

Chapter 81

~MAYA~

"I think we should all calm down," Isabella says as she tries to lighten the mood. "Obviously, everyone is still stressed from everything that has happened to this family recently. Let's not say things in the heat of the moment that can hurt each other. Don't let the events of today ruin what we have."

While she had a point, it was still hard for me to accept everything.

I couldn't stand here and look at Kane anymore after what he just said to me. I tried to stand up for him, and he attacked me verbally for it.

"Will you please excuse me," I say to everyone before I storm out of the room. I don't bother looking his way when I leave. I didn't want to look at him. Kane had finally done what he always said he would; he had hurt me. I was already sad that he was back with Maya, and I knew that from now on, she would always be put above me or anyone else. I was willing to make my peace with that for Kane's happiness until I saw how she spoke with him today. But apparently, I was wrong in Kane's eyes for standing up for him.

How could I stay here after the way he just spoke to me? And that wasn't all that had me upset. Why did they let Maya talk to him like that? It was evident that her words were hurting him, and no one seemed to care. And Kane, instead of standing up for himself and telling her what it was like for him without her, lets her say whatever she wants to.

I understood that she was having a hard time, but why would she attack the people that cared for her? If they didn't come for her, she would still be locked up in that abandoned castle with nowhere to turn.

"Hey!" Gabriella called out to me before I could leave the palace. I wasn't sure where I was heading. I just knew I wanted to escape.

I turned to look at her, waiting to hear what she had to say.

"I know that you probably don't want to be here right now. I think that it's best if you come home with Arthur and me. You can stay there for as long as you like. We can return when things between you and Maya improve." She tells me.

I was glad for her suggestion. I didn't want to see Kane, and I definitely didn't want to see Maya.

"Thank you; I'll be happy if we can leave now." I plead with her.

She nods, "Arthur is already by the vehicle, and I've said bye to everyone else. They know that you'll be coming with me, so you don't have to worry about telling them."

I thank her for another time as we both walk towards the vehicle where Arthur is already waiting for us, just as she said earlier. Gabriella opened the door for me, and I got into the back seat.

The ride to their home was an awkward one. I don't think any of us knew what to say to lighten the mood. I wanted to ask Gabriella if I was wrong standing up for Kane, but I remained quiet. I don't think she will take my side. I don't think anyone would when they love Maya so much.

It doesn't take us long to get by Gabriella's home.

As soon as we walk in, a little girl runs into her arms and hugs her.

"I'll like you to meet our sweet girl, Emma," Gabriella tells me.

The girl smiles at me, and I return her smile. She's beautiful, and her smile definitely lights up the room.

Arthur picks her up in his arms and tells her that he brought snacks as he walks with her into the kitchen. I wasn't aware that they had any children together. I knew she was pregnant, but I thought it was her first child. Gabriella looked very young; the child couldn't be hers. At least, I didn't know that to be possible. How old would she have had to be to have her?

"I didn't know you had a daughter," I tell her, saying what was on my mind.

"We adopted her." She explains. "She was just like me before I found out who my parents were. Arthur and I decided to take her in. I already loved her like my own daughter. And Arthur was the one who suggested it when he realized how much I cared for her."

Before she found out who her parents were? What did Gabriella mean by that? Did she not know who her parents were at a point in her life? That wasn't important after what she'd just said. I couldn't believe they were so wonderful to adopt the sweet girl.

My heart melts at her words, "just when I think your family couldn't get any kinder. She's lucky to have you as her mother."

Gabriella smiles, "thank you. Would you like something to eat or drink?"

I shook my head; I was still angry and hurt over what had happened earlier. I've done nothing but stick by Kane's side since I first met him. And he's always stuck by my side as well. He never let Giselle mistreat me in any way. He always protected me. This was the first time he's ever spoken so harshly to me before, and the pain I felt was excruciating. I knew that he loved Maya, but how could he speak to me like that when all I was trying to do was make her see that her words were hurting him.

"Don't take what he said to you personally," Gabriella tries to comfort me. "I don't think he meant to speak so roughly to you. He was only concerned about Maya."

She somehow knows exactly what's bothering me. It's not like I tried to hide it either.

I knew that she was right. I knew that he would always support Maya no matter what since she was the love of his life. I just got so angry by the way she was speaking to him. I never liked seeing Kane hurt; whenever he was in pain, somehow, it affected me more. His pain felt like mine.

"Between you and me, I don't blame you for what you said to Maya." She continues.

I'm surprised that she was taking my side or at least understanding why I acted the way that I did. I was sure that she would pick up for Maya just like Kane had done.

"You don't?" I asked to confirm that I had heard her correctly.

She shook her head and poured herself some water, "not at all. Maya had it coming. I understand that she's going through plenty but taking it out on Kane was uncalled for. Maybe she's still hurt about the past. I'm not sure what's going on with her. I know that she was wrong for making it look like Kane was wrong for protecting you and your babies. She made it sound like he intentionally let their baby die. He wasn't the one to push her down the stairs, and from what you've told us, it was clear that he had gone through hell without her. I knew he kept blaming himself for everything that happened. Her telling him that he was to blame for the loss of their baby was only making him feel more guilty than he already did."

I couldn't hide my surprise from hearing her say everything I was thinking.

"Exactly!" I snap. "How could she do that to him? I've heard Kane talk about Maya, and he called her a ray of sunshine. The way he spoke about her, I expected her to be a lot more loving. He said that she protected him from her brothers at one point when they almost killed him for hurting her. The woman that I saw today didn't look like someone who would ever protect him. Today was the first day that I met her, and I can't judge her, but it's hard not to. She's nothing like the person Kane described to me."

"I haven't known her that long either," Gabriella tells me. "But I can also sense that something is not right. She doesn't seem like the same Maya to me at all. Something is off about her. Maybe the witch did something to her. I'm not sure what's going on, but someone needs to find out what happened to her in that abandoned castle."

Arthur whistles behind us, "I can see that you two are getting along well."

Gabriella rolls her eyes, "yes, we are, and if you haven't realized, you're disturbing us."

He laughs and kisses her on her cheek, "you don't need to tell me twice."

I watch as he leaves us to continue with our discussion.

"I thought that I was the only one that realized something was off with Maya," I tell her. "I'm surprised that no one else saw it."

"I think it's because we're not directly related to her somehow," Gabriella answers me. "Everyone else has close ties with her and is happy that she's home. They're too blinded by love to realize that something is wrong with her. Or maybe they saw it too but are trying to be understanding since she's been through plenty recently. But we're different; we can see straight through her."

I had to agree with Gabriella on that. They were blinded, especially Kane. If he opened his eyes a little, maybe he would be able to tell that something was off about his mate.

"Hopefully, she returns to her normal self soon before she breaks Kane's heart more. I hate to see him in pain. Giselle made him suffer greatly, especially when Maya wasn't by his side. Now that Maya had returned, I hoped she would treat him well. So far, that isn't happening. She's making things harder for him. I'm afraid of what will happen to him if she continues to push him like that."

I'm surprised when Gabriella doesn't respond. I turn to look at her and am startled to find her staring at me as though she's seeing me in a new light.

"What's wrong?" I ask her.

"You care about Kane plenty," she points out. "Don't you?"

Oh damn. What was I thinking speaking so freely to her? Gabriella made it easy to talk to her, so easy that I forgot to hide how much I cared about Kane.

"Come to think of it. Kane also seems to care a great deal about you." She added before I could answer. "I've only seen him that concerned about one other person, Maya. You're a lovely person, but I don't think that's enough to make Kane worry about you the way that he does. He doesn't seem like the type of person to fuss over someone he doesn't care for."

My cheeks are red, and I don't think it's helping my situation.

"You care about him also. A lot." I bring up something I've pointed out before. I'm trying to change the topic, but I'm also curious to know what's between the two of them. Why did she care for him so much? She already had a mate she was head over heels in love with. So what is it about Kane that makes her want to protect him?

Gabriella sighs and takes another sip of her water, "I wasn't supposed to bring this up with anyone, but I think it's safe to say that I can trust you. I need you to promise me that you will not tell Kane. I'm waiting for the right time to tell him."

I nod, "I promise. As you said, you can trust me. Whatever it is, I won't tell anyone, not even Kane."

Her hand tightens around the glass, and I can tell this isn't an easy topic for her, "before I tell you. I'll have to give you a little glimpse into my life. When I was a child, I was kidnapped from my home. But I wasn't the only one; my twin brother was also kidnapped. I was left to die in the woods. I don't think it's any use telling you what happened to me next. That's not important to this story. When I met Arthur, my life completely changed. We had many struggles before we could finally be together. Again, I'm not going to tell you the details of those struggles. But I eventually found my birth parents, and they told me about my brother. It turns out that they never found him. I honestly didn't think that there was a chance that we would ever find him. But now, I think I may have found him."

My lips part, "you think that Kane is your long-lost brother?" I ask her before she can finish.

She smiles, "I don't know how to explain it, but I feel this strong sisterly connection whenever I'm around him. I constantly want to protect him from any harm. I'm always worried about him. And I can't deny that he also shares some resemblance to me. But I don't have enough proof. I only found my parents because of an amulet they'd left on me. Maya's family was able to help me find my parents because of that amulet. They recognized it immediately. I was hoping that Kane would also have the same amulet as I did, but when I asked him, he told me he didn't. I don't want to mention it to him until I have more proof, but so far, I'm not getting anywhere."

"If I'm being honest, when I first saw you, I immediately saw a resemblance between the two of you. I also think that he is your brother. He has to be." I tell her. "But what does that mean about his father? He mentioned that his father and sister were killed by Maya's family. Does this mean that they weren't his real family? Were they responsible for his kidnapping as well as yours?"

Gabriella shrugs her shoulders, "I know he is my brother. It definitely means that they were not his real family. From what I've heard about his father and sister, I can tell you that they weren't good people. It's why Maya's family got rid of them. They were causing too many problems for everyone else. If Austin and everyone else didn't fight back, they would probably be the ones dead right now. Knowing everything I knew about his father and sister, I can say that there is a good chance that his father was responsible. I'm not sure what his intention was or if someone he knew performed the disgusting act; I hope that I can prove this to Kane."

What would happen if Kane found out that his whole life was a complete lie? His father had most likely lied to him. He wasn't his real dad. Kane already had so much going on in his life; this would only destroy him more. But it could also help give him the support he needed. He wasn't alone. He had a sister, and he had a family. I just wasn't sure that he would be willing to accept them.

"This will explain why you protected him from Maya's family." I point out.

She nods, "I couldn't watch them hurt him. They were going to kill him. I couldn't stand back and watch it happen. I knew I had to stop them before it was too late. I almost cried that day; I knew that he was hurting, but no one else could see it. Their rage blinded them so that none of them saw that he was dying inside of the news of what had happened to Maya. He was her mate; they were bonded; of course, he would feel it more than anyone else."

I bite my lip to keep from crying. Hearing what Kane had to go through in the past always made me tear up inside. And now I was getting more details on the events in his life before I met him.

"Have you ever considered going to his home?" I ask her. "Not Kane's, but his father's. Maybe there will be something there that can prove that he is your brother. I doubt that Kane would easily accept your words. He doesn't seem like the type who would give in easily. He would want proof to accept that his father and sister weren't even blood-related to him. If he went through so much to avenge their deaths, he clearly loves them a lot. This only means that the last thing he will want to hear is that they weren't his family, to begin with. That they'd lied to him since the beginning."

Gabriella looks surprised by my suggestion, "I have never thought of that actually. But you are right. Why didn't I think of it before? It is possible that there would be clues in that house. As far as I know, I don't think Kane visited that home since they died. I could be wrong, however."

"If you want, I'll be happy to help you look. I'm willing to do anything to help you prove that he is your brother."

Gabriella touches my hand, "thank you so much. You don't know how much that will mean to me."

I smile. I know that she still wanted to ask me why I was so willing to help when it concerned Kane, but she didn't. And I'm grateful for that. She was so honest with me that I didn't want to lie to her. If she asked again, I would have no choice but to tell her the truth. I will have to tell her that I liked Kane a lot, and my feelings might have been stronger than just liking him.

But hopefully, for now, I didn't have to give her the answer that she wanted. I could keep that secret with me for as long as possible.