

## Chapter 161 Trouble Times Two

\*\*Madalynn's POV

The crisp approach of dusk laid mist upon the ground as the setting sun disappeared over the treetops. I waited amongst the shadows of the forest. Watching the camp ahead from a safe distance, waiting to take the opportunity to strike.

"Is everyone in position?" the leader of James' men said, causing me to snarl at him.

"Do you not f\*cking have eyes?" I snapped with annoyance. "I told you my guys are always ready."

I saw his jaw clench, but he swallowed whatever words he wanted to say. He should know by now not to question me. Yet, instead, he continued down the same road as always... annoying me.

"Prepare the shift. The changing of the guards is in ten minutes," I told him as I quickly undressed and let my clothes drop to the forest floor.

As the shift came over me, I felt the uneasiness flow against my skin as if someone was watching me. Usually, something like that didn't bother me, but my wolf seemed to notice that it wasn't someone from my group.

Pulling my wolf's attention back to what was important, I crouched low to the forest floor and waited. Sure enough, our opponents began the shift change, and that was our break in the line to attack.

Looking at James' leader next to me, I nodded. We both howled into the air, telling the others to attack, and within moments, chaos erupted.

The thundering of paws against the forest floor and the eruption of snarling and fighting echoed through the air. There was no turning back from our choice, and with the three hundred wolves we brought to battle, we greatly outnumbered Ethan.

The only problem I had was that Ethan was a formidable warrior, and one of him equaled ten of my own. He would have to be taken down quickly.

Dashing through the masses, I took down one wolf after another.

The prize I sought lay within the tent at the center of camp, but making my way there was challenging. A roar bellowed through the air, causing my wolf to cower in fright. Ethan stepped from the shadows, his black wolf towering over others as his red eyes scanned the crowd.

I knew who he was looking for, and as his eyes fell on me, I froze.

A growl echoed from his throat as saliva dripped from his mouth. The very presence of his eyes on me was enough to make me want to run in fear, but I couldn't allow myself to show weakness.

I wasn't that useless Rosalie b\*tch.

In addition, for too long, Ethan had fed the anger in my soul, and the time had come to an end. He destroyed everything by merely existing, so he must pay the price for it!

He and his Rosalie c\*nt deserved to die.

As he charged forward, a few warriors saw his movements, and they all charged at him to attack him at the same time, trying to stop him in his tracks. Thrashing and pulling, Ethan fought them off, and one by one, they fell to the ground. dead.

To our advantage, though, a second wave consisting of James' men broke through the treeline and headed straight for Ethan

The plan... kill Ethan and capture Rosalie.

As much as I hated working with James, his plan would get me what I wanted. I couldn't wait to take that b\*tch Rosalie's child and watch her on her knees begging me. I'd make her watch me have some

fun with her f\*cking son, and I'd be glad to hear her scream in pain.

Once James was done with her, I'd torture her in a million ways before I granted her death wish.

Just thinking about that made me excited. As much as I wished that Ethan could bear witnessing those wonderful scenes, it wasn't possible. Ethan was a threat that needed to be dealt with quickly.

Taking down a gray wolf that charged towards me, I bit into the side of her neck, ripping out her throat.

The naked body of a woman lay on the ground where a wolf once stood. Her eyes were dull and lifeless as her dark hair spread around her like a halo, which made me jealous.

How dare she maintain her look after turning rogue?! I stepped on her body and hissed. Now she was a just a f\*cking piece of ugly trash.

Then I heard a heartbroken sob wrack through the air, and I bursted out laughing. It sounded like someone just lost his mate. How pathetic!

Stupid for him to have her here and for being so weak!

My head turned back towards the battle. I watched as the wolves worked at overpowering Ethan.

However, no matter how many came at him, it didn't seem to be enough.

His strength, his speed, and his gorgeous wolf was just unformidable. Yes, he was my foe, but I couldn't help but admire him.

I had heard of his ruthless and undefeatable reputation ever since I was young. I dreamed of being his bride, yet he treated me like a piece of crap and ruined everything I had!

How much I admired him in the past was not even one percent of how much I hated him now. I would do anything in exchange for seeing him suffer for the rest of his life!

However, it didn't strike me what a terrifying enemy he could be.

He killed without mercy, and even a few rogues who weren't with us and had been in his camp were killed mistakenly, but he only glanced down at what he had done without remorse for a second before he carried on his killing spree.

Taking advantage of his distraction, I attempted to make my way through the masses towards the center tent.

I wanted Rosalie's head, but even just capturing her and taking her from Ethan was a feat I wished to accomplish,

James's guy wanted me to distract Ethan so that they could get close to Rosalie. Did they really think I'd give up any opportunity to see Ethan and that b\*tch beg for my forgiveness?

As I was getting close, a wolf appeared in my way as Iran, and even without having him shift, I knew who it was.

Talon,

His eyes bore into me with hatred, and so were mine into him. He owed me big for my bloody wedding, and he surely would regret that!

Before I knew it, we were at each other's throats. He pawed at me, snapping at my throat.

I howled, but he was too strong for me. D\*mn Drogomor pack!

He pinned me down and was ready for his final blow. I howled again, crying for help, but I didn't see any of my guys close enough to save me.

I struggled frantically without avail.

Was this it?! I f\*cking hate this world! Curse you, Moon Goddess!

However, before he could land a final blow, he was knocked from my body.

A red raven wolf with black and red fur had knocked him off me and now stood guard in front of my

wolf.

Confusion filled me, but a draw to that he wolf was becoming increasingly powerful.

Letting out a howl to retreat, I stood and ran off into the treeline as fast as I could.

Before I got too far away, I turned and glanced over my shoulder. The appearance of a few snarling wolves invading

Rosalie's tent brought a smile back to my face, despite my injuries.

According to the plan, those would be James's secret agents.

Maybe I wouldn't be the one to get her, but as long as someone did, that was all that mattered.

With that image in my mind, I ran till I was a safe distance away.

"Sh\*t," I murmured to myself as I shifted, and the pain from Talon's attack surfaced.

I was so caught up in the moment, I didn't prepare myself like I should have, and Talon was able to get one over on me.

Slow approaching steps caught my attention just in time to see dark eyes with gold flecks appear from around the rocks where I was hiding. Baring my fangs like the wounded animal I was, I stared at the massive man approaching me.

His dark hair cascaded over one of his eyes, but yet, it was short at the back of his head.

He had a bad boy persona that made my wolf howl in excitement. I knew without a doubt what he was to me, but when I heard him say it, it woke me up from my stupor.

"Mate." The word whispered softly off his lips took me by surprise.

"Who are you?" | quickly demanded, my heart beating out of my chest, but I could not stop laughing.

A chuckle left his lips as he looked around. "Let's get your \*ss out of here. Come with me."

He reached out to help me, but on instinct, I recoiled back. An intrigued expression crossed his face at my movements.

"Tell me who you are first." My voice came out softer this time, but in the end, I wanted the same thing. I wanted to know who he was and what he was doing here.

"I'm your mate, Madalynn," he replied with a smirk. Shock registered in my eyes that he knew my name.

The name | used before I was banished. It felt so long ago.

"How do you know my name?" | replied with hesitation, "I don't even know you."

"No, you don't. But in time, you will," he said, stepping closer to me, his arm reaching out and wrapping around my waist as he roughly pulled me closer to him. The sparks of our bond trailed over my skin as a soft moan left my lips.

\*I was sent here weeks ago to spy on the camp and the movements of a woman who led a force to protect my prey.. Never before today had I laid eyes on you, but I am glad that I did. Otherwise you would be dead."

He was right. If he hadn't been there today, Talon would have surely killed me.

And if it wasn't Talon, it would have been Ethan.

Just thinking about how dangerous he looked out there had me second guessing myself. I was no match for him, and I didn't think that anyone would ever be,

Until I met the man in front of me who looked just as dangerous as Ethan out on the field of battle.

"Please tell me who you are." I lifted my chin up, but requested softly against his lips, not daring to make the first move.

\*I'm Behar Son of King Kalheir to the western kingdom, and you, my delectable mate, are their future queen.

## Chapter 162 No Goodbyes

\*\*Soren's POV

The battle raged around Ethan's camp. Everywhere we looked, there were snarling, fighting wolves, rushing at one another and tearing each other apart.

Blood, tufts of fur, and shattered bone littered the ground, as well as the broken and mangled bodies of dozens of wolves from each side of the fray.

Now was my chance to get into Ethan's camp and see if Rosalie was there.

It would be risky, but the battle seemed to be moving south, away from the camp, and I had to assume that was because Ethan was doing his best to get the enemies away from his woman and child.

As long as he continued to be successful at keeping the rogues and King James's forces away from the camp, I should be able to carry out my own plan.

Especially now that I had someone with me who could help...

Joining up with Seraphine had never been part of my strategy, but now that she was with me, I was making the most of it. Seraphine was very good at sneaking around the forest without being detected, which I could testify to myself.

Best of all, Rosalie was much more likely to go with Seraphine than she was with me. While we had made amends to some degree before all of this fighting began, it wasn't as if we were friends again.

But she'd go with Seraphine. She trusted her, as she should.

I just needed to find Rosalie and find a way to get her away from the camp without Ethan or anyone else noticing.

"This is where you think she is?" Seraphine whispered, pointed to a tent couple hundred yards away.

We were still in our human forms for now because we couldn't communicate as wolves. We didn't have mindlinking capabilities with one another.

I nodded. "That's the one I sent word to you about."

Since we'd banded together, she'd explained to me how she'd been injured when rogues tried to attack Rosalie and the baby, when his nanny was killed.

I knew that her people were looking for Rosalie but couldn't find her anywhere, so once I was fairly certain about her location, I'd sent word back to the Winter Forest pack.

However, I didn't ask for reinforcements. Trying to break through Ethan's defenses by force would be a waste of time and lives. I only needed someone Rosalie would trust. So I ended up with Seraphine.

Using my recently obtained tricks from my new friends, I was able to hide our scents and got closer to the center of the camp

I intended to make as good a use as possible of Seraphine's skills, like her ability to get in and out of places unseen.

Meanwhile, my new friends, the most ragtag mob of outcasts anyone had ever seen, were spread out in the woods, ready to help. I didn't need them to fight anyone, but they could be really helpful if we needed to hide our traces.

Seraphine and I watched from the shadows as a fight waged on between two wolves not far away from the tent I suspected Rosalie was in. Then, another wolf came to help, and the fight dispersed. One male wolf limped off toward Ethan's line while the other two exited into the woods.

This is our chance! Seraphine whispered. Let's stay in our human form for communication, just in case."

It was more dangerous, but we could do that

However, when we got closer, I realized that I underestimated how much detail Ethan placed on Rosalie.

"This would be easier with more warriors," I mumbled, looking at the half dozen guards around the tent,

My ex-subordinate rolled her eyes and replied, "You and I both know it wouldn't help. It would be better if the pack stayed back where Ethan couldn't detect them. Fighting him seems like a sure way to die."

"Come on, I was only venting," I said. Deep down, we were on the same page.

Seraphine and I couldn't go against six of Ethan's best warriors at the same time. We may have a chance to fight them, but we'd definitely draw unnecessary attention to us.

We needed to be patient and wait for our opportunity.

However, as each minute past, the two of us were getting more and more anxious. If things didn't change, sooner or later, Ethan would return, and who knew when the next opportunity would arise.

As if the Moon Goddess heard our stress, we noticed a group of five other wolves were also approaching the center tent.

Seraphine and I exchanged a worried look, because unlike most rogues, those new wolves were well trained and organized. I could only think of one possibility – they were King James's secret agents! D\*mn it! Rosalie was surrounded by danger! I could only hope that the guards Ethan put around the tent was enough against James's men.

As expected, a battle broke between the two parties. Blood splattered the ground outside of the tent where that last fight had taken place. The guards had left their stations to push the attackers back.

This was just the chance Seraphine and I needed.

"I'll go first," I started to say, but by then, Seraphine was already taking off, stopping behind a tree closer to the tent. I cursed under my breath and followed, my eyes darting around everywhere looking for threats.

Luckily, the battle moved a little away from the tent, and Seraphine and I made it into the tent.

We saw her.

Rosalie was standing with her baby on her hip, a knife in the other hand.

Theld my hands up. "Ro! It's me!" | said.

Her eyes widened, but then she realized that it was me, and she relaxed a bit. Then, she saw Seraphine.

"Oh, thank the Moon Goddess!" she exclaimed, moving to hug her friend. "I was so scared that you hadn't recovered from your wounds."

"I'm fine," Seraphine told her, hugging her back. "And so is Jace."

"That's so good to hear," Rosalie said.

"We don't have time to chat right now," I told her. "We need to get out of here while Ethan is distracted, assuming you want to go."

However, she hesitated for a moment. "Soren, how could me and Rowan trust you?"

"Rowan?" I repeated, realizing she must've finally picked a name for the baby. I shook my head to clear it. "I understand your concern, Rosalie, but I'm with Seraphine. If she can trust me, surely you can, too. Unless you want to stay. Have you been held against your will?"

She didn't answer me, but the look on her face told me that Ethan had been keeping her here, even though she wanted to leave

Alright, it seemed that I got my answer

She stall didn't move I couldn't blame her for being hesitant to go with me considering our history, but i continued to try to persuade her if you want to go, now is the time we've been observing and the battle is to the south If we go north, we can get out of here safely.

"And our pack has people nearby to help escort us back to the palace once we get you sately away from this place, Seraphine added

I could see the heertation in Rosalie's face as she looked from the tent door to the little home she'd

been living in recently. She seemed torn.

“Your Majesty! I don’t know what Ethan’s been telling you, but he’s a rogue now. He’s even more dangerous and vicious than before.” Seraphine continued, “Dear, now is not the time to contemplate matters of the heart. You know that it’s safer for the baby to be back in the palace. Let us get him there.”

That was all it took. Rosalie nodded. “You’re right. I was actually planning on leaving while they were gone anyway. It’s just...”

“Just what?” Seraphine asked.

“Nothing. Just a silly promise I made. I’d prefer to leave with a proper farewell.” Rosalie shook her head.

“And he made a lot of promises to you that haven’t been kept either, Your Majesty,” Seraphine reminded her. “Please think about the baby first. People say a lot of things when they are under duress. He can’t expect you to mean every single one of them.”

“Wave at him as you run into the woods whether he sees you or not and that will count,” I told her in jest.

Rosalie rolled her eyes, but her expression softened as she was amused.

“Fine,” she said. “I’ll go with you now.” She looked around the room and grabbed a bag, quickly stuffing some of the things the baby would need inside and slinging it over her shoulder. She didn’t have a lot to bring with her. I didn’t even see that she had a change of clothes.

“Do you have your wolf now?” Seraphine asked her.

She was already twenty-one?!

She nodded. “Yes, I have, but I’ve only shifted once because I haven’t been able to leave the tent. I’m not sure whether I can control it well yet.”

Once again, I found myself cursing under my breath.

D\*mn it, Ethan, really? Rosalie was supposed to be the woman he loved, yet she wasn’t even given the freedom to let her own wolf out.

I was happy for her that she could shift. I couldn’t wait to meet her wolf – no doubt that she must be a magnificent beauty. However, at the same time, it struck me that she wasn’t my fate mate...

“No problem,” I said, trying to hide my disappointment. “We’ll just have to hurry.”

Seraphine stuck her head out of the tent first and said, “It’s clear. Let’s go before the battle shifts and comes back this way.”

Rosalie followed her, and I brought up the rear, hoping that we were able to get lost in the woods before we were discovered.

“Cut through the trees over there,” I whispered to Seraphine, pointing to the place where we’d entered the camp since it seemed to still be safe.

Seraphine didn’t listen to me. Instead, she went another direction, leaving me cursing from the back as I followed along, helpless to control her movements. We stepped into the solace of the trees, and I realized that there were two large wolves visible from here that I hadn’t seen before. They were charging through the area I’d just told Seraphine to go to.

I needed to keep my mouth shut and let her do her thing. She was far better at navigating in the northern tier than I was, at least when it came to avoiding the enemy

Seraphine continued to cut through the trees, taking a circular route, and I kept my eyes and ears open,

hoping we managed to get Rosalie and the baby out of here before Ethan found out I wasn't ready to face the Rogue King with two women and a child.

### **Chapter 163 An Unsuccessful Escape Attempt**

\*\*Rosalie's POV

Although I hadn't been planning on fleeing my makeshift prison during the battle, when Seraphine and Soren showed up to help facilitate my rescue, I knew they were right. It was time for Rowan and me to go.

But that didn't make it any easier to actually get my feet moving and head out of the tent.

Not only was it dangerous to take the baby out there where the battle was raging on, but I'd also made Ethan a promise, and now! was breaking it. Just because Ethan lied to me before didn't mean that it was okay for me to turn around and do the same thing to him.

However, I needed to think about what was best for me and Rowan at the moment, and that meant I needed to go while we had the opportunity.

I followed Seraphine through the woods, Rowan nestled in my arms. I didn't have a baby carrier for him this time, so I had to make due with carrying the squirmy baby in my arms. At least he was quiet. That last thing we needed was for him to start crying and give away our location.

"We just needed to get out of the camp. Once we're in the woods, we have friends who can help us hide our scents," Soren smiled.

"Friends?" | raised an eyebrow.

He shrugged, "New friends. Not rogues. Not someone from our past. I promise."

I didn't mean to pry to begin with, and this wasn't the time for it either. I nodded and focused back on our escape.

Seraphine was good at leading us through the forest, taking different routes to stay away from the wolves that were all around us. Most of them were too busy fighting to be paying close attention to us, especially when they couldn't smell us easily from afar.

The deeper into the woods we ran, the more dangerous the situation became as the fight had spread all around, and it didn't seem like there was any way to get around it. We would have to find a way to thread our way through and hope that we could slip past without anyone detecting us.

I followed Seraphine around a large shrub between two pine trees, jostling Rowan as I ran. Seraphine slowed up quickly, and I almost ran into the back of her.

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Peering over her shoulder, I saw the reason why she had stopped. Two large gray wolves were facing off in the clearing just in

g on the ground at the moment, one on top of the other, the two of them snarling as one tried desperately to get to the other's neck and the one on the bottom did his best to try and fight the other one off in order to save his own life,

The scent of blood filled the air as the one on top finally managed to find a way to clamp down on the other male's neck. The dying wolf yelped and yipped for a moment, frantic high-pitched sounds coming from his mouth before he died and went still.

Leaving the other wolf unoccupied.

If he gave the air a good sniff, he'd no doubt realize he wasn't alone and three adult humans were huddling nearby with a bite sized morsel between them.

"Get ready to shift," Soren whispered to Seraphine. She didn't move, though. It was almost as if she

thought she could will the large gray wolf to go the other way

My heart was thundering in my chest as I watched him standing there catching his breath. In my mind, I was begging him to just turn and go the other direction,

The wolf lifted his head, his ears perking up. He was listening to something in the distance. A moment later, he bounded off back toward camp and was soon far enough away from us that we were safe to proceed.

I let out a long sigh, and when Seraphine started running again, I followed. We continued to wind our way through the forest, looking for larger trees to hide behind as we wove in and out of the trees.

Rowan's little hand shot up and grabbed hold of my face, his fingers pinching my skin as he tried to shove his little fingers in my mouth. I grabbed hold of his hand and gently pulled it down, smiling at him, hoping he wasn't sensing our stress. His little hand

darted back up again, though, and I took hold of it again to move it.

His wrist was wearing the small leather bracelet with a few beads on it that Ethan had given it to him.

Vicky said it was something that was done as a tradition in the Drogomor pack. Almost all kids had a bracelet that was made by their father.

As I saw Rowan's little hand moving back and forth while I ran, I realized that bracelet might just be the last gift he ever got from his father. It might just be the only thing he ever had to remind him of his dad.

I tried not to think about that. I wanted Rowan to be able to see his father, but not under the circumstances Ethan had concocted. That had been held against my will for far too long, and Ethan was still trying to rule over me as if I was still the same naive girl that he had first met a year ago.

If Ethan truly cared about either one of us, he was going to have to learn how to compromise and listen to the needs of others. He couldn't continue to just impose his will on us.

Seraphine slowed again at the sounds of snarling in front of us. She hunkered beneath the boughs of a pine tree, and Soren and I did the same, waiting to see if this battle in front of us would end soon, like the last one had.

It didn't, and eventually, Seraphine decided we were in too dangerous of a position to continue to stay there. She turned and went in another direction, but quickly enough, we heard more wolves somewhere in the woods directly before our path.

We would have to change directions again, but we were running out of places to go. Seraphine turned us around again, and this time, we were headed back the way we had been coming from.

My arms were beginning to get tired. Rowan was getting so big now, he was heavy, and the fact that he was squirming wasn't helping my cause. My biceps were beginning to feel like concrete.

"Do you want me to carry him?" Soren asked from behind me.

Initially, my first instinct was to tell him no. I didn't want him carrying my son. What if we got separated, or what if something happened to Rowan because I couldn't protect him? But after the third time Soren had asked me, I finally said, "Yes, but just for a little while so that my arms can rest."

"Of course," he said, taking Rowan from me. The baby immediately began to fuss since it was a stranger holding him. We'd just turned around again, and I was scared that Rowan's cries would give away our location.

Within a few minutes, I had begun to ask Soren for my baby back, but he didn't hand him over. We all just kept running, Rowan fussing, and Seraphine trying to find the right path to get us out of the camp.

A thought occurred to me. They could move a lot faster if they were wolves. I was slowing them down.

"Should you two shift? || could ride on your back, Soren."

"What about the baby?" he asked.



"I'll hold him on your back," I said.

Just then, another group of wolves appeared in front of us. They were so busy fighting that they didn't seem to notice us, but we had to switch directions again, and now, I felt like we were running right back into the camp.

"All right," Soren said, stopping and thrusting Rowan back at me. He quickly shifted, and so did Seraphine. Once they were in their wolf forms, I prepared to climb onto Soren's back so that we could move faster. I didn't know if it would help, but it couldn't be any worse than what we had been doing, I was afraid if I shited, I would slow them down since I wasn't used to being in my wolf form.

Before I could even throw my leg over his back, though, we heard a low rumble in the bushes behind us. I knew what I was going to see the moment I turned around, and a paralyzing fear shot through me.

Soren glanced behind us, and his eyes widened in annoyance and a little bit of panic.

He couldn't speak to me in this state, but I knew by his expression when he looked back at me that he wanted me to hurry and climb on

I couldn't do it, though. If I went with them, my son had little to no chance of getting away. I needed to stay and face the angry male behind me.

Quickly, I tied Rowan's blanket around him so that he wouldn't fall out and then slipped the knot into Soren's mouth. "Run!" I told him.

Soren shook his head, obviously not wanting to leave me behind, but as another growl echoed behind us, I saw the hesitation melt away.

He knew-Soren knew-my baby was more important to me than anything else, including my life, and as Soren and Seraphine took off running through the trees, I turned around to stall the only man who would be fast enough to catch them.

Ethan

## **Chapter 164 Ethan's Rage**

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

The way that Ethan was growling at us, I had assumed he was still in his wolf form, but when I turned to look at him, it was the human Ethan's eyes I was looking into.

Shirtless with only a small pair of tattered shorts covering him, he glared at me, his hands in fists.

At the moment, it was difficult to tell the difference between the man and his beast.

"What the f\*ck are you doing, Rosalie?" he shouted at me, coming at me slowly, which was surprising. I didn't know why he didn't shoot right past me and go after Rowan. Wouldn't it be the baby he was really after?

"I'm doing whatever the hell I want to," I shot back immediately and tried my best to keep his attention on me. "Who do you think you are to tell me what I can and cannot do, Ethan?"

He had narrowed the distance between us so that he was only a few feet away.

I needed to make sure Seraphine and Soren had time to get out of here so that Ethan couldn't get my

baby.

I listened to the sound of them running through the woods behind me, the thunk of their wolf paws getting quieter and quieter as they got further away.

Even though I realized I was sacrificing my freedom, I needed Rowan to be safe, and that meant he needed to be in the north, with our pack, not here, locked in a heavily guarded tent in the middle of a battlefield.

“You promised me!” Ethan growled, his teeth locked together in a grimace. “I trusted you, Rosalie! You said you wouldn’t leave without telling me goodbye!”

“And I haven’t!” I argued, even though the only reason I was still there was because he had caught me. “Goodbye, Ethan!” I said and turned to go, as if that was the only reason I hadn’t left with the others.

I wasn’t surprised at all when his fingers wrapped around my arm and tugged me back. It didn’t hurt, but it was forceful.

“You’re not f\*cking going anywhere, Rosalie!” he said. “You f\*cking lied to me! You were planning to sneak out from me again, and you know it!”

I wrenched my arm out of his grip. “You have the audacity to stand there and yell at me for lying to you, Ethan? Seriously? After all of the lies you’ve said to me? You don’t get to talk to me about breaking promises! I would’ve said whatever was necessary to get you to leave me the hell alone!”

His crimson eyes were so red that it almost seemed like they would start to drip blood. He further narrowed them until they were only slits. He was seething, his nostrils flaring as he drew in deep breaths. “Just wake the f\*ck up, Rosalie!” he said. “You think that you’re the queen now so you can do what you want, but you will always belong to me, do you understand?!”

“I don’t belong to you, Ethan! I don’t belong to anyone!” I yelled at him. Anger was beginning to boil up in me, too, now. Who the heck did he think he was? What did I have to do to prove to him that I was an individual, a person, who wasn’t owned or controlled on the property of anyone?

“You will always belong to me!” he said again. “And now, you’ve let my f\*cking a\*shole half-brother take our baby? Are you insane? Have you f\*cking lost your mind?!”

“Your brother will take care of my son!” I emphasized the word “my” as I yelled back. “Unlike you, he actually cares about people! All you ever do for Rowan is come in and stare at him for a few minutes a day. He doesn’t even know who you are! You only wanted him as an heir, but have you ever thought of what he wants?”

I could tell his fists were clenched tightly. I could hear the cracking of his knuckles. Would he hit me? However, I didn’t care at that moment so I continued, “You care as little about his life as you do mine,

and he will know that, Ethan. He will grow up knowing that his absent father was just a tyrant who only cares about himself!”

“Shut up, Rosalie!” Ethan scowled at me. “You don’t know what the f\*ck you’re talking about! I love my son!”

“Love?” | sneered, “He was simply a product of you following King James’s orders, and nothing more. No one who actually loves their child would ever hurt their other parent, and you were going to curse him to a life with no mother because I wasn’t convenient to you! You were going to let my son be raised by Madalynn! Who the hell would ever do that to their child?!”

All of the mistreatment i’d suffered at Ethan’s hands came back to me, flashing before my eyes, and more than anything. I just wanted to hit him.

But he was so much bigger than me, so much stronger, raising a hand to hit him would be suicidal. One blow from his fist could end me. Yet, I continued to dance the fine line between baiting him with my words and sending him spiraling into a rage where he couldn’t control his own emotions or actions.

His scarlet eyes were glowing now, as he continued to measure me up as his fists clenched and unclenched. “You’re going to pay for this, Rosalie,” he said. “If you think the conditions before were unfair, you just f\*cking wait. You’ve betrayed the wrong Alpha.”

“You’re no Alpha!” I shouted. “You’re just a rogue! And not even a good one at that. You tried to kill your own followers! You have even killed your own soldiers in battle because you care so little about others. These people have given up everything for you, Ethan! Vicky, Talon, Paul... Georgia, so many others! You aren’t worth it, and yet here you are bossing everyone around like you’re some sort of a freaking god when you’re really not even a man!”

I knew what I said wasn’t totally true. I heard from Vicky that Ethan mistakenly hurt some of his guys, but none of them were originally from Drogomor. Maybe deep down, his pack bond prevented him from hurting his own pack.

However, I didn’t care to clarify it with him. I saw him hesitate for a moment, seemingly shocked by what I’d said.

“Watch your mouth, Rosalie!” he shouted, and I could see him getting even closer to that breaking point.

But I was there, too. Anger shot through my veins as I thought about my friends and everything they had left behind so that Ethan would live. And how did he repay them? By becoming some sort of a monster. He didn’t care about any of them anymore, not even Talon who had stood by his side for so long.

“What’s the matter, Ethan?” I taunted. “Are you afraid that what I’m saying is true? Are you afraid that you’ve actually lost all of your morals? That your scruples have gone out the window because of this

soulless creature you've become? Are you afraid that James has taken more than just your citizenship away but that he's actually stolen your essence? Do you even have a human side anymore?"

He was breathing so hard now, I could almost see the steam coming out of his ears with every exhale. His mouth was open, his teeth elongated as if he was about to shift, and with every breath he took, his chest heaved. He couldn't even formulate a response to me now, he was so enraged.

Behind me, I no longer heard the sound of Seraphine and Soren as their wolves took my baby to safety. The further away from me Rowan got, the more I felt like my heart was being ripped from my chest.

It was Ethan who had made me give my baby away-it was Ethan who had caused this chasm between my son and me-one I had no idea when I'd be able to cross. When would I see his sweet little face again? When would I hold him in my arms?

My own anger flared again at the thought of my child out there in the world without me, crying, missing me. All because his father had lost all sense when he'd given his soul away.

\* All you want is power. All you want is to control me and everyone else, Ethan. Well, you may take my body back to your freaking Camp and lock me up again, but I will tell you right now, you will never have me! If I live a thousand years, I will never, ever forgive you for making my baby leave!"

"Shut up, Rosalie!" he said, but it seemed more like a plea this time than an order, like he knew that if I didn't stop taunting him with my angry words, he was going to lose all self-control, and he simply wouldn't be able to keep from doing something drastic, something he couldn't take back.

"I don't have to shut up!" I told him. "My son is gone, thanks to you! He's out there in the woods, crying, missing his mother, because of you! If you're going to be so selfish as to make me stay here, in your camp away from my baby, then I want you to know that you can consider him no longer your son!"

I could see his veins raised on his forehead, I could hear his teeth chattering due to anger, and I was ready to bear his rage, because I was desperate

I was angry, at him, at myself at the situation. I didn't care what I said any more. If he was going to punish me, then so be it! How much worse would it get?

All of the negative emotions that I had tried to press down erupted like a volcano, and I did not care whether I said what I meant

any more. I just needed to get it out.

"From this day forward, when I write his name, I will spell it with an E-R-O-W-E-N because even if he is your own flesh and blood, Ethan Gray, it's clear to me that you don't love him. But Soren does! And he will take care of him! He can call Soren his father from now on while I spend the rest of my days rotting with you!"

A horrific growl emitted . VIII...

### **Chapter 165 Prisoner Again**

He was so strong, so powerful, that a direct blow from him to my head would certainly crush my skull. When he swung his fist at me, I knew then, I was a dead woman.

So I waited, with my eyes closed, for the impact, assuming my world would fade away soon. Rowan's sweet face was all I saw before my eyes

But rather than feeling the direct impact of Ethan's fist to my head, instead, I felt a rain of debris-bark, leaves, small twigs-as Ethan instead made contact with a large elm tree I was standing next to.

His rageful battle cry rang out around me as the splintered wood hit me in the face and shoulder. I raised my arms to shield my face and waited for the storm to pass.

When I opened my eyes again, the tree was demolished. A large chunk of it was missing on the far side, and the trunk was bent backward like it would topple over any second.

My eyes then went to Ethan. Blood was pouring from his hand, the skin mangled and shredded from where the bark had bitten into his flesh. However, he didn't stop. He continued to punch the tree over and over again until his fists were coated in so much blood and cuts that I could barely tell their original shapes.

When he was finally done, he left his fists half buried in the tree trunk and he was still panting heavily from the exertion of trying to keep from hitting me. The blood trickled down from his fingers along the tree trunk, forming a small puddle on the ground.

Eyes wide, mouth agape, I stared at him, not knowing what to say. I couldn't believe what had just happened. Had he really just punched a tree instead of me? Nearly destroying a sixty-foot elm rather than my face?

He didn't spare a look at me, and his eyes were red and moist. For a second, I thought, if he were to cry, he would cry blood instead of tears.

At seeing the wounds on his hands, my gut instinct was to offer to help, to try to fix it. Standing there in obvious pain, even though he wasn't so much as gritting his teeth, I knew that Ethan was more vulnerable in that very moment than he had ever been before, even when we were making love, even when he confessed to me about his broken heart, even when he'd told me that he loved me for the first time.

But then I remembered-there's no fixing Ethan. After all of this time of me trying to correct his erratic, unacceptable behavior, perhaps that lesson had finally sunk into my skull, even if his fist didn't.

He might be vulnerable at the moment, but in a matter of seconds, his countenance would change. He'd bottle that emotion right back up, and he would go from the emotionally available, open person I saw standing before me now back to the heartless monster I'd come to know of late.

Even as I watched him, I could see his countenance change. His eyes were narrowing again, and his face crumpled into a scowl, not because of the pain but because of the anger.

Punching the tree hadn't made him feel any better. It had only messed up his hands-and the tree.

Knowing that Seraphine and Soren had to have gotten away by now, I resigned myself to the fact that I was Ethan's prisoner again. Running would do me no good. Even with injured hands, he'd catch me,

Besides, all of the fight was out of me. Not only did Ethan's outrage let me know he'd completely lost his mind now, but it also resigned me to the fact that I was a lost cause.

I was never going to break free of him... Now, I may never even see my son again.

Once he had caught his breath, he said, "Let's go, Rosalie."

A moment later a few of his guards arrived, and I knew I'd better start walking. But before I turned to go, I said, "Just remember what I told you, Ethan. I may be here in the flesh and blood, but you will never capture my soul. I don't belong to you."

He didn't say anything in return, only stared at me, his red eyes seemingly dead to the world.

The guards surrounded me, all of them bloodied and battered from the battle, which I was assuming was over since I no longer heard wolves fighting in the distance. Otherwise, they likely wouldn't have come to investigate the situation.

I doubted Ethan had actually called for their assistance using the

hearsay under the impression he could handle me himself. While that proved to still be true, I could hardly blame him for his overconfidence.

Ethan came with us. He insisted on taunting me, staking songs of defiance on staying in my presence, an amenace that simply would not go away.

I thought I'd feel better after saying all I wanted to Ethan, however, seeing him hurt made me more upset than I could understand.

Instead of letting my emotion out, in fact,

I shook my head and seriously thought there was something wrong with me.

When we got back to the camp, I saw that much of it was in shambles. People were trying to right the tents and put things back where they belonged.

Luckily for me, my prison tent was unharmed.

Vicky was in her human form, working alongside a man I had to assume was Paul to help a few injured wolves. When she saw me, her eyes lit up, and she came running over to me. "Rosalie," she said.

Vicky only got about ten feet from me when Ethan stopped her. "Wol!" he shouted, "You are no longer allowed to see Rosalie! No one is!"

Vicky's face fell, and I watched her puzzle over what might have happened. It was clear she wanted to

reason with Ethan, but she knew better than to do that. Instead, she asked him. What happened to your hands?"

"Leave me the f\*ck alone," was his impolite response, and once again, I saw the emotion in her face shift. She lowered her head, but glanced at me. I could tell she was sincerely concerned for her Alpha.

I wanted to tell her I was sorry and thank her for her friendship, but at the moment, all I could do was keep walking,

"Where's the baby?" Vicky called after us, and Ethan swirled around and came after her. Thankfully, by then, Paul was there. He took Vicky by the arm and tugged her away, making small bowing gestures as he went, as if to silently apologize to Ethan so that he didn't destroy both of them.

"Stop being a jerk!" I muttered, not caring if he heard me or not. I knew he wasn't going to hit me now, so I wasn't afraid of him.

But the defeated spirit I felt was weighing down my soul sat like a heavy boulder in my chest.

Especially when I arrived back at my tent.

Inside, everything was nearly the same.

Except for the fact that my baby was gone. His bassinet, the one Ethan had made for him, sat there empty. All of his things were gone for the most part. There was just the cot with the dirty blankets on it and a few other items I'd been brought over the time I'd been held here.

I would go back to my previous disposition soon enough-not eating, not drinking any water, not talking to anyone.

If he wanted to hold me here, he'd have to be satisfied with a shell of me because that's all he was going to get.

"You will stay here," Ethan said to me. I didn't turn around to look at him. "No more visitors. Only you in



here... as my prisoner.”

Without turning around, I reminded him of what I’d already told him. “You may have my body, but you’ll never have me, Ethan. If you ever regain your soul, you’ll realize what a horrible person you’ve become! I don’t want to see your face. Ever again.”

He growled at me, but he didn’t say anything. What was there to say? I was the prisoner, he was the master.... If he expected me to like that, he had another thing coming.

Ethan stepped out of my tent, closing it up behind him, and I heard him telling the guards to stay there and not to go anywhere for any reason

A sigh of exhaustion left my lips as I melted onto the cot, sitting with my back against the tent wall again, my knees folded up into my chest

I had done this before; I could do it again.

But the gloom there was a hopelessness around me that I hadn’t felt before. My son was gone. I had no chance of getting to see my

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could become a spirit and just float through the tent walls, that I could fly away, over the forest, to find my baby, and

then re-solidify next to him, snatching him up in my arms.

For however long Etrian kept me here this time, I would spend every moment thinking of Rowan and praying that he was safe

When Ethan first met me, I was a different woman in many ways, but one thing he failed to take into consideration was how dramatically a woman can change when she becomes a mother.

Before, I was trying to find a way to survive Ethan for myself and the welfare of someone I'd never met. Now, I was trying to survive Ethan for Rowan, my child, the most important person in the world.

That made me far stronger than Ethan could ever realize.

### **Chapter 166 Crisis Was Brewing**

#Soren's POV

I never in a million years thought I would receive the looks of respect from the Winter Forest pack around me, but when I stepped back into their territory again, I was welcomed like a hero.

They trusted me because I protected Rowan, bringing the heir to the kingdom back to his people.

However, I turned down the invitation to move to the palace. Instead, I insisted on returning to my cottage every night, even if I spent the day with Rowan in the palace. The cottage reminded me of my time with Rosalie back on the islands, and every time I closed my eyes, I could see her smiling face.

It broke my heart when I had to escape without her, leaving her back with my half-brother, a wolf who was losing his mind.

But at the end of the day, at least I was able to get Rowan away. I was able to bring him back to Rosalie's people, as Rosalie requested. Now, I just needed to work with the pack to bring Rosalie back-if that was at all possible.

It had been two weeks since we got back, and every moment without Rosalie was agonizing.

"Soren," Cerina greeted me upon my arrival at the door outside of the conference room, "you're here. Let us speak with the council to see what can be done."

As Cerina's words ended, the double doors to the council's chambers opened, and I stepped within to face the masses.

Eyes fell upon me, and all hushed murmurs came to an end.

That done wrong to their queen in the past. However, now I stood by their side because I had brought the heir to the throne home.

Cerina gestured for me to take a seat. "Welcome, everyone," she said loudly as she addressed the people. "There are a few things that need to be discussed. One of course being our queen."

Murmurs once again erupted as angry and worried voices filled the hall.

“We’ll fight for our queen. We need her back at all costs!” one person shouted out.

“We have seen with the small battles that many of our warriors are hurt. We have been able to hold them off this far with Her Majesty being gone, but we can’t continue to do so,” another person said; many others agreed.

Seraphine waited until the hall was a bit quieter and asked, “I understand that we all want to save her, however, while we were able to rescue the prince, it’ll be even more difficult to approach Her Majesty again, now that the Rogue King has lost his son.”

Someone in the crowd immediately retorted, “Are you saying we should just abandon our queen?”

“We have strong troops and warriors. We’re not afraid of the Rogue King!” another followed.

I sighed inwardly. Those who were the loudest obviously hadn’t faced Ethan directly on the battlefield before. Had they seen Ethan and his men before, they would know to never underestimate the Alpha of Drogomor- or the Rogue King.

Regardless of whether Ethan had lost his sanity or not, he was the best warrior I’d ever seen. Or rather, since he’d turned rogue, he had become a more terrifying killing machine.

Seraphine shook her head and tried to explain. “No, I’m saying we should have a solid plan.”

“But.”

“General,” Cerina interrupted, pressing down the murmuring, and turning to General Vandough, “What do you think?”

He pondered for a moment and stated honestly, “We have just gone through a big fight not long ago, and our troops need time to recover. At this moment, we are no match for the Rogue King.”

Someone immediately shouted out, “That’s the point! Our queen can help us to heal the wounded.”

“That’s right! With the queen’s blood, our army is not defeatable!”

“We want our queen back!” someone demanded with a firm tone as he smacked his hand upon the table.

I frowned. What the hell did those people think Rosalie was? A walking medicine cabinet or a moving blood bank?

Seeing the discussion going nowhere, Cerina noticed my frowning face, and she asked me, “It seems

that you have some opinions Mind to share with us, Soren?"

I pressed down my displeased emotion and tried to speak in a level tone. "I think everyone here has great points. I glanced around the room and saw people nodding at me. "But we all know that we have great challenges to overcome if we want Her Majesty

back

"That's why we are discussing it! Just tell us your opinion, are you willing to fight to get our queen back? Someone was already impatient.

"No," I answered consciously, and Seraphine looked at me puzzled, while Cerina remained silent

One of the people advocating to fight Ethan sneered, We saved you, our queen trusted you, and you, you are just being a coward!

I shook my head. "If by ending myself I could bring about the return of your queen, I'd do it, but my question to you is, even if we initiate the battle against the Rogue King right now, other than jeopardizing our overall defense, what good can we do?"

Seraphine added, We also still need to protect the prince here."

That's correct," I smiled. "We wouldn't be able to pour all of our forces to face the Rogue King. We all have responsibilities here, in the city."

Cerina nodded at my words.

"So we just sit here and wait while our queen suffers?"

"No," I denied again.

"Please tell us what you are proposing then?" Seraphine asked on behalf of the rest of the room.

Well," I replied, tapping my fist on the table gently, "we need to launch a rescue mission to approach the Rogue King and try to get to Her Majesty."

"But you just said you wouldn't fight for her..."

"No, we won't fight, at least not right away. But we'd go there to try to pressure the Rogue King,"

General Vandough finally commented, "I don't see the point in doing so."

Tasked, "Everyone gathered here today because you are all worried about the safety of the queen, am I correct?"

They nodded. "Yes, we want her back so that we are sure we can protect her, and she can lead us."

"Good. The point is, let's first ensure that the Rogue King won't hurt Her Majesty. Let's see her with our own eyes. Let's make sure that she's safe!"

No one objected this time. They agreed with me so far.

"With us pressuring them, we have a chance to converse with the Rogue King. But we don't need to attack right away. When he knows we are not threatening enough, he might not even bother chasing us out of his territory. Then we can wait close by for the best time to rescue our queen."

The room went quiet for a moment, and Commander Landon asked, "But what if he refuses to converse or let us see our queen?"

"Then at that point, let's fight, and let's bring our queen back at all costs!" I said loudly as my voice echoed through the hall.

The rest of the council exchanged a few words, and I saw them nodding to each other. It made me smile to see many of them quickly change their minds about the situation,

"I agree" Cerina was the first to show her support "Let's first ensure the safety of our queen before we go down the path of a full war with the Rogue King. We'll demand to have him hand over our queen, and we'll take it from there."

General Vandough asked, "How big of a team would you need?"

"A team of elites. Maybe two hundred warriors."

If that's the case, we can move sooner—"General Vandough mumbled as he stood up and walked off. A group of men liom the

i followed him out

"When are we leaving?" Commander Landon asked me.

I let out a long breath and shook my head. "I won't be going."

With all of our history, if Ethan knew I was there, everything would go south.

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Commander Landon had left to go to Rosalie while I stayed back in the Winter Forest pack. Not having much else to do, I spent most of my time playing with Rowan.

The little one was adorable and growing fast, but there were times when his expression reminded me so much of Ethan, it was as if I was holding a miniature version of my brother in my arms. When he saw his mother, little Rowan would laugh and smile so widely. With me, and most others, he was a serious little gentleman with inquisitive eyes and a cautious disposition.

I always laughed when I saw him puzzling over me, like he wasn't quite sure whether or not we could be friends.

Things here seemed to be quiet lately, but I just had a feeling this was the calmness before the storm arrived.

Something just seemed wrong, but I couldn't tell what was the cause of it.

'Boss. Something urgent,' Thomas' voice rang through my mind.

'Thomas? Where are you?' I asked. I sent Thomas out to spend time with my group of outcast friends and gather intel since he'd recovered from his injury. He was way happier to be busy than laying in a hospital bed.

However, he didn't answer my question. 'I am using all my strength to send this to you, so I don't have long. Long story short, Madalynn and Beher are mates!

Before I had a chance to ask more questions, I lost the connection back to the mindlink with Thomas, and I couldn't reach him any

more.

I snapped back from the mindlink but my mind was trying to digest what I'd just learned.

Usually, the mindlink worked best if you were near. The further away the parties were, the more exhaustion it would cause, and thus, it was harder to maintain. We would never want to put so much strain on the mind that it could knock us out immediately.

There were only two explanations why Thomas had to send a message to me this way, either it was so urgent that he needed me to take action immediately, or for some reason, he was not able to get close enough.

Either way, it was not good news.

My heart raced with worry thinking about what was to come. Hurrying to the council chamber, I managed to find Cerina and Seraphine.

Their eyes turned to me with concern as they watched me quickly approach them.

“We have a very big problem,” I replied breathlessly. “I just got intel that Madalynn, the leader of the savage rogues, found her mate.”

They all looked at me. From my expression, they were all concerned.

“How bad is it?” Commander Landon asked before the others could say anything.

“Her mate is King Kal’s son, Behar.”

Cerina and Seraphine gasped at my words.

I continued, “Knowing Madalynn and her desire for Rosalie’s death... it’s nothing good. Behar is just as scheming and ruthless as his father, if not more.”

We needed to get word to Rosalie and Ethan and warn them about what could be coming.

“Seraphine, send a letter to Georgia. They have to be warned.”

She quickly took off down the hall to do as I had said.

My heart raced at the notion that there was a bigger war coming than we had hoped for.

Not only would we be going against the rogues Madalynn controlled, but now we would be going against James and Kals forces

The battle was far bigger than the numbers we controlled

## **Chapter 167 Try To Talk Sense Into Him**

\*Georgia’s POV

“I can’t believe that worked,” I mumbled to myself, knowing that it was pure dumb luck Seraphine and Soren were able to get away with Rowan

Had Rosalie not sacrificed her own freedom for the others, I had no doubt Ethan would have killed Seraphine and Soren by the simple way he was acting towards Rosalie.

He had lost his mind for the last time, and even though he was my brother...

I had no remorse for him about how Rosalie treated him.

He had it coming.

Stepping through the brush, I came upon the area Rosalie and Ethan were arguing in. I was forced to

watch a small piece of the conflict between Rosalie and Ethan, and as I had, I felt pure fear flood through me, unsure of whether I should help her.

The anger that seeped off her, though, was like nothing I had ever felt before. It didn't matter what crap Ethan gave her... she gave it right back.

It was as if the moment she got her wolf, something new woke up from deep inside her. A powerful force awakened from years of slumber ready to take on anything thrown its way.

Deciding not to intervene, I disappeared into the shadows of the trees. I made myself scarce. The last thing I wanted to do was be present when Ethan completely lost his senses.

I didn't want him to see me witnessing the moment they were having.

It would only anger him further, and there would be a chance he wouldn't hold back on punishing me. I figured I liked my life way too much to let that happen, so I stayed out of it while providing a little help to my other brother and Seraphine.

Seeing Soren again was something I hadn't expected for so long, and yet him coming back left a warm feeling in my heart. To know that after all these years, he was okay.

It was a relief, but at the same time, I was also angry that he was away for so many years and never had reached out to me.

It would take time, but I knew that in a day or two I would get word of their safe arrival. Until then, I would have to have faith that Soren would protect Rowan, no matter the cost.

I sighed, my two brothers just needed to figure their sh\*t out.

Making my way into camp, I thought about everything that had happened. I had long believed that Ethan's way of handling things in his relationship with Rosalie was unhealthy.

She deserved better, no matter how much I loved my half brother. So did Rowan.

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It had been a few days since the incident with Ethan, and his attitude hadn't changed. He was still the same devil that he had become since Rowan left.

And his reign of terror had no boundaries.

"Georgia!" Paul called from outside my open tent, catching my attention. Turning to face Paul, I caught a glimpse of his fist as if he was holding something in it, and my eyes lit up.



“Is that-” | said, breathlessly, with a smile.

Stepping forward, Paul handed me a rolled up note and sighed, “If Alpha finds out I am bringing you your messages from outside the camp, he is going to have my head.”

willing my eyes, I smiled. “Stop worrying. Now go, before someone sees you. Tell Vicky I said thanks.”

Pomodod has head, bowing slightly as he turned and quickly left my tent.

Opening the note, I let my eyes scan over Seraphine’s writing and I extracted three pleques of key information

First, they had gotten back to the palace, which was great news.

Second, however, Rosalie’s people were coming for her, and that was something Ethan wouldn’t be happy about

Before Rowan’s escape, Rosalie’s people couldn’t identify our exact camp location as we kept moving. But now, due to the increased injuries and expanded territories from the recent battles and operations, it was no longer possible for us to hide such a large group without traces.

But at least we all knew this would happen sooner or later. Nothing surprising.

The third news, however, was bad. How the h\*ll did Madalynn’s mate end up being Kal’s son Behar?!

I cursed under my breath.

Great, just great! What a f\*cking mess we were in!

First things first, Ethan and the Winter Forest pack didn’t need to be enemies. One side was my family, and the other was my friends. It was really hard for me to pick sides. And then, mix in my two brothers’ sh\*t. Then on top of that, we also knew James was after Rosalie, and Kal was after my idiot brother Soren, while Madalynn wanted to seek revenge from both Rosalie and Ethan and now that f\*cking b\*tch was mated to Behar...

Could the problems be more f\*cking complicated?!

I paced back and forth trying to clear my mind.

Alright, to make things simple, attack one issue at a time. Step one, Ethan needed to recognize who Rosalie really was. She was a queen, and one with a mighty force that could help bring down James, Kal, and Madalynn if the White Queen and the Rogue King could work together.

I just had to get Ethan on board with the plan, but that was easier said than done.

Preparing myself mentally, I went over the plan in my head.

Ethan, Rosalie, and the rest of us needed to take sanctuary behind the Winter Forest pack's boundary. At least when we combined, we would be stronger in numbers, and Rosalie would be safe and reunited with her son.

Standing to my feet, I moved swiftly from the tent, heading for Ethan. The words I would say to him played over and over in my mind as my eyes wandered towards Rosalie's tent as I passed it.

I longed to see her-but, I knew I wouldn't be able to

The warriors posted outside were on specific orders to allow no one to approach. So I had to skip the idea of visiting her for now.

Stepping up to Ethan's tent, I found him leaning over a makeshift table. He and Talon talked in hushed whispers as they went over the papers in front of them.

No doubt more battle strategy plans.

"Ethan," I said, straightening my back and preparing for the argument that was sure to follow.

His cold red eyes glanced up at me with an irritated expression. "What do you want?"

"May I have a moment of your time?" I asked him, watching as Talon met my gaze and smiled. "It will only take a moment."

Ethan turned his gaze to Talon and nodded his head, gesturing for Talon to leave.

Before Talon exited the tent, I could tell he was a bit worried about me. When would he stop treating me like someone who needed his protection all the time? I was no less of a warrior than him.

Okay, maybe after I got my wolf. But still, I was quite confident in myself.

I made a face at him, and he shook his head with a smile, which made me lose my focus for a second.

Talon, I really didn't like that he had been treating me like his sister. Like Vicky.

"What do you want, Georgia?" Ethan asked as he took a seat in a chair behind the table. His question pulled me back to face my woody Alpha brother

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out and got to the point. "I received word today that Rosalie's people are on their way here. They want to work with

us on the problem, but they want their queen."

Ethan's eyes narrow in anger at my words. "What the f\*ck did you just say?"

Great. Here it comes. I internally groaned.

"Ethan, stop I sighed, not wanting to argue. "This is ridiculous. Your son is safe back with Rosalie's people, and the time has come to let her go too."

\*That isn't your place to say!" Ethan yelled, and I just shrugged.

"Don't yell at me." I replied. "Look around you, Ethan. Not only are rogues surrounding us, but so are military forces, and with our numbers dwindling, how do you expect to keep everyone safe?"

He stood to his feet, taking steps towards me. "She doesn't belong to them. She belongs to me," he growled in anger. "She is mine."

"Ethan, do you ever want her back for real? If so, then f\*cking be reasonable."

"I have her here already," he sneered.

I crossed my arms and nodded. "Uh-um, so why haven't you dared to speak to her for days?"

He didn't answer and just growled. Others might have been afraid of him, but I wasn't. "Have you really thought this through? If you really hurt or kill her people, do you think there would be any possibility for you two to get back together?"

He was about to say something, but I interrupted. "Before you deny it, let me finish. I meant, you two get back together for real, not just holding her shell here. Stop thinking you are always in charge. She is a queen, whether you want to accept it or not, and those people are coming here for their leader. Instead of fighting it, try embracing it."

My words seemed to fall on deaf ears as he stood staring at me. The swirling black and red abyss of his eyes shined down at me as if there was something he wanted to strike me for because of how I was acting, but instead, he internally battled about it

"How are you getting in contact with the outside world beyond these boundaries?" he growled, stepping closer, causing me to step back

"That's none of your business, Ethan," I retorted. "I have my contacts just like you have yours."

“You’re betraying me just like the others, aren’t you!” he roared in anger. “All of you are!”

“What the f\*ck are you talking about? We are not like your f\*cking cousin!” I yelled in frustration

The conversation I wanted to have with him was getting nowhere. He was so stuck in his beliefs that everyone was out to get him that he couldn’t even see the truth if it were to smack him in the face.

“If you don’t get your sh\*t together, Ethan, you are going to lose her, and you’re going to lose Rowan as well. Is that seriously what you f\*cking want?”

As if my words had some kind of pull on him, his eyes widened, and he snapped out of the unhinged state he was in. Stepping back, he stared at me. His mind seemed to reel from my words.

“No-” he mumbled, shaking his head. “They won’t leave me. Rosalie, and my son won’t leave me.”

Sometimes I didn’t know why I bothered to try to talk sense into him. At one point in my life, the things I did were for Ethan. Now, though, I thought what I had been doing was for Rosalie.

She didn’t deserve this kind of life or treatment, and neither did Rowan

“Let me talk to her before things get messy?” I asked him with a sigh. “The last thing that needs to happen is for innocent and unnecessary blood to be shed because of your stupidity and stubbornness.”

“No” His decision was final on the matter. He stood with a stern glare upon his face.

What? What do you mean no, Ethan? This is important!”

Removed as he stepped past me and headed towards the entrance to his tent

Wat

is going to talk to Rosalie, it’s going to be me.”

## **Chapter 168: Still A Prisoner**

\*\*Rosalie’s POV

Without my baby nearby, without being able to communicate to anyone, and without being able to do anything, the world seemed to be slowly slipping away from me.

It didn’t matter that I was a queen now, nor did it matter that I had this magical blood that could cure people. I was beginning to feel completely alone, and hopeless.

Most of the time, I’d sit in my tent and stare at the wall, and I started to question whether everything

that happened was real, or was it all just a long nightmare?

Except for occasionally, I'd get the idea that someone was watching me. Whether it was through the two small windows on either side of the tent or some other smaller hole I was unsure of, but I would get goosebumps on my arms, and the hairs on the back of my neck would stand up under the weight of unseen eyes.

That was the only feeling that reminded me that I was alive.

!

It reminded me a lot of how I had felt back on the islands when Ethan had first arrived. I hadn't known it at the time, but he was standing outside in the garden near the cottage Soren had let me live in, his eyes, watching me through the open window.

Was that what I was experiencing now? Was Ethan watching me?

I shook my head; it really didn't matter. I longed to see my son, my friends, my pack, or even face my enemies. The only person I didn't want to have any contact with was Ethan.

The battle, killing, and blood were slowly eating away his heart, and he was less and less of the person that I fell in love with a long time ago.

With his soul dissipated, his strength grew. Maybe one day, he would become the true Rogue King. To me, however, it would be the same. I wasn't going anywhere.

Only in my dreams did I see hope.

I dreamed of my people coming into Ethan's camp and confronting him so that I could be released to them.

I dreamed of being with Rowan, holding him, kissing him, and rocking him to sleep. He would reach out to me with giggles, showing me how much he'd missed me.

I started to talk myself into sleeping more and more because life was way better while I was asleep than awake. So I laid down again, praying to the Moon Goddess that she'd bless me with dreams that could rescue me from my desperation.

Soon, I drifted off. Then I smiled at the sight of Rowan. We were in a meadow together, and he was a little older. He was picking white wildflowers and making a daisy chain. I walked closer to watch what he was doing, and realized that he was creating a crown for my head.

One that looked exactly the same as the one his father had given me on my birthday!

He gave it to me and ran away laughing, but my heart sank as the crown dropped from my hand and fell on a pool of blood...

My eyes snapped open with my heart thumping and my heartbeat pounding against my eardrum.

“Shh... it’s okay, it’s okay,” I heard a low voice whisper in the dark, and a large hand caressed my face.

I jerked away as soon as I realized who it was and demanded, “Get away from me!”

Why did he have to plague me so? Not only was I a prisoner in his horrible camp, but now, he’d turned my beautiful dream into a nightmare!

He lit a lamp to give me some light. I could see his face. He seemed to be worried and... hurt?

However, he didn’t say anything, and he didn’t move. I couldn’t tell what was going through his mind, and I really didn’t want to know

stared at his face for a few moments. All of a sudden. I just couldn’t control my sadness. A surge of warmth rushed into my YAS.

and I couldn’t help but ask in a quivering voice, “How long are you going to keep me as your prisoner here?”

I didn’t know why I even tried to ask. He never gave me a satisfactory answer anyway.

His face sank. Soon, anger replaced whatever little concern or sadness was left on his face.

“Forever!” he roared. Seemingly irritated by my question, he added, “And do NOT try me again!”

His unusually loud voice startled my already unstable nerves, and I could no longer keep my tears from falling.

That had to show him my weakness, so I took a deep breath to calm myself. Now that I was fully awake and alert, I wiped off my tears, pulled myself together and turned my back towards him. There was no point continuing the conversation.

However, he wasn’t done with me. I heard him also working on soothing his own breathing behind me.

After a long silence, finally, he sat down on the edge of my cot and willed me to look at him. I knew I would not win the fight, so I turned around

“Look, Rosalie,” he tried to level his tone, “I didn’t come here to fight.”.

I scoffed, “Right, that really seems like the case.”

He ignored my comment. "I need you to do something for me," he told me.

I looked up, waiting for what he was going to say.

"Your people have sent a representative. Georgia has been in contact with him. It seems... they want you back and are refusing to listen to reason. They are vowing to start a war if you're not released at once."

I stared at him blankly for a moment before I said, "Then give me back."

He shook his head. "I can't do that."

"You mean you won't do that," I corrected him. "Why not, Ethan? Don't you know that a caged bird doesn't sing?"

His crimson eyes stared into mine, and I thought perhaps he was pondering my response, but then he shook his head again. "I won't budge on this, Rosalie. You are my mate, and you will stay here, but I need you to go ask them to retreat."

What?

He continued to clarify his request. "I need you to tell them you're here because you want to be, you're happy here, and they should leave you, leave us, alone."

I looked at him in disbelief. How could he?!

I also burst into laughter, and I could hardly stop, while he just sat there expressionlessly.

"Ethan!" I was so angry that my voice was trembling due to fury. "Are you really just so arrogant that you believe everyone should just do exactly what you want them to?! How could you even bring yourself to ask for that?!"

Strangely, he kept his cool. "Rosalie, I know you're upset with me right now, but I want you to listen."

"Why would I listen to a monster like you!" I raised my voice.

"Because I'm asking you this for your people, not for me. It's best for everyone, and you're smart enough to figure that out"

My eyes widened, and I forced myself to evaluate the situation with a cool mind.

Ethan was right. The fight between my pack and Ethan's group could be, and should be, avoided. There were people important to me in both parties, and the last thing I wanted to see was those who I cared

about get hurt or killed because of me.

What was more, with other forces watching, undermining either of our numbers wouldn't do either of us any good.

I bit down hard on my lip. Unfortunately, Regardless of how much I wanted to defy him...

"really have no choice, do I?" I asked him.

"You do, but you should know that I'll fight with anything or anyone who wants to take you away from me. Rosalie, you know much

you.

"App! I than just stopt I'll do it I'll do it, okay?!"

I saw him swallow hard, but he didn't insist on finishing what he wanted to say. Eventually, he took a deep breath and looked me in the eye. "I will escort you to make sure that you are not harmed and that you can't get away. Tell them to back off before they get hurt."

His words were clear. If I wanted to avoid unnecessary blood being shed, I'd have to consent to stay here with him and tell my people to stand down.

"Fine," I told him. "I'll do it to avoid a war because I don't want any more blood on my hands, but you have to know, Ethan, I'm not staying here because I want to be with you. I'm staying here because you're forcing me to."

He slowly shook his head. "In time, you'll grow to feel the mate bond, too."

"Do you really believe that?" He didn't answer, but he didn't have to. It was clear that he did.

I took a few minutes to prepare so that when I faced my people, I didn't look like quite a mess.

He waited patiently for me to get ready.

Once I was done, Ethan, Talon, and several other guards escorted me through the woods to a clearing where about two hundred of my officials and elite warriors were waiting, led by Commander Landon.

They seemed to be the representatives of a much larger army.

"Your Majesty!"

"She's here. Her Majesty is here!"



“Your Majesty, thank the Moon Goddess you’re alright!”

I saw looks of relief wash over all of their faces when they saw me unharmed. My first instinct was to break away from Ethan’s strong grip on my arm and join them, but I knew I would not succeed.

Rogue or not, no one had been able to withstand Ethan’s wrath.

“Rogue King, how dare you kidnap our queen!” one official condemned, pointing at Ethan.

“That’s right! We need our queen back,” Commander Landon agreed.

“Return our queen, or there will be war!!” Someone else raised his voice.

I needed to do something quick. Ethan’s expression didn’t look that friendly at all now, and I immediately was concerned for my people. I needed to stop them before any one from my pack initiated an attack, or before Ethan lost his temper.

“Thank you all for coming,” I said, trying to keep my voice strong and unwavering as I addressed them. “Please listen to me.”

The crowd quieted down at my words.

“I wanted to let you know that you should not come here!” I raised my voice, so that they could hear.

“Your Majesty! What are you talking about... we’re here to bring you back...” Commander Landon obviously did not believe my words.

“There were some misunderstandings,” I interrupted him, “and I will be remaining with the... Rogue King as... his guest.”

“But Your Majesty...”

I looked at him coldly and scolded, “Commander Landon, are you questioning my decision?”

“No,” he said, and then he lowered his head, “My apologies, Your Majesty.”

I nodded and softened my tone. “Everyone, there’s no reason for us to go to war with... our neighbor at this time,” I gritted my teeth, “And the Rogue King will not harm me. Right?” I looked at Ethan.

A crooked smile pulled up the comers of his mouth as he placed his arm around my shoulder, agreeing. “You have my word that I’ll protect your queen with my life!”

Although I wanted to pull away from him, I didn’t because I needed to convince my people.

Commander Landon hesitated at my words while someone else protested, “But Your Majesty, your people need you. They are all awaiting your safe return. Especially the prince”

Ileli tears threatening to fall as Ethan’s grip on my shoulders increased. Just the mention of my son had me wanting to run away and right

But I didn’t let myself be distracted from what Ethan had instructed me to do. “I know that, Commander,” I told him “And I hope to be back in the north with my people soon. But for now, I’ll stay”

The commander opened his mouth, but he didn’t make any further objections this time. However, they all still stood there, not wanting to leave

Ethan was losing his patience. “You heard your queen. Now go!”

I didn’t like the way that he addressed my people, however, there was no point in fighting about it at the moment What I did was for my people, to keep them safe, and to prevent unnecessary casualties as much as I could.

As we turned to go, I gave Commander Landon one last look, hoping he would take the cue and leave with his group of people.

However, I saw him parted his lips and shouted out, “Rogue King, we won’t leave! Since Her Majesty is your guest, we demand to be close to her in case she needs our service!”

“Do what you want, as long as you don’t step across my boundary!” Ethan said, losing interest in Landon.

He gestured for me to go with him and I walked alongside him back to my prison

“You did well, Rosalie,” he praised. However, to me, that was an insult instead of a compliment

I turned and looked at him, seething with anger. “If you think threatening my people and holding me here against my will is the way into my heart, you’ve got another thing coming.”

I glanced down and saw the scar on his chest from where I’d stabbed him

I wondered if I was given another chance to do that would I push the knife all the way through to the hilt?

## **Chapter 169 Talon’s Punishment**

\*\*Ethan’s POV

‘Alpha, the battle is over.’ Talon reported.

We were attacked again, but my men fought hard, and the border of my territory expanded.

This time, I had a feeling we weren't just fighting against a group of rogues. We also encountered well-trained military forces. It might have been James's men, but my instincts told me there were also other forces out there. Someone more dangerous.

Nevertheless, it didn't matter because all wolves looked the same to me-especially the dead ones.

The battle waged through an abandoned village near our camp, and as Georgia and I chased the remaining wolves through town, Talon, who was back on the other side of the village, reported our victory,

Talon, take those captives over into the woods and dispatch them,' I told him, catching up to a wolf that was running with a small bag in his mouth. I knocked him onto the ground and tore out his throat in one fluid motion, leaving him reflexively jerking as the bag fell from his mouth.

Georgia jumped off my back and whistled. She picked up the bag on the ground and asked curiously, "What was so important that he'd tried to run away with it?"

'Alpha,' Talon said back, using the mindlink, 'it's against the warriors' code for us to take their lives.'

A wave of irritation washed over me. Who did my Beta think he was, trying to tell me what was and was not acceptable?

'Talon, I gave you an order,' I reiterated.

'I understand, sir,' he replied. 'But some of these prisoners may be King James's men, if they catch wind of it.'

'And?' I asked him. 'Talon, do as I say, now!'

First, all I knew was they were mingled amongst rogues, so they shouldn't be treated differently from rogues. Second, they should've known their fate when they chose to attack me first,

I had no patience to debate with Talon, so I cut the mindlink off. He knew what had been asked of him.

"Everything okay?" Georgia asked me, breathing heavily from the run.

I nodded. 'Everything is fine. Or else it better be.

Georgia had opened the bag. It was filled with jewelry. Valuable loot like this wasn't commonly seen, but I had little interest.

However, before I turned to walk away, a pearl necklace caught my attention.

“We should figure out where he took this from and give it back,” Georgia noted.

| sneered

“What?” She was puzzled at my reaction.

Talon, Georgia, or others... they still thought they were heroes to bring justice? We were f\*cking rogues, no different than the other savages that we had just killed.

‘If you and Talon don’t want to live and act like rogues, then why don’t you just f\*cking go back to Mirage?’

Georgia was beyond confused and shocked at my snarky comment, “Ethan, what the f\*ck is wrong with you?”

Why was everyone questioning me today?

I narrowed my eyes at her. ‘Stop trying to tell me what to do, Georgia, or you’ll find yourself in the sort of trouble you don’t need or want’

She opened her mouth a bit, like she wanted to speak, but she couldn’t.

I picked the white pearl necklace up with my mouth and told her, ‘Do whatever the f\*ck you want with the rest.’

I trotted off back toward our camp. It was a long way from there since we had claimed more territory.

I needed to have full control of the northern tier. I needed my territory expanded, and I needed more rogues to join us, because Rosalie was here and my son was further north. Anyone who wanted to get to them needed to first be able to get through me.

My forces were much larger now than they had been when I’d first arrived here, even with our loss of numbers on the battlefield, and I had far more wolves and land than I’d had to begin with.

None of that mattered, though, when the one thing I wanted... was so distant from me.

I made it back to camp and went into my tent to shift into my human form and get dressed. I examined the necklace. The moment / saw it, I thought of my Rosalie. Pure and perfect. It would look great on her slender and graceful neck.

The pearls were of the highest quality, and the clasp was made of pure gold.

Last time I made her a flower crown. Sooner or later, I would make her a real crown to go with this

necklace.

Happy with the present, I made my way to her tent and picked up some wild flowers in the woods nearby

When I entered her tent, I found her in the same near-catatonic state she'd been in for quite a few days. The uncontrollable anger towards the world seemed to dissipate, and my heart felt heavy in my chest to see her this way.

I would do whatever was needed to snap her out of it.

"Rosalie?" I said, waiting for her to turn and look at me.

She didn't, so I proceeded into the tent and sat next to her on the cot, facing her. "How are you?"

She didn't even move. Her eyes were focused on the wall, away from me. The last time I'd heard her speak was when I took her out to tell her people to leave her be, and go home.

That was a few days ago.

"I brought you something." Taking the flowers, I held them under her nose.

This action got her to blink a few times and then look down at them. "Flowers?" she asked me, like she wasn't sure what they were.

"That's right," I told her, and I picked one out to put it behind her ear.

She didn't dodge like usual, and her whole body was rigid like she was just a statue.

I sighed. "And this." I held the necklace out for her to see.

She lifted her eyelid a little, but again, there was no emotion there. None.

"It's a pearl necklace," I told her. "Isn't it beautiful?"

She stared at me blankly.

I kneeled in front of her, put down the flowers on her lap, and the necklace on top of the flowers, but she was like a soulless doll; she didn't fight, didn't react.

I led her hand to touch the gifts on her lap. "Rosalie, don't be like this."

The scent of the fresh flowers slowly filled the air. Gradually, her eyes seemed to focus back on me.

Her fingers traced over the flowers, gently caressing the petals. Then they brushed the smooth pearls slowly.

“Do you like them?” | asked carefully.

Finally, she lifted her gaze and looked at me. She hadn’t spoken for a few days. It seemed that it took her some time to get used to talking again. “Why would I want them, Ethan?”

“Because I want you to be happy.”

“You want your prisoner to be happy? Don’t you think you’ve got the wrong logic?”

“I know you’re still mad at me, but I just think that...”

“Think what? As long as you bring me gifts, I will happily stay here with you?”

I pressed my lips tight, tried my best not to argue with her.

She scoffed, “What the heck is wrong with you?!”

Her words hurt. I had hoped she’d like the gifts, but she didn’t seem to care at all. She looked away from me again, her eyes refocusing on the wall.

“I guess... you don’t want them then,” I said. The heaviness I’d felt in my heart before turned into a stabbing pain.

My mate rejecting me over and over was too much for me. I needed to get out of her presence,

“I’ll see you later, Rosalie,” I told her as I felt like I was fleeing from her tent.

She didn’t even turn to look at me.

I needed to do something to distract myself from the thoughts of her, so I went back out into the camp, thinking I should check on the situation with the prisoners. Hopefully, by now, Talon had done what I’d asked him to do.

I saw my Beta on the other end of the camp, speaking to Georgia and Vicky in hushed tones. I looked around and saw a newly erected tent that seemed to have some more people in it, guards standing outside of the door.

“What’s going on?” I asked as I approached.

“Alpha,” he began, his tone cautious. “I wanted to speak with you regarding the prisoners.”

I

Anger began to course through my veins as I realized he had done the opposite of what I asked him to do. "You didn't take care of them?" I growled.

"Yes, I did." Talon's expression was upset. My Beta had no problems killing enemies on the battlefield, but dispatching the captives was something new to him, even though they were ruthless criminals who had blood all over their hands already. "Mostly."

That meant not all. I felt exasperation rushing through.

"But Alpha, there are a few exceptions."

"Talon!" I barked, making Vicky jump, and Georgia's eyes widened in shock. "I gave you an order! I didn't tell you to bring them back here so that we could discuss whether or not my order was negotiable!"

"Alpha, the ones in there are fairly young, and they're barely able to shift..."

This was the first time ever my Beta had disobeyed me.

Uncontrollable fury rushed through me, and I roared to the guards, "Escort Beta Talon to his tent," I told them. "Lock him in there and don't let him leave."

Turning back to face Talon, I said, "You purposely disobeyed me! Now, not only will you be my prisoner for the rest of your existence, but in the morning, at first dawn, you will receive forty lashes for your disobedience!"

Vicky shrieked and covered her mouth, and I snapped my head and gave her a warning look...

Talon lifted his hands to stop Vicky and Georgia. Then he stared up at me and simply said, "Yes, Alpha."

The guards grabbed hold of him and began to take him away. He held up his hand and told them, "I can walk myself."

"No!" Vicky shouted, but I spun around, ignoring her. I couldn't give a d\*mn what she thought.

"Ethan!" Georgia said, grabbing my arm.

I shook her loose and turned to look at her. "Would you like to be next?" I asked her, my teeth clenched together.

She glared back at me. "Look at you! What a f\*cking pathetic monster you're becoming!"

“You’re right,” I narrowed my eyes at her. “You are looking at a monster. A monster called the Rogue King!”

With that, I turned around and marched back to my tent, still fuming, ready to kill anyone who crossed my path.

## **Chapter 170: Rosalie’s Persuasion**

\*Rosalie’s POV

The flowers Ethan had brought me remained on my lap. Though I considered pushing them off onto the floor, I didn’t. They were beautiful and innocent, and they deserved to be treated better.

I sighed. I bundled them into a bouquet and placed them on the table along with the necklace. The simple decoration immediately brightened the room.

I heard a discussion at the door of my tent that got my attention. Georgia’s voice boomed above those of the guards and another female voice I thought to be Vicky’s.

“Let me in there right now, d\*mn you, or I’ll cut your balls off and shove them down your throat!”

“But Miss Georgia,” one of the guards was saying, “the Rogue King has expressly forbid us from letting anyone inside to see the White Queen.”

The next thing I heard was the sound of someone doubling over in pain as I assumed Georgia had punched him in the stomach.

“Go tell Ethan. Now! Otherwise you’ll be the next!” she threatened the other guard.

“M-Miss Georgia...” he stammered.

“Just f\*cking go tell him, and leave us the f\*ck alone!” Georgia scolded.

I heard footsteps running away, and a moment later, my tent door opened, and Georgia and Vicky were walking in

Stunned, I stood up to hug them. “What are you doing here?” | asked them. Ethan hadn’t let me see anyone except for him since Rowan had left.

Georgia hugged me tightly. “We don’t have a lot of time before Ethan finds out that we’re here,” she explained. She released me, and Thugged Vicky, seeing by her face that she’d been crying. Her eyes were red and puffy, and she had streaks down her cheeks where tears had rolled through the layer of dust that covered her face, likely from a recent battle

“What’s going on?” I asked,



The two exchanged a quick glance before Georgia said, "It's Ethan He's lost his damn mind!"

"Tell me something I don't already know," I muttered, folding my arms beneath my chest. "What did he do this time?"

Bursting into tears, Vicky managed to choke out, "Talon! He's. going to whip him!"

"What?" I couldn't believe what she was telling me. Talon, of all people? The one person who was loyal to Ethan, no matter what he did?

"Why in the world would he do that?"

Vicky was sobbing so hard now, she couldn't speak Georgia wrapped an arm around her and pulled her to her shoulder as she answered me.

"Talon was in charge of the prisoners from our recent battle. Ethan told him to have them all executed, but Talon spared some because those were very young rogues...."

I nodded. "Talon did the right thing," I said. I couldn't imagine how ruthless Ethan had to have become.

"Well, Alpha didn't see it that way." Vicky choked out.

Georgia patted her back as Vicky continued to cry. I felt just awful for my friend, but I didn't even have a tissue to give to her

"When Ethan found out, he lost his sh\*t," Georgia said. "He had Talon locked up. In the morning, he's going to give Talon forty lashes as his punishment."

"Forty lashes?" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My hands flew up to cover my mouth. Forty lashes had been known to strip all of the flesh right off of one's back. Talon would be in serious condition from something like that especially if they became infected

Most importantly, did Ethan also expect Talon to fight? If Talon went out to battle with wounds like that, he wouldn't be able to fight effectively, and he could die!

"That's right," Georgia confirmed, "We can't let that happen, Rosalie. If Ethan can do that to Talon, he can do it to anyone. Besides that... Talon doesn't deserve to be treated that way. He's been so loyal to Ethan all of these years. He gave up everything to stay by his side. Now, my f\*cking brother is willing to stoop so low?"

I could tell by the way she was shaking her head, her lips pressed together, that she was trying to control her rage.

—

I agreed with her. We couldn't let that happen. But I didn't know how to stop it either. "What can we do? Do you think you can break Talon out of the tent so he can run away?"

"No," Georgia said quickly, like that wasn't even a possibility. "He's too well guarded. No, the only way we can keep this from happening is if you can talk Ethan out of it."

"Me?" I asked, my eyes widening, "How can I talk him out of it?" I was still his prisoner, after all. Clearly, I wasn't good at talking Ethan out of anything.

"But you did. You've done it once. You're the only one he'll listen to," Vicky said between sobs.

"Please Rosalie?" Georgia pleaded. "It's the only way to save Talon."

With no hesitation, I said, "Yes, of course, I'll try. I just... don't want you to get your hopes up, that's all."

"Thank you, Rosalie!" Vicky said, letting go of Georgia to hug me. I knew we could count on you!"

So much for them not getting their hopes up.

Georgia hugged me, too. "Thank you for trying."

"Of course," I sighed. "I only hope I can make Ethan listen to me."

"Listen to you about what?"

Ethan's voice boomed from the opening of the tent, making all three of us jump, even Georgia

Ethan's expression clearly told us that he was beyond furious.

"We should go," Vicky said quietly.

"Guards," the Rogue King said behind the other two girls, "take them to..."

"Ethan!" I shouted out, redirecting his attention to me before he could come up with another horrendous punishment for my friends.

Ethan's eyes lit up, and he walked towards me, seemingly forgetting what he was about to say

Georgia and Vicky exchanged a look and quickly fled the tent. The guards looked at us for a moment and quietly exited the room as well.

Once they were gone, Ethan was right in front of me. "What's going on, Rosalie?"

I took a deep breath. As angry as I was at him for everything he'd done to me and what he was threatening to do to Talon, I knew it wouldn't do me any good to yell at him. I had to keep myself calm and patient.

"Please take a seat."

Ethan was surprised, but he didn't question me.

I took a few moments to organize my thoughts. My eyes darted to the flowers and the necklace on the table.

Then I cleared my throat and said, "Thank you for the flowers."

He followed my gaze and saw the flowers on the table, and it seemed to me that he was pleasantly surprised that I made them into a bouquet. I was really glad that I didn't throw them away like I originally planned to. I added, "And the necklace."

Ethan looked at me in disbelief. The red in his crimson eyes seemed to have faded a little, and I could see an expression similar to a smile on his face.

He cleared his throat and murmured, "You're welcome."

I stared at him with my mind blank for a moment.

I knew it was wrong to feel this way, but when I saw his reaction, I couldn't help but soften my tone. "What happened to Talon?" I asked him, as if I didn't already know.

His smile faded now that he realized that was the only reason why I wanted to talk to him. However, he still answered my question. "I don't like it when people disobey direct orders," he grumbled and put his hands on his hips.

I nodded. "I can't blame you for that. I don't think any leader likes that. But it doesn't sound like Talon to do something like that just because he felt like it. He's always been so loyal to you. He gave up everything to be here, to make sure you weren't alone."

His expression shifted as his lips pursed slightly, and he looked away from me. He knew what I was saying was true. "I don't know what got into his head today, but I gave him a direct order, and he disobeyed it."

"Did he say why?" I asked.

"Yeah." He looked down at the ground for a minute. "He didn't think it was necessary. But it's not his place to question whether or not my orders are ethical!" he shouted.

He was starting to get angry. I couldn't let that happen. "No, of course, it's not, but at the same time, it's not like you've been yourself recently. Perhaps he just wanted to make sure you'd thought this through."

"What do you mean I haven't been myself?" he growled.

I sighed and waited a moment, choosing my words carefully. "This rogue business has changed you a little, you know?"

A little... that was an understatement.

His forehead knit together, then he scoffed, "For the better, I guess."

I didn't argue with him, but continued with my original statement. "Ethan, you've become a little more... ruthless than before. Surely, you have to see that." I didn't give him a chance to answer. "Talon would do anything for you. Even now, he wouldn't hesitate to stand there and let his back be ripped to shreds simply because you wish it."

Ethan retorted, "He deserves it!"

I didn't deny him, but I went on. "If you think so. However, in this case... what would happen if he runs into another battle tomorrow after a life-altering punishment like this?" I looked him in the eye, "Are you ready to lose your best friend for life?"

His face softened a bit, although he still tried to persuade himself he had made the right choice. "I can't let the others see me as a weak leader."

"No, they won't," I said. "They'll see you as a merciful leader, one who is reasonable and can reconsider the situation when new information is brought to light."

He thought about that for a long moment before he finally said, "Fine. I'll think about it."

"Thank you," I said, knowing that was his way of letting the whole matter go. "For Talon and for those young lives."

He stood up and quickly cleared the space between us.

"I'll grant you your wish," he whispered, "as long as..."

Ethan swallowed and I saw the lump in his throat move. I was immediately on high alert, looking at his lustful eyes warily.

If he wanted my body in exchange, what should I do?

However, he only printed a kiss on my cheek and quickly pulled away before I got the chance to condemn him.

“I’m glad you’re up off the bed,” he said before he left the tent.

I didn’t know how to respond as I sat there for a long time, letting my heated face slowly cool down.