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We talk with Delilah and James for another fifteen minutes or so before we say our goodbyes.

As we are leaving the hospital wing, we see the doctor.

“Luna! I am so happy to see you! I take it you’re feeling better?” he asks joyfully.

“Yes, sir. I am feeling more like myself. Thank you for asking,” I respond gratefully, “Also, we just went to visit James. I helped him out, so you won’t need to worry about him too much. Hopefully, you can send him home soon to finish recovering.”

“Well then! I will check on him right now,” he looks happy at the opportunity to see the results of my healing ability.

“Oh, Doc, before you go, can you look into getting a doctor that specializes in hybrid pregnancies for James’s mate?” Bronx adds quietly.

“Yes Alpha, absolutely,” he bows slightly at Bronx.

Bronx takes my hand and we head back to the apartment. “Can we stop by the daycare and visit Codi?” I ask, trying to think of ways to distract my mind.

“Well, you’re in luck. Today is Saturday. We can go to Lenora and Milo’s apartment to visit Codi,” he pulls my hand up to his face and gives it a kiss.

“Oh, thank the Goddess. That is perfect,” I smile, knowing Lenora loves when I spend time with Codi. It gives her and Milo an opportunity to get things done around the apartment or even go on date nights.

“We have a meeting with Marco and Musu this afternoon, so you only have a few hours,” Bronx reminds me.

We make our way to the fourth floor and knock on the apartment door. A flustered Lenora opens the door with Codi throwing a tantrum in her arms. Her expression turns to surprise when she sees us.

“Kas! What are you doing? I thought you would need more time to recover after yesterday?” she looks back and forth between Bronx and I.

"I am feeling much better. Bronx and I talked through some things last night. You guys can talk about it. I will take Codi," I smile, holding my arms out to take the screaming toddler.

If I didn't know Lenora well enough, I wouldn't have seen the moment of hesitation or fleeting look of worry before she placed Codi in my arms. Codi immediately calms down and gives me wet kisses on my cheek when I hug her.

Great. Lenora doesn't even trust me. Who else is going to feel that way? James and Delilah didn't outright say it, but they were more than happy to not have to see me for a month. 1

I guess I'm going to have to earn back trust from a lot of people. Who can blame them? I still don't completely trust myself, either.

We head inside and I take Codi to her room so Lenora and Bronx can talk about the woman named Cora and the Feral.

I sit in the beanbag chair and put Codi on my lap. We read a book about dragons eating tacos. She helps me turn the pages and points to the colorful pictures as I read in silly voices. I feel her yawn against me as she settles in a little deeper.

"Au Ka?" she says in her sleepy little voice. "Yes, Niece Codi?" I set the book down and cover her before I give her a kiss on the forehead.

"Wan cat," she yawns again as she adjusts her little body to lean against me.

"You want a cat? I don't know if it is a good idea for a kitty in a packhouse full of wolves, baby girl," I whisper while I run my fingers through her fine, dark hair.

"No. Cat," she says before she falls asleep completely. Her breathing evens out and her thumb makes its way into her chubby little mouth. 1

I think for a while, trying to decipher what she was trying to tell me. I look around the room decorated in pink and cream. There are no stuffed animals that look like cats in the room. Maybe there is one at daycare? I make a mental note to ask Lenora.

I find myself humming a little tune while I rub Codi's back. I can't remember where I heard it, probably at the daycare. The warmth of Codi and the blanket laying against me in combination with the tune makes my eyelids heavy. I think about the happiness on Delilah's face when she made her announcement and the way Lenora looks at Codi with nothing but love and wonder. It makes me smile inside. My thoughts fade into a dream. 1

I'm in a hall that looks like it was created for giants. Tall pillars made of white marble with gilded corners line the colossal room. Animal skin blankets cover chairs that are too

tall for me to climb into. Beyond the pillars, I can see a sunny, beautiful day outside, puffy clouds with a sky as blue as Delilah's eyes. I seem to be alone, but I also feel like it wouldn't be right to call out to anyone in here. I look to my left, then to my right, and choose to walk to my left, even though both directions look the same. It just seems like the correct thing to do.

As I walk down the regal corridor, I notice statues in alcoves alternating between men and women. They are dressed in togas and leather armor, some with crowns, others with spears. I admire the perfect craftsmanship until I get to one of a woman that looks familiar. I step closer and look up at her stone face. She has strong features and hair that looks like it is flowing in the wind even though it is made of marble. She is wearing a crown. I have to stand back to see it properly. It is a crown of a crescent moon.

"Mother?" I whisper in awe. "Mother, eh? You must be lokaste. I've been waiting for you," I hear a man's voice rumble behind me.

I turn and gasp. A tall man with white hair and light blue eyes stands in front of me. Even with white hair, I can't tell how old he is. I get the sense that he is ageless. He has always been and he will always be. He has a broad chest and strong arms, with his hands on his hips. As I take in his features, I realize he is wearing a leather brace that is holding a bow and quiver on his back. The quiver looks like it's filled with electricity.

"I-I'm sorry, sir. Do I know you?"

"Ehh, my name isn't important right now. Please follow me, lunch will be served soon," He holds out his arm, bidding me to latch my arm in his. It is a little awkward since he is so tall.

When our skin makes contact, it creates an overwhelming feeling. It feels like he has perfected the art of holding in the excessive amount of power that makes up his essence.

"So my child, what brings you here?" he asks as we walk. "I'm sorry, Sir. I-I'm not sure where here is exactly," I apologize for my ignorance.

He stops walking and looks at me before he pats my hand, "This is Mount Olympus, lokaste."

"What?" I look at him with my mouth wide open.

"Close your mouth, flies will find their way in," he chuckles.

"A-are you Zeus, sir?" I feel tears welling up in my eyes.

"Yes, that is one of the many names I go by," he smiles warmly as he looks at me, making me stop in my tracks.

"Y-Your Highness, I-," I stutter at his casual admission.

"No, no, just Zeus to you, my dear lokaste," he pats my hand holding his arm, "You are a very special young lady. I don't need you to use my formal title."

"Alright, Zeus," I feel a sense of deja vu. Bronx and I had a similar first conversation.

"Sir, how did I get here? And why was I summoned?" My heart is hopeful, but I don't want to assume anything. Could this be my opportunity to ask about being able to have a pup?

"We will discuss over food, lokaste," Zeus informs me.

"Please, sir, just Kas, if we are being informal with each other," I tilt my head and give a charming smile.

We make our way to a dining room that is bigger than the entire first floor of the Blood River packhouse. A stunningly beautiful woman approaches me with a stool to help me into the next to Zeus. She realizes I'm too short to reach the tabletop, so she brings several pillows for me to sit on, like an adult version of a booster seat. 1

Now that I can see the table, I take in the amazing sight. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, sliced meats as far as the eye can see.

"Help yourself, my dear," Zeus waves his hand over the table.

I take some of the fruit and nuts and place them on the giant platter that's supposed to be a plate in front of me.

"I always forget just how petite you are for a goddess," he puts his chin on his hand, looking at me like I'm a sideshow act.

"Zeus, I appreciate the opportunity to be here, having lunch with you. It is truly an honor I never thought I would experience, but, um, I'm still trying to understand why exactly I was summoned here," I explain, trying to see if I can get him to get to the point.

He opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted by a man who looks about Bronx's age. He is over seven feet tall and slender with soft features. His hair cascades around his face in dark ringlets.

"Father, can I interest you in wine?" he asks.

“Ah, Dionysus, yes please,” Zeus cheers as the man pours red wine from a decanter he is holding, “Son, this is your half sister, Iokaste.”

The man looks at me with a mix of curiosity and disgust, “She is one of the Menae? One of the wild monstrosities Mother and that human created?”

Excuse me? Did he just call me a monstrosity? I don’t fucking think so, asshole.

I pick up a walnut from the table, ready to hit him with it and stand on the seat of the chair so I am at eye level with him. I feel a growl coming from deep within me. The man rolls his eyes and walks away without another word. Coward. 3

Zeus looks at me with a smirk, which turns into a deep laugh, “Oh Kas, as feisty as ever. Almost five thousand years old now, right?”

“Yes, sir,” I come to my senses and sit back down on the cushion, “I’m sorry about that. Wait, does that mean you and I have met before?”

“You have nothing to apologize for,” he looks amused, “Always trust your instincts, Kas and yes, we have met before.”

“I- why did you just say that?” I ask suspiciously.

“Which part?”

“About trusting my instincts,” I think back to the vision of the woman with red eyes.

“It’s true. You are part animal. Your wolf’s spirit will always guide you. Trust your instincts,” he pops a fig in his mouth as he explains himself. He takes a moment to chew before he sighs, “Now, why you are here.” I perk up and pay close attention now.

“The Fates have sent me a message that involves your future. Now, while I’m not allowed to tell you the specifics, I want you to know your life is going to be pretty chaotic and stressful for a while, but we made you to handle situations like this. Admittedly, this lifetime is more challenging than most for you and for that, I apologize, but some things are out of even my control. Ultimately, you are going to have decisions to make about the people you love,” he looks at me with a friendly affection, “Not everyone will agree with your decisions. It will be up to you to trust your heart to do what’s right, even if it is uncomfortable.”

“I see,” I answer as I look at my hands in my lap, “Why are you telling me this, Zeus?”

“Because I have heard your pleas. I want you to know, if you do as I ask and follow your instincts, the path won’t be easy, but I will bring you back here to grant your wish,” his tone is serious and firm, but gentle at the same time.

I look up at him as his words process in my mind, "You'll grant Bronx and I permission to have a baby?" "Indeed," he nods but his expression is blank.

"Sir, will my child have a difficult life?" I can feel my concern grow.

"Fate has not been written for your pup yet. There is nothing to see and nothing to be foretold at this point. Which means there are still questions about what kinds of decisions you will make when the time comes," his mouth scrunches a little, trying not to look too frustrated at the idea.

"Alright. I think I understand. I will do my best to not let you down, Zeus," I bow my head gratefully, "I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to be here and giving me as much information as you can."

"You're welcome, Kas. Spoken like a true Luna, I might add. There is a lot riding on you. It is a lot of pressure for a spirit so young. Please remember that you are never alone. Even in the dark. You are never alone," his expression changes to one of paternal concern. He reaches his giant hand toward me and brushes his fingers across my jaw line. As he removes it, I feel myself getting sleepy.

I watch as he becomes blurry and the world gets dark. I slip back into the comfort of a deep sleep. "Kas. Time to wake up, Baby," I hear Bronx's voice coaxing me back from my slumber.

I slowly open my eyes and smile as I feel Codi's weight still leaning against me with the blanket covering both of us. Bronx is crouching in front of me with a loving grin on his face. Lenora is standing behind him with her cell phone, taking a picture.

I pull my arms up to hold sleeping Codi more securely, breathing in her baby scent from her hair. I take a moment to think about the dream I just had. There is an odd sensation on the palm of my hand. I pull it out from under the blanket to find a walnut the size of a baseball.

"What the Hell? Kas, where did that come from?" Bronx looks at the nut, confused.

"I-It wasn't a dream. I met Zeus," I whisper with tears in my eyes.

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"You had a dream about Zeus?" Bronx looks at me suspiciously, unsure of what I am saying.

“No, Bronx,” I extend my hand with the giant walnut out further as if it is proof, “I had lunch with Zeus. I also met Dionysus. He called me a monstrosity. I picked up the nut to hit him with, but he walked away.” 1

“Kas, we have dealt with a whole lotta crazy since you have become part of our pack, but that...that is pretty damn close to the top of the list,” Lenora says in a loud whisper, so she doesn’t wake the baby. The look of disbelief on her face is evident, “You haven’t left this room in two hours. We’ve checked on you twice.”

She doesn’t sound angry; she sounds more concerned for my mental state. Like if she says it firmly enough, I will stop the pretense and believe her instead.

That is how Lenora is. Pushy in her own way. A stickler for rules and order. Everything in Lenora’s world fit into tidy little boxes until I came along. I know it bothers her that my life naturally exists outside of her perfect world, constantly changing, morphing, and developing as I learn who I am. She stands by and supports me as my abilities mature and as I get to decide who I really want to be. She has never had that opportunity. Her path has always been planned for her. She may never understand the intricacies of my life as much as she tries.

I know she loves me. She is like my big sister. I’m her Luna. Until yesterday, she has never had any doubts about me. She has always been in my corner. After yesterday, a seed of doubt has been planted, making her push her agenda a little more than she usually would

“Lenora,” I look at her as sympathetically as possible, “I’m sorry. I don’t know how to explain it and I don’t understand how it happened either. I wish I did because I would explain in a heartbeat.” 1

Bronx steps in to ease the tension. His eyes have a glint of hope behind them, “Kas, what did you speak with Zeus about?”

“He told me things are going to be difficult and chaotic for a while and I’m going to have difficult choices to make. He also told me to trust my instincts,” I nod while I summarize, adding in the last part since it was part of the vision I had about the redeyed woman.

“He used those words specifically?” Bronx’s eye grows wide.

“Yeah. I think he said it on purpose, like a clue,” I confirm.

I give Bronx a pleading look. We need to get out of here so I can tell him about the rest of the conversation as soon as possible. I want him to know if I can make it through all this, I will go back and Zeus will let me have a pup. I can’t say anything in front of

Lenora. The only other people who know I can't have a pup are Bronx and Lady Camille. He seems to read my expression. 4

"Well, Musu and Marco should be here in an hour. Kas, how about we go upstairs so you can change before we meet them in my office. Codi can finish her nap in her bed," he says, "Lenora, if we are giving both of them time off, we may as well make this a working meeting so Musu can update us on everything she is currently working on."

"Alright," Lenora picks Codi up out of my lap and lays her in the crib, "I will meet you guys up there."

I immediately feel colder without the warm baby and her blanket covering me. I sigh and let Bronx help me stand up.

We say our goodbyes to Lenora and head up to our apartment. I pull Bronx along behind me so we can get there as fast as possible. When we get inside, I push him in, then close the door, and stand against it.

"Bronx," I put my hands up, covering my nose and mouth, "Zeus said if I can make it through everything that is coming, he will let me have a pup."

"Oh, Baby! That's awesome news!" he gives me a broad grin and pulls me into a hug, lifting me off of my feet, "We all know you can do anything you put your mind to. I have no doubt you can handle whatever comes your way. Besides, you have me by your side. I will keep you safe."

I try to tell Bronx details about the beauty of Mount Olympus, but I can't find the words to describe it. It's almost like my brain won't let me talk about it. I guess it isn't meant for everyone to know.

We both change and make ourselves presentable for a business casual meeting with Marco, Musu, and Lenora. 1

Bronx gets ready to open the apartment door, but stops short, turning around to face me.

"Kas?" He takes me by the waist and pulls me toward him.

"Yes, Sweetheart?" I marvel at his handsome face. I feel like I'm on cloud nine at the prospect of becoming a mother because of this man.

"I know I have said this before, but I will say it over and over again until the day I die. It doesn't matter which lifetime it is. They can reincarnate me a thousand times and I will still feel the same," he caresses my chin and smiles. His green crisp eye sparkles as he continues, "I only need you. I know you want a baby and I do too, but if we can't have a pup, it doesn't make a difference to me. You and I could be hermits in a shack on the back of the territory, and I would love you just as much as I do now. You are the one

who makes me truly happy. If there was any doubt before, the past week has taken it away.”

“Thank you, Bronx. I love you, too,” I lean against his strong chest and let him kiss me on the top of my head. He wraps his arms around me and kisses the top of my head. I feel the calming glow of my aura surrounding us. We stay like that for a few minutes before he clears his throat and lets me go. He takes my hand and leads me down to his office.

Marco and Musu are sitting in the waiting area in the hallway as we approach. They look so happy together. Seriously, one of the most loving couples I have ever met. They stand up when they see us, bowing slightly to show their respect.

“Alpha, Luna,” Marco says, using our formal titles.

“Knock it off, Marco, this is a casual meeting,” Bronx smirks as he opens the door and bids them into the office.

We settle in the conference table chairs when we hear another knock on the door. Milo and Lenora step in without waiting for Bronx to reply.

“Hi guys, I hope you don’t mind that I brought Milo since this will involve his team,” Lenora says, “Ashley is watching Codi for us.”

“Yeah, that’s not a problem,” Bronx waves them to the table.

“Hi Little Sister,” Milo regards me and gives me a kiss on top of my head before he and Lenora sit down.

“Hi, Milo,” I giggle. I don’t know if I will ever get used to him calling me that, even though Lenora, Reggie, and Ashley have also adopted the nickname, it just sounds extra silly coming from Milo.

“Do you smell that?” Lenora asks.

“What?” Milo looks at her. We all sniff the air, oblivious to any change.

“Something smells, I don’t know, different,” she looks around, trying to pinpoint what is different in the room.

“Well, you figure that out while we get started,” Bronx clasps his hands in front of him, lacing his fingers while he speaks.

I notice Marco give Musu an admiring look, bringing my attention back to them. I get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside as I watch them holding hands.

HOLD UP! Stop the presses. I blink hard and look again to make sure I'm not imagining it.

"YOU TWO ARE ENGAGED!?" I scream excitedly, pointing at the beautiful diamond ring on Musu's finger.

Marco looks at her and smiles, kissing her ring hand while Musu nods, covering her smile with her other hand. Lenora jumps up and runs to the other side of the table. She pulls Musu into an enormous hug.

"Oh my Goddess!! Congratulations!! When did-," she pauses and turns her nose into Musu's hair. She steps back, keeping Musu in her grasp. Lenora's eyes are as large as saucers, "You..."

"Yes, I'm pregnant," Musu grins at Lenora from ear to ear. Lenora shrieks and pulls Musu back into a tight hug before they start talking excitedly. Bronx and Milo both stand and take turns giving Marco handshakes and clapping him on the back.

I feel the vice that was around my heart earlier in the day clench back down harder than ever. Every fiber of my being wants to get up and walk away from the table, walk down to the hall, go straight to my bed, pull the covers over my head, and throw myself a little pity party. But I can't do that. I am Luna of this pack. I need to be happy for my guard and his mate. I sit and watch everyone talk excitedly about the details of the proposal and when Musu is due until ever vigilant, Marco stops and looks at me. 1

"Kas? You okay, Luna?" he looks at me with genuine concern.

"I'm fine, Marco. I'm just so happy for you two, I don't even know what to do with myself," I reach across the table and squeeze his hand.

He grins, but there is a suspicious glint in his eye. I can tell this conversation with him isn't over, but right now isn't about me.

"Let's get started then," I announce, clearing my throat to change the subject.

Marco and Musu ultimately request not to take a full month from either of their jobs. They agree one week off now if they can use the other three weeks to extend maternity leave. Bronx and I agree, as does Lenora. Marco concedes to shortened shifts he will share with Tyree and any other guards that will be reassigned from Milo's team.

Before they leave, we discuss my sisters, the woman named Cora, the red-eyed woman, and the odd not so coincidental meeting request from Catherine Santoro. Bronx, Milo, and Marco decide to stay for another fifteen minutes to discuss security at the bakery. 1

As Musu, Lenora, and I leave, I stop Musu in the hall.

“I am really happy for you, Musu. You and Marco are going to be great parents,” I compliment her. “Thank you, Luna. Once I get past these sleepy spells, I will feel much better about this. But for now, I just want to nap all the time,” she stifles a yawn as she speaks.

“How about a little hug with a little extra energy?” I offer.

“That would be fantastic,” she laughs as we embrace each other. I release some positive healing energy into her. I hear her sigh as she rubs my back.

“Thank you, Luna. I feel better already.”

I watch as she and Lenora make their way down the stairs trying to decide which they should worry about first, the wedding or the baby. I turn and look at the office door, but decide to go to the apartment instead.

I wonder if this is part of the challenges Zeus had told me about.

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Chapter 26

Bronx's POV

It took everything I had to not console Kas in front of everyone when Musu announced her pregnancy. I know she is happy for Musu and Marco, but I could also feel her disappointment. Even though Zeus had told her she may be able to have a baby in the future, nothing is guaranteed. That's just how life is. To her credit, she fulfilled her duty as Luna and stoically congratulated the happy couple and helped come to an agreement for their adjusted schedules.

I watch as she follows Lenora and Musu out when we are finished. Marco and Milo stay behind so we can discuss schedules and strategies for guards to protect Kas for the foreseeable future.

“Alpha, I know a lot has happened over the last week or so, but is Kas okay?” Marco asks. Other than Delilah and me, he knows her probably better than anyone. One of the

few people I don't mind when he doesn't call her Luna because at the end of the day, they really are friends.

I pause for a moment, debating whether to tell him about Kas not being able to have a baby, but decide against it. Lenora is the only person I have ever told, and I swore her to secrecy. Lenora takes that kind of trust seriously, so I know she wouldn't tell anyone, not even Milo. 1

"Yeah, she'll be okay. You know how she gets when there are a lot of changes going on," I do my best to mollify his worry, "I will check on her when we're done here. Also, I think it will help her to go down and have dinner with the pack. Things have just been... heavy...if she sees how excited everyone is to have her back, I think that will help her mood."

Marco nods and lets it go so we can get to work with a plan to make sure she is under constant surveillance when she is not in the packhouse, including the best ways to keep reporters and paparazzi from interrupting her day. I make some notes to discuss upgrading the bakery security system and add extra cameras that will be monitored from MasonCo headquarters. 1

"Alright gentlemen, I wish James was here, but Marco, I think it's important you see this video linking the Santoro's to the Menaes. I told Kas about the incident, but I don't really want her seeing this," I get up and lock the door, just in case Kas comes back. I turn my laptop so Marco can see the screen and pull up the video Lenora sent me and show it to Marco, who had not seen it before.

"D-did Musu have to see this?" he says with a hollow voice as he watches the gruesome scene play out.

"She is the one who sent it to Lenora, so yes, she has definitely seen it. They showed it to Reggie, Milo, and me the day after Kas was back. It's over a year old. One of Musu's confidential contacts sent it to her," I speak as calmly as possible, "Off camera, this woman took out his liver and heart."

"Alpha, I-," he stops with his mouth slightly agape before he turns his eyes away from the screen to me, "There's so many layers to this. She killed him the same way they attacked you?"

I nod slowly, "So now you understand my concern a little more."

Marco nods as he leans back in his seat, "You're gonna let that woman come here to the packhouse?"

"Yeah, we cannot, under any circumstances, let her know that we have any concerns. Reggie has a team looking into the Santoros. He should have a report for me in the next couple of days. Carly had our analysts do a financial audit on Santoro Enterprises."

Milo is looking at Marco like he is a fat piece of birthday cake.

“Beta?” Marco looks at Milo and back at me with confusion.

“It will be good to have you back on my team for a bit Marco,” he puts his arm up, covering his nose and mouth with the crook of his arm like he is batman or something, “Maybe we will convince you to come back to the dark side.” 2

I audibly groan as Marco laughs at his old boss. In all seriousness, having Marco and Tyree along with some of the other members of Milo’s team working security detail gives me a sense of relief while James is on sabbatical.

We plan to meet again with the entire team to go over their temporary security detail assignments and to discuss the best way to handle the Santoro Enterprises team’s visit before we leave.

When I get to the apartment, I can hear the shower running. I make my way to the bathroom and peek into the shower stall. Through the glass doors, I can see Kas curled up on the floor of the shower, sitting on a washcloth, letting the hot water run over her.

“Kas?”

When she sees me, one side of her mouth picks up in acknowledgement of my presence, but she doesn’t move.

I sit on the ground outside the shower and tilt my head to the side, “Wanna talk about it?”

She blinks a couple times, considering it, before shaking her head no.

“Alright, wanna go downstairs for dinner?” I ask.

Again she shakes her head no.

“What if I tell you this is one of those very few instances where it sounds like I’m asking, but I’m not actually asking,” I say in a matter-of-fact tone.

Kas looks at me through the water droplets with a confused look.

“Baby, you need to try to get back to some sort of normal life. I know there is a whole lot weighing down on you, but you’re not alone. You are the Luna of the Blood River pack. You have an entire pack out there getting ready for dinner, who loves, respects, and supports you.”

She scrunches up her nose and pushes her hair out of her face as her mood breaks.

“I know you well enough to know that going downstairs, getting to see and talk to everyone, and have a giant bowl of pasta, is going to make you feel a thousand times better. You will be totally re energized,” I explain as I watch the look on her face morph from sadness to contemplation.

“Tell me I’m wrong.”

“You’re not wrong,” she finally says, trying to suppress a smile.

“Good. We have forty five minutes before dinner. Let’s go find a cute outfit for you,” I smile at her as I stand up and grab a towel to wrap her up in.

Sure enough, Kas’s mood improves significantly when she goes down to the dining room. She gets to talk to so many people she hasn’t seen in a week. After a full bowl of alfredo with chicken, she seems more like her old self than she has been in since she got home.

And after a little mystery birdie told Mrs. Miller about Kas’s craving for a banana split, she arranged for a sundae bar for dessert. Kas’s eyes lit up like a Winter Solstice tree when she saw the tables arranged with all her favorite toppings. Just another reminder of how important it is for me to pay attention to the little things when I have time alone with her.

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Chapter 27

Katherine’s POV

“They offered us accommodations at the Blood River pack house?” I ask suspiciously.

“Yes, Luna. They said they have plenty of room and would be honored to have the entire team there. If we would rather stay at a hotel, they will make those arrangements, too. We just have to let them know how many suites we need,” my assistant says through the phone.

“I think the packhouse would probably be the best option,” I think about Cora, who will need to come with us, being able to shift on Blood River’s extensive territory. I also selfishly think about the opportunity to get to see Iokaste in person.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Sarah, how did they know we were wolves? How did they know to offer us a place in the packhouse?”

“I didn’t think to ask, Luna, but Mister Mason’s assistant was very nice. She sent pictures of the suites we would stay in and everything.” I smirk at her innocence, “Alright, please request a block of eight suites.”

“Yes, Luna. Oh also, Alexandros left a message. He says his team has scoured the eastern seaboard of the United States with no luck. They are moving to the Midwest but they are pretty sure Tessa must be headed to wherever Iokaste is,” her tone turns more serious as she relays the message.

“Alright, I will contact him about our upcoming trip to Blood River. Please complete the travel arrangements. Cora is coming, so we need the large jet in case she needs room to shift.”

“Yes, Luna,” she replies obediently before hanging up.

I pull my personal cell phone from the drawer and dial Tessa’s number for the hundredth time since she drank from the Journeyer’s Cup. Straight to voicemail. I sigh before calling Alexandros. I can hear the exhaustion in his voice. Not having Tessa with him is wearing on him. She has to know that. It must be difficult for her to be away from him, too.

“Have you heard from her?” he asks, trying but failing to hide the desperation in his voice. “Sorry, Alexandros, no,” I frown as I deliver the update.

“She must be close to Iokaste, 1-I just hope she’s not reckless enough to stand outside the hornets’ nest, Katherine,” he gives a frustrated growl.

“She will turn up, don’t worry,” I reassure him with empty words before we say our goodbyes and hang up. I don’t know if she will be alright or not, but I’m not going to tell him that.

I mind link Amari and Cora to join me in my office.

“We are out in the greenhouse. We will be there soon,” Amari’s sweet voice rings through the mind link. Which gives me time to finish some paperwork.

When they finally get to the office, I see Cora has let someone care for her dreadlocks and finally took a proper shower. She is wearing a loose t-shirt and running shorts. I notice she still won’t wear shoes, but at least Amari convinced her to try the clothes on for size and she liked them. In the couple of weeks she has been home, she has spent most of her time in wolf form, but when she is in human form, she stays with Amari during the days to take advantage of her healing power. At night, she sleeps in my apartment. I can still feel her pain from the loss of losing her mate. I give her energy to help her composure while she gives me energy to help bolster my independence. 1

“Alright Sisters, we are going to the United States in two weeks to meet with Blood River. I spoke to Alexandros, he is going to meet us there,” I explain, looking back and forth between them.

“I am going too?” Cora looks confused as to why she would need to be at a business meeting.

“Yes. We have blown our opportunity to summon Iokaste here,” I give Amari a scornful look, “So we need to go to her. Don’t worry, Blood River has a large territory. You will have plenty of free reign to run around.”

She gives a little sigh and nods, understanding that we don’t have much of a choice.

I update both of them on the quick call I had with Alexandros and that he is also going to make his way to Montana and meet us there as our head of security in Tessa’s absence. I also make sure to remind them that under no circumstances are they to interact with Iokaste other than to greet her as Blood River Luna. They both agree, but I get the sense that Cora feels guilty about something. I make a mental note to ask her about it later.

Bronx’s POV

“Alpha, there is a call on line three for you,” Carly’s voice comes over the intercom, “It is the woman from the boarding house you funded last year.”

“I’ll take it,” I furrow my brow, “What is her name again? Edna?”

“Yes, sir. Edna Kirby.”

Last year, Kas and I funded having a boarding house built for a foundation that houses women who are victims of domestic violence. I had told the head of the foundation if she ever needed anything, to please let me know. Obviously, her call on a Tuesday afternoon was unexpected, so I pick up the line.

“Mrs. Kirby! It’s a pleasure to hear from you!” I do my best to sound friendly. Admittedly, not one of my strong suits.

“Mister Mason, thank you for taking my call. I hope all is well,” her voice is warm and friendly, “I know you are a busy man, so I will get to the point. The other day, I took in a new case. She looked very familiar, but I couldn’t remember where I had seen her before.”

“Alright?” I ask unsure of where the conversation is leading

“Well, I pulled out the newspaper clipping from the day of the ribbon cutting and realized I knew exactly how I knew her. She is the spitting image of your sister, Lenora,” the woman claims proudly.

I feel the blood drain from my face a little, “I’m sorry, ma’am. Are you saying my sister requested asylum in your boarding house?”

“Well, that’s the thing Mister Mason. Her paperwork says her name is Contessa DeCaul. It seems like a very unusual name to choose as an alias. I approached her later and tried to see if I could get her to give her real name, but she insisted that was it. Usually, our cases are confidential, but in this instance, I thought you should know.” 1

“Mrs. Kirby, I appreciate your diligence and for giving me the heads up. I will certainly look into it. It was very nice speaking with you. You take care,” I say and hang up before she can respond.

I pick up my cell and call Lenora. “Hey Bronx, what’s up?” She answers in as professional a tone as she can.

“Where are you at?” 1

“Two floors below you in my office at headquarters, why?”

“Stay there. I’m sending security to your office. I don’t want you to leave,” I warn.

“Why? What’s going on?” She asks in her usual cool, not bothered tone.

“You’re ‘look alike’ was spotted in town. I gotta go. I need to have Kas’s detail get her back to the packhouse,” I hang up and pick up the phone, ringing Milo. At the same time, I go to the door of my office. Milo picks up at the same time Carly asks me if I need help with anything. 2

“Carly, we are on lockdown. Send extra security to Lenora’s office.”

“WHAT?! BRONX! What are you talking about extra security to Lenora’s office? What’s going on?!” Milo starts yelling into the phone.

“Milo, get Kas back to the packhouse right now. Lockdown pack territory, send extra guards to all the borders. We have a situation, I will be there as soon as I am sure I can get Lenora and Ashley out of here safely,” I bark my orders into the phone.

“Bronx, what the Hell is happening?” He asks hurriedly.

“One of Kas’s kidnapers was spotted. The one she said looks like Lenora. Protect your Luna, Milo.” “Yes, Alpha,” he replies quickly and hangs up.

