

## **Kings Breeder 591**

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 591

Chapter 91 : Destiny of the Moon Goddess

\*Lena\*

Kiern came to me in the morning with four maids trailing behind her. Xander shot up in bed, watching with arched brows as I was whisked into the adjoining bathroom on the far side of the room. Kiern mentioned something about breakfast being served in the dining hall, motioning with her hand for Xander to leave.

I caught a glimpse of Xander's face before the bathroom door was closed, his eyes wide with surprise.

What a way to wake up.

I was given a fragrant bath rich with dried petals and oils that soaked into my skin while Kiern rattled on and on about what needed to happen today. She was taking me into the village of Brune to meet with a Wise Woman, and apparently, there was a very specific way I needed to dress for the occasion.

Xander wasn't in the room when I was ushered out of the bath and back into the bedroom. My hair was combed and dried, then pinned away from my face as I was dressed in a white gown that brushed against my ankles and sported puffy, cotton sleeves. It was an odd look, but I noticed Kiern was dressed the same, only in dark colors. She was missing the glimmering jewels she'd worn on her fingers and neck the night before, and her hair was twisted into a loose bun on the top of her head.

She looked normal, simple, and radiant.

But I felt like her doll as she fluffed the sleeves of my dress, fussing over me with a motherly touch. A cloak was placed over my shoulders and clasped across my chest with a broach made of pure gold, a giant opal in the center.

"Don't we need shoes?" I asked as I hustled behind her as we walked briskly down the corridor toward what must have been the main foyer of the palace. She looked at me over her shoulder, giving me a girlish grin.

"And not be able to feel the grass beneath our toes? I think not!"

Two guards opened the three-story high double doors leading out of the palace, and I was momentarily blinded by the light that spread over us. I blinked into the artificial sunlight and gasped.

It was paradise.

I wouldn't have known we were underground had I not been told as much. The sky, or the ceiling, was covered in what looked like crystals that reflected the rays that lit the entire kingdom up like the sun. Rolling hills of the softest grass I'd ever felt lay before me, lush and thick. Huge trees I couldn't name, their leaves a multitude of colors, fanned out in thickets, flanked by small houses carved out of pure marble and adorned in jewels.

Kiern was pleased by my shocked reaction. She grabbed my hand, squeezing as she led me forward into the grass. We followed no trail, and I didn't stop to look over my shoulder until we reached the crest of a hill.

Beyond lay the village I'd see from the window, but it was much larger than I'd expected. How they'd managed to create this massive space underground and house so many people, I didn't know. I couldn't even fathom it.

But what was behind me took my breath away.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" Kiern smiled as we gazed upon the palace.

It was made of pure crystal, and shown like a rainbow in the lights that danced around it. Crystal stairs led up to the palace, which had been built into the side of what I realized was just a large cavern that must have extended for miles and miles.

"I hope you're hungry. Narcissa won't let us leave her home unless we eat something," she grinned as we turned our heads back to the village and began to walk down the hill into town.

The villagers stopped to bow to Kiern as we passed, casting suspicious eyes on me, but overall were friendly and welcoming. The village was busy and loud, with several markets going on within the great space at one time.

What surprised me the most were the children who ran through the street, their voices lifted in gaiety.

"There's not many of them," Kiern said with a hint of melancholy in her voice, tilting her head toward a great marble fountain in the center of the market square where four children were sitting and playing with toys. "Children are precious to us, a rare blessing."

I had the sudden urge to tell her the truth and reveal what I knew about King Nikolas—and what he wanted to do to me, but I bit my tongue and followed her through the market square, passing street after street until we reached the very edge of her kingdom.

Trees cut the village off from the far edge of the crystal cave. We walked into what looked like a small forest, and in a moment we were standing on the edge of a cliff. I looked up at the crystals that covered the ceiling, my gaze lowering to the spot where the crystal faded into black granite, and disappeared altogether into all-encompassing darkness.

There was a bridge before us, hanging over a drop-off. I could hear water roaring far, far below us, and could only imagine just how far down the water was. My skin prickled with unease as I followed Kiern onto the bridge, walking slowly and cautiously until we reached the other side with nothing but lanterns to light our way.

I'd been putting blind trust in Kiern since the moment I'd opened my eyes in this strange place. I prayed to whoever was listening that I was right about her and her people—and that I wasn't being led into a trap.

The cave came to an abrupt end, funneling to a stop as the ceiling above us became shallow. I could reach up and run my fingertips over the damp rock above our heads as we closed in on what looked like a house built into the rock, much like the palace had been built into the unending crystals.

Before we reached the front door, Kiern turned to me, her hands on my shoulders.

“I need you to know that you are safe. No one in this kingdom is going to harm you, Lena.”

“Oh, I—okay—”

“And,” she continued, her expression turning serious, “you cannot speak a word about what is said here, or what you’ve seen.”

I swallowed back the anxiety tightening my throat as she turned me toward the door.

“I wasn’t totally truthful when I said King Nikolas was the only High Vampire left,” she said, lifting her hand to knock.

Every downy hair on my body stood on end as footsteps sounded behind the door. It swung open, showering us in faint amber light.

“Narcissa,” Queen Kiern said as she curtsied.

I looked up into the eyes of the woman standing in the doorway, and found it impossible to move, or breathe.

\*\*\*

“So, you’ve brought me the Moon Goddess,” Narcissa said as she removed the kettle from its hook over the hearth.

She was the tallest woman I’d ever laid eyes on, her long silver hair brushing against her knees in soft waves as she moved around the spacious, one-room home tucked at the very edge of the underground Kingdom of Brune. I realized why she lived here instead of the village instantly as I gazed upon her nearly translucent skin. It sparkled in the firelight, a pale silver in color as she poured four cups of tea.

I wasn’t sure who the fourth cup was for, but I didn’t ask. Her presence alone was enough for me to want to cower and run. Even the power within me trembled with fear.

She was a High Vampire—ageless, but ancient. She’d lived during the time that Leto, Morrighan, and Lycaon ruled the pack lands.

And she had welcomed me into her home, pouring my tea and filling a plate with pastries and cookies for me to enjoy.

I took a ginger bite of one of the cookies, unable to stop my hand from shaking. Narcissa’s eyes were a deep violet flaked with crimson red around the irises. She was watching me intently, her mouth curving into what I hoped was a friendly smile as I chewed and swallowed the bite.

There was a crash outside the door leading into the house, and someone cursed as they stepped inside the house. A young woman dressed in a black cloak gathered a basket into her arms and bent to pick up what looked like bundles of herbs that had spilled onto the floor when she’d entered the house.

She looked up at us, surprised, then narrowed her eyes at Narcissa.

“Oh, don’t be so sour, Starla,” Narcissa said with a wink before turning her gaze back to me.

Starla hurried into a small kitchen area tucked in the corner of the room and began to noisily empty the content of her basket on the counter.

"I poured you some tea, darling," Narcissa chirped.

"I'm not thirsty."

"Suit yourself. I will drink it," Narcissa rolled her eyes and folded her hands around her tea cup. "So, I see that you're terrified of me, young Goddess."

I blanched, tucking my hands in my lap as Narcissa studied my face. Kiern seemed unbothered as she casually sipped her tea.

"Most people are, but that is fine. I'm used to it. Kiern told me you're in need of assistance with some grand plan you have to kill my brother, is that true?"

Brother?

"Nikolas, of course," she winked, just as Starla placed a bowl of blood dusted with fresh herbs on the table in front of her.

I felt the sudden urge to vomit as I paled, clutching my stomach. How had she known? I'd never spoken that plan out loud to anyone, including myself. Narcissa was reading my mind, and it was likely Kiern had the ability to do that as well.

Narcissa shrugged, looking over at Kiern, who gave her a gentle smile.

"I told you, you are safe here, Lena," Kiern urged, nudging me with her elbow. "Now is the time to ask any questions you have about this realm. You need to know what you're up against."

My eyes traveled to Narcissa, who was waiting patiently for me to say something, anything. She was beautiful, but in a strange, deadly way that erased whatever kindness she laced her words with. This woman... this thing—she was death itself.

"Why can't you kill him?" I asked.

"Because we share a maker, the God of Night. If I were to kill him, I'd carry around a piece of his soul inside of me. He killed our siblings; our brothers and sisters. Now their souls carry out their revenge by having the opportunity to torment him forever."

I opened my mouth to respond but found I had no words to convey the questions dancing through my mind.

"We were supposed to be shepherds of the people our father created, not the masters. I chose to live here, with them, rather than rule over the realm alongside my siblings and aid in their tyrannical bloodbaths and slavery."

"Do you know what he wants me for?" I stammered, my chest tightening around the words. Narcissa sighed deeply, shaking her head as she glanced at Kiern, who nodded her permission to continue.

I found this gesture odd. I would have assumed Narcissa had authority over Kiern, and even Costas, but she was metaphorically bending the knee to her.

“He thinks he can get a child out of you, an heir, but this is based on falsehoods. It’s based on something our father said to us long ago, when the realm was born and we were young.”

“What did he say?”

“He said he was the true father of the twins Morrighan and Lycaon, and given the fact we had been created in our father’s image, Nikolas believed he was able to father children if the female harbored the blood of the White Queen, or the Dark King in the realm of the wolves. But, he’s wrong. He’s possessed by this theory. He became especially frantic when the witches proclaimed a great prophecy had been fulfilled, and the Moon Goddess would be born again and be coming home... you, my dear.”

“Coming home? Here?”

“Oh, no. Not here. This is hell, child. I’m speaking of the realm of the gods.”

“What do I need to do in order to kill him?” I said, feeling a little lightheaded as I reached for a pastry. She smiled as I popped the entire thing into my mouth.

“Slowly, painfully... that’s how I would do it. I’d make him pay for all of his wrongs. But all you really need is a little light,” she said.

Behind her, Starla was rummaging through a cabinet along the far wall. Starla walked toward us and dropped a velvet bag into Narcissa’s waiting palm. She handed the bag to me, smiling as I opened it and dumped the contents into my hands—a twig, a dried flower, and a golden gem the size of my thumb.

“You must go now. They are waiting for you,” said Narcissa.

“Who?” I asked, but Kiern had risen and was already walking toward the door, Starla following close behind.

Narcissa reached out before I could rise to my feet, wrapping an ice cold hand around mine.

“Everything you ever questioned will be answered in time,” she whispered, giving me a genuine smile.

“I don’t know what you mean—”

“Morrighan would have been so proud,” she continued, squeezing my hand before she let go.

“You knew her?”

But the feeling of her hand around mine evaporated, and in an instant she was gone, disappearing completely. I flinched as I turned around, meeting Starla’s gaze.

“It’s a sunstone. Remember that you have it,” she said sharply as she motioned for me to leave. Kiern was waiting for me in front of the bridge leading back to the village. I looked back at the little house once more before I faced Kiern.

“It’s time for you to go now,” she said with reluctance, and maybe even regret. “Does Xander know what you plan to do?”

“No,” I replied, my heart squeezing as I met her eye.

“We’ll keep him safe,” she said, and we returned to the village.

Sold as the Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 592

Chapter 92 : I Have to Stay

\*Lena\*

We spent the remainder of the day in Brune and had dinner with Kiern, Costas, and their court once again. I sat in relative silence during dinner, picking at my food while Xander and Costas leaned into each other and spoke in low murmurs. Costas was animated, obviously trying to convince Xander to open the portal and allow all-out war between our two realms.

I didn’t have a chance to utter a single word to Xander until we were in our bedroom after dinner, preparing to leave Brune altogether.

“Costas said we have roughly two hours before daybreak above ground,” he said as he laid out a variety of different items on the bed he meant to pack in a backpack he had sitting on the floor. “You should try to sleep.”

I crossed my arms over my chest, watching as he tossed the backpack on the bed and began to pack it with dried food, water bottles, and an assortment of first aid items.

“I’m not opening the portal—”

“I know. I told him no,” Xander breathed, glancing up at me as he zipped up the backpack and reached for a leather belt he’d laid out over the bed. Four knives were sheathed and hanging on the leather. It was a gift from Costas. Xander looked down at it in regret.

“I don’t understand the hierarchy here,” I hissed, sitting on the edge of the bed as he weighed the belt in his hands. “Kiern said there are multiple underground cities like Brune—”

“None like Brune, from what I understand. Brune has farms, agriculture. They trade goods with the other cities but they all consider Kiern and Costas the king and queen of the lower vampires. He could... he could give us an army, Lena, against King Nikolas.” He met my eye, uncertainty etched on every line of his face.

“But you don’t trust him?”

“Something about him is just... off. I don’t know how to explain it. What about Kiern? How was your day with her?”

I opened my mouth to tell him about meeting Narcissa, the High Vampire, but then closed my mouth, pursing my lips. Something inside of me was telling me to keep quiet, damn near begging me not to utter a word.

“It—it was fine. We explored the kingdom.”

“Fascinating, isn’t it? All of this... magic. That’s the only way to describe it, really. Costas doesn’t even know how the lights work in this place, the lights that come through the crystals. He said it’s been like this for thousands of years.”

Thousands of years—Brune had been here for thousands of years. Narcissa was just as old, old enough to have known Morrighan somehow. And her brother? Nikolas?

I swallowed against the terror creeping up my throat as I scooted off the bed and turned away from Xander, pretending to be invested in something on the other side of the room.

Clothes for our journey had been laid out on one of the sofas near the fireplace—a simple white cotton shirt and a pair of trousers, as well as a leather vest, a belt similar to Xander’s, and a jacket made of an odd, scale-like material that was faintly silver in color. Boots and socks in my size sat near the door.

I glanced at Xander over my shoulder, feeling suddenly sick to my stomach as I gazed up at his face. He had no idea what I was about to do. He wouldn’t ever understand why I’d chosen to leave him out of it.

I laid down on one of the plush sofas and closed my eyes, drifting into a shallow slumber before I was woken by Xander an hour or so later. I got dressed, and Xander helped me put on the leather belt, which was heavy with knives that were so long they hung mid-thigh. I unsheathed one, perplexed as I turned it from side to side.

The tip and blade was made of iron, sharpened so violently it sliced through the sleeve of my shirt without an ounce of pressure as I tested it on the fabric. But the body of the knife was made of wood. I turned to Xander, who took the knife from my hands and twirled it over his fingers in an expert fashion.

He jabbed, the tip of the knife fixed right over my heart. I didn’t move as his eyes locked on mine. “Don’t stab,” he said in a soft, seductive whisper and then withdrew the knife. “s\*\*\*h. It’s more effective, contrary to popular belief, and easier.” He placed two fingers against my side, along my ribs. “If you need to stab someone in the chest to kill them, you’ve already lost.” His free hand ran up my side, his fingers brushing along my collarbone as he found the soft divet between my neck and collarbone where my pulse was hammering against his touch. “s\*\*\*h,” he repeated. “But if you must stab, do it here, and aim down. Drive the knife down.”

His words were a command.

“Okay,” I whispered, the intimacy of the brief introduction to fighting with knives setting me on fire.

He sheathed the knife on my belt and returned to readying himself as if nothing had just happened between us.

“Why is it made of wood?” I asked as I shrugged on the leather vest.

It had a high collar that covered my neck, and my stomach turned as I realized its significance. I’d seen a feeder earlier in the day—a man, walking alongside one of the servants as they passed me in the hallway outside the dining hall. One side of his neck was bandaged, while the other sported two red marks, teeth marks.

The collar of the vest felt incredibly tight all of the sudden, and I found it hard to swallow as I pushed my hands through the scaled jacket, running my fingers over the heavy, solid fabric.

It was armor.

“Costas said a wooden stake through the heart is the only way to truly kill a vampire,” he said, extending his hand to mine.

I looked up at Xander, fear rippling through me as I thought of Narcissa and how terrified I'd been of her, even though she'd be friendly and caring.

"We're going to be fine," he whispered, and he bent his head to brush a soft kiss across my lips. "It's time."

\*\*\*

Xander and Costas were several paces ahead of me as we walked across the rolling hills outside of the crystal palace toward a set of inconspicuous golden doors in the distance.

Starla, to my surprise, had accompanied us. She was walking next to me, her face twisted in a scowl. I glanced at her as we made our way toward the entrance of their refuge, and she met my eye, glaring.

"What?" I whispered, furrowing my brows at her.

"This is suicide. You know that, right?"

"What is?"

"Don't play dumb. Do you really think you can defeat King Nikolas?"

I paled, glancing at Xander before shushing Starla firmly and grabbing onto her arm, pulling her to a stop. "Xander doesn't know—"

"Do you still have the sunstone?"

"Yes, why? What does it do?"

Starla narrowed her eyes at me, studying my face. I didn't understand her temper. She wasn't nice, and had barely said a word to me at Narcissa's house earlier in the day. All around us night was falling in the cave, the crystals high above us reflecting a vivid violet light.

"Bring it to the witches. It has to be you."

"Witches? What—"

"They won't let anyone else on their island. Go to the sea; they'll be expecting you."

"Starla, I can't—"

She ripped her arm out of my grip and turned on her heel, walking away. I gaped after her, my brow furrowed so deeply it was starting to give me a headache.

"Lena? What's going on?" Xander said, and I turned to him, noticing him standing with Costas in the distance as they waited for me to catch up.

I shook my head, walking briskly to catch up with them.

"Don't mind Starla. She is a pest," Costas smiled.

I resisted the urge to look him up and down as I waited for him to turn away from me and continue walking toward the door.



“She was the one who found us in the forest,” Xander told Costas.

“That’s because she spends most nights out there in the dark hunting for the flowers that only bloom in the moonlight—blood orchids, mostly, and moon mushrooms, midnight roses, and so on and so forth. She uses them for tonics and teas for our people.”

“She’s a healer?” I asked.

“Mhmm, sure. I’d say so. But she’s a nightmare, truly. I don’t know what her problem is. I’ve spent the last four hundred years or so avoiding her at all costs. She’s rather close with Kiern, however.”

I realized he likely had no idea Narcissa lived in his Kingdom. He would’ve mentioned her to Xander, surely. Costas would have gloated over her presence.

We’d reached the doorway but had to wait to go through for approximately seventeen minutes. Costas explained that while the sun had set in Brune, the sun was just coming up in the Realm of Night, and we’d have exactly five hours before the sun set again.

“King Nicolas has spies everywhere. Trust no one, and find shelter after dark if you’re unable to open a portal home right away. Return here, if you must. You’re always welcome.”

Xander only nodded, his gaze fixed on Costas’s face.

“And,” Costas continued, tossing a velvet pouch to Xander, “if you change your mind about our deal, use these.”

I knew what was in the bag without Xander needing to open it—bloodstones, the same ruby-like gems King Nikolas was using to create the temporary breaks between our realms to traffic young shifter women into his clutches.

We exited through the doors without so much as a goodbye, or good luck.

\*\*\*

\*Xander\*

We didn’t have time to walk back to the gorge, and I didn’t know the way there anyway. But Lena was dragging her feet, refusing to use her powers to open a portal back to her realm. She was acting... tired, maybe even a little sick.

She was pregnant, of course, and I knew that was weighing on her, but she’d been fine when we’d left Brune and returned to the surface, which was just as ugly and barren as I’d remembered it being when Henry led me into his cave.

“Do you want to rest?” I asked, but she shook her head, her face drained of all color as we walked through the forest at a slow crawl. “Lena, come on. We need to do this.”

“No,” she breathed, meeting my eye.

“What? What do you mean, no?”

“No. I’m not going back. Not yet.”

I gaped at her, shaking my head. "Lena, we have to."

"And let this continue? King Nikolas is going to find a way into my realm one way or another. He'll make more Hybrids like Maxwell said he would."

I ran my tongue along my lower lip, glancing up at the sky. The pinkish hue in the sky was already starting to fade. If we didn't do this now, well, we'd have to turn back for Brune.

"Lena, do it now—"

"No."

"Lena!"

Movement caught my eye, directly behind where she was standing. My body went rigid as a shadow moved behind the gnarled, blacked trees. Lena's lower lip trembled, and she whimpered, sucking in her breath as she looked up into my eyes.

I hadn't noticed the trail of blood. I hadn't noticed the deliberate cut on the palm of her hand.

"No. You didn't."

"Xander, I'm sorry. I have to stay—"

"Lena!" I roared, lunging for her and throwing my shadow of power over her just as a creature stalked out of the trees and rose to its feet behind her.

Six vampires dressed in long, hooded cloaks came up behind it, sniffing the air. Lena held up her hand, white light ebbing between us.

I screamed her name before it all went black.

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 593

Chapter 93 : I Didn't Look Back

\*Xander\*

I'd never used my powers before, not like this. That shadow of darkness was a mystery to me still, its presence life-long, but dormant. I'd heard the stories passed down from generation to generation.

I'd been old enough to witness my uncle, who showed much more of a promise to the powers of the Dark Lord than I ever had, overcome the soul-sucking darkness in his veins as he laid his heart before a woman with the blood of the White Queens.

My powers were minuscule, a faint fluttering in my body. But when Lena had marked me, well, suddenly I could feel those powers itching to get loose, to take over, drawn out by her own.

And when I watched more of those gray, molted creatures come out of the forest, followed by their handlers who were more human than hybrid beasts but not by much, I felt my powers surge as anger and betrayal swept over me like a rogue wave.

Lena had planned this. She'd stalled our trek back to the gorge until we'd run out of daylight. She'd cut her hand open, leaving a trail of blood for the vampires who worked under King Nikolas's rule to find us.

And now she was trying to send me back to the pack lands while she went on some foolish hero's journey into the Night Realm, alone.

I think the f\*\*k not.

I screamed at her, throwing the full force of my power forward just as a spray of light erupted around us, splitting the sky in two.

I wasn't a match for her strength, and I had been just a second too late in casting my shadow of darkness like a net over her. Her cry of surprise, then terror, cut through me like a knife as a winged hybrid landed behind her, its oddly human hands outstretched and closing in on her.

"Close it!" I screamed, drawing one of the wooden-bodied blades from my belt as several vampires surrounded me, their eyes burning crimson beneath their black hoods. "Close the f\*\*\*\*\*g portal!"

I could feel the force of it behind me, invisible save for a magnetic rippling that made the landscape beyond look somewhat distorted. I could step through and save myself. That's what she had wanted, after all.

But she was gone in an instant, the clouds above my head breaking apart as the hybrid disappeared back into the darkening night.

She was my mate—my pregnant mate. I wasn't going to let her sacrifice herself to the f\*\*\*\*\*g Vampire King.

I kept my eyes on the vampires, who were inching toward me as the last shred of day waned and night fell over the forest. Their hybrids waited behind them, varying in shape and color. I could still see the wolf in them, and I felt a pang of regret as I gazed from hybrid to hybrid, wondering who they had been before they'd been captured, taken, and turned against their will.

The vampires eyed me, sizing me up. They lipped dry, cracked lips and ran their tongues along their long, pointed teeth.

None of the vampires in Brune had looked like this. They had been beautiful, kind, and flushed with healthy, lively color.

These vampires were gray and shriveled, their eyes red and black orbs against their hollowed, sunken faces.

They were hungry. They were kept starved for the purpose of the hunt—this hunt.

I could shift, but I'd have to fight off the vampires and their hybrids with nothing but my jaw and claws. I knew about their speed because Costas had been more than happy to show me his own. I couldn't outrun them. I had to fight. I had to make a stand, even if it was my last.

"You'd better have a f\*\*\*\*\*g plan, Lena!" I screeched, although it was unlikely she could hear me, wherever the hell she was now.

My only choice was to kill them all one by one and pray to the Goddess that the winged hybrid hadn't noticed the rippling vortex behind me before it'd flown off with her.

These vampires couldn't leave this clearing alive, not with the pack lands only inches away.

The first one lunged forward, and I slashed it with my knife. The smell of burning flesh wafted through the air as it screeched and rolled away. One after another, they tried me, lunging and baring their teeth. I had the upper hand until they ganged up on me, all while their hybrids watched.

I understood the reasoning for the odd, suffocating armor Costas had supplied us with when the vampires began to try to sink their teeth into me. The scaled jacket cracked their teeth over and over as I swung my blade wildly, slashing through whatever was nearby.

But it was six to one, and after half an hour of this dance, I suddenly felt like I was being stabbed repeatedly in the thigh.

Pain ricocheted through me, and I lost my balance as the vampires attacked my legs. The leather that covered my pants wasn't thick enough to totally thwart their assault, and once they had me on the ground I knew, without a doubt, that it was over.

'Adrian!' I screamed through the mind-link, praying the open portal could relay my message. 'I'm dead. It's over. The portal is open. You must warn the Alphas. You must stop these creatures from breaching the pack lands. Egoren—'

My mind began to drift, my heart rate slowing. I was losing blood—all of it. Once they'd gotten me on the ground, it was nothing for them to tear my armor from my body to access my wrists and my neck.

I held on by a thread as I turned to look at the hybrids. I noticed them backing away, bowing their heads to me as they disappeared into the darkened woods without their vampires.

Why? What was happening?

I didn't close my eyes. I held on, unable to move. The only feeling left inside of me was the steady beat of my powers being drained away with my blood.

Maybe I was already dead? I couldn't feel anything. I couldn't see anything other than the stars above my head as I let my eyes flutter against the night sky.

Dying was surprisingly peaceful, I realized. It was alright. Lena would kill that ugly vampire bastard king. She would; I didn't doubt it. I'd be mad at her for a long time, but I had forever to get over it— eternity. Where would I go next? What was waiting for me on the other side? Lycaon himself? What would he be like....

I closed my eyes and accepted death, but only momentarily. Air rushed back into my lungs, choking me awake. I opened my eyes again and found myself completely, and utterly alone.

I was nearly naked; the shirt and pants I'd been wearing beneath the layers of armor were shredded and barely hanging from my body. I sat up, my breath catching in my throat as a searing pain radiated through my body, making my ears ring.

It was full dark, and I could barely see anything. I couldn't even see the rippling portal in the lack of light.

But the clouds were moving overhead, and soon intense starlight filtered down into the forest, giving me a muted view of the damage done to my body, and the damage I myself had inflicted on the half dozen vampires who were sprawled around me, dead where they lay.

Not only were they dead, but they were shriveled. I swallowed hard as I looked down at the vampire who was sprawled out over my legs, face down and covered by his cloak. I shot backward, scooting as far as possible away from the scene, panting as adrenaline coursed through my body and ignited a burning pain in the puncture marks that covered my skin.

The body of the vampire shattered against my swift movements, settling into the cracked ground in a puff of ash.

All of them were dead. All of them.

I looked down at my hands, at the lines of darkness coursing beneath my skin, and I knew with certainty what had happened.

I'd killed them with the dark powers that ran through my veins. That soul-sucking force had poisoned them, turning them into dust, into soot.

I choked a laugh, holding my bare arms up to the light of the stars. These creatures couldn't handle even a taste of my blood without dying.

I felt a surge of what I could only describe as pure, unadulterated confidence as I jumped to my feet, but then I swayed violently and fell back to my knees as my vision went black. I was weak, but not

weak enough to lay there in the open. The hybrids had retreated—to where I didn't know. But they were still out there.

I had a decision to make. I could stay here and guard the portal while Lena did whatever the hell she was planning on doing. I could go through the portal and not only warn the pack lands about what was happening but also gather reinforcements to help rescue their princess. I could go back to Brune and ask for help.

Or, I could go get my mate myself.

I ground my teeth as I gingerly rose to my feet, steadying myself on the trunk of the tree. I looked around the forest, then up at the sky above, which was starting to turn a pale blue in the distance as the realm's fleeting daylight returned.

A thought struck me as I watched daylight break overhead.

Henry had told me time worked differently here, that he'd only been in the Night Realm for a week when almost six weeks had passed in the pack lands. We'd been here for three days, maybe four. How much time had passed in the pack lands in our absence?

I ran my fingers through my hair, trying to gauge the severity of the situation. I had no idea how far along Lena was in her pregnancy. It was early, that I knew for sure. But she'd been throwing up all day, every day since we'd arrived in the Night Realm.

She was exhausted, and she'd complained about the pants she'd been fitted for only a day ago being too tight around the waist when we'd suited up for what should have been our journey home. I ran my hands over my face, going over everything I knew about pregnancy, which in all honesty, wasn't much.

Would her pregnancy progress at a faster pace here? If a week in this realm was six weeks in her realm, how much time did we have?

My heart and body reacted before my mind could catch up, and I started walking through the forest, passing the portal and turning my back to it. I didn't have time to go back to the pack lands for help. I wasn't going to waste a second in Brune putting up with their lavish dinners and social rituals while Lena was in the clutches of the Vampire King.

The only things I stopped to grab on my way out of the clearing were the wooden, iron-tipped knives, the belt that held them, and that velvet bag of bloodstones.

I didn't look back.

\*\*\*

I walked all through the day in no particular direction. I reached out to Lena through our bond over and over, trusting that my body knew better than my mind as I let my legs lead the way toward my mate.

I'd come out of the forest an hour ago, walking out onto a wide, rocky bluff overlooking a narrow valley below. I started, overwhelmed by the jagged landscape and what looked like an abandoned city built into the curve of the mountains below.

The city was falling in on itself and was too far away to see in detail. But, if there was someone hiding there who could tell me the way to the Vampire King's lair, well, taking my chances against more blood-thirsty demons was a risk I had to take.

Night was falling again. The days were so impossibly short here, and I had no way to keep track of how much time was passing. It felt incredibly rapid, however, and my stomach twisted with anxiety as I thought of Lena.

I had to get her out of here, and it needed to happen quickly.

I climbed into a tree, going as high as the branches would let me while also holding my weight. I balanced myself, my stomach aching with hunger and stress.

I just needed to find the Vampire King. That's all I needed to do.

I closed my eyes briefly, not letting myself fall into a deep sleep so I could keep my guard up. A few hours passed; they must have, because when I opened my eyes again it was full dark.

I looked around, my body going rigid as I tried to stay absolutely silent.

That's when I heard it—a woman's voice. She was arguing with someone, her voice lifted in... fear.

I looked down, squinting into the dark as I made out two figures standing directly below me. Her companion hissed, his hood falling over his shoulders revealing pale skin and shining amber colored eyes.

The woman was not like him, though. She didn't shine like the vampires I'd known in Brune. She wasn't gray and molted like the vampires that had attacked me in the clearing. Her scent hit me, soft and delicate and laced with apprehension.

"You're coming with me," the male vampire spat, his voice laced with fury.

"No," she said sharply, but her voice trembled.

He reached out and grabbed her arm, and I launched myself out of the tree on top of him, flattening him to the ground beneath me.

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 594

Chapter 94 : Daughter of a Queen

\*Xander\*

"ZEKE!" the woman screamed as I wrestled her captor into the ground.

I glanced up at her, confused as she dropped to her knees and swatted me repeatedly with a canvas sack that felt like it was filled with rocks.

The man, apparently named Zeke, was hissing and moaning beneath me as I shoved my elbow into the back of his neck and held one of the wooden knives against his ribs, ready to drive it through his chest.

"Get off of him, you maniac!" the woman cried, beating me with her bag of rocks.

"He's a vampire!" I protested, throwing my weight against him as he continued to struggle.

The woman looked more annoyed than anything. Her skin wasn't pale at all, not like his. It was a rich golden brown, and her eyes were the palest, brightest blue I'd ever seen. Her hair was covered by the hood of her black cloak, but a few rogue, shadowed curls fell over her forehead as she glowered at me and wound her arm back, slamming the sack of rocks into my shoulder.

"He's my brother!" she spat, winding up to hit me again.

Zeke huffed a breath, straining as he tried to lift his head.

"He doesn't look like your brother," I said stupidly.

She glared, gritting her teeth as she reached into her bag and removed a rock. So, I'd been right.

She tossed it at me but missed, and it ricocheted off the tree and hit her in the chin. Her high-pitched screech was enough for me to loosen my grip on Zeke, and he struggled out from underneath me before I could regain my hold on him.

He had me on my back in an instant, his canine teeth snapping down from his gums in two long, pointed fangs. His amber eyes glowed, momentarily possessing me as I looked up at him, unable to tear my eyes away from his face.

"Holy s\*\*t," I said, unable to stop the words from rolling off my tongue.

He furrowed his brow at me as his sister came up beside him, looking down at me with marked disapproval in her eyes.

“What?” Zeke said, likely surprised I hadn’t screamed or begged for mercy.

He wasn’t a sunken, shriveled gray demon from the depths of hell like what had assaulted me. If he’d been wearing finer clothes, he easily could have been a member of Costas’ court.

But the initial shock I’d felt when I looked at his face, and the rich ebony hair, made me realize what had actually caught me by surprise.

“You look like Kiern,” I stammered, and he immediately let me go.

The woman opened her mouth in a perfect O shape, her eyes flicking to her brother’s face as the male vampire took a staggering step backward.

“How do you know the Queen of Brune?” the woman asked, her voice a symphony of sound.

I looked her up and down. She wasn’t a shifter. I would have been able to smell that on her. But she wasn’t a vampire, either. At least, not totally. She had a familiar look about her, but her features were striking and abnormal. She had a power about her I couldn’t explain, something that caused me to want to cower and flinch away from her gaze, but I held it nonetheless.

“I was just in Brune.”

“What were you doing in Brune?” she asked, a hint of fire in her voice. She looked defensive, and I was sure I saw a look of fear in her eyes.

Zeke ran his tongue along his lower lip, arching a brow as he waited for my response.

“It’s a long story,” I answered, moving slowly into a seated position, leaning against the tree. The empty blackness of the night around us was fading into a rich, purple twilight, and I noticed the vampire flick his eyes to the sky, his expression tightening.

“What happened in Brune?” he asked, lowering his gaze to my tattered clothing and bite marks coating my exposed skin.

“Nothing. They’re fine, at least they were when I left a day ago—a little over a day—”

“What are you?” the woman asked, taking a step forward.

Zeke stopped her from advancing any further toward me with his arm. She sniffed, scrunching her nose.

“What? Do I smell?” I teased, which neither of them appreciated. “I’m a wolf.”

“There are no wolves here,” she said.

“I can prove it to you,” I offered.

It wasn’t like my clothes could rip any further without falling off completely, anyway.

Zeke growled, low in his throat.



“What are you doing here?” the woman asked. “Why were you in Brune?”

“So many questions, and I don’t even know your name,” I countered, crossing my arms over my chest.

She stiffened, chewing her lower lip as she glanced at Zeke, who shook his head.

“lanthe,” she whispered, the name barely audible. I c\*\*\*\*d my brow. “IANTHE.”

“Eye-what?”

“Eye-an-thee!” she snapped, exaggerating every sound. “Now tell us what you’re doing out here barely clothed and covered in bite marks.”

“I was attacked by vampires, obviously. And I’m looking for the Vampire King, King Nikolas. He has my mate, and I need to get her back. Do you know the way to the castle?”

Zeke and lanthe looked at each other. lanthe’s voice cracked into a laugh, and she threw her head back, wiping tears of mirth from her eyes.

“You’re not serious—”

“I am.” I reached to the velvet sack of bloodstone on my belt and emptied the contents into my palm. “If you show me the way, I’ll give you these.”

“Where did you get those?” Zeke asked sharply, his upper lip curling into a sneer.

“King Costas of Brune,” I said, closing my hands around the bloodstones. I had no idea of their worth, but it was all I had to offer them. “Please. All I need is—”

“Why did he give you these?” Zeke’s tone was harsh with a bitter edge.

I furrowed my brow as I looked over his face, trying to make sense of the anger flaming behind his eyes. lanthe cleared her throat, nudging the vampire with her elbow as she glanced up at the sky.

“We don’t have time for this conversation. It’s nearly daylight, Zeke. We need to find you shelter.”

Zeke’s eyes remained on mine for a moment before he let out his breath and ground his teeth, then nodded, turning his gaze to lanthe. “There are caves nearby.”

“Wait!” I said, rising to my feet. “Please, how do I get to the castle?”

lanthe looked me up and down, taking in my tattered clothing and overall disheveled appearance before glancing at her brother, who had tucked his long hair behind his ears and was putting on his hood.

“I have some food, but not much. We will talk while he sleeps—”

“No,” Zeke said firmly, but based on the look lanthe gave him, she was the one in charge. Zeke surrendered, rolling his eyes toward me and baring his teeth with a hiss before he started forward, disappearing over the edge of the bluff.

“What’s his problem?”

“Just so you know,” lanthe said sharply as she walked forward, looking at me over her shoulder, “I am perfectly capable of defending myself and my honor. If you so much as touch me, I’ll kill you without hesitation.”

“I just need to know how to find the Vampire King,” I said as I raised my hands in surrender. “You could tell me now, and I’ll be on my way.”

“You’ll never find it in your current state. Come, I have a few hours to explain.”

She stepped down over the edge of the bluff, skillfully maneuvering down the rocks that led into the narrow valley. Zeke was far below us, and as I followed lanthe downwards, he disappeared in a shadowed crack in the black granite.

\*\*\*

lanthe laid out a small spread of stale bread and a few pieces of jerky. I couldn’t name the meat. It didn’t taste like anything I’d ever eaten. I swallowed it down nonetheless.

Zeke was in the farthest reaches of the cave he’d found, which was little more than a shallow hole in the side of the bluff. Pink sunlight poured through the entrance where we sat, and lanthe turned her face toward it, the light shimmering across her skin.

“What are you?” I asked, popping a dry piece of bread into my mouth.

She removed her hood to reveal spiral curls that fell over her shoulders in a shower of deep brown and auburn, nearly the color of her skin.

“Just a wayward witch,” she said casually. I wasn’t sure if she was joking or not. She obviously wasn’t a vampire if she could stand sitting in the sun like that. “Excuse Zeke’s behavior, if you can. He’s fiercely protective of me.”

“Is he really your brother?”

“Yes, he is. We share a mother.”

“Is that mother... Kiern?” I asked, hesitating before I said the queen’s name. lanthe turned her gaze to me, nodding.

“Zeke is her son through Costas, and I am her daughter through... well, I’m not entirely sure.”

“But she’s a vampire?”

“Yes, she is. But my father was a witch. I only have vague memories of her, and I’ve never met him because he’s dead. Zeke has been my guardian since birth.”

“Then, you weren’t born in Brune?”

“Obviously not. Zeke and his mother went to visit her people in one of the other underground cities ruled by the lower vampires. The city had been found by King Nikolas and destroyed. They were taken in by a coven far east of here, across the great river. Zeke said they spent many years there. I was born, and Kiern could in no way return with me to Brune. Costas would have killed me immediately because of his fierce jealousy when it comes to our mother. So, I was to be left behind in the care of the witches

but... the coven was attacked. Zeke and I were separated from Kiern, and he... he has raised me ever since."

I wasn't sure what to say, but she didn't seem to be waiting for a response.

"Zeke has been looking for the coven of the Great Witch for years, but they hide themselves well. Tonight, we will cross a river, and on the other side is the sea. That's where they live, and where he means for me to stay."

"That's what you were arguing about last night?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because King Nikolas knows of me and has been sending his spies after us for years. Zeke thinks it's the only place I'll be safe. But... I am of both kinds. The vampires don't accept me. Who says the witches will?"

"Why is the King after you?"

"Why did he take your... your—"

"My mate," I breathed, wrapping my arms around my knees. Ianthe had given me a pair of Zeke's pants to wear, pulling them out of her canvas sack. She had all kinds of things in there, which was odd based on its size.

"He wants a child," Ianthe breathed, her eyes looking out over the valley. "That's what he has your mate for."

"I know."

Maybe that's what he wanted her for, as well. I stared at her, wondering just how old she was. It was hard to tell. She was young, but being half vampire she could have been hundreds of years old. A life on the run, in hiding, could have been decades or centuries.

"Zeke will help you find him," she whispered, tilting her head toward the back of the cave, "and I will convince him if he refuses. But only if I can have the bloodstones."

"Why do you need them? What can they do?"

"Whatever I want them to," she replied, a glimmer of mischief in her eyes. "Try to sleep. We have a long journey tonight."

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 595

Chapter 95 : Offering to the King

\*Oliver\*

I watched from Gideon's front porch as two figures approached, walking hand and hand up the driveway. Adrian looked like he was healing from several blows to the face based on the purplish hue of

his eye sockets and jawline, but Abigail looked chipper and exceedingly relieved as they neared the house. I smirked, rising from the chair I'd been sitting in aimlessly for what felt like several hours.

"I take it my family knows what happened?" I said loudly, watching the scowl form on Adrian's mouth. He'd definitely taken one for the team.

"This," he said sharply, waving his hand around his face as he stopped short of the porch steps, "was for stealing the Persephone. That Beta of your father nearly killed me, and he said you're next."

"He almost went after your dad, too," Abigail teased, resting her hand on Adrian's shoulder. "Your mom had to separate them."

"So the whole family is in Breles, then?" I asked, guilt rippling through my stomach as they walked up the steps. I held the door open, and Adrian tossed a heavy duffle bag into my chest as he passed.

"Queen Hannah is in Winter Forest with someone named Mara, and White Queen Rosalie. Your mom is... heading this way, apparently."

"Great," I murmured as I shut the front door behind me and tucked my hands in the pockets of my jeans.

It had been over a month since Lena and Xander had disappeared. Adrian, Gideon, and I had spent over a week in the hills looking for any trace of them, eventually coming up with the rotting bodies of a man Gideon knew as Maxwell Radcliff and an unfamiliar guard. We'd also found a large, blackened area outside of what was once a temple, which was littered with bones. At first, I thought something had exploded there, but after a thorough investigation of the area, we realized that was where Lena had opened the portal, and she had blasted away the winged creature that had carried Xander off into the night.

It seemed far-fetched even now, but there had been no trace of them, or of the hybrid beasts that had been causing chaos in the west, for weeks now.

The only explanation was that Lena had opened the portal and closed it behind her.

I'd stayed behind in Crimson Creek when Adrian went back to Breles a little over a week ago to find Abigail, while also being the one to try to come up with an explanation as to what happened to my cousin and his Alpha. I'd expected him to show up with an army, and my parents, and Lena's parents. But it was just him and Abigail.

He sunk down into one of the couches, groaning loudly. Abigail swatted him as she turned around the room, looking around.

"Adrian said vampires lived here," she mused.

"They went into town," I said, then explained the whole damn thing about the blood root to her. They could use it to stay in the sun for a while if need be. It kept them alive while not needing to suck the blood out of helpless victims. But from the stories Alma had told me about their kind at night while we sat by the fireplace and waited for news from Adrian, I found out just how closely related our kinds were, especially since the vampires who lived in this realm had been removed from their realm for a long, long time.

They were more like us now than what they used to be. Our realm had morphed them, shaped them to fit into our environment. Gideon, while always the graceful, welcoming host, had made it clear to me that the second there was conflict with the King of the Vampires, he and his family were out. They would leave because they didn't stand a chance.

"Why did Hannah go to Winter Forest? Why is no one here? I expected my family to be here—"

"They're building armies in Breles. I've never seen anything like it," Adrian said with a sigh, rubbing his eyes and wincing as he grazed the bruises. "Maeve wanted to come. She's waiting for word from Hannah, from what I understand. They're trying to find Lena themselves."

"Oliver," Abigail cut in, "your mom told me to tell you to... to remember what you can do, and who you are. I didn't understand at the time—"

"I could probably open a portal," I shrugged.

Abigail eyed me suspiciously, but Adrian looked livid.

"Why haven't you mentioned this before?"

"I've had a lot of time to think and mess around out here," I said sharply, shrugging. "I can do a lot of the stuff Lena can, I think. At least, I used to when we were younger, before I turned twenty-one and came into my powers as a wolf. I tried once while you were away, and I felt it for a moment, but nothing happened. Not yet, at least. But when I was trying... I can't explain it—" I gripped the couch, leaning over it to look down at Adrian. "Someone is there, calling out to me. Trying to lure me in."

"The Vampire King?" Adrian asked, but I shook my head, glancing at Abigail.

"Not Lena?" she asked, and I shook my head at her too. "Then who?"

"It's a mate bond. I should only have healing powers, but this light—" I looked down at my hands, turning my palms out toward Abigail. "Lena couldn't do much besides make plants grow through the carpets and dream dance before she was marked by Xander. Something about that bond, well, I think it's important. I first felt it with you, Abi, not going to lie, but it wasn't strong like it should be. Just a flicker."

Adrian was growing red in the face, but I continued.

"A spark, that's it. But when we found those bodies, Adrian. When we were in that place... I felt a f\*\*\*\*\*g lightening bolt. Like my mate had been there, like she was still there—"

"Is this really what you're worried about? Your parents are livid, Oliver. There's a war coming. People are dying—"

"I can't f\*\*\*\*\*g help it," I breathed. "It's just there, like this energy is all around me, begging me to use it like Lena can, or so I thought. Whatever it is... it wants me to go there, to that realm. My mate is over there, Adrian. I feel like I'm supposed to find her, and she's supposed to, I don't know, help me like Lena and Xander helped each other—"

"They got blasted into another realm, and now the royal family wants to f\*\*\*\*\*g kill me for it," Adrian argued, but Abigail laid her hand over his shoulder again, squeezing. He relaxed.

“This is all a little... out there. Don’t you think? Hell, you say you felt a spark with me, huh? Maybe my long lost twin sister is in the other realm.”

Adrian smirked, shaking his head. I also considered this a joke, but the expression on Abigail’s face told me otherwise.

“Wait, you have a twin?” I asked.

Adrian’s eyes shot up to his mate, studying her closely.

“Yeah, I do. I, uh, I did. She just... wasn’t there one day. I woke up and looked over and her bed was empty, the window cracked open like she had left in the night or been taken. My parents don’t talk about it. I was young, four or five. The only memory of her I have is her name.”

“Abigail, that’s awful. I’m sorry—” Adrian said, but I raised my hand, cutting him off.

“What was her name?” I asked, my tone steady and voice deathly serious.

“Elaine,” she said, tilting her head as she looked at me. “Her name was Elaine.”

\*\*\*

\*Lena\*

The Vampire King’s castle was death. That’s the only way to describe it. Black vines snaked up its half dozen or so towers made of obsidian, and there weren’t any windows to be seen. The interior was just as bleak.

It was frigid in the castle. So cold, ice glistened on the walls of the circular bedroom I’d been stuck in for an unknown amount of time, likely days. A glass of water that had been sitting on the side table beside the bed was nearly frozen over, and the bed itself was bare. I’d taken the sheets and duvet off the mattress and wrapped myself in them as I slumped against the stone wall, trying in vain to stay warm.

I’d slept, but fitfully. I’d been so stupid... so, so stupid. What the hell had I been thinking? I hadn’t even thought of Xander throwing his power over me like a net, stopping me from being able to force him through the portal. That single second of realization had been enough for me to fail. The last thing I heard was his scream telling me to shut the portal, but it was too late. I was airborne, stuck in the clutches of a hybrid beast and much too far away.

He wasn’t dead; I knew that much, but I was too weak to use our bond to communicate with him.

I hadn’t met the king, not yet. But there was a reason for the cold, barren room and lack of food. He was keeping me cold and hungry to stifle my powers, and it was working. The lights above my head flickered in an uneven rhythm and gave me a painful, throbbing headache.

I wrapped the blankets tighter around my body, doing what I could to keep save the precious life inside of me that was no doubt suffering just as much as I was.

Would he know I was pregnant? Would he be able to sense it?

I let a single tear fall down my chilled cheeks then wiped it away.

They'd taken my armor. They'd taken the knives. But the little pouch with the sunstone in it had been hanging from my neck, hidden by my clothing. I still had it.

I didn't know what it was, or how to use it. Starla had been adamant that I keep it safe. There had to be a reason.

The door to the room swung open, and I flinched, turning my eyes away from whoever was taking up the doorway. Warm air rushed in and crept through the blankets, thank Goddess.

"Up," said a voice so shrill it sent a chill up my spine.

I rose to my feet, trembling as I held the blankets against my body.

"The king will see you now. Leave the blankets—"

"I'm freezing," I said through chattering teeth.

The figure in the doorway entered the room, his face and body now in my full view—ugly, so, so ugly. His skin was gray and sunken around his bones, and his eyes burned a deep red. He wore a silver cloak that was nearly the same color as his skin.

He was bald, but past his sunken cheeks, I could see youth flaming behind his eyes. He may have been handsome, once, before he became what he was.

He took several steps toward me and ripped the blankets away, tossing them on the bed. "Go, now!"

I swallowed against the fear rushing through my body. I was barefoot, and the frost-covered floor bit into my feet as I walked out of the room, followed by the man.

The hallway was warm, almost hot. I sighed deeply, shaking terribly from the abrupt change in temperature.

"Your behavior will determine your privileges," the man, obviously a guard of the king sent to fetch me, said with a shrill, gravelly hiss. "If you want warmth, you will be warm to the king. If you want food, you will offer him the same."

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 596

Chapter 96 : Submitting to the King

\*Lena\*

Black double doors made of iron opened wide as the vampire guard pushed me into the dining hall.

My toes curled as the smell of blood hit me, and I closed my eyes, hanging my head to stop myself from gazing upon whatever bloody sight lay before me.

I heard the doors close behind me, locking shut. Heat rippled over my skin, and the roaring of a massive fire thundered in my ears.

"Open your eyes," came a rich male voice that echoed through the hall.

My lashes fluttered as I opened my eyes and stared down at my feet, trying to get a sense of the room and the ageless vampire who was seated yards away, commanding me.

When I finally had the courage to look forward, I wasn't overcome with shock like I had been when I first gazed upon Narcissa. There was no metallic taste and feel of ancient magic, and no intense, unearthly pull like the one that made it hard for me to tear my eyes away from her translucent skin and silver hair.

Like Narcissa, Nikolas was incredibly tall and lean, graceful in every moment he made. But his hair was an icy platinum, similar to my own, and his skin had a creaminess to it that hers hadn't possessed.

He looked shockingly human, compared to his sister.

Violet eyes flaked with crimson looked me up and down, but I didn't flinch or cower beneath his gaze.

He wasn't what I'd been expecting. He didn't ooze power. He didn't scare me.

I straightened my back, squaring my shoulders as I took a shallow breath and looked around the room. Long, narrow, endless stone—there wasn't a single decoration save for the dozens of thick, tallow candles that burned along the center of the table and along the mantel over the hearth that stretched the entire width of the room.

He was seated directly in front of the hearth, and some of the peachy color of his skin could probably be attributed to the red and amber flames that danced behind him. He didn't rise to his feet as I took a single step in his direction.

"Beautiful," he cooed, his eyes flashing with an emotion I couldn't quite read. Hunger was there, obviously, for more reasons than one. But he looked... impressed.

I fought the urge to bow, to kneel before him as I tucked my hand behind my back and held his gaze. A man was slumped in a chair next to him, his neck bloodied and oozing. King Nikolas followed my gaze and chuckled low in his throat.

"He's still alive," he said in an almost seductive whisper as he ran a long, pale finger across the man's cheek. "Just asleep."

"I want a fire lit in my room," I said through gritted teeth, "and food... water that doesn't freeze solid within a few minutes of being delivered."

"So many demands and yet you haven't even bowed before your king?"

He was not my king, and I wanted to say as much, but I bit down on my tongue. I wondered if he could read my mind like Narcissa had been able to, and possibly Kiern as well. But as I watched him settle back against a high-backed chair, his eyes taking in every line and curve of my face before settling on my neck, I had the suspicion that he could not.

I wondered what his powers were if he didn't share the same ones as his sister. He was immortal, yes, but not a seer.

"You have demands of me as well," I spat, realizing my life and plan for his death involved playing his game. "And I can't do anything unless my basic needs are taken care of."



He narrowed his eyes at me, studying the color flaming across my cheeks. I made myself look as angry and confident as possible, but on the inside I was crumbling. The warmth of the room was seeping into my bones, replacing the icy chill that had numbed the pangs of hunger, dehydration, and the distress I felt about Xander and the whole portal situation.

He snapped his fingers and two gray, molted vampires stepped forward. I studied them, wondering what the difference was between them and the man who the king had been feeding on moments before I was brought to the dining hall. They carried him away, and within seconds the blood was mopped from the table, and the king summoned me to sit on the opposite side of the table from him.

There was a great distance between us as I sat down. The table was at least twelve feet long. I had to squint over the candles to see a clear glimpse of his face.

He was handsome in the same way Narcissa had been beautiful, more captivatingly strange than anything. He looked no older than myself, but his eyes gave away his true age. They were deep wells of vivid color, and full of secrets lost to time.

A large bowl of chopped fruit was laid in front of me. I looked down at it, then up at Nikolas, letting my face twist with disappointment.

"I need more than fruit," I said sharply. I hadn't been given a fork or spoon to eat with, either.

"All of my feeders eat only fruit," he said casually, leaning back in his chair with a goblet of blood, or maybe even wine, in one of his hands. "You all taste better that way."

"I wasn't aware I was here as your feeder," I said, plucking a piece of what could have been an apple and popping it into my mouth. I did everything I could to stop myself from moaning with relief as the taste of it hit my tongue, and I stopped myself from scooping fistfuls of the fruit and stuffing it in my mouth like my body wanted.

"You can be more to me once you prove to me what you can do. That is the rule." He snapped his fingers, and a door opened along the side of the room. The same man he'd been feeding on earlier was dragged into the room again as though they'd just stored him in some back hallway until this very moment. "Heal him."

"Why? You said he was fine—"

"I want to see that you can do it," he said with a shred of coldness to his voice.

I took another bite of the fruit, then another, and another. I watched him as I chewed, trying to get a sense of what exactly he was looking for.

Maxwell had told me the woman who went missing in Crimson Creek were all females who may have been from a White Queen bloodline. It wasn't far-fetched, given the family tree my Uncle Troy had found in the library in Winter Forest. There were dozens upon dozens of spindly branches hanging off the main line of White Queens.

I realized as I finished off the first bowl of fruit that many a woman had gone through his ice trial and had sat in this same chair. They'd watched the guards drag a body across the floor, and they'd been commanded to heal it.

They hadn't been able to do it. But Nikolas knew that I could. There wasn't a shadow of a doubt in those eyes of his as he watched me stand and make my way over to his feeder, who was so bloodless that his wounds had gone dry.

I didn't break eye contact with Nikolas as I held out my palm.

"I need a knife," I demanded, but a sly smile twitched on the corners of Nikolas's mouth.

"You don't need a knife," he growled. "Come here."

I hid my terror as I obeyed, but my skin crawled as I came within touching distance of the Vampire King—the god. He took my outstretched hand in his, his touch like ice. He bent his head, running a single blade-like fang across the meat of my palm at the base of my thumb.

His mouth hovered over my skin for a moment, his breath ragged as he lifted his head to meet my gaze.

Could he taste the difference between me and the other woman he'd tortured in this way? My powers were weak if they were even there at all. I was also the youngest of the women who he'd taken, at least from what I knew. I hadn't come into my shifter powers yet, and wouldn't for several months.

I didn't hesitate as I knelt before his feeder and dropped my blood into his gaping mouth. I didn't wait for the results. I sat back down in my seat and wrapped my hand in a cloth napkin, then started eating from a fresh bowl of fruit that had been brought out in my absence from the table.

The king said nothing. He kept his eyes on the man as I ate my fill of fruit, not bothering to remember my manners. A pitcher of water was placed in front of me, and I pushed the glass that had accompanied it out of the way and drank straight from the pitcher, water spilling down my chin and soaking my shirt.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the man's leg twitch, and Nikolas rose so abruptly from his chair that it fell backward and sent a thundering echo through the dining hall.

I wiped my face on my sleeve and watched Nikolas with interest as he crouched in front of his feeder and poked the man with his finger. The man groaned, then quieted, a little color returning to his skin.

"Do you not find it odd that you feed off your own kind?" I said flatly.

Nikolas chuckled, a boyish gleam in his eyes as he met my gaze. "You are... brilliant—"

"Do you have a library?" I asked sharply.

I kept my expression stone cold and razor sharp, my tone betraying the rapid beating of my heart and adrenaline rippling over my skin.

I needed to play this game with him. I was good at games. I'd been playing chess since I was just a kid, balanced on my grandfather's lap while he taught me every move he knew.

I would play, and play, and play until Nikolas believed I was submitting to him. I needed certain freedoms to be successful in this mission. I needed full access to his castle to learn the layout. I needed access to his guards and subjects to learn his plans, his strengths, and his weaknesses. I would set my trap, between my legs if I was desperate, and I would lure him into his own death at my hands.

No one had said a thing about the portal I'd opened, twice now. I'd heard no whispers of its existence. I found it likely he wasn't aware that it was there... not yet, at least.

I needed to keep that a secret.

But first, I needed to find out what the sunstone could do.

"I do have a library," he replied.

"I want access to it, freely, whenever I want."

"Fine." He rounded the table, walking slowly toward me. He was dressed in all black, which brought the sharpness of his features. He laid a hand over the top of my chair, looking down at me as I brought the pitcher to my lips once again, drinking deeply.

"I want to see what else you can do," he whispered, reaching down to tuck a lock of my hair behind my ear, his finger brushing slowly across my cheek.

He didn't just mean my powers.

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 597

Chapter 97 : I'm Going to Kill Him

\*Lena\*

I was ushered by two vampire guards shortly after I'd attempted to heal King Nikolas's feeder. I was thankful for it. I didn't want to spend another second in the room with him, and the place was so thick with the stench of blood.

I memorized the corridors we walked down, taking stock of every turn and every detail down to chips in the uneven chunks of obsidian and black granite of which the castle was made. I also prepared myself for another long stay in my ice palace, but when I was shoved through the door to my room, I was shocked by the transformation.

It was hot inside the room now, the frost that once lined the floor no longer shining like an icy, greasy sheen along the tiles. The circular room was lit only by the hearth, which was blazing, and more wood to feed it was stacked along the curved stone wall. My bed, which had been nothing more than a thin, soiled mattress on the ground, had been totally removed and replaced by an ornate, solid wood bed frame and a thick mattress that made my bones sing with relief as I gazed upon it, noticing the thick quilts and soft sheets.

A plush armchair had been placed in front of the fire, as well as a round coffee table. Vases of flowers I'd never seen before sat on nearly every surface.

Several platters of food were piled high on the coffee table. I didn't wait for the guards to shut the door behind me before I darted forward, dropping to my knees in front of the spread, which included steak dripping with pepper and butter, and a bowl of mashed potatoes sparkling with flakes of coarse salt. There was another plate piled with vegetables soaked in a rich, wine-colored sauce and sprinkled with

what smelled like fresh herbs. A bowl of meaty stew, and an entire loaf of bread, along with a butter dish filled with golden, sweet honey butter, finished off the presentation.

I started to cry despite my efforts to control myself as I cut into the steak. I washed bite after bite down with glass upon glass of milk, which was cold and creamy, fresh.

So, they had cows in this realm. They had farms, agriculture. It wasn't a total surprise. I'd eaten food as rich and flavorful as this in Brune, along with the rest of Kiern and Costas's court. Kiern had explained that they did eat, although some favored blood over most meals. Kiern had preferred real food, while her husband had not.

For King Nikolas's castle to provide a meal such as this, they would have needed a well-staffed kitchen. I pushed the thought of the king and my situation out of my mind as I finished the steak and moved on to the rest.

I wasn't hungry any longer, but I continued to eat until every last crumb of bread, every honeyed shimmer of butter, and every drop of milk was gone.

I crawled into bed and flopped down on the sheets, my hands creeping over my stomach as I held my palms over the sanctuary where the greatest and most vulnerable part of me lay.

I'd worried about the baby endlessly over the past several days of my ice trial. It couldn't have been healthy or safe for her.

I turned my head to the door as the knob turned, but my body was too spent to react. A young woman peaked inside, hesitating for a moment before she fully entered the room. She was dressed plainly in a homespun gray dress that brushed her ankles and a stained apron. Her hair, mousy brown and thin, was pulled away from her face in a low bun along the nape of her neck.

She was incredibly young... at least, she looked like it, no more than a teenager. But she could have been a thousand years old for all I knew.

She didn't meet my eye as she fluttered across the room and began to stack the plates, the porcelain clanging against the crackling of the fire. She didn't meet my eye as she spoke, either, and her voice held a hint of what could only be described as fear as she said, "Can I run you a bath?"

I winced, sinking into the bedclothes. The bathroom adjacent to the bedroom had been filthy and covered in ice so thick I couldn't have run a bath if I tried. I hadn't even looked in there since returning to my room.

She finally looked over at me, her sapphire eyes lined with dark circles and indescribable sadness. She looked miserable and exhausted, enough so that I sat up and gathered the covers around my waist.

"Are you alright?" I asked, and she flinched at the sound of my voice as though I'd slapped her.

"Fine, miss."

She turned her back to me and walked along the curve of the wall toward the narrow wood door that led into the bathroom. Light sprung from the darkness as she lit what must have been candles within. I heard the sound of running water, and soon steam was billowing through the gap between the door and the wall, sending wafts of orange blossom and pine through the room.

I rose from the bed and moved quietly toward the bathroom. I could see her shadow moving beneath the door and I halted, not wanting to scare her.

“You can come in,” she said softly, sensing my nearby presence.

I swallowed back the sudden nerves coursing through my body as I pushed open the door.

The bathroom wasn't recognizable from what it had been before. The tub, once covered entirely in ice, was carved out of obsidian, flush with the wall. The water swirled like ink dusted with bubbles and petals as I looked down into it, then back up at her.

“Everything was cleaned while you were with His... the king,” she whispered, not meeting my eyes as she turned away and took two of the thickest towels I'd ever seen in my life out of the linen closet. “There are new clothes in that armoire in your bedroom. I will fetch you something to wear to bed while you undress.”

“Okay—”

The door to the bathroom closed behind her as she hurried out. I took off my shirt and pants, the same I'd been wearing beneath the armor Costas had supplied us with before the King's winged hybrid plucked me off the ground and into the sky.

I'd barely lowered myself into the bath when she returned, stopped short in the doorway as her eyes settled on my stomach. She was looking at the scars that ran across my belly, long, jagged reminders of the night Xander, Bethany, and I had faced off with Jen.

The water was almost too hot to be tolerable, but I didn't sink into it up to my shoulders.

“Do you want to hear the story?” I asked her as she stood like a statue in the doorway, a white night dress clutched to her breasts.

She made a soft humming noise, then blinked, lowering her head as she rushed toward the counter where she laid the towels.

“I didn't mean to stare—”

“I would stare if I saw something like this on someone else,” I admitted beneath my breath.

Her shoulders relaxed, and she laid the nightgown over the towels before turning back around.

“Do you need help washing and combing your hair—”

“I have a question,” I began, unaccustomed to the force in my voice. She swallowed again and nodded tightly as I swirled the water with my hands. “What is the difference between you and the gray vampire with the sunken faces?”

“I am a lower vampire,” she answered quickly, “and they are... something else, older than our kind.”

“But still vampires?”

“I—” she hesitated, and to my surprise, her skin colored as she searched for the words she needed to continue. “They don't need to feed.”

“What?” I said, a shocked laugh escaping my throat.

She looked as though she were about to shrug, but only lowered her gaze to the floor. “They are so old they’ve just.... All that’s left of them is what they are, just muscle, just speed. An undying loyalty is all that’s left in their minds.” She took a reluctant step away from the counter, turning to face me fully. She met my eye, only the second time she had done so. “Stay away from them. Do not talk to them.”

“Why?”

“Because they are just an extension of the king—” She bit her lip, flushing deeply. She must have thought she said too much. I needed her to say more.

“What is your name?”

“Penny,” she whispered.

“Do you know what the king is going to use me for?”

“Yes, I—”

“How many women have come before me?”

She looked pained, her eyes watering as she looked away from me and toward the mirror hanging on the wall.

“Many, but you’re the only one who has made it this far.”

“What happens to them after they fail his tests? The first test is healing the feeder, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know. I’m only... I’m here to tend to your needs now. I’ve never had the opportunity to do that before now.”

I vaguely remembered being told that the people who wandered out into the hills outside of Crimson Creek were always found dead sometime later, months later, mutilated—all but one.

“Carly Maddox,” I whispered. “Do you know who that is?”

She shook her head, looking confused.

“Elaine?” I pressed. “Henry?”

“No, I’m sorry.”

I began to rise from the bath, and she quickly handed me a towel, stepping out of the bathroom once again while I dried off and dressed. I ignored my hair, letting it drip onto my shoulders and neck as I walked out into the bedroom. She was hurrying to gather the dishes, trying to leave.

“What is next for me? What’s the next test?”

“No one has ever made it this far. I do not know—”

“Penny,” I pleaded, raw emotion bursting forth as the events of the past several weeks, months at this point flooded forward. Tears blurred my vision as I held my hands up in surrender. “Can I trust you?”

She flared her nostrils, clutching the plates so hard they rattled.

“Can I trust you?” I repeated, more sternly this time.

“My people are slaves,” she said in a trembling voice. “I’m lucky to not be a feeder—”

“I am going to kill him,” I admitted, only because there was no way this situation could get any worse than it was.

“You can’t kill him,” she replied. “Many have tried—”

“They haven’t been me,” I growled, and the message was clear.

Penny nearly dropped the plates, her eyes going wide and round as she looked into my eyes. I knew what she saw. I could feel it. My powers, strengthened by warmth and food, were returning. My powers, which I’d ignored and been afraid of my entire life.

I was going to bring down this realm with them.

“Find out what the next trial is,” I said with force.

All she could do was nod.

Sold as the Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 598

Chapter 98 : This Isn’t Magic, It’s Hell

\*Xander\*

Ilanthe walked in step with me as we left the cave. This annoyed Zeke, who walked a few paces in front of us with his shoulders tight and his head snapping in our direction every once in a while.

I was telling Ilanthe everything, holding nothing back. Egoren, my family, the pack lands—everything. At this point, why not? If I didn’t find Lena soon, everything was going to s\*\*t anyway.

She was especially curious about the White Queens and had many, many questions.

“So, your kind has witches too?”

“I don’t think they like being called witches,” I smirked as we followed Zeke along a well-beaten trail through the rocky landscape leading to the abandoned city. “But they are pretty different from shifters, you know, wolves.”

“But you’re different as well—”

“Not nearly as powerful as my mate,” I interrupted with a shrug.

I’d already told them both about getting attacked and the blood being drained from my veins, then waking up buried under shriveled bodies that turned to ash when I moved. Zeke looked weary, but Ilanthe had been wildly impressed, pressing me for information.

But when it came to giving me any more information about themselves, they were mum. I figured it didn’t really matter, given that I was killing their king and getting the hell out of the place as soon as

possible.

It took longer than I thought to reach the city. It was the dead of night by the time we crouched behind a large boulder, waiting for Zeke to give us permission to continue forward. It was much, much lighter at the base of the valley than it had been in the thick forest, which was now far above us, barely a shadow against the inky black sky. A moon shone against the slate that fanned out over the valley, reflecting on the ribbons of yellow and white rock woven into each layer of thin, brittle stone. Far away I heard a screech, and it echoed through the valley, disappearing on the breeze it had ridden in on.

“What makes that sound?” I whispered to lanthe.

She pursed her lips. “We call it Nahga,” she whispered as Zeke motioned us to continue down the trail. “I’ve never seen one up close. It’s some sort of winged creature. It belongs to the king.”

I wondered if it had been the same winged beast that had taken Lena, and the same that had plucked me from the ground when Oliver, Adrian, and I were stopped on the highway leading to Crimson Creek. But, based on the far-off look in her eyes as she scanned the horizon, I had a feeling the Nahga was something else entirely.

“There’s many of them—spies, in my opinion, for the king. They also sound the approach of day.”

“Which is coming soon, so we need to pick up the pace if we’re going to reach the river,” Zeke cut in, his voice edged with annoyance.

I arched my brow at him as he fixed me with a scowl.

“Maybe we should stay in the city,” lanthe suggested, her voice as sweet as sugar as she gave her brother practiced doe eyes.

Zeke frowned at her. “You’re stalling the inevitable, lanthe,” he said flatly, but then he looked up at the sky, noticing the streaks of pale violet on the horizon. We still had a few hours before daybreak, at least.

We walked through the abandoned city without stopping. lanthe moved in front of us after a while, leading the way along what looked like it had once been a road. Large cracks had split the road open in several places and had extended to the buildings as well, toppling some over on each other.

“Quakes,” Zeke said shortly, following my gaze.

“Is that why there’s no one here?”

“There’s no one here because the city was once a stronghold of a rebel army against King Nikolas, and everyone was either killed on the spot and eaten, or taken as slaves for his mines.”

I pressed my lips into a tight line.

“It’s been abandoned for centuries,” he continued.

That I believed. The buildings were towering above us as we walked, several stories high but shrouded in an ancient darkness my mind couldn’t comprehend.

“How long have your people been fighting the king?”



“Longer than your own recorded history,” Zeke quipped, shrugging a shoulder. “Our people were once the children of this realm. The High Vampires weren’t always called thus. They were our Gods and Goddesses. They were unseen, the children of the creator of our world. He was called, and is still referred to, as ‘The Father,’ but King Nikolas refuses to acknowledge the title. He kills anyone who even utters those words.”

“What changed? What caused all of this?” I waved my hand in a wide circle toward the crumbling remains of what used to be a massive metropolis.

“Greed, I assume. I’m sure the truth has been twisted and exaggerated with time. Some say the very second The Father turned his power over to his children, the High Vampires, they turned on each other. They killed one another until only one was left.”

“King Nikolas?”

“Yeah, I guess. He’s the only one anyone has ever seen. The rest of them are just myths.”

“This place is awful,” I breathed, not even trying to hide the words.

Zeke smirked, looking back at me for a moment before we left the desecrated city behind us.

The stars were still shining overhead when we reached the river. It wasn’t much of a river, if I was being honest, but it was the first sign of running water I’d seen since Lena pulled us into the realm.

I was f\*\*\*\*\*g thirsty.

“Is it good to drink?” I asked, watching as lanthe tucked her hand in the crook of Zeke’s elbow. They turned to look at me as they reached the water’s edge, lanthe’s eyes glimmering like gems.

“It will be,” she said, and I was utterly confused but I followed them nonetheless.

I hopped over the cragged rocks with ease, and in less than a minute were on the other side of the narrow, lazy river. lanthe stopped, filling up a jug she’d pulled from her bottomless bag.

She held it between her hands for a moment, then met Zeke’s eye, then mine. She raised the jug to her lips and drank deeply, then handed it to me.

The jug was hot to the touch and I nearly dropped it. I gave her a weary eye before I drank. It was clean, and cool.

lanthe hadn’t told me what her powers were, but maybe filtering water so it was drinkable was one of them.

“The sea is five miles away—” Zeke began.

lanthe groaned. “It’s farther, and you know it. We should camp here.”

“lanthe—”

“I’m with Zeke on this one,” I said, tilting the jug back to my mouth. “I have somewhere I need to be.”

Zeke was fighting back a smile as lanthe narrowed her eyes at me.

"I can take you to King Nikolas right now," she said sharply.

"No, you can't." Zeke's tone was heavy as he put an arm on his sister's shoulder, squeezing. "You have to go, lanthe. We talked about this. You know why—"

"I know," she bit out, on the edge of surrender.

Zeke had mentioned that lanthe was well known to the king, but I didn't know how, or why. She met my eye as though my questions had been said out loud, and I felt the urge to cower under the force of her gaze.

"The king is powerful, but not as powerful as my kind... my father's kind. They have summoned me home," she began, looking as though this was a speech she'd rehearsed. "The king has been trying to destroy my kind for centuries, unsuccessfully."

"The lower vampires have sent countless armies to try to overthrow him," Zeke cut in, his eyes darkening. "But we're nothing without the alliance of the Great Covens."

"So..." I shifted my weight, catching the starlight reflecting in lanthe's eyes as I looked from her to Zeke. "You're using lanthe to recruit—"

"It's a long story, and we don't have time to discuss it now," Zeke said sharply, waving his hand in dismissal. "We have five more miles before daybreak. Let's go."

\*\*\*

I followed them through the darkened landscape for the remainder of the night. The mountains that had once towered above us fell away, and soon the crashing of the waves against a nearby shore filled my ears.

The sky was a shallow violet as the stars began to fade, the first signs of day breaking over the water.

But there was no landscape along the horizon. The water seemed to just... stop.

It wasn't until lanthe went to the water's edge and removed her hood that I noticed it. A thick wall of mist hung over the water, nearly a mile out, the fine particles of clouds reflecting every color of the breaking dawn.

I could have asked what it was, but I knew—magic, something unexplainable, a break in this realm, leading to another.

"Let them know you're here. I don't have much time," Zeke said in a low, pained whisper. lanthe turned to look at him, her face glistening with tears. "We will see each other again, lanthe."

"This is unfair—"

"This world wasn't meant for someone like you. You must go."

lanthe knew this in her bones. I could see it on her face as she focused on her brother, tears rolling along her jaw. She turned away from us, kneeling before the water as gentle waves broke around her knees. She laid her palm over the water, and within seconds light began to trickle from her fingertips, mingling with the surf.

I watched the ribbons of power move through the water, fanning out and disappearing into the distant depths.

Zeke hissed as he pulled his cloak over his head, shielding himself from the first light of day.

“Go, Zeke,” lanthe said, a choked sob escaping her throat as I gasped, unable to tear my eyes away from the wall of mist and magic.

It... opened, like a door. And through the opening came a small boat rocking on the water with no captain in sight.

It was nothing more than a rowboat, but it came toward us, inch by inch coming closer to taking lanthe to her destiny, whatever that was.

“I’ll take you to King Nikolas’s kingdom,” Zeke said painfully, covering the exposed skin of his jaw with his hand as he turned away from the horizon. lanthe had stepped onto the boat, her back to us as it slowly began to move out into open water.

“This is all just...”

“Hell,” Zeke quipped, his mouth forming into a tight line. “This isn’t magic, Xander. It’s hell.”

A brief flash of muted light washed over me, and lanthe was gone.

“I need to find shelter,” Zeke said before disappearing into the rocks behind us, no doubt seeking shelter in the split boulders the size of a house that lined the shore.

I could do nothing more than sit down on the rocky beach, my gaze fixed on the mist.

Sold as the Alpha King’s Breeder Chapter 599

Chapter 99 : My Mate is There

\*Xander\*

I spent the short day watching the wall of mist along the horizon, wondering what the hell was on the other side and why Zeke hadn’t gone with lanthe.

Zeke finally crawled out of whatever hole he’d be hiding in around dusk, his face shielded from the lingering daylight by the hood of his cloak. He looked sunken, and his eyes were burning with frustration.

I flinched a bit as his eyes met mine, glowing like raw gold in the fading sunset. His expression went beyond the hurt of sending his sister away. He looked hungry.

“You can’t eat me,” I said quickly, rising to my feet. “My blood is like poison, apparently—”

“I don’t feed on people,” he sneered, rolling his eyes as he turned his gaze to the water. He sniffed indignantly, watching the surf. In a flash of black fabric and a spray of water, he disappeared below the surface.

I waited and waited for him to come back up, cursing his name after nearly five minutes had passed. That bastard was killing himself, I thought. And I still didn’t know how to get to the Vampire King.

But his head breached the surface of the water in the distance, his mouth open and gasping for air as he began to swim back to shore. He rose to his feet, the gentle waves swirling around him as he carried several good-sized fish in his arms and dumped them on the rocky beach a few yards away from me.

He was sopping wet and irritated as he pointed his finger to the sack he'd been carrying around during our journey down the bluff and through the city.

"There's matches and kindling in there. Start a fire," he commanded.

"Yes, sir," I grumbled, watching as he knelt before the fish and chose his first meal.

I turned my gaze away before I witnessed him sucking the blood from a f\*\*\*\*\*g fish. That was something I didn't particularly care to see.

I started a small fire while Zeke did whatever he was currently doing behind me. Eventually, he dropped several pieces of driftwood next to me, sitting down with a long sigh of relief.

He'd dropped a fish in my lap, some creature I'd never seen before with pale pink flesh. I flayed it, laying it over a level piece of slate to roast above the embers.

"Thanks for leaving me some," I said, glancing at the pile of shriveled fish carcasses just visible in the distance.

Zeke shrugged, closing his eyes and tilting his face to the sky as dusk receded and night bloomed over the tops of our heads. "You're welcome."

I narrowed my eyes at him and popped a piece of fish into my mouth, chewing slowly. It had a strange flavor, slightly salty, but fish was fish.

"Why didn't you go with her?"

"Because it's a realm of daylight and sun. The boat wouldn't have moved if I'd stepped into it, anyway. I don't understand their magic, so don't ask."

"Okay..."

"And anyway, I need to return to Brune."

"You're still taking me to the Vampire King, right?"

"I'm taking you as far as I can," he said shortly, picking at the fish and putting a piece of it into his mouth.

"What do you need to do in Brune?" I asked, noticing his expression go hard as steel.

He eyed me, then looked away. "You ask a lot of questions—"

"You just seem like... I don't know, you'd rather do anything else but go home. How long have you been gone, anyway? Kiern and Costas didn't even mention that they had a son—"

He flexed his jaw, grinding his teeth as I uttered Costas's name. Interesting.

"At least a century, maybe more. You lose track of time after a while."

“And you don’t get along with your dad?”

He clicked his tongue, his eyes meeting mine again with a silent nod.

“Well, he seemed fine to me,” I murmured as I took another bite of the fish.

“He’s just as bad as King Nikolas in many ways,” Zeke said sharply.

I furrowed my brow, giving him a look of marked confusion. But that little flicker of unease I’d been holding onto since leaving Brune flared across my skin.

“Why?”

“Did you make any deals with him?” Zeke asked, and I sucked in my breath before explaining his desires to open a portal and allow his army, and the armies of the pack lands, to work as one against the Vampire King.

“But you didn’t agree?” Zeke pressed, somewhat frantic.

“No, I didn’t. My sole focus is getting my mate out of here.”

Zeke nodded, but then looked to the sack of bloodstones on my belt. “You should get rid of those. Throw them in the water.”

“Why?”

Before he could answer, a thundering cracking sounded above our heads, too loud and nearby to be a storm. The ground trembled, and I turned to Zeke just as a light split the sky into two.

I almost screamed, but I gathered myself as something the size of a man fell from the sky and into the water.

Zeke was panting and had covered his face with his hood from the light. We looked at each other, then out to the water as whatever, or whoever, had fallen from the sky resurfaced, coughing violently.

“f\*\*k me, that hurt,” said a voice over the sound of the waves, and I jumped to my feet.

“No f\*\*\*\*\*g way,” I whispered, shock numbing my body as I ran to the water’s edge. “Oliver?”

\*\*\*

\*Oliver\*

Mom’s letter was curt, and to the point. According to her, I was a hard-headed menace who didn’t care about the repercussions of my actions. There was a war going on, for Goddess sake. Where the hell are you? So on, and so forth.

I folded the letter up and set it on the side table in the sparsely furnished bedroom I’d been living in for over a month now, tucked in the upper level of Gideon’s house. I could hear Adrian and Abigail talking in hushed voices next door, bickering about something. Adrian has just returned from another trek back to the camps outside of Breles for information on the current situation in the pack lands. He’d returned with news about feuding Alpha’s and bored warriors, and to my great surprise, a letter from my mother.

She was going to Winter Forest. My grandma, Rosalie, was still up there, tending to the refugees who had crossed the sea between Red lakes and the eastern continent. Clare, Sasha's mother, had been one of them, and after a month of speculation and worry, Sasha and her mother were to finally be reunited.

I knew something strange was going on in Winter Forest based on the wording of Mom's letter and her vague description of her itinerary. Aunt Hanna was going too; something was up.

"I know you're trying to find Lena," Mom's letter said toward the end. "But this is a journey she needs to go on by herself. She needs to find out who she is, and what she's capable of."

The words stung, only because I was selfishly wondering why no one seemed to notice that I was also strange and powerful in my own right. I felt as though my parents had sheltered me the same way Hanna and Rowan had sheltered Lena.

In all honestly, I wasn't too worried about Lena. She'd always been able to hold her own. I didn't know Xander well enough to form an opinion on his disappearance, but whatever had happened to them had stopped the nightly attacks in the small villages dotted across the west. The portals to our realm had been closed.

Or so I thought.

"You better be in Breles when I get back," Mom's letter concluded.

Sure, I thought dismally. We'd have to leave Gideon's house eventually. We'd been sitting here for weeks, looking for clues. There was no sign of Lena or Xander anywhere.

I decided to go on a walk as night fell, much to Adrian's chagrin. Gideon and his brothers were off on some errand, and Alma kept to herself in the kitchen most nights, preparing what would be another delicious meal laced with blood root. I was getting used to the taste, and as I made my way down the stairs and into the living room, I realized I'd never actually seen the stuff before.

Adrian said it grew like moss in the distant hills.

Well, I had nothing else to do. Maybe Alma would be nice to me if I brought some back for her. Maybe she'd even make those oatmeal cookies I liked.

I walked out into the night, my hands tucked in my pockets. I considered shifting, but was enjoying the cool night air on my skin too much to want to coat myself in fur. It was mid-February, and the first hints of spring were evident in the air. Mist clung to my feet as I walked in no particular direction, just forward, toward the distant stars.

But then I felt it—a ripple of electricity spreading across my chest. I stopped walking and looked around, wondering if Abigail was coming up behind me. I only felt this way around her, and after she'd explained that she had a twin, it made a lot more sense, especially since now that unusual spark was tearing into my chest.

It was intense, like I was being pulled toward whatever was causing it. This was much more than that little flare of heat toward Abigail.

This was it—my mate bond. And it was pulling me toward my mate, right at that moment.

My breath hitched in my throat as I walked forward into the misty darkness, unaware of what direction I was traveling in. I was too caught up in the feeling gripping my body, mind, and soul to see how the sky seemed to contract in front of me, the stars hanging upside down, the air pulsating with energy.

I thought I heard a voice nearby, soft and feminine and lifted in laughter. It was her; it had to be—my mate.

I took a few more steps, then I was hit by a force I didn't have the words to describe. A panicked scream was ripped from my mouth as I was pulled apart, my body knitting itself back together in seconds as blackness consumed me, then spit me out, and then I was falling, and falling, and falling.

Water—I'd fallen into water, and lots of it. I struggled to the surface, gasping for air as my head breached the water and I opened my eyes.

Pure night.

"f\*\*k me," I coughed, looking around. "That hurt."

My eyes focused on a fire in the distance along a beach, and two shadowed figures rising from the rocks, watching me.

"Oliver?"

"Xander?" I gaped, swallowing water and choking just as Xander ran toward the waves breaking against the beach.

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 600

Chapter 100 : Blood of the White Queen

\*Lena\*

The first time I ventured out of my windowless prison in the Vampire King's castle was anticlimactic. I didn't get very far before running into a group of the gray, sunken-eyed guards that Penny had warned me to stay away from. They hissed at me, their red eyes shining in the dim light of a long, curving corridor I'd been exploring.

I'd retreated back to my room, shaken.

King Nikolas hadn't called on me in what felt like days. Food was delivered to my room in three-hour increments, and it was always plentiful and delicious. I ate as much as I possibly could, trying to strengthen my body and my powers for the fight I would soon be up against.

On the third day after meeting the king and healing his feeder, I went to the library. It was dank and dim like the rest of the castle, which was completely windowless to the outside world. But the library was situated in what looked like a tower, a wide spiral staircase made of stone stretching to the highest point of the castle. But even stranger was the way the staircase descended into incredibly dark depths, likely built through whatever mountain the place was built on top of. Cold air funneled up from the black pit, and I peeked over the railing of the staircase as I gazed down, holding a candle over the darkness.

"Hello?" I said into the pit, and my voice echoed... and echoed, and echoed.

Gooseflesh rippled over my arms, and not from the cold, as I retreated to the stacks of books that lined the curved walls. Thousands of books lined the shelves, all of them coated in cobwebs and dust. I climbed the staircase, running my fingers over the spines of the books as I ascended the stone steps. I noticed the books gradually became newer as I walked up, and up, their spines freshly repaired and dust-free.

I almost ran into the man standing on the steps, who had a feather duster in one hand and a candle in the other. I covered my mouth with one hand and gripped the railing with the other, stifling a scream as he held the candle up between us to get a better look at my face.

He was an older gentleman with kind, round eyes. But he was a vampire, of course. A lower vampire, like the people in Brune, but he was old... much older than any vampire I'd seen before. They all seemed to just stop aging as young adults, dripping eternal youth.

This man was an elder.

"What are you doing in here, girl?" he hissed, and I felt the color drain from my face as I walked backward down the stairs. "No need to be frightened of me," he grumbled, turning back to the bookshelf with the duster in hand.

"I was just looking—"

"For what? A book about princesses? A fairy tale? You've come to the wrong library for that, I'm afraid."

"Is there more than one?" I squeaked, adrenaline still pumping through my veins.

The man gave me a sarcastic look, then rolled his eyes back to the shelves. "No. And don't go poking around where you're not supposed to be—"

"I was told I had free access to the library," I stammered, and he met my eye again, one wiry gray brow arched in shock.

"By?"

"By King Nikolas," I replied, a little breathless. "I just wanted something to read. I'm stuck in that room all the time—"

"He's never let feeders in here before—"

"I'm not his feeder," I said quickly, cutting him off. The man looked thoroughly confused, but then the realization struck him like a punch to the chest.

"How are you still alive?"

There it was—someone who knew the truth, someone who, by the look on his face, was just as shocked as the king had been when I'd healed the feeder. But something different twinkled in the old man's eyes, something like... rebellion.

I shrugged in response to his question, looking into the flames of the candle I was holding for a moment.



“And just what kind of book are you looking for?” he asked, the flame of his own candle dancing in his eyes.

He was sizing me up, and I was doing the same. I couldn’t outwardly tell him I was a spy, and an assassin, but maybe after a few visits to the library I would have a chance to do just that.

“Something about this place. It’s history, geography—”

“Geography?”

“Actually, geology would be ideal.”

“You want to read a book about rocks?”

“I want to read something that will put me into a stupor while I wait for the king to continue his trials on me,” I said bluntly, shrugging innocently.

He huffed a breath, tilting his head toward the black pit below us. “Down there.”

I followed him down, down, down. The air became chilled and my breath puffed with moisture as we descended deep into the well of darkness. The books down here were damp, some totally covered in mold. I grimaced as he stopped, his fingers moving across several spines before he pulled out a massive, heavy book that was bound in what looked like leather.

“It’s very old, so be careful,” he said as he thrust it into my chest.

It smelled like decay, like mildew and dust. I gave him a short smile, and he began to walk past me back up the stairs.

“What’s at the bottom of this pit?” I asked, noticing the stairs continued to spiral downward out of sight.

“They say that’s where the bones of the other High Vampires lay,” he said in all seriousness, and a chill ran up my spine that had nothing to do with air. “You’d be smart not to let anyone know you have that book.”

I nodded, following close behind him as we walked back up the stairs to the main landing that led back into the castle.

I paused at the doorway, tucking the book in the crook of my arm and covering it with the rich navy blue wool cloak I was wearing over a pale gray dress made of homespun. “Thank you,” I said, meaning it.

“What is your name?”

“I don’t remember,” he said, then turned away, walking back up the stairs.

\*\*\*

It had thousands of pages.

I’d been bent over books for years and still couldn’t make sense of what I was looking at as I sat in the bathroom, my back against the door in case anyone tried to come in.

It was in a different language, which was entirely unhelpful. There were no pictures, and the pages were so old and frail that they ripped and disintegrated against my touch.

“Damnit,” I hissed, flipping back to the beginning. I’d opened it in the middle for whatever reason, and had skipped the front title page, which was nothing more than blotted ink spots arranged in a half-moon shape. The ink looked... fresh.

I flipped the page over, noting the paper was much newer than the pages following it, but the spine had never been repaired, and I saw no signs of the title page being sewn in after the fact.

I ran my fingers over the ink spots and felt a jolt of electricity shoot up my arm as the paper sliced through my thumb.

“Ouch!” I growled, bringing my thumb to my mouth to suck the drop of blood away, but then stopped.

The place where the paper had sliced through my skin... the blood was spreading up the page, so rapidly I thought I might have been imagining it. I wiped my bloody thumb on my shirt and focused on the page, my breath catching in my throat as the single drop of blood soaked completely through the paper, turning it a deep crimson.

There wasn’t nearly enough blood to have that kind of effect, but I didn’t have time to mull it over. The ink spots glowed for a moment, and my mouth gaped as the black spots began to burn, turning the entire title page into charred ash. I dropped the book on the floor, thinking the entire thing was about to go up in flames. It slammed shut on its own accord, and I jumped, pressing my back against the door and stifling a scream as light poured through the book, and then faded.

“What the hell,” I whispered, my voice laced with terror. I kicked the book with my toe, but it didn’t tremble or grow the teeth that I’d half expected it to. It just lay there.

I squatted down, balancing on my toes in case I needed to jump again to get away from it, and gingerly opened it.

It was... repaired. Every page was fresh as though it had just been printed.

I could read it now—every word.

“Miss?” came Penny’s voice from the bedroom.

I jumped, my heart thundering in my chest as I scooped up the book and searched frantically for a hiding place... no, not a cabinet. Penny was always in and out of the linen closet, too. My eyes focused on the toilet, which was rather archaic compared to what we had back in my realm, but it was my only option. I stuffed the book between the toilet and the hall, praying to whoever was listening that it would be hidden well.

Then I steeled my expression and walked out of the bathroom.

“Oh, you’re bleeding—”

“I’m alright,” I said quickly, holding out my thumb as Penny’s face flushed a sickly cream color. “I cut my finger... on the faucet.”

She furrowed her brow but I looked away from her, pretending to be invested in the tray of food she had set out on the coffee table.

But there was no food.

I opened my mouth, but the words didn't form on the tip of my tongue. That's when I noticed the dress laying on the bed.

It was jet black and made of the finest, most transparent silk I've ever seen. There was a belt for the waist, and I looked at it with wide eyes as I realized that it wasn't an overlay of any kind. This was the entire dress—a sheer ribbon of fabric. I turned to Penny, eyes flaming.

"You're dining with the king," she said, her lower lip trembling as she tucked her hands in the pocket of her apron.

"I'm dining with the king?" I asked, taking a step toward her. "Or is he dining on me?"

She ran her tongue along her lower lip. "I think he's already been fed."

"Gross," I murmured as I turned back around and looked at the dress, taking it in my hands. I could see my hands beneath the fabric. Everything would be on display.

It's just a game. This is all just a game.