

## Chapter 6

My best friend had just been murdered. Caleb, the man that I loved, was dead.

a7

And the man that had killed him was walking towards my house. To my home, with my father beside him.

a5

My head spun with sickness. My feet were moving, carrying me towards my home but I wasn't exactly sure how and I wasn't sure if they should've been.

But I couldn't think about anything. I only had one image in my mind and that was Caleb's dead body in wolf form, lying in a pool of his own blood.

a7

It wasn't possible. This whole fucked up situation wasn't happening. This was all some deranged dream and I would wake up in a few minutes, scared, but relieved. That was it. I couldn't let myself think that he was gone.

"Are you sure?" my father whispered, his quivering words targeted at the man walking beside him.

"Sure that your daughter is my mate?" the man asked. The man that had killed Caleb. My father must've nodded because he replied, "Yes, I'm sure."

That was all that was said. That was all that the two men discussed, like they were talking about the price of gasoline or maybe a typo in a newspaper. The words were hard and accusing, but there was no fight, no argument. There was displeasure, but it could not conquer solid fact. Neither of them added anything as we all climbed up the wide stairs to my home.

a8

My father moved first, pulling open the door like he always did for my mother. My glazed over eyes assessed the gesture and assumed it was for me. I stepped into my house. And as I moved past my father, I noticed how wide and wary his eyes were. And they were watching me, like he was preparing for an outburst.

"What happened?" my mother gasped when she saw me.

Her reaction caused me to look at myself, wondering what was wrong with me. Then I saw the dirt caked under my finger nails from when I had clawed at the dirt, before I had convinced myself this wasn't real. My feet were covered in dirt and grass clipping since I had neglected to put my flats back on. My cute dress, the one I had been so excited to wear to the interview, was dusty and had several grass stains. And down the centre of my chest was a line of half dried vomit.

a24

"Charlotte is going to shower. While she is in the shower could you start packing her clothes?" my father asked. His voice was robotic.

a9

"Who are you?" my mother demanded, turning to the dark stranger.

"Sorry to intrude. My name is Hades," he greeted, acting like a perfect gentleman.

a8

His tone was kind and light. He sounded wonderful. His voice was low and rough, but there was no drawl or accent to it. Despite the bargain brand jeans he wore and his lack of shirt he was refined and even, like he had come from the upper class.

a0

It didn't matter. My mother paled and the dish cloth she was holding dropped to the tile. Her jaw unhinged, she blatantly gaped at this man.

"Please, go gather up Charlotte's things," my father pressed. "She needs to have a shower, then she will be leaving."

a18

"Oh, yes," my mother managed, but her voice quaked. For a second it looked like she was going to curtsy, but then thought better of it. "Come Charlotte."

a25

I followed my mother until I reached the bathroom. My father had said that I needed to shower so I supposed that was all I needed to do. I didn't glance at myself in the mirror when I entered. I pulled the dress o , vaguely aware that there was a zipper on the back but pulling up I heard a seam give. Then the dress came o easily. I got in the shower, feeling almost like I was getting ready for another day. But now the make up I had put on for the interview ran down my face and the dirt that my skin had collected swirled down the drain. I rubbed shampoo into my thick brown hair until it was filled with suds. Once that was rinsed out I used the strawberry conditioner. I hated it, but my sister loved it.

a7

I stepped out of the shower when I was clean and caught the steamy outline of my body in the mirror. Then, there was a flash of reality through all the numbness. But this couldn't be happening. When I saw the lines of my brown hair and the plainness of my brown eyes I decided that all of this wasn't real. I was utterly average. Things like this didn't happen to people like me. There was nothing remarkable about me, surely this was all a massive, violent nightmare that would pass.

I Would wake up eventually and tell Caleb all about the nightmare that I had. We would laugh. He would hold me. Maybe we would even kiss again. I would let him, this time. I would never tell him to stop.

a8

But when I walked into my room I found my mother folding my clothes into a suitcase. Clearly, she didn't understand that this was just a weird dream.

a7

"I don't want to go," I said, hoping that some rationality would wake me up.

"You have to," my mother replied. Her statement had been instant, like she had been expecting me to say something like that.

"But I want to stay here with you and Tabitha and dad," I complained.

a7

"I know, but you can't," she denied. Now her hands weren't carefully folding the clothing like they had been when I first walked it. She was grabbed fistfuls of clothes and shoving them into the suitcase that hardly ever got used. Even the rapid movements couldn't hide the shaking.

a7

"Why not?"

"Because," she began, then lowered her voice, "we don't want to upset him. God only knows what a man like that will do when he's provoked. We can't risk upsetting him at all while he's here. The damage that he could do to the pack would be unimaginable. You have to think of the good of the pack. We can't be selfish at a time like this."

a0

"What about me?" I pressed. "Could he hurt me?"

a7

My mother paused. Her hands were gripping the top of the suitcase, about to close it, when she froze. Then, a er several blinks she slammed it shut with much more force than needed. A er the latches were snapped, she wiped a hand underneath her nose and stood with the suitcase clutched in the other.

"He's your mate. He would never hurt you," she stated, but the tears gleaming in her eyes gave away to the lies. "Now get dressed and come downstairs as soon as you're ready. We don't want to keep him waiting."

a1

~~~Question of the Day~~~

What is your favorite way to get exercise?

a292

I recently bought my first house and since the gyms are shut down I go for walks everyday. It's a beautiful place and the town was built around a large pond. You get to see people or wander into a bit of nature. Sometimes I put on a podcast if I need a little more stimulation!

a5