

Chapter 12

My mind had been spinning since yesterday. First, there was the fact those fire-breathing monsters were out to get me, and then there was the slight possibility that Maxim didn't actually reject me.

Again, I didn't sleep a wink.

Yesterday when everything got settled, I didn't see Fiona until dinner time. Leonardo had her on high watch. So, I took the time to unpack my bags, and I knew it sounded crazy, but I thought more about Maxim than the damn dragons.

I still remember each word of his rejection. 'Because I reject you, Maxim. I reject you as my mate.'

I shivered at the memory.

I knew I was the one who wanted to reject him first, but I hated that he did it instead. Now, I was left with the possibility that he didn't. If he really did, he wouldn't be able to feel me, and if I was being honest, I had felt him a few times too. When his stress level increased, and when he got extremely angry, I would get quick flashes of them.

We didn't speak during dinner last night, nor did he make me breakfast again this morning. He avoided me at all costs as if he actually regretted saving me. Of course, the thought hurt me. I am much a human as a wolf; hence, I have feelings.

Perhaps it would be better for everyone if I had died.

"Maxim?" A knock sounded at my door, and I realised that it was Lukas's voice that called.

With a huff, I shuffled from my bed and trotted over towards the door to open it. He could've let himself in if he wanted to, but I was grateful that he respected my privacy.

"Hey," I mumbled as I opened the door. He was wearing a huge, toothy grin. He seemed more relaxed today than yesterday when he was in full Alpha mode.

"Hi," he returned. "You look great."

I smiled as my eyes flickered to my outfit. "Thanks, um, where are we going exactly?"

After what happened yesterday, I wasn't too fond of leaving the house again. But Lukas texted me this morning and told me to wear something nice because he is taking me somewhere.

He tried not to smile wider as he answered. "Nowhere special," he mumbled. It was evident that I was still uncomfortable going out.

It wasn't Lukas who I didn't want to go out with. In fact, apart from the jealousy, I had gotten quite comfortable around him. Of course, he made me feel safe, but I could still remember flashbacks of the claws of those dragons.

I caught his sigh without actually looking at him.

"Maxim," he mumbled, gently holding my cheek in his hand and bringing my eyes to meet his. I shivered at his touch, but not in a bad way. "I promise that you'll be safe. But if you are not comfortable going out, we can hang out here."

With Maxim? No can do.

I quickly shook my head.

"No, it's fine. Just let me get my phone." I grabbed the device from the nightstand and closed my windows so no bugs would get in. As I met Lukas at the door, he held my hand in his large ones and led me to his car.

The ride was relatively quiet. He asked me now and then if I was okay, and I would show him places where Fiona took me yesterday. Sometimes, he would have deeper stories behind certain sites, which were pretty interesting.

At last, we arrived at Omega Park, one of the few Fiona showed me yesterday. I hadn't actually seen inside them, though, so I was a little excited.

"Don't worry. We are far away from the border, so those dragons can't get in. I have no idea why they chose to attack our pack," he mumbled to himself. "We've had rogue attacks, but never these." His frown disappeared as he met my eyes again. "But I have increased border patrol, so they are not getting anywhere farther than an inch over the border. There's a reason why we have the most feared border patrol, you know?" His voice was cocky, and I couldn't help the chuckle it evoked.

"I know. I've heard stories."

"Good stories?" he questioned, and I shrugged.

"I guess. It depends on your definition of good. I've heard stories about the two Alphas, how strong and ruthless they are."

Lukas laughed heartily as he connected our hands again and led us to the entrance. "Strong? Yes. Ruthless? That would be Maxim." He chuckled, but it quickly fell when he noticed my expression. "Shit, I'm sorry. Is that still a touchy subject for you?"

I laughed humourlessly. "Nah. I mean, I only found out he was my mate two days ago when I tried to reject him, and he rejected me instead." My voice dripped with sarcasm, and I saw that I made Lukas uncomfortable. But there was nothing I could say to make it better.

We stopped under a maple tree with a small park bench. In front of us was the wide, open area scattered with small yellow flowers and lush grass. A bench sat under every tree in sight, and as far as I could tell, there was no one around.

"I'm sorry," he apologised after a while. "The only reason I took you here was to talk a little more in private. I wasn't lying when I said I wanted us to know each other more. Especially given the circumstances."

I nodded in understanding, and if I was to admit, I was happy he took me here. I have always loved nature. It calmed me.

"It's okay. I'm just still adjusting."

He still looked uncomfortable. "I actually wanted to apologise for trying to force you to accept me and not Maxim. If I should be honest, Maxim, at first, I had no interest in being with someone who is not my mate until I saw you that day I picked you up."

My heart swelled. "Really?"

"Yes," he nodded. "I was actually really excited to be with you, and that was odd coming from me." He met my eyes and never dropped his gaze from mine. "When you told me that your mate lived at the Alpha house, I knew it was my brother, and I was angry. I was angry that I got so excited to have you, only to have you stripped away."

"I had no idea," I said. I only thought he was being an Alpha wolf. I didn't know it was so emotional for him.

"You have to believe that I never wanted my brother to be unhappy, and I always told him that if he found his mate, that would be better than me taking some innocent girl to be my Luna. But I guess that selfish part of

me wanted to be the happy one, and I'm sorry."

I actually smiled as I held his hand. "It's okay, Lukas. I understand. And look how it turned out, huh? The universe wanted us together all along."

"You think so?" His smile was back and in full folds, and I couldn't help but mimic it.

"I do."

"You have a beautiful smile, Maxim. I have no idea why your brother was so eager to send you away. You seem like a blessing in itself."

I scoffed. "Barely. If you only knew the half of it," I whispered. I could see the curiosity on his face, but he didn't push it, and I was happy.

"Well, to me, you are. I don't want you to feel pressured or forced. You were already forced to come here. You can be a Luna on your own terms, but I hope you know that you'll be a great one."

"I hope," I told him. I hadn't really had much practice being anything good, so it will be a challenge.

We talked for a while, and I realised that Lukas was just a normal human being like me. He had his moments when he was an Alpha, like yesterday evening, but he was sweet and surprisingly easy to talk to.

I found myself telling him my deepest darkest secrets from childhood in my rebel stage when I once filled my brother's room with frogs when he punished me by making me clean the river. Clean the damn river!

He knew it was me, but he had no proof, so he couldn't do anything to me. Those were Lance's orders.

Lukas had some pretty incredible stories too. Most included Maxim, but he would jump over details with my mate only for my sake. I appreciated it.

Soon, it was mid-day, and more people were starting to come around. About two or four. We decided to leave, though I didn't want to.

"Am I a bad person for being happy that I have you for myself?" Lukas asked as we got in his car. I thought about it for a while but shook my head.

"No. After all, Maxim rejected me." Even though we still somehow have a bond. But I wouldn't tell Lukas that.

He surprised me by actually laughing. "You tried to reject him first until I told you to think about it before you actually do. I just didn't want you to make rash decisions and hate yourself forever for doing so."

I shrugged. "I had my reasons. But why did he reject me? What reason did he have?" If I admitted it, I was grudgeful that Maxim rejected me. I knew why I didn't want to be with him, but it was only ego that caused him to say what he said.

"That's just Maxim," Lukas said with a shrug. "If he believes he doesn't have his way, he acts out. He will regret it soon, though. This isn't what I wanted for him." The last part came out as a whisper, and his eyes became distant for a while until he met mine again.

They were curious and questioning, and it seemed like he was trying to read me from the inside out, but couldn't.

"But you. Why did you want to reject him? Your reaction to seeing him shocked us both."

I pondered for a while. I had told Lukas so many things from childhood, but could I tell him this? I guess I could. I mean, I would have to eventually.

I dropped his intense gaze and fiddled with my hands as I resurfaced the memory. My eyes stung with tears

and my throat grew suddenly dry.

Where do I even start?



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