

CHAPTER 86

CHAPTER 86 She Will Return Home with Me

"Will this hurt like he says, Dina?" Lily asked.

Dina didn't immediately answer. 'Yes. It will be excruciating. Mate marks aren't meant to be removed. This is old magic.'

'Will Garrett be able to mark me again?' Lily asked.

'I do not know,' Dina responded, causing Lily to bite her lip. She wanted to run, but she needed to play along. She needed to act like she was willing to do this, which would give her an opportunity to escape later.

As the crowd watched with bated breath, warriors, their faces stoic, stepped forward and seized Lily. Some muttered their apologies to her, as they were against this. Lily didn't resist. With firm but gentle hands, they led her toward the stage, where Elder Richard awaited with a gleaming dagger whose blade glowed an eerie green.

"We need to get down there. We need to rescue our mate!" Berric screamed within Garrett. He agreed and moved to intervene, but Ethan and his father restrained him by his arms.

"What are you doing? Let go of me!" Garrett snarled at them, and then he felt the hum of the Alpha call from his father. It was not forceful but reassuring, and it calmed Garrett slightly.

"If you go against the Elders, you will be put in the dungeon, and then you won't be able to help Lily," Jack warned. He looked at his youngest son, Matthew, in disgust as he saw him taking great pleasure in seeing Garrett in distress. Jack wanted to slap that smirk off his face. If Matthew thought he would get away with this, he was sorely mistaken.

Desperation gnawed at Garrett's heart, but he clung to the only lifeline he had left - the mate bond. With every fiber of his being, he reached out to Lily through their connection, saying, 'Lily, I am sorry for everything. I should have marked you before, and this wouldn't be happening.'

'You have nothing to be sorry for,' Lily responded. 'You have nothing to fear. You will not lose me. I won't accept Matthew, no matter what he does. I will never mark him back. My heart belongs to you.'

On the stage, Elder Richard held the dagger with a steady hand, the moonlight glinting off its blade. The room seemed to hold its breath, waiting for the inevitable. He cast a glance at Lily, noticing her blank expression and being surprised at the young woman's resilience. Elder Richard expected her to be throwing a tantrum, but she wasn't.

'She is just like her mother. She didn't show her emotion either,' he thought before saying, "We understand that this is a difficult moment for you, young she-wolf. But we must preserve our customs and traditions. The mate mark must be removed."

"As I do not believe that this was done with good intentions, I do not agree,"

Lily responded. "Do what you must. Her statement caused some of the elders to exchange glances as they were surprised by her words.

With a deliberate and precise motion, Elder Richard brought the dagger closer to Lily's skin. The instant the blade touched Lily's skin, a collective gasp swept through the assembly. The pain was excruciating—a searing agony that tore through her—but she held back her cries. Garrett's eyes never left her, his heart breaking as he went through the pain with her. His father's hand clasped his as he provided his son with support.

Moments later, the mate mark lay in pieces on the stage, a physical representation of their love now discarded. Lily's breaths were ragged, but she remained standing, her eyes locked with Garrett's, a silent promise etched into her gaze.

Elder Richard, his task complete, lowered the dagger and turned his attention to the assembled crowd. "Lily Bray will now return to her family pack in preparation for the mating ceremony."

"I will not allow it," a voice rang out from the audience. Tiffany's father, Edan, who had remained quiet until now, stood up, surprising everyone with the strength of his disapproval. "With all due respect, Elder

Richard, as the Alpha of the Moon Shine pride, Lily is under my protection.

Once she renounced her pack and accepted my pride as her family, she was my responsibility, not Alpha Kenneth's."

Kenneth couldn't hide his irritation at this turn of events. He exchanged a heated glance with Robert. "I think it is time we address the elephant in the room.

Felines should not be interfering in the matter of wolves."

"Excuse me?" Edan said. The elders representing the weretigers and lykoi, feline counterparts of lycans, hissed their displeasure at Kenneth's insult.

"You heard me clearly, Edan. She is my daughter, and she should be with her blood," Kenneth continued.

"The same blood that abused and abandoned her and almost left her for dead because she was an Omega. You didn't care about her until you realized what her lineage was."

"I will not sit here and discuss this with you. Her pride bond must be removed as well," Kenneth said, dismissing Edan.

"And why should we send her back to the pack where the last red wolf died under mysterious circumstances? Ethan chimed in, earning a glare from Kenneth.

"My wife died during childbirth. There was nothing suspicious about it,"

Kenneth retorted.

"That is yet to be seen. Lily Bray should be sent to live with her grandmother's pack for her safety," Ethan recommended.

"No! I won't put up with interference all the time. Lily will return home with me," Kenneth demanded.

"Lily Bray will return to her family's pack," Elder Richard stated. "This discussion is over."

The declaration sent shockwaves through the audience, which interpreted Elder Richard's decisions as biased toward Kenneth. An uproar ensued as members of the crowd began voicing their opinions, some in favor of Kenneth and others in support of Edan's assertion of responsibility.

Elder Richard, with a raised hand, tried to quell the rising discord. "Please, let us maintain order."

One of the elders stood, stepping in front of Elder Richard, and stated, "We will need to discuss this matter. We will take a recess for five minutes."