

Chapter 32

Ten Days. It had been ten torturous days of never-ending pain, fever, and a wailing wolf in my head.

I had no idea that Lukas marking me would've been this bad. If I had even the slightest idea that he would've done this or that I would've been so sick, I would've stayed far away from him. We are wolves, and wolves don't get sick because we heal too quickly. This was fairly new to me, Maxim, and even Fiona, and she was sort of everyone's mom around here.

I have been to the pack hospital five times in one and a half weeks, in a bathtub half the times trying to get a reign on my body temperature and bedridden since that dreadful day. I knew this all would be bad, but I didn't expect it to be this bad.

I was sick of being sick. And quite frankly, I felt like I was a burden to everyone around me.

Maxim had barely gotten any time to do his actual job, though he refused to speak to Lukas, even if it concerned the pack. Leonardo talks with him occasionally, from what I've heard from Fiona. But even he was still giving Lukas the cold shoulder. I actually felt terrible for Lukas at times, which was evidently stupid considering what he did to me. But I hated the thought that he was excluded by everyone.

On the other hand, Fiona had everything on her shoulder from cleaning, cooking and laundry, simply because no one, helpers, cooks and other staff, was allowed inside the Alpha house. This, I hated, even more, considering the fact that she has a growing baby inside of her who gets larger each second of the day.

Of course, Leonardo helps when he can, but if I had to eat another steak from Leonardo, I'd rather take my chances with the dragons.

Speaking of dragons, I hadn't had another dream about the moon goddess or anything concerning dragons and moon shards. In fact, my sleep has become relatively uneventful. Not even a fragment of a dream. I blamed it on my disconnected wolf because it is the wolf side that anchors me to the moon. But now, I was completely mundane with a distorted wolf and human illness symptoms.

If I thought having nightmares were bad, imagine a never-ending one like this.

To make it worse, every afternoon around one when I took my 'nap', Lukas would sneak in here and sit in front of my bed, saying nothing. I only pretended that it was my ideal nap time because I wanted Maxim to take a break and actually take care of himself too.

He had been with me from the day Lukas bit me. He fed me, nursed me, and even bathed me. I always thought that my mate would behold my nakedness on the night of our first mating, but as always, my life had other plans. I wasn't complaining, though. It was funny sometimes seeing him try to look at my face instead of my body when he undresses and bathes me. My favourite part was watching the bulge in his pants grow each time he slipped my dress or blouse from my shoulder. It was nice to know that he still found me attractive, especially considering the awful amount of weight I've lost. I could see it each time I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror.

It only made sense. I had little appetite nowadays, and I didn't want to pressure Fiona. She already does so much, and I can't have her cooking me a meal when I happen to feel for food once a day. I usually pick around whatever Maxim brings me and let the sickness do the rest of the talking.

Awful. It was all awful.

From the Beta basically running this pack alone, both Alphas separated, the pack clueless and a pregnant she-wolf keeping a three-story house in order, everything was yet again upside down. It was all because of my existence.

The thought gnawed away at me as I lay curled up against my bed. Maxim had just left me for my one o'clock nap, and this was the time where I usually questioned my entire existence. Sometimes, the universe pities me, and I actually fall asleep. But I could tell that today wouldn't be one of those days.

Ten days.

I still couldn't believe I had been sick this long. I needed to get rid of this mark, though I had no clue how. And from what I've seen, Maxim doesn't either. I'm terrified of what might happen if the full moon comes, and I'm still bearing Lukas's mark.

Naturally, when a wolf is marked, she goes into heat on the next full moon. It's pretty obvious now that this mark did not agree with my body or wolf, so I didn't want to see what would happen to me if the full moon came with me like this.

It was only a week and a half away, and we were nowhere closer to fixing me. I might just lose my mind or, better, die. Maybe then these people can go on with their lives just as how it was before I came with my dragons and love triangle and nightmares.

My door made a squeak as a single tear rolled down the side of my face and disappeared into my pillow. The scent was vaguely familiar, and I closed my eyes just like I always did when Lukas came to visit me this time of day.

I was still angry at him. I was pissed, outraged and I felt betrayed. But each day that goes by when he comes here and just sits and stares at me, I can't help but wonder what this must've been like for him.

He wasn't sick, that was for sure, but he must've been tearing up inside. Serves him right, of course, but I could only imagine his pain. His Beta and brother won't even meet his eyes, Fiona, who loves everybody, had officially declared her hate for him after I got worse, and I, well, I was the one he wanted. And every day, he comes here and stares at the mess he made. That couldn't be easy.

It must've been awful.

"I think I've found it," Lukas said. His voice was quiet and frail, almost breaking as if he hadn't spoken in days. I perked a bit as he said this but kept my breathing levelled to give the impression that I was still asleep.

Since his daily visits, this had been the first time he had ever said anything.

"I have spent days trying to find a way to... to reverse what I did, and I think I actually found it." This information almost sent me flying over the moon.

I was far too sick of being sick to do anything but rejoice. I'd jump up and hug him out of excitement.

"But it's risky," he added, and I almost screamed in frustration. "I know you can't hear me because you're sleeping, but I just wanted to tell you before I tried to approach Maxim. I know going to him is a risk on its own, but he did tell me that I better find a way to fix this, and I did."

I knew it. Guilt had been killing him these past days. A sin will always be a sin as long as the doer is never repentant. And I could tell that Lukas had his fair share of self-examination. I knew he still wanted me. I could literally feel it, but he wanted me better even more, and that's the only important thing.

"So, I managed to contact an oracle through an old friend of mine." And oracle? Those wolves had direct visions from the moon goddess and sometimes served as a mediator for wolves who wanted special requests from the moon herself.

I had never seen or met one, and despite my strange abilities, I didn't consider seeking one out. But I understood why Lukas would.

"He was reluctant to help me, of course, because I told him the whole truth, though he claimed that he

already saw me coming." He sighed before continuing. "He wouldn't tell me the ideal way to get rid of the mark. He deems it as... as my ideal punishment if we... if we end up losing you." His voice broke as he said this, and my heart slammed against my chest.

I knew oracles were hardcore, but for him to believe that me dying or losing my mind was the right punishment for Lukas was quite cruel. Not even to Lukas per se, but to me too. He would rather Lukas be punished than actually save my life? And they are supposed to be arbiters of light.

"But," he continued, "the old man did tell me of a way to heal you somewhat. It will take away your pain even for a while. At this point, I'll take what I get."

Me too.

"The trick is, there is some sort of reverse biology to this thing because the thing that is supposed to heal you is wolfsbane."

My eyes almost shot out of their sockets as he said this. Luckily, my back was turned to him, so he didn't see that I was awake. But did he just say wolfsbane? As in the single most poisonous herb to our species?

He had to be joking, right?

I was now convinced that the oracle really wanted me dead. Perhaps he predicted that I would cause a war with dragons and werewolves and decided it would be best to get rid of me now.

But weirdly, I wasn't that freaked because I knew Maxim would never allow it.

"I don't like the idea. Trust me, I don't. It's risky. But oracles can't lie, and I'm willing to do anything to see you back on your feet until we find something permanent."

I closed my eyes again as I heard him stand, and he moved around the bed and placed a soft kiss on my forehead. I still wanted to shove him away, scream at him and curse him for what he did to me. It all still hurts. But I let him have the moment.

I sighed silently as he moved away from my bed. I assumed he was leaving, probably to tell Maxim what he found. I could already hear the shouting from the argument they'll have. There's no way Maxim will allow him to get wolfsbane anywhere near me.

"Oh, and Melissa? I really am sorry, and I promise that once we get past this, I will leave you alone to be happy with Maxim. I really, really am sorry." Lukas's words were always sincere, but this? I could hear the emotion dripping from each syllable as he spoke.

I held back a sob as my tears came spilling again because even after hearing his heartfelt apology, even after feeling awful that he was on the receiving end of everyone's cold shoulder and even after knowing that he was hurting so much, I still wanted to scream at him and squeeze his neck. I mean, that's natural, right? He forcefully marked me, after all. I wasn't a bad person for feeling angry, hurt and violated.

I guess in time, everything will change.

He started walking again from what I could hear. I tried to keep a rein on my emotions. He stayed longer than he usually does today. Hence, the last thing I wanted was for him to hear me crying and turn around, only for Maxim to come back and be outraged.

I was not ready for the fight of the century. Especially not while I was sick.

But it seemed as if my mind called it as I thought it would because just then, the door squeaked open again, and the room was encamped with my mate's wonderful scent yet again while Lukas was still here.

Oh crap.