

## Chapter 128

The pieces were falling into place. Morgan's words and convictions over why the Vampire King should be dethroned and what he wanted to do to move the vampires out of their old fashion ways struck a cord with most vampires. He had overwhelming support. Even some of the problem vampires swapping sides after hearing some of his interviews. After a few days, I finally stepped into the light, speaking about the conversations I had had with Morgan and that he was also wanting what we wanted; peace. While it would mean both sides didn't get to do whatever they wanted, it was enough that we could live harmoniously together.

My packs followed. Most of them know Morgan from him helping put out the fires of unrest for many years with Hector. They were mostly on board with my endorsement, which was exactly what I needed. It was never just my endorsement that was needed by also the people I serve as King. Uriel hadn't said anything yet but I also hadn't heard from my mom yet. We were already into day four and I could see the toll it was taking on Hector. He was far more anxious and the kids were not happy with her missing a lot longer than she said she was going to be gone for.

Apparently, this wasn't a common occurrence for them. Zeke put me in my place when I felt a little salty about it. He asked me when I was a child did she ever leave for long periods of time and the answer was never. She went on weekend trips but she was always back to take us to school on Monday. It wasn't until Týr took over as Alpha

and I'd already moved to the High Council did she start her disappearing acts.

"Hey!" AJ slammed his hand on my back and I nearly jumped out of my skin. "You're thinking too hard. Just like Mom right now, I swear."

I hummed and then nearly spit out the tea I had been drinking. "What about Mom?"

"She's back. Came in late last night. I don't think she slept though. She was in rough shape. You'll probably get out of training with her for a couple days."

I nodded but I didn't quite hear him. I was already heading out the door with keys. Did I have things to do today? Absolutely. Were they gonna get done? Eventually they would. But I had a lot of questions for her and if she spoke to Uriel about our plan.

I pulled into their long driveway and slowed down. A bunch of the kids were playing ball outside and a few were gardening in the front flower beds. Gale and Sammy ran over to my car as I got out.

"Hey, Vale. Dad said you might be around."

I shut the door gave both of them fist bumps. "Yeah, AJ just told me Mom is back."

Gale nodded but before I walked past him, he took my arm. "Look...just...she's rough today. Don't try to ask too much of her today."

My brow furrowed. "What do you mean she's rough?"

He sighed and nodded to the door. "Go in. Just don't say

that I didn't warn you."

Now, I felt really on edge. Naresh was also worried as he paced in my mind. Going into the castle, I looked around the living room and kitchen but no one was there. Ahead though, the doors to the center atrium were open slightly. I walked up to them and slowly opened them. Hector was sitting on one of the doors, his head in his hands. The mood wasn't good and I tried to still my racing heart.

"Hector? Mom?"

Hector's head shot up and his eyes glowed for a moment before going back to normal. "Vale, what are you..." He sighed. "No, of course. There won't be training today. If you want to speak to her..."

"Hector, stop. I can speak for myself, thank you. I'm not dying."

I walked around the tree and saw my mom sitting with a book under the branches. She smiled and I just stared at her. There were dark circles carved under her eyes and she looked paler than normal. Her eyes held almost no light and she looked weak. I knew she probably could still kick my ass in this state but I didn't want her to. She smiled but it didn't help brighten her face. Patting her lap, I walked over and sat down next to her, only to flop over and let her comb her hands through my hair.

"I didn't mean to scare you. It really looks worse than it is."

I snorted. "You look terrible."

She slapped my head. "Don't be rude. You were already projecting your thoughts so loud even I could hear them and I was talking to Hector."



"Wait, what?"

Hector shook his head. "Uriel will be back in a couple days to add more runes. You won't be able to fight each other until then. I can take over tomorrow until then."

I looked at him but his face was so grim. It was dark and brooding, almost angry. Mom reached out and took his hand, kissing it before he walked off. She sighed and went back to running her hands through my hair.

"Does offloading power really do this to you? Every time?"

She looked at me for a while before shaking her head. "It's doesn't. I'm sorry, but I can't talk about it. Not right now."

I stared up at her face but she was looking off, and I could swear that tears were filling her eyes but they never fell. Instead, they seemed to evaporate as she looked down at me and smiled.

"I'm going to have Hector go all out with you tomorrow. From what I heard, you weren't training at all while I was gone."

I huffed. "I did train a little with Zeke. I just was doing a lot of work too." I paused, debating how much I should tell her but I knew she probably had already heard. "He's gathering people. It's not been slow either. Vampires are taking sides. I've even lost contact with three packs and so I would assume that's where they are headed too."

Mom was quiet for a moment. "I just...I can't figure out what he wants. I can't understand his end goal. Oran is categorically crazy. Mad scientist level and far above anything Frankenstein could achieve. I just don't understand. If I could figure it out, we wouldn't be just

running into the dark on this."

"Finding his end goal can't be on you. Like you said, he's crazy. I think it would take another madman to understand his end goal."

She laughed and ran her hands through my hair. "I think you underestimate the things I've gone through all these years, Vale. But it's nice to hear. Even if it is wrong."

"Mom..." I sat up and looked at her but she just flashed her cheesy smile at me.

"Where are they gathering?"

I sighed. "At the old High Council Castle. It's been abandoned but I have reports that it's been busy and there are tents set up all around the area."

She leaned back against the roots, her hair falling down the back side of it. Her eyes closed and she was so still, it was almost like she became part of the roots. I'd never master her level of meditation. It's like she became a statue and no matter what you did, you wouldn't be able to break her out of it.

"Why there? Why not his castle? Why pull people together knowing the reaction? Why?" She wasn't asking me. "

Anyways, we need to be ready on our end. There has to be a plan. So now we are on the defensive. We need to be at the top of our game at every step of the way. Otherwise..." Her eyes slowly opened. "We will lose the ones we love."

"So, I'll get my ass handed to me by Hector for the next few days?"

She laughed. "Yes. That's part of it. We also want to beef up your information network. We need as much

information as possible coming in. Also, security. Beef up the security around the pack. Oran is waiting for something. That something could us, or the kids."

The look on her face was pure anger and I could feel the slight trickle of power coming off of her. It started to grow and Naresh came forward, trying to fight against the power. Hector slammed the door open before throwing a wooden spoon at Mom. She reached out and caught it before it hit her, the power now completely gone.

"Watch yourself, Auri."

"Yeah, yeah." She licked the spoon and smiled. "Lunch is ready, come have some with us."

Slowly, she got up and I watched her walk down the path of roots. My eyes followed her as she handed the spoon back to Hector. He kissed her and brushed her cheek before she walked past him. His eyes found mine and I smiled but he didn't return it.

'I think Mom is right. I think she may be a bit more mad than we think.' Naresh whipped his tail, settling down after stepping forward.

'I don't know, Naresh. Is it mad to want to protect the ones you love?'

He shrugged. 'Depends on how far you're willing to go. But feeling her, that power. She would burn down the world.'

'So would we...for Zeke or Reagan or Rowan.'

There was a moment of silence before he finally answered as we made our way out into the hallways. 'We would but we wouldn't succeed. She could, Vale. That's the difference. The difference in our power. The



difference in our abilities. The difference in our minds. We would, but she could.'

'What are you saying, Naresh?'

'I'm saying we need to protect our family, our pack, and our kind. From all dangers.'

Suddenly, my eyes widened and I stopped in the hallways before the kitchen. 'You mean from her too.'

'Yes, Vale. From her to. We might be the only ones. You and Hector will have to stop her from destroying the world. If this escalates, we may need to as well.'

'I couldn't survive against her, Naresh. You know that. We can't even touch her now.'

It was a stab in the gut to say it but he knew it too. 'I know. But getting in her way would be the only way to stop her.'

'You mean...'

'Sacrificing ourselves, yes.' Naresh was quiet for a moment. 'We need to ready ourselves for that real possibility. That we might die at our Mom's hand.'

I growled, putting my hand to my head. 'You're wrong, Naresh. She wouldn't do that. I know, Mom. She would never let it get that bad.'

'I hope you're right, Vale. I sincerely hope you're right.'