

# Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 111

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chapter 111 Marco's POV

"Mister Sanchez, what can I do for you? I'm having a terrible day," Katherine sighs into the phone. "Katherine, we need your help. Something's wrong with Kas," I pace around the living room, cause ain't no way I can stand still right now.

"What's wrong with her? Out with it," she snaps. There ain't no concern for Kas in her voice. She just sounds annoyed. Kas was right about this bitch.

"She is hysterical, and it seems like she's in a lot of pain. She keeps calling for Amari," I explain as patiently as I can.

"Well, that is probably because Amari passed away sometime last night or this morning," her voice is so cold and uncaring that you'd think she didn't give a shit about Amari. It makes me feel like she just threw a bucket of ice water at me, "Just tell your Alpha to keep giving her all those hugs and kisses until she gets over herself."

"Wait? What do you mean, Amari and her mate passed away?" I ask. How can she say it with no emotions, like it doesn't matter that her sister died? °

"What don't you understand? She didn't come down for breakfast, so I sent someone to fetch her. They found her and Jasen dead in their bed. Deceased, gone, kicked the bucket...Oh, that's right, you're Hispanic...Muerte. Comprende?"

I'm trying to think of what Mama would say in this situation, even if this lady did just throw down her racist card on the table. I think she would say 'Marco, sé amable ahora, sé enojado mas tarde' [Be nice now, be mad later]. "I-I'm really sorry for your loss, Katherine"

"Aren't we all, Mister Sanchez? If Kas had just drank the damn wine Deon gave her last night, none of this would be an issue. She'll be fine. I'm sure what she is experiencing right now is the bond she shares with Amari breaking," Katherine says, like it ain't no thing and hangs up the phone on me.

I look at my phone, thinking about everything the woman just told me.

Dionysus was telling the truth.

Katherine hired him to be at the event. '

None of this would be an issue.' The wine was poison, and she knew it. She hired a god to kill her sister? Even thinking about it sounds crazy, but how else do you explain it?

'Tell your Alpha to keep giving her all those hugs and kisses'. What made her say that? I put my hands on my hips and look around the room, trying to put the pieces of the conversation together.

"Carly?" I mind link her.

"Hi Marco, everything okay?"

"This hotel, what made you book here? Is this the only five star one around?"

"No, there were others, but Santoro Enterprises staff said all of their VIP guests stay here. They were able to get us a special rate for the rooms."

I look around again. You gotta be fucking kidding me. I'm so fucking stupid.

"Carly, we're cutting the stay short. Get everyone packed up. Contact the airport; get our flight switched to this afternoon. The earlier the better."

"O-okay? Marco, what's going on?"

"Security breach. Everyone needs to be ready to leave in half an hour. Mind link communication as much as possible. I know you can't with Delilah, so just talk as little as possible with her. Got it?"

"No problem, Marco. I'll let you know when the cars are downstairs."

"James, Bronx, you're not gonna believe the phone call I just had. It's time to leave. Carly is already making arrangements," I switch my mind link to them.

Once we're on the plane, Delilah gets her doctor bag of potions and goes with the rest of the ladies into the bedroom at the back of the plane to see if they can help Kas feel better. We stay out in the main area and discuss what's going on. It's real uncomfortable cause Bronx is so angry that it's making the rest of us feel like we have to submit to him.



"We seriously underestimated this, Katherine. Myself included," Bronx crosses his arms in front of himself, "When we get home, we're regrouping with our Beta and Gamma to come up with a better plan. To protect Kas and Tessa."

"Excuse me, gentlemen?" Musu, Carly, and Diane are standing by the curtain at the back of the plane smiling at us.

"Is Kas okay?" Bronx jumps to attention, ready to go to Kas.

"Oh yes, Alpha, she's fine," Diane reassures him, "She asked to speak with Delilah and Marco...privately."

When Bronx turns around, I'm pretty sure he's gonna pounce and strangle me to death, but he sits down and glares at me while I walk to the back of the plane instead.

Kas and Delilah are sitting on the bed. Delilah is holding three vials of green liquid in one hand and wiping tears away from Kas's face with the other.

"You okay, Kas?" I try to smile, but her puffy eyes and red nose make me feel bad for her.

"I will be," she snuffles, "I have no choice. Please sit down, Marco."

I slide the door closed and sit on the edge of the bed, "Alright, whatever you got to say, make it quick before your husbands take turns murdering me for being in here with you two."

"I've moved the timeline up," Kas says blankly.

"Because of Amari?" There's an uncomfortable feeling in my chest, cause this is all getting too real too quick.

She takes two of the vials out of Delilah's hand and hands one to me, "If you drink this, it will force you to keep it a secret. That's the only way I'm going to talk about it with either of you. Delilah has already agreed to drink it." I take the little tube out of her hand and look at it, "This shit ain't gonna poison me?"

"No," Delilah shakes her head, "but it will prevent you from speaking about this conversation."

"What happens if I try?"

"Your, uh, your throat shuts and cuts off your breathing until you pass out," Delilah shifts her eyes around so she don't have to look at me.

Kas snuffles and holds up her vial like she wants to take a shot. Delilah does the same. I look in the vial again and hold it up with a sigh. We all throw them back at the same time. It has a sweet, then kinda sour taste but seems harmless enough.

"Alright, so what's goin' on?" I hand the tube back to Delilah.

Kas explains her impossible trip to Mount Olympus and what really happened to Amari and her mate.

"You got Zeus's power inside you right now?" I ask, looking her over. She looks like shit, but I assumed it was cause of losing her sister.

“A good bit of it, yeah. It’s uncomfortable too. I need to get it out as soon as I can,” Kas says shifting in her spot, “Plus, since Leticia has the Mavri Magea in one place, I can’t wait much longer.”

“Kas, what if you’re not ready? What if you haven’t learned enough magic or how to harness your powers?” Delilah puts her hands over her mouth and whispers.

“When I was with the Mavri Magea, I could feel their power feeding me, strengthening me. I wasn’t taking it from them. It was like they were sharing it with me. It felt...right. We shared memories. It helped fill in all the things I’ve forgotten over the centuries. I know who I am now and don’t want to forget it. The only way to do that is to see this through to the end.”

“Let’s see if we can help you stay in the light, mon ami,” Delilah takes Kas’s hand, then takes mine with her other one. Kas holds her other hand out to me and I take it so we make a little circle. Delilah and Kas both close their eyes, so I do, too. I feel a warmth coming from their hands that feels like I’m holding a cup of coffee. When I open my eyes, it fades away. I don’t know what just happened, but I feel more calm than I did when I came into the room.

“Thank you, you two. I appreciate you more than you’ll ever know,” Kas smiles, “Can you send Bronx in? It seems like a good time for a nap with my mate.”

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chapter 112 Bronx’s POV

Diane offers to keep Kas company in the apartment while we work out a plan on how to keep her and Tessa safe from the rest of the Mana. I feel better knowing she is a nurse and Kas trusts her. When I get back in the afternoons, she reports that Kas mostly sleeps and spends a lot of time in the shower. Almost every day, after I dismiss Diane, Kas lets me hold her while she continues to cry from the lingering pain. I don’t know how else to help her and it’s killing me. She doesn’t leave the apartment except to come downstairs for dinner. She insists being with the pack will lift her spirits up.

Delilah comes to the apartment every evening after dinner with her bag of potion ingredients. She and Kas spend an hour with the bedroom door closed meditating and trying different remedies to help ease Kas's pain and help her sleep. Some nights it seems to help. Other nights, I have to hold my sweet little mate while she whimpers and cries to her mother for mercy. I feel completely helpless. There is nothing I can do but be there for her.

Delilah easily convinces Kas that she shouldn't come back to work until she feels better and until there are fewer reporters hanging around in front of the bakery. They decide to let Kas work on accounting and purchasing from home while Delilah takes care of operations. To cover for Kas's extended absence, the PR team puts out a statement that Kas is really shaken up by what happened at the charity event and is choosing to spend time out of the public eye for a while.

I meet with my Betas, Gammas, James, Marco, and Tessa every day, working out details on a better security plan. After a long three days, we all finally agreed on a strict strategy that ends just short of putting motion sensors in Tessa's suite and my apartment. We place extra guards and put as many technological upgrades in place as we can in the packhouse and around the perimeter of the territory. Delilah sets up various wards around the packhouse and territory, but she explains she doesn't know if they will work against attacks from deities.

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Milo and Reggie go dark with their teams for a few days to handle the security breach at the hotel in Greece. Tessa could only provide limited information on Santoro Enterprises' existing security systems since Alexandros and Katherine handled all of it. She gave us dozens of international locations to search to get whatever it is they needed.

"I don't know what video and audio files you're talking about, Bronxy?" Milo smirks at me when they get back from wherever they have been, "And neither does anyone at Santoro Enterprises or Golden Mountain pack."

"Even from the Australian servers?" Tessa crosses her arms, challenging him.

"I didn't have time to get a boomerang from the airport gift shop. I was only able to get this," Milo opens his duffle bag and pulls out five blade server cartridges, "There were fifty total in there, but these were the five that were

"Locked in the vault?" Tessa asks with her jaw wide open.

"Yeah, how did you know?" Milo gives her a goofy grin.

"Those...oh my Goddess...those are our files," she stares at the cartridges wide eyed.

"No shit, Tessa. We got them from a Santoro Enterprise facility," Milo raises his eyebrows and nods slowly at her, then hands the pieces to James, "Careful, my dude, they're heavy."

I watch Tessa rub her fingers on her forehead the same way Lenora does when she's frustrated, "No Beta, you don't understand. Those are OUR files." "Can you give us some more detail about what's on the server blades, Tessa?" I ask before she gets mad at Milo.

"We used to have a library with all the information about each of the Manaes, but once the technology was available, we switched it to be all digital. If those are the five blades from the vault, you have every bit of historical information there

is to have about the five leaders of the Manaе. Between the five of us alone, there is close to forty thousand years' worth of data. Images of ancient scrolls, translations of tomes, born and death dates, identities throughout the years, information about our abilities. Everything," she stops short and looks at Milo, "Wait. That vault requires biometrics from multiple people to get in. How did you do it?"

Milo holds his finger to his mouth like he's keeping a secret and whispers, "Black ops".

James looks at the contents in his hands in awe. We watch him back out of the room, "I gotta go. I know just the person to help me with these. We've got work to do. I'll keep you posted!" "Arrogant Beta you got there, Bronx," Tessa murmurs, smirking at Milo, who is pretending to swing a baseball bat and pointing to his imaginary home run.

"Yeah, he drives me fucking crazy, but I wouldn't be here without him," I lean back in my seat and watch him celebrate his acquisition.

Tessa leaves to meet with Marco and Musu. They have been discussing the inner workings of the Manaе for the past several days so we can get a better understanding of how they operate in case we need to attack. When she can handle it, they discuss how cold and ruthless Katherine can really be.

When they report back to me, I'm not surprised by their findings. It turns out Katherine will do anything to keep power over the Manaе. The more power she has, the happier and the more dangerous she is. Since Kas is the only one who is able and historically willing to challenge Katherine's position, she will do anything to get rid of her youngest sister. Even if that means killing her before Cora is reborn. If Cora isn't reborn, Kas can't be either. If neither Kas nor Cora are alive, Katherine will find a way to gain control of the Mavri Magea and the Agrios. Amari's submissive Giatros will fall in line now that she is gone. By the time she is reborn and ready to take her place, it will be too late. Tessa's obedient Frouros will bear the same fate.

kkk

I'm checking the last email in my inbox on Saturday when there's a knock on

the door. I look at my watch, four forty- five p.m.

"Come in!"

The door opens slowly and I hear a high pitched little giggle as Codi toddles into the room with Lenora behind her. Even

Saint's brooding mood lightens up at the sight of her.

"Codi!" my smile is instantaneous. I put my arms out to her. She squeals happily when I pick her up and pretend to nibble on her cheek.

"Uncle Box!" she claps her hands at me. '

"Milo taught her that," Lenora smiles, " and now she keeps asking for you and for Kas. I figure, at least give her one of you guys."

Lenora sits in the seat across from me and watches me play with Codi to get her to say Bronx.

"How's Kas? I mean, when she's not faking to be happy at dinner," Lenora asks with a tilt of her head.

"I can't say she's doing great, but I don't know what else to do," I glance at her before I turn my attention back to Codi, letting her yank on my fangs and

pretending to snarl at her. Her laugh gives me a couple minutes of distraction until it's time for her and Lenora to leave.

"Bronx?"

"Yeah?"

"Everything is going to be okay," Lenora reaches over the desk and squeezes my arm.

"I hope you're right, Lenora."

"I love you, Big Brother."

"I love you too, Leni. I love you too."

"Uncle Box, Codi lub you."

"And Uncle Bronx lubs Codi," I give her a raspberry on the cheek before I hand her back to her mom.

I wait a minute until they leave and savor the silence before I get up and head to the apartment.

The smell of baked goods gets stronger as I get closer. When I turn the corner, I see Tyree on guard with two to-go containers on the bench next to him.

"Hey Tyree. Did Diane bake for you?" I ask him, already knowing that she didn't.

"No Alpha, the Luna must feel better. She's been baking all day. Diane wanted to give me more, but there's only so many cookies a guy can eat. I'm gonna give those to Mom and Dad," he says with a smile.

I nod with a little smile, glad to hear Kas is back to her old self, but when I open the door, I can't believe what I am seeing. Dozens upon dozens of cookies, muffins, cupcakes are stacked in containers all over the apartment. Pies and cakes in various stages of cooling are covering almost every surface that doesn't have a container.

Diane comes rushing out of the kitchen when she hears me come in, "Alpha, sir, I-I don't know what happened. One minute she was sleeping, the next she insisted she needed supplies for baking and once the kitchen staff brought up what she needed I blinked my eyes and there was...well...this..."

"You blinked your eyes and there was this?" I look at her unconvinced.

"Yeah, not an exaggeration," she looks at me with wide eyes, "The Luna won't stop baking. She says she needs to get the energy out of her system."

"Okay, Diane. I got it from here. You can go home. Take some of these containers with you, please. Hand them out to whoever wants some."

"Y-Yes, Alpha."

I make my way to the kitchen where Kas is decorating cookies to look like little autumn leaves.

“Kas, did you freeze Diane and Tyree?” I ask calmly, even though inside I am upset that she keeps freezing our pack members.

“Just for a little while, I needed more time. I just need more time, Bronx,” she puts down the icing bag and turns toward me. Her eyes are watery like she was crying and she has a little bit of icing on the tip of her nose.

“Baby, you and I have no idea how much time we actually have left in this life,” I step forward and take her by the shoulders, “Just like everyone else, we don’t know what is going to happen. The future isn’t set in stone. Everything is going to be fine. Just please, stop freezing people in time because that isn’t going to solve anything, okay?” She gives me a little frustrated look, “Okay. Um, I need to let Lex out. She’s driving me crazy. I spoke to Marco and he said he and James and a few other guards can escort me to the western part of the territory on Monday. There shouldn’t be anyone out there.”

“That’s good, Kas. That will be good for both you and Lex to get out of the pack house for a while,” I pull her closer to me for a hug.

Even with as much as she’s done today she still feels like her energy is practically vibrating trying to get out of her.

“Yeah. It will be good,” she murmurs into my shirt.

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chapter 113 Kas’s POV

I look in the bathroom mirror and sigh, “Lex, we’re doing the right thing here, right?”

“Yeah. I truly believe we are. Everything will change. We’ve known for centuries it wouldn’t be easy, but right now, you have all the tools and resources you need to make it happen,” she reassures me, “You’ve got this.”

"You can feel it taking over, can't you? The darkness. Even with Delilah trying to help remove its presence every day?"

"That is your human spirit, Kas. I don't feel it. I just sense that I feel you're not the same anymore. You may never be, honestly. But I will always be here for you, regardless."

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I lean against the back of the door and cross my arms, "What if I'm happier this way? With this feeling inside. I'm stronger than I've ever been. It's a little scary, but it feels good too."

"Kas, what do you want me to say? That you should stop letting Delilah try to help you? Let yourself become corrupted by dark magic?"

"A part of me does, yeah."

"I love you, Kas, but if you really feel that way, go to Hell."

"I plan to, Lex," I cut her off, not wanting to start more of an argument with her. I look in the mirror closely one more time. There are dark circles forming under my

eyes and my skin is becoming pale. I need a break from all this, but there's no time for that.

I fix my ponytail, then open the door. Without warning, Julia shoots a fireball from her hands directly at me from another direction a dark smoking potion gets hurled at me, I deflect them both with a swipe of my hand before either can land on me, then extinguish them with an incantation before they can damage the carpet.

"Good, but stop holding back. Who's next?" I call out, prepping for two more sisters to step forward and spar with me using their abilities.

"Kas, you're going to get hurt," Leticia stops in the hallway, looking worried and tired.

"Leticia, do you think she's going to take it easy on me?" I put my hands on my hips, scolding her, "No. She won't and I'll

"We all need a break, Kas," Leticia wipes her forehead with her sleeve, "We've been at this for hours. You may have Zeus's endless energy, but we don't, darling."

"IT only have a few days left," I drop my shoulders and soften my tone, "I just want to make sure I'm as ready as! can be sol can come back and take care of all of you."

"Are you going to stay for dinner?" A voice calls from the kitchen.

"Not tonight, darling," I call back.

I have been coming to the apartment every day to train with the Mavri Magea and strengthen my skills. Somehow, the apartment knows we are training and morphs itself into a full gym for us to use. When we finish for the day, it changes back into a regular apartment with enough bedrooms that I guess we could consider it a dormitory.

The Mavri Magea are trying to get along for my benefit, but I can tell it is a strain on them to all have to be in this proximity to each other. While being close to them strengthens me naturally, it is not so natural for someone who controls fire with their mind to be near someone who controls other people's emotions for very long. I understand now while they spread themselves around the globe instead of being a close-knit unit like the Sentinel or the Mavens.

I haven't told them any of the details, just that I plan on continuing forward until I have completed what I started centuries ago. None of them question me. They just insist on helping if it's going to help them and the Manaes.

When we're not training, we're working on a plan to get the cursed silver pieces from the packhouse vault. I am surprised how easily the ten of us can work together on it. All I had to do was show them the layout of the packhouse and explain where the vault was, and they eagerly asked if they could help by using their own talents. I am more than grateful for all the input I can get, but hesitant about letting them use their talents against anyone in my pack.

While I spend my days with my sisters, Diane thinks I'm sleeping. Cora told me I would feel pain when she died, but I didn't realize it would happen when other Manaes died as well. Leticia believes I only feel the deaths of the other Leaders since I share their abilities. She has never known me to experience pain of a bond breaking when one of the Mavri Magea dies in previous lifetimes. So we come up with ways to hold back the pain through magic. It's uncomfortable in its own way, not feeling the natural pain of mourning. Some days it works and I'm okay, but other days, once Bronx and I are alone, the dam breaks and all the emotions and physical pain escape at one time.

When I'm with the Mavri Magea in our gray and green apartment, I feel great. Almost invincible, regardless of my physical appearance seeming to deteriorate. They share their energy with me willingly. It is dark and a little erratic, but I'm doing my best to control it. I have too much at stake to let the dark overtake me, yet. Sometimes, though, I can't help it and I let it be my driving force, knowing I have one goal in mind. The person I was before all of this would never have

relinquished themselves to the thoughts and ideas I have now. I would have never been strong-willed enough to see this through.

When I'm home in the packhouse, I feel perpetually exhausted. Everyone assumes it is from the pain of losing

Amari. In reality, it is just stress and the strain of training with my sisters all day. There is so much riding on this plan. Delilah comes every evening to meditate with me and try to cleanse me of dark energy as much as she can, but she isn't able to get all of it out. Every day, it fills me a little more, refusing to relinquish its grip on the edges of my soul, and every day, I let it nestle deeper in the corners that are becoming heavier and darker. It doesn't help that Zeus's foreign energy is eating away at me trying to escape. I fight every second of every day to contain it. I am going to need it when the time comes.

I make Bronx take me to the dining room every day. I need to be around the pack. Some sense of normalcy and distraction from the changes happening in my mind and body makes me feel better about what I'm doing. Sometimes I see people look at me and whisper to each other. Other times they smile as they walk by, but don't stop to say hello like they used to.

The patient, caring parts of my soul that refuse to give up on trying to be a good person and become disheartened at the pack members' reactions to me. I see them look at me sympathetically or whisper to each other and shake their heads while they look from the corners of their eyes. They smile politely when they walk by, but they rarely say hello to me anymore. My little storm cloud hovers over me most days as I fight the urge to shout at them and demand respect.

There is some redemption when Hannah tells me how much she loves school and introduces me to her new friends. They are so thrilled about their Solstice play. Even though I promised Hannah I wouldn't miss it, I don't know if I will be here. Maybe I won't be anywhere. It's hard to say. I'm glad they're excited, though. I do my best to pretend to be excited for them and pray to my Mother that they will stay innocent forever.

When the days are all said and done, sometimes! can keep it together and relax with my mate, enjoying each other's company in the privacy of our apartment. Other nights, the dam breaks inside of me and I can't help myself. He holds me and comforts me while I cry until I fall asleep. I let our mate bond comfort me and

I pray to my Mother again. This time it's not for the innocence of children. It's for redemption and mercy for my future actions.

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chapter 114 "Kas, this is where you live when you're not with us?" Julia asks, looking around my apartment in the packhouse in awe.

"Yep. This is it," I smile as I take a couple of boxes out of her hands, "What's your home like when you aren't at Mavri Magea apartment?"

"Well, it's basically a bunker," she frowns, "I can't have a whole lot of flammable items. Just the necessities." I give her a compassionate look, "Maybe soon, I can help you hone your ability. Get a better control over it?"

"I would love that, Kas," she smiles before she steps back through the portal to get more containers of baked goods they have prepared using my recipes. I look at the clock on the wall, four thirty p.m.

"Alright, ladies, time to wrap it up. I'll take it from here and I'll see you all soon," I clap my hands, giving everyone a hug before they climb back through the portal in my bedroom.

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When the last of the Mavri Magea disappears into the white circular light, I wave my hand and recite the incantation to close it. I rush out to the kitchen, flick

some flour onto my sundress before I unpause my BLACKPINK playlist and uncurl my

hand, releasing Diane and Tyree from their frozen positions and go back to icing the cookies in front of me, humming and dancing to the music. Diane drops her hands to her sides and looks around, "Oh, my. Did we really bake this much today, Kas?"

"Yeah, it can pile up really quick. What can I say? Time flies when you're having fun, Diane," I shrug with a smile, "Don't worry, Bronx and I will deliver it all to pack members. We always find it's a great way to connect with them. Especially if I go a little overboard and have enough baked goods to go around. Maybe he'll agree to do it tomorrow even though we are supposed to stay in the apartment."

"A little overboard?" Diane asks. She nods in disbelief as she realizes just how many containers are around the apartment. She was so pleased this morning when I asked her to order supplies from the kitchen so she and I could bake instead of me sleeping all day, taking it as a sign I was feeling better. Poor Diane didn't know it was partially an act. I mean, I am happy I got to spend the day with her, but baking all day was really just a vehicle for my plan to get started.

I vaguely hear the door and smell Bronx's dark chocolate and coffee scent, but I'm so engrossed in the details of the cookie I'm decorating, I don't even hear Diane say goodbye or Bronx come into the kitchen.

"Kas, did you freeze Diane and Tyree?" he sounds calm, but I know he must be mad. He has asked me not to use my abilities on pack members before unless it's an emergency. I take advantage of his forgiving mood to tell him about my worries of needing more time and about letting Lex go for a run when my guards are all back on duty. He gives me a little pep talk about the time we have left in this lifetime and looks pleased I'm planning to shift to go for a run.

“So does all this mean you’re feeling better?” he asks with a smile when he pulls away from a comforting hug. I close my eyes when he smooths my hair away from my face. His hands feel so warm and gentle against my skin, I can’t help but lean my head into his hand and sigh.

“Better than I have in almost two weeks,” smile back. I let my hands wander under his shirt and around his waist, pulling him to close the gap between us.

I stand on the tops of his feet while he walks forward, pressing me between the counter and his body. I kiss his chest with sweet little kisses when he leans forward to slide the cookies on the counter behind me away. He moves his hands under my ass and picks me up, setting me gently on the counter so we are closer to eye level. He kisses me gently on the lips before moving to my neck with soft little nibbles, sliding the straps of my sundress away and down to my collarbone, barely avoiding my

marking spot. Shivers go up my spine at the whisper light touch of his mouth against my skin, making me giggle.

He smirks as he lets me lift his shirt, exposing his hard tattooed chest and chiseled abs for me to admire. I toss the shirt on the floor and he continues where he left off, pulling my dress over my head and onto the floor with his shirt, kissing my collarbone down to my breasts while he caresses my midsection. I feel him grab my thighs and growl quietly, spreading my legs apart further so he can stand closer against me.

He slides his hands up my thighs slowly until he reaches the top hem of my panties and slips his fingers below. I gasp as I feel his palm press against my clit and his fingers move toward my core, slipping inside me in one smooth movement. He slides my panties off with the other hand, tossing them to the floor with my dress. I lean back on my hands and moan with a howl when he rocks his hand to pleasure me from the inside and out.

“Bronx, I...oh Goddess,” I groan and squeeze my eyes shut, trying not to let myself release so soon, but it feels so good all I can think of is wanting more. I feel my hand move on top of his, trying to press harder against my most sensitive

spots, but I can't concentrate enough to show him what I want. A whimper escapes me when he eases my hand away so he can have control.

My breath becomes heavier at the sensation building inside me and focus on taking his pants off. When I lean forward, using his arm as support, he keeps rocking his hand against my clit and working my core with his fingers, inching deeper with each movement. My breaths hitch when he finds my most sensitive spot and concentrates the movement of his hand in slow, rhythmic circles. I unbuckle his pants, letting them fall to the floor, and move my fingertips inside his boxers. He leans into me as he massages his cock with one hand, feeling it grow larger and harder with each stroke, and pulling the boxers to the floor with the other hand.

"You're so wet, Baby," Bronx whispers into my neck right below my ear, "Cum for me. Cum on my hand. Put on a show for me."

I feel him change the pace of his hand, rocking faster, ramping up the pleasure I feel against my clit and my core. The faster speed makes my breath turn heavier, responding to his movements. "It feels so good," I moan as I let the sensation relax and excite me at the same time. I look into his eyes when I feel him getting harder in my hand. They flash black for when Saint tries to come to the surface. It makes me more excited knowing they both want to be with me. I tighten my grip on his cock slightly, adding more pressure to my strokes. Bronx groans heavily in my ear, showing me his approval without words.

The stimulation of him touching me and my hand stroking him brings me to the edge of control. My back arches as I get closer to my climax from his hand. Bronx takes his other hand and supports my back, watching me through his eyelashes as the orgasm surges through me, making me shudder in ecstasy. Lex purrs in satisfaction at the wave of bliss.

"Oh, my little goddess, so beautiful when you let go," Bronx murmurs when he feels my muscles relax. He pulls his hand out from between my legs and licks my juices from his hand. I wrap my legs around him, but he stops me and grabs me by the hips, turning me over so I'm bent over the countertop with my legs dangling off the ground. When his hard cock presses against me from behind, I feel myself gasp and my body involuntarily stiffens as a flashback of a memory comes to mind.

"We don't have to," he says apologetically and leans forward, nuzzling my cheek, "Let's go to the bedroom."

"No, go ahead. I want you," I close my eyes and take a deep breath as he takes his time when he enters me from behind.

He goes slow at first, sliding his cock almost all the way out of my core so the head is just barely in, then gradually slides deep inside in a steady rhythm. My muscles contract around him, making him groan and lean forward on top of me. I feel one of his muscular arms snake over my shoulder down the front of me, pulling my back against his warm chest and allowing him to play with one of my sensitive nipples. He rolls it between his fingertips turning it harder at his touch. The other arm wraps around my waist, pulling me off the counter until he is holding me up, rubbing my clit in soft slow circles that match the rhythm of him thrusting deeply into my core. All I can do is hold on to the counter and let him have complete control of my body. Both of us pant and moan with pleasure from the sensation of a new position for us.

"More," I manage to whisper between gasps. The building pressure of another orgasm takes over as Bronx moves faster. I feel his cock getting harder with each thrust until he stops deep inside of me. He moans with a howl as he squeezes his arms around me tighter.

The familiar sensation of his cock twitching inside of me before releasing his hot seed fuels my desire for him.

The movement in my core triggers my climax, making me grip the counter tightly and howl in pleasure. I press my hips back and grind against him, making the orgasm last as long as possible.

When my muscles finally relax, he slides out of me and carries me to the bedroom. He lays me down and gets me a towel so I can clean up before he lays down next to me, pulling me close.

"Bronx?" I murmur while I stroke the scruff on his chin.

"Yeah, Baby?" He looks down at me with a smile.

"I don't care how many lifetimes we have. I just hope each one has a moment like this. Where there is no question how much we love each other. Where we can just hold each other and be happy. That's all I want," I feel my voice crack, but I don't let myself cry.

"We can only hope the Goddess blesses us with that type of life, Kas," he kisses my forehead and holds me closer.

We wrap our bodies around each other and whisper sweet words of love until

Bronx falls asleep. I watch his peaceful slumber wondering how many more times I will get to see him this way in this lifetime.

## Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 115

[/ Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future](#)

**chapter 115** "Tessa said she and Arnie can escort us to give everyone else a break, but only pack members who live in the packhouse, okay? If we leave the packhouse, we have to have extra security. Even if it is just the houses down the street," Bronx lectures me after making a few phone calls.

"I'll take it. We can get everyone else tomorrow in the dining room," I smile and throw my arms around his waist before I run on my toes to the shower to get myself ready for the day. I turn on the water in the shower and get undressed, take off all my jewelry, including my lavish, trackable, diamond dog collar, and place it all in the little velvet lined dish on the countertop. Oh sorry, I meant to say, the beautiful diamond necklace my husband had custom made, using the latest nanotechnology, so he could know where I am every second of every day.

I step into the shower and start washing my hair. As I'm massaging the shampoo into my hair, I hear Bronx call me.

"Baby? Did you take your necklace off? I got an alert," he calls into the bathroom.

"Yeah," I holler back over the noise of the shower, "I have to wash my hair. I didn't want it to get full of conditioner. It's on the tray on the bathroom counter."

[REDACTED]

"Okay, just checking," he says before I hear the bathroom door close, "Please don't forget to put it on when you're done."

"No problem, Sweetheart," I call back sweetly.

"Lex, how long was that?"

"Ninety-seven seconds. I thought it would be faster. Better give us a buffer, just in case" she advises.

"Yeah. That's a good call. Ten seconds?" Inod and pout my lip as! rinse out the shampoo.

"I haven't been out in for a long time. I'm itching to go. Ten seconds is way more than enough. We just have to shift quickly."

"Okay. You're not exaggerating, right? If you tell me ten seconds, I'm giving you ten seconds."

"I can make it eight if you want," she snarks back.

"Fine. Ten. You don't have to be a little bitch about it," I huff at her.

"You don't have to be a little bitch," she mimics in a mocking tone. I roll my eyes and cut off our connection before she makes me mad.

I rub the conditioner into my hair and pile it on top of my head. I close my eyes and think outside of my body, "Leticia, are you there?"

"Hi Kas! Is it time?" Leticia asks excitedly.

"I'm in the shower. Be ready to take notes. I will recite the incantation as soon as I'm dressed."

"Got it! You behave now, Kas. I only have two eyeballs left since you told me not to kill Bronx or Jasen," she warns, but sounds more like she's reciting the safety instructions airline stewards give before the flight takes off.

She changes her voice to sound like a moaning ghost with a giggle, "T'll be waatchiling youuuu."

I smile and shake my head at her, "I'll see you tonight before I go to sleep.

Love you, Leticia."

"Love you too, Kas!" she chimes happily as I pull myself back to my body and finish my shower.

I put on a thick sweater and black jeans, paired with a pair of trainers. Once I dry my hair, I put all my jewelry back on, including the necklace and a string bracelet with some of Leticia's hair braided into it. I recite an incantation as I slide my fingers over the bracelet. It glows purple for a moment, and the vision in my left eye goes blurry. I blink hard a few times to adjust to the sensation of seeing double and look in the mirror. The dark circles under my eyes are more pronounced than they have been before, making my skin look pale. I haven't weighed myself, but I feel like I may have lost weight.

My left eye looks bloodshot from the spell, which doesn't help my appearance any, but I know it will fade soon. I hide the bracelet under my sleeve and head out to meet Bronx so we can hand out boxes of baked goods around the packhouse.

"Kas, what happened to your eye?" Bronx asks when I meet him by the door. He takes my chin in his hands and gives me a concerned look.

"Oh, I got shampoo in my eye. Lex is already healing it. It will be better in no time," I brush off his worry.

"Hi Tessa! Hi Arnie!" I smile and take her hand when we get into the hallway.

Arnie gives me a nod and greets Bronx. They get to work moving in and out of the apartment, stacking boxes onto a cart while I speak with Tessa.

"Hi Kas, how, uh, how are you feeling?" she asks, looking unsure of herself.

"I'm feeling much better. Thank you for asking. And how have you been? Bronx said you have been working closely with the team. Oh, would you like a cupcake?" I open the box in my hands and pull out a lemon cupcake with lavender icing for her.

"Oh, not right now. M-maybe when I'm done with escort duty," she smiles, holding her hands up in front of her.

"Suit yourself," I shrug.

"Is your eye okay?" She leans down and points to my left eye.

"Oh, yeah," I wave her off, "Shampoo in my eye."

"Okay, Luna," Arnie says, "We're ready. We will start on the second floor, then go down to the main level to catch anyone who is around."

"And the hospital wing?" I ask hopefully.

Bronx looks at the boxes, "Well, we should have enough. Worst-case scenario, we can come back and get more. Goddess knows there's plenty in there."

"Great! Let's go," I sing with a broad grin. Bronx lets me walk beside Tessa so she and I can chat. She tells me how much she enjoys being here at Blood River and is grateful that we are going to let her live out the rest of her lifetime here. She doesn't speak out against

Katherine, but she definitely seems more relaxed now that she has distance from her.

We make our way to the second floor and start handing packages out to the packhouse residents. Some people are not home, so we leave the boxes in front of their doors to make sure they don't miss out on the snacks. It is nice to see so many people, even if they are looking at me a little awkwardly.

I'm a little disappointed that neither Diane nor Carly are in their suites. I was hoping to apologize to Diane for freezing her. It needed to be done, but she didn't know that.

We make our way to the main floor, handing boxes to pack members who are working and then to the kitchens, where Mrs. Miller engulfs me into a powerful hug and hug. Tessa stiffens when she hears me squeak in Mrs. Miller's arms, but Bronx pulls her back and reassures her its normal behavior for us.

There isn't anyone just milling around because of the security protocols in place, so we can make quick work of handing out goodies. Arnie opens the door to the hospital wing, and I am surprised to see Diane and Carly sitting in the patient waiting area.

"Diane! Carly! What's wrong? Why are you here?" I kneel in front of them, taking their hands in mine.

"We'll be okay, Kas. We have just been feeling a little off since we got back from Greece and our wolves haven't been able to help, so we came in to get checked out. That's all," Carly explains. Diane gives her a sweet smile and smooths Carly's strawberry blonde hair back.

"We already saw the doctor. He ran a couple of tests. We are just waiting for the results," Diane pulls her attention away from Carly and looks at us with a sad smile.

"Diane, why didn't you say something? I could have healed you. I can do it now if you want," my eyebrows knit with worry for my friend and her mate. Inside, I fight against the storm cloud that wants me to be angry that they didn't say something sooner.

"No Kas, you've been sick yourself. We couldn't ask that of you. The doctor is more than capable of handling whatever is going on," Diane pats my hand, "Here he comes now."

I turn to see the head doctor walking towards us holding up two folders, "Ladies, um, would you like to come to my office?"

"No sir, you can tell us here. The Alpha and Luna are practically family," Carly reassures him.

"Well," he looks at Bronx and I nervously, then hands the folders to Diane and Carly, "we still need to do an exam for each of you to confirm for sure, but I, uh, want to be the first to congratulate you?"

Diane looks at him, confused, and opens the folder. I watch her scan the paper, then look up at him angrily. She takes the folder from Carly's hand and looks at the paper inside.

"Doctor, is this some kind of sick joke?" she jumps up and growls at him. Her face is turning red with anger and tears are forming in the corners of her eyes.

"Diane, what is it?" Carly stands up and takes her hand, holding her back from the doctor.

"The tests show that we're both pregnant, Carly. I've never been with a man. Not like that, anyways," Diane's lip trembles when she looks at her mate, "I swear to you. Never."

"I-I don't understand, Doctor. I mean, I dated a guy in high school, but that was years ago and I would never cheat on my mate. How is this possible?" I hear Carly's voice crack as she asks the question.

"Divine intervention," Tessa interrupts. "What? What are you talking about, Tessa?" Carly asks impatiently.

"IT would never question the strength of your mate bond," Tessa explains apologetically, "but it's happened before. You were in Greece when Amari and Jasen died. You both saw what Bronx did, so, presumably, it emotionally charged you to witness that. It may have been strong enough that Mother guided their spirits to you."

"Tessa, you think Diane and Carly could be pregnant with our sister and her mate?" I ask in awe, looking back and forth between her and Diane and Carly. She looks at the pair with compassion, "Unless either of you ladies have another explanation?"

Diane and Carly look at each other and start chuckling, which turns into laughter and tears, complete with hugs and kisses at the excitement of the news that they will both be having pups.

"Well, I definitely didn't see THAT coming," Bronx murmurs in my ear with a chuckle.

# Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 116

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After congratulating the happy couple, we make our way around the hospital wing, handing out boxes to the grateful staff and the patients who are happy to get a visit from their Alpha and Luna. When all the boxes run out, we make our way back up to the apartment. I give Tessa a deep hug, letting her energy surround me without pulling it from her. It feels very structured and controlled to hug her, but full of gratitude and love at the same time.

"Everything's going to work out for the Manaë, Tessa. I'm going to make sure of it," I pat my hand against her face reassuringly.

"Little Sister, I don't know how you think you could make a difference on your own, but I commend your tenacity," she gives me a kiss on the cheek and makes her way down the hall.

I get back to my normal routine and make dinner for Bronx. He comes into the kitchen and helps make the side dishes, listening to my instructions carefully. Just like the guards and warriors I have given lessons to in the past, using the paring knife proves too difficult for Bronx's large hands so I help him peel the veggies and pretend not to see him sneak nibbles from the salad while I'm putting the meatloaf in the oven.

"I'm so glad you're feeling better, Kas. Except for having to be followed around by two guards, today was almost...well... dare I say 'normal' for us," he tenderly wraps his arms around me, "Now to get you looking healthy again. Tell that sassy wolf of yours to get you healed up."

"You can tell him I've been a little fucking BUSY healing you from attacks by the Mavri Magea," Lex growls impatiently.

"Lex, chill. Training is over. No more drills tomorrow," I remind her, "Let's just enjoy this evening with our mate. Please."

I feel her sigh heavily, "I'm sorry, Kas. You're right. I'm just a little stressed out."

"Yeah, I know. It's going to be okay. We've got this."

"What are you two talking about in there?" Bronx asks, poking the side of my head playfully, bringing me back to reality.

"She's just excited to get to go for arun tomorrow," I brush my fingers against the scruff on his chin and pull him toward me for a kiss.

While we wait for dinner to finish cooking, we talk a little about pack business and things that have been happening since I have been back from Greece. I try my

best to avoid talking about future plans and give vague answers about Solstice and baby showers for all the women who are pregnant.

We clean up the dishes and watch a couple of cooking competition shows on television before we go to bed. As we snuggle under my green and gray blanket on the sofa, I let my eyes close. When I open them, I'm in the hallway of the Mavri Magea apartment. I let myself in and greet my sisters as I always do, with hugs and words of appreciation. A conference table has materialized in the living room with ten seats for us to review the information Leticia got today while she was looking through my eyes. I explain the areas where security has increased and areas that shouldn't be a problem. I warn it's a dangerous mission for everyone and they need to stay on guard. In a more compassionate tone, I tell them if anyone doesn't make it, we will see them in our next lifetime.

I show them pictures of all the women who are pregnant who we believe are going to give birth to goddesses or guardians, making sure they understand it is strictly off limits to be in contact with these women.

We practice shifting again, making sure everyone has timing down. I watch as nine beautiful black wolves with violet eyes look at me expectantly, tails wagging. They are all almost as big as Lex, but not quite. Close enough to confuse anyone who isn't paying close attention.

"You're going to be wonderful, my darlings," I coo at them with pride, "For now, it's time for me to get back to the packhouse. Be ready. You have a few hours to prepare."

They all shift back, putting oversized t-shirts on before they bid me good night, giving me hugs and telling me how proud they are of me.

When I open my eyes again, I'm in bed, cradled in Bronx's arms. I look out the window and see the sun rising. I grip him tighter and breathe his scent deeply before I wake him up with a kiss on his nose.

"Do you have to go down for training this morning, Sweetheart?" I ask softly. He groans and unwraps himself from around me, rubbing his face with his hands, "Yeah. Tessa is helping with a hand to hand fighting clinic. I said I would observe."

"Can I go?" ask sleepily.

Please say no.

"Let's give it another couple days to make sure you really have your strength back," he kisses my forehead, "You did a lot the past two days and you're letting Lex go for a run today. Get some rest, Baby."

Thank the Goddess.

I roll my eyes as he gets out of bed and goes to put on clothes for training. He's so overprotective, but I guess I will be grateful for the extra couple of hours of sleep.

"Are you going to the office today?" I call to him.

Please say yes.

"Not today. I'll be working from the home office," his muffled voice replies from the closet room.

Shit.

He comes out and kisses me goodbye. I let my lips linger against his for a moment before he leaves then I let myself close my eyes and get some actual sleep.

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"Alright, Kas, don't let Lex get too far a head of us. It defeats the purpose of us trailing you. We'll give you space, but we still gotta have eyes on you," Marco instructs as we stand at the treeline, "Stay in the assigned quadrant. We don't wanna trigger no security protocols."

"Got it. Can we go now?" I ask hastily, pulling off my dress, already feeling the prickly sensation of fur under my skin.

"Kas, a little modesty?" James scolds as he turns away.

"Hell with modesty, James," I roll my eyes and shift, letting Lex stretch and yawn as she shakes out her fur and waits for our escorts to shift as well.

"Ready, Lex? You know where we're headed, right?"

"Ready...steady...GO!" she yells into the minds of the rest of the wolves waiting on her and takes off like a bullet from a gun.

I sit back and let her romp through the underbrush, scaring small animals and flushing birds. She howls happily as she strides effortlessly through our territory, enjoying the crisp, late November air. In the distance, we can hear our escorts howl, their paws pounding the ground to Keep up.

"There it is, Kas. Are you ready?" Lex directs us to the old abandoned cabin.

"Yeah. Get ready to set the timer," I say, already prepping to shift.

Lex sprints until she slides to a stop on the back side of the cabin. I shift as quickly as possible and tear off the tracker necklace, throwing it to the ground in disgust. I recite an incantation, creating a portal.

"Thirty seconds, Kas. Come on, we have to go," Lex growls.

"Almost done," I concentrate as the edges of the portal become more defined until it shimmers confidently in mid air. As soon as I'm sure it's stable, I run,

shifting back to wolf form as we go, and sprint back toward Clash and Reaper, who are surely going to be mad that I went out of their sight.

Behind me, I hear the happy howls of my sisters as they come out of the portal, spreading themselves into a wide formation.

"We're set, Kas," Leticia's voice rings in my mind. For once, she sounds serious and focused.

"Remember, whatever you do, don't stop," I order, "We meet back at the apartment. Goddess speed, my darlings."

"Eighty five seconds!" Lex yells as she crests a hill. Marco, James, and the four other guards who were assigned to escort me are barreling toward us.

"KAS? LEX? WHERE ARE YOU?" Saint's voice howls in our mind.

"Lex! What are you doin'?" I hear Marco's wolf, Clash, in our mind.

"It's go time, Clash," Lex chuckles at him, "You got our back?"

"You know I do," Clash responds just as Lex barrels past him, Reaper, and two other wolf guards at full speed. They skid to a stop behind us and turn around to catch us, but it's no use. Lex is already half way down the mountain.

"Don't slow down Lex," I urge her.

"I'm sorry, did you say faster?" She laughs and somehow picks up her sprint to a whole other level of fast.

There is some barking and growling in the distance as the guards discover the other black wolves making their way through the woods, but not as far back as I thought they would be.

"Didn't the Luna pass us? We just saw her up he-. Wait, what the fuck?" A guard calls out, confused, as he sees other black wolves with violet eyes.

In front of us, I can feel the ground shaking and Saint's thundering paws are echoing in my ears.

"Lex?" Saint growls, "Kas took the necklace off."

"She sure did, my love," Lex teases. She finds a rock formation to hide in and watches as Saint runs up the mountain.

He is so focused on the location of the necklace, that he completely ignores our scent and runs straight past us toward the cabin. Beyond him, two black wolves are making an all-out run toward the packhouse.

Lex pants as the packhouse comes into view. The side door is wide open, so we sprint toward it.

"It's gonna work, Kas. We're almost there," she says triumphantly.

We slow down as we get to the door and look behind us. Nine giant black wolves with glowing violet eyes walk toward us silently, with heads lowered, waiting for instructions.

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I send six of the wolves in one by one to spread themselves around the packhouse. The more confused pack members are by seeing Lex look alike, the better.

"Leticia, no shifting. No magic," I warn before she enters.

"Yeah, yeah. You've already told me," her wolf tilts her head curiously at Lex before she bounds off into the pack house.

"Alright, ladies. The back staircase to the dungeon is to the left. I'll shift. You stay in wolf form until we get to the safe. Let's make this quick," I say to Sophie and Thea, who are twins. Sophie has the power of telekinesis and Thea can control electricity.

Throughout the packhouse we can hear yelling, barking, and claws clacking on the marble floors. When we get to the door to the dungeon staircase, I shift and quietly use a spell to break the lock. I crack the door open and sniff deeply. There are no fresh scents. No prisoners means no guards are down there. We won't have any interruptions until someone has time to check time to see why the dungeon door alarm triggered. With the other wolves running around the packhouse creating a grand diversion, we probably have four minutes. I allot three and a half to be on the safe side.

I hold the door open for the giant black wolves, who silently pad down the steps, then close it tightly behind me and follow them.

The motion sensor lights turn on as we reach the bottom of the steps, startling the wolves. I hold my finger to my lips and wave them toward the back of the dungeon where the security desk is. We hide from view of the stairs by crouching behind the desk.

One wolf spits out a leather bag she has been carrying before she takes her human form. The twins are two inches taller than me and have more angular features, but they have the same violet eyes and sparkly silver hair. I hand them shirts and shorts from the bin next to the security desk and we quickly dress.

“Ready?” I say into their minds.

When Sophie and Thea look at each other, wicked smiles form on their faces. They look back at me with cold, violet eyes and nod in unison. If I wasn't their leader, I wouldn't trust them. Hell, I am their leader and I barely trust them. If they didn't trust me, they would double cross me. I'm certain of it. They would have no problem using their abilities to strangle and electrocute me at the same time until my brain is fries.

For now, they're counting on me to change their lives for the better. That means they will comply with my orders without question. The growing dark and stormy part of me feels a sense of satisfaction knowing they take pleasure in having such a major role in this heist.

We take our places and simultaneously press the three nearly invisible buttons around the room that open the hidden door embedded in the brick wall behind us. The open door exposes a steel door to the safe where the cursed shards are being stored.

Thea steps forward and puts her hands an inch away from the door. She looks like she is assessing the situation by using the ambient electrical energy coming from the door. Typically, you need the biometrics of two ranked members plus the personal security code for each of those ranked members to open the door.

She looks at us and mind links a message of warning, “Look away.” Sophie and I turn our heads away from Thea. The bright light makes us have to shield our eyes as the crackling electricity creates a burning smell in the air. There is a series of small clicks as the safe releases its lock and pops open. A thick, black smoke pours out from inside as Thea steps back, waving her hand in front of her face, trying not to cough.

Sophie jumps up and takes Thea's place. She quickly locates the glass box with the cursed silver shards inside. Using her mind, she picks it up and slides it into the leather bag her wolf carried without coming close to having to touch it. She slides the bag over her head and across her body.

“That's a hundred eighty seconds, Kas,” Lex calls out the three-minute mark for me.

“Let's get out of here,” I mind link them and wave my hand to lead them back up the backstairs. We silently slink our way up the stairwell until we pass the main level. I block the broken door so they can go ahead of me up the stairs toward the fifth floor where we are meeting the rest of our Mavri Magea. From outside the door, I can hear wolves snarling and snapping. My little storm cloud is happy to hear my sisters refusing to go down without a fight.

As we get to the fourth floor, we hear the stairwell door on the main floor crash open and guards rush in. Without being able to see them, I can't freeze everyone. I curl my hand into a fist and hope it at least slows them down. I grab Sophie and Thea's hands and pull them the rest of the way to the fifth floor. When we get to the top, I take a quick pause, then push the heavy stairwell door open and peek out.

I concentrate and say a quick spell to unlock my apartment door from the distance we are standing, then nod to Sophie. She pushes opens the stairwell door the rest of the way and we take off running with Thea.

"Kas?!" I hear Bronx yell from the main stairway. Based on the echo, it sounds like he is on the third or fourth floor landing.

"Shit. Get inside!" I mind link to my sisters. They nod and continue to sprint down to the apartment. At the other end of the hall, I see two more violet eyed women, half dressed in shirts they found. They are hiding in the shadows, looking at me pleadingly. One has a large wolf bite on her arm. The other has a swollen eye.

I run to the staircase and meet Bronx at the fourth floor landing, giving them a chance to make it into my apartment. Four down, five to go.

"I'm right here!" I cry out, running up to Bronx. Before he can go any further, I turn him to block his view of the fifth floor hallway.

"Kas, why did you take the necklace off?" Bronx grabs me by the shoulders and pulls me toward him, hugging me tightly, "Oh, Goddess, I was so worried."

"I'm okay, Bronx. I'm okay," I hug him back, "I-I saw wolves and got...scared."

"Alpha, we found these three on the main level," Marco approaches, also only wearing shorts, flanked by Lenora and Tessa. Each of them has one of my sisters.

That makes seven. Two left. Leticia and Desiree are still somewhere in the packhouse.

Marco has his handgun on the back of Ellen's head. She has a bloody nose and a complicated look on her face. I can't tell if she's scared or ready to attack and turn Marco to stone.

Lenora has her claws and fangs extended while she holds Simone by the neck. Her eyes are pitch black, with Justice just under the surface. Simone isn't struggling, but looks defiant as she wipes blood away from her mouth, just waiting for an opportunity to poison Lenora with one touch of her hand. Estelle is struggling hard against Tessa, who is dragging her tightly by the neck. Tessa's claws extend into the sides of Estelle's throat, blood flowing freely while Estelle gags and grabs at Tessa helplessly.

"Tessa, stop it!" I step out of Bronx's arms. My heart clenches at the sight and my storm cloud grows, urging me to confront Tessa. I hold it back, but just barely.

"You're hurting her!"

"Sorry, Kas, Estelle has a banshee voice," Tessa advises, not aware that I'm familiar with Estelle's ability and that I have also been practicing it in a soundproof room at our magical apartment, "If she utters one word, we're all dead."

"Tessa," Bronx puts his hand up. I see a concerned look cross his face as the instinct to protect the Mavri Magea kicks in, even if they are trespassers in his packhouse, "You can ease up. We have a soundproof room in the dungeon. We can take her there."

"Can we go to the apartment and talk this through first?" I ask, my voice cracks when I speak, "I'm their leader. They must have a good reason to be here. If they wanted to hurt our pack members, they could have but from what I can sense, they haven't. We can hear them out before we pass judgement. Please."

Bronx looks at me and back at my sisters. His shoulders drop slightly, disappointed that he is giving into his protective instincts, "Fine. Let's go."

I watch as he turns and heads up the stairs to the fifth floor. Lenora and Tessa follow him.

"What should I do, Kas?" Marco asks in a mind link.

"Play along," I say simply and turn up the stairs.

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"Incoming," I link my sisters in the apartment.

"We're hidden," I hear Thea reply. Marco, Ellen, and I make our way into the apartment. Bronx is already standing in front of the sofa, where Estelle and Simone are sitting. Marco directs Ellen to sit as well and stands behind the sofa with his gun still raised behind them. I don't see any of my other sisters who I know are hiding somewhere inside.

"You. Keep your mouth shut," Bronx points to Estelle, then points to Ellen, "How many of you are here?"

"Just the three of us," Ellen says sullenly.

"Bullshit," Tessa growls with her nose in the air, "I smell more of you."

Bronx puts his nose in the air as well.

His eyes turn black as Saint comes to the surface. A deep growl comes from his chest. Saint's gravelly voice comes out of Bronx's mouth, "Lie to me again and I will end this lifetime for all of you."

I watch my sisters shrink back as their Guardian threatens their lives. I have a powerful instinct to scold him for their mistreatment, but I can't let him know I brought the Mavri Magea here, so! stay quiet.

"Stay here, Alpha. I'll flush them out," Marco says before he makes his way into the bedroom, gun still drawn.

Bronx stands with his arms crossed over his chest. His large stature makes him look extremely intimidating. I step forward and stand next to him as he stares down at the women on the sofa with a damning glare. The tension in the air is so thick you could practically chew on it.

Lenora and Tessa jump to attention when they hear growling and snarling sound coming from the closet in the bedroom. They sprint to help Marco while Bronx continues to stand as still as a statue in front of my sisters. The four women I sent into the apartment quietly step out from the bedroom with Marco, Lenora, and Tessa behind them.

Marco has his gun at the ready with his eyes solid black. There are deep claw marks on the side of his face, bleeding freely while Clash works on healing him.

"Sit," Bronx snaps, pointing to the floor in front of him. All four women sit in a line on the floor in front of the sofa, avoiding eye contact with everyone. I look around at the scene, not ready to panic. Two left. Where are Leticia and Desiree? I can only hope they stuck to the plan.

"Bronx, can we—" I say as I see his expression turning darker. He is the Guardian for the Mavri Magea. It's part of his job to keep them safe, just like he would for me. I need to find a way to remind him of that responsibility. I could use Desiree's manipulation ability, but I don't want to do that to my mate.

"Stay out of this, Kas," Bronx snaps at me with a snarl.

"Oh, Hell no," Lex growls and tries to push forward.

The little storm cloud, the one I've been fighting so hard against to keep the good parts of me in control, rages into a frenzy. It grows and morphs into a typhoon with no regard to my restraint. It blows and howls, giving its fury a voice. Its manipulative whisper turns into a screeching command. The destructive thunder and lightning provide a source of power I have been holding back. Now, as it refuses to be denied anymore, it stirs the darkest parts of my soul to wake up and take charge.

"Excuse me?!" I grab his wrist roughly, letting my hand burn him. My outburst forces him to take his attention away from the women in front of him. The power of my wrath creates a bright violet aura around us. The smell of burning flesh fills the room.

When I speak again, my voice is unfamiliar. It's my goddess voice coming forward, "I will not be dismissed, Alpha Regent Bronx Andreas Mason. These are MY sisters. I'm responsible for them and I will NOT let you harm them."

"Kas, what the fuck are you talking about? They attacked us and you're burning me!" He tries to yank his wrist out of my hand, but I may as well have him in a vise.

"Oh, what do we have here? A little lover's quarrel between Bronxy and Kas?" Leticia's bitter voice coos mockingly at us. She holds her hands up to her heart and tilts her head as she watches us. A giggle comes from someone standing beside her.

We look toward the bedroom to see her and Desiree standing in the doorway, both looking very smug. Desiree's athletic build is a stark contrast to Leticia's petite frame, but her facial features are just as cruel and cold as Leticia's.

I snarl at the two women standing in front of us who weren't supposed to shift to human form. They were supposed to stay hidden in wolf form in case we needed protection. They didn't follow the plan.

"Wh-where? There was no one else in there..." Lenora stammers with confusion, readying herself for a physical fight.

"Oh, we were there. Just a little invisibility spell Kas and I invented combined with a scent blocker," Leticia smiles with a giggle as she waves at me. I let go of Bronx's wrist and glare furiously at the two women for defying my order.

"Liar," Bronx says sternly, "Kas barely knows you and she doesn't know magic."

Leticia and Desiree both look past Bronx at me and start laughing. High pitched, scratchy and maniacal laughter makes them double over, leaning against each other. My aura brightens and fills the room as my temper seethes.

The distraction gives Thea time to jump from the sofa to pounce onto Tessa's back with a growl. She clamps her hands down on Tessa's head and releases a deadly surge of electricity into our unsuspecting sister.

"TESSA!" I hear myself scream, trying to run forward, but Bronx holds me back. I watch as her back arches and an unnaturally high-pitched squeal emanates from her. She drops to her knees, then flat on her stomach before Thea finally lets her go. Thea takes a step back with a satisfied look on her face.

Instantly, I feel the edges of my soul crumbling and turning to ash as Tessa's lifeless body lays face down on the floor. There is nothing but anger and agony inside me. All the good in my soul gets snuffed out by the juggernaut of the storm.

I look at Tessa and make an x over my heart with my hand and murmur, "Adeio apo ton pono [Empty from the pain]."

I let Bronx pull me behind him to give me time to figure out my next move. He, Lenora, and Marco all move forward, but they stop, realizing they could meet the same fate. Marco points his gun at Thea. He flicks his eyes at me in a silent message, then I hear the slight inner workings of his gun. As he pulls down on the trigger, I curl my fingers into a fist, stopping time.

I run forward and flick the bullet with my fingers, setting it off course toward the wall. I immediately recite the incantation to open a portal back to the Mavri

Magea apartment. It shines brightly behind Bronx, in front of the silver-haired women on the sofa. '

I put myself between Bronx and the portal to slow him down in case he tries to get any ideas about going through it. I uncurl my fingers, letting the scene play out again.

"Go! GO!" I scream at my sisters before any Blood River pack members can react. Except for Leticia and Desiree, who are on the other side of the room, they all scramble up and jump into the portal in front of them.

In front of me, Bronx ignores Thea, who sprints to get to the portal. He runs to Tessa to see if she's still alive. I can tell by the dull pain in my chest getting stronger that she's not. I resist pulling my hands in to grab my chest and keep them out to the sides to protect the portal until all nine of my sisters are through.

"Will you two quit fucking around and LEAVE!" I growl at my remaining sisters. Lenora steps forward, growling at Leticia and Desiree, ready to take them down at all costs.

Desiree looks at her with a confident smirk, then over to Marco, "Marco is it? Yes, I believe it is. Marco, Leticia and I are going to go through that portal over there. I just need you to make sure that Bronx and Lenora here don't follow us through. You want to help us with that, don't you? Maybe just a little click of your trigger finger. What do you say?" I let a surge of energy flow through me and use some of the telekinetic energy I share with Sophie to reach out and pull on Leticia and Desiree, "GET. OUT. NOW. A blank look crosses over Marco's face, and he points his gun at Bronx. He looks down at his hand and tries to pull it in a different direction, but he can't. Desiree's voice has manipulated him to do what she says, whether or not he wants to.

"Marco!" Lenora turns and screams. She leaps at him, shoving him into the wall to stop him from shooting Bronx and rolls off him as the gun fires into the ceiling instead of at her brother. She immediately scrambles back toward Bronx, blocking Marco from being able to shoot him again.

"Lenora, get out of the way," Marco says. The strain of trying to fight against the manipulation is making him sweat.

"Oh, no you don't, Tessa look-a-like," Leticia scolds as she fights against the telekinetic pull. She reaches back and hurls something at Lenora that can only be characterized as a razor sharp sword made of purple light. The sword hits Lenora in the neck and slides down her down her body with a sickening sound. It deeply tears her body from her neck to waist.

"Leni!" Bronx yells, as he catches Lenora in his arms. Lenora reaches up and touches Bronx on the face. I hear her murmur something to him, but I can't hear what it is.

I feel myself freeze on the spot and watch as the light of Lenora's spirit extinguishes in her eyes. If I hadn't just protected myself from feeling pain, the pack bond of my Beta female dying would consume me as much as Tessa's death. I open my mouth to say something, but nothing comes out.

Leticia and Desiree calmly walk over Tessa's corpse. Desiree gives her a small kick as she walks by and past Bronx, who is holding Lenora in his arms, watching the women in disbelief.

"Thank you for your service, Marco," Desiree gives Marco a little wave before she jumps into the portal. Leticia follows her with a cruel laugh.

I look down at my shirt and realize it's splattered with Lenora's blood. My breath catches in my throat. No. This can't be right. No. No. No. Leticia and Desiree were supposed to stay in wolf form and not use their abilities. No one was supposed to die today.

The darkness that was overtaking me a few minutes ago recedes and I feel like myself than I have in weeks. I want to run forward and help heal Lenora, but I already know it's too late. I want to go to Bronx, but it doesn't feel right. If I go to him now, I won't have the courage to go through the portal. I have to finish what I started. It's up to me to make all of this right. I take a step back toward the portal to go punish Leticia and Desiree for defying me.

"Bronx, I'll be back. This is my fight," I shake my head as I speak.

"Kas, you can't do this. You can't," Bronx sobs with tears rolling down his face. Lenora's blood is covering him from the underside of his chin all the way down his chest. I watch as her lifeless eyes stare into the ether while he continues to hold her close. I swallow hard as my own tears stain my face.

"Bronx, I have to. Please don't make me choose," I shake my head. I don't know how to make him understand, "I'm doing this for us."

"You've lost your mind, Kas. Stay. Let me get you help. If you leave right now, there will be consequences. You aren't helping us, you're ruining us. Can't you see that?" he growls through his tears. I can feel his anger building past his anguish.

I turn and look at the hands extended out to me through the portal. All I have to do is reach out and take them, but that feels too dangerous. I turn back to Bronx. What should I do? How do I fix this?

"We have to go, Kas," Lex says calmly in my mind, "Now, before we lose our nerve."

"Go Kas," Marco groans from where he is sitting, propped up against the wall, blood trickling down the side of his face. He's still holding his gun up at Bronx, "Go now. I will deal with the consequences."

I stop for a moment. Lex is right. Marco's right. I have to go. I reach out for the hands and let myself be pulled into a world of treachery.

## Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 119

/ [Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future](#)

When I come out on the other side of the portal, Leticia is waiting to greet me with open arms and a huge smile.

Much to her surprise, she is met with my most vicious right hook I can muster to the face. I feel the satisfying crunch of the bones in her nose collapse under the weight of my punch. I watch her collapse to the floor. Blood pours from her broken nose onto the gray carpet. Around us, my sisters gasp in surprise at my actions.

"HOW DARE YOU CROSS ME?" my goddess voice booms, "YOU WILL PAY FOR KILLING MY BETA, LETICIA!"

"Kas, I'm sorry. I-" Leticia looks up at me, prepared to beg for mercy. She won't find any.

I grab the collar of her shirt and force her down by her neck, and kneel on her chest while I continue to pummel her traitorous face. I barely hear the rest of the Mavri Magea trying to stop me and pull me off her. The typhoon in my mind suddenly stops churning, giving me the ability to focus on Leticia.

I clap my hand over her mouth, making my purple aura surround both of us and let the words tumble out of my mouth. I feel words of a spell that has never existed before float to the surface of my mind.

Lex rages at the loss of our Beta and I grit my teeth, continuing to use my goddess voice as I exact my revenge, "Apéranti siopi [infinite silence]."

Her eyes turn wide as she looks at me.

She shakes her head and screams while she tries to push my hand away from her mouth. I feel the tingling heat of the spell working as her screams turn into a muffled whining. Tears pour from eyes as she understands her fate.

When I remove my hand, the area that once held her mouth is now a plane of smooth pale skin, as if a mouth never existed on her face at all. The blood from her broken nose has slowed to a dribble as her wolf heals her, but she will never heal from my spell. She can never reverse it and her life will never be the same. That's just fucking fine with me.

I watch her for a moment as she grabs at her face, trying to grasp the reality of her situation. Before it can settle in, I drag her by the neck, down the hallway toward her room.

"I bind you, Leticia Latmus. In the names of our mother, Selene, Goddess of the Moon and Hecate, Goddess of Magic and Witchcraft, I bind you from using your given abilities or abilities you have gained over your lifetimes," My voice booms as I lug her down the hallway. She claws at my hand desperately, trying to escape, but it's no use. I lock my grip and there is no way I'm letting go.

With each step I wrench more energy from her, making her muffled screams weaker as we get closer to her room, "I bind you to prevent you from performing magic for your benefit or the detriment of others. I remove the privileges bestowed upon you by our mother. I bind you, Leticia Latmus. As the Leader of the Mavri Magea, I punish you, to live the rest of this lifetime confined in a manner I see fit."

When we reach her door, I pull Leticia up to look her in the eye. I have leached away any power she had moments before, rendering her as helpless as a lamb. She is so pale and weak that she can't even grasp my hand against her throat. I launch her into the room, watching her roll across the floor before I let my telekinesis slam the door closed, trapping her inside. I run my hand across the edges and mutter an incantation, sealing it shut with her inside.

I storm back out into the living room where the rest of my sisters are cowering in fear, trying to get as far away from me as they can. I point Desiree out of the group.

"Get your ass out here, Desiree," I snarl at her. She looks around, trying to find a way to escape, but she knows it's no use.

"Don't say a word, Desiree," I use her own ability against her, "For the rest of your lifetime, not a peep out of you."

I watch her eyes get big as she opens her mouth and tries to speak, but no sound comes out. When she puts her hands up to her mouth in shock, I grab her wrist and drag her toward her bedroom. With each step, I pull more energy from her until she can barely walk. I swing her door open and push her in front of me. I kick the small of her back, pushing her into the room and seal her in as I did with Leticia.

When I get back out to the living room, my seven remaining sisters are in tears, terrified that they are the next victim of my wrath.

"I'm going to give you a choice. You can all either go willingly to your rooms, where I will seal you in until I'm ready to release you," I cross my arms over my chest, letting my purple aura glow brightly, "Or I can make you go to your rooms. You have five seconds to decide."

The women all scramble up from their spots and run toward their rooms. "EXCEPT for you," I catch Thea by the elbow as she tries to get past me and clamp down on her.

"Kas, p-please, Tessa would have killed us all. I-I had to do it. I was trying to protect you," she snuffles with tears running down her face. I can feel her shaking under my grip.

"I gave orders, Thea. I said no one uses their abilities unless I give the order," I whisper in her ear, "You disobeyed me and now you will be punished for it." I grab her other arm and look her square in the eyes and pull her energy in one large surge, causing her to fall to the ground. I grab her by the ankle and drag her down the hallway, tossing her limp body into her room like a rag doll.

I walk down the hallway, sealing doors, ignoring the cries from the occupants, and make my way to the living room.

"Time to get to work, Lex," I put my hands on my hips and sigh at my wolf, "I was hoping we could work with

Leticia on this, but that obviously isn't an option anymore."

"What are we going to do about Lenora?" Lex asks. Her voice is mournful, thinking about our friend. "I hope one day I will be able to go back," I shake my head, "But I have to finish this. Lenora will always hold a place in my heart. If things were different, I would be there for Bronx and Milo. I would be there to support my pack, but I can't. Not anymore. I have to see this through."

I feel like there should be tears for Lenora, but I don't have any. The pain I know I should feel right now has been subdued by dark magic. It was the choice I made to protect myself. A choice that darkened my soul even more than it already was. Zeus was right the first time I met him. Not everyone will agree with my decisions, but I need to trust my instincts to do what's right.

I pick up the leather bag that contains the cursed silver shards and close my eyes. When I open them, the apartment has transformed the room into a laboratory. The cursed silver blade is in the middle of the table. I can practically feel it calling out to its missing pieces, begging to be reunited. I open up the binder full of notecards and pick up a pen to get to work.

## Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 120

[/ Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future](#)

The murky water laps up and almost touches the soles of my shoes. The dark gray stones of the shore are wet with a thick gelatinous coating, making them slippery under my feet. I shuffle back slightly to avoid letting its poison get too close. One drop could kill me.

The landscape is dead and soft at the edges. There is no bright white here, there is no pure black either. Just a world composed of shades of gray. Purgatory.

I assumed it would be awful here, that it would be full of pain and suffering, but it's actually still and peaceful. I close my eyes for a moment and let the silence engulf me. Finding my way here has taken me halfway across a world! never knew existed. Now that I've witnessed what purgatory is like, I'm pretty sure it would satisfy me to exist with its blank, empty feeling. It's better than the darkness that has taken over. It is a comforting contrast to the Mavri Magea apartment. Trying to reforge a cursed blade and block out the pitiful whining of my sisters locked in their rooms has been exhausting.

Fabricating the blade has not only consumed every waking moment. It has also filled the nightmares during my rare periods of sleep for the last three days.

"Don't get comfortable here, Kas," Lex warns, "There is still a lot of work to do. Losing yourself in this place is dangerous."

"Just a fantasy, I suppose," I sigh at her,

"It doesn't really matter, Lex. I'm already lost. I can feel it in my soul."

"We've still got this. Just hang in there," she comforts me. '

I look out at the water and watch the souls trapped under the glasslike surface. They try to rise, but cannot break the surface and sink again. Their beautiful, sallow skin reminds me of what my own has become. The eyes of the dead are clouded over with a fuzzy pale gray coating, which makes me wonder if they know what they are trying to escape from.

What if they're better off here and they just don't realize it? How pathetic were the lives they must have lived to be stuck here for eternity? Not allowed into the underworld, not allowed into the kingdom of the dead. Would I suffer the same fate at the end of my spirit's journey? Would I finally feel relief in a place like this or will my suffering continue?

I don't know how long I've been standing here. It may be five minutes. It may be five years. Time doesn't seem to matter when you stand on the shore of the River Styx. The only thing that matters is that my meeting is successful.

I try to look out past the fog, but it is like thin layers of gauzy fabric. Each layer on its own is thin, but stacked against each other, unpenetrable. I wrap the thick black cloak closer to my body and pull the hood down to hide my eyes when the bow of a boat cutting silently through the dark water full of lost souls becomes visible.

There's no noise when the boat runs ashore. A bearded man with a limp and a brimless hat climbs off the boat using a flimsy plank of wood and stands on the shore. His gravely voice interrupts the comforting silence, "Do you need passage to the underworld?"

"Yes. Are you Charon?" I ask calmly. I have read too many stories of evil spirits trying to escape the underworld to trust he is who he says he is.

"It is one name I go by. Do you have payment for the ferryman?" He asks in a gruff voice, holding out his hand.

I pull two golden coins out of my pocket and lay them in his hand. He wraps his fingers around them and rubs them with his thumb until they disappear into his skin. There is a soft glow, showing he has accepted my payment. He looks up and gives me a creepy smile, "A deity? A child of the Olympians?"

I'm not prepared for him to know what I am. I pause, then nod my head without raising my hood.

"Please come aboard, child of the Gods," he walks up a plank onto the boat and holds his hand out for me to take.

I climb up the rickety plank and stand near the middle of the boat while he prepares to launch from the shore. I keep as still as possible as we make our way across the endless river. Screams and cries from the underworld get louder as we glide across the water. Jagged stone mountains, back-lit by fires, cut through the thick fog.

The sight of souls trying to grab at the boat makes my lip curl in disgust. The Spirits I was just jealous of for being able to live in this place are now revolting to me. I want to reach out and kick at them with my heels.

"Control, Kas," Lex hums quietly in my mind, "We need her help. You need to have control." "

I nod internally and adjust my cloak, forcing myself to stay at the center of the boat and remain as still as I can.

It seems like an eternity before we reach the other side. A familiar man standing on the shore greets us. His white hair contrasted by his solid black eyes and permanent sneer give away his identity. Hades and his three-headed dog, Cerberus, are awaiting my arrival.

"Daughter of Selene," he bows and holds his hand out to help me off the boat. I hesitate, not sure that I should trust of the God of the Underworld.

"Oh, come off it, lokaste," he rolls his eyes in frustration, "You're not getting to Melinoé's part of this realm without me and my dear brother insists I need to help you after your terrific power play on Mount Olympus."

"Melinoé?" I ask. I push my hood back and let him see my face, "I am grateful for your help, but I'm here to see Mesperryian, Sir."

"Yes, yes, that is what they call her in the modern world. Much more intimidating sounding, isn't it?" He says, sounding annoyed, "It isn't her given name. I take it you have a payment for her?"

"I do, Sir," I press my arm closer to my chest, securing the leather sheath under my cloak.

"Ecch. Enough with the 'Sir' bullshit. Call me Hades," he says, waving to me to follow him.

We walk through a maze of twists and turns for miles until I'm hopelessly lost in among obsidian stone mountains. He is quiet for some time, but eventually stops and turns back to look at me.

"How can I help you?" he sneers, looking down his nose at me.

I feel my eyes shift back and forth, finding it difficult to look at him, "E-excuse me, Hades? Help me with what?"

"I'm not stupid, Iokaste. You may be the only one who can fix this problem with the Manaes, but it affects all the Gods and Goddesses. Including me. So how can I help?"

"I-I'm going to need more energy for what I plan to attempt," I lower my head in respect.

"Ah. That's right. Energy vampire. Quite the power move to pull my brother's energy," his sneer turns into a satisfied smile, "The power from the God of Thunder. That isn't enough?"

"I won't know for sure until after I speak with the Goddess Melinoé, but to be successful, I know I'm going to need unprecedented amounts of power. What I have taken so far, well, I think it may be killing me. I don't know how much longer I will survive if she doesn't agree to help me."

"How dark of a path are you willing to follow, Iokaste?" he says earnestly, with his hands clasped in front of him.

I consider his words for a moment before I answer, "My heart still wants to go home to my pack after this is all said and done, Hades. I can't do that if I reach a point of no return."

"That's what I needed to hear," He looks at me with what I assume is compassion and holds out his hand, "Take what you need."

"W-what?" I look at his hand, then up into his onyx eyes.

"You won't be able to do this with all that pure white fluffy bullshit energy you have collected. You're going to need as much dark energy as possible, so take what you need. Just don't fucking bleed me dry, child."

I tentatively take his hand and feel him willingly release his dark, angry energy for me. I close my eyes and take a deep, satisfying breath as it fills me and calms

my spirit. When I open my eyes, Hades looks much older and much more tired than he did before.

I reluctantly release his hand and give him a small smile, "Thank you, Hades."

"You're welcome," his voice sounds strained. He points to a steel door carved into the side of a boulder, "Here we are. Good luck, daughter of Selene.

This quest is yours alone, but we are all counting on you to succeed. Even the little bitch behind that door, regardless of what she says." '

I watch him walk away and look at the door. Did he just call his own daughter a bitch?

Before I can knock on the door, it swings open. A grungy snake scaled hand grabs my wrist and pulls me inside and slams the door behind me. It takes my eyes a moment as Lex adjusts to the darkened room. There are various torture devices and tools hanging from the ceiling and displayed around the room. A groaning sound comes from an iron maiden in the corner. The floor is slightly sticky when I try to lift my feet.

"What do you want from me, daughter of Selene?" a croaking voice croaks asks. The woman isn't wearing any clothes, but she doesn't need to. Her features are reptilian to a point that she looks like a giant lizard. She has an elongated head with sharp teeth sticking out at all angles from a mouth with no lips. There is no end to the depths of her black eyes. '

"Melinoé? Or do you prefer Mesperyian?" I ask, trying to show her some respect.

"What. Do. You. Want?" she hisses at me in her croaky tone.

So it's like that. I'll play along. I'm not afraid to go toe to toe with the Goddess of Torture because at this point, what do I have to lose.

"I thought everyone knew by now, Melinoé," roll my eyes at her. I wave my hand casually, "I want you to tell me how to make more Waiting Rooms."

She looks at me blankly, then flicks her forked tongue out of her mouth before she gives a disdainful laugh that pierces my ears, "That's your plan? Trap the rest of the Manaë in torture chambers?"

"What I choose to do with the chambers is not your concern," I growl. Hades was right, she is a bitch, "If you're not willing to help, then I've wasted my time coming here. I have enough resources to figure it out on my own. Thank you for your time. Have a nice life."

I back away toward the door, not trusting her to turn my back on her.

"No wait! Don't leave," she rushes forward and puts her hands up. She sounds almost desperate, "Do you have anything to give me as payment for my services? Don't go yet."

Gotcha, bitch.

I pull the leather sheath out of my cloak and slide the cursed blade out carefully. Avoiding touching the silver to my skin. Her eyes widen when she sees it. "Is that-" she stammers.

"It is. And I have reforged it. It is no longer fragmented. If you help me and don't double cross me, it's yours. The first moment I feel you have deceived me, the blade dissolves into a useless pile of rust."

"You cursed a cursed object? You're more wicked than I gave you credit for," A lopsided smile graces her scaly features, "I'll help you." "

"I was hoping you would say that," I give her a lopsided smile of my own and throw my cloak over her to transport us to our first destination.