

Latent by Queasy

Chapter 5

I knew my fate as well as I knew I was a freak. Dad was going to fry my ass.

Over the years, he'd reduced the amount of time he tortured me with wolfsbane. Only injecting me with it occasionally, and as a form of punishment.

Which he would give to me if Lizzy told on me. And I was sure she would. So it was only a matter of time before he sent me down to that dank cell.

"Hey," Eunice called softly, speeding down the road, not minding the snow. "Are you okay?"

Using my middle finger, I tucked my hair behind my ear. "Yeah, sure, why not."

She pursed her lips but remained silent.

I turned my face to the window, defeatedly resting my forehead on it. I stared at my reflection, my eyes were a burning teal. Yet another abnormality.

Sometimes werewolves expressed strong emotions through their eyes. When they felt anger, anxiety, or lust, their eyes shone a fervid yellow. Mine shone teal. I stared at my palms, what the hell was I?

Eunice's voice drew me out of my thoughts, pointing out, "The last time that happened you were thirteen."

I turned to face her. "What?" I asked, then realized what she meant. I went back to staring at my hands. "Oh..." The fact I could move things with my mind was yet another missing piece to the puzzle of my identity. "I don't... I guess it was because I was furious."

"Yeah, you were too when Max Dalton broke your arm."

Whenever a trance induced by my abilities overtook me, all sense of reason escaped me, all except one; to hurt. The permanent scar on both Max's arms could attest to that.

I wasn't just confused of what I was, I was scared of what I was.

After a while Eunice said quietly, "We are almost at the pack-house."

My stomach plummeted, but still I said, "Pullover let me get into the boot."

She reluctantly did just that and a few seconds ticked by before I got down. Eunice watched me with pensive eyes as I went over to the back of the car. "Look, Hil, there must be another way to get in... We could find some other way to—"

"And risk getting caught? Everywhere's heavily guarded, Euni. We can't take the risk." I opened the boot and climbed in. Staring her determinedly in the eyes, I said, "Close it."

That changed out of my party clothes and now laid staring at the worn ceiling of my room, my heartbeats banging against my ribcage. My ears intensely listened into the quiet for father's men. I tried to distract my thoughts by looking around the small room. My anxiety only intensified at the reminder of how this room came to be mine.

At fourteen, father made something similar to a public denouncement of me when he banished me to the right wing of the pack-house, where the Omegas stayed. H

My heart seized at the sudden banging at the door. I rushed to my feet and went over to open the door. Sure enough, one of father's men stood in front of me.

"Follow me." His tone was stoic and without emotion, which didn't help the state of my nerves.

In silence we walked through the house's dark hallways, entering into wide and empty corridors once in a while. A flight of stairs soon appeared before us; We climbed up it together. Our footsteps, although silent, echoed, bouncing off the walls ridden with large portraits of the pack's previous Alphas and Lunas.

My eyes caught the serene portrait of my mother and my trepidation grew; we were almost at father's office.

Soon the large elm doors of his office loomed before me.

The hallways on either side of me stretched into oblivion, devoid of a single soul. It brought to notice how chillingly alone I was.

The man beside me rose his hand and delivered three knocks on the door. The sound was startlingly loud amidst the stiff silence.

A curt 'come in' sounded from within, and without hesitation the man opened the door and ushered me

The office was depressingly the same. The beige walls, the brown rugs, the oil paintings of large ships and peaceful harbours, the huge, brown grandfather clock: all the same.

Father sat behind the monumental desk in the middle of the room, his head bent over an open book. His black hair now bore sprinkles of white in them.

He raised his head and I was subjected to his piercing grey stare, eyes so cold. I swallowed, tempted to rub at my forearms. I would never get used to his gaze, its frigidity and unfeelingness.

He motioned to the brown leather seat in front of him and for the first time in my life, I hesitated to obey his command. He never told me to sit.

Slowly my legs moved. And then I sat, before him. In this position he was unsettlingly close to me.

The only time he ever came close to me was to inject aconite into my system. I stilled the memories that instantly threatened to come to the fore. But I couldn't still the hate, the bitter tang tasting in my mouth. Before me was a man who'd tortured me till I longed for death, a man that'd made me into the jaded person I am today, a man who I'd longed to love me...

"Hilda," he said simply in his characteristically calm and detached tone.

I tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. "Yes, father?" He had forbidden me from ever calling him dad.

"Next tomorrow, as you know, is the Festival of Lanterns. I've decided that you'll be following me to Beastclaw for the event."

To say I was shocked was an understatement. Why? I wanted so badly to ask. I realized he wasn't done talking when he continued.

"We'll be leaving for Australia early in the morning, and are to be at the airport by six. Pack a bag that'll cover a three-day stay and report to me here by five."

Still dumbstruck, I stared at him blankly.

Irritation crept into his tone. "Have I made myself clear?"

"Yeah... Yes, I mean yes."

"Good." He turned back to his work, effectively dismissing me.

After a while I stood, and then left.

The man who'd brought me here escorted me back. I barely noticed him over my thoughts going haywire. A bunch of loud, random theories surrounded a single question. Why was father taking me to Beastclaw?

For the festival, you only took the people you cared for, like, your friend, partner, lover, child or sibling. Not someone whose existence you despise and shun.

Why was father taking me to Beastclaw?

He only ever took Anna or Shea.

So why me?

After the man deposited me at my room door, he turned and left. I waited until he'd vanished from the corridor before I tiptoed-ran to Eunice's room. We stayed up all night discussing theories and coming to no reasonable conclusion.

It was exactly five in the morning when I came to stand before father's office door.

The cold chill in the air bit into my skin. It scarcely registered to me, instead what did was the curt 'come in' that sounded from within the office.

I shouldered my bag and, after taking in a breath, opened the door.

Father stood staring out the wide window cut into the wide walls, his hands in his pockets, glasses perched on his nose.

Moments dragged by. I stood there awkwardly, waiting for him to turn and notice me. When he did, not that I expected otherwise, he didn't acknowledge me, instead he motioned at my bag and said, "I see you're prepared. We leave now." With that he hastily left the office.

His long strides eating up the length of the hallways in a matter of seconds, I tried to keep up with him.

As I rushed to catch up with his strides, I felt something akin to excitement flutter in my stomach. This would be the first time I was leaving Alaska! And I found I was not averse to the idea of a little exploration.

When we stepped outside, I pulled my jacket tighter around me. Werewolves stopped in their proceedings to bow to the Alpha. They noticed me standing beside him, and immediately deduced he was taking me with him to Beastclaw for the Festival. If they were surprised they did not show it.

Although I had no doubts tongues would wag tonight.

As father proceeded to go to the garage, I spotted Eunice amidst a sea of other sour-faced Omegas; strands of her carrot red hair sprung out of her bonnet. I rose a hand and subtly waved to her, she waved back just as subtly, a small, genuine smile on her lips.

A chill suddenly slithered up my spine and the hairs on my nape stood erect. I spun around searchingly, finding nothing.

Dread settled in my stomach. I only felt this way when something significant was about to happen. Something significantly bad.
