

## Chapter 19 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

When the waiter left, I was super relieved. He was always staring and had inched closer while we were ordering, ending up right next to me again. I looked at Victor. He was glaring after the waiter.

“Is everything okay?” I asked.

“I don’t like how close he was to you or how open he was about his nature. We should leave.” He answered.

“But, we just ordered. That would be rude, Victor. The restaurant would have wasted all the money for the food.” I replied.

“It won’t cost them much. They comp more than that most nights.” Rosy said.

“Please. Don’t make me go because some boy was acting strange. I really want to stay here. Maybe it’s because of my blood, too.” I offered.

They looked at each other. Something passed between them, but I didn’t understand their expressions. Victor sighed. He seemed disappointed. It nearly made me want to leave like he’d suggested. I never wanted to disappoint him.

“Werewolves are humans who turn into wolves. They’re stronger, have better reflexes and senses, and they do a lot of strange things because of their animal side. They can be truly... unrestrained creatures.” Marius explained. “I think he may believe you’re his mate, Echo.”

“His what?” I asked.

“Wolves born into a pack believe their goddess predetermines their romantic conclusion. The person they’ll marry. It’s an odd thing to see when two wolves find each other and are mates.” Marius responded.

“He thinks I’m supposed to marry him? Wow.” I rolled my eyes. “I’m still not leaving. He can believe what he wants. I’m Victor’s servant before anything else. If he wants me, he has to do more than tell me some deity commanded it. That deity didn’t do anything to help me when I was suffering. I won’t do anything for her.”

Victor was looking past Rosalynn with a smirk. I followed his gaze. Our waiter was only a few feet away with a tray of drinks. There was a look of pain in his eyes, but he moved forward and set drinks down. I felt a little bad. I hadn't intended him to hear that.

"If you'd like, you can purchase a bottle of wine and bring a vial of blood in. We mix drinks for many of our vampire customers." He said quietly.

"We'll remember that. Thank you." Victor smiled and dismissed him.

Grayson stared at me for a while before leaving the table. I felt a blush creep up. That was a little embarrassing, but at least he'd understand. He wasn't meant for me. No one was.

"That was pretty cold, Echo." Rosalynn snickered.

"It was the truth. I spent ten years being used, told where to go, what to do, and how to do it. This is the first time I've been free. I'm not giving it up so I can be some werewolf's wife. We should stop talking about this." I said and pulled out my phone to set up my language app.

It changed the whole mood of the meal. It was tense and I didn't really want to be there anymore. I wished I hadn't fought against leaving. Why couldn't anything just be the way I imagined it would? I did my best to lighten the mood when I could.

Grayson was distant, but polite. I really didn't want anything to do with anyone else. I was Victor's servant. I didn't want to be anything else.

He saved me. I wasn't going to discount that just because some 'goddess' decided I needed a puppy. I was glad he didn't push it. I wouldn't be nice if he had. I preferred being nice when I could.

At the end of the meal, we opted not to have dessert. I was more than happy to leave without it. Victor wasn't going to leave a tip until I gave him big pleading eyes.

Harmony once told me that most servers lived off their tips and weren't paid a lot hourly. Just because the waiter thought a goddess wanted him to love me, wasn't a good excuse for not giving him the money he deserved. He was on top of everything through the meal.

As I walked out the door behind everyone, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned to see Grayson, really freaking close again. I jumped away.

"You left your phone." He said shyly, handing me my phone.

"Umm. Thanks, I guess. Sorry, if I hurt your feelings earlier. You should ask your goddess for a different mate, if that's what's going on here. I'm not good for you. You deserve someone better." I told him.

“You don’t even know me. I wasn’t going to say anything because you didn’t know me and I wanted to give you time. I still do. Go on a date with me. Please. Just, give me time to let you know me.” He pled.

“Grayson-”

“Gray.” He corrected.

“Gray. What exactly do you think I am? What do you think I’m doing with these vampires?” I asked.

“I heard you say you’re Victor’s servant. Does that mean you’re a live-in donor kinda thing? They don’t hurt you, right? Because I can take you to my pack house. My brother is the Alpha. We can protect you.” Gray offered.

“I’m a dhampyr. I’m the servant of Victor, the master of this territory. I can’t be the mate of a werewolf. I really am sorry. We just aren’t a match. I have no idea what your goddess was thinking when she tied you to me. Thank you for the offer, but I will have to decline. Go find some wolf girl to mate with. I’m not an option.” I explained.

“Are you rejecting me?” He whimpered.

The look in his eyes was a little heartbreaking. I wished there was something I could do to help with the pain he seemed to be having, but I had no clue what would be appropriate. I just knew, I didn’t want to touch him.

“Echo! We’re going, now.” Victor shouted.

“I’m sorry, Gray.” I said before I ran to the car and jumped in the back seat.

Victor didn’t even give me time to get my seatbelt on before he peeled out of the parking lot and sped home. That was super awkward. Victor looked angry. I didn’t know why. I turned him down pretty thoroughly. No one talked the whole way home.

When we arrived at home, Victor pulled me into his office and locked the door. I didn’t understand what was going on. He started pacing and it made me nervous.

“Victor? Did I do something wrong?” I asked.

He turned and got close to me. “Did you feel anything when he touched you?”

“Annoyed. A little freaked out that he was so close.” I told him.

Victor sighed and pulled me into a hug. I wrapped my arms around him. He needed reassurance. He must have been worried that I would go off with the wolf.

“I won’t stop you if you fall in love and want to leave my service. I just didn’t want you to go off with that mutt. He doesn’t deserve you.” Victor growled.

“I’m not leaving, Victor. You’re my master. I’m going to stay with you forever. And, when I’m ready, you can turn me, then we can be vampire friends instead of master and servant. Until the sun explodes or we get bored and die. I promise.”

“Don’t promise that. Things change as people get older. As years go on. You might wake up one day and not want to take care of me anymore. I might become a burden. My last servant couldn’t deal with seeing people he cared for dying around him.” Victor murmured.

“Once my sister and brother are gone, I’ll only care for you. As long as you wake up every evening, I’ll have a reason to go on. I take care of you as much as you take care of me, Victor. Don’t ever forget that. I’ll always be here. No goddess is going to change how I feel.” I promised.

“Do you love me, Echo?” He asked.

“Of course I do, Victor. You’re my friend.” I said and hugged him tighter.

“I love you, too. I’ll protect you forever and give you anything you desire.” He whispered, kissing the top of my head.

“I need to get some sleep. I have to be up early to go enroll in school.” I told him.

“I want you to remember, you carry my name and, during the day, that makes you as much the master as I am. You already showed how smart and strong you are today. How good you are at being diplomatic, and how quickly you think. You are the mistress of this territory. Don’t let any of those children bully you.” Victor instructed.

“Victor, they couldn’t possibly say or do anything that I haven’t experienced in the past. They don’t have anything worse to offer. Plus, I get to come home every afternoon to take care of you and have fun. Good night, don’t worry.” I smiled and pulled away.

“Sleep well, Echo. I expect a full report when I get up tomorrow.”

“Yes, master.” I bowed and headed to my room.

I picked out my clothing for the next day and took a shower before climbing into my bed. Maybe tomorrow will be better. I needed to forget about the wolf boy and focus entirely on my future as Victor’s servant. I represented him when the sun was up and I needed to figure out exactly what that meant for me.