

Chosen 321

Chapter 321 Crumbling Walls... And a call for help

Feeling the walls she'd learnt to build around herself finally groan for the last time, the Luna gave in to the call of the wild.

She'd been offered help many times before and all those attempts had been eating away at her resolve. This time, she wasn't able to do anything without any help. It almost felt like fate was playing a cruel trick on her.

For a long time, she wanted to scream in frustration each time she found that she was only getting weaker, but that could only last so long. Now she was surrounded by creatures that had ventured into places alien to their habitats for the sole purpose of helping her.

Her resistance crumbled at last and she gave in, speaking of everything that had plagued her mind. She spoke of the escaped prisoners that threatened the king's coronation and the victims she'd managed to save.

She mentioned the lack of power that made her useless. Her weakening state sapped more of her strength with each passing day. She spoke of the training moments in the colossal gym that she wasn't able to attend.

She spoke of Kyle and how much she wanted to help him. She spoke of the family she'd not had so much time to spend within Sirius. She spoke of her adoptive family that she hadn't even gotten the chance to get to know as well as she could have wished.

When the Luna was done talking, she felt a thousand times lighter and had barely noticed the tears that were streaming down her face.

"It looks to me like you'll be needing us more than we had realised ourselves," the lion concluded, inching closer to her face. Katie moved back to escape the approaching lion only to collide with the tree she'd been leaning against. Before she could complain (not like she could. Against the king of beasts, she could do nothing), the lion was licking her face.

"I'm not sure if this is helping," the blue-eyed Luna found herself giggling. She wrapped her arms around the lion's massive neck, drowning her arms in his majestic silky mane in an attempt to move him away from her.

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This, however, proved useless. The struggle against the lion was futile. It was much stronger than she was in her weakened state.

When the lion was sure the salt of tears was gone from the Luna's face, it stopped licking her, "You're much weaker than you were described by the creatures of the reserve."

The girl sighed, "Yeah... I've just been talking about that."

“It’s decided,” the lion finally pulled away from her and bowed, “We will be your strength for as long as we are able and for as long as you need us to be.” The lion declared. A bear and three more lions made themselves known to the girl, drawing closer to the first lion and bowing in a similar gesture...

‘I worked so hard to make sure I was the one everyone had to depend on. I never thought the tables would turn so fast...’ while she wondered how she had reached this situation.

Growing up in Brigadia and even earning the title of Rogue Killer and one hell of a reputation, she couldn’t have thought the words would ever escape her, but they did, “I’ll be counting on you. Lend me your strength,” she could have sworn the lion leading the group smirked at her reply... or was it simply her imagination playing tricks on her.

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Lina Sirius, princess of the Sirius empire, fell into her bed with a washed-out ghostly expression frozen on her face. She was so mentally exhausted, she qualified to have smoke coming out of her brain similar to the animations she’d watched as a child. Oddly enough, the small analogy did run across her mind a couple of times.

At last, her finals were over. Three days of gruesome examinations, courtesy of her parents. Honour, who had come to the palace with her, hung her jacket on the coat rack beside the door, chuckling at the girl’s antics, “Why did they have to make our class do everything in three days while the rest of the school gets to have their exams spread out?” Lina screamed.

“I would guess your parents made that happen, but what do I know?” Madeline replied with a shrug, popping a chip into her mouth from the half-filled bag she’d carried from Honour’s house on their way to the palace.

“I wish I could be more like you, Madeline. You don’t have to go through all this work and risk brain damage. I am wondering though. Why don’t you have to go to school again?” the girl whined.

“I should have my share of school, but the king hasn’t had everything concerning my presence here sorted out. In the meantime, I won’t be able to proceed. Hopefully, I can finish without being held back a year.

Luckily, I didn’t develop scholastic ambitions. That would have been problematic. Being the daughter of the Seeker...” her expression darkened, “Is said to be too dangerous for that kind of ambition.”

The girl stared at the ceiling in thought before continuing further, “I asked my grandmother to at least let me follow my dreams of becoming a chef and opening up a restaurant of my own someday. I’m not the only one with that dream, but I have the talent for it. I don’t know how she did it, but she was able to convince the alpha of our pack to let me apprentice in my free time.”

“Oh, that’s cool. I wish there was a rule against me going to school. Maybe something like... rulers have to learn more about their kingdom and how to rule it instead of wasting their time in school or something like that?” Lina continued complaining, sounding less and less like a princess.

“Do you want to be a ruler though?” Madeline asked with a raised brow, “It sounds like a hassle.”

“Huh, ruling the wolves isn’t a hassle. It’s fulfilling. The royals bear the responsibility of keeping the wolves happy and satisfied with the world as it is. I’m not nearly as good as my dad when it comes to making decisions and doing the right thing when it counts, but he gives me something to look up to,” the girl’s complaining tone had completely vanished from her voice as she explained.

This specific topic lit up a fire in her eyes that the other two girls had never noticed before. ‘Huh, Lina as a queen. Now there is a thought I would have never come up with,’ Madeline thought to herself.

“It must be that royal blood of yours talking,” Honour sighed, “Have you forgotten the meeting we have with the king today?”

“Oh yeah, I almost forgot,” Lina’s voice was now coming out of a large pillow, sounding muffled and even more childish now.

“No, you completely forgot. We should get going now,” Honour walked up to the girl and started nudging her.

“Honour, we could at least first sleep for an hour before having to deal with matters of the empire?” Lina nuzzled deeper into the pillow, her free hand searching for another to bury herself under.

“You can sleep when you’re done talking to the king. You know he rarely calls on you. It might be something important,” Honour replied in a serious tone.

“Do you think it would have something to do with my grandmother?” Madeline’s voice silenced the room.

Lina peeked at her from underneath the pillow, “We’ll find her, Madeline. The hunters are going to be notified to keep a lookout for her when they finally make a sweep of no-man’s-land.”

“I know... but how long do you think it would take the hunters to go through the different parts of the world? What if the rogues have...”

“Don’t allow yourself to think like that? You’ll run yourself crazy. For as long as you haven’t felt that pain in your chest that suggests she has died, you are allowed to hope and pray for her safety,” Honour stopped her, flinching slightly at her odd words... ‘Pray... To whom, I wonder.’ “Put a smile on that face. We have a royal to meet.”

“I’m a royal too. You should put on smiles when coming to meet me too,” Lina held her nose high, having sat up from the bed.

“Ugh, you know what I meant Lina. Let’s get going,” Honour chuckled, now making her way for the door. Lina took that to be a signal for them to actually leave and got up from the bed... against her will.

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Chapter 322 News of a Wounded Sirius

The king was seated in his office, rubbing his temples and not at all on top of things like he usually was, “It’s like the world is trying to implode from the inside out,” the man exclaimed just as the three girls were making an entrance.

"Is something wrong, Father?" Lina called out.

"Yes, Drake. Something is wrong. Well, I'm not sure if I would... wait, Lina, could you please stay in character?" the king exclaimed, finally noticing it was a feminine voice that had referred to him as 'father.'

"It's contagious. I can't help it sometimes," the girl chuckled, taking her seat in front of the king's desk. The king took his time before addressing them.

Queen Martha had refreshments brought to the office and served the king. He was oddly tense for a normal meeting. The tension in the room made the suspense worse.

"I'll get to the point. We rushed your exams because you received an invitation to go to King Cole's coronation. We have all been invited, but I don't think we'll all be able to go, obviously. While we're there, it would be important that you pay your respects to the departed king of the Lycaon empire," the king started, drawing a tight-lipped smile. The king wiped his brow, avoiding his daughter's eyes.

Lina noticed the king's white knuckles along with all the other nervous ticks she rarely witnessed from the king... he was hiding more than he was letting on, "Dad, what aren't you telling us?"

"Well, it's Katie. Beta Alpha Caden reported her condition. She's not doing well," the man replied in a low tone. A gasp went through the room. Drake was the only one that didn't react that way.

"After what she pulled in Lycaon against the rogue king, there were bound to be consequences," the male sighed.

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"That was to be expected and she was hospitalised, but this is different. She was supposed to get better like werewolves always do. What's even more troubling is that medical tests return claiming she's perfectly fine and yet she continues to get weaker and weaker as the days go by," the king's royal aura wavered. Deep lines of worry appeared on his forehead as he relayed the information.

Drake held back his next reply while Lina's breath turned uneven. "That's not all though," the queen picked up.

"What could be worse than that?" Lina muttered.

"Lycaon is under attack." When silence was all that greeted her, she continued, "During the rogue king's escape, there were several prisoners that escaped the dungeons.

These prisoners didn't leave as everyone had hoped. Instead, they stayed behind and began abducting people and wreaking havoc. As of right now, it is known that they will make an attempt against the empire during the coronation. Their goals are not yet clear, but a recording of one of them revealed this much."

"This is not good. Katie cannot defend herself if they were to find her," Lina rushed out.

"Yes, that is true. The future king notified us that her room is guarded at all times and that she doesn't go anywhere without a skilled escort. It's not like she can travel that much either," the queen replied with a sigh.

“Father_”

“Yes, Drake... Oh, sorry, Lina,” giggles rippled through the room.

“I would like to go to Cole’s coronation,” the girl replied.

Madeline trained her eyes on the girl in shock, “Lina, are you sure about that?”

“Yeah... I am. Katie was there for me when I was almost kidnapped. I would like to help her in whatever way I can,” the girl smiled, “I’m also really worried about her. It can’t be easy for her to be... ‘weak’.” The girl scrunched her brows as though she’d tasted something funny... ‘That whole sentence felt wrong.’

“What is that supposed to mean?” Madeline asked. Without ever having the chance to see the hunter, the girl knew little about the person they were talking about.

“I almost forget you weren’t here when she was. Katie is the sister I talk about. She’s... really... really strong,” Lina replied, “And she’s used to protecting everyone that matters to her... or at least... was. The thought of her in a weakened state feels alien to my mind. It must be eating her from the inside out.”

“I’ll have to agree with you on that, Lina,” the queen agreed, “And I would like the whole family to go to Lycaon to give her the support she needs. Alpha Jackson and Alpha Phillip were able to hold the fort when we went to Brigadia, this will be no different.”

“Then it’s settled. We’ll be making our way for the capital in two days,” the king announced, noting the final tone in his wife’s voice and ending the purpose of their meeting. In all honesty, it sounded like it was the decision he was hoping they would reach from the beginning.

“What about Bree?” Honour asked.

“We’ll have to keep an eye out for that one. I can tell she has cut herself off from the mind link. Sean hasn’t done so completely, even though we can’t reach him. The two of them are far from the capital now. Knowing him, the girl is safe, but that’s from what I knew of him before all this,” King Davin scrunched his eyebrows.

His opinion on the man was still shifting within his mind, never taking full form. This was the same state of his emotions towards his uncle, “I’m afraid we are stuck on that matter.”

“I’ll check with Bree’s parents and see if I can figure out anything from there,” Drake replied.

“Thank you, Drake. If she kept a diary and happened to leave it behind... Doubtful, but... It wouldn’t hurt if you tried.” With that said, the meeting was closed and the three girls left the room quickly, following Lina’s lead.

The king smiled upon realising her intended destination. ‘I guess you and Crysta will be just fine,’ he thought to himself.

Chapter 323 Makeover

Katie once again woke up to the emptiness of a bed with her mate gone and the lingering warmth of his presence already starting to dissipate. A nagging frustration worked its way into her mind, "Cole, one of these days, I'm going to throw you into a torture chamber."

A hearty laugh came from the other side of the mind link, "Sorry, I didn't want to wake you. I also didn't know how long you were going to stay awake so I..."

"Ugh, stop apologizing. I know you have your duties as the king. I would only be slowing you down," the Luna replied, wondering when it was that she would be able to help him with those same duties...

However, that also posed another problem. If she ever did get well enough to get back to her responsibilities, that would mean she'd finish the last remaining part of the school before going into the looming chaos on whether she was a hunter of the Chase family or the future queen of the Lycaon empire.

The girl shuddered at the thoughts before bringing her attention back to the alpha talking to her.

"Not at all really. Caden and Jason would be able to pick up the slack if I asked them to. Can we have breakfast together?" he asked her.

Memories of the previous evening flooded her mind. Just like he'd requested, she'd managed to get back to her room before evening hours, thanks to a lift from the eagles that accompanied her.

The king had already prepared a car for them where he took her out into the city for a late evening dinner at one of the most peaceful parks situated on the outskirts of the capital.

The beauty of the park was that it was far from the palace, quiet and surrounded by beautiful greenery. A few other couples used the place and Cole informed Katie of how famous the place was for the same kind of reservations he'd made.

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'That... was a date. No doubt about it... but why do I feel like I want him to say it that way,' the girl rolled in the bed shivering both at the childish thoughts and the fact that they were coming from her... the Rogue Killer.

"Where are we going this time?" the girl cooed.

"The gardens... You can meet me there in thirty minutes but take your time. Don't..."

"I won't push myself, Cole. Although, some things are worth pushing me for," the girl smirked and thus ended the mind-link conversation.

Katie got up from the bed and sauntered into the shower to get herself ready. Twenty minutes were enough before she came out only to be startled by the humming woman seated by her bed.

The shock quickly turned into warmth and love. This specific woman's presence brought warmth to Katie's heart. She bore the one face that Katie had known the longest and had grown very fond of, "Good morning, Aunt Marie."

The hunter looked up at her adoptive daughter before smiling warmly, "Good morning dear." Marie got up from her place on the bed and rushed the girl into a warm embrace.

Katie was all for hugging until she realized she was dripping. This realization came later than it should have. Opposition was no longer an option, "Wait... wait, I'm wet. Should you really be..."

"It's just a little water, dear. Now get over here. Besides, you've done much worse than a little water," Aunt Marie pulled the towelled girl into one of her familiar bear hugs, paying no mind to the girl's wet body.

The last part of her comment left Katie mortified, 'What's that supposed to... Oh...'

"Royals use expensive soap," the woman muttered while she dragged her adoptive daughter to the dresser and beckoned for her to take a seat. Aunt Marie then started idly working on beautifying her daughter... something she'd done countless times before during their conversations, "We haven't talked together for a while, Katie... just the two of us."

"No, no, we haven't," the girl shrunk into her seat. A tap on her shoulder notified her to keep her back straight and she quickly adhered to the silent order, 'Although, I'm also curious as to how you got in here.'

"I can try to understand what's happening in your mind. How are you holding up?" Marie didn't sound surprised.

"I try to keep from thinking about it, but it's so hard. Every time I get dizzy after walking for only a short while. Every time I wake up and feel ten times heavier. I tried powering through it at one point, but..." the girl paused and shook off the memory of her on the day of her best friend's evaluation test.

"At first, it was frustrating, but now-" the girl stopped speaking and cut the thoughts from her mind, lest she risked leaking her emotions into the pack link. Most of the time, the general positivity of the pack overpowered her depressive mood swings... and when everyone was asleep in the night, Cole's arms wrapped around her in a safe cocoon.

There was a period of silence while the hunter combed through Katie's silky hair in smooth comforting strokes. Staring into the mirror, she found that the woman was paying far too much attention to her dark hair.

"Your hair is beautiful, you know. Does he tell you that?" the woman swooned. The mischievous grin that appeared on her adoptive mother's face sent chills down her spine.

"Huh... what does that have to do with anything??" replied a confused Katie.

Chuckling, the woman explained, "Honestly, I have to say I'm glad you've been able to feel what it is to be weak and helpless again.

Don't get me wrong. It's not that I don't want you to become strong again. It's just that I wanted you to realise what it's like to rely on others and trust that they will come through for you." The woman's words heavily rhymed with those of a certain lion she'd spoken to not so long ago.

“Yeah, I might know what you mean. I don’t really have a choice in the matter now. I can barely do anything without asking for help now,” the girl’s mind began to wander to her latest collection of new helpers.

Finn and Darla were responsible for reporting to her when any of the animals had something to tell her and they also offered her company when she was alone in the king’s chambers.

“On the note of getting all the help that I can take, I can talk to animals now.” Marie stopped combing the giddy girl’s hair. The myriad of thoughts that crossed her mind was lost to Katie.

“How many of your powers have you discovered as one of the goddesses chosen?” she asked with a hint of urgency.

“Oh? Let me see... I haven’t used the first one a lot and I’m not completely sure how it works. That time I used it, Ashley was in control of my body. I’m not really sure what she did, but a few adjustments to my shift boosted my speed by a lot. I was racing Lina that time,” the girl said thoughtfully.

“Oh, did you win?” the woman asked curiously, rubbing her daughter’s shoulders. Her thumbs rubbed over the star-shaped wounds on the girl’s shoulders. The scars from the time she’d been shot by Jeremiah.

“Yes, I did. Although, I realised Lina hasn’t trained herself as much as I have. If she’s already that fast at that age... I don’t know what to make of her potential,” the Luna chuckled, “I don’t know how to control that power, but I do know how to speak to animals. Now that’s something I can control.”

“That’s good to hear. Though you do realise you just happily admitted to being able to speak to animals. Don’t say I didn’t warn you when you suddenly become the Luna that negotiates with rogue carnivores,” the woman chuckled.

The girl giggled at the hunter’s comment, “I’m proud of the ability to talk to them. At least, that way, I can help out with the investigation without straining myself.”

The girl raised her head high in pride. Aunt Marie didn’t share her opinion, “Now I know who to call when I have a rat problem.”

Katie’s mouth dropped in horror, “Keep talking like that, and I might just be the cause of your rat problem.”

Aunt Marie exploded into a hearty laugh. Katie didn’t share in this humour and only huffed... her small tantrum was only temporary as the sound of her mother’s contagious laugh swatted all her stubborn attempts.

When the woman was done, she pulled the girl’s hair back and placed it to one side, completely exposing her neck and the most prominent symbol on the Luna, Cole’s mark.

Aunt Marie caressed the sensitive spot and stopped only when Katie started to look uncomfortable, “You have friends, you know... and a mate that loves you very much. Sandra is getting bored training by her lonesome these days. She wishes you could go with her,” the woman continued.

“I know that... I wish I could make the journey,” the girl sighed. She’d thought of going there the day before, but hadn’t regained enough energy to do so. Before she knew it, her date with Cole came and

went faster than she could follow, "Speaking of my mate, I have breakfast with Cole in the gardens. Could we do this a little faster?"

"The king will wait for you even if it kills him. I haven't got to talk to you in so long," Marie huffed. In a solemn tone, she added, "Why did you have to grow up so big?"

"Now that's a new one. You were always the one telling me to eat my vegetables so that I can grow big and strong."

"I asked you to eat your vegetables in case you grew up, but I didn't ask you to grow up. You could have just stayed the young little girl I could protect. We could have lived in the remote town of Brigadia happily. It would have been nice to have time be frozen in time while we were there," the amount of sadness in the woman's voice was impossible to miss.

Something clawed at the back of Katie's mind as she listened to her adoptive mother, but she couldn't quite figure out what it was. All she could tell was that there was a sadness in her tone that didn't seem to go away...even when she smiled.

Had she really missed talking to her for that long? Or was something else amiss? She wondered if she was missing something or if her mother was keeping something from her intentionally. It wouldn't have been the first time.

Seeing her through the mirror again, however, the thoughts melted from the girl's mind. She stood up from her seat and enveloped her mother in a warm hug. The older woman gave in to her daughter's display of affection.

"You know I will always be your daughter, right? It doesn't matter how old I am. You raised me," the girl tried.

Sighing, Marie spoke, the tinge of sadness Katie had heard before getting heavily suppressed, "Just look at you. We're practically the same height now. Not to mention my frozen age kept me young that whole time. It's like we're sisters."

"Does it bother you?" the Luna asked.

"Just a little. Thorrin, Alice, Micah, and Evelyn all grew older while the two of us stayed young. It's like we were plucked from time."

'That's more than a little bothered...'

"I'm sorry about that," Katie tried.

"It's not your fault. In any case, I should be asking you how the king is treating you," the woman pulled away from her daughter with a smirk on her face.

"The look on your face has me confused. Is that a trick question?" Katie narrowed her eyes at the woman.

"Oh, don't play dumb with me," Aunt Marie wiggled her eyebrows.

"I guess growing up also means I get to see the shameless side of you," Katie was mortified, "I thought Uncle Tom was the only one capable of making me cringe. I should have known there was more to it."

Aunt Marie erupted into peals of laughter, "You're cute when you're trying to hide what happens between the two of you," Katie sighed in disbelief as her adopted mother continued to laugh at her.

"If you don't mind, I have a breakfast to attend with my dearly beloved," the girl huffed, turning her attention to the closet.

"Oh, let me get you ready for it," the woman replied, catching the girl off guard. It had been a long time since the woman had helped her get ready for anything, "I know. This can be practice for when I get to prepare you for your wedding." The woman piped up.

Katie's heart leapt into overdrive at the mention of a wedding, "What... what wedding? No, get those ideas out of your head." The Luna panicked.

"Huh, I thought the two of you are happy. Why wouldn't you get married?" Aunt Marie sounded genuinely confused and that in itself was enough to scare Katie even more.

"We are happy. We are very happy the way we are right now... A wedding is just another step that I hadn't thought about. Come on, who gets married at the age of eighteen?" Katie was still freaking out.

"Oh... Oh, you don't know, do you?" Aunt Marie beamed with a gleam of realisation on her face.

"Don't know what?" Katie raised a brow.

"Well, a mate is your perfect match. Werewolves don't really care about the age at which they get married. Even if you find your mate when you're only eighteen, the wedding is only a short step away. It happens so fast, you barely have the time to notice it. Before you know it, you have little ones running all over..."

"That's enough out of you," Katie covered Marie's mouth. Her face was a deep shade of red and her breath was ragged from the detailed description of the rest of her summed-up life laid out before her. Aunt Marie began to chuckle, prying the girl's hand away from her mouth.

"Let's get you ready for your date with Cole," the woman guided her to the closet and picked out the outfit.

By the time Katie was done dressing up or whenever it was Aunt Marie was done beautifying her daughter, Katie was certain she'd made a mistake to let her handle it. She was dressed to kill for a simple breakfast.

"Is there something I'm missing here?" the girl asked the woman, cringing at the dazzling reflection that stared back at her through the mirror.

"If you can't see how beautiful you look right now, then you're missing just about everything," the woman replied. Katie took one more look into the mirror. It was like she'd been transformed into a different person and yet stayed the same.

The light make-up had allowed her to keep her natural complexion. The dress was a light shade of yellow, sleeveless, flowing into a beautiful eruption of flowery decorations below her waist till it only lightly touched the ground.

“You just decided to design a princess, didn’t you?” the Luna commented bluntly.

“Aren’t you one though?” Marie asked, placing her hands on her shoulders and staring into the mirror. The two ladies stared back at each other through the mirror.

“I guess you have a point there,” Katie replied. Just then, her cheeks turned a shade of pink. Nervously, “Do...Do you think Cole will like it?”

“He’d have to be as dense as a tree to miss this level of beauty,” the woman gave a reassuring smile.

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Chapter 324 Anxious Pair

Cole sat in the gazebo patiently and anxiously waiting for his beautiful mate. Thirty minutes had already gone by and there was no sign of her. The pack link confirmed her current location, so he had nothing to worry about concerning where she was.

Besides, it wouldn’t help even if he asked her where she had been. The stories she’d told him of the creatures of the wild the day before had only confused him more. He knew she could speak to animals, but what she described...

Shaking the thoughts out of his mind, he reached for something in his pocket and rolled the small cubic items, feeling its smooth edges between his fingers. This peculiar item was another reason for his anxiety.

When he thought of what he wanted to talk to Katie about, he couldn’t relax and the object in his pocket only made this more challenging for him.

The king thought back to what had happened to him since he left the capital to go to Brigadia... a small town located so far from the capital with an outstanding rating on their school’s security system.

It was at that outstanding school that he had met the girl he was now patiently waiting for. It felt like a very long time ago, but it wasn’t even close to making a year since he’d met Katie.

His life hadn’t been the same since then, however. Despite the Sirius pack’s attempts at concealing her, she’d stuck out far more than he had and even gotten injured in the process. It wasn’t like he could have been injured badly in the process.

‘Maybe they don’t attack me because it would be harder to bring me harm?’ he idly posed the question. However, it was met with the calm silence of the Royal Gardens.

He almost called her through the mind link, but etiquette kept him from being so rash. As the time wore on, his anxiety only climbed higher, “What are you worried about, your majesty?” Caden asked him, walking up to the gazebo.

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“What are you doing here? Katie’s almost here. What are you doing here?” the man whisper-yelled through gritted teeth.

“I don’t think I’ve seen the king of Lycaon this anxious before,” Caden chuckled, “...no, change that to never. I have never seen the king of Lycaon anxious... ever.”

“No kidding. What gave it away?” Cole shrugged.

“Well, I could feel it through the beta mind link. I came to check on you to see if you’re doing alright,” the man replied. Being bound to a royal as a beta alpha made it impossible for either of them to hide anything... It was similar to the mind link shared by mates... only restricted by laws that bound the beta alphas to their royals.

If anyone were to ask Caden what was going on in the king’s head, he wouldn’t be able to answer that because he lacked permission from the king... and if the king suddenly made a request through that mind link, the beta alpha wouldn’t have the slightest bit of power to resist the command.

“Well, as you can see, Caden, I am fine,” Cole replied, “You don’t have to worry about me.”

“It’s part of my job, my king,” the man bowed, “Where is Luna Katie?”

“She’s getting ready to come here and I would want you to be gone by the time she gets here,” the royal replied. His anxiety was now on a level of its own.

Caden raised his hands in surrender and backed away from the gazebo, “Good luck then. If you need any help though, you know you can ask.” With a wink, the beta alpha bid him farewell.

When the beta alpha was gone, the king sighed and leaned back into his seat, ‘What was that about?’ However, the king didn’t have the brain power to worry about two things at the same time. When he remembered the item within his pocket, all thoughts of Caden’s sudden appearance would vanish from his mind.

Just as he was about to give up waiting, the alluring-almost intoxicating scent of his mate permeated the air announcing her long-awaited arrival. He searched the garden path and finally laid eyes on her. However, he hadn’t expected what he saw standing in his mate’s place. She hadn’t dressed the way she normally did. Her hair had been tied into a beautiful bun, exposing the mark on her shoulder in the sleeveless yellow dress she was wearing.

The star-shaped scars set on her shoulders stood out like battle scars reminding him of a time when she would have left the world of the living and that they could get through anything together...

The girl made her way to the king at a pace unrecognizable to him. In his mind, her gait could have lasted a decade before she made it to him. She was frozen in place, a portrait caught in the perfect shade of the morning sun and the pinnacle of beauty, “Good morning, Cole.” Her greeting snapped Cole out of his daze.

“Uh yeah... I just lost myself staring for a second. You look... breathtaking. Like a princess stepping out of a fairytale,” the blue-eyed man smiled warmly. Katie’s cheeks felt hot from hearing the compliment.

“Thanks for the compliment. You don’t look half bad yourself,” she replied. Cole got out of his seat and offered her one, pulling her chair out for her to sit.

'What's with him today?' Katie's inner voice screamed, 'We are having breakfast, aren't we?'

"Was it much trouble for you to get here?" he asked politely, "I made sure the flowers were trimmed to perfection."

"I hadn't noticed that. They definitely made the walk here more colourful," she gave a taut smile, taking in the view of the flowers that surrounded them. 'What's he talking about? They look exactly the same as they always have,' she mentally groaned.

"You didn't like them, did you?" Cole's disappointment was even worse, "I knew I should have had them all changed completely."

Panicking, "Huh, no, that's not it. I just thought the garden has always been perfect. Although, now that I take another look, they do look better than they always do. They've lost all their... uh, imperfections."

The flowers in the garden had always looked beautiful whether they were tended to or not.

"If you say so," the king replied, "Help yourself to anything you like."

The girl regarded the spread on the table and for one of the first times in her life, the food looked like it was too much for her to eat, "Someone has an appetite today."

"Huh, I eat normally for a wolf, but this is a two-wolf job. And this time, you shouldn't expect me to eat everything you fail to," Cole narrowed his eyes at his luna.

Katie chuckled at the memory. It was only the day before. She'd sorely misjudged when the king would come around and surprised him late after their date with a cart full of food she'd left over from breakfast.

"Well, you can count one wolf out. I'm not as hungry as I normally am," the girl replied before starting to eat. Cole shrugged it off, setting a new mental mission to at least make sure she ate what he deemed was enough for the wolf to survive.

The couple spoke of everything and anything that came to mind. Cole's nerves diminished the more they spoke. His mate was open with him as he was with her. His mind was put more at ease when he was reminded that he didn't have to be perfect for her to keep talking to him. She focused on no one and nothing else... as did he.

"Did you think she would make it that day?" their conversation continued. Katie always seemed to have a story hanging at the back of her mind. More stories than one would expect to come from a small town such as Brigadia and from someone that spent a large part of their life training.

"I was not sure. I mean Jackeline is good at archery, but come on... she'd bruised her fingers. Back then, I wasn't as good as I was at the Founders' festival and I found shooting an arrow to be hard even at my best. That shot was so fun to watch. I don't think I've ever got a rush from an archery game like that one. Jackeline was... still is amazing," the girl mused.

"Ah, the Founders' festival, that takes me back. What did you think of my archery? Quite impressive, wasn't it?" Cole puffed out his chest.

“Oh, you need a lot of work, dear. Quite a bit. However, I did like our game back in Brigadia. It was the calmest game I’d had in a while... an amazing breath of fresh air,” the girl smiled.

“I loved that whole day. Each part of it is etched into my memory like it was yesterday,” Cole found himself answering deeply without thinking twice about it, “Life has certainly gotten interesting ever since the day I met you.”

Chapter 325 Indescribable Bliss

“I would add the word ‘chaotic’ to that description. Wonderful would be the other,” Katie’s calm demeanour lasted only a moment, “I mean... being attacked by seven rogues was no normal thing back in Brigadia.”

“Yeah, that’s true,” the man chuckled shortly before his expression fell again.

Katie noticed. “Hey, Cole. Is there something you’re not telling me? You’ve been oddly anxious this whole time. Is everything alright?”

“You noticed, huh? And here I thought I was doing a good job of hiding it,” the man replied with a nervous chuckle. After a short pause, “No, there is nothing wrong. There is something I want to tell you though. Would you walk with me, Katie?”

Katie started feeling anxious as well. She had no idea what was going on in the man’s mind and it was driving her borderline crazy. She stood up and walked beside the king. The gardens provided a calm mood for the two of them, “I’ve been doing a lot of thinking on the matter and remembering quite a lot.”

“What is it?”

“We met in Brigadia when my father sent me there and from the day I set eyes on the same dark blue beautiful eyes, my life hasn’t been the same. We’ve been through quite a lot.”

‘Wait, what’s happening right now?’ Katie’s mind was rushing a million miles per second.

“Although you’ve been through much more than I have. That much is obvious. I have worried, laughed, wept, but most of all, I have loved,” Katie’s cheeks suddenly turned red at the last part.

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She knew a lot about Cole’s life from the time they’d spent together, but when he did things like this, she couldn’t see it coming no matter how much she tried. It was impossible for her to know what he was thinking.

Her words were stuck when she felt she must have spoken up. Her heart had already been set aflutter and Cole had her undivided attention...

‘Maybe he’s going on an expedition and is trying to say goodbye.’

Well, most of her attention... The part of it that could still interpret the words coming out of her mate’s mouth.

Cole continued, “So, I shall ask you what has been on my mind for a while now?”

'This is it...' anticipation assaulted her mind.

"We won't be able to make it official until after the coronation, but..." from his pocket, the king retrieved a small black box. Katie's eyes widened in shock when she saw it, "Would you do me the honour of marrying me?"

The girl was stumped by the man's request and hadn't even noticed when it was that he put down his left knee. His blue eyes bore into hers with so much emotion it was overwhelming.

The Luna couldn't help but wonder if her adoptive mother had known that this was going to happen. It didn't matter to her now that she was being asked to marry the man. Her answer was stuck. She couldn't find a way to phrase it... and it was breaking her. "Is something wrong?"

She nodded, "No... no, nothing's wrong. I just..." her words were gone.

Cole frowned, confused by the reply. It was a matter of her saying yes or no. Nothing so difficult about that... right? Doubt... suspicion... ever so slowly crept into Cole's mind.

Just when the girl was about to give up on her speech, something awakened within her. 'Honestly, Katie. You're hopeless without me,' a groggy voice woke up from her slumber.

Cole's second thoughts stopped when he saw the girl's eyes flicker to life, restoring the light within them and signalling the return of her wolf. Ashley took control of the girl's body and fulfilled her promise.

The blue-eyed female reached down and wrapped her arms around Cole's neck...

And kissed him... ending the torrent of thoughts that swarmed the king's mind.

Through the mind link, the two of them spoke vividly. Katie felt then she could explain what she wanted to tell him, "Cole, will you hear me out?"

With the girl in his arms, he was weakened in resolve to deny whatever explanation she had for him, "I...I'm listening, Katie."

"I know you've heard me talk about it before. The world I intend to build. To put an end to the rogue king and end the prejudice between the wolves and humans," the girl said to him.

"Yeah, I remember you saying something like that," he sighed... still holding onto what little patience he had left.

"In a world like that, there will be no need for hunters. No need to protect everyone from our kind. There will be no need for children to fear the forest. Travelling without hunters to protect you.

A world without fear... We would be free to go anywhere we wish. It will be a world where everyone can be happy without having to look over their shoulders for rogues," the girl paused, she could tell he was yet to see her reasoning which was why she had saved this part for last, "It would also be a world I would like to raise our children in."

Cole was taken aback by her words that he broke their kiss. Looking into his mate's bright eyes, he opened his mouth to speak. Katie's eyes were stained with tears he hadn't noticed before.

The girl put a finger to his lips silencing him while she continued with the rest of her explanation, "I would never dream of saying no to you, Cole. Would you just wait for me a little longer?"

It wasn't a request, but a plea that brought more tears to the girl's eyes. 'So that's why she couldn't reply. I hadn't even thought she'd considered it.' If only words could describe his happiness.

(A/N: Author's library of descriptive words runs speechless)

"Don't cry, Katie," he wiped away a tear, "I can wait for you. I wouldn't dream of being with anyone else, so I'll wait."

"Thanks," Katie pulled Cole into a tight hug. The male bit back his tears. Even with her hugging him tightly, he could feel her strength wasn't what it used to be. In fact, her arms held him with less energy with each passing second.

Without warning, he carried her into his arms and started the walk back to their room. The girl sighed, "So you noticed."

"I wouldn't miss it," he replied sadly, "Try to take it easy, Katie."

Usually, Katie would roll her eyes and give in to his words. However... this time was different. Katie's eyelids closed and her head fell back. The prince adjusted his hold on her so she rested on his chest. She was heavier... She'd gone unconscious, stopping Cole in his tracks.

"I can't keep watching this," his words weren't aimed at anyone in particular but himself...

"I'm glad we're on the same page," a male voice raptured the silent harmony of the Royal Gardens. Cole turned to face the sudden arrival and regarded him with a slight bow. The man returned the gesture with a bow of his own.

"What do you have in mind, Thorrin Chase?"

Chapter 326 I'm Hopeful

Thorrin made his presence known to the king after the girl had fainted in his arms. The king was not the only person that had been worried about the girl's condition. "How is she doing?" the warrior asked Cole.

"She knows how to keep herself well rested at least, but with how this is going, I wake up worried that she might not open her eyes," the king replied in a sad tone, "I can't lose someone else."

"You have the whole Chase family working with you on this. We won't let anything happen. The world is not ready to lose her just yet," the hunter lamented, following the king as he took her back to the palace.

"You've been watching, haven't you?"

"Yes, yes, we have..." Thorrin stuttered and rushed to defend himself, "I'm not talking about your date if that's what you're trying to say, but yes, I've been watching her progress. She was eager to get out when she was fine, but the amount of time she could spend exerting herself kept getting smaller and smaller. The Chase family has been worried as well."

The man's change in behaviour went unnoticed by the king. Cole lingered for a moment, weighing his options. Keeping Katie in the dark and oblivious to the worry that surrounded her had become more of an instinct. Sighing, "Speak your mind, Thorrin."

"We have started searching for reasons for her condition. Why she wasn't improving and how we could save her... Marie spent a lot of time in the family library, along with Evelyn. Her condition is almost unseen.

Considering she's been blessed by two gods, burning through that much divine energy as she did that day was bound to have unforeseen consequences. I'm glad you got to her before her body was destroyed.

However, some level of damage had already been done. Katie's body lost the ability to retain divine energy, so it continues to leak out of her. Without being able to retain it, she'll keep deteriorating until that day you're afraid of," Thorrin explained solemnly.

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"Tell me something, Thorrin. What happens when she runs out of time? Will she..." the words got caught in the king's mouth.

"No, she won't die. At least, not under the right conditions," the man replied, "If she's hospitalised in the right facility, they can keep her alive, but that's not a life I could wish for anyone."

Cole's gaze was set on the beautiful sleeping girl in his arms. He wondered whether his proposal had escalated her emotions and rushed her to her limit. 'Could she have fainted because...' Cole forced the thoughts out of his mind lest they slow him down when he needed to be at his best to help her.

In Katie's current state, she couldn't do anything to bring her goal closer to fruition, "She wants to end the war in her time."

"That was the resolution the hunters came up with when the two of you were born," the man sighed. It felt like they'd taken one step forward and a thousand steps back, "As I speak, teams of hunters have started scouring no man's land in search of the remaining forces of the rogue army. We will have the remaining rogues rooted out from their very hiding places. Information provided by Tom has proven useful in identifying the subtle signs of their settlements."

"I wish you the best of luck in that regard. If you need help from the empire, I will be willing to offer you any assistance," Cole replied, somewhat absentminded.

As they entered the palace, they came face to face with Bella. The delta was shocked to see Cole carrying her unconscious Luna, "What happened to her, Cole?"

"You forget to call me by my title," the king sighed, "She just ran out of energy is all. At least I got to see her wolf this time."

Bella stood aside and bowed to the king as he passed by, "She's taken half the time she did three days ago," the girl muttered to herself.

The king ignored her worried mutterings and continued on his way to his chambers. By the time he had made it, another hunter had joined the two of them.

Marie, Katie's adoptive mother, had something to share with them.

"Marie, have you discovered something that could help her?" Thorrin asked.

"Yes, I did. I'm not sure though. It sounds more like a myth from the looks of it," the woman replied.

"At this point, anything will help. It's already been established that everything we know in the field of medicine won't help us treat her condition," Thorrin lamented. Their progress up until this point was not encouraging, to say the least.

"Well, I found something alright. The gods are the ones that gave the hunters and werewolves their... abilities and from what we know, this girl was blessed by both of them. I know it's a gamble, but if we can find a way to let her meet with either of them, we could be able to ask them to heal her," the woman replied.

"When you said myth, I didn't know how crazy you were thinking," Cole interrupted. He already felt like giving up before she'd even started.

"I can tell you're out of ideas as well. You can't heal her any further, can you?" Marie countered his tone.

"No, there is nothing physically wrong with her. Her injuries are different. Not normal if I might say," the man replied, "In any case, I know you wouldn't bring up something this far-fetched unless you had found some sort of evidence. What makes you so confident we can talk to one of the gods? It usually works the other way round."

"I know Katie has spoken to one before. We just have to find a place where the gods have ever touched the earth. It becomes a nexus that allows them to return to the planet without affecting it drastically," the woman explained.

"Like a field of moon lotuses locked away by an unnatural growth of moon lotuses," a feminine voice interrupted them. Cole's eyes darted to the girl he'd only laid down to rest a moment ago. Katie's eyes were open and bright blue.

"It's been a while since I've seen your eyes that colour," Marie responded. Cole reached for her hand and held it in his. Her smile was weak and it was clear she wasn't going to be awake for so long.

"It won't be long," she replied, "Talking to the gods, huh? I wonder what good that will do."

"It's all we have got right now. We can take you there now," Marie replied.

"No, not yet. I will go after the coronation," the girl strained.

"Katie, don't be stubborn. You're not looking good as it is. Delaying for four more days will only..."

"My mind's made up, Uncle Thorrin. I will stay here until the coronation. Once the coronation is done, I will not fight any decision you make," Katie's voice was both steeled as well as laced with a subtle plea.

"Will it work though? We are only speculating," Cole asked. The people in that room, except Thorrin, were well-acquainted with her impervious will and determination. Once her mind was made up, there was simply no way of talking her out of it.

“It has to, Cole,” she replied, “A positive attitude is the first step on the path to recovery.”

“You got that one right,” Aunt Marie gave her a warm smile, “Keep that smile and you will be better in no time. Just so you know, Katie, this is the last selfish request coming from you that I will tolerate. Now rest.”

The girl smiled, an emotion akin to relief crossing her eyes before she closed them to rest.

The two hunters left the room. As they walked off, Thorrin couldn't help but ask, “Hey, do you think she would stop making selfish requests just because you told her that?”

“If she agrees to it, then yes. She's not one to break agreements,” the woman replied with a sigh, “I hope this works.”

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Cole stayed by Katie's side, unable to let his mind wander to the rest of the things he was supposed to take care of. His thoughts were interfered with by the warm feel of a hand intertwining with his, “Hey, you're not worried, are you?”

“Of course, I am. That's obvious,” he replied. The girl laying in the bed before him had not slept as she'd been ordered to do so. With Cole around, that was not going to happen easily. The day was still young and the girl didn't want to spend it all laying down. Alas, she didn't have that much of a choice. Lifting her hand alone was proving to be a chore.

“I will be fine, Cole,” she tried.

“You don't know that Katie and you don't have to lie about it,” Cole nearly yelled. The tight knot forming in his chest did not help the situation.

Katie took note of the bitterness in his tone. He was doing his best to hide it, but he wasn't okay with her state, “I can still speak to animals though. So that's something.”

“When do you get that chance?” If it hadn't been for sharing memories, Cole wouldn't have believed the girl's stories, but now that she was a lot weaker than she had been then, she couldn't take any more of such trips... and she hadn't.

“They come to me when I want them to or when they feel like it. There is this pigeon called Finn. I think he has half a brain or maybe he's just trying to impress the other female, Darla. The two of them get along. I wonder if...”

“Katie,” Cole interrupted her. The girl paid attention to him once more. His pained expression had only gotten worse.

“I guess distracting you won't work this time,” the girl sighed, “I'll be fine, Cole. I don't know why, but I know I'm not done yet. I know how much you worry. Sometimes, I feel like blocking the mind link because of the gloomy thoughts that you harbour. Being your mate means I get to listen to them more than the others, but I will be fine. I can't prove it, but I know I will.” The girl nearly chuckled, ‘How did I become the one tending to my healthy mate?’

“You haven't been able to detect danger since you got into...”

“That’s enough gloom from you,” the girl snapped at the king. Cole was shocked by the reaction. Katie pinched the bridge of her nose, “I already have my mind to torture me, Cole and I’ve only recently been able to get past that. You have a kingdom to run. Now more than ever, Lycaon needs you. There are criminals on the loose, so go and do something about that.”

Surprisingly, her words and positive attitude did the trick. While Cole’s gloom dissipated, a bit of shame came along with this newfound clarity, “Right... the escaped prisoners... That’s a whole other mess to deal with. I want you to rest, Katie. I’m sorry for the gloom. I couldn’t help it. Not after...”

“I know, Cole. I can’t blame you, but trust me with this. You’re not going to lose me too, okay?” the girl smiled.

Cole couldn’t put his finger on it, but her tone was similar to one he’d heard once before. She reminded him a lot... about his father in the days he was sent to Brigadia.

The emotion that came from her through the mind link was more positive than he’d ever detected from her. She bore no fear of the condition she was in. If she did have any, he would have detected it. It wasn’t like she was hiding anything from him.

The king reached for the girl and hugged her tightly, “Very well. I will tone down my worry, but you can’t keep me from worrying completely. That would be impossible.”

“I’m not asking you to keep yourself from worrying. I know I wouldn’t be able to keep myself from it either if you were in my place. Just dial it down a notch, and I’ll be fine. I wouldn’t ask you of this unless I was sure of it.”

“Are you sure of it?” he raised one brow in question.

“I’m hopeful, Cole,” she chuckled, “I will be fine.”

It almost felt like the girl in his hands would vanish the moment he let go of her. She had grown so precious to the king that he couldn’t imagine what he would do in a world without her. She hugged him back with the strength she could muster.

‘Will hope be enough?’ Cole thought to himself...

Chapter 327 Coronation Day

The days up to the coronation went by slower than Katie would have liked. Without her strength returning like it normally did, the girl resorted to reserving what was left of it which limited her movements and hangout areas down to the king’s chambers and the gardens... on occasion.

Cole stopped pushing her to do anything that would exert her in the slightest and checked up on her far more times than she preferred. Regardless of how sweet his checkups were, they only reminded her that she was worrying everyone about her condition.

Cole’s frequent checkups also reminded her that he was now getting better at masking his worry. Either that or the king actually missed her presence so much that he found himself returning to her many times through the day, ‘It’s not like he sleeps somewhere else in the night, sheesh...’ Katie was not complaining. Her inner selfish princess loved the attention she got from her mate.

Darla and Finn visited her daily and kept her company when the king and her visitors were not around. The birds, having been all about the city, had all manner of stories to keep the girl entertained. Finn's odd imitations of humans got Katie every time. Unlike the people that visited Katie, the Creatures of the Wild that did manage to visit her looked past her weakened state which was refreshing for the girl.

Hearing the words, 'How are you feeling today?' from everyone that came to see her was starting to get on her nerves. Thankfully, Darla and Finn never once brought it up. They only showed signs of remembering this when Katie showed that she was straining. Only then did they let her rest.

It was refreshing to speak to someone without being reminded of her condition.

However, regardless of how slow the days went by, the day of Cole's coronation was eventually upon them. With nothing from the criminal group and no signs of suspicious activity in the entire capital of Lycaon and the surrounding areas, Cole's coronation day finally arrived and preparations were made just like the king had ordered in the meeting they had earlier that week.

Katie was starting to grow anxious, "You're sure you're going to be okay, Cole?" she asked him.

"How many times are you going to ask me that? I will be fine. It's not like you're being crowned Luna of the Lycaon empire," the man chuckled, whilst tying his tie. The girl stood up from the bed in an effort to help him, only to fall back down. Her legs shook from the weight of her body, but she kept the worry to herself.

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"I guess being a king is in your blood. If you do feel anxious though, you know you can always call on me and I'll be right by your side," the Luna tried. If Katie had been in Cole's situation at the moment, she would have shivered with fear, but he wasn't... 'So cool.'

Cole walked up to her and placed a kiss on her lips, "That's my Luna. I am fine and will continue to be fine, but if you do happen to feel anxious, there is always space for you by my side, darling."

"So blue... Your eyes, I mean," the girl blurted out, stunned by his sudden display of affection. The first thing at the top of her mind simply rolled off her tongue.

"So are yours. I see Ashley is with us today," Cole smiled, cupping her cheek, "It's been a while."

"Yeah, it has. What about the criminals though? Have you gotten close to catching them?" Katie frowned, leaning into her mate's touch.

'Has Cole always been this much of a softie?' Ashley's weak voice resounded within her mind. The wolf was mentally purring in response to its mate's attention. The presence of her wolf, however, made her wonder if Cole ever had to go through the same split personality situation she went through when Ashley was awake. Shelving the question, she tuned out of her mind before the king could notice her wandering mind.

Cole placed another kiss on her lips and returned to preening in the mirror, "They haven't done anything to draw attention. I guess they are playing this careful. Our trackers, unfortunately, are not as good as you are. The trail always runs cold. Those escaped criminals are that careful, I guess."

"I'm not a normal wolf, so you can't blame your trackers. They're probably doing the best they can," Katie replied.

The door swung open inviting in the ladies that Katie had now gotten used to seeing, "Cole, that's enough canoodling for you. Come with me," the queen barked, pulling the man before he could complain, "It's good to see you, Katie." The woman winked at her... 'I do not like what you might be insinuating...' the Luna thought to herself but smiled fondly nonetheless.

Cole picked up his coat on the way out and exited, his mother pushing him to move faster with each passing second. Katie was almost sure she heard his wolf whimper, but perhaps it was just her imagination.

When her mate and his mother were finally gone, she regarded the two that had remained. Two of the most important females in her life. Sandra and her adoptive mother, Marie, "Good morning," she greeted them.

"Good morning, dear. Let's get you ready," Aunt Marie replied.

The girl made her second attempt to stand, steeling her nerves as the dizziness returned. This time, she was able to stand her ground and start walking, "You know, Cole could have done that," she argued.

"I know that, but considering how much time the two of you take when he decides to get you ready, that would be counterproductive," the woman replied. Katie winced at the memory her mother forced her to remember. Their last day in Brigadia had riled up her father just because he had to wait for hours for her and Cole to meet them in the hotel lobby.

"Katie, are you feeling okay?" Sandra interrupted when she couldn't hold it in much longer.

"I'm as fine as I'll ever be, Sandra. Thanks for asking," Katie smiled, stepping into the bathroom, "Would the two of you just wait for me for a bit? I'll try to be quick."

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Chapter 328 Throne Room

Sandra was set on getting the girl's hair done and Aunt Marie worked on her make-up. Knowing Katie, the woman did her best to keep it simple. Searching her mind for a random topic to talk about, she began, "One day, you're going to be challenged for Cole. I've seen quite a several unmated females that stare at you and him with envy."

"That will not be happening. I believe Bella is behaving these days," the girl replied.

"Oh, is that the competition you'd scouted?" Sandra pitched in mischievously.

"No, she is no competition. She was just someone that seemed interested in him. I'm much better looking than her and obviously stronger," the girl raised her nose high with pride.

The two women chuckled, "Katie, how do you want me to do this?" Sandra asked when she was done combing her dark locks.

The girl looked at herself in the mirror. Her dark hair fell upon her shoulders in beautiful waves. It had always been that way, but the girl didn't take the time to notice. She was far too interested in training to mind her looks.

Her time being powerless had allowed her to notice a few things about herself, "I know I normally don't care about it, but I'd like it to stay the way it is."

"You sure... I could make you look much better you know. Boys, especially werewolf boys, like to see your neck a little more exposed," Aunt Marie said a little absentminded.

"Well, I'm not looking for a look that will appease werewolf boys much less, distract Cole from the ceremony. When I think about it, this is also the look Cole fell for back then," she replied. The two women gasped, but remained quiet.

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"What is it?" Katie looked between her adoptive mother before her and the girl in the mirror.

"No, it's probably nothing. Katie, are you feeling well?" Sandra asked, feeling the girl's forehead.

Aunt Marie did the same, "I think I know what you mean, Sandra. She's really burning up."

"Not funny, both of you," Katie groaned.

Sandra chuckled, "It's not normal for anyone to hear you talk about your emotions so casually."

Sandra wasn't wrong. The observation brought an air of silence to the room. Back then, Katie could barely express her emotions in front of people. She'd learnt how to suppress them to a frightening degree and had even slowly started to forget how to interpret them. If it hadn't been for Ashley...

"How quickly times change!" Katie muttered.

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Cole sat impatiently in the seat that had been set for him in the front row of the throne room. His suit was starting to feel stuffy even though he'd never thought of it that way. The tension in the air was suffocating. It was like someone wanted to bring an end to him through his clothes. Maybe it was just the nerves finally catching up to him, 'Ha, nerves...' he mentally scoffed, then shuddered, unsure of what else it could have been.

His eyes darted to the pristine thrones that overlooked the whole throne room raised higher than everything else. Before these majestic thrones was a large stage that had been decorated with fine red carpets. Tapestries depicting moments of the past hung on all walls. However, behind the thrones were portraits of the former king and queen.

These were changed every time a new king took over control of the empire. Just like his father before him, the tapestries that hung at the back of the throne room were to be changed. This ceremony though, would only occur once it was official that he'd found his Luna. In other words, on their wedding... 'I wonder how long that is...' shaking the thoughts from his mind, he allowed his thoughts to wander once more.

Hunters had taken different points of the palace to protect them from any attacks and the throne room was starting to fill up with wolves that had been invited to attend the ceremony. Many of them were from noble families with close relations to the royal families and families that could be traced back to times during the war against humans.

Caden walked up to his alpha, "There hasn't been a sign of any of the criminals since the start of the ceremony."

"Stay vigilant, Caden. We can't know what they plan to do at all. Honestly, with how quiet they have been this whole week, I can't help, but feel uneasy," Cole responded with a slight shiver. 'Is the air in here getting colder or something?' The beta alpha bowed and left the royal to his thoughts.

Jason approached him from behind, facing the throne he was set to inherit by the end of the day, "It's been a long time since I've entered this room," the man said, startling the king.

"Oh yeah, after my father fell sick, he wouldn't use this place anymore, but then again, the kings of the past stopped using the throne room for a lot. It was soon reserved for hearings and ceremonies like this," Cole sighed.

"I've heard stories about this place, but most of them are so old that they are told differently by every elder that tries," Jason chuckled. His mind seemed to be exploring the history of their kingdom now that he'd laid his eyes on the thrones.

"Yeah... there is one that will never change though. This was the place where the kings declared the end of their war against the human race and it was probably the beginning of the war against the rogue king," Cole answered, "When my father finally started talking to me, he would tell me stories of the old kings in the way his father told him. The sudden transformation was like night and day."

"King Trevor was a benevolent ruler. You have some big shoes to fill," Jason snickered.

"I know that more than anyone," Cole sighed, "How long is she going to take?"

"Who? Do you mean Katie?"

"No, I mean the queen. She's the one to initiate the ceremony in my father's place. Don't tell me she's got the jitters," Cole complained. 'Or is that what I'm afraid of? It's not normal for the Luna to be the one to conduct this ceremony?'

"I'll go and check up on her."

"Please do." The throne room was nearly full with everyone that had been invited.

Cole sat in silence, his mind wandering into the pack link and reporting the general emotion of excitement and happiness that filled the wolves of the Lycaon pack. Some of them were more anxious than excited while very few exuded envy and disappointment, 'I guess we can't be rid of those,' the king sighed.

Just then, a new presence announced itself to him.

"It's been a while, Cole Lycaon," a deep voice called on Cole's attention. The young king quickly got to his feet and acknowledged the new arrivals. The entire Sirius family stood before him, dressed to the

nines and looking far too elegant. Their presence brought him the peace he never thought he was missing.

King Davin and Queen Martha stood before him with the queen's arm looped around that of her husband affectionately. Her dress was an exceptional gorgeous white that matched the king's flashy white. 'That suit has no creases. I'm sure of it,' Cole thought to himself, covertly straining his eyes in search of one. The king had outdone himself.

Standing behind them was Lina Sirius, dressed in green and her older brother, Drake Sirius. The princess was looking beautiful as well and for only a flicker of a moment, Cole thought he saw an unusual resemblance to his mate flicker within the girl's blue orbs. Or maybe he'd just imagined it.

Drake Sirius, on the other hand, was in a navy blue suit, fitted perfectly that it turned him into a portrait of a model. Nonetheless, he was able to ruin that marvellous illusion with his calculating eyes that darted about the entire throne room in search of something he wasn't bound to find.

"It has been a while indeed," he replied with a slight bow and a signal to their seats at the front beside him.

"Where is my sister?" Lina asked all of a sudden.

"She's getting ready," the man replied.

"I thought you'd normally help her do that. I remember a certain time when she couldn't walk," Queen Martha stifled with a laugh.

"I'd be better off if she could heal up already. I like taking care of her, but it's scary as well," the king sighed. This, however, aroused worries within the Sirius royal family. They had only heard about her condition. Cole's mood now confirmed their need to worry.

Chapter 329 Animal Companion

Jason rushed up the stairs until he made it to the queen's chambers. Stopping at the door and acknowledging the two wolves that guarded it, he knocked. From the other side, the melodic sound of the queen's rang clear, "Who is it?"

"Alpha Jason, your highness," he replied. 'Hmm, maybe queens practice speech. Although I can't imagine Katie would start speaking like that once she was officially the Luna of Lycaon,' somehow he doubted these thoughts. Katie had spectacularly pulled off the respectable hunter act when they'd first met her in Brigadia. Perhaps she could also pull off being the elegant queen like Queen Martha and Queen Margaret both did.

"Oh, Jason, come in," reluctantly, the beta alpha pushed the door open and walked in. The queen sat in front of her dresser, staring into the mirror with an expressionless face, "Is he growing anxious?"

The beta alpha kept himself from taking in the disturbed state of the room, "Quite the opposite actually. He might be a little worried that you're taking long."

"I suppose. He's just as confident as his father was regarding matters concerning the kingdom. It's a strength possessed by the royals of Lycaon, I suppose," the elegant woman sighed.

“Well, Katie is also confident when she’s protecting people,” now that Jason thought about it, this was his first time speaking to the queen alone. Without Cole to divert her attention away from her, this was very different. Having the attention of the Luna was not as pleasant as he’d imagined it to be. This was the most powerful woman in Lycaon, probably followed by Katie and he had no idea how to conduct himself around her.

“They make a sweet couple. I would never have thought he would find her, but then again, my husband had no doubt,” the woman commented, snapping him out of his panicked thoughts.

“Your highness, is something the matter?” Jason asked. It wasn’t that he wanted to make conversation with the queen, however, he was curious to know why she wouldn’t get up from the chair she currently occupied.

“I just... can’t bear to see the kingdom move on so fast after his death,” her expressionless facade was gone, replaced by the face of someone that was still going through mourning of their lost loved one.

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Was Cole also similar to her? No, Jason would have noticed... or had the king simply learnt to hide it. Lately, Cole’s emotions were also getting harder to read. With the recent death of his father and Katie’s state on top of running an empire, the king was starting to shield his true emotions.

“I don’t think I follow,” Jason replied.

“How can you not? I am a grieving woman and...”

“No, I didn’t mean it like that,” the beta alpha cut her off. When she remained quiet he continued, “When Cole’s mother died, I heard that the king could barely move on, but the kingdom needed its ruler and he had to forge a path forward even though it was the hardest thing at the moment. It was his duty to do so. Losing his wife didn’t mean he had to let go of the kingdom. The empire knew what he was going through and didn’t press him unless necessary, but he held strong for the sake of countless others that relied on him. I know Cole is well aware of this fact,” the beta alpha replied.

“You are the worst at pep talks. Do you know that?” the woman chuckled.

“Yeah, I know that, but I can’t give a good pep talk on a day like this. Look outside, your highness,” the queen tore her gaze from the mirror and looked toward the balcony Jason had walked up to.

“What am I supposed to be seeing?” she asked.

“It’s cloudy, your highness. I believe you noticed the rain when the king died. Cole is not having fun with this either, but it has to happen,” the man replied, “I would know. The only person that can feel his emotions more than Caden and I, is Katie.”

“You could have led with that,” the queen sounded defeated... at last.

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Katie had the other women leave before her and walked up to the balcony. They’d settled for a deep blue floral dress that was much similar to the one that Marie had made her wear to her date with Cole.

It was also a dress that Katie would never have worn if she was given the choice. Regarding fashion, she didn't understand as much as the other females. She did, however, remain stubborn in matters concerning her face and hair. She'd been defeated when choosing a dress and fallen prey to an argument that went, 'You're not on the security detail. You don't need to wear something that can let you run.'

That had been enough to get her to agree to the ladies' demands.

A lone pigeon fluttered toward her and landed on the girl's shoulder, "Good morning. Today is the day, isn't it?" Darla chirped in delight.

"Yes, it is. What have the others decided?"

"They have all chosen to help as they had many days ago. We'll take care of the details involving how we shall get into the throne room. I can barely contain the excitement. That is one of the parts of this palace that has an ancient feel to it," the pigeon cooed.

The girl didn't bother asking. The creatures of the wild had done a lot for her already and every time they said they would get something done, they did... Katie was still unsure whether to consider it scary or overly competent. Darla's excitement did not go unnoticed, 'We are trying to catch criminals, right?' Katie chose to keep this question to herself and proceeded to more important matters, "Do you know who the criminals are?"

"Yes, we do. I will show them to you when we get to the throne room. The rats, roaches, lizards and all the other small creatures that were able to overhear peculiar conversations... It was all too easy," the pigeon replied... 'Is it just me... or does Darla sound a little... smug?' the female pigeon had her breast puffed out in an obvious manner of pride.

Chapter 330 Compromised...!

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" she asked. While she would have liked to yell at the pigeon, straining herself this early in the day would have been unwise.

"It couldn't be done. You needed your rest to make it to today, so we took a gamble. We will get them today and keep them from causing any harm," the pigeon replied.

Katie sighed deeply and pinched the bridge of her nose, "Very well, Darla. Let's get going then. Stay close to me." With that, Katie walked back into her room with the pigeon perching on her shoulder comfortably.

Her secret was not as important as the lives of the people that were going to attend the coronation. Katie exited her room and came face to face with Kyle. The beta alpha bowed low, as well as the other two wolves flanking him on both sides.

"Good morning, Kyle," Katie greeted delightfully.

"Good morning, Luna Katie. You're practically glowing today," he returned. His eyes settled on the pigeon that perched on her bare shoulder, however, he chose to dismiss the matter... for now.

“Well, I am well rested and happy,” Katie answered, paying no mind to the humble bird and walking past the beta alpha. Kyle kept a distance between himself and the Luna and followed her through the palace halls.

“Might I ask what the creature on your neck is doing? Perhaps you’ve chosen to carry a pet now?” Kyle asked when he could hold back his suspicions. He grimaced when the pigeon cooed at his remark.

“The bird is my companion today,” Katie replied lightly.

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“Oh, and this... bird knows this as well,” he asked her, walking ahead so he could see her expression. His alpha’s bright blue eyes regarded him for a moment before setting her eyes back on the halls.

Kyle pulled back when he realised she wasn’t going to tell him any more than that, “And here I thought we were making some kind of progress,” he slumped his shoulders.

Katie opened her mouth to say something, but stopped when Darla suddenly interfered, “Katie, that maid...” The girl scanned the passing wolves and came in eye contact with a maid pushing a food cart.

Chills went down Katie’s spine at the sight of the woman. They were still on the floor that housed the king’s chambers and as far as she knew, no one had ordered any food. Katie also couldn’t find her face to be familiar. She’d not taken the time to memorise the faces of those that served her, but it was odd to lack even a spark of recognition. The next words that came out of Darla’s beak put all the missing pieces together, “She’s one of them.”

Fear gripped the Luna at the words of the bird on her shoulder. Almost immediately after the bird had cooed, a shiny glint of silverware reached her eyes. Kyle sensed the tension and stepped in between the two immediately barring the maid’s path from the Luna.

“Kyle, seize her now,” Katie ordered and the command gripped the beta alpha’s whole being. Sensing that her cover had been blown, the woman retrieved a knife from underneath the white table cloth on her cart and attacked Kyle.

Kyle evaded her knife’s path swiftly and held her wrist, yanking it at an odd angle and forcing the piece of cutlery out of her hand, “That’s dangerous, you know,” he exclaimed before forcefully twisting her arm and slamming her to the right wall.

The sheer strength behind Kyle’s actions rendered all her actions useless. Once he’d gripped her hand within his, the fight was pretty much over. With her face pinned uncomfortably against the wall, she struggled against his iron grip but soon found these struggles to be useless.

‘When did Kyle get that strong?’ Katie thought to herself. She’d noticed his physique change as time passed, but the change was still substantial for a few weeks of being a beta alpha.

‘Well, I guess any kind of strength should look monstrous to me in this state. Perhaps, my perspective is not the same as it has always been,’ she tried reasoning but was ultimately defeated within her own mind. Kyle had handled this situation far too swiftly than she’d expected... and Katie felt a lot safer with him around.

The rogue woman raised her other hand in surrender. The other guards escorting Katie approached them and restrained the woman. Before the woman was taken away, she regarded Katie with a wicked glint in her eye, "You're even weaker in person. By the end of today, you won't be a threat to our king anymore."

"The last time I checked, the king really liked me," Katie feigned ignorance, "And couldn't get hurt by a mere kitchen knife either." While Katie knew she was referring to the rogue king and not Cole, she stubbornly refused to acknowledge the man as royalty, "And the other king is my father, so I'm afraid you either mad or delusional... or both."

Kyle watched the woman get taken away from them. Wiping the thin film of sweat on his brow, he asked, "How did you know she was going to attack you?"

"You can thank my companion for the heads-up," she gestured to the bird on her shoulder with a kind smile.

Now it all made sense.

"You've got to be kidding me. You can talk to animals now!" the boy sighed, "It's like the gods are trying to make a demi-god out of a human."

"Yeah, I can talk to them and they know the criminals by face and voice," the girl giggled to him.

The beta alpha was taken aback by her words, "Wait, that would make you the biggest thorn in their side. What are you going to do now that you can identify them? You could help this investigation come to an end. They could..." the beta alpha forced himself to stop thinking too much. His job was simple and his alpha's calm demeanour only suggested she'd thought about all of this already. All that remained was for him to listen to her instructions and help if he could.

"Naturally, I will take them down before they can cause any harm," the girl shrugged.

"Even in your state, you're just as frightening as ever," Kyle chuckled, "In that case, I request permission to help you out with your mission."

"Permission granted," the girl replied, retrieving her phone from her purse. "It will be like old times, except that this time you can fight for a change." She chuckled.

Kyle looked different as well. Kyle's whole mood was significantly lighter. For once, she didn't detect any sad or gloomy emotions coming from him and there were no signs of torture anymore, "I take it Caden is taking it easier on you."

"Yes. Can I ask why you had to hand me over to him in the first place?" Kyle asked as they resumed their walk. The wolves that followed them were replaced moments later and the light commotion in the halls died down almost as though nothing had happened. The only sign of this short attack was the message that was carried along covertly toward the future king of Lycaon.

"Caden was the one most affected by your crime. So, yeah, I had to give him a chance to get closure. Has he asked you yet?" the Luna asked.

"No, not yet. I guess he's not yet ready to let go of her yet and I can't exactly blame him," the beta alpha replied.

“How are you finding the capital, Kyle?” this question, while phrased differently was exactly the same one she asked every time she wanted to know about his progress.

Kyle sighed heavily. He knew she wouldn't stop checking on his progress. He was coming to terms with his predicament and also finally accepting the fact that the rogue killer was far too soft for her own good.

“The capital is fine, I guess. I'll save you the effort and tell you that my thoughts have not changed. I only live to serve my master. Nothing else.”

“Oh... Very well then,” Katie sighed. ‘Beta alphas are not capable of lying... What will it take to get you to start living again?’ the thought lingered on the girl's mind for a moment. When no answer would come to her, she shelved it with all her other pending questions. With so little energy to spare, there was only so much she could take care of... and there was a band of criminals at large.

And they had already infiltrated the palace.