

Kidnapped by My Mate Novel

Chapter 101 – Kidnapped by My Mate Series II: His Lost Queen

Filed To Story:

“Wouldn’t it be safer for me to sit in my own seat, with a seat belt on?” I whispered to Grayson.

When I tried to move, Grayson let out a growl so loud the walls of the car shook.

Both Liam and I winced.

“Stop trying to move away from me,” Grayson said deeply through gritted teeth, his arms squeezing me.

All I could do was nod my head in agreement.

He adjusted me on his lap so that my back was firmly pressed up against his chest again. His eyes snapped up to look at Liam. “What the fuck are you waiting for?”

Liam looked back at us, his expression stiff. “I don’t think it’s a good idea to take you to the airport.”

“Fuck,” Grayson groaned. He opened the car door next to him. “We’re getting a cab.”

“Wait,” Liam said. When Grayson started to slide out of the car, taking me with him, Liam quickly grabbed my wrist. “Just hold on a minute, would ya?”

Grayson’s eyes narrowed on Liam’s grip on my wrist, then snapped back up to meet his gaze. His whole body began to shake.

Before he did something stupid, I quickly put my other hand on his chest, trying to calm him.

I looked at Liam. “Liam, let go.”

He shook his head. “Hear me out first. I’m just thinking of your safety, Belle.”

“Okay, but the werewolf behind me is literally about to murder you if you don’t let go of my arm in the next five seconds.”

Right on cue, Grayson’s breathing picked up, and dark hairs started to sprout from his arms. Seeing this, Liam quickly released my arm. I sighed in relief.

“Come to my father’s house,” Liam continued before Grayson could make another move. “It’s safe there.

“I know you think it would be better to take her to the airport because it’s public or whatever, but so was the diner.

“We have the memories of over twenty humans we need to wipe because they saw what Azazel did to Belle’s coworkers. A public place isn’t going to stop him from hurting her if that’s what he wants.”

“No, but I would,” Grayson growled.

Once again, he forcefully started to tug me out of the car, but I grabbed the headrest of the seat next to us to stop him.

“Do I get a say in any of this?” I asked the two of them. “Or are you two going to make all the decisions for me like if I’m not even here? I mean, seriously, is it not my life on the line?”

Grayson’s forehead dropped down onto my shoulder as he tried to keep himself calm, his shoulders rising and falling quickly with each of his ragged breaths.

His grip on my waist was so tight, his fingers splayed out over my rib cage, that it was almost on the verge of pain. “I do not want to hear those words come out of your mouth ever again. No one is going to hurt you.”

“I agree with Liam,” I declared. “I think we should go with him.” I looked at Liam.

“We could just go to your apartment, right?”

Liam hesitated. “Actually, we can’t. Apparently, you had my address written down in your personal information at the diner. Azazel was seen breaking into my apartment earlier today.”

Even more guilt filled my stomach. “He was at your apartment?”

He nodded. “I haven’t been back there yet, so I don’t know exactly what happened, but my doorman called me earlier.”

“Liam, I’m so sorry. I can’t believe I pulled you into all of this—”

“It’s okay, Belle,” he interrupted. “I don’t care about my fucking apartment. I care about keeping you safe.”

“And the longer we stay in this damn parking lot, just waiting for someone to see us, the longer we’re putting you at risk.”

“Then I think we should go to your dad’s house.”

Grayson snarled behind me.

My attention swung to him. “It’s the best thing to do right now, okay? How long does a flight from Croatia to Maine even take? Twelve, thirteen hours?”

“We can’t just sit in an airport, waiting for Azazel to find us. We would put all of those people in danger just by being there.”

“My father’s house is safe—really safe. Azazel wouldn’t be able to get in. No one would touch her,” Liam said to Grayson.

“We’ll only stay there until the plane gets here. Then we’ll leave,” I added.

Grayson’s dark eyes studied me for several long seconds. “You trust him?”

My gaze slid to Liam and then back to my mate. I nodded once. “Yes. I trust him.”

In fact, Liam was probably the person I trusted most in the world after everything that had happened between Grayson and me.

Grayson wetted his bottom lip, still incredibly tense. “Fine.” He settled back into the chair, adjusting me in his lap.

He looked up at Liam, who just continued to stare at us in anticipation. “Well, vampire, are you going to drive or not?”

BELLE

We pulled up to Liam’s father’s house in record time.

The drive was honestly a bit terrifying—Liam sped the entire time, nearly running over several people, and took back roads to avoid any busy streets where we might be spotted.

The house was surrounded by giant gates—the type you would expect to see at a celebrity’s home, put there for their privacy and safety.

There was a man in a uniform waiting for us at a station next to the entrance to the gate. He let us through the moment he saw Liam’s truck.

We drove up the long private driveway and up to one of the biggest houses I had ever seen.

In fact, it was so big that it didn't even really look like a house at all—it was more like a mansion disguised as a sweet little beach house, painted in whites, blues, and creams, but also probably had at least twenty bedrooms.

Liam stopped his car in front of a massive garage. It was open, so I could see the six vehicles inside of it—a Tesla, Porsche, and Lamborghini all casually parked next to each other.

This was where Liam had grown up? I knew his family had money, but this was more than just money; this was power and prestige.

I swallowed, suddenly feeling extremely underdressed.

Grayson had given me some of his clothes to wear back at the hotel—a black T-shirt and a pair of gray sweatpants that I had to roll up six times to be able to walk in—

since I only had my waitress uniform from the other night.

I hadn't minded how big everything was on me when he had given me the clothes, but now I felt tiny, like I was drowning in fabric.

"I wish I was wearing something else," I muttered. "I don't even have shoes on."

"It doesn't matter what you're wearing because if anybody looks at you for longer than five seconds, I'll rip their eyes out," Grayson replied, his voice jagged.

Liam opened his door. "A real charmer you got there, Belle," he said as he stepped out of the car.

Grayson bared his teeth at him.

I reached for the handle of the door next to us, but Grayson grabbed my hand, stopping me.

"Who else is in the house?" he asked Liam.

"What?" Liam replied.

"I smell three people inside. Who are they?"

Liam's brows rose in shock. I was shocked too. He could smell them from all the way out here?

“My parents,” Liam responded. He looked at the house. “And my sister, probably, but I’m not sure.”

“Laila is here?” I hadn’t seen my friend since the night Adalee attacked me. A sense of relief filled me, knowing that I would get to see her before Grayson and I left.

All of a sudden, the door to the driver’s seat of the vehicle was slammed shut by Grayson. Then he quickly pressed the lock down to keep Liam out of the car.

“What the hell?” Liam asked, watching us from the other side of the window. He held up the key in his hand. “You know I have the key, right? I could get in if I wanted to.”

Grayson ignored him and instead unexpectedly turned me around in his lap so that I was straddling him, giving me his full attention.

He gently grabbed my chin and turned my head so I couldn’t look away from him.

“I need you to listen to me, okay?” he said, his tone serious. His thumb started to stroke the skin of my chin.

I nodded slowly. “Okay.”

“We’re about to meet one of the most notorious vampires of all time,” he started.

“And he’s invited us to his home, in his territory.

“I don’t know what his intentions are, but I don’t trust him. And I don’t trust him around you—especially when I’m already on edge.

“If I could, I would lock you away and keep you all to myself for the rest of eternity.” His hands squeezed my hips roughly and then slowly traveled up and along my rib cage.

His jaw was clenched so hard that I was worried it was going to pop. I couldn’t help but shift against him, feeling my blood go hot, my breathing getting deeper.

“I need you to stay with me,” he continued. “My wolf is extremely close to the surface. If anything happens to you...”

He took a deep shuddering breath. “Just stay with me. I want you by my side at all times. Take more than one step away from me, and I can’t promise I won’t murder every single person in that house. Friend or not.”

The intensity coming off of him at that moment made my stomach tighten. “Okay.

I’ll stay with you.”

He continued to stare at me.

“I promise.” I framed his face in my hands and put my forehead against his, leaving a short kiss on his full lips. “I won’t leave your side,” I whispered against his mouth.

He hauled me even closer to him. “No matter what?”

“No matter what.” I looked back at the house, suddenly feeling uneasy. “Are they...

Will they have red eyes?”

Grayson nodded slowly. “The Blackwoods are descendants of the Mortars, so they can change the color of their eyes as they see fit. But, yes, their eyes are naturally red.”

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He must have been able to sense how worried that made me feel because he quickly said, “But you have nothing to worry about because I’m not leaving your side either. No matter what.

“No one is going to come near you. I can promise you that.”

Grayson started to purr quietly, making my eyes snap up to meet his and my body relax into him.

I was worrying him. And, Lord knew, when Grayson was worried about me, things tended to get intense pretty quickly. And not in a good way.

“I’ll be fine,” I said, trying to soothe him, rubbing my hands on his arms. “I just don’t like the idea of being surrounded by all of those red eyes after all of the night terrors I had. But I’ll be fine. I’m not worried.”

Lie. I was terrified.

I studied Grayson’s eyes which were currently a dark red, both his wolf and vampire sides staring back at me. Liam’s eyes were also red. I tried taking in some deep breaths.

If I could get used to the two of them looking like demons straight out of hell, who was to say I couldn’t handle more, right?

“That’s what your night terrors were about?” Liam asked, suddenly swinging the car door open.

I gasped. “You could hear that?”

Liam scoffed as if I had just insulted him. “Of course I could hear it. I’m a vampire, remember?”

A low growl ripped through Grayson’s chest. He hugged me closer to him. “How does he know about your night terrors?”

His gaze snapped to Liam. “How the hell do you know about my mate’s night terrors?”

“It’s not what you think—” I started to say.

“I know about them because I could hear her screaming bloody murder every night when she was staying with me. You know, after you abandoned her and left her homeless with nowhere to go?” Liam explained.

Grayson’s body started vibrating with anger as his chest grew wider, stretching out his T-shirt. He looked down at me with livid eyes. “You lived with him?”

Well, shit.

I swallowed. I had very intentionally not brought up my time spent staying at Liam’s apartment, knowing it would just cause issues. “Well, yes, but it’s—”

“For how long?” Grayson bit out through gritted teeth.

“T-Two months,” I replied stiffly. “But I didn’t want to, I swear! And I got out of there as soon as I had enough money for my own apartment. I didn’t have anywhere else to go.

“And where would you have rather I slept, outside in the cold, or inside in Liam’s very nice, very safe apartment?”

“You were sleeping in the same house as a fucking vampire, Belle. That’s the furthest thing from safe.”

I threw my hands up defensively. “Well, it wasn’t like I knew that! And aren’t you technically a vampire now too? And I sleep in the same bed as you.”

Grayson abruptly grabbed my head, making me gasp. He tilted it to the side so he could examine my neck. “Did you bite her?” he demanded from Liam. “If you fed from her, I swear to God—”

I scoffed, pushing him away from me. “No, he didn’t bite me—”

“I’m not asking you.” Grayson shoved me behind him.

My mouth fell open in shock. Rude.

“Humans often don’t remember when vampires feed from them. In fact, they release a venom that makes you keep going back to them, addicted to their presence like a drug.” He glared at Liam.

“It’s what makes them so deadly.”

“I would never feed from her,” Liam fumed. “She’s my friend. I only ever wanted to help her. I took care of her—when no one else did.”

Grayson lunged forward with me still on his lap—probably meaning to strangle my friend—but I quickly wrapped my arms around his neck, stopping him.

“I’m okay,” I whispered into his neck. “I’m okay. He never touched me. He wouldn’t even think about touching me like that. I promise.” I leaned back to look at him, giving him a small smile.

“There’s only one person who has ever put his teeth in me without my permission, and that was you.”

I expected him to return my smile at my joke, but that wasn’t the case. Instead, his hand gripped my jaw—not hard, but definitely stiff and unyielding.

A small ring of red formed around his irises and then slowly bled over the black that signified his wolf until it was completely covered. His vampire was in charge.

“That is how it will stay,” he snarled. “Mine are the only teeth that will ever pierce your perfect skin.”

His hand skimmed down to my jaw until it was loosely wrapped around my neck, his thumb running over my pulse. He was so close to me—I could feel his breath fanning over my lips.

He stared down at me with so much intensity, so much longing that I found myself leaning into him. “Take another step, boy, and my teeth will be sinking into you next. Right over your throat.”

Grayson didn’t look at Liam as he spoke. I hadn’t even noticed Liam getting closer to us, taking slow, careful steps.

I knew he was only concerned for my safety, but I wanted to tell him that he needed to stop messing with Grayson when he was in such a state as he was now. He was going to get himself killed.

Thankfully though, I saw him pause his movements out of the corner of my eye.

Grayson grunted. “We will only be here for one night. The plane is already on its way.” I wasn’t sure if he was saying it for my benefit or for his own.

After checking our surroundings, he lifted me into his arms once again and stepped out of the car.

The inside of Liam’s childhood home was even more spectacular than the outside. It was all big windows, white walls with matching furniture, and hard granite flooring.

As nice as it was, however, it somehow managed to feel both beautiful and unwelcoming at the same time. It felt cold and staged, nothing like what I was expecting from the place Liam grew up.

I was grateful that Grayson had allowed me to walk on my own as we stepped through the large double doors. He stayed close, though, his presence behind me like an unrelenting shadow.

Liam led us through the main foyer, lit by a chandelier and framed on one side by a winding staircase, and into a living room.

Three people were waiting for us—Laila and two red-eyed vampires who I could only assume were Liam and Laila’s parents. I could see aspects of both children in their facial features.

I had always thought Laila was one of the most gorgeous women I had ever seen, and now I knew why. I was immediately stricken by the beauty of her mother.

She had dark, golden skin that seemed to sparkle in the light, and her hair was pinned up in intricate braids, revealing her slender neck and sharp collarbones.

She wore a long, yellow dress meant to look casual but appeared chic and elegant on her slender form.

She was the sort of woman with a presence that demanded to be noticed and admired—maybe even envied.

The man standing next to her had the same demanding presence but, unlike his wife, whose captivating beauty was what made her unique, his allure came from his extreme size and intimidating posture.

He wasn’t as big as Grayson, but he might’ve given Kyle a run for his money. His hair was dark brown, almost black, with bits of gray starting to show with his older age.

I immediately noticed how well-groomed he was, the lines of his beard and hairline above his forehead sharp and precise.

This surprised me considering the fact that Liam preferred to keep his hair messy in a way that screamed boy-next-door and just-finished-messing-around-with-some-random-girl.

He was wearing black slacks and a gray buttoned shirt and was holding a half-full glass of some kind of brown drink—probably scotch or whiskey.

Unlike their children, who looked like perfectly normal humans, neither Mrs. nor Mr. Blackwood bothered to hide their vampire features.

Both had fangs peeking out from beneath their top lips and red eyes so bright they were almost too striking to look at directly.

They even had long claws protruding from the tips of their fingers, sharp and deadly.

I took a step back as soon as we entered the room, suddenly very aware of how small I was compared to all of them and how easily they could kill me.

I wouldn't stand a chance against any of them; I wouldn't even last a second in a fight.

I didn't remember Liam being nearly as intimidating as his parents the night he saved me from Adalee and I found out he was a vampire.

My back met Grayson's front as he stepped up behind me, wrapping a thick arm around my waist, pressing me to him tightly.

Laila's lips turned up into a bright smile as soon as she saw me. "Belle," she breathed out, relief clear on her face as she jumped out of the large leather armchair she was sitting in and raced toward me.

She held her arms out, meaning to hug me, but Grayson stepped in front of me before she could reach me.

"Absolutely not," Grayson said to Laila sternly. He backed me up until I was sandwiched between him and the wall behind us, his large hands squeezing my hips.

I let out an exasperated huff. Laila was the last person he needed to be protecting me from. "It's just Laila, Grayson. She's my friend. She won't hurt me," I said to him.

"You said no matter what, remember?" he replied in a low tone.

"Well, yeah, but I'm kind of smooshed back here."

He took a small step forward so that I wasn't completely pressed against the wall anymore, but he didn't offer me any more room.

"A room full of vampires, Belle. A room full of vampires. You're staying right where you are."

My forehead fell onto his back. This was embarrassing. "At least let me look at them. Don't you want them to respect me?"

Grayson loosened his hold on my hips, allowing me to peek my head out from behind him. He wrapped his arm around my shoulders, still keeping half of me behind him.

He had quite obviously staked his claim.

I looked at Laila. She was glaring at Grayson. I didn't blame her, though. I wouldn't like him either.

"Hi, Laila," I said, giving her a small wave. "I've missed you."

She looked back at me. "I'm so glad you're okay. I've been so worried," she took another step forward. Grayson growled.

"Too close," he snapped.

Laila's expression soured even more, if that was possible. "I don't like you."

Grayson stared back at her, unblinking and completely unaffected by her words.

His lack of response only seemed to infuriate Laila more. "Let Belle go. She's not some dog you can just order around."

To my surprise, it wasn't Grayson who grunted out a response. It was Liam.

"Just leave it, Laila. Belle can be a part of the conversation from back there," he responded, stepping up a few feet from Grayson and crossing his arms over his chest.

His eyes were narrowed on his father, who was sipping his drink and watching our interaction with dimmed interest.

How I ended up with two overly-protective, supernatural men was beyond me.

Jeffery Blackwood's eyes fell to mine as if he could sense my gaze. He regarded me for several long seconds, looking me up and down and then licking his whiskey-covered lips.

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“I’m fine, Laila,” I cut in, forcing my gaze back on her. I gave her what I hoped looked like a genuine smile, even though I was terrified of the way her father was looking at me from across the room.

“I don’t mind. He can’t help it.”

Before she could respond, someone else spoke.

“So the little werewolf lover running around my town ended up being the queen of the supernatural, huh? You would never have been able to tell from the looks of her.”

I veered back. Ouch.

“Alpha Grayson Stoll,” Jeffery Blackwood continued, his voice deeper and more dangerous than I had been expecting.

He approached my mate and offered him his hand once he was a few feet away, careful not to get too close. “Or is it King Grayson Stoll now? Do you have a preference?”

“I prefer you don’t insult my mate or refer to her as the ‘little werewolf lover,’”

Grayson growled, ignoring the man’s outstretched hand. “You will call her Luna or nothing at all.”

Liam’s father’s brows rose. He waited a few more moments before finally letting his hand fall back to his side. He cleared his throat as he eyed Grayson’s large form.

“I must admit, I’m used to being the biggest man in the room. This is quite the change for me. I’m Jeffery Blackwood, leader of the clan of Evergreen for the last forty years. And this is my wife, Elizabeth.”

His wife stepped beside him, smiling, showing off her sharp fangs. She bowed her head slightly in greeting. It didn’t escape my attention that she didn’t say a single word.

Grayson didn’t respond, only staring back at them with a stone face. I had to hold myself back from throwing my head back and groaning. This was already a mess.

Jeffery was good at hiding it, but I could still tell that Grayson’s indifference toward him was off-putting for him. He continued talking.

“Your mate has caused quite the uproar in our town. I was happy to give her a place to stay and keep her safe for the last few months, despite not knowing who she really was.

“You can imagine what a shock it was to discover her history with you—and now the former king of vampires.” He looked at me. “You’ve been very busy, Luna.”

My head tilted in question. Did he really just say he took care of me for the last few months?

“Actually, the way I remember it,” I began bitterly, “it was Liam who took me in when I had nowhere else to go.

“If it were up to you, I would have been unemployed, homeless, and on the next bus out of here less than twenty-four hours after arriving in Evergreen. You never wanted me here.”

I was surprised by my own boldness. But there was something about this man that made me immediately dislike him. And I wasn’t about to let him lie to my mate just because he wanted to be on his good side.

The air in the room dried up. Everyone seemed to hold their breath as they waited for a response.

“That true?” Grayson asked, his voice deeper.

“I was wary of your mate’s presence in Evergreen,” Jeffery answered, never losing the casualness in his tone. “And no one can deny that I was right in my worries.

“She has single-handedly brought the current and former king to my doorstep.

However, I can say now that I am glad to have had her stay here, knowing who she is. I wouldn’t have had it any other way.”

Liam scoffed. “You beat me up when you found out she was living with me.”

I gasped. “What?” I remembered coming home to him sporting a black eye the first month I was staying with him, but he had just told me he had been in a bar fight.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Liam shrugged, keeping eye contact with his dad. “Wasn’t the first time my father lost his temper and took it out on me. And I’m sure it won’t be the last.”

Grayson was incredibly stiff in front of me, tension beginning to coil his muscles. I knew it was time to change the subject before he did something stupid like shift.

“Do we know where Azazel is now?” I asked.

“Still in Evergreen, unfortunately,” Liam answered before his father could.

“He’s evaded our attempts to try and contact him—or he’s used the power of the Mortars to talk his way out of any interaction we’ve managed to have.”

“He will not be able to get to you here. We have the best security money can buy and clan members stationed outside, ready to defend the house if need be,” Jeffery said.

The sky outside was pitch black. It was getting late, and all I wanted to do was curl up in bed next to Grayson and sleep for the next few days.

Grayson looked down at me with concern in his dark eyes. “Liam,” he said. “Is there a room we can stay in for the night?”

I leaned into Grayson a bit more. The bond between us that I had hated so much just mere days ago now made me feel safe and loved. He could feel my exhaustion and knew what I needed.

Liam nodded. “Yeah. Follow me.”

GRAYSON

Liam left us in a large guest room with its own bathroom.

The moment he closed the door behind him, leaving Belle and me alone, I locked it and immediately started scanning the room for any signs of danger toward my mate.

I checked under the bed and in the closet before examining the windows to ensure the locks were secure. I was impressed when I found bulletproof glass along the windows.

I wasn’t sure what sort of vampire—or any supernatural creature, really—would choose a gun over their supernatural powers, but I appreciated Jeffrey hadn’t been lying when he said he had the best security money could buy.

Belle sat on the edge of the bed and silently watched while I moved around. That calmed me a bit. I liked her eyes on me. I liked having her attention.

I liked knowing where she was at all times—especially in a situation like this.

I didn’t feel good about any of this. I hated depending on anybody else besides myself when it came to the safety of my mate.

Belle stood and approached me while I was still examining the window. She ran a hand up my arm, leaving sparks everywhere she touched.

The attraction between us flared now that we were by ourselves, making my nostrils flare. I automatically pulled her to me, tucking her into my chest.

“How are you doing?” Belle asked. Her hands dipped under the back of my shirt, seeking the skin-to-skin contact of her mate.

Her fingers traced the muscles of my back, massaging them gently. I wasn't even sure if she was aware that she was doing it, but hell if I was going to point it out to her and risk her stopping.

The need to mate and claim her was becoming more prominent. It could no longer be ignored. My wolf paced unhappily in my mind. He didn't understand the need to wait. He was ready now.

He didn't think our mark on her neck was enough—he wanted her to smell like us; he wanted everyone to know who she belonged to.

He pushed to the surface and growled through my chest, wanting to show me his anger and remind his mate that he was there. Waiting. Anxious.

Belle looked up at me, concern written all over her face. But before she could worry too much, I tilted her head up by her chin and pressed my lips to hers.

She didn't hesitate to return my kiss, even pulling me closer.

Now wasn't the right time to be thinking about throwing my mate on the bed and devouring her until she was screaming my name over and over again.

But with the way she was pressing up against me and letting out sweet little breathy moans against my mouth, dark and dirty thoughts were front and center in my mind.

If it weren't for that stupid prophecy, Belle would already be connected to me forever. I would have made sure of it. She would be mine—mind, body, and soul.

Fuck, did I want that.

It didn't help that every instinct in me felt the need to dominate her to remind her and everyone around us exactly who her alpha was.

I pulled back before I lost control. Belle huffed adorably, annoyed. I smiled and licked my lips, my eyes skating down her beautiful body so perfectly pressed up against mine.

I loved the fact that she was in my clothes, covered in my scent. It helped calm me a bit. I would keep her like this all the time if I could.

“I'm fine, baby,” I said, not wanting her to worry.

My wolf growled in my chest again, letting her know that he was, in fact, not fine at all. He was going ballistic.

Belle gave me a look that told me she didn't believe me. Instead of elaborating, though, I just pressed a kiss to her forehead and pushed her toward the bathroom to get ready for bed.

She needed to rest, not hear about all the dirty thoughts I was having about her.

She let me guide her to the bathroom, not even arguing when I found a new toothbrush in one of the drawers and put toothpaste on it for her, handing it to her.

I did the same for my own and then stood behind her while we brushed our teeth, keeping one hand on her stomach, watching her in the mirror.

She rolled her eyes but didn't try to push me away. She knew I was on edge. She knew I needed this—needed the control.

“Did I look like this the entire time we were talking to the Blackwoods?” Belle asked once we were done with our teeth.

She pulled on the large T-shirt that fell past her knees, readjusting it and tucking one side into the waistband of her sweatpants, so it didn't look quite so huge on her.

I pulled her hands away when she started to mess with her hair. “Stop. You're perfect no matter how you look. It doesn't matter what they think about you.”

“I'm just glad that Laila is letting me borrow some of her clothes for the plane tomorrow.”

Liam had also offered to go get mine and Belle's things from the hotel and Belle's apartment tonight.

Belle's head fell back against my chest. She watched me in the mirror. “You know, as terrible as this situation is, I'm...glad I'm here with you. I don't ever want to be away from you that long ever again.”

Pink stained her cheeks at her sweet admission. “I missed you.”

My chest ached. “I would say I missed you too, but that wouldn't even begin to express the hell I went through over the last three months without you. Never again.

“I won't go a single day without having you by my side. Fuck, even an hour might be too long for me.”

She smiled. “Well, I hope you can go without for at least a few minutes”—she turned and put her hands on my chest—“because I need to pee.” She shoved me out of the bathroom.

I growled playfully as she slammed the door in my face.

Belle was restless.

It was nearly one in the morning, and although she had drifted off a few times, she kept waking up and shifting against me anxiously.

I fished through her emotions through the bond, trying to decipher what had her so worked up, but there was nothing too out of the ordinary.

I felt her worry over Azazel being nearby and about returning to my pack tomorrow, but I also felt her trust in me returning. She felt safe with me. She knew I wasn't going to let anyone or anything hurt her.

She was also exhausted. Her body was still healing from the starving bond, and although she was slowly getting better, it was taking it out of her.

So why the hell was she still awake?

She was hiding something from me. I could feel it. There was some imperceptible emotion rolling through her—one she didn't want me to know about and was keeping locked up.

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Filed To Story:

As annoying as that was, I pushed my irritation down. I would talk to her about it tomorrow. I didn't want to keep her from getting sleep.

My vampire purred for her at a low frequency, not loud enough for her to notice, but enough to hopefully help her relax.

I was happy to do this for her all night if she needed it; I didn't plan on sleeping tonight, wanting to stay alert in case anything happened.

But the way she continued to shift and rub against me nearly had me pinning her down and fucking the living shit out of her. It was getting harder and harder to keep my wolf under control.

As the purrs rolled over her, Belle softened and pressed back against me. I was wrapped around her from behind, with her tucked into me, our legs tangled together under the sheets.

I had to hold in a deep snarl when she rubbed her little ass up against my hard-as-rock cock, murmuring something incomprehensible in her half-asleep state. Then she stilled. Her breathing slowed.

Just as I thought she had finally nodded off, she huffed and flipped her body around so she was facing me, nuzzling her face into my bare chest and neck.

I froze when she threw one of her legs over my hip, pressing her pussy up against my cock. Only her sweatpants and my boxers separated us from being skin-to-skin.

And then she started to move. And grind.

My whole body lit on fire.

They weren't large movements—they were small and fueled by sleep. Filled with innocence. She didn't know what she needed or even that she was doing it, just that it felt good.

And then I realized what was going on, why she was having such a hard time falling asleep, why she was keeping her emotions under lock and key, and why she couldn't stop wiggling her supple body against me.

She was horny.

Yes, my girl was so turned on it was keeping her awake. The bond was getting to her the same way it was getting to me.

That realization nearly killed me. It was one thing for me to go without, but my mate?

Fuck. That.

If she needed release, I was going to give it to her.

My hand traveled up her spine until I was gripping the back of her neck, squeezing it. Belle sucked in a small breath, her hip movements rolling to a stop.

“Did I wake you up?” Belle whispered into the darkness.

“No,” I replied, my voice deep and hoarse. “You didn't.”

My other hand found its way to her hip, gently encouraging her to continue her movements, faster this time. I guided her hips down, so her clit rubbed up against my pulsing shaft.

Belle gasped. “Grayson...,” she moaned out. “What are you doing?”

“Taking care of you. Relax.”

She automatically did as she was told, allowing me full control. Her arms snaked their way around my neck as I picked up the pace, grinding up against her.

Her breaths started to come out as pants until she was mewling against my skin.

I growled. “Quiet, little mate.” I kissed her jaw and up to her ear so I was sure she could hear me. “No one but me gets to hear the sound of your pleasure. I need you quiet. Understand?”

She nodded, although she seemed a bit distracted as she started to move her hips. I couldn’t have that.

With my grip on her hip, I slowed her anxious grinding and grabbed her chin with my other hand, forcing her to look at me.

“I want to hear you say it. No vampire is going to hear your sweet moans. Say you understand.”

She nodded again, wiggling to try and get out of my grip. “I understand,” she said, her words rushing out. “I’ll be quiet.”

“Good girl.”

I allowed her to move again, meeting her thrusts with mine—harder, faster.

I dragged the ridge of my cock up and down her clothed pussy like a man possessed, my eyes soaking up the beautiful sight of my mate writhing against me, finding pleasure with my body.

Fuck, I was going to get off like this.

My wolf side clawed at my consciousness. This wasn’t enough. He wanted more. He pounded so hard against my mind that I physically jerked forward, nearly crushing Belle.

I couldn’t help but let my instincts momentarily take over and pushed Belle onto her back before climbing over her and slamming my hips down onto hers.

Belle squeaked as I started to full-on hump her like a wild animal. I knew the moment the seam of her sweatpants started to grind up against her clit, her eyes rolling to the back, and her legs opening wider.

I snarled low when small noises started to come out of her mouth as she neared her climax. My possessiveness and need to have her all to myself took over any logical thinking I may have been hanging onto.

I grabbed her jaw in my hand and slammed my lips down onto hers, swallowing all of the noises of bliss she was making and keeping them all to myself.

The taste of her consumed me, and I was suddenly extremely grateful for the sturdiness of this bed—it didn't make a single noise as I dry-humped my mate into oblivion.

Belle's orgasm came hard and fast. I never took my lips from hers, and she whined into my mouth, her nails digging into my shoulders and only adding to my own fire.

Feeling her shake and convulse against me was all it took for me to go off, grinding down harder than I had before.

After what felt like forever, both of our intense highs finally ebbed and flowed to an end. Belle was completely limp beneath me, breathing heavily.

I continued to kiss her even though her lips were loose and pliable under mine, not ready to be done with her just yet.

Although we both came, the primal feeling inside of me—the need to claim her—

didn't calm. My hips never ceased moving, thrusting lazily while I kissed her.

It wasn't much, but it kept me from ripping all of her clothes off and finally taking her sweet virginity.

Later. That would come later.

Belle giggled when I swiped my tongue across her lips. I growled playfully before pulling back and looking down at my droopy-eyed, smiling mate.

Fuck, she looked beautiful like this—beneath me, swollen lips, flushed and satisfied.

After cleaning ourselves up in the bathroom, Belle and I settled back into the bed, her in my arms.

She slept like the dead for the rest of the night.

BELLE

Grayson couldn't keep his hands off of me the next morning.

I sort of loved it.

He had woken me up extremely early with gentle kisses on my mark.

He had been receiving constant updates from the pilot of his private plane all night, and the moment he knew it was near, he wanted us up and moving.

We took a quick shower and then got dressed. Of course, Grayson got all growly when I put on Laila's black leggings and a T-shirt instead of his humongous clothes.

Laila even let me use a pair of sneakers, too, which I was extremely grateful for.

"Fucking vampire scent," Grayson kept fuming under his breath once I was dressed.

I rolled my eyes. He should just be grateful that it was Laila's clothes and not Liam's.

We were just about to leave the room when rushed footsteps started approaching.

"Belle! Belle!" someone shouted.

I ran to the door and pried it open before Grayson could stop me, coming face to face with a very panicked-looking Laila.

"My dad is a traitor," she said, her words rushing out before I could even react to the large tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Liam is holding him off, but my father told Azazel where you are. You need to get out of here. Now."

Grayson had me in his arms before she had even finished speaking. I didn't even have time to process what was going on or what Laila had just told us.

My mate hugged me close to his body, pressed my face into his neck to shield my eyes, and then he sprinted.

Intense wind made my hair fly everywhere as he ran at a speed that made everything blur past us. I tried looking up, but Grayson's firm grip kept my head forced down.

I expected to be there like that for a while. But only seconds later, we came to an abrupt stop, Grayson's entire body jerking forward. I squeaked in surprise.

"Grayson?" I asked when he didn't move for several seconds. I could feel his heart beating rapidly in his chest.

The sound of a car's wheels screeched in front of us. A door opened.

"Get in." Relief filled me at the sound of Liam's voice.

He was okay. Or at least, he sounded like he was.

Grayson finally released his hold on my neck, allowing me to look up as he carried me into the passenger side door of an absolutely incredible blue Lamborghini.

“Liam!” I exclaimed when I saw him in the driver’s seat, a scowl painted over his handsome features.

I didn’t have time to ask him any questions or try to understand what the hell was going on because, the next thing I knew, Liam threw the car into reverse, not even waiting for Grayson to close our car door all the way.

Grayson pulled me into his lap in the passenger seat and wrapped his arms around me, acting as my seat belt.

I screamed as Liam tore through the gates of his father’s driveway—nearly hitting an oncoming car—and swerved the car around so he was speeding down the street in front of his father’s house.

“Azazel knows where you are,” Liam explained in a rush once the car was stable.

“He knows about the plane and your plan to bring Belle back to Croatia with you.

He’s coming after you.

“He’s going to try and stop you both.”

It was then I was able to get a good look at my friend. My mouth went dry. “Liam,” I said uneasily, “you’re covered in blood.”

He had red splattered all over his arms and down his chest.

The fact that he was wearing a white T-shirt only made the color of the bright blood more pronounced, and with his matching eyes, he looked like something straight out of a horror movie.

Liam wiped his hand over his mouth—which I now noticed had blood in the corners—and swiped his tongue over his sharp fangs. “Not mine,” he grunted in response.

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I could see his muscles tensing beneath his skin and his dark eyebrows pulling tight together.

“Then whose is it?” I asked carefully, fearing I already knew the answer.

He hesitated for only a moment before answering. “My father’s. He’s dead. I killed him.”

“Liam...” What do you say to the person who just killed his own father?

“The fucker deserved it,” Liam continued, his voice coming out like a hiss. “He’s been in contact with Azazel since the day Adalee showed up. He was going to lead him to the house. Ambush you both.”

I put my hand on Liam’s knee. Grayson stiffened beneath me but didn’t stop me.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “Whether or not he deserved it, what you did couldn’t have been easy.”

Liam suddenly swerved the car, quickly changing lanes. I hadn’t even noticed we had pulled onto a highway. He was speeding past all of the other cars. Blaring horns followed behind us.

I swallowed. “Liam, are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Liam responded. “My only priority is getting you out of here.”

Grayson grabbed my wrist—I didn’t even realize I was still holding Liam’s leg—and put his hand in mine. He held me closer.

“Where is Azazel now?” Grayson asked.

Liam’s eyes snapped up to the rearview mirror, looking behind us. “He’s coming after you now. Wouldn’t be surprised if he were in one of the cars behind us right now.

“We need to get you on that plane and in the air.”

“How long until the plane gets here?” I asked Grayson.

“The plane isn’t here yet?” Liam snapped. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

“It should be landing now,” Grayson grunted through his teeth.

“So does that mean you can slow down? Please?” I asked. Grayson’s thumb started to brush over my arm, trying to calm me. His chest vibrated with quiet purrs.

Liam shook his head. “We can’t let them catch up to us.”

At the speed we were going, there was no chance of that happening.

Liam reached down and grabbed something from beneath his thigh. My eyes widened when I saw what it was: a gun.

Grayson snarled, ready to destroy the threat, but Liam quickly set it down in my lap before he could do anything.

“That’s for you,” Liam explained grimly, never taking his eyes from the road. “I got it for you a week or so ago to keep in your apartment but never got around to giving it to you.”

He met my eyes for half a second. “In case you need to defend yourself.”

I stared down at the handgun in my lap. I had never used a gun before. I wasn’t even sure I’d seen one in real life.

They honestly terrified me—one of the only tools solely made for killing and injuring, so easily misused.

Grayson picked it up. “Do you know how to use it?”

I shook my head.

He explained it to me in a gentle tone, probably sensing my nerves, showing me the safety and how to hold it properly.

After he double-checked that the safety was on, he put it in the waistband of my leggings, setting my T-shirt over it, so it was out of sight.

After the most terrifying car ride of my entire life, we were pulling up to the Machias Valley Airport.

“Keep driving,” Grayson told Liam. “Get on the runway.”

I shrieked when Liam ran over a curb, causing the entire car to jump. My head nearly smashed into the roof.

Grayson pulled me closer to him and rubbed his massive hand over my leg. His arms were so tight around me that it almost hurt. “Try not to kill my mate, Blackwood.”

With a car so nice, I was shocked by how recklessly Liam was driving. Although, I was sure the Lamborghini belonged to his father. Guess he wouldn’t be needing it anymore, would he?

“Is this even legal?” I asked. We were on the runway now with several planes all around us. The long strip was mostly empty, though, with no signs of any planes getting ready to take off.

Liam scoffed. “Your boyfriend is the king of the fucking world. Anything is legal.”

Before I had time to process that, Grayson spoke. “That’s the plane.”

I followed his line of vision. In the distance, there was a plane that had just pulled to a stop, the same one that had taken us from France to Minnesota.

I knew it because it had a big blue stripe on the side and was smaller than all the other planes.

When we pulled up next to the plane, the stairs to board were already lowering.

Grayson carried me out of the car before setting me on my feet and leading me to the steps.

“You know,” a familiar voice started from inside the plane. He rounded the corner, revealing his grinning face. “Private planes are really bad for the environment.”

My heart leapt in my chest. “Elijah!” I exclaimed.

He looked good. I was relieved to see that it was the same old Elijah I had known before. He hadn’t grown a foot or looked like he was on testosterone.

Grayson released me, and Elijah met me halfway down the stairs with open arms. I practically launched myself against him, beyond happy to see him again.

“Fuck, it’s good to see you again, Luna,” Elijah said against my shoulder, pulling me closer to him. “I was so happy when I heard the alpha found you. You have no idea how worried I was.”

I leaned back to look at him, smiling brightly. “I missed you. I’ve been worried about you too.”

“All right, that’s enough,” Grayson growled. I hadn’t even noticed him coming up behind me. He grabbed my elbow and pulled me down a step.

I had to hold myself back from pushing him down the steps for trying to take me away from my friend after not having seen him for months.

If his wolf weren’t so close to the surface, I probably would have.

“Sorry, Alpha,” Elijah said immediately, tilting his head to the side as a sign of submission.

Grayson grunted in response, dismissing his apology.

“What are you doing here?” I asked Elijah.

“You’ll have time to catch up as soon as we’re back in the air,” Grayson said before Elijah could respond. He led me into the plane.

“We need to refuel, Alpha.” The pilot appeared from behind the door to the cockpit.

“It’ll take an hour or so.”

“No,” Grayson replied. “We can stop at another airport, but we need to get out of Maine.”

The pilot didn’t hesitate before nodding vigorously. “Yes, Alpha. We can take off in ten minutes?”

Grayson’s nostrils flared. “Make it five.”

The pilot nodded once more and then scampered away.

“Eeek!” another, more feminine voice screamed. Everyone’s attention swung to the back of the plane to where the voice was coming from.

Without warning, a tiny, black-haired body came flying toward me. But before she could reach me, Grayson reached a hand out, stopping the person.

“Minnie,” Grayson spoke in a scornful tone. He had his outstretched hand on the girl’s forehead, holding her back from me like a parent would a misbehaving child.

“Would you try not to flatten my mate?”

The girl, Minnie, looked at me with the brightest smile I had ever seen. I immediately knew she was a vampire due to her bright red eyes that matched Liam’s.

“I’m so excited to meet you,” Minnie said to me. She was practically bouncing with her enthusiasm.

“I’ve heard so much about you. I can’t wait to have another girl around the palace to talk to. Well, I mean, I have my sister, but she always has her nose pressed into a book—”

“You brought Minnie?” Grayson asked, directing his question to Elijah. He dropped his hand from her forehead, allowing Minnie to jump around.

“You try telling her not to do what she wants,” Elijah responded. “It doesn’t go well.

She wanted to meet the luna. I was just lucky she was asleep for half the flight, so she didn’t talk my ear off. Guess we woke her up.”

Grayson glowered at the little vampire.

Minnie scoffed, seemingly not the least bit threatened by the intimidating hybrid twice her size. “Your mate doesn’t like me. He’s an extremely grumpy person.”

I automatically knew we were going to be friends. A laugh escaped my mouth.

“Don’t take it personally. He doesn’t really like anybody,” I said to her. I looked up at Grayson. “Except me, I guess.”

Grayson’s eyes morphed to their normal forest green for a single second as he looked down at me. He brushed his thumb over my jaw lovingly.

When I looked back at Minnie, her eyes were wide, and her lips were curled into her mouth like she was trying hard not to speak.

“You two are just so cute,” she finally blurted. “It’s nice to see King Grayson at peace.”

Elijah, who was standing next to me, leaned down to whisper something. “Who’s the tall, dark, and brooding character over there? And are we aware of the fact that he’s covered in blood?”

I looked over at Liam. He was standing in the doorway of the plane, looking outside with a deep scowl on his face.

“That’s Liam,” I said quietly.

Elijah’s brows rose. “Hold on. You mean Liam, as in Liam Blackwood?”

I nodded once, surprised that he knew his name. There was so much about the supernatural world that I had yet to learn.

“He’s cute,” Minnie whispered to me, eyeing Liam up and down like he was a piece of meat.

My lips turned up. “He can also probably hear you.” Liam didn’t react, but I knew he had incredible hearing and was listening to everything we were saying.

She grinned. “Oh, I know.”

“Blackwood,” Grayson grunted. He seemed to have just remembered Liam was here now that we were talking about him. “What the fuck are you doing on my plane?”

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“You think I’m just going to leave Belle alone after being the only person watching over her for months?” Liam replied as if it were an obvious explanation. “Not going to happen, werewolf.”

“Are you the luna’s protector?” Minnie asked him. “Oh, my gosh, you must be! I didn’t think she would find you so soon.

“But I guess you did come when she needed you most, just like the prophecy said you would. I just always assumed she would find you when she was—”

“Minnie,” Grayson interrupted, irritated. “What the hell are you talking about?”

Minnie frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Liam isn’t Belle’s anything,” Grayson snapped, his voice becoming deeper.

Minnie took a step back. “I think you might be wrong about that. He has all the qualities of the queen’s guardian.”

Liam approached us, suddenly interested in the conversation. “The queen’s guardian? What is that?”

Minnie giggled. “Well... you. You’re the luna’s protector.” She turned to Grayson.

“Didn’t you read the prophecy?”

“What prophecy?” I asked.

“The prophecy that said I was going to be king,” Grayson explained, glaring at Minnie for bringing it up. “Of course I read it. ~I’m Belle’s protector, not some random vampire.”

“That’s not how it works. You’re not going to be able to be there for your mate all the time when you are king. The prophecy stated that she would have someone to protect her, just as Queen Evangeline did.”

Queen Evangeline? Yet another name that I didn’t recognize.

“How do you know this?” I asked.

Minnie slowly looked at Liam, a small smile playing on her lips. “I can feel his soul. It’s filled with kindness and bravery, and goodwill. He will be the perfect guardian.”

Liam shifted on his feet, regarding Minnie with humble discomfort.

“That and the birthmark on his arm,” Minnie finished.

Everyone’s eyes fell on the large birthmark that took over half of Liam’s left arm. It climbed up the upper half of his bicep and beneath the collar of his shirt.

It was barely visible—only a shade or two lighter than his normal skin. It was the first time I had noticed it in the several months I had known him and spent time with him.

“It’s the same one Queen Evangeline’s guardian had,” Elijah murmured in awe. “It’s incredible. Except hers wasn’t a birthmark. It was a scar—from a burn.”

Liam, who was also looking down at the birthmark as if he were seeing it for the first time, raised his head. “So... does this mean I get to stay on the plane now?”

GRAYSON

I had to keep reminding myself not to grip Belle too tightly as I held her against me during the flight to Zaweth. I pressed my nose to her hair, inhaling her scent by the lungful.

I was mad. For more than one reason.

I was mad that Liam Blackwood was on my plane, following us back to the supernatural kingdom. I was mad Azazel Mortar was hunting my single reason for living.

And I was mad that I continually failed at being Belle’s mate.

She didn’t deserve any of this. But to hell if I wasn’t going to try to make it all worth it.

Belle was dead asleep in my lap, my arms wrapped tightly around her. She had passed out about halfway through the flight after Minnie had chattered her ear off in the seat across from us.

I could tell Belle liked Minnie, and that pleased me. She was going to be a good friend to my Belle. I could already tell.

It made a slight sense of regret form in my gut for how I had treated Minnie since I had known her.

Liam was in the seat next to Minnie—keeping a close eye on us as always—and Elijah was in the seat next to me and Belle, fast asleep.

The plane was starting its descent. And the closer we got to the ground, the higher my anxiety grew. This was starting to feel a bit too much like the night I lost Belle—

the night Azazel took over my body.

I wasn't going to let anything happen to her ever again. I would protect her from any threats. Even if that threat was me.

Belle shifted against me, her eyes fluttering open. She looked up at me.

"Are you okay?" she asked. Her hand cupped my jaw, running her fingers over it. "I can feel your thoughts racing."

I frowned. The last thing I wanted to do was wake her up. Or make her worry. "I'm okay, love. You should go back to sleep. I didn't mean to wake you up."

I could tell by her expression that she wasn't buying any of my shit. "You didn't sleep at all last night. You need to rest too, you know."

"I'll rest when you're safe."

Her lips turned down, not liking my answer. "You're always so worried about taking care of me," she said. "You've been through a lot. Someone needs to make sure you're okay."

I kissed her forehead. "I'm okay as long as I'm with you. You're all I need."

Someone made an exaggerated gagging noise next to us. "Is it too late to get off?"

When I looked to my right, Liam, with his eyes still closed and his arms crossed over his chest, was making a face of disgust. "We can all hear you."

"There are fifteen seats on this plane," I snapped back. "Find somewhere else to fucking sit."

The fact that Liam was even on this plane right now was a miracle. It took everything in me not to throw the cocky bastard out the window. I didn't give a fuck if he was Belle's "guardian."

It was only after Belle explained the strange need Liam felt to look after her when she first arrived at Evergreen that I actually started to consider what an asset he could be.

Although I would try, I wouldn't be able to look after Belle 24/7 when we got to Zaweth. It could be useful to have someone guarding her when I couldn't.

I just hated that it had to be him.

One thing was for sure, though—I would be reading the prophecy at least a dozen more times as soon as we got to Zaweth.

Until then, however, I planned on ignoring him. It was the only way I was going to preserve my sanity.

Minnie giggled. Her red eyes were peering at us and a bit jarring in the dim lighting. I hadn't even realized she was awake. "I think it's sweet. He loves her."

Belle's lips turned up just the slightest bit as a sweet blush took over her cheeks.

Liam huffed and turned his body toward the plane wall, going back to sleep.

"So...how soon before we land?" Belle asked me. I could hear the nerves in her casual tone. She was trying to hide how anxious she was, as if that were even possible.

I tucked a piece of loose hair behind her ear. "About an hour."

She nodded. "Okay. Great. That's great." I didn't miss the way she dropped her gaze.

"You have nothing to worry about, Belle. I'll be with you the entire time."

"You said that last time."

"There was an evil vampire waiting to take over his body last time," Elijah murmured, shifting out of his sleep.

"I thought Zaweth was filled with vampires," Belle pointed out.

"Not the evil kind," Minnie said, smiling brightly. "We're nice."

Belle said nothing in response.

"This time is different," Elijah started, "because you know how to protect yourself.

You know to run away or ask for help if anything happens."

"But nothing is going to happen," I said. "I'm not going to let anything happen."

Belle said nothing as she settled back down into my lap, her back pressed up against my chest. She grabbed my arms and wrapped them around her as tight as they would go.

I could feel her heart racing against my skin.

I picked her up and carried her to the back of the plane, where no one was sitting. I adjusted her on my lap so that she was straddling me, our faces inches apart.

Belle gazed at me with her big, beautiful blue eyes. “What is it?” she asked.

She smelled so good. So, so good. She was my personal walking aphrodisiac. My already hard cock twitched in my pants.

I could tell Belle felt it beneath her because her scent sweetened, and she shifted her cute little ass against it gently. The movement was innocent.

She wasn’t trying to tempt me, but that didn’t change the fact that if it weren’t for the other people on this plane, my fingers would be knuckle deep in her pussy, thrusting in and out until she screamed my name against my lips.

“Grayson?” Belle said, trying to get my attention.

Christ. I should not be thinking about this right now. The urge to mate with her was getting intense. It was starting to take over my every thought.

I clenched my jaw as I leaned forward, placing my forehead against hers, breathing in her mouthwatering scent.

“I love you,” I whispered. “I love you so much. I’m so glad I found you. I’m so glad you’re coming home with me.

“And I’m so grateful for the trust you’re affording me after everything that happened. You know that, right?”

She nodded, her fingers sliding through the hair above the back of my neck. “I know. I love you too.”

I gently tilted her head up by her chin so that my lips could fall down onto hers.

Belle automatically leaned into the kiss, our tongues tangling together.

A small growl released from my chest when her hips started to shift against me. It wasn’t as if she even knew what she was doing. Her movements were small and not thought out.

It was the bond. Telling her what to do. Pushing her to mate and connect with me completely.

I gripped her hips, trying to slowly roll them to a stop. I needed to end this before either of us took it too far. “Mmm, Belle...,” I said against her lips. “Not here, sweet girl.”

She pulled her mouth away from mine. Her eyes fluttered open, and a sweet blush took over her cheeks. Her hand covered her mouth, which was probably tingling with sparks in the same way mine was.

“Sorry,” she whispered. “I don’t know what that was—”

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“Hey, it’s okay.” I gave her a reassuring smile. “I would have loved to continue, but I don’t think we want an audience for that.”

She glanced back at the three others calmly chatting where we had left them. Well, Minnie was talking to Elijah, and Liam was pretending to sleep.

Belle looked back at me, nodding. “Yeah, you’re probably right.”

Her sweet blush nearly killed me. I could feel her mild embarrassment through the bond. Could it be that she thought she was the only one experiencing this intense attraction and need for...more?

I wished I could have told her that it was just the bond pushing us together, but I didn’t want to confuse her or—for the sake of my own insanity—encourage her.

With my hand on her head, I guided her head onto my chest. “Rest. I’ll wake you up when we get home.”

“Home,” she repeated, settling against me once again. “Home sounds nice.”

I kissed her forehead. “That it does.”

As long as I didn’t go crazy with lust first.

GRAYSON

I was going crazy with lust.

Nearly a month had passed since arriving back at Zaweth with Belle. Everything had been going so well.

For a little while, that is.

My pack had accepted her with open arms, just like I knew they would, expressing their deep regret for how they treated her without hesitation.

Belle had been wary of them at first, nervous around the werewolves who had mistreated her for so long, but eventually, she started to get along with them and even fit in.

She made friends with everyone she met, remembering names and faces better than even I could. She cared about them and took it upon herself to get to know everyone, even checking in on them.

She was a natural luna. She took her place as my queen with grace and poise.

The two of us lived in our own wing of the palace of the supernatural in the center of Zaweth. I had it built especially for us when I first took over as king.

It was more of an apartment than anything else, with our very own kitchen, dining room, living room, two bathrooms, and two bedrooms.

Belle loved it, which made me happy, especially knowing the dump she had been staying in for the last several months.

My favorite part about our wing was that it was far away from everyone else and secluded.

This was good because we weren't the only people who lived in the palace—it occupied about five hundred supernatural total—and I wanted to ensure we had total privacy.

Only I got to hear the sound of my mate's pleasure.

My favorite activity was seeing how many times I could make her scream my name in one night while I ravished her pussy with my tongue for hours and hours.

And as much as I enjoyed this—and, boy, did I enjoy doing this—I also did it out of necessity. It was the only way to keep my wolf at bay.

It was the only way to keep myself at bay.

During the day, though, I eventually decided I had to keep my distance. Being around her for too long always amounted to an all-consuming arousal that ended with both of us in bed, me on top of her.

Then, it took everything in me not to spread her legs, thrust my cock into her sweet little pussy, and lodge my teeth into her beautiful neck, ensuring the mating bond was finally completed, and she was tied to me forever.

And then I would fuck her some more.

Yeah, my self-control was hanging on by a thread.

So I found other ways to occupy my time that didn't include Belle, which killed me.

But it was better than pinning her to whatever nearby wall there was and fucking her all the way into next week like I wanted to.

I would leave her early in the morning for training with my pack—where I would try to work off some pent-up energy—and then I would be off in meetings for the rest of the day.

Sometimes Belle would come with me. I preferred it that way for a while. I wanted her close. But the attraction quickly became too much. For both of us.

Soon, it became hard to be in the same room with her. The smell of her constant arousal was too much.

When Belle wasn't exploring the kingdom and finding ways to keep herself busy, she was hanging out with Minnie during the day.

She would help her make house calls to the sick. She really enjoyed it. She came home every day with stories of the people they met and helped.

She loved being with Minnie—they had become great friends, just like I predicted they would.

At first, I felt nervous about Belle going out of the palace every day without me by her side.

I hated the idea of her sitting in our palace wing by herself every day, but I hated the idea of her being unprotected even more. That was when Liam volunteered to go with them.

I said no. Of course I said no. I hated that motherfucking vampire with every fiber of my being.

But Belle begged for me to let him come with.

And begged.

And when I still said no, she did it anyway.

My strong, stubborn, little mate.

Liam was lucky he had earned the tiniest bit of my trust by killing his own father and protecting Belle from Adalee. Or he would be six feet under right now.

I felt extremely tense as I walked through the gym early in the morning. Belle was still asleep when I left her, and I had to literally pry her body off mine to get out of bed.

She had always been a massive cuddler during the night, but since I had started putting off mating with her, she began wrapping herself around me like a vine while she slept.

Her body sought the nearness of her mate that I wasn't providing her with while she was awake.

Usually, I wouldn't mind. Usually, I would encourage the close contact.

But her squirming her little body against me for hours upon hours, rubbing her face and lips against my chest and neck while she slept, was starting to drive me fucking insane.

Belle was confused. The force of the bond was strong. Relentless. She was becoming desperate to mate, and oh boy, was she making sure I knew it.

She hadn't outright told me, but I could sense it— smell it—every time we were together.

When I walked into our room last night, she was wearing one of my shirts, completely covered in my scent, which she knew drove my wolf and me crazy.

No bra and a red thong painfully visible through the white fabric of my shirt.

I had also found her sitting criss-cross on our bed with the crotch of her panties so beautifully on display for me.

I could smell her mating pheromones all the way down the hall, which made it painfully obvious what she had been hoping for.

The moment I stepped into the room, my own body heaved with incapacitating lust as my eyes traveled up and down her form. Even just looking at her caused every part of my body to come alive.

Well, some parts more than others.

I made her come. Multiple times. For hours. I threw her onto the bed and devoured her until she begged me to stop.

I spent so much time licking her sweet pussy that I could still taste her on my tongue now. It wasn't what either of us wanted, not really, but it was all I could do.

We were both slowly going insane, and everyone around us knew it. My pack members eyed me every time I stepped out of our palace wing, knowing I was near my breaking point.

They knew I hadn't fully mated with Belle and could feel the absence of the connection to their luna. I'm sure they all wondered what was taking me so long.

They longed for the connection as well.

I couldn't mate with her, though. Not yet. Not until I had all the information on how shifting to a fairy would affect her.

She was human, and whether or not she wanted to admit it, she was fragile. I would not be the one to cause her harm.

I tried convincing myself that I wouldn't have to wait too much longer.

Kyle had gotten me in touch with a warlock who apparently was a relative of Evangeline Viotto and was willing to talk to me about the Fae.

I had come extremely close to telling her about the prophecy so many times. She deserved to know why I was avoiding her, why her body was reacting to mine the way it was.

But I knew that if I told her, she would try to convince me that it wasn't a big deal. I knew her, and I knew how desperate she was—and how selfless.

She was well aware of how rigid I had been the last month or so and how badly I wanted her. She just didn't understand why I wasn't taking her.

She would gladly risk her life if it meant finally being fully connected to me and giving us both some relief. And I just couldn't have that.

Elijah looked up from his weights as I walked past him in the gym. I didn't miss the way the corners of his lips turned up just a bit. "Morning, Alpha," he said, amusement leaking from his tone.

"Elijah," I grunted back in greeting. I turned and crossed my arms over my chest, assessing my pack—or should I say kingdom—as they trained.

I was still getting used to that. Just like with Belle, taking on the role of alpha king had come naturally to me. I fell into the role with ease.

Elijah approached me slowly, coming to stand by my side, facing the large gym as well. "Kyle will be here soon. He wasn't planning on being late, but he said he needed coffee."

Not surprised. "Sounds like Kyle," I murmured. Coffee didn't even do anything to him now that he was a hybrid, but he still claimed that it did. He drank about fifteen mug-fulls every morning.

"Right," Elijah agreed. He was avoiding eye contact with me. There was something he wasn't telling me.

"You got something to share with me, Elijah?" I asked him slowly.

I was in no mood for games this morning, or any morning, really, ever since having to wake up and leave an unsatisfied, sexy-as-all-sin mate every day.

He shifted. “Well, uh...I feel like it is my, uh, moral obligation to warn you that Kyle’s going to give you a ton of shit when he gets here.”

I let my gaze slide to him. “Care to explain?”

He opened his mouth to respond, but before he could, someone else spoke. “Holy fuck, Alpha, would you point that thing somewhere else? You’re liable to poke my mate’s eye out.”

Kyle approached us with the biggest shit-eating grin I had ever seen on his face.

I looked down. Christ—he was right. I suddenly understood what Elijah had been trying to warn me about. The simple gym shorts I was wearing did nothing to hide the massive erection I was sporting.

I hadn’t even thought about hiding it or taking care of it this morning, just needing to get away from Belle as quickly as possible.

I quickly and discreetly readjusted, so it was less noticeable.

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Filed To Story:

“Ignore it,” I growled, crossing my arms over my chest and looking away from them.

Sensing my touchy mood, Kyle gave Elijah a quick kiss on the lips before sending him on his way. Elijah found a spot on the other side of the gym to finish his workout.

Kyle turned to me, elbowing my side. “Hey, if I don’t give you shit, then who will, Alpha?”

I grunted. “I would prefer no one. Perks of being king.”

A moment of awkward silence passed between us. “So...You and the luna...?” Kyle prodded.

“None of your business.”

He nodded his head in understanding. “It’s getting that bad, huh?”

“Kyle...,” I warned in a low tone.

He rolled his eyes and let out a deep breath. “Yeah, yeah, it’s none of my business.

“I know you would like to believe that, but you make it all of our business every second you go without fully mating the luna and fulfilling the prophecy.

“And when you walk around smelling so strongly of mating pheromones that I could choke on the fumes.”

I wasn’t listening to him anymore, my attention stolen.

I had just gotten a whiff of my favorite scent in the whole world.

Belle.

Belle was nearby. She was watching me.

And, fuck, she was turned on.

All of my focus was suddenly on this new development. Had she come to watch me work out? Did she need something? Was she lonely? Horny?

My head snapped up and narrowed on the viewing deck overlooking the gym. It was one-way glass, so I couldn’t see her, but I knew she was there.

And I knew she could see me. I would be able to pick out her gaze on me in a room of thousands.

My naughty mate definitely knew she wasn’t supposed to be here. It was dangerous for her, a human, to be surrounded by bloodthirsty vampires.

I had told her countless times that she wasn’t allowed outside our wing without the proper protection—especially when Azazel was still out there.

Azazel hadn’t caused any problems lately, but I almost would have preferred it if he would. Then I would at least know what he was up to. He was quiet right now, too quiet. And it was making me nervous.

“Oh, shit.” Kyle chuckled as he raised a hand to cover his nose. He shook his head with a smile. “The two of you are worse than teenagers, I swear.”

Thankfully, he walked away before I had to beat him to death for smelling my mate.

All of my prior thoughts about keeping a safe distance from my little mate went out the window as I started to march toward her, ready to give her exactly what she needed.

BELLE

I woke up in bed by myself. The spot where Grayson slept was cold, and a deep longing was rooted in my chest, making it hard for me to breathe.

Usually, I would just deal with it. I was a big girl who could go a few hours without my boyfriend.

Codependency? Yeah, we don't know her.

But today was different. The last couple of days—weeks, actually—had been different. I wanted to be around him all the time.

I craved his presence, his heart-melting smile, his very skillful touch. He was like a drug that I needed all the time in order to survive.

Which was why I somehow found myself walking toward the gym's viewing deck at six in the morning, seeking even a single glimpse of my mate.

I knew I wasn't supposed to be out here. Liam would be at my door within the next hour, and then we would be meeting with Minnie.

Today we were visiting an older witch who had apparently turned herself into a cow and didn't know how to turn back.

I had no idea what Minnie was going to be able to do to help her, but I definitely wasn't going to miss it. So I would have to be quick. I just needed to be near him for a few minutes, and then I would be fine.

I hoped.

My eyes found him the moment I entered the viewing deck. He was at the back of the gym, talking to Elijah and Kyle, arms crossed over his massive chest.

His muscles strained against his black shirt, and sweat dripped down his face and neck, making him glisten in the fluorescent lighting.

God, he was hot. He was truly perfect in every way, shape, and form. Part of me thought it wasn't fair, but the other part of me was content to stare at him and his perfection.

I sat down at one of the two large leather couches, observing my mate with rapt attention. It was crazy how much peace it brought me just to be near him, to watch him. It was the mate bond.

He was the other half of my soul, and I wanted to be with him as much as I possibly could. At the beginning of our relationship, that would have terrified me.

My dependency on him would have made me flee, run for the hills like a coward until he inevitably came and hunted me down. Now though, it felt natural. In fact, it felt incredible.

I loved him. He completed me. And after months of hesitation, trust-building between the two of us, and just pain in general due to everything that happened, that was an amazing feeling to have.

A giggle left my mouth when I noticed the deep scowl on Grayson's face as he conversed with Kyle.

Kyle had obviously just said something that had bothered him, which, to be fair, wasn't hard to do nowadays. He was snappy with every person but me.

It was extremely entertaining witnessing him be all sweet and caring with me when we were in private and then all grumpy and territorial the moment we were in public.

Plus, it definitely made me feel special. And loved. I was the only one who really knew him.

I suddenly wished I were down there. I wanted to touch him, to wrap my arms around him and press my lips to any exposed skin I could.

I wanted to beg him to take the day off—king duties be damned—and spend it with me.

Knowing him, he would probably pick me up, throw me over his shoulder, and march me right back to our wing, where he would ravish me head to toe until I was nothing but a satisfied puddle beneath him.

I shifted, unconsciously rubbing my legs together as a deep, throbbing sensation started in my nether regions, eliciting a small gasp to escape my lips.

The fire in my core that I thought he had put out last night when he had spent half the night with his head between my legs—had officially reignited. And it was stronger than ever.

Before I could stop myself, my hand reached for the button to my jeans.

Oh God, I should not be doing this right now. Not when anyone could walk in and see me. Not when Grayson could find out and punish me for getting myself off.

He once caught me touching myself in the shower and had been so angry, so close to shifting, that I nearly peed myself.

“This sweet little pussy is mine~, Belle,” ~he had said, his hand cupping me between my legs with an unyielding grip that had my mind spinning and my breath coming out in short pants.

“If you need to get off, you come to me. You come to your mate and let me take care of you in the way you need. Only I get to make this pussy pulse with pleasure.

Understand?”

Needless to say, we didn’t spend much time sleeping that night.

I hadn’t touched myself since then, and that had been weeks ago, only days after arriving in Zaweth. Thankfully, I hadn’t needed to. Grayson took care of my every need and then some.

All it took was one hooded glance from me, and he was throwing me down on whatever nearby surface and tearing my clothes off.

But, as of recently, that was starting to feel like all we ever did. It was all I ever wanted to do.

I couldn’t be in the same room with him for more than an hour without feeling a wet heat start to unravel between my legs. And it was never Grayson who initiated our... activities.

He was always more than happy to participate, but it always took a bit of prompting from me. It was almost as if he only ever wanted to be intimate with me if I was the one who wanted it.

I was starting to feel needy. And clingy. And maybe even a little bit dirty.

Don’t get me wrong, there is absolutely nothing wrong with an active sex life, but I was starting to question if Grayson really wanted to be with me in that way or if he was just appeasing me.

Was he getting annoyed with how often I wanted him between my legs recently?

And Lord forbid he start to think that was all I wanted from him.

And the worst part was, we hadn’t even had sex yet! We had done every other thing you could possibly think of, but his glorious cock had never once actually entered my body.

I knew Grayson was trying to take it slow so that I didn’t freak out after everything that had happened between us.

I couldn’t blame him for that and even appreciated it at first.

Especially since I was still a bit traumatized from when Azazel—in Grayson’s body—had told me my only job as his mate was to bring him pleasure and power, right before he attempted to force himself on me.

But a lot had happened since then. My trust in him and in my role as his mate had been restored.

Our relationship had evolved and flourished and turned into something completely different than it had been during our time in Paris less than a year ago.

The love between us was so substantial, so profound, completely all-consuming.

And real.

Without warning, his eyes snapped up to meet mine. Tingles immediately shot through me, and I gasped, nearly shooting out of the couch I was sitting in.

My hand dropped the button to my pants as if it had burned me. He couldn’t be looking at me, right?

The other side of this window was a mirror. I had seen it with my own eyes the last time I had been in the gym.

I was sure of it—I wouldn’t have walked in here intending to ogle my mate unnoticed if I hadn’t been sure.

So how the hell was he looking right at me right now?

My heart pounded against my rib cage, nearly turning upside down when his nostrils flared, taking in a deep breath before narrowing his eyes.

He said something to Kyle and then started to march toward me.

Oh, shit.

I squeaked, jumping off the couch and immediately turning on my heel to flee to the door behind me.

Grayson had never told me I wasn’t allowed to come here, but he did say to stay away from vampires. And there were a lot of vampires down there.

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Filed To Story:

And I had been so close to touching myself near said vampires. Would he be mad at me? I already knew the answer.

Holy shit, what if it really was a window and not a one-way mirror, as I had thought? What if people could see me?

Shit, shit, shit.

Before I even reached the door handle, it flung open, revealing my still shirtless mate. I let out an embarrassing shriek of surprise. Holy fucking fuck, he was fast.

It occurred to me that he must have used his vampire speed to get here so quickly.

It literally only took him seconds.

He stared at me as he stood in the doorway. He inhaled deeply, taking in my scent.

His eyes flashed.

“Oh. Hi.” I waved awkwardly. “What’s up?”

I took several steps back when he started to prowl toward me like a predator stalking its prey.

His lips turned up in a smirk, telling me he found my discomfort amusing. “You’re not supposed to be up here, little mate.” His tone was deep and rich, and my body reacted to it

I swallowed, my throat suddenly desert dry. “Oh, yeah. No, you’re probably right.” I tried to sound casual but failed entirely. “Well, I guess I’ll just go back to our wing then.”

I meant to move past him but found that I couldn’t for some reason. I couldn’t make my feet move.

I didn’t want to leave him.

Grayson’s brows rose, and his conceited smile grew wider. He closed the distance between us with one large step, looking down at me. He didn’t touch me, though, which was the only thing I really wanted.

“Did you need something, Belle?” he asked, his voice low and amused. He leaned down so that his nose ran over my hairline.

I shifted, shuffling my feet. “I, um... No, not exactly,” I responded pathetically.

“Then why are you here?” His lips were so close to my ear. I could feel his breath wash over my mark. Warm tingles traveled down my body all the way to my toes.

“I... I wanted to see you,” I finally admitted, a deep blush creeping up my neck. “I missed you.”

He started to purr, and I couldn't stop myself as I leaned into him, placing my cheek against his hard chest to better feel the vibrations. They washed over my body like a warm wave.

He finally wrapped his arms around me, and I slumped against him in instant relief. This was what I needed. I needed him.

“I didn't think you could see me up here through the one-way glass,” I said gently as I nuzzled my nose against his chest. He smelled so good.

“I couldn't,” Grayson replied, his voice gravelly and deep. He grabbed my head and tilted it up, so I was looking directly at him.

“But I could smell you.” He paused, rubbing his nose into my hair. “I could smell how wet you were getting.”

“What?” I screeched.

As much as I wanted to avoid the embarrassment, I wasn't even going to try and deny the fact that I was getting turned on watching him train, knowing it would be pointless to try and prove his incredible sense of smell wrong.

So instead, I said, “Does that mean everyone else could smell me too?”

He growled and tugged me closer. “I would kill them if they smelled what's mine.

Only Kyle and I have the enhanced senses.”

My forehead fell onto his chest as I groaned. Well, that's embarrassing. At least it was only Kyle, though, and not the entire pack. Although, I was sure I would be getting a ton of shit from Kyle about it later.

With his fingers gripping my chin, Grayson tilted my head up, so I was looking at him. He studied my face with his dark-red eyes.

It occurred to me that I couldn't remember the last time I had seen his eyes as their natural forest-green color. Was that something I should be worried about? I was starting to miss them.

After a few more seconds, Grayson growled. “Fuck, you’re beautiful. I’m one lucky bastard.”

I smiled up at him. I would never get sick of his incessant need to compliment me.

When your soulmate was as good-looking as mine was, it felt good to hear there was a chance I could compare.

One of his hands traveled down my body and over my ass, gripping it in his rough palm. His purring increased and took on an appreciative resonance.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt your training,” I murmured, trying to regain control over my body, so I didn’t do anything stupid.

I needed to change the subject—think of something other than how good it felt to have his body pressed up against mine like this. I had already made a fool of myself.

“I’m sorry if I did. You shouldn’t have to run to me whenever I need you.”

He shook his head. “I could never be mad at you. Especially for needing me.” His hand ran through my hair in a soothing gesture.

“In fact, I’m proud of you for following your instincts.” His fist curled to grip my hair, and he tilted my head to the side just enough to eye the mark on my neck. He licked his lips. “Such a good little mate.”

My mark had been healing well since arriving in Zaweth and spending more time with Grayson. It was still a bit red and a tiny bit sore but didn’t hurt nearly as much as it had when he’d found me in Maine.

And that was all due to Grayson’s unyielding insistence on “tending” to it, as he called it, on a daily basis or basically any time he was around me and could get his hands on it.

This meant him latching his mouth onto the mark for hours at a time, kissing, licking, sucking, and nibbling on it until my brain all but turned to mush, and my pussy was so wet, it could put the Pacific Ocean to shame.

I often woke in the middle of the night to Grayson pushing my head to the side and lapping at my sensitive skin with his sinful tongue, sometimes while his fingers traveled down between my legs to toy with my throbbing clit.

I had only just convinced him to stop tending to my mark in public, thank God.

“My instincts?” I repeated, sounding breathless.

“Something was telling you to come see me, right? I’m glad you followed those instincts and came looking for your mate. I’m glad you’re taking care of your needs

—letting me take care of your needs.”

I didn’t like how accurate his words were. Something had been telling me to go see him—like I was a magnet and he was metal. And now that I was here with him, I didn’t want to leave.

Okay, so maybe we did know codependency...

Before I could even comprehend the words coming out of my mouth, I found myself saying, “Could I stay with you today?” The question came out rushed, desperate sounding.

Grayson’s eyes softened, and I suddenly became embarrassed. “I know you’re busy,”

I said, “but maybe I could just hang out with you during your meetings or whatever? I wasn’t kidding when I said I missed you this morning.”

The corner of Grayson’s lips turned up. “As much as I would love that, I thought you were excited about helping Minnie out today. You couldn’t stop talking about it last night.”

Oh, right. I had completely forgotten about that. Jeez, what was wrong with me? A few minutes in Grayson’s presence and I was ready to drop everything just to spend some more time with him.

My shoulders deflated a bit. “Oh, yeah. You’re right. I should probably go with her.

Once in a lifetime opportunity and all that.”

Grayson must have seen the disappointment on my face because he quickly continued, “How long before you meet Minnie and Liam?” His gaze grew heated.

“An hour and a half. Liam is coming to get me at eight.”

Next thing I knew, I was being thrown over his shoulder and marched out the door.

BELLE

Forty-five minutes later, I was splayed out over Grayson’s bare chest, completely breathless as sweat dripped down my still-buzzing body.

Grayson’s fingers—the same fingers that had been inside of me only moments before—were running up and down my back in lazy strokes, leaving pleasurable shivers in their wake.

He had just given me two of the most intense orgasms of my entire life. He was getting so good at making me come that he barely even had to try anymore.

He just played my body like a violin, knowing exactly what to do to have me flying over the edge repeatedly, however many times he wanted, without any mercy.

But something inside of me still itched— had been itching for the past several weeks.

No matter how much time we spent in this bed, or in the shower, or against our kitchen counter, or on the living room floor, bringing each other to new heights, it was never enough.

There was this constant need inside of me that was growing stronger with every passing day, becoming nearly impossible to ignore. I wanted— needed— him in a more intimate (dirty) way.

I wanted more than just the orgasms we gave each other with our hands or mouths or desperate rubbing in the middle of the night.

Lifting my head, I propped my chin on his chest and looked up at my mate. He was staring up at the ceiling with a stoic look on his face, lost in deep thought.

He was so lost in thought that he didn't even notice when my hand began to wander lower, along his pecs and over his hard abs.

We had a sheet thrown over us, covering our lower halves, but Grayson was still wearing his gym shorts.

And by the looks of the outline of his hard cock that was deliciously visible even with the sheet and his shorts covering it, he wasn't nearly as satisfied as I was.

I nervously chewed on my lower lip as my fingers dipped under the edge of the sheet to play with the waistband of his shorts.

I felt his body stiffen beneath mine, but he didn't make any moves to stop me.

Unlike Grayson, I had few opportunities to pleasure my mate—and not from lack of trying.

This was how things would usually go between us: he would take his time making me fall apart, but when it came to his pleasure, he always found a reason to stop me.

So you can imagine my surprise—and delight—when he didn't try to pull my hand away from him this time.

Slowly, carefully, I wrapped my hand around his rock-hard cock. I paused again, but he still didn't move. Instead, he closed his eyes, and I started to stroke him with long, deliberate movements.

I felt him thicken even further under my touch, and a deep satisfaction ran through me. It was proof that I had the same effect on him that he had on me.

I knew it was ridiculous, but sometimes I worried about that.

“Fuck, Belle,” he groaned when I ran my thumb over the tip before shifting my hand back down. “You have no idea what you're doing to me right now.”

I pursed my lips to keep from smiling. I pressed them to his neck. “Oh, I think I might have some idea.” My hand squeezed the base, and his hips shot up. He let out another deep groan.

Giddiness took over.

He might actually let me do this.

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Filed To Story:

GRAYSON

Belle's perfect little hand was wrapped around my throbbing cock, stroking it up and down.

Her bare breasts were pressed up against my chest, hard nipples digging into my skin, sweet lips kissing and sucking on my neck.

My wolf paced in my head, loving every second of what was happening and encouraging it with deep growls that I'm sure Belle could hear. She was probably taking them as a good sign. But she shouldn't.

I couldn't do this.

Frustration was welling inside of me as I said, “Belle... I put my hand over hers to stop her movements. Maybe we should—”

“No!” she instantly snapped back, shocking me. Before I could comprehend what was happening, Belle was on top of me, straddling my stomach.

Her wet pussy was pressed up against me, definitely not helping my situation.

“Please let me do this, Grayson,” she continued. “Please let me make you feel as good as you make me feel.”

Fucking Moon Goddess, help me.

My mate—the sexiest little specimen on planet Earth—was sitting on top of me, completely naked, eyes pleading, begging me to let her stroke my cock until I came.

And I couldn’t let her.

I just couldn’t. Not without losing control. Not without doing something I would regret.

She must have been able to read my expression because her face fell. All of the confidence she had been exhibiting only moments before was suddenly gone. Her shoulders deflated, and her chin dropped slightly.

“I-I mean—” She looked away. She sounded so unsure of herself and timid that it nearly broke me. “Only if you want me to. I don’t want to pressure you or...f-force you or anything. I never mean to—”

“Force me?” I interrupted. I sat up slightly, leaning back on my elbows. I couldn’t believe what I had just heard. “You think you have to force me?”

Her lower lip started to wobble slightly. “I-I don’t know, Grayson.” She crossed her arms over her bare breasts to hide herself from me, still avoiding my gaze. “I’m sorry. This is all dumb—”

She made a move to get off of me, but before she could move, I gripped her hips.

She thought I was going to let her go after what she had just said? “Oh, no. You’re not going anywhere.”

Belle squirmed with embarrassment but couldn’t get away from my hold. I didn’t think she realized she was rubbing her wet pussy all over my abs, coating my stomach in her arousal.

I was hyper-aware of how easy it would be to tilt her hips down so that her swollen clit was pressed to me. Christ, I would love to watch her come undone while she dry-humped my abs.

It was suddenly all I could think about. I bet it would only take her a few minutes until she started to pant in the way she always did before she started to scream my name.

I could already imagine how beautiful she would look from this angle.

And it would be so easy to shift her back so that her cumming pussy was on top of my cock.

My hands unconsciously tightened on her hips, getting ready to give her another orgasm.

“Grayson?” Belle asked me, her quiet voice snapping me out of whatever lust-induced hypnosis I was under. Jesus Christ, I was going insane.

My eyes snapped up to hers. My wolf was clawing against the walls of my unconsciousness, huffing and growling with impatience and rage.

He didn’t understand why I wasn’t taking advantage of this perfect opportunity to mount my mate and finally make her mine once and for all.

He was even sending me mental images of Belle splayed out for me in different positions, my thick cock thrusting into her over and over—

Shit, fuck, fucking, shit, fuck!

I felt like slamming my head into a wall. I needed to stop thinking about this. This was exactly why I needed to put distance between us.

My mate was trying to express her concerns to me, and all I could think about was fucking her and all the different ways I could make her come.

I could feel my body growing, arms sprouting with dark hair as my wolf pushed to take over.

“Are you okay?” Belle continued when I still didn’t respond. She studied my changing body with wary eyes. “Did I say something wrong? Did I upset your wolf?”

Fuck, was she really asking me if she was the one in the wrong here? How could she not see it was me? It was ~me~ who took her away from her old life and then destroyed her heart.

Then I took her back only to, once again, put her in danger by being with me. I was the problem in this relationship, not her. Never her.

“You know what? Never mind,” she said. “I didn’t mean to start anything.” She swallowed. “A-and now I honestly just feel a little embarrassed. I should get ready.”

With red cheeks and humiliation seeping through our bond and wrapping itself around my heart like a boa constrictor, Belle grabbed a blanket and pulled it around her.

She couldn’t even look at me. “Liam is going to be here soon, and I know you probably need to get back to work.”

I let her crawl off of me because there was nothing else I could do. I needed to get control of my wolf before I let anything else happen.

If I let her continue, I couldn't promise I would be able to stop. I would take her right here, right now, my intention of protecting her from the potential danger of shifting into a Fae be damned.

If she had her hand on my lips or, fuck, if she even breathed on my dick in the next few minutes, and I ~didn't~ take advantage and mate with her, I knew my wolf was too worked up to keep himself from shifting.

He wouldn't hurt her—he would never do anything like that; no, he would do it purely out of rage. Because he didn't know what else to do.

Because he was just as frustrated and wound up as I was.

Because Belle was making it clear she was willing and oh-so-deliciously horny, and I couldn't do the one thing that would give her any lasting relief without also potentially causing her lasting harm too.

And I couldn't have that. And I sure as hell couldn't have my wolf shift when she was in this state. It would terrify Belle, and she was already so timid and unsure when it came to sex.

But I also couldn't leave her like this, thinking she had done something wrong.

Yeah, fuck that.

I stood, not even bothering to cover up as I strode after her. She had scampered off into our walk-in closet to hide.

Her eyes widened to the size of saucers when she saw me. I'm sure I looked just as rabid as I felt.

My muscles were stiff and flexed with the effort to stay in control while my wolf was still pushing me to shift, making my already intimidating form seem bigger and more threatening.

To add to that, my nearly purple and still very hard cock was bobbing up and down with every step I took, slapping up against my stomach with heavy smacks.

I didn't say a single word before grabbing her by the chin and smashing her lips to mine. She squeaked in shock but didn't fight the kiss, instantly giving in to me and opening her mouth to invite my tongue in.

This wasn't a sweet or loving kiss like the ones we normally shared.

I kissed her thoroughly and aggressively, pushing my stone-like cock up against her stomach, leaving her with no doubt about how much I wanted her and how much of an effect she had on me.

After a few minutes, I finally pulled away and found great satisfaction in the way Belle let out a needy whimper and tried to pull me back to her. She was too fucking cute.

“I want you, Belle,” I told her, maintaining my hold on her chin to keep her eyes on mine instead of looking away in discomfort like I knew she wanted to do. “I want you so badly it hurts.”

I couldn’t even believe my need for her was something I had to ensure her of. The fact that she was having any doubts was simply unacceptable.

Her damn lip started to wobble again, threatening to bring me to my knees. “Then why...?”

“I’m already late for a meeting with Zagan.” It was a lie but a white one. One that saved her from falling down a rabbit hole of doubt about our relationship that simply just wasn’t necessary or true.

“I would love nothing more than to let you have your way with me, but I know I wouldn’t be able to hold myself back if that happened.

“Things would inevitably progress because I can’t have you touching me in that way without needing more. ~A lot more.”

Her mouth dropped open with her deep inhales of breath, the smell of her already overwhelming arousal becoming even more concentrated in the air.

My wolf sent an image of me pushing her against the wall before taking her roughly and burying my teeth into her neck.

I paused, gritting my teeth as I pushed the image out of my head.

“And I have a busy day,” I continued after a moment. My voice was so deep and laced with growls I was surprised she could even understand me.

“I can’t start something I wouldn’t be able to finish. And nothing between you and me will ever be rushed.

“You deserve my undivided, thorough attention when we finally take that step so that I can worship you for hours upon hours until you beg me to stop.”

Belle nodded, but her eyes were dilated, and her chest rose and fell with each shallow breath she took.

Hmm, perhaps telling her I was barely holding myself back from fucking her had not been the right thing to say. Her arousal was so strong now that I could practically taste it in the air.

All of the relief I had given her with the two orgasms from earlier was completely eradicated.

“But then, why were you mad? Why did you look like you were about to shift?”

“Because I do want you. I had to hold my wolf back from shifting because he wanted you so bad.”

That answer seemed to relax her a bit and ease some of her doubts. “Oh,” she whispered.

When she didn’t say anything else, I pressed my lips to hers once more, sweetly and tenderly this time.

She melted against me like she always did, and I was appeased by her reaction. She wasn’t trying to pull away, and the feeling of her embarrassment in the bond had started to subside.

Seconds later, I pulled back. “Now, go take a shower before Blackwood gets here.

Only I get to know what your wet pussy smells like, and I know for a fact you’ve made another mess down there.”

Her blush was back. “Oh, God, what time is it? Liam is going to be here soon!”

“Then you better get going. Because there’s no way I’m letting you leave our wing looking or smelling like that.”

She squeaked and ran off toward the bathroom, dropping the sheet she had wrapped around her about halfway there.

The sight of her perky little ass jiggling so enticingly was the last I saw of her before she slammed the door shut behind her.

Dear Moon Goddess, help me.

BELLE

I couldn’t stop bouncing my leg as I sat waiting for Minnie to show up with Liam at my side.

It was a beautiful July day, so waiting outside a coffee shop for one of my best friends with another one of my best friends, sipping an iced latte wasn't the worst way to spend my morning.

But I couldn't get my anxiety under control. I kept repeatedly replaying in my head on a constant loop the conversation Grayson and I'd had in our bedroom four days before.

The entire situation had been absolutely mortifying. Having your significant other turn you away in the bedroom wasn't exactly fun.