

Alpha's Rejected Mate Returns as Queen

Chapter 61 The Clown

Selma Payne's POV:

My father had discussed Carolyn's strange behavior with the southern Duke. But, surprisingly, the southern Duke had flatly refused to investigate Carolyn.

"This is an insult," he retorted. "An insult to my daughter and me."

No matter how much my father tried to persuade him, he would not agree. It was as if he did not care whether his daughter was in danger. However, his excuses were always to protect his daughter.

What a contradictory father and daughter pair.

In the end, the southern Duke relented and agreed to let the security department conduct a witchcraft inspection on Carolyn. However, it had to be done secretly, and Carolyn couldn't find out.

The Moonlight Festival was the day of the operation, but my father had never said it would be carried out on the float. But, unfortunately, the float parade didn't stop from morning to night, so there was no way for the inspectors to get close to Carolyn.

"Perhaps something unexpected happened and made the southern Duke regret it. I have to go take a look."

"Ladies, I have to go and greet the southern Duke." I used my mother as an excuse. "The Queen has specially instructed that if you meet the southern Duke, you should greet him on behalf of the royal family. So don't lose your etiquette."

"I'll go too," Aldrich said. "I'm also a noble. So it's not good to pretend I didn't see him, right?"

We'd go together.

"What happened?" Aldrich quickly asked me in a low voice. "Is there something about the southern Duke worth paying attention to?"

As expected of someone from a political family, his intuition was always accurate.

I shook my head. "It's not him. It's his daughter, Carolyn."

“That little girl? What’s wrong with her?”

“She seems to have magic fluctuations. The Lycan King suspects she may have been possessed by witches and hopes to conduct a secret examination today.”

“There’s no way to examine the float.” Aldrich frowned.

I nodded. “That’s why I’m going to solve the problem.”

The southern Duke also saw us.

“Happy Moonlight Festival, Sir Aldrich, Miss Selma.” He bowed like a gentleman, playing his role as the Moon Prophet today.

Carolyn had no choice but not to go onto the float and come down to greet us.

We exchanged a few words, and I tried my best to stall for time, hoping that the float would leave quickly.

“You’re so beautiful today, Carolyn,” I said to the girl covered in shiny pearls. “The diamond headband suits you. Is that the shape of baby’s breath? Truly original.”

“Thank you for your praise.” Carolyn nodded slightly. “This is a gift from my father for my sixteenth birthday. An Italy jewelry designer specially made it. It’s one of a kind. Your brooch is also very beautiful, the moon made of opal. Very suitable for the occasion, isn’t it? Everyone likes to wear accessories made of opal during the Moonlight Festival. It’s just like the moon, and it’s never wrong.”

I pretended not to hear the anger in her words.

“Why did you think of performing on the float? That’s tiring. Every year, the maidservants representing the royal family in the event say they don’t want to go anymore. After all, not everyone can stand dancing for an entire day.”

Carolyn proudly said, “That’s not the same. They’re just some weak Omegas. I’m the future Alpha of the Southern Pack. So how can those weak chickens be compared to me?”

This wasn’t a nice thing to say, not to mention the status of the people who could come to the palace to work, but the undisguised discrimination against Omegas was vulgar.

It wasn’t the era of harsh class hierarchy hundreds of years ago. So the Omegas should also receive the respect they deserve.

Carolyn reminded me of Benson. They were equally proud, arrogant, and condescending.

Fortunately, someone broke the awkward atmosphere.

Aldrich suggested, “Do you want some moon fudge? It’s a special product from the Lycan Pack, and you can only have it during the Moonlight Festival every year.”

He waved his hand to beckon the revelry clown holding a tray.

“Happy holidays, guys.” The clown laughed happily. “Do you want a piece of soft candy? There are cranberry and peach flavors.”

We tasted the moon fudge. The cranberry flavor was great. Then, we left.

Back at the soda stall, I received a text message from my mother.

The inspectors had indeed detected magical fluctuations in Carolyn. What was even more unfortunate was that it was powerful black sorcery that shielded her from the outside world. As such, the inspectors could not find anything other than magical fluctuations.

This wasn’t good news, but at least we had the confidence to convince the southern Duke to assist in the investigation.

While chatting, I quietly asked Aldrich, “How do you know that the clown is a prosecutor in disguise?”

“I don’t know.” Aldrich smiled. “But he kept circling us but didn’t give out any of the candies in his hand. This one is not very bright, right?”

“You’re so smart.” I looked at him in surprise. “I think that clown is no different from the other clowns.”

“Soldiers are always more sensitive. After all, the battlefield is fierce. So you have to be alert to ensure your safety.”

I was simply fascinated by this astute warrior!

62 Fireworks

Selma Payne’s POV:

As usual, a grand fireworks show would be held on the night of the Moonlight Festival.

The girls went to look for their family, while Aldrich and I found a quiet and uninhabited hillside to wait for the fireworks.

“Are you happy tonight?” He draped his coat over my shoulders.” If there’s anything bad about the Moonlight Festival, it’s everyone’s wearing too little in the snow. Every year, the number of patients having hypothermia in the hospital increases on the second day of the Moonlight Festival.”

I stroked the soft fine fur of the wool coat and smiled. “Is this the reason why you chose the Shepherd? This thick and warm coat?”

We laughed out loud.

When I was with Aldrich, I always seemed to smile unconsciously. It was silly, yes. But somehow, I had willingly fallen into this sweetness.

We cuddled.

Suddenly, a dazzling bullet of light shot into the sky. A few seconds later, it exploded with a loud bang and bloomed into a massive firework of broken gold.

“It’s starting!” I sat up in excitement.

The Shadow Pack’s customs differed slightly from the Lycan Pack’s. This was the first time I’d seen such a grand fireworks show, and I almost drowned in the dazzling colors that covered the sky.

“It’s so beautiful, Aldrich!” I tugged at my boyfriend’s sleeve excitedly.

“Yeah... It’s too beautiful,” he said in a low voice.

It was only then that I realized that he wasn’t paying attention to the fireworks. Instead, he had been looking at me.

“Is there something on my face? Or do I look funny with makeup?” I lowered my head in embarrassment and wanted to take out a mirror from my bag.

Aldrich took my hand and gave it a light kiss.

“No, there’s nothing.

“It’s just that the moonlight is too gentle. I’m immersed in it and can’t control my emotions.”

The atmosphere was too flirtatious, and the distance between us gradually shortened.

Finally, we kissed gently.

Unlike the passionate and wordless kisses from before, our lips were like two light feathers that gently met in the breeze. They separated after a touch, but they were also at a distance.

The intertwined breaths blended like milk and water. We were like two wolves snuggling up to each other for warmth on a winter night. We closed our eyes and enjoyed this quiet moment.

“Selma.” Aldrich sighed. “I love you.”

“I love you too, my shepherd and my knight.”

We embraced each other under the fireworks.

The happy day ended, and it was late at night. Aldrich had to go back to the camp. The camp still strictly enforced the curfew on this grand festival. He sent me back to the palace, and we parted ways.

The palace also held a banquet for the servants and attendants on duty. Kara invited me to drink a few non-alcoholic fizzy wheat drinks before returning to my room to rest.
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It was three minutes to twelve.

“What are you doing?” I texted Aldrich.

“I’m thinking of you,” he replied.

My face turned red again.

“Be serious!”

“Don’t be angry. I’m preparing a gift for you.”

“A gift? What gift?”

“On the day after the Moonlight Festival, a man must prepare a gift for his sweetheart. This is a small custom among the young people.”

I couldn’t wait to see what the gift was, but I still asked reservedly, “If you tell me now, I won’t be surprised anymore. Hmph.”

“Please calm your anger, Your Highness the goddess. I’ve missed you so much that I can’t keep any secrets from you.”

“Alright! Please don’t do this. I’m dying of laughter!”

We agreed to meet at the training ground tomorrow afternoon, and I fell asleep with full anticipation.

The following day, I woke up almost at the break of dawn. I didn't look dispirited at all after staying up all night. The unknown gift made me so excited that my mother noticed my excitement.

"My little princess, why are you so happy today?" She asked, "Could it be that you had a fortuitous encounter at the party yesterday?"

"What?" I drank the milk absentmindedly. "No, Mother. Yesterday was a wonderful day. I'm still reminiscing about it."

"Still reminiscing." My mother smiled teasingly. "Who left such a deep impression on you?"

"Oh, unknowingly, my baby has reached the age to meet her mate," my father said.

Only then did I understand what they meant. I blushed and quickly retorted, "It's not that, Father, Mother. I'm happy because of the Moonlight Festival."

In fact, the real 'culprit' was Aldrich, but I couldn't say it out loud, which made me a little disappointed.

My mother looked regretful. "Okay, but it doesn't matter. You're still young. You have plenty of time to find your mate."

In fact, my mate had long appeared and disappeared. It was none other than Benson Walton, the werewolf who now rarely appeared in my mind.

I felt as if it had been a lifetime ago though it had only been a short year, wasn't it? The memories of the past were as distant as my past life.

63 Negligence

Selma Payne's POV:

"Speaking of this... "My mother said, "It seems like Lennon already has a candidate for a son-in-law."

"So soon?" I couldn't understand. "Is he that assured about Carolyn's current situation? There's already concrete evidence of her magic fluctuations, and as a father, he's still in the mood to arrange a blind date for his daughter?"

"There's something wrong with Lennon. He wasn't like this last year when he brought Carolyn to the Moonlight Festival," my father said with a frown. "He was a kind father,

and he stuck to his principles. Carolyn was also a polite lady who kept a low profile. The father and daughter pair had changed too much. I'm worried that Lennon might have been affected by black magic."

"That's impossible!" My mother exclaimed. "Lennon is such a powerful warrior. Even a legendary wizard lost to him."

"But Dorothy didn't sense any magic fluctuations from the southern Duke. Once witchcraft is performed, there will be magical fluctuations left behind. No matter how good the concealment spell is, it can't hide from a divination witch with superb insight."

"This is where the problem lies." My father said, "Either my guess is wrong, or we are facing an unprecedented powerful enemy."

"Can't we give the southern Duke a checkup too?" I asked.

"Unfortunately, my child, I can't. A Duke has his unshakeable dignity. We've already checked his daughter. It's too outrageous to check him."

"But this is all to ensure their safety..." I said, unwilling to give up.

"Sometimes, status and dignity are more important than safety." My father said, "Even the Lycan King has his concerns."

Due to what happened to the southern Duke, I'd been depressed all morning.

The first step of my plan was blocked, making me extremely frustrated.

In the afternoon, I went to the training ground, and Aldrich was already waiting there.

"What happened?" He noticed that I was not in a great mood.

"It's the southern Duke. It's not just Carolyn; he might also be under the witches' control. It was my idea to inform the southern Duke of Carolyn's strange behavior and get him to cooperate with us in examining his daughter. Unfortunately, there's something wrong with the southern Duke, which means that everything we've done before had probably alerted the enemy. I've messed everything up."

I curled up on the stone steps, feeling stupid.

Even the daughter of the southern Duke had fallen for it. How could the witches have released him? I should have thought of this possibility, but I didn't, so everything was ruined.

Aldrich came to my side and hugged me gently.

“No, it’s not. It’s just a small mistake,” he said.

“Of course, it won’t be that simple!” I was a little angry. “What I’m doing is equivalent to sending a message to the witches. Once they know that we’ve noticed their traces, they’ll be more vigilant, which means that everything will be more difficult from her on!”

“Is that really the case?” Aldrich was not angry at my sudden anger. Instead, he was quite tolerant. “If everything was as bad as you said, would you still be here?”

“What?” I didn’t understand. “But we made an agreement…”

“No, no, no, that’s not what I meant. If the situation was urgent, would the Lycan King be as calm as he is now? He should have discussed countermeasures with you and her Majesty the Queen, just like when he accepted your opinion.”

“Maybe the King and the Queen are discussing a strategy.” I buried my head in my arms. “They don’t trust me anymore because I messed everything up.”

Aldrich pulled me into his arms like a baby penguin.

“I know the Lycan King. He’s an open-minded King and a tolerant senior.” He said, “The Lycan King won’t take his anger out on you because he took your suggestion. He won’t blame you either because the negligence of a young man is always worthy of forgiveness.”

“Really? How do you know?”

“Because I’ve made a mistake before, but the King forgave me and taught me more ways to make up for it.”

Well, maybe my father wanted to teach me the same way he taught Aldrich, so he asked me to go to his and my mother’s place at night.

“Let’s not talk about this.” I pulled myself together. “Where’s the gift? I’ve been looking forward to it since last night’s dream.”

Aldrich put on an act and said, “Ha! A young lady with an unpredictable mood.”

“Don’t change the topic!” I reached out and tickled him. “Take it out, show it to me!”

“I surrender! I surrender!” He laughed until he was breathless and took out a long jewelry box from his pockets.

I opened it. There was a pendant inside, inlaid with black opals that were as bright as the night sky.

“Wow,” I couldn’t help but exclaim. “It’s so beautiful.”

Aldrich put it on for me.

“From the first time I saw you, I was attracted by your eyes that were as mysterious as the night,” he said.

“Back then, I thought that maybe I was a meteorite that the Moon Goddess had dropped into the human world.

“Otherwise, why would I be so eager to return to the night sky?”

64 The Blind Date

Aldrich’s POV:

I felt unprecedented happiness. This happiness was brought to me by Selma.

When I was still a high school student, I had once scoffed at the concept of ‘love’ and treated the love drama girls were talking about as trash. Such soft and disheartening emotions would only become a burden to the soldiers.

However, when I got to my age, though young and still rebellious, I tasted how easy it was for a person to willingly fall into depravity like a tiny electric current running through my heart.

I couldn’t help but fantasize about everything I had with Selma. Her smile, anger, and anything related to the word ‘Selma’ fascinated me.

I’d thought about the gift of the moonlight since it snowed the first day.

Perfumes or cosmetics were too plain, the beautiful dresses were a bit superficial, and the gorgeous jewelry was very vulgar. I thought hard, but I was not satisfied with any of them.

The moon that had fallen to the mortal world, what exactly was worthy of its pure moonlight?

One day, I was flying to Australia for a mission where an old friend was. He graciously invited me to visit his mine. There, I personally excavated a dazzling black opal.

Almost in an instant, I thought of Selma’s eyes.

Her eyes were as mysterious as the night, and every bit of starlight that flickered in them could easily tug at my heartstrings.

Her moves, frowns, and smiles filled her eyes with more moving emotions than fireworks.

This black opal was like a treasure the Moon Goddess had given me. It dispelled the fog and comforted my lover's heart.

After returning to the pack, I personally polished and embedded this raw stone into a necklace, making it into a pendant. Then, I secretly lengthened the silver chain so the pendant could hang over Selma's chest.

My moon liked this gem very much. Her features were even more moving than the gem.

My heart felt like it was soaking in 38°C honey water, gradually melting.

I felt like I was walking on cotton when I returned to the camp. My expression must be very strange because I was smiling like a child who'd received a large pile of soft candy during the Moonlight Festival.

The next day, I received a call from my father. He wanted me to go home and discuss some things.

My first thought was that King and my father had discussed the matter of the southern Duke and his daughter. Did my father have a mission for me?

"But on second thought, Selma said that this had to be kept a secret. Of course, she wouldn't have told me if it wasn't for the Moonlight Festival incident.

"Good evening, Son." My father was reading a travel book leisurely. Then, he looked up at me and asked, "How was the Moonlight Festival? Did you meet the girl you like?"

"About that, I don't think the Moon Goddess remembers about my marriage."

I said calmly, praying in my heart that the Moon Goddess would forgive me for lying.

I thought my father was just casually concerned, but he sat up straight seriously and motioned for me to sit down.

Wow, this was not good.

"I know you young people are not like us old bones back in the day, where we value our feelings more than fate." My father said that so kindly that I felt a little creeped out.

"Feelings have to be developed. If you stay in the military camp daily, you won't have time to fall in love."

"That's true, but I'm not in a hurry to find my true love," I replied uneasily.

No, that was a lie. I couldn't wait to marry Selma, if possible, tomorrow.

My father said, "Of course not. You're still young and have a lot of time, but this doesn't stop you from looking for potential partners, right?"

The ominous premonition grew stronger, and I didn't want to continue this topic. "In fact, I'd rather start a career before starting a family. You know, Father, I'm a soldier and spend most of my time in the camp. Half of the time I have left is spent on missions, so I can't accompany my girlfriend like other boys. No girl can stand this."

"I understand, I understand." My father didn't seem like he was going to give up. "But friends don't have to stick together all the time. Friendship can also be the foundation of love. You can find a girl with the same goal and develop a strong friendship first."

I vaguely felt that there was a hidden meaning in my father's words. "What are you trying to say?"

My father smiled and passed the phone to me.

A picture of the southern Duke's daughter, Carolyn, was on the screen.

"This is... ?" I raised my head in disbelief. "So you called me back just to have me go on a blind date?"

"I'm just introducing you to a friend." My father shook his head in disagreement.

I didn't believe his excuses!

"However, Carolyn is only sixteen years old, so this is illegal! Besides, I'm not even close to her, so it's impossible that something would develop between us."

"The law doesn't say you can't get engaged at sixteen, right?"

My father took the phone back and said, "Yesterday, you met Lennon and Carolyn. They both like you. Lennon's objective for coming to the Lycan Pack is to help his daughter find a suitable fiancé."

"This is impossible." I shook my head firmly. "I will never date a high school girl. I don't want to be in the news for molesting an underage girl."

Besides, there was already a bright moon in my heart, so how could I let others disrupt the pure moonlight?

Alpha's Rejected Mate Returns as Queen

65 An Entanglement

Aldrich's POV:

It was ridiculous. It was one thing for the southern Duke to dote on his daughter, but why would her father agree to such an outrageous proposal?

"Don't get so worked up, Son. It's just a suggestion." My father said, "There's no harm in young people spending more time together. Don't you think so?"

"No matter what you say, I won't agree. I won't get engaged to Carolyn, and I won't see her. I don't think our family is so down and out that we must rely on marriage between nobles to survive."

After a long silence, my father suddenly put down the black tea in his hand and asked, "Why?"

"What?" I was confused. "It's ridiculous to fall in love with an underage girl. Do you need other reasons?"

"It's not that," my father said firmly. "I know you, Son. So what's the real reason?"

"... This is it. I said, nothing else."

Selma's smile appeared in my mind. The Moon Goddess knew how much I wanted to say the name I had been thinking about day and night, but I couldn't. I promised Selma I would keep it a secret.

My father smiled and said, "You know what?" You ate a can of moon fudge under your blanket when you were young. Your mother asked, but you said you didn't know. This was the expression you had when you lied. I know you too well. "

I didn't know what to say. The astuteness that I was so proud of disappeared before my family.

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"I respect your choice, Aldrich, my son." My father patted my shoulder. "But no matter your decision, I just want to say that I'll be proud of you if you take responsibility like a man."

This was a conversation that would lead nowhere. It had no effect other than calming down my excited brain.

I'd long anticipated that such a day would come. If it weren't Carolyn, then it would be some other girl from a noble family. Although noble marriage was the end of the old era, it could not be denied that traditional customs impacted life.

If I had not met Selma, I was afraid I would have been like many noble young men, looking for a mate of noble birth.

In short, due to certain psychological reasons, I hid this matter from Selma.

I knew that I had never been a fearless and powerful warrior. When I faced my lover, I was like a wolf cub full of weaknesses. Any word from my lover would make me weak in the knees, so I was afraid of anything that might become a trigger between us.

However, life did not always go as one wished. The more one wanted peace, the more turbulent it would be.

Three days after the conversation, on Monday evening.

"I must say I have to find a new environment to train." Lying on the grass, Selma panted as she said, "I keep feeling like there's an invisible wall before me, which makes it very difficult for me to improve. Perhaps this is what they call a bottleneck?"

I handed her an energy drink and nodded with a smile. "That's right, my dear. Your progress has surprised me. Your bottleneck period comes faster than the average person. This is normal. We can try some new training to help you find a more suitable state."

Selma got up. Together, we snuggled up against a tree.

She took out the pendant on her chest and carefully observed it against the setting sun.

"I've always kept it close to me," she said. "When I sleep at night, it's close to my chest. It makes me feel very safe. Do you know why?"

"Why?" I shook my head.

Selma smiled slyly. She placed the black opal before her eyes. The brilliant light refracted by the gemstone could not compare to the liveliness in her eyes.

"Because it's like this, it's like you're always by my side."

I was like a little kid, dizzy from the great joy.

I kept telling myself, 'Hey, Aldrich, calm down, don't show such an embarrassing expression. This is nothing. It's just an expression of love. So it's not a big deal, right?'

However, I might have to admit that I was in love. Why couldn't I just be a young boy?

So I hugged my beloved sweetheart like a bear, and I couldn't help but suck the sweet honey from those lips that made me go crazy.

We touched our foreheads and rubbed our ears against each other under the dim setting sun.

On the way back to the palace's main hall, we met the southern Duke and Carolyn.

"Good evening, young people." The Duke looked very happy. "Did the training go well?"

"Thanks to you, everything is fine."

The southern Duke invited us for a walk, which was not common. Out of courtesy, Selma and I had no choice but to agree to this rare invitation.

We casually chatted in the garden for a while before Carolyn suddenly said, "Father, are you not going to tell Sir Aldrich the good news?"

"You're too impatient, baby!" The southern Duke adoringly reproached her but said to me, according to his daughter's request, "I think the King and the Queen will inform you tomorrow, but it's always better to get some hints in advance so that we don't lose our composure."

"What is it?" I had a bad feeling about this, especially when Carolyn constantly looked at me shyly.

The southern Duke chuckled. "Carolyn wants to make a trip back to the south. You're a brave warrior. You can escort her, right?"

It was as if I had been struck by lightning on a clear day, and I froze on the spot.

66 A Sense of Security

Aldrich's POV:

I didn't even dare to look at Selma's expression. The southern Duke's hint was too straightforward. She must have heard the hidden meaning behind it.

It was a trip called 'escort', but in reality, it was a 'blind date'.

"You know," I stammered. "The military camp doesn't allow long leave for no reason. I'm afraid I can't help you."

"That's why I went to ask for special permission from the King and the Queen." The Duke winked at me, but I only felt it was fate's merciless mockery.

This wasn't right. It was too wrong.

I quickly calmed down.

The southern Duke was acting first and reporting later.

My father had already rejected the southern Duke's invitation as I had suggested. Anyone with some social knowledge would know this was a polite rejection.

There was no way the southern Duke wouldn't notice, but he still went about his way and applied for permission to leave the army from the highest leader. This was a form of coercion.

Did the southern Duke dote on his daughter to this extent that he was willing to use such underhanded means to force me to submit?

My intuition told me something was wrong, but reality didn't allow me to overthink it. Selma had already left calmly.

I couldn't get any clues from her expressionless face, but I could tell she was burning with anger.

I hurriedly chased after her and hurriedly bade her farewell, but Carolyn held onto my arm.

"Have you been to the Southern Pack? It's no worse than the Lycan Pack. Let me tell you about the local customs and practices."

Her warm invitation only made me feel annoyed. I didn't understand why this father and daughter pair were even stickier than moon fudge.

"I'm sorry, I have some urgent matters to deal with."

I couldn't be bothered about being gentlemanly anymore as I shook off Carolyn's hand and ran after Selma.

Carolyn, behind me, seemed to be complaining about something to the southern Duke. I didn't care. I was willing to accept any subsequent accusations and punishments as long as they could eliminate Selma's misunderstanding.

"Wait a moment!" I finally caught up to her. I grabbed Selma's wrist and pulled her to a corner of the maze of shrubs. "I swear that things are not what you think. There is a huge misunderstanding here! I rejected him! I don't know why they are holding on to me like this! I've never thought of loving someone else. Please believe me!"

Selma said coldly, "You rejected him. Does that mean this isn't the first time the southern Duke has tried to set you up with Carolyn? When? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I was afraid you would react like this," I pleaded. "On the second night of the Moonlight Festival, my father suddenly asked me to go on a blind date with Carolyn."

How could I agree to that? I immediately rejected it. Please believe me, I beg you, Selma.”

“So why did you hide it from me?” Selma’s eyes were brimming with tears.” You said you wouldn’t hide any secrets from me, didn’t you? You lied to me!”

Moon Goddess, her tears were more powerful than acid. They easily corroded my heart.

“I don’t want you to misunderstand,” I said incoherently. “I swear to Moon Goddess that I don’t have any other intentions. I kept it from you because I don’t want you to be troubled by these things.

“You are a kind girl, Selma. Although you always act like you don’t care, I can feel the hidden uneasiness you have when you face me.

“I was afraid that I didn’t give you enough security. I was afraid you would be even more upset if you knew about this, so I kept it from you.

“But now, I know I was wrong. I shouldn’t have used one contradiction to cover up another. I should have given you more security instead of grabbing onto what you’ve already lost.

“Please be angry at me, Selma. This is my fault. But please don’t look at me so coldly. I beg you, my lover, don’t give me the ‘death sentence’.”

I looked at her with hope, but Selma gently broke free from my hand.

Her expression was so sorrowful.

“This isn’t just your fault, Aldrich. Maybe we didn’t give each other enough security.” She said, “There are some secrets between us. There aren’t many, but they can’t be ignored. They’re also fatal enough.

“I don’t blame you. In fact, do you know? Even I don’t know why I’m angry.”

“I want to...”

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“We need to calm down.”

Just like that, she passed the final sentence.

Selma left. I did not notice when she left because the moment she said that, it was as if my soul had been taken away by the witch, leaving me with a chaotic body to face this sad world.

After a long while, I realized that Selma had 'broken up' with me.

Her words were ambiguous, but the meaning was clear.

I didn't understand.

It was just a small secret.

How did things come to this?

67 The Awakening

Selma Payne's POV:

"Your Highness, are you alright?"

I looked at my ashen self in the mirror and heard Kara's worried voice.

I wanted to tell her that I was fine and had no problem. I wanted to tell her not to worry, but I failed.

Because I was in a very, very, very bad state right now.

Was Aldrich to blame for this? Should I blame him for hiding the truth?

I thought I should because I was his girlfriend. We shouldn't keep any secrets between us.

However, I didn't think I should, because I was his girlfriend. There shouldn't have been any secrets, yet, I lied to him from the beginning.

'Selma' was only a shadow of the past, a forced disguise.

'Madeline' is the current me, the princess of the Lycan Pack, the future Queen.

The real liar was not Aldrich but me. I used a fake identity to gain his love from the beginning, and I couldn't even show this love in front of everyone.

A strong sense of nausea hit me again. I retched but could only spit out bitter bile.

Kara's voice became louder and louder. Finally, she said that if I didn't open the door, she would have to get the spare key and asked me to forgive her.

I washed my face and forced myself to smile. I opened the door and said, "It's okay. I'm just a little nauseous. Maybe I'm too tired from training."

My shoddy performance did not fool Kara. She did not listen to my orders for the first time and forcefully invited my parents and Tracy.

My mother hugged me as soon as she entered the room. Her eyes were red as she pressed me into her arms.

This strong woman could deal with the difficulties of the Council of Elders with a poker face. No matter how busy the state affairs were, they could not shake her. However, she was unusually weak when it came to me. I always made her cry and turned her love into a sharp blade of worry that stabbed her.

And my father, this powerful and magnanimous King would only lose the calmness he was so proud of when he had to deal with me.

I'd always been lying and hurting others, be it, my lover or family.

This made me hate myself even more. Finally, I gently moved away from my mother's arms and lay on the goose feather pillow.

"Don't worry, Father, Mother. I am just too tired from training. Kara is too nervous."

I laughed and spoke, but soon I couldn't laugh anymore. I saw my stiff reflection in their eyes. Their expressions were so strange as if they were afraid that they couldn't see my abnormality.

My parents didn't say anything. Instead, they simply held my hand tightly.

Tracy rushed over and did some basic checks on me before using a special test paper to test my blood. She said solemnly, "I think Your Highness will have to shift your awakening in advance. Your hormone changes are too chaotic, which may disrupt your normal growth pace. Your wolf will wake up early."

My mother exclaimed nervously, "Will there be any negative effects?"

Tracy shook her head and said, "This is a very rare occurrence. There are no conclusive cases. I can only say that there are pros and cons to this. The best case scenario is that the princess is safe and sound. The worst-case scenario is... a failure in the awakening and her Highness' wolf will go into eternal slumber."

This time, even my father couldn't remain calm. He immediately gave Tracy an order, "From now on, you will receive the highest authorization from the medical department. You have the right to mobilize and use any resources you think are necessary. You must ensure Selma's safety."

Tracy's brows furrowed as he accepted the mission and immediately went to prepare.

While they were talking, I felt my nausea getting stronger and stronger, so much so that my consciousness was being tortured to the point of blurriness. My control over my body weakened. Someone was replacing my soul and controlling this trembling body inch by inch.

Was someone calling me?

I heard my mother's voice, my father's, Kara's, and even Aldrich's...

Wait, were the girls here too?

And my adoptive parents, Rhode...

Benson...

Why were they here? Was today the public opening day of the palace?

I didn't know why I was still in the mood to joke around. The feeling of losing control was so strange, but I felt an inexplicable sense of joy for some reason.

It felt like family members smiling at each other or old friends reuniting at the same time. Everything was so strange, but at the same time, so familiar.

All of a sudden, the noisy calls in my ears disappeared. Instead, I felt warmth all over my body, as if I had returned to my mother's womb.

My umbilical cord was connected to another person. I couldn't see her nor touch her; only the umbilical cord that tightly connected us was saying, "This is your closest half, your most trusted friend."

I struggled to open my eyes to see what she looked like; the girl connected to my blood. However, I had already lost control of my body. All I could do was try my best to move my eyelids as if seeing her face was the only thing that kept me going.

Soon.

Just a little bit more.

It'd be done soon.

Finally, I used all my strength to open my eyes a little.

Then, I met a pair of dark eyes.

She said, "You are me, and I am you. Hello, I'm Maxine."

68 Maxine

Selma Payne's POV:

After an unknown amount of time, I opened my eyes.

The night was dark outside the window. There was no light in my bedroom, only a lot of candles. There seemed to be some herb added to the wax, filling the whole room with a bitter and sweet fragrance.

"Is there anyone..." I was shocked by myself the moment I spoke. My voice sounded like a rusty saw!

I picked up the cup of water by the bed and took a sip before lying down again. This slight movement exhausted me again.

"Are you alright?" A cold female voice sounded, frightening me.

I looked around but didn't see anyone.

"I'm not in the room, little fool. I'm in your body." The female voice was a little impatient. "Are you always sleeping in biology class? How can you not have any common sense?"
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"I'm just too tired. I don't usually do this..." I retorted subconsciously.

Wait a minute.

I suddenly realized that she said she was in my body. So didn't that make her my wolf?

My awakening succeeded?

My wolf sounded helpless. "Don't act like a seven or eight-year-old child who has never seen the world. That's right. I am your wolf. Stop screaming in your heart. You are so noisy."

"Alright, I'm sorry," I apologized softly.

"It's fine." My wolf said, "Let me introduce myself again. I am Maxine."

"Hello, I'm Selma or Madeline."

"Or?" Maxine sneered disdainfully, "How can a person have two names? Don't you know who you are?"

I retorted, "I only have two names. 'Selma' was given to me by my adoptive parents, and 'Madeline' is my real name. They don't conflict with each other. So there's nothing strange about it."

"Really? That's not what you think, you two-faced little girl."

"Don't speak as if you're the elder. In fact, you were only born a few hours ago!"

I wasn't as excited as I was at the beginning. Maxine was an interesting wolf, and I liked her very much. However, when I thought about how I would have to spend the rest of my life with such a vicious wolf, I couldn't help but shiver.

My thoughts couldn't escape Maxine's observation, and she bluntly said, "You're too used to running away. You'll shut yourself up if someone tells the truth you don't like to hear. Forgive me for being blunt, but a person who doesn't accept admonishments with an 'open mind' can't be a good Queen."

Did she not know that I knew she was telling the truth?

But I couldn't change it. I didn't know how to change it. I knew my problem from the start, but at the critical moment, running away seemed to become the easiest way for me. When everything was over, I realized I had messed up everything again.

Just like what he did to Aldrich.

How was he now?

I couldn't help but think.

I didn't say we were 'breaking up'. Back then, what was left of my rationality was still holding on to me so that I wouldn't be stupid enough to jump off the cliff. But 'calming down' wasn't any better, was it? The only difference between that and 'breaking up' was the ver.

Maxine sensed everything about me and said, "Look, you're regretting it again. Silly girl, don't you feel tired? She was always competing with herself in the cycle of 'regret'. If you care so much about Aldrich, why don't you go to him immediately and talk it out? It's just a blind date. You saw Aldrich's attitude. You should understand how much he loves you; he would never have agreed to that."

I held my head in pain and said, "That's not the problem! Of course, I know that Aldrich didn't betray me!"

"So what's the problem?" Maxine calmly analyzed, "Is it you? You don't dare to meet him because you hid your true identity?"

I lifted the blanket and wanted to shout to vent my emotions, but in the end, I could only fall back onto the bed.

“... That’s right,” I said. “I’m afraid. I don’t dare to clarify things to Aldrich. It’s funny, right? It’s just an identity and a name. It’s not a big deal. I can’t believe I’m afraid of such a thing.”

“You don’t trust Aldrich, and you don’t trust yourself. Why?” Maxine asked, hitting the nail on the head.

“I don’t know either. If I have to find a reason, I think it’s because I lied.”

“Because you didn’t just lie to Aldrich; you lied to everyone too, right? You’ve hidden your love from others.”

I nodded numbly. “Perhaps from the very beginning, choosing to hide it was a mistake. If I had been bold enough to make it public, Aldrich wouldn’t have lied about being single, and the southern Duke and Carolyn wouldn’t have fallen for him. We wouldn’t have quarreled, and my awakening wouldn’t have had an accident. It’s a chain reaction, and the root of everything is the initial concealment.”

Man created lies, but he could not control them. They were like a sliding ladder that led to an unknown place. Once you stepped on it, you could only go with the flow.

69 Getting Used To Each Other

Selma Payne’s POV:

“Since you understand the root of the problem, can’t you solve it? Everything started from concealment, but it can also end with concealment. So why don’t you just reveal it? Announce your identity to Aldrich, and announce your relationship to the King and the Queen. That way, the problem will be solved.”

“No!” I flatly refused.

“Why? You have to admit that this is the most effective method.”

That was right. This was the most effective method.

So, why shouldn’t I do it?

“Alright, you coward. You don’t dare to, right?” Maxine said disdainfully.

I ignored her.

Although she was right, I didn't dare to because I was afraid to see the disappointed eyes of my loved ones and relatives.

"Poor girl, but you have no other choice! Either you go now, or I'll do it," Maxine said overbearingly. "I'll take away the control of your body, confess to Aldrich, then kiss and have sex."

"You can't do this!" I shrieked and blushed.

"Humph, so why don't you try and see if I can?"

"We... we just had the awakening. We are not at the stage where we can freely switch between the two. You can't control me," I said guiltily.

"So why don't you try and see if I can? Hurry up, don't dilly-dally. Bring out the Queen in you!"

"I'm still far from becoming the Queen," I mumbled.

"Who cares?"

Maxine was getting restless, and I felt that my control over my body had loosened a little.

"Alright! It's done! I'll agree to your request!"

I quickly agreed. If Maxine wanted to control my body and Aldrich, Moon Goddess, I might as well jump off the cliff again!

"This is more like it!" Maxine laughed in satisfaction, then silently hid in the depths of my body.

"I'm watching. Don't try to play any tricks!" She didn't forget to threaten me.

"As you command, Queen Maxine."

I helplessly dragged my exhausted body and opened the door.

Kara and Tracy sat on the chairs by the door while my parents sat on the sofa with their eyes closed.

"You're awake!" Kara would always be the first to notice me. She looked at Tracy happily and asked, "Does this mean that the Princess is fine?"

Before Tracy could reply, my parents hugged me tightly.

“Thank you, Moon Goddess!” They said, “It’s great that you woke up safely!”

We waited for Tracy’s answer.

The royal doctor wiped the sweat from her forehead and used some instruments I didn’t recognize to examine me. They took up half of my room and the reception room. Then, she happily announced, “I can say with certainty that Her Highness the Princess is safe and sound! Your awakening must have succeeded. Have you met your wolf?”

I nodded. “Yes, she’s called Maxine. She’s a good and understanding girl.”

She was just a little straightforward.

I secretly added in my heart, and as expected, I received a protest from Maxine.

“Oh, this is the second best news I’ve heard today,” my mother said with relief. “Maxine, great. What a good name.”

“Maybe,” my father said happily. “Can Pymon and Irene meet her?”

Without waiting for my reply, Maxine had already jubilantly agreed. I could only say, “Of course. When we learn how to transform into our wolf form, we’ll inform Pymon and Irene as soon as possible.”

Under my parents’ and Tracy’s suggestions, I was again helped back to my bed to rest.

“You need more sleep to recover your energy,” Tracy said. “Abundant experience will allow you and Maxine to get along better.”

Thus, I proudly told Maxine, “I’m not trying to run away. After all, I can’t disobey a doctor, right?”

“Don’t think you can escape,” Maxine was furious. “I will keep an eye on you!”

The awakening had used up too much of my energy. Within a few minutes, I fell asleep again.

When I woke up, it was already noon. The first thing I did was check my phone, but there was nothing. There was no call, no message, and no contact from Aldrich.

This made me lay back on the bed in frustration.

Should he go?

I was conflicted.

In the past, every time we quarreled, Aldrich would be the first to give in. But, this time, he didn't say a single word. Did this mean that he was angry for real?

If I went to him now, would I be adding fuel to the fire?

What should I do if he said coldly, "Haven't we broken up?"

Leave in sadness? Or try to make him stay?

Maxine couldn't bear to listen any longer and screamed in my body, "Don't act like a middle school girl. Do your lips and tongue have some hidden diseases that prevent you from speaking? Just give in first. What's the use of thinking about those things now? Don't give yourself any reason to retreat!"

She was very eccentric, but just like before, she was right.

Thus, I temporarily put away my weak emotions, tidied myself up, and headed back to the military camp.

70 The Weight Of The Secret

Selma Payne's POV:

"He took a leave and went home?"

"Yes, Miss." The soldier on duty said, "Sir Aldrich will be back this afternoon."

"Alright, thank you."

After learning that Aldrich was not in the camp, my imposing manner instantly dropped by three levels.

"You're not allowed to retreat! I'm not joking," Maxine threatened me.

"But he's not here..."

"Then, go to his house. Don't you know where Duke Frank's mansion is?"

"Is there a need for that?"

"Of course, there is! Please get this straight, little princess; you and Aldrich did not just have a simple quarrel, okay? If you want both sides to agree that you're done for, then don't go. If you still love him, hurry up and explain it to them, so these two fools don't have to act in a sh*tty drama! I don't want to be the audience of that!"

"We're not done!" I retorted softly, but I still did as she said.

I didn't want anyone to see through me, so I asked the driver to send me to the park and lied that I had an appointment with the girls to meet here. After the driver left, he took a taxi to the duke's mansion.

The security here was tight. The guard stopped the car from a distance and said politely but firmly, "I'm sorry, Miss. This is private property. Unauthorized people are not allowed in."

"I'm here to see Sir Aldrich," I told him calmly. "Tell him that I'm Selma, and he'll understand. "

The guard nodded and made a phone call. Half a minute later, he trotted over and said, "Forgive my rudeness, Miss. You can go in now."

The tall iron door slowly opened.

Stepping on the soft grass, I felt like my heart was hanging in the air with my steps. But then, it broke free from my body and impatiently flew to Aldrich, staring at me like a tiger watching its prey. Once I said anything wrong or made any false move, it would fall without pity and tear itself into pieces.

The servant pushed the door open for me. Someone was standing in front of the door. He had been anxiously pacing back and forth, but when he saw the door open, he immediately put on a calm expression. However, he didn't even know what to do with his hands. It was Aldrich.

"Good morning, Selma," He smiled and greeted me as if nothing had happened yesterday. "Why are you here?"

I didn't know how I was so calm. "We need to talk, Aldrich."

He didn't say anything, but he couldn't keep his calm expression any longer and took me to his room.

As soon as we entered, he hugged me tightly and buried himself in my neck like a child.

I was shocked and subconsciously wanted to push him away.

"I don't want to break up," he said in a muffled voice.

"What?" I laughed and said, "I haven't said anything yet."

Aldrich raised his head and gently leaned on my forehead, saying, "If it was something good you wanted to say, you don't have to say anything. I'm willing to do anything. If it's a bad thing, you don't have to say anything, either. I'll never agree."

“Then tell me, what is good and what is bad?”

“For example... ” He pouted like a child. “If you want to kiss me, it’s good. If you want to break up with me, like yesterday, it’s bad.”

I fell silent, and he put away his childish attitude.

After a while, he took my hand and said, “Let’s not give each other the cold shoulder anymore, okay?”

“You didn’t contact me. You didn’t send me any messages or call me.” I wanted to stay calm, but I couldn’t help but sob.

“It’s my fault,” Aldrich took me into his arms. “I was too timid. I didn’t dare to contact you. I was afraid you were still angry with me. Just thinking about your expression when you left yesterday, my heart feels like it’s about to break into pieces.”

‘Don’t!’

‘No!’

I couldn’t stand Aldrich apologizing to me, not knowing that his apology would only make me despise myself more.

So. I interrupted him and pushed him away. Then, holding back my tears, I said, “Aldrich, I have something to tell you.”

“... ”

He fell silent, and tears filled his determined eyes.

I forced myself not to look and spilled my guts and heart.

“I lost my composure yesterday. I know that nothing is going on between you and Carolyn. It’s just that... I care too much about you. I don’t want you to be involved with any other woman. Even if it’s just Carolyn’s unrequited love, which is sickening, I don’t think I can change that.

“I’m not angry at you for hiding it from me. In fact, I’m overjoyed at every consideration and protection you have for me. I said that because I felt guilty that you didn’t do anything wrong. But, Aldrich, I’m the liar. I’ve been hiding something from you from the beginning.”

Aldrich’s eyes widened in shock. “What are you talking about? I don’t understand.”

“Of course, you don’t understand because I’ve been hiding it from you.” I was already sobbing. “I didn’t just lie to you; I lied to everyone. I love you so much, my lover, but I can’t stand being deceived. I don’t want the person you love not to be the real me. I don’t want our love to be hidden in the corner of the training ground.

“I hate keeping secrets!”