

Alpha's Rejected 111

Chapter 111 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Stefan POV

At first, I thought initially that I was imagining things. But I could see the sidelong glances they were giving each other, their chemistry difficult to ignore, even with the sad news of Amber's sister's death. I told myself I was being ridiculous, but the other more possessive part of me, knew instinctively that I was right and I was seeing red when I saw Alpha Rowan grab hold of Amber's hand once more, right in front of my eyes.

I ignored the voice inside of my head, that told me I was meant to be courteous to guests, and that now was not the right time for this. I stopped thinking like a King and instead began thinking like a jealous, red-blooded male, keen to defend the one he loved. I glared at Alpha Rowan who stared steadily back at me. "What's all this?" I barked, getting up from the table and startling everyone who was sitting. Amber flinched and Rowan didn't say a word, those big dark eyes of his piercing, as though he could look right through me.

"What's what?" asked Amber hurriedly, looking a bit pale and wan.

For a moment I felt a pang, seeing the tears still trailing down her cheeks, but another part of me was so angry, that I ignored the fact that my mate needed me at this moment.

"I can sense it" I growled, looking right at Alpha Rowan who had the nerve to look a little shamefaced "the mate bond between you two hasn't been severed, has it?"

Amber looked astonished and a little guilty as she glanced at Rowan. "Why didn't you accept my rejection?" she asked him shakily, almost pleading with him.

I glared, wanting nothing more than to wrap my hands around this Alpha Rowan's neck and squeeze tightly, while he gasped for air, his feet kicking uselessly as he went purple in the face. I could picture it in my mind and the image made me smile.

"Because I still was in love with you," Rowan said harshly, getting up from the table and folding his arms as he glared back at me "even under Stacey's spell, I was still enamored with you. I couldn't imagine my life without you in it" he added.

Clarissa just looked pale, a hand to her mouth, her body trembling as she stared indignantly. "Boys" she chided "do you really think that now is an appropriate time for this nonsense?"

But Rowan wasn't backing down. "I still want you, Amber, I've never stopped wanting you, and I know it might take a lifetime, but I want your forgiveness and I'm not leaving until I've earned it and your love."

Amber gaped, apparently speechless and an awkward silence filled the room.

"Rowan I" she stammered "I'm in love with Stefan now. It's too late for apologies, what's done is done."

"Then how do you explain my mark on your neck? It's still there with Stefan's" he pointed out.

Clarissa had a look and gasped when she saw two tattoos on her daughter's neck, one of a wolf and another of a crown or tiara. "I've never seen two marks on a person before unless that person had multiple mates," she said in wonder "perhaps all of you are destined to be with each other."

"Like hell" I growled not liking that idea in the slightest. There was no way I was sharing Amber with the meathead standing there. I wanted Amber all to myself.

Amber just looked sick to her stomach. "Please" she begged us both "we can sort all this out. There's no need to fight just now" she added, trying to be the voice of reason.

"Actually a fight sounds like a very good idea" Rowan snarled, glancing at me in a challenging way "after all the winner could have Amber."

"Amber is not a prize to be won," I said tightly, seeing my mate's anger at Rowan's suggestion "but I'm more than happy to fight you if that's what you are wanting."

"Then let's do it" scoffed Rowan as Amber just shook her head and closed her eyes in resignation, Clarissa reaching over to grasp her hand and squeeze it.

"Just let them get all their testosterone out of their system" I heard Clarissa murmur to Amber who was just nodding along, looking drained.

"We'll fight on the grounds," I said haughtily "there's no way we're fighting in the throne room. Not enough space."

Rowan's eyes narrowed. "Worried about your precious throne are we" he mocked "very well then, lead the way to the grounds."

Amber stood up and sighed. "Will it do me any good to ask you both not to do this?"

Rowan shook his head. I shook mine. We both had something to prove now and I was determined to show Amber that I was the better fighter. Clarissa stood up and began to make her way to the doorway.

"This way," I told Rowan, following behind Clarissa, keeping a wary eye on my back. I didn't trust Rowan not to try anything underhanded or sneaky but I needn't have worried, as he brought up the rear. We went downstairs and out the door, onto the beautiful soft lush green grass, Rowan looking quite determined. He didn't have a hope in hell of beating me, I thought with some satisfaction, but something told me he'd put up one hell of a fight. Amber plopped herself down onto the grass with Clarissa seated beside her.

"Stupid idiots" I heard her snarl to her mother who merely nodded in agreement.

Rowan heard her as well, judging by the way he clenched his jaw tightly and the way his eyes turned pitch black at the insult. He began to shrug out of his shirt as I watched, wishing I could cover up Amber's eyes so that she wouldn't stare at the other man's naked chest. I contemplated rushing him, but it didn't seem sportsmanlike to attack while he was stripping off his clothes, somehow it just didn't seem right. I guess that's the downside to being a shifter, if you don't strip first you rip all your clothes to shreds.

I heard a strangled noise come from Amber as Rowan began to undo the zip of his jeans and pull them off and quickly glared at her, noticing she quickly averted her gaze when she saw me looking at her. He was wearing no underwear and he stood there, hands on his hips, looking proud, while Clarissa went bright red and turned her head to stare pointedly in the other direction.

"Well," said Rowan "are you ready?"

I just laughed. "I'm waiting on you mutt, why don't you hurry up and shift and show me what you've got."

There was a series of large cracking sounds as Rowan's bones shifted and readjusted himself, until a large black wolf sat there, on its haunches, where Rowan had been. So this was his wolf I mused, impressed despite myself. He was quite large for a shifter, which meant he would be very powerful. He moved and I jumped to the side just in time to avoid his claws as he came crashing back down onto the ground. He let out a ferocious growl and raced toward me. I dodged, letting my fingernails grow, and quickly scratched him across his chest as he went past me.

Another growl. He didn't sound so pleased now. In fact, Rowan sounded downright angry. I turned and surveyed him, before rushing towards him and grabbing hold of his tail. I picked him up off the floor with ease and sent him flying into a nearby tree. Amber was gaping, mesmerized by the scene in front of her. "My god" she whispered "I didn't realize you were that strong," she said.

I shrugged, trying to be modest. Vampires had incredible strength and I was stronger than most, being both a full-fledged vampire as well as a royal one as well.

Rowan ambled to his feet and shook his head, dislodging bits of debris and leaves off his fur. This time he leaped towards me and I rolled underneath him, slashing with my nails and scratching him across the underside of his belly. He gave a howl as he landed on the ground and I got to my feet, turning around to face him. There was blood trickling from his wounds now and a half-crazed look on his face.

"Don't you want to give up yet?" I asked smugly.

The bastard still wouldn't stop and he rushed me again, but this time I leaped into the air and landed on the back of him, biting the back of his neck in the hopes he would concede. I didn't want to drain his blood but at the rate, he was trying to buck me off, I might have to. He managed to dislodge me and I

went flying across the ground, hitting the trunk of a nearby tree with a large thud. Ouch. That hurt like a bitch. I shook my head to clear it as I got up and began to circle an equally wary Rowan. I was growing tired of this fight, Amber watching between her fingers, worry creasing her brow. Clarissa looked like she was going to be sick, both girls having the sense to stay well out of the way.

The large black wolf began to circle me, stomping its feet with angry thuds. I tensed myself and got ready, waiting for him to make his move. This time when he rushed me, I held still until the very last moment and then rolled beneath him, using my nails to rip a large gash in his stomach, before rolling back out and grabbing hold of his tail. I yanked it hard and then lifted him up, banging him back down onto the ground as the large black wolf let out a howl. I did this several times and then dropped him like he was a heavy sack of potatoes.

Whew. I was feeling a little out of breath. Rowan was curled up on his side in the fetal position. He wasn't moving and blood was pooling beneath him. I began to grow concerned, Amber doing the same as she got to her feet and rushed to Alpha Rowan's side.

"Rowan," she said, shaking him gently as he whimpered "Rowan what's going on? Rowan are you okay" she exclaimed.

Clarissa put a hand to her mouth and began to tremble. "I think you might have really injured him, King Stefan."

I rushed over and felt Rowan's pulse beneath my hand. It was beating but thread and the amount of blood pooling beneath him was a concern.

"Can he shift back?" I asked Amber and she nodded, stroking Rowan's fur.

"Rowan" she whispered into his ear, as his ears pricked slightly, "you need to shift back to your human form."

For a moment we all stood there, looking around helplessly, wondering if he'd even heard Amber before there was a series of large cracks, and then a very naked Rowan lay there, shivering, his body pale and almost lifeless.

I heard Amber give a strangled cry. I sighed. This wasn't the outcome I had been hoping for. Slowly, I bent down to gather Alpha Rowan in my arms, trying to forget about his nakedness. He was damn heavy that was for sure, even for a vampire who could lift his wolf. I cradled him against my chest, his body all limp, his eyes fluttering open and closed as he struggled to maintain consciousness.

"Come on," I said to a very anxious Amber "let's get him to the hospital wing."

She waved her arm at me. "It's quicker if you run. We'll catch up"

I nodded and then rushed off, so quickly that everything passed by me in a blur. Soon I was in the hospital wing and doctors and nurses were rushing toward me.

"He's lost a lot of blood," I told them, wondering who the pretty girl was in the back, a heavily pregnant woman who was staring wide-eyed at everything, "and he's just fallen unconscious" I finished, as I placed the heavy shifter onto a hospital bed. The doctors waved me out. "You can't do anything else," they told me, closing the curtains as I hovered "go and wait in the waiting room."

I strode out to see a stricken Amber and Clarissa in the waiting room. "How is he?"

I hesitated and then told them the truth, as the nurses had said to me before I had come out here "they're not sure he's going to make it. I'm sorry Amber."

She hung her head and began to cry. It felt like a dagger being plunged into my heart over and over again. She was so upset for Rowan, and showed so much caring, that I began to wonder whether she truly loved me or if I had been a substitute for Rowan.

Chapter 112 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Stacey POV

I couldn't believe how rotten my luck was. What on earth was he doing here? I had been sent to the hospital wing of the castle with fresh bed linens and been about to leave when none other than that blasted man, was brought into the hospital, with severe injuries. Out of curiosity and because I didn't

want to be seen, I hovered in the back, listening to the nurses and the doctors commenting on his condition.

"He has severe gashes on his right side and along his lower abdomen."

"Get me fresh towels, stat"

"Do you think that his condition is going to stabilize anytime soon?"

"I can't say for sure, but I do know there is a high possibility that this man, may not make it, not without some sort of blood transfusion which we can't give him without permission, and right now he's unconscious."

He was unconscious. I didn't know whether to weep with relief or cry out in joy. He hadn't seen me as he'd been wheeled in, I was certain of it. The nurses and the doctors came filing out, all of them arguing with each other on the best way to treat their patient, King Stefan in the waiting room with none other than Amber and what I surmised must be her mother, even though they didn't look alike. Her mother (she was far too old to be her sister) had golden blonde hair and honey golden skin, whereas Amber's skin tone was pale and fair, her red hair a blazing beacon from where she sat, her green eyes dull with worry. Clearly, she was concerned about Rowan, despite the fact that King Stefan was also present, her mate.

I sidled cautiously towards the hospital room, the nurses and doctors barely giving me a glance. I needed to get a good look at him. Because as long as he lived, he posed a threat towards me and my unborn child. My hand reflexively placed itself on my stomach. I inched closer and disappeared behind the curtain, looking at the large man on the bed who was connected to all sorts of machines. His wounds had been stitched up, I saw with a wince, but he was extremely pale and I knew by the doctor's comments that he had lost quite a bit of blood. His eyes were closed and his breathing was shallow, his chest barely moving up and down. Perhaps the doctor had been right and he wouldn't live? Then I wouldn't have to worry about him telling Amber that I had been the one to murder her sister, even if it had been on Darius's orders. For I had deliberately left that little detail out when I had spoken to Amber and implored her for sanctuary.

I kept my ears strained for any noises coming past, as I moved slowly and steadily to Alpha Rowan's side, glancing down at him with a bit of regret, but not enough that it would prevent me from doing what I must to keep myself and my child safe. He looked harmless now, but if he recovered and knew I was here? Well, there was no telling what he would do. I couldn't risk it. Couldn't let him recover. I slowly

opened up the small vial that was contained in my pocket at all times in case I needed it. Foolish perhaps, if I got caught I would have a hell of a lot of explaining to do, but the vial was barely bigger than my fingertip and easily stayed in the pockets of my apron. I was careful too, making sure it was there at all times as I went about my day and performed my chores. Some small part of me refused to relinquish it, believing that I would need this small vial of poison one day and I'd been right. Today was that day.

I tipped his head back and undid the stopper on the vial. For a moment I hesitated. I felt sorry for the man, sorry I was doing this but I was resolved and before I could stop myself, I put the stopper to his lips and forced him to swallow several small drops. Then I did the stopper back up and hastened to the curtain. I glanced out and saw that the doctors and nurses were still talking in a small group and quickly slid back out, just as I heard Rowan beginning to gasp and saw his mouth begin to froth. As the doctors and nurses heard the sounds of beeping coming from the machine, I disappeared round a corner and watched wide-eyed as there was a giant commotion.

"What do you think is wrong with him?" I heard a nurse yell. She sounded slightly panicked, all of them moving in tandem as a team to monitor Rowan's vitals as he lay there, completely helpless. Because I had only used a small portion of the vial, it would take some time for the poison to work but that was fine with me. I had no compunctions that the Alpha would die by my hand now and I slowly, leisurely, made my way out the back way of the hospital wing, feeling gleeful. I was finally free, I no longer had to fear my secrets getting out and that annoying son of a bitch was now gone from my life. I wouldn't have to look over my shoulder, wondering where he was or if he was out looking for me. As long as Amber remained ignorant of the fact that I had murdered her sister, then I was still safe, in my sanctuary, with employment and a place to call home. No one and nothing was going to mess with that. I didn't care who I had to get rid of, to keep myself safe from harm. If it came down to killing Amber, I would do so in a heartbeat, pregnancy, or no pregnancy. With a spring in my step, I began to move back towards the kitchen, where Melissa was no doubt waiting for my return.

Amber POV

We heard the sounds of beeping filling the air and watched as the nurses and doctors rushed into Rowan's hospital room. I put a hand to my throat, Stefan still standing there, looking grim-faced. He had been told that there was a chance that Rowan might not survive the attack and I was deeply upset at the news. As it was, I was beginning to feel pain across my chest, beginning slowly and then intensifying as time went on.

"Urgh" I groaned, collapsing onto a seat and holding my chest as Stefan hastened to my side.

"Amber what's wrong?" he asked anxiously, his eyes raking over me in worry.

"I don't know" I wheezed "but it hurts Stefan."

Something dawned in his eyes and he glanced toward the hospital room. "It's the mate bond," he said quietly "you're in pain because Rowan is. But why has it started now?"

I was speechless. Was this pain really connected to Rowan somehow? But why hadn't I felt it when he was injured fighting Stefan? I looked at my mate in horror, my mouth gaping open as I connected the dots.

"He's dying Stefan" I almost screamed out, my mother jumping out of her chair to stand beside me "that's why I'm feeling this pain. God, it's excruciating."

Stefan didn't hesitate, going over to the doctors and telling them in no uncertain terms that we were entering the room. He came back over and grabbed hold of my arm, leading me into the hospital room where Rowan was lying. I gasped as I took the scene in. He was lying there, so pale his skin was almost translucent, foam frothing at his mouth, his body convulsing on and off. The doctor glanced at us looking helpless. "I don't know what's wrong, He shouldn't be having this kind of reaction unless he's been poisoned, but you said that you were both just in a fight," he said to Stefan puzzled.

I went over to Rowan's side and held his large hand, sucking in a breath as a lightning bolt of pain shot through me, almost making me buckle to my knees.

"So much pain" I moaned as Stefan struggled to hold me upright. My mother came into the room, stopping short as she too, took stock of Rowan and his condition.

"That's poison," she said grimly "the same poison that Sophie no doubt ingested. I'm sure of it. He's exhibiting the same foaming at the mouth that she did."

The doctor sighed and shook his head. "In which case, it won't matter much what we do, he only has a few minutes to live, if that," he said sadly "there is one other option but it would require King Stefan's approval."

I glanced at Stefan, seeing his eyes glowing red as he glowered down at Alpha Rowan lying there on the hospital bed. I clutched at my chest and at his arm, making him turn to look at me.

"Stefan, what is the doctor saying" I pleaded and Stefan heaved a sigh and glanced down at the bed, looking a bit dismayed.

"He means that I can save Alpha Rowan if I choose to," he said quietly, "but it would involve me changing him into a hybrid, just like you are. The only difference is that he may react differently to the change. You exhibit hardly any change besides maybe your speed and you don't crave blood. I cannot say that will be the same for Alpha Rowan."

But I latched onto Stefan like he was a lifeline. "But you can save him" I pleaded.

Stefan gave a small smile. "I can" he agreed "but he may not see it that way. A lot of shifters would prefer to die, rather than be a hybrid. Can you tell me that Alpha Rowan isn't one of them?" he asked.

I couldn't. But I could guarantee that Alpha Rowan would want to live, especially if he was my mate as well. I doubled over the bed, clutching my chest, tears pouring down my cheeks and Stefan swore.

"I need to make the decision now" he murmured to himself and then shook his head, swearing vehemently beneath his breath. I watched as his fangs began to grow out of his mouth, his hand letting go of mine.

"Keep in mind, I'm only doing this for you," he told me softly "not because I regret injuring him. Also, if he was poisoned it was under my watch, so I feel as though I owe him."

I didn't care. I knew Stefan was doing this under protest but it made no difference to me.

He bit down hard, on his wrist, drawing blood to the surface, and then held it over Rowan's mouth, dripping it in slowly. Rowan automatically swallowed, several small drops and then Stefan stopped, waited a minute, and then, bit down on Rowan's neck as well, before sealing the wound with his tongue as I gaped.

"Just in case" he muttered looking sheepish "one way or the other it should work" he commented.

I sat down on a chair that my mother thoughtfully provided, Stefan behind me, rubbing soothing circles on my back as I gasped through the continuing pain, which slowly began to lessen. We waited anxiously for Rowan to get better. It seemed like a lifetime. His skin began to get some color into his cheeks, giving him a rosy hue, his breathing deepened and evened out as the doctor checked him and the convulsions stopped completely, but his eyes remained closed. My pain was gone now and I sat upright, staring anxiously at Rowan, willing him to open his eyes.

"How long does it take?" I asked Stefan.

He looked thoughtful. "It could take minutes, hours, or days. Everyone responds to the transition differently. Yours took no time at all but that could be because I was marking you or because we were mates." He gave a nonchalant shrug.

My mother clasped her hands together. "Oh I hope he wakes soon" she breathed "it would be a real shame if he didn't."

I almost rolled my eyes at that. Just how close had mother and Rowan gotten while on their travels together?

Then we heard it. A strange wheezing sound, a strangled noise, and then, Alpha Rowan sat upright, his eyes opening at the same time, blinking in confusion as he looked around at all of us.

"What happened?" he asked a bit bemused as we all just shook our heads at him "and what is this strange feeling I'm having?"

We all glanced at Stefan who looked a bit annoyed at having to tell Rowan what he'd done.

"The thing is that you were poisoned, so it's not like I really had a choice" he muttered crossly as Rowan folded his arms and glared at the vampire King "and Amber wanted you to live" he made it sound like a bad thing "so I gave you some of my vampire blood to heal you."

Awkward silence and then Rowan exploded as we all jumped back in fright. "YOU DID WHAT TO ME?"

Chapter 113 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

Rowan was going to be alright. I calmed myself down, glancing at Stefan gratefully. He was to remain in the hospital, Rowan that was, for another night for monitoring, and while he got 'used to being a hybrid' thanks to Stefan's blood. We walked hand in hand, down the corridors, leaving my mother to chat amicably with Rowan.

"Thank you" I breathed and Stefan gave my hand a squeeze "I know you only did it for me but" I shrugged helplessly, tears pricking the corner of my eyes. Was there anything this man wouldn't do for me? From defending me to the council members to turning Rowan into a hybrid on my behalf, Stefan had far outdone himself.

"I'm just glad that the pain you were feeling is gone" he answered with a small frown "but at some stage, we are going to have to talk about this mate bond" he added as I flinched.

Talking about the mate bond was the last thing I wanted to do. But I knew eventually, we would have to figure out what we were going to do. I couldn't picture myself leaving Stefan, but neither could I picture rejecting Alpha Rowan again. It was all too confusing.

Elder Mathias came striding toward us, looking most displeased, not that he ever looks kindly to me. He glared at both of us and snapped "council meeting, now" making both of us look at each other with raised eyebrows. Had they heard about what Stefan had done already? But it had only been mere minutes since we had left the hospital wing. Who could have possibly informed the council about everything that had happened at that time?

"In the throne room" added Mathias unnecessarily and we both followed him, glumly, upstairs and to the right, away from the hospital wing and into the throne room, the guards by the doors bowing in respect when they saw their King. It was really too bad that Elder Mathias couldn't be that respectful, I thought to myself sourly, not liking the man at all. Somehow I was not surprised to see Elaine standing there, in the small group of other elders. I glowered at her but she merely raised her nose in the air and stared haughtily away.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Stefan mildly, trying to keep his temper. I could see his jaw clench tightly and the way his eyes flashed showed his anger.

"Ah, Amber how lovely to see you again" beamed Elder Gerald, the only one to greet me, in a cheerful voice. The other elders glared at him.

"Pleasure to see you again," I told Gerald honestly, making him smile even more widely at me.

"Gentleman, as much as I enjoy these meetings," said Stefan a tad sarcastically "what is the meaning of this?"

Elder Mathias drew back his shoulders. "It has come to our attention that there are more shifters in the palace."

I nodded slowly as Stefan began to speak "those shifters happen to be Amber's mother and um. . ." he hesitated, unsure how to put it.

"Amber's mate," said Mathias slyly as the other elders gasped in shock. "Isn't that right Stefan?"

Stefan looked at me helplessly. Elaine looked triumphant in the background, a smile curved on her lips as she regarded us both. She thought she had won, but she had another thing coming, I thought grimly. I straightened my own shoulders and spoke before Stefan could defend himself. "Alpha Rowan was my mate but I rejected him for my own personal reasons. Stefan is and will remain my true mate" I said honestly, reaching out and taking hold of my mate's hand.

"I have heard that there is still a mate bond present" hissed Elder Mathias "if you rejected him then why is it still there? Why does it remain?"

Now I was lost. I couldn't say why there was still a mate bond, all I could do was guess the reason. I looked Elder Mathias directly in the eyes. "I cannot say for sure, only that Alpha Rowan did not accept my rejection, so the mate bond was not severed as it should have been."

Elder Mathias pointed a shaking hand at me "his mark remains on your neck. Look" he insisted, speaking to the other council members who shifted awkwardly in their seats. Elder Thomas was the only one with the nerve to get up from his seat to examine the nape of my neck and the mark that was on it. "He's right" he reported to the council members as he sat back down "but King Stefan's mark is present also."

"Hmmm" murmured Elder Gerald unexpectedly "I wonder what that means" he paused for a moment and deliberated "could it possibly mean that all three of you are destined mates?" he asked "I have heard of that happening."

"Nonsense" spluttered Elder Mathias "what poppycock are you sprouting now you old moron" he snarled.

Elder Gerald slammed his hand on the table. "Listen here" he hissed, his eyes glowing red as he glared at a repentant-looking Mathias who had realized he may have gone too far this time "you will not insult me again. Not if you wish to live at any rate. Is that clear?" he demanded.

"My apologies Elder Gerald," said Elder Mathias meekly.

"As for the multiple mate's things, well it's blatantly clear to me that that is the reason for the two marks. It's happened before in history you know that and I guess now it's happening again. The question is" Elder Gerald commented wryly, with a glance toward me "is whether Amber wants to accept her second mate or not and if they can all live in harmony together. "

I gaped at him. Multiple mates. Was he kidding? But the man seemed to be very sincere. I gulped. Stefan looked at me. I looked at him pained. "I don't know" I stammered feeling like an idiot and hating the way the lights dimmed from Stefan's eyes. This wasn't my fault, I wanted to shout at him, so don't take it out on me, but I couldn't. Both of us were hating the situation we were in.

"We cannot have a slut for a queen" Elaine cut in, a sneer on her face, her father Elder Mathias nodding along with her "we have always only had one male mate for the queen and it should be no different now. This woman is not fit to be our queen, she will only bring ruin to the kingdom. Best she leaves now before the damage is too much to repair."

My hands clenched into fists. "How about you start minding your own business" I shot back "and you will never be queen Elaine, so give it up already" I finished tiredly. I was tired of all this fighting, tired of the council pushing their own agenda onto Stefan.

"As for the slut comment" I hissed and then I was off, leaping across the table over astonished council members, and tackling Elaine to the ground whose mouth was open in shock.

I wrestled her to the floor, both of us scratching and clawing at each other. I was heedful of my pregnancy and quite frankly marveling at the fact I had been able to jump so high, let alone so far. We stood up and Elaine backed away slightly, her eyes narrowed in derision.

"Mangy mutt" she hissed and raced towards me.

I dodged to the side and kicked my leg out, making her stumble, and then kicked out with my leg, getting her right in the kneecap and making her tumble to the ground. She gave a hiss as she awkwardly got back to her feet, limping now, her eyes glowing a bright vivid red.

"Come now girls, enough" shouted Elder Mathias, sounding quite alarmed.

But none of us were going to back down. Elaine dashed towards me again, her hands out, her nails long and I reached over and grabbed her arm, bending it behind her back and then kicking her so that she flew across the room with a shriek.

"You bitch" she howled "I swear I'm going to kill you."

If she was going to kill me by fighting then she was doing a pretty poor job of attempting it, I thought with a smirk. This time she went to leap and I shifted, forgetting all about my surroundings, forgetting that I was meant to be keeping my wolf a secret and I met her in mid-air, clawing and scratching her in the face as she let out a screech, covering her face and dropping to the floor. I followed suit, standing there, tensing, waiting for the next inevitable attack.

The elders began to mutter amongst themselves in the background. "She's a white wolf, can you believe it"

"My god, I've only ever heard of white wolves in legends"

"Wonder what kind of powers she has"

"She's unique, not an ordinary wolf"

"What does all this mean?"

"You were saying she wasn't queen material, but I beg to differ Elder Mathias."

King Stefan hadn't moved from his position, merely folding his arms and watching the fight with interest. He knew we needed to battle this out, for my sake and he wasn't about to interfere. I could see the concern in his eyes though and I cursed the fact that I had lost my temper enough to reveal my secret in front of a room full of elders.

"A white wolf" whispered Elaine, looking at me with contempt in her eyes "who cares, I'll still kill you" she shouted and she was next to me in a flash, using her vampire speed. She lifted me as I kicked her out, getting her in the head and making her drop me. She gave a hiss, rubbing her head, and then tackled me, scratching me across the chest and side before I managed to roll over and kick her off. She went flying back a few paces and then stopped herself in her tracks. Across the room, Elaine's father was trying to get her attention.

"Elaine" he yelled "stop it. you can't win my child. Stop already" but Elaine wasn't having it. I sighed. The fight was becoming tedious and Elaine had no hopes of winning. It was time to deliver the final blow. Lilac was watching the spectacle with a frown on her face.

This fight is going on too long. Don't forget you have a pup in your belly child.

I haven't forgotten and the pup is perfectly safe.

For now, it is, but I think it's time that this fight ended, don't you?

You read my mind Lilac, That's exactly what I'm about to do.

I cut off the link to my wolf and concentrated, feeling the heat engulf me, rising in my chest and throat. Elaine had an uncertain look on her face now, and she bit her lip, looking concerned. I let out a large exhale and then tipped my head back, concentrating on the fire, and then once it had gathered, I let it loose, sending a flame directly at Elaine who failed to get out of the way in time. She let out a loud scream of pain as the flame engulfed her, her dress now aflame as Elder Mathias frantically threw his coat over her, and got her to roll over and over again.

Now that the threat was gone, I shifted back to human form and stood there, hands on my hips, cocking my head at the weeping girl on the floor. "I'm done fighting with you" I spat out "and if you ever call me a slut or mangy mutt again, I'll kick your ass without hesitation."

Elaine was nodding, still sobbing, burn marks all over her face, body, and arms. I didn't feel sorry for her. As a vampire, she would heal undeniably fast. I strode over to Stefan who immediately pulled his shirt off and put it on me, it hanging down past my knees. The elders were silent, all looking stricken as they eyed Elaine. I gave my most wicked grin.

"Gentleman," I said smoothly, leaning into Stefan's embrace "I take it that this council meeting is now over? We'll take our leave now" I added, tugging on Stefan's hand and leading him towards the doorway.

No one had the nerve to stop us or even attempt to and we shut the door with a loud bang behind us, leaving the council members to talk amongst themselves.

Chapter 114 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Stacey POV

I couldn't believe it. He had more lives than a damn cat. I was trembling all over as the news spread throughout the castle that Alpha Rowan had been poisoned and yet still lived. He would know it was me, I was certain of it. I needed to get the hell out of here, but where would I go? I had no family to speak of, or at least none that would take me in, certainly not in my condition, and there was no pack that would be suitable or safe from Alpha Rowan, let alone Amber and the vampire King.

I was officially screwed, I thought with a frown, a frown that Melissa noticed on her way through the kitchen. "Stacey," she asked pleasantly "is there something wrong?"

She eyed my pregnant form "do you perhaps need to take a break? Are you feeling a bit run down?"

I went to shake my head and then hesitated. Maybe Melissa was my way out, that is if she didn't get suspicious of my motives. "I am feeling a bit under the weather" I admitted wryly, putting a protective hand over my stomach and pretending to look sick "perhaps I could go and rest for a bit" I suggested, really laying it on thick.

Melissa to her credit didn't even blink an eyelid. The lady really was naive or just too nice for her own good. She gave a firm nod and said to me "I believe that will do you some good. Take as much time as you need, and I'll get someone to replace you in the kitchen" she assured me.

I was going to miss this woman, I thought a little sadly as I slowly made my way into the servant's wing and into my bedroom. Once there, I began to pack up a few bits and pieces, mainly clothes into a small bag and then glanced into the hallway. The coast was clear, I thought with gratefulness, hurrying out and heading toward the main entrance. The guards barely blinked, let alone acknowledged my presence, but then their job was to keep strangers out, not keep people in. I gave them a small wave, pretending I was doing a chore, the backpack firmly on my back.

The grounds were swarming with vampires and I made my way through, one destination in mind, heading there with hurried steps. I was so close, the grounds were so vast it was frustrating, and just as I finally made it to the outskirts of the forest, I heard a voice that made my blood chill and I turned to face it, gulping hard and knowing that I had run out of time.

"Where on earth do you think you are going, Stacey?"

It was none other than Amber herself and she sounded extremely pissed, her eyes blazing as she stared me down, her red hair billowing in the breeze, King Stefan standing resolutely beside her and looking just as angry, perhaps more so. Fuck.

Amber POV

I was determined to get to the bottom of whether Stacey had killed my sister or not and whether it was done on Darius's orders. But when I went to the kitchen to find Stacey, Melissa informed me that she had gone to lie down as she was feeling under the weather. Stefan was by my side as we checked her room, to discover it was empty and that there were clothes strewn everywhere, as though she had left in a hurry.

"I swear I didn't know she was going to try to leave" said Melissa wringing her hands together nervously and swallowing hard.

"It's okay Melissa, you had no way of knowing." I tried to assure the poor woman who looked so nervous as King Stefan gave a sigh.

"Where do you think she's going?" he asked with a glance in my direction.

I hesitated. From what I could understand Stacey had pretty much been a loner as she went about her chores in the castle, with only Melissa being her true friend. There was no one to take her in, that she could go running to and while I knew nothing about her family, surely she would have gone to them for help first, instead of ending up in the vampire King's Castle and pleading for sanctuary. If she was on the run then she would no doubt head for the forest.

"The forest," I told King Stefan, gripping hold of his hand "let's hurry before it's too late. She won't shift until she gets to the outskirts" I added and we began to hurry out of the castle and into the grounds.

The grounds were swarming with people, and visitors and those that lived on the grounds all looked on with curiosity as we began to hurry. I cursed the fact the grounds were so vast, placing a hand on my swollen belly as we hurried across the grass, seeing Stacey in the distance.

"There," I said pointing at her figure in the distance and rushing my footsteps to try and catch up with her. Stefan gallantly stayed by my side, despite the fact he easily could have caught up with her without me. I used my vampire speed, and moved, finally catching up with her before she could shift. She tensed, obviously sensing my presence as I yelled out, pissed off and highly annoyed "Where on earth do you think you are going, Stacey?"

She turned, her dark hair billowing in the wind, a nervous look on her face. She licked her lips and glanced once more towards the forest, a backpack hanging on her back. I was right then, she was attempting to flee.

"I um" she coughed "thought that I would take my leave," she said a bit weakly. Her hand went to her stomach in a protective manner that I recognized.

I cocked my head at her "why would that be? What's happened to make you think running away is the answer?"

She went deathly pale.

I continued "would it be the fact that you poisoned Alpha Rowan while he was lying near death on the hospital bed?"

She stared at the ground. I felt malice towards her, an undeniable rage rising within me "or would it happen to be the fact that you killed my sister?" I almost screamed at her, watching her blanch at the words.

"Amber it's not what you think" she pleaded, desperation in her tone. The wind picked up, making her dress float around her "I had no choice. Rowan had me in the dungeon when Darius came to see me. I was a prisoner, all because I loved Rowan so much that I resorted to magic to make him love me in return" she said pathetically, trying to get me to see her side of the story.

"You're telling me that Darius was the one who put you up to it?" I asked incredulously. I didn't believe her for one second, Darius would never do something like that to Sophie, ever. He had adored and loved his wife too much. She was lying. She had to be.

"If you loved Rowan so much, then why did you try to kill him?" asked Stefan evenly and Stacey hesitated.

"Because I knew he would kill me if he knew I was here. He's still angry that Darius was the one to free me from his dungeon. I just wanted to feel safe" she wailed "was that too much to ask."

My blood was boiling. I was so angry that I couldn't speak straight. "You killed my sister" I spat out "and you want to feel safe? Are you even hearing yourself right now?"

She hung her head and there was nothing but pained silence. "Stacey you are hereby sentenced to be a prisoner in the castle," said Stefan quietly "for murder and attempted murder, the punishment will be death, once your baby has been born" he added grimly. I nodded in agreement, still in pain and shock over her admitting to killing my twin sister. I refused to believe that Darius had anything to do with it.

"Like hell" snarled Stacey and I reacted instinctively, shoving Stefan to the side and shifting at the same time Stacey did, both of us circling each other. I waited for an opening and she went on the offensive, leaping high in the air, as I rose to meet her. I was cautious though, still very aware of my own pregnancy and the innocent child that Stacey was carrying. I landed on her back and scratched and clawed her, making her howl in pain.

She bucked me off and I went flying a few paces back as she recovered and snarled at me, smacking her jaws together and eyeing me with hatred. I let out a ferocious growl and went straight for her, my speed and ability too fast for her to comprehend, tackling her and sending her flying to the ground. She rolled over, hitting the nearby trunk of a tree, and whimpered. From the cracking sounds, I guessed she had broken a few ribs at the bare minimum.

Stefan was wisely staying out of the way, his eyes taking in everything, ready to step in if I needed him to but I didn't need him. I had this, I thought to myself viciously, I wasn't going to let my sister's murderer get away. This time when she raced towards me I leaped high in the air and landed on her back, my jaws clamping down on her neck, my claws digging into her back and sides. Concede, I thought viciously, biting down hard as she whimpered, trying to buck me off with no avail, Concede you stupid bitch. She jumped around in an attempt to dislodge me and I bit down harder, trying very hard not to sever her spinal cord or break her neck. She splayed out on the floor, whimpering, and then placed her head down between her paws, submitting to me and allowing me to climb off her in triumph.

She shifted back to her human form, tears trailing down her cheeks, blood pouring around her body. I knew she was going to need medical attention but I also didn't want her anywhere near Rowan. Not while he was recovering at any rate.

Several guards came running. Stefan pointed at a shivering Stacey who was still lying on the ground crying in distress, her body nude. "Take her to the dungeon" he commanded "and make sure she gets medical attention while she's in there. She's pregnant," he added unnecessarily for it was blatantly obvious to anyone who looked at her. I sat on my haunches and watched, as two guards gently picked

up the weeping Stacey from the floor and held her tightly against their chests, one holding her arms, the other holding her legs. They began to carry her over the grounds and towards the castle.

"Make sure you get her some clothes" barked Stefan, seeing her body trembling from the cold. I had to give it to him, he was certainly a compassionate guy.

Stefan came up beside me and gently reached out a hand, stroking my fur as I whined and wagged my tail at him, making him chortle with amusement. He shook his head. "That was one hell of a fight," he said as I began to picture his hands on me in my human form, becoming slightly aroused "but do be more careful" he warned, bending to look me in the eyes "you're pregnant with the King's heir remember" he teased and then jumped back as I began to shift back towards my human form, my bones cracking and readjusting until I stood there, completely naked to his eyes which darkened and began to glow bright red.

"Woman" he sighed "you have no idea how tempting you are right now, do you? You look like a bloody goddess" he complimented me while removing his shirt and handing it over so I could throw it over my shoulders.

"Well," I said lightly, basking in his compliments and taking hold of his hand "how about you show me just how tempting I am to you?" I suggested.

His eyes glowed red and he reached over to take ahold of my hand, tugging me to him, bending his head down, and kissing my lips softly as I moaned into his mouth.

"Oh, I think I can arrange that," he said rather wickedly as he pulled back and looked at my swollen lips. He began to tug me towards the castle.

Chapter 115 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

The investigator had provided far more information than even I had expected. I glanced down at the coordinates he had given me and rumbled them up, glancing around the forest in consternation. Here was the last place the Alpha Rogue, Gordon, had been known to have been and I wondered, with a

grimace, if he had left the forest already and was on the move. I had heard he was looking for Amber, in need of her powers to gain something from her, but I couldn't understand what. What kind of magical powers did Amber have that he was in need of? Heck, I was fascinated at the prospect she had magic at her fingertips or powers. She would make an excellent Luna, that was for sure.

I tensed, wondering if I should shift when I heard footsteps coming up behind me. I sniffed, my eyes widening. Whatever was coming smelt like a shifter but it was off somehow. Like there was something wrong with it. It had the smell of a rogue, with rotten eggs and the smell of rotten meat wafting toward me but there was also something else I could detect in his scent. Something different from being a rogue or shifter. I turned and met the eyes of a tall well built looking man, with a scar across his face and the power of an Alpha.

"You must be Alpha Gordon" I stammered despite myself, my hands becoming clammy with nerves. The man cocked his head at me, his eyes going a dark red, as though he was trying to read me. I fought to maintain my composure. Sure I was an Alpha as well, but this man was seriously large, much larger than me, and he still smelt funny. Like he was of a different race.

"Who wants to know?" thundered the man, crossing his arms across his chest and regarding me like a bug he'd like to squish.

"My name is Alpha Darius" I squeaked and the man let out a laugh, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

"What would an Alpha want with me? Especially such a puny one" he sneered.

I tried really hard not to take offense to that. But it was hard, especially as it looked like the man didn't seem to consider me a threat whatsoever. I was glad my mother and father weren't here to see this, they would most definitely find it insulting and my father would no doubt challenge the Alpha to a fight.

"I um, have heard that you are searching for someone of interest" I began and his hand shot out, gripping me by the neck and squeezing it gently.

"Who told you?"

"I'm looking for the same person" I wheezed, my hands scrabbling at my neck "I hired a private investigator who led me to you."

The Alpha Rogue was silent for a moment, his hand continuing to squeeze and then he let go, my body hitting the floor with a large thud. I winced from the pain and scrambled back to my feet.

I heard scrambling through the trees and saw several rogues standing in position, waiting to pounce. The Alpha looked at all of them with a knowing smile, indicating for them to remain where they were.

"Stay" he boomed as though they were dogs who awaited instruction.

The rogues didn't make a single movement. It was fascinating. The Alpha Rogue looked pleased. He glowered down at me. "You have some nerve coming to look for me" he growled "I have killed shifters for less."

I held up my hands as though to ward him off. Stupid I know, but it was a reflex. "I believe that we are both looking for the same person but for different reasons" I explained calmly, despite my heart thudding wildly in my chest.

The rogue raised an eyebrow "and what exactly is it you are after from this person?" he asked gruffly, waiting impatiently for me to answer.

I thought about my words carefully. I couldn't risk angering the Alpha Rogue. As it was, I feared any wrong movement on my part would cause the other rogues to attack. They were certainly poised to do just that.

"The girl," I said softly and a bit wistfully "the girl Amber is pregnant with my child. I want her to be my Luna" I explained and the Alpha Rogue looked amused.

"You want the girl?" he asked "but does she want you?"

I fidgeted nervously "I have reason to think I might be able to persuade her to marry me" I hedged and he let out a small peal of laughter.

"If she wanted to marry you, she would have" he sneered "especially if she's carrying your pup."

"She couldn't before because I was married to her sister," I said lamely and winced, the Alpha Rogue raising an eyebrow at me.

"Where's the sister now?"

I glanced away and mumbled "she's dead. I took care of her."

Now the rogue looked impressed rather than amused. "You took care of the competition and paved the way to have your girl" he commented, "now that's acting more like a rogue than a shifter" he mused.

I wasn't like them, I wanted to protest and yell out loud. Instead, I bit my tongue and slowly nodded my head. I needed to stay on this guy's good side, If I had any hopes of him agreeing to my plan. It helped that he had the resources of several rogues at his disposal now too.

"What about what I need?" asked the rogue with a grin and a challenging look "I happen to have a need of this Amber girl."

I frowned perplexedly. What did the Alpha Rogue need Amber for?

"What is it she can do that you need her so badly?"

The Alpha Rogue was silent for a moment. "Have you not sensed it yet? Can you not tell by my scent what is missing? Think about it you young pup" he growled.

I sniffed experimentally and my eyes widened as I realized what his cryptic words meant. The Alpha Rogue did not have a wolf. But how was that related to Amber?

"What does that have to do with Amber?" I asked confused.

He gave a small huff of frustration. "Your Amber is a white wolf, capable of bringing my wolf to the surface. I wish for her to do that for me" he said slowly as though explaining to a child.

A white wolf! I had only heard about them through myths and legends. They were a tall tale told at parties and around bonfires. No one had ever seen one for real, at least not in the last few decades. There was no way Amber could be a white wolf, he had to be mistaken.

"White wolves don't exist," I said dumbly and the Alpha Rogue let out a small roar.

"They do, or I would not be chasing this girl down" he growled "I came close to getting her to do it once before but that bitch killed me and I lost my chance."

I blinked "why aren't you not dead then?" Was there some vital piece of information I was missing?

The Alpha Rogue smiled, "because I drank the Vampire King's blood and now I am a half-vampire. I will be a hybrid, once I am given my wolf. A strong one, and I will rule the rogues and create my own pack" he boasted.

Good for him, I thought a bit benevolently. I wondered what it was like to be half-vampire and whether he was faster or more deadly than a shifter. Something told me I didn't want to find out.

"Look," I said with a bit of a pout "both of us want the same girl, so why don't we work together and find her? You can have her for your wolf thing and I can take her away after."

The Alpha Rogue Gordon looked intrigued. He glanced at his men and then made a motion, almost like shooing them away. He sat down on the floor and motioned for me to do the same.

"What did you have in mind?" he asked.

I leaned forward and began to outline my plan. I knew Amber's location, thanks to the private investigator, but the hardest part was going to be luring her out of the castle. If I included the Alpha

Rogue in the plan, then he might just be the distraction I needed. It was worth a shot. I wasn't about to give up on getting Amber when she was so close to my reach.

"How do we know this plan will work?" asked the Alpha Rogue suspiciously "how do you know you can gain her trust enough for her to let you lure her away?"

I sighed. "She still thinks I'm her friend and her ex-boyfriend. Besides no one has told her about Sophie's death so I can rely on that to get sympathy from her. There's no way she'll believe I'm responsible, not when I loved Sophie so much" I said in a sarcastic tone of voice.

"This better work" growled the Alpha Rogue with a warning glance at me "because if it doesn't then I'm holding you personally responsible."

"It will work," I said more confidently than I actually felt. The rogue Alpha gave me a small nod. He was no longer smiling. "Then I shall meet you there," he said quietly, his voice hushed in the woods, birds perched above us on the branches. The trees swayed in the wind as I watched.

"I shall get there first" I promised, remembering the plan. The Alpha Rogue got to his feet and regarded me silently for a moment.

"If you try and reveal me I will kill you," he said and I nodded, knowing he was telling the truth.

He dusted his threadbare pants off and then turned, but stopped in his tracks. "We need to be able to communicate," he said unexpectedly and then reached down with a strong hand and gripped my arm, hauling me to my feet. I regarded him slightly panicked. If he'd had his wolf we could have communicated, but he didn't. So what on earth was he thinking? I was a little concerned now. Then he sniffed me and chuckled.

"This is going to hurt" he murmured and then before I could stop him, he bit me, right in the nape of the neck and then sealed the wound with his tongue as I shuddered. from the pain. Then he used his fangs to rip across his wrist and placed it above my lips.

"Drink" he commanded "and then we will be able to mind-link with one another.

I hesitated and he pushed the wrist against my lips. I pressed my lips against his wrist and then with a shudder, began to suck at it, drinking his blood. The metallic taste was enough to make me gag, but I persevered and then pulled back, wiping the back of my hand across my mouth in disgust.

"That was revolting" I snapped and the Alpha Rogue shrugged.

"Try mind linking" he growled.

I pictured him in my mind and then began to speak. There, I'm mind linking you, are you happy now?

Stop being such a smartass warned the Alpha Rogue in my mind. IT had worked! The Alpha Rogue was delighted now and gave me a genuine smile. "Now leave" he ordered me "we don't have much time to implement the plan. Especially if she's as pregnant as you say."

I nodded and began to walk back toward my car. There was the sound of rustling leaves and when I glanced back over my shoulder, the Alpha Rogue was gone and so were his minions. There was no trace of them at all, as though they had simply vanished into thin air. I swallowed hard and then climbed into the car, starting the engine. The next stop, I thought to myself triumphantly, would be the vampire King's castle.

Chapter 116 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Rowan POV

It's been two days of staying put in this blasted hospital wing after that little bitch Stacey tried to poison me. No matter how apologetic Amber was about it, it didn't change the fact that she'd tried to kill me while I was already pretty much on my deathbed. Not to mention I'd ingested King Stefan's blood, turning me half-vampire. I half expected to have red glowing eyes and a pointy tail but that hadn't resulted. Instead, I felt relatively normal, except for a slight craving for meat, which to be fair, was something I had as a shifter as well.

"She's in the dungeon now Rowan, she can't get to you," Amber said quietly, leaning forward in the hospital chair she was sitting on and regarding me steadily.

It didn't make me any less angry or annoyed. What kind of security did this castle have, for someone like Stacey to be able to slip through its guards and poison me? It was seriously lacking in security I thought disgruntled.

King Stefan stayed where he was, leaning against the doorway, looking way too casual for my benefit. He was nonchalant. "Yes, I've had my people throw her in the dungeon for now" he agreed "until such time as the baby is born. Then, she will be executed" he promised me.

"What about the baby?" asked Amber sadly.

King Stefan shrugged. "We will find it a good home, don't you worry about that. There will be plenty of people wanting to raise the child."

I sat up in the hospital bed, very aware of the gown I was wearing and frowned. "When can I get out of this blasted bed" I grouched and saw Amber hide a smile. King Stefan merely glowered back at me. A doctor came waltzing through the curtain as if to answer my question. It was an attractive female doctor, with long auburn hair and big brown eyes, large spectacles and she wore a white doctor's coat. Her name tag read Dr. Jameson.

"How are you feeling today?" she asked in a chirpy voice, going to my side and beginning to take my blood pressure.

I eyed the doctor grumpily. "I feel fine, when can I get out of this bed?" I huffed. After all, I had initially been told that I needed to spend one night there and it had been two days! I was growing restless, and bored and I wanted to discuss things with Amber, without the King present preferably but I didn't like my chances of that.

The doctor arched an eyebrow at me. "Well," she said slowly, checking my pulse "all your vitals are normal and the poison seems to have exited your system, so you can leave when you feel up for it."

Now that was more like it, I thought to myself smirking. I began to climb out of the bed and King Stefan averted his eyes while Amber blushed and looked anywhere but at me. I glanced down and hastily wrapped the gown tighter around myself.

"I think I'll organize some clothes for you" Stefan muttered, glancing at Amber "do you need anything sweetheart?"

She shook her head. I could have celebrated right then and there. He was leaving me alone with Amber. I couldn't believe my luck. He was either extremely trusting or an idiot. It was difficult to tell.

"Don't take too long" I called out, Stefan shooting me a dark look before he walked over to Amber and pecked her on the forehead right in front of my eyes.

"I'll be back soon" he murmured and then left. I wondered why he didn't mind-link his people and then realized that maybe he just didn't want to spend any longer around me than he had to.

He disappeared with one last backward glance over his shoulder, his eyes narrowed on me before he was gone, the doorway empty of his presence.

"So," said Amber quietly, fidgeting and wringing her hands together "how are you really feeling Rowan?"

I moved around and stretched experimentally, showing off my body to her as she flushed. "I feel really good," I told her honestly "a lot like my normal self."

"So no bad feelings about the whole vampire blood thing?" asked Amber tentatively, biting her lip. God, she was so adorable! I wanted to kiss those plump lips of hers and it was taking everything in me to maintain some semblance of control.

I shook my head. "You did what you had to do," I said quietly "and you saved my life doing it. So thank you, Amber, for everything you've done for me."

"What are your plans now?" she asked, leaning back in the chair some more.

I was thoughtful. I knew I probably had no chance of getting Amber back but I couldn't ignore the longing inside of me or the way my wolf was desperate just to be with her. I couldn't walk away, at least not without trying. Sure, King Stefan seemed like a lovely fellow, but Amber was mine first I thought a bit viciously to myself.

I couldn't help myself. I turned around and stared at Amber, feeling my breath quicken and my hands become slightly clammy from nerves. I reached out with one hand and stroked her cheek lightly, her own breathing hastening, her lips parting in invitation. I let out a small growl as her eyes fluttered closed and then, I leaned down, grabbing hold of the back of her neck with one hand, keeping her still, my lips pressing against hers. She let out a small gasp and then moaned, as my tongue dived inside of her mouth and began to caress hers, sparks flying between us and tingles running down my spine. I felt my cock twitching in arousal and deepened the kiss, taking her roughly, possessively, as she kissed me back just as hard, responding in a way I hadn't even dreamed of. It was like pure heaven, feeling her lips against mine and I couldn't stop myself, Amber finally being the one to break free, a guilty look on her face.

"Rowan" she breathed, her cheeks a rosy hue and her eyes twinkling "we can't do this. I'm with Stefan now."

"But look how you just responded to me, Amber. Do you honestly think that we're not meant to be together?"

"I'm in love with Stefan," she said quietly, still looking immensely guilty "not you Rowan."

It stung but I wasn't finished yet. "My mark is still on you" I growled, pointing to the nape of her neck and watching as she reached up a trembling hand to touch it "that means that I'm still bonded to you."

"My mark is also on her" cut in a furious voice, King Stefan arrived in the doorway. He took one look at Amber's guilty expression and exploded, throwing the clothes he'd brought me right in my face.

"I'm so sorry Stefan" Amber began and Stefan held up his hand, eyeing me with contempt.

"Don't apologize" he sneered "I'm betting that Rowan was the one to kiss you first. You just couldn't help yourself, could you?" he demanded heatedly.

I said nothing, merely stared at him as he folded his arms across his chest and glowered.

"I kissed him back Stefan" Amber blurted out, holding a hand to her mouth and looking about to cry.

Stefan stared at her stonily. "You kissed him back" he repeated with a voice dripping with malice "how could you Amber?"

Amber stared at the ground looking miserable. "I don't know," she said in a small voice "it's all so confusing. I'm in love with you but I'm drawn to Rowan as well. I don't understand what's happening to me."

I had a fairly good idea. She was a unique wolf after all, from what I'd heard. Thanks to Clarissa I now knew all about Amber's wolf and how special she was. It made sense that she would have multiple mates but I daren't speak aloud about it. Stefan looked like he wanted to rip me to shreds as it was.

"I think I know what's going on" cut in a voice and we all swiveled our heads to stare at one of the eldest-looking vampires I had ever met. He looked like a cheerful fellow, with a round face and a huge grin on it, his eyes sparkling with good humor. He made his way inside.

"You must be Alpha Rowan," he said kindly to me and I nodded, still gripping my hospital gown to myself tightly so I wasn't showing anything off I shouldn't be.

"I am," I told him "and you are?"

"Forgive my bad manners," said the elderly vampire "but my name is Elder Gerald and it's a pleasure to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you" I muttered, not sure what else I should say.

"This is all well and good but what are you doing here?" asked Stefan calmly "elders don't generally concern themselves with hospitals."

Elder Gerald laughed. "I don't like hospitals" he agreed "but I thought I would make an exception this one time. I wanted to meet Alpha Rowan, the shifter you defeated in a fight and who almost died in his hospital bed due to poisoning."

Stefan blanched. Amber just looked perplexed but happy to see the elder which meant she was familiar with him.

"Yes well," said Stefan with a helpless shrug "it couldn't be helped. Now, what did you mean by you know what is happening to Amber?"

Elder Gerald looked taken aback. "Well I thought it might have been a tad bit obvious," he said looking a bit astounded "your mate is mates with Rowan as well. She has multiple mates. I can't make it any clearer than that," he said with a bit of a sigh.

"No, that can't be right" argued Stefan "she rejected him for heaven's sake."

Elder Gerald stared at me. "Am I right in assuming you didn't accept the rejection?" he asked.

"You would be right" I confirmed heavily.

He nodded to himself. Stefan looked pissed. Amber looked nervous and Clarissa thankfully was missing for some strange reason. I wondered where she was.

"So multiple mates," said Elder Gerald again, with a look at Stefan I couldn't interpret "you might not want to face the truth but it's right here in front of your face. The question is, whether you are able to share her or not. Of course, she could always reject Rowan again but I do have to ask you to consider this. By being mates to a shifter and a vampire, she could open doors to each race being more accepting of the other, which is something that you have always endeavored to do, King Stefan."

King Stefan fell silent, mulling his words. Amber looked insulted. "I don't want to be shared like I'm some sort of prized possession" she snapped at Elder Gerald, who raised an eyebrow at her tone of voice.

"Then reject one," said Elder Gerald breezily "but isn't it interesting how his mark" he pointed to me "has remained all this time? Rejection and all?"

We all looked at Amber's neck where the two tattoos rested side by side, one of a wolf and the other one of a crown or tiara depending on how you looked at it. Amber lightly touched it again. I followed her every move.

"What you do decide, will affect the kingdom, so I suggest you choose wisely child" Elder Gerald told Amber, patting her on the arm like she was a small child. He began to shuffle out of the doorway, leaving all of us staring wide-eyed at each other.

"I um need to get out of here" Amber stammered, glancing between the two of us and blushing bright red. I opened my mouth to object but she was out of the door before I could utter a sound, leaving myself and Stefan together.

"We need to talk," I told him grimly as he came further in and plonked himself on the chair "because I have no intentions of giving up Amber and something tells me you feel the same way."

"I guess we need to come up with some kind of solution then," Stefan said with a scowl "because I'm in love with her and I'm not giving her up."

Chapter 117 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Clarissa POV

The castle was massive, immense, with twists and turns everywhere. I found myself in the library of all places, perusing the books and occasionally dusting off some of them as I brought them out from the shelves to glance at. Alpha Rowan was now recovered from his ordeal, or so he had assured me and Amber was spending the day with her mate Stefan, who was not well pleased with Rowan it seemed. Both of them having the same mate bond with Amber. I was surprised to discover she had multiple mates but even more shocked by her special wolf.

I spared a thought for my darling daughter Sophie and felt the rage rekindle inside of me again. She should still be alive today. Should still be pregnant and expecting. It wasn't fair that she had been taken from me. She was too young to have died and every day I blamed myself for what had happened. If I hadn't insisted on her marrying that low-life son of a bitch Darius, then maybe things would have turned out differently. Maybe Sophie would be married to a man that loved her and is expecting his child now, instead of buried far below the earth, with her corpse rotting away.

I huffed and slammed a book back into the shelf and glanced around the library. It was empty of people, besides myself, and I took the opportunity to sit down in a comfortable armchair and glance out the window, taking stock of the children playing out on the grounds, laughing happily and kicking a ball around. I could see the forest in the distance and I swallowed hard, feeling an intense desire to go for a run.

But I had a secret. One that I was ashamed of. Since my marriage with that awful Beta Mathew, I hadn't been able to shift. I hadn't heard my wolf's voice in years. I didn't even know if I could shift. But the longing was there, and I found myself yearning to feel the earth beneath my paws, to see the scenery passing by in a blur, to run so fast that I was almost impossible to see. To immerse myself in nature.

I got to my feet and as if I was on autopilot, I began to walk downstairs, towards the front entrance of the castle. The guards gave me a friendly smile, something I had gotten used to since I'd been here. I had been expecting hostility and anger directed at me for being a shifter, but to my surprise, the vampires tended to be very accepting of our kind. If only shifters could show the same amount of hospitality towards the other races, I thought idly, how much better this world would be.

I walked across the grounds, as if in a trance, careful to avoid walking into any of the children running amok outside. I was barefoot but it didn't matter, the grass feeling soft and lush beneath my feet. Birds chirped overhead and the trees swayed back and forth in the breeze. I could smell the scent of pine, and dirt and I inhaled it greedily, closing my eyes in bliss.

The forest was quiet, besides the chattering of birds and the patrol other than giving me a curious glance, left me alone as I stood there, surveying the trees and smelling the woods. My hands clenched into fists. I so badly wanted to run, but did I have it in me? Or would it be foolish to even try? What if my wolf was gone completely? I would look a fool but something in me refused to listen to the mocking and taunting voice in my head, tuning it out completely.

I began to lift my dress over my head, folding it neatly and placing it aside on a small stump nearby. I undid the clasp on my bra next and placed that with my dress and then slowly slid out of my panties, placing them neatly with my other clothes. I was naked now, and vulnerable. I shivered slightly as the wind picked up. Out of habit, I tried once more to reach my wolf Desiree but there was nothing but silence. If my wolf was there, it was impossible to tell.

I closed my eyes and concentrated, hard, picturing myself turning into a wolf, willing the sounds of broken limbs shifting and readjusting to come to my ears. Initially, nothing happened and I felt a wave of

disappointment crash over me. I stifled a sob, my hands clenching into fists, so hard that my nails drew blood which trickled down my hands and onto the forest floor. I fell to my knees, my hands covering my face, and sobbed, desperate to have the wolf back that I had lost so long ago. Mathew had taken everything from me. My dignity, my respect, and now my wolf. Was there anything that he had left me?

"Please" I began to sob, looking upwards at the clear blue sky, beseeching the goddess "please, bring Desiree back to me. I never wanted to lose her. She's a part of me, my other half, my soul."

I felt tears trailing down my cheeks, my hands scrabbling into the earth, and desperation rising within me. "I don't deserve this" I shouted out, anger in my voice "do you have any idea what I've been through? How much I've had to endure? How much more must I suffer?"

Silence. My shoulders slumped in defeat and then to my astonishment, I heard the merest whisper in my mind, a female voice from long ago.

You may have suffered but so have I. Why did you let me go, Clarissa? Why didn't you fight back?

I made a mistake Desiree and I've paid dearly for it. I never wanted you to leave Desiree, please believe me.

I believe you, but this time I won't allow you to ignore me and pretend I don't exist. If you wish for me to remain, say it now, or else I'll go and leave you forever.

I want you to stay Desiree! I can't live without you.

I pleaded with my wolf. She gave a harrumph and then I felt the most excruciating pain I've ever felt in my life. I heard my bones breaking in the foreground, as I let out a horrific scream, my whole body trembling in pain, as they began to readjust themselves. It was reminiscent of the first time I had shifted and I thought to myself idly, that the pain was no doubt due to not having shifted for many, many years.

Just as suddenly the pain faded and then was completely gone. I blinked, watching everything come into focus, able to see easily for miles. I glanced down and saw paws instead of legs, silver ones. I could have wept for joy. I had turned into my wolf, for the first time in years and I felt a longing to run. My paws thudded across the ground and the trees passed by in a blur as I explored the forest and the vampire

King's territory. We drank from a stream, and I let my wolf take over as we hunted a nearby buck, killing him and eating him in order to satiate our hunger and our need to hunt.

When I was tired, I took a nap beneath a nearby tree, curling up much like a cat, my soft snores filling the forest. It was the first time I had slept in ages and I slept well, hours passed before I woke back up, startled to see that the sun was now fading and the moon was coming up. I stretched, feeling hungry, and began to trot towards home, reluctant to go back to my human form and knowing that I must. Amber must be worried sick, I thought, for I hadn't thought to tell her where I was going, let alone what I was going to attempt to do.

I sighed. I didn't know what I was going to do. I couldn't just continue to impose on Amber and Stefan. Especially since they were having some difficulties due to Alpha Rowan's presence. But I also had nowhere else to go. Mathew had finally been served the divorce papers but was apparently unwilling to sign them, which meant I had to get my lawyer involved some more.

The moon was shining overhead as we made our way back to where I had left my clothes. Desiree was excited, chatting a mile a minute as I listened with a smile. I would never get sick of my wolf's voice, I decided, not when it had been missing for so long. It was a little strange though, hearing another voice in my head and one that I would have to get used to once again. I promised her that we would go for a run in the next few days, perhaps with Amber if she was willing. I was keen to see my daughter's wolf in action and the powers she had.

Brrr, it was getting cold outside and I began to concentrate, closing my eyes and envisioning myself in my human form, from my long blonde hair to my blue eyes and slender frame. My bones began to crack and shift, thankfully the process not taking as long as earlier, nor was it as painful, instead it was merely an aching feeling thank goodness. I slid my panties back on and then struggled to do up the clasp on my bra. My dress was thrown haphazardly over my head and then I was about to turn and walk towards the castle when I smelt the most delicious scent wafting towards me.

It smelled like gingerbread, one of my favorite scents of all time. It was one of the reasons I adored Christmas time. But who on earth would be baking gingerbread at this late hour, I thought a bit astounded. Not to mention it was a subtle scent, one that seemed to be floating amongst the trees, rather than coming from the grounds. I sniffed it appreciatively, my mouth watering at the aroma. My heart began to thump loudly in my chest and my hands began to tremble. My body was having some sort of reaction to whatever this scent was! My wolf was going berserk, prancing around wildly in my head. I wondered what the hell was happening to me.

There was the sound of leaves crunching nearby and the sounds of twigs breaking, as someone made their way towards me, heedless of the debris on the forest floor. My body tensed and then the most beautiful man I had ever seen came crashing into view. I sucked in a breath, unable to breathe properly, my eyes raking over him. He was tall and slender, but with muscled arms and legs. He had the silkiest and most stunning-looking raven-black hair and dark green eyes which were glowing slightly. He was pale, but that was to be expected considering that he had to be a vampire.

I gaped. He stared back, looking at me just as intensely. Both of us were speechless. I had never dreamed of this happening to me. Not again. Not after being with Mathew. I had no words. My mouth opened and shut, but nothing came out. The man ran a hand through his hair, making it disheveled as he regarded me steadily. He looked surprised but not displeased, I noted, so he wasn't too upset at discovering that his mate was a shifter. Instead, he looked nervous and apprehensive. I swallowed hard.

"Hello" he finally spoke in a smooth and charming voice "what might be your name?" he asked me, in a soft and musical tone of voice that sounded like small silver bells chiming.

"I'm Clarissa" I stammered. I felt so awkward standing there, but to my shock he seemed to recover his composure and walked over to me, reaching out to take ahold of my hand and giving it a squeeze. Sparks flew between us and I found myself examining his lips, wondering what they would taste like and wondering if he would kiss me.

"Well Clarissa," he said teasingly "my name is Dylan and it's a pleasure to meet you."

Chapter 118 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I can't believe it. I just can't. What are the odds my mother would find her second chance mate and that he would be a half-vampire for heaven's sake? It's so exciting. Also, adorable and cute and so many other words to describe it. I'm about to go and find Stefan, heading to his study when there is a commotion at the door. I glance towards it with interest and my eyes widen as I see none other than Darius standing there, wrestling with several vampire guards.

Was he insane? He was going to get himself bitten or worse, his head ripped off if he didn't stop, I thought to myself, rushing toward him. The guards looked grim, wrestling him to the ground and forcing

his arms behind his back, about to put cuffs on him when I stopped them. "Stop, he's a friend" I cried and they glanced toward me, reluctantly letting go and stepping backward. Stefan appeared on the scene, Rowan right behind him.

"Darius, what on earth are you doing here?" I asked him as he awkwardly got to his feet and glowered at the guards. He stretched out his arms and legs, shaking them off and looking pleased with himself.

"I came to see you of course" he muttered but before he could say anything else, Stefan cut in.

"Take him to the dungeon," he said abruptly.

Rowan glowered at Darius, folding his arms across his chest and staring at the other man who blanched from the look in Rowan's eyes.

"Stefan" I protested, turning to him "you can't put him in the dungeon. He hasn't done anything wrong" I exclaimed.

Stefan looked displeased, arching an eyebrow at Darius. "He better have a good reason for coming here to see you" he spat out, Rowan nodding alongside him. Since when had those two become so friendly I thought to myself astounded. The last I had seen of them together they had despised each other. Now they were acting like the best of friends.

I placed a hand on my stomach, breathing deeply. Lately, I had been experiencing cramps and have been told by the hospital they were known as fake labor or Braxton hicks. It didn't stop them from being painful though and I winced from the pain, something that Stefan noticed immediately. "I think we should take this conversation to the study," he said grimly, motioning towards Rowan and Darius who smirked at him. We began to walk towards the study, Stefan holding my hand as we wandered, while Rowan rubbed soothing circles on my back behind me. I waited for Stefan to get mad at him, or to snarl at Rowan but to my surprise, he didn't even seem to notice the man had his hands touching me. Darius brought up the rear.

We filed into the study and Stefan sat me down in the armchair, while Rowan sat pointedly in the other one, leaving Stefan to sit behind his desk and for Darius to remain standing.

"It's come to my attention that you bypassed security protocols in order to get to the castle," Stefan said heatedly, skewering Darius with a glare "when you could have simply driven up to my guards and demanded entry."

Darius shifted on his feet. "I wasn't thinking," he said dryly "I just wanted to see Amber so badly" he added with a large exhale.

"About that" Rowan said wryly "why would that be? Would it be to tell her about her sister's death," he asked, leaning forward as Darius gave a nervous gulp.

"So you already know," he said softly, tears pricking the corners of his eyes "that I lost Sophie Amber, I'm so so sorry" he choked out, his voice sounding strangled.

"Mother told me," I said softly "we have the person responsible for her poisoning in the dungeon right now" along with Elaine, I thought idly to myself. Something that was probably not the best combination, unless Stefan had freed her since she'd been placed there. I hadn't seen the woman walking around the castle lately though.

"Do we though" growled Rowan, cocking his head and looking straight at Darius "because my gut tells me that you had something to do with it as well" he scoffed.

Darius looked insulted. There, I thought to myself triumphantly, I knew he couldn't have done it. But then, why did he look so uncomfortable?

"Excuse me" he hissed "but I can assure you that I had nothing whatsoever to do with Sophie's death. I mourned her loss and I still do" he added with a low growl.

This was getting out of hand, I thought idly to myself, glancing at Stefan who was merely watching Rowan and Darius, his black eyes revealing nothing. I wondered what he was thinking. Was he angry that Darius had turned up? Did he blame me for this? Was he worried on my behalf?

"Prove it" snapped Rowan "I know you're the one who released Stacey from my prison" he snarled "and when I get my hands on you" he threatened lowly.

Darius puffed his chest out, not intimidated by Rowan in the slightest. "Are you going to keep insulting me" he demanded "because if that's the case, then I guess a fight is in order" he added.

Rowan laughed out loud, the sound echoing throughout the empty room "Like the last time" he challenged and Darius fell silent. I gaped at the two of them, feeling annoyed that they were fighting with one another.

"Would you two cut it out?" I said tiredly and both men fell silent.

I fidgeted in my chair, trying to get comfortable, feeling sweat bead on my brow. I was feeling nauseous, and tired. I hadn't slept peacefully in days, due to what was happening with Rowan and the fighting between him and Stefan, not to mention the surprise of the mate bond between us three.

"Darius, why don't you just tell the truth? You didn't just come out here to see me, what else is going on" I demanded.

He hesitated for a moment, glancing around the room and avoiding my eyes. Whatever it was, it was important for him to have come all this way.

"It's about custody of the baby," he said and I sucked in a gasp.

I should have realized he would have come about that, especially now that Sophie was gone, I thought dismayed.

"I um, know that I agreed to sharing custody, but I've changed my mind," I told Darius who looked flustered and disapprovingly at me.

"Well that's unfortunate," he said lightly "because I don't intend to give up custody of the baby. I want full custody Amber," he said and I stared at him incredulously, fighting the the urge to reach over and slap him. Was his grief making him act this way? IT had to be. The Darius I knew would never do anything to hurt me like this. I was stunned, speechless, unable to utter a sound. How could he do this to me?

Stefan slammed his hands down on the table "that's never going to happen" he snarled "because that baby is the heir to my kingdom and so help me god I will end you if you try to take the child away from me or Amber."

"Besides," Rowan said evenly, leaning back in his chair, an amused look on his face "that baby that Amber is carrying, happens to be mine."

Now I was dreaming, I thought to myself hazily. There was no way that Stefan and Rowan were working in cahoots with each other.

Darius gave a low growl of frustration "I happen to have it on good authority that the child is mine and I will make Amber have a paternity test to prove it if I have to."

Tears formed in the corner of my own eyes.

"Darius" I pleaded "please don't do this. Haven't you put me through enough?"

He sighed and glanced at me, looking apologetic but resolved "my parents want to hold their grandchild and that child would also be the heir to my pack" he said, looking pointedly at Stefan who was frowning "I'm afraid that I can't budge on this. It either gives me full custody, or I'll be forced to prove your an unfit mother."

I was shocked at the insult but not as much as Rowan and Stefan who both got to their feet, making their way toward Darius.

"Stop" my voice cracked and they did, Darius edging backward slightly "it's not worth it Stefan and Rowan. Darius I won't give you full custody, and" here my voice grew stronger "I'll be damned if you ever call me an unfit mother again" I snarled, getting to my feet and regarding my ex with hatred in my eyes.

He blanched. "I'll get my lawyers involved" he threatened.

"Do that?" I told him quietly "because Stefan also has lawyers and so does Rowan" I added, Rowan, looked pleased I had included him.

Darius noted the two men glaring at him and then glanced down at the nape of my neck, his eyes widening in disbelief. "You have two marks on your neck," he said in awe "but that means" he glanced between Stefan and Rowan, realization dawning in his eyes "you have multiple mates" he finished weakly.

I don't know what gave me the courage to say it or to embrace it, but I did. I stepped forward and grabbed hold of both Rowan and Stefan's hands "I do have two mates" I said sincerely "and that means you have no chance in hell Darius, so I would give it up. We can have dinner and discuss this civilly instead" I said, clutching their hands tightly, "but that's as much as I'm willing to do."

Darius nodded slowly. "Fine, let's discuss this at dinnertime," he said calmly "but Amber"

"I think you should leave now" I cut in "go to the kitchen or something, I want some time alone with my mates."

Darius gaped but had the sense not to say anything, instead turning on his heel and storming out. I shut the door behind him and locked it, breathing heavily. Rowan and Stefan stood side by side, identical grins on their faces.

"So we're both your mates then" Rowan drawled as I looked helplessly between them both "is that right Amber?"

I swallowed hard, feeling my heart beat loudly in my chest and my body beginning to tremble. I coughed, trying to clear my throat.

"Well, the thing is" I squeaked and Stefan stepped closer, his eyes glowing as he took a hold of my face in his hands, bending down and pressing his lips to mine in a possessive manner, making me moan into his mouth as he became more insistent and passionate, Rowan standing there patiently, looking on.

Before I could understand what was happening, Stefan suddenly broke the kiss off, and then Rowan was there, kissing me roughly, his hand gripping the back of my hair, his tongue diving inside in a rough and

primal way that had my juices flowing. I moaned, feeling the sparks, wondering where Stefan was, and then just as suddenly Rowan broke the kiss off and then stepped back, looking pleased with himself.

"What's going on?" I gasped and they grinned at each other, facing me knowingly.

"We talked about it," Stefan said smugly

"And we're willing to share" cut in Rowan calmly.

My mouth fell open. Just like that, I thought dazedly, they were willing to share me. I wasn't sure if I wanted to feel indignant or flattered.

"The thing is," Stefan said quietly, cocking his head at me "that both of us love you and don't want to live without you. The only solution that either of us could come up with, was to be willing to share you."

"What if I'm not" I whispered and they looked at each other, concern in their eyes.

"Then I guess you reject us both," said Rowan casually and both waited, arms folded across their chest for me to answer.

Chapter 119 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I sat down to dinner that night feeling like I was some sort of referee or mediator. My mother, bless her heart, was situated down at the other end of the dining table, chatting away with her mate, King Stefan's best friend Dylan. Stefan had been ecstatic to find his best friend had found his mate and knew that my mother would make an excellent mate for him. I was positive she would as well and after everything my mother had gone through with my father, she more than deserved to end up with someone who would cherish and adore her. From what I could see with Dylan, he was smitten with her already.

I sat between Rowan and Stefan, each of them immediately placing a possessive hand on my thighs, both comfortable and at ease, despite the kisses we had shared earlier. Both of them seemed to have come to some sort of truce when it came to me and I was bewildered, not sure what to think about the multiple mates thing. I blushed just thinking about what having sex with them might entail. Too much information I know, but can you blame me for thinking about it? These guys were cool as cucumbers. It was unnerving.

Darius sat on the other side of the dining table opposite me. We were quiet as the servants began to file in, bringing in the first course, Teresa among them. She gave me a cheeky wink and mouthed the words 'we have to talk' as I nodded adamantly. Boy did I need a girlfriend to confide in right now? Teresa would be perfect, albeit maybe a bit jealous of my situation. I would have to be respectful of her situation, for she too was desperate for a mate and had yet to find one.

I began to pick at my food, absent-mindedly, not even paying attention to the food, only knowing that it was delicious as everyone else did the same. The silence was awkward and filled with tension, both Rowan and Stefan glaring at Darius who refused to be cowed and glared back. My mother was glaring at Darius as well, her eyes dripping with hatred and there was malice in her expression, a deep loathing I had seen before but for once it wasn't aimed at me.

"So Amber," my mother said conversationally, turning to look at me with a wide smile on her face "how does it feel having two sexy mates at the same time?"

I almost choked Stefan, thumping me on the back as I spluttered, reaching out to grab my glass of water and frantically drink it down. "Mother" I gasped "how can you say such things."

She gave a nonchalant shrug. "It's blatantly obvious, the way those two are staring at you. Besides with the wolf you possess it's not a surprise. How do you feel about it?"

Rowan and Stefan turned to regard me questionably as I blushed profusely. "It's um" I stammered "different but not unpleasant" I added hastily. My cheeks flushed, remembering each of their kisses. Stefan and Rowan looked satisfied.

"But how do you feel about sharing her?" pressed my mother with determination, gazing at each of the men who looked toward each other.

"Initially neither one of us wanted to" Stefan answered finally "but then we realized that we also didn't want to lose her. The best solution all around was to come to the agreement of sharing her, but it all boils down to Amber and what she wants. Turns out," he said with a nonchalant shrug "she wants both of us."

I stared at the table, embarrassed beyond belief, while Rowan and Stefan both looked satisfied with each other. Their hands still touched my thighs and I wriggled, feeling the heat of their hands on my flesh.

Darius sneered. "Why am I not surprised you chose both," he said in a way that sounded like an insult.

I glared at him. "So what if I did" I defended hotly, feeling aggressive at that moment, my hackles raised so to speak "are you jealous Darius?" I asked him sweetly.

He shook his head. "No, but perhaps now would be a good time to discuss custody of the baby you are carrying."

"You mean my child," I told him firmly "not yours, nor will it ever be yours."

He slammed his fork down. "I can make you take a paternity test" he announced.

Stefan looked at him smugly "go ahead, I can guarantee that it won't make a whit of difference. Do you claim that you're going to attack Amber and make her out to be an unfit mother? What about you? I find it no coincidence that your wife died under mysterious circumstances and that she had a miscarriage to boot."

Rowan joined in, leaning back in his chair "I too, guarantee you won't have a hope in hell between mine and Stefan's lawyers. This child stays with us. We're a family, and you have no say in the child's upbringing."

Darius was furious, spitting mad. "You told me we would discuss this civilly" he snarled "and instead you're just repeating what you've already said."

I looked at him innocently. "Darius, I am being civil" I pointed out "because if I wasn't" I allowed my canines to come out, "I would have shifted by now and ripped you a new one" I added.

He flinched. But wasn't about to give up the fight. "You can't honestly think that these men" he pointed at Rowan and Stefan "would be more appropriate fathers? What about how he treated you?" he asked pointing to Rowan.

Rowan squeezed my thigh. I opened my mouth and answered "yes, he treated me like shit" I said meaningfully "but he was under a spell and I've forgiven him for his transgressions. He still has to prove himself to me, but I don't hate him for what he did. It's no worse than what you did, is it?" I asked cocking my head and regarding him steadily.

Darius looked confused and then blushed as he realized what I meant. "You abandoned me, Darius, left me to fend for myself alone, forced me into a marriage I didn't want" which thankfully hadn't happened "and now you claim to want this child. You married my sister" I told him "not me. You didn't fight for us, you just dropped me like a sack of potatoes" I glared.

He dug his fingernails into the table. "I'm not giving up without a fight" he screeched like a petulant child. I shook my head at him. "I don't expect you to give up," I told him honestly, feeling a bit sorry for him and how lost he looked "but I'm warning you that you won't win Darius" I added gently and sincerely.

My mother was watching everything unfold, her lips curled back in a sneer. She hated Darius with a passion and I worried she might try to do something to him. I couldn't finish my dinner and I pushed it back regretfully, feeling a bit out of sorts.

"Are you alright?" asked Rowan, leaning in to murmur it in my ear.

I frowned. I was having cramping pain along my lower stomach again and was putting it down to those blasted Braxton hicks that seemed to persist. It was quite painful and I gingerly stood up, Rowan and Stefan removing their hands from my thighs.

"If you'll forgive me, I'm quite tired," I told Darius regretfully "but I think we've finished discussing things, don't you?"

He flattened his lips and said nothing. I pushed my chair back in and turned toward the stairs, Rowan and Stefan helping me, each of them on one side, offering me their arms. They were certainly acting like a gentleman, I thought a bit amused. I walked up two steps and then stopped, heaving in a big breath as Stefan peered down at me in concern.

"Something is wrong" I panted, feeling the cramping pain becoming even worse, doubling over in pain. I could feel something wet at the back of my dress and then I heard Rowan's strangled voice.

"She's bleeding."

I let out a small cry and then Stefan was picking me up and cradling me in his arms, bridal style, making his way back down the stairs and rushing me down the corridors.

"Hospital" he growled, Rowan following along behind me.

My mother put a hand to her mouth as we rushed past her, while Darius was looking highly concerned as he watched us go. We reached the hospital in record time, the doctor rushing toward us as she spotted Stefan.

"Put her down on the bed" she instructed King Stefan with a worried look on her face. She took in my blood-soaked dress and panties and paled.

"Get her in the room" she shouted and a nurse moved, hustling past Rowan and Stefan, pushing the bed into a nearby empty room, the doctor vanishing and then reappearing with an ultrasound machine.

I was sobbing by now. It was too soon to be giving birth and I was worried I was having a miscarriage. I placed a hand on my swollen stomach, wanting to be comforted.

"Alright honey, let's take a look at your womb and see what's going on," said the Doctor with a friendly smile. She had red hair and green eyes and looked to be in control, despite the worried look in her eyes.

"My baby" I wailed and Stefan gripped my hand, Rowan gripping the other one, both of them doing their best to comfort me.

"It's alright" whispered Stefan, stroking my forehead, "everything is going to be alright."

Rowan nodded his agreement, kissing me on the cheek.

The doctor placed the probe on my stomach and all of us stared at the screen in dread. I felt nauseous, sick to my stomach at the thought of what might be happening. The doctor bit her lip as she moved it around, saying nothing for several moments. It felt like a lifetime as we waited, all of us on tenterhooks, hoping desperately to hear that there was nothing wrong.

"Okay," said the doctor finally, giving me a reassuring smile "your baby is fine, his heartbeat is nice and strong. I want you to remember that."

"Okay, but why am I bleeding?" I asked nervously.

"There seems to be no cause for the bleeding, sometimes it happens" the doctor explained with a frown "however, for the time being, I would like to put you on bed rest, just for the next few days just to be cautious."

"That's not a problem," Stefan told the doctor, his tone brooking no arguments as he gently stroked my forehead "we'll make sure she stays resting in bed."

I pouted. I wasn't good at staying in one spot for very long and staying in bed all day sounded especially boring and lonely. I would do it, for the sake of my child, but I knew I wasn't going to enjoy it.

My mother came rushing in. "Oh sweet heaven are you okay?" she asked, flinging her arms around me.

"Everything's fine mum, I just have to go on bed rest for a little bit" I answered a little sulkily.

She looked relieved. I looked around but there was no sign of Dylan.

"Dylan's still a little shy when it comes to you" she answered seeing my look "but he'll get used to the idea of you eventually. Just give him some time."

I nodded slowly. From what I had seen Dylan was quite an introvert, a shy gentleman who seemed to shy away from too much attention.

"Time for bed" Rowan cut in and Stefan nodded his agreement. The doctor gave a smile. "She should be fine, but contact me if you have any worries. The bleeding has already stopped" she assured us as we smiled back at her.

Stefan picked me back up and cradled me to his chest as I put my arms around his neck, enjoying the feel of his body against mine. He carried me with ease out of the hospital wing, Rowan coming behind us, while my mother waved goodbye, mouthing she would see me tomorrow.

To my surprise, Stefan placed me in a guest room as I looked at him with bewilderment. "Why here?" I asked and he sighed.

"I want you to get a decent rest" he answered "and you won't get it if you share a bed with me and Rowan" he added, indicating the other man who was leaning against the doorway. Just the image of both of them in the bed with me was enough to make my cheeks burn bright red. I yawned unexpectedly, making both of them laugh.

"I'm not sleepy" I protested and they chuckled.

"Get some sleep," Stefan told me quietly "and if you need anything, ring that bell" he added, pointing to a bell sitting on the bedside table.

Rowan came sauntering over. "Goodnight Princess" he growled, bending down and capturing my lips with his, kissing me gently and then breaking it off. Stefan did the same, not phased in the slightest by Rowan kissing me.

"Goodnight" I whispered and they left, shutting the door behind them. Without meaning to, I closed my eyes and soon drifted into a deep sleep.

I can't say for sure what it was that woke me. It could have been the sound of the window cracking open, or the sudden rush of footsteps across the floor. Whatever it was, I bolted upright, only to see Darius's eyes in the darkness, something pushed against my mouth, his hands holding it firmly against me as I tried to scream out for help. But the chemical in the fabric was strong and I inhaled it, feeling my body grow weak and limp. Darius let go and it was only then I realized there was a second man in the room, who had been holding me from behind.

"Well done," said the voice as Darius backed away.

I blinked, the image of him becoming fuzzy. Then before I could do anything else, I felt darkness consume me.

Chapter 120 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

My head felt like it was stuffed full of cotton balls, and my mind was fuzzy as I tried to sit upright, hearing the clanking sound of chains as my eyes shot open in disbelief. Where was I? I wondered to myself, as I glanced around and saw nothing but darkness surrounding me. My body was weak and as I glanced downward, I saw that I was chained up, the silver burning my flesh and making me wince from the pain. What happened? The last thing I remember was going to bed and then . . . oh my god! My eyes widened as I remembered Darius suddenly in my bedroom and the feeling of someone else holding me as he pressed something to my mouth, something with a strong chemical smell to it.

The floor beneath me was hard and uneven, made of rock and I felt along it, trying to find something sharp that may prove useful as a weapon. There was nothing, just a few useless pebbles, I noted with a grimace. I felt the baby kicking and felt relief that my precious baby was still alive. Whatever the chemical that had been used, it hadn't proved to be harmful to the baby, or at least I hoped so considering the baby was happily moving about.

I saw something moving in the shadows and wriggled about, frantically trying to move, my eyes straining to see and then none other than Darius came walking forward.

"You" I hissed, furious "you pathetic, miserable, excuse of a human being."

He laughed outright at my fury, taking delight in it. "Well aren't you just your normal feisty self" he congratulated me, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

"What do you want with me, Darius?" I asked him, testing my restraints and finding them too tight to maneuver or dislodge. His eyes watched my every movement.

"Where's your partner?" I asked suddenly and saw him stiffen before another shadow came out of the darkness. My mouth gaped open. It wasn't possible, it couldn't be him. He was dead, I thought to myself, we'd been sure of it. But then I remembered that I had lost consciousness after supposedly killing him. Was he something else, some other race? I sniffed uncertainly and then gasped. He smelt like a half-vampire, which meant he had drunk from one, perhaps Stefan when he was a prisoner of Alpha Gordon? It was the only logical explanation I could think of.

"Good, you're awake," said Alpha Gordon smugly, his arms folded across his chest, a menacing look in his eyes. "I want you to use your powers to bring my wolf to the surface" he added.

The hell I would I thought to myself. Darius looked at me with something akin to a warning in his glance but I ignored it. "Go to hell" I spat out, and heard the Alpha laugh or rather chuckle to himself.

"Do you really think you have a choice?" he asked me, leaning forward, his tone dripping with malice "Considering you're restrained with no one to help you?"

I wriggled on the floor. "Stefan and Rowan will find me" I answered confidently and heard Alpha Gordon laugh out loud, slapping his knees merrily with his hands.

"They don't even know you've been taken" answered Darius smugly, "it will be hours before they think to look for you, thanks to a well-planned rogue attack at the castle."

I stared at him speechless. "You planned this," I said slowly and Darius nodded. "How long have you been in cahoots with one another?"

"Oh a few weeks," Darius said blithely "we both had our own agenda and agreed to work as a team. Now are you going to bring his wolf to the surface or not?" he asked lightly.

I shook my head adamantly. Alpha Gordon stepped forward, his massive bulk overpowering me. Without a word or warning, he stepped on one of my hands, crushing it as I cried out in pain, trying not to topple to the side.

"Are you sure about that?" asked Alpha Gordon.

I shut my eyes, trying to concentrate on my breathing, forcing the pain away. He pulled back his foot and then stomped on my hand, crushing my fingers as I howled in pain. He hopped off and grinned at me.

"Are you prepared to now?" he asked casually "I see you have another good hand."

I bit my lip to keep from screaming. As he approached I swung my legs out, sending him flying to the ground which he hit with a curse and a loud thud. It was a shame my ankles were restrained together, I thought sadly because otherwise, I could have done a hell of a lot more damage.

Darius helped Alpha Gordon to his feet. "Stupid bitch" he snarled at me.

I raised an eyebrow. The Alpha spits out a bunch of vile insults toward me, making me laugh out loud. He had completely lost his composure in his anger.

"Calm down" Darius growls at the Alpha.

But Gordon wasn't having it. He glowered at me, his eyes gleaming in the darkness. I saw his eyes shoot toward my swollen stomach and sucked in a breath. Anything but that I thought, suddenly full of dread. If he threatened the life of my unborn child, I would do anything to keep it safe, and Darius and he knew it. It was like he suddenly realized he had leverage, because he reached down and hauled me up, my feet dangling slightly as his eyes began to turn a bright and vivid red.

"If you do not bring my wolf to the surface," he said very evenly, in a tone dripping with venom "I will kick the shit out of you and at your stomach until you miscarry, do you understand me," he said and I knew he meant every word of his threat.

Tears pricked the corners of my eyes. I just couldn't risk it. Even Lilac was of the same opinion, hating that we needed to give in, but unwilling to risk the life of our pup.

"Fine" I snarled "but how do I know you won't do that anyway?"

Darius stepped forward. "Because I want you in one piece," he said calmly "and you're mine after he's finished with you."

I didn't like the way he was eyeing me or the words he had just used. What the hell did he mean I was his? I felt insulted but wasn't stupid enough to provoke him.

Alpha Gordon carefully put me on my feet. I winced, the pain throbbing in my left hand where he'd crushed the bones. Lilac was trying frantically to heal me but it would take some time.

"I need these chains off," I said impatiently, gesturing toward them "and my hands free to do what you want."

Alpha Gordon remained suspicious. "You can have your hands free but that's it. The chains remain around your body and legs."

I gave a huff but knew he wouldn't be swayed.

Darius reached forward with a key in his right hand and quickly undid the restraints around my wrists. I gave a sigh of relief as they came off. I stretched my good hand experimentally.

"Right then, let's get a move on," said Alpha Gordon, coming right up to me and standing there, an expectant look on his face. I considered punching him but let's face it, he'd get me back within an instant. Out of the two of us, I had the most to lose and both men knew it.

I took a deep breath and then I apologized in my mind for what I was about to do and unleash. Then slowly, gingerly, I placed my good hand against his chest and began to concentrate. My palm began to glow and I felt warm all over, tingles all over my body as the warmth grew. Then I began to feel a sharp pain, gritting my teeth and pushing through until I felt myself becoming cold all over and shivering. I

stopped, and Alpha Gordon glanced down at me, a wide grin on his face. Darius moved to help me lie down as Alpha Gordon let out a triumphant growl.

"I can hear my wolf" he declared as I shivered miserably.

There was the ominous sound of cracking noises and loud howls as the Alpha shifted for the first time. I glanced over my shoulder with dread and saw a large black wolf with glowing red eyes sitting there. It let out a growl and Darius gave it a challenging look.

"She's mine now, remember" he pointed out and the wolf stopped, standing up and glaring at Darius for a moment before it made its way toward where I assumed the entry to the cave was.

I couldn't stop shaking. I was cold all over and feeling detached. My god, what had I just done? Have I just unleashed a monster? For Alpha Gordon's wolf looked larger than the average alpha wolf, even if Darius hadn't seemed to see it. Not to mention he was also half-vampire, which would give the Alpha even more speed and agility. I began to pray to the moon goddess in my mind to save me, frightened of what Darius would want with me next.

Darius crouched beside me. "You look all done in," he said in a whisper, one that was meant to sound concerned as I glowered at him "but that's alright because I can put you in the car" he added with a shrug as the Alpha disappeared completely from view. I felt his strong arms come around me and saw him wince from the silver. "I'll undo the restraints when we get back" he murmured.

Get back to where? I wanted to shout. Where are you taking me? What do you want with me? I felt myself beginning to sob and one of his hands adjusted itself so that he could wipe my tears away.

"There, there" he soothed "it's alright. We're just going to take a little trip together like we should have when we were together. I made a mistake Amber" he continued thoughtfully as he began to carry my limp body toward the entrance to the cave "when I agreed to marry Sophie and now I'm going to fix it. I'm fixing the past," he said smugly as my eyes widened.

I tried to move and he tightened his grip. "Don't make me put you out again" he threatened and I stilled. We made our way out of the cave and I blinked up at the night sky, seeing the stars twinkle overhead and wondering how much time had passed since I'd been stolen. Not much from the looks of it.

Darius seemed to know the way, his feet sure and steady as he made his way over fallen leaves and debris, toward a road where there was a car parked surreptitiously by the side. It was his car, one I recognized instantly and he calmly opened the boot of the car and slid me inside of it. I couldn't move, no matter how much I willed myself to. Not after bringing Alpha Gordon's wolf to the surface. It had completely drained me. Lilac was silent, which worried me, and I tried to pretend everything was fine and that she was silent because she was trying to heal me.

My body was sore all over. Darius took a look at me as my eyelids fluttered closed and then he began to withdraw something from his pocket. Something that smelt pungent and strong with chemicals. Please, god, no I thought to myself, widening my eyes and trying to mutter something, anything to stop him.

"Darius" I managed to utter and he looked at me remorsefully, holding the large scrap of fabric in his right hand.

"Sorry about this Amber," he said finally, and then before I could put up a fight or move, he was placing the fabric against my nose and mouth, forcing me to inhale the chemical substance.

The last thing I saw was Darius's face and the last thing I heard was the sound of the boot closing before everything went black and darkness consumed me.