

Alpha's Rejected 81

Chapter 81 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I was running through the forest in my wolf form when I came upon two children running away from another shifter, although this one was a rogue. I pounced on the rogue just before it could tackle the little girl to the ground, pinning it down and growling. The little girl, with messy blonde hair, and her friend or brother, who had the same sort of facial features, continued to run as I backed away from the rogue with its glowing red eyes and snarl on its face. I had the feeling the rogue was none too happy with me but I didn't care.

"Run Cory" I could hear the little girl's voice behind me, shrieking and I was distracted for a moment, the other wolf trying to take the opportunity to tackle me to the ground, slashing and clawing away. I gave a small hiss as his claws made contact with me, causing a large gash on my side. I got to my feet and backed away slowly, dodging to the side as it went to tackle me again. I turned and ran, in the opposite direction of the children, leading the rogue away from them. It followed me, its paws thudding loudly behind me as I continued to sprint, wanting as much distance between the rogue and the children as possible. God willing, when this was all over, I would go back and find the children safe from harm.

I heard a low growl in front of me and stopped short, another rogue coming out from behind the trees. It jumped and I met it in mid-air, tackling it to the ground and clawing rapidly at it, causing it to yelp as several long gashes formed on its hindquarters. The wolf behind me jumped and rolled me to the ground, biting down on my neck as I kicked out and sent it flying into the nearest tree, its body hitting the trunk of it with a large thud. It fell to the ground snarling and I warily looked back and forth between the two.

We can take them, we just need to be more cautious of them attacking together.

I'm trying to be but rogues are not exactly the easiest to take down Lilac

I know child, so be careful. Don't forget about the children back there, we need to keep them safe as well.

At least the rogue's not chasing them anymore, with luck they might manage to make it to the next pack.

We can only hope so child.

I began to run again, dodging past trees and fallen branches, the other wolves struggling to keep up with my speed. As I ran, I healed the gash in my side, the blood from it, staining my pure white fur. Then I skidded to a complete halt, as several other wolves came out of the woods, all rogues, all growling lowly at me. I could maybe take out two or three, but there was at least a half a dozen or more. I was a goner and even Lilac was silent now, apprehensive and fully aware of the danger we were in.

I sensed an Alpha and turned my head, to see one of the biggest men I'd ever seen, step out from a cave, his lips curled back in a smile as he spotted me. He looked like he couldn't believe his luck.

"A white wolf" he chortled, "and just the one we were going to go after, no less. Can you believe it" he cried out to the other wolves, who all stepped around each other to form a circle around me. I tensed, waiting for the inevitable, but it didn't come. None of them were attacking for some strange reason.

"Shift," the Alpha said looking tired and drained. I wondered about the paleness of his complexion. The man looked like a Viking, with his shaggy hair and beard, not to mention the tallness of his body.

I hesitated. He hadn't used his alpha tone, but then he didn't really need to, did he? Not when I was surrounded by his companions, who all looked at me eagerly, looking more than ready to fight if it came down to that. I wasn't pleased but I felt like I had no choice and while they all watched, I shifted, into my naked form, standing there shivering. I glared up at the Alpha Rogue who looked unrepentant.

"So you're the white wolf" he boomed "we've been watching you, waiting to take you and instead you come running straight to us."

He frowned and glared at the other wolves who were staring wildly at me with their glowing red eyes.

"Back off" he snapped, motioning to them.

Several wolves did as he asked, while another one shifted into a male form, a man with blonde dreadlocks and a beard, who looked like someone who enjoyed surfing, rather than being a rogue. It was not something I'd expected to see and judging by the way he strode straight towards the Alpha Rogue, he was his right-hand man because he didn't seem to fear the Alpha at all.

"Alpha Gordon," said the man "what would you have us do with her?" he asked.

The man stroked his beard. "Place her in the cave as well. She might need some influencing to do what I require of her" he added as I glared at them both hatefully. Part of me considered making a run for it, but glancing around, the rogues were still in eyesight and I wasn't about to test their patience.

Fuck, Lilac what do you suppose he wants with us?

I don't know but do you sense something strange about this alpha? Try and smell him and you'll see what I mean. Maybe that's the reason he's so desperate to have us. We mustn't do it though child, no matter what. Do you hear me? We cannot give in to his demands. It would make him far more dangerous than he already is.

I stopped speaking to Lilac and concentrated, sniffing towards Alpha Gordon who was muttering something to this other fellow, and blinked in confusion. Why couldn't I sense his wolf? I could sense his aura and he was most definitely an Alpha but there was no wolf to be had. Is this why he needed me? Because of the power, I contained to bring his wolf to the surface. Lilac was right, if I did that this man would be even more dangerous and there was no telling that he would let go of me afterward.

I heard yelling and screaming behind me and glanced over my shoulder, disheartened to see the two little children I'd tried so desperately to save, in a rogue's grasp as they kicked and struggled.

"Let go" the little girl was screaming, her face all bunched up. The little boy was kicking for all he was worth and frantically trying to reach for his sister's hand.

"Carrie" he was yelling and it broke my heart to hear them, let alone see both children being handled so roughly.

"Let them go" I snarled and Alpha Gordon laughed at the angry expression on my face.

"Or what?" he mocked me. "Something tells me that having these children would be a benefit on my part, especially if you refuse to do what I want" he added.

I felt something sting my leg and looked down to see a dart embedded in my thigh. My mouth opened and closed in shock. I couldn't believe it but his crony had shot me with a tranquilizer dart!

Alpha Gordon looked annoyed as he glared at the surfer dude. "Jordan, that wasn't necessary you idiot" he growled, "now I'll have to wait for the little bitch to wake up to do what I want."

Jordan just shrugged, not looking sorry at all. So much for being afraid of the alpha, I thought to myself woosily, these two were like frenemies.

"It's only for a short time," Jordan said shortly "and the little bitch gave me what for earlier and injured me."

Alpha Gordon rolled his eyes. "You could have gotten her to heal you dumbass" he pointed out.

Now Jordan looked frustrated. He clearly hadn't thought about that.

"What do you want with me" I stammered, staggering slightly where I stood. The rogue holding the boy and girl disappeared into the cave, their screams and yelling slowly fading away.

"Isn't it obvious?" asked Alpha Gordon with a smirk "I want you to give me my wolf, my dear."

I shook my head at him, feeling woozy. "I won't do it" I mumbled, my mouth feeling dry like cotton balls. "You're evil."

He walked closer to me as I dropped to one knee on the ground, trying desperately to keep myself upright. There was a knowing smile on the bastard's face.

"You won't have a choice," he said softly, bending to speak into my ear as I shuddered at the feeling of his breath, "not if you want to save those two children" he threatened.

I felt nauseous, unable to speak to Lilac. I'd been dosed with wolfsbane, I realized in horror, which explained the sedating effects and not being able to communicate with my wolf. My other knee fell to the ground so that I was kneeling and Alpha Gordon reached forward and grabbed a lock of my hair, twining it around his finger and forcing my face upwards to look at him.

"You know" he mused, "You're rather pretty with that red hair and green eyes of yours. I imagine you are quite fierce and proud as well" he added.

I shivered. I didn't like him calling me pretty. I would rather, he thought I was ugly. He leaned down and still using my hair to hold my head in place, mashed his lips against mine as I struggled with futility against him. His lips were rough, coarse and he plundered the inside of mine without mercy as I gagged. It felt like a lifetime as he kissed me, my body growing weaker by the moment until finally, he pulled back and surveyed me. "You tasted delicious" he purred motioning towards Jordan who moved to scoop me up in his arms.

I tried to kick, to punch, but it was hopeless. The wolfsbane had well and truly taken effect. I felt helpless and vulnerable, carried in Jordan's surprisingly strong arms. "Take her to the cave and tie her up" boomed Alpha Gordon "and make sure that she can't get away."

The cave was dark as we entered and I blinked my eyes as they became accustomed to the darkness. Up ahead I could hear the children sobbing as we walked, Jordan not saying a word. We rounded a corner and Jordan stopped in his tracks as my eyes widened in disbelief. Ahead of us, chained to some bolts in the wall, was the most beautiful man I had ever seen. He wasn't a shifter, for I couldn't smell a wolf with him, but he was glorious to behold. Slightly pale, with brown auburn hair and dark brown eyes that were almost black. He also smelt incredible, like apples and cinnamon, my favorite dessert being apple pie. I sniffed appreciatively and watched the man's eyes suddenly widen as he took me in, his eyes suddenly a blazing red color.

Jordan placed me down next to the man who began to tug rather wildly at the chains holding him in place.

"Cut it out" snarled Jordan "christ, what's gotten into you" he snapped, shaking his head.

I knew what had come over him because I had the same feeling as I stared at the man who was chained. It physically hurt to look at him tied up and I would have done anything to free him if I hadn't been drugged and useless. The man's mouth opened and he let out a ferocious growl, that echoed throughout the cave.

Jordan proceeded to tie me up to some more bolts in the cave, restraining my hands and ankles together. I tried to resist, but couldn't move in the end and was forced to concede. He kicked me, hard in the ribs, eliciting a gasp from me and another low growl from the man, which I had just realized was a vampire of all things.

"Do that to her again and you're a dead man" he hissed at Jordan who looked confused.

"Why do you care" he snapped.

Don't my eyes begged the man, don't tell him that we're mates, he'll only find a way to use it against us. The man's mouth opened and I cringed but he closed it, having seen the warning look in my eyes. My eyelids began to flutter and I lay down on the ground, unable to move far, feeling incredibly weak. The man looked down at me with a grim expression on his face as my eyes finally closed, the sound of the children weeping the last thing I heard before darkness claimed me.

Chapter 82 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Sophie POV

"I know you're seeing someone else, you're out at all hours of the night, you reek of her perfume and you smell like sex. I'm not stupid, you know that Darius. So who is she" I demanded, feeling hysterical. My hands clenched into fists and I could feel myself gritting my teeth.

I was beside myself. Even though I thought things had been going well, with Darius claiming that he adored me, the fizzle had gone out of our relationship somewhat. It was like he had grown bored of me or something, whereas I still loved him something fierce. I ran a hand through my disheveled blonde hair feeling partly crazed.

Darius glowered at me. We were standing in the middle of the forest, where no one could hear us arguing, especially his mother Luna Marian and Alpha John. I didn't want his family to know that something was wrong. But in hindsight maybe they should know. They could at least reign him back whereas he took no notice of anything I said.

"It's none of your business" he growled "and I'm not cheating on you" he denied, but his face gave it away. I could always tell when he was lying and he was lying to my face right now. It was blatantly obvious.

"It is my business," I told him heatedly "we're married, Darius. Doesn't that mean anything to you? We made vows to love and cherish each other" I added, feeling hurt and somewhat puzzled by his attitude. Was I not enough for him? Didn't he care about the promises we had made to each other? Where was it all going wrong?

He looked at me with eyes so piercing that I flinched in reaction. "We got married because you trapped me, remember Sophie? I love you, but to be stuck with you for the rest of my life" he said bitterly "when it should have been Amber."

My heart dropped. So he was still in love with my sister. I shouldn't have been surprised. But after the honeymoon we'd had and the way we had been loving each other, I thought for sure he'd gotten over my sister. After all, he'd promised to give me a chance, hadn't he? Until death did us part? Or had he been such a clever liar that I had fallen for it, hook, line, and sinker?

"I have done everything I can to make it up to you" I whispered shakily, gesturing with my hands. "I've loved you since we were small Darius, what do I have to do to prove that to you?" I would do anything, anything at all if it meant that he loved me. No matter how much he degraded me or humiliated me, I was willing to do whatever it took to keep him with me by my side.

"It doesn't matter if you love me" he sneered, an ugly look on his face as I backed away slowly "I've been trying to pretend to be someone I'm not and I'm tired of it. I'm tired of trying to be the perfect husband and the perfect understanding ex-boyfriend. I want the child Amber is carrying and I want her, not you. As for the cheating? Well, it's a darn sight better than having to sleep with you, more exciting for a start." I flinched from the malice dripping from his voice.

So the pain I had been feeling, had been when he had been cheating on me! My mouth gaped open at the anger that Darius was exhibiting toward me. "Darius, you're mother won't be happy to hear about you cheating" I accused, rather foolishly, my heart thudding wildly in my chest. Had he forgotten we

were going to be the future Alpha and Luna of the pack for heaven's sake? His mother would have a coronary if she discovered Darius was cheating on me.

He drew himself up straight. "You wouldn't be so stupid as to tell her" he boomed "you're an idiot Sophie if you think that's going to get me to stop."

I sucked in a breath. "So our marriage vows mean nothing to you" I accused, pointing a finger at him "they were just empty words" and empty promises I thought sadly to myself.

He shook his head at me. "I tried to be what you wanted, what my mother and father expected of me and all it has done is make me miserable" he scoffed, running a hand through his shaggy hair "I won't keep pretending everything is fine. Maybe for a little while, I convinced myself that I adored you, but now, now I despise you again. I hate feeling trapped."

I stared at him miserably. "I can't believe this, Darius, you asshole," I told him, feeling stricken "If you think that you're stuck, how do you think I feel?"

He laughed out loud at that fact. "You're the one who instigated all this" he snapped "planning on seducing me and having your parents find us together. That was your idea, so if you feel trapped, then you only have yourself to blame" he roared as I cringed away from him. Birds, frightened by the loud noises, took flight from their perches and flew hastily away.

I didn't know what to do. Gone was the Darius I knew and now, standing in front of me was a complete stranger, one who was glaring at me with hatred and contempt in his eyes. I closed my eyes, feeling a tear trickle down my cheek.

"How would you like it if I cheated on you" I choked out, grasping at straws.

His eyes narrowed. "Do it" he invited me, spreading his arms out wide "if you can find someone willing to sleep with you. Something tells me that most men aren't going to want to sleep with a pregnant woman. Besides which, that would make you a slut, something I already know you are."

I gasped. "I am not a slut" I snarled, "and you, you're nothing but a manwhore" I spluttered.

He grinned. "I'm not denying that. So what if I am? The truth hurts doesn't it Sophie" he mocked.

He was right, it did hurt. It hurt knowing that I was still coming off as second best to Amber and to anyone he was cheating on me with. It hurt knowing I wasn't enough for him. It hurt knowing I had given my heart to someone who had ripped it out of my chest and stomped on it. My lip quivered. Why couldn't I have just once, come out on top? I hadn't seen this coming, at least not initially. I thought with the baby on the way that Darius would be faithful to me, that everything was behind us and now this? My heart felt like it was torn in two.

I wasn't going to stand for this. I wiped the tears from my eyes and stared at Darius, hard. "You're going to stop what you're doing and stop cheating on me," I said haughtily and with confidence. I was going to make him stop, whether he liked it or not.

He sneered at me. "What if I don't want to?" he asked slowly, moving forwards and cocking his head at me "what are you going to do about it, Sophie? How are you going to make me stop?"

I frowned at him. "I'll tell your mother. Luna Marian will be on my side, you idiot. Do you really think she would condone your cheating? What happened to wanting to be the Alpha of the pack? Do you really think your parents would have you take over after this?"

He stopped smiling now and looked disgusted with me. "So you want to go and tattle to my mother," he said unconcerned "you always were a goody two shoes" he spat out "and I'm willing to bet that they'll still make me Alpha if you weren't in the picture."

I was puzzled by what he meant by this. His arm shot out and I felt a sharp stinging pain against my left cheek where he slapped me hard. I cried out in pain. He chuckled lowly under his breath. "How does that feel?" he taunted, pushing me hard so that I stumbled.

My hand shot to my abdomen protectively, as I staggered backward, almost falling over my own two feet.

"Stop Darius" I pleaded, feeling panicked. My breathing was haggard and heavy as I fought the urge to run, not wanting to give the bastard the satisfaction of seeing how scared I was of him. This was a complete stranger to me.

He ignored my pleas. "You little bitch" he hissed advancing on me as I stepped back a few paces. He shoved me hard, and I fell to my knees, sobbing now. "You think you can just push me around to get what you want? I don't answer to you" he roared and his leg kicked out, getting me right in the stomach as my mouth opened in a blood curdling scream. I felt the rippling pain across my stomach and even he knew he'd gone too far, as he turned and strode away, without a second glance.

The pain was excruciating. My mouth opened and closed in a scream as I felt something trickling down my legs. Blood and a lot of it. I screamed out for help but no one came. I lay in a fetal position, whimpering, unable to move, frightened out of my wits. I sobbed, constantly, my hands wrapped around my stomach, feeling nausea and vomiting. I lay there for hours, darkness coming over me, the blood constantly flowing between my legs as I lost the child I had been carrying. I could feel myself becoming limp, my eyes closing in resignation.

What had I done? I should never have approached Darius in the first place, but never in my wildest dreams would I have ever imagined him to be this capable of cruelty. I thought he was the one, the man I would be married to, for the rest of my life. Instead, now, I lay there, feeling myself grow cold, my heart beginning to pound wildly in my chest. I welcomed the darkness, feeling my life draining away, despite my wolf trying to urge me to fight, to let it heal me. But I didn't want to be healed, I wanted to die. I couldn't see what was worth living for. To see Darius again would merely be cruel and I couldn't bear to look upon his face once more, not when he was the reason I had just lost our baby. I knew I was hemorrhaging and I celebrated, rejoicing that soon I would be gone from this earth and no longer left to love someone who would never love me back. The only thing that caused me bitterness is that Darius would never be punished for what he did, no doubt this would be thought of as an accident. I also regretted not being able to warn Amber about him. Now that I was gone, I knew he would be going after Amber and the baby. I just hope that she sees him for what he is.

I heard a scream coming from a distance, my mother's voice crying out in shock as she knelt beside me. I blinked up at her, astonished to see her. Last I'd heard she was with Amber. She had a hand to her mouth. "Sweetheart" she whispered "we've been looking all over for you. Let's get you to the hospital."

I shook my head, now so weak I could barely speak. Still, I tried to utter the words regardless. "Must warn Amber" I tried to say but it came out as a strangled gargle "ust born ember" instead.

My mother held my hand, tears coming to her eyes and as she looked down at me, I glanced up at the sky and let the darkness consume me.

Chapter 83 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I woke up, my eyelids fluttering, staring up at the dark ceiling of the cave. The man, who was tied down next to me, smiled with relief to see me awake.

"Thank god" he breathed, "are you alright?"

I frowned at him, sitting as upright as I possibly could considering that I was restrained. "I've been better" I admitted as he shook his head, looking at his restraints with a grim expression on his face and testing them. They made a loud clattering sound as he let out a low growl of frustration.

"My name's Amber" I whispered shyly, "what's your name?"

He stopped moving and bowed his head. "It's King Stefan" he growled, "Stefan to you."

I nodded shyly. What does one say to a mate they've only just met and this time not under conniving circumstances? I opened my mouth to begin when I heard the vampire king hiss, the sound of footsteps approaching.

"Great" Stefan murmured, "they're back."

It was the blonde-haired-dread-locked Jordan who approached, grinning widely. He glanced over at the vampire king who was now struggling widely with his chains. The children in the corner were fast asleep, tear stains on their cheeks. Evidently, they had cried themselves to sleep. I was disgusted that they would treat children this way and resolved to get the children free when I could.

"Stress less," Jordan said wickedly to Stefan. "The Alpha doesn't want you, he wants her," he said firmly, pointing towards me.

I sucked in a breath, knowing full well why I might be wanted by the Alpha and I would be damned if I did what he wanted. Jordan leaned down over me and began to undo my restraints with a key. The fool was alone, to my astonishment. Perhaps he considered me to be weak due to being a female or he

thought he was safe simply because of the sheer number of shifters out there. Or maybe he thought I wouldn't have the nerve to do what I did next.

My leg shot out, kicking Jordan right in the nuts. He opened his mouth to let out a howl and I headbutted him, sending him careening backward. A roundhouse kick to the chest sent him to the wall of the cave where he hit his head and slid down to the ground unconscious. The key was on the floor, gleaming in the darkness and I bent down to pick it up, glancing over at a very impressed mate of mine.

"Well done" he growled as I hastily let him free, before going over to the children and waking them up quietly.

"Come on guys, wake up. We need to go", I cajoled them, as they both sat up and rubbed their eyes, blinking as they looked around the cave wide-eyed.

"We'll be caught" the little boy, Cory hissed at us, looking concerned and more than a little worried. His sister put her thumb in her mouth and gazed at me and Stefan in awe.

"If we stay here, they could continue to hurt us," I told them quietly. "You need to come with us.

"What about the other men?"

Stefan spoke up, his voice grim "that's for Amber and me to take care of. I want both of you to stay in the cave until we come back for you. Do you hear me?"

I hesitated, not wanting to leave the children behind and yet knowing it was the best plan of action. The children looked fearfully at the unconscious Jordan. I smiled at them reassuringly.

"He's no threat to you anymore, see," I told them, dragging Jordan over to the restraints and tying him up. I sadly had no clothes in which to tear off, something that Stefan seemed to realize as he dragged off his shirt and tossed it to me. I ripped a long shred of fabric off and tied a gag around Jordan's mouth so that he couldn't cry out for help, should he wake up. Then I put the shirt on, relieved to see that it went down to almost my knees. Stefan was that much taller than me.

"You'll really come back?" whispered the little girl, Carrie and I nodded, bending down to give them a small hug, feeling a pang in my heart. If this didn't go to plan, then I could only hope they had the common sense to make a run for it.

"Alright, let's go", Stefan said harshly "they're expecting Jordan to come back with you. So let's hurry up."

I blinked, coming back to my senses. I had been staring at Stefan's bare chest and the six-pack he had, like a horny schoolgirl who was ogling her mate. With a sigh, I began to follow him, tiptoeing to the edge of the cave and peering out into the sunlight.

"There are at least a dozen shifters in the vicinity" Stefan hissed, pointing them out to me.

"That's not the concern, the concern is. . ." I began to say, when the Alpha Rogue, Gordon, filled the doorway with several men.

"I see that you managed to overpower Jordan," he said snootily, "not that it would have taken much to take him down" he added crossly. He gestured towards his men, who grabbed hold of me as I kicked and punched. Stefan dragged away at the same time. Neither of us was going to go without a fight and I managed to take two men out, Stefan taking all of them out, before Alpha Gordon grabbed hold of me, dragging me out into the open as Stefan hissed at him.

I mouthed the words 'run Stefan' at my mate but he refused to listen, his eyes piercing as he stared at a gloating Alpha Gordon.

"Let her go" he cried, and the Alpha laughed, a chilling sound that sent shivers down my spine.

"I can only think of one reason a vampire would stop to help a shifter" he declared as my heart sank, "and that's because they are mates."

I kicked out, but his hand twisted in my hair, dragging me upright, my legs kicking uselessly as my hands scrabbled at the man's hands pulling at my hair to no avail. Several shifters approached Stefan, who was watching wildly, unable to make a move without hurting him in the process.

"Stefan, watch out" I screamed as two shifters attacked him. Alpha Gordon turned me so that I was staring directly into his eyes.

"If you want to save your mate," he said as I glanced back over my shoulder, six shifters now fighting Stefan who was in the middle of it all, "then you will give me my wolf" he snarled.

Stefan was fighting valiantly but there was no way he could hold his own against twelve shifters, vampire or no vampire. But I couldn't bring myself to give this Alpha Rogue a wolf, not when he was so evil. His wolf would have the same temperament as him and the same cold, calculating nature. It would be a disaster in the making. I shook my head, refusing, and he grabbed hold of my arm and pulled it, dislocating my shoulder as I screamed. Stefan glanced over at me, his face paling, a look of determination on his face. He managed to take two more shifters down as he fought to get to me.

"Give me my wolf" growled Alpha Gordon in a menacing tone.

I didn't think. I shifted, and the Alpha was forced to let go of me, the dislocated arm going back into its socket during the transformation. Four shifters surrounded the Alpha, who looked nonplused for a moment before he took refuge behind them. "Attack her but don't kill her" he cried, and then turned and walked away as I stared at the small group who were snarling at me, their fur raised on end.

I jumped, dodging their attacks as they all tackled me head-on. One I sent flying into a nearby tree, its body crashing to the floor with a large thud. I kicked out at another one, sending it sprawling into its partner and making them both roll to the floor. The last one standing sized me up and I leaped on its back, clawing and scratching as it frantically tried to buck me off. I bit down on its neck and severed its spinal cord, killing it instantly, and dropped to the floor, eyeing the last three shifters warily as they began to circle me.

Stefan finished taking down the last of the shifters surrounding him and raced over to join me, jumping over the confused shifters, until he stood at my side. One leaped towards us and Stefan took it head-on, while the other two jumped towards me simultaneously as I dodged to the side and kicked out. One went flying into the tree over, impaled on a branch, its legs weakly kicking as it stayed there, unable to dislodge itself. I hoped it died a slow and painful death.

The other one, I expected to make a move. What I was not expecting, was for the shifter to look around at its fallen comrades and turn tail and run. We both let it go, Stefan, standing over the last shifter that he'd killed, both of us looking around for Alpha Gordon.

He came staggering out of the caves, clutching Carrie in his arms, along with a dagger.

"Let her go" demanded Stefan with a menacing growl.

Alpha Gordon ignored him. "I'll kill her" he shouted as Cory came racing outside towards us, his lip quivering and tears flowing from his eyes. I shifted and took him into my arms, holding him possessively as Stefan stared at Alpha Gordon with glowing red eyes that promised retribution.

"Let her go," I said quietly "You know that we'll kill you."

In answer, he pulled back the girl's head and placed the dagger at her throat, slicing it a little so that blood welled up. I gasped in horror. "Stop" I shouted as the girl began to wail and cry. She was panicking now, while Stefan was eyeing the blood and licking his lips. I was worried he might try to rush the girl.

"Give me what I need" The Alpha roared, sending birds flying from their perches and into flight. I ignored the skittering of my own heart and put Cory down, pushing him toward a confused Stefan. I had an idea in the inkling of my mind, but first, the Alpha had to believe that I was feeling defeated. I forced tears to my eyes.

"She's just a little girl" I yelled out, my voice sounding broken and weak. "she's done nothing to you."

"I don't care" he snarled, "not if it gets me what I want."

"If I do as you ask" I shouted, ignoring Stefan who looked at me in shock, and Cory, who was wiggling in Stefan's grasp, crying quietly. "will you let her go?"

"Of course" he answered triumphantly, believing he had me.

I approached slowly, my arms out wide, walking towards the Alpha with a mouth that felt like cotton balls. God, I really hoped this worked. He continued to hold the dagger up to Carrie's throat as I reached over and touched him with my hand.

Lilac, I just want to create a white ball of power, nothing more. I want him to believe that I'm doing as he asked. Do you understand me?

Do it just as if you're healing him then. Create a ball of white light in your palm and direct it onto his chest. He'll feel the warmth and think it's working.

Got it. Let's start praying Lilac, because I need this to work.

I concentrated hard, forming a white sphere of light in my hand as the Alpha smirked at me. I noticed that he had loosened his grip in anticipation of the little girl. Which is what I needed. I tentatively placed the hand with the ball onto his chest, sending the light into him as he gasped with joy. "I can feel it" he crowed, "the warmth, the magic. I can feel it."

He spread his arms out, and Carrie was dropped unceremoniously to the ground. I shoved the little girl behind me and she went running toward Cory. The second she was free, my other arm came up, grabbing his hand with the knife. We fought, as he realized too late, what I was up to and I ended up with my back against his chest, his hand with the knife going straight for me. Damn. I closed my eyes and tensed.

"Bitch" he hissed in my ear and then I felt the knife go into my chest. I grabbed hold of the hilt and before he could stop me, I pushed the knife through my body until it went into his chest, as well, before grabbing the knife and ripping it out.

I stumbled away, in pain, Stefan rushing to my side as I fell to the ground coughing blood. Alpha Gordon's eyes were wide open and he was staggering sideways, blood pouring out from his wound. I prayed it was fatal as I brought up my own healing power. I directed it to myself, feeling the incredible warmth of the light as it began to knit my flesh back together. Alpha Gordon toppled to the ground.

"Amber," said Stefan worriedly, "Amber, you're going to be okay, baby, I swear. I promise you, everything is going to be fine" he added, stroking my hair.

"So tired" I whispered, feeling my eyes beginning to close with the strain of healing myself "I just need to rest for a little bit", I coughed.

"Amber, stay with me. Don't go to sleep, Amber, Amber, Amber" he babbled and I barely heard him, my eyes beginning to close of their own accord. The pain was fading fast but the tiredness and the complete exhaustion caught up with me. The last thing I heard before I fell asleep, was Stefan's voice one last time. "AMBER."

Chapter 84 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I couldn't open my eyes, not at first. All I could do was hear the incessant beeping sounds of machines in the room, as I struggled with where I lay. What had happened? The last thing I remember was wrestling with the Alpha Rogue. Where was Stefan? I bolted upright, my eyes opening. I stared up at the ceiling and glanced around the room. I was in a large four-poster bed, with magnificent carpet on the floor and drapes on the windows. The walls were made of dark stone like I was in a castle. In the corner of the room, sat Stefan, snoring lightly in a chair. Had he sat beside me this entire time, waiting for me to wake up?

I went to move and saw that I was connected to an IV, ripping it out and stumbling over to Stefan, a smile on my face. I was glad to see him but unnerved. How did we make it here? Where were the children? There were so many questions in my mind. I lightly shook Stefan, who immediately woke up, flinging his arms around me, a startled expression on his face.

"Amber," he said, his voice muffled against my shoulder, his hand stroking my hair, "you're awake. How are you?"

"Sore" I admitted wryly as he hurriedly stepped back from me, putting his hands in the pockets of his jeans. I was dressed in a pale pink dress, one that I wondered if he'd put on me, or if somebody else had dressed me. It must be clashing horribly with my red hair. Not that Stefan seemed to notice.

I saw him look pointedly down at my IV and suck in a breath at the sight of blood trickling from the small wound where I'd ripped it out. "Sorry," I said, blushing "I was never one to wait," I said quietly as he looked at me concerned.

"You shouldn't have done that" he admonished, grabbing hold of my hand and then slowly licking the blood away. I gasped, seeing the wound beginning to heal itself. I had the presence of mind to touch my chest, seeing that there was no large gaping hole. Evidently, that meant I had managed to heal it before I was unconscious.

"Is this your castle?" I asked Stefan, interested.

He gave a nod, running a hand through his disheveled hair. "You could say that" he agreed before my stomach gave a large growl. "Sounds like you might be hungry", he teased. I laughed abashedly.

My stomach was growling with hunger. "How long have I been out?" I asked shyly.

"Two days", Stefan answered, and I blushed, looking down at myself. I must look a right mess, but he didn't seem phased by my appearance at all.

"Let's get you some food," he said quietly, and I gave a sheepish smile, as he grabbed hold of my hand with a firm grasp and began to tug me out of the room.

We descended the stairs, heading into the kitchen, where he made me sit down at the dining table, which was otherwise unoccupied. I studied him with interest. Was he going to cook for me? I didn't know vampires could cook, but obviously, they must have been able to before becoming vampires. I wondered if he was turned or born a vampire. Did vampires eat food?

He looked rather efficient in the kitchen, I have to admit. He was bustling back and forth, throwing all sorts of different ingredients in the pan. I was full of admiration as I watched him. The most delicious smell wafted towards me and I sniffed appreciatively, blushing as my stomach gave another loud gurgle. He laughed. "Sorry it's taking a bit long," he said with a raised eyebrow, flipping over the omelet as I practically drooled. He shoved a glass of water at me and I drank it down thirstily, Stefan refilling the glass as soon as I'd finished.

Five minutes later, he placed a steaming hot omelet in front of me. I dug in eagerly, watching his eyes twinkle as I enjoyed the food. "I hope you like it," he said as I glanced at him with my mouth full. It was delicious, one of the best omelets I have eaten. I was dismayed to see that he wasn't eating though.

"You aren't eating?" I asked, mumbling.

He shook his head. "Vampires tend to prefer blood to food," he said wryly, "but on occasion, we can eat normal food if we feel the occasion warrants it."

Huh. You learn something new every day. Still, it was a bit disquieting, being the only one eating. I shrugged my discomfort aside and finished off the omelet, patting my stomach in satisfaction. "Delicious", I breathed gratefully.

"How are you feeling now?" he asked me a bit anxiously.

I frowned at him. "A little bit tired and sore. My chest hurts" I said, pointing to it, "but that's only to be expected. How did we get here?"

He looked a bit sheepish. "I carried you" he blurted out, "you were unconscious the whole time and I needed to get you medical attention so. . ." he trailed off.

"What about the children?"

He glanced away. "They belonged to an orphanage," he said softly, "and were taken in the middle of the night. We've managed to find them some adoptive parents for now and they seem to be happy."

I was glad about that. The children deserved a loving father and mother. They had seemed to be so adorable, yet so protective of each other.

A man came waltzing into the room, a broad grin on his face. I eyed him with curiosity. Like Stefan, he was incredibly handsome, with dark brown eyes and hair. He looked muscled all over but had an easygoing way about him. Like nothing phased him whatsoever. "Stefan" he greeted my mate, who gave him a wicked grin.

"Avoiding the council by any chance?" he asked the other man, before turning to me with a start. "This is Dylan, my best friend, and confidant", he introduced me, glowering as Dylan shook my hand. "Dylan, this is my mate Amber", he finished.

Dylan gave me a wink. "Course I'm avoiding the damn council, especially that pain in the ass, Mathias. Christ, you'd think they would get the hint every time they have to go looking for me. Which reminds me, they are currently looking for you" he exhaled, "so I would go for a walk or something before they think about going and looking in here."

I looked at Stefan, noticing the grim expression on his face. "What is the council?" I asked with interest.

He sighed. "A council is made up of a bunch of elders who like to help me make decisions in regard to running the kingdom. Unfortunately, that means they seem to think they can interfere with my life as well."

He turned to Dylan. "Have they said why they are looking for me?"

Dylan shook his head. "Could be anything" he pointed out, grimacing. "A bunch of old-fashioned men like that could literally be about the drapes," he said with a chuckle.

"Right then," Stefan said with a low growl, " a walk it is, that is if you are up for it?" he asked me, noticing that I was lightly touching my chest. I hurriedly put my hand down.

"I'm up for a walk," I said eagerly, wanting to see the grounds. If it were anything like the castle, it would be magnificent. Then I had a thought. "What happened to the alpha rogue after what I did to him? Please tell me he didn't survive" I said with a groan, as I stood up from the table and reached automatically for Stefan's hand. He seemed pleased, sparks flying down my hands where we touched.

"No, no" Stefan denied, "he died. Thank goodness, because I was more worried about you than wanting to finish him off" he muttered.

He was so sweet, I thought to myself, holding hands with my mate as we walked through some back hallways and doors, eventually coming to the outside. It was a glorious day, with warm sunshine that shone down upon us, trees swaying slightly in the wind, and a clear blue sky. There were flowers everywhere, in an abundance of colors, even small patches of daisies. The castle was stunning in the background, and I wondered how they managed to keep it secret from humans.

"How do you keep this from humans?"

Stefan looked a little surprised by my question. "We have a spell that makes it invisible to human beings. So far, we haven't had a single one stumble onto our territory" he said proudly.

We walked in silence for a while, content to just hold each other's hands. It was a far cry from what I had been used to with Darius, who would talk nonstop, mostly about himself. Plus, I liked the way he felt, the smoothness of his hand as he grasped mine. I felt nervous, though, not sure whether I should try and ask him questions about himself. As it was, I didn't get the chance to, for an older male with a white beard and silver hair stopped us in the middle of our walk, looking very indignant, putting his hands on his hip like an angry father or someone close to Stefan.

"King Stefan" he hissed, "there you are. You are aware, are you not, that the council has been looking for you? Are you ignoring the council?"

I looked at Stefan questionably as he squeezed my hand and drew his shoulders straight back. "Mathias," he said cordially, inclining his head to the elder, "Why am I not surprised to run into you" he muttered under his breath.

"The council wishes to hold a meeting and we cannot do it while you run around with your little slut here" he growled. I immediately stiffened at the insult.

The look on Stefan's face was comical. Mine, however, was displeased as I glared at the elder, feeling extremely disrespected and tempted to rip him a new asshole.

"How dare you call her a slut" hissed Stefan, letting go of my hand and rushing forward to grab the elder by the throat. I watched passively as the elder's legs kicked around wildly, his hands grabbing at his throat, his face going purple. I didn't know they could do that. I thought, being Vampires, they didn't need oxygen. It was fascinating and no more than the old bastard deserved though.

"You will apologize to my mate" Stefan said evenly, squeezing the elder's throat even tighter. Mathias scabbled uselessly at Stefan's hands and then slumped in defeat. He glowered at me as I raised an eyebrow and folded my arms, waiting for this damn apology.

"I apologize" wheezed Mathias, "now let me go."

Stefan dropped him none too gently, Mathias rubbing his throat and staring wide-eyed at his king. "You, you" he stammered, "you've gone too far this time."

"It's you who has gone too far," Stefan boomed, "or have you forgotten who your king is? Now go, and tell the council I will be there shortly, but it had better be about something important", he added as Mathias awkwardly got to his feet. We both watched the elder limp away, rubbing his throat and scowling as he walked.

"Should I go to the council meeting?" I asked him, feeling nervous and shy, "because I don't mind continuing to wander the grounds while you are gone."

Stefan thought about it and then sighed. "It probably involves you as well, so it makes sense for you to come with me", he pointed out with a grimace.

I didn't like the sound of that. What on earth could the council possibly want with me? I hadn't done anything to put myself on their radar, except for spending time with Stefan, of course. But he was my second chance mate and even though we were from different races, I couldn't picture myself rejecting him. He was so nice and so different from anything I'd experienced before. Not only that, but he was protective, something I very much appreciated. Up until now, he hadn't even mentioned the fact I was pregnant and it was causing me some anxiety. Would he be upset that I was carrying someone else's child or did that not phase him in the slightest?

Chapter 85 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Rowan POV

She thought she was so clever, skipping out and deceiving me all this time. When Amber left, I felt the pain of the mate bond as it severed as she rejected me. I didn't accept it, angry that she was able to leave so easily from my pack. How had she managed to do it when I had used my alpha tone on her?

I followed through the forest, careful to avoid stepping on any loose branches or twigs, avoiding the leaves so they wouldn't crunch beneath my feet as she wandered in front of me, in human form, in no

hurry, glancing around her every so often as though she was nervous. As well as she should be. I wondered where she was going, but she walked with a purpose, as though aware of the direction like she had been this way before. Like she had been this way many times before and memorized the way.

Stacey was clad in a robe and in her nightgown. It was late, late at night and she shivered slightly in the cold breeze, the full moon lighting the path and showing her to me clearly. She had thought I was sleeping when she got up and dressed herself, before leaving quietly through the door. I had given her a two-minute head start, before hopping out of bed and dressing hastily, following the scent of that perfume she always seemed to wear. It was so pungent, that I didn't need to be too close to her to know where she was at all times.

She walked, confidently, thinking herself to be alone. Eventually, we came across a large two-story cottage on the outskirts of town. She knocked, once, twice, thrice, before the door opened and Stacey went inside, a small young teenage girl peering anxiously out into the darkness, as I slipped behind a tree so she couldn't see me.

What on earth was Stacey up to? Why had she come here, to this place of all places? I waited, holding my breath for the door to close, which it did with a loud squeak, and then I drifted towards an open window, glancing in to see Stacey pacing back and forth, muttering something under her breath that I strained to hear.

"Celia," she said, turning to the teenage girl, who stood there with her arms folded and a puzzled expression on her face, "I swear it's working. Amber is gone, can you believe it? That little bitch finally left us both alone and I didn't have to kill her to get the job done." She sounded incredulous and proud for some reason.

The teenage girl raised an eyebrow. "I'd still like to know how she managed to avoid a miscarriage with the high amount of Penny Royal you gave her. There's something suspicious about that" she uttered in a hoarse voice.

Stacey raised a hand in a dismissive manner. "who cares" she crowed, "the slut is gone and Rowan is all mine."

The teenage girl sighed, looking a bit put out. "Is that all you came to tell me" she demanded, "this late at night?" She seemed tired, also clad in a nightgown, with dark circles underneath her eyes.

Stacey shook her head. "No, I came to see you as well" she argued back, "it's been a few weeks since I saw you last and I need some more of that perfume" she added, looking nonchalant.

"How much have you been using it? I only just gave you a new one. You're not wearing it every day, are you?" Celia asked with a bewildered expression on her face.

"Of course I am," Stacey told her, puzzled, "otherwise it won't work."

Celia's mouth gaped open. "I told you not to remember? The effects will wear off much sooner the more Alpha Rowan is near it. Every few days, I told you, so that the effects remained strong on him."

"But I can't risk it wearing off" Stacey argued back. She glanced around nervously and I ducked just in time before I was caught eavesdropping on their conversation.

"You're risking that by wearing it every day" huffed Celia's voice. I slowly peeked back up, to see that she was glowering at Stacey.

"Fine, I'll slow down and stop wearing it so much," Stacey said persuasively, "but I still need a new vial of it."

Celia rolled her eyes.

"Fine" she snapped, "wait here." She turned around, her nightgown billowing around her, and began to head out the doorway, calling over her shoulder "don't touch anything."

I lost sight of Celia, whose footsteps sounded like they were heading upstairs. Stacey remained in the room, which looked like a living room, with two large couches in it and a rug. There was no television, to my surprise, and I sniffed experimentally, wondering what race Celia was. She definitely didn't smell like a shifter, but there was some lingering smell that indicated that she was a supernatural creature. The question was what kind? I had my suspicions. Especially given the conversation they were having.

What kind of perfume was Celia giving Stacey and why did she need to wear it every day? What kind of effects was it having on me? All I could tell about the perfume was that it smelled like honeysuckle and

roses, and was particularly potent. But from the way they were talking, it was almost like there was a spell about it of some kind. Stacey hummed lightly under her breath as she waited for her friend to come back. When Celia did, she looked anything but impressed as she passed a light purple bottle, so small it could be considered a vial, to Stacey.

"Be careful with this one. I may have made it slightly stronger than the last one by accident. Do not wear it every day", she admonished a repentant-looking Stacey.

Stacey tucked it into the pocket of her robe and gave her friend a smile. "I promise" she agreed easily, giving Celia a hug "thank you."

"I'm worried about you" Celia whispered shakily. "I don't think this plan is safe anymore, Stacey. What if he finds out? The spell won't last forever and I can't keep making this perfume forever either. I think you should give up and get out of there while you still can."

I frowned at that.

"No can do," Stacey said with her nose in the air, looking down at the young girl with a snooty expression on her face "I'm aiming to be Luna of the pack and I won't stop until I get it" she added.

Celia looked frustrated as she ran a hand through her brown hair, making it disheveled, blinking back tears. "He'll kill you if he finds out", she choked.

Stacey sighed. "Trust me, he's not going to find out about any of it. As far as he's concerned, everything is going well and we're starting a family together. He's too far under the spell to even contemplate anything else."

She reached out and gave Celia a hug. "I have to go" she said quietly, "but I promise to come and visit again", she whispered. Celia hugged her back tightly and let go reluctantly.

I quickly sidled around the back of the house, hearing both their footsteps as they approached the front door.

"I'll see you soon," said Celia regretfully.

"See you soon" repeated Stacey. I heard the front door open and then close, footsteps approaching the forest, presumably Stacey's. I hesitated. Should I go after her, or should I get the answers I was seeking as to why Celia was being so secretive and what this spell of hers was doing to me?

I made up my mind and approached the front door. I knocked on it quietly and then flattened myself against the wall. Celia, expecting it to be Stacey again, opened the door and peered out, her eyes widening as I rushed towards her, shoving her inside and shutting the door closed. She opened her mouth to scream and my eyes turned pitch black.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you" I growled.

She closed her mouth.

"What, what do you want" she stammered.

I leaned back against the doorway, watching her glance around, looking for an escape route. I gave her a wicked grin. "I want answers", I purred, "and you're going to give them to me. Now talk" I hissed as she raised a hand and began to mumble something under her breath. She didn't get far. I reached out and yanked her hand, breaking it as she cried out in shock. I had no doubt that she had been trying to perform a spell on me, making her half-witch, the little bitch. She held her broken hand against her chest with her other hand.

"Stacey will know that you've hurt me" she warned, but I just chuckled, a malicious sound that sent shivers down her spine.

"I could care less about Stacey right now. What I want to know is what spell is being done, using the perfume", I warned.

She grimaced and glanced over toward me, a frown on her face. "It's supposed to confuse and disorient you, but most of all it's supposed to make you slowly fall in love with her."

That was the spell? Did that mean that my feelings toward Stacey weren't real? That anything I was feeling was manufactured because of the spell? But as an Alpha, shouldn't I be able to ward off any spells? I glared at Celia, who was looking at me a bit shame-faced.

"What else does it do?" I asked her suspiciously as she bit her lip and looked at me nervously, backing away slowly as though I was about to pounce on her.

"Nothing," she said, stammering, but I didn't believe her. I knew there was something she wasn't telling me. Otherwise, why was she looking anywhere but at me?

"What does it do?" I growled, my hands clenching into fists.

"I told you nothing, it doesn't do anything else" she whispered, looking desperate. My hand shot out of its own accord and grabbed her by the neck as she wriggled and kicked.

"You're lying" I snapped, tightening my grip and watching her face turn purple.

She made spluttering and choking sounds, her hands scratching at mine, in a frantic attempt to get me to release her. I began to shake her, watching her head move back and forth. "Tell me, what it does," I said slowly, punctuating each word perfectly. She began to tremble in my hands. I tightened my grip, even more, cutting off her oxygen supply and watching as her lips began to turn blue. It was only a matter of time before she became unconscious.

"Okay," she wheezed pathetically "I'll tell you."

I loosened my grip slightly, not trusting this so-called witch not to try anything. But she was just a teenage girl in her heart and I knew she was frightened of me. It would be foolish to try a spell when I wouldn't hesitate to kill her.

"Tell me" I roared.

She shook. "It makes you believe what she tells you. So you think that the baby she is carrying is yours when in actual fact it's Gordon's."

I felt sick to my stomach. All this time I had contemplated the possibility it was mine, made allowances for that fact and now I was discovering that Stacey knew the truth and was keeping it from me. I was so angry that I was speechless. My rage knew no bounds. Without ceremony, I snapped the little witch's neck and dropped her to the ground. She hit the floor with a large thump and was completely still. I glared down at the body. I wanted to hurt it some more, but it would be pointless now. Instead, I forced myself to get moving, walking out the front door and then shutting it ever so quietly. I shifted into my massive black wolf. I needed to catch up with Stacey and she was going to be in for the shock of her life when I caught up with her. My mind was awl with thoughts of revenge and what exactly I was going to do to her. She would be begging for mercy once I was through with her. What a shame that her lies had finally caught up with her.

Chapter 86 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

She looked so pale, sleeping there, machines hooked up to her wrist where the IV was. Her long blonde hair was disheveled and cascaded down her shoulders, all over the pillow, and her blue eyes closed with dark circles beneath them. She was almost ethereal she was that pale and she looked so innocent and vulnerable where she slept. She lay there in a hospital gown, her clothes drenched in blood. Her blood. The hospital had taken them off of her when she was dragged to the hospital by her mother. I tried not to frown and instead look like the kind loving husband that I was meant to be.

My mother was ashen, sitting beside my wife, holding tightly to her hand, tears trickling from her eyes. "I can't believe it" she whispered thickly "I just can't. . ." she broke down and cried into her hands.

I hurried to her side. "Mother please," I said tiredly "there will be other chances, in the future, I'm sure of it."

"But poor Sophie," she said sobbing "do you think she knows?"

I thought back to that night. It had only been a few hours but I remembered clearly, the stricken look on my wife's face as I kicked out at her, intentionally aiming for the stomach as we argued about my cheating. Something told me that Sophie was aware of the consequences of my actions. For a moment I spared a thought for the baby I had lost and then I shrugged it off. I wanted a baby, but not Sophie's. I was tired of pretending to be the perfect loving husband in the public's eye. Tired of trying at a marriage

I had never wanted in the first place. Tired of pretending that I could be faithful. Was it really my fault if girls from the pack threw themselves at me? Was I supposed to say no? They were far more interesting than my wife and were more willing to do certain things that Sophie tended to dislike in the bedroom. Not to mention I didn't have to give a damn about them afterward, it was merely wham, bam, thank you, ma'am. They had no interest in a relationship and that's what made them perfect. If only Sophie had left well enough alone, then this would never have happened.

"Mother, perhaps you need to take a break," I said, fighting the urge to roll my eyes.

My mother, the Luna was grieving the loss of her grandchild and I was used to her almost always maintaining her poise, not looking as broken as she did right now. She was grating on my nerves. I wondered where the hell father was because he would have been able to distract her. He was probably taking care of important pack business. It rankled because you would think something like this would take priority over work.

"Oh, I can't just leave her" my mother protested weakly, glancing over at the doorway, where a pale-looking Clarissa was now standing.

"Clarissa," my mother said tightly, getting up from the chair beside the bed and rushing towards her friend, hugging her profusely. "I'm so so sorry" she breathed.

I saw Clarissa glancing at me and sucked in a breath. Did she know? Had Sophie said something to her when her mother found her? It was hard to tell, there was nothing but a pleasant expression on her face, even though there were tears in the corner of her eyes as she glanced at her daughter.

"Marian," Clarissa said quietly "any news?"

My mother sadly shook her head. "The doctors say she should wake up any minute now, but we're still waiting" she exhaled "just like before you went for your drink," she said with a sigh.

Clarissa was silent.

I sat down beside the bed and cradled my wife's limp and lifeless hand in my own, pretending to be the loving husband in front of my mother and hers. I took deep shallow breaths, pretending to be confused

as to how this could have happened. "I don't get it, she must have fainted and fallen down somehow," I said thickly "she shouldn't have been in the forest" I added grimly.

"It's just lucky that Clarissa found her," my mother said evenly with a shake of her head "who knows what would have happened if she didn't."

I had visions of Sophie dying without anyone finding her, but I wisely said nothing. Instead, I squeezed Sophie's hand and tried to look heartbroken. Clarissa sat down in the other armchair, on the opposite side of Sophie, stroking her hair and pulling it back from her face.

"She's going to be so upset when she wakes up," she told my mother softly "she was so looking forward to having this baby. She talked about it a lot and what she wanted to do to the nursery. She would have made a fantastic mother."

My mother nodded. "She would have been a great mother" she readily agreed.

"There is still time," I told them both steadily "after all it's not like she's going anywhere. She'll be a mother when the time is right" I said with a strangled voice, tears pricking my eyes. Damn, I was a good actor.

The doctor came in an attractive female with auburn curly hair and big dark eyes. Her name tag read Dr. Jones and I gave her an appreciative smile as she began to read over Sophie's clipboard and take her vitals. "Still no sign of waking, I see," Dr. Jones said sighing.

"She is going to wake up though, isn't she?" asked Clarissa anxiously, wringing her hands. "I mean she's not in a coma or anything?"

The doctor shook her head and gave Clarissa a reassuring smile. "No she's not in a coma, she's merely sleeping off the anesthetic we gave her when we treated her miscarriage. It might still take a while but she will wake up" she assured her.

Clarissa looked highly relieved, as did my mother.

"Her blood pressure is good and so is her pulse," Dr. Jones said, scribbling away on the clipboard. "Heartbeat is strong. She did lose a fair bit of blood with the miscarriage and we did have to give her a transfusion" she informed us "in order for her to heal quicker."

She pulled back the blanket and began to feel the stomach "Stomach is soft and not hard which is a good sign" she said quietly "and all in all she appears to be in perfect health. I expect her to make a full recovery."

"What do we tell her?" asked Luna Marian, my mother sounding lost "when she asks about her baby?"

The doctor stiffened slightly. "The truth," she said with a grim expression on her beautiful face "if it's any help we do have a counselor she can speak to about what happened. I want to organize some counseling sessions for her after she's discharged as well. You can never be too careful and it might do some good for her to talk about the trauma she experienced."

Clarissa nodded tightly and my mother gave an exclamation and began to sob even harder. Clarissa put an arm around her. "Marian," she said quietly "how about we go and get a cuppa together. Give Darius some time alone with his wife. He can let us know when she wakes" she whispered.

I was more than happy for them both to leave. I was on tenterhooks trying to pretend that I was upset with everything. The doctor quietly left as my mother and Clarissa began to gather their stuff, leaning on each other and walking through the doorway.

"You'll let us know" my mother confirmed, asking over her shoulder.

"I will let you know the instant she awakens" I repeated, "go and get something to drink. Bring me back something" I requested "some coffee please."

Mother smiled and then left, still clutching at Clarissa who looked like she was about to topple over. Relieved, I let out a huge sigh and then leaned back in the chair, rubbing my tired eyes and putting my head in my hands. Christ, I was exhausted and all I wanted was some decent sleep. I scowled down at my wife, willing her to awaken so that I could go back home and fall into my bed and fall fast asleep.

Her eyelids fluttered and I moved closer, grabbing hold of her hand. The machines began to go off, beeping incessantly and Dr. Jones came rushing back in, her curly hair all mussed, a concerned look on her face. She began to check the IV and then the machines, slowly all of them fading into silence, to my great relief. She gingerly pulled the IV out. "It's finished" she explained "which is why this machine was making so much noise. She still has a cannula in, in case we need to give her anything else."

She began to recheck vitals, humming lightly under her breath. "My guess is she'll be awake soon" she beamed and then darted back out the door.

Sophie's hand began to move in my own, tentatively and I grasped it tightly, watching wide-eyed as her eyes began to flutter again, and then her blue eyes opened completely as she let out a gasp, bolting upright in the bed. I yanked my hand back hurriedly as she placed a hand on her chest and stared around the room completely disorientated. "Where am I?" she asked me murmuring under her breath.

Surely she should know by the white sterile walls and ceiling, not to mention the type of bed she was in and the machines, that she was in a hospital? Maybe she hit her head back in the forest.

"You're in the hospital," I said calmly, leaning back in my chair and observing her. She seemed confused and bewildered, staring around at the walls and then glancing over at me. Her hand shot to her stomach. She began to panic. "The baby" she groaned "the baby. . ."

"Is gone" I said with a sneer "for good Sophie."

Her mouth opened and closed with a gape, Sophie completely speechless for once. I knew it wouldn't be long until she remembered what happened. "You" she gasped "Darius you bastard" she choked out.

She remembered then. I smiled at her wickedly, "maybe I am but you know something?" I purred, getting up and peering down the hallway to find it deserted. My hand shot out, grasping her around the neck, enjoying the feeling of being in control while she was powerless, scrabbling uselessly and scratching wildly "you're not going to say a word about what happened Sophie. In fact, you're going to pretend that we're the loving, boring couple we've always been, aren't you" I threatened, whispering in her ear as she shuddered.

For a moment I thought that she would refuse, and be defiant and I let go of her, ready to break a limb if I had to but she glanced away from me. "I won't say anything" she whispered, tears trailing down her cheeks. She looked defeated like I had broken her spirit.

"Good, because I intend to have Amber eventually" I continued to whisper "and there is nothing you can do about it. Not if you want to live, that is" I exhaled, hearing footsteps coming down the corridor. Judging by the sound of the heels clacking on the floor and the fact that there was two sets approaching, I surmised that it was my mother and Sophie's coming back from the hospital cafeteria.

"Remember, not a word" I hissed, as my mother came walking in first, handing me a cup of coffee and smiling widely at Sophie. Her own mother sat beside her on the opposite side and grabbed her hand, crying openly.

"I'm so glad to see you're awake" Clarissa cried "what happened to you?" she asked.

I held my breath, glowering at Sophie who bit her lip and looked at her mother sheepishly. "I wanted to go for a walk and clear my head" she admitted "so I went into the forest alone. I must have tripped or slipped on something and fallen. I was calling out for Darius because I panicked and forgot to mind-link him."

Her mother sighed. Sophie began to cry as my mother put a comforting hand on her shoulder. "I lost the baby" she wept "I lost my baby mother."

I put on a woebegone expression and patted Sophie's arm. "We lost our child, but thank goodness you are safe and alive," I told her between gritted teeth.

She looked at me with such hatred that I sucked in a breath and almost recoiled. "I wish I was dead," she said to me honestly.

Chapter 87 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Stefan POV

I brought Amber with me to the council meeting, which conveniently was held in the throne room. As we approached, we saw that there was a large group of the elders, sequestered at a table, some of which had raised eyebrows as they took in Amber who was clutching my hand tightly.

"Don't be so nervous" I chided her, squeezing her hand in a reassuring manner "they aren't going to hurt you or anything. This meeting will just be about boring kingdom matters." Or so help me it better be.

At least I hoped that was the case. It was difficult to read the various expressions on the elder's faces, but Mathias was definitely there, glaring at me and particularly at Amber. She noticed and stiffened as I brought her to my side, my hand resting around her waist. We reached the table and I pulled out a chair for Amber, seating her first before seating myself and joining my hands together, resting my head atop of them.

"Gentlemen," I said evenly, without a hint of malice in my tone, Amber sitting quietly beside me, her hair obstructing her face "to what do I owe this pleasure?"

The elders all glanced at one another as though waiting for someone to have the guts to speak. Instantly I knew this meeting was about more than kingdom matters. Damn. I was so hoping I wasn't about to rip someone's head off. I wish I could have Dylan in here, he would give the elders a real piece of his mind, not caring about the consequences. Not to mention would be a soothing presence for Amber, but he was not permitted in the throne room with the elders, due to his rather undesirable status of being half vampire instead of a full-fledged one. A shame, because I held him in far higher esteem than I ever did the elders.

Finally, Elder Thomas spoke, an elderly vampire with a pot belly and thinning white hair, his eyes a dull red, rather than a vibrant glowing one. His cheeks were red and puffy, a sure sign that the old bastard had been drinking again. Not that he'd admit to it though. "It has come to this council's attention that you have yet to find a wife and produce an heir" he began in that annoying monotonous tone of his.

Not this again. I felt like exploding, almost jumping to my feet, but Amber quickly reached over and grabbed my hand, squeezing it and indicating for me to hear them out.

"You know how important it is that you produce an heir, should something happen to you" Mathias cut in as I glowered at him. Thomas cleared his throat. "We have given you several weeks to provide a wife for us to approve of."

I ignored them, wondering what Amber was thinking about all this. I opened my mouth and blasted them all. "How dare you tell me, a king what to do" I hissed "are you out of your mind?"

Thomas had the decency to look a little embarrassed, while another elder, elder Mathew began to speak as though ignoring my words, his brown eyes fixed on mine, his chin jutting out and his forehead creased in wrinkles. "With what happened to your mother and father, we thought you would understand the urgency in providing an heir. After all, both of them were killed by shifters and if it wasn't for you, your lineage would have died out."

Amber stiffened beside me. The council looked at her, most with disapproving looks on their faces.

"No one expected them to be killed by shifters" I agreed "but we don't know what really happened that day. You know as well as I that shifters have never really tolerated vampires and vice versa. For all we know, my parents might have been the ones to attack first and paid the consequences" I growled.

My parents had never liked shifters, often commenting on them in derogatory terms. I still remember my father clearly referring to them as 'rabid dogs and nothing better than mangy mutts' on more than one occasion. Both of them had firmly believed themselves to be better than shifters and far superior. It was that kind of thinking that had gotten them killed. I was determined to go down a different route.

"Your parents were the best rulers we have had in a long time" Elder Mathias broke in, interrupting my thoughts.

I blinked at him. Why was he looking so shifty now? In fact, why was the entire council beginning to look a bit uncomfortable. It occurred to me that they were deliberately ignoring Amber and I wasn't going to stand for it a moment longer.

"My mate, Amber is sitting beside me," I said "Amber this is the council of elders, Elder Thomas, Elder Mathew, Elder Mathias, Elder Gerald, and Elder Jacob."

She gave them a tentative smile. "It's nice to meet you all" she stammered.

Elder Gerald, a handsome man with silver tips in his black hair, was the only one who smiled back at her, gazing at her with curiosity and interest. "It's a delight to meet you," he said, reaching over and shaking her hand. Amber blushed as he let go and shot a look at me, one of bewilderment.

"You cannot be serious" Elder Mathias hissed, avoiding looking at Amber who looked a little hurt by the rest of the council's actions, "there is no way that we can permit you to have a mate that is a shifter of all things" he snapped.

The council began to mutter amongst themselves as I sucked in a breath. "I expect you to be courteous to my mate" I roared, all of them falling silent. "I care not, that she's a shifter or not of our kind for that matter. I think it's time that we started realizing our mates will not always be other vampires. Some of you have never even found your mate. Has it not occurred to you that this could be because your mate might also be a shifter or witch? Maybe even fae? It's time to stop being so close-minded" I exhaled.

The council looked displeased. Except for Alpha Gerald who continued to eye a silent Amber with interest. I could tell by the way she was biting her lip and shifting in her seat that she was fighting not to say anything. "May I ask what kind of shifter you are?" he asked "what colour is your wolf?"

I broke in before she could answer. "She's a plain silver wolf, very lovely and adorable" I burst out as she looked at me askance. My eyes pleaded with her to go with me, not wanting them to find out that she was a special or rare wolf. I didn't want her to be used by them.

"Yes," she murmured " a silver wolf."

"See," said Elder Mathew furiously "she's not even a special wolf. She is not fit to be our queen. Bring in the candidate that we have all agreed to."

"Whoa," said Elder Gerald "I never agreed to this."

"Doesn't matter, the majority of us did" said Elder Thomas smugly.

I listened to them in disbelief and watched Elder Mathias leave through the doors, coming back clutching the arm of a woman I recognized instantly. She had beautiful raven black hair with a tinge of blue highlights, big dark eyes that were almost black and her hair was long, cascading all the way down

to her hips. She wore a revealing black dress, that showed off her creamy pale skin and a generous amount of cleavage. Her feet were clad in killer heels and she wore a smirk on her face as Elder Mathias led her back inside the throne room.

"We have come to the agreement that Elaine here, would be best suited for the role of queen" Elder Thomas said blithely, as Elder Mathias sat her down and then retook his seat. I could see tears forming in the corners of Amber's eyes and I felt nothing but pure, unadulterated hate toward them all. "Stefan, it's nice to see you again," Elaine said sincerely.

"What were you thinking? That I would just accept an ex-girlfriend as my queen? There is absolutely no logic to your decision" I argued.

"She is of old blood and a full-fledged vampire" Elder Mathias said quietly, the council straining to hear his words "she will bear a child that is pure blood and worthy to be our king. Not to mention she is fertile and willing to have a child with you immediately."

Amber sucked in a breath, her hands clutching the edge of the table, her nails digging in. I could see she was struggling to hold her temper.

"I want a child with you more than anything," said Elaine, leaning forward and glancing slyly at Amber "and we did separate on good terms Stefan, still remaining friends. I agree with the council, the future king and heir must be of pure blood and a fully-fledged vampire."

I shook my head "I won't do it, I won't forsake my mate for the sake of what you, the council want. There are no laws that say I must marry another vampire. I have my mate right here and that's where she is staying."

"Look at her" sneered Elaine "she wouldn't last one week as queen and you know it. Plus, our people would never accept a shifter for their queen, or has that not occurred to you?"

Gerald looked at Amber. "I happen to think that having an interracial couple, of different species, for our king and queen would open the way for others to do the same. Perhaps that is what we should be aiming for?" he suggested quietly, to the council's disgust.

"She's nothing but a mangy mutt" denied Elaine and just like that, Amber's temper burst to my amazement. I had been expecting her to lose it more quickly than she had.

"Mangy mutt" Amber murmured, shooting up from the table and staring at Elaine, hard "is that the best you could come up with? A bit pathetic," she told the woman, her hands clenching into fists as Elaine looked at her incredulously "I've heard much worse from my own kind and I'm still standing here."

Gerald looked at her approvingly, while the rest of the elder men seemed taken aback by Amber's response. My hand shot out and took hold of hers, rubbing it gently. "You insulted my mate," I told Elaine "and I expect an apology."

She opened her mouth to protest and then changed her mind, when Amber made a movement, as though about to go to her. "I apologize, King Stefan, for insulting your mate," she said with a grimace.

Amber shot her a look filled with daggers.

"Nonetheless, it is still time you took a wife, so what is going to be your decision?" demanded Mathias "because all hell will break loose if you choose your mate. You will insult our way of life and the way we have always lived."

The others readily agreed with him, Elaine nodding adamantly, her hair bouncing over her shoulder.

"Our people will learn to live with it" I growled back "and perhaps they might surprise you and be more willing to accept another race than you imagine they might be like. There are lots of vampires that don't hold grudges against the shifters, unlike you lot. It's time we looked to the future, rather than the past."

"I approve of Amber as the future queen," Gerald told us both unexpectedly "I admire her spirit and I believe we should work towards building a bridge with the other races. I wish you all the luck in the world."

"Thank you," I said lowly "but I must ask my mate something. For it's too presumptuous for me to believe that she'll say yes. Amber, will you be my queen? The child that you are carrying would be my heir" I added as the council sucked in a breath.

She merely looked at me with her big green eyes, biting her lip in the adorable way that she does. I saw her glance at the council uneasily and I waited on tenterhooks for her to open her mouth and give me the answer I was desperately hoping she would. Elaine was muttering under her breath and I shot her a look that told her to shut up. I hated the fact that I had put Amber on the spot like this, but I had to know, if she would be willing to try, for my and hers sake. It would be difficult but we could forge a pathway together and have the marriage I had always wanted, one that was full of love and affection, instead of being duty-bound. I wanted the marriage my parents never had. The question was, did Amber want the same thing?

Chapter 88 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I stared around me while the council meeting went on, occasionally biting my lip and my tongue so that I didn't embarrass or anger my mate in any way. But when they brought in his ex-girlfriend Elaine, it was all too much and I almost crumpled then and there. It was exactly like what had happened with Rowan and his ex-girlfriend and it was making me have second thoughts about this whole mate bond with a vampire king who everyone wanted to produce an heir and marry almost immediately.

The only council member that was friendly towards me was Gerald who looked at me and offered his own opinion. "I happen to think that having an interracial couple, of different species, for our king and queen would open the way for others to do the same. Perhaps that is what we should be aiming for?" he suggested quietly, to the council's disgust.

"She's nothing but a mangy mutt" denied Elaine and just like that, my temper burst to my amazement. I had been trying so hard not to lose control but she was pushing all my buttons and deliberately provoking me.

"Mangy mutt" I murmured, shooting up from the table and staring at Elaine, hard "is that the best you could come up with? A bit pathetic" I told the woman, my hands clenching into fists as Elaine looked at me incredulously "I've heard much worse from my own kind and I'm still standing here."

Gerald looked at her approvingly, while the rest of the elder men seemed taken aback by my response. Did they think that I would just continue to keep quiet while being insulted? Stefan's hand shot out and took hold of mine rubbing it gently. "You insulted my mate," he told Elaine to my relief "and I expect an apology."

She opened her mouth to protest and then changed her mind, when I made a movement, as though about to go to her. "I apologize, King Stefan, for insulting your mate," she said with a grimace.

I shot her a look filled with daggers. That was the most pathetic apology I had ever heard, but at least it was an apology. I couldn't expect anything more.

"Nonetheless, it is still time you took a wife, so what is going to be your decision?" demanded Mathias "because all hell will break loose if you choose your mate. You will insult our way of life and the way we have always lived."

The others readily agreed with him, Elaine nodding adamantly, her hair bouncing over her shoulder.

"Our people will learn to live with it" Stefan growled back, continuing to defend me "and perhaps they might surprise you and be more willing to accept another race than you imagine they might be like. There are lots of vampires that don't hold grudges against the shifters, unlike you lot. It's time we looked to the future, rather than the past."

"I approve of Amber as the future queen," Gerald told us both unexpectedly "I admire her spirit and I believe we should work towards building a bridge with the other races. I wish you all the luck in the world."

"Thank you," Stefan said lowly "but I must ask my mate something. For it's too presumptuous for me to believe that she'll say yes. Amber will you be my queen? The child that you are carrying would be my heir" he added as the council sucked in a breath.

I merely looked at him with my big green eyes, biting my lip. I glanced at the council uneasily and I knew Stefan waited on tenterhooks for me to open my mouth and give him the answer he was desperately hoping I would. Elaine was muttering under her breath and I shot her a look that told her to shut up. I hated being put on the spot like this, even if it had been done with the best intentions.

"Be your queen" I stammered, as Stefan held onto my hand tightly, his eyes staring deeply into mine. "I know nothing about being queen and how to act, let alone whether or not I could perform the job correctly."

"Exactly" snarled Mathias, in a right temper, "you would be foolish to make her one. Elaine is much better suited, and knows what her role would entail."

"Silence" thundered Stefan, the council growing quiet in the face of his anger "let her speak."

I glanced over at Elaine again, taking in her smirking face. She was so beautiful with that raven black hair and green eyes that seemed to shine. She was petite, and dainty but looked every bit the queen. How could I possibly compare to her? I felt mousy in comparison. Not to mention it was so soon.

"We barely know each other," I said quietly to Stefan "besides the fact we are mates, we haven't had time to get to know about the other."

"Then we'll learn about each other" Stefan countered back "I'm not asking you to become queen straight away" he added firmly "just that you think about becoming queen in the future. I want you, Amber as my mate, and I'm willing to fight for it. Are you?"

He was willing to fight for me I marveled, unable to believe it. It was a far cry from Darius who had let me go without a fight and Rowan who had been unable to make a decision. Here was this man, declaring he wanted me, in front of a council no less, and being absolutely sincere in his words.

"I don't know" I whispered, "what if it incites a war between our people?"

Gerald spoke up. "I don't believe that will be the case. The majority of our race, are more like Stefan in their viewpoints, it is only a rare few" he coughed and looked pointedly at the council members "who believe it should be otherwise. I stand by what I said, I believe that this will do more good than harm."

It was nice in a way, to have at least one council member approve of me, I had to admit.

"That's what you think" Elaine hissed, her lips curled back in contempt as she stared at me "but there are many that will be upset if I am not chosen to be the queen."

I stared over at Stefan uneasily but he was busy glowering at Elaine. "Stop this nonsense" he thundered "you will never be queen and for the council to have even considered it was folly on their part. I would not have allowed myself to be bullied into taking a queen I was not in love with."

"Are you saying you love her?" asked Gerald with curiosity, gesturing towards me.

I blushed profusely and bit my lip. While my feelings were strong for Stefan I wasn't sure I would go quite so far as to say I was in love with him.

"What I'm saying is that I have strong feelings for Amber, whereas I feel nothing for you, Elaine, I never did," Stefan said heatedly.

Ouch. Part of me felt sorry for Elaine who was blushing bright red now and looking close to tears. I guess this council meeting hadn't quite gone to her plan. She looked extremely embarrassed.

"I don't have to listen to this anymore" Elaine blurted out "I'm leaving but I'm not leaving this castle." She threatened, Elder Mathias hurriedly helped her up and moved towards the doors with her. I watched feeling detached.

"She is unfortunately a guest so we can't make her leave" Gerald explained with a frown as the other elders began to get up from their seats, most of them with a defeated look on their faces.

"Surely though, there is no reason for her to stay?" I asked Stefan quietly.

He grimaced. "She was a good friend of my parents and we dated for quite a while, I can't just demand she leaves, because it would be considered the heights of rudeness, but she will stay out of your way."

Gerald reached over and shook my hand as he stood up. "It was a real pleasure to meet you, Amber. I do hope you'll agree to consider being queen. We could use someone to shake things up a little" he said with a sigh, shaking his head. "The council has become too set in their ways and their traditions. I fear, they are unable to contemplate what the future might hold, if they continue to be stubborn jackasses" he exhaled.

I liked this man. I smiled at him. "It was really nice to meet you," I told him, and he grinned and winked at Prince Stefan.

"Don't let this one go" he advised him as I listened trying not to giggle "she's a damn sight better than anyone else you've dated."

He left, shutting the throne room doors behind him with a decisive click.

Stefan sighed and ran a hand through his disheveled hair. "I'm sorry about that and I'm sorry about putting you on the spot" he grunted "it's just the council was being . . ." he trailed off looking thoughtful.

"Stubborn, annoying, rude?" I supplied with a grin.

"All that and more" he agreed "I want you to take as much time as you need to consider it. I don't want you to feel pressured Amber, into doing something you don't want to do. We have time, to get to know each other."

I interrupted him, placing a protective hand over my stomach. "Did you mean it?" I blurted out, feeling myself flush.

He looked confused. "Mean what?"

"About the baby being an heir?"

"Of course," he said, his eyes piercing mine "I understand that you're pregnant and I harbor no ill feelings towards you or the child. It's not like you knew we were mates. The child is completely innocent and I wish to treat it as my own."

Tears pricked the corners of my eyes. My smile was shaky as I flung myself into this man's arms, letting him hold me tightly to him. "I just can't believe that you are so accepting" I sniffed and felt his arms grip me and hold me tightly against his chest. He stroked my hair, letting me just breathe for the first time since I had come into this room.

"This child will be ours if you decide to stay with me," he told me softly.

I sniffled some more.

"Do you know what you are having?" he asked and I shook my head. "No" I admitted and he smiled.

"Do you want it to be a surprise?" he asked and I thought about it.

"No" I whispered, "I really want to know what I'm having."

"Then let's organise an ultrasound for you" he commented easily "there is of course a hospital wing in the castle for such things. I would be honored if I could accompany you" he sounded hopeful.

I pulled back and gazed into his eyes. "I would love for you to come with me," I told him with a laugh "and I would love it if you found out the gender with me."

His hand was stroking my arm and there was a look on his face, that I couldn't decipher or describe. Was it lust? Or something far more powerful? I didn't know, but he bent his head down, so that it was inches from my own, and then before I could utter a sound or word he placed his lips gently on top of mine and began to kiss me, his hands gripping my arms, to keep me in place. I moaned into his mouth. His lips were soft and smooth, gentle, kissing me gently rather than in a rough manner. His tongue lightly licked along my lips and I opened my mouth, letting his tongue inside and feeling it softly caress my own. He gave a low growl, deepening the kiss, his arms holding onto me like he never wanted to let me go. All I could do was stand there, kissing him back just as passionately and little by little, losing a piece of my heart to him.

Chapter 89 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

We reluctantly pulled apart, Stefan with a thoughtful expression on his face as he ran a hand over the stubble on his chin. "I have an idea," he said slowly "but I need time to organize it. Do you think you'll be fine for an hour or so?"

I was a little incredulous that he felt I needed him for protection. I shook my head and smiled at him wryly. "I'll be fine," I told him, fervently hoping that I wouldn't run into Elaine or any of the other council members. Except for Gerald, that is. I was more than happy to have a chat with that man if I came across him. He seemed like such a nice fellow in comparison to the other elders.

"I might just tour the castle," I told Stefan excitedly, wondering if there would be anyone willing to talk to me. It was times like this that I missed Tessa and the conversations we would have together. I wondered how she was doing and what she was up to.

"That sounds fine," Stefan said lowly "but do keep an eye out. I can't say why, but I feel like someone is watching us, waiting to make their move."

I shuddered. It was probably his imagination or maybe he was getting that vibe from Elaine. I wouldn't put it past that bitch to do something considering she had referred to me as a mangy mutt. My hands itched to put themselves around her neck and strangle her.

"Well, I must be off," Stefan said reluctantly, and then, his hand shot out, pulling me towards him.

"Just one more kiss" he growled and bent his head to mine, my lips opening eagerly to him, this time the kiss more rough and primal as he plundered my mouth, his tongue delving inside. I felt the heat, where his hands were gripping me, and tingles, ran down my spine as we kissed. It was electrifying. I had never felt this way before, not even with Darius and it was nerve-wracking. How could I feel so strongly towards another, when I had felt the mate bond before and it hadn't even come close to this? This was amazing, spell-bounding, and the stuff of fairytales. I moaned into his mouth, my hand slowly trailing up and down his arm, stroking it, wishing that I had the nerve to go any further. Right now, Lilac and I were about ready to jump him, we were becoming that aroused and just from a kiss.

His kiss became gentler, slower, his tongue winding around my own. I leaned against his chest, my hands going beneath his sweater in an attempt to feel his skin. He panted, reluctantly grabbing hold of my hands and stopping me in my tracks. His eyes were glowing red and I wondered if my own had gone pitch black or not. I was feeling pure unadulterated lust toward him. "As much as I enjoy your touch" he growled, "you keep touching me like this and we'll never make it out of the throne room."

I pouted, slightly disappointed and a little ashamed of myself. Why was I feeling so damn horny? Must be those pregnancy hormones, I thought a little dazedly.

He gave a chuckle as I began to come back to my senses. "I better go, before it becomes too hard to" he hissed and my eyes shot down towards his nether regions of their own accord, my eyes widening as I saw his erection through his jeans. I wasn't the only one affected it seemed.

I watched him leave, him glancing one last time over his shoulder as he gave me a wink and a grin, before leaving through the doors. I followed slowly, making my way downstairs and hesitating. Should I go to the kitchen, or would a walk on the grounds be better? Part of me was itching to go for a run but the council believed me to be a plain silver wolf, something that was irking poor Lilac no end.

I can't believe you let them believe I was a normal wolf. We're special Amber, unique and very rare.

I know Lilac, but you heard Stefan. He doesn't want the council to use us because of our abilities.

It still rankles. What's the point of being a rare and unique wolf, if you have to hide it?

It's just, for now, I promise

I'll take your word for it.

I sighed and made my way into the kitchen where there were servants bustling to and fro. I grabbed a plate of food from a nearby servant who directed me toward the dining table. I sat down, eating my food and just watching them work, when one took a break and sat next to me, eating her own lunch. She was a pretty girl and was very much like Tessa, with auburn brown hair and dark brown eyes, a tall slender physique, and pale skin. She wore a maid's uniform. "Hello," she said shyly "my name is Teresa, what's yours?"

I was stunned. Even her name was close to Tessa's! I gave her a smile. "It's Amber," I said quietly and her eyes widened in disbelief.

"Are you the Vampire King's Mate?" she said in a hushed voice, looking around in wonder.

"I guess so," I said uncertainly "does everyone in the castle know about me?" I felt very awkward asking that.

She nodded emphatically as my heart sank. "Yeah, it's been spread all around the castle about you. You're a shifter, aren't you?" she asked with curiosity "what's that like?"

"It's no different to being human," I said with a murmur "other than we can change into our wolf form at will and fight and I guess hunt animals. Most of us just enjoy being out for a run in our wolf form though" I assured her.

"What about you?" I asked calmly "what's it like being a vampire?"

Her face dropped. "I'm only a half-vampire" she said in a whisper, glancing around the room "which is why I'm a servant. I tend to be looked down upon because of it."

"I'm so sorry" I exclaimed "I didn't mean to upset you."

"Oh you didn't" she assured me "it's just the way things are. Besides you're much nicer than her" she added with a scowl, gesturing towards the entryway where Elaine was now standing and ordering a servant about.

"Really? She doesn't seem so bad" I commented, lying through gritted teeth. After all, I couldn't just judge her by her appearance and comments in the throne room, as much as I'd like to.

Teresa rolled her eyes. "You should have been here when she was dating Stefan. She ordered us around like we were nothing but her personal maids. She was rude and she still is. I get that I'm a servant, but I still have feelings" she confessed.

I opened my mouth to say something when Stefan appeared in the doorway, a wide grin on his face, that disappeared the second he saw Elaine who made her way toward him. I hastily stood up. "I guess that's my cue to leave," I told Teresa who was watching Stefan and Elaine with disgust "it was really nice meeting you," I told her sincerely.

She smiled at me, before looking back over to Stefan who was shaking his head at Elaine and recoiling when she tried to place a hand on his arm.

I hastened to his side. "Stefan," I said sweetly "is everything ready?"

He gave a sigh of relief and quickly tugged me towards him as Elaine scowled at the interruption.

"I haven't finished talking to Stefan" she protested.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait. Stefan promised me some personal ahem" I coughed lightly "time and I'm taking him up on it."

Elaine looked scandalized. God knows what she was thinking.

"Well then, shall we?" Stefan said smirking, holding out his arm to me. Around us, I could feel the stares from the vampire servants and I swallowed hard, taking hold of his arm and holding onto it for dear life. "We shall," I said thickly.

He lead me out of the kitchen and made his way upstairs. I wondered where we were going, as it was getting late in the afternoon, but he made his way towards the west wing and up the stairs, each step feeling like I was coming towards something private, something special, the further away from people we got. Eventually, it lead up to the roof and he helped me out the window, onto a ledge where there was a picnic basket set up, with blankets nearby and glasses of wine to drink. I gaped, astonished at the effort he had gone to. There were even fairy lights winding along the roof and twinkling brightly.

"Stefan" I breathed "it's beautiful."

He looked nervous as he helped me to sit down. "Some wine?" he asked and I shook my head, watching him bite his lip as realization dawned and he face palmed himself.

"Of course," he said crossly "you can't have wine. I should have remembered that."

"That's okay," I said, touched by his efforts.

He frowned and began to rifle through the picnic basket, grabbing hold of a water bottle and handing it to me. I unscrewed the lid and began to thirstily drink.

"Sorry about that" he apologized and I just smiled.

"Really, it's fine," I told him. He still looked so unsure, it was pretty damn adorable.

I leaned back and crossed my ankles, enjoying looking up at the sky which was slowly getting darker as the sunset. It was magnificent to behold, Stefan next to me, lightly stroking my leg as we watched.

"It's so beautiful," I said quietly.

"Yes, you are," he said firmly, making me blush as I hastily took another sip of water.

For a while, we were content to watch the sunset, both of us lost in our thoughts. It wasn't an awkward silence though, merely one of contentment, both of us glad for the companionship of the other.

Eventually, though, my stomach growled and Stefan raised an eyebrow and laughed. "I take it you're hungry" he teased, opening the picnic basket and piling things between the two of us. There were crackers and cheese, grapes, fruit salad, meat and salad rolls, and more wine I noticed with a grimace. He hastily tucked the wine back away when he saw the look on my face. I hid my grin. I wasn't angry at him for forgetting. It's not like he had experience with pregnancy and what you could and couldn't have.

Both of us began to eat, piling our plates up and munching away happily.

"So how old are you?" I asked Stefan.

He looked at me. "225 years old," he said softly "how about you?"

"I'm eighteen," I said, in awe of his age.

"So young" he mused "and the pregnancy, are you happy about it?"

I nodded. "I got pregnant my first time though" I admitted a little ashamed "we used a condom and everything but . . ." I trailed off.

He nodded. "Sometimes things just happen," he said nonchalantly "what about the father though? Does he know about the child?"

I sighed. "He does and he wants to be a part of the child's life. But I don't know" I exhaled "I'm not so sure that's what I want. It really hurt, you know, when he married my sister and gave me up without a fight. "

"Whoa" exclaimed Stefan "your ex married your sister but you're pregnant by him?"

"Yeah," I said slowly "and he's having a baby with my sister as well. It's all so confusing. It's why I was so surprised when you said the child would be like your own. Not everybody would be that generous" I told him.

"I won't lie, it does hurt a little bit that you're already pregnant but I can't change that, and neither can you. Besides, you'll make a beautiful mother and I bet the child is as lovely as you are. You are my mate and I want all of you, child and all" he said fixing those big dark eyes on me that made me flush and look away.

"So tell me this story about your ex-boyfriend. Was he your mate?" he asked with interest and I shook my head.

"Actually" I began "it's a long story but I did meet my mate. How about I tell you everything. . ." and he nodded eager to hear my story as I began the long winding tale of everything that had happened to me up until I met Stefan.

Chapter 90 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Rowan POV

I walked down the hallway with something akin to triumph in my facial expression. I had her, I had her and she didn't even know it yet. I gripped the arm of the miserable excuse of a guard, Grant, holding him in front of me and shoving him, hard towards the door, which he opened with trembling hands.

"Get in" I snarled, shoving him through the open door and almost sending him tumbling down the stairs. He was covered in bruises, from our fight earlier, where I had beaten him to an inch of his life, his nose bleeding from being broken and several of his teeth loose and cracked. He hadn't come quietly either, to my satisfaction. I'd needed to take my anger out on someone and he'd been convenient when I'd put two and two together, realizing he'd been covering for Stacey all this damn time.

I gripped him by the arm again and stomped downstairs, relishing the startled look on Stacey's face as we stormed past, the guards opening up a new cell for me. I pushed him inside, the guards rushing to help restrain the young lad, so that his feet dangled above the floor uselessly, his hands high above his head. I cocked my head to the side and observed him, noting his shallow breathing, the way his eyes darted wildly everywhere, and the way his body shook. The boy was more than frightened, he looked about ready to piss his pants. I half hoped he would, if only to bring about even more humiliation to him.

"What are you doing?" cried Stacey from her own cell, her voice shrill and panicked.

I ignored her, concentrating on Grant who was avoiding my gaze.

"Where are the implements?" I asked the guards casually, one of them leaving to retrieve the trolley as I gloved up my hands so that the silver wouldn't affect me.

"Please" wheezed Grant, nasally due to his broken nose, "please don't" he begged.

As if he had a say in anything that was about to happen to him. I merely glowered at him, my arms folded across my chest, waiting impatiently for the trolley to be pushed in front of me, by the other guard who swallowed nervously when I glanced at him.

"Rowan, please, he's just a kid" Stacey protested in a muffled voice, her own hands and feet restrained in the cell.

Grant was older than a mere child though, and old enough to know better. My own man had betrayed me and now it was time for him to face the consequences. The first thing I did though, was to walk into the cell and reach up, pushing the nose back into place painfully, a sharp cracking noise sounding as Grant flinched from the pain. I grinned. Now he would be able to speak and scream like a normal shifter. It wouldn't take long for his wolf to heal the broken nose, I thought calmly, and I could always break it again and again if I wished.

I turned around and surveyed the trolley, wondering where I wanted to start. There were so many various torture items that it was difficult to choose. I grabbed the cat o nine tails with silver on the spokes, speaking grimly to the guards who were waiting patiently for instructions.

"Strip him" I instructed. Grant was still clad in a shirt and pants, having fought me in human form earlier, perhaps believing he stood a better chance than trying to fight me in wolf form. The guards used their claws to shred his clothes off of him, leaving him naked and vulnerable.

His back was exposed to me. I pulled the whip back and with all of my strength, struck him directly across the middle of his back. He tipped his head back and screamed, the sound echoing throughout the dungeon.

Thwack, thwack, I didn't let up, hitting with all my strength and relishing in his screams, the guards standing in their corner, doing their best to avoid looking. Blood was welling up in the gashes left by the whip, adding to the metallic scent that was already prevalent in the air.

"You bastard" Stacey shouted, "leave him alone already."

I was a little surprised by how much she seemed to care about Grant who was still, his head slumped as he stared at the ground, perhaps hoping I was finished when in actual fact, I was just getting started.

"Tell me Grant" I sneered "what did Stacey have you do for her? Was she responsible for the herb found in Amber's drink that time?"

He was silent.

Thwack, Thwack, two more strikes against his back as he shuddered.

"Answer me" I growled but he shook his head, staring down at the ground mutely.

"Tell me" I demanded, thwack, thwack, thwack, hitting him three more times and watching the blood trickle down from his wounds and onto the cold hard dungeon floor. I sucked in a breath, impressed despite myself at the young lad's fortitude. He wasn't giving Stacey up, at least not anytime soon. I was going to have to be more persuasive.

I placed the cat o nine tails back onto the trolley, the silver spokes now tainted with blood, and surveyed the implements again. This time I grabbed hold of a dagger, brandishing it in my hand and watching as Grant's eyes widened before his eyes narrowed and his face went cold and unyielding again. The dagger was made of silver, designed to burn the flesh and make it sizzle. I moved to Grant, staring him deep into the eyes, and then plunged the dagger inside his stomach, leaving it there to burn him as he bucked and writhed in his restraints, kicking out uselessly, screaming at the top of his lungs. I waited, counting to thirty, before I reached out and grasped the dagger by the handle, wrenching it back out.

"Tell me, Grant, what did Stacey have you do for her?" I coaxed, waving the blood-stained dagger at him.

His jaw clenched tight and he started at the ground. Fine then. More torture it was.

I plunged the dagger into his thigh, leaving it there, and listened to his screams as I counted to sixty, before retrieving the dagger.

"Oh my god," Stacey was sobbing from the next cell.

I didn't give Grant a chance to speak, walking behind him and then, using the dagger to peel off a large patch of skin off his back. That one really made him scream. I dropped the skin to the ground and walked back around to the front of Grant.

"Tell me," I said grimly.

"Fine" he breathed, "she had me seek out a specific herb for her. Told me she was using it for skincare or something like that" he added, looking apologetically at the next cell.

"What herb" I demanded.

"It was called Penny Royal" he stammered.

I gave a big groan. Everyone knew that pennyroyal could cause miscarriages, but given enough of it, it could also cause the person who ingested it to die. Grant really was an idiot.

"What else?" I asked, "what else did she do?"

But he was already shaking his head again, clamming back up. I walked back around and put the point of the dagger into his shoulder and began to carve, listening to his flesh sizzle and burn from the silver. When I was finished there was a word carved into his back and it read 'traitor'.

"Please" Grant pleaded, "please no more."

But I'd already had enough of listening to him and him not answering my questions. I put my hand up and punched him, breaking his nose again, and then as he howled, put it back together in the right place again.

"I'm going to keep breaking that" I warned him.

"What else did she have you do?" I asked, still holding the dagger in my right hand.

He bit his lip and glanced away. I sighed.

This time I was none too gentle, plunging the dagger in the back of his leg and pulling it downwards, severing tendons and the like, leaving it in for more than two minutes as his flesh began to bubble from the burn of the silver. When I yanked it out, I expected him to talk and this time he did.

"She had me cover for her when she went somewhere. I don't know where she went."

I raised an eyebrow. I had already figured out that she had gone to the witch's house every time she disappeared.

"What did you do when she came back?"

He hung his head "We had sex" he answered softly.

I exploded. "You betrayed your alpha in return for sex. Are you fucking kidding me, Grant?"

I was more than annoyed, I was angry. Because of him, my mate had almost died from being poisoned and had been targeted by him as the wolf who attacked her. I didn't hold back this time. Instead, I cupped his balls in my hand and raised the dagger, the guards leaping into action to keep him still as he began to babble and plead with me.

"Rowan, please, Alpha, don't do this, it will never happen again. Please, oh god, don't do it" he cried as I brought the dagger down and neatly sliced off his scrotum. I listened to the scream as he tipped his head back, blood spurting everywhere. I flung the offending piece of equipment to the corner of the cell and then looked at my guards who stared back non-passively, not surprised by the torture in the slightest.

"Get him medical assistance, but in the cell, I don't want the son of a bitch to step foot out of this cell. He's betrayed me and as such will be executed when I see fit."

Grant was passed out unconscious now, hanging there. I could hear Stacey's crying from next door and smiled grimly to myself. I kept hold of the dagger, the blood staining the silver of it, walking over to her cell, one of the guards unlocking it for me. The second she saw me, her eyes widened and she began to look panicked, no doubt fearing she was about to be tortured.

"You attacked my mate" I sneered as she began to tremble. Unlike Grant, she wasn't dangling from the ceiling but instead was restrained and shackled, lying on the cold hard floor. "You almost killed her" I roared.

I eyed Stacey with contempt, taking in the mess of her hair, her dark eyes wide, her pale skin almost translucent, she was that ashen and pale. Her dress was torn and ripped, and her shoes were in the corner of the cell. She had been so shocked to find herself dragged off to the dungeon after I had killed her precious witch friend, not expecting it from tame, calm, Rowan. She had seriously underestimated me.

"Please, Rowan, let me go" she pleaded, almost hysterical. "I know what I did was wrong, but I am pregnant. You can't take this out on an innocent child" she continued, begging me.

She was right, I would never torture her while she was pregnant with an innocent child, no matter how much she had wronged me. But I also had an answer to that. "You will still be executed when I see fit. After you've given birth to your child" I told her evenly "and you won't be having a natural birth either. I have doctors on standby to give you a c-section when it's safe enough. I want you to die as soon as remotely possible" I hissed as her lips quivered.

"Rowan, you can't do this to me" she screamed "what about everything I've done for you? Does that mean nothing to you? Nothing at all?"

I laughed, my voice dripping with malice "you have done nothing for me, Stacey, except be a giant pain in the ass. I'm no longer under your spell remember? I broke your perfume bottles and now that I'm aware of it, the perfume you have on is not affecting me as it was before."

She drooped. "I did it for us" she whispered so quietly I almost missed it.

"You did it for yourself" I thundered "and your selfishness has now caused another man to die. Think about that while you're locked up in your cell because you are going to have plenty of time to think about things in here" I threatened. I shut the cell door and waited for the guards to lock the cell door again. She got up awkwardly and tried to hop towards the door as I turned around and made my way towards the stairs.

"Rowan" she screamed "don't do this, please god no, don't leave me in here" she wailed.

I continued up the steps, as she continued to scream at me "please, I'll do anything, anything you want. Just let me out, I can't stand it in here, please, oh god, Rowan no, where are you going?" as I opened the door and made my way out of the dungeon. The last thing I heard before I shut the door was another scream and this time it was a blood-curdling one. It looked like Grant had woken up. I grinned and slammed the door shut, cutting off their screams, and began to make my way toward my study.