

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 17

Chapter Seventeen

The sound of flesh being torn apart filled my ears and I instinctively tried to curl away from the pain.

...Except it wasn't contact with my skin that made the noise.

I quickly opened my eyes and saw an exhausted Cai standing over me, the limp body of the dark grey wolf falling to the ground next to him. I could see the wolf's throat had been ripped, which was further supported by the new red glove Cai was sporting.

He looked like a war god standing in the darkening sky, covered in dust and blood all over his body. And yet his golden eyes shined out in contrast to the red that had marred his face. I realised then that he must have killed the two wolves that were on him in order to save me in time from the third. He truly was an unnatural force to be reckoned with. I just prayed that all the blood that was on him wasn't his.

He fell to his knees next to me, heaving for air, and tried to inspect my wound. I could tell he was at his limit just as I was, and yet he was still dedicated to trying to ensure I was okay.

"...I'm sorry," I whispered, my voice weak and croaky.

He didn't reply but I could see he was more focused on my injury than anything else.

He tore at his shirt and started turning it into strips of bandage.

... That's when I noticed the large claw marks that mangled his lower abdomen. They were ugly and bleeding.

"No... bandage yourself first," I croaked out.

But he just shook his head and pushed my hands out of the way; the ones that had been holding pressure to my wound. The bandages were uneven and awkwardly sized in some areas, but all things considered, he did manage to wrap it up tight enough that it would hold until we hopefully reached the hospital.

Initially, I thought the plan was for us to wait until the warriors arrived. They hadn't shown up during the battle but that surely then meant that they would be arriving soon, right? Had Mrs Newman managed to convince them I was telling the truth?

A horrible sinking feeling hit my stomach as I realised that, if they didn't believe her, then we were likely stuck out here until Myra managed to alert others for help. Would we be

oth live that long without medical attention? I was already feeling myself weakening, struggling to stay awake, but I fought against it.

Then, to my utter horror, Cai scooped me up into his arms and stood up on his shaky legs.

“What are you doing?!” | asked alarmed, as loudly as I could manage.

“I’m not... Jetting you... die here...,” he gasped out as he began to walk.

Was this because of what he’d said during the battle? Because of Aleric? If so, he was risking his life for nothing. Aleric wouldn’t start a war over someone he hated.

However, it did raise questions about the Goddess’ words. She said I needed to stop my death. I had imagined she was referring to when I became Luna, after going to trial for false accusations. If I died again so soon, would it be the same outcome? Would I be putting the lives of all werewolves at risk just like she had said?

Cai was walking down the dirt path as best he could but, every few steps or so, I could feel him almost fall. He was pushing himself further than I’d thought possible for any person. I wanted to stand up, to free him of my burden, but I was as limp as the dead grey wolf now. I was completely at his mercy and I knew there was nothing I could do.

“Over there!” suddenly a voice shouted ahead of us.

I turned my head and, through blurry eyes, I could just make out a *few figures running towards us*.

...Warriors,” Cai affirmed, and relief overcame me.

We were safe. We were going to be okay.

As I started to relax, my vision was becoming foggier and foggier. I just needed to sleep for a bit and then I’d be okay.

“Aria... stay awake,” Cai managed to huff out.

His legs then gave out and the two of us fell to the ground. *Somehow*, he had managed to keep *me* securely in his arms during the fall so I wouldn’t hit the ground.

It was okay though, he didn’t need *to worry*. *I was just going to take a quick nap.*

...Just a few minutes tops.

“Aria...”

And then the world went black

Everything was cold and dark around me... and *weirdly* familiar,

Had I been here before?

And with a startling realisation, I realised I was in the Abyss.

I was... dead?

Four days was all it had taken to get myself killed again. *Would I be made to go back again like last time?*

I had so many questions going through my *mind*. I knew *from previous experience* that there was no escaping the Abyss, not until it was *ready to release me*. I would need to wait in the empty, the darkness, the nothing... alone.

Suddenly, a light suddenly then me, and I *somehow found myself* at the trial grounds, standing up at the council who would decide my fate.

It was just like *before* but there were small changes. *Aleric was facing the elders, his back to me as he addressed them, and Thea had wrapped herself around him like the snake she was, smiling at me with her true face. The face of a demon.*

The sky was dark

and contained *two* full moons; *one red*, one bright silver. It offset the scene before me as the light had cast itself down, creating a double shadow to everyone present. I stared down at my *own shadows* before me and found they were *irregular* and oddly different. The smaller one was lighter in silver tones and rounder, however, the larger one was red and much taller,

Suddenly Aleric spoke, bringing my attention back to him.

"You have been found guilty of the charges against you. The murder of the Alpha heir, in addition to the harm caused to another pack member, carry the harshest sentence," Aleric started.

He turned around and Thea finally stepped back, her smile never faltering as she fed on the anticipation of waiting to watch me die. Her hunger was insatiable, looking as though she was holding herself back from killing me herself.

"Therefore, with the power held within me, I, Aleric Dumont, Alpha of the Winter Mist Pack, sentence you, Ariadne Chrysalis, former Luna of the Winter Mist Pack, to death."

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I looked up to meet his eyes and, to my surprise, it wasn't Aleric I was looking at. It was Cai. He carried the broadsword in his hand as if it was entirely natural for him, as if he'd held it many times before. I looked into his golden eyes and saw the same cold look I was so familiar with from Aleric. A look of – hatred.

“Cai... what are you doing?” I managed to say, finally finding my voice.

He ignored me completely as the scene continued like a script of the original memory. It was like I was unable to make a difference, everything was predetermined.

“Your sentence is to be carried out immediately.”

“Cai... please stop. This isn't you. You're not Aleric.”

He continued to walk towards me with the sword in hand, unstoping and uncaring about anything I had to say. I wanted to scream at him that this was wrong, that this wasn't how it was supposed to pan out, but suddenly my voice was gone again. Every time I tried to speak it was like I was being suffocated, and every time I tried to get up to run my body would refuse to listen.

There was no waiting for me to place my head on the block. No, he immediately stepped forward and swung his arm back.

I looked behind him for one final moment and saw Thea to his left staring at me with such greed, almost salivating at the final blow about to be struck. But she wasn't the only one there.

To my utter shock and horror, to his right, I also saw the Goddess herself watching on. She was a silent bystander, unmoving and expressionless as she stood and witnessed what was about to occur without a single ounce of remorse showing. She had told me I wouldn't be alone this time, and yet she showed no regret at seeing me killed.

I met Cai's eyes as he brought the sword down. I wanted to watch this time, not die in the darkness as I had the last time.

The impact was quick, finishing the job swiftly in one movement.

And finally, I felt at peace.