

2.Epilogue

Chapter 130 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Rieka POV

“What are you looking at, my goddess?” Dante asks, coming up behind me in my study as I’m peering over one of my books.

He leans over my shoulder then chuckles lightly at the scene playing out on the pages. Little Taegan is not so little any longer. He has grown in the past 6 years of his time on Earth. Here, in my realm, it feels like just yesterday that he was sitting with me leaning over one of my books as I am doing right now, peering into the lives of all his family and friends back in his home.

I forever will treasure those moments I was given with him. Dante is great company, as are all the others serving their sentences against the deities in this realm, but being in the presence of one of my own, the savior of my bloodline, it was a gift in and of itself. He was everything I wished for a grandson of my line to be. He is whom I am most proud of. My greatest accomplishment as a goddess is helping the fates to ensure his birth.

Taegan is currently watching his sisters and youngest cousins chase around a reluctant Callum who he offered up to them as a distraction while the three older boys were babysitting. The adults had a night out and Taegan volunteered himself, Callum and Rian to babysit the youngest.

I can read the inner monologue Taegan is having with Conri, which makes me chuckle. Conri was always an ornery man. Being transformed into a Lycan by the deities didn’t change that. It changed many things in preparation for being merged with Taegan, but not his core personality. I’m grateful for that. Taegan and his greatest grandfather are well-suited to one another.

I watch as Rian sneaks up behind Aly and scares her, earning him a punch in the nose from the spunky 8-year-old. I can tell that it hurt, but he is trying to play it down to not show any weakness, but wanting to appear less-strong than any of the others playing. He is the oldest out of the group but is often overlooked as the elder because of Taegan.

Taegan is going to be hard to measure up to for anyone, especially a fae-siren hybrid living in a pack of strong werewolves. He will be overlooked plenty during his time there, causing him to want to seek things that are going to be detrimental to his well-being once he gets older, just like what happened with his mother. That was the biggest factor in deciding to pair him the way I did. I had the deities of the fairy-kind asking for Taegan to be paired with his mate to help right a wrong done by their children too. It was a juggling act when it was first requested, but when I looked into the future, I saw that what they wanted was best for everyone.

Two alphas rarely work well together. If I had paired Rosie with Taegan, the world would have back-slid back into chaos and needless feuds because of the aftermath. Neither of them would have bent their knee to the other, and that would have torn their families apart. Their packs would have fallen into chaos. Rosie would have suffered like her mother, and Taegan's powerful magic would have made everyone suffer.

Rosie's future with a mate that has strengths outside of physical strength and dominance is exactly what she and her pack need. That is, if she can learn to submit to the bond. It will be the only time she will have to submit in her entire life, and if she can learn to let go of her pride long enough to do that, she will see just how much better the future with an emotionally and intellectually strong mate can be. A mate that is slow to violence and slow to anger, much like her father, is exactly what she needs.

Taegan is a protector. He has too much of his own father in him. With Conri at his side, I couldn't put them with a headstrong mate. Conri and Taegan both would have burned the world down as Rosie continued to defy them. Taegan needs someone who will always look up to him, someone who needs a strong protector, but who will also prove herself beforehand in order to never feel less-than worthy of being his mate, despite her differences.

With both these pairings, there will be many challenges, but the rewards and blessings will be far greater. Not to mention, it will end the wrong-doings of the fairy king that originally tore the veil between worlds. Lust is a nasty thing, and Thyra's grandfather learned the hard way that the consequences of lust can affect generations. What he did affected the entire world. Aengus helped to right the wrongs done to my line. Now it is my time to help right the wrongs done to his own kind. Wrongs that very few still know of. Many might have stories and assumptions, but only someone who can speak to the gods or who was there could know the exact details. Details that led to the seers.

Any minute now.....

I can tell the exact moment that Taegan and Conri feel her; feel their mate's presence entering the world. The inner monologue stops and Conri pushes forward, almost making Taegan shift on the spot. I had to quickly place my hand over the picture and reach out with all the power in me to help Taegan keep him at bay.

Conri felt it. He felt her birth and the same magic that helped create him surging inside her. He would be the key to unleashing her from the binding of her ancestry, and she would be the key to taming him. Her magic will be like a beacon to him for the next 18 years, but he will make it. I've seen it. That is a sure thing, because Taegan won't be doing it alone. I will be with him to help him every step of the way. I would never let Conri ruin himself and his chance at true happiness. This mate will be perfect for them both, unlike the place-keeper I forced on him in the ancient past to make him forget me.

Aly and the twins sense something wrong with their brother, stopping their assault on their cousin to turn their attentions to Taegan, then each of them runs to him to offer a helping hand.

I watch a few moments longer, then when I'm sure Conri is no longer a threat, I sit back with a sigh.

He wanted her. He will have to wait. I will have to be vigilant to help Taegan from this point on. It is going to be a very long 18 years for those two, but I know they will make it. When the prize is as great as that, they have no choice. Winning will be everything.

"Is the lad alright, my goddess?" Dante asked, looking over the table with the book with much concern.

"He will be," I grinned sadly, "Life is full of trials for us all, Dante. You know that as well as I. I won't let him fail."

Dante's face transforms into a solemn expression, and I can almost see the alpha he once was. An alpha that gave the ultimate sacrifice and broke the laws of his goddess to save someone he loved but was not fated to save.

All those placed in this purgatory of servitude have a story like his. Max would have been doomed to the same fate trying to save Bailey if not for my meddling and the help of the other deities in gifting him a second chance with Thyra. Even Joseph, Katherine's grandfather, is serving a deity in this realm. I had to ensure that she and Max both stayed distracted and stayed here in my mansion to ensure no accidental meeting occurred.

"You are amazing, my goddess," Dante whispers, "I came here angry at you, but have witnessed your endless efforts and compassion you have for our kind. My short suffering was nothing compared to your eternal tribulation."

My eyes soften, my face tilting with humbled tenderness. Out of all of those assigned to serve me as restitution for their sins against fate, Dante has always been dear to me, understanding more than anyone that this is a punishment for me just as much as it is one for him.

"Your kind words always have a way of lifting my spirits, Dante. Thank you."

He grins, bowing slightly, then starts to close my book to return it to the shelf. "You are done with this for now, correct goddess? I think a break in the gardens with a cup of tea would do more to lift your spirits than measly words from me."

"You do make a great cup of tea," I chuckled, "That sounds great, Dante. Thank you."

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Taegan POV

She's here. My future mate, whoever she is, has finally been born. Conri went absolutely crazy in my head for a moment, practically ripping the skin from my muscles trying to tear out of me

to find her, but the goddess had to have stepped in and stopped him. I felt her. I felt her presence in me for a split second, just enough to help me to reign him in and calm him down.

“Tay Tay, are you sure you’re okay?” Aly asks me, opening my eyes wide with her fingers to check on Conri. Leah and Lauren are on either side of me gripping my arms like they are scared to let me go. I love my sisters. They help a great deal to tame Conri. They center him, giving him a purpose and something to protect. He is a powerful Alpha Lycan in a child’s body, though I haven’t felt like a child in a very long time. He wants to protect and command, and being a big brother to three powerful Lycan sisters helps him with that.

“I’m fine, Aly,” I took her hands and held them in my own. “Conri just got excited for a minute.”

“I want Conri!” Lauren squeals.

“Me too! Me too! I want to go to the falls with him,” Leah is shaking my arm excitedly.

Letting Conri out right now might not be a good idea with what just happened. He is still panting in the back of my mind, trying to fight off the urge to find and protect his mate.

“I’m fine,” he pants, “It was just a shock having felt her for the first time. The pull towards her is insane.”

It is. I can feel it too. I can feel her magic like a beacon calling for me. No, a beacon is too weak a comparison. She is like gravity, my entire soul being pulled in her direction. It’s going to be hard to fight off the urge to go to her before she is ready to accept me.

12 years. My mate and I will be 12 years apart. I will have to wait 18 years to claim her. Moon goddess, help me to be strong.

“Tay Tay,” Lauren pulls on my arm, “Let’s go to the falls.”

I look at Callum being dog piled by his 3 younger brothers. He looks worn out and tired, not up for the long hike to the waterfall. Rian won’t do the hike, but he will use his magic to teleport there. Maybe I can have him teleport all of us up there?

“I’m better now,” Conri tells me, “I’m under control. I just had to fight the urge to go to her. I can shift.”

“You sure?”

“If my sisters want me, then hell yeah. Can you, uh, maybe call your friend in Miami later, though. I just want to know her name.”

“Miami?” I asked. “Whose name?”

“Mate’s. She’s there. I can feel it.”

Hmm. If he wants me to call Rosie, that might be difficult. I told her years ago that we wouldn't be mates, and I don't think she has fully accepted that yet. Talking to her has become difficult. I don't want to be mean, but I don't want to give her false hope either.

If my mate is down there in Miami, avoiding Rosie won't do any good. I should try to maintain a friendship with her, so when it's time to take my mate, the process goes smoother. I just have to make sure Rosie knows that we are just friends and can never be anything more. I haven't called her my mate in 6 years, but she still calls me that when we do talk. That has to stop. Maybe I should talk to her father. He seemed against me from the start. I'm sure he will help.

"I can try calling her later," I told my Lycan. "If she gets hung up on the mate thing again, we will have to keep our mate a secret from her. I don't want to make life difficult for our mate. Being mated with us will be difficult enough."

Conri scoffs, "Speak for yourself. I'm a total catch."

"Like a disease," I snort, making him growl.

"Conri can come out to play, but let's stay here until mom and dad get back," I tell my sisters. "It will be hard to get everyone up there, and the grown-ups will be concerned if we aren't here when they return."

"Awww," all three of them sighed together.

"I know. I know. We will go later. For now....."

I push on Conri, nudging him to take over, which he eagerly does. In 10 seconds I am in the back of our mind watching him take over, lifting Lauren and Leah in his arms and spinning them around while they giggle.

"Let's play catch the Lycan," Conri chuckles in his deep voice. None of my sisters are intimidated by Conri, but I can see fear tracing Rian and my youngest cousin's faces. They will get used to him after a few minutes. Conri is scary enough without adding his being able to talk into the mix, but they always accept him after a few minutes.

"Yay! I'm it!" Aly yells, hopping up to chase us. I was focused the entire time on keeping Conri from running south, straight for Miami.

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2 weeks later.....

"I'm so happy you called, Taegan!" Rosie gushes at me on FaceTime. She has on a pretty pink shirt and has butterfly clips in her hair to hold her bangs back. She looks more like Carli now, a little less like Parker besides her coloring. She's pretty, but now that I know she isn't my mate, I

don't take too much note of her attractiveness. She's also 10, so Conri doesn't ever react to her either. It would just be weird to fawn over a little girl that wasn't our future mate.

That's the reason for this phone call. I talked to her mom briefly, explaining to her that I wasn't Rosie's mate without telling her in full detail how I knew. I wanted to talk to her dad, but he ignored my call. Carli just said to not right off the possibility yet, not really taking much of what I said seriously. What could I tell her? The moon goddess told me that Rosie wasn't my mate and it was someone else in her pack that was just born two weeks ago.

Actually, I would have told her just that if it wasn't for Rosie walking in and taking the phone from her mother. I will have to try again later to talk to Carli about that.

"Hey, Rosie. I was just calling to see how things were going."

She giggles flirtatiously. "I've been good. Mom and dad have been busy. Aunt Lily and uncle Matt have been helping Uncle Mitch and Uncle Mark with their new daughters. They had twins with their mate, so everyone has been busy. Mom keeps wanting to go over to hold the babies since dad won't have another."

"Babies, huh?" I feel Conri hanging onto that bit of information. "How long ago did Mitch and Mark have the babies?"

"Hmmm...2 weeks maybe. I can ask my mom. Mom!" Rosie pulls the phone away from her as she looks over in the direction of her mother. Her yelling made Rian poke his head into my room to see what the noise was.

"What was that?" Rian asked while Rosie was busy talking to her mother. Rian comes to sit by me on my bed to stare at my phone screen. I heard his breath hitch when his eyes landed on Rosie.

That's right. Rian hasn't met Rosie yet. Grandpa avoids Carli like the plague, so he has never had the chance.

"Who is she?" Rian hisses in my ear. I flinch as his hot breath tickles my neck, making me a bit grossed out by his germs.

"Rosie," I told him, wiping my hand down my neck. "Her parents are the Alpha and Luna of our sister pack in Miami. She will be the next Alpha."

He looked stunned by her, but then his face contorted with disbelief when I said she was going to be alpha. He is from a male-dominated society. Sometimes I forget, since he lets my sisters push him around so much.

"She's a girl, though," he says, making me and Conri smirk because I was right. "Girls can't be alphas."

“The heck I can’t,” Rosie glares at him from the screen, “Who’s the jerk?”

Oh, goodness. He’s going to eternally be on her bad side now. Rosie is like her mom in her defensiveness. She doesn’t like being told what she can and can not do.

“Rosie, this is my uncle, Rian. I’m sure he didn’t mean any offense.”

I elbow Rian, causing him to grunt and then hiss from the sting, rubbing it with his hand. He quickly recovers as he looks warily at the phone screen.

“I didn’t mean to offend you. That wasn’t my intention. I just don’t see how a girl can be an alpha.”

Rosie glared deeper at him. “Well, I don’t see how a prissy little punk like you could be my mate’s uncle. Jerk,” she huffs as I groan hearing her call me mate again. “Taegan, my mom said two weeks ago. Mom will send you a picture of me holding them when she gets her phone back. I will let you go.” She turns her nose up at Rian. “The view next to you is quite unpleasant.”

Before I can say bye, she hangs up, leaving Rian and I in a daze.

“Goodness, I really didn’t mean to offend her,” Rian grumbles, looking solemn from Rosie’s treatment of him.

“It’s fine. She get’s like that. I wouldn’t worry too much.”

“Hmm,” he hums, “for some reason I do. I really want her not to be mad at me for my misunderstanding.”

“Why does it matter?” I smirked, “You like her or something?”

“No,” his face turns a bright red. “I just don’t want to be rude.”

I scoff, “She can be rude too. Don’t worry about it. It’s not a big deal. It will blow over or she will forget,” I told him, thinking about Mitch and Mark’s daughters too much to be invested in the conversation with Rian.

“I hope so,” he said weakly.

I’m about to ask why, but my phone pings, and my thoughts are all consumed by the cute twins I see on the screen. Rian leans over my shoulder and I can sense him grinning too.

The twins on Rosie’s lap are adorable, but the one with purple eyes has Conri pushing to the surface and has him feeling restless under my skin.

It’s her. She is the one. She has to be.

‘What are their names?’ I texted Carli, anxious to hear her reply.

‘Harper and Harley’, she replies.

“Harper and Harley. I wonder which one is the one with the purple eyes?” Conri asks me.

I wonder too, so I ask.

“Beautiful,” Rian whispers to himself, still looking at the picture.

“Yeah, she is,” I grin, feeling protective already. When I get Carli’s reply, Conri starts purring in content at our mate’s pretty name.

“Harley,” I said in a murmured breath, “I can’t wait till the day we meet.”

“18 years,” Conri says.

“18 years,” I repeated.

“I can’t wait to meet Rosie too,” Rian sighs, then it dawns on me that Rian is a little too infatuated with Rosie.

Oh my. I nearly forgot. Rosie and Rian will be mates.