

Latent by Queasy

Chapter 3

After I'd finished dressing up, I took stock of myself in the full-length mirror.

The virginal white slipdress draped around me lovingly, molding my figure into something prim and elegant. My midnight black hair was let to cascade down my shoulders in dark waves, and my makeup was done flawlessly; my lips were a blood red, and the pearls dangling from my ears shone scarlet.

Coupled with my pale skin, I probably looked like some vampire male's daydream. Couldn't be farther from the truth...

I wasn't a daydream, a nightmare was more like it— I lived in one until I couldn't tell myself apart from the demons that haunted me.

"You look stunning," I told Eunice, coming out of my thoughts.

A curt thank you met my statement. I took it to mean she was still mad at me over our earlier disagreement.

"Come over let me do your hair," I offered.

She replied with a short, "I can handle it."

"I could do your makeup if you want."

"I don't."

A sigh left my lips. I tried to make my voice sound light. "Come on, Euni. You seriously can't be mad at me for giving my honest opinions."

The sound of her hairbrush hitting the table filled the cramped room. "Mad? I'm not mad at you for giving your 'honest opinions,'" she said.

"Then why are you giving me the cold shoulder? You are mad at me, admit it—"

"Alright, no!" she bursted out.

"What?" my tone was confused.

She stood. "I'm not mad at you for speaking your mind, I'm mad at you for being the way you are."

“The way I... am?”

“Yes.” Her green gaze locked in on mine. “Distrustful, cynical, jaded. Pessimistic. You’re never ready to see the good in people.”

I was getting riled. “By people I hope you don’t mean Vaughan Lupus.”

“And if I do?”

“Then, Euni, I’d congratulate you for being the most stupid-sounding person alive.”

Her eyes flashed yellow. “Stupid?! I’m stupid? Wh—”

“I mean—you don’t even know him!”

“Neither do you!”

“Yeah, but I’ve heard rumors. He’s cursed, Euni! A ruthless, coldblooded killer!”

My ringing statement hung in the tense air for moments, before she straightened and gave me a glare. “Rumors are just that—rumors.”

A hot sigh left my lips. Shutting my eyes for a brief moment, I opened them and sent a small smile that didn’t quite reach my eyes her way. In a measured tone, I said, “Can we, just, not do this? It’s my birthday today and I’d like to not spend it arguing with my best friend.”

Her demeanor cracked a bit, then after a while she gave a small nod

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The engine revved and sputtered at length before Eunice’s old Volkswagen pulled out of the driveway.

“So, where do we go to?” I asked, looking ahead at the road.

Squinting as she drove, she thought aloud, “I’d say... K-nine, but I should think, with all the preparations for the Festival of Lanterns coming up, every immortal club would be closed for the day.”

“Then, we go to a mortals club instead,” I suggested.

She pursed her lips hesitantly for a second. “Alright.”

Mingling with mortals was frowned upon, among other things we could be in danger of being captured by Hunters— human immortal-extremists.

They captured werewolves and vampires alike, locking them up in heavily sealed cages: and then they experimented on them in their labs for weaknesses. A shiver ran down my spine. The captives rarely got out alive, and the ones who did... wished they'd died.

I didn't have an idea what went down in those labs, but something told me it was worse than having just wolfsbane injected into your—

"...Earth to Hilda!"

A squeak left my lips. I turned wide eyes towards Eunice.

"You're doing that thing where you space out and look like you've just drank wolf—"

"I get it, I get it." Getting a grip of myself, I asked, "What? Were you saying something?"

"Yeah." She faced forward and swallowed. "Something about how there might be a teeny, tiny possibility that this might be a bad idea."

Using my middle finger, I tucked my hair behind my ear. I did this whenever I got nervous. "You mean, because of the Hunters?"

"Yeah."

"Well, we haven't heard any report of them since they were spotted at a bar in Newhalen last year. So, I'm pretty sure there's absolutely nothing to worry about."

"You think so?"

"Yes. Now go on," I waved her onwards, "go get your boyfriend to let us through the gates."

"Alright. And, Hil?"

"What?"

"In the boot," she said before going.

We'd stopped at a spot near the pack gates. It was obscured by closely-knit shrubs and tall trees. If you walked to the edge of it and bent a little to the right, you'd see the huge barriers. It was lined with large, burly werewolf warriors. Men carrying ammunition paced back and forth, some chatted and laughed loudly, slapping each other on the back, while some remained in stony silence, their eyes sharp and watchful.

The last time I'd been this close to the gates was six years ago, when I'd tried running away from the pack. I didn't get far though. I'd been brought back kicking and screaming to father, and his syringe filled with wolfsbane.

I swallowed. Opening the boot, I got in, leaving it open.

My dad, although not wanting to have anything to do with me, had his men watch my every move and report to him my whereabouts. Didn't want his little secret getting out of the bag... Or pack-house. I snorted, then sobered up. If he found out I went out of the pack's vicinity, again, and to attend a mortals club...

I steered my mind away from the thought of what he might do.

Approaching footsteps had me tensing. Seconds dragged by before Eunice's face came into view above me. I released a breath. "What took you so long?"

When a rosy blush coated her cheeks I pretended to throw up. "Euurrghh. I'd told you to get Jim to open the pack-gates, not your gates."

Her cheeks burned hotter and she positioned her middle finger in front of my face. A giggle left me.

Her face suddenly turned serious. "You sure you'll be able to cope in there?"

I turned sober as well, my pulse starting to beat at a dangerous rate. I gave a small, determined nod. "Yeah."

She nodded as well, then proceeded to close the boot slowly. I was soon blanketed in total darkness.

And the memories came crawling back...