

Kings Breeder 451

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Sophia stared at me for a long time while I felt as if I had a knot in my stomach that made me barely able to maintain my composure.

What if she said no? Then who could I turn to?

I really couldn't imagine.

It felt like ages had passed before she finally let out a breath and said, "Tell me what to do."

As expected, Xavier sent for the sacred artifact in Sophia's pack and then came to look for her. Sophia volunteered to perform the secret ritual using the dagger which greatly pleased the king and his Beta.

Everything was ready and the ritual would be performed the next day. Even though, logically, I knew I should get some rest to have full energy to face what fate would bring, I just could not stop tossing and turning.

Perhaps I should head to the dungeon and give Theo a heads- up? No, no, that would be too risky. With the ritual tomorrow, the security would be tight and there would be no way of getting by unless I was authorized down there.

I had to wait.

As the sun's early morning rays pierced into the room, I followed Sophia and got ready for the time to come.

"Ah, Miss Chambers, you looked to be fully prepared." Xavier arrived a little past seven. "Are we ready?"

Sophia nodded. She wore an indigo long gown with round silver embroideries on it, symbolizing the full moon in the night sky. Three girls in white gowns followed her, me included.

Each of us wore a mask that was sent by Sophia's pack and held an elegant tray with both of our hands. The three trays individually carried different necessities needed for the ritual -bandages, medicine, and the sacred Dagger of Mercy.

I lowered my gaze and focused on the tray in my hand, not wanting to make eye contact with anyone.

Xavier frowned, "I didn't know you needed this many helpers. The fewer people involved, the better."

Sophia shook her head. "I'm afraid it's part of the ritual. I won't be able to perform it on my own."

"Fine. Follow me."

I let out a quiet breath of relief and started walking with the group.

We walked down the stairway that led to the dungeon. My heart was pounding in my chest as we entered the space.

Jake was still tied up but the cell next to his was empty now. Theo had been splayed out on what looked to be some kind of concrete altar. His hands and feet were tied to the four posts at the four corners of the square slab, and there were some sort of herbs on the floor.

Wolfsbane, I assumed.

I could see the cuts and bruises all over his body, most of them were still raw and fresh. Those bastards must have given him something to slow down his healing process!

My throat tightened upon seeing him like that and tears almost rushed out. Thank the Goddess I was wearing the mask, otherwise, others might have noticed my reddened eyes.

The guards came and tightened the shackles around his limbs and Theo struggled against them, but it was no use.

He seemed to be even weaker than a few days ago.

Starvation, physical torture, and lack of rest had almost taken the life out of him. Yes, he had the most powerful blood in his veins, but it didn't mean he still had any strength to fight against other well-trained warriors.

His eyes were even darker than usual, and I could tell that his wolf was trying to push forward. He was trying everything he could but he was too weak to overcome the effects of the wolfsbane.

King Sebastian walked in, looking as smug as ever with Xavier by his side.

"Miss Chambers, I thank you for this wonderful service you are doing for your country. A true form of patriotism."

Sophia forced a smile. "It is my honor, my king."

"Let's get started, ladies," Sebastian cackled like the devil, "I have a world to lead and a son to command."

Fury boiled inside me. I did everything I could to restrain myself from grabbing the sacred dagger and stabbing it into the disgusting faces of Sebastian and Xavier.

I had never hated a man as much as Sebastian.

The evil king then turned to his son who lay on the altar, bound in metal. "Ready, son?"

Theo growled at him, baring his canines which threatened to extend.

From the distance, I heard Jake shout in a hoarse voice, "You can't do this to him!"

Sophia stepped toward him and nodded to me.

My gaze landed on the Dagger of Mercy. It was much smaller than I thought it would be. It had a handle that was made out of dark wood, some delicate carving that symbolized the full moon could be seen. I couldn't tell whether the blade was

sharp or not because it was inside a plain, silver sheath.

I lowered my head and raised the tray all the way up.

Sophia held the dagger in her hand and whispered something over it that I couldn't quite catch. A few seconds later, it began to glow.

She then turned to the king. "It's ready."

She walked over to me and stared directly into my eyes, trying to relay a message that read.

Be calm.

Sophia then moved to Theo who was still struggling in his chains. She hovered by his head and whispered something in his ear that no one else could hear when she leaned to him.

His movements stilled for a moment and he snapped his neck in my direction.

My heart skipped a beat. Did he recognize me?

But it was only for a millisecond before he looked back at Sophia who had straightened and now held the dagger over his chest.

Xavier praised, "Marvelous, isn't it? This is the first time in days that Prince Theo has been so cooperative!"

I again wanted to throw daggers at Xavier with my eyes, but I decided that my attention should be on Sophia and Theo just in case.

I watched as he continued to struggle but I noticed that his movements weren't as forced or as frantic. I only hoped that the king didn't notice as well.

I looked at Sebastian and he just looked like a kid in a candy store. His eyes were bright and wide and he looked excited by all of this. Of course. What a sick man.

Sophia laid a white cloth over Theo's upper body, then lifted her gaze and gave me a final look, before sinking the dagger into Theo's chest.

A small gasp escaped my lips, but luckily, most people around were just as stunned as me, and no one seemed to care about the small sound I'd just made.

When Sophia pulled out the dagger, blood seeped through the white cloth covering Theo. I heard her order, "Bandage and medicine!"

The other two girls hurried up to the altar and started cleaning and patching up all the wounds on Theo's body. They did not forget to remove the wolfbane either.

Sophia continued to whisper her mantra with her eyes closed, and Theo fought her as if he was in great pain. However, he didn't utter a single word through it all.

"Give way to control, your soul must be subdued," Sophia began her chant. "Remove the rebellion and give way to the master. No longer your own and only answer to your master's call."

She repeated this several times, and Theo continued to writhe in pain as she said every word.

Finally, she stepped away, and he went still. His eyes were closed and his chest rose and fell slowly.

“No-!” Jake screamed from his cell. “Alpha! Theo! Fucking wake up!”

Sebastian looked bored. “Someone shut him up.”

One of the guards got into the cell and started beating Jake until his head slumped down.

Sophia then turned to the king. “It’s done now. From now on, he’ll only listen to your commands and your commands alone.”

Sebastian frowned. “Why does he look like he’s sleeping?”

“Because the first person who wakes him will be the person he’s loyal to, Your Majesty,” Sophia smiled, although I saw thin sweat seeping through the back of her robe.

I figured she must be just as nervous as me.

“Whenever you’re ready, please go ahead.” She gestured to the ‘sleeping prince’. “Wake him up.”

Sebastian stepped toward the altar with a complacent smile on his face. “Theo, get up.”,

Theo opened his eyes. He stared at the ceiling like it was the most interesting thing in the world.

Sebastian turned to the guards and waved them over quickly. “Take these shackles off of him now.”

The guards hurried and got the shackles off.

“Theo, now raise,” the king commanded.

Theo did as he was told and kept his face completely passive. He didn’t wince when he stepped onto the ground. A mindless body wouldn’t feel pain.

“Kneel before your king.” The way Sebastian smiled when he said that made me want to punch his teeth out.

Theo did as he was commanded without any delay, and the king’s smile grew even larger.

“It really worked.” He looked to his Beta and then back to Sophia. “The little bastard would never kneel before me if he were in his right mind.”

I froze. The more I stared at Theo, the more anxious I became. He acted so lifelessly that I couldn’t help but wonder...what if Sophia had gone through with the king’s actual plan?

Or... what if something went wrong and Theo did become Sebastian’s puppet?

I couldn’t even dare to think deeper about that possibility. All I could do at that moment was pray to the Moon Goddess as Sebastian gave his third order.

“Remove your gloves.”

Something wasn’t sitting right with me. Why was he asking Theo to remove his gloves? Those were the gloves that kept Theo from killing people. If he wanted them off it meant that he wanted to kill someone....

Crap!

“I want you to touch and kill Sophia and her servant girls!”

I stopped breathing, and my heart caught in my throat.

I knew Sebastian was despicable, but I didn’t expect him to kick away the ladder so soon!

Sebastian turned to Sophia with a twisted smile on his face. “Miss Chambers, I appreciate your contribution! However, what you and your pack can do is too powerful and too dangerous. It cannot leave this room.”

Fear emerged in Sophia’s eyes and she immediately bowed her head, trying to ease the king’s worry, “Your Majesty, you have my words that this will never happen again outside of your permission.”

“You’re a smart girl, and during normal circumstances, you would be a very helpful resource. However, today is different. Miss Chambers, I’m afraid you have to stay here, forever.”

“I... I beg your pardon, Your Majesty?” Sophia squealed with wide eyes and took a step back. “I did exactly what you requested to show you my loyalty. How could you do this to me?”

“It’s nothing personal, my dear. Strictly business.” He shrugged. “Now, kill them, Theo.”

Theo held his hand up at us and took a menacing first step.

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

How were we going to get out of this now?

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Theo

I glared icily at Ciana and Sophia. They cowered before me and I smirked as I started to remove my gloves.

At the last minute, I caught Ciana’s eye. She was afraid of me for a moment, but I chuckled lightly again and I could tell she understood. She gave a slight nod.

I rounded on my father and jumped at him.

“What is this!?” Sebastian snarled. He glared at me, then pointed at Sophia. “I told you to kill that witch!”

“I’m not going to do that, Father,” I snarled, holding my hands out toward him.

“You filthy little witch! How dare you lie to me and go against my orders?” Sebastian roared, pointing at Sophia. He backed away as I stalked toward him.

I wasn’t going to let him get away this time.

“You refused to help Warren. Why would I do anything to help you?” Sophia asked, her shrill voice breaking through the air. “You could have just been a decent father for once, then you might not be in this situation.”

“You’re all betrayers! That little witch betrayed her king. And you, Theo, betrayed your own father. I’ll have you all executed for this!” he cried.

I noticed for the first time, my father had a flicker of fear in his eyes. He must have feared losing control, seeing all of us turning against him, even the people in his kingdom.

I shook my head, snarling. A tyrant could only hold so tightly before his victims started to fight against the squeezing pain.

“I’m not betraying my father. You are not my father because you never treated me like a son. Since I’m nothing more than a tool to you, I can disown you as my father and feel no remorse in what I’m about to do,” I informed him coldly.

I raised my arms up, showing off my bare, uncovered hands. Smirking, I reached for my father.

Sebastian growled and turned on his heel. He ran fast.

As helpful as Sophia’s bandages and medicine were, I was still weak from my captivity. Growling, I jumped into action, chasing my father away from the altar. I couldn’t let him get away again!

I didn’t care if he was still the king, I’d make sure no one dared shield him or protect him.

He probably was feeling cornered, no doubt. Unfortunately, cornered animals were always more dangerous. I needed to end this before he did anything crazy.

“Face me, coward!” I shouted.

“Who do you think you are to give me orders?” Sebastian growled back. He disappeared into the crowd and I heard a startled cry from within.

“No!” I gasped, recognizing the voice. I raced into the crowd after him. Everyone immediately parted for me with terror in their eyes as I launched myself forward.

My father turned back to me, a wild look on his face. He had his arms around a hostage. Sebastian glared at me, a hand aimed at her throat.

“Mother!” I stopped in my tracks.

“Don’t come any closer,” he snarled, spit flying from his mouth and landing on my mother’s face.

She made a disgusted look and shrank back within his hold.

“Don’t worry about me, Theo, finish what you started!” my mother cried.

“Let her go. This is between you and me!” I demanded.

Sebastian sneered and shook his head. “Look around, son. Guards are closing in from all sides, guards loyal to me. If you even lift a finger, I will kill your mother.”

He raised a hand and held it inches above her chest. I recognized the hand position, like he was getting ready to suck the life out of her.

"No," I muttered, shaking my head.

There were dozens of guards closing in around me, but they didn't concern me. I couldn't take my eyes off my father's hand and how it dipped lower to my mother's skin.

I almost forgot.

Just like me, he had the ability to drain others' lives. He was my father and it was his bloodline that was connected back to King Lycoan, the original Dark King.

However, he didn't wear gloves all the time. He didn't need to because he had a lot better control over his power...

I narrowed my eyes, how could I forget about that?

He'd been ecstatic when he discovered my powers at a young age. He'd quickly turned me into a weapon. I never understood why. If he'd had the same power, why did he need me?

"Don't be silly, my love," My mother sneered in a condescending voice, especially when she said the word

"love."

"Shut up!" Sebastian snapped, shaking her in his grasp.

I clenched my fists, ready to tear his head off for touching her and threatening her.

"You won't kill me, Sebastian, you can't. Don't fool yourself and don't try to bluff my son. He's smarter than that," she went on, laughing again.

"I told you to shut up!" Sebastian snarled, snapping his teeth close to her ear.

My mother shook her head and smirked at me. "Don't let him trick you. He won't be able to kill me. Shorten my lifespan, perhaps, but he doesn't have the strength to kill anyone."

My father growled. "Surrender, or you'll be responsible for whatever it is I do to her."

I glanced at the guards as they closed in around me, I had to drop my defense. There was no way I'd let Sebastian hurt my mother, even though she made it sound like he wouldn't be able to.

"Theo, don't listen to him. He can control it but only because he is weaker than you. He doesn't have the power to kill someone. All he can do is injure them and shorten their lifespan. I can take it... just... take him out!" my mother shouted.

"Careful, my dearest, you aren't as young as you used to be. I might have just enough strength to suck you dry," Sebastian warned.

"He doesn't! If he did, he would have done it already, just to show you he could. You know I'm right, Theo. You're stronger than him, you always have been," she said.

I looked at my own hands. I knew I had more strength than Sebastian but if I ran at him, how many years off my mother's life would he take before I could defeat him? Would it be enough to make her sick or weaken her?

I'd only just gotten her back in my life and didn't want to lose her all over again.

Seeing me not fighting back, she anxiously urged. "Theo, do it!"

"Ha. Ha. Ha." Sebastian's laugh rang loudly in my ears.

"After all these years, dear Nita, you still don't know me well at all. Let me remind you, there're a million ways to break a beautifully slender and fragile neck like yours," Sebastian said, still laughing, "but why would I do that?"

"It is an empty threat! Theo, why are you hesitating?" she shouted, pointing at me.

Sebastian chuckled again. "Stop encouraging him. That fucking weak-minded brat is not going to let me harm a single hair on your head. I know that far better than you."

"What the heck are you talking about, my son is way stronger than you, you freaking psycho!"

"Why do you think you're still alive so many years after Regina and Odelia had died? You don't really think it's just because you're lucky, do you?"

My mother's eyes widened.

What would she do when she found out the truth? A mix of anxiety and expectation coiled in my stomach.

"I've always kept you alive for a very, very special reason. You're the only thing that has ever been able to control Theo," Sebastian said, his voice thick with humor. "You see, with you around, I can get him to do mostly what I want."

My mother gasped. "Theo, you..."

"You never knew, did you? As long as Theo did exactly as I said, you remained alive and well. If he showed an ounce of disobedience, all I had to do was tell him I'd kill you and he'd fall in line. Even that time he was so seriously injured at 16, he came right back to me... because of you."

"STOP!" I roared.

"Oh, Theo," Mother whispered. She shook her head. "I never deserved you as a son. You protect me and care for me when I don't deserve it."

"He didn't tell you, then?" Sebastian continued, still high on his own joy. "I convinced him to produce a useful heir for me only when bringing your name into the conversation. Now, Theo, put on your gloves and go with the guards. Be a good son now, like you've always been, and I'll keep your mother safe."

I felt my mother's gaze burning into me. When I looked at her, her eyes were glassy with sadness. There was something else there, like a long awaited sense of peace and understanding. She held herself tall, her lips drawn in a determined look.

I had no idea what she was thinking or planning.

“Theo, surrender now, or else your mother will suffer,” my father said again.

My father... he was threatening my mother just to imprison me. He was nothing but a despicable tyrant.

The royal guards had completely closed in around us. There was no escape, and if I tried, Mother would die.

“Surrender!” he ordered.

I glared at Sebastian, hands raised with the desire to wrap around his throat and suck his life out. He couldn't defeat me, but my own strength was fading fast.

I hadn't had a decent meal since he locked me in the dungeons and I hadn't been able to recover fully from the torture.

Sighing, I bowed my head and nodded.

Sebastian chuckled and released my mother. He motioned to the guards to get closer to me.

I let my hands fall, assuming a submissive posture, but the decision had been made-let the guards come and they all would die, even if it meant I broke my own promise of never choosing to use that damned power again!

I needed it at this moment. I needed fresh life essence to heal myself and fight Sebastian, no matter what price I had to pay!

Suddenly, my mother raced toward my outstretched hands.

“Don't!” I shouted, feeling the heat of her life force as she approached.

My body was so weak, I wouldn't be able to control myself. If anything, my power was more dangerous, because it would seek a strong life force to replenish my weakened body.

“I'm sorry... Theo...my son!” she shouted, and her voice started to weaken, “You're free now!”

She ran right into my hands, grabbing them and clamping them tightly onto her heart.

“NO!” I cried as I felt her lifeforce pour into me. I tried to pull my hands away, but she held me down.

My body started to get refilled with strength, trying to replenish what was taken from it. When I'd fought Warren, the only reason he wasn't dead was because I'd been at top strength and my power hadn't worked as fast or as strongly. He still ended up in a coma.

Now, there was nothing to hold me back, nothing to stop me from draining her completely.

“I-it's okay, Th-Theo,” she said, a smile on her gentle lips.

“No! No!” I roared, “STOP-!”

Panicking, I tried to pull away again, but we were stuck together now. A howl broke free from my throat as I tried and tried to pull away.

But I couldn't.

It felt like time was moving in slow motion. She was trying to say something else, but no words came out of her cracked, parched lips. Her skin was starting to lose its natural glow and her hair was turning gray.

I saw every wrinkle on her face, every strand of gray hair, I saw it happen. I saw as her eyes glazed over. But her smile... her smile never faltered.

My hands, my own hands were murdering the woman that gave me life! She was dying right in front of my eyes.

I howled again, throwing my head back and howling to the sky. I couldn't break the cycle, I couldn't control my power, I was going to kill her!

"No! Theo, stop!" A familiar voice broke through my panic and the next moment, a pair of warm, bare hands came down on mine.

Skin on skin. So soft and gentle. Ciana's fresh water lily scent filled my lungs.

Opening my eyes, I saw her clear, blue eyes staring back at me, heartbroken and full of tears. She looked panicked and worried for me all at the same time.

Her fingers curled around mine and I saw how labored her breathing was. Her strength was fading fast.

"C-Ciana!?" My eyes bulged.

"Let go, NOW! I CAN'T CONTROL IT!" I screamed at her, terror surged up inside of me as I saw her weakening.

But she wouldn't-she probably couldn't.

My mind spun and I stared at her hands connected to mine.

No no no, not her...

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Ciana gasped and her knees buckled.

I couldn't even bring myself to look at the two and only important women in front of me.

It was as if the world was laughing at my arrogance. I thought

I could win this, but look, what I had done?

Why did the Goddess punish me like this?

Roaring, I ripped my hands away from Ciana and Nita.

Wait, was I already disconnected from them? What the-

"Theo, she's still alive. What are you waiting for? Fight!" Ciana's urgent voice echoed loudly in the air. I must have gone full-on insane to have this hallucination!

"Theo! Focus!" Ciana's voice shouted again.

As soon as I was dragged back to reality, I felt nudged by a group of... heads.

It was Samson, Linus, and Perceval coming to my aid, and when I looked up, there was Ciana. A lively, energetic Ciana.

She didn't faint nor was she hurt. She was still intact.

She collapsed on the ground only because she went to check on my mother, who lay still beside her.

Ciana checked her pulse and glared at me. She pointed behind me.

"Prince Theo, if Your Highness delays one more second, then all of us will really be dead. Linus bite them!" She pointed at the guards and my lion lunged forward, then she turned to the tiger, "Samson, you come to carry Lady Nite. She is not food, okay?"

I shifted and joined the fight while thousands of thoughts muddled my mind.

How was this even possible? Somehow, Ciana was able to stop me from draining my mother, and herself....She didn't look weak or sick at all.

She'd touched my hands, willingly, and nothing had happened to her.

Goddess, if I had died right at this second, I would've been at peace. However, life just gave me a touch of hope, and I was ready to fight to end this once and for all!

"What's this!? You were able to stop yourself?" Sebastian snarled behind me.

I glanced over at him. How could I forget he was there in all the craziness?

Sebastian grabbed the neck of the guard nearest to him and started sucking the life out of him until the guard groaned and passed out. He moved on to the next, and the next, getting more and more strength from them.

When his loyal guards realized what he was doing, they started backing away. Knees wobbling, they were petrified of

what the king would do to them as they backed away slowly, hoping they'd get far enough before the king set his sights on them.

This wasn't about them. I knew that. Sebastian was powering up to face me.

I looked back at Ciana. She was working to get my mother on Samson's back. Our eyes locked for a moment. She cleared her throat and arched an eyebrow at me.

"Come on, Prince! Don't just stare at me, do something. Your father is going to cause a lot more damage if you don't stop him!" she said, shaking her head at me.

Was Ciana immune to my ability? Was that even possible?

For now, it didn't matter how the miracle happened. I turn my attention back to my father. I'd promised myself he wasn't getting away this time, especially since I had more strength now.

Taking in a deep breath, I turned and lunged at Sebastian.

He snarled and blocked my incoming attack, grabbing my wrists and keeping my arms bound.

I smirked and thrust my knee into his stomach.

He groaned and staggered back. He caught himself on a nearby guard, clutched him, and sucked until the guard fainted.

I stalked toward him and could see that he was already feeling frantic.

Now, all I needed to do was finish him. He was too dangerous to let out of here alive.

Suddenly, Sebastian launched himself at me. Growling, he thrust his fists into my chest.

Gasping, I slid back on the ground. I grabbed his wrists and twisted them until they cracked. Sebastian roared in pain. He recovered quickly though. I threw a punch at him but he blocked it and delivered a quick jab to my side.

I winced, but it gave me the chance to tackle him around the waist and throw him down on the ground.

“You can’t beat me, Theo. You don’t have what it takes,” Sebastian taunted as I pinned him down.

I punched him in the face. He roared and twisted until he threw me off of him.

“And what does it take?” I snarled. I jumped up and kicked him in the side, keeping him down on the ground.

“I can keep going back for more, getting stronger, regaining my strength,” he laughed, then curled on his side and coughed up blood.

“Funny, because from where I’m standing, you don’t look too good,” I snarled, kicking him again in the side.

Sebastian rolled away, avoiding the kick this time. He jumped up and we met head-on. I grabbed his shoulders and pushed him back, avoiding a kick when he went for my leg. I used my body, and his pinned foot, to keep him back.

Sebastian groaned in pain and pushed at my back, trying to get me to release him.

“Think you’ll still be able to use your hands to suck out people’s lives when I break them off?” I asked with a snarl.

“No!” Sebastian roared. He pulled away from me and kicked me in the back. I pitched forward, catching myself on my hands and springing to my feet again.

Sebastian had run off toward a large group of guards approaching with Xavier.

“Your Majesty, what can I do to help?” Xavier asked, bowing to my father.

“Move!” Sebastian barked. He shoved Xavier aside and grabbed the first guard. Immediately, the guard dropped to the ground and passed out.

Laughing wildly, my father grabbed another guard and another.

Most of them were frozen in terror, watching their comrades fall to the ground, rigid and unconscious. The few that had their wits about them ran.

“Anyone who runs will be hunted down and killed for treason!” Sebastian shouted, his eyes flicking around like crazy.

He looked like a complete madman, grabbing anyone he could, laughing and cackling. After a short pause, he rolled his wrists and I could see that he was completely healed.

I approached him again, ready to finish this fight.

Sebastian snarled at me, eyes darting around the field of downed guards. “Xavier, get over here, I need you!”

I saw Xavier’s smile fade as his eyes swept around at the guards he’d brought to help. None of them were left. They’d either run off in fear or fallen to my father.

Sebastian licked his lips and rubbed his hands together. There was no mistaking what he wanted Xavier for.

“Get over here right now, you wretch!” the freak demanded.

“Um... I think I should go and get more reinforcements,” Xavier said, his voice shaking. He took one step back and my father lost it.

Spitting and snarling, Sebastian leapt at Xavier. Midair, he shifted into a wolf. He collided with Xavier, pinning him to the ground, and bit down hard on Xavier’s side.

“Ahhhh!” Xavier let out a shriek of pain as Sebastian’s teeth sank into him.

Xavier shouted and screamed, writhing in pain. Blood spurted from his side. He groaned and another stream of blood dribbled from his mouth.

Through his shrieking and screaming, I saw a smear of blood on Sebastian’s fur. It wasn’t Xavier’s blood, it was too far from my dad’s teeth.

“Prince Theo, Your Highness! Help!” Xavier cried. “Please!”

Sebastian shook him and his arms flailed. I saw the bloody blade of a knife in Xavier’s hand. He’d somehow pulled a knife and stabbed Sebastian. My father was weakened and unable to focus. It was time for me to make my move.

I shifted and lunged at Sebastian. Crashing into his side, he yelped and released Xavier. I pinned him down on his side. I thrust my front paws against the stab wound and Sebastian groaned.

Leaning down, I clamped my jaws around his throat and I snapped my powerful jaws closed.

Sebastian howled and whined. He struggled against me but as hot blood spurted from his neck, he weakened quickly. I held him still. He twisted and writhed, but I was far too strong against him now.

I wasn’t going to risk him having some final escape attempt. I was going to hold onto him until I was sure he was dead.

While I held Sebastian down, feeling the life fade from him, Jake ran in, rounding up the royal guards that had tried to run off.

“Anyone that doesn’t want to share the same fate as these unconscious mongrels, lower your weapons and bow down to Prince Theo,” Jake ordered.

I heard weapons clattering to the ground and glanced around to see the guards dropping to their knees. Whether it was fear of me or fear of my father that made them comply, I wasn’t sure. It didn’t matter.

All that mattered was that Sebastian was no longer a threat.

When I felt Sebastian’s last, gasping breath, I released him and shook my head. I turned back to Xavier and he immediately stopped whining about his wound and dropped to the ground on his hands and knees in front of me.

“Please, Prince Theo, spare me. I... I’ve been injured enough. I can still be of use to you,” he begged.

Blood still gushed from his side where my father had bitten him. I rolled my eyes toward Jake, and he shrugged.

Sighing, I walked over to look down at Xavier. The shadow of my wolf covered him completely. He was getting pale and I didn’t think he’d live much longer. For a moment, I considered letting him join my father in death.

He was my father’s loyal servant.

‘Get him to a healer,’ I grumbled through the mind link, tossing my head back.

“Are you sure you want to spare him, Alpha?” Jake asked.

“Oh, Your Highn... no, Your Majesty, thank you. Thank you so much,” Xavier gushed as two guards came over and hauled him off, obeying me instantly.

A huge weight crushed down on me, like a ton of bricks. All the pain from my torture and starvation came rushing back. The fight with Sebastian had sapped all the energy I’d gained from Nita, and I was back to the pain and exhaustion from before.

I won!

Sebastian was dead.

Ciana and Nita were alive.

I couldn’t ask for more. My legs trembled and buckled and I crashed to the ground. My wolf form melted away quickly and was just me again.

“Alpha!” Jake ran over and covered me with a cape.

“Theo, are you okay?” Ciana’s sweet voice said nearby.

I looked around until I saw her and I reached a weak, trembling arm to her.

“Ciana... you’re... you’re all right,” I gasped, sighing as my eyelids drooped. I had to fight to keep them open.

“I’m fine. Not even a scratch on me. Don’t worry, okay?” she asked. She even held her arms out to show me she was unharmed.

“Th-thank the goddess,” I whispered.

My eyes closed in exhaustion, and I felt a single, hot teardrop streak down my cheek... Then I allowed the sweet darkness to take me.

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Ciana

Theo was moved to his room and I went with him. Dottie, the healer, was summoned to check him over. I stood back and watched as she did her job.

She sighed a few times. My heart raced every time and I held my breath.

“Prince Theo is fine,” she said. “He just needs a little time to recover.”

“Are you sure that he is going to be okay?” I wanted to be assured.

“Yes, Miss. If you’re worried, stay with him. You can look after him,” she suggested..

“Yeah, I’ll do that.” I went to the bedside and tucked the covers closer to Theo. Slowly, I smoothed some wrinkles out of his comforter.

He looked peaceful, like he was just asleep instead of unconscious. There was a slight thinness to his face, probably from being starved in the dungeons.

Nita stood at his bedside, opposite of me. She looked at Theo’s sleeping face with a strange expression of mixed emotions.

“He’s going to be okay, Lady Nita,” Dottje smiled at Theo’s mother, but looked puzzled-relieved, but puzzled.

“You can just call me Nita. The king’s dead, and I’m no longer a royal concubine.”

Dottie nodded. “It was a miracle! He didn’t kill you. Actually, you look... better than you did a few hours ago. What a relief!”

“I’m not sure what happened but I suddenly felt a lot of my strength return.” Nita then absently lifted her eyes to me. “But there is a more urgent matter to discuss.”

Why was she looking at me like that?

“You’re immune to Theo’s powers. Why?” she asked, fixing me with a hardened, suspicious stare.

I shook my head. Being immune to Theo’s power was as much a shock to me as everyone else. At that point, I didn’t even think too much. All I knew was that I had to do something so that Theo wouldn’t kill his mother.

He'd already suffered too much from Maggie and Warren.

Based on what Jake said, there had been no other survivors when Theo's power was activated in the past. Now that things calmed down, I had the chance to sort through the details of the past incidents.

Perhaps the reason Theo's deadly impact skipped Warren was because I happened to be there to break their physical connection.

As for why it didn't impact me... I shrugged at Nita. "I don't know. Maybe it is just fate."

Nita murmured, as if she was talking to herself. "As far as I know, even the mates of the Dark Kings weren't immune to this power. That was why the descendants of the Dark Kings had to be really careful when they were around their loved ones."

I grinned, "Whatever it is, it's a good thing, right? I'm just glad I was able to help!"

Nita looked at me for a long moment, and her sharp look softened. She turned on her heel and walked towards the door. "It seems like Theo is in good hands. I'll come back once he is awake."

"Don't worry, we'll let you know as soon as he is up!"

Nita walked out of the room with a gentle sigh, but she didn't say anything else.

I stayed with Theo most of the day. His breathing was steady and his color was returning. Dottie had left a few things that would help revitalize him once he woke up. I wasn't worried about him anymore. He was strong and I knew he'd pull through.

When I left his room to grab myself a snack, the palace was in complete chaos. I'd never seen so many people running around! It was like no one knew where they were supposed to be or what they were supposed to be doing.

I dodged around a frantic servant and dashed away from a couple of well-dressed maids that were urgently discussing Warren and Theo's condition in rapid, short sentences.

A familiar face popped out in the crowd and I went over.

"Jake, what is going on? Why is everything..." I got cut off by a soldier bustling by as he bumped into my shoulder.

Grunting, I rubbed my arm.

"Ciana, you should be back with Theo. He needs you more," Jake said, dismissively. He looked like a rubber band pulled to the breaking point.

"I can help," I said.

Jake shook his head. "Sebastian is dead. Warren and Theo are both unconscious. People are panicking. They have no idea what is going on and there is a lot of fear about who is going to become the next ruler, especially with both princes incapacitated."

"I see," I muttered.

Unfortunately, there wasn't anything I could do to help. I wasn't a member of the royal family. Jake was Theo's Beta and he was having a hard enough time keeping things under control. We'd need a miracle to get the palace organized now.

"Jake, Beta Jake," Sophia called down the corridor.

Jake groaned and let out a long, exasperated sigh. "Yes, Miss Chambers?"

Dottie was right behind her with an unusually large smile on her face.

"Warren is awake," Sophia panted. She tried and failed to hide her smile. "He's awake!"

"What? How?" I blurted out, knowing that Warren couldn't wake up on his own.

"We don't know. He's still a little confused. But a lot of the other guards that Sebastian attacked have woken up as well. They are all disoriented," Sophia said.

"Dottie, is that true?" Jake asked.

"It is. I've examined them all and they are all well on their way to recovery," she said, nodding.

"That's... the best news I've gotten all day," Jake said, sighing again. Only this time, it was a sigh of relief.

"I don't understand. I thought once a life essence was taken, it had to be replaced, otherwise, the person would never wake up," I said, referencing Dottie's explanation of Warren's condition.

"That is what I thought, as well," Dottie admitted, her smile fading.

"I don't care what is going on. Warren is awake, and I need to be by his side." Sophia turned on her heel and ran down the hall.

My thoughts went to Nita. I was still amazed at how fast she'd recovered. She'd been unconscious and seriously aged, but just now, she looked a lot younger and her strength had returned.

The same thing was happening to Warren and the other guards.

"Perhaps it is time to get answers. There is one person that knew Sebastian's secrets better than anyone," Jake suggested.

"Xavier!" I jumped in.

The three of us went to a private infirmary room where Dottie had set Xavier up. He was pretty badly wounded but he was healing quickly.

Jake went right over to Xavier's bedside and slammed his hand down on the bedside table. "Xavier, stop pretending to be asleep!"

Xavier yelped and "woke" up. He sat bolt upright and clutched his side where he was covered in bandages. Xavier lifted wide, scared eyes to Jake. Then, his eyes darted to me and Dottie.

"Please, please don't hurt me. Prince Theo said he would spare me."

"When Theo wakes up, he will be the one to determine whether you will live or die. We are interested in something else," Jake explained.

"No, please, just let me go. Tell Prince Theo I escaped. Or tell him I died. I just want to go back to my home pack and live out the rest of my life," he begged, looking at us with frantic eyes.

"Not so fast! If you talk to me and answer my questions, I will put in a good word with the prince. Perhaps, he will agree to your request," Jake said, holding his hand up.

Xavier sighed, but it sounded more like a sob. "Okay, what do you want to know?"

"Tell us everything you can about Sebastian, all of his dirty laundry. We want to know it all," I jumped in.

Slowly, Xavier adjusted his position, propping himself up on the pillows behind him.

"Well, you see, His Majes... I mean, Sebastian knew that his power was limited. He couldn't kill his enemies with it but he knew another way to use it to his advantage. He would steal little bits of everyone's energy. It is what kept him strong and young," Xavier explained.

I gasped and covered my mouth.

Jake snarled and shook his head.

Dottie sighed heavily, her shoulders sagging. "That's so shamefully horrendous..."

"You've never noticed how youthful he looked? Or how he was never sick? Did you ever see how fast he recovered after getting wounded? That is because he was stealing life from everyone. Just enough that they wouldn't notice," Xavier elaborated.

"How did none of us know?" Jake asked, looking at Dottie, who shook her head.

"He was sneaky. He knew how to do it without anyone noticing," Xavier claimed. "He was always surrounded by so many people, he could take a small portion from all of them and it would replenish him a hundred times. Then he'd go for another group."

I shook my head, disgust coiling in my stomach like a snake. Sebastian was cruel and awful, but I never knew he went that far.

"Could he... could he steal the life force of anyone who stood around him?" I asked.

Xavier shook his head. "Not that I know of. As far as I know, that power only works when there is physical contact. People might feel exhausted at times, but no one really knows why."

"I remember seeing Lady Nita feel exhausted after Sebastian's visit. I thought it was just... because she hated him so much, it emotionally drained her," Dottie muttered more to herself, but we all heard it.

"Now that the King is dead, the life forces he stole have been returned to their original owner... well, if the original owner is still alive and close enough," Xavier said.

"That's why Warren is awake! Whatever Sebastian stole from him was enough to restore what Theo took!" I blurted out. Quickly.

"It makes sense," Jake agreed. "If Sebastian stole enough over the years, it would be enough to wake him now that Sebastian is dead and Warren's life force is returned."

“And that must be why Nita recovered so soon too!” Dottie came to that conclusion, solving the puzzle which probably had been hovering in her mind the entire time.

“Well, Lady Nite really lucked out,” Jake added. “If... if

Sebastian hadn’t stolen her life force for years and then died right then, she might not have made it.”

Jake still called her Lady Nita out of respect, probably because she was Theo’s mother.

“Fate is a funny thing,” Dottie muttered, shaking her head.

“Did I answer all your questions? Can I please leave now, forever?” Xavier asked.

“Once Dottie gives you a clean bill of health, you can leave, but I don’t want you coming back, ever!” Jake gave his final say. He knew Theo wouldn’t care less about the ending of Xavier.

“Really, not a problem,” Xavier quickly accepted Jake’s arrangement.

“Well, now that all of that is cleared up, I need to update Nita. Prince Theo is going to be crowned king soon and I’m sure she will need to help prepare for his coronation,” Dottie said. She gave us all a quick nod and departed.

I headed back to Theo’s room to check on him. I hadn’t wanted to be gone that long but we’d gotten the answers we wanted about Warren and Sebastian. It was all very disturbing, but at least it was all over.

I sat on Theo’s bed, next to him, and smoothed his hair away from his face.

I couldn’t wait to tell him that Nita and Warren were okay. I could just see the spark of hope and life returning to his eyes, easing his pain and suffering.

I’d hold his hand, and he would not be able to push me away this time.

After three days of Theo just lying there, I was getting worried, but Dottie kept telling me that he’d wake up any time. His strength was restored and she’d given him some supplements to keep his health up.

I sat with him and talked about everything that was going on with his mother planning the coronation.

Suddenly, Theo reached out and grabbed me, pulling me against his chest. His strong arms pinned me against him and I couldn’t wiggle free.

“Um... Theo.” He hugged me so tight that I could barely make a sound.

“Hmm... mmm,” he muttered. Apparently, he was only half conscious.

“Theo,” I called him gently, pushing at him.

His eyes snapped open and he sat up, pushing me away from him.

“I’m sorry, Ciana, I wasn’t thinking... I wasn’t fully awake,” he said quickly.

“It’s okay. You startled me, that’s all.”

“I know. I’m sorry. It’s just... you’re alive and I’m so happy about that. I didn’t mean to... cross a line,” he said, his voice professional and cool.

My heart immediately softened as if it was a patch of cotton. Yes, I understood that he had been through a lot in the past few days, nearly killing his mother, actually killing his father, all the torture, and so on, however, he was frustrating me!

Why did he have to be so reserved all the time? Why couldn't

He just open his heart up?

I needed to get a clear answer on how he felt about me. Today.

I stared at Theo until he looked at me and our eyes locked. I held his gaze for a while, thinking about what I wanted to say.

"First thing first, your mother and Warren are both fine. No harm at all, I thought you should know."

His eyes lit up, and he let out a sigh of relief. "Thank you," he murmured.

"You're welcome. Now Prince Theo, can I ask you a few questions?" I asked.

He lifted his gaze and nodded.

"Okay, well, You said, you're happy that I'm alive. Why are you happy?" I asked, arching an eyebrow.

Theo creased his brow. "Because, Ciana, you're my... friend. Why wouldn't I be happy?"

"Is that it... are we just friends?" I asked, pressing Theo to be honest with himself.

Theo stared at me and kept his silence. It was like he couldn't figure out what I wanted from him.

Sighing, I moved on to my next question. "Okay, second question, you have been pushing me away from you. Is it because you're afraid you can't control your power?"

"Yes," Theo confirmed with a sigh that mimicked mine.

I grabbed his hand. Instantly, he pulled back, but I didn't let go.

"You don't have to worry about that. See, your power doesn't impact me, not at all," I reminded him. Leaning in, I kissed him before he could pull away again.

Theo froze with his lips on mine, and then he pushed forward, kissing me back, but I pulled away. I stared right into Theo's eyes and asked my last question.

"Do you love me?"

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The thumping of his heart was strong underneath my hand. His deep, dark eyes stared into mine with so much wonder and awe. He was looking at me like I outshined the stars and the moon in the sky.

My heartbeat drummed loudly against my ears, waiting anxiously for his answer. With each passing second, it felt as if my heart beat violently in my chest and was about to explode.

I waited for him to say something. Anything at all.

A while back, I couldn't tell how I felt about him, but now, it couldn't be more clear.

I had fallen for him from the very moment we kissed in that little garden when I had accidentally eaten his fruit. I may have not fully known it then but looking back that was the moment it began.

I had been afraid to tell him my feelings before but now I wasn't scared anymore. I just also needed to hear them from him. I needed those three words to be spoken by his lips and for him to mean every single one.

Tentatively, he reached up and cupped the side of my face slowly. He was still hesitant to touch me even though I assured him that he couldn't hurt me.

His thumb brushed against the skin of my cheek. It was the softest of touches, but it meant more to me than words could ever describe.

My question was still unanswered, but I could already sense the spark in the air.

"Do I love you?" He looked deep into my eyes. That bottomless gaze caused my blood to heat and for every nerve ending in my body to come to life.

"I love you more than life, Ciana."

Tears blurred my vision as he articulated every one of his words.

"I didn't know when it happened, but I found myself wanting to be with you more every time you were in my presence, until one day, I couldn't stand to be apart from you."

His words were like soft velvet reaching into my chest and wrapping me in their warmth.

The magic of his touch sent pleasure-filled tingles from my fingers to the tip of my toes. I leaned into his touch wanting to commit this moment to memory.

"I can't believe I can touch you, and not hurt you," he whispered, looking up at me, his voice trembled. "I always wondered what you felt like. You look so soft..."

"And am I?" My voice came out so low and quiet I had barely heard it.

He didn't answer.

We stared at each other, completely absorbing the pleasant presence of the person that meant the world in our hearts.

"Theo?" Unable to resist the pull between us, I drew my face closer to his. My hair fell to curtain us, almost like it was holding us in this intimate moment.

"Yes?"

"Kiss me."

A thin layer of haze moisturized his stunning onyx-black eyes. Without hesitation, he lifted his head and captured my lips.

I moaned into his mouth. Our lips moved together in an intricate dance, slow, fluent, and perfectly in sync.

He brushed his tongue along my bottom lip, asking for permission to enter, which I gladly gave him. He tilted my head, deepening our kiss further.

I was immersed in his musky, masculine scent. Every nerve ending had come to life and all I could feel and think was him.

He tightened his other arm around my waist and flipped us over so I now lay on the mattress and he hovered over me.

I took a moment to marvel at the chiseled body above me. He was truly carved by the goddess herself. I couldn't help but run my fingertips against every curve on his bare chest.

He chuckled, "Like what you see?" His dark gaze danced with teasing mischief.

I never knew that Theo was capable of being playful, but then I realized that he was slowly peeling away the layers of clothes on me.

I tried to relax my body, but although I knew exactly what I wanted, it still didn't change how nervous I felt.

We were very close like this just a few days ago, when he was under the influence of an aphrodisiac, but at that time, if anything happened, it was impulsive and perhaps irrational.

However, tonight was different.

Tonight was special.

I knew what I wanted, and was ready for it.

"I love you, Theo," I uttered the words as I stared up at him. "I've known for a very long time. But I was afraid to say the words out loud because then they would become real, and real scares me."

He ran his thumb along the side of my face.

"But I don't want to hide from my feelings anymore. I can't."

His eyes bored into mine with a heated passion I had never seen before. It took him some effort, but he finally said, "Ciana, I don't know what I did to deserve you... But now that you're here, no force on this earth and beyond will ever break us."

Then he crashed down. This time, his kiss was eager and fierce.

I grabbed the back of his neck with a newfound determination and responded to him with passion, as if I was pouring my whole heart into that kiss.

only prayed that he could feel it too.

His tongue swiped over every inch of my mouth and his hand slowly moved down from my face to my neck, my shoulder and my chest. I couldn't hold back a moan and arched my back.

My center pressed against his hardening length causing a groan to come out of him. He grabbed my hips and dug his fingers into my skin gently, but it was enough to set my body on fire and make it tremble in something I'd never experienced before.

Desire.

I arched my back even more, longing for the closeness of his body.

Suddenly, he ripped his lips from mine with a growl and looked up at me.

“If you do that again,” he warned, “I won’t be able to stop, Ciana.”

A dangerous glimmer flickered in his eyes, but I wasn’t afraid. Not a single bit.

“I don’t want you to stop.”

His eyes went wide for a split second before they darkened.

I leaned forward and captured his lips with mine and then moved my kisses to his chin, down his throat.

Theo swallowed and I felt as the lump in his throat bobbed up and down. Then his hands slipped under the t-shirt that I was wearing, touching the bare skin on my belly.

I gasped at his touch, feeling electricity flow through my whole body. His hand was large and warm, and my body wiggled impatiently, as if it was begging for more attention.

Theo’s hand started to move up and towards my back slowly. When it reached the center of my back, without me knowing it, my bra was loosened.

Then it gently roamed back to the front of my chest, circling around my heart. I moaned again, which encouraged him to continue.

After a momentary pause, Theo’s hand gently covered my breast.

“Um...” I let out another moan, and then a foreign feeling of warmth and fluid moistened between my legs.

His lips immediately captured mine again gently, but the hand on my breast started to move rhythmically with our kiss, sending surges of more warmth flowing through my core.

His other hand slipped down my waist into my underwear and started rubbing the soft cheeks of my behind.

My mind was a hot mess, my blood was boiling hot, and my body ached for something that I couldn’t name.

Then his fingers slipped past the thin fabric and began rubbing up and down my center and I felt every single cell in my body short circuit, and more and more warm fluid moistened the most private part of my body.

He continued his movements slowly and tentatively. Then he dipped one finger into my opening between my legs.

I let out a breathless gasp into his mouth, but my hips ground into him more.

“Theo...” I moaned his name into the darkened room. “Ah...”

The moonlight streamed in from outside casting the most beautiful blue hue into the room.

He didn't stop what he was doing with his hand, but then he peeled his lips from mine and slowly started peppering kisses down the side of my neck and then my chest.

With each kiss, he lifted my shirt a little higher exposing the skin beneath. He kissed my stomach making sure to lick and suck as he went along. Everywhere he touched came to life. Every single touch he made was pure ecstasy.

He hooked the sides of my panties and slowly pulled them down.

My heart started to pound loudly against my eardrum and my core was even more arching. I had a vague recollection of physical intimacy with him while we were role-playing the Moonlit Crystal realm, however, I didn't expect that it was not even one percent of how it felt in real life.

"Theo...I..."

"You what?"

But I was at a loss for words.

Then I heard him let out a low chuckle, and the next moment, the t-shirt was stripped away from me, and so were Theo's boxers.

His arousal was in between my legs, and he guided my hand to touch it, while he continued roaming his hands all over my body, setting every inch of my skin on fire.

I didn't know what I was supposed to do, so I let my instinct take over and gently brushed and squeezed his burning desire with my hand.

"Fuck!" he moaned, "Ciana..."

I grunted in return, but I had no rationality left.

"Look at me..." he panted as his member angled himself at my entrance. Theo looked into my eyes. "If you need me to stop at any moment, tell me, okay?"

I nodded, as my body trembled in the ache for desire and in excitement for what was going to happen next.

Then, he pushed into me.

A burning sensation took me by surprise as it felt like I was being ripped apart.

"Ah..." Tears fell off my cheeks. My whole body tensed as he slowly eased himself inside of me.

When he looked back up at my face he paused. "Do you want me to stop?"

I shook my head vigorously and grabbed his shoulders. "No..."

I pulled him toward me and he continued to push inside of me. His lips covered mine, and his hand was back on my breasts, rubbing gently.

He continued to push his length in me while moving his lips to my ear, side of my neck, shoulder, heart, and finally wrapped around my nipple.

“Ahhh...” I couldn’t help but let out a loud and long moan, in pain, and in the ecstatic pleasure that I had never felt in my life before, at which time, his member was fully buried inside

Another warmth of wetness flowed out from my body and a hint of metallic smell pervaded the air.

It was my first time...

Tears filled my eyes as contentment and gratefulness filled my heart. I could not be more appreciative that it was given to the man I loved.

“Fuck,” he stared at me with a dangerous look that I’d never seen. It was as if he was about to swallow me and make me into part of him. His dark eyes screamed danger, but all I wanted to do was give myself to him.

“Did I hurt you?”

I shook my head again.

The initial pain faded and I could feel the fullness of him as I took in every single inch of his manhood. I tried to wiggle my hip slightly, and I was amazed at how fast my body was getting used to him.

“Ciana... Oh, Goddess!” he moaned with my subtle movement, and that also caused a moan to escape my lips.

His breathing was even heavier. Looking into his dark eyes, I allowed myself to indulge in their endless abyss. I took another breath and pulled myself back just a little.

His eyes widened, and he could no longer endure my tease.

He pulled back out and then eased into me again, filling me once more.

He continued those movements as I tilted my head back and allowed myself to let go.

My breasts bobbed back and forth and he drove into me gently. His cock tapped my base with every push.

Once I was sure of the rhythm, I began to respond to his movement.

“Ciana,” he panted as he started to thrust faster. “You feel so fucking good-”

He felt amazing too, but the pleasure had stolen my voice and all I could utter were soft moans.

His eyes widened. He leaned forward and offered me his shoulder as he continued to speed up.

“Don’t make those sounds, it’ll make me come,” he ordered, “bite me.”

I obediently sank my teeth into his smooth and solid shoulder, and received an even louder moan from him. Then he picked up his pace even more and began the grinding motions every time he thrust back in.

He took my legs to wrap around his waist and lifted my hips. to allow him to go in a little deeper.

All my senses started to give way to pleasure and only one thing screamed in my mind.

I wanted him. All of him.

He took his fingers and began rubbing the tight nub between my legs, the motion sending me into complete overdrive. The heat pooled into my stomach and I searched for my release.

Every second drawing closer and closer to the edge.

“Theo...oh...I...”

“Say it,” he demanded, “tell me what you want!”

“You!” I claimed, “I want you!”

He thrust faster and faster and I let him fully take charge. I didn’t know where I was or even who I was. And just like that, I fell off the cliff and plunged into a sea of ecstasy. The tingles ran all the way up and down my spine and to the tip of every nerve in my body.

“Oh, oh fuck!!”

He moaned loudly as he emptied inside of me. His body shuddered above me and the last remnants of his orgasms filtered out of him.

My mind was empty but my heart felt so full.

The past few days had been a whirlwind ride and so much had happened in such a short span of time. But all of it had led us to this very point here.

I couldn’t think, nor could I move.

I was totally spent.

Theo removed himself from me and lay beside me. He pulled me into his arms and nuzzled his nose into the crook of my neck from behind.

“Ciana Black, I love you.”

Those were the last words I heard before exhaustion crashed into me and took me to a sweet and peaceful dreamland.

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Theo

I wanted to stay in this moment forever and never let it go.

She was here, in my arms.

Nothing else mattered.

And nothing else could take her from me.

She was dreaming. I could tell by the way her lips tilted. upward ever so slightly. I was just curious what she was dreaming about.

Was she back to her pack, spending time in the gorgeous garden with her parents? Or was she riding a majestic white horse to get to a valley full of delicious wild fruits?

Whatever it was, it must be a good one based on the faint smile on her face. A girl like her deserved the most beautiful dreams in the world.

No worries. No fear. No fighting.

She didn't need any of that in her dreams because she'd already fought enough for me, even when I had given up on myself. The sole reason I was even here today was because of her.

I owed her my life, my everything.

It always amazed me that a small frame like hers held so much might.

I couldn't imagine what kind of courage it would take for her to stand her ground and fight for what she believed in. She never backed down from any challenge laid before her.

Raymond, Luther, Sebastian, and me.

She had the brightest and warmest heart and it was the reason why she could defeat the darkest evil, and melt the coldest cage barring my heart.

She wiggled.

"Shhh..." I whispered, gently caressing her back.

"Um... Theo...are you awake already?" she murmured, "It's still dark outside..."

"It's still early, get some more rest."

She let out a content sigh and buried her sweet head in my arms and chest. I couldn't describe how soft my heart was seeing her drawn to me like this.

I had worn her out. A sense of contentment and pride filled my chest at the thought.

I couldn't help but lean down and kissed her cheek. She only stirred a little.

It was crazy how all those years ago we met, and when I thought I'd never see her again, she came to me again. I was never much of a believer in fate because all it had ever done for me was bring me misery, until this moment.

Every tear I shed, every drop of blood I spilled, and every nightmare I experienced were all worth it because of her.

She had changed my life, starting with just one warm smile and a half-worn bracelet.

I would never tire of touching her soft skin and feeling her body. What were the odds that the one person I loved more than anything on this earth was the only person I could touch?

Goddess and fate were generous to me.

I kissed her again softly and sighed in a whisper, "The only regret I had was that I lost the bracelet you gave me."

Her eyes were still closed and she was barely awake, but I heard her ask, "Theo... what did you say?"

I gently combed my fingers into her hair and murmured, "Nothing. You go back to sleep."

She sniffed a few deep breaths and struggled to open her eyes. She was a bit worried, "Theo... are you okay? I seemed to hear you say bracelet?"

I sighed, "Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you. How do you feel?"

Her eyes were fully opened now. As soon as she realized that we were naked against each other, a most adorable hint of pink climbed her cheeks.

"I... I feel great... Just that, I don't want to move."

"Then don't move. Let me hold you."

I adjusted my position to make it more comfortable for her and planted another kiss on her lips. Immediately, I felt a new surge of desire coursing through me, and I was sure she felt it against her thighs too.

"Theo...?" she was more awake now and her face turned bright red.

"Um...?" I looked down at her, narrowing my eyes.

She obviously read the signal, but I could tell she was still exhausted and probably sore, so I took a few deep breaths to suppress the urge to spread her legs again and insert myself into her soft, warm body.

She cleared her throat and quickly resumed what she wanted to ask, "What bracelet?"

I looked deeply into her eyes and started my story slowly.

"When I was 16, I was injured severely and I lost most of my vision. I fell down a cliff and got lost in a forest, thinking, even if I died right there, it may not be such a bad ending to my shameful life..."

Her eyes widened as she gasped.

"... until I met this girl. She was the first and only person who brought me warmth and hope during my darkest years." I couldn't help but chuckle as the fond memory re-emerged, "Well, she was also quite chatty, and I learned all about her adventures quite quickly."

My thumb caressed her cheek, watching her speechless expression mixed with a little embarrassment- it was the cutest thing in the world.

"When I was able to move around, I got her the Sun Blossom that she had been talking about non-stop. In return, she gifted me her bracelet."

"So... you are, you are the boy?!"

"Nice to meet you again, Girl."

"I... I..." she croaked, tears rolling down her face, "I can't believe it..."

I tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear. "I remembered thinking to myself when we were in the forest, she is the most beautiful girl I had ever met in my life, and I had always

wondered what you look like. I told myself, one day, I would find you.”

She didn’t interrupt me this time and waited quietly to let me continue.

“However, a few years ago I was attacked and had to take shelter at the Moon Goddess temple. When I realized that I had lost it, I searched the entire temple upside down without luck. I thought, perhaps the Goddess doesn’t want me to find you. A freak like me doesn’t deserve-”

She placed a finger on my lips and followed with a fierce kiss. “Listen Theo, I don’t ever want to hear you call yourself that again!”

I kissed her back with a dotting smile. “Sure, I won’t say that again. Anyway, that was my story. I don’t know how it got to Warren, but it doesn’t matter now, because you’re here now. With me.”

“I agree!” She gave me another kiss. Then she thought of something. “Wait, you said you couldn’t see well and you still went back to the cliff to get the Sun Blossom?”

“Ciana,” I said, gently scraping my nose, having a feeling that she was going to scold me, “it was fine. It wasn’t that bad-”

“WERE YOU CRAZY?! Did you know how dangerous it was? You could’ve died!”

“I didn’t die,” I rubbed my hands against her back, “Calm down... and yes.”

“Yes what?” she snapped.

I let out a low chuckle and leaned close as I whispered, “Yes, I was crazy. Crazy for you.”

Before she could say anything, I invaded her sweet mouth with my tongue.

“Um... um...” She pulled herself away and panted, “Don’t... don’t try to distract me!”

I pulled her back to me. My hands traveled up and down the length of her entire back. There was no better joy to see her soften under my touch.

I’d never known that just simply feeling her skin could set such a burning desire within me

“You... you...” she stammered.

“Me what?”

“You’re seducing me!”

I lifted her chin and willed her to look up at me. “And?”

Her face was burning red, but her features were softened and I could tell her body started to heat up with desire just like mine.

I leaned down to give her ear a slight lick and looked her in the eye again. “May I?”

Her eyes moved from my lips to my eyes and then back to my lips again. Then she gave me a nod with her face red like the most delicious apple.

I crashed my lips back down onto hers with a heated need, claimed both of her wrists with one hand, and lifted her smooth, naked body tightly against mine with another.

The night hadn't ended, and I couldn't wait another second for her to be fully mine again.

The morning rays streamed into the room, casting a golden glow over the beauty in my arms. She was still sound asleep.

I sucked in her heavenly scent of subtle water lilies, and couldn't help caressing her flawless skin. She hummed in satisfaction, moving herself toward me.

I could just lie here forever.

Unfortunately, the reality was that I would need to get up sooner or later.

The palace was in shambles. With Sebastian's death and me being the crown prince, in line for the throne, I had to address my people and start getting back to my responsibilities.

I felt a pressure against the side of my head. Someone was trying to mindlink me.

I allowed the person to come through.

'You're awake! This is great news,' Jake said through our mindlink.

I sighed, 'Yes, I'm awake now.'

I didn't want this moment with Ciana to end. I almost wanted to tell Jake to wait.

'Does Ciana know? She's been worried about you.'

I glanced at the sleeping beauty again, and my tone softened. 'Yes, she knows.'

'Great. I'll be right over,' Jake happily disconnected our mindlink before I could tell him not to come.

Within seconds, he barged into my room. Not even a courtesy knock.

Jake greeted me happily and loudly. "Thank the heavens! Alpha, I'm so happy to see you-

-Ciana jolted awake in my arms and her eyes went wide.

Jake stared at her and she looked at Jake who was standing at the door with wide eyes and open mouth.

"Oh shit," he cursed under his breath.

Ciana squealed and got under the covers concealing herself.

"Oh, my goddess!" I heard her groan.

She pushed closer to me and buried her head in my naked chest.

I glared at my Beta and leveled him with a cool gaze.

"You guys were...and you are naked under the-

“Jake,” was all I said to get him to shut up.

He clamped his mouth shut and looked everywhere else in the room but us.

“What do you need?”

He let out a nervous laugh and scratched the back of his head. “Well...the coronation and your mother and the people...”

He was babbling and I couldn’t make sense of anything he was saying.

“Tell him to leave,” Ciana whispered, trying to grab my attention back to her. “Please?”

She was still hidden under the covers but I had no doubt that her face was bright red with embarrassment.

However, I didn’t need to ask.

“You know what? I think I should go. Lots of work to do and whatnot,” Jake let out another nervous laugh as he slowly backed out of the room.

“I need you to do some research for me later on,” I told him as he eased his way out the doorway.

He did a little salute. “Sure thing boss. Just tell me what you need when you have time. I will just... Umm...leave you two to finish whatever you were doing. Oh, good morning, Ciana.”

He closed the door before I could say anything, and Ciana was so embarrassed that she almost burst into tears.

When the door was closed she peeked her head through the covers and looked up at me.

“He knows about us now,” she covered her face. “Oh, my goddess.”

I cocked an eyebrow and looked at the floor that had our discarded clothes all over it. “Yes, he does.”

I pulled her up toward me and captured her lips with mine in a passionate kiss. But just as I was about to deepen the kiss she pulled away and pressed her hands against my chest.

“They’ll all know we had sex!” she exclaimed. She sat up in the bed, clinging the soft silk sheets to her naked chest.

“What are we going to do?” She looked a little panicked.

I played with her hair that cascaded down her porcelain skin. “Theo! We have a serious issue here.”

“And what might that issue be?” I kept playing with her hair until she swatted my hand away to which I glared at her. “It’s going to be okay.”

“But...Jake saw me in your bed naked.”

“He didn’t see your naked body.”

“Theo, that’s not the point! He knows we had sex.”

“So? Are you ashamed of me?”

She paused and then shook her head. "No, of course not."

"Then I don't see a problem. Ciana, we're going to be okay."

She closed her mouth and her features softened. She leaned her body against my chest and sighed, "Sorry, I... I don't know why, I was just a little nervous. You're going to be the king and I..."

"And you are my one and only love. That will never change, no matter who I am. I promise."

I raised her chin with the hook of my finger and captured her tasty lips gently again. After a quick kiss, I asked, "Do you trust me?"

She looked deeply into my eyes, and answered, "Yes, I do."

She took a deep breath, her body relaxed, and she leaned in to give me a kiss.

My hands moved from her back to her front and captured her two soft breasts, rubbing them. Ciana's body immediately reacted to me and her back arched.

"Good."

Suddenly, I lifted her hip to meet mine in a sitting position, facing each other.

She gasped, "Theo!"

"Yes, my love."

Feeling a warm flow pouring down her leg, I smirked, "Now, we have something more important to do!"

"A...again?!"

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

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 457](#)

Warren

"Your Highness, you should eat something," Sophia said. as she set the tray down on my bedside table. "How else do you expect to get your strength back? Your wolf also needs nourishment."

I looked at the breakfast the chefs had prepared. It was all my favorites, yet I still didn't have the stomach for it.

"Thank you," I sighed, "But I'm not hungry."

"If you don't like this, I'll get something else for you." She stood up and stopped one of the maids running down the hallway, "Hey you! Come here. Ask the chef to make some omelets instead."

When she sat on the bed beside me, she tried to hold my hand but I retracted from her touch.

I was appreciative of everything Sophia had done for me. In the past few days, while I was in and out, every time I opened my eyes, I saw her next to me, taking care of me.

Jake and Dottie had come to check on me a few times and filled me in on what had occurred, I was honestly astonished by the brave choice Sophia made, and I expressed my gratitude.

Without her, I would still be in a coma.

It was just that... How I wished it was Ciana's face I saw

when I opened my eyes from the long-lasting darkness. Sophia told me Ciana had visited a couple of times, but I was asleep.

My thoughts were interrupted by a knock at my door.

"Come in," I answered.

It was Ciana. Her arrival brought an instant smile to my face.

Then my mood darkened when I saw Theo following her in. I wasn't sure how I could face him.

"Warren, it's good to see you up!" Ciana's cheerful voice was as pleasant as usual.

"Thank you for saving my life," I told her, and then turned to Sophia, "Thank you too, Miss Chambers."

Ciana chimed in, "Sophia, wow, you were good! I was so nervous, but you were calm and confident the whole time. during the ritual. I have no idea how you did it! Thank you, thank you! I owe you big this time!"

"No need to thank me, I didn't do that for you." Sophia held out a hand toward Ciana, her face flushed a little. "Besides, we're not friends yet."

Ciana didn't seem to mind Sophia's unfriendly manner and just smiled at me. "Warren, I'll go pick some fresh flowers for your room. Be right back. Oh, Sophia, could you come help me?"

Ciana didn't give Sophia the chance to turn her down and dragged her out of the room. I was thankful she gave Theo

and I some privacy to sort out our problems.

I sighed, looking at Theo, who had been keeping his silence. Neither of us knew where to start our conversation.

"I didn't expect you to have gone through so much to save me." I felt I had to say something, 'otherwise, we might be staring at each other like this for the rest of the day.

"You were in a coma because of me. That was the least I could do." After a short pause, Theo said, "Warren, believe it or not, I never wanted to harm you or Maggie."

I sighed. By now, I had thought through everything. In fact, I'd long known that he didn't do it maliciously to begin with. Like others had said, Maggie's death was a tragic accident.

But for me, being able to blame someone else was probably the easiest way to handle the sadness of losing my dearest twin sister.

I nodded, "I know."

Theo seemed to be a bit surprised at the change in my attitude.

"It's just too hard for me to let go of her."

"Then don't let go," Theo said firmly, surprising me. "Warren, give me some time. You and I are royals, and we have burdens no others can shoulder. Right now, our country is in chaos-it has been for the past thirty years."

"Father... was not a good king."

"He was not," Theo continued to present his point. "Our

people need us and we need to work together. Give me fifteen years. Once I get everything back in order, if you still want your revenge for Maggie, I'll be more than happy to accept that."

I stared at him and suddenly felt that the person standing in front of me wasn't the Theo that I was familiar with. Either I had never understood him, or he had changed.

"But right now," Theo said. "Besides me, someone else is also responsible for Maggie's death."

"Luther." I gritted through my teeth.

"That's right. We need to take him down," Theo stared into my eyes, "Warren, brother, join me."

The room was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. Theo's gaze didn't carry the usual coldness and distance, and I found it hard to turn him down.

"I need some time to think about it," I told him.

He didn't press me for an answer and left the room with a nod.

I didn't know how long I stared at the wall thinking about what he just said. He was right, I was the descendant of King Lycaon, and I had duties for this country.

I heard a knock at the door again. It must be Ciana returning with Sophia. Sighing, I answered, "Come in, please."

The door opened. I looked up and instantly felt the blood drain from my face.

"Warren," a soft, familiar voice called my name, but it made every single hair on my body stand up.

Maggie!!

It was Maggie standing at the entrance!

She closed the door behind her and slowly walked toward my bed.

"Who are you?! How dare you use that face!" I scolded.

She smiled gently, and I would never mistake that smile. It was her!

She sat down next to my bed and tenderly covered my hand with hers. "I'm Maggie, your sister. Have you forgotten about me already?"

It was her. There was no mistake. No imposter could fake her in front of me.

"Maggie... but how is this possible? What is... how are you here?" I grabbed her hands and felt her smooth skin against mine, but her presence no longer made me feel warm.

My instincts told me that something terrible was about to happen.

I fought back the unsettling premonition and forced a smile on my face. "Maggie, you're back, that's great! Father is dead, the three of us, we can work together. Let me tell Theo..."

"Warren, stop!" she ordered sharply.

I didn't fight back, only waited for her explanation.

"Sebastian was not our father, and we do not belong here."

My eyes widened, and I couldn't comprehend what she said.

"You and I never had any place in the royal bloodline, and we never will. Our father was merely one of the king's guards... We are just bastard children!"

**

Ciana

I couldn't believe that Theo was finally king! He'd deserved it, and now, I knew he would change the way his father had ruled the country.

After the coronation, we all headed into the ballroom for a big celebration.

Theo was busy with all kinds of officials and pack leaders, so I grabbed a couple of glasses of champagne and went to find Brook.

"Here you are. It is quite the night to celebrate, isn't it?" Brook giggled as I handed her a glass.

Her cheeks were red. I wondered if she had already started drinking.

She took a few large gulps of the champagne, and then she started fanning herself with her hand.

"Brook, are you okay?" I asked. I grabbed the champagne glass from her before she guzzled it all down.

She laughed nervously, her face turning bright red. Brook kept twisting her hands around and I could tell she was upset and trying to hide it behind nervous laughter.

"Everything is fine. It is all just fine. No need to worry, I'm fine," Brook said in a rush.

"Okay... because I know you pretty well, and none of that sounds like you are actually fine," I told her. I reached out and put a comforting arm on her shoulder.

“What could possibly be wrong, Ciana? Theo is king. Warren is awake. This is all good.” Her tone did not sound convincing at all.

I gave her a look and shook my head. “Look, I know things have been crazy for some time. But you don’t have to worry. Theo is going to set everything right, everything that his father messed up.”

Brook sighed and her shoulders sagged. She looked like a deflating balloon.

“It isn’t that. I’m confident Theo will be great. I’m just... trying to figure something out,” she admitted.

“What is it? You can tell me. I’d like to help if I can,” I said, pressing for her to open up.

Whatever was bothering Brook was really getting to her. She couldn’t even stand in a room for a party and enjoy herself.

“Well... it’s just... No, I can’t talk about it,” she said, shaking her head. “It’s so embarrassing!”

Inwardly, I was seriously concerned. Brook and I usually talked about everything.

I smiled and tried to encourage her. “Brook, we’re friends and you’re obviously distressed. Even if I can’t help, you’ll feel better if you just talk it through with me.”

And it couldn’t have been as embarrassing as Jake seeing me almost naked the other day anyway.

Brook finally made up her mind. “Maybe you’re right. Well... oh, it is just so awkward... but I could use a second opinion.”

“I’m listening.” I held a hand out and beckoned her to continue.

“Okay, so Jake has been acting a little weird lately. I asked him about it and he said he was busy with the coronation. I understood that but... well, I got the sense there was something else. I brought supper to him in his office and...” She trailed off again.

“And?” I asked, holding my breath in anticipation. Brook really knew how to drag it out.

“I just... I couldn’t believe what I found!” she exclaimed.

“What did you find?” I asked, my throat a little dry. I wasn’t sure if it was something bad or just outrageous. Brook made it sound like Jake was into something really weird.

“He... he...” Again, her cheeks turned beet red and she looked down at the floor. “I... Well, he had a bunch of pictures and magazines on his desk. And they were all... they were all erotic pornographic things!”

ing.

“WHAT!?” I choked on my champagne and started cough-

A few people looked at us, and I quickly took some water, calmed myself, and smiled and waved until they looked away.

“I mean, is that what he has been working on lately? What’s wrong with him? I thought... he was a good and responsible man, but if that’s his hobby...” Brook groaned and covered her face with her hands.

I felt like my eyes were going to pop out of my head. "I never thought Beta Jake was that kind of guy..."

She let out another groan.

"That's not even the worst part. I mean, I get that guys... well, like that stuff sometimes. But he totally denied it when I called him out. He came up with all these excuses about why he had those things! I mean, the least he could have done was just admit to it after I caught him," Brook said with another groan.

I didn't expect there was more to the story. So I put on my serious, supportive face and nodded a few more times to show her that I had been following. "What excuses did he use?"

"He claimed that this had nothing to do with him! It was just an assignment!"

"Assignment?"

Brook nodded angrily. "Right? He claimed it was an as- signment from Prince... no, King Theo!"

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 458](#)

"Theo?!"

This time, I almost spat out the small amount of liquor in my mouth. I patted my chest until the coughing stopped.

Heat climbed up my face as I thought about the nights in the past week. Every night, I was in Theo's bed and every night, he was so... vigorous and demanding!

He had been eager to explore my body in different ways, and all I could do was give in to the extreme desires and plea- sure under his lead. Once I even questioned him whether he really was a virgin like he claimed himself to be. How else would he seem so experienced at it?

"I'm just that gifted!" he claimed with a mysterious and proud smile.

Now I knew why. So... it turned out that he had asked Jake to do the dirty work for him?!

I pinched the bridge of my nose.

Should I have a conversation with Theo for the sake of Brook and Jake's relationship?

Brook was so worked up now, I didn't think she remem- bered I was there. She was in full-on rant mode.

"Why did he have to make up such obvious lies? We all know that King Theo is single, and he has no interest in wom- en whatsoever. There were a few girls who tried to seduce him

and he didn't even spare them a glance! I didn't mean you, Ciana. You're a different case."

"I..."

"I know he cares about you. You're his friend and he re- spects you, but it's not like you guys are together!"

Jake probably hadn't told anyone about Theo and I, and I appreciated that. After all, with everything going on, I wasn't sure it was the right time for us to publicize our relationship, but Brook was someone I could trust to keep a secret.

I probably should let her know that Jake most likely wasn't lying.

But Goddess, how could I even start to explain this?

Should I really just be blunt with Brook that Theo and I had been making love and he probably did ask Jake to do this... assignment?

I felt my face was burning hot. Thankfully, Brook didn't notice that. Even if she did, she would think it was due to the

alcohol.

"Um...Brook, there's something I want to tell you..."

"Don't stop me. I know you'll try to defend Jake because he is your friend too! Honestly, I couldn't believe it! I wish he was just honest with me... It's not a big deal if... he wants to read porn, but why would he make up such a lie?"

"Brook, just take a breath..."

Brook took her champagne from me again and took a gentle sip. It seemed like talking about things had allowed her

to calm down some.

"I'm sure there is a reasonable explanation. I can ask Theo about it, if you want," I offered, deciding to leave this subject

like that.

"No, no. You don't need to, Ciana: This is our problem, and we need to figure it out! You're already kind enough to hear me vent, and you have a lot going on. I won't bother you, and certainly not the king, with my silly issues like this!"

Oh, Brook...

I made a promise in my heart that one day I would clear Jake's name for her.

Instinctively, I searched for Theo in the crowd. He was standing with several other officials.

"Um... we can talk about that later," Brook said. "It seems like they're discussing something important."

I nodded to her and got a little closer to Theo. He'd been so busy all night and I wanted to talk to him before another group of officials took his attention. If I could sneak in when he finished his current conversation, I could get a few seconds of his time.

I stood by a pillar, a little out of sight, and heard some of their conversations.

When he caught a glimpse of me, the corner of his lips slightly curled up and formed a faint smile. I was again dazed by his god-like handsome face.

It was still hard to believe that he was mine.

“Now that you’ve been crowned, it is time for you to start thinking about choosing a Luna Queen, Your Majesty,” one of the officials said.

“If you’re not ready to choose a queen, you should at least have a concubine and produce an heir. It will keep your blood- line strong and show the kingdom you’re committed to stabil- ity and longevity,” another said.

“I’m aware of the necessity. I already have a candidate in mind for my Luna Queen,” Theo said. “I just need a little more time to think about it.”

His eyes shifted to me.

My heart sped up a little and I bit my lower lip.

We hadn’t talked about that at all, but of course, I had been thinking about it.

What would my future be like?

I would like to stay by Theo’s side... but he was the king! Was I ready to take on the role of the queen?

What if he asked me? What should I say?

If Theo was an ordinary citizen, or an Alpha of any other pack, I would bounce up to hug him and say yes.

However, he was the king! And I wasn’t so confident about myself. If I were to be with him, I’d have a lot to learn to live up to the role I was supposed to take as the co-ruler of the country...

“In that case, what should we do with the group of prospective consorts still hanging around the castle, should

we dismiss them?” the official asked.

“Hmm...”

I expected Theo to jump on that question and quickly tell the officials to dismiss them all. He’d been wanting to since we all arrived. Now that he and I were taking things to the next level, I thought he’d be happy to send the rest of the girls home.

“No. Leave them to me, for now,” he finally answered.

My heart sank suddenly. All around me, other girls that had come with me to the palace were casually listening in on the conversation. They started muttering excitedly to each. other.

“Who does the king want as his Luna Queen?”

“I don’t know, but he said he’s close.”

“One of us could be the next Luna Queen.”

They gushed and squealed and giggled about it all.

Jealousy flared in my chest and I glared at my empty champagne glass. Setting it aside, I collected the skirts of my dress and left the celebration.

I headed into the garden to clear my head. The music and chatter became a distant murmur in the back of my mind.

I trusted Theo. I knew that he cared about me and that he wanted to be with me. And I knew that there weren't other girls in that group he was interested in. So why was he choosing to still keep them around?

What if he didn't really like me and just settled for me because I was immune to his touch? What if he thought we shouldn't be mates? What if he didn't think I came from a strong enough pack for me to be queen?

So many questions raced through my mind.

I took in a deep breath and Theo's familiar scent filled my nostrils. On the edge of my senses, I felt him approaching, but I didn't want to see him right now. I was still confused and upset about why he wanted to keep the other consort candidates around.

Turning away from him, I meant to head out of the garden before he saw me.

"Ciana, what are you doing out here? I've been looking for you. Where are you going?" Theo asked, grabbing my arm before I could get away.

"Why were you looking for me?" I asked snippily.

"I saw that you left the party. I wanted to make sure you were alright but you haven't come back. I want to celebrate this night with you." He cupped my cheek and smiled at me.

I almost leaned forward to kiss him. Darn this good-looking man!

I pulled away. "You want to celebrate with me, and all the other consorts brought to the palace?" I asked, arching an eyebrow.

"What are you talking about?"

"Obviously, you don't just need me since you're keeping

that entire group of girls that came to the castle with me. I'm sure one of them can celebrate with you just as well. And why not, there are a lot of girls in the group better suited for you. Trust me, I get it, you want options. I'm not going to stand in your way," I said, pulling away from his grasp and crossing my arms.

Theo creased his brow, then he smirked. He stepped forward and put his hands on my shoulders. His thumb brushed my cheek.

Why wasn't he mad at me?

"Ack!" I cried out in surprise.

Theo scooped me up in his arms and threw me over his shoulder.

“Theo, what are you doing!?” I cried as he carried me off.

He didn’t answer me. He just carried me out of the garden. and back into the palace. When he got to his bedroom, he dropped me on the soft, comfy mattress.

“Who else could I make my wife? Who else could be that person but you? They can’t even get close to me,” he said.

I sat on the end of the bed and crossed my arms and legs, glaring at him.

“So, the only reason you want me is because I’m the only one you can touch? You don’t even have a choice in the mat- ter, right? It has nothing to do with liking me, it has to do with my immunity,” I snarled.

Theo leaned in and cupped my cheeks. He forced me to

look into his eyes and I gasped.

“Ciana Black, for my whole life, as long or short as it might be, you will be the only person I ever love. I swear to the Moon Goddess and to Dark King Lycaon that I will never love ano- ther the way I love you,” he swore, his voice serious yet tender.

My cheeks burned and I averted my eyes. “I hope that’s not your way of proposing, Theo. When you propose, it needs to be better than in your bedroom,” I muttered.

Theo smirked and lifted my face just a little higher. He pressed his lips to mine. I couldn’t resist and kissed him back. immediately.

His hands moved to my hips and he squeezed gently. I gasped as he pushed me back on the bed and hovered over

He grabbed my dress and slid the skirts up my legs slowly, then he kissed my lips as he pulled the dress up my body.

A shiver ran through me as the silk fabric brushed my thighs and my stomach. His large, warm hands grabbed my hips and squeezed again.

Moaning, I arched into his touch, my skin feeling like it was on fire.

His tongue dove past my lips and I met it with mine, a silent battle that neither of us wanted to win. When he pulled away, I whimpered, desperately wanting to feel his lips on mine again.

He smirked, “Ciana, do you want to know a secret?”

“Wh-what?” I panted.

He leaned in and whispered in my ear, “I didn’t think it was possible, but you’re even more intoxicating when you’re jeal- ous!”

After saying that, Theo tucked his hands under my knees and bent them, setting my feet flat on the mattress. He pressed his lips against the inside of my right knee, his mouth searing hot against my skin. Slowly, tantalizingly, he kissed a trail up my inner thigh.

I squirmed on the bed, my fists clenching around the comforter as his mouth moved closer and closer to my swollen core.

He slipped his finger into the edge of my panties, pulling the lacey fabric aside. Theo's tongue flicked against my slick entrance and my legs quivered.

I moaned again, moving a hand to the top of his head. His tongue dove in, tracing every inch of my wet folds. My mind reeled with pleasure.

His tongue moved again, swirling in long, slow circles around. I cried out in pleasure and lifted my hips to meet his mouth, my fingers knotting in his hair. My legs trembled and I writhed, jerking with pleasure.

Again and again, he repeated the slow, sensual circles. My little nub throbbed with pure pleasure that grew and grew. Nothing else existed but his mouth on me. With each lick of his tongue, I got closer and closer to divinity until...

"Theo, I'm..." I gasped, my legs clenched around his head. Arching my back, I moaned and gasped as waves of pleasure

crashed through me. I felt lighter than air, like I was floating on clouds.

"The only way to treat jealousy," he chuckled with lust, "is to let me show you just how much I love you..."

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Swiftly, Theo removed the rest of my clothes and his own.

He crawled onto the bed, pushing my legs apart with his knees. He brushed his fingertips along the inside of my thighs, up my legs, and to my hips. He grabbed my hips, digging his fingers into my skin. Then, he caressed his hands along my sides.

Cupping my breasts, Theo pinched my nipples between his fingers and leaned in, kissing my mouth. I tasted myself on him and a thrill shot through me. I pushed my tongue into his mouth and ran it over the inside of his cheeks.

Theo grunted and pinched my nipples tighter. I gasped and threw my head back on the pillows. He tweaked and rolled the little buds around, sending shocks of pleasure straight into my silky folds.

I brought my hands to his chest, tracing the deep lines of his muscles. My fingers slid into the grooves of his abs and down the lines of his hips.

My stomach fluttered with the memory of the last time I'd been here and I moaned needily.

"I want to feel you again... inside," I whispered. I grasped his firm member with my fingertips and dragged them along his shaft.

Theo groaned and closed his eyes for a moment. He kissed my lips again, his hands running down my sides and to

my hips.

Before I knew what was happening, Theo grabbed my hips and flipped me onto my stomach. He pulled my hair away from my neck and kissed and nipped the back of my neck and along my shoulder.

I squirmed around and moaned wantonly. His hands ran down my back in feather-light touches, traveling along my spine and down. He squeezed my butt cheeks, massaging them and pulling them apart.

Up my sides his fingers moved, sending tingles through my entire body. I twisted in his grasp ready to explode completely.

“You’re trying to torture me, aren’t you?” I panted, my words turning to a moan when he sucked on my neck.

Theo chuckled close to my ear. “Nope, just a little prize for your jealousy,” he purred.

His heavy member pressed against my back, nestled right against my butt. I lifted my hips and Theo gasped, his hands tightening around me.

“You little vixen,” he muttered. His tongue darted out and licked the back of my ear. Theo wrapped one arm around me, pressing against my breasts in a pleasurable painful embrace.

With his free hand, he lifted me up and his swollen, throbbing manhood pressed against my soaking entrance.

Without any further delay, he grunted and thrust in. I whimpered, pushing my hips back to feel more of him.

Theo’s arm tightened around me like a vice.

“Don’t get greedy,” he demanded.

I groaned, just about ready to explode. Theo took his time, sinking into me one inch at a time. My thighs clenched and he gasped against my ear.

“You feel so good, Ciana,” he whispered raggedly.

My stomach exploded in flutters at his praise. Somehow, he knew all the right things to say and do to increase my pleasure and sensation. Well, now I knew where he had learned all

that...

When he was fully inside, it was like he was stretching me apart in all the right ways. He stroked against my tight walls and I opened up to him.

His hips slapped against me with each thrust. Moaning, I lifted my hips to meet his movements.

He moved his free arm around my hips, tucking his fingers between my legs. They searched through my folds until the pad of his forefinger brushed against my heated core. I cried out, trembling as he thrust into me, all the way up to the hilt

of his shaft.

With his thrusts, every inch of my body tingled with pleasure. I moaned and writhed. How could anything possibly feel this good?

His quick, ragged breaths tickled my ear until he latched his mouth onto my neck, sucking my skin gently.

"Theo..." I cried out his name as he hit my spot and I

arched my hips off the bed. Each thrust got me closer and closer to the edge until I moaned and sobbed, squeezing my legs around his hand to maximize my pleasure.

My walls tightened around his member and Theo grunted.

"You're so tight... it's... perfect," Theo gasped against my neck. He groaned and quivered inside of me as he reached his own climax.

He sighed and collapsed on top of me, breathing heavily. He wrapped both his arms around me tightly, like he was afraid I'd disappear. I wasn't going anywhere, not ever again.

Slowly, he rolled off of me and laid on his back. I snuggled up closer to him and rested my head on his chest, listening to his heart thrumming against my cheek. Theo rubbed my back gently, soothing away every worry or doubt that lingered in my mind.

My eyelids grew heavy and the last thing I remembered was him telling me how much he loved me.

And me telling myself to just trust him.

The following few days, I barely got to see Theo as he was so busy getting settled in his new role.

However, there was very little I could do.

I loved spending time with him, but I knew myself well enough that I couldn't just sit there doing nothing all day. I wanted to help, but what was I supposed to do?

Looking out the window, my mind wandered. I had been

away from my pack again for a couple of months now. Thomas of course would take care of the pack until my parents returned, but now that all the crises were resolved at the palace, I figured it was a good time for me to go home.

Of course, if and when Theo needed me, I'd be back. I just couldn't allow myself to waste time, sitting here all day, just for Theo to come back at night to give me a kiss. If I couldn't add any value to the palace, at least, I could make myself useful back home.

Someone knocked on the door and I jumped up to see who it might be.

“Theo?” I opened the door, confused why he was already back. It had just past five in the afternoon, and the sun hadn’t set yet.

“Did you forget something? I could’ve grabbed it for you. Every minute of your time counts...”

“No, I pushed off the work for the rest of the day.”

“Why?”

He grabbed my hand and left a kiss on the back of it. Then he gestured like a medieval gentleman. “Miss Black, would you join me for a date?”

He smiled, and his dark eyes sparkled, like the most stunning star at night.

“Now?”

He chuckled, “Yes. Now. Let’s go!”

“Wait, I’m wearing jeans. At least let me put on a dress.”

“No need. You’re beautiful in whatever you’re wearing.”

He smiled and grabbed my hand, tugging me along. I had to jog a little to catch up with him.

Talk about men who had long legs...

We had never been on an official date before, and I couldn’t stop guessing where he was taking me until we got to the top of a small hill outside of the palace.

When we stopped, I gasped at the beautiful scenery.

The sun was setting, painting half of the blue sky in different shades of gold, orange and red. In front of us, the silhouette of the majestic palace could be seen, with lights twinkling through its windows. Night was falling, coating the forest behind us in a mysterious cover of purple.

Not far away from where we stood was a picnic table with a white tablecloth on it. A lit candle and a vase with a rose

were in the middle as a centerpiece.

“Please allow me.” Theo helped me get situated.

“Theo, this place is beautiful!”

Theo grinned, kissed my cheek and sat across from me.

“Glad you like it.”

Then he clapped his hands once, as if on cue, and a violinist in a tailored suit appeared. He stood by our table and started playing a slow, calm, romantic melody.

Following him were three servants.

The one in the middle bowed slightly to both of us and smiled, “We have a very special meal for tonight. A salad for starters with caramelized figs and pomegranate seeds, followed by a lovely, zesty plum

kharcho soup. For your entree, we've prepared roast duck with black truffle cream sauce, and ricotta-stuffed zucchini blossoms. Lastly, we'll have a rhubarb and rosewater flan for dessert."

The other two servants stepped up and laid down our food on warm plates.

"Please enjoy." The first servant smiled again.

I stared at them for a minute and then stared at Theo. My heart was warm, and I was stunned speechless by the gorgeous views, beautiful music and delicious aroma of food.

The music ended and the violinist along with the three servants bowed to us again, leaving me alone with Theo.

Once it was just us, Theo picked up my hands, rubbing them gently with his thumbs. "I hope you like it."

"Theo, this is... this is just gorgeous. Thank you!"

"My pleasure. Sorry that I haven't been able to spend any time with you lately. I've been missing you."

I blushed. "We see each other every night."

"That's different. I wish I could be with you 24 hours a day."

"Me too," I sighed, "But I understand you have your responsibilities...."

Theo looked me in the eye. "Ciana, I just want to make you

happy, but I know something has been bothering you. What is it?"

Did he notice that already?

Open communication was the most important element in a relationship, so I decided to be honest.

"Theo, I want to help. You have a million things going on and I understand there are things only you can do as a king. However, if we're together, I want to share your burden in some way. I'm a little unhappy because I can't be of any help to you."

Theo arched an eyebrow, and I was confused.

"Why did you look at me like that?" I asked.

"I thought..." Theo said hesitantly, as if he was worried that I'd be mad at him if he told the truth, but he let out a breath. and finished his sentence. "I thought you were still upset about the other girls."

I shrugged and admitted, "Well, that too. But I trust you."

He froze and then broke into a chuckle, shaking his head.

"Did I say anything wrong?" I asked, getting confused.

"No,.. not at all. You just never stop to amaze me." He gave me a dotting smile. "Ciana, I don't know how I got so lucky to have you."

His deep, dark eyes locked on me, making me feel butterflies in my stomach. I was lost in his gaze for a moment before I cleared my throat. "Um...So, how are things going?"

Theo sighed, "We're getting more and more reports of re- bellion activity."

"That's... not good," I muttered.

"It is manageable, don't worry," Theo said with confi- dence.

"Really? Mind sharing your plans? I'm just curious."

He gave me a mysterious smile. "It's manageable because I have ambassadors for my court. As long as they agree that I'm the kind of king that is needed, someone just and fair, their words could help stabilize the country."

"Ambassadors..." I thought aloud, and then it was like a light bulb switched on as the realization dawned on me.

"The girls!" I exclaimed, "That's why you didn't dismiss them all immediately! Those are all Alphas' daughters, and they could make useful ambassadors for the royal court, as long as you could convince them and show them that you're a good king!"

"Exactly." Theo smiled, seemingly proud of my thought process. "Sometimes, it's frustrating to have such a smart girl- friend. I could never keep my secrets for long."

I blushed when he said "girlfriend". Sweetness filled my heart, and I murmured, "Stop teasing me, Your Majesty!"

"It's not teasing if it's true," he claimed, still smiling. "Now, let's get our food started before it gets cold."

"Good idea. I'm starving!"

The evening went on, and Theo caught me up on a few

other topics. I loved that he felt comfortable sharing his work with me, even if I was just there listening.

"Alpha, I'm sorry to interrupt your night out, but we have two things to report," Jake's voice rang from the woods be- hind us. He gave me a quick wave. "First, a scout has returned from checking on the rebels. He's injured severely and wants. to speak with you urgently."

Theo's brow furrowed and he squeezed my hands.

"And what's the second?" Theo asked.

"Well, I'm not sure whether it's me overreacting, but I haven't seen Warren the whole day."

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I thought about how Warren had left the palace once with me without telling anyone, and said he had done that in the past as well.

I squeezed Theo's hand back and told both of them, "He may just need some time for himself. I wouldn't be too con- cerned. Theo, why don't you talk to the scout and I'll see if I can find Warren?"

I gave him an understanding smile, doing my best to be supportive.

"Alright," he said. Reluctantly, he gave me a quick kiss and left with Jake.

I let out a sigh and slowly made my way back to the palace.

A slithering sound in the leaves made me perk up my ears and I saw Perceval coming toward me. It immediately brought a big smile to my face.

“Hey, Percy! It’s been a while!”

The snake slithered right up to me and coiled around my ankles. I smiled and bent down to scratch his head. He closed his eyes and flicked his tongue at me. I imagined him smiling a little as he bobbed his head back and forth, leaning into my touch.

“I missed you too,” I giggled.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and started slithering away, but didn’t get far before he looked back and hissed at me.

“Is there something you want to show me?” I asked. I followed after him. Some fond memories came to me, and I won-

dered where he would take me this time.

“Percy, this is...Sebastian’s old room?” Why would Perceval take me here?

Then I realized that the door was cracked open and I could see someone inside.

My heart caught in my throat when I recognized him.

“Warren?”

He stopped dead and slowly looked at me.

His eyes looked distant and lost.

“You’re here! I’m so glad to see you moving around. I take it you’re feeling better,” I said, walking into the room. “But why did you come here?”

Warren’s face was a little pale and he looked around quickly before he replied, “Yes, I’m feeling better. Thanks for asking.” However, he avoided looking at me.

“Warren, you okay?” Something didn’t feel right.

He smiled, but I could tell it was strained. “I’m okay... I, um, I’ve always misunderstood my brother, but now, I’ve decided to let go of our past.”

“Really? That is great,” I grinned, relieved. “I knew you two could bury the hatchet. That’s what family does....”

Suddenly, Warren pounced at me and struck me behind my neck. I gasped and heaved for breath, the wind knocked

out of me.

What had just happened? Warren attacked me!

Before I hit the ground, a pair of arms held me and laid me gently on the ground.

"I'm sorry, I lied again," Warren said with a bitter smile. "Theo is not my brother. He never has been and he never will be."

"Goodbye, Ciana."

I lifted my head as Warren walked away. The bitter smile on his face disturbed me right to the bones but also broke my heart. I tried to lift my arm to grab him but I wasn't able to.

My head swam with dizziness and I couldn't hold it up anymore.

Groaning, I collapsed on the floor fully as Warren left.

I blinked my eyes awake and immediately realized I wasn't on the floor or in Sebastian's room.

"Urh..." I groaned, touching my head. I was still a bit dizzy.

"Ciana! Thank goodness you're awake!" Theo's voice rang, and the next moment, he hugged me tightly against his body. His heart hammered in my ears.

"Th-Theo... I.... can't... breathe..." I gasped.

"I'm sorry," he said, releasing me quickly. "I was scared to death!"

I felt something gently nudging me and found Perceval perked up as soon as he saw my movement.

It must be the python who went to get Theo to help me.

"Thanks, Percy!" I said, but my mind went to Warren. Why did he attack me?

Theo pulled me into his arms again and I heard him mur- mur, "I'm glad nothing worse happened to you. Warren could have...."

I shook my head and stopped him.

"No, Warren won't kill me. I'm sure of that," I said firmly, "I just don't know why he did that."

Theo didn't argue with me, only asked, "Did he say any- thing?"

"He said... you aren't his brother. You've never been, and you never will be."

Theo's eyes widened. "What does that mean? I thought... we kinda got past that."

I had some suspicion about Warren and Maggie's real father when Aurora told me about their childhood, but that was just my guess. I had no evidence, nor did I think it was a good idea to cause any unnecessary confusion. But now...

“Theo, this is purely what I’ve heard. I have no other evidence whatsoever, but I think at least you should know.”

After I told him about my observations and what I heard from Aurora, Theo fell into silence.

“Theo, I’m sorry, I didn’t know whether this is at all related. I didn’t mean to add more burden to your plate.”

He shook his head, “No, it helps. If your guess is true, it explains why he did what he did.”

“You mean, why he attacked me?”

“No. Not that. He took the key that Sebastian used to wear and the sacred scrolls with encoded messages in the texts.”

“So he knocked me out simply because I happened to be in Sebastian’s room.”

Theo nodded. “No one was watching him. He’s a prince, there was no need to keep a guard on him. I know Warren and I had our problems but I didn’t consider him a threat or an enemy,” Theo said, a deep crease forming between his brows.

“Do we have any clue why he took the key and the scroll? Did you ever figure out what is on the scroll?”

Theo shook his head. “With Sebastian’s death and the coronation, I wasn’t even thinking about the key or the safe, let alone the scroll. Especially since Warren woke up on his own. The only reason we were after it was to find a way to save him.”

I nodded absently. “I assume you didn’t find him?”

“He disappeared. No one has been able to track him or find him. I’ve sent several scouts and trackers after him but

they haven’t turned anything up,” Theo said, shrugging. “Well, there’s no use for us to worry about it yet. I’m sure, sooner or later, we’ll find out. I’m just glad you’re okay.”

A knock on his door ended our conversation. Jake poked his head in and he smiled when he saw me sitting up.

“Glad to see you’re awake. I need Alpha, but he wouldn’t leave your side,” Jake teased, then his tone became serious and professional when he turned to Theo, “More bad news, I’m afraid.”

He pulled a chair up to the edge of the bed. I thought Jake would take Theo away to talk but they stayed there with me.

“Trouble always comes double,” Theo sighed, “What else is going on out there?”

“There are a lot of packs that are against your rule and are building a rebellion against the crown,” Jake reported.

“That is discouraging,” Theo muttered.

I grabbed his hand and gave it a squeeze. “You’re going to do great. I believe in you.”

Theo smiled at me and patted the back of my hand. He turned his attention to Jake who went on to provide more de- tails.

“We knew that Luther was gaining influence. Apparently, he’s spent years building loyalty in packs that oppose the crown. The Vaner pack is only one of them,” Jake told us.

I nodded. “He tried to get Raymond to convert my entire pack to support him and rebel against the crown too.”

“Correct, and he almost succeeded,” Jake said.

“I get why people may want to rebel against Sebastian, but Sebastian is dead. Now that Theo is the new king, wouldn’ t things be much better?”

Theo answered my question. “It’s not that simple, Ciana. These packs aren’t rebelling against me, it is against my entire family and what we stand for. ‘The crown’ just means the cur- rent ruling regime,” Theo said with a sigh. “Especially since it’s not like I’ve always had a good reputation to begin with.”

“And Luther is trying to convince them that he’d make a better king. A lot of the packs are buying it,” Jake added.

Theo and Jake exchanged a look and I saw the worry in their eyes. My father had taught me about pack leadership and politics. Whatever Luther was doing, it went far beyond politics.

Theo could prove he was fair, just, and merciful. He could stand as the strongest king, the protector of all packs, and show sincere gratitude and kindness. But it wouldn’t matter if Luther had conned hundreds of followers into being loyal to him with magic, trickery, and promises.

“We need to expose Luther for what he is,” I suggested.

Jake agreed, “True. The only problem is, it’s easier said than done. Hold on a second, please.” He went to open the door, and there was Brook, standing with her hand half raised, seemingly just about to knock on the door.

How did Jake even know she was out there?

“Oh, Jake, you’re here too.” The moment she saw Jake, her

face flushed and she looked a bit shy. At least, she didn’t seem to be mad at him anymore. I had a feeling that the two had sorted out their issues about Jake’s unspeakable assignment.

“Oh Ciana,” she ran to my side, “How are you feeling?”

“Much better. Just a little lightheaded,” I said, tapping my temple.

Brook smiled. “Well, I’m glad you’re doing better. I was looking for you – actually, to be precise, someone is looking for you.”

I searched all the names I could think of, but couldn’t come up with anyone who would come all the way to the palace to look for me off the top of my head.

“Do you know who that is?”

“Yes,” Brook said, “He says he knows you from your pack. His name is Thomas.”

“Thomas?” I asked, my heart fluttering.

I hadn’t seen Thomas since he showed up to bring my pack back to order. He’d arrived just in time to save them after Raymond had been defeated.

What was he doing here, at the palace?

“I told him I knew you and I’d come and find you. He said it was kind of... urgent,” she said, shrugging.

I swallowed hard. Urgent news from Uncle Thomas? Was it about the pack? Or was it about my parents?

“He’s out in the gardens.” Brook nodded toward the door.

“Thank you, Brook.” I got up quickly. Theo gave me a hand, but he didn’t stop me.

“I’ll be back soon!” I waved and ran out of the door. I felt a little guilty about leaving them in the dust, but Thomas wouldn’t make a trip all the way here unless it was serious.

How did he even know I’d returned to the palace? I hadn’t told him where I was going and I hadn’t sent updates on my travels.

I hurried through the garden and found him sitting on a stone bench, heavily contemplating a sculpture of the Moon Goddess.

“Thomas,” I called, approaching him quickly. My heart raced as I scanned his features for any sign that he brought bad news.