



Chapter Three

Natalia

Sleep evades me the whole night.

I don't know how long it's been, all I'm aware of is that I've been lying here, curled up in bed long enough. Wallowing in my own self pity. Long enough for me to have run out of tears. I sit up slowly and look out of the window. It's still dark, and when I check the time on the clock, it's nearly 5am.

No one would be awake by this time.

I walk over to the wardrobe and begin stung my belongings into a bag. I have to get out of here. The mere thought of leaving, leaving Cardan knocks the wind out of me. A life without Cardan is a world not worth living in.

My rst love, my rst friend, my only friend. But I've lost him already. He took something he shouldn't have. I gave him something thinking when it came down to it, he would choose me over anyone else.

It sucks to be wrong.

It f*****g sucks.

I feel empty, and broken, and angry, desperately angry. But most of all I feel stupid. Stupid enough to have fallen for what could only have been a dream, an illusion.

I close my eyes, and tell myself to breathe. I've been here before. I've been here before and I survived through it. I've been lonelier than this, more hopeless, more desperate than this. I can get through anything. But f**k. I feel completely robbed. I have to start over now, face the outside world alone. I can either chose to give up now, or go on. But giving up has never been an option. I've made the choice to live on, and this time, there won't be any looking back.

I hug myself tightly, shaking from the cold and the gravity of my decision. I had used part of the little money I had saved up to catch a bus to the human town, it was all spur of the moment, and now that I've had time to think about it all, the uncertainty is starting to creep in.

Am I really going to survive all by myself in a strange land?

With no money and no one I know who I can go to for help. I'm completely on my own.

Then I remember everything else that happened the day before. As much as I try to, I can't hate him. It's fate. We just aren't supposed to be together.

The thought does nothing to take the sting away though. Or the gutting feeling in my chest. It feels as though a crater's been carved inside of me.

I don't realize when I doze off, until the driver shakes me awake, looking obviously annoyed at having his time wasted. I mutter my apologies, grab my bag and make my way down, half expecting someone to stop and point at me shouting 'freak' or 'pathetic' but no one seems to even take any notice of me. I look just like any other person here, and everyone is going about their respective businesses. I decide to nd a cheap place to get some hot food and crash for the night before it gets too late, then I can begin nding my bearings tomorrow. But after checking about three places without any luck, I decide on a quiet alleyway to sleep in for the night. I spread some cutout cartons on the ground and use my bag as a pillow, curling myself up to ward off the cold.

The moment my eyes slide closed, I hear the noises. A small group of young boys laughing raucously, obviously drunk as they stagger into the alley. They pass around a bottle, which I'm guessing is alcohol. I sit up immediately, hoping they don't notice me by the corner.

"I gotta take a piss," One of them says, as he moves further into the corner, his pants already halfway down. He doesn't see me at rst, but when his gazes nally catches mine, he rubs at his eyes aggressively, probably trying to determine if someone is actually there, or if his eyes are playing tricks on him.

"Well would you look at that?" The loud drawl draws the attention of the others. They make their way over, excited about what he's found. The rst guy leans down, bringing his face close to mine, baring yellowed teeth at me as he grins manically. He can't be much older than twenty years but the harsh life on the streets makes him seem much more haggard. He reeks of cheap booze and I recoil from him.

He grabs a handful of my hair, "She a pretty thing, ain't she?"

The others mutter their approval as they take me in, leering and forming a wall of drunken bodies around me.

"Leave me the f**k alone." I mutter angrily, struggling to free myself from his grasp.

"Such lthy words shouldn't come out of this pretty mouth."

"I can think of many other things that mouth can do." One of them says. They laugh loudly at the lewd jokes they make, and I realize there's little I can do in this situation, seeing as it's four against one. Werewolf or not. The odds aren't in my favour.

"Please, let me go." My attempt at appealing to whatever humanity is left in their drunken stupor falls on deaf ears. The rst one pushes me down and I drop to my knees, wincing as the concrete tears through my jeans, digging into my skin. They all then proceed to hold me down as one rips at my sweater. He palms my breasts roughly, and groans as he touches himself with his other hand.

"Help!" I yell, my body bucking desperately, trying to break free from their grasp. I didn't get this far just to fail here. I didn't toss it all away just to face the same kind of mockery again.

"Someone hel-" A dirty hand clamps over my mouth.

"Keep your mouth shut, and this'll be over before you know it."

I cry against his palm, hating the desperation swelling in my chest.

No. No. No.

This can't be happening. Not today. Not after...

I squeeze my eyes shut, letting the tears soak through my hair as I try to transport myself to a different time and place.

A large grip rips the buttons of my jeans.

"f**k, this is about to be a fun night-"

The sentence dies on his lips, and my entire body locks up in the next second, as a single gunshot blasts through the air.