

Broken Warrior 101

Chapter 101

When we get to my car, I lean against it pulling her against me. I'm sure she can feel my arousal from our time in my bedroom.

My dick is pressed against her stomach. No hiding that.

I pull her hands up, wrapping them around my neck before moving my hands to her hips, holding her against me.

"I want you to be my girlfriend." I tell her.

"What?"

"You and me. I want us to be together. I want everyone to know that you're mine."

"I don't..."

I cut her off. "I know you're waiting for your mate. And I won't push you past any limits that you have. But, for the next seven

weeks, I want us to be exclusive. You don't see anyone else, and I won't see anyone else. It's just you and me. We're together. I

get to take you on dates. We hold hands in school. I can kiss you in public. The whole nine yards."

I know her stance on waiting for her mate, she just doesn't know she's waiting for me. That's okay. We can both wait, but I need

be able to spend time with her. Kai needs to be close to her. I'll find little ways to make sure that we have time together every

day.

"Can I think about it?" She asks me.

"Of course. But I'll say it now. I want you. You, Cara Nelson, the woman; not Cara Nelson, the Guardian. I want the mind, body

and soul, not just the fierce protector that you are."

"Okay." She says quietly.

"Okay. I'll pick you up for school tomorrow?" I ask, hoping to start my day with my girl.

When she nods yes, I give her a tender kiss. I make a mental note to adjust any conflicts to being able to pick her up and drop

her off daily, because I'll be driving her the rest of the school year.

"Goodnight love. Sleep well."

I watch her wave to me as I pull away. I head back to the pack house. I'm in desperate need of a release and a cold shower.

Anders

When Cara walks back inside, and says goodnight, I watch as she climbs the stairs headed to her room.

"What's on your mind Anders? Are you concerned about the two of them together?" My oldest and dearest friend asks me.

Tonight had been a wonderful walk down memory lane. Seeing our pups going through the same life experiences we have been

through just brought it all back. I haven't seen Clint laugh as much as he did tonight since, well, not since Lily's death. It felt really

good to have my friend back.

"Not concerned in the way that you are thinking Clint."

"Concerned in what way?"

I turn to my friend. "I can't imagine what it will feel like for Rik to have a Guardian that is also his mate. My bond to you is so

strong, and I've hated every battle we were ever in, knowing that you would give your life for me. But, at least, I didn't have the

same bond to you that I have with Cali. I'm not sure I would have been able to handle it if Cali had been a Guardian. My need to

protect her is overwhelming sometimes." a

Clint looks up to where his daughter is moving around in her room. "It's not something we can choose Anders. It's in our genetic

code, our being, our soul. The pull to protect our Alpha is impossible to overcome."

"I understand that. It's the same with being an Alpha. It's in my genes to protect my pack members. All my pack members." I turn

to look at Clint. "That always included you as well."

I look back up to where Cara's light has switched off and the sounds of her moving around her room have quieted. "I just wonder

how the two of them will find the common ground they need as mates. If they don't, they may just kill each other trying to save

each other."

Chapter 102

Overnight, I tossed and turned, thinking of Rik's question. I really want to say yes. I want to get to know him. It's a risk, if we

begin dating. If he's not my mate, it may cause issues with my mate in the future. But, as of now, I will be his

Guardian. Getting to know him is important. And I'll make sure to maintain my boundaries.

I finally fall asleep early in the morning but wake at my normal time. It's time for me to get back to training. I know my father will

not agree, and possibly Rik won't either. But I can't continue to sit around.

I get dressed and head outside just as the other warriors begin to show up. Rik isn't here yet, so I walk up to the others and greet

them. I get a lot of high fives, welcome backs, good to have you back on your feet, the usual greetings when someone has been

out for a while.

"Cara? What are you doing out here? You should be resting." My father asks.

"Dad, I need to get back to training. I need to start building my strength again."

"There will be plenty of time for that next week. For now, you need to rest."

I turn to face my father head on. "No. This is not how you trained me, sir." I use sir instead of calling him dad as an

acknowledgement of him leading the training and me being a trainee. I need him to think like a warrior, not a father.

"Cara." It comes out as a warning. He's telling me not to argue with him. Well, guess what dad. You didn't raise me to give up or

give in.

"Sir." I reiterate the word. The training field has gone silent. The warriors are watching to see which Guardian will win this battle.

have trained me all my

life to fight through weakness. 'The enemy won't give you a break if you're hurt or injured Cara.' Those are your words, not mine.

That is how I've been taught. That is how I train. Push through the pain, push through the weakness, push through until you can

get back on your feet. So that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to push through, starting today. Sir."

My father is staring holes into me. His anger palpable. I feel heat at my back and smell the scent of brownies. Rik has arrived.

I'm not sure if he is supporting me, or preparing to argue with me, but right now, my focus is on my father.

Alpha Anders walks up to my father and puts his hand on his shoulder. "She doesn't just look like Lily, she acts like her too, don't

you think Clint?" He asks my father.

My father doesn't say anything, and Anders continues. "Better to have her in training and under your supervision than to have

her go off and try to train on her own, wouldn't you agree?"

I see my father give in, his shoulders slumping in defeat. "You're right old friend. She's as tough and stubborn as her mother." His

next statement is for me. "As your trainer, if I think you've had enough, you listen, do you understand me Cara? And no sparring,

only obstacles today."

"Yes sir." I smile at my dad before turning to Rik. His brows are furrowed. "Are you going to argue with me about training too?"

He puts his hands up in a surrender and takes a step back. "Nope, not me." Then he grins at me.

"Okay you bunch of pansies, let's see what you've got. Rik. Cara. You're up first."

Dad has us on the outdoor ninja warrior course today. We are running the course in pairs. I'm familiar with it which will give me

an advantage over Rik. He still has the overall advantage though because I'm definitely not up to my usual fighting strength.

When dad shoots the starter gun, we go. About halfway through, I realize Rik is holding back, making sure I can get through the

course. He stays close until we finish, beating me by only a couple of seconds. I'm panting much more than I should be and my

time is terrible, but I did finish.

I look at Rik, "You slowed down for me, why?"

He shrugs handing me a bottle of water. "I know you're not at the top of your game, and I just wanted to make sure you didn't

need any help. You didn't, but I wanted to be there if you did."

Chapter 103

It's sweet and something that I wouldn't have expected of the old Rik. The one I used to think he was. Now, having watched him

in different scenarios, in different ways, being supportive and being a leader, I'm not surprised.

We turn and begin cheering for the other warriors. We make appropriate 'ohhhh' and 'ahhhh' sounds when they fall or get hit by

flying objects. Even in my weakened state, I still finished third behind Rik and Trevor.

"You bunch of pansies! You call yourselves warriors? My daughter, who was on her deathbed a couple days ago, still beat most

of you? What kind of warriors do you think you are?" My father barks in his drill sergeant voice.

When it's time for sparring, I walk around to help train the warriors with my dad. He's focused on the weakest warriors, so I move

to work with the warriors that are taking on Rik. "Listen up." I call the warriors who will be sparring with Rik to attention. "Can

anyone tell me what Rik's signature move is?"

Not surprisingly, it's Trevor that answers. "He uses his height and speed to bring you to the ground. Depending on his opponent's

height, he may use an uppercut to knock a shorter opponent off his or her feet. Or if it's someone tall like me, he likes to sweep

the legs to bring you down. Once you're down, he uses his strength to pin you.

"Exactly. So, what is the key to defending against our Alpha's signature move?" Silence. They don't know the answer. Rik is

watching me, he seems just as eager to hear my response.

I look at the warriors in our circle. "Anticipate the move."

Trevor scoffs. "That's your big suggestion, anticipate his move? I already do that."

"Actually, you don't." I tell him. "I've watched you, it's the same way you are with me. You know my moves, but I still best you with them."

"Yeah, because he's an Alpha and you're a Guardian."

"Wrong." Rik jumps in. "It's because you expect to lose, and you get caught up in the fight and forget to anticipate the move."

"Exactly." I pick up the train of thought. "Think back. When's the last time either one of us used our signature moves on you in the

first five minutes of sparring?" Rik and I have ended up shoulder to shoulder facing the warriors, as if we are

teaching the class together. United. It's a good feeling.

"Now, let's see you give it a try." I step back and Rik steps up. I whistle for them to start and watch as Trevor begins to get lost in

the fight. The other warriors are watching too, waiting for the signature move.

"Jump!" I shout just as Rik goes to swipe Trevor's legs. He does, but not fast enough and Rik still takes him down. "Good job,

Trevor. Do you see the difference now?"

"Yeah." He replies and takes Rik's extended hand to stand.

"What I want to know is when do we get to see you two go head to head?" Trevor asks, and the other warriors agree.

"Monday." I say, just as Rik says "Not for another week or so."

We look at each other. "No." He says to me. "You need to be back at full strength."

"Hey Dean." I call out. "You'd better get your betting odds ready."

I step up to Rik. He's shaking his head at me, but I know exactly how to get what I want. And I'll be close enough to full strength

on Monday. And in this, even if I lose, I'll win.

"I'll tell you what Alpha. You spar with me on Monday and if you win, the answer to your question last night is yes."

He stares at me for a moment. "That's fighting dirty little Guardian."

“Just using the weapons in my arsenal, Alpha.”

He holds out his hand. “Deal.”

I shake it. “Deal.”

I hear Dean starting to take bets on who will win on Monday.

My dad calls the end of training and the warriors all start to head to their homes. Rik looks at me. “I’ll pick you up in 45 minutes

Cara.”

“See you soon Rik.” I start to turn away to head inside. “Oh.” I turn back and realize he hasn’t moved at all. He was watching me

walk away. “Remind me I want to ask you something on our way to school.”

He

looks at me. “Can’t wait.”

I turn and walk inside. I can feel his eyes on me the entire time.

Chapter 104

When my father and I arrive at training on Friday morning, the first thing I see is Cara dressed for a workout. The second thing I

notice is that everyone is quiet and Cara is verbally clashing with her father.

I come to stand behind her. If she wants to train, I will train with her. I can make sure that she doesn’t push herself too much. I’m

proud that she’s out here and ready to go, but I also don’t want her pushing too hard too fast.

When it’s time for sparring, I’m thrilled that Cara takes up a position to help work with the warriors that are going against me. I

love her teaching method. She’s making my warriors think. It’s no surprise that Trevor has the answer to her question about my

signature move. I’m surprised she knows what it is, but I guess I shouldn’t be. She’s been training to be a fighting machine her

whole life.

Her fighting intelligence is superior. Her simple answer stumps Trevor and I can see by the look on their faces, that it stumps the

rest of the warriors too. But she's absolutely right. The only way to overcome a move that someone uses again and again, is to

anticipate it and be prepared to counter it.

When Trevor gives her the flippant response that her answer isn't helpful, I jump in. I move to stand beside her, showing a united

front. She's right about this and they need to know we are in total agreement.

The pack already knows that she's my mate, so they will be looking at her as their future Luna. Showing them that we are in

agreement will make the pack feel safer, stronger. It's something that is important in pack dynamics. The Alpha and Luna should

always show that they are unified. Dissention among the two leading wolves causes dissention among the pack, weakening

them.

Cara is able to point out to Trevor where he made a mistake. Next time, I think I'll have a harder time taking him down, which is

good. I plan to make him my lead warrior.

When Trevor asks when Cara and I will spar, we answer at the same time. I have no intention of sparring with her so soon, until

she offers to give me what I

want. Her.

It's a low blow. I quickly think over the possibilities of sparring with her. I am a strong enough fighter that I can wear her out and

not hurt her. I'm confident enough in my skills. Normally, I wouldn't try to wear her down, but if this is what it takes for her to say

yes to being my girlfriend, then I'm in.

When Clint calls the end of training, I enjoy the view of Cara's rounded ass as she

+15 DONOS

walks inside. Then, I head back to the pack house. My father falls into step with

1. me.

“Son, do you think it’s wise to spar with Cara on Monday? I know she’s tough and strong, but it seems too soon.”

“I agree dad, but apparently, she has put her willingness to be my girlfriend on outcome of that battle. So, yes, I’d rather wait, but

I’m going to win and she

will be mine.”

He looks at me thoughtfully. “Just be careful. You don’t want the next several weeks to be spent helping her recover.”

“Don’t worry dad, I got this.”

When I get to Cara’s house, she’s walking out the door before I have a chance to get to her. I jog over and collect her bag, taking

the opportunity to give her a quick kiss on her nose.

Her cheeks turn a pale shade of pink. Damn, my girl is adorable. So tough on the training field, so sweet and innocent over a

little kiss.

When we get to my car, she stops. “Is this your birthday present?” She asks me.

Chapter 105

I look sheepishly at her as I open her door. “It is, but to be honest, I didn’t expect it. I’d been looking at it for a while, planning to

buy it for myself one day, but apparently nothing gets past my mother.”

She slides in and I close her door. On my way around the car, I put her bag in the trunk then join her. My car already smells like

vanilla and honey. The small space making her smell that much more intense.

When I start down her long driveway, I remember her request. “What did you want to ask me?”

She turns to me. “First, you can say no.” I already know that I’d never deny her anything, unless she asks me to stay away from

her. Then I’ll definitely say no.

I look over at her as she hesitates. She’s rubbing her hands together in a way I’ve never seen from her before. I realize, she’s

nervous. I reach out and put my hand over hers, causing her to turn her gaze back to me. "I haven't been to my mother's

memorial in a while, and I'm planning to go this weekend. I was wondering if you would like to go with me."

"You want me to go with you to your mother's memorial this weekend?" I confirm. I'm thrilled. She wants to spend time with me,

time that she will be spending with her mother. But it also means that it's one less excuse I need to find to see her this weekend.

"Yes, but feel free to say no..."

"Of course, I'll go with you." I cut her off. "On one condition." I stipulate.

She eyes me warily. "What condition?"

I wait until I'm stopped at a light before turning to her. "I want you to go on a date with me tonight."

I can see her hesitancy, so I continue. "I know that it won't be as my girlfriend, but we can still go out to dinner together, right?"

She looks at me for a long moment. The car behind me honks for me to go, so I turn and start driving again.

We're in the school parking lot before she responds. "Yes, I'll go out with you tonight."

It's like the sun just broke through the clouds on a rainy day. She agreed to go out with me. I have her all to myself for the

evening. Now, I have to make sure that I

+15 BONOS

have a perfect night planned. My smile is so wide my cheeks hurt.

I hop out of the car and around to her side, rushing when she starts to open her door for herself. "I got that." I tell her and finish

opening the door, giving her my hand to help her out. When she stands up, I can't help but pull her into me. "Thank you." I say

softly so only she hears.

"For what?" Her voice sounds breathy, her eyes shining up at me.

"For saying yes. You just made my day." I give her a quick kiss on her lips. Oh yeah, I'll be sneaking those in all day and all

weekend if I can.

I grab our bags from the trunk, then risk taking her hand in mine as we walk into school. She doesn't pull away,

So I walk her to her lockers. Mine are on the other side of the walkway, but I don't want to leave her side. Thankfully, once she

gets what she needs, she asks if I need anything from my locker. I smile as I grab her hand and lead her to my locker, letting go

only when I must in order to exchange my books for class.

Then I walk her to her class, stealing another kiss from her lips before turning to head to my class, whistling as I go.

Cooper

Author

She agreed to the date! Where do you think Rik will take her?

Chapter 106

Rik picks me up, right on time. I head out to meet him and he seems perturbed, jogging up to me and taking my bag. He kisses

me on the nose and I blush.

Romantic Rik is bewitching.

He opens the door for me. Ok, I can totally get into Gentleman Rik as well. I'd be lying if I said I didn't like the attention.

As we head out, he reminds me to ask my question. I don't know why it's important to me that he joins me when I visit my mom,

but I want him to say yes. My desire for him to join me only makes me feel insecure in asking him, so I start off by telling him he

can say no. I swear I hear him scoff.

I get so nervous, I can't get the words out. I'm rubbing my hands together, looking out the window, trying to find the words, when

I feel his hand on mine. I look up at him and he's got me locked in his intense gaze. Without thinking, I ask

him.

As he repeats it back to me, like he can't believe I would ask that, I hear how dumb it sounds and immediately start

backpedaling, telling him he can say no.

When he says he'll come with me, I feel relief, until he adds the stipulation of a date.

Here's the thing. I've been focused on my training and my studies my entire life. Two hours of training in the morning, school, two

hours of training at night, dinner, homework, sleep, repeat. Even my weekends are focused on training and studies. You see

where I'm going? There has never been room for dating in my life. Ever. The most I've ever done over the last year, is go

dancing on Friday nights and more recently Liam would drive me home. Sometimes we'd stop for food, like the last time. But,

that's not a date. I'm nearly 18 years old and I have no idea how to act or what to do on a date.

I'm not used to feeling insecure, but I do now. What if Rik thinks I'm too immature to date? What if I do it all wrong and he

realizes he's wasting his time on me. He says it's not as his girlfriend and he just wants to go to dinner. I can do dinner, right? I

mean, we had dinner last night with our parents and it was fine. How hard can it be having dinner at a restaurant, just the two of

us?

As I've been contemplating all of this, we've arrived at school and I realize I haven't given him an answer. 'Just go. It can't be that

hard.' Artemis pipes in and makes up my mind. When I say yes, I get Rik's mega-watt smile. I'm not sure there is anything in the

world more amazing to see than when he turns that smile

on you, and right now, it's aimed at me. I feel my heart flutter in my chest.

When he thanks me because I agreed to our date, that piece of my heart that already belonged to Rik, got a bit larger. His quick

kiss on my lips makes me feel special, so when he takes my hand as we head into school, I don't say anything.

When we get to my class, he kisses me again. I know I told him we could do this if I agreed to be his girlfriend, but I really like

this side of Rik. He doesn't care who sees us. He doesn't care who may be watching. All he seems to care about is me. It's

intoxicating.

The rest of the day is exactly the same. He walks me to all my classes, sneaking in kisses before he leaves to go to his class.

At lunch, Chase is still giving it his best shot with Lacey. Her icy exterior doesn't seem to have thawed overnight and I swear it's

only making Chase try harder. Good luck with that.

When we leave the lunchroom and get to my next class, I decide to turn the tables and before he can sneak in a kiss, I reach up

grab the collar of his shirt and pull him to me. I don't just peck his lips, I go all in and it only takes him a second to respond.

Before I know it, I'm pushed against the wall beside my classroom, his lips bruising in their passion. I run my tongue across his

lips and he opens them giving me entrance. I only have a minute before he takes control, dominating the

kiss.

When he pulls back, his eyes look as glazed as mine feel. I give him a smug look, pecking his lips again before sliding out from

under his arm. I look at him over my shoulder. "See you after class Alpha." And I walk into my room. Before the door closes, I

hear a growl of pleasure rumble in his chest.

At the end of the day, we walk to our lockers, get our work for the weekend and then walk hand in hand to his car. He pulls me to

the trunk to put our bags in and then walks me to the passenger door. He pushes me against the car and takes my mouth in a

kiss so possessive that I can do nothing but try to keep up. When he pulls away, he leans his forehead against mine. "That's for

getting me so turned on in the middle of the school day little guardian. I thought I should return the favor."

He smiles and pulls back, opening my door. I feel unsteady on my feet. The man seems to steal my sense of reality every time

he kisses me.

Chapter 107

I am having the best day! Every time I see Cara, I'm stealing a kiss. She doesn't seem bothered by it and actually seems to start

waiting for me to kiss her.

By lunch, I'm on a high. I've grabbed a couple of minutes to make plans for dinner tonight and I called in a favor with my mom to

make Cara's favorite brownies. Chase is still, well, chasing Lacey. I can tell he's enjoying the hunt. I know my friend. The longer

she holds out, the more he's going to keep coming after her. If Dean had a bet going, my money would be on my boy. He won't

lose. After lunch, I walk Cara to her class. I'm thinking about our plans tonight and about ready to steal another kiss when she

takes me totally by surprise and pulls me down, kisses me like I've been dreaming she would. I'm stunned for about one second

before I respond, pushing her against the wall outside her classroom. When she runs her tongue against my lips, wanting to

deepen our kiss, I feel the heat flowing straight to my dick. Instinct kicks in and I take control. I want so much more, but we are in

the middle of our school day with everyone watching. I've heard snickers from some guys and huffing from some girls as I've

been kissing Cara. Don't care. Let everyone see that she's mine.

When I pull away, I feel drugged. By her scent, by her taste, by her. Her eyes are glazed for a moment before they become filled

with mischief. She pecks my lips, ducking out from under my arm and then turns and flashes me a sizzling look that has my dick

going from semi hard to rock hard. My girl is flirting with me, very publicly. My growl is all satisfied pleasure. Damn this girl. If this

is any indication of what our life will be like, I'm a goner. One hundred percent, completely over the moon. And I couldn't be

happier about it.

I turn to head to class, not getting more than a few steps before Chase is beside me. "Might want to take care of that tent you're

popping before walking into class Alpha." I look down. Shit! Shifting myself around isn't going to hide this

one.

"Thanks man." I say to Chase before detouring to the bathrooms. Again, this girl has me so out of control I have to relieve myself

at school. A thought occurs to me about how to punish my little guardian for getting me this worked up during my school day. The

thought alone has me cumming so hard and fast I still make it to

class on time.

I meet her after our last class. When I walk her to the passenger door, I push her against the car before she can get in. I put

everything into the kiss, every bit of passion, desire, love, possessiveness. Everything. I hear the softest, sweetest

moan from her before I pull away and put my forehead against hers. I let her know that this is the punishment she gets for

working me up during the school day before stepping back and opening her door. I feel very smug when I see her wobbling on

her feet. Mission accomplished.

I hold her hand on the way home. I'm becoming addicted to the tingles that are only getting stronger as her birthday gets closer. I

can't imagine how much more intense the feeling will be when she recognizes me as her mate and then once we've completed

our bond? Euphoria.

When we get to her house, I jump out of the car and walk around to open her door for her. She's my girl and I want her to know

that this is the kind of treatment she can expect from me. I'm pleased that she waits for me this time and I help her out of the car

before grabbing her bag. I put it over my shoulder and take her hand, walking her up to the front door.

"I'll pick you up at 6pm, okay?" I turn to her, taking both of her hands in mine.

"Okay. What should I wear? I mean, how should I dress?"

"Dress nice. I'm wining and dining my future girlfriend tonight." I smile at her and kiss her nose. I start to tilt my head to kiss her

lips when I hear Clint clear his throat behind me. I pull back and turn to greet him.

"Good afternoon Clint." I reach out to shake his hand. "I'm planning to take your daughter out for dinner tonight."

He raises an eyebrow and looks past me to Cara before looking back at me. "I expect you to take care of my daughter while

she's in your care Rik. If anything at all happens to her, you'll answer to me."

"Of course, sir. She'll be safe with me."

I'm not used to having fathers threatening me. In the times when I have taken a girl out, the parents are usually so happy that

their daughter is going out with an alpha that they practically throw her at me.

"Do I need to remind you of the rules Rik?"

"No sir." Yes, I remember that she's waiting for her mate. Her mate being me. But I'll respect that she doesn't know that yet, even

though I know she's already started to feel the mate bond.

Chapter 108

"Dad. Have you forgotten that I'm HIS Guardian, not the other way around? Shouldn't you be threatening me to keep him safe?"

I can't help my smirk. Cara can't see it, but Clint can. He looks past me at Cara again. "First, you're not back to full strength yet.

Second, he's taking you out as a date, not as his Guardian so he damn well better treat you with the respect and protection that

he would provide any other woman on a date." His gaze shifts back to me. "Isn't that right, Alpha?"

"You are absolutely correct Guardian." I use his title since he used mine. "And I will treat your daughter with the utmost care and

respect this evening."

His gaze returns to Cara. "Go get ready for training, I want to do some light strength building today."

"Okay dad, be right there." Cara replies.

I start to turn to say goodbye to Cara, when Clint stops me. "Rik. Why don't you plan to start joining us for our afternoon training

sessions starting Monday.'

I think my mouth fell to the floor. "It would be my honor sir."

He nods once before wheeling himself inside.

I'm still staring after him when I feel Cara's finger under my chin, closing my mouth for me. She moves to stand in front of me.

"Guess I'll be seeing a whole lot more of you Alpha."

I focus my attention back on her. "Well Little Guardian, after I defeat you on Monday, you'll be spending more time than just

training with me. Now get going and be ready by six. I can't wait to have you all to myself."

I pull her to me and give her a scorching kiss before heading back to my car. When I look back at her, she's still watching me, her

fingers touching her lips. Yeah, I'll be spending as much time as possible with my girl.

When I get home, I check in with my mom. She has the brownies baked and set aside for me. She took it a step further and put a

picnic basket together and added some wine and glasses. I thank her giving her a hug and a kiss on the top of her

head.

"Where's dad? He wanted to talk to me."

"He's in his office."

I head up to my father's office and knock, waiting for him to tell me to come in

When he does, I walk in and go to sit in front of his desk. He looks tired. I ask th most important question. "Any news from Liarn

about Eli Gunnar?"

"Nothing yet. He's found traces of him, but he's good at hiding. He's been doing It for years."

I nod. I knew I'd have heard if Liam caught Eli, but I was hoping for better news.

"Son, I wanted to talk to you about Cara."

I sit up straighter, this was unexpected. "What about her?"

He folds his hands together and leans forward resting his arms on his desk and he looks at me. "Have you given any thought to

what it will be like to have a Guardian as a mate?"

It has occurred to me, and I have to admit, I don't like it. Kai and I already feel protective of Cara. Losing her to Eli, even for a

week was maddening. And this is before we have a solidified bond. It will only become harder once she accepts us and we've

marked and mated her.

"I have. I'm not really sure how to handle it Dad. I can't give her a command to stand down, and I don't want to command her. I

want a partner. I want her to stand beside me, not in front of me. I should be the one protecting her, not the other way around.

That's my job as her Alpha, as her mate. But, I think we'll have to have a serious conversation about what that means for us and

our future."

He nods his head. "I'm glad you're already thinking about it. I don't know that I have any advice for you. My bond with Clint made

it hard enough to have him putting his life on the line for me. If it had been your mother..." He stops, shaking his head. Yeah, it's

not a comfortable thought and one that I'll need to think about more before tonight. I want to have a plan to discuss with her.

She's stubborn and fierce, but I need for her agree with me on this.

"That was all, son. I wanted to make sure that you were thinking about the potential consequences of the future."

I smile at my father. Thinking about the future is what good alphas do. And my father has raised me to be a good alpha.

I stand to go. "Thanks Dad. I appreciate it."

As I turn to leave, he asks, "Where are you taking Cara tonight?"

"Ethereal." I smile. "I want her to have the true dining experience. Then I'm taking her to the overlook to see the stars and eat

brownies."

"Sounds like a good night. Enjoy son."

"I will." And with that, I head out to get ready for my date.

Chapter 109

Dad goes easy on me in training, but it still feels good. As I work to get my body stronger, it is helping to make Artemis stronger

as well. She's back in my mind full time, but not yet strong enough to shift.

After training, I skip the bath for a shower, knowing I'll need time to do my hair and makeup. Since I'm not exactly sure where we

are going, but he said to dress nice, I decide to go with an off the shoulder long sleeve red sweater dress. I pair it with a thick

brown belt to give it dimension and matching brown knee-high boots. I pull my curls into textured waves, with a single braid on

one side that I pin back. I go light on makeup, adding more color to my eyeshadow and a softer glossy tint to my lips. Light

eyeliner and a swipe of mascara finishes off the look.

Just as I'm finishing up, I hear the knock at the door. I grab my jacket and purse and head downstairs. When I open the door, I'm

greeted by my gorgeous date who is holding another bouquet of flowers, tulips this time.

Before I can say anything, he whistles low, looking me up and down. "Damn. I'm going to have to fight off all the other male

wolves tonight."

I roll my eyes, even though I know I'm blushing. "Tulips this time? And in their own vase?"

I reach for the flowers, taking them as he leans in and gives me a light kiss on my lips. "I thought I would do something different

and surprise you. And you mentioned that you only had the one vase."

He follows me as I walk into the kitchen. Dad looks up from the living room. Rik." He nods his head in acknowledgement before

looking at the tulips and looking back at Rik. "Tulips, huh?"

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"Yes sir." Rik responds and he has a smirk on his face. I look between the two of them. "Do tulips have a meaning as well?" I ask,

feeling out of the loop.

Dad turns back to the TV, ignoring me. Rik leans down and gently kisses my lips. again. "Maybe."

I shake my head, putting the flowers on the bar before calling out a goodnight to my father.

Rik takes my hand and leads me out to the car. "So, where are we going?" I ask. He opens my door, but before I can get in the

car, he presses his body against mine, kissing me properly. My hands slide into his hair, pulling him closer. I hear a soft groan

before he pulls back, watching me as he licks his lips. "Delicious." He says.

I smile. "Must be my lip gloss."

He chuckles, shaking his head. "Nope. Definitely not the lip gloss."

I get in the car and we pull out. "So...?"

He looks over at me, taking my hand and kissing the back of it before putting it on his thigh, interlacing my fingers with his. "I

wanted to give you the real dining experience at Ethereal."

I'm startled. My very first date is going to be at the most expensive restaurant around?

I look down at myself. "Am I dressed okay?"

I take inventory of what he's wearing. A sapphire blue button-down long-sleeved shirt that fits him like it was made for him. The

cuffs are turned up showing a white underside giving it an edgier look. He's left it untucked over his black slacks and he's

wearing black dress shoes. His long hair is down tonight. It's sexy, hanging down to his shoulders. He usually pulls it into a man

bun, so it's a different, almost wilder side to him.

He looks over at me, squeezing my hand. "You look beautiful. Perfect, as always."

We arrive at the restaurant, and he drives up to valet parking. The valet opens my door and I step out. The restaurant lives up to

his name. It feels like we've entered a fairy land. There are no buildings in the near vicinity, so it gives the impression that you

are in the middle of the forest. Twinkling lights are everywhere, making you feel that you are far away from the stresses of the

world. The music that is lightly playing outside is gentle and relaxing, adding to the overall atmosphere. From here, I can see

inside the floor to ceiling windows. The interior is dark with dim lights, giving it a romantic feel and this extends out the front

entrance to the valet. Even though I can see that there are people inside, the dim lighting provides privacy. It just feels,

well....ethereal.

Chapter 110

Rik walks up, smiling at my expression. I'm sure I look like I am in awe, and I am. It's beautiful. He takes my hand and walks us

inside. I'm surprised and happy to see Tamara at the hostess stand.

She smiles as we walk in. "Alpha, Lu...Cara, welcome to Ethereal."

"Tamara." I smile at her. "It's so good to see you again."

She smiles at me and gives Rik an apologetic look. I wonder what that's about.

"Please, follow me." She says and leads us to a private booth in the back. As we walk through, I notice that the restaurant, which

wasn't exactly loud to begin with, goes silent as diners watch us pass. Everyone nods their head in deference.

to Rik.

We are seated in a semi-circular booth giving us the ability to sit side by side and also look out over the surrounding forest. "If

you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to let me know." Tamara says as she hands us our menus.

Rik takes my hand in his as we begin to look over our menus. "Is it always like that for you?" I ask, never having spent time with

Rik in public like this.

He turns to me. "Like what?" He asks.

"Like it was when we walked in here. Everyone getting quiet and watching you walk by."

He shrugs. "I think it was for both of us, not just me."

I scoff. "Why would people show deference to me?"

He looks at me as if I'm missing something important. "You're a Guardian." He says as if it's obvious.

"But..." I'm cut off as our waitress comes over. "Alpha." She says and while she gives me the barest of looks, just enough to not

be considered rude, she makes a point of looking Rik up and down, practically salivating over him. Yes, he looks gorgeous, but

really, he's on a date and you're working. Have some respect.

I feel Artemis push forward. She's feeling disrespected too and wants to put this she-wolf in her place. But before I can say

anything, Rik looks up, giving her a brief glance and smile. "Hey Jessica."

He turns to me. "Do

"Sure."

you want wine?"

"I say. He turns back to the wine menu. "Red, right?" He asks me..

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"Do you drink red?" I ask, because I honestly don't know.

He turns and smiles at me. "I do tonight."

"Rik..." I start to tell him not to order it if he doesn't drink it, but it's too late.

He looks at Jessica and orders a bottle of red for us and water as well. She gives him what I assume is her best, seductive smile.

He doesn't seem to notice as he turns back to me. I see her smile slip a little as she turns to go get our wine.

It's like there is no one else in the world for Rik, except me. It's heady, and I feel myself getting sucked into the Rik vortex.