

## Chapter 27 Painting a portrait

Enzo's POV

I sat on the loveseat on the far side of the art gallery while Lila sat in front of her canvas. She had this perplexed look in her eyes as she fixated her gaze on her painting. I had given her some old clothes so she wouldn't get paint all over her outfit, along with an apron.

Her tongue was out slightly, touching the top of her lip, as she often did while concentrating. I had taken note of that while watching her. She bit onto her bottom lip slightly, tugging at it between her teeth. I watched as it grew red and swollen from the intensity of her bite and I wondered at what point she would release it.

She had paint smeared on her features as she splattered the brush across the canvas.

It's been a couple of hours since we began the painting; she had to have been almost done by now.

"What happened to you wanting to reject her?" Max asked with a little humor in his voice.

It was true that I was planning on going to the academy to reject her, but as I got close to the packhouse, I started thinking about my mother and what I could do to make her more comfortable. She deserved to have something nice, and she always said she wished she had more pictures of me.

"You can't reject her after you ask this type of favor from her," Max said, shaking his large canine head. I could see him clearly in my mind's eyes.

Rejecting her would definitely be harder now; I set myself up for that. But I ignored my wolf, not having a proper answer for him.

Lila finally placed the paintbrush down gently and leaned back in her chair, taking in her work. There was a faint smile on her face as she scanned the picture with her eyes.

"This is probably my best work yet," she said, meeting my eyes.

I stood to my feet and walked around the canvas to look at the painting and I couldn't believe my eyes. It was like a photograph; it was the most glorious painting I had ever seen. She even captured that couch I was sitting on and the background pictures as well. She included a couple of flowers on the table that sat beside the couch.

"It's perfect," I said in only a whisper.

Her face lit up as she peered up at me.

"I hope your mother likes it," she said. "And I hope that she gets well soon."

I tensed at her words, but I didn't say anything in response.

"Thank you for your work," I said to her in the most professional way I could manage. "I can pay you for the service."

She rose her brows, but she shook her head.

"That won't be necessary," she said with a light chuckle.

I went to grab the painting, but she stepped in front of it quickly.

"Let it dry. It's still wet," she scolded.

Oh. Right.

I nodded and turned away from her, we hadn't spoken during the entire painting process and I wasn't planning on sticking around and speaking to her now. I was still upset that she came all the way to the Calypso pack by herself. Without any protection or guards with her.

She was incredibly stupid for acting so carelessly. She's aware of the dangers around the world; especially knowing what she is.

I couldn't keep the aggravation off my face, and I was afraid that if I turned to face her, she would see it clear as day. That wasn't something I was going to explain to her. Not right now.

"Professor?" I heard her small voice behind me before I had the chance to reach the door.

I froze before grabbing the door handle. Something about her voice sent a warmth through my entire body.

"What happened with your mother? Why was she beaten so badly?"

Who had told her that my mother was beaten?

I pressed my lips firmly together as more aggravation and annoyance surfaced within me; it must have been Dee. I would have to have a talk with her about speaking about my personal affairs.

"It doesn't matter." I answered. "I'm dealing with it."

"I don't doubt that; but why would they target your mother? What did she do to them?"

My entire jaw tensed; it wasn't about what she did to them, it was about what she is. It's about what Lila is.

If I wasn't careful, the same thing could happen to Lila.

I don't think I could live with myself if anything like that happened to her.

"Enzo? "Lila spoke my name so effortlessly like she's done it a thousand times before. I realized I was standing with my back toward her and not saying anything for a long while.

I turned to face her, meeting the concerned look in her oddly colored eyes.

"My mother did nothing to them. It's a dangerous world, Lila Things like this happen."

She furrowed her brows together as she processed what I had just said before she shook her head.

"I don't believe that," she said in return. "There might be bad people, but the world itself isn't dangerous. Not when there are people out there to protect it."

"Look around! " I nearly shouted, waving my arms around dramatically. "There's nobody here to protect the world. At least not yet."

"That's not true," Lila said firmly, folding her arms across her chest. "My father is one of the greatest men I know, and he's set out every day to protect the world from men like your father."

As soon as those words left her lips, I could tell she regretted them. She gasped and covered her mouth with the palms of her hands, peering up at me.

"I didn't mean that," she said in only a whisper.

"Yes, you did," I said, keeping my eyes steadily on hers. "And you're right. My father was a terrible man. The world needs protecting from those like him."

She dropped her hands to her sides; at this point, it almost looked like she wanted to cry. I wondered what was running through her mind.

"Was it his men that hurt your mother?"

I was surprised by her question; she was incredibly smart, and I knew I couldn't keep something like that from her for long.

"What do you know about his men?" I asked in return.

She lowered her gaze.

"I know they are still out there; terrorizing those like me. But they also fear my father and mother after what happened with Blaise. So, they typically stay out of Elysium. But I know they are still out there... they don't just go away like that."

She really was smart.

"My parents shield me from them because they don't want me to worry about the rest of the world right now. They want me to worry about myself and my education. But I'm not stupid...I know they are out there, and I know there are other Volanas out there too. But what I don't understand is why your mother was targeted by them."

She wasn't going to give up until I answered her question.

"My mother was hunting them. She's a bounty hunter. They found her first?"

I was lying. She knew I was lying. The look on her face proved that she could see through my lie. But she was also smart enough to know that I didn't want to tell her the truth. She looked as though she was going to say something more. But she didn't.

I turned back toward the door to leave and then she spoke again.

"Can we go to the bake sale?"

Lila's POV

"Ouch..." Val said within me. "I didn't think our mate would be a liar."

"I didn't think he'd be our professor either, but here we are," I say in return, trying to brush the previous conversation out of my mind.

I couldn't believe he could just lie to me so effortlessly. His mother wasn't a bounty hunter; I could tell he was lying from the look in his eyes. He should know, more than anything, that mates can see through each other's lies.

Hearing that his mother was attacked by Blaise's men gave me an unsettled feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Enzo hadn't said a word about it since our conversation in the art gallery. That was over two hours ago.

We pulled up to the large elementary school in the middle of the town and I already saw Dee in distance setting everything up for the bake sale.

"Oh, my goddess! " I heard the voice of a small child in the distance as I approached.

"It's her!" Another child yelled, pointing directly at me.

"It's Lila!!!"

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