

## Chapter 44

-Seth-

I sink my fangs into my mate's delicate neck and taste the metallic blood. I feel her find her release and realize I timed her marking perfectly for her, and I retract my fangs, licking the spot to seal the mark and placing a kiss on it, because she deserves it. I continue my movements just a moment longer when I also find my release, deep inside her, holding her close to me, and release the customary howl when a royal finds their mate. I forgot to tell her about the howl. I hope it didn't scare her.

Any attempts to ever replace my mate were an obvious mistake, but this moment with her has solidified that for me. I smile and look down at her, but there's something on her face that tells me something is wrong. I move to inspect her neck, but her mark is sealed.

"... I think something is wrong." I hear her say and her voice isn't quite the same.

"What's wrong, Molly?" I ask her, trying not to panic. Her skin feels cold and it's only getting colder. I grab the closest blanket and wrap it around her as quickly as I can. I notice the muscles in her arms and hands contracting, almost twitching. "I think you're having a seizure", I say to her, but she doesn't respond.

I take her face in my hands. "Molly, hey, Molly," I nearly shout but she's not answering. Shit. Shit. Her eyelids are getting droopy when they finally close and her body goes limp in my arms.

Randall, we have a problem.

What happened? We felt you mark her, but no one can link her.

I did, but... I don't know what happened. I think she had a seizure. She feels like ice and she's not conscious. I don't know what I did.

Bring her here. I'll meet you.

I quickly throw my jeans, socks and shoes back on and scoop up my mate in my arms. She's so cold and her lips look like they may be turning blue. I consider shifting, but there would be no safe way to keep her on Altair's back, even though I'd get there faster in wolf form. I run across the creek and field, entering the woods, thankful that I had marked the path as we came now.

We hadn't gone very far, but it feels like we were 100 miles away as I run back with my mate in my arms. Did I injure her? She didn't seem injured. Did I mark her incorrectly? That's so rare, and Altair is sure that isn't the case.

What did I do? I ask my wolf, feeling my heart break at the sight of my mate in my arms.

I don't think you did anything, Seth. She had a lot of magic in her.

I nod, knowing he's probably right. Lily herself said it was a terribly complex spell. She changed her looks, that can't be easy on her small body. But for that to be the problem, it would mean that the spell was lifted, and I'm too afraid to hope for that. I don't think I could hide the disappointment if I'm wrong when she wakes up. If she wakes up.

I'm almost to the area with the pine trees when I come upon Randall's large, brown wolf. He growls at me and I stop, but finally realize he thinks I hurt her.

"I swear, I didn't do anything to hurt her," and he just stares at me, finally turning around and we continue running back towards the cabin.

Lily is standing on the front porch and holds the door open for us to enter. I notice that Randall had at some point shifted back but I don't know, nor care, when or how that happened. I take Molly into her childhood bedroom where the covers were already pulled back and place her gently in bed, pulling the blankets back over her and reach out to feel her head.

"She's so cold," I say and Celeste reaches in the blankets, grabbing Molly's hand.

"What happened, Seth? Her body is like ice." Celeste says and I'm almost embarrassed to tell them.

"I, I marked her. I sealed it. We, uh, finished and then she said she was cold and told me something was wrong." I tell her as Celeste gently rolls her to look at her mark and Benjamin steps up.

The two elder wolves inspect her mark and then look at each other. Celeste turns to me, "her mark looks fine".

"Altair thinks that it could be from the magic," I tell them and I can see Benjamin visibly tense. "I don't know though. I think she had a seizure." I tell them, trying to hold back tears.

Randall comes up and places his arm on my shoulder. "You need to get your parents here, and have them bring Sofia."

I start to protest but I see Benjamin sit down on the side of the bed, raking his hands through his already unkempt hair. Ultimately, this decision is up to him. He sighs deeply and I know this isn't what he would want, but we all love Molly and want her safe.

"He can't hurt her now. I marked her so if he does anything to her it would weaken me, and he wouldn't risk that," I tell him, taking a seat next to him. "The last thing he wants is for the kingdom to fall to my uncle. He wouldn't dare hurt her."

Benjamin nods slowly. "Have him bring Sofia, immediately. I'll have men meet them at the mouth of the cave."

Dad.

Congratulations, son!

Dad, she's hurt. We need you and mom to come immediately. Bring Sofia, their pack doctor.

Do we need to bring anyone in from the palace?

I don't think so, just get here as soon as you can. We have a lot to tell you. Please stay calm when you get here.

Son, what is going on?

Just get here, with Sofia. And bring Rob, too. Have his beta watch the pack.

Alright, we'll be there soon.

Lily comes in with a thermometer and takes Molly's temperature. She frowns and looks up at us, but doesn't say anything. We all know it's not good.

I can warm her. I hear Altair say and at this point, it's the best bet we have. I take my shoes off and pull off my jeans.

"Celeste, help me move her and cover her back up." I say to her as I remove blankets from Molly, clearing the bed the best I can. Everyone looks at me with confusion as I walk out of the cramped room to have more space and I shift, coming back in and climbing on the bed. Altair curls up and Celeste realizes what I meant. She lifts Molly up and allows Altair to lay behind her, gently placing her back and bringing the blankets back to cover her.

Molly lays right where she's placed, not moving at all. Her breathing is shallow and her heart is beating so slowly as she lays there on Altair as he tries desperately to warm her. Celeste comes to sit back on the bed and places her hand on Altair. We look at her quizzically, unsure what she's thinking.

"I don't think this is your fault," she tells him quietly. "Your mark is right, this is something else."

It's comforting to know that someone in the room doesn't think this was my fault, because while no one has said it, their faces have betrayed them. It's not time to place blame, though. I just want Molly to wake.

We lay like this for an hour or so. No one moves and no one says a word, we all just stare intently at my mate waiting for any indication she's ok. Finally, Lily moves forward, clearly terrified to be near Altair and checks Molly's temperature again with a shaky hand.

"She's a little warmer," she says and I feel my heart swell a little at the thought of being able to help my mate through this.

I catch the scent of my parents and look up, noticing Randall seems to have smelled the same. He looks at Altair and we give no indication of getting up. He sighs, resigning to his fate, and walks outside to meet them. Benjamin begins to walk out but Celeste stops him.

"It's probably best if you let him tell him before he sees you," she tells him.

He sighs deeply. "You're probably right. He's not likely to hurt Molly, but he may still try to kill me."

"We won't let that happen," she says to him and I see his shoulders relax a bit. There's got to be more to the story than either of them have told us, but now isn't the time for me to find it.

"She's WHO?!" I hear my dad shout from outside and I realize Randall must have jumped straight into the story for time's sake. It's a few more minutes before the door opens to reveal Sofia and my mother.

Sofia walks straight over to Molly and takes her temperature and turns her head to check her mark, though she inspects it more closely. She shines a light on it and runs her hand across a few times.

"Her temperature was about 8 degrees lower an hour ago. Seth shifted into his wolf and it has helped a lot," Lily tells her and she nods.

"Why doesn't everyone leave us so I can speak with the Prince?" Sofia suggests and everyone heads to the door, except for Benjamin.

"Sofia, she's my daughter!" he exclaims at being dismissed and looks dismayed at the thought of leaving her.

"I know Alpha, but I need to know exactly what happened and she'll be furious when she wakes up to know you were all here for that conversation." Sofia tells him. Alpha? Does she know him? He shakes his head but finally exits the room, with a deep sigh.

"Can you shift back so we can talk?" Sofia asks, but I'm hesitant to move. "I need to know what happened, exactly. You can climb back in and hold her, keep your skin against hers. It will still help her to stay warm."

She helps to lift Molly so I can get out of bed. Altair stalks behind her and we shift back. She's listening to her heart, a worried look on her face.

"Her heart slowed as I carried her back. It's picked up a bit lying on Altair, but it's still not right." I tell her as I walk back over and get in the bed next to my mate, pulling her tightly against me and kissing her head. "I marked her, and then she lost consciousness."

"Am I correct in assuming this was not a royal marking ceremony and more of the wolf way?" she asks, trying to say it politely.

"Yes. You know you can smell me on her." I tell her and she nods. "She was fine, she... enjoyed herself. I didn't notice anything that would give any indication that I had hurt her. We finished and she told me she was cold, I wrapped her in a blanket and could feel her temperature dropping. I think she may have had a seizure, and then she just lost consciousness. It happened so quickly."

"Nothing else weird stuck out to you about anything at all this evening?" she asks and I shake my head no, brushing Molly's hair back from her beautiful face. I see the outline of her hand under the blanket though and remember an important detail.

"Hours before, I healed her finger." I tell her.

"You, what?! How?!" she asks me, astonished.

"My wolf licked it, and it healed." I tell her and she looks at us, her mouth hanging open. "She'd had a dream when it first happened but didn't realize her wolf was telling her how to fix it. Benjamin figured it out and she wanted to try."

"I'm going to get the King and her father. Well, both of her fathers, I guess." Sofia says and walks out, coming back with the three large men, who all look mad.

My dad starts to say something but I hold my hand up to him. "We'll discuss it all when Molly is awake, and OK. I'm not dealing with anything other than her right now." I tell them and no one dares to say anything. Sofia sits down on the side of the bed, placing her hand over Molly's, which is still under the blankets.

"I need to know about the spell that was placed on her," and everyone looked at her abruptly. "I don't want to tell Lily if we can avoid it. She will feel terrible if that's what is happening and it won't do any good."

"You know them?" I ask her and she slowly nods her head.

"I was in Alpha Benjamin's original pack. Alpha Randall was aware," and both men nod in the affirmative.

"I don't know the specifics, but it blocked her wolf and the magic she's likely to have. It also changed her eyes and hair." I tell her and Benjamin nods in agreement.

"The spell also changed her scent," Benjamin adds, and I vaguely remember hearing her say that, but it didn't seem important at that time.

"That's a lot for her body to deal with," my dad says, only a slight hint of judgment in his voice.

Benjamin growls lowly. "We were trying to keep her safe from a murderous mad man."

"Not. Now." Randall says angrily.

"I agree, this seems like it's coming from the spell trying to lift," my dad says. "I'll contact the palace and have people go through any books that may have information that could help."

"Your Highness," Sofia addressed him, seemingly a little afraid. "It may be important to note that your son's wolf was able to heal Molly's finger before he marked her."

"How?" he asks me and I'm so frustrated he'd ask.

"I don't know dad, it's not important how it worked. Molly is more complex than you realize." I say to him.

My dad growls lowly at me. "I mean what did you do? It's probably important for them to know to research."

"If it's what Molly and I had talked about earlier, I can fill him in on the details for you," Benjamin tells me and I just nod at him.

Our dads all turn and leave us. Sofia takes Molly's temperature once more and listens to her heart.

"It's not any better, but it's not worse," she says. "You just continue to hold her against yourself. Hopefully it will warm her, and maybe her wolf will sense it."

I pull Molly as close to me as I can, kissing her on the head. She's so beautiful, and she almost looks peaceful and I hold her.

This isn't your fault, Son.

I can't lose her, Dad.

We'll do everything we can. You could have told me. You didn't have to hide who she is.

There's so much of the history between you and Benjamin we didn't know, I didn't want anything to happen to her.

I know, Seth. I just need you to know I would never hurt your mate. Ever. Mates are something special.

I'm sorry.

I know. She's the most precious thing to you. Just take care of her and hopefully we'll have some answers soon.