

## Chapter 31

Everything around me seemed like a blur.

My ears rang like a long beeping sound that you hear in hospitals when someone dies. Around me, so much was happening. Could hear Maxim screaming at Lukas, I could hear footsteps dashing towards my room, and I could see the ceiling getting farther and farther as I fell.

Luckily, my head didn't meet the ground as Maxim filled my vision. He caught me just in time before I hit the ground, and that's when my first tear fell.

My heart ached as if someone had just stuck an acid dipped knife through it, and my neck throbbed even more. My wolf was reckless. She didn't understand this mark, because it wasn't from our mate. It would surely make her sick for a few days, which meant I would be sick too.

Slowly, it was then that the world started to make sense again. Sentences were formed, people were heard, and my senses returned to me.

The pain was excruciating. I felt like someone had just sunk their teeth in my neck, which was precisely what Lukas did.

Lukas.

I couldn't believe he did this to me. I couldn't believe he betrayed me like this, despite his reasons. The first sob broke from my lips as Maxim leaned me against the bottom of my bed. I was still frozen, though my senses were back with me.

I could see him from the corner of my eyes as Maxim marched towards him. Yet, I had no strength to call after my mate. I had no power to even speak. I just sat there, curled up against my bed as my mate flung a heavy fist towards his brother's face.

"How fucking dare you!" Maxim screamed as he swung a second punch, and all I could do was sit and watch.

Lukas didn't defend himself. Instead, he stood there, looking just as shocked as I was—staring at me as if he was aware he had just committed a crime.

"Hey! What's going on here?" Leonardo and Fiona appeared, both of them looking worried as Leonardo caught Maxim just as he was about to punch his brother again.

Maxim was fuming. He was red, his muscles were tense, and Leonardo had to dig his heels in my rug to somewhat hold him down.

"What happened?" Fiona asked desperately, seeming on the brink of tears as Leonardo assessed the situation.

I watched as the Beta's face went from confusion to shock as he took in Lukas's bloody mouth, and then he followed Lukas's gaze to me, curled against the floor.

It didn't take long for Fiona to catch on, and when she did, she dashed towards me in her own tears.

Without even saying anything, she grabbed me in her arms as she sobbed against my shoulder. I didn't even notice I had been shaking like a leaf until then. I was utterly traumatised.

"Luke... Luke, you didn't," Leonardo whispered, seeming just as shocked as the rest of us.

Lukas finally shifted his gaze away from me and toward his brothers. "I... What did I do?" he asked, and I didn't know why, but his question angered me.

He had some gall to barge into my room out of mere jealousy, mark me and then act like he didn't know what he did. Had he any idea what he had done? There was a proper way of doing these things; a mark wasn't from one's mate, and even then, I would've had to approve!

This was one of the biggest laws in our world. Marking someone else's mate forcefully-actually, marking ANYONE forcefully was punishable by death in some laws. It is equivalent to the highest degree of rape.

And now, he really stood there looking as if this was some mistake as if he didn't know what he did!

Yet, even with so much trying to come out, all I could do was cry even harder, so hard that my vision was completely blurred by tears.

"I'm s-so sorry, Mel," Fiona cried. "I'm so sor-ry this hap-pened to you."

She squeezed me tighter, and though on any other day on any other occasion, this would've been comforting, I didn't feel any better.

"Lukas, you aren't her mate!" Leonardo was angry now too, and I don't think I have ever seen Leonardo angry. "Do you know what will happen if this... this forced bond is not complete? She will lose her mind, Luke! She will lose her mind!"

I wiped my tears to get a better visual of what was happening. Maxim seemed to have calmed down just a bit, seeing that Leonardo was on his side.

"And you know what will happen if Maxim puts his mark on her?" Leonardo asked again. Lukas simply stared. "Huh?!" Leonardo shouted. "Tell me, Luke. What will happen?"

"She... she will die," he mumbled as if reality had just sunk in.

My heart broke as I heard this. Even in the midst of my shock and trauma, I was still a bit hopeful because I assumed Maxim would simply replace Lukas's mark. But I had completely forgotten that it doesn't work that way.

Two marks from different wolves are detrimental and highly dangerous in themselves. But if any she-wolf should bear two marks from two alphas, she will surely die.

If it was even possible, I cried even harder.

"You fucking killed her!" Leo screamed, letting go of Maxim in the process. "And you know what? I won't even feel bad if Maxim kills you for doing this to his mate. Look at her, Luke. Look at her!"

Slowly, Lukas shifted his gaze back to me. I hated how I might've looked in that moment, just shaking, frail and sobbing on the floor. But it was all his fault, and mine too forever leading him on. I will either lose my mind or die, and the worst part was, everything could've been different if I didn't try to resist Maxim in the first place.

I stared at the three of them by the door. Maxim was standing, heaving in rage as he stared at Lukas. Lukas never looked away from me, and Leonardo stared at him in disgust. Then, he turned his head in my direction, and our eyes met briefly. I thought I saw sadness on Leo's face for a quick second before he went down the hallway, just as fast as he came.

"I won't even waste another punch on you," Maxim growled, though it looked like he was just dying to punch him again. "You're not worth it. Just know that this... you and me, we are done," he spat, bringing back his brother's attention to him.

"Maxim-"

"Don't say my name," Maxim growled even harsher. "Don't you even dare. I told you that if you did

something like this again, we're done, and I don't fucking care what you tell the pack, what you tell mom and dad.... I don't care! You had no right to mark my mate, and if anything happens to her, I swear on every star in the sky that you have not just lost a brother but gained an enemy. And brother, you don't want me as your enemy."

Maxim closed his eyes briefly, and my tears slowly became less as the pain in my neck subsided.

"Two days," he suddenly added. "You have two weeks to find a way to undo your doing because I will not sit by and watch another full moon catch her like this. I will not let her lose her mind because of you." He took a slow, threatening step towards him. "And if she does, you will have to answer to me, brother. And I will happily dig myself an early grave after I throw you in yours."

And with that, he left his brother standing silent in my doorway and moved towards Fiona and me. He shared a look with Fiona briefly, and she shuffled away and wiped her own tears. Maxim scooped me in his arms easily, and Fiona placed a long kiss on my forehead before leaving the room too. But she didn't waste any time in giving Lukas the deadliest glare that I had ever seen from her, and just like that too, she was gone.

Lukas's eyes found me as Maxim crossed the room. They seemed repentant, sorry and scared-not for himself. But for me.

He didn't think of the consequences when he did what he did. He didn't for once think of how this would affect not only Maxim but me. I was already getting sick. I could feel it in my wolf, and by the way, my temperature rose quickly.

It all seemed like slow motion as I clung to Maxim's chest and the door closed slowly with Lukas on the other side.

"I'm sorry, Melissa," he whispered. It was so quiet that I didn't even think Maxim heard it until the door finally closed, leaving me yet again how it started, with Maxim and I in the room alone.

He brought me to the bathroom attached to my room and placed me in the bath without removing my clothes.

He tore a piece of his shirt effortlessly from his body and damped it with some water before dabbing it gently to my still open wound.

He was still furious, that was for sure, but the minute he met my eyes, his entire demeanour softened. Suddenly, I didn't feel like myself anymore. I felt vulnerable, scared and sad. For the first time in my life, I was faced with sickness and death, and I had no idea how to deal with it.

Maxim placed a lingering kiss on my forehead before wiping away a fallen tear from my eyes with his thumb.

"Am I gonna die?" I asked in such a small voice that I didn't even recognise it.

I watched my mate's entire world fall behind his eyes at my simple but powerful question, and he squeezed his eyes shut tightly for a while before meeting mine again.

Despite his evident pain, he managed to smile at me as he caressed my cheek with his thumb.

"No, Melissa," he mumbled, though his words held so much determination that I wanted so desperately to believe him. "You're going to be just fine," he added softly. "I promise."