

Denied 531

Chapter 531

"There's some paperwork I want you to look at, to read over before you make a decision."

"What kind of paperwork?"

"A contract to read over."

"You've had a contract drafted up already?"

"I'm feeling hopeful." He shrugs out, he was extremely confident that I would take him up on his offer.

We move back to his office, where he places the contract in front of me. A document consisting of page after page, it's going to take me a few days just to read this alone.

"Did you have a legal team draft this up or something?" I laugh out but it falls flat by his blunt and non humorous response.

"Yes. I want to do this right."

I take a seat on the chair opposite his desk...does he expect me to read this all in one sitting.

I wouldn't know the first thing about reading a legal document.

"I want to do right by you Cleo, I want you to know that no matter what happens to me.

This pack will be yours..."

"Mine?" I look up from the document, my eyes readjusting from scanning through the small text.

"Yes, until your child becomes of age."

"I would have complete control of the pack?"

"Yes Cleo, in the event of something happening to me, this contract would protect you. No matter what happens you are legally part of this pack, legally binding to be the Luna no matter what. For your child to be the future alpha...no matter what." "No matter what.." I was tempted...

"No matter what. Even if I die, this pack will protect you Cleo. Your child will be the next alpha, nobody can undo that.

I mean what I said... if you chose this, I will look after you. You won't need to ever feel shame of conceiving a half human child, no one will know. Your child will be an alpha as far as anyone knows. Let me take care of you, let me look out for you." I let his words sink in, trying to find a loophole to his offering...trying to find something that would show warning flags.

That surely this was too good to be true.

My child would be the future alpha, which not he, or anybody else can undo.

"What are you thinking?"

"I don't think you want to know." I truthfully respond.

"No lies between us Cleo, just the truth. Let's make that vow to one another right now." His eyes hold mine defiantly.

"I'm looking for a sign that you are tricking me, that this is too good to be true...and for a reason."

"There is no trickery, I wouldn't have drafted up a legal binding contract if there was. If anything, this contract protects you more than me."

He was right, he was looking out for

me. More than my parents, more than Jace they had their own lives their own concerns. Jace has a mate bond to try and save, Dad has Mum to keep sane, Ares has the pack coming his way.

When Jace finds out that the baby is his, he'd come for it. He would demand the baby joins the Clear Waters pack...that my baby would be raised by him and his mate.

But if I sign this document, I would

be able to protect my child. I would be able to use the Amber Desert warriors to push him back from our lives. It wouldn't just be a father trying to gain access, it would be a pack fighting another pack.

"No lies?" If I am going to sign this then I need to be truthful to him. He cannot go into this blindly trusting me.

"No lies..."

"Then before I sign this, I should tell you. My baby isn't human, and when I give birth we won't be able to hide that he or she will be an alpha born. Which means, this pack will be a target."

I can see his brain working, see the realisation hit him through his eyes. At first he seems confused until he catches up...yes my child is the child of an alpha. I just won't say which one, not yet.

His head nods gently as if he were talking to himself.

"This pack has been a target for a long time Cleo, we will protect our alpha child no matter what."

His words give me courage, his words give me the peace of mind that my baby won't be taken from me. That he will help me.

I reach for the pen, flipping the pages to the very end...scribbling my signature on the dotted line.

I was now the Luna of the Amber Desert pack.

Chapter 532

-Jace ~

The way I remembered the Clear Waters pack was a distant memory.

The softness, the tranquillity of the landscape...everything that made it what it was...is now steel, metal..a cold harshness.

The brutality in contrast to how I remember it was a wake up call to how long I had been away. I had been gone, what shy of a year...look how much has happened in that year. Mum said steel borders, I imagined steel borders...but to actually see them was something else.

Not only that, warriors of the Dark Phantom pack had infiltrated the pack here...turning the clear waters warriors into something else.

I get it, Dad needed to send them to protect the borders but if the Dark Phantom was considered night...then the Clear Waters was always known as being the light to its darkness.

It had been a week since Callie and I left the Dark Phantom pack.

A week of Callie getting used to her new pack, and taking the time to get to know the pack members.

Today the family descended, everyone...and I mean everyone was coming. Even the Arancea's...apparently my family cannot do anything without them.

But them coming serves a purpose once and for all.

Today, I would announce the date Callie would be made a pack member and the Luna through me marking her.

We talked about it in detail, more Callie bringing it up every time she could...

...Was I sure I wanted to mark her...

...I shouldn't mark her to keep the mate bond open in case I change my mind...

...That she can be a pack member and be a Luna that way...

But in marking her, I was setting Cleo free. I was unchaining myself from the very thing that threatened to topple me.

My mind was made up.

I was at the sea border over looking the peaceful beach. This was my favourite spot in this land, if I pretend not to take notice of the steel borders to either side of me...I can envisage complete freedom inside of this pack. How it was. Just looking out to the horizon gave me peace.

Since returning I have ensured I was at each and every training session.

I'm appreciative of the work the Dark Phantom Warriors have done here but it was time they left. Once my family leave, they...along with Auntie Alora and Ezra would be leaving too.

It was time for a fresh start, time for a new leadership upon this pack. Time to accept my fate.

My phone rings, my fingers moving to accept the call immediately.

"Alpha, the Alphas, Miss Josie and Knox are here." A guard's voice updates me over the phone.

"Grant access." I grunt out before ending the call. They were early.

"Time to get this done." I murmur to myself, not noticing a figure moving towards me in my peripheral vision.

"Are you sure about this Jace, there is no rush?" Auntie Alora moves to my side, I could sense her unease of stepping down and leaving the pack that she had called home for the best part of twenty years.

But she had given up so much, never having children of her own, never exploring the world...surely it was about time she did what she wanted.

"You've kept the pack safe all these years, it's time you enjoyed retirement."

"To be honest Jace, I wouldn't know what to do with myself."

"What do you mean?"

"This is the first pack that has felt like home to me, real home. I'm not sure how I feel about leaving."

"What about Ezra?"

"He's suggesting we return back to Jude's pack, be with his family." She shrugs out, as she loops her arm between mine, resting her head against my upper arm.

"I'm beyond grateful for what you have done here Auntie Alora, how you have kept the pack safe for me.

I know it can't have been easy not having Mum here, but also trying to keep up with the demands of an off site alpha.

If you wanted to stay here, this is your home, you can stay. I just thought you would want to do something different."

The sound of cars arriving pulls my

attention away from the

conversation, towards the alpha

house. When Mum hands me the

Alpha title I'll be able to control. through the pack link, who the guards let through the gates but for now it was all done through Auntie Alora as Beta or technology. Most of the time, the guards calling me for clearance.

I may be the future Alpha but I wasn't born here, or raised here...I cannot feel the pack link until I accept the Alpha title from Mum.

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Something, for security purposes, I wanted to address as soon as possible.

"Think about it. I have a penthouse at the beach club with your name all over it." I pull Auntie Alora in for a hug, placing a kiss on top of her head. She had given up so much for Mum, it was time she did something for her. But she would always have a place in my pack, if that is what she truly wanted.

We both head back towards the alpha house to find my parents, Josie, Knox and Lobo already inside..Jaxon's car pulling up just as I walk inside the house.

"You're early." I lean in to kiss Mum, a disapproving moan escaping me.

"She wanted to see what you have done with the place." Josie smirks out as she pats me on the back, Lobo already growling at me as per usual.

I swear this dog only likes Dad because he fed it and Knox...because he has to.

"We the first to arrive?" Jaxon walks through the front door, his eyes searching the faces of his own family. That he arrived with.

"That's because you are all far too early. Talk about host pressure."

"We wanted a swim..." Josie winks out as she picks up her bag and heads up stairs.

It may be a steel fortress but the Clear Waters did she offer the best swimming lagoons for miles.

"I'll let you know when lunch is ready." I call up to her, Knox moving past me to also head up the stairs.

"Hello everyone." Callie walks into the hallway, her arms already extended out to greet Mum. Shes smiling now, but her parents will arrive later...at least my family can take the pressure off when the time comes. I suspect, the real reason they are early. "Callie dear, how has it been going?"

"Really well, it's such a beautiful place. I can't believe how lucky I am."

"The moon goddess picked you to lead this pack for a reason dear, she clearly sees something in you." Mum cups her hands around Callie's face.

"Well I hope I don't let her down..." Callie's eyes move to mine, I can see a flash of concern before she masks it well. A smile spreading out as she, as always, meets both my parents confidently in the eye.

I leave them to it, continuing with my alpha duties, checking the borders, which Jaxon tags along for.

He's quiet...too quiet. He makes no comment on my border shift pattern, on the formation of guard numbers...not a thing. Most unlike him.

"What's yanking your balls?"

"Huh?"

"You've not said a thing, not even one comment on what I'm doing wrong."

we him suspiciously,

Jaxon was unashamedly vocal. about most things, especially pack security. So what was up with his silence.

ton

"That's because you aren't doing anything wrong." He shrugs out, his eyes yet again darting back towards the house.

I continue to watch him...his hands are in the front of his pockets, his body not to its full height...something was worrying him.

Then at the sound of an engine...he exhales, patting me on the back as a car arrives and parks up.

"You're doing great." He calls back to me as he all but breaks out into

jog, back towards the alpha

house...he was hiding something

Call it a sibling sixth sense but I just knew that he was keeping something to himself. "Perhaps he thinks any criticism and you'll run again." My wolf growls out in my head.

"We...we ran!" I snarl back at him, pushing him deeper into the corner of my mind.

Reluctantly I move back towards the alpha house, following my brother as he moves to greet the next arrivals.

I haven't seen Cleo, haven't heard from her since the cabin...and why would But just knowing she was in the back of the car was putting my wolf on edge.

I watch on, perplexed, as Jaxon all but rips the back door open, only for Ares to step out of the car.

Even I lower my head slightly to notice, that only Ares was in the back.

Thank the goddess, she decided not to come.

"No Cleo?" Jaxon turns to Uncle Orpheus, my brother's eyes narrowing.

"No, she couldn't make it." Ares responds, as he moves in front of his parents, blocking them from Jaxon's interrogating eyes.

Chapter 534

-Jace-

"Here, let me take your things Auntie Rosa." I move around Jaxon, ignoring his sudden issues with Ares as I retrieve the bags from the floor to take inside into their guest room.

"Jace." She almost jumps aside at my closeness, her eyes concentrating on Ares as he meets Jaxon's scrutinising scare.

Good for him, he was an alpha himself and he needed to grow into his future title. About time Jaxon got used to other males fighting back.

It can't just be myself and Knox all the time. Besides Ares is like a younger sibling to Jaxon and I...he wouldn't go out of his way to hurt him.

If anything he would be gentler with him that he was with me.

However, the warning rumble emitting from Jaxon's chest forces me to caution my brother's reaction.

"Jaxon..." I growl out, reminding Jaxon that this is my land and for once, he has to do what I want.

I won't have him acting this way, not when the last group gathering ended the way it did.

It seems to work, snapping him out of his anger long enough for him to redirect towards me.

"What?" He narrows his eyes at me, my own wolf pressing forward in preparation.

I won't have him challenging me, not here and not today of all days.

For once, I need things to go to plan.

"What is going on with you?" I find him through the mind-link and push on it, wanting to get to the root of his irrational anger of late. Until I lose my link to the Dark Phantom pack, and with my family close by, I can now use the mind-link again. Not all things had to be said in public.

Jaxon was always on the verge of a rage induced episode...but recently it seems to be heightened. That he could blow his top at any second.

"Nothing."

"You don't have to be here."

"Oh yes I do." He grunts back to me, barging past me as he follows Auntie Rosa and Uncle Orpheus inside the alpha house. Where my parents and Callie are already waiting for them.

Also heading inside, I find Callie is already making refreshments for our recent arrivals, but dread starts to wash over me. I turn to look behind me, one figure in particular missing.

Cleo's absence is noticeable. Their arrival just doesn't have the same impact without her.

She was always the first to embrace me, always the first to say how much she missed me.

A level of coldness spreads over me without her being here, something I will just have to get used to.

"No Cleo?" Mum glances behind me as I walk into the hallway, I guess growing up we were always drawn to one another, now I know why.

"She's not well." Auntie Rosa sheepishly responds, her gaze not meeting either Mum's or mine.

"Still? She's been poorly for a week?"

"What's going on?" Callie moves towards me whispering into my ear.

"I don't know."

"Did she see the doctor?" Mum pushes as she takes a seat next to Auntie Rosa, who awkwardly looks towards her mate and son. That feeling of dread continuing to grip me almost by the throat.

"Why ever would she see a doctor?" Auntie Rosa's laugh is highly pitched, even for her. She was hiding something.

"Since when do werewolves become ill..." Mum shrugs, her brows furrowing as she searches the room... meeting my eyes on a confused glance.

"It's nothing.." Auntie Rosa shrinks into her seat, her shoulders almost coiling in on herself.

"Get her on the phone." Jaxon's aura is felt before his words are said.

"Excuse me?"

"Get her on the phone?" Jaxon demands out, his phone pointed out to Auntie Rosa as he stands in front of her.

"Because I've tried her all week and she hasn't been responding."

"She's just busy." Auntie Rosa

shrugs out, her eyes moving at

unbelievable pace as they dart

between her mate and back to everybody else.

That sensation of dread grows, spreading deeper into my gut...like a virus that won't guilt until it takes me once and for all.

My wolf pushes forward and for

once I don't fight him. Something was troubling him and I had a reason to believe it was to do with Cleo. There are things that Cleo has said to me in the past, things that I wouldn't share.

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But I know for a fact, her relationship with her mother hasn't been as rosey as Auntie Rosa might want to make out.

"What's going on?" I move to stand next to Jaxon, just as Josie and Knox move through the house from the back door, towels wrapped around their bodies from swimming in the lagoons.

Both Jaxon and I are towering over Auntie Rosa, as she continues to sit on the sofa next to Mum.

Uncle Orpheus takes a step closer to his mate, placing a hand on her shoulder from the side.

I don't miss the way he squeezes it reassuringly.

I lower my body, crouching down to her eye line...judging by the gulp that had just emitted from her, she found both Jaxon and I towering over her intimidating.

Crouched down, I take her hand off her lap and place it into mine, gaining her full attention.

"Auntie Rosa, what is going on...where is Cleo?" I ensure my voice is soft, any trace of male dominance vanishing from it. I search her eyes, I can see pain hidden behind her discomfort, behind her mask. "We don't know." She sighs out.

"What do you mean you don't know?" I breathe out.

"She left the night of the dinner party..."

"Left? What do you mean left?"

"Jace." I hear Callie gasp out from behind but I can't turn to look at her, not when I was watching

Auntie Rosa's lips so intently.

"We argued...I said things I didn't mean..." A sob escapes her, her hand snatching away from mine to cover her face.

My wolf...he's on the verge of shifting and tracking her down himself. Our mate was gone...and even her parents don't know where.

"She's missing?" The words leave my lips at an excruciating slow pace. Words I never thought in my deadliest of nightmares I would be uttering.

"That was a week ago... Why didn't you say something?" Jaxon roars out next to me, forcing me to stand as his aura continues to swirl out into the room.

His eyes were solely on Uncle Orpheus, who was in return, solely concentrating on my brother.

"We thought...I thought she would be back by now. It's so out of character for her to just disappear." Uncle Orpheus responds.

"We've searched for her, but her phone is off which means we can't track her." Ares moves to my side, placing his phone out to show that he has tried her hundreds of times. All unanswered. en

Dread turns to fear.

"I don't understand...why would she disappear just because of an argument?" Josie interjects, she was right Cleo was a calm character, this isn't like her at all.

Unless...I've caused this...I know I

have. I've pushed her away, pushed

her away from her family. That was never my intention. Fuck...I wanted to keep her safe. Not send her directly into potential danger

"What did you say to her?" Jaxon diverts around the sofa, getting into Uncle Orpheus' space.

"What did I say? What the fuck did you say to her?" Uncle Orpheus roars back in return, pure anger radiating off him as he places a hand around my brother's throat.

Jaxon doesn't respond except for a smirk forming onto his lips.

"Trust me, I wanted her to tell the truth."

"And what truth would that be?"

"More than what you know.."

"Is that why there is a fist sized hole in her bedroom wall?" Uncle Orpheus roars into Jaxon's face, his grip tight around my brother's throat.

Bedroom...he was in her bedroom?

"You were in her bedroom?" My wolf is winning, his anger at the possibility that something was happening between the two of them...she was mine...not his. "Yes, but it's not what you think.."
Jaxon tries to calm my increasing anger...my eyes were starting to blur as uncontrollable rage takes over me.

My chest starts to spread out, my

lungs needing room as I start to pant out...my shoulders rising and falling as my alpha aura moves to dominate the atmosphere between us.

"You were in her bedroom?" I seethe out.

"Jace, no." I hear both Callie and Josie scream out, as I lunge for my brother, taking the sofa out with me.

Chapter 536

- Jace ~

"I promise...it's not what you think!" I hear Jaxon grunt out as he tries to push me off him but I'm too busy pummelling him with punch after punch.

How dare he even try to take advantage of her in that kind of way.

"Why else were you in her bedroom?" I'm like a man possessed as all I see is my brother protecting his face through red-hazed eyes.

"Because..."

I continue to punch as the wetness of blood coats my knuckles. I continue to drive punch after punch into his face, hands trying to grip at me from behind but I'm too fast for them, too angry for them. "Jace stop!" I hear Auntie Alora's voice from behind me, she must also be trying to pull me off him.

He's decided that he's had enough of my punches when he lands a harsh blow to my temple, not holding back on the weight behind it.

"Because...I needed her to tell me the truth!" He growls out at me, his wolf on the cusp of shifting. A warning, one more punch from me and he'll let loose in my sitting room.

"What truth?" I pull him up off the floor by the scruff of his collar just high enough, a fist threatening to knock him out once for all. If he's so much as touched her I'll fucking kill him.

I pull my hand back....preparing to land the hardest of punches when an icy coldness spreads through me, first at my chest then out...as if my blood pumping through my veins was being frozen over. All energy was leaving me.

My hand drops from Jaxon's shirt as I start to claw at my chest.

"Enough!" I hear Mum seethe from behind. I turn to find her eyes an ethereal blue, she was doing something to me. She was causing this.

Was she taking my strength away from me. Is this what her ability does, is this what he feels like.

I've never experienced it myself but judging by her goddess like glare, that was in fact what she was doing to me.

And it fucking hurt too.

Groaning, I move to the floor, my body weakening as she forces my wolf to retreat...my entire body to collapse on the ground.

One second I was a powerful alpha, my aura dominating the room...the next as weak as a new born pup, collapsing to the floor.

"Enough Kaia." I look up to find Dad placing a firm grip upon her waist, his teeth grazing against his mate mark on her neck...something that knocks her out of her ability.

Her eyes already bleeding back

towards her normal green, just as Josie growls out moving towards Jaxon first...a orangey red light emitting from her hands as the cuts and bruises upon his face heal up.

She then moves on to me, her hand cupping the side of my face as I feel her healing ability spread out through me. I feel my energy returning to me as Knox makes it known he's struggling to watch

Josie's energy decline.

It was a knock on effect between us, Dad warning Mum to stop, then Josie jumping in to heal us, only for Knox to growl out in warning for her to stop.

Both females paling having used their abilities...in very different ways.

"I'm sorry Jace, but you needed to be stopped!" Mum defiantly holds my glare as I rise off the floor, my eyes turning to her...my jaw tensed from fury.

I take stock of what I had just done. Both Mum and Autnie Rosa had been knocked to the ground as I

acted out in a fit of rage, something that never happened to me.

"Where is she?" I demand out to the room.

"I told you we don't know. We can't find her..." Uncle Orpheus growls out at me as he holds his trembling

mate to his chest. I'm a dick, I've

terrified her... let my anger get tenet

point my wolf took over control.

"We've been to every pack we know.." Ares adds.

the

"You have?" Auntie Rosa pulls out from Orpheus chest, her eyes looking up as she bites down on her bottom lip.

"Of course love, she's vulnerable..." He strokes her hair, placing it behind her ears, a tender moment shared between the two of them. He always has a special technique in calming her.

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"Why is she vulnerable?" My low rumble snaps both of their heads towards me.

"My car..." Jaxon shouts out.

"What?"

"She took my car the night she left...she was so desperate to leave. I've regretted letting her use it since, but maybe..."

"Jaxon!" Josie roars out in frustration. All of us were on the verge of snapping at each other. One of us was missing...if anything has happened to her. No I can't think like that. She's fine. She has to be.

"My car has a tracking device." Jaxon moves out of the room, disappearing only to return back from my office with a tablet, that he casts onto the television.

"Did she take it with her.."

"Yes but we don't know if she still has it." Ares responds out, no wonder he's matured into more of an alpha since last week. He hasn't had a choice.

"It will inform us of her last known location at least...we can work from there." Jaxon types away on the tablet, loading a map onto the television.

"We tried different packs but she doesn't know anyone that we don't. Any alpha that knows her would have informed us immediately. We were thinking a human city...maybe she had contacts there." Rosa voice continues to shake.

"Cleo? She doesn't know any humans." Josie responds.

"You didn't believe that bullshit did you?" Jaxon scoffs out not even turning to look away from the television.

"What do you mean?" Auntie Rosa's voice is drowned out when Jaxon points out at the map.

"Here...there's my car...it's not far from your pack actually."

"Where?" Orpheus takes a step closer to the television.

"Here...and this is your pack...do you know this area?"

"Hector!" Uncle Orpheus growls out, as his fingers trace around parts of the land. A silence settles upon the room as he looks up to Dad. ""Fuck me!"

"Hector." Mum scolds Dad's language as he moves closer to the TV screen.

"What would she be doing there?"

"Where? Where is she?" Rosa demands to know.

"She's never met him, never." Orpheus continues talking to Dad as if they are the only two people in the room.

"Then how would they know each other..."

"Where is she?" Auntie Rosa yet again demands, her voice louder this time. She was hanging on by a piece of string.

"She's at the Amber Desert pack." Auntie Alora gasps out, naming a pack I have never heard of before.

"No that's not possible." Auntie Rosa seems to zone out, her head shaking from side to side as she retreats back in on herself. "What? You are certain?" Mum gasps out.

"I know those lands like the back of my hand, they were meant to be mine after all." Dad mumbles out.

"No...No..."

"Rosa, you need to calm down.." Mum turns to Rosa, trying to calm her continuing declining state.

"No...she can't be there. Not with

him...No Kaia...he's a monster." Pure

fear radiates off Cleo's Mum,

sending

Cold shiver down my

Who was a monster, who the fuck are they talking about

"Hector..." Mum growls out.

"We need to leave, now." Dad demands out, it was complete chaos. Everyone is talking over each other. Auntie Rosa struggling with some kind of panic attack.

"Will someone tell me what is going on?" I roar out, my patience worn and my need to know if Cleo was in danger increasing by the second. "Kaia?....Kaia, are you coming..."

"No...I don't think I can?"

"He won't hurt her." Auntie Alora moves to Rosa's side, holding her upright.

"Really? You are still defending him even now?" Mum seethes out to her sister.

"I'm not defending him Kaia, but he won't hurt her. Why would he?"

"Why would he? For power...for revenge." Dad roars out, and to my surprise...he moves with such precision, with such focus towards an unravelling Mum.

I've never seen her like this...never.

Auntie Rosa, I'm not surprised at her hyperventilating as Auntie Alora and Josie try to calm her but Mum Hooks as if she is going to collapse at any second.

"Orpheus..." Auntie Rosa stops hyperventilating long enough to gasp out, a demanding cry.

"The baby..." A painful wail escapes her....freezing me on the spot.

Chapter 538

- Jace -

"Baby, what baby?"

"Of course..." Mum gasps out but I can't keep up with everybody else's words, all I can concentrate is on one image...Cleo having a baby.

"What baby?" I roar out again, surely, they must have it wrong. She can't be with child, she would have told me.

"Cleo is pregnant." The words leave Auntie Rosa's lips, her eyes piercing directly through to my soul. No..that cannot be.

"What?"

"He still wants an heir, after all this time." Dad's voice rumbles out loudly over everybody else's.

"No the father is a human...it's not Than's." Rosa declares out loudly, shaking her head, her breathing continuing to be erratic.

It's like the world disappears around me...everything just melts away. All the shouting over each other, the incessant noise...it is blocked out, as all I can hear is my own heart beat thudding against my chest. "She's pregnant?" My words don't even sound like my own. They sound clouded...a voice not belonging to me.

Maybe it's the blood now pumping violently against my ear drum that has drowned out even the sound of my own voice.

"Jace?" Jaxon clears the floor towards me, large meaningful strides before his hand lands firmly on my shoulder...helping to keep me grounded.

"Than...how do I know that name?" Josie's voice rises above the arguing that has continued in the room. "He..."

"Kaia...don't." Rosa screams out, her hands covering her ears as if she was pained by the sound of this name physically.

"It's time Rosa, it's time they all learnt the truth. We should have told them. She wouldn't have gone near him if she knew. He's manipulated our lengths to protect them...all this time we've been keeping him away but he has just been biding his time."

"Wait, I've met him...he was the one in the bar..the one that got kicked out by Uncle Jude's men. What does he want with Cleo?" Josie interjects.

"Is she in danger?" Ares growls out, his hands turning into tiny clenched fists. Cleo might be older than him but I know for a fact he would go to the ends of the world to protect her, just like I would for Josie. Having a sister doesn't matter if they are older or younger than you, you keep them safe no matter what. "Yes...I'm afraid she is in danger." Mum sighs out, her voice trembling.

"Who is he?" I growl out in frustration, as Mum turns to Auntie Alora.

Secrecy, always so much secrecy.

"Alpha Than is your mother's ex

husband. But also Auntie Alora's ex

mate Dad answers, he

n to be by Mum's

the

"You were mated to him?" My eyes flicker between Mum and Auntie Alora. The words are bitter upon my lips, just how deeply involved is Cleo in this It was imperative that we get to her, that we pull her away from this male.

"We both were. But he used me, until I escaped...."

"Kaia.." A powerful dark aura emits from Dad, the notorious Dark Phantom alpha wolf still as lethal as when we were children.

"It's okay, it's time they knew." Mum places a hand on Dad, soothing his wolf's anger by her touch.

"I escaped to find my father, my search for him led me here."

"Orpheus...he's a monster...we need to get her out...." Auntie Rosa reaches for my Uncle.

"Why did you flee?" Jaxon demands,

I hadn't noticed that his hand was

still placed upon my shoulder. Keeping me rooted to the spot.

"What if she hurts her like he hurt you..." Auntie Rosa screams out, her voice breaking at the last word.

It's like a thunder clap, Auntie Rosa's words stopping all other noise in the room.

"He hurt you?" Both Jaxon and I utter the words at the same time, both holding back on our wolves.

"I was pregnant when I arrived here..."

"Don't tell us..." Jaxon starts but is cut off.

"No...no you are definitely your father's children."

"Then..."

"I lost the baby."

"You were willing to give him an heir?" Jaxon demands.

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"No...no...I wasn't willing." Her voice is firm yet quiet in volume. I wish I had misheard, I wish I had this wrong...is she saying what I think she is saying.

"You mean?"

"It was a long time ago.."

"Mum..." Josie starts to sob out, as she tries to take a step closer to Mum.

"You knew about this?" So much rage is laced in Jaxon's voice as he turns on Auntie Alora.

"Yes.."

"Not at the time no, she was in a coma. It isn't Alora's fault any more than it is mine. We were both victims..'

"He attacked you? He forced himself on you?" I can already feel my chest stretching out, my spine elongating to my full height as pure red molten anger boils through my veins.

I wanted blood, I wanted his death. I could feel Jaxon next to me reacting in the same way, feel his wolf on the verge of hunting this alpha down and ripping his head off.

Because that's what I am going to do. He hurt our mother...

"Yes!"

"And he's still breathing?"

"He has lived with a severed mate bond, that is a punishment worse than death. Why give him the easy option.." Mum responds, her eyes glued to both Jaxon and me.

"Because now he has taken Cleo, to act out revenge on." I was shaking, I couldn't contain my

wolf any longer. He needed out, he needed to find her. What if he was hurting her as we stand here talking about the past.

"This is my fault." I seethe out.

"How?" Mum's brow furrow in confusion.

"I've forced her into his arms."

"No, Jace...you weren't to know." Callie stands on the fringe of my family crisis, her eyes glistening with pained tears.

"I'm just to blame..." Her hands move to her face as she tries to hold back her sobs.

"We need to get to her." Jaxon states out next to me. Everything

second we waste here she could be in pain...just the thought of her in

pain makes unbearable nausea grip me at the core of my stomach

"It's not as simple as that." Dad shakes his head, his hands still gripping Mum closely to him.

"Why?"

"Entering onto those lands would be an act of war, something I'm sure he is relying on us to do."

"He has taken her." I roar out impatiently. I don't care about war, he won't live long enough to even summon any warriors he may have.

"Not if she has entered willingly. He's been waiting for this.."

"Then you take the lands back." Mum turns to Dad, her hand moving to touch him by the side of his face

"I gave up those lands decades ago." He says as he leans into her touch.

"You were a pack member?" Josie is pulled back towards Knox, his hands tightly wrapping around her. What I would give to have Cleo safely in my arms, to make sure she was safe, to protect her.

I'm a fool, I've been such a fool. Trying to fight against our mate bond, thinking I was keeping her safe when all it has done is pushed her towards a danger I didn't know even existed.

"I was the future alpha until his mother decided to push me aside for my brother."

"Brother..." All three of us respond, Dad has never mentioned to us siblings that he has a brother.
"We share the same father."

"You need to do something Hector, please." Auntie Rosa sobs out, Ares now holding her to him. I can see the anger radiating off him, his own sister was in peril.

"I can't, I no longer have any claims on those lands. I would be unlawfully taking the alliance to war." "What if you do have a reason to invade those lands." All eyes turn to Jaxon.

"I don't but if I do...then nothing

would get in my way from destroying him once and for all." Dad's eyes bleed out into an orangey red, gone are the grey ash

pupils...now replaced with balls of fire.

"How about your grandchild?"

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- Jace -

"Grandchild?" A few voices ask at once, all eyes looking to Jaxon in replica astonishment, myself included.

"Jaxon, what are you talking about..." Josie calls out, but my eyes are locked on my brother, whose hand...that has remained on my shoulder for some time, suddenly has some weight to it.

Suddenly I can feel myself being pushed down by a gravitational weight.

"Jace..." He turns to me, a graveness within his eyes.

"Jaxon?" Mum demands out but she is immediately hushed by Jaxon.

"Mum, just stop... Jace..." My head tilts slightly to his hand on my shoulder, he had crossed the floor to be by my side...he was preparing to support me before I even knew why.

Why would he need to support me..

Then a flashback, to their odd behaviour the other night. The way he wouldn't leave her alone...the way he snatched the champagne flute out of her hand.

"No.." I gasp out.

"Yes."

"You are certain?" Auntie Rosa had said the baby was human, but Josie was right...when has Rosa ever been around humans. Except for my beach club and I put an end to that...being with her instead. "Of course I am certain, she's only ever loved you."

No, if she was pregnant with my child I would have felt it, I would have recognised the pull even more.

I would have sensed if she was pregnant...

"Not if you took a wolfsbane shot!" My wolf whimpers out in my head, for once his aggression towards me is replaced with a yearning for her, a fear that I've done things I can't undo. Irrevocable damage to the mate bond.

"No." My knees fall to the ground, a thud ricocheting around the now silence of the room. Everybody had been so loud, so vocal that I couldn't make sense of what was being said. But now that I am met with an eery silence...I can feel it, feel the truth calling out to me.

It had been all this time but I had been ignoring it, the mate bond was trying to warn me, trying to force me to open my eyes to it. But I kept denying it, kept pushing it back down...ignoring it, fighting it.

That she has been pregnant all this time. How she had tried to reach out to me again and again...how brave she had been even to arrive here.

Strength beyond anything I could

muster. I flaunted a fake mate before her very eyes, touched another.....purposefully, when my own mate stood before me. Pregnant with my own child.

I've broken her heart yet again, pushed her to an unknown enemy.

Somebody who has used my mistake against us, against our parents. Biding his time....just waiting.

He thinks he can dare have what is mine? Dare have what is destined for me....

"Jace...oh no Jace.. " Callie's voice is tearful, pained.

"What have I done." I breathe out, my voice barely audible.

"What have you done?" Ares shoots me a glare, his jaw tense.

"The baby....it's mine." I close my eyes, my admission loud for all to hear.

"How is that even possible? The baby is a human." A tearful wail escapes Auntie Rosa.

"Because...I am in love with her, and she me.."

"But you have a mate?" Ares grunts out, as he moves away from his mother...making a beeline for me.

"No...she is my mate?" I meet his eyes.

"You have two mates?" Mum gasps out only to be met with Callie's response.

"No...no Jace and I aren't mates..."

A silence settles across the living room, not one person takes a breath as they must all be thinking the same thing.

"You rejected my daughter? My pregnant daughter?" Uncle Orpheus roars out, his eyes turning to that of

his wolf as he takes large heavy steps towards me, as does his son.

"I didn't know she was pregnant..."

"We need to stop fighting over what

has happened and get to her, she could be in trouble." Jaxon moves to block me from them but I don't care what they do to me, they could punch me til I was black and blue, on the brink of death... kill me...but first I need to get to Cleo.