

Chapter 91 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

We walked hurriedly back to the clinic where Bailey was being kept. I could tell by Max's expression that he was more than worried. He loved and valued his family greatly and suffered with them when they suffered.

That was such an admirable quality in a man, but also a sad one. His happiness stemmed from the happiness of those around him.

I hope I can help him to achieve and maintain his happiness. He deserves happiness. Anyone who sees the way he treasures his family can see that.

"I hope that pain in the ass isn't refusing treatment again," he grumbles. "Axel might not command her to quit being a stubborn ass, but I will."

"I somehow doubt that," I smirked at him, "You treated her like you treat your granddaughter."

He grumbled deeply, "I could if I needed to."

"Sure you can," I patted his arm, making his face soften. The effect we have on one another is soothing, and I feel comforted just having him near. I hope he feels the same. Bailey will be alright. I know she will.

When we get to the clinic, the staff and nurses are in a frenzy. Axel is growling and snarling out commands, panicked over whatever happened with Bailey, I'm sure.

To no surprise, Max rushes forward and joins his son in demanding what is wrong.

I was about to plant myself against the wall out of the way when I peeked into Bailey's room and saw her sitting up in bed, looking perfectly fine. She just has this annoyed grimace on her face while watching her mate.

I look at Max and his son, who are barking demands at some poor doctor, then decide to leave them to their antics and join Bailey in the room.

"Hi again, Bailey," I smiled fondly at the adorable young woman. Her dimples were already pronounced with her grim expression, but when she smiled at me, they indented deeper in her cheeks, making her soft, heart-shaped face grow even more lovely.

“Thyra! Come on in,” she pats her bed, “Those two won’t be done with their hissy fits for a while, so you might as well take a seat.”

I move closer to her, sitting in the chair beside her, though, instead of the bed. I’m sure her overprotective alpha male family members will want that spot soon.

“How are you feeling?” I asked, “Max said something along the lines of you being really bad again with your sickness.”

She huffs, waving her hands dismissively. “I just threw up. No big deal. Morning sickness happens.” A fierce growl erupts from the doorway and Bailey closes her eyes in annoyance, sighing with her frustration.

“You do not throw up blood with morning sickness, Bailey,” her mate turned to growl at her, overhearing our conversation. His glare and the way she rolls her eyes tells me they have already argued about this plenty before we got here.

“What the hell is wrong with her?!” barked Max to one of the doctors. “Why are you not doing anything to fucking stop it?!”

“Knock it off. Both of you. He can’t do anything and you know it. Quit acting like asses,” Bailey snaps. Even while trying to put harshness and venom into her words, she still looks adorable.

I don’t think she could look threatening if her life depended on it. She looks as frightening as a hissing kitten. I want to scratch between her fluffed up ears and awe at her instead of being scared.

I can look threatening, though.

“All you two are doing is riling her up and making her more stressed. Your useless yelling will do more harm than good,” I told them both, narrowing my eyes between them. “I expected more rational thinking between two alphas.”

Both cast guilty expressions, mumbling apologies while dismissing the doctor. The nurses bring in more blankets for Bailey and fresh water in a personal pitcher now that they are not in danger of angering the irrational men in their tantrums any longer and can finally safely enter the room.

Bailey must have thrown up on herself, because she is in a different gown than before. There are new sheets on her bed too and the smell of disinfectant and bleach is in the air.

“You know, when Lucy was pregnant with Katherine, she would get extremely ill as well. Joseph used his magic as a witch to brew her potions to help. Antonio was telling me that you have a witch in the pack. If you call for her, I can give her the recipe that Joseph left in his notes. I’m sure it will help more than any human medicine could.”

Bailey looked up at her mate expectantly.

“On it,” he murmurs before racing out of the clinic, yelling back at his dad, “Sit on her if she tries to get up.”

“You will not,” Bailey raised her eyebrows at Max.

“Don’t push me,” Max glares.

She makes the adorable angered kitten face again, making Max’s expression soften.

He is totally putty in her hands.

She sighs, shaking her head, then turns a sweet smile towards me. “Thanks for giving Axel something to do by going and getting Xiomara. He was going crazy sitting here doing nothing.”

“I should have thought of it before,” I pat her leg apologetically, “It could have helped sooner.”

She smirks knowingly at me, “I’m sure your mind was preoccupied with other thoughts.” She looks up at Max and grins, then back at me. She leans forward and moves to sweep the hair off my shoulder. Her smile falters soon after. “Aw. No mark yet?”

Max snorts and I chuckle awkwardly as we exchange a brief look.

“What?” Bailey asks, watching us.

“Nothing,” Max mutters, “Lay back down and worry about yourself, sweetheart.”

“I like worrying about you, though.”

I loved Bailey at that moment. It’s amazing to see her caring for her father-in-law like he cares for her.

Max sighed, sitting next to her on the bed, then gently pushing her shoulder to get her to lay down. “I’ve had enough of your stubborn attitude today. If you’re worried about me, lay down and relax. I can’t relax until you do.”

She gave him a disapproving look. “I’ll be fine until Axel gets back. You have more important things to do right now, and relaxing isn’t one of them.” She moves her eyes towards me, nudging her head in my direction. Even Max drops the grumpy look and laughs at her for a moment.

“Goddess, you’re a handful today, aren’t you? I plan on doing plenty of that after I know you are safe,” he tells her.

"What's that?" I asked curiously.

He smirks, "Playing chess."

My cheeks heat hearing him say that.

“We can’t leave anyway until the witch gets here,” I said to change the subject.

“Oh,” she scrunches her face, looking so cute. She sighs, lying back down without any more argument while Max tucks the blankets in around her. She then turns her sweet smile on me. “So, you knew my grandfather and grandma?”

“Oh, yes,” I nodded, “Your grandfather, Joseph, helped me when I first got banished from my home. He helped me to learn to adjust to life in the human world and looked out for me.”

“Had you not been here before?” she asks. I thought her first question would be about my banishment and the reasons behind it. I almost breathe a sigh of relief that it isn’t.

“I had. Numerous times, but not in, um, healthy settings. I came to the human realm a lot to seek fun and adventure, but after I was banished from my home, I didn’t have a safe environment to return to at the end of my adventures. And truly, I didn’t want to have those kinds of adventures any longer. Joseph, being a witch, caught on right away as to what I was when I was lost and alone in a bustling human city. He was hiding his true identity himself, not wanting to be a part of the toxic coven he was a part of in New York.

“He showed me how to live as humans do, helped me to get a job to support myself, and showed me what a normal human life was. I was forever grateful to him for helping me so greatly when I was at my lowest point.”

“That’s sweet,” Bailey grins widely, “I haven’t heard much about my grandfather before. Grandma rarely talked about him.”

“Well, he died when your mother was but a baby. Even grief has its limits. When we miss someone greatly, it hurts less when we stop speaking about them and let them become a memory in our hearts.”

She smiles sadly. “You lost him too, it sounds like.”

“Oh, I grieved him greatly, but I have to carry the burden of being a part of the reason he died. He chose death to save your grandmother, but I still helped aid him in doing so. I then promised him that I would look after your line after he was gone. I failed him with your mother, it seems, but I won’t fail him with you,” I reached forward and set my hands upon hers, “I know how to stop the curse this time, and your daughters will never have its threat hanging above them.”

She turns her hands to grip mine. “Thank you Thyra,” she then lets go of my hand to place hers over her belly, “Thank you,” she repeats.

“Of course,” I looked at Max and offered him a warm smile as he stared back at me with a stoic expression. “I have more reason than ever to aid your family now.”

“I guess you do,” she giggled. “Since you know my grandma, do you want to meet her before you and Max head out on your journey?”

I can’t help but to cringe. “Lucy may not like that.”

“Why not?” Max asks, his deep voice vibrating around the room.

“Well,” I bit my lip nervously, “She thought Joseph was having an affair with me for some time. We weren’t, of course, but she still had those suspicions. Especially before his death when we were spending so much time together trying to find a way to break the curse or stop it from killing her. He couldn’t very well tell her that he was a witch, I was a fairy princess, and we were preparing to sacrifice his life to save hers.”

“Oh,” Bailey winces, “Maybe we should hold off on you meeting her again then.”

I laugh dryly, “Yeah, that would probably be best.”

Max grunts, and when I look back at him, he looks unhappy now, not just his normal stoic self.

“Aw, are you jealous of an imaginary affair?” Bailey teases him, poking at the corners of his frown. He pretends to snap his teeth at her finger, which makes her squeal.

“Don’t start,” he says in a mocking tone, “Isn’t that what you always tell me?”

She giggles, “I just think you’re cute when you get all jealous. I like it.”

“Sweetheart, I bet when that shit went down, my balls hadn’t even dropped yet. Your grandmother is a lot older than me. I’m not jealous.”

“Now, lying isn’t cute, Max,” she pokes his frown teasingly again. She chuckles when he growls, then she turns to look at me, “So, you’re a lot older than Max too, huh? You sure don’t look like it.”

“Well, time works differently in my realm. I was only back home for three years, but it has been nearly 30 years in your world,” I tell her.

“Home for you is here now, just so you know,” Max interrupted, “I want to make it clear now that I’m not letting you go anywhere without me.”

My face heats and my belly tightens at his profession. Bailey squeals excitedly, obviously thrilled by Max’s claim.

“Aw, I’m so happy you came, Thyra. Hmm, if I subtract 27 from my grandmother’s age, that makes you younger than Max!”

I shrug, "Age isn't always relevant. It means little to the fae," I smirked at Max, who had looked momentarily worried, "It's definitely irrelevant when someone is as handsome as your father-in-law."

Now Max's cheeks and neck blushed, and my mind started to wonder what the rest of his body would look like in the alluring shade. His gaze is intense, and I suddenly feel like it is only us in the room.

That is until a loud squeal breaks our trance.

"GI-PAW!" the little girl from earlier yells in a high-pitched voice, being held by the tall and lean-looking Beta I met earlier.

Aly starts to sob and yell, wiggling around in his arms until he gives up trying to hold her and sets her on the ground. "Gi-paw, bad!" she cries, "Not nice!"

She runs over to the bed and he stands, lifting her in his strong arms and she hits his chest, continuing to cry. "Bad gi-paw!"

"What's wrong, Rick? I thought we got her calmed down for the night?" Bailey asks.

Max rubs her back and "shh's" her, bouncing her back and forth to calm her down.

"I thought so too," the man, Rick, says, "She just started throwing a hissy fit demanding to come here. She wouldn't take "no" for an answer."

Bailey holds her arms out for her daughter, but Aly turns her head away, holding on to Max even tighter. "She always knows when you are near," Bailey sighs, "Did you guys walk by the Beta house on your way here or did you drive?"

"We walked," Max sighs, "Sorry, Rick. I didn't think she would sense me just walking by."

Rick sighs, rubbing his temples, "Scared the crap out of me. She woke up from a dead sleep in my arms yelling for grandpa and saying we had to come back here."

"Where's Taegan?" Bailey asks.

"Taegan passed out on the couch with Quinn watching a movie. The little brat took my spot and practically fell asleep on top of her."

Max snorts. "Kid's got moves."

"You say that, Alpha, but it won't be long until he is crawling all over your mate with those puppy dog eyes. I'm tempted to call Steph and Addi to come get him. They eat that shit up."

I giggle, remembering the way Taegan sat on the couch next to me and smoothly laid his head on my shoulder.

“She will be his grandma too pretty soon,” Max shrugs, “He stopped doing that shit with Cousin Courtney as soon as he found out they were family. I’m not worried.”

“Wait. I’m going to be a grandma?” It took him saying it for me to realize that being his mate would instantly make me a part of this loving family. I would be like their grandmother in that sense.

He nods slowly, still soothing Aly as he rocks her back and forth. “Are you okay with that?”

Taegan’s handsome little face flits through my head, reminding me of...

Well, that is a memory for another time, when we get everything else figured out. I would be thrilled to have children around again, though.

“I’m more than okay with it,” I smile fondly at him, then laugh when Aly turns her face to glare accusingly at me, “I don’t know if she is, though.”

2.12 Kids and Insanity

Chapter 92 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

“Gi-paw not nice,” Aly sobs, making my heart hurt.

“I know, baby. I’m sorry,” I tell her, even though I’m not exactly sure why I’m sorry. I just know I don’t like it when she is mad, especially at me.

“Gi-paw night night wiff Aly,” she whimpers, “Not mate.”

Aw. Now the squirt is putting me between a rock and a fucking hard place.

“Aly, we talked about this,” Bailey said, trying to take her from me again. Aly turns her head away.

“No! Mama mean to Aly,” she says as her little fists knot in my shirt.

Bailey sighs, looking about ready to jump out of the bed and paddle Aly's bottom with one of her brother's wooden spoons. I'm at a loss about what to do. I can't choose between my mate and my granddaughter, and I have to leave tomorrow with Thyra to save Bailey. Bailey seems just as lost as me, rubbing her temples.

Rick is hovering at the door, like he is unsure if he should step in and help in Axel's absence. Aly usually loves Rick and listens to him pretty well. I guess not today, though. Not when we need her to.

To my surprise, Thyra is the one who stands in her chair and comes over to stand next to me, meeting Aly's angry expression with a kind smile.

"Aly. Can I call you Aly?" She asks in a gentle tone.

Aly responds with an adorable little growl, making Thyra chuckle. She's showing a lot more patience and kindness than the squirt deserves right now. That's for sure.

"You're so pretty, Aly. You look just like your grandpa. You both have the same pretty blue eyes."

Aly unknots her hands from my shirt to reach up and rub her face, like she can feel the color of her eyes.

Her face was still grumpy and untrusting, her eyes narrowed at Thyra. I'm about to tell Aly to be nice, but Thyra laughs before I can.

"You know what else you have that looks just like your grandpa's?"

"What?" Aly mutters in an untrusting tone.

"Right here," Thyra rubs the space between her own eyebrows, "You make the same face right here when you're unhappy."

Aly moves her hand to the space above her little nose as I move my hand to rub the space between my own eyebrows automatically, without meaning to. Bailey chokes on her laughter watching us. Rick even snorts out a laugh.

"She's right, Alpha," he says.

Aly smiles for a brief second at her mother and Rick's laughter before catching herself and scowling at Thyra once again. "My gi-paw," she mutters.

Thyra's face softens, tilting to the side in an adoring way as she watches my granddaughter. "He is your grandpa. Grandpas are super special to have, huh? I have to borrow your grandpa to help your mama, but I'll bring him right back to you after we make your mom all better. We will be

here tonight, though. Do you want to stay with your grandpa and me tonight, and I can show you my Pegasus tomorrow before we leave?"

I watched Aly's face as she stared at Thyra and I could tell her curiosity was outweighing her hostility now. "What peg-sus?"

Thyra smiles widely, "Want me to show you?"

Aly nods, and then Thyra lifts a hand in the air, palm up, a cloud of glittering smoke forming a ball in her hand that turns transparent, revealing a herd of almost white horses with large wings tucked into their sides.

They are the most majestic beasts I have ever seen. Their manes are flowing in the wind, and their coats are all glossy and smooth. They look strong with cords of muscles and thick necks.

They are galloping around an open golden field, butterflies fluttering about them, landing on their ears and making the beasts neigh and buck about in annoyance.

Thyra wiggles her fingers slightly, zooming the image in on one in particular, who looks slightly blue in color. Or maybe green? Mint would be the way Bailey would describe the color of the Pegasus. It's pretty and fits Thyra perfectly.

The things I thought were butterflies are actually pixies, teasing the magnificent beasts and laughing in the air when the horses react.

Aly looked amazed, her eyes wide and her hand extended, trying to touch the image of the flying horse.

"This is Nelly. She's been mine since I was your size. Isn't she pretty?"

"Pwetty," Aly murmurs, then looks up at Thyra, no longer mad, "Where Aly's?"

We all laughed at her innocent question. Goddess, I'm going to have to buy her a pony and build horse stalls now.

"How about we share Nelly?" Thyra asks. "Would you like to ride her when we get back?"

"Yes!" Aly squeals, throwing her hands up in the air.

Goddess, Thyra is amazing. She not only didn't let Aly's sour attitude get to her, she got the brat to warm up to her too. It's going to cost me the price of a pony, but I'll gladly get her all the ponies I get to have my baby girl get along with my mate.

I reach out, cupping Thyra's face, my thumbs skimming over her velvety smooth skin. Aly doesn't physically stop me from touching her or start yelling at me to stop. She's still preoccupied staring at the misty magical ball in Thyra's hand with the horses.

“You’re mine,” I whispered to Thyra, our eyes meeting and my heart swelling with pride.

She laughs, the sound is fucking music to my ears. “And you are hers, but I think I can convince her to share.”

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I dismiss Rick, since Aly will now be staying with me tonight, thanks to Thyra’s impressive toddler negotiating skills. He tells me he will bring Taegan to my house to say bye to me and Thyra in the morning, since we don’t know how long we will be gone.

Aly still won’t let me go, but she isn’t being openly hostile to Thyra any longer. She is even initiating conversations with her, asking to see the ‘peg-sus’ again, and asking questions about them, like what they eat, and where they live.

Bailey looks relieved now, and even takes a short nap until Axel finally gets back. Xiomara lives in the barracks in town with her mate as they manage the security of the pack members and businesses in town. Xiomara was never marked, so Axel couldn’t mind link her, and her mate couldn’t either. It took them a while to track her down as she was out with friends.

She said marking her would alter her DNA and could make her lose her magic. It’s usually not a problem not being able to mind link her, but Axel seemed pretty exhausted by the time he brought her back.

Thyra waved her hand, producing another cloud of mist and conjured up an old leather notebook which was stuffed so full with loose papers it seemed the binding was about to bust.

She gave the notebook to Xiomara, who took it excitedly, saying over and over again that there were incredible spells inside the book. She found the recipe for the potion Thyra mentioned, then promised to prepare it and have it ready for Bailey by morning. It wasn’t an easy formula and requires stewing, so it wouldn’t be a quick and easy fix. She will have to keep making it and having it ready for Bailey daily.

Axel tried to pay her for her help, but Xiomara wouldn’t accept any payment. She said that even though she is not marked, we have always treated her like a precious pack member and Bailey is still her Luna.

I’m going to gift her husband a new fucking truck or something when I get back, since she won’t accept anything. By the grateful look on my son’s face, I can tell he’s going to try and find some way to thank her too.

After she leaves and it’s just the 4 of us, plus the clingy rugrat in my arms, I feel like we can finally relax.

Bailey seemed to be in pain again, but Thyra ran her hands over her belly, singing a soft, wordless melody, and it erased all of Bailey’s pain and put her right to sleep.

“I need to learn that trick,” Axel yawns, leaning back in a recliner the staff brought in for him.

Thyra smiles, “It’s very similar to your ability as an alpha to cast comfort over a member of your pack using your aura. I have the ability, as a princess of the courts. I can manipulate feelings so I can make a person think they have no pain and they are tired, even if that isn’t the case in actuality.”

“A fairy princess, huh?” Axel says drowsily, holding his arms out to me for Aly.

To my disappointment, Aly actually leans forward to go to him. I may be her favorite, but her daddy is a very close second. She must not have her guard up any more about Thyra stealing me. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t disappointed a little. It’s sweet seeing her act so possessive over me. Makes me feel like I’m ten feet tall and the best grandpa in the world. Nate ain’t got shit on me.

Thyra smiles tightly, “I was. I angered my brother who is now the Northern King and I lost my title. A lost title doesn’t cause me to lose my abilities, though.”

She keeps mentioning being exiled, but this is the first time she said anything about losing her title as a princess.

I want to ask what happened, but I don’t want to make her feel uncomfortable or pry. She looks anxious or sad every time the subject comes up. It’s like she lost more than just her title and her rights as a princess. I don’t want to be the reason those negative feelings resurface. I only want her to feel happiness with me.

“Dad lucked out getting a princess of the fairy kingdom as his second chance mate,” Axel mutters, resting his head on Aly’s. He looks fucking spent. As shitty as this day was for me, I imagine it was at least a hundred times worse for him. “I think we all lucked out with you being here. I know I’m grateful,” Axel adds.

Thyra smiles shyly, “I’m grateful to be here too.” Her eyes meet mine and my chest swells again. If Aly being possessive of me makes me feel 10 feet tall, Thyra looking at me like that makes me feel 20 feet tall, like the king of the fucking world.

She may not have the title of princess anymore, but I plan on making her my fucking queen.

“Dada, I sweepy,” Aly says, burrowing her face into Axel’s shirt.

“I know, baby girl. Daddy is too,” he says, kissing her head.

“Why don’t we take Aly back for the night now so you can get some sleep? I’ll bring her back with Taegan in the morning before we leave.”

“You sure you don’t mind, dad? She will probably sleep here with me if I rock her a bit.”

Aly pouts, lifting her head from his chest and looking at Thyra. “I want peg-sus wiff gi-paw mate.”

I wrapped my arm around my mate’s shoulder, feeling so much pride that Thyra won her over. A heartfelt smile breaks on her face as she stares back at Aly.

“What happens when Bailey gets sick again? You don’t want Aly in that. I’ll ask your aunt and Nate to help while I’m gone.”

Axel makes a face. “I don’t want to cockblock my own dad. She’s your fucking mate and unmarked. Are you sure you keeping Aly is a good idea? I have nurses and staff that can help with her here if I need them to. You will have to keep your shit in your pants with Aly there.”

“I’m not some juvenile sex-crazed cunt like you, dickhead. You got your fucking mate screaming loud enough for the entire fucking pack to hear every fucking night. I have more control than Aly’s own parents, you little shit.”

Axel smirks, “I bet it’s been so fucking long since you used it, it’s shriveled up and fell off.”

I growled at my shithead son, “If you want to have a fucking dick measuring contest, I’ll be happy to whip your ass anytime. You’re not too grown for me to put your bitch ass in your place.”

He blows kisses at me, laughing softly, and I swear if he wasn’t holding my granddaughter I’d beat his ass right here.

“Everything okay?” Thyra asks, staring up at me.

“Peachy,” I snarled at my son, showing my canines. “You just earned yourself an ass whooping, kid,” I pointed at my son.

“Don’t throw your back out threatening me, old man,” he huffs, “I don’t want to embarrass you in front of your new mate, so let’s just say you win.”

Thyra looks up at me confused, probably knowing we were mind linking, but she doesn’t know what about. This little shit is making things uncomfortable for me. I don’t want to explain this conversation to Thyra.

I growl again, and Axel laughs, standing to his feet and walking over to us with Aly almost asleep on his chest. “Okay, dad. All joking aside, thanks for today. For everything,” he pats my back, squeezing my shoulder slightly, “I don’t know how we could manage without you.”

My anger melts away, my face relaxing with a smile trying to break free.

Fucking kids. They will bring you to the fucking point of insanity, then in just a few words remind you why you love them, at any age.

“Yep,” I mumble gruffly, trying not to let it show that I’m happy hearing his praise.

He chuckles, then kisses Aly’s head before handing her to me. He then moves to Thyra, surprising her with a quick hug and wishing her a good night.

## 2.13 Sweet Feelings

# Chapter 93 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Thyra POV

About halfway back to Max’s house, Aly falls asleep. Max was holding her tenderly, rubbing her back and sniffing or kissing her hair every once in a while.

There is something so attractive about a big, gruff man being sweet and loving to a child. Max adores his grandkids and it shows in everything he does.

“What were you and your son talking about that made you so angry before we left?” I asked, my curiosity still peaked watching their weird interaction. They went from talking about Max taking his granddaughter for the night to their eyes fogging over and Max growling. They were obviously talking in their minds, but if they were just talking about Aly, I doubt he would be reacting that way.

Max groans, “Nothing. He was just being a shithead,” he mumbles, making me laugh.

“You treat your son very differently from the rest of the members of your family.”

“Yeah, that’s because the only thing Axel needs protection from is me if he pisses me off. He’s a grown ass man and the alpha now,” he mumbles gruffly, his eyebrows drawn downward making his whole face look sexy and tough.

“Bailey is a grown woman and the Luna, but you still treat her like you treat your grandkids.” The dynamic between Bailey and Max was more fascinating to me than any of their other relationships. It was like Bailey was determined to protect and adore her father-in-law in a way no one else did.

I have a feeling that her protectiveness towards Max was what prevented her from telling them about her condition sooner. She wasn’t going to let Max sacrifice himself for her and he was obviously determined to be the one to take on that burden.

She opened up and accepted me right away, being ecstatic for Max even though things were looking fairly grave for her.

Seeing how protective and sacrificial Max is for his family, I was so happy to see that he was being treasured in the same way.

“Bailey may be grown, but her ass needs protecting more than anyone else’s. The woman is too selfless for her own good sometimes.”

“Because she loves you all so much,” I smiled up at Max, “I like her. She’s a sweetheart.”

“Yeah,” Max smiles, “She is. Sweetest pain in the ass I know.”

I giggle at him, making his smile stretch even further.

“Goddess, you’re beautiful. Especially when you laugh like that,” he shamelessly states.

My face heats under his praise as his magnificent blue eyes continue to study my face. He makes me feel beautiful and special every time he looks at me.

“You’re a sweetheart too,” I muttered, “or a sweet talker at least.”

“Honey, when you laugh like that it makes me want to be anything but sweet to you. Makes me want to be downright fucking rude,” he growls dominantly, making me shutter with desire.

My core leaks the more he stares. Tingles travel all over me, like I can physically feel his eyes on me everywhere they travel.

“Shit,” he groans, his nostrils flaring, taking a deep breath.

Yeah. Shit. He can smell my arousal, I’m sure.

I look away self-consciously, biting my lips together as I try to reign in my lust.

“I should have left Aly with Axel.” His deep voice grumbles, and the reason behind his statement did little to help me get control of my body.

“Aly wouldn’t be happy if you did that,” I reminded him.

Aly. Focus the conversation on Aly and stop thinking about her sexy beast of a grandpa staring at me like a meal he can’t wait to devour.

“She will live,” he huffs, “Here’s the Beta’s house. Maybe I can drop her off with Rick now that she’s passed out.”

“Don’t do that to the poor man. Imagine how mad she is going to be when she wakes,” I laughed and leaned closer to kiss her little nose. I promised her she could see Nelly when she woke up. She will raise hell if she wakes up anywhere but her grandpa’s house, I’m sure.

I looked over to the cottage about 200 meters to our left.

“Aly sensed you walking by earlier this far away?” I asked, studying the distance between us and the house.

Max snorts, “Girl has the nose of a bloodhound. She always knows when I’m close by.”

“Hmm.” That’s very unique, even for a werewolf pup. “She is the first female she-wolf from the goddess’s bloodline,” I mused.

Max cocks his head to the side, then stares down at his granddaughter, “I didn’t even realize that.”

“What about Taegan?” I asked, “Does he have special abilities?”

This is the first time the moon goddess’s own children were born as wolves. It’s quite fascinating to think about.

“Taegan? Well, the boy is smarter than any other kid his age. He’s smarter than many adults. He has his magic too. Xiomara said he was going to be a force to be reckoned with by his magic alone. Add to that, he is a dominant little alpha pup.”

I nodded, “Joseph was a strong witch. Too strong. The coven he was born into wanted him to be the next head, but he didn’t agree with many of the practices the coven required of their head. They didn’t want to lose him because of how strong he was either, so he ran away, going into hiding up here in Canada.”

“What practices?” Max’s brows furrow in that sexy way again.

I sigh, “Well, they took multiple wives, for one. They said it was to maintain their power, but the wives were often treated cruelly, passed around like property. The women in the coven who possessed magical abilities were oppressed, and the coven had a really bad relationship with the fae. Joseph told me why, and it made me sick. When my banishment was lifted, I tried to tell my brother but he wouldn’t hear about any of it. When Queen Aisling from the Southern Kingdom sent a messenger at Antonio’s request, I sent the information back to her with the messenger. Someone needed to know what the coven had been doing and using fairy lineage for.”

“What do you mean?”

“They had a seer, a distant daughter of a human woman and a fairy king. They are a product of our kings’ crimes against this world, taking human women as concubines. Most were sent back to this world in hopes of righting those wrongs done by fairy kings, or from jealousy of the fairy

women. I'm not sure. The rumors go both ways. When witches figured out how powerful having a seer could be, they started oppressing them here."

"Why?" he asks, "I haven't even heard of a seer before. How are they powerful?"

"Well, they aren't necessarily powerful, but their blood and ties to our realm are. Seers have fairy blood and can access magic from my realm. Witches, needing a way to fuel their magic to keep it powerful, can use different means to do that. Sex is one of the most conventional ways of fueling magic. The coven head would use the seer to draw magic from my realm and would almost become invincible because of it. The seer they had was nothing more than a sexual object and when the head was done using her to gain more magic, she would be forced to have a daughter to carry on the seer bloodline, then usually be sacrificed."

Max growls, "That's fucking disgusting, Thyra. A coven like that needs to be put down."

"I agree," I murmured. "Queen Aisling will handle it, I'm sure. The messenger I handed the information to seemed as disturbed as you are now. Something will be done."

"Hmm," he hums, looking deep in thought, "I hope something is done. If not, we need to do something ourselves. Casey, Axel's Gamma and my niece's mate, is from a pack in Florida with strong ties to the fae and other races. I think Queen Aisling works directly with them to govern the fae she rules over in our world. Maybe I can have him reach out to someone there."

I smiled warmly at him, "That would be great. Thank you."

He grunts, still looking disturbed.

Max is a great man, and I'm very grateful that I'm getting a second chance at happiness with him and his precious family too.

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The next morning.....

"Morning. How did you sleep, honey?" Max asks as he comes up from behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist and kissing my cheek as I sit at his breakfast bar, sipping on a cup of tea.

"Wonderfully. How about you?"

He kissed my cheek one more time, his facial hair tickling my skin that was dancing with the sparks from the mate bond. He then moves around the kitchen counter to the coffee maker. He's not wearing a shirt again, and his pajama bottoms are hanging low on his hips. He looks nothing like a grandpa right now. He looks like a cover model for a romance novel or a spread for a naughty calendar featuring the world's sexiest men.

“I got kicked in the face by baby feet all night,” he smirks, “Then woke up covered in drool from Aly lying on my chest. Had to get rid of my shirt.”

I should thank Aly for that later.

“Came to get coffee before tackling the sopping diaper that’s about to bust all over my bed.”

“You’re such a good grandpa,” I grinned and chuckled over my cup, taking a long sip as I watched him move around the kitchen. I could get used to this sight. “Is Aly still sleeping?”

“Yeah. It’s hard getting her to sleep, but once she’s out, she’s out. She could sleep through anything. Even doing gymnastics all over me.”

I can just imagine the night Max had with Aly. I slept in his guest bedroom, and it was quite a good night’s sleep. The whole house smells like Max, and it is a comforting scent.

“Can I go try and wake her up? I could change her diaper for you too.”

“Do you know how?” Max asks. “She’s a wiggler. It might not be easy.”

“I can handle it,” I smiled sadly. It won’t be my first time changing a wiggling toddler.

“Then by all means,” he chuckles deeply, spooning coffee grounds into the machine. The sound lifts my momentary sad mood at memories from the past.

I like his deep laugh as much as he says he likes mine.

Aly is lying sideways in Max’s bed, her little bottom sticking up in the air, her diaper sagging almost to the bed.

She looks angelic with her blonde curls and little pink toned nose. Her cheeks are chubby as her mouth is slightly opened, her small teeth visible as she mumbles in her sleep.

“Aly,” I rubbed her back, resting my nose against her curls, loving the scent of her grandpa clinging to them. “Wake up, Aly. We have to get ready to meet Nelly today.”

Her back arches from my touch, her body stretching as she struggles to open her eyes. The cutest little moan leaves her, making me chuckle. She is quite adorable, much like her mom.

She may have her dad and grandpa’s coloring, but her features resemble her mom’s right now in her relaxed state. It’s funny that she looks like her grandpa when she’s upset, but her mom when she is relaxed.

“Peg-sus?” she mumbles, rolling over on her back.

“Yeah, we need to get ready to meet my Pegasus. Is it okay if I change your diaper while your grandpa makes coffee?”

She opens her eyes more, looking at me for a few seconds like she is evaluating if I am worthy of the task, then nods, pointing her chubby little finger at the nightstand with a stack of diapers and a pack of wipes.

Her staying with Max must be a norm, because his bedroom is littered with more evidence of it being her space too. There is even a crib, obviously unused, up against the wall with a changing table next to it. Toys are everywhere, just like the living room yesterday.

I lifted her in my arms, holding her for the first time, and trying not to show my excitement too much as I walked her over to the changing table.

“Do you stay with grandpa a lot?” I asked her.

She nods, rubbing the sleepiness from her eyes.

“I bet your grandpa likes having you here with him,” I smiled at her, “Do you know where he keeps your clothes?” I asked her as I started to change her diaper. When the cold air hits her, she starts wiggling around, just like Max said she would, but I easily manage by keeping both her little feet in one of my hands.

“Dere,” she points to the nightstand again. She must have clothes in the drawer.

I finished changing her diaper, then set her on the ground to get her clothes. It takes me three tries to find an outfit she approves of. To no surprise, she picks a shirt that has a silhouette of a horse, little pink leggings and adorable little boots she calls her ‘tick-en boots’. I can only assume that means chicken boots.

I grab a little brush I assume is hers from the bathroom and start brushing out her curls, sitting her on top of the bathroom counter, while she demands to brush her teeth all by herself. I was just finishing pulling her curls into two pigtails when I looked up, hearing chuckling from the doorway.

There is Max, looking like a snack with his bare chest and sexy features, watching us while leaning against the door frame sipping on a cup of coffee.

“I could get used to seeing you in this bathroom every morning,” he smiles.

I grinned at his reflection in the mirror, fluffing Aly’s pigtails before lifting her from where she was sitting on the counter, setting her on the ground to run to her grandpa.

“Gi-paw! I see peg-sus day!”

“I know!” he squats and lifts her with one arm, “I’m excited. Aren’t you?”

“So cited!!” she squeals, throwing her arms in the air.

Max’s deep chuckle as he smiles down at his granddaughter is so endearing. I could get used to this too.

“Can you tell Thrya thank you for helping you get ready?”

Aly opens her arms for me to come get her, then falls trustingly into me as I catch her. Her little arms wrapped tightly around my neck feels amazing and almost brings tears to my eyes. I haven’t felt this in so, so long; The innocent love and trust of a child.

“Tank you Ty-ma,” she sings out, then kisses my cheek.

“You are so welcome, my sweet girl. It was my pleasure.”

2.14 Fun Bags

Chapter 94 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“Grandpa, Grandpa! Hide me!” Taegan yelled abruptly, after opening and running through the front door as we sat down for a quick breakfast of oatmeal and microwaved frozen breakfast sausage.

Max just lifts a brow suspiciously, dropping a sausage on his plate. “Why?”

Taegan runs over to him, standing behind his chair to hide his frame from whoever is snarling outside, obviously coming for the frantic little boy.

“Taegan, what did you do? Why the hell is Rick chasing you?”

“Hey, mom said not to cuss-“

“Taegan,” Max cuts him off.

“What! I didn’t do anything!” Taegan stomps his foot, looking a little too guilty to be so defensive.

“The hell you didn’t, you rude little punk,” the Beta from yesterday runs through the open door. “Where are your spoons, Alpha? Someone needs to start beating manners into that kid.”

“I was using my manners! I was saying thank you!”

“Saying ‘thank you for letting me use your fun bags as pillows’ is not manners you little shit!” Rick roars.

I choke on my bite of oatmeal, snorting it up my nose, and Max spews coffee all over the place.

“You said what?!” Max yells. “You had better have said that to Rick and not Quinn.”

Taegan makes a disgusted face. “Why would I say that to him? He doesn’t have-“

“Taegan!” Max growls.

“I’m really going to spank the kid this time, Alpha. He’s lucky he doesn’t have his wolf yet.”

“I was being nice!” Taegan yells, still hiding behind his grandfather, even though he looks just as in danger from Max’s anger as Rick’s now.

“That’s disrespectful and inappropriate behavior, boy. You can’t say shit like that, especially to a mated she-wolf. What is your mom going to say when she finds out you were that rude to her friend?”

Taegan’s defensive attitude drops at the mention of his mother.

“Mommy won’t get mad,” he says, “Stupid Casey said it to Cousin Courtney and she laughed.”

Max growls, and Rick groans, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Fucking, Casey," Max mutters, shaking his head.

“Taegan, I know you are not that stupid to think you saying that to my mate is the same as Casey saying that to his.”

Taegan wrinkled his nose, glaring at Rick. “But, daddy started talking about mom’s fun bags. I thought that was just another name for them. It sounds nicer than the other stuff you guys call boobs.”

“You guys is too broad a term. I never call them anything. I don’t talk about boobs, especially my mate’s, in front of anyone,” Rick states.

“Relax, babe,” a pretty young woman walks into the house, coming up behind Rick and wrapping her arms around him. She must be Quinn. “I wasn’t offended. I don’t know why you are.”

“Because they’re my fun bags!” he yells.

The oatmeal I just managed to suck back down from my nasal passage shoots right back up as I choke on a laugh.

“See!” Taegan yells, pointing an accusing finger at the Beta, “You say it too.”

Rick growls, baring his teeth at the kid.

“Taegan, we don’t talk about a woman’s body like that. Ever,” Max narrows his eyes at his grandson.

“But Daddy and Casey do it all the time. Uncle Nate too.”

Max drags a hand down his face. “I swear, all the fucking men in my family,” he shakes his head, looking up at the ceiling, “I can’t believe Axel was worried about me last night. Taegan, apologize to Quinn and Rick. If you offended them, you’re wrong.”

“But Miss Quinn said she was not offended,” Taegan puffs out his cheeks.

“Mrs. Quinn,” Rick growls, “from now on, just call her Mrs. Anderson.”

A slow grin spread on Taegan’s face, “Like she’s a teacher?”

Oh, this kid is trouble with a capital ‘T’. He knows exactly what he’s saying and doing, trying to use his charm to get out of it.

I couldn’t help but to sputter on my laughter. Quinn, too, is overtaken with a fit of giggles while her mate snarls and Max looks exhausted.

“Alpha....,” Rick growled in a dangerously low voice.

“I know, Rick. I fucking know.”

“I’m about to make Aly the next official Alpha of this pack,” Rick continues.

“I said I fucking know! Damn it, it’s too early for this shit.” He pulls Taegan’s arm, bringing him around to face Rick. “Taegan, if you don’t apologize, I’m sending you to the fucking mining camp until I get back. I have too much to worry about and so does your father. We can’t deal with your immature flirty bullshit right now.”

Taegan doesn’t look scared of his grandpa at all, lifting his brow while he weighs his options. “Which camp?”

“Does it matter?” Max sighs, “It’s a damn punishment, not a vacation.”

“I like the camp at Silver Lake. The accountant makes good cookies.”

He just doesn't know when to quit. I really don't blame the young Beta for being so angry with him. I would be too with his attitude like this.

"It will be the Crooked Peak Camp," Rick growls, "With no running water or women to ogle at."

Taegan cringes.

"And I will be the one to take you there. It will be a very educational flight for you."

Taegan sticks his tongue out in disgust, shaking his head.

"Fine! I'm sorry for talking about your mate's fun bags," he says, making Rick growl, and Max tighten his hold on his arm. "BOOBS! Geez, I don't know what you want me to call them."

"Don't call them anything! Don't even think about them again you little turd." Rick doesn't look happy about the apology at all and I don't blame him.

Max shakes Taegan's arm, then nods to Quinn.

"Okay, okay," Taegan sighs, then smiles as he looks up at Quinn. "Mrs. Anderson, I'm sorry I said thank you for letting me use your....unmentionables as pillows. I will be more careful with what I say in the future."

Quinn chuckles, shaking her head. "Oh, you're going to be so much fun in high school, Taegan. What would you do if someone started talking about Rosie's fun bags?"

Taegan growls at the question, "They would die."

Quinn lifts her eyebrows, angling her face while letting that sink in with the little boy.

He sighs, drooping his shoulders and hanging his head. "Okay, you're right. I'm sorry Mrs. Quinn. I'm sorry, Beta Rick."

Quinn smiles triumphantly, "That's more like it." She winks at the little boy and his solemn face then turns into a smirk before winking back.

Max lets him go, telling him to go get ready. He must have said his little fun bag comment right when he woke up because he was still in his pajamas.

Rick glares at him until he is out of sight, then turns to Max. "I love my Luna, and I would do anything for your son, but if I have to babysit him again, he's sleeping outside in a tent with me guarding the door."

"Rick, it's cold," Quinn pushes his shoulder, "He said he was sorry."

Rick just growled in response.

Max sighs, running a hand down his face again, “I’ll have Nate and Fiona help with the kids. Can you just cover for Axel until I get back?”

Rick nods stiffly, “I am already planning on it.”

“Good. Thanks,” he sits back, looking worn out, “I don’t know where he got that from.”

“He’s a witch,” I tell them, speaking for the first time in this whole ordeal, “A male witch. His body craves power. I told you, intimate relationships are the easiest source to fuel his magic. He’s too young for playing chess, obviously,” I said, making Max snort, “but he can get little surges of power through touch. If he is touching the women he flirts with all the time, that’s what he is doing. Absorbing some of their vitality.”

“Not with my mate, he’s not,” Rick mutters, glaring at his laughing mate from the corner of his eye.

“It all makes sense now,” she giggles.

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Quinn and Rick leave to get ready for work, and I offer to clean the dishes from breakfast while Max talks with Taegan back in his bedroom.

Aly is sitting on the counter beside me, offering to feed me bites of her teddy grahams she's snacking on as I wash, then wanting to help dry the dishes when I'm done.

Taegan comes out of his grandfather’s bedroom looking quite solemn, turning to go into the bathroom and out of sight when Max comes out behind him. Max walks into the kitchen and buries his face in my neck, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“You okay?” I asked, patting his head.

“Yeah,” he sighs, “I hate being the bad guy. I usually let Bailey or Axel do it, but don’t want to put that on them right now. I’m going to have to have my brother-in-law watch him like a hawk while we’re gone. My niece is heavily pregnant, though. It feels like everything is falling to shit with Bailey getting sick.”

“Gi-paw sad?” Aly asks, scooting to the edge of the counter and patting his arm.

I pick her up so she can get closer to him as she wants, and she rests her head on my shoulder next to his. He puckers his lips and she offers him her cheek, then giggles when he pretends to bite her cheek instead of kissing it.

Such a good grandfather.

“I’m ready, grandpa,” Taegan calls from behind us. He is looking down at the ground, kicking his foot back and forth in full pout mode.

“Good. Grab one of my blankets from the closet and use it since you don’t have your coat. I’ll have Aunt Fiona bring you one later.”

Taegan goes to get a blanket with a sigh, and Max shakes his head. “That boy. I’m tempted to bring him with us.”

I cocked my head to the side, thinking, “Why don’t we?”

He stops mid-motion as he is sliding Aly’s coat on to her little arms. She turns around to stare at him in confusion, but he is lost in thought and doesn’t notice.

“Can we?” he asked after about a minute when Aly got fed up with waiting and finished putting her coat on herself.

I shrug. “I don’t see why we can’t.”

“It won’t be dangerous?”

I shook my head, “It shouldn’t be. We are going to see his greatest grandmother in her realm. I don’t see how it would be.”

He thinks a while longer, pacing the living room while I help Aly get her boots on and tie Taegan’s shoes because he claims he forgot how to do it himself.

Trouble, trouble, trouble, this boy.

He’s cute. I’ll give him that.

“I’ll have to ask Axel,” Max says as we stand at the door, waiting for him.

“Good thing that’s where we are going,” I laughed, “Come on. There is no harm in asking. Let’s go.”

“Ty-ma, peg-sus?” Aly taps the side of my face as I held her.

I smiled widely at the little girl. “Are you ready to meet Nelly?”

She vigorously nods, making me laugh.

“Who’s Nelly?” Taegan asks, pulling on my sleeve.

“Peg-sus!” Aly cheers, confusing her brother more.

“Huh?” He cocks his head to the side.

“Pegasus,” I tell him, “Nelly is my Pegasus.”

I walked out the door with Aly cheering for her ‘peg-sus’, walking to the closest open space before holding my hand out in front of me. I let my magic flow forward, centering it on making a portal in front of us. Taegan and Aly are in awe as the fairy realm comes into view.

Nelly, sensing my magic, turns to come to me as the portal opens large enough for her to travel through. She snorts in the direction of Philos, a stallion that once belonged to my father. I whistled, telling her to call Loreana, a young mare that was yet to be assigned to anyone. Loreana is Nelly’s child and will be perfect for Taegan if he comes with us.

“Wow,” Taegan whispers, his eyes wide with amazement as the horses pass to our side of the portal. “They have wings!”

“They do,” I chuckled.

“Do they fly?” he asks.

I look back at Max, who has the same amazed look on his face as his grandchildren.

“They do,” I answered Taegan. “Want to take a ride?”

## 2.15 Muddy Waters

# Chapter 95 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Max POV

Now, I’ve ridden a horse plenty of damn times. Scouting for new plots and land for lumber and mining, you have to. Roads don’t just pop up in the wilderness when you need them, and shifting isn’t practical when traveling with humans.

Riding flying horses is nothing like riding a normal damn horse. At least not for me.

I should have walked.

This beast is determined to kill me, or at least make me look like a fucking idiot as I cling to it for my life. The way his breathing puffs out into short bursts, I know the fucker is laughing at me.

He keeps diving up and down, doing spirals in the air, huffing his taunting laugh when I yell at him to stop.

Worst yet, there is no saddle, and his spine is helping to redefine the term 'blue balls'.

"This is fun, grandpa!" Taegan yells, riding on the back of the young mare by himself, having no issues at all with holding on.

Aly is on Thyra's lap, squealing and clapping as they soar through the air. I guess I'm the only one having issues keeping control of this thing.

Thyra whistles, and all three beasts slowly circle to the ground, mine gracing me with a last-minute nose dive, making me scream. He lifts his wings at the last second, right as I fear death, stopping with a jerk and landing gracefully on his feet.

The bastard then sits, making me fall backward into a slushy mud puddle.

"Shit, you fucking jackass! What the fuck is your damn problem?!"

"Grandpa, mom said not to play in the mud. You're going to get in trouble," Taegan says, somehow getting his horse to walk over to stand over me, directing it with nothing more than his heels and knees. It then kneels, letting him slide off gracefully.

How can the kid control his horse when I can't control mine? Taegan's only ridden a horse once.

Thyra is holding her hand over her mouth, trying to stop her sultry giggles from slipping out. Damn, I love her laugh. Covered in fucking mud with sore balls and a bruised ego doesn't feel so bad when I hear her laugh.

"I'm sorry," she chokes, trying not to laugh, "I guess Philos wasn't the best option for you."

"What the hell is his problem?" I asked, standing at my feet, brushing the mud off my ass while glaring at the creature. Do they still use horses to make glue? I should find out.

"He was my father's. He probably just senses your aura as an alpha and is showing his dominance, since you do not possess magic as we do. I can ride him and you can ride Nelly if you wish."

The stallion and I are in an intense stare-off, and Thyra's offer feels like I would be conceding to him, admitting that he was the dominant one between us.

No fucking way am I conceding to the fucker.

“If it’s dominance that the bastard wants, its dominance that he is going to get,” I mutter, “I’m riding him.”

“Okay,” Thyra smirks, “You got a little something right here,” she says, pointing to her chin.

Fuck. I scratched my chin with my muddy hand and had mud all over my beard.

She giggles with Aly as they walk with Taegan towards the clinic doors, leaving me alone with the three beasts.

I glared at Philos, my thoughts returning to making him glue. “Okay, jackass. We can do this the easy way, where we can just fucking get along, or you and I can both do this the fucking hard way and be miserable the whole time.”

He answers by kicking his back legs in the mud, splashing the front of me with it.

“Shit! Fucking damn it!” I kicked back, splashing his white coat with the thick mud as I kicked it towards him in a fit of anger, “Your ass is going by Elmer’s from now on, because that’s going to be what they call you if you don’t knock it the fuck off!”

He neighs loudly, shaking the mud I had just kicked at him off, back onto me, then making his horsey laughter.

Fucking hell, I’m gonna murder this thing. Maybe I should have taken Thyra’s offer to switch. I need a shower now, and the number for the closest glue factory.

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Thyra POV

When we walk into Bailey’s room, she quickly shushes us, then smiles down at her mate napping between her legs with his head resting on her belly.

She’s in another new hospital gown, and the room smells strongly of disinfectant again. She must have gotten sick not too long ago.

“Mom,” Taegan whispers loudly, “I rode on a flying horse! It was so fun!”

“Did you?” she smiled widely, “Did you tell your grandpa’s mate thank you?”

“Thank you!” he turns his charming smile on me.

“You are most welcome,” I ruffled his hair.

“Mama. Daddy sweepy?” Aly asks, resting her head on my shoulder, angling her face to stare at her parents. No wonder how Aly has her grandfather so wrapped around her finger. She’s so sweet and adorable when she’s not mad at you.

Bailey nods solemnly, “Yes. Daddy didn’t get much sleep last night.”

“Everything okay? Did you have another bout of pain through the night?” I asked.

She shrugs, “I slept most of the night after you guys left. Whatever you did helped a lot,” she smiled gratefully, “Axel got called away, though. Casey spotted rogues skirting our borders. You and Max had Aly, and Rick and Quinn had Taegan, so Axel decided to go by himself with Casey.”

“Oh, no. I hope they didn’t cause too much trouble.”

Bailey makes a face, “It sounded like they were just scoping out the pack. They never crossed over. Axel had Stephanie and Addison go out to watch their behavior a few hours ago, and Casey’s going to handle getting a team together to see what it is they want.”

She sighs, running her fingers through Axel’s hair, making him snuggle more into her belly. “He’s so stressed. I wish I could take some of the burden off him, but he won’t let me out of this room. Especially since I got sick soon after he got back.”

“Don’t even think about it,” Axel grumbles against her. His eyes are still closed and resting, but he’s obviously awake. “If you want to help with my stress, quit trying to talk everyone into letting you leave.”

“I did not,” she huffs, puffing out her cheeks.

“Yes you did. Aunt Fiona said you asked the nurse.”

“I was joking,” she mutters defensively, “I said it would be easier for everyone if they watched me from our bed at home and not here.”

“No,” Axel growls, skimming his nose along her belly, then kissing it tenderly.

He’s so sweet to her. Tough and firm, but so loving. The men in this family know how to love their women.

He yawns loudly as he sits up, stretching his arms wide, then leaning back down and kissing Bailey on the lips before getting up.

He smiles at seeing Aly cuddled in my arms. “I’m glad she’s no longer seeing you as the other woman,” he snorts.

“Ty-ma gib me Peg-sus wide,” Aly boasts with a toothy grin.

“Yeah, dad. It was so cool! I got to ride my own, and it went so high. Grandpa didn’t like it, though. He,” Taegan stops, looking at his mom for a second, then motions for Axel to bend down so he can whisper in his ear, “Grandpa said lots of bad words to his horse. He didn’t like him.”

Axel chuckles. “Did you say bad words to your horse?”

Taegan shook his head, making a disgusted face.

“That’s probably why you had more fun than grandpa did,” he smirks. “Animals like horses can sense when you don’t like them.”

“Oh, I don’t think liking had anything to do with it,” I laughed, “Philos is a king’s stallion. Your father is an alpha. They both have dominant auras and Philos wouldn’t concede to him. I should have taken more care while choosing a pegasus for your father to use.”

Axel grins crookedly and Bailey giggles from the bed, holding Taegan, who has climbed up in her arms. He looks much too old to be sitting in his mom’s lap. The adoring way Taegan is staring up at her, I can see that he loves his mom fiercely. He may like to flirt, but I can see by how he treats his mom he will be good to his mate one day.

He just needs to get his power-hungry male witch tendencies under control.

“Let me guess, dad didn’t want to get a different horse?” Axel asks.

I chuckle and shake my head.

“Figures,” he laughs, holding his hands out to Aly. She throws herself towards him with a big smile and Axel lovingly rubs his nose against hers. “Where is he now?”

I laughed, “Probably at home taking a shower. He was tossed into a puddle of mud.”

“Oh, goddess,” Axel snorts.

“Gi-paw messy bessy,” Aly giggles.

“Is grandpa a messy bessy?” Axel laughs.

“Hey, dad. Grandpa and Thyra said I could go with them. I don’t want to go with Uncle Rick again. Can I go with them to save mom?”

“Huh?” Axel and Bailey exchanged a look and then looked at me for more explanation.

I didn’t think I would have to be the one to explain to them about what happened this morning and Max’s decision to take his grandson with us. I’m slightly uncomfortable with the idea, but I guess I have no choice.

“Well, there was an incident with the Beta’s, it seems, and Max was going to talk to you both about Taegan coming with us to make things easier for everyone here. It won’t be dangerous and he’s the next Alpha of this pack and the moon goddess’s distant grandson. I think it will be beneficial to everyone.”

“What happened with the Betas?” Axel asked.

“Well,” I looked at Taegan, raising my eyebrows. I think he should be the one to tell them.

He looks up at his mom with a guilty expression and Bailey attempts to look angry. “Taegan, what did you do?”

“I just told her thank you,” Taegan whispered.

“For what? What did you tell Quinn thank you for?” Axel asks, much more frighteningly than Bailey’s attempt.

“I said sorry! I won’t say fun bags again!” He is quick to exclaim.

“Fun bags?” Axel repeated the phrase.

“Boobs!” Aly giggles. Oh, great. Out of everything said during that conversation, that is the word she repeats.

“Taegan,” Bailey groans, “We talked about this.”

“I was saying thank you! She let me sleep on them!”

Axel mutters a curse under his breath, rubbing the exhaustion from his eyes with one of his large hands. “I don’t have the time or patience to deal with this shit, Taegan.”

“Dad, I said sorry!”

Axel growls, then turns to me.

“I’m sorry, Thyra, but can you give us a moment with our son? I’ll be over to my dad’s soon to talk about Taegan joining you guys, but we need to discuss it first.”

“Yes,” I smiled sadly at him. Poor man is under so much stress. I hope he allows Taegan to come. It would be good for Taegan and his father, it seems. “Do you want me to take Aly with me?”

“It’s okay. I think I’m going to need her to help me stay calm,” he narrowed his eyes at his son.

I leave them to it, feeling slightly awkward about my part in Taegan getting in trouble. It was bound to happen, but I’m still not sure it was my place to say anything.

I walked Nelly, Philos and Loreana back to Max's house, getting many curious stares along the way from various pack members. They are magnificent creatures, for sure, even to the fairy kind. Most fae do not get the chance to ride or have one, since they are reserved for royalty and those appointed to serve the king.

I left the creatures waiting out front as I entered the house, not knocking since Max told me already that his home was mine.

What I was not ready for, was the sight of Max strutting around his house naked, freshly out of the shower when I walked in.

2.16 Mine and His

Chapter 96 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

I attempted to ride the fucker one more time back to my house, but he wouldn't even let me mount him. The jackass kicked me, dangerously close to an area I was not ready to have permanent damage to yet, with an unmarked and unmated mate.

With a roar, I left the damn beast and went back home to shower and doctor my wounded thigh and ego.

I'm halfway through my shower when Axel mind links me.

"Hey, dad. Were you serious about taking Taegan with you guys?"

Shit. I was so worked up over the Pegasus bullshit that I forgot about talking with him about it. I hope Thyra wasn't too uncomfortable bringing it up.

"Yeah. I love the kid, but he's too much sometimes. You should have heard the shit he said to Quinn this morning."

"Oh, I'm about to. Rick is about to head over to tell me about it."

"Good," I grunt. I hated being the bad guy this morning, laying into Taegan about how to treat women. He's got the face of a saint and the charm of a snake around the ladies.

“We will talk about the trip and him going with you and then I’ll meet you at your place after, so you guys can set off.”

“Hey, wait a minute,” I growled, stepping out of the shower, “I haven’t seen Bailey today. I’m coming to tell her bye before we go.”

Axel chuckles in the mind link. “Okay. Well, head over here when you’re done, then.”

I examined my leg where I was kicked after drying off. The bruise is fading already, but the center of it still looks nasty.

Damn animal. I should have accepted Thyra’s offer to switch.

I put my muddy clothes in the washer for a quick wash before hopping in the washer, and the washer beeps, indicating it’s done. I walked out to switch it over to the dryer, not bothering to dress. My towel is around my shoulders as I dry my hair, but no one is here but me, so I don’t see a problem with walking around naked.

That is until I heard the front door open, and I looked over to see Thyra standing in the entrance, mouth wide opened in surprise.

“Shit,” I muttered, quickly pulling my towel from my shoulders to wrap around my waist. “Sorry. I was doing laundry.”

The corners of her open mouth quirk up as her eyes travel over my body. “Do you only have one pair of underwear?” she says, taking a step closer, “I’m not complaining. I just liked the view.”

Oh, fuck. The way her heated eyes are roaming my exposed flesh makes my body vibrate with pride.

I smirked while closing the distance between us, hooking my finger under her chin and forcing her to look up at my face. When her eyes are locked with mine, I drop the towel, letting it pool at my feet.

Her small gasp makes me chuckle. She tries to look down, but I hold her chin steady, not letting her.

“My eyes are up here, honey,” I husked deeply before slowly leaning down and resting my lips on hers in a feather-soft kiss.

She whimpers, trying to deepen it, and the goddess knows I want to let her, but I like being in control, especially after losing it while riding that damn flying horse.

“I’ll be right back,” I whispered, letting my breath fan her face and making her eyelashes flutter in delirium before turning to head for the laundry room.

Her whimper as she watches me walk away butt-ass naked makes me grin, and I put a little more exaggeration into my strut to give her a good show.

Fuck, that was exactly what I needed to feel like a man again. Her man. I may not be able to tame that wild beast that should be glue, but I can tame her, it seems.

I move the laundry from the washer to the dryer, hitting start. I then spend a few extra seconds flexing all my muscles, making sure they are tight and on full display. I may be in my 50s, but I still got it.

Taking a deep breath, I tried for my most charming smile before leaving the laundry room, strutting back out into the living room with new confidence.

....But then I stopped short the moment I saw Thyra.

Ho-ly fuck.....

She is gloriously naked, just my towel I left behind draped over her shoulders. As my eyes, which I'm sure are bugged out, start traveling down her beautiful, perfect body, with her wide hips, toned waist, a sexy indent traveling from her navel to between her full, heavy breasts.

My eyes catch faint scars on her lower abdomen, barely noticeable except when they catch the light. If I didn't have werewolf eyes, I doubt I would have caught them.

Thyra pulls the towel from around her neck, slowly, then wraps it around her body as she saunters over to me. She's on her tip-toes, swinging her lush hips with a cat-ate-the-canary smile on her lips.

"My eyes are up here," she says in a breathy, sultry whisper, making me shiver as she flicks her finger under my chin.

I bit my lips hungrily, unable to take my eyes off hers. When I bend to try and kiss her, she rests her finger on my mouth, pressing against it, then leans up and breathes against her finger, her delicious scent hovering around me. "I'll be in your room while you finish your laundry."

With that, she drops the towel, making me groan when her breasts spring free and barely rub against my chest. She smirks, then slowly turns, watching me over her shoulder for a moment before she struts towards my room.

"Axel," I mind linked my son before it's too late, and I'm too far gone in my desires.

"Yeah, dad?"

I sighed deeply, trying to make my mind work right so I could talk. "I'm gonna be a while."

He sighs, then laughs dryly, “Yeah, I should have expected that. Let me know if you need me to send some Viagra over there.”

I growl deeply, “Fuck you,” I mutter, before closing the link and heading to my bedroom to claim my woman.

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Thyra POV

It doesn’t take long for Max to pick his jaw up off the floor and follow me. He thought he had me at a disadvantage, making me get all hot and bothered, then leaving me to stew.

I showed him. I plan on showing him who really has the upper hand soon.

His icy eyes melt, trailing after me as I crawl across his bed. He looks like a predator about to pounce.

I center myself on the bed against the pillows, leaning back against the headboard. I smirk, bringing my knees to my chest before spreading them wide, trailing my hands down my body to squeeze my breasts.

The way he is watching me, its like I can feel him everywhere his eyes travel. It makes my body buzz with desire, my need for him tingling deep inside me.

He kneels on the bed, grabbing my ankles and jerking them down, pulling my body towards him. My hair fans on the pillows behind me, and my chest bounces with the motion.

His large, rough hands sail up my legs, making sparks dance in their wake. They stop just before my pussy, his thumb barely gliding against my moistening lips.

“I want you, Thyra. All of you,” he husks in his deep, sexy growl.

“Take me,” I challenged, “but your son said he would be here soon, so you better hurry.”

A confident smirk spreads on his face as he leans over me, “He’s not coming. I’ve got you for as long as it takes.”

I quirked a brow in confusion, “As long as what takes?”

The hungry expression returns, his eyes moving all over my body before meeting mine again. “As long as it takes for me to taste every fucking inch of you,” he growls, then nibbles on my bottom lip.

My back arches, my chest pushes against his. His hands are holding my hips in place, his thumb rubbing light, teasing circles around my bundle of nerves.

When his warm tongue dives between my lips, caressing against mine as his lips mold to my lips, I can feel it in my core. He worships my mouth, swallowing each of my moans and whimpers.

When I forget how to breathe, he moves his mouth along my jaw, kissing his way down my neck until he reaches my sensitive chest. He bites on my flesh, making me cry out in pleasure and pain. His teeth scrape roughly along my skin, meeting my nipple and making me jerk from the over stimulation.

This tongue caresses on my peak, as his fingers begin to message between my folds, loosening me while his thumb becomes more forceful against my clit.

It's all too much for me. With the sparks and his skilled mouth, I can't think clearly enough to do anything but succumb to the pleasure he is bringing me.

His teeth clamp around my nipple, pulling gently, making me cry out and combust around his fingers.

Fuck, I didn't last long under his touch. He chuckles deeply, kissing my breast one final time before sliding down, lapping at the folds underneath my chest before his tongue trails down to my belly button.

He kisses around it, wet and sloppy, making me wiggle and squirm.

When I feel his hot breath on my core, my eyes roll to the back of my head, my soaked pussy dripping as he pulls his fingers from me.

"Fucking amazing," he groans, running his nose between my lower lips and inhaling deeply. "Fuck," he growls again, then makes me scream as his tongue invades, lapping at my juices from the inside.

He hooks his arms around my thighs, forcing them to stay open while he vigorously devours me. I'm a writhing mess, my mind unable to comprehend the pleasure he is forcing upon me.

My leg hooks around his neck, holding him against me as my insides begin to quiver with a new bout of overwhelming pleasure. I scream out some mangled version of his name, Max growling as he more fervently laps his tongue between my folds, his nose rubbing against my clit. As I come down from my high, his teeth latch onto my nerves, sucking hard, making my dying orgasm burst into new life.

My legs are shaking uncontrollably, my back arching far off the mattress. I'm gripping the sheets in desperation, my core feeling like it is folding in on itself, trembling as it shatters.

"Mmm," Max moans, running his flattened tongue up my slip one last time before smirking at me.

“Fuck, that was incredible,” I panted, biting my lip as my body wiggled beneath him from the lingering pleasure vibrating through all my tightened muscles.

“Yeah?” he leans back on his heels, rubbing his massive cock between my folds, coating it with my abundant moisture, “Just wait,” is all the warning he gives me before sheathing his massive length inside me, making my body jerk with the violent but very welcome motion.

“Oh, fuck, honey,” he coos huskily, leaning down and cupping my face between his large hands, “You feel just as good as you taste.”

I whimper from his praise as he slowly brings his hips back and starts pumping into me. The current of pleasure has me gasping, feeling him throbbing so deep inside me. When he hooks one of my legs over his shoulder, I scream as he starts pounding into me.

It’s too much. All of him is too much and not enough all at the same time. My magic, overwhelmed by the bond, burns in my fingertips. I reach for his butt's cheek, wanting to lessen his assault, or urge him to go harder. I’m not sure.

When my hand tightens its hold on his ass, my magic flows from me, imprinting him with my name in its vine-like script. I don’t realize what I’ve done until my magic travels up my arms in glowing vines under my skin, until it reaches my face, and Max slows his movements, watching with wide eyes as my skin lights in an eternal glow.

His fingers brush along my cheeks, where the vines begin, then down my arms, his expression full of wonder. He turns to see the evidence of my brand on his butt, then chuckles deeply, making his dick which is still inside me flex with the movement.

“I’ve heard that fairies brand one another when they mate, but I’ve never seen it before. Does this mean I’m yours now? Forever?” he asks, slowly gyrating his pelvis against mine, making my eyes roll to the back of my head. His cocky expression has my dominant side breaking free.

My eyes glow, catching him off-guard, then I pull him forward and roll us so I’m now on top, looming over him with my chest pressed firmly against him.

“Do you have a problem with that?” I asked before biting down hard on the fatty tissue of his ear, making him hiss.

“Fuck, no,” he growls, thrusting his hips up, making me cry out as he hits a place inside me that is all new.

I push against his chest to sit up, riding him as I build that delicious friction deep inside to my core. My pussy is swollen with pleasure, sucking him in deeper with each thrust. His hands find their way to my breast, pulling and twisting my nipples, driving me to ride him harder until I am bouncing uncontrollably with his movements.

As I start to tip over the edge again, he sits up, his face looming above mine as he grips my hips, slamming my body down on his continuously as my whole body begins to shake.

“My turn,” he growls, pushing my hair back with his nose, then licking his tongue up my nape as I feel his canines elongate. He growls, sinking his teeth into me, and the pleasure it brings is indescribable. My magic flows to him through the bond as his DNA mingles with mine, our souls connecting and euphoria washing over me.

I can feel his seed shooting inside me, as my final pleasure vibrates around him.

We are now one, bonded forever. He is mine as I am his, and I couldn’t have been happier.

## 2.17 Out of Control

# Chapter 97 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Bailey POV

“Taegan, I’m not very happy with you right now. You know better than to talk to women that way,” I told my son, who was actively trying to squirm behind my back to hide from his father.

Axel has addressed this issue with him over and over again, especially during training, where many of the women undress openly so they can shift.

He has gotten better, and we haven't had issues in a long time, but the lesson obviously hasn't been learned yet.

“Taegan,” Axel growls, grabbing him around the waist with one arm and carrying him over to a chair in the corner of the room. “We’re trying to talk to you.”

Aly, mimicking her dad, does a little growl, glaring at her brother while resting her head on Axel’s shoulder. Carli would say her ovaries would be tingling if she saw the cuteness between this father and daughter right now.

This isn’t the time to be admiring my husband and daughter, though.

“I said I was sorry! Miss Quinn had already said it was okay and grandpa talked to me,” he looked up towards the ceiling like he was exasperated. It's a move he learned from his father and grandfather, and he looks just like them every time he does it. “He talked to me for a loooong time. I thought my ears were going to fall off.”

“It doesn’t look like anything anyone is saying to you is sticking, though, Taegan,” I said pleadingly.

His face falls, knowing I’m really upset with him. “I’m sorry,” he says in a whisper.

“How can we trust you to ever be away from us if you can’t even be respectful to our Betas? You think there are no consequences for your actions, so maybe we should start making some that you will notice,” Axel says.

“Like what?” Taegan asked.

“Like no video games, to start,” I tell him, “And no TV. I’m having those taken from your room and changing the passwords on the wifi.”

Taegan’s mouth drops and he makes a horrified expression. “How do I talk to Rosie without wifi?”

“How do you talk to Rosie without feeling guilty about flirting with other girls?” Axel snaps, “If you really think Rosie is your mate, you shouldn’t be disrespecting her that way. Talking about fun bags to mated she-wolves. That’s horrible. Rick is on his way here right now, and if he doesn’t feel like you are sorry, I’m going to let him choose your punishment.”

“What! I thought no wifi or TV was my punishment!?”

“That’s your punishment from us for not listening when we warned you before. It doesn’t cover the wrong you did to Beta Rick by disrespecting him and his mate,” I tell him.

Taegan sighs, hanging his head, “But Beta Rick wants to send me to the yucky mining camp. The one where we had to poop in buckets.”

“That sounds good to me. No women there for you to be an ass to,” Axel huffs.

Taegan continues to sulk in the corner while we wait for Rick, who was doing some work in the office for Axel when he called for him. Aly distracts Axel from his exhaustion by tracing a tattoo on the side of his neck that disappears beneath his shirt.

She keeps asking for markers to color it in, something Axel lets her do often, but we don’t have any here with us. Knowing Axel, he’s probably already mind linked one of the secretaries, or even Rick, to bring markers to the clinic for her.

I’m starting to get the stabbing cramps in my lower abdomen, but not bad enough that I can’t hide it. Thyra helped a lot last night to help me get rid of the worst of the pain. It felt a lot like Axel’s alpha aura he uses to help someone relax or calm down when they are distressed. That benefit of the alpha aura is designed for alpha’s to help reassure their distressed pack members that they are safe and protected. It can help someone weaker like me, a human, fall asleep, but that’s the extent of its power.

Thyra's power warped my feelings completely. I was hurting so badly that I was consumed by the pain, but with her magic, that was replaced with a dull pulsing that was almost hypnotic. It didn't take away the feeling in my stomach, it just changed it.

A wave of exhaustion washed over me and I was asleep before I knew it. I don't even remember Max and her leaving.

Seeing Aly with her this morning was so much progress from yesterday, it gives me hope that even if something does happen to me, that Aly and all my kids will have a dependable woman to be there for them. The way she understood Taegan this morning and put the burden of telling us what happened on him, though gently coaxing him to be honest, was reassuring. I think she will be able to handle Taegan better than even Max can.

Max wouldn't have been mated to someone not worthy of him, so she must be super special, just like him.

I was lost in my thoughts, still trying to hold in the pain from showing on my face, when the door to my room burst open, and in storms a sobbing Courtney.

"HOW COULD YOU NOT TELL ME!" she cries, holding her round belly and throwing herself at me on the bed. "Why would you hide that you're pregnant from me? I like secrets! I wouldn't have told anyone. You know I can keep secrets, especially from my cousin."

"Hey!" Axel scoffs, "I'm right here."

Courtney, gripping my hands while sitting so close to me, her belly is pressing against mine, turns to glare at Axel, "You didn't tell me either, jerk."

"Oh, I am so sorry. Next time my wife is in a crisis, I'll stop everything to tell you all about it first."

"Good," Courtney nods, wiping the tears from her eyes, "I hope you do."

Axel growls, "Where are your babysitters? Where's Casey and Uncle Nate?"

"Right here!" Casey calls from the hallway, Conner on his shoulders and Calum gripping his hand. Calum has a bag of mini donuts he's trying to hold and eat at the same time, which is probably what slowed Casey down.

"Sorry. Calum told her about Bailey this morning and I couldn't fucking stop her from coming. I tried," his eyes went wide, showing just how hard his morning had been.

Poor guy. He was up all night with Axel too, and Courtney had already been stressing him out with her pregnancy demands.

“Well, I don’t need her here stressing Bailey out more with her pissy hormones. Get her out,” Axel snaps.

“Either of you touch me, I will bite,” Courtney growls. She bumps me with her hip, making me scoot over, and slides under the blankets next to me, a look on her face daring either of the men to try messing with her.

I giggle at her stubbornness. “Aww, she’s not stressing me out. But we are waiting for Rick right now. It might not be a good time for the company.”

“Why?” Courtney’s eyes went wide, looking from Axel to me, “Is it about the rogues last night?”

I shook my head, “No, Taegan made some bad choices this morning with Quinn and Rick.”

Courtney tilts her head to the side, and I know she’s definitely not leaving now. Not if this involves Quinn too. She likes being involved with everyone’s business. “Go on,” she says.

“I just said thank you,” Taegan mutters.

Axel sighs, looking up towards the ceiling and shaking his head. Aly watches him for a few seconds, then copies the action.

So stinking cute.

“He thanked Quin for letting him use her fun bags as pillows last night,” I somehow told Courteny while keeping a straight face. It’s hilarious to say out loud, but still very wrong. I don’t want Taegan thinking that me laughing at his statement is affirming that it is okay.

“Oh, my,” Courtney bites her lip, fighting to hold back her own laughter. “That is quite a naughty thing to say to someone.”

“I heard it from your mate,” Taegan growled.

“Yeah, I hear dad talk about your fun bags all the time. Why is it bad?” Callum asks with a mouth full of powdery donuts. The kid loves it when his mom is pregnant because it’s the only time she buys hostess and little debbie snacks.

Taegan started to say, “Because your dad does porn sh-”

“Taegan!” Axel snaps.

Taegan crosses his arms, slouching further into the chair with a little “hmpf”.

Casey’s mouth was hanging open, “When do I say that shit?”

“All the time!” Axel, Taegan and Callum say at the same time, followed by a little, “All time,” from Aly, so she can fit in with them.

Courtney and I choke on our laughter. I wince when my laughing causes the pain in my stomach to worsen, but luckily no one notices, too focused on Casey and Taegan.

Conner is looking down at his dad from above, resting his little chin on Casey’s forehead, “Say sorry, daddy,” he tells him, though I’m sure the two-year-old has no idea what Casey did wrong. I don’t even think Casey did anything wrong. Taegan just needs to learn not to repeat those kinds of things.

He scoffs, rolling his eyes, “I’m sorry,” he states, “that you can’t control your own kid and want to blame me,” he adds in a muttered whisper, making Axel groan in exasperation.

“Daddy, Aly want donut,” Aly whines, staring at her cousin.

Callum holds a donut up for Aly and she gladly takes it, then tries to wiggle free to sit with Callum as he climbs onto the foot of my bed at his mom’s feet. Axel sets her beside him, ruffling Callum’s hair while Callum hands my grabby daughter another donut.

“Taegan, come with me,” Axel says. “Case, stay here and don’t let my wife get out of that bed. No matter what.”

“What if I have to pee?” I asked in a huff.

“I think he is giving you permission to wet the bed,” Courtney snorts.

“I can get you some adult diapers,” Casey smirks.

“Where are we going, dad?” Taegan asks Axel, who I guess is choosing to ignore my question.

“Rick is on his way here now. We’re going to meet him outside to talk, then you and I are packing you a bag. You’re going with grandpa.”

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Taegan POV

After meeting with Beta Rick, dad was even more mad.

I thought I was done getting in trouble after Grandpa complained about my behavior all morning.

I really didn’t mean to make Quinn mad at me. She laughed when I said it, so I thought it was okay. I didn’t think two little words would be this big of a deal.

Now, when I get back from this trip with grandpa and his new mate, I have to go with Beta Rick to the lumber plant every weekend to work, and I'm not allowed to go to the co-ed training any more.

That's stupid. I always go with Miss Addison and Stephanie to the training on the weekends.

"Can I call Rosie and tell her I'm grounded and can't talk to her for a while?" I asked Dad.

He grunts, shaking his head. "Your mother will talk to Luna Carli later and tell her."

"That's stupid. Why can't I just tell her?" I snapped, regretting what I said instantly when Dad growled at me.

"Boy, you are about to learn respect the hard way if you don't get your act together. I will make your sister the next alpha if you keep this shit up," he shakes his head, like he is truly disappointed in me, "What is the matter with you lately? You know better than to act like this."

What's the matter with me? My mother is dying, and I'm being left out of everything, like it doesn't concern me. She trusted me, more than anyone else, to help her when she first started getting sick, but now I feel like me helping her just made everything worse. I didn't know mom was dying. I thought she was just sick from the twins she was carrying. I didn't know those twins, my newest siblings, were the ones killing her.

It may be the curse I keep hearing them talk about, but I feel like if I told grandpa sooner about mom and what she was hiding, she wouldn't be as sick as she is now. Grandpa or daddy could have talked mom into not having the babies like the doctor tried to do lots of times.

It feels like mom would rather have those babies than stay alive with me.

If I don't make jokes like Casey, or get mad, I feel so sad that I know I'm going to cry, and I don't want mom to see me cry. When I'm sad, it makes her feel so much worse. It always has, so I've always tried to hide my sadness when I felt it.

My other feelings feel out of control when I try to hide my sadness, but I can't let my sadness show. No matter what. I can't let mom feel worse than she does.

I can feel my magic inside me getting more unstable with the way I have been feeling. It feels like it is burning beneath my skin sometimes, but dad and grandpa can't understand that. Xiomara showed me how to center it, to get it under control in my chest, but when I start to feel mad or really sad, it breaks free and feels like it's burning.

It wants to save mom.

I'm glad dad is letting me go with Grandpa and Thyra, because Thyra might be able to help me. Holding her hand makes my magic calm down, and when I was riding the flying horse, everything inside me felt better.

“I want Grandpa,” I muttered to dad, not knowing how else to answer his question. The answer is too complicated, and I don’t know how to explain it to him.

Dad sighs again, “Okay, Taegan.” The disappointment I hear in his voice makes my heart hurt, and my magic tries to flare out of control again.

I sigh too, not knowing what else to do.

2.18 Welcome to the Family

Chapter 98 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Thyra POV

Max’s chest is vibrating against my ear as he purrs in satisfaction. Both of us are finally spent and we’re basking in the afterglow, sated and filthy.

I really think there isn’t a single inch of my body that didn’t have Max’s mouth on it at some point. Everything is a sticky, sweaty, slimy mess, but I’m more than content lying here like this.

But we have things to do.

“We need to get up,” I sighed, “it’s probably almost noon now.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” he groans, trailing his fingers down my back, “Back to reality.”

Despite saying that, we both make no motions to actually get up, and after a few minutes I chuckle. “We really do need to get up, Max.”

He sighs heavily, “I know, I know. I’m having a hard time finding the motivation. I could stay in bed with you forever.”

I rolled over on top of him, resting my chin on his chest and smiling at him sadly. “Bailey.”

That was all the motivation he needed. His blissful expression weakens, making him almost look guilty.

“You’re right,” he groans. He grabs my waist and rolls over on the bed, spinning me so I’m tucked underneath him. He kisses me tenderly before pushing off the bed to get ready.

He leaves the room for a second, then comes back with both of our clothes, handing me mine before sliding his boxers on.

You can still see the top of my name branding his ass cheek. I couldn't believe out of all the places to put it, I ended up putting it there in my pleasure filled delirium.

I wonder if I should tell him that having his pants hanging so low on his waist is just showcasing my brand? His mark, still fresh and tingling deliciously, is for all to see right on my neck, so I decide to just let it go for now. I like that you can still see it every time his shirt rises up.

"Ready to go?" Max asked, encircling me in his arms after putting his sheets in the washer.

"Of course, but who is going to switch that out for you? Won't they get moldy if you leave them like that?" I asked, nodding towards his laundry room.

"My sister said she would switch them. I just mind linked her. I have the cleaning omegas come twice a week too, so if Fiona forgets, it would be the end of the world."

"Oh," I murmured, making a mental note about the omegas and his sister. We really just jumped into being mates, and I haven't thought much about what life with him will be like after I get back.

There is a lot we don't know about one another, and guilt eats at me, knowing I should tell him my biggest secret soon.

Since Rian was taken from me by my brother, I really haven't told anyone. I never even told Joseph. He suspected, and asked me once about having kids, but I would never tell him the truth or the story behind losing my son because of my transgressions. I was too embarrassed and ashamed to admit why I lost him, and why my brother was trying to keep us separated.

Rian was about Taegan's age the last time I saw him. I can't even tell how old he would be now. Not with how much I have traveled between realms and with my banishment.

My brother made Rian a prince, and is raising him as if he is his own son. I'm grateful that I was the only one punished and that he took favor on Rian, treating him as well as he is even with his mixed blood.

How could I tell Max about something about myself as shameful as losing my rights to my own child because of mistakes I made in my past? I was nervous about telling him about Alyssa, but this is much more personal and is fully my fault. No one can argue that I didn't make mistakes. Those mistakes led to Rian, but Max might see me differently if he learned the circumstances behind them. I don't want him to fear that I may be a bad influence on his grandchildren like my brother said I was to my own son.

"You okay, honey?" Max asks me, rubbing his hand down my back to distract me from my thoughts. He has a backpack over his shoulder, ready to leave.

"I'm fine," I told him, trying to push away my wayward thoughts and smile up at him. "Let me see that," I told him, holding my hand out for the backpack.

He gave me a disapproving look. "No, I think I got it."

I rolled my eyes, "Just let me see."

"I'm not letting you carry my damn bag for me, Thyra," he grumbles.

"No one is going to carry your bag," I tell him, waving my hand in the air and opening up a portal to my vortex where I keep my belongings when I travel. It travels with me, and makes journeys like this so much easier.

Max's jaw drops, and he slowly slides his bag off his shoulder, handing it to me so I can hoist it inside.

"That's....handy," he murmurs under his breath, making me chuckle.

"It is, isn't it?"

When we get outside, Max glares at Philos, and I almost laugh when Philos seems to glare back at him.

"We can still switch," I told him, walking up to Nelly, who put her head to my chest so I would rub her ears. "Nelly is a sweetheart."

"Nope," he grunts, flexing his hands at his side. I imagine he's thinking about flexing his hands around Philos's neck. "This fucker and I have some shit to work out."

I sigh, "Really? Because I don't think you have time to take another shower and wash your clothes all over again."

He bares his canines to the pegasus, and Philos stomps his hooves threateningly on the ground.

"Oh, Nelly. I think it's time I put a stop to his stubbornness," I whispered to my sweet beast, then let my magic flow to the tips of my fingers, snapping them, making Max jump and yelp, feeling a shock coming from my brand on his ass.

"Bailey is waiting," I looked at him sternly, then nodded to Nelly, "You two can work out your shit later."

I came up beside him, kissing his cheek to soften the sting of my magic, then chuckled when he glared down at me. He's still rubbing his ass cheek, looking very offended.

"How did you do that?" He grumbles.

“Want to find out again?” I asked, raising my hand teasingly and letting my fingers glow.

“No,” he mutters, then growls, kissing my lips once before begrudgingly walking over to Nelly, who welcomes him by nuzzling his shoulder. She can feel my magic in him from the brand and will behave perfectly as a result.

The short ride to the clinic, letting the three pegasus trot instead of fly, was much easier for Max, and he was petting and loving on Nelly by the time we got there.

“Why can’t that jackass be more like her,” he asks me, sliding off her back and rubbing the side of her neck.

I chuckled, taking his hand as we walked inside.

There are far more faces in Bailey’s room when we get there. A very pregnant woman named Courtney, who is Max’s niece, is lying beside Bailey on the bed. She has her arm locked with Bailey’s at the elbow, almost like she is trying to mold herself to Bailey’s side.

Bailey has her knees up on the bed, and a little boy is leaning back against them, watching the TV on the wall while eating straight from a box of cereal.

There is a very large, heavily tattooed man named Casey, napping in the chair brought in for Axel. A toddler I haven’t seen before is on his lap, coloring on one arm with markers between his tattoos while Aly is giggling at his other knee, coloring on his other arm. How a man can sleep through that, I do not know.

A man about Max’s age was griping at Courtney when we walked in, trying to talk her into going home so Bailey could rest. He stopped complaining to his daughter and smiled mischievously at us when we walked in.

Max introduced him as Nate, and told me that he was his brother-in-law, mated to Fiona, his sister.

“Where’s Axel?” Max asked, looking around the room like he might magically appear. Taegan was gone too.

“They’re packing for Taegan to come with you,” Bailey smiles, but her smile doesn’t reach her eyes. Watching her closer, it seemed like her legs were up not for the boy’s comfort, but hers.

She’s having those cramping pains again, and doing a good job hiding it.

I leave Max’s side, who is arguing with Nate now about his family overtaking the hospital room, Courtney chiming in and telling Max to make Nate and Casey leave, because she wasn’t going anywhere.

I casually sit beside Bailey in the chair next to her bed, and she smiles tightly at me. I rested my hand against her belly, being careful not to be too noticeable as I let my magic flow to her, leaning over to whisper the words in her ear needed to cast the spell to warp the pain into something way more manageable and comforting. Her hair and mine are hopefully helping to muffle the sound so her father-in-law and everyone else doesn't notice. I understand her wanting to hide the pain. There is nothing anyone else here can do for her, and she wants to protect them in her own way.

When I'm done, she sighs in relief, giving me a very grateful smile that does reach her eyes this time, making those charming dimples appear on her face.

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Of course, my dear," I gripped her hand, then looked back at the arguing men.

Only, they are not arguing any longer. Max caught the end of the interaction, and looks more upset that Bailey was in pain again and was keeping it to herself.

"What were you doing with your hand to make it glow like that?" the little boy leaning against Bailey's legs asked, turned around completely and resting his chin on her knees. He looks to be about the same age as Taegan, but doesn't have that same sharpness and maturity that Taegan carries. He's still adorable, but Taegan seems like a little man to me.

"I was just helping her tummy to feel a bit better. It's uncomfortable being pregnant sometimes."

"Wow," he stares, "Can you do that to my mom? She is always complaining about her back hurting. She says it's daddy's fault, but he just says 'damn right' and doesn't make his hands glow to help her. He just offers to give her a massage, but then she ends up complaining about her back more after he's done."

I bite my lips together, trying not to laugh. Max looks upset, and Nate makes a disgusted face, then kicks the sleeping Casey in the chair in the corner. Casey jerks his head up, wakes, and quickly wraps his arms around the two toddlers in his lap to keep them from falling.

"What? What happened?" he stutters, disoriented.

"You happened, you fuck-brained little shit. Keep your filthy fucking hands off my daughter!"

"Dad, it's a little late to get mad about that," Courtney rolls her eyes in a huff.

"The fuck it is! This asshole just keeps adding dates to that fucking plaque. Now he's doing that shit in front of my grandkids!"

"What the hell are you talking about, old man?" Casey yawns, and Aly and the other toddler both shove a marker in his mouth at the same time, making him gag. They giggle, then look at Courtney at the same time.

Courtney laughs, “I taught them that, “ she boasts proudly.

Casey coughs to clear his throat, “At least they didn’t use their fingers like you do.”

“How does dat feel, daddy?” the other toddler giggles, and Courtney and Bailey lean together, chortling.

“That’s exactly what I tell him every time I do it,” Courtney snorts, trying to catch her breath.

“This shit is why my grandson keeps getting in trouble, Nate! Why the fuck can’t you control your kids!?” Max yells at Nate.

“My kids? They’re grown ass adults. How is it my fault?” Nate throws his arms in the air, offended.

“Because you have always done that same shit to my sister! They learned it from you!”

“This will go on forever,” Bailey sighs, leaning over to tell me. She then brushes the hair from my shoulder to see my mark and smiles radiantly, “You will get used to the petty fights. Welcome to the family.”

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Nate ends up somehow convincing Courtney to leave Bailey’s bed, promising her some kind of dessert called deep fried twinkies if she goes home. I’ve never heard of it before and it doesn’t sound appealing to me. She got out of bed really fast after hearing it, so maybe it is good and just sounds unpleasant.

Max is rocking Aly in the chair while I sit beside Bailey, answering the questions she has about fairies. She thought we would all have wings, but only our kings and queens are granted the magic that unleashes them when they are crowned. My brother has wings now, but I do not, much to her disappointment.

Axel and Taegan come back a little while later, and Taegan looks almost relieved to see me, which takes me off guard.

He runs up to me, gripping my hands tightly.

“Thyra, can you make it stop again?” he asks, confusing me.

“Stop?” I looked around the room and saw everyone else just as confused as me. “Make what stop?”

He grips my hands tighter, and I can then feel it. His magic minorly siphoning from mine.

## 2.19 You Saved Me First

## Chapter 99 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

His face relaxes as he holds my hands. I forget everyone else in the room and focus on his features, studying his aura, and then I see the vibrant blue hues of his magic flare to life.

His body heaved a sigh of relief, and I could see he was under great strain trying to center his magic and get it under control.

I run my hand down the side of his face, letting my magic flow freely as I do, and his little handsome face smiles at the sensation. This poor boy. He is going to be too powerful for his own good.

“Better?” I ask him, and he nods gratefully.

“Yes,” he breathes out in relief, “Thank you Thyra.”

“You are welcome, young man,” I grinned warmly, running my fingers back through his hair. “You can come see me when that happens anytime.”

His shoulders sag, like he is relieved to hear that, then he releases my hand to climb up on the bed with his mom, cuddling up next to her like he was suddenly exhausted.

She looks as confused as everyone else, but doesn’t ask questions. She just brushes her knuckles down his face and kisses his head before resting hers on his.

“When what happens?” Axel is the one to ask.

“His magic,” I tell him, “It was seeking more power; something to fuel it.”

“It feels bad when it does that and it's hard to make it stop,” Taegan grumbles, his body tucked in next to Bailey’s.

“Why didn’t you tell us, baby?” Bailey asks him.

He buries his face in the crook of her arm, shaking his head, not wanting to answer.

“Taegan?” Axel pressed him. His tone is firm, but he comes to sit on Bailey’s other side and rubs the boy's back tenderly.

“I’m okay now,” Taegan sighs, exasperated. “Thyra’s hands make it feel centered again. It felt like it was trying to escape before.”

“It’s seeking out more power,” I told him, “I’m glad you are going with us. My realm has natural magic and I can help to connect you to it.”

“Why is it doing that, though?” Max asked, “Have you been having those problems for long, Taegan?”

He shakes his head. “No. Don’t worry, grandpa. I feel better now. We have to save mom.”

This poor boy. He’s far more mature than he should be for his age and I see Bailey’s selfless trait in him all of a sudden. I have a feeling he has been suffering alone as long as his mother has, going through the same lengths to keep it to himself.

Bailey kisses his head, holding his face in her hand. “You always save me, baby. Thank you.”

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When Aly realized that Taegan was going with grandpa on the pegasuses and she wasn’t invited, she threw a tantrum that could put all tantrums to shame.

Her screams were ear piercing as she clung to him, not willing to even consider letting him go. The poor man looked on the verge of tears himself, not knowing whether to cling to her as well or try to help his son to pry her from him.

Bailey, having been allowed to see us off outside, after a lot of arguing and bribing, ended up being the one to deal with the screaming toddler.

“Now, that’s enough,” she told Aly sternly, her angry kitten face actually working on Aly.

Aly’s screaming stopped, but her lip still quivered as she tried to give her mom a pleading look.

“No ma’am. You are making this harder for grandpa by acting like that. You don’t want grandpa to leave here sad, do you?”

Aly shook her head before resting it on Max’s chest.

“Then stop making him feel bad. Grandpa will be back before you know it.”

Aly sniffles, “But, Aly go too.”

Max looks heartbroken, gripping the toddler tighter to his chest. Bailey narrows her eyes at both of them. If Max didn’t give in so easily, I doubt Aly would be this hard to handle.

“Aly, no. Max, hand her over.” She reaches her hands out for her daughter.

Max rubs his eyes before kissing Aly, who looks absolutely devastated, though she does a good job holding back her tears. He gently gives Aly to Bailey, and the little girl buries her face in Bailey's neck, hiding her tears.

Taegan is clinging to Bailey's side, watching the exchange solemnly. His hands are glowing slightly, so slightly that I would have missed it if I hadn't been paying attention to his aura too.

Hmm. It seems his magic's instability is triggered by his mother in some way. I will have to see if there is more to his issue than he is letting on later.

"Goddess, you created a monster," Axel sighs, hugging his father in the manly way men do; slapping each other's backs in a two-second embrace.

"You and Bailey created her, you ass," Max grumbles gruffly, rubbing his eyes again.

"No. We created a sweet little girl and you turned her into the spoiled creature she is," Axel laughs dryly, "Be careful dad. And thank you. Take care of my son," he then smirks at me, pulling me into a much more gentle hug, "And you keep them both in line. Thank you too, Thyra, for everything."

I can tell he means more than just showing up to save his wife. Who knew that our fates and lives would become so intertwined before I came here yesterday morning?

"I will," I smiled at him as he pulled away, "And you are very welcome."

Axel pulls Taegan off to the side for a minute, hugging the boy tightly. Taegan seems upset at first, but then clings to his father tightly after a few seconds. When they pull away from each other, Axel has tears in his eyes and tries to blink them away, looking up at the sky.

"I love you, son," Axel says in his deep voice full of emotion and tears.

"I love you too, dad. Take care of my mom." Even Taegan's goodbye is too mature for his age.

Bailey hands Axel the depressed toddler, then goes to her knees so she's at Taegan's level, pulling him in front of her.

"I just want you to know how proud I am of you for doing this with your grandparents, Taegan."

Taegan looks down at the ground while Bailey holds his hands. He won't meet her eyes as he kicks one of his feet shyly.

"I thought I was going with grandpa because you guys were punishing me?"

Bailey's face goes solemn, then she takes one of her hands and places it on his cheek, tilting his face up to look at her. "No, baby. You have always been the most dependable person in my life. I

know that you going with them is the right thing. I can feel it. Right here,” she pats her chest over her heart. “You are going because it’s what you are meant to do.”

Taegan’s eyes started to glisten when he looked at his mother, then his lips slowly started to tremble, “I’m scared, mom.”

“What are you scared of, baby? Grandpa will protect you from anything. You know that.”

He looks down at the ground again, a single tear running down his cheek. “I’m scared you won’t be here when I get back,” he confesses before a sob escapes him, and his face contorts into a painfully heartbreaking expression of fear and sadness. “I don’t want you to die.”

“Taegan,” Bailey whispered, tears escaping from her eyes. She pulls him into a hug and he falls into her embrace, molding his body tightly against hers while he starts to sob loudly.

It was like a damn had broken inside the boy, and the full weight of the sorrow and worries he was carrying was just too much for his little body to bear. His aura is dancing with hues of black and red, and I think I found the reason his magic has been so unstable. The person he cares for the most is dying, and his magic wants to save her, but doesn’t have enough power to do so.

I can see the blue hues licking out and fusing in momentary spurts to his mother, trying to chase the tainted darkness of the curse away.

His power is going to be unimaginable one day. His body hungers for more power now, and just doesn’t know a stable way to source it yet.

His sobbing quiets into hiccups and choked tears after a few minutes, and watching him with his mother is making silent tears fall from my eyes.

I don’t think one of us has a dry eye.

Axel isn’t trying to stop his crying any longer. He’s choking on sobs while hugging Aly closer to him. Aly is watching her brother, crying out of sympathy, because I don’t think she knows what’s going on.

And Max....

Max’s expression pains me. He is staring up at the sky, biting his lips so hard they are turning white. His handsome face was shadowed in dark ridges from the strain of his sorrow. I can feel his sadness in our newly formed bond, intensifying my own feelings watching the little boy confess his worries to his mother.

I wrap my arm around his waist, and he pulls me against him, burying his face in my hair before his tears begin to fall, falling on my shoulder, his deep breathing ragged and rough.

I find comfort in his touch, and I hope he is finding some in mine.

“I am not going to die,” Bailey states, her sweet voice thick with her tears, “Just like I feel you are supposed to go on this journey, I feel that you, once again, will be my saving grace. And you know what?”

“What?” Taegan chokes out.

“You are going to be saving not just me, but all three of your sisters too. Even if the worst were to happen to me, I know they would be okay because they have you. You’ve endured so much in your life, Taegan, and it has made you the strongest and wisest little boy there is. I know that without a doubt. I think the goddess was preparing you for this journey, Taegan. You are already my savior. You saved me from the moment I learned you were growing inside me until now. That’s how I know you were made for this, and everything will be okay.”

Taegan sniffled, pulling back from his mother to look at her face. “I thought dad was your savior?”

Bailey smiles, “He saved us, but you, my amazing and strong son, were always the one to save me.”

2.20 Blue Cliff Falls

Chapter 100 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

“This is fun, grandpa!” Taegan yells above the wind, his laugh carrying over to me.

Watching the boy now as he rides his flying horse, you wouldn’t even guess that he was crying his eyes out, and had the rest of us in tears just a little while ago.

He looks so much more relaxed, getting that burden off his shoulders by sharing with us his anxiety. It tore at me; at all of us to hear how worried he was about his mother. We all were, but never stopped to consider how he was truly feeling. He had been carrying the secret of her illness and pregnancy longer than he ever should have, and because he was always so dependable, especially when it had anything to do with Bailey, no one thought much of it.

No wonder he’s been acting up. The kid was trying to carry more stress than any boy should, and we were all so wrapped up in our own damn problems and drama, we missed it.

I feel like I let him down; like we all let him down, but I'm so incredibly proud of him for finally telling us. That boy's entire life has always revolved around his mother. She is the center of his universe, and with the possibility of her dying, we all should have thought more about what that possibility would do to Taegan, and how he would process it. His world has been turned upside down. He needed his mother's reassurance that she was going to be okay.

When she told him that he saved her first, I almost lost it. Yeah, my son took them out of a bad situation, but that boy was her sole reason for leaving the fuck-face cunt in the first place. He was her reason for surviving, for fighting. No one gives either of them enough credit for the strength they have shown countless times now.

Both Taegan and Bailey are survivors. They are both the strongest warriors we have.

Though both of them still need protecting most of the time. From their own selflessness more than anything else. Watching Taegan acting carefree on the back of his Pegasus right now, I feel he might need some protecting from his recklessness too.

“Make sure you hang on tight, Taegan! Don’t you fall!”

“I won’t,” he laughs at me, like the thought of him falling was crazy. I wanted to growl at him in frustration. His parents will fucking kill me if he falls, if I don't kill myself from the guilt first.

Nelly is as sweet as can be, but I still don’t trust these things not to throw us off, or do some kind of stunt that would cause my grandson to lose his hold.

“He’s fine,” Thyra tells me, flying beside me on the jackass of all beasts. I swear the damn thing is giving me a dirty look from the corner of its beady eyes. “They are flying as one. Having magic connects them. You should worry about yourself more than him,” she giggles.

I huff, “I think I’m doing a damn good job right now.”

She laughs, then kicks her heels into the side of Philos, making him take off and catch up to Taegan.

My competitive nature almost kicks in, but then I get a good look at Thyra’s ass as she rides her beast, and I’m suddenly perfectly fine with the view from behind them.

Fuck, it was not too long ago I had a similar view as she rode me reverse cowgirl in my bed. That was a magical moment indeed.

I can’t believe that just yesterday I was searching for her, and now she’s with me and is my mate. She’s mine. Forever. My mark on her neck is catching the rays of the sun as her long hair flutters behind her.

I did that. I put that mark there, and now she will always be with me. I will never have to search for her again.

She was all our saving grace, with Bailey and the curse, with me and my loneliness, and for Taegan, my little grandson who is already so much stronger than I will ever be. We all needed her. She came to save us all.

We are nearing the falls, and from the sky, it looks so much more beautiful than any other time I have seen it. I've seen it from the top and from the water below, but never from the sky.

As we get closer and closer, the middle of the waterfall closer to the top of the cliff catches the light in a weird way, making me almost lose my balance from surprise.

It's....changing colors. No, that's not how I would describe it. It's catching all the colors, the way the bubbles Aly always makes me blow for her catch all the colors as they expand. It's flexing and bending the light, making the water pouring down seem to dance in the air.

How could no one have ever noticed this before?

"WAS THAT....?!" I tried to yell against the wind.

Thyra turns and smiles at me. "IT WAS! FOLLOW ME!"

She directs Philos towards the falls, and Taegan follows close behind.

"Come on, grandpa!" he laughs, easily making his horse obey.

"I'm tryin', kid," I groaned, pushing my knees into the side of Nelly to get her to follow her master. Thankfully, she obeys.

When we get right before the falls, when we can feel the mist in our faces, Thyra stops, waiting until me and Taegan are alongside her.

"So how does this work?!" I yelled out above the sound of the roaring water cascading down in front of us.

"You know, I was wondering about that too, until just a little while ago," she smiles at me, pointing to her neck. "I have your DNA in me now, and you have my magic in you. Taegan is already a perfect mix of both magic and the original alpha genes. We should be able to just fly through!"

"And if we can't?!" I asked, "What happens if this portal still doesn't open for us?!"

A worried look crosses her face, then she looks over to Taegan, biting her lip. He was staring at the waterfall with a look of amazement, but turned to look at us, cocking his head like he was confused by my question.

"What do you mean, grandpa?"

“I mean, what happens if we try to go through, but just end up crashing into the rocks?”

The jagged rocks going down the face of the cliff would likely kill us if we ran into them with too much force, and I’m not too ashamed to admit that I don’t trust the control I have over Nelly, despite how sweet she is, to stop myself in time.

“That’s silly, grandpa,” Taegan laughs at me, “You can see the other side! See!” He says, pointing to the morphing surface of the water in front of us. It just looks like the bubble effect on water to me. I can tell it’s a portal, but I can’t see the other side of it.

“You can see the other side?” Thyra asked him.

Good. If she's asking, I guess I’m not the only one who can’t see the other side.

“Yeah, she’s waiting for us. See!” He points again, and despite how much I’m squinting and straining my eyes to see, all I see is the water and the shifting rainbows from the portal. I can’t see the other side.

“Who?!”

“Her!” he points more dramatically, looking like he’s on the verge of exasperation, having to repeat himself so much.

“I don’t see anyone, Taegan. Are you sure you see someone?” Thyra asks.

He sighs, “Really? Can’t you hear her? She said to come over,” he laughs, smiling while staring at the portal, “She said the water is fine.”

“What the fuck,” I growl, squinting to try and see what he sees again.

Taegan laughs, “I like her. I’m going,” he declares, before kicking the sides of Loreana, causing her to soar towards the center of the water.

I reached out to try and stop him, but he was too fast, and I nearly fell trying to get him. I look up, my heart racing as I think he’s about to crash into the face of the cliff, but once Loreana touches the falling water, the water parts, opening up to a glowing world of all white and gold.

Taegan squeals as he sails through the portal, the water closing once he is on the other side. Before it closes, I see a woman that looks so much like Bailey, it’s uncanny, on the other side of it with a broad, warm smile and dimpled cheeks.

She had her arms open, smiling warmly at Taegan like she was welcoming him to her realm.

“Was that?.....”

“Rieka,” Thyra finishes for me, her tone full of awe. “That was her. Did you feel her power?” she asked, looking stunned.

I scoff, “No. I was too busy feeling fucking frightened out of my damn life thinking my grandson was about to crash into the side of a fucking cliff after I just told his parents I’d keep him safe.”

Thyra chuckles, grinning while looking at me from the corner of her eye. “You’re about to be in the presence of your goddess, Alpha Max. Maybe you should get control over your distasteful words for the time being.”

“Fuck that,” I growled in reflex, just because it’s what I usually say when someone tells me to stop cussing.

She laughs, looking so sexy with her head tilted back, “Suit yourself. I like you better when your mouth is a little dirty, after all.” She winks at me, then kicks her heels against Philos’s sides, making him jerk forward toward the portal.

I wince, thinking my woman was about to crash, but just like with Taegan, the waters part, and the portal opens to the other side.

Taegan is standing at the woman, Rieka’s feet, bouncing up and down while she smiles down at him, her hand resting on the side of his face.

When Thyra is all the way through, the portal closes again, and I’m the only one left on this side.

Ah, fuck it.

I kick my heel into Nelly, and she jeers forward excitedly, like she didn’t like being left behind either. When her nose touches the water, I feel this energy surround me, as the water parts. It makes my whole body tingle, and my head feels light, like it’s floating in the clouds.

“FUUUUCCCCCKK!” I scream as the bright light blinds me, and the energy pushes in on me before I feel it recede.

“Holy fucking shit, what the hell was that?!” I staggered on Nelly’s back, trying to get my bearings.

She drifts down to a stop, alongside Philos and Thyra. Thyra is shaking her head at me with a smirk, then dismounts Philos in the gracefully manner fitting of a fairy princess.

She looks regal now, her stance and walk fitting that of her formal royal title of the fairy court. I see the formal airs of the princess she used to be as she approaches the goddess and Taegan, taking Taegan’s hand in hers to help remind him to restrain his excitement.

“Excuse my mate, Goddess Rieka. He’s a bit uncivilized in his speech, but he means no offense.”

The goddess.

Shit, it just hit me that I am in the presence of a goddess. My fucking goddess, and I can't even put a damn filter over my mouth.

"Fuck," I muttered, the groan when I realized I just did it again.

Rieka laughs, which sounds like music with its melodious ring.

Just like Bailey.

"It's quite alright, my dear Thyra. I know of Max Kissinger well. He is one of my children, after all. One I have kept a close watch over for the last several decades." She smiled warmly at me.

"It is so nice to meet you at last, Max, descendant of the first werewolf."