

Chapter 24

Meelo Day 28

A hurried knock came at my door.

I was about to tell whoever it was to go away, since I just got off my first guard duty and was still tired from having to wake up so early that morning, but a voice came through my door before I even had the chance to say a word.

"Meelo!" the voice said.

It was Teo.

"Yeah?" I shouted from where I was laying on my bed, not even bothering to stand up and the door.

"Seq's been hurt!"

No.

I climbed out of bed and hopped over my weapons on the ground as I ran to the door.

Without even stopping to keep talking to Teo, I rushed over to Sera's hut, arriving out of breath. When I finally pushed opened the shaman's door, I nearly broke it. As I entered, my eyes immediately fell on my fox, who looked like he was on the verge of dying.

Seq was lying shirtless and unconscious on top of a bed. His head, which had placed itself so many times on my shoulder as I drifted off to sleep, was now swollen with welts and scars. My gaze fell down to his torso, where the more severe wounds were. My little loving fox, which I adored, had deep jagged slashes that ran across his chest in every direction. I wasn't a shaman and didn't have any healing experience, but even I could tell that the cuts were deep. His shoulders were also covered with countless bite marks that had replaced large chunks of fur and flesh, showing off the redness that was underneath Seq's fur.

I stood there, staring at my comatose boyfriend, at loss for words. I must have looked like an idiot, standing there with my mouth hanging open. Yet, all of the stress and frustration that I felt from the past two days vanished. The only thing that mattered to me was Seq and whether or not he was going to be okay.

Sera walked over to Seq and bent over with some yellow herbs that she held in her hand. She started to crush the leaves and carefully sprinkled them into the open cuts on Seq's chest.

I walked over and watched Sera as she attended to my boyfriend's injuries. "How is he?" I said, hoarsely.

The shepherd didn't look back up at me. Instead, she talked while she worked. "His wounds are pretty deep and there's a chance of infection. And, even if the cuts and bites don't get infected, I'm worried about the blows to his head. But I won't be able to know how bad they are until Seq wakes up, which may not happen until a few days from now,"

I was quiet.

"Whoever did this was serious about killing him," Sera said.

A grim thought passed through my mind and made me shiver. "Who last saw him?"

Sera stood up and walked over to her desk to pick up more herbs. "I was told he went hunting with Rye, who came back to camp without Seq,"

That was all I needed to hear.

Without saying goodbye, I turned and hastily walked out of Sera's hut. She tried calling after me to ask where I was going, but I didn't answer her. Instead, I focused all of my attention on finding Rye.

Soon, I started to run and arrived at Rye's hut in only a few moments. I shoved the door open and it slammed against the inside of the hut. Silently, I stood there in the open doorway and glared into the dark, searching for Rye. It only took my eyes a heartbeat to adjust to the dimness and I found Rye sitting in his chair, working on something at his desk.

He didn't turn to face me or speak, which further convinced me that he was the one who had hurt Seq. I hardly even cared that he was dressed in a tunic and trousers.

I stomped over to Rye and hovered above him. "Get up,"

Rye remained silent. Slowly, he rose from his seat and turned to face me.

I grabbed the fennec by the collar of his tunic, nearly lifting him off the ground. "Why did you do it?" I snarled.

Rye blinked, almost as if he woke up from a dream. "What?"

Without even thinking, I threw him back against his desk, which made some unfinished tools bang as they fell onto the ground. Rye's eyes were now filled to the brim with fear.

"Don't play dumb with me!" I yelled.

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

"Why did you hurt Seq?"

The fennec gave a sigh. "I already told you. I thought he cheated on me with Grix and-"

"Not that!" I said. "Why did you almost kill him?"

Rye was silent and his eyes searched my face for some sign of what I was talking about. Then, his ears sagged back and his gaze softened. "Seq's hurt?" he asked, in a low whisper.

"No shit, he's hurt! You beat him to death out in the woods,"

"Look, Meelo," Rye said, slowly raising his hands up in front of him, as if he was trying to calm me down. "Seq and I argued, and he told me to come back to camp. Nothing else happened,"

I bared my teeth at the fennec. "I don't believe you,"

"Too bad," Rye said, his voice becoming sharp.

That sent me over the edge. I took a step forward and put all of my weight into the punch that I landed on Rye's muzzle. Rye flinched as his head jerked to the side from the impact of my fist, just before turning back to face me.

I lowered the hand I had punched Rye with to my side. My fingers screamed in a burning pain from the fennec's muzzle, but I ignored them. I only returned the hard gaze that Rye gave me.

"That's one," Rye warned me, as he faced forward again. "Don't take a second,"

I lunged forward at the fennec, punching his stomach with my still-stinging hand. I expected Rye to collapse again or let out a yip of pain. He didn't do either.

Rye jumped onto me, causing me to lose my balance and fall back onto the floor. My back slammed hard against the ground while Rye still held onto me, causing my head to bounce onto the wooden floor and send waves of pain through my skull. As I tried to see through the bright lights that completely blocked my sight, Rye's fist bashed against my cheek. I tried to roll over and get on top of Rye, but the fennec had me pinned down. He was stronger than he looked.

After another punch hit me in the nose, I reached out with my unsheathed claws and managed to scratch Rye's left cheek. I could feel blood dripping off my hands. As Rye was stunned from my scratch, I managed to throw him off by punching him on the side of his head.

Rye collapsed to the side and I fought to stand up. I stumbled over to where he lay facedown. Before Rye had the chance to stand up, I raised my leg and began to stomp onto the fennec's back, putting all of my strength and weight into each blow. As I was about to bring my leg down for what was probably the eighth time, Rye reached out and pulled on my leg, bringing me down onto the ground next to him.

Once I was on the ground again, Rye stood up with his back to the still open doorway.

Quickly, I rose and rushed at Rye with unsheathed claws. Just before I was close enough to cut Rye open, the fennec leaped to the side and I ran through the doorway.

As my claw hit the cold icy air outside of Rye's hut, I turned around to see Rye's fist, just before it struck me on my forehead. Before I could fall back from the force of the Rye's punch, he grabbed me by the tunic and continued to keep punching my face.

While Rye's arm drew back for a fourth or fifth punch, I reached out with both of hands and began to press my thumbs down on his eyes. Rye let go of me and took a step back, rubbing his eyes as he did so.

I grabbed him by his tunic and got in his face. "Why did you do it?"

Rye looked up at me, blinking a couple of times to make sure his eyes were fine. Both of us were out of breath.

"I didn't do anything!" he said.

"Liar!" I screamed and punched Rye in the mouth.

Rye looked at me in the eye. "I...didn't do...*anything*!"

I punched him again.

Rye's head slowly turned back and faced me with tired eyes, while blood ran down his cheek from where I scratched him.

I pulled my arm back to ready another punch, but was stopped when a firm hand grabbed my wrist. I turned my head over my shoulder and saw Fare, who held onto my arm with tight fingers. Behind her, stood every Kyan in camp. All of the rage in my body suddenly vanished.

How did I not notice them?

The thought troubled me as let go of Rye and was released by Fare. I then noticed Grix walking towards us with a cold look in his eyes. *Shit*. As if I wasn't in enough trouble already. *Idiot!*

Grix stopped next to Fare while he looked down at Rye and I, like we were his sons who had just finished bickering. He didn't say anything, which I actually liked less than him saying how much I fucked up.

"So, what? Guard duty? Staying in camp? Is that our punishment?" Rye asked.

Grix folded his arms and kept his disappointed look. "I think that your scars will be punishment enough. Or am I wrong?"

I turned and gave Rye a look. Then, I turned back to face Grix and shook my head. I only hoped that Rye did the same.

"Good," Grix said, just before he uncrossed his arms and walked away. Then, he stopped and turned around to look at me. "Oh. And Meelo?"

My ears perked up and my tail flicked. "Yeah?"

"Sera told me that Seq's awake now," the wolf said, just before turning back around and walking away.

Seq.

I started running towards Sera's hut.