

## Chapter 41

Benjamin and I take our time returning to the cabin, neither of us saying much, just enjoying being around each other. He's given me quite a bit to think about, and his offer really helped to take off some of the pressure that I've been feeling. There is so, so much riding on his mark being what reverses the spell that it really makes it feel far less special than it should be. Will my wolf feel that? Will it affect the outcome?

We reach the cabin and I can't help but look at the old cedar tree that used to be home to a tire swing. I have no memories of it, and the only way I know it was there was that it's in the background of an old photo, but I can feel the happiness that once came from there. I close my eyes and take a deep breath and I swear that I can feel the sound of kids laughter. I know that doesn't make any sense, but it's the only way I know how to describe it.

"You loved the tire swing that was there," Benjamin says and I look up to see his smile. "You all four did. You all spent so much time swinging on it, and fighting over it," he finishes with a chuckle.

"I can feel the happiness from the area," I tell him and he smiles down at me.

"Your mate is probably right," he says to me with a nod. "You can probably feel the vibrations from the earth, from the tree. There was once so much happiness there". He puts his arm around my shoulders and gently squeezes. "I know it's weird for you, and you don't remember anything, but I'm so glad you're here, Molly."

"I'm glad, too," I say with a smile, leaning my head into him. "I hope that someday I'll remember."

"You will," he tells me. "I'm sure of it."

He releases me and we walk inside. I take my jacket off and Benjamin takes it from me, hanging it up. My dad looks up from his same place in the same chair. I'm not sure he moved the whole time we were gone.

"Hey, Kiddo," dad says to me with a smile. "Find any cool trees?"

"Actually, yes!" I tell him, excitedly. "There's sugar maple trees and Benjamin said some of the local rogues make syrup!" I tell him as I sit on the couch across from him.

"Your mate may have something to say about your plans to move out here and become a maple syrup farmer," he tells me with a chuckle.

I smile at him. "He'd probably move here willingly. Just abdicate the throne and make syrup. It sounds wonderful." I tell him with a giggle.

"I think the whole kingdom may have something to say about that," Benjamin says with a laugh, sitting down on the couch next to me.

"I think the whole kingdom is going to have plenty to talk about, anyway," I say with a shrug.

My dad moves to pick up the photo album, looking through all the old photos of me that are there. "Your hair was so curly," he says, smiling at me. "And you were so chubby."

"I know. It's weird." I tell him, being completely honest. I know Lily didn't change my looks much, but it's weird to think I'll look different.

"Molly," Lily says, poking her head around the corner from the kitchen. "I'm heating some water for you now. Would you like some help washing your hair?"

I feel awkward, and I'm not sure how to explain it to her. "I think I'll be OK, but I'll let you know if I have any problems." I say to her with a smile that feels forced. I know that she's my biological mother, but to me, she's a complete stranger. I'm not sure how I'll be able to wash it, but I'll figure it out.

We sit there a bit longer and I glance through a book sitting on a nearby table. After a bit, Lily lets me know the bath is ready. I head into the bathroom to the old, worn clawfoot tub. She's laid out a couple threadbare towels and I notice a pair of old pajama pants and a shirt as well. It's very thoughtful and I feel bad declining her help even though I'll probably need it.

I undress, managing to untie my shoes myself and climb into the water, sinking down. The water is warm and inviting and I'm thankful it's not freezing cold like I was worried it would be. I wonder who I would be as a person if I had grown up here. They have what they need, but it's obvious that money isn't abundant, though I guess they have more than most rogues do.

I grab the washcloth and use the bar of soap there- it's just a boring, unscented soap, and begin to wash myself. I rub my shoulders, down my arms and back, moving down to my breasts when I catch the beloved juniper scent of my mate. There's a gentle knock at the door and it cracks open as Seth quickly enters the bathroom.

"Hey, beautiful," he says with a smile that makes my heart skip a beat.

"Hi," I say shyly. "That didn't take long."

"Nope, it wasn't terrible."

"What did your dad say?"

"I told him that we'd met your biological parents and we would be here for a day or two. He seemed fine with it, but said to be careful."

"Good. I'm glad you're back." I tell him quietly.

He smiles at me again, the way that makes me feel so special. "What did you do today?"

"Benjamin and I went for a walk. I found the place for you to mark me." I tell him, biting my lip nervously.

"Yeah?" he asks, c\*\*\*\*\*g an eyebrow and taking his t-shirt off, reaching forward to take the rag out of my hand to take over washing me. "Is it far?"

"It's not terribly far," I tell him as he washes down my chest and along my stomach, moving to grasp one of my legs and clean it thoroughly. "It's really beautiful."

"Good. You're happy with it?" he asks, moving on to my other leg.

I smile at him. "Yeah, I am. I think you'll like it, too."

"I'm sure I will," he tells me as his hand slowly moves up, reaching my most sensitive area, and he gently strokes, causing me to gasp.

"Seth," I whisper and look at the bathroom door in panic.

Seth just smirks at me and leans forward. "Tonight," he whispers in my ear.

I find myself unable to say anything and I just nod. He grabs my injured hand and places it as far out of the tub as it will reach and helps me lean back, putting my hair in the water. He helps me lean up and he reaches up, lathering shampoo in my hair.

"I'm not really sure how to do this, Love," he says with a sheepish look on his face. "I hope it's alright."

"It's OK, Seth. I don't know either," I tell him with a small giggle.

"You're so beautiful, Molly," he tells me as he attempts to rinse my hair.

I smile up at his handsome face. "So are you."

He helps me out of the tub, releases the water and wraps a towel around me. "Seth, there's something I need you to do for me."

"Can it wait until after lunch?" he asks and I nod.

"It's just an idea Benjamin had, to maybe heal my finger."

"You don't think marking you will do it?" he says and I can feel that I've hurt him.

I sigh gently. "It's not that, but I feel like there's so much pressure. It would help if everything wasn't hanging on marking me."

He doesn't say another word, just dries me off and helps me put on the clothes he brought me. I notice that the underwear and bra are black lace and far sexier than anything any normal person staying in a cabin with no electricity would pack and I wonder for a moment if my mom or Seth packed my bag, but honestly, it could be either. I put on the black jeans and olive green long sleeved t-shirt. Seth takes the towel and dries my hair the best he can with it, brushing through it. He grabs his shirt, pulling it on quickly. He turns and walks out, still not saying anything.

I exit the bathroom and smell Oliver's beef stew. "Did Oli send food with you?"

"He insisted," my mom says, and I can't help but smile. It's one of my favorites. His mom taught us to make it and we used to make it together after we'd go hiking in the cold or playing all day in the snow.

"Come eat, Molly, so you can take your medicine," Lily tells me, placing a bowl on the table for me.

We all eat in relative silence. I assume everyone either heard our conversation or they can just feel the tension in the air. Seth takes the bottle of medicine and opens it, handing two pills to me. I take the medicine and before I've even swallowed them he gets up and walks outside. I follow him, grabbing my jacket but I don't stop to worry about my shoes.

He stomps off into the trees and I try to follow quickly, but the debris on the ground is hurting my feet and making me slower. He quickly turns to look at me and realizes the problem.

"Why the hell didn't you put shoes on?" he asks me, stomping back towards me.

"I couldn't put them on if I'd tried," I snap at him, holding my injured hand up level with his face. He reaches me and bends down slightly, grabbing me and tossing me over his shoulder as he continues in the direction he was going. He continues a bit before stopping at a fallen tree and sitting me on it.

"Why the f\*\*k don't you want me to mark you?" he asks, clearly angry but trying to control his temper.

I take a deep breath and try my best to figure out how to explain it. "Everything will be different when you mark me, or it won't be at all. If you mark me and it works, I'll be your mate and my finger will be fixed. But I'll also be a princess, and a wolf, and a witch. I won't even look the same. And if you mark me and it doesn't work, I'll be your mate, but everyone will be disappointed about everything I'm not. It's a lot of pressure." I tell him, my voice cracking a bit at the end.

"You think I'm not feeling the pressure of this?" he snaps at me. "If it doesn't fix you, it will all be my fault."

"I don't want you to mark me just to FIX me," I snap at him angry, crossing my arms in an attempt to comfort myself from the sting of his words.

Seth looks at me, clearly realizing what he said. "s\*\*t, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that," he tells me, taking a step towards me and pushing my wet hair behind my ear.

"I just want you to mark me because you want to, because I'm yours." I say, a few tears escaping.

"I want you, Molly," he whispers into my hair, holding me tightly to his chest. "I'm sorry. You're right, there's so much pressure on this and it's not fair to either of us. What do you want me to try?"

I don't respond for a bit, I just sit there wrapped in his arms, enjoying the comfort of his embrace. "The first time I dreamed of my wolf she was licking my finger and I thought she was trying to heal it," I say and he nods, releasing me slightly to look at me. "Benjamin thinks she may have been trying to tell me how to fix it."

"So you want me to lick your finger?" he asks, confused.

"Not exactly, I think Altair needs to." I tell him.

He looks down at me for a moment and clearly doesn't believe what I'm saying, but he steps back and starts to take his shirt off. He removes his shoes and socks and continues until he's standing before me naked. Taking a step back, he shifts in front of me.

I take the splint off my finger, the only thing I've been keeping on it the past few days, as Altair slowly walks up to me. This is the first time I've seen him in person, awake. He's as big now as he was in my dreams, and as terrifying, too. He nuzzles his head against my injured hand and I turn it, awkwardly holding my fingers back so he can reach the injury. He slowly licks my finger and then sits back, watching it.

My finger starts to itch, and the forming scar starts to lighten. The stitches begin to push up towards the surface and Altair stands up, carefully biting through each stitch to release it. I can't help the tears that are streaming out of my eyes as Altair takes a step back and shifts so that Seth is standing there now. He gently takes my hand and stares at it, pulling at the now loose stitches. It hurts a little as he pulls them out, but not terribly. The scar continues to lighten and I take a chance at bending my finger.

"Seth," I whisper, breathlessly, completely in awe of what he was able to do. "You fixed it!"