

Kings Breeder 371

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 371](#)

: He Kissed Me Again!

Ciana

Frustration boiled through my veins just thinking about Theo and how unreasonable he was acting, insisting on going back to the castle right now when my pack had such a crisis on our hands.

He, of all people, should have understood the importance of serving one's people.

My feet carried me to the pack house not far away from my home. Mom and Dad had decided that we wouldn't live in

an enormous building. Instead, we had been living in a smaller home with more privacy for the three of us, and the pack house was only used for meetings and events.

Running directly into the pack house right now may not be a good idea. Like Theo said, if this was a trap, there could be danger awaiting me. I decided that I'd stay near the building and see what I could find.

I'd just walked over to my favorite willow tree in the garden when I heard low voices coming from beyond the row of hedges across from me.

Pausing, I drew in a deep breath and held it so that I could hear what they were talking about.

"I am just shocked she made it out of there alive," a man said. "I thought for certain the Dark Prince would be the death of her."

Another more composed voice responded, "Well, as I've said all along, we have to be careful about her. She is

stronger than her diminutive size would indicate. It was a good plan, but even good plans may not work out

sometimes. That's why we also have a plan B."

The first one said, "You're right. This time, we'll definitely take care of that spoiled little bitch."

Spoiled little bitch? I'd thought for certain at first they were speaking about me—going to the castle at all. But who thinks I'm a spoiled little bi-

"Beta Raymond, what would you like us to do now?" the second voice asked.

My stomach dropped to my feet. Then I heard the third person speak. This time, it was a familiar voice, and I immediately recognized that it belonged to Dad's Beta, Raymond. "I'm not that worried about Ciana, but we've got

to make sure Alpha doesn't return."

I had to place a hand over my mouth to keep in my shock. What was he getting at exactly? Bitterness and fury

coursed through me; I was so angry that my body started to tremble.

How could Beta Raymond betray us like this?

Even though Susan had mentioned his unusual behavior, I didn't want to come to the hasty conclusion that he was the culprit without solid evidence. After all, he was one of Dad's most trusted subordinates. Growing up, he had been nice to me, like a fatherly figure. But now, he was standing there, discussing our demise!

Raymond's voice continued, "We need to make sure he dies out there somewhere, wherever the hell he's at. Now, listen, here's what we're going to do..."

I wished I could see all of the other guys' faces, so that I could let my father know, one way or another, exactly who

was conspiring against him.

I leaned in a little closer to hear better, but I knew I couldn't let them see me. If they knew I was aware of their plans, they wouldn't hesitate to kill me.

As they continued to speak about how imperative it was that the entire family of the Alpha was no longer around to cause them trouble, the scent of the woods after a fresh

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rain hit my lungs.

Theo?! Where was he?

Sliding my hand around the trunk of the willow, I moved to my left, and then my hand hit something warm and hard. I peeked around the tree and there he was.

What in the world was he doing here? Hadn't he said he was leaving, going back to the castle, done with all of this?

His dark eyes met mine, and I could see just how angry he

was.

I wanted to shout at him, but I couldn't. If I made a sound at all, the excellent hearing of the wolf shifters would pick up

on it immediately.

I took a step backward, away from Theo, but I was discombobulated because of the unexpected appearance of the prince, and my foot came down on a twig. The loud snapping noise echoed through the garden. It could n't be mistaken for anything else.

"What the fuck was that?" one of the men said.

Theo looked at me, seemingly a bit upset that I'd ruined the perfect eavesdropping opportunity. I mouthed at him, "Run!"

I didn't even get the full word formed on my lips before his mouth came crashing down on mine and he pulled me to the ground. His arms encircled me, and he climbed on top of me, kissing me almost as deeply as he had that time in the pavilion when he'd been after my blood.

When he pulled away for a moment to suck in a breath, "What the hell are you doing?"

Quickly, he said, "Saving you. Go with it." Then he crushed his lips on mine again:

I didn't want to go with it, but a second later, I heard the footsteps come to a halt and the chuckle of a group of men who were standing on the other side of the willow tree,

watching us.

"Get off!" I insisted, pushing Theo hard in the chest. If he didn't comply, I'd have no other choice but to use my knee.

He did this time, and as he stood, he took my hand and pulled me to my feet.

My face was crimson, and it had nothing to do with the efforts Theo had put in. "Oh, hello, everyone," I stammered..

"Ciana," Raymond stepped forward, a bit surprised to see me. "Well, I heard that you're back. Sorry I haven't gotten the chance to pay you a visit yet. I didn't know you'd come

to the pack house."

"Uhm... it's nice to see you again. I, uh, had something in my eye, and my servant... Thorn... was helping me get it out."

"Something in your eye?" Now I was able to put the names to their faces. Larry was the one who was speaking. "More like something in your mouth."

They all laughed at that, but when Raymond gave them a stern look, they abruptly stopped, as if his word was the law.

“No reason to be embarrassed, Miss Ciana,” Raymond said. “This boy is your manservant?” He looked Theo up and down, as if he were my father and he was trying to decide whether or not he was good enough for me.

Had I not just heard what he’d said before, I might have thought that Raymond was watching out for me because he had always been like a father figure to me. But now all I could feel was disgust.

I couldn’t let him know that, though.

“He is my servant,” I said, trying to sound sure of myself.

“Well, no offense, Miss Ciana, but I think you can do a little better than that. I mean, he’s a good-looking fellow, I

suppose. But you’re an Alpha’s daughter, and he’s just an Omega.”

I could practically feel my blood beginning to boil as I fought the urge to rip Raymond’s throat out.

As if Theo felt my anger, he stepped forward and created a half barrier between me and Raymond.

Was he worried that I would do something irrational?

Maybe it wouldn’t be such a bad thing to just attack Raymond. Then the threat would be handled, and I was

fairly certain that Theo could take all five of those middle-aged men before they could even see what had hit them.

But I knew it wasn’t the right way to handle it. It may not be that hard to kill Raymond, but we’d be alerting our

hidden enemies. It seemed to me that there were more people behind this, and I needed to get a full picture of exactly what was going on. And while Raymond deserved to be

killed, he might have information we could use.

“We are not a couple,” I assured them. “I just had something in my eye.”

“If you insist,” Raymond said with a shrug. “Anyway, we’re so glad you’ve returned to the pack. I bet that was a trying time, spending all of those weeks with Prince Theo, the

Dark Prince. Thank goodness you are well.”

He spoke as if he were a true family friend. I couldn’t believe that he could lie to my face like that. The expression on my face must not have been very friendly. Raymond frowned and asked, “Ciana, are you alright?”

“Y-yes!” I tried to lower his guard. I had to say something to make him not suspect me.

“I’m just happy to be back. It was just terrible,” I said, even though I knew I was throwing fuel on the fire in front of the

prince. But I didn’t have time to come up with anything else. And after what Theo had just done, I needed

“Really?” Raymond’s eyes widened, and I thought I heard a low growl from the back of Theo’s throat.

“Oh, yes. Not only that, but he also smells-”

Theo cleared his throat and said, through clenched teeth, “Perhaps you should speak about something else, miss?”

“I don’t like to dwell on it, that’s true. Thorn knows that talking about the prince is upsetting,” I said.

“Because you weren’t chosen to be the next Luna Queen?”

Larry asked.

“No, because of the odor.”

“Right.” Raymond laughed under his breath. “Well, we are glad you’re here. We hope that you will find your fated mate, someone... worthy of marrying an Alpha’s daughter.” He looked Theo up and down again. “You must set an example for the other women in the pack, after all. No need for such wonderful, noble women to sink so low.”

“Yes, yes, of course.” I didn’t want to insist Theo and I weren’t kissing again because these guys were not idiots, nor were they without the use of their eyes.

“We’ll be off now,” Raymond said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do.”

“I bet you do.” I heard the suspicious tone in my voice and immediately laughed so he wouldn’t realize I was on to him. He twerked an eyebrow but then let it fall when I said, “I’m sure my father will thank you kindly when he returns for taking such good care of the pack in our absence.”

“I don’t do it for the glory,” he said, and I heard a hint of that malicious tone I’d picked up on before. “I do it because

My stomach twisted. How I longed to tell him where he could go. Instead, I kept the smile pinned to my face and waited for him to leave.

When they were all gone, I wheeled to face Theo. With everything going on, I was in a horrible mood at

“It was the best way to throw their suspicions off,” he said

matter-of-factly.

I couldn’t help but point my finger at him. “You... you...” I

couldn’t say much, because I knew he was right. So I wiped my mouth on the back of my hand. “Never, ever kiss me again! Ever! Especially not without my permission!”

“Believe me, it wasn’t my plan.” He shrugged.

“Good!” I pushed him back against the tree and lost my balance while he was still standing still. Before I fell to the ground, his powerful arm

He glared at me, and I glared back at him. After a couple of seconds, I heard him ask, “So... never ever... or never without your permission?”

What did he say? I blinked a few times before his words sank in.

He must be joking, right?!

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 372](#)

Who Am I to Wed?

It had been two days. Theo didn't say much of anything else to me, and neither did I to him.

We spent a lot of time in the library or the parlor, me looking for information and him... sulking. At least, that's what it looked like to me. Maybe he was using the mind-link to communicate with leaders of nearby packs or had set up some sort of a network to relay information back to the castle. I honestly had no idea. All I knew for certain was that he wasn't speaking to me.

I did my best to look around the pack house, trying to find information about what was going on with Raymond or figure out how to contact my parents, but both efforts

were futile.

All I knew for certain was that Raymond wanted to take control of the pack, and in my father's absence, he was acting like he was the Alpha.

It was dangerous, and I had to find a way to put a stop to it, sooner rather than later.

I wanted to discuss the situation with Theo, but I was still mad at him and didn't want to be the one to beg.

To my surprise, he hadn't left. I thought he would after our argument, but instead, he had followed me around.

"Why did you follow me that day?" I asked him once.

"I ran into you," he corrected me. "I told you I would investigate, and you happened to be there."

I almost wanted to roll my eyes, but I didn't. Because, deep down, I knew he had just come to check on me, to make

sure I was safe, which made me feel that maybe he did care about me.

I guessed my blood must be just so important to him that he couldn't bear to leave without it.

We were in the parlor of the pack house, and I was looking through an old journal I'd found that appeared to belong to an Alpha of the pack from before my father took over. It was mostly about crops and taxes and other boring things, but I was determined to read all the way through it for any

clue as to what might be going on in our pack.

A maid came in and announced, "Miss Ciana, Beta Raymond is here to see you." She curtsied and then turned

and left.

I stared after her, wondering why she didn't wait for me to say I'd see him, but he was there an instant later, walking in

like he owned the place.

"Aw, there you are!" He swept into the room wearing a nice suit, his hair slicked back, like he was on his way to a business meeting. "It's lovely to see you!"

I stood, my forehead still puckered at his unexpected appearance. "Good afternoon, Raymond."

His eyes immediately went to Theo, who was still sitting on the coach and didn't even spare him a glance.

I was pretty sure Raymond was thinking Theo should be standing next to me, like any other servant. But then... he already thought there was something romantic going on between Thorn and I, so he likely thought we were reading love poems to one another or whispering sweet nothings

into one another's ears.

Then I caught a slightly offended glint that surfaced in Raymond's eyes-he was probably expecting the Omega to stand up immediately, bow to him, and offer his service to the Beta of the pack.

I didn't want Raymond to make any more comments on how a servant should behave, so I asked, "How may I help

you?"

"I'm sorry I didn't let you know I was stopping by. It's only... I

have some wonderful news, and I'm certain you will be overjoyed to hear it. I couldn't wait another moment to tell you!"

Curiosity overwhelmed me as I studied his face. "Wh-what is it?" I braced myself, thinking I probably didn't want to

know.

"Well, you'll remember what I told you the other day in the garden about finding a suitable mate?"

Again, he was looking at Theo with disgust written all over his face.

"I remember what you said." How could I possibly forget? Here he was with his vicious plan of eliminating my family, with the nerve to make ridiculous comments about me

being a bad example to the entire village by dating an Omega.

Raymond continued, "Yes, well, I was thinking, who would be the best match for our beautiful, intelligent, kind hearted-"

Theo looked up at Raymond, narrowing his eyes.

"-Wonderful, loving Ciana?"

"I don't know," I said. "When you say it like that, I sound pretty remarkable."

He chuckled. "Oh, I thought of someone. It's the perfect match for you! The entire pack has already heard the news, and the elders have agreed, so the marriage is set. All we have to do is hold the ceremony."

"Wait!" I implored him. "You've already talked to the elders and the pack about this? And you haven't spoken to me?"

"I am looking after you, young lady, as your father would want for me to do." He sounded a bit more stern now, but

he still had that jovial look about him. "At any rate, you won't have that attitude when I tell you who it is."

"Fine, Raymond. Who is it that you've decided I am to wed?" I asked, my tone conveying I was anything but thrilled.

"Hawke." His grin widened so that I could practically see his back teeth.

"Hawke?" I repeated, my forehead wrinkling. "Wh-what?"

"Yeah, Hawke!" He said it again, clapping his hands together this time. "It's absolutely perfect isn't it?"

I knew Hawke. He was a few years older than me-big, loud, brutish, with unkempt curly hair that was always standing up all over his head and deep dark freckles that looked like polka-dots.

No, I was not marrying Hawke.

"I'm sorry, Raymond," I said, trying to sound as convincing as possible. "You are not in a position to force me to marry anyone, and I will not do it."

"Oh, but you see, darling, that's where you're wrong." He clapped his hands twice, and the doors opened. A flurry of servants came rushing into the room carrying all sorts of wedding materials, mostly dresses, jewelry, shoes, and other accessories. Some of them had flowers in their hands, like they were going to assemble the bouquet right here

and now.

"What is all of this?" I shouted. "No! We are not doing this!" I yelled at the servants to stop, but they were not listening to me. They would only obey Raymond.

I turned back to look at him, and the smile on his face was still there, but it looked positively evil. "I'm sorry to tell you this, Ciana, but from now on, you're on house arrest. You and your servant boy there do not leave this house until after the wedding ceremony, do you hear me?"

"You have no authority over me!" I shouted at him, but now, several of the female servants had a grip on me. They were moving me into position, trying to get me measured for my wedding gown, I supposed.

Raymond chuckled loudly as he backed toward the door. "Don't worry, Ciana. This is all for the best. You'll see."

"No! Wait!" I yelled after his retreating form.

I tried to break free of the servants, but an older woman with a tight grip and piercing eyes said, "You will stand still, young lady! We will complete our task! So unless you feel like fighting all thirty of us, I suggest you get it into your thick head that this is happening!"

She looked stern, her eyes wild and her white hair pulled up so tightly into a bun it had to be painful on her scalp.

My eyes immediately went to Theo. He was still sitting on the couch, his arms folded, and I couldn't tell what he was thinking at all. Was he actually enjoying this?

I didn't speak to him, not at the moment anyway. I was too busy being poked and prodded, spun and turned, until I didn't know which way was up.

Part of me wanted to fight them and run away, but I knew it wouldn't be possible without Theo's help. Judging by his aloof attitude toward the whole thing, it didn't seem he was interested in picking a fight.

What's more, no Omega could fight thirty shifters at once, so getting changed and measured, and trying on different

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outfits and accessories, wasn't life-threatening enough for us to blow Theo's cover.

Finally, after about three hours of torture, Doris, the woman who was leading the whole thing, announced, "We are finished. Let's go!" She clapped her hands twice, and the thirty servants immediately packed up all of the things they had brought into the parlor and began to carry them out of the room.

Doris wasn't finished with me yet, though. She bowed to me, yet her words were not so respectful. "And as for you, miss, try not to leave without permission. For your safety, Beta Raymond has ordered you to stay here until the wedding." She looked from me to Theo and then back again before adding, "But your servant can leave now."

"No!" I shook my head. "Thorn stays with me!"

She sneered, but probably thinking an Omega wasn't a threat anyway, so she said, "Fine, as you wish, miss." Then she turned and left.

I had to imagine there would be guards at every exit and entry point of the pack house.

Turning to Theo, who was still sitting with a slightly amused look on his face, I almost lost my temper.

"Was it fun to watch my misfortune?" Exhausted, I crossed

over to the other end of the couch and slumped down on it. I felt defeated, but I wasn't ready to give up.

He chuckled lightly. Watching his smiling handsome face made me want to scream even more.

"I told you we should've left." He put down the magazine he had been reading. "Now, you're stuck here, marrying a wolf named after a bird. What kind of a name is Hawke anyway?"

I almost laughed. Sometimes he surprised me, the way he said things with a dry sense of humor.

"Well, I guess it's just my fate to marry someone I don't want to," I said before I truly considered my words.

His eyebrows knit together and he studied me for a

moment before he asked, "Excuse me?"

"What? Am I wrong? Whether it's Hawke or Prince Theo, I

don't see the difference. Bottom line is, I'm being forced either way!"

"You're comparing me with that Hawke guy?"

I opened my mouth to tell him he was right, but then I could clearly sense that he was getting angry and dangerous... so I closed my lips again.

"Do not put my name in the same sentence as his, understand?"

This time, in order to avoid escalating our already tense relationship, I decided not to argue with the prince and

nodded my head a few times. After all, he'd stayed here for me.

"Good. Who is he anyway?" Theo was satisfied with my reaction.

"Hawke?" I wasn't sure why I asked the question. Who else could he be speaking of?

"Yes. Why would Raymond pick him?"

I cleared my throat and said, "Because Hawke is Raymond's son."

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 373](#)

Ciana Was in Danger

Theo

Ciana and I had discussed the situation, and she insisted on waiting until the scheduled wedding day, when she could get a clear sense of who was on Raymond's side, and what his ultimate purpose was behind forcing this marriage.

I didn't fully agree with her plan, but I wasn't going to pick another fight now that she was willing to talk to me again. Luckily, no thing much had happened since Raymond left a couple of days ago.

The only problem was that, with Ciana's house arrest, more guards were placed within and around the pack house and the overall security had been tightened in the Alvar pack. As a result, while Jake was able to mind-link me, he couldn't

see me as easily as before.

'Alpha, are you able to meet in person? I have something to show you.'

'See you in forty minutes outside of the town border,' I told him via mind-link and turned to the woman sitting next to me. "Ciana, I'll be back."

She lifted her gaze from her book to look at me. I saw a hint of concern in her eyes, but she only asked, "What would you like for dinner? I'll ask them to prepare it."

Ever since Raymond's announcement, while Ciana was putting on a calm face, I knew she felt insecure. For example, right now, I could tell she was concerned about being surrounded by Raymond's men alone, and what she really wanted to ask me was whether I'd be back by dinner

time.

"I'll be back in no more than an hour and a half." I got up

from the couch and continued, "By the way, if you want to know how long I'll be gone, you can just ask it directly rather than beating around the bush."

"I didn't—"

"And you can make steak for dinner."

"Why do I have to cook?" she protested. "Between you and me, who is supposed to be the servant anyway..."

I chuckled as I walked out of the room in a pretty good

mood.

Raymond's men wouldn't allow Ciana to leave, but they didn't seem to care about where went, which made things easier for me.

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Glancing over my shoulder, I made my way to the back door of the kitchen, making sure that no one was following me. All of the servants and guards were elsewhere. Since Ciana had been on house arrest and Raymond had decided he was in charge, the pack house was filled with irrelevant people.

I made sure they didn't feel comfortable staying in the same room with us so that I could enjoy some quiet moments alone with Ciana.

When I arrived at my destination in the woods, I saw a familiar figure in a warrior's uniform standing there.

"What did you find?" I asked briefly, not having any time for my Beta to waste.

He opened his palm, and I saw a fist-sized clear crystal.

"This is... the Moonlit Crystal?"

"Yes, Alpha," Jake explained. "I was able to locate it much faster than I thought. With its help, we won't need to wait until the blood moon to regrow the dreamberry. It can create the illusion of the blood moon, which would trick the plant into blooming and growing fruit."

This was indeed great news. "Well done, Jake!"

The effect of the berry I'd consumed last time had been wearing off, and I could feel I was losing control of my

power.

"The best time to use the crystal is in three days, Alpha, during the Full Moon." He had a crooked grin on his face, and I could tell he was proud of himself. "It would be for the best if this could transpire at the palace, though, Alpha. I believe it will be safer if the situation is handled there."

"Very well," I said. I knew his concerns were valid. "Get ready to leave. I'll fetch Ciana."

"Yes, Alpha." With that, he gave the sign of respect and disappeared in the woods.

Ciana

After Theo left the house, I spent some more time reading, but the longer he was away, the more unsettled I began to

feel.

I just had a knot in my stomach as if something bad was about to happen. I didn't know why I felt this way; they probably would leave me alone until the big day.

It had been over an hour since Theo left the house. When

would he be back? Thirty more minutes?

I scoffed at myself. Since when did I rely on him that much? No, I wasn't relying on him... it was just that the situation was sticky right now. I just really didn't want to deal with Raymond or Hawke when Theo was not around.

As if my thoughts of the devil had made the devil appear, I looked up to see Hawke standing in the parlor doorway, a smug look on his face. My stomach churned. He was the last person on earth I wanted to speak to.

"There you are, gorgeous," he said in a smarmy tone as he came in without being invited. He sauntered over and planted himself on my couch, about two feet from me. "I bet you were excited to hear the news, weren't you?"

"What news?" I asked, looking back at my book. I wasn't able to concentrate on reading with him there, but I pretended to leave since

that meant he'd leave me alone.

"That we're to be married, of course. I never thought I'd be marrying an Alpha's daughter, but then, when my father told me the depths that you've sunk to recently, I realized that you need me much more than I need you, in order to pull yourself up out of the gutter."

He had my attention now. I set my book aside and brushed my hair back over my shoulders, trying to decide how to

respond to that. Eventually, I said, "I'm not sure I know what you're talking about."

"Oh, come on, Ciana!" he said, smirking at me. "Everyone knows that you're having sex with your manservant. But that needs to end now. You and I are betrothed, and I will not have my wife-to-be sleeping with anyone else, let alone a lowly servant."

"Hawke, I can assure you, I am not having any sort of romantic relations with my servant." I swallowed down the rest of what I wanted to say. If I'd said more, I might have accidentally given Theo away.

"Please! Half the village saw the two of you having sex in the garden. My father was there." Hawke shook his head at

me.

"No, that's not what-

"Listen, Ciana." He reached over and took my hand. I tried to pull it away, but his grip was strong. "You have to stop fucking him, you hear me? Now, I know you've got to be happy to be marrying some one like

me, someone with prestige and position. So stop messing around with him and focus your attention on me."

He tried to pull me into an embrace, but I pushed him away. "Hawke, stop. We haven't even seen each other in a very

long time. That's not appropriate!"

His eyes narrowed slightly, and I thought he might say something else, but he only growled at me. I wished that Theo was t here, but I had no idea where he had gone.

I would never admit that I wished he was present, but having the prince in the room while this wanna-be was attempting to claim me for his own might've been helpful.

"Where the hell is your servant boy anyway?" Hawke asked me. "I figured the slack-jawed mouth-breather would be hanging around, gawking at you. Let's get him in here. I have some work for him to do. Boy! Boy!" he began to yell, as if that might summon my alleged servant.

"Leave him alone, Hawke," I cautioned, but Raymond's son was incapable of listening. "Stop shouting f or him. He's busy."

"You call for your boy right now!" he continued. "I stepped in dog shit on my way over here." He kicked off his loafers, and the smell of dog poop I hadn't noticed before mingled with his awful foot odor. "Get him over here so that he can

clean them off."

I wished Theo hadn't gone too far, but I couldn't blame him for ignoring all of the commotion in here if h e could hear it. It was clear that Hawke was imbalanced at the moment,

and whether it was the possibility of marrying an Alpha's daughter that had him all worked up or something else, I coul dn't say. I just wanted him to stop.

"Come in here, boy!" Hawke shouted. "My shitty shoes need cleaned!" He started to get up off of the couch to chase Theo down, but I put a hand on his leg to stop him.

"Hawke, please. You can't order him around. He's not an ordinary servant. He only responds to me," I tried to explain to him.

"Fine. Then you tell him to come in here and clean my shoes," he insisted.

I shook my head. "Absolutely not."

"Then you do it!" He picked up his shoes, and the scent of dog manure hit me in the lungs.

"No! Stop! Put them down!"

Hawke glared at me and then tossed them on the floor. "Oh, so I see how you treat your husband!"

"You are not my husband!" I reminded him. I scooted away from him on the couch, preparing to get up, but his hand reached out and took hold of my wrist. "Let go of me."

"No! Listen, you stupid bitch!" he shouted at me. "You're so ignorant! It's no wonder the prince didn't want you. You're not even that prett y!"

I got up off of the couch, twisting my wrist to get it out of his grip. My gut was telling me that this was about to be a fight or flight situation, and since Hawke was now positioned between me and the only exit, I needed to come up with a way of making sure he didn't hurt me.

"Where the fuck are you going, bitch?" he asked me.

I had no idea why Hawke was behaving this way. His eyes were narrowed as he stalked toward me. He had turned into

an animal. I'd known him a long time, and the two of us had never been friends, but the fact that he was this angry because I wouldn't ask Theo to clean his shoes, or clean them myself, made me think something had happened to this man to make him act so irrationally.

Hawke was still about ten feet away from me when he snarled, baring his teeth, which had taken the form of wolf fangs. He came at me, and I grabbed a la

off of the shelf near me and hurled it at him.

I'd always been a pretty good shot, and this time, the vase flew free, smashing right into the side of Hawke. He screeched and held his hand up to his bloody head while he rocked on

his feet, losing his balance.

I'd managed to slow him down, but I didn't know what else I could toss at him, and when he regained his balance a

moment later and came charging at me again, all I could do was dodge around the room.

He chased me, cutting me off and driving me back in the other direction, away from the door several times. Eventually, he had me cornered in the back of the room, near a window, and I contemplated diving through it.

"Guards! Get in here!" he shouted. My eyebrows furrowed. Since when did Hawke control the guards?

Something must've happened to make the guards think they had to answer to him because five of them came pouring in through the door. When I looked at their faces, I realized these weren't just any ordinary

These were friends of Hawke's. It was no wonder he was able to get them to do as he commanded so easily.

But I realized all of them had evil smirks on their faces, their eyes raking over my body in a way that made every hair on my neck stand on end.

"I think it's time I taught you a lesson, bitch." Hawke lunged at me again. This time, his friends moved to escaping. Two of them took hold of my arms, holding them while he came at me.

His palm screamed across my cheek, whipping my head to the side as my face lit on fire. Before I could me again. My head shot backward, my skull cracking into the wall.

The world began to spin and grew fuzzy as I fought to keep my eyes open, but I was beginning to lose consciousness, an

on the wall.

My knees folded in, but the two men kept ahold of me, keeping me upright, and all six of the men began to laugh.

“Go ahead and lay her down, guys,” Hawke said, and I realized he was unbuttoning his slacks. “I think th way to teach this whore a lesson is to show her how it feels to

be with a real man.”

Fear bubbled up inside of me, but all five of the men were on me now, holding me down while Hawke unfastened his

pants.

I couldn't kick, I couldn't punch, and when I tried to scream, all that came out was a hoarse whimper.

“No!” I pleaded with him. “No!”

But Hawke was coming at me, and there was absolutely

nothing I could do to save myself.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 374](#)

: That's My Face

“All right, baby,” Hawke said as he lowered himself down on the ground on top of me, his pants hanging open. “It's time for you to experience what it's like to be with a real man.

“No!” I whimpered, unable to say much more with the pain in my head keeping me dizzy and my arms and legs pinned down.

My shirt was halfway torn open, revealing my bra, and I was desperate. Help! Where was Theo? Why wasn't he back?

Susan... maybe she could think of a way to get me out of this. I tried using the mind- link to call to her, but she didn't answer either. And I didn't know what else to do other than

pray.

Someone... anyone, help, please!

Hawke chuckled and reached for my skirt, getting ready to pull it up.

Before he could get my skirt out of the way, he was

suddenly lifted off of me. I watched through blurry vision as he went flying across the room, crashing into the bookcase

where I'd plucked the vase from earlier.

"What the fuck?" one of his men shouted. He was next. But instead of being tossed away, he got a thick black boot to his skull. Blood squirted out of his nose and mouth as his head crashed into the wall and his eyes rolled back in his

head.

"How dare you touch her!" A thunderous and furious roar shook the entire mansion, and I had never been so thankful

for Theo's presence.

The other four men all got up to try and defend themselves, but they were no match for the Dark Prince. Even when two of them attacked him at once, he punched and kicked his way out of the situation, sending them flying against one another, into the walls and furniture, and tumbling onto the

floor.

From across the room, Hawke shouted, "I'm gonna tell my dad!"

Pulling myself up to sitting, I tried to get my head on right as Theo went over to Hawke and kicked him in the gut, hard. Hawke began to cry like a little baby.

"The mind-link," I whispered, using the wall to push myself up to standing. The room was still blurry, but my vision was beginning to clear. All around me, I saw bodies. I didn't

think any of them were dead, but they were in bad shape.

Theo came back to me, and I could tell that he was still outraged.

"We need to get out of here," I said to him. "Hawke must have mind-linked others. Raymond will be on his way, and I don't want to blow your cover."

He ignored my worry and threw his jacket on me. His gaze was dangerous and concerned at the same time. "You're hurt. Hawke hit you?"

"Yes," I said. "But I'll be okay. Let's go."

But he didn't move. A chill went down my spine and saw his face darken.

I'd never seen him this way before, not even when he was attacked in his office the first day we met. His demeanor was terrifyingly cold... and even without the mind-link, I could clearly acknowledge his urge to kill.

He gently laid me down on the coach and stood up to walk toward Hawke.

“Don’t... Don’t you come any closer!” Hawke cowered as Theo approached him.

Before he could do anything else, the door opened again, and Raymond hurriedly stepped inside. He had several people with him, including one of the pack healers. “What is the meaning of this?”

“Daddy!” Hawke moaned. “Help! She hurt me for no reason!”

I opened my mouth to protest, but then I closed it. Who was Raymond to believe me anyway?

The pack healer kneeled down next to Hawke to examine him. His father stalked over as well, bending down to look at his wounds. A moment later, he stood and said, “How dare you! Both of you. I

will ensure that you pay for this! You’re already in more trouble than you will ever be able to get out of, with everything you have done since you arrived here, girl!”

“Everything I have done?” I retorted, no longer caring about our original plan of laying low. If we needed to take care of Raymond right now, we would.

“Silence!” Raymond barked.

I looked back at the group he’d assembled. They were mostly pack elders, people who had prestige amongst the pack members. All of them were people who had been known to be friendly with Raymond, but I had never thought there was reason to believe they weren’t loyal to my parents.

“Do not say another word, girl!” Raymond was walking back toward the center of the room. “You have a lot to explain! You will be held accountable for every crime you’ve committed!”

I sneered, “Beta Raymond, between you and me, if anyone has committed a crime-” I didn’t get the whole question out before he snapped his fingers and yet more people came into the room.

They were carrying a sheet with something heavy in it. I had no idea what it was until they dumped it on the rug in the middle of the parlor. Then, the sheet came open and the contents spilled onto the floor.

It was a body!

I gasped as I stared at the form of a woman, her dress

bloodied and torn. Even with her hair covering her face, I

knew who it was.

When Raymond leaned down and pulled her head back so that her dead eyes were staring into my face, I took a step back, running into Theo, who had returned to my side the moment Raymond entered the house. He was like a brick wall, unyielding, and even though he didn’t touch me, it was such a comfort knowing I wasn’t alone at this moment.

“You recognize Susan, I presume?” Raymond asked me, releasing her head so that it snapped back to the ground. “The two of you were good friends at one point, I believe. She was a mentor to you. A governess, yes? She greeted you upon your arrival here.”

I couldn't speak. Everything he said about Susan was true. We were friends. She was a mentor to me. I had been happy to see her smiling face when I had arrived back here.

“But then... something happened,” he continued, an accusatory look on his face as he stepped over Susan and

came closer to me. “Susan must've noticed you were acting a little strange, girl. She must've been suspicious.”

“What are you... talking about?” I croaked as tears

streamed down my cheeks. Shock and pain consumed me. Susan... she was dead... why?

“Oh, that's rich.” He shook his head, his hands on his hips. “You are still trying to play pretend with us, even though it's obvious we are all on to you now, little girl.”

“On to me?” For the first time ever since I'd been back, I started to panic. I had underestimated Raymond, and I had no idea what other strings he could pull.

I looked at Theo for help, but he didn't make eye contact with me. His head was pointed straight ahead at Raymond

as he listened to the story that was being woven about us. But just having him next to me seemed to give me strength and courage. I took a deep breath and did my best to switch my focus from Susan's body to Raymond.

“That's right.” He folded his arms and glowered at me. “You killed her! And you did so because she figured out your secret!”

“What? No! I would never-” I began.

“Silence!” he shouted as all of the people gathered in the doorway began to murmur about what the secret might be. Though not everyone in the pack had come, there were still at least fifty people out there.

“You will pay for your crimes—murder, beating my son, and... pretending to be the Alpha's daughter!”

“Pretending?” I said, standing up, raising my voice. “You're lying! I didn't kill Susan. Your son was hurt because he was trying to force himself upon me, and... I am Ciana Black, the Alpha's daughter!”

“No, you're not!” Pointing a finger at me, his arm extended to its full length, he proclaimed, “You are an imposter!” Raymond turned his attention to the door. “Let her in!”

My head swiveled around to look at the entryway as the

people assembled there stepped aside and a woman

walked through them. She had her face tilted to the floor, but when she lifted her head so I could see her, I gasped in

shock.

The woman who had just walked into the room looked exactly like me! We could've been identical twins! It was like I was looking in a mirror. She had the same fair skin, blonde hair, sapphire eyes, and the same petite build. She was wearing different clothes, and her countenance was much meeker than mine, but other than that, we were the same.

How could this be?

I turned to Theo, expecting him to be just as shocked as I was, but he looked more bored than anything else.

As she turned her eyes to look at me, I remembered what Luther had said. He'd warned me of this. He'd spoken of an

imposter....

"This is the real Alpha's daughter," Raymond explained to the crowd. "Ciana, tell us what happened."

"Yes, Mister Raymond."

The girl cleared her throat and spoke in a voice that sounded similar to mine but much quieter.

"I was on my way back from the castle after Prince Theo chose someone else over me. At any rate, I was came at me. She assaulted me, and using

witchcraft, she made it so that her face looked exactly like mine. Then, she locked me up and came here of you."

By the time she finished, she was weeping softly, wiping at the tears that flowed down her face.

Inside, I was seething, infuriated that she was standing here, pretending to be me, and accusing me of d

But I didn't get a chance to say anything.

"That's right!" Raymond barked. "This woman," he said, pointing at me, "is a fake! She hurt our dear Ciana and killed Susan! Now, she must pay, and I beli

punishment for these horrible crimes is for this woman to be put to death!"

With his words, the crowd worked themselves into a tizzy. They were turning toward one another, murmuring under their breath.

I heard many of them agreeing with him, saying that the

imposter, which was me, apparently, needed to be put to death for my crimes.

“Wait!” I shouted, trying to get them to hear me above their conversations. “You can’t seriously believe him. I’m Ciana, and I can prove it! I know much more about this pack and all of you than this woman, the true imposter, could possibly know!”

“If she knows anything, it’s all due to her witchcraft!” Raymond shouted.

“That’s preposterous!” I shouted back at him. “No, Raymond! Stop this nonsense right now!”

“You are an evil, vicious woman, and you must die for all that you have done!”

Raymond continued to yell, the crowd began to talk even more loudly, and the girl who wore my face began to cry even louder.

My head was already swimming, a dull ache in the back of my skull from where I’d hit it on the wall. I couldn’t believe any of this was happening.

How was I going to get out of this situation?

I was just beginning to think that I was going to collapse on

the floor, curl in on myself, and give up on ever being able to convince them that I was who I said I was and that this other woman was a liar when I heard an authoritative voice demand, “That’s enough!”

Immediately, the entire room went dead quiet as every eye turned and focused on the speaker, who had

My eyes were locked on his handsome face. I waited with bated breath to hear what Theo would say ne

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 375](#)

Do You Know Who I Am?

Theo

I drew attention from everyone in the room, and most especially this Raymond character. “Shut up if you don’t

want to die.”

I no longer suppressed my Alpha demeanor, and the room went quiet as everyone stood perfectly still, gawking at me.

Meanwhile, I’d mind-linked Jake.

‘Jake, I need you at the pack house. We’ve gotten into a little trouble.’

‘I’ll be there in five minutes.’

‘Get the car. We’re leaving as soon as you arrive.’

‘Yes, Alpha.’

I hadn't forgotten that I was wearing the clothes of a servant and that all of these people thought I was Thorn, a fool that Ciana had met along the roadway somewhere.

It didn't matter. I knew who I was. And I had no interest in dealing with them anymore.

Raymond, however, was bold enough to try his luck with me. "What's this? The imposter's boyfriend thinks he has some sort of authority over me and my pack? You're

nothing but a lowly Omega. The hell if I'm going to stand here and let you speak to me that way."

I glared at him, willing him to do something to piss me off

more. It had been a while since I'd wanted to kill, but this time, I'd be happy to.

Raymond gave some sort of signal and six of his men shifted quickly into their wolf forms and came at me. "Tear

him to shreds!" he ordered.

It was almost too easy. I didn't even bother to shift. Rather, I grabbed a letter opener I'd noticed lying on a desk nearby, and when the first wolf leaped at me, I shoved it into his neck, hitting an artery. Blood spurted everywhere, and he dropped to the ground.

The next wolf was already pouncing. I took hold of his front right leg and twisted it as I shoved my boot into his gut and flipped him over backward. His leg broke with a sickening snap.

I then used his body as a club to beat back the other four,

tossing him at one of them before I brought my boot heel

down on his skull and then landed the others with several quick punches and kicks that left them lying on the floor in a bloody heap.

A few of them were still breathing, but I knew they wouldn't last.

The rest of the crowd had stood there watching but now broke out into a flurry of whispers and desperate cries of what might happen next when the imposter Ciana let out an ear splitting shriek and folded to the floor like a crumpled piece of paper.

No one moved to break her fall.

"Wh-who the fuck are you?" Raymond stuttered, still standing across the room from me. He hadn't bothered to send in any other so-called warriors after getting an idea of what I was capable of.

I ignored him. It was an insult for me to even mention my name to this schemer. He was afraid of me, I could tell,

because he stayed where he was and dared not do anything else.

Getting no response from me, he turned to look at Ciana, the real one, and my eyes followed his gaze. She didn't look so well. Her face was slightly swollen, her lips were pale, and she couldn't even stand straight without holding on to me.

Her physical injury and the death of her friend had overwhelmed her. I needed to get her away from those fucking assholes.

"Move!" I growled.

"Whoever you are, you can leave, but she is a criminal and deserves to be sentenced to death. Guards!" he called again. And this time, there were more than fifteen around us.

I wouldn't mind tearing their heads off, but they were lucky this time. They really should thank the heavens for Jake's arrival.

"How dare you, Beta Raymond of the Alvar pack!" Jake's voice echoed in the air as he rushed over, so that everyone could hear, "Is this how you show your respect to His Royal Highness?"

A murmur went up through the crowd..

"Who's that new guy?"

"I'd seen him before... that's Beta Jake."

"You're not referring to THAT Beta Jake, right?"

"It's him... I can tell. He has a scar across his left eyebrow..."

"Then that servant Thorn..."

"Shh!! That's no servant, you idiot! Who else would Beta Jake show this kind of respect? That's Prince Theo!"

"Prince Theo?!"

So at least some of the people in this pack who were a part of Raymond's coup weren't as stupid as he was.

"No... " Raymond stammered, his face turning pale as he realized who he was speaking to. "Th-that can't be."

Jake interrupted him sharply and announced, "Shut your filthy mouth! This is Prince Theo, The third prince of Egoren!"

Raymond gasped and took a step back, and so did his henchmen. "How... how is that possible...?"

“Your Highness, how would you like me to handle them?” Jake looked at me.

“That guy,” I pointed to Hawke and ordered, “Take his two arms.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

Jake charged toward Hawke without a split second of delay, and before anyone could react, blood spread

everywhere.

Hawke shrieked at the top of his lungs, “Ahhh!!”

Raymond screamed, “Hawke! No—!” He ran to his son, but his scumbag son had already fainted and collapsed on the ground. “Oh... no...’

”

“No?” I sneered. “Do you, or anyone else here, have any fucking problem with what I just did?”

I thought Raymond would fight back, but to my surprise, after the initial grief, he quickly collected himself. So this bastard was just a piece of cold-hearted crap, and I wondered how much he really cared for his idiot son.

“No... of course not!” Raymond lowered his head and dropped to his knees. “Please forgive us for our ignorance of your arrival....”

I couldn’t see his face, but I couldn’t imagine that he was saying any of that sincerely. He continued, “What an honor it is for you to pay a visit to our pack. But Your Highness, why are you here? We certainly weren’t expecting you....”

Jake frowned and scolded, “Who do you think you are to question the prince’s agenda?”

As much as I wanted to just kill Raymond, a simple death just wasn’t enough punishment for the crimes he had

committed. I knew Ciana would want to handle him on her own later.

“My betrothed wanted to come home to see how her people are doing,” I said, “so I decided to accompany her.”

Ciana’s eyes widened hearing my words, but she didn’t say anything. It was as if what happened had taken away all her strength.

“Sir, you’re the most intelligent man in all the land except for perhaps your honorable father, the king.” Raymond shook his head immediately and put on a fake smile, which made me disgusted. “But... this witch is cunning! Is it possible that this wretched woman, this imposter, has fooled you too?” Raymond gestured at Ciana as he said the

words.

Rage boiled up inside of me. All I wanted to do was climb over the pile of accumulated bodies and slap the shit out of him.

As if Ciana knew what I was about to do, she gently tugged my sleeve. I leaned down so that I could hear her. "Leave

him to me," she murmured.

I raised a furrowed brow as she whispered, "I need to take care of him on my own..."

I could tell she was fading fast. She would have to deal with Raymond some other day, but I respected her wishes.

Besides, if I had put Raymond to death right then, I wouldn't have had time to stay there to handle the aftermath, or to wait until Ciana's parents came back. I hated that I chose to spare his life though.

"Do you really think that the prince can't tell the difference between an imposter and the real Alpha's daughter?" Jake

answered for me. "Your tricks don't work on us."

"Now, move!" I demanded.

This time, no one dared to stand in my way.

I turned and looked at the crowd again. Most of them were outside of the house and I wasn't sure how much they had heard, but for the ones inside the house, all of them looked petrified-and mortified.

"Raymond, I don't have time to deal with you today, but I know what you're planning. If you are against Alpha Black, then you are against the crown. Only the king has the authority to decide who is Alpha!"

"Yes, Your Highness," Raymond replied, and so did the people in the room, their heads downcast. It was obvious to me that all of these people were traitors, that they were all loyal to Raymond and not to the Black family.

They would all need to be dealt with, but I had bigger problems at the moment. I looked over at Ciana and saw her eyes rolling back into her head as she struggled to stay conscious. Her hand grappled against me, trying to gain control as her knees grew weaker by the second.

I wasn't about to let her pass out like the imposter. Instead, I stepped over to her, avoiding the spilled blood on the carpet, and lifted her into my arms. She didn't verbally protest this time because she was really struggling.

Her eyes rolled back again, and for a moment, she lost consciousness. Her cheek pressed against my chest.

"Jake, let's go."

I gave one last glare at Raymond and his pathetic son, Hawke. I'd ensure that they get what they deserve after I took care of the urgent matter at hand.

Once we were outside, Ciana blinked a few times, the bright light of the sun disturbing her uneasy slumber. I'd made it to the edge of the yard when Ciana became conscious enough to realize what was happening. She flung herself up the best she could, frantically looking over my shoulder toward her house. "Wait..." she murmured. "Where are we going?" "Back to the castle."

Her eyes widened a bit. "But I can't leave yet. I have to stay and handle this situation..."

"Out of the question," I told her. "You are injured, your pack is in shambles right now, and you are going back to the palace with me to recover."

"

"But... Your Highness! Wait!" she demanded in my arms.

I didn't slow down, but only said, "I know you're worried about your pack, but leave that to me."

"Didn't you make it clear that you don't care about my pack?" She was trying to be feisty, but it was clear she was still in pain and tired.

I was pleased to hear her voice raise a bit but I held back my smile. I knew it would just rile her up more, and while I liked it when she was angry-it made her eyes glow-now wasn't the time to purposely agitate her. "Ciana," I said,

using my Alpha voice. "We'll take care of it later. I promise. We have an urgent matter to attend to."

"But-" she protested again.

"Shhh.... Listen to me, just this once."

She stared at me for a moment, and then did as I said, allowing herself to rest back into my arms again.

I had carried her all the way to the car when she broke the silence. She asked me, "What is it?"

"What is what?" I questioned, having no idea what she was speaking about.

"The urgent matter," she said.

"We may be able to regrow the dreamberry in three days."

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 376](#)

: Share His Room

Ciana

The ride back to the castle was quiet and long. For hours and hours, I sat in a seat across from Theo, but like on the way here, we didn't speak much-except this time, I wasn't upset with him. I was upset with myself.

I'd gone to a whole lot of trouble for absolutely no reason. While I had figured out that there were multiple problems brewing in my pack, I had solved exactly none of them. And even worse, my good friend and mentor had been killed in order to frame me for her murder.

Every time I thought about her, I felt overwhelmed by suffocating sadness and white-hot anger. The pain growing within my chest was too raw and too fresh for me to even accept that it was real, and I longed to be out of the range of the prince's watchful eye so I could let my emotions out.

Theo had only briefly mentioned that we needed to be back to the palace by Full Moon, which was only a couple of days away from now, but he didn't tell me anything else- even if he had, I probably wouldn't pay much attention.

As the car approached the palace, I could feel the dread

that washed over me. Looking at Theo's face, I saw a similar expression there and thought perhaps I didn't know him that well after all.

The door was opened for me, and I got out. We had arrived late in the evening, and I was exhausted.

As we walked up the steps to the palace, I suddenly remembered that I was supposed to be his prisoner before I'd left the palace. What would he do to me then? Would I be returning to my generous accommodations in the dungeon?

But when Jake asked where he should place me, Theo replied, "The room next to mine will do. Also, get Dottie."

My eyebrows raised, and for a moment, I thought he was being a civilized human being for once. But then I remembered why we were here-the dreamberry, and the fact that I was the source of the blood he needed.

'That's right. Theo doesn't want me for me. He just wants my blood,' I reminded myself.

Luckily, I was able to recover quite fast.

"No major concerns regarding Miss Black," Dottie assured Theo, and then she turned to me and said, "Dear, make sure you get lots of rest and you'll be fine!"

I sat up, thinking maybe some reading before bed would

help me fall asleep easier when the door between my room and Theo's opened.

"You should be asleep by now," Theo said.

I had forgotten that he had extraordinarily sharp hearing. "Did I bother you? Sorry, I couldn't sleep," I said.

He came over to the foot of the bed, and in the light of the almost-full moon, I could see that he was concerned.

It was shocking to see such an expression on his handsome face.

"Perhaps a visitor will do you some good," he suggested.

My forehead crinkled as I tried to decipher what he was talking about, but a moment later, there was a light rapping on the door, and I had to wonder if he had summoned someone with the mind-link.

He went and pulled the door open, and standing there in her robe was my beautiful redheaded friend, Brook.

A smile immediately came to my face as she bowed to the prince and then bounded across the room, throwing her

arms around me. I looked over her shoulder to see Theo standing there with what could only be described as a faint smile on his face.

"Thank you," I mouthed to him.

He only shrugged and then went back to his room.

"Oh, Ciana! I missed you so much!" Brook said. "You've missed out on quite a bit while you were gone. How are

you? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I assured her, though it wasn't exactly true. "How are you?"

"Good, but I feel so terrible, Ciana! If I had never allowed myself to be kidnapped by that horrible man in the first place, you would never have gotten yourself into this awful situation!"

"No! No! You mustn't blame yourself," I told her. "Believe me, Brook, I've managed to get myself into plenty of trouble on my own, thank you very much."

That made her giggle. "How are things in your pack?"

"Not good," I admitted.

Knowing Brook, she would internalize everything I told her

and become even more upset about the situation than I was if I allowed her to know exactly what had gone on.

So I didn't.

"I had some trouble with a man who wants to be Alpha," I said with a simple shrug of my shoulders. "But Prince Theo set him straight."

"And he brought you back here!" she added, a glint of mischief in her eyes. I knew she was implying something.

"Yes, well, I believe the prince had his own reasoning for that," I said, implying that it wasn't at all what she thought it was. Again, the details were not important.

"Well, the other girls are saying he took you with him even during his work because he loves you."

I laughed. I couldn't help it. So that was the rumor? It

seemed that no one other than Brook knew I had been

thrown in the dungeon, and when they didn't see either Theo or me for a few days, they just assumed that Theo had brought me along with him wherever he went.

"Believe me, that is not the case at all. Prince Theo doesn't love anyone as far as I can tell." I meant the statement as a blow to His Royal Pain in the Butt, but when I said it, the words only made me sad.

We talked for about an hour about the things that had gone on in the castle, but I could tell Brook was extremely

tired, and I decided I should let her go. "You should go get some rest," I told her. "We can talk more tomorrow."

Brook yawned and said, "You're right." She smiled at me, but it seemed forced, and I began to wonder if something else was bothering her.

But by then, she was already moving off of the bed. She kissed my cheek, and I gave her a hug as we both wished each other goodnight.

Falling back onto my pillows, I was greeted with the same view that had not allowed me to sleep before. Susan's face filled my mind, followed by Raymond's and Hawke's.

I didn't want to be alone.

It had only been a few minutes since Brook had left, so I thought I might go after her and see if maybe she might want to sleep in my room with me. Throwing back the covers, I put on my robe and flew to the door, throwing it

open.

Peeking my head out, I looked down the hallway. To my surprise, Brook was still nearby.

But she was busy.

I stepped back inside of my room to observe what was

67574

going on without being seen.

Brook was speaking to Jake at the end of the hall, and it appeared that she was softly crying. He pulled out a handkerchief and handed it to her, and she dabbed at her

eyes.

I had noticed that she'd looked upset when she left, but I didn't know what was wrong. And why was she with the

Beta? Had the two of them established some sort of a...

relationship?

At the moment, it wasn't my business. I decided to let it be and went back inside, closing the door quietly behind me.

Taking off my robe, once again I lay down and stared at the ceiling. I couldn't start tossing and turning again or I'd disturb the prince next door, and the next time, he might not be so nice as to summon my best friend.

I lay there for another hour, watching the shadows cast by the moon track across the white expanse above me.

Nothing worked to make me forget the horrors I'd encountered on my journey. From Susan's face to the pile of mangled wolves that Prince Theo had dropped in front of me, it was all a nightmare.

Looking at the seam of our shared door, I saw that Theo's

light was still on. Did he not need rest?

Finally, out of desperation, I got up one more time and shoved my arms into my robe. This time, I went to the other door and knocked gently, fear pulsing through me as I imagined he might shout at me for waking him again.

Theo opened the door fairly quickly.

"I'm so sorry, Your Highness," I whispered. "I can't sleep, and I don't want to be alone. Would it be possible for me to use

your couch?"

He didn't say anything and only stared at me for a moment.

I had started to second guess what I'd asked when he stepped aside and hooked his head in the direction of the sofa, which I took to mean yes.

“Thank you,” I whispered as he pulled the door closed behind me. He looked a bit sympathetic as I padded across the carpet and lay down on the couch.

He dimmed the light in the room and left a reading lamp for himself while he continued working on something.

Through my half-opened eyes, I saw that he was as handsome as a god, but his usual, cold demeanor seemed to not only keep people away, but also the evil ghosts,

restless spirits and even nightmares. It was strange. The more I spent time with him, the less I seemed to know him.

Slowly, my eyelids grew heavy, and a wave of sleep crested over me, dragging me down into the abyss. I closed my eyes.

What was it about being there, in Prince Theo’s room, that had suddenly made me feel so content?

I had no idea, but I was glad to realize I was finally dozing off.

The last thing I noticed before sleep claimed me was the feel of a warm, soft cover being tossed over me.

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 377](#)

The Moonlit Crystal

I woke up the next morning, finally feeling alive again. A good night’s sleep could do wonders.

Theo had already left the room and I was by myself. I took a deep breath and let the late morning sunshine beam in on me. Being consumed by sadness and depression wouldn’t do anyone any good, and if Raymond thought he could do whatever he wanted to our pack, then he was wrong!

Sooner or later, I would head back to my pack lands to get vengeance for Susan’s death and put that stupid Raymond in his place. I also wanted to find out more about that woman who was walking around wearing my face.

But before that, I had an obligation to fulfill. I needed to help Theo get his berry back first. That was what I owed him. Regardless of his reason for chasing me down and going to my pack with me, it was a fact that he had stood up for me and saved me. That alone, under normal circumstances, would make him my friend.

Now, I didn’t know how much a proud prince wanted to befriend a commoner like me, I just thought that the least I could do was donate my blood so he could get his berry back as a small token of thanks. Going back to my pack

would be dangerous, and if I didn’t make it... I’d die feeling guilty that I had not replaced the precious fruit I’d taken from Theo.

After that, I would speak to him and ask for permission to go home as soon as I could. It seemed to me that when he was willing to listen, he could be reasonable. He knew what was going on in my pack, and it was also important for him to ensure my pack was in good hands.

If I was willing to stay and do whatever he needed me to do in order to make sure he got the berry to work, and I'd pledge my allegiance to him, then hopefully, he'd be willing to work with me and let me go home right after that.

Theo had mentioned doing something on the Full Moon,

which was tomorrow night, but he didn't give me any more details. Luckily, it was only a day away, and I could wait.

The sun was beginning to go down when I finally heard Prince Theo's voice in his adjoining room. I'd thought I heard someone else speaking to him, so I crept over to the door to listen and recognized Jake's voice.

I hadn't seen either Theo or Jake since two days ago when we'd returned to the palace, and I'd been waiting in my room for their instructions, but neither of them told me anything but asking me to get some more rest.

But tonight was the Full Moon. There must be something I needed to do, right?

"No... works... crystal... how..."

Crystal? Huh? I thought this was all about some sort of berry? What were they talking about?

I stood next to the door, wondering if now would be a good time for me to knock and bring up the berry situation or if I should wait.

I raised my hand to knock on the door, but before my hand could even come down, Theo said, "Ciana, you don't need to eavesdrop. Just come in. This concerns you, too."

My cheeks flushed as I realized he thought I was being sneaky when I really just hadn't had a chance to decide if now was a good time. I decided not to try and explain and just went in.

Jake was standing there in the middle of the room, next to the prince, and when the Beta looked at me, he had a bit of an amused expression on his face, but Theo gave him a stern look.

In his hands, the prince held a piece of black fabric. It

looked like velvet, soft and thick. In the center of it was a

large crystal, probably three inches long and an inch around. The light above our heads illuminated it slightly, making it appear to be a pinkish white color. It was lovely, but I had no idea what it was for.

"This is the Moonlit Crystal," Jake explained to me. "It has magical powers that might be able to help us with our problem, but we're not exactly sure how to use it, although we do know that the best time to use it is under the full moon."

Looking from Jake to Prince Theo, I asked, "Problem? What problem?"

“Well, about the blood moon.”

“The blood moon was a few months away, I remembered you said? And it was one of the prerequisites to replace the berry?” I asked Jake.

“Exactly,” Jake smiled encouragingly. “The berry must be planted under the light of the blood moon, and the blood of whomever ate the last one must be mixed in the soil,” Jake explained to me.

“How romantic. And sanitary,” I remarked, making the Beta chuckle.

The Alpha did not think it was funny. He cleared his throat.

“This is serious.”

“Sorry, Alpha,” Jake said. I straightened up as well.

“So... you said we don’t need to wait until the blood moon because of this crystal?” I asked, looking closely at the crystal, but Theo tugged it away from me, like he thought I might touch it.

“Bingo again!”

“So how does this thing work?” I asked.

“According to the witch I got it from,” Jake began, “it can somehow create an illusion of the blood moon that tricks the berry into reacting the same way that it would if there was a blood moon.”

“That seems simple enough,” I said. “Do you just put it outside under a regular moon or something?”

“We don’t know,” Prince Theo said, curtly.

“The witch said it has to be cleansed, re-energized... or recharged first, something like that,” Jake explained. “She said that right now it wouldn’t do anything at all, and we’d just be wasting our efforts.”

Jake and I then launched into a discussion of the

possibilities of how the crystal might work, and we explored the ideas of soaking it in water, heating it up, putting it in the freezer—

but when it came to my idea of running high voltage electricity through it, it was turned down really quickly by Theo.

Finally, I exclaimed, “I give up! Maybe it was easier to just wait until the next blood moon.” Although, if that was the case, I’d need to replan my trip back home...

“No, unfortunately, we can’t wait,” Jake sighed, and immediately, Theo gave him a pointed look.

“Why?”

Theo interjected, “You don’t need to know.”

“Alpha,” the Beta argued. “Miss Black is part of this now. She needs to know what’s going on.”

I didn't want to be kept in the dark. "Please, I would love to help!" I said sincerely.

Jake encouraged, "She may think of something we haven't.. Alpha, I trust Miss Black."

Theo looked at both of us and finally gave in. "Fine, just the bare minimum of what she needs to know."

"In that case, Alpha, perhaps you tell her then?" Jake reasoned. "Since I may say too much."

For some reason, I had the feeling that Beta Jake wasn't quite that enthusiastic about solving the crystal problem. It was more like he was trying to make me and his Alpha to become friends ...

That discovery stunned me, but I found that I wasn't completely against the idea. So I pulled up a bright smile... hopefully, that would encourage him to open up a little.

Grumbling, the prince turned to look at me and stared at my smiling face for a couple seconds. But then he looked away and avoided my eye contact.

Did I do anything wrong?

"The berry is a special type of fruit that I need to consume frequently– for personal reasons. If I don't, it could be very

bad."

"For you?" I asked, confused.

He shook his head. "No. For everyone else."

I looked at Jake, and he nodded. I had heard plenty of rumors about the Dark Prince over the years, how he killed people indiscriminately, how he hated everyone, including

his own family members, how he never smiled and wanted to be left alone. So I had an idea of what he might be

saying.

Was it possible that the berry was used to prevent him from doing harm to others?

Now I feel really bad about eating it. If I'd had any idea it was a special fruit, I never would've touched it , despite how appetizing it looked and how hungry I was.

"Normally, I'd be okay even without it for a little while. However, recently things changed and it became more important that I get the replenishment on time. That's why we have to get the crystal working."

Then he pressed his lips tight, and I knew that was all he was willing to share.

I wasn't disappointed at all. In fact, I was actually quite grateful that he trusted me enough to even tell me

Then my gaze was attracted to the crystal. "Look, it is so beautiful!" I muttered as a ray of moon light beamed on it. A soft glow enveloped the

Before I realized what I was doing, I'd reached out and poked it.

"Don't touch!" Theo shouted at me, but even as he was speaking, something in the room shifted.

The crystal began to glow! At first, it was a soft white, barely noticeable, but within seconds, it grew brighter and brighter still until I had to look away. Prince Theo still held it in his hand, but he used his other arm to shield his eyes.

"I guess we figured it out," I heard Jake mutter.

Turning my head to keep from losing my ability to see, I was facing the door between our adjoining room

realized that Brook and Warren had wandered into my chambers.

"Ciana?" she called. "Are you feeling better? We thought maybe-" She cut off when she saw the bright light. "What's going on here?" Brook asked as she came through the door, her mouth agape in amazement.

"What is that?" Warren was asking.

Then, I saw someone else chasing behind him. It was hard to see over Warren's broad shoulders, but w it had to be Sophia.

The next thing I knew, the entire room was spinning around us. I felt like I was floating in the air as we w everyone else was.

It felt as if I'd landed with a thud on a soft surface.

I had a splitting headache, but I couldn't remember anything else.

Who was I?

Opening my eyes, I adjusted to the dim light in the room.

But nothing else was normal.

I was in a bed, naked, in a room I'd never seen before in my life.

On top of me, also naked, was a man with an amorous look on his face that told me exactly what he had on his mind.

I was shocked, but strangely, not afraid.

I tried to recollect my memories but to no avail.

Who was I?

Where was this place?

And most importantly, who was this naked man?!

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 378](#)

I Had Sex!

My headache started to fade away and I took a few deep breaths, but I still couldn't remember what I had just been doing or what was going on.

In fact, I was still having trouble remembering who I was.

And then it came back to me as I murmured, "I'm the king's mistress. And he's marrying another woman...."

"Yes, I know, my lady," he said softly, his breathing heavy.

Who was he again? He looked so familiar. His dark eyes and hair, his god-like handsome face, the intensity of his gaze... and all of those hot muscles pressing against me.

Finally, pieces and bits of information came to me, a name

started to form in my head, but I had difficulties

pronouncing it...Th-Th-Theron? Thalen? Theo!

"And you are my guard." I said this to him as if I was unsure,

but he nodded.

"Like all of us here at the castle, miss, we would do anything for you. You have practically been the Luna Queen for three

years now."

Yes, that was right. I was the woman the king loved more than any other....

Correct, I WAS. Not anymore. He had brought another woman into the castle that he planned to marry! How could he do this to me? After everything I had done for him, he was willing to cast me aside.

He said had fallen for her all of those years ago, even thought she might be his mate, and then she'd disappeared. But he'd found her now, and not just her—he'd found out that she had given birth to their son, and that was why he would marry her, to make her the Luna Queen, and their son the prince!

But if that was the case, why did he choose to be with me to begin with, just so that he could throw away what the two of us had together for someone who had been absent from his life for all of that time? It was me who had been

right there with him all along!

But he wanted her. Now that he had found her, I would be

cast aside, as if the memories we shared had never

existed...

My heart ached from thinking about it. I loved him so much, and I thought maybe someday he would learn to love me, too.

But he was not capable of such a thing. His cruelty in bringing her here had proven that what I had been longing for was no more than a silly dream of mine.

My lip trembled a bit from thinking about it, and tears wet my eyes.

“Don’t cry.” Theo, the guard, reached up and wiped away my tears. “It will be all right.”

I shook my head, trying to push aside the pain in my heart, but it didn’t work.

“If the king can hurt me so deeply, then I wish to do the same to him.” As if acting on impulse, I reached for the man on top of me, draping my fingers around the back of his head and pulling him closer to me.

His breaths were warm on my face, and his gaze was deep. I couldn’t help but again appreciate his perfect facial

features and regal demeanor, which made him not look like a guard... but a prince.

I was shocked by my own thoughts. No, no... Theo was my guard, right?

However, he pulled back, and it was as if he used all of his will to stop. “Wait... my lady. You have my heart and my soul, and I’ll do anything for you. But I’d hate for you to

regret this...

”

I understood what he was saying. The king was so powerful. He might punish me severely for going behind his back and sleeping with someone else, even though he didn’t want to make me the queen. But I wanted this, and it was clear to me by the look in Theo’s eyes that he wanted it to.

Holding a finger up to his lips, I whispered, “Shh... Not another word.” Then I pulled myself up and kissed his trembling lips.

A look of confusion passed across his handsome face as he looked down at himself and realized he had disrobed, and so had I. I didn’t remember any of that happening, but it must have, because here we were.

I ran my palm along his cheek, and he leaned into my hand, gasping a little at my touch. I could see the attraction in his dark eyes, and my body moved toward his with no effort

whatsoever.

With a deep breath, he closed the distance between us. Closing my eyes, I waited in eager anticipation for his lips to brush mine, but that didn’t come, so I opened my eyes and saw him lingering a fraction of an inch away from me.

“Wh— what if I hurt you?” His voice was husky, and his body was burning hot. It seemed that he was doing everything

he could to put a pause on this to make sure I would be okay.

Hurt me? Shaking my head, I ordered, "Take me...

"

When I placed my hands on his chest, and glided them across his skin, I heard a low groan and his lips crashed into mine, and his tongue parted my teeth and took every inch

of my mouth. I closed my eyes and responded to him passionately.

His arm scooped under me and pulled me against his muscular chest.

It wasn't as if I was a virgin. Was I? No, I had been serving the king for years.... However, the feeling seemed so foreign to me. My heart was beating so fast, my body was burning and my core ached.

All I could think about was that I wanted him to kiss me more, for his hands to roam through my body, and more....

Immediately, the rest of the world faded away again, and that same dizzy feeling I'd had before overcame me, but for a different reason altogether. Desire and pleasure consumed me. Was this the euphoria of making love? I

wasn't sure, but I knew I craved it.

His mouth moved down my neck, nipping and sucking as

he traced a line to my breasts, pushing the blankets I'd had wrapped around me out of the way. I gasped and ran my hands down his back, trailing my fingernails over his rippled muscles as his tongue flicked out to taste my sensitive peak.

Taking my hardened flesh between his lips, he sucked and licked. I could feel my core heating up for him. I wanted him so badly. Moving my leg to the other side of his hips, I slid beneath him. In doing so, my knee rubbed across his cock. He was massive—his length and hardness seemed almost impossible to believe.

I swallowed, and a hint of confusion and worry flashed through my mind, but I had no brain capacity to process.

that. All I had left in my mind was... I wanted him.

"Take me, Theo. Please," I whispered, beginning to buck my hips beneath him.

"Theo?" He said his own name like he wasn't certain that

was correct, but whatever thought he'd had, it passed quickly enough, and then, I felt the tip of his manhood at my slick entry. I lifted my hips to entice him to press inside, and when he did, an ethereal moan shot out of me.

I'd never felt anything in my whole life! It was as if I was experiencing sex for the first time...

He took his time, moving slowly and deeply at first, grinding against me. I lifted my knees and squeezed against him, closing my eyes to further enjoy every sensation. I lowered my hands to his perfect ass and pressed him more deeply inside of me.

When he began to increase his pace, I soon found myself breathless, gasping for air as pant after pant left my lungs. "Theo..." I cried. "Don't... don't stop...."

My words encouraged him further, and he thrust even harder until I felt my body tighten and go into spasms around him. I did my best to continue to breathe, but his

magnificent member had ripped all of the oxygen from my body.

When he finally joined me, he let out a few deep grunts, and then I felt his warm seed fill me. I finally opened my eyes to see him staring down at me, beads of sweat lining his forehead. I couldn't read his expression. Was he upset

that I'd convinced him to do this, or was he thinking about something else entirely?

After a moment, he rolled over next to me, completely spent, but still holding me tight in his arms. I lay on his chest for a moment, also gasping for air. I knew that I'd slept with the king hundreds of times before, but this seemed so different. It was like I had truly been touched by a man for the first time in my life.

A thought entered my head. Maybe it wasn't just any man who had touched me to bring me to this feeling of ecstasy,

but maybe there was something special about this

particular man.

I brushed that thought aside, though. Theo was a handsome man, that was for certain. But he was only romantic feelings for him the way that I did the king.

I loved the king. I wanted to marry him. No, there was certainly no way that what had happened between

and I was more than carnal desire.

No, it had all been like a pleasant dream....

Dream. Something about that word seemed strange to me all of a sudden. Like... all of this really was ju

But no, that couldn't be. It wouldn't make any sense because I could remember the king and his new wif

Wait a minute!

I had felt so dizzy before all of this happened with Theo. I couldn't even remember his name at the begin

Was it possible?

I lifted myself up to look at his face. He was lying on his back. When he sensed my movements, his dark
on me.

He was breathing normally now but looked troubled, and I had to assume he was thinking the king would now, I wasn't sure what was happening.

"What is it, my lady?" he asked me. "I didn't hurt you did I?"

"No," I said quickly. "No, that was wonderful. Thank you." I pulled the blankets up to my chin, suddenly feeling shy.

Why did I feel this way around Theo?

Theo!

A blur of images passed before my eyes as everything went spiraling around in my mind again, and then, all of those visions crashed together, tangling up with one another and then sorting themselves

Ciana Black! That was my name. I wasn't the king's mistress! I was an Alpha's daughter. I'd been summ

But I hadn't wanted to be involved in any of that.

And Prince Theo hadn't wanted me there either. He'd forced me to feed his animals, starved me, and th

Why did he do that? Why didn't he just let me go?

"The berry!" I murmured aloud.

"What was that?" The man lying next to me looked like

Theo, but I wasn't sure if it was really him or if he even knew who he was.

Because not only did I now remember the berry... I also remembered the item that must be the reason f

The Moonlit Crystal.

I gasped and stared at Theo with my eyes bulging.

I suddenly realized what might have happened.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 379](#)

: This is All Your Fault!

I stared at Theo, and he stared at me, and then, suddenly, I saw a look of understanding on his face, and the next moment, his face started to turn a slight hint of pink and the tips of his ears were red.

He sat up abruptly and grabbed a piece of clothing from the floor to cover himself below his waist and turned his face away from me.

"Oh, no..." I murmured, and then asked the man next to me

tentatively, "Your Highness...?"

"Yes?" He nodded, acknowledging how I addressed him. Obviously, just like me, he was his true self now.

Oh. My. Heavens.

What had we done?!

He avoided eye contact with me, cleared his throat, and asked in a husky voice, "What's going on?"

My mouth opened and closed a few times, but I couldn't make a sound.

What was going on? I wanted to know too! But, most importantly, how could he act so calmly as if nothing had happened?!

My hands covered my face and I was so... mortified, shocked, angry, confused, heartbroken and... embarrassed.

"How could you do this to me?!" I condemned loudly.

"Me?" he asked. "You were the one who wanted me!"

"You planned this whole thing from the beginning!" I retorted, tugging on the blanket to make sure it was completely covering my naked form.

"I know nothing about any of this," he exclaimed, and I could tell by his face that he meant it. "And I warned you not to touch it."

"Ahhhh!" I couldn't help but pull my hair.

That was... that was my first time! How was I supposed to take this news? How was I supposed to accept everything that had just happened?!

"Ciana," he called.

"Give me a minute!" I just wanted to cry.

"Ciana!" He raised his voice, and this time drew my attention to him. "Listen, this is a problem."

"No! Maybe not!" I reasoned, though I wasn't sure how it couldn't be. "We are the only ones that know. We will just forget all about it!"

"As loudly as you moan? I doubt it," he said in his usual, calm tone, which made me want to smack him. But then I remembered that he was a prince, at least in some world, so I kept my hands fisted around the blanket.

"Don't tell me you didn't enjoy it," he added.

I paused and then my face was on fire. All right, I admitted it. The sex had been very good-not that I had anything at all to compare it to. But... how had I lost my virginity in such a crazy scenario where I didn't even think I was myself?

Goddess, heavens, just kill me.

I buried my head under the blanket and demanded, "Do not mention it!"

He seemed to be entertained by my reaction. Through the blanket over my head, I heard his light chuckle, and then he said, "But that wasn't what I was about to say."

"What is it that you want to say then?"

"Listen, Ciana, this world wasn't real."

He got my attention. He was right. It really did all seem like a dream.

"What do you mean?" I uncovered my head from the blanket to look at him.

"Well, I'm not sure, but since you were the first one who touched the crystal, let me ask you this.... Why did you do that?"

"Why did I do what?"

I noticed that although his expression didn't change, there was a hint of pink on his handsome face again. He cleared his throat. "Why did you... seduce me?"

"I d-" The words caught in my throat. I wanted to deny it, but I couldn't. It actually was the case. I had been the one to make him have sex with me. In my mind, I had thought he was a servant who was going to help me get back at my

lover, the king.

Where did all of this come from? It was as if... as if I was

playing the role of someone else. The emotions I felt were so real and strong-love, betrayal, hatred, revenge, and

pain.

The king chose someone else. How I wished that wasn't true... how I wished that... the king would marry me and make me the Luna Queen.

It was as if the one and only purpose I was brought to this world was to fulfill that wish...

My eyes widened. That was it! That was how we were supposed to "cleanse" or "re-energize" the crystal!

"I think I figured out what we need to do," I told him. "Well, we'd better get dressed before-"

But just then, my bedroom door opened, and a woman dressed in a servant's outfit walked in.

Seeing her red hair, my face immediately lit up. I was temporarily distracted and happy that Brook was with me. But then she realized what was happening. "My lady! Your guard! He has taken advantage of you."

"Excuse me?" Theo frowned, but by then, Brook was screaming for the guards to come in and take him away.

"Brook... Do you not remember who he is?" I asked my friend.

Brook glared at him angrily and answered, "Of course I do! And I thought he is the most loyal one among all guards!

Who knew he would commit such an outrageous crime to you, my lady...."

I realized that, unlike me and Theo, Brook might have truly forgotten who she really was except for her name.

Theo's expression was darker. Without saying anything, he leaped over me and pulled his pants on while Brook rushed over and helped to put on my dress.

"My lady! Are you all right?" Brook asked. "Did he hurt you?"

"No, no," My face must be bright red again. I could feel the heat. "I'm all right."

Soon, a bunch of guards came in and took hold of Theo.

"See that he's locked up!" Brook told them.

Theo glanced at me and lowered his voice. "Tell them to stop."

My mouth opened to say something, like perhaps this was not what Brook thought it was. But we were in this strange world, and maybe it wasn't a bad idea to just go along with what was going on. Either way, it wasn't like that Theo wouldn't be able to protect himself.

Besides, I remembered what he had just done to me and

said to me, I suddenly thought perhaps it would do him some good to experience the interior of a dungeon cell

himself for a bit.

"Come with us, you vile piece of filth!" one of them said as he grabbed Theo's arm.

He glared at me and I mouthed my soundless reply, "Go with it."

I knew he could easily kill all of those guards and escape if

he really tried, but he didn't. Instead, he went along with

them and left the room.

When Brook and I were alone, she bustled around my room, saying, "I'll get you some clean clothes. No, could you like to take a bath or perhaps a shower..." I began to wonder exactly what was going on in her head. She seemed

confused.

"Brook? Do you know where the others are?" I asked her, my voice just above a whisper in case anyone else happened to be listening and wondered what I was talking about.

She turned to face me, her eyes wide as she asked, "There are others?"

“What?” Now it was my turn to be confused.

?

“Other men in your room!” She spun around a few times, looking for these alleged attackers.

“No!” I said, almost laughing. “I meant... you know. The others.”

If Brook was here, that had to mean that Prince Warren had gotten into this magical place with Theo and me as well,

didn't it? And Jake would have to be here because he was standing right next to us when the crystal did... whatever the crystal had done.

What about Sophia? Was that maddening woman here somewhere, too? Why had she even been with Brook and Warren when they came looking for me to begin with? It

wasn't as if we were friends....

“I don't quite get what you're asking, my lady.” Brook asked.

She didn't know. That had to be the answer. She must not have figured out what I had yet, that we weren't where we

had been-who we had been.

It had taken Theo a bit longer than it took me, so perhaps all of our reactions would be different.

I was certain that if I tried to explain to her what had

happened, she would be sending me away to get my head examined, so I decided against that.

12

Pressing the heel of my hand against my forehead, I said, “You know, I'm not feeling that well. Perhaps a nice bath would be in order.”

“Yes, of course, miss,” she said, and with that, she scurried into the bathroom to run the tub.

I leaned back against the headboard, trying to sort through all of it. How had the crystal sent us to this place, and who were we each supposed to be?

If what I thought was correct, that I was the king's lover and my wish was to marry the king and become the Luna Queen, what would we do next?

A few moments later, Brook came out of the bathroom. “I'

ve run the bath with your favorite lavender salts, miss. Would you like for me to wash your hair for you as I usually

do?”

I gave her a strange look. Whoever I had become, she was different from me, that was for sure. "No, thank you. I'll manage it myself this time." I hadn't looked in a mirror yet, but I had to think I must look like myself. After all, Brook looked like herself, and Theo definitely looked like he

always did.

Not that I'd seen so much of him before today....

The thought brought a blush to my cheeks as I went into the bathroom.

The bathroom was lovely, with polished white marble on the floor and a large clawfoot tub. I sank down into the water and let it soothe my aching muscles.

Even in the bath, I could still smell Theo's scent on me. As I washed his essence off of my body, my face heated from thinking about what we had done. If it were possible to forget who we were when we got there, I wondered if there was a chance he would forget that when we got back to our reality.

I decided that probably wasn't the case.....

The scent of the lavender was making me relaxed and I could think clearer.

Whoever had used the crystal last had left this wish of marrying the king, and this was something we had to complete in order to fulfill the prerequisite of using the crystal to create the blood moon illusion..

At this point, waiting until the actual blood moon seemed like it would've been a lot less complicated.

But we were here now, so whatever it was we were supposed to do, we'd have to figure it out, get it done, and get back to our world.

First thing first-I decided to get Theo out of that dungeon. While it had seemed a bit humorous to me when he'd been taken away by the guards, ultimately, he was the prince, and I shouldn't be messing with him too much.

Secondly, we needed to come up with a plan to fulfill the wish-to get the king to marry me.

Once the decision was made, I got out from the tub and Brook was already waiting to get me dressed.

"Brook, can you dress me any faster?" I asked as she took her time putting a necklace around my neck. It was odd. having anyone dress me anyway. I didn't understand why royals couldn't just do it themselves....

"I'm sorry, miss," she said, but she didn't speed up any.

I looked at my reflection in the mirror, and my mind wandered. Who was it that I was supposed to be? The mistress to the king.

When was this crystal used last? I wondered which king the lady whose wish I had inherited was in love with.

“Are you all right, my lady? You look a little pale.” Brook stopped brushing out my hair to ask me the question,

which irritated me.

“Yes, yes. I’m fine. Just... hurry up please.”

She finished my hair, and I thanked her, ready to get out of there. I wondered how I would ever find him, but then I

remembered whoever I was supposed to be, she knew how to get to the dungeon.

I just needed to follow my instincts.

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 380](#)

Plan A or Plan B?

I was able to find the correct doors and hallways without even thinking about it, as if I had lived in the place for a long time.

I reached the dungeon and pushed open the heavy door. Two guards stood on the other side. Taking one look at me, they bowed their heads and let me through. This woman was important, and it was strange to be revered that way as I walked along the stone floor.

The dungeon was dark and musty smelling, much the same way the place I had been held for all of those months was.

Brook had trailed along behind me, and I heard her making little comments under her breath about the smell and the dirty state of the place, and I almost laughed. I wondered how hard it had been for her to visit me in the dungeon back home.

When we arrived down by the cells, I saw a familiar face and almost froze in my tracks. The guard standing outside of the cell where Theo was being kept, talking to him through the bars, sounded much different than he had in the other world.

“Quiet down! You’re a prisoner now. And no, we won’t let you approach our lady again!” Jake... I wondered what he would feel if he remembered how he’d spoken to his Alpha

when we get back to our world....

Theo was standing. His arms were across in front of his chest, and he was leaning against the wall casually. No matter what situation he was in, he always seemed to have control of everything. I’d never seen him panicked, helpless, or weak in general.

It was as if he wasn’t a prisoner, but a prince who happened to pay a visit to the dungeon. He was, in fact, a prince—a powerful, cold, and extremely handsome one, even when he was in jail.

As soon as Theo's dark eyes settled on me, he ignored the man who was his Beta in the real world and gave me a nod. From his expression, obviously, he'd been expecting me to come here relatively soon. "What took you so long?" he

asked.

I opened my mouth to respond to him, but before I could get any words out, Brook said, "How dare you? You cannot speak to our lady that way! Especially after what you've done to her!"

"Am I speaking to you?" Theo threw her a cold and expressionless glare. He wasn't happy with the situation at

all—when it was obvious that Prince Theo wasn't happy, it could get really scary.

Brook took several steps back. It looked for a moment like she might burst into tears.

"It's all right," I said to Brook, holding a hand out to steady her.

"Open the door," Theo commanded.

This time, Jake stepped in, as if he felt he had the

obligation to stand up for the two women there. He scolded Theo, "You should be ashamed of yourself. How unruly! You cannot speak to a lady this way!"

Theo's expression was priceless.

He had probably never been spoken to in that way, especially by his own Beta.

What a world... as crazy as the situation was, I couldn't help but find it a bit funny. Nevertheless, I pressed down the upcurl of my lips so that I didn't irritate the already—cranky prince anymore.

"It's okay," I said to Jake in a calm voice. "Open it."

"My lady!" Brook urged, her eyes widened at my decision.

"But my lady," Jake said, turning to look at me. "This man has been accused of committing heinous acts against you. Surely, you must see that he deserves to be punished for

these awful activities?"

"Believe me, it's not exactly what you think," I explained. "It's okay. You can let him out."

Like Brook, Jake's eyes also bulged from his head. "Let him out?" he repeated. "But—"

"It's my order," I said, now that I knew for certain that he didn't remember his reality either. If he had known that he was Theo's Beta and that I was simply a member of the prince's consort, he wouldn't say anything of what he had just

said in his wildest dreams.

Reluctantly, Jake reached to his waist where a keychain was held, and he unlocked the cell. Theo walked past him, coming at me, and I thought Jake might try to hurt him to keep him from harming me.

"It's all right," I assured Jake, for what seemed like the hundredth time. "I've got the situation well under control. You are dismissed."

With that, I turned to walk back upstairs, and Theo came with me. Brook and Jake followed behind at a distance, but I wanted to go somewhere that no one else would follow us

because Theo and I needed to speak about this situation alone.

I knew exactly where to go. It was so strange, knowing this place so well when I wasn't even in my own reality. It was as if I'd inherited someone else's memory.

My feet carried me to a library, and when I pushed through the doors, Theo was with me. I turned to Brook and said, "I'll see you shortly."

She raised an eyebrow, but I didn't need to say more. She left. Jake wasn't even there. He must've gone back to his assigned duties.

The library was large, with thousands of books on sturdy mahogany bookshelves. I led him to a couch across the room by a picture window that looked out on a beautiful garden.

"Um, sorry that you were put in the dungeon." I decided to start the conversation with an apology, hoping he wouldn't hold much of a grudge against me for causing him to be thrown in the dungeon earlier. "It seems that we are the only ones who remember who we really are."

"It appears so. I wonder why," he said.

"No idea," I shrugged. "But you're supposed to be the Moon Goddess' descendant, and maybe she just really likes me," I joked.

He gave me a strange look and took his seat on the couch. Then he signaled me to sit next to him.

I secretly let out a sigh of relief— at least he didn't seem to be too upset about being thrown in the dungeon earlier.

As soon as I sat down though, I immediately regretted it because I was surrounded by his masculine scent, and my mind went back to what we had done earlier. My cheeks heated and I was having trouble looking at him.

Luckily, Theo didn't seem to be focused on that. "Before I left the room, you were about to tell me something. What was it?"

I calmed my fast heartbeat and explained, "Yes, like you said, this world didn't seem to be real. We ended up here because of the Moonlit Crystal."

"I told you not to touch that thing!" he scolded. "It could be dangerous-"

"I already said I'm sorry!" I retorted, suddenly feeling aggrieved and without thinking, I added, "But Your Highness, allow me to remind you, it was me who suffered the most loss, okay?"

"Loss?"

Of course it was my loss! That was my precious first time!!

It was supposed to be with the love of my life, under the starry night sky or somewhere romantic, not with someone such as an aloof prince who didn't even care.

The more I thought about it, the more aggrieved I felt- especially since I couldn't even blame him for it. Tears started to well up in my eyes, so I lowered my head. He didn't need to see me cry, because he would never

understand that or even care about it. Why did I even

bother telling him that to begin with?

"Was it... your first time?"

"None of your business!" I snapped, and then I realized that he had leaned in and his tone was almost ... tender. I took a deep breath in and tried to focus back on our issue at hand. "At any rate, we are here now, in some sort of alternate reality or something. And I think that you and I are the only ones who remember what happened, where we came

from."

He stared at me for a moment, and I saw emotions I couldn't quite recognize mixed in his dark eyes. He didn't respond to me immediately and I had no idea what was going through his mind.

"So, it really was your first time?" he asked again.

Why, why, why? Why did he have to keep bringing it up?

And why did he have that smirk on his face?!

I finally lost it and burst out yelling at him. "Yes, it was! You took my virginity! Are you happy now?!"

After a few seconds, he cleared his throat, shifted his gaze away from me, and murmured, "I... I didn't know."

What did that even mean? But I really didn't want to continue that topic anymore. Whatever happened had already happened. There was nothing I could do about it, so I moved on. "Now can we please focus on the issue here, so that we can get out of this place and get that stupid berry working for you?"

When he turned back to look at me again, he had his usual emotionless expression on. He nodded. "Okay. I agree, this wasn't the real world. One thing I'm also sure about is that it was only consciousnesses pulled in here, not our physical bodies."

"How do you know?"

He shook his head but didn't tell me the reason.

"So....that means, everything we see here are just illusions?"

"Most likely," he agreed. "Now we just need to know how to fulfill the last user's wish."

Wait a second. Did that mean I hadn't lost my virginity?

All of a sudden, I was overwhelmed by happiness and hope. What kind of emotional roller coaster I had

Theo stared at me as he waited for my response. I was sure he found the smile on my face suspicious,

"I think I've gotten that piece figured out." I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "It seems the woman marry someone else. So to fulfill her wish, since I'm playing her role now, I guess I'll need to change the

I tried to sort through the memories of the woman whose life I'd been dropped into, hoping to find some

frowned and folded his arms across his chest, commenting, "That's stupid."

He was obviously not happy about it, but why? Was he upset with me? It wasn't my idea!

"Listen, Your Highness, we have to get this accomplished for the sake of YOUR berry," I reminded him.

After a long time, he finally said, "Fine. So... let's go with that."

"That means, I need to win the king's heart, but..." I admitted to him. "It doesn't sound easy."

"What's your concern?"

I rolled my eyes. "What if I fail? What if I'm not quite the vixen you're giving me credit for being?"

When I said vixen, he actually chuckled under his breath.. "Then we do it the easy way."

"What?"

"We'll just force him to marry you. If he dares to disagree, we'll threaten to kill him and his fiancée. I bet problem."

My mouth dropped open, and I stared at him, trying to process that he had actually said that. "Are you serio have to go straight to violence?"

Theo shrugged. "It's a means to an end."

"No!"

“Why not? It isn’t real anyway.”

“I just don’t like killing anyone, or threatening to kill anyone. Real or not.” I shook my head at him. “I will figure it out.”

“Well, if you have to do it the boring way....”

An eyebrow arched, I looked at him for a moment, and I noticed a very slight upcurl on his lips. He was b so funny.

“Ciana, you can do it.” Theo seemed very confident in what he was saying. “But Plan B is always an option.”

“You sure are giving me an awful lot of credit, thinking I can easily make a man fall in love with me.”

“Yes, I am,” Theo said, giving me a pointed look, and I had to swallow a lump in my throat.

What did he mean by that??