

Chapter 8

Violet

I was, admittedly, extremely anxious. I couldn't quite recall a moment in my life when I was this nervous. Wondering why? My birthday is tomorrow! Tomorrow! Which meant I will find my mate. Maybe. Hopefully? Possibly.

"What if he's a monster?" I mumbled to myself as I walked through the woods.

I'd been taking these walks more often recently, having become restless the last week or so. I had barely eaten anything in the last three days, my appetite leveling off at zero. I knew this was normal; Some people ate like they were eating for ten, and others were like me. Mom even ordered my favorite pizza last night, but I couldn't touch it. So, I went for a walk instead. Now here I was again, wandering aimlessly around the forest, talking to myself.

"I hope he's at least attentive." I sighed. "It would suck donkey balls if I had a mate who never listened to me."

That only made me think about my newly mated friends. Dylan and Brianne had been inseparable, going everywhere together, and pining vocally for each other when they couldn't be together, like in class. Me? I was the one who had to listen to it. As my birthday grew closer, I was getting more short-tempered. Wednesday, I'd snapped at Brianne in English, immediately feeling awful. She assured me it was okay; she understood. But still.

Garrett wasn't much better than I was at the moment. The only difference is that he did have an appetite. Yet, he was as hot tempered as I was lately,

which was unusual to see. I looked up at the sky, amazed that it was already darkening. I hadn't realized I'd been out here that long; I'd left around two. Then I realized where I was.

The clearing where Mom had her first shift.

A smile spread across my face as I looked around. Mom had brought me here years ago, and then a few times since, reliving the memory of her first shift, and how she thought she could avoid Dad because he'd upset her. And then how he'd found her, totally pissed off that she'd run away.

A laugh escaped me as I recalled the next part; Dad's face when he saw Mom's wolf for the first time, and her telling him off afterwards. Boy, I wish I'd been alive then to see that.

"What's funny?"

I started at the voice behind me. Whirling around, I immediately took a fighting stance, my eyes narrowing as they landed on Jasper. He threw his hands up in surrender, taking a step back.

"Easy tiger. I'm not here to fight you."

Slowly, I straightened up. "What are you doing out here?" I asked him sharply.

"I was out for a walk, and I saw you. Thought I'd come say hi." He shrugged.

"You seem to be running into me a lot lately." I crossed my arms. "What's up with that?"

"Maybe I'm just lucky." He shot me a grin, and my stomach did a little flip. I pushed the feeling aside.

"Yeah, I don't think that's it."

"You missed my birthday."

I rolled my eyes. He'd asked me at least twenty times to go to his stupid birthday party. My answer was no every time. Instead, I'd stayed in and watched old horror movies and ate more junk food than I cared to admit. Still a better way to spend the night though.

"Happy birthday." I told him nonchalantly.

He took a few steps, placing himself in front of me. "Don't I get a birthday kiss?"

"Nope."

"Ouch."

I rolled my eyes again, turning away from him.

"Are you excited for tomorrow?" He asked.

"What's tomorrow?" I played dumb. He gave me a look.

"Your birthday."

"Oh yeah. How'd I forget that?"

He chuckled lowly beside me. "Think you'll find your mate?"

"I don't know." I replied honestly.

Jasper looked up into the sky. I took the chance to peek at him; The sky was clear, casting the last rays of light through the woods. Long shadows fell over the ground, ours and the trees and bushes. An orange hue played around him from the setting sun, lighting up his features. His hair shone, taking on an auburn color, and his eyes reflected the light of the sky. In this light, he seemed even more muscular, his white t-shirt clinging to him. My mouth went completely dry as my eyes landed on his jeans, and the outline I saw there. Well, damn.

"It's rude to stare at people."

My eyes met his as I felt blood rush to my face. He smirked at me cockily.

"I wasn't staring at you." I lied.

"Sure."

I turned my face away, hoping my hair covered my blazing cheeks. Jasper sank to the ground, patting the spot next to him.

"Seriously?" I asked. "What makes you think I want to hang out with you?"

"I wouldn't call this 'hanging out'." He looked around. "I was out for a walk, you were out for a walk, and we both needed a break."

I almost smiled at his stupidity. Almost.

"Fine." I slumped to the ground next to him, keeping some distance between us. He chuckled lowly.

We sat in silence for a while. I stared at a tree with an odd shape in its trunk, listening to the sounds of the forest around me. After a while, Jasper spoke.

"I'm scared." He said randomly. I turned my head to look at him, but he was looking up at the sky still. It was slowly beginning to fill with stars, some reflecting in his eyes.

"Why?" I asked.

"I'm scared of my first shift." He explained.

I thought about that for a minute. "But males have an easier time than females."

"I guess." He lifted one shoulder in a half shrug.

"If sure you'll be fine." I paused. "Honestly, I'm freaked out too." My voice wavered at the end, giving away just how freaked out I actually was.

"You?" He gave me a look of mock bewilderment. "But you're not scared of anything."

"Oh, shut up." I threw a twig at him. "Everyone is scared of something you know."

"Yeah. That's true."

"You didn't meet your mate yet?" I asked.

"I'm out here with you, aren't I?"

I shot him a wide-eyed look. He laughed.

"What I mean is, I'm not holed up in my room with a mate right now."

"Oh." I looked away, another blush on my face. "Yeah."

"What about you?"

"Obviously not. Or I wouldn't be out here either."

"Fair enough." He leaned back on his hands. "Are you excited to meet him?"

I thought through my answer. "Maybe."

"Maybe?" His tone was confused.

"Well, I guess it depends on who it is." I said. "I know that some people don't get the best mates. And some people are mated with monsters." I sighed. "I just hope whoever he is, he's good to me."

"I'm sure he will be. How could he not be, honestly?"

I met his eyes, and my breath hitched at the look in them. I'd never seen Jasper look at anyone so tenderly, so gently. Somehow, it made me feel better. Made me feel reassured.

"Thanks." I said quietly.

We lapsed back into silence, but it was less uncomfortable now. Actually, it was surprising me more and more how comfortable I felt around Jasper. Obviously, I wasn't his biggest fan, and given my mood recently, it was

downright amazing I hadn't slugged him upon seeing him. What was even more odd, was a part of me wanted to keep talking to him.

"So, uh..." I cleared my throat, much to his amusement. "Are your parents coming tomorrow?"

His smile faltered, and I regretted asking.

"Yeah." He said monotonously.

"You don't seem very happy about it." I pressed.

He let out a breath. "You don't know much about me, do you?"

His question took me by surprise. "Not really." I admitted.

He tugged his knees into his chest, resting his chin on them. "Did you know I wasn't born into Blood Moon?"

My eyes widened. "No."

"My Mom was a rogue."

A rogue? "Did she bring you here?" I asked curiously.

He shook his head. "I wandered into Blood Moon territory when I was six. We were attacked one night and... she died protecting me."

"Oh." My eyes shifted to the ground. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be."

I lifted my gaze to his again.

"I loved my mom. And she loved me. I know she would do the same thing again, if she had another chance. There was nothing I could do, and I've accepted that."

I looked into his eyes, saw the pain there. Instinctively, I reached out and placed my hand on his shoulder, leaning over.

"I think that's a good way to look at it." I said.

"Yeah. I do wish she could be here tomorrow night, but my adoptive family will be, so I take that as a win."

"How did you... I don't mean to pry but..." I flopped around in my head, trying to find a way to ask my question. Jasper laughed, patting my hand that was still on his shoulder.

"Your Mom took me in actually." He smiled. "The Beta found me wandering around the woods and brought me to the packhouse. The same night, your mom found an amazing family who were willing to take me in."

"The Coles."

"Yup."

"And your dad?" I asked. "Was he a rogue too?"

His face instantly hardened. The change was so fierce, my hand fell away from his shoulder. The air grew tense, and I knew I shouldn't have asked that particular question.

"My Dad-," He spit the word, "-Was never around. Mom never mentioned him either. I don't even know if he knows I exist. He wasn't there to help protect us, to protect her. I'm better off without him, and I don't need to know who he is."

I stared at him, too stunned to reply. A sharp pang of sympathy, sympathy I knew he didn't want, hit me. I couldn't imagine my life without my dad.

"I'm sorry..." I whispered.

Jasper took a deep breath. "No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have snapped like that. I just don't like to talk about him."

"Understandable. I won't bring it up again."

"Thanks."

The silence was, once again, awkward.