

Chapter 101 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

Axel is pouting. Not his usual adorable pouting where he uses me as a pillow and grumbles while nuzzling into my chest, but full-on, guilt-ridden pouting. I can't blame him. I feel the same.

"Fuck, I'm a horrible parent," he groans, resting his head on my belly with his arms wrapped tightly around me.

"You're not a horrible parent," I tried to tell him for the millionth time.

"I am," he growls, at himself, not at me, "I didn't think about how this shit was hurting him once. I was fucking yelling at him for talking about tits! In hind fucking sight, it wasn't even that big of a fucking deal, but I acted like he just lit Quinn on fire or something."

I cringed, knowing I was no better. I should never have let Taegan carry that burden. He's so mature for his age, I forget how young he really is. He's always been my biggest supporter, and when I first learned of the pregnancy and started feeling the pain from the curse, he picked up on it right away.

Axel always told him to take care of his mom and sister when he left for work. Even without his dad telling him, Taegan would have done it. He's always been overly protective of me. I didn't think anything about asking him to keep it a secret for now. I didn't realize how much he would comprehend.

I never said I was dying or that it was the curse, but I should have known that he would piece it together. The kid is too smart for his own good. Telling him not to tell daddy or grandpa that his mom is pregnant with twins and doesn't feel good sometimes was too naive of me. I tried to downplay my sickness with him, and it hurt him more in the end. I had him to depend on, but he was left to worry on his own, with no one to help him sort his feelings out.

"I failed him more than anyone," I murmured. "I never should have put that on him."

Axel growls, "No you shouldn't, you pain in the ass. Quit hiding it from me when you're hurting. Dad told me Thyra had to help you again before they left."

My face heats with embarrassment. "It wasn't that bad."

“Bull shit,” he scoffed, looking up and glaring at me. “I should use Taegan’s spoons on you.”

“Wouldn’t that defeat the purpose?” I giggled, then my laugh died down into a heavy sigh, “I miss Taegan already,” I whispered.

“Yeah,” Axel goes back to nuzzling my belly, “Me too. I’m getting him his own horse when he gets back.”

“Oh, gawd,” I rolled my eyes. “I heard your dad say he was getting Aly a pony earlier. You both are horrible,” I laughed dryly.

He shrugs, then starts kissing my belly. “Do you two want a pony too?”

“Wait till they’re born before you start spoiling them, please.”

“No promises,” he grins.

We laid in the hospital bed, just cuddling and talking for a long time, until Axel got a mind link from his aunt saying Aly was throwing a temper tantrum because she wanted him. He had to leave for a bit to get her, since Fiona was babysitting Courtney and the boys too.

Right after he left, a tentative knock sounded on the door.

“Come in!” I called out.

I was surprised to see Katherine pop her head in. “Um, I’m sorry to bother you, but I was asked to drop something off to you.”

I smiled warmly at her. It’s hard for me to see her as my mom, but she has been amazing to Grandma since she came back into her life. I have no ill-feelings towards her and really don’t mind being around her any more.

“Come in. You’re not bothering me at all.”

She smiles back, coming around the door and closing it gently. “Thank you,” she looks around the room nervously. “Where is everyone else? I didn’t expect to find you alone.”

“Well, Taegan left with Max and Thyra, and I’m sure Axel will be back soon. He went to get Aly from Fiona. I guess he’s trusting me to stay put while he’s away,” I chuckled.

“Oh,” Katherine smiled tightly, like she was nervous about being alone in the same room with me. I can’t really blame her. I’ve spent the last few years being deliberate about never being alone with her. It’s awkward and it usually makes us both anxious. It wasn’t until recently, once I found out I was dying, that I came to see how silly I was being.

“Would you like to have a seat,” I waved my hand in the direction of Axel’s recliner next to the bed.

She smiles, nodding once, then nervously moves to sit on the edge of the seat.

She has a thermos in her hands, and after sitting, she hesitantly extends it out to me. “Addison brought me this and asked me to take it to you. Xiomara said she has to stay with the brewing potion around the clock to prevent it from burning, so warriors will be bringing it back and forth for now. Everyone else was busy, so I volunteered to help,” she rushed to explain, like she was scared she needed a good reason to be here.

“Thank you,” I said as I took the thermos from her, unscrewing the lid and smelling the contents inside. “Hmm. It smells sweet,” I murmured in surprise. “Did she say how much I needed to drink?”

“Oh,” Katherine sits up impossibly straighter on the edge of the seat, as if she's trying to look polite and formal, “She said the recipe called for 2-4 ounces every other hour. She said you can dilute it with water or juice and sip it throughout the day if you would prefer to do it that way.”

She looks around the room until her eyes land on the water pitcher on my bedside table.

“Um, would you like me to help you make some now? Since you’re supposed to stay put in that bed?”

Her eyes are wide in hopeful expectation, and I can’t tell her ‘no’.

“Sure. That would be great. Thank you,” I smiled warmly at her.

Her returning smile is radiant with elation. “Yeah? I mean, yes! Um, would you like it with juice or water? Does the hospital have juice?” She stands up quickly, looking jittery on her feet like she was trying to figure out how to best carry out the task.

“Water is fine. I think Axel set my cup by the sink,” I pointed to the direction of the bathroom.

She hurries to fetch it, looking excited to be able to help. I watch as she carefully measures out 2 ounces of the liquid exactly, being so exact that I’m thoroughly impressed. The cups the hospital provides have the measurements on the side to monitor the intake of fluids, which makes measuring the liquid an easy enough task, but she makes it look like an exact science.

Once she’s done, she pours the cold ice water from my pitcher over it and then scurries out to the hall, moving so fast with her vampire speed, I almost miss that she left, and comes back with a new straw.

She gingerly sets the cup in my hands, then waits nervously while I take a sip.

“Mmh, it’s actually really good,” I smiled at her. “It tastes like ginger and something sweet. Like a type of berry I can’t quite place.”

“Elderberry, I think,” Katherine tells me. “I, uh, tried a bit before bringing it over. I wanted to make sure it wouldn’t hurt you before giving it to you. I hope you don’t mind.”

“No, not at all,” I smiled at her, then took another drink, “Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome, Bailey,” she grins proudly.

I continue to drink the mixture while she stands next to the bed, both of us in an awkward silence that we don’t know how to fill.

“Well,” she smooths her hands down the front of her silk shirt after a few minutes, “I guess I’ll leave you to-”

“Bailey!” Axel comes running into the room, looking frantic with Aly on his hip, “Shit,” he curses, “Fuck, we have rogues in the fucking territory. I need to go.”

“Go!” I told him, moving from the bed to get Aly.

He groans, not wanting to hand her over, obviously worried about leaving her here with me alone. Aly is whimpering, unsure of what’s wrong, and clinging to him tighter.

“Here,” Katherine reaches for my daughter. “I can stay with them. Go.”

Axel breathes out a sigh of relief. “Thank you. I’ll be back! Don’t you fucking move, Bailey!”

He almost throws a reluctant Aly at Katherine, then sprints out the door just as quickly as he came, barking orders at the hospital staff to lock down the clinic and protect their luna.

“Daddy,” Aly whimpers, but surprisingly nuzzles into Katherine’s shoulder, wiping her eyes and snotty nose on her expensive-looking shirt.

If Katherine minds, she doesn’t show it. She holds my daughter close for a few seconds, resting her cheek on her head, then sets her on the bed beside me.

“Please stay there, Bailey. I’m going to just make sure there are guards outside the doors, then I’ll lock us in.”

“Do you think it’s serious?!” I asked frantically. “What about grandma?!”

“Dusty and Chris were there with her. I’ll...I’ll call the house and see,” she says, before opening the door and coming face to face with two warriors. “Oh, good. I’m locking us in,” she tells them briskly. One of them nods, and Katherine quickly closes the door before turning the lock and moving the recliner in front of the door.

She then pulls out her phone and quickly places the call.

“Mom? Are the boys still there?” she asks frantically, then sighs in relief, and I can hear grandma yelling on the other side of the line, clearly upset about something.

“Mom, they’re trying to keep you safe. Just listen, please. If they say to stay in the safe room, then it’s because something is going on……I’m sure you were enjoying watching the men training, but you still have to listen……No, I’m with Bailey……Yes, we’re safe……Yes, okay……Okay, love you too, mama.”

She hangs up and smiles slightly, her shoulder sagging with relief. “They have her in the safe room. She’s safe.”

“Good,” I murmured, holding Aly and trying to get her to calm down.

Aly is whimpering for Axel, but that can’t be helped right now. He’s got a job to do, and we just have to be patient and pray everything is okay.

“Is she okay?” Katherine asked, moving closer to the bed.

I nodded, “She just wants her daddy. I’m number three on her list, after Daddy and grandpa.”

“I’ve heard,” she chuckles dryly, “Max usually has her while he trains.”

I smirked, kissing the top of Aly’s head, “Yeah, if grandpa is near, she wants him. It doesn’t matter if he’s busy or working.”

After a few minutes, Aly finally calms down, and the room is quiet while we wait for news.

“Do you think it’s safe yet?” I asked.

Katherine presses her ear to the door, then shrugs, “I don’t hear anything outside of the norm. Has the pack had intruders before?”

I shook my head, “Not since I’ve been here. Rogue wolves are never an issue here. Axel has to deal with rogue vampires sometimes, but never wolves. Not since Levi.”

Katherine was about to say something else, but she suddenly jerked her head to the side, then, after a few seconds, pressed her ear to the door again.

My body tenses with alarm, then I feel it, this sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

This time, it’s not the curse.

It’s Axel.

“He’s hurt,” I whispered, then quickly moved out of the bed, fighting to get out of the sheets before hurrying to the door. “He’s hurt! I need to go,” I told her, trying to give Katherine Aly and push her out of the way.

“No, Bailey! You can’t! They’re-”

A deep roar echoes in the halls outside the door, followed by snarling and vicious gnawing and gnashing sounds. The sounds of monstrous beasts fighting get closer, and Katherine quickly lifts me and Aly with her vampire strength and closes us in the bathroom, shutting the door quickly then blocking it with something on the other side so I can’t get out.

I feel him. I feel his pain radiating in the pit of my stomach.

Aly’s screams are lost to me in the pain through the bond as tears stream from my own eyes.

“No!” I screamed, falling to the floor, “Axel, please, no.”

2.22 Unexpected

Chapter 102 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“Alpha, we got rogues again,” Stephanie mind links me as I approached the clinic with Aly cursing me out in her broken toddler talk for leaving her with my aunt.

Aly keeps calling me a ‘zit-head’ and I know she got it from my dad. I’m so not excited for Bailey to hear her say that. Me and Dad are both sure to get an earful and she will send Taegan after us with his spoons. Taegan would be all too happy to do it.

“Did they cross over, or are they skirting the line again?”

“Skirting the line. It looks like they are looking for someone. They haven’t noticed me yet. I called for Quinn and she’s on her way, but they’re making me nervous.”

“Where’s Casey?” I asked.

“The Gamma is on a patrol in town with his dad. One of the workers at the bar said he saw a rogue in there two nights ago and they went to see if they could get a trail. I tried to reach Beta, but he’s at the lumber mill.”

“Shit,” I cursed, then looked down at my scowling baby girl, who was clinging to my shirt like she knew I was about to have to leave her again. Her little grumpy expression is too much, and I chuckle, kissing the indents in between her little eyebrows.

“If they cross over, let me know. I’ll be right there.”

They didn’t cross over last night, I doubt they will now. Maybe they are passing through and are just curious. They didn’t smell feral.

I’m in the clinic, walking back to Bailey’s room when Quinn’s voice breaks through the link, “Alpha, we need you. They’re on our territory.”

“Shit! Where?”

“Where the river gets deep before the rapids, near the hiking trails.”

Shit.

Thank the fucking goddess that Katherine was with Bailey. After passing a crying Aly off to her, I sprint out of the clinic, barking orders at the security team to lock it down and guard Bailey. Then I break out the double doors and shift before I’m even off the steps.

I’m sprinting full speed to the north where Quinn said they were. Anxiety is eating away at me. I have too much shit to handle as it is, I didn’t need a fucking rogue attack on top of it all. When I’m almost there, Addison speeds past me, looking worried about her mate. The sound of my warriors howling is nearing me as well and I can feel the thunderous rhythm of at least a dozen paws beating on the earth at the same time.

“Alpha.....”

“Quinn, I’m almost there.”

“Um, I know. We can hear you. You might want to ask the warriors to fall back or calm their tits. The rogues aren’t by themselves.”

“What?!” I asked, dumbfounded, not understanding what she was talking about.

“There are kids.”

Sure enough, when I clear the last bend, breaking through to the view of the river that borders our pack, there’s an older rogue couple standing a few feet away from Quinn, Stephanie and Addison.

Behind them, 5 kids, ranging from Aly’s size to a teenager, are standing warily, glaring at my female warriors with no trust. Quinn is in her wolf form, but Steph is shifted back, wearing Addison’s coat, probably so she can be the one to communicate.

“See, he’s here. That’s our alpha,” Stephanie pointed in my direction as I cautiously walked down the hill, not wanting to frighten the kids.

When they turn their eyes to me, I see all the kids have deep red eyes.

Vampires.

“Quinn, why are 5 vampire children with 2 rogue wolves?”

“Finding out now, Alpha. I want to shift back to ask, but I don’t think Rick could handle any more kids enjoying my fun bags today, so Steph is asking them questions.”

My warriors are close, their loud approach making the kids startle and the older two hiss.

“Fall back! There are kids so quiet your asses down. Your scaring them,” I called through the mass link, “hold your stance in the tree line for now.”

“YES, ALPHA!” They respond, and the howling instantly stops.

“I told you they don’t want us,” the oldest kid, a teenage girl, snaps, looking between me and Quinn warily. “They may have vampires here, but they probably keep them as pets. Look at her,” she glares at Addison, who is standing protectively in front of Stephanie, “She looks like a dog herself right now.”

Stephanie growls at the insult, but Addison seems completely unfazed. She almost looks amused with the girl.

I shift back, not caring about being naked, and the kids all started back in fear, all except the rude little shit that just called my member a dog. She holds her ground, and except for the slight tremor in her hands at her sides, she’s trying to appear unfazed.

“Call a member of my pack a fucking dog again, I don’t care why you’re here, I’ll show you what a real fucking dog can do. What the hell are you doing in my pack?”

Her eyes narrow further, but her visible gulp tells me she’s not as tough as she’s trying to appear.

The older man looks back and glares at the girl, then turns an apologetic expression towards me.

“Excuse Pheobe’s words, Alpha. These children have all been through an ordeal and don’t trust others easily.”

I plant myself in front of the three women protectively, folding my arms across my chest as I evaluate each of them.

The man and woman are clearly rogue, and have the same scent I detected last night, but they are sane and don’t have the horrible rotten stench of becoming feral on them. They look around

Dad's age, with peppered hair and the touch of wrinkles in the corner of their eyes, but still capable wolves.

The children all being vampires is what is throwing me off, making me wary. It doesn't add up.

The oldest is probably around 13 or 14 on closer inspection. She seemed much older with her malice and cold demeanor, but I can see all her young features ridden with distrust and fear now that I'm closer.

The youngest is just a baby, maybe 2, and seems way skinnier in her thin clothes than Aly ever was. She's in the arms of a boy, maybe not much older than Taegan, her little arms clinging to him, and my face instantly softens as it reminds me of my own children. The other two, a set of boys, maybe 4 or 5, have the same darker coloring as the oldest girl, Phoebe, making me believe that those three are siblings.

The two wolves look well-fed and clean, but the kids all look a mess, like they haven't washed for a long time. All 5 look wary and scared.

"What are you doing on my land?" I asked, looking back at the man.

He looks at Addison for a split second, then back at me. "My name is Robert and my mate, Mindy, and I were just passing through. We're lone wolves, as you can probably tell, and don't stick to one place too long. We were on our way West and 4 days ago were camping maybe 30 miles north of here when we, uh," he turned to look at the oldest girl again, Phoebe, "We heard screams coming from a nearby cave. Child screams. There were rogue vamps, sir. 2 of them, that were using these kids for their meals."

"We couldn't leave them," Mindy said solemnly, "We became rogues after losing our child. I couldn't ignore it, and Rob couldn't either, so we killed the rogue vampires and got the kids out of there. We didn't know how to help them or what to do afterward, so Rob went to town and tried to find out if there was a coven close by we could take them to."

The man cuts in, "I found a bar in town, and everyone in it was a werewolf, but I did see a vampire woman with a mate mark on her neck, so I asked a bit about the werewolf pack nearby instead. Your pack, Alpha. I heard that you were an accepting Alpha and welcomed different races in your pack. I even saw vampires coming and going yesterday like they belonged here. I was hoping you might be able to help us with the kids getting the medical attention they need. Maybe help them find a place to stay once they recover?"

I look at the children again, scowling deeply after hearing what they've been through. Their skin is so dirty that I missed it the first time I looked, but now that I know what to look for, I see it. Bite marks from fangs on all of their necks.

I look at Addison, and by her expression I know she's noticed the same. Even thinking about someone harming the little girl that reminds me of my daughter fills me with rage.

“They lying?” I asked Addison, just to be sure.

“No, Alpha. They definitely are not,” she confirms, still looking at the children.

Stephanie stepped closer to her, resting her hands on her shoulders, looking at the kids with sympathy.

“Would your father help them?” I asked.

Addison scoffs, “Yes, but they would have a better life here. No one likes being oppressed, and my father likes being lord of his own universe,” she looks at me, her face full of resolve, “You should keep them here. There is love and freedom in your pack, and that’s what these children will need.”

I nodded, thinking much the same. I trust Addison’s judgment more on this, though, so if she said to send them to her father, I would have done it. Looking back at the little girl being held by the boy, I’m glad she asked for them to stay.

The oldest girl scoffs, “What if I don’t want to stay in a pack filled with mutts? My brothers and I will be fine on our own. I told you that,” she snaps at the man.

“Honey, no one wants to merely survive. Think of what’s best for your brothers. You want them to thrive, not struggle,” Misty tells her.

The girl looks at her brothers who are watching my warriors in the treeline curiously, not looking as afraid anymore. They almost look like they want to run over and pet one of them.

Her nostrils flare, then she looks back at me and hisses, “Then I can be on my own. I don’t want to be raised by dogs.”

The couple tries to stop her, but she’s too fast. She’s about to jump over the river, when a Moose breaks free from the treeline on the other side to get a drink, startling her.

How the fuck a moose wandered into the middle of so many predators, I don’t know, but Phoebe loses her footing and falls into the icy river.

“Fuck,” I roared, not missing a beat, and I ran to dive in after her.

The water is like ice, making it hard to force my muscles to move after the shock of jumping in, but I somehow do, pushing my body to follow Phoebe as she gets carried away with the rushing current.

She’s sputtering as she bobs and flails in the water, trying to swim. Her hands connected with a log jutting out from the bank, and I breathed a sigh of relief when I finally got to her, wrapping my arm around her waist and hoisting her over my shoulder with one hand while I held onto the log with my other, pulling us back to the edge of the river.

I was so focused on getting out of the freezing water, I didn't think to watch for branches under the surface, and one gets me, stabbing me deep in the abdomen.

"SHIT," I growled. Stuck in place.

"Wwwh-wwwhat?" Phoebe asks with her teeth chattering.

"I'm stabbed in the fucking stomach by a branch is what, you pain in the ass. This is why you shouldn't try surviving on your fucking own.

"Hhh-hh-how is yy-yyy-your stu-pp-pppp-pitidy my fff-fffault?"

I growl as the temptation to drop her goes through my mind.

Everyone is racing for the shore, but Addison is the first one to us. She gracefully walked on the log, and pulled Phoebe from my shoulder, holding the girl in her arms easily though they looked to be almost the same size.

"What's wrong, Alpha?" she asks, seeing and smelling my blood in the water.

"I'll be fine. Just got to shift to heal. Get her back home and warmed up before she dies from hypothermia. I didn't just get myself stabbed saving her for her stubborn ass to die from the cold."

Addison chuckles, "You got it, Alpha," walking to the shore, where Stephanie hands the coat to her to put around Phoebe. Then, Addison and the girl are off in the direction of the heart of the pack.

"You boys want a ride to follow your sister?" Stephanie asked Phoebe's brothers with a smile. They nodded eagerly.

She shifts, and Misty helps the boys on her back, telling them to hold on tight. Stephanie runs smoothly, used to carrying Taegan and Callum, and follows her mate's trail.

"You okay, Alpha?" Quinn asks, kneeling down at the edge of the shore and tilting her wolfie head while examining the blood in the water.

"I'm fucking dandy as can be," I snap, as I use both my hands to break the branch off, then pull myself to shore.

It's deeply embedded, with blood pouring out around it, but nothing that won't heal quickly once I shift.

Quinn winces watching me pull the branch out in a swift movement before I quickly shift back, shaking out my fur and groaning as it begins to heal. In wolf form, I'm healing rapidly, and the bleeding stops at once.

“That’s good, because your ass needs to get to the clinic. Antonio got to the pack for Katherine, and started a fight with the guards because they had the place locked down.”

I growl in frustration, wanting to throw an Aly worthy temper tantrum at all this shit happening at once.

“Fucking shit, I’m going to murder that fucking vampire once and for all. Can you and the warriors deal with them?” I asked, nodding to the couple and the two remaining children.

Quinn’s wolfie face grins as she looks at the kids. “I got this. Go kill the undead.”

2.23 Quinn's

Chapter 103 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Quinn POV

After Axel left, I was left with no choice but to shift into my human form and let the fun bags out for all to see. I had no other way to communicate with the couple and the remaining two children.

The young boy and baby girl looked frightened enough by their friend’s attempt at running away and with Axel jumping in after her. Then, with all the warriors skirting the treeline and the ordeal they had already been through, I was desperate to get them back to the packhouse where they could recover and start to feel at ease.

I shift back, and thankfully, the man offers me his jacket to hide my front after his mate’s urging, elbowing him and nudging her head in my direction. It was the wife's code for 'give her your coat'.

“Thank you, Robert,” I smiled warmly at him, then nodded my thanks to his mate. “Do you mind following me back to the packhouse so we can discuss things out of the cold?”

“Actually,” Mindy looked at her mate hesitantly, “We haven’t been back to a pack in a long time, and aren’t really comfortable being in one now. We just wanted to drop the children off with someone responsible who we knew could help them, then be on our way.”

“Oh,” I murmured, then looked at the children. The girl looked underweight and so cold, even for a vampire, in her thin dress and worn out and dirty little pants. The boy was trembling

himself, wearing just pajama bottoms and a ratty long-sleeved shirt, but he was enveloping his sister in his arms, trying to shield her as best he could from the cold wind.

His determination to protect his sister was obvious. His neck is covered in bite marks, but his sister's has very few. I have a suspicion that he protected her as best he could from that as well.

My past and my experience with rogue, feral vampires makes my heart contract for these kids. I know a bit about what they've been through. I need to protect them.

"The kids will be safe with me. We will make sure they are well taken care of."

Mindy smiles warmly at me, "I can see that, dear. Your Alpha wouldn't have saved Phoebe the way he did otherwise."

Robert turns and pats the boy's shoulder, which he winces away from, probably on reflex after all he had been through. He gives Robert an apologetic expression after doing it, and Robert seems like he is used to the boy avoiding his touch. "You will be safe here. You keep taking care of your sister, but you let these people take care of you. Okay, Adam? I know you are scared to let others help you, but you have to start somewhere if you are both going to get better. Try trusting them."

The boy flashes his untrusting red eyes at me, then looks back at the man. "You can't stay too?"

Robert's face softened. "No, Adam, we can't."

"They are welcome to come and see you whenever they can, though. Is that okay with you, Adam?" I asked, squatting down to his level.

He scrutinizes my face then looks back at Robert. "Will you come check on us? Will we see you again?"

Mindy comes up beside him and ruffles his hair, which makes Adam cringe slightly, but doesn't move away like he did for Robert, "Of course we will. We will be heading back after winter is over. We can stop in town then," she then looks at me, "If that is okay?"

I nod, "Our packhouse number is listed under Kissinger Lumber in the town phonebook. Call whenever. Or you can stop by the bar in town and ask for the Beta. We can bring them into town to meet you." I looked at the little boy and smiled reassuringly, "There is a great place that serves the best milkshakes. Can we meet them there?"

The boy's eyes light up at the mention of milkshakes and the little girl turns her head to look at me. Her little button nose is adorable, along with her messy but curly locks of hair. Vampires are pretty, even when they are this small. I can tell the boy is going to be a looker, rivaling even Taegan when he gets older. That's going to be fun.

"I like milkshakes," the little boy admitted.

I smiled broadly, “I do too. My name is Quinn, Adam, and I think we are going to be great friends.”

The kids say quick goodbyes to the couple, then I hand Robert back his jacket before shifting back, and having the kids climb on top of my back. Adam was hesitant when I told him he should ride on my back as we went back to the packhouse, but when I told him it would help get his sister to somewhere warmer faster, he agreed.

The warriors fell in around us, following me back. Adam held his sister in front of him in his lap so he could support her while gripping my fur. I stayed as steady as I could to help them not be scared. I know how I felt coming to this pack for the first time when I was just 16, after my pack was destroyed in a vampire attack, and I’m a werewolf. I was going to be with my own kind. These kids have to be terrified at being thrown into a pack of wolves after suffering so much.

When we get to the pack’s center, I can hear a commotion coming from the clinic, most likely from Axel dealing with that prick vampire leader we have been oh so blessed with putting up with for the past couple of years. I hope Axel is giving him hell.

I decided to take the kids to the packhouse instead of getting treated there. The warrior building has a small unstaffed medical room and my office is there, but it will have a lot more intimidating warriors and a lot more nudity than the packhouse. I don't want these kids any more scared than they already are.

Rick keeps extra clothes for us in his office, and I can send an omega to the Alpha house to borrow clothes from Taegan and Aly for the kids. Bailey probably even has some in her office.

I kneel down on the bottom steps for Adam and his sister to slide off my back, then shift back to my human form. I can’t help being naked, but Adam doesn’t seem to notice or care. Good. Rick will like that, especially after the incident with Taegan this morning.

Adam is looking around the pack in fascination, and his sister is staring at me, like she’s amazed I was able to shift. I’m dying to hold her, but I think Adam would prefer to be the only one holding her until he knows he can trust us. He didn't seem to like either of them being touched back with Robert and Mindy. You can't blame him.

“This way,” I told them, waving to the warriors who were running back towards the packhouse.

Adam watches them leave while he carries his sister up the steps and inside, standing close to my heels as I walk towards my mate’s office.

“This is our packhouse. It’s the central hub of our pack where the Alpha, Beta, and the Luna work. The other wolves who were with us are heading to the warrior center. That is where our Gamma, who is in charge of the warriors, and myself work.”

“Are you the Gamma?” Adam asked me.

“No. I’m the Beta female. My mate is the Beta. I am in charge of the female warriors, though.”

“So your mate must be really scary, like that big alpha guy?” Adam looked at me warily.

I chuckle, “Actually, I’m much scarier than my mate.”

He furrows his little brows, doubting my words. “You’re not scary.”

“No?” I smiled down at him, “That’s because I like you. I’m only scary when I want to be.”

Adam blushes through the grime on his cheeks hearing me say that I like him, which makes me laugh more. “My mate is pretty awesome. You will meet him soon. He’s not like Alpha Axel at all.”

“Good,” Adam sighs, “That man scared me. He had a tree branch sticking through his stomach and didn’t say ‘ouch’ once. That’s not normal.”

I threw my head back and laughed at that, “No. Our Alpha is something else. Normal could never describe him. He’s a good Alpha, though. Just crude and loud. You should see our previous Alpha. He’s even scarier, but I’ll let you in on a secret.”

“What?”

I smiled down at him, “Alpha Axel has a weakness. Their names are Bailey and Aly. If you want to ever put fear into our Alpha for any reason, just say you’re going to get Bailey or Aly and he will do whatever you want. That man would rather eat snot than have his mate or daughter mad at him.”

Adam grimaces, “He eats snot? That’s not healthy.”

I giggled. “Oh, I can’t wait for you to meet his son. Our Alpha has a little boy who is probably close to your age. Actually, our Gamma does too. And Aly and Connor are probably close to your sister’s age.” I smiled at the sweet little girl who was watching me curiously with her red eyes, “What’s her name?”

To my surprise, she is the one to answer me. “Beff,” she grins shyly, then buries her face on her brother’s shoulder. Her voice was cute and sweet, making me grin.

“Beth,” I repeated, “That’s a very pretty name.”

“Her name is Bethany, but mom always called her Beth.”

I open Rick’s door and usher the kids inside, then head to the file cabinet behind his desk and pull out a pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt before pulling them both on, thinking over how to ask this question nagging me. Adam stands awkwardly in the middle of the room, looking around to try and take everything in.

“Adam, what happened to your parents?” I asked straight out, not able to think of a way to soften the question.

Adam’s face darkens, and for a moment, he looks very much like a vampire, like Addison when she gets pissed off. He has the same dangerous look to his features.

“My aunt and uncle killed them before taking us.”

“Your aunt and uncle?” I repeated, “They were the rogue vampires that were feeding off of you?”

Adam nodded, gripping his sister a little more tightly to his skinny frame. “Yeah. Phoebe tried to tell us to run, but we couldn’t get away.”

I gulped, coming around the desk and kneeling in front of the little boy. “Who were the rogue vampires to Phoebe, Adam?”

His whole expression turns sad, “Her parents.”

No wonder the girl seemed angry with the world. Poor girl. I’ll have to tell Axel later so he’s careful not to be too hard on her.

I look up at Adam and his sister, Beth, from where I’m squatting on the floor, fighting the urge to pull them both to me and smother them with as much love as I can. They are much too young to have endured what they endured. That’s why I think Adam and Taegan will be great friends when Taegan gets back from fairy land, or wherever it was they went. I’m still unsure of the details of their trip with all the other madness that has been going on around here.

“Hey, when was the last time either of you fed? We have blood shipments that come every month for our two vampires who live here with us full time. Do you want to drink, then I can get you both ice cream before I get you looked at in the clinic?” I think they need to be looked at by an actual doctor, and maybe see if Katherine or Addison can explain to me anything else I may need to know about taking care of these kids.

At the word ‘fed’, both of the kids perk up, and I know it has been a while. I chuckle, then tell them to hold on while I go to Axel and Bailey’s office to see if I can find a blanket, or better yet, extra clothes for the kids.

To my luck, Bailey has a stack of fresh clothes for both of the kids under the changing table she keeps in her office. I grab a pack of baby wipes and a diaper too, just in case Beth needs it. She didn’t appear to be wearing one, but that may be from the lack of having it, rather than from not needing it. She looks much too young to be out of diapers.

When I come back in, I ask Adam if he wants to shower in Rick’s attached bathroom before changing, and he agrees, looking grateful for the opportunity. That gives me a chance to finally hold Beth, who surprisingly comes right to me.

I thought Adam was going to refuse, not wanting to leave his sister alone with me, but I guess I had earned his trust enough to hold her while he washes up. I noticed, though, that he leaves the door cracked to listen to us while he's in the bathroom.

I try to get Beth's face as clean as I can with the wipes, but it makes her skin muddy instead. It takes me about 20 wipes before I get to a clean patch of skin. Beth sat patiently in my lap, letting me wipe her as I tried to be as tender and gentle as possible.

When Adam is done, he comes out in Taegan's clothes looking like a different kid. His skin is porcelain, but his hair is a dark, dark auburn, not brown like I originally thought. He is a very good looking boy, and I know Taegan will have some competition in the future.

I ask the kids if I can help Beth get clean, and after thinking it over for a few seconds, Adam just asks me to keep the bathroom door open so he can hear that his sister is alright. I am more than willing to agree. I understand his concern.

Beth, like her brother, has auburn hair, but hers is lighter. It's almost red, which makes her eyes pop. Her pants, when I get them off of her, are soiled, but only with urine, and her little bottom has a nasty rash. It looks like the pants had been washed of other excrements over and over again, so that answers my question about just not having diapers for her.

Adam may not have let Mindy and Robert change the little girl and they may not have known she needed diapers. I'm trying not to think badly of them for the state of her bottom, making excuses for them in my head, but I can't help but to feel a little upset. She's a baby. I wish they had thought of getting her diapers. I'm glad they decided to give the kids to us instead of letting them stay in this state much longer.

I opt not to wash it with the men's body wash Rick has available, and just use the sprayer to rinse it. The doctors will have to treat it when we go over in a bit.

She is a very easy baby. She just let me clean her up, not making a peep. She smiles when I talk to her, and when I accidentally dropped the sprayer, spraying myself in the face, she laughed like it was the funniest thing ever. Her laugh makes me laugh with her, and I'm tempted to spray myself in the face again and again so I can keep listening to it.

Adam peeked his head in, hearing me sputtering on water and his sister laughing, then started laughing with us before slipping back out, averting his eyes from his naked sister standing in the middle of the open shower.

These kids are the sweetest, making me want to shower them with all my affection and help them heal.

After getting Beth clean, I wrapped a fluffy towel around her and carried her out to the office. "Hey, Adam. Can you get that stack of clothes and the diaper for me and follow me? I think our Luna has some baby powder in her office to help her sister be more comfortable in a new diaper."

Adam is quick to help, and follows me close as we move to the next office over. The omegas working, walking the halls, look at us curiously, but offer the children warm smiles and friendly greetings. Adam tucks himself against my leg, looking shy, and my heart sores seeing him seek me for protection and comfort.

I lay Beth on the changing table and am quick to lay a diaper under her rash-covered bottom to prevent it from being on the cold mat. I find baby powder under the table, and after getting her powered up and diapered, I help her to get the clothes borrowed from Aly on.

She is swimming in them, the clothes being much too big for her, but they are warm and she seems content.

Adam finds Taegan's Nintendo Switch and looks at it curiously from where it sits on the coffee table. I can tell he wants to touch it, but he is holding himself back.

"You can play it, Adam. Taegan won't mind. Bring it with us."

Taegan may actually mind, since he doesn't even let Callum use his stuff without watching his hands twenty times and inspecting his body for food and stains, but after letting Taegan borrow my fun bags all night, I'll knock the little kid upside the head if he complains about me letting Adam borrow his video game. I'll talk to Rick about getting him his own later.

As if on queue, Rick chooses that moment to mind link me. "Hey, baby. Where are you? I'm getting back now. Are you okay?"

"The packhouse. I'm...." I looked at Adam who was tentatively turning on the video game, then lifted Beth in my arms, being careful to stay clear of pressing my arm against her rash while holding her, anchoring my arm around her legs and another on her back. "I'm with two kids I want you to meet."

I know one thing for sure; Adam and Beth are now mine. Ours, no matter what. I just have to get Rick on board, then they are coming home with us.

2.24 Twin Pillows

Chapter 104 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

I was fucking furious the whole way back to the clinic. I can feel Bailey's fear and her heart-wrenching distress. Whatever the fuck Antonio thinks he's doing, he's about to meet his end if I find out he is the cause of her feeling like that.

I shift the second my paws touch the clinic sidewalk, rushing past the double [doors](#) in panic from seeing the mayhem outside the building.

The clinic is a fucking mess, guards and warriors are disoriented outside, and the inside looks like a fucking bomb went off. Papers are thrown all over the ground, the lights are flickering, supply and med carts are upturned, their contents spilled all over the ground.

At the end of the hall leading to Bailey's room, the two warriors who were sent to guard her look like they'd been through hell. Kevin has blood dripping from his forehead, while Matt is lying in a heap on the ground. Thank fuck he is still breathing.

Felix, Antonio's fucking lap dog, is being held back by Addison, and I can see Stephanie with Phoebe and her brothers in a room on the other side of the nurses' station, doctors and nurses in there with them to examine them, despite the chaos. Stephanie is giving them blood bags like juice pouches, and the boys look happy enough to be there. Phoebe, with a hospital blanket around her body, and a blood bag pressed to her lips, looks wary still, and I can't blame her. I would be too if this was my first impression of the pack of wolves she didn't want to be in.

Her eyes flashed to me for a second, and I could see her shoulders relaxing a bit, making me believe she is more wary of the vampires who are the reason for all this shit than the wolves here.

Casey and Nate have Antonio on the ground, a wooden branch protruding through his chest, just missing his heart. Even in the sorry state he's in, he's still hissing and snapping at the men.

"GIVE ME MY RINA!" he yells, "WHERE THE HELL IS MY RINA?!"

"I told you, you sick fuck, she's with her daughter keeping her safe. You better get your shit together before Alpha gets here, or your ass is going to be cream-of-bat," Casey tries to tell him.

"Too late," I growled, prowling over to them.

They all turned to look at me, and the look on my face must be deadly, because even my uncle and Casey shrunk back at my approach.

My breathing is ragged with rage, and fur is sprouting all up and down my arms, legs and naked torso. The urge to shift and tear this fucker apart for disturbing my pack for his selfish reasons once again is so strong, I'm fighting against myself with every breath I take.

On closer inspection, I can see that Antonio has splinters of wood all over his body, as well as Felix, though Felix has way less. Uncle Nate had the brilliant idea once, while visiting the lumberyard, to use the wood chips and sawdust as weapons against vampires, loading them into

potato guns for situations like this. It wasn't long after Quinn joined us when her original pack was destroyed.

Uncle Nate and Casey are the best vampire hunters we have. If they didn't show up when they did, I don't even want to know the damage Antonio would have done. The clinic is torn up enough as it is.

"You two. Back up," I tell them, my eyes staying steady on the fucking leech as they stand and move away from his body.

Antonio starts to move to get up, but before he can, my foot comes down hard on the tree branch sticking out of him, making him scream.

Felix flinches forward, but makes no moves to save his master, probably because Addison has a silver dagger resting against his throat.

"FUCK!!" Antonio screams, trying to push my foot off his chest and the bending tree branch. I can tell he is trying to use his powers, trying to mist, but the living wood lodged in his body is preventing it.

"You should totally tea bag him," Casey whispers loudly.

"Are you kidding? I wouldn't want my junk anywhere near those fangs," Uncle Nate hits Casey's chest.

"There's a roll of duct tape in the car," suggested Casey.

"You go right the fuck ahead and try to duct tape a first generation vampire Lord's mouth and try dangling your balls and tiny dick in his face. I'll watch," Uncle Nate snorts.

"Your daughter loves it when I do it to her," Casey mutters mockingly, making Uncle Nate growl and grab him by the throat.

"Will you both shut the fuck up!" I roared, "Shit." How those two can carry on like that in a situation like this is beyond me. "Casey, go check on my fucking mate and quit talking about your balls."

"Sorry," he shrugged out of his father-in-law's hold. "Seeing yours reminded me of how blessed I am. Hard not to talk about it."

Oh my goddess, I'm about to lose my mind. "You're about to get fixed and have no balls."

"I like that idea," Uncle Nate agrees.

"Yeah, yeah. You're both jealous. I get it," Casey taunts, walking to Bailey's [door](#) while Kevin moves away.

I tell Kevin to get Matt and get medical attention while Casey tries the door handle, then knocks when he sees the door is locked.

“Is it over?” I heard Katherine’s faint voice, “Who is it?”

“It’s everyone’s favorite, well-endowed Gamma. Open up!”

I rolled my eyes then looked down to see Antonio staring at the door longingly. I still can’t believe he did all this just because he couldn’t get to Katherine while the pack was in lock down.

Katherine doesn’t make a peep, probably untrusting of Casey’s crude response.

I sigh deeply, fed up with all this shit for the day. “Katherine, I’m out here. It’s okay. Open the door. Casey’s going to check on Bailey. She doesn’t feel right in the bond.”

The sound of something heavy being lifted away from the door is followed by metal scraping on the ground before the door slowly opens and Katherine peeks out. Seeing me, she breathes a sigh of relief before opening the door all the way.

Casey steps past her, and she looks worriedly at me and Antonio, her eyes trained on my foot that is stepping on his chest.

“Holy shit, Katherine. How did you get the fucking marble counter ripped out of the wall? This shit weighs a ton.”

“Oh,” she sputters, moving into the room and coming back out seconds later with the heavy counter from the medical cabinet in her hands, placing it against the wall and out of the way.

“Shit,” Casey shakes his head, then moves back to where I can’t see him behind the door. I heard a door open, and then the sound of my daughter sobbing quietly. Aly starts wailing after a few seconds, and Casey begins cooing to her and then curses under his breath. “Alpha, you need to get in here,” he says gravely.

Katherine looks back in the room, then gasps, which makes my anxiety sore.

Now that she is here, I doubt Antonio will act up again. “You make one wrong move, I’ll fucking end you. Nothing excuses your disrespect and destruction of my pack. If one of those warriors you assaulted is seriously injured, you’re dead.”

He hisses at me, and I growl back, but still lift my foot from his chest. Uncle Nate moved to stand over him as I stepped away and moved towards the room.

“Let that fucker go, Addison. Your mate needs you,” I nodded across the hall at the kids watching our interaction, Stephanie trying to keep the boys from wiggling too much as a doctor examines their bite marks.

“What about him?” she asks, nodding down at Antonio. Her eyes are filled with so much disgust, like everyone else watching the vampire Lord.

“Katherine can deal with his sorry ass. That’s why he did all this shit. For her.” I look at Katherine, and she’s looking around the clinic, seeing the destruction her boyfriend caused.

“Why?” she asks, looking at him in confusion, “Why would you do all this and hurt those men?”

Antonio grunted, pulling the tree branch from his chest, then panting deeply over and over again as his chest healed, looking at Katherine like the answer was obvious. “They wouldn’t let me get to you.”

“SO?!” Katherine yells, “I was with Bailey, trying to keep her safe and calm! You,” she bites her lip, then looks in the room where I can’t see, “You hurt my daughter for the last time, Tony. I’m not going to let you keep doing this.”

Hearing her say Bailey was hurt, I rushed past her, and saw my mate passed out on the bathroom floor, clutching her stomach in her hands. Casey is holding a wailing Aly, trying to calm her down.

I fell to the ground, checking Bailey’s pulse after pulling her head into my lap.

“She’s okay, Alpha,” Casey tells me, none of the laughter or joking left in his tone. He’s my serious, dependable Gamma, worried about his Luna right now. “Pulse is steady.”

“Daddy,” Aly whimpers, wanting me. I can’t take her and pick Bailey up at the same time, but Casey follows me as I lift Bailey in my arms and carry her out into the hall.

Bailey’s beautiful face is contorted in pain, and her little broken whimper makes my chest tighten. She had dried tear lines all over her face and her eyes were all puffy and red. My poor, beautiful mate. I don’t know what happened, but if she isn’t okay, Antonio will die. I will tear him apart with my bare fucking hands and feed him to the bears.

Casey must have mind linked for a doctor or nurse, because one waves us to a new room across the hall. Her room is not usable right now with the bed flipped and all the fixtures pulled out of place. Katherine went to the extreme of keeping her safe, even though her vampire lover was the issue. The way she is glaring at Antonio now, I know she is almost as pissed as me.

“Get him off my pack before I really kill him,” I told Katherine as I walked by.

She nods, her eyes softening as she runs her knuckles down Bailey’s cheek, then turns fierce when she looks at Antonio. “Follow me,” she snaps at the guy as he tries to get steady on his feet. She is showing him no sympathy. “You too,” she looks briefly at Felix before walking past both of them, down the hall towards the exit.

"I'll go get you some clothes," Uncle Nate tells me, "Aly, baby. Want to come with Uncle Nate?"

Aly shakes her head, "Want daddy."

"I got her, Nate. I'm staying here with the Alpha and Luna for now. After you get Axel's clothes, can you check the patrols? Quinn is busy," Casey tells his father-in-law, "And DO NOT tell Courtney anything yet. Fiona is keeping her oblivious so she stays put."

"Yeah, she told me too," Uncle Rick rolled his eyes, "I'll be right back."

Courtney, that intrusive and bossy brat, would be here as fast as she could waddle if she knew all this shit was happening.

Once in the new room, right before I'm about to lay Bailey on her new bed, her eyes flutter open, and she groans, her hands going back to her stomach.

"Axel," she whimpers in a broken sob.

"I'm right here, baby. I got you."

Her eyes open fully, and she stares at me in confusion, then tears start to stream from the corner of her eyes. "Axel?" she touches my face, then a choked gasp leaves her, "You're alive. Oh my gawd, you're alive," she cries, pulling my face to hers.

Alive? Why wouldn't I be? Did she think Antonio killed me?

"Bailey," I tried to break from her hold, but after a few seconds, I gave in to the feeling of her desperate kisses, letting her vanilla scent and the sparks from our bond chase away my anxiety.

"Alpha," Casey coughs, "I don't want to interrupt, but I think I should remind you that you are very much naked right now. There are kids present, and, well, me."

"Shut up, Casey," Bailey growls, not letting up her hold on me. I almost laughed, but he's right.

"Baby," I gently pushed her away so I could look down at her, "I need to get you looked at, or I'm not going to be able to relax. I'll kiss you all you want after the doctor is done."

She bites that tempting bottom lip of hers, staring up into my eyes. "I thought you were dying," she whispers.

I furrowed my brows. "Why?"

She rubs her stomach. "I felt it, right here."

I look at the spot she is rubbing, then piece what must have happened together. “No,” I chuckle, “I got hurt in an accident, but nothing to kill me. Nothing serious.” I brushed the hair from her tear-soaked face after laying her on the bed. “I’m sorry I worried you. I didn’t think about you feeling it too.”

“What?” she asks, looking at my stomach. I don’t even have a scar now. I’m completely healed.

“He got hurt saving me from the river,” Phoebe says from the open doorway. I didn’t even hear the girl approaching the room. I grabbed a pillow and held it in front of my junk, not wanting her to see my excitement from kissing my wife. “I’m sorry. I wasn’t trying to eavesdrop, alpha dude. Addison told me I can come apologize for calling you stupid, even though I still think it wasn’t my fault you walked into a tree branch, and it was a pretty stupid thing to do.”

I groan, “Half-assed apology accepted,” I tell her, “You can go.”

She snorts, “Thanks. By the way, that pillow seems a little excessive. Reach for a twin next time.”

Casey choked on a laugh, then gaped as the girl walked out of the [door](#) and back over to the room with her brothers. “Well, damn. I think a 12-year-old just called your dick small, Alpha.”

“I”M 15!” She yells from the other room.

Bailey looks up at me in confusion. “You saved a girl from a river? I thought there were rogues? She was a vampire like my mother, wasn’t she?”

“It’s a long story,” I groan.

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Katherine POV

I’m mortified walking out of the clinic, passing the warriors and staff who are working to clean up the mess Tony made in his anger. I can’t believe he did something so stupid just because the pack was locked down for a bit and they wouldn’t let him in.

“Rina,” he tries to take my hand as he comes up beside me, but I quickly pull it out of his reach.

“Don’t,” I snapped, “Don’t you dare try touching me.”

“Rina,” he pouts, trying to give me the same crestfallen face he always does when I’m upset with him.

It’s not going to work this time. Not after seeing my daughter in a crumpled heap on the bathroom floor because of him. I know she was trying to get out of the room because of something going on with her mate, but if I wasn’t trying to protect her from my own damn mate,



I could have helped her through her panic. I could have called for help from a doctor. His selfishness has hurt my daughter for the last time.

Once we are outside, I see his expensive car parked in the lot, and head in that direction.

“Rina, talk to me,” Tony begged, trying again to reach for me. I pulled my hand back so he couldn't.

“Okay, I turned my glare on him, “Let’s talk. Let’s talk about how you, once again, for your selfish reasons, caused problems not just for this entire pack, but for my family. You hurt my daughter.”

He scoffs, “I fail to see how fighting with a few guard dogs would hurt the Luna.”

“Of course you don’t,” I shook my head. “I can’t keep doing this, Tony. I won’t. I don’t know how to face her now. I..,” I bite my lip as emotion gets caught in my throat. I try to swallow it back down so I can continue to talk. “I got to hold my granddaughter for the first time. I was being trusted to keep Bailey safe, for the first time. We were talking; being friendly, then you had to come and ruin that all.”

“Rina, they wouldn’t let me get you. I thought there was a threat and I couldn’t protect you.” He tries to step towards me, but I take a step back.

“I don’t need your protection. I’ve never felt safer than I do here in this pack, and I’m more than capable of taking care of myself. It’s your blood and your venom in my body. I’m probably the strongest changed vampire in North America. You know that. No, you weren’t trying to protect me, you were trying to control a situation you think involved me and threw a fit and hurt others when they wouldn’t let you. I’m....I’m done, Tony.”

His eyes go large in anxious surprise. “What do you mean you’re done?”

“I’m done,” I whispered, looking at the ground while I swallowed through the lump in my throat, then meet his eyes again, “I’m not going to keep allowing you to hurt my family. You don’t even see that you did anything wrong.”

“I DO!” he says, taking a step towards me. “I do see it! I’m sorry, Rina. I was just anxious. I needed to get to you.”

I shook my head. “No. You didn’t. Anxiety isn’t a reason to hurt others, and I’m done being your reason for being a bad person. I’m not going to be the reason you keep causing my family pain.”

I back up a few steps so I could get the words out, feeling suffocated this close to him. I love him, and I'll always love him, but a toxic relationship like ours will never get better, not while the toxic one is unwilling to see his own faults. I've been trying to be a better person for my family for the last few years. Tony hasn't changed at all.

“I don’t want to see you anymore. I don’t want you to come here again. I’m going to apologize to Alpha Axel and hope he allows me to keep staying here to be with my mom and my daughter, and then I’m going to tell him I don’t want to see you anymore.”

“Rina, please,” Tony looked frantic, circling in place, looking frightened for the first time since I met him. “Please, just don’t. I can...I can hold myself back, but don’t tell me not to see you anymore.”

I shook my head, “I’m sorry. I’m done. We’re done. This isn’t healthy for anybody, and I’m not doing it anymore.”

2.25 Addison's

## Chapter 105 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Addison POV

“Just leave it alone, babe,” Stephanie whispers to me, wiping one of the little boys, Preston, down with a soapy and wet wash rag.

“I can’t believe he did all this,” I hissed back at her. “I can’t just let it go. You know that she doesn’t have enough of a spine to tell the bastard off like she should.”

Stephanie pursed her lips. “I don’t know about that. She seemed pretty upset after seeing Bailey.”

“Who’s Bailey?” Preston asked Steph.

“Our Luna,” she smiled down at him. “She’s the Alpha’s mate and wife.”

“Is the Alpha that scary dude that was bleeding everywhere that likes to be naked?” Peter, the other little boy asked.

Stephanie laughs and I crack a smile, despite my sour mood towards my father. “Yes, that’s him.”

“Oh. His wife lady must be scary too.”

Stephanie and I both snort. “Yeah, right. She could scare the fluff right off a dandelion,” I mutter, and the doctor examining Phoebe along with a nurse looking at Peter laughs too.

Phoebe wrinkled her nose. “So, she’s not like him?”

The doctor is the one that answers. “Our Luna is probably the sweetest person in this pack. She can be stubborn as they get, but scary would never be an adjective used to describe her. Just the men in her life.”

“Yeah, if you think our Alpha is scary, wait until you meet his dad,” the nurse says.

Peter smiled broadly, “I can’t wait.”

Phoebe rolls her eyes, “Of course you can’t.” She seems to be thinking about something, then asks if she can go next door to apologize to the Alpha.

I can tell by the look on her face that she just wanted to get a closer look at Bailey, and I almost told her no, but then decided against it. The fact that this girl is asking instead of just doing it is demonstrating her trust in me. I should try trusting her enough to let her go. Maybe seeing the Alpha being the way he is with Bailey will help her to trust him.

“Sure, but come back please when you are done. After the doctors are done giving you three the all clear, we can head over to our house and get you guys set up.”

Phoebe nods, then slips out of the room.

Stephanie quickly turned her head to look at me, a slow smile spreading on her face. “Are we keeping them for now?”

I grinned, reaching up to cup her face, “I think that is up to them, but I wouldn’t mind it at all, if you don’t.”

She places her hand over mine, her eyes glowing with love and admiration. She presses her lips to mine, then nods. “Okay. Yes. Let’s do it.”

“I wanna do it too,” Preston pulls on Stephanie’s sleeve, then closes his eyes and puckers his lips.

Cute little booger.

“No, sir,” I laughed, pushing his head back playfully, “Those lips are mine.”

“Huh?” Peter tilts his head, quirking his lips to the side, looking confused, “But you’re not a daddy.”

“Nope, I’m sure not,” I snorted, “That doesn’t make her any less mine.”

“But you’re both girls,” Preston says.

“Oh, it’s like the shows dad used to watch on the TV in the basement when mom was at work. The naked, sweaty girls kissed each other in those too,” Peter says.

It most certainly is not. Well, not unless we are alone in the privacy of our home. Sometimes in the forest.... Or in the bathroom of the bar. There were a few times in the backseat of the patrol car, having a little bit of fun with the handcuffs too....

We’re going to have to watch ourselves if the kids are staying with us. We have the same right as any other couple to show we love each other in public, but raising kids will be different. No more couch sex or fun in the backseats.

“Oh yeah! We aren’t supposed to talk about that, though. Dad said it was a secret from mom,” Preston says, breaking me from my thoughts.

Peter glared at his brother, “But mom and dad are dead now, so we can talk about it. Dad can’t do anything to us anymore if we don’t listen.”

Stephanie and I exchanged a look. “Boys, I know it’s a sensitive subject, but since you brought it up, do you mind telling us what happened to your parents?” Stephanie asked.

They both grimaced. “The old man killed them,” Peter said.

“Old man?” I asked.

“Robert. The old wolf guy. He came into the cave and snuck up behind mom and dad when they were biting sissy and put a stake in their hearts,” Preston told us.

“Yeah, I wasn’t sad, though. They were mean to sissy and Adam the most. Adam and Phoebe tried to get us to run away with Beth, but dad caught us again and Phoebe got really hurt. Dad almost broke her neck, but then she started bleeding and dad got distracted. I was happy that the old man came,” Peter confessed.

“Yeah, I didn’t want them to kill sissy.”

I had a bad father, but nothing like them. These poor kids. Phoebe especially. No wonder she is so untrusting.

Stephanie pulls Preston to her in a big hug, and the nurse who was examining Peter, stops to ruffle his hair and stroke his cheek.

“Do you think we should tell Quinn about this?” Stephanie asked, “She has the other two kids.”

Oh, shit. I forgot about the other two. Are we keeping them too? I don’t know if we can handle 4 little kids and a teenager. The boys and Phoebe will keep us busy as it is.

“I’ll go tell her,” I told Steph, kissing her again before leaving the room.

“No fair. I want one too,” I heard one of the boys complain as I started walking down the hall.

Stephanie chuckles, then I hear two quick smooches from her, most likely on the cheek. They’re cute. Taegan and them can form some little flirty boys’ gang when Taegan gets back. Taegan always asks us to give him kisses on the cheek too. When I kiss Taegan, though, I feel him siphoning some of my power from me. I don’t think he is doing those things just to be a flirt. I think the witch in him needs it.

Preston and Peter are just cute little flirts, about to start living with a lesbian couple. This should be fun.

On my way out, I passed Katherine coming back in. By the look on her face, I can tell whatever conversation she had with my dad was a bad one. She looks heartbroken.

She keeps her eyes downcast, lost in her own thoughts. I wanted to stop her and ask what happened, but I stopped myself. She doesn’t look ready to talk about anything, and it’s not really my business.

When I step outside, it suddenly becomes my business when I see my father in a crumpled heap on the ground beside his car, wailing. No tears are coming from his eyes, but his grief is rolling off him in every other way. I ran over to him without even thinking, needing to know what happened.

Felix was standing to the side, looking lost at what to do.

“What happened?” I asked my father’s sidekick. “Is it the splinters in him?” I know it’s not, but I just can’t imagine my father losing his mind like this for a woman. He didn’t even bat an eye when my mom told him she was leaving him, not wanting to be one of his many mistresses, or when she died.

“She’s done,” father chokes. “She....she told me she was done. She....no, this can’t....she can’t,” he mutters, raking his claws down his face.

“What?” I looked at Felix for clarification.

Felix shook his head gravely. “I believe Lady Rina just ended things with your father. For good.”

“Oh, shit,” I muttered. I never thought I would see the day when Katherine would do such a thing. I knew she was trying to do better for her mom and even for Bailey, but I thought my father would always have a hold on her. It must be the goddess genes in her that make her resistant to the sire and imprint bond from my father, because normally a changed vampire didn’t have free will from the one that changed them.

“She can’t,” Father hisses. “I....I can’t let her. I....I have to stop her. She can’t do this to me. I can make her come back....I can-”

“Holy shit, do you hear yourself right now?” I rolled my eyes. “That is why she finally got fed up with you. You’re such a selfish bastard, you aren’t even blaming yourself right now, are you? You are going to play victim, even after all the shit you just pulled.”

His red-rimmed eyes make his red irises look more menacing than ever as he glares up at me, probably blaming me now for the shame and grief he feels, all because I spoke the truth.

“Don’t look at me like that. If you thought of anyone else but yourself, she might still be with you. You did this to yourself. If you learn from this for once, instead of going mental and upturning the world because you didn’t get your way, maybe she will take you back one day. Right now,” I shake my head, “I don’t see it. She won’t choose you over her daughter, especially when you never choose anyone over yourself.”

“I’ve been trying!” he hisses, “I’ve been tirelessly looking for Thyra to help the young alpha’s mate.”

“Yeah, all to get Katherine back. You were doing that for yourself. Katherine saw through that, and that’s why she would never go back with you. I overheard your shit yesterday. I was at the warrior center and could hear you trying to talk her into coming back to the mansion with you now that the fairy woman was found. This shit is why she said no. She cares for her family, unlike you,” I shake my head, “I know you won’t get this, though. You never will. You will always only care about yourself.”

“I care about her,” he whispers, looking broken as he stares past me to the clinic that he destroyed to get to Katherine. “She’s.....she’s my everything.”

“Then be better. The way you are now, she’s going to stay lost to you forever.”

With that, I turned to leave, not wanting to waste anymore time talking to a man who would never listen. I’ve got more to worry about right now than that poor bastard.

Walking to the packhouse, Beta Rick was just parking his car near the offices. “Hey, Rick!” I yelled at him, “Quinn in there?”

“Yeah, she said she has someone she wants me to meet.”

“Two someones, actually,” I smirked at him.

“Two?” he quirks his brow as we walk inside.

“Yeah, a rogue couple saved 5 vampire kids from a rogue vampire couple. I have three of them at the clinic, all siblings, and Quinn took the other two.”

“Oh,” he thinks for several seconds, then his face softens, “Oh,” he repeats in a much deeper tone, “She wants to keep them. I see what she meant now,” he chuckles.

I almost breathed a sigh of relief. I didn't think Stephanie and I could handle 5, so I'm glad to hear this.

"I was coming to tell her about the rogue vampires that they were saved from. It turns out they were family." I told Rick all of what the boys told me, and caught him up on what happened at the river and in the clinic.

He groans, "It just never ends, does it?"

I chuckle. "My mom used to say that bad things come in threes, and I think we have met that threshold. Hopefully there is no more."

He narrows his eyes at me, "Go knock on wood, now, before the walls of the packhouse come falling down on top of us."

I laughed, then reached out and knocked on one of the wooden beams right before we reached his office.

We can hear giggles and Quinn talking softly on the other side of Rick's office door. Sounds like they are getting along fine. "Tell Quinn that the blood supply is at the clinic, but Alpha keeps some in the kitchen in the mini fridge in the back for Katherine and me too, if those kids need it."

"I'll tell her. Thanks, Addison."

"See you later, Beta."

When I walked back outside, and started heading back towards the clinic, I noticed my father and Felix were gone. Good. Alpha would have really killed him if he had stayed.

Staff members are working on getting the clinic put back together when I walk in, the halls already smelling like disinfectant and bleach from cleaning up the blood. Gamma Nate is coming out of Bailey's new room, waving to me as he leaves, so I don't notice the solemn vibe in the room Stephanie and the three kids are in right away.

Looking around, it becomes apparent that something is seriously wrong.

"What? What's going on?" I asked, looking at the doctor who was staring at a clipboard, looking upset while standing next to Phoebe, who was on the exam table.

The nurse claps her hands, forcing a smile and reaching her hands out to the little boys. "Do you two want to go see the vending machine in the break room? I think there are cookies and donuts there."

"COOKIES!" They cheer together, taking her hand as she leads them out.

She's clearly trying to protect them from whatever conversation is about to happen. I look at Stephanie for clarification, and she smiles sadly, then goes to stand next to Phoebe, resting her hand on her shoulder.

"It's going to be okay, Phoebe. You're safe now, and we can take care of you."

Phoebe snorts, looking lost and broken under all that anger she keeps at the surface as a mask.

"What?" I asked again, about going crazy from the anxiety.

"She ingested some vampire blood," the doctor tells me. "Not much, but it only takes a little for a vampire to turn rogue."

My heart drops. Fuck, I should have knocked on wood sooner.

"You guys should have let me drown," Phoebe muttered.

"No," Alpha startles us all from the doorway. I turned to see him finally dressed, looking fierce, even with a toddler sleeping on his chest. "You kept those kids safe, and you deserve no less, no matter how big of a pain in the ass you are. You're not dying. We have witches, fairies and other resources at our hands. We will find a way to help you, kid. You don't give up yet."

Phoebe glares untrusting at him, "I could kill you. I could kill my brothers or my cousins."

Axel scoffs, "Please. You couldn't kill me."

"A tree branch almost killed you," she huffs, making Axel chuckle.

"I think that says more for the tree branch than you." He shakes his head, then looks at the doctor. "Make her comfortable, and call Vincent in Miami to see what we can do to slow her progress. Lady Delilah may have a way to reverse the effects."

There is no reversing the effects. Once damned by our own blood, we stay damned. That was one thing my father was always super careful about.

Axel placed one of his hands down on my shoulder. "You and Steph keeping the boys?"

I nod.

"Good. Go bathe them and get them fed, then bring them back here for a bit to play with Aly so I can take a nap. It's been one hell of a day," he then looked at Phoebe, "And you stay put. You protected your brothers, we will protect you."

"And if the worst happens?" Phoebe challenged.



“Then I’ll take care of you myself,” he says, not sugar coating a thing. He’s the alpha. He takes the heaviest burdens of this pack, and this will be one of them. “Then I will protect your family in your place. You’re my responsibility now, and I’m not giving up on you, so don’t give up on yourself.”

“We’re not either,” Stephanie rubs her shoulder.

I came forward and took her hand. I don’t know how, but we have to find a way to save her. This family has lost too much already. “No we won’t, Phoebe. You are ours now, and we won’t give up on you. Ever.”

## 2.26 Broken to Heal

# Chapter 106 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

Fuck.

That poor fucking pain in the ass girl. I wanted to dislike her for her smart mouth, but I couldn’t. Not after hearing the shit she had been through.

When the doctor came to give me the grave news that she was in the process of turning rogue, after overhearing her brothers say that it was their own parents who hurt them, I knew I couldn’t give up on her. It may seem grave, but for some reason, I still have hope.

“She okay?” Bailey asks me, as I walked back in her room, the doctor just finishing up examining her for injury or bruising from fainting.

“She will be fine, baby,” I told her, coming to her side and kissing her head. “How are you doing?” I asked her, but looked to the doctor for the truthful answer, because the goddess knows Bailey would never give it to me if it was bad news.

“She’s fine for now, Alpha,” the doctor sighs, as exasperated with Bailey’s continual self-destructive behavior as me. “Babies are both fine and her vitals look good. No major bruising.”

He gives her a stern warning to stay in [bed](#), which she rolls her eyes at, then leaves to go back to check on the other injured during Antonio's visit.

I sent a quick prayer of thanks to the heavens, then went to sit by Bailey on the chair next to her bed. She whimpers, shaking her head and pulling me back up.

“What?” I ask.

“I need you,” she pouts, her eyes glistening with more tears. She moves over on the bed, giving me room to lay down with her.

My heart swells hearing her say she needs me, and despite my exhaustion and my sleeping toddler on my chest, I manage to get under the covers next to her and pull her to my side. Aly doesn’t even stir from all the jousting around. She wore herself out crying, and the second Casey was able to pass her over to me, she buried her nose against my chest and fell asleep.

I’ve got both my girls in my arms, and exhaustion is weighing heavy on me. What a long fucking 24 hours it has been.

“You’re really okay?” Bailey whispers, pulling my shirt up to look at my stomach, her fingers tracing the exact spot where I was stabbed with the branch, even though there isn’t any sign on my skin that the injury ever happened.

“I’m fine,” I told her for the hundredth time, taking her hand and bringing it to my lips. “It was just a scratch.”

Casey snorts from across the room. “Fucking scratch my ass. The word on the grapevine is you had an entire tree branch stuck right through you like you were a fucking werewolf kabob. Just needed some tzatziki sauce and you could have been served right up with a side of rice.”

Bailey jerks her head up, looking at me with more worry than before, and I’m tempted to wake my daughter just so I can turn Casey’s ass into a wolf kabob.

“That’s exaggerated,” I tell her, kissing her nose and pulling her back to lay her head on my chest. “You freak my wife out, I’ll tell your wife you ate her twinkies while on patrol last night.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Casey growled in the mind link.

“Try me.”

He glares at me for a few seconds, then sighs, pushing himself off from the chair. “Bailey, I was exaggerating. It would be pretty fucking pathetic of an alpha to get dominated by a tree branch, especially an alpha that owns a lumber business,” he smirks, and I growl at him in the mind link. Oh, he is going to pay for that later. “I’ll let you both rest. I’ll be out in the hall if you need something pretty to look at later.”

It’s finally quiet for a few minutes after he leaves, but then Bailey pulls my shirt back up and starts rubbing the spot again. If I didn’t feel her worry through the bond, and didn’t have our daughter sleeping on my chest, I would think she was trying to start something by feeling me up.

She is all worry and anxiety through the mate bond, though, and I want to kick Casey's ass all the more.

"I thought you died, Axel," she says after a few minutes. "I thought I was losing you."

I want to huff at her, and ask her how she thinks I feel about her and this fucking curse. I wouldn't do that to her, though. I know she already feels bad enough about keeping the secret from me, and about having our son keep that secret too.

"I would never leave you, baby," I reassured her, resting my head on top of her. "You never have to worry about that. I would claw my way out of hell if I had to, to get back to you, so quit worrying and go to sleep."

She moans softly, nuzzling into my chest, but I can tell she is still too wound up for sleep right now. Too much shit has happened in one morning for both of us.

"Where do you think Katherine went?" Bailey asks me after several quiet minutes.

I shrugged, "She went to go get that vampire bastard off my lands. I don't know where she went after that."

Bailey remains pensive for a few minutes, then says, "She protected me."

I nodded, pulling her closer. "I know. I heard. She ripped the damn marble slab right out of the wall to block the door to protect you."

Bailey nods. "I never thought she would do that. Especially against her own mate."

Yeah. Me neither, but she really surprised me today. Her concern for Bailey outweighed everything else going on. She didn't try to stop me from hurting Antonio, though I could tell she felt pain herself watching him. She had to have known that he was the one that was wrecking the clinic, but she still chose to protect my mate, her daughter, over the vampire lord we all thought came first to her.

"She's trying for you, Bailey," I whispered to her. "Maybe it's time you gave her a chance."

She snuggles impossibly closer to me. "Yeah. Maybe you're right."

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Katherine POV

My unbeating heart feels like it's breaking in my chest. I never thought I would have the courage to do that. Not ever.

When I saw Bailey on the floor in that bathroom, though, I knew Tony and I had reached the end of our time together. I knew it would never work. Not with the way he was. I thought for so long that I was his first priority, but it took today's destruction for me to realize that he puts himself and his wants above all else.

He knew the pack would never let me come to harm. He knew Alpha Axel would prioritize my safety for the sake of my mother and Bailey. He knew that, but destroyed this whole building all because he was told we were on lockdown and he had to wait to get to me.

That's toxic, through and through, and I won't let that kind of toxic behavior hurt my daughter or her family.

I came back to the clinic, mostly because I wanted a quick escape from Tony, but now I don't know where to go or what to do.

Do I apologize to Bailey? To Axel? Do I have that right?

I end up coming back to Bailey's old room, standing in the mess from my own destructive behavior in trying to keep Bailey safe. The room looks just as bad as the rest of the clinic, only I did this, not Tony.

I stared around the room at the mess I made. The [bed](#) is upside down, the mattress lopsided underneath and the sheets and pillows lying around it. The recliner is broken, the cushions torn from where I grabbed it. The counter top is still outside the room, and the cabinets are cracked and broken.

My eyes continue to scan the mess until they land on the thermos of the medicine for Bailey.

Luckily, it seems fine. It's in one piece just lying on the ground.

It takes me several minutes of staring before I decide to pick it up. I need to get it to Bailey, or at least to Axel or a nurse. Bailey might not want to be around me after today, but I still want to make sure she has this, and she is still taken care of. Axel has so much on his plate. I can make sure she at least has her medicine.

I pick it up, checking it thoroughly for damage. Opening the lid, it looks and smells the same as before. Good.

I set the medicine on the bathroom counter, then spent some time trying to tidy up the rest of the room to the best of my ability. I made this mess. I should be the one to clean it.

I get the bed the right way up, put the mattress back on top of it, then gather all the pillows and bedding on top when a couple of warriors come in.

"Oh. Miss Katherine, we can take care of this," one of them said.

“No, no. I did this. I can clean it up,” I tried to tell them.

“Don’t worry about it,” the other warrior said. “Beta said to just get the trash out and he’s bringing a team in tomorrow to replace and repair everything. We’re just going to haul all this to the dump for now.”

I smile nervously, feeling unsure, but nod to them in agreement before going to grab the thermos for Bailey and leaving the room so they can work.

I just stood out in the hall for a minute, unsure of what to do now.

“Katherine!” Casey, the Gamma, waves at me from where he’s sitting in a chair outside of Bailey’s new room. “She’s in here if you’re looking for Bailey.”

“Um,” I fiddled with the thermos, “I don’t think I should....”

“Should what? Go in there? I just heard Bailey asking about you. Go on in. She’s worried about you after what happened.”

Worried about me? Worried I’m still here and Tony might come back to mess up more of the pack?

“Maybe you can just give this to her?” I asked, reaching out to him with the thermos.

He shakes his head. “No can do. I was grounded for telling the truth, so you will have to take that in there yourself.”

I shifted uncomfortably on my feet, looking into the room nervously. Bailey looks close to sleep while lying on Axel’s chest, and Aly is passed out on his other side. Axel is very much awake, though, and waves me over with a big smile.

“Come in, Katherine. Grab a seat. I could use some help with Aly when she wakes up.”

2.27 Rieka

Chapter 107 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Thyra POV

The moon goddess realm is much what I imagined it would be. Everything is ethereal and vibrant, including Rieka herself.

She is in a long, white, robe-like dress, a bit like a yukata, only the sleeves split and reveal her arms. Her face is glowing and lovely, looking much like Bailey's. She actually could pass as Bailey's twin. The resemblance is uncanny. Even down to the dimples. Her hair is much longer and a few shades lighter, but I think the lighter coloring is from the ethereal glow that radiates off of her. Her eyes are a hazel color, not the dark brown like Bailey's, but her facial features are much the same.

She took us to an open veranda in a lush garden filled with vividly colorful flowers and lots of hanging vines. The table we are sitting at is a large cut tree that has been shaved underneath to allow room for legs and feet. The rings of the tree are showing on top of it, and the bark is peeled away intricately to form natural chairs to sit on.

We were the only ones here, but Rieka assured us that there were others. Our purpose here did not involve meeting them, and she said nothing good comes from mingling with celestials, so they are staying away for our benefit. She warned us we may encounter her servants and those assigned to help her, but we would not see the other deities while we were here.

I have so many questions, but all of Rieka's time is being occupied by my mate's grandson.

"You are such a smart little boy," Rieka tells Taegan.

Taegan has been explaining to the moon goddess for the last half an hour how his grandpa taught him to get gold from the ground, telling her everything from the way to pump water into a holding pond, to how to pan the dirt to find a good spot. I was even impressed with his vast knowledge.

Max had to throw him a few words when Taegan was struggling with the correct terminology, but Taegan really is a smart boy, and was able to explain everything really well.

"You are going to do so well running your pack one day," Rieka tells him, running her finger through his hair as he grins up at her proudly. She keeps touching him in little ways like this, and I can see by their auras that with each touch, she is transferring to him a bit of her magical power, helping him to stay stable. I'm grateful, because I feel slightly cut off from my realm while in this one.

It's like being in a room inside another room. Like being in a master suite's bathroom. In the bedroom, you can still hear things happening outside of the bedroom, but it becomes harder when in the bathroom. Being here is like having another divider between my realm and me. I was nervous for a moment how I would help Taegan with his magic, but it seems Rieka has seen that problem and is solving it herself.

"I know. Mommy tells me that all the time," he beams, referring to her comment on him being a good alpha one day.

Max huffs, smiling and shaking his head at Taegan's cheekiness, but Rieka doesn't seem to mind Taegan's less than humble declaration. She just chuckles, passing him another cookie.

We have been here for several hours now, and all Rieka has done is talk to Taegan. It's sweet watching them, because it reminds me of the way Bailey is with Taegan, but I can feel Max's anxiety reaching new heights periodically. He's scared to say anything, since almost every time he opens his mouth, he can't seem to stop curse words from flying out, but I know he is just itching to ask the moon goddess how to save Bailey.

She has to know why we are here. She was expecting us. She waved Taegan over somehow, spoke to him even though we couldn't hear her, and knew we would follow him when he charged forward. There is just no way she is unaware of what is happening to her furthest descendents.

"Goddess," I said, drawing her attention to me.

She looks up at me, smiling tenderly. "Call me Rieka, Princess Thyra. Goddess has always been a title I felt less than comfortable with. Mother of wolves may be more appropriate, since watching over my creation is the extent of my goddess' powers.

"So you can't just do whatever you want? That's what I thought a goddess could do," Taegan asks, pulling on her sleeve to get her attention again.

She shakes her head. "No. I wasn't given this role as a reward. It was a curse, but one I gladly took to protect those I love."

Even that about her is so much like Bailey. Max must be thinking the same, because he is staring at her with the same look he got this morning when Bailey was trying to hide being in pain again. Bailey loves her family too much to let them worry about her when there is nothing they can do. That must be an inherited trait.

"But you have power over all the werewolves, don't you?" Taegan continued to ask questions.

"I have enough. I can make matches with werewolves and the mate bonds, and I can influence the strength of their abilities as wolves. I can only manage the wolf aspects of a werewolf. The human side of the werewolf is still a victim to the individual's free-will if that makes any sense to you."

Taegan tilts his face to the side while he thinks. "Like, you can't make them a good person or a bad person?"

Rieka shook her head. "No. That is all up to the werewolf's character. I can only influence their wolf side to do certain things," she then looks up and smiles at Max, "I can push a person's werewolf side to hurry and mark their mate when they are trying to be selfless and fight the urge."

Max's face goes bright red, and I can't help but to chuckle. "I was, uh, trying to wait until Bailey's ass was saved before I thought about myself," he mutters, "Ma'am."

"Oh, I know, Max. Your motives always revolve around your loved ones. That's why I needed to give you a little push. Your wolf side couldn't resist your mate's teasing."

Max reaches for my hand, lacing his fingers with mine. "You're strip tease sure as fuck didn't help my restraint, honey," he mutters in the mind link.

"You started it," I snorted back.

Rieka is smirking, looking between us, and I almost wonder if she could hear our mind linking. It is a wolf's ability, after all.

"Miss Rieka, goddess ma'am. If you only have power over werewolves, how are you going to save mommy?" Taegan asks, his eyebrows drawn down in deep concern.

I can hear Max breathing a sigh of relief, and feel his absolve now that his grandson took the burden of asking the moon goddess about Bailey.

"Well," she smiles, brushing her hands through Taegan's hair and down his face, "It isn't me who is going to save her."

"It's not?" Taegan tilts his head, looking upset, "But that's why we came here! You have to save mommy! Mommy can't die! Mommy can't-"

"Hush, young Alpha. Your mother will not be dying. I just won't be the one to save her. I won't be the one to break the curse."

"You won't?" Taegan looked at her, more confused than before.

Max is the one to ask the next important question, though. "If you can't save her, who can?"

Rieka's knowing smile was magnificent. She places her hand on top of Taegan's head. "He can," she stares proudly down at the little boy. "You, Taegan, will have the power to save your mother. I'll just be giving you the tools to do it."

Oh, thank heavens that we brought him along. Though now, I can see by the twinkle in Rieka's eye that that was the plan all along. It must be so hard to be a goddess like her, looking at the world and her creation and deciding how to influence it to have things work out for the best while still allowing people to have free will. She has to be an exceptional goddess, because we played right into what she wanted us to do, down to mating and marking each other and bringing Taegan with us.

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## Max POV

The moon goddess, Rieka, may have told us to call us by her name, but it just doesn't sit right with me. I've been praying to the woman since I could speak. Being informal with her just doesn't fucking feel right to me.

She's the mother of our kind. She deserves that respect. After hearing from my new mate and that shitty vampire how the curse came to be, I don't think I will ever be able to be informal with her. Her presence demands respect, and fuck me, I'm going to give it to her.

The moon goddess doesn't offer much more information about how Taegan is going to save his mom. As much as I want to demand fucking answers, I'm trying hard to keep my shit in line in front of her. She gave me Thyra. She may claim to not be all-powerful, but I'm sure she could fuck shit up if she wanted to for me.

I have so many fucking questions; about saving Bailey, about Alyssa and her death, about Harriet and the shitty hand we were dealt, her being mated to a maintenance man in my pack with a few fucking screws loose when I had already taken her as my chosen mate. Most of all, I want to ask about Thyra, and how I could have been lucky enough to have been blessed with her, even though she is not a werewolf and I don't feel worthy of a fucking fairy princess. Especially one as perfect as her.

Shit. Now that we are mated, what happens if she wants to go back to her realm after all this is over? Can I go with her? Fuck. Could I even stomach leaving my grandkids? Leaving my pack and my family?

I don't want to ruin shit with her. She is my second chance. My last chance for happiness. I don't want her to abandon anything to be with me, just like I would have a hard time abandoning my family to go to her realm.

I saw the stretch marks. I saw the evidence of her once having a child, a child she has yet to mention.

Did something happen to the child? Surely, if she had a kid waiting for her back at home she would have told me. If she lost a baby, that's something I could never bring up or ask her about. She would have to tell me when she was ready.

I have all these doubts and insecurities, and I just want the moon goddess to tell me that it will work out. It has to. I couldn't live without her now that I have her, and I would have a hell of a time trying to abandon my family.

I don't think she would ask that of me. No, I know she wouldn't, but I still have so many questions. I just want reassurance from the deity I have always prayed to and relied on that this mate will last for the long haul. I can't survive losing another.

I'm walking alongside Thyra as we walk behind the moon goddess and Taegan to a mansion resting on a hill surrounded by a meadow that looks straight out of a fucking postcard. This entire place looks like something straight out of a fucking fairytale I'd read to Aly at night. The damn mansion has ivy and moss traveling up its sides, flowers blooming in bunches at random points. Aly would go crazy over all this shit if she were here.

Damn it. I miss her.

"You okay, Max?" Thyra asked me, reaching out to take my hand.

I thread my fingers through hers, then bring them up to my lips, the touch of her doing miracles on my sour thoughts. Goddess, I love her. I hope everything works out. It has to.

"I've been better," I told her, not wanting to lie. Shit, Nate would tell me I was PMSing or some shit like that if he was here. Thank fuck he's not.

Thyra looks up at me with so much sympathy and understanding. She knows I'm worried, I'm sure. She can probably read me through the bond and with her fairy senses. I'm coming to learn that nothing gets past her. She hopefully just thinks I'm worried about Bailey and can't sense my worries about the possibility of losing another mate.

"Everything will be fine, Alpha Max," the moon goddess calls back to me. She's giving me a sympathetic smile, gripping my grandson's hand. "Everything," she reiterates, "You will have nothing to be anxious over by the time you leave here. Everything will work out."

Everything? Surely not everything will be fucking peachy keen by the time we leave here. My pain in the ass, but sweeter than sugar daughter-in-law is pregnant with fucking twins and dying from a curse, my son is drowning in work and I'm not there to help him, my grandson has this overbearing responsibility now to save his mother, and my new mate might have a child I know nothing about. How the hell is all of that going to work the fuck out?

She said she's not all powerful, but the look on her face that looks so similar to Bailey's, and the twinkle in her eyes has me believing that it might just be true.

Thyra looks up at me curiously, but doesn't ask. She's letting the quiet understanding pass between the moon goddess and me stay between the moon goddess and me. I love her so much more for that.

Harriet would have hounded me and nagged the shit out of me to tell her what I was thinking and to explain what the moon goddess was saying to me. Thyra is just gripping my hand tighter, letting the sparks between us help to soothe my uncertainties. Goddess, I pray everything works out, just as you said.

"It will," I hear the moon goddess's voice flitting through my mind, not like a mind link, where there is a thread of a connection, but her voice is resounding and absolute in my head, not giving me any control to end or start the connection. This is a connection that can not be severed.

I startled slightly, looking up at her in surprise, making her chuckle lightly in my head. “I wouldn’t give you a gift I plan on taking away later. Rest easy, Max. You will not know loneliness again, and neither will she. Have faith. Not just in me, but each other.”

With that, she leaves my mind, and I suddenly realize I’ve stopped walking, meaning Thyra has too. She is just staring between the goddess and I, probably wondering what just happened.

“I didn’t know you could mind link too,” I said out loud, as a way to explain to my mate why I was so startled. I don’t want to leave her wondering.

“Of course I can,” the moon goddess grins.

“She’s been doing it with me since the waterfall, grandpa,” Taegan looks at me like I’m fucking crazy. “I thought you knew that.”

“How the hell would I fucking know that?!” I exclaim, then my face heats, realizing I put my damn foot in my fucking mouth again.

Shit, sometimes I hate not having a fucking filter.

Taegan is glaring at me for the curse words, but Thyra and the moon goddess are both laughing at me, which makes me more fucking embarrassed.

“Shit,” I muttered, then ran a hand down my face. I’m too exhausted for this shit.

“Relax, Alpha Max. I’m perfectly fine with your less than censored mouth. Just be yourself. You do not have to put on airs for me.”

“You’re the fucking moon goddess, though. I should be able to hold my damn tongue.”

“Maybe,” she smirks, “But just remember, I’ve seen every aspect of your life, and know you as well as you know yourself. Your tongue will not catch me off guard. No need to get shy over a dirty word or two.”

“Or hundreds,” Taegan, the brat, had to add. Love the shit out of the boy, but he is making me sound worse in front of our deity.

“I like your dirty mouth,” Thyra whispers to me.

Well, shit.

The moon goddess giggles. “You both are going to be so, so great together. I am so happy it all worked out.”

Me fucking too.

We reach the mansion door, and she opens it, telling us to go in. All of us gasp together, all except her, when a humanoid figure, with the body of a man and the chest and face of a wolf approaches her from the other side.

“The rooms are ready, my goddess,” he says in a very human voice.

“Thank you, Dante,” she grins at him, reaching up and scratching between his ears, which causes his eyes to close and his tail to wag slightly. “Taegan and I should get started right away. Why don’t you two follow Dante up to your rooms? Treat this home as your own and try to rest. It may take us some time.”

“Some time to do what?” Thyra asks, still eyeing the wolf-man warily.

“Awaken Taegan’s wolf, of course,” the goddess states, as if it was obvious.

## 2.28 Being Cute

# Chapter 108 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“Do you think it’s a good idea, leaving him alone with her?” I asked Thyra after the weird fucking dog man showed us to a bedroom.

No, to call this fucking over the top, massive space a mere bedroom is a joke. My house could probably fit in this one bedroom. It’s too clean, too white, too clean smelling, and too over the top for my taste.

“She’s your moon goddess, Max. If he’s not safe with her, then your whole species is doomed,” she laughs lightly at me, shaking her head.

“Oh, it’s not her I’m worried about. Shit, just this morning he was talking about tits like it was a normal thing for a little boy to do. What if he says something to offend the woman and she makes him mates him with a fucking toad?”

“A toad?” Thyra quirked an eyebrow at me.

“Yeah. A toad. The big ones with warts. Fucking gross looking fuckers.”

Thyra chuckles, making me smile despite my worries. “I don’t think she is a vengeful deity. She is okay with your crude words. I doubt she will care much if Taegan decides to compliment her fun bags or anything such as that.”

“Oh, goddess, please don’t let him say shit about fun bags,” I groaned, making Thyra giggle.

“You know, you just prayed to her for your grandson not to talk about her breasts.”

“Ah, shit,” I muttered, dragging my hand down my face. Fuck, I can’t keep my fucking foot out of my fucking mouth. I’m not used to having to watch how I speak. I’m the fucking alpha. Well, now the Alpha’s father. No one has ever had a higher rank than me before.

Thyra chuckles, coming to wrap her arms around my waist. “You’re cute when you get flustered.”

A playful growl vibrates my chest. “No one has ever called me cute before.”

“Maybe not to your face, but I’m sure there have been plenty of women who had the thought,” she softly said as her hands roamed to my chest and traveled up to wrap around my neck.

“Oh, honey. Cute is not what I want you to think about me. Not fucking ever.”

I feel a shiver travel up her body. She bites that tempting bottom lip, her teeth leaving little indentions as the corners of her mouth lift slightly. She’s fighting a smile. Fuck, she’s so damn perfect.

“How do you want me to think of you then?” she asks, and I want to fucking moan hearing the teasing in her voice.

“Mmmh,” I tangled my hand underneath her hair, pulling slightly, just enough to make her gasp, giving me the opening I needed.

I suck that delicious lip into my mouth, letting my teeth graze the tender flesh. Fuck, she tastes amazing. So, so fuckign amazing. To my fucking delight, she bites back, making a deep satisfied growl vibrate between us. My tongue explores her warm mouth eagerly. Her nails are scraping and scratching my neck, making my dick throb as the sparks erupt all down my back.

Her body feels so soft against mine. I want to taste every fucking inch of it; worship every fucking inch of it, starting with that sweet smelling pussy of hers that is filling this huge space with its delicious fragrance as it leaks for me in desire.

“I want you,” I groan deeply, kissing my way to my mark on her neck, then nibbling on it, making her twitch and whimper. “I want to eat that delicious pussy of yours, and make you explode on my tongue,” I flick my tongue out, satisfaction igniting my entire being when it makes her mewl in a sweet voice, “I want to taste you, and devour everything you can give me, then I want to show you exactly how un-cute I can fucking be while driving every moan, cry and scream of pleasure out of you that I fucking can.”

“Max...,” she gasps, her legs parting as she rubs her pussy against my leg, gyrating her pelvis so I can feel her arousal leaking through her thin pants and coating my jeans.

“Can I do that, honey?” I skimmed my nose up her nape, then nimble on the soft flesh on her ear. I circle my tongue around it, at the same time, skimming my hand from her shoulder to her breasts, teasing her hardening nipple through her shirt.

That does her in. Her whole body shakes, and I swear she’s about to cum just from my teasing.

Goddess, she is fucking perfect. So, so perfect.

I grab the hem of her shirt, slowly pulling it up and over her head, revealing her bare, heavy chest.

No bra. I love that she doesn’t ever wear a fucking bra. So fucking sexy, and she sure as shit doesn’t need one.

I roll one of her nipples between my fingers, her arousal perfuming the air more and her whole body twitching as she cries out. My knee between her legs is supporting most of her body weight, my other hand gripping the back of her neck, keeping her head angled so I can watch the expression on her face.

Her face is contorted with pleasure, her eyes half closed and her mouth slack. She is grinding her hips against my leg, the slick friction leaving a trail on my pants. The more I tease her tits, the harder she grinds on me, and I shudder with the realization that I have so much fucking control over her pleasure just by playing with her chest.

I lick my fingers, then start twisting her peak with more force, my mouth crashing against hers so I can catch all her moans. She is crying and panting into my mouth, and I know she is fucking close. So fucking close to exploding on my leg, and I haven’t even touched her pussy yet. I never thought I could feel this satisfied while still fully dressed.

I growl, dipping my head down, my teeth grazing against her free nipple before sucking it into my wet, warm mouth, my tongue twirling around its stiff peak.

That’s all she needs. She screams my name as her body shakes, my leg now soaked with her orgasm.

She can cum just from me playing with her tits, and I fucking love that. This is going to be my new favorite game from this day forward. This is how I’m going to wake her up every morning, how I win every little argument, how I fucking drive her wild and how I cheer her up when she is having a rough day. It’s like I have my own magic I can use to control her.

“How fucking cute was that?” I asked smugly, grinning down at her while she gained some of her composure.

She gives me a satisfied, tired smile, her beautiful eyes and entire face looking so sexy with the afterglow of her orgasm.

“Pretty fucking cute,” she teases me. “You can be cute with me anytime.”

“Fuck,” I groaned, “I’ll show you fucking cute.”

I pick her up and carry her to the bed, tossing her down, my dick throbbing painfully as I watch her tits jiggle while she yelps. I pull my shirt over my head, then kick off my boots while unfastening my jeans, smirking when I feel how wet she made the leg of my pants as I slide them down my legs.

“Come here, honey,” I growled, pulling one of her legs and dragging her excited body down the bed so I could get her pants off her too. “Oooh-ho-ho, fuck,” I groaned, peeling her pants down and seeing the mess inside. She smells so fucking sweet, like ripe fruit, and I can’t wait to devour her.

“Look how wet you got me,” she husks, running her fingers between her folds, slipping them inside her and pumping them in and out a few times as she lulls her head back. When she brings them up to show me the glistening moisture coating them, I eagerly suck them between my lips, then moan as my tongue works to lick them clean.

“Want another taste?” she asks, spreading her knees as far apart as she can, working those fingers back between her lower lips, then using them to spread herself wide open.

I drop to my fucking knees, looking like I’m about to pray at her altar. Her scent is driving me wild.

“Mine,” I growled, spreading her legs even further apart, then running my tongue over her fingers. I suck them into my mouth, getting her fingers clean for the second time, then nudge her hand away as I rest her legs over my shoulders.

“She’s all yours, baby. Treat her gently,” Thyra whispered roughly.

“Fuck that,” I groan, then suck her clit roughly into my mouth, thrusting my fingers in her and making her back arch off the bed as she screams out. My tongue is wildly massaging her nerves, my teeth graving it as I suck her harder and harder. My fingers are pumping in and out of her, stretching her wide, getting her ready for what’s to come.

“Fuu-....Max! Oh, gawd, yes,” I have her bucking her pussy against my face, her tight tunnel pulsing around my fingers. “You’re....you’re going to.... Fuck, max!”

She screams out, a second orgasm taking her, her wetness overflowing and making me shiver, knowing just how good she is going to feel when we get to the good part.

I let go of her clit, running my tongue up her slit, then grinning wickedly at her dazed face. “Was that fucking cute too?”

She gives me a sultry smile, then nods.

“Fuck, woman,” I sighed, standing on my feet and massaging my manhood in my hands. “I guess this is fucking cute to you too.”

She bites her lip watching me, her eyes darkening slightly with lust before shaking her head. “That’s monstrous,” she whispers.

I smirk, pushing my body between her legs. “That’s more like it,” I tell her, then position myself at her entrance before slowly pushing into her.

Her fucking pussy feel so amazing. I don’t know how I could ever get enough of it. I slowly start to pump in and out of her, and she reaches her hands out to me, beckoning for me to join her on the bed.

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Thyra POV

Max leans over me, wrapping his arms around my body and pulling me further up on the soft bedding, his dick still pulsing inside me. I’ve already cummed twice, and my body is super sensitive, buzzing with energy and anticipating more pleasure.

Max’s hand finds its way to my chest, and I’m mewling at just the thought of what it is going to do. He rubs his rough thumb against my pebbled peak, then twists it between his fingers. His mouth is on my neck, sucking and nibbling on his mark, making those mind-numbing sparks dance all over my body.

I never knew true pleasure before this man. This is incomparable to anything I have ever experienced before. I can’t even think, the gratifying bliss is so overwhelming. My body is like a puppet in his hands, my body totally at his mercy, and he is showing me none.

His dick is filling me, stretching me. He is hitting places inside me I didn’t know existed before him.

Fuck, I wanted to mess with him more; tease him more, but there isn’t a thing I could tease him about right now. He is working my body like a pro, and I just want to bask in the feelings that he is bringing me.

His hands grip from underneath my shoulders, then suddenly his thrusts turn more violent, more hard and forceful. His knees come up under my thighs, and he’s ramming my body into his while thrusting and twisting his hips.

His balls are slapping against my ass and his pelvis is grinding sweetly against my aching clit. Fuck, this man is going to make me cum again.

I’m screaming out incoherent words, my body shaking with the coming eruption. It keeps building and building with every thrust, and soon, he is pushing me over that ledge again.

I scream out, my magic flaring, making my skin glow as the viney imprints reveal themselves on the sides of my body. My magic flows into him, making his icy blue eyes glow as his speed builds, his own orgasm nearing, making mine last painfully long.

“Fuck, fuck, FUCK!” he roars, then his thick, massive length pulses inside me, his spurts of cum shooting deep within me.

“Fuck, Thyra,” he groans, “Shit, that went way too fucking fast,” he pants as we both come down from our highs.

I giggle and run my fingers up his spine as he rests his head on my chest, his hot breath fanning against my nipple.

“We can make round 2,” 2 for him, 4 for me, “last longer. We have all night.”

“Shit,” he groans, turning his head to stare at me, “I’m going to fucking get you pregnant at this rate, you know that? I’ll have two granddaughters and a child myself the same fucking age.”

My smile falters, and I bite my lip, not sure how to respond. “Um, you want more kids?” I managed to ask.

Max shrugs, kissing between my breasts before looking back up at me. “I haven’t given it much thought. We probably should, though.”

I smiled sadly, running my fingers through his hair. “I can’t have kids anymore, Max. That is something I won’t be able to give you.”

He nods, like he wasn’t too concerned about it, but then he leans up and looks down at my belly, and I freeze, realizing what he’s staring at. He doesn’t say anything, but I know he knows. He knows the changes to a woman’s body that occur after childbirth. He’s already noticed the evidence that I once did have a child.

2.29 Getting to Know You

Chapter 109 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Taegan POV

“Shouldn’t we wait for grandpa and Thyra?” I asked Miss Rieka as we sat down at a big shiny table to eat.

She laughs, and it sounds like mom's laugh, which makes me smile. I like the way she sounds when she talks and laughs. "I think your guardians will be a bit preoccupied for the evening. I'll have food sent up to them a bit later. I want to take this time to get to know you better, Taegan."

Get to know me? I thought the moon goddess already knew everything about me? Isn't that part of being a moon goddess?

"What are they doing?" I asked, wondering why grandpa wouldn't be able to come down for dinner.

"Oh, just building their bond more. I think I make your grandfather nervous, so I'm helping him to relax a bit before we meet them again. A mate is good for helping your wolf side relax and remain sated. Your grandpa hasn't had that in a long time, and I think he needs some help learning to be happy for himself a bit now."

"Oh," I muttered, still confused. Oh well. As long as grandpa is happy, that's all that matters. "So, how do you get to know me? I thought a moon goddess already knew all of the werewolves?"

She laughs again. It makes me miss mom a bit. "I know all my werewolves very well, Taegan, but you have yet to gain your wolf side. I just know you as I've seen you through your father's eyes, and those around you. I need to know you on a more personal level, and gain some insight into your nature and see your soul to decide how to proceed from here."

"What do you mean?" I asked, tilting my head.

Rieka smiles, then sighs while looking out the window. "Let's eat first, then I will explain more after."

Two of the dog people came in with trays of food. I got nervous, thinking it was going to be something fancy and yucky, like that time dad took all of us to the fancy restaurant when he asked mom to marry him. We ate lobster with our steak, which was weird because of the shell, and had oysters and some fancy word for fish eggs too. It was yucky and salty.

When dog man number one lifted the lid covering the food, I saw it was chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese. I love both, and was very excited.

Dog man one and two brought out trays of fruits like grapes and cut up apples and another of carrots and cherry tomatoes. Those are the only two vegetables I like to eat, so I'm very happy.

I was so hungry after touring the place. Miss Rieka took me all around this big house after dog man one took grandpa and Miss Thyra upstairs, and I was amazed at everything about it. It's so big, and very, very clean and shiny. There is a big kitchen that had all kinds of candies in containers in the pantry that Miss Rieka said I was welcome to. I thought it wouldn't have a fridge because everything looks like a fairy tale, and fairy tales don't have fridges, but the kitchen had a fridge! It had all kinds of regular drinks and snacks in there too.

There was a big library with a big fireplace. If Calum was there he would be running up and down the stairs that led up to the top railing for the up high books. I imagined using him as a moving target with my nerf gun, which made me laugh. Calum would love the pantry and the kitchen. Food is his favorite thing besides his dad. I have to be tough on him and make him play hard with me, because I don't want my Gamma to be out of shape one day. He has to be my Gamma, too, because he's my best friend. Daddy is best friends with Brother Casey and Uncle Rick. I want to have my Beta and Gamma be my best friends too. Grandpa said it's important to have people you trust more than anything as your Beta and Gamma. I wonder who I can choose for my Beta one day.

After we finish eating, the dog men take the empty plates back to wherever they came from and bring back out a tray of cookies. They are still warm and smell like they had just come out of the oven.

"Do you like cookies?" Miss Rieka asks me with a little laugh when I get my fourth one.

I nod, "Mommy makes them for me all the time. Grandma Lucy used to, but it's hard for her to walk and stand for a long time now, and Katherine, who is my grandma, but I don't call her grandma for some reason, doesn't know how to make them very well. She tried to make them last time Miss Addison took me to go see Grandma Lucy, but they were too hard to eat."

Miss Rieka chuckles. "Do you like Katherine, your grandma, who you don't call grandma?"

I shrug, "I do, but she acts nervous around me, so it's hard to really tell. I like that she takes care of Grandma Lucy. Grandma Lucy loves her a lot, so I guess I like her because Grandma Lucy does. I just don't get how she can be mom's mom, but mom doesn't call her mom. It's all very confusing. Mom just tells me to call her grandma if I want to, but it feels weird when mom doesn't call her mom. It would be like Dad calling Grandpa Max and not Dad."

Miss Rieka chuckles again, "That does sound confusing."

"I know," I sighed, then swallowed a big drink of milk. I'm full now and want to start to talk about what Miss Rieka was saying earlier. "Miss Rieka, can we talk about saving my mom now? You said you had to get to know me first?"

She tilts her head and moves her lips to the side like she's thinking about what to say. Mom makes the same face when she is thinking too. "I have to get to know you, really know you, because once I help you to achieve this power, I will be bestowing on you, there is no going back, and there could be big issues if you are not ready to use it the right way. You are a very smart boy, Taegan, but also very young. I need to be sure that you are smart enough and selfless enough to know when and how to use these gifts the right way."

I poke my lips out, not exactly sure what she is trying to say. Does she think I'm too selfish to save my mom? I want to save my mom more than anything, though. I don't think that's selfish, but maybe it is. I don't like thinking that the moon goddess doesn't know if she can trust me with the power to save my mommy.

With my thoughts and feelings going bad again, I feel my magic beating heavily in my chest, pushing out to my skin like it always does when I get sad or upset, and I start to worry since Thyra isn't with me to help.

"Taegan," Miss Rieka reaches out and places her hand on my cheek, the energy I feel in her hand making my magic go back to normal, better than even the way Miss Thyra makes it feel. "You don't need to worry too much. I already know through your father's eyes and the eyes of your grandpa and everyone else who loves you that you are a selfless and trustworthy little boy. I just need to be sure of a few things before we unlock your wolf."

"What do you need to be sure about? I want to save my mom," I whispered.

She nods slightly, smiling just a little bit, but her eyes look sad. "This is a heavy burden I am placing on you, Taegan. I need to be sure you are ready for it, or it will affect the whole world, not just your mom and your pack."

"How?"

"Well," she tilts her head to the side again, thinking about the words to say, "Things are beginning to right themselves in your world finally. The selfishness that led to the curses that disturbed the peace of many races is being fixed now that all the races are learning to work together for the good of the world instead of fighting against one another for personal gain. Look at your pack, for example. Me and the other deities are able to match vampires and werewolves, humans with them too, even witches and fae are in your pack now. Your world is finally evolving for the better, and so, the consequences of my time are becoming moot. Look at your father's Gamma, for example."

"Brother Casey?" I asked, and she smiled and nodded.

"Did you know that he was bitten by a vampire? A very strong vampire? He would have died back in my time, no matter the circumstances. But, an original vampire by the name of Delilah found a cure for strong vampire venom some centuries ago, and used her influence in the medical field of the human world to make it available for werewolf kind. She did it selflessly, and because of that, she was blessed with a good life, despite the constant need to feed on blood.

"She set up a system for all vampires she ruled over so that they could live in peace with humans, and now her coven is one of the healthiest in the world. She works selflessly with the werewolves and fairy kind in her territory to make it a safe place for supernaturals to live alongside humans. When one of her kind steps out of line, becoming a danger to the peace she is working to build in your world, she takes care of the problem herself, even when the threat doesn't pertain to her. She uses her great power for the good of her kind and the world around her.

"Many who were once cursed are gaining redemption through their acts over the years. You, my young alpha, are the redemption to werewolf kind. You were born for great things, Taegan. You will be the most powerful werewolf ever to exist, but with that comes great responsibility. You

can not use these powers for selfish gain, or the curse could come back to destroy the ones you love after it's been lifted. This burden on you will be heavy at times, but you were born in heavy circumstances. You know the suffering of all kinds because of the events you have already had to endure in your short life. I believe in you, Taegan. I believe you can be the savior that your kind has always needed. Your kind, and many many others, including the young woman who is destined to one day be your Beta."

"My Beta?" I repeated, confused, "But Beta Rick and Miss Quinn don't have kids."

She smiles like mom smiles, making me smile with her. "They didn't when you left, no."

My eyes go wide and I get scared for a minute. Miss Thyra said that time worked differently here. Did a lot of time pass by already? Is mom still alive?

"Don't worry, Taegan," Miss Rieka puts her hand on top of mine. "Time is irrelevant here if that is your worry. Time is a chain binding the regular world, not the world of the gods. Your mother is very much alive and still fine. I could even send you back to the exact second you left if you wanted me to. I won't, because that would disturb the timeline, but time is never something you will have to worry about while in this realm."

I sigh loudly, happy to hear mom is still okay. "Good. I don't want mom to die more than anything."

Miss Rieka nods and rubs my hand. "I know you would do anything to save your mom, but would you do all you could to save someone you didn't have a close relationship with? Say, a young vampire girl who is lying on her deathbed?"

I think about it for a few minutes, then ask, "Why is she on her deathbed? Did she hurt someone else?"

Miss Rieka shook her head. "No, she is dying because she used herself to save the ones she was caring for."

"Oh, well, that's a no-brainer, then. I would save her. An Alpha saves and protects no matter what. It's our job."

"What if it wasn't your job?" she asks, "What if you weren't Alpha. Would you still save her?"

"If I wasn't Alpha? Why wouldn't I be an Alpha?"

She laughs, "Hypothetically. I know you are an Alpha, Taegan, and you will always be one, but I'm just curious if you would still save her even if it wasn't your job."

I thought about it for a few seconds, then nodded. "Yes. If I am able, I would still help to save her."

“Even though she is a vampire?”

I make the nose huffing sound like grandpa always does when someone asks a stupid question.

“Being a vampire doesn’t have anything to do with it. Do you not want me to save her because she’s a vampire? Is it because you are the moon goddess? That’s not nice, Miss Rieka.”

She throws her head back and laughs, and my disappointment goes away when I see her smile.

“No, Taegan. I want you to be willing to save anyone who needs it; vampires, fairies, even sirens and demons if there's ever a need.”

“Oh,” I said, thinking about what she said, “Then what's wrong with me wanting to save a vampire?”

“Nothing, Taegan. Nothing at all.”

2.30 Unwavering Trust

Chapter 110 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“Max....I can’t....I can’t anymore,” I whimper, my head lulling back and my body going slack after another body shattering orgasm. I’m on top of him, panting while trying to remain upright. I was riding him backwards, loving the feeling of his balls rubbing against my nerves, and loving the sounds he was making while watching my ass as I worked his dick over for my own pleasure, but now I’m too tired to go on.

“I got you, honey,” Max groans, guiding my hips and flexing his for a few more thrusts, then laying me back on his chest, rolling us over to our sides. He continues to pump in and out of me, slow and sensually, no longer going hard and fast like we started out. This is slow and sweet. This is making love, something I have rarely done in my life. No, I don’t think I have ever made love. Not like this.

I can really feel Max’s love in every inch of my body, in every touch he gives me. His sweet words and rough whispers, the way he worships my entire being and puts all my needs before his own, I truly feel like he loves me.

It’s an emotional feeling, knowing I am cared for so deeply and so entirely.

It makes me feel like, no matter what, this man will still love me. No matter my past, the mistakes I have made in my life, or the consequences I am still living with to this day. I truly feel like the man whispering sweetly in my ear, caressing and enveloping my body in his strong arms

while he sweetly makes love to me for hours on end, will continue to love me and be there for me no matter what.

“Fuck, I can’t hold it back, Thyra. You feel so damn good,” he husks deeply, his hips thrusting becoming more sporadic. He nibbles his mark on my neck, his hand gliding up to my sore, sensitive nipples, teasing them and massaging the thick flesh around them. I don’t know how, but I have another in me, and my pussy begins to pulse painfully around his slick, hard member.

Each squeeze of my nipple makes the nerves in my clit buzz, and by the time he reaches his climax, I’m whimpering and mewling with mine.

We are covered in so many fluids; sweat, semen and my arousal, that I should feel disgusted, but I feel anything but. I feel safe and warm, and I feel adored in his arms. This is so comfortable and feels so right. I never want to be without this man. Not ever.

“Fucking hell, you are so, so fucking amazing, honey,” he gushes, kissing my sweat-covered neck. “I have never felt so amazing in all my life. How are you?” he asked, slipping out of me and turning my face towards his.

“I’m tired,” I smiled lazily, “I don’t think I can go any longer, Max.”

He smirks, then rests his lips against mine, his tender kiss making me moan in contentment.

“I bet I could change your mind.”

I giggle at that. Werewolf stamina is no joke. “I bet you could too, but I would like to at least have time to catch my breath.”

He grumbles deeply, but turns our bodies so I’m on my back and he’s resting his head on top of my chest.

“Are you always this insatiable?” I asked, laughing dryly.

“No ma’am. Seems to be a trait you bring out in me,” he chuckles, his warm breath fanning over my nipple and making me shiver. He notices my body’s reaction and does it again before I smack him lightly on the head and tell him to quit.

“Stop,” I thrashed beneath him, “Ten minutes. Give me ten minutes of rest before you make my whole body your puppet once again.”

“My puppet?” he repeats humorously, “That sounds like a dirty innuendo just waiting to be walked into.”

“How so?” I huffed.

“Oh, I don’t know. Say that shit in front of Nate and we will see. That bastard can make a dirty joke appear out of thin fucking air. I can just imagine the way he would use being all up inside you as an opening for his sick fucking mind to take off in that direction.”

I laugh while I comb my fingers through his hair. “Nate was that man you were arguing with in the hospital, right? Your brother-in-law?”

“That’s him. Fucking infuriating twat-nosed motherfucker.”

I giggle at his creative insults. I love the gruff way he speaks. I grew up with formality and passive-aggressive insults. Being with Max, who isn’t afraid to say exactly what he is thinking and doesn’t sugar-coat things, is refreshing. I love his confidence and roughness. It was always something I craved in a man.

That was probably why I made the mistakes I made in the past. I was trying to find something the fairy realm could not offer me.

Max is tracing the light patterns of my stretch marks on my belly, and I bite my lips as I think about my secret, and possibly revealing it to him.

He won’t think differently of me. I’m sure of that now. I have never confessed my past sins, though, and every time I think of doing so, it makes me anxious, my chest hollowing out and my limbs prickling in fear.

I messed up. Not just my life, but my son’s life had a rough start as well, no matter how hard I tried to protect him from it. My brother did what he did to protect both Rian and myself, but the shame is everlasting. I may never get to know my son again, and I will never get to experience having my own children again.

Max and his family are ever more a blessing to me, because though I can not experience my own children, I know Bailey is selfless enough to let me experience the love of being a grandma. I can treasure Max’s grandkids right alongside him, and continue wishing for the best for my own son, living the life of a prince under my brother’s rule.

“Max,” I whispered, deciding now is the time to finally confess to him about why I can not have his children.

He tilts his head, looking up at me, and after seeing the tense expression on my face, he leans up and alarm crosses over his features.

“What, honey? What’s wrong?”

I bit my lips together, trying to think of how to tell him about Rian and my past.

“Thyra? What’s wrong? What are you scared about?”

Scared? Oh yeah. He can feel my emotions in the bond. He can probably feel my hesitation and my worry right now too.

I just need to tell him.

“Um, you know how I said I can’t have kids?” I asked, trying hard to fight past the anxious sick feeling building in my chest.

“Yeah, but you don’t have to worry about that, honey. We’ve got a heap load of grandkids. Too many grandkids after Bailey pops out this new batch.”

I quickly shook my head. “No, Max. It’s not that. I just....I just thought I should explain why; Why I can’t have kids any longer.”

“Okay....,” Max says, sitting up the rest of the way. “Wait a second.”

“What for?” I ask, but then yelp slightly when he drags me over to him by my foot. He lifts me in his arms, carrying me while situating himself against the headboard, resting me on his lap and cradling his arms around me. “What are you doing?” I asked.

“Well, I get the feeling that because of what you’re about to tell me, I’m going to need to hold you a bit tighter than I could have before.” He cups my face, giving me a long, tender, and oh-so-sweet kiss, full of trust and unconditional love. He is enveloping me in security and making me feel the weight of his unmoving feelings for me.

Damn. This mate bond is incredible, but the one I’m mated to makes it so much stronger, I’m sure. Max is like a safe haven. A stronghold. An unwavering force and my ultimate protector. He is chasing away all my insecurities and anxiousness with a kiss, and my love is growing all the more for him.

I love this man, and I’m sure that he will still love me, even after hearing my story.

“You okay to tell me this, Thyra?” Max asks in a deep, sweet-smelling breath after breaking our kiss and resting his head against mine. “If you don’t want to, or if you want to wait for another time, I can wait as long as you need me to. I will always be here to listen when you are ready to tell me.”

I smiled, a single tear dripping down my face, overwhelming happiness and relief flooding me.

“I want to tell you, Max. I don’t want there to be secrets between us, and I want to show you that I trust you as much as you are trusting me.” I rub my thumb over his stubbled cheek, looking up into his icy blue eyes, feeling the heat of his love radiating from them. “I love you Max. I love you so much, and I need to tell you this. I need to tell you about Rian and how I came to be a dishonored princess of the fairy court.”