

Kings Breeder 401

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 401](#)

Something Special

It felt as if the world shifted under my feet. I couldn't believe the cold and callus way that Theo had treated me, ordering me to leave the palace at once as if I was nothing and no one to him.

I knew that I had made the promise to his mother that I would leave as soon as I had fulfilled my duties, and at the time, I had meant it.

There was a lot going on back home. The imposter was still there, I needed to bring justice for Susan's death, and whatever that Raymond was plotting must be stopped.

I had already run away from the palace once in an attempt to get back to my home. Why didn't I want to go now? Wasn't it for the best that I was able to go back and ensure everything was straightened up in my pack?

With no other choice, I had to take my belongings from the room I had been staying in when I was his personal attendant and head back to the girls' rooms in the wing far away from the royals' residence.

I should have packed up and left the castle altogether as he had commanded me to, but my heart wouldn't let me. I was upset, but it wasn't as if he'd done anything wrong to me or harmed me. He'd only insisted that I do what I'd said I was going to do in the first place.

It wasn't necessary for him to be so cold to me, but then, that was just Theo. He was always like that.

Well, not always. I thought about the moments we'd shared where he was soft and tender... Before I let my mind wander to the time we shared in the crystal's realm, I stopped my thoughts.

It was strange that when his mother had said I had to go, he'd insisted that I stay. I didn't think it was all about the berry. But then, maybe it had been.

He had kissed me a few times, and while sometimes it had been about my blood, at other times, I had gotten the impression he was kissing me because he wanted to.

Because he liked me.

Perhaps I was wrong....

I wasn't sure what I should do, so I went into the room I had once shared with Brook and the other girls and dropped my bags, sitting down on the bed with my head in my hands. No one was in the room at the moment, and I was glad because I needed a moment to myself.

I'd been sitting there a while, though I wasn't sure how long because I'd been so lost in my thoughts, when I heard the sound of a startled gasp and looked up.

Brook was standing in the doorway, a puzzled look on her face. "Ciana? What are you doing here?" she asked me. "Are you okay?"

I shrugged. "I don't know." I sounded indifferent, I realized, but I didn't have enough emotions to draw upon at the

288 Vouchers

moment to be anything but blasé.

She came and sat down next to me, putting her arm around me. "What happened? Is it Prince Theo or Prince Warren?"

I made a face at her, and she shrugged, like how was she supposed to know?

I bit out, "Prince Theo. He was just very cold and unsympathetic to me. He wants me to leave and go back home, or so he says. I just don't know what to do."

Brook's eyes widened, and her mouth formed an O, but she didn't speak, and I couldn't read her thoughts.

"What is it?" I asked her.

"Well, nothing. It's just... he's been so kind and loving toward you lately. I thought... a lot of people thought... he was going to choose you to be his luna. Some of the other girls have given up all hope." She smiled at me with kindness in her eyes, and I wasn't sure if I should laugh or cry.

"Well, they shouldn't. He was never interested in me in that way," I said with a smirk. "I'm no longer his attendant. Hopefully this news will cheer some girls up."

"What happened?" Brook was surprised.

"I wish I knew. I'm just so confused."

"Um," Brook thought for a while. "I'm quite sure he hasn't changed his mind about you so quickly. I think he really likes you. But... do you want to be with him?" She looked at me as if she already knew the answer.

That would be quite the feat, though, because I didn't know the answer myself. "I don't know for certain," I told her. "The situation between us is... strange."

She nodded in understanding. She knew as well as anyone else what I meant. "Perhaps you shouldn't give up so quickly. You could make him a gift. That might make him see that you

have gone to a great deal to help him because you care for him."

I couldn't help the skeptical face I made. I was not an arts and crafts kind of gal. I preferred to be outside, working with my hands in the forest or the garden, not sitting at a table sewing or hot gluing sequins to foam wreaths.

And even though Brook probably couldn't remember the disastrous cooking incident from the dream realm, it was safe to say I would not be making Prince Theo cookies to impress

him either.

"You could make him a lapel pin!" she exclaimed.

My eyes bulged and my nose wrinkled. "A lapel pin? Isn't that kind of... odd?" Who had ever heard of making someone a lapel pin as a gift?

"No!" she insisted. "Trust me, it's not odd. You really should read the history of the other packs one day, Ciana. It will be enlightening to you."

Lalmost laughed. She was so funny when she was trying to scold me.

"I wouldn't even know where to begin."

"I have a kit!" she said, standing up and clapping her hands in joy. I giggled. She really was adorable.

"You have a kit for making lapel pins?" I was surprised. I wanted to question whether she planned on making one for Beta Jake but decided not to tease her for fear someone else might overhear. We were meant to be there for Theo, after all.

"I do have one," she said, going to her bag that she'd stored beneath her bed. She pulled out a couple of boxes of crafting items and shouted with happiness when she found the right one. I had no idea she was so into arts and crafts.

She carried it over to a little table in our room, and I pulled myself up off of the bed to follow her.

"It's not that hard," she told me, but when I looked at it, I had my doubts. "Just choose the items that you

I looked at all of the items she had spread out on the table, and considered if any of them reminded me of Prince Theo.

I saw a heart—that was out of the question—an angel—also a no, and a set of red lips for kissing. No to that as well.

Then, I saw a berry. It wasn't the same color, but it would still remind him of what we'd gone through together. I saw a few other items that might also fit. A red moon, a black wolf and a pair of gloves.

"All right," I told her. "I guess I can do this."

288 Vouchers

Again, she was clapping and leaping up and down. "Yeah! He's going to love it, and then the two of you will be back to how you were before."

With a halfhearted smile, I sat down at the table and set to work. Brook gave me some space, but I wished she would've hung around because little symbols into the clear circle, and when I went to push the back on, it sliced through my finger, leaving searching for a bandage.

Finally, after what was probably an extra hour on top of what it was supposed to take, I had the pin put together. I put the little round back on it that was let a few deep breaths in and out of my lungs.

I didn't want to go back over to him. I was afraid he'd yell at me and tell me I should've been gone by now.

But I had to do it. Otherwise, we'd leave so much between us unsaid, and I'd never know if he'd really wanted me just for my blood— or for something more.

When I walked to his wing, I was surprised to see that he wasn't in his room.

Where would he be? But then I saw him, standing at the end of a long hallway that led to the royal garde

He wasn't alone, though. I held my breath as I watched the scene play out in front of me.

Sophia was standing behind him, helping him slip into a jacket. She placed her hands on the top of his s

“There you are, Prince Theo,” she said, her voice a purr. “You truly are one of the most gorgeous men I’v

I must've made a noise then because Theo lifted his gaze. I was sure he saw me. A hint of surprise flashed in his eyes, but then his eyes narrowed, and I had a feeling he was going to yell at me for not having left.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 402](#)

A Token of Affection

He didn't. Instead, he totally ignored me and turned around. In his deep and soothing voice, he asked Sophia, “Only one of?”

Sophia blushed and lowered her head as if she was really shy, “Your Highness...

The whole scene caused a cold and hard knot in my stomach and I felt like a fool for ever making him a nything.

It was clear now that all he'd ever wanted from me was help in getting his berry to grow. I fisted my hands, trying to fight back the bitterness.

I couldn't understand why I was so upset. Yes, I might have considered myself a friend of his, and whoever that he chose to be with really wasn't my business, right?

But that wasn't working... I couldn't help feeling betrayed, somehow, and it hurt, especially when I heard Sophia giggle.

Rounding the corner, I saw two other girls coming down the hallway. “Oh, look over there. It's the has been,” one of them said, and then they laughed. I recognized them as being friends of Sophia.

Before they got far enough away from me that I couldn't hear, the other one said, “Sophia is the one Prince Theo wants now. I'm so happy for her. Everyone should've known she would win. She is the most beautiful one here. Not that loser.”

I managed to keep my tears back until I heard the other one say, “Sophia will be Prince Theo's Luna.”

I should've turned around and ran away when I had the chance, but it was too late.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Sophia's sharp voice. echoed in the empty hallway.

“Don’t curse,” Theo reminded her quietly, his voice almost gentle. “It’s not becoming of a lady.”

“I’m so sorry, my Prince,” she said. “It’s only... I can’t believe the same girl you just told to leave the castle immediately is standing here staring at us with her mouth hanging open. Better close it before you swallow a fly.”

I wasn’t sure what to say to her, so I ended up saying nothing at all. I took a step backward, thinking now was as good a time as ever to leave, but now, Theo was also finally paying attention to me.

I fully expected to see rage in his eyes, but I didn’t. He just looked more indifferent than anything else.

“What are you doing here, Ciana?” he asked me. “I didn’t think I’d left things unclear before.”

“You were quite clear, sir,” I agreed with him, finding my voice despite the feeling that my heart was being squeezed. “I am leaving. I just... had something to give to you first.”

“What is it?” Sophia asked, sashaying across the hallway.

“It’s not for you.” I withdrew my hand, accidentally squeezing the metal of the lapel pin again. It stung as I got yet another

cut on my hand. I tried not to wince.

“I know it’s not for me, but if you haven’t noticed, I am the prince’s personal attendant now,” Sophia smirked. “Let me see it.”

My eyes shifted back to Theo. He didn’t make a move to stop her, so with a sigh, I opened my palm, noticing a bit of blood near the bandage I had on from earlier.

Sophia picked up the lapel pin out of my hand and immediately began to laugh. “What the f-”

“Language,” Theo reminded her quietly again. He rarely spoke to me in that tone, yet, he was willing to show his tenderness to Sophia!

Sophia cleared her throat. He really was investing his time and effort in her if he was trying to get her to act like Luna Queen

material.

“Beg your pardon, Alpha,” she said, placing the pin back into my hand. She crossed back to him. “You wouldn’t want it anyway. It’s just a little scrap of junk.”

Rage coursed through me. I’d worked really hard on that gift, and even though it might not look like much to Sophia, it had

meant a lot to me.

Theo didn’t say anything. I took another step backward.

“Although, I guess I can see why she made a lapel pin for you, Alpha. It is a bit pathetic, though, don’t you think?” Sophia said as she took her place back at the prince’s elbow.

“A lapel pin?” His eyebrows arched, and I noted he was

thinking about something deeper than he had been before.

"I just thought-" I began, wanting to explain to him that I had thought it would be something he could wear on special occasions when he had to wear a suit jacket. At least, that was something I'd been telling myself while I was making it. I saw no reason to tell them that it had been Brook's idea.

"You just thought that you could win over the heart of the prince the same way that Luna Jezebel won over the heart of Alpha King Titus two hundred years ago? Right?" Sophia asked, giving me an accusatory remark as she folded her arms beneath her ample bosom.

"What?" I gasped, not knowing what she was talking about. I could tell now by the expression on Theo's face that he was also familiar with this story.

"Everyone knows that Jezebel was a poor woman who lived in the village. She saw King Titus from a distance and knew she had to do whatever she could to win his heart."

She glared at me and continued, "On the day when the king traditionally met with people from the village, she came to the throne room, kneeled down before him, and said, 'Your

Majesty, I know it isn't much, but I have made this lapel pin for you as a token of my appreciation for your service to our pack.' Then when she looked up at the king, he was stunned by her beauty and immediately fell in love with her."

Theo looked away from me, seemingly didn't care about what Sophia was saying. I had never heard of it before, but something told me my dear, sweet friend Brook had.

I was going to have to have words with her when I got back to our room.

"So even though Jezebel and King Titus were not fated mates, the Moon Goddess smiled upon them. She rewarded the poor village woman who had gone to such great lengths to impress the king and made it so that he fell deeply in love with her. They were married, and she became the Luna Queen of all the land."

Sophia tipped her head to the side and pursed her lips a moment before saying, "Such an original idea you had."

"I... I didn't know," I stammered.

She scoffed. "You didn't know? Somehow I doubt that. Everyone in the palace knows that a gift of a lapel pin is a token of one's love. But who do you think you are daring to give it to the prince?"

Nothing came to mind in regards to an answer, so I just stood there, staring at both of them, wondering what I could say to dismiss myself.

It didn't take long for Theo to respond anyway. "Sophia," he said, his tone rather bored, "leave Ciana alone." For a moment, I thought perhaps he was going to defend me against her.

But then his tone changed completely, and he sounded scornful, notes of boredom still coming through as well just to

make me feel even worse.

“You know there’s nothing between the two of us. Sure, I kept you close for a while, but that was only because, at the time, you were useful to me. Now, you are not, and you know it. Your time at the castle has come to an end. I’m not interested

in your pin or whatever gifts you want to make for me. I only ask you one thing—leave, now.”

His eyes cut through me like daggers, and I truly wished I had never even come here today at all, let alone having gone to the trouble to bring him a gift I made wi

To think, I’d actually thought there was a chance he might appreciate my hard work.

Hadn’t I known him long enough to understand that he wasn’t capable of appreciating anything anyone d

“All right,” I said quietly. “I understand what you are saying, my Prince. I’m very sorry that I bothered you

“Well, thank the Moon Goddess for that,” Sophia chimed in. “It’s not as if your face is even pretty, anywa

“Sophia,” Prince Theo said, but he didn’t say more, and she didn’t take the saying of her name to mean she should stop.

“Really, having you leave the castle will be the best thing for all of us. None of the other girls can stand you, except for that ridiculous little redheaded girl. We’re all sick and tired of you doing ev

She buffed her fingernails on her shoulder and then admired them for a moment before blowing them off and giving me a vindictive smile.

I couldn’t think of anyone else in the world I despised more

than her at the moment.

But she was right about one thing. Everyone would be better off without me here.

I still had the lapel pin in my hand, and I wasn’t sure why, so I tossed it on the ground. If he didn’t like it. That was fine. He could be the one to throw it in the trash—the same way that he believed his mother had picked up the bookmark he had made for her and tossed

Let him draw his own parallels if that’s where his mind took him.

“I’m sorry for all of the trouble I’ve caused,” I said. Then, I turned around and walked away as fast as I could. The sooner I could get away from the two of them, the better.

Thankfully, this time I made it down the hallway without seeing anyone else. I was leery of running into a the moment I overheard what they had to say.

My feet carried me outside, where I had always felt most comfortable. When I stepped into the garden a ached.

It was foolish of me not to listen to what Prince Theo had told me in the first place. He'd made his position been using me for my blood. Now, I had served my purpose.

It was truly time for me to go home.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 403](#)

The Wrong Prince

I wasn't sure where I was going or what I was planning to do, but I wanted the fresh air in my lungs to clear my mind.

After I'd been outside for a few moments, the bitterness in my chest seemed to be relieved to a degree. I let out a sigh. I didn't even understand why I felt the strange need to see Theo or talk to him.

At this point, I didn't owe him anything, and he'd granted me freedom. I'd gotten what I wanted, and there was no reason to be upset.

Yes, I would comply with Prince Theo's wishes and leave the castle- after I went to see his animals and tell them a proper goodbye. I had become close to them, especially that silly snake of his.

Just then, before I could even make it to his zoo, I heard a thud, sounded like something fell on the ground.

What happened? I changed my path to check it out in case someone needed help.

In the distance, a little boy was sitting on the grass near the sidewalk. He was dressed in regal clothes, the royal colors, and the fabric was fine. His hair was a bit messy, and he had a streak of dirt on his cheek, but I could tell despite his disheveled state that he was someone important.

It also looked as if he might be injured. He was holding his leg,

up

his knee, and while he wasn't

his pant leg was purple, he did look distressed.

"Oh, no!" I said in a gentle voice as I rushed over to him. He looked to be about eight or ten at most.

"You alright?"

He looked up to me with similar dark eyes to the ones I was used to looking into when I stared at the princes, but he didn't say anything.

Perhaps he was afraid of me. He didn't know me, after all. I gave him a smile that I hoped would set him at ease as I sat down on my knees next to him on the path.

From here, I could see that he had a cut on his leg. It wasn't too deep, but it did look painful. Thankfully, I had placed an extra bandage in my pocket earlier, in case my hand started bleeding again.

So, I pulled it out of my pocket and showed it to him. "Do you want me to put this on your cut? Will that make you feel better?" It needed to be cleaned, but at least it wouldn't bleed all down his leg to his sock as he went inside.

Again, he said nothing, but as I opened the bandage and put it on him, he didn't try to pull away from me. I smiled at him and said, "There you go. All better. What's your name? I'm

Ciana."

Before he could respond, I heard the sound of footsteps coming up the path from the castle and turned my attention in that direction, startled and afraid it might be Theo. I doubted he would've followed me, but it was possible he had just come this way, and I didn't want to see him..

I saw that it was Warren coming my way and contemplated getting up and darting away. I really didn't want to speak to him at the moment. Not that I disliked him or anything, but I wasn't in the mood to be friendly.

With a sigh, I turned back to the boy, but... he was gone.

Confused, I looked all over the place for him and noticed him darting off between some bushes in the distance.

I guessed he hadn't hurt himself so bad after all.

With a chuckle, I got up off of the ground just as Warren reached me.

"Did you become friends with Alexander too?"

"Alexander? The boy?"

"Yes, that was my nephew," Warren said with a light smile. "He's always out here playing in the garden."

"Your nephew?" I tried to understand whose child that boy could be. As far as I knew, there weren't other siblings of Warren living in the palace.

"Yes. He is my older half brother's son."

"Oh," I searched my memory and tried to figure out who Warren's older brother was, but to no avail. However, it wouldn't matter. I was going to leave here very soon, and the royal family tree really shouldn't concern me all that much going forward. So I simply commented, "I hope I didn't scare him. He wouldn't speak to me."

"Alexander? No, I'm sure you didn't scare him. He has selective

mutism," Warren explained. "Ever since his father was executed for treason and his mother went missing all of those years ago, he hasn't said a word."

My eyes widened. That was the last thing I expected to hear!

My heart broke a little for Prince Alexander. Now it rang a bell. His father was Prince Warren and Prince Theo's older brother, the late Crown Prince Justin, the oldest son of King Sabastian, who betrayed his father and was sentenced to death many years ago.

"I'm really sorry to hear about that," I said. "He seems sweet." My eyes trained off in the distance where the child had disappeared, but I could no longer see a trace of him.

"You have nothing to apologize for! Say, do you want to hear something kind of funny?" Prince Warren asked me with a broad smile, the kind that might've made me lose my sleep a few weeks ago, but now, all of that charm seemed to be missing the mark for me.

I didn't want to be impolite, though. He was still a very kind man, and he was a prince. "Sure," I told him, forcing myself to smile back. "What is it?"

"Well, I had a really strange dream the other night. And you were in it." He wiggled his eyebrows at me, but I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

I managed to keep the smile frozen on my face. Goddess,

could he be talking about what had happened in the realm created by the crystal? There was only one way to find out.

"Oh?" I asked. "What happened?"

I hoped I didn't regret my choice to pry, but it was clear he wanted to tell me.

"Well, I dreamed you and I were getting married!" He made a face at me like he wanted to know if I thought it was silly, even though he clearly didn't think it was.

"Oh... how... funny," I said. "Uhm, well, I can tell you that no such thing has ever happened in real life." A nervous laugh escaped my lips. "So it had to have been a dream!"

"Yeah, yeah, it was a dream, I know, but..." he began.

I cut him off. "You know what they say about dreams being opposite of reality, right?" Again, I laughed, but this time it sounded nervous and slightly annoying.

Prince Warren's eyes shifted, and I thought I had hurt his feelings. "Ciana, are you alright? Something seems to be bothering you. I mean, no, of course, I understand we didn't really get married, but you and I have known each other for many years—right? Remember, the bracelet?"

He raised his wrist to show me the gift I'd given him a long time ago.

I smiled bitterly. Of course, I remembered the bracelet. How could I forget? Still, a lot had changed for me since I came to the castle. I wasn't the same silly girl I had been who thought I might be in love with the boy I'd met in the woods.

Honestly, I didn't think till this day I understood what love really was. However, one thing I was sure of was that love was a lot more complicated than I had ever thought it would be.

"Did something happen?" Prince Warren asked me, cutting through my thoughts.

“Happen?” I repeated.

“Yeah, like between you and Theo or something? You look upset, and in my experience, if you’re upset, it’s usually his fault.” He seemed a bit bitter, and I couldn’t blame him for feeling that way.

I didn’t want to vent and dump anything on Prince Warren. After all, he didn’t want to be in the middle of the spat I was having with his brother, and I didn’t want to dwell on i

But when I opened my mouth to tell him that it was nothing, the truth came out instead.

Or at least... bits and pieces of it.

“I just went to tell him goodbye, and he... was so rude. I don’t understand him, Prince Warren. All I’ve done since I got here was try to be kind and useful to him, and he is always so rude to me. It’s like he goes out of his way to try and hurt my feelings. I just don’t get it, and I probably never will. It’s probably a good thing that I’m leaving.”

“You’re leaving?” he repeated, and I could hear he was both surprised and a bit hurt. “Why?”

“I need to go home to take care of some pack affairs. Don’t worry, this time, I was officially dismissed. I’m gentle gaze was on me, silently encouraging me to go on, so I did.

“Prince Theo dismissed me. He said I was of no use to him

anymore. And that’s fine. Whatever. He can spend his time with Sophia or whoever he likes. “But when I went to tell him goodbye...”

I had to pause for a moment because I was getting a little choked up, and the last thing I wanted to do was cry about Prince Theo in front of his brother.

Talk about silly.

“You went to tell him goodbye, and what, Ciana?” Prince Warren placed his hand on my arm, gently, and it made me feel a bit better, just to have the human touch of someone who was so kindhearted.

“And... he was cold and rude,” I said with a shrug. “He basically just told me to get lost, didn’t even want to say goodbye to me.” Again, tears Prince Theo’s rudeness make me so upset.

“I’m so sorry, Ciana,” Prince Warren said, and I could tell by the emotion in his voice he meant it. “He just get it. I don’t understand how anyone could treat you the way he does. Quite frankly, he doesn’t deserve

My eyebrows raised as I looked up into his eyes, a bit concerned about what he was going to say next.

I had suspected for a while now that there was a possibility that Warren had feelings for me. But he’d be a member of Prince Theo’s consort, not his own.

However, now that I had told him I was leaving, that Prince

Theo had dismissed me, he must’ve thought none of that mattered.

I said a silent prayer to the Moon Goddess that this wasn’t about to be a confession of his feelings because I honestly didn’t know how he would respond to him.

“Listen Ciana, I know you might be hurt by my brother. He sometimes could be a coldhearted jerk. I tota He stared deeply into my eyes, and continued, “But, I’m not like that. I understand what a treasure you t you would give me the chance-”

“Prince Warren!” I interrupted him, my voice trembling nervously. Was he really about to say to me what I thought he might say?

I hoped not. I couldn’t allow him to.

Because I was afraid of what he might say, not because he wasn’t a wonderful man, but because I knew

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 404](#)

What If She Said Yes?

Theo

“This is the ugliest lapel pin I’ve ever seen in my life,” Sophia said, picking up the trinket off of the ground and turning it around and around in her hands. “Really, why would she put all of these random things on it anyway? A berry? Red moon? She’s so stupid.”

“Shut up.” I ordered, watching her cheeks turn slightly pink from embarrassment. She just couldn’t help her filthy mouth.

She was walking toward the wastebasket. While I wasn’t certain what I wanted to do with it, I knew I wasn’t goin g to let her throw it away.

I held my hand out, knowing if I said anything at all, my emotion would show too much. Just because I didn’t want Ciana hanging around the castle anymore, that didn’t give Sophia or anyone else the right to insult her.

Sophia dropped the pin into my hand. “Haven’t you got work to do?” I asked her, pointing to her own ro om. She started moving her junk into the side chamber, she might as well get that completed. It seemed like a good excuse to get her out of my hair.

I turned my attention to the pin. I could tell even at first glance that Ciana had put a lot of effort into mak ing this for me. It did have a symbol of berries on it, as well as other items that only we would know the meaning of. It made my heart

feel warm.

I remembered seeing a bandage on her hand and a smear of blood. Had she injured herself going to all of this trouble just for me? I shook my head. She really wasn’t the crafty sort, but she’d been trying to make an impression.

She seemed to have never heard of the story Sophia told about the Luna who made a similar gift for her Alpha, but was there a likelihood that she had and still chose to make this for

me?

I gently brushed my thumb against it and the time we spent together replayed in my mind.

“There you are!” My father’s voice bellowed through the other end of the hallway.

“Your Majesty,” I acknowledged him.

Sophia, who hadn’t been too far away, also bowed in respect. “Your Majesty.”

His Beta, Xavier, whom I couldn’t stand in the least, was standing behind my father. His nose was up in the air as he prepared to interject his thoughts into our conversation, I had no doubt.

“I have been looking for you,” my father said.

“What for?” I really wasn’t in a mood to deal with him at the moment. I shoved my hand in my pocket and dropped the pin in. No one needed to see the gift from Ciana.

“You tell me,” Father said with a haughty air about him as he tilted his head to the side and observed me. “Tell me how the

new heir is coming along. Have you succeeded in impregnating one of these women yet? I certainly hope you have good news for me. I’ve gotten quite tired of waiting, after all.”

I nearly choked at the wording of his question but covered it with a cough. “No, King Sebastian,” I said, being more formal than I had been before. “We have not successfully completed that transaction—not as of yet, anyway.”

“Why not? I thought the Black girl was the one you had chosen. Is she not capable of bearing a child?” He looked down his nose at me with great scrutiny.

I wasn’t sure how to answer that question. It wasn’t as if Ciana and I had even tried creating a child—at least not in the real world. I wouldn’t let thoughts of what had happened between us in the dream realm linger. That was a dangerous path to go down, and so far, I’d avoided it every turn.

Almost every turn.

Instead of letting him know all of the details that were honestly not his business, I said, “She isn’t physically fit for the task, Your Majesty. I will be choosing someone else.”

“Someone else!” he shouted. “But... you’ve already wasted so much time on this girl!”

“Your Majesty, if I may,” Beta Xavier spoke up, “wouldn’t it be best if the prince chose whatever girl makes him most happy? Shouldn’t he find a girl that makes him feel a certain kind of way, one he is attracted to and wishes to spend time with?”

“Happy? Why in hell would I care about that?” my loving

father remarked. He shook his head, making his long mustache swoosh back and forth.

“Well, we want an heir that is strong and powerful, right? So... we need to give Prince Theo a chance to explore all of his options and not just settle for the first girl who catches his eye,” Beta Xavier explained, and for once, I thought perhaps he wasn’t that bad after all, even if he was encouraging my father not to care about my wishes.

“Yes, yes, of course we need a strong heir.” The king stroked his chin with his fingers. “But we must not wait too long.”

“With all due respect,” Xavier continued, “we do want Prince Theo to make a good choice, but let us not forget he isn’t the only male with royal blood who is capable of producing a strong heir.”

My father sighed and dragged his hand down his face. “Are we going to have this conversation again, Xavier? I already told you, I want Theo to be the one to produce the heir.”

He wanted me for my powers, not my intellect, battle skills or leadership abilities.

“Yes, I know, but wouldn’t it be smart to have more than one to choose from, Your Majesty?” Xavier prodded.

I wasn’t sure whether I should be happy or irritated that he was pushing the attention onto my brother.

“Very well.” I was surprised to hear my father say those words. “Let Warren know he can also choose a woman from

the consort.”

My mouth wanted to drop open, but I fought it. From the consort? From MY consort? No, that wouldn’t do, not at all.

After all, it seemed pretty clear to me exactly who Warren would pick. I couldn’t think of it.

“Do I have to tell him?” Xavier blurted out. Thinking better of his wording, he rephrased his statement.

“That is, don’t you think it would be better, coming from you? The king?”

My father growled at him. “Just tell him it is my order, Xavier. And as for you, Prince Theo, find a woman. Make a powerful heir. Got it?”

“Yes, Father,” I said. He turned then and hurried out, Xavier with him. It shouldn’t surprise me in the least that he was willing to let Warren try for an heir, too. After all, it will cost my father nothing.

Irritated, I turned in a different direction and walked away. I needed to take a walk and get my head straight.

I’d only made it a few steps when I heard a high-pitched voice behind me. “Where are you going, Prince Theo?”

I grumbled without turning back to look at Sophia, “Garden!”

Of course, she tagged along. It was stupid of me to keep choosing her as my personal attendant, but I had my reasons.

As long as I sent Ciana back to her pack right away, she wouldn’t be part of the consort anymore, and that should stop Warren from going after her.

I strolled outside, and what to my wandering eyes did I see but Ciana speaking to Warren.

He had that lovesick puppy dog look in his eyes that he always got when she was around, and it made me want to stalk over there and pound him.

His words carried to me in the wind, "Listen Ciana, I know you might be hurt by my brother. He sometimes could be a coldhearted

jerk. I totally understand you might want to stay away from this place, from us right now.... But, I'm not like that. I understand what a treasure you truly are. If you would give me the chance-

"Prince Warren!" Ciana seemed to want to stop him from saying more.

I took a deep breath in to calm the bitterness and rage that started to bubble up, and decided to interrupt their conversation.

"Ciana, why are you still here? Didn't you say you would stay away from me?" I could hear my voice was full of sarcasm and didn't need anyone to tell me how ridiculous I sounded.

She opened her mouth to respond, but before she could, I turned to Warren. "Father's puppet is looking for you."

"For what?" Warren asked, knowing I meant Xavier.

"Well, apparently you get to choose a woman, too. Congratulations. You've just been promoted to possible

"Wh-what? Father wants me to pick a lady, too? From your consort?" Warren asked, flabbergasted.

"Yes, that's what I've just been informed of," I confirmed, folding my hands behind my back. I gave my brother a hard stare. As long as he left Ciana alone, he could choose whoever the hell he wanted with the rest of the group.

That way... Ciana could also let go of whatever feelings she might have for him too.

Maybe it was a good idea to have Warren paired up with someone, after all.

"But... I don't want to. This is absolutely preposterous. I'm not a soulless offspring-making machine and I have no interest in any of those girls out there!"

His eyes fell on Ciana. If he had the ability to simply choose her, he certainly would do so, because I noticed the careful wording of those girls out there. Not this one.

I shrugged. "Welcome to my world of misery, brother," I remarked.

"That's not very nice," Ciana chimed in. "Why does Prince Warren have to pick someone he doesn't even like?"

"Because it's the king's order," I told her. The fact that she was standing up for my brother irritated me.

"There must be something you could do, right, Prince Theo?" Ciana pleaded on behalf of Warren. I couldn't help the fire of rage burning inside me.

Warren thought for a moment and said, "How about-

I immediately knew what he wanted to propose, however, he must know that Ciana was going home and wouldn't be an

option, so I stopped him right there. “If you want to negotiate with Father, that’s up to you. Now, Ciana, you’re dismissed from the palace.”

She fought back, “But Prince Warren shouldn’t need to do this!”

Why was she so persistent? Did she really care about Warren that much? To make it worse, the tone she

I snapped at her without thinking, “What’s the matter, Miss Black? Are you afraid that some other lady will win over yourself?”

Her mouth dropped open and hung there while she fluttered her eyelashes at me, trying to figure out how to respond. Even Sophia seemed to be concerned for some reason.

While I didn’t care about what Sophia’s problem was, I was anxious to hear Ciana’s answer.

What did I want her to reply, anyway? That she wasn’t interested in marrying Warren? Well, she wasn’t surprised.

For a moment, I regretted what I said and was afraid of what I might hear from her lips.

What if... she said yes?

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 405](#)

A Final Plea

Ciana

I didn’t have a response for Theo when he said I must want to marry Warren. His cold words had taken their toll on me, and I was done.

“You know what, Your Highness? It’s been a long day and you’re right, I should go.”

With that, I turned around and walked away from the three of them, even though Warren shouted my name for me to come back.

I was done playing this game with Theo. He continued to baffle and confuse me at every turn, and I just couldn’t take

much more.

I walked back to my room and my initial plan was to start packing— I needed to go check on the situation in my own pack anyway, but I found myself sitting on the edge of the bed, thinking about Theo.

A sharp knock on the door got my attention. It wouldn’t be Brook, because even her knock was gentle. I walked over and flung it open, not really wanting to put up with anyone else at the moment.

I was a little surprised to see Sophia standing there, but only because she had knocked. It seemed to be more like her to just barge in. “What do you want?” I asked her.

However, if I hadn’t heard it with my own ears, I would never have imagined those words were from her mouth in my

wildest dreams.

“You should give Prince Theo another chance,” she blurted out. “I think he likes you.”

With my eyes bulging, all I could do was raise an eyebrow and stare at her for a second before a sarcastic laugh bubbled up and out of my lips.

“Why do you say that? Didn’t you just overhear what he said to me in the garden?” She was right there with us!

“Yes, I was there,” she admitted. I went back to my bed and pulled out my suitcase.

Sophia bringing up the situation from her perspective only made me feel more inclined to pack and leave. After all, Theo certainly wasn’t interested in me. He’d made himself clear more than once, and I was sick and tired of being his punching bag.

Sophia followed me into the room and stood at the foot of my bed while I threw my clothes into my bags.

“Listen, Ciana, it’s not what you think it is,” she said.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean... the only time he ever wants me around is when you’re there. He summons me whenever he knows you’re going to see the two of us together, and then he pretends like he might be interested in me. But the moment you’re gone, he discards me without a care in the world.”

I stared at Sophia for a long moment, not sure what to make of her statement. It didn’t seem to me like it could possibly be the truth. After all, this wasn’t the first time Theo chose her over me as his attendant anyway.

She made it sound like he was intentionally trying to make me jealous, but that didn’t make any sense to me at all.

I continued to toss my clothes into my luggage, not knowing how to respond to her absurd comments. But then I realized, she wasn’t here out of concern for me or for Theo.

“What do you want me to do, Sophia? And why would you want me to do it?”

She swallowed so hard, I could see the lump in her throat. “I want you to try and win Prince Theo over, get him to admit he has feelings for you, so that Prince Warren gives up on you and doesn’t try to pursue you. Especially now that the king has given Prince Warren permission to choose a woman as well.”

“And...” I began, “why in the world would you want me to do that?” I already knew the answer to my own question, of course, but I had to ask anyway. I wanted to hear it from her own mouth.

She wasn’t so quick to tell me the truth and answered my question with another question.

“Prince Warren is wasting his time on you if you already like Prince Theo, isn’t he? Why would you want to torture a good man like that?”

I smirked at her. “Sophia, tell me the truth or else you can

forget about me doing anything except for packing up and catching the next train out of here to go back to my own pack. After all, it's not like I owe you anything."

She grunted and shook her head.

"Fine," she said. "Prince Theo is... cold. He's aloof. I can't get him to open up to me no matter how hard I try. But Warren... Prince Warren is different."

I knew exactly what she was talking about, of course. Theo never let his walls down for anyone, whereas Warren was an open book. He was always willing to open up and talk about anything, including his feelings. They were quite opposite to

one another.

But I still hadn't gotten an adequate response from her. "So why does it matter to you that the two brothers are different?"

"Well, because... I want Prince Warren to give up on you."

"Let me get this straight." I watched her eyes shift uncomfortably under my scrutiny. "You, Sophia, the girl who has everything, who barks orders at us right and left... you're interested in the gentle and mild Prince Warren but not the bold and powerful Prince Theo?"

She narrowed her eyes at me, and I thought I was about to get a taste of the attitude I'd just reminded her of.

But she lifted up her chin and looked me firmly in the eye. "Yes, I like Warren," she confessed bravely.

Her honesty surprised me. I would've thought Sophia was the type to go after power, yet, here she was, admitting her

feelings in front of someone she never got along with.

She certainly had her reasons. "He's different from any of the other men I've ever been interested in, that's true. But from the moment I first laid eyes on him, I've just thought... he was wonderful."

Yes, I could understand what she meant. After all, I'd had a crush on Warren for years, from the time I only knew him as the boy from the forest.

Now that I'd gotten to know him, however, he wasn't quite the man I'd thought he was back then.

True, that he was sweet and kind hearted. He was thoughtful, patient, and caring. I couldn't think of anything bad to say about Prince Warren at all.

However, for the reason I couldn't understand till this day, he didn't ignite a spark of intrigue in me. I started to think that there must be something wrong with me. How could any girl turn down a man like Warren?

"Work with me on this, Ciana, then we'll both get what we want."

Although she didn't use the word "please", this was the first time I'd actually had a normal conversation with her. It was probably the best attitude I could get out of her.

“Oh, well, I am here to serve you,” I said sarcastically, but I couldn’t help but smile at her at the end of the sentence. She hung her head a little bit, like she was a bit uncomfortable.

I guess she was too proud to ask for help. In the past, she only

needed to give the orders, and someone would just get it done for her. Anyhow, I’d stopped packing. Maybe I shouldn’t do any more for a little while.

Or maybe I should just go ahead and finish tossing my stuff into my suitcases and get out of here, cut my losses, and go back home where it was quite clear my pack needed my help.

“Ciana...” Sophia said, with a question mark hanging over her head, “are you interested in Prince Warren?”

Quickly, I shook my head. That much I knew to be fact. “No, you don’t have to worry about that.” I saw the breath of relief she released as it practically stirred the curtains across the room.

“I’m not sure if what you have had to say about Theo is true or not, but I can promise you that I am not interested in Warren.”

“So... if he asks you to stay here and be his woman, you won’t do it?” she clarified.

I shook my head again. “No, I won’t stay for Warren.”

“But... you might stay here for Prince Theo?” A crooked grin spread across her face, and for once it was curious.

“I honestly don’t know... I would say, most likely, no.”

Surprisingly, this time she didn’t continue to pry. I figured she’d gotten the answer she wanted already.

I had a lot to handle back home. I’d delayed long enough already... A few days ago, I felt that I owed them both of them were checked off my list. There really wasn’t any reason for me to stay.

She nodded. “That’s all I can ask for. I do appreciate your candor. I know you and I have never been friends, and

perhaps we never will be, but I do respect that you never back down from what you believe in.”

“Thank you.” I tried to think of something nice to say back to her, but it was hard. I grabbed the low hanging fruit. “I’ve always thought you were very pretty. Perhaps the most beautiful woman here.”

Sophia flashed me a broad grin and said, “I know.”

She straightened her hair and spun on her heel, headed out the door, leaving me chuckling at her antics

Then, I thought of Theo, and I wasn’t laughing anymore.

A thought came to my mind. Perhaps I could give him one more chance, but I couldn’t approach him directly like I had earlier in the day. No, I had to be more subtle.

With a deep breath, I left the room, my bags packed but not within my grasp.

It took me a little while to find the man I was searching for, and when I approached him, I was a bit leery of which version of him I'd find.

Theo wasn't the only one who ran hot or cold around here.

Thankfully, when Beta Jake turned to look at me, he had a smile on his face. "I see you haven't left yet."

It was almost like he was happy to see me.

"Not yet," I confirmed the obvious. "Can you do me a favor?"

"I can try." He gave me a firm nod.

"Will you deliver a message to your Alpha for me, please?" My heart was beating out of my chest as he let Prince Theo know I'll be at the pavilion at midnight. If he wants to see me before I go, he should be th

Jake replied, "I'll let him know, Ciana." I could hear the sympathy in his voice, and that made me wonder

How would I feel if he didn't come?

Broken, probably.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 406](#)

See You At Midnight

Theo

I sat in my office, looking at a tall stack of files. As frustrating as it was to go through the backlog of the documents, at least I could take a break from my father's Beta checking on me twice a day on the status of producing an heir, since he had assigned Warren with the same task.

However, I made very little progress on the mountain of files. Despite my best efforts, my mind had been somewhere else and I really needed to get it to focus back on the work in front of me.

I was just able to start reading a page when I heard a knock on my door.

"Yeah?" I called.

Jake stuck his head in the door. "Alpha, can I come in?"

I gestured for him to come in. "What's up?"

"I'll make it quick. I have a message for you." Jake obviously had noticed the pile of files, and the look on his face told me he felt bad interrupting me.

The reality was, he didn't. My productivity was basically none at this moment, but it had nothing to do with him.

He had a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"What's that?" I asked him.

“Someone wanted me to tell you that she’ll be waiting for you at the pavilion tonight at midnight, if you would like to see her again... away from all of the other pressures of the world.”

I took a deep breath and thought about how to respond. Obviously, he meant Ciana. I didn’t even feel the need to ask.

“Alpha?”

“I heard you.” That was all I had to say about it.

“Uhm... you do know that I mean Ciana Black, right?” he asked me.

I sighed. “Yeah, Jake. How stupid do you think I am?”

He grinned, and I dared him to answer that question with a harsh look. “Well, are you going to go?”

“No,” I said, trying to make sure that he couldn’t see my inner turmoil.

“Well, I think you should.” He looked me in the eye.

I nodded. “Got it. Bye.”

“Alpha, can I be honest?”

“What?”

“Ciana truly cares about you...”

I lifted up my hand to stop him.

I knew what he wanted to say. However, even if I went to see her, what would it really change? Nothing.

I couldn’t keep her around me, and she was still going back to her pack. It wouldn’t make any difference.

And deep down... I knew I could only push her away so many times-I’d used up all my will power in the past few days to put distance between us.

Jake came over to my desk and asked me worriedly, “Are you sure there’s nothing I can do to help?”

“Actually, there is.” I handed him a stack of files. “These are all pretty simple. I think even you can handle them.”

“Alpha-“

I arched an eyebrow and asked impatiently. “Any problems?”

“Ah no,” he replied, weighing his words, “but had you read my note on top of this pile, you’ll know that I had already gone through them, and all you need to do is to sign them. I CAN forge your signature if you need me to, but Beta Xavier will throw me in jail and you’ll have to read those files yourself going forward.”

“Oh, there is something new over there.” Jake flipped through a shorter stack at the corner of my desk.

“I see. These must be from this afternoon. Well, I’ll get them started.”

He took the files and left my office, thank goodness.

Immediately, my mind went to all of the memories I had of Ciana.

My power was different now than it had been before, and controlling it was more challenging than it had been before the situation with the Moonlit Crystal.

I couldn't guarantee her safety at this point, and I was not willing to risk hurting her when I didn't know what was happening in my own body.

I grabbed some paperwork and started signing them robotically.

Thoughts of Ciana's warm skin came to mind. The way her lips were so luscious and full, how she always tasted like sweet water and mint, how her body felt beneath me.

I knew it was just an imaginary world, but it had seemed so real at the time. She'd felt perfect, and every second I'd shared in bed with her was seared into my mind.

Which was precisely why I couldn't be with her-ever again.

But would it hurt to go see her one more time? Maybe she just wanted to tell me goodbye. After all, she had told my mother that she was willing to go home as soon as she helped me with the berry.

It didn't help that Jake came in at least a dozen times to advise me to change my mind.

Finally every piece of paper on my desk was signed, and the sun had gone down. My mind kept oscillating between what I wanted to do and what I knew I should do.

About 11:00, there was a familiar knock on the door. I sighed and dropped my head onto my desk with a thunk. "Jake..."

He opened the door. "Hi, Alpha," he said with a crooked grin on his face. "Sure it's getting late. I just wanted-"

"I know!" I shouted, looking up at him. "I know! You just wanted to know if I am going to see Ciana or not!"

"Yes, that," he began. "And-"

"Really, Jake! You've come by a hundred times already! Why can't you just mind your own business?" I continued.

"Right, I only wanted to-"

"You don't need to make excuses. I get it. You think that I should go and see her. You've made your point clear."

"That's true, I do think you should, but I only wanted to say—"

"Fine!" I shouted, standing up from my desk. "I'll go. Just for you! Because you're driving me insane!"

Jake stared at me for a long moment before he said, "That's great. I think you're making the right decision. But I only came to tell you... I'm done with these files." He walked over to my desk then and dropped the files that he had taken from me earlier onto my desk.

I could only say two words to him. "Get out."

Jake couldn't press down the smile on his face as he turned to head back out the door.

"Yes, Alpha," he said over his shoulder. "But I'm glad you made up your mind to go. I really do think that it's the right decision. She really cares about you, and I think, maybe you care about her, too." He gave me a long look but then headed out the door, closing it behind him.

I collapsed into my chair and dropped my head on the desk again. The urge to bang my forehead several times against the wood was overwhelming, but I controlled myself.

What was I doing? I'd just told Jake I was going to go see

Ciana at the pavilion. Why would I say that? I should've known better!

I was calm at the moment, though. I pulled open my desk drawer and found the lapel pin I'd put there earlier in the day. I clipped it on and decided to head to the pavilion.

My heart was pumped, and even the air seemed more pleasant. Yes... I couldn't lie to myself. I longed to see her so much that I couldn't wait another moment.

But then, I felt my powers beginning to grow inside of me. They were boiling up in a way that I knew was dangerous.

Fuck! Must it happen right at this moment?!

I took a deep breath and assessed the situation, however, the more I wanted to press it down, the more it seemed to be out of control.

I took some slow, deep breaths and tried to remember all of the meditation skills that I had practiced over the years, but none of them seemed to be working. I could feel the burn of power within my veins.

Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!!

No, I couldn't let this get out of my grip. I had to find a way to get it under control-now.

I watched as the clock ticked, 11:15, 11:30.

My heart sank more and more as it was getting closer to midnight.

11:45, 12:00...

I let out a long, desperate breath.

It was too late already. She must be gone...

In my mind's eye, I imagined Ciana sitting there for an hour or so, waiting for me, and when I didn't show, she likely got up and left this damn place for good.

I closed my eyes hopelessly, laughing at myself, at how stupid I was behaving. I should've known better-I should not have hoped to see her. A monster like me, I needed to stay away from her for her sake....

By the time I finally felt somewhat normal and opened my eyes again, it was 2:00 in the morning.

I'd already missed my chance to speak with her, to see what she wanted.

To say goodbye.

With a sigh, I got up. I knew what else I could do to help calm my raging powers.

I headed to the window and took off in a sprint, I shifted midstride, letting my dark wolf run free.

In the moonlight, I let my mind go and just followed my wolf, letting him run wherever he wanted to go.

My paws carried me between the evergreen trees, the scent of pine coating my lungs as I sucked in air. I splashed through a narrow creek, the crisp, cool water splashing up to wet my fur.

Leaping over a small hedge, I sent a flurry of night birds out of the trees and up into the inky blue sky. Their squawks filled the night air, but I didn't slow to watch them flutter away as I continued to sprint through the woods.

These were the same woods I'd run through a million times before. I didn't need to think or look where I was going.

All I needed to do was let my wolf run free and take me wherever he wanted to go. I dodged around trees and slipped between them, never fearing running into a tree trunk because I knew these woods like they were my home. My

powers felt more under control at the moment than they had all night.

Nearly out of breath, I finally paused to assess where I had ended up running to. Ahead of me, moonlight streamed over the top of the building as I stood in the shadows, looking at it from a distance.

I was shocked to see that my wolf had instinctively brought me to the pavilion, the exact same place where Ciana had asked to meet me.

Was there any chance... that she was still here?

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 407](#)

Nothing At All

Ciana

The air was chilly, more so than I had planned for. It was much warmer during the day, so I did not expect the temperature to drop so dramatically at night.

I had left my room about an hour ago to walk out here. My mind had been on the possibility of whether or not Theo would be here to meet me, so I hadn't even thought about the chance that it would be cold.

Now, I was sitting on the steps of the pavilion, staring back at the palace, waiting.

I'd been sitting here waiting for a really long time now, and every intelligent part of my brain was telling me that I needed to get up and leave.

Not only was it cold outside, I was beginning to shiver. My nose was starting to feel a little stuffy, and I could feel the urge to sneeze.

What in the world was I doing?

I didn't have an answer for that. I knew that this was stupid. If he was going to come, he would've been here a long time ago.

Yet again, I found myself questioning what in the world I had been thinking. If Prince Theo hadn't made it clear earlier that he didn't care about me, this should've been a really big clue. But my bottom continued to stay firmly planted to the step I'd been sitting on for more than three hours because I was a fool.

A familiar sound caught my attention, and I couldn't help the smile that came to my face even though it was followed by a sneeze. The slithering got closer, and when Perceval wrapped himself around my shoulders, I felt a bit warmer.

Petting his head, I said, "Hello there, friend." His forked tongue darted out of his mouth, and he licked me. "It's nice to see you again."

He coiled himself around my arm and rested his head on my shoulder. It didn't make me too much warmer since he was a reptile, but it was nice of him to try.

"Well, at least I can count on you, my little friend." I rested my head gently on top of his.

Perceval was just further proof to me that animals were often better than people.

"It's not like I would've known what to say to him anyway," I said to the snake. "I mean, what was I going to do? Beg him to let me stay? He'd made himself pretty clear earlier when he told me to go. And even if he does, I wouldn't stay anyway. I need to go home..."

Of course, the snake said nothing in response. It was probably just as well. What could he possibly say?

I didn't even know what I wanted from all this, other than... seeing him one more time, and to talk to him.

If what Sophia told me was true, why did he act so strangely? Why did everything have to be so complicated? Why wouldn't he just be honest with me?

Now that I thought about it, I figured that I really just wanted to have a real conversation with him one more time.

Whether he was doing okay? Had he reconciled with his mother? Was everything with the berry working?

How did he feel about me? Would he treat me like a friend?

Would he miss me while I was gone...

Another chill went down my spine as a cold breeze blew past me. I sneezed again and my eyes focused on the palace in the distance.

As the night deepened, I was losing hope by the minute. It was pretty stupid of me to sit out here in the cold pining over someone who might not want to have anything to do with me, wasn't it?

Perceval slithered down from my shoulder and wrapped himself around my legs. I wasn't sure if he was trying to guide me to get up or if he was saying I shouldn't go just yet.

Just then, I felt a warm fabric slip over my shoulders.

Startled, I looked up into a pair of familiar dark eyes.

"Warren?"

He smiled and sat down next to me on the step. "I thought I might find you here."

He had placed his suit jacket over my shoulders, which I appreciated. I was much warmer now, but I was still confused.

"What are you doing out here?" I asked him.

"What are YOU doing out here?" he asked me back.

I didn't answer. What could I say? He had seen how Theo treated me while we were in the garden. He probably would be amazed by my silliness.

Getting no response from me, he explained how he got here. "I had gone to your room to look for you but you weren't there. I tried to figure out where you might've gone, and Brook said that you might be outside. I guessed if that was the case, then you had to have gone out to the zoo to say goodbye to all of your furry friends."

I couldn't help but smile at him. He knew me so well. Though I hadn't gone over there to say goodbye to the other animals, I had thought about doing so and intended to do that before I left.

But I had come here instead, like a fool.

"Then how did you end up here?" I asked him.

"You weren't in the zoo either, and I noticed that there was one animal missing." He shrugged, and a small smile pulled up the corners of his mouth. "The python normally guards this pavilion, and I thought you might have come here to bid him a farewell. And here you are." He seemed proud of himself for figuring out the mystery, and I thought he was pretty clever, too.

But that wasn't really why I was here, and I didn't want to lie to the wonderful man in front of me. I thought about everything Sophia had said earlier, about how Warren was so kind and

thoughtful. He wasn't cold and dismissive of others the way that... some other people were.

Sighing, I looked down at the ground. Should I just tell Warren the truth? But, eventually I decided to keep that to myself.

"It's good to see you here..." I whispered.

"It's getting late, let's go back."

I shook my head. I didn't even understand why.

Warren waited for a moment and cleared his throat. "I don't think he's coming, Ciana."

My eyes widened, and I felt my cheeks heat up, despite the fact that we were sitting outside in the cold. "Wh-what?" I asked, trying to seem as innocent as possible.

"I mean, I assume that you are waiting for Theo or else you wouldn't be sitting here in the cold, sneezing. You'd probably say goodbye to Perceval quickly and rush back inside to your warm bed."

I didn't know what to say. Clearly, he understood that I wasn't just here just to pet the snake.

"So... you know I am here to see him, then?"

Warren nodded, that crooked grin still on his face. "Yes, but when I walked past his bedroom on the way out here, his lights were out. So I figured he was either out here with you or fast asleep, and since I don't see him anywhere, I'm guessing he went to bed."

I swallowed hard, the bitterness inside of me overwhelming. I didn't know if I should laugh at myself or cry aloud. That was how much he cared about me, then? He couldn't even bring himself to walk out here just to see what I had to say to him?

So much for Sophia's theory that Theo actually liked me.

But then, that really shouldn't have been a surprise at all because it was quite clear to me at the moment that Prince

Theo didn't actually care about anyone other than himself.

Despite how he must feel at knowing that I had been waiting for his brother, Warren didn't shout at me for choosing his brother instead of him. Instead, he simply put his arm around me and pulled me to his shoulder.

Sighing, I dropped my head against his shoulder, needing his support as a friend.

He held me there in the comfort of his arms for a long moment before he said, "I'm sorry, Ciana. I wish that I could explain my brother to you, but I can't. I know he's hurt your feelings, and I'm very sorry about that."

"No, it's not your fault. Not at all," I assured him, looking up at him. "And I'm sorry for anything I may have done to hurt you."

He scoffed, but I could hear the pain in his voice. "I think... maybe you were right earlier, when you said you were going to leave. Maybe you need a break from all of this."

I was surprised to hear him say that because I thought he'd try to convince me to stay there and be the woman he tried to have an heir with. But perhaps he didn't want to play second fiddle to anyone, even his brother.

He respected my choice. Warmth flowed through my heart.

How lucky I was to have met such a gentle and kind soul?

"I think that's probably for the best," I replied. The urge to cry bubbled up inside of me, but I swallowed it down.

“Why don’t you let me walk you back to the palace?” he suggested. “You’ve had a long day.”

I silently nodded. He stood and pulled me to my feet, and I kept his jacket wrapped around me as I started back toward the lights of the palace in the distance. Perceval slithered along in front of us, leading the way.

My heart was heavy in my chest, and as every step took me further away from the place where Theo had first kissed me, where I’d done everything I could to save his life, I felt the tears pool behind my eyes.

I couldn’t help but turn around and look back over my shoulder at the pavilion. It looked so beautiful with the moonlight streaming down on it. The moonbeams caught the glass in the greenhouse and made the top of the building twinkle.

Just then, I caught a strange form in the shadows of the forest on the other side of the pavilion.

‘I stopped in my tracks, turning fully around and staring into the blackness.

“What is it?” Warren asked me, his voice laced with alarm.

Whatever I’d seen, it must’ve disappeared because I didn’t see anything now.

Perhaps my eyes were tricking me.

“Nothing. I didn’t see anything at all.”

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 408](#)

My Dad and His Brother

My bags were all packed. I was ready to head out, to catch a ride to the train station, and then get on the train back home.

The morning sun illuminated the room I had shared with Brook as I made sure I hadn’t missed anything. Everything was there.

I had no reason to stay.

“The maid I spoke to said that the delivery man leaves the front gate of the palace in about fifteen minutes,” Brook said as she came in and sat down on the edge of the bed. “So you shouldn’t have any trouble catching a ride to the train station with him.”

“Thank you.” I wasn’t sure how I was going to say goodbye to her when the time came, but at least she was going to be accompanying me to the front gate, so I could put it off for a few more minutes.

A few of the other girls came to say goodbye, but all of them were happy I was leaving. They thought it gave them a better chance with Theo. If they knew how he’d ignored me last night at the pavilion, they would know that I never really had a chance with him to begin with.

“I’ll miss you, too, Brook. Thank you for being such a good friend to me.” I hoped I’d be able to see her again in the near future.

"It's not like we'll never see each other again!" Brook wiped away her tears and managed to give me a big smile. Then she reached out to one of my bags when someone else took it from her.

"Beta Jake?"

"Let me carry this for you."

"Thank you, but no need," I grabbed it back from him. "Beta Jake, as you can see, I'm leaving. You can report back to your Alpha that I'll be gone and he won't need to worry about me bothering him any more."

"Ciana, you misunderstood-he's very upset that he couldn't make it last night."

I shook my head and stared at him. "I'm not a fool. You don't need to make up things just to make me feel better."

Jake stared at me and let out a sigh. "I apologize on behalf of Alpha. Sometimes he may appear to be cold and aloof, but he has his good qualities, too."

"Save it," I told him, noticing the truck driver coming out. "I don't want to talk about him ever again. That's my ride. I'll see you both later." I gave Brook one last wave and headed over to get in the truck.

After about an hour, we arrived at the train station. I thanked the driver and walked up to the teller to purchase a ticket back to my pack.

I had about an hour before my train left, so I found a bench and sat down.

My mind was preoccupied with a thousand thoughts, and I couldn't concentrate on a single one of them.

My ticket was in my hand as I watched a few other trains come and go. People bustled to get on and off of the trains, rushing about. Most of them were with their families or friends. I was alone. I was okay with that.

And then I saw him.

My eyes focused on a familiar face. He was sitting on a bench about twenty yards away from me. He wasn't even looking in my direction.

I swallowed back my confusion and got up to go over to him. I had to know what he was doing at the train station.

Sitting down next to him, I asked, "Why are you here?" trying to sound interested but not accusatory.

Warren looked over at me with a guilty grin on his face. "I'm sorry, but had to see you off."

"But why are you at the train station?" I asked again. "You could have just said goodbye back in the palace..."

He let out a sigh. "Well, I've decided to go visit my sister," he explained.

Confused, I stared at him for a moment and then asked, "But what about your father's task?"

“That’s exactly why I’m here. I decided I don’t want to do that. I’m tired of him ordering me around all of the time, so I’ve decided I will just do as I please.”

I almost laughed. My understanding was that he often did as he pleased. This was nothing unusual.

“Where does your sister live? What train are you on?” I asked, not able to see the details on the ticket in his hand. I was surprised that he didn’t use a royal limo. But then, if he was sneaking out, the fewer people that knew where he was, the better.

“I actually have to go right to the station near your pack and then switch trains,” he explained. “So... I’m afraid I’m on the same train as you.” He held up his ticket for me to see. “I’m sorry. I didn’t want you to think I was stalking you or anything.

Shaking my head, I said, “No, I don’t think that.”

“Well, we can sit on the train together,” he suggested. “We can keep each other company.”

“Um, sure.”

He smiled brightly. “That’s great, thanks.”

At least I wouldn’t be lonely on my way home after all.

We sat and chatted about nothing in particular until the train arrived, and then we got on and shared a seat. Warren was kind enough to let me sit by the window.

He knew how I liked to stare out at nature. I would’ve rather been out there, but I had my responsibilities to take care of.

The train ride was fairly uneventful. I almost fell asleep a few times. Warren suggested we chat about our families, which was a good idea to me. I told him all about my mother’s family first, and then about my father’s.

Some of the tales about my father’s brother seemed unbelievable to Warren, and I had to wonder if it was possible that my dad had just made them up to amuse me.

“No way! He chose to be a rogue?” Warren’s jaw almost fell.

“Yep, and then became the rogue king.”

“That was unbelievable... but wouldn’t he lose his soul?”

“Apparently no.”

“And he basically single-handedly destroyed half of his enemy’s army...”

“Well, according to Dad, he and his brother each take half of the credit.”

“How have I never heard about this?”

“See, that’s why I always question whether any of those stories are real,” I laughed, “What about you?” I asked him after I was done with all of my family anecdotes. “I know nothing about your sister.”

His face brightened. "Oh, Maggie is great. It's too bad you didn't get a chance to meet her. I think you'd really love her. Honestly, Brook reminds me a lot of her. They're both very sweet, graceful, and kind."

I smiled, wishing I'd had a chance to meet her. "She sounds lovely."

"She really is. And so are you."

I felt my cheeks heat and immediately turned my eyes away. However, Warren didn't seem to notice that, and continued innocently, "Ever since Mother died, Maggie had been playing the role of a parent to me..." His voice trailed off.

Out the window, I saw familiar surroundings.

"We're almost there," I stood up, trying to get ready. However, I knew that home would not be like how it should be.

I needed to be mentally prepared for the danger out there. Because of Susan's death, I wouldn't approach any of my close friends anymore in case Raymond lashed out on them.

I needed to handle this alone, which made me a bit nervous.

We were almost to the train station when I heard someone a few seats back talking loudly. I heard my name and turned around.

I didn't know the person, but when they saw me, the woman's eyes widened. "My Goddess, she looks just like Miss Ciana!"

My eyebrows narrowed as the man sitting next to her said, "Yes, she does, but we know that she can't be the Alpha's daughter. After all, she has to be getting ready for the alliance ceremony."

Warren was listening, too. He turned all the way around and put his knees in the seat so he could speak to them. "What alliance ceremony?" he asked them.

"Oh, haven't you heard?" the woman asked. "The daughter of our pack Alpha is entering an alliance soon with a very powerful leader from another pack."

Warren and I exchanged worried glances. I had no idea what they were talking about, but I knew it couldn't be good.

The last time I was here, I'd met that girl who looked exactly like me, the one that Raymond had tried to tell everyone was me, so I had to assume that's who they were talking about* now, that it was the fake version of me who was making an alliance.

But with whom?

I tried to think of all of our neighboring packs. None of them seemed powerful enough to me to make the pack members this excited.

I said to Warren, who had turned back around and sat down, "I wish I knew who they were talking about." I shook my head, thinking at least I would be a bit more prepared to show up and find out the situation if I knew who it was.

Clearing his throat, Warren leaned up a bit and looked around.

He noticed a couple across the aisle from us. "Excuse me," he said, tapping the man on the shoulder.

The gentleman turned around with a questioning look on his face. "Yes? What is it?"

"I was just wondering, can you tell me who it is that Ciana Black is joining into the alliance with? Do you happen to know the man's name?"

"Yes, of course," he said. "I thought everyone around here knew his name."

"I'm sorry," Warren said with a shrug. "I'm not from around here."

"Oh, well, then, I don't mind telling you. His name is Luther."

"Luther?" I repeated the name with my eyes bulging.

No! Anyone but Luther!

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 409](#)

To Marry Me

Warren

Ciana's face said it all. She was clearly upset and shocked. I was also surprised to hear that. I heard about Luther being a pain to deal with back at the palace, but I had no idea why he would come all the way out here to Alvar pack to cause trouble.

"What the!" Ciana muttered, under her breath as the train began to slow down to a stop at the station.

"I guess... Raymond's plan is working."

"What plan?" I had a little bit of information about what had happened when Ciana and Theo had come out here, but I didn't know all of the details.

Ciana was more thinking aloud than answering me from what I could tell. "Obviously, he found this girl who looks like me and brought her in as a puppet. He probably convinced the pack elders and others that he had the support of my family even though my parents aren't here because he has that fake version of me."

"So he's using a woman who looks a bit like you to trick everyone into thinking you are willing to make an alliance with Luther's pack?" I asked her.

She turned and looked at me. "She looks exactly like me, Warren. Exactly. Close enough to fool just about anyone."

"Wow," I muttered. "Even your parents?"

"No, I don't think so, but they're not here, and I don't have any other family. No, the only other person besides my mom and dad who might be able to tell would be Susan, but she's... dead." Ciana's eyes widened slowly, and she began nodding.

"What is it?" I asked her.

“That’s why she had to die! Of course!” she gritted through her teeth as she turned and looked at me, grasping onto my arm.

“What are you talking about?”

“Raymond knew because Susan and I were so close that she would see that this imposter isn’t me, and she would say something. So... he killed her.” I saw a mixture of anger and sadness on her face at this revelation.

We pulled into the train station, I grabbed her luggage as well as mine. “Let’s go. We’ll get all of this sorted.”

“We?”

“Yes, we. I’ll go to my sister’s once we get your pack affairs straightened out.”

“But Pr... Warren. You really don’t need to. I can handle this myself.”

I sighed. I knew why she didn’t want me to come along.

Even though she didn’t say it aloud, she basically had rejected me. Being on the road going in the same direction and keeping each other accompanied is one thing, but she probably wouldn’t feel comfortable if I decided to follow her around.

However, I really just wanted to help her and protect her. Not just as a man who wanted to help the woman that he cared about, but also as a friend looking out for another friend.

I wasn’t looking for anything in return from her.

I simply just wanted to be there for her.

“Why don’t you let me go with you and help you?” I asked her as the train stopped and the people around us began to gather up their belongings. In my experience, Ciana was good at helping people, but she wasn’t the greatest at accepting help from others.

“Because this is not your burden to bear,” she said. “My pack may not be safe at this moment. It seems quite clear that he has been able to fool the pack into throwing their support behind him through these devious means.”

“That’s exactly why you need to let me go with you, Ciana. By yourself, you won’t be able to get as much done as you would if you allow me to stay for a day or two and help.” I thought it might take a bit longer than that, but I needed to ease her into the idea.

She was still shaking her head, but I thought she might be coming around to the idea. Everyone else was off of the train now, so I took her bags and led her out. I waited until we were off of the train and could find a more secluded part of the station to speak.

It seemed like a lot of people were arriving at the village for the ceremony. Maybe we’d gotten here just in time.

Once we had a bit of privacy, I turned to Ciana. “If you were me and you knew your friend was going into a dangerous situation, would you just turn around and leave me to handle the mess all by myself?”

She stared at me for a moment, and shook her head honestly.

I beamed at her, "See, then what makes you think I would leave you all alone when I'm already here?"

Finally, she sighed, and gave in. "In that case, Prince Warren, thank you so much!"

"Great! Call me Warren, and it's my pleasure! Now, do you have any thoughts on where to start?"

She pondered for a moment, and analyzed, "To enter the alliance, they would have to present my pack's artifact as the symbol of authority in place of my parents. If I can get it... I'll be able to persuade the pack that I'm the real Ciana Black, and interrupt the ceremony."

"Do you know where it'll be?" I asked.

"I do, but most likely, Raymond has moved it." I saw the wheels turning in her head before she shrugged and said, "No, but I'm sure they will get it out for the alliance ceremony since that is such a big deal."

"What is your pack's artifact?"

"It's a feather from an arrow of the Moon Goddess," Ciana explained to me. "It's said to be a sacred arrow she shot from her bow. It's a symbol of power for our entire pack when the Alpha and the Luna are absent."

"Alright, well, then we need to get ourselves into the ceremony?" I ask her, half-thinking aloud.

"And I'll find an opportunity to steal it during the event!" She clapped her hands together. "Of course, if we were able to locate it ahead of time, it would be even better."

"All right. It should be easy enough for me to walk right into 'your pack and announce that I am here," I said. "But I'm not sure what to do about you. If you show up there, they are likely to arrest you-or worse."

"That's true. Alright. You go in, and I'll stay back for a bit until I feel it's safe to sneak into the village."

"But... if you do that, how will you know where to find me?"

Ciana winked at me with a grin this time. "Do you not think I know my pack well enough to be able to find you, silly? They will most definitely give you the grand visitors' suite at the pack house. But you should say no."

"I'm listening."

"Instead, ask them to put you in the Alpha's mansion.

Raymond won't like it, but you're a prestigious prince. You can tell him what to do. If you are at my parents' house, it will be easier for me to get to you, and it will be easier for us to find the feather."

"Sounds like a plan. Be careful. I don't want you to get hurt while I'm in here rubbing elbows with the fake pack leader."

"I will," she assured me, and then, still lugging her bags, Ciana turned to walk away. She got about four steps before she paused and turned back to face me. "Thank you. You always seem to be there when I need you."

Her words made my heart warm. "I'll always be there for you, Ciana," I assured her.

It didn't take me too long to get to the town. Finding the man in charge was pretty easy as well. The moment that Raymond heard that I was there, he came all the way out to greet me.

"Prince Warren!" he exclaimed, shaking my hand. I felt dirty just touching him. "It's an honor to meet you, Your Highness. Please tell me, what is it that brings you here to our humble pack?"

"It's nice to meet you as well. You're... not the pack Alpha, though, are you?" I looked around. "Where is Alpha Black?"

"Oh, he and his wife are away on business and have been for some time. They have trusted me with the pack affair while they're away. I'm doing my best to handle all of it, but it's quite difficult. Luckily though, I have full support from their daughter, Miss Ciana Black." He gave me a confident nod.

I tried not to say anything sarcastic but only agreed with him by nodding adamantly as he spoke. "Do you think that they will be back soon? I have an important matter that I'd like to discuss with the Alpha."

"Sadly, no," he said, looking down at the floor and shaking his head as if he were upset about the fact that the Blacks were not in the village. "If I am honest with you, Prince Warren, some of us are beginning to get a bit worried about them."

My eyebrows arched as I wondered what he might say next. "Why is that?"

"Well, no one has heard from them in quite some time. We continue to pray to the Moon Goddess that all is well." He was acting like he thought his Alpha and Luna were dead, and he was sad about it, but I saw right through his act.

"That's too bad," I sighed. "Well, I need to speak to the Alpha eventually, but for now, I would like to see Ciana, please."

The man's eyes almost bugged out of his head. "Ciana?" he asked. "Oh, I'm afraid she's quite busy at the moment."

"Oh?" I smiled. "I think she would like to see me. After all, the two of us became quite close when she was at the castle. While things didn't work out between her and Theo, she and I have quite a bit in common."

"Is that so?" He was a bit astonished. "I wasn't aware of that. Well, I'm afraid she's not available at the moment. Perhaps later in the day."

I knew exactly what he was doing. He didn't want me to see the imposter. He was trying to keep her from me. He thought I might be able to tell the difference between the real Ciana and this one he'd brought in.

He was right to be concerned.

“All right then,” I said politely. “I’d like to stay in the Alpha’s house then, if you don’t mind. Ciana had invited me to stay at her house if I ever came to visit.”

“The Alpha’s house?” he questioned. “But we have a lovely room in the pack house.”

“No, no, I insist,” I told him. “I prefer quieter surroundings and more privacy.”

He nodded. “Well, you are the prince.”

“Good, and as soon as you have a chance, please let Ciana know I am here and will wait for her.” I looked at the time, acting as if I was in such a hurry I needed to get out of there right away.

His eyes widened yet again as he asked me, “May I know what it is you intend to ask Miss Ciana?”

I didn’t hesitate to respond, “To marry me.”

[Sold As The Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 410](#)

A Change of Plan

Theo

The window in my office overlooked the garden. Most of the time, I didn’t pay any attention to it at all, but today, it seemed like I couldn’t stop staring outside.

She was gone. Really gone this time. And I couldn’t follow her as I had the last time she had run away. No, it was better this way. And even though it hurt right now, I knew I would get over it eventually.

With as much experience as I had at being all alone, I knew from the past that I would eventually forget all about her.

I’d forget the shape of her face, how her mouth curled up at the corners when she smiled, the way her eyes twinkled when she was happy.

I’d forget her scent-that fresh, warm smell of all things lovely and inviting.

I’d forget the softness of her skin and how her lips felt so perfect pressing against mine.

Before too much longer, all of that would fade into the background, and someday, when someone said the name

Ciana Black, I’d be able to not feel part of me was missing....

Jake knocked on the door and waited for me to tell him he could enter. “What is it?” I asked him.

“Just a note that Ciana got safely to her pack. The men you had followed her have reported back. They’re still there to protect her. That’s all.” Jake was looking at me like he expected me to look sad or disappointed.

“Okay,” I said, acting as if I didn’t even care. The lapel pin in my hand seemed heavier now, as if it weighed as much as the rock sitting in my chest.

“Are you all right, Alpha?” Jake asked me.

“Yes, of course I am,” I said dismissively.

“Don’t you worry about her? Sure, we have men protecting her, but...”

“I have faith that she can handle Raymond on her own. After all, most of the pack simply just didn’t know the truth. As long as she can prove her identity, she’ll be fine.”

“Alright.” Jake nodded, but the look on his face told me he didn’t agree. “Even if she is fine, how about you?”

“What about me?”

He gave me a concerned glance, but I was fine. I would be fine.

It really was all for the best that she was gone. Staying here would only put her in more danger compared to her pack, and neither of us needed that.

“Could you go get me those files we discussed before?” I asked Jake, trying to get back to business.

“Oh, sorry. I meant to bring them. They’re in my office. I’ll be right back.”

He left the door ajar and headed over to his office to grab them. Since his office was just down the hall, it should only take a moment.

That gave me a few minutes to stare at the lapel pin in my hand. All of the images on it reminded me of the special times we’d shared together.

“There he is!” I heard a female voice say. I looked up to see two women standing in the entrance to my office.

I recognized both of them from the consort group. I believed they were friends of Sophia, though I had no idea what their names were.

“Your Highness,” one with dark hair said, “is there anything we can do to serve you? Could we straighten your office? Or rub your feet?”

“Perhaps we could cook you something?” the blonde asked. “We would love to do whatever we can to help you.”

What the hell?

“Who let the two of you into my part of the palace?” I demanded, staring them down.

“Your Highness... Beta Xavier said you might be lonely and it’s our responsibility to-“

Their words caught in their throat as I narrowed my eyes and sneered, “To what?”

Xavier, I should’ve known he wouldn’t just give up. Father must have tasked him to continue monitoring the progress and I should’ve known he wouldn’t give up so easily.

It was as if my words encouraged the two women somehow.

“To... serve you,” the dark-haired one stood up, batted her eyelashes, and gave a flirtatious smile which made me want to puke.

“And bring you joy,” the blonde said in a seductive tune as she started walking over and even reaching out her arm, about to touch me.

“How dare you!” I gave each of them a cold glare and they both stopped midway.

Panic flashed on their faces as I scoffed, “It seems that you two are tired of living?”

They both dropped to their knees immediately.

“We’re so sorry!” the one with dark hair cried, “We... were only trying to help!”

“Really, my Prince!” the other one explained, “we were hoping to be of service to you. So far, all we’ve been doing is sitting around and waiting. Beta Xavier said...”

“Get out,” I ordered. “Now.”

Both of them burst into tears and took off down the hallway, clutching onto one another.

Jake came back in with the files. “Really, Jake, close the door next time.”

He looked confused and closed the door behind him as he came over to my desk. “Sorry. Did something happen?”

“Doesn’t matter now.”

I didn’t want to explain it all to him, so I just ignored the question and took the folders. Jake didn’t ask more questions, however, his expression looked serious.

“Alpha, I just got some important news about Alvar Pack.”

Ciana’s pack? He had my attention now. I set the files down and studied his face. “Tell me.”

He sank down on the edge of one of the chairs across from me.

“It seems that the pack is undergoing some sort of alliance ceremony,” Jake told me. “One of the men that tailed Ciana there just reported to me. He said that he heard about it on a train. It’s some sort of a big deal.”

“Who are they aligning themselves with?”

Jake swallowed so hard I could see his throat moving. “Uhm, we haven’t gotten the final confirmation, but one name that has come up is troublesome.”

“Let me guess,” I crossed my arms in front of me. “Luther?”

“Yes.”

Of course, it would be him. It seemed like every time there was something going wrong in my life anymore, it could all be traced back to that asshole. “What is he doing there?”

“I don’t have a lot of details, sir, but if that’s the case, Ciana’s pack is in more trouble than we originally thought. Even if Ciana can handle Raymond, I don’t think it’s a good idea for her to go against Luther on her own.”

Son of a bitch! I should've known Luther must be behind all of this. After all, he was the one who told Ciana the news from her pack. He of course didn't do that out of his good heart.

Jake suggested solemnly, "I think we should probably send some troops there to fix the situation, or else Ciana and the rest of them will continue to be in a mess of trouble."

"No need to send troops," I told him, already knowing what needed to be done.

"What do you mean no need to send troops?" Jake asked, looking surprised.

"We don't have enough information about Luther's group yet. How many of them are there, how many packs they've been working with, where is their base? Without that information, even if we win the battle, it won't solve the cause."

"Then, let me send more men to start the investigation. Some of them are already there..."

"I've dealt with Luther before. He's cunning and not easy to handle. Tell Greg and Sherry to come to see me."

Jake's eyes widened. "You can't be serious!"

My only response was to shrug.

"But... are you sure that's safe? And what about Ciana? Are you sure you're ready to see her again so soon?"

I pushed up from my desk to standing. "I won't be near her. Jake, arrange a new identity for me that makes it easy for me to travel around the southern packs, but your informants don't need to know exactly who I am."

"Yes, Alpha, I'll get that sorted. However...."

"This is the best way to do it. I'll have first-hand information. Luther has been after me for some time now, and meanwhile I'm after him. This is a great opportunity."

He nodded, knowing me well enough to understand that he wasn't going to be able to change my mind.

"Very well, Alpha. I am sure that you'll be able to help Ciana and her entire pack. I just don't want to see you in a situation you might regret."

Jake was my Beta, but he was also my friend, and I appreciated what he was telling me. "I'll be alright. Keep informed with everything in the palace. You're in charge here."

I left my office and headed back to my private chambers, which was just down the hall a little way. I had only just arrived when Greg and Sherry showed up.

We went straight into my bathroom. Greg was a master of disguise, and Sherry, his mate, knew all of the tricks for making sure a person looked natural, no matter how many changes were made to their outer appearance.

I sat back and let them work their wonder. Greg extended my hair and gave it a totally different style before dying it.

After Greg changed my hair to a light blond, Sherry fitted me for colored contacts that made my eyes a bright blue. Just those two changes already made me look very different.

Then she applied some products to make my skin a darker shade before she worked on my eyebrows, fake facial hair and minimum makeup that made my chin and nose appear to be different shapes visually.

Lastly, they provided me with a casual outfit.

When they were all finished, I looked at myself in the mirror and didn't recognize the man I was looking at.

"Well, Prince Theo," Greg began, "what do you think?"

"I have no idea who I'm looking at," I told them. "It's perfect.

We'll leave in two hours when it's dark outside."

"Yes, Alpha."

The two of them bowed to me before leaving my room. I knew they also needed to disguise themselves.

My gaze fell on the lapel pin on my dresser. After a moment, let out a sigh, grabbed it, and put it in my pocket.