

Chosen 271

Chapter 271 One Step at a Time

Cole chuckled at the older woman's reaction before engulfing her in a hug. "How are you doing, mother?" he greeted.

"As well as my wolf and I can take. And please, would you tell your mate to drop the formalities?" the woman replied warmly, her blue eyes beaming with pride as she regarded her son.

"She seems to have a mind of her own, mother. You must have overheard our conversation about fireflies. She seems set on investigating everything that makes no human sense to her," Cole replied, pulling away and letting Katie through. The woman hugged Katie just as heartily holding onto the girl longer than normal etiquette dictated.

"I didn't say I would make an investigation. I'll just have someone do that for me. Since I am no longer Sandra's mentor, this might just be a little harder than it would have been," Katie groaned.

"Huh, I had never thought Sandra was your shortcut to all your useless errands or had I?" Cole whispered, "So you've been torturing the girl all this time. I knew there was something fishy..."

"Hey, Cole, don't get any ideas. I haven't been giving her any unreasonable orders. It was only that one time that... and that other time... No, forget about it," Katie's face turned red once more. The queen laughed at the two of them while a servant brought them refreshments, "I'll have to apologise and acknowledge her efforts while she was training under me."

"Mother, I think you should have prepared far more than this," Cole directed his attention to the queen, avoiding eye contact with his mate.

"Wait, huh... Do you mean?"

"Uh huh, just keep them coming," Cole nodded as though he was reading the queen's mind. Katie wasn't sure what was going on until the queen turned to her with a horrific expression.

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"Hey Cole, what did you tell her?" Katie yelled at the alpha.

"I only told her that you, unlike other people I know, have a larger appetite than most," he replied with a smile. The girl looked between him and the queen and decided against an outburst...

"Tell that to someone else and we'll be in a whole different situation," Katie responded with a huff.

"Oh my... I'm glad you're warming up to me," the queen replied, "In that case, you won't mind me having invited someone else."

"Hello... Am I late?" Sandra's voice piped in.

"Come on, Sandra. You're a hunter now. You've got to be more like... Why are you all so early?" Jason's voice abruptly came after hers, mimicking that of a soldier at the end. It was no longer a surprise to find the two of them together. Where there was Sandra, there was Jason, it was that simple.

"I am not going to change overnight, Jason," the girl returned with a voice even less confident than before.

"I thought you were working, Jason," Cole narrowed his eyes at the uninvited man.

"Well, I was... No, I am still working. I just took a break to walk this beautiful lady to her destination," Jason replied, sighing in disappointment.

"Hey, Jason, you'll work yourself to the ground if you don't take a break once in a while," Sandra voiced her worries.

"Well, it's short walks with you and the fact that you worry for me that keeps me healthy," Jason replied, placing a peck on her forehead, "I'll see you later, Sandra." The girl was speechless as he walked away, her face flushed from his words and actions.

"A hunter with a werewolf," Katie whistled, "and I thought fish couldn't fly."

"Don't make assumptions, Katie," Sandra complained, taking a seat at the other side of the table after bowing in acknowledgement of the queen. Cole might have dropped his jaw when Sandra did not acknowledge him. She simply looked at Katie and continued, "How are you doing?"

"I'm fine, Sandra. It's the tea parties and the fact that you worry that have kept me alive this whole time," the hunter imitated Jason.

"You play dirty, Sirius," Sandra covered her face with her palms, throwing the table into a chorus of laughter, "But more seriously though, how are you, Katie?"

Katie thought about her answer this time, having noticed the deep concern behind the girl's question, "Well, I don't know honestly. I've never been so... tired in my life I guess."

"You sound like someone that let the rogue king run off and is taking far too long to get back up," Sandra replied.

"Hmm, I think there is more to it than that, but I can't be too sure. It's not like any of my abilities are working right yet. Back then, I could tell there was trouble going on in Lycaon and something else boiling within Sirius.

I accepted I couldn't do it all on my own and let the hunters in Lycaon take care of everything as well as those I trusted in Sirius as well. It was terrifying and very stressful, to be honest, but everything was going well... until something unforeseen managed to slip past my foresight," Katie said to her, "Ever since that fight with the rogue king, it all went silent... everything. Like my ears are working... but not."

"What if the rogue king took a vacation as well?" Sandra tried.

"What if? indeed..." Katie chuckled, raising her fingers in the air to quote her words, "How is life as a hunter treating you?"

"It hasn't started yet. I haven't yet got my license which means I'm still a junior. Your uncle promised to help me out with it later. I would like you to..." the girl stopped her question halfway, but Katie had already picked up on her train of thought.

“It would be my honour, Sandra. I will go with you,” she responded. All those about the table were astonished to hear her accept to step out of the safety of the king’s chambers once more, “I’m sorry for making you all worry. I also know that I can’t just do nothing. Step by step, I will get back to my normal self.”

‘Sometimes I wonder if the rogue king really did take a vacation as well,’ she thought to herself.

Cole hugged the unsuspecting girl, excited to see that she was finally showing some positive improvement in her attitude. Even as he was happy to see that, something clawed at the back of her mind. A suspicion that wouldn’t let him be completely happy and he couldn’t shake it. ‘Katie is getting better, isn’t she?’

Chapter 272 Unexpected Company

The tea party proceeded harmoniously among the four of them. Against all of Cole’s complaints, the queen brought up different parts of his life growing up that she found hilarious and others that she found inspirational.

Katie, who was carefully listening and hanging at her every word, was astounded by what the boy had gone through to learn how to fight.

At first, Cole’s father had done nothing to train him. Instead, the boy had challenged the beta alphas time and time again to duels which he lost plenty of times. Among the embarrassing parts was when the queen thought it would be nice to take the boy swimming.

Cole hadn’t shown any enthusiasm towards the idea even though it was meant to be fun for them and nothing more. As a boy who’d grown up observing the pack warriors, he knew weakness was one of those things he was never to show in his life. In the queen’s words, “Normally, when I would propose something fun for the two of us to do, the boy would jump at the idea, trying to get me to the venue before we even had time to get packing, but this time, Cole wanted nothing to do with me. It was like I was a stranger.”

Eventually, the queen got the boy to the pool, after a lot of persuasions and sweet talking. Cole was not an easy child to convince, however, he had a soft spot for the queen and at the end of the day, she inevitably found out that the boy did not know how to swim.

Hilarious as the discovery might have been, Cole was proud of that story. After all, it was the day he got his first swimming lesson from his stepmother.

“Oh, Katie, why don’t you tell us how you learnt how to swim?” Cole asked her when it seemed she wouldn’t let go of the issue.

“Um, my life isn’t that eventful. You’ll get severely bored,” Katie replied with a tight smile, stirring her tea nervously, “Well, except for the parts with Sandra in them. Those were always fun. There were a few times when we had fun with my adoptive parents, but I was pretty much good at everything by the time we came to having fun.”

Katie hunted through her mind for a time she had had fun with her parents when it wasn’t hunter-related and found that the memories were few. Being a hunter was every bit a part of the first part of

her life as breathing. Taking her swimming was just another fitness training and a way to improve her breathing and endurance.

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“What about the parts with me in them?” a new voice dismantled the peaceful atmosphere. Katie sighed when she heard Kyle’s voice. As someone who’d intentionally cropped the boy’s parts out of her narrations, this was a very inconvenient situation.

Appalled by the rude interruption along with the several red flags that the sudden intruder raised everywhere he went, Katie’s voice went up several octaves, “What are you even doing here? Where is Caden?” Cole had his arm around the girl, glaring daggers at the boy that had just made his presence known.

While Kyle was virtually incapable of harming Katie, Cole didn’t trust him around his mate one bit. It couldn’t be helped.

“Right here, Luna. And you, prisoner, keep your mouth shut,” Caden ordered the boy who complied immediately, “I only come to inquire about something from Alpha Cole. It couldn’t wait and I didn’t feel it appropriate to interrupt his mind in the middle of this important... um, party.”

“Well, this lunatic can speak while you speak with Cole,” Katie replied, prying Cole’s protective hand from her. She gave him a reassuring look. Reluctantly, the alpha complied and stood up to attend to royal matters.

When Cole was gone, silence surrounded the table. The queen suddenly felt like she was in the last place on earth she could have chosen to be and the air was getting oddly thinner. ‘And when it was I that called on this tea party,’ she mentally cursed.

“Oh my, do we live in the mountains now? The three of you clearly have a lot to catch up on,” the queen excused herself quickly with a cup of tea in her hands, even when Sandra’s eyes begged her to stay. The air was still humid from the rain that had plagued Lycaon for a while.

“Well, I guess it’s just the three of us once again. It’s been a while,” Kyle was the first to break the silence, grinning widely at the two of them. He hovered his hand above a plate of scones and turned to look at his alpha. Katie noticed he was asking for permission and nodded in approval before the boy popped one of the scones into his mouth.

“Yeah, I guess it is the three of us again,” Katie replied, pointing to a spot far from her, “Sit there.”

“I love the hostility... It’s fresh and warm. Like biting into a warm piece of meat,” the boy joked before losing the smile on his face.

“If I had my way, I would make sure you don’t see meat for the rest of your life,” Sandra sighed, “But alas, you need it to be able to protect Katie with every ounce of energy you can offer.”

“Now now, guys, this is no way to have a reunion. Kyle is reformed now, aren’t you, Kyle?” Katie asked.

“It’s not like I have that much of choice in the matter,” Kyle replied, plunging them into yet another awkward silence.

“Kyle,” Sandra spoke up, “Knowing what you know now, would you still go back to the rogues if you were given the chance?”

The boy couldn't bring himself to look the girl in the eye, “Am I meant to answer that truthfully?”

Glaring at the boy, Sandra spat, “No, you don't. That reaction answers all the questions I had already.”

Katie was not so easily convinced by the boy's reaction to the question. The two of them shared emotions and she could tell something was up, “Well then, go ahead.”

Shocked, he asked, “Go ahead and do what, Alpha Katie?”

“Go ahead and answer the question truthfully,” she asked him. Kyle was indeed shocked to hear that she had a question like that for him. He had expected to dodge the question with another question, but she'd seen straight through him.

Chapter 273 That bad, huh!

The expression on her face told him everything he needed to know. And the fact that she was his alpha, he could not bring himself to disobey her words. It was impossible for beta alphas. Every now and then he was reminded of how chained he was to the girl.

“The rogues value strength more than anything. I wasn't strong or useful in any other way once my cover was blown. I've seen the way they treat those weaker than them and fell victim a few times to a few of the lighter errands the weak go through.

The entire time that I was with them, it was only the rogue king that kept his promise to treat me in a special way in comparison to the others. But the others were envious of my position with the rogue king.

Even if that was the case, I could tell he was about to see no use for me. I was as good as dead already. The explosion back there that was meant to kill me while I was still there proved it all.”

Sandra looked back at the boy before, her hateful expression melting off her face, “So, no, I wouldn't go back to the rogues knowing all that I know. But then again, that could be my master's resigned mood talking,” it was Katie's turn to be shocked this time, “You didn't even know I had arrived. You didn't catch my scent or even sense my presence. Are you okay, Katie?”

The girl looked between both her friends, a heavy feeling of nostalgia hitting her more than ever. This wasn't the first or second or any number of countable times that they had shown this much worry towards her. Even though Kyle had been pretending back then, it had been real to her and it was real to her now as well.

Each time they had hung out together and found that one of her arms was in pain from the gruesome training or that she was limping from an injury. Each time she'd tried to hide what was happening with her, one of them had seen straight through her and forced her to come clean, “I'm fine. You don't have to worry about me, okay?”

“Spill it, Katie Sirius,” Sandra barked, pointing a spoon at her and wiping the smirk from her face.

Seeing no way out of her situation, she sighed, "At first, it was just the gifts I noticed were missing. That is normal for a very tired hunter, which I feel like right now, but then, I've not been able to recover any of my werewolf senses as sharply as before. It must be because I'm tired.

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It can be nothing more than that. I'm just tired and that's all there is to it," she tried convincing herself even though it didn't sound that way, "You don't have to worry, I'll be fine soon."

Sandra lifted the spoon from her tea and let it fall back into the cup she was stirring, "Well, if you say so... On the subject of hunters, I'm having my evaluation tomorrow."

"Oh my... Sandra, that's awesome. You mean you'll be able to get your license tomorrow?" the girl asked, "Wow, that takes me back."

"Yeah, I would like it if you could come along if... if that's okay with you?" the girl asked, nervously.

"Oh, I was obviously going to tag along, but what would make you think I wouldn't?" Katie asked her with a raised brow.

"Well, you've been laid back this past week. You barely left your room and I was growing worried. I didn't think you'd be able to make it," the girl responded.

"No, Sandra... Of course, I'll make it. I made a promise I would come, didn't I?" Katie tried. In a lower tone, "I admit, I've not been able to do much in the past week. I've wanted to do nothing more than to vanish into nothingness. I failed in my task and I almost got myself killed at the same time. I felt like I couldn't get anything right. Like I'd failed everything..." the girl explained, "But I am getting better. I promise you that."

Sandra smiled upon hearing her friend's words, "That's more reassuring. For a moment there, I thought you were broken."

"Yeah... Same here," Kyle responded with a nervous laugh. 'My Luna, I hear what you're saying... but...'

'Just let it go, for now, Kyle,' she stopped the beta alpha from prying any further.

'Very well, Alpha Katie,' he responded respectfully. It wasn't even hard for him to forget about what he was about to tell her. His body did it for him.

'In exchange for all that power, the beta alphas would lose the complete free will over their actions and be bound by the will of the royals that commanded them. There wouldn't be a thing in the world that could break them free of this bond and they would serve that royal until their death...' Caden's lesson rang through his mind as clear as a bell.

During the 'torture' Kyle was supposed to receive from Caden, the beta alpha had been teaching him the roles of a beta alpha. He had learned a lot from him. Cole had been around while they took care of some of the issues concerning the kingdom. The three of them worked like a well-oiled machine.

Every time Cole was tired, they would take over for him and when any of them felt tired, they were allowed to notify the king. The king would then decide whether they were to rest. In Cole's case, he was

always allowing them to take a few breaks and when they were done with the work or left with enough for him to do on his own, he would dismiss them entirely.

The most tedious part of their work was the paperwork and the next most tedious part of their work was the hearings from the empire's citizens.

The applications for a hearing would take a long time to be approved and when it was time for the king to hear them out, he had to be present and pay attention to what they had to say to him.

The beta alphas could take his place in case of an emergency. Thankfully, it wasn't so much work that they didn't have any free time. They, once in a while got some free time. It was during this time that Kyle was tortured within the dungeons by Caden.

"How are you doing, Kyle?" Katie asked him when she felt waves of discomfort coming from him.

"Oh, I'm... well... better than I was with the rogues," he replied. Katie's memories of the times she saw him with wounds all over reminded her of the reason Caden was taking him around.

"That bad, huh..." she grimaced.

"How was I to know that the man had taken a liking to that cross-dresser?" he groaned, trying his best to ignore the pain that shot through his chest when the injuries to his ribs were triggered.

Chapter 274 Magic?

Katie decided against speaking about Kyle's situation and continued on to take a sip of tea. The boy eyed them for a while before speaking.

"You know, under normal circumstances, I would be expecting something like poison. In the world I grew up in, trust is not something you can simply stumble upon."

"I agree... Katie, why are you keeping him around again?" Sandra asked, letting all her unbridled hate for the boy fill her voice.

"What... Why would you, of all people, be asking such a question, Sandra? You know just how harmless he is. Just look at him. Bruised and eating healthy without a single harmful thought in his mind. I would know if it was there," Katie responded.

"For some reason, even after the little muscle he's put on, he looks more harmless than he was as a scrawny kid from high school," Sandra replied with a frown. The boy's presence irked her and the fact that Katie tolerated it irked her even more.

"Yeah, sometimes I forget that he's the same scrawny kid. Although the only difference this time... is that he's not pretending to be that scrawny kid," Katie responded with a genuine smile.

"What is the trio talking about?" Caden's voice suddenly piped in, "I hope Kyle is not causing much trouble."

"I don't think 'Kyle' would pose a threat to two hunters," Sandra replied with a chuckle.

"Looks like I had nothing to worry about," Caden laughed. Cole came later with the queen in tow.

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“Cole, don’t worry one bit about that issue. I’ll deal with it,” the queen said to Cole before announcing she would like to retire to her chambers. Having noticed how late it was, she excused herself and exited the gardens.

With her gone and time ticking well into the night, there wasn’t much reason for the gathering to continue.

Kyle bid Katie and Sandra farewell and followed his caretaker, ‘Caden’ who was returning for one last hour of work. Sandra reminded Katie of the next day’s plans before leaving as well.

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The female royal preened into the mirror while she tied her hair up into a bun, ‘Ashley, just how much can Kyle know from the connection we share with Kyle?’ Katie spoke to the wolf within her.

“I don’t know,” the wolf replied with barely a care in the world.

“You don’t sound worried at all about that,” Katie argued.

“I’m not worried, Katie. It’s the freedom of having him as our beta alpha. He can’t do anything that would be negative to us. Even if he was to be drugged and tortured to the brink of death, his loyalty would not waver,” the wolf replied in a bored tone.

“You make it sound like he’s being bound by absolute magic,” the girl shuddered at the wolf’s demeanour.

“Hmm, magic would not be the word to use, but yes... It’s something like that,” the wolf responded, “And don’t you dare act surprised.

You transform into a gigantic white wolf that keeps its clothes when it shifts back. Not to mention you’re currently speaking to me, an entity in your mind. If that’s not magic, then you’ve got something terribly wrong with your logic.”

“Oh, I had never thought of it that way...” Katie chuckled nervously before stepping out of the bathroom. Her remark, however, left an image of the white wolf shaking its head in disbelief at the girl’s mind.

“Someone’s taking her time,” Cole called out.

“Well, I was once told that my scent is so hard to miss, so I was trying to wash myself down real good,” the girl chuckled.

“To hide your scent from me, you’d have to use divine energy for that,” Cole chuckled lightly.

“Divine energy?”

The smile on the alpha’s face fell when the girl asked, “Sometimes I forget how much you don’t know about werewolves and hunters.”

“Huh, hey, I learnt everything I needed to learn about them,” Katie huffed, finally deciding to proceed from caring about her hair. She walked into the closet and began searching for a nightgown.

“Perhaps not enough though. Divine energy has been called many names, magic being the most common name for it...” ‘And to think I’ve just been talking about something similar with my wolf,’ the girl thought.’

“...Although it simply means, the power of the gods. No one knows the limits of the gods or if they even have limits, but that they are lead by Zeus... well and all the other stories we know about them.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard that much. How does this have to do with anything though? You made it sound like there is a lot that I don’t know about divine energy,” the girl complained.

“Well yeah, there is a lot you don’t know about it,” Cole said getting up from the bed and walking into the closet where the girl had just donned a purple silk gown.

The royal didn’t stop in his advance and before the girl realised what was happening, he was carrying her out of the closet and to the bed. Katie didn’t complain and instead wrapped her hands around his neck and studied him while he continued.

Images began to slip into her mind of the girl fighting the rogue king, “The blue aura that was surrounding you while you were fighting was that same kind of energy. I have never heard of it leaking out of someone like that, but there was no doubt about it when I saw it coming from you.

At some point, it looked like you would split with your wolf if you’d continued using it like that. It’s that same energy that turns our eyes a different colour and makes them glow. Blue only shows that royals have the most divine energy from the goddess.”

Placing the girl on the bed and laying beside her, he continued almost seamlessly and effortlessly. Katie wondered if she was really that light or if he was simply that strong, “The red eyes show the next level of power the others have.

The same goes for green and yellow. That extra power is what allows alphas and royals to shift back and forth without losing their clothes. Does that make more sense now?”

Katie gasped when everything seemed to snap into place in her mind. She’d wondered a number of things, but had never gotten to asking them. This was one of them and Cole had just answered it for her, “Well yeah, that explains a lot...” she agreed, staring past his mesmerising blue eyes, “You had something to tell me. Do you still think you can...”

“Yeah, I’ll tell you. After all, this is the only day that I’ll allow myself to go that far back in my past,” Cole said to her with a chuckle, allowing the images of his past to filter into his mate’s mind.

Katie felt incredibly close to him when the memories of Cole began entering her mind. Seeing the world through the eyes of a younger Cole was nothing like hearing the stories narrated by words only. She wanted to know all of it.

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Chapter 275 Beloved Queen

Little Cole spent the biggest part of his early years getting out of his father's way when he could. The kind and benevolent leader was kind to his entire kingdom except for the one thing that was the cause of his sadness... Cole himself.

All through his life as a child, Cole had known the king for his rage fits and the experiments that were carried out on him. The man cared nothing for his well-being.

Diving into the detail was hard for him as he told the story... Thankfully, the bond he shared with his mate made it easier for him. She saw what he remembered and through that, few words were required for an explanation.

Day after day, the boy was pierced, poked and prodded and the scientists that had accepted the king's offer took the time to study the divine energy that flowed through the boy's veins.

As it turned out, the boy had far more power compared to the ordinary royal and research was made to try and discover what made him special from the rest of them. At first, there were no results and it seemed the boy was just the same as all of them, but then...

After everything they had done to his body, something manifested within him. A power to resist torture. He became impervious to needles and resistant to the drugs they used.

When the king was sure there was nothing else he could do to the boy, he let him be. Cole soon came to know, after numerous attempts to get his father's attention, that he was not meant to be in his presence.

The sad part about coming to this realisation was that he couldn't blame him. After all, he'd heard the stories about his father and mother before he was born.

It was his birth that had brought about the demise of the king's wife. Resentment towards the concept of a mate had almost grown within him, but the new queen, Margaret had curbed it from him before he could begin to hate them.

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'Call it weird... but in my eyes. A bond that was so strong that it left a man as powerful as my father stranded was beautiful,' he tried explaining his reasoning.

'The story about my father and how he came to lose his mate was known through the castle. There was nothing he could do to prevent her from dying. He watched her lose her life while the doctors tried all they could after my birth. She'd lost a lot of blood and was fading fast.

The king was not strong enough to protect her, or at least, that is what I chose to believe on that day. In order to train me to be able to do what he couldn't.

I had faced the bitterness that came from his loss. He might have put me through a lot, but once I had gained my resistance to torture, I continued to see him in pain. The only difference this time was that he couldn't put all his frustrations onto anyone else.'

Cole narrated as the images of the boy training with the pack warriors, challenging the beta alphas and extra in the woods when he was supposed to be relaxing.

Katie almost found something similar between the two of them, but Cole, unlike her, knew when he'd hit his limit. Once he did, he would retire for the day.

'I challenged pack warriors to duels and lost many times, but with time, my skill and strength grew. By the time I left home, the only ones I couldn't beat were the king's beta alphas and the top warriors that came second only to the beta alphas,' he continued, showing the numerous times that Alpha Cross had thrown him across the training arena. The boy never gave up and kept getting back up until he couldn't do so anymore.

During this time, he made two friends who would stick with him through it all, Caden and Jason, admiring his spirit.

The two of them trained with him and did their best to keep up with their alpha. The intense training got them out of their peers' league fast enough, but it was still not enough to beat the beta alphas even when they teamed up.

'When did you and your father start to...' Katie was still asking when the images stopped rushing and started going back in reverse.

'It might be the most vivid memory I have of him. It was also the day that everything changed for us. When he started acting like my father for the first time and started making up for the lost time. I was about eleven at the time,' Cole said to her before going quiet and letting the memory play for his mate to watch.

The eleven-year-old version of Cole had gathered his nerves and was finally going to talk to his father. It had been a while since the man had even looked him straight in the eye, but Cole was confident that he had to talk to him. He reached the king's office and knocked at the door. When no answer came through, Cole pushed the door open.

To his surprise, the door budged and let him through. He was stunned by what he saw inside. Papers lay strewn across the ground. Bottles of alcohol were randomly scattered about the room and the office stunk of booze. His father had his head on the desk, snoring very loudly.

Cole entered the office and looked about the room, trying to understand why the king would subject himself to this kind of life each and every day.

It wasn't the first time he was hearing of something like this, but the first he was seeing it for himself. His father's beta alphas had made a comment or two about his cringe-worthy habits.

Cole walked up to the sleeping royal and froze at the item in his hand. Under the man's hand was a picture frame of a stunningly beautiful woman.

Cole knew the picture well. How couldn't he? It was the picture of the person that had brought him into the world. His mother and the former queen of Lycaon, Helena Lycaon.

Chapter 276 Her Name Was...

The boy spent his time cleaning his father's office, putting away the bottles and trash lying around. He arranged his father's desk in the best way that he could.

After having paid attention to the matters the beta alphas often discussed, he found that some of the documents on the king's desk were of things that he'd heard about.

Cole arranged the work into piles of finished and unfinished. There were those he tried to go through on his own, leaving drafts of his solutions in the finished pile and others he arranged in a way the king could go through as fast and efficiently as he felt possible.

Things he didn't understand at all got their own pile as well. When he was done, he sat on the sofa on the other side of the king's desk and nodded off from waiting for the king to wake up.

The king woke up moments later to an organised office with his head pounding in pain. Before he could appreciate what had been done for him, he saw the boy sleeping on the sofa.

A scowl immediately graced his face. One that Cole had now grown used to, "Get up, boy. What are you doing in my office?"

Cole's sharp ears picked up on the harsh voice and his reflexes kicked in, allowing him to seat up and react quickly, "Oh hi... Father..."

"You should stop calling me that. I am the alpha of the Lycaon empire. So you will address me as such," the king barked, rubbing his face before looking about his desk.

It was not in the order he had left it and he could tell from the boy's childish handwriting that he'd been messing around with his work.

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The picture frame in his hand told him the boy had not touched it. "You have some brains to know you shouldn't have touched this. What were you doing at my desk?"

"Well, I hadn't come to get into your work or anything. I just came here to talk to you. I heard from the beta alphas that you had a meeting tomorrow in the morning, so I thought I would help with some of the work. Let me..."

"This is none of your concern. Do you hear me? You don't come into this room. You don't show your face. Damn it, have you forgotten everything I've told you till now? Has nothing got into that thick skull of yours boy?" the man yelled at Cole. The boy was quiet for much longer than the king could wait, "Well boy, what do you have to say for yourself?"

Cole sighed, "I came earlier to ask you something about..." the boy swallowed. The words were stuck in his throat. He hadn't thought it would be this hard for him to say it. Breathing in deeply, he spoke up "I wanted to ask what she was like... the queen. My mother. I've heard only what everyone knew about her, but I know there isn't someone who would know more about her but you. So I was thinking..."

"You have no right. None whatsoever... Do you hear me?" the king bellowed and watched the boy shrink back from his fury. Even after his outburst, however, the boy didn't rush for the door. He stayed in his seat.

"I can't be injured or at least, it's difficult," the boy reminded the king before he could strike him.

The king sighed and rubbed his temples. The boy was still before him and very insistent on staying... and it was getting on his nerves, "This boy must be testing my limits," the king mumbled to himself. To Cole, "Yeah, what of it?"

"Well, the reason for this power is all the needles and poisons that you had injected into me. I can't blame the scientists since they were only ordered by someone else. I know the person responsible for all my suffering though."

'The boy's finally gone mad. It wasn't a secret to him that I ordered all that,' the king inwardly sighed, watching the boy speak.

"It's my mother," the boy answered bluntly, keeping his eyes away from his father.

The king's anger began to boil anew, dwarfing what he'd felt before towards the boy. Through gritted teeth, "You've got some nerve to say such a thing..."

"No, Father..." the boy cut him off. His breath became sharp and uneven. He had never stood up to him before, but he had to one day and today was the day that he'd chosen to do that. The king was surprised by the behaviour.

"Oh, is there something you want to say? Come on... Let's hear it."

"I have heard stories about my father and mother. I have heard of the kind and dashing Alpha Trevor Lycaon," the king smirked at the boy's words, "But that's not the person I've come to know. When the kind king looks at me, he scowls and starts thinking of ways to remind me of the sin I committed."

"Sin?" the king wondered, almost shocked by the boy's words. Cole continued as though he'd missed his interruption.

"My crime of being born and robbing him of his mate. I can't imagine what that must have been like... After all, that day, you lost the most important person in your life and merely gained a reminder of that," the boy was finally done seething.

Little Cole took his seat once again, "I've thought about so many things. Royals' minds develop fast. I knew I had to have done something wrong at a young age and I soon found out what it was.

I could have solved it all my way, but the new queen taught me everything about being royal. My responsibilities and what it means for me to be who I am. What it means for me to be a firstborn. Many times I wonder if I could ever be as strong as you are..."

"Strong?" the king asked, this time Cole heard him. The king's rage had simmered down as he got to hear the thoughts that swarmed his son's mind and not the boy he always scowled at when he saw him.

"Yes, strong. You lost her and yet here you are, still running the kingdom. They say many would take their own lives in that situation, but you are still running the Lycaon empire in spite of all that," Cole praised the king.

"What makes you think you are not strong?" the king sighed, going through the other documents that were laid in the unfinished pile.

“Well, for starters, I haven’t felt the kind of pain you have, but I already feel like I’m at my limit,” the king paused at the boy’s response and tried to decipher, ‘limit... what limit?’

“I have thought about it so many times. What would it be like to be free of all of this? What would it be like to leave my life behind? At this point, anything is better than what I’m going through right now.”

“What gives...”

“You know father...” the boy cut him off once more, letting his eyes wander the portraits in the room, “You might have lost your mate that day... but I... it was like I was born without a family.”

Silence took over the room... the king’s eyes looked misty as he thought through the boy’s words. The two of them had never had a conversation. ‘They grow up so fast,’ the king thought to himself.

Realising he’d missed the boy’s entire childhood life. “What kept you from running then?” while the king didn’t want to think of it, curiosity tugged at him.

“I’m royalty... and your only heir. The entire werewolf empire depends on us. If I were to vanish one day, I would forsake many of them.

I read the documentation on the transfer of the power of a royal in case an heir was not present. I didn’t like it either. So... countless times, I have dismissed the idea. I was stuck for a long time, but everyone has a breaking point... or so I’ve heard. Before deciding on leaving, I decided to come here and talk to you first,” the boy explained.

The king looked from the boy to the picture frame in his hand. The similarity between the two people was uncanny. In mind as well, now he believed.

The boy reminded him so much of her that it hurt him every time. He’d tried everything he could, but the boy wasn’t going anywhere. He was more of a constant reminder than the pictures and the memories he heard. He was a spitting image of her in character as well. It was like she was right in front of him, but not the same and it tore at him.

And now of all times, he was channelling more of her than he’d ever thought possible. The queen had died to bring a miracle into the world. “Do you hate me, Cole?” the king asked.

“No, I don’t,” the boy chuckled, “I merely admire you. I know it’s weird, but I also know you’re not perfect. You were bound to snap one way or another and if I was going to be on the receiving end, I wouldn’t have minded that much. The empire is still standing and many werewolves look up to you.”

“What brought you here, Cole?” the man sighed, “I could just call on the beta alphas to give you a thrashing for your behaviour?”

The king looked up when the boy wouldn’t answer. Cole had his eye pinned to a portrait somewhere else. Turning to see what he was looking at, he came face to face with the former queen, “What would she have said to bring you back?” Cole asked.

“I won’t try to think through that question. I know what she would say and I wouldn’t be so happy to hear it either. Cole, confronting me about what’s happened the past years is not going to fix anything,” the king finally said to him.

"I know that, father... And that's not what I came here to ask you about. I just... wanted to know what she was truly like. I've heard stories from almost everyone in the palace, but not from the person that's supposed to remember her the best," Cole answered before smiling dejectedly, "I guess I won't get that much. I'll let you be, father... I'm sorry for bothering you."

The boy bowed and turned to leave swiftly. The boy's swift movements were enough to hide the tears that had started to stream down his face, "Cole, wait..." the young prince froze in place, "Take a seat."

The king resigned to his seat. Looking once more at the files the boy had tried to solve on his own, he found that he'd done the work wonderfully.

There was nothing wrong with the boy his wife had given him. Even after doing all he'd done to him, the boy still tried to reach out to him... just like his mother had done before him, 'Your son is just like you,' he thought to himself, wiping the glass protecting the picture in his hand as though she could hear his thoughts.

The face of the beautiful Queen Helena's warm smile filled the king's mind as though encouraging him to take the first step towards reconciliation with his son.

'What's wrong with the two of you?' He handed the picture he was holding in his hand over to the boy in front of his desk. Cole, slowly took it from him, "Her name was Helena and she was the greatest person I'd ever met."

Chapter 277 Sunrise... and a Healing Heart

Katie was pulled from her mate's memories only to find that Cole had fallen fast asleep. When he had fallen asleep was not known to her. The faint traces of tears on his face showed that he'd probably fallen asleep a while ago and continued to dream after he was sleeping.

She caressed his cheek, wiping a fresh new tear that broke from its confines mirroring a similar glistening bead one of her own, 'I guess strength comes in many forms.'

She thought to herself, noticing the man was finally free of the gloom that had plagued his mind. A cold breeze pushed open the doors of the balcony, notifying the girl of a change that she could only describe as a miracle.

There was a drop of rain falling anymore, not even the slightest drizzle of rain and the faint traces of a power that had arrested the sky were gone... 'So it was you...'

With the calming breeze coming from the balcony, the girl was soon lulled to sleep as well. The night passed even faster than the girl could have imagined and she rose early the next morning, a rarity that hadn't occurred in quite some time.

"Hey... Hey... Sleeping future king, just how long are you planning to stay in bed?" Katie poked her mate's cheek beside her.

"As long as I feel I need... What are you doing up at this hour? It's not even six yet. You haven't been able to get up this early in a while?" the alpha groaned, pulling a pillow from under him and covering his head.

“Well, I... That doesn’t matter right now,” the girl huffed ripping the pillow from his grip, “Now get up and look and follow me.”

Once Cole realised she wasn’t going to let him be, he rolled out of bed and got ready as fast as she could let him(which almost got him out the door in a shirt put on inside out).

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“Come on, you’re taking far too long,” she called to him, dragging him through the palace in a jumpy mood similar to that of an excited child. Losing the remaining embers of sleep was easy once Cole heard a voice that excited.

“Hey, wait up. You’ll trip if you keep running that fast,” Cole called out to Katie as he tried to keep up the pace, “How are you this energetic though?” Hope, as well as worry, seeped into his voice.

“Oh, don’t worry about that. What matters is what I have to show you?” the girl responded, quickly. Cole followed her as she bounded up the stairs and to her destination.

‘She definitely knows her way about the palace. As he followed, he soon figured she was heading for the top floor. A smile graced his lips when he noticed she was starting to regain her cheery nature.

They finally reached the top floor and ascended the stairs that led into one of the towers. Katie had vanished into one of the rooms at the top whilst the alpha followed his mate’s scent with a smile he simply couldn’t wipe off.

“Now what’s so nice about this place that you wanted to...” he froze upon entering the room.

From his memory of the palace, it was one of the few rooms in the place with a balcony and also one with the best view of the palace grounds, however, with how high it was into the air, no one used it for fear of falling accidents. The room was now being used as a storeroom, or so Cole had thought.

The room had been completely cleared and cleaned till it was spotless. The floors and furniture were sparkling clean, but that wasn’t what caught his attention the most.

It was the beautiful girl who stood on the balcony letting the wind blow through her long dark locks. This explained the change in her scent’s intensity, but now he was worried that she was being a little bit too free-spirited for safety, “Hey, Katie, you have to be...”

“Cole, look... Out there... Over the horizon,” the girl pointed excitedly, before stepping out of the way for him to see what she was saying.

Red streaks of sunlight painted the sky announcing the arrival of a light that hadn’t been seen in over a week. Seeing the sunrise had never felt so nostalgic before. After the rains that had terrorized the empire, it was starting to look like they would never see it again, “Is that...”

“Sunrise, Cole. The sun is rising again,” the girl ran back to him and grabbed his hand, pulling him to the balcony as well, “Come on.”

Following her, the near-petrified alpha watched the sun begin its journey for the first time in a little over a week. It had been a long time since they’d seen the sight.

The sky turned beautiful shades of red that swirled with clouds painting a perfect scenery with the vibrant green of the woods below it, "I never thought it could look so... beautiful."

Katie smiled at her mate's realisation, "Yeah... It's also a symbol of the peace in your heart."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Cole asked her.

"Don't overthink it," she responded, planting her lips on his. He got the message she was trying to tell him in one go.

While he didn't want to believe it was his fault for the missing sunshine, the warmth from his mate's embrace wiped all distracting worrying thoughts from his mind and allowed him to simply accept the moment for what it was... and enjoy it.

'Perhaps, it would be better if I didn't overthink it...' he replied through the mind link.

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The princess ordered that their breakfast be brought for them in their room. The assortment of cookies and bread that were brought had no idea what they'd been signed up for.

Cole made sure to keep Katie's plate at least half full without her noticing. With how happy she was, he was sure she was capable of eating so much more if she didn't realise what was happening.

Over the past days, he'd noticed a significant drop in her appetite and this was his first attempt at remedying it.

When the girl noticed, "Hey, what do you think you're doing?"

"I was just helping you reach the scones. I wouldn't want you to stretch so far to reach them, dear," the man chuckled nervously.

"Cole, you're holding a muffin," the girl groaned, "If you're trying to make me eat, don't lie about it."

"Well... umm, I just want you to get better faster. Have you eaten to your fill since that day?" Cole asked her.

"No, I haven't. What does that have to..."

"Aha... So you are still healing? Are you okay?" the royal cut her off, trying to break through his mate's protective barrier.

Chapter 278 Shimmering River

"Of course, I am okay. Why wouldn't I be?" Katie asked, this time noticing the worry behind his words and action. No matter how much he told him that, he just didn't seem capable of letting it go.

"Your metabolism is faster than it was in Brigadia. It can only mean you've been trying to heal your body with everything you eat. Bare with me, Katie, but you need to get better and I'm worried about you," he pleaded, holding his hands up with his palms together with his head bowed down.

Katie looked at the man before her and sighed. She could feel the worry coming from him through their link, "How could I say no to something like that? I don't want to see you doing something like that in public though. Come on... It's embarrassing," she blushed red.

"Huh, what's embarrassing about a girl with an appetite? It is the easiest way for me to know that you're returning to your old self," Cole replied with a hearty smile.

The girl found herself laughing at his statement. It was not the first time she'd heard him compliment something she found embarrassing.

The last time she could remember was the time she'd talked about her ability to talk to animals. His reaction had blown her expectations. This was no different, "Was it something I said?"

"No, no, Cole. It's not," she replied when her laughter began to die down, "Now let's finish up. Sandra should be waiting for me by now." Continuing in her private thoughts, 'You're just perfect.'

Her following thoughts weren't without worry though, 'My old self... huh?'

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Sandra stood in the parking lot leaning against a black SUV while she waited for the hunter/former mentor. Humming to a tune she'd heard recently from Jason's phone, she continued to wait.

She'd been waiting a short while before she heard rushed footsteps coming towards her, "Sandra... Sandra..." Katie's voice came from the car at the start of the parking lot. The hunter was... oddly winded, but still tried to speak, "I'm sorry, I'm... late... Oof, those are so many stairs."

"Are you okay, Katie?" Sandra asked the girl as she tried to catch her breath. She put her hand to her friend's forehead and noticed there was barely a drop of sweat. Her temperature was alright as well.

"Yeah, just a little winded is all," Katie replied, "We should get going. Do you know where the Hunter's Agency is?"

"Yeah, I know where it is, but Jason assigned us a driver. He'll wait for us until we are done and bring us back... Or take us shopping as I'd originally thought to do."

Katie smirked at the girl's idea, "Very well. What are we waiting for then?" she responded, smiling at her friend before heading for the door of the SUV. When the former mentor had taken her seat in the car, Sandra tried looking back to gauge what distance the girl had run to reach her.

No matter what way she looked at it, she just simply couldn't find a reason for Katie to have been panting as badly as she'd been doing. Scrunching her eyebrows in confusion, she entered the car.

The two of them sat in the back and asked the music to be turned up while they waited. Taking in the sights as they drove through was breathtaking for both of them, "It's amazing, isn't it, Katie?"

"Yeah, it is. Lycaon doesn't have the same feel to it as Sirius, but you can't deny the peace in this city. Even after what happened a week ago, the city seems to be healing already," Katie responded.

“Exactly... the people here though... They know their food,” Sandra replied, pointing to the restaurants as they drove through the city.

Katie wondered what the girl was trying to point out when she spoke of food, but dumped the idea the moment she realised her stomach was already drained of all its contents.

“Food is one thing all werewolves have in com-mon...” Katie went silent as the car drove over a bridge.

Out the window, they could clearly see a river that flowed through the city much like the one in the Sirius capital.

The sun was rising over the horizon and its rays bounced off the surface of the smooth flowing river, giving it a beautiful glassy appearance that captured the eyes of anyone that saw it.

The river seemed to flow through the capital and continue on endlessly into the forest and vanish as far as the eye could see.

“Beautiful,” the girl exclaimed before she could stop herself.

“Isn’t it?” the driver intervened, “one of the two Great Sister rivers. This one was never named by the king of Lycaon, so the Sirius empire chose to call the entire thing the Great Sirius river even though they are originally two rivers to speak of.”

“Do the rivers have any connection to each other?” Katie asked, suddenly interested in knowing what the man had to say.

“Well yeah, according to what the legends say. It’s said that the two rivers meet at a confluence deep into no man’s land. When the two royals were looking for humans to turn and increase their forces, they went their different ways at that confluence, following the river upstream and the rivers led the two of them apart until they found the places on which they built the two Great capitals and founded the empires.”

Katie mused as they passed the large bridge, mesmerised by the sun reflecting off the gushing water. The rest of the journey was a little quieter as they soon reached the Hunter’s Agency.

“Wow, it’s huge,” Katie exclaimed when they got out of the car.

“Oh, I just realised you never once visited the Hunter’s Agency back in Sirius,” Sandra remembered, “Our little facility back in Brigadia is nothing in comparison.” The girl chuckled nervously, shivers going through her body...

Katie noticed and pulled her friend close, “Hey, calm down, okay? You’re going to do great. Once you have a gift, it’s not going... anywhere.”

Sandra thought she felt something wrong with the way the girl said her words of wisdom, but seeing as she was doing her best to cheer her on, she couldn’t let her mind focus on anything other than the task ahead of her, “Yeah... you must be right...” she convinced herself.

Chapter 279 Unrivaled Potential And Withering Resolve

Sandra walked through the intricately designed gates of the great facility with Katie following behind. The royal wouldn't let her eyes settle on a single thing.

Unlike the one they were used to back in Brigadia, this one consisted of multiple buildings that towered almost thrice the height of the highest one in Brigadia. The hunters that milled through were far too busy to pay them any attention which felt more like a relief to Sandra.

Thinking back to the Agency in Brigadia, it would have been hard for them to go anywhere without a hunter approaching Katie to make some kind of brief conversation before moving on. The two of them had come to know the hunters at home that it felt like a big family.

"This is nothing like the one in Brigadia at all, is it?" Katie mused whilst looking around.

"Nope, it's nothing like it at all," Sandra responded, getting her bearings and leading Katie to the main building or so Katie thought. It was the one facing the gates directly.

Inside, the building was cool with air blowing through it evenly from the air conditioners placed at every entrance. However, stepping into the main building did not save them from the utter confusion of being here for the first time.

"I'm glad the two of you could make it," a male voice came to their rescue when they were just about to make it to the counter.

Delighted, Katie was hugging her adoptive father before he had time to complain about it, "I missed you too, Katie."

"Mr Tom, where am I..."

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"Oh, your examination will be conducted in one of the labs. Follow me if you will," Tom responded, walking them to the desk at the reception. The man spoke with the woman at the other side of the desk and got the paperwork necessary. While Sandra worked on signing the papers, the man inched closer to his adoptive daughter, "Are you feeling better, Katie?"

Katie sighed, "Well, I am trying to. The pain in my body is almost gone, but..."

"What is it?" the man asked her, now worried that something might be worse than he'd imagined. Upon seeing the man's worried expression, Katie couldn't help but lose the courage to get her words out.

"It's probably nothing, Uncle Tom. Don't worry about it," she forced a smile.

"Are you sure?" she nodded, getting him to let it go. Tom looked her in the eye and decided against pressing the matter any further, "Very well. The family said they would like to get to know you."

"What...?" Katie blanched. Her memories of the man that had spoken at the memorial came back to her, "Come to think of it, there was that man at the memorial yesterday. Who was he?"

"Oh, that is my brother, Thorrin. Did you get to talk to him?"

"No, I went straight home after all the tiring speeches. I was feeling exhausted," she replied with a sad smile.

“Exhausted? What do you...”

“I’m done with the paperwork. What’s next, Mr Tom? Do I get my blood taken and checked for traces of the gift within it? What’s supposed to happen?” Sandra interrupted.

‘Safe...’ Katie breathed out in relief at the interruption.

“Oh no. It’s nothing like that Sandra. Let me take you to the lab where you’ll be tested,” the man announced, leading the way to the elevator.

The trio remained silent as they followed Tom’s lead. It was evident that Sandra was indeed nervous about the test she was about to go through.

Katie had already gone through hers and pretty much knew there was nothing for her friend to worry about, but none of that would have helped the nervous girl. They could both only watch everything unfold before them.

Stepping out of the elevator on the third floor, Tom stepped out as another hunter went in. There was a look of surprise on the woman’s face before she relaxed. Katie, used to that reaction, only passed by her as though nothing had happened. Similar reactions were seen as they walked through the hallway, attracting more attention.

On both sides, they found there to be laboratories with different instruments, almost all of them in use. At one point, Katie’s nose began to itch as she got a whiff of wolfsbane being tampered with in one of the labs, “What is this place for, Uncle?”

“Well, this is where most of the research is carried about. It would also happen to be where humans are trying to bridge the gap between science and divine energy. As of right now, there has been next to no progress on the matter,” he explained.

“Of course, there wouldn’t be. You get to see someone shifting from their human bodies into large wolves. How will that ever connect with science?” Katie huffed.

“You’re right about that,” the man chuckled, “However, there are some stunning discoveries to be made along the way.”

Finally leading them to the room they were going to. This one bore no windows or doors that let them see inside. Katie searched her mind for a sense of what was inside, but nothing came through, as she’d expected. Not even the detection of life in the room let alone the number of people inside.

She was still far too tired to pick up on anything. She normally subconsciously kept watch of a three-kilometre radius, but at the moment, there was nothing she could pick up on.

The door opened almost noiselessly leading them into a large room filled with machines and monitors. There was a glass ahead separating the observation room from the other part of the room.

On the other side of the glass which Katie was now sure peeked down below, was a racetrack with plenty of obstacles. In the middle of the racetrack was a single machine that Katie knew quite well.

It was built like the reverse of a weight balance. The hunter being tested would be required to lift the handle as much as they could with both hands and the versatile equipment would measure just how much force they were able to output.

If the force the hunter was capable of using was abnormally more than their physique suggested, then it would be confirmed that they had the Strength Prometheus gift.

Katie had gone through both tests as her adoptive parents were confused as to which gift she had. Until it was accepted that she had both gifts, it was impossible for any one hunter to believe that she'd been granted both.

Some of them convinced themselves that she was just really athletic, but the truth came out on the day of her examination.

"Hey, Katie... that race track," Sandra shivered at what she was supposed to go through.

Katie looked at the obstacles on the racetrack. Most of them were standard obstacles, however, there was barely any distance between them, "You forget that it's an agility gift, Sandra, speed is sort of like a side effect of that agility."

"What if I was just really good at controlling my breathing out in the woods and that's why I was able to..."

"Your confidence is boundless when you're protecting others. I would have never thought something like this would put you on edge," Katie chuckled at her friend's behaviour, "Don't worry, Sandra. You'll do great."

Sandra sighed and walked in as well, "Well, hunters, I have brought a candidate of my own."

Most of the scientists that hadn't already noticed them turned to see them, "Oh, Hunter Thomas, we thought you were just making an inspection."

Tom sighed, "While it might have been nice to just drop in and watch you all scam in attempts to fix everything wrong on your computers, that is not why I am here.

This here is Sandra Alastair and I believe she is in possession of an agility gift. We are here to have it evaluated."

"Oh, okay then. She'll have to get dressed in one of the uniforms," the man answered leading the girl away from them.

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"Okay, Sandra, we would like you to just relax and do this just like would to get through the race track as fast as you can. Try to stay relaxed.

If you have the gift, you won't actually exert yourself as much as you think you have to," the man said over the speakers.

Sandra looked up to the glass and began to wonder what kind of room they were in and how it was connected to the other building they'd been walking through. The architecture just seemed too complicated to make sense in her mind's eye.

The girl stretched her limbs in the hopes of getting rid of the nervousness that racked her. The latex outfit they had her wear was not helping her nerves either. It was almost like she could feel the machines within the uniform that was reading her vitals.

Lights above the starting point began to blink red while a beeping sound simultaneously blared through the entire room. After blinking three times, the lights went green and Sandra was off, raising a small plume of dust with the force of her foot.

"Woah, that was unexpected. She's faster than the average beginner. Are you sure she has only just awakened this gift?" one of the scientists asked while poring over the readings on the screens excitedly, "The scanners on the suit are picking up massive readings of divine energy. They are way too high for someone who's only just awakened their gift."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Katie asked the man.

"Well, it either means her gift has been active, but she kept it from everyone else or... She has a will to improve herself so much that it's forcing her body to work at peak levels. If that's the case, then we're looking at someone with the potential to grow really strong in a short amount of time. It's not unheard of. I can think of a few hunters that had these same kinds of readers. Quite a few indeed."

The way the man said 'quite a few' made it obvious who he was talking about, however, the hunters ignored his enthusiasm and turned their eyes on the girl dashing about the obstacle course.

Katie watched her friend weave through the obstacles almost effortlessly. The obstacles were many and difficult to evade, but for some reason, Sandra was having no trouble with any of them.

At some point where she had to jump hurdles, it seemed as though the girl was only slowed down during the moments when her feet did not touch the ground, "Look at her go. It's like she was made for that gift." The girl exclaimed watching her friend dash about almost blurry to her eyes.

"She definitely has potential," Tom responded firmly.

While the girl completed the rest of the course, Katie went through the door that would take her to the other side of the laboratory that Sandra was in.

Picking a bottle of water on her way there. The race course was also meant to test endurance. From how big it had been made coupled with the laps Sandra had already run around it, Katie could tell the girl was about to reach her limit.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs leading onto the race track, the girl stopped, taking note of her ragged breathing. Sweat had already started to form on her brow. She'd been trying to ignore it, but the more something like that happened, the more she worried about it.

"Hey Sandra," she called out to her friend who'd only just collapsed at the centre of the racetrack, "You did well, Sandra."

“You think so... You think I was going too slow, don't you?” the girl's shoulders slumped. Katie laughed at her friend's accusations.

“Here, drink up, Sandra. You'll have a license in no time,” she handed her friend the bottle, kneeling beside her while she tried to recover.

Her eyes wandered from her tired friend and landed on the machine that measured the strength Prometheus' gift, her thoughts wandering as well, ‘You were so fast... Honestly, I could barely follow your movements.’

For a moment, she let her hand rest on the machine meant to test grip strength. Sandra wasn't watching this and no one else was. Katie, however, kept her neutral expression when she squeezed the machine as hard as she could.

It wouldn't budge.

Chapter 280 Daydreaming

It had been a week since the school trip to the reserve and the news of the Lycaon king's death had reached the kingdom of Sirius. Receiving the horrid account of the events had gotten the usually jovial mood in the Sirius empire completely down and sombre.

The werewolves of the Sirius empire were in mourning. The depressing rain that didn't seem to have an end to it kept the mood down longer.

It was almost as though someone was making it rain on purpose. Umbrellas had become the one accessory everyone had to carry around with them.

‘Oh, Katie, I hope you're fine,’ Lina thought to herself while she stared out the classroom window. The rain constantly pelted the glass pane in a rhythmic tone that neither sped up nor lessened.

The loud ringing of the bell snatched her out of her thoughts and brought her back to the present.

“Hey. Daydreaming again, I see,” a familiar voice brought more reason for her to keep going. News of Katie's condition had reached them only a day after finding out what Honour was.

Her heroic rush to keep the rogue king from escaping was quickly forgotten and replaced with deep worry for her life.

“Well, yeah. I can barely keep myself awake with all this rain,” Lina stretched, covering her mouth to hide the yawn that escaped her. The princess got up from her seat and started packing her things.

“I can't believe school continued as if nothing had happened at all,” Honour slumped her shoulders.

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“Oh? The school was going to continue with or without what happened. I just don't understand why you had to come to school after the time you had,” Lina regarded her friend with sympathy.

“Come on, Lina. You know you can't survive school without me. I had to come here to take care of you. Who else would do that?” Honour joked.

"I can think of a few names," a voice interrupted them.

"I was actually just thinking of only one name, but it seems..." Lina let her sentence linger as she took in the new escorts she was getting.

Ginger and Bree were standing on both sides of the delta. The two girls bowed slightly to acknowledge the girl's superiority, "How did you even get here so fast? The bell has just rung. It was literally a moment ago."

Crysta smiled proudly, "When one's as diligent as I am, time itself seems to bend to get me where I'm supposed to be in a shorter time than..."

"She gets out of class before the bell had even rung. The teacher doesn't even call after her these days," Bree cut her off nonchalantly. Lina thought she noticed a glint of disgust, but dismissed it in the next second as part of the paranoia she'd developed towards the three girls.

"You're no fun, Bree," Crysta huffed, stepping aside to let Lina through. The royal, recognising her gesture started leading the way to the Den.

Honour walked beside her, narrating all the horrors of a carnivorous flower she'd only come to know about from the library.

Lina was convinced from the start that the plant could only be found in fairy tales as she couldn't begin to fathom the idea of there being a plant alive that her friend had never heard of.

Nonetheless, the girl listened to Honour go on and on about one of her favourite topics. Before any of them had noticed, they were taking their places in the Den, "Honour, in all your research on plants, have you ever found something that's resistant to wolfsbane at least?" Lina asked, her mind having stumbled on the random idea.

"Huh, none that I've heard of, but if there was ever such a thing, it would probably take even longer for someone to turn it into a medicine," the girl replied.

"How come?" Lina asked.

"Werewolf anatomy is complicated that most of the drugs they use on us have taken decades to develop. I've heard there are labs all over the world that are meant to bridge that gap with next to no success in the field," Honour responded, "Now if I may take my leave."

"Honour, you're eating with us today," Lina reached for her friend's hand before she could leave the VIP section of the Den.

"But Lina, I have to..."

"Let them handle it for today. You don't have to. Please, Honour. Just for today," the girl begged her friend. Honour squirmed under her friend's pleading gaze. The word 'no', along with all other gestures of refusal had completely vanished from her vocabulary.

Like an angel sent from the skies, a voice came from outside the VIP section, "Enjoy yourself for once, Honour. It's not like an official member of the staff. One volunteer less won't make us slower in the job we signed up for."

“You hear that. You get to stay,” Lina grinned widely. The Fates must have been smiling with her at that moment.

“Wait, this whole time, you were doing that work as a volunteer?” Crysta sounded bewildered.

“Yeah, is that weird?” the girl laughed nervously, taking a seat beside Lina for the first time.

“No, it’s not weird at all. Just disgustingly nice,” an irritated voice interrupted them. Lina finally noticed the alpha seated at the opposite side with his head on the table.

Once again, a cigar was missing from his mouth and he was just as irritable as always, even more so without the nicotine in his system, a drug that seemed to affect werewolves just the same as humans, but with less harmful effects on werewolves.

“Someone is in a bad mood as always,” Lina raised her voice so he could hear. Wyatt lifted his face so he could look the royal in the eye through the narrow slits made by his eyelids right before slumping his head back down.

There wasn’t another word from him after that. Liam never showed up to the VIP section that day... as it had been for days on end since the trip.

The two alphas never talked to each other anymore and Wyatt was always grumpy. Whether the reason was his friend ignoring him or something else entirely was not known by anyone around him.

After all, he was known for caring about nothing in his life. He just did as he pleased and everyone let him be. Perhaps that lifestyle was finally catching up to him.

The day proceeded in high spirits for Lina and her friends as their goal was to continue having a normal school life.

Every once in a while, the moment of that decision would rattle through Lina’s mind. The day they found out about Honour...

“Lina, what are we going to do about this? Are we to remain quiet or tell the king?” Crysta had asked her while they sat in the car on their way back to the palace that night. They spoke through the mind link to keep the driver from hearing their conversation and even then made sure to keep their conversation hidden from the pack link entirely.

“No, we cannot let father know anything about this just yet. Honour still has almost two years with us. If people were to find out what she is, there is no telling what will happen,” Lina said to her.

“I know that. Keeping quiet helps Honour continue living a normal life, but then what happens to you and her? I’ve never seen Honour in a mood to be alone even from you,” the girl continued asking her questions.

Lina wanted to scream into her ear to shut up, but the more the girl spoke, the more Lina got a grip of what she was supposed to be thinking about. Without her obnoxious guidance, the girl would have gotten herself stuck in a loop of worry for her dear friend.

After giving it some thought, the princess replied, "Fine, this is what we will do, Crysta. We will let her know that her secret is safe with us..."

... lastly, we will continue our lives as though she didn't just receive the worst news from her parents. We will help her live out the rest of her life as a werewolf in happiness. It will be our mission to help keep her mind off all of this," Lina told the girl.

Crysta took a moment of hesitation before smiling in contentment, "Yes, your highness."

"Try not to call me that..."

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"Lina... Earth to Lina," the girl snapped out of her thoughts once again, "Honestly, it's like you're daydreaming most of the time," Crysta sighed. Looking around her, Lina noticed the class was already empty.

"Did I miss the bell?" she asked.

"You seemed to have missed a lot more than the bell," Honour replied. Your notes are not even complete."

"Oh yeah," Lina exclaimed, taking a look at the notes in her book that had stopped making sense half a page from her hand. Her handwriting had stayed alright even though she didn't understand what she'd been writing.

A purr and information dump in her mind later told her that her wolf had taken over for her during the session.

"Well, I guess I'll have to do more research on the matter when I get home. That's if I remember to do it at all," she said to herself before getting up from her seat.

The group of five walked out of the school building, brandishing umbrellas and started their way to the car, "Crysta, you get Bree and Ginger back to the palace. I'll walk Honour home."

"The car can take all of us where we need to go, you know. We could drop Honour off at her place and..."

"I'd like to take the scenic route home today," Lina cut her off despite the obvious raindrops that pelted her umbrella. Crysta took the hint in her voice, nodded with a slight bow and led the two girls into the car without another word.

"Don't make me come looking for you, Lina," the delta yelled out before entering the car herself. As a parting gesture, they waved at them while the car drove off.

When the car had gone, the two friends began their walk, "This rain doesn't seem natural," Lina cursed.

"Well, that might just be because it isn't," Honour replied cheerfully, "Why did you feel like walking today?"

"I wanted to talk to you privately. Lately, it's almost as if Crysta is always around me and I don't know if you would tell me what I want to hear with her around," Lina voiced her reasons.

“Oh, I see. So that’s the reason I’m standing out here in the rain,” Honour chuckled.

“Yeah, are you mad?” Lina asked her, the humour failing to reach her.

“No, Lina, I’m not mad. I’m not bothered by the rain. One of the perks of being a goddess I guess. Makes sense why I’ve never been sick in my life,” the girl explained, letting her umbrella fall to the side so the rain would reach her directly. Lina rushed to protect the girl, only to stop when a sound came from the forest to their side. The two girls turned at the same time...

Lina’s wolf urged her forward and she complied. Right when she was about to reach the first tree, a dark-haired girl, drenched from head to toe in rainwater stumbled out of the woods barefoot and fell to her knees, her legs seemingly no longer able to support her body.

Her face was pale and held a ghostly expression. Her clothes were torn in random places and she seemed to have cuts all over her body, probably from the woods. “Someone... help... My mother. Rogues...” not much else came out of her before she collapsed on the ground before them.