

Alpha's Blind Luna Online Free

Chapter 101

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I had taken Gale's advice up. After finishing my business with her, I headed to the vampire archives. It turned out that there were so many that it took several months just to go all of them. The issue was, none of them had the information I was looking for. I knew from what Vale had actually told me, one of the Alpha Kings ran across experiments done by vampires but there wasn't even record of that. Somehow though, there was a record of six Vampire kings previous and even single one of his nightly sex routine he had with woman and men of all races.

Finally, after months, I broke down and called Morgan. At the very least he could point me in the right direction if I gave him a little bit of information. He did, which helped narrow my search down a bit and I found what I was looking for but not really. It went into the specifics of how the experiments were done but not that they had ever been successful and definitely not the after effects of one who had gone through them.

Feeling hopeless, I spent some time in one of Morgan's offshoots to his mafia crew. They were surprisingly relaxed when it came to a werewolf in their midst but it was there that these vampire tendencies started to shine. I accidentally mistook blood for wine and felt myself savoring it instead of being revolted by it. I also started feeling more comfortable on their schedule, not really sleeping much. It was like I was going through puberty again and it was scary without any guidance.

Morgan pulled me aside, saying that his boys were giving him updates and that I was freaking them out. Finally, I spilled most of what was going on. That I had no idea what I was doing and I was well and truly afraid. Afraid that I was turning into a vampire and losing my werewolf side. He listened to me completely unload about the past years of issues without saying anything. Once I was done, he said he knew someone that would be able to help me. That would have the knowledge I was seeking.

That's how I ended up in the car with Morgan now. We had been mostly quiet, with Morgan thrumming against the steering wheel to music that was in a language I couldn't identify. Staring out the window, I wondered if this really was the only choice. Morgan did say there was someone who would

know about being part vampire but how many could there actually be? Was he just taking us to an ex-vampire researcher? Could I even trust them?

'You need to trust Morgan.' Ryder e chimed in.'Yeah yeah.' I sighed heavily.

"Everything alright?"Morgan asked, looking atme.

My eyes widened."Sorry. Didn't realize... I was talking to Rydere."

Morgan chuckled."How odd it must be to have another entity in your mind. I mean, I know it's normal for you guys. But it's still an odd concept to wrap your head around. Basically two souls connected to one body."

I cocked my head to the side."I guess? It's probably the best way to describe it. Since one soul can actually die leaving the other."

"Has a wolf taken over in full after their humanside died?"

My eyes narrowed for a moment."Yes and no. Yes because it has happened. But no because you're probably thinking a wolf staying in human form and living like a human. That doesn't happen. Usually there is a final shift and then they don't go back to human."

Morgan thrummed again on the steering wheel."It seems I will be proving you wrong in multiple ways today's."

My eyes widened and I looked back at the emptyroad ahead of us. It was a country road and the houses spanned miles between each other. Morgan's words bounced around in my head.

'I mean, there could potentially be a wolf whochooses to stay in human form.' Ryder e mused.'It just would be very odd. They could have also lost their ability to shift.'

'Then wouldn't they just...'

Ryder e tsked.'Don't finished that sentence, Hector. Not all of us have a death wish. Especially if a wolf doesn't have a relationship with their counterpart, why should we as a wolf suffer? Hell, I'm sure Cat o has that feeling right now.'

I winced.'Stop, Rydere. I don't want to talk about ...'

'Auri? Our mate? Our love? You've been running all these years! I want our mate! I don't understand why you ran! Why after all these years of wanting her, loving her, you choose to run away!'

Growling, I balled up my fist. 'Because she was forced. Forced to mate us. To have sex with us. We are no better than those fucking vampires who raped her. We raped her, Rydere! She was forced to be with us! How can you still want to look at her and not feel the same fucking pain I do?' Ryder e growled back. 'She already forgave us. She already talked to us about it. Accepted us! We could feel her love for us. You chose to ignore that and leave her alone after she took care of us through our heat. Left her in a foreign country! Alone! After years of trying to find her!'

My mouth thinned and I turned back to look at the rolling hills. The hills were only interrupted by an old forest that darkened the horizon. This was a usual argument. Hell, Ryder e had taken over forcefully for days at a time and searched for her. But he wasn't able to find her. For a while it was easy to follow the destruction, the labs being exploded all over the world. But it had been two years since the last destruction notice. Three years since I left her in the hotel room. Three hellish years of losing my mind without my mate, fighting with my wolf, while trying to wrap my mind over the fucked up things we had gone through. What she had gone through.

"Seems like a serious discussion."

I looked over at Morgan. He was looking at me worriedly. Shaking my head, I relaxed my fists. "It's nothing. Sometimes, both souls don't see eye to eye."

He chuckled. "I would almost be worried if two souls had the exact same view. How would you be better? How would you grow if you didn't have someone who was different from you? Good or bad."

As I nodded, I let my eyes fall. Grateful that Morgan didn't ask what it was about. Especially with him, Auri was a touchy subject. I know he had basically ignored any and all talk of her for the past couple years. Literally exiting the room whenever Vale brought her up. Ezekiel wouldn't be so dramatic but you could see the look in his eye, the guilt was still eating at him. He still felt responsible for what happened to her. Vale was still so angry she never visited or came back.

He had stepped up to work with the wolves more now, bringing the Alpha's together under his rule. Vale was truly the Alpha King now. I heard a couple

months ago the talks between the kings and the mother witch went better than anyone thought. Compromises had to be made but nothing too shocking. Vale handed down his first real act as king to the Alpha's of the packs. When asked though, he said he would still hold his own mother accountable for killing one of her own kind. How could he be considered a wise king if he didn't judge all under the same laws? I hadn't told anyone about the fact that she had been built to be the King Killer. It wasn't my place. So much of what I knew wasn't my place to tell. Even with Morgan, I hid the fact that we were mates. Managed to always be able to hide Auri's mark on my shoulder or wouldn't answer questions about it when asked. Now, it was more 'why I was looking younger?' and 'Why the lines in my face were disappearing and my body was nearly as it was twenty years ago?' My grey strips of my hair still hadn't receded but I hadn't gain any new ones.

"We are almost there." Morgan pointed ahead.

Far off in the distance there was a large house abutting the forest. It was covered in flowers and vines; like the earth was trying to reclaim it. It has a stone border that stretched around the house, also covered in flowers. It was low and didn't hide the extensive garden in the front of the house. It looked almost like a secrecy garden.

"There are... a lot of kids. Just as a heads up. All but one, I think, that are mixed. Like you."

My interest was piqued. "How many?"

"Nine."

I coughed. "Nine?! How many adults?"

Morgan looked at me and smiled. "One. Single parent to nine kids who are all in special circumstances. Just like you. It's why I would call them an expert." Leaning forward, I started at the house. Goddess, nine or at least eight who were multiple races. Not just part human but supernatural. I could finally get some answers. Some better information. Maybe some peace that I wasn't completely turning. Or knowledge that I was and it was only a matter of time. Something I would just need to accept.

Morgan pulled down the driveway and just parked in the road. Looking around, I realized there was no vehicle in sight.

“They aren't here?”

Shaking his head, he unbuckled. “They don't own a vehicle. It would be silly when you would have to fit ten people in. That size would never fit on these roads.”

Opening up the door, Morgan slammed it shut and popped the trunk. He pulled out three bags from the trunk and shut it. I got out, staring up at the house. It was impressive. The house reminded me of the old manors in the late 1700s. Looking at the windows, there were plenty of rooms for nine kids. Still, I didn't want to presume and left my duffle in the back seat of the car.

“Morgan!” Multiple cries of children as the front doors flew open. At least five rushed out, swarming around Morgan who had just managed to open the gate. They jumped up and down, racing around him. They all looked different ages, ranging from three to twelve at least. I walked around the car and up to the wooden gate entrance that lead through the garden to the front door.

“Papa, what are you doing here? I wasn't expecting you so soon.”



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My hand froze on the wooden gate that had shut behind Morgan as he struggled to walk towards the house. Swallowing hard, I looked up to see Auri, standing in the doorway. Ryder e howled loudly and I felt my knees go weak. Goddess, she was beautiful. In her arms looked like a tiny fey child who was clutched to her. She was wearing jeans, a white shirt, and a deep green apron that covered most of her front. Her bright blue hair was short, shorter than the years after Micah had cut her hair off, barely reaching her shoulders. It reminded me of when she was Astra all those years ago. Hell, she looked as young as she had been back then as well.

Her eyes went from Morgan to me, standing frozen at her gate. I braced myself for anger but the only thing I received was a smile. The grip I had on the wood tightened as I started to sway.

'Mate!' Ryder e purred like a kitten.

“Sorry, Princess. We have a wayward werewolfvampire who is worried about his future.”Morgan turned to me, now grinning like a madman.“I thought I would bring him to the expert.”

Suddenly, anger bubbled up. Morgan knew allalong. Knew where he was taking me and knew it wasn't where I wanted to be. That I didn't want to see her. How long had he known she was here? Hell, how long had she been here? Quickly, the anger wained as questions started to fill my mind. What was she doing here? Why did she have nine kids? Who were there? How was she? How was she dealing with all these kids on her own? Let alone if they were all mixed.

“I don't know about expert but I've got someexperience.”There was amusement in her words. Auri motioned me in.“You don't need to be invited in. That's a myth.”

Morgan outright laughed while Auri and a couple of the kids giggled. Rubbin g the back of my neck, I swung the gate open and stepped inside.

Looking around, I realized the planter boxes in the front were all food. Ranging from tomatoes and zucchini to what looked like herbs. Morgan had picked up two of the kids, both looking about three and siblings. Another five year old came over to me and narrowed her eyes.

“Who the hell are you?”

My eyes widened as I realized not everyone was as they seemed.“I am a friend of Morgan and Auri.”

“Mommy doesn't have any friends like you.”The voice sounded strange coming out of a five year olds mouth. I realized she must be a vampire and older than just five years old. It was shocking since I thought there was a law against changing children into vampires.

“I'm half werewolf, half vampire. So I feel like I fit in a little better than most.”

This brought a smile to the child's face.“Ah! You're a fuckup like the rest of us! Welcome!”①

“Felicity, you call anyone in our family that,you're going to lose that bedroom of yours.”Auri's voice filtered outside.

Felicity's eyes widened and inhaled. "Yes, Mommy." It was weird hearing the difference in her voice saying 'mommy'. Especially after cursing and talking like an adult. She raced back into the house, seemingly running from whatever punishment she would receive if she continued.

Heading into the house, I closed the double doors behind me. Morgan was passing out items from his bags in the parlor to the left and to the right three kids were in the kitchen with Auri. The little fey was sitting on the counter next to Auri as she was making food. The other two, definitely the oldest out of the group, maybe thirteen and fourteen, were helping with prep as well. I felt torn, standing like an idiot in the hallway. Finally, I took a deep breath.

"Anything I can help with, lov... Auri." I bit back the word.

"If you can, grab two more plates from the cabinet next to the refrigerator. We weren't expecting guests. Gale will show you where the silverware is."

I looked at the two. The eldest boy, Gale, glared at me before turning back to what he was doing. Swallowing, I already felt his hostility. Auri moved seamlessly, the little fey child next to her humming a tune. The older girl, the other one who was helping, was also humming.

Going over to the fridge, I opened up cabinet next to it and looked at the table. Grabbing the matching plates, I placed them at two empty spots and then walked back over to Gale. He glared up at me again, his eyes bright. Tapping the drawer next to him, he moved just a bit to allow me to pull the drawer open. I grabbed silverware to match the setup on the table.

"Do you know where the napkins are?"

"What? Don't have eyes, wolf?" Gale growled.

In a flash, a wooden spoon bounced off his head and he rubbed his head. "Gale, is that how we treat guests? Seriously?"

He pouted for a moment. "Sorry, Mom."

Reaching over, he grabbed two napkins from a pile to his left. He handed them to me without saying anything else.

Setting the rest of the table, Morgan was done with the gifts being handed out and easily corralled the kids to the table. He was picking up the little ones who

needed boosters. I jumped in and helped push in some of the other kids who were too small to push in their chairs.

“Gale, Sammy, and Herr, your gifts are in the bags for after dinner.”

“Thanks, Morgan.” Gale smiled brightly as he brought a serving plate full of vegetables.

Morgan grabbed a huge pot of soup and carried it to the table while Auri took a huge plate of meat one handed while she carried the little fey girl. Placing the plate down first, she put the little fey in a seat and grabbed two more huge plates.

“Sit, Hector. You too, Morgan.”

I almost sat right there on the floor. My name from her lips easily made me weak. Swallowing, I took up the empty seat next to Morgan who was at the head of the table. Auri was at the other head of the table. “Uncle Uriel brought the buck for tonight's dinner. So next time you see him, make sure you say thank you.”

I looked at Morgan, eyes wide. “Uriel? As in King Uriel of the Fey?”

Auri chuckled, bringing a cup to her lips. “Yes. That Uriel. We actually keep in touch frequently. Checks in to make sure everything is okay and I haven't lost my sanity yet. I think he does it now out of friendship, not just because he feels his mates magic.” She tapped her eyes and suddenly it clicked.

I coughed. “That was Uriel? You said that a fey lost his mate but you didn't say who it was. It makes more sense now that you were running around with him to find the labs.”

She shrugged. “Fey don't have mates unless they are royalty. I thought you knew that.”

“I mean... I did but I guess I never put it together.” I grumbled. Being put on the spot like that, a couple of the kids giggling, made me realize I really hadn't been paying attention.

“So, what did everyone get from Papa?” Auri asked the table.

All the kids erupted into an exciting chatter and Morgan laughed, taking his glass and drinking it. I grabbed it and took a sip as well. Goddess, it tasted good. Like fresh fruit that quenched a thirst I didn't know I had. I took another sip and set it down, grabbing food as the other kids also were digging into the food already. My eyes turned to Morgan to ask if he wanted something but his eyes were on me, a wide grin on his face.

"What?"

"Enjoying the drink? You sighed so loudly therefor a second."

My eyes narrowed. "Yes? I didn't realize how thirsty I was. I'm assuming it's fresh fruit from the garden?"

"Fresh raspberries, strawberries, blueberries and blood." Gale answered who was sitting across from me.

My eyes widened and I started to shake my head. "What? You're... you're joking, right?"

Morgan burst out laughing. "No, Hector. Every single one at this table has some vampire in them."

I looked horrified at Auri.

She held up her glass, smiling. "I'm glad you like it. Makes it easier for the kids."

"I... but... where do you get it...?"

Gale answered. "Some guy was snooping around the house. So we..." He made a motion across his throat.

My hand started to shake as I looked at Auri who was shaking her head.

"Gale, come on. What the hell is going on with you today?"

"I don't like him! Why is he even here? He can't be a grown ass adult and face his own problems?" Gale glared at me as he answered.

"Gale Storm, stand up now." Auri's commanding voice hushed the entire table. Everyone's eyes were on her or on Gale. She stood up and walked over to him.

“Stairs now.” He raced up the stairs and she slowly followed after him.

“Oooo.... Gale is in trouble.” One of the younger girls chuckled.

Felicity, the only full vampire outside of Morgan, shook her head. “He shouldn’t have snapped like that. He knows better. Whether or not he likes a guest.” “I mean, we all dislike him but you don’t see us throwing a fit about it.” The girl who had been helping Auri in the kitchen, shook her head.

I looked at Morgan who was struggling to keep a straight face. He was biting his lip to not let the smile completely take over.

“All of you are wrong.” The little Fey girl spoke up. She was still eating her soup. “You guys don’t know how much he means to her. You guys ought to be nice. He’s not bad. Just new. You can’t expect everyone to come in and be okay with all of us.”

All the kids looked at me and I straightened my back. “To be honest, I’m still dealing with my own vampire changes. It’s a lot to take.”

“See. Don’t be so harsh. He hasn’t had Momma. She can help him if she gets over her anger and feelings of abandonment.”

Morgan coughed. “Herr, sometimes, things shouldn’t be said. Those are feelings that are personal. You know that.”

Her r rolled her eyes. “Momma would never say that out loud. She’d probably just accept him running away and justify it. Again.” She was going to say something else but Auri came down the steps and sat back down. “Sorry about that. Really, he’s not usually like that.” She smiled at me and my heart hammered in my chest. “He’s a good kid. Just sometimes he takes his duty as the eldest a little too seriously.”

Picking up her spoon, she smiled at the quiet table. “Alright, who wants to tell me about school today?”

The heaviness that hung a moment ago disappeared as the kids chatted happily about their school day. From what I could gather, they went to a school in a pack territory that welcomed all supernatural children. Witch, fey, werewolf and even some half-humans. But the kids kept their vampire sides under wraps save for Felicity. She was currently in middle school with some of the other kids.

I glanced over at Morgan who had gone quiet. He was swirling the drink in his cup around before taking a sip, staring into it. His eyes met mine once and he sighed.

"I've known, Hector. Auri told me. Everything. Everything she went through, everything that happened between you two. Everything that happened after. If that's what you're wondering."

I hadn't but I was surprised. She had told him we were mated. Was she not ashamed of me? Ashamed of what happened between us? The fact that I raped her while she was hanging on a wall.

'No. I'm not. I'm sorry you're so ashamed of me though.'

My eyes widened and looked down at Auri. She had mind linked me. She was in deep conversation with one of the kids about a math problem he was convinced the teacher had been incorrect. Her eyes glanced up at me and I saw the flickering hurt in them.

'Auri... that's not... it's not...' I felt the link close before I could even finish my thought.



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Getting up, I stormed out of the dining room and out the front door. Striding through the garden, I swung the gate open. It slammed behind me as I flung the car door open. Grabbing a pack of cigarettes, I lit one and took a drag.

It was already getting dark but according to my watch it was barely 7 p. m. Blowing out the smoke, I closed my eyes. This was too much. All of this was too much. I was so overwhelmed and lost in this sea that was Auri's life now. Morgan fit, as he always did. Hell, he even abandoned her and she forgave him, eventually. It was five years later but it happened. Was there still hope?

"May I?"

My eyes widened and I slipped from my lean against the car. Auri had snuck up on me. She was holding out her hand. Putting the packet of cigarettes in her grasp, she easily tapped one out but lit it from a flame she produced from her finger.

“Normally, I don't like smoking around the house. The kids and the garden. But I'll let it slide tonight.” Auri leaned against the car next to me. She let out the smoke, making small circles before blowing the rest through. “Why are you here, Hector?”

“Morgan tricked me. He said we were going to go to an expert on multi-supernatural races. He said they would know how to ease my mind or help me through.”

“Through growing younger and having no issues drinking blood? Sometimes feeling extra warm in the sun or needing to put shades on during a particularly sunny day? Not really feeling the need to sleep but your body still feels tired?”

My eyes widened. “Ex... exactly like that...”

Auri chuckled. “Hector, you aren't turning into a vampire. You're already as much of a vampire as you're going to get.” She looked at me, her deep amber eyes almost glowing like the end of her cigarette. “Werewolves can't turn into a vampire, Hector. It's not possible. However, because part of us is made up of very specific vampire pieces, certain attributes and abilities are passed to us. The anti-aging will stop. We won't keep aging backwards. I would say we are pretty much done at this point.”

She took a drag from her cigarette and let it out. “It's not that you're craving blood either. You underestimate what it feels like to be a vampire. How it is to fight those urges and that feeling wanting to bite into someone. What blood does for us is scratch an itch that we don't even know we feel. Part of us wants it but because we can't turn, it's not a necessity. It's not a craving. But it does taste nice going down. Like when you have a sweet tooth. Same thing.”

“How... how do you know all this?”

Auri smiled and let out a sigh. “I've got nine kids in there depending on me to tell them it's okay and the things they are going through are normal. That they can live normal lives one day.”

She put the cigarette to her lips, inhaled and exhaled before continuing. "Gale is part werewolf, part vampire. However, his human side died during the operation. I believe his name was Derek. Gale is his wolf. He's not as much vampire as we are, a failure in the eyes of Oran. He will continue to age as a normal werewolf but he has the same itch as we do."

Morgan's words early flittered back into my mind. "Can he not shift?"

"Oh no, he can. He just prefers his human form. Sammy is a witch. Normally, witches can be turned into vampires but they lose their power and they can't be turned into werewolves. However, she has a wolf named Chrissy and she's still got her powers as a blood witch. Which alone is when a vampire and witch do shit they shouldn't."

My eyes went back to the house. Looking at the lights now on in each of the rooms. I lit another cigarette.

"Felicity, I know, you might have already figured out. She is the only straight supernatural. She's 56 but in a five year old body. She wants to do everything an adult can do but the limitations of her body make it impossible. If she tries to get you to buy her booze, decline."

I chuckled. "Why is she in school then?"

Auri sighed. "She's been bounced around labs. Really, she isn't supposed to even be alive. Even now, if the Vampire King or the High Council found out, someone would be ordered to kill her."

"She didn't choose that! She didn't choose to be that small! Turned that young! Why...?"

Auri put up her hand, she dipped her head slightly up me. "I know, Hector. It's why she is here." She paused before continuing. "Her r is probably one of the most powerful fey I've come across. They pieced her together from different fey who derived their power from different places. Voice, eyes, mouth, tongue, fingers, toes... you name it. Just like my eyes. Then, throw in a vampire heart and you have an eternal powerhouse."

"But she looks four of five? Will she stay that small? I thought fey were immortal?"

Shaking her head, she stomped out the cigarette. Auri reached for another but her hand brushed mine and for the first time in over three years I felt the electricity jolt through me. Ryder e had been surprisingly quiet since we got here but even the small contact made him whine. In my shock, I dropped the pack on the ground. Auri bent down and picked it up. Her face showing nothing as she slid out another cigarette and lit it.

“Fey live exceptionally long lives but they are not like vampires. They are not immortal. She has been aging. I don't know when she will stop, but she will be a force as she grows older. Already she's as smart as a tack but she needs to work on her social skills. It's why we have her at the level she is instead of middle school where she might do better academically.”

Morgan chastising her for her words made sense. She had power but no filter.

“Also, fey are notoriously ambiguous when it comes to their morals. I hope to try and make sure she has some before letting her loose on the world.” Auri chuckled. “So Gale, Sammy, Felicity, Herr, there are five more.”

“Juniper and Wendy are both seven. Both werewolf vampires like you but opposite. Vampires first, grafted to be able to shift without wolves. Colton is eleven. He is a fey vampire. He was one of the first I found and I tried to set him up with a home with the fey. It wasn't before long I found him back on my porch. The family were afraid of his appetite for meat, specifically raw meat. I tried to get a few of them homes but no one understood or was willing to understand. So I just decided to call them my own. Gave them hope, a safe place and most importantly, love.” Auri looked over at me, her eyes searching me for a moment.

“What of the twins? Are they three or four?”

She was still watching me but her head nodded. “What does Rydere have to say?”

My eyes narrowed. “He's been really quiet since we got here. I think he was shocked seeing you.”

Her head turned away from me and looked up. She inhaled and then exhaled the smoke out. “Then he knows.”

“Knows what?”

"It would probably be better coming from him." Auri's eyes closed as her head leaned back against the car.

'Let me take over, Hector. I need to speak with her.' Ryder e was stern but emotionless, like he was holding everything back.

Stepping back, I allowed Ryder e to step forward.

"My love." His deep voice sounded in the night and Auri snapped her head up.

"Ryder e, there you are."

I wanted to take him back as he reached out but I let him do what he wanted. He had been suffering and I knew that. Now, I just had to trust him. He brushed her cheek with our fingers, the bolts rushing through us. Auri leaned into his hand and she grabbed it, holding it to her cheek.

"I'm sorry, love. I tried. Tried to convince him all his doubts and worries were in his head. Not yours. But he continued to dig himself further and further into the darkness. I managed to take over a couple times but I couldn't find you."

She smiled. "It's okay. Probably by that time, I was here. Around the time I stopped taking out labs. I didn't want to keep leaving the kids with Morgan. My last escapade I picked up Juniper and Wendy. Nine was enough. I needed to take on my role as mom. Also to protect them, keep them hidden and safe."

"Love, the twins..."

Auri moved away from our hand and put the cigarette to her lips. It was a couple of deep exhales before she answered.

"The reason why we managed to get out of that lab, why the vampire scientist decided to help us in the first place. She was one of the ones who was working the surgeries on me. They were adding some of the internal bits that I had lost when Morgan saved me from my health potion decay. She found out that I was pregnant."

My thoughts stalled. I was frozen in my mind. Ryder e didn't seem as shocked though. There was surprise at her story but not to the extent that we had just found out Auri was with child.

'Because wolves can sense their own young,Hector. That's why I'm not shocked. The moment they ran out of the house, I knew.'Ryder e sounded like he was chastising me.

“A lot of those scientists aren't happy with torture. Some of them are but usually it's all in the name of science. But even scientists draw a line. If Oran found out I was pregnant, he would have ensured at least some of their growth before taking them from me to experiment on them to see what combination he could build. Already they would be part werewolf, part vampire from you and I, and then maybe even some fe y power. But he could do much more. That's why she helped us get out.”

I ripped Ryder e back.“Why didn’t you tell me?”My voice sounded hysterical but I was on the verge of tears.

Auri looked at me, a frown on her face.“I tried. Before we left the compound wasn't a good time. You would have flipped your lid and if you lost your cool they might have just killed you right there. When we got back to the hotel, I tried then too. But you went into heat. You wouldn't have remembered or been able to even comprehend it. Then... you left.”

“You should have tried...!”

“I did, Hector!I tried calling you! Over and over.I reached out to Morgan and Pipsqueak, trying to get into contact with you. The entire time I was pregnant, I tried to talk to you!”I could hear it in her voice, she was upset but not angry.“I needed my mate. I needed my knight, my best friend, and my lover. I needed you, Hector. And you left. Left me alone. At least Logan was nice enough to say goodbye when he left me. You just up and fucking left me alone while I was asleep!”Throwing my cigarette down, I stomped on it.“I raped you, Auri!We were forced to mate. Forced to fuck. Forced into a heat. We literally couldn't get away. You had to drag my ass out of that place and then you still fucking took care of me during my real heat. I was just as bad as those vampires, Auri. I was just another one...”

Before I could finish, Auri's palm came down on the side of my cheek. The sound of being slapped reverberated in my ears and my brain. My mate had just slapped me. Auri had just slapped me. Eyes meeting hers, I found hers were filled with tears.

“If I wanted to remove this mark, Hector, I could have asked Vale to remove it. Hell, I could have asked the asshat that removed Logan's bond.”

“Why didn't you?” My voice was small, my hands balled up into fists. I had searched for an option for her early on, to remove the bond but I had forgotten Vale could have done it.

She started to shake her head. “Because I love you, Hector! Goddess above, you felt it! You felt it through our bond when I couldn't put up my walls. Did you forget that? All that time? All our talks... did that mean nothing to you? Fuck Hector, I told you over and over again that you didn't rape me! You saved me. So many times. I wanted and needed my mate. I was alone, pregnant, working through having fey powers, working through also watching myself go back in time. Worried because vampires can't have children but here I was. I couldn't just go get checked out by anyone either. It would be chaos. I had them alone, Hector. Alone. In a shitty pool in a shitty apartment that I paid rent for a month.” 1

Tears filled my eyes as I watched hers spill over. Auri squeezed her eyes shut but I quickly reached out to her and pulled her close. My grip tightened as she started to fight me but after a while, her hands gripped my shirt tight and she cried into my chest. I forgot how tiny she was. Built and pure muscle, but still the tiny fairy we had come to love.

“I know it's late. Maybe too late. But I'm sorry. I genuinely thought you would come to your senses and hate me. Hate me like I hated myself. I thought being free of that place meant you would see that you didn't need me. I never... I'm sorry, my love. I'm so sorry.” My lips pressed on her head as I held her shaking form.



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Chapter 104

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We didn't say anything else for a while. My eyes closed and I rested my cheek on her head, reveling in the dance that were the sparks between us. Goddess, comparing me to Logan was a knife that continued to dig further into my heart. Ryder had been right and deep down I knew it. I just couldn't stop hating myself. For what I did. For how weak I was. Everything I did to her.

“Hector, I never hated you. Not once. Even when you left. I felt you struggling because you never brought your walls up when you were with me.” Auri nuzzled further into my chest. “But can you stop hating yourself? Can you forgive yourself? Can you move on?”

I lifted my cheek from her head and pressed my lips back down. “I don't know, Auri. I hate...”

She shook her head against me, cutting me off. “No. Stop hating. I don't regret it. If I had to do it over again, Hector... if the Moon Goddess sent me back in time right before I swapped places with Ezekiel, knowing the outcome, I would do it all again.”

Auri stepped back and immediately I missed her. Her eyes found mine and could see the pain and danger that I couldn't feel through our bond. “If you can't come up with that conclusion either, then tomorrow you and Morgan can leave. I don't need you. I don't need someone who regrets being my mate. Regrets all the time we had together.”

“I don't...!”

“But you do. You hate it. You hate everything about it.” She stepped back a couple more steps as I tried to reach out to her. “The twins, make sure to spend some time with them. You can... put them to bed if you want. Osiris is the eldest. His nickname is Sir cause he's the thinker and planner. Bast is the fighter. She's strong and she protects her brother. The two of them will be a force together.”

She started to turn but I grabbed her wrist. Auri froze as my hand held hers. “You named them after Egyptian gods?”

Chuckling, she nodded. “Your father came over from Egypt right? He took your mom's name when they mated. I thought...”

“Thank you, Auri. It feels like... you've honored my Dad. After what I did... you still...”

Auri just nodded. She tore out of my grip and I watched her head into the house. “It is 8:30 p. m. and all of you guys better be in bed with your teeth brushed before I get up there or you know the consequences.”

Suddenly, there was a rush of movement and squealing in the house. It brought a smile to my face. Turning, I grabbed my duffle out of the car and headed in. Morgan was sitting in the parlor reading a newspaper with a steaming mug in his hand. Auri was loudly and slowly making her way up the stairs. Allowing time for everyone to brush and get to bed. I headed up the stairs after her.

“The twins room is the third on the right.”

Auri turned to the first door and knocked. Kids thundered through the hallway and into their rooms, slamming the doors. I tried to keep from laughing but Ryder e was chuckling.

'She keeps a tight ship.'

I nodded. 'Has to for having nine kids and one of her.'

I opened up the door and peaked in. Osiris and Bast had a single bed they were sharing. There was enough room for two but as I peered in, they were curled up next to each other. A smile came to my face as I realized they probably chose to sleep in the same bed like Reagan and Rowan. I wondered if they begged Auri when they switched to their little toddler bed like Reagan and Rowan had. A pain shot through my lungs, every time I took a breath. I had been there for Vale and Ezekiel's pups but all the while, my own pups were growing up without a father.

Pulling up the blankets, I covered their little bodies and sat at the edge of the bed. Osiris shifted and his eyes opened to look at me.

“You're our dad, right?”

My eyes widened but Ryder e just sighed. 'Wolves know their family, Hector. Don't be so surprised. You're the only one with your head up your ass.'

I nodded. “I am. I'm sorry I wasn't around.”

“We had Mommy. She missed you though.” Bast didn't open her eyes but she answered as she shifted her position. “Don't hurt Mommy.”

I smiled and brushed some hair out of their faces as they curled up in the bed, Auri sticking to the tradition of my family by not cutting their hair. “I'm going to try not to. Goodnight you two.” Standing up, I walked over to the door

and turned out the light. A night light was shining in the far corner, making it look like stars were filling the room.

Osiris looked me for a moment before closing his eyes. "We are a family. All of us. You can't just accept us and not them."

My body froze for a second before shutting the door behind me. Auri was making her way into the last room in the hallways and I headed down the stairs. Sitting on the couch, Morgan was still reading through the paper. Rubbing my face with my hands, suddenly I felt my age. Not body-wise but mentally.

"A lot to take in?"

I chuckled at Morgan. "You're an ass for doing this. A complete asshole."

Morgan laughed and turned the page. "I've been called worse by people closer. You needed to see her and she had the answers you wanted. Right?"

Sighing, I nodded. "Yeah. She did. But at the same time... there is so much more here. How am I supposed to take this all in? Did you know... the twins...?"

He folded the paper and set it down on the table next to the chair. "Of course I did, Hector. There were multiple times I tried to talk to you too. But after a while Auri asked me to stop trying. You weren't ready for her, let alone ready for them. It's not just them though. All of them call her some variation of Mom. She's adopted all of them. Pipsqueak did all the paperwork. Changed her name to Estel Storm. So all the kids last names are Storm. She has her own life here now."

"But Vale and Logan and the Golden Moon pack..."

Morgan shook his head. "This is her pack now, Hector. She has alliances with the local fey and werewolves. Even the vampires in the city. Vale took over as he was meant to with Golden Moon."

"You mean Ezekiel. Vale hasn't done shit. He spends most of his time trying to work through the tentative peace treaty he has set up with the other leaders."

"Is he not home now that the treaty has been signed?" Auri walked down the stairs and into the parlor. She sat on the couch next to me but not touching

me. My hands itched to pull her close, to hold her tight and never let her go again.

"Vale is jumping from pack to pack, making sure that the Alphas are abiding by the laws set. He's making sure everyone is following his rules and are being punished if they don't. As well as ensuring the other races aren't acting up around the packs." I nearly growled out the last part.

"You don't seem happy about it." Auri in was more of an observation than a question. My head turned to her and for a moment I got lost in her eyes. Eyes that were so familiar and yet not. They still were the window to her soul, her feelings that she could hide in her features couldn't be hidden in her eyes.

"He's taken up the mantle as Alpha King, much like the kings before. I know you and Logan were the outliers when it came to ruling but I'm not sure if this is any better. While the leaders are all signed up for this, that doesn't mean all the individuals are. It seems like there is a chance for too many gaps. Too many issues like the BloodHunter Coven basically given free reign because the Vampire King won't do anything about it."

She sighed. "He's the Alpha King. The wolves should listen to him. At the very least, this was a step in the right direction I think. But you're right. It leaves much to be desired in the way of reigning in their subjects. Uriel does a very good job just because the fey are very ingrained in their ways and that their king is damn near a god. The vampire king though, as well as the witches... let's just say they are less inclined to step in when an issue arises with one of their own."

"He's trying to stop the war by taking control of the werewolves as king. I can see how he thinks this will work but he's relying too much on the words of the other leaders. He's put all his faith into their agreement. We are already starting to see some issue with the vampire king currently. Not that Vale has noticed." Morgan leaned forward, his hands clasp together. "Auri, you've been out of the game too long."

Auri growled at him. "I'm not getting back in this stupid game, Morgan. Oran was right. No matter what, the BloodHunter Coven built me, molded me. My past has dictated who I am today and as much as I tried to live freely... that fact isn't going to change. Taking myself out, retiring completely, taking care of my kids, that's what matters."

"I get that, Princess. But you have four other children..."

"That are grown ass adults! Who aren't dealing with being multiple supernatural beings. Who aren't struggling through this world alone and scared. I raised them, Logan and I did. And now they are old enough to make their own decisions."

I finally reached out and pulled Auri to me. Both my arms wrapped around her shoulders and I let her head rest on me. "Auri, that's the problem. They do need you. Your kids have lost their way. They won't listen to anyone anymore. Won't listen to reason or see the holes in how they are moving forward." I kissed her head, feeling her relax a little in my arms. "I know you're scared. I was there when Oran explained all that they had built you to be. But that doesn't have to define you. It also doesn't need to force you underground."

"King Killer, Hector. Do they expect me to kill my own son?" Her voice was small.

Shaking my head, I looked at Morgan who had concern written on his face. "No, they don't. Auri, you are to pass judgement on the kings of our world. That is what they wanted you to be. Could you kill a king? Absolutely. But there is more to it. There is wisdom and council and ways to help a king straying from the path. Sure, they may try and label you as a king killer. It doesn't make you that. They aren't puppeteering you. You're free now."

Motioning to the room, I continued. "Look at what you have built. The love and care you pour into this place... into those kids. It's not what they would have wanted or expected. To keep that love of supernaturals but here you are. Actually becoming the best and most apt person to help kings in the future."

"He's right, Princess. Running away from the world won't stick it to them or save you. They are still out there. Vale is thinking the war is over when we are already starting to see cracks in the promises made. He needs someone he can trust." Morgan added.

Auri snorted. "As he puts out a bounty on my head. Sure."

"I mean, you killed his trusted advisor and a High Councilor member." Morgan leaned back, stating it very matter-of-factly.

"He knew it was coming as soon as I was free." She threw back at him.

Morgan paused for a moment. "Mark was one of them... wasn't he?"

"He was the one who broke my connection with Logan, Papa. He was the one that reached into me and severed all ties at the behest of Oran. He's been feeding them information and working with them this whole time. He took my connection, so I took his life." Auri grumbled. "I just... was lucky enough that someone loves me more." Her eyes met mine and I smiled. 2

Ryder e stepped forward and he brushed her cheek with the back of our hand. "As long as you will have me, have us, my love, we will be by your side. Forever and a day."

She smiled at us and laid her head down on our chest. Rydere, leaning back into the couch, reveled in the electricity. After a moment, I felt a flood of emotions; her emotions. She let down her walls for me and I let Rydere comb our fingers through her hair while I sorted through them.

There was so much to them. Fear, worry, elation, sadness, confusion, determination, love... only to name a few. My own emotions were an open book to her since I never learned how to raise my walls but this brought me a level of happiness and contentment to know how she was feeling.

"I need to head to bed. There are four guestrooms down the hall. Choose any one. Papa already has his at the very end. If you need anything, I'm the first door here." Auri pointed to the hall behind the stairs. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Princess."

"Goodnight, mate."



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Chapter 105

Chapter 105

I took the reigns back from Rydere as she got up and disappeared behind a door. Sighing, I fell back against the couch. "I don't know if she should come back."

Morgan chuckled. "I don't think she could have hidden here much longer. The world is a lot smaller than we think. Eventually, it would spread to here. Someone would ask for help or something might happen that would force her out. I would rather avoid the latter, because that girl has the power to completely destroy the world."

He looked at me, the laughter gone from his face. A more serious look, one that showed just how long he had been alive. "Auri has the ability to reset our world. The BloodHunter coven likes to call her a king killer but honestly, that's a fucking joke. She killed the Vampire King already before she even was even mated to that asshat Alpha. Then she killed the fake Alpha King." He paused for a moment, chewing on his words. "I think it would be more appropriate to call her a Goddess of Judgement. Because the only ones who could bring her down... would be the gods themselves and even then... I truly wonder..." His sentence trailed off and a silence filled between sentence trailed off and a silence filled between us for a few minutes.

Slapping his knees, Morgan got up. "Better head to bed. Mornings get chaotic here, especially with school in session. You're gonna need some level of awareness to walk through it to the coffee pot."

I nodded and stood. Grabbing my duffle that I had dropped behind the couch, I opened up one of the doors down the hall. It was simple but homely room. Large bed, wood furniture, art on the walls that looked like some of the kids had done but it was really well done. There was even an en-suite bath and I quickly took a shower and pulled on some sweats.

'What if...' Ryder e started.

'No. Don't even think about it. We got to holdher. That was enough for today.' I bit back at him.

He sighed and said nothing as I laid down on top of the blanket. I was exhausted and I felt myself starting to fall asleep. The tired state both emotionally and mentally made me start to slip back into my mind. It was too late before I realized Ryder e had taken full control. He got up and walked to the door. My hands reached out but because I was already falling asleep, he easily pushed me back. In horror, I watched as he made his way down the hall to Auri's room. A light shown under the door and he grabbed the handle without knocking and quietly opened it. Auri was sitting at a desk in her room, pouring over papers that she fanned out. She was wearing a thin pink tank top, no bra, and some blue sleep shorts. Her head didn't even look up

from the papers as Rydere shut the door behind him. He leaned against the door, waiting.

"Does Hector know you're here, Rydere?" There was an edge of amusement in her voice.

"Yes and no. He knows but he's too tired to take control back."

Auri turned in her chair and we got a full view of her breast stretching the fabric of the top and her nipples raising the fabric even more.

Ryder e swallowed hard. I realized he wasn't here for sex, he wanted to keep it in as much as I had. He just wanted to be near her.

"I have a few more things I need to finish. But you can lay down if you're having trouble sleeping." Auri turned back to her paperwork.

Ryder e smirked and walked over to her. He towered over her small figure and looked at the paperwork. "What is it?"

"Some of it is financial stuff for the house. Some of it is information for the school. Notes for the kids since I document everything in case I need to refer back to it for issues that might arise. I also help out the local pack, the fey king, and I do some business with the witch coven as well. All of that leads up to a pile of paperwork every night." Auri chuckled to herself. "I'm not even Alpha and I deal with all this paperwork."

Ryder e nuzzled her neck, kissing her mark that was on full display. "You are still an Alpha. This is your pack. Morgan was right. You just made your own pack."

Sighing, she looked down. "I miss my Beta."

Ryder e stopped and brushed her short hair behind her ear. "We are right here, love. Hector may take some time but... I don't think either of us intend on going anywhere anytime soon. I'm your knight, love. I always will be."

Her hand came up and cupped our cheek, brushing her thumb lightly against our skin. "I missed you... so much. It hurts and I'm scared you'll leave me again. But I can't bring myself to push you away."

Sadness washed through the bond and Rydere leaned into her hand. "We can only prove to you that we won't. Prove to you by standing by your side in

anything you do. Either staying here, taking care of the kids or going out into the world and taking care of the kids out there.”

“I love you, Rydere. Hector too. I know it's not as much as...”

“Hush, love. You loving us is enough. Your love, however the amount, is enough for us. After all these years, after the first time we saw you in those fucking combat boots and leather jacket. All we have wanted was to freely love you.” Rydere sighed. “I know Hector chose poorly but he was too upset to stay.”

Auri set her pen down and got up. She walked to the bed and sat on the quilt top. “I understand his thoughts. I do. I just thought I had told him enough... let him feel enough that he saved me from having anyone else touch me. All I wanted was to move forward with you...” She pulled her knees up, looking even smaller. It was still a wonder, her looking the same as she did back when she became Astra.

Ryder e sat next to her on the bed. “I know. I tried to talk to him too. But after trying to protect you for so long... then failing. It was too much. We will be making up for that mistake for the rest of our lives. But we will be happy to if it means we get to be with you.”

Putting an arm around her, Rydere let her lean into him. He rubbed her arm, sending the shocks through her and us. Every so often she would shiver and Rydere only pulled her closer.

“When did you get so big? I don't remember you towering over me like this before.” Auri chuckled.

“That's on you, love. When we mated, something shifted. Never would I have thought we would have a growth spurt in our 50's but here we are. We also don't shift in front of others.”

Auri sat up. “Why? Are you okay?”

Ryder e laughed and shook his head. “Our human side grew, bulking up. But our wolf side, love, we are larger than Vale.”

Her eyes grew wide. “But that's...”

"Impossible or should be as someone who barely had any Beta blood. But here I am. Being mated to you gave us a power that we have never felt before. Not even as Alpha."

Scooting back and slipping under the quilt, Auri tapped her knees. "They said that by removing Logan as my mate, removing me as Luna Queen, it allowed the full power of Alpha King take over. I guess that. mixed with the few power and vampirism... it would make my mate just as powerful."

"We would need to be to stand by your side."

Patting the side of the bed, Ryder e didn't need her to ask twice. He clamored next to her and scooted under the covers. Pulling her in, she nuzzled against us. A contentment flowed between us and Ryder e purred.

"Rydere, promise me something."

He hummed.

"Don't let Hector second guess my decision to keep our mark. Keep us as mates."

His sigh was enormous. "I will try, love. But he is his own worrywart."

I wanted to interject that I wasn't but I receive a glare from him.

"Logan will find out. Other people are going to find out. But no matter what... you are my mate now. You and Hector. Logan might ask for me back but he..."

"He's an ass, that?" Ryder e offered but Auri slapped our chest.

"No, Rydere. Logan let fear... fear of me dying again dictate who he grew into. Trying to control me and everything around us. Especially after Vale was born." She sighed. "While I get it, the mate bond died, I died and that's bound to change anyone but it corrupted him. Not just Vale being Alpha King. He wanted to keep me in a bubble. It turned... possessive and cruel. Twisted him as he already had slowly been turning into when I first came back pregnant with Tyr, after Sif and Freya were born, then Vale. It was too much for him to keep being the Alpha that I loved. The one who had changed before the war and after the war. He learned to love but it got lost."

Tears fell down her cheeks and Ryder e pulled her close. Suddenly, I felt myself being thrust forward, Ryder e not knowing how best to comfort her.

“Auri...”

“There was so much wrong. I tried to force it out of the kids view. Out of the packs view. Helping Vale gave me something but even then, Logan and I would fight that I was doing too much. Even though I had been off the steroids for years. His need to control me and keep me safe just...”

Pulling back slightly, I wiped the tears from her eyes. “I know, Auri. I saw it. I saw it but I didn’t say anything. I should have. It wasn’t enough for me to just be there and I realized it too late. I’m sorry.”

She shook her head. “If anything, you, Bryan, and Morgan helped keep my sanity. I love him, I always will. But what Logan had become is a twisted version of himself and only made worse by having no emotions behind them. After taking the Nova 2.0, not caring anymore, I was preparing to ask Vale to remove our bond already.”

My eyes widened and I was shocked. She chuckled though.

“Why are you surprised? He kicked me out of the pack. Out of my home. Turned Týr into his own twisted Alpha. If any king would need to be removed...”

“Auri, don’t say that. You don’t mean it.”

Her head rested on my chest, her legs interweaving into mine. “How could you still love someone like me, Hector? How did you not become twisted like him?”

I sighed and pressed my lips to her forehead. “Maybe because you weren’t mine to begin with. I never had that possessive feeling. I loved you absolutely but you were not mine. Never were mine and I convinced myself never to be mine. How could I twist myself when I already felt like I was being a terrible Gamma, falling in love with my Alpha’s Luna? Was that not twisted enough?”

She lifted her head and her soft lips found mine. It was light brush, with a small amount of pressure but I reveled in it. “Thank you. For staying by my side through all of it. You didn’t have to and for how many times I pushed you guys away...”

"You never have to thank us, Auri. We should bethanking you. For letting us in and accepting us, even when you found out our feelings. And now... now that we are mated... for wanting us still."

She hummed but didn't say anything. It was only a minute when I realized her breath evened out, signifying she fell asleep. With her in my arms, I fully relaxed into the mattress and pillow. For the first time in years, I feel into a deep revitalizing sleep.



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Chapter 106

Chapter 106

I jolted awake with a start. It sounded like a herd of elephants were rampaging through the house. Auri was gone and I pulled my phone up. It wasn't even six-thirty. I also had six missed calls. Four from Bryan, two from Vale. Groaning, I rolled out of bed and rubbed my eyes. More thundering and I finally opened the door.

What I wasn't expecting was the chaos that was ensuing. All the kids, in a various state of dress, running around. Some getting their backpacks together, others were sitting at the table having breakfast. Auri and Morgan were in the kitchen with nine different lunch boxes open, putting together food. I was floored.

"Ah!Hector! Coffee is here."Morgan reachedover and poured a cup of coffee.

Reaching out, I took the mug and took a drink. Sighing, I closed my eyes. Hands tugged my pants and I looked down. Herr was smiling up at me.

"Can you help me up?"

I set my coffee down and picked her up. She smiled at me and I turned her around."What would you like?" "There is a juice box on the counter."

Looking around, there was an open apple juice on the counter and I grabbed it, handing it to her. She smiled and kissed my cheek.

"Thank you."

I let her down and she raced off. Auri was smiling at me. Shrugging, I grabbed my coffee again and took another sip.

“Cover your ears, Hector.” Auri warned before she took a deep breath. “TEN MINUTE WARNING. BE DRESSED, WITH BACKPACK ON, LINED UP AT THE KITCHEN.”

Even more chaos broke out. The kids at the table either started shoveling in food faster or they were putting their dishes in the sink. Morgan laughed and started to zip up the lunchboxes.

“Hector, that means you too. Dressed and ready.”

Morgan leaned over and kissed Auri's head. “I'm going into town today, did you need anything?”

“No, I have to go tomorrow. The witches requested some extra herbs. So we will finish out the growth tonight and I'll head in tomorrow. Thanks though.”

I headed back into the guest room and changed into jeans and a shirt. Wrinkling my nose, the XL shirt stretched tight across my chest. It looked more like a muscle shirt now. Maybe I would go with Auri tomorrow and pick up some new clothes.

As I walked back into the main area, all the kids were lined up in order of the eldest first. Gale glared at me but didn't say anything. Auri was putting lunches in their backpacks as they walked by and out the door. Felicity was the last one to walk on her own. The twins were waiting behind Herr but Auri picked up Herr, putting her lunch in her bag. The twins pulled at my pants and I picked them both up, putting their lunches in their small little bags.

I followed Auri as we all started to walk west, further from where Morgan and I came in yesterday. A few minutes later, Morgan pulled out in the car and headed in the opposite direction. I walked next to Auri as her pack of kids walked in front of her. It was ten minutes until I felt the shift of walking onto a pack territory. My eyes widened and I looked at Auri. She didn't seem phased at all.

“Alright, before we get near the school... let's go...”

All the kids ran to Auri, kissing her on the cheek. Even Gale came over and kissed her. They all continued their heading into the pack and I saw the huge

school come into view past some trees. It was probably double, if not triple, the size of the school in Kirk and the one in Golden Moon was even smaller. A bunch of kids were walking in, some flying as fey children made their way from the forest.

"Mommy, when I can I fly to school?" Herr asked innocently.

"Well, it will still be a couple years to see if your wings manifest. If they don't, you and I can work on some spells and see if we can't let you fly while we walk. But you need to be patient." Auri smiled at her and Herr nodded.

Bast leaned over. "What about us, Momma?"

Laughing, she shook her head. "First, we have to see if you have fey powers. If you do, we will have to ask Uncle Uriel if he knows about Aunt Illya's powers. Cause if you inherit anything of fey, it's from her."

The two in my arms nodded excitedly.

"But, like I told Herr, you still have a few years for powers to manifest."

Both their faces fell.

I chuckled. "Think of it this way. Sharing chores, you would get stuck with cleaning the ceiling and fans every day." Both of them scrunched up their nose and I continued to laugh. We reached the school entrance and there was the Alpha with who I assumed his Beta or Gamma, welcoming the kids in.

"Ah! Miss Storm. Lovely to see you this morning."

Auri smiled. "Alpha Gregory, I'm surprised to see you here this early on a Thursday."

He smiled and immediately, I didn't like how he was looking at Auri. My hair stood on end and Ryder growled. Herr leaned over and motioned me in. I leaned now and she cupped her hand to my ear.

"Alpha Gregory likes Mommy. He wants her to be their Luna. He doesn't know she's mated." Herr took a breath. "He's been trying to woo her and it gets creepy sometimes. Gale gets really mad. He's standing right there."

She moved away and pointed. True to her word, Gale had stepped off to the side, glaring at us as the other kids had disappeared into the sea. I stepped closer to Auri. She looked up at me and smiled.

“Hector, meet Alpha Gregory. He’s the one that runs the school.” She turned to the Alpha. “Hector previously was a Gamma and then Beta. Now...” Auri looked up at me, not knowing if I was still Beta.

I smiled and reached out to shake his hand. “Now, I decided to take a much needed vacation.”

His hand clasped mine and I realized the Alpha was putting strength behind the shake. I wanted to roll my eyes and as much as Ryder wanted to show him up, I let go.

“Well, not all are cut out to lead.” He chuckled.

“Oh, Hector is only a few years older than I am.” Auri smiled up at me. “We’ve been around a lot longer than we look. Around the block a few times.”

I didn’t know if she was oblivious to his words or what. But it made me happy she was defending me.

“Well, the stress of leadership can catch up to anyone.”

She didn’t acknowledge him as she let down Herr. The twins wiggled out of my arms and Herr took both their hands. They walked together through the school and Auri motioned to Gale who nodded. He followed them a couple steps behind. “Well, we will be on our way. Alpha Gregory, Beta Dean, have a wonderful day.”

“Estel, wait. There is a little Italian place that is to die for in town. Come have dinner with me. I’m sure you could use some time away from the kids.”

I balled up my fist. The Alpha didn’t notice but I realized the Beta did. He was sharp and went to pull his Alpha back who had stepped closer to Auri.

“I’m sorry, Alpha...”

“Greg, please.”

Auri cleared her throat. “I’m sorry, Alpha, but as I said before. I appreciate you allowing my kids to go to school but I’m not...”

"Estel, I know there is more going on than what you say with those kids. And if you continue to..."

Finally, I stepped forward. "Are you threatening her, Alpha?" Suddenly, I regretted not breaking his hand earlier.

"Hector..." Auri gave me her warning tone but I put a hand on her shoulder.

"Don't use your position as Alpha to try and coerce people to do what you. What you are doing here, with a co-supernatural school, is incredible. Don't sully it but dipping low enough to be threatening a mother of nine to go out with you. Are you that desperate?" I flashed him a sickly sweet smile.

"Alpha, we have some work that we need..." The Beta tried to pull him back.

The Alpha wasn't having it though. "Who are you to say anything in this? It's none of your business. This is between Estel and I. Step back."

"Excuse me?"

Auri turned and put her hand on my chest. "Hector, please. Not in front of the school."

I tore my eyes from the Alpha and looked down at her. She wasn't mad, more worried. Not for me, I knew that. Auri knew I would rip him apart. It was the kids. Sighing, I squared my shoulders and let her push me back.

"Yeah, that's right. Back off. You're lucky I let you on my territory."

Growling, I stopped moving back. Auri growled too.

"Alpha Gregory. I would request you not to provoke him or me, for that matter. If you will excuse us, we will be off your territory until we need to pick up the kids." "You can do nothing to me, Estel. I hold all the cards. You will obey your Alpha." As he said it, he made the mistake of pointing to the school.

I managed to brace myself quick enough to feel Auri's power wash over the area. Alpha Gregory and his Beta were on their knees in a single breath. Her eyes were golden but they weren't like Vale's. The power from the fey burned in her eyes and lit up her face in a golden glow. As more of her power poured out, I staggered, trying to keep standing against it.

"I suggest you take those words back, Alpha. You can insult me or threaten me however you wish but you leave my children out of it. Do you understand?"

Finally, I couldn't hold and I fell down to my knees, my neck bared to her. I wondered how much of her power she was allowing out. Before, I would have said maybe 70% is what made me fall but I had a feeling her powers were far beyond that now. Hell, Vale had to use 100% of his power for me just to bare my neck.

"I... I understand." The Alpha stammered out.



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Auri nodded and suddenly the weight was gone, as if it was never there. She reached down and picked me up off the ground.

"Sorry. Got a little heated there. Good to know the level that you can take. We will have to work on it if you're staying for a while. I don't expect you to be up and running around at 100% but..." There was a mischievous smile on her face. "...20 % is kinda of sad."

My eyes widened. Ryder even stepped back a little, shocked as well. She laughed and shook her head.

"Shall we?" Her hand was held out to me and intertwined my fingers with hers.

We walked quietly for a while. She hadn't even looked back at the Alpha. I, however, glanced back at him, my anger rising back up.

"Honestly, he's not that bad. Pushy, sure. But he's a good Alpha. Especially with the ideas that all supernaturals should be on the same page. Together, learning and coexisting. Not fighting each other."

"Not a bad guy?! Auri, he just threatened your kids!" Auri sighed. "Because you're here. He's threatened by you. His Beta even caught your reaction."

"You're my mate and he's coming onto you! I should have broken his bones when he tried to squeeze my hand." I mumbled.

Laughing, she brought my hand up and kissed it. "I didn't know if you were wanting to..."

"... fight him?"

She rolled her eyes. "... take responsibility, Hector."

I stopped and because our hands were together, her progress was halted as well. "Auri, I love you."

"That doesn't mean you're ready to be my mate, Hector. Yes, it was forced but as much as you were worried about how I would feel, you need to realize that I got the easy side of this deal." Auri came back and cupped my cheek. "You're stuck with me. The broken, mother of thirteen. Four of which are all over twenty and have their own issues, nine under fourteen who absolutely have issues. I'm the King Killer, the Huntress, the most notorious and wanted wolf with a ridiculous bounty on my head. I've got powers that surpass just about everyone I've met and I don't know their limits yet. Not to mention..." I could hear her heart hammering in her chest. "... we have forever now. A concept that I still struggle to wrap my head around."

Standing before her, I really looked at the woman in front of me. Auri was beautiful and sensual. She aged gracefully over the years but now those lines of wisdom only showed in her eyes. Her power, even locked away, still emanated from her in a way that commanded respect. However, the love she held and the kindness softened those edges.

Auri was right. If I was to stand by her side as her mate, it was more than just strength and power that I needed. I needed to be more than myself, more than just the simpering wolf who loved a Luna. I was mated to a Goddess, a wolf, a vampire, a fey, a king, and a mother... all rolled into one package.

A smile spread to my face. Getting down on one knee, I took both of Auri's hands in mine. "I, Hector Mendes, reject the bond to the Golden Moon pack. I hereby pledge my allegiance, my loyalty, my love, and myself to Auri Meadows, Goddess of Judgement. I also request your hand in marriage, if... if you will have me."

Her eyes were wide as saucers as I felt a full blush rush across my face. She didn't say anything as she stared into my eyes. I started to stammer.

"I... I know there are so many things I need to be better at. A better protector, learning to be a good mate... a good father... I just..."

"Hector..."

"I know we didn't get to choose being mates but if the fey, witches, humans and even vampires think the idea of marriage is a good thing. It's a choice that we can have and I know I don't have a ring but we can..."

"Hector."

"I just... I can't lose you and I love you and I want to be with you every single day. We won't grow old but now forever feels like a gift and I... I just ..."

She tore her hands out of mine and threw her arms over my shoulders. In a second, her lips crashed against mine and I wrapped my arms around her. Holding her tight to me, I kissed her with a passion and a fever that I had been holding back. Goddess, I loved Auri. I loved her so much. But the love I felt for her mixed in the bond with the love she had for me.

Her forehead rested against mine. "Yes, Hector. Absolutely." I swallowed hard. My breath coming out in spurts before I started to laugh. Tears filled my eyes and I held her face, kissing Auri again. "I fucking love you."

"I love you. I have to equally learn with you. I haven't been the best mate but I want to be better. Learn to be stronger. To be better."

"Then, I guess we will be on this road together."

She nodded, tears streaming down her face. "Thank you... for choosing me. I know I was upset last night. But I..."

Shaking my head, I kissed her nose. "I understand. Especially after all that's happened. I want you to be happy. And I always hoped... that ... it would be with me."

"You're the best friend I could ever have and that I never deserved. Never deserved your love. But I hope to... one day."

Smiling, I felt on cloud nine. Taking her hand again, I stood and we continued our walk. My phone started to vibrate and I honestly forgot I shoved it in my pocket. Pulling it out, I saw Vale was calling. Auri giggled.

“Did you forget they can feel the break from the pack?” I sighed. “Maybe.”

Rejecting the call, he immediately called again. Auri squeezed my hand. “I’m not answering.” I rejected it again.

“Hector, you’re gonna have to...”

I looked down and this time Ezekiel was calling. Sighing, I rejected two calls from him. The next one was from Bryan and I groaned.

“He will murder you if you reject that call.” Auri chuckled.

Answering it, I put the phone on speaker as we walked. “Hello, Bryan.”

“What the hell do you think you are doing?” Bryan yelled over the phone.

In the background, you could hear Vale ask if I really answered him.

“Relax Bryan. It’s fine.”

“It’s fine? It’s fine?! It’s not fine. You just left the pack!”

I sighed and Auri squeezed my hand. “I know what I did and why I did it.”

Bryan was quiet and all sound disappeared. “Hector, Vale thinks you’re abandoning him. He can’t lose you, not now when we are working out the kinks of the treaty.”

“I mean, I kind of am. He has his own leadership to lean on now. He doesn’t need me or you.”

Auri hit me in the chest and I laughed. “What? It’s true.”

She hissed. “It’s not! You’re not abandoning Vale.”

“Hector! Do you have me on speaker? Who is that?”

I smiled and looked at Auri. “My fiancé.”

"You're what?! Hector! The fuck is going on with you?"

Auri was red as a tomato and I started to laugh. Pulling her close, I put my arm around her and kissed the side of her head. She fit right into my side.

"Can't you be happy for me? Seriously Bryan, you're my best friend."

"And as your best friend I'm asking what the hell are you doing? Marriage? What is she? Another supernatural race?"

"I mean... you aren't wrong." Auri giggled and shook her head. "You're terrible." She whispered and I nodded.

We got to the gate and I pulled it open for her. She walked into the house but I stayed out and leaned against the short brick wall.

"I'm choosing a direction. Finally, I feel like I have a direction in my life. A purpose and a way forward."

Bryan growled. "You've been gone for six months. How are you finding a wife? Even getting married? What about Auri?"

"Bryan, stop. It's time. Time for me to get my shit together."

He laughed. "Hector, you're too old for this. You can't even have kids!"

My brow furrowed. "Why not? I'm not that old. Fuck Bryan, what the hell?"

"Seriously? You want to have a newborn when you're sixty?"

"One, I'm not sixty. And two, it's fine because she has nine kids."

I heard Bryan choke on something and I smirked. "Nine? Did you just say nine kids? Hector, now I know you're fucking with me." "I'm not actually. Gale, Felicity, Osiris, Wendy, Colin, Herr, Bast, Juniper, and Sammy. Ranging from 3 to 14."

There was silence for a while. "You're not joking ... are you?"

"I'm not. Look, I don't know when I'll be coming back to Italy or the US. But what I do know is that if we do, I'm not coming back to the pack. You and I both know he's putting all his eggs in one basket and if the basket breaks, all hell is going to break loose."

"You going to try to convince him of that? Before this so called 'King Killer' comes for Vale?"

My eyes widened. "You know of the King Killer?"

Bryan snorted. "Vale got real paranoid, real quick. Suddenly, anyone on the edge of the territory is a spy and needs to be apprehended. I try to give my input but there isn't much I can do when it comes to the rumors..."

This conversation was going nowhere. I knew I kept a lot of secrets from him lately, especially what happened to Auri and I, so part of it my fault but it was pissing me off how closed minded he was right now. 1

"I'm gonna go. Vale can put a bounty on my head too if it pleases his majesty. But when I come

back, he'd better have a plan if this goes tits up."

A sigh came over the line. "Whatever, Hector. I'd say you're too old but so am I. I might just ask to stay in Italy and help Ezekiel. I'm tired. Between your shit, Vale, and Auri missing, my sanity is gone." ①

Rolling my eyes at his drama queen routine, I shook my head. "I'll talk to you later."

"When's the wedding?" I could hear his sarcastic tone and it irked me more than it should have.

"Maybe a couple months. Depends on what she wants to do."

"Three!" Auri shouted from the house and I laughed.

"You heard the woman. Three months."

He scoffed. "Talk to you later, asshole."

"You too asshole."

The phone line disconnected and I rolled my eyes. My brain almost stuttered. "Wait... did you just say three months?"



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*** Ezekiel's POV ***

"You sure you're okay?" Vale asked me for atleast the fourth time today.

"I'm fine, Vale. What did you want me to do withthese reports?"I snipped back without meaning to. It didn't help make my point that I was okay.

His eyes narrowed at me."Look... if you need..."

"I said, I'm fine."I look a breath beforeanswering calmly."The reports, Vale."

Vale let the silence hang in the air for a couple seconds before sighing himself and shaking his head."Just put them on the to-do pile. I'm getting too many conflicting reports to just file them away at this point."

My eyes narrowed."What do you mean?"

"You know the conditions that were signed bythe Fey King, Vampire King, and Mother Witch?"

I closed one eye and rubbed my chin, trying to think back to anything specific that jumped out as an issue. It had been at least 12 weeks, maybe more, since the meeting between all the supernatural leaders had happened. Somehow, they all had agreed with a little coaxing. It tookthem an entire week just to agree on the terms. Each one wanted to have something added that limited the other races but were unwilling to give up anything on their end. Eventually, there was enough compromise between all of them, and of course Vale, that an agreement was signed and put in action.

From there, it was hammering the new regulations into place. It seemed like the Fey King was having the easiest time. I hadn't really spent much time with any fe y creatures to know how their hierarchy worked but apparently, it was pretty intense. We saw reports of shifts in the fey and their territory within days. Everyone else was a bit slower.

Vale had a fight on his hands from a lot of the packs. So much so, that there was a point where he had to have his Alpha King Command up at all times to

be able to force packs to comply. It was a given that the use of Nova 2.0 was outlawed. All of the other leaders were in agreement and Vale already knew that it wasn't something that he could, or really wanted to, compromise on. No matter where it came from, it was a blight and need to be removed.

The trickier part is that they also called for any and all leadership who had taken it for more than two months, to be removed from their position. That had been a tough one. We weren't like the Vampire King and the Mother Witch. Packs passed down their leadership based on the level of leadership within their blood and were taught by their elders. This extended from Alpha to Beta, even Gamma and sometimes Delta, depending on how large the pack was. We couldn't just vote for someone to take their place. A lot of our leadership had young children that would be taking over.

The compromise had been that if any pack had leadership that was 'of age' then they would take over immediately. If they were not, they would technically fall under the Alpha King. So Vale went from partially managing Golden Moon, to now managing over fifty. He thought he had a lot of paperwork before but now he was chained to his desk most of the hours of the day. The only time he left was to sleep in bed, sometimes go out with the kids and I to play or to go visit a pack that was having issues.

I'd retaken up Golden Moon fully now, since it was going to be easier on Vale and also helped him when he had any questions regarding pack management. He ended up getting a serious crash course between Bryan and I of how to run a pack. "I mean, I remember them, but there was a longlist of them. I don't know what specifically you are wanting me to remember."

Vale groaned. "The vampires we are seeing some inconsistencies in their movements." ①

"Like?"

I placed the pile of paper on his desk; it was a complete and utter disaster. It triggered me a bit but I didn't work from his desk anymore. I'd taken up what used to be a storage shed outside. At first, I tried to convert one of the offices in the house but I wasn't able to get anything done. Between Vale, the kids, and everyone else coming and going, it was just too chaotic. I'd have cleaned up my desk and had it just how I wanted and come back after lunch to having it destroyed because someone was looking for something. Apparently, it was more convenient to look rather than ask me. ①

So I made myself an office out of the shed. Cleaning it out, I added a full wall of windows so I could see out and then added the comforts of AC and heating. It was something that was now my little space to work and I kept it clean and how I wanted it without it being messed up. Now, it was more effort to have to walk outside and check my stuff than it was to ask me if I was in the house. It was the perfect solution. "Vampires crossing into pack territories. Some of the fey are noticing them in forests where they shouldn't be as well. I haven't received any complaints from the witches but some of the fey are noticing there might be something going on between the two. I don't know." He ran his hands through his hair. "I get four reports from four different races. All of them saying something different for the same damn incident."

I chuckled. "Right, but the big thing that you said in doing this, was that you wouldn't be trying to watch all the supernaturals. That with this treaty, we could focus on our kind."

Vale gave me the most indignant look. "You are the last person who should be telling me that."

Barking out a laugh, I shook my head. Walking around the desk, I reached down and intended to kiss his forehead. Vale had other plans as he grabbed the front of my shirt, pulling me down lower and attacking my lips with his. It was so aggressive that we just mashed lips before actually kissing. He hummed as his tongue battled with mine. His hand loosened and I gave him a final peck before standing up.

"I'm just saying that you started down this road. You have a ton of packs you need to be focusing on. If you're having issues within a specific pack territory, take it up with them. Otherwise, maybe reach out to the Vampire King. But there is only so much you can do." I headed out of his office and I turned as I crossed the threshold. "Try to stay on track with what you're trying to accomplish. Otherwise, you'll get swept away."

"You sure you're okay..." He started to call out and I rolled my eyes.

Flipping him off, I shut his office door and headed down the stairs. Bryan was in the kitchen with Jax and AJ. It looked like from the mess they were trying to make lunch but at this point, they could have been doing a science experiment.

"I hope you're cleaning that up after you're done. The twins don't even make that much of a mess."

Jax chuckled and shook his head as AJ and Bryan looked at me sheepishly.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Bryan wrinkled his nose. "I'm following the recipe exactly." He pointed to the book in front of him.

"The recipe doesn't say how to keep things neat and tidy. It also won't help when you finish, it turns out terrible, and you have to clean up after it."

AJ snickered. "Look, Mom was the chef in the family. Not us. Jax might be the closest but..."

"I know when something is beyond the scope of my abilities." Jax added.

Bryan flashed me a goofy grin as he added some ingredients. He had been doing so much better lately. As much as I didn't want to think it was due to him living on his own, I think it was the case. Months ago we felt Hector's connection to the pack break. Vale was livid, especially after he relied on Hector to reach out to the witches; or so he said. I think it was more personal than that.

Slowly, they had been mending their relationship and Hector was the driving force behind our warriors. Vale felt it more personally that he broke from the pack. Bryan was the one who spoke to Hector though. He said that he was getting married. I'd seen Bryan livid but when the phone hung up, I feared for the house's structural integrity. Now, he was fueled by his anger at the whole situation.

"Are you...?"

"I swear to the Goddess above, if you ask me if I'm okay I will kill you." I growled at AJ.

He put his hands up. "Sorry. Vale asked..." I looked over my shoulder and shouted. "Stop fucking asking Vale!"

Grabbing a bag of chips, I stomped out of the back door and slammed it behind me. I continued to stomp all the way to my office before I shut the door. Taking a deep breath, I sighed. Setting the snack down on my desk, I slumped into my chair and rubbed my face with my hand.

There was something wrong. There had been something wrong for a long time now. Ever since Germany, I'd been lying to Vale. Well, not lying but

definitely not telling him the truth. I didn't tell him that the woman, who he had specifically brought us to go see, was actually his mother.



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Vale was going to kill me. Okay, maybe not kill me but definitely torture me. Hell, I wouldn't put it past him to tie me to the bed and shove a vibrator in my ass; forcing me to come over and over against for hours from as far away as the bluetooth would reach. Faris growled, seemingly liking the idea but I shook my head. I gave him the mental image of us, writhing in pain as we were drenched in sweat and cum and seemingly no end in sight. He seemed to back off a little after that image when through our mind.

As soon as she had stepped out, I was shocked. Auri had been teaching me and sometimes, through the quiet of our work, she would talk about the old days. Her old days with her crew and how she took up the name Astra back when she was on Nova. I'd tracked down some old songs and even some old performances that had been uploaded online.

She was incredible and I fell in love with her sound. Morgan even helped me track down some of her earlier stuff, when she would sing with her friend Max. You could see a sadness in Morgan's eyes when he spoke about Max and I knew he was where she got Vale's middle name but I didn't know much else outside of that. Her voice was so pure and its own sound that I started to listen to her on repeat. When Vale pointed out her name in my phone it caught me off guard. She did say that she made the choice not to show Vale her singing because him being so sensitive about the fact that she lost her voice the same day he was born bothered him when he was little. He was too impressionable and he would even blame himself sometimes for the deterioration of the relationship between Auri and Logan. Which was ridiculous and she agreed but she said he was sensitive when he was little.

I imagined a little Vale running around, trying to be strong and the thought made me smile. Sighing, I rubbed my eyes and closed them. How had he not known her? I mean sure, she looked exactly like she did when she was Astra but I mean, she wasn't that old when Vale was born. Her scent, her voice, her

power, everything I thought would tip him off. But no, he was still awestruck by who he believed was a fe y and who he definitely feared a little.

Auri was either fucking with him or she genuinely didn't want to tell him. She played her part until she asked for thirty minutes with me alone. I had to ask Vale to trust me and that apparently was a tall order considering how much he felt her power. Auri sat down with me and as soon as Vale was out the door, I dissolved into tears. She held me for five of those thirty minutes just listening to me apologize to her. Once I was apologized out, she told me that it was never my fault. I was never to be blamed for what happened. That no matter who it had been from the pack, she would have gone to save them. She even went so far as to say she was proud of me. Everything I did to fight them, for staying alive, for bouncing back, and for everything I had done up until then with Vale and the pack. Auri was well informed about everything that was going on in the pack and I figured she had a couple insiders that she reached out to.

I don't know why I didn't put it together that she was the one who sent me the music on my phone. Maybe because I still thought she didn't have her voice but I should have connected it with Astra at the very least. It was why I liked it so much and why the twins liked it. I'd raised them on it. Talking with her, she had definitely changed. She seemed to be doing well and she said there was a lot going on but that she managed to keep everything from completely imploding.

Then, Auri turned around and pulled the madness that was plaguing Faris and I for months. I felt the weight lift and I looked at her shocked but she just smiled. 'The least I can do for my son-in-law' was all she said about it. The worst part, she said she didn't care if I told Vale that it was her. I could have walked out of that building and told him. But I didn't. I didn't and I didn't know why.

Faris snorted in my head and I sighed. He was right. I did know why. I didn't want him to bring her in. I didn't want him to throw away everything in search for her again. Once I went to Vale, I knew she would be gone again. Not until she wanted to show back up in our lives. So I didn't say anything right away. Now, it just seemed too late. I'd be fucked if I told him but it would be even worse when he found out on his own.

It still felt like I was lying to him every day. The weight of that lie was sitting on my chest and squeezing the life out of me. At first, I don't think it was as noticeable but now Vale would ask me multiple times a day if I was okay.

“Alpha?” I looked up to see one of the warriors poking his head into the office.

“Ah! Dino, how can I help you?”

He looked around shyly before stepping into the shed. “The guys are wanting to know how we are doing shifts tonight. Cause...”

I smiled. “The festival happening in the town over?”

Dino smiled and nodded. “Yeah. A bunch of us wanted to go and so we were wondering how we were going to be divided up.” Tapping the desk with my finger, I closed my eyes for a moment. “Remind me who is supposed to be on shift tonight?” I pulled out one of my notebooks and flipped to a blank page.

“Me, Vince, Bennett, Sal, Kip, Young, Phil, Nick, Waylon, and Len.”

I wrote down all the names as Dino said them. Smiling, I tapped the notebook. “We probably could knock that down to half. Most of the pack will be off territory for the festival as well.”

Writing down a number in the top right hand corner, I folded it over. Smirking, I opened up the mind link to all the guys.

‘From what I understand, you all want to go to the festival but without compromising too much of the pack’s safety. I’ve deemed that five of you will be able to go and the other five will have to spread out a bit more.’

There were different groans that followed and I chuckled. Dino was chuckling in front of me as he stood in an at-ease stance.

‘To make it fair, I have picked a number between one and one hundred. The five people who get the closest to the number will get to go to the festival.’

A bunch of them started to rattle off numbers and I cleared my throat, the link growing quiet.

‘Dino. You first.’ 27.

‘Vince.’

2.

‘Bennett.’

'89.'

'Sal'

'Damn I was going to do 1. Um...32.'

'Kip.'

'99.'

'Young.'

'23.'

'Phil.'

'69.'

The whole group snorted and I rolled my eyes.

'Nick.'

'45.'

'Waylon.'

'74.'

'Lastly, Len.'

He hummed for a moment. 'I don't know...'

(I an) I growled out 'Alright!65!'

I finished writing Len's number next to his name and I showed Dino the notebook.

'Dino, does this look right?'

He stepped forward. 'Yes, Alpha.'

'Do you see the folded corner?'

‘Yes, Alpha.’

I smiled. ‘Will you flip that up for me and tell the guys what number is there?’

Dino nodded and reached up. Flipping up the corner, he groaned and rolled his eyes as he rolled his eyes. ‘Guys, it’s 50. Literally, in the middle.’

‘Fucking goddess, Alpha.’

Everyone groaned along with Dino while I snickered.

‘Dino, Sal, Nick, Len, and Phil, all of you guys getto go to the festival.’

They all hoot and hollered.

‘69 works every time!’ Phil laughed and I shook my head.

Dino had a big smile on his face. I smiled and shook my head, flipping through my notebook and adjusting the information for the night and adjusting the information for the night’s patrol.

‘However...’ The line went silent. ‘Vince, Bennett, Kip, Young, and Waylon, all of you will be allowed to take off the entire weekend next weekend. If you wish to go into town and stay the night, I will cover the expenses for room and board as well as for one meal.’

‘Hell yeah!’

‘Wait! Can I change it? I want to go next week!’ Nick whined.

I smiled. ‘You should have asked what it meant staying behind. Did you think I would force five of you to stay behind without giving you something to help sweeten the deal?’

There was silence over the link.

Sighing, I shook my head. ‘Come on guys, I’m not that mean.’

Phil chuckled. ‘Yeah, only the Alpha King would.’

There was a sharp inhale heard over the link before it got deathly quiet. I raised my eyebrow as I looked at Dino. He was completely ashen as he

stared at me, waiting to know what I was going to say. I didn't say anything for a while, letting them sweat it out for a bit.

'Phil?' He coughed as he cleared his throat. 'Yes, Alpha?' His voice cracked for a moment.

'Come to my office if you don't mind.'

There was a second pause. 'Yes, Alpha.'

I flashed a smile to Dino. "You can go ahead and head out Dino. I'll take care of everything else from here."

He nodded and headed out, but his hand hovered over the door nob. "Are... are you going to tell Alpha King Vale?"

"About what?" I raised an eyebrow.

At first his face look confused before I raised my eyebrows a couple times quickly. Dino smiled and nodded to me before heading out, closing the door behind him. Rubbin g my face, I groaned. It was silly to tell Vale something so childish but before I doled out a stupid punishment for him, I wondered where he was coming from.

All of them were from our more recent graduates of warriors and they hadn't been around for long enough to really know Vale too much. At least, not in the capacity as Alpha of the pack. I'd mostly handled the day to day and originally, with Hector, I took care of the warriors training and patrols. After Hector left, I took it up completely and made sure I was there for every training session. After about fifteen minutes, there was a knock on the door and I smiled but quickly schooled my features. Leaning forward, elbows on the desk, I interlocked my fingers and rested my chin on them.

"Come on in, Phil."

The door opened up slowing and a very white and nervous pup stepped into my office. He came forward and stood in front of my desk. I didn't pull out the second chair I had specifically for this reason. Phil was shifting his weight as he wiped his hands on his jeans.

"Alpha."

I gave him a short nod. "Let's chat."



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Chapter 110

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I pulled on a leather jacket that I picked up in Germany and with jeans and a black shirt, I was ready to go. My hair was a mess but I didn't feel like messing with it now. Heading down the stairs, AJ, Jax, Felix, and Lucy were all standing around, ready to go out to the festival. Originally, I had wanted to bring the twins but it was going to be too late for them at this point. So I figured it would be a grown up day for all of us. Simon and his mate were sweet enough to take them for the evening, sitting that their bedtime was the same time as the kids and they didn't want to be out late.

"Looking good, Alpha."

Lucy winked at me and I smiled. My brow furrowed after a moment. "Where is Vale?"

All of them shrugged and I sighed, turning around and going back up the stairs to his office. Sure enough, he was leaning over his desk, two papers in one hand and a pen in his mouth.

"Vale, come on. We need to head out before it gets too late and we can't find parking."

He looked up and shook his head. "I have a couple things..."

"Vale! You promised. You promised two weeks ago..." I whined, cocking my head to my side as I looked at my mate. "You promised you would come with us... with me."

"I know. I know. I'm sorry. I'll be an hour late or so. I'll take a ride share so that I don't need to find parking. I'll find you."

Squaring my shoulders and pursing my lips tight, I started at Vale for a moment. "Promise?"

“Yes, little Alpha. I promise. Now, shoo. Go enjoy and I'll be there soon.”

My eyes narrowed at him before I turned and made an effort to slam the door to his office. Stomping down the stairs, I shook my head as every looked at me with questions in their eyes.

“Let's go.”

“But Vale...”AJ looked up at the office.

I growled. “No. Fuck him. He wants to be a dick, he can be a dick. Let's go.”

‘I heard that.’

Opening up the front door, everyone headed into the Escalade before I slammed the door hard enough to shake the walls of the entire house.

‘Zeke.’

I shut down the mind link and got into the passenger seat as Jax got into the drivers seat. Everyone else slid into the back seats and we headed off to the city over to enjoy the festival. It was about ten minutes into the ride that my phone buzzed. Pulling it up, I expected it to be Vale after I shut down the mind link but it wasn't. My brow furrowed.

“What is it, Zeke?”Bryan leaned forward, probably seeing my face in the rearview mirror.

“It's Hector.”I cocked my head to the side and opened up the text message.

, ‘Hope you're going to be at the festival tonight.

Holding up the phone so Bryan could read the message, he barked out a laugh. “No fucking way he would show his face around here. Not after what he did.”

I shrugged and replied.

‘We are. Why?’

It showed Hector typing immediately.

‘I would love to introduce you guys to my wife.’

My jaw dropped open and hunched over my phone a bit more. Everyone in the back seat seemed to lean forward.

“Wait... what's he saying?” Lucy asked from the far back row.

I hushed them all.

‘Wait, are you in town?’ He sent a laughing while crying emoji.

‘Of course. We can meet you at the bar on the corner of Piazza Giacomo Matteotti and Via Aldo Moro.’

I held my phone up for everyone to see the messages. Bryan cracked his knuckles.

“I’m going to fucking kill him.”

“Dad, please don’t. He just got married.”

Bryan shook his head. “He didn’t even invite me to the wedding! How the hell can I just let that slide?”

The entire car burst out laughing and Bryan looked around at us very confused. I leaned my head back on the chair as I covered my mouth, trying not to snort. Lucy had no such luck and was just embracing her full laughter. AJ was the one who was able to actually get more than a word out.

“After all this time... after how mad... it was because he didn’t invite you to his wedding?”

Bryan threw up his hands as far as the car ceiling would allow him. “I mean, I’m not happy about him getting married to someone who I never met before but I mean, he was my best man.

Wouldn’t it be part of my job as his best friend to be his best man? But noooo. No, I don’t get a fucking invite or even a ‘show up at this location for the ceremony’. How dare he.”

Nothing about his little rant made any of us hold back our laughter. Jax was even struggling keeping the car straight and had to put two hands on the steering wheel. I looked back down at my phone.

‘Careful. Bryan is coming for you.’

Hector replied immediately.

‘What do you mean? It’s past his bedtime. Is he actually showing up?’

I snorted and soon my phone was yanked out of my hand. Struggling, I tried to grab it back but Bryan had it as he glared at the screen.

“That fucking bastard. Oh, he don’t know the meaning of pain until I get done with his ass. There is going to be blood running through the streets of Rome tonight!”

Felix shook his head and laughed. “Bryan... we aren’t going to Rome...”

“I know that!” He snipped back and we just couldn’t stop laughing.

Bryan started typing on my phone and I tried to grab it out of his hands but he moved as he typed. I growled and finally pulled my seatbelt out, allowing more room to lean back in the back seat. “Zeke! Come on! I’m trying to drive here!” Jax complained as I knocked into his shoulder as I leaned back.

“Tell that to Bryan! He took my phone!”

I snatched it back and turned, plopping my ass back into the seat. It took a second to fix my now super long seatbelt but I got it fixed. Looking down at my messages, I growled.

‘Listen up, asshole. I’m going to put my fist so far up your ass you’re going to be tasting the garlic pa sta I made for a week. Then I’m to pummel your face so hard that your new fucking wife isn’t going to recognize you like I don’t! You are the worst fucking asssssss...’

The message cut off when I had finally got my hands on it but he managed to send it anyways.

‘That was Bryan, not me.’

There was another laughing while crying emoji.

‘I figured. You can tell him that he is welcome to try but my wife likes my face how it is. So, you’ll have to go through her first. Let me tell you, she’s fierce.’

I relayed the message to Bryan who scoffed. “We’ll see about that.”

'He says you will see about that. I'm glad you're in town. I am excited to see you and meet your wife. Is there a reason or you just visiting to get the shit kicked out of you by Bryan?'

This time there was a longer pause between messages. I knew he was looking at it because I could see the read message as well as the little dots showing he was typing but it was taking a while.

'The specifics we will have to talk about tomorrow. We are just wanting to enjoy the night tonight with some good food, good drinks, and good company. So tell Bryan he can fuck off.'

I laughed and showed Bryan the message. He had crossed his arms over his chest and was pouting like the twins did. His words came out into an incoherent grumble as he turned and stared out the window. This earned him a few more giggles from the rest of us before I turned back to look at the road ahead.

"Well, I'm happy that we get to see Hector. If he found someone that actually makes him happy, what can we do?" Jax looked back at the group in the back seat.

"Rearrange his face." Bryan chimed in and I shook my head.

Lucy was the one who smacked him on the shoulder though. "No. We be just as happy for him and congratulate him. We make sure we are welcoming and inviting to his new partner. Out being a fucking sourpuss just because you didn't get to go to the wedding."

"But..."

"How do we know anyone was able to go? If she is a fey... I mean their ceremonies are kind of intense right?" Felix added. "Did you say she was mixed?"

I shrugged. "I'm not knowledgeable in the Fey as much as I should be. Especially not their marriage ceremonies. I know they don't have mates unless they are of super high rank but outside of that, I'm not sure."

"If he has a good enough explanation, maybe...and that's a big maybe... I won't shove my fist up his ass."

AJ snorted. "And rearranging his face?"

"Oh no, that's happening no matter what. Hefucking deserves it. Abandoning us completely. Getting married. Inviting no one. No introducing his new wife before they got married. What if I don't approve of her? What if she's just after his dick? I mean I know it's big but it's not that..."

"DAD!" Lucy screamed covering her ears.

The whole car erupted again in laughter and I started to get the hiccups. Jax reached over and slammed his hand on my back a couple times but I struggled to breathe as I laughed. My stomach was cramping and AJ was crying, tears streaming down.

"I have to pee so bad!" He yelled through his breaths.

"We are almost there." Jax said as he looked back in the mirror at his brother.

I raised an eyebrow at him. "No we aren't. We..."

"Shut it, Zeke! Don't tell him that!" He whisper yelled at me but everyone in the entire car was a werewolf and we all heard it which made AJ laugh more.

"Seriously, pull over. I have to piss. So bad. Or I'll do it in the car."

Jax started to slow and pull over. "See what you did? Now we have to pull over. Now we definitely aren't getting a good parking spot."

