

## Chapter 151 I Shifted For The First Time

\*\*Rosalie's POV

I needed to get away from Ethan.

As I ran out of the tent and across the camp, my cheeks were burning with shame from what had just happened. I kept my robe pulled tight around me and headed for the solace of the forest.

I couldn't go far, though. As much as I wanted to take off and just keep running, without my boy, I could only go far enough to get the sounds of the camp out of my ears so I could think clearly for a moment.

Why had I done that?

Why had I let Ethan make love to me when that was the last thing I'd wanted?

Not that I wasn't willing at the time... I couldn't deny that I was helplessly attracted to him even till this day.

It was just that I wanted to fight it, fight the desire of him. I knew better than to let my emotions carry me away, and I'd given in to his wanton desire.

He had done so much to hurt me!

From treating me like a tool, to planning to kill me, to using me to get to Soren.... All of those things added together made me feel like I should hate him and never want to see him again, and yet I'd let him into my body like nothing was wrong.

Like I was still the girl who would've done anything just to spend a little more time with him.

He'd been the one to decide I wasn't worthy of him, though. He'd been the one to push me aside. So now, I shouldn't feel bad for doing the same to him.

But I hadn't. I'd let him right back into my arms, into my bed... into my heart?

Yes, I had loved him once.

Yes, he was the father of my child, and yes, he was still the most attractive man I'd ever seen.

But I wanted to say no, he hadn't made it that far.

Not yet anyway.

"Mates," I whispered, shaking my head.

Now that I was outside of the tent, I could see the moon. The bright silvery light was slightly obscured by the trees, but I could still see the round orb up in the sky, looking down at me as if it was the seeing-eye of the Moon Goddess.

I wondered if she was having a laugh at the grand joke she'd just played. I'd begged her to let Ethan find his mate so that he'd leave me be, only to find out that it had been me all along.... And now, I couldn't feel the pull because she'd granted both of my wishes?

I couldn't describe the emotions coursing through me. It was as if I struggled for this long and eventually came back and realized that when all of my wishes were granted, I was in a worse situation.

How unfortunate a soul was I?

I desperately needed a place to escape this fate, and all I wanted to do was to run away-run away from Ethan and run away from myself.

I charged through the woods as fast as I could. It felt good to not have to think and just let my body carry me along I ran blindly, not caring about where I was going, until the root from a large tree jutting out from the ground tangled

around my feet, and I fell-hard.

In that instant, as the ground came up to meet me, something inside of me changed.

My bones and muscles began to move, rearranging themselves as if they'd always known exactly how to

do this. Fur sprang up on the outside of my body, and my robe fell away  
In the blink of an eye, I felt my body was ten times lighter, and everything moved much slower. I was about to adjust my body mid-air to prepare for the fall.

To my surprise, I landed gracefully on the ground with no pain at all.

With four legs.

I was stunned and looked down at my body to find a beautiful snow white wolf with glossy fur shining in the moonlight

My eyes widened. I found my wolf!

My sight was immediately enhanced and everything was crystal clear even through the night.

I could hear the slightest movement from the tents I'd just left, and even my baby's smooth breathing, and I could smell Ethan's scent as he was chasing behind me not far away.

The change was so overwhelming, I could not help but let out a long howl to the moon.

"Oohoooo-!"

The sound of Ethan's footsteps as he came up behind me had me closing my eyes and retreating into myself as continued to run. I should've known he wouldn't let me go, but I didn't want to face him.

However, a moment later, I heard the pounding of paws behind me.

Then I felt a snout hit me in the back left hip, and I was tumbling again. I flipped over and landed on my back, looking up into Ethan's red wolf eyes.

Exhausted from all of the running and the emotional turmoil, my wolf shifted back into my human form. Above me, Ethan's wolf did the same.

Now, he was staring down at me, his hands on my shoulders, keeping me from getting up. I was still pinned.

"Rosalie!"

"Let me go!"

"Come back to the tent. I can't protect you as easily out here as I can back in camp," he said quietly.

I was still angry despite the fact that his tone was soft and concerned now.

"No," I told him. "I don't want to go back to your rogue camp, Ethan. I want to go home. I'm going to get my baby and we're going to head back to the palace where we belong."

He shook his head, and I could see in his red eyes that he was doing his best to stay calm. "Rosalie, I can't let you do that. They are after you. You must stay here with me."

"You don't get to tell me what to do anymore, Ethan!" I shouted at him. "I am not your breeder slave girl. I am a queen, and I get to determine for myself what is best for me and my baby!" I pushed him off of me, and he let me get up. I saw the remains of my tattered robe a few feet away and walked over to pick it up. I tossed it around me, thinking a bit of coverage was better than none.

"He's our baby," he corrected. "And I've already missed out on too much time with him. I'm not going to let you take him out into the woods where Goddess knows what may befall him."

He latched on to my arm again, but I pulled free. It seemed that perhaps I was stronger already, though I was just barely twenty-one and had just met my wolf.

"Leave me alone!" I shouted, wishing I could call for Talon or someone to help me. But I knew they were loyal to him beyond anything else. Even Georgia and Vicky would likely choose his side over mine.

"Just because you are the queen, that doesn't mean you're making the best decision for yourself and my son!" Ethan shouted

"What is that supposed to mean? That you think I'm stupid?" I snapped back at him.

"No, that's not what I said," he replied, running a hand through his hair. "I'm saying... common sense

would tell anyone they should stay here while there are rogues and members of armies out there looking for them!"

"Oh, so now I don't have any common sense!" I yelled back at him, putting my hands on my hips. "Well, why would you even want to claim me as your mate then if I'm such an idiot? Why don't you just reject me and get it over with?" I wished he would. If he would reject me, then I wouldn't be bound to him any longer.

Ethan shook his head again. "Don't be unreasonable, Rosalie. I know you're very intelligent. You're just not thinking straight because you're mad. Come back to camp. Now."

That was the old Ethan. He was commanding me again.

"No!" I told him, and I turned away, thinking perhaps I'd go into the forest and hide and then come back and get my baby later

He was too fast for me, though. He grabbed me again, harder this time, though he wasn't intending to hurt me. "It's not safe out here, Rosalie," he said, tugging me as he backed up toward the camp.

Thad two choices-struggle, hurt myself in the process, and end up going with him, or just go along.

It was difficult to get my feet to cooperate when I didn't want to do as he'd told me, but if I didn't, I was going to get hurt.

And I'd still be his prisoner.

I let him tug me back into camp. He stopped along the way to put on his pants but didn't let go of me. Several people stood staring as he escorted me in, but one sharp look from Ethan, and they all turned away to mind their own business.

He took me back to the same tent I'd been in before. Tugging me inside, he backed over to the bed and pushed me down.

The scent of our lovemaking still hung in the air.

I hoped he wasn't about to try that again right now because I was not in the mood.

Ethan dropped to his knees in front of me, his hands in mine.

"Rosalie," he said, his tone calmer than before. "I don't want to hurt you, and I don't want to upset you, but trust me when I say it's better for you to stay put for the time being, all right?"

What could I say? I'd already let him know that I didn't want to stay, and he'd dragged me back here anyway.

I was his prisoner now. Nothing I could say was going to change that.

"Can I have my baby, please?" I asked him.

"Not right now," Ethan said. "You need to rest."

"I want to see him, and I want to see him now." I looked right into his red eyes, stressing that I meant it.

If I was going to be a compliant prisoner, he was going to need to give me my baby.

Ethan let out a little sigh. "Why must you fight me on everything?"

I wanted to tell him that I felt the exact same way I only continued to stare at him.

"I'll bring him in when he wakes up so you can feed him. Now, you both need to rest and you need to recover from your wounds."

It seemed funny that he wasn't that worried about my wounds when he was on top of me, thrusting inside of me.

Ethan stood and leaned in to kiss my cheek. I stayed completely still, like a statue as his warm lips grazed my cheek. "I love you, Rosalie," he said as he got up to leave.

I said nothing. I couldn't echo his sentiment.

At the tent door, he looked over his shoulder at me, but he didn't smile. He only stared at me before he

finally turned to go

As soon as I was alone, I fell backward onto my pillow and covered my face with my arm. Why did I have to be so foolish? I should've never let him get to me again. I had already given him my body. I couldn't let him take my heart.

I might be his fated mate, but he wasn't mine. I didn't have one. I'd sworn that off.

So it didn't matter how badly he wanted me to love him, I wasn't going to.

I wasn't going to fall for that again...

### **Chapter 152 Birthday Gifts From Him**

I woke up with a slight headache.

Dizziness washed over me as I looked around the tent and tried to remember what happened.

Everything came crashing back to me, and I lay there for a moment with my hand pressed to my temple.

My stomach grumbled. I had no idea what time it was because there was no clock in the tent, and I

couldn't see the sun, but I knew I had slept longer than usual because I felt so hungry now

I wondered if the guards would bring me something to eat if I went and asked them.

Just as I was pondering what to do, the tent door opened, and Ethan walked in. He was carrying our baby in one hand and had a container in the other. He also had some sort of a package tucked under his arm.

He brought food for sure because as soon as he walked in, the tent was filled with the delicious smell which made my mouth water.

"You're awake," Ethan said with a soft voice and I felt it was yesterday once more,

Did he have to start the day the same way as the day before? It really didn't end well for me

However, he was more gentle this time. I thought maybe he felt bad about everything that had

transpired, but I was in no mood to accept his apology. I was still a prisoner here, after all.

hungry. Ethan turned his head to give me some privacy while the baby latched on, and then I covered him with a blanket

My stomach rumbled again, loud enough for him to hear.

My face flushed

"What's that?" I looked towards the container, trying to cover for my embarrassment.

A small smirk appeared on his face. "I guess I'm just in time," he explained. "It's wild game and some fruit. I hope you like it."

He set a plate down on the cot along with a fork and a knife.

It was a nice gesture, and I did appreciate it, but I didn't want to be too excited about it. "Thanks," I told him. I was going to have to wait until the baby was done eating first. My eyes glanced over the bright berries and the savory meat, as well as the fork and the sharp knife.

"How are you feeling?" Ethan tried to start the conversation.

"Fine," I said That was all he was going to get out of me.

"Good" He nodded.

Then neither of us spoke, and it was uncomfortably quiet in the tent.

Once the baby was done eating, I carefully laid him down on the bed, fixed my shirt, and then picked up the plate of food so that the knife was nowhere near the sleeping child.

Ethan moved closer to me, and cleared his throat. "Hey, I have something else for you."

I arched an eyebrow. "Is it a ticket out of here?" I asked him, "Because I would like my freedom."

He just stared at me, his brows furrowed above his crimson eyes. Letting out a loud sigh, he said, "No, Rosalie. We've been over this. You can't leave right now. It's not safe."

I would scowl at him if it would help my situation, but I knew he wasn't going to budge, "What is it, then?" I asked him, wanting to argue but not wanting to yell while the baby was next to us. Ethan handed me the package he had under his arm. I saw that the wrapping paper was actually an old paper bag. It was resourceful, I guessed.

I unwrapped it, and found a beautiful crown made of white wildflowers.

I looked at him puzzled. What was this for?

"Happy birthday," he said. He had a sheepish grin as he waited for my reaction to his gift.

"Um thank you," I responded flatly. However, I had to admit it was very pretty.

Did he make it for me? I just could not picture Ethan going to the field and picking wild flowers one by one..

Seeing I had no more comments, he spoke again. "I know today is also your coronation."

Yes, I am aware, and thanks to you, I can't attend it! | spouted in my mind, but I bit my tongue so that we didn't end up in another fight. I'd had enough of these

He took the crown out of my hand and set it on top of my head, taking a few seconds to arrange my hair around it.

I didn't stop him because I just didn't have the energy to fight with him any more.

Then he took a step back, to my surprise, kneeled down with one knee and picked up one of my hands.

He looked up to my eyes and said sincerely. "Your Majesty, may your reign be guided by the Moon Goddess. May your land be blessed with joy and prosperity!"

It happened too soon, and before I could react, he ended his sentences with a kiss on the back of my hand.

His lips were a little cold against my skin, but his breath was warm.

My heart just skipped a beat

However, I immediately reminded myself that no matter how nice he acted, he was the reason why I couldn't go back to my people. Therefore, I pulled my hand back and dropped my face.

He looked up at me again, and from his expression, I knew my reaction probably hurt him.

"Look, Rosalie, I know it's not that big of a present. I'm sorry if you don't like it..." His smile had completely faded by the time he finished speaking, and I just couldn't help but feel bad for what I did. I heard myself say, "It was a nice gesture, Ethan, thanks."

I despise myself. What was wrong with me? Why couldn't I just keep my stand strong around him?

His expression didn't change much and he nodded. "You're welcome."

Again, the silence took over the tent.

I took a few bites of the lunch he'd brought me and immediately I could feel the appreciation of my own stomach. The food was delicious, and it tasted especially good when I was so hungry.

However, I slowed down, because he was just sitting there, staring at me...

"Ethan," I swallowed a bite, "Um...you're making me really uncomfortable just watching me." I had to point this out honestly "Are you hungry? Do you want to eat?"

I was so disappointed in myself. Why did I even bother to ask him?!

His eyes lit up at my invitation, and he leaned forward His warm breath blew in my ear, and I heard him whisper seductively. "Yes... I'm hungry"

What the!!

"You ..you..." My eyes widened, and I couldn't believe his mind totally went somewhere else. "You get away from me!" | raised my voice.

How dare he! After everything he did to me yesterday, how could he still act like nothing had happened?

What was to him? His prisoner? His sex slave?!

I stood up and moved away from him as soon as I could, worried he might proceed with something I was totally not in the mood for

Luckily, he didn't chase after me and let me get away. It seemed that he found some amusement watching me, but then he said, "I have something for the baby, too."

He held up a small leather rope with a few beads on it and a small wooden pendant. I saw that it was a little wolf. "I made it for him. Come take a look."

I didn't move, still keeping my distance from him.

Seeing how wary I was, he chuckled, "I won't force you to do anything, not on your birthday anyway. Come over."

I hesitated for a moment, but reached up and held the wolf in my palm. It was expertly carved.

"It's beautiful," I admitted honestly.

My praise lightened his mood for sure. He let out a small smile, and bent over to tie the leather strap around the baby's wrist.

It was his first gift from his father.

"Thanks a lot, Ethan," I told him. Then I put down my plate. Although I was hungry, I was also too irritated by the situation to eat much. Besides... I really wanted to find a way to make him leave in a rush. "But I really think that you should just go now. I want to be alone."

He looked at me for a long moment, standing near the bed, practically hovering over me. "I thought we could spend some time together today for your birthday."

I glanced over my plate, and my brain was running quickly. Yes, I needed him to leave the tent soon.

A sarcastic chuckle came out of my mouth. "Seriously? You think I want to spend time with you for my birthday? Ethan, I'd rather be alone. I haven't forgotten what I'm doing here and that you won't let me go."

"I'm protecting you!" he said, his voice a bit too loud. The baby squirmed a bit, and I told Ethan to shoosh. He grumbled at me and folded his arms across his chest.

I scooted the plate with what was left of the food and the knife on the floor, pushing it underneath the cot enough that he'd forget about it.

"Ethan, you can tell yourself that you're protecting me all you want to, but we both know that's not true. You're just keeping me here because you don't want me to leave. You want to see the baby, and for now, you think you want to see me because of the mate bond. But at the end of the day, nothing has changed-except for you're somehow even more cruel and thoughtless than you were before!" I kept my voice down, but my words were pointed.

"Thoughtless?" he asked bitterly.

The baby whimpered at the sound of his father's voice. I gently picked him up and held him against my shoulder "You can't really think that the fact that you brought me some flowers and a piece of meat is going to make everything else that has happened between us all better, can you?"

"I think that you should understand that I'm doing my best to make amends!" he shouted. The baby started crying.

"Now, look what you've done!" I said through clenched teeth. "Get out of here, Ethan!"

"Give me the baby!" he demanded.

"No!" I yelled back. "He's crying, so now I have to feed him again. Unless you've suddenly learned how to breastfeed, I think I'm the only one who can do that. Leave, so I can quiet him down!"

"You're just unreasonable!" he yelled.

“Like you are! Get out of here, Ethan. I don’t want to see you! That’s my birthday wish! Get out!!”

Ethan just continued to glare at me for a long second before he turned around and stormed out of the tent, practically knocking the flap of the door off as he went through.

Once he was gone, I took a deep breath and latched the baby back on to feed him, but I felt awful.

Yes, I had angered him on purpose, but I felt bad about that because he had been trying to be nice. Deep down inside, watching him get hurt still made my heart ache.

But my plan worked. Ethan was gone, and the knife was still here.... That could come in handy.

The baby reached up with his chubby little hand, and I saw the wolf pendant his father had given him close up. It was perfect

That a feeling my son would treasure that gift forever-regardless of what role his father ended up playing in his life.

### **Chapter 153 If You Want My Life, Rosalie, Then Take it**

**\*\*Madalynn’s POV**

I was so close. My guys almost got her.

They were supposed to bring her to me, and I could almost feel my claws sinking into that stupid bitch Rosalie. F\*cking tramp. I had lost everything because of her. I was going to make her pay. I was going to rip her heart out in front of Ethan and devour it like a gourmet meal.

But I came up short and I lost a few of my best b\*tches.

I had to retreat to make sure that I didn’t lose my life. F\*cking Ethan! He ruined it for me. Again!

I should have known, though. That fool was head over heels for her, even if he had lost his soul and taken on red eyes.

He had befallen the same fate as I had—karma really is a bitch.

For weeks, we had been watching Rosalie’s forces, and I thought this time we were going to get her. Why did everyone work against me and help that worthless nobody? I just couldn’t f\*cking get it.

I gasped in pain as the doctor changed the bandage on my side.

“Watch your freaking hands! Don’t you know how to treat your f\*cking patient right?” | snarled.

One of the wolves with Ethan had gotten me good, and even though I took down many of Rosalie’s warriors, I was no match for the power of those with Ethan.

Perhaps once I got rid of Rosalie, he would see who the stronger wolf was. Then he would beg me to be his queen. A Rogue King and his Rogue Queen.

The idea was one that brought amusement to my eyes, but at the same time, there was no way I would agree after everything he had done to me.

I’d rather see him slowly die beneath my claws.

“Madalynn!” a voice called from the front of my tent, bringing me back to realization.

“What?” | snapped as my eyes darted towards the figure of one of my rogues.

He hesitated for a moment as disgust smeared itself across his face. “Someone is here to see you.”

“Tell him I’m busy.” Annoyance filled me, knowing someone would dare to interrupt me after the battle I had just gone through. I wasn’t in the mood to deal with anyone’s bullshit.

Standing to my feet, I made my way from the tent, however I came face to face with one of James’ guys.

“You have a lot of balls coming here,” I smirked. “I should kill you now and send your head back to James on a platter.”

Rolling his eyes, he sighed, “Enough, Madalynn. I have an updated offer to give you.”

He held out a rolled up parchment in his hand, and quickly, I snatched it. A huff of irritation left him at my actions.

I unrolled the parchment and quickly glanced over the words inside.

James was more of a pathetic fool than I thought him to be.

“Your king is really desperate, huh?” | sneered at the messenger.

He ignored my comment and exited the room after making sure that I’d gotten the message. “I will be back in two

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days for your response,” he said.

Laughter escaped my lips as I shook my head. Tossing the letter into a small trunk on the table, I grabbed a small green vial and downed the contents. The warming liquid of the herbs rejuvenates me with excessive *force*, the power of the magical herbs running through my veins like a wildfire.

My eyes glanced down at the parchment with curiosity as I twirled it over in my fingers.

“Are you really just going to let him go?” the man next to me snapped.

Glancing up at him, a smile crossed my lips as my hand darted out, gripping his throat.

“Are you f\*cking questioning me, wolf? I would highly suggest you rethink that action.”

His eyes widened at my tone, and quickly, he shook his head. “No, I’m sorry.”

Irritated by his weakness, I let go and took the parchment, walking back into my tent.

“Madalynn, the scouting group is ready for your command!” my second called out through the open tent, causing a smile to crest my lips.

“Wonderful. Nightfall is approaching, and we have much work to do.”

\*\*Ethan’s POV



“What is it, Talon?” I asked him as he came inside of the tent.

“Alpha... I want to talk to you about Rosalie.” He stood in front of my desk, his hands folded in front of him.

“She asked to leave again?” | roared.

“No.” Talon shook his head.

“Her people found us?”

“No.”

“Then what the f\*ck do you want?”

Talon was taken aback a little, but he was quickly back to his normal self.

| pinched the bridge of my nose.

Recently, my temper had been short. Talon had been a loyal friend and subordinate. It wasn't necessary for me to have said what I said. “Sorry, man. Yes, Rosalie, what about her?”

I could tell he was a bit worried about me, but he didn't comment on that. Instead, he went on with his report. “It has been three days...” he started.

| almost burst out roaring at him again for bringing this up, but I managed to control my volume. I reminded him, “We've talked about this, Talon. I know that you, Vicky, and Georgia are concerned about me keeping her in the tent, but this is what's best for her at the moment.”

Rosalie... even the thought of her made my heart heavy. Why wasn't she feeling the matebond like I was? Why was she fighting me at every turn? Why wouldn't she just listen?

“I understand that, sir, but that's not what I wanted to tell you.”

My eyebrows arched as I studied his face. “What is it then?” I asked him, pressing down my frustration.

He cleared his throat. “Long story short, Rosalie hasn't been eating. Every meal we take to her, she sends back untouched. It doesn't matter what it is or who brings it to her. Even when it's Georgia, and she reminds her that it's important that she keep her strength, for the baby, Rosalie still won't eat it. She just sits there, staring at the wall of the tent, like she's in a trance.”

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I could feel my fury building up How could she be that stubborn and irresponsible? I restricted her freedom to protect her. Why couldn't she understand that?

\*It's not healthy, Ethan. And we are worried about her. She won't be able to keep feeding the baby if she doesn't start eating, not to mention clearly she's struggling right now.” With that, he stopped talking, taking a deep breath and letting it out, like he was glad I'd let him say all of that.

I pondered the situation for a minute,

\*F\*ck." I muttered, slamming my hands down on the desk I was sitting at. "I'll go talk to her."

"Do you think – Talon stopped as I rose from my chair. I met his eyes and waited. "Nothing." He shook his head.

"What?" I asked, wondering what he'd been about to say.

"Just... do you think it's for the best if you're the one to talk to her, Ethan? I mean... she's unhappy with you." He shrugged, and I knew it wasn't easy for him to say that to me.

Meeting his eyes, I said, "I'm the one who upset her, so I'm the one who needs to speak to her. I'll talk some sense into her."

Talon had a skeptical look on his face as I walked past him to the tent door.

Perhaps he was right, and I wasn't the best person for this job, but obviously, no one else had been able to persuade Rosalie either.

Thad avoided going to her tent because I wasn't sure whether I could resist my desire for my mate. I'd tried my best not to force her, but it had been getting harder.

I couldn't understand why, after all the difficulties we had gone through together, she just couldn't accept me into her life?

Two guards stood outside of Rosalie's tent. They both made the sign of respect to me as I approached, and I gave them a wave of my hand to say that wasn't necessary.

Opening the tent door, I walked in, my eyes falling immediately on Rosalie's face. Talon was right. She was sitting on the cot, her knees pulled up to her chest with her arms wrapped around them.

She didn't even look at me when I came in. Her eyes were still locked on the tent wall across from her. I wasn't even sure if she was blinking.

"Rosalie?" I called her name, but she didn't turn to look at me. She was wearing the same clothes she'd had on the day before when I'd come in, sweatpants, a large T-shirt, and thick wool socks that went almost to her knees.

She looked sexy in anything, and even with her messy hair piled on top of her head, I wanted to go to her and take her in my arms, but that's not what she wanted right now.

"Rosalie," I said, closing the distance between us. "I hear you're not eating. Listen, you've got to eat. What about the baby? If you don't eat, he can't eat."

She still didn't look up at me.

Talon was right—she really was in a trance.

Dropping to my knees, I leaned against the cot, hoping she'd acknowledge that I was there, but she didn't turn her head.

"Rosalie?" I said again. This time, I had to work really hard to make myself sound calm.

I took a deep breath and put my hand on her shoulder. "I know that you're angry at me, but you have to trust me that it's for the best."

Rubbing her back, I leaned closer to her face, willing her to just turn her head a little. She didn't.

I lifted my hand to her hair, gently tugging on a loose curl, but she continued to ignore me. Even when I ran my hand across her cheek, she didn't turn to face me.

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Her sweet scent filled my nostril, and I had to fight hard against the desire to claim her and mark her right there. But at the same time, her behavior started to get on my nerves,

I leaned closer to her so that my face was in front of hers. "Rosalie?" I said again. "Can you hear me?"

She blinked then, and her eyes came to focus on mine. At that moment, I felt my heart flutter in my chest just at the eye contact. A small smile pulled at the corners of my mouth.

"There you are," I said. "Everything is going to be okay, I promise. I love you, Rosalie."

I leaned forward to kiss her, but a flash of her hand and the feel of cold metal against my chest had me pausing a few inches from her lips.

Glancing down, I saw that she'd pulled a blade on me. A silver knife gleamed in the lamplight. She had it pressed against my chest, right above my heart

Shocked, I met her eyes again. I realized that was the knife I brought in along with her birthday lunch.

She said nonchalantly, "You say you love me, Ethan, but I'm your prisoner here."

"You're not my prisoner. If you promise me that you won't run away, then you will have all the freedom you want. I'm just trying to protect you."

Her eyes narrowed. "If you truly loved me, Ethan, you'd let me leave. You wouldn't be keeping me here against my will when you know how badly I want to leave!"

It would've been easy for me to grab her wrist and pull the knife out of her grip. I was much stronger than her, and she was weaker than normal from not eating

But at that moment, I didn't care. With Rosalie angry at me, with the state of how everything was at the moment... part of me didn't even care anymore.

"If you want my life, Rosalie, then take it. You already have my heart You may as well have all of me. With that, I leaned forward to press my lips against hers with the knife still pointing against my skin.

As my lips pressed against her warm, still mouth, a sharp pain radiated through my chest, and the scent of blood filled the air, but I didn't care.

I continued to push myself forward.

Her delicious pink lips were calling for me and I was so desperate for her that nothing else mattered

## Chapter 154 And Spanking

\*\*Rosalie's POV

I was tired of it all

Tired of him treating me as if I was a child.

Tired of him acting like he could control every aspect of my life.

I was supposed to be the queen of the north, and I demanded respect from everyone—including him. Ethan had been acting crazy since the moment he realized I was his mate, and even before that.

No matter how many times I tried to reason with him, he didn't care. Even my son was rarely brought to me unless it was time for him to eat, and Ethan doing that to me made me hate him more.

I was the one to decide how to take care of my son, and I had done it on my own since his birth.

If someone would take those rights away from me, they would pay dearly for their actions, without exception.

So when Ethan came in to check on me, I was ready. I played the poor, pitiful woman he thought I was, and I took advantage of the situation.

His eyes widened as the blade pierced his skin. I took him by surprise. His crimson orbs stared at me in shock. Hopefully, he understood now that I wasn't the girl he thought I was.

I was ready for him to see me as an equal, and not someone who had to be told what to do.

"Finish it," he muttered against my lips as I stared at him. "Go on... do it."

His words caught me off guard, and regardless of my anger towards him and the situation he put me in, I started to panic

What was he doing? Did he lose his mind?!

As much as I wanted to get away from him, did I ever want to really kill him?

I didn't know. There was still love for him in my heart that I hated. A part of me wanted to spend my life with him, but the other part vowed to loathe him for all eternity

He pressed his body against the knife a little more and looked at me with joy and franticness in his eyes. It was as if he'd be so happy if he was dead in my hands right here.

I wasn't so sure what I saw in his crimson orbs.

Pain, desire, desperation and maybe... love? I was confused. Did he really love me? Did he really not care if I killed him? *Was* I wrong about him?

What on earth did he want from me?!

"Rosalie, take it, take my life," he whispered again and pushed himself even further.

"S—stop it!"

My hand could no longer hold the knife still before his lips descended on mine.

The blade clattered to the floor.

His lips devoured mine, his hand held the back of my head close to him, and his tongue invaded my mouth. His scent surrounded me.

I had no place to hide from him, and I felt his other hand had pressed my body tightly against his. I could feel his

burning hard desire against my thigh.

All parts of rationalization left my mind at that moment as I succumbed to the lust he brought me. I hated him and what he was doing, but at the same time, I realized that I wanted this. I wanted him to make me feel the way he did before. I wanted him to help me forget.

As confusion and lust took over, his fingers slipped under the hem of my shirt, sliding across my bare skin before gripping at my hips.

Grinding and kissing, the heightened sense of passion between us clouded my mind further until the only thing left I wanted was for him to claim me like the animal he was.

"I hate you... Ethan..." I whispered, but even I could tell how seductive I sounded, earning a growl of dangerous desire from him in response. His movements became more frenzied and hungry with every motion he made.

Before I knew it, my shirt was thrown to the floor along with the rest of our clothing. His head descended between my thighs causing my head to tilt back in pleasure as he devoured my core. The vibrations of his growls as he swirled his tongue against my sensitive numb pushing me over the edge.

"Oh, goddess..." | moaned.

Over and over, I rocked my hips against his face, wanting more and more of him. The radiating waves of pleasure that rocked my body were explosive. Every single nerve ending heightened unlike ever before.

Leaning up, Ethan looked at me with his blood red eyes. The stare was evil and raw, but something in it made me soaking wet for him. He gripped me roughly, turning me over onto my knees, pulling my \*ss towards him before thrusting himself into me from behind.

A cry escaped my lips as his fingers gripped my hair, jerking my head back roughly.

"Do you like that, Rosalie?" he taunted me in my ear, causing me to gasp in pleasure. "Do you like it when I punish you for not listening?"

In any normal state, I would probably lash out at him and tell him to go shove it, but right now I wanted him, and every word he said made me want to come undone.

"Ethan..." | begged, "please..."

"Please what?" He panted.

I cried with tears falling down my cheeks. I didn't know what I felt—hopeless, pain, shame or pleasure. It didn't matter. The only thing I knew was...

“Please... I want you.”

Thrusting hard against me, his thick erection hit my cervix. The swell of his knot stretched my core to the max, causing me to cry out. As my climax hit, he continued thrusting, forcing me to ride out the wave he'd created.

Yet, he wasn't done.

I widened my eyes and realized that he gave me a smile like demon from h\*ll. I swallowed hard as he spanked my bottom.

I screamed as he held me tight against him, and he continued.

I couldn't remember how many times I begged him for more or to stop, I was so lost in the sensation that my brain could not think at all.

This was an Ethan I hadn't experienced before. A side of him that was more animalistic than human, and even though the pure primal carnage of it was intoxicating... I knew I would hate myself for it later.

I hated the way he made me feel, but I craved it.

No one could make me feel the way Ethan did, and I wanted no one else to.

Slowly spinning me around to make sure his knot doesn't tug the wrong way, he pulls my chest to his and looks me in the eye as I bounce up and down on his shaft. His lips found mine as sweat dripped down against our skin.

\*I'm going to spill every inch of my seed into you, Rosalie. You're the only woman who will ever bear my children,” he growled before taking my lips once more.

His words took me by surprise, but the idea was not one I cared to think about at the moment.

The night was supposed to turn out the way it was. I was supposed to keep my cool and force him to let me leave, but... how could he do this to me?

It was so unfair....

I met his crooked smile and all of a sudden felt hopeless and ashamed of myself, but at the same time, I just could not deny the pleasure and my own desire for him.

Looking down, I saw the cut where I stabbed him. Bright red liquid was leaking out from there, as if it was calling for me.

“You are so unfair!!” I cried out loud, and I just didn't know what was right or wrong any more. When the rush of emotions took over, I bit down on his cut.

My tongue trailed over his wound, lapping up the blood that had been spilled, which caused him to groan in pleasure as his pace sped up, going faster and faster.

Without thinking about my actions, I sucked more blood out from the cut. A cry of pain and pleasure escaped him as his hot seed filled the inside of me.

His warm blood flowed into my mouth, causing a moan of pleasure to leave my lips as I relished in the metallic taste of him.

Gripping my jaw, Ethan pulled my lips from his chest and stared at me for a moment before his lips captured mine and the taste of his blood mingled in both of our mouths. By then, my lips were sore from so much kissing, I felt a split in my own bottom lip.

Ethan must have felt it too, because his kisses became more gentle, and he then used his tongue to lick my blood off and kissed me again.

The erotic sensation of our mixed blood play caused me to move my hips along his sensitive shaft more. A shivering wave of delight seemed to cross his face, and he smiled at me lustfully.

I realized that he was far from finishing.

– gasped, and the night continued....

\*\*Madalynn's POV

I sent my guys out to try to locate Ethan's camp. When they finally found it, for two days, they tried to find a way to get in to obtain the prize I sought. However, the detail on her was so thick, my guys couldn't make much progress.

There was limited information my scouting group collected, but it was enough for me to raise my stakes.

They saw Rosalie's form come storming out of the tent wrapped in a robe, beyond pissed off, and Ethan came chasing after her like a dog chasing a bone.

"Madalynn?" a voice called to me as I stepped back into the center of my camp. Turning, I came face to face with James's messenger from before.

"Oh, you came back," I snorted, shaking my head.

"I told you I would be back in two days," he snapped with irritation.

Growls resonated around me as his eyes glanced around. "I would be careful how you speak to me. They don't like the disrespect

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\*\*What do you say? Do you accept the king's offer to collaborate with us?" he asked quickly, not wanting to waste anymore time

"Perhaps. Follow me."

Walking towards my tent, I entered and made my way towards the watering canister to quench my thirst. I gulped down the water in disgust. It wasn't as delicious as blood,

I had thought about what James had offered me. However, the situation was a bit more challenging than I thought it would be

“It seems the stakes are higher than what was offered.”

He didn’t change his expression. “I take it as *you’re* not competent?”

“If you don’t need me, then why are you here? Why don’t you go f\*ck yourself?” I snapped. “They are fated mates Now that she has her wolf, it will be even harder.”

He looked surprised for a moment, and then smirked, “That’s why King James made the offer.”

“What makes you think I would even consider working with you?”

I watched as he chuckled, “Because, while you have been focused on them, we have been watching you, Madalynn. It seems that we are both in the same situation, with neither of us able to get what we want.”

“Be it as it may... I want her dead while *you* want her alive. I see conflict with that.”

“King James needs her alive only for a short time,” he replied. “When His Majesty is done, maybe he will give her to you. That is something you will have to discuss with him.”

Discussions with James?

From what I saw, that man discussed nothing. Yet, his proposal was one that intrigued me. If I worked with him, then it would mean I would get to come back to court.

I would be pardoned of my so-called crimes, and I would redeem myself to high society with a decent bounty paid to me up front

It was a good deal—if it all worked out.

I wasn’t meant for the roque life, but I made it work for now. However, I wasn’t planning to be a rogue for the rest of my life.

“Well, then,” I said after much contemplation, “what are your plans?”

“It isn’t that hard,” a vicious smile crossed his face, “Ethan may be powerful, but he can only be in one place at a time. You lead your guys to distract him, and I’ll lead mine to take Rosalie.”

## **Chapter 155: Escaping From The Rogue King**

\*\*Soren’s POV

For days, I had been searching for Rosalie and had still come up empty-handed.

It hadn’t been easy to track her while avoiding all of the other parties running amok in the woods.

All of a sudden, the northern territory was crowded with different forces. Besides the mysterious Winter Forest pack, not only were there guys from my uncle’s kingdom, who would’ve gladly had my head if they were to come across me, there were also King James’s secret agents as well as all sorts of rogues.

On the way to the frontline, I caught word of the Rogue King. The moment I overheard some villagers talking about the handsome, muscular man with the red eyes who was undefeatable in battle, I knew who it had to be.



My half-brother Ethan. The Alpha who had been thrown out of the capital by his very own cousin. Who else could it be?

But I didn't want to have anything to do with them, Kal, James or Ethan. None. I simply wanted to find Rosalie and make sure that she was okay. James was after her for her blood. If she wasn't careful, they would find opportunities to approach her and take her back to Mirage.

However, regardless of trying my best, I was still too late.

By the time I got to the frontline, unfortunately, I got word that Rosalie was already taken away by the Rogue King. He came and left like a ghost. No one knew how he did it, but we were not able to locate him after his short appearance.

The Winter Forest pack had been searching for their queen for days. Even if the scout got a glimpse of the Rogue King, by the time the reinforcements arrived, Ethan and his group would just disappear again. No one was able to get in touch with Rosalie, so we had no way of knowing whether she was there with him because she wanted to be or because he wouldn't let her go.

I needed to find that out. If she did want to be liberated, then no matter how strong Ethan was, I would do everything I could to set her free.

I was frustrated with the progress Cerina and Seraphine made in searching for Rosalie and decided it would be best if I acted on my own. I realized that I could guess some of Ethan's plans when I put myself in his shoes. After all, we were brothers. A lot of times, we would think alike.

After almost a week, I'd managed to spot a campsite that I thought had to be Ethan's. I spent a day or two in the woods nearby without being detected, but just when I thought I saw someone walking around who looked a lot like my half-brother, I realized that the smell of wolves was growing stronger by the second.

Part of me wanted to stick around to confirm whether that was Ethan, but the alarms in my brain were going off, telling me to run.

They must've detected me and were on my trail.

Abandoning my initial goal, I took off, running through the forest as quickly as I could. Hearing the sound of paws hitting the forest floor near behind me, I dodged behind a tree and stripped in order to salvage my clothes before I shifted, taking them with me.

In my wolf form, I was faster than in my human form, and I was also quicker than Ethan's soldiers.

He wasn't the only brother who got speed and agility as part of their good genes.

I circled back around the battlefield that they'd all been fighting on a few days ago, letting the mixed scents from the various packs mask my smell. The aluminum odor of blood and a hint of death hung in the air as well, mingling

with the usual fragrances of the forest. Together, they helped me to hide my trail.

Still, I could feel them behind me, even if they weren't right on my tail anymore. I circled around again, going much wider and heading for a nearby village. Perhaps I could find a place to hide there or at the very least use the scents of the others in the village to mask my own.

I dodged between buildings and down alleys, drawing a few eyes from passersby who were probably wondering if I was a rogue myself.

But my eyes were not red, so they didn't stare for long at the stranger, assuming I meant no harm.

I kept running, making loops, heading back into the woods a distance from Ethan's camp.

Once I reached a thicker section of forest, I slowed down and listened. I didn't hear them anywhere. I couldn't smell them anymore either.

I thought I'd lost them..

I decided to take a breather. I shifted back into my human form and got dressed. I sat with my back against the trunk of a pine tree and considered my next move.

How was I supposed to get into the camp all by myself to find out whether or not Rosalie was truly there?

If I still had the troops I had before, it would be so much easier. I wasn't used to being on my own. I had people who worked for me, and I had Thomas, but now... it was just me.

Closing my eyes, I let my exhaustion from running around the woods overtake me. Before I knew it, I was asleep and dreaming of Rosalie, of finding her, liberating her, and running away with her to a place where she and I could start a life together with the baby. It was a pleasant dream, one I never wanted to end.

But then, a strange noise woke me, and when my eyes flew open, I was looking into a pair of dark eyes only a few inches from my face.

I leaped backward, wanting to get into a defensive position, but I was trapped against the tree. I swung my fist around, which seemed to startle the person in front of me. And in a flash, I noticed a knife was pointing at my throat.

However, the person holding the knife was trembling, obviously not a seasoned fighter. I narrowed my eyes and dodged the knife easily. With a few tussels back and forth, I gained the upper hand and snatched the knife from my attacker.

It didn't take long for me to pin him down and point the knife back at his throat, but then I realized that he was a young wolf who had fear in his eyes.

"Who are you?" I growled.

"Wait! Don't hurt him!" an elderly female voice said, "I 'pologize for that, son!"

I looked up from the young man and saw the face of an old woman. She said, "We ain't sure whether you're a rogue. Sorry, we needed to be careful."

I didn't move and evaluated my situation. It was true that they didn't attack me in the first place. Had I not waved my fists around, the guy probably wouldn't have pulled the knife. They probably didn't intend to really hurt me after all.

Sol moved the knife away and released the young men in my capture.

I got a clear view of the leader. She was probably in her mid-seventies with gray hair and wrinkled skin. She was covered in dirt and leaves, as was I, no doubt, and it appeared as if she must live out here in the woods.

"We're all good," I said. "I didn't mean any harm either. I was just very tired and took a rest here."

I wasn't afraid of them, but I'd rather conserve my energy by avoiding any fighting at the moment.

"Yes, we see it now, son," she nodded. "You look half-starved, too. You hungry?" Thadn't eaten much of anything for the last several days, so I found myself nodding before I even considered why she was asking.

"Well, why don't you come on over to our camp with me, and we'll fix you up with some stew, huh?"

"\*Camp?" I repeated, not sure what she was talking about. Who was the "we" she had referenced?

"That's right. I'm Wanda, and we live in these parts. Ain't many of us, but we're close. Come with me."

"Hi, Wanda," I said, nodding at her kindness. "I appreciate it." I had no idea if I should trust her or not, but if it was a pack of old and weak, I thought I'd be fine.

Pulling myself up off of the ground, I followed her about a quarter-mile to the camp she'd referred to. It was small, only a few huts and a firepit where a pot was heating. The smell told me this was the stew she'd referred to.

As we entered, a few others came out. Not all of them were old, but none of them looked intimidating. One was a young girl. She had to be about Rosalie's age, I imagined.

Wanda told me their names. The girl, Becca, nodded at me, but she kept her distance. She looked frightened. I stayed away from her out of respect. The young man who initially approached me was her brother.

Afraid to tell them my real name in case they had heard of me, I said, "I'm Shawn." They gave me friendly nods to welcome my arrival.

"What brings you out this way, Shawn?" a middle-aged man named Henry asked me.

"I lost my pack during the war and I escaped with only one woman. When that battle was going on the other day, we split up to avoid the conflict." It was a lie, but not much of one. "I haven't been able to find her since then, and I'm afraid she might've been captured by the Rogue King." That part was true.

"Your mate?" Henry asked.

I wished, but I shook my head. "No, but she's most important to me."

As Wanda passed me a bowl of stew, she smiled, "Ah, young lover."

Not exactly. But I didn't deny it either. "Thank you," I took the bowl over and sat down to eat the stew with them. "What brings all of you here?" I asked.

"Most of us here lost our families to those damn rogues or the war," she said, and during dinner, I heard more of their stories.

Wanda had lost her home and her husband. With nowhere to turn, she'd ended up here. Becca's parents had been killed when she and her brother were younger, and now, this was their family. They didn't have a penny to her name. Henry had deserted his post with the army because he was afraid of dying, and now he was on the run.

I'd always looked at war from the military perspective, and rarely knew what it really meant for the normal civilians.

What would they think of me if they knew my role in the conflict and that I had been sending resources to the rogues? I shook that thought out of my head.

As the sun began to go down, Wanda asked, "You got a place to sleep tonight?" "No," I told her. "I'll probably just find a tree somewhere." "Oh, no! You can't do that! Rogues are everywhere," Henry said.

"Stay here. We've got plenty of room."

I tried to turn it down. "Nah, I still need to go find her. But thanks."

Wanda frowned, "Ya' said you've been runnin' 'round for a few days. Why that be?"

I shrugged. "They knew my scent by now."

Becca, who had been quiet, lifted her head. She whispered something into Wanda's ear, and Wanda discussed it quietly with Henry.

"Son," Wanda said, "why don't ya' stay the night with us, and we'll go with ya' tomorrow? It'd be slower, but we may be able to help cover your scent."

I didn't know that was even possible. However, I remembered when they approached me, I didn't sense anything.

"How?"

"We got our ways, son. Ya'know, otherwise we wouldn't be able to survive."

My eyes widened. That, indeed, could be a great help. However, I was wary, "Why would you do that?."

Wanda chuckled. "Easy, son. All of us here know what it's like to lose someone. If we can help, as long as it won't put us in danger, we'll help. We're all a bunch of misfits, but we know how to take care of one

another.”

Her words touched a soft place in my heart.

Misfits... more and more often lately, that was how I felt too, I didn't belong to any pack any more and I'd lost pretty much everything. This group was a bunch of outcasts, yet, I fit well here.

I laughed at myself bitterly.

That night, lying in a hut with a few other men, including Henry who snored like a grizzly bear, I stared up at the thatch roof and thought of Rosalie and her baby. I had to find a way to get them back.

These people were kind enough to offer help to a stranger like me. I didn't want to put any of them at risk, but needed it, and they seemed to be confident about keeping themselves safe.

In addition, if they helped me get to Rosalie, it may give them an opportunity to join the pack of the north and not have to be outcasts anymore, so it would be worth it.

Rosalie was kind and forgiving, she would welcome them with open arms, especially if she knew that they helped me to find her....

When I finally fell asleep, there was a smile on my face.

### **Chapter 156 After The Wild Sex...**

\*Ethan POV

Staring down at Rosalie, I spent the entire rest of the night admiring her beauty. Never had we made love in such a way, but now, with her back to my chest and my body wrapped around hers, I was indulged in love and passion that I thought I would never be able to obtain.

She was exhausted and had been sleeping for a few hours. Her breathing was smooth, and her scent was incredibly delicious. My wolf was already whimpering for her again, but I knew she would be too tired for that.

So many thoughts were running through my mind. She tried to kill me, but she didn't. Did that mean that perhaps I weighed more in her heart than I thought?

I was hopeful. Perhaps if I worked hard enough, she could still find the possibility of accepting me back into her life? And perhaps my dream to start all over again with her was something that was actually possible?

She was everything to me. Everything I always wanted, and couldn't believe that I was so stupid long ago to even consider ending her life.

I also couldn't believe I was so clueless that she could have been my mate.

The wound at my chest had healed more rapidly than anything I had ever witnessed before, and it made me wonder if the rumors about Rosalie were true.

Did she really have healing powers?

Was her blood a cure that would change the outcome of the war?

Many questions ran through my mind, but at the end of the day, deep down, I knew the truth. I knew that one way or another, Rosalie was far more special than we realized.

Her sweet body wiggled, which pulled me out of my own thoughts. I noticed that her breathing had changed. She must be awake.

“Rosalie...” I whispered softly in her ear as my fingers brushed strands of hair from her sleeping face.

However, I heard no response.

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I used one arm to support my body so that I could see her face, “Talk to me Rosalie,” I whispered again.

“Tell me what you want...”

Then I saw her eyes staring off into the distance, and her gaze contained no emotion at all again.

My heart sank.

So desperately did I want to see the love and affection in her eyes that I had once seen, but it was more than obvious that that version of Rosalie was gone.

I couldn't tell what she was thinking at the moment, but it certainly was not adoration.

She unwrapped herself from my arms, sat up slowly, and pulled away from me. My brows furrowed in confusion as I watched her naked form walk towards a chair and grab the silk robe, slipping it on around her body.

Her cold attitude extinguished the love and passion in the tent instantly, and I felt disappointment, and resentment started to replace the tenderness and joy in my heart. At that moment I was so upset that I raised my voice. "So is that it? | asked with sarcasm. "Are you just going to ignore me?" She turned and stared at me and finally asked me back, "What do you want me to say, Ethan?"

I didn't know how to answer,

She shook her head and sat down on a chair in the far corner of the tent. It was silent again.

The indifference in her tone and gaze caused anger to surge through me. "Rosalie, I just want you to be the woman I know you can be." I pressed down my irritation and tried to make myself sound leveled.

Her response was again cold and distant. "The old Rosalie is long gone, Ethan. This is the person you get from now on.

I stood up and walked over to her, gripping her arm. "Don't do this to me..."

Her eyes stayed on me for a moment as if she was searching the depths of my soul, but in the end, only a small smirk crossed her lips, and she looked away. She didn't bother to argue with me any more.

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My eyes widened with shock as a roar escaped my lips in anger. "Then what was last night about?!"

"Last night was a mistake. That was all," she calmly declared

It took me a while to take in what she had said, and she had no idea how much her words hurt.

No longer able to withstand her indifference, I grabbed my shorts, slid them on, and stormed out of her tent.

I told myself that she played a good game of pretending that she didn't care, but deep down, I knew she did. There was no way that she would sleep with me and not have some type of feelings.

It just wasn't possible. I refused to believe it.

"Alpha?" Talon's voice rang behind me, and turning, I found concern etched on his face. Something was wrong, and whatever it was, Talon was worried..

"What the f\*ck do you need me for?!" I was already in a terrible mood and had no interest in dealing with Talon's sht.

Talon frowned and looked into my eyes, even more worried He hesitated but went on with his reporting after a short pause.

"We've been working on clearing up the area surrounding the camp and pushing our border further. Some scouts came back last night. They ran into some other rogues and didn't get as far as we hoped, but they still made some progress."

"Who went?"

"Siggle Eye's group along with another four groups."

"How many did we lose?"

Talon's tone was lighter, and he said in a more cheerful tone, "Fortunately, none."

.

“None died, meaning they didn’t fight hard enough. They made no progress, and you’re happy? Talon, what the f\*ck is wrong with you!”

Talon’s brow furrowed. “Alpha, I don’t understand.” I turned to him and gave him my order. “Kill all the guys who led the operation.” Talon was stunned, and he looked me in the eye. “Ethan... what’s going on! Are you serious?” “Are you f\*cking questioning me?” I roared. Why must everyone fight with me? Why couldn’t they just do what I asked? Rosalie first, then Georgia fought with me asking me to let the baby stay with Rosalie, and now Talon...? “Ethan, do you understand what you’re talking about? You’re not yourself!” Talon rarely raised his voice at me, but he obviously wanted his opinion heard this time.

“If you don’t want to do it, I will!”:

What the h\*ck was wrong with everyone?!

My anger rose rapidly, and the only thing that could calm my fury was blood.

I needed to feel my enemies’ blood drip from my mouth as I snapped their necks and ripped out their throats. I needed it, and I needed it now.

Quickly I shifted, and as I did, a roar escaped my throat, letting out the battle cry that other wolves should be fearful of, regardless of whether they were from my ranks or from the enemies’.

“Sh\*t!” I heard Talon curse and chase after me.

I let the madness and bloodlust fill my mind as I let my wolf take control. By the time I got to the other side of the camp, I saw Vicky and Paul. They were helping those who were wounded from the operation that Talon had just reported about.

“Alpha!” the couple greeted me, but I could see terror in their eyes when they met my eyes.

“Move!” My red eyes gazed forward. Those savages fought like sh\*t. They deserve to die without honor!’ I roared at them through the mindlink.

Their eyes widened in fear as they stared at me, mouths opened wide. Were they afraid of me? Good, they should be!

“Alpha!” Vicky pressed down her voice so that those wounded not far away wouldn’t hear our conversation. “They joined our cause and fought for us. Please, spare their lives

I narrowed my eyes, and Talon arrived, inserting himself between me and his sister.

You will watch how you speak to me, Vicky!’ I snapped at her in the mindlink. The rage coursed inside me, and I was so consumed with the anger that rationality wasn’t in my forefront.

Vicky whispered, “My apologies, Alpha.” Her eyes cast low, and I could tell Paul was wary of me.

Talon had shifted back to his human form as he grabbed two capes. He wrapped one around himself and tossed the other to my wolf. He knew that I wouldn’t attack his human form. “Alpha, just take a moment for yourself. Please!”

I hated when they called me Alpha.

What kind of Alpha was I really becoming... one without a title,. Without a soul... and without a mate. I pressed down my anger as much as I could and shifted back as well

“Do none of you understand my order? They are weak, and I don’t have time for weakness! Kill them!”

A voice rang behind me. “I can’t shift, and according to you, I’m weak too. Why don’t you just f\*cking kill me as well?” It was Georgia. Great, just great. They were all teaming up against me!

“Georgia, what the f\*ck are you doing here?”

She ignored me and greeted the rest of the group, “Oh, hi, guys! Um, do you mind if I have a word with my brother? I don’t want to make this ugly.”

I clenched my fists. Talon looked at her with disapproval, but she winked back at him. He sighed and

pulled both Vicky and Paul away. After the three of them left the scene, Georgia snapped at me, "You need to f\*cking wake up, Ethan! It wasn't your choice to become a rogue, but what the f\*ck are you doing right now?!" "I'm doing what's best for everyone!" I retorted. "No, you're not. You're just lashing out at everyone for no reason. Talon and Vicky gave up everything for you, and look what you're doing to them now!" . Glancing at her, I bared my teeth in anger. "Watch how you speak to me.". "Stop it, Ethan! Stop telling us what we should or should not do. We're all adults, and we know how to f\*cking take care of ourselves!"

Htook a deep breath. "So you're here to question how I run my ranks, Georgia?"

"No, that's your f\*cking business. I'm here for Rosalie. I want to see her, and she needs to see her son."

"No," I replied, still thinking about how Rosalie acted earlier. "She needs to rest."

"That is literally your f\*cking explanation for everything! That's all you ever say to anyone. That Rosalie needs to rest. Stop being a f\*cking \*sshole and let her go back to her people, and let her be the queen she is, Ethan!"

stared at her. "I know what you're thinking, Georgia! You want to help her run away from me. You want to go back to her pack and act like a hero. But this is real war we're fighting, Georgia, not some f\*cking kids' game!"

"What the f\*ck are you talking about?!"

Georgia's eyes looked up to me once more. "Like I said, I'm just wasting my time trying to reason with you. I'll say this once. You need to trust us, and you need to trust Rosalie. If you're going to keep her here, at least let her have company! If you don't trust me, fine. At least let Talon or Vicky go. You know they won't betray you!" My eyes widened with fury burning in their depths as a roar escaped my lips.

"Shut up, Georgia!"

Georgia wasn't afraid of me at all, and she sneered, "I will after I'm done. She deserves so much better than what you are right now, and so does your son. You are not the man you used to be, and I can see why she doesn't want you any more, you asshole!"

Ll

After she finished, he turned around and left me standing there by myself.

I could feel the pull towards Rosalie again and I caught a glimpse of her tent. It seemed that her tent flap was open for a second.

The red haze in my eye seemed to fade a little. I stood there for a few minutes and then walked to my own tent. However, Georgia's words kept coming back to my mind.

I sat on my bed and tried to press my frustration down without avail.

Finally, I mindlinked Vicky.

'Yes, Alpha?' she responded instantly. I could tell she had found her calm self again.

"Alpha...?' she asked tentatively.

After a long pause, I said, 'Go check on Rosalie.'

## **Chapter 157: Visit From a Friend**

**\*\*Rosalie's POV**

I was so disappointed in myself.

How could I allow Ethan to manipulate me that way? I tried so hard to stay away from him, but I failed miserably. The physical attraction I had towards him was something I could never understand.

However, every time after that, I'd feel so ashamed. I couldn't do this any more. I needed to get out of here....

After Ethan left, I went back to staring at nothing, praying to the Moon Goddess that she would let me

out of this hellhole, that I could get my son and get back to my new home with my pack.

Then I heard him shouting outside of the tent, I had to get up and go see what was happening. I couldn't gather much, but it seemed from the looks on Vicky and Talon's faces, amongst others, that Ethan was pissing other people off, too, and not just me.

Falling back onto the bed, I resumed my attempt at clearing my mind completely. I didn't want to think about my current

situation, so I tried not to think at all. But my arms felt empty, and my heart ached because my baby wasn't here with me.

The tent flap opened, and I just assumed it was either one of the guards bringing me food again or it was Ethan coming back for another round. I was dressed now and didn't intend to give in to his carnal needs anytime soon.

"Rosalie?"

The sound of a familiar female voice had me turning around quickly.

I could hardly believe my eyes.

"Vicky?" I said, getting to my feet. Was my friend really standing inside of my tent?

She had tears in her eyes, and I moved to her quickly, the two of us embracing in a tight hug as both of us began to weep with joy at finally being reunited.

It took both of us several moments to be able to regain the ability to speak. "Does Ethan know you're in here?" I asked her. I wanted to see her so badly, but I didn't want her to get in trouble.

She nodded. "Yes, he does, though I don't know how long he'll let me stay. How are you?"

I wasn't sure how to answer that. She reached up and smoothed back my hair, and I felt myself tearing up again. Shaking my head, I asked, "How did everything get to be such a mess?"

"I don't know," she admitted. "But every time I start to think this has to be it, we've reached rock bottom, something else happens that makes the situation a thousand times worse."

The two of us sat on the edge of my cot. I had so much I wanted to tell her, and I wanted to know all about how things had been for her, but I wasn't even sure where to begin.

Eventually, I asked, "How was your journey here?"

"It was difficult at first. I'm certainly not used to sleeping outside under the stars," she chuckled, "but now that I have a tent, it's a lot more comfortable." She said it in a lighthearted tone, but I knew they must have been through a lot more trouble than what she made it sound like.

"How are Talon and Estrella?"

"Talon's the same. Estrella went back to the pack, and I'm assuming no news is good news. Regardless of whether Alpha is there, Drogomor pack still has the best warriors and is useful for the kingdom, you know."

From what I'd heard, King James's banishment was only for Ethan. As a politician and a ruler, the best choice for the

king would be to absorb the Drogomor warriors into his own military force. I would assume he'd left the rest of the pack unharmed

Maybe Talon and Vicky didn't need to run away from the capital either... but they still chose to follow their Alpha.

I sighed. "You've been so brave to go through all of this and follow Ethan."

"I couldn't stay in the castle, not under the circumstances. Alpha did everything he could to serve his country, and we'd follow him to the end of the world. Plus, the king wouldn't go easy on me or Talon being Alpha's confidants anyway."



“Why wouldn’t the king keep his word? I thought he was only after Ethan.”

“You’re too kind, Rosalie. Think again for me, please?” Vicky smiled bitterly.

I pondered for a moment and realized that I might be too naive. If Vicky and Talon stayed in the capital, knowing how much Ethan cared about his subordinates, King James would probably hold Talon, Vicky, and some of Ethan’s most trusted subordinates hostage.

Knowing Ethan, he would definitely go back for them. At that point, he would be just willingly walking back into their trap.

I looked up at Vicky. She could tell I’d come to the conclusion myself. “Alpha might not be perfect, but we wouldn’t abandon him, just like we knew he’d never abandon us. See, King James knew that too. In fact, he sent men after us and tried to eliminate us all.”

| gasped. “Thank goodness you all are okay.”

This time, Vicky chuckled mysteriously, which made me confused and curious. “What’s that smile about?” I asked.

Vicky commented, “Yes, we are all good, because the king sent the wrong person to go after us.”

I looked at her even more confused.

“He sent Paul,” Vicky explained, “He sent my mate!”

It took me just a few seconds to digest what she said, and my eyes widened. “You mean...”

A smile pulled up the corners of her mouth. “Yes! You remember Paul? The guard from the capital that I knew was my mate?” Just speaking his name made her smile brighter.

“Of course, I do.”

“King James sent him after Alpha, but he is on our side now because of me!” she said proudly.

“Oh, my! Vicky! That’s wonderful! Well, I meant, not great that King James was after you, but Paul... how wonderful!”

She giggled. “Yes... I agree.”

“I’m so glad to hear that,” I told her. “You deserve someone who loves you with his whole heart and will make you happy.”

“Thank you, Rosalie.”

As glad as I was for her, the statement made my chest feel heavy because I didn’t have that, and as long as Ethan was supposed to be my mate, I had a feeling I never would.

Realizing that I was thinking about him again, I forced myself to focus back on Vicky.

After we took a moment to soak each other in, she asked me in a more cheerful voice, “How about you? I want to know what happened to you! You must have had quite the adventure getting to the north, I assume?”

“Yes, I certainly did.”

I thought back over the past few months and gave her a brief summary on what happened after I left Mirage and how | ended up in the Winter Forest pack.

Vicky squeezed my hand and said, “We all heard about the White Queen, and you have no idea how proud of you we are!!”

My face started to heat up. “I’m still learning, Vicky, but for the first time in my life, I felt like maybe I’d finally found a place where I fit in, where I could contribute.”

“I’m so glad that you were able to find your people. We always knew there was something incredibly special about you.”

I felt my face turning bright red at her compliment. “Thank you,” I told her. “I had a lot of help.”

“Still...” Vicky said, “you are amazing, Rosalie. And the fact that you were able to step in right away and take over as the queen says a lot about you.”

I wanted to thank her for her kind words again, however, the thought of my people and my responsibility pulled me back to reality. I muttered, “They have to be missing me and wondering where I am....”

Seeing that I was worried, Vicky squeezed my hand. “Rosalie, sorry about your situation.... Please, just give Alpha some time. It has been a few rough months for him.”

“Vicky, I know this wasn’t something you could control. Georgia has tried too, but Ethan just does whatever he wants,” I muttered

Vicky replied, “Despite the changes that Alpha has undergone recently, he does love you.”

I couldn’t help but scoff. “He certainly has a funny way of showing it.”

“I totally agree,” Vicky said. “He has never been good with his emotions, but now that he’s become a rogue, his anger has taken over his life, and he’s not able to make rational decisions anymore.”

Something told me she wasn’t just talking about me being a prisoner.

I frowned. My mind went to the scene where he was scolding Talon or Vicky earlier.

I felt that Ethan had changed. Not just his appearance... Was he still the man he once was?

“What’s going on, Vicky?” I asked.

She took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. “We had a battle earlier. We won, but some of the rogues that have joined us recently didn’t perform to the level of Alpha’s expectations. That’s not surprising.”

“That’s understandable,” I nodded and smiled. “No one was trained like the Drogomor pack.”

“Exactly,” Vicky said. “But he was so unhappy with the way the survivors handled themselves in battle, he’s calling for them to be executed.”

I stared at her for a long moment, my eyes wide with shock. “Seriously?” I asked. “But... why would he do that?”

Vicky shook her head. “I don’t know. It doesn’t seem like something Alpha would even consider in the past, but he’s adamant that it must be done. Talon and I tried to talk him out of it, but he won’t listen to us.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Vicky....”

She patted my hand. “Rosalie, you have nothing to apologize for... it’s just that we’re all worried about him. He’s losing himself.”

Losing himself. I repeated her words in my mind. “What do you mean by losing himself?”

“We’re worried that he will turn into a rogue..” Vicky’s look was concerned, “a real rogue, if he lets his desire for blood take over. Killing might feel good for him at the moment, but the more he gives in to that bloodthirsty desire, the sooner he’ll lose his soul.”

“... I didn’t know that...” I gasped.

“Rosalie, I know with everything going on, we would be selfish to ask you for this favor... but could you help him?” Vicky asked me.

“Me?”

Vicky nodded, “Yes, you. Could you speak to him and stop him from killing those guys? He will listen to you.”

I shook my head. “Vicky, I’m sorry, but I think you might be mistaking the situation. I’m just his prisoner. Why would he listen to me? Ever since I was brought here, he hasn’t listened to a word I have to say about anything.”

I couldn't even get him to let me see my baby unless the child was crying because he was hungry. "Rosalie, you're different, and he'll listen to you. I promise." Vicky seemed certain, but I had my doubts. However, when I met her eyes, I knew I had no choice but to take a chance, though. Whether Ethan needed me for help, I couldn't say, but at a minimum, if I could talk him out of killing those who didn't deserve death, it would be worth the effort it took to try.. "Vicky, I don't know why you are so confident in me, but yes I can talk to him. I'm willing to give it a try."

### **Chapter 158: A Deal Was Struck**

\*\*Ethan's POV

After another operation, I tried to get back to work but it was difficult. The situation with the new joiners kept weighing on my mind. Seeing them in battle just standing there, or fighting with little skill, made me so angry I'd wanted to stop fighting the enemy and attack them myself. It made me furious to hear Talon and the others so appalled at my decision to make those pay for their mistakes.

What's wrong with them? This was a rogue war, what's wrong with me killing rogues? Weak as they were, if they were not killed by me, they would die on the battlefield anyway.

So why did everyone look at me like I was some sort of a monster, even thinking that way?

I pushed the thoughts aside and went back to my work. Georgia kept saying that the camp wasn't the safest place for Rosalie and our son. Deep down, I supposed I knew she was right, but I wasn't ready to take Rosalie back to her people.

If I did, she wouldn't need me anymore if she didn't need me. She'd have no reason to even be in my presence.

A reality where I didn't get to see Rosalie and the baby was not one I was willing to accept.

Allowing Vicky to go speak to Rosalie was a bit of a compromise for me. Maybe if she saw one of her friends for a bit, she would come around and stop wanting to get away.

There was a sound at the door flap and I looked up to see a soldier standing there, peering in at me. I hated not having a door that could handle a knock. "What?" I called.

"Pardon me, Alpha," he said, his voice at a clang, a bit, his eyes wide with tears. "Miss Rosalie is asking to speak to you."

I flew out of my chair and covered the distance between myself and the gangly young man in a few seconds. Grabbing him by the collar, "What are you talking about?" I asked her. "Rosalie is asking to speak to me about what?"

He began to shake as he looked up at me, his mouth open but no words forming. I gave him a hard shake and he said, "That's all I know, \$-\$-sur."

I released him and turned around taking a few deep breaths. Perhaps I had overreacted.

"Get out of here. I told him, "You can go."

"Yes, sir. He was gone in a flash but I just stood there for a moment wondering what Rosalie wanted to take to me about. Likely she wanted to demand to be released again.

She could forget about that.

I decided I'd better be prepared before I went into speak to her. Using the mind-link, I summoned Vicky to my tent and went back to my desk, trying to calm myself. Getting angry wasn't going to help anyone. Vicky walked in a few moments later and I could tell that she was nervous around me. She kept her distance, her face a pale shade of white. "You wanted to see me, su."

"Come in, Vicky," I said, letting out a sigh. I gestured at a chair across from my desk. She had to know I wasn't going to hurt her. "Did you visit Rosalie?"

It took her a moment to walk over and sit down. She sat rigidly on the edge of the chair her hands folded in her lap. "Yes, Alpha. I did speak to her."

\* About what I demanded

Vicky's eyes widened further. "Uhm, just about how things were going. We talked about our trips here.

She shrugged. "Not much else. The baby.

I assumed there had to be more. "What else?" I barked.

She shook her head, "Nothing that I can remember."

Vicky was lying to me. But I didn't want to push her. That last thing I needed was to make her cry again.

Why did women always have to cry over everything?

\*Fine, I told her "If you don't want to tell me, then you can get out."

"Alpha, we also talked about Paul and she told me about becoming queen."

I stared at her for a long moment. If they talked about Paul, they had to have spoken about me as well.

Vicky probably told Rosalie about how loving and doting Paul was, how he would always be concerned with how she was doing and if she needed anything.

Rosalie probably told Vicky I was an uncaring asshole who only thought about himself.

"Leave," I told her.

Vicky got up out of the chair and moved swiftly to the exit, but by the time she got to the door, I stopped her.

"Did you..." I cleared my throat, "did you guys talk about me?"

Vicky paused for a moment, and she nodded. She wanted to say something, but she bit her lips waiting for my reaction.

I stared at her for a moment, and I couldn't describe how I felt. I guess no matter if her answer was yes or no, it wouldn't matter. Either way, I wouldn't be happy about it.

I didn't say anything else and only waved my hands to dismiss her.

I decided I needed to go talk to Rosalie. Abandoning my unfinished work, I headed out the door and across the camp to the tent where Rosalie was being kept.

I walked right past the guards and threw the tent flap open, seeing her sitting on the cot, staring at nothing again.

Had she really summoned me for more of this?

Irritated, I bit out, "You're not leaving, so don't even bother to ask."

She turned her head to look in my direction but didn't look me in the face. "I didn't ask," she said, that assertive tone I wasn't used to from her taking me by surprise.

"What is it, then?" I folded my arms, returning her annoyance with more of my own.

Rosalie sighed and shifted her position slightly on the bed. "These rogues that you're holding, intending to execute, I don't think that's a good idea.

"F\*cking Vicky." I muttered, pissed that she'd told Rosalie my business.

"It wasn't Vicky," she said. "I overheard. This is a tent, not a castle with stone walls."

Somehow, I doubted that was true, though I had noticed her sticking her head out earlier when I was talking to Talon and Vicky about the situation.

"I don't really care what you think," I told her. "They've failed me in battle, and they deserve to die."

\*They joined you, and just because they're not skilled, that doesn't make them worthless, criminals, or otherwise worthy of death!" she spat, still not looking into my face, but obviously pointing her statement in my direction.

I tried my best to give her my perspective. "Rosalie, those are rogues. The rogues your people had been

fighting and killing. I don't see any differences between what you were doing and what I'm doing now." "Ethan, first, unlike you, my people do not initiate attacks unless we know for sure those groups were ruthless and

aggressive. Second, you and I both know that most of the rogues in the northern borders are displaced civilians to begin with. They joined the rogue groups because that's the only way for them to survive.

Third, even if they are criminals, you can't just kill them without justification."

It was almost amusing to see her act this way, so confident and strong. "Why do you even care?" I asked her. "It's not like you even know any of them."

"I don't need to know them to understand that what you're planning is wrong, Ethan," she told me.

"Now, I respectfully ask you, from one leader to another, not to do that."

I moved toward her and hovered over her, willing her to look up into my eyes. She didn't. Once again, her vacant eyes were locked on a spot across the room.

Tired of all of this, I considered what she was asking. Rosalie had changed, but her heart was still the same. She would still do anything to help others.

"You and I would have to agree to disagree," I finally said, and I could tell from her expression that she was disappointed. Even disappointment was better than her plain indifference.

Therefore, I continued with my offer, "However, I'll make a deal with you." Her head jerked in my direction for a moment, but she quickly looked away and didn't speak. "If you will snap the f\*ck out of this funk and start acting like a woman who gives a damn about her existence, then I'll concede."

"What are you talking about?" she asked me, but her tone conveyed that she knew exactly what I was getting at.

"I will grant your request if you agree to start eating properly and taking better care of yourself," I explained. "I'm sick and tired of having to worry about your condition. So if you'll start acting like you don't think you'd be better off dead, then I'll let them live."

For the first time since we'd been reunited, Rosalie lifted her gaze, and her eyes locked on mine. Her head rocked back once and then moved forward—a sharp nod.

"Is that a yes?" I asked, looking for confirmation.

"Yes," she told me, still looking into my eyes. "If you allow them to live, I promise to start taking better care of myself."

A smile formed on my face, and at that moment, all I wanted to do was lunge at her. I wanted to tangle my hands in her hair and swallow her whole, to kiss her like I had earlier when we were making love. I wanted to sink my teeth into the warm flesh of her neck and taste her, to leave the imprint of my teeth on her skin for all to see. Marked forever as mine, no one would ever try to take her from me again. Before I could move, I heard Talon's voice behind me and wondered when the h\*ll he'd even come into the tent.

"I'm so sorry to interrupt, Alpha, but we have another problem."

I cursed beneath my breath and managed to pull my eyes away from Rosalie. "What is it now?" I asked him.

He gestured for me to leave with him, and I sighed. Returning my gaze to Rosalie, I was happy to see she hadn't slipped back into her trance. "Don't forget our deal," I told her.

"You neither," she replied with one arched eyebrow.

Goddess, was she sexy.

I followed Talon out, stepping away from the tent so that Rosalie was no longer able to overhear my business. "What's going on?" I asked him.

“Some of the guards on patrol just came back to say they’ve seen some rogues on the border of our territory again. We’re not sure if it’s the same group that attacked before, trying again, or if this is another force, but we should prepare for another attack.”

Would it never end?

“All right,” I told him. “Inform Richard and Paul. Let’s get everyone ready, just in case.”

He nodded at me and headed off to do what I’d asked, and I went to do my own preparation.

Eventually, word would get out that the Rogue King was not one to be trifled with and people would leave us the h\* | | alone.

But this was not that day.

## Chapter 159 War is Coming Again

\*\*Rosalie’s POV

The agreement Ethan and I had made changed the situation I found myself in. Though I still would’ve preferred to go home, once he saw that I was living up to my end of the bargain, he began to show more leniency to me. Even later that first evening, he let Vicky come back into my room again.

“Ethan says that you can have the baby in here with you to sleep at night,” she explained as she brought me my child.

“Really?” I could hardly believe my ears. Until I’d fallen under Ethan’s clutches, I’d never been away from my baby for more than a few hours at a time. In the past few days, I had to find a way to fall asleep without him near me. Now the

situation might be changing, making it all worth it that I’d managed to choke down a bit of stew earlier.

“That’s right,” Vicky said with a smile as I took my child from her and held him close. He was hungry, so I started feeding him, lovingly stroking his little head, while Vicky continued. “I’ll go get the rest of his things.”

“Thank you, Vicky.” I told her, but she smiled back at me and said, “You don’t need to thank me. You did it, not me.”

A few minutes later, she was back with the meager items Ethan had managed to procure for our child. It wasn’t much, but he had a few changes of clothing, some cloth diapers, and a wooden bassinet that it looked like someone might have hand crafted for my boy.

I had to persuade myself that it wasn’t Ethan, because if I did, I would find myself willing to give in to him even more.

I caught a glimpse of the bracelet on his chubby arm, and no matter how hard I denied, I just couldn’t help but feel a stream of warmth flow through my heart. I thought about all of the lovely things my child had back at the palace, but it was strange that nothing seemed to be able to compare to the little bracelet that his father made him.

However, that didn’t mean that I planned to stay for long. If I was going to get out of his grasp, I was going to have to figure out a way to run away. That would be easier with the baby in the same tent as me at night. I had done it once before; I could do it again. Granted, it would be more difficult now, but that didn’t make it impossible.

I wasn’t planning to tell my friends-Vicky, Georgia, and maybe even Talon, I couldn’t put them in a spot to make a choice between me and their leader.

Once the baby was finished eating, I put him in his bed on top of a mattress that was made out of an old blanket and pillow. Everything here was makeshift.

“What’s going on with the rogues?” I asked Vicky, referring to the people she’d told me about earlier.

“Alpha has decided to get them proper training.” Vicky said with a smile. “Thank you so much for

intervening on their behalf. I also thank you on behalf of Alpha. I knew, deep down, you did it for his own sake.”

I wasn't sure what to say about her gratitude, but I was glad to hear that he'd listened to some sense. It was a relief to know he wasn't going to have them executed. Not now, anyway.

“Thank you for telling me about them.” I could only tell her that and ignored the “for his own sake” part. She nodded. “There's a good chance we will have another battle soon, though. It seemed that some rogues were chasing after us. Everyone is preparing for it. So I'm not sure how much training they will get done before we have to go back and fight again.”

The idea that another battle might be waging soon so close to my baby made me nervous, especially since I recalled seeing Madalynn earlier. Would it be her group?

I was so bogged down by losing my freedom that I hadn't gotten the chance to tell anyone who I saw on the battlefield.

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But then... it might also be a blessing in disguise, so I kept my silence.

If Ethan had all of his attention on the attack, perhaps that would be a good time for me to slip away. I didn't need any more guards around me.

I didn't doubt Ethan's ability to keep me and the baby safe and repel the enemies from the battlefield. But being safe and being happy were two different things, and at the moment, there was nothing even remotely comfortable about our situation

“Ethan thinks it might be Madalynn's forces that are mounting an attack,” Vicky continued, sitting next to me on the bed. “They fought so fiercely the last time when your forces battled them, he is concerned. And angry.”

Oh well... I guessed I underestimated Ethan's competency.

Quickly, I adjusted my expectations and shrugged. “What else is new? Isn't he always angry anyway?”

I had made the statement in a condescending tone, but Vicky's sad expression told me that it was something that truly bothered her. “He's just not himself anymore.”

It bothered me, too, but I'd already sworn to myself that I wasn't getting involved with Ethan again. If he wanted to sit around and brood and be miserable all day, that was his business.

A couple of days went by, and I didn't see Ethan at all. That wasn't unpleasant to me because I had my baby with me, and Vicky came and visited frequently. Still, when I was alone in the tent, and the baby was sleeping... my mind wandered.

I thought about how Ethan had reacted when I'd pressed that knife to his chest. Just thinking about some of my behavior recently made my cheeks burn with shame. I couldn't believe how wanton I'd become in bed, now that I was twenty-one and becoming more in touch with my inner wolf.

Still, I didn't regret having cut him. In fact, part of me wished I had been stronger. If I could've actually hurt him, maybe I would've managed to get away a few days ago. At least, I might not have been so quick to fall under his spell.

Ethan had acted so differently, though, with that knife to his heart. He hadn't flinched or lashed out at me. He hadn't even tried to get away. Did he loathe his existence so much at the moment that he didn't mind if I did stab him in the chest and kill him?

But then... he probably knew me well enough that he was certain I wouldn't do it. Leading a battle against foes who are trying to kill the innocent people in my kingdom was one thing, but killing someone that I knew and had once loved, the father of my children, that was something different entirely.

He must've known it and used it against me.

What a... jerk! B\*sard!

After cursing in my mind a few times, I felt a little better, but eventually, I gave up. I came to the conclusion that I could never intentionally hurt Ethan, no matter how angry I was at him.

Vicky came in, jarring me from my memories of that exchange. With the baby asleep, I had some time to chat, and she caught me up on everything that was happening in camp.

"Madalynn's forces seem to be the ones that have been poking around our territory recently, just as Alpha suspected. Although, we won't know for sure unless there's a battle, or we can take one of them hostage and interrogate them. With every passing hour, Alpha appears to be angrier and angrier at the situation and ready to fight."

In the back of my mind, I had to wonder if it might be someone else. Could my own people figure out where Ethan had taken me and mount an attack to get me back?

Seraphine, Cerina, and even Soren... What would they do?

Ethan claimed that it was for my safety. Even if it was true, he had to realize that he wasn't the only person here who cared about me, and there were others who would stop at nothing to get me my freedom, especially those who didn't

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see Ethan as an ally.

Like Soren...

"Are the others ready to fight?" I asked Vicky.

"Most of them are. That's the thing about staying in a camp with so many soldiers. It seems like everyone is always on edge, waiting for their opportunity to get back to the battlefield."

I nodded in understanding. However, I could imagine it would be difficult for her to adjust to this new lifestyle. "How is Paul?"

Her face brightened. "He's doing well, thank you. He's been helping with the training. Since he's proven himself to be very loyal, Alpha and my brother are giving him more responsibility."

"That's wonderful," I told her. It was evident she was quite proud of her fated mate.

The two of us continued to talk for several more minutes before Vicky decided she needed to go. She visited me frequently but usually didn't stay for long, as if she was afraid Ethan might realize she was here and change his mind, telling her she couldn't come back.

She gave me a hug goodbye and then exited the tent, leaving me alone with my thoughts again.

Why did it seem the moment I was alone, my thoughts immediately returned to Ethan?

And then, as if I had summoned the Rogue King, he appeared in my doorway. I took a deep breath and bit down on my bottom lip, unsure what to think about him being there.

I'd be lying if I didn't admit that part of me missed him when he was away. But then when he returned, he frustrated me to no end, and I was glad when he left.

I guessed it wasn't this version of Ethan I was missing.

It was clear he was irritated as he stood there at the door, staring at me, not speaking. He was always irritated about something. I waited, my eyebrows arched in a questioning expression, and I hoped he'd hurry up and let me know what he was doing here.

Though I had nothing better to do than to speak to him, the way he was staring made me uneasy. I finally blurted out, "What do you want now?" and he snapped out of his stupor.

Moving toward me quickly, Ethan's expression shifted, but I wasn't sure if he was going to kiss me or...something more.

I braced myself



## Chapter 160 The Name Of Our Boy

\*\*Ethan's POV

I walked into Rosalie's tent, not exactly sure what I was doing there or what I even planned to say to her when I spoke to her. But I needed to see her. Regardless of whether I was a heartless rogue or not, I always had one soft place in me, and Rosalie and our child were nestled in there, whether she wanted to be or not.

"What do you want now?" she asked. Her tone sounded more exhausted than angry this time. I saw that the baby was sleeping in the bassinet I'd carved for him. I didn't want to disturb him, so I hoped we could keep from arguing. It seemed like every single time I spoke to Rosalie anymore, that's all we did. "How are you?" I asked her, taking a few cautious steps over to see what sort of a mood she was in. I could see she'd been eating. She had more energy, and the glow she always had about her face was stronger.

She shrugged. "I'm a prisoner being held against my will who only just got to start seeing my friends a couple of days ago and am in the process of bonding with my child again who has hardly seen me since I got here. How do you expect me to be?"

A smart remark made its way onto my tongue, but I bit it back. I didn't come there to argue. I ignored what she'd said and replied, "I'm glad to see you're eating."

"Well, a promise is a promise. At least, it is to me." She gave me a look that said she hadn't forgotten all of the promises she felt I'd broken to her. Maybe she was right, and I hadn't managed to keep my word with her. The circumstances around us changed so rapidly, it was like trying to predict which direction a stick floating by in a fury of rapids might go.

How was I to know whether or not I'd be able to do all of the things we'd dreamed of doing together back when life was simpler?

Still... I wasn't going to fight with her. "We've got a big fight coming," I looked her in the eye, trying to really converse with her. "I have a feeling that this time there are more than one force surrounding the camp. A lot of them are rogues but there may be others.

She frowned. "What do you mean?"

I was happy that at least she was willing to say something. There could be trained soldiers under the employment of the kings."

She bit her bottom lip. I didn't mean to scare her, but I needed to make sure she was aware of the situation, too. "I think the baby and I would be much safer at the palace," she said.

I sucked in a deep breath and let it out slowly. We'd talked about this before. I wasn't letting her go so I stated, "Rosalie, It would be too dangerous for you to get there."

She shook her head. "It's too dangerous for us to stay."

The way she was talking was alarming to me. A ripple of fear went up my spine. Ever since our discussion the other day, I'd been afraid I'd be summoned from my work to be told she was gone.

Though I had guards watching her all the time, there was a possibility she could give them the slip.

After all, she had succeeded in doing that before. Or for that matter, she could get some of these rogues that were supposed to be loyal to me to help her.

I was certain that Rosalie had the charm to persuade people and get them to help her if she tried. That was why I tried to restrict her from getting in contact with others as much as possible.

"You can't leave, Rosalie," I told her, trying to keep the begging out of my voice. I sat down on the cot near her feet, and

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she pulled them back away from me, like she just couldn't stand being near me, She didn't respond this time and just looked off in the distance again, like she used to do when she was withdrawn.

"Rosalie, listen, I have to go out and fight. I'll be responsible for a lot of lives, including your friends, Talon, Vicky, Georgia," I said bitterly. "I don't need you to care about me, but I know you care about them, right?"

She didn't respond again, however, her beautiful eyes weren't just staring in the distance now. At least I knew she was listening.

If it was about anyone else, she'd be interested, just not me. How ironic.

However, I pressed down my urge to make any sarcastic remarks and continued in a leveled tone. "I need to keep my mind on what's happening in the battle around me. I can't be distracted, not at all." I placed my hand gently on her ankle.

Finally, she turned her eyes to look at me. "I understand that, Ethan. What are you saying?"

"I'm saying... if I thought there was a chance you might be gone when I came back, I'd be so worried while I was fighting, it wouldn't be safe. It would be bad for my guys as well. I need to know for certain that when this battle is over, and I come back to the camp, you'll be here."

"What do you want me to say, Ethan?" she asked. Her doe eyes were so captivatingly stunning, even when all I could see was disdain in them. "You're holding me here against my will. You want me to agree not to take any opportunities that might arise for me to leave?"

"I know you don't want to be here, Rosalie. And I'm willing to discuss it with you when things are safer, but for now, please, promise me you won't leave during the battle? For your friends and our boy."

I turned and looked at my sleeping son. He had his thumb pressed between his thin pink lips, and his chubby cheeks were moving back and forth as he sucked on his finger.

I'd already missed out on so much of his life. I didn't ever want to say goodbye to him again.

I knew what I was asking for was ridiculous. Why would she make such a promise? And even if she did, it wasn't for me.

A wave of indescribable bitterness crushed down, and I almost felt a lump in my throat. I must have looked pathetic. I hated to be like this, hopeless, helpless, and useless.

Georgia was right; she deserved someone way better. If I was her, I wouldn't even choose me.

"Fine."

My attention was drawn back to Rosalie. I certainly hadn't been expecting her to say that. "What?"

"I said fine, Ethan," she repeated. "You want me to promise not to leave during the battle? Fine. I won't. I won't leave without saying goodbye. But when this is over, we need to talk about this situation. You can't keep holding me here indefinitely."

I nodded. That was something I could agree to-to talk about it. "Thanks."

"Sure," she said, her tone snippy.

I couldn't blame her. It's not like I'd just given her a heartwarming token of my gratitude. This had already turned out to be way better than I anticipated.

My eyes refocused on the baby. I wished I could pick him up and hold him again before I left, but I didn't want to disturb him. All of a sudden, I realized something.

"Rosalie, it just struck me," I muttered, "what's our boy's name?"

There were so many things going on lately, I totally forgot to ask. Our perfect little angel, I wondered what name his

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mother chose for him?

My questions obviously took her by surprise. She remained silent.

“Rosalie?”

“I... I’ve been trying to decide,” Rosalie whispered. However, my instinct told me that wasn’t the case.

“What?” I asked her. “What was it?”

She shook her head. I was beyond confused. Why was she hiding our boy’s name from me?

“Rosalie, tell me.”

“I thought I had one picked out, but now....” She shook her head again.

I moved closer to her and tentatively kneeled down with one knee facing her. She seemed too busy debating with herself to push me away this time.

I was even more intrigued. Why was she acting like this?

I reached out to her shoulders and willed her to look at me. What is it?”

“I don’t want to say,” she told me, and she seemed really troubled. “It’s... stupid.”

I thought of all of the not-so-attractive names I’d heard in my life, but my attention soon was soon drawn back to the embarrassed brunette in front of me. I couldn’t help but remark, “Whatever name you chose for him would be wonderful, but Stupid is a bit... unique.”

I watched as she took a couple seconds to react to my comment, and her doe eyes widened in disbelief. She murmured in shock, “No... that wasn’t the na-what, Ethan, how could you...”

Watching her showing any emotion at this point was a joy for me, especially when that emotion wasn’t all that negative towards me.

Finally, she complained with a little embarrassment, “Ethan, that’s not funny!”

I cracked a smile, and watched her face turn a little pink. After a short moment, she couldn’t help but also let out a chuckle. That was the best music I’d heard in months, and I almost lost it.

Not wanting to ruin the moment, I dragged myself out from the desire of kissing her and claiming her and said, “Funny or not, I made you smile, so it worked. Seriously, though, Rosalie. What were you thinking of naming him?”

She took a deep breath and blew it out. “Well, right after I had him, I thought of Rowan...”

“Rowan?” I repeated. She nodded and lowered her head. I could see her face blushing and my heart started racing.

Rosalie with Ethan. Rowan.

At the moment, I felt as if I was in heaven.”

Rowan. I loved it, actually, but I didn’t want to seem overzealous and make her change her mind. What if she hated me so much that she’d change anything I liked?

So I tried to make myself sound calm, “I like that. It’s a strong name.”

Not to mention she was right. Rosalie with Ethan...

“I don’t know,” she said, “I was thinking maybe there was a better name...”

“I think it’s the perfect name for a future king,” I told her as our son wiggled a bit and scrunched up his little face.

“Maybe.” She seemed to be still considering it.

“Rosalie, it’s a good name. Trust me,” I said assertively.

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Finally, she nodded and looked into my eyes. “I loved you when he was conceived, and I’ve tried to love you every day since, but... anyway, regardless of everything else that has happened, our boy was a product of love.”

She dropped her gaze, and for a moment, I could see exactly how much pain I'd caused her.

"I will find a way to fix all of this, Rosalie," I told her, but she wasn't looking at me again. I couldn't blame her. She felt like I'd lied to her time and time again, and even though that wasn't the case, I didn't have time to try to reassure her about it now.

The baby was waking up now, so I reached over and carefully lifted him out of the bassinet. I knew he was hungry and wanted his mother so he could eat, but I wanted to hold him before I left. He snuggled his little head against my shoulder and grunted a few times.

I held him for a few moments before I realized he was going to fuss until he ate. Turning to Rosalie, I saw that she had tears in her eyes. I wondered what I'd done wrong now. Did she not want me to pick him up?

"What's the matter?" I asked her.

She shook her head. "Nothing. Hand him to me. Hand me Rowan."