

## Kings Breeder 391

### [Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 391](#)

#### Theo's Past II

After Zade's death, Father decided to put me in training. He sent the best mentors to train me. I worked really hard because I wanted to become the strongest warrior; perhaps then my mother would be proud and would want to see me again.

What I didn't know was that my father expected something different from me. He didn't need me to become a warrior. He needed me to be a killer.

When I was ten years old, King Sebastian started a program where he would allow prisoners a chance to gain their freedom.

These were the worse sort of criminals murderers, rapists, those that had robbed others violently. He made it seem so simple for them.

"Defeat my son, a little boy, and you will walk free."

Of course, these hardened criminals had jumped at the chance. What would a ten-year-old do to stop them? Those monsters didn't mind tearing a child apart in exchange for their freedom.

But it never happened that way.

As much as I could use my battle skills to protect myself, I was too young and was no match against full-grown men. As a result, almost always, at the end of each fight, I'd end up draining them of their lives, along with their dreadful emo-

tions before their deaths.

Watching the lifeless bodies collapse in front of my eyes became the worst of my childhood nightmares. I wasn't able to have a single night of peaceful sleep. Whether I was awake or asleep

during the night, I always felt as if numerous eyes were watching me, condemning me for taking their lives.

I was tormented. I hated my power – because of it, not only did I absorb the terror of those who were killed by me, but I also got all of their horrible traits – the parts that made them criminals to begin with. I was no longer capable of smiling, of showing kindness. Their emotions became mine, and I couldn't escape them.

"Father, I can't do this anymore..." I begged him. "I'll work hard to be a good warrior and you can put me into any training but this. Please!"

"Nonsense!" he said. Then he softened his expression and encouraged me. "They're murderers, son," he told me. "They deserve to die. You're doing the entire kingdom a service in getting rid of them."

I'd nod and try to believe that was true so that I could feel just slightly better for what I did. I was desperate, and I went to my mother again, because I didn't even remember how many trials I'd been through without actually being able to see her.

I wanted to tell her that I was doing the kingdom a service, and that maybe she shouldn't be locking me out of her life.

When I told her the situation through her closed door, unlike usual where she was just silent, this time, I heard her say, "Whether they deserve to die or not should not be your decision, Theo."

Tears had stung my eyes at her words. "Mother!" I shouted. "I had no choice! If I didn't kill them, they would kill me!"

After a long while, I heard her say, "I know." It seemed that she sighed, but then, her tone was sharp again. "But keep in mind that you have no right to take lives, and neither does anyone else!"

From that point on, I trained hard in battling with a knife. I was unable to shift into my wolf because I was still too young, so I had to rely on being a keen fighter in my human form.

Eventually, I became so skilled in the art of fighting that I started to win battles without having to suck the life out of anyone. In some cases, I was even able to disable them without having physical contact, thus sparing their lives.

But my choice of fighting angered my father. He saw my skills as some sort of a parlor trick, something he could show off to his friends and brag about. He shamed me for winning the fights any other way.

One day, when I openly refused to go back to the old way, he threw me in a jail cell.

"Theodore, you must learn to respect your father and your king!" he said. "This is for your own good! You are blessed with the power, and you must respect it, honor it, and make full use of it! Your kingdom needs it, and you shouldn't be ashamed. Your useless mercy will only make you weak!"

"Father, I'm not weak!" I protested. "None of your warriors are able to take me down easily one on one and-"

"Enough! You'll listen to me. Look around you. Without your divine power, you're just as pathetic as any of them!"

I saw a group of twenty or so prisoners, but this time, they were different from the criminals I usually fought. They didn't look fierce or evil. There were elderly men, women, and... even children.

"Who are they?" I asked my father.

He didn't answer me. Instead, he asked me, "Do you want to save them?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." I nodded.

"Very well. I'll give you a choice. Use your abilities to kill two of them," he said cruelly. "Show me that you're a strong soul, and I'll consider releasing the rest."

The cell gate closed behind me. My eyes widened and I couldn't believe what he'd said.

His voice traveled away with him. "When you're ready and done, let the guards know. They'll let you out. Otherwise, you will stay here until you get your mind straightened out."

The rest of the prisoners looked at me in terror. They were probably right to be terrified by me, a monster. But I'd made up my mind. I didn't want to kill for no reason anymore, especially not those people in front of me.

"You have no right to take lives, and neither does anyone else!" My mother's words echoed in my mind.

I warned all of them, "I will kill you. I'm sure all of you have heard the stories about me. They are all true. If you come at

me, I will have no choice but to make sure that you die. So... if you leave me alone, I will leave you alone."

And so I tucked myself in a corner and no one bothered me. For days, I stared outside, doing nothing. I didn't talk, didn't eat, and didn't even drink much. I felt my body getting weaker and weaker, yet for the first time in a long time, I felt peaceful.

Maybe it wasn't so bad even if I just died like that. At least I wasn't forced to kill.

My father checked on me a couple of times, and each time, he was furious. He urged me to kill them and tried to get them to attack me. But instead, I just existed there in the cell, not eating or drinking, protesting my father's actions.

"You can't force me, father," I told him.

After a long time—how long, I couldn't even remember—my small body gave out, and I passed out in the cell. When I opened my eyes again, I was back in my bedroom. My father was standing at the foot of my bed, a big smile on his face.

"I knew I could count on you," he said. "That's exactly what you needed to do! Killing two of those bastards."

"Killing them?" I didn't understand. I hadn't attacked any— one this time....

"Because you've done a great job, as a prize, I'll let you do whatever you want for the rest of those prisoners. It's time for them to learn to respect their regal Prince Theo!"

I didn't know exactly what had happened. I could only assume that after I had passed out, in my unconscious state, my

body had done what it needed to in order to save me—I might have sucked out their lives without even knowing it!

As my father turned to walk away, a single tear rolled down my cheek.

Like he'd said years ago, I was indeed a monster.

When I recovered, I went to my mother again.

She still refused to open the door. Banging on it with both fists, I asked her, "Mother, what do I do? I did everything I could to stay away from them, but they still died! What else can I do..."

"Theo," through the door, she told me, "then remember them. Remember that those men died in your place."

\*Ciana\*

My head was pounding. I sat up, leaning on an elbow for a second as I tried to remember exactly what had happened. I looked at my hand and saw it was no longer bleeding.

I was lying on the floor in Theo's room, and Jake and Theo were near me, as they should have been. Across the room, near the doorway that led to my chamber, Brook and Warren lay on their sides, and in my room, Sophia was spread out, her arms and legs split like a star. She looked a little silly, but I wasn't in a laughing mood.

Sitting up, I rubbed my head. I could remember every- thing that had happened. I wondered how long we had been gone. It must not have been long in this world or else some-

one would've come looking for us.

The crystal was lying by Theo's leg. I remembered then that the mission had failed. He wouldn't be able to use the crystal to replant the dreamberry sooner than the next blood moon. I swore under my breath. Now what would we do?

I heard a deep grunt and looked around, trying to figure out who was waking up. Jake sat up abruptly, looking around the room. "What the hell?" he asked.

"Beta Jake," I said. "How are you?"

"Not good. What happened?" He pressed on his head for a moment but didn't deny who he was. At least that was a good sign—we were indeed back to reality.

"I'm not sure," I told him. "What do you remember?"

He hadn't been able to recall this world in the other realm, so maybe he wouldn't remember what had happened in the world the crystal created either.

"I have no idea. I just know we were looking at the crystal."

"Right." I nodded. As expected, he didn't recall. "I'm not sure what happened, but I think that we should move Brook, Prince Warren, and Sophia to their rooms before they wake up. They might panic to find themselves lying on the floor, and they don't know anything about the crystal."

Jake still looked a little disoriented, but he nodded. "All right. I'll see to it. What about Alpha?"

Theo wasn't moving either. "I'm his personal attendant," I reminded Jake. "I'll stay with him."

"Very well," he said, accepting my proposal.

He helped me move Theo to his bed, then went to carefully pick Brook up, carrying her out of the room. I wondered if anything that had happened in the illusional world would impact his feelings toward Brook in real life.

Luckily, Jake was able to get everyone else situated in their rooms before they woke up. He had to take care of a few other urgent matters, so I was left alone with the prince again.

I was surprised that Theo was still out of it. We were the first ones to get pulled into the crystal's world, so I'd assumed he would return to this reality right after me. I wished we could talk soon because he probably would be the only other one to remember what had happened there.

Hopefully, he remembered the important parts, like the fact that the crystal hadn't been activated, but had forgotten other parts—like the fact that we had made love.

With a sigh, I laid a blanket over him and scooted a little closer to him, thinking I should give him a little nudge. But before I even touched him, he began to moan, turning back and forth slightly. "Mama!" he muttered. "Please! Come back! Don't you love me?"

"Mama?" I repeated. Was he dreaming? Whatever was going on, he was clearly in distress. I'd never seen him like that before. Prince Theo was always calm and in control.

His brow furrowed, and a painful look appeared on his face.

What was he dreaming about? What would make such a strong, cold and collected prince look so... vulnerable?

"Mama, what do I do?" he shouted.

I couldn't stand watching him suffer anymore, so I patted him on the shoulder. "It's okay, Theo," I whispered. "It's okay."

I tried shaking him a little, but that didn't do anything. He didn't open his eyes, nor did he settle down.

Unsure what else to do, I acted on instinct. When I was little and had a bad dream, my mother would sing me a lullaby to comfort me and help me go back to sleep.

With my hand on Theo's chest, I began to sing, hoping it would help to wake him up, or at the very least, provide him some peace in his sleep.

\*Theo

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 392](#)

She Warmed My Heart

Fear, hatred, pain, and despair... other than those feelings, I couldn't sense anything else. My father's cruelty and my mother's callousness made me realize that there was no place for me to run to and no place for me to hide.

I was hopeless.

A thick fog seemed to roll in out of nowhere. I held my breath, wondering what my next nightmare would be.

Somewhere in the distance, I heard the faint sound of a woman singing. It was a lullaby, a beautiful song. And I was certain I'd heard it before. But when?

The fog lifted, and I found myself in a military tent. This was a familiar scene to me as well. Without even looking in a mirror, I knew how old I was. This happened when I was six-teen.

When Beta Xavier threw aside the tent flap and walked in, I wasn't surprised to see him. I swore under my breath, knowing what was about to happen.

Two loud, deep, male voices were taunting me. "Come out and face us like a man, you coward! You monster!"

I took a deep breath and waited for Xavier to speak. He kept his distance from me, hanging back by the entrance. I was used to it by now. Even with my gloves on, even with a mask at the ready that would cover almost my entire face ex-

cept for my eyes, no one wanted to be anywhere near me.

"Prince Theo, your father wishes for you to attack at once," he said.

"What is all of that commotion?" I asked the question as I had back then, even though I knew the answer.

"The twin Alphas, sir. They are protesting against His Majesty, claiming that they're a peaceful pack and don't want war. But they also don't want to contribute their natural resources to the crown as your father is insisting." Beta Xavier folded his hands in front of himself, awaiting my response.

"I understand all of that, Xavier." I had been tasked to destroy this pack two years ago, at only fourteen, but I hadn't done it yet. I'd always been fond of this pack. I remembered the stories my mother had told me when I was a little boy about the tall trees that grew here and the gems and minerals. Father wanted to exploit those resources, but I had been able to push aside those ambitions until now.

Thus, Xavier's presence. The king thought I'd go in and kill all of them with his Beta here.

"I'll deal with them," I said, pushing up from my chair.

"But Your Highness, we simply need to attack, to take the entire pack out," Xavier told me.

As I walked toward him, he moved away, afraid I might touch him.

14 18%

Afraid I might kill him.

I walked right past him, outside, to where the two Alphas

were waiting for me. They were both tall and muscular—and angry. I took a deep breath and approached them, not wanting to do so but knowing that I had to. I also knew exactly what was going to happen.

At least once I'd gotten through this, I might finally have some peace.

The woods jutted out to the edge of the cliff, and down below, the ground slanted at a sharp angle, and even more evergreens reached out to the sky. It would've been a beautiful scene if it wasn't about to be the scene of a death.

"Come on, you coward!" one of the twins shouted. "Come and fight us like a man!"

I looked at them coldly and sneered, "You both should shift, or you won't last more than ten minutes."

However, they didn't. Because I wasn't old enough to shift, they insisted on fighting me in human form to be fair. They were good men, but one of them had to die. Only then could I save their pack, and I could see my plan through....

I knew that. I knew everything, even the first time I'd gone through this. I knew that if I didn't find a way to permanently get out of attacking this pack, then it wouldn't be just one of their Alphas losing his life—they would all die.

The two of them came at me. I used a knife to defend myself, but I was no match for two of the most famous warriors and Alphas known throughout the country.

Then, one of them came at me, and I cut him in the chest, but it wasn't enough to hurt him. He managed to slash at my arm, shredding it slightly.

29.65

Pain radiated through my flesh, and blood began to drip down.

"Is this all you've got? Little prince, why don't you..." he couldn't finish his sentence though; he froze in his tracks. His eyes enlarged, and a look of horror took over his face. He fell to his knees. I felt his power, his strength, but I also felt his anguish and terror.

"Stop!" the other twin shouted. "Stop right now! You're killing him! You're killing my brother!"

"I told you to shift," I lifted my gaze to look at him emotionlessly.

He fell to the ground, dead, and then, his brother, rather than running to him, raced toward me.

He shifted into his wolf, hitting me hard and knocking me backward. His claws ripped through me, splitting my middle and digging into my leg. I ripped my knife out and plunged it into him, forcing him off of me. "Do you want to die, too?" I shouted at him.

The twin realized that he was about to have the same thing happen to him as he'd just witnessed with his brother, and he backed off.

I lay there, bleeding, wondering if it was enough.

Was it enough to persuade Xavier that I'd already tried and failed, and if Prince Theo couldn't take them down, none of the king's warriors could? Was it enough to rile this pack up to seek revenge for their

leader, so that they could stand a chance to fight off the king's troops? Was it enough to make people think I would die and end this misery?

46 66%

I hoped so.

I watched the giant wolf charge toward me and give me another blow.

As my body rolled over the edge of the cliff, I whispered to the giant wolf, "I'm sorry." I doubt that he heard it though.

Tumbling down, hitting trees, snapping branches, and knocking pebbles and rocks loose from the earth, eventually, I came to rest on my back beneath the boughs of a pine tree.

I knew I couldn't stay there. As much as every fiber of my body hurt, I had to get up and move or else Xavier would send someone to get me. And knowing my father, he'd get me healed up and send me right back here to attack.

Fighting against the pain, I got up off the ground and began to walk, using the trees to help me. My clothes were coated in blood, but I didn't seem to be leaving a trail, so maybe it would be less easy for my father's men to find me.

I continued to walk until I couldn't go any further. Sinking to the ground beneath a tree, I put my mask on, in case anyone should happen upon me. I didn't want to be recognized.

"Boy? Boy?"

I heard a voice and tried to open my eyes, but my vision was so blurry, all I could see was the shape of a girl hovering over me. Her hand reached out for me, and I pulled away from her. "Don't touch me!" I shouted.

"Do you want to die?" she asked me, point blank.

"I don't care," I mumbled, and I meant it. My eyes rolled back into my head, and I passed out again.

When I opened my eyes again, I was in a cave, and the girl was sitting nearby me, a fire blazing in the mouth of the cave.

I tried to sit up, and even though I wasn't as sore as I had been before, it was still difficult to move as the pain continued to radiate throughout my body.

"Oh, good. You're awake," she said. "I was hoping you'd be awake soon. Are you hungry?" She offered me some food from her backpack, a bit of dried meat and an apple. I took it and ate it as slowly as I could. I was starving, but I didn't want to scarf it down.

"You really should stay away from me," I warned her.

"Why?" she asked. "You needed help, so I helped you."

"But... you're not afraid of me?"



She giggled. "No. Why would I be afraid of you? I'm not afraid of wild beasts. It would be silly for me to be afraid of a wounded boy."

"I'm not a boy," I said, my voice a little rougher than I meant for it to be.

"Sorry. Man then," she said, practically rolling her eyes.

For hours, she told me stories about her encounters in the forest. I sat and listened while she chattered on. It was a good situation for me since I didn't particularly like to speak, and she spoke with no reservations about her life.

78.03%

I'd never met anyone like her, so upbeat and friendly toward a... monster like me.

Like that, we spent a few days together.

Her stories were all over the place, but I loved hearing them.

When was the last time anyone had willingly talked to me, let alone shared with me her entire life with such... passion and bright smiles?

I didn't know how to describe her. She was kind, upbeat, and friendly. Her smiles were so warm... like the sunshine, though it was difficult for me to see because she was still blurry. But that didn't change the fact that for the first time in years, my heart felt warm.

### [Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 393](#)

Could Not Get Enough of Her

"Oh, oh, and that wildebeest, his horns were the coolest...." she went on, telling me another of her adventures.

"You're not afraid of animals at all?"

"No, not really. Animals aren't like people. They can instinctively tell who is good and who is not. As long as they know we are good, they will be good to us."

I thought it was an interesting take, but I didn't say anything more about it at the moment. I had another question for her.

"And what are you doing out here in the woods all alone?" I asked her, imagining she'd been out hunting some majestic animal.

Tapping her chin, she said, "Um, have you heard of the Sun Blossom flower?"

I felt my eyes widening, but I said nothing, so she continued.

"You know, the flower that grows on the side of the mountains. I've heard they're beautiful and smell wonderful. That's why I came. My friend was leading me there...."

“Your friend?” Now, I was confused and glanced around. Had I missed someone? A threat?

She giggled and said, “Yes, my new friend. A little white pony.”

I gasped in relief and held back a laugh. Of course, she’d been chasing an animal. “Those flowers, they’re not easy to get,” I said to her.

The girl nodded. “My mother also said it was a fool’s errand, but I love flowers. Don’t you?”

I shrugged and dropped my eyes. I didn’t really care that much for flowers, personally.

But clearly, they meant a lot to her.

The next day, while she was out in the woods doing something, I found a way to get myself out of the makeshift bed and headed back to the place where I’d fallen down the side of the cliff.

I knew I had seen some of the flowers she wanted as I’d been tumbling, and while I was nervous to go back there in case my father’s troops were looking for me, I needed to get her a flower.

It took me a while to climb back up the way I’d come, but eventually, I found one and brought it back to her.

It had taken a toll on me. I’d re-injured myself quite a bit going through all of that trouble, but when I heard her gasping with delight, I knew it had been worth it.

This girl was special. She was the only one that had been kind to me, and I wanted to repay that kindness.

The look on her face when she turned around and saw me standing there with the flower in my hand was priceless. I would never forget it.

“You’re a true friend,” she said, sniffing the flower.

I felt myself recoil and instantly said, “I’m not your friend. I don’t need friends.”

I saw the pain in her eyes, but she didn’t argue with me. Instead, she took the bracelet off of her arm. “Here. This will help you. And if you don’t want people to be your friends, at least you can have animals to be your friends.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“My father made this for me when I was a little girl. It has a special scent to make the animals calm so they trust the wearer. I don’t really need it anymore since the animals and I are friends, but it may help you.”

At that moment, a snake slithered over out of the forest, as if she had called it. The green reptile wrapped itself around her leg, and she bent down to pat its head, laughing. I wanted to take a step back, not because I was afraid of the snake but because I was afraid I might hurt it.

“You can pet him,” she said. “He won’t hurt you.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” I’d already had enough of how people felt before they died, I really didn’t need to pile on animals’ feelings.

She giggled again, and the snake left her and came over to me, brushing against my boot and standing up a bit, as if to say that he wanted me to pet him, and before I knew it, it was already rubbing its head against my palm.

My breath caught in my throat.

Slowly, I bent down and stroked his head with my hand. He hissed in delight and wound his way around my leg.

“He likes you!” the girl said. “Now, you have two friends. Whether you like it or not.” She winked at me, and the snake continued to beg me to pet it, which I did.

Later that night, back in the cave, I could tell her mood was down a little from before. “What’s wrong?” I asked her, trying to keep the emotion out of my voice as I asked.

“Oh, uh... I guess it’s just that I miss my mom,” she told me.

I nodded. I understood what that was like, although it was a feeling from long ago.

“Are you close to your mom?” she asked me.

“No.” That was all she needed to know.

“That’s too bad. I love my mom so much. When I was younger, she used to sing me a song when I had bad dreams. Would you like to hear it?”

I didn’t answer her, only looked down at the bracelet she had given me. With no response, she took that as a yes, and she began to sing.

The bracelet....

9

I’d lost it. Would the girl be mad if she found out?

My head began to grow fuzzy again, but the sound of the girl singing stayed with me as I began to twirl through time and space again. Then, the young girl’s voice melded with another voice, a more familiar one.

I was back in my room, lying on my bed. The Moonlit Crystal was next to me, but I wasn’t alone.

Ciana was there, sitting next to me, singing that same song from the cave. Of course, she was the girl. The bracelet had already taught me that. But seeing her now, after such a dream, brought so much emotion flooding through me.

She had been kind to me when no one else was. She hadn’t feared me. She’d called me her friend.

My beautiful, intelligent, funny and kind... Ciana.

I sat up abruptly, and her eyes widened. Her lips parted to say something to me, but before she could speak, I pressed my lips to hers, my hand tangling in her hair as I devoured her mouth.

All of those emotions came bubbling through, and I simply could not get enough of her.

\*Ciana\*

Theo was kissing me again!

The moment his lips touched mine, I felt a wave of electricity float over my skin and then through my body. I almost forgot to squirm away from him. His lips were quivering and cold, but his breath was gentle. It was so different from the other kisses we shared before...

What was I even thinking of comparing our past kisses?! | didn't even think I should count them as real kisses!

49.77%

I tried to squirm away from him, although honestly... not because what he was doing to me didn't feel good.

However, something was wrong. I mean, he wouldn't kiss me just because he wanted to, would he? I needed to get free so that I could find out what was going on.

"Your Highness... Prince Theo?" I asked, once my mouth was no longer pressed against his. "What's happening? Are you okay?" I probably should have shouted at him for taking liberties with me once again, but I didn't, especially when I saw his eyes were only half-open, I wondered if this had happened in his sleep.

In response to my questions, he spewed out a string of information that I did not understand. I only caught a few words. "Luther... Moonlit Crystal backfired."

"What?" I was confused. I tried to keep him upright. He was starting to fall back onto the bed, so I wrapped my arms around him to steady him.

"Luther... Ortiz pack. Their sacred artifact from the Moon Goddess...." I wasn't sure what he was talking about, but his hand came up to grip my collar tightly as he tried to explain it to me.

"All right, all right," I said, cradling him as his eyes rolled back into his head. "I'll get Jake, and we'll figure it out."

"Alpha?" Jake's voice behind me startled me slightly.

"Beta Jake, you're back!"

"How's Alpha doing?"

"I think he's out again." I shook my head. "Do you think there's something going on with him?"

Jake's brow was furrowed. "I don't know, but it seems like he's getting weaker and weaker. Did he say anything?"

“Yes. He said... Luther, Moon Goddess artifact and Moonlit Crystal backfire. He also mentioned... Ortiz pack.” What if the crystal had had a different effect on him than it had on the rest of us, and he was going to continue to suffer the ramifications of using it?

“Shit!” Jake cursed under his breath.

I took a moment to digest the situation. It was clear to me that Luther didn’t like Theo. They were enemies. If the crystal belonged to the Ortiz pack, maybe Luther had manipulated it somehow, and now Prince Theo would suffer the consequences of it.

“If the Moonlit Crystal is the artifact of the Ortiz pack, does that mean that we will have to rely on someone from that pack to help us break whatever spell has been cast on the prince?” I had a feeling there wasn’t much I could do to get Luther to help us with this. “Then is there anyone else from that pack we can reach out to?”

Jake shook his head slowly, “The Ortiz pack was wiped out by King Sebastian many years ago...”

My eyes widened. No wonder Luther hated the royal court so much.

“So, there is no one else who knows the crystal? There is no other way other than begging Luther?”

The reality was, even if we did, I doubted Luther would do

us a favor. If I understood the situation correctly, this was exactly what he wanted to happen anyway.

Jake sighed, but it was as if he wanted to say something and swallowed it down.

“You thought of something? What is it?” I urged him. I could hear the anxiousness in my own voice.

He lifted his gaze to look at me, but he hesitated.

I pressed my lips tight. Wasn’t Jake the one who said I could be trusted? Why was he acting like this now, holding back crucial information from me while all I wanted to do was help Theo?

“Beta Jake, I really meant no harm, I just want to help...”

“No, not that!” he quickly explained, as if he was worried that I misunderstood his intentions. “Ciana, I trust you. It’s just that... whatever, even if Alpha doesn’t like it, I think it’s fine.”

He took in a breath and let it out. After a long pause, he slowly said. “There is one other survivor of the Ortiz pack, right here in the castle-”

My eyes widened and I interrupted him. “Then what are we waiting for?”

“Because I’m not sure she’ll be any more willing to help Alpha than Luther.”

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 394](#)

Lady Nita

“Who would that be?” I asked.

When Jake responded, his answer totally shocked me. “Lady Nita, King Sebastian’s third wife, Prince Theo’s mother.”

“What?” I sank down onto the edge of the bed beside Theo, my mind trying to process what Jake had just said. “But... that’s his... mother.”

The Beta nodded, folding his arms across his chest. “That’s right. She has always hated her own son and treated him coldly since he was a little boy.”

I felt a cold shiver shoot down my spine.

It was so hard for me to understand how that was possible. My own mother and I were so very close. She would’ve done anything for me and I adored her the same way in return. Some of my happiest memories were from when my mother and I spent time together.

The lullaby I had been singing for Prince Theo just a few minutes ago was one that she had taught me and sung to me when I was a little girl.

Who could hate their own child?

Turning my attention back to Jake, I asked, “Why would someone want to see their own son suffer?”

“Their relationship is... complicated.”

I shifted on the bed to look at Theo. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why he was now so distant and cold.

He was frowning, seemingly suffering from something. Whatever dream he was in, it was definitely not a good one. And he was calling for her, his mother, earlier. I felt a dull ache in my heart. Could he be a different person had he had his mother’s love?

I still found it hard to believe. “I just don’t understand-”

Before Jake and I could continue our conversation, I heard a slight knock on the door of my chamber. I rushed to open it and saw a slightly disheveled Brook standing there with something in her hands.

“Brook? Are you okay?” I was worried. It was late, and normally by this hour, the entire palace had quieted down. Polite as Brook was, she wouldn’t come to look for me unless it was something urgent.

“Yes, I’m okay,” she said quietly. “Oh, Beta Jake.”

Jake had come through the door that connected my room with Theo’s. “Oh, hi, Brook.”

She looked at Jake and blushed slightly before she returned her attention to me. “I just woke up after having the strangest dreams. I can’t remember most of them, but I know they were unusual. I couldn’t fall asleep, so... I went to the kitchen and got these cookies I’d baked earlier. I was hoping someone would be awake to help me eat them so I don’t eat them all myself.” She smiled shyly.

As I was hesitating about whether I should get Brook involved in this situation, I heard Jake say, “Come in, Brook.”

The three of us returned to Theo’s room. She headed to a chair near the bed, setting the plate of cookies down on a lit-

tle table.

She was observant enough to know something was going wrong. "Is Prince Theo okay?" she asked.

"He... um... he's sick." I wasn't sure it was the best to tell Brook the entire story, so I found an acceptable excuse.

I took a cookie off of the platter and snapped it in half, nibbling on a piece of it, even though I wasn't hungry.

"Oh, no," Brook said, turning toward Jake. He sat down in a chair next to her. "Do you think he'll be alright?" She reached over and put her hand on his arm, and I realized the pair of them had a deeper connection than I had realized. He didn't pull away.

"I'm not sure," Jake admitted, concern lacing his voice. He took a deep breath and looked from her to me and then back. again.

"Is there anything we can do to help?" Brook asked.

I exchanged a look with Jake, and he slightly nodded his head. "We are thinking about reaching out to his mother."

"Lady Nita?"

I was surprised. "You know her, Brook?"

"No, I don't know her, but I've heard about her." Brook smiled. "Ciana, you haven't been around the rest of the girls much and even when you're, you don't gossip. Words spread in this place very fast."

"I suppose it's no secret that Alpha and his mother have never gotten along," Jake agreed with Brook.

"Yes, that's what I heard as well," Brook confirmed. "But why?"

"That part isn't something people openly discuss here. The king forbids it. Also, it happened so long ago, only the older servants remember," Jake explained. "King Sebastian conquered her pack, the Ortiz

pack, and forced Lady Nita to marry him against her will. Ever since then, she's hated every- thing about the royal family. Her father had been the Alpha of the Ortiz pack when she was younger, before King Sebastian practically wiped it from the face of the earth."

"That's terrible!" Brook exclaimed. "That poor woman!" She shook her head, and tears began to form in her eyes.

Jake leaned over and brushed them away, a sweet gesture that made my heart flutter a bit.

"But we need her help. Prince Theo needs her help," I sighed, "We are trying to figure out how to approach her."

"It was terrible for her," Jake sighed, "and unfortunately, she took her anger out on her child. She's always been cold and distant to Alpha. Some people say she actually despises him."

I couldn't imagine how it would have been for Theo grow- ing up in a castle with a mother who hated him. He probably felt so lonely.

Now, some of the comments he had made to me since I'd arrived about how he didn't care about being alone began to make sense.

I turned and looked at him now. He was sleeping, and his brow was wrinkled as his head turned from side to side. I wanted to sing him a lullaby again. That seemed to help last time, but I couldn't bring myself to do it in front of two other people.

"She hates King Sebastian," Brook said, thinking aloud as Jake finally tried her cookies. "I could understand that, but

Prince Theo is her son. How could she-"

"She was brought to this palace against her will, her people were killed by her husband that was forced on her." Jake sighed. "She hates everything related to King Sebastian and this palace. Prince Theo has his blood and therefore, unfortunately, is a constant reminder of the king."

Brook replied softly, "It's really a shame."

"It isn't my position to comment on His and Her Royal Highnesses' relationship, but I know Alpha loves his mother deep down. I just wish she could show a little tenderness towards him," Jake took a cookie. "These are delicious, by the way."

Brook blushed. "Thank you. It's my mother's recipe." Her own words must've weighed on her heart. "I can't imagine not having my mother in my life. We are close. I miss her so much now, being away from her."

"There has to be some way to tap into Lady Nita's innate motherly love, right?" I asked. I was still nibbling on my cookie. It did taste very good, but I was having a hard time choking it down.

Jake shook his head slowly in response to my statement. "She's been disconnected from him for so long, it's almost like

she's incapable of caring about him anymore."

"But I have faith that Lady Nita is not a cold hearted person," Brook said firmly. Jake gave her a soft smile. I thought I knew what he was thinking. Brook was sweet and always tried to find the good in everyone.

I had no doubt Lady Nita could be a good person since she had only become so cold and distant after the atrocities that happened to her people. However, when a person had been trapped in her sad past for so long, it would be hard to predict what years of hatred had done to her.

Theo seemed to be getting worse by the second. Now, tiny beads of sweat had sprung up on his forehead. Not only did we need to find a way to end this endless sleep that seemed to be afflicting him, we still hadn't solved the problem of the berry. It seemed quite obvious to me that we had failed in our mission.

But Brook and Jake still had no idea about any of that. They couldn't remember what had happened to us, and anything that did come back to them, they seemed to think was just a dream.

I decided to let them think that for now and concentrate on helping Theo.



“We should at least give it a try,” I suggested. “We have nothing to lose. Besides, she might not like interacting with Prince Theo, but I would think it is a different situation because this is to save his life. Even if he is a stranger, wouldn’t she do something to help save a life?”

“She might be more willing to save a stranger than a dangerous prince who is known to be ruthless and bloodthirsty.”

“Maybe we can let her know that Prince Theo has been trying very hard to be kinder to everyone recently, and he deserves a second chance?”

“You think he’s been kind?” Jake asked me. I could hear the surprise in his voice.

“Kinder.” I chuckled. Of course, he’d had his moments, but I did believe that most of the time, he was willing to be reasonable.

Now that I thought about it, he actually saved me a few times. He really wasn’t as intimidating as he seemed after I got to know him better. I was surprised that I actually considered myself one of the people “who got to know” the fearsome Prince Theo.

But then flickers of images filled my mind for a moment—Theo on top of me, the feeling of his muscular back beneath my hands, how he’d made me feel when he was pressed so deeply inside of me....

Well, from that perspective, I not only knew him better, I actually knew him too well...

What was I thinking? I shook my head to push all those thoughts out of my head and tried to ignore the heat climbing up my face.

“We can try to speak to her,” Jake nodded, “hopefully, we can convince her. I’ll get it arranged.”

A sharp knock on the door had all of us turning in that direction.

Who in the world would be knocking on the prince’s door at this time of night? An unsettled feeling washed over me as I wondered if the castle had ears.

Brook and I exchanged a wary look as Jake went to the door and pulled it open.

### [Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 395](#)

#### Lady Nita’s Condition

I had never seen the woman who was standing there before, but instantly, I knew who she must be.

She was wearing a long, flowing purple gown with a robe over the top that reached the ground. Made of black velvet, the purple feathers at her shoulders made the robe look fit for a royal lady.

And that was exactly who was wearing it.

“Lady Nita, Your Highness,” Jake said, bowing low as he moved aside for her to come into the room.

“Greetings, Beta Jake. I am not surprised to see you here. However, I need to speak to my son in private, so I would like for you and the redheaded girl to leave at once.” She nodded at both Jake and Brook, and they exchanged a leery glance before walking out the door together.

Confused, I continued to sit next to Theo's bed. Should I explain to her what was going on? Should I introduce myself? Should I excuse myself just like Jake and Brook? I didn't know what to do.

"Ciana," she said in an even tone, "move aside, please."

My eyebrows arched. She knew who I was? I did as she said, getting up and scooting away from the bed as she slowly walked toward it. Theo was still unconscious, his forehead creased in consternation.

0.00%

She stopped at the foot of his bed and stared at him for a

long moment. She was thin, stoic and cold. It was said that Lady Nita was known for her beauty when she was young. However, the cold demeanor from the woman who stood in front of me made it hard for me to appreciate her elegant and almost perfect facial features.

I thought she would be around my mother's age, but for some reason, I just felt that she was a bit older than my mother.

She walked past me and lifted her hands. A soft blue glow began to emanate out of them. The soft light filtered through the air and hovered around Theo's body, bathing him in its warmth.

It didn't look dangerous, like a bolt of lightning. Rather, it appeared to be inviting, soothing even.

Prince Theo began to blink his eyes, and as the light faded, I saw that he was trying to sit up but was struggling. I took a few quick steps over and helped him to a sitting position before even thinking about whether or not that was all right with the royal lady.

Since she had told me to move aside, as soon as Prince Theo was able to balance himself, I stepped away. Lady Nita didn't comment on anything I'd done, so I decided to stay by the bed.

"Theodore," she said, once he was seated up. "Do you know what happened to you?"

He was wincing a little, as if he was in pain, and I wanted to go to him, to help him, but I stayed back, letting mother and son do what needed to be done.

"Not sure," he managed to grunt out. "But I think someone else was controlling the Moonlit Crystal."

Lady Nita nodded. Her gaze was on the crystal, and I couldn't read her expression. After a while, she whispered, "I hadn't expected to ever see it again."

It seemed she was already aware of the situation. "And you realize that only someone from my pack can help you?"

Theo blinked a few times and nodded. "Yes, I found out about that a few moments ago."

She cleared her throat and folded her hands in front of

her. "I can help you. But I have one condition."

Joy bubbled up inside of me. Knowing that Lady Nita had never been very kind to her son in the past, I had been afraid that she wouldn't want to help him, but now it sounded like maybe she would after all. It didn't matter to me what the condition was, the fact that she was willing to save him was reason for happiness.

"What is your condition?" Theo asked, his voice still hoarse but growing a bit stronger, for now. I had a feeling that the power of the blue light would fade away eventually, and he would fall back to sleep again, like he had a little while ago.

After he'd kissed me....

"My condition is simple. I will save your life if you send Ciana Black away from this castle and never, ever see her again."

My eyes widened. Her dark eyes fell on me for a moment, and I couldn't help the ripple of anxiety that shot through me.

26.33%

Her look was sharp, and I didn't like having that heavy gaze on me.

Once she removed her eyes from me, I thought about her condition. The idea that Theo could be saved was overwhelmingly positive. But... that would mean I'd never see him again.

That would be okay, wouldn't it? After all, most of the time, he seemed to despise me, or at the very least, barely tol-

erate me.

So... not seeing him again wouldn't be all that bad for either one of us. Right?

I thought back to the time we'd spent together inside of the world created by the crystal. He'd made love to me, and it had been passionate and invigorating.

But that was just part of a dream, and we were only playing the part that the crystal wanted us to play. It wasn't real. We had never really been together.

Was I upset about not getting to spend more time with him? No, I wasn't.

It was ridiculous to think that. I must be upset because I'd leave the palace and not be able to see Brook again.

The bright side was, I would be able to go back home, vindicate Susan's death, and save my parents' Alphadom, just as I had been planning before the business with the crystal came about.

So it was for the best that Lady Nita's wishes be fulfilled.

Annoyance washed over me as I thought about how silly I'

d been to even consider the possibility of staying by his side instead of letting his mother save him. It was no contest – I needed to go.

I thought for certain Theo would want to see me leave anyway, so when he said coldly, "No. She will stay," I couldn't believe my ears.

My eyes widened.

Did he care about me? Was there a chance that the prince really did have positive feelings for me? Perhaps, he also considered me a...friend?

But then his mother demanded to know, "Why, Theodore?"

His response made my insides crumble into a thousand pieces, particularly my heart.

"Because... I need her blood. For the dreamberry."

Oh. Right. There was that. I had almost forgotten. How foolish was I to think that he actually gave even an ounce of

concern about me?

She laughed, almost sounding like a maniacal cackle. "Don't be ridiculous, Theodore. Her blood is not so important. After all, if you die, what good will it do to have her blood?"

She had a point. If he was permanently asleep, or even worse, dead, having the berry would do no one any good.

"Listen to me," she said, gripping the board at the foot of the bed. "I know what's best for you."

53.045

Theo's eyes bulged from his head as his face began to

turn red. "You know what's best for me?" he echoed. "I find that quite interesting considering how you have always treated me like a nuisance, like I am the worst thing that ever happened to you!"

"Don't you speak to me that way, Theodore. You are my son." Her voice carried a stern warning embedded in each word.

"That's right, I am your son," he said, his hands curling into fists that wrapped around the blankets covering him. "And it is about time that you remembered that! The Moon Goddess knows you seemed to have forgotten that fact how many years ago? No, Lady Nita, I'm sorry, but I will not heed your warning!"

"Theodore," she said through gritted teeth. "This is not a request, it's an order!"

"An order from Lady Nita?" Theo scoffed, "As far as I know, my status is more superior than yours in this palace, Your Highness."

"I'm your mother, Theo!"

Theo sneered, "Now you remember that you're a mother? No, you don't get to call yourself my mother anymore."

"What did you say?" I could hear the trembling in her voice. "How dare you speak to me that way!"

“How many times have I reached out to you for help over the years, and what have I gotten?” Theo bursted out. I’d never seen him like this before.

6509%

He continued, “Why would I listen to someone who shut

me out from her life for years?! No, not after the way you’ve always treated me! You turned away when I needed you more than anyone else in the world, but you wouldn’t help me! You left me to Father’s twisted desires and every time I came to you for comfort or support, you wouldn’t even open the door!”

Lady Nita lowered her gaze. Her silence was a confirmation of everything that Jake had told me earlier and what Theo had just said.

“So, no, you don’t get to come in here and tell me what to do! I will not bend to your threats, Lady Nita. Now, please get out of my room before I have the guards to remove you!”

She stared at him for a long moment, a scowl on her face, as she seethed with anger and bitterness. I thought there was a good chance she could create another ball of magic and toss it at him, or at me, killing both of us.

But she didn’t. It didn’t take her too long to regain her composure. Instead of continuing to persuade Theo, she said, “Very well, Your Highness. If this is what you are choosing to do, then I hope you will not regret your decision.”

With that, she turned, twirling her long skirt and robe behind her as she went. Her servant opened the door for her and she walked out the room gracefully with even paces, as if the conversation she had with Theo was a casual discussion about the weather, not an argument and heated negotiation about his life.

When the door clicked closed, I was still digesting the situation.

77 86%

I stood there, my mouth hanging open, blinking in disbelief, trying to figure out what in the world had just happened.

All of Theo’s words played over and over again in my mind, and the weight of them began to sink in. I realized just how awful Theo’s childhood had truly been.

When I turned to look at him, I could see the handsome and strong man before me, but inside of him, deep down, a lonely soul still lived.

And now, for the first time since I’d met him, I began to understand why Prince Theo was the way that he was.

However, I was more confused than ever about what he thought about me. Was there something more, something deeper to our dream encounter and his fevered kisses? Or was my blood and that berry all that he really cared about?

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 396](#)

## Not a Monster

I wondered what in the world I was going to do next. After all, Prince Theo had just given up his best chance at breaking free of the Moonlit Crystal. It seemed like he had made a hasty decision.

Why was he turned down Lady Nita's offer? Because of my blood? That's what he said, and that's what I thought, too, but it seemed like an awful lot for him to be willing to risk certain death over. After all, the dreamberry wouldn't do him any good if he was unconscious for the rest of his life.

I sat back on the bed next to him. I wanted to ask him a lot of questions, but all I could do was sit and stare at him.

It was clear he wasn't feeling well. His eyes were beginning to close, and he could hardly sit up. Nevertheless, when he spoke, his voice was harsh. "Go ahead and say it. I know what you want to tell me, so just spit it out."

Taken aback, I asked him, "What are you talking about?" How could he possibly know what I wanted to say to him when I didn't even know.

"You agree with her. I can see it in your eyes. You think I'm a monster, just like my mother does." With that, he let his eyes go closed, and I thought he was falling back to sleep.

I couldn't let that happen, though. Not on this note, anyway.

I placed my hand on his leg. "That's not true."

He smirked, "You can be honest. I'm not going to hurt you for telling the truth."

"Theo," I didn't know where I'd gotten the guts to call him by his name, but I felt strongly that I needed to get this straight. I was dead serious. "I do not think that you are a monster."

He opened his eyes just a bit. Dark slits looked out at me, his eyebrows arching slightly as he was trying to scrutinize what I'd said.

"When you first got here..." he tried to justify his statement, "I killed right in front of you, seven young girls, just like you. That didn't make you think I was a cold-blooded murderer?"

Flashes of memories danced before my eyes as I thought about what had happened when I had entered Prince Theo's office with those other girls. They were assassins, and they had come there to kill him. All that Theo and Jake had done was defend themselves.

"I didn't know the details of what happened with those packs, and I couldn't judge you based on what seemed to be going on just on the surface." I shook my head. "It did scare me a little bit because I wasn't sure if you were going to believe me when I said I didn't have anything to do with them. But you took my word and didn't harm me."

"I didn't take your word. You're too weak to be an assassin."

I rolled my eyes. What was wrong with this guy? Why couldn't he just accept my honest feedback?

"And yet, you could have killed me anyway just to be safe rather than allowing me, a potential threat, to remain near you. You chose to let me live."

He blinked several times in reaction to my response.

“Let me ask you this,” I continued, “when you sent me to your zoo, did you mean to have the animals hurt me?”

“...No.”

“I thought so. Knowing the animals, they would behave differently had they been instructed to be aggressive. So, like I said, I’ve never thought that you would do things just for the sake of being vicious.”

I hoped my explanation sank in.

“Granted, there have been times when you’ve driven me a little crazy.” I squeezed his arm a little, and he opened his eyes further. “I didn’t really appreciate my time in your dungeon, but I do get that you thought I was working with Luther. For the most part, you’ve gone out of your way to protect me. I remember what happened with that terrible Hawke in my own pack. You saved me then. More than once. So no, I don’t think you’re a monster. Sorry to disappoint you, Prince Theo, but you’re going to have to try a lot harder to drive me away.”

I had meant that last part as a joke, but as soon as it came out of my mouth, I saw his face crumble, and for a moment, I thought I even caught a glimmer in his eyes.

Were his eyes moist? I wasn’t sure, but at that moment, my heart was soft for him.

He was so tired and sick, he probably couldn’t do much to keep his emotions under the circumstances, but he fought it.

“You wouldn’t be the first to run away from me,” he croaked, his voice just above a whisper.

It hurt me to hear him say that. I wanted to comfort him.

“I was six or seven when it started,” he began, and I realized then he was letting me in, telling me something he’d probably never told anyone before.

“With your mother?” I asked him, my volume matching his.

He nodded slightly. “She never loved my father. She’d been forced to marry him after he wiped out her pack. Who could blame her for hating him?”

A chill went down my spine. Even though this wasn’t the first time I was hearing this information, having him put it so bluntly made me feel sorry for his mother. For the moment. As he continued speaking, that would change.

“When I was a little boy, she didn’t want to have anything to do with me because she said I reminded her of him. She shunned me, made me stay away from her. I was too little to understand.”

His words tugged at my heartstrings. I felt one tear slip down my cheek and I quickly wiped it away and sniffled to try and keep my composure, but he wasn’t making it easy.

“She would shout at me and call me a monster. I said I’d do whatever I could to change, so that she could love me. But she said that was impossible, that the same venom that flowed through my father’s veins flowed through mine. She was probably right.”

I shook my head. “No, she’s wrong.”

“When I was younger, I used to do... everything I could to try and please her, to attempt to get her attention... but I... failed at every turn.” He was beginning to sweat a bit, fine beads of perspiration pegging his forehead. It was getting

harder for him to resume the conversation.

I brushed his hair back off of his damp skin.

“None of that worked though?” I asked him. Clearly not, based on the way she’d just acted now.

He shook his head. “I tried everything I could. I knew that she loved to read, so I thought I might be able to do some- thing to catch her attention, to show her how much I loved her.”

The prince stopped speaking for a moment. I let him gather his thoughts before I gently nudged him to keep speaking. “What did you do for her?”

Taking a deep breath, he said, “I went out into the gar- dens behind the house and picked some flowers. But I didn’t just choose the ones that I knew she had planted there, the ones that the maids clipped and brought in to fill her vases every day. No, I wanted her to have something special, so I went beyond the gardens to the grasslands, and I searched high and low to find wildflowers in a variety of colors.”

“Oh, that’s so nice,” I said, once I thought he’d finished his story. “You made her a special bouquet.”

“Actually, no.” His eyes were open a bit more now, and he seemed more lucid than before. “I took them back to my room and pressed them for several days, and then, I used the flow-  
ers to fashion a bookmark. You see, I knew that my mother loved to read. It was one of her favorite ways to spend her free time. I thought, if she had a special bookmark from me, she would think of me whenever she reached for her book.”

I could see a young boy, sitting in his room, pressing those flowers, making that bookmark, trying to give a pleas- ant surprise for his mother. That young boy was just so pre- cious in my mind’s eye.

His story wasn’t over, though. I could tell by the bitterness on his face.

“What happened when you gave her the bookmark?”

He took a deep breath and replied, “She took one look at it, dropped it on the ground, and turned around and walked away, leaving it behind. Leaving me behind.”

I gasped. I should’ve known it would be something awful, but I was shocked that she could be so cold and callous. “I’m so very sorry,” I whispered.

He didn’t respond, only lay back with his eyes closed. I needed to say something to reassure him.



“You’re not like your father,” I told him, hearing the conviction in my own voice. “I don’t care what your mother says. She’s wrong. Maybe if she took a moment to get to know you, she would see that. But no, you’re not like King Sebastian. I’ve seen your kindness, Prince Theo. I’ve seen that you are a good man.”

His eyes were just slits as he looked at me, and for a moment, I thought he might just tell me I didn’t know what I was talking about.

Instead, he shocked the heck out of me when he said, “Ciana... can I have a hug?”

I was taken aback at first, but I quickly said, “Y-yes, of course.”

He sat up a bit, and I wrapped my arms around him, careful not to squeeze him too tightly because I didn’t want to cause him further harm. The two of us melted into one another, and we stayed like that for several moments. I hoped he could feel my strength and some of it would transfer to him.

When I finally released him, he rested back on his pillow, closing his eyes, and falling asleep.

Seeing him lying there in such a troubled state twisted and untwisted emotions deep inside of me. I couldn’t just let him suffer. I had to find a way to help him.

I took a deep breath, and made up my mind.

I knew what I needed to do.

We recommend you read these novels after this one. Please check them out we hope you will like them

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 397](#)

When I Find My Mate

There was only one person who could help us, and that was his mother. Luther wouldn’t do it, that was for certain.

I decided to go speak to her, but first, I needed to rest. I had no idea how long we had actually been in that other realm, but I felt like it had been days since I slept.

Before I got up off of Theo’s bed, I smoothed his hair. back. “Don’t worry, Theo. We’ll figure it out.”

Leaning forward, I brushed my lips against his. I wasn’t sure why I’d even done it, but it just felt right at the time.

The moment I sat up, I realized how foolish I was acting. If he had been awake, he would’ve pushed me away and told me I was disgusting or something.

Maybe nothing that harsh, but he hadn’t ever kissed me because he’d wanted to. He’d always been after something- from my blood to fooling Raymond back in my pack.

No, Prince Theo certainly didn’t have romantic feelings for me. And that was okay. We could just be friends. Even if that was the extent of our relationship, I’d be sure to help him. He needed someone to have his back after all of this time beside his Beta.

I went to sleep, but early the next morning, I got up, showered, dressed, checked on Theo and found him still asleep and then went to see Lady Nita.

She didn't live in the castle proper like the rest of the royal family. No, she lived in a palace a little bit away from the rest of the family.

She knew I was coming before I reached her door. The servants definitely let her know. When I knocked on her door, I half expected her to send me away.

Instead, the servant who had opened the door, a middle-aged man dressed smartly in a butler's uniform, moved aside so I could see the queen clearly.

I bowed my head to her. "Your Highness," I began. "Please help Prince Theo. I promise you that I will leave the palace after everything is sorted."

Her eyebrows arched, and for a moment, I thought she might laugh in my face and tell me to get out. "Why is that?" she asked me.

I shrugged. I didn't want to tell her the truth, that he had helped me, both in the dream world and back in my pack, that I owed him for helping me.

It seemed to me that the best thing for me to do was to get out of the way. He'd already spent too much time with me. He needed to focus on the other girls to see if his mate might be there. It wasn't me, after all.

"I just want to help him. If you'll fix him, as soon as I'm done with the berry, I'll leave. I have things to attend to in my own pack, after all." I looked into her eyes for a second before I added, "Please."

"Fine," she said with a sharp nod. "But no matter what happens, no matter what he says, you must keep your promise. Do you understand? If you don't, there will be consequences."

"I understand." What more could I say? I'd already made up my mind.

With that, she turned to her servant. "Cedrick, let's go," she said, and she started off back toward Prince Theo's wing of the castle, the servant-Cedrick-coming along with her.

He seemed to be pretty loyal to her from what I could tell. He was also the one who accompanied her last night.

Once we were back in Theo's bedroom, I stayed back out of the way and let her do what she needed to do. Once again, the blue light glowed from her hands, and she directed it at him. Theo illuminated, and after a few seconds, he began to stir, actually lifting up off of the bed slightly before he came to a rest again.

The blue light dissipated, and Theo sat up in a start, staring at his mother. "What happened?" he blurted out

"I'm glad to see you're feeling better," she remarked, sarcastically. "There. You're awake. For now."

"For now?" he asked. Then, his eyes fell on me.

"What did you do?" he asked me, and I immediately stepped back.

“What did you do?” he demanded again.

I couldn't answer him, so he turned back to his mother. “Whatever she promised you, I will not agree to it. I asked you not to meddle!”

With those words, he doubled over, his face crinkling with pain, and it was clear that whatever was happening, it was hurting him severely.

“What's happening?” I asked. “Are you doing that to him?”

Lady Nita shook her head. Then, back to Theo, she said, “You can and you will obey me. I've already told her, this is how it must be!”

“I do not need you!” Prince Theo shouted through his pain.

“Your Highness, Prince Theo! You mustn't speak to her that way!”

Cedrick's voice caught me off-guard. I wasn't expecting the servant to say anything at all.

Neither was Theo as he turned to look at him. “What was that?”

Even Lady Nita was shocked. “Cedrick, shut your mouth! Ciana, leave us.”

“Ciana, you stay!” Theo ordered.

Lady Nita gave me a sharp look. “If you want me to help him, leave now.”

I looked at Theo and back to his mother, then lowered my head to both of them and walked out of the room.

\*Theo

“What do you want?” I asked my mother, “I've made it clear. You cannot force me. Now, I'll say this one last time. Leave me alone!”

Cedrick dropped on his knees. “Your Highness! You've misunderstood your mother!”

“Oh really? What have I misunderstood? That she despises me? That she spewed her hatred everywhere and she never wanted me to be happy?”

Cedrick wanted to say something but my mother raised her hand to stop it. “Cedrick, be quiet.”

“I'm sorry, Your Highness, but I cannot. Prince Theo needs to understand....” The servant was pleading, his hands folded together in front of him.

“He doesn't need to understand anything!” she command- ed. “Just leave it be.”

But her most trusted servant wasn't listening to her. He turned back to face me. “Your Highness. Your mother cares about you. You might not know, but she was watching you from far away, she was looking forward to your visit every time you were outside of the door, and you had no idea how precious she treated the bookmark-”

“Cedrick!” My mother interrupted her servant one more time and I saw panic on her face.

“Yeah right, so precious that she threw it on the ground!”

“She kept it. She still has it! After all of these years, it’s tucked inside of her favorite book!”

I didn’t know what to say. I was shocked. How was it possible?

If what he said was true, why had Mother been acting this way?

“The bookmark,” Cedrick whispered. “She didn’t toss it aside like you think she did. She kept it because she does love you, she really does!”

“Cedrick, if you say one more word, I swear to the Goddess above I will lock you up in the dungeon!” my mother warned him.

He must not have taken her threats seriously because the servant didn’t back down. “I’m sorry, my lady, but you have to know that letting this continue to go on isn’t what’s best for either one of you.”

My mother tried to deny it. “I do not love him!”

But this time, I could hear the emotion in her voice crumbling. She was saying the same sort of horrible things she’d always said to me, but did she mean them?

“Cedrick, tell me the truth!” I demanded.

“Prince Theo,” Cedrick lowered his head, “you know what it is that makes your powers soar out of control. It isn’t just fear and hate—it’s also love. I’m sure you’d figure that out.”

I mulled over what the servant was shouting to me and slowly began to nod.

“She was trying to protect you!”

“Protect me how? Letting me face those hideous murderers by myself?”

“If she showed her love to you, you would lose control! Your power can only be controlled when you are able to control your emotions. Your Highness! Love is the most powerful emotion of all, and if you allow yourself to succumb to it, it will make everything within you boil over in an explosion of power! Think about how you would feel if she showed you love, and you end up hurting her, or worse killing her! How would you feel then?”

“I...”

“You would hate yourself even more! And the trauma that you would go through would turn you into a true monster! Therefore, Lady Nita did what she thought was best for you, which was to keep the distance!”

“Cedrick how dare you...” my mother whispered, however, everything that could be said had been said.

“But I have the dreamberry,” I argued. “The dreamberry always helps me to control my power. As long as I have those and wear my gloves, I will be able to control it!”

“No, that’s not true,” Cedrick said.

Mother was looking at the floor now, as if she had decided to just let the conversation go on around her. "The dream-berry helps when your emotions are fairly even. If your emotions begin to ebb out of control, then even the dreamberry will not be able to stop the ramifications from your outbursts of emotion, regardless if it is a positive emotion like love or negative emotions like hatred. It is still the darkness within your blood that will bubble to the surface and lash out at those around you!"

I shook my head in disbelief. "This all seems like a great excuse to me..."

"I watched her suffer!" Cedrick blurted out. "I watched her try herself to sleep at night because she wanted to be with 'ou so badly! But she couldn't. By teaching you what it was like to be all alone, to go without her love, she was preparing 'ou for what it would be like for the rest of your life."

"For the rest of my life?" I let out a bitter laugh and took a deep breath in.

I'd always known my fate was cursed. I'd be okay staying away from people most of my life, but I thought one day, I'd find a solution for the damn power that made me this freak. The dreamberry gave me hope, but it turned out to be a minor relief at most, not a real solution.

I was destined to be alone, whether I liked it or not, and that was it.

I looked at the woman in front of me, and all of a sudden, the emotions I had for her all mingled together and then faded away. I wasn't sad or angry, neither did I feel love or care. Everything just seemed... so flat, as if I lost my ability to comprehend my feelings.

And this was exactly what she wanted anyway, because it was the best for me and everyone else around me, according to her.

"As you wished, Mother, I'm used to being alone now. I'm used to treating everyone cold and everything indifferently and I'd accepted that."

"Good, Theodore." She finally looked at me. Her expression hadn't changed much but I heard the approval in her

tone. I couldn't tell what she was thinking, just like most people had no idea what was in my mind. I was truly a product of my upbringing.

"But tell me, how am I going to control my emotions when I find my mate?"

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 398](#)

The 21st Generation of King Lycaon

Cedrick wanted to say something but my mother raised her hand to stop him.

"I suppressed your mate sense," she answered my question instead. Her voice wasn't loud, but shock settled into my bones.

"How could you..."

"If you cannot find your mate, then you will not have to worry about losing control around her."

All I could do was stare at her from across the room.

So what was I? A crazy, heartless freak who was cursed to live in this world all alone until the end of his pathetic life? I was not allowed to love, nor was I allowed to hate. No emotions, no friends, and no... hope.

"Why me?" I murmured.

"I do not know. But what I do know is that you're the 21st generation of King Lycaon's bloodline and your power is unparalleled. Whether you like it or not, it's a blessing from the Moon Goddess herself."

I'd never asked for it! I never wanted this damn power!

She sighed and said softly, "Now, let's take care of whatever it is you feel you must do as ramifications for the crystal, and we will talk about these other matters at another time."

\*Ciana"

It had been almost two days since Lady Nita and Theo were locked in his room.

I assumed she was treating him for the nightmares Luther had inflicted upon him. I spent much of that time wandering outside-waiting.

What I was waiting for exactly, I wouldn't admit to anyone. Whenever Brook came to check on me, to bring me some food or see if I needed anything, I'd eat a little to appease her, but mostly, I just pretended to be tending to the garden or feeding the animals that sometimes came by.

But I think she knew, as I did, that I was worried about Prince Theo. I wanted to make sure that he was well.

Just as the sun was beginning to set on the second day, the door opened, and she came out, along with her servant, Cedrick and... Theo.

I tried not to rush in to see if he was okay, but instead, I casually walked over, keeping my hands folded behind my back, pretending to be nonchalant.

Lady Nita looked down her nose at me and shook her head, obviously irritated at my presence. "You'll be happy to know that whatever that was bothering him has been lifted,"

she said.

I noticed then that she had something in her hand. It was the Moonlit Crystal. It looked benign just resting in her palm, but I knew better. It could be dangerous.

"That's wonderful!" I couldn't help but bounce up and say a silent prayer to the Moon Goddess. Perhaps it made me seem like a little girl, but what I really wanted to do was hurl myself at him and wrap him in a hug.

I couldn't do that, though. If I had learned one thing about Theo over the weeks that I had known him, it was that, under normal circumstances, he was not a hugger.

So I was doubly surprised when he closed the distance between us and wrapped his arms around me in a tight hug.

“Thank you, Ciana,” he muttered.

My cheeks immediately flamed from his touch, and the thoughts that filled my mind were of all of the intimate times we’d spent together.

The time he’d kissed me in the pavilion, the passionate exchange we’d used to attempt to fool Raymond at my pack, and especially making love to him in the illusional realm of the Moonlit crystal.

“You’re welcome, Your Highness,” I said, finally managing to pull away from him. “I’m just glad you’re feeling better.”

Behind me, his mother cleared her throat, and in a voice that meant business, she said, “You know, Theodore, the terms of my agreeing to break this curse included Ciana going away and never coming back again. I think it’s time that happened.”

“After the berry,” I reminded her, and the look she gave me told me I’d better shut my mouth right away.

“No, Mother. I don’t remember ever agreeing to your terms,” Theo commented. He had released me, but we were still standing very close to one another, and seeing his resolve made me proud to know him.

“You have been warned about what will happen, Theodore!” Queen Nita folded her arms beneath her chest, her nostrils flaring with anger.

“It won’t matter, Mother.”

What were they talking about? What wouldn’t matter?

Then he added, “Because I do not love her.”

His words stung a bit, but I shouldn’t have been surprised to hear him say that. Of course, he did not love me.... I didn’t love him either. So what difference did it make?

It was then that I noticed that the crystal in her palm was glowing, much the same way it had right before we’d all fallen into the dream realm. Except the light wasn’t as intense this time. It was warm and inviting.

“What’s going on with the crystal?” Theo asked. “Why is it glowing like that?”

Lady Nita unfolded her arms and held her hand out so we could clearly see the glowing crystal.

She frowned and then let out a relieved breath. “It was cleansed and now is ready to be used again.”

“But... I thought we failed,” Theo muttered, looking at me.

I did, too. In fact, there was no doubt in my mind we had failed the quest. Theo had been forced to smash the ring to protect me from being killed. So no token of the love between the king and the woman I was role playing was ever exchanged.

Unless....

Theo pointed at my wrist. "Could it be?" he asked, both of us staring at the place where Warren had slipped the bracelet on. It wasn't there now, but we both understood the symbolism.

"Perhaps the bracelet was the token instead," Theo continued. "It was special to you both. Maybe that was enough to make the wedding go through in the illusory world."

"Quick! We don't have a second to lose!" I said to Theo. While we had been talking, the crystal glowed, but this time, in a mild red color, just like the blood moon would.

Theo extended his hand, and his mother handed over the crystal, probably thrilled that I would be leaving the second the ceremony was over with. I couldn't think about that at the moment. I just needed to help Theo replant the dreamberry.

As we rushed to the pavilion, he called Jake to meet us there through the mind-link. When we arrived, the Beta was running in from the other direction.

Nita and Cedrick came along with us. I had no idea what needed to be done, so I followed Theo up the stairs. I stayed back, afraid I'd accidentally ruin something again.

Setting the crystal down on an empty planter turned upside down on the table, Theo positioned it so that the moonlight was hitting it. The crystal reflected the light, creating an eerie red glow, giving us all the illusion of a blood moon. It had to be enough to fool the dreamberry seed as well.

"I need some of your blood, Ciana," he said, looking right into my eyes. "Please."

I nodded and stepped forward, thinking he would use a knife or something to slit my finger.

"Be careful, Theodore," Lady Nita warned from behind me.

Theo looked over my shoulder and scowled at her. "I know what I'm doing, Mother," he said. "Now, you might want to look away."

His mother made a rumbling noise low in her throat, and I heard the swoosh of robes behind me. I wasn't sure why she needed to look away until he beckoned me to come closer.

His arms came around me, pulling me close to his chest. I gazed into his bottomless dark eyes, and as he took a deep breath, so did I. The scent of the forest embraced me, and I couldn't help but let my eyes flutter closed.

His lips were warm and soft on mine. He tasted like fresh water. When his tongue probed me to part my lips, I followed his command. Why he was kissing me, I wasn't sure. He'd just said he didn't love me, but I felt safe and cared for in the prince's arms.

Until he bit down on my tongue.

Pain radiated through my mouth, and I swore at myself under my breath for not remembering this was exactly what he'd done last time. I almost pulled away and cursed at him. But I didn't move. In a moment, the pain began to subside.



He didn't let me go right away, though. He was sucking on my tongue. I felt his tongue lapping at the bottom of mine as he created suction with his lips. When he finally broke away from me, he had blood on his lips. They glistened a ruby red in the moonlight.

Lady Nita made another growling noise in the back of her throat. I had no idea why she would disapprove of this. After all, this berry was what was going to make me go away, wasn't it?

"I hope you know what you're doing." That was all she said as she shook her head.

"Of course, I do," he replied.

Theo gestured for me to lean over the soil, which I did. Because he'd bitten me so deeply and sucked so hard, when I extended my tongue, several bright red drops of blood fell onto the soil above the seeds.

The crystal was positioned now so that the place where I'd been bleeding was bathed in red light. We all stood back as a sprig of green broke free from the soil.

I couldn't believe how quickly it was growing, but I didn't want to speak and ruin it. Instead, I took a few more steps away and waited with my hands folded in front of me, almost as if I was praying.

I actually sort-of was. I wanted the Moon Goddess to make this work so badly.

Before our very eyes, the sprout turned into a stem, and then a longer vine with green leaves continued to shoot up a foot, then two feet, out of the soil. I'd never seen anything grow so quickly. It was amazing and nearly took my breath away

Then, a bud began to appear on one of the branches. I watched it carefully as it got larger and turned from a light yellowish-orange color to red and then to a deep purple.

After about fifteen minutes, it looked the same as the berry I had eaten.

"I believe it's ripe," Theo said. He looked at Jake for confirmation, and his Beta nodded. I assumed he had seen this before. With that, he plucked the berry from the vine and popped it into his mouth.

He didn't seem to savor it as I had, and simply swallowed it with a triumphant look on his face.

Then he looked at his hands and made fists slowly.

"It worked," he assured the rest of the group.

I smiled at him, so glad that everything was finally back to how it should be.

It was then that Jake hit the floor with a loud thunk.

We all turned to look at the Beta to see what was wrong. His face was wrinkling and pale. He had a horrible expression of panic and sorrow on his face.

"Jake?" Theo called, but I couldn't follow him as he went around the table to check on his Beta.

Suddenly, I began to feel extremely tired and woozy. The world around me began to spin, and it felt like all my energy and vitality were sucked out from me. I was so tired.

I needed to sit down... to lie down....

Something was wrong with me. Something was terribly wrong!

We recommend you read these novels after this one. Please check them out we hope you will like them

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 399](#)

Curse of the Dark Prince

\*Theo\*

All around me, everyone was dying.

This couldn't be happening again!

Jake, Ciana, Cedrick, and Mother, who was staring at me, with a look on her face that said she had warned me about this.

As quickly as I could, I rushed from the pavilion and headed back to the castle. I wanted to make sure they were okay, but the longer I stayed there, the less likely it was that they'd wake up.

I was hoping that by staying away from them, they'd wake up on their own, or some guards would find them and move them to their room.

Bottomline was, I should not be near them.

The moment I entered my room, I bolted both doors-the one to the hallway and the one to my attendant's chamber.

Ciana's room....

Dropping down on the bed, I took my head in my hands.

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

How the hell could this have happened again?

I cursed the Moon Goddess and punched my fists into the

288 Vouchers

wall. My hands splitted open, blood was streaming down for a few seconds, but then they started to heal at a visible speed.

Anger raged through me, and I couldn't control it. The thought that I could've managed to kill the very few people who were important to me was enough to make me lose it.

I threw my nightstand and bookcase into the wall, sending the contents tumbling and thundering onto the floor, spilling a glass of water and countless books in every direction.

Still not satisfied with my outlet, I kicked a large volume across the room and then sent the sofa flipping end over end.

With nothing much left to break out here, I breathed a bit heavily from exertion as I took a look around. I'd certainly made a mess of things, but all it did was make me more upset.

Finally, I sat down on my bed and leaned back against the headboard..

How the fuck did this all happen again?!

I hated everything about myself. Everything.

\*\*

A couple days went by, and the only contact I had with the outside world was when a servant would come and leave food outside of my door, knocking that it had arrived. A few hours later, I'd hear someone come by and pick up the untouched tray.

Food wasn't what I needed to survive at the moment. Whoever came even close to my room should feel tired and drained. So unless they were forced, no one would want to be near my wing at this moment.

Then, on the third day after I'd harmed my best friend and that girl with the infectious smile, I heard a sharp knock on my door.

I said nothing, but it didn't stop. Finally, I shouted, "Get the fuck away from me!"

'Alpha, let me come in,' Jake spoke via the mindlink.

Jake! Was he finally awake?

'Stay out of this,' I ordered.

My Beta was persistent though. 'Alpha, please. Let me in.'

'I'm not going to tell you again. Stay the fuck out!'

'Alpha, you need to know, we're all right. I was a bit further away from you, so I didn't suffer much. And Ciana is okay, too. She's resting, but really... she has recovered. Lady Nita and Cedrick are fine too. Really Alpha, it wasn't as bad as you thought.'

I appreciated the update. After a long pause, when I finally felt I was alive again. I sighed, 'It's not safe for you, Jake. Leave. Now.'

Unable to refuse my order, he walked away, leaving me alone again, but this time, I was able to think again.

They weren't dead— that was good to know. In the back of my mind, I had hoped that I had been able to flee the scene fast enough to spare them. I had felt their surprise when I'd started to drain them, but I hadn't felt the terror and anguish I

It was reassuring to know that they were okay. Especially the girl. After all, Mother and Jake fully understood the danger being near me, but Ciana had no idea. She was probably still confused about what had occurred.

I sat on my bed and started meditation. As my mother suggested, in order to be able to leave my room again, to be near people, I had to get a grip on my emotions.

After Jake's visit, I was able to do that again.

The dreamberry should have worked, but why did this occur?

Was there something wrong with the berry? Was it because of the crystal?

Or was this because I lost control of my emotions like Mother suggested?

I quickly ruled out the issues with the berry and the crystal. I'd used the berry many times before and this never happened. With Mother controlling the crystal, I doubt it was the cause.

So the only reason that I'd lost control was that something or... someone had stirred up enough emotion in me that even the dr

eamberry lost its effectiveness.

I knew the answer almost immediately. Only one woman could make me feel such over-the-top emotions.

My mother.

Yes, it was the bitterness and longing that she had stirred in me that had made me feel this way. That was also coupled

with the anger I felt at her betrayal and I was still shocked by what I found out from Cedrick a few days ago.

It was the only thing that made sense.

Once I came to that conclusion, I was able to focus on calming myself down.

After a few days of solace, I thought I might be safe to go out around others again, but I had no way of knowing that for

sure.

A knock on my door drew me out of my thoughts. I sighed and ran a hand through my hair, knowing it was Jake again.

He had come to report to me every day, but I hadn't allowed him to come in yet.

"Alpha, please open the door," he said. "It's been days. Let me see that you're alright."

"It's still dangerous, Jake," I told him.

"Listen, we both know I wouldn't even be alive if it wasn't for you. I trust you, Alpha. I know you won't hurt me." He sounded so confident, it was hard not to think he was right.

As much as I wanted to live in complete isolation for the rest of my existence, I couldn't. I still had things that I needed to accomplish, and therefore, I would have to face someone again some time.

Climbing over the broken furniture and the rest of the mess I'd made, I headed for the door, pushing the bookcase out of the way so I could open it. I was a little lightheaded from not having eaten in so long, but I ignored it.

When Jake walked in, he took one look around and said, "Well... I guess you got that out of your system." I responded with an exhausted smile. I could see that he was trying to lighten the mood. "How are things

My Beta shrugged. "About the same as usual. Your mother has gone back to her palace, probably feeling smug about the whole thing. The women are wondering where you are and if you are okay. A few of them are grumbling about how it's not fair that they never get to see you but some other girls get to spend so much time with you, probably meaning Brook and uh, what's her name." He winked at me, and my stomach flipped over. He thought he was being cute.

But I couldn't forget her name. "How is she?" I asked him, folding my arms across my chest.

"Brook? She's great. When she heard I didn't feel so well, she baked me a pie. Best pie I ever had. Those

I glared at him, and he laughed. I did think it was funny, but I wasn't about to let Jake know that. It might encourage him

"Ciana is doing much better," he said, putting his joking aside. "She's been out and about for a while now and seems like her usual self."

I almost smiled. Just thinking about her made a pleasant feeling settle into my chest like nothing I'd ever wondered what she was doing at that very moment. Knowing her, she was probably outside with the animals, fake swor

"She wants to see you."

Jake's statement cut through my thoughts, and any trace of a smile I might've formed faded away.

It was out of the question.

I didn't want to dig deeper for the reason, but I did know it wouldn't be a good idea for her safety.

When we were in the illusionary realm created by the Moonlit Crystal, I hadn't been worried about hurting her, because none of us had our physical bodies there, only our

consciousness was brought into that world. I couldn't drain anyone there.

But this wasn't the imaginary world. This was real—and here, I hurt people when I didn't mean to.

I'd already hurt her once, and the dreamberry was obviously not strong enough to counteract the emotion mother had stirred in me.

Taking a deep breath, I steeled myself and shook my head. "No. There's no need for her to see me."

"Alpha," Jake pressed, "I'm sure everything will be fine. It might have taken the dreamberry a little longer could it do? Can't she just see you for a few minutes? She just wants to make sure you're alright."

Jake wasn't there when Cedrick explained the relationship

between my emotions and my power. His argument seemed sound, and it was tempting for me to throw

But then, an image of her smile flashed before my eyes, and I knew exactly what I needed to do. This w

"No," I told Jake. "Under no circumstances will I see her. In fact, now that I have the dreamberry, her task is com be needing her services again."

Jake's forehead creased as he studied my face. "What are you saying, Alpha? Are you certain that you a

I knew what he was trying to do, but I couldn't let him sway me. She was just another girl to me after all, no one important.

"I'm saying, tell her to leave. Now."

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 400](#)

: It's Time For Her to Go

\*Ciana\*

I went to check on Theo every single day after I woke up. I didn't know what happened or what Theo had inadvertently done to me in the pavilion after eating the dreamberry.

I just knew that something was off the first time I went to find him and saw a pair of guards standing out side of his room. Rarely did he have anyone around him, so the fact that he had placed guards outside of his door told me he was quite serious about not being disturbed.

"I just want to make sure he is okay. Please, let me in."

"Sorry, miss, but Alpha would rather not be disturbed." That was all I could get from them.

They told me that no one was allowed in by the prince's orders. So I considered knocking on the door between our rooms, but it seemed disrespectful for me to do such a thing when he clearly didn't want anyone to bother him. The few times I tried, it was always locked.

A few days after I woke up, I heard Jake in there speaking to him. Their voices were serious and a bit heated, especially right before I heard Jake leave the room, but I couldn't understand what they were saying. I wanted to rush out of the room right then and catch Jake in the hallway so that I could question him.

But I didn't do it because I was afraid.

I was afraid that maybe they had been talking about me. Maybe the reason Theo was so angry was because of something I had done or hadn't done. Whatever it was, it could have caused him to react the way that he had in the pavilion.

I didn't remember exactly what happened in the pavilion after Theo ate the berry. Everything seemed to be in a blur in my mind.

I just needed to understand exactly what happened, make sure everyone was all right, and then I could go home with peace of mind.

A couple of days after I heard Jake in his room speaking to him, I happened upon the Beta in the courtyard, visiting with Brook. The two of them were smiling at one another, clearly sharing pleasantries, so I thought now might be a good time for me to approach Theo's most trusted subordinate and ask him if it might be possible for me to get past those guards.

The moment Jake saw me, his countenance changed. "Ciana. You probably shouldn't be out and about. You should be lying down," he said, as if he wanted me to go back into hiding.

"I'm fine," I assured him. "I was hoping I could speak to you, though."

"I'm very busy," Jake said, but Brook was too polite to help him with his lie.

"Oh, I need to go anyway. I promised one of the other girls I'd show her how to braid her hair. I'll see you later, Beta." Brook dipped her head, and her cheeks turned a bit pink. I watched her walk away and might've smiled at her demeanor if Jake's

wasn't bothering me so much.

Clearing my throat, I said, "I was hoping you could help me obtain an audience with Prince Theo."

His eyebrows narrowed, and he said, "I'm afraid that's out of the question. The prince is very busy."

I knew for a fact that wasn't true. I'd heard him through the wall pacing the floor most of the day—for several days. Sometimes, he sounded like he was cleaning up a bit, but I wouldn't call that busy.

"Jake, I wouldn't take up too much of his time," I explained. I just wanted to make sure he was all right, and I needed to see him with my own eyes to verify that.

The Beta practically growled at me. "It doesn't really matter what you want, miss. You seem to be under the mistaken opinion that you are special, and I assure you that you are not. You are just another girl trying to make the prince your husband. He's a very busy man, and he simply doesn't have time for the likes of you. In fact, if I were you, I'd stay as far away from him as possible. I'd keep completely out of his line of sight at all times."

My eyes widened as I listened to what he was saying. None of it made sense! Why was Jake being so rude to me? He'd never acted this way before.

"I beg your pardon, sir," I said as politely as I could, "but after all that we've been through, I think I should at least be granted a few moments of his time. After all, I did help him with the dreamberry."

"That's right. You did help him." He continued to speak in that aloof voice, and it made my blood run cold. "But now, you've served your purpose, and there's absolutely no reason in the world why you would need to stick around here any longer. You are of no value to His Highness anymore, so please leave him alone."

With my mouth hanging open, I turned around and headed back to the palace, wondering what in the world had gotten into kindhearted Jake who was always so polite and caring.

What was going on? Had we ended up in another crazy realm where everyone was mean?

Perhaps I hadn't actually awoken from my coma yet....

In search of answers, I headed straight back to Theo's door. If Jake was going to treat me like garbage, I could only assume the treatment I'd get from the Dark Prince would be even worse, but I needed to speak to him, and I wasn't about to take no for an answer.

As upset as I was, it was easy for me to keep my adrenaline pumping as I headed for the door in a sprint. "Guards! Guards!" I shouted. "There's a fight out there! I think Beta Jake needs your help! Hurry!"

The two of them looked at one another, and then, since I was so worked up, they took off to see what the problem might be, leaving me alone in front of Theo's door.

It was likely locked. If I knocked on it, he would simply tell me to go away. He might even come over to the door to make sure I didn't get in.

So I wasn't about to knock.

Pulling a hairpin from my bun, I stuck it into the lock and quickly got the mechanism to click. I had the door flung open before the prince could even register what was happening.

I could see the surprise mixed with anger on his face at first as he noted that he had an intruder. But when he saw it was me, a flicker of something else took the harsh shadows away for mere seconds before they returned.

I had seen a fondness there. Perhaps even the beginnings of a smile. However, it faded so quickly that I questioned whether it was just my imagination.

Now, as I stood in his room, my hair coming loose from the bun, he glared at me and quickly crossed from where he'd sat on his bed. He left at least ten feet between us, though, as he asked me, "What are you doing in here?"

"I needed to see you," I blurted out, hastily trying to repin my hair but failing miserably so that one lock fell over my left eye. Blowing it out of the way did no good, so I swiped it behind my ear. "I want to make sure you've recovered."

"So... you've seen me now. I'm well, as you can see. If you don't have anything else to report, you may leave now," he said, his tone nearly as mean as Jake's. "I have a lot of work to do."

I stood there, dumbfounded, not able to easily accept that he really wanted me to go.

It was so hard for me to understand what was happening. "Why are you avoiding me?"

"I'm not avoiding you," he said with a shrug. "It just never crossed my mind to come and see you."

"I thought you'd at least want to check on me?"



“Why would I? Now that your blood is no longer needed, you’re nothing but a member of the consort my father put together. You don’t really think that you’re special to me, do you?”

His jaw was locked, and I saw the muscles that lined it tighten and twitch a few times as he kept his dark eyes trained on me.

The words that came from between his lips hurt. I wasn’t sure what to say to him. How could he be so callous? How could he be so cold?

Those questions refused to form on my tongue, so I simply stood there, staring at him, trying to form a sentence. Perhaps Jake was right and all of this had been about the stupid dreamberry after all.

“You know,” the cruel prince continued, folding his arms. “I seem to recall that you promised my mother that you would leave as soon as you fulfilled your duties with the berry.”

I wanted to interject, to remind him that he had insisted I not be sent away. But instead, I allowed my head to rock back and forth in agreement. If I

“Well, I think it’s time you were on your way. Jake-”

“Yes, Alpha.” The Beta showed up at the door, waiting for his Alpha’s order. Theo said in an indifferent tone, “Make the announcement. From today on, Ciana Black is no longer my attendant.”

“Wait-” I widened my eyes.

He turned to me. “You were a complete and utter failure, as you have been with nearly every task that I’ve assigned to you.”

Now, he was just being cruel. None of that was necessary, and I knew in my heart that it wasn’t even true.

“Now, you should pack up and prepare to be on the next train back to your pack lands. You can tell them that you’ve failed the task and are back for good this time.”

As if he was worried I would stick around, he instructed Jake, “Send men to escort her and ensure she stays in her pack.”

Jake avoided eye contact with me and simply replied, “Yes, Alpha.”

Somehow, I managed to choke down the lump that had lodged in my throat. When I began to speak, my words were barely audible. “Well, if that’s how you really feel....”

“That’s exactly how I really feel,” Theo interrupted. “Your time at the castle is over, Ciana Black. Pack your bags, leave, and I never, ever want to see your face again.”

A single tear rolled down my cheek as I took one last look at Prince Theo’s face and then turned on my heel to walk out the

door