

Chapter 111 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“Rian?” Max repeated the name, “Who is that?”

I could feel his jealousy flare for a moment, which made me smile a bit. For being so large and gruff, Max is really cute at times. I'll wait to tell him that later, since his reaction to being called cute is to prove how rude he can be. This talk is going to be too emotional for me and I want to say everything while I still have the courage to do so. I've never revealed that I have a son to anyone before, and I've never told my story. I just hope he doesn't think too badly of me after I tell him everything.

“Rian is my son,” I confessed, resisting the urge to close my eyes to avoid his judging gaze. When I look up at him, though, I see no judgment. I don't even see pity like I would often see in the eyes of those living in my realm that were aware of my history and what caused me to become a disgraced princess.

No, Max is staring at me with that same steady gaze he always has, the same adoration and steadfastness reflecting back to me in his beautiful blue eyes that had been there since we met.

“Your son, huh? Wow. I thought you might have a child,” he grins, rubbing my cheek with his thumb. “Where is Rian now?”

My smile falters into a grimace. “With my brother, living the life of a fairy prince back in Alfheimr.”

“Hmm,” he grunts, not in an offensive way, like he is determining how to react. He's simply letting me know he is actively thinking about the conversation. “How old is Rian?” he asks after a few seconds.

I smile sadly, “I'm not sure. I'm guessing about 8, but I can't be too sure now. Not with the different ways time works between realms.”

Max's arm's tightened around me, and I'm sure he can feel my sadness. I miss my son. I miss his easy smile and carefree attitude. I miss how he could brighten up the darkest of circumstances, and help me to see the good in any situation. I know why my brother took him from me, and even though I selfishly want him with me, I'm grateful that my brother chose to protect him the best way he could, even if that meant taking him from me and casting me aside. I just need Max to understand why I don't have my son with me like I do, so he doesn't think too badly of the

fairy kingdom. As infuriating as it is to be denied my son, it's no one's fault but my own. My own selfish desires led me to this life. Having Max with me now makes everything seem a little less harsh, because all those events led to me being with him. I just pray he still wants me after this.

“To tell you why I was dishonored so, and why my son was taken from me, I feel like I should explain the events that led up to it.”

Max stared at me for a few seconds, gauging my emotions. He kisses my forehead, then leans back completely against the cushioned headboard, putting a bit of space between us and nodding for me to continue. No words. None are needed with Max. I'm grateful for the bit of space, because when he is so close, it makes me think too much about him and makes it hard to focus on much else.

“I love my realm,” I started by saying, “as I loved my kingdom and my family, but it never seemed like enough for me. The etiquette and mannerisms, as well as the strains and pressures of being a princess were not easy for me to accept. I wished for freedom of expression, and I wished to be able to be valued for my heart and not only how well I behaved to keep my family's honor. My brother and I were less stiff and refined than my father's other children, and I didn't understand why my brother was valued for showing such independence and strength, while I was often reprimanded for the same behavior.

“When I was a young girl, I started to think it strange that no one ever showed their true emotions. No one ever expressed their feelings, and etiquette and honor were valued more than individuality, at least with the princesses, since our kingdom was only inherited and ran by men,” I sighed, “I wanted more. I wanted more than to look pretty and act pretty. I wanted more than to be a consort or concubine to a neighboring kingdom, whose only purpose was to be a pretty ornament and have children along with the other emotionless women kept in a royal ruler's harem. So, when my father announced my betrothal to the siren king, I was crushed.”

“Siren king?” Max asked, “Like, a mermaid?”

“Merman,” I smirked at him, “But yes. I was going to be sent to the merman king, to be one of his many wives. None of his previous wives had given him a son, so I felt great pressure to accomplish that duty from my father. I also had all the other anxieties that come with a forced marriage. I expressed my displeasure to my father, who was king, and my brother, who was just the crowned prince at the time.

“My brother tried to argue for my sake with our father, but it was already set and I could not back out of the marriage, no matter how much I didn't want it. When I got to the siren kingdom, that was the first time that I was ever around others who regularly traveled between the realms. Royalty in my kingdom were not easily allowed to do that because of the dangers it could unleash for humans. The guards and knights of the sirens would all go to the human world, your world, and interact with humans, something I was always told not to do. My curiosity about the human world boiled over until one day, a few days before the wedding, a guard was speaking about heading to the human world in my presence, and I talked him into taking me with him.

“I didn’t realize it until much later, but the guard had been observing me, and knew that I didn’t want the marriage and that I was unsettled and bored with my life. As a fairy princess, my status was more than desirable in the human world. That's what made it dangerous. Vampires would desire my blood, witches would desire my magic, disgraced fae kind would desire my unbreakable connection to the realm they no longer had access to. I didn’t see that the guard was targeting me until it was too late and I had already left my world for this one with him.

“At first it was fun. I was thrown into a world that had everything I had always desired. I met many different species, partied, got lost in the thrill of animosity that I never had as a fairy princess before. Lucian, the siren guard that took me, would on occasion ask for favors of me, like fueling the magic needed for a witch coven’s seance, giving blood to vampires with addictions to the magic only a fairy’s blood can offer, and on occasion he would ask for me to use my teleportation to smuggle other beings back into our world. That was a major crime, so I often told him ‘no’, but Lucian had a way of convincing me that it wasn’t that horrible of a thing to do, reuniting a poor fae being with the world that can sustain a longer life for them. Being exiled to your world is viewed as a death sentence to some, since it shortens our life to that of a human's. I thought I was doing something good for my people as a princess thanks to Lucian's manipulation. I didn't realize how big of a crime it truly was until much later.

“Years passed by, and my time on Earth was a blur of meaningless pleasures and floating between realms with Lucian. I even met Antonio, the prick, on occasion, since that was very much his scene too at the time. It was centuries before Katherine when I first met him, and I can see positive changes in his personality from back then to now, but still nothing like the other vampires in the other areas of the world who have learned to live for their people and not themselves. Antonio is still a selfish prick. Imprinting Katherine is what changed him the most and drew him away from that sinful life. He once had a harem of sirens and mistresses. He truly acted like his own God, but then, after Katherine, he started to treat her as his goddess. He did away with his harem and quit holding sex parties where he feasted on blood for weeks, sometimes months on end. His coven had no rogue vampires coming from the results of his partying ways. I really thought Katherine had changed him, but I can tell you more about that later, since Katherine came a few years, well, centuries, after I had Rian," I said, waving off my wayward thoughts of Antonio and getting back to my story. Max is rubbing my lower back soothingly while I get my thoughts together.

“As for me and Lucian,” I took a deep breath, nervous about telling Max this part. He is sitting quietly, listening to my story, not revealing any of his thoughts in his stoic expression. “Well, we began having a physical relationship soon after he brought me to your world. At first, for many years, it was just physical. The nights we didn’t end up in others’ beds, we were with each other. It was a blur for the most part, and I realize now that he kept it that way for me so I would stay in the stupor of the lifestyle we were living.

“When I started to miss my family and life, though, Lucian became more manipulative and controlling. When I voiced wanting to stay in the fairy realm, wanting to go back home to make amends with my family, that was when Lucian got angry with me for the first time. We fought, then over time I went into this numb state. I can see now that he was using his siren abilities on me, tampering with my overactive emotions and making me feel nothing for some time.

“When I finally was able to recognize what he was doing to me and I was able to fight off the haze, I discovered I was pregnant. Lucian had impregnated me to force me to stay with him.”

A growl shakes my body, coming from Max, and his previously passive face is now pissed. “Where is this fucker now?” his deep voice makes my hair stand on end because of the threat in it.

“Dead,” I reassured him, placing my hand against his chest. He takes my hand, gripping it firmly, kissing my wrist with his eyes closed, like he is trying to reign in his temper with the sparks in our bond. After a few seconds, when I feel he is calm once again, I add, “My brother killed him.”

“Your brother?”

I nod, “Yes. It took him some time to find me, but when he did, he killed the asshole and saved me and Rian from the cruelty I was being subjected to.”

Max scowls as he thinks, and I can feel his unease in the bond. “What cruelty, Thyra? What did he do to you?”

I grimaced. “Nothing I haven’t already done to myself. We stayed in the fairy realm up until Rian was born, and for most of the time after, hiding away in hidden camps and caves. He would force us into the human world at times, though, and I was made to do things that only a fairy of royal blood could do. The worst would be sleeping with witches or allowing vampires to drink from me. After some time, he couldn’t really force me to take an exiled fae back to our world any longer, not since Rian started thinking clearly and speaking freely, since it would be too hard to hide things from him. Rian was a cheerful boy, even in our circumstances, and even though Lucian treated me horribly, he still treated Rian well, as long as I cooperated with him. Rian liked to talk, though, and would often speak his mind. Since he was traveling with us, Lucian was always worried that he would reveal who we were and what we were doing if others were ever in Rian’s presence.

“The things he made me do behind closed doors were never seen by Rian, but Lucian could not hide smuggling beings into Alfheimr from his eyes. That was ultimately how he was caught, though. A disgraced pixie wanted to get back to the fairy realm and offered Lucian enough money to cause him to be willing to take the risk. Getting ready to travel, Rian asked the pixie man many questions. It was irritating the man, but he tried to keep that hidden since we were doing him a favor. I was told to keep my mouth shut around the pixie so he remained unaware of my true identity, but Rian let it slip, calling me Princess Thyra like he often heard Lucian mockingly call me.

“The Pixie became scared as we were trying to trap him into a prison or execution sentence and freaked out on the other side of the portal, making our magic flare defensively, which alerted the knights passing through the area. The pixie was captured, but we escaped. Just barely.

“After that, we remained on the run, with my brother knowing of my part in the crime of bringing the exiled fae back into our realm. Lucian tried to convince me to escape back into the human world and live there permanently, but I wanted to be found. I kept giving him excuses to stay. I knew that if he got me back to the human world at that point, I would never see the fairy realm again. He would have kept me hidden out of my brother’s reach for the rest of my life. That was no life for a child.”

“What happened to your father?” Max asked, “Wouldn’t he have been looking for you as well?”

I grimace, “My father had other daughters. He was angry with me, but I was replaceable as far as the marriage went. He thought I was just going through a rebellious phase and I would be back. He died before I could ever see him again. My brother, my only full sibling from the same mother as me, was the one to take the throne. Aengus, my brother, was always honorable in his duties, but he cared for me. We were close in our youth, and I think that is what drove him to find us and not write me off as a lost cause like many of the others in the fairy court wished to do.

“He found us in a cave on feral land between kingdoms. Alfeimer has plenty of untamed land, so it must not have been an easy feat. He found us, and personally beheaded Lucian right there after a knight took my son away. The siren king that Lucian betrayed wanted his head, so it was sent back to him, and my son and I were taken back to the fairy court under my brother’s care.

“I revealed everything to my brother, but because my crimes included smuggling the exiled fae back into Alfheimr, which affected all of our realm, not just my brother’s kingdom, I had to stand trial. I was found guilty of a number of charges, then faced exile myself. Worse than that, because I was admittedly a prostitute for my magic for so long, and because of the birth of Rian, who was taken from me and placed in my brother’s care, I was sterilized.”

Max growls thunderously. “They took your ability to have kids because you were fucking trafficked? How the hell is that your fault?”

I smiled sadly at him. “I am a fairy princess, Max. If I were to have a child with a human or a witch, it could result in a seer, and that is an act forbidden by our species now after the way witches were discovered using seers to siphon magic from our world. My brother had no choice if I was to be exiled. Because my crimes were against all of Alfheimr, it was a punishment placed on me by the entire realm, not just him. I believe that if the decision was just Aengus’s, he would not have taken my ability to be a mother.” I hope not, at least. “He may have given up on me, but he wasn’t cruel.”

Max grumbles deep in his chest, “That is still fucking cruel.” he pulls me tighter to his chest, caressing my arms and kissing the top of my head. “I’m sorry, Thyra. I’m sorry for all you have been through. Do you think you will be allowed to have your son with you ever again?”

I shook my head against his chest, trying to keep my tears at bay. “No. I think there was a chance, but I ruined that by how I helped Joseph.”

“What do you mean?” Max asked.

I let Max’s musky, woody scent calm me for a minute before I spoke. “After my exile, I met Joseph, Lucy’s husband, and he helped me to overcome my struggles, being a naive fairy thrust into the human world with no real knowledge of how the world worked. He helped me to learn basic human expectations of being a functioning member of society, like getting a job and acquiring money. He showed me how to live an honest life, so I wasn’t tempted to go back to selling my blood or my body to survive. He made it possible for me to live a good life, where I could survive as a regular human would.

“I was forever grateful to him, and would have done anything to help him, so when he asked me to help him to sacrifice himself to save Lucy, I didn’t hesitate. In my eagerness to help him, I used my abilities as a fairy princess to grant him as much power and magic as he needed. I didn’t think about the effects it could have on the fairy world. The curse is a powerful curse. It took a lot of magic from my brother’s kingdom to get the results we needed. Magic is a natural occurrence in my world, but because such a strong being was draining so much of it from Alfheimr, it had a few negative effects on the kingdom. My brother had to correct the imbalance for the people not to suffer, which caused his leniency towards me to be no more.

“When my exile was lifted, and I thought the moon goddess’s descendants were saved from the curse, I went back to my realm, only to find I was no longer welcomed in the courts. I was no longer allowed to hold the title of princess. Worst of all, I couldn’t see my son. My brother didn’t want my reckless, selfish actions to hurt my son, and he banned me from seeing him.

“I lived for two years in my realm as a regular fairy lived, but was not granted my reason for coming back. I could no longer hope to be a mother to my son.”

My throat is swelling thinking of my bright and cheerful little boy, who was always my light in the darkest of circumstances. I miss him. I miss his smiles, his laughter. I miss the way he would carelessly speak like I had always wished I could as a child. I miss the future I robbed myself of because I longed for something that I shouldn’t have.

I rub my face against Max’s chest, my tears breaking free and streaming down my nose onto his skin. His strong arms wrap around me and he gently rocks back and forth while holding me close, an action I’m sure he learned from taking care of his grandkids. I let my sobs overtake me, feeling safe enough to freely cry for the first time in my life.

“I miss him,” I cried out. “I miss my son.”

Max moans gently, holding me a bit tighter, letting me feel his love and soothing presence as I cry. No words are needed with him. I know his feelings of remorse as I feel them in the bond. I feel nothing but devotion and empathy. There is no judgment or resentment anywhere in him.

“I’m sorry I can’t give you children,” I cried, “I’m sorry you got stuck with a disgrace of a mate.”

“No, honey. No,” Max groans, gently gripping my face in his large hands, forcing me to look at him, “You, Thyra, may just be the strongest woman on the face of this planet. And you are mine. Don’t ever apologize for that. The only asshole who should be sorry is dead, and good fucking ridance. I have half a fucking mind to ask the goddess, or whoever else I would have to ask, maybe a deity with a fish head instead of a man’s or some shit like that, to bring the fucker back just so I could kill him again. Slow and painfully like he deserves. I’m so fucking lucky to have you, Thyra. Don’t apologize for that,” he presses his lips to mine in a soft, sensual way. I sob, my body shaking slightly from his tender touch. I love him. I love this man so much.

Max chuckles deeply, “I love you too, honey. I really do, more than anything. Just don’t tell Aly that.”

I laughed breathlessly, “I didn’t mean to mind link that thought.”

“I’m glad you did,” he grins. “I like hearing it. I love you too, Thyra, and I’m glad you told me your story. I love you all the more for it.”

I smiled with fresh tears falling from my eyes, wrapping my arms around his neck and kissing him with as much love and passion as I could. He combs my hair back from my tear-soaked face, rocking back and forth until I’ve had my fill of him.

We stay like that for some time, Max wrapping me in his strong arms while we just enjoy each other’s soothing presence. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and I feel so much closer to Max than before. I’m glad I told him. I’m so thankful that Rieka gave him to me.

“Hey, honey?” Max said after a long while.

“Hmm?”

“Didn’t your brother give you the information and materials you needed to help us save Bailey?”

“Yeah,” I leaned back to look at him.

“And I’m sure you needed his permission to take the flying glue sticks out of the fairy realm?”

I cocked my head to the side, wondering what he was getting at. “He did, but Nelly was already mine. I just needed his permission to borrow my father’s and Nelly’s baby, and I needed his okay before I could take them out of Alfheimr.”

Max brushes his hand on the side of my face. “If your brother truly abandoned you or lost faith in you, I don’t think he would have done all that, honey. There was no reason other than you being his sister for him to help you help us or for him to grant you the use of the flying demons. I wouldn’t give up on a future with your son just yet, because I don’t think a brother would defend and protect his sister as adamantly as he did just to throw her to the wolves,” he grins, “No pun intended.”

I smiled weakly, “I’m not sure, Max.”

“Me neither, but don’t give up hope just yet. I bet Rian wants his mom just as much as you want him. Never give up on that hope, honey. Never.”

2.32 Spoons and The Future

Chapter 112 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

KNOCK*KNOCK*KNOCK

“Mmhm,” I groaned, burying my nose in my sexy, broken-hearted, stronger than life, mate’s hair. After she told me her story, I held her until she fell asleep, trying my hardest to use my aura to make her feel just a tiny bit better. With her being who she is, a fairy princess with a stronger aura than me, I’m not sure it helped her much, but it sure as hell helped me being able to hold her like that and to feel her trust in me as she let herself feel vulnerable, maybe for the first time since all that shit happened to her.

Fuck, do I wish I could revive the shitstain who hurt her and kill him all over again. Beheading is too quick a death. He should have to suffer for centuries the way she did. After Thyra fell asleep, I stayed up for hours thinking up all the fucking ways I could prolong his agony.

If I didn't have her with me to keep my calm, I might have ventured outside to hunt a mystical heavenly fucking bear to tear into, or at the very least, go to the stable where the goddess left the flying headaches and tried taming the one who would soon be rubber cement if he didn't lose his shitty attitude.

Goddess, do they have regular bears here, or would it be a half-bear-half-man creature like the creepy butler dogs she has? Fuck. Did I just ask that insulting question to the fucking goddess herself again? I got to quit fucking doing that.

KNOCK*KNOCK*KNOCK

“Shit,” I grumbled, not wanting to get up. I haven’t had enough of her. I could just stay in bed all day with her sweet, plump ass pressed against me and-

“GRANDPA!” Taegan’s voice carried through the door, breaking me from my lewd thoughts. “IT’S BREAKFAST! WAKE UP!”

Thyra stirs beside me. “Mmh, you’re being called, grandpa,” she moans in a sleepy voice, making all my lewd thoughts come crashing back.

I squeeze her, growling playfully against the back of her neck. “I’m hungry for something else. Not fucking breakfast.”

Thyra giggles hoarsely, turning in my arms. “You may be able to blow off your grandson, but do you really want to blow off your moon goddess? We already missed dinner last night.”

I groaned, tucking her against my chest, both of us still very fucking nude and the feeling of her tits pressed against mine combined with the sparks making me want to take my chances on skipping breakfast and pissing off my goddess.

“GRANDPA! LET GRANDMA THYRA GO AND COME OUT! GIVE HER A BREAK!”

“I’m about to give that kid a damn break, alright,” I grumbled.

Thyra has a big smile on her face as she leans away from me.

“What?” I asked.

“He called me grandma,” she whispers.

I smirked, suddenly not so annoyed with my grandson. “That’s what you are, isn’t it?” I asked, then kissed her nose.

“I guess it is,” she closes her eyes as I rest my head against hers, an ecstatic expression on her perfect face. “I like it. I like him calling me grandma.”

I laughed deep in my chest, “You are the hottest fucking grandma in all the realms.”

“Good thing I’m mated to the hottest grandpa,” she says, then giggles when my roaming hands start to tickle her sides.

She seems so much lighter today. Less guarded and more carefree. I love seeing her like that. She went through so much. I hope I can keep her this free and happy for the rest of our lives.

“GRAND! PA! I’M COMING IN TO SAVE HER IF YOU DON’T LET HER GO!”

“GO AWAY YOU LITTLE SNOT! WE’RE BUSY!” I yelled back.

“NO YOU’RE NOT! YOU’RE DOING WHAT DAD DOES TO MOM ALL NIGHT! I HAVE ENOUGH SISTERS. I DON’T NEED MORE BABIES TO TAKE CARE OF!”

“Oh, my,” Thyra places a hand over her mouth, “How old is he again?”

I groan, “Not old enough to be saying shit like that.”

The laughs, and it chases away all of my annoyance once again. “It’s good to know that this insatiable attribute of yours is hereditary. No wonder your daughter-in-law was so surprised to see no mate mark when we went back to the hospital that first night.”

“Ha, I’m not some horn dog like my fucking son.”

Thyra raises an eyebrow, then wiggles against my very hard morning wood.

“It’s morning,” I growled at her.

“Uh huh,” she grins, then kisses my lips before slipping out of bed, taking the bedsheet with her, leaving me groaning from the loss of contact with her while in nothing but all my naked glory. “He looked much the same all evening. I don’t think morning has anything to do with it,” she chuckles, staring at my dick.

I rest my hands behind my head. “Welp,” I grin wickedly, “I guess we know what needs to be done to get rid of it then.”

“GRAND! PA! I’M COMING IN!”

I growl deeply, then spring up from the bed, on the warpath to throw the kid in a room at random and lock it from the outside so he can’t come out until I’m ready for him to.

“Uh, uh, uh,” Thyra presses her hand against my chest to stop me, “My grandson is expecting us at breakfast. Go get ready.” She goes on her tip-toes, then whispers in my ear, “I’ll take care of that for you later.”

I groan, wanting it now. I haven’t had enough of her, and with her all playful like this, it just makes me want her even more.

“Go,” she says, kissing my lips much too briefly, then making her finger light up with her magic when I don’t make and move to do what she said.

“Fine,” I growled, “YOU BETTER BE RUN, KID!” I yelled at my grandson.

Thyra makes her fingers light up again, only this time I feel that painful buzzing electrical current on my ass where her brand is.

“Fuck!” I roared, gripping my ass cheek as I stumbled to one knee. This shit hurts more than stepping barefoot on fucking legos.

“Don’t be mean to my grandson,” Thyra turns her nose up, then wraps the sheet around her more tightly before walking to the door, opening it just a crack, “Good morning, Taegan. We will be out in just a few minutes.”

Despite the pain in my ass, watching my mate smiling adoringly at my...no, our grandson makes me smile with pride. Fuck, she's so damn perfect. Even her ability to zap my ass on demand I find sexy as hell.

"Do you need help?" Taegan asks, "Grandpa sounded grumpy this morning."

"Oh, I got him handled," she laughs, "Thank you, though."

"Anytime," I hear Taegan's cheerful, flirty voice say back to her, "If he gets too grumpy, you just have to threaten him with Aly. Or you can borrow my spoons."

"Spoons?" Thyra repeated, looking down at him in confusion.

"Yeah. The ones with the holes in the middle work the best. I can show you how to use them later."

I rolled my eyes, "Your dad said you left your spoons at home."

"THAT'S WHAT HE THINKS!" Taegan calls out, "WHY WOULD I NOT BRING MY SPOONS?" I hear him scoff.

Right. I'm the weird one for thinking he didn't need to bring fucking spoons to see the fucking moon goddess. I shouldn't threaten to tell him mom, but Thyra might just zap my ass again.

Thyra ushers him away, promising him she will not let me do to her what his dad does to Bailey in the morning. For example, when they promise to be right out in the mornings, then Axel comes out by himself an hour later after he made Bailey pass out again. That story had Thyra turn a brilliantly sexy shade of red from embarrassment. Axel holds just as much blame for some of the shit that comes out of Taegan's mouth and Casey and twat-faced Nate do.

"Jeez, you werewolf men need to watch your actions in front of the kids. That boy is too smart for his own good. He knows far too much," Thyra continues to blush, walking into the bathroom and up beside me at the vanity.

"It's not just the men's fault," I smirked at her between flossing my teeth, "His mama's a screamer. Wakes the whole damn pack up when they forget to close the window."

"I did not need to know that," Thyra's blush deepens as she turns on the shower and drops the sheet. I take a few seconds to appreciate her perfect ass and curvy body. Those tits. Fuck, she gets off if I just look at them the right way. I could get off just watching her.

A mischievous, hungry smile spreads on my face as I set my floss down and turn to watch as she tests the water, then slips into the steamy, open shower. She turns around, facing me, letting the water stream down her back and soak her thick hair. When she sees the expression on my face as I push off the vanity, strutting over to join her, her eyes narrow on me.

“No, no, no. I just promised Taegan I wouldn’t let you do that.”

“Do what?” I feigned naivety as I reached the shower door.

She holds her hand up, the glowing green light flicking from her fingertips and making me yelp and fall to my knee again, like I’m doing the most painful fucking lunge ever. The zapping kills my erection instantly.

“You know what. My grandson said no.”

“I need a shower too,” I growled, “I have your pussy juice all over me.”

“You can wash it off the second I’m done washing your semen out of my hair, Max,” she scolds me.

I smirked, standing back to my feet with a lot of effort. Damn, I fucking love that only she can bring me to my knees with a flick of her fucking fingers. “Make sure you get good and clean. I’m going to enjoy getting you dirty again later.”

She smiles, laughing lightly as she rinses the suds from her hair. Fuck me, she’s gorgeous. Watching her chest jiggle as she moves and seeing her pretty pussy get slick with the sudsy water has me hard and ready once again.

Breakfast better be fucking quick.

Thyra POV

“We’re here,” Max grumbles gruffly as the butler dogman, Dante, leads us into the dining room.

“Bout time,” Taegan huffs, hopping up from his chair next to Reika’s and running over to us. To my surprise, it’s me he runs up to and wraps his arms around. “Did he attack you, Grandma Thyra? Do you need a spoon?”

“No, sweetie,” I shook my head, trying not to laugh as I hugged him back, “I got something better than spoons.” I let my magic, which seems to be a little more active today, flicker in my hand and he grins knowingly.

When Max told me the story behind the spoons, I almost cried, but seeing the boy joking about using them on his grandpa makes it humorous now. No wonder this boy is so strong-willed and intelligent. He’s gone through a lot in his short life too.

“Where the hell did you hide spoons, anyway?” Max asks.

Taegan shrugs with a smirk, “You don’t need to know. It’s a secret and mommy says secrets don’t get shared.”

“I know damn well how your mother feels about secrets,” Max growls, “Use those spoons on her.”

Taegan makes an appalled face, like the mere thought of spanking his mother is atrocious. “No! Mommy said-”

“Yeah, yeah,” Max muses his hair, then picks him up after pulling him off me. “Mommy says lots of things. I got it.”

Taegan pushes his lips to the side of his face, narrowing his eyes at Max. “Grandpa, you’re grumpy today.”

“Just today?” I giggle, then chuckle before walking away towards Rieka when Max scowls at me. “Good morning, Rieka. How are you today?”

“Oh, I’m lovely, Thyra. I would ask how you are doing, but your contentment and optimism are exuding out of you. You look radiant today, my dear.”

My cheeks heat from her praise. “We had a good rest last night. Thank you,” I murmured, taking the seat beside her as she waved her hand towards it for me to join her.

Taegan squeals, and I turn my head in surprise only to smile and laugh when I see Max dangling a giggling Taegan by his ankle in the air with one hand, tickling his exposed belly with his other. He may be crude and gruff, but I don’t think there is a better grandfather out there.

“He’s a good man,” Rieka says, watching them with a broad smile. “He was a great father, too. He will be an excellent father to any little boy.”

I slowly turned my head to stare at her, my face falling into a mask of confusion. I’m sure she is just making an observation, not knowing my history. “I’m sure he would,” I say hesitantly, “I can not have children any longer, but I’m enjoying watching him be a grandfather.”

“Oh, I think that man still has quite a few parenting years in him,” she grins, “I think Taegan would do well having a fae uncle to be friends with as well.”

“Rieka,” I murmured, “I...Why are you saying this?”

She grins even wider, leaning forward to place her hand over mine. “Your brother said to tell you, ‘I will come to see you soon, sister’,” Rieka repeats, only when she says those words, she is using Aengus’s voice, not hers. It’s like he is speaking through her. “‘We both will’.” Rieka sits back in her chair, the corner of her mouth turned up, making a dimple appear as she gauges my reaction.

My lip quivers, and my eyes begin to prickle as I fight the urge to cry. “Does he mean?....”

Rieka smiles and nods, “Yes, my dear. It seems you will be seeing your brother and child soon. Once your time is completed here, you will be reunited with your son.”

I lost the battle I was fighting with my eyes, my tears slowly streaming down my face. “Why?” I gasped, “Why now?”

Her radiant face is filled with sympathy. “Sometimes the best way to help someone is to not enable them anymore with momentary satisfaction. It's not because we don't love them, but because we do. Your brother saw your future if you were to keep your son with you in the harsh world you were not used to, where you knew only horrid ways to survive in it. We sometimes make greater mistakes from fear, than we would make otherwise, and that was your destiny. If your brother had granted you your son while living on Earth, it would have hurt the both of you. You would have done anything to try and give him all you could, and it would have hurt you both terribly in the end.

“Your brother giving you the chance to grow and learn on your own, where you just had to worry about yourself and not stress about the well-being of your son, opened your world to better possibilities. You became better, Thyra. If he sent Rian with you when you were first banished, that first night when you were stranded on the streets, trying to figure out what to do next, you would have turned back to the only way you knew to provide for your son in the human world. You would have ruined yourself.

“Upon your return to Alfheimr, your brother saw your future much the same as before if he gave you Rian then. You may not have been exiled and could have lived happy enough with your son while carrying the burden of being a dishonored royal, but you still did not have a purpose or a place to belong. Your brother saw your future, and directed you to the one that led to Max. He helped direct you to the family and love you have always wanted.”

“How?” I whispered brokenly, “How did he know about my future with Max?”

Rieka grins knowingly, “I may have meddled more than I should. I'm still meddling,” she chuckles, “That little boy over there laughing in his grandfather's arms might be upset with my meddling in the near future, but he will be happier in the long run too, just like you. Life is like an intricate puzzle, and if you try to force things into place, it could damage the greater picture. The other deities and I are here to guide our children into the best possible future we can, to help them not to shatter the perfect picture their lives have the potential to be by staying too focused on the small details that are often too confusing to short yourself until the picture is almost complete.”

My throat feels clogged as I try not to sob and throw myself into this woman's arms. She is telling me I will have my son soon, isn't she? It's slightly confusing, her analogy, and I feel like she is talking in nothing but metaphors, but I think I get the main picture now. Could I truly have Rian with me again, living with Max and the amazing family he has already given me?

“Thyra?” Max's voice is full of alarm as he comes rushing over to us, Taegan yelling “Whoa,” as he is thrown over his grandfather's shoulder.

“What’s wrong? What happened?”

“What?” Taegan pushes himself up against Max's shoulder to look at me, and his face mimics his grandfather's with his concern. “Miss Rieka,” he growls, “I told you it's not okay to be mean to someone just because they're not a werewolf.”

Rieka and I both laugh, her radiantly and me, a flipping mess as tears and snot fall from my face and a half sob comes out with each laugh. “She was being nice, Taegan. Very nice,” I reassured him.

“Are you sure, because I don't want anyone making my grandma sad.”

He looks fierce, too fierce for a little boy, and Max just nods in agreement. I feel like I've got two protectors standing over me, ready to shield me from anything. It's a tremendous feeling to have people so ready to fight the world and even a goddess on my behalf. I'm glad Rieka is taking this with humor and not showing any offense.

“Oh, sweetie,” I hiccup and Rieka hands me a cloth napkin to wipe my face while rubbing my back soothingly. “I've never been more happy.”

2.33 Uncles and Mates

Chapter 113 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

I have to quickly tell Max what Rieka told me, because he soon goes into protector mode and I am nervous he will truly insult his moon goddess while trying to defend me from whatever he thinks she did or said to me.

Thank heavens that she seems to find his behavior amusing. She isn't offended in the least that my protective, burly mate had thoughts of harming her for offending me. She just sat back in her chair and grinned lovingly, like she found the behavior endearing.

When I tell him about Rian, and about the message my brother left for me, Max falls to his knees and starts tearing up with me.

“That's great, honey. That's so, so great.” He wraps his arms around my waist as I hold his face and start to kiss him deeply, overcome with my own happiness.

It's like Rieka said. I couldn't imagine a more perfect life than spending the rest of it with this man while raising Rian together with him. He really would be an amazing father figure. Axel is a

fine man and a great alpha. Taegan, bless his unfiltered mouth and kind heart, is being raised with so much love and devotion by the men in his life, not to mention his kind-hearted mom. I want the same for my Rian too. I want Rian to experience the devotion and freedom that comes with living in a pack and not the pressure and formality of being a fairy royal.

“Do you....would you consider maybe.....would it be okay if I really did get Rian back? Could he live with us at your home?”

“Our home, Thyra. That already makes it his home too.”

A sob escapes me as I start kissing all over his face, making him hum deeply with his own happiness.

“Wait. Who’s Rian?” Taegan asks, standing in the circle of Rieka’s arms as they watch us lost in our own little bubble of tear-filled happiness.

I smiled shyly. “My son. Rian is my son.”

“Oh,” he wrinkles his little nose while thinking. “Why didn’t you bring him with you?”

“It’s a long story, squirt. We’ll tell you later,” Max grumbles, nuzzling his head against my chest.

Taegan purses his lips like he is unhappy with the vague response, but Rieka’s sudden soft laughter distracts him, and he turns to smile at her instead.

“Taegan, sweetie. Are you excited about getting a new uncle?”

Taegan’s smile faltered. “That depends. Brother Casey and Beta Rick are my pretend ‘uncles’ and they make me mad a lot.”

Rieka chuckles, “Well, Rian is 7, so just a little older than you.”

7. My son is still very young. I thought he might be a bit older, but I’m glad I didn’t miss many years with him.

“Oh,” Taegan turns his head as he thinks, “I don’t know how he could be an uncle if he’s my age, but I guess that’s okay. I’m still the alpha, right?”

Rieka grins, “You will always be the alpha, Taegan. No one can take that title from you.”

“I mean, of Blue Cliff Pack. I will still be the next Alpha of my pack, right? Mommy said I was going to be a great Alpha of my pack and I don’t want to disappoint her.”

This boy with his mom. Max laughs gruffly, “You are still the next Alpha, boy. The only thing that will change is you will have another friend to help you torment your little cousins and help you with your sisters.”

Oh, I like the sound of that. It sounds so normal and mundane. Something I always craved as a child. By Taegan’s expression, I can tell he likes the sound of that too.

“Could he help me shave Brother Casey’s eyebrows off his annoying face in his sleep?”

“Why in the heavens would you want to do that?” I asked.

Taegan shrugs, a mischievous smirk on his face. “I decided the fun bags thing was his fault. He needs to be punished if I’m punished.”

“Taegan,” Max growls at him.

“Okay, okay. Geez. I’ll just shave one off.”

“Shit, Taegan. If you so much as touch a pair of fucking trimmers or put them close to anyone's face, I’ll be shaving you bald for the next year,” Max pulled away from me to growl at his grandson.

“Okay. Gosh, grandpa. You really are grumpy today.” Taegan rolls his eyes, then turns to Rieka. “See what I have to deal with. He just had his head on Grandma Thyra's fun bags and he's still crabby.” Max growls, and I think Taegan is about to push his luck with his grandpa, no matter how funny I think he is.

“Oh, what a hard life you must lead,” she chuckles.

“I’m okay with an uncle the same age as me, Miss Rieka, as long as he doesn’t steal my position. I can’t make mommy sad.”

“Oh, he will not be stealing your position in Blue Cliff Pack. Don’t worry. He will have his own destiny. Fate is a funny thing sometimes.”

I catch a mischievous sparkle in her eye as she says that. Something tells me that though Rian won’t be a threat to Taegan’s position, which I never expected him to be because of Rian not being a wolf, Rian may be taking something else from Taegan because of fate. It’s almost like she is trying to get Taegan fully on board before it happens to lessen the blow later. If she hadn’t mentioned Taegan being upset later about her continued meddling, I probably would have missed the silent message she was sending to him now.

She turns to me and winks, and I now know for sure that Rian and Taegan will have an interesting relationship and fate and Rieka’s meddling will play a big part in it.

“Let us have our breakfast!” she sings out, clapping her hands to signal the dogmen to start bringing out the food. “Taegan and I have a lot of work to do, and I’m sure you two can find ways to celebrate the good news.”

“Fuck, yeah we can,” Max grins wickedly, making my face heat with embarrassment.

“No babies,” Taegan narrows his eyes at us, making me blush deeper, “A new uncle is all I can handle right now.”

“Boy, if you don’t stop talking like that, I’m going to-”

“Grandma Thyra!” Taegan interrupted him, “Quick! The finger magic!”

Oh, this boy. I love him so much already. I smirked at him, flicking my finger and letting the smallest spark of magic seep out and buzz through my brand on Max’s ass. He yelps, then growls. “What the fuck!?”

“Don’t threaten my grandson,” I stated, turning my nose up in the air, trying not to laugh at Taegan’s triumphant expression. Max looks between us, amused, and then chuckles, rubbing his butt’s cheek and standing to take the chair beside mine while I scoot myself in.

“My grandson is turning my own mate against me,” he says, feigning offense.

“Don’t threaten her grandson,” Taegan tells him, repeating my words. “She has something better than spoons.”

“Yes, she does,” Max grins crookedly at me, winking at me and making my heart race with his sexy expression. “She has me.”

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Taegan POV

“Where are we going?” I asked Miss Rieka. After breakfast, she told me we had work to do and I had to say bye to Grandpa and Grandma Thyra.

Grandpa acts a lot differently now that he has Grandma Thyra. He’s still grumpy, but it’s a happy grumpy if that makes sense. I used to think Grandpa was the strongest person in the world, but I think Grandma Thyra can take him. She has magic. I like her magic. It feels strong. Grandpa won’t stand a chance against her magic.

“To the library,” Miss Rieka answers me, “I have to start prepping your mind for the changes your wolf will bring. Your wolf side will be a bit different from a normal werewolf.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. I don’t know if I want to be different. I want to be big and scary like dad’s wolf side.

“Well, my dear, your wolf will look a little different to start with. He will also be a separate entity from you.”

“Huh?” I tilted my head to the side, confused by what she meant.

She laughs at me, and even though I’m still confused, I smile, liking the sound of her laugh.

“You will find out soon, Taegan. It’s hard for me to explain, since you will be the first of your kind.”

“First?” I scrunched my face up, “so will there be more like me?”

“Of course. That’s how we are going to save your mom. Your sisters too.”

“Oh. I like the sound of that then. Will I be stronger than daddy and grandpa?”

“You will be stronger than your daddy and grandpa combined. You won’t ever have to use your spoons again,” she giggles at me.

Good. I’m tired of carrying my spoons around with them tucked into my socks. My legs are just long enough that the wooden spoons don’t touch my knees anymore, but it’s still not comfortable.

“Will mommy and my sisters be strong too? I can give them my spoons if they’re not.”

“They will be stronger than normal werewolves, yes.”

“Poor dad,” I sighed, “Mom is going to give him a headache if she is stronger than him.”

We got to the big library door and I ran ahead of Miss Rieka so I could open the door for her.

“Thank you,” she smiles like mommy does and rubs my head. “You are a charmer, aren’t you?”

I shrug, feeling proud of myself. “I always open the door for mommy and her friends. It makes them happy.”

“I know it does. You’re such a sweet little Alpha. You’re going to make your mate very happy one day.”

“I know,” I smiled smugly, “Rosie’s mom, Miss Carli, says that too.”

A sad smile appeared on her face, making my heart beat weirdly and my magic flare uncomfortably in my chest. She reaches down and rests her hand on the side of my face, making my magic calm down again.

“Taegan, sweetheart. Rosie isn’t going to be your mate.”

Panic fills me, and my magic starts to flare out again, making my skin feel itchy like it's crawling.

"But...but..."

"Shh, Taegan," Miss Rieka drops her knees and holds my face in her hands. My magic calms down again, but my heart still hurts. Rosie has to be my mate. She's strong like me. Being around her makes my magic feel good. She made me feel like I do when I hold Cousin Courtney or Miss Quinn's hand. I need Rosie. She is the only one who can do that who is my age.

"I know you're disappointed, Taegan, but I have someone so much more suited to you already planned. Your connection with her will be instant. The moment she is born you will feel it instantly."

"She's not even born yet!?" I was already going to have to wait 2 years for Rosie. Now she's telling me I'll have to wait even longer?!

"I'm sorry, Taegan. It's hard for me to explain to you now, but one day you will see exactly why good things come to those who wait."

"But I want Rosie," I whimper.

"And I want you to be happy. With your powers, and with both you and Rosie being very dominant alphas, a pairing between the two of you will lead to ruin for both your packs. It would ruin you and her. You both need to be the protectors of your packs. I know why you want Rosie, and I promise you your fated mate will be so much better."

My chest feels like someone is sitting on it, and my face is burning as I try not to cry. "You promise?"

"I promise, sweetie," she says, running her fingers back through my hair. "You will still help Rosie a lot, though. I want you to always stay close with her because that's how both of you will find your mates."

"Okay," I whispered, my bottom lip dipping down on my face. I don't want to wait that long for my mate. I wanted to have my mate before I took over the pack to help my magic stay calm. I hope Miss Rieka is right and she is worth the wait, whoever she's going to be.

2.34

## Chapter 114 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

## Bailey POV

I've been staying in the clinic for two weeks now. Two long, long weeks. I want to go home so badly. Back to my own bed and my normal life. I can't even argue with Axel about leaving because the pain has been coming more frequently and more intensely the further along I am getting in my pregnancy. Even the doctors said they would chase me down and tie me to my bed if I tried to escape. A Luna command can't stop them if my husband can just release them from it.

That's not the worst of it. Every time the pain comes, Axel knows. I don't know how he knows, but he does. He could have just left 5 minutes prior to do something for the pack that would cause him to be away for hours, but he would come right back at the very beginning of the pain and stay with me all the way through it.

It sucks. I think he's trying to stay attuned to me through our bond 24/7 and I am scared he is taking too much on at a time. With the vampire children showing up and needing help recovering and getting legally adopted by the pack, and with all the other regular stresses of running the pack, I really don't want him to have to worry about me too.

He's also been working with Vincent in Miami and the vampire leader down there to try and help Phoebe. Nothing they try is working, including Phoebe being injected with Lady Delilah's venom, which we really hoped might show some positive effects. She is still slowly deteriorating. The venom did nothing.

The poor girl is working hard to put on a brave face, but every time her brothers or cousins leave here after visiting, I can hear her crying alone in her room. It breaks my heart.

Axel would always go over to her room and either pick a fight with her to get her spirits back up or be a listening ear for her. I did catch him a few times just hugging her and letting her cry on his shoulder. I don't think she has ever had a decent man to look up to in her life. Her father sounded like a monster. She accepted Addison and Stephanie right away, but she is slowly starting to open up to Axel too.

That man is such a blessing. Even with all the stress he is under, he still takes time to make sure she is doing well and being a rock for her when she needs it. We may not know how to help her not turn rogue, but Axel isn't letting her give up. I think that is what is causing her to open up to him. Even with her snarky comments and teenage attitude, Axel isn't taking it personal. He remained the same steadfast man he had always been, not wavering just because of a few insults.

One good thing that has changed in the last two weeks is that I am actually beginning to build a relationship with my mom. A real relationship. If Axel can't be here, she is here with me. Sometimes she will come even if Axel is here and has no plans on leaving. Now that I've opened that door for her, she is taking every opportunity she can to come through it.

Courtney is about to have her baby, which is making Fiona busy with helping with the boys and keeping Courtney's raging hormones under control. Quinn has her hands full with her two little ones, each of them needing all her time and love she can give them. Grandma Lucy is getting too advanced in her years to even properly take care of herself. She comes to visit with Katherine sometimes, but most of the time she is at her house being looked after by Dusty and Chris. Katherine stepping up and helping to 'babysit me' has really been a help to Axel, making it easier for him to leave me when he needs to.

Aly likes her too. Aly still demands to be with Axel all the time, but when she can't, Aly will pout, but still go to Katherine. Katherine loves every moment she can get with her granddaughter, cuddling her and singing to her. She does anything and everything that Aly asks. Axel is scared of leaving her alone with me, because of the possibility of me having an episode, but with Katherine always here, it helps to make him leaving me for periods of time with our daughter a bit easier.

Today, Axel had to run into town for a meeting that Rick couldn't cover and Aly is going with him. He actually got Aly a little power suit to attend the meeting in. He said if anyone questions him bringing his own daughter to work while her mother is sick in the hospital, then he doesn't want to do business with them anyway.

She looked adorable in her little black slacks, white collared shirt and black blazer with a tiny wolf pinned to the lapel. Axel even ordered her a thick peacoat and a designer scarf, hat and glove set to wear with it. They matched with Axel. He's wearing a simple black suit, no tie because he says they're like wearing a 'fucking leash', and his wool overcoat and scarf with the same design as Aly's. He has matched Taegan plenty of times, but this was the first time he matched his outfit with our daughter. I was swooning watching them move around the room together, Axel making sure I had everything I needed before he left and Aly acting as his little shadow.

"I got your rice cake snacks right here and your hot cheetos you asked for. I brought you your laptop too, even though I didn't want to. I already did all the bookkeeping for the packhouse and paid the invoices you were talking about, so please don't try to work. I'll take the laptop back home if I see that you are doing stuff unnecessarily."

I narrowed my eyes at him, "It's the busiest time of the year before the camps shut down for winter. I can add numbers together without straining myself. I don't even have to get out of bed to do it."

Axel growls at me, "Rick and I managed the finances before you and we can do it again for the next few weeks just fine. Each camp has their own manager to do the accounting, and we just have to sign off on the large checks."

"What about the Christmas bonuses and the-"

"Bailey," Axel growls, leaning over me on the bed so his face is only a few inches away from mine. His crystal blue eyes are narrowed and fierce, but I just giggle, biting my lips to try and

keep it in. He can't intimidate me into doing what he wants like he can do to anyone else, and he knows that. I think his grumpy face is cute. "I'm not fucking joking. No work."

"Okay, okay," I grinned, resting my hand on the side of his face.

"You're going to do it anyway, aren't you?"

I shrug, "You have a meeting to get to, don't you?"

His eyes tighten to little slits and my laughter is about to bubble out of me at his expression. I lean up and peck his lips, making him growl again before he grips the back of my head, holding my face to his, deepening the kiss with such dominance I feel my core tighten in delicious ways.

"Fuck, you drive me crazy," he mutters in a low gravelly voice.

I giggle, "I love you too."

"Not as much as I love you," he whispers, then kisses me deeply one more time before Aly interrupts us.

"Daddy! Aly go bye bye!" she demanded, pulling on his pant leg.

I giggle as Axel looks over at her with an amused smirk on his face. "You ready to go to work?"

She grins widely, then runs over to Katherine who is sitting in a chair watching in the corner, holding Aly's backpack. The backpack is her size and one she got from Disney World with a Tangled design on it. She is carrying her own 'work stuff', which are only just crayons and mini-coloring books, and her Rapunzel thermos with chocolate milk in it. Axel has the diaper bag for her already in the car with everything else she could need. Katherine hands her the backpack, then gives her a brief hug and kisses her on the head before Aly runs back over to Axel.

"Weddy Daddy."

"So stinking cute," I murmured.

Axel chuckles, then picks up our daughter, her little blonde curls in her ponytail falling into her face as he helps her to lean down to give me a kiss goodbye.

"No work, mama," she scolds me, her little eyebrows dipping down into that adorable face that Thyra said looks just like Max's.

"Okay, baby. You be good for daddy?"

"Yep," she boasts, "I daddy hep-per."

“You are daddy’s little helper,” Axel says, tickling her sides and making her laugh, “Let’s go make mama lots of money.”

“All the mwon-ies!” she sings, making all of us chuckle.

Axel sets her back on the ground, then leans over me again. “I love you. Behave,” he growls softly before kissing my lips.

“I love you too,” I whispered back.

He leans over my belly and kisses it a few times, whispering to the twins to behave and that he loves them too. I seriously hit the jackpot when he found me. He’s the total freaking package of fatherly perfection while looking incredibly sexy and being the most dependable man in the entire world. He’s all mine and my pride is swelling inside me.

He leans down and grips Aly’s hand and they both wave to me and Katherine as they leave the room. I hear them yell out a goodbye to Phoebe too. Aly calls her 'bebe', which is so precious. I can tell Phoebe loves hearing it.

“Aly is so adorable in her little business suit,” my mom gushes, “I think she likes matching her dad.”

“It’s helping her not miss her grandpa as much.” The first two days after Thyra took my son and father-in-law away were hard for everyone to adjust to, not just with the incident that happened with the vampire children, but with Axel learning how to juggle all the work without his dad to help. Nate and Archie are having to step up a bit more to assist the current Alpha, Beta and Gamma, since Max was always constantly around to pick up the slack. I don’t think anyone realized just how much Max did around here until he left.

And I depended on my son more than I realized. After the shock of Axel not dying and it being a misunderstanding wore off, I cried myself to sleep that night because I missed him so much. Taegan has always been my constant, maybe more so than Axel in some ways, so the impact of his absence hit me hard all of a sudden as the weight of everything that had happened that day and the day before came crashing down on me.

I know Max would keep him safe and give his own life for Taegan if it even came down to it. I’m not worried about his safety. I know he will be okay. I can feel somehow that he is safe and fine. I just miss him terribly. He really is my best friend. Learning to adjust without him has been hard, but I’m glad he went. I’m glad we have this chance for me to break my habit of depending on him more than I should.

Axel has been missing him terribly too. I think he’s taking Aly to work with him so much because it helps distract him from his son’s absence. Axel takes Taegan with him to work a lot because he says Taegan should start watching and learning how to run a pack early, the way Max raised Axel. It’s obvious that that wasn’t necessarily the reason. He just liked spending the extra time with our son. Taegan always put me as his highest priority, so maybe Axel used the fact that



Taegan would one day be the alpha of the pack to draw him away from me at the beginning of us coming to live here.

Now, unless the work will be dangerous for her to be around, Aly goes with him everywhere, just like Taegan used to.

“Ready for your drink?” Katherine, mom, however I should address her, asked me.

“Sure,” I grin.

She hops out of her chair and busies herself mixing the potion from Xiomara with sprite, which I have found is my favorite way to drink it. She looks more than happy to be helping me and eagerly hands the drink to me before sitting in the chair beside the bed.

“Do you want to watch some TV?” she asks, “Hallmark just started their Christmas marathon.”

I grin mischievously, then slowly open my laptop, making her laugh and shake her head.

“You’re going to work anyway, aren’t you?” she asks, turning on the TV anyway and beginning to flip through the channels.

“That depends. Are you going to tell on me?” I asked, fighting to keep the smile off my face.

“I can not tell what I do not know. You can mess with your laptop and I’ll not look. If I’m asked, I can just say I do not know what you were doing, I was watching Monica help Joey cover his genitals in lunch meat.”

I look up and see she has found a station with Friends reruns and start to laugh. “I like this show.”

“Me too. It’s my favorite,” she tells me.

I open up my work email, finding an email at the very top of the list of unreads from Axel saying that if I’m reading it, I’m in trouble when he gets back, since I obviously didn’t listen. I start to scan reports, making notes in a Google document of everything I need to review or go back and ask for the managers to do-over. I’m halfway into a document from the lumber mill with invoices paid, comparing them to the accounts and receipts, since something appears to be missing when I hear screaming from next door.

Katherine jumps to her feet then runs out into the hall, looking mortified for a minute before telling me to stay put.

Yeah right. If it was something that was a threat to me, I’m sure she would have stayed in the room with me and locked me in. It sounds like someone is in pain. No way am I going to sit back here and just ignore it.

I push the covers off me, slip on my house shoes and run out into the hall. I thought I would find someone seriously injured or maybe Courtney in labor, something like that. I didn't expect to find nurses and doctors outside of Phoebe's room, Katherine standing in front of them like she was blocking them from entering the room. Phoebe was screaming, strapped to the bed with one arm, her other arm with her nails extended into sharp points scraping on the side of the bed.

Her eyes look crazed and her skin looks pale and clammy. I saw her just this morning and she looked perfectly normal. Right now, she looks wild and like a vampire you might see in a horror movie. Her dark hair is hanging over her eyes in wild knots, like she has been pulling at it, and her shirt is torn at the shoulder, hanging down in shreds.

Something glints in the red of her eyes, and I realize she is fighting herself. She is fighting to get control over some urge inside her, and she's hurting herself in the process.

When she begins to tear at her own face with her claws, I jump into action without even realizing it. I push past the nurses and duck under my mother's arms before she even realizes I'm there. She reaches out to stop me, yelling out my name, but I'm already beside Phoebe reaching for her hand and pulling it away from her face.

"Bailey!" mom yelled, coming up beside me and gripping my arms like she was about to tear me out of the room.

"She needs help!" I yelled back. "Look at her eyes!"

Phoebe is flailing her head back, screaming at the top of her lungs while fighting my grip on her wrist. She is about to be free of my weak hold, but mom reaches out and grips her wrist with me, holding her hand away from her face.

"It burns!" Phoebe's scream dies out and she cries. "It burns!"

"What burns, Phoebe?" I asked. I push her hair out of her face to see what she is talking about and so we can get a better view of her eyes. I wanted to cry when I saw the broken expression on her face.

A doctor and two nurses braved coming in to help restrain her, each nurse gabbing a kicking leg while the doctor looks through the medicine cart, probably looking for a sedative.

"Her skin was getting translucent so we started to restrain her just in case this happened, but we only got one arm done before she flipped," one of the nurses said.

I look at the restraint and see it sizzling on her wrist. They must have infused it with silver to keep her from breaking free. Phoebe rolled her neck to look at me, bloody tears streaming down her face.

“It burns,” she whimpers, her eyes flickering back and forth from wild to pain, reason to madness. She is fighting the transformation inside her, and I think the silver is hurting her, not helping her.

I reached for the strap, undoing the clasp with one hand since the lock wasn't fastened yet. She must have gone mad from the pain of the silver before the nurses had a chance to do it.

As soon as she is free, her crying stops. She's no longer thrashing about wildly on the bed. My relief is short-lived when she takes my hand in hers and brings it to her face. Her fangs sink into my wrist before anyone can stop her.

### 2.35 Meeting Interrupted

## Chapter 115 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Phoebe POV

I have felt fear plenty of times in my life. I have grown accustomed to it, thanks to my shitty dad and our less than ideal way of life. Being vampires that are not sworn to a coven is dangerous, and what's even more dangerous is having a father who is so wracked by his greed and madness that you wake up every morning unsure if that day will be your last.

The fear I felt was always for my siblings and younger cousins, more than myself. I wasn't scared of death any longer. Dying would have been a relief to me. I was scared of dying and no one being left to take care of my brothers. I took the brunt of the abuse for them. I welcomed it. I didn't want them to feel the same bitterness and pain that had become my constant companion in life.

After my dad and mom went fully rogue, they managed to hide it for some time, but then their madness consumed both of them until they took the lives of my aunt and uncle and took Adam and Beth for themselves. It was hell being on the run from the law after that.

Since Adam was in school, he stopped showing up and the school sent the police to do a wellness check. That was when the police found my aunt and uncle brutally murdered and we had to start hiding in caves and in the wilderness so my parents wouldn't get caught. Adam and I were able to take most of the abuse, but it was still dire for all of us.

Before we were saved, after we tried to help our siblings escape, my father spitefully accused me of thinking I was better than him because I was not a rogue like he was. He forced me to drink his own filthy, tarry blood just moments before he was killed.

I knew I was going to die. I knew I was going to go mad like them. There is no recovering from being a rogue.

When we were brought to the wolf pack and I saw Addison and Stephanie, I thought I could leave my brothers and cousins with them and die alone. Then that damn alpha prevented that from happening. The Alpha of the pack not only wouldn't let me go, he made me feel hope, something I hadn't had for myself in a long time.

The asshole even made me start liking him and trusting him, and my hope grew by the day.

Now, that hope is all but gone.

He's not going to forgive me for this.

My mind was reeling in madness, the fuzziness of hungry desire blurring my rationality. After I bit Bailey, my mind instantly cleared and realization of what I had just done hit me like a ton of bricks. I felt true fear for myself, something I haven't felt in such a long time. I always felt sorrow, sadness, remorse, but rarely did I fear anything for myself anymore.

Now, I'm consumed with fear.

I don't want to hurt the Luna. I don't want to make anyone here hate me. I don't want to let go of that hope that has started to grow inside me.

I don't want to disappoint the Alpha. I don't want to lose that feeling that he gives me each day when he tells me to keep fighting. I don't want him to finally have had enough of me and leave me to die. He may kill me himself after this.

"Oww," Bailey whimpered, pulling her arm away from me when I quickly released it. "That stings."

Katherine, her mom, hissed violently, pulling her away from me and looking at her arm in worry while I now had several wolves growling at me, holding me down firmly on the bed.

"Anti-venom!" one of the nurses yells.

"Wait," Katherine murmurs, examining Bailey's arm.

"I'm fine," Bailey waves away her concern. "It just pinched and stung for a moment."

Katherine looks at her arms some more, not listening to Bailey's protests, then sighs. "I think she really is fine. Venom didn't affect me when I was human. It doesn't look to be affecting her either."

"But," the doctor that was standing at the med cart comes over to Bailey and examines her arm too, "She's been bitten by a rogue."

“She doesn’t look rogue any longer to me,” Bailey states, smiling at me. “I really am fine, Phoebe. You don’t have to look so worried.”

“I’m sorry,” I cried out, “I...I snapped before I could stop myself.”

“I know, sweetie,” she grins, “You look like you feel better now. That’s what matters.”

“Hell it is,” the doctor mutters, “The Alpha is going to raise hell, Bailey.”

“Oh, I’m fine. It was an accident. I’ll let you look at me in a second. Go check her out for now.”

The doctor growls, narrowing his eyes at Bailey, then comes over and examines my eyes with his light. I keep my mouth clenched, seeing him be wary of getting close to it. After a few seconds of examining my retinas, his eyebrows pulled down in confusion.

He turns to a nurse and asks for a syringe and needle to draw blood from me, then his eyes widen in surprise when the blood is no longer black and thick, but bright red and almost back to normal.

“It’s...how? How is this possible?”

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Earlier

Axel POV

“Daddy! Look!” Aly sings out from the backseat, holding up a coloring page with squiggles all over it.

“Pretty,” I grinned at her in the rearview mirror.

“It peg-sus!” She grins, putting the paper back down in her lap and continuing to color all over it.

Shit, I’m going to have to get her a damn pony. She is going to lose her pretty little head when she finds out that she can’t keep the pegasus that Thyra brought with her.

“Daddy?”

“Yes, baby girl?”

“Where gi-paw?”

I groaned under my breath. “We talked about this, remember? He’s doing something important to save mama.”

“Oh,” she puffs out her cheeks and continues to color. “Daddy?”

“Yes?” I asked in a deep, hesitant voice.

“Where TayTay?”

“Aly,” I say in a scolding voice. She always starts this string of questions before a melt down about being left behind. “We talked about where your brother is. He’s doing important stuff with grandpa. That’s why you gotta be daddy’s helper and help me at work. You have to do important stuff with daddy.”

“Im-por-ant?” she cocks her head to the side, her eyes wide like she is about to cry.

“Very important,” I gripped at her in the mirror, “We got to make lots of money. We have to get Aly her own pony.”

“Aly pony?! Yay!” She squeals. The waterworks are avoided for now.

Looks like the pony is a sure thing now. I’ll have to hire a crew to get a stable put in near the packhouse, probably near that damn chicken coop that dad already put up for the kids.

Goddess help Aly’s future mate. Dad and I got her so spoiled that it's going to take a strong fucking man with an even stronger will than her to handle her.

Good. I don’t want my daughter mated to some pussy. None of my daughters.

The meeting is being held in an office suite we have in town by the bar where Bailey and I first met. We can’t really invite humans onto pack lands, so the office is a front for their sake. The few employees that do work there manage the properties in town that we own, but the office is set up to seem like it’s the central hub for the company. I even have an office there, but the only person who ever uses it is Rick.

After Bailey came back, I had no reason to want to stay in town for extended work times. I don’t think I’ve been in the office more than a handful of times since she’s been here.

I also know that Rick and Quinn use the office for fucking when they are at the bar and are having a little too good of a time. Rick can have it. He fucked in it, he claimed it. No way am I going to get work done on that desk after the ways I’m sure they abused it. Gross.

That shit will have to stop now that they’re raising two kids.

“Daddy. I pee pee potty pants.”

“Oh, geez,” I chuckled, “okay, baby. We’re almost there.”

I pull into my spot outside the bar and office and see the other cars already there. Buyers are loitering in the lobby. They’re going to have to wait for me to change my daughter’s diaper.

I grab the diaper bag and Aly grabs her little backpack, papers and crayons spilling out of it. I have to shove them all back in and then calm her hysterics because I'm ruining her 'peg-sus' picture.

When I lift her in my arms, I cringe, turning my nose up. "You didn't just potty, you little stinker."

She giggles shyly and I just silently start to pray I won't get her shit on me while she wiggles too much when changing her. It's happened plenty of fucking times in the past.

"You need to learn to use the big girl potty," I told her.

"Nooo," she sings out with an adorable giggle.

I think she likes making us change her shit. It's her way of putting us in our place and letting us know she runs the show.

It's true. She does.

I changed her in the bathroom, thankfully not getting anything on me. There were several close calls. I then help her to get her little backpack on her shoulders and grab the diaper bag that also has my work shit in it, and we make our way to the conference room where everyone is waiting for me.

"Sorry, everyone. Dad duties. My wife is still in the hospital because of her high-risk pregnancy, so my daughter will be accompanying me today." I take my seat at the end of the table beside one of my secretaries. She is my secretary from the packhouse and knows my family really well, so Aly gets excited about seeing her. Aly had to pull out her Pegasus drawing to show her. Almost everyone laughs at her. The two who don't are a younger arrogant man from New York who obviously doesn't have fucking kids, and a woman from a Texas firm with hair bigger than her fucking state who has always been a little more suggestive than I'm comfortable with. We've been dealing with her firm for over a decade, and she was really disappointed to hear about my marriage.

"That's very pretty," Luisa smiled warmly at my daughter, "Mr. Kissinger, would you like for me to take Aly and keep her busy for you?"

"No, I want to keep her with me today. Thank you, though."

"I daddy hep-per," Aly tells her.

"You're a good little helper. I see you help your mama in the office all the time," Luisa says, and I see that twinkle in her eye which makes me smirk. She is fiercely protective of her Luna like everyone else in the pack. She will remind this group, specifically Miss Texas, that I'm happily married every chance she gets.

The meeting begins, Aly sitting on my lap and coloring her papers, and while Mr. young and pretentious from New York is droning on about pointless shit to make him and his company sound more important than they are, I pull out my phone to check in on Bailey.

There at the top of my notifications is an email back from the one I sent her earlier today.

I couldn't hide my smirk as I read her response.

Guess you will just have to punish me later. Whoops, you can't. Oh well. Don't worry. I'll take the liberty of punishing myself next time I take a shower. If you don't take my laptop back, I'll let you watch.

Fuck me.

She can keep the damn laptop. I'll just have Rick change the password for the wifi at the clinic and turn the hotspot feature off on her phone plan. Win/win for me. I hope she likes playing minesweep and solitaire because that's all her laptop will be good for. She can keep it all she wants.

When Mr. New York is done droning on about how his company needs lower supply rates, a shrinking economy, bluh bluh bluh, shit, Luisa moves the contract he brought in front of me to view their terms, and I scoff.

Yeah. He can shove his proposal up his ass.

"You're cute," I mutter, "I'm not wasting my time with this. Thanks for giving me a few minutes to check my email and flirt with my wife, because your little speech would have been a total fucking waste of my time if not for that. Aly," I handed the contract to her, "do you need something else to color on?"

Aly looks up from her work, looks at the paper and shrugs her little shoulder. "It ug-y, daddy."

She doesn't like to color on paper with words and not pictures.

"You're right, sweetie. Too bad this isn't even good to doodle over. We should just throw this in the trash." I slide the paper back to a smirking Luisa and she slides the paper back down to a red-faced Mr. New York. "The bin is by the door on your way out. Next time you come to a meeting like this, kid, do your fucking market research before opening your mouth and insulting a company the way you just did with those ridiculous numbers. Everyone else in this fucking room knows that lumber has tripled in price over the last several months and the prices are just going to go further up. You were the only one who wanted to argue about the current rate we are offering, and I was curious to know why. Now I know. Thank you for your interest, but maybe try Home Depot next time."

He sputters, looking flustered as hell, before getting on his feet and storming out of the meeting room. Even Miss Texas was pressing her lips together to keep from laughing at his embarrassment.

With his bullshit out of the way, the meeting continues as each company starts to bid on how much product they need and the rates they are willing to offer. Our company has several long-term business relationships we offer first dibs to, all of which are other werewolf packs, except for a vampire coven in Washington. This meeting is to disperse the remaining product for next year to the human companies who want it. Rick could probably have handled this, or even Uncle Archie, but Rick is working on something in the mining camps this week and Uncle Archie is helping Quinn today shop for Adam and Bethany, the vampire children her and Rick are adopting.

My secretary does most of the work, listening to each proposal and writing it down. We will go over everyone's bid later today and meet again in the morning to offer each company a contract for the year based on their needs.

We were now at Miss Texas's turn to speak when suddenly I felt this searing pain in my arm, followed by a dull ache all through my muscles, causing me to groan out while gripping my arm.

"Fuck," I clenched my teeth, wondering what the fuck was going on.

"You okay, daddy?" Aly taps the side of my face as the pain slowly goes away.

Shit. What was that?

"Yeah, sorry baby," I lifted her back to my lap. I accidentally pushed her to stand between my legs when the pain came. I looked around the room and everyone was staring at me with concern. "Sorry. I guess my arm cramped up."

"You haven't been sleeping well at the hospital with your wife, All-uh, Mr. Kissinger," Luisa said, almost calling me alpha. "Do you think maybe you should get to the clinic and make sure everything is okay?"

She stares pointedly at me, and even though she worded it to sound like I should get checked out, she is telling me to go check on Bailey.

"I think you're right," I mutter, gripping my arm again before standing up, setting Aly on the ground while Luisa and I get her stuff back in her little backpack. I was thinking about leaving it, the need to check in on my mate growing by the second, but Aly would have a melt down and it would take getting out of here and back to the pack so much longer.

I put Aly's coat on her and Luisa handed her the backpack while I slung the diaper bag over my shoulder. Miss Texas looked peeved, but who fucking cares? Everyone else is sending well wishes for me and Bailey. Luisa can cover the rest of the meeting and I'll just have to come back in the morning and be there to sign the final contracts.

When I'm outside, I call the clinic, and no one answers, making me worry even more. I can't fucking mind link Katherine and Bailey won't fucking tell me if something is wrong. I call the clinic again, after Aly is buckled and I'm in the driver's seat, and thankfully someone answers.

"It's me. Is Bailey okay?" I ask, not wasting time trying to figure out who I'm talking to. They would have to be a fucking idiot not to recognize my voice or know who Bailey is.

"Alpha! Oh, um, the Luna was helping the vampire girl and got bit, but-"

"WHAT!?" I roared, stepping on the gas after tearing out of my parking spot. "SHE WAS FUCKING BIT!?"

"Yes, Alpha," the girl on the other end squeaks.

"IS SHE.....WHY THE FUCK WAS SHE....IS SHE OKAY?!" Fuck! Why the hell was she helping with Phoebe anyway?

That's a stupid fucking question. Because she is a pain in the ass and is determined to make my life harder than it needs to be.

"I'm not sure, Alpha," the girl sounded ready to cry.

Fuck!

I hung up the phone and called Casey.

"I know, Alpha. We are racing over there now," he answers mid-ring with a tense voice.

"How close are you?"

"Warrior center."

He'll be there in just a few minutes then. "I'm coming from town."

"See you there," he says, then hangs up the phone. I tried not to get pissed that he hung up on me and didn't stay on to let me hear what was going on at the clinic. I know he can't handle a situation while on the phone with me.

Fuck, this drive is too fucking long.

Aly is whimpering in the back seat, probably picking up on my anxious, angered mood. I need to get to Bailey. Please, Bailey, be okay. I don't know what she was fucking thinking about, trying to help with a rogue vampire in her fucking condition. Does she not fucking think before jumping into these types of situations? She's fucking pregnant and dying as it fucking is.

I hope she's fine so I can tie her to the fucking bed and have a guard sit on her around the clock until my family gets back with whatever they have to do to save her. She needs saving from herself more than anything, because she's going to get herself killed before the curse does it for her.

"Axel, she's fine. She's been bitten, but she's fucking fine," Casey mind linked me.

Thank fuck.

"Tie her to her fucking bed," I growled.

"Can't. Katherine already did. Well, she's holding her down on it, anyway. But, Bailey is, uh...she's making them put Phoebe in her room, too."

"WHY!?"

Fuck, I'm never going to be able to leave her side again. She's going to make me turn gray or I'm going to go fucking mad. Probably both by the end of this pregnancy.

"Just get here. You'll see," he sighs, sounding exasperated.

I cross into our territory in half the time it would usually take me, and tear into the clinic parking lot. Stephanie is racing into the clinic with the boys, and I bet Addison is already in there. Casey said 'we' and I'm sure Addison was the other party in that 'we'. I get Aly out of the car seat at record speed, her eyes leaking and her lips quivering as she tries not to cry. I'm scaring her. I don't know how to calm my aura right now to make her feel better.

"Alpha," Stephanie muttered a greeting, walking hurriedly beside me into the clinic.

I just growl, not in the mood for fucking words in my rush to get to Bailey.

When I reach her room, my growl deepens, vibrating and shaking the fucking walls.

"What the fuck do you think you are doing?"

Bailey is on her bed, and Phoebe's bed is now beside hers. That should be enough to anger me, but then my wife is having her blood drained by a damn nurse, and Phoebe has a clear plastic cup with a straw in it, filled a quarter of the way with what appears to be my wife's blood. Bailey's vanilla scent is perfuming the room more than normal from the cup.

Phoebe looks scared at seeing me, Addison resting a hand on her shoulder reassuringly, but Bailey just smiles like nothing is fucking wrong with this picture.

"Welcome back! Guess what? We found a way to stop Phoebe from turning for the time being." If I wasn't so fucking pissed and anxious I would find her greeting cute.

I am pissed though. I'm livid.

Casey huffs, "Yeah, I don't think that's going to make him any less angry with you for turning yourself into a living fucking juice pouch, Bailey."

Bailey narrows her eyes at Casey, not looking threatening in the least. "Go away. I'm mad at you."

"Why me?" he scoffs.

"You were mean to Phoebe."

Addison narrows her eyes at Casey, and I can just imagine Casey's reaction to Phoebe when he got there. Even if Phoebe is a kid, Casey's priority would be to Bailey. He probably tried to take her away and lock her up in the cells for rogues.

"SHE FUCKING BIT YOU!" he sighs, "No, you're right. I should have given her a fucking five five and a gold fucking star for taking a nip at my Luna. That's the proper etiquette here, right?"

Katherine was standing in the corner, rubbing her temples, looking closer to her age for once from the stress and not younger than her own daughter as she usually looks.

"Will someone fucking tell me what's going on?!" I yelled.

Bailey's doctor sighs, "Looks like having goddess blood can be a blessing too, Alpha. When Phoebe bit Bailey, the symptoms of being rogue disappeared instantly. No harm came to Bailey, either. Venom, even from a rogue, had no effect on her."

Phoebe looked up at me guiltily, setting the cup down on the table beside her. "I'm sorry. I...I'm sorry Alpha. If you want me to be locked up now, or whatever, I will go. I didn't mean to hurt the Luna."

"What?! No, Phoebe. You didn't hurt me. See. I'm fine." Bailey holds up her bandaged arms and it takes everything in me not to growl again seeing it.

"Mama hurt?" Aly whimpers.

"No, baby," Bailey had the nerve to smile at her, "It's just a scratch."

Just a scratch? Just a fucking scratch?!

Oh, her offer to punish her is looking more appealing than ever.

"Katherine, will you take Aly for a bit? I think I need a word with my mate?" I snarl when she narrows her eyes at me, "Addison, get Phoebe's bed back to her room. She is to stay here where

the doctors can monitor her, but you or Stephanie need to stay with her the rest of the day to make sure the symptoms don't come back. Everyone else, out."

Bailey narrows her eyes at me, but I'm not giving into her this time. Yes, it might have turned out okay, but she still put herself and our babies at risk, and no fucking way am I letting that slide.

"I'm sorry, Alpha," Phoebe murmured weakly as Addison and the nurses wheeled her past me back to her room.

"This isn't your fault, Phoebe," I rested my hand on her shoulder. "I'll come talk to you after I talk to her and strap her to the fucking bed."

Bailey scoffs, and Casey whispers a "Serves you right" at her.

"You're not kicking me out?" Phoebe asked.

"No, Phoebe. I'm not ever kicking you out. You're family, remember. You're staying where you belong. Don't worry about that."

Her lip quivers, and my anger dies just a little at her broken state. She really thought I was going to blame her or kick her out. She just did what her sickness caused her to do. My fucking wife is the one getting punished for this.

"Relax, punk. You can't get rid of me that easily."

She nodded fervently, and I ruffled her hair before the nurses continued to wheel her out of the room. Addison gave me a grateful smile as she passed by.

Casey is the last to leave the room, patting my shoulder as he goes. "Give her hell."

"Oh, I plan to," I grunted, focusing in on my pain in the ass mate.

2.36 Why The Goddess is a Woman

Chapter 116 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

My eyes zero in on my mate, my arms flexing at my side. The damn bandage on her arm makes my teeth clench as I'm watching her rub her swollen belly with an angry look on her face, like she has any reason to be mad at me.

“I don’t know what you are getting so worked up about,” she turns her nose up, looking so much like Aly that I almost want to laugh.

Almost.

Seems my daughter isn’t the only one getting spoiled and acting out of line lately. Maybe she’s learning the behavior from her damn mother.

“I’m not even hurt. It was like getting bitten by a kitten,” she cringes, and I know it hurt her worse than that. I fucking felt it. “It only happened for a second and then she was back to normal. You’re being a jerk over nothing.”

“Nothing?” My voice was low and deep. This is the fucking tone I use when I’m pissed and about to fuck something up, and my mate is the only one who doesn’t tremble in fear of hearing it. Oh, how I fucking want to make her tremble and beg for my mercy right now. If she weren’t fucking pregnant and dying, she would be tied to our fucking bed and I’d have her screaming from now until morning.

The second that this curse is gone and those babies are out of her.....

“Axel, you’re being ridiculous,” she sighs, not affected by my tone at all.

“No, Bailey, I’m not. You putting yourself and our daughters in danger....that is fucking ridiculous.”

She sighs, still unwavering as I lean over her bed, my aura menacing and wild. I’m fucking exhausted, and feel unhinged enough as it fucking is. She’s pushing me too fucking far today.

“I didn’t think she was going to bite me. You should have seen her, Axel. She was hurting. She was fighting herself and the damn silver in her restraints was hindering her, not helping her. I wasn’t going to let her suffer alone.”

“You weren’t fucking thinking at all, Bailey,” I spit at her venomously, “The doctors could have called for Addison or Stephanie. You did not need to be the one to help her.”

She scoffs, “So you would have preferred for her to just lay in bed screaming until one of them could get there? She’s a child, Axel. If it was Aly or Taegan I would hope some other mother would step up and try to help one of them if I wasn’t with them.”

“I would to, unless it was a psychotic pregnant woman on her fucking death bed and high-risk enough as it is.”

“Don’t you fucking call me psychotic you jerk! You’re being mean. Go back to work. I would rather have loud mouth Casey in here than you right now.”

A deep growl vibrates through my chest, and I'm seconds away from fucking snapping on my mate.

"Don't you growl at me. I get that you were worried, but that doesn't mean you get to be a jerk to me. I saw her face, Axel. I saw the pain she was in. I know I'm not going to fucking die and these babies are going to be just fine, so I helped her. I'm her fucking Luna and I wasn't going to let her suffer. If you want to be mad at me for that, fine, but do it somewhere else."

She's fucking pregnant. She's fucking pregnant. She's fucking pregnant. I have to remind myself over and over again before I bend her over and start spanking the fuck out of her right here.

This fucking sucks not being able to fuck her into submission. That's the only way I can ever really get my way with her when we are fighting like this. Not that it happens often, but when she is being particularly stubborn like she is right now, I can win her over with sex. That's off the fucking table now.

"How the hell do you know you won't die and the babies are going to be okay? Huh? You have no fucking way of knowing that. Forget the shit you put me through thinking the worst happened to you. Again. How the fuck could you risk our unborn daughters like that?"

"Because the moon goddess told me too!" She screamed right in my face.

What the fuck is she talking about?

I opened my mouth to ask, then closed it again. Why the fuck would the moon goddess tell her to do something like that? And she's not a werewolf. I know she's got goddess blood in her, but it just doesn't make sense.

"She told you to get fucking bit by a teenage rogue vampire?" I eventually asked, my tone dubious, which just seemed to piss her off more.

"No, jerk. She told me that me and the babies would be fine."

I groaned in frustration, "So, because she told you that, you chose to just be as fucking reckless as possible? Did she tell you to drive your mate mad too?"

Bailey scowls, which I usually find adorable, but I'm still too mad to find any of her behavior cute right now. Well...maybe a little cute, but she is still a fucking pain in the ass.

"I don't want to tell you if you're going to be mean about it," she turned her nose up.

"Oh, I'm about to get really fucking mean unless you give me a reason not to."

We stare heatedly at each other, neither of us budging, her chocolatey brown eyes looking just as fierce as mine feel right now. Then, she has to go and lick her pink, plump lips, and all it takes is

my eyes flickering down to catch the action for the fire of rage burning inside to take a different course.

My mouth collides with hers, the fury burning inside me being poured out between us. She gasps in her sweet, melodic voice, then moans, being taken by surprise by my sudden attack. Once the surprise wears off, I feel it in the bond when her arousal turns back into anger, and she bites my lip hard enough to make me growl and pull away.

“We were having a serious discussion,” she snaps.

“Oh, we still fucking are,” I growled, dipping down to try to kiss her again after licking my sore, throbbing lip. She moves her head away to the side so I can’t reach her lips.

“We can’t talk if you’re going to start that! And don’t start something you won’t finish!” she snaps when I growl at her for moving away from me.

“I’m going to fucking finish,” I muttered through clenched teeth.

“No you are fucking not,” she snaps back. “You said I’m too high risk, jerk. You are not going to yell at me, growl at me, call me psycho, be a butt, then get me all hot and bothered and leave me wanting.”

Fuck. She’s right.

“I can still get both of us off without putting it in,” I offered.

“Are you kidding me?! No you can’t. Not until you say sorry.”

“Say sorry?! Are you fucking kidding me right now, Bailey?!”

“No, I’m not,” she huffs.

I rub my temples, my wanting mood is all but gone now.

“How about you say sorry for putting yourself and our unborn daughters at risk, again, then I’ll say sorry for getting mad at you for being a pain in the fucking ass.”

“I told you, I knew we would be fine!”

“Because the moon goddess told you that you would be peachy fucking keen and walk away unscathed if you baited yourself to a rabid vampire? That makes total fucking sense,” I retort, letting my frustration with her pour into each fucking syllable.

“No!” she yells, “Not exactly,” she says in a much weaker voice.

“Then what, exactly? Why are you being so fucking reckless?” I moaned out in desperation, “It’s not just fucking you, Bailey. You are carrying our daughters! Why?! Why can’t you just fucking behave and stay in the fucking bed when I tell you to?”

Her eyes narrowed for a moment, then her lips began to tremble just enough for my heart to drop. She looks down at her belly and begins rubbing it, her bandaged hand making my heart clench more and more. “Because I’m not meant to sit back and do nothing, Axel. I’m the Luna. Taking care of the pack is my job too. You keep trying to take it all on by yourself, and I get why, but it’s not supposed to be like this. You’re not supposed to shelter and hide me away all the time like you try to do. Rieka told me. Well, she’s been trying to tell me, and I’m just now kinda getting it.”

“Bailey,” I groaned, ignoring the crazy moon goddess thing for now, “I’m not trying to hide you away.”

“Yes you are,” she murmurs, “You always have been. I know it’s because of what happened with Levi and then because I’m a human, and the threat of the curse.” She bites her lips, then looks up at me through those thick, beautiful dark lashes. “I’m not going to die, Axel, and I’m not as weak as you think I am. I don’t need you to exhaust yourself trying to protect me all the time. If you can’t be with me, you make your dad babysit me. If not him, someone else. It’s not just exhausting for you. It’s exhausting for me too.”

My heart plummets. Of course I want to keep her safe. She’s my entire fucking world. “That’s my job, Bailey. That’s what I’m supposed to do.”

“No, Axel,” she shakes her head. “I think when I left you seven years ago, and then came back years later abused and guarded, it made you hyper vigilant to keep me safe and keep me sheltered. Even Carli and Simone pointed out last time we went down to visit that you never leave me alone. Everything is always about protecting me. It’s become your and your dad’s sole focus in life to make my life as sheltered and secure as possible. It’s bled into the pack, now everyone sees me as someone to be protected and not the mother of the pack like I am supposed to be,” her voice trembles for a moment, but then she continues, “When Thyra came, I was so relieved. I was happy for your dad and Thyra, of course, but I was relieved. Thyra doesn’t seem like the type to let him hover over me all the time, smothering me by trying to keep me safe. It has made you worse than ever, though.”

“Baby,” I groan, “Can you blame me? I mean, look at what happened today! It may have turned out fine, but there is no way you could have known that it wouldn’t hurt you if she bit you. Hell, she could have fucking lost control and gutted you with her fucking claws. You didn’t know what was going to happen. I bet you just ran in there with no regard for yourself.”

She looks down guiltily. “I’m sorry. I just...I couldn’t let her suffer. My body moved before I really thought about it, and then when she bit me, I just felt like it was going to be okay. I don’t know how to explain it to you without you thinking I’m more crazy, or psychotic, than you already do. I just knew me and the babies would be fine.”

Doubt is still weighing heavily inside me. She keeps telling me she will be fine, but I can't turn the worry off. I can't turn off that endless, intense drive to protect her.

"Try me," I told her, "I really can't think you're crazier than I already do, so why don't you try trusting me by telling me, and I'll try to listen with an open mind in return." I'm sure as hell not going to let up on trying to keep her safe, so whatever she tells me will change nothing. I still want to understand what's going on inside her head and why she thinks the moon goddess is telling her to be so reckless.

"You won't growl at me while I tell you?" she asks hesitantly, "or make fun of me?"

"I can't promise the growling. That's a knee-jerk reaction you seem prone to drawing out of me lately, but I won't make fun of you," I tell her, "and I promise I'll listen."

She rubs her belly repeatedly, looking down lost in her thoughts for a moment. She's probably debating if she wants to tell me or not. I gently place my hands over hers, smiling when I feel the babies moving. She looks up and her small smile makes my heart pound. I hate that she is hesitating this much to tell me anything.

Maybe I do try to shelter her too much.

She quirks her lips to the side of her face, making her dimples poke out, and I resist the urge to poke a finger into them. She's so fucking adorable. How could I not want to protect her?

"I thought it was just recurring dreams I was having long before I found out about the babies," she started to talk, and I resolved myself to keep my mouth shut and listen. "It's been going on since Aly was born, I think. I was having the same dreams every single night, and I always woke up trying to cling to them, but the exact contents of the dream would never come back to me. I would have this lasting feeling of comfort, though. I felt to my core that everything, everything, was going to be okay. Then," she bites her lips, looking nervous, "I, uh, started to remember the dreams."

I try to keep an open mind, still not convinced that the moon goddess is coming to her in dreams or whatever the hell it is she is trying to tell me. I softly asked, "What did you remember?"

She bites her lips, "You're going to think I'm crazy."

I rub my hand over her belly, strumming my thumb on her belly button that is starting to poke out. She hates it when I do it, but it's hard to resist. She narrows her eyes at me, wiggling under my touch. I chuckled at her annoyance, but then sighed heavily, moving my hand to grip hers.

"I won't think you are crazy, baby. Just tell me."

She purses her lips. "Fine. Don't touch my belly button and I'll tell you."

I smile, "Okay, baby. I won't."

She sighs before she continues to talk again. “Well...She talks to me.”

“Talks to you?” I repeated.

Bailey nods. “I thought I was talking to myself when I started to remember bits and pieces of my dreams. She looks just like a really pretty, skinny version of myself. Only, she’s so much more gorgeous.”

I growl, and she narrows her eyes at me. “No one is more gorgeous than you,” I mutter.

She scoffs, “I’m your mate. You have to think that.”

“I don’t just think that. I fucking know that.”

She smiles and shakes her head. “Fine. Agree to disagree.”

“Nope. I do not agree to that.”

She tilted her head to the side, trying to give me her best attempt at an angry face, but it just made her dimples stick out and she looked fucking adorably gorgeous. I don’t know how she could possibly think anyone could be more beautiful than she is.

“Anyway,” she continued on, looking exasperated with me, but I could feel her happiness in the bond. “She would talk to me, and I could never remember exactly what she was saying or telling me, the dreams were always intangible to me when I was awake, until a moment would come and it would just hit me. Like with Taegan, when he told us that he was scared of me dying while he was gone, it just hit me that he was meant to go and I would be fine. I didn’t remember the exact conversation before that, but at that moment, that peace I felt from the dream came back to me. I suddenly recalled that conversation, just enough of it to reassure him and I just knew everything was going to be okay.”

“So....,” I tried to wrap my mind around what she was telling me, “the moon goddess speaks to you in your dreams, and you can only remember the conversations when you need to?”

She laughs humorlessly, “Something like that.”

“Hmm.” I looked at my hand linked with hers, then glanced over at the bandage on her arm. “Did she tell you that you should get bit by Phoebe too?”

Bailey rips her hand out of mine, looking truly pissed. “I knew you were just going to make fun of me.”

“I’m not!” I tried to quickly backtrack, “I’m just trying to understand.”

“Understand my ass,” she mutters, making me chuckle.

“I do love your ass,” I teased her, making her glare at me more. “Baby, I’m just trying to understand. Tell me,” I took her hand again, only this time, I took the one attached to her bandaged arm. “How did the moon goddess tell you that this was going to be okay?”

She bites her lips in hesitation. “She didn’t, really. Not until after it happened did I remember her telling me that vampire venom couldn’t hurt me. Not even from a rogue. Moon goddess blood is safe from all negative supernatural influences like that, remember?”

“Okay... But how did she tell you you’d be okay to even go into her room in the first place?”

She sighs. “She didn’t tell me that specifically, but the first dream I remembered came back to me like a fleeting thought at that moment. I didn’t even realize it was stirring inside me until after everything happened. I knew it was meant to happen then and everything was going to be okay.”

“And what was this first dream you remember?” I asked.

She stays quiet for a few minutes, staring up at me, reading my face for something. For what, I’m not sure. “Protect them,” she whispers after a minute or so. “She told me to protect them. To protect everyone in the ways that you can’t, Axel. You are the Alpha, the protector of this pack in the way of strength and resilience. You could take on a whole horde of any kind of monster to keep your pack safe. You live and you would die for this pack. But there are things that only a Luna can protect her pack from. You weren’t meant to rule this pack on your own. No alpha is. That is why the moon goddess gives the Alphas a Luna to rule and protect alongside them. Your mother was not a good example of what a Luna should be. I’m not meant to be hidden away and protected. I am meant to stand alongside you, working together with you for this pack. You can tell me to stay in this bed, stay safe at home, stay on pack lands unless I have a protector, and you can even tell our son to take care of his mom and order all your warriors to babysit me, but now that I know what I am supposed to do, I’m going to keep trying to do it. Between the both of us, you know who has a better shot at getting her way. You would literally have to tie me to this bed and keep me under lock and key to make me stay put. I know you won’t do that, though, because you love me. You don’t want to hurt me by abusing your strength over me like that, just like I’m not trying to hurt you and am trying to meet you halfway by staying in this damn clinic, even though I want to be doing so many other things.”

My throat begins to swell and shame washes over me. I rest my hand over her belly and my other hand grips hers just a little bit tighter. “I don’t want you to get hurt, baby. I don’t want to lose you.”

“You won’t!” she stresses, resting her free hand on my face. I lean into her touch, letting the sparks soothe some of the anxiety and fear eating away at me. “I know, Axel! I know I will be okay. That we will be okay. Just please, trust me, like I have always trusted you.”

I place my hand over hers on my cheek, then turn to kiss her palm before pressing her hand against my face again. “Okay, Bailey,” I whisper, “I’m...I’m going to try.”

She giggles. “I know you will.”

A slow smile spread on my face. “Is that another thing the goddess told you?”

“No,” she laughs, “I just trust you. If you say you are going to try, I know you will.”

My chest swells with my love for her. I could never thank the goddess enough for giving me a more perfect mate.

“Can I ask for one more thing?” Her sweet voice is so soothing, I might just agree to anything she asks.

“What, baby?”

She bites her lip, and I’m suddenly nervous. “I want to go home.”

I groan, not liking the idea of her being away from the care of doctors when she needs them.

“Not alone! I want my mom to come stay with us too. You saw her. She won’t let anything bad happen to me. She might be tougher than you.”

I don’t like it. I don’t like it at all. I’m about to tell her that, but then a voice floats in my head, “It’s fine, dad. Mom should go home.”

That wasn’t no fucking moon goddess. That was Taegan’s voice, and that fact left me stunned for a few seconds, the impact of what I just heard shaking me to my core. I swear I can even hear my son laughing at my reaction in my head too.

Fuck it. I don’t think I have any choice but to trust my mate, and now my son too.

“Okay, Bailey. I’ll get you home by the end of the day.”

“Really?!” Her whole face lights up, and I suddenly want to do more things she asks of me to get the same reaction from her.

“Really,” I chuckle. “Goddess, you drive me crazy,” I mutter.

She giggles against my lips as I lean down and kiss her tenderly and quickly. “We can be crazy together.”

“Crazy together at home apparently,” I muttered. “You don’t seem to be the only one with a deity messing with their head.”

“What do you mean?” she cocks her head to the side.

“I’ll tell you later,” I whispered, pressing my lips to hers one more time, then pulling away from her, “Seems I got a job to do right now.”

“What?” she looks up at me questioningly.

“Gotta break you out of here.”

Her face lights up again, and I know I made the right decision. Fuck, I gotta let her go some. Give her room to fucking make her own decisions. It’s going to be hard to do. I didn’t realize how tight I was holding on to her, but what she says makes sense. After losing her after the night we first met, I never wanted to feel that feeling of loss again. I’ve been keeping her in a cage to keep her safe.

I need to trust her more and let her go. Let her make her own choices too.

I walked out the door and ran into Casey first. “You strap her down good and fucking tight, boss?”

I groaned, disgusted with myself for saying that. “No, the opposite. I’m getting her discharged and taking her home.”

“What?” he asks, stunned.

“You heard me. She’s a grown ass woman and the Luna of this pack. It’s time we started treating her like it.”

“But,” he sputters, looking from me to the room, “she’s dying, Alpha.”

“No she’s fucking not. Not with my son up there in some heavenly cloud doing the shit he needs to do, fucking talking in my head and shit. I trust him and I trust my mate,” I clench my jaw while scratching the back of my neck, “Or at least I’m going to start trusting her from now on. She’s not dying, she’s going home, I’m sleeping in my own fucking bed tonight, and that’s that. If you want to argue with someone, take it up with her yourself. I’m telling you, though, you won’t win.”

“I bet I could,” he mutters, looking at Bailey’s room like he was itching for a challenge.

“You can’t even win against your own mate. Shit, I think I know why the moon goddess is a goddess and not a fucking god.”

“Why?” Casey asks.

“Because the women are all fucking stronger than us.

He scoffs, shaking his head like he thinks I just told a joke.

"You don't believe me, go home and tell your mate you snuck a box of her twinkies to work with you."

He looks scared shitless at the thought.

"See," I smirked, "The women are stronger than us all."

2.37 Heavenly Departure

Chapter 117 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Taegan POV

"I totally freaked dad out," I snickered, looking over the big book on Miss Rieka's desk, the pictures and living words, as she calls them, moving on the page.

Dad looks less mad finally, and mom looks happy, so I'm happy. Stupid Casey can go suck a lemon, though. I wanna kick him in the tummy for wanting to pick a fight with mommy.

"You did very well, Taegan," Rieka smiled at me.

I chuckle, feeling pretty darn happy with myself. Getting in daddy's head wasn't that hard.

"Can we do it to Callum now?" I asked, waving my hand above the book like Miss Rieka showed me, thinking about my best friend so I could try and find his story. He won't come up, though.

"He doesn't have a wolf yet," Miss Rieka reminds me, "You can't reach him yet."

"Ah, man," I grumbled.

"Why? What did you want to tell him?"

I shrug, "I don't know. Maybe that I ate his secret Oreos? The ones he hides behind his books. He can't get mad at me if I'm not there when I tell him." I just want to show him my new skill. It's like a built-in walkie talkie.

Miss Rieka laughs. "I guess you will have to wait to tell him in person. Sorry."

“Hmm,” I made my hand move back above the book, grinning when it finds Casey. “Can I talk to Brother Casey?”

“Probably not,” she snorts, “but just out of curiosity, what do you want to tell him?”

“He he he,” I smiled widely, “That his shoe is untied.”

She leans over the book. “It’s not untied.”

“I know,” I smirked, “I just want to tell him that over and over again for fun. Really quietly so he doesn’t know it’s me.”

“Taegan....”

I frowned, “Is that a no?”

“It’s a no.”

“Well, what about ‘your fly is unzipped’? Can I tell him that?”

“Nope.”

“Cousin Courtney says your face hair looks weak?” I don’t know what that means, but I heard dad tell him that once and he got really mad.

“No, Taegan. And if you say cousin Courtney he will know it’s you.”

“Oh,” I frown, “but mommy said I can’t just call her Courtney.” Mommy says that its rude.

“I think you are done with the book for today,” Miss Reika shuts it and carries it over to the big bookshelf behind her desk. She puts it between the other two books that say PAST and FUTURE. That’s how she keeps track of everybody.

We were looking in the PRESENT book, because Miss Rieka said that we needed to watch daddy and mommy. It was gross watching daddy try to suck mommy’s face, but mom made him stop. Mom is a lot smarter than dad sometimes.

We’ve been doing this the past few days, and today was the first day that Miss Rieka let me do it by myself. She said she needed to save her power for something big later, but needed to help mommy so she was going to let me do it by talking to daddy.

“Did I do it right, Miss Rieka? Was that mind linking?”

She runs her fingers through my hair and smiles. “It was. It was a little more powerful than regular mind linking. Do you remember what I told you about being stronger than normal wolves? You will be able to mind link anyone with a wolf, not just the people in your pack. You

won't be restrained by distance either. The fact that you were able to do it today means that your wolf is about ready to emerge.”

“Good!” I plopped down on a chair, feeling relieved, “We’ve been doing this forever.”

She laughs at me. “It does feel like forever here, doesn’t it?”

“It's been hundreds of sleeps!” I leaned back, feeling exhausted.

“Well, in your world it hasn’t been. You still have a young body and mind, Taegan. I told you it was going to take some work to get you ready for your wolf.”

“Yeah,” I rested my chin on my hand, “I miss my mom, though. And dad and Aly. I even miss stupid Casey and his weak face hair and bright colored shoes.”

“I know, Taegan,” Miss Rieka rests her hand on my head, probably feeling my magic flaring a bit when I say I miss my family. “It won’t be much longer.”

I let her hand calm my magic, making it come back to the center of my chest and rest. It feels like it’s gently rotating in its middle, the way a globe does in daddy’s office. It doesn’t feel like it’s pushing out of me anymore. It's gotten a lot stronger since we got here, and it feels different too. It doesn't feel like witch magic. It feels like something different. Something like Miss Rieka's magic.

I wanted to ask Grandma Thyra about it, but Miss Rieka said she was keeping them busy and distracted to keep grandpa from worrying, so I haven't talked to her about the magic yet. Grandpa is always all over her anyway and they suck face way grosser than mom and dad. Miss Rieka said it's for the best for now, that my grandpa would try to rush things if she didn't keep him distracted. I don't know what that means, but I thrust Miss Rieka. I've been reading all her books with her and I can start to understand what she is saying most of the time now. I don't think I want to understand what she is meaning by 'distracted' either, so I'm not going to ask.

I like asking her other questions, though.

“Miss Rieka?”

“Yes?” She says, taking the chair beside me and opening a small book in her lap, one of the spell books.

“What does ‘yeet’ mean?”

She scrunches her nose up like mommy does and gives me a confused look. “Yeet?”

“Yeah. Yeet.”

“Use it in a sentence.”

I sighed, “‘I’m going to yeet you over the building’. Well, Brother Casey said more than that, but mommy says I can’t say the bad words yet, even though I know what most of them mean.” Brother Casey actually said, ‘I’m going to yeet your fat ass over that fucking building if you don’t leave my face hair the fuck alone’. It was when Brother Casey showed up at training with a skinny trail of hair all around his mouth in a square shape. Dad told him that his face hair finally looked as weak as the rest of him.

“Oh my,” Miss Rieka giggles, “I remember that conversation. It means to throw something, I believe. The context changes with each generation and even by the individuals using it, but Casey definitely meant he was going to throw your father over the building.”

“Oh,” I said, resting my head on my chin again. “Miss Rieka, how come you know everything that I’m talking about all the time when I talk about my family? Do you watch us all the time?”

She smiles but doesn’t look happy. She looks sad while smiling at my question. “I always watch all my children all the time. I have to. It’s part of the curse I took upon myself to keep my children ignorant and at peace.”

“That sounds tiring,” I mumbled. “I would have a hard time doing that.”

She chuckles at me. “It isn’t easy, my child, but I’m happy to do it. It hurts at times when my children are hurting or making decisions that will hurt others, but I’m still happy to do it. Better me than someone else.”

“Did someone else want to do it?” I asked.

She makes the sad smile again. “Someone did. I wouldn’t let him.”

“Who?”

“My husband,” she says, like it's not a big deal, but I can hear the sad tone in her voice. “He wanted to take my place, but I couldn’t let him. He had the strength needed to overcome the terrors plaguing our clan, and I had different strengths. I wanted my people to thrive, and to do that I knew I needed to be the one to take on the curse. My daughter and I had to plot behind his back and come to receive the punishment ourselves. She took the curse on earth and I took the curse in heaven. When my husband found out, I was granted the ability to turn his affections elsewhere so he didn’t try to fight the gods himself to get me back.”

“You told me that,” I took her hand, feeling her sadness, “That’s when you made the first mate bond.”

She grins, “It was. My daughter had to leave our clan too to protect their bond, but she gladly did it.” She sighs, gripping my hand tightly, “Our bloodline has suffered much, but because we took that suffering, the rest of the werewolves thrived. Werewolves generally have a selfless character and a strong urge to protect their family. There are a few bad eggs, just like in any society or family, but werewolves haven’t suffered many of the affiliations other races have suffered due to

the sacrifice Baeli and I doomed our daughters too. It may sound cruel, considering your mother's condition, but I would do it again, and I know my daughter would do it again too, to protect those we loved. To protect our clan and the man who fiercely loved us."

"Baeli?" My eyes go wide with surprise. "Like, my mom?"

She giggles, "Exactly like your mom. Baeli was my daughter, and your mom, Bailey, is just like her. Selfless to a fault, willing to do anything to protect her man and her pack. My daughter always thought with her heart before her head, just like your mom. I knew the moment your mom was born, when I saw her through your grandfather Max, that she was the one. The one it would all end with, because she was the exact image of the one it all started with."

"I thought Alyssa, grandpa's first mate, was the one who was supposed to end it all?" I heard Uncle Rick tell Miss Quinn that the night I stayed with them and he thought I was sleeping. I also saw it in the PAST book not long ago.

"I did too for a while, but then I saw Bailey in Max's future. After your dad was born, I saw her in his future too, and that's when I knew that Alyssa was always just a stepping stone in the patterns of fate to get your mother where she needed to be. I felt bad for your grandpa, but I saw someone greater for him in his future too. The other deities and I had to entangle many fates and plan every millisecond of your family's lives to the best of our abilities while still granting free will to get the outcome we've finally come to." She sets the spell book down and rubs my cheek. "I waited so long for you, Taegan. You were the final piece. You are the key to everything. You, my child, are the final piece of the puzzle for so many."

"Hmm, so kinda like the final boss? Like Ganondorf and Ganon in Zelda? I'm the final piece to win the game?"

She throws her head back and laughs, "Not at all. You are more like Link. The only one who can defeat the bad guys and save the princess."

"Link doesn't have a beast form, though," I tell her.

"You won't have a beast form. Beasts are wild creatures devoid of rational thought. You will have a counterpart. A partner to help you become stronger. Your counterpart will be as intelligent and humanoid as you, Taegan. He will only be able to protect, not destroy."

"Wow," I tried to imagine what she was talking about. I can picture it at all. "I can't wait to meet him."

"Good, because I think we are about ready." Miss Rieka stands and starts to walk to the bookshelves in the darkest corner of the library. She runs her hands over the books until the spine of one starts to light up with a glittering glow against her fingers. Its golden hue intensifies, making it hard for me to keep watching.

I close my eyes when Miss Rieka pulls the book, the glow blinding me, making my eyes hurt. Then, all the light dies out, and when I open my eyes again, even the regular lights are off in the library, the only light coming is from Miss Rieka. Her entire body is glowing gold, making her no longer look like a normal person like my mom, but like a real goddess. A beautiful and really powerful goddess.

She is standing in front of a thing that looks a lot like one of Grandma Thyra's portals, but this one makes my head feel funny when I try to stare into it.

"Come, Taegan," she beckoned me with a smile on her face, causing the unease I felt at seeing her glowing disappear. I feel warm and fuzzy inside instead. My magic is spinning inside me, intensifying, but not like it's out of control. It feels like it is just getting stronger, preparing for whatever is about to happen.

"Where are we going?" I asked, scooting my booty off the chair.

"To meet the others," she says, her voice sounding a little different than normal. It almost sounds like she's singing. "Then, to fully awaken your wolf."

Excitement makes my heart beat really fast. I can finally get my wolf. I've been waiting for this for so long. Once I get my wolf, I can go back to mom. I can save her.

I took her hand that she was holding out to me. My body suddenly starts buzzing weirdly, my magic stretching to every inch of my body in a way I have never felt before. The orb that is usually in my chest is expanding like a moldable balloon, and my mind clears. It doesn't feel normal. It feels like something is missing, like my mental capacity is magnified, but not just for myself.

I didn't even know the phrase 'mental capacity' 10 seconds ago. What the heck is going on?

I look up at the goddess in confusion, but she is not looking at me. She was looking towards the library doors.

I looked over in the direction she was looking towards and saw my grandfather and grandmother standing in the doorway staring at me, their mouths agape. My grandfather seemed to be ready to run into the room, a worried look on his face. The only thing stopping him is Thyra's hand on his chest and the magic I can not only see, but I can feel, in a new, different way, humming like a livewire in her fingers. I can read her aura, a black and indigo hue, and I know she is fighting to keep my grandfather at bay.

"All will be fine, Max. It is time; time for the sacrifices you have endured to come to fruition."

Grandpa. Not grandfather, because that is unfamiliar and would hurt his feelings if I started to call him that. I don't know why I had the sudden urge to begin calling him grandfather. That's too strange. Grandpa is looking at me, unsure if he should believe what his own goddess is telling him.

“I will be fine, Grandpa,” I told him in his mind, “This is what I am meant to do.”

His eyes got even wider, not so much in fear, but more in surprise at hearing my voice inside his head. He didn't expect that, and it almost makes me want to laugh.

“How?....”

I look up to the goddess, and my smile stretches seeing her ethereal energy flowing out of her and into me. She has been holding back for my sake, but now that I can tolerate the full brunt of her power, she won't have to hold back any longer. She can be the preeminent deity that she truly is. That's why she kept feeding me her energy in small doses. She was preparing me for this.

“Soon, Grandpa,” I smirked smugly at my now less volatile grandfather, “We can go home soon.”

With that, Rieka steps forward, pulling me through the portal with her. The magic in me is reaching out, grasping the pulsing, divine energy around us.

I look back one final time at my grandfather, who is now on his knees, looking lost as he stares after me. “My fate is to save them. Your fate is hovering next to you. Take care of Grandma Thyra and I can handle the rest.”

Max POV

I felt weird all day. I thought it was my unease having been in the fucking realm for much longer than I would have liked.

Don't get me wrong. I love the time I am spending with my new mate. It's really like being in heaven having nothing to do but build our bond by spending so much time together. We fuck for what feels like days on end without ever getting tired, never getting enough of each other, and then when we aren't fucking and spending our time in bed, we would travel the mansion, explore the grounds, have private meals together and also spend time with Taegan when he wasn't with the moon goddess, which was rare.

It's intoxicating, having no obligations but to ride out the high of everlasting bliss, but today it dawned on me that Thyra and I came here to save Bailey and end the curse. We aren't doing anything for that. Not a damn fucking thing.

The goddess said it would be Taegan, which, okay, I fucking get it, but it's eating at me today.

When? When the fuck will he be getting this almighty power and his wolf so we can head back to finish what we came here to do?

“You feel like you are in a mood today,” Thyra smirks at me, lying naked in our bed, not even a sheet to cover her. I've had my mouth and tongue on every inch and crevice of her body

hundreds of times now. She wasn't shy before that, and she sure as fuck isn't shy about her body now.

I fucking love that, but I'm starting to feel like my head is being messed with to just be focused on fucking my new mate.

That lust-filled haze isn't weighing on me today, and it's making my anxieties about Bailey and going back home return.

"I, uh, think I need to speak to the moon goddess," I mutter, standing from the bed and walking to the bathroom to get my clothes that magically appear there whenever I need them. We haven't done laundry once, and Thyra only opened her little portal locker thing once to get our belongings. I guess the dog men have the ability to magically clean our clothes and put them back in the room without us noticing. It's probably just magic. Who fucking knows?

I didn't think about it before. I didn't think of much of anything besides Thyra after our first few days here, but today I'm thinking about everything but sex for once.

We need to fucking go home and save Bailey. It's been so fucking long.

"What's wrong?" Thyra came in behind me, pulling on her own clothes.

"I don't know," I grumbled, "I feel like I need to check on Taegan and we need to hurry this shit up. We've been here for fucking ever."

She stares at me in the mirror for a few seconds, then tilts her head to the side while she thinks. "We have, haven't we? Huh. I didn't realize it till just now."

"That's what I'm saying," I growled. "I feel off. I feel like something is fucking changing and I need to go check on Taegan."

"I'm coming with you," she says, pulling her shirt over her head and slipping on her shoes.

Right as we both are about to leave the room, all the lights in the room glow stronger than before, for 10 whole seconds, then they all go out at the same time. That feeling of unease intensifies, making both of us bolt out of the room together.

I'm holding Thyra's hand, leading the way to the library where I know the goddess spends the most time with my grandson. I have my werewolf vision helping me to see in the dark and she doesn't. I never even stopped in there to see what they were doing. I just trusted her with him, no questions asked.

That's not like me. I'm fucking protective. Sometimes too much so. I know it. Normally, I would supervise anything and everything that had to do with my grandkids to make sure no harm came to them. I've been so drowned in my own desires for my mate that I haven't thought of checking in on Taegan once.

When we get to the doors, a weird glow is filtering from underneath them. I open the doors to the library, and then my heart fucking drops.

What the fuck is going on? The goddess doesn't look like she does normally. She looks.....otherworldly. She looks like a fucking god. I mean, she did before too, but not like this. This is almost frightening. The power radiating off her is stifling, and there is my fucking grandson, glowing in the same heavenly glow as her, being led to some portal to who the fuck knows where.

Thyra is pressing on my chest, holding me in place with her magic as the urge to run to my grandson and take him away from something so frighteningly glorious rushes through me.

It's my fucking job to protect him, and she is taking him away from me. She is taking him somewhere I feel in my bones I will never be able to go.

I don't want to believe her when she tells me that all will be fine. How the fuck will everything be fine if he is going somewhere I can't go?

It isn't until I hear Taegan's voice in my head do I realize that I'm already out of my element. His voice has so much authority in it, he no longer sounds like my mischievous little grandson, flirting with all the girls and endlessly pranking his cousins. He's.....he's something else. He's something so much greater now, and it scares me.

I'm the protector. I'm his grandpa. I should be the one protecting him, to save him, but I suddenly feel like he's the one who will be protecting me.

"My fate is to save them. Your fate is hovering next to you. Take care of Grandma Thyra and I can handle the rest."

He disappears beyond the portal, and then the room is filled with a light so blinding, Thyra and I are thrown to the ground by its impactful force.

"WHAT THE FUCK!" I roared, my heart racing. I opened my eyes slowly, pulling myself off my mate who I tried to protect with my body. I look around and Taegan is gone, along with the goddess. "Taegan?" Where did she take him?

"Do not worry, Alpha and Princess. They will be back soon. Very soon. Time works differently here," Dante says from behind us as the lights begin to flicker back on. "The goddess wishes your forgiveness for her meddling. She needed uninterrupted cooperation. As such, she messed with your, um, sex drives and kept you in a euphoric state to achieve that. Her power will be used in full for your grandson today, so she chose to relieve you from her influence. If you would follow me, we can wait for them in the other room over a cup of tea, or coffee, whichever you prefer. It will feel like but a minute in this realm before they return."

"I don't want any fucking coffee! I want my fucking grandson!"

Dante grins in his wolfish way. "By the time you are done with your coffee, he will return."

2.38 Elysium and the Not Beast

Chapter 118 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Taegan POV

The space around us feels suffocating and empty at the same time. The power in it is stifling, making it hard to breathe. You aren't breathing oxygen. It's pure untamed magic, ancient and transcendent, like the pure power of a star at the moment it explodes.

My human body is trying to reject the power, but the magic in me is clinging to it desperately, the conflict between the two feels like it's tearing me apart.

"Breathe, Taegan," I hear the goddess somewhere in the void, her melodic tone lost in the nothingness of the space, perpetrating through the oppressive power that is suffocating me.

"I can't!" I cried out in my head.

"You can. Let go, Taegan. Let it overtake you. It will only be a moment."

Let go? Let go of what? There is nothing to let go of.

"Your reason, Taegan. There are no constrictions in Elysium, and you are still trying to hold on to the laws you're constricted by on Earth. Let go. Don't think. Just be."

Let go of my reason?

I try. I try to shut off my brain and the moment I do, my body stops trying to breathe; it quits fighting for oxygen that I instinctually just know I need, and the moment I quit fighting for a breath, the rest of my body quits fighting the power surging around me, my inner magic finally able to latch on to the power it is being offered.

The power no longer feels suffocating. It's as much a part of me as my own magic is, transforming my body. My limbs are the first to change, elongating, muscles emerging where there never were muscles before. Not muscles my 6-year-old body could obtain. From the tips of my fingers and toes, all the way up my legs and arms, the transformation moving over every cell inside me in the trail of power, changing me into something different; something new. I've been in dad's mind with the goddess. I've been in many strong alphas' minds across the world I live

in, watching them and feeling their energy and power. This is nothing like the power they possess. This is absolute. This is infinite and pure. This is ethereal, like the moon goddess herself.

When the power reaches my chest, my heartbeat begins to pound against my ribcage, my adrenaline pumping through me and I have to resist the urge to fight off the power once again. It's overtaking all of me, making me into something unknown. Something primal and raw. Something made of pure power and ancient.

This isn't the power of an alpha wolf. This is something more primordial than wolves.

The nothingness around me takes on a mystic glow, the faint violet waves in the black space become visible as the power creeps up my face, transforming my vision along with my features. My entire body no longer feels like my own, my mind expanding and my consciousness being pushed to the side, making room for another.

I'm no longer looking out of my own eyes. This is no longer my body. This is no longer just my mind.

"Conri," I whisper.

"Hello, Taegan," a primitive, deep voice echoes in my head with me. "We meet at last."

"You're my wolf?" I asked, even my voice sounding different in the confines of our mind. It's not the voice of a 6-year-old boy. My voice is a lot like my father's voice; deep, authoritative, mature.

"I'm your Lycan," he says, his gravelly chuckle making me smile.

"Lycan," I repeated, "You're strong. Stronger than dad. Stronger than Grandpa."

"And now so are you."

I grin, eager to flex our new strength and see what we can do.

"Beautiful," the goddess sings out, and I feel a hand on my back. No, not my back. Conri's back. I can feel it, but it's not my skin, my fur that she is touching. It's Conri's and I can only feel it because our minds are the same. His feelings are shared with the sharing of our mind.

"My goddess," Conri purrs, his fur rising at the feel of her touch. "You are as magnificent as ever, Rieka, my goddess."

"You are as coquettish as ever, I see," she chuckles. Her hand brushes through the fur along Conri's spine, and with the touch, sadness washes over me, but only for a moment. The feeling is as fleeting as my vision, which is still not restored. I know that Conri can see, but for some reason I can't. It's like the sense is unavailable to me at the moment.

“I’m glad I could see you one more time before I send you back to finish what we started,” the goddess murmurs, her melodious voice dripping with poignancy.

“I am here to serve you, my goddess,” Conri responds, his tone reverent, not sad as hers. I wonder why he doesn’t feel her sorrow as I do.

She sighs heavily and I feel her hand rubbing between my ears, making Conri purr again. “It’s time to fully meet your human counterpart,” she tells him, “He needs to see what you are and what he will become.”

“Yes, my goddess. I feel it too.”

She holds his face in her hands as he bows down to be within her reach. I feel lips tenderly pressing against one eyelid, and then the other. When she releases her hold on him, his back straightens, his eyelids blink rapidly and suddenly I can see. The room around me is void of anything physical. It’s impossible to describe the pure power, glowing strongly all around us. It’s alive, spinning us in an orbit of its aboriginal divinity. Fire. Fire would be the closest thing I could use to describe it. All consuming and renewing. This is the place creation is forged, in the fiery planes of this timeless, primordial realm.

Elysium. That’s what the goddess called it.

I look up, Conri following along with my will in his body, and I see other beings, much like the goddess, floating in the space around us. Only, they don’t appear to be floating. It looks as if they are to my human mind, but I think they just are. They are just there, choosing to be above us, not restricted by material structures and gravity. They simply exist in this place.

Each one of them is as magnificent as the next, their overwhelming power and authority radiating out of their very presence.

When my eyes, Conri’s eyes land on Rieka, I want to cry at the divinity flowing out of every cell of her being. She’s magnificent, just as Conri described her. She looks nothing like my mother in this realm. She looks timeless, lustrous with power and sovereignty. I love my mother, and she is the most beautiful human there is, but Rieka is not human. That fact never occurred to me until that very moment.

She’s a god. She’s the moon itself in all its radiance. She is the very foundation of the core of my being, and no one and nothing could compare to the glory that exudes from her at this moment.

“Goddess,” I gasped, my voice still mature and deep.

“My, Taegan. With a voice like that, I don’t think I can call you my child any longer,” the goddess chuckles lightly. “Come see.”

She beckons Conri to follow her, then waves her hand in the air, producing something that would be described as a mirror in my world, but not here. Here, it is something as immaterial as the rest of this realm. It is like the power itself took this form to show off its own abilities.

When I focus on Conri's body in the projection, the power it is reflecting back to us, I try to sharply inhale with a gasp, but without oxygen I end up making a strangled noise instead. He's like nothing I have ever seen before. Nothing like a werewolf in my world. He's a god in and of himself.

His body is like a man's. No. It is stronger than any man. Impossibly stronger. Towering above the goddess, monstrous in size, but humanoid in shape. His face is the only thing resembling a wolf, but even that is too powerful to be identified as a wolf's. His snout is wider, neck thicker, covered in thick black fur with tracings and patterns of silver in symmetric patches. His eyes are a glowing blue, electric like the magic flowing thick in our veins.

"Conri. You are.....intimidating. You're not beautiful at all. Where the heck was she looking?"

"You brat! Where the hell do you think? Look at me! My fur is glowing and luscious."

"Luscious and scary. You're going to make my dad crap a brick. Wait...." I think for a few seconds, then a sinister smile stretches on Conri's face as he follows my train of thought. "We can totally freak the weak face hair right off Casey."

"Oh, I like to scare," Conri chuckles. He starts rifling through my memories, pausing a little longer than necessary on the ones of different she-wolves in our pack. He doesn't do it to mom or anyone in our family, or the she-wolves he knows are taken. Just the single ones I see daily at training. Grandpa isn't going to like that. Dad either. He lands on a memory of Beta Rick, projecting it in our mind. "We scare him too."

"Oh, I like you, you horrendous hairy beast."

"We can make it a game. Big bad wolf and the horrendous hairy beast game. We win every time."

"I like to win," I grinned.

"Okay, you two," the goddess chides us, "plan your pranks and games later. Taegan, you need to do your first transformation. I want to warn you, though, this place is not bound to the laws of time and reason like Earth is. Your appearance will be different than before. You will go back to normal in your world as well as in mine, but here, you will be as you will be."

"Will be as you will be? That sounds like a bad nursery rhyme," Conri teases her, making her narrow her eyes at him. We visibly shiver at the power exuding from those threatening eyes. She can do with us as she wishes here.

"Stop mocking her or she will turn us into a poodle," I hissed at him.

“Poodle if you are lucky,” she smirks, lifting a brow. “Conri, walk Taegan through the process of shifting. The process of him taking back his body and taking control of it.”

“Anything for you, my goddess,” he croons. She rolls her eyes at his flirtatious behavior.

“Okay, Taegan. It’s not that hard. Feel your position in our mind right now. Do you feel how I’m at the forefront and you are in the back? Will yourself forward, and at the same time, expand your magic, starting from your chest, then work your way out to your limbs. It’s the complete reverse to how I took control from you.”

“Were you what my magic was trying to cling to?” I asked.

“The deities were binding my soul and magic to yours. It’s an uncomfortable process, but necessary for us. It will be easier when our sisters and mom do it because they won’t have magic like you. Your magic had to transform with your body.”

“So my magic is as beastly as you now?” I smirked at him.

“I’m not a beast, you brat. I’m a Lycan.”

“Same thing,” I snort.

“No it's not. I’m majestic and intelligent, with pretty eyes and luscious fur.”

“Some people say poodles have luscious fur,” I teased him.

“Some say you were shitting your pants and wetting the bed just yesterday,” he growls.

“Some people would be wrong. I’ve been wiping my own butt for more than 4 years and I’ve never wet the bed. Beastly intelligence you have, I tell you. Maybe I should request a poodle instead. I hear they have high brain function.”

“Will you quit yapping and take control?” he snarls, “Let’s see the state of your fur. It won't be as luscious as mine, I'm sure.”

“Okay, okay,” I laughed, trying to focus on my magic as I laughed myself forward in our mind. It’s a lot easier than I thought it would be. My magic is different, too. It’s stronger. More stable. It’s a mixture of both of our magic and I can feel his ancient Lycan energy fusing with my human magic, transforming it as it pumps through our body. I latch on to my magic, expanding it to overshadow his Lycan magic. As his magic recedes, mine transforms our body back to human form, but it’s a human form I'm not familiar with.

I look like my dad. No, dad looks older than this, and more rough; weathered. I look very similar to him, though. My muscles are just as big as his, maybe more dense in some places. My waist is narrower. I am butt naked, and when my eyes drift down to what mom would call my bathing suit area, my eyes go wide.

“How the heck do I fit that in my underwear? That’s too much,” I stared horrified at my naked state.

Conri snorts and chortles in my head, and the goddess is rolling her eyes, looking like my mom again when she is annoyed about something.

“Typical male. Focusing on that and nothing else. I see you can transform as you should, so I believe our time here is done. Let us return to the mansion before your grandfather becomes unforgivably rude to my helpers.”

“Can I go back like this?” I asked. “Grandpa will lose his mind.”

“I think he is on the verge of doing just that without your help, Taegan. I think we can let him see you this way naturally over the next 14 years.” She is giving me that motherly scolding face again, making me smile to ease her disapproval of my behavior. Just like it works with mom, it works with the goddess. She smirks, fighting back a smile and shakes her head.

“You and your counterpart will do well together. Every father on earth is going to be praying to me to save their daughters from the both of you.”

“Because we are both so beautiful?” Conri asks in my head, but somehow I hear him out loud as well in the ethereal space we are still in.

“Because you are both so flirtatious and use your charms to get your way,” she laughs, waving her hand and making the mirror-like power transform into a portal like the one we went through to get here. “Come, Taegan. Let’s save your grandmother a headache.”

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Thyra POV

“How fucking long does it take you to make a shitty cup of coffee?” Max snarls at Dante.

Dante groans, shaking his head, his snout opening to reveal his canines, and I imagine he’s thinking about how much trouble he could get in if he took the liberty of shutting up my mate.

“Max,” I rested my hand on his arm, “It’s only been a few minutes.”

“The fuck it has. Hurry with the damn coffee and get my grandson back to me.”

“Your tea, princess,” Dante hums, ignoring Max’s demands while setting a porcelain tea cup and saucer in front of me. The aromatic fragrance drifts up to me with the steam, the lavender and honey scent making me moan with gratitude.

“Thank you Dante. It smells lovely.”

“You are very welcome, princess.”

“Don’t ignore me, you fucking mutt. Coffee. Now. Then I want my grandson.”

Dante sighs. “He will be returning any moment, Alpha. Your anger and crass words are not needed for that to occur.”

“I’m sure my size 18 boot up your ass isn’t needed either, but you’re about to get it if you don’t hurry with the fucking coffee.”

“Max!” I hissed at him. “Calm down or I’ll make you.”

“Don’t you get all zappy fingers with me,” he scowls at me, then winces seeing the disapproving look on my face. “I’m sorry. Zap away. Just make him hurry the fuck up with the coffee. Zap him too.”

“You’re about to get more than zapped,” I snapped at him. “You can act all dominant alpha wolf to others at home, but try it with me and see how that ends for you.”

He groans, wrapping his arms around my waist, dragging me and my chair closer to him and burying his face in my neck. “They took my grandson, though. I want him back.”

“I get that, but I doubt you have anything to worry about if he is with the goddess.”

I picked up my cup of tea and took it to my lips, sipping the hot flowery liquid and letting the tea coat my entire mouth before I swallowed. Dante makes very good tea. It’s a lot like the tea I would always request in the fairy courts when I was a very young lady, before I was shipped off for marriage. I wonder if my brother told the goddess my likes and dislikes when he spoke with her. This entire trip has been filled with all my favorite foods and such. Maybe she just knew. She is a deity. She probably wanted to keep both Max and myself content and distracted to do what she needed with Taegan without our interference. The display we saw earlier was a lot to handle. I can only imagine the kind of divine power she has been using while we were distracted with other things. Max may have interfered if it scared him too much like the display earlier did.

“I want my grandson,” Max groans again, his nose pressed against the mark on my neck. The sparks are dancing on my skin, and I know he is using my scent to get control of his anxiety and anger.

I sighed, rolling my eyes and sending Dante an apologetic expression. He smiles his wolfie grin, the last of the drip coffee falling into the coffee cup waiting below the upper glass funnel. He takes his time wiping the edges of the cup, and I’m glad Max has his head buried in my nape, my hair shielding his view. He would lose his mind if he saw how slow Dante was intentionally being.

Dante must know the exact moment of when Taegan will return and is holding out for them to prevent Max from going ballistic. I would do the same.

Dante holds the cup up, examining it for any blemishes or drips, and after he is satisfied with its pristine condition, he sighs, then sets it in front of my mate.

“Your coffee, Alpha,” he said in an unenthusiastic tone. He stepped back just in time for Max to raise his head, pick up the steaming hot cup, then down the burning liquid in one giant gulp.

My irrational, hyper-protective mate is infuriating sometimes. I can tell it burned his esophagus becomes mine aches right away through the bond.

“What the hell?!” I snapped at him, rubbing my neck. He looks apologetic for a minute, but his wolf abilities heal him quickly, making my pain disappear as well. He just grips my thigh for a moment, like that was going to placate me, then snarls at Dante.

“Now give me my fucking grandson, mutt.”

Dante snarls, his snout vibrating with the action. A deep growl leaves Max, so I just lift my cup and move my chair back a foot or so, giving Max room to get his ass kicked in the goddess’ realm. He deserves it at this point.

Before the fight can break out, the doors of the sitting room burst and Taegan comes running in, giggling freely, a faint glow radiating out of his body. He runs straight for Max, throwing his arms around the burly man who, just half a second prior, was wound tight, ready to attack. Max relaxed instantly, encircling his grandson in his arms, pulling him tight to his chest.

“You’re being bad, grandpa. You are giving Grandma Thyra a headache.”

“Oh Taegan,” Max sounded about ready to cry, “What took you so long?”

“Oh my gosh,” I rolled my eyes, and saw Dante doing the same before he walked off. It’s been about 5 minutes for us.

Rieka trails in after Taegan, and by the look on her face, I don’t think it was merely 5 minutes for her. She looks exhausted.

“I have my wolf, grandpa!” Taegan tells him excitedly. “His name is Conri!”

Rieka smiles sadly, and the sorrow in her eyes as she stares at Taegan is a strange mix of relief and remorse. I wonder why, but I feel it would be unkind to ask.

“I will retire for the evening. We will begin the final stage in the morning, Taegan. Remember what I told you.”

“No shifting,” he nodded at her, making her smile once more before leaving the room.

“You gave your wolf appearance a name?” Max asks, holding him at arms length to examine him.

“He had a name. It’s Conri.”

Max’s brows furrowed in confusion, but he didn’t question it. I don’t either. I don’t think the goddess wants us to yet.

“Where did you go?” Max asks.

Taegan’s smile transformed into the expression he held before he left through the portal. The intelligence behind it shocked me for a moment. His eyes glowed oddly. As I stare into them, becoming transfixed with the complexity behind them, I sense a power different to any I have ever encountered before. It amazes and terrifies me for a moment, that amount of power being contained in this little boy.

When I examine the rest of his features, I see his eyes aren’t the only thing different about his tiny body. The way he carries himself is different. More maturity is showing in his movements. More control. He was already a very mature boy for his age, but he now seems graceful, like a full-grown alpha in the way he moves. There is no uncertainty about the way he holds himself. No questions about his expression. The intelligence there is beyond what I see in most adults.

“I can’t tell you, grandpa, but I can tell you that it’s going to be okay now. You won’t be stuck here much longer. We’re almost ready to save mom. I think you should try to enjoy your time with Grandma Thyra without all us grandkids getting between the two of you while you still can. We are almost ready to go home, and you know Aly won’t let you go for a long time when we get there.”

Max’s mouth drops at Taegan’s intelligent way of speaking. Hell, mine is too. It’s not in his words, but in his speech. I feel like Taegan is trying to seem more juvenile in his speech on purpose not to freak Max out, but we could still pick up on the difference in the confidence behind his words.

“Taegan?” Max studied his face more than before, “Why do you have the aura of an alpha now? Why....why do you....why are you.....?”

“I am an alpha, silly,” Taegan laughs at him, “I always was.” He sighs heavily, and it’s not the sigh of a little boy, but of a man with many burdens. “I think I want to rest too. I’ll see you both at dinner.”

Taegan gives his grandpa one last hug, then comes to me and kisses my cheek, the power of his magic buzzing against my skin making me gasp.

I’m flabbergasted. He feels and acts so differently now. I thought that, and was about to voice my concern, but then Taegan turned back to stare at his grandpa from the door. “You should shave before you start sucking grandma Thyra’s face again, grandpa. You look homeless today.”

Max snaps out of his stupor, growling at the insult. “You brat,” he snarls, jumping out of his chair, then chases a giggling Taegan down the hall.



Well, it's good to see that some things haven't changed, but I'm still amazed by the things that have.

## 2.39 Urgent Dreams

# Chapter 119 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Bailey POV

“What are you doing?” I grumbled, lying on my side and cuddling a pillow I'm sure I stole from Axel during the night. It smells like him.

“Nothing,” Axel whispers hoarsely in my ear, though he most certainly isn't doing nothing. I could feel both his hands between my legs, not playing with my fun area but squeezing the inner fat of my thighs, jiggling it and making my ass shake against him.

“Leave my legs alone,” I groaned, trying to cling to my sleep. I was having a pleasant but somehow urgent dream and I wanted to go back to it.

“These are my legs,” Axel growls against the back of my neck, “I can touch them if I want.”

“Not when your pregnant wife is sleeping.”

“She doesn't sound like she's sleeping any more,” he grumbles, squeezing my fat with more force, making me squirm.

I've been home for a few weeks now, and Axel going a month without sex is becoming a problem. An alpha's sex drive is no joke and I have no clue how he managed it before me. I've just been pleasuring myself when I wanted to, but that doesn't help him. Waking up to him groping my thigh and ass isn't something new.

Whenever I offer to help him with his needs, he always refuses, saying he will be fine.

“You'll find something a lot more fun to play with if you go north a little bit,” I told him, smirking against the pillow.

That really makes him groan. He quickly moved his hands from between my legs to resist temptation.

“Stop,” he growls.

“I’m just saying. You’d be saving me the trouble of doing it for myself later.”

“Bailey,” he huffs in a strangled cry. “Fuck, I have training in 30 fucking minutes.”

“Well, then hurry and leave,” I smirked, “so I can get to it.”

He groans, rolling away from me. I sense a tantrum coming from him, one that would rival Aly’s. I should cool him down and not tease him too much before he leaves for training, or all the warriors are going to have one heck of a morning dealing with his frustration.

I rolled over to snuggle against his chest, my big belly pressing into his side. “You could let me help you,” I kissed his peck, running my hand down his abs and outlining his oh-so-happy trail down to his shorts.

“No. It could hurt you,” he grumbled in a deep, gravelly voice.

“We had sex when I was pregnant with Aly and I was fine.”

“You were not suffering from some damn curse when you were pregnant with Aly. What if the pain comes when we are doing it?”

“Then we stop,” I scoffed, “Obviously. You can just hold me and help me through it like you always do, then we can go back to-”

“Go back to sex! Fuck, Bailey. If you start hurting like that when we are doing it, that will ruin sex for me for life. I’d rather just suffer and wait.”

I groan, not able to argue with that. I can see where he is coming from. The episodes have been getting pretty bad lately.

“Can I at least help you so you don’t go to training and start ripping everyone’s head off?”

He looks down and narrows his eyes at me, probably thinking through all the people who could have told on him. “I’m not going to rip anyone’s head off.”

“No, but you are going to make them match your level during the workouts, and no one can keep up with you. When they lag behind, you’ll yell at them more than you should.”

He growls, “Fucking Casey. Did he tell you that?”

“No he didn’t and leave the poor man alone. He has enough to juggle without you tossing your grumpy mood at him too.”

Courtney had her pup last week, so neither Casey or her are getting any sleep. She’s probably getting more than him. He wakes up all through the night so she doesn’t have to open her eyes for more than a few seconds to get Casper to latch on to her boobs. Casey does all the changing

and rocking to get the baby back to sleep since he can't be with her all day to do it. Fiona helps her during the day, and I know she gets naps, but Casey doesn't. Axel doesn't need to add to the reasons why his Gamma is so tired.

"He's not coming in today anyway," Axel sighed, "He looked dead on his ugly shoe wearing feet yesterday, so I told him to stay home for a few days."

I grinned up at Axel, pushing my toes against the mattress to reach his cheek and kiss it. "You're so sweet."

"I know," he smirks, placing a finger under my chin and lifting my face to his. His kisses are soft and tender, but I can feel the longing and need behind them. 4 more weeks until the babies are due. 4 more weeks and then, hopefully, our son will finally be back with his grandparents and the threat of me dying won't be hanging over our heads.

"Mmh, I don't want to get up," Axel groans, gripping my ass with one hand and rubbing my giant belly with his other.

"Stay home. Give the warriors the morning off," I suggested.

"Maybe," he smirks. "If I take the morning off, me and you can go over to the clinic and visit Phoebe."

"I was going to go see her with my mom later anyway. They need more blood," I reminded him.

When I mention my mom, he makes a face. Not because of her, but because Antonio keeps calling Axel to check on her. I asked him not to burden her by telling her. She would start blaming herself for Antonio annoying Axel and may even feel burdened to deal with him herself. I want her to be able to make the choice herself if she wants to talk with him again without feeling pressured that she has to because he won't leave Axel alone.

"Your mom could use a day off," Axel sighs, checking the time on his phone. His eyes cloud over as he mind links, and when he looks back at me, he has a shameless smile on his face. "Okay. Training is canceled. Archie is working in the packhouse today and patrols are already covered. I should be able to spend the day focused on you."

"Mmh, I like that," I grinned against his lips, wrapping my arms around his neck and pulling him into my kiss. His mouth moves sensually against mine, making me moan breathlessly, wanting more. But then the babies decided to kick against his abdomen and he pulled away, going back to being overly cautious of hurting me.

I sigh, feeling frustrated but not wanting to push him anymore for more, trying to respect his reason for not wanting to.

"Help me shower?" I asked, tracing his chest hair with my finger.

He smirks, “I thought you were going to do it to yourself? Don’t you usually do that in the shower?”

I blush crimson hearing that he knows about my secret. “I can still do it,” I grumble, “You can just watch.”

He groans, but still ends up following me in, getting off himself while he watches me. It amazes me that he still finds me attractive and sexy when I look like I ate a whale. His heated stare still scanned my body like he had never found me more attractive.

It was just about time for Aly to wake up when we got out, so Axel slipped on some sweats, leaving the room to get her sippy cup ready for when she did wake up to avoid a tantrum. When he came back into our room, I started to have tightness in my belly. I don’t even try to hide my pain from him anymore. It’s pointless. He can usually feel it too, now that he’s always trying to detect me in the bond.

I was bent over the sink, hoping for the pain to pass while gritting my teeth to keep from yelling out. Axel rubbed my lower back, whispering words of comfort while I was momentarily lost in the pain. It’s like my insides are getting stirred with a hot iron when the pain comes now. It knocks me to the ground, making it hard to breathe, my lungs burning with every weezing intake of air. It feels like my whole body is rejecting life itself, trying to push me to end it all. Anything to make the pain stop.

Sometimes I wonder if this was why mom turned to drug use. I wonder if the bond was urging her to end her own life in some small way, and the pain of that grew after she had me. It’s almost impossible to fully describe the hopelessness that comes with the pain of this curse. It truly feels like death is the only way out. Maybe she was unaware of the effects of the curse and was mindlessly searching for some kind of relief. Antonio was the ultimate relief from this hopeless feeling. He granted her the ability to live and die at the same time, satisfying the curse on her. It took me suffering like this to see how it could be possible for someone to choose drugs and death over living with their daughter.

I have my daughters growing inside me. I might have considered succumbing to those same temptations to make this hopeless pain lessened if it wasn’t for them.

When the pain finally starts to let up and I can take in the world around me again, panting now that breathing no longer feels as if it is burning my lungs, I find Axel in tears, rocking me in his arms, both of us on the ground in our bathroom.

Aly is crying outside of our room, sounding like she is in the living room, and I can hear my mom trying to shush her and comfort her.

“How long?” I asked when I regained the ability to speak. My voice sounded hoarse and broken to my ears. I wonder if I was screaming and I was just too lost in the pain to realize it.

Axel hiccups, he tears falling onto my neck. I can feel his anguish, his anxious sorrow. His shattered breathing cools my sweat-covered skin. This was why I wanted to hide it from him. I didn't want to hurt him like this.

"20 minutes," he whispers, "20 long minutes."

20 minutes. Not the longest spell, but it definitely felt more intense than the past ones.

"You can't leave me," he cries, his sobbing shaking both of us.

"Hey, I won't," I told him, trying to pull his face out of the crook of my neck. When I finally do, his broken expression crushes me. His blue eyes are rimmed in red and his tears are leaving thick water trails down to his stubble. He still looks incredibly handsome, even broken and grieved like this. "They'll be back soon," I tell him, "I know it. I'm not leaving you."

He bites his lip, cupping my face and resting his head on mine. "They need to hurry the fuck up."

A breathless laugh leaves me. They will. The remnants of my dream flickered back to me. They will be back soon. Very soon. I need to prepare Axel and this pack for the worst, though, before that happens. There will be no easy way to do this. No pain-free way to prepare for what is to come. If I tell Axel, he will do something drastic to try to prevent it.

"Axel," I say softly when I feel his breathing starting to even out, "I'm fine now, but my voice is raw. Can you get me water? Maybe some of the medicine from Xiomara?"

He groans, wiping a hand down his face, unable to wipe off the sorrow still resting there. "Yeah. Sprite with it, right?"

"Yes please. Thank you."

He lifts me in his arms, carrying me back to our bed. I thank him, kissing his cheek before he leaves. Once he is out the door, I move to his side of the bed to get his phone, shuffling through his contacts quickly until I find the one I need. A person who I know will do anything to get back into my good graces, because that's his only hope of getting back into my mom's.

I sent myself Antonio's number, and the number of Felix, his right-hand-man, then deleted the message to prevent Axel from seeing it. I don't want him to question why I needed their numbers.

When I heard Axel coming back down the hall, I quickly set his phone back down, curling up into his spot on the bed, pulling his pillows against me to hide my face. I prefer his spot over mine when I don't feel good, so he won't question it. He sets my water and medicine beside me on his nightstand, then bends down to kiss my head.

"I'm going to go settle down Aly. I'll be right back to help you shower again."

“Thank you,” I whisper, waiting until I hear him out in the living room talking to my mom before I move to my nightstand to get my phone. I hurried back to his side, as fast as I could with a belly constantly in my way, then opened the text I sent to myself from Axel’s phone.

I saved the numbers, then sent Antonio the message my son told me to send him. The message that was urgent in my dream.

This is Bailey. Can you be at my house at midnight on the next full moon? That is in 4 days.

I wait anxiously for a reply, and when I am about to text Felix instead, I finally receive a reply.

Antonio:| Yes

Hmm. I thought he would at least ask why.

4 days. Just 4 more days and I will get my son back and everything will be right with the world again. I just pray that the moon goddess can prevent my mate from burning the world down before that happens.

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Katherine POV

“You can’t tell him until it happens. If you do, he will try to sacrifice himself to prevent it, and it has to happen to end this,” Bailey tells me.

My insides are knotting and I feel like I’m about to be violently ill. What she is asking me is a heavy, heavy burden, and I know there is no use arguing. I can’t tell her ‘no’. I know in this pack, I am really the only one she can trust to do this. My loyalty is to her, not her pack or her mate. Everyone else would be obligated to inform Axel. I’m the only one that can carry out this task, and I may be the strongest one here to prevent her husband from doing something rash while the events that need to happen unfold.

Once it starts, I will ask Addison to help me handle Axel, and then, if things work as Bailey said, we will have until midnight to.....to help her.

I hate this. I hate that this is what it will come to, but after watching my daughter and the way she handles this pack and her mate, I know she is so much stronger than she first appears to be.

She will survive. This won’t be the end.

“I will do everything as you asked, Bailey. You don't have to worry about me,” I said, trying to force a smile.

“I know I don’t, Thank you,” she grins, then sighs as she stares out the window of the room we are sitting in at the clinic, watching her Mate tease the young vampire girl across the hall.

Bailey is waiting to get her blood drawn for Phoebe to drink. Since Phoebe has been ingesting it, there hasn't been any regression in her health. She is still in the very early stages of becoming a rogue, but there has been no progression since the day she accidentally bit Bailey.

Bailey hums a laugh watching Phoebe get irritated at something Axel just said. Phoebe's brothers are playing with Aly, chasing her up and down the halls under Stephanie's watch. Bailey truly loves her pack and everyone in it, including the vampires, witches and now fairies that reside here. I knew Harriet quite well and I know she never truly cared for her pack the way Bailey does. She never would have accepted other races or loved them the way Bailey does. My daughter is an amazing Luna. An amazing person. I may not have helped to raise her, but my chest is still swelling with pride just being able to say that such an amazing woman is my daughter.

"Can you help me with one more thing?" Bailey says, tearing her eyes away from her husband.

"Anything," I smiled at her.

She giggles, "It's kind of urgent. I don't know if I can ask anyone else to do this either. They will ask too many questions."

Oh no. Now I'm kind of worried. "What?" my voice is laced with uncertainty.

She laughs sweetly again. "Can you give Max's house a quick makeover? It needs to be ready in 4 days."

I furrowed my brows, confused by her request.

"He's going to need one of his guest rooms converted into a little boy's room. One fit for a prince."

2.40 The Daughter I Always Longed For

Chapter 120 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

"Grandpa, just do it," Taegan scowls at me.

"No!" I huffed, "Rover, there is not coming anywhere near me with that fucking needle."

Thyra is leaning against the wall, smirking, and I can feel the woman's amusement in the damn bond. Fuck, this is so frustrating. I know they need my blood to save Bailey, I fucking get that, but I trust Dante to take it about as far as I can throw him, which isn't far.

I found that out the hard way. My pride is still stinging from challenging him to spar and then losing in the most shameful fucking display you could imagine. Damn divine dog. I still hate him.

"Will you let me do it, then?" Taegan asks, looking a little too eager at the prospect of digging around my veins with a needle.

"I'll hold him down," Dante offers, his snout stretching into a menacing grin.

A fierce growl vibrates my chest. He's really not coming near me now.

"Just give him a knife and let him get blood the primal way, since the big bad alpha seems to be frightened of a little needle," Thyra offers.

"I'm not fucking scared of needles. I'm scared of a rabid mutt or a 6-year-old stabbing me and digging around in my fucking arms."

"Give it here, Dante," Thyra holds her hand out for the syringe.

I narrowed my eyes at her. "Give me the knife instead."

"Why? Do you not trust me either?"

"Do you have a medical degree?" I asked.

"No, but I have many other qualifications," she quirked a brow at me.

"Like what?" I crossed my arms over my chest in case the mutt, still watching me like a snake, tried to take me by surprise.

"Like having the ability to castrate you in your sleep if you don't quit being a brat." She then adds in a mind link, "I also have the vagina in this relationship. I don't want to be the only one with balls too."

"Did you just call me a pussy?" I scoffed.

"I sure as hell am not seeing anything to prove otherwise right now," she snaps.

Fuck, why does it turn me on so much when she gets all authoritative to me? It's like she is challenging my manhood, and fuck do I want to meet her head-on.

“Shit,” I gripped, closing my eyes and held my arm out for her to stab me with the vicious looking needle.

“Finally,” Taegan sighs, “You’re a big baby, grandpa. Uncle Nate would make fun of you so much right now.”

“Shut up,” I growled, peeking out of one eye to see him staring at me with an amused smirk. His eyes cloud over a bit, not like mind linking but in a strange way that makes his entire eye glow a faint blue.

He must be talking to the thing in his head he calls a Lycan. The moon goddess told me I couldn’t see it. She said that he had to wait to shift until he was with his mom. It irritates the hell out of me that he has a fucking wolf that I’m not allowed to see, one that is supposedly stronger than me, but I’m not going to jeopardize saving Bailey by demanding something the moon goddess said no to.

Taegan looks like he is laughing at himself, his smile stretching on his face and a snicker leaving his lips.

Fucking irritating. I want to know what kind of thing is in his mind. What the hell is it telling him?

“Ready?” Thyra asks.

“No,” I grumbled.

“Too bad.”

Without any warning, she stabs my arms, making me yell in a very unmanly manner. Fuck, she’s going to say something else about me being a pussy. I’m almost excited about it, but then I see Dante chuckle to himself and I’m pissed off again.

“What the fuck are you still doing here? Go play tea party or something,” I growled, wanting the infuriating dog man to leave.

He rolls his black, beady eyes, then exits through the kitchen, probably to go tell on me to the goddess. Annoying animal. I’m glad we’re getting ready to go home. Fuck, we should be leaving as soon as the moon goddess gets back. She had to prepare something for Taegan, and then we are out of here.

“There, you big baby,” Thyra says, pulling the full syringe from my forearm. I looked away, cringing at the feel of the needle slipping out of me.

Taegan produces from his jacket pocket a glass container that looks like a mason jar, only with an air-tight clasp instead of a screw top, then takes the syringe from Thyra to squirt my blood in it.

“Why do you need my blood? Why couldn’t you get your fucking dad’s when we got back?” I asked him.

“Because dad is going to be very unhappy when we get back, and taking his blood will be impossible. I actually need you to hold him back for me the second you see him, or he might kill Grandma Katherine’s mate.”

“Antonio?” I questioned. Why the fuck would that twat waffle be there?

“That’s him. He’s the closest and most convenient original vampire we have. Mom is getting him ready for his part for us.”

I stare at my grandson, uncomfortable with the implications of everything he is saying. Why the hell would Axel want to kill Antonio? What is Antonio going to do to Bailey to make Axel want to?

Thyra looks concerned down at Taegan, then combs her fingers through his hair. He turns and smiles up at her. “I’m excited for you, Grandma Thyra.”

“Me?” she coughs a laugh. “Why? What’s going to happen to me?”

Taegan shrugs. “I think mom wanted to keep it a surprise. That’s what it looked like. She is doing some renovations to grandpa’s house for you.”

“Is she upgrading my kitchen or something? What the fuck is she doing?” I asked, now concerned about my house. “And why isn’t your mom in the damn hospital like she’s supposed to be?”

“Mom isn’t supposed to be in the hospital,” he simply says.

I groan. Decoding the shit that comes out of my grandson’s mouth gives me a fucking headache. I wish he could just be straightforward with me.

“Good. You got it, Princess,” the goddess says as she walks into the kitchen, making me jump out of my stool in surprise. I didn’t even hear her come in.

“I had to threaten him to get it,” my mate smirks at me, and I feel myself going weak in the fucking knees at her sultry face. Fuck me, I can’t wait for all this shit to be over so I can do something about the look she’s giving me. This pussy will show her pussy just who has the balls in this relationship. They will be smacking against her ass until the fucking sun comes up.

“Focus, Max,” the goddess scolds me. The disapproving looks she sends me makes me hang my head shamefully.

“Sorry,” I muttered.

She comes to Taegan and crouches down in front of him. She stares into his eyes and his eyes do that eerie glowing shit again. Taegan smiles and nods his head, taking a book from her hands, an old weathered one with different phases of the moon on it. He nods at her again, and then opens his jacket to stick it in an inside pocket.

They must be mind linking. Freaks the shit out of me that my grandson can do that.

She smiles up at him, rubbing her hand on his cheek, then kissing his forehead before she stands to look between me and Thyra.

“Let’s head to the place we first met. Your pegasus will be there waiting for you. We can discuss what is to come next while we walk.”

Nervousness eats away at me as we follow behind Taegan and the goddess. This scene is a lot like when we first got her; Thyra and I holding hands and following behind the goddess and my grandson. I’m as confused and anxious now as I was back then, but this time it’s not anxiousness for my mate. One thing that has solidified during our time here is our bond. She’s fucking mine forever and I have no doubt about that.

My anxiety and worry is for my grandson and his mother. This almost feels morbid. The atmosphere around Taegan is heavy with responsibility; too much responsibility for a boy. Too fucking much for my boy; my grandson.

“Max,” the goddess turned her head to look at me, Taegan mimicking her and looking back as well. “It’s very important that you listen and do as I say for what is about to happen. If you don’t, the consequences will be grave.”

Well, shit. There goes any chance of my anxiety going the fuck down. I gulp nervously, and Thyra takes my hand in both of hers, squeezing it reassuringly.

“What’s about to happen?” I dared to fucking ask, then regretted it instantly.

She smiles sadly. “Bailey doesn’t have magic to fuse a Lycan’s magic with. She will have to be reborn for the transformation to happen. Not just her, but the twins she is carrying in her womb.”

Thyra gasped, pressing her hand to her chest, then looking up at me nervously. I still don’t understand. No. I don’t want to understand. I don’t want to let that thought fully comprehend in my mind. It can’t. She can’t.

“Please tell me you’re not saying what I think you’re saying,” I murmured. No way. I won’t fucking believe it.

The goddess nods. She looks down at Taegan, smiling sadly, running her hand over the top of his head while he stares confidently up at her. “It’s okay, goddess. I know. I know what’s going to happen.” Taegan's voice didn't waver. It may be the tone of a young boy, but the words and weight behind them are not.

“I know you do, Taegan, but I also know it's never easy to hear that your mother has to die.”

“No,” I whisper. She can't. I can't let her. I won't. I'll die if I fucking have to. Bailey can't fucking die. She can't.

“She can, and she will. That is unchangeable, Max,” the goddess says, looking sternly at me and reading my mind. “If you want her to live again, you need to do exactly as you are told, or all of this will be for not. Do you understand?”

Her eyes are glowing with matchless authority. I can feel the weight of her power crashing into me for a moment, and it takes the breath right out of me. She can not be defied here, but it is not my actions here that she is worried about.

My eyes sting, the threat of crying making my face burn. I hate this, but I know I have no choice here. I can't let my son lose his mate. I can't lose my daughter-in-law. I can't lose my grandbabies before they ever get the chance to grip my fingers. I can't miss those first cries of life, the first steps of theirs. I can't miss their first words or the first time they call me grandpa.

And I can't lose Bailey. She is the Luna my pack has always needed. She is more than we deserve. I can't lose her gentle love and tender hugs. I can't lose her teasing and easy dimpled smile. No one can be as big of a pain in the ass as her. No one could compare.

She is the daughter I have always longed for.

I will do whatever I have to to make sure she comes back.

“What do I have to do?” I asked in a broken whisper, a tear spilling down my cheek.

The goddess smiles sadly. She walks back to rest her hand on my shoulder and Taegan takes my hand that is free, Thyra still gripping my other. I can't tell anymore if Thyra is trying to calm me or herself. Both of us are a weeping fucking mess.

“You are both going to war with your own pack. That's how you are going to fucking save her,” the goddess smirks, her eyes still filled with sadness, even while teasing me for the last time.