

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener

chapter 1

Most people don' t even remember the packhouse has a dungeon. I do though. I have a little room in the back that used to be a solitary confinement cell. It smells of old piss, vomit, and blood. You get used to it. I have a cot and an old tattered blanket to keep me warm. I even scored a lamp out of the trash. It still works, so I have light to do my homework. Home sweet home and all that jazz, right? I mean, at least I' m not a rogue. Oh yeah, I should introduce myself. My name is Iokaste Latmus, but I go by Kas. No one calls me Iokaste except for teachers on the first day of school. I' m a werewolf in the Silver Moon pack. Since I' m an orphan, I' m not completely sure how old I am but pretty sure I' m sixteen. Also, I' m an omega which means I' m a servant. My job is to make the meals for the werewolves who live in the packhouse. Between making breakfast and dinner for over a hundred wolves, cleaning up after them, and restocking the pantries of the ranked members' apartments on the third and fourth floors, I do normal teenager stuff. Except, I don' t really have a lot of spare time to do normal teenager stuff. So homework, homework is the extent of my normal teenager stuff. Right now, it' s eleven-thirty at night. I' m putting the finishing touches on my English essay when I hear the door of the dungeon slam open. Great. Now what did I do? It doesn' t take much. Alpha Graham Connors is an alcoholic. It' s really difficult for werewolves to get drunk, which means you have to drink really heavily to feel the effects. Which means he probably had a fight with Luna Caroline about his drinking. Which means she locked him out of their room. Which means he has come down to take out his anger on me. Just an average Tuesday night in the packhouse.

The sharp smell of whiskey hits my nose well before he

appears in front of my door. I know the drill. I' m already on my feet waiting for him.

Oh crap oh crap oh crap. I' m thinking in my mind.

“Alpha Graham, what can I do for you?” I ask with my eyes looking at the floor. I keep my hands clasped in front of me, trying to look as small as possible.

Without a word, a whiskey bottle whizzes past my ear and smashes against the wall above my cot. I flinch and can' t help but start to tremble and hug myself. We' re beyond 'Oh crap' , we' re in 'Oh shit' territory now. Whatever is about to happen it' s going to be worse than usual.

He lunges forward and grabs me by the throat with both hands. I feel tears coming to my eyes as the lack of oxygen turns the edges of my vision dark. I desperately claw at his hands, trying to escape his grip but it' s no use. He picks me up by the neck so I' m at face level with him. His eyes are pitch black indicating his wolf Ruckus is at the surface. His breath stinks from drinking and his face is red with anger.

I start gagging and choking from the lack of oxygen.

Without warning, he throws me across the room as if I weigh nothing. My body slams against the wall and I land on my back on the cot. The shards of the broken bottle pierce the skin on my back through my thin t-shirt. The whiskey makes the cuts burn. I try to muffle a scream as the pain sears through me. He comes across the room and picks me up roughly by the hair. I feel the shards of glass cutting deeper as he pulls me up.

He slaps me as hard as he can before throwing me to the ground. He kicks me in the gut and stomps on my back over and over. The glass bits are grinding deeper into my back. I can feel blood soaking through my shredded shirt. I don' t dare move and make him even madder. I feel my ribs snap when his foot makes contact. One of his kicks lands on my jaw. I feel a sickening snap. Rattle in my brain. The metallic taste of blood instantly fills my mouth. Alpha Graham has been using me as his personal

punching bag for years, but this was way more intense than it has ever been before. Usually, he slaps me a few times, then whips me until I'm bleeding and raw. In the past couple of years, he started dipping the whip in wolfsbane, which makes me heal slower, so now I have gnarly scars across my back and arms.

"Apha Gahm, sthoph. Pleesh," I manage to eke out. My voice is small and garbled between the broken jaw and blood pouring out of my mouth. He abruptly stops and walks out of the room. He comes back a moment later with the whip and starts lashing my back relentlessly. The whip is dripping with wolfsbane. The lashes, combined with the glass shards still in my back, combined with the wolfbane is too much. My vision turns blurry and I black out. Blackness and numbness surround me. Is this what being dead is like? It's peaceful, but a little bit boring. At least I

don't have to feed the pack. Oh dang, I didn't get a chance to turn in that English essay. It was a good one too. The constant soft beeps are soothing. I don't know how long I've been dead, but I feel like I want to open my eyes, ready to take on the afterlife.

After what seems like forever, I'm able to open my eyes and find I'm alone in a soft comfortable bed in a brightly lit, clean room. This is the afterlife? Maybe this is some sort of waiting area, but where's the lobby? Is there a receptionist? My mind slowly becomes more clear and I realize I'm not dead. I'm in the pack hospital.

I need to leave before the Alpha finds me outside the dungeon. I try to get up but I can barely move my body. Every move causes excruciating pain. I start to panic, making the beeps in the room become faster. Oh, I'm hooked up to a bunch of machines. I try to figure out how to unhook them so no one hears the noises. Too late, I hear people in the hallway getting closer. I try to sit up. I need to ignore the pain. I have to escape. I slowly slide off the side of the bed. My legs were wobbly.

The tubes and wires sticking out of me preventing me from getting too far.

The door opens and the pack doctor comes in with a nurse. The doctor is an older man. He has black hair that's turning gray on the sides. The nurse is young with blond curly hair pulled back into a ponytail.

"Ah, Kas. You're awake. Let's get you back in bed, shall we?" The doctor says gently. He and the nurse come to either side of me and reach out to hold my arms. A deep growl escapes my chest.

"Don't touch me," I snap, shaking them off. My voice is scratchy and raw and my mouth feels like a thousand needles are poking into it.

"It's alright, Kas. No one is going to hurt you here. We're trying to help you heal. Let's get you back to bed and get you a drink of water," the doctor raises his hands in surrender.

I look at him hesitantly before accepting their help back into the bed. The nurse hands me a cup of water with a straw. It hurts the whole lower half of my face to drink, but the water feels good on my throat.

The doctor sits in the chair beside the bed as the nurse checks my vitals and starts messing with the tubes and wires attached to me.

"Kas, you had surgery to remove hundreds of shards of glass from your back, we also had to reset some ribs, your jaw, and you had a lot of wolfsbane in your blood. We gave you a transfusion to clear it from your system so you could heal," the doctor explains, "You're lucky you didn't die."

Sure about that last part, doc? I think to myself.

"When the pack realized breakfast had not been prepared, Beta Tate went to get you and found you on the ground in your...uh...room," he looks at me with sympathy, "Kas, who did this to you? It's a crime that could be grounds for banishment from the pack. Based on the scarring, this isn't the first time you've been attacked."

I can't answer him. I stare at my hands on my lap quietly. How can I tell him Alpha Graham is the one who caused this? There's no way he'd believe me, even if he did, what are they going to do? Banish the Alpha? Fat chance of that. I decide my best move is to just shake my head no. I don't want to get kicked out of the pack for lying. I have nowhere to go. I would be a rogue.

"Okay. Let's move on to the next question. When do you turn seventeen?" He looks at papers inside his folder.

"I-I don't know exactly, sir," I say honestly. He looks at me with a furrowed brow. He glances at the nurse and asks her to give us privacy for a few minutes. Oh crap, am I in trouble? I just woke up, I don't know what I could have done while I was sleeping. She finishes what she's doing and leaves the room.

"You don't know your birthday, Kas?" he asks, confused.

"M-my father brought me here when I was a baby. He was a rogue. Alpha Graham, well...he..." I feel my face turning hot with embarrassment. My hands tremble and tears threaten to escape my eyes. I didn't think I would have to tell this story to the doctor. I thought everyone already knew.

My father was a rogue. Alpha Graham murdered him for coming onto pack territory without permission. They didn't realize he was carrying a baby until they unzipped his jacket and saw I was tucked inside. It was a miracle I survived. Since I was just a baby, they couldn't just get rid of me but they didn't know anything about me. I was wrapped in a blanket that had the name 'Iokaste' embroidered on it. So, that is what they called me. My father could have actually been a kidnapper for all I know. The only reason they gave me the last name Latmus is because after they killed my father, they looked through his wallet to identify him. The only form of ID he had was a library card that said Andy Latmus on it. I've tried an internet search for his name on the computer in the school library before. Nothing comes up in the search.

“You don’ t need to finish, I know what happened to your father.”

“Well, after that…happened…Luna Caroline took me in until I was old enough to start school. Then she moved me into the dungeon. I’ ve kinda been on my own since then. I never found out when my actual birthday is. To be honest, you’ re the first person who has ever asked. I mean, I guess I’ m sixteen. My wolf hasn’ t woken up yet.” The doctor nods, looking at me with pity. Almost like he actually cares. He asks me a few more questions about my medical history, but there’ s nothing to really speak of. I don’ t remember ever being treated by a doctor before.

“I see,” he closes the folder and tucks his pen into his shirt pocket, “Well, I know you haven’ t had a chance to look in the mirror yet, but when you do, you may find you look a little different. Don’ t be alarmed. I believe it’ s a sign that your wolf is starting to wake up. I’ ve done as many tests as I could think of. It is not medically related.”

I look at him with confusion, “Y-yes, sir.” I assume he means I’ m healing faster but, why did he need to warn me? Why not just tell me?

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future
by Neener Beener chapter 2

I look at the nurse who is staring at me. When she realizes I caught her, her eyes dart away. What’ s that about? Okay, lady. Rude.

“I’ ll leave you now,” she says, “You can go in the bathroom and wash up. Just take that pole with the IV solution with you. There are lounge shorts and fresh underwear in the bag. You need to leave the hospital gown on until your back heals. Alright?”

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“Yes, ma’ am. Thank you, Diane,” she nods and leaves

the room.

It's the first time in my life people have been kind to me. I mean, I think it's part of their job but still. All I have known so far were insults, physical misery, and hard work. Never any kindness, never any love. I feel like I can trust the doctor but I'm still wary of Nurse Diane. The way she stared at me just now makes me uncomfortable.

I pick up the duffle bag and go to the bathroom. I avoid looking in the mirror. I'm not sure I'm ready to see the damage on my face. Everything in the bathroom is fresh and white. There's a shower, but I'm worried the pressure of the water will hurt my back. I decide to fill the tub halfway and get in. The water is warm and soothing. There's a washcloth and a fresh bar of soap. I clean myself until the water is gross. All the dried blood tinges the water pink. I drain the tub, wipe out the ring of dirt around the edge, and fill it again. The water is not nearly as dirty as I finish washing. It hurts to raise my arms, but I don't want to call the nurse to help me. I gently wash my hair and use a cup to rinse it. I dry off and wrap the soft towel around my hair.

There's a toothbrush and a small tube of paste on the shelf by the sink. I'm living in the lap of luxury in the pack hospital! I pick them up and start brushing my teeth. I can't avoid it anymore, I need to look in the mirror. I finally worked up the courage to take a peek. What I see makes me drop the toothbrush.

My face is still covered in bruises, but that's not what made me drop the toothbrush. The iris of my left eye is violet. Not like a shade of blue that could be a little purple in the right light. No no. My right pupil is still the drab gray I'm used to but my left pupil looks crazy. I blink my eyes hard a few times. Still the same. I try rubbing my eye but it doesn't make a difference. There's no mistaking it - my eye is bright, practically glowing...violet.

The two days seem to last forever. I'm not complaining though. I've never gotten so much sleep in my life and as

a bonus, I get three meals a day. Three! I keep looking in the mirror. I can't get over how weird my purple eye looks. I wake up on the second day and go to the bathroom to freshen up.

I stare at myself in the mirror for the millionth time. My left eye is still violet. Now my right eye seems like it's starting to turn violet as well. There was nothing I can do about it, so I decide to try not to worry. Since Silver Moon is a pretty big pack, we have a high school on pack territory. The library has a really big werewolf lore research section. I will do some research during lunch. As I tilt my head to the side to brush my hair, I notice a chunk of my hair has changed color. Instead of my normal mousy brown, it is silvery gray.

Okay seriously now. What is going on? What is happening to me? Is this a trick? Is there bleach in the shampoo or something? If it is a trick, it isn't funny. I pick up the bottle and smell it. It smells like strawberries, not bleach. Weird. I have never heard of a wolf's eye or hair color changing when they are coming of age but that's what the doctor thinks is happening.

Diane comes in just after lunch with paperwork and pamphlets for me. She hands me another little bag, "Just a little something to help you stay incognito until you are finished healing," she says.

"Thank you for everything," I say as I open the bag. There is a baseball cap and a pair of dark sunglasses.

"How do I look?" I ask as I model them for her. She giggles at my poses, "You're a star, darling." Maybe she isn't so bad after all.

She gives me a gentle hug and sends me on my way. I have another two hours before I need to start prepping dinner. I decide to take my new clothes to my room and clean up the mess down there so I can sleep tonight. Something smells different as I walk down the hall of the dungeon, like a cleaning solution. I turn on my lamp to find the room has been transformed. My lamp is not sitting on an old stack of milk crates. It is on a

nightstand. There is a new bed too, my old cot is gone. I have a proper bed. Complete with new sheets and blankets. There is also a small desk and chair with all my school books arranged in a basket next to it. I must be dreaming. That or I walked into someone else's room by accident, except no one else lives down here. You can barely tell it was an old dungeon cell. It looks like what I imagine a dorm room would look like.

I peek out of the doorway to make sure I am in the right place. I seem to be. What gives? I walk over to the bed and sit carefully as if it will disappear if I move too fast. It is like a cloud. The gray and turquoise linens are fresh and new. There are even two pillows. I never had a proper pillow before, let alone two.

As far as I know, Diane is the only one who came down here while I was in the hospital. Could she have had all this done? Surely she will get in trouble when Alpha Graham finds out. Then I remember she doesn't know how much the Alpha hates me. I don't know how I'm going to explain it when he finds out but I won't tattle on anyone for trying to help me either.

I put my new clothes away in the drawers of the nightstand. I stash the duffle bag under the mattress. Once I am seventeen, I will figure out a way to get out of this place. Find a new pack that will accept a violet-eyed weakling of a wolf.

I sit at the desk and write a thank you letter to the doctor and Nurse Diane. I turn in the chair looking around the like-new room. I am in awe that someone would do this for me. I must have been daydreaming because I don't hear the door at the top of the stairs, but I hear two sets of footsteps coming down the hall. Instantly I freeze. I can smell Alpha Graham's scent getting closer. I don't know who the other scent belongs to.

Instinctively, I scramble and stand in the middle of the room just as they get to the doorway. He leans against the frame and crosses his arms in front of himself. I can

feel my whole body trembling as he stares. My eyes are glued to the ground. I definitely do not want him to see my new eye color shining through.

“C-can I help y-you, Alpha Graham?”

“That little stunt you pulled cost me a lot of money,” he says with a calm, gravelly voice, “And when you cost me money, you cost my whole family money.”

“I’ m sorry, sir,” I apologize, although I have no idea what stunt he is talking about. I look up just enough to see Ryan, the Alpha’ s son, is also standing in the doorway. Ryan takes a step closer and I can feel tears starting to sting the corners of my eyes as my arms shake uncontrollably. How am I going to face him at school? I haven’ t had a conversation with him since his mom made me live in the dungeon, anyway. But as far as I know, he had no idea I live down here now. He is going to tell everyone for sure.

“Surgery and hospital stays aren’ t cheap, Kas,” Alpha Graham sneers from the doorway, “And do you know how disgusting the food has been for the past two and a half days?”

I just nod, still looking at the ground. I’ m not trying to argue with a lunatic. It isn’ t my fault I had to have surgery. He’ s the one who broke a bottle and threw me into the broken pieces! If he hadn’ t, I would have been just fine. I would have been able to bounce back the next day and make breakfast like I was supposed to, even if I was banged up.

There is a pause and he finally growls, “Where did all this furniture come from? Did you steal it?”

“N-no, sir. I-I...it was here when I g-got back from the hospital wing. I don’ t know wh-who brought it.”

“You owe me, Kas Latmus. You also owe whoever turned your room into the Ritz-Carlton. You’ ll work in the packhouse until you pay it back every cent. For the rest of your life if necessary. No more school. You don’ t need education to cook and clean.”

He uses his Alpha tone. I cannot disobey. With those

words, the small flame of hope in my heart extinguishes. I don't get paid so I don't know how I could ever pay back any debt. Luna Caroline told me years ago that the room in the dungeon was payment enough for my services. I am less than an omega now. I am a slave.

"Ryan, teach her a lesson for wasting our money."

"Yes, Alpha."

Tears stream down my face as the reality of my fate sets in. Alpha Graham is passing the torch of his cruelty down to his son. But I know better than that. He will never stop hurting me.

Ryan reaches forward and claps the back of my neck. He forces me down into a bowing position and growls deeply, "You should be grateful my father doesn't banish you. If you were a rogue, I would make damn sure you never made it to the border of the territory."

A squeak escapes my throat. I am so scared I feel like I am going to pass out. I can feel blackness in the edges of my vision as my heart races.

Ryan turns to his father, "Don't worry, Alpha. I've got this situation covered."

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener

chapter 3

I hear Alpha Graham's footsteps walk back down the hallway as he leaves the dungeon. Ryan tightens his grip on my neck, extending his wolf claws, making me yelp.

As soon the door slams, Ryan releases my neck and kneels in front of me. His face is contorted with anger. His eyes flicker black as his wolf, Dagger, comes to the surface. He grabs my shoulders, shaking me roughly,

"What the Hell did you do to make him so mad?"

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Why isn't he beating me like he told Alpha Graham he would? I stiffen my whole body, avoiding eye contact

with him. I' m shaking so badly, I can' t even speak now. The thought of two people beating me regularly for the rest of my life...it just can' t be real. Can it? How can the Goddess allow this to happen? I want to die. That' s not an exaggeration. That' s not me being dramatic. Please, Goddess, don' t let this happen. Just let me die.

I shake so badly that I fall to my knees. I start to sob hysterically and my brain shuts down from being able to think rationally.

Ryan grabs my chin and forces me to look at him in his cold gray eyes. He looks at me in horror for a moment, "Wh-what happened to your eyes?"

He moves his hands up from my chin to just below my eyes. It feels like his hands are trembling against my face.

"A-are you a hybrid or something?"

All I can manage is to shake my head no between sobs. As I shake my head, I feel him starting to press his thumbs against my lower eyelids obstructing my vision. Oh no no no, he' s going to poke my eyes out. Holy crap, he saw the violet color. He was going to blind me. I place my hands on top of his trying to pull him away. I hear myself screaming, "NONONONOOOOO! STOP!! Don' t take my eyes ouuutttt! PLEEAASSEEEE!!!"

For just a moment, time freezes. I don' t mean like it feels like time is standing still because I' m in the middle of a traumatic situation. No, time is actually frozen. Well, frozen for everything except for me I should say. I can feel it in the air.

It only lasts for a moment. I pull Ryan' s hands away from my face easily. The look of anger combined with confusion is stuck on his face. Next to him, a fly is suspended in mid-air. The second hand on the clock has stopped on the wall behind him. Drips of water aren' t finished falling, leaving umbrella-shaped splashes in the puddles on the floor.

What the...Hell? Did the Moon Goddess hear me? Did she

have mercy on me? Did she let me die?

I look back at Ryan with wide eyes. My hands are glowing purple. As quickly as it stopped, time starts again. Ryan starts screaming and pushes himself away from me. The tops of his hands where my hands were touching him are red and swollen.

I look down at my hands. They are normal again, not glowing purple. Seriously though, what the Hell just happened?

I shut my eyes tight, waiting for Ryan to retaliate.

“If you tell anyone, I will kill you,” he says in my ear. Then he punches me in the stomach, knocking the air out of my lungs.

I hear his footsteps running down the hall, then out the door. I don't know how long I sit like this but when I finally open my eyes I breathe a sigh of relief.

I lean against my bed for a while longer, sobbing, shaking, and trying to catch my breath. He didn't hurt me? Surely he was coming back. I sniff the air but his scent is gone. I listened carefully but there were no sounds in other parts of the dungeon. I'm alone.

“Goddess, thank you for saving me. Thank you,” I say out loud, just in case the miracle I just experienced was because of her.

I feel exhausted, but starting to feel calmer. Okay Kas, focus. I need to make dinner for the pack or Alpha Graham will find me and murder me. I don't think it's an exaggeration, either. Even if I try to run away, either he or Ryan would find me before I could get off the territory. I think he really would kill me at this point. Speaking of which, it was only a matter of time before Ryan comes back to beat the crap out of me like his father told him to.

I take a few deep breaths and make myself go down the hall to wash up at the sink. I splash cold water on my face and look in the grungy mirror. Both of my eyes are pure violet now. The silver streaks are starting to take over my hair now. It isn't like an old person's hair. It is

silvery white that almost shimmers, even in the low light of the dungeon. So weird, there's no way I'm going to be able to get used to this new look.

I go back to my room and get dressed in leggings and a t-shirt. I put on the baseball cap Diane gave me, pulling the brim low to hide my eyes. Throughout dinner, I receive murderous glares from Alpha Graham. I make sure to keep my eyes to the floor so Alpha Graham would avoid seeing the color. Ryan glares at me every chance he gets. After dinner, it takes longer than usual to stock pantries because whoever did it while I was in the hospital had no idea what they were doing.

It is well after midnight when I flop down on my bed and close my eyes. June 20th, I think to myself. It's the last day of school. Well, for other people anyway, not me.

You don't need an education to cook and stock pantries, Alpha Graham's words ring in my ears. Just another day for me, I suppose. I wallow in self-pity for a bit before I roll over and try to fall asleep. I'm almost asleep when I hear a woman's voice.

"Hello!"

I quickly scramble to my feet, looking everywhere for who it could be. I'm the only one in the room. I peek into the hallway and look around but no one is there either.

"Hello?" I whisper loudly down the hallway.

"Ugh, Kas. This is no way for a warrior to behave. Get your shit together," the voice chides. I realize the voice is

coming from inside my head.

"A-are you my wolf?" I ask hesitantly, worried that I've gone insane.

"I am. My name is Elexis. You can call me Lex."

"Oh, Elexis. You woke up a day too late. Our Alpha just turned us into a slave less than twelve hours ago. We have no way to escape now," I feel tears welling up. I explain everything to her. How the Alpha killed my father, how the Luna made me live in the dungeon, the beatings, all of it. I sob through the whole thing.

“I’ m here now, Kas. Don’ t worry. We are a child of the Moon Goddess, we are a warrior. Which means we are strong. We will get through this.”

“Lex, earlier, when my hands turned purple and burned Ryan. Was that you?”

“Sort of. That was you, but my waking up helped activate your power. I can explain more later. Get some sleep for now.”

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 4

The next month and a half are the worst of my life.

Thank Goddess for Lex. She keeps me going. Any motivation I ever had is gone now. Instead of just breakfast and dinner, now I make lunch too and I’ m still on pantry duty. Every moment of my day is filled with work from the time I wake up until the time I crash in my bed. Lex convinces me to enjoy the time that she and I get to spend together, which is when I’ m cooking meals. I find I actually do enjoy cooking while Lex is with me. No one comes to bother me, so we get to have great conversations without interruptions. In the end, I have created something people will enjoy. I even found a couple of recipe books in the back of one of the kitchen cupboards and taught myself some new techniques and dishes to make.

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Everything else in my life is complete shit. Alpha Graham allows pack members to hit me and verbally abuse me and they take full advantage at every opportunity. He comes to my room multiple times a week to beat me and berate me for imaginary offenses I haven’ t committed. Sometimes Ryan comes and watches. A couple of times he even gets the whip for his father but he never actually hits me. I swear I see him smiling while he watches. Lex tries to convince me to fight back, but that would be a death sentence for both of us. If I fight back or even worse, if I shift, I’ m certain I’ d be killed on the spot.

Lex keeps telling me everything will change when I shift. She keeps saying we are a daughter of the Moon Goddess and we are her warrior. She is frustrated that I submit instead of fighting back. She is angry at me for keeping her a secret. She says doing so is making her weaker.

“Okay, Lex, a couple of problems with all of this,” I try to tell her for the millionth time after we plop in bed, “First, I have no idea when I’ m going to be able to let you out. I’ m up and working every day from five a.m. until after midnight. Secondly, if the Alpha finds out I have a wolf at all, he might banish me and kill me or just skip banishing me and straight out kill me. Lastly, we are a slave, not a warrior. We aren’ t even an omega.”

“Kas, we are not just a warrior, we are a child of the Moon Goddess. She is our mother.”

I just roll my eyes, “Okay, okay. I don’ t know when I can let you out, but at the first opportunity, I will take it, Lex. I promise.”

This seems to satisfy her. We keep having the same argument about werewolves all being children of Moon Goddess versus being an actual child of the Moon Goddess. She doesn’ t understand the difference. I think she actually believes the Moon Goddess is my mom, like, in the literal sense of the word mother.

Every night, I’ m completely exhausted by the time I get back to my room. It’ s an even longer day if I’ m visited by Alpha Graham. Lex has been the best friend I could ask for, even if she is frustrated and getting weak. She is always supporting me and pushing me to not give up. I feel guilty that I can’ t support her in return.

One day, Lori, Alpha Graham’ s personal omega comes running up to me while I’ m making lunch and tells me the Alpha wants to see me in his office right away. I drop what I’ m doing and hurry to his office.

I knock on the door quietly in case he’ s busy.

“Come in,” he calls from inside. I pull open the door and

peek inside.

“You called for me, Alpha?” I ask as quietly as possible. The easiest way to get away from him is to use as few words as possible and ask as few questions as possible.

“Don’ t just stand there, come in,” he snarls. I rush inside and close the door behind me. I stay as close to the door as possible in case I need to make a run for it.

“Kas, we have a delegation coming from the Blood River pack next week. Twenty wolves in total, all of the ranked members, their mates, the heads of their security and guards, and security detail for all of them. If all goes well, we’ ll be forming a pact with them. They must be treated with the utmost respect and courtesy. Bring lunches to the conference room every day and make a formal dinner every night next week, keep their pantries stocked, and stay the Hell out of the way. Got it?”

I look up from under my hat, still keeping my face low enough that he can’ t see my eyes. Yes, even after almost two months, he still hasn’ t noticed that I have purple eyes. Or if he has, he hasn’ t pointed it out. He also hasn’ t said anything about my silver hair. Which is just fine with me.

“Yes, sir. ”

“Everyone will be here on Monday. Except for the Alpha, who is coming Tuesday. We’ ll be having a party after dinner to welcome him. Make sure there is enough food for the party. Give Sam the information for the additional food you need to make. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir. ”

“Good. We need to keep the Alpha happy. If not, I won’ t hesitate to let him kill you. Do you understand?” He stands up with his hands leaning on the desk looking very intimidating.

“Y-yes, sir. ”

“Now get out of my sight, ” he points to the door behind me.

I scramble out of the room as fast as possible to find

Sam. Sam is in charge of ordering supplies for the packhouse. He should be in his office right now. My mind is already churning through the special foods to make and the groceries I need for them. I also need extra supplies for the guest suite pantries. I wonder what kind of foods the Blood River pack likes?

Blood River is the largest pack in the northern region with my pack, Silver Moon, being the second largest. Alpha Graham says Blood River is vicious and strict. Most of their pack has served in the military at one point or another. They employ dark magicians and witches to help them keep power over neighboring packs. I wonder if they are going to bring any dark witches here. I hope not. I also hear their Alpha kills pack members who fail training tests because he doesn't want weak wolves in his pack. Definitely a guy I don't want to cross paths with. I get to Sam's office and knock on the door. I can hear noises coming from inside but he doesn't answer. I knock a little louder. What a jerk, he has to know I'm here. He knows my scent. Just tell me to come in, already.

"I don't like this guy, Kas. He's creepy. He stares at your boobs," Lex complains.

"Well, we don't have a choice but to work with him, Lex. He's the money man."

"Ugh. Fine, but let's make it quick."

I knock again. More impatiently this time.

"What is it?" He finally growls from inside.

I open the door to find there's a mostly naked female wolf with long blond hair sitting on his desk. Her legs are wrapped around his waist. She hides her face in his chest. I can't see who she was, but there is no denying whose scent it is. Sam is not wearing any pants and he is sweating.

"Get the fuck out, Kas! I'm busy here!"

I stand there wide-eyed, jaw slack for a moment. I can't be seeing this. Sam is having sex in his office...WITH THE LUNA.

"GET OUT, KAS!" He yells louder.

I come to my senses and slam the door closed. I run back to the kitchen as fast as I can. I can feel the blood drain from my face. If anyone finds out what I just saw, I am dead meat. Holy crap Holy crap Holy crap Holy crap. Lex thinks it's hilarious. She laughs in my head throughout lunch preparation. I'm just trying to erase the scene from my mind.

I'm about to take the platters out to the dining room, Sam comes charging into the kitchen. He makes a beeline at me, grabbing me by the throat, and pinning me against the wall. He hauls back and punches me square in the face. The back of my head slams against the wall so hard I see stars. I can feel blood dripping from my nose as I slide down the wall with a groan.

"You didn't see anything!" His eyes are pitch black as he growls at me. I can feel his claws extending into my neck drawing blood, "You understand, you little bitch!"

I'm paralyzed with fear. I can't answer. I can't even nod. Suddenly I feel like I'm falling backward in my mind. I blink quickly a few times. It feels like I'm looking out of someone else's eyes.

"Let her go!" The voice comes from me, but it isn't my voice. It's Elexis. Her voice booms and sounds almost ethereal. The dishes on the counter shake as she growls deeply at Sam.

I watch helplessly, as my hands glow violet and grab Sam's wrists. As I grab him, his eyes widen in fear and he starts howling in pain. A sizzling sound comes from where my hands connect with his skin. He quickly releases my neck and we both fall to the ground.

"How are you doing this? What the Hell are you, Kas?" I stand up feeling much taller than my five-foot-tall frame. Lex's voice booms from me, "I'm a warrior child of the Moon Goddess. If you tell anyone what has happened here today, I. WILL. KILL. YOU," Elexis threatens.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 5

Sam scoots back on his backside away from me, wide-eyed, then clambers up and runs away as fast as he can.

Suddenly, I'm thrust back into my normal state of mind and I fall back to the ground, exhausted. My hands are no longer glowing but they feel like they are on fire and full of static electricity.

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"Lex! What was that?" I scold her, but mostly because it scared me.

"I couldn't help it. He was threatening us."

"Okay, but what was with the glowy purple, burny hands thing?! That's not normal!"

"Kas, we've been through this. We are a child of the Moon Goddess. We are special. The 'glowy purple, burny hands thing' is a gift from our mother. There is more too. You will see after we shift for the first time. Until then, I'm not strong enough to show you. Besides, it isn't like I

hurt him; his wolf will heal him before he is back in his office."

"I-I don-, wait, you mean the Moon Goddess is my actual mom? Like she gave birth to me, specifically? Not just, like, mother of all werewolves because she created us a gazillion years ago?"

"That's what I've been saying since I woke up. It's not my fault you didn't believe me."

I pick up a towel to wipe the blood from my nose. Lex is already healing me from the break. But my face is clearly going to be bruised for a couple of days. I pull my hat down low so no one can see the bruises then pick up the first two platters and rush out to the dining room.

"Okay, well if you're able to do that to Sam, how come you can't do it to Alpha Graham or Ryan?"

"Well, I think it happened one time before I woke up, but I wasn't fully in control then. I can't do it now because he's our Alpha, Kas. I can't go against what he says. I can't attack our Alpha or our future Alpha."

“Fine,” I concede. I don’t want to argue with her. I’m just trying to figure out the rules. I’m kinda in uncharted territory here. I mean, it’s cool territory but I don’t know what our limits are.

Once all the platters are out, I make the list of extra supplies I need and put it in the box hanging outside Sam’s office. That way, I don’t have to face him again. I clean up the dining room from lunch and still have about forty-five minutes until I need to start dinner. I decide to go to the stockroom and put supplies on the pantry cart for later. As I’m working, I hear someone clear their throat behind me. I look up to find Ryan standing uncomfortably close to me.

“Can I help you with something, Ryan?” I try to swallow the panic that instantly builds in my throat.

“Kas, I just wanted to say, when I’m Alpha, you won’t be treated the way you are now,” he takes a step closer, forcing me to back up against the cart.

“Ryan, please stop,” I put my hands up and push lightly against him to get him to move, but he’s stronger than me and doesn’t budge. I look up at him to see an evil grin distorting his face.

“I see the way my dad treats you, Kas. You never complain. You just take it,” he moves closer, breathing deeply until he’s fully pressing himself against me, “I think you like when he does it. Don’t you?” he whispers in my ear.

What in the actual Hell?! There is no way I heard him right. Did I?

“Ryan, I absolutely do not enjoy being beaten by your father,” I say in disbelief, “and you’re no better, standing there watching him instead of stopping him.”

I can feel tears stinging the corners of my eyes as he slips an arm around my waist. I cannot believe this is happening right now.

“Don’t lie to me, Kas. It makes me hard to think about what I’ll do to you when it’s finally my turn. I can’t wait until he lets me treat you like that. I want to hear you

moan with pleasure when I beat you. I want you on your knees so I can whip you instead of him. I want you to be my toy, Kas, not his. You'd like that, wouldn't you? Bowing down to me with that pretty ass in the air? We'll turn the dungeon into a playroom just for us, instead of just your bedroom," He's nuzzling against my neck right below my ear making me cringe, but I don't have anywhere to be able to move to get away from him. I can feel his erection getting harder as he leans more weight against me.

"Are you insane?" I yell. I push hard against him but he's too strong. He doesn't budge, "Get off of me, you sicko!" This whole time, he's been turned on by watching his dad torture me? What the hell is wrong with this family? The look on his face contorts from happy evil to disgusted. Without warning, he takes a step back and kicks me in the stomach causing me to double over in pain. He elbows me in the back, dropping me to my knees. Then he bends over behind me, pressing his body against mine, and slides his arm under my shirt roughly massaging my breast while he grunts in my ear. He slides his other hand inside my leggings, rubbing his fingers against my lower area. He pulls me toward his body, pressing his erection against my butt, moving back and forth to rub himself against me, his mouth right next to my ear. He's breathing hard as he licks my face.

"I know you want me, Kas. Don't worry, you'll be mine as soon as I convince my father to let me have you. I wanted him to watch the first time I take you. I want to make him proud when I make you squeal in pain but I don't think I can wait," His voice is rough and ragged with excitement and he's grinding against me and groping me.

All I can do is sob. I'm afraid to fight back or to even say anything. Lex can't help me because he's my future Alpha.

'Moon Goddess, if you're really my mother, please help me! Please save me from this!' I cry in my mind as Ryan

gropes and rubs himself against me. He pulls my leggings and underwear down, tearing them both in half with his wolf claws extended. I feel him pressing himself against my entrance. I know what was about to happen and I can't take it anymore. I turn my mind off. Just like the night his father beat me within an inch of my life. My mind cannot be present for what is happening to my body.

He finally gets off me and I fall to the floor. He tears the back of my shirt open and releases his seed on the skin of my scarred back. He kicks me in the stomach again and walks away. I lay on the floor of the supply room crying.

"Get up, Kas," Lex commands in my mind.

"I said get up," she repeats. Her voice is stern but caring,

"You're better than this. We will survive this."

"I want to die, Lex. I can't do this anymore. I can't."

"You can and you will. We will find our mate soon enough and things will change. I promise."

"How can you be so sure?"

"You will see. Glow, burny hands are not our only gift."

I get up, find an old cardigan in the back of the stockroom, and put it on. I go back to my room to find new clothes before making dinner.

The next four days go without incident. Unless you consider I have gone to the roof several times contemplating my existence. Each time, I stand with my toes at the edge and stare down from the four-story building. I can't bring myself to do anything except cry and go back to my room. I can't do it to Elexis. I can't take her life because I want to take mine.

Sunday after dinner service, I see Luna Caroline in the hallway while I'm refilling pantries. She quickly approaches me and grabs me by the arm. She extends her claws into my bicep, drawing blood.

"Kas, if you tell anyone and I mean anyone what you saw in Sam's office, I will kill you," she says in a low threatening tone.

You too, lady? I' m fed up. She wants to kill me? Okay, fine. I lift my hat and let my violet eyes look directly at her. She gasps at the unusual sight.

"Luna, it would be a relief and I would welcome death. You clearly don' t know or care how I' m treated by this pack. Including your husband, your son, and apparently your lover, too," Tears choke up in my throat. I cannot take any more punishment or threats from anyone else. I' m at my wit' s end. If she murders me right here in this hallway, it would be a relief.

"I' m sorry, Lex. I just can' t do it anymore," I say to my wolf as I' m staring down Luna Caroline. She doesn' t respond, she shuts our mind link and crawls into the corner of my mind.

Luna Caroline pushes me away, "Insolent child! You should be grateful for your life! The Alpha will hear about this."

"I' m not grateful for this life, Luna. And if you think I should be, you are part of the problem. If you want to tell the Alpha about this incident, I' m more than happy to tell him what instigated it."

She stares at me with pure anger and hatred before walking away without a word. I guess fate has other plans for me. I stand in the hall for a few minutes to see if she is coming back, but she doesn' t. I' m certain she is going to sabotage me. Maybe she' s going to smother me in my sleep or just stab me straight in the back. Either way, I was serious when I told her I welcome death.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 6

I finish pantry duty making sure everything is set in the guest rooms. I had Sam order bouquets for each of the suites as an extra touch. In the guest Alpha' s suite, I also add a bottle of champagne. If this is the last thing I ever get to do, I want it to be something that makes someone else happy.

It is almost one-thirty in the morning before I plop into bed exhausted. It has been a shit day. If Luna Caroline

has anything to do with it, it will probably be my last. Lex is exhausted too. She stops sulking long enough to tell me she needs me to shift, but I can't. I have no time or energy. I keep promising her I will, but I feel like I've broken that promise. I float off to sleep to the sounds of her whimpering in my head while I cry into the pillow.

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To my surprise, my alarm wakes me in the morning. Lex makes me promise to hang on for one more day. We go through the motions of the life I hate. While I'm getting ready, I look in the mirror to find my hair is completely silvery white now. I tuck it into a bun to try to avoid people noticing it.

The delegation from Blood River arrives in the early afternoon. They are all tall and intimidating with tattoos and big muscles. Some of them have visible scars on their arms and faces. They're wearing matching black and white business clothes or all-black security uniforms. Luna Caroline directs them to the sitting room while I quietly bring in pitchers of water and ice tea for them to drink. I do my best to try not to be noticed when one of the women calls me out.

"You there, omega," She says abruptly, staring with green eyes and black hair pulled into a tight ponytail. I look around and realize she is speaking to me.

"Wine. Wine for everyone."

"Beta Lenora, of course, right away," Luna Caroline says quickly, then nods her head to me.

I rush to the wine cellar and pull out two cases of wine, napkins, and glasses, prepping the drink service cart and head back to the sitting room. I open three bottles each of red and white, leaving the rest for them to do as they wish and I back out of the room so I can start on preparing dinner.

The rest of the day goes without a hitch. The guests seem pleased with dinner. In the evening, I go to each guest suite to make sure everyone is happy with their

accommodations. A couple of people ask for more bags of chips or soda but on the whole, everyone seems satisfied.

The last door is the Beta's room. Beta Lenora opens the door wearing a blue t-shirt and jeans, looking much more relaxed than earlier. She has a large tattoo of a rose and a dagger on her forearm. Her dark hair is still pulled back but she isn't wearing makeup. I can see now, she looks only a few years older than me. I can hear her mate inside talking on the phone.

"Thanks for checking on us. Everything is wonderful. The flowers are a beautiful touch. You have good taste," she smiles at me. I bow to her slightly, then turn to leave.

"Wait, what's under your hat?" I stop in my tracks and turn around.

"I'm sorry ma'am?" I ask. I feel the blood drain from my face and a knot forms in my belly.

"Your hat. Why is it so low? What are you trying to hide?" she asks, "Come closer."

I come closer and slowly take off my hat. Keeping my eyes to the ground. My silver hair cascades down my back. It is embarrassingly greasy and visibly dirty. I feel myself blush.

"Oh, I see," she says with surprise in her voice, "Now. Don't be disrespectful. Always look me in the eye when I speak to you."

Oh crap. I look up at her. The light from her room shines right into my eyes. She looks at me blankly for a moment trying to process what she is seeing.

"What are you? A hybrid?"

"No, ma'am. The pack doctor did tests but doesn't know why it happened. He thinks it must be a transformation related to my wolf getting ready to wake up," I mean, it's not a lie...it's just not the whole truth, right? How am I supposed to tell a complete stranger that my wolf says I am the Moon Goddess's actual daughter and that is why I have silver hair and violet eyes?

She grabs my chin and pulls my face closer to hers,

inspecting closely, “And does the pack doctor know someone has broken your nose recently? You still have bruises.”

“He’s treated my injuries in the past,” I’m not trying to elaborate or implicate anyone to this woman I don’t know.

“Who’s at the door, Lenora?” the Beta inside calls to her.

“Just the omega assigned to us, Milo. What’s your name, again?”

“It’s Iokaste, ma’am but please call me Kas. I’m not an omega, though. I’m just a servant.”

“Her name is Kas. She picked out my beautiful flowers,” she’s still talking to her mate but she hasn’t taken her eyes off me as if she is trying to size me up for some reason. Her brow furrows slightly as she stares. She’s making me really self conscious.

“That’s nice. Ask her if I can get bubbly water in the refrigerator.”

“No problem, ma’am,” She and I share a smile at ‘bubbly water’, “I will bring it shortly and leave it at the door.”

“Thank you. Oh and Kas, if those bruises aren’t healed tomorrow morning, find some powder. Alpha Bronx Mason does not tolerate seeing injuries like that.”

“Ye-yes, ma’am.”

I run to the stockroom, get four bottles of San Pellegrino and put them in front of the door, then run away as fast as I can. One million questions run through my head. Would their Alpha kill me for being weaker than other wolves even if I was not part of his pack? Was she going to tell Alpha Graham about my unusual features? Was she going to call him out for letting someone break my nose? I mean, lady, if you think that is bad, I got some news you’re not gonna like and then I’m dead meat by your Alpha for sure.

Alpha Graham comes down later and whips me for not having all the items our guests wanted. By morning, Lex has still not been able to fully heal me. So I put on a loose black t-shirt and shorts with a stretched-out

waistband. I' m in so much pain, everything is a struggle. Cooking, carrying breakfast trays, leaning over to clean tables. Every move causes scabs to open and bleed, making the back of my shirt damp with blood.

Beta Lenora makes eye contact with me a couple of times. She can tell something was wrong but doesn' t say anything.

For some reason she can' t explain, Lex is bouncing around in my head all morning.

“The Beta is so nice! I can' t wait to meet the Alpha and Luna!”

“Lex, come on. We' re not going to get to meet the Alpha and Luna. We' re going to melt into the wallpaper and pretend we don' t exist.”

“Pshh. I want to meet them.”

“Okay, well I hate to disappoint you, but you' re gonna get disappointed.”

Lori comes in while I' m prepping lunch to let me know the Alpha has arrived and I need to make lunch for him as well. There is no Luna. He doesn' t have a mate? And according to Lori...he' s really handsome. Not that it matters to me, because I' m going to be wallpaper. I don' t want him to notice me at all.

I take the trays to the conference room. Alpha Bronx Mason is not there but there is a spot at the table where he is supposed to sit. I leave his meal at the empty seat. Everyone from the Blood River pack politely thanks me as I lay plates in front of them. Their manners betray their intimidating features. No one from the Silver Moon pack says a word to me as I serve them. I collect the trays and walk out quietly. Lori lets me know she will clean the plates so I can focus on dinner and food for the party. I go to the kitchen but need a minute to collect myself before I get started on dinner. I go out the back door and stand on the stoop. In the distance I see a man smoking. I don' t recognize him, it must be the Alpha from Blood River. He is too far away for me to see his actual features though. All I can see is a tall figure with dark hair and a

black suit. The wind wafts his cigarette smoke toward me. It smells like cigarettes but I swear it smells like coffee too...or dark chocolate. This guy was a mocha drinker? I laugh to myself at the thought of the big bad Alpha of Blood River sipping on a mochaccino.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future
by Neener Beener chapter 7

I make a four-course meal of Caesar salad, bacon-wrapped shrimp appetizers, beef wellington with braised Brussels sprouts for the main dish, and a key lime pie for dessert. I also make bruschetta, crostinis, tomato fritters, mini calzones, assorted veggie trays with dip, and chocolate truffles to serve for the party. I finished the desserts and veggie trays between breakfast and lunch so there was less for me to worry about now.

I realize Lex's advice of finding happiness in cooking has helped me enjoy making this dinner. Maybe because I'm serving people other than my pack or maybe it's because I'm making special food, not just the regular stuff I make for the pack? Either way, I don't mind my work today. I felt a sense of pride in it.

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There are servers for dinner service since it's a formal event. I stay in the kitchen and make sure everything is plated and going out the door in perfect condition. I'm in the zone, as they say.

I peek out from the kitchen after each course is served. People seem to really enjoy the food, which is a relief. I notice Alpha Graham is getting pretty drunk. Luna Caroline keeps taking his glass away from him, but he keeps ordering the omegas to give him more. The dining room is extra crowded, so I don't get a better look at Alpha Bronx Mason. Beta Lenora sees me peeking out from the kitchen and gives me a wink and thumbs up. I smile and give a little wave before pulling my head back. I help the servers take the party food to the tables at the edges of the ballroom. I also make sure the bars in the

corners are fully stocked. The DJ is finishing setting up and colorful lights are sliding across the floor. Party balloons and streamers are hanging all over the place. The first few guests are starting to wander in which is my cue to duck out the back door.

Luckily, the dinner servers will clean up dinner service tonight, which gives me extra time to restock pantries. I head upstairs to the stockroom and load the cart up. I'm humming to myself as I go room to room. I feel an odd sense of calm as I go.

"You're in a good mood," Lex says.

"I guess. I'm not sure why though. My back is still killing me and my feet are killing me too."

"Well, I'm happy that you're happy for once. This version of you is pretty cool."

"Thanks, Lex. You're not half bad yourself."

I finish stocking the ranked pack members' rooms on the fourth and third floors. Then head to the second floor where the guest suites are. The cleaning staff has cleaned the rooms and bathrooms. I just need to restock the toiletries, pantry items, and refrigerators.

I make quick work of the rooms. I remember to stock the Betas' room with more bottles of San Pellegrino, refresh the flowers, and leave a little tent card with a handwritten smiley face on the kitchenette counter.

It's almost midnight now, everyone is still in the ballroom partying the night away. I close the door to the Betas' suite and move to the Alpha's suite door. It's the last room left for the night. I know he must be at the party too, but I knock first just in case. I lean my ear against the door and don't hear a reply. I'm not sure if he has been in the room yet, but I need to check and make sure just in case it needs to be restocked. I slip the key card in the slot and open the door. From down the hall, I hear footsteps.

"Hey, you! What are you doing there?" A gruff voice calls from down the hallway.

I assume he's a security guard, so I start to reply that

I' m part of housekeeping. I mean, I have a giant cart full of snacks and drinks. I' m also only five feet tall and not even eighty pounds. I don' t know how much of a threat this guy thinks I could be.

I look up from under my hat at two security guards walking quickly toward me. One of them is much bigger than the other. I notice he' s dressed really nice for a security guard. Actually, he' s the most handsome werewolf I' ve ever seen in my life. He' s probably six foot, six inches tall and close to two hundred fifty pounds of solid muscle with broad shoulders. He has tattoos covering his neck and the backs of his hands. His slicked?back black hair and olive completion makes his green eye look the color of a crisp Granny Smith apple. His other eye is covered with a black eye patch. The smell of coffee and dark chocolate fills the air and I' m rooted to the spot. I slowly pull my hat up from my eyes just enough to get a better look at him.

Lex is jumping wildly in my head as he pushes past the guard, "It' s him! It' s him!"

He and I say it at the same time, "Mate."

He strides up to me and roughly pushes me against the door with a low growl. I don' t think he realizes how light I

am as I get slammed a bit too hard against the solid oak. He places both hands against the door on either side of my shoulders, preventing me from escaping. He puts his face against my neck and inhales deeply. My heart is pounding in my chest. I' m feeling overwhelmed and panic is settling in. He must sense that I' m weak. He' s going to kill me before his Alpha gets a chance to do it. Shit.

"Alpha Bronx, is this omega trying to steal something?" The security guard says as he approaches.

"Get BACK!" he snarls at the guard, flashing his large wolf fangs. The guard stops in his tracks.

"Alpha?" the guard says with a confused look. Alpha? Wait, what? Alpha. This can' t be right.

"MINE!" Alpha Bronx growls.

My back is starting to feel wet. Oh crap, I' m bleeding a lot now. When he pushed me against the door, it pulled open most of the unhealed lash wounds. Now the initial adrenaline is wearing off and my back is starting to sting. The door behind my back feels slick. I try not to whimper. I don' t want to show that I am weak. I don' t want him to murder me when I just found him. Who am I kidding, there' s no way he doesn' t already know I' m a wimp.

“Kas, I can' t heal you fast enough. Hang in there! The scars make it harder. I' m trying but I feel so weak! We are losing too much blood,” Lex whimpers. She sounds far away.

Over Alpha Bronx' s shoulder, I see Luna Caroline and Alpha Graham running down the hall. Well, Alpha Graham is stumbling more than running. Beta Tate and Betas Milo and Lenora are right behind them. My head starts swimming and I feel dizzy and nauseous.

“Kas, what did you do? You insolent, child!” Luna Caroline yells. Her voice sounds far away even though she is right in front of me now.

She reaches out to slap me but Alpha Bronx snarls and grabs her hand out of the air snapping her wrist. Alpha Graham snarls back at him. I feel the edges of my vision turn black. My knees feel like jelly.

I watch as if I' m in a dream. I can' t hear anyone now even though they are all yelling. They look like they are moving in slow motion.

Alpha Graham drunkenly yanks Luna Caroline' s arm pulling her back from Alpha Bronx who is still snarling at them. The security guard is trying to separate them as Beta Tate is trying to pull Alpha Graham back. Betas Milo and Lenora take a defensive stance guarding Alpha Bronx. Sam comes up behind Alpha Graham just as he yanks on Luna Caroline. She cries out in pain. Sam hauls back and punches Alpha Graham as hard as he can.

The metallic smell of blood starts to fill there air. I' m

shaking all over. I can't tell if it is out of fear or from the blood loss. I can't feel Elexis anymore. I look around, to see if anyone else notices the smell but they are all arguing with each other. I look down and realize blood is running down my legs and the door. Splashing onto the floor in large drips. There is blood in my hair where it is touching the door. I grip Alpha Bronx's forearm. He looks back at me and his eye widens.

"Help," I whisper. I feel myself sliding down the door. Everything goes black before I hit the floor.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future
by Neener Beener chapter 8

I wake up feeling woozy, laying on my stomach in my bed. What the Hell? Was last night some sort of weird dream? I think the Alpha from Blood River attacked me. No. That doesn't seem right. As hard as I try, I can't remember the details.

I hear unfamiliar voices in the hallway but I also hear the doctor and nurse Diane. There is a large man, wearing all black, standing in the doorway with his back facing me. I realize I'm not wearing a shirt. I'm only covered by a sheet and my back is covered in bandages.

"Lex, are you there?" I ask, suddenly feeling scared. "I'm here, Kas," Her voice is soft and far away.

"Are you okay, Lex? I'm so sorry," I can feel her weakness and pain. Tears sting my eyes.

"You have nothing to apologize for, Kas. I'll be alright. You were strong. You held out as long as you could. I tried to slow down time to give you more time to get help but it made me weaker."

"Wait, that was you?"

"Well, yeah, but it didn't work the way it was supposed to. I can explain more later. I've been on guard while you were resting, listening to what is happening around us and I think you are safe. Now that you're awake, I need to rest so I can finish healing you. Don't worry, we will be back to our old selves in another couple days."

“Okay. Thank you, Lex. You’ re the best wolf a girl could ask for,” I breathe a small sigh of relief knowing that Lex is okay and that she thinks we might be safe.

“Thanks, Kas. You’ re the strongest person a wolf could ask for,” I feel her curl up in the back of my mind for a nap.

“It’ s been two days! ” A man’ s voice snarls in an angry, loud whisper, “How long do you expect me to leave her in this disgusting dungeon? I need to get her out of here as soon as possible.”

Two days?! I have been knocked out for two days?!

“I understand Alpha, but trust me, the best thing for Kas is to wake up in her own bed,” the doctor explains, “The last time this happened, waking up in the hospital wing was traumatizing for her. I know it may not be comfortable for you to be down here, but this is what she has known for thirteen years. It’ s what’ s best for her.”

“The LAST time?! This is bullshit! How could you know a pup is being abused, being forced to live in a fucking dungeon for Goddess sake and not do something about it?” A woman says angrily. I think it’ s Beta Lenora. The doctor pauses, then continues, “I understand your position, but rest assured, I didn’ t know how bad things were for her until the past few months, or I would have done something about it a long time ago.”

I turn my head toward the wall and squeeze my eyes shut, trying to ignore the voices. After the trouble I caused the other night, it’ s only a matter of time before Alpha Graham comes to the dungeon and executes me.

” It’ s time for me to change her dressings, ” I hear Nurse Diane say. She quietly walks into the room and pulls a makeshift curtain across the doorway.

I turn my head toward her, putting my finger to my mouth, and whisper, “Shhhhh. What’ s happening, Diane?”

“Kas! I’ m so glad you’ re awake, ” she looks at the doorway as she whispers back, “Let me change the dressings on your back, then I will explain.”

Diane tries to be careful while she changes the bandages but the pain is excruciating. I bite my lip so I won't whimper out loud. When she's done, she tells me I should be healed in the next day or two, then hands me a pill to take for pain. She covers me with the sheet again and tells me everything that happened after I passed out.

Alpha Bronx called on the Elder Council, who came and punished dozens of pack members for my mistreatment. When they found out Alpha Graham was the one responsible for my injuries, Alpha Bronx shifted into his wolf and almost murdered him.

Members of the Council were barely able to stop him. They stripped the titles from everyone in the Silver Moon pack and banished Alpha Graham. In support of his father, Ryan chose to leave too. I remember that no one knows what he had done to me, but I'm scared to say anything. I have no proof and he's gone now anyways.

The Council declared Silver Moon would be under their leadership until a suitable Alpha could be found. Pack members were given the option to stay or leave peacefully. They could either willingly become rogues or request asylum with other packs. About half the Silver Moon pack chose to leave. I'm shocked to hear all those changes are because of what happened to me.

"What's taking so long in there?" The guard growls from the other side of the curtain.

"Just writing up my notes. I'll be done soon," Diane calls out.

"Diane, what's going to happen to me?"

"Well, since Alpha Bronx Mason is your mate, I assume you're going to go to Blood River to be their Luna," she smiles hesitantly, "I think the better question would be, what happens to Silver Moon."

My mind starts to churn with worry. What she said doesn't make sense. How can Alpha Bronx be my mate?

He saw me pass out, he knows I' m a weak wolf. He' s going to take me back to his pack and kill me. He doesn' t want a weak wolf as his Luna. I have to figure out how to escape.

I quickly feel the pill taking effect and close my eyes. I can worry about my future when I wake up.

I dream about running through a forest at night. It feels so real. The cold air bites at my skin. There is snow on the ground leaving a powdery path under my feet as I scurry through the brush.

A large gray wolf is chasing me, nipping at my heels but it' s not able to catch me. I run until I get to the edge of a

cliff. I look down and see the river below, full of blood and overflowing with the melting snow making it rage out of control.

I turn to find the wolf cornering me on the cliff. He has a whip in his mouth. He drops it to the ground and growls at me.

" Please! Please don' t do this! " I cry for mercy. The wind swirls around us, chilling me to the bone, as the wolf lowers his head in preparation to attack.

I scream as he lunges at me. I' m still screaming as I sit up in bed. I can' t stop as I clutch the quilt to my chest.

I can feel tears already streaming down my face. I' m shaking all over. The sounds of my screams are blood?curdling as they reverberate on the walls of my room but

I still can' t stop.

Alpha Bronx comes rushing into the room and places his large hands on my shoulders. Sparks of electricity overwhelm me where he touches my bare skin. He is breathing heavily and I can feel his hands trembling.

As I look into the solid black eye of his wolf, an unfamiliar sensation washes over me: he' s different from Alphas I' ve had run-ins with before. I can sense his worry, anger, sorrow and even fear as he looks back at me.

But why? Why would he feel those things when he looks

at me? Could he actually care?

No. No way. It must be my hysterical imagination. I' m just a slave, a weak wolf. Alpha Bronx kills wolves like me, everyone says so. Nobody loves me. Nobody ever will.

“Kas, what' s wrong? What happened? “ His voice is deep and gruff. He looks at me with a furrowed brow.

My nightmare is still fresh in my mind. It felt so real, like it was an actual memory, not just a dream.

Thinking about the wolf that was chasing me, there is only one thought that comes to mind. Between sobs, I blurt out, “I want to live! Please! Don' t hurt me! “ Alpha Bronx lets go of my shoulders and backs up a step looking confused. He is shaking his head no.

Beta Lenora pulls on his arm, making him back up, while Nurse Diane steps forward to check on me.

“Kas, you' re okay. It' s Nurse Diane. Talk to me. What happened?” she asks soothingly while she checks my pulse.

I don' t know how to tell her about my nightmare. I just know I don' t want the wolf from my dream to hurt me. I grab her arms and beg, “Help me, Diane! I need you! Please, please don' t let him hurt me! “

Diane soothes me but looks startled. She looks at the doctor, then at Alpha Bronx.

Alpha Bronx rubs his hands on his face and starts pacing. Beta Lenora is whispering quietly to him.

The doctor tentatively steps forward now, watching Alpha Bronx from the corner of his eyes, ” Kas, it' s alright. No one is going to hurt you. You are safe. ”

He rubs my shoulder soothingly with one hand and shines a little light in my eyes with the other.

A fresh round of images from my dream flash in my mind, making me shake violently all over and I can' t stop. I can' t speak and it feels like my brain is being scrambled. I try to suck in a breath of air but my body won' t let it fill my lungs. What is happening to me? I see Alpha Bronx looking at me. He looks so angry. I pull my

blanket to my face and try to muffle my cries.

“Enough of this bullshit. Lenora, get the cars ready. We’re leaving. NOW, ” Alpha Bronx says with a disgusted look.

Beta Lenora rushes out of the room.

“Alpha, please, give us more time to stabilize her,” the doctor tries to put himself between Alpha Bronx and me. That is apparently a big mistake.

The Alpha pushes him out of the way with a dangerous growl and scoops me up like a baby, wrapping the quilt tightly around my body. He carries me as if I weigh nothing. I can’t stop shaking, no matter how hard I try. I feel hot tears running down my face. I start whimpering. I want to try to plead for my life but I suddenly can’t form a coherent thought. My mind feels like a radio only getting pieces of the signal. Everything starts to fade into static until I have no concept of reality.

“Lex, I need you!” I call out to her in my mind.

“I’m here, Kas. I’m trying but this is all coming from your mind. I can’t heal your mind. Stay with me!

Focus on my voice, okay? We can get through this together, ” she whimpers.

In the distance, I can hear voices around me. I try to listen. Anything to ground me so my mind doesn’t float away but it feels like I’m underwater.

Beta Lenora’s face comes into view now. The bright sun is behind her, making it difficult to see her features. She climbs in the back in the car, holding me like a baby across her lap, “It’s going to be okay, Kas. We just need to get you back to Blood River.

Alpha Bronx knows what to do.”

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 9

Bronx’s POV

As soon as my guard Tyree told me an omega was trying to get in my suite, I left the party and rushed upstairs. My wolf, Saint, urged me to hurry.

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“Something’s wrong. We need to get to her now,” he growls.

I don’t have any pack secrets in the suite but that doesn’t mean I want a stranger going in without my permission. As we turn the corner, we see a scrawny little girl at the end of the hall struggling to push open the heavy door of my suite.

The scent of fresh rain and lilacs wafts in the air, somehow making me feel less angry.

The girl looks up at us from under her baseball cap when Tyree yells at her. I can’t see her face from the shadow of the hat, but I don’t need to. I’m immediately drawn to her. My heart almost skips a beat.

“Mate,” Saint cries out, taking over control of my body. He strides over and roughly pushes her against the door. I feel my fangs extending as I deeply breathe in her scent.

“Saint, don’t you DARE mark her,” I warn, pulling on his consciousness, trying to regain control. He growls, but pulls back slightly.

At that moment all Hell breaks loose. Saint immediately acts to protect his newly found mate, resulting in the Silver Moon Luna ending up with a broken wrist and the drunk Alpha getting punched by one of his own people. My pack members put themselves in the middle to prevent me from attacking someone.

During the commotion, I feel a small tap on my arm and a sweet little voice whisper, “Help.”

I turn to see the girl looking up at me. The color of her eyes instantly shocks me. They’re as purple as U V lights. Her hair is an odd sparkly gray color. I feel a pang of pain when I notice how sickly gaunt and pale she is. As I take in her features, her eyes roll back in her head and she passes out.

A familiar scent hits my nose as I catch her falling body. Blood. My hands and the door behind her are covered in it. Saint didn’t claw her. What the Hell happened?

“Hospital wing! NOW!” I roared, stopping the Silver Moon pack members in their tracks.

“What are we going to do, Bronx?” Lenora asks. She is sitting in the back of the SUV holding my mate on her lap during a fuel stop. She wipes some stray hairs out of Kas’ s sleeping face. I take the last drag of my cigarette and stamp it out on the ground.

“I don’ t know, but we’ ll figure it out. We’ re her family now. She’ s obviously not the future Luna we were expecting but I don’ t care. She’ s mine and no one will ever hurt her again.”

Lenora and I switch places and I finally get to hold my mate in my arms. I breathe in her amazing fresh rain and lilac scent. Having her close to me gives me a sense of calm I have not felt in years, if ever. I have waited for so long to find her. I almost lost hope. I will treasure her for the rest of our lives.

“You gonna be okay?” Lenora asks.

“Yeah. I’ ll tell the driver to pull over if there’ s a problem,

” I reassure her before she closes the door.

I look closer at the beautiful girl. There are small scars at her jawline and near her ears, but in my eyes, they only add to her stunning beauty. I take a few of her silver hairs in my fingers. It’ s like nothing I’ ve ever seen; like a

wig of silver filament but it isn’ t a wig. It is just how her hair is. Her breath hitches as she sighs in her sleep. I tuck the hairs behind her ear and pull her closer to me. The doctors are ready and waiting when we get to our packhouse. They start by asking Kas questions about her medical history but she is clearly not in any shape to give them answers. She flinches and shivers at the noises and talking around her but doesn’ t look to see where the sounds are coming from. Getting no information from her, they decide to move on to her physical examination. The nurses shoo me out of the room so they can get Kas changed.

Once they change her into a clean hospital gown, they check her vitals. Her heart is racing even though she is sitting still. The stress of everything is too much for her, so they decide to sedate her to finish the exam. Once she's asleep, they roll her on her stomach, exposing her back and immediately call Lenora and me back into the room.

One of the nurses is standing in the corner crying, being consoled by another nurse. I approach the bed and look at my mate's back in horror. I can't remember seeing something so gruesome in my life. Her wolf has mostly healed her, so there are only a few open wounds but every inch of the rest of her back is covered red, raw scars on top of old healed scars, on top of even older scars from being whipped over the years. The doctor tells me it is the same on the butt and backs of her thighs as well.

Lenora gasps and puts her hand to her mouth, gripping my forearm with the other.

Saint rages in my head at the sight. I shake in anger and ball my hands into fists. I let out a low growl that shakes the room causing the medical staff to take a step back and bow their heads, exposing their necks in submission. If I knew where Connors had gone, I would go right now and destroy him. How could anyone do this to another werewolf? Let alone a child. A child who was under their care. Part of their own pack.

"Bronx, " Lenora whispers calmly, "I don't know what you are thinking right now but your priority needs to be Kas and only Kas. Nothing else matters, no one else matters. Don't let yourself get distracted by revenge. Your mission is to be here for her and help her get healthy. "

Lenora isn't afraid of me like everyone else is. She always knows just what to say. I 'm grateful to have her by my side right now.

"Doctor, finish whatever tests you need to finish and we can have the rest this conversation in your office. Make her as comfortable as possible, " I order, walking away

before he can answer.

I leave the packhouse and walk until I get to the treeline. I roar into the woods, releasing some of the built up anger. The birds stop chirping and even the crickets are silent. I undress and shift to let Saint out for a run. He needs to blow off steam so I can focus. Lenora mind links me when the doctor is ready for in He tells us there is nothing they can do about the scars, so Kas being underweight and malnourished are his biggest concerns. They can't tell exactly how old she is, except that she is at least seventeen. Her fast healing indicates her wolf is awake and trying to keep her alive.

"Find that rogue Alpha and murder him," Saint growls.

"Saint, Lenora's right. We need to be here with our mate. I'm not spending another second of my life thinking about that asshole if I can help it," I respond, trying not to let Saint's anger influence me again, "Our focus needs to be on her now."

"Fine, but if I ever even catch a whiff of his scent, he's dead," Saint snarls, getting in the final word.

The doctors can't account for Kas's unusual eye or hair color. They say it could be from malnutrition but not likely. Every blood test comes back clean.

There are a few unusual genetic markers but she is a pure werewolf, not a hybrid. Not that it matters, but we want to make sure she is getting the correct treatment for whatever type of creature she may be.

They keep her overnight for evaluation but then let me take her upstairs. I carry her to the suite next to mine, so she can have some privacy until she is comfortable.

Lenora and I get her settled in the bed. We give her the green and gray blanket from her old room to help comfort her. She sleeps for three days.

Occasionally she wakes up whimpering and confused. We feed her applesauce or pudding, but she only eats a bite or two before falling back asleep.

The doctor checks on her everyday and says she can sleep as long as she wants. She's been through a lot of

trauma and it is her mind's way of protecting her. I only leave her side to freshen up and get food from the kitchen. When I'm not there, Lenora sits by her side. It's the fourth day. I'm cutting some fruit in the kitchenette, so there is something to eat in case she wakes up. I hear some stirring from the bed.

"H—Hello?" a soft voice calls.

"You're awake!" I call out, so she knows she's not alone. I don't want to scare her after everything she has been through. I put down the pineapple and walk around the corner. Relief floods over me when I see Kas sitting at the edge of the bed.

She looks startled when she sees me. She tries to stand up but falls to the floor and starts to scoot backwards away from me.

"Put the giant knife down, dummy! You're scaring her!" Saint yells.

"Oh shit! I didn't realize I was holding it," I set it down and kneel on the floor in front of her, hoping it will be less intimidating for her if I'm closer to her eye level.

"Kas, it's okay. No one is going to hurt you. You're safe now," I reach my hand out but the look on her face becomes more desperate, so I pull it back.

As I am pulling my hand away, I notice her eyes flash black. Without warning, she thrusts her palm out toward my face and slams it into my nose. There is a loud crack as my nose breaks and blood gushes out.

Her wolf broke my nose?! What the Hell?!

"Arrghhh!" I put my hands to my face, waiting for the pain to fade while Saint heals me.

"I knew she would be feisty!" Saint chuckles.

As the blood dries, I look up to an empty room. Where did she go?

"Kas?" I ask out loud. I hear a little growl coming from under the solid oak bed frame. I bend down and look. Sure enough, I see her glowing purple eyes looking at me. She has positioned herself so there is no way I could possibly reach her without lifting the whole bed.

“I think I fucked up,” I say to Saint. “Yeah. Well said, dummy.”

Kas’ s POV

I wake up in a large comfortable bed. I take in my surroundings. The room around me is light and airy. The furniture is mahogany and the linens are made of silk. I’ m definitely not in the Silver Moon packhouse. I’ m not in a hospital room either.

Uhh...where am I? I need to think. I remember Beta Lenora’ s scent. Also, coffee and dark chocolate. I make myself think back further. I had a nightmare. It felt so real. Nurse Diane was trying to help me. I was in a car. None of the details form in my mind. So frustrating.

“Lex, are you here with me?”

“I am. Are you feeling better? You really scared me, Kas.”

“Yeah, I feel better. Do you know where we are?” “We’ re safe now. We’ re in the Blood River packhouse.

“Blood River?!? Lex, how is that safe?”

“Well, no one has tried to kill us yet. So we have that going for us. “

“I suppose. Is Beta Lenora here somewhere?”

“She must be. Let’ s get something to eat then we can go find her, ” she assures me. I slide to the edge of the bed and try to stand but my legs give out.

“Damn, I’ m still too weak, ” I murmur under my breath. From around the corner, I hear someone moving. “H?Hello?” I call out quietly. My voice is dry and hoarse.

Alpha Bronx appears from around the corner with a huge knife in his hand. My heart clenches. If I scream, he’ s just going to kill me faster. I have to get away. I try to stand again but fall. I scramble on the floor, trying to escape. I don’ t know where I’ m going, I just have to get away. I look up and he is on the floor right in front of me.

“Lex, they tricked us! He’ s going to kill us!” I cry out.

“We are a warrior, not a wimp, Kas! Hit him! ” Lex growls.

WHAT?! “ Clearly, she has lost her mind. I can’ t hit an

Alpha wolf.

“HIT. HIM, “ she says more forcefully. “Lex, he’ ll kill me!
“

“Ugh. Fine. I’ m taking control, “ she gripes.
Without warning, I’ m pulled back from my own
consciousness and watch as Lex thrusts the heel of m y
palm into Alpha Bronx’ s nose making blood spurt
everywhere. As soon as he’ s distracted, I squeeze my
body under the bed, getting as close to the middle as
possible. Lex moves back and I am in control again.
I hear Alpha Bronx call my name, making a growl to
escape my mouth.

I don’ t think so, mister Alpha wolf. It isn’ t going to be
so

easy to kill me.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 10

Bronx’ s POV

After about fifteen minutes of failed attempts to try to
convince Kas to come out from under the bed, I call
Lenora and a nurse to help coax her out. I go to my room
to shower and change while they do that.

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Lenora meets me out in the hallway before I can go back
into Kas’ s suite.

“Is she alright? “ I ask, searching Lenora’ s eyes for the
truth.

“Yeah, but that whole thing exhausted her. She is back in
bed sleeping, “ she admits, shoving her hands in her
pockets.

“Bronx, I know I told you to be here and be with Kas, but
maybe you should go get some sleep yourself, ” She
looks at me sympathetically, “I can’ t believe you were so
distracted that she was able to break your nose. You
have to take care of yourself if you’ re going to take care
of her. ”

I sigh in frustration and rub my hands over my face, “I’ m

fine, Lenora. “

“No. You’ re not fine. An eighty pound she-wolf just broke Bronx Mason’ s nose. Does that sound fine to you?, “ her tone is forceful, “I’ ll stay here for a few hours. You go get

sleep and get your head straight. “

“Fine. But if anything else happens to her, Leni- “

“It won’ t. Now get the Hell out of here. Go get some sleep. You look like shit.”

I go back to my room and lay down. I take off my eye patch and rub my hands over my face again.

“Do you think our mate will be okay?” Saint whimpers.

“I hope so, buddy. I hope so. I haven’ t even had a proper conversation with her and I just want to spend every moment with her.”

“Yeah. What are the chances the Moon Goddess would mate us with someone else who has scars?” he muses.

“She does everything for a reason,” I mindlessly touch my fingers on the place where my left eye used to be.

” I’ m not tired, Bronx. Let me out. I wanna go for a run, ” Saint sighs.

“Yeah, that’ s a good idea. Mind if Ghost and Crusher come along?”

“The more the merrier.”

We run at breakneck speed until we get to the river. We shift back to our human forms, grab some shorts from the lockbox at the edge of the woods, and sit on the river bank. The river has a high iron content which makes the water turn red with rust. It looks like blood, hence the Blood River pack name. Not nearly as ominous as the rumors would have you think.

“So break it down for me, Bronx. What’ s her deal?”

Reggie asks.

I light a cigarette and explain everything I am able to piece together from Lenora, the Silver Moon pack, what happened while I was at their packhouse, and what the doctors said.

“So that’ s it. She was a slave. She didn’ t even want to be

referred to as an omega, according to Lenora.

Silver Moon's doctor said she has no family. The Alpha and Luna and others in the pack have been abusing her mentally and physically for years."

Thinking about her mistreatment still boils my blood.

"Other than the doctor, who was completely insane and the nurse who Kas seemed to trust, there wasn't a single wolf in the pack that the Elders spoke to who had not either hit her or said shitty things to her."

"Lenora said her scars are intense," Milo says quietly after a minute of silence.

"Yeah, like Freddie Krueger intense. Our doctors called the marks on her back 'keloid scars'. They are thick and raised up like big bumps. Usually only humans get them. They said it's because that fucker used wolfs bane on whatever he was whipping her with and it made it more difficult to heal. Imagine how damn strong you have to be to go through abuse like that and live. She was just a kid. She didn't have anyone, not even her wolf to help her through any of it," I rub my hands on my face and look at them, "And those are just the physical scars. The emotional scars, who knows how deep they go. The brain can be a twisted place."

"We know man, we have been through it with you and we will be right by your side for this as well," Reggie claps his hand on my shoulder, "We're always here for ya man...and your mate."

"Thanks, man," I force a smile.

We all sit for a while longer, taking in nature while I finish my cigarette.

"Bronx, I'm not trying to add more pressure but you need to talk to the Elders. Find out what to do if she isn't well enough to become Luna. You only have nine months left," Milo says.

"Summer Solstice. Don't remind me, man. I know. Let's see if we can get her out of her current state first. I don't know anything about her, only that she is my mate.

Once we are sure she even wants the pressure of being a

Luna Regent. Then we can think about the pack' s future.”

“Well, that and putting up with your dumb ass, Bronxy, ” Milo says with a smirk, breaking the serious tone of our conversation.

“Fuck you, Milo, ” I smirk back.

We sit around and talk for a while longer before we all shift into our wolves and head back to the packhouse.

I get a quick shower and go directly to Kas' s room.

“Nothing to report, Alpha, ” Lenora stands and salutes me.

“Knock it off, Lenora. How is she?” I ask, looking at my tiny sleeping mate. Why does she have to be so tiny and fragile? It makes her even more adorable.

” Honestly, she has been tossing and turning and even whimpering a bit in her sleep, ” Lenora puts her hand on my forearm, ” Bronx, you should lay down with her.

Having her mate next to her will help calm her down.

Trust me. Milo and I are most content when we have physical contact. Even if it' s just holding hands.”

A few things to know about me, I' m twenty-four years old. I run the largest werewolf pack in all of North America. In the olden days, I would' ve been considered the king of the northwestern United States and southern Canadian regions. Nowadays, I' m called an ‘Alpha Regent’ , which means I' m responsible for all the smaller packs in my region. We haven' t been in a monarchy for centuries. Each pack has an Alpha and Luna who enforce the laws for their pack. If there' s a problem, I get involved. If it' s a big problem, we have a Council of Elders who get involved in the situation.

I' ve fought in two werewo lf wars. I declined to take the title of General and fought in the ranks with the rest of the militia. Yes, my wolf Saint and I have killed werewolves. We' ve also killed vampires, witches, and even a werebear. I ‘in not proud of it but death is inevitable in war. Maybe it' s my military background, but I ‘in strictly business when I ‘ in in public. Maybe more often than I should be. It' s earned me a reputation of

being...well...I guess you could say 'not so nice.' I do have to admit, I can be a bit of a hothead. It's not as bad as it used to be though. When I'm with my family or my ranked members, I've learned to relax a bit.

With all that being said, I haven't had time to hold a girl's hand other than a handshake since I was sixteen years old, let alone lay next to a girl. My palms felt a little sweaty at the thought of laying next to Kas. She is the most beautiful wolf I have ever laid eyes on. I'm also a little worried that Saint won't control himself.

"Don't put this on me, buddy. Don't get me wrong, I'm excited to meet her wolf, but I'm not gonna jump an unconscious girl, for Goddess sake!" He chimes in.

"Come on, Bronx. You had no problem holding her in the car ride here," Lenora justifies when she sees me looking uncomfortable.

"Well, I mean, that was different, ya know. She was wrapped up in a giant quilt, not in my bed wearing my favorite t-shirt but, uh, okay. Yeah, uh, I'll give it a try after you leave," trying to play it cool but failing miserably.

Lenora rolls her eyes at me and heads out the door.

"Good luck, Casanova!" she calls as the door closes behind her.

I stand awkwardly next to the bed and clear my throat as I rock back and forth on my heels. I'm not sure how to go about this.

"Dude. Start by sitting down. You're making me nervous," Saint scolds.

"Sit. Yeah, good idea. Uh, okay..." I look around as I wipe my sweaty hands on my pants and grab a chair from the kitchen table. I move it to the bedside and slowly reach out for Kas's hand.

"It's not a live grenade, it's just our mate's hand. Stop being a weenie," Saint teases.

"Knock it off, dude. I'm not trying to scare her again, I growl.

I have always been taught that you need to ask a

woman's permission to touch her, unless she is trying to kill you, then all bets are off. Right now seems like an ask permission situation, but there is no one to ask. My mate seems to be in an endless sleep.

"Kas, " I whisper softly, "um, Lenora thinks it would be a

good idea if I laid down with you, but I don't want to do that. I mean, I do but I want to be sure that's what you want first. So, um, if it's alright, I 'in just going to hold your hand for a while. Hopefully it will help you somehow? I don't know. Just please understand, I'm doing my best to control myself here. I want to do what's best for you. It would be a lot easier to do that if you woke up and told me exactly what that is."

Just as she has for the last three days, she lays deathly still. I take a deep breath. Here goes nothing.

Little zaps of electricity hit me as our fingertips touch. She sighs deeply with a slight whine and turns her head toward me. I almost pull my fingers back, but I see her face look more relaxed than it has in the week that I've known her. Very slowly, I slide my hand into hers, letting the sparks flow between us. Her hand in mine feels like the most natural thing in the world. I pull our joined hands to my lips and place a small kiss on her hand. Her scent of fresh rain and lilacs overwhelms my senses and makes me relaxed too. I lay my head against the mattress and just watch her sleep.

"I'm sorry I scared you earlier but I'm here now, Kas and wild werebears couldn't drag me away from you, " I whisper. I pull her hand toward me and press it to my cheek.

I haven't slept more than an hour at a time in almost a week but I can't bring myself to look away from her. I sit there and watch her sleep, with her soft hand against my cheek. I don't know how much time passes before my eyes feel heavier and heavier and sleep takes me away.

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 11

Kas' s POV

I wake up to see it' s nightttime. I 'm pretty sure the bed I' m in is

the softest bed in the world. The scent of coffee and dark chocolate fills my senses and for the first time in forever, I feel

completely relaxed. Happy little sparks shoot around my body.

I

realize I am cradled in a large man' s arms, like a kid with a teddy

bear. He' s so tall that I feel like a little kid next to him.

My face is

against his t -shirt, breathing in his intoxicating scent.

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I' m too short to look up to see his face from my position, but I

already know it' s Alpha Bronx Mason. I start to feel panic try to

rise in my chest, but Lex gently pushes it back down.

Enjoy this moment, Kas, ” she whispers when she feels me starting to struggle, “He is your mate. He isn' t going to hurt

you.”

“We don' t even know him, Lex. He could be dangerous. “

“Oh, shush it. He' s not dangerous while he' s sleeping. He doesn' t

have a knife or anything. Just relax. Please, give this a chance. “

I take a deep breath letting his scent calm me. He' s softly snoring, so I know he isn' t going to catch me staring at him.

He' s

so muscular that his t-shirt stretches tight against his broad chest. Now that he' s in a t-shirt, I see his arms are covered with

tattoos just like his neck and the backs of his hands. I try to

adjust my position so I can get a better look at his face. I want to

see if he is wearing his eye patch.

Okay, so I actually want to see what's under the eye patch.

What

can I say? I'm curious. As I move, he rolls over on his side toward me. I 'm pretty sure his heavy arms are going to crush me.

I tap on his forearm softly to wake him up or at least get him to

roll back off of me. It works but not the way I am hoping because his eye slowly opens, then he jolts up, and falls off the bed with a

hard crash. I look over the side of the bed, wincing, and realize

he landed on a chair, smashing it to bits.

"I -I' m so sorry. I fell asleep. I don' t remember getting in bed. I -

I...didn' t...I..." he stammers as he speaks. He looks at me with eye

as wide as a saucer.

"A-are you okay, Alpha B-bronx?" I ask with wide eyes of my own. My voice is dry and scratchy, "I didn' t mean to startle you."

He looks up at me from the floor. He' s breathing hard and his hand is gripping his chest.

"Oh, thank the Goddess, " Recognition that I am looking back at

him finally hits him, "I' m so glad you finally snapped out of it!"

I look at him confused as he pulls himself up and kneels on the

floor beside the bed. He turns on the nightstand lamp so we can

see each other better.

"Kas, you scaring me out of a dead sleep, is the best thing that' s

happened to me this week. How do you feel?"

I pause, trying to decide how I feel, "Thirsty."

"Okay, stay right there. I'll get you water," he scrambles up and

pushes the pieces of the broken chair out of the way. He quickly goes around the corner and comes back with a glass of water and

a straw. He sits on the edge of the bed and watches me drink water like I'm a circus attraction.

I finally put the glass down on the nightstand and clear my throat. It feels much better now.

"Do you want more?"

"No, thank you," I smile as I try to avert his gaze. He is looking

at me with anticipation. I'm not sure what else to say. I might as

well figure out what is going on.

"Alpha, if I may ask, where am I?"

He looks at me with a relieved smile, "You're in the Blood River

warehouse. In the suite next to my apartment."

"How long have I been here?" "About four days."

"Oh. When are you sending me back to Silver Moon?" My voice is tiny, trying to fight back tears. I look down letting my hair

cover my face so he can't see. Now that I'm awake, he's either

sending me back or keeping me prisoner before he kills me. Right?

"Back to Silver Moon? No, Kas. You're staying here with- Wait.

You want to go back to Silver Moon?" He looks really confused and kind of sad.

"I -I, I'm - I mean - I don't want to stay here to be a prisoner

and I don't want to die, Alpha Bronx. I would rather be a slave," I almost can't hear my own voice.

"Prisoner? DIE? Goddess no, Kas," he sounds shocked. I look up

to see he has an alarmed look on his face.

“I want you to stay here with me but I can’ t force you to,”
he

reaches to take my hand but stops himself and pulls it back
when

he sees me flinch at the movement.

“Y-you aren’ t going to kill me?” I’ m trying to choke back
tears but

I can feel them stinging my eyes.

“What?! Why would you think that? You’ re my mate! ” He says
with disbelief.

“Alpha Graham told me you kill weak wolves. I ‘m a weak
wolf, ”

hot tears staining my face. That’ s it. I told him. If he
didn’ t know

before, he knows now. I’ m done for.

He looks at me, mouth hanging open. I can’ t tell what he is
thinking but I feel ashamed and hang my head to avoid eye
contact.

I watch him raise his hand toward my face. I flinch back before
he can slap me.

“Oh Kas, Baby, I’ m not going to hurt you. No one is ever going
to

hurt you again, ” he says gently, “May I please touch your
beautiful face? I can’ t stand to see you cry. I just want to
wipe

these tears away.”

Wait. Did he just call me Baby? Did he ask permission to touch
me? I’ m so confused.

I look up to see his green eye boring into my soul. He looks
like

he’ s in pain, it’ s almost like I can feel it. I nod slightly.

I can’ t

stand seeing him like that. I have heard people talk about the
mate pull and the mate bond before. Is this it? Wanting a
stranger to wipe my tears away? I mean, I guess I don’ t mind
him touching me, it makes me feel calm.

My muscles tense up as he gently places his giant hand on the

side of my face and wipes the tears away, then does the same to the other side. Tingles form where he touches me making the tense muscles relax immediately. Lex purrs in my head. I' m safe, I finally realize. No one has wanted to comfort me in my entire life. I can' t help myself, I crawl into his lap and put my arms around him. He breathes a sigh of relief and folds his arms around me in return. He puts his chin on top of my head and strokes my hair. I feel his warmth enveloping me and I swear I can see a light purple aura around the edges of our bodies. Alpha Bronx doesn' t seem to notice. It must be my magination. I can hear Lex purring louder now. ” No one will ever hurt you again, Kas. No one, ” he reassures me as he pulls me tighter against his body.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 12

We stay like this for a while until he says, “How about we get you something to eat? You haven' t had anything solid in almost a week. “

I pull away from our comfortable position and think about it. Dear reader, Plz Bookmark this website for the next update “Yeah, I' m pretty hungry, ” I agree. I don' t actually feel hungry, but I don' t want to make him upset with me either. Not when things are starting to go so well.

“Alright, I' ll make you a little snack. Then we can get the kitchen to bring something up for you. “

“Thank you, I' m just going to freshen up real quick, if that' s

okay? “

“Of course. The bathroom is through that door, ” he points to a

door at the back of the suite.

He helps me get out of his lap and I make my way to the bathroom. I look in the mirror and realize I’ m a mess.

My face is visibly dirty and there is still some dried blood in my

tangled hair. I look down and see my hands and arms are just as

gross as my face. I sniff the shirt I’ m wearing. I smell terrible.

UGH! How embarrassing!

I wash up at the sink as quickly as I can. At the very least to get

the dirt off my face, arms, and hands. I don’ t have a hair brush

or a hair tie, so I try just running my fingers through to smooth it

out. It ends up looking worse. Oh my Goddess! The hottest guy on the planet is just outside the door. Of course I look like a feral

child! I swallow my pride and head out to the kitchen.

Alpha Bronx is standing in the kitchen cutting berries with a much

smaller knife than he had the last time he was in the kitchen.

“Feel better?” he asks, not looking up from what he is doing.

“Umm, better enough for now, I guess, ” I reply shyly.

He smiles as he looks at me and nods. He doesn’ t seem to notice my messy appearance.

“Umm, just out of curiosity, did you call me ‘Baby’ earlier?” I lean

against the counter and ask as he prepares the bowl of fruit salad

for me.

A guilty look crosses his face and he rubs his hand on the back of

his neck, “Uh, yeah, I guess I did. Is that alright? “

“I think so. I just wasn’ t expecting it. “
He has me sit at the breakfast bar of the kitchenette and puts
the
bowl of fruit in front of me. I smile as I take a piece of
strawberry. It tastes amazing. I eat more fruit when all of
a
sudden, my stomach feels like it is in a weird knot.

“Oww! ” I push the bowl away and grab my stomach.

“What is it, Baby? What’ s wrong?” Alpha Bronx comes around
the
counter and kneels in front of me.

“My stomach, ” I grimace.

His eyes glaze over as he mind links someone. A moment later,
a
doctor comes to the room. He gets there so fast that I wonder
if

he was waiting outside the apartment. He starts checking my
pulse, looking in my eyes and mouth, and asking me questions.
He tells us the fruit is too much for my stomach right now.
I need

to eat bland foods and work my way up to exciting foods, you
know, like fruit. Toast with butter and crackers until I can
slowly
tolerate more.

“I ‘m glad to see you up and about, Luna, ” he says with
a smile
as he packs up his bag.

My head snaps up. He just called me Luna. He pats my hand and
tells Alpha Bronx to call him if there is anything more. The
Alpha
takes some Ritz crackers out of the pantry, arranges them on
a
plate, and hands the plate to me.

“Bon appétit, ” he says with a shrug. “Alpha Bronx, that
doctor
called me Luna. ”

“Okay, first things first. It’ s just Bronx. My name is Bronx
Mason.

You, of all people, never need to call me Alpha. Got it?" He says

with a smirk. It's kinda a s*xxy look.

"Okay, Bronx," I emphasize his name, playfully, "What's the second thing?"

"The doctor was right to call you Luna. You're my mate and as

long as I don't completely fuck things up between us, one day you'll be Luna of my pack." I can feel my face flush.

"Now eat your crackers, Baby. I slaved away all day, on them," he dramatically puts the back of his hand on his forehead. I giggle, looking at the little plate.

"I love that sound," he leans against the counter, putting his chin in his hand.

I smile at him before clearing my throat, "Um, Bronx. I was wondering if anyone picked up my clothes before we left Silver Moon? I have a pair of leggings and a couple of t-shirts."

"What? You don't like my favorite shirt?" He looks offended.

"I-I 'm sorry. I j-just meant..." I stammer trying to figure out how to backtrack.

"Kas, it's okay. I'm just teasing. It was a bad joke. I'm the one

who should apologize. Not you. I'll get Lenora. Hopefully, she has

some clothes that fit you. We'll get you to the mall tomorrow so

you can buy new clothes. I'll be right back," he caresses my

cheek lightly, then leaves the room.

Crap. I can't go to the mall. I have no money. Obviously, he doesn't know that.

"Lex, is this real or are we having some kind of bizarre dream? Like, are we going to wake up in my bed in the dungeon?"

"No, I don't think this is a dream, Kas. I can feel his wolf. I can't

wait to meet him! And Bronx called you Baby. So romantic just like always! ” Lex says excitedly.

I munch on the crackers, and listen to Lex gush over our mate. Always? I’ m not sure what she means by that but I just munch on

the crackers and chat with her.

Without warning, Lenora barges into the room with Bronx close behind her. They both plop giant piles of clothes on the bed.

“Well, you’ re about eight inches shorter than me and from what

the doc says about sixty pounds lighter. Soooo… I brought my niece Elle’ s clothes,” Lenora says with a shrug.

I pick up a few things. There are a lot of neon- colored leggings and shirts with kittens and unicorns.

“Sorry, she’ s ten,” she cringes.

“Uhh, it’ s okay. There must be something in here I can wear, ” I

shrug. I don’ t want to admit the clothes are a lot nicer than anything I’ ve owned before.

I find a pair of jeggings and a white t-shirt that says ‘ Girl Power’

in sparkly pink letters. Good enough for me. There’ s a couple of

pairs of clean underwear but no bra. Not that I have much of a

chest but I do prefer to wear one. I keep digging until I find a

spaghetti strap undershirt in the pile. It will have to do.

Aside

from smelling like I have a dead animal stowed away, Bronx’ s shirt is huge on me, it comes down to my knees like a dress, so

anything is an improvement.

“Don’ t worry, Kas. There are some stores with petite sections at

the mall. We will find adult clothes for you, ” Lenora reassures

me.

I feel myself flush with embarrassment, “About that. I -I, um, I can’ t go to the mall.”

“Why not?” Bronx and Lenora speak at the same time.

“I don’ t have money for shopping. Alpha Graham never paid me.

Getting to live in the packhouse was my payment, ” I say, looking

at the ground, red-faced.

” Oh, Baby, you don’ t have to worry about money, ” Bronx pulls

out his wallet and hands me a black credit card.

“I -I, what -, ” my eyes go wide. I have never been to a mall, let

alone used a credit card. I barely know this guy and he is just handing me his?

Lenora grabs the card out of Bronx’ s hand, “I’ ll handle that.”

Bronx groans and rolls his eyes as Lenora puts his card in her pocket.

“Um, Lenora, can I talk to you for a second...umm, alone? ”

I shift

my eyes away from Bronx’ s gaze. He doesn’ t ask why I need to

talk to her, he just squeezes my hand and steps out of the room.

“What’ s up, Kas? Everything alright?”

“Oh, yes. Yes. It’ s just...before you leave, can you help me wash

my hair and back? Everything is still sore and umm...I haven’ t had a proper bath in literally months. I don’ t want Bronx to think

I don’ t take care of myself.”

“Of course, Kas. I’ d be happy to, “ she smiles warmly.

We go into the bathroom and she runs a bath for me but I’ m hesitant to take off my clothes.

” It’ s okay, Kas. I saw your scars when you were in the hospital

wing, ” She has tears in her eyes as she speaks.

“I’ m sorry for everything you had to go through that caused them. You should know that in this pack, from the time we are very young, we’ re taught that scars are actually a sign of strength. It means you’ ve survived something your wolf couldn’ t

help you through. You had to endure it on your own.

” I can’ t even begin to imagine everything you’ ve been through,

Kas. I have so much respect for you, as does Bronx. You’ ve gone

through things that no one should ever have to endure and you did it alone...for years. Your wolf wasn’ t even awake to support

you through any of it. The mental fortitude that must have taken is unreal. To me, you are a superhero. “

She shakes her head and pauses as she composes herself. She wipes a tear from her eye and sniffs.

” Kas, if you choose to stay with Bronx as his mate and I really hope you do, I will be proud to call you my Luna and my sister. So will the rest of the pack, when they hear your story. You’ re the

perfect example of what we’ re taught growing up. Those scars don’ t show a weakness you should be ashamed of. They show strength you should be proud of.”

Man, does she have a way with words. Suddenly, I am not self conscious anymore. I undress and she helps me get in the hot, bubbly tub. The water almost comes up to my shoulders, so I’ m pretty covered. The water feels so good against my skin.

” I put in some oatmeal bath in the water to help soothe your skin, ” she smiles.

” Thanks. It feels amazing. The only time I have ever gotten a bath is when I was in the hospital wing at Silver Moon. Unless you count the times I got pushed into the pool at the packhouse, ” I say, adding, “Oh, but don’ t worry the pool isn’ t

that deep. “

Lenora’ s face looks concerned but she doesn’ t say anything.

She lets me soak in the relaxing water for a bit as we get to know each other. She can't believe I've never seen a movie in a theater or gone to a concert. I can't believe she has never used a stove before. I laugh and tell her I would love to teach her some easy things she can make for her and Milo to have a quiet night in. After I'm cleaned up, she wraps me in a towel so big and fluffy it almost wraps around me twice. Then she leads me to a vanity to dry my hair.

"Lenora, did you say sister, earlier? When you were talking about my scars?"

"Oh, yeah. I'm Bronx's sister. Milo is Bronx's best friend, which is how he became Beta. I'm his mate, so I became Beta too."

"Whoa. You mean sister, sister, like the same parents, sister? And he was okay with his best friend being your mate? Wasn't it awkward?"

"Yep, same parents sister. And Milo being my mate went over like lead balloons," she laughs, "I turned seventeen about six months after Bronx became Alpha. I came out of my room the morning of my birthday and blamo! Milo walked by smelling like strawberries and lemonade. The rest was history, "

she gently pulls the brush through my sparkling hair.

"Speaking of birthdays, you said you had to hide your wolf from your pack. When exactly did you turn seventeen? It seems like your wolf must be new to you. "

“June twentieth. I never knew exactly when my birthday was until

this year when she woke up. “

“Oh, summer solstice! Cool. We always have a big party that day.

Now we will have even more reason to celebrate! “

I look at how sparkly my hair is without dirt or blood on it.

It

makes my violet eyes stand out even more. Lenora notices me admiring myself.

“So, what’s up with the hair and eyes anyway?”

“Well, my wolf Elexis, I call her Lex. Lex says it’s because the

Moon Goddess is my mother. Not like, the Moon Goddess is the mother of all werewolves but like, she actually thinks the Moon Goddess gave birth to me.”

“What?” Lenora looks at me through the mirror.

I just shrug, “I don’t know. Obviously, she’s confused but I never

met my mother. The man who they called my father was a rogue. He was killed before they realized I was in his jacket. There is no

proof he was even actually my dad.”

“Huh, a mystery,” she says with a smile as I change into the clothes I picked out, “Let’s get you back to your mate. Based on

how many times he has mind linked me since we’ve been in here, I know he’s anxious to spend time with you. “

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 13

We come out of the bathroom to find Bronx

watching TV in the sitting area. He stands up when he hears the

bathroom door open. When he turns around, he freezes.

“Oh my Goddess,” he says under his breath. He gulps as he stares at me.

“She cleans up nice, huh?” Lenora smiles.

“Uh, yeah, I - uh, stunned - that - I, ” he’ s not able to make a full

sentence as he stares at me.

“You know what, I ‘m just gonna go, ” Lenora says over my shoulder as she points to the door. She gives me a thumbs up and a wink as she leaves.

I stand where she left me, not sure what to do with my hands.

“Waannnaaa… watch TV with me?” Bronx points behind him at the television.

“Sure, ” I tentatively walk over to the sofa. He takes my hand

causing little sparks where he touches me and gently pulls me down onto the seat next to him.

“Is this okay? Sitting next to me like this? I should’ ve asked first. “

“Yeah, it’ s fine, ” I feel myself blushing. “What do you like to watch? “

“I don’ t know. I’ ve never had time to watch television.”

“Oh, right. Okay, um, what are your hobbies? What do you do in your free time?”

“Hmmm, homework and mental breakdowns. ” “Oh crap, I’ m sorry, I didn’ t “

” It’ s okay, Bronx. I’ m teasing you. I mean honestly though, all I

know about is cooking, baking, and stocking pantries… and homework, ” I look at him from the side of my eye with a smirk on my face.

“Okay, smart aleck. Cooking and baking. I can work with that. We have like three cooking channels, ” he flips the station to a

cooking competition show called Chopped.

The chefs are given boxes of ingredients. They don’ t know what’ s

inside until the timer starts and they have to make up a meal using all the ingredients.

Bronx gets up to make popcorn as I describe what I would make

with the ingredients for each course. By the time we're on the third episode, I think I'm addicted. The dessert rounds are my favorite.

"Kas, were you the one who made dinner for the formal party at Silver Moon? The first night I was there, " he asks with an air of sudden realization.

"Yeah, I made breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day at Silver Moon. Did you like the beef Wellington at the party?"

"Like it? It was the best dinner I ever had. That means you made the killer key lime pie too, right? Before I found you going into my room, I was going to ask the Alpha who the chef was so we could use them for some of our formal events."

"Well, I'm at your service, parties big and small, I cook 'em all!"

He smiles and puts his arm over my shoulders, pulling me closer. I gladly snuggle up next to him.

Seriously, how is this my life right now? There's no way it's real.

I'm not sure when I fell asleep, but I wake up in the morning tucked in bed. Bronx isn't next to me or sleeping on the couch.

It makes me feel a bit empty inside. I slide out of bed and see a note on the nightstand.

Kas,

A couple of pack things came up. Lenora will take you to the mall.

Have a good time!

Bronx

"Watch out world, she's a wild one!" Lex teases while I make myself some toast with butter.

“Knock it off. I don’ t want to get sick again, ” I sulk at her.

“I know, I know, ” I sense her rolling her eyes, “Kas, do you think

we can talk to our mate about shifting soon? Please?”

“Yeah. When I see him after the mall. I will make time to speak to him.”

“Thank you. So, what do you think the mall is like?”

“I don’ t know. It sounds like there are stores with a ton of clothes

and shoes and stuff, ” I shrug a bit, not able to picture it in my mind.

She’ s just about to ask another question when Lenora walks in

with a blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman.

” Hi, Kas! Ready for a big day?” Lenora says with a big smile,

“This is Ashley, she is Reggie’ s mate.”

“Nice to meet you, Ashley, ” I smile awkwardly as she stares at me.

Oh, my Goddess. Rude!

“Oh, sorry, ” she snaps out of her stare, “It’ s an honor to meet

you, Luna. I didn’ t mean to stare.

They said your eyes were purple, but I didn’ t realize th- “

“Oh no, just Kas, please. Really. Yeah, the eye thing is a bit

unsettling if you’ re not prepared. It’ s okay. It still freaks me out

sometimes too, ” I reassure her, ” Lenora, do you have a hat I can

borrow? People are going to stare at me. “

“Pshh, Kas, you don’ t need to worry about that. Humans dye their

hair and wear weird color contacts all the time to get what you

have naturally. You’ re going to fit right in. “

“Alright,” I feel self-conscious, but I guess I ‘ll get over it.

We go to the garage where there are about thirty different cars and get into a black BMW convertible.

“Lenora, this is your car?” I look in awe.

“Oh no,” she dismisses, “My car is a Jaguar. It’s only a two

seater, so we have to take a pack fleet car today. “

“I see. Um, so, Ashley, other than being ranked members of the

pack, what do you all do for work?” I ask, trying to make small talk.

Ashley explains the jobs in detail, “Our pack has a security company, Mason Co. We have different divisions - physical security, electronics, networks, all kinds of stuff. Bronx is CEO.

Lenora is the VP of our International Contracts division. I’m the

head of HR. I mostly make sure there are no problems between the werewolves and humans that work for the company. Milo and Reggie run a military- focused division that we don’t talk much

about…you know…protocols and all. “

“Oh wow, ” I reply. Would I need to work for the company as well? I do need a job after all.

“This is great! We can show them how awesome of a warrior we are!” Lex chirps.

“Don’t worry, you won’t have to work for the company when you’re Luna. Bronx needs you at home heading up pack matters, ”

Ashley glances back at me from the front seat.

“Dang it,” Lex huffs.

The mall is nothing like I expected. There are people everywhere,

loud noises, bright lights, and smells. Holy cow, the food court

smells like a million bucks! There are stores just for perfume that

smell overwhelming. I don't understand why humans would want to smell like that. There are more stores than I can count.

I 'in

pretty sure Lenora and Ashley want to go into all of them.

We don't go into all the stores, but we do go into most of them.

For every store we go into, they make me try on countless outfits

and dresses, even evening gowns. When will I ever really need an

evening gown? We buy almost everything I try on, even though I

insist I don't need it. I was just hoping to get out of there with a

couple pairs of leggings, a few t-shirts, a bra, and some underwear. No such luck. Ashley had already taken three loads of

bags back to the car while I'm trying on even more clothes.

All the sales people seem very familiar with Lenora and Ashley.

Their eyes light up and they practically run over to help us when

we would walk into their store. They are friendly to my face, but

while I'm in the dressing rooms of several of the stores, I hear

sales ladies whisper things like 'so thin' and 'eating disorder' ,

which makes me very self-conscious. Lex tells me not to worry about it.

Lenora must have heard also because she makes me buy some of the clothes a size bigger than what I currently am. She loudly says she is sure I'm going to need them when I'm no longer underweight.

Our last stop before lunch is Victoria's Secret. I pick up some

comfy looking cotton underwear from a sale bin and Ashley grabs them out of my hand.

” Oh no no no, Kas. You can do better than that,” Ashley says with a sly smirk. She leads me into the store where she and Lenora load my arms with silky, lacy bras and underwear and some other things they say are meant to be “exciting for my mate.” But I ‘in not really at the mall. I ‘in in the stockroom. Ryan is on top of me, his hot breath in my ear. Not again. Please don’ t let this be happening. Goddess no, I can’ t go through this again. I can feel his weight on top of me, his hands roughly grabbing at me. I squeeze my eyes shut. I can’ t believe escaping Silver Moon was just a stupid daydream. Actually, I can. I just can’ t believe I let myself believe it was real...but it felt so, so real. I ‘in not really in the stockroom. I ‘ in sitting in the food court. Why the Hell would I have that flashback like that in the middle of the food court? And why the Hell did it feel so real? Actually, how did I get to the food court? I don’ t remember leaving Victoria’ s Secret. Is this another daydream? Ryan’ s scent is still strong in my nose, Lenora and Ashley are sitting in front of me completely oblivious of the danger, laughing at a joke Lenora is trying to tell. Why do I feel like none of us are safe? Panic is starting to build in my chest now. Someone is patting my face. I shake my head and look up to find I ‘in still in the lingerie store. Lenora is kneeling on the ground in front of me holding my hands and Ashley is looking at me wide eyed, gently patting my face with her hand.

” You okay, Kas, ” Lenora looks at me, concerned. ” I -I just remembered something, that’ s all, ” my voice is shaky. I realize I

had dropped all the items they put in my arms and tears are rolling down my cheeks. I’ m not sure how to explain what just happened.

” I —Is there a bathroom?” I clear my throat, ” I just need to freshen up. “

”Yeah, I’ ll take you, ” Ashley takes her sleeve and wipes my

tears, “Lenora, can you pay? Meet us at the food court. “

”Of course. You’ re sure you’ re okay, Kas? We can go home right

now if you prefer, ” Lenora asks, still looking concerned.

”I’ m fine, ” I reassure her. Ashley takes me by the elbow and

leads me out of the store to the bathroom. She waits outside the

door while I freshen up. When I come out, she hugs me and tells me I can always talk to her. I return the hug and thank her.

I don’ t feel like I know her well enough to trust her yet, but maybe one day.

We go to the food court where there are an infinite number of smells and restaurants. It seems like there is every type of fast

food you can think of.

”What do you want to eat? “

”Well, I’ m only allowed to have bland food for now, so somewhere with breadsticks, maybe? “

”Sbarro, it is!” She texts Lenora to let her know where we’ re headed.

She gets slices of pizza for her and Lenora and breadsticks for

me. Lenora meets up with us and sits next to Ashley. They are

laughing at a joke Lenora is telling. I get an odd feeling of
deja

vu.

The distinctive scent hits me. Ryan is here and he's close.

My

heart starts pounding. Lenora and Ashley are still laughing,
completely oblivious. I start to panic.

Lex is on full alert in my head, "Run, Kas! We need to run!
NOW!

"

"Lenora...I something's wrong...I, " I stammer as I start to
stand up. I can feel my eyes wide with panic. Lenora stops
laughing and looks at me. Her eyes widen and turn pitch black
as

she looks past my shoulder.

A hand claps the back of my neck hard and squeezes with sharp
claws extended, painfully breaking my skin, as I get pushed
back

down in the seat. A little yelp escapes me. Oh shit.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 14

Lenora lunges across the table, sailing over top of me, causing
the person who had grabbed me to let go. I hear growling and
snarling as she fights with the person. At the same time, Ashley
grabs me by the wrist and pulls me away from the scuffle. She
runs into the bathroom and locks the door.

"Kas, are you okay?" Ashley holds both sides of my face,

"Come

on, Kas, answer me, please. "

I feel myself looking at her, but I feel numb. Like my mind
is

separating from my body. There is a high pitched hum taking
over my hearing. Even Lex is trying to call me but she sounds
so

far away. I can't feel her like I usually do.

Ashley is patting my face. I see her talking to me, but I can't
hear

her anymore. All I hear is the steady high pitched hum. My body

starts shivering in fear. I need to calm down. Lenora and Ashley are going to make sure I' m safe. I try to breathe but there' s no air.

Lenora' s face comes into view. I see her mouth moving but all I hear is the humming. Oh no! She has a busted lip. How did that happen? I reach up and touch where it' s cracked open and bleeding. There is a split second of purple light just as the world turns black.

I hear Bronx calling my name in the darkness. He' s so far away. I don' t know how I' ll ever get to where he is. I call out his name so he knows where I am. The more I call him, the closer he sounds. " Kas, can you hear me? Are you there?" Lex calls out. I reach out and I can feel her spirit.

"I' m here, Lex. Thank Goddess I found you! "

" Kas, it' s time to come out of this darkness. Bronx needs you to go to him. He' s scared. Come on, follow me. We' ll do this together. Call for him again so he can find us," I start calling out

his name louder until I can feel Bronx very close. My eyes open and find I' m in his arms at the packhouse.

" Bronx? How did I get here? I was at the mall, then I got lost in

darkness. I could hear you. Lex found me and led me back, " I try

to put my thoughts in order.

" Oh Kas! Thank the Goddess. Why do you keep scaring me like that?" he tucks a piece of hair behind my ear and presses his forehead against mine, then pulls back so he can look at me again.

" What happened?" I ask, confused, "How did I get back here?"

Lenora and Ashley burst into the room crying and talking at the

same time. I reassure them I 'in fine and they calm down. Once they collect themselves, they explain everything that happened at

the mall.

Ryan tried to attack me but Lenora was able to fight him off.

Mall

security spooked him and he ran off. Lenora didn' t come away unscathed, Ryan is an Alpha after all. She had a broken wrist and

lost three of her teeth in the fight. She refused medical treatment

and ran to find Ashley and me.

" Kas, my wolf was healing me but it was you. You did it, "

She

looks at me with teary eyes, "Why didn' t you tell us you' re a

healer? "

"What?" I sit up taller. Now I' m confused and surprised.

"As soon as you touched me, I healed almost instantly. You didn' t

pass out until you touched me. I t was like it sucked all your energy out. Even my teeth pulled back into their sockets. There was a purple light coming from your fingertips and everything, "

she explains with wide eyes.

"I didn' t know, " I shake my head in disbelief, "I 've never healed

anyone in my life. I' ve burned a couple of people with my hands,

but never on purpose. "

All three of them look at me like I have a second nose.

"Oh, right, I wanted to talk to you when we got back from the mall, " I say to Bronx seriously, "I' ve never shifted before and

Elaxis keeps telling me she needs me to, so she can be at her full

strength. She doesn't seem to be able to tell what that means, though. "

"Hold up, hold up. Can we rewind to where you burned people...with your hands?" Lenora asks, disbelieving what she just heard.

"Wait, you've been seventeen for almost three months and you've never shifted?" Ashley asks at the same time. I shake my head answering Ashley first, "When I was at Silver Moon, we decided it was best for Lex to stay hidden, but I accidentally burned Ryan. That was before Lex fully woke up. I

burned Sam the accountant, after she was awake. I mean, their wolves were able to heal them, but it happened. " Lenora and Ashley look at me like I just told them I'm the queen of England.

"What? It was an accident. My hands started glowing purple and the next thing I know, they had burns. I couldn't help it," I justify to the wide eyed girls.

"Oh no no no. Don't get it twisted. I burned Sam on purpose. He broke your nose!" Lex growls. I decide it's best not to announce that.

"The only other time I remember glowing is when Bronx hugged me for the first time, but it didn't burn him. That time my whole body glowed, it made him glow too," I continue to explain my unusual glowing power.

Now Bronx is looking at me the way girls are. He blinks a couple of times and clears his throat.

"I was glowing?" He looks wary.

He sets me down on the couch and starts pacing.

"In the morning, we all meet in my office and the six of us can

make arrangements for Kas to shift safely. Lenora said your birthday was on summer solstice, so there have been a few full moons already.

Depending on what we find, I don't see why we can't let you shift

even if it isn't a full moon like most new wolves do," Bronx says

with a smile.

"Thank you," I smile back gratefully, feeling a sense of relief.

"Also, with your unique physical features and the powers your wolf seems to have, I think we need to do some research to figure out what is going on here before you shift. Clearly, you're

special and not just

because you're my mate," Bronx says with a smile as he squeezes my hand, "I want to make sure we know what we're getting into beforehand. Make sure you and Lex are getting the support you need. "

"Research?" My ears perk up. I feel very excited now, "Do you

have a library here? "

"Yeah, we have a pack library and I have a private library behind

my office," he says nonchalantly. Like a private library comes with everyone's home.

"Can-can I help with the research?" I ask sheepishly, trying to

hide my excitement.

Bronx laughs, "Baby with that twinkle in your eye, how could I

possibly stop you? "

He looks up at Lenora and Ashley, " Ladies, can you give us some

privacy, please? I need to speak to my mate. "

They nod and quietly leave the room. I get the feeling they already know what he wants to talk to me about. Bronx sets me down and leads me over to the sofa.

“Is everything alright, Bronx? “

“Yeah, Baby. I want to run something by you,” his tone is serious.

“Okay, ” I sit down on the sofa next to him and he takes my hands in his.

“Kas, I think it would be a good idea if you talked to a therapist about all the stuff you’ ve been through… cause, honestly, it’ s a lot. I want the best for you and I think having someone to talk to that can help you work through all those traumatic things would help you. Lots of my warriors see therapists for a lot less, there’ s no shame in it, ” I look him in the eye as I try to absorb his words.

“Now, that doesn’ t mean you can’ t talk to me about the things that you’ ve been through. I ’m happy to listen and I would be honored for you to trust me with any amount of it, but I can’ t give you advice on how to deal with it as the doctors can. We have some of the best therapists in the northwest right here in our hospital. It’ s your choice. I don’ t want to pressure you to do anything you don’ t want to do. I just want you to know your options. “

I think about it for a minute, “Yeah. I think I would like that. I feel like a lot of the time, Lex takes on a lot of my burden. It’ s not fair to her. Also, the passing out at the drop of a hat thing is getting kind of old. “

“Good. I ’ll arrange your first appointment. You can work with the clinic to set up any additional appointments you want, ” he smiles.

I can sense he feels relieved.

We sit quietly on the sofa for a few minutes holding hands.

I

guess if we are being honest, now is a good time to talk to him

about what' s on my mind.

“Bronx, there is something I want to tell you, ” I confess,

“but

please don' t be mad, okay? And if you think less of me or if you

find that it is too much for you and you want me to leave, I will

understand. Just say the word. “

“Baby, there' s nothing you could say that would make me think less of you, ” he looks at me with his eyebrows knit tightly.

“So, it' s about Ryan, ” I feel the familiar lump of tears in my

throat, I swallow it down. I pull my hands out of his into my lap

and look down at them, “Well, a-a couple of days before you came to Silver Moon, he um, he attacked me. “

“What do you mean ‘attacked you’ ?” Bronx says with a growl in

his voice, making me instinctively pull back.

This is it. This is where he changes his mind and has me executed for being weak.

“I ‘m sorry, Baby. I ‘m not growling at you. My wolf, Saint is

upset hearing another man touched you.

Please, tell me what happened, ” he reassures me as he smooths my hair.

I take a deep breath and speak as clearly as I can, still looking at

my lap. I can' t bear to look him in the eye while I say it, ”

H-he

forced himself on me. Elexis couldn' t protect me because he was

my future Alpha. She said she couldn' t hurt him. “

I wring my hands in my lap, “I wanted you to know sooner than later. If you don’ t want to be with me because I’ m not…pure anymore…I –I ‘ll understand. I mean – I just wanted to tell you

now before we start getting more attached to each other. So if

you want, just say the word and I’ ll leave. “

I look back up at him. I can’ t read the look on his face. He sighs

deeply and rubs his hands on his face. He stands up and starts pacing. His hands are flexing open and closed. His eye is flickering black then green as he tries to control his wolf. Oh crap.

That was the final straw. Is this the part where he tells me to get

the Hell out of his home or just drags me down to the dungeon until he decides the best way to execute me? He finally stops and

kneels in front of me. He takes a deep breath and takes my hands in his, looking me straight in the eye.

” Kas, you have nothing to be ashamed of and nothing to fear. Thank you for sharing that with me. I don’ t want to lose you because of what some asshole did to you without your permission. If anything, knowing that happened to you…It makes

me want to protect you even more,” his words are so sincere.

I

can tell he is telling the truth. I feel tears pricking the corners of

my eyes as I wrap my arms around his neck and give him the biggest hug I can muster. He wraps his arms around my waist and pulls me into his lap, making me feel the safest I have ever

felt in my life. I swear I hear him sniffle as we hold each other.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 15

The next day we meet with the Betas and Gammas in Bronx’ s

office first thing in the morning. They all agree on something right

away. I don't get to leave the packhouse unless I have two security guards at all times. We don't know where Ryan or his dad are. Bronx is not willing to take any chances.

Ashley picks up her phone and laptop and goes to the back of the

office where there is a small conference table. She comes back a

few minutes later with a smile on her face.

"All set. They'll be here in fifteen minutes," she says cheerfully.

"Good work, Ashley. Alright team, next order of business. We have to do research and figure out why Kas has powers and if there is anything we need to do to make accommodations for her," Bronx says, "Kas, tell us what you have experienced so far.

Please. "

His demeanor when we are around other people is a stark difference from when we are alone together. This version of Bronx is kinda s*xy, I must admit.

"Well, the first thing that happened was my eyes changed color to

violet. The left one first, then the right one. They started to

change when I was in the pack hospital after...well, I was healing

from an injury, " I try to avoid getting into gory details, "

Within a

few days they were both the color they are now. But before that they were just plain old gray. "

Bronx is taking notes on his laptop. The others are just paying attention to what I am saying.

"I noticed my hair changing color next. It used to be light brown.

The color change started just after my eyes changed. It was a

little darker at first and it happened in sections on my hair, but it happened quickly. Even though it's long, locks of it would go from brown to silver overnight, until it was all silver. I think it was a total of two weeks from brown to silver. Once it was all silver, it lightened up and got more sparkly."

"Have you tried to cut it?" Lenora asks.

"No. The last time I had to cut my hair was because someone threw gum at me. That was before it was silver," I say matter of factly. Bronx lets out a low growl.

"Knock it off, Bronx," Milo says, "We're trying to move forward here."

It's the first time I have heard Milo speak to Bronx this way, but it works. Milo clears his throat and motions for me to continue.

"The burning people with my hands, well, the first time was a day or two before Lex woke up fully. The second time, she took over and I couldn't stop her."

"I'm sorry. Did you say burning people?" Reggie looks at me with wide eyes.

"Old news, Reggie. Keep up, Babe," Ashley dismisses her mate,

"Keep going, Kas."

"Oh, also, I'm pretty sure I've stopped time around me a couple of times but I'm still able to move. I don't know. The second time, it didn't work right and just slowed down time, Lex wasn't able to tell me why. Just that we don't have our full power until she's able to shift."

“You already know about me being able to heal Lenora. About half an hour before that, I think I had a premonition? I can’t be

sure but that’s the only way I can explain it. We were in the store

and all of a sudden I was reliving a real bad memory that happened before I came to Blood River. It had to do with Ryan, Alpha Graham’s son. The memory was the one I told you about last night, Bronx,” Bronx nods and squeezes my hand, “but then

the bad memory stopped and I swear I saw us sitting in the food court and I could smell his scent. But we weren’t actually in the

food court, we were still in the store. When he actually showed up

in the food court, it seemed like deja vu more than a premonition, like I imagined it but then I remembered it while it

was actually happening. “

“So that’s what happened when you dropped all those clothes in

Victoria’s Secret?” Ashley asks.

Bronx growls, “Excuse me, where? “

“Oh relax, big brother. She needed underwear and bras,”

Lenora

says defensively, but her face looks a bit guilty.

“Ohh, you know what, I think I saw when it happened! I saw the

glow around you but I figured it must have been the pink lighting

in the store, ” Ashley recalls.

Just then there is a knock on the door. Bronx bids the person to

enter. Two burly men dressed in black walk in.

“Kas, this is James and Marco. They’re going to be your personal

guards, ” Ashley stands and introduces us, “Guys, this is Kas.

She' s Alpha Bronx' s mate. “

They look at each other, then look at me and bow slightly,

“Welcome to Blood River, Luna, ” the one named James says. Bronx stands up, ” Gentlemen, you' re to know where Kas is at all

times. If she leaves the packhouse, you escort her. Even if it' s

just out to the gardens, even if she is with me. Twelve hour shifts

while she' s in the packhouse. When she goes out, both of you have

eyes on her at all times. Are we clear? “ “Yes, Alpha, ” they speak

in unison.

Bronx pulls out a picture of Alpha Graham and Ryan, “These two

men are dangerous and are potentially stalking my mate. The younger one tried to attack her yesterday. Lenora was able to stop him. If you see either of them, protect Kas at all costs. Consider this a military escort. “

“Yes, Alpha, ” they reply again.

Marco steps forward, “Luna it' s our honor to serve you, ” James

nods behind him. I bow my head slightly at them and thank them both.

“We will be here in the back library for the next several hours,

gentlemen. Your assignment starts immediately. You two work out who' s on guard first. Wait outside the office, ” Bronx says.

Power seems to be rolling off him as he speaks.

“Yes, Alpha, ” they repeat. They both bow to me again and leave the office.

“That was intense, ” Lex says in awe.

Bronx stands up and we follow him to a door near the back of the

office. He opens a keypad, punches in a code, and the door

silently opens.

“This is your private library?” I look around in awe. There are mahogany tables and giant lounge chairs all over the huge room. There are large, old books in glass cases and on pedestals placed strategically around the room. There are two stories of floor-to-ceiling built in mahogany bookshelves packed full of books that go around three walls. The fourth wall is just windows facing a beautiful pond.

“Alright guys, let’s split this up,” He pulls out a laptop and pulls up a list of books in the library. He gives us each ten books to look at. We split up around the room finding our assigned books and finding spots to go through them. I find a pad of paper and a pen and start making notes. Three hours later, I ‘m through eight of the books I had pulled from the shelves without having found anything useful.

A loud growling yawn makes everyone jump out of their skin.

“Milo! You scared the crap out of everyone!” Lenora scolds. “Sorry. I just needed to stretch,” he says, feigning innocence,

“I’m going to the kitchen to get us all lunch. Any requests?”

“Just get some pizzas. Oh, breadsticks and applesauce for Kas. Do you want anything else, Baby?”

“A banana would be great. I’m really hungry.” Bronx smiles, “Get

the lady a banana, Milo!”

I turn back to the book I ‘m reading. It is written in old English,

so it’s difficult to understand. I flip the page to find a beautiful

hand-painted illustration. It is a depiction of the Moon Goddess.

There' s a man standing next to her that looks like a king.
They

are surrounded by children. She is holding a baby in her arms
with gray hair and violet eyes. The title on the next page says
'Manae - Children of Selene' . No freaking way.

"Bronx! I found something! I found something !" Everyone
comes
over to look at the book.

"Menae? Hmm. I saw something about that in a more recent
book. Let me go get it," Reggie muses. He trots over to a pile
of
books and brings them over.

He flips through the pages until he finds what he' s looking
for and

starts reading aloud, "The Menae are fifty children of the
Moon

Goddess and the human king Endymion. Modern times say they
represent the fifty months of the four-year Olympiad cycle.

"So basically, a kid a month for a little over four years?
It looks

like Zeus allowed the Menae to be goddesses, even though
Endymion was human. There is no mention of any names or their
powers, but if they are goddesses, they would have some type
of

power right? "

Bronx strums his fingers against his cheek as he looks at the
laptop screen, "Alright, so this says there were two Olympiad
cycles. Ancient Greeks believed one four-year cycle had
forty-nine months and a second cycle had fifty months.

Something to

do with the lunar cycle because that is how they kept track
of

time. We don' t use lunar cycles to keep track of time anymore,
so

it doesn' t matter that there' s more than twelve full moons
per

calendar year. "

I look more at the old English book while he is talking,

“Uhh…my

name is here… “

I point to a small print sentence that clearly says ‘lokaste’
in the

middle of it, but I’ m not familiar with the words around it,
so I

can’ t figure out what it’ s saying.

Reggie looks over my shoulder, “It says Kas in there? “

“No, Reggie, my full name is lokaste. “

“Oh sick! Like lokaste the Seer,” Reggie says, sounding
excited.

“Who is lokaste the Seer? “ I ask, confused.

“Reggie, Kas is clearly not named after an Assassin’ s Creed
character, ” Bronx rolls his eyes as he looks up from his
computer.

“Okay, but lokaste the character predicts the future just like
our

lokaste can. Could be relevant! “

“Please don’ t call me that. Just call me Kas. Please, ” I
request.

“Why don’ t you like being called lokaste anyway?”

Ashley asks.

“I, um, it was the name on the blanket I was found in. I like
to

think my parents put a lot of thought into what my name would
be. I always wanted to ask them more about why they chose
such an unusual name for me but I can’ t. Who knows, maybe
they

just saw it in a book like this and thought it was pretty. I
guess I

may never know, ” I shrug, trying not to feel down. I feel
the

familiar lump of sadness in my chest.

He must sense my sadness, because Bronx clears his throat and
gets everyone’ s attention away from me, “Back to the task
at

hand. According to this, lokaste was an ancient Greek woman.

She was the queen of Thebes. Accidentally married her son who just so happened to be Oedipus. Whoops! “

“Ohh-kay, definitely do not call me lokaste!” I proclaim. Bronx snorts a little and looks back at the monitor, ” And some

people believe the word lokaste translates to...oh...”

He trails off before he finishes. He sighs and rubs his face in his hands.

“TRANSLATES TO WHAT?! ” Lenora yells, throwing her hands in the air. “Violet.”

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 16

“Violet? Like the color of Kas’ s eyes?” Ashley asks. Her voice is thick with skepticism.

“Yeah, Ashley, other than the flower, there are not a whole lot of definitions of violet, ” Lenora teases.

Reggie looks up from the book he’ s referencing, ” Kas, what did you say your dad’ s name was? “

“Andy. Why? “

Reggie nudges Bronx who leans over the book and reads aloud, ” Selene was so enamored with the way Endymion looked while he was sleeping in a cave on Mount Latmus that she asked Zeus to allow her to have a relationship with him. Oh, holy shit. “

“Mount Latmus? Like my last name?” I’ m a bit confused.

“Kas, what if Andy is like some sort of shortened, modernized version of Endymion. Endy, Andy. What if the Moon Goddess turned him into a werewolf? Because that’ s what she does right?

What if she turned him into the first werewolf? ” Reggie starts theorizing. Lenora and Ashley stand behind him with wide-eyed disbelief.

I blink a couple of times as he throws out questions and until I

burst out laughing. Like, a maniacal villain who lost their mind in the middle of the movie, laughing. I' m laughing so hard that I can' t catch my breath, my belly hurts, and tears are coming out of my eyes. Everyone is looking at me like maybe I lost my marbles.

“ ‘Come on, like, seriously. You can' t honestly believe that, ” I reason with him in between laughs, “The chances all these things are coincidences is a whole lot more realistic than it all being connected in some sort of ancient greek conspiracy theory. The Moon Goddess, my actual mother? A painting of me as a baby in an ancient book of werewolf lore? My name in this book is MY name and not just a reference to the color purple or an ancient queen? My dad is an ancient Greek king who had fifty daughters with the Moon Goddess? The Moon Goddess turned him into the first werewolf? Guys. Come on. Let' s be serious for just a minute here. What are the chances? Basically zero chance. ”

“PIZZA' S here...” Milo interrupts with a happy yell, but quickly quiets down when he sees the look on everyone' s faces staring at me while I laugh uncontrollably.

“Yeahhh...I think we' re at a good stopping point, ” Ashley nods.

She takes me by the elbow out into the office, everyone follows. We sit around the conference table in the back corner of the office while we eat. Hypothesizing the information we have found so far.

“Kas, how old is Elexis anyway, ” Lenora asks while she pulls extra cheese out of the bottom of the pizza box.

“Never ask a lady her age, ” Lex snaps quickly.

“Lex, this is important. We are trying to figure out who I am

before we can shift. We have to make sure it’s safe for both of us.

You want to shift, don’t you? “

“Ugh. Fine. I’m four thousand six hundred and eighty-two years

old, I think. I’ve kind of lost count because we kept track of time

differently back in the old days. “

“Lex, be serious. “

“Why the Hell would I joke about that? “

“She says she is over four thousand years old. “

Ashley spits out her water. Milo stops eating, mid - bite of his

pizza. Dramatic much?

I know wolves’ spirits live a lot longer than humans, but I have

no idea how much longer. Everyone else asks their wolves how old they are. Saint is the oldest at eight hundred twenty-nine years old. Everyone else’s wolves are less than two hundred years old.

“How many human spirits have you been attached to, Lex? “

“Just you, Kas. We’re attached through all of your lives. Forever

in the past and forever in the future. Don’t you remember?”

She

sounds kind of sad that I don’t remember our past lives.

“You mean like, I’ve been reincarnated over and over for forty-six

hundred years? “

While I’m talking to Lex, Bronx is talking to the others, “If Kas

was a goddess, she would be thousands of years old. She’s only seventeen years old. We know she got to the Silver Moon when she was an infant. “

“Uhh…what if I was reincarnated? “

Bronx stops and turns to me, “Reincarnated? “

“That’s what Lex is telling me,” I shrug, “Since the beginning of her lifetime, she and I have always been together. “

“Okay. I think we need to call in the Elder Council. We need their help here. Kas, I’m sorry, but we need to wait a little longer for

you to be able to shift,” Bronx says apologetically.

I feel Lex’s frustration but she doesn’t say anything. I take the

last bite of my delicious breadstick and cross my arms in a huff.

Bronx’s POV

I send everyone out of the office so I can make calls to the Elders and get some work done for my security business. I also make arrangements for Kas to see one of the pack therapists. Tobias, the head of the Elders, lets me know he can have everyone gathered at the packhouse in a couple of weeks. It will

have to do. Other than the chance she could give someone a minor burn, Kas doesn’t seem to be dangerous and her shifting into wolf form is not something to be considered an emergency. Even if Saint and Elexis are anxious to meet each other.

It takes about five hours to finish up everything I need to do for

the business. I sit back in my chair while I have some peace and

quiet and start to think. I need to talk to Kas about becoming Luna by summer solstice but we just met. I don’t want to scare her or put any unneeded pressure on her but if I don’t mate and

have a Luna for Blood River by the summer solstice, my position as Alpha Regent will be taken away. Just one more thing to talk to the Elders about.

A knock on the door interrupts my thoughts. Carly, my assistant,

comes in with a bag.

“Alpha, everything you requested is in the bag,” she confirms.

“Thank you, Carly. Have a good night, ” I smile at her.

“You’ re welcome. Good night, Alpha, ” she looks at me suspiciously, before she leaves the room. I sit confused at her

reaction until I realize it is because I rarely say thank you and I

don’ t know if I’ ve ever told her to have a good night. I can change, right? I make a mental note to make an effort to be nicer

to Carly. She’ s a good assistant. I should show her I appreciate her.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 17

I pick up the bag and walk down to Kas’ s suite. Hopefully, I can

convince her to accept the gift. She seems weird about money, but I don’ t understand why. I want to spend it on her. Down to

my last penny and according to my accountants, I have a lot of penn!es.

After the incident at the mall, I don’ t think she knows just how

much Lenora and Ashley bought for her. They left some pajamas and casual clothes in her suite for her, but the rest they hung up

or put in drawers in the closet room of my apartment. They even had a custom upholstered bench added to the closet, so it will be

more comfortable when the girls are in there. I decide I probably

shouldn’ t mention it to Kas for now. She would find out eventually.

As I think about the closet, I wonder if I could convince Kas to

move into the apartment with me or if it is too soon. I just want

to be able to spend as much time with her as possible.

When I get to her suite, I see James is standing at the end of the

hall, giving Kas space so she feels comfortable but still close enough to take action if necessary. He nods at me as I knock on

the door. I nod back when Kas opens it to let me in.

“Hi Baby, ” I smile. My heart beats faster when I see her smile back.

She takes my hand and lets me inside. I see she changed from jeans and a long sleeve shirt from earlier to a spaghetti strap dress. She is still too

skinny, but she has been eating more since she got here, even if

it is mostly toast and breadsticks. She has added some fruits and

veggies into her diet too. Her curves are just starting to fill in,

making her look more grown up. Her hair is in a messy bun on top of her head, sparkling in the light of the room. She is so

innocent. She clearly doesn’ t know how s*xy she looks.

“I missed you, ” she says as she stands on her toes giving me a

huge hug. I wrap my arms around her, pick her up, and walk into the room with her in my arms. I bury my head into the crook of

her neck breathing her fresh rain and lilac scent deeply. I can feel

her scars under my hands, but she doesn’ t seem to mind. She giggles as we feel the sparks between us. I don’ t put her down until we reach the sitting area.

“I have something for you, Baby, ” I hand her the bag.

“Bronx, don’ t buy things for me. I don’ t have any way to repay

you. “

“This is a gift, but it is also for your safety. Besides, it’ s through

my company. Technically, you’ re a client and it’ s tax deductible.

Go ahead. Open it. “

She pulls the box out of the bag. Her eyes go wide as her mind processes the new iPhone box she’ s holding and she lunges forward giving me another big hug.

“Holy cow! Thank you so much! Will you teach me how to use it? “

“I - uh, yeah, of course. I’ ll show you how to text and program phone numbers and everything,” I didn’ t even consider that she

has never had a cell phone before, but I need to know she can get ahold of my Betas, Gammas, me, or James and Marco anytime she needs.

“How about we go down to the dining room to eat dinner with the pack today? It’ s pasta night, so there will be plenty you can eat.

After dinner, we can program your phone. “

She looks at me tentatively and stands up. Is she nervous? Is it

too soon? Did I f*ck up again?

She walks toward the closet and starts searching for something,

“Alright, but I need to cover up. I can’ t go to dinner in a spaghetti

strap dress. I don’ t want everyone to stare. Let me find a cardigan. Does my hair look alright? Is this dress alright if I wear

a cardigan? You can’ t see my scars, right?” She asks in rapidfire

as she stands in front of me with a light green cardigan over the dress looking very nervous.

“Of course, you can wear whatever you want. That sweater is

perfect. And your hair looks nice in a bun like that. Is this okay,
Baby? Going to dinner downstairs, I mean. If it's too much too soon, it can wait. People will understand. They're not expecting us tonight. "

"Bronx, this will be the first time I have met anyone from the pack other than the ranked members, the doctors, and my security guards, " Kas looks me in the eye but I can't read her expression.

"Oh, yeah, you're right. It's probably too soon, we can eat up here. I don't want you to be uncomfortable. "

"Oh, no. Honestly, I 'm looking forward to a fresh start. I mean, eventually, I want to meet everyone, but if I can at least start with the pack members in the dining room, I'll take it! "

"So that's a yes? "

She just giggles and nods.

"This woman is amazing, Bronx, " Saint purs, "Can she be Luna now? "

"No Saint, not yet. It's too soon to have serious conversations about that. "

He huffs at me and moves to the back of my mind.

The dining room is already bustling when we arrive. People didn't anticipate I was going to be there, so they started to eat without waiting for me. I usually like to say a few words before we eat since for most pack members, it is the only time they get to see me or hear what's on my mind.

As people realize I' m there and I have a guest with me, the room

becomes very quiet. I know everyone has heard she is here, but hardly any one has seen Kas yet. Everyone is looking at us with anticipation. I can see smiles and hear whispers from around the room.

I have my hand on Kas' s lower back as I lead her toward the head table. Milo, Lenora, Reggie, and Ashley are already there. The girls wave with big smiles, happy to see Kas off the fifth floor.

Before we get to our seats, I lead Kas to an area in front of the

table. The entire room is looking at us attentively.

“Good evening Blood River pack! I apologize for my absence lately. Some of you may know, we have a new member of our pack. She needed time to recover from some injuries and I was tending to her, but she is better now and looking forward to meeting all of you.”

Eyes widen with excitement around the room. Pack members are whispering and clapping lightly with anticipation.

“I would like to introduce you to my mate and your future Luna, Kas Latmus, formerly of the Silver Moon pack.”

The room erupts in cheers and howls at the announcement. I look down at Kas who is still holding my hand. She is blushing and giving people little waves in between clapping her hand over her mouth.

I notice our joined hands start to get warm. I look down to see

they' re glowing with a hint of purple. I move a little closer to her

and pull her hand behind me so people won' t see.

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“So she had powers before her wolf woke up?” Elder Randall questions after Kas tells the Elders her story. He sounds suspicious of Kas' s claims.

“Randall, Kas is sitting right here. Please address her directly.

She doesn't have a rank right now, but she is Blood River's future

Luna Regent,” I scold the old man.

Randall gets a sour look on his face at being corrected and huffs

at me.

There are fifteen werewolves from around the world on the Elder Council, making up the international governing body for all werewolf kind. They are former Alphas and Alpha Regents who have been elected to their council positions after they turned their packs over to their successors. There are many who believe

I will be elected to the Council one day. Only time will tell. The knowledge of the Elders is passed down from generation to generation. Each specializes in the history of their region.

If

anyone can give us answers about Kas, it will be them. We are in

the third hour of this meeting and haven't gotten very far. Kas has been holding her own very well, only looking to me for help a couple of times. She took her time explaining everything that had happened.

Some of the Elders have questions but are reluctant to speak directly to Kas because she was a slave at Silver Moon and she isn't officially Luna of Blood River yet. In their regions, Elders

don't interact with werewolves who are not ranked members of a

pack, let alone slaves. It's an archaic way of thinking. It's also

very frustrating for the purposes of this meeting.

Oscar from the Australian region speaks up next, ” Miss Latmus,

you claim your wolf says she is not at full power until you shift?”

“Yes, sir. But she can't explain what that means. I'm

embarrassed to say that shortly after she first woke up, I almost

lost control and she came to the surface. We didn't shift though."

"It's happened to the best of us, my dear," Oscar smiles reassuringly to her.

Roham from the South Asian region speaks next, "There are stories of a wolf being the dominant personality which causes the

human part of their spirit to be born repeatedly with them instead

of the wolf being assigned to a different human spirit every reincarnation. It's a deeper connection between the two, therefore not easy to separate the spirits from lifetime to lifetime.

Miss Latmus, it sounds like it may be the case with you and Elexis. If you are a Goddess, her spirit may have been put in place to protect your spirit throughout its eternal journey... however many lifetimes that may end up being. In the modern world we think of gods and goddesses as immortal, in reality, it is

just their essence that is immortal. Only the Gods we refer to as

Titans are truly immortal."

Felipe, the Elder from the Mediterranean region chimes in,

"What

Roham is saying is, the Moon Goddess Selene is a titan, her lover

Endymion was human. When Zeus allowed their children to be Goddesses, he was allowing their essences to be reincarnated until the end of time. So, Lokaste, if your wolf Elexis is telling you

that you have been connected to her since the beginning of both of your essences and you have been displaying powers beyond a

typical werewolf, then I would say, yes, you're indeed a goddess.

One of the fifty Menae.

Daughter of the Moon Goddess. It is reasonable to say she selected Elexis to protect you. This gives credence to her claim

that the two of you are warriors.”

The other Elders around the table nod and mur mur in agreement. I look at Kas who doesn't seem surprised. She looks relieved. It's as if she was anticipating the answer and just waiting for confirmation of the fact that she was a goddess. She

just needed someone to tell her what Lex had told her was true. I

give her hand a little squeeze. She looks at me with a grateful smile.

“Thank you, gentlemen. If I may, I have a couple of questions?”

Kas asks tentatively.

” Please proceed, lokaste. Who are we to refuse the words of a goddess?” Philipe says, waving his hand welcomingly toward her,

“Maybe even Randall and Karthik will speak more freely now, eh?”

The men around the table chuckle at the reference to the ones not wanting to speak to Kas before they found out she was a goddess. Kas continues when the laughter died down.

” If Zeus gave permission for the Goddess Selene to have a relationship with Endymion, do you think that means his essence would also get reincarnated so they can love each other forever? I mean, d-do you think the man who brought me to Silver Moon was really my father? Could he have been Endymion? He was killed because he was a rogue. That means he was a werewolf. Is it possible he was the first werewolf?” Kas asks her questions rapid fire, her eyes welling up

with tears. After what she just heard, she is not thinking about herself, she is worried about her father.

“I believe it is very possible that yes he was Endymion, ” Felipe

confirms, “but please don’ t despair, lokaste. We have no way of knowing if he was the first werewolf but he was turned at some point for him to be identified as a rogue. That means your father’ s essence will be reincarnated. He will live again to love the Moon Goddess just as he has in his other lives. He may have already been reincarnated for all we know. What we may never be able to answer is how he ended up as a rogue trespassing on Silver Moon territory. He must have had a good reason. Now, my dear, is there anything else we can help answer for you?” Kas nods and sniffs back her tears, “If I have been reincarnated for over four thousand years, how come I can’ t remember any of my lives? Why don’ t I remember Elexis? If our connection is as deep as you say, shouldn’ t I remember?” Henri, the European Elder from France, who also happens to be a friend from my infantry when we were in the military, stands up from the table and nods toward Kas, “I request to address Alpha Bronx. lokaste, I mean no disrespect.” She nods at him, then looks at me expectantly. “Go ahead, Henri,” I confirm, looking back at him. Henri continues, “Alpha, I know in the past, you have declined to accept the help of witches and I completely understand your hesitation but we need to consider this is an exceptional case. Witches have direct connections to the powers of many gods and goddesses. I know of a coven of light witches near m y pack who can help train and hone the abilities of your mate to protect her. They can help lokaste remember who she is. Help her learn about

the essence of her spirit. lokaste seems to have some volatile abilities as well. She doesn't seem like the type of wolf who is interested in harming anyone or using her abilities for evil. It's in her best interest to learn how to control those abilities before there is an accident. The coven can teach her how to focus her energy. To be a master healer. You know healers are rare in our community and it's an ability that will benefit countless wolves.

Please take your time and consider it. “

I feel the hot acid of my temper starting to rise in my chest. Saint

is raging in my mind. He hates witches more than I do. We've survived too many battles and lost one too many body parts to trust them. The Elders can see my rage building and looked very uncomfortable.

“Henri is a traitor, Bronx! Tear his throat out,” Saint howls. I feel

myself stand up and realize Saint is trying to take control. Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 19

“Let's break gentlemen. Take the time you need for lunch, tea, follow up on pack business, whatever you need. We'll reconvene later this afternoon,” Saint's growl reverberates through my

voice as he fights for control. I don't wait for an answer. I bow

and leave the room with Kas following close behind.

“Bronx! What's the matter?” Kas calls after me. I can't stop, Saint

is forcing his way to the surface. I can't risk hurting her or saying

something I'd regret. She has been working so hard the past

couple of weeks, meeting with the therapist, eating healthy foods

so she can gain weight, and getting to know pack members. I can't ruin that progress by losing my temper in front of her. Even with all the positive strides she made, she still has nightmares almost every night. She tosses and turns, talks and cries in her sleep, and wakes up screaming in cold sweats. I sleep

on her sofa, so she won't be alone when she wakes up. It's my

responsibility to keep her safe. I cradle her in my arms and soothe her until she falls back asleep.

Sometimes I'm so tired that I fall asleep holding her but most of

the time, I go back to the sofa.

Being a bystander in Kas' s personal Hell is excruciating to watch.

I can't imagine living it but I already have. The second time I

came back from war, I spent months in the hospital. Saint almost killed three nurses one evening. He forgot where he was and was

convinced they were witches trying to kill us. Reggie almost resigned after I attacked him in the hallway. I almost slit his

throat right there in the packhouse. Fortunately, he is well trained

and was able to fight me off long enough until help arrived.

Lenora was the one who convinced me how important mental health is, not only physical health. I still see the therapist every

month. She would be disappointed at how I was handling this situation.

Right now, I have to get out of here before I go off. I pull off my

clothes leaving them in a trail on the floor behind me as I stride

down the hall until I' m in my underwear. I let Saint take over
as I
push open the back door, just in time for him to shift into
his
huge white wolf form and we take off running.

"We' ve got forty-five minutes to get it out of our system,
man."

"Fine," Saint growls and cuts off our mind link.

Milo' s POV

I hear the conference room door slam open. I look over the
landing to see Bronx busting out, his eyes were pitch black,
and

he looks like he' s got murder on the mind.

Oh shit. What set him off this time?

Kas is desperately trying to keep up with him, but it' s no
use.

She' s so small, there is no way her teeny little legs can move
fast
enough.

By the time I get to the bottom of the stairs, Bronx is gone
with

nothing but a trail of clothes leading to the door and a scared
little mate who is trying not to James is standing behind her,
looking a little panicked. He knows how to handle two
full-grown

charging werebears, no problem, but a crying she - wolf, not
so
much.

In the past couple weeks, Kas has grown on me so much that I
already consider her my sister. It tugs at my heart to see her
upset. It makes me angry that Bronx is the one who caused her
to feel this way.

"Come on little sister, let' s go upstairs. Tell me what
happened, "

I motion to James that it is alright and to follow us.

"We were meeting with the Elders and one of them recommended
asking light witches to help me with my powers and Bronx got

really mad. I could feel it. It was so strong, it made me mad.
The

next thing I know he's headed out the door and ran off," her voice is shaky as she explains what happened.

"The Elder Council recommended witches come here?"

"Yeah or I can go to them in France. They can help me learn how

to control my abilities," she wipes the tears out of her eyes as

she explains.

"Oh, I see," I rub the scruff on my chin, "Well, in a perfect world,

Bronx would tell you this, but I guess I need to."

"Tell me what?"

We sit on a bench in the hallway outside my office. James stands near the end of the hall, giving us privacy but still close enough

to protect Kas if needed.

I sigh trying to decide the best way to explain Bronx's past.

"Kas, Bronx lost his eye during the war, in a fight with a dark

witch. She used magic to paralyze him and sliced it out with a

cursed silver knife. She also stabbed him in the gut and took part

of his liver. She wasn't very careful about it and the knife broke

off in his abdomen. He was fully awake for the whole thing and couldn't do anything about it. Saint was blocked because of the

silver floating around Bronx's body, so he couldn't help heal him.

Bronx almost died. In fact, there is still a couple flakes of cursed

silver imbedded in his liver. It will never fully heal. Can you

imagine how strong he and Saint were before that?

Before the cursed silver? Practically invincible. It took months for

him to recover and he was forced to retire from military service.

Rumor is, the witch kept his eyeball as a trophy and used his liver

to finish some dark spell she had been concocting.”

“Oh, my. No, he never said anything to me about it,” Kas says softly. She looks like she’s a bit in shock.

” Yeah, suggesting witches help you, that would be one of the things that would make him that angry, ” I explain.

We talk a while longer until Lenora comes out of her office.

She

sits on my lap while we fill her in on what happened.

I continue to explain Bronx’s behavior, “I know it seems odd that

he would disregard you like that, Kas but in his mind, it was to

protect you, I’m sure of it. When he gets mad, he shuts everyone

out. He used to lash out at everyone. Even Reggie and me. One time, Bronx almost sliced Reggie’s throat because he didn’t

recognize him. He didn’t recognize his own Gamma, Kas. Can you

imagine? Reggie was ready to leave the pack over it.”

Lenora chimes in, “I was the one to convince Bronx he needed help. So he started seeing one of the pack therapists and it

helped a lot. I think he still sees her once a month. He still has

his problems, Kas, but we all do to some degree. There’s a reason he has the reputation he does. He walked away just now

because he doesn’t always know how to deal with his temper.

That’s the only way he knows how to not hurt you. He’s never had someone in his life he has been protective over the way

he is

with you.”

Just then, Bronx comes up the stairs with a lit cigarette in his

mouth, a small grunt with each step. He is covered head to toe in mud, except for the gym shorts he picked up, but those are basically trash now. I know covering yourself in mud is a military tactic to hide from enemies, but none of our security sensors triggered to indicate our borders had been breached. Did he just roll in the mud for the fun of it?

“Dude, first off, what kind of party did you and Saint have? And

secondly, no smoking in the pack house! “

He walks straight past Lenora and me as if we don’ t even exist.

“I need you,” he says, pointing to Kas. He bends down and grabs

her around the waist like he’ s going to hug her, except he picks

her up and puts her over his shoulder. He doesn’ t even break his

stride, he just continues walking as if Lenora and I aren’ t standing there. He spits out the cigarette and steps on it as he

walks away.

“Uh, bye guys, thanks for the talk, ” Kas waves over Bronx’ s shoulder at us as she’ s carried down the hall.

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chapter 20

Kas’ s POV

Bronx looks like a swamp monster as he walks towards me with a

cigarette hanging out of his mouth. I stand up when I see him, putting my hands over my mouth with a little gasp.

We make eye contact. With all the mud, I can’ t read his expression, but I can feel his pain. Not physical pain, emotional

pain.

“I need you, ” he growls as he walks past Milo and Lenora. He

leans over, wraps his muddy arms around my waist, and picks me up. He doesn't even break his stride. He just keeps walking. There's a squishing sound where his skin contacts my clothes. Welp, I guess this outfit is done for.

After listening to everything Milo and Lenora just told me, I had no idea what reaction to expect when Bronx got back, but it certainly wasn't being thrown over the shoulder of a swamp monster.

"Uh, bye guys. Thanks for the talk," I wave at Milo and Lenora.

They wave back with confused looks on their faces.

"Want to tell me what's going on, Bronx?" I ask as he climbs the stairs.

He just grunts as he carries me, wrapping his arms around my legs in a tight bear hug up the stairs to the fifth floor.

Instead of going to my suite, he opens the door to his apartment and kicks it closed behind him. He carries me all the way to his bedroom and sits me on the edge of the bed. Instead of sitting up and looking at me, he lays his muddy head next to my hip, his heavy, muddy chest is in my lap, and his arms still tightly around my waist.

I smooth his muddy hair as he silently holds on to me as if his life is depending on it. I can feel his emotions, he feels tormented. Maybe his life does depend on it? I feel helpless seeing him like this.

"Bronx, sweetheart, please talk to me. Please. Whatever it is, I'll listen," I soothe him.

The most unexpected thing happens next, silent sobs start racking through him. My eyes grow wide. Uhh, what? He's crying?

Now I definitely don't know what to do.

I pull his arms off from around me and slide off the bed, into his lap, and lean against him. He puts his head against my shoulder and continues to cry. He shakes his head back and forth as he sobs. His whole chest heaves as he whimpers and tries to catch his breath. We sit like this for some time until he starts to calm down. It's clear this reaction isn't just because of witches. This is built up stress that he's been holding on to for a long time. I feel a twinge of guilt knowing I am part of that stress. I lean away from him so I can look at his face. Like a big baby, he won't look at me. He lifts his face to the ceiling, stopping me from seeing his tears but it's my turn to wipe tears away. Well, tears and mud, but you get the idea. I press on his chin gently, pushing his face down so he is looking at me square in the face. It's the first time I've seen him with no eyepatch. At first glance, it was a bit jarring to see a long vertical scar where an eye should be. The thought of his scar is fleeting as I look into his eye and see all the pain he has been holding on to.

"Bronx, what's going on?" I use a gentle tone as I caress his cheek, "Please don't hide from me. I can take care of you just as much as you do for me. Please trust me."

He looks at me with a tear welling up again, "I can't pile this shit onto you, Kas. You've been through enough. This is my burden and mine alone. I just -I don't know what to do with it. The biggest threat I've ever sworn to protect my pack from is

witchcraft. After what I went through when I was in the military, I've fought tooth and nail to keep witches and other creatures off of my territory. That bitch didn't just take my eye. She took part of my liver and almost killed me. It's my job to keep my pack safe."

"Now the one thing that can help my mate, the one f*cking thing, is exactly what I have fought so hard against for years, " his voice is shaky as his lip trembles, " I don't know what to do Kas. I need to do what's best for you but I also need to do what's best for the pack, and right now those things are conflicting. I'm not just an Alpha, I'm an Alpha Regent. The word of my decision will get out and everyone will judge me. Maybe even question my authority, regardless of what I decide."

He squishes his muddy head into the crook of my neck and takes a deep shaky breath. I let him stay like that until his breathing settles. We're both going to need showers after this.

"I bet that smells like nothing but mud, " I joke, trying to lighten the mood. I'm also trying to stall until I figure out how I should reply to what he just told me.

"Huhuh, no you always smell like fresh rain and lilacs. Oh, what do I smell like to you?" The sounds of crying fading from his voice.

"Coffee and dark chocolate, it's almost like a mochaccino, " I giggle. He laughs a little before sighing deeply.

I pull him away again so I can look him in the eye, ” Bronx,
next
time, just talk to me. Especially if you or Saint are mad. I
‘m your
mate. I’ m not as fragile as you think I am. We’ re supposed
to be
in this together, right? This is not just you and only you.
This is you and me as a team. I’ m here to support you in all
things and if I’ m going to be Luna someday, it’ s also my
responsibility to keep the pack safe. We can talk through these
sorts of things if you just speak to me instead of walking away.
Besides, I would never want you to make a decision that would
be bad for the pack. More importantly, it’ s not up to you to
make
decisions like this on my behalf. We can talk through the pros
and
cons and decide what is best together.”

“I ‘m sorry. I didn’ t want to hurt you, Kas. I didn’ t want
to say
something in anger that would push you away or make you think
you did something wrong, ” he looks me in the eyes, trying
to
read my expressions.

He’ s been treating me with such care for the past few weeks.
It’ s
like I ‘m a bomb that’ s going to go off at any second. Yes,
I still
have a lot of healing to do, but I ‘m working on it. Who knows,
maybe I’ ll never be fully over all the crap I’ ve endured,
but I
know it was in the past. He is my future.

I take a deep breath. Trying to explain how serious I am
doesn’ t
seem to be getting into his head. I need to take action. Here
goes
nothing. I grip both sides of his face and look him straight
in the

eye as I slowly pull him toward me until our lips touch. Lex is going bonkers in my mind as I pepper his lips with little kisses, each kiss a little longer than the last. I finally close my eyes as I feel butterflies in my chest. The little kisses morph into one slow and soft kiss.

His back stiffens at first contact but Bronx quickly relaxes and pulls me tight against him, holding the back of my head, deepening the kiss. Electricity sparks between us as the kiss becomes more passionate. He adjusts his arms so my entire body was pressed closer to him. I feel him growing harder against my butt. I'm sure he can smell my arousal as he presses his tongue against my lips and I allow him in. We're both breathing heavily as we sit in each other's arms on the floor of his bedroom, losing ourselves in each other.

He finally pulls away trailing little kisses across my face and clears his throat. He had a big smile on his face, "You kissed me."

"Noooo! Don't stop now!" Lex pleads.

"I'm sorry, I should have asked if it was okay," I reply to Bronx, ignoring Lex.

"Oh Goddess, Kas. You never need to ask if it's okay to do that. I

- uh - I've never kissed anyone before, so I wasn't expecting it,"

he confesses shyly. "Really? I just assumed you've had girlfriends before. "

“Uhh, I-well, I’ ve been so focused on military training and the security business and leading the pack plus, I’ ve never given up hope that my mate was out there somewhere. I wanted to save myself for her. I’ ve never had a girlfriend. “ Well, that’ s a surprise. It was the first kiss for both of us.

“Well, as much as I would like to continue kissing you, we, unfortunately, need to get back down to the conference room. Why don’ t you go get your shower and meet me in my suite in half an hour? We can talk about this witch problem before we go back downstairs. “

He nods in agreement and gives me one more tight hug before he helps me stand up and walks me to the door of my suite, both of us covered in sticky mud now. He gives me a small kiss on the forehead and goes to get his shower. I look down the hall to see James trying not to make eye contact with a little smile on his face.

“Don’ t worry, James, ” I call out, winking at him, ” We’ re all safe from the swamp monster. “

“I heard that! ” Bronx’ s muffled voice comes from his apartment.

James smiles as I giggle and go inside my suite to get cleaned up.

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When I come out of the bathroom, Bronx is sitting at the breakfast bar waiting for me. He’ s back to his stoic composed self, looking handsome in a tailored blue suit with an eye patch to

match and a crisp, white shirt unbuttoned at the top. I sit next to

him and place my hand on his arm.

“Bronx, if being trained by witches is the only way to help me,

then that is what I need to do. We have to accept that. Elder Henri is right. I don’ t want to hurt anyone because I don’ t know

what I’ m doing or can’ t control my abilities. I understand your

concerns about witches being here, so I think it would be best for

me to go to them, if they agree to it. That way they don’ t have to

come here and you don’ t have to worry about the pack. We just need to come to an agreement with them on what the terms are for me being there. “

He rubs his hands on his face and sighs thinking about it,

“Alright, Kas, but it would mean we would have to be apart for a

while. Henri’ s pack is too far away for you to come home. I only

agree to this if you are permanently home by winter solstice.

Until then, I would come visit as often as I can but I do have a

pack and business to run. I can’ t be there as often as either of us

would like. “

I feel a pang in my heart thinking about being away from Bronx,

“Would James and Marco be with me at least? “

“Without a doubt. There is no way you are going without them there. They are my two best personal security guards. They’ re loyal and I trust them with your life. They would never let me

down. “

“Okay then. Let’ s go talk to the Elders. ”

He nods and takes my hand. He gives me one more sweet, lingering kiss before we head downstairs.

Bronx' s POV

I was caught off guard when Kas kissed me. Honestly, I had been worried it would be too stressful if I tried to kiss her first.

She is

right. I have been underestimating her and treating her like a

bomb that would go off at any second. I need to trust her and have more faith in her. I also need to figure out how to let her in

without either of us getting hurt and that' s fully on me.

I can' t deny her an opportunity to learn more about her past and

receive training to control her abilities. That would be cruel in

different ways than she has been treated before.

We get to the conference room as the Elders are filing in and taking their seats.

I stand to address the Council, "Gentlemen, thank you for allowing the intermission. We cannot thank you enough for your guidance. My Luna and I have discussed the matter and yes, Henri, we believe it would be beneficial for her to receive training

from the coven you were speaking about, if they are willing to

take her in. We can discuss more details in private. No need to

hold everyone else up. "

The Elders go through the formality of voting on the issue to make sure they are all in agreement and following all the laws.

Henri stays behind after everyone else has left.

"Let' s discuss over dinner, old friend, " I clap him on the shoulder.

"Oh! Can I make dinner? We can eat in your apartment, Bronx, " Kas asks, her face lights up at the thought of getting to cook.

"Kas, you don' t need to do th- "

"Please? I really do miss cooking for people. I' ll even make dessert. It' s just the three of us right? It won' t be a problem at

all,” she begs with an excited twinkle in her violet eyes.
I can’t

deny her when she looks so cute and she is so excited.

“Alright, Henri, I will send an omega to escort you at seven p.m.”

“Alright, see you then,” he smiles, looking from me to Kas and back again.

I take Kas to the kitchen and pick up all the supplies she needs to

make dinner. Mrs. Miller, our head chef, looks at me suspiciously

as Kas goes through the pantry pulling out what she needs. I convince Kas to let two omegas bring everything up to my apartment, along with a full set of pots, pans, and cooking utensils.

I put on some pop music as Kas prepares dinner. She danced around the kitchen with that twinkle in her eye. I’m more of a

heavy metal kind of guy but if listening to BTS and Olivia Rodrigo

makes her happy, then I will listen to pop music.

Kas is in her wheelhouse and there’s no stopping her. The apartment smells like a five star restaurant by the time Henri is

escorted upstairs.

” Oh my! It smells like magic and healing are not your mate’s only

abilities, Bronx,” he and I both laugh heartily as Kas smiles at us

from the kitchen.

” Food will be ready in fifteen minutes, gentlemen. Please, have a

seat. I had the omegas bring up a bottle of wine but I don’t know

much about wine, so I hope you like it.”

“I’m sure it’s perfect, Baby,” I uncork the bottle of cabernet

sauvignon and take it to the seating area. I'm not much of a drinker since I only have part of a liver. The doctor estimates I get drunk at the same rate as a human, which is a little off putting to me. This is kind of a special occasion, so a glass won't be the end of the world.

Henri and I had served in the military together before his son Martin took over his pack and Henri was elected to the Council. Aside from Milo and Reggie, he is one of my best friends even if

we don't get to see each other often. We catch up with each other's lives while we sip the wine. Kas brings over some shrimp

cocktail for us to munch on while we wait. Henri and I are so engrossed in conversation I don't even realize she sets the table

and brings all the food out until she comes over to let us know it's time to eat.

When we get to the table, there are two plates with a rack of lamb, asparagus, and what looks like mashed potatoes with a cream sauce. The third plate has grilled chicken and asparagus. Even though Kas has been doing much better with eating a wider variety of foods, her stomach was not at the point yet where she could tolerate red meats.

Henri's eyes widen with the first bite, "Bronx, are you sure this

lady is not a Michelin rated chef? lokaste, this is the best lamb I

have ever eaten. "

"Please call me Kas, Henri, and thank you. I'm glad you like it,"

she beams.

Henri is right. I don't know what she put in it, but I've never had

such a delicious lamb dish. After we clean our plates, Kas brings out a chocolate souffle for dessert.

“Henri, please excuse me, but I feel like we are close enough friends that I can be more informal with you, ” I motion vaguely.

” Of course, Bronx. We have seen each other at our worst. No formalities necessary.”

Kas sets the souffle dish on the table and puts the dessert on our plates. Before she can sit down, I pull her into my lap, nuzzling her neck. She blushes a little as Henri laughs.

“Ah, mademoiselle, you bring out a side of my friend that I ‘ve never seen before! The beauty soothes the savage beast. Haha! Who is this mystery man?” Henri smiles as he picks up his glass of wine and tips it toward me, “Love looks good on you, mon frère.

I ‘m French, so I know what I ‘m talking about, ” he winks and

takes a bite of the souffle. His eyes cross as he moans. He points at it with his fork, nodding. “I’ m so glad you like it,

Henri, ” Kas smiles.

After we finish with dinner, we move to the back living room to

discuss the details of Kas going to the coven.

It’ s a coven in the south of France who has had a close relationship with the Lune D’ or pack for centuries. Henri assures

me they can be trusted and i n fact, they had trained dozens of

werewolf healers over the years. Since they are in the old world,

they have studied gods and goddesses for many generations.

They are the right people to help Kas.

We discuss my limitations of having her gone until the winter

solstice, having two guards accompany her, and I want to be able

to visit every two weeks. I can't imagine being away from her for

a day let alone two weeks but we are all making sacrifices here. Henri gets up to make a phone call to the coven while Kas and I

sit on the sofa, waiting for him to come back.

"You're so brave, Kas. Going off to be on your own for almost three months? A lot of wolves wouldn't be able to leave their pack

for that long," I say to her. I am more trying to justify for myself than her.

"I have to go, Bronx. I'm going to miss you like crazy and all the

pack members, but I have to do this. For myself, for Lex, and for

everyone around me."

I lean over and kiss her cheek. She sighs with a ragged breath, but looks like she isn't going to let herself cry.

Henri comes back into the room, "Kas, the coven will take you in

two weeks. Bronx, make

arrangements to meet me at my pack. I will drive to the coven's realm from there. "

"Thank you, Henri," Kas says gratefully.

"It's nothing. Who knew it would take a goddess to tame the

mighty Bronx Mason? I am more than happy to help her with anything I can. Thank you so much for dinner, Kas. It was a one

of a kind experience. Until next time my friends, au revoir,"

Henri regards us. We shake hands and an omega sees Henri out.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 22

"Well, you're going to get to go to France. That's so exciting!" I

say as cheerfully as I can once we' re alone.
Kas smiles at me but it doesn' t reach her eyes, " Yeah, I' m
sure I
will be more excited as the date gets closer. Right now, it
makes
me nervous and sad, I guess. "

"Kas, I know it is kind of weird timing but what do you think
about moving into my apartment instead of staying in the suite?
I
mean, if you want to stay in the suite that' s fine too. I just
thought, you know, maybe you would be more
comfortable...here? "

I rub the back of my neck as she looks at me, contemplating
my
request.

"Sooo we would sleep in the same bed? You wouldn' t sleep on
the
sofa anymore like you do in my suite? " she asks tentatively.

"She' s gonna say no! You f*cked up, dummy! " Saint howls.

"Shut up, Saint! "

"Whatever makes you comfortable, Baby. If you want me to sleep
in the bed, I promise I won' t try anything. I want everything
to
be at your pace. If you want me to sleep on the sofa, I can
do
that too. "

"Won' t try anything?! What' s the point?! " Saint continues
to
shout.

Kas looks around my apartment for a bit, then back at me.

"I trust you to sleep in the bed with me and not try
anything, "

she says calmly, "I just want you to promise one thing. "

"Anything, Baby, " I reassured her.

"Never make me wake up alone. If you have to leave, wake me
up and tell me. No more notes or searching for you. It scares
me

and makes me feel so empty when I wake up alone. "

I pick her up into a bear hug and kiss her cheek. She giggles as

my chin scruff tickles her face.

“I promise. You will never wake up alone. I will have someone bring your belongings from the suite tomorrow, okay?”

“Yeah, that sounds good but I need to at least go get pajamas.”

“About that, I have been holding back on you a little bit. I have

something to show you but don’t be mad at me. It was Lenora and Ashley,” I hold my hands in the air.

“Umm, okay?” she says with a confused look.

I lead her into the bedroom and stand at the door to the closet. Why am I so nervous to show her this?

“Cause she’s gonna be pissed off when she realizes how much money you spent on her,” Saint says sarcastically.

“Shut it, Saint,” I growl back at him.

“So after the incident at the mall, Lenora and Ashley brought what you needed to your suite, but they brought everything else here. After that, I think they felt guilty about what happened, so

they went out and got you some more, so…” I open the door to

the closet room and she walks in with her mouth agape.

It hadn’t started as a closet, it was a large storage room.

I don’t

need that much storage space so I had it converted to a closet after my parents moved out. The entire back wall is filled with clothes, shoes, purses, hats, and accessories for Kas. The new upholstered bench sits in the middle of the room. I sit down as

she walks around touching all the clothes in disbelief.

“Everything on this wall is mine?” she asks quietly.

“Well, the long dresses are over there, but yes,” I point to

another wall that has a longer space for dresses and gowns.

“Oh, pajamas and underwear and stuff are in those drawers,”

I

pointed at a built-in dresser.

“And that door leads to the bathroom,” I point to a door on the opposite wall.

“Bronx, this is too much. I don’t need all of this. I don’t even know what to say,” her voice is shaky as she holds her hands against her cheeks.

“Please don’t say no,” I plead as I reach for her hand. She obliges and stands in front of me, “Please let me give all this to you with no strings attached. I want to do this for you, Kas. Money is not important to me. You are. I want to give you everything within my power.”

She looks at me for a moment considering my words.

She sighs deeply, “Okay, well, as long as you don’t let Ashley and

Lenora buy anything else, I’ll give in this one time. I already got a

shower this afternoon so, I’m just going to change into my pajamas and I will be right out.”

“Okay. Thank you so much, Baby. This means so much to me,”

I kiss the top of her head and leave her in the closet to change.

“Shouldn’t I be the one to be saying thank you?” she giggles as

I’m walking away.

“No thanks needed from you, Kas. Trust me. No thanks needed,”

I smile back at her. I step out of the room to give her privacy. Typically, I just sleep in boxers, but that seems a bit inappropriate at this point in our relationship. I wait until she

comes out of the room then go and put on sweatpants.

When I come back from changing, she is standing next to the bed

looking like she' s in deep thought. I feel my eyebrows knit
as I
look closely at her. I realize she' s standing a little too
still. There
is a distinct glow on her skin. It is light purple as if she
is
standing under a colored light. It' s just like Ashley
described from
when Kas had a vision at the mall.

“Kas, Baby? ” I say tentatively. I don' t want to scare her.
I gently
take her hand when she doesn' t respond. Her skin is ice cold
and
I don' t feel the comforting sparks of our mate bond. I don' t
feel
any emotion from her at all.

“Kas?! Answer me, please!” I say, trying not to panic. I
gently pat
her face, but she doesn' t acknowledge my presence.

“Oh Goddess, what now?! Saint whines seeing there is something
wrong.

Her eyes are open but she isn' t blinking; they are glazed over
like

her mind is a million miles away. A tear rolls down her cheek.
Suddenly, she sucks in a deep breath and coughs like she is
choking. She looks around the room in a panic as if she just
got

there. Her face goes pale and she throws her arms around me
when she realizes I am kneeling in front of her. The sparks
between us were back.

“It' s okay, Kas. I' m here. You' re safe. What happened, Baby?
Did
you see something?” I ask, patting her back trying to help
her
clear her coughing fit. When she is able to catch her breath,
she
starts to try to explain.

“A fire. It was so hot. I could feel it burning my skin. You were g?gone. I couldn’ t sa-,” she speaks quickly with panic in her voice,

her words are not making sense.

“Where was this fire, Kas? Can you remember any details?”

I ask

as I smooth back her hair, trying to calm her down.

“Here. In the packhouse,” she shuts her eyes tightly, trying to

remember, “There are winter solstice decorations up. It’ s dark

outside. That’ s all I can remember, I’ m sorry.”

“It’ s alright. Tell you what, I’ m going to have electricians check

the whole packhouse, make sure everything is safe. Okay? But it

sounds like we have enough time that we can prevent a fire from happening.”

Kas’ s POV

Ryan is glaring at me through this whole meal. I ‘m certain he is

going to jump up and tell everyone my secret. My heart is pounding in my chest. They’ re going to execute me for sure.

I

need to get out of the dining room before anyone realizes how nervous I a

The smell of smoke and fire hits my nose. Wasn’ t I just serving food? Don’ t be stupid, Kas, you’ re a member of Blood River now.

I look around and see the orange glow of fire in the living room. I

run to the door to find the room is consumed with flames. The fake tree we have set up for the winter solstice looks like it was

melting, some branches starting to catch fire. I can hear people

in the hallway screaming.

I run back to the bedroom to wake Bronx up, “Bronx! Wake up!

We have to get out!”

I shake him but he doesn’ t budge. His skin is cold even though the room is getting hotter by the second. I focus past the smell of

fire. He smells like whiskey and wolfsbane.

Oh shit, oh shit. What should I do?

“Don’ t panic, Kas. You’ re a healer, you can save him. We learned

about this. Come on!” I hear Lex but I can’ t feel her.

I fight back tears of panic as I place one hand on Bronx’ s chest

and one on his forehead. The familiar warmth followed by a sting of pain filled me. He’ s gone. I can’ t save him. The smoke is taking

over my lungs and the flames of the fire is starting to lick at my

skin.

I suck in a deep breath of fresh air and cough the smoke out.

I

look up and see my mate kneeling in front of me. There is no fire.

Bronx is wide awake, looking worriedly at me.

“It’ s okay, Kas. I’ m here. You’ re safe. What happened, Baby?

Did

you see something?” He asks, patting my back. I catch my breath and stop coughing. My dream is already fading from my mind.

I

have to tell him quickly before it is gone.

“A fire. It was so hot. I could feel it burning my skin. You were g?gone. I couldn’ t sa-,” I say quickly.

“Where was this fire, Kas? Can you remember any details? ”

Bronx asks as he smooths back my hair, trying to calm me down.

“Here. In the packhouse,” I shut my eyes, trying to remember the fading images, “There are winter solstice decorations up.

It’ s

dark outside. That’ s all I can remember, I’ m sorry.”

He reassures me he is going to hire an electrician to do a safety

check of all the wiring. As he' s speaking details of the vision
turn

to blurry images in my mind. I remember trying to wake him up.
He was sleeping. Then the memory fades and it is gone.

I look up and realize he isn' t wearing a shirt. Other than
when he

was covered in mud, I had never seen him shirtless. He has
tattoos covering his whole body. His muscular chest and
chiseled

abs are on full display. He has a huge jagged scar right below
his

ribs on the left hand side. He stands up making his sweatpants
hang low on his hips.

I feel myself blush. Of all the werewolves in the world, how
did I

luck out on this Adonis? I shouldn' t say that. I don' t know
enough

about mythology, Adonis could be my cousin or something.

“Oh my Goddess, ” Lex swoons, “does this mean we get to mate
now?”

“No Lex, but he is pretty sexy, right?” “Mmmhmm” she purrs.
After I reassure Bronx I' m alright, he gives me a little kiss
and we

climb into bed. It' s kind of awkward at first. Usually he
doesn' t

get in my bed unless it' s to wake me up from a nightmare.

Eventually, I snuggle up in the crook of his arm, using
his shoulder as a pillow. I let his coffee and dark chocolate
scent

calm me and fall asleep peacefully in my mate' s arms.

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chapter 23

Bronx' s POV

I wake up in the morning to find Kas and my bodies are
completely intertwined. She didn' t wake up once all night.

No

crying, no nightmares, or screaming. Just peaceful sleep. I
nuzzle

her sparkly silver hair, breathing in her scent feeling completely content.

Feeling her all over me, combined with her scent and our mate bond, I start to get aroused.

Saint howls with excitement, “Okay, wake her up so we can mate already! “

“Stop it, Saint.”

“Can we at least mark her?” “Saint, I said knock it off.”

“Prude.”

Just then, Kas rolls away from me with a sleepy little groan as

she rubs her eyes and opens them, “It’ s morning already?”

“Yeah, Baby. You slept all night! How do you feel?” I sit up and

realize her legs are still draped over mine.

” Really good! ” She sits up and stretches. I see the top buttons

of her shirt have come undone. I turn my head with a gulp. My movement makes her look down and gasp. Seeing she’ s almost exposed, she instinctively turns toward me for protection and presses her body against me to hide.

The Goddess is testing me for sure.

” Fail the test ! Fail the test ! ” Saint chants in my mind as he tries

to push his way to the front.

” Kas, I told you I would control myself. If I’ m going to keep that

promise, I need to get up and go get a cold shower right now.

This was only our first night together. I don’ t want to press my

luck. ”

A mischievous look comes across her face. I don’ t think she realizes her violet eyes flash as Lex comes close to the surface.

Kas speaks, but it isn’ t her voice. Lex’ s voice comes through huskier and more confident than Kas, ” Bronx, before you go

I

just want to give you a little kiss.”

Before I can stop her, she crawls up on my lap and straddles me.

I can't help but let out a low growl as I feel her press the skin of

her half open shirt against my chest and she starts kissing me.

My hands grip her hips tightly, pulling her closer until she is

pressed against my aroused cock. She takes my hands and moves them for me so one is caressing her breast under her shirt, the other firmly on her ass. I rub and gently pull on her

nipple while we kiss. I don't even realize what I'm doing as my

mouth leaves hers and moves down her neck. I start to lick and suck on the spot I will mark her and she lets out a little moan at

the sensation. She breathes heavily as she nibbles on my ear, holding the back of my neck. The body heat between us makes me want to be even closer to her.

I don't notice my fangs are extended until I feel the pressure of

her skin starting to puncture and she lets out a moaning growl of

pleasure, bringing me to my senses.

Whoa. No. Wait. No. I was about to mark her? What the Hell was I thinking? I push Saint as far back in my mind as I can. It's way

too soon. We can not mark each other yet. We have no idea what would happen to either of us if we did and I 'm not willing to risk

it until after we know her powers are under control.

I snap out of it and I open my eyes. I see Kas is glowing purple. No, WE are glowing purple. It's the sobering reminder that we

don't know the full extent of her powers.

“Nope nope nope. Not today, Kas. Nope, I made a promise. I

-

and - nope. We’ re glowing and I can’ t wait it’ s just I just nope, ” I can’ t even make a complete sentence. I pick her up off of me, put her on the bed, and run to the bathroom as

fast as I can. I turn the shower on and stand under the freezing water for what seems like forever until I’ m calmed down and no

longer glowing.

“You’ re such a buzzkill, ” Saint chides after I chastise him for

trying to mark Kas.

By the time I shower, change, and come out of the closet room, Kas had already changed into a dress and braided her hair.

“I’ m sorry, Bronx. I’ m not quite sure what came over me. I - “

“It’ s okay, Baby. You don’ t need to apologize. Our bond is strong.

Our wolves’ s bond is strong. I’ m an Alpha Regent and you’ re a

literal goddess. Of course the closer we are to each other, the

more we want to, you know, be with each other. We met each other

over a month ago and just kissed for the first time yesterday.

Saint and Lex are definitely influencing us. We just need to hold

out. “

She nods, looking a little embarrassed, “Okay, you’ re right. I’ m

glad you’ re not mad. I’ m a little disappointed in myself. “

“But did you like it?” I smirk at her as I grab her waist and pull

her toward me.

She scrunches her nose at me and sticks her tongue out, “Let’ s get breakfast. “

The next two weeks fly by in a heartbeat. I get back to my

regular schedule. Training at five a.m. with the pack warriors, going into the office at my security company headquarters. Kas starts spending more time in the kitchens. She and Mrs. Miller become close and trade cooking secrets and techniques. Everyone in the pack notices the difference in the quality of our meals, especially the desserts.

The night before she leaves, I make the announcement to the pack that Kas would be going away for training. It is an emotional moment for the entire pack. Everyone already loves her and no one wants her to leave, even if it is temporary.

Kas' s POV

It' s the night before leave for France. I' m sitting on Bronx' s lap on the sofa. We' re just holding each other, sitting in comfortable silence. I know I' m going to see him in two weeks, but thinking about being away from him already hurts my heart.

“Bronx, please do me a favor while I' m away, ” I request. It was

something that had been nagging at me for the past two weeks.

“Anything, Baby. What is it? “

“Please don' t drink whiskey while I' m gone. I don' t know why exactly, but I feel like you shouldn' t.”

“Whiskey? That' s pretty specific. Does it have to do with a vision? “

“I -I can' t remember, but it feels important. Just don' t drink whiskey, okay? “

“Okay, Baby. I won' t. I promise, ” he kisses my temple, “Let' s go to bed. It' s going to be a long day tomorrow. “

We go to bed, but spend most of the night snuggling and making out. Five a.m. comes too early. The trip to the airport takes about

two hours and we were ushered onto a private plane. Bronx is the

last one on the plane because he insists he needs a cigarette before the flight. I have never flown before and I'm really nervous.

Bronx holds my hand until I fall asleep about an hour into the flight. It's dark when we reach France, but from what I can see it

is beautiful. Henri arranged for cars to pick us up. We have a nice

dinner with his pack and a delicious breakfast. I even sneak into

the kitchen to learn how they make croissants before we leave for

the coven's realm.

The coven is a couple of hours away from the pack territory.

I

hold Bronx's hand tightly when our driver tells us we're close. We

reach the edge of the realm, which seems to be a giant golden gate in the middle of the road. Three women dressed in white are

standing in front of the golden fence, waiting for us. Henri and

Bronx get out and speak to the women for a few minutes then come back to the SUV.

"Alright Kas, James, Marco, this is where we leave you. The witches won't allow us to go into their realm until it's time for my

prearranged visit. James and Marco, your orders are the same for

the next eight weeks as they have been for the past month, " Bronx informs us.

I step out of the vehicle straight into Bronx's waiting arms. He

picks me up so I am at eye level with him and crashes his lips into mine. When he finally pulls away, I can see a tear welling up

in his eye.

“Kas, I’ ll be back in two weeks. Until then, you need to give your

cell phone to Marco. The witches said you need to have complete focus during your training. No contact between us, but James and

Marco will be able to contact me at any time. If you need anything and I mean anything, ask them to call me right away. “ I gently kiss his cheek, “Alright, two weeks. You once told me I

was the bravest wolf you know. Be as brave as me, alright? “

“You always seem to know just what to say,” he smiles as he nuzzled my cheek.

We kiss again before he puts me down. James and Marco take our bags and we walk to the women. I look back to see Bronx and Henri watching. Henri has his hand on Bronx’ s shoulder. Bronx has already lit a cigarette. I can feel his sadness and worry. Lex is howling about having to be away from her mate.

“Hello, I’ m Kas. This is James and Marco. It’ s a pleasure to meet you,” I say as I make the introductions.

The women appear to be triplets. The one in the center speaks, her voice is warm and welcoming, ” Hello Luna lokaste, we know who you are. I’ m Sister Penny, this is Sister Rachel and Sister Celia. It’ s a pleasure to meet you as well. Are you ready to learn

more about who you are? “

“Yes, yes I am,” I reply as confidently as I can muster. All three

women reach out their hands.

“We are going to portal to our coven house. It won’ t hurt, but it

can be a little disorienting. Since you need to be willing participants, we will wait until all three of you have willingly taken

our hands to leave, ” James and Marco obediently take Rachel and

Celia's hands. I turn and take one last look at Bronx, who is watching intently. I feel my hand slide into Penny's. As soon as we're all connected with the women, we're standing in the hallway of what appears to be a large old estate home. I feel odd in those first few moments. I realize I can't feel my mate bond with Bronx and start to panic a little. I grab Marco's sleeve and grip tightly.

"Are you alright, Luna?" he asks with a concerned voice. He drops the bags he's holding and turns me to face him.

"I - Marco, something's wrong. I can't feel my connection with Bronx," I say quietly, forcing myself not to cry.

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chapter 24

"Welcome Luna lokaste, welcome gentlemen. I'm Lady Camille, mother of this coven," an older woman standing in the middle of

the entryway welcomes us, "Luna lokaste, you are correct. You will not be able to feel your bond with your mate while you are in our realm unless he is here with you.

Never fear, we have spells that will help you overcome this feeling so you can concentrate on your studies and training.

We will show you to your rooms in a few minutes, but first we need to go over some rules. "

Marco pats my hand, "Give it a chance, Luna. If it's too much of a problem, I'll call the Alpha. "

Lady Camille begins as if she didn't hear what Marco just said, "

Now, the first thing to know is you will not be able to speak about

the things we do here. Our land has an enchantment that will prevent you from being able to do so.

“The second thing is that your weapons and cell phones will not

work here, gentlemen. You’ re welcome to escort Luna lokaste anywhere you want, but I assure you, the three of you have never been safer. If you need your cell phones, please ask and we will open up a connection to the outside world. “

I look at James and Marco who are looking at each other with furrowed brows. James looks at Lady Camille and nods once in understanding.

“And finally, time works differently here. Alpha Regent Bronx Mason will return in two weeks for a visit, but it is going to seem

more like two months for the three of you. I understand that it’ s

a long time for a werewolf to be away from your pack, but I assure you, we will do our best to make you comfortable. Luna Lokaste , we will bring dinner to your room tonight. Please have

your guards join you for this evening’ s meal so the three of you

can get acclimated. We will introduce you all to the coven tomorrow morning. Speaking of which, starting tomorrow and for the next eight months, we will begin our days at six in the morning. Now, sisters, please show these three to their rooms. I’ m sure they must all need some rest. ”

” Thank you, Lady Camille. Please, you and the rest of your coven

can call me Kas. ”

” Oh no, Luna lokaste. You will find that there is power in a name.

While you are here, we will address you by your Goddess-given name, ” she smiles warmly and turns away.

“It’ s gonna be a long eight months, ” Lex sighs.

Bronx’ s POV

They told us they were going to portal, but it was still jarring to

see Kas there one second and gone the next. Just like Sister Penny said, the moment they disappear, I can't feel Kas's connection. My heart feels empty and Saint howls mournfully in my head.

He doesn't understand why his mate needs to leave.

I light another cigarette and take a few deep drags before I drop

it and snuff it with my foot. It isn't making me feel any better about the situation. I sigh deeply and get back in the car.

Henri

tries to make small talk but I'm not interested.

Saint's mood changes from sadness to anger. He snarls and tries

to push to the surface, "You son of a bitch, you just let them take

our mate away? How could you do this to us?"

"Saint, it's temporary. We need to do this for Kas and Elexis. They deserve to know who they are. We owe it to them to be able to reach their full potential, " I try to justify to him for the

hundredth time. It's takes everything I have to push him back and

stop him from shifting.

"If they harm a hair on my mate's head, I'm disowning you, " he

snarls. I don't respond. I'm hurting just as much as he is. He

doesn't say another word, he just crawls to a back corner of my

mind and curls up. I can feel his pain, but there is nothing I can

do about it. Between the distance from Kas and Saint's tantrum, I

feel lost and exhausted. I close my eyes for a moment. Henri wakes me up when we get to his packhouse. I feel like I'm going through the motions as I get out of the car and into the castle.

I

don' t leave my room for dinner, so Henri' s wife brings a tray up

to me. I push the food around the plate before I put it in the kitchenette sink and lay down. I look at pictures of Kas on my

phone until I fall asleep. I leave early the next morning , without

saying goodbye to anyone except Henri. I feel homesick.

Two weeks. I can do this. I don' t have a choice.

When I land, I have a missed call from Marco. I listen to the voicemail reassuring me that Kas has settled in and things are going well. James would call again when he had the opportunity but cell reception is spotty, so it may not be as regular as I would

like. It is such a generic message. No real details, no intel on the

coven, just a check-in. I dismiss it as me being exhausted.

I trust

him and James to keep Kas safe. I have to. Their situation is currently out of my control.

I find Milo and Reggie in the kitchen having an afternoon snack.

“Man, you look like shit!” Reggie says, putting down his sandwich.

“You don' t say,” I rub my hands on my face like I always do when

I' m frustrated.

“Wanna go for a run? Get your mind off of things?” Milo offers.

Normally I would say yes, but Saint is in such a bad mood that he

just yells NO from the back of my mind and shuts down our link again.

” I don' t think that' s a good idea. Where' s Cason? I need a

distraction. I want some ink.”

“He' s down in the weight room. Want me to get him for ya?”

Milo

asks.

“Yeah. I’ m gonna shower then meet him at his shop.
Carson is from a small French Canadian pack. His father was killed in an attack when he was just a pup. His mother found a second chance mate with one of our warriors, so they came to Blood River when he was fourteen. He started tattooing when he was seventeen and has been my tattoo artist since my first taste of ink. Over the years, he has turned my body into a work of art. But he isn’ t just my tattoo artist, he’ s like an unofficial therapist. Not just for me, for anyone who sits in his chair. I walk to his shop down the road from the packhouse about an hour later. He is ready and waiting when I get there. Fortunately for me, he is an artistic genius. I give him a shitty description of what I have in mind, show him several pictures, and he magically sketches out what’ s in my brain. We talk about Kas and all the things that make her so special. From her bubbly, caring personality, her love of cooking, I also touch on her past a bit. I even tell him about her abilities being the reason she has to go to France. “Sounds like she is going to be a great Luna. You’ re a lucky guy Alpha Bronx, ” he says with his thick French accent. It takes a couple of hours to complete the design on my quad. The result was a realistic pair of violet eyes that look just like the pictures I had shown him, with lokaste written below it in his signature script writing. The ‘Kas’ part of her name is a little larger than the rest of the letters. It’ s perfect. I join the pack for dinner but I’ m completely distracted. I don’ t

have much to say and even after sitting with Cason for a couple hours, I 'm still in a bad mood. Everyone can feel it, making dinner a subdued event. I push food around my plate until I' ve had enough. Lenora makes me eat a couple of bland breadsticks, then I go to my apartment.

I flop face first on the sofa and scream into a pillow. After a while,

I hear the door open but I don' t look up from the pillow. It' s either Lenora or my parents. They' re the only ones who have a key.

"Honey, I heard you had to send your mate away. Are you alright?" Mom' s sweet voice fills the room.

" Come on champ, no sulking. Let' s get you up and get some grub in you. Lenora says you didn' t eat dinner and Henri texted me to say he was worried about you," Dad says as he follows in

behind Mom. He heads straight to the kitchen to make me dinner. In my dad' s eyes, food cures all ailments. I can' t wait for him to

meet Kas. He isn' t a great cook but he could make a mean hoagie.

I get off the sofa and give my morn a bone crushing bear hug. She can handle it, I' ve been doing it for years. She and Dad were

both in the military when they were younger. That' s how they met. Before she retired, she was one of the pack' s lead trainers.

After I took over, they retired and moved into a house near the packhouse but they travel a lot so I didn' t get to see them often.

They were a great Alpha Regent and Luna, they deserve the time to relax.

"I miss her, Mom. I feel like I have a crater—sized hole in my heart, " I sigh as I lean against her.

She pats my back, “It’ s going to be okay, Honey. Lenora filled us

in. You get to see her in a couple of weeks right?”

“Yeah, ” I sigh. She pulls out of our hug and looks at me, her

green eyes sparkling. She pats my cheek sympathetically. Just then Dad comes out of the kitchen with a giant meatball hoagie. We sit at the table while I eat and tell them all about Kas. The

bad and the good. I show them pictures of her on my cell phone. I keep flipping back until I get to the first one I ever took of her.

It is of her back. Raw and bleeding. I had to send it to the Elder

Council to get them to make an appearance at Silver Moon. I flip

to the next picture, it is her dungeon room. The next picture is

from our hospital wing, showing her healed scars, then pictures of

us together, and ones of her that she didn’ t realize I took in the

library and in the gardens.

“Well, she certainly looks beautiful, scarred or not. And it sounds

and looks like she’ s a strong young lady, Bronx. We can’ t wait to

meet her. When will she be back?” Dad asks.

“In time for winter solstice, ” I lean back in my seat with a sigh.

“Perfect. We should be back from Japan just in time to meet her, ”

Mom says cheerfully.

I finish my food as they tell me all about their trip to Peru.

They

stay for a couple of hours as we catch up on pack and security business things before they head home. They are leaving again

in

a few days and won't be back until the week before the winter solstice, the same time Kas will be back.

It's difficult to fall asleep. I realize Kas' s old green and grey

comforter is neatly folded over the loveseat in the sitting area of

the bedroom. I don't understand why she insists on keeping it,

but she uses it every time she takes a nap. I pick it up and hold it

to my nose. It smells just like her. I drag the blanket to the bed

and hold it against me. I feel a little calmer, but still not able to

sleep.

"You did this to us, man. You let her leave, " Saint reminds me

for the umpteenth time.

It's going to be a long two weeks.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 25

The first few days, I let myself wallow in my own misery, moping around the apartment. I don't even shower. I spend a lot of time

on the balcony, letting cigarette butts pile up in the ashtray.

When I can't stand the silence anymore, I throw myself into work. I get to the office by seven in the morning and leave after

eleven at night every day. After three days, I realize Carly is

working the same hours to try to keep up and looks exhausted.

I

let her know she doesn't need to stay the long hours I do, she

can work her regular hours. She seems relieved and grateful.

Milo

and Lenora distract me over the weekend with movies and

shopping. I don' t need anything for myself but I picked up some kitchen gadgets for Kas as winter solstice gifts. On day eleven, I woke up ready to train. Saint has the itch to spar, which is bad news for my sparring partners.

I get to the training grounds and let the trainers know to queue warriors up so I can burn some energy. They already know what to do when I' m in a mood like this. They pair up experienced warriors and triple up new trainees to spar against me. I burn through all the pairs until I get to Milo and Reggie. They' re the only warriors that are an actual challenge for me, the others are just warm-ups.

“Ready or not, here we come! ” Milo teases.

They lunge at me simultaneously. Milo to my upper body, Reggie to my lower body. I lean back and roll, bringing both of them with me as I fall. I hop up from the roll, facing them. They pop up ready to lunge again.

Ding.

I hear a little bell. No one around me seems to acknowledge the sound. I stand up from my defensive stance, looking around confused, just as Milo throws a vicious right hook. I fall to the ground like a ton of bricks. I can hear gasps around the ring.

“Bronx, are you okay, man? You didn' t even defend yourself! ”

Milo runs over, picking me up off the ground.

“I -I got distracted, ” I say, more to myself than Milo.

“Saint, did you hear a bell?”

“Yeah, but where did it come from?” he sounds a bit dazed.

Ding.

The sound chimes again but this time it feels like it vibrates my

bones making me feel dizzy. The smell of fresh rain and lilacs fills

my nose.

“Kas?” A sharp pain rips through my head. I press my palms to

my temples and grimace, “Kas is that you, Baby?”

“Bronx, Kas isn’ t here, she’ s in France, ” Reggie’ s face appears in

front of me looking worried.

Ding.

The bell is so loud that I can’ t concentrate on anything else.

I

start to feel disoriented and nauseous. Oh Goddess, I’ m gonna puke. I lean forward as my stomach churns, dry heaving from the

sensation.

Ding.

The sound shakes me so hard that I fall to my knees. “You guys don’ t hear that bell?”

“There’ s no bell, Alpha, ” the trainer is looking into my eye now,

“follow my fingers.”

Ding.

My vision is spinning wildly now. I fall forward onto my hands before my vision fades and I black out.

I wake up in the middle of the night in the hospital wing. My head

is throbbing. Nothing a little aspirin won’ t fix. Otherwise, I feel

fine.

Milo is in a chair on the other side of the room with Lenora in his

lap. They’ re both sound asleep. The clock on the wall says one?thirty.

Damn, I was out all day? “Saint what happened?”

“That bell sound did something to us.” “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Just a little confused. We’ ve been through worse. Time to

get up, buddy. You know the drill.”

Saint and I have an agreement. When either of us is injured, we

get up as soon as we are able. Staying down is dangerous.

That’ s

when you’ re most

vulnerable. That’ s when body parts disappear. We need to assess

the treatment we need and keep moving. Right now, I need a running faucet, enough water to hydrate an elephant, and aspirin.

I could also go for a cigarette.

I swing my legs over the side of the bed and stand up. My legs are a little shaky, but a couple of steps gets them back to normal.

I walk over to Lenora and Milo.

“Leni, Milo,” I use Lenora’ s childhood nickname as I pat her cheek.

Lenora’ s eyes open slowly, then widen when she sees me.

“Oh! Bronx!” She cries as she launches herself at me for a crushing hug. I easily catch her and set her down.

Milo rubs his eyes awake with a big yawn, “See Sugar, I told you

he’ d be okay. He just needed a nap, like little pups do.”

“I can’ t believe I was out all day! That was a Hell of a punch, Milo. But don’ t worry, payback’ s a bitch, ” I chuckle. Milo stands

up and claps my back.

“Bronx, you weren’ t out for a day you- “

Just then the doctor and a nurse come in, “Alpha Bronx, please sit down so we can give you a look over.

I obediently sit in the chair next to the bed while the nurse checks my vitals and the doctor asks some general questions.

“A bell and your mate’s scent?” He looks concerned, “Alpha, with your medical history, I want to do a brain scan before you leave.

Phantom sounds and smells are symptoms of a stroke. As is, you slept for thirty—six hours.”

“Thirty-six hours! What the f*ck are you talking about?” I jump

up from the seat, startling the nurse, “I have to leave to see Kas!

You can scan my brain when I get back, doc.”

“Now Alpha, you still have five hours before your flight leaves. I

will have you out of the hospital wing in forty-five minutes.

Still

plenty of time to pack and get to the airport. I promise. I won’t

feel comfortable having you fly until we do the test, ” the doctor

insists.

I grumble and growl as he makes me sit in a wheelchair. I feel like an invalid. I can walk just fine. As soon as the scan is done

Lenora is waiting for me with fresh clothes, my suitcase already

packed, and all my travel documents.

“Be safe, Bronx. You’re the only big brother I have and you scared the crap out of us, ” she says softly.

“Thank you, Leni. You’re the best, ” I praise her and give her a

kiss on the cheek.

Milo and I salute each other and I leave for the airport. A headache is not keeping me from my mate.

By the time I get to the airport, my headache has subsided but now I ‘m anxious about getting to see Kas. The flight seems like

it’s taking an eternity. All I can think about is her. Even Saint,

who has given me the silent treatment for the past two weeks,
is
starting to stir. Henri left a Maserati with keys at the airport
so I
don't have to wait for a driver. I have to remember to thank
him.

I race like the wind down the country roads until I reach the
gate
to the witches' realm. An older woman is standing in front
of the
gate. I park the car in the grass next to the road and grab
my
knapsack.

"Hello Alpha Regent Bronx Mason, Lady Camille, Mother of this
coven. I 'm sure you' re ready to see your mate," she smiles,
"but

before we go, let' s sit and discuss her progress so far."

"Alpha Bronx is fine, Lady Camille. I save the formal
vernacular
for ceremonies and public events."

She nods in confirmation. In all honesty, I don't want her
using
my full name and title because I know it will give her power
over
me.

She motions behind me with her hand. I turn around to find a
bench behind me that was not there a moment before. I stare
at

it tentatively until Lady Camille gently takes my elbow and
leads
me to it. I stiffen at her touch.

"I understand your hesitation based on your history with
witches,
Alpha Bronx, but I assure you, everyone within our borders has
nothing but good intentions for you, your mate, and your
guards."

Something about her voice is so soothing, like a lullaby, that
I

begin to relax as I listen to her. In the back of my mind, I'm certain it must be some sort of magic, but I can't be sure.

We

speak for the next hour about Kas and how quickly she is learning. She is impressed with how quickly Kas is harnessing control of her abilities and how strong she has become.

"Lady Camille, is there any possibility what Kas is learning here

could have affected me?" I tell her about the bell incident.

"Interesting. I believe yes, that is a possibility. She has been

working on meditation and searching the universe with her spirit.

None of us realized she was powerful enough to make contact from half the world away. We have been using a bell to hone her

focus," she taps her fingers on her chin as she thinks, "Somehow that concentrated energy must have reached you. I truly apologize. The good news is, this information helps us craft

the next stage of her training and we can take your safety into better consideration."

"Alright, anything else?" I ask. I just want to see Kas but I don't

want to be disrespectful of the leader of the coven.

"Ah, yes actually. You and I are going to have a decision to make," she says in a serious tone, "Your guard James has found his mate. We have time to decide what will be best for our coven and your pack, but I thought you should know."

"James's mate is a witch?" I ask skeptically.

"It seems that way. We can discuss the matter in more detail later. Now, are you ready to see your mate?"

"Lady Camille, ready is an understatement," I smile as I stand,

smoothing my clothes.

I look at her outstretched hand, hesitant for just a moment, before I place my hand in hers and we're in the entryway of a

a

French estate home. Before I can object, one of the sisters takes

my bag for me and I'm led to a sitting room. Everything is colonial French decor. Light and airy, with lots of wide open double doors looking out onto gardens. The fresh air smells intoxicating.

I get the sense that seasons don't exist here. Outside the gate, a

November chill is in the air, and leaves on trees are falling. Everything here looks lush and green as if spring is ending and

summer is just beginning.

I take a deep breath and the smell of fresh rain and lilacs fills my

nose.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 26

I hear a familiar giggle that warms my soul. I turn to find the

most gorgeous woman in the world standing in front of me. She's wearing leggings and a linen sleeveless tunic style top. She's gained weight since the last time I saw her, filling out her curves.

Her skin has a sun-kissed glow that makes a few freckles pop on

her nose and cheeks. My heart skips a beat at the sight of my mate.

She bounces on her toes and runs to me.

"Bronx!" she squeals as she jumps into my outstretched arms. Sparks fly between us as our bodies collide.

"Kas! Oh, Goddess, it's so good to see you. You look amazing," I

say as I pepper her face with kisses and plant one on her mouth.

"Luna lokaste, dinner is in two hours. Why don't you show Alpha

Bronx around in the meantime?" Lady Camille suggests as she seems to appear out of nowhere.

“Yes, ma’ am, ” Kas says but doesn’ t take her eyes off of me.

“Bronx, I have learned so much already. Lex and I are so close now. It’ s practically like we’ re the same spirit, ” Kas speaks

excitedly as we walk around the coven house grounds. I notice Marco following at a distance, giving us plenty of space. Good.

I

am glad to see he is committed to his job.

“Oh, did Lady Camille tell you about James and Sister Delilah?”

she says with sparkling eyes.

“Yeah, Baby, she said she and I have decisions to make before you guys leave. We can worry about that later, ” I reassure her.

We stop at a bench next to the path we’ re walking on. I sit down

and pull her into my lap. We sit there holding each other, talking

about how things have been. She seems to have done a lot in two

weeks. The more she tells me the more I don’ t know how she possibly had the time to do it all. As she sits on my lap, our conversation melts into nothing more than slow, soft kisses until

a woman comes up to us and clears her throat.

“My apologies for the interruption, Alpha Bronx, Luna lokaste, but

dinner will be served in ten minutes, ” she says with a blush.

“Thank you, Sister Renee, ” Kas says gratefully. She stands up

and takes my hand.

We go inside to a large dining room with three long tables that take up the length of the room. There are benches instead of chairs. Approximately a hundred women are talking and laughing with each other in their seats.

They all stop when they see Kas and me. They stand in unison and bow, showing their respect to me. I

bow in return feeling self conscious as I realize I am the only person who is not female in the room. They all go back to sitting but quietly, as Lady Camille stands at the center of the room on a small platform.

“Sisters, as you know, Luna Iokaste’s mate has arrived for a visit.

Please make him feel welcome over the next two days. In other news, tonight is the full moon. Alpha Bronx, your Luna wanted to surprise you with the news, so please, Luna Iokaste, go ahead.”

Kas stands up from her seat with an ear to ear smile and turns to

face me, “Bronx, tonight I get to shift for the first time. Will you please shift with me?”

I stare at Kas in excited disbelief until I realize she is waiting for

me to answer her, “Y-yes. Oh my Goddess, Kas, of course I will shift with you! I would be honored. “

“Wonderful! Sisters, we will all meet at eleven in the courtyard

tonight in support of Luna Iokaste,” Lady Camille announces. Cheers erupt around the room. I look at Kas who’s smiling broadly at me with happy tears in her eyes.

Saint is practically doing backflips in my head.

Lady Camille sits down across from us and explains the details of

the ceremony to honor both of our gods and goddesses before the shift.

The next several hours are a bit of a whirlwind. Kas says many of

the sisters of the coven have never seen a werewolf shift before.

So this is exciting for them for many reasons.

While they’re prepping Kas for the ceremony, I go to find James.

I find his and Marco' s rooms are on either side of Kas' s. It makes me feel a little better that they are protecting her from both sides.

“Alpha, I' m so glad you' re here. Permission to speak about a personal matter, Sir,” he requests after letting me into his room.

“Of course, James. You know you always have my ear, I reassure him.

He leads me to a small table and asks me to sit while he gets us

glasses of water. He sits down and starts to tell me about his mate; I can see he' s head over heels in love. I know the feeling.

I tell him to enjoy his time with her and that we will figure out

what to do before it' s time for him to leave this place. He seems

relieved, then shows me pictures of the beautiful young woman. She' s tall and thin with light brown hair and blue eyes that sparkle.

“James, I don' t know much about what happens when witches fall

in love, but I do know werewolves can get distracted easily, ”

I look at him seriously, hoping I don' t have to spell out my concerns.

“Don' t worry, Alpha, the Luna is always my number one priority.

Delilah and I meet up when it' s Marco' s watch and she knows not

to disturb me when I' m on duty. ”

“Good, ” I pause for a moment. I attempt to soften my tone.

I try imagining I' m talking to Milo or Reggie, “So, do you love her?”

He looks at me with a bit of surprise at my relaxed tone. I'm his Alpha. I never talk about personal relationships. When he realizes it isn't a trick question, his shoulders relax and he puts his hand on his heart.

"Alpha, she's amazing. She smells like apples and honey and her eyes change color depending on her mood. She is so caring and sweet. I just want to be close to her all the time."

I laugh at the big burly warrior in front of me pining over his mate. I've seen him take down a werebear in a battle once. I

can't imagine him being the complete opposite with his mate. People probably think the same about me, I imagine.

"I completely understand, James. Trust me, I completely understand," I clap his shoulder and leave his room.

I find Marco in the hallway standing guard outside Kas's room.

"Marco, at ease," I say as I walk into the hallway. "Hello, Alpha.

Good to see you."

"Thank you. How are you, Marco? We miss seeing you at the packhouse. Training isn't the same without you," I smile. He

looks at me the same as James. Confused at my relaxed conversation.

"Things here are...tranquil...always. It can be unnerving because everything is so perfect. Like too perfect, ya know. But we've adjusted. James found his mate, they've been together for almost the whole two months now. I'm happy for him."

"Two months? Marco, you've only been here two weeks." His face looks concerned, "Alpha, no one told you? Time is different here. A week for you in the real world is a month for

us.”

I feel the blood drain from my face.

“So you’re saying when I leave here Sunday, it’s only going to be

a few hours passed when I get in my car?

“I guess. It’s kinda hard to think about, like, it doesn’t click in my brain exactly.”

Saint growls in my mind. It seems torturous to keep a werewolf away from their pack for eight weeks let alone eight months.

No

one had told me about the change in time when we agreed to this arrangement. I try not to let anger swirl in my mind.

“A-are you alright? I mean, alone…here.”

” Oddly, yeah. I just remind myself it’s for the Luna and it’s

temporary. I will appreciate being home so much more once I get

there.”

“And the Luna, how has she been holding up?”

“They keep her busy. It’s like basic training, but more mental

workouts instead of physical ones. Her day starts at six a.m. and

usually goes until nine p.m. Honestly, it is kinda nice to see her

changing. She seems more confident and walks taller. She still finds time to make us cookies too. Last week she made lemon bars. I think maybe cookies is one of her magic abilities.”

I laugh a little at thinking about Kas in the kitchen baking.

“Alpha, don’t get me wrong. She misses you. You can see it in

her face when she has down time but the coven is doing its best to keep her distracted and keep her spirits up. I think they really

care about her.

“Thanks, Marco. I appreciate your sacrifice to take on this assignment.”

He nods as Lady Camille comes around the corner.

“Ah, Alpha Bronx. I would like to speak to you about tonight. Please join me in my office.”

She holds out her hand. We have to portal to her office? Seems a

bit excessive, but okay.

I blink and we are in a circular room with no door. There is a

simple wooden desk at the center with bookshelves covering most of the walls.

“Please, sit,” she motions to a guest chair at the desk.

“Before we talk about tonight’s ceremony, I wanted to let you

know that I just found out about time being different here in your

realm than it is in the rest of the world. I ‘m not too happy that

wasn’t disclosed before Kas and I agreed to this arrangement, Lady Camille. “

“Alpha Bronx, I assure you, the ambient magic of our realm is

helping temper the negative effects your mate and guards would usually feel from being away from your pack for so long. If

we do

find any of them starts experiencing distress, we will contact you

right away, ” she reassures me.

I consider her words for a moment and decide to drop the matter.

Drop it, but not forget it.

“What can I do for you in regards to this evening, Lady Camille?”

“Alpha Bronx, as you know, tonight is a full moon.

After you and Luna lokaste shift back to your human forms, we need you two to mate tonight. Under no circumstances are you

to

mark each other, but she is a goddess born of love. She needs to

experience physical love with you for us to be able to progress

with her training.”

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 27

I feel my blood start to boil but I know I need to keep my cool. All I can do is blink at her until I feel calm enough to speak.

I

unintentionally growl as I say, ” Lady Camille, are you aware of

my Luna’ s past? I have always promised her we will do everything at her pace. I won’ t mate with her if she isn’ t ready.”

“Stand down, Alpha Regent Bronx Mason,” as she says in a stern tone, using my full name and title, I feel a disorienting sensation

cloud my mind, reminding me how powerful she is, “I ‘in aware that Luna lokaste has had to endure experiences that were out of

her control and we have been counseling her on how to handle her thoughts and emotions related to those events.”

She stares at me for a long moment, then continues with a softer tone, “I recommend you find a way to give her that control back

so you two can...enjoy yourselves. You don’ t need to have her back here until Sunday morning. The connection between you two and your wolf spirits is important. The emotional and the physical. It is very clear that the emotional portion is strong.

Now

it’ s time to focus on the physical. Also , she has been working very hard and deserves a break for the weekend.”

She hands me a map, “We have a cottage in the woods. You can go here for privacy. All the food and clothing you two need is

there. I don’ t know if you want your guards to go or not. It won’ t

matter because the cottage will only be visible to you and Luna Lokaste. Once you’ re inside, they will believe you have sent them

to an empty field.”

What in the world is she talking about? A secret realm inside her

secret realm?

“Alright, can I have this map?” I ask cordially.

“Of course. I think we are finished here. Let me get you back so

you can also prepare for the ceremony, ” as she hands it to me

she touches my hand and we are back in the hallway with Marco.

“The ceremony starts in two and a half hours, gentlemen, ” Lady

Camille bows and walks away.

“Come on Marco, I need you and James to scout out a location. I

will stay here with Kas. ”

Marco and James both come to my suite and I show them the map. I give them orders to scout the location, get pictures, and

report back. We go to the gardens, they shift into their gray wolves and take off into the forest. An hour and a half later, they

come back to my suite, showing me pictures from their cell phones.

“It’ s just an empty field, Alpha, ” James flips through the pictures

on his phone. There are five or six pictures with a chalet -style

cottage in the middle of a clearing in the woods. I look at him

suspiciously.

“Marco, did you take pictures? ” I ask, feeling myself growing impatient.

“Yes, Alpha, but there’ s nothing there, ” he shrugs as he flips

through his pictures of the chalet.

“Are you guys f*cking with me? There’ s clearly a cottage in the

pictures, ” I growl at their not so funny joke.

“Alpha, what are you talking about? ” James looks irritated that I

would question him and looks back at his phone before holding up

the picture again, ” No disrespect, Alpha, but why would we do

that? Empty clearing. Are you feeling alright?”

They can’ t see it. They really can’ t see it.

“I don’ t trust this, Bronx, ” Saint says with a growl.

“Saint, after we shift, I will let you spend time with Lex but I need

you to evaluate this house before I let Kas go in there, ”

I inform

him.

“No problem, ” he huffs, seeming satisfied to have the responsibility.

“Alright, gentlemen, ” based on the way they are looking at me, I

know I need to choose my words wisely, “Once Kas and I shift, we are going to let our wolves connect for a while, then go to this

clearing. Saint is going to check it out. If there is a problem, we

will come back right away. If not, you are relieved until Sunday when we come back. If we are not back by Sunday morning, come back to this field and find us.”

“Alright, Alpha. Thank you, sir, ” Marco says with a confused look.

A familiar looking tall blonde woman with ocean blue eyes comes down the hall. She hands me a white robe, “Alpha Bronx Mason, we would like to request you wear this for the ceremony. It will

make it easier than having you undress when it is time to shift.

We have arranged a platform in the gardens so everyone can watch you and Luna lokaste, just like you would in your pack. ”

“Thank you, Miss, ” I take the robe from her. She glances at

James and blushes as she presses her lips together, then she turns around and skips down the hall.

“Oh, that’s Delilah?” I say as I elbow him with a smirk.

“Yeah, isn’t she like a dream?” he asks with stars in his eyes.

I smile as I walk away. I go to my room and change into the robe

then head to Kas’ s room. She’ s sitting in a chair in a white robe

that matches mine. Several women are finishing up her makeup and hair. She looks stunning. She has on light, natural makeup and her silver hair is pinned on top of her head with a little flower

crown. I feel my heart race as her violet eyes look at me through the mirror. The women all see me and giggle as they leave the room.

The last woman says she will be back in twenty minutes to retrieve us for the ceremony.

“You look out of this world, Baby.”

“Thanks, ” she smiles, “Lex and I are so excited.”

“I bet. Saint and I are too, ” I kiss her forehead and sit in the

chair next to her. We make small talk and I describe what shifting

to her wolf will feel like.

“Kas, did Lady Camille tell you everything she expects tonight, Kas?”

“Y-yes, ” she says with a blush. I take her hand in mine.

“I don’ t want to rush you to do anything you are not ready for,

Kas. I promised you everything would be at your pace and I still stand by that, ” I reassure her.

“I’ m ready, ” she nods as she looks at me. I don’ t see any doubt

in her eyes. I kiss her hand gently, just in time for the witch to

knock on the door for us to go to the ceremony.

We go hand in hand to the garden and climb a little platform
so

we are standing in front of the witches and James and Marco.
Lady Camille leads a prayer to the Goddess Hecate and another
to the Goddess Selene. She then implores the Goddesses to keep
us safe during our transformation and throughout our lives.
It is

actually a really beautiful prayer.

The witches all look up and reach to the night sky, with joined
hands, and recite an incantation in unison. Their voices are
hypnotizing. Reminding me how dangerous witches can be.
When they are done, Lady Camille indicates we can begin to
shift.

“Ready, Baby?” “Yeah, what do I do?”

“Just relax and let your mind move to the back. Let Lex take
control. Like I said earlier, it’s going to hurt, but don’t
be afraid.

It’s only for a minute. As soon as you have shifted Saint and
I will
too.”

I stand back to give her space. She nods and lets her robe fall
to

the ground. I hear murmurs and see shocked looks from the
women that can see her back for the first time. Kas either
doesn’t

hear them or she’s ignoring them. Either way, it’s clear from
the

look on her face, she’s ready for this.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 28

Kas’s POV

I stand naked on the platform looking into Bronx’s apple green
eye. He’s looking at me in the eyes, smiling with pride.
A month ago, I would have tried to cover myself from letting
him

see me like this, but the time I have spent here at the coven
and

the things I have learned about my mind and who I am have

given me the confidence to do things I wouldn' t have done in the past. Beyond that, I' m finally going to let Lex have the freedom she deserves to meet her mate. She and I have started to connect on a deeper level. It' s a union we didn' t know we wanted from each other but it has been desperately needed. We have a long way to go, but it was a start.

“Ready, Lex?”

“Yes! Let' s get this show on the road,” she howls at me. Just like Bronx said, I let myself fall back so Lex can take control.

I feel the pain of the cracking and popping of bones, skin, and muscles stretching and tearing. It hurts, but not as bad as other things I have been through. I look down to see black fur sprouting out of my skin. When I stop feeling the transition, I looked up at the crowd.

Everyone claps and cheers for me. Some are even pointing and nodding with approval.

“They' re cheering for you, Lex!”

She shakes out her jet black fur and bows her head in recognition

of the crowd, “Of course they are. We' re beautiful!”

Lex turns to Bronx who takes off his robe and eye patch. He doesn' t seem to be intimidated by the women whispering and giggling around him. Lex growls a bit knowing women are staring at him.

“Calm down, they are not a threat, Lex. It' s going to be okay, ” I feel her relax a little as she realizes he only has eyes for her. He smiles and winks at her. She purrs at his gesture.

“Oh, Kas, it' s gonna be a good night, ” I blush as Lex admires

Bronx' s naked body.

He shifts into Saint and everyone cheers again. Saint and Lex are

almost the same sizes. Even though he' s an Alpha Regent wolf, she' s only slightly smaller in stature. A normal female wolf would

be half the size of an Alpha wolf. They nuzzle and yip at each other and without another care in the world, bound out into the

woods.

I move to the back of her mind to give her and Saint privacy. It' s the middle of the night when we arrive at the cabin. Lex gives

me back control and we shift. Saint takes a lap around the cabin,

sniffing intently and looking out into the dark forest. He finally

comes and stands beside me before he shifts back to Bronx.

Bronx takes my hand and leads me inside.

“Let' s freshen up, Baby, ” he says as he picks a leaf out of my

hair. I giggle as he scrunches his face up at the leaf.

As we walk into the bedroom, Bronx turns to look at me, “Kas, I

have done a whole lot of reflecting over the past couple of weeks.

I just want to say, I love you. With every fiber of my being, I love

you, lokaste Latinus. ”

” I love you too, Bronx Mason. You allowed me to be here, in this

realm, with these amazing women. I know how much of an emotional sacrifice it was for you to agree to it. Not to mention

poor Marco. But the coven does care about our wellbeing. Look at

how much good my training has done in just a short time; I' ve learned so much and I' m healthier now than I ever was. Mentally

and physically. And look, James found his mate ! If he wouldn' t have come here, he would have been alone forever. All of that is

possible because you put aside your personal feelings and did what was best for others. How could I not love you for that?"

He caresses my cheek, looking at me lovingly, before pulls me close and gives me a short but passionate kiss. He goes to turn on the shower then comes back to lead me to the steamy bathroom. The shower is made for multiple people based on the positions of multiple showerheads.

The hot water feels refreshing after such a long run. Bronx steps

into the shower with me. There is no hesitation or shyness between us. It just feels natural to be here together. He picks up

a washcloth and gently starts stroking it against my body. He starts with my shoulders and works his way down. He moves slowly and spends more time on my sensitive parts, sometimes using his fingers or mouth instead of the cloth, making me moan and gasp softly. He hands me a washcloth and I give him the same treatment.

When I finish washing him, he pulls me close and starts to kiss me deeply. I move my kisses down to his chin, then neck, and work my way down his chest until I' m kneeling in front of him, his

cock is already hard and getting bigger as I look at it. I start by

kissing the tip, finishing with a small flick of my tongue.

He hisses

as I start to lick and suck the tip more intensely.

I look up at him to see he is looking straight at me but when we

make eye contact it seems to trigger something in him, making him more excited. I feel him growing even harder as I take him deeper in my mouth. My tongue massages him as I move along his shaft. I can hear his low moans and pants of pleasure as I bob

my head up and down. I hollow out my cheeks when I feel him at

the back of my throat, making my mouth tighter around his length. I look up again and see he has one hand on the shower wall and the other on the top of my head, gripping my hair.

“Ahh, stop, Kas, stop!” he cries out. I pull back worried that I’ ve done something wrong.

“Are you alright, Bronx? Did I hurt you?” I look up at him.

“No Baby, let’ s move to the bedroom, ” he pants as he helps me stand.

He swiftly picks me up, turns off the shower, and wraps a towel around me before he carries me to the bed. He gently lays me on

my back and climbs to the end of the bed by my feet. He starts to

caress the curves of my hips and waist as he worships my body with a lustful look in his eye. He kisses my inner thighs, working

his way up to my sweet spot. He starts to lick and suck as he rubs my clit at the same time. My breath turns ragged as his tongue dives deep into my core. I can feel pressure building as he

replaces his tongue with one then two fingers and starts sucking

my clit. I squeeze my eyes tight and arch my back, letting out a

cry, as the pleasure builds in my core.

Right before I reach my climax, he stops. ” What? Why — why did

you stop?”

” Kas, I just want to make sure this is really what you want before

we go any further, ” he looks at me with a look of concern.

I put my hands on both sides of his face and pull him up toward me. I lick my juices from around his mouth making his eye flicker

from black to green and back again as Saint tries to take control.

“Yes, Bronx...and Saint. Lex and I are one hundred percent sure.

I

want to feel you deep inside me, Bronx. Don’ t you want that too?”

” Yeah, Baby, you have no idea, ” he bends down to nibble and blow on my nipple, making me shiver, as he positions himself between my legs. I feel him press against my entrance, making me let out an involuntary moan. I wrap my legs around his waist and use my feet to press against his ass, encouraging him to move inside my dripping sweet spot. I ‘ in so wet, he easily slides

into my core in one smooth thrust. I feel him fill me up inside as

he holds still for a moment. I look up to see he has his eye closed

and he is trying to control his breathing. The sparks of our mate

bond had never been more intense.

“Don’ t stop, Bronx, please don’ t stop, ” I beg feeling him involuntarily twitch deep inside my core before he starts moving

again.

He puts one hand behind my back pressing me closer to his body as he slowly starts to slide back and forth inside me. I never imagined in my entire life that I could feel so much pleasure.

I

move my hips to match his motion intensifying the sensation.

I

squeeze my eyes shut for a moment concentrating on how good he feels inside me. When I open them again, I look him in the eye and realize we have a glowing purple aura surrounding us.

He

looks a little freaked out, but he doesn’ t stop. The more intense

our motions, the brighter it gets. Every time he rocks, he hits the

most sensitive spots making me groan and growl. The walls of my

core squeeze tight against him as I edge closer to a climax.

“Deeper,” I pant as I grab onto his back and try to push myself closer against him.

He sits up and pulling me with him so I’ m sitting on top of him.

This position puts him fully inside of me, giving me control of the

pace with my movements. I bounce and grind against him. I feel him deep inside me filling my core completely. As I take control of the pace, he uses his fingers to excite my clit even more.

It’ s a

sensory overload. I can’ t help but whimper with excitement.

“Ah, Baby, you feel so good! Faster my little goddess, faster!” he

growls as he grabs my hips, showing me the speed he wants me to move.

I pick up the pace, pushing myself to the edge of climax. Bronx begins to thrust harder in rhythm with my movements. The pressure that had been building in my core explodes as I reach my climax. I lift my head to the ceiling and moan loudly. I can

feel heat flowing from my body as I start to lose control.

I feel his shaft tighten until his hot seed releases into me as I ride

my high. He supports my back as I lean back and let out a howl of pleasure before I slump against him. As we come down from our ecstasy, we collapse on the bed, sweating and out of breath. Lex howls as she feels my surge of emotion starts to subside.

My

whole body is like jelly. I roll over draping an arm and a leg on

him. I think I can lay here forever.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 29

Bronx’ s POV

I never imagined how perfect my first time would be.

I feel pure contentment as I lay next to Kas, but I also felt
lust

for more at the same time.

Kas has an arm and a leg draped over me. I use my fingertips
to

gently caress her arm as we admire each other. Her beautiful
violet eyes look tired, which is expected. A first shift takes
a lot

out of you. There was still a glint of mischief in there too.

I take

her hand and kiss it.

“You’ re amazing, ” I smile at her as I tuck some sparkly
stray

hairs behind her ear.

“You called me your little goddess, ” she smiles sleepily.

“Well, you’ re mine and you are a goddess, aren’ t you? “

“Yeah, I suppose that’ s true, ” she muses, looking into the
distance.

“And compared to just about the rest of the world, except maybe
fairies and tree sprites, you are little, ” I tease, “That
makes you

my little goddess. “

“Hey! I’ ve grown half an inch since I’ ve been here, ” she
giggles

at me. I wrap my arms around her and pull her closer so I can
pepper little kisses on her face and neck, making her giggle
more. It really is my favorite sound.

“So, Kas, I ‘m kinda curious...uh, in the shower, how uh, when
um, oh, I’ m f*cking this up...I’ m just wondering how you knew
how to, um well you were there, you know, ” I stumble over my
words feeling like a moron.

” Oh haha, that ! Well, sex and fertility are actually a big
thing

with witches since they don’ t have fated mates like we do.

Male

and female witches want to make sure their chosen mates are
satisfied in all aspects of their relationships so they won’ t
want to

leave. They talk pretty openly about it and share advice with each other. I' ve learned a lot of ways we can satisfy each other...in the bedroom...in the shower...and lots of other places too. Not to mention, I 'in sharing a body with a four -thousand-year -old wolf. She knows a thing or two. Want me to show you more about what I' ve learned?" she giggles.

"Really?" I can' t stop the smile plastered to my face. " M hmmm, " she pulls herself closer to me.

" Right now? I mean, you look a bit tired, Baby." "Don' t worry, Bronx. I have plenty of energy."

Kas teaches me new ways we can pleasure each other for the rest of the whole damn weekend. It may sound cliché, but it isn' t

just sex. We are learning how to feed off of each other' s physical

wants and needs and emotions. By the end of the weekend, I feel more connected to her than ever. And honestly, if that' s what she

learned in the first couple of months, I am looking forward to

what she would know by the time she leaves the coven house. Sunday morning comes too soon. Kas insists on making breakfast for me before we shift and make our way out of the woods to the

coven house. As usual, it is the most amazing meal I' ve ever had.

When we arrive at the coven house, there are two young witches waiting for us with robes. Kas thanks them and leads me to her suite so we can freshen up. Once we are ready, we meet with Lady Camille to discuss what skills Kas will be working on until my next visit.

I drag my feet packing my bag. I' m dreading leaving Kas again but it' s different than last time. I know now, she is being well

taken care of and she is as happy as she can be in the circumstances. When I finally can't prolong it anymore, I pick up

my bag and we head out to the entryway of the house. I'm not sure how long we stand there holding each other until we hear Lady Camille clear her throat.

"Please Lady Camille, give us just one more minute," Kas pleads.

Lady Camille nods and takes a step back.

"Bronx, what we experienced this weekend, please, don't deny James and Delilah from being able to share this kind of love. Whatever you and Lady Camille decide is best for our pack and their coven, please don't make them have to give each other up.

They are so happy together."

And that right there is how I know she's going to be a great Luna.

She could be thinking about us and our relationship but she's not.

She's using it as an example of why other wolves deserve to be

with their fated mate.

"Lady Camille, can we make time to speak about this matter the

next time I visit?" I ask respectfully, "I want to go back to my

pack and discuss this with my Beta and Gamma to try to come up

with a solution. "

"That's fine Alpha Bronx, but for now, it's time for you to leave, "

she advises.

She holds out her hand to portal me to the gate. I gently kiss Kas

one last time before picking up my bag and taking Lady Camille's

hand. Instantly, she and I are outside the gate by my car.

"Alpha Bronx, were you able to make a connection with your

mate as we discussed? “

“I think that’ s an understatement, Lady Camille,” I confess as I

rub the back of my neck. I can feel myself blushing a bit.

“That’ s good news, Alpha Bronx. And nothing to be embarrassed about. The next time you come, you will see an even greater transformation in her spirit and even better control over her abilities, ” she turns back to the gate to leave but stops,

“Oh, and

Alpha Bronx, that aura that surrounds you when you’ re together,

that won’ t go away. When you see it, you should…embrace it, lean into that sensation. You won’ t regret it,” she smirks as she

raises her eyebrows. She turns toward the giant golden gate and

disappears from sight.

How did she know about that? Okay, regardless of what she says, having the head of the coven know about my love life with my mate is embarrassing.

I look at my phone and realize it was still the same day as when I

had arrived, it is just late in the evening. My flight was not for

another two days. I have a cigarette then make a climb in the Maserati to take a detour to Lune D’ or and meet up with Henri.

I spend most of the ride to Lune D’ or thinking about what Kas had said about James and Delilah. She’ s right. What kind of leader am I if I deny one of my pack members the opportunity to

love someone unconditionally, the way Kas and I do? I need to speak to some of the Elders who have pacts with witches and other supernatural species to figure out what types of things I

need to take into consideration for Delilah to become part of our

pack. That’ s if Lady Camille would even allow it.

Milo’ s POV

It's only a couple of days, but covering Bronx's duties was exhausting. I don't know how he juggles all of it. I just have to

hold out until Sunday night. I'm sitting at his desk, feeling overwhelmed, sorting through requisitions that need to be signed

before the close of business when Lenora comes in.

My beautiful mate. She makes my heart race every time I see her. Her full lips and legs seem like they went on forever, they

get me every time. Not to mention those green eyes with her black hair. Oh my Goddess. I'm the luckiest wolf in the world.

My

spoonful of sugar, she makes every day sweeter.

"Hi Sugar, what's up?"

"Just got a delivery. It's for Bronx from the Council," she says,

placing a box on the desk.

I open the box to find a bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue whiskey. I whistle, "Nice! I will give it to him when he gets back.

This is a

special occasion drink. "

"What if I have a special occasion for you guys to drink to?"

She

asks with a singsong tone.

"What is it, Sugar? You know I always like to hear good news? Did you get a new contract for MasonCo?"

"No, even more exciting than that," she pulls a pen box out from

behind her back and hands it to me. "

"You bought me a pen?" I look at the box confused, "How is this good news?"

"Just look inside the box, Milo," she rolls her eyes at me.

I open the box to see a white stick inside. It said Clear Blue on

the side. Oh shit, no way. My fingers shake as I pick up the stick

and see the little blue plus sign in the window. My heart skips a beat.

“You’ re pregnant? Please tell me this isn’ t one of your jokes, Lenora,” I grab her hips and pull her toward me until she’ s sitting on the desk in front of me. I look her straight in the eyes. My

heart is pounding in my chest, “Please tell me this is real. “ “It’ s real! We’ re having a pup!” she squeals with tears in her eyes.

I sit there stunned for a moment. I ‘m not even sure what to think. I come to my senses and lift her shirt. I start frantically

kissing her stomach, “Hi little pup, I’ m your daddy! I’ m gonna

teach you how to be the most fearsome warrior that ever lived. Unless you want to be a doctor, then I’ ll send you to the best medical school. Okay? “

Lenora giggles and runs her fingers through my hair as I coo at

her belly. There was a pup in there. My pup. Our pup. I ‘m the

luckiest son of a bitch in the world. She’ s the most amazing woman and she’ s all mine. I wrap my arms around her waist, hugging her tightly.

Lenora and I have been trying for months to have a pup. Even with as much practice as we’ ve gotten in, i t didn’ t just happen

like it did for other couples. We even started to consider adoption.

I can’ t wait to tell Bronx when he gets home. He’ s gonna be Uncle Bronx.

“Come on, Sugar, let me sign the last of this paperwork, then we

can go celebrate with Reggie and Ashley. It's a bummer that we have to wait to tell Kas until the winter solstice, but I know she will be excited too.

I finish the paperwork and email everything to Bronx's assistant.

We leave the bottle of whiskey on the desk so he'll see it when he

gets home and lock the door behind us.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 30

Bronx's POV

I spend the remainder of the weekend at Lune D'or. I catch up

with Henri and his son Martin who is now Alpha Regent and join in on a pack run. I even lead a couple of training sessions with

their elite warriors. At dinner on Saturday evening, I meet Martin's in-laws. They own a bakery in town. The kitchen staff had told them about Kas wanting to learn how to make croissants which they found endearing. They give me their family recipe for

baguettes to give to Kas when she gets home. It's in French, so I

need to see if Cason will translate it for me. I know she's going to

love it.

Surprisingly, I don't feel empty like I had the last time I left Kas.

It's almost like our time together energized and motivated me. I

do a lot of research and get a ton of work done on the flight home and feel refreshed when I land. I'm completely ready to

dive into work for MasonCo and bide my time until I see Kas again.

When I get to the packhouse, I start to feel the sadness creep in

but I refuse to wallow in sorrow. I drop my things in my apartment, then head to my office. Carly takes the recipe to give

to Cason for translation. Then I mind link Milo and Reggie to meet

me in my office so we could discuss James' s mate situation.

"How' s Kas? Is the training helping? Does she miss us?"

Reggie

asks as soon as he and Milo walk in.

"It' s good to see you too, Reggie, " I snark at the rapidfire questions.

Milo, the more perceptive of the two, squints his eyes and steps forward, "You okay, man? Something seems...different. "

" I don' t know what you' re talking about, Milo, " I dismiss his

concern, "Kas is doing good, Reggie.

She' s learning a lot and she has so much more confidence. She isn' t sickly thin anymore and she' s been getting sun, so she has

these cute freckles. She even grew half an inch. "

Thinking about her makes me smile. Flashes of our weekend come to my mind. I close my eyes and take a deep breath.

"You dirty, dirty dog. You mated! Did you mark her? Is she our

official Luna? " Milo sits down at the edge of his chair.

"Milo, you' re crossing a line. Besides, I don' t kiss and tell, " I snarl

at him.

" Bronx, you don' t kiss, " Reggie chimes in, looking smug,

"I 've

known you for twenty-four years. You never even held a girl' s hand before you met Kas.

The look on your face right now? We can practically hear Saint purring! You two definitely mated. "

"Bronxy' s in looove, " Milo sings and flutters his eyes dramatically.

“Busted. Not ashamed. She’s the best mate ever. We’re in love, ”

Saint laughs in my head.

“Drop it, guys! You’re being disrespectful to my mate and your future Luna. ”

“They definitely mated. Future Luna means he didn’t mark her, ”

Reggie says to Milo as if I’m not even in the room.

“Guys! We have other things to worry about, ” I command.

“Fine, pull the rank card. Now, what’s going on with James? Did

he find a mate at Lune D’ or?” Milo puts the teasing aside to focus

on one of his top warriors.

“No. At the coven, ” I look at them solemnly.

“He’s mated to a witch? ” Reggie’s eyes grow huge.

Milo groans as he leans on the desk and rubs his temples with his

fingers, “Come on, Bronx. You sure she didn’t just enchant him or

something? “

“No, they’re clearly enamored with each other. It’s not a spell,

they’re definitely mates, ” I confirm for them. They both look at

me incredulously but they don’t have anything more to add.

“So what’s our next move? How do we handle this? We don’t want to lose James, ” Reggie asks.

“Glad you asked. I did some research on the flight home. There are ten packs in North America who allow witches, vampires, and

other breeds of shifters who are mated to werewolves to live on

their pack territory, which means they also have hybrids.

Hybrids can be just as dangerous, if not more than a full-bred shifter. ”

I hand each of them five phone numbers, “Give these Alphas a call, find out as much information as you can on how they handle those relationships in their pack. Any special rules or laws they have established to keep the peace or anything they have tried to implement that didn’ t work, I want to know what they are. I ‘m going to research in my library.

“Lady Camille doesn’ t seem to be opposed to their union, but their coven consists of women only.

Having James and Marco there is a courtesy they are allowing for

our benefit. There is no way she is going to allow James to stay

and like Reggie said, I

wouldn’ t want to lose him either. I think the only way she will

allow Delilah to leave the coven is if we take her abilities and

customs into consideration and not force her to suppress who she

is.

“When I go back in two weeks, I want a complete charter of fair

laws and expectations that we expect any super naturals who are

living on our territory to abide by, whether it is a witch, a

vampire, another breed of shifter, whatever. If they want to live

here, they have to agree or they can find another place to live.

Have it on my desk Thursday. “

“Yes Alpha, ” they respond in unison. I thought they’ d leave immediately to get started, but they don’ t even stand up. They just look at me. Milo is smirking like he has a joke to tell.

“What?” I question as I look up at them.

“I have some good news, ” Milo says with his signature goofy grin.

“Good news? Spill it man, what’ s up?” I lean back in my chair, lacing my fingers on top of my head, switching to friend mode from business mode.

“Lenora’ s pregnant! We’ re having a pup!” His voice grows louder

with excitement as he tells me the news. Reggie laughs and claps him in the back.

It takes my brain a second to process what he just told me.

When

it hits me, I jump up and laugh, hugging him and clapping his back, ” Congratulations, man! That’ s so awesome! Holy shit, I’ m

gonna be an uncle?! Oh my Goddess. I can’ t wait to tell Kas.

We

need to celebrate! I’ ll get the kitchen omegas to bring up some

beer. “

“I have a better idea, the Elder Council sent whiskey while you

were gone, ” Milo points to the box on my desk.

I furrow my brow and pull the blue box closer to me. Johnnie Walker Blue label. It’ s an expensive whiskey. I look at the card, it

has the Elder Council official crest at the top and a simple typed

note that says ‘In appreciation for your hospitality. ‘ Why would

the Council send me liquor? They know I am missing part of my liver and that I’ m not a big drinker.

“No whiskey. Anything else, just not whiskey, ” I say, putting the

bottle back down.

“Aww, Bronx, why not?” Reggie asks with a pout.

“I made a promise to Kas. We can save this bottle for another time. Choose another poison for this celebration. “

“Vodka it is!” Milo cheers, undeterred.
Reggie and I groan but agree. It’s his day after all. I wasn’t planning on drinking, but here we are. One or two shots won’t kill me.
By the time Lenora and Ashley get home from work at MasonCo, the three of us are wasted by the pool, still in our pants but we have taken our shirts and shoes off. We are laughing and slurring out goofy jokes. I can’t remember the last time I was drunk, but it feels good to relax with my best friends for once.
” You guys, what the Hell?” Lenora walks up to us and puts her hands on her hips.
I press my cigarette between my lips, stumble to my feet, and wrap her in a hug, “My baby sister is having a pup! I ‘ m gonna be Uncle Bronx! ” I cheer, as lose my balance and we both fall into the pool.
” Bronx! What the f*ck? These shoes are Balenciaga!” Lenora growls, pulling herself out of the pool as I laugh like a maniac from the water. Milo and Reggie are rolling on the ground in fits of laughter. Ashley has her hand over her mouth trying to not laugh at her best friend.
Lenora storms off with Ashley trailing behind her. After Milo , Reggie, and I calm down we all go back upstairs. Milo and Reggie go to find their mates and ask for Lenora’s forgiveness. I head up to my apartment to shower. I will find Lenora later to grovel and properly congratulate her…maybe offer to buy her new shoes to replace the ones I ruined in the pool.
I get my shower and lay on my bed wrapped in a towel, thinking about Kas and what it would be like to be a dad someday. I don’t

realize my eye closed until I wake up to birds chirping in the morning. My head is pounding and the sun feels like it's a spotlight on my face. I sit up and realize I'm in under the covers in

sweatpants. Hold up, this is not how I fell asleep.

"Go back to sleep, dummy. You gave me a hangover, Saint snarls.

"Saint, someone put our clothes on and put us in bed. "

"Pretty sure it was Lenora. She's mad at you, but she's still going

to make sure you're taken care of when Kas isn't here. You know

you have some sucking up to do, buddy. "

"Ugh. You're right. But you know what? " "You're going to let me

go back to sleep? "

"Yeah, but before you do, I'm going to be an uncle, Saint. I can't

wait. One day, Kas and I will get to share that news. What do you

think about being a dad one day? "

There's a long pause, "I want that," he finally says. It was a

begrudging tone. He was not the type of wolf to be warm and fuzzy and excited about emotional things. Our connection with Kas and Lex is starting to show another facet of his personality,

just like it is mine.

"Saint, this whole mate thing. I think it's making us a better wolf. "

"Go back to sleep, dummy. I think you're still drunk. "

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 31

After making amends with Lenora by promising her two new pairs of shoes, we focus on work. In the last week, Lenora had brought in four large international contracts she had been working on for

months. We need to get set up and staffed in the various

countries and work with the local governments to ensure we have the correct permits to conduct our work. I know my team can do

it without me, but I welcome the distraction.

In my free time, I' m in my library drowning in research. The more I research, the more I feel like a speciesist a*shole.

For

years, I let myself believe in preconceived notions about other paranormal species that simply weren' t true. I never questioned

what I had been told by the people around me. It' s eye opening and humbling to learn the facts. It makes me realize I need to

change my ways and I need to do a better job at educating my pack.

In addition, Milo and Reggie are calling Alphas and drafting a

charter I could present to Lady Camille. On Thursday, they present the final draft to me. I make edits to it based on the research I have done. Once we are all in agreement with the updated details, I send it to Carly to have it printed on our pack

letterhead.

By the end of the week, I' m exhausted. I take the weekend to be

lazy and recharge. I watch Kas' s favorite cooking show and record a couple new ones for her that I think she' ll enjoy.

Thankfully, I have meetings at three different packs the next week to keep my mind occupied.

Thank the Goddess, the week flies by in a heartbeat. I finish the

last of the pack meetings and get back to Blood River on Thursday late in the evening. I brief Milo on things that may come up while I' m gone and head out to the airport for a redeye flight to France. Henri, once again, has left me a car so I can

drive myself directly. When I get to the gate of the coven' s land, I

find Lady Camille is waiting for me.

“Lady Camille, thank you again for having me as a guest,”

I bow

slightly, something I read that witches see as a sign of respect,

“Can we go to your office first? I have some papers to review with you, regarding James and Delilah. “

“Of course, Alpha Bronx. Would you like for them to join us?”

she

asks. Her tone seems more relaxed than it has in our past interactions. Amazing what a simple non-verbal gesture can do.

“Not yet, if that’s alright with you. I want to make sure we are in

agreement and if possible, I would like lokaste to be there.

She is

my Luna and she deserves to have input in these types of matters. “

“Very well,” she smiles and holds out her hand, “I will send for

her. “

I take her hand and we’re instantly in her office. She presses a

button on her desk.

“Yes, Lady Camille?” a voice on the other end answers.

“Please send for Luna lokaste. We have some business matters to

discuss. “

Yes m’ am. She’s in the meditation room, it will be a few more minutes before she comes out,” the voice responds.

“Very well. I will be expecting her,” she says and lets go of the

button.

“Alpha Bronx, before Luna lokaste arrives, I want to tell you how

wonderful she is progressing. Her powers are well beyond anything we could have anticipated. Fortunately, we have very powerful witches here, so we can work with her. She is an

extremely fast learner. Now, I don't want to get her hopes up and

have her lose focus, but we may be able to send her home a little earlier than originally anticipated.

"Please understand, her progress will be a lifelong endeavor. What she learns here will help her control her abilities but using

them will take practice and discipline. I would like to have regular

check-ins with her after she leaves, of course. We want to make sure we are here to mentor her as she matures and her abilities blossom. "

I feel my heart skip, "Bring her home early? How early Lady Camille? "

"As much as two weeks, I would think. We will see how the next two weeks progress. In the meantime, as I said, please don't mention this to her. If she loses focus, it could cause delays in

her ability to complete her training. "

Just then there was a slight popping sound and the familiar giggle

of my mate warms my soul.

I turn around just in time to catch her as she throws herself into

my arms, wrapping her legs around my

waist. I easily scoop her up in my arms and crash my lips onto hers.

"Oh Kas! I'm so happy to see you, " I say breathlessly. I put her

down so I can get a better look at her.

"I'm happy to see you too. I have so much to tell you about what

Lex and I have learned, " she smiles brightly at me as she stands

tall.

"Have you grown more, Baby?" I cock head as I realize she is

standing taller.

“Another inch and a half since you were here. After I shifted, Lex became stronger and my body had to accommodate that growth. Lady Camille thinks I could grow another inch. But don’ t use that as an excuse to buy me more clothes, Bronx. The ones I have at home will still be just fine. So, what are we doing here?” she asks. Her voice is bright and bubbly and excited. I love seeing her like this.

I take her hand and have her sit next to me across from Lady Camille. I am bursting at the seams at the news Lady Camille just gave me. I take a deep breath to calm myself and focus on other matters.

“Kas, I asked Lady Camille to have you in attendance since this is a Blood River pack matter. You are our future Luna, you should be involved in these types of decisions. You requested a solution that will allow James and Sister Delilah to stay together and here is the best effort that Milo, Reggie, and myself could come up with. “

I turn to face forward, ” Lady Camille, as you know, for werewolves, the mate bond is an essential part of who we are. I think we would all hate to see James and Sister Delilah have to be separated for any reason.

“I’ m also aware that you do not allow men to live on your land permanently. We know having James and Marco here is a courtesy you are allowing for my peace of mind. Taking this into

consideration, we have done a lot of research with packs that allow non

- werewolves to live on their territories and I have done research

in my historical library. We have taken the other packs' advice on

what works well or not well, educated ourselves on how to alleviate prejudices and speciesism within the pack, and we have

developed a charter. If you agree and James and Delilah agree, we would be honored to have her live with us at Blood River and

become a pack member."

I hand a copy of the document to Lady Camille and Kas.

"I don't expect an answer right now, take as much time as you

need. Feel free to let me know if you think there should be any

adjustments. Anything that would make you more comfortable with the terms of the charter. I would like to keep this between the three of us until we have come to a consensus before we inform James and Delilah, if that's okay."

"Luna lokaste. That thing you and I practiced. I think this is the

appropriate moment to invoke it."

I turn to Kas feeling confused, "What?"

"Bronx, one of the things I have learned is that you can only use

magic with the recipient's permission. Otherwise, slowly but surely dark magic consumes

you. So, if it's okay with you, I'm going to pause time for you. It

won't hurt, you may see us moving or notice some shadows, but in just a minute, you will be back to normal. It will give us time to

look at your document right now, instead of having to wait. "

I'm torn. I trust Kas, but do I want anyone using magic on me?

“Saint, you have to agree to this also, it’s not just up to me. “

“I trust our mate. She won’t let anything bad happen to us.” I am shocked to hear him agree to have magic performed on us.

“Alright, Saint is okay with it and so am I. “

Kas leans over and gives me a kiss, then brushes her fingers across my forehead. I see her eyes glow purple for a moment. I couldn’t move if I wanted to. I see her and Lady Camille look

like they are in superspeed fast forward, hunched over the desk talking with each other, and flipping through pages. The sky outside starts to turn dark, then light. Suddenly, I see Kas’s face

in front of me. She caresses my cheek lovingly.

“Hi Sweetheart, ” she smiles sweetly, ” Did you feel anything? “

I blink a few times and shake my head no. “Saint, you good?”

“That was the weirdest thing ever but yeah, I’m okay, ” Saint replies, a bit confused.

Kas takes my hand and sits down next to me, “Lady Camille and I

reviewed everything. There are just a few things that she would like changed and then she will be happy to agree to the charter. “

“Di -did you two work all night? ” I ask, still a little confused as to what just happened.

“Yes, but don’t worry about that. Lady Camille is going to let you

stay for an extra day. You will still be back at Blood River by

Sunday evening. “

I review the changes they made to the charter. Everything they have added or scratched out makes sense to me.

“Alright, I will take it back to the pack so we can write up the

final version. “

“No need. I can do that right now, ” Lady Camille says with a smile.

I hand the document back to her. She puts her hands flat on the top and bottom of the stack, closes her eyes, and mutters something under her breath. She hands it back to me with all the edits made as if someone typed it up and pulled fresh off the printer.

I smile and shake my head as I sign the document. Kas signs next, then Lady Camille.

“Now, I think it’ s time for you two to have a little alone time.

Luna Iokaste, please remember to make time to discuss the things we have spoken about, ” she extends her hands and Kas and I are in the gardens.

“Come on, Bronx! Let’ s go to the cabin! ” Kas squeals as she starts taking her shoes off. We quickly strip off our clothes giggling and playfully tickling each other and kissing until we are undressed. Then we shift and let Saint and Lex bound off into the woods to spend time together.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 32

We spend all day in the cottage in the woods, mostly with no clothes on. While, yes, it intensifies our physical connection, our

emotional connection is beyond anything either of us could have ever imagined. I can’ t even imagine how much more intense things will be when I am finally able to mark her.

It’ s Saturday evening and we are laying in bed with our bodies intertwined. I’ m playing with a lock of her hair while she nuzzles my neck.

“Kas, do you think things will change when you come home or

will we still be this close? Because when you first came here and I

had to go home alone, I felt like the world was going to end. Nothing made me happy. Saint wouldn't even talk to me.

"But last time when I went home, it was like I was completely energized and ready to get back to normal. I mean, I missed you

like crazy, but I had hope in my heart. And now? I feel like I

could go home and could take on the world. Once you're back, I'm going to be unstoppable," I explain as I continue to play with

her hair, running my fingers through her scalp.

"It's just going to keep getting better, Sweetheart. Let's freshen

up and get dressed. I'll make you dinner and explain the things I

have been learning about," she assures me with a kiss on my marking spot, sending shivers down my spine.

"I don't understand why we have to wait to mark our mate. She

clearly wants to mark us," Saint huffs.

"Saint, we told Lady Camille we will wait. Our word is our bond,"

I argue.

"Damn you and your morals," he snarls back before going to the

back of my mind.

I let Kas get a shower first, then I take my turn. I'm certain if we

get a shower together, dinner would never happen. When I get to

the kitchen, she's almost done chopping vegetables.

"Hi Baby, what's for dinner? Can I help with anything?" I ask,

looking over her shoulder. She may have grown two inches, but she still only comes up to the middle of my chest. I avoid the temptation of resting my chin on the top of her head but the

thought of it makes me smile inside.

“Shepherd’ s pie. I don’ t need help but thank you. Just have a

seat,” she uses the knife to point at a stool by the counter.

I pull

the stool next to her and sit down making us about the same height.

“Sounds delicious, Baby. So, spill. What have you been learning

about? ” I ask. I put my elbow on the counter and put my chin in

my hand.

Kas tells me how the coven has leveraged her abilities and taught

her how to use meditation and past life regression to help her get

in touch with the significant experiences of her spirit’ s pervious

lives, good and bad. She’ s aware of the experiences but she doesn’ t have an emotional connection to them. She explains it

like remembering scenes from a television show or movie.

The witches believe the more she practices through her life, the

more connected she will become to the memories and they will become important to her. She may even remember it in her next lifetime. She has learned so much about her past, that it’ s helping

shape who she wants to be moving forward. It has made her realize that the years she suffered abuse in this life was such a

tiny part of her journey as a whole. It’ s only important in this

lifetime, it would always be something she remembered, but it didn’ t define her life or future lives moving forward.

It all sounds so amazing and I am glad she is getting to know more about herself, but I ‘m not sure where that puts me.

“That’ s great, Baby,” I smile and rub her shoulders, but she sees right through me.

“Mmm, nope. Don’ t hold out on me. What’ s wrong, Bronx?” she asks with a concerned look as she drains the fat from the ground beef.

“I don’ t want to sound insecure or anything, ” I confide, “but if the things I know you’ ve been through for years and years is an insignificant part of your life, I mean, we only met a few months ago. So, like, I don’ t know. Do I even exist in this timeline of all things, Kas? “

I feel a pang of sadness and guilt in my chest as I slump forward a little. This is supposed to be about her, not me.

“Oh Bronx, ” she comes to the stool and stands between my legs, wrapping her arms around my neck, “Why do you think Lady Camille has been having us spend time alone here in this cottage? “

“I assumed it’ s because we’ re mates and she knows it would be detrimental to both of us if she kept us apart, ” I put my hands on her tiny waist and shrug, suddenly feeling very unimportant. Not something I’ m used to and call me selfish but I have to say, I don’ t like it.

“Well, yeah, but it’ s deeper than that, Sweetheart. The more we’ re together, the stronger our connection is. Not just by having sex, but anytime we experience a significant emotional event together. Good ones or bad ones, ” she looks me in the eye to see if I understand.

I am really out of my element in this conversation. I understand

the physical connection but I get lost when Kas tries to explain the spirit and emotional stuff.

“What do you mean by our connection? Our mate bond?” I feel my brows knit as I speak.

“Yes, our mate bond is part of that, but it is bigger and deeper than that. It has to do with our individual spirits needing each

other to survive,” she explains.

I’ m trying but she may as well be speaking Mandarin. I’ m trying

not to get frustrated but I can’ t help it. Patience is not my strong

suit. She can see that it doesn’ t make sense to me. So she goes

about it a different way. She grabs two onions, one white, one red.

“This onion is you,” she holds up a white onion and hands it to

me, ” The red one is me. “

“Okay? “

“Now, the onion represents everything about each of us as individuals. Each layer is a part of our spirit, only one of those

layers is our mate bond. “

“What about the rest of the onion? “

“All kinds of things. Attitude, behaviors, how you react to situations, your morals. Things like that,” she explains.

“Alright, keep going. “

She cuts each onion in half. She holds up the halves that don’ t have roots, ” This is the part of our lives that hasn’ t happened yet.

The root side is all your experiences. What happens at the root, effects everything that hasn’ t happened yet. “

She hands me a knife and tells me to start chopping the root side

of my onion. I chop my onion while she chops hers. It doesn’ t take long for my eyes to start watering from the pungent smell.

“Strong smell?” she asks with a giggle.

I sniff the tears back but all I do is manage to breathe in more

fumes, “How is this not making you cry? “

“The smell of my onion is not as strong. But watch what happens when I put the two together. “

She proceeds to push her onion pieces toward mine so they are mixed together and minces them even further.

“You see how the smell changes as the two onions get chopped together? “

“Yeah, I guess so, ” She’ s right, the smell of the two onions has

changed. Still oniony, but not as sharp.

“Now look at the pile. Can you tell exactly which bits are from

your onion and which were from mine? “

“Only some of the bits, ” I confirm I look at the pile of minced

onion.

“Exactly. Now, think about that as our life experiences. The more

we share with each other, the more we compliment each other.

Not just physically. Cause remember, this pile doesn’ t represent

physical things. “

“So the more experiences we have together, the more our spirits

merge together? “

“Yeah, that’ s a good way to think about it. “

Next she grabs the tops of the onions she had not chopped. She slices off the tops making thick rings and starts pulling out various rings from each onion. She stacks white and red rings alternatively inside each other.

“So, the more our past looks like this, ” she points to the minced

pile, The more our future looks like this. “

She holds up the little Frankenstein sliced onion, smiling proudly.

“But more importantly, the future onion isn’ t just the future for this lifetime, ” she continues, “It helps shape the version of who we become in our future lives. Isn’ t it cool to think that everything we do in this life will affect our future lives? Oh and a closer connection will make it easier to find each other in our next lives, ” there is a twinkle in her eye as she explains our lives and spirits. I understand better but still shaky on the whole concept.

She is speaking like I have past and future lives too but I don’ t want to interrupt her as she nerds out, so I just nod, letting her continue.

” In this life specifically, the closer our connection, the stronger we both become. I ‘ll be more in tune with my abilities and you’ ll have more power and influence since you are an Alpha Regent. That probably explains your surge of energy when you went home last time. Even Lex and Saint are stronger when they’ re together, which makes our human forms that much stronger. That’ s why I’ ve grown two inches since I’ ve been here. Lex is coining into her full power and I need to be physically bigger to be able to support her, ” she says it like it should have been clear the whole time which makes me chuckle at her.

” Well, if what you’ re saying is we should spend more time together and experience as many things as possible, I ‘in all in, Kas, ” I pull her closer and give her a little kiss. “I’ in looking

forward to it, ” she smiles then turns back to the food she is preparing.

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chapter 33

“I think the one thing I still don’ t understand is when you talk

about our lives that haven’ t happened yet. You’ re a goddess so

you are going to keep being reincarnated. I just have a regular old human spirit, ” I try to justify when she is done talking.

“Actually…you’ re not just a regular human spirit. Just like my

spirit is tied to Lex, yours is tied to Saint.

I’ ve just been attached to her longer. Your spirit had to come into

existence before it could be linked to Saint’ s. Can you believe

we’ ve been together before? In our previous lives. Which means,

so have Saint and Lex, ” she talks excitedly as she piles the food

in layers in a ceramic dish.

She looks up to see me looking at her in disbelief. I am trying to

connect the dots of what she’ s saying. I swear I’ m not usually this dense.

“Pick your jaw up off the floor, Sweetheart. I’ m not the only one

who’ s been reincarnated here, Bronx. You have been too. Lots of

times. It’ s easier for Saint and Lex to remember for some reason.

Ask Saint, he’ ll tell you. “

“Saint, is that true? Do you remember being connected to me for

eight hundred years? “

“Yeah, of course, ” his tone is so matter of fact that you would

think he has told me all this before.

“Do you remember being with Lex before? “

“Why do you think I miss her when we don’ t get to see her?

I was

made for her and I have loved every minute of it. She’ s amazing,

” he swoons over his mate, “You have Kas, I have Lex. We were mates for the first time eight hundred years ago. We have never had another mate. You and Kas’ s names change, but it’ s always your essences, your spirits. You’ ve been mates with Kas at least

fifteen times, I think. I don’ t know for sure. I’ ve lost track. ”

My eyes widened at the realization, ” So we were actually made for Kas and Lex?”

” That’ s a good way to put it. The Goddess made us extra strong since Kas is a goddess. It’ s the only way we can be with her and

not get hurt. That’ s why you’ re an Alpha. Anything less and she

could accidentally destroy us and if she did, poof, our spirits’

journey would be over. ”

“Why are you just now telling me this, Saint?”

“I tell you all the time that she is our mate. It’ s not my fault

you’ re a dummy and don’ t understand.

Imagine if I was going on and on about past lives. You would never have believed me. ”

Kas watches me patiently while I have my internal conversation with Saint. When I ‘in finished, I pull her closer to me possessively, ” So we’ ve been together basically forever? Since

the beginning of my human spirit?”

” Yeah, Sweetheart. Forever in the past and forever in the future,

” Kas cocks her head to the side slightly and smiles softly as she

searches my eye for any doubt.

It’ s difficult to wrap my mind around but I love the idea of it. As

her words linger in my mind, I hold her close. I was made for her.

In that moment, that bit of knowledge made me feel even more protective of her. Someone would have to get through me first and no one gets through me. No one.

As I’ m holding her, the thought that she and Lex have been connected over three thousand years longer than I have existed sinks in. I bristle at the thought of who she was connected to

before that time.

“Now you’ re really being a dummy, Bronx,” Saint chides,

“You.

Didn’ t. Exist. Let it go, Romeo.”

He’ s right. I let the thought extinguish at his words and let myself

breathe in Kas’ s scent deeply to calm myself.

“Ohhh, that must be what she meant, ” I break the comfortable silence. Letting everything Kas has just told me marinate has given me a minute to come to a realization.

“What who meant?” Kas asks quizzically.

“So you know that purple glowy aura thing that happens when we’ re together?” I look lovingly into her sparkling violet eyes.

“Mmm, yeah, I know. That’ s our connection strengthening, ”

Kas

says with a little smirk.

“The last time I was here, Lady Camille told me I should embrace

it when that happens. I think her exact words were ‘lean into it’ .”

“Haha, that sounds like a very Lady Camille thing to say but she

is right. That is the time our spirits are the most open to each

other. The aura helps our spirits connect more closely,” she smiles as she pulls away from

me to clean up the dishes from prepping the meal. She washes while I dry and put things away.

Before I know it, a steaming serving of shepherd’s pie is sitting in

front of me. Just like anything Kas cooks, it’s the best I’ve ever

had.

I pull her close to me and whisper in her ear, “So, the purple glowy thing. “

“Uh-huh, ” she bites her bottom lip, looking up at me mischievously.

“What do you say we go see how bright we can make it? “ I say with a little growl.

A huge grin comes over her face and without a word, Kas grabs my hand and pulls me to the bedroom.

Monday morning comes too soon. We wake up early so we can give Saint and Lex a few hours to spend together in the woods, then head back to the coven house.

Kas goes to find Lady Camille while I get James and Delilah so we

can tell them about our decision. I knock on James’s door and hear some shuffling and whispering from inside. James cracks the

door open with a little growl for whoever is interrupting what he

was doing.

“Alpha! ” he says, surprised to see me. He opens the door wider

and stands at attention, with a towel covering his lower half.

“At ease, James. You and your mate get freshened up, meet me, Luna Iokaste, and Lady Camille in the front sitting room. We need

to speak with the two of

you, ” I use my best poker face so I don’ t alert him about what is about to happen.

” Yes, Alpha, ” he gulps hard with a worried look. I nod and turn away to go find Kas.

I make my way to the sitting room to see Kas and Lady Camille already sitting having lemonade. Since James is one of my warriors, I choose to remain standing to address him.

James and Delilah finally come to the room holding hands, looking very nervous. Delilah looks like she could cry at any moment or maybe she already had.

” Alpha Bronx, why don’ t you lead this conversation? ” Lady Camille requests.

” Thank you, Lady Camille. James, Sister Delilah, we all know how

important the mate bond is for werewolves and occasionally, their

non-werewolf mates, ” I motion to Delilah, “When Lady Camille told me that one of my top warriors found his mate in her coven, I was surprised, to say the least. But when I saw the way you two

looked at each other, I knew it was not my place to go against the Moon Goddess’ s wishes. I also recognize the Goddess Hecate also must have agreed with this destiny. I went back to Blood River and did a lot of research. As did my Beta and Gamma until we came up with a solution to allow the two of you to be together. ”

I hand each of them a copy of the charter, “This is a charter outlining laws and provisions for situations like yours. I need both

of you to read and agree to the terms of this charter. If you do,

then Sister Delilah, Lady Camille has already given her consent for you to come live with us and become a member of the Blood River pack, that is, if you want to. ”

James’ s eyes grow big as a wave of relief comes over him.

Delilah

squeals as she covers her mouth with both hands and starts to cry tears of joy. James pulls her into a tight hug, kissing her

forehead and stroking her blond hair.

He quickly composes himself, "Alpha, permission to take the papers back to my room so we can review."

"Granted, " I nod at him.

Delilah strides across the room and kneels before Lady Camille, taking Camille's hands in hers, " Mother, thank you. Thank you so much!"

"My beautiful daughter, how could I ever deny you a n opportunity to love someone unconditionally?" Lady Camille asks,

tears dot the corners of her eyes.

Daughter?! Now I realize the gravity of the situation. If Delilah

stays at the coven, one day she would be Lady Camille's successor. She is giving that up to be with her mate. Lady Camille is allowing the future Mother of the coven to give up her

lineage for love.

Lady Camille kisses Delilah's hands and stands up, "I have one

more announcement before we break. "

We all give her our attention. Now that they are standing next to

each other, I see the resemblance between the two.

"Based on what Luna lokaste has told me, I believe we can shorten the duration of her stay, and therefore shorten James, Marco, and Sister Delilah's stay as well.

"Alpha Bronx, when you come back in two weeks, I would like to

request you stay the weekend so we can perform some ceremonies, but then you will be able to take your entourage back to Blood River with you. "

My heart leaps for joy. It almost doesn't register that Kas squeals

and is hugging me around the waist.

Moon Goddess, thank you!

I reach down and pick Kas up by her waist. She wraps her arms and legs around me letting me kissing her deeply.

I pull away just long enough to say, "I'm so proud of you, Baby.

So proud."

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 34

I leave the coven with a flame of joy in my heart. When I get back to the packhouse and tell everyone the good news, the atmosphere couldn't have been more celebratory.

I want to do something special for James and Milo as a thank-you.

I give Ashley orders to spruce up their homes. Especially James's house to make it comfortable for Delilah.

I also have her set up classes for the pack, focusing on speciesism and being more open-minded. Not just for MasonCo employees, for everyone. Presumably, other pack members may have mates that are not werewolves. I want to make sure everyone is prepared and respectful of the mate bond, regardless of species.

Ashley takes several omegas to help get the work done at James's house. Fresh paint, new bed, new linens, dishes, and such. Leaving it just plain enough that Delilah and James would be able to decorate it to their taste. She has the pantry filled with

staples and pre-orders perishable food to put into the refrigerator

the day before they come home. She doesn't want them to have anything to worry about.

Marco is one of the warriors who chooses to live in an apartment instead of a house on pack territory. Milo looks in his file to where

there are notes about taking care of his parents, who are bit older. He does most of the maintenance and yard work for them and doesn't have time to take care of a house of his own.

I tell Lenora to have the Sanchez house added to the list of

properties our landscaping and maintenance staff will start to take care of it. I don't want him to have to do the extra work on his days off. He should be able to spend that time with his family if that is what he chooses.

When Ashley takes the omegas to Marco's apartment, they find a stereotypical bachelor pad complete with second-hand furniture and an unidentifiable smell that needs to be expelled.

"Um, Alpha?" she sends a mind link. She used my title, which means it is pack business related.

"Yes, Gamma?" I sigh in response.

"I'm going to need a bigger budget for this. Everything Marco has looks like it is second hand and falling apart...and we need a couple of people from the cleaning crew," she sounds kind of grossed out.

"Granted. Do what you have to do. He deserves it," I confirm. From what Carly tells me, Ashley got rid of all the furniture and redecorated the entire place. She even got him a seventy-two - inch television and a new Xbox. I can only imagine how much he's going to love it.

And because she apparently doesn't have enough on her plate with all of that, Ashley insists on putting up winter solstice decorations around the packhouse early, so they will be ready when Kas, Delilah, James, and Marco get home. Within a week, much to the dismay of the frazzled house staff, the packhouse is

decorated top to bottom. I look around and realize it may be even a little more over the top than what she usually does. Aside from that, I focus heavily on MasonCo business. Holiday time always results in higher security needs for individuals,

events, and businesses. I chip in, contacting our typical seasonal clients and set them up with advisors for this year's needs. Even the more picky clients are more than happy to hear from me. We have much smoother conversations than years past, helping solidify future business. I remember what Kas had said about power and influence. I can't help but wonder if the smooth conversations with my clients is the beginning of that. The day before I leave to pick up Kas, Marco, Delilah and James, there's a knock on my apartment door. Ashley is standing there with two omegas who are carrying boxes so big, they can barely see over them.

"We're here to decorate!" she says in a sing-song voice as she throws her arins in the air with a huge smile. I notice she is wearing a sweater with a polar bear hugging a decorated solstice tree.

"No one is safe from your festive decorations, huh?" I grumble. In prior years, I have been able to escape having my apartment decorated, but it looks like that isn't an option this year. Not that I'm trying to be a Grinch, but I like my space minimal. I am more than happy to look at the decorations in the rest of the packhouse.

"Nope!" She pushes past me with the omegas in tow, "I want it to be perfect for Kas."

"Alright, alright. I'm going to give you three the space to do your thing. I will be in my office if you need me. Easy on the glitter, Ashley."

“Extra glitter. Sounds good! Later!” She called from somewhere deep inside one of the boxes. I walk to my office and finish up some paperwork. When I’m done, I sit back in my seat, savoring the moment of silence. I look at my wrist, admiring the newest tattoo that said ‘forever in the past and forever in the future’ in a thin script font. My mate is coming home and nothing would ever take her away from me again. I lose track of time as I daydream about Kas being home until there’s a knock on my office door.

“Come in!” I call out. Milo and Reggie open the door and quickly close it behind them.

“Dude, Ashley’s out of control! Bronx, ” Reggie whines, ” She decorated our bathroom. I don’t know what I’m going to do with her!”

“She bought Lenora a shirt that says ‘Tis the season to be pregnant’ and one for me that says, ‘We’re trading our silent nights for a bundle of joy’. Save us! ” Milo adds.

All I can do is laugh, “Guys, you have literally fought in werewolf wars. You can handle a she-wolf excited about her Luna coming home after so many weeks. Plus, she wants to make Delilah feel comfortable.”

“I’ll take another military tour, thank you very much, ” Reggie says, sliding down in his chair.

“Well, you guys can hide out here, but lock up behind you. I have done as much work as possible, so there shouldn’t be much for you to cover Milo. I leave early, so I will see you when I get back. Now it’s time to see the winter

wonderland Ashley has made my apartment into.”
Reggie groans and rolls his eyes, ” She got to you Too! No
one is
safe.”

“Have a safe flight! ” Milo says as I close the door.
My eyes go wide when I open my apartment door. It looks like
an
over-the-top department store window. I can’ t help but laugh
as I
pull down swaths of glitter coated garland that are so low I
have
to duck under them and roll up a red plaid rug in the sitting
room. I decide to leave the artificial tree because it looks
nice,
Kas is going to like it. I also leave the winter-theined hand
towels
in the kitchen and poinsettia on the dining table.
I’ m excited, but I also have an odd sense of calm as I pack
my
bag. I decide to stay on the calm wave and have dinner in my
apartment, knowing its my last few hours of peace I’ ll be
getting for a while. Once Kas is home, everyone will
understandably want to spend time with us. If I go down to the
dining room, I will be bombarded by excited pack members. I
get
ready for bed, feeling lonely and excited at the same time.
I know
it will be the last time I am ever going to feel lonely again.
Kas
will be next to me from here on out. Before I climb into bed,
I
open the nightstand and pull out the little blue velvet box.
I open
it and admire the ring inside.
“She’ s gonna love it,” Saint chimes in. “You think so?”
I ask with
a smile.

I' ve known her for a long time. Trust me on this, ” he reassured me.

“Should I take it with me and ask before we leave the cover or hold out for the winter solstice party?”

“Ugh. What' s the matter with you? Ask her on the morning of solstice when it' s just the two of you.

You know she doesn' t like all eyes on her, dummy, ” he scolds with a growl. “You' re right, ” I close the box and put it back in the nightstand.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 35

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 35

In the morning, I board the jet only to find an unfamiliar pilot performing preflight checks.

Oh, Hell no.

I 'm not going to fly with a pilot I don' t know. First off, I have no

idea what his experience is. Secondly, too many media outlets try

to sneak around to get information about me and my company.

I

wouldn' t put it past a network to plant a pilot to try to get intel on

me. MasonCo is a multibillion dollar corporation. Because of the

nature of our work, I usually decline interviews. I don' t need any

information about my clients to accidentally leak to anyone.

Unfortunately, this tactic makes the media more desperate to find

out how I am so successful. When I do go out in public in the human world, paparazzi always seem to find me and make up the most ridiculous shit about my business dealings and

relationship

status.

This guy looks familiar, but I can't put a finger on where I have

seen him before. Definitely not on one of my private flights.

My

intuition suddenly tells me I need to be cautious.

"Where's Mitch?" I skip the pleasantries, as I take off my suit

jacket and drape it over the seat next to me. Internally, I'm wary

but I try not to let it show in my voice. Plus, I already feel annoyed by this change in personnel with no forewarning.

"Good morning, Alpha," the stranger says with a small salute,

"Mitch is on paternity leave, his wife had her pup this week.

Name's Joe Morris, substitute pilot for the weekend. "

I look him over for a minute, annoyed that he thinks he can speak to me so casually. He's on the younger side with close-cropped blond hair and clear gray eyes; over six feet tall but not

as tall as me, with a slim build. He averts his eyes when he realizes I'm staring longer than socially acceptable.

I can smell that he's a werewolf, but I don't recognize his scent at

all. Why does this guy look so familiar? Did he serve in the military with me? No way. He is not muscular enough to have ever been a warrior.

"Give me a minute before we take off? I just need to make a quick call, " It's an order, not a question. He nods in confirmation

and continues with his preflight checks.

"Of course, Alpha, we have plenty of time," his nerves come through in his tone. He nods in confirmation and continues with his preflight checks.

I make my way down the stairs of the plane and light a cigarette before calling Carly. She answers on the third ring, sounding groggy.

"Carly, why didn't you tell me there was going to be a substitute

pilot? ” I snarl into the phone. When I dialed her number, I reminded myself to remember not to be too harsh with my tone but I’ m angry she didn’ t tell me about this change in personnel.

She instantly sounds more alert on hearing my voice.

“I -I just got the call at one a.m, Alpha. This guy was the only one I could find on such short notice, ” she says with a touch of fear in her voice. “Vaughn wasn’ t available?”

“No, Alpha. Vaughn is in Colombia with Beta Lenora, ” I hear pages flipping as she speaks.

“Dammit. Okay. Well, has this guy been vetted through security at least? I have no idea who he is, ” I ask, impatiently, “You expect me to let my mate be flown across the Atlantic by some random pilot? “

“Alpha, please don’ t be upset. I found out that Mitch was going to be out at one a.m. I contacted the airport, they provided me with this guy’ s name at one fifteen and I submitted his background paperwork at one -thirty in the morning. It’ s only five a.m. now.

It’ s going to be at least noon before it all clears. The earliest someone is in the office to process him is seven a.m. “ There is a pause and more page flipping, “The other options are

to change the flight time to later this afternoon or wait for another pilot who is already cleared. Which would be this two? thirty p.m. The airport doesn’ t have any open take -off slots until three p.m. If you choose not to take off in half an hour as planned, you won’ t be able to take off until three. You can always

fly commercial but I know you don’ t like to draw that kind of

attention. If you' ve changed your mind, the next commercial flight leaves at eleven a.m. and has a three-hour layover at Heathrow. You would get into France about the same time as the afternoon private flight. My hands are tied, sir."

I place my hand on my hip and pace for a minute. I can feel my

patience fraying as Saint starts to stalk around in my mind. He wants to get to our mate just as badly as

I do.

Shit.

"Alright, fine. Don' t make any changes to the itinerary. I will take

off in half an hour, " I growl. I hang up the phone without saying

goodbye.

I pace as I collect myself before getting back on the plane. Something is definitely off here. Mitch has been my pilot for four

years. He never mentioned a pup on the way. Not that he and I

play golf on the weekends or anything, but I feel like I would have some idea if one of my staff had a pregnant mate.

"Saint, if we get on this plane right now, you need to be on high

alert. Something isn' t right here. You know that, right?"

"You need to be on high alert, Saint, " he mocks me, " I' m always

on high alert. Let' s get Kas."

"Fine, " I throw my cigarette into a puddle, rub my face with my

hands, and take a deep breath before I get back on the plane. Instinctively, I run through a dozen scenarios in my head in case

anything goes wrong.

An hour and a half into the flight, I decide I 'm just being paranoid. Everything is going smoothly. I 'm engrossed in reading

the New York Times when Freddie, my usual steward comes by with a cup of coffee.

“Thank you,” I say without looking up.

“Of course, Alpha. I’ m here if you need me. Just ring the bell if

there’ s anything else you need,” the man says. His tone is nervous. I dismiss it since I have that effect on a lot of people.

I flip the page of the newspaper and take a sip of the coffee. Blech!

“Freddie, ” I call out, “What the Hell is in this coffee? “

“It’ s your usual brand, Alpha. Would you like me to make you a

fresh cup? ” My outburst clearly made him more nervous.

“No, that’ s okay,” typical crappy airline coffee, but at least it will

keep me awake.

“Bronx! Wake the f*ck up!” Saint snarls.

I open my bleary eyes to a searing pain in my wrists, ankles, and

across my chest. I’ m hogtied on the floor of the jet in silver chains. Freddie is hogtied unconscious next to me. He looks pale

and has dried blood coming from his nose and mouth. I listen quietly. I can hear his heartbeat, so I know at least he isn’ t dead.

“What the f*ck? Saint, what happened?” I groan.

“I think the coffee was poisoned. Come on, get out of the chains.

We need to get up. ”

I struggle against the chains, but all it does is make the searing

pain worse.

“Ahh, Alpha Bronx. So glad you’ re awake!” a man’ s gravelly voice

says with a sneer. He pulls back the curtain from the galley. His

eyes are bloodshot, he is gaunt and he hasn't had a haircut in months. From the smell of it, he hasn't had a shower either, but there is no mistaking who he is.

"Connors! What the Hell is the meaning of this?" I snarl at him as

I struggle against the painful silver restraints. "This, Alpha Regent Bronx Mason, is a hostile takeover," he kicks me in the face and stuffs a pungent-smelling rag in my face. Concentrated wolfsbane. I fight for a minute, but it's no use, world goes black.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 36

Kas' s POV

Tomorrow is the big day! I'm finally going home. Oh, my Goddess! Thinking about being able to sleep snuggle up to Bronx every night, being able to get into a routine with the pack, and

continuing to hone my abilities, it all sounds perfect. For the first

time in my life, I am truly looking forward to my future. I have

hope in my heart. Lex is excited because she will have more opportunities to run on the Blood River pack territory. She is

looking forward to the additional freedom. I can't blame her.

As

she has become stronger, she has more energy to burn.

Some days I feel like I am vibrating from the inside out because she has trouble containing her energy.

I'm also really excited that Delilah and James get to stay together. They are so in love. It is adorable to watch them together. Who knew such a ferocious warrior could turn into such

a mushy little pup when he is around his mate? She is going to fit

in perfectly with the pack.

Marco has been a trooper throughout this whole time. Sometimes I see him looking really glum when he doesn' t realize anyone is

looking. He and I become closer. I genuinely consider him my friend now, not just my guard. I do my best to joke around or bake for him, get his mind off of things, but I know what it feels

like to be lonely. It' s a bottomless pit that you just keep falling

down. There is no getting out of it unless someone throws you a

rope and you catch it.

I' ve decided I ' in going to ask Bronx if we can give them both an

extended vacation or a bonus or both. I don' t know if it is appropriate or not, but I feel like they have sacrificed so much to

be here to protect me, I can' t just turn a blind eye. I want to

show them my appreciation.

Lady Camille and the sisters of the coven have been so kind and

generous. I know I have friends for life here. They have taught me so much about myself, how to let go of all the shitty things that have happened and hold on to the good. I don' t know what I

can do to show them my thanks, but I make a mental note to ask Delilah as soon as we get home and she' s settled in.

They' ve taught me how to control my abilities, to not be ashamed

of my own physical form, and to appreciate my spirit. My healer abilities still fascinate me. I still need to practice a lot to fully

control it, but I find it beautiful to be able to cure someone or

take away their pain. I can't wait to use them in real life. Also, I have a deeper connection to my mate. I can remember lifetimes of being with him and the closer our connection the more he will remember too. I have not had any premonitions while I've been here, but I promise Lady Camille if it happens, I will have Bronx bring me back right away. One of the things the sisters have not taught me is fighting skills. They are pacifists and don't believe in violence. James and Milo both agree I should at least know how to defend myself. We get permission from Lady Camille to at least practice blocking and escaping holds. She agreed, so in our free time, we practice basic moves. Just a few blocks and how to escape holds. We make sure we are still respectful of the sisters' beliefs but still learning. I have a few last things to pack but I keep getting distracted by daydreams of being home and about the future. Out of nowhere, a distinct tug pulls in my heart. "Lex, did you feel that?" I rub my chest from the sensation. "Uh, yeah. Are you having a heart attack? You're only seventeen. You can't have a heart attack. Can you?" she asks, concerned about me. "No, I feel like I 'm fine, but something is wrong. I know that doesn't make sense, " I feel my brows knit as the sharp pain turns into a dull thud. "Uh oh. " "What, uh oh? No uh ohs, Lex. " "What if something happened to our mate, and we are feeling it because of our connection?"

“Uh oh.”

“But we’ re not marked. I thought that only happens to mates who

are marked? “

“You and Bronx are not regular werewolves, Kas,” she warns. Panic quickly tries to burrow its way into my chest. I bolt out of

the room to find help. Marco is standing in the hall, on duty.

I

grab him by the hand and start pulling on him. I can feel tears starting to sting my eyes, “Come on, Marco! We need to find Lady

Camille. Do you have your cell phone? We need to call Bronx right away. “

He runs with me, trailing back by a step, “Luna, I don’ t understand? What happened? The Alpha should be arriving in any minute. “

I come to a sliding stop in the front sitting room. Lady Camille is

sitting with two young witches having tea.

“Lady Camille, ” I cry out, “Please give Marco access to use his

phone to call Alpha Bronx. Please! “

“Luna lokaste, what’ s wrong, child?” she stares at me with disbelief and worry on her face.

“I felt something through my connection with my mate. Something’ s wrong. I can’ t tell what, I can just feel it,” I feel the

tears threatening to spill over.

Lady Camille looks at me trying to search for something, I’ m not

sure what.

“Very well. Go ahead, Marco. Your phone should work now,” she

motions to him calmly.

Marco pulls his cell phone from his pocket, dials, and puts it on

speaker. The call goes straight to Bronx’ s voicemail.

“He must still be on the plane, ” Marco shakes his head trying to justify.

“No! No! Please call Beta Milo, ” the panic that has burrowed itself in my chest was now coming through in my voice. I need to calm down and think rationally, but there’ s no way that’ s going to

happen until I know Bronx is safe. Marco dials the phone again.

“Marco? Is that you?” I hear Milo’ s deep voice on the other end.

“Milo! When did Bronx leave for France? ” I cry into the phone, completely cutting Marco out. The panic has pushed the tears out of my eyes and I can’ t stop them from flowing now, “He’ s not here yet! His phone went right to voicemail. “

“Hey there Little Sister! I think the jet was supposed to take off around five -thirty this morning. Let me check with Carly. Give me just a second. It’ s going to be okay. We will get this figured

out, ” He reassures me when he hears my tone.

Marco gently takes my hand, “See, Luna, it’ s going to be okay. Beta Milo has it under control, ” I try to smile at him, but all I

have is panic and tears right now.

I feel like Milo put us on hold forever. Marco must have mind?linked James because he and Delilah come into the sitting room.

Delilah takes my other hand, to try to comfort me. Marco lets my

hand go and pulls James to the side, speaking to him in a hushed tone.

“Yeah, Carly says he took off at five thirty—five this morning. He should have landed, like, six hours ago. Maybe he doesn’ t have

good reception on the way to the coven? Give it another hour, Kas. He will be there soon. “

I don’ t know how else to explain it except to say that Lex snapped. I feel my skin turn itchy and hot. With out warning, my

consciousness get yanked back in my mind.

“Lex! Stop! We can’ t shift right now! ” I fight against her. I pull

on her as hard as I could, fighting for control.

“NO GHOST! YOUR ALPHA IS IN TROUBLE. FIND HIM NOW! ” her voice booms into the phone, speaking directly to Milo’ s wolf The

walls of the coven house rattle as her voice thunders in its ethereal tone.

“Y-yes, Luna, ” his voice suddenly becomes very small,

“Marco, I

will call you back in ten minutes. I need to get people into the

office, so we can figure out what’ s going on. “

The line disconnects and I am thrust back into control of my body. I hold my hands to my mouth, “I-I’ m so sorry! Lex took over. “

“It’ s alright, Luna lokaste, don’ t forget, she is a wolf after all.

She’ s right to take over if you need her, ” Delilah reassures me

while she pats my hand, “Why don’ t we sit down? A quick meditation will suit us until Beta Milo calls back, alright? “

I nod and sit on the love seat with her. I look up at Marco and

James, I think they are scared of after Lex’ s outburst. Panic gives

way to a numbness I haven’ t felt in months.

“Lady Camille, do you think it would work if I try to reach out to

Bronx through our connection? Even if we aren’ t marked yet?”

I

ask blankly.

“Well, if you say you have already felt a sensation in your heart,

then yes, your connection is strong enough, Luna lokaste. But be

advised, depending on how deep your connection runs, you could experience the same sensations he is. Good or bad. You need to

use caution if you try to reach out to his spirit. “

I consider her words. If I put myself in danger, Bronx is going to

be pissed. But if I don’ t try to reach out to him and something happens that could be prevented, I don’ t know how I will live with

myself.

Honestly, I don’ t know how I will live without Bronx.

“Don’ t think like that, Kas,” Lex whines, “You can do this.

I

believe in you. You can find him. “

Her determination feeds my confidence. I will find him at all costs.

Just then, Marco’ s phone rings. I jump out of my seat as he answers it and puts it on speaker.

“Go ahead, Beta. We are all here, I have you on speaker, ”

Marco

says.

“Marco, James. Kas is right. The jet didn’ t land at Agen La Garenne Airport, but there have been no emergency beacons or reports of crashes. We’ re working on tracking its location.

I’ m

getting on a plane with your old team. “

Marco and James give each other a knowing look, then look over at me. It was a mix of remorse, sympathy, and a hint of fear swirling in their eyes.

Milo continues, “Unfortunately, that means the four of you are

going to have to sit tight at the coven house. If the Alpha is in

danger, then so is Kas. We can't let her leave the realm until we

find him. Lady Camille, I apologize for the additional intrusion."

"It is no problem, Beta Milo Burns," Lady Camille reassures him.

"Marco, James, sorry to do this to you, but get caffeinated, secure the Luna, wait for my call," Milo continues. His tone is

serious as he gives orders.

"Yes, Beta," They say in unison before Marco cuts the line. Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 37

My heart sinks. No no no no. This is not happening. This is NOT

happening! Okay, calm down, Kas.

Meditate. Find him through our connection. You're a Goddess, damn it.

"Alright, if I have to be on lockdown, can it be in the meditation room, please?" I ask Lady Camille.

"Of course, Luna lokaste. Please be careful in your search. Sister

Delilah, please accompany your Luna. Should she need anything, you are to assist in any way you can," Lady Camille says in a

comforting manner.

"Thank you, Lady Camille," I sigh with my hands over my heart.

Marco gently takes me by the elbow and leads me to the meditation room with James and Delilah right behind us. Marco and James have never really needed to protect me from a threat. It was shocking to see how their demeanor changed from being watchful to being protective.

There's no windows or other doors in the meditation room. It is

dimly lit with mats and cushions placed on the floor. There is a

hint of music playing in the background. One way in, one way out. The perfect location to be protected by my guards. They make sure no one else is in the room, James kisses Delilah deeply, then they step out, and close the door behind us.

“Okay, Delilah, I’ m going to try to find my mate through our connection. Please pray to Goddess Hecate to keep me safe,” I look into her deep blue eyes as we join hands.

“Okay. I’ m right here if you need me, Luna Iokaste,” she looks at

me with compassion and worry. I can’ t help but chuckle.

“Delilah, if you’ re coming to live with us, please, call me Kas or

Luna Kas if you insist on using my title, ” I plead with her with as

much of a smile as I can muster.

She smiles shyly and nods.

I sit on the soft mat on the floor, close my eyes, and let my spirit

extend out into the universe.

Bronx’ s POV

I wake up in a dark, musty room. The air is stale, hot, and humid. My head is pounding. I try to shake out the feeling and look around me. The edges of my vision are a bit blurry but I can

still see.

Okay, first thing’ s first, I need to orient myself and assess my

situation.

I’ m in the center of the dungeon cell, hanging by silver shackles.

My shoes are missing and my toes are barely touching the damp ground. My body weight is putting pressure on the silver shackles

around my wrists, and let me tell you, that shit burns. Welp, not

a great situation.

“Saint, you there? You okay? “

“Concentrated wolfsbane?” he asks with a groan, ” What kind of sick f*ck is that guy?”

Alright, so the rag to the face was full of wolfsbane. I don’ t taste any in my mouth, so I didn’ t ingest any. That’ s at least one good sign.

“Okay, man. I’ ll figure out how to get outta here. Let me know when you are ready, cause when I get out, we’ re gonna need to shift. “

“Ten-four, ” he groans weakly. I know he will rebound quickly.

Graham Connors. How did he get on my jet? It had to be that substitute pilot. Doesn’ t matter now. Focus, Bronx.

What does matter is, where the Hell am I? I don’ t see anything distinctive to help identify where I could be. Great. Nothing smells familiar. Great. I don’ t hear

any noises outside, so I’ m somewhere remote. Great. There’ s one

small window with bars. No way I could fit through it regardless.

Great. The only way out is through the cell door, which is locked

and appears to be made out of silver. Things are not looking up

for me. At least I didn’ t ingest any wolfsbane.

I look up to see my shackles attached to an eye hook in the ceiling. The ceiling looks like it is made of cement which is crumbling. I wonder how weak the cement is? If I can get enough leverage from my bodyweight, maybe I can pull the eye hook out. It’ s the only plan I have. I lift my legs up toward my elbows

and throw my feet down forcefully. Burning pain rips through my

wrists but I feel the hook loosen. I make the same movement
one

more time. The skin on my wrists is blistering from the pressure
against the silver. The hook is deep in the ceiling but it's
moving.

I'm about to lift my legs up a third time but I hear a door
creak

and footsteps coming down the hall. I also hear a soft dragging,
scraping sound. The smell

of whiskey, wolfsbane, and rogue wolf hit my nose.

Connors comes into view. His clothes are torn and disheveled.
He's holding an empty liquor bottle in one hand and a whip
in the

other. The whip looks like a cat of nine tails with tiny rows
of

barbs at the ends. It is dripping wet with wolfsbane.

"Well well well, lookie what the rogue caught himself," he
slurs

heavily, "I got myself a big bad Alpha Regent. "

He slowly approaches me. I swear he took a bath in the whiskey.

"Where is my slave?" he snarls. His eyes are feral behind
his

intoxication.

"Kas is NOT your slave and her location is not your concern,
motherf*cker," I growl and spit at his face. I have to keep
him

talking. If he's talking, he's distracted. If he's
distracted, I have a

better chance of making it out of this alive.

"Bronx Mason, you are not in a position to say no. You will
tell

me," he snarls again.

"And why would I do that?" I growl back at him. Anger is
flowing

through me. I yank my wrists forcefully against the shackles,
ignoring the pain. I feel more movement coming from the eye
hook.

He doesn't answer. A sick smile comes across his face. He unzips

his pants and pees on my legs. Gross. I feel Saint starting to stir.

He won't stand for this kind of disrespect.

"Because you won't like what happens if you don't," he laughs as

he sways and zips his pants.

"If you kill me, you'll never find her. I'm the only one who knows

where she is," I retort defiantly.

His cold, drunk eyes turn black.

"Oh hey there wolfie. What's your name?" I egg on his wolf peeking through.

"I'm Ruckus and I want my slave back," he takes a couple of

steps forward.

"Not gonna happen, big guy. She was never meant to be your slave. You and Connors took an innocent girl and abused the shit

out of her," I snarl back. Neither Saint nor I are afraid of some

feral wolf. Especially if they threaten our mate.

"If you won't tell me where she is, then you get a taste of what

she experiences when she disobeys me," he roars and spins me

so my back faces him. I feel movement above me as the eye hook wiggles looser. He rips my shirt off and steps back. The first

lash makes my back feel like it's on fire.

"Arrghh!!" I yell out. Holy. Shit.

"F*ck! More wolfsbane?!" Saint yells in my mind at the same time.

Connors rains down lashes with the whip until he's out of breath.

The pain is excruciating. I feel myself getting weaker with each

thrash. The puddle of
blood under my feet is getting bigger. Filling the air with
a copper
smell.

Saint has no choice but to retreat. Any progress he made on
recovering has been erased by the poison now weaving its way
through my veins. We' re relying solely on my physical strength
now. I won' t let him down. The poison is going to kill him
if I

don' t do something fast. I can feel him fading.

I' m helpless, hanging from the ceiling. I try kicking Connors
but

he is too far away. I' m panting but can' t catch my breath
between each stinging slash against my skin. What he doesn' t
realize is with each lash, I pull down harder on my wrists.

The

eye hook I am tethered to becomes looser and looser.

" Tell me where she is!?" he rages.

" Get f*cked, " I grunt. I take a chance as I use the last
of my

strength and heave myself up, grab the chains fully with my
hands and yank my full bodyweight down. The eye hook finally
gives way, causing me to come crashing down on my raw
bleeding back into the pool of my own blood.

The impact knocks the wind out of me. Combined with the pain
of

the wolfsbane laced lashes, I see stars. Before I can react,
the

silver chains fall forcefully against my bare chest blistering
my

skin. I blink a few times trying to orient myself, when I
realize

Connors is standing over me. His face is surprised but still
full of

drunken rage.

He pulls his arm back and brings the whip down with his full
force. I tighten my chains taught in my hands and quickly extend
my arms straight up. The chains catch the ends of the whip

tangling the two together. The tangled leather mixed in the chains makes it easy to yank Connors down on top of me. He is so drunk, he doesn't even try to stop himself from falling. His neck lands directly on the outstretched chain. I catch him and quickly wrap the chain around causing him to choke and burn at the same time. I manage to roll us over so I'm on top of him. He looks dazed, even before I start punching him. Even with Saint incapacitated, my rage is more than enough for both of us. I start punching him with as much strength as I have, pulling my arm as far back as the shackles will allow and letting my fist fall heavily on his face. I keep punching until he doesn't have a face left to speak of. When I feel like I have no strength left, all my rage exacted on Connors' face, I unwrap the chain from around his neck and roll off of him falling back with exhaustion. I lay on the ground trying to catch my breath, feeling woozy. Knowing I have to get up and move. I have to get out of here. I roll over and sit up on my knees. Every movement is torture in and of itself. I pat down Connors and find the key to the silver chains and the dungeon cell. I free myself, standing in the puddle of my own blood and I teeter out of the cell, closing Connors inside and locking it. I throw the key down the drain of the neighboring cell and slide along the wall of the long hallway as I make my way out of the dungeon. I look down at my hands, only

the top edge of Kas' s quote remains on my wrist. The rest blistered off by the silver shackles.

I push open the door to the dungeon and fall forward onto a dusty hardwood floor. I seem to be in a small abandoned packhouse. I drag myself up the stairs and find a bedroom with a

dirty, ancient looking mattress on the floor. I can' t catch my

breath, each one is more short and ragged than the last. I close the door and lock it, then collapse onto the mattress. The edges of my vision turn dark.

"Saint, I can' t move. I can' t get up. We' re dying. Th- this is the end, buddy."

There' s no answer. I can' t feel him. Saint is gone.

" Saint? " I continue to speak to him. Even if he is just a memory,

he is all I have right now. I can' t stand thinking I 'm alone in

these last moments of my life. I will always have Saint. Forever in

the past and forever in the future, right? But I don' t want him in

the future. I want him here right now.

A realization hits me at that moment. This is what Connors did to

Kas. Over and over again. He destroyed her body, shattered her mind and filled her with deadly poison. Taking her to the brink of

death but she survived. Lex had still been asleep; Kas was alone.

Just like I am now. She is infinitely stronger than I had ever been.

I feel a tear slide down my cheek as the world turns blurry, my

limbs go numb, and everything fades away as I float off into oblivion.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener

chapter 38

Kas' s POV

As I pull away from my physical body and spread my spirit into the universe, I feel him. His spirit is fading but he' s there.

I sense

a familiar pain coursing

through me. Something tells me his back is wet with blood and there is poison in his veins, but my spirit doesn' t understand that

physical concept.

I focus on him with all my power. His and Saint' s souls are in

limbo. No longer connected to each other, not alive, but not yet

dead. I collect their essences, willing them to come toward me,

toward life, and follow me back to Bronx' s body before it' s too

late. I push my healing powers out to Bronx and Saint. Giving them the strength to live.

” Bronx, come back, Sweetheart, ” I sense his spirit recognizes

mine. He flickers brighter. It' s almost indistinguishable but it' s

there. The tiniest little spark, “I need you to tell me where you

are, Bronx. “

A vision comes to me of an abandoned house with a human church in the distance. It' s a very old stone structure. The bell

tower has two large bells hanging. The church bells chime a distinct tune. Hopefully it' s enough to help Milo identify where he

is.

“Hold on, Bronx, we' re coming for you, ” I whisper.

I pull my spirit back to my body, collecting all the pieces of my

essence as I pull back into to my physical form. Something feels

wrong. Something is missing. I open my eyes to see Marco, James, Delilah, and Lady Camille standing over me. Delilah is crying. I'm flat on my back. The floor below me is wet and sticky.

I try to sit up, but I can't. I'm dizzy, sick to my stomach, and

weak. I can't feel Lex, there is a void where she usually sits.

"I can describe where he is," I say weakly.

I tell them about the vision and Bronx being close to death.

I

brought him back, but I don't know for how long.

"We got it from here, Luna. Lady Camille, let's get her medical

attention, right now," James said.

Lady Camille nods and swipes her hand over my face, "Sleep Luna lokaste, reserve your energy."

I don't have a choice. The strength of her magic immediately slips

me into a dreamless sleep.

Bronx's POV

Floating in the ether at the edge of death. Cold and dark but comforting at the same time. There is no pain, no emotion, no time, just darkness. In this emptiness, I feel it more than hear it.

A sensation calling out to me, calling my name with no words, weightlessly pulling me to an unknown destination. It doesn't matter where it's leading me. I let it guide me through the darkness. Am I going toward the solace of death or the warmth of

the world of the living? I have no way of knowing.

A healing warmth fills my chest and spreads out to every cell of

my body. It separates me from the ether and sucks out the poison, it seals the wounds of the body I left behind and refills my

spirit with emotions. I sense it placing a healing warm glow around Saint's soul. I know he is there with me, being pulled away from the ether but he still feels separate from me.

“Bronx, come back, Sweetheart, ” I hear it now. Kas’ s voice calling to me, “I need you to tell me where you are, Bronx, ” It’ s definitely her voice. It isn’ t in the air and it isn’ t my imagination or a hallucination. It’ s like it’ s coming from my own soul.

“Kas? Where are you?” I call out, desperate to be closer to her.

I slowly open my eyes. It’ s daylight now. Kas is not here. I know

I heard her. I know she is here with me.

” Kas, Baby? I heard you. Where are you? ” I ignore the pain coursing through my body and use all my strength to crawl on my

hands and knees to the window. She wants to know where I am. I look out and see an old stone church with two bells. The bells start to chime a sweet tune.

“Kas, I’ m in an abandoned packhouse. It’ s hot outside and humid.

I can see the steeple of a human church, ” I say out loud. I have

no idea how she is communicating with me but I figure my best bet is to speak out loud.

“Kas, I can’ t feel Saint, ” I’ m fighting back the lump in my throat

that will bring forth tears, “He’ s gone. ”

“Hold on for me, Sweetheart. We are coming, we’ re coming for you. ”

I crawl back to the mattress and flop down. The movement to and from the window, completely exhausted me. My fingertips feel numb.

I close my eyes again praying to the Moon Goddess, I don’ t die in

my sleep.

“Bronx! ”

“Alpha! Can you hear us?”

I hear familiar voices and movements in the house. I try to open my eyes but it's a struggle. I don't have the strength to even open my eyes.

"Milo? Henri?" I whisper. There are other voices too. I hear crashing sounds as they bust down doors to other rooms. I try to call out but I can't. I'm too weak. The door to my room crashes open. Milo barges in.

"Oh my Goddess! Bronx!" Milo runs over to me while Henri yells to people in the hall.

I use all the strength I have to take his hand. I let the tears I have been holding back fall freely now.

"Saint's gone," I whisper.

"What? No Bronx, that can't be. You've lost a lot of blood but you're gonna be alright. Just hang in there, my dude. We're going to give you morphine and get you to Kas right away," Milo's voice is calm but his face is pure panic.

A woman in a military medic uniform rushes into the room. She pulls a morphine pen from her medical bag and injects me. My mind fades into a dreamless sleep.

I feel my body being jostled around. I open my eyes, I'm on the floor of a helicopter. There is a tube connected to Milo's arm feeding into mine. A field blood transfusion. It's a dangerous procedure, reserved for dire cases. He is yelling out orders to the pilot. I fall back into the dreamless sleep. I wake up again for a moment, laying in the back of a bumpy SUV before I fade out

once more. I wake again to Milo carrying me over his back in a fireman's carry through the coven house.

"Milo" I eke out, weakly patting him on the ribs, " put me down."

"Nah man, we are getting you to bed. There's no way you can stand right now. Henri and I are going to give you another transfusion of our blood. Just hang in there. "

"Is Kas here?" I ask.

"Yeah Bronx, we're taking you to her," Milo responds sympathetically. I look to see Henri is directly behind him, pulling

out more tubing and needle to perform another field transfusion.

My friends are keeping me alive with their blood.

They take me down a hallway to Kas's room and sit me on a stool. Milo kneels in front of me letting me lean all my weight onto him. Henri pokes a needle into his arm, then into mine.

I

turn my head to see a witch coming over to tend to my wounds.

"Alpha Regent Bronx Mason, may I have your permission to help heal you with magic? I believe I will only be able to slow the blood loss. Your wolf will need to help with the rest." she asks.

"Just do it," Milo snaps, "I am currently the acting Blood River

Alpha. I give you permission on Bronx's behalf."

I ignore their conversation. I can't focus on anything they are

saying anyway. The world is fading in and out as I lean heavily on

Milo. A wave of comfort gently washes over me.

"Kas?" I can smell her fresh rain and lilac scent, warming me to the core.

"Bronx, my friend, let the witch clean your wounds, then you can

go lay down with your mate, " Henri says reassuringly.

Lay down with her? I look up to see there are several witches, James, and Marco all gathered around a large bed. Kas is laying on her stomach, still and pale. Bandages are covering her back.

“Kas?” My breath shortens as anger and panic set in. I feel tears

well up seeing her helpless on the bed. I try to get up to go to

her but Milo pulls me back down, “What happened? Who did this to her?”

“You wouldn’ t believe me if I even tried to tell you, Alpha, ”

James shakes his head at me.

After about fifteen minutes, the witch is finished putting a salve

on my back and gently applying bandages, but she does not tape them all the way down. She advises that Lady Camille needs to look at me first. Henri ends the transfusion. He and Milo pick me

up and set me on the bed, swinging my legs up for me so I can rest next to my mate.

“On your stomach please, Alpha Bronx. I need to confirm if my

theory is correct. It will determine the best way to heal you both,

” Lady Camille addresses me. She then turns to the room, “If you

are not a member of the Blood River pack, please leave the room. ”

All the women except Delilah leave.

“Please face me, Alpha Bronx, I don’ t want you to see the state

Luna lokaste is in right now, ” Lady Camille commands.

“But— “

“There is no time for ‘but’ , Alpha Bronx, there is only time for

action, ” she firmly schools me.

She carefully lifts the dressings from my back. I hear Delilah doing the same for Kas.

“As I suspected. Alpha Bronx, you and Luna Iokaste’s injuries are identical. I will explain how I believe this happened but that is not important right now.

What’s important is that you heal each other. Then we can discuss specifics.”

She says it so matter of factly that I thought she was talking to someone else. I feel her gently securing the dressings to my raw back.

“Lady Camille, I’m not a healer, ” I give her a confused look.

“Alpha Bronx, you are her healer, ” she face softens as she tilts her head toward Kas.

I look over to see Delilah finishing up the dressings on Kas’s back. When she’s done, everyone quietly files out of the room. I ‘m not really sure what I ‘m supposed to do, but I already feel

better just being next to Kas. That has to mean something, right?

I carefully roll on my side, forcing myself to ignore my own pain.

Kas is the only thing that matters now. I brush some of her glittering silver hair out of her face and take her little hand as I admire her beautiful features.

“Baby, when you called for me, I heard you and you led me back. Now I ‘m calling for you. Wherever you are in there or out there or whatever, please come back. Come back to me, my little goddess. Please come back because I can’t do this without you.”

I kiss her hand and hold it to my cheek. She doesn’t respond at

all, not even a twitch. She is deathly still next to me. How did this

happen? How could I have prevented this? I promised her and failed.

I close my eyes and focus on her. Thinking about good times we' ve shared, her sweet little giggle, her face when she is baking

or cooking. I feel a warmth coming from her hand.

I open my eyes and search her features but nothing has changed.

It is my hopeful imagination.

"Please, Kas. Please come back to me. I can' t be alone. I just-, " I

whisper with a ragged breath before the tears I have been holding back start to slide

down my cheeks. Now that the adreneline has start to die down, I

feel exhausted. My eyes grow heavy and I let myself fall asleep next to my mate. Holding her hand to my cheek. I will never let

her go again.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 39

Lex' s POV

I can' t feel Kas. For the first time in millennia, our spirits are split

from each other. I know I' m a warrior, but I' m scared. Kas and I

have worked through our problems together forever. Like she said, forever in the past and forever in the future.

Without her, I' m just a wolf. I don' t know where I am or how I' m

going to get back to her.

The last thing I remember, she was reaching out to the universe to find our mate. She didn' t realize she reached too far. But I

don' t blame her, she did the right thing. We needed to find Saint

and Bronx. We found them. By the time we got to Bronx, Saint

was already edging to purgatory, moments from death.
Kas was amazing. She kept reaching, even after we were stretched too far. I helped but I could feel the strain on her human spirit. I reached out to Saint and made a connection with him. I led him back to Bronx. I don't know if he made it all the way, I hope he did. Saint isn't here now. Neither is Kas or Bronx.

I'm so scared. I pray my mother, the Moon Goddess, finds me and leads me back to Kas. I'm so empty without her. I keep hearing sounds. They are so far away that I'm not sure if they are real or not, it's just a feeling.

"Hello?" my voice doesn't even have an echo. I need to focus. I need to find my way back to Kas and Saint and Bronx. I need to make sure they are alright.

Alright, Lex. Focus. Time to think our way back to Kas and our mate.

Saint's POV

This is dead. I've been here before but it's different this time. I'm disconnected from Bronx. I don't want to be scared, but I am. I don't know how long I've been here but I don't think it matters.

Like Kas said, forever in the past and forever in the future.

As long as I can find my way back to Bronx, everything will be okay.

Everything is so still and peaceful in this place. It doesn't feel right. I feel like I should be angry but I don't feel anything. Murdered by a rogue. What a disgraceful way to go. I won't let

that happen again. I learn from every experience. I' m a warrior.

But I can' t be a warrior if I 'm dead. I have to find my way back from dead.

I miss my mate, Elexis. I guess that is a feeling, right? Missing

someone I mean. I miss Bronx and Kas too. Bronx said we could make a pup with Kas. Dead means we can' t do that.

I feel like I can hear sounds but it might be my imagination. Maybe I feel it, not hear it. I don' t know, shit is so confusing right now.

"Who' s there?" I snarl. There' s no way I' m gonna let anyone bait me. I need to figure out a way to get back. Get back to being alive. Get back to Bronx and Elexis and Kas. It is my job to protect them.

It' s probably not a good idea but let myself be led toward the sound, even if it is my imagination. It is something better than nothing.

Bronx' s POV

I' ve lost track of time, but when I open my eyes, I see the sun is

coining up through the window. Kas is still laying in front of me

on her stomach. I don' t think she has moved at all. I stretch a

little to see how my back feels. It still hurts, I can feel scabs over

the cuts. I 'in not fully healed yet, but still much faster than any human would.

" Saint, buddy, you there? Please be there, Saint, " No reply. I can

feel him, but I can't reach wherever he is. If he is that far away,
how have I healed this much?
I sit up on the edge of the bed and lean forward, testing my legs
to make sure I'm not going to fall. I'm able to stand. I make my
way to the bathroom. I splash water on my face and look in the mirror. I look like shit. I am pale, my eyes are puffy, and my hair
is a rat's nest. There is still a deep red burn mark from the silver
chains across my chest. I reach around to my back and gently pull off the dressing. I turn to see how bad it is in the mirror.
Oh
shit. Bad, but it is healing. I press the tape of the bandages back
down as gently as possible.
I fill a cup with water and make my way back to the bedroom.
I
set the cup on the nightstand and sit next to Kas.
"Kas, Baby, can you hear me?" I brush her hair out of her face
and off her neck, letting my fingers brush against her skin and
linger. I feel a sense of relief as the familiar sparks of our mate
bond burst at our touch. I lean forward and kiss her cheek.
I
gently speak into her ear, "Come on, Baby. Time for you to come
back to me. Wake up, open your eyes for me."
She stirs slightly and furrows her brow. She opens her eyes and
blinks with a groan. There are dark circles under her violet eyes.
They look dull and tired but my heart jumps at the sight. I've never heard a better sound in my life.

I lay down next to her so she doesn't have to move and I can look her in the eyes, "Kas, how are you feeling, Baby? "

"Bronx? How did you get here? Are you okay, Sweetheart?" She gingerly rolls onto her side to face me and caresses my face. She

struggles to smile through a grimace of pain.

"I'm not exactly sure how I got here, but I think there was a

helicopter involved?" I pause, not sure if I should tell her the

details of what I remember. I

figure she is going to find out eventually, so I go for it,

"Graham

Connors sabotaged me. He somehow had a substitute pilot assigned and hijacked my flight. The pilot must have let him hide

before I boarded. "

"He kidnapped you?" she sounds concerned.

"Yeah and he hurt me...like he used to hurt you," I say softly,

"I

thought I was going to die, Kas. I -I think I did, but I felt you

calling me back. I don't know how you did it but you saved me

Kas. "

She smiles weakly and kisses my hands, "Do you want me to explain what I think happened? "

"Only if you want to. I don't want you to push yourself right now. "

She asks me to help her sit up. I carefully pull her so she is next

to me.

"Let's draw a bath, Sweetheart. The tub is big enough for both of

us. We can add some healing herbs and soak for a while. I can explain then. "

"Okay, Baby. Here, have some water, " I hand her the cup. She

sits up and takes some deep gulps while I continue, " Kas,
I can't
reach Saint. I feel like he is still there but too far away
for me to
contact. Is Lex with you? "

She looks past me as she tries to talk to Lex, "Same. I feel
like

she is lost inside me, " a frown comes over her face, making
my

heart clench, "Don't worry, Bronx, we'll figure this out. "

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener
chapter 40

I run the water in the huge bathtub. Kas comes in with a sachet
full of fragrant herbs and spreads them in the water. As they
touch the surface, they sizzle and disappear, turning the water
a

deep aqua green. I step in first, then help her in.

Kas sits behind me and gently pours water down my back, being
careful not to touch my wounds with her hands. The initial sting
gives way to a cooling

feeling. My skin immediately feels relief causing me to audibly
groan.

"Now this is some magic I can get into, " I sigh.

Kas giggles behind me, "These witches know a thing or two about
healing, huh?"

We adjust our positions so she is sitting in front of me. I
move

her braided hair out of the way and use the cup to pour the
water

over her back. The sight of her wounds makes my heart clench.

"Oh, Baby, this is terrible, " I don't even realize I say
it out loud.

"It was worth it, Bronx. It isn't any worse than what I have
experienced before, " she turns her head slightly back toward
me

and says with a slight hitch in her voice.

"Never again, " I don't know if I am saying it to her, to
myself, or

to her mother the Moon Goddess herself, but I mean it.
Kas sighs with relief as the water cascades down her back. I watch as the redness recedes into her skin and the swelling visibly wanes.

She finally turns around to face me, resting her forehead on mine

and intertwining our fingers. The sparks of our mate bond were weaker without Saint and Lex but the welcoming glow of our connection gently shines from where our hands touch.

She leans back slightly and looks me in the eye. She seems to stumble over her words a little, not sure where to begin, “You know how I told you that when we’ re together, our spirits become

more and more connected? “

“Yeah, I remember, Baby,” I caress my fingers against her cheek

as I admire her beautiful face.

“Well, what I didn’ t get to tell you is that Lady Camille believes

this is something new. We probably weren’ t able to connect like

this in our past lives.

Think of it as...hmmm...evolution? I guess?” the look on her face

is complicated, like she isn’ t sure if she’ s explaining it right.

“Mmm, okay. So every time we have sex, our spirits become a little closer to being one spirit? ” I smirk.

She giggles and shakes her head at me.

“So yes, it is like two spirits where the edges are blurred and you

can’ t tell where one ends and the other begins, but when you stand back, you can see there are actually two, ” she explains pointing back and forth between us.

A little smirk comes to her face as she continues, ” And I told you

before, deepening our connection doesn’ t always have to be when

we' re having s*x.

Just when things are emotionally charged, good or bad.”

” I mean, my memory isn' t photographic or anything. That is the

part I remember the most. But in all seriousness, it' s like when

we first introduced you to the pack and our hands started to glow

or when you have a premonition, ” I nod in understanding. I think

I finally grasp the concept, hopefully that' s close enough.

” Exactly. Just like that. Meeting the pack was one of the happiest

moments of my life. And that moment helped us get that much closer, ” she confirms pinching her finger and thumb almost together in front of her eye. A smile graces her gorgeous face as

she remembers that day.

” When you were kidnapped, your spirit instinctively reached out

to me for help because of the connection. I felt there was something wrong, but since the connection is new; it' s not that

strong yet. The sensation it creates is still limited. The only thing

I could think to do was to figure out where you were and see if

you were okay. I had to send my spirit out of my body. I' ve never

sent it that far before to connect with you like that. Not on purpose, anyway, ” she shrugs. I think she is referring to the bell

incident, but I don' t interrupt.

” When my spirit found yours, you were on the cusp of death, Bronx. You were in the place between life and death that my spirit shouldn' t have tried to go. It goes against nature.

I got to a

point where I couldn' t go anymore, so I had to just call for you

and lead you toward me. When I felt you getting closer , I was able to send healing energy out to you. The closer I got to you,

the more your injuries were passed to me. It completely drained me because my physical body was injured too. As I got weaker, I

was losing my anchor to this world. Then, I saw the image of the

church and came back to my body. I told everyone what I saw.

I

don' t really remember much after that. “

Tears are rolling down her face. I wipe them away and give her a

gentle kiss. Holding her head in my hands. I look into her beautiful eyes when a realization hits me.

Shit.

“So I did this to you?” I feel my brow knit as the words form.

“What?”

“You got hurt because I got hurt. I promised you no one would ever hurt you again, Kas but it was me. You got hurt because of

me, ” Anger washes over me like acid. I have nowhere to direct it

to but myself. If Saint was here, he would call me a dummy.

I' m

sure of it.

“No, Bronx. I got hurt because I did something stupid. I extended

myself too far without knowing what I was doing. You' re not allowed to blame yourself for my recklessness, ” she sounds upset with herself now.

“You sacrificed for me. You saved me, Kas. You are the most selfless person I know. Thank you. I don' t know what to say other

than I love you. With everything I have, Kas Latmus, I love you, ”

I look into her eyes. I meant every syllable of what I just said. I

never thought I would say it to anyone. She has changed my entire world, my entire outlook on life.

“I love you too, Bronx Mason, ” she smiles sweetly at me. There

is no doubt in her eyes. I lean forward and give her full lips a

gentle kiss. One full of promise and love.

Her breath hitches as she continues. She starts to cry silent tears

again, “Bronx, w-we need to get Lex and Saint back. I can’ t stand

this emptiness. “

“Okay, tell me what we need to do. I’ ll do whatever you tell me

to, Kas. I need them back just as badly as you do. “

“I -I think we have to live without them for a while as we heal

and get stronger. Our connection to each other helps us heal just

like our wolves do. The closer we are, the faster our physical bodies heal, and I think it will help bring them back from wherever they are. “

I nod with determination, ” Okay. Let’ s get home to Blood River,

and get to healing. We’ ll figure out how to get our wolves back. ”

“That sounds great, ” she smiles and leans against my chest with

a sigh.

“Hello? Alpha, Luna?” Milo calls out from the bedroom.

“We’ re in the tub, Milo. Please send Delilah and Lady Camille to

check on our wounds. We will be out in just a minute, ” I call out.

“Sure thing, man. ”

I wait until we hear the door close behind him before I step out of

the tub and wrap a towel around my waist. I help Kas out and grab her robe. She stands so I can slide it over her shoulders.

I

gently spin her back around and put it on her backward.

“I don’ t want to hurt your back, Baby. This will let Lady Camille

take a look.”

She giggles her sweet as honey laugh and puts her arms through the sleeves.

I help Kas put on pajama bottoms and lay on her stomach across the bed. I grab the stool from the makeup vanity and sit next to

her.

We’ re whispering words meant only for the other to hear, holding

hands, and giving each other sweet little kisses when Delilah and

Lady Camille come in.

“I’ m glad to see you’ re feeling better, ” Lady Camille smiles at our

display of affection.

She and Delilah check our injuries and decide to only put a salve

on them, no dressings. Delilah hands Kas an oversized shirt.

It is

loose and comfortable on her. Milo comes in with James and tosses me one of his shirts.

Kas tells the witches about our wolves and her theory as to how

to get them to come back. Lady

Camille agrees but will do more research to see if she can find any more info that will be helpful. She discusses ways Delilah can

keep track of our wolves’ progress and finally gives Kas tips on

ways to conserve and focus her energy.

“Luna lokaste, it has been a pleasure training you. As we have agreed, I will see you every six months, but you are welcome to

come as often as you’ d like, ” Lady Camille addresses Kas warmly.

“Thank you, Lady Camille. I owe everything to you,” Kas replies

with a beautiful, loving smile.

I stand up and take Lady Camille’ s hand. I give it a quick kiss,

“I’ m forever indebted to you, Lady Camille.”

“Keep my daughter safe and your debt is paid, Alpha Bronx Mason, ” she pinches my cheek and turns to Delilah with outstretched arins. Delilah gives her a deep hug.

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 41

Kas’ s POV

An hour later, we are standing at the gates to the coven’ s realm. Henri is there with blacked-out SUVs to transport us. We don’ t stop at Lune D’ or, but we do stop at a small café in the quaint little human town where the airport is while we wait for our flight time. I am not very hungry, so I only have a small plate of cheeses and meats.

At first, Bronx insists I sit on his lap, but he keeps getting pulled away by phone calls, so I sit next to Delilah. I watch my mate pacing and smoking outside the big window on the sidewalk, which reminds me that Marco has my phone. I don’ t expect any calls or messages.

Everyone who has the number knew I was unavailable.

I power up the phone and wait a minute as it connects with wifi. Notifications started to ping… dozens of them.

Soon my phone is flooded with notifications. I open my

texts to find that Bronx messaged me every day. Things to the effect of how much he cares about me and misses me, updates on things going on with the pack, and even some more private ones describing positions he wants to try when I get home. I feel the heat as my face blushes reading his ideas.

I look up at him pacing on his phone. I 'm so in love with him. He glances over at me and sees the phone in my hands. I give him a little wave, he turns away as his face turns pink.

It' s finally time to board the jet. The energy of our group is upbeat but mellow from exhaustion at the same time. We can' t stop talking about seeing our friends and eating pizza. James and Marco are dying for a beer. Milo can' t wait to see Lenora even though it has only been a couple days. He insists she has important matters to discuss with me, but won' t tell me what.

After a couple of hours, Bronx and I start to get sleepy. He leads me to the back part of the plane where there' s a little room with a bed. Exhaustion hits us both hard and we quickly fall asleep.

I wake up to find our bodies tangled together. I lean forward and kiss his stubbly chin. He stirs a little but doesn' t open his eyes.

” Baby, I had such a good dream, ” he murmurs. I 'm pretty sure he' s talking in his sleep.

“Oh? What was it about?” I ask, just in case he is actually awake.

“You said you would- “, the rest of the sentence was garbled babble. He starts snoring lightly before I could ask him to repeat it. I giggle and shake my head.

I lay there a bit longer, but can' t fall back asleep.

“Bronx, I' m going to sit with Delilah, okay?” “Mnhmm, ” He untangles himself from me and rolls over.

I walk out into the main cabin. It' s dark outside and the cabin lights are dimmed. Delilah is curled up, sleeping in James' s lap. He has his arms wrapped lovingly around her. He looks like he is about to fall asleep also. Milo is

stretched out across two seats with the hood of his sweatshirt covering his face.

I sit next to Marco who has the reading light on, focused intently on a magazine about cooking. Who knew?

“Hi Luna. How are you feeling?” He asks, setting the magazine down.

“As well as can be expected, thanks for asking, ” I point to his magazine, “Do you like to cook, Marco? It’ s one of my favorite hobbies, you know.”

He looks at me with surprise, “I figured you just made kick—ass sympathy cookies.”

I laugh quietly and shake my head no.

“No, I don’ t cook, ” he continues, “but I want to learn. I’ m going to have a mate someday soon. Clash keeps telling me so and Momma Sanchez always says ‘trust your wolf.’ ”

“Your mom is right, ” I smile thinking about the conversations we have had about how close he is to his family, “You know, maybe I can convince Mrs. Miller to let me teach some cooking lessons in the packhouse kitchen. If you have any friends who want to join in, let me know. “

“Really, Luna? That would be awesome! ” he grins at me.

“Anything for my pack. Especially you and James. Now show me which recipes caught your eye.”

We flip through the magazine, pointing out our favorite recipes until the steward comes in and tells us we will be landing soon. I wake Bronx up and take our seats.

Delilah is stretching sleepily as James buckles her seatbelt for her. Bronx follows suit and buckles mine for me as well. He must remember how nervous I was the last time we flew, so he takes my hand in his before I need to ask.

“Almost there, Baby, ” he soothes as he leans in and kisses my cheek gently. His coffee and dark chocolate scent calms me as the plane bounces and quickly slows down, just like it’ s supposed to.

When we finally arrive at the packhouse, what looks to

be the entire Blood River pack standing outside in the snow. Some in wolf form howling with joy, most in human form clapping and cheering.

Reggie, Ashley, and Lenora are standing on the front steps. Lenroa runs up to Milo and gives him a death grip of a hug. When she finally releases him, she and Ashley give us gentle hugs with tears in their eyes.

“Don’ t you ever do that to me again, Bronx,” Lenora scolds her brother. I swear I see tears starting to form in her eyes.

“Sorry, Leni. I didn’ t mean to scare you, ” he says as he holds her hand. He gives her a peck on the cheek which seems to be enough for her to forgive him.

Bronx and I climb the steps so he can address the pack.

“Thank you all so much for the warm welcome home.

Luna Kas and I are grateful to be back and mostly in one piece, ” his deep voice booms.

There’ s a small chuckle from the crowd, “For the foreseeable future, Beta Milo is still in charge while the Luna and I recover from our injuries and spend some quiet time together. “

The people and wolves who are gathered around all bow to him.

Bronx continues, “We still plan on having the Winter Solstice celebration as usual. Unfortunately, I will not be able to lead the pack run. I will leave that honor to Beta Milo. “

“Again, thank you for the warm welcome home. We appreciate every one of you, ” he waves to the cheering crowd.

Milo requests that we all go to Bronx’ s office including James, Delilah, and Marco. When we are all gathered, he announces that he is giving both James and Marco a month of paid leave and dismisses them. The excitement in the room can’ t be higher.

Once they leave, Lenora clears her throat and stands in front of us, and looks at me solemnly, “Kas, I have some news. ”

“What is it, Lenora? Is everything alright?” Bronx hadn’t told me it was something serious, just important. The look on her face says it’s something serious.

“I’m going to need you and Ashley’s help decorating the room next to Milo and mine,” a smile spreads across her face, “because I’m having a pup! We need a nursery!” It takes a second to process what she just said in my tired brain. I look at Milo who is beaming ear to ear then back to Lenora who has a matching smile. I scream and hug Lenora tightly while I jump on my toes in her arms. She gently pats my back as she laughs.

I’m going to be Aunt Kas?! That’s going to take a minute to get used to. Four months ago I didn’t even have a sibling. Now I am part of a whole family.

Us girls talk excitedly about the baby as the guys examine Bronx’s wounds.

“So much for all that ink,” I overhear Reggie say as the guys have their own conversation, “I guess if the scars aren’t too bad, Cason can start over.”

I make a mental note. Sounds like it’s time to work on that connection so Bronx’s skin will heal with minimal scars.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 42

After a long day of catching up with everyone, Bronx and I finally get back to our apartment. I’m exhausted but I need a shower. The problem is, my back is still sore, and not completely healed. I let Bronx lift my shirt to check my wounds. He agrees that the water pressure is probably a bad idea for another day or so.

“How about I run a bath for us, Baby?” he offers. He gives me a gentle hug and goes to run the water.

When I get into the bathroom, Bronx helps me undress.

“I got this, Baby. Let me take care of you,” he insists. I blush at the gesture as he carefully removes my clothes for me. With every piece of clothing he removes, he places innocent little kisses on my skin, setting off little sparks with each one. He helps me into the tub, then

removes his clothes and joins me.

Bronx lets me look at his back first. His wounds are mostly healed except for the ones that were the deepest. There are scars starting to form across his whole back. Most of his tattoos are ruined.

When I' m done, we turn around so he can wash my back. His fingers brush against my skin causing little shivers to run down my spine. When he is finished he pulls my back close to his chest and wraps his arms around me. He breathes in my scent, caressing me gently.

"I love you, Kas. I know you told me it' s not my fault, but I can' t help but feel guilty for you getting hurt too. I am so grateful you did what you did, but you shouldn' t have," he says in a low tone.

I pull away from his embrace and turn to face him.

"Bronx, I want to be the best mate that I can be for you. You are generous and selfless, even if you don' t let the world see that side of you. I consider myself blessed that I get to see it. I want to give you everything I can. I don' t really have any belongings to share with you, so all I have to give is...me, " I smile softly, looking at him through hooded lids as I crawl onto him, straddling his lap. I lean against him, pressing my body firmly against him and start kissing his jaw and flick my tongue across his ear. I can feel his member start to twitch against me.

"Baby, what are you doing? You' re not fully healed yet. I don' t wanna hurt you, " he groans lightly, trying to keep his voice even.

"Well then, it sounds like you have a choice to make. I can stop right now and we can just go get dressed and go to bed with all this sexual tension between us or you can let me keep going and figure out ways we can do this without causing each other any pain," I give him the choice between kisses to his neck and jaw. I feel his hands tighten their grip against my hips. I can practically hear the gears churning in his head.

"Keep going, Baby, " he whispers as he leans his head toward my ear, kissing my neck just below my earlobe.

As he nuzzles my cheek, I feel his length growing and getting harder against my thigh. He lifts his knees, using his thighs to support me so I won't fall backward. The movement puts his tip closer to my entrance, allowing me to grind against him slowly.

I sit back slightly so he can see me better. His eye darts down to my exposed breasts just above the waterline.

His tongue licks his bottom lip, desperate to taste my nipple in his mouth. Knowing he can't grab onto my back to pull me closer, he places one hand on the edge of the tub and uses the fingers of his other to roll my nipple between his fingers causing me to moan.

"Bronx. Fill my pussy to the brim with your hard cock, " I growl in his ear. I don't usually talk dirty like that, but I

use the phrase from one of his texts so he knows I have read them.

His face spreads into a lopsided grin as he grips the edges of the tub and raises his hips slightly against me.

"I was thinking something more like this, " I take one of his hands and place it on my hip. I take the other hand and navigate his fingers to my clit. I use my hand to show him the circular motions I want him to make. His touch quickly brings a pleasurable tingling from my core. I move my hand and work it up and down the length of his quickly growing member, using the fingertips of my other hand to caress the tip. I lean forward and nibble on his ear at the same time making him growl with pleasure. As he becomes more excited, he starts rubbing me faster, his breath becoming heavier. I look to see he has a furrowed brow, panting, and looking at me through his eyelashes.

I put my thumb over the hole on his tip and put more pressure on the shaft before I pull up from the base to the tip and back down in one long smooth motion making him moan loudly. He moves his hand from my clit to the side of the tub and grips tightly as I drive him crazy. His other hand is still gripped firmly on my hip. I take the

opportunity to slide myself down on his completely hard member, letting it completely fill my core. I let out a moan of satisfaction at the feeling.

I slide my hands out of the water, cascading soapy water over my breasts, and start playing with my nipples for him to watch. His pupil dilates at the sight. At the same time, I start rocking my hips, creating a slow steady rhythm. Bronx matches my movements, grabbing the other side of the tub as his hips push against me. I feel him throb inside me as he slides in and out of my core. His breath becomes more ragged as he starts thrusting harder forcing me to press my knees closer to his hips, gripping him as tight as I can with my thighs.

“Oh Goddess, Kas, you feel so good. Your pussy’ s so tight,” he pants, eye squeezing shut.

“Open your eye, Bronx,” I whisper, “look at me.” He looks at me and smiles as the glow of our connection brightens around us.

“Open up to me, Bronx. Let go. Give it to me as hard as you can. Don’ t hold back, ” I beg seductively.

His eye widens at my request. Obediently, he grabs my hips tightly with both hands and starts thrusting roughly against me. His movements are unrestrained and reckless. Over and over he lifts me up by my hips and pushes me back down as hard as he can, lifting his hips in rhythm. I have no say in the movements giving him full control to use me for his pleasure. I trust him completely. Knowing he’ s in full control, acting instinctively with no reservations, makes me want to give myself to him even more.

The thought of being the one to bring him to this state of ecstasy edges me closer to climax as he continues buck wildly below me. Each thrust causes both of us to moan loudly.

“I’ m so close, Baby, ” he cries out with a growl. I lean toward his neck as his movements become more erratic. I lick and suck his marking spot but don’ t extend my fangs, I just nibble, teasing him.

A moment later, I feel his seed fill me. The sensation pushes me over the edge and I climax at the same time. We collapse onto each other, our chests heaving heavily. I feel stronger than I have in days. We take our time to collect ourselves before we get out of the tub. Bronx wraps me in a fluffy towel and carries me to bed.

“Let me put some salve on your back, Baby. It will help get the last of these cuts taken care of. I’ ll go get it, you get yourself some pajamas to put on after, okay?” he says gently.

“Okay, ” I reply, feeling relaxed and sleepy. He goes to the bathroom to get the jar of salve while I pull myself off the bed to get a pajama shirt. I get back to the bed and lay on my belly with my hands folded under my face. I feel so relaxed. Bronx comes back into the bedroom and stops in his tracks, looking at me laying in my underwear, with a smile.

“You’ re so f*cking beautiful, Kas, ” he purrs before he finally sits next to me putting the salve gingerly on my cuts. When he is done I put on the pajamas and crawl back in bed, snuggling in my mates arms. As we are both on the edge of sleep, I work up the courage to ask what had been on my mind all day.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future
by Neener Beener chapter 43

“Bronx?” I say shyly. I hope he is sleepy enough that he will just say yes to my request.

“Yeah, Baby?” he responds sleepily. His voice is almost a whisper.

“I want to do something for you, but I need your permission and I’ m afraid you’ ll say no, ” I try to sound casual and calm.

The light of the moon shining through the window is the only light allowing me to see his reaction. He opens his eye and looks at me with concern but his voice sounds suspicious of my motives, “Why would I ever tell you no? But more importantly, why would you need permission?”

“I –I want to heal you, ” I sit up, facing him, “I don’ t want

you to end up with scars like mine. I know in Blood River having scars is a badge of honor, but this is different.”

“You’ re right. I’ m going to say no, ” he rolls gingerly on his back away from me and stares at the ceiling, “I t isn’ t your burden to bear. I don’ t want you to waste your precious strength on something like that.

You’ re healing, yourself. You don’ t need to heal me too.” Ugh, why does my mate have to be so stubborn.

“Bronx, please. I have enough strength for this. I mean I ’ ll probably be tired tomorrow, but I will be fine, I promise, ” I pout.

“Kas, you almost died bringing me back from the brink of death. I can’ t lose you because you are worried about my vanity. I can’ t.”

“You won’ t lose me. This is a simple enough healing. There’ s no poison in your bloodstream anymore, it’ s just flesh wounds. This is basic stuff. I’ ve trained for it for months. Please, let me do this for you.”

He gets out of bed and starts pacing, looking at me angrily. There is also a touch of confusion mixed in. He stops and rubs his face with his hands before he puts them on his hips.

Oh crap. He’ s frustrated with me.

“You’ re not going to stop until I say yes, are you? “

“Probably not, ” I shrug, trying to sound nonchalant. “If I

let you do this and anything happens to you I - “

“Nothing will happen. It will just make me extra sleepy. I promise.”

He sighs heavily, letting his arms drop to his sides in defeat, “Okay, I don’ t want this to turn into a fight, so if

it will appease you, fine. You can try to heal me. What do you want me to do?”

A sense of relief spreads over me, “Thank you, Bronx. Thank you so much. ”

I sit up on my knees and pull him down to sit on the bed.

“Just relax, think about what it feels like when your back is well...not full of lash marks. Don’ t think about me, don’ t think about anyone else, just imagine what you look and feel like when you are one hundred percent healthy.”

“Ohh-kaay?” He looks at me like I’ m crazy. “Just close your eyes and focus, please.”

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

Bronx’ s POV

I close my eyes and sigh deeply. I know this is a bad idea but I have to trust her.

” Now, think about your body. Think about what it feels like when you move when you exercise. The way your muscles on your back feel when you’ re fighting. The way they relax when you’ re next to me, ” she speaks, her voice subtly changes, “Good, now think deeper than that. Think down to the individual strands of muscle. Think about when they are flexed, about when they are stretched. The way they feel when you get a massage.”

As Kas talks, I feel my body relax, like I’ m hypnotized. Her voice melts into me, becoming part of me. It’ s so natural, like it has always been there.

I start to understand what Kas meant when she said she spread herself out in the universe. I can feel my body, but it doesn’ t necessarily matter at that moment. I am more than just by body. I am part of my surroundings as well.

Her arms slide around me as she leans on my back. I feel a warmth building in my chest radiating to my back. It doesn’ t hurt. It’ s comforting and I don’ t want it to stop.

I

feel any tension that I didn’ t even know that I had been holding on to release from my body. I feel better than I have in weeks. Shit, months even.

The warmth starts to dissipate into the far corners of my body, evening out and cooling down. I open my eyes and

look around. No pain, no soreness, nothing.

I look at Kas sitting back on the bed. She smiles weakly.

“You did it?” I laugh in disbelief, “You did it Kas!”

I stand up and swing my arms back and forth like I’ m warming up for an upper-body workout. It doesn’ t hurt. I’ m not even a little sore. I turn on the light and go to the mirror, turning to look at my back.

Anywhere there was a lash mark has been replaced with smooth skin. No scarring, no tattoos, nothing. It’ s not even red. I turn again and look at my chest. Same thing. No more redness from the silver chains. I look down at my wrists, no blisters. The only indication there was ever a flaw is that the tattoos are missing where all my injuries were.

I look in the mirror more closely. The jagged scar, the one that defined such a significant part of my life; the one I received from the witch’ s silver blade that pierced my skin and allowed her to steal a part of my liver. It’ s like it was never there. I look down

and run my hand over the area in disbelief. I had outlined that scar with my fingers countless nights, committing it to memory. It’ s not there. My skin is as smooth as the day I was born. I lift my gaze to the mirror and look again. This can’ t be real.

I take a step closer and lean into the mirror further. My eye goes wide. The scar across my eye socket is gone.

Only the slit of my eyelid remains. I almost don’ t recognize my face without the scar there.

I don’ t understand. I mean, I know it’ s because Kas healed me, but it didn’ t occur to me that it would remove all my scars.

“Baby, you’ re amazing!” I hear the shock in my voice. I look at her through the mirror to see her sitting back on the bed, looking a little pale and sleepy.

“Yeah, Sweetheart, I mean you’ re gonna need new tattoos but yeah, your body is as good as new,” she smiles weakly.

I sit on the bed and take her into my arms, pulling her

into my lap, being careful of her back. I push her hair back from her face and kiss her forehead. She smiles up at me, then her sleepy eyes close and she starts snoring lightly.

I tuck her into bed and get myself a glass of water. As I sit there I felt a slight pain behind my missing eye. I swear for a split second I can hear Saint, but then he is gone. I close my eye and search my mind for him, trying to mimic the feeling when Kas was healing me. He is still far away, but it feels like he is one step closer than he was before.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future
by Neener Beener chapter 44

It makes me nervous how tired Kas is the next day. She's still pale and her eyes don't have their usual sparkle. She insists on getting out of bed but she falls asleep at the kitchenette table before I can finish toasting a bagel for her. I carry her over to the sofa and bring her some pillows and her gray and green blanket. I wrap her up in a little cocoon and turn on the cooking channel she likes. Before I can even turn around, she is already asleep on the couch.

I call James and request Delilah come check on her to make sure what she is going through is normal. Once Delilah arrives, she looks Kas over. She agrees that what Kas did to heal me should be well within her power, but since she isn't anywhere close to her full power with her injuries, it just gassed her. She just needs rest. Delilah lets me know she will brew up something for Kas to drink that will help but it will take a few hours for it to kick in.

"I will stay here with her. I'm sorry, Alpha Bronx, but you need to leave for a while. Give her some peace and quiet. I will stay here and make sure she's okay," Delilah says. She writes a list of ingredients on a piece of paper and hands it to me, "The kitchen should have all these herbs. I need these to make the tea to help Luna Iok- uh Luna Kas. "

"Sorry, Alpha, but you heard the boss," James shrugs as

Delilah closes the apartment door behind us, “I am going to see if I can sneak a snack from the kitchen. I can take that list to Mrs. Miller. “

I hand him the list and watch him lightly jog down the stairs to the kitchen. I could go workout in the weight room. It’s down in the basement. I don’t want to be that far away in case something happens to Kas. I head down the hall to my office to catch up on work instead. Milo enters the office and practically jumps out of his skin, in a split second his claws and fangs extend, taking a defensive stance, until he realizes it’s just me.

“Bronx, you scared the shit out of me. What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be lying on your belly or something?” he grabs his chest and looks at me with concern.

“Kas healed me last night. Now she is tired, so Delilah kicked me out of my own apartment, ” I lean back in my chair with a frown.

“Kas healed you? What? I thought she needed to get her energy back before she could do things like that, ” he looks confused, “Wait, Delilah kicked you out of your apartment? How tired is Kas that she needs Delilah there? “

“Well, let’s just say Kas was able to get her energy back last night through our connection and I may never be able to get in my bathtub without getting a boner again, ” my mind wanders thinking about last night, “but when she healed me, it wiped out every ounce of energy she had built up. ”

Milo sits in the chair across from me and crosses his arms in front of himself, laughing at the blush that spreads from my neck to my face.

His stupid, goofy grin is plastered on his face, ” That’s my

boy. We’ll have an heir to your throne in no time! “

“Watch it, Milo, ” I warn with a growl. He knows I don’t like being referred to as royalty in anyway, shape, or

form. I do not have a throne, nor do I want one.

“Alright, alright. So Kas healed you. Like fully healed you?”

I stand up and pull my shirt off, exposing my back to him.

“My Goddess. That’s incredible,” he says in awe, “Cason’s gonna have a field day!”

“Haha, yeah, I ‘m going to need to go see him soon, but more importantly, look at this,” I turn around and show him the spot where my scar used to be under my rib cage.

“W—where’s your scar? She made that disappear too?” he stares wide eyed before looking up at me with disbelief.

“That’s nothing. Look at this,” I lift my eye patch and show him the smooth skin of my eyelid underneath.

“No way,” he murmurs under his breath as he gawks at me. He knows better than anyone how gnarly the scar on my eye area was, “your mate did that. Son of a gun. I can’t believe it.”

“Yeah, she’s amazing,” I swoon. I feel a pang of guilt about how weak healing me has made Kas. I ‘m not sure how I will make it up to her, but I will find a way. Saint would know right away what I should do for her. He loves our mate so much, but he’s not here.

After a moment of silence, a serious mood falls over me,

“Milo, I need you to keep acting as Alpha until we figure out how to get Saint back. I don’t know how long it is going to take. What I do know is that I don’t want people to know. It will make the entire pack a target for attacks. It stays between the people that already know, you, Me, Kas, Marco, James, and Delilah. Not even Lenora, Reggie, or Ashley finds out. Got it. I will focus on MasonCo business in the meantime. If you need me to cover any of your… clients…just say the word. I can still do that, even without a wolf.”

“Of course, Bronx. I understand. Anything you want,” he agrees, spreading his hands in front of him. I know for all

things in my life, I can count on Milo to be loyal. I trust him with this.

“I felt him for a second last night, Milo. Like, just a fraction of a moment of being able to feel him, after Kas healed me. He was gone again just as fast. I mean, it’s weird. If I concentrate on him, I feel like he is there, just…disconnected? Lost? Blocked? I don’t know how to explain it,” I lean back in my seat fiddling with a pen. I can feel my mood darken.

” Don’t worry, man, you and Kas will get it figured out. Saint and Lex will be back in no time. Until then, I’ve got you covered,” Milo nods with reassurance.

“Tell you what, when he comes back, we bust open that bottle of Johnnie Blue, ” I point to the bottle on my desk, trying to lighten the mood.

“Cheers to that!” he chuckles.

Milo catches me up on everything happening with the pack. He has done a good job keeping the ship afloat while I have been out of pocket. I wouldn’t expect anything less. He may be a goofball, but he does everything with precision. It’s one of the reasons I made him my Beta. Once he is done with pack updates, we move on to more personal things.

He gushes Lenora and the baby. They got to see it on the screen during their last appointment. According to him, the baby looks like a lima bean right now but since werewolf pups grow so quickly, they should know if it’s a boy or a girl in the next few weeks. I’m so excited for them. It’s a bonus for Kas and I, we get to be an Aunt and Uncle. The thought of Kas having a baby isn’t even fathomable at that moment, but someday when we’re both ready, we would make that a reality.

“So in other news, ” Milo says, clearing his throat as he changes to a more serious tone, “Reggie and I are closer to finding out how Connors got on your flight. “

My interest is piqued. I lean forward, paying closer attention.

“Apparently, Mitch got a call around eleven p.m. from a

man claiming to be your new assistant telling him you had canceled your flight to France. He says there is no way his mate is pregnant. He just met her two months ago and they are not at that point in their relationship. “ He pulls out his phone and starts to flip through some notes, “The substitute pilot, Joe Morris, which is obviously not his real name, arrived at the airport around three a.m. to do all his preflight checks. He had MasonCo credentials, so they let him past airport security with no question. Ashley is working on how he got the badge. She said there was a Joseph Morris working at MasonCo but he retired last year. ”

” Hmm, maybe it was the name that seemed familiar then, not the face? But I swear, there was something about him that was familiar. I have seen him somewhere before, ” I scratch my chin recalling the man’s features.

” There was a security camera that caught Connors getting out of the car with him near the back gate where the rest of the flight staff park. We are still trying to track down his real identity, but we have some good leads. Reggie has one of his specialists on it. ”

” Milo it just occurred to me, but what happened to Connors corpse after I locked him in that cell?”

” You did a number on him, man. There was practically nothing left of his skull. Since his face was unidentifiable , our clean up crew took his body to a human morgue. Not our problem anymore. ”

” Good f*cking riddance, ” I cross my arms across my chest. I feel a perverse sense of satisfaction knowing his death was at my hands. Saint would be proud if that had turned out to be one of my final moments.

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We talk more about the additional responsibilities I need Milo to cover if he is going to be acting Alpha. Obviously I will be here to support him, but I am going to trust him to do what he believes is right.

As we are talking James sends me a mind link, ” Alpha!

Delilah just texted me, she needs us back at the apartment. She said it's important. I 'm on my way there right now. "

My heart jumps, "Milo, it's Kas. I gotta go."

I sprint out of the room before he has a chance to answer but I feel him on my heels as I run down the hall. James gets to the top of the stairs as we are running past and joins us.

"What's happening, Alpha?" Tyree, Kas's substitute guard asks as I skid to a halt at the apartment door.

"Wait here, Tyree. No one else comes in, " I growl as I push open the door.

"Kas! Delilah! " They aren't in the living room.

"We're in here, Alpha Bronx, " I hear Delilah's voice from the bedroom. I rush into the bedroom, throwing the door open.

Kas is standing next to Delilah. They both jump with fright as the door bangs against the wall. It takes me a moment to process what I am seeing until Milo and James bump into my back.

I growl comes from deep within my chest and rattles the room. My best friend and my mate's personal guard are standing right behind me looking at my mate. My mate who has no shirt on. Kas quickly covers her breasts with her hands when she realizes I am not the only man standing in our bedroom. Her eyes are wide with embarrassment and she is turning bright red.

"BRONX!" she squeals, trying to turn away to cover herself. Delilah puts her arms out wide and situates herself between Kas and the three men who just burst into the room but it's too late Milo and James have already seen her and my instinct to protect my mate is in overdrive.

"Little Sister! What the Hell?! " Milo says, sounding very uncomfortable.

"Milo, James, you need to get the f*ck out before you end up with broken necks, " I snarl. I can feel myself shaking in anger. Even without Saint driving the wolf side

of me, I lose sight of the fact that I trust these two men with my life and hers. No other male wolf is going to look at my mate n*ked.

I hear shuffling behind me and the bedroom door closes.

“Delilah, what’s the meaning of this?” My voice booms at the witch, “James said it was important. “

“Y-yes, Alpha. I -I said it was important. N-not that it was an emergency, ” Delilah wimpers. She looks terrified as she gets a small taste of my temper. She is not a wolf, she doesn’t know to show her neck to me in submission.

“Bronx, calm down, Sweetheart. Delilah didn’t do anything wrong. You’re overreacting, ” Kas scolds, coming out from behind Delilah. She’s still holding hands over her chest to cover herself, “We have something to show you! “

“Baby, please put a shirt on, ” I say, trying to keep eye contact and not let my eyes wander. How did I go from angry to aroused in a single heartbeat? I don’t know, but I won’t be able to control myself very long if she’s walking around with no shirt.

Kas just rolls her eyes, “Bronx, look!” She turns around and shows me her back. Delilah shifts her gaze from me to Kas then back to me. Her face is lit up like the Fourth of July.

My jaw drops. I can’t comprehend what I ‘m seeing. Her back is healed from her injuries that I just put salve on last night. Not even redness or swelling left over. Don’t get me wrong, the keloid scars are still distinct, but even they are a little less raised than they were before.

“You’re healed? How?” my mouth is hanging wide open.

“Bronx! You’re not looking at the important part, ” Kas whines.

That’s not the important part? What more could there be?

“What, Baby? What the Hell more could there be? What am I missing?” I reach my hand out and gently touch her back looking closer. I’m afraid if I put any amount of pressure on her skin the illusion will fade and she will be

back to having severe wounds all over her body.

“Do you see anything familiar, Sherlock Holmes?” I can hear the sarcasm in her voice.

I look closer, trying to identify differences between yesterday and today. My eyes widen at the realization. No f*cking way.

I don’ t know how in the Goddess name it happened, but Kas now has my tattoos transferred to her body. They are identical to mine except much more muted in color. They are smaller to fit her little frame and contoured to her scars but they are there. I turn her around to see they cover the front of her as well.

Down to what’ s left of her saying around my wrist.

“Kas, you have my tattoos, ” I whisper in awe, looking at part of a dragon with a skull for a head on her skin.

“Delilah, please make sure to call Lady Camille and let her know. You’ re dismissed, ” I say, still staring at Kas. I

can’ t take my eyes off of her. Something about the thought of her body covered in tattoos fuels me. I just want to tear the rest of her clothes off and admire every inch of her skin for the rest of the day.

“Bronx, I was hoping we could have Delilah and James join us for dinner here in the apartment. Please?” she begs with her sweet little voice. She’ s so excited she is bouncing on her toes. I look into her eyes. They are sparkling again, making her look as happy as I’ ve ever seen her.

“Okay, Baby, okay! I love seeing you this happy, but please, conserve your energy. I don’ t want you to wear yourself out again. I know the next thing you are going to ask is if you can cook, but I want you to take it easy, okay? So I will only say yes to dinner if you let me have Mrs. Miller bring it to us.”

She smiles broadly and nods. I take her hand and feel the warmth that has become familiar coming from her. I look down and see our hands glowing. I smile and kiss her hand, “Go get ready. I’ ll call Mrs. Miller. “

Kas rushes to the bathroom to freshen up for dinner. Delilah is still standing awkwardly, not sure what to do with herself. I almost forgot she was there.

“Delilah, I apologize for my actions, ” I bow slightly to her, “I meant no disrespect. If anything, I should be thanking you for helping make Kas feel better. It is more than just James who is lucky to have you here. “

She looks down with a blush on her face, “It’ s nothing, Alpha Bronx. Kas is more than my Luna, she is my friend. I’ m happy I can help.”

I make a mental note that she chose not to use Kas’ s title. She must genuinely care for her to yield that form of power.

James and Delilah arrive back at the apartment at the same time as our food. Kas greets Mrs. Miller with a big hug. Tears form in the corner of Mrs. Miller’ s eyes as she hugs Kas back. Kas makes it a point to say hello and thank the omega assistants, who giggle and blush at the attention.

Kas and Delilah go back into the bedroom so they can see if Kas has a dress that will fit Delilah for Winter Solstice. Looking at her, I would think Lenora or Ashley would be more suited to loan her clothing, but I ‘m just glad to see Kas has found a friend she can relate to.

Mrs. Miller gives me heating instructions for the food and generously helps James and me set the table, before leaving. James seems uncomfortable being in my private residence, especially after what happened earlier in the day.

“You can relax, James. Did you see how excited those two were to run off into the closet? Kas is at least five inches shorter than Delilah, nothing in that closet is going to fit your mate except maybe some socks or hats, ” I chuckle, “I have a feeling we’ re going to get to know each other a lot better. Want a beer? “

“Water is fine, sir. I’ ve had plenty to drink the past couple of days, ” he rubs his hand on the back of his neck.

“Haha! Alright. And how is Delilah acclimating to pack life

so far? “

“Everyone has been great so far. She was super self-conscious the first day, but she is opening up for sure,”

There’s a twinkle in his eye as he speaks about her.

“Can I ask a, uh, personal question? You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to,” I ask tentatively.

“Sure, what is it, Alpha?” his eyes shift a little bit.

“What is it like for your wolf? I mean since Delilah doesn’t have a wolf for him to connect with? “

“Ranger? He doesn’t seem to mind. He says he likes being able to focus all his attention on her, and not her and a wolf. I don’t understand it, but the Moon Goddess knows what she’s doing, right?” James shrugs.

“She sure does, man,” I ponder morbidly for a moment. What if it were just Kas and me forever? No wolves with us? Is that even a possibility? Right now it seems like it could be.

My thoughts are interrupted as Delilah and Kas come out of the bedroom.

“Um, Alpha Bronx, I’m sorry but I didn’t get to, uh… compare…so I can let my mother know, ” Delilah says shyly. Her ocean-blue eyes seem darker than usual as she averts my gaze again.

“You need to see my back?” I ask. She nods in confirmation.

I take off my shirt so she can see. She inspects closely, trying not to touch me, holding up pictures she has on her cell phone of Kas’s back.

I can sense tension coming from James because I ‘m so close to his mate. I’m his Alpha, he won’t say anything but I understand the feeling. She seems to stare forever until she tells me I can put my shirt back on. She gently takes my arm and compares our wrists.

“Well, this confirms my earlier suspicion. This happened because of your connection. Alpha Bronx, the healing magic has subsided in you, so you’re completely healed. But Kas, I think this is just an initial reaction since the energy originated from your spirit. I believe the tattoos

will fade as the healing magic fades. You may even see a partial reversal of your healing progress. Don't be surprised if you experience unexplained blisters or irritation. If you do, call for me right away. I can make a salve to keep you comfortable," Delilah instructs.

"Thank you, Delilah. Now, let's eat! I 'm starving!" Kas exclaims.

We sit down to a delicious meal, laughing and getting to know each other better.

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Kas' s POV

The next few days begin to form into a comfortable schedule for us. Bronx goes to his office at MasonCo most days. Just like he promised when I first moved into the apartment, je wakes me every morning up to let me know he' s leaving. And every morning he gives me a passionate kiss that leaves me missing him until he gets home. Somehow he seems to have an endless supply of flowers too. I don' t know where he gets them from, but he brings a few for me every evening and places them in a vase on my nightstand. He takes out the ones that are starting to wilt, so I always have fresh bouquet to look at.

I start to focus on searching my mind for Lex. I d*****d some calming music on my phone and spend my morning meditating. I feel her deep within the farthest corners of my mind, but the harder I try, the more difficult it is to reach her. The closet way I can describe it is that I feel like she is trapped in a cage in a

dark room in my mind. The problem is, I can' t find the room and I don' t know how to open the cage.

Deliah occasionally joins me. Having her there is helpful to guide me when I get frustrated. She is also good company. I love Lenora and Ashley but they are a little older than me and sometimes it' s hard to vibe with them.

"Kas, I can' t imagine how frustrating it is for you, but

think of it this way. When a person goes missing and they send out a search party, it is important for everyone to stay calm. If people in the search party panic or get angry, they lose focus and miss out on clues they would see if they were concentrating.

Keep yourself controlled for Lex' s benefit, especially when it is the most difficult, “ she advises with a sympathetic tone to her voice.

“Thanks, Delilah. You' re right. Every time I get frustrated it' s because I feel like she is just out of reach. I need to focus on staying calm, “ I appreciate her guidance. She is much more familiar with practicing meditation than I am. An excited look comes over her face. She scrunches her face, trying not to burst into a smile.

“What? What' s that face for? “ I can' t help but smile at her.

“James is taking me to meet his parents, “ she squeals, shaking her hands in front of her with excitement, “I mean, they only live twenty minutes away in the human town outside the pack territory, but still. I am so excited I could burst. We are going to spend a long weekend there. “

“Oh my Goddess! That' s so awesome! “ I exclaim, “ Have you decided what you' re going to wear to meet them? “

“Oh yeah, the last of my things arrived from the shipping company yesterday, so I have my full wardrobe to pick from finally. I don' t have many winter clothes though. I had no idea how cold Montana would be, “ she laughs, “I ordered a winter coat online and some boots. Other than that, my clothes are made of thin cotton. “

Witches are only able to wear natural fibers, so I recommend some stores I had seen at the mall with wool sweaters and heavy peacoats that would suit her. We go to my closet so I can give her a couple of sets of winter hats, scarves, mittens and things like that. I trust she will bring them back to me when she gets her own.

“Oh, also, I' m not sure if it' s supposed to be a surprise, but James and Marco asked if they can come back to

work on Monday. James says they're bored. I think they miss your cookies, " she teases with a giggle. Once Delilah leaves, I go to the kitchen to see Mrs. Miller. We finalize the menu for the Winter Solstice party, coming up with some special desserts I know everyone will love.

As we are finishing up, a large pair of arms snake themselves around my waist and pick me up while backing away from the kitchen. Mrs. Miller giggles as she waves goodbye.

"I guess we're done!" I call out, with a giggle, as I'm carried away.

"Come on, Kas. Quick meeting in my office. We all need to be there," Bronx says in my ear, kissing my neck. He carries me like that, nuzzling my neck, all the way to his office.

"So what's the meeting about?" I ask.

"Coverage," he says, like that one word should tell me everything I need to know. Before I can ask what it means, he opens the door. Milo, Lenora, Reggie, and Ashley are all at the conference table.

"Hi guys. Sorry for the short notice," Milo says as we take our places at the table.

Ashley hands us each a sheet of paper. It is a complicated chart with days, times, and names on it.

"Alright, so Lenora is going out of town for work. Santiago then Brisbane. Reggie has to leave for a week also," she clears her throat, clearly not happy.

"Where is Reggie going?" I ask, turning my head in his direction.

"Sorry, Luna. Classified," he shrugs.

"He doesn't even get to tell me Kas. Milo is the only one who knows. That's the nature of their division at MasonCo," Ashley frowns. She erases her expression and gets back to business, "I had already planned a trip to see my parents in Cheyenne, so we are going to need coverage for all pack duties."

She starts explaining the complicated chart. Milo, Bronx,

and I will split all the responsibilities. It seems very overwhelming. I feel a little pit of doubt forming in my stomach as she speaks.

“Alright, today is Wednesday. Lenora and I leave tomorrow, Reggie leaves Thursday. Lenora gets back Wednesday, Reggie gets back Thursday, and I get back on Friday, “ she ticks the lines off on her copy.

“Oh, also, Kas. Marco and James requested to get back to work. Apparently the both claim to be bored. Marco is back starting Monday night. James is back Tuesday, “ Ashley says, looking at some additional notes in her book.

I nod, feeling a bit numb listening to Ashley rattle off the information as I look at the list of my responsibilities.

“You okay, Baby? You look kinda pale, “ Bronx leans forward, looking at me with concern.

I nod again, “I -I just have an upset stomach. I’ m going to go lay down. Ashley, do you need me for anything else? “

“No, I think we’ re good. I hope you feel be- “ I don’ t hear the rest, I’ m already out the door letting it close behind me.

Just get to the apartment, Kas. Go in the bathroom and close the door. No panicking in the hallway. I keep repeating to myself as I make my way quickly down the hallway.

I get to the apartment door and pull out my key fumbling to get it in the lock.

Just kidding. I ‘m at the mall. I must have seriously zoned out because Lenora is telling a joke but I don’ t get it. Ashley thinks it’ s hilarious.

A familiar scent hits me. Ryan is here and he’ s close. My heart starts pounding. Lenora and Ashley are completely oblivious. Okay, now it’ s time to panic.

“Lenora…I something’ s wrong…I, “ I stammer as I start to stand up. Lenora stops laughing and looks at me. Her eyes widen and turn pitch black.

A hand claps the back of my neck hard and squeezes

with sharp claws extended, painfully breaking my skin, as I get pushed back down in the seat. A little yelp escapes me. Oh shit. He found me.

Lenora lunges across the table over me, forcing the person who had grabbed me to let go. I hear growling and snarling as she fights with the attacker. At the same time, Ashley grabs me by the wrist and pulls me away from the scuffle. We run to the bathroom and lock the door.

"Kas, are you okay?" Ashley says, holding both sides of my face, "Come on, Kas, answer me, please."

I feel myself looking at her, but I feel numb. Like my mind is separating from my body. There is a high pitched tone taking over my hearing. Where is Lex when I need her? I feel like she's absent.

Ashley pats my face. I can see her talking, but I only hear the steady high pitched hum. My body shivers in fear. I need to calm down. Lenora and Ashley are going to make sure I'm safe. I try to breathe but there's no air. Lenora's face comes into view. Her mouth is moving but all I hear is the hum. How did she get a busted lip? I touch the spot where it's cracked open and bleeding. There is a moment of purple light just as the world turns black.

I wake up in a cold sweat panting heavily. What in the world was that crazy dream?. Wait. What was I dreaming about? I can't remember. Only the feeling that it was terrifying. I think it had to do with Ryan. My heart is racing as I try to take some calming breaths. The light of the moon casts a serene blue light over everything in the room. Bronx is snoring lightly beside me. I can still feel my heart pounding from the nightmare. No way I'm getting back to sleep, so I go out to the kitchen for a cup of water. Even as I take a few sips of water, the dream seems further and further away. I hear noises coming from the bedroom. Bronx is up? He must have felt me get out of bed.

"Bronx? I'm right here, Sweetheart, " I say softly as I

make my way back to the bedroom. Bronx is still in bed, thrashing wildly. Whimpering and cursing under his breath, fighting off an invisible assailant in his sleep. Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future by Neener Beener chapter 47

I rush over and turn on the bedside lamp before I crawl onto the bed.

“Bronx, Sweetheart! Wake up! You’ re having a nightmare, ” I grasp his shoulders, his face is covered in sweat. He easily pushes me off, cursing deeply at whoever he is fighting in his dream, ” Bronx! Wake up, please! “

Very suddenly, he becomes deathly still.

“B-Bronx? A-are you okay? ” I lean forward to look at him closer.

His eye shoots open, wider than I have ever seen before and he sits straight up in bed. Fear and anger roll off of him as every muscle in his body tenses. His skin stretches tight over his tensed muscles, he balls his hands into fists, and lets out a roar so loud the entire room reverberates. He is breathing roughly through his nostrils, reminding me of a charging bull as his body shakes, the anger building.

“Bronx? You’ re scaring me, ” I gently touch his arm. He snaps his head toward me, seeing me for the first time since he woke up. There is no recognition on his face, as if I’ m a complete stranger. His normally beautiful green eye scares me and I start backing away, off the bed. As if on cue, his eye turns solid black and he lunges forward at me.

“SAINT! ” I scream, rolling off the bed onto the floor, “Saint, it’ s me. It’ s Kas! “

I scramble on the floor toward the door but Bronx jumps off the bed and charges at me. His hands tightly wrap around my throat and keeps charging until he has me pinned to the wall. My feet are dangling off the ground, kicking helplessly as he leans forward.

I can hear voices and banging coming from the hallway,

trying to breakdown the apartment door. Help is on the way. I need to stall. I need to talk sense into Saint.

“WHERE IS MY MATE?” He growls through Bronx’ s body, slamming me against the wall again.

“Sai-nt. It’ s me. I’ m your mate,” I try to reason with him, but he looks like he is out for blood, like he’ s never seen me before. I choke and gag, helplessly hitting his forearms as he continues to cut off my air supply.

“WHERE IS SHE?” he snarls again. He pulls me away from the wall and slams against it again. I can’ t answer, I have no air left. My eyes are bulging out of my head and tears are streaming down my cheeks. M y mate is going to kill me. This can’ t be happening. I can’ t believe I am about to do this. I have no choice. I focus on my energy and place my hands over his, letting the energy sear through me, burning his hands. I can feel blisters forming and bursting on his skin under my grip. Saint is wound so tight, he doesn’ t even seem to notice. I try to reach out for his face, but his arms are too long, I can’ t reach. Goddess please, please help me. Don’ t let this happen. The edges of my vision begin to blur and spots start to form. Darker and darker. The only thing I can make out is the onyx abyss of Saint’ s eye. The wolf possessing my mate’ s body. I stare until I can’ t see anymore. I am suddenly pulled into oblivion with such force that can’ t help but flail my arms and legs, a dark abyss with no escape. I can’ t feel my body anymore. I’ m gone. By the hand of my own mate.

“Kas, Baby…Kas?” Bronx is kneeling in front of me. He looks so scared. We aren’ t in the bedroom. We are in the hallway. It’ s the middle of the day. What the Hell just happened? I think I had a premonition.

Wait. Which one is reality? Is this the premonition? Memories swirl and mix in my brain making me feel dizzy.

“Bronx? ” I say with confusion, “Why are you on the floor? “

Bronx’ s POV

“Alpha, come quick. Something’s wrong with the Luna. It’s like…she’s frozen…and she’s glowing purple, sir,” the

mind link from Tyree, Kas’s temporary guard, comes through a couple minutes after she leaves the room.

“Where are you?” I jump up, startling everyone at the table.

“In front of your quarters, Alpha. What should I do?” He asks in a shaky voice.

“Don’t touch her, Tyree. I’m on my way,” I reply and cut the link.

“Bronx, what’s wrong?” Lenora says as I turn to run out of the room.

“I think Kas is having a premonition,” I say as I bolt out the office.

I run as fast as my legs will carry me down the hall. As I turn the corner I see Tyree with a terrified look on his face, kneeling on one knee in front of Kas, who is glowing bright purple. She is as still as a statue. He stands up and backs away as I slide to a halt and squat down in front of her so we are at eye level.

” Kas, snap out of it, Baby. Come on, I’m right here. You’re safe, Kas. No one can hurt you now, ” I say in a soft urgent voice, patting her face and rubbing her shoulders. The empty look in her eyes would make you think she was a department store mannequin. She isn’t a million miles away, she’s a million galaxies away.

I take her hands in mine. They are as cold as ice like they were the last time I found her like this. She is glowing much brighter now than she was last time.

” Ashley ! Go get Delilah. NOW! ” I order without looking away from Kas. Ashley doesn’t hesitate, she runs off to go find the witch.

I feel an odd sensation coining from Kas’s hands. Almost as if they are vibrating. They quickly turn warm, then hot, then fire hot. Without warning, a surge of energy pulses from her through me, causing a searing pain to flow into my hands.

I scream, making everyone around me take another step back. I look at my hands to see they are bright red and blistered from being burned. Kas burned me? I remember Saint's words as I look at my hands, 'The Goddess made us extra strong since Kas is a goddess. It's the only way we can be with her and not get hurt. That's why you're an Alpha. Anything less and she could accidentally destroy us and if she did, poof, our spirits' journey would be over.'

I turn my hands over, then look up at Kas again, then around at the concerned friends standing close by. A realization hits me. If I can't get her out of this vision she

is having, other people could get hurt much worse than me.

"Goddess, please forgive me. I don't know what else I can do," I say out loud.

Tears are streaming down from her hollow eyes. How can someone be so distant and so emotional at the same time? I have to act now before I chicken out and people get hurt. It's my only option. I close my eye for a moment and take a deep breath. I look her square in the face, slap her as hard as my conscience will allow. The people around me audibly gasp.

"BRONX! What the f*ck?!" Lenora screams and she tries to step forward, but Milo grabs her around the waist and holds her back.

Kas stumbles back from the weight of my hand but I catch her before she falls. She shakes her head out and looks at me with confusion.

"Kas, Baby...Kas?" I say looking into her eyes as her expression turns back to normal. The purple aura around her quickly fades.

"Bronx?" she looks at me with confusion, "Why are you on the floor?"

"Oh my Goddess, Baby. You scared the shit out of me," I sigh with relief. I reach up to wipe her tears away, but she flinches back away from my touch. It reminds me of

when I first met her and how scared she was of everything, including me.

“Kas, wh -what’ s wrong? Please, let me wipe your tears, ” I swallow hard, “I -I didn’ t mean to hurt you. I didn’ t know what else to do. “

Kas look around and sees everyone is in the hallway staring at her. A look of embarrassment comes over her face.

“Let’ s get her into the apartment, ” Lenora pulls herself out of Milo’ s arms and steps forward, unlocking the door. She gives me a damning glare as she takes Kas by the elbow and guides her in with me closely behind.

As she is closing the door, she addresses the people in the hall, “Time to go find other things to do, lookie loos. Except you, Tyree. Keep your post. You did the right thing by sending the mind link. Good job. “ As soon as we’ re inside, Kas starts to wander to the kitchen in a bit of a daze.

“Kas are you alright, Baby? Did you have a vision?” I ask. After she flinched away from me, I ‘m scared to get too close to her. I didn’ t mean to hurt her. I didn’ t know how else to snap her out of it.

“I -I just need to find what I did with my cup of water, ” she replies, more to herself than Lenora or I and wanders into the kitchen.

Lenora steps forward, “Kas, what was your premonition? What did you see? We need to know so we can help you. So we can try to prevent whatever it is you saw from happening. “

Kas is still searching the counters for her nonexistent glass of water, ignoring both Lenora and I.

Lenora approaches her and puts her hands on Kas’ s shoulders, stopping her from avoiding us.

“Kas, please. Please speak to us. We need to know so we can help you, ” Lenora says in as gentle a tone as I have ever heard from her.

Kas looks up at her, not speaking for a moment. I swear for the first time in my life I see Lenora break eye contact

first. Kas looks over at me with a complicated look. I see tears starting to pool in her eyes again. “Saint killed me. “
Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener chapter 48

“What? No, Kas. That’s not possible. You know that’s not possible. Saint would never harm a hair on your head. He loves you. I love you,” I say desperately, taking a step forward, praying she doesn’t take a step back. My heart clenches at the thought that she could ever be scared I would hurt her. What am I talking about? I just slapped her in the hallway in front of all those people. She just had a vision that my wolf killed her. How could she not be scared of me?

A knock on the door interrupts my thoughts. I find James and Delilah standing there.

“Please, come in,” I gesture with my arm.

“Thank you, Alpha Bronx, ” Delilah says with a bow and walks past me.

“If it’s alright, Alpha, I’m going to stay in the hall with Tyree. Make sure things are…under control,” James gives me a knowing look. I trust him to convince Tyree to keep quiet about this incident.

“Thanks, James, ” I look at Tyree, who still looks very uncomfortable with what he just witnessed. Even with the sensitivity and speciesism awareness classes we had implemented, I ‘m sure nothing could prepare him for a purple glowing werewolf, that happened to be his Luna. I look back inside and see Lenora and Delilah trying to console Kas who is now crying and shaking her head. I want to run to her and console her, but I can feel her pain and fear. I know it will just upset her more,

“Actually, I think I need to step out for a bit while the ladies work this out too. “

I quietly step out, closing the door behind me. I walk down the stairs, ignoring everyone who says hello , out of the packhouse into the frozen gardens. The early December wind whips through my wool sweater, chilling me to my bone, but I ignore it. I don’t care. I pull the

pack of cigarettes from my pocket. One left. I light it and take a long comforting drag before I walk further. My boots leave dark prints, like scars on the frosted ground. "Bronx!" I hear Lenora scold through a mind link, "Come back, you ne-

I selfishly cut the link before she has a chance to finish and block my mind so no one else can disturb me. I can't face Kas or anyone else right now. Not after what I did. I walk past the gardens, past the sprawling hills, and into the forest of the pack territory. If the only thing that is ever left of me is footprints on the frozen ground, that is more than I deserve.

What is this unfamiliar emotion? It's more than remorse. More than sorrow. I walk further and further into the woods, no direction or destination in mind. Just a sense of needing to sort myself out before I face my beautiful mate. My beautiful mate, that I hurt. My head is hollow and overwhelmingly full at the same time. Guilt is wracking my body.

Every step I take further into the woods destroys me more but I keep walking. I deserve the pain.

The sun is setting. I don't care how tough think I am, the sweater I'm wearing won't be enough to keep me warm once the sun is completely set. I find a lockbox of spare clothes used for when pack members shift next to the Blood River. I pull out a winter jacket and a spare pack of cigarettes. I light one and find a frozen rock to sit on. I sit and stare at the river, letting the smoke from the cigarette curl in front of my face. The blood red water is slushy with ice coining from the mountain, making it more of a shade of pink.

Vignettes of moments with Kas flash in my mind. The first time I saw her, not understanding the rush of the mate bond I was feeling. That first car ride home, holding her in my arms feeling so helpless. Hearing her sweet little giggle for the first time. The look of joy she gets when she cooks for me. The excitement the first time we went to the dining room and I had to hide our glowing

hands. The way she initiated our first kiss even though I was caked in mud. Thinking about it now makes butterflies form in my stomach. I take another long drag of the cigarette to calm them down. The pain I felt seeing her disappear into thin air to study with the coven. The pride I felt watching her shift for the first time. Seeing the stunningly beautiful Elexis for the first time. All these thoughts swirl around with my emotions, making me feel more and more sad and confused.

How can I help her? She is so much more than I am.

She's a goddess. Daughter of the Moon Goddess. I 'in just a werewolf. A soldier who got lucky enough to be an Alpha. I 'in fooling myself to think I' m the right thing for

her. I' m not worthy of her. I place my hands on either side of my head and sigh deeply. As I put my elbows on my knees, I look down and realize I have smoked more than half a pack of cigarettes while I' ve been sitting here.

The moon and stars are

the only light now. I look up at the moon. It is full and almost at its peak, glued down to the deep blue purple of the night sky. The stars are splattered like bits of paint around it. Almost as beautiful as Kas, I think to myself.

Almost.

I take a deep breath. I have had low moments in my life before, but this is the lowest. I don' t see a way out of this bottomless pit I have thrown myself into.

" Moon Goddess, please help me. I need your guidance. I want nothing but the best for your daughter. I' m not sure if I am what is best for her. Not in this life anyway, " I gulp hard, fighting back tears as I call out into the sky.

The wind takes my words away without a second

thought. I close my eye, hoping against all odds, the wind has taken my words to hold an audience with the

Moon Goddess. I wipe away a traitorous tear that

escapes and tries to slide down my cheek. I feel the

leftover moisture freeze on my skin. When I open my eye

again, I feel a peculiar wind swirl around me. It is not

bitter cold like the rest of the air. It is reassuring and welcoming.

The Moon Goddess. Different emotions fill me now. Warm and comforting acceptance, gratitude, encouragement. All those things wrapped into one, swinging me wildly from despair to a sense of purpose. The wind fills my ears, 'find balance, my warrior child' a voice carried by the wind's endless flow reassures me with a whisper. Kas needs me.

Even in the moments I do bonehead things. She is my mate and I need to ask her forgiveness. I can't run from her. I need to run to her.

"Thank you, Moon Goddess," I say with a smile of relief. I sit contemplating what I just experienced. When I stand up, ready to face the music for my actions, I stretch my arms to the air and yawn. I have no idea what time it is, but it must be late. The moon looks to be at its highest point. An odd sensation comes over me. A tickle in the back of my mind quickly becomes an itch and builds to a searing pain that drops me to my knees.

"Aarrghhh !!!" I can't tell if I said it out loud or if it came

from my mind. A rush of blood makes me dizzy, causing me to lean forward on all fours. My stomach churns and hot bile comes up hitting the ground with a splat. I look at the vomit as steam rises from the pile.

The pain is relentless. The roaring in my head won't stop. The dizziness spins my vision like a top.

"Milo!" I groan through the mind link. I hope I'm not too far away. I hope the message makes it through the relentless roaring in my head, "Help! I need you!" No sooner than I finish calling out to my friend, my skin starts to get hot and itchy. My bones crack and pop, my skin stretches and pulls as my form morphs growing bigger and longer. The clothes I'm wearing tear into pieces falling to the ground in little shreds as my body gets larger and changes shape. Paws with white fur take the place of my hands as I shift into a giant, pure white

wolf. The roaring in my head turns into a deafening howl as Saint completes the transformation.

He shakes out his fur and looks around at his surroundings. He seems confused. I sense dizziness overtaking him just like it did me, causing him to stumble and fall. He lays on the ground with a huff.

” Saint?” I ask softly, “You okay, buddy?”

He doesn’ t answer. I can feel him. He is in control of his wolf form. I can’ t tell if he can’ t hear me, if he can hear me but can’ t answer, or if he is just ignoring me. I can’ t shift back if I can’ t reach his consciousness. I feel like I’ m

trapped in a soundproof room inside his body.

I rustling comes from the woods behind us. Saint tries to stand up to defend himself but his legs won’ t hold him. It feels more like his physical form is too weak, even though my human form is just fine. Ghost and Crusher come barreling out of the woods. Ghost skids to a stop with a little huff of surprise as he sees Saint laying on the river bank.

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener

chapter 49

Kas’ s POV

I can feel the lump in my throat give way into tears as Delilah comes into the apartment. She sets down a leather bag that looks like an old time doctor’ s bag and takes my hands in hers.

“Kas, what happened?” she asks. Her face is fills with worry. Lenora is rubbing soothing circles on my back.

“I had a vision, Delilah, it was awful, ” I begin to sob and collapse against her. Delilah wipes my tears with her sleeve as she shushes me, rocking me gently in her arms. Her movement makes me realize I flinched when Bronx tried to do the same thing just a few moments ago. Why did I do that? Was it because of the

premonition? My heart aches thinking that I did that because of something Bronx didn't actually do. It was just in my head.

I look around and realize he isn't in the room. "Bronx?"

I

look around, "Where did he go?"

"I think he feels guilty for slapping you," Lenora growls in annoyed tone. She has a hand on her hip taking a judgemental stance.

"Slap me? Don't be ridiculous. Bronx would never hit me, Lenora," I defend my mate with a little growl.

"Kas, I saw it. We all did."

"I don't remember. I can't believe it would happen," I shake my head in denial.

"Okay, if you don't remember, that's probably for the best. How about you and Delilah sit down so you can tell her what your premonition was, Kas. I'll mind link my brother and see if I can get him back here," Lenora reassures me, "Don't worry about him."

I let Delilah lead me to the sofa while Lenora contacts Bronx.

"Alright, Luna lokaste. May I connect with your mind?" Delilah asks. She uses my formal title indicating she needs to have control over my mind.

"Yes, please, before the memory fades. I already feel like I am starting to forget the details of it," I sniff away the last of my tears.

"Alright. This will be easier if you close your eyes and concentrate on the vision. I'm going to recite an incantation. The more I speak, the less you will be aware of your surroundings. There is a possibility that you will feel like you're in that moment again. I know it will be scary, but I need you to let yourself relive it. You may see me as a ghost in your peripheral vision if you try to look around. This is normal. I will be observing details you may not be able to because of the traumatizing nature of the event," she explains.

Lenora comes over to the sofa, "Bronx is having a

tantrum. He won't speak to me, but he's fine. We just need to give him a little time, then I will send Milo and Reggie after him. They know how to talk to him when he gets in one of these moods. "

"Beta Lenora, I'm going to perform magic on Luna I okaste. It may look scary, but whatever happens is normal, I assure you. I don't know how long it will take, but I need you to make sure we are not interrupted. Ending the link too early can be...well... bad. "

"You got it," Lenora says. She goes and locks the door to the apartment and comes back to observe Delilah.

I nod and sit on the sofa cross-legged, facing the witch who has become my best friend and close my eyes. I feel her hands press gently against the sides of my head and she begins to murmur words in a language I don't understand. An odd sensation comes from her hands. Cooling and soft, making me feel like I 'm turning to jelly. Her unfamiliar words become a part of my mind.

I wake up in bed in a cold sweat. I 'm aware that I'm in my premonition, but I can't stop the events from playing out. I look around and I swear I see Delilah standing just out of my vision but turning my head to face her doesn't work. She is always just out of my line of sight. I try to say her name but the word dissolves like dust in my mouth. Once again, I relive the horror as Saint possesses Bronx's body and the last flicker of life leaves my body. I gasp as I open my eyes wide, back in reality. Delilah looks at me with tears in her eyes. She pulls me in for a deep hug.

"It's going to be okay, Kas. It may not seem like it right now, but it's going to be okay, " Delilah sniffs tears away.

"Are you girls alright?" Lenora is sitting on the floor next to the sofa looking up at us before looking at her watch.

"I'm okay. Are you okay, Delilah? I 'in so sorry you had to experience that," I soothe. It's my turn to wipe her tears.

” Kas, please, let me take this fear out of your mind. I have everything I need to relay to my mother so we can figure out how to keep you and your mate safe from, well, from whatever triggers that to happen.”

” I won’ t remember at all?” I ask.

” You will remember , but it will just be an awareness. It won’ t feel scary like it does now, ” she nods while she is explaining, “It’ s complex magic and taking away someone’ s emotions kind of falls in the gray magic area of light and dark but I think in this case, it’ s for the best. I am sure Lady Camille would agree.”

” Alright, please take it away, ” I nod. I don’ t even have to think about it. I understand Delilah telling mee this is gray magic means it is going to take a lot out of her and she will need to have a cleansing ceremony performed, but I trust her. She wouldn’ t offer it to me if she didn’ t believe it was necessary, “

I don’ t want to feel this way about my mate. He hasn’ t actually done anything.”

She and Lenora stand and go to the kitchen. I overhear bits and pieces of Delilah describing what happened in the vision and Lenora mentioning PTSD. They come back with Delilah holding her doctor’ s bag, placing it on the coffee table. She pulls out several bottles of liquid and pouches of herbs. She hands Lenora an empty glass and starts filling it with the various components. As I watch her skillfully concoct the potion, her ocean blue eyes turn darker and darker until they are almost navy blue. As the last ingredient touches the rest of the potion, it turns from muddy brown to an acid green.

Lenora’ s eyes widen at the sight, holding the glass far in front of her, “What are you going to do with this? “

“Kas needs to drink it,” Delilah says, her voice so deep, it’ s almost unrecognizable. She takes the glass from Lenora and hands it to me. I take a sniff and almost gag.

It smells of filth and rot. It reminds me of my former bedroom in the dungeon of the Silver Moon packhouse.

Delilah stands up and moves behind me.

“Kas, you are going to feel me touch your head. It is going to feel a bit like a heavy kiss. You need to drink the liquid without stopping. Down to the last drop,” she says with the altered tone in her voice.

“A-alright, ” I sigh nervously.

“Go ahead. “

I feel a pressure against the crown of my head. It almost feels like something has passed through my skull and is lapping at my brain. I pinch my nose closed with my free hand and start gulping down the vile liquid. It is thick and chunky as I force it down my throat. When I am sure the glass is empty, I set it down and start gagging. The pressure on my head dissipates. I feel better. I look at Lenora who looks mortified. She is looking at Delilah with a mix of disgust and disbelief, maybe even a bit of fear too, but I know Lenora doesn't fear anything.

I turn to see what she is looking at.

” NO! ” they yell at the same time. Delilah puts her hands on my head pushing it back to face front.

I hear slimy gagging noises coming from behind me, then silence. Delilah lets go of my head and flumps down on the sofa, finally letting me turn around.

She looks like all her energy is completely spent. I help her lean back on a pillow and grab my gray and green blanket for her. It always makes me feel better when I am exhausted.

“I -is that what you actually look like? ” Lenora asks, “Is what we see now a glamour? I -I' m not trying to be disrespectful or anything, I just want to understand what I just saw, Delilah. “

“What you saw is what my soul would look like if I were to let dark magic consume me. If a witch succumbs to the enticements of dark magic, eventually, who she is on the inside manifests on the outside, sooner or later, that is what you would see when you looked at me. An old disfigured hag, ” Delilah says sleepily, ” It is temporary in

this case. When I go home for a visit, we will perform a

cleansing ritual for my spirit.

“I see. Okay. Thank you for telling me,” Lenora nods but still looks tentative.

“In other matters, that little Vulcan mind meld you two were stuck in, well, that took a long time, ” Lenora informs us.

“What do you mean by a long time?” I ask.

“It’ s one -thirty in the morning, ” she looks at her watch.

“What? We were in there for over seven hours?” I ask in disbelief, “Where’ s Bronx?”

“Take it easy, Kas. He’ s going to be okay. Let’ s get James to take Delilah home, then I can take you to Bronx. ”

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

by Neener Beener

chapter 50

Lenora stands and unlocks the apartment door. James is pacing the hall and rushes inside as soon as he is allowed entry.

“My Love! ” he exclaims when he sees Delilah bundled up on the sofa. He kneels down and caresses her face, giving her little kisses.

“Oh, Puppy. Don’ t worry. I’ m okay, ” she smiles as he comes to her side.

“James, you can take her wrapped in the blanket so she won’ t get cold. I will get it back some other time, ” I offer.

“It’ s alright, Luna. My truck is out front, ” he carefully unwraps his mate from her cocoon and hands the blanket to me before picking her up bridal style. Lenora drapes his coat over her.

“Delilah, I will come see you tomorrow if you’ re feeling better, “ I tell her.

“Thank you, Kas, ” she says sleepily, leaning into James’ chest. James gingerly walks out of the apartment so he can take his mate home and care for her. A pang of guilt strikes my heart. I am not able to heal Delilah because

she is not a werewolf. She is a powerful witch, but what she did for me this evening took so much out of her. I have to find a way to make it up to her.

“Did you hear that?” Lenora asked with a smirk as soon as they’ re gone.

“Hear what?” I ask, looking at her with confusion.

“Delilah calls James ‘Puppy’ , ” Lenora giggles at the thought of big burly James being called a puppy.

I cover my mouth hiding my giggle. Once I collect myself I turn to Lenora, “Okay, no more stalling, where’ s Bronx?”

“Hospital wing. “

“Hospital wing?! What happened? ” Worry starts to build in my chest.

She looks at me unsure what to say. She just sighs, ” Saint won’ t shift back into human form. We’ re not sure why. “

“Won’ t or can’ t?” I’ m not sure how I know to ask the question.

“Come on, Kas, maybe you can help figure it out. “

We walk briskly down to the hospital wing. I realize, I wrapped my blanket around me without knowing I was doing it. The doctor meets us in the hallway.

“Luna, I’ m glad you’ re here. We’ ve tried to speak with Alpha Bronx’ s wolf, but for some reason, he doesn’ t seem to be able to communicate with us.

Beta Milo had to bring him back from the woods on an ATV. He couldn’ t walk here himself. Physically, he seems weak, but we can’ t figure out why. Other than the muscle weakness, he seems to be healthy, albeit a little irritable. But that isn’ t unusual for our Alpha, ” the doctor explains to us as we walk down the hall. We stop in front of a patient room door.

“Please, take as much time as you need. Hopefully the mate bond will help provide some answers. If not, I feel slightly uncomfortable to ask, but I understand you had training for your healer abilities while you were away. I don’ t know if this case calls for those abilities or not.

“No need to feel awkward, Doctor. Thank you for letting me know the situation. “

“Be careful, Kas. We don’ t know what kind of state of mind Saint is in that he won’ t allow Bronx to come forward…or if it is Bronx that is the one who is not in the right state of mind,” Lenora says with warning.

I nod at her and open the door. I quietly step inside gently closing the door behind me.

The room is dimly lit. Saint’ s hulking form is on a low kennel cot. He lifts his head as I come in and looks at me sleepily with his single vibrant green eye. His tail thumps against the cot and he starts to whine with a yawn when he sees me approach. Joy fills my heart at the sight of him. Mate’ s don’ t usually spend time together in opposite forms, but seeing him in front of me reminds me that I love him just as much as Bronx.

“Hi Saint,” I whisper soothingly, “The doctor said maybe you’ re not feeling well. Can I lay down with you? Maybe I can help heal you? “

He looks at me for a moment and I can’ t tell if he understands me or not until he tries to stand up and come to me.

“Oh no, Sweetheart, let me come to you, ” I assure him and step over to where he is laying.

He sits, then lays back on the cot, allowing me to crawl onto it with him. I lean against his big barreled chest and wrap my arms around his neck. He has the same coffee and dark chocolate scent as Bronx but muskier.

“I ‘ve missed you, Saint. So has Bronx, ” I murmur as I stroke his soft fur.

He nuzzles my face and gives me a small lick on the cheek before wrapping his giant body around me, effectively wrapping me into a white wolf cocoon. His face is leaning up against mine as I run my fingers through his soft coat and nuzzle my face on the thick fur of his neck.

“Saint, is Bronx in there with you?” I ask gently, stroking his face, knowing I won’ t get an answer, ” Can I use

some of my healing ability to try to bring him back? It makes me nervous that you are not strong right now, because Bronx was fine before he left the packhouse. I promise it won't make you go away again. Just enough for both of you to share a body like you used to. I promise. Hopefully the healing energy will help make you stronger too.

He lifts his head up and looks into my eyes. He gives me a small huff and another lick on my cheek. I take that as a sign of approval.

"Thank you, Sweetheart, " I nuzzle him again.

I take a deep breath. I have never tried to use my abilities on someone in wolf form. But I just promised him everything would be fine, so I need to make sure I keep that promise.

"Saint, I think Bronx is feeling guilty about something that happened earlier today. I don't know if he told you about it or not, but he doesn't need to feel guilty. I need him to know that. He did the right thing. I don't blame him. I'm not mad at him. So if he's in there with you and if you two are on speaking terms, please let him know for me, okay? "

The giant wolf doesn't really respond, he just sighs deeply and lets his tongue loll out of the side of his mouth. He uses his snout to lift my hand to pet him more.

"My sweet wolf mate. You mean so much to me. I love you," I place my hands on either side of his soft ears and kiss him on the end of his nose.

"Ready? I've never done this on someone in wolf form. I'm not sure how it will feel for you. If you are uncomfortable, let me know. "

He nods once and closes his eye. I focus on Saint and Bronx.

The deeper my energy goes in search of Bronx, the more relaxed Saint's body becomes. He leans his heavy head on my shoulder with a deep sigh. It almost feels like he is relieved. The healing energy is working on him.

“That’ s a relief for me too, Sweetheart, ” I say into his mind.

I keep searching until I come to a wall. I try to push my energy past it, but it won’ t budge.

“Can you help me, Saint? Bronx is behind that wall, I can feel it. I think whatever made you come forward, put him behind the wall you were stuck behind. “

I feel Saint’ s energy. In comparison to my smooth, flowing calm energy, Saint’ s is raw and forceful, barely contained from turning violent. It gives me a better understanding of this handsome wolf.

Wordlessly, he helps me push against the wall. With both of us pushing, it easily slides and starts to crumble. As it does, a wave of negative emotions washes over us. I move in front of Saint and use my positive energy against it. Dissipating it into thin air.

I am starting to feel weak now, ” Saint, I will have to come back later to find Bronx, but I think we made good progress. You did such a good job, ” I say to him as I pull my spirit and energy back until I am looking at his wolf form. He nuzzles me gratefully and lets me fall asleep in his warm comforting embrace.

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