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Vadirr and Prince Duron were communicating through mind link, they couldn't be any more obvious. Their gestures gave them away, the creasing of Vadirr's eyebrows, the way Prince Duron's eyes kept darting to the door and back at me, the occasional rubbing of temples, the quirking of brows, and the curious looks. Whatever they were discussing, they didn't want me hearing any of it, and why did I have a feeling that it involved me?

Oh Esme! You are not that important!

They stopped as soon as Prince Draven returned, turning their attention to him.

The first prince had just declared to one of the kinsmen that he found his mate and if this is true, then that means a lot to our kind. It is no news that he has been on the look out for his mate for many years. After his father's demise, the first Prince could not be king until he found his mate. The seat of the king cannot be handled by an unmated Lycan and after what the past king did to his mate, the kinsmen reinforced that law.

If this is true, it means there'd be a feast to announce the next luna Queen and celebrate the Prince finding his mate, then a mating ceremony will follow. It means that Prince Draven will soon ascend the throne after many years. It is good news! But the Prince Draven didn't look happy. His jaw was set in a hard, warning stare as he glared at the two other men, his eyes glowing red with annoyance. He went back to his initial standing position with his back to me, and his hands tucked in his pockets.

"Leave us," He mouthed, and I struggled to stand to my feet with my hands still cuffed in front of me, but his next words stopped me "Not you!"

I stiffened, my eyes darting to rest on his back.

"Are you sure this is a good idea, Draven?" Prince Duron asked skeptically.

"Leave us!" he commanded again, his stance growing even more rigid. The Lycan prince hated being questioned, but the two men still hesitated before shuffling out of the room.

When he turned around to face me, his eyes were no longer glowing red as they had been when he entered the room. Instead, he wore a cold, hard stare to hide his thoughts. He moved towards me with calculated steps, and while I had the hunch to move away from him, my body betrayed me. I couldn't carry myself. He picked my hands in one of his and with the key in the other hand, he starts to uncuff my wobbly hands. My heart was drumming loud, so loud I was certain he heard it, and a familiar headache started to spread from the left side of my head. I knew this pain all too well, I know what will follow next, and I hoped and prayed that it wouldn't happen now, not in the presence of Prince Draven. Especially not now. I wouldn't disgrace myself like this, he hated me already and I wonder what he'd do if he saw that I was mad. It was that voice in my head, the same voice I'd heard severally but I'd never been able to make any sense out of it.

The cuffs fell to the ground, and I snapped my hands back as if being burned, swallowing loudly "Please – Punish me now and get it over with," I wanted to be away from him so bad, I wanted to be able to breathe properly. But he made my situation worse when he rested a finger on my jaw, tilting my head up to meet his.

I stared into cold blue eyes, eyes without any emotions, eyes that looked like they could see right into my soul, but

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I couldn't hold his stare over two seconds, I looked away to stare into space, anywhere but his eyes.

"I'm not going to punish you," His voice dropped to almost a whisper, a dangerous hint in them "You must do something for me,"

My eyes darted to his and back into space very quickly. The Lycan prince never asks for anything, he takes without asking, and even though he didn't sound like it was a request, it felt like he needed my consent, so I nodded my head weakly. That small movement of my head increased the headache I was already feeling. I heard the whisper in my head, so faint, yet it was there. I tried not to wince, I tried not to make any move to indicate what I was feeling inside, but Prince Draven must have sensed that something was wrong.

He pulled his finger away from my face, his eyes taking a look I couldn't quite place, then he took one step back to observe me properly. "Who are you?" he suddenly asked.

Taken aback by his sudden question, my mouth dropped open and close again, not sure why he was asking me this. "Esmeray," I answered awkwardly.

"Esmeray," he repeated quietly. I felt happiness at the bottom of my stomach at the way he pronounced my name. No one ever called me by my name at Silver moon pack except for Ailana, and hearing the Lycan prince pronounce it in that manner gave me joy. He even sounded like he fancied it, and I had to bite the insides of my cheeks to prevent me from smiling like a kitten.

"Your surname?" he asked, quirking a brow. Whatever joy I felt died when he asked me that. I wasn't exactly proud of my family name after what they did. I was from a family of traitors and that made me a traitor too, after all, I had a traitors blood flowing through my veins. I had the instinct

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to lie, but the sensible part of me told me not to make my situation worse. If he found out that I lied, I'll only be putting myself into more trouble than I was already in.

"Greyson," I answered.

The silence that followed scarred the hell out of me. What if he knew? The chances are very rare. My parents weren't exactly popular and there's no way that name will ring a bell to any royal, especially not the strongest and most important member of our kind. Besides, Greyson is quite a generic name.

"Who are your parents?" He probed, his eyes boring into mine, studying my slightest move without giving anything off.

"I-I-" What do I tell him? That my parents had been traitors? I couldn't say that. I could already feel tears brewing, "They are dead," I muttered. That did the trick. He sighed and shook his head, probably out of irritation for my weakness, I'm not sure but I was glad that he dropped the topic.

"I'll spare your life Esme, but you must do something for me in return. I demand it," His voice carried a usual authority, and I nodded again. What could a nobody like me do for a man so powerful? A man whose word is the law. A man who could have anything he wanted with just a snap of his fingers?

"Look at me, Esme," He commanded, and I had no choice but to obey, even though I wanted to look at anywhere but his face. My headache was increasing, and my wolf was hiding somewhere at the back of my head like she normally did whenever this happened.

"You have to pretend to be my mate," He stated squarely, his voice as hard as steel. My ears perked up, my eyes widened, my heart slammed hard in my chest, my teeth

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shattered, and for a second, I was convinced I'd heard him wrongly. "From this minute henceforth, you have to act as my mate and not leave any doubts in the heart of the kinsmen or other members of this palace that we are mates. It's simple, but first, you have to stop being so scared of me," His voice was cool, too cool.

It's hard to not be scared of the strongest man on the planet, but what he was asking me to do was totally impossible. So, he'd lied to the kinsman about finding his mate?

But why me? A man as good looking as Prince Draven could have any alpha female he wanted. Every female would crawl at his feet and plead for him to take them, and didn't the Kinsman mention a certain Heather to be his chosen mate? If it's the same Heather I know that he'd been referring to, then she'd be good for a man like Prince Draven. I'd read stories about her as a child and she'd been friends with Prince Draven since forever. No one knew if they were lovers for a fact, but there were rumors.

"Do you understand?" He asked impatiently. My eyes rested on his shoes as I nodded my head again. I could never say no to a man like him, not if I still wanted my head on my neck. "Then, we must get to work, mate,"