

Dr. Luna

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The Vampires Promised Bride Chapter 61

Derek moved the clothing off of her and only left the bandages around her ribs. He looked over her blackened and bruised body and his heart wrenched in pain.

"Derek..." Lucy said quietly she gave him a soft smile. She could feel his emotions raging. He was hurting and angry for her. And he was angry at himself that it even happened. "Don't. We are past this part okay?"

Derek lifted her hand up to his lips kissing her fingers delicately. "It hurts my heart seeing this. I love you so much and this just hurts... I'll never be past someone hurting my soul..." It really was a good thing their emotions flowed together as if they were the same. Without the soul mate bond, it would have been very tough for the two of them to get through this moment. They knew how one another felt and their thoughts. They didn't feel unworthy because of this. They knew their acceptance. Still... it didn't make seeing the marks of abuse on your mate any easier. But through their mate bond, they could caress and ease each other. Their inner energy helped soothe the pain the other was feeling.

He tenderly washed her skin. As he did the tears flowed from his own eyes. Someone had hurt his precious little mate and he couldn't even do anything about it. He couldn't help feeling like a failure... it was his role to protect her and support her. Yet, a power so strong had gotten a hold of her. It was only normal to feel inadequate about his own strength. Someone else had to save his woman. Someone else has to fight the culprit.

He leaned down and gently kissed the marks on her body. Washing her skin with his own tears as well. She just quietly let him knowing he needed to let his emotions out too. He needed to take care of her in this way.

He carefully made his way washing her until he reached her breasts. Where he met with her eyes promising all the things he planned to do to her later. And how he would make sure her body would be purged by his body heat. She tried to get him to engage in that promise now but he only smiled and shook his head. There was no way he could possibly touch her like that in her condition. But he still left gentle kisses on her sensitive mounds smiling as he heard her protesting for more.

Derek sat the basin aside when he finally finished and gently eased her into the new clothes. He grabbed some pillows and helped prop her body up. Stealing soft kisses all the while continuing to dote on her. He leaned forward and kissed his mark on her neck, remembering the taste of her blood. Lucy was also reminiscing about the way he tasted to her and how much she wanted to drink from him again.

"That is definitely not a good idea." Derek chuckled knowing he wouldn't be able to stop himself then.

"Which is why it is a good idea." Lucy grinned up at him.

"You are a little minx!" He chuckled prodding her nose lightly. She heaved a pouting sighed and it felt good to have a normal interaction between them. He looked her body over and frowned slightly. "I guess I can probably carry you out there Lucy. But I'm propping you on the couch and you are staying there. Deal?" He watched as Lucy smiled up at him appreciatively.

"Thank you." Lucy reached her arms around his neck as he carefully lifted her body. She winced once at the shift but then rested comfortably in his chest. She played with his neck and traced feather-like touches over her mark on him. Enough that she could feel it arousing him. She smiled and bit her lip as he eased her onto the couch propping her up with support. "Oh, could you put that in a bag for me and bring it here?" Lucy asked and watched Derek chuckle and nod his head.

Abaddon appeared in front of Lucy and he frowned. "Should you be out here on the couch..."

"Now don't you start too." Lucy giggled as Derek walked back with the bag she requested.

"We pick our battles with Lucy. And this is what will make her happy right now." Derek eased himself in beside her, using his arm to support her into his side comfortably.

"I'll open the door then... so they will know you are ready." Abaddon walked over and as he opened the door was met with her family all standing there. They were just waiting for the okay.

"Lucy!" Aiden rushed in front of the couch and knelt in front of her. His bottom lip quivered but he quickly tucked it in. He didn't want to cry in front of her and upset her more. Though inwardly he was trembling with anger after seeing the condition his sister was in. "I've missed you."

"Missed you too." Lucy smiled and watched as her family filled the room. Jasper and Justice were next to make it to her. Then one by one each one of her family members came up to her letting her know how happy they were that she was back. Most of their

eyes gave away the emotions they were hiding behind their smiles. They were very angry and all were eager for revenge.

"Lucy... I'm so sorry." Alexis said in a strangled voice. She felt guilty knowing that Lucy was covering for her. What happened to Lucy should have happened to her. And seeing her cousins face crushed her and made her love Lucy even more.

"Lex, don't. I have something for you." Lucy motioned for Derek to give Alexis the bag. She watched as Alexis opened it and looked up at her with her head to the side. "That is Aken's shirt... I thought that way you could have his scent close to you..." "Thank you so much, Lucy." Alexis's eyes watered as she clutched the bag close to her chest.

"He saved me for you, Lex. He cares just so you know. I think it is killing him to stay away from you but he wants to keep you safe. He couldn't stand your pain because of me..." Lucy watched the tears trickle from Alexis's face. "What am I going to do with him..." Alexis smiled, shaking her head slowly before moving aside so Freya could kneel in front of Lucy.

Wyatt placed his hand on Lucy's hand while Freya rested her head on Lucy's lap. Losing Lucy and then seeing her in the condition she was in took a toll on the both of them. It convinced them even more that they were doing the right thing keeping their children out of this battle with the witch. It revealed to them how easily they could lose them and there was nothing they could do. The other covens haven't been able to make an antidote for whatever potion Beryl has created. Though they had sample blood from a wolf that was killed by it recently. They still haven't been able to figure out how to stop its effects.

"I'm okay. It's okay." Lucy was the one comforting her parents instead of them comforting her. She knew they must also be feeling like failures. What happened to her was awful but it could have easily been worse. Much worse. And she decided she wouldn't let it break her. She was going to be stronger because of it.

A loud commotion broke the quiet moment between the parents and their daughter.

"Cody!" Kelsie yelled. "I can't believe you. Those weren't for you! I made you your own. Those were for Lucy." She growled as she chased Cody around the kitchen area.

"Aww Kels I didn't know... don't be mad." Cody dodged between Titus and then tried to hide behind Rhea.

"Uh oh Po panda strikes again." Titus chuckled and leaned back into his chair. This had been a regular occurrence ever since Rhea first came to his kingdom. It felt like only yesterday and yet it had been over two decades now. "Jason ate some too!" Cody immediately deflected to his twin brother.

"Sure, only because you offered them to me. How was I to know they were specially baked?" Jason smirked and leaned his head down into Jin's neck.

Kelsie jumped at Cody but he effortlessly grabbed her hand and twirled her back into his front. He leaned his head down and quietly whispered something inaudible to her making her cheeks heat up red.

"Save the foreplay for the bedroom." Brian chuckled as Raine covered her face, mortified over her parents.

"Hey whelp just wait until you find your mate." Cody winked up at the young dragon.

"Maybe I'll meet the lucky lady at this mating party coming up if I am fortunate. And if not... I think I don't mind tasting the other fruit available." Brian shrugged with a sly grin.

"Oh Dragon Fruit. I like it. Maybe I'll join in on this party..." Micah chuckled. "Just because I am not taking a mate doesn't mean I can't sample the fruit."

"Lucy got to sample your fruit. How was it Luce?" Justice asked with a smirk.

"It was awful." Lucy smiled trying not to laugh.

"Hey! That wasn't a kiss and I said no judgment." Micah pouted.

"The only reason you're still alive is because it wasn't a kiss." Jasper said with a snicker.

"Oh? Is that a challenge fangs?" Micah smirked, turning to Jasper.

"Fangs?" Jasper quirked his brow up. "You are a freaking werebear and you are calling me fangs?"

Lucy giggled and winced from the pain in her side. Not having your healing abilities was horrible.

"Hey, don't make her laugh." Derek scolded as he doted over Lucy gently brushing his fingers through her hair.

It was relaxing. It felt normal and everything felt like it was okay. Lucy was surrounded by the people she loved the most in this world. And the normalcy was exactly what she needed.

"Hey Aba, what about you? Does that all work in spirit form? You want to join us on the prowl?" Justice asked, slapping the half-demon on the back giving him a lower glance to the pants motion with his eyes.

Abaddon chuckled. "Yes. Everything still works in this form. But I think I'll hold off on prowling. I think I'd rather be the prowled than the prowler."

"Oh I like it. I want that too. I need a lady stalker." Justice said with a laugh.

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Alexis made her way quietly out of the room and escaped to the balcony off of the room. She stared into the silence and leaped from the balcony. She silently fell to the ground lifting herself with her ice gently landing on her feet. White mist and sparkling crystals twinkled around her under the night sky. She walked to the garden that she always visited when she wanted to be alone. There she stared out in the darkness.

"I don't know if you can hear me... but thank you." She sighed. "I don't care what the risks are. I know you are trying to protect me but I just want to be with you. Are you really planning to keep avoiding me?" She bit her bottom lip staring into the darkness. "It isn't fair for you to decide this yourself. What do you really want? Do you really want me to move on and take another mate? You can't want this. Staying away from me isn't going to stop anything. It is only going to hurt us both."

She felt dumb talking into the darkness but it was the only way she could vent. She hated this. She hated he took the choices from her. She didn't want to take another mate not when she had a fated one. And now that she knew he did care about her she was infuriated. He wasn't even giving her a chance. Did he really plan to make her wait until Erebus was taken care of and then what about after that? Would he come to her then? And who knew how long it would take for the Erebus situation to be taken care of. She clicked her tongue angrily and glared into the darkness. "You aren't making this decision. No! If you won't show yourself to me then I will find you. I will drag you here and put you to your knees. You are mine. And I'm going to take what is mine. Just wait. I'm going to find you." Alexis turned and stormed away. She felt dumb always having to yell in the empty night air. She had no way of knowing if he was there to hear her or not. But it was all she could do to vent.

Little did she know in the darkness hidden Aken watched her. A smile played on his lips as he listened to her words. He watched her adorable self stomping away as she marched back to the castle.

"I'm sorry princess but you won't be able to find me. You deserve someone better than me and I hope you find him. This has to be goodbye for us. I've loved watching you grow. I've loved seeing your shining light. But your light isn't for me. The light doesn't belong in the dark.

The day can never be one with the night. Be happy Alexis... Find love... and be safe." It pained Aken to even think of another man embracing her. But it was dangerous for him to take her. And she was someone too pure for him. His darkness could never embrace her light. It was best all around to let her go. She would never know the man who loved

her so much he was sacrificing himself for her. The sting of walking away hit him deep in his chest. After all these years of watching her... he loved her. He slowly fell deeper and deeper. She wasn't just a mate to him she was the woman he loved.

He was a monster who had dangerous enemies. He couldn't risk her life for his happiness. It was best for her to find another... it was best for her to have a chosen mate instead. It would be hell... but a hell he deserved. He would endure it as long as she was safe and happy. "Goodbye, my love."

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"Can I just be healed already!" Lucy growled and crossed her arms over her chest. It had been several days since she was rescued. Several days of still not being able to heal or be healed. And her family was keeping her still. From the bed to the couch. At least now she was moved back to the main floor. But it was ridiculous. They even had her in a wheelchair now. Between Derek, Aba and her family, she was being smothered.

Though Aba had been sent to give the king and queen an update and they were waiting for him to return. And Jasper and Brian had went back to witch hunting. They both formed a partnership together and made a friendly competition. The first one to capture the witch wins. And the loser must shave their head. Either way... this was a win win situation for Lucy.

"Just enjoy the pampering my love." Derek chuckled as he brought a drink next to her. He leaned his head down to her and gently pecked the top of her head. Taking a moment to let his nose linger in her hair while he took in hits of her scent. "I don't want to be pampered. I want up!" Lucy snorted with a pout.

"Even once you are healed I'm putting you in bubble wrap." Justice beamed at her while she shot him an irritated look.

"I feel just as confined as Lucy. I'm stuck holed up here while Brian and Jasper get to stretch their muscles." Aiden growled. "Though it is nice to be with everyone. Mom and dad are enjoying spending time with everyone as well. Even though grandma and grandpa had to leave today. Even Cody and Jason are getting to spend some rare time together too. I guess this is the positive. We are all getting to spend some precious time with everyone. Even you and me Lucy. Our time together is coming to an end too." "It isn't coming to an end Aiden. Sure we might not live together but we are only a portal away." Lucy gave him a small smile. Then she felt the familiar burn as if she was about to shift. This must be a good sign. Her magic must be coming back. Her eyes met with Aiden's who also had a peculiar look on his face.

And then just like that they both shifted into their lycan's forcefully.

"What is going on?!" Derek asked in shock.

Lucy and Aiden looked at each other. At that moment Lucy felt her body completely heal but this wasn't just about what happened to her. Something also forced Aiden to shift.

"Great... something weird is happening again..." Micah stood up sprinting out of the room. "I'll get Wyatt."

Lucy tried to shift back but couldn't. And even more weird... she couldn't communicate with anyone.

Aiden?

I hear you Lucy.

Okay... she could communicate with Aiden. But why couldn't she communicate with Derek? He was her soul mate. What was severing that connection?

A mass entrance of nervous family members came into the room.

"What is going on?" Wyatt asked. Lucy! Aiden! But they didn't answer him. Their heads looked his way but he couldn't hear their voices.

Derek walked up and touched Lucy. "I can't hear her thoughts... but I can sense her emotions. She is confused too..." He ran his fingers through her fur and squatted down to her. "It is just one adventure after another for us, huh?" Lucy licked at his face and gently pushed her muzzle under his neck. She felt him wrap his arms around her neck and hug her body closely.

Lee's eyes darkened as he felt the aura in the room. There was a small trace of the energy of Lycaon. Lycaon was the deity of the lycan's... once upon a time. But when the lycan's vanished he did as well. Whatever was happening here was because of him, he was certain of it. But he didn't want to cause any alarm right now. After the mess with Erebus, he was sure the last thing this family wanted to hear was that another deity was involved. But Lycaon wouldn't do anything to hurt his precious lycans. This must be a test of sorts.

So I guess we are stuck like this for now? Aiden looked up at Lucy who turned her head to look at him.

Do you wish to shift freely again? You must find the one frozen in time but still alive. Release her from her cruel fate because only she can be your mate. The bass voice sounded in their heads then it was silence again.

Aiden, Lucy. A familiar voice entered their minds next. They both turned their heads up to Levi.

Levi sighed in relief. At least he could communicate with them. He was a deity after all certain perks came with that. Good, you can hear me.

Yes, we can't shift back. A voice said if we want to be able to shift we need to find one frozen in time and release her from her fate... I think she is meant to be Aiden's mate. Lucy listened as Aiden growled lowly.

This is the work of Lycaon. The lycan deity. I don't understand the point of making you shift and stay in your wolf forms. My guess it is a challenge for the two of you. And he didn't expect me... Someone who can actually still override his nonsense. This is none of your business Leviathan! The same voice commanded.

It is my business. These two are my niece and nephew. Care to try again? Lee chuckled darkly.

But they are mine. Like the dragons are yours. And the future king must claim his queen. Until then they will be stuck in this form.

Why drag my sister into this if it is my task? Aiden growled angrily baring his teeth slightly. The family members quietly observed the very frustrating situation.

There is something that only she can do...

Where do we need to go? What is it I can do? Lucy asked the voice in her head.

This is where I'll find out if you are worthy or not. This is your task. And your quest to solve... So Leviathan... I enact the code upon you. You will stay out of this from here on out.

Levi snarled and scowled angrily. Just as the dragons were his to command the lycans belonged to Lycaon. As such he couldn't interfere or help aid Lucy and Aiden now. The code is what the deities came up with to keep things fair. Only one was able to interfere with the code... and that was Selene. She had special privileges that other deities didn't have.

I won't let anything happen to them. Damn the code if they end up in danger. Levi's eyes darkened as his heavy aura filled the room. There is a witch out there right now looking for these two... you are putting them in danger.

A loud scoff was heard in their heads. They aren't in danger of the witch you speak of. Not my children.

But the potion is separating their wolves... Levi was interrupted by the voice laughing loudly in their heads.

They are lycans, not werewolves. They were created as lycans. That means their true form is a wolf, not a human. Don't compare them with a creature so much weaker. Their wolves can't be killed separately from them.

And how exactly are we lycans? Aiden asked.

This was an arrangement between the moon goddess and myself.

You are interfering with a soulmate bond. Lee growled.

No, I haven't. They are still connected. The mind link and thoughts are blocked off. Can't have the vampire aiding them on their challenge. This is meant for the two of them and the two of them alone. And I suggest if they ever want to be human again they do the task on their own.

Rogio is involved now... Levi tried another angle hoping to call whatever this was off.

I am quite aware of Erebus and his antics. Rogio and I are on the same page. The lycan female is also precious to me just as much as she is to Rogio. Erebus days are numbered. And Rogio has agreed to stand aside for this trial. After all... she was mine before she mated to one of his. Now... lets see if they are worthy of their species.

They felt the connection cut out and Lucy and Aiden just looked at each other quietly. On the positive from the sounds of it whatever potion the witch had it should not affect them. But on the negative, they were stuck in this form right now.

Lee sighed and looked up at Wyatt and Freya. "Lycaon has given Lucy and Aiden a task. I can't intervene because he is their deity. But I did find out some good news. Lucy and Aiden are no in danger from the witch's potion. They are not separate from their wolves. They are one. This brings me to something you won't like... They will have to leave the safety of the dragon kingdom to perform their task. It involves Aiden's mate. And if they want to be able to shift back they must find the one frozen in time." "I'm going with them then," Wyatt growled angrily. He was so tired of deities involving his family in their antics.

"No." Derek said calmly trying to feel through Lucy's emotions what her thoughts were. "It is best for you and Freya to stay here where it is safe. I'll go and bring Abaddon and Justice."

"You won't be able to help them with their task..." Levi said quietly.

"I won't leave Lucy's side. Not after... what happened." Derek's voice grew quiet and he felt Lucy nuzzle her head into him. It still stung. Lucy being taken still was bitter and painful for him. It was something he wasn't sure he would ever get over. The fear of losing Lucy and what she had been through... He shifted his fingers through the fawn-colored wolf. The feelings of her love flowed into him. He smiled. No matter what form

she was in she was still his. She was still the one his heart was connected to. Still... he would prefer her human form for several reasons.

"I can send Micah too." Alexis listened as he immediately objected.

"No. I'm not leaving your side Alexis. I'm your guardian. Justice is Lucy's. It is best I stay with you."

"Who is going to touch me here? With my father around?" Alexis frowned folding her hands over her chest.

"I'm going to be checking in with them and going back and forth. I agree it is best to keep the guardians with their own charges for now. Lycaon wouldn't give them a task they couldn't handle. I'm sure there is another purpose behind this... Let the five of them handle it." Lee said quietly. "This is something that is meant for just those two."

"You can't expect me to just sit here..." Titus said with an irritating bite.

"I'll keep my eye on them." Lee looked at Titus and then to Wyatt. "These tasks are usually for a purpose..." Plus he knew the family right now would intervene too quickly and could potentially sabotage Lucy and Aiden. Lycaon could very well not let them shift again if he gets angered.

"I don't see why we can't just send a small army to accompany them." Titus interjected again. A few of his dragons at the very least would make them all feel better.

"Because this is a challenge, Titus. There can be consequences for intervening. Like I said I'll be watching over them from a distance. If anything seems too bad I'll stop it."

"Sounds like we don't have a choice." Freya clicked her tongue angrily.

"You don't. If we interfere they may end up stuck in their feral form. He can keep them there..." Lee knew everyone was angry over this. The family had been under a lot of stress lately. But there wasn't anything anyone could do. "You two be careful." Wyatt said with a sad frown.

"Justice... stay safe and alert out there." Jason looked at his son... a guardian. This was his role now. It is his sole purpose to protect Lucy. Still... it is hard to let your child go knowing there will be dangers.

"Don't worry I'll keep us all safe." Justice looked over at Derek. "It will look like we are just taking our new pets for a walk." He chuckled and Aiden let a low growl of annoyance slip from his throat. So Lucy... any idea where to start?

Anxious to find your mate? Lucy turned wagging her tail slightly. This was potentially exciting they might end up finding Aiden's other half.

If it is my mate out there then yes. Plus I don't want to stay like this forever. This is a pain.

Aiden, maybe being in a feral form is a hint. Perhaps you can sense her?

Oh yeah maybe. Here I had in my head we would be looking for ice or something...

Lucy rolled her eyes and growled in annoyance.

"What is the matter, Lucy? Aiden getting frustrating?" Derek chuckled feeling his mate's emotions.

"We need an interpreter. I don't speak lycan." Justice chuckled and looked up at Lee.

Just then Aba appeared in the room. He looked around in confusion and his eyes met with the two lycans. "Okay... what did I miss?"

"Quick version... The deity Lycaon forced them into their feral forms to complete a task and if we aid them they may remain in their feral forms." Justice said with a scowl. "Can you hear Lucy's thoughts?"

"I can communicate with my master always. But I won't relay anything... deities can be spiteful asses... no offense." Aba turned and shrugged looking at Lee.

"None taken."

He could have at least told us where to look. Aiden sighed in annoyance.

How about the old lycan kingdom? I think that would be the most logical starting point.

You think my mate is a lycan? Aiden wagged his tail in excitement.

Well, I think that makes the most sense.

Alright... let's go then. Aiden walked up to Freya and leaned his head into her hand. He knew his parents were worrying and he wanted to reassure them. Lucy went it did the same thing. It was a simple gesture but all they could do to convey their feelings. "So Aiden, you going to give me a ride? Look... I think it makes sense. We can cover ground faster on your backs." Justice said chuckling.

Though it was a joke Aiden and Lucy both looked at each other. It wasn't a bad idea. They could cover ground easily and fast this way. And also keeping them all close. Sure, Derek and Justice were fast but Lucy and Aiden's four legs were superior in speed. And their lycans were a towering size that could easily carry someone on their back. Aba could teleport along with them with ease.

"Wait that was a joke." Justice licked his lips nervously as he let out a dry chuckle. Talk about a moment he should have inserted his foot in his mouth.

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Two blurs raced over the mountainside, one fawn, and the other silver. Justice gripped onto the silver fur below him. This was supposed to be a ha-ha joke, not something serious. Of course, they would pick now to take him seriously. Why not the time he wanted to try spreading his seed across the swim team? No, they laughed that all off. And riding on the back of a speeding lycan was actually terrifying. Especially how Aiden leaped off boulders and free fell to the ground. Aba was following them in flashes that he was capable of. It was his teleportation. And he had more energy now that him and Lucy had a better relationship.

Lucy was racing happily alongside of Aiden. It had been a while since she was able to run and stretch her legs. Same with Aiden. They were both enjoying this moment running freely. And it was fun since Derek was riding on her back. His hands curling in her hair made her body tingle and she imagined a different scenario of pulling hair... Good thing he couldn't read her thoughts though he still knew her emotions. She felt his other hand rub through her fur as he chuckled lowly.

"I feel the same way little mate. We have some reconnecting to do after you shift back. Now that you are finally all healed up. I'm in desperate need of some Lucy therapy."

One of the good things about being in her feral form was that he couldn't see her blushing. Even if Derek understood her feelings he kept quiet and gently stroked her side. Just being close like this had a comforting effect on the both of them.

They came to a wooded area that was shrouded in mist. In the distance, you could hear a slight screaming sound. Aba materialized between the two wolves and stared quietly in front of them.

"The Shriek..." Aba said with a sharp intake.

The Shriek was a dangerous vengeful spirit that claimed the lives of anyone who feared death or wished to live. Bitter from the life they lost they now claimed the lives of whoever they encountered... because who didn't want to live? This was all true except for Jester and Freya. In fact, Jester lived in the woods with a Shriek. It kept him isolated and private. That was until the day a girl with auburn hair entered his forest. This was Freya. A girl who also didn't fear death or care if she lived.

"I've heard about that from Uncle Jester." Derek tightened his hand in Lucy's fur. "Is there no going around?"

Lucy looked over to Aba. She had also heard of stories of the Shriek from her mother. And that there had also been another more dangerous one there before. There was a chance there were more terrible vengeful spirits in the woods. Just then two more terrifying screams were heard in different locations confirming Lucy's thoughts. There was more than one. But the fastest way was through those woods.

Can we outrun them? Lucy asked looking at Abaddon.

I don't know Lucy. I can hold one off... but I don't know how many we are dealing with. The woods have become infested after the demon war. It would be wise to go around... but to go around would mean going through the mountains. His eyes darted to Derek for a moment and then back to Lucy. Going through the mountains would be dangerous for you and Derek. They are no friends of the vampires there.

Lucy knew Abaddon was speaking about the Children of the Moon. Three remaining packs of wolves that banded together. They hate vampires and kill them with a vengeance. Her father had tried to unite them with the packs but they wouldn't budge because of how accepting they were of vampires. The Children of the Moon were a strong pack but the five of them would be able to overcome. The problem is that would be annihilating the pack... and it was always Wyatt's hope to assimilate them. They were wolves too. Aiden could probably command them, right? They never tried to order rogues before though it should be in their power. She looked at Aiden and asked him what he was thinking. Through the forest or mountains.

It isn't worth the risk Lucy... if the pack is hostile we will have no choice but to wipe them all out... And it is faster to go through the forest. Aiden stared at the woods with a low growl. We will run straight through not giving them a chance to catch us. We stop for nothing. Don't look back and just keep running.

Lucy had to agree with him. She hardly wanted to kill the isolated pack. For the most part, they just want to be left alone to live their own life. They have never caused trouble for anyone. They had a strong hatred for vampires but given what happened to them before it was understandable. Long ago way before her time, there were three packs that rested on the outskirts of the vampire kingdom. This was back before Alaric took over as king. The vampires wanted to expand their territory and went to talk with the packs to come to an agreement.

This is where things get cloudy. Each species accuses the other one of starting the attack. And in the end, it left three packs destroyed that united together as the Children of the Moon. All that remained was the alpha's son of one of the packs and under him, the three remaining members united. What really happened that day? It was hard to tell. But the vampires are adamant they only went for peaceful talks and they were attacked. In either case, the hatred the Children of the Moon harbored for vampires would not be extinguished. Still, Wyatt was hopeful in time they would be able to resolve the ill feelings of the past.

Shrilling screams erupted from the forest. The eerie sound echoed as the cries polluted through the forest. It was enough to make Lucy step back nervously. Going through the mountains would mean a fight. But going through the forest could mean death. Lucy... we can do this. Let's see which one of us is faster, eh?

"I don't think we should travel through the forest." Derek could feel Lucy's nervousness and he was also anxious about it. All of them had something to live for. And it wasn't the fear of death but the fear of leaving the one you loved behind. Which would be enough for the Shrieks.

Lucy took in a deep breath calming her nerves. She lifted her head to Aba.

Tell them to hold on tight and not to let go. We are running straight through. We need them to duck down and hug our bodies tightly so we don't accidentally knock them off running through the trees. Lucy watched as Aba slowly nodded his head. He relayed the message to Justice and Derek before turning his focus back to Lucy.

"I'll do what I can princess." Aba said quietly. He didn't have the fear of death. He was already dead. But he could only do what he could to hold them off. But the numbers were against them. All he could do was distract them and fight off any that got too close. Just stay safe. Don't do anything rash. Lucy returned her focus to the wailing woods in front of them. It was as if the Shrieks knew they were coming and were excited for it.

Alright Lucy... Are you ready? Aiden took a step near his sister and stared into her eyes. Maybe this was part of their test?

Don't get killed. Lucy watched as Aiden's wolf panted happily at her.

What are you talking about? I'm faster than you. Aiden said trying to provoke the competitive spirit out of Lucy. They needed to think of something else besides running from certain death.

Ah ah ah I don't think so dear brother. Lucy wagged her tail slightly. I guess this will prove who is the fastest, agreed?

Agreed. You need a head start...

You are the one who needs the head start.

Alright Lucy... see you on the other side.

Lucy looked forward and shifted her feet below her. She felt Derek wrap around her body. She glanced over to see Justice doing the same thing. She could see the look in his eyes that he was anxious about this idea. Let's go!

The two wolves flew down the ravine and crashed into the thick forest. The dark woods were covered in a thick mist. But they knew their destination was straight through. They continued racing and crashing through the woods. The sound of shrieking was drawing closer and from all directions. Soon a loud wail was trailing behind Lucy.

The branches beat against her face as she plunged into the unknown forest. She jumped over fallen trees and through bushes. Aiden was running parallel to her in the distance. Behind him, she could see three glowing energies following him and wailing angrily. Faster. Faster. Faster. She needed to run faster.

Screams were closing in and the loud howling cries multiplied behind her. She dared not look back. She had to focus on in front of them. In front.

A glowing light appeared in front of Aiden. And in a flash Aba kicked the energy to the side allowing Aiden to race through. The two lycan's glanced at the other periodically checking on the other and their pursuers.

Lucy's paws pounded against the ground. She was pushing her legs as hard as she could. Yet, she couldn't shake the distance between her and the cries. They continued to close in on both her and Aiden. The screeching cries were almost deafening now as their numbers increased. Closer. Closer. Closer. The colors of the forest all blurred together as the thick clouds of mist covered her view.

They weren't going to make it. She couldn't even see the light to show the end of the forest yet. Could she fight against them? Was there a way to stop all of them? She knew they might have a chance against a few of them but these numbers? The numbers were massive. She didn't know how many there were but she was guessing there was about a hundred maybe more. Why were there so many? Were these the demon souls that all gathered together after the war? All becoming vengeful spirits from being robbed of their life? Closer. Closer. Closer. She could feel their cold getting closer to her. They were right on Aiden's heels as well. Aba couldn't stop this...

A heavy pulse shook the area. Lucy and Aiden continued to speed forward yet the wails were now sounding farther away. She didn't dare risk looking back and end up running into one in front of her. She assumed Aba did something. She hoped he was alright.

The earth rose from the ground and the Shrieks collided into the magical earth barrier. Aba hovered just above it looking down on their savior.

"Could you shut up already? All this noise is ruining my mood." Aken turned and eyed the Shrieks. They glowered near him. One of the Shrieks charged towards him wailing. Aken gazed at the annoying menace and it evaporated.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?" Aken chuckled lowly. "You all will pay for interrupting my walk..." A loud thunderous c***k echoed through the woods and instantly the vengeful spirits all combusted.

"What the HELL do you think you are doing?" Lycaon growled appearing in from of Aken.

"I was trying to enjoy a peaceful walk. These menacing spirits and their loud cries were making it impossible for me to enjoy myself. Problem solved." Aken said with a smirk playing on his lips.

"Who do you think you are fooling? You were aiding MY lycans." Lycaon growled angrily. He was a towering man with fire red hair. His muscles bulged in anger as he clenched his hands into fists. Aken looked around the empty forest. "I don't see any lycans."

Lycaon growled at Aken angrily and took a step towards him. Aken turned his head sharply and set a dark gaze upon the deity.

"Careful Ly. I'd be very careful." Aken watched as the deity froze in his place with a scowl over his lips.

"I don't know what your game is but stay out of this. This is my trial for MY lycans. I invoke the code on you. You would be mindful to follow it. I'd hate it if you ended up trapped again... maybe this time underground." Lycaon scoffed in irritation. "You think you can rise up against me again? Try it, friend. Go ahead. The truth is... you fools know you need me. And it just so happens we have a common enemy."

"Erebus..." Lycaon said quietly watching Aken nod. This was true. He wasn't a fan of the Kraken but when it came to being a god killer Aken would be a terror to be reckoned with. After all... he had done it before. "Fine... I guess this means we are on the same side this time. Just don't interfere in this again."

Aken smirked as the deity disappeared. He turned his head to look into the distance where Lucy and Aiden had disappeared. He owed her for what she endured pretending to be his mate. And whenever he got the chance he would be there to aid her. What he did just now what his simple thanks.

"Tell your master not to be so reckless. I can't always pop in and save the day. And where the hell is that blue lizard at?" Aken lifted his gaze upwards to the tree canopy. He knew Aba was up there.

Aba flashed in front of Aken and lowered his head to him in appreciation. "Thank you. I believe Leviathan is watching them but was waiting until the last second to intervene since Lycaon had invoked the code upon him."

Aken rolled his eyes he looked in the distance and took a few steps. "Keep her safe."

Aba watched him vanish and a smile spread over his face. Aken was also protecting his princess. He closed his eyes and traced to himself to Lucy, projecting himself to her.

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Lucy and Aiden both were panting heavily in the middle of the clearing. They both laid down while Derek and Justice stayed near their sides. They were all looking towards the forest wondering what had happened. "Geez that was close. We almost didn't make it." Justice sighed and looked over at Lucy. "You two okay? That was some intense running."

"You did good Lucy." Derek said in a cooing voice as he massaged her fur with his hand in soothing motions.

Aba materialized in front of them and his gaze immediately searched for Lucy's. He found her wolf and instantly relaxed. "Thank goodness you are alright! What did you do to stop them?" Derek asked feeling Lucy's immediate relief as well.

Aba shook his head with a soft smile. "I didn't. Aken did it. It seems you made quite the impression on him princess."

"As long as it is a platonic impression I'm fine with it." Derek curled his arm possessively over Lucy. When it came to deity's he didn't have a high opinion of them after what happened with Lucy.

Aba chuckled. "You don't have to worry. His heart is somewhere else. Right, Lucy?"

Lucy nodded her head and leaned into Derek's touch more. She was shocked that Aken had come to their aid but incredibly thankful. She was certain if they got any closer her Uncle Levi would have intervened and she didn't want stuck as a lycan.

I don't think we should go that way on the way back... Aiden said with a chuckle. At least now we know I am the fastest though.

Lucy jerked her head in the direction of Aiden. I was an inch ahead of you!

That's cute Lucy. Really it is. But you didn't beat me.

Aba chuckled. "Do one of you two know which one of them made it out of the woods first?" He said looking at Derek and Justice.

The two men looked at one another for a second before they both said in unison.

"It was a tie."

"It was a tie."

Lucy and Aiden growled in displeasure over this. This was not what either of them wanted to hear.

Derek chuckled and wrapped his arms around Lucy's neck, burying himself in her fur. "You are too adorable sometimes Luce." He held her just like that buried in her warmth. This risking their life was starting to become a normal occurrence in their lives. He just wanted them to live their lives together peacefully running their kingdom. Nice and quiet where he could spend his days doting and loving on her. When they finally got back he would be taking Jasper's idea of the mini fridge. A quick snack, rehydrating and back at it. He would put what they did during her heat to shame. They had some long overdue love making to be had. She was healed now... but wasn't in the right form.

"You want me to cuddle with you like that too Aiden? Because I will." Justice laughed as Aiden snarled at him.

Aiden arose slowly and looked away from the forest they had just come from. He turned and faced behind him. In the distance were the ruins of an ancient past. The area that lycan's once dominated. He wasn't sure at first what he was feeling after running for his life. But now he was feeling it... the slight pull.

Lucy... I feel something...

Lucy eased herself to her feet slowly bringing Derek up with her. She looked at her brother curiously and watched as he wafted his nose in the air.

What do you smell? Lucy asked trying to test the air with her nose as well.

I can't describe it... something amazing. Something that makes me excited...

Your mate... Lucy looked to the distance. She could see Aiden was now anxious to follow the scent. So much for resting but she couldn't blame him. Alright well lets go. The sooner this is done the sooner we can shift again.

"We getting back to it already?" Justice asked with a stretch.

"Aiden here smells something." Abaddon watched the two men nod in immediate understanding.

Justice hopped onto Aiden's back. "Hi Ho Silver, Away!" He clicked his heels playfully into Aiden. He only chuckled at Aiden's low snarl. His cousin wasn't a scary lycan prince to him.

"Baby, I can run along side of you. Especially after all that running you just did." Derek listened as Lucy snorted at him with indignance. She nudged at him with her nose encouraging him to get on already. He sighed but obliged her. He liked being close with her but felt like this was putting a strain on her.

Alright lets see what this is all about. Is the trial simply finding your mate? If so we seem to almost be done. Lucy jumped ahead and Aiden was running at her heels.

He said there was something that only you could do though... Aiden was trying to think what all of this could mean. Was the point of all this just to give him his mate? He was certain there was more to it than that. And if they had guessed right... and he assumed they have since he was smelling the most intoxicating smell in the world... then they were about to find out real soon.

Lucy slowed down as they reached the stone entryway. She waited for Aiden so that she could follow his lead. After all, it was the scent of his mate they were now following.

Aiden approached cautiously and both men hopped off of the lycans back. There was no more running now. And everyone wanted to be alert for whatever they found.

Aiden felt his heart racing as he inhaled the stronger scent. It was like he had butterflies in his chest. The excitement he felt made his guard lower. All he could think about was finding the source. He carefully climbed over the rubble and onto a light gray stone platform. Around the platform were stone stands as if it used to be an arena of some sort. In the middle of the area was a dark area that disappeared into the earth. It was from this area his feet were pulling him.

Lucy approached next to Aiden and looked down the dark stairway. The stairs were steep and led straight down. She watched as Aiden plunged into darkness and she quickly followed behind him. The instant she did a loud slamming noise was heard. The ground above her closed over, leaving just her and Aiden locked in the darkness.

They both stood there for a moment quietly pondering over the situation. It seemed like Aiden couldn't get through either.

Lucy tilted her head back as she heard the sound of Aiden walking farther downward.

Aiden, wait for me. She understood he was being driven by instincts but he still needed to be smart about the situation. A barrier just locked them in and everyone else out. This wasn't going to be a game of freeze tag. Where Aiden runs in taps the girl and she is free. She could see he was agitated. He was moving his nose trying to find which way to go.

When they reached the bottom of the stairs the path opened up wider with torches lit of blue flames. The ground was a tan stone walkway and the walls were small brown bricks that also covered the ceiling. Lucy looked around cautiously as she followed next to Aiden. She was going to have to keep a protective eye on him since he wasn't thinking rationally right now. The pull of his mate was intoxicating his ability to think clearly.

The sound of water trickling made her ears perk up. She peered down the corridor and could see that it was starting to widen. It opened up into a solid gray stone room. With the middle being divided by a small crystal stream that flowed in a brick ditch. Across the trickling stream was a mass of sorts. The blue torches in the room flickered over it revealing a clear crystal with a young woman curled up in its center. It was like she was frozen or sealed solid.

Aiden lifted his nose to the crystal and his ears perked up. He quickly leaped over the stream running up to the mass. He pawed at the crystal frantically and began to whimper. Lucy went to follow him but the water suddenly rose. The trickling water froze forming an ice wall between her and Aiden.

Lucy could see Aiden's silver wolf charging into the ice barrier but it wouldn't budge. She noticed a black blob moving towards Aiden. She growled at it as she charged into the barricade. Then the horrifying sounds of her brother fighting some creatures she couldn't see clearly. She could hear his growls and whimpers. The terrifying roar of the creature echoed through the wall. And there was nothing she could do. She began frantically clawing at the ice and charging into it. But it was unrelenting and unmoving. "The future prince should be able to manage just fine. And if not... he isn't worthy of the crown." A voice whipped into the air.

Lucy watched as a man with fire red hair appeared in front of her. He watched her with a small smile.

"That is his task. Now is the moment for your choice."

My choice?

"I am Lycaon. And over there sealed is the lycan princess. But there is just one problem... She is on the verge of losing everything. Which is why she was put in the seal to prevent her death. But you have the ability to save her... and only you." Lycaon frowned and rubbed the back of his head.

"I'm going to be honest. What I'm about to tell you isn't something easy. It is a tough devastating decision. But... because of balance it is the only one that can be made."

Lucy didn't like where this was going. She could feel like she was about to be given a crushing choice.

"Remember how lycans are one with their wolves? You don't have an extra voice in your head of another existence. This is true for all lycans of the past and Aiden. To die in your wolf form is to die in your human form. That is what you see is happening to the girl in the seal."

"I can't just fix and bring back to life what was taken. But you Lucy are different. You are a fairy princess and the future queen of vampires. And you have the ability to make an

incredible sacrifice for your brother. You can gift his mate... the girl sealed... you can give her your lycan existence. This is something only you can do. In order to give her a life you would have to give up that part of yourself."

But I am my lycan... I don't understand...

"You are a fairy princess now. The moment her existence took hold was the moment you were given this ability. The wolves will need lycan leaders. And the king of the werewolves has the ability to have lycan offspring so we just encouraged it. The moment you became the fairy princess though you opened up a whole other possibility. The chance for two lycans to unite together."

The sound of fighting soon quieted behind her. She turned her head to see Aiden pacing by the ice wall. She felt relieved knowing he was alright. She turned and looked back at the diety. So he was telling her she could essentially give a part of herself to this girl. By doing so it would give her a chance at life and give Aiden a chance to be with his mate. But she would no longer be a lycan... she would no longer be able to shift.

"If you still desired to be a wolf your father can always grant you a werewolf as he had done before."

Lucy was going to be the queen of the vampires. She didn't need a wolf. How will this affect me... with everything?

"Your vampire will take over more. Your vampire strength and pure blood abilities will finally be able to take a hold. They can't now because of your lycan blood. And you will still have your fairy magic. As far as the children you carry they will be born as purebloods just like the vampires need. Even as a lycan that was already all you would have. Vampire children with enhanced abilities. And that won't change... Obviously, the fairy bloodline will also remain." Lycaon pinned an intense gaze on Lucy. "The decision is yours though. Take the time you need because it is irreversible."

Lucy swallowed hard. She would never feel the earth below her paws again... She would never feel the wind rushing through her as she raced through the woods. It wasn't everything but it was part of her. Hell it was her. This was like splitting her soul in half and giving half of it to the other girl.

Her paws trembled slightly but there wasn't a real decision here though. Her brother's fated mate was sealed there. How could she walk away from that? His happiness was important to her. She wasn't sure how she would cope with it... but she could adjust. Her grandfather's beta lost his wolf before and has been great. It took him a while to adjust but he is now okay with everything.

It was a bit different for her since her lycan was her. Would she feel empty? Would it hurt? She turned her head to look at Aiden clawing at the ice desperately. For her

brother... she could sacrifice this. It was his happiness on the line here too. And as long as she had Derek by her side she would be able to face everything.

She took a deep breath. She had to do this for Aiden. She loved him and couldn't condemn him to this type of suffering. He would never be able to move on knowing his mate was sealed here. She firmly looked at Lycaon. So how do I give her a part of me... how do I give her my lycan?

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Lucy felt herself transform back into her human. She looked at her hands and squeezed her fingers together. Was that it? The last time she would ever be in her feral form? "I have another question..." Lucy asked. "What of the girl? Who is she? What about her memories? She will be waking up in a world where everyone she loved is gone."

"She will be able to heal. Having her fated mate will ease her mind. She is the lycan princess of the original kingdom. It is through her and Aiden's line that a descendant will help aid in reclaiming the world. At least that is one of the legacies seen." "Selene again?" Lucy said in annoyance. This was getting ridiculous.

"Unfortunately, a terrifying future will come. And at this time... Elysium will seal shut to protect those inside of it. It will become a refuge for all magical creatures that seek safety. The kingdom will expand and create a parallel world of its own. However, some will choose to stay and fight. And it will be on their shoulders alone what will happen to humanity. Instead of saving themselves, they will choose to stay and battle to protect the humans. And they will become the guardians of the world... We all know of this potential future. And all deities will not be able to get involved in this war. Because doing so would cause a war among the gods. Instead... those on the side of humanity can only do one thing. Try to stack the chess pieces on the board and hope it is enough." "Like Selene did with the demon war?"

"Only larger scale Lucy. This will not be a simple war coming. This is going to be a life-altering time. Think about it... For Elysium to be sealed the threat must be detrimental." Lycaon could see realization hit her then.

"In reality... me helping this girl is more than just being Aiden's mate then. The future also depends on it. Talk about there not really being a choice."

"But there is always a choice Lucy. And there is always a cause and effect from the choices made."

"This isn't a choice for me. I won't see my brother miserable. I love him and his happiness is important to me. I could never be happy if he wasn't happy. So... tell me what I need to do."

The ice barrier fell down back to trickling water. Aiden came to Lucy and put his head into her hand. The barrier prevented him from mind linking but he could still hear the conversation. Don't do it Lucy. Don't. I'll be okay. I won't have you destroying yourself.

Lucy patted her brother on the head and smiled. "I'm the vampire princess now Aiden. I don't need my lycan. But you need your mate. And the Diamond pack needs their alpha and luna... the wolves need their king and queen." She shook her head. "This is what I can do. It is what I can do to help out my old pack. Don't worry... I'll adjust." Her heart hurt as she talked. This was a painful decision albeit a necessary one. It would take time to adjust... but she had time. She was immortal. She would be okay. She had Derek. Thinking of Derek gave her strength. Her love was waiting for her and probably worrying. She looked up at Lycaon who nodded his head towards the encapsulated lady.

Lucy jumped over the trickling water. She noticed the black heap shredded in the corner. It was a monstrous-sized scorpion. She looked back at Aiden quickly analyzing his body for any wounds but he looked fine. With a sigh of relief, she took a step forward but felt Aiden's jaws clamp around her wrist.

No, Lucy! Aiden growled and tugged on her arm.

Lycaon smirked and the next second Lucy felt Aiden's jaws release from her.

Damnit. Lucy don't do it! Please... Lucy please don't...

Lucy watched as her brother seemed to be frozen in place. He loved her enough not to let her sacrifice a part of herself. And she loved him enough to sacrifice it. He was the best brother she could have ever asked for. She smiled at him showing him it was okay before turning back to look at the crystal.

She walked up to it, listening to Aiden's loud growls in protest. She looked into the crystal at the young lady. The woman had light blonde hair, looked to be around their age, and was curled up in a fetal position. She looked scared and lonely. She wasn't sure what she should do but something inside of her told her to touch the crystal.

She breathed in deeply through her nose and gently reached her fingers out to touch the clear solid. She felt her fingers turn icy as the warmth of her lycan flowed into the crystal. The icy feeling spread across her body taking siege inside of her. Her body shivered and trembled as the cold bit at her. Her breath became ragged as ice seized her lungs. She felt like all of her warmth was flowing out of her and into the crystal.

The young woman's body began to illuminate, and the crystal started to slowly drip away. It oozed onto the ground like a gel and disappeared into the stone floor. Lucy felt the crystal shrink away from her hand and the girl landed slowly onto the ground. Lucy felt arms around her, and she curled into the warmth. She was freezing. Her whole body was like ice. She recognized the smoked cedar smell as she rested her head into his

chest. She watched as Aiden came up in his human form his eyes were darting to the woman on the floor and back to her.

"I-I-I'm f-f-f-fine... take care of your m-m-mate." Lucy shivered out.

Aiden lifted the girl into his chest, she was still unconscious. He started crying and looked up at Lucy. "Thank-you Lucy... I can never... for what you sacrificed for me..."

"Shush." Lucy said with shivering blue lips. Sounds of running was heard and Derek and Justice crashed into the room. Derek sprinted to her and robbed her from Aba's arms. She felt his heat embracing her body and calming her heart. And she HEARD his thoughts of worry.

"Oh Lucy..." Derek whimpered out. He knew from their soul bond everything and what Lucy had sacrificed. He looked up to see the steady streams flowing from Aiden's eyes. He nodded to him showing that Lucy was okay. And at this moment she was. Though that could easily change in time. For now, it was more shocking.

Justice reached out and placed his hand on Lucy's cheek. He pushed his energy into her to give her the warmth her body needed. He looked over at Aiden and the unknown girl who stirred every so slightly. Lucy lifted her eyes behind the men to see nothing. Lycaon was gone.

"I'm good now Justice thank you." Lucy said quietly. She didn't feel empty. She felt the disconnection like she did the last few days when her magic was blocked. So, she was already used to the feeling. The difference is that now she could still feel her other powers more prominently. She leaned her face into Derek's chest while looking at her brother's mate.

The woman's eyes opened to reveal pale silver eyes. She looked around in confusion until her eyes met with Aiden's. Then the two of them just stared at one another. And for just looking at the other the moment was incredibly intimate.

"Hey... we have a lot to catch up... I'm Aiden."

"Diana." Her quiet voice whispered out. She glanced around the room and at the other people she didn't recognize. "How am I alive?"

"My sister..." Aiden's voice croaked. "My sister gave a part of herself to you so that you could live."

Justice's eyes were instantly on Lucy as he studied her. What had she given up?

The lady's eyes flashed over to Lucy. She studied Lucy for a moment before she gasped. "I've seen you before... in my dreams." She squirmed slightly and Aiden lowered her gently to her feet. "It's quiet..." She reached her hand up and touched her

chest. "They are all gone..." "I'm afraid you have been in there for quite some time..." Aiden could see her shocked face and that she was distressed.

"What did I do in your dream?" Lucy was curious. Was this a premonition? Or was this something else?

"You told me not to be afraid that you would come for me... and I guess you did." Diana looked into Lucy's green eyes. "But you don't remember sending me those messages?"

Lucy shook her head. "No... I'm sorry I don't."

"It feels like everything just happened. Like no time has passed. And yet..." Diana looked at the clothes everyone was wearing. "It has been a long time. I can't even smell the scent of my pack members anymore."

"I think it has been well over a century..." Aiden watched her silver eyes snap up to his.

"Hope you don't mind younger men..." Justice teased, and a crooked grin landed on his lips.

"Let's leave them alone to talk for a bit..." Lucy said quietly. She walked out with the three guys and back up into the light which was now fading into dusk.

"What did you give up Lucy?" Justice asked focused on her eyes.

Derek squeezed Lucy's arm and looked at Justice and Aba. "She had to pull her lycan from her and give it to Diana."

"How? The lycan is her? That is impossible." Justice growled angrily. Aba just quietly stared at Lucy not saying anything.

"How does it feel?" Aba asked quietly.

"Similar to how it did with the magic block. But I can feel my other powers." Lucy watched as Aba slowly nodded his head. Something unreadable flashed in his eyes as he studied her closely.

"So, this was the thing that only Lucy could do..." Justice growled angrily. "I am tired of these damn deities."

"Justice it's okay. Aiden has his mate now. I'm okay. I have you guys and Derek." She felt him squeeze her body into his. "I feel okay right now. Honest. And I feel relieved that Aiden has found his mate."

Lee materialized in front of them and looked over at Aba. The two seemed to have a quiet conversation as their eyes glazed over. His eyes darkened and he set his jaw tight. He looked back over at Lucy and sighed.

"Always something going on with you..." Lee looked her over with a small frown. No matter how she was acting now this was going to hit her later.

"I guess so..." Lucy said with a faint smile.

"Geez Uncle Levi you could have killed those Shrieks earlier for us. I thought we were goners." Justice said with a snort.

"I was holding off until the last possible second when I saw someone else decided they couldn't wait any longer. That rascal... I need to figure out what to do with Aken too." Lee ran his hand through his hair. "Alright well lets get you guys back... I know your parents are worrying." He looked at Justice and Lucy.

"We can't leave Aiden." Lucy protested.

"You're not. I'll have him and his mate brought back to a room of their own. I think they need some time together..." Lee cleared his throat. "Alright, no more crazy stuff happening. Or I'll be waging my own war against the other deities."

"Uncle Levi... do you also know about the war coming. One where Elysium will be sealed?" Lucy asked and his eyes softened looking at her.

"Yes... but so do you. You've seen it too. In your premonition." He sighed and shook his head. "Don't go adding this to your worries. That fight isn't yours. Your kind will be going to the alternate world Elysium creates."

"But..."

"You'll see when the time comes. It is way too soon in the timeline for this all to make sense Lucy. And still... it is only one future. And the future is always changing." Lee smiled at her.

The future was unpredictable it changed with every choice and decision that was made. While some outcomes were more clear nothing was certain... only probable. And the war that would be coming wouldn't be her fight. The preservation of species would lead her to protect her people. But some would stay... Lee's eyes lifted to Justice. Some would stay to protect humanity. And the future of the world would be in their hands.

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Freya hugged Lucy tight. "That was a very brave and selfless thing you did for your brother."

"He would have done the same thing for me." Lucy leaned back as her father patted her head gently.

"Also... given the situation now with Aiden and him finding his mate I think it is more appropriate for him to return back to the pack. He will need to get Diana acclimated there as well. And since we know they are immune to the potion there shouldn't be a problem." Lucy watched Wyatt nod his head slowly.

"I think you are right. Besides... he will need his privacy with his mate for a while. I'm sure there is a lot for her to adjust to. Like our way of life now." Wyatt stared into his daughter's green eyes. "Do you want to come back too?"

Lucy shook her head and smiled. "My place is with Derek. And I need to also get acquainted with the vampires there." She felt Derek come up behind her and she leaned her back into his chest. His mind was speaking of much more private agendas for the two of them.

Alexis walked in and her eyes met with Lucy.

"It seems your mate came to our rescue again." Lucy said with a faint smile.

"He is really making me frustrated. I swear I am going to punch him when I finally meet with him. The man is infuriating me." Alexis huffed out angrily though there was a smile at the corner of her lips. "I am glad he is taking care of my important people. But he has another thing coming if he thinks I am just going to let him do his thing. I don't care about Erebus. I am not going to let one crazy deity keep me away from my mate."

"He is really crazy Alexis... and dark." Lucy said quietly.

Alexis' face fell and she gave Lucy a sympathetic smile. "I don't want your efforts to be in vain either..."

"Lex you aren't. That is your mate out there. And they tend to push their feelings over ours." Lucy nudged Derek playfully. "If it was me I would be fighting too. This is your life. Call your own shots and track him down. Wear him down. And place your mark on him." Alexis smiled warmly and nodded. "Thank you Lucy, I knew you'd have my back."

"Aba, do you mind if I borrow you for a moment before you head back to the vampire kingdom? I want you to take something to Lucy for me." Freya looked up at the demon who nodded his head. "Thank you."

"You and dad still better stay out of the fighting," Lucy said with a smirk. She was the one who had the one up on them now.

"Jasper and Brian were still looking for the witch but things have been quiet. I think she has gone into hiding." Wyatt sighed and rubbed the back of his head.

The door opened and Justice walked in with his parents, Jin and Jason. "We going back to the vampire kingdom now?"

Lucy nodded her head as Levi walked in with Rhea and Titus.

"We have Aiden and Diana set up at the far end of the castle. Do you want one of us to interrupt..." Titus asked with a chuckle.

"No need. He will be coming to the Diamond pack. Rhea can open him up a portal when he comes up for air." Wyatt rubbed the back of his neck. Having mates was a normal part of life and it reached a very primal part of their beasts. Almost hard to control. He was sure if things were going well between them they wouldn't be waiting long to seal their bond.

"You guys should all plan to attend one of the days during the mating party that will be coming up. You know Titus... I was thinking there should be a rededication ceremony or something? Where we get to feast on our mates publicly again." Cody felt Kelsie elbow him into his side and he grinned widely down at her.

"I'm down with that." Lee said, smirking down at Rhea.

"Haha nice try but no." Kelsie snorted.

"Wow, you guys are embarrassing sometimes..." Raine sighed quietly.

"Micah, you should really think about taking a mate. Just for the ceremony." Justice beamed over at him.

"Yeah, and what if I end up with someone like one of your cousins here? No thanks. Alexis is enough trouble already." Micah chuckled, shaking his head. These women may have scarred him from ever taking a mate. As of now, it wasn't his thing. He took his role very seriously, similar to Tristan. Playing with the ladies was one thing but having a committed relationship was another. But who knows if that would change in the future.

"Oh Micah you are just jealous that none of us ladies want you." Alexis said, sticking her tongue out at him childishly.

"You got me Lex. That's it."

"Well it has been a very interesting couple weeks and a crazy day." Derek watched as Lucy nodded up at him.

"Lucy... if you ever decide that you miss that part of you... I know it isn't the same but... I know Kade didn't want any part of it. He didn't want to take on another wolf and that was his personal choice. I know a lycan and werewolf are different but there are also similarities." Wyatt watched Lucy flash him a wide smile.

"I know where to find you daddy. But... I'm okay. At least right now... I think I'm alright... Okay... I guess this is goodbye for now. See you all soon." Lucy opened up a portal. This would be linked to the last portal that was opened by Aiden. "Where will this open up at?" "Should open up into our room. Aiden opened the portal as soon as we got the pearl piece." Derek looked up at Aba. "See you back at the castle."

"Mom tell sis I said hi next time you talk to her." Justice grinned at his mother before walking into the open gateway.

Derek smiled as they walked into his room. Ryan and Jasper were still out looking for the witch. He would need to regroup and replan things but for now... he couldn't think about what to do next with the witch.

"We need to find my parents and fill them in on all the events." Derek said with a tired sigh. He looked at his bed wistfully. He had a lot more he wanted to do even though he was tired. But he wasn't sure if Lucy was really up to it. She had been through a lot. And maybe that is exactly what I need. Lucy smiled as she intertwined her fingers with his walking down the hallway.

"We need to put a deity proof barrier up or something. Isn't that what the merrow Queen has around her place? Where did she get one?" Justice recalled the last time he was here and how everything went amiss because of that damn Erebus. There had to be a way to prevent that in the future.

"I don't know... I guess we can talk to grandma or Aunt Rhea about it. Maybe one of them would know? I don't think it will be a problem now according to what Aken said."

"Still... if there is a way to put that type of barrier up I am all for it. I am tired of deities and their nonsense." Derek said with a low growl.

"Don't forget it is also a deity who saved us earlier and who saved me." Lucy said with a smirk.

"Yeah and it was deities that put you in both of those situations." Derek scowled and Justice nodded his head in agreement.

"I think it is worth looking into for sure." Justice wasn't going to bank on Erebus not being vengeful and knowing he was going to die coming in to kill Lucy first. It would be best if they could at least create a safe area.

"And then what guys? I never leave the safety of the bubble you put me in? That isn't happening. What does it matter if I am safe in the castle or castle grounds? But as soon as I leave I would be exposed again. And you are not keeping me locked up. It isn't happening." Lucy looked at the two men. "I know what has happened lately... well it has taken a toll on all of us. But for the most part, we know this isn't the normal."

Derek looked up to see his parents walking towards them.

"Oh Lucy, we are so glad you are back." Willa said, wrapping her arms around her.

"Thank you. I'm all healed up finally."

"That must have been quite an ordeal. Derek has filled us in about Rogio getting involved. You should be safe now. He has always looked over our family well when he was awake." Alaric looked over at Derek. "It's good to have you back son." "Thank you. We had another interesting experience today as well."

"Well come walk and talk with me son."

Derek sighed. He really didn't want to have a lengthy conversation right now. But his father deserved to know about all the recent events as well. "Mira."

"Sire." The pale girl materialized in a kneeling position.

"Please escort Lucy back to the room and stay with her until I return. I'm sure she wishes to take a proper shower and relax after the day we have had." Derek could see Lucy protesting until the moment he mentioned shower. He smiled reading her adorable thoughts on how wonderful a real shower would feel.

"I'll stay with Lucy too, until you get back." Justice felt extra anxious and protective after what happened last time.

Lucy watched as Derek reluctantly walked one way with his parents while she went the other.

"Lucy I am so happy you are back with us." Mira said as she guided Lucy into the bedroom.

"Thank you. It will be nice to take some time to acquaint myself with this place as my home." Lucy looked up to Justice who nodded his head. This was Justice's home now too and he also needed to get familiar and comfortable with the place. "Well if you two don't mind I'll be getting a much-appreciated shower. No more sponge baths for me." Lucy cheered.

"Well unless it's part of your foreplay right?" Justice chuckled and Lucy tossed a pillow at him from the couch.

"Do you wish for me to accompany you in the bathroom Lucy?" Mira asked.

"No, thank you. I think I am perfectly safe getting a shower." Lucy giggled at the banshee's protectiveness. But she guessed she had more reason to be on edge after what happened. A member of the royal family had been taken from under her nose. Something the royal guard dog was not used to. It had never happened before.

Lucy enjoyed a long hot shower thoroughly cleansing herself before she dried off and put on fresh clean clothes. She walked out into the room to see Aba was back sitting with Justice and Mira. When he saw her he immediately stood up holding a bag in his hands. "What is that?" Lucy asked with a curious smile.

"This is what your mother asked me to bring to you. She said you would know what it is and why..." Aba said, handing the black leather bag to Lucy.

Lucy smiled and took the bag over to the table. She sat it down and opened it up to see what her mother had sent her. She looked at the contents in the bag. Silently she stared at the bag. Hot tears began to stream down her face and she clutched the bag tightly bringing it to her chest. She closed her eyes tight and began quietly sobbing. Everything was hitting at that moment. And she was being crushed with another heavy blow.

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Aba vanished from the room instantly and Justice walked up to Lucy's side. He knew Aba was going for Derek. He watched as Lucy lowered the bag back down on the table and sifted her hands in the contents. Tears streamed down her face. Justice looked into the bag and pursed his lips together. He placed his hand on Lucy's back and rubbed it gently. "It's okay Lucy. You are allowed to grieve for what you lost."

Lucy turned into Justice and began crying. Her soft sobs and hiccups muffled into his shirt. What her mother had sent her wasn't supposed to make her feel sad but it was a message telling her she was still strong. It was a huntress outfit, with daggers, silver stakes, throwing knives and black combat boots. But what it made Lucy realize was the part of her that she sacrificed. She had always trained with the mixture of her skills but now it came down to the skills her mother taught her. She had witch and fairy magic too but when it came to physical combat she could no longer fight as a lycan. It would all come down to her hand to hand combat training.

The past events just all hit her. The a*****n, her giving up a part of herself, her lips and body being touched by someone other than Derek. And it hurt. Like being crashed into a wall. She thought she was okay... with everything. But her mental wall had been hit hard and it was all finally sinking in.

"Okay everyone I'll handle everything from here."

Lucy felt her body being spun around as she was wrapped tightly into Derek's chest. The sound of the others leaving was heard, followed by the door shutting.

"Oh, Lucy." Derek's voice was soft and soothing. He rubbed her back gently and breathed in slowly as he felt her emotions hitting against him. Her pain was his pain. "I'm sorry... I don't know why I'm so emotional over all of this."

"Baby you've been through a lot. And you are trying to be strong through it all. Lean on me, okay? Let it out. Let me feel it too. Don't close it off inside of you as you did before." He kissed the top of her head as his fingers continued to trace over her back gently. Lucy wept into his chest. Her quiet sobs filled the room while Derek continued to hold her and soothe her with his voice. She could feel him comforting her both on the outside and inside with his positive thoughts and emotions. He was there for her and sympathized with her. He was also hurting for her too. She gripped her fingers into his chest, leaning her forehead into him. It was so nice to have a soul mate. She didn't need to explain anything to him. He just knew. And he knew exactly what she needed. She loved him, she missed him... and she was desiring him. "Lucy, baby let's wait."

"No." Lucy looked up at his face with her damp eyes and smiled. She wrapped her arms around his neck bringing him down to her and crashed her lips into his. Greedily and desperately. She needed him to make her body his. To erase all the touches with his own. And she simply just needed to feel connected to him like this. It had been weeks after they had newly mated. Far too long. They both needed this.

She thrust her tongue into his mouth and listened as he growled in approval. She danced with his tongue, sucking on it gently and nipping at his bottom lip. She felt him lift her body up and she wrapped her legs around him. Her hands tangled in his hair as the kiss became more frantic and urgent. She could feel his emotions and knew exactly where his thoughts were. And he was still worried about continuing on with this in the back of his mind.

She forced her mouth away from his and continued to hold his hair in her hands. "Derek. I need you. That is what needs to be healed right now. I'm not blocking anything from you. You can feel my emotions." She nudged her nose into his cheek and peppered him with light kisses working her way down to his neck. She licked over the mark on his neck and teased it with her teeth. Biting at it and remembering the taste of his blood.

When she had marked him it was as both her vampire and lycan self. So establishing the mark wasn't necessary. But she wanted to taste him again. The memories of the party came into her mind and she couldn't contain her want. She sank her teeth into his neck and he moaned out in pleasure. Liquid desire and want filled her up as her body heated up needing more.

"Mmmm, Lucy." Derek moaned with a slight growl and collapsed on top of her on his bed. A wave of pleasure rippled through him as she removed her fangs from him. He

reached out and quickly tore her clothing off of her before discarding his own clothes carelessly. It was now his turn. He also desired to taste his mate. A primal growl sounded from his throat as he extended his fangs down into her neck. His hand wandered over her warm flesh below him as he drank the ecstasy from her. She rolled her hips into him and across his arousal. He lifted up slowly, licking her neck carefully for any escaped droplet. Before crashing his lips into hers frantically moving against her. He slowly slid his hand down and he cupped one of her mounds.

As he played with her body he moved from her lips and began claiming every inch of her as his own. Trailing his tongue over her sensitive skin, nipping and playing with her body while his hand continued to tease her buds heightening her senses. She was going crazy with need as he played and toyed with her body. She felt his hot breath and soft lips creep up her inner thigh and gently kiss her center that was craving him.

"Derek..." She whimpered out. She needed him now and she knew he knew it, he knew exactly what she needed and was feeling. His lips trailed up her stomach and he took a moment to take one of her buds into his mouth. She arched her chest into him and gasped from his hot mouth. His tongue flicked over her and she reached down gripping into his hair, pulling him up to her.

His lips crashed into hers as she felt him gently knee her legs apart for him. They were both more than ready for this. She felt the head of his arousal near her entrance and with a deep thrust he was filling her up. They began dancing the dance of passion meeting each other thrust for thrust. The sound of their heavy panting and moaning filled the air as they both reached their highs together.

"Gods Lucy..." Derek collapsed into her chest. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead. "I missed you so much baby." He said leaving light kisses on her chest.

"Mmmm me too." Lucy smiled in contentment as she wrapped her arms around his head running her fingers through his hair.

And for a moment they just stayed like that. Their two bodies against each other catching their breaths, feeling each other's chests rising and falling and listening to the sound of the hearts beating. This was their moment. This was about two separate bodies that were one existence. They were soaking in one another and their passionate moment.

"You know my sweet Luce Luce..."

Lucy's lips tugged upwards as his thoughts raced into her head.

"I have a filled refrigerator in here. Plenty of drinks and we can live on the contents of the food in there for a couple of days..." Derek lifted his head up and grinned at her mischievously. "And I really want to taste you again..."

Lucy giggled as she felt his desire rising already. "If you think you have the stamina to keep up with me..." She bit her lip coquettishly and felt his body lift upwards slightly.

"Let's see how long we can last before exhaustion kicks in... you up for the challenge?" Derek smirked. "After all... that only took the edge off..."

She watched as his eyes darkened with desire as he began to lay siege upon her body again... and again... and again. Throughout the day and night, they continued to reach for each other, satisfying their desires completely. Taking a small break for fluids and one for a shower that ended up not just being a shower. They stayed locked up together for days absorbing every moment they could.

Derek helped her get dressed, gently kissing her bare shoulder before covering it with clothing... the first time they had worn clothes in days. He continued to mentally praise her body over and over.

"Will you stop it?" Lucy giggled out swatting at him.

He grabbed her hand and pulled her into his chest. "Never. I'll never stop praising my perfect little mate." He kissed the tip of her nose. "Alas... the small remnants of nonperishable food is gone and we can't live off of each other."

"I want a whole stack of pancakes!" Lucy smiled and thought of her brother. He always wanted her to make pancakes. She wondered how things were going with him and his new mate.

"We will visit them soon."

"I know we will. I plan on stopping there on the-"

"No-"

"I'm not asking... On the way to find Beryl." Lucy was going witch hunting very soon. Enough was enough. And she knew Derek planned to go back as well and she was going with him. Lycan's weren't affected and even if they were she wasn't one now. She was a dhampir like her mother except she had strong fairy magic. "I can see you looking for some sort of loophole around this. There isn't one. I won't ever be parted from your side again. And I am not staying in the dragon kingdom waiting around for you. Besides, Justice needs to see some action too so he can test out his guardian skills."

"You're right my little mate. We aren't good apart and I can't be worrying about you the whole time. We will capture this witch together." Derek smiled and leaned his forehead into hers. He felt dumb that for a second he planned to leave her at the dragon kingdom. Of course, that wouldn't work with Lucy. Not after everything. And especially now knowing she isn't in danger from the potion.

"But that isn't right now... not today. Today is a relaxing day." Derek said and Lucy giggled.

"What were the days before?" Lucy giggled.

"Oh, those are fun days but not relaxing. It takes work pleasing a woman like you. Very satisfying work." Derek grinned and tugged her into his side, walking her out the door. "Today we are going to show the kingdom that their princess is safe." "After food though?" Lucy listened to his chuckle.

"Yes. Food is first on the agenda. Mira." Derek called out.

"Sire."

"Please ask the kitchen staff to prepare a breakfast feast. The princess and I are famished."

"My lord." Mira bowed her head with a faint smile and vanished.

"I hope Justice has managed to keep himself busy!" Lucy looked around wondering where he was.

"I'm sure he is just fine." Derek winked down at Lucy. "He's your guardian sweetheart. You're not his." She had a bad habit of trying to look after and take care of everyone. But she was the one who was the most precious. She was his most precious and perfect little mate.

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Derek and Lucy were finishing their breakfast when Justice strolled in the room with Aba.

"Luce Luce, Derek! Perfect. Just the people we needed to see. We weren't sure if you were ever going to emerge." Justice chuckled, taking a few pancakes onto his plate. "The thing is Aba and I have been talking and we both think you need to recall the soldiers. Maybe leave the elite team there secretly but call everyone else back."

"If the witch has gone into hiding we need to make her think it is okay to come out of her rabbit hole." Aba added. This was something he and Justice had been going over extensively. The witch was not going to make her appearance if she thought she was being watched.

Derek nodded his head slowly as he met with Lucy's eyes. A smile spread over his lips. "Yes, Lucy. This means we can bring Jasper home. I'll have to leave Ryan though.

But... you've made an interesting observation. We can search for her for years and not find her at this rate. And the elite soldiers are very good at not being seen."

"I like this idea. Besides, we still need to think about how we want to handle the witch. I mean we can't just lock her up forever, right? Isn't that risky? And we can't kill her because then Erebus will get her soul." Lucy frowned and looked up at Aba. "Is there a way to break that contract?"

"A soul contract? It would have to be by Erebus himself." Aba frowned and rubbed the back of his neck. "But... well... it's cruel... but in this witch's case she deserves it... but we can drain her of her magic. She would be just like a regular human." Lucy turned and looked at Justice while hearing Derek's thoughts. Both men were thinking this was a good idea.

"Okay... let's say we do this... can she just have it reversed somehow?" Lucy wasn't sure if this would just be creating a more vindictive enemy in the future.

"No, the effects can't be reversed. It is another type of blood potion. It would make magic unable to exist in her body permanently. But this wouldn't stop her from trying to reach out to demons again. But since she knows her soul will be devoured without her magic she probably wouldn't try anything... or... I take that back. She is so desperate for revenge she wouldn't probably do anything..." Aba furrowed his brows as he thought carefully. "We could always curse her to a place. Make it so that she can never leave her island. Of course, that is a bit dark for a fairy princess but it isn't for me." He chuckled with a shrug.

"Aba... can you relay these orders to Ryan and Jasper. Tell Jasper to escort the soldiers back and inform Ryan of our plan for him to stay with the elite soldiers. At any sign of the witch, they may capture her if they have an opening." Derek watched Aba bow slightly and vanish. "We will think more about the witch. But I am thinking draining her of her magic wouldn't be a bad thing. Of course, we should probably discuss this stuff with your family."

"We can send them a messenger fairy." Lucy said with a smile and Derek's eyes lit up.

"I can see them now too, right? I haven't seen one of the invisible fairy's yet." Derek listened as Lucy giggled.

"Well with the guardians around they keep the other fairy's away with their aura. The brownies and such are considered pests. Which they can be but they are adorable." Lucy listened as Justice growled in annoyance. "Oh Justice, push that aura down some." "I don't want brownies going through my stuff. It's worse than mice. What if they poop in there or something." Justice pouted with his brows furrowed.

Lucy giggled and shook her head. "Quit acting like a child. At least bring it down enough so the messenger fairies don't have a hard time. What if someone tries to send me a

message? So just enough for them but not enough for the sprites and brownies..." "Deal!" Justice beamed happily. He had never been a fan of the little pests. The only ones he could tolerate were the fae dragons because he thought they were neat looking.

"Okay well let's go and take a walk around and greet the people." Derek said, extending his hand out to Lucy.

She nodded and smiled up at him. They needed to reassure the vampires that everything was fine and that their princess was back safely.

It only took a few days for Jasper to return with the army. Lucy's family wanted to take a more wait and see approach with the witch. They wanted to talk with her before they decided her fate. They were all in agreement though that her magic would be removed. But after that they weren't sure.

Lucy was adjusting to her life here at the vampire kingdom. And she was now out on a stroll among the little vampire town. She was wearing a cloak over her head that blocked her scent so she could walk around without being detected. This way she could spectate the other villages without them being aware of her presence. Mira, Aba, and Justice were all with her. Mira though stayed out of sight, while Justice also wore a similar cloak. Derek and Jasper were not far; they were just on the other side tending to the vampire soldiers.

Today Lucy had decided she was going to meet with Stella. This was Sabrina's cousin and she thought it would be nice to be on good terms with her. Especially since Sabrina would be joining them in the castle as one of the elite soldiers. She didn't want there to be awkwardness between them. She didn't hold any ill feelings towards her over what she did.

She noticed Stella sitting on a bench on the outside of the town. She was sitting alone and honestly... she looked horrible. She turned and motioned for Justice and Aba to stay back. She didn't want them startling the young lady making her think she was in trouble. "Stella?" Lucy watched as the girl jerked her head up and immediately lowered herself in respect to Lucy. "That's not necessary Stella. I was thinking maybe we could talk and be friends?"

"Y-y-ou... wish to be my friend?" Stella whispered out quietly.

Lucy smiled at her kindly. "Yes."

"Don't you hate me?"

"No, I don't hate you. I'm sorry you felt like you couldn't just be honest and needed to create a fake relationship... but I am not upset with you over it. The only way I would be

truly angry is if you were really after what is mine." Lucy smiled sheepishly with a half shrug. "Where are all your friends at?"

"Friends..." Stella frowned. "After what happened... no one will talk to me anymore. I guess they weren't really my friends. And no one wants to be seen with the woman who angered the princess."

Lucy frowned. "Well, those don't sound like very good friends. You know Stella... if you are hanging around people that make you feel like you have to lie to belong then those are not real friends."

"Yeah... I guess so." Stella whispered out quietly. She lifted her eyes up at Lucy and her bottom lip quivered. "I am so sorry. I didn't mean any harm. I just didn't want to be pressured into sleeping with others... I'm sorry."

"It is all water under the bridge. Let us move past this okay? I want us to get along and be friends."

"I would like that very much." Stella smiled up at her.

"Good. From now on just call me Lucy and no more bowing and such." Lucy giggled and winked down at her. She wasn't sure what happened but suddenly the world blurred together and everything seemed to spin. As if she was in a funhouse the land swirled together as a wave of exhaustion hit her body.

She felt Aba's arms around her steadying her as Justice ran up from the distance.

"Lucy? Are you alright?" Justice asked, taking her face in his hands. Her body started swaying unnaturally again and Aba pulled her into his body to stabilize her.

The dizziness continued to beat against her and she had to lean her body into Aba's. She was losing the strength to stand on her own.

"Justice, go and get Derek. I'm taking Lucy inside." Aba said, teleporting Lucy back into her bedroom. "Are you alright?"

Lucy felt like the world was swirling around her and her eyelids were becoming heavy. It was like a wave of exhaustion seized her body. She couldn't even form coherent thoughts as her mind started shutting down on her. Her vision began to tunnel and she blinked hard trying to restore her sight.

"Lucy?" Aba eased her body onto the couch and knelt by her side. "What are you feeling? Did something happen? Did she say something?"

"Tired..." Lucy whispered out as she fought to keep her eyes open.

Aba nodded his head slowly and sat his hand on her forehead. "Yes... I can see the little light has become stronger."

Little light? Lucy flickered her eyes up to Aba who had a faint smile resting on his face. "It was just a tiny light that day of the ball. Which is why I wouldn't let Derek give you the vervain. But your light has grown and is sucking the energy of yours up."

"Oh my goodness... because I am the fairy princess now... so... How is that all going to work? Oh my gosh?! And why didn't you tell me?!" She dropped her hands to her stomach with a new surge flowing through her of excitement. It was able to hold the fatigue at bay. "Ha Ha sorry. I was curious how long it would take for you to notice... honestly, it is much quicker than I imagined... As far as the princess thing... perhaps things have been forever changed now. Maybe there will always be another fairy princess. Another type of self- preservation, perhaps? You'll have to ask your grandmother, but I imagine the burden will still be on Alexis and her child. But if Alexis never has an heir..." Aba watched as Lucy closed her eyes.

"So I am going to be trapped next to Derek's side just like all the other fairy princesses were with their mate before?" Lucy watched as light flashed in Aba's eyes.

"Well, the difference with you is you have a servant. I can feed you my energy as a minor supplement. Which is why you are even still awake right now."

"Oh, I thought it was from my excitement." Lucy chuckled. "Thank you."

"Do you want me to put a mental block up before your prince arrives? Or do you just want me to sneak out of here and stop the others from entering? I'm sure he is going to be thrilled. This is also huge news for the vampires to have a new heir already brewing inside of you."

"Oh goodness. But this will be a daughter promised to the fairy kingdom... Until Alexis at least has her daughter..."

Aba cleared his throat and stood up. "Well, I guess you and Derek will just have to have more children. I think you two can work out those details." He chuckled and ran his hand through his hair.

"Don't worry about blocking anything. I want him to know. Besides, he will be in a massive panic. It will be easier if he can just read my thoughts."

"I think that is the best move in this situation. I'll just be waiting right outside then. He will be here in a few seconds." Aba chuckled as he heard the frantic running sounds in the castle. Just as he opened the door Derek appeared along with Jasper and Justice. "Go on in Derek... you two I need to speak with." He allowed just enough room for Derek to squeeze through before shutting the others out. He would explain to them so they didn't worry. But this should be a private moment for the couple.

Derek rushed to Lucy blindly and froze right in front of her. He dropped to his knees as his eyes began to water up. He inched closer and placed his hand on her belly and leaned his forehead into hers. This moment was everything. So much had happened in such a short amount of time. This happened sooner than he expected but he couldn't help the joy he felt. And their happiness together bonded them more. This was what they created from their love. The little energy growing inside of Lucy.

"I never think I can love you more and yet you continue to make me burst for you. I have never been this full inside in my life." Derek kissed her forehead. "I love you my little mate..." He rubbed her stomach gently and moved his head down to kiss her stomach. "And you too, my little love."

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The kingdom had a big celebration in honor of the future heir to the vampire kingdom. Wyatt and Freya along with Lilly stopped by to visit a couple of days ago too. She found out that Aiden and Diana are doing okay. Diana is trying to adjust to her life here and they have told the pack about the two of them being lycans. The Diamond pack was very excited about their future leaders being lycans and what it would mean for the packs.

Lilly was able to confirm that Alexis' child would be the first heir to the fairy kingdom. But it seemed that things have changed in that as of now there will continue to be two fairy princesses. Maybe had Alexis gotten pregnant first that would have changed. So there is a chance that if Alexis' daughter conceives first then things will go back to there only being one princess at a time. Who knows since fairy magic has a will of its own.

Her grandmother told her that she will need to come with Derek to pick out a future guardian for their daughter. There was no doubt about it that the first child would be a girl. Though Derek wasn't so certain and planned to prepare for either gender. Derek was being adorable with how he treated Lucy. He was always rubbing and kissing her stomach. He would have conversations with his little love and tell them how important they were to him already. He would also brag to Lucy at times about how good he actually was at making babies since it happened from their first time together. Though she had to tease him that it was the heat that played the main factor in it.

For the most part things have been fairly quiet. The elite soldiers were still silently waiting for the witch to emerge. And Lucy had about a two to three-hour time window before she needed a recharge from Derek or Aba. Though usually Derek never left her side except when she demanded girl time.

That was the other thing. Stella and Lucy had been getting along well together. Stella was actually a very sweet girl who wasn't malicious at all. She was a bit weak and

allowed herself to be bullied. Because she wasn't strong enough to stand up for herself she made up a fake boyfriend.

Overall life was good right now. No, it was perfect. Willa and Alaric were over the moon excited and when her parents were visiting, they were deciding on grandparent names. Willa took Mimi and Alaric Papaw while Wyatt and Freya elected just to be grandpa and grandma.

Derek had been overly doting and Lucy had needed to take a couple of days each week for her 'de-smother' time. That's what was happening right now. She was walking down the hall with Stella. They were going to take a quiet stroll through the garden. While Derek, Aba, Jasper, and Justice were holding a sportsman sparring competition. The three of them would be attacking Justice and testing his guardian skills. Just a muscle-flexing competition if you asked Lucy but whatever got the smothering men out of her hair. Though Justice never used his sword while sparring with him. I guess he felt like he didn't need it or he was afraid to accidentally hurt them.

Lucy and Stella entered just out of the palace when they saw Mira holding a guard by his throat. Her eyes were the color of a storm and this tiny fragile looking girl had this man lifted up with one hand.

"Tell me who!?!!" Mira growled lowly.

"It's everyone... everyone is saying it. Please... I didn't mean anything by it." The guard stuttered through a strangled breath.

"Mira." Lucy said, shocked. "Put him down." She walked up to the banshee who immediately obeyed. "What seems to be the problem?"

The guard fell to the ground and bowed sprawled across his stomach. "Forgive me princess. Please. I promise I didn't mean anything by it. I was just asking a question. I didn't know."

"Didn't know what?" Lucy asked as Stella came closer to Lucy's side.

"He is talking about the rumors...." Stella whispered out quietly looking down at the man.

"What rumors?" She looked at Stella confused. Stella looked away and wouldn't make eye contact with her.

"You don't need to know. They are just vicious rumors." Stella whispered quietly.

Lucy looked up to Mira who would give her the answers she wanted. "Mira, what is being said?"

Mira's eyes softened and sadness flickered in her eyes. "They are saying... they are saying that the child you are carrying is not that of the prince's. That you are carrying the deity's child in your womb. He forced himself on you and that now they are saying you are bearing a false heir to the throne."

"But that isn't true. Erebus never touched me like that." Lucy watched as the soldier lifted his head, his eyes looking relieved.

"Thank goodness. So you really are carrying the prince's heir."

Lucy was shocked. It was clear by his eyes just how much he believed it. This would be how much they all believed it. It was like being blindsided. She was obviously happy. And this... this wasn't something that was easily fixed. Sure, Derek could make an announcement. The king and queen could make a decree. But all the vampires would be sympathizing with the royal family over this tragedy. They wouldn't believe in the child until they were born and could smell the pureblood themselves. "Should I kill him?" Mira asked coldly.

"You'd have to kill the whole kingdom." The soldier said horrified.

Mira shrugged. "We can build again. And build again with more loyal vampires."

"Leave him Mira. He is only repeating what has been spread around. Though you should have told me Stella." Lucy looked at her sadly.

"How could I tell you something like that?" She shook her head sadly. "You don't need to think about such things."

"Mira... see if you can find the roots to this rumor. It started somewhere." Lucy watched as Mira nodded her head.

"Do I kill them?" Mira asked with a small smile reaching her lips.

"No, Mira. You bring them to the palace."

Mira lowered her head and bowed. And instantly she vanished. Lucy did not doubt that Mira would be able to locate the source of the rumors. Lucy looked at the soldier and sighed. "You are free to be on your way." The soldier stood and bowed. He apologized once more before he left.

"Lucy, are you okay?" Stella asked with worry.

Was she okay? It was more to it than that. It wasn't just the gossip in itself. The truth is this rumor brought back the pain she had forgotten. It brought back the memories of the weeks she was kidnapped and abused. She remembered the feeling of helplessness and the pain she felt. The desperation that plagued her. It all flooded inside of her once

again. It was haunting her all over. Then to top it all off they were calling her child that was created with love a false heir.

Her own pack would never have doubted her. She could go to them right now and they would welcome her and the child she carried. She could go to the dragon kingdom... hell in any of the four dragon kingdoms and she would be welcomed and treasured. And obviously, she would be precious in Elysium. But for this malicious rumor to be started and spread as it did... it meant there was still a long way for her to go as far as being accepted. At a time when this place started feeling like home... she was now back to feeling like a stranger. And not just a stranger, but an unwanted one. Someone who they thought would be ruining their vampire legacy by the child she carried.

Meryl thought Freya was an abomination and even now her granddaughter hunted the bloodline down. All because they were an existence that was unwanted by them. The purest of witches couldn't stand for the contaminated bloodline. How many vampires actually felt this way? It was clear by these rumors that there were many who did not approve of her. Regardless of the blood bond... she wasn't wanted.

Derek told her she would be their precious princess. She would be treasured by the vampires. No. She was treasured by the royal family but not the vampires. To the vampires, she was still an outsider. And though she was speculating she imagined they didn't deem her worthy of being mated to their prince. Anyone who loved their princess wouldn't make up such a nasty rumor. And as her mind wandered she began to really miss her pack... her home.

Lucy cleared her throat and gave Stella a sad smile with half a shrug. "I'm a little sad... and the rumor leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. I'm sorry I really don't feel up to taking that walk anymore. Maybe next time?"

"Of course. Hey, don't let it get to you. The truth will come out when your baby is born. Then they will all feel horrible for their bad judgment." Stella watched as Lucy nodded to her with the same sad smile.

"I know. Thanks Stella." Lucy walked Stella back in through the castle and saw her to the exit. She waved goodbye to her friend and closed her eyes inhaling slowly in long deep breaths. This was not one of those situations where you wanted to hear everything would be alright... eventually. This is one of those times she wanted to go out and show these vampires their princess. She wished she could unleash her hurt and anger and smash them into submission.

Her mother Freya, spent most of her life in solitude until she met her father. She was unwanted by the Briar coven but she was not part of that witch's group. But if there was someone who knew how it felt to be unwanted it was her grandmother, Lilly. Lilly came from a pack where she was unwanted because she wasn't a pure werewolf. That has long changed now, but Lilly grew up unwanted by her own pack. While Lucy had always been wanted up until now. She was a tri princess. Princess to the wolves, vampires,

and fairies. Two of them would gladly welcome her... she was a rare gem in their eyes. Because of this she felt even more slighted by the vampires. Why were they so much better than the other two species?

Derek would be welcomed by the fairies and the werewolves if they lived there. Malicious rumors would never be spread about him. She knew her pack and trusted them. If she would have been the one to bring Derek to the Diamond pack and he was taking his place by her side there... Yes, she knew without a doubt nothing like this would happen if it was reversed. Were there some wolves that would be against it? Yes, like Kyle and she was sure there would be select wolves but not like what she was experiencing here. And they were doing it maliciously behind her back and talking about her in secret. They were not even giving her a chance to refute it. To them, this is the situation and there is no changing their mind.

She reached down and touched her stomach lightly rubbing it. She felt sad for her baby even being thought about as an illegitimate heir. She knew Derek was going to be livid. He would more than likely plan to come down hard on his people. And whoever started the rumor... she wasn't sure what would happen. If it was a higher-ranked noble they would probably be exiled, but a lower-ranked member might be killed. Then what would happen? The people would view this as an act of the prince protecting his mate and they would just be more cautious about their thoughts in the future. But this wouldn't change anything. They would still continue to think and feel like they do now.

She could admit it. She was angry. And because of this, she was lumping all the vampires together. Because one person started a rumor that spread around she assumed they all didn't like her. It could be true and it might not. But that soldier from earlier seemed to really believe the rumor. But he didn't look at her with contempt. If anything he looked relieved for her when she said it wasn't true. Almost as if there was pity. She supposed this could be true too. Maybe some did pity her, thinking the deity forced himself on her. But one thing logically hit her... for this to be so well believed there was no way the rumor came from someone low ranking. This must have come from a prominent family. Only someone with a lot of clout and connection to the royal family could have their words believed this much.

She rolled her eyes at herself for the drama she just created. Luckily her mother taught her to keep thinking until she reached a logical conclusion. The logical conclusion was that someone with connections to the family spread these rumors which is why they spread with so much belief.

Had someone close to her family said something about them it would spread through the pack as truth too. This wouldn't be a malicious act but would show their faith and trust in this person. If Sam said it, it would be as if her father said it. The pack trusted him that much. Who was like this in the vampire kingdom? There is Jester and Jasper... but she trusted them and they had a great relationship with her family. It wasn't them.

She really didn't know the prominent members that well to know who had the most clout. She walked back down the long corridor slowly. Mira would find out... she wouldn't have to worry about figuring it out and she was starting to feel tired. She walked back into her room and laid on the couch. She embarked on an emotional ride there that took her for some mental loops but luckily she arrived at the most logical conclusion. At least it was the conclusion she needed to believe in. Because if she felt that the vampires really didn't want her here...

She grabbed a blanket off the back of the couch and pulled it up over her body. She couldn't think like that. Derek trusted his people too and he said she would be treasured there. There was someone who didn't want her here... someone had a problem with her. The door to the room opened and Derek walked in, followed by Jasper, Justice and Aba. They were laughing and jabbing at each other. The moment Derek's eyes fell on Lucy his face fell. His lips pursed tight and his knuckles turned white with the fist he was making. He walked up to Lucy and knelt next to the couch wrapping his arms around her. He pressed his head into her neck and squeezed his eyes shut.

"I'm so sorry, Lucy." Derek whispered. His mate had been hurt. She had been mentally suffering. How dare his people spread such a rumor about HIS child and HIS mate. He kissed her neck gently and leaned up looking over to Jasper. His black orbs were full of rage. His fangs were slightly elongated as he snarled. His whole body was trembling now in a very dark fury. There was no quelling his wrath... someone was going to die for this.

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Jasper came a couple of steps closer looking between Lucy and Derek. "What happened?" He could see Derek's hands trembling in anger. It was one of the rare moments calm and collected Derek had looked like this. He saw him like this when Lucy had been taken so he knew this was serious. Lucy reached up and intertwined her fingers with Derek. "Let's take a moment here and be calm okay. Um okay. I worked it out in my head... I mean I was upset and still am but-"

"But nothing Lucy!" Derek growled angrily, raising his voice at a level she had never heard before. She

his emotions were not directed at her and it was just the result of his frustration.

feel his anger but also his hurt... he was also in pain because of the rumors. She watched as his eyes softened towards her immediately. She could feel how

"I'm sorry Lucy. I'm not yelling at you. I would never... I am losing my temper but in no way is it directed to you. I didn't mean to raise my voice there. I'm..."

Lucy reached forward and cupped his face in her hands. "Derek. I can read your thoughts and emotions. What are you stumbling over an apology for." She giggled and pecked his lips. "Thank the gods for the soul mate bond." Derek sighed out, reining his emotions in. He wouldn't upset his pregnant mate. He would approach this calmly and rationally. He looked up at Aba, Justice and Jasper. "Mira is out searching for the culprit now. But apparently, someone has started a malicious rumor that they are believing the rumor. Which means..."

"Which means it must come from someone close to your family." Aba said darkly, his eyes turning black now why I didn't let you give her the vervain."

Derek nodded his head. "Thank you Aba. But that isn't necessary. We will find the culprit and peel his skin." Jasper squeezed his hand into a fist. "Damn it, who the hell would try something like this? They know

Derek set his jaw, it made him sick to even have to say it. "They are saying that the child Lucy is carrying isn't mine. That it belongs to that bastard Erebus. And

I can swear an oath in front of your people that I knew Lucy was pregnant before she was taken. As her servant, I felt the energy inside of her. Which you already

know about. I will cut off his body publicly and defang him. We will proceed to pour vervain over his exposed skin giving him a slow and torturous death." Justice's face was so important to Lucy. How could our people spread something like this around?"

"I don't think they were being malicious but it was out of pity... maybe even worry about their future." Lucy watched as Justice shook his head angrily. "This wouldn't happen back at the pack." Justice growled out and folded his arms over his chest.

"What if Sam or Adam had told the pack something? The pack would believe them and take their word for it right? This is probably a similar situation here. And who knows how long this vampire had been around. They are immortal after all. They could have a lot of clout." Lucy could feel Derek's pride brimming at the top of her head. She looked at him and gave him a reassuring smile.

"I won't allow it, Justice. Just as your father wouldn't either. No one will mistreat Lucy. And I will make a very bold public statement making an example out of whoever did it. Regardless of who they are." Derek reached out to Lucy and pulled her into his chest. "I am going to hold a public meeting. I am addressing this issue immediately. And once the culprit is found. Mira should be able to track down the source. That is what her goal is."

"Should I assist her?" Aba said with dark orbs filled with anger.

"No... but I want you making your way through all those on the castle ground. Please make sure you dispel this rumor among all who are inside of the castle. Don't kill

anyone... but get through to them." Derek said darkly as Aba quickly nodded and vanished. He wouldn't tolerate rumors in his kingdom let alone his own castle. This was their safe space. And the rumor was insulting.

Derek reached down and placed his hand over Lucy's stomach. His unborn child had been insulted too. This was something he couldn't take lightly. His little love was already someone he was incredibly protective of.

"Derek... calm down." Lucy smiled up at him. His anger was storming and raging in energy spikes. But it was more than that. His fairy magic began spiking a red aura that flickered around him. It was a curious energy and she wanted to touch it so she could know it better. But it seemed hot. There was a heat that radiated off of it. She had never seen a fairy energy like this and wondered if it had something to do with mixing with his pure vampire blood?

Derek looked down at his body trying to see whatever Lucy was seeing. But he didn't have the gift to see the energy.

"That looks like some pretty wicked stuff there." Justice said as he walked closer. As a guardian, he could see it. And since Derek was Lucy's prince he was also his guardian too.

"It's different, isn't it Justice?" Lucy said, looking for traces of the energy that disappeared.

"Very different. And angry." Justice chuckled and slapped Derek on the back. "Thank you though. I'm glad I am not the only one livid. It helps calm me down seeing how angry you are." Justice chuckled.

Jasper stood there quietly deep in thought. In his head, he was going through everyone that could have a problem with Lucy. The best candidates that were potential threats. Someone that was an established vampire whose words would be taken as truth. A lord or lady among the vampires who had been there through the ages. Was it someone jealous of Lucy? This would lead to a lady... Or was it someone who had a problem with her coming from the werewolf pack? Maybe it was someone wanting to cause discord through the royal family.

"Don't bother Jasper. It will drive you nuts. Let Mira do her job. She will get the answer through any means necessary." Derek looked up at Jasper and knew what he was doing. It could be anyone and it hurt to think about someone doing this to them. And then there was the why...

"Lucy, I'm going to speak with my parents. They need to know about this immediately. Do you want to come with me? Or stay in the room? Those are your only two options my sweet little mate." Derek's lips curled up as he felt her playful agitation. He reached his hand out and brushed it through her hair. "Stay here and rest. My loves are tired."

He leaned in and brushed his lips against her forehead. "Jasper and Justice will stay here and keep you company. Why don't you lay down and maybe try to get a nap in." "Napping alone is no fun." Lucy said with a small pout.

"Baby, if I was napping with you we wouldn't be napping." He winked at her and looked up at the two men. "Stay in this room. Under no circumstances is she to leave until I return."

Lucy watched him walk away and she looked at her guards. "Well, he is gone so what is the plan?"

Justice chuckled. "You want to rest on the bed or couch? If we turn the television on will that be a bother?"

"I'll rest on the couch and watch you guys play. What are you going to play? Anything interesting?" Lucy watched Justice pulling out the games for the game consoles.

"Eh... some sort of fighter game or something. I need to take my frustrations out on killing something. Virtual killing will have to do for now."

"Sounds good to me." Jasper said, sitting on the couch patting the seat next to him for Lucy.

She smiled and sat down beside him, tucking her feet up underneath her. Justice came back, handing Jasper a controller and taking the seat on the other side of Lucy. She was safely sandwiched between the two of them. And honestly... it was an incredibly safe and relaxing feeling.

She leaned her head on Jasper and tucked her feet under Justice making herself comfortable. She wondered how Willa and Alaric would feel hearing about this news. It must be upsetting for them too. The people they ruled over and protected were spreading something hurtful about their family. She wondered how they would want to handle it.

She closed her eyes and let her mind wander. She wondered... and a thought popped into her mind there but she tried to push it away. Yet, it came back. As if this nagging idea was being put in there by someone. She furrowed her brows slightly and sighed. She would bring it up to Derek when he came back and see what he thought. This would also depend on what Mira found...

For now, she would just have to wait for Derek...

Alaric paced across the room angrily as Willa and Irene stayed seated watching him. Jester was quiet but the darkness in his eyes showed the fury that was building up inside of him.

"Mira is investigating the matter now. I don't care who it is father... I want the person dead for this." Derek said with absolute determination. He watched his father slow his walk and pause. He lifted his head up and met with Derek's amber eyes.

"You do realize what you are calling for..." Alaric said carefully.

"I'm calling for whoever is against my princess to be destroyed. I won't allow them to live, not even in exile." Derek growled lowly.

"It isn't so easy... This could cause an uprising." Alaric shook his head slowly.

"This could already cause a war. You think the werewolves will tolerate malicious rumors about their princess without proper retaliation? Hell... I won't tolerate it. If you won't just execute the person then I will challenge them to a duel. This should appease any sympathizers." Derek felt his composure slipping again as his anger surged. It was ridiculous. No one was above being punished.

"If this was an act against Jasper you would see to the person being executed." Jester said firmly, meeting his gaze with his brother's. "You must do the same for Lucy. She is your daughter now too."

"Hell I know that. Don't you think I am angry?!" Alaric sighed bitterly.

"Not angry enough!" Willa finally spoke out loudly. "I want this person caught and eliminated. They tried to cause doubt and division. They were saying our grandchild isn't worthy. OUR grandchild!" She roared. It was so hard for her to conceive and Derek was her precious baby. The dream of being a grandmother was finally going to happen and her people were saying the baby wasn't a legitimate heir?! The always composed Willa released a dark aura in the room as her anger grew. This was not something she could ever tolerate. She didn't care who it was... there was only one path for them. Death.

Alaric rubbed the back of his neck and looked down. "I know Willa." His voice was soft and somber. Yet the fire in his eyes showed his own rage he was trying to battle. There would be consequences if they put to death a vampire who was centuries old. Oddly enough age did play a factor because the longer you have been around the more allies you can have. And some of the prominent families had been around since before his time. Some of them were close to demons. Though demons were no longer the power like they were twenty years ago. Still... you don't want to involve yourself on their bad side. The other problem is some were devout followers of Rogio. Angering their deity would not be a smart move.

It was best to see who the culprit was and go from there. They would be severely punished. But he couldn't immediately say it would be by death. And as strong as his son was he wouldn't want him dueling with any of the older vampires. They were sneaky and have well developed their unique skills.

Being a leader meant you had to put your personal feelings aside and do what was best. He needed to make the decision that would not cause trouble later. It would be like covering up a fire thinking you put it out but it was really smoldering underneath. And when your back was turned it would rage on with a burning vengeance. What happened wouldn't be tolerated... but he was going to have to really think about how to handle the situation.

"No decision will be made right now. First, we find the culprit. That is my command. Now... we need to address our people though. I don't want any more of this nonsense being spread about. Jester, call an emergency meeting. I want all to gather below the upper balcony where I will address everyone. Mandatory all should be there within one hour!" Alaric turned to Jester who nodded his head.

Derek balled his hand up in a fist and turned to storm out.

"Derek!" Alaric said in a crisp fatherly voice. "We can't just rule with emotions. There will be justice. I promise."

"I won't rule like that father. I don't care how long someone has done their due diligence. A vicious rumor like this has only one outcome...death. What if it was a slanderous insult against mom? Would this still be the same route you would take?!" Derek snapped and glared at his father in defiance.

"Yes, it is. Because we need to remember our actions can have trickling effects. Solving one problem now could create a mess in the future. We must not just think about the now but what could come. You are young and hot-headed."

"Hot-headed? That is my mate and child that those rumors are about. Calling my child an illegitimate heir to the throne... and I am just supposed to remain calm. I should sit across from these people and discuss this rationally over tea?" Derek scoffed angrily. "I will never rule that way father. And I will say this once. If I feel this situation isn't handled well I won't stay here with Lucy. Jasper can have the damn crown. I don't want it if this is how my family will get treated." "Derek!" Willa said mortified.

"Derek, I am not saying anything right now. Only that we should think about this is all. I am not saying yes or no. I am just wanting to speak to whoever did it and go from there."

Derek shrugged. "Do what you need to do. I've said my peace and I mean it." There was a deadly calmness to his voice as he turned and left the room. "He's just upset." Jester said quietly.

"He is hurting. He feels betrayed by his own people too... Alaric..." Willa said in a whimper.

"Willa, I'll handle the situation... both of them. Derek is young. But sometimes the best thing you can do is approach things at a calmer pace. You can see more clearly and not make rash decisions. I'm angry too. I'm hurting for him too. I love Lucy and the baby she is carrying. I love them too!" Alaric shook his head. "I would approach it the same way no matter who the rumor is about. It isn't easy to be a father and a leader. My first instinct is to rip apart anyone who hurt my son and family. But as a leader, I need to think about my decisions. I just need time to think." He whispered out, rubbing his hand over his face.

"Jester, please see to the announcement and have the arrangements made."

Alaric watched Irene and Jester walk out of the room together. Willa came up to Alaric and he pulled her into his arms. He leaned his head down into her neck and breathed in her scent.

"I hate this..." Alaric whispered out as his hands shook slightly. Being a king was not the easy job a lot of people think it is. Often the crown that is worn can be very heavy. This was one of those moments.