

## Chapter 156

It was miserable outside. High winds and heavy rain. Jake still insisted on driving me to and from the mall. I didn't argue or make a fuss. If he wanted to drive me then so be it.

"Ready to go?". He asked.

"He's already there". I slipped my phone into my purse. "He's just messaged to see if I was still coming".

"Are you sure you don't want me to come?".

I closed the door and put on my seatbelt. "I'll be fine, and I told you I have to do this on my own". He wouldn't leave. I knew deep down he would either float around the mall or he'd sit in the carpark.

We didn't speak the rest of the journey, but it was a comfortable silence. Every so often he would change the station on the stereo. He was anxious I could feel it. He didn't want me doing this on my own, but he had nothing to be anxious about.

It was my dad. What's the worst that could happen?

He pulled into the carpark and cut the engine.

"You'll call me when you're done?". He asked.

Do I take him with me?

I was having second thoughts. Who knew what was going to be said. What if I needed him? Why was I such an overthinker? Always thinking the worst and making things up in my head before they've even happened.

It was stressful. My mind constant. The anxiety crippling me. Why did I always have to take life so seriously?

"Yes". I unclipped my seatbelt before leaning over and placing a kiss on his cheek. "You don't have to worry about me".

"Yes". I unclipped my seatbelt before leaning over and placing a kiss on his cheek. "You don't have to worry about me".

"I'll always worry about you". He turned his head his lips finding mine. "You call me if you need me, and I'll be straight there".

..

He wasn't alone.

My nerves crept in, my stomach dropping. I could hear how fast my heart was beating and yet I still approached the booth he was sitting in.

He was with an older gentleman; I'm assuming it was my grandfather, but I couldn't be sure. Both stood as soon as they saw me. Only sitting when I took my seat.

Weird.

"She looks just like her mom". The older gentleman smiled. "I'm your grandpa sweetheart but you can call me Arthur".

I didn't know what to say so I said nothing.

"Would you like something to drink Leah?". My dad asked.

Wait, do I call him dad, or do I call him Jack? I wasn't sure if I was comfortable enough to call him dad. We were after all meeting for the first time. Okay second time but it was still early in our relationship.

"I'll have a water please". I wanted coffee, the smell alone was getting to me. One cup wouldn't hurt right? "In fact, could I have coffee please with loads of milk".

"Sure". He smiled whilst getting to his feet.

Which left me alone with Arthur. It wasn't awkward but I wasn't exactly comfortable. I didn't know these men and they were my

family. How bad is that?

"We're your family Leah".

"I know". I chewed the inside of my cheek.

"You don't have to be afraid of us sweetheart. We have waited a long time to meet you".

That didn't sit right with me. Waited a long time to meet me? Couldn't they have looked for me? I mean if they are royal werewolves then surely, they have some power?

It wasn't my fault it took this long. I didn't ask to be kept from them. My mom died and my dad couldn't look after me. What did he expect?

And I wasn't afraid of them I was curious and sceptical. I wanted to know why it had taken so long for this to happen.

"I'm not afraid".

"Why would you be afraid?". My dad placed my drink down next to me. "You don't have to be afraid. Dad what did you say?". He asked.

"I told her that we were family and that she doesn't have to be afraid of us. I didn't mean anything by it".

I think this was too much too soon. I had geared myself up to meet and talk with my dad and only my dad. Once I got to meet him on more than a few occasions I would maybe be ready to meet the rest of my family.

I think.

"I think I should go".

"Please don't". My dad begged. "I have waited so long for this. Please don't leave".

"I don't know what to say to you. I had all these questions that I wanted answers too and now". I paused. "I think I'm a little overwhelmed". There was no point in trying to hide it and I'm sure he would be able to feel that I was a little on edge.

"And that's understandable but please stay".

I pulled my bottom lip between my teeth and nodded. This is what I wanted. I had to remind myself of that.

"I'm going to head home and leave you to it. I didn't mean to overwhelm you sweetheart. I will see you again when you are ready". Arthur spoke.

I gave him a small smile. It's not that I didn't want to meet with them I did but I had never met or seen them before. We were strangers. It was sad to say but it was true.

I wasn't sure if I should start the conversation or leave it to him. I felt weird. This whole thing felt strange.

"I'm sorry for making you feel uncomfortable. I didn't plan to bring your grandpa, but he insisted".

"I feel bad that he left. I want to meet my family but-...".

"In good time". He cut me off. "I'm not going to rush you. This is a massive thing, meeting with me is a massive thing but it's a first step and it's a step in the right direction. I'm not going to push you or make you do anything you're not comfortable with".

"What was she like?". I asked.

"A breath of fresh air". He smiled. "She was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen and from the moment I lay eyes on her I knew I loved her".

I felt the lump appear in the back of my throat and yet I couldn't hide my smile. I loved hearing about my mom. I knew she was

special.

"How did you meet? Were you friends beforehand? Did you go to the same school?"

"Hey". He whispered placing his hand over mine.

Instantly I pulled it back.

"Sorry". I made a face.

"We met at a party". He grinned.

"Did you know instantly that she was your mate?"

He nodded. "But your mom was dating someone else".

"She was?"

Wow. My gran never shared that part with me.

"I paced myself and waited it out. I knew it would happen eventually and I didn't want to scare her off".

"But she felt the connection?". I asked.

He smiled and nodded. "But as I said I didn't want to scare her off, so I waited until she came to me, and she did".

"It was that easy?". I frowned.

Surely, she had questions? I mean I freaked out once I found out werewolves were real. My world turned upside down.

"I never said it was easy, but we loved each other very much".

"Do you miss her?"

"Every minute of every day". He smiled. "What I would give to see her one more time".

"Why did you let my gran take me?"

"When your mom died, I died with her. I was no good for you

back then. I couldn't control myself, my wolf. I couldn't come to terms with living without her. I did what I thought was best".

"Best for who because I grew up without a mom or a dad".

"I had to keep you safe, I couldn't look after you, I wasn't fit. Getting you out of town and away from me was what I had to do".

I chewed the inside of my cheek. "Eighteen years of my life and never once did you try and contact me. I wasn't allowed to talk about you, I wasn't even allowed to say your name. She shot me down every time. I was curious but then I grew up and realised I didn't need you".

"Don't think for one second that I didn't know where you were".

"What?".

"I promised I would never contact you until your gran gave me the go ahead. She wanted to make sure you were ready. That was our agreement".

Agreement?

I wasn't shocked by this if anything I expected it. From all the secrets and lies this was nothing new. She had her reasons for doing so but it wasn't at the best interest of me.

"So, I'm ready now?". I asked. "Are you here because my gran gave you permission?".

"Leah".

"You had eighteen years to come looking for me but instead chose to stay away. How did she know when I was going to be ready? Shouldn't it have been my decision?".

"It is completely your decision and if you want to walk out of

here now and never see me again then I will respect that”.

I didn't want that. I wanted him in my life. I wanted what I missed out on for all those years, but I couldn't just sweep everything under the carpet. Relationships were built on trust and right now there was none.

“It's going to take time”. I spoke.

“As much time as you need”. He added.

“I want you in my life, but I have to get used to the idea of you being here first. You're my dad but right now we're nothing but strangers. In time I hope we can change that”.

“Your terms. This goes however you want it to go. I just want to get to know my daughter”.

I wanted to get to know his also, but we couldn't disregard the eighteen years that he missed. But the one thing we did have was time. There was plenty of time for us to get to know one another.

“A coffee date every Sunday”. I suggested.

It was small but it was a start.

“Every Sunday”. He smiled.