

Family Meeting

Eric woke up with a start. I was feeling very refreshed, and I couldn't help but wonder why. Then the day came back to me. Well, I guess it was three days ago. Fuck. I reached for my mate. She was sleeping somewhat restlessly. What concerned me was the fact that she looked exhausted. I wondered if she slept much these past few days. It certainly didn't look she had. I pulled her into me gently so she could keep sleeping. No one had linked me yet so; I could take a moment to hold my mate and just watched her sleep.

After several moments Haley woke with a start. She looked up into my eyes. Relief and exhaustion passed through our bond. I was about to say something when she started to sob. I whispered in her ear, "Haley. Angel, it's alright I'm back." Haley spoke through her tears, "I'm so tired, Eric. I missed you so much. We don't even have names for the babies yet. I'm so scared." I held her. I wasn't sure where this thing about the pups name came from, but I comforted her, "It's alright. We will talk and pick names, but you need sleep. Just tell me why you are scared, Angel."

She whispered into my chest, "The babies are already so powerful, Eric. People will want to take them. I can't lose them, not our babies." I held her and growled. Thor was pissed at the thought of someone taking our pups. I controlled my anger telling her, "We will protect them. I swear to you that we will. Your dad will help us. Just go back to sleep, little mate. Let me take care of you and them. I'll protect us. You've clearly been working this whole time. I'll take over now. Just rest, Angel." Slowly her sobs faded to whimpering. Then her breathing evened out.

I watched her, making sure she was truly asleep. Caleb linked me, "I feel like I just had the best nap. My mate was NOT happy with me. She's been making training schedules to help out Haley. Boy am I in the doghouse. In other news the warriors on Lucas' door have informed me he wants to speak to you before he leaves. Dylan called him. We missed a hell of a lot during our three day unwanted hiatus." I answered, "I'll be right there. I want a warrior on our door. Haley is sleeping now, and it doesn't seem like she got much while we were out."

Caleb snorted, "From what highlights I've gotten from my sons, she did not. There's already a warrior on your door. Just tell him to stay." I was stunned, "Why is there already a warrior outside the door?" Caleb answered, "Your mate ordered one on all our doors." I sighed, "Of course she did. That was smart. I'm coming." Slowly I extracted myself from Haley. I placed my pillow in her arms. She inhaled it deeply, which made me oddly happy. My scent calmed her, even in her sleep. I left her to catch up on her rest.

I saw Haley's guard was also standing there. I knew they'd let me see them. I turned to my warrior. I told him, "Stay and assist your Luna's guard. No one gets

in except me for now.” My warrior nodded, “Those were the Luna’s orders as well. I’ll make sure no one gets in, Alpha. Not that I think they would get past those guys.” He nodded to Haley’s guard. I snorted, “No, they wouldn’t. All the same...” My warrior nodded again.

I walked down the hall smiling. Haley had done quite well in my absence. Which didn’t surprise me; it was comforting though. I hadn’t had much time to show her the ropes of being a Luna with the chaos surrounding us, and she’d slid into the role perfectly. All while filling my role as well.

I strode into the war room to see a hoard of people already waiting. Bjourn, Marcus, dad, mom, my brothers, their mates, Caleb, Jim, Nick, and Lucas all sat there. I smiled and told them honestly, “It’s good to see everyone again. Lucas, I’m guessing you need to head out soon. So, you go first with what you have to say.”

Lucas smiled, “First, I wanted to say thank you to your mate, but Caleb said you told him she was sleeping. Jim and Nick said she barely slept while we were out, I’m glad she is getting some much needed rest. She is a credit to you, Eric. I’m still very upset she doesn’t have a sister. I’ll be on my way, but she has my thanks.” I nodded as he left.

I looked at Jim and Nick. I said, “I’m assuming Haley sent our dues off to the council.” Nick answered, “Umm, no she didn’t.” I sighed, “Well, they will just have to understand I hadn’t had a chance to catch her up to speed on everything. We can send it today. Why didn’t you two tell Haley to send it?” Jim quickly answered, “Because you don’t owe anything. No one here does.” I looked around the room. The only person not surprised was Caleb.

He shrugged and informed us, “The boys told me what happened. I for one can’t wait to watch the tape.” I frowned, “Tape of what?” Jim smiled, “Of Haley ripping the council to metaphorical pieces. Your pack, your brothers, and Lucas’ pack do not owe dues for the next three months. This is a symbolic gesture as recompense for the three days you were unconscious.”

He handed me a piece of paper and continued, “Here’s the permanently lowered rate for dues moving forward for all the packs. It’s signed by all council members, which is why Lucas wanted to thank Haley. Beta Dylan told him about the dues.” I took the paper and passed it to Jackson.

I was stunned. I asked, “And how the FUCK did she manage to do this?” Nick and Jim laughed. Nick answered, “In a very Haley sarcastic, insulting, savvy way. The tape is great. Beta Dylan watched it with popcorn. He called us to say he was in love with your mate.” I growled, “Excuse me?” Jim smiled, “Yeah, he did. He even told Haley she has a place to go; should she tire of you.” I growled in anger.

Jackson sighed, “Eric, it’s fine. Haley’s not leaving.” I was struggling not to get in my car and go punch Dylan Frost. Thor snarled, “Or we could shift and run.” He had a point. I shoved those feelings aside. There was work to do. I sighed, “Alright. I’ll deal with Dylan later. Let’s start on the paperwork we’ve missed. How many disputes do we have to get through today? We will prioritize those over the paperwork.”

Jim cut a glare at my brothers’ mates. I looked at him surprised. What was Jim upset with them for? He looked them all dead in the eye when he said, “None of you have any paperwork left to do. The disputes were handled as well.” Jackson spoke first, “Baby, that was nice of you guys.” Molly looked ashamed and looked away from Jackson. Thor growled in my head not liking where this was going. Nick spoke, “They didn’t do any of it. Haley did it all. Molly did offer the last day, but Jackson’s was already done.”

I stared at them in shock. I shook myself, “I’m sorry. You’re saying Haley did four packs paperwork AND handled the disputes?” They nodded. I growled, “By herself?” Nick nodded and pointed to the middle of the table, “Plus she did that.” He removed a black sheet covering a dome shaped package on the table. We all gasped at the sight that greeted us. I shouted, “HOW THE FUCK DID I NOT SEE THAT?” Thor snorted, “Or smell it. It has no smell.” I stared in shock at Claudia’s head staring back at us. Claudia had definitely seen better days. She looked like she had a rough ending.

My mom shrieked, “Get that out of here!” I went to pick it up. Jim and Nick shouted simultaneously, “No! Don’t!” I touched the glass encasing Claudia’s head and a light shock went through me. Haley’s voice echoed in the room, “I think the fuck not! The reminder of when I say a bitch is a fucking psycho will remain until I think you understand that it means THE BITCH IS A FUCKING PSYCHO.” I looked around the room, but Haley wasn’t here.

Marcus and Bjourn burst into laughter. Nick spoke, “So, Haley’s a little salty about the Claudia situation. She fairy charmed the dome to do well, that.” All the men laughed. The women looked slightly disturbed. Marcus chuckled, “That’s so Haley it’s insane,”

My mom spoke, “Eric, you need to speak to Haley. She’s being unreasonable.” I laughed, “About the head? It’s my office, I can cover it while you’re in here. I have no problem with it though.” My mom sighed, “Not about that... though maybe about that. No, Haley’s been in a snit since she got back.”

I quirked an eyebrow. Really? I said, “Since she did a shit ton of paperwork, handled disputes, and tortured someone alone? I’m surprised you don’t know exactly why she’s pissed.” Cassandra huffed, “Her brothers mates tortured Claudia with her, she wasn’t alone. She’s mad at us.” I frowned, “Ok... So, she’s pissed at

you for not helping her with paperwork and pack disputes? I can't say I don't understand her feelings. I would like an explanation as to why she did it all alone. Particularly when she has the least experience as a Luna. Why didn't any of you help her?"

Jackson added, "I would like to know that answer as well. Separately my brothers and I have a lot of paperwork, you guys know that. Combined, it's a nightmare. What were you guys doing while Haley did it all by herself? Then when she handled all the pack disputes?" Jessica started crying. Molly sighed, "We didn't know she was doing it alone until last night." Nick growled, "You should have known. You didn't ask." Molly looked away, "You're right. We didn't." I growled now, "Why? Someone tell me why this happened" My mom answered, "Because she was mad at us. Plus, the girls and I didn't want to leave our mates. You know you would've felt the same way. Eric moved everything into Haley's hospital room when she was unconscious from removing that charm."

We all looked at them like they had three heads, "I understand the inclination, but since you brought up that I still did work while being my mate's side. Which means your argument is lacking. Did you ask anyone to bring the work to your rooms?" Jim snorted, "No, they didn't ask a damn thing."

My mom cleared her throat, "Make it more obvious whose side you two are on. You were supposed to talk to her." Nick growled, "We did. We were already on her side before you asked us to talk to her. We just thought you all needed to talk. When we actually opened our mouths and spoke to her about it, Haley gave her thoughts on the matter. I've gotta tell you, you're going to be slapped in the face with some hard truths when you actually manage to speak to her."

My mom huffed, "We didn't do anything wrong!" Nick glared at her. Jim said, "You did, and I think you know it. This is for her to slap you in the face with though, not me." My eyebrows couldn't get any higher on my forehead. Caleb's mouth was on the floor. Jim nor Nick had ever spoken back to my mother their entire lives. My brothers looked extremely conflicted. My dad was dumbfounded. I was searching for words to say when a burly woman burst into the room. I startled when I saw an angry Catherine behind her.

I questioned, "Catherine?" Catherine glowered, "Would you care to explain this, Alpha?" She pointed at the woman who had burst into the room. I frowned, "I couldn't if I wanted to. I don't know this woman." Marcus snorted. Bjourن greeted, "Hello, Doris." I spun to face them. Doris answered, "Prince Bjourن, Prince Marcus, it is nice to see you both. Prince Eric, it is an honor to make your acquaintance."

Bjourn evaluated her. Marcus spoke, "So Haley knows." I frowned asking, "Haley knows what? What is going on?" Doris stepped forward, "I am Haley's OB in the Hackura realm. The king sent me here to oversee the rest of her pregnancy."

I might have to surgically get my eyebrows lowered from the top of my head. I was fairly certain they were stuck now. My mother snorted, "Eric, you have to talk to her. This is too far." Catherine glowered at Doris. She turned to me, "Will you please tell this woman the Luna is MY patient?" Doris rounded on her, "I do not answer to Prince Alpha Eric. I answer to the King of the Hackura. HE sent me to oversee the Princess. At the princess' request." I sat down even more surprised. This was Haley's wish? Not Titus'?

My mother glared at me. I glared back and said, "Someone explain before I lose my mind." My mom huffed, "Ask your mate then." I growled, "She needs to sleep! She's less than one month from her due date and ran four PACKS the last several days. WITHOUT HELP! Making all the reasons you spouted about her needing to be stress free for the rest of her pregnancy is quite clearly bullshit, because she's EXHAUSTED! And I have no idea what's going on, but it's clearly some petty bullshit that someone is going to explain to me RIGHT FUCKING NOW!"

Marcus spoke, "I'm going on out a limb and guess what happened. Haley found out that you didn't want to keep her in the dark about the Claudia situation." Nick and Jim stared at the women, none of whom were talking. Jim sighed, "Marcus is right. She found out when we got back. They all shouted at her that she wasn't supposed to be with you. She was deeply hurt and felt betrayed. She asked how they knew about the meeting and quickly figured out they told you not to tell her. They told her Catherine agreed with them. That she had informed you Haley could go into early labor with any more stress during this pregnancy, given all she's endured already." Catherine growled, "Which is true." Bjourn snorted, "Which is why Doris is here."

I grabbed my hair with my hands and pulled. I asked, "Which is why? Someone break this down for my like I'm a child because I'm not hearing why yet." Bjourn looked at Marcus. Marcus nodded and answered, "You know Haley has trust issues, especially with doctors and witches. Well, it's most people in general; the exception was your family. Which sadly, has probably changed while we were unavailable." He turned to our pack OB and addressed her. He said, "Catherine, you did talk about Haley's care to a lot of people that aren't her. She doesn't trust you now. I am a doctor myself. I do understand, but Haley should've been included in the conversations about her own health." I closed my eyes as it hit me. Marcus was right.

Catherine was mad. She threw her hands in the air, "Oh for god's sake. It was the Alpha's! We discuss people's care together. That's how a pack works." Bjourn answered her, "No, it wasn't just the Alpha's. First, you met with her husband's

mother and sisters in law to discuss her care. THEN you brought it to the Alpha's, us, Caleb, Jim, Nick, AND Lucas Lyons, who literally had no right to information. You never spoke to Haley about managing her own stress though. I myself would be upset if I was my little sister." He paused then added, "Not this upset, but I don't have her past and trust issues. What you have done is a HIPAA violation, and you seem to forget she's studying to be a therapist. That she hasn't filed a grievance of some sort for violating her trust leaves you in a very lucky position. I'd let it go if I were you."

Catherine's mouth slammed shut. Her face turned red with shame. My mom spoke, "This is ridiculous. Eric, you can reason with Haley. Catherine is a great doctor." I agreed, "She is." I turned to Catherine and told her honestly, "Catherine, I have absolute faith in you as a doctor and as a pack member. I know you would deliver my pups without a problem; unfortunately, we all stepped into a pile of shit. None of us, including me, considered Haley's past with doctors. Or her simple rights to have a say in her healthcare. We have all made decisions without her concerning her health. I know the goal was to keep her happy and calm, but it would be very hypocritical of all of us to not accept her choice now. I am very truly sorry, Catherine." Catherine nodded, "No, I understand. I'll show Doris around. I'll speak to Luna Haley and apologize. I would still like to assist Doris when the time comes, but I'll leave that decision to the Luna. Come on Doris." Doris bowed to Me, Marcus, and Bjourn before they left.

Harold spoke, "I'm changing the topic, but Jess I don't understand. So, what if Haley was upset with you all? You know when I'm not able to lead, you're in charge of our pack. The paperwork you didn't do, fine. The disputes of our pack though? Honey, you had to know those were being handled." Jessica had tears streaming down her face. She nodded, "Yes, I did. Molly was the only one who didn't know about it." Molly flinched. It seemed she didn't know they'd kept it from her. Harold grabbed her hands, "I'm not upset. I just don't understand." Jessica cried, "I was being selfish. I didn't want to leave you, and then I heard Haley was handling it and... we just let her. I'm sorry."

Jackson asked, "Why though? I'm sure she handled it well, but she has never handled a dispute in the pack." Jim jumped in, "She did a great job. When she had questions Nick and I helped her." Jackson shook his head and said, "I'm grateful you helped her, but it's beside the point. As I said I'm sure she did a good job. She's seen fairies and Hackura court I'm sure that helped her, but we are different. It's just not something she should've had to do alone. She should've had four helpers. Mom you led all our packs, you were her best resource. Why was this kept from Molly?" No one spoke.

Eventually Jim did, "Molly was the only one wavering on thinking what you all did was right. The others couldn't face her because they know she's right. They are being hypocrites. They are probably hoping if they let it ride out

Haley will be herself and apologize.” I asked, “Is that true?” My mother stubbornly replied, “I don’t think Haley is right.” Jim growled, “You can’t fool a fairy, Cassandra. She already knows your motivations. So, if I were you, I’d come to terms with it before your family meeting. To be honest, I highly doubt you’ll get her to attend; If you do, I can’t say you’ll enjoy it.” My dad spoke, “Of course Haley will come for the family meeting.” Nick stared at me before saying, “Not unless Eric makes her, she won’t. She’s upset and hurt and she has every right to be. She’d have reason enough after you letting her deal with all the pack issues, which you piled on after you betrayed her.”

Shana offered, “Families forgive each other no matter who is right or wrong. She’s not even mad at her brothers according to Molly.” Jim spoke again, “As I’m sure Molly explained to you, Haley’s brothers aren’t you. She has no doubt they will hear her side and apologize. She doesn’t even think they will need to hear her side to apologize. She pointed out her brothers haven’t expected her to divulge all her secrets for the sake of their family. For fuck’s sake we ALL heard about how she didn’t speak to her family for a while. Marcus bribed her with Dr. Pepper, and in my opinion that’s really because he’s her savior. Marcus, feel free to correct me if I’m wrong, but you didn’t then share her secrets when she told you hers. Just because your family is open and honest and has no secrets.”

I closed my eyes in frustration. They were right. We did do that. Then we closed her out and kept a secret because we thought it was what was best. Marcus spoke, “No, I’ve never betrayed my sister’s confidence by sharing the secrets that she told me.” Bjourn added, “We also have secrets in our family. Besides, my sister is very much like a fairy about things being fair. She hates one sided shit.”

I sighed, “Great. I know the problem already. Mom, we will have a family meeting. Maybe not today though. I still need to talk to Haley.” My mom glared, “We will have a family meeting tonight. You have no paperwork to catch up on.” I glared back, “I’d check your audacity mother because that is no thanks to any of you.” That shut her up quickly. Normally I’d feel guilty about the tears that pricked her eyes, but not today. She’d deserved that.

I wanted to move on, so I asked, “Is Alpha Harden dead like his daughter?” Nick answered, “No, Haley said he was yours.” A knock interrupted us. I yelled, “Come in.” Astrid and Torvi bounded inside. Both Cambridge men smiled. Torvi spoke first and to my surprise she spoke to me with a smile on her face, “Eric. May I call you Eric?” I nodded, “You just did, and we are family. So, sure.” She smiled and reached out her hand to shake mine. I cast a glance at Marcus, who looked just as confused as I was. After she shook my hand, Astrid did the same.

We all looked at each other. Torvi spoke again, “I just needed to shake your hand. When Marcus gets out of the doghouse with me; he may as well. I have learned new things.” I was totally lost. Astrid added, “Oh, I feel the same way. Bjourn may

worship at your feet. Who would've thought that watching your honeymoon sexstraveganza, with Haley of all people, would be so enlightening?" I opened my mouth and shut it several times.

Torvi continued, "And we didn't even get to see it all! I mean my god. No wonder she's having triplets. Remind me when we see her later Astrid, I need to ask her what one of those toys was." Astrid nodded, "OH! I know exactly which one you are talking about."

I held up my hands, "You should ask Miley. They were her toys. We stole them and have since replaced them with a blank check. How exactly did you come to see our honeymoon?" Astrid laughed, "Little Haley didn't get around to telling you yet? Her island house is under video surveillance. It even has audio." Jackson snorted. I tried to will my hard on away, knowing I could watch that back. Torvi brought me back to the conversation saying, "I hope you don't mind that was saw it, Eric. It was part of Claudia's torture that Haley decided on. Plus, sex doesn't faze a Hackura. It's not a big deal to us."

Harold and Caleb spit out their drinks. Nick and Jim looked shocked too. They must not have known about that. I spoke, "I don't mind. I'm not shy." Astrid chuckled, "We figured. The fact that you were constantly asking Haley to tell you who she belonged to just about destroyed your former lover." Torvi laughed, "I think the parts where he said he was Haley's ripped her apart the most." She dropped that word bomb on me and turned to Marcus.

She smiled, "Marcus, Haley had some fabulous pointers on torture when she wasn't running all the packs." She cut a glare at the women in the room. Molly spoke, "I don't believe we got to meet at the wedding. I'm Molly." Torvi said nothing to her. Astrid laughed, "We know who you are. When the nicest girl we've ever met is mad at you; we join her in solidarity. So, fix things with our little sister and we will introduce ourselves. Though you are less to blame than them. Knowing who has your back is sometimes a hard lesson, Molly Connors. They didn't have yours. They cut you out because you disagreed, which hurt your relationship with Haley. Believe people when they show you who they are. It's something we teach in our realm, and I have learned particularly as the future queen." Bjourn laughed and Marcus snorted.

My mom asked, "Are you married to her brothers? I thought you weren't married yet. Where were you two while she was running all the packs?" I gaped at her. Torvi smiled, "You know we aren't married yet. We don't rush to the altar in the Hackura realm. Royal weddings are a big deal, but that doesn't mean Haley isn't our sister. It's hard for her to accept, but all her brothers' mates see her as a sister. In our realm, we are family. I call Marcus my husband, a piece of paper does not define who we are to each other. Where were we? You know that as well. We were torturing Claudia in Haley's absence. It was nice for her that she had something to

go do. Torturing Claudia tore her up inside. She tried not to show it; but we know her. So, we saw. A few of our brothers in law stopped by as well. The sexathon was a fabulous torture though.” Astrid laughed, “Especially since she used that device to force her to keep her eyes open.”

I really was going to have to Ethan research how to get my eyebrows back into their original places. Jackson spoke, “That’s not a real thing.” Marcus laughed, “If Haley has seen it in a movie or tv show she can conjure it into reality.” Bjourn grinned broadly, “I will have to have her conjure me one. Let’s go eat brother, I’m starved. It’s also highly likely we will run into our little one in the kitchen. That Mrs. Blanch will have her there, I feel it.” They both nodded and held out their hands to their mates. Both women stared at them then walked out the room without them. Marcus laughed, “I think you’re going to have to propose this time, brother.” Bjourn laughed exclaiming, “I’ve had the ring for years.” Marcus snorted, “I know.” They left together.

I really didn’t know what else to say. We all sat in silence until I found some words, “Well, let’s review the disputes and resolutions so we are up to speed.” Nick and Jim pulled the files for us. Molly, Shana, Jessica, and my mother cringed when they saw the stack. I stared at the files. I sighed, “You’re joking. Haley handled seventy-five disputes by herself? On TOP of the paperwork?” Jim nodded, “She did. She only asked us for help on her first ones. Oh, and uhh she saw the file of threats. She knew who took the picture and gave him patrol duty. We spoke to Liam and had him give him the worst shifts for the month sentence she gave him.” I growled, “Who took it? And why did he get shitty patrols instead of a one way ticket to the dungeon?” Nick sighed, “It was Dave.”

Now I was stunned. Dave was so loyal. He’d have been my last suspect. Jim continued, “It wasn’t his fault. Claudia enchanted him. They were sleeping together. She simply asked him to take pictures by the lake. He had taken multiple pictures before getting Haley in a shot. Haley thought since Claudia knew things about Hexxus she probably knew that eventually Dave would get a picture of Haley outside. Haley felt that since you were enchanted along with Nathan and Lucas, not to mention her brother AND her father, that it was fair punishment. Dave’s intent was not to get her picture and pass it along. We agreed that patrol duty was fair, on top of his regular duties. Dave is beside himself. Haley told him it was fine; he needs to hear it from you though.” I sighed, “Call him in. She’s right. This is not his fault. He didn’t betray us.” They nodded.

My brothers and I began to look over the disputes. Lunch was brought into us. My brothers kept cutting glares at their mates as they read through the files. I was impressed with how Haley had handled everything. She came up with some unique solutions, gave fair punishments, but was lenient in cases where it was deserved. I was so proud of how well she had done. Particularly since this was before she had a chance to sit in on these with me to see how I handle them.

I paused when Nick and Jim brought Dave into the room. He immediately went to his knees and bared his neck to me. He told me, "I'm so sorry Alpha. I would never try to harm you or the Luna. I love this pack. My betrayal is killing me. I accept whatever punishment you give me." I sighed, "Dave, please stand up. I agree with my Luna. The patrol duty is fair. Had you taken the picture knowing it was a threat; you'd be in silver in the dungeons before you could blink. I myself was played for a fool by Claudia. I am sorry she used you in her deranged game. Your loyalty has never been a question, Dave. I left you here to guard Haley when I left for the summit the first time for a reason. Had the fairies not knocked you out; I know you would've defended your Luna to the death if needed. I would leave you here again Dave, knowing what I know now." Dave nodded with tears in his eyes. He promised, "I'll make this up to you both, Alpha. I swear it." He left.

My mom spoke, "Are we going to talk about this situation with Haley?" I rolled my eyes, "What situation would that be? The situation where you all left her to do this alone because you didn't like that she's upset with you? Or where you are determined to make her talk to you after not speaking to her this whole time?" My mom growled, "I am still your mother, young man. I meant her freezing us out and being upset with us." I shrugged, "I don't control how she feels any more than dad controls you. We will all talk as a family. Eventually, we will put this behind us because we are family. You could at least admit you shouldn't have left her to do all this alone because you were upset with her. Regardless of the fact that she doesn't view your actions as in her best interest as you do."

My mom frowned, "It was and is in her best interest. Not to mention your pups." I rubbed my temple, "I understand you believe that mom. I agreed with you at the time. We will all talk tonight because you're insistent. I think you are wrong to push her now, but because you are my mother and I respect you... We will have the meeting. Do not push this." My mom looked outside and commented, "Technically it is night." Everyone stared at her.

Molly asked the question we all were thinking, "You want to spring a family meeting on Haley?" My mom sighed, "Molly, you told her we would have one." Jackson sighed, "It's like knowing you're going to be in a car crash, but you can't stop it. Can I just say as someone who has seen Haley get blindsided... It did NOT go well for the other party." I groaned, "Let me go find her and talk to her. I'm not walking her into a family meeting without warning. They aren't interventions mom." My mom nodded, "We will be waiting in the main room for you both." I stared at her as she walked out. I had no idea what had got into her.

I focused on my bond with Haley. It felt she was definitely further than our room. Based on the distance I was guessing she was in her treehouse. I left the war room, shifting once I was outside. I ran directly to the treehouse. I shifted back once I reached it. I grabbed some shorts I had stashed near Haley's treehouse and climbed up.

Marcus, Bjourn, Astrid, and Torvi were all sitting laughing and talking with Haley. She looked up and smiled at me. She said, "Hey Eric." She tried to get up, but she was struggling since she was so heavily pregnant. Marcus helped her and she quickly waddled over to me. She gave me a hug. We stood there for a while just holding each other. I had several days to make up for. Haley eventually pulled back and said, "Let's sit down." I nodded.

Bjourn was giving me a knowing look. As soon as I sat down, he asked, "So, when's the family meeting?" He winked at me as he said it. I sighed, "It has been requested it happen as soon I bring Haley back from here." Haley snorted, "Have fun then. I'll be camping out here avoiding that shit." I sighed, "I know they upset you, but we do need to talk this through, together." Haley scooted away from me.

She glared, "Why? Because they've decided to speak to me now that you all are awake? They think they have back up to gang up on me. You guys." My eyes widened, "That... that can't be it." She rolled her eyes, "Then why didn't they want to talk until you all woke up? All of a fucking sudden, they can't wait another day to speak to me?"

I frowned, "What happened?" I figured I'd ask this time. Haley snorted, "They claimed I was avoiding them when they fucking avoided me. I barely slept. They knew where I was. It wasn't a secret. The only place I told the pack warriors they weren't allowed was the dungeon." I sighed, "Well, they want to talk now. I won't let them gang up on you with the guys. Truthfully, I don't think my brothers would gang up on you. Think of it more of you getting to say how you feel to them as opposed to a family meeting. Everything doesn't have to be resolved tonight. Let's just get everyone's sides out in the open."

Haley nodded, then looked me in the eyes. She said, "IF you gang up on me with them, we are going to go to the Hackura realm and spending the night... maybe even a few days there." I smirked, "A night is fine, but I believe Doris was sent to tend to you here. It wouldn't be fair to have her here and you there." Haley smiled broadly asking, "My dad sent her?" I was surprised, "You didn't know?" She shrugged, "I hung up on him. I left my phone in our room, then I fell asleep out here. I ran into these guys in the kitchen when I went for food, and I was really fucking hungry."

Marcus replied, "You hung up... on dad?" Haley sighed, "He said I was being testy because I was pregnant. I told him why I wanted her and hung the up. I wasn't being fucking testy about wanting Doris. Hanging up on him might have been testy." I groaned, "This is going to be an interesting family meeting, isn't it?" She nodded, "If you insist on having me there, then yes." I was beginning to think I didn't. My dad linked me, "I'll get no peace if you aren't here soon." Great. I told Haley, "Well, let's get going then." We stood up to leave.

The song Another one bites the dust by Queen began to play. I whirled to see Bjourn playing the song on his phone smirking. Haley laughed at his joke. I couldn't help but feel his song choice was more than appropriate.

Bjourn was spot on with his song choice. It started the second Haley popped us back into the main room. We took the seats left on the love seat. My mother started. "Now that we are all here; we can start the family meeting." Haley snorted and asked, "Just so I'm clear. Who the fuck decides who gets invited to these meetings? I seem to have missed the last one where you convinced my mate to keep a secret from me. Remember that one? When you used the damn pack OB as a scare tactic, having her break the law." All the men paused. Oh god. This was going to be bad.

My mom frowned, "The attitude is unhelpful, Haley." Haley said, "Too fucking bad. You placed my children, me, and my mate in danger because you felt guilty. Pardon me if I'm out of shits to give. I'm ridiculously pregnant and uncomfortable. I do not have the time nor inclination to pat you on the head and hold your damn hand. I'm not going to tell you that you did what you thought was best. We BOTH know that's not why you did it. I would suggest you call an end to this farce of a meeting. Talk to Molly about what we spoke about."

Molly cut in, "I told them. I just want to say, we are sorry that we left you to do all the disputes and paperwork. It wasn't right." Haley rolled her eyes, "On the list of shit I want an apology for that's pretty low on it. I appreciate YOUR apology though. Since you can only speak yourself. They haven't apologized, nor do they appear to be sorry."

Shana sighed, "We wanted what was best for the pups, Haley." Haley glared at her, "I'll state this plainly. Do NOT think you can manipulate me by using my fucking children. Jessica is pregnant. She knew about the fucking meeting with the Claudzilla. Don't think for ONE second, I didn't notice her husband went to the damn meeting. So red grape meet green." I bit my lip. To be fair, Haley's comparison was the same thing as the pot and kettle.

I looked at my brothers. Jackson linked us all, "Well, shit. She makes really good points." I sighed, "I've noticed." My mom frowned, "It's not manipulation. We spoke with Catherine and given the stress you already endured during this pregnancy knowing this was too much. You were taken and tortured." Haley glared at my mom, "Believe me, I'm aware. I was there. I also know you feel fucking guilty about. For the damn record, it wasn't your fault. No one kept anything from Shana out of fear for her or her kids after she was taken. The only thing Darrin did was leave her at home during the summit because he didn't want her to deliver away from home. She was aware the summit was happening though and where Darrin was."

My mom told her “That wasn’t the same.” Haley stood her ground, “Wasn’t it? Shana were you not taken from your home? Were you not hit, groped, and otherwise treated rather fucking poorly?” Darrin growled. Shana answered, “Yes, but....” Haley cut her off, “Then it’s the same damn thing.”

My mom eyed Haley like a petulant child. She spoke crossly, “Haley, it was not the same.” Haley smiled, “If we are talking about your motivations, then you’d be right. No one felt guilty about Shana being taken. You all feel extreme guilt about me. Shana can barely stand to look at me because of it. I’m not saying you aren’t entitled to feel very protective of Eric's happiness, he’s your son. You saw him torn apart when I was fucking taken. I understand you don’t want to see that again, truly I do. Here’s the deal though, you kept a secret from me. You conspired against me and my mate. You fucking betrayed me. Ever since I arrived here it’s been the Connors have no secrets. You practically repeated it until you were out of fucking breath. Eric and I couldn’t have a private moment to discuss the Alpha who accosted me at school. Then what hurts the most about this is you all made me get a fucking physical; that you ALL heard the results to. Not just you either, my family, and Caleb saw them. Jim and Nick are aware of the particulars and god knows who else. THEN you shared it with my fairy family; however, I just dealt with it because of this no secrets bullshit.”

My dad cut in, “It’s not bullshit.” Haley disagreed immediately, “It’s complete and utter bullshit when you all are the fucking ones who get to decide what gets to be kept secret. You use your no secrets bullshit so you know everyone else’s business. Then you all decided AS A FAMILY to exclude me. After telling me I was a part of this family. Like a damn fool, I actually believed you. You bullied and scared my mate into keeping this situation from me. You caused this entire sequence of events. Somehow Jessica who is pregnant, was deemed perfectly safe to be stressed out about the situation.”

Jessica spoke, “It’s not the same. The threats weren’t against me.” I raised an eyebrow. Haley spat back, “I saw the damn file in the office, Jessica. There are monthly threats against all of you. Look me in the eye and tell me you don’t know that.” She paused. Jessica eventually answered, “I do know about them.”

Haley nodded, “Exactly. So, until you all want to be honest about this, I don’t see what we have to discuss. I could’ve stopped this whole shitfest from happening, but you cut me out of the loop. After forcing me to lay all my deepest darkest secrets, my shame laid bare to you. Then you throw it back in my fucking face.” I cringed.

My mother complained, “Haley, we didn’t do that. You are family. We just wanted to protect you.” Haley gritted her teeth, “YOU DID do that! You even roped my doctor into your damn scheme. Now, I can’t trust her. I think it’s really fucking

clear I'm not someone you consider family. My FAMILY wouldn't have done this to me."

My mom sighed, "You're being very dramatic dear. It's understandable at this stage of pregnancy. We spoke with Catherine, and she gave her medical opinion. She's very hurt by your actions. That new doctor that's here, there's no need for it." Haley clenched her hands into fists. She hissed, "My pregnancy has nothing to do with me being pissed the fuck off at you. Your hypocrisy does. There is a need for Doris. I need someone I TRUST to deliver my children and handle my care. I don't trust someone who came up with a plan for MY health without me. It's completely unethical. Also, your opinion on my doctor is irrelevant. It's my body, my babies, and my decision." Mom leveled Haley with a look my brothers and I knew all too well.

Haley's brothers and their mates entered the room. They stood in the background. My mother was being condescending now, "Haley, this is childish. Our doctors share details with the Alpha's about the care of their patients. Your Doris will report to Eric on your care, and your father."

Haley spat back, "I'm childish? That's fucking rich. You've ignored me and let me do everyone's damn job because you wanted to be right. But I'M fucking childish? Last I checked you; Shana, Jessica, Molly, Caleb, Nick, Jim, and Liam were not Alpha's. Catherine had NO RIGHT to discuss my care with you. She should've slammed the fucking door in your face for having the audacity to ask MY DOCTOR about MY CARE. Do you honestly think there haven't ever been threats against me in my life? In Faerie, I LIVED them. I heard them all and they were done to me. In the Hackura realm, I've been being threatened since before I knew I was one. Let alone before knowing that I was king's fucking daughter. They escalated once I was home with my family. Particularly, after I started going on missions. It's part of who I am. It's part of my life. I can handle threats. I cannot handle betrayal and hypocrisy."

Jackson was frowning along with my brothers. My mom spoke again, "Eric, come on. Talk to her. We didn't betray her." Before I could tell my mom to go to hell; Haley hissed, "Talk to ME. Stop trying to use my mate against me. Keep pushing me Cassandra, and I'll MAKE you tell me why you really did this. I know and I know you know. Just let this be. I understand your reasons. It doesn't make them or you right. You did betray me. You fucking lied to me, you kept a secret, and you went behind my back. You came between me and my mate. You all think you can saddle your hypocrisy horse and ride it here, well think again."

I bit my lip so I didn't laugh. Marcus chuckled, "That's not the saying, little sister." She hissed at him, "Oh for fucks sakes! It should be the stupid fucking saying!" Marcus laughed and the bubble seemed to burst in the room. Sadly, my mother wasn't giving in. She was not used to not getting her way. She insisted, "I did

nothing wrong. I did what was best for you and those pups you seem to keep forgetting about.” Now I WAS going to get involved.

I growled, “That’s over the line, mom.” Haley stood with tears in her eyes. She said, “How dare you, Cassandra. I spend every waking moment thinking of my children. The day that shot of iron hit my system I was dying inside thinking I would lose our child, because I didn’t know there were three. I begged for them to stay with me. I wanted to curl up into a damn ball and lie on the ground; I couldn’t though because this is MY pack and they are MY people to defend. I fought for this pack. I was done when the second dose of iron hit me. It physically was killing me. Without the fairy goddesses protection, our children wouldn’t have survived. At the time, I had forgotten all about the fairy goddess. All I could fucking think about was losing my baby. Against all the damn odds, I found more strength at seeing you almost killed. I pulled everything my brothers and father were giving to me in our bond.

She hissed at my mom, “Do you think anyone in this room would’ve gotten over you being murdered like that? The war with the werewolves and the vampires would still be raging.” I winced. She wasn’t wrong, nor was she done yet. She continued, “I fought for you. I fought the iron that was killing me. I could literally fucking feel it weighing me down. I shoved it aside for you, for this family and for this pack. I got you to safety because these men would be lost if you died that way. In your own fucking home. No mother in law of mine is going to be murdered. They love you. I couldn’t live with myself if you had died like that. You fucking knew I couldn’t go with you to safety. Your arguing took time away from me. If I’d gone, they would’ve found the safe room with all the pack members including you. They would’ve found Shana. They might have taken you for fun because they are sadistic bastards. They had no reason to keep you alive though, other than as bargaining chips. You wouldn’t have survived those days the vampires were kept in downtime when Masium kept the sun up. Shana, you did nothing wrong. You protected yourself, your girls, and Mrs. Blanch. Get the fuck over it and start looking at me every once in a while.”

Shana had tears streaming down her face. Haley kept going, “The only action I would change from that day is turning my back on Arion. I regret nothing else because I did what was right. While you saw what Eric went through while I was taken, I was fucking tortured for the lives of my children for THREE DAYS. At the hands of the monster who was my own personal demon. For three days, he tortured me. He put me through SIMS confusing me. He mind fucked me by using fake Eric’s to try to get me to give up two of our children. I fought for them, and I always will. I could’ve agreed at any point in time, and the torture would’ve stopped. I fucking refused because I am their mother. I tortured another woman to protect my children and mate. All to send a message. To prove that Eric isn’t the only one in this couple that should not be crossed. Do you even have the slightest inkling what that’s like for me? I know exactly how she felt. I know exactly what

her mind and body felt. I know how everyfuckingthing in her was screaming out in pain. How she just wished for anything for anyone to stop what's happening to her. I did that for my mate and my children. Because I am their fucking mother. I love them and how DARE you say I never thought of them."

Mom interrupted, "Haley I didn't mean... I..." Haley cut her off, "I'm not fucking done." She looked my mother in the eye and said, "Tell me why you convinced everyone, even using Catherine and my children as pawns, to scare their father into agreeing to hide this from me." I watched as my mother tried not to answer. She fought against the words that would spill from her mouth, but she couldn't keep the truth from the truth seeker.

She answered, "Because it was my fault Arion took you. You came back for me, and then you wouldn't listen to my advice. Eric would've gotten here in time if you'd come. I watched my son go through hell. He turned into a shell of the man he is. He wouldn't shower, he barely slept, and he felt your torture. He asked Jackson to take over the packs if he couldn't get to you because he was going to kill himself if you died. He sobbed after hearing about your prank on Darrin. I had to hold him and rock him, something I hadn't done since he was baby. Then he finds you, and you left us again running away from him. Eric was a wreck before Jackson linked that he found you. My baby boy was in pain. You are his weakness, and I couldn't let you do that to him again. If you were ignorant of the threats and the meeting you couldn't interfere."

Haley turned her head, "And there you have it. Here's where you fucked up; Your husband and all FOUR of your sons were almost taken, because I wasn't told about this meeting. I'm not just his weakness, Cassandra. I'm his secret weapon and his strength, as he is mine. I knew something was off, I just thought he made a judgement call not to tell me. While he and I would've gone a round about that later; you scared him into not telling me and that's not right. What's worse is you KNOW it was fucking wrong, but you want to sit there and pretend like you're not in the wrong. I'm so sick of that damn Claudzilla taking things from me. She's dead and reaching from beyond the grave to fuck with me. All I want is an apology from the four of you for this. That day I was kidnapped wasn't any of your fault. It certainly wasn't my fault I woke up alone and scared in a lab after thinking I was free. I understand it may take some time to get to a place where you believe that and that's fine. I'm not fine with you making me share every part of me and my past to then cut me out because you thought it was best for Eric. I understand what you saw him go through. Don't think I wasn't suffering right there with him. He felt my pain but it was nowhere NEAR the level of pain I was actually in. I'm pregnant not an invalid. I fucking told you guys Claudzilla wasn't going to go away. I'm sorry I'm not who you want for you son Cassandra, but I am who I am. I'm so fucking done with this family meeting."

Haley got up and walked out of the room. Marcus and Bjourn went after her. Torvi and Astrid headed towards the kitchen. We could all hear Haley start to cry. My mom started to cry as well as the other girls. I started to speak, "Mom I..." I trailed off. What could I even say? She played me because she thought it was what was best for me. Not Haley. Not the pups. Me. She blamed Haley for so much that wasn't her fault. It wasn't fair, or right.

Darrin found words before I could. He asked, "Shana, have you really been feeling so guilty this whole time?" Shana cried, "How could I not? She saved me Darrin, twice. She came for me when I was taken. Then she warned me to get to safety that day she was taken from us. I am a Luna, and a fighter; however, I just ran and hid." Darrin spoke astonished, "You were pregnant, Shana! Heavily pregnant with twins. You couldn't have done anything." Shana cried, "Because she healed me. I was pregnant because of her. I didn't even help her."

I jumped in, "She wouldn't have wanted you to. Your being there would've distracted her. Some pack members may not have gotten to safety because of it. Pregnant women are always taken to safety first, Shana you know that. Luna's even more so. You did nothing wrong on that day, and you shouldn't feel bad for it." Shana just kept crying. I wish I could offer condolences for her most recent actions, but I really couldn't. At most I could say she followed my mom's lead. It's not like that made it better.

My dad spoke, "My dear, it's... well, it's not alright. We all understand why you did it, but you have to talk to Haley. I know you love her. She thinks you want someone else for Eric. I...you can't really blame her for all those things. Can you?" He looked me dead in the eye. I knew he wanted me to tell her I understood. I just didn't know what to say. I was just hit with the information that my mom intentionally misled me. My mate was not the only one hurting from my mother's words. I stayed quiet for several moments.

Finally, I said, "She's my everything, mom. We can't cut her out of the loop because I was lost without her when they took her from me." My mom met my eyes with a hard look, "Maybe you can't, but I can. You don't know what you looked like. You were broken and that's not my baby boy. You have always been such an independent, strong willed Alpha. Even as a child." I growled, "No, you cannot. You act like she was to blame for this, and it wasn't her fault." My mom shook her head, "No, of course she's not to blame. There's more to consider here, Eric. You are the head of this family. We need you, and you need her. She needs to be kept out of harm's way so you can do your job."

I was about to argue when Torvi interjected, "She will never have that kind of ignorant life. Maybe she would've if she had come to us a delicate little fairy princess, but Fabian ripped that away from her. She was meant to rule by your son's side as his equal, not as his trophy. Should he try to keep her in a glass case;

he will come to find her spirit withered and eventually broken. She would believe he didn't trust her. As she believes now that you do not trust her."

My mom frowned, "That's ridiculous. I didn't say I didn't trust her." Astrid laughed, "Didn't you imply it though? I didn't hear the whole meeting, and that's what I took from your words. When she came here, she told me you said you were her family now. That you see the other girls your sons are mated to as your daughters. Love and acceptance are all Haley has ever wanted. Now you, a mother figure, have taken several steps away from that role with her to protect your son. As Haley said it's understandable; however, hurtful to her nonetheless."

I cringed. My mother gasped, "No, I do love her. I'm not stepping back. We just... She doesn't need to know every detail of what's happening. It was the right thing to do." Torvi spoke, "You do not love Haley like you love your son. You want her locked away, ignorant of the world and her pack. All to make sure you never see your child in that kind of pain again. We cannot control the world for our children, though I do understand the inclination to try. If you truly love Haley, and I hope you do, you should work very hard to tear down the wall she has between you now. All this meeting did was build it higher and fortify it. I don't even blame her. You still refuse to see what you did was not for the best. Next time, take care that our mates do not fall into your schemes. I will not be nice a second time if you put my mate in harm's way, or possibly damage his relationship with his sister. Their relationship is very important to him." With that the girls left.

We all sat there. My mom seemed to especially be reeling from the words spoken by the Hackura women. My mom said, "I do love her, Eric." I nodded, "I know you do. You're going to have to make this right with her, mom." My mom shrugged, "I don't know how. I feel the way I feel." I sighed, "Maybe it's best if you and dad continue your travels for a while then."

My siblings, their mates, and my parents gaped at me. They didn't speak, so I continued, "I can't be worried if every piece of advice you or dad give me is tainted by this fear of yours now. I can't worry that you spoke to my brothers and that's where their motivations come from. I lean on their mates as well. Clearly, they still look to you to lead. I need to know their advice to Haley isn't clouded if she ever even asks them for it now. You burned bridges between them and yourself. My mate is used to being an island, but we gave her a family. Then you've made her feel like she's back to being an island. I know it hurt you to see me like that, mom. I know I wasn't acting like myself, but Haley's not wrong. She's my strength. We would've had a better plan for the meeting with Claudia if I had done what my instincts told me. You played me."

My mom stood and shook her head, "Your father and I aren't leaving. Your pups are about to be born along with Harold's. Shana just gave birth. You can't possibly expect us to leave." I shrugged, "I can if you can't get over this. I suggest you

work past this if you want to stay.” My mom sighed, “You don’t understand.” I took a deep breath, “The problem is I do. I do understand why you did it. It makes complete and utter sense to me. I may not be a father yet, but the instinct to protect my pups is there. I won’t have you hurt Haley though, mom. I can’t and I won’t. I won’t wonder about the advice I receive. I won’t doubt the words of my most trusted advisors because of this. I already have a hard job, and I won’t add that to it. She saved you. She saved our family. That should count for something. This wasn’t her fault.”

My mom rolled her eyes, “Of course it does! The girls can have pups again. Shana would’ve been hurt more severely without her had Haley not saved her when she was kidnapped. She definitely would’ve been held longer. I…” her voice shook as she continued, “I would’ve died without her. That doesn’t change the fact that I would give my life a million times over to never see you like that again, Eric. She has weaknesses, and she doesn’t possess the strength to deal with them.” I was stunned. When I looked around, I saw my brothers were stunned too. I managed to say, “Excuse me?” Mom spoke “Her fairy brothers are her weakness. Arion should be dead.”

Jackson snorted and cut into the conversation, “So, if Darrin betrayed me thinking it was for the best for his pack… No, for Shana, Darrin betrayed me for Shana’s life. Should I kill him, mom?” Mom cringed, “It’s not the same.” Darrin sighed, “Sadly, it is the same. So, Haley has weaknesses? We all do, but she makes Eric a better man. She makes him happy. When you four convinced us it was best to cut her out of the loop, did Eric seem happy to you? Because he didn’t seem happy to me.”

Mom admitted, “Maybe not the blissed out happy with her he has been, but he didn’t want to die. That’s good enough for me.” I closed my eyes, “Then you have decisions to make, mom. It doesn’t have to be tonight, but you do need to decide the kind of relationship you want with my wife. Because right now, you isolated her from my brothers’ mates. You hurt her and cut her off. You put her out in the cold for no reason. You all had her doing the work of four people by herself, which just compounded the hurt that she already felt. The sad fact is you can’t even admit that was hypocritical because it was AFTER you convinced everyone she needed calm and peace during the rest of her pregnancy.”

My mom’s eyes filled with tears, but I wasn’t done. I told her, “You need to decide if you can move past this. Because if you can’t, I can’t have you here. I love you, and I love having you and dad here. That doesn’t change the fact that it’s not Haley’s fault she was taken. It’s not yours either. It’s also not her fault I was destroyed by what happened to her while she was gone.” My mom had tears running down her face. She whispered, “I just want you to live. I want you to be happy. Haley doesn’t have to be a hands on Luna. Some Luna’s aren’t.” I sighed, “Some are not my wife.”

Mom rolled her eyes, “You don’t know that she’s going to be a mom now.” I nodded, “And if you ever accuse her of not caring for our children again; I won’t pause I’ll throw you out of this house.” Mom took a step back and admitted, “Well, that was wrong, but I just...” Jackson cut her off, “You just wanted to manipulate and hurt her into doing what you wanted. Do you not think we don’t understand? Do you think I liked seeing my big brother hurt that way? To hear him tell me I couldn’t save him if we didn’t save her? It gutted me mom. To watch him suffer to hear him say that to me, was truly godawful. That’s not Haley’s fault though. If you think any of us wouldn’t feel the same for our mates, you’re wrong. I understand feelings are raw, but you didn’t just play Eric, you played us all. She’s... we did what Haley said, we made her expose all her secrets then cut her out. Can’t you see how wrong that is? Then my mate disagreed with you, so you cut HER out. What the fuck is that? Molly would’ve helped with the disputes if she’d known.”

Mom was silent then spoke, “Maybe cutting Molly out was wrong. I was hurt. It doesn’t matter now, though, what does matter is that he’s my son. I have to do what’s best for my child.” I spoke, “I’m a grown man who makes my own life decisions. Haley is what’s best for me, mom. Her being exactly who she is best for the pack and me. She doesn’t need to change. She’s the princess of two races! The mistakes that have been made are when I act independently from her without asking for her input. That’s when we are weak. Haley just kicked off her part fairy initiative, she’s not going to sit at home and knit sweaters! I’m so proud of her. We all should be proud of her. She’s reaching out to a group that’s been neglected. We can’t take that from her, they are her people.”

My brothers nodded. Their mates' faces were full of shame. Mom spoke, “I am proud of her. I do love her Eric, she’s family. Is it so wrong I just want you to be the man you’ve always been?” I shook my head, “No, but I’m a better man with her. You’ve seen her fight. She’s an asset to me mom. She saved us that day with Claudia. If she didn’t come, I honestly don’t know if Claudia wouldn’t have just killed everyone but me. Have you even heard what happened that day? Or were you just mad to see she brought us home?”

Mom scoffed, “Unconscious. She brought you all home unconscious. Some savior.” I growled, “And now I’m done. I’m going to comfort my mate. Someone tell mom what happened when we walked to that fucking trap. Dad, let me know in a few weeks what you both decide on how we are handling this. Because this will be handled before Haley gives birth.” Mom spoke, “You would keep me from my grandpups because I want you safe?” I shook my head, “No, but you can’t live here anymore if you can’t make peace with my mate.” Mom shrugged, “I don’t have a problem with her, Eric. She has the problem.”

I was exasperated, “You can’t be serious. You DO have a problem with her. I know you love her mom, and I know you love me. But I have to run our packs with

confidence and I can't do that if you're going to be here whispering in everyone's ear about how I should hide things from Haley. It's no better than that bitch Alania whispering about how Haley was a princess that had to do her duty. Clearly that worked out SO well for the Holloran's," I stood and made a move to leave the room.

I pointed out, "Think of it this way mom, Dad doesn't put you in a glass case even though you almost died. You would've died too. We all saw it on that video. If Haley hadn't saved you, there is no way you'd be sitting here with us right now. No one is keeping things from you because of it."

My mom frowned, not giving in. So, I decided to push HER, "Dad went down at the summit mom when you linked him goodbye. In a room full of Alpha's and Beta's. Jessica and Molly had to hold him up until we got to him. He couldn't have stopped an attack on himself if he wanted to. He couldn't even speak to us! He was on his knees in agony; but not once did any of us consider cutting you out of the loop. Not once did Haley suggest it when she came home, nor did any of the girls. Dad definitely didn't."

Mom gasped and went to her knees as I walked out of the room. I heard her ask, "What have I done, Nathan? How can he think those things are the same? Is it a crime now to love my son? Everyone ganged up on me!" My dad sighed, "We will fix it my love. No one ganged up on you. We told you this was too soon. You wanted this meeting." She cried, "I love them all. I love her Nathan, I do. It's just how we saw him... he's my boy and he was so broken it was her fault." I heard my dad comforting her, "I know my love, I know. But it wasn't her fault." I stopped listening and focused on my bond with Haley. I sighed when I realized she was in her treehouse again.

I shifted and made my way to my Angel. I climbed inside the treehouse. Marcus and Bjourn nodded at me. Haley lifted her puffy red eyes. She whispered, "I know you didn't take their side, but can we go to the Hackura realm? I just want to listen to the waves and sit by the ocean." I nodded. I knew she needed to be somewhere she felt peace and calm. Without another word Bjourn opened a portal. I picked Haley up bridal style, and we all stepped through.

I linked Jackson, "We are in the Hackura realm at the moment. I'm sure we will be back tonight or some weird shit." Jackson snorted, "Or some weird shit. I'm sorry, Eric." I sighed, "It's not your fault. It's mom's. It's just a fucked up situation. I have to protect Haley though. I have to protect her and my pups." Jackson answered, "I know, brother. I would do the same." I comforted, "Molly would've helped. I know that. I'm sorry they cut her out too." Jackson sighed, "Yeah, she's reeling from that." I figured she was. Her and my mom had been close the longest, given she was Jackson's mate and moved to us first.

Marcus and Bjourn nodded to me before they left the beach. Haley pointed to where two chairs were seated by each other in the sand. I put her in one. When I sat down in mine she told me, "My dad had these put here for me. He brought me at least once every week to just sit and listen to the waves to feel safe. When I was first here it was every day when he was in the realm." My heart constricted. I said, "You're safe in our home, Haley." She smiled, "I know that Eric. I don't want to cause you and your family problems." I smiled sadly, "In case you missed our wedding my Angel; you are my family too." She sighed, "Your mom did what she thought was best for you. I understand, but it fucking hurts Eric. I just wanted to belong in your life so badly I wasn't cautious of my own damn actions."

I grabbed her hands, "You do belong in my life." She shrugged, "But not your family's lives. They are a really big part of your life, and I don't want to change that. I know how close you are. You all changed your no secrets policy because of me. It's ok. Not everyone has good relationships with their in-laws. Miley and I watched movies and tv shows with that exact dynamic often. I also wonder if you truly have a bullshit no secrets policy, or if your mom decides who the fuck gets to know everything."

I disagreed immediately, "It's because she's afraid. You do belong in my family's lives, as you do mine. My parents will decide what they can handle now. Whether that's them traveling again, or my mom putting this aside with you,

the decision is theirs. My brothers and their mates feel awful about it. I would expect an apology from them shortly, particularly Molly. She didn't know, Angel. She didn't know you were handling disputes until she talked to you. They cut her out too."

Haley gasped, "You'll make your mom leave? Eric, I don't want that. I could tell everyone was so damn happy they came home! I don't have to have a great relationship with her. I just wanted to. It's not necessary though." I nodded, "You're not wrong. We were happy when they decided to stay. That doesn't change the fact that I won't have my mom making you feel like an outsider in your own home. I also won't question the advice I'm being given constantly; I can't run the pack that way. I can't question if Jackson is giving me sound advice or if my mom planted a bug in his ear about something. I trust my brothers implicitly, and I won't change that."

Haley questioned, "Why the fuck would your mom put a bug in Jackson's ear? What would that do?" I actually laughed, "It's a saying." Haley snorted, "A stupid damn saying. A bug in his ear would bother him." We sat in silence for a moment before Haley said, "Then I'll talk to Cassandra." I shook my head, "No, this is her decision, and her move. This is not on you, Angel."

Haley sighed and admitted, "I'm really scared." I closed my eyes, "It will be fine. No matter what we will always be a family. They traveled for years and stopped in to see us. If that what happens, it would be fine." Haley frowned, "Not about that. Eric, Fabian said our daughter will likely be a truth seeker. I know one of our children is a pusher." I frowned, "A pusher?" She nodded, "The truth seeker and pusher are supposed to be a team. The truth seeker seeks the truth. Should they not like the truth they hear the pusher can melt the brain and apply pressure to it. Or they can push the mental images of every bad thing to the mind of the person who has done them."

My eyes lit up in understanding, "That's what happened to those wolves who blocked your path to Claudia. Jackson was right. The baby melted their brains." Haley nodded and started to cry, "People are going to want them. Fairies will really want them. I can't... Eric they can't suffer like I did. Not them, not our babies." I got out of my chair and lifted her off hers. I sat back down with her on my lap.

I promised her, "We will protect them, they will protect each other. I won't let a fairy have them. Any of them." Haley continued, "One of them has a shield and your hearing. I keep imagining little toddlers seeing you shift and just following you. I just see them thinking I can do that and shifting too." I laughed, "Not until they are sixteen. We have plenty of time for that." Haley sighed, "Think about it Eric. They are untrained and using their fairy powers. One of them absolutely has your hearing. They heard the dart fired and the shield came up at the exact moment the werewolves heard the dart. I had no idea what was happening." I sat back contemplating, "If they can shift young, they will get to know their wolves better. It's unlikely though. I will help them understand. You can train them to control their fairy powers. We will figure this out."

Haley sniffled, "They don't have names." I smiled, "That's easy enough to fix. Do you have any ideas?" She nodded. I braced myself considering where she was raised. Haley told me, "Well, I was kind of thinking one of the boys would be EJ, Eric Junior." My heart swelled with pride. Tears threatened to fall down my cheeks as she continued "I was thinking there are so many people in our lives that I want in their names. Then I decided they could have two middles names if we wanted. The combined names I thought of are horrid; Nathis, Tithan all bad. I don't know how but I want my dad's name, your dads, and Marcus. I was thinking Jack for Jackson. You can say no, but you two seem the closest out of your brothers. Plus, we will probably have more kids we need to save family names for."

I nodded, "You are so kind, Angel. We are absolutely having more pups if you want them. Jackson and I are quite close. We are the oldest. I love that you want to name one Eric Junior. EJ is a good name. We could do Eric Jack Titus Connors Junior. It's a hell of a long name, but as you said; a unique child deserves someone kind of uniqueness in his name." Haley nodded, "I like that." I smiled, "One down.

Do you like the name Alexander?" She nodded, "I love that name." I smiled and asked, "What about Alexander Marcus Nathan Conners?" She nodded enthusiastically and smiled. Her eyes were dancing with excitement.

I admitted, "Girl names are harder for me." Haley smiled, "Well... I kind of had a thought. We'll need to think of one more name to match the boys. I was thinking I wanted Veronica's name in hers. I was thinking also about your mom's name but shorter." She never ceased to amaze me. Even after the last few days, and tonight she thought of my family. Haley continued, "So, I was thinking Cassie Veronica insert another name Conners." I laughed, "Insert another name I like it. That's kind of you after everything with my mother lately. To have her in our daughter's name." She shrugged, "She's protecting her son. I understand Eric, I want her in our children's lives. I don't have to have the same relationship with her that she does with Molly, Shana, and Jessica. I can accept her in lives of you and our children. It might fucking sting, but that's all it has to be." I frowned, knowing nothing but time could fix the damage done between my mother and mate.

I decided to go back to names. I said, "Cassie Veronica Shayla Conners." Haley smiled, "Where's Shayla from?" I smiled, "It means from the fairy palace." She sighed, "It's a pretty name." I smiled, "I want them to be proud of their fairy side, Haley. Your part fairy. I love that side of you." Haley nodded, "I like it. So, we have their names: EJ, Alexander, and Cassie." I nodded, "We are a great team. We can name pups really quickly." She laughed and tucked her head into the crook of my neck.

We sat there listening to the ocean. I could feel her calming in the bond. I looked behind us when I heard someone in the distance. I relaxed when I saw Marcus approaching us. He called, "Dad wants to see you both before we all head back." I nodded. I scooped up Haley. She said, "No need to hurry. My dad is probably pissed the fuck off at me." I laughed, "You did hang up on a king." She sighed, "Well, that's only partially my fault. It's asshole week and no one told me." I laughed.

I linked Jackson, "I've got another golden egg from my mate." Jackson laughed, "What's the new saying?" I linked back, "Apparently, it's asshole week." Jackson barked out a laugh. I carried Haley over to where Marcus was waiting. He nodded when he saw her. I knew he could tell in their bond she'd calmed down, but she looked much better too. We all headed up the beach to the castle.

