

Chapter 76

Dimitri

The closer we got to our destination, the angrier I was becoming. Usually, I would take this time to go over the plan, the details. Encourage the men. This time, I was silent, introverted. I could feel that it was putting off the men, but I couldn't find it in myself to give some grand speech. What would I say anyways? "We get my mate back or I'll kill all of you in a blind rage"? Yeah, sure. This was different than any other fight I'd ever been in. Too much was at stake; There was too much that could be lost. For me, for the pack. That wasn't the cause of my anger though.

All I could think about was what that piece of shit might be doing with a Lily. Because of Claras magic, I couldn't feel if she was betraying me or not. And if that's what she had to do to survive, I couldn't fault her for it. But that didn't mean I was okay with it either. Just the thought of him touching what was mine, kissing her, feeling her body... it made my blood boil in my veins. Jennine hadn't had the need to make any deals about Bastians death. In my eyes, he was already a dead man. And if she was telling the truth, he was a dead man sooner than I hoped.

"We're about half an hour out. You want to say anything to the men?" Ben whispered to me.

"You do it."

"Uh... alright."

I felt him stand and watched him stand in front of our group. I felt like a shitty Alpha right now, but at the same time, I didn't care much. I'm sure

any man in my position would feel much the same. I looked down at my knees as my Beta talked.

"You all know why we're here. To get our Luna back." He paused. "I'll be honest with you all, we don't know if our Luna is under the influence of magic. If she is, there is a chance she will fight against us. I don't need to tell you the consequences if she gets hurt."

A snarl ripped its way out of me, audible to everyone.

"If that so happens to be the case, the only course of action to take is to subdue her. To get her safely through the portal and back home. You all know how these things go. There will be blood. There will be death. But let's make it so it belongs to other side. Each and every one of you has proven yourselves the finest warriors of Blood Moon. I want to see you uphold that honor, and bring our Luna home. You with us?"

Shouts went up around the cabin of agreement. Ben sat down, sighing loudly.

"Good job." I said.

"Thanks."

"It was very moving. You should write poetry." Luke pretended to wipe away a tear.

"You're always such a dick before a fight." Ben scoffed.

"It's the energy man. Can't help it."

I ignored their bantering as I felt the plane tip. We must have been closer than Ben thought. The pilots voice came over the speakers, ordering everyone to strap in for landing. I looked around, noticing only one person who looked more nervous than excited for the coming battle. But I trusted Ben to take care of his mate so she could go home to her daughter. I had my own mate to worry about for now. My stomach lurched as we descended; admittedly, I had never been a good flyer, but sometimes it

was necessary. I looked out the window, seeing the tops of trees appear, and the ocean below us.

Far out in the distance, I caught site of what looked like an abandoned ruin. I kept my eyes trained on that until the trees blocked my view and I felt the wheels hit the pavement. The landing was rough, and everyone sighed in relief when we finally came to a full stop.

"I am never getting on of these things again." Miguel muttered. He had a green undertone to his face as he stood on wobbly legs.

"Not even for our honeymoon? I was going to take you to Greece." Luke said.

"I'll swim."

I stood and made my way to the exit. Ben and Luke followed behind me with their mates, and the rest followed after us. I took the time to look around, get my bearings. We'd landed in what seemed like a large area of bare forest. All around us were great giants of trees. It was quiet, except for our breathing and the sounds of the ocean. Ben, Luke and I scanned the area for any signs of danger, any signs of a trap. I was more than shocked that we didn't find any; Perhaps Jennine had told the truth. Looking in the direction of the old ruins I'd seen, I signaled to the group snow standing before me.

"You all know the plan. Three groups. One with me, one with the Beta, and one with the Gamma. Let's go!" I barked.

Men started filing in around me, but I couldn't focus on them. Lily was here, I knew it. I could feel it. Our bond felt stronger, almost like a pull. Before everyone was situated, I started walking towards the trees, anxious to get to my mate. Ben caught me before I hit the tree line.

"I know you want to get this done. I know. But Dimitri, you have to think. We can't just storm the place."

"What are you implying?" I snapped.

"Nothing. Just that you need to calm down and stick to the plan. Don't act on impulse."

I took a deep breath. He was right.

"You're right. I just... I just want her back."

"So do we. So, let's do this, rationally."

I nodded. "Let's do this."

He clapped me on the back once. "I'll go get Clara to call Gideon."

I waited until my group formed behind me and for Ben to give me the thumbs up. When all was ready, I stepped into the trees and let our bond pull me forward. Ben and Luke split with their groups on either side of us, covering from all sides. We walked silently for about twenty minutes before I stopped.

"Alright. Wait here until night. Keep your eyes and ears open. Collin, tell the others we've stopped."

"Yes Alpha." I looked at the sky; The sun was setting, not long to wait now.

"I can feel her." Ajax said.

"Me too."

"Hmm."

"What?"

"I can feel Aya, but I can't reach her."

"You can't talk to her?"

"No. It feels... it feels like there's a wall up. Like she's blocking me out."

My guts twisted uncomfortably. "What does that mean?"

"I'm not sure."

"Can you reach Lily?"

"I think so. But I don't think I should try, in case she's..."

"Right. Better leave it then."

I grit my teeth painfully; I couldn't even tell my own mate I was here to save her because she might have turned against me. The fact that I couldn't trust her right now hurt badly.

"Alpha, Beta Ben says they have movement where they are." Collin spoke up suddenly. I spun to face him.

"How many?"

"Five, in wolf form."

"Tell them to take them out, quietly. And hide the bodies if they can."

His eyes glazed over. When they cleared, he nodded at me, indicating it was done. I nodded back and looked around. More than likely, they were out hunting, but what if Bastian knew we were here? That wasn't a risk I was willing to take. The sun was nearly set now, and I wasn't waiting anymore.

"Tell the others we're moving in."

His wolf nodded at me while my men took their positions. Silently, we stalked through forest. Every step I felt closer to Lily, until I saw the tree line breaking ahead. I signaled for the men to stop. Cautiously, I inched forward, the ruins coming into view. It was rubble; bricks and stones lay on the ground and in huge heaps where a castle once stood. One lonely tower stood strong against the elements, though it was covered in vines and the roof was all but nonexistent.

"Ben?" I mind linked him.

"Now?"

"Now."

I crouched, waiting. Clara was supposed to lift the veil that hid the castle. A minute ticked by. Then another one. And another. I was losing patience when suddenly, the old scattered rubble and dilapidated tower in front of me became a beautiful stronghold, straight out of a book. The one tower was now accompanied by many, with lights glowing in the thin windows. The walls were high, solid brick and stone, lush vines crawling up and twisting together. Even the air changed; it cleared and held a noticeably different texture.

None of this held my attention though, because standing in front of the magnificent structure stood an immense gathering of wolves. Rogues. My eyes ran over them, thin, foaming from the mouth beasts. And landed on the man standing in front of them.

The resemblance to Lilys father was uncanny. It was truly hard to believe they weren't related by blood. The one big difference were his eyes. Cold, flat. Bloodthirsty.

"Bastian." I snarled viciously.