

# **My Hockey Alpha #Chapter 221 - Read My Hockey**

## **Alpha Chapter 221**

### **Chapter 221**

Chapter 221: Learning Curve

Nina

I felt utterly hopeless. What was I supposed to do? Selena put some sort of hex on Luke to keep him from opening a portal, which was not only shocking as I wasn't even sure how she knew that he was coming, but the rest of us also couldn't open a portal.

"We'll try again tomorrow, Nina," Luke said gently. He reached out to squeeze my shoulder, but I flinched away. I was too angry for comfort, not at him, but at Selena.

"We have to get to Enzo tonight," I insisted, my voice shaking as my eyes began to well up with tears. "Please. I can't explain it, but I think that tomorrow might be too late."

Luke paused. Between the five of us, the air was silent.

"Nina, I... I really can't open a portal," Luke said quietly. "I'm sorry, but I just can't. She put a hex on me. She may have put a hex on the whole area so no one could even open a portal."

"Nina, Enzo will be okay until the morning," Jessica said, stepping forward and placing her hand on my arm. When I looked over at her, she had a pained and apologetic expression on her face. Even in the darkness, I could see that there were tears in her own eyes. "He's strong. He'll be okay."

I shook my head and let out a wry chuckle as the tears began to stream down my cheeks.

"That's what you keep saying," I growled, "but it's not true. Selena already has her claws sunken in far enough. I saw how easily she made Enzo forget everything just now. He... He was practically an entirely different person. If we don't get to him soon, she'll only strengthen her grip on him."

The air fell silent again as all of my friends stared at me. I felt as though they were looking at me like I was a crazy person, and it made me sick. Why couldn't they understand that we needed to figure this out now? Enzo was in danger. His father was in danger. The Alpha King was in danger, and so was the entire world if we didn't get help against the Crescents. Tonight was the one night that we had left. Selena was too smart and cunning, and she would act quickly. Even though we hadn't been raised together, we were still twins... And somehow, I knew what she was going to do next. It

was like a sixth sense. It made me wonder if that was why she knew that Luke was coming; maybe she had that same sixth sense about me.

"Nina, I'm sorry..." Luke whispered.

A sob caught in my throat. I looked around frantically at all of my friends, pleading them to do something, anything. Deep down, the logical part of me knew that there was nothing that any of them could do... But the illogical part of me was angry that they weren't even trying.

Suddenly, Matt stepped forward.

"Let me try," he said, lifting his chin up with a brave expression on his face. "I'm a werewolf now. Maybe if you show me how to do it, Luke, I can open a portal."

Luke's eyes went wide. "It's not quite as simple as just teaching someone," he said. "You either have the ability or you don't. But I suppose that you could have the ability, and maybe it's just dormant."

Matt nodded. "That's all the hope I need. Let's try it."

I felt my heart leap into my throat, and I took a step back to join Lori and Jessica while Matt and Luke gathered together in the middle of the clearing. As I watched Luke begin to demonstrate how to open a portal to Matt, Lori and Jessica both took each of my hands, and together the three of us watched with bated breath.

"It's like this," Luke began. He turned to the side, then held his left arm out with his index finger and his middle finger extended. Matt imitated him. "Widen your stance," Luke said. "There you go. And keep your middle finger and index finger together, like they're glued together. Perfect. Now..." Luke began to move his hand slowly in a counter-clockwise circle, his eyes focused on the space in front of him. Matt followed his movement, and once Luke was satisfied with Matt's form, he stepped back and observed.

"While you make that motion, picture something in your mind that gives you strength. It can be anything... In your case, you could use your wolf. By picturing that thing, you're taking strength from it and using that strength to open the portal. But you have to stay focused on it."

Matt nodded silently. I could see him furrowing his brow, like he was thinking hard, focusing on one thing. Without a wolf, I wondered what Luke thought of when he needed to open a portal.

Several long, palpable seconds passed. Matt stayed firmly focused on the air in front of him, his hand moving continuously in that same counter-clockwise motion. Lori and

Jessica tightened their grips on my hand, and the three of us barely even breathed as we watched.

But finally, Matt dropped his hand back to his side and shook his head solemnly.

"I can't do it," he said quietly, turning back to face the rest of us. "I'm sorry. I don't think I have that ability."

I felt my heart sink. My friends all gave me an apologetic look, but I only felt anger bubbling up inside of me.

"Let me try," I said, dropping Lori and Jessica's hands and storming into the center of the clearing. "Get out of the way."

Matt jumped out of my way. The rest of my friends stared at me in shock. I could practically feel the pity emanating off of them; they knew that it wasn't going to work. But I had to try. I couldn't live with myself

if I didn't.

"But, Nina," Luke said, walking up to me, "your wolf—"

"I don't care." I knew that my wolf had gone dormant again. It didn't matter to me; I still needed to try. "Just show me how."

Luke let out a sigh. I got into the position that he showed Matt, waiting for Luke's instructions. Without a word, he finally reached out and adjusted my arm and my hand.

I shut my eyes then and pictured something that gave me strength. I pictured... Enzo. And all of my other friends. I pictured the night that Luke first saved me from the rogue. I pictured Lori and Jessica's smiling faces around the campfire. I pictured Matt and Enzo carrying us through the woods in their wolf forms. All of those things gave me strength.

As I pictured all of these things, over and over again, I moved my hand in the motion that Luke demonstrated. I focused hard, harder than I ever thought I could. I pictured Tiffany, and how warm her hugs were. I pictured my mom... And my brother.

I didn't know how long I did this for. I was so focused, that it could have been an eternity. I only stopped and opened my eyes when I felt Luke's hand on my arm, and I opened my eyes to see him slowly shaking his head.

My heart fell into the depths of my stomach again. I felt so heavy that I was certain that a hole would bore into the ground below me and I would sink into the center of the earth.

"I'm sorry, Nina," Luke said quietly. "Let's go home. We'll come back tomorrow."

When I turned back to face my friends, the tears in my eyes were so thick that they were nothing but shapeless blobs. But they were right; there was nothing we could do now. We would have to wait until

Selena's hex wore off before we could get to Enzo, and we could only pray that he wasn't too far gone — or even dead — by the time we got to him.

I nodded and allowed my friends to guide me away. My feet felt heavy as I walked, like my body was filled with bricks. Everything felt numb — even the feeling of my friends' hands on my back as we began to walk away felt distant.

But then, I heard something. And so did they. We all stopped, our eyes widening, as the sound of something electric buzzed behind us.

I whipped around. My mouth dropped open to see that a portal was opening there, where I had been standing before.

My friends and I all stared at each other, each of us equally as shocked; but the portal was already beginning to close, and we didn't have time to stand there frozen in our places.

And so, with a chorus of amazed laughter, the five of us all grabbed each other's hands and leaped into the portal.

## **Chapter 222**

### Chapter 222: High Speed Chase

Enzo

Even though my wolf woke up finally, I still didn't have the strength to shift just yet. Thankfully, however, I was able to run fast, and my night vision was better than it was just minutes before. As I ran through the forest, I didn't know exactly where I was going; all I knew was that I needed to get away before Selena and the witch did something horrible.

I still couldn't fathom exactly what was going on. I knew that Selena put some sort of spell on me, but I didn't know what it was or why she did it. Whatever it was, her intentions were extremely dark and sinister. I knew that much.

However, I didn't have the time to stop and think about any of what was going on. Selena and the witch were both hot on my heels. They ran at inhuman speeds through the woods; even the witch, who looked old and crippled, ran like a bolt of lightning. Every time I glanced over my shoulders, I could see them getting closer and closer. All I could do was urge my legs to push me faster through the forest and hope that they wouldn't catch me, because I knew that they would kill me if they did.

“Come back here, Enzo!” I heard Selena shout behind me. “I promise I won’t hurt you too badly! It’ll just be a little cut, and then it will all be over!”

I cursed under my breath at Selena’s words, and pushed myself faster. I leaped over rocks and tree roots, dodged around trees and bushes, and crashed through the underbrush. I didn’t care that thorns and branches were scratching up my skin and causing me to bleed. The only thing that was important was getting Selena and the witch off of my trail. They had to give up soon, once they realized that I wouldn’t stop... Right?

But they didn’t stop.

At one point, I heard Selena’s footsteps approaching too close for comfort, and I swore that I even felt her hand brush the back of my neck. I dodged out of the way at the last second before she could catch me, my heart racing a mile a minute.

She was too close. I needed to shift if I was going to get away from her.

“Fio, I need to shift,” I said to my wolf as I ran at breakneck speeds through the dark woods. “Please. I know you’re tired, but I need you.”

“I’m trying my best,” Fio replied. “But something is missing. I can feel it... But I don’t know what it is.”

I furrowed my brow, processing what Fio was referring to as I leaped over a fallen tree. My foot hit the tree and I nearly lost my balance, but I managed to stay upright and keep running. What was Fio talking about? What was missing?

Somehow, I could sense that the missing link was there. It was just out of reach. If I could only force my way through the thick fog that was surrounding my brain, maybe I could reach it and figure out what it was.

But the fog was still too thick. I would need to focus harder, but it was difficult when I was also focused on running away from Selena.

As I weaved around another tree, I tried to picture what it was that I was missing. It was a person... If I really pushed myself, I thought I could picture a face. A woman’s face.

At first, I thought it was Selena’s face. But as I ran, stretching my mind all the while in order to focus harder on the face, I realized that it wasn’t her at all. It was different. It was the girl from the woods earlier; the one who tackled Selena.

Her name... What was it? How did I know her? Obviously she held some significance, but I couldn’t make out the details through the fog. Somehow, I knew that I was familiar with her. She was the missing link; she was the source of the strength I needed to break out of this spell.

What was her name?

I dodged another attack from Selena. Suddenly, the witch appeared in front of me; she had circled around somehow and they were trying to cut me off. I quickly leaped out of the way, tumbling down a hill that was thick with dried leaves. I felt my arm get scraped badly, but it didn't stop me from scrambling to my feet at the bottom and continuing to run.

I needed to remember her name... If I was going to shift, I needed to remember this girl.

Suddenly, it came to me. I didn't know why, but all of a sudden, I felt her name float through my mind, as though she stepped through a door that brought her closer to me.

"Nina," I said to my wolf. "Her name is Nina."

Fio's entire being bristled with recognition. Suddenly, I felt even more of his power surge through me, and I felt myself begin to shift. I didn't know why I needed to remember that girl's name or her significance in my life, but somehow, just her name gave me the strength to shift.

And, like a flash, I shot forward on four legs instead of two. My primal instincts took over as I weaved through the forest, as though my mind felt clearer than ever. Selena shifted behind me, but I already had a head start in front of her, and when I looked over my shoulder I saw her gray wolf form slowly getting further away as I pushed myself faster and faster.

It felt like I was flying. I didn't even pay any attention to where I was going; I just needed to run. And if there was one thing that I was good at, it was speed. I had always been faster than the rest, and I was

faster than Selena now, even with her sickening combination of werewolf and witch powers.

Selena followed behind me for a long time. I didn't know how long I was running for, but she stayed in my peripherals for a good distance. I kept weaving around trees, taking winding paths through the forest and trying my best to confuse her. At one point, I doubled back and passed by her like a blur, leaving her stupefied for a few moments before she came to her senses and chased after me again.

What felt like an eternity passed. I ran, feeling the wind through my fur, until I thought that my legs would give out beneath me.

And by that point, I didn't sense Selena's or the witch's presence anywhere nearby.

Of course, I couldn't stop entirely, but I slowed to a lazy run, checking in all directions in case either of them showed up again. Thankfully, they didn't; I had lost them.

Finally, I slowed down to a walk, then finally stopped so I could collect my bearings. I realized now that when I began running, I had no plan as to where exactly I was running to, but at the time that didn't matter. However, I quickly realized now that my haste had come with some consequences.

I was now entirely lost, in the middle of the pitch black woods, with nowhere to go from here.

## **Chapter 223**

### **Chapter 223: The Alpha King's Lineage**

Nina

My friends and I jumped through the portal just before it closed. We came out on the other side in the dark forest, although we weren't in the same location like the other times when I went through portals.

As we slowly sat up and got our bearings, Luke was the first to stand quickly and look around.

"I think I have a pretty good idea of where we are," he said, pacing around. It was dark, so I flipped on the flashlight on my phone and stood. We didn't seem to be in any particular location of note; it was nothing but forest all around. I was a bit amazed that Luke was able to tell where we were, because to me it looked like nothing but pine trees.

"Do you know which direction we need to go in?" I asked, to which Luke nodded and pointed ahead of us. "Let's go, then. We don't have time to lose."

Lori, Jessica and Matt all nodded and followed. Luke walked at the front of the group alongside me as he guided us through the dark woods. I had no idea where we were going, but Luke seemed pretty sure of himself and I assumed that we would eventually find the Alpha King's mansion.

I wasn't sure exactly what I would do if we found Enzo and Selena. Admittedly, I hadn't thought much about it ahead of time. I was so preoccupied with preparing for our excursion and subsequently opening a portal that I didn't spend the time to make a plan, and now it was very possible that we could stumble upon Enzo and Selena at any moment.

However, our way through the woods was slow. The darkness fell on us like a heavy blanket, and the canopy of trees was so thick that the light from the full moon only broke through at random intervals. Even our flashlights were only useful for a few feet in front of us, and none of us wanted to waste our



batteries so early on in the journey. Not only that, but Luke kept making it extremely clear that having too many flashlights could give away our location to people who we might have wanted to be hiding from, and our clumsy progress was making a lot of noise in the quiet woods.

Finally, Luke stopped at the top of a small hill to let everyone catch their breath — mostly Lori and Jessica — and looked around with an almost confused expression on his face.

I felt my heart sink as I watched his face.

“You don’t know where we’re going anymore, do you?” I asked.

Luke paused for a moment, looking embarrassed, before he finally shook his head. “It’s just so dark. I think I got us turned around at some point because everything looks the same in this goddamn forest.”

I gritted my teeth. But I couldn’t be mad at Luke; it was dark here, darker than the forest back in Mountainview. It almost felt as though there was some sort of dark magic over these woods, like someone knew we were here and they wanted us to get lost. Or, maybe that was just what the werewolf realm was like at night. I didn’t know for sure.

Either way, now that we were here, I somehow felt more at peace than before. It was almost as if stepping through that portal changed the course of everything that was happening... Or maybe, I hoped silently, Enzo somehow escaped. If I was his mate, wouldn’t his safety bring me some peace even if I wasn’t beside him?

“Alright,” I said finally. “I guess we should stop before we just get more lost. Can we build a fire, at least?”

Luke looked around, squinting into the woods and pricking his ears to listen before he nodded. “Yeah. I think it’ll be okay. I don’t sense anyone around.”

Lori and Jessica let out a small sigh of relief and dropped their bags down on the ground. To be fair, it was late and we had all hardly been getting any sleep as of late. We needed the rest, and we needed to eat.

Matt and I built a fire while the others kept watch, and soon enough we had a small fire going between all of us. We sat on the ground around the fire in a circle, eating granola bars and drinking bottled water.

“Hey, it’s kind of like that time we all went camping,” Matt said. “Remember?”

Lori grinned. “Yeah, it is.” Her voice was dreamy and full of nostalgia. “That was a fun time. I mean, aside from the fact that Nina almost got kidnapped.”



I couldn't help but blush a bit with embarrassment. During that trip, Enzo had dazed everyone and made them go back to sleep so they wouldn't remember, but the truth of what really happened did eventually come out when I told my friends everything after I escaped from Edward's lair. Lori and Jessica were a bit annoyed that I didn't tell them sooner, especially when it happened right under their nose, but what was I supposed to do?

Either way, Matt was right. This was sort of like our camping trip, minus the music and the tasty food roasted over the fire and the lukewarm beer and... Minus Enzo. James, too. I couldn't deny the fact that I did miss James; at least, I missed the way that he was before he went insane. Although, despite everything that he did, I hoped that he was safe right now.

And I hoped that Enzo was safe, too.

But I had a good feeling. And at least now, while we rested and waited for dawn to come so we could see enough to keep moving, I could make a plan for if — no, when — we found Enzo. Hopefully, when we found him, we would be able to open another portal and get him back into the human realm, even if

we had to drag him through because Selena's spell was too strong. We planned for Luke to put a hex on Selena to keep her from opening a portal of her own, and then we would get Enzo to a safe place where Selena wouldn't find him.

I hated to say it, but we would have to take him to the tunnels. It was the only place on campus that we were all fairly certain Selena didn't know about, and they were easy to protect. Once we got Enzo down there, we could try to break Selena's spell. And after that... We would have to come back for Richard.

I wasn't sure exactly what we would do once it came time to find the Alpha King. If Selena was truly as powerful as she seemed, and she had years to sink her teeth into his mind, there was no knowing exactly how strong the spell was on him. I could only hope that presenting myself to him as his missing daughter would break the spell. He was my father, after all, and even though I had never met him, I had faith that he would recognize his own daughter.

But of course, there was still the issue of Selena discovering our plan and stopping us before we could accomplish any of those things.

And my friends didn't know this, but I already had a plan set in place just in case that happened.

I would have to kill Selena. And there was a good chance that I would die along with her, because when we were going through the portal, I had a strange premonition...

That premonition showed me something. It showed me the truth behind why the Crescents weren't able to kill me as a baby. And it wasn't a protection charm, or anything like that. It was something deeper.

It was the power of the twin bond.

If one of us died, then so must the other.

## **Chapter 224**

### Chapter 224: Smoke & Mirrors

Enzo

When I finally stopped running, I quickly came to the realization that I had taken such a winding path that I had not only gotten Selena and the witch off of my trail, but I had somehow also gotten myself completely lost.

Normally, I would have had no problem traversing these woods. Despite the fact that I could hardly remember anything before a few hours ago, I did remember my childhood, and I remembered spending a lot of time in these very woods when I was young. But even though the moon was full, which would have normally made the whole place so bright it would have felt like daytime, it was incredibly dark. Even with my night vision, I could hardly even see twenty feet in front of me. Anything beyond that was nothing but inky blackness.

Selena and the witch must have cast some sort of spell on these woods. Maybe that was why they suddenly stopped chasing me; maybe they figured it would be better to simply put a spell on the woods to make me get lost. I was sure of it.

But I wasn't going to give up that easily.

I didn't know how long I walked like that in my wolf form. I kept my head down, my ears pricked for the slightest sound in the woods, and my eyes focused on the path ahead of me as I slowly padded through the dark forest. Surely I was bound to come to the edge of the woods eventually; they didn't go on infinitely, so long as I didn't accidentally walk in circles.

But it felt like an eternity that I walked out there. And as I walked, I felt as though my mind was playing tricks on me. Every so often I would freeze, whipping my head around and staring into the darkness when I heard what sounded like a twig snapping underfoot, or someone's voice. But there was never

anything. I couldn't tell, though, if it was just my imagination, if I really was being followed, or if these were more tricks that Selena and the witch were playing on me.

Either way, I had to keep moving. I had to find the edge of the woods and get out.

While I walked, I decided to focus on something else to keep my mind off of the discomforting noises around me. And there was only one thing I wanted to focus on: remembering.

I realized that Selena had some sort of spell on me. But it was still strong, and although the fog was thinning out slightly, it wasn't enough. Somehow, I knew that that girl who looked oddly like Selena was somehow the key to all of this, but since I was stupid and went with Selena instead of trusting the girl when she said that Selena was a liar, I was now all alone. I should have listened to her, but I didn't, and now I was paying the price.

I just wished that I could remember more than her name.

Her name was Nina, and she was somehow connected to me, but I couldn't remember anything else. Even her name faded in and out of my mind, as though I was being teased. It was as if her name, her existence, was attached to a thin string that someone was tugging along just out of reach. Every so often I could get a little glimpse of it, and a few times I felt it in my fingers, but then it would quickly slip away and out of reach.

Nina...

How did I know her? She was so familiar, yet so unfamiliar at the same time. She looked like Selena, only with brown eyes and freckles instead of blue eyes and clear skin. If I tried to picture her really hard, I could just make out her appearance. She was beautiful. She looked kind and caring, and she was extremely intelligent, too.

This was progress, at least. I was remembering little bits here and there, and I knew that if I could just break out of this thick fog that was surrounding my brain, then Selena wouldn't have control over me anymore. I knew that this was her last-ditch effort to manipulate me, and if I could only get control over my own mind again, then she wouldn't be able to take over it anymore. Somehow, I knew that I had broken out of her spell at least once before, which meant that I could do it again.

As I walked, I tried to picture other things; not just Nina. I tried to picture my life before just a few hours ago. I had friends... I knew that much. I remembered playing hockey, and I remembered how happy hockey made me. In fact, all of my closest friends were on the hockey team. Yes, I could remember now. I could remember all of their faces. My closest friend was Matt, and I thought...

Matt was my Beta. We had formed our own pack, and thus formed a bond that was nearly impossible to break. I remembered all of that now.

But even these memories were faint and foggy, and I still couldn't wrap my head around Nina just yet. I wasn't sure why I was able to remember other things, but she was always just out of reach.

Maybe I couldn't do this all on my own. Maybe, if I wanted to remember everything fully, I would need to have it in front of me. I needed to see and touch, not just picture it in my mind. I couldn't quite explain it, but somehow I knew that if I could just see Nina, if I could just touch her freckled face and look into her chocolate brown eyes, I could remember her. I just needed to find her... But I was lost, and I still hadn't found the edge of the forest yet.

Finally, my legs began to feel weak. All of the running earlier left me exhausted, and I had been walking for ages. I needed to rest.

I decided to stop by a large tree, where I shifted back into my human form to give Fio a rest as well, and then leaned on the tree and slid down to the ground.

Maybe Selena and the witch were still on my trail as I sat here and leaned my head back, closing my eyes, but I didn't even care at this point. I was exhausted, and I wouldn't be able to find my way out of here anyway if I didn't wait for dawn to arrive. It was simply too dark to see anything. I was only going to get myself more lost if I kept trying to find my way out. I was fairly certain that I had already been somehow walking in circles instead of a straight line as intended.

My eyes weren't closed for long, however, before something suddenly came to my senses. It was faint at first... A scent. It smelled like campfire smoke.

Suddenly, my eyes shot open. I stood, sniffing the air more intensely; it was, in fact, campfire smoke, and it was lingering. This smoke very well could be real, unlike all of the other things that I sensed around here.

Maybe, if I followed the smell of campfire smoke, I would find help.

## **Chapter 225**

### Chapter 225: Long Shadows

Nina

My friends and I sat around the fire, listening quietly to the crackling of the logs and the sounds of the forest around us. It was so pitch black that we couldn't see anything beyond the dim orange glow cast by the fire. Everything else beyond that was nothing but inky blackness, despite the fact that the moon was full in the sky. It made no sense; there had to have been some sort of spell on this forest, as though someone was trying to slow us down or get us lost.

We were all exhausted, but none of us felt safe enough to sleep. Every so often, we would hear some sort of strange sound in the forest and we would all leap up out of fear, shining our flashlights frantically into the darkness only to find that nothing was there. It felt like tricks were being played on us. Maybe, if we got tricked enough times

into thinking that the sounds we heard were all in our head, someone would ambush us from the shadows. It was like the boy who cried wolf.

“Um... Maybe we should try to sleep in shifts,” Lori finally said, breaking the silence. “I don’t think it’s super helpful if we’re all sleep deprived. I think we’re starting to see things.”

“There’s no way I’m sleeping out here,” Jessica grumbled as she pulled her jacket closer around her shoulders. “It’s too creepy.”

“I think we should just keep moving,” Matt finally said, standing. “The longer we sit out here, the easier of a target we are to anyone who might want to hurt us.”

Luke shot me a glance over the fire. I shook my head; we needed to stay put. I couldn’t quite explain why, but I somehow felt safer staying in one spot. Not only would we just get even more lost in the darkness, but it would be too easy to lose each other if we were moving. Someone could have easily

gotten snatched away if we walked through the dark forest and we would never know until it was too late.

“We’ll stay here,” I said, gesturing for Matt to sit back down. “And if anyone needs to sleep, then sleep. I think we’re safe as long as we stay put and keep someone on guard.”

My friends fell silent. I knew then that none of them were going to rest — not even me. I was more on guard than ever, because I had a sinking feeling that Selena might suddenly show up. Of course I told my friends that we were safer here, but I didn’t think that we were really safe anywhere. I felt as though we were being watched already. There was no knowing exactly how many minions Selena had in this world. For all we knew, she had an entire army all to herself.

Finally, I felt too exhausted to sit up any longer. I didn’t know how long we had been sitting there, but it felt like we were sitting there for an eternity, and even my back started to hurt from being so tense. Still staying next to the fire, I decided to lay back and stretch out a bit. I let out a bit of a sigh as I felt my back align on the hard ground, and I stared up at the full moon above us.

If only the full moon’s light could have illuminated the forest; then, I would have felt confident continuing on our journey. But I knew that Selena knew we were here. I could sense it. As twins, we were more connected than I had previously realized. I was funny, because I had never once thought that I had a twin, and I had never felt connected to anyone like that. Somehow, I thought that returning to the werewolf realm after spending more time with Selena made our bond stronger, because I felt a strange connection to her after passing through the portal.

And, not to mention the fact that I had that foreboding premonition when I passed through the portal. It was only for a split second, but I felt an unmistakable feeling of dread. In my mind, a single image flashed for that brief moment: an image of Selena's body laying next to mine. We were both dead. But I knew that it didn't have to end up that way. If I could stop her without killing her, then neither of us would die; and yet, if I did have to kill her, I knew that I wouldn't be able to survive. The bond between

us was too strong, and if one of us died, then so would the other. It was fate, and there was no escaping it.

I didn't want to have to kill Selena. And of course, I didn't want to die, either. I knew that I would try everything I could to not have anyone die, but if Selena simply couldn't be stopped either way... Then it had to be done. The fate of the world rested on it. I didn't know if she was working with the Crescents or not, but I did know for sure that she had sinister intentions. She hated my existence, not only because I was a threat to her chances of finding love, but also because I was a threat to her power. I knew that she already had the Alpha King wrapped around her little finger, and there was no telling exactly what she would use him to accomplish. All I knew was that she planned on using him for something bigger and darker than anything the Crescents or the Fullmoons could fathom. Whatever she had planned... would make the war between the Crescents and the Fullmoons seem like child's play.

Suddenly, my train of thought was broken by another sound in the woods. I instantly shot up, my eyes wide. My friends stared back, their eyes equally as wide as mine. This sound was far louder than the sounds we had heard before, and it lingered even longer.

It was the sound of twigs crunching underfoot.

Someone was coming, and they weren't stopping.

Without a word, I jumped up to my feet, and so did my friends. Our fight or flight instincts kicked in then, and because we couldn't flee due to the overwhelming darkness, we had to fight. I just hoped that whoever this was didn't outnumber us, but for all we knew, there were multiple people. Maybe Selena finally came, and maybe she brought friends.

The footsteps approached even closer, slow and steady. A low, thunderous growl rumbled in Matt's throat as he put himself in front of us, between the rest of us and the intruder. Jessica slowly reached

down and grabbed her big, heavy bat flashlight, and Luke and Lori put their fists up instinctively, prepared to fight.

But when the unexpected intruder stepped into the light and showed his familiar face, all of our bodies froze and a chorus of gasps escaped our throats as we saw who it was.

It wasn't Selena or anyone else. I felt my heart leap into my throat when I saw him, and all of my worries suddenly melted away.

It was Enzo, and his face looked just as surprised and confused as ours.

## **Chapter 226**

### Chapter 226: A Fated Reunion

Nina

My eyes widened and my jaw dropped when I saw Enzo standing in front of me. I felt my heart leap up into my throat.

This had to be some sort of trick... Enzo was standing right here. Somehow, he had found us in the darkness. Maybe my intuition to stay where we were was right. Maybe our fated mate bond led us to each other, and I only needed to be impatient.

"E-Enzo?" I whispered, taking a step forward and still not believing my eyes. "Is that you?"

Enzo slowly nodded. His eyes shifted back and forth between me and the rest of our friends, who were all equally as shocked as I was that Enzo had suddenly found us like this.

I wanted to run to him, but I still couldn't be sure yet if this was a trick of some sort. But what he said next solidified that he had come here of his own volition.

"Nina?" he said quietly. "Is that your name?"

I nodded, feeling tears come to my eyes. Part of me was devastated that he still seemed unsure as to who I was, but an even bigger part of me was thrilled beyond all belief that he had broken through Selena's spell just enough to at least remember my name.

"I remembered you," he said, his voice still quiet. "I remembered all of you. Well... Sort of. But I can't quite remember everything. I know that Selena put a spell on me, but I think I need help to break out of it completely."

"What does it feel like?" Lori asked suddenly. "Maybe if you can describe it to us, we can help you."

Enzo paused, thoughtfully chewing his lip for a moment before answering. "It's like my brain is surrounded by a thick fog. Sometimes I can see through it a little bit and get tiny glimpses of my real memories, but I can never completely get rid of it."



Lori, Jessica, Matt, and Luke all suddenly turned to look at me. I think that they knew exactly what I was thinking; because I was Enzo's real fated mate, I was the only one who could completely break him free. And we didn't have the time or the resources to patiently try to make his memories return. I knew that I had to be more aggressive about it.

"I think I can help," I said quietly, stepping away from the rest of the group and toward Enzo with tears in my eyes — tears of happiness over the fact that he had returned to me. "If you'll let me."

Enzo stared at me for a moment before nodding, almost sheepishly. "I'll do anything," he said, his voice so low it was almost a whisper. "I know you're the key to it all."

I knew what I had to do. But first, I glanced over my shoulder at my friends, who all seemed to take the hint and turned around to give us some privacy. Then, I gently took Enzo's hand. My own hands were shaking, but I steadied them with a deep breath and looked up into his soft, brown eyes.

Now that we were no longer in Mountainview, Selena hadn't bothered to put a disguise on herself or Enzo again. In fact, their disguises hadn't returned much at all since I initially was able to make Enzo remember everything in the locker rooms. Now, I was able to see him fully with nothing in the way, and it brought tears to my eyes just to see his brown eyes, his soft, curly hair, his sharp jaw, and feel his large and calloused hands.

Enzo seemed to know what to do before I even did it myself. Suddenly, he brought one of his hands up to my cheek, and he slowly bent down to my level.

When his lips gently and tentatively pressed against mine, I felt a shock wave course through my body like electricity. I couldn't help myself; I kissed him harder, pressing our lips together more firmly, hoping

and praying that he wouldn't pull away.

And he didn't.

In fact, he pulled me even closer. He wrapped his arms around my waist and kissed me as though the world was ending.

When we finally pulled away, both of our faces were red with passion. I looked up at him, my eyes widening to see a smile on his face. His eyes were no longer blurry and confused, but clear and strong.

"Thank you, Nina," he whispered, his arms still holding me tightly. "I missed you."

A choked sob caught in my throat. "I missed you, too," I whimpered.

Enzo pulled me close. For a few moments, I buried my face in his chest and cried silently, partially from happiness and partially from a release of all of my pain and stress. I didn't stop crying until one of my friends suddenly spoke up.

"Are you two love birds done yet?" Lori said. I laughed and wiped the tears out of my eyes. When I looked over at my friends, they were still turned away from us.

"Yes," I said. "We're done."

My friends turned back around. When they saw that Enzo was still holding me close, they all let out a collective sigh of relief as they realized that the spell had been broken. That was all it took; that was all it ever would have taken. Our bond was too strong for even Selena to break, and we only needed a kiss to break her spell.

Enzo looked down at the fire, then up at the dark sky. The forest seemed to be lightening a bit, although not by much. I wasn't sure if it simply meant that dawn was coming, or if our kiss had also

destroyed some of Selena's power over the forest.

"We can't stay here," Enzo said, looking back at the group. "We need to get moving. Selena and the witch are probably still looking for me."

I furrowed my brow. "The witch?" I asked.

Enzo nodded. "I found her earlier performing some ritual with a witch."

Luke's eyes widened. "You're not saying..."

Once again, Enzo nodded. "She's training with a witch. It's highly illegal, and it's why she's so powerful. For a werewolf to have both werewolf abilities and witch abilities... It's a dangerous combination already, not to mention the fact that she's the Alpha King's daughter."

I felt my chest get tight. This was even more sinister than I thought. If Selena was practicing dark magic, then she was already more powerful than I was. And, to make matters worse, my wolf was still weak. I felt her presence flicker slightly back to life when I kissed Enzo, but not much. I needed to break through the curse if my wolf was going to emerge, and only then could I defeat Selena.

But Enzo was right; first and foremost, we needed to get moving before Selena and this supposed witch found us. Only now, I wondered if we should open a portal and return home or if we should try to save Richard first.

Either way, I would be happy with either outcome. As I looked up at Enzo, who had his arm still wrapped firmly around me, I felt stronger than ever. As long as I could be by his side, I was confident that we could accomplish anything.

## **Chapter 227**

### **Chapter 227: Secondary Rescue**

Nina

"We can't stay here," Enzo said, his arm still firmly wrapped around me as he addressed the rest of the group. "It's too dangerous."

Enzo was right. If Selena and the witch were still looking for him, it was dangerous to be out here in the dark. Maybe it would be best to get home first and regroup before we came back on another mission to save Richard and the Alpha King.

"I can open portals now," I said, stepping back from Enzo a bit to look at him. "I can get us out of here. And Luke learned a hex to put on Selena that will temporarily stop her from opening one, so it'll give us a head start if she tries to follow us."

Enzo's eyes widened momentarily as I told him that I could open portals, but at the same time, he shook his head. "I can't just leave my dad here," he said. "Now that I can remember everything, I remember that he didn't look so good when I was staying in the mansion with Selena. I think she might be putting spells on him or even poisoning him."

"Won't she just put another spell on you again if she finds you, though?" Matt asked. "Don't you... I don't know... Need to prepare so she can't manipulate you again?"

Once again, Enzo shook his head. "No. I think that her spell this time was so strong because it was her last ditch effort to control me. Now that I have you guys and was able to break through a spell that strong, I think I have too much mental fortitude now for her to succeed."

I couldn't help but smile a bit at Enzo's words. To hear that he was free now from Selena's manipulation made me happy. At the same time, however, there was always a possibility that she would try another

dirty trick. Maybe she would even try to kill one of us. If she really was practicing black magic along with her werewolf abilities, then that probably meant that nothing would stop her from getting what she wanted.

"Alright," I finally said, looking around at the group. "We'll go on a secondary mission to save Enzo's father. Is everyone okay with this?"

Lori and Jessica seemed hesitant at first. Luke said nothing, but he didn't seem against the idea. And Matt stepped forward, slapping Enzo heartily on the shoulder.

"As your Beta, I'll gladly accompany you," he said. "We've already come this far."

A grin slowly spread across Enzo's face. Even in the darkness, illuminated only by the flickering fire, he looked more handsome than ever. He clapped Matt back on the shoulder and nodded silently, then looked over at the rest of the group and silently urged them to join us.

Finally, Lori and Jessica agreed to join us as well. "We did say we were a pack, after all," Jessica said with a hesitant smile. I walked over to my two friends and hugged them tightly.

"It'll be okay," I replied. "Selena doesn't stand a chance against us if we all stick together. She doesn't have what we have."

Suddenly, Luke spoke up. "If we're going to try to infiltrate the Alpha King's mansion, we'll need a plan," Luke said in a somber tone of voice. "The security there is tight enough when things are normal. With Selena and apparently her witch friend roaming around, it'll be even more dangerous. Not to mention the fact that I think they put a spell on these woods to cast out the light. They want us to get lost, and I think they know that we're here."

Luke was right. We had come here so hastily that none of us made a real plan, and not a single one of us ever expected Enzo to suddenly appear right in front of us. Part of me still didn't even think that any

of this was real, and that it was a dream or one of Selena's tricks instead.

"The guards switch out every few hours," Enzo said. "During that time, there is a slight gap where we can get in. There's a side door through the servant's quarters that's rarely guarded, and all of the servants will be asleep. If we're fast, we can get in through there."

"What if Selena finds us first?" Jessica chimed in, her voice shaking slightly with worry. Lori put her arm around her comfortingly, but I could tell that Lori was scared, too.

"Honestly, I'm not sure." Enzo's voice sounded solemn. "She and that witch are both really powerful. I don't even think I really outran them earlier; I think they intentionally let me go thinking that I would just get lost in the darkness. And whatever that ritual was... It made them even more powerful."

A silence fell over the group when Enzo finished talking. I felt a lump rise in my throat as I pictured how powerful Selena could be by now. As her twin, I knew that I shared some of the same powers, but she was too smart to put a curse on me and make my wolf go

dormant. But maybe, if I could open a portal on my own, I could manage some other things, too.

"If Selena finds us, I'll handle her," I said, swallowing my fear.

The rest of the group stared at me in shock.

"Nina, what are you talking about?" Enzo asked, his eyes wide. "She's too powerful. You can't take her on your own."

I shook my head and stared at the forest floor for a few moments. The fire crackled behind us, its flames getting lower and lower and casting our surroundings with even more darkness. If it wasn't for the little bit of light that was beginning to bleed through the trees, it would be pitch black by now.

"She's my twin," I said. "In a weird way, I feel like I know her. Like I've always known her. And I think I can stand a chance against her, or at least hold her off while the rest of you escape."

"Nina!" Jessica shouted, stamping her foot angrily on the ground. "You're not seriously trying to tell us that you plan on sacrificing yourself?"

I didn't know what to say. I couldn't tell them about the premonition I had in the portal. If I told them, then it would only incite panic. But I knew, at the same time, that there was a good chance that the only way to stop Selena was to fight her, and she wouldn't stop until she was dead. We would have to fight to the death, but both of us would die anyway. But if it meant saving the world... I would do it.

I looked up at Enzo then. His eyes were wide and full of recognition. Somehow, he knew what I was planning. I knew that he was furious with me, but at the same time, he seemed to understand the consequences of letting Selena gain power. I didn't want to leave him, and he didn't want to leave me, but we both knew what Selena could be capable of if she wasn't stopped.

"If you die, I'll die with you, Nina Harper," his voice echoed in my mind.

All I could do was stare back at him.

I wouldn't let him do that. Hopefully, no one would die tonight.

## **Chapter 228**

Chapter 228: Closely Guarded

Nina

I knew that Enzo didn't want to continue now that he seemed to have an understanding of the possibility of what was to come. But he didn't say anything. Instead, we quietly put out our fire and began our journey toward the Alpha King's mansion.

Somehow, my kiss with Enzo made the forest a little lighter. It seemed that Enzo remembering his past and breaking out of Selena's spell also made her spell on the forest a bit less potent, like some of her power was drawn from manipulating Enzo. I hoped that it threw her off guard, but it also worried me that it only further alerted her to our presence and that it would piss her off.

The six of us began our walk to the Alpha King's mansion. Now that it was a little bit lighter in the forest, Luke was able to get his bearings again. Luke and Enzo walked toward the front of the group as our guides. I stuck close to Enzo, not letting go of his warm hand for even a moment, and stayed vigilant in case Selena or the witch suddenly showed up.

I knew that they were out there somewhere. We all knew. There was only a very slim chance that Selena was potentially waiting for us at the mansion, but I was certain that she would continue hunting through the woods for us instead of simply waiting there. And there was absolutely no chance in Hell that Selena would have given up her search. With Enzo on the loose and finally free from her spell, she was too smart to let him go because she knew that it would only mean that he would join us and work to take her down. If she wanted to succeed in whatever sinister plan she had, she needed full control over everyone she could get her hands on — and we were people that she simply couldn't control, because we had immense power as a group of friends who were brought together by an unbreakable bond.

When we first decided to call ourselves a pack, I didn't see it as much more than symbolic. But as time went on, however, I was beginning to realize that it was much more than that. Something changed when Enzo declared Matt his Beta, and when we decided on our pack's name. It made it feel final, like it had been set in stone. Somehow, I thought that it had some sort of physical effect on us. Maybe it was just in my head, but it really did feel as though we all had a stronger bond. Now that we had Enzo back, too, that bond felt even stronger.

Somehow, I think that bond was protecting us from Selena to some extent. I didn't think that it was protecting us entirely, but I could tell that it was weakening her power over us. Even if it was just weakening her a little bit, anything would help at this point. I didn't want anyone to have to die tonight, and if I could subdue Selena in a way that would prevent her from using her magic on anyone else, then maybe I could stop her completely. Maybe, if I captured her and brought her to the Alpha King, he would know what to do with her. I just hoped that her control over him wasn't so strong that he wouldn't believe me at all.

"So..." Enzo said quietly, breaking the silence as we walked and looking down at me, his hand still holding mine. "You can open portals? But your wolf..."

I nodded and bit my lip for a moment. "I guess I can. I tried earlier, and it worked somehow. But my wolf is still dormant, so I don't entirely know how it's possible."

Suddenly, Luke chimed in. "It's like I told you earlier," he said matter-of-factly. "You're more powerful than you think. You are the Alpha King's daughter, after all, which means you possess more abilities than the average werewolf. And, because of your twin bond with Selena, some of her magic may leak through to you."

My eyes widened. While I had come to the realization that killing Selena would also kill me, I hadn't thought that her magical abilities could bleed through to me. I didn't know why that didn't occur to me, but it made sense now that I thought about it.

"So does that mean that I could potentially stand a chance against Selena?" I asked quietly. As I spoke, I felt Enzo's hand get tense around mine, and when I looked up his jaw was clenching and unclenching over and over again. I knew that he didn't like the thought of me going head-to-head with Selena, but there was no other way to get around it. It was a highly likely possibility, and I knew that I would be the only other person who could take her down if we needed to.

Luke stopped short and slowly turned to look at me. He looked just as worried as Enzo, but I also knew that he understood where I was coming from.

"Maybe," he said, his voice somber. "There's no way to know for sure. She has an advantage because she has her wolf, and yours is dormant."

I fell silent, but nodded nonetheless. As we kept moving again, Enzo's hand never left mine and he only tightened his grip. Without my wolf, even though she hadn't emerged yet anyway, I was much weaker than Selena. Before, when I did have my wolf, I could tell how much more powerful I was even without her fully emerging. But now, her existence was nothing but a flicker. Enzo's presence and love for me helped, but not enough. I needed to find a way to break through this curse if I wanted my wolf to emerge. But would I be able to do it in time before I would potentially have to fight Selena?

Somehow, we managed to walk for quite a while longer without any incidents. In fact, we eventually reached the edge of the woods. Ahead of us, across a wide gravel road, lay the Alpha King's massive mansion.

As soon as we reached the edge of the woods, the inky blackness ended. The full moon illuminated the mansion so brightly it almost looked like daytime, which was both a blessing and a curse; of course, it felt amazing to not be lost in the darkness anymore, but it would also make it harder to get inside the mansion without being seen.

"There's the side door," Enzo said, pointing over to the side of the mansion. There was a row of hedges leading up to a small set of stairs, and after that there was a small wooden door. I was a bit surprised that there was no guard there, but it was a servant



entrance, after all. I just hoped that there were no guards waiting for us inside the door — or anyone else, for that matter. If we could just get in, get Richard, and get out, this could all be over with quickly.

The mansion was dark. I couldn't see a single light on, which was a good sign; it meant that everyone was likely asleep.

Either that, or Selena was waiting for us inside in the darkness.

## **Chapter 229**

### **Chapter 229: Never Leave My Side**

Nina

"There's the side door," Enzo said, pointing ahead at a small wooden door that was located on the side of the mansion. "The guards should switch over soon. When they do, we can get inside if we run quickly. But all of us can't go in there."

I nodded. "You're right. It would be too obvious if six of us went in all at once."

"I can keep watch out here," Matt said. "Maybe if Selena comes, I can distract her. Lori and Jessica, maybe you two can stay with me."

Lori and Jessica both nodded in agreement. I was glad, because I felt as though it was more dangerous inside the mansion. At least out here, they could easily run away if they needed to. Then, that just left Enzo, Luke and I to go inside. Enzo knew the layout of the mansion well, so of course he needed to go in. And if Selena was inside waiting for us, I wanted to be there to fight her if I needed to. As for Luke... When I looked at him, I knew that he wouldn't let me go in there without him. He was originally supposed to be my bodyguard, after all. He wouldn't have come this far just to let me wander into the monster's lair without him there by my side to protect me, regardless of whether Enzo was with me or not.

"Okay." I looked back and forth between all of my friends. "We'll be fast. If you guys see Selena coming, text me so we know she's out here. When we get Richard, we'll come back and I'll open a portal for us and get us all the hell out of here."

The rest of my friends nodded. Suddenly, Enzo shook my shoulder and pointed again.

"Look," he said. "They're switching over again."

I could see that the current guards that were patrolling the front of the mansion were now turning and heading back inside. At the front door, I could see more guards coming out. Now was our chance; we only had a tiny window of unguarded time to run across

the road and over to the door, and so without even having the time to so much as say goodbye to our friends, Enzo, Luke and I took off across the road with Enzo in the lead.

He ran fast, keeping low. I followed suit, always keeping one eye on the guards. Luke ran behind me.

When we finally reached the row of hedges that hid us from the guards, we only had a second to spare before they stopped at their posts. But they were going to begin patrolling, so we couldn't stop here in case one of them came over to our area. Enzo, still staying low, crouched and ran up to the side door. He took one glance over his shoulder at Luke and I, checking to make sure that we were behind him — and we were right on his heels — before he quietly pushed the door open.

Much to my surprise, the door opened with ease. I was shocked that this side door wasn't locked at this hour, which only made me even more anxious that Selena was inside the mansion, and that she intentionally kept it unlocked knowing that we would walk straight into her trap.

And yet, when we stepped inside into a dark, narrow corridor, no one was there.

It was extremely dark inside with no lights on. I reached for my phone to flick on the flashlight, but Enzo stopped me and slowly shook his head.

He had night vision abilities, and without my wolf, I could hardly see anything. But he was right; using a flashlight could alert someone to our presence. I would just have to hold onto his arm and trust his night vision to guide us until my eyes adjusted enough to see just a little bit.

Slowly and quietly, the three of us began walking down the corridor. I held firmly onto Enzo's strong arm with both hands, feeling as though I was as blind as a bat at first. Finally, my eyes adjusted a little

and I could see somewhat better. We turned down another hallway that was a bit wider, and there were doors on either side.

I could hear the sounds of snoring coming through some of the doors. Enzo did say before that the side door led to the servants' quarters, so I figured that the servants' bedrooms lined this hallway.

Eventually, we came out into the dark kitchen. There was a skylight that allowed the light of the full moon to shine through, illuminating the kitchen in a pale blue hue. It was a pretty kitchen, very old-fashioned, and I normally would have been excited to see such a beautiful house. But now, it just felt like a maze that could have danger lurking around every corner.

However, as we continued down another hallway, it really did seem as though no one was stirring. If Selena was here, she was hiding herself well. No servants were awake and moving about, and only once or twice we quickly ducked into a different hallway or into an empty room when a guard walked past. It was surprisingly calm and quiet, and it seemed that security inside the building was a lot more relaxed than outside.

I couldn't deny the fact that my heart was racing a mile a minute, though. I was certain that Selena would jump out at any moment and kill all three of us, which made me only hold onto Enzo even more tightly. His strong arm felt firm and steady beneath my grip, and when I glanced up at him on occasion, his eyes were glowing slightly red as he used his night vision. His face was solemn, and he was completely focused on navigating us through this maze.

At one point, we ducked into a small room to avoid a sleepy guard walking past, and we waited there for a few moments to get our bearings. The room seemed like a small library, with the walls made of bookshelves, a stained glass window on the far wall, and a table with chairs in the center.

It felt strange being this close to my biological father. All my life, I always thought that my real parents were dead. I never even thought for a moment that even one of my parents could still be alive, let alone

the Alpha King of the werewolves. Maybe that was what urged me to say what I said next; or maybe it was because of the fear that Selena could show up at any moment, and I wanted to employ the help of my father.

"Maybe I should find the Alpha King," I whispered suddenly, shocked even at my own words. Luke and Enzo slowly turned to face me, their brows furrowed with confusion.

"What are you talking about?" Enzo whispered, his voice almost a growl. "You want to go off on your own?"

I shrugged. "The mansion is quiet. Maybe now would be a good time to show myself to him and get his help. I have a good feeling that, even if Selena does have a spell on him, I can break it as his daughter."

Neither Enzo nor Luke said anything for a few moments. I watched as they stared at me with wide eyes in the darkness, then glanced at each other.

Suddenly, Enzo's head whipped around to face the door. All of us held our breath as we heard footsteps approaching; had someone heard us talking?

Quickly, like ghosts in the night, the three of us scurried into the darkest corner of the room and waited there. It felt like an eternity as the heavy footsteps outside the door slowly approached, then stopped for the longest time in front of the door.

I could hear the doorknob rattle, like someone put their hand on it, and I clamped my own hand over my mouth in fear. My eyes were wide, and my chest felt full of guilt as I realized that I had alerted someone to our presence by talking — all because of a stupid idea that I came up with in the moment because I was too emotional over knowing that my biological father was near.

But, thankfully, the footsteps receded. Whoever that was never opened the door, and once we could no longer hear the footsteps, we all let out a collective sigh of relief.

And yet, when I looked up at Enzo, he was still staring at me with rage burning in his eyes.

“I won’t let you leave my side,” he whispered.

## **Chapter 230**

### **Chapter 230: Too Late**

Nina

“I won’t let you leave my side,” Enzo whispered. His voice was a low growl, and his eyes flashed an even brighter red as he spoke. I knew that he was serious, and after the fact that we were almost caught by what sounded like a guard, maybe he was right. Maybe it was better if we stuck together in case something bad happened.

I was just worried that once we rescued Richard, Selena would only become more agitated once she found out and she would either strengthen her defenses so we couldn’t save the Alpha King, or she would come after us and stop us before we ever were even able to come back.

Either way, it didn’t matter anymore. What Luke said next only solidified that.

“This entire place is shrouded in magic,” he whispered, sounding stern as he looked at me. “Even if you’re able to get the Alpha King to recognize you, Selena’s claws are probably already dug in too deep. It would take days, maybe even weeks, to break the spell she has on him; she’s had years to perfect her tactics over him, and even though he’s your biological father, you don’t have the power of the fated mate bond that you have with Enzo. It’s too risky, and we need to focus on getting out of here with Richard first. We can come back once he’s safe.”

I nodded. Although it hurt to have to come back with the possibility that Selena could even possibly kill our father in the meantime, Luke and Enzo were right. I felt like a bit of an idiot for even considering the possibility that I could handle a mission like that on my own, and I didn’t want to leave Luke and Enzo alone if Selena showed up. I had already made up my mind that I needed to be the one to stop Selena, and I could never live with myself if she did something to them while I was trying to deal with the Alpha King.

“Okay,” I whispered, feeling a bit embarrassed. “Let’s go.”

I took Enzo’s hand again as Luke quietly cracked the door open and peered out both ways, swiveling his head left and right to make sure that the coast was clear before he slipped out. Enzo and I followed, and the three of us continued our journey through the dark, maze-like mansion.

We quietly tiptoed down several more winding corridors before finally coming to a narrow set of stairs that looked like they were hardly used. They were located at the end of an equally narrow hallway that wasn’t even wide enough for us to walk next to each other, so we had to walk in a single file line. Even then, however, I continued to hold Enzo’s hand. His grip on my hand was tight, as though he expected me to be torn away from him at any moment.

While we walked, I wished that our reunion could have been more emotional. I wished that we could have had more time to be with each other. I wished that we were safely back in our dorms, without the threat of Selena coming after us. But, at the very least, I was glad to have Enzo back; and I was even more glad to know that Selena couldn’t manipulate him again after this.

And if I pretended that there wasn’t a likely possibility that Selena and I would die tonight, I could imagine that everything was okay.

But it wasn’t.

Slowly, the three of us made our way up the stairs. The steps were creaky, and we all had to walk with painstaking care so as not to make too much noise. It was easy for Luke and myself to walk up the stairs without causing them to creak too much, but Enzo was big and heavy from all of the muscle in his body, and several times we had to stop and cringe, hoping that no one heard the creaks.

Thankfully, no one ever came.

Finally, we made it to the top of the steps after what felt like an eternity and came out into another, wider hallway. There was a balcony inside that looked out over the first floor below us, which allowed us to see our surroundings a bit more. We could see that there were two guards standing in the entryway below, facing the front door. They were talking in hushed voices, and were clearly not paying too much attention, which allowed us to quietly sneak by without them noticing our presence.

Once we were out of eyeshot of the guards, Enzo silently pointed down another long hallway. This one was lined with large windows on either side that had curved designs etched into the glass, causing the light from the full moon to cast patterns on the floor. The three of us quickly made our way down the hallway, taking care not to be seen through the large windows in case anyone was looking, and then came to a point where the hallway branched off into two directions.

"I think his bedroom is down this way," Enzo whispered, his voice so low it sounded like nothing more than a gentle gust of wind. He pointed to the right, where the corridor went straight on until it reached a dead end with a large alcove that contained a marble statue, and Luke and I silently followed him.

As we walked down the hallway, each side was lined with a few large, heavy wooden doors. Enzo paused at each one, chewing his lip nervously; clearly, he didn't know exactly which room belonged to his father. But when we came to the last door in the hallway, I could tell that he sensed his father inside, and he seemed much more confident now.

Enzo glanced over and Luke and I. We both nodded, then watched as he slowly turned the doorknob and opened the door.

Inside the large room, with its high, arched ceiling and large canopy bed, a low fire glowed in the fireplace. It seemed as though the fire hadn't been tended to in some time, and was getting close to being nothing but embers. The bed, which was made out of what looked like mahogany wood with ornate spiral designs carved into the four tall posts, had a heavy drapery over the top that came down and covered the bed.

Someone was sleeping in that bed, but none of us could see just yet who it was.

Slowly, Enzo moved forward and reached out for the curtain on the bed. Luke and I stood by the doorway, holding our breath with wide eyes as we watched Enzo slowly pull back the curtain. It felt like an eternity passed, and the entire time I felt as though Selena would come up behind me at any moment and grab me around the neck.

Suddenly, recognition flashed across his face. He turned to look at Luke and I and nodded, then reached into the bed to wake his father up. I slowly walked over to see, but when I did, my face fell and my heart sank into the depths of my stomach.

A gasp escaped my throat. Enzo's hands began to shake violently, and he stumbled backwards, clamping a hand over his mouth as his eyes widened.

Richard was alive; I could hear him breathing gently, but it wasn't a solid and steady form of breathing. It was what I learned in medical school to be known as the "death rattle"; when a person's lungs begin to fill with fluid shortly before death.

I leaned closer to get a better look, and when I did, my fears were only confirmed.

Richard's face was gaunt and pale. His eyes were half open, but they were clouded over and looked like they were made of glass. His body was so thin I could see his collar bones protruding even through his shirt.

Enzo's father was on the verge of death, and there was no stopping it now. He had an hour, maybe two, left to live.

That was why Selena hadn't come after us: she already knew that our rescue mission would fail.