

King Breeder 131

Chapter 131 The One We've Been Waiting For

"Ronale POV

4 hadn't been in the cabin long when I got the feeling I was being watched. I felt like I needed to move on, and I had JUNT Onthered my baby up into my arms, preparing to leave, when suddenly, that sensation went away

I was dusk, I went to the window to look out to see if anyone was standing out there. My fingers trembled slightly as 1 went to pull the curtains back to peer outside. Studying the long shadows cast by the trees, I attempted to see anyone was standing there. My concentration was fully on the scene before me when a noise behind me had me jumping, spinning around, ready to protect myself.

"Seraphine!" I shouted, collapsing onto the couch I had been leaning over. "Goddess! You scared me to death

"Sorry, Rosalie," she said. "I had it on good authority that you were here. I didn't mean to frighten you. I knocked lightly before I came in, but I didn't hear you say anything, and I thought you might be sleeping."

"It's okay," I said, patting my boy's little head. He was still asleep. "I thought someone was out front."

She frowned. "I didn't see anyone...'

"It doesn't matter now. That feeling is gone. It could be just some random travelers passing here. I was probably being over sensitive." I assured her.

"No, let's not risk it. We should get going.'

I understood that she was right, but this cabin had two comfortable beds, and I had been looking forward to sleeping for a few hours.

Still, if she thought it was best to keep going now, then that's what we should do.

As we were about to leave, in the distance, we heard loud howling and growls. My eyes went to Seraphine's face. "What is that?"

She cocked an ear and listened for a few moments. "It sounds like the rogues may have been intercepted..."

"Are we that close to your pack—our pack?" I asked. It was taking some getting used to, thinking of this place we were traveling to as being my home as well.

Seraphine shrugged. "We are about six hours' distance from there, but if they came further south, it is possible that they are near enough for us to hear them." at

"Are you certain it wouldn't be best for us to travel during the daytime?" It wasn't just that I was tired, I didn't want to go out at night with a bunch of wolves in the shadows when I couldn't shift.

Seraphine considered my words before she slowly nodded. "All right. We'll go at first light."

The next morning, after a few hours of restless sleep, we got up to travel north. Almost from the beginning of our trip, it was clear that whatever battle had gone on the night before had been fairly large and destructive. Blood coated the

grass and sides of trees. Tufts of fur littered the ground, and debris was scattered everywhere.

Every once in a while, we'd come across a dead body. Despite the frostiness of the morning, the dawn's first rays of light had already begun to decay the corpses, and the odor was pungent enough that we could smell them well before we reached the place where they fell.

In death, it was impossible to tell whether they *were* from the east, the west, or the north. They were simply dead wolves my fade en there who attemy til troeter helt wees em to the sky is the sun ajan ta etenkt pige

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* move on pret the bottle noene and further month where #prewetter, and I had to wrap my baby up tightar Hy the time # was early afternoon, we were on the outakta ola willinge, and was cher that something was going on here something that had everyone in an upperom, and # wasn't my wivel

"What's going on

anked Seraphine

tym not sure," she said, "but i think at might have something to do with that battle.'

"But it was so far south, I said as she rushed off in the direction that many of the others were headed to

Perhaps another one, then. Normally, when people are hurrying this quickly, it's because others are hurt.' Seraphine picked up speed, and I followed, holding my son close against my chest.

We entered a great hall where several fallen soldiers were lying on cots, all of them in their human forms, and none of king very good. I quickly counted seven of them, with twice as many women tending to them. Their medical supplies seemed to be depleted from what I could tell. Carts of bandages with very few rolls of white left on them sat in the middle of the aisle, and shelves of medicine across the way were also nearly empty.

"What's going on?" Seraphine asked a woman with long hair the same color as hers.

"Our warriors are dying," the woman said, "and we're out of medicine to save them. The rogues attacked our village again last night, for the fifth time in two weeks. We haven't been able to get supplies for months because of the war between the east and west. We are doing everything we can, but without the proper medication and supplies. She slowly shook her head

"Seraphine? a woman from across the room said. "Is that you?"

"Yes, it's me, Daphne." The older woman came across the room to hug Seraphine. It was clear that everyone here recognized Seraphine as one of their own, but this woman actually knew her.

"It's good to have a skilled medicine woman here when we need her, but... I don't know what else to do," Daphne said, once she let Seraphine go. "They're in so much pain, and we don't even have any medication for them."

"Seraphine, I want to help..." I said gently

They were suffering, and they needed help

On the way here, Seraphine had already told me about the specialty healing power of my blood. If that was the case, I wished I could do something

"But Rosalie," Seraphine frowned. As she moved away, Daphne finally realized my existence.

It was then that the others looked up at me, and a hush fell across the room—except for one bowl of water that someone dropped that clattered to the floor.

As soon as they *were* over their shock, the women dropped to the floor in the same manner that Seraphine had. Even some of the injured warriors tried to do that. I could only stand there, my hands pressed to my mouth, shaking my head, willing them to stop

Daphne looked up at me. "It's you... the princess!"

"Please," I finally said, "please... don't. It's really not necessary."

Another woman shouted, "Luna Willa's daughter is here!"

My eyes widened. "Yes, I am Willa's daughter, but... I'm nothing special."

Seraphine turned to me "Princess Rosalie, you are special these people recognize you. They see you for who you are You are not only powerful here, you are the ruler."

I slowly shook my head. I wasn't used to that sort of attention. I wasn't sure how to process it. All of my life, I'd helped others, not relied on other people to serve me. I wouldn't even know where to begin....

"Seraphine, what do I need to do to help these warriors?" I tried to switch their attention from me to the wounded. I looked at their faces. Many of them were gritting their teeth in pain while others were near passing out.

"Are you sure? You..." Seraphine hesitated.

I looked at her seriously and nodded my head in confirmation. "Yes, I'm sure. Please, let me help. You *told me my blood has healing qualities.*"

"Your kindness would forever be appreciated, Princess!" Seraphine bowed to me again and said, "If we can draw some blood, we can give it to these warriors, and it will heal them. It will only take a few drops for each of them to be feeling much better in no time at all."

"That's it?" I felt like perhaps I hadn't heard her correctly. It seemed too easy. "Really?"

Seraphine nodded. That's right. I know it sounds strange, but it's true."

*All right,' I told her, right away. "Please do it."

Daphne took me to an empty bed right away, and within moments, they had me hooked up and were taking blood from my arm. I held my sleeping baby the whole time. It only took a few moments, and then other ladies came to distribute my blood to the warriors.

“Now, just lay back and rest,” Daphne said. Seraphine was off helping the others. “I’ll get you something to eat to help your blood sugar.” She patted my hand, and I thought I was going to like this woman. She seemed sweet, like a grandmother.

She came back a few moments later with a chocolate chip cookie and a small glass of milk. “We are so happy you’re here,” Daphne told me. “I remember your mother when she was a little girl. You have her eyes.”

I took a bit of the cookie and swallowed it down, but I wasn’t sure what to say. I had only vague memories of my mother.

“We thought... *you* were all gone,” I told her.

Daphne nodded. “It hasn’t been easy, living up here, hidden from the world. But we’ve been waiting for your return. All of the evil that took over when your mother passed, well, it had no place in our lands. Now that you’re here, all of that will be over, and our land will flourish again.”

I felt an awful lot of responsibility on my shoulders. What if I wasn’t the magical person they thought I was? What if my blood did nothing?”

Daphne patted my son on the back and smiled. “He’s precious.”

“Thank you,” I said, hoping she didn’t ask about his father.

She didn’t. But she did ask me something else. “You have a friend named Georgia, yes?”

My eyes widened. “How did you... how did you know that?”

She grinned at me. “Communication between our villages is important to make sure that we are safe. She is near, and she has been instrumental in fighting the rogues. You will see her soon.”

“How did you know that she is my friend?” I asked her, excitement building at the chance of seeing Georgia, even though it made me nervous that Ethan might find us.

“She was carrying a book, one that contains our legends.” Daphne patted my arm lovingly. “We will thank the Moon

Goddess tonight that you are here with a grand celebration and let the others know that they should rejoice as well.”

“But what if—I began, but before I could finish asking her what she would do if they were wrong, and I had no magical qualities, she interrupted me.

“Look!” she said, gesturing at the room.

All around me, I saw the warriors getting up off of their beds, fully healed, ready to go back out onto the battlefields and fight again as if they’d never been hurt at all.

I couldn't believe it. They were all perfectly fine now.

"Your blood did that," Daphne said. "You are the princess. She smiled at me. You are the one we have been waiting for."

Chapter 132 Hand Over Ethan

****Talon's POV**

Screaming

The alarming sound jolted me from my sleep, causing me to jump from my bed. The distant yelling set my wolf on edge as I quickly dressed and thrust myself from my room out into the hall.

Warriors ran down the corridors towards the front main hall as the crying and screaming filled the capital, causing concern to sweep through me like a rollercoaster.

"What's going on?" I asked a passing warrior as I neared the grand staircase.

The first tier of the capital defense has broken through, beta. They are closing in."

This was the second day after we'd received the warning from patrol that Kal's army was stationed only a couple hundred miles away from Mirage.

I tried to calm myself. I could not believe what I'd heard. Something must be wrong. There was no way this could be possible.

Thad so many doubts about the whole situation.

First of all, we had worked hard on securing the western border and making sure that Kal's troops had been cut off from supplies.

It was impossible for them to get through our defenses, let alone get close to the capital!

Yet, it happened.

Secondly, the first tier defense for the capital was built to withhold major attacks, and it should ideally last at least one week. However, it was broken in only one day.

There was only one explanation for this...

Letting my feet take the stairs two at a time, I ran towards the grand front door and stepped out into the cool morning air.

Smoke lined the sky in the distance as villagers ran towards the capital, seeking the safety of its powerful walls. Never had I expected the war to approach us this far, but in the end, they got past all of our barriers without warning.

Crying, screaming, and pleading for safety cast a shadow over the once bright and cheerful walls of the capital. Its glittering gold was slowly being speckled with the drops of blood that came from wounded civilians who had been escaping

I tried to comprehend what exactly had happened. When I went to bed the night before, everything was fine, and yet in a matter of forty-eight hours, chaos consumed our country.

Turning on my heels, I pushed through the mass hysteria of people seeking shelter and made my way towards the grand hall. The flocking of royals and leaders pushing through the large wooden doors seeking advice from their king.

“Calm down!” James’ voice roared through the tall vaulted ceilings, quieting everyone who stood waiting for an update on whether they were truly safe within the capital walls.

“King James,” I stated, bowing my head with respect.

His dark eyes glanced towards me. The deep dark bags beneath his eyes were heavy and clearly from his lack of sleep over the past few weeks. “We just received word from scouts that the western forces are only five miles away.”

*That’s impossible.” I gasped in disbelief as the chaos of other leaders consumed the surrounding area

“How did they get this close?” one leader yelled, demanding an explanation.

“You told us they couldn’t get past. Ethan assured us he know what he was doing!” Another white-haired man added, causing my eyes to dart to him with disdain.

Someone has to be helping our enemy. A spy. someone among us. It was the only explanation.

“Enough everyone!” James yelled, pressing his thumb to his temple.

I could only imagine the stress James was under right now. Ethan wasn’t here, and with Kal’s troops moving in closer, it was only a matter of time before the war was at our front door.

It was times like this when I was thankful to just be a Beta.

James sat silent on his throne as warrior after warrior approached him, as well as a man in a white cloak. The men all spoke in hushed whispers, piquing my curiosity.

Usually, information was shared amongst the leaders, and yet James seemed to keep secrets with these few men. Something about the situation was not sitting right with me

“Your Majesty! a voice called from behind me, drawing my attention from what I had been watching.

Everyone turned to the young warrior, who bowed his head before the king.

“There is a messenger at the gate.”

“From Kal?” the king questioned, raising a brow.

“Yes. He is requesting an audience with Your Majesty.”

My eyes turned towards King James.

Hesitation filled his eyes as he straightened himself on his throne. “Bring him in.”

The warrior didn’t need to be told twice, and as I watched him exit the grand hall, I questioned why a messenger had been sent from Kal.

To send a messenger now, after all the bloodshed he had caused, seemed pointless.

He had to want something.

It was the only thing that made sense.

Heavy footsteps moved across the tile flooring of the hall. Dark hair, and green eyes set upon the slender body of a running messenger. The dirt and soot that caressed his skin showed signs of what his prior days had composed of.

The army was on the move, and whatever this messenger had to say would depict the outcome of what was about to happen.

“King James,” the messenger said clearly as he bowed his head and dropped to one knee. “I bring word from King Kal regarding the war.”

Hushed murmurs flowed over the crowd. The man’s words caught everyone’s attention as we listened to see what Kal’s demands were.

“Speak quickly,” James retorted in aggravation.

“Your capital is under siege, and it’s only a matter of time before we break through the capital walls,” the messenger

stated, causing murmurs in the crowd.

“No, you wouldn’t,” King James retorted. “Your forces are running out of supplies.”

“Your Majesty, you might be right, however, your city also has limited food and supplies, yet you have countless more civilians than we have members of our military.”

I frowned and had to admit he was right. Compared to Kal’s army, the capital was more vulnerable to the limited food and medical resources because most people in the capital were non–military civilians.

What’s more, we wouldn’t be able to get reinforcements—our troops were already spread thin between the frontline and the north. From what I could see, there would be limited reinforcements available for the capital, if any.

The messenger smiled. “However, my king is merciful, and he would hate to see unnecessary bloodshed. In fact, he has agreed to end the war, but only under one circumstance.”

“What would that be?” James sneered, leaning forward on his throne. His knuckles turned white with the grip he had on the chair’s arms,

“King Kal would like you to hand over Alpha Ethan, and the war will end.”

Collective gasps echoed in the hall as James’ eyes widened in shock. My own surprise coursed through me as I tried to make sure I had heard the man right.

Kal wanted Ethan?

If Kal was here claiming that this war was just because of Ethan, he was a liar.

There was no way that James could believe this falsehood, and if he did, then James was not fit to be king. This was more than a simple grudge related match.

“Your king asked me to give up the guardian of my country?” James sneered and raised his voice. “Is your king just too arrogant, or does he think I’m just stupid?!”

Everyone could hear the fury in his tone. No one spoke, and the hall was so quiet that I could hear a pin drop.

I sighed in relief at hearing the king’s retort. I didn’t know what I had been worried about. There was no way he could just hand over Ethan. Without Ethan, King James’ kingdom would fall, regardless.

Ethan was the brunt force behind James having succeeded in this war so far, and with everything going on, there was no way we could survive the outcome if King James agreed to Kal’s proposal.

“Your Majesty, I apologize on my king’s behalf for the misunderstanding that might have been caused.” The messenger bowed down again politely

King James replied, “I see no misunderstanding that he started this war and invaded my country!”

The messenger still maintained his diplomatic smile. Your Majesty, please allow me to explain,”

“I see no need for that,” King James said. However, I knew he would want to know what Kal had to say

“Your Majesty, King Kal has only come this far to seek revenge on Ethan for having killed his brother, Victor!”

The entire hall gasped. Then murmuring started to scatter across the hall.

“Who was Victor...?”

“Don’t listen to him... he is here to distract us.”

...but what if it is true? Alpha Ethan really was the cause of the capital...?”

It was like lightning striking across the sunny sky.

They might not know who Victor was, but I did.

Victor Black, Soren’s father, Ethan’s stepfather, who Ethan killed when he was 18!

Everything made sense now

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No wonder than’s mother chose hun over Ethan’s father!

No wonder Soren would work for the West King Kal, because Kal was Sorent’s uncle!

Toursed under my breath. Dimn it, this news would work against my Alpha.

The messenger continued. “If you hand over Ethan, King Kal will retreat and not press further into *your country*. Hundreds of lives will be spared.”

Hesitation and consideration flashed within James' eyes. He was actually considering what the man had said, and without even answering, a roar of protests and agreements rang through the grand hall.

"Give them Ethan!"

"Our people are dying for one man!"

"End the war and give them what they want!"

Protest after protest, I thanked the heavens that Ethan wasn't here right now. I could already see how the conversation would go if he was.

To think that many of these people relied on Ethan over the years for protection, and now they were willing to cast him to the masses in order to save their own asses.

There was no loyalty with these men, and it disgusted me.

Your Majesty! I cleared my throat and made myself heard. "It makes no sense that King Kal would suddenly be willing to end this war for Ethan." I started, speaking up over the roar of conversation.

All eyes turned to me as James raised a brow. "Why do you say that, Beta Talon?"

"If that was all he wanted, my King, then why not have sent this request to begin with? Why sit here and kill countless people and destroy our forces when he could have sent a messenger before all the confrontation?"

Everyone knew this was a trap, including the king. However, someone needed to speak up for my Alpha.

"I need time to discuss this," James replied, his brows narrowed at the man before him. "Please escort this man to a holding area. I will call when I have my answer."

For James to even need time to consider his decision didn't sit well with me.

There was a lurking sense of uneasiness washing over me as I watched James continue to speak with an older man at his throne.

Whatever they were discussing was both important and pleasing to James.

"Gentlemen," he stated loudly as he rose to his feet, "I know many of you have a lot of questions, all of which I hope to answer. However, right now, the most important one is what is best for our kingdom."

"You can't seriously even be considering declining this?" a disgruntled Alpha exclaimed with his arms crossed. "One life isn't worth the many!"

"Enough!" James roared in return as he stepped forward towards the group who stood awaiting his order. "Beta Talon, where is Ethan now?"

I should have known that was the direction he was going to go in.

I cursed under my breath.

“Your Majesty, I’m not sure, I wished there was a way I could inform Ethan to turn around. He should not come back to the capital at this moment. “Word was sent out for him to return, but I haven’t heard from him since last night”

James nodded as if pleased with what I had said. “That’s good. We need him back here.”

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Chapter 737 Hand Over Ethan

King James, you understand what will happen if we hand Ethan over, right?” I added, hoping that the king would not be this stupid.

“Are you questioning my judgment?” he snapped as he glared at me.

“No, my King. I just mean that I think they—”

“Enough!” he boomed, cutting me off mid-sentence, not allowing me to speak further.

Watler, the king’s advisor, jumped in, Talon, you may be great at what you do, but a Beta shouldn’t speak unless spoken to.

“Who doesn’t need to speak unless spoken to?” Ethan’s voice called out from behind me. My heart sank with concern over what was going to happen next.

Turning, I faced an angry-looking Ethan, who stalked into the room as if he owned it. For once, I had wished he wouldn’t have returned to the capital. The only thing that his return had done was fuel on already burning fire.

Most of these men didn’t like Ethan because they were intimidated by him.

Now that Kal was offering a way out by handing over Ethan, they would surely agree.

Chapter 133 Ethan, You Are Banished!

****Ethan’s POV**

A stillness fell over the throne room as I walked in. King James looked exhausted, with dark bags under his eyes, and Talon looked distressed. His teeth were gritted together, and I felt like he wanted to tell me something

But I had left Rosalie and my baby to travel a great distance to be here. It was clear that something chaotic was happening as I used a little-known tunnel to make my way into the capital with the men who had accompanied me.

Now, I stood before a group of men who were glaring at me, waiting for the king to answer *my* question.

“Who doesn’t need to speak unless spoken to?” I asked him. Surely, no one was to speak to Talon in such a disrespectful way

Granted, my Beta was a subordinate, but he’d never been anything but a loyal, respectful soldier for the king.

“Ethan, you’ve returned,” my cousin said, a look of relief washing over him. “And not a moment too soon, I’m afraid.”

*Alpha!” Talon greeted me, although I could tell from his expression that he wished I hadn’t returned.

“What’s going on?” I asked. “Were those villagers running into the capital shouting about enemy soldiers?” It didn’t seem possible. When I’d left the capital, not long ago, the western forces were miles and miles away. Our army was strong enough to keep them at bay and drive them back with no problem whatsoever.

“I’m afraid so,” James said, dragging a hand down his face. “Everyone, leave Ethan and me. We need to discuss this matter in private.”

Talon, who had started his exit the moment the king made the request, mindlinked me. I could see by the look in his eyes that something was wrong.

A few of the other leaders, ones who thought that they were more important than they truly were, lingered around the throne, possibly thinking they were too critical to the king’s decision-making to truly need to be dismissed.

“Go at once!” James barked, and everyone filtered out.

Alpha, be on your guard. There’s no time for me to explain, but don’t trust anything James says to you. Things aren’t what they seem’ Talon said, preparing me for the conversation with the king.

I stared at my Beta for a moment in confusion, wondering what he was getting at. A cold chill went down my spine as I contemplated what it might be that Talon was trying to warn me about. I wished he had more time to prepare me for what was about to happen.

However, he couldn’t go into more details before the room went silent with only the king and me left.

“What’s happening, James?” I eventually asked, approaching the throne and speaking more bluntly, now that the others had cleared out.

James wouldn’t look at me, so I didn’t take that as a good sign.

“Kal sent a messenger,” he began, his eyes downcast. “He said Kal is making only one demand. He will call his troops off if I comply. Only one.” James let out a sigh and got up from his throne, his footsteps heavy as he walked over to the window.

Resting a weary hand on the windowsill, he looked outside. What used to be a beautiful flower garden was now trampled by the boots of villagers running for their lives and guards trying to contain them.

“I have not been put in an easy position, Ethan,” he said. I kept my distance, watching him, trying to understand what he

was getting at. What condition could Kal possibly be demanding that King James could be considering? “Thousands of citizens could die if I don’t comply.”

“What is it?” I asked even though Talon had prepped me. My voice was quiet as I tried to figure it out on my own. “I don’t even understand how they’ve gotten so close.”

“Neither do I, and yet, here they are...” he said, his eyes still focused outside.

They had to have used the tunnels. It was the only way. But how would they have even known of their existence?

I already knew the answer to that question. We knew there was a traitor in our midst. And now, I felt certain I knew exactly who it was.

When I got my hands on him...

However, what James said next took me by surprise.

“Before, when I needed an heir, the situation was different,” James continued. “*You were* my only hope then. I needed to make sure that someone was here to continue our grandfather’s bloodline, someone who hadn’t taken a mate, someone who hadn’t promised the woman they loved that they’d never forsake her the way that I had.”

He turned and glanced over his shoulder at me then, but he had to look away quickly, and I stared at him in confusion, though I thought I was beginning to put the situation into perspective.

“Before?” I asked him.

“Yes, but now... through some miracle, something I can’t quite understand... none of that matters now. We no longer need to pressure you for an heir. The bloodline will be secure without burdening you.” He turned and met my gaze then, and I stepped toward him.

“What are you saying, James?” I asked him. “Do you mean

“Yes,” he said, his eyes wide with wonder. “The queen is pregnant. It’s a miracle. It’s been confirmed. I don’t know how it happened, but it has.”

I didn’t know why he brought this up at the moment, but it was great news.

“That’s astounding!” Joy bubbled up inside of me as I realized what this meant for both of us. I took my cousin by the shoulders. “Congratulations, Your Majesty. You’ll have an heir from your own bloodline, and I... I can go and be free.”

Thoughts of what this would mean for me and Rosalie surfaced. I would no longer need to worry about what the crown required of me. I could go and find her and be with her. *We* could raise our child together however we wanted. Neither of us would ever have to worry about the baby being the heir to the kingdom again.

But my joy was short-lived when I saw the expression on James’s face. He slowly shook his head. “No, Ethan. You don’t understand,” he said. “King Kat... he wants... you.”

I stared at him for a long moment, letting those words soak into my consciousness. “He wants me?” I repeated. “Why in the world would he want me?”

James shook his head. "Don't you know who he is, Ethan? I didn't know until the messenger told me. But you... surely you must know. With all of the investigative work and sleuthing you do as part of your job, you must've learned at some point that King Kal is the brother of... your stepfather."

My eyes widened as my grip around James faltered. But no... I hadn't known. Victor was King Kal's brother?

It all made sense now... though. For all of those years, I'd tried to track Victor's family down and had been unsuccessful. He had appeared in our land like a ghost, untraceable, like a phantom who had just appeared one day out of the fog. And no matter how hard I looked, I hadn't been able to secure any proof of where he'd come from.

Now I knew why.

algun project to make sure there was no way to trace him from the west to our kingdom. Because it # was known that he was on many annou kingdom let alone that he was related to royalty there, I wouldn't be the only one who wanted to kill him.

To James I could only mutter, "I didn't know."

"You don't

James topped his head to the side and studied my face, clearly surprised to hear that

"No, I had no idea * I still needed time to process this, but I didn't have time. "And now... he wants me in return for killing his homble brother all those years ago?"

"That's right" James said

Soren would be waiting for me, too, no doubt. All of that was beginning to come together, too. Kal would let his nephew command his forces, for certain.

I shook my head. "And you're considering handing me over? Why would you even contemplate handing me over when I could go out there right now with a force a quarter of the size of his men and destroy him?"

Don't put me in a position to have to make that decision, Ethan," James said. "You are my cousin, and you've always been loyal to me. I'm asking you, please... sacrifice yourself. Do it for your kingdom. These people... they're dying for you. For what you've done. Turn yourself over to him. Please."

For what I've done?" Once again, I was stunned at the words coming out of James's mouth. "Cousin, we both know that I've served this kingdom faithfully for my entire life."

Anger welled up inside of me as I thought about everything I'd given up. For what I'd done? What had I done? Watched the woman I love die? Watched my child disappear, slip through my fingers, for what? So that he could make me a scapegoat?

I could go out there right now with a hundred men and push King Kal's soldiers so far away from here that they would never see the castle walls again. I could destroy them completely.

Yet, I was asked to hand myself over to Kal!

A loud clap of laughter burst out of my mouth uncontrollably.

This world could really be so ridiculous. James's gaze was unwavering, and I could tell right then he had already made up his mind. He wanted me to slink out of there and raise the white flag, to go to King Kal's kingdom and let him beat me and defile me, humiliate me, torture me, and kill me like a dog.

He didn't want me to fight

Not because he believed we'd already lost too many men.

Not because he didn't think I could win.

no

He wanted me dead because he didn't want me to ever be able to compete for the throne with his unborn child!

I couldn't stop laughing. I laughed so hard that I could feel tears start to come out of my eyes. He remained silent, watching me.

I shook my head. 'I won't do it.'

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Then you leave me little choice, Ethan Gray," King James said, his eyes cast to the ground. Raising them slightly, with no conviction in his voice he said, "From this moment forward, Ethan, you are banished!"

Chapter 134 Alone With King Kal

Banished

I couldn't believe my own cousin had said that word to me. Before I could do anything. I heard him order, "Guards, arrest him"

The doors of the throne room opened, and the guards and crowd hooded back in. They didn't go far. Everyone was waiting for the king's decision.

People looked at me, some were shocked, some were puzzled, some looked at me with pity, and some were gloating over the situation

However, I noticed that none of my pack members were there. They must have been intentionally kept away from the throne room

I stood staring at James for a few seconds. His gaze was already alert, and before I knew it, royal guards had circled him in the center, protecting him- from me.

My cousin no longer trusted me, and it was the same from me towards him,

I shifted without hesitation and fought off a few guards coming at me.

As I moved my way towards the exit of the room, I heard him announce to the crowd, "Ladies and Gentlemen! I must inform you that Alpha Ethan Gray is the cause of this war. I know it will come as a shock because many of you have always seen him as a hero, but because he cruelly murdered his

stepfather many years ago, King Kal, the brother of the man that was slaughtered, has attacked our kingdom.”

The crowd was quiet, and the king continued, “Now, King Kal is offering peace if we hand the true culprit, the one responsible for all of our suffering, over to him. Let Ethan be the one to pay the consequences for his dastardly deeds! Let his life be given instead of the innocents’. He has fooled us into thinking he was on our side when all along he has been the one to cause all of our pain and senseless deaths!”

It was clear that James’s mind was made up before I even walked into the room.

Cheers went up with the end of the king’s speech, and others began to chant that I should be captured and sent to Kal to die, and I was banished from the kingdom because I wouldn’t turn myself over to certain torment and death.

And all I could do was to run for my life.

I was not afraid of death, but at least I would want to die for something worthy.

I picked up speed, running down the hallway toward the outside of the building. Finally, the emotions started to settle in. Betrayal, rage, and desperate disappointment stirred together in my mind, and I could barely breathe.

Talon, I’ve got to go,” I told him via mindlink. I’m leaving the capital.”

I couldn’t force my pack to come with me, but at the same time, they would be in danger if they stayed behind. They were loyal to me, and James would never trust them to shift their loyalty to him. I needed to warn them.

What’s happening?’ Talon’s tone sounded frantic, even through the mindlink. ‘Is the king turning you over to Kal?’

‘He tried. I’m no longer an Alpha, I am banished. If you want to stay, I unders-‘I couldn’t finish my sentence.

‘Ethan, shut the f*ck up. We’re all coming.’

I chuckled bitterly. When was the last time I heard Talon curse? My best friend, loyal subordinate... I couldn’t be more grateful.

Thank you, man’s managed to say “Get what you can together, and meet me where we came in
lo left most of my forces there before I entered the capital

I only had one bagi kept when I was out on the battlefield. In it were some water, change of clothes, and the lattered ultrasound picture Rosalie had given me all those months ago. It was the only picture of my child I had..

I charged toward the tunnel I knew would allow me to escape the capital. But as I ran and calmed my mind, I realized there was a unique opportunity, and I couldn’t let it slip through my fingers.

King Kal, our hated enemy, the brother of the man I despised, was out there, not far away from where I stood.

He was the true cause of all of the suffering of our people. We all knew why he came to the East continent, and why he chose to ask for me now- that was because he was losing the war!

He was the one who should be blamed for the death and destruction that had taken place here, and I wouldn't let that b*stard get out of here without any pain!

If I had to go through suffering, someone else would need to go through it with me.

I changed my trajectory. With my wolf's speed, I was so much faster than anyone else James could send after me, I knew I could either outrun or outfight his soldiers. I just needed to get to the tunnel that led to Kal before any of them realized what I was doing.

Talon,'I said, using the mindlink again. I'm going to run an errand. Lay low, and I'll be back.'

'An errand?' he asked, stupefied. Where are you going? Wait-'

I cut off the mindlink. I had no time.

Sticking to the shadows and outskirts of the capital, I ran next to bushes and walls, brushing against every flowery bush or mud puddle to help hide my scent.

I saw the opening to the tunnel I needed up ahead. The sound of guards shouting to one another in the distance let me know my path was clear. Even if they saw where I went, they wouldn't catch me.

I had to shift to open the trap door that led to the tunnel, which was hidden in the ground near a cropping of large rocks toward the back of the castle. Quickly, I took my human form and pulled the door open, peeking inside to make sure I was alone. I had no doubt the enemy soldiers hadn't been using this tunnel. It was too small. The others coming from this direction were much wider.

This one would barely be wide enough for my wolf.

But I wasn't claustrophobic.

Dropping down onto the stairs, I pulled the door closed and then shifted back into my wolf, securing my bag, and heading on my way.

The floor of the tunnel had a few inches of water in it. The smell of wet concrete and earth coated my lungs as I ran along at full speed. My fur brushed along the sides of the tunnel, it was so close. I pressed on.

Only a few moments later, I reached the end of the tunnel and waited. This would be more dangerous because enemy wolves would smell that I wasn't part of their pack. I could assume that many of the warriors would be on their way to the capital, or already pouring through the castle walls, but I was certain Kal would be in his camp, and he would have a detail of guards protecting him.

If only it was nighttime, my task would be much easier.

But it wasn't, and I didn't have time to wait around and see what unfolded.

At the end of the tunnel I shot up the stairs and used my snout to push through the door, popping up just enough to see where I was in relation to the camp.

I couldn't have missed it

Rows of tents stood about three hundred yards to my right. For the most part, the camp was silent, I heard a few male voices futter to me in the wind

Those would be the guards

Satisfied that none of them were close enough to me to spot my ascent, I climbed out of the tunnel, hoping I'd be able to access it again when I needed it

Staying low to the ground, I sniffed the air for an indication of where the guards were. The distinct smell of a male hit my lungs, and I realized one was nearby.

After rolling around in the leaves for a moment to help mask my scent, I stalked to the closest tree and used the trunk to hide myself as I waited. A few moments later, a guard came by. He was in his human form, probably for easier communication. After all, mindlink could only work amongst the core pack members.

It didn't look like the guard was aware that I was there. In fact, he wasn't paying attention at all, just making his rounds as he had been instructed.

When I burst out from my hiding place and leaped on top of him so quickly, he didn't have time to make any sound. The impact knocked the wind out of him, and my sharp teeth sank into his throat, ripping out enough flesh to prevent him from ever making another sound again.

With his blood dripping from my jowls, I surveyed the situation. Not smelling any other wolves nearby, I shifted to my human form, put on the dead guard's uniform, and headed into the camp.

Finding King Kal's tent wasn't difficult. It was the largest one, located in the center of the camp. A glance around told me I wouldn't have any problem sneaking into that tent. The other guards noticed me from far away, but they were not suspicious probably because they couldn't see my face clearly.

If they were as unobservant as the one I'd just killed, they wouldn't find the dead body for a few minutes. And that was all I would need

Kal... the West King, the one who initiated this war. He had the guts to get this close to the capital, then he'd better prepare to pay the price!

There were a couple guards outside of the tent, so I lowered my head and made myself heard. "My King, urgent news from Mirage about Alpha Ethan!" After saying this sentence, I entered the tent before the two guards could react.

Kal was standing behind his desk, looking at a map.

Alone.

The Moon Goddess was on my side this time if I could smile now, I would grin from ear to ear.

He was obviously waiting for the news.

“Give me the report,’ he said, but immediately, he realized that I entered the tent without permission and he was on high alert. “Who are you!?”

But it was too late. I took my chance, shifted, and launched myself off of my back legs. I went flying over the desk, hitting him full force with all of my weight and knocking him backward against the wall of the tent.

“Arrgh!” Kal shouted. “Guards!!”

Chapter 135 Ethan Escaped

Kal called for help, but it was too late. I took my chance, shifted, and launched myself off of my back legs. I went flying over the desk, hitting him full force with all of my weight and knocking him backward against the wall of the tent *Arrgh!* Kal shouted. “Guards!!” I couldn’t speak to him since I was in my wolf form, so I’d have to show him I meant business in another way. With my paws on his chest, I bent down to bite his neck.

Kal brought his right arm up to block me. Even in his human form, he was a strong man. He was, after all, a king. He came from powerful bloodlines.

This wouldn’t be as easy as I’d hoped. Rather than biting into his neck, I sunk my teeth into his arm gnawing at the flesh. Kal screamed as blood shot out, dripping all over his face and splattering the floor. I ground my teeth against the bone of his forearm, pulling until I felt a snap.

With his upper arm in my mouth, I turned my head and spit it out. Now, it would be easier for me to get to his neck.

“Ethan, you f*cking bastard!” he shouted.

I hoped those would be the last words he said. Leaning forward again, I aimed for his neck, but then, I felt a sharp pain in my side and smelled another fresh spray of blood.

But this time, it was my own crimson life force that was flowing all over the ground.

Looking down, I could see that he had a knife in his hand.

“King Kal!” I heard shouts outside and then three wolves entered the tent.

I realized that my best opportunity was gone. As he pulled the knife back to stab me again, I knew that I had no choice but to abandon my mission. If I stayed any longer, I’d be captured, and then I’d be of no use to anyone.

I growled at him and swiped my claws across his face, leaving a band of red marks. His body hit the ground, but at the same time, sharp pain radiated from my body and my legs. I was being attacked by three wolves.

Kal seemed to have lost his consciousness. Maybe due to the loss of blood.

I would recover from my injury, but he couldn’t grow another arm.... He wouldn’t forget what I’d done.

I fought off the three wolves, sprinting out of the tent, and ran between the forces Kal had called for, moving much quicker than any of them could. They didn't even have a chance to change direction before I made my way between them untouched.

They trailed me as I headed back to the tunnel I'd used to sneak in. However, with my wound, I lost some of my speed and I couldn't get rid of them,

D*mn it! With only this distance in between me and the enemy guards, they would discover the tunnel I came from if I choose the same route back. I couldn't do that that tunnel connected back into the capital, and I couldn't let them find it!

So I ran in a different direction and hoped that I could last long enough to get to the meeting spot with Talon. The problem was that I was in the middle of Kal's base. More enemies gathered from all directions, and a few of them managed to slow me down even more. A Bisdardat

If I couldn't break through to meet with Talon, I'd seriously consider going back to Kal's tent and do some more damage to that mother f*cker before his guys tore me apart

*Oooowhooo—

Familiar howls echoed from nearby

I wished I could chuckle. Well, it seemed like I wouldn't need to go back to Kal to deliver *my* suicidal attacks now.

Ethan, seriously, did you f*cking lose your mind?!' Talon roared in the mindlink.

Second time in a day. Talon, 'I was injured, but I was in a much better mood compared to earlier in the day. Enemies' blood was always the most effective solution to a bad day. 'You've broken your own record.'

Talon ignored my joke. He only asked, 'Where shall I meet you?'

Twelve o'clock of the capital. We are heading north, I told him.

Soon, Talon and my men were able to clear through the wolf batch ahead of me.

Talon, Vicky, Richard, along with the soldiers I'd brought with me were all here. Their meager belongings in bags strapped to their backs, I knew they were here to prove their loyalty to me.

Once I got back with my men, the enemies hesitated to chase after us. No one would like to fight against the Drogomor's warriors. Especially with their leader severely injured, they dare not come after me.

All I could think to say was, Thank you,' before I motioned for them to follow me. No one made any sound, but I knew they would follow me until the end of my days.

'Alpha, is your wound okay?' This time, it was Vicky who broke the silence.

Yes, and it's all worth it. I bit off Kal's arm. 'I knew Talon was not happy with my reckless deed. Hopefully, this news would cheer him up. He didn't say anything, but I knew he heard it.

As expected, he sighed, 'Hopefully, that would give Commander Adler enough time to send reinforcement to the capital.'

Who cares about them!' Vicky retorted. I knew "them" meant James and the other Alphas who voted for handing me out.

Vicky,' Talon stopped her, 'it doesn't help.'

I cleared my throat and managed to draw their attention back to me. 'Guys, we'll split up into small groups to blend in when we are close to the capital. They will be looking for me. We'll meet at the shortcut to go back north. You guys go with Richard.'

Soon, we scattered our group to mingle with the civilians outside of the capital, falling in between some wolves that were clearly from the village. I could tell by their size and the desperate looks in their eyes.

Chaos flooded my eyes as soldiers, citizens, and wolves of all sorts ran amok everywhere I looked.

I ran with them for several hundred yards before I saw a military detail over to my left. They appeared to be looking for someone-probably me.

It was time to shift tactics. I left my pack of citizen wolves and found some humans. I couldn't blend in with them, but they were carrying large pieces of luggage and running frantically, so I was able to get behind them and make it to the woods.

Another military detail was coming through, but this one seemed to be trying to direct the citizens. They were in their human forms, and the leader said, "Calm down, everyone! Come this way!" and gestured for them all to follow him.

Taking the opportunity to duck behind a bush, I waited for them to leave, then I sprinted the last hundred yards toward the shortcut leading us to the north.

Once we regrouped, we took off. When I'd used a similar path to access the capital only a few hours or so ago, I

never would've thought I'd be leaving again so quickly, but I tried not to think about that just now. So much had happened in such a short amount of time, but it wasn't the time for me to get overwhelmed.

it had been a couple of days since we'd left the capital. Our paws flew through the darkening woods, and I had sorted through everything that had happened on the way.

By now, I'd be stupid if I still couldn't figure out who was the turncoat in the capital.

Based on Talon's report, Damian had *disappeared before I arrived*. That b*sard had worked with Soren to put on

this show.

Not surprising. I was quite sure that even Romero must have figured out that his Beta *wasn't loyal* to him or his daughter.

Damian didn't care about his Alpha- maybe he wanted to become an Alpha of the *islands himself*.

I had no interest in knowing his ambitions, but I'd make sure he paid for this eventually, *unfortunately*, not right now though.

Right now, I needed to focus on getting to the north.

James and Kal would both be looking for me. If they couldn't figure out where I'd gone, *would* they start with Rosalie and my child? The possibility sent shivers down my spine. I *needed* to be with my family.

Vaguely, my mind went back to the words of the Seer, but I really didn't give a f*ck what fate would have to say to *me*. My life was already f*cked up, and it wouldn't get any worse. So I'd do whatever I felt like at the moment.

Once I was *further* north, I'd try to find Georgia to warn her. She would have to make her own choice on which side to pick, among me, Soren, and James. If my half sister was with me, it would be easier to find Rosalie and my child.

The thought of Rosalie made my heart ache. I was so close to her just a few days ago but I let that opportunity slip. Now I was banished, how could I ever ask her to be with me again?

No, I couldn't

I knew I needed to go north because she was there with my child, however I could never bring myself to ask her to live the rest of her life with a rogue.

I couldn't allow her to do that.

Once I was there, once I got close enough to her... I would just meet my child and leave. I'd be close by to protect her without her knowing it, and that would be enough for me.

Was this the punishment that the Moon Goddess gave me for *my* failure to treat Rosalie properly? Did what I do earlier in my life *lead* to my ridiculous fate right now?

I found no answers. All I knew was that I wanted to be close to her, whether she wanted me or not, because that would bring me hope and joy, and that was the only thing I needed right now.

'Alpha, we are close to the northern tier. I can tell we're not alone.' Talon commented via mindlink.

'Rogues, Richard pitched in.

I licked my lips, and I could feel a thirst for blood. 'Let them come!' I snarled.

We broke through the forest and came up a slight slope into a relatively open area. The moonlight was bright, and we could see clearly. I was in the lead and paused to survey the area. I didn't see any wolves- but I could smell them.

'They're here,' Richard said...

Scanned with CamScanner

ette *** Ethan Empw

From what I could tell, there weren't many, perhaps a half dozen. I let out a long howl.

A giant black wolf came out from between the trees, his sharp teeth gleaming in the moonlight. I snarled at him, and he crouched down, as if he thought he could take all of us on at once. One by one, the other five revealed themselves. None of them were quite as big as him, but they were good-sized.

Fools' I muttered to myself.

"They would slow us down," Talon said using the mindlink.

"They won't," I told him. I could rip them all apart. I could still feel the warmth of Kal's blood all over my chin.

The large black wolf came running at me, and the others attacked as well. It was over before it began. I grabbed him out of the air, sinking my teeth into his neck. I swung him around and tossed him against a tree. Hearing the crack of bones as he hit the tree, I watched as he slid to the ground, whimpering.

Leaving him there to die was an option, but I wanted to taste his blood in my mouth. I ran over and sank my teeth into his neck, ripping the tendons and muscle as I bit through the veins. The whimpering stopped, and the forest went silent as I spit out a wad of dirty fur and bloody meat.

Looking around, I saw that the other five were down as well, and only one of my warriors was even bleeding. It was a minor scratch over his eye. He'd be fine.

'Let's go,' said, and we began to run again.

If that was all fate had to throw at me, then I'd laugh and tell it to f*ck itself.

Chapter 136 Dous Rosalle Know Your Plan?

Georgia's POV Smoke settled in the air, causing an eerie feeling to cross the land we had just battled upon. Priest Cerina had agreed to offer help to the northern villages by fighting off the rogues. However, that was only the very first step for the displaced people to re-build their homes.

With the advancements our forces had made in the war, the rogue leader had no choice but to move back and lie low.

But even with the pleasant progress we'd made, there was still so much to be done. "Georgia!" a warrior yelled, catching my attention and causing me to turn.

"Yes?" I asked with a smile, pleased that he was addressing me by my name, and not adding a f*cking useless prefix of "miss" in front of it.

It took days for me to get it through to them. I wasn't the snooty lady they were expecting. I wanted to be seen as any other person in the army.

"I was sent to inform you that the council is meeting. With the battle done, they are looking to go over our next move."

"That's wonderful," I replied. We needed to meet and talk about what to do next. With the battle won, things had to be determined regarding how we would move forward.

"Go see that the border on the eastern front of the village is secured. As for the rogues who surrendered," I sighed, thinking it over for a moment, "place them in a holding area until I talk to Jace."

Jace and I had moved these forces across the land like an ongoing tidal wave of vengeance. Any rogues who didn't want to submit and fall under the northern rule were killed, and those who submitted were spared.

Growing closer to the main tent, I spotted Jace walking with another man. His tall burly figure stood out against the crowd.

"Jace!" I called out.

He turned to me with a smile as he shook his head. "Hey, glad to see you could make the meeting. You'd skip and keep having fun out there," he chuckled.

"I wish," I grinned, "but I heard General Vandough and someone higher up are here."

Falling in step with each other, we headed into the tent. The group of leaders were already there, waiting to hear what we were to do next. The man at the head of it all was General Lee Vandough. He was the right hand to the high priestess herself. He must have brought news from the high priestess.

"Welcome, everyone!" he bellowed out in a hearty tone with a firm and serious look upon his face. "I am glad that we were all able to make it through this battle in one piece. As much as I wish it was over, we still have a long way to go."

Murmured agreements filtered through the air at his statement. I listened to his words and was a bit confused.

About two months ago, Blake and I were saved by the Winter Forest pack. Neither of us knew that there were people living in the far north. It was said that the climate there was not suitable for living.

How I persuaded them to help the civilians in the Eastern Kingdom was a long story. Anyway, now here I was, with the leaders of the Winter Forest pack, finally chasing out the rogues that took so many innocent lives and destroyed so many homes.

The northern villages couldn't be more grateful for what we had done. However, I didn't quite understand what he meant by a long way to go."

in the course of the past couple of months, most of the villages were taken back from the rogues. Like the high priestess had told me, the Winter Forest Pack would want to remain unknown by most. My thoughts were interrupted by the general's question. "Does anyone have a status report? He looked *towards* Jact and!

*The territory is ours, and the rogues who submitted will be taken back to the city for their hearing,' Jace announced.

Ouns, was I overly sensitive?

"That's wonderful. What about supplies? Georgia, how are the supply runs and the wounded?"

snapped out of my own doubts and answered right away. "We are down about thirty percent on food, and we've got enough for two more months until the next refill. However, our medical supplies are at a loss. We only have about fifteen percent of the original supplies remaining and desperately need more."

My words caused shock to flow through the men as the general stared at me with a concerned expression.

“What about the wounded.. What is our count?” he asked softly.

‘About one hundred and thirty, sir, but there are almost five hundred civilians who were injured. We just didn’t get here in time before the rogues ran through them. There was a lot more damage done here than there was at the last village.’

I couldn’t stop thinking about the havoc that the rogues played on this particular village. It was almost as if they had been looking for something, but no matter how much I looked around to see what it was, I couldn’t find anything.

“We will need someone to go back and request some supply trucks from the high priest. Georgia, would you be the messenger for this task, and make sure we have the supplies back in four days?” he asked, as a smile crested my face.

“Of course, General. You know I am all about helping the cause.”

The general chuckled at my comment, nodding his head. “And take the captured rogues along with you to the priest, Georgia.”

Curiosity filled me with concerns over the rogues that had been captured.

“General, are we planning to integrate the rogues within the troops or hold off?” I asked, curious to what they had planned. We had discussed a lot over the weeks, but there was still a lot of uncertainty.

“Yes. They will be integrated, but I want them thoroughly inspected before moving forward.”

Nodding my head, I took in what he said. It only made sense to take precautions.

The general cleared his throat and announced, “Now, there is something I want to share with the rest of you who didn’t know.”

His statement drew everyone’s attention. I looked around the room curiously at the others. Most of them seemed to be more than happy about what he is going to say. I was one of the few that hadn’t gotten the news.

“For those of you who don’t know, our princess has returned!” he rejoiced.

“Princess?” I asked in confusion.

Lee looked at me and nodded with a smile. “Yes, our princess and your friend!”

My eyes were widened. That sounded almost too good to be true!

I rushed over to him and grabbed his arm. “Rosalie? She’s alive? And she’s here?!”

He gave me a confirmation nod with a smile. “She’s with the high priestess.”

No wonder he had specifically asked me to go for the supply run because he knew Rosalie was there.

te Roshe Know your fan?

I was over the moon, and I couldn't wait to run back and see her. I felt my eyes were warm with tears. I had so many questions to ask her. How did she escape, where did she go, what exactly happened...?

She had made it back to her people! After all this time, she was able to find her way back to her own home. Happiness flowed through me when I thought of her. And was the baby also around? My little nephew or niece! I just couldn't help but smile ear to ear.

Under chaos was the only way to describe the scene before me. Their voices talked over one another as they spoke about how Rosalie coming home would save them all.

Rosalie had become a beacon of hope amongst her people

The hollars of happiness and excitement flowed from the other wolves in the tent, but there were a few people who were skeptical. "Are you sure, general? We haven't been able to find her for so many years!"

"Yes, I can testify it's her," an elderly woman's voice rang out, causing everyone to turn to her. Her graying hair and warm smile took me by surprise.

"Wise woman Seraphine! You're back!" someone in the crowd exclaimed.

"Ladies and gentlemen, if you still have any doubts, I'm sure Seraphine would be more than happy to answer them," the general replied with a smile as he gestured to the woman.

"Thank you, Lee. It's been a while." Seraphine gave him a small hug as if greeting an old friend.

"What's she like?" someone asked from the back, piquing everyone's attention. Their murmurs brought a lot of attention to the situation.

"I know so many of you are interested in knowing what our princess is like, and I want to assure you that she is everything we could have hoped for. She is kind, caring, and compassionate. She has all the qualities of the old queens and so much more."

"Will she change the outcome of the war? What are her plans?" one man called out.

"Will she ride the war front and kill these rogues with us?" another yelled.

"Yes, she will do all of those things and so much more," Seraphine added with a smile, nodding and speaking with multiple people on the war efforts and rebuilding the kingdom.

The crowd *awed* over the details, smiles lighting their faces at hearing about how wonderful Rosalie was. It had been so long since I had seen her, and I contemplated what she was like now after all this time.

It was amazing to see the hope she brought.

"Yes, our queen will save us!"

"Her blood will heal the wounded and strengthen our army!"

I frowned. What did they mean? Blood? However, this wasn't the right time and place to figure that out.

“With our queen now back with her people, we will need to seek her council to progress further towards the border,” a dark-haired man stated with a smirk, causing a commotion of agreement to follow.

“There is still a lot to figure out, but I am more than confident our queen will lead us to victory.”

“Our queen has returned to her people, and with her leadership we will be able to forge an empire that cannot be taken down. Her leadership will help to bring back the old nation and rightful rulers of the east!”

“Wait... what?” I mumbled.

Forge an empire? Bring back the old nation? What were they talking about?

The girl I had once known was gentle and kind. She would never seek out war and hurt innocent lives for no reason!

“Quick question,” I said over the crowded conversation. “Does Rosalie know your plan?”

Seraphine’s eyes turned to me. “What do you mean?”

All eyes were on me. I could have been wrong, but the Rosalie I knew was not one that would intentionally raise a

What’s more, regardless of what she would like to do, I just didn’t like that they seemed to be making decisions for her.

Does Rosalie know you plan to make her your queen and have her fight in a war?” I repeated,

The one thing I did know for sure, though, was that Rosalie had grown tired of being told what to do, and she surely wouldn’t like being lied to. That was why she ran away from my brother. My words seemed to hold some weight, and everyone in the room quieted down, including the general.

Seraphine lifted her chin, and her eyes stared into mine. “Why wouldn’t she? She is the rightful ruler and wouldn’t leave her people unattended.”

I raised my brows. Rosalie was my friend, and I would hate to see her forced into doing something she didn’t want to again. However, I also knew that if she chose to, she could be an amazing leader.

I just wanted to make sure she was the one who made the decision, not others.

A smile escaped my lips as I stared back at Seraphine. “If you truly treat her as your queen, shouldn’t you run these plans by Rosalie *before* you start assuming what she is going to do?”

Chapter 137: Assassinating Ethan

****Ethan’s POV**

After several days of running with very little sleep, we decided we needed to make a camp for the night. I knew that my fighting forces could stand up against any other soldiers in the world, but even the strongest warriors would need time to restore their stamina.

‘I think this looks like a good place to bunk down and get a few hours of sleep,’ Talon said as we reached a thicker part of the forest, several hours into our fifth day of travel. It was dark, and the stars were

beginning to descend as the sun would be coming up soon enough. We'd better take advantage of the darkness before heading into another long day tomorrow.

I surveyed the area. We could take shelter against a rocky slope that would protect us from one side. We'd have to watch the other three to make sure that we weren't attacked from any other direction.

'I agree,' I said, after I finished examining the place Talon had selected.

We'd already tracked down some small game in our wolf forms earlier and eaten, so there would be no fire. The smoke would signal to others where they could find us.

'Vicky, I suggest you stay in your wolf form,' Talon told her. 'But it's up to you.'

She nodded and looked around. Vicky wasn't used to being outside in the elements like the guys. She wasn't one to complain, and I knew she wouldn't say a word about the ground being too hard, about being cold or hungry. However, she wasn't like the guys who had been out in the forest fighting and knew how to make do with what they had either.

'We need to establish a watch,' I said. 'At least three per shift.'

'I'll go first,' Richard said immediately, and he appointed Matthew and Arthur to go with him.

The rest of us found spots on the ground to sleep in. Almost everyone stayed close together. It was safer that way. Vicky was right next to her brother.

I thought I should probably lie down on her other side, to make her more comfortable, but I wanted to walk around the perimeter first.

An unsettled feeling permeated my gut, and I wasn't going to be able to rest until I determined its source; it seemed to be

something more than just the events of the day, though those were weighing heavily on my mind.

As soon as the others were sleeping, and the first watch was in their spots, I got up and went for a walk around the outskirts of the camp. I wanted to make sure that there were

no unwelcome wolves anywhere near us.

I walked along the edge of the woods, nodding to Richard as he patrolled his part of the perimeter. He nodded in return, and I continued on my way, cutting between the thick trees as I made my way through Matthew's section. His eyes cut through the darkness, but he didn't move as he sniffed his Alpha's scent and knew not to be concerned.

When I came to Arthur's area of the perimeter, I stopped. I didn't see the third wolf anywhere, which was alarming.

Was it possible some of the enemy forces had gotten close

enough to pick him off? That's how rogues preferred to operate, after all. They liked to find one wolf out on their own and pull them out into the woods, killing them, and then strike again.

Slowly, I crept forward into the trees, listening. I could smell Arthur, so I knew he had been there, but I wasn't sure how old the scent was. Something was different, though. I wasn't smelling his wolf anymore.

I was smelling... a different wolf.

I turned around just in time to see another wolf coming through the trees, sprinting at me at full speed.

I could tell this was one of James's royal guards. The scent of the capital was all over him. He had obviously been sent from James to assassinate me.

I got into a defensive position. As soon as the wolf came barreling through the trees, I leaped in front of him, knocking him out of the air

He hit the ground hard, but he struggled and got up again

quickly and bit me on my forearm. In a split second, I had to release him, and he jumped up again.

B*sard, where the f*ck was Arthur?!

The invader was ready for his second attack and was charging towards me at high speed.

I was fully ready, however, the anticipated crash didn't land on me, and the wolf leaped past me and he knocked down something behind me instead.

I turned around to figure out what had just happened.

I moved closer and saw that Arthur hit his head on a large rock. Blood spurted everywhere, and his eyes rolled back into his head. He was dead.

Howled to warn the pack and squinted my eyes at the murderer. How dare he!

I leaped forward again and landed on the wolf. This time, he couldn't get away from me. However, he shifted back to his human form.

I shifted back as well so that I could speak. "You're from the capital. How did you find me?!"

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He was panting and wiped away the blood on his face, "1

found you because of Vicky."

Vicky?! Did she leak my whereabouts to James?! No... it couldn't be!

grabbed his neck and warned him, "Watch every word you say... you killed my man, and now you're lying about Vicky?!"

'Alpha! Vicky's voice filled my head. "Alpha, please, stop!

Within a few seconds, I saw Vicky run towards me along with Talon. She had switched back to her human form and was dressed. She charged straight towards me- or the man whose neck was being grabbed by me.

“Paul! What are you doing here?!”

I was confused. What the h*ck was going on?!

I looked over at her, and didn't let go of my prisoner. “You know this b*stard?” I asked her.

Her eyes were wide with fear, and she nodded. “Alpha, he's my mate! Please!”

I released him, giving Paul a chance to speak.

Paul was finally able to breathe. “Alpha Ethan! Please, I meant no harm!”

I scolded, “You killed my man!”

The rest of the group gasped, and they all looked at Paul with hatred, except for Vicky.

Paul shook his head, “No, Alpha Ethan. If I didn't kill him just now, he would've hurt you!”

I narrowed my eyes. Talon threw a cape to me and Vicky did the same for Paul.

I got up to examine Arthur. Next to Arthur's body was a large butcher knife. He was only a step behind me, and he would've stabbed me in the neck because I was focused on the battle and couldn't smell him in his human form.

A shiver sent down my spine, Arthur was the one who tried to kill me, and Paul indeed saved me.

“They sent me after you because they knew I'd be able to find Vicky,” Paul explained. “In case Arthur's assassination failed, they wanted me to tell you that King Kal has retreated, thanks to you injuring him. King James wanted me to let you know that he wants you back at the capital. He wanted me to tell you that he regrets what has happened.”

I stared into his dark eyes for a moment, waiting.

“But that's not true,” Paul continued, and I began to feel that perhaps I could trust him after all. “The truth is, I'm supposed to trick you into coming back with me so that they can kill you. The king and the queen want you dead, Alpha. I'm sorry.”

For a moment, all I could do was look at him, my mind running over all of the words he'd just told me.

My own cousin wants me dead and would stop at nothing to accomplish that.

I helped Paul up, and Vicky dove into his hug. “Thank you for coming....” I heard her sobbing.

Taking a few steps away from the couple, I thought about how I'd almost killed the wolf coming to warn me. I was glad that hadn't happened.

But what about James? My own cousin? The man I would've given anything for? The man I had been willing to give up my life to protect? And the queen...I'd always seen her as a gentle older sister

However, they had ordered this. They had told this messenger to come and lie to me to lure me back to the capital? Locking me up or trading me to the enemy was one thing, now they wanted me dead?

I couldn't believe what had happened.

My shock and disbelief quickly turned to rage as I turned to look at the others. They were all standing in the clearing, the whites of their eyes reflecting in the moonlight as they stared at me, trying to comprehend what they had just witnessed.

“Is there anyone here who agrees with my cousin?” I asked.

“Are any of you here to do King James’s bidding? Do any of you wish to see me dead?”

No one moved. They only stared at me, none of them able to comprehend what they had witnessed, just as I was unable to.

My cousin and his wife were fearful I’d come after the throne, that I’d hold a grudge against the king for asking me to go with Kal. It was their only option. Kill me or face the possibility I might come for them.

I shook my head. What they should have realized was that, until that moment, it never would’ve crossed my mind. I would’ve been content to leave that place, to find Rosalie and my baby and start over. Even if I was to live the rest of my life with nothing, at least I’d have them. I would rather be a poor man with love than a rich man without my family.

But now... they had made my heart burn with anger, and I couldn’t promise that I wouldn’t come back and seek revenge for what they’d tried to do this night.

James turning his back against me was one thing.

Throwing me out of the capital I’d fought to defend, that was an act of cowardice.

Now, they’d taken it a step forward and sought to have me eliminated.

“Alpha Ethan, please allow me to join your pack and follow

your lead! I vow to protect Vicky with my life, and I will be loyal to the person she’s loyal to!” Paul bowed to me.

I looked at him, but I shook my head.

“Paul, I appreciate it. However, I’m no longer an Alpha. You are welcome to stay, but you are also welcome to leave. You have my gratitude either way.”

Vicky sighed. “You should get some rest, Alpha.” I looked over and saw her step up to stand beside Paul. “I know you’ll say you’re not tired, not now, but you should rest. We have a long journey ahead of us. We’ll make sure that nothing happens.”

She turned to Paul, “And so should you, Paul.”

I wanted to argue with her, but the adrenaline rush from before was starting to wear off, and I was growing weary. My body did need to rest. I was glad to see she wasn’t holding it against me that I’d almost killed her mate.

If I was to accomplish everything that was on my mind, I was going to need to rest.

Either fleeing or revenge took a lot of energy.

Chapter 138 Reign of a New Queen

****Rosalie's POV**

The north was more than I ever dreamt it to be.

Since the moment I arrived, they had shown me nothing but kindness. I was a savior to them. While I certainly didn't think of myself that way, it made me feel good that I could help.

"Rosalie!" Seraphine called out as she walked into my suite. I hadn't seen her for a couple of days. "Are you settling in okay?"

Looking around the Luna Queen suite I had been placed in, I felt nothing but overwhelmed. It was beautiful, but I felt like they were expecting more than I could give them. "Yes, it's beautiful."

I didn't want to seem ungrateful, but deep down, I couldn't help but feel out of place.

This wasn't the life I had wanted.

All I wanted was to live a small peaceful life with my son and be an average person. Yet, as soon as I had come to the north, I was thrust into the life of a royal.

"I can tell something is bothering you." Her motherly tone made me smile.

Seraphine had looked out for me since day one. She wasn't my mother, but her role in my life was a very close second,

"I'm fine. I promise. This is just more than I was expecting," I assured her.

Understanding passed over Seraphine's face as she walked around the room, admiring what had been set up for me. "I know it's a lot, but you have to know how important this is."

How has my life become so chaotic?

"I'm not sure about all of this, Seraphine," I admitted. "I came here for answers, yes, but I never expected to be thrust into this kind of life."

"I know, but it's your birthright," she stated causing me to sigh again.

I knew what it was, but it didn't mean I wanted it.

No one seemed to really ask me what I wanted. It was as if they just expected me to take on the task without asking questions.

And that just wasn't the person I was anymore.

Filled with trepidation, I let out a heavy breath, taking a seat on the sofa. "Don't worry about me. Um, is everything okay with you? I haven't seen you for two days."

Seraphine was always around, but I also knew that she had been busy ever since we returned.

Before Seraphine could answer, soft knocking at the door caught my attention, and as the door slowly opened, I watched as High Priestess Cerina entered with someone.

That someone made me so happy that I wanted to cry.

“Georgia!” I stood and quickly wrapped my arms around her.

“Oh, Rosalie—” she whispered, hugging me tight, “it’s so good to see you again. I came as soon as I heard you were here.”

Pulling back, I smiled at her.

Dirt and soot covered her skin, showing evidence of her fighting. Her eyes were tired and worn, and I could only imagine the things she had been through.

She seemed more burned out, but there within the depths of her eye still—lurked the spark of a fire. One that I was sure appeared on the battlefield.

“I am so glad to see you as well. I’m sorry for leaving—” I knew I didn’t have to apologize, but the tight-lipped smile she gave me told me she understood.

“It’s all in the past,” she replied slowly, looking down. “I take it we have a baby now?”

Laughing, I nodded my head as I took her hand and led her

over to the white bassinet in the middle of the living room. My child’s sleeping form laid calm and peaceful, wrapped in the blue knitted blanket I had made him so long ago.

“Rosalie—” Georgia gasped, her hand coming across her mouth with tears in her eyes. “He is so beautiful... What did you name him?”

“I haven’t decided yet,” I replied, turning my eyes back to him once more.

She was right. He was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen, but perhaps that was my biased opinion as his mother.

“No name yet? Hey, you know, I have a lot of ideas.” She gave me a wink and we both laughed, just like the old times.

“I hate to interrupt the happy reunion...” Cerina smiled, causing us both to turn to face her. “There are some things we really must discuss.”

Letting out a deep breath, I nodded.

I knew the conversation was coming, but it wasn’t something really cared to speak about. I wasn’t sure what they expected me to do.

“Of course, I’m so sorry.” I replied, making my way towards the sofa, gesturing for them all to take a seat. “What can I help you with?”

The woman hesitated for a moment, her eyes turning to

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Seraphine before turning back towards me. "I know that you have only just come back, but your people need you, Your Highness."

"Please, you don't need to call me that," I quickly replied. "It's just Rosalie."

Cerina looked towards Seraphine, who smiled, shrugging her shoulders.

"Rosalie, you are the returned princess. The new queen of the north."

I knew what they were saying was true, but I didn't want it.

"I am not the queen you want. I don't even know what my people need," I replied, trying to make Cerina see reason.

"Well, for starters, we need to rebuild the northern territory. While we helped our neighboring villages, we do need to rebuild our own home and need guidance on how or where to rebuild," Seraphine added, trying to bring light to the situation.

"Yes, we do. On top of that, we also need more supplies. We are running thin on things as you saw yesterday—" Cerina noted, looking towards me.

Did she really think I knew what to do?

An uneasy feeling grew within me as my anxiety built. The two of them continued to discuss things that needed done within the territory, and all the information was just becoming very

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overwhelming

Taking a deep breath, I tried to collect my thoughts.

They wanted me to lead these people, but I knew nothing about ruling anyone.

"We think there is a lot you can do—"

"I—" hesitation filled me as a rush of confusion flooded my mind, "I can't."

As much as I wanted to help them, I didn't know how. The last thing I wanted to do was mess something up. I never had anyone count on me before, and I was still grasping the fact | was a mother with a child who depended on me.

Now, I was expected to rule a territory!

"Rosalie, it's your birthright," Seraphine replied in a soft motherly tone. "Your people have been without their rightful leader for so long." .

"I understand that, but I don't know how to run a country. It wouldn't be responsible for me to take on that role," I tried to explain.

I knew I was disappointing them, but in the end I would just let them down anyway.

It was for the best that I didn't rule. Someone with experience was needed instead.

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“Rosalie—” Georgia’s gentle voice caught my attention, “I know this is a lot. I don’t know everything you went through before you came to my brother, but I got the idea from Vicky—”

“Then you understand why I can’t do this,” I quickly stammered, trying to make her see reason. “I was never raised to be a leader. I was never treated to believe I could be anything more than what I was. I only just started getting used to the fact I could be my own person.”

“I know—” she said softly, “but you don’t have to do this alone. All three of us are here to help you. However, to me, that’s if, and only if, that’s what you decide to do.”

“Yes, Georgia is right,” Cerina replied, reaching forward and taking my hand. “None of us expect you to know how to do this all on your own. You will have a team of advisors helping you.”

The slow rush of worry coursed through my veins. The idea of having people to help me was a good thing, but at the same time, if I took on this role, there was no going back.

My mind drifted off to Ethan at that moment. Wondering how he ruled so easily and all on his own.

“I don’t want to let anyone down.”

Yet, as I looked at my child, I questioned my decision.

He was born as an Alpha, an heir to the kingdom, and he was

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born to rule. I’d already taken away his father from his life, now would I also take away his birthrights? Was I being too selfish?

While I was his mother, was it really up to me to decide whether he should grow up as a nobody?

Leading these people and becoming their queen would at least give him options. He could choose his own path when he grew older. One day, this could all be his, and he would become the king as so many of his ancestors had done before. Or one day, he could choose to walk away, but at least, he was the one to make the decision for his life.

Cerina squeezed my hand. “I can’t promise you that somewhere up the road, someone won’t be disappointed with you. As a leader, you just have to realize you are doing your best to have your people’s best interests at heart.”

Her words touched me. I knew deep down that not everyone would be happy with me, but at least I could say that I tried my best.

“Okay,” I replied before giving myself a chance to change my mind.

The smiles that littered their faces made me feel good about my decision.

Yes, it wasn’t what I had wanted to do, but the choice felt right.

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"I know you can do this," Georgia replied cheerfully. "You have more courage in you than you realize."

"Thank you, Georgia." As long as I had the three of them with me, the job didn't seem as hard to take on. "I don't know what I am supposed to do first, though."

"Well, we will take everything one day at a time," Seraphine added while standing to her feet. "Georgia, what do you and Cerina think would be the first plan of action?"

The two women seemed to think for a moment over Seraphine's question before Georgia slowly piped up, "Well, for me, it would be to figure out our next plan of action with the rogues."

"Yes, and then, of course, on my end, we need to focus on the people. Supplies and rebuilding. However, everything can be taken one step at a time."

Taking a deep breath, I thought about what Ethan would do first.

As much as I hated him for everything he had done to me, he was still the only leader actually had the chance to get close to. The only one I had seen rule from a far.

"Georgia, let's start with the rogues. What is it you need to know?"

She smiled at me, her brows raising. "Well... for starters,

General Vandough needs more supplies to help with the villagers, but we are running low within the pack here too. What do you think?"

I thought for a moment and took a deep breath. "We cannot just let the villagers starve after we finally get rid of the rogues. We can spare some supplies for the villagers, but split it in small batches. We will help them to get through the winter, but as the weather gets warm, they need to be able to re-establish themselves."

The looks that crossed their faces from my statement worried me.

"Is that right?" I asked hesitantly.

Cerina nodded her head. "Yes. What you said were the words of a wise leader. I have no doubt in my mind that you are going to make the most amazing queen, Rosalie."

A swell of pride rose within me at her praise, and for the first time in a long time, I felt what I was doing was right. If I could help the north rebuild, I would create a safe place for my son to live in peace.

The kind of home he was always meant to have.

Chapter 139 The Truth Of Soren's Past

****Soren's POV**

"Don't you think it's time we went back home?" Thomas asked me as the two of us stood in my tent late one evening. "The war is practically over now, Soren. Your uncle needs you back home to help him regroup."

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly, not feeling the need to explain myself to my subordinate. "Not now," I told him. It was short and to the point, and that's all he needed.

"But you have to understand, Soren, no one expected Ethan to act that way! After he was banished... he actually attacked your uncle! He went right into that camp and bit his f*cking arm off! The man has clearly lost his mind."

I shook my head. "I don't want to hear anything else about my d*mn brother, all right?" I told him. "He doesn't matter anymore."

"Wait, what?" Thomas asked me. "I thought... if Ethan doesn't matter anymore, then why the h*ll are we looking for Rosalie? You're not trying to get her back to hurt him?"

I dropped my gaze to the floor. Thomas didn't need to know my motivation. "It's more complicated than that," I muttered.

"More complicated? Soren... the queen is pregnant with the heir, so Ethan's baby is nothing now. If you're not trying to get back at him, then what is it?"

I shook my head. "Leave all of that to me," I told him.

"Oh, I see," he said, his lips pursed together as he gave me a disapproving look.

Glowering at him, I said, "Thomas, I'll remind you that you're not in charge here."

"Yes, sir," he said, his eyes narrowed. "It's just... with Kal's forces being pushed back after he was injured, I think it's best if we leave the north and go back home. They're in a full retreat now! The East has had all the time in the world to move in and drive them back since he's been injured. Having the queen carrying a child didn't get rid of Ethan, instead, it backfired on us, and indirectly caused our king's suffering."

Finally, I agreed with something he said. "I warned my uncle to never underestimate Ethan. I personally told him I thought it was better if he didn't get so close to Mirage in person. But the b*stard didn't listen. He wanted to feel the glory of winning the war himself."

I shook my head in disgust. "He said he wanted to see his enemies fall with his own eyes. Now, Uncle Kal is eating the consequences of his own arrogance." I rested my hand on the table, thinking about how foolish the king had been to go

about things the way he had.

He never listened to me, and now he was the one suffering for

"And Romero?" Thomas said with a chuckle. "It serves his *ss right to be locked up by King James for what he did, trying to play both sides. I never did trust that guy."

"No, I knew better than to trust him, too," I told him. "He's no longer useful to James, so he had no trouble locking him up for his betrayal." An image of Romero suffering in a dungeon cell filled my mind, making me want to laugh.

“So... you’re not at all interested in going back to the islands?” Thomas asked me again, a look of disbelief on his face. “You don’t care that Damian’s claiming to be the new Alpha of the islands? Don’t you want to go back and force his *ss out of your land?”

I sneered, “Romero let me use the island as part of the deal he had with my uncle. It wasn’t mine to begin with. Anyway, at the moment, I have more important things to worry about than that asshole. I’ll take care of him later.”

“Because now you’re here, trying to find Rosalie and her baby, because....”

Anger flared up in me as I understood exactly what he was getting at. “Maybe if you had done a better job of preventing Rosalie and her baby from fleeing the island to begin with we

wouldn’t be in this predicament, now *would we?*”

“Hey! It’s not all my fault!” Thomas argued, “How was anyone supposed to know Seraphine would be so conniving and betray us the way that she did?”

He had a point there. I never would’ve expected Seraphine to tell Rosalie the truth and stab me in the back like that. I had been under the impression that the midwife was loyal to me.

It just went to show that you couldn’t ever *really* trust anyone.

“I guess that means we’re not leaving the north until we find

Ro~”

“Shh!” I said, holding up a finger. “Do you hear that?” I asked him, stepping over to the door of the tent. Something wasn’t right. I had an odd feeling inside of my stomach, and I thought I smelled something different in the air.

“What?” Thomas asked, huffing.

“I don’t hear anything,” I told him. “Nothing at all. Do you?”

“No, but so what?” Thomas asked.

We’d brought quite a few men with us. It made no sense that it would be completely silent in the camp.

I stepped out of the tent to see that everyone was gone. Thomas followed me, and we took a few steps around, staying together, knowing something wasn’t right. The thith Or Setarie net

A flurry in the woods around us had us both panicked as a fon of troops poured out from every direction, surrounding us. Thomas and I stood there, back to back, trying to assess the situation

“Who are these bastards?” Thomas asked me.

“Not sure,” I told him.

Then, a large frame emerged from between the others as a muscular middle-aged man stepped into the light.

A shudder went down my spine as I recognized the haggard face. An unforgettable jagged scar marred the left side of his face, running from his ear to his jaw.

I froze...it was him! The one that hunted me when I was young, the one who haunted me in my nightmares for years!

Why did he suddenly show up again? Did Ethan send him after me again? How did Ethan know I was here?!

He was coming right at me, and I had no place to hide.

I needed to swallow my fear and try to make them forget that they had me completely surrounded. "Where are my men?" I asked, tipping my chin up and squaring my shoulders.

"Shut the f*ck up, Soren!" the b*stard shouted. "You're just a useless *sshole like your father." He wrinkled his nose up at me and glared down at me. "You think you're so f*cking smart, but you're just a useless piece of sh*t. The only thing you'll

ever be good at is ruining things!"

I wanted to lash out at him, to demand he tell me where my men were right then, but how could I say anything at all when we were surrounded, and he was towering over me.

Those nightmares from my childhood came flooding back through my mind.

With his nose only a fraction of an inch away from mine, he lowered his voice and growled out, "I told the king I should've killed you ten years ago, but he told me that you might be useful long term..."

What was he talking about?!

He licked his lips and smirked, "Had he listened to me, he wouldn't have to lose his arm and go through all the suffering thanks to you f*cking piece of sh*t!"

My eyes widened as I realized exactly what scarface was telling me.

Ten years ago, I'd been hunted down and almost killed by a group of men. I had always assumed they'd been sent by my half brother, that Ethan would be the one who wanted to kill

1. me.

But that wasn't the case at all. It was Kal! My own uncle, the man who I thought saved me, and told me that it was all Ethan's fault. He told me that one day, he would help me to

get my revenge.

Over the years, he never announced to the public that I was his nephew because I thought he wanted to protect me. I didn't mind taking care of all of his dirty work for him with my hidden identity...

I didn't agree with him on a lot of things, but that was fine. I'd always thought that at least, I was his family no matter what.

However, it was all a lie! He just used me as a pawn against James and Ethan, and now he wanted me dead?! Because I couldn't help him win the war, and I wasn't useful to him any more, so he wanted my life?!

Rage mixed with a cold chill and splintered down my back as I asked again, "Where the h*ll are my men?"

A snarl of a smile split his face. "They were disrespectful to me, little man," he told me. "So we killed them."

Horror washed over me as the faces of all of the men who'd come with me to the north flashed before my eyes. They had trusted me and came here because I needed their help.

Now, they were dead, every single one of them!

Rage boiled up inside of me. Using the mind-link, I told Thomas, "Get them!"

He didn't hesitate, as I was sure he was feeling the same outrage I was.

It might've been considered dirty fighting, but I needed to do what I could. With no warning, I raised my knee and shoved it right into the scar-faced man's balls. He doubled over in pain, and I grabbed his head and slammed it into my thigh, throwing him backward into the men standing behind him.

Thomas was fighting behind me, and the two of us managed to take them by surprise enough to break through their lines. As I cut between two of Kal's warriors, one of them lashed out with a knife, catching me in the back, near my rib cage. Pain ripped through my center, but I couldn't slow down. I just grabbed his arm and yanked, pulling him up into the air and using his body as a club to hit the man on the other side of me. I released his arm and both of them tumbled to the ground.

Despite the pain, I knew we had to run so I took off into the woods, shifting into my wolf form, but grabbing my pants in my mouth to take them with me in case I needed them.

'Soren, where are you going?' Thomas mindlinked me.

'Stop following me. You go back to the island and check on others!' I ordered.

'Boss, but

'This is an order. I'll be fine. Just f*cking go. Now!' I reiterated.

He let out a long howl and finally changed his direction.

I ran as fast as I could, heading north. Knowing Thomas went south was a relief. Scarface's target was me, and only me. The further I was away from Thomas, the safer it was for him.

It was night, and the woods were alive with the sounds of creatures, many of them predators.

How many of them were rogues? If I was lucky, I might be able to run into the few rogue groups I worked with before. But if I was unlucky...

I continued to run through the night, hearing howls and growls in the distance as I wound my way further north. By dawn, I was exhausted and starving. I had found water but no food. My legs were beginning to cramp up from running for so long, but I had to keep going.

And then, I tore around a large bush to come face to face with three large wolves.

I froze, thinking perhaps I could backtrack and get away from them. But I was so tired, I couldn't even get my feet to move again.

All three of Kal's men came rushing at me, their teeth gnashing me, their claws ripping into my fur. I cursed, but I knew then, I was a dead man.

The agony that rippled through my body from every direction was excruciating. I did my best to try to get away, to guard my neck to keep them from tearing out my throat, and to fight them off, but I was just too tired.

Then, in the distance, the sound of paws hitting the ground quickly sounded, and the wolves that had me in their clutches pulled their heads away.

Someone was coming, and whatever forces they were, there were a lot of them.

By the behavior of these three after me, I could tell that they weren't expecting friends. They took off into the woods, and I collapsed on the ground under a tree.

With the last amount of strength I had left, I shifted and pulled on my pants, thinking it would be easier for me to get help from humans who might have medicine if I was in my human form.

But I didn't have any more energy. I couldn't drag myself from beneath the tree where I had fallen to go look for help.

As darkness overcame me, Rosalie's face flashed before my eyes, and I wished so badly that she was there so I could tell her how truly sorry I was for everything I'd done to her.

I knew, though, I'd never see her again.

The world faded away, and even though I thought I heard the sound of her voice carrying to me on the wind... I knew it had to be a figment of my imagination as I faded away into oblivion.

Chapter 140 Who Did Rosalie Find?

****Rosalie's POV**

The view from the Queen's suite was spectacular. People said that the far north was only ruins from the old times, but they didn't know Cerina had led my people to rebuild it over the years.

Even with everything that the people of the north—my people had been through, they hadn't failed to take care of the palace.

Because they truly revered the royal family.

They truly revered my family.

They truly revered me.

I was especially impressed by the garden. There weren't any flowers or plants as those couldn't easily survive the harsh climate. This was a garden mainly decorated with beautiful stone sculptures.

Staring out at the window, I tried to come to grips with what they were asking me to do. I knew I'd have plenty of help, but I needed to understand how things worked in this land, how Cerina had been running things, what the laws had been before, when my ancestors were the rulers.

I needed to make sure that I was able to accept all of those rules and laws myself because I didn't want to be the one enforcing rules that I didn't agree with.

A couple of days ago, Cerina took me to a great hall that looked a lot like a library except all of the books looked like they were textbooks or legal journals of some sort. Along one wall was a huge shelf full of cubby holes with scrolls in it.

Some of these documents had to be hundreds of years old, if not thousands.

When I told her that it would take years to just finish reading them, she showed me a large volume that had been sitting in the middle of a massive oak table and told me that it contained our main laws, the primary rules, and the references to the corresponding detailed rules of our land.

I had been studying for a few days.

Most of the laws were understandable, but a few of them seemed outdated and unnecessarily harsh. For example, there was one that said a father could punish his daughter by striking her if she spoke out of turn. I thought that seemed archaic. I also wanted to remove some of the regulations about how landowners could punish those who leased their land if they didn't pay taxes on time. I agreed there should be penalties, but not physical ones.

I made a list of items I wanted to change. It wasn't long, but they were all important.

Behind me, my baby made a little fussing sound. I put down my books to check on him. I wanted to go talk to Cerina, but I needed to wait for Seraphine to come back first. It all worked out well as I got time to feed him and get him back to sleep.

"Rosalie, were you looking for me?" Seraphine entered the room, and she walked directly to the crib and gently rocked it when she saw the little one wiggling a little. I smiled. It felt so

good to know that my son wasn't only loved by me.

"Yes, I was about to talk to Cerina. I have some thoughts and questions regarding the laws."

Seraphine nodded her head while rocking the crib back and forth slightly. "I saw her talking to Georgia in the courtyard. Dear, I'm sure it may seem overwhelming, but I have faith that you'll figure it out. You still have a couple of months until your twenty-first birthday."

My twenty-first birthday would also be my coronation day. I had a lot to learn before then.

“Thank you, Seraphine,” I told her, patting her arm. “You’re such a blessing to me.”

Seraphine smiled. “I’m the one who has been blessed. To be the one to have found you and brought you back to our land... the Moon Goddess is smiling upon all of us.”

I didn’t know how to respond to her compliment, so I only smiled and went out to find Cerina.

Cerina and Georgia were standing in the courtyard, and by the gestures Georgia was making, it seemed she was wound up, though I didn’t think she was mad at Cerina. As I approached, I heard her saying, “Whoever is leading those rogues needs to be cut down and slaughtered! They have become even more brazen in the last few days.”

She turned then and saw me, and her tone changed. “Oh, hi, Rosalie,” she said. “I’m sorry. I just... it makes me so angry to hear that more people have been harmed. It was just like an endless battle. Just when we thought we were good, those b*astards were back again! Where did they all come from!”

“How bad was it?” I asked.

Cerina answered, her voice calm. “Another village was attacked. This time four children were harmed, and one passed away. He was only two.”

My heart broke at the words, and I grasped my chest, thinking of my own son. “How could they? Those are innocent lives...”

Seeing my reaction, Georgia said firmly, “I know. We need to get back out there and begin fighting again. Sorry, Rosalie. There’s no need for us to burden you with what happens out there.”

I shook my head. “No, Georgia, please, keep me informed. I

can’t fight, but please let me know if there’s anything I can help with.”

Cerina gave me a smile. “That’s very kind of you, Your Majesty.”

Georgia smiled. “We’ll handle it for now, but if we need your help, I’m not shy to ask. Now, I’ll go check in with the others.” || knew that meant she was going to check with the military leaders.

I watched her walk away, and I turned my attention to Cerina. “Would it be possible for us to review the laws and rules of the land as a group? I have some thoughts to share.”

Cerina’s face lit up, and I could tell that she was pleased with the progress I’d made.

“Yes, of course,” Cerina said. “I’ll get a meeting put together.”

A couple of hours later, I was accompanied by Cerina as we went to the boardroom to meet with the other five leaders.

All grew quiet when I walked in, and I felt my cheeks redden from the weight of their eyes on my face.

I cleared my throat and started. “Thank you for coming, everyone. As many of you may know, I’ve been reviewing the laws and regulations of the land to make sure I understand all of them before I begin my rule. What I’ve discovered is that the kingdom has many laws put in place that favor our people and help them to thrive.”

Most of them nodded, and were waiting for *me* to continue.

I stood up in front of everyone. “Centuries ago, under my ancestors’ reign, our land thrived with prosperity, thanks to those laws and rules. Many of them will help our land to recover and become prosperous again. However, time has changed and some may not be as applicable as they were in times past... I will share my preliminary thoughts for those | have doubts about, and I would love to hear your opinions. Your assistance in revising the laws will help to build the foundation for our people’s prosperous future.”

All of the leaders seemed in agreement with what I had to say. They nodded their heads, smiled, and looked at one another with approving glances.

The meeting went more smoothly than I thought. I expected that I might get some push back. However, Cerina and the rest of the leaders were mostly supportive of what I proposed.

There were a couple of items I realized that I’d oversimplified the impact they currently had on how the pack operated. Thankfully, Cerina was able to explain the depth of them in the meeting, while the rest of the leaders pitched in for alternative solutions.

I was amazed that I wasn’t the only one who had thought of changing these particular laws. For most of the items!

pointed out, Cerina and the rest of the group had also felt that changes were long overdue, and they were pleased that I brought them up. What surprised me was, *for some of* the items I raised concerns about, leaders in the *room already* had some great solutions or alternatives for them. *However, in* the past, no actions had been taken on those.

After a two-hour long discussion, everyone seemed to be *in* agreement, and it was a fruitful meeting. One of the gentlemen, Mr. Charles, noted down the action items and volunteered to take the lead to document the required changes for the group of leaders to review.

At the end of the meeting, Cerina concluded our discussion with a smile, and I could tell she was very proud of me. “Your Majesty, our people will be very happy with the amendments to more just and fair laws.”

I didn’t like that she’d called me “Your Majesty,” but if I was going to be the queen... I was going to have to get used to it.

My face was burning, but I looked at everyone with appreciation. “Thank you for the kind words,” I said. I took a deep breath. “In the meantime, I would like to continue to learn the ways of how a queen must rule her land. I feel very unprepared. Just because I have royal ancestors, that doesn’t make me fit to be a queen.”

“No, it’s not your blood, dear,” Cerina said. “It’s you—you are a natural-born leader, it’s true. But your kindness, your

willingness to help others, your loving heart, and your hard work... that’s what will make you a mighty queen.”

I still had a long way to go, but I felt more confident that I could do it. "Will you teach me?" I asked her and the rest of the room.

"We all will," Cerina nodded and then added, "well done."

She stood up and started clapping, and the rest of the room stood up and joined her.

Then I started my official training.

From etiquette, to law and politics, to combat, I took lessons from experts on different subject matter. Anything that I needed to know to be a good queen, I needed to learn.

Most of the time, my baby was in the same room with me because others were also busy with their own responsibilities. However, when I was in physical training on fighting, Seraphine normally watched him for me.

As part of my combat training, I needed to be out on patrol with the warriors. Even though I didn't have my wolf yet, I was able to keep up as long as they didn't run at full speed. I needed to get a lay of the land and make sure that I understood what was expected if rogues were discovered in our territory

Scanned with CamScanner

As I was inspecting our border, I heard a loud noise in the woods over to my right. Several of the *wolves* next to me leaped into the woods. *We* saw the tails of *dark wolves* running off in the distance.

"Rogues!" I muttered. At least, they *were* running away. Though I was nervous, I ran along with the wolves the best I could. Some of them were getting away from me to go after the rogues, while the rest stayed back to make sure I was all right.

Noticing blood on the ground, I slowed down and looked around. It appeared as if there'd been a battle here before we arrived. Had the rogues been fighting someone else? Our forces?

No, if it was our people, I would know. It had to be someone else.

I glanced around, trying to figure out where all of the blood was coming from.

It was then that I saw the form of a man lying over beneath a tree. He was wearing tattered pants, and he was doubled over, clearly in pain. The trail of blood led right to him.

My eyes widened in fear as I thought about what the situation might be.

"Are you all right?" I shouted to him as I ran over, ducking beneath the branches to check on him.

He didn't answer. His back was to me, and it looked familiar...

"Go get help," I told one of my group as I got closer to where the man lay.

My blood could help him, but he'd need to be stitched up.

I kneeled down next to him and lifted his head. Then I froze, nearly falling backward onto my bottom.

I couldn't believe the face I was looking at.

“How did you get here?” I whispered.

“You know him?” a voice at my shoulder asked. Others had arrived to help.

I nodded. “I know him all right. I know him... quite well...”

It was Soren’s assistant, Thomas.