

## Chapter 68-2

“Could we speak alone for a moment?” he asks and I was not expecting him to want to, but I nod. Lily squeezes my hand and walks into their bedroom while Alex turns and goes outside, shutting the door behind him. “Would you like to take a seat?” he asks, motioning to the couch, and I nod.

I sit on one end of the couch and he sits on the far end, leaving some space between us. “You were so young when everything happened, and I was so overtaken with grief. I saw the way that you looked at me once you woke up. I don’t know exactly what you remember, but I know it was how I blamed you,” he tells me and I nod, looking down at my feet, my eyes beginning to fill with tears.

"I'm sorry," I tell him, trying not to cry.

“It wasn’t fair for me to blame you. You didn’t deserve that, and it wasn't your fault,” he says and looks off at the roaring fire. “Grief is a funny thing. I blamed you for their deaths and thought if you were away from me then I would feel better. But I was wrong. I just grieved the loss of all of my children, especially you. I didn’t realize just how bad it would feel until after they adopted you and the bond we had left was completely severed. Yes, I lost my strength, but it was interesting that my strength was tied to you the whole time.” None of this was anything that I even remotely expected him to say to me, and I don’t know how to respond to him. I just continue to look down at my feet, clasping my hands together tightly.

“I had started to lose my strength before the adoption, if I'm being honest. That really did me in though. It needed to happen, though. The Bardulf’s really took good care of you. We kept an eye on you, but to be honest, I was never really worried. I knew you would be safe with them.”

“They really did love me. Do love me,” I correct myself and look up at him.

Benjamin smiles at me. “I’m glad. I made many mistakes, but sending you away was what haunted me the most. I need to be completely honest with you, though,” he says and I nod to him. “After the boys were killed it occurred to me that YOU were left to fulfill the prophecy, and I wondered if the Prince would be your mate. There was no way to be sure though, not until you were old enough to shift. I figured Peter would kill you, either way. The Prince is good to you though?”

Woah. He knew Seth was my mate. It’s a bit hard to wrap my mind around that. “He’s really good to me,” I tell him with a smile.

“I still worry about his father,” he says and looks off into space. “He took so much from me. What’s to stop him from hurting you now?”

Maybe this is why our bond is so strong. I hear Sage in my head and I have to agree with her.

Do you think it’s OK to tell him?

I think you should

“Our bond is strong,” I begin to tell him. “Unusually strong. We’re very sure that if one of us dies, the other will as well. Peter can’t hurt me without hurting Seth. But I don’t think that’s anything that we ever need to worry about.”

“I had wondered, based on what you told me,” he says with a nod. “A bond like that is very rare.”

“I know,” I tell him. “So, umm, I spoke with King Peter. He will be passing a law before he steps down from the throne, completely outlawing the murder of children before their first shift.”

“He’s trying to make amends now,” he says, looking a little upset.

“Actually,” I tell him, and he looks at me. “He offered to take a blood oath that he wouldn’t hurt me. I didn’t feel it necessary, given our bond, and requested this as a formal law, instead.”

“How can you be so forgiving of the man who murdered your brothers and took so much from you?” he asks me, looking upset.

“I have a list of offenses from multiple people that I have to find forgiveness for,” I tell him, a little upset. “He killed my brothers. You blamed me and sent me away. Lily sent me away, twice. My mom lied. There’s so much blame to go around for so many things. I find that I have to forgive him because he’s my mate's father. We will have to live with him soon, and I need to come to terms that he’s not the same man he was then. Just like I have to accept that you are not the same man who yelled at me and blamed me for my brother's deaths.”

“These are not the same things though,” he says raising his voice a little.

I look at him and square my shoulders. “No, they are not.”

“Then how can you forgive him, and not come to see us, like we are bad people?” he asks loudly.

“It’s not that I think you’re bad people, I just…” I pause, not really knowing how to explain how I feel. “You blamed me, and you didn’t want me anymore,” I say, a few tears escaping. “I spent 18 years thinking that you didn't want me, but the way the memories work, I've only just remembered I even had brothers. It's hard. There’s enough forgiveness for everyone, it’s just going to take some time.”

“I guess that’s the best I can ask for,” he says with a weak smile.

"I didn't know anything about Peter when I met him. He was kind, even when it seemed I didn't have a wolf. Seth struggled with that at first, but Peter was the one who helped. It's hard to think that the kind man I met then, who has been the most consistent one in reassuring me that I am made to be the queen, is the same one who I watched murder Jason. I truly don't think he's the same person he was then. Time and guilt have changed him, like you just said they've done to you." He nods a little and looks down at his feet and I note that I continue to do the exact same thing. He must be where I got that from, and the thought warms my heart a bit.

“Seth really is a good man,” I tell him. “As is my brother. They came with me.”

“To protect you from me,” he spits out, his voice laced with venom.

“Yes. You’ve created a whole pack in the rogue territory, and then sent warriors to pace the border,” I tell him with a shrug. “No one knew what was going on and if it would be safe.”

“You'll never be in danger from the wolves in my pack. In a better world you would have grown up in this pack,” he says, slightly less angry. "But it could have been you that was taken."

I look at him with sympathy, realizing how difficult this has been for him. “I know, and we want to help. Will you please tell me about the missing she-wolves?”

“I will, but I need something from you first,” he says, and that piques my curiosity.

“What’s that?” I ask, very curious to know what he wants from me.

“I assume you’ll eventually leave Lunar Falls and move to the palace?” he asks.

I nod to him, slowly. “After I shift. I’m staying at the Falls for that.”

He smiles slightly at that, and I’m not sure why. “I’d like for you to take Albert with you. Put him in your guard. It will make me feel better having someone from my old pack with you, even if he doesn’t remember it.”

I look at him and smile brightly, laughing a little. “Done. That was already the plan, though we haven’t asked him, yet.”

“Good,” he says and glances up at the door. “He seems to have grown into a fine young man.”

“He’s always been very kind,” I tell him. “He worked hard in school and worked his way up as a warrior. He really is one of the best the pack has.”