

Kings Breeder 731

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Mila

With Eros locked up and all of us being back in the rogue zone at Soren's inn, I felt a lot more comfortable. Soren put me back in the guest room right next to his. He'd been pretty busy when we got back, checking in with Thomas and the rest of his warriors.

Soren seemed really relaxed too and I liked seeing him at peace.

Although, I wasn't sure how long the peace would last. Eros was just the first one to approach us about the artifact and the rumors Soren spread. We both knew he wouldn't be the last to come for us.

The work Soren was doing with Thomas and his warriors was important and I didn't want to get in the way.

They'd need to be ready when the others came after me.

Until then, I found I didn't have much to do and I couldn't stay cooped up in the inn all day.

I let myself into the large inn down the street from Soren's.

"Madam Scarlett?" I called, walking into her big, open lobby.

"Miss Mila," Scarlett said. She smiled coyly when she saw me and held out a silk, gloved hand.

"I was wondering if you could answer a few questions for me?" I asked, smiling innocently.

"My dear, you know that I don't answer questions for free. Do you have any money?" she asked, licking her cherry-red lips.

"I don't but I have something else to offer," I said. I held out a lotion bottle.

Scarlette arched an eyebrow and c****d her head to the side.

"What is it?" she asked a curious gleam in her eyes.

"This is a special lotion. Magical, actually. It will slow down aging."

Madam Scarlett's eyes widened and she grinned. "My my, you do know the way to my heart." She snatched the bottle from me.

It was the first spell I'd used from the spellbook that my mother left me. After the meteor shower, Soren started teaching me the language that the book was written in. I studied it every day and read about the plants and spells in it.

Strangely, I picked up the language really quickly and wondered if that was because of my witch heritage. The language was a part of my family legacy.

I'd learned the spell for the potion from the book.

"This is the most thoughtful gift for a woman in my profession," she said. "I like it so much, I will give you 10 questions."

"I think you'll really enjoy it. I tested it myself and it is quite effective," I said, rubbing my own soft, smooth cheek.

The book had spells and potions in it. The lotion had been in the potions section. Some of them, when I read them, I felt like I'd learned them before. Reading them was an easy way to refresh my memory on something I learned a long time ago.

It made it easy for me to pick up some of the new things.

I'd been able to use some of the spells without even thinking about it, once I was reminded of them. They were probably spells that my mother had taught me when I was a child. They were buried in my memory and as the Blackfire poison faded, I could feel my witch power getting stronger. Spells and magic felt more natural.

"So, what can I do for you?" Scarlett asked. She led me into what seemed like a living room and sat down on a fancy, satin couch.

Scarlett draped her arm along the back of the couch and motioned for me to sit beside her.

"I'm trying to think of a gift for Soren," I said, plopping down on the couch.

"A gift? What did Soren do to be so deserving of a gift?" she asked, giving me a mischievous look.

My cheeks warmed. "Well... he's done a lot for me lately."

"I'm sure he has," she said suggestively.

"So you have any ideas?" I pressed.

"A scarf," she said quickly.

"A scarf? I've never seen Soren wear one."

"That's why I suggested it," Scarlett laughed and brushed my arm with her silky fingers. "He used to have a scarf and he wore it everywhere. It was something he cared for greatly. After a journey he went on, he came back without it and for two months he was in a foul mood."

"Because he lost his scarf?" I asked, creasing my brow.

"Perhaps. None of us knew what happened," she said, shaking her head. "Thomas once casually asked where the scarf was and the look Soren gave him told Thomas never to ask again. It led us to believe the scarf was the source of his bad mood."

"I don't know anything about buying scarves," I said.

"You shouldn't buy it, you should make it. When we are done here, I will have one of my girls take you into town to get yarn, needles, and she'll teach you to knit," she assured.

“Well, Mila, everything is going very well. After one last dose, you should be all set,” Dr. Lee told me as he packed up his medical kit.

It was my last checkup with him.

“Thank you so much, Lee,” I said grinning.

“No need to thank me. I’m only making sure you are recovering. Soren is the one who got the Howlingred flower for you,” Lee said disinterestedly.

I chewed my lower lip as I thought about what Lee said.

I’d read about the Howlingred plant in the spellbook and I knew that Soren had to feed the plant lots of blood in order to get the flower for the antidote. He’d probably risked his life to give it enough blood because it wasn’t the flower’s blooming season.

That made me feel even more grateful toward him and I’d been working hard to finish his scarf. It had come out much better than I expected.

I went to my desk and picked up the scarf. It was light and smooth but the yarn would keep Soren warm in cooler temperatures, too. I put the scarf in a gift box.

Tonight, I wanted to give the scarf to Soren. It was definitely time.

Just thinking about it made my stomach flutter giddily.

Knock. Knock.

“Come in,” I called automatically.

Soren poked his head into my room. He stepped in with a bouquet of flowers in hand. They were wildflowers and absolutely gorgeous.

“I brought you these,” he said. He put the vase and the flowers on a table in my room.

“They’re gorgeous,” I gasped. I stuck my nose in the flowers and inhaled.

“I thought they could brighten up your room a little bit,” Soren said, smiling kindly.

“Thank you.”

“Come on, I have something to show you,” he said, nodding toward the door.

I nodded, grabbing the gift bag and I followed Soren downstairs. He led me out into the inn courtyard. There was a place for patio dining but that wasn’t what Soren wanted to show me.

In one of the corners of the courtyard, nestled between a tree and garden flowers, there was a swing.

I stopped dead and gasped, my arms going limp at my sides. It was the same swing from the childhood memory dream Soren had seen with me. The swing my parents had given me.

“Soren...”

“You said you didn’t want the childhood cabin back in Hathaway territory or your packland. I did want you to enjoy something that reminds you of your childhood. What do you think?” he asked, motioning to the swing.

I stared at the swing and shook my head. There was nothing I could say... It was so special and perfect.

Soren frowned at me. “You don’t like it?”

“No!” I shook my head. “I mean... Yes, I like it. I love it!”

I went over to the swing and pushed it. It swung back and forth, exactly like my memory.

Taking a deep breath, I went back to Soren and I hugged him.

“Thank you.”

Soren smirked and hugged me back. For a moment, I didn’t want to leave his embrace.

“As if I didn’t need any more reasons to give you a gift,” I said. I put the gift bag in his hands. “Please accept this as a small token of my appreciation... for everything.”

Soren creased his brow and pulled the scarf from the bag. He ran it through his fingers and a tender look entered his eyes.

Smirking, Soren wrapped the scarf around his neck.

“How do I look?” he asked, posing for me.

I giggled. “Great!”

“Mila, this is a lovely gift. Thank you very much,” he said. He held a hand out to me.

“Do we have somewhere else to go?” I asked.

“Take my hand and find out,” he teased.

I grabbed his hand and Soren led me back inside the inn. We went to the formal dining room and it was empty. There was one table in the center of the dining room that was set for two with fresh wildflowers and candles in the center.

“I thought we could enjoy a relaxing dinner for two after everything we’ve been through recently,” he explained, holding my chair out for me.

“You’re right, we deserve a nice, quiet meal,” I agreed.

“Are your feet itching?” Soren asked as he sat across from me.

There was a cart next to our table with covered trays. Soren pulled the covers off to reveal the yummy, steaming food inside. He served us both.

“My feet? Why do you care about my feet?” I asked furrowing my brow.

“You’re not thinking of running again, are you?” he clarified.

I giggled and shook my head. “Not right now. I’m pretty content with the peace we have right now.”

“Good.”

Soren smiled at me and I got the feeling that he was more relieved than sarcastic. I wouldn't expect him to come out and say that, though.

“How are things going with Thomas and your warriors?” I asked, making conversation.

“Very well. They've all been working hard. If anyone comes after us or the artifact, we'll be ready,” he assured.

When we finished dinner, Soren showed me that he had two slices of 14-layer chocolate mousse cake.

“Oh my Goddess,” I gasped as he set my slice in front of me.

“This will be the most delicious cake you've ever had. Enjoy it,” Soren said, winking at me.

“This almost looks too good to eat,” I said, carving a bite out with my fork.

Soren arched an eyebrow at me.

“Almost.”

He chuckled and nodded.

Soren walked me back to my room when we were done with dessert. I was stuffed after the cake and I felt like I was wobbling up the stairs.

“Thank you Soren for a good night and the present,” I said when we got to my door.

Soren slipped his arms around my waist.

“Thank you for my gift,” he said, indicating his scarf. He hugged me closer and pressed a kiss to my lips.

Soren had never given me a goodnight kiss before. I was too startled to respond and then Soren pulled away.

I didn't want to spoil the moment with questions so I smiled at Soren and quickly slipped into my room, shutting the door.

Flopping down on my bed, I couldn't stop grinning as I stared at the ceiling. A good night kiss was more than just business and I felt so happy at Soren's display of affection.

Sighing, I closed my eyes trying to sleep. Tomorrow I'd have another enjoyable day in the rogue zone.

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As soon as I fell asleep, I came face to face with Helen. She looked so thin and pale, like she'd been starved and badly hurt since the last dream.

I still didn't know if these were real interactions with her.

“My dearest Mila,” she said, holding shaky arms out to me.

“Helen!” I ran to her and hugged her.

Her whole body was frail in my arms, and she felt like a stick figure or a scarecrow.

“Listen to me, my darling. You are on the brink of facing great danger. Please, please be careful of the Alpha King,” she begged.

“Helen, where are you? I want to find you. I’ve learned a lot about magic and I can help you,” I insisted.

“It is too late for me. Do not look for me because you will not find me and you need to focus on your own safety,” she insisted. Her voice was still firm despite her weakened body.

“No...”

“This is the last time I will come to you in your dreams. Soon, I will take my last journey and join your mother,” she said, smiling weakly. Her lips were thin and pale.

“No!” I snapped. “Aunt Helen, we need more time. I still have questions and need to know more about my past. And the artifact...”

“The artifact is your responsibility now. There is no more help I can offer you, Mila,” she said, touching my cheek gently.

“You can’t die! I only have two of the artifact parts and I’m not ready... not ready to lose my family,” I said, tears springing to my eyes.

Helen’s eyes filled with warmth and bittersweet sadness. She looked relieved and peaceful.

“My dear Mila, you have done so well. I am proud of you and your parents would be too,” she insisted. “I’m glad I got to know you, in what little time we had.”

“This can’t be the end. You’re all the family I have left,” I told her, hugging her tighter. I was a little afraid I’d break her if I wasn’t careful but I couldn’t control my emotions.

“For better or for worse, my mission in this world is complete and my time is up,” she told me again, running her fingers through my hair.

I shook my head, clinging to her like a little child scared of a monster under my bed.

“As for the Blade of Souls, you’ve already found the majority of it. The rest, leave it up to the Moon Goddess. Have faith in your heart,” she told me, pressing her hand to my chest.

My heart thudded against her palm.

“Listen to me. I don’t have much time left but I need you to know this. I made a mistake when I was young... I tried to interfere with the future. My mind was always so full of the future and I couldn’t let it happen...” she trailed off, coughing.

“What was going to happen? What did you see?” I asked urgently. It didn’t feel like she was going to answer my questions because she had something she wanted to say before dying but I had to ask.

“I tried to change fate and in the end, nothing changed... rather, what I did caused the future I was trying to prevent,” she told me.

“I forgive you. You don’t need to worry about that now,” I assured.

"You can't forgive me. I'm a sinner and I should have died long ago," she said in a raspy whisper.

"No! No, no. Please don't leave me," I begged, feeling like she was slipping away.

Mila smiled lightly at me. "Child, you've grown up and you are not alone now. Your mate is a good man. I can leave in peace, knowing that."

"I am alone. With you gone..."

"Don't be sad, Mila, and don't let hatred blind you. Let go of your past. Look to the future with your mate and your friends. When the time is right, answers will come to you," she said.

Helen's body wavered and she disappeared in my arms.

"Helen!" I cried out.

I sat up in bed, my eyes filled with tears. I hugged myself and tried to steady my breathing. Was Helen really dead? Had I missed out on meeting her in person?

Shaken, I couldn't get back to sleep. I paced my room but I really didn't want to be alone. I went to Soren's room next door and knocked lightly.

Soren opened the door quickly. The light was on behind him. Apparently, he wasn't sleeping either.

"I think Helen might be dead," I whispered.

Soren's face softened and he opened his bedroom door. I went in and he shut the door slowly.

"Were you dreaming of her again?" he asked.

I nodded. "Yes. She came to say goodbye to me... she was dying in my arms and I couldn't do anything to help her. I was useless!"

"It isn't your fault, Mila," Soren said gently. He rubbed my arms because I was still hugging myself.

"I think she's been suffering and there was nothing..." I sighed and trailed off.

Soren hugged me quickly and then stepped away. He turned from me and paced a few steps, stroking his chin. Something was clearly on his mind.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Thomas... found some things..." Soren said slowly.

"Some things about what?" I pressed chewing my bottom lip.

"He found a few things about Helen that we didn't know before," he clarified.

"Soren, please tell me. I need to know. She's family," I insisted. I went over to him and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Based on what we found out, Helen killed Norwind's Luna. It was an accident, from what I understand, but Chandler was furious and hated Helen so much that when she disappeared along with the Blade of Souls, he had a witch curse Miltern pack, Helen's pack," he explained.

My jaw dropped. I couldn't believe that Helen had killed someone, even accidentally. Was that the mistake she'd told me about?

"She told me that she made a mistake. Do you think that was it, killing Alpha Chandler's Luna?" I asked.

Soren glanced over his shoulder at me.

"I'm not sure..."

Sighing, I pulled away from Soren and started pacing around his room. I didn't want to think that Helen had actually done something horrible enough to cause Pomeni pack to get wiped out because she killed Chandler's luna and hid the Blade of Souls from him.

Shaking my head, I forced those thoughts away. Greed and selfishness destroyed my parents and their pack.

"My gut says that wasn't what Helen was referring to. From what I've heard, her mistake was 12 to 14 years ago," he told me.

"From what you've heard?" I asked, arching an eyebrow.

Soren was old enough that he'd have a solid memory of events from 12 to 14 years ago. It was a strange way to phrase things.

"There was already a thinning population of witches at the time. No one knows why. We tried to get more information but the clues have been hidden or cleaned up," he continued.

I pursed my lips and narrowed my eyes slightly. Had Helen's mistake led to the persecution of the witches. That made a lot more sense than Chandler's luna.

And then there was the matter of how Soren was talking. He made it seem like he wasn't around back then.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Soren asked, arching an eyebrow.

"The way you talk is curious... I've always thought you were rather observant, but you don't have a grasp on what happened 12 to 14 years ago. You make it sound like you don't know what happened back then," I pointed out.

"Because I wasn't here," Soren said, shrugging.

"You mean you weren't in the rogue zone, or you were in a different area?" I asked, creasing my brow.

Soren sighed and looked thoughtfully at the ceiling. I wasn't sure if he was trying to come up with an excuse or a way to evade my question.

"No, not in another area... I'm not from Egoren. I only arrived 12 years ago so I don't know much about what was going on then or before then. I wasn't well established yet," he explained.

I tilted my head at him, putting my hands on my hips. "Huh?" I stared at him.

Soren smirked at me. "You're adorable when you are confused."

"I don't get it, Soren. How is it possible that you're not from Egoren? There are no places outside of Egoren, or beyond, are there? I mean, other than the islands but I heard no one could survive there..."

"My hometown is very, very far away. But that is a story for another day," Soren asserted with a nod. "The point is, we couldn't dig up more information than that. Whoever covered this truth up is highly influential, do you know who that might be?"

I narrowed my eyes at him. I really wanted to know more about Soren's secret past but he changed the subject, clearly not interested in talking about it more. It wasn't the right time to press him about it.

Instead, I focused on Soren's questions.

Helen's warning came back to me.

"The Alpha King!" I blurted. "Helen asked me to watch out for the Alpha King."

Soren frowned slightly and nodded.

"Dark King Sebastian... that would make sense..."

"It would?" I asked. I didn't think that the Alpha King was a bad guy. Then again, I didn't know much about him.

"If the Alpha King is the one who wanted to cover up the past, he certainly has the power to do so," Soren explained.

"I imagine he would..."

"So, my question is, what did Helen do that made the Alpha King so mad he decided to kill all the witches? And she had to upset King Sebastian because Alpha Chandler wouldn't have the power to condemn the witches," he reminded me.

I sighed and shrugged. "She didn't tell me. I got the feeling she didn't want me to find out because she thought I would hate her."

I groaned and shook my head. Soren's eyes followed me and I could tell he was studying me carefully.

"Mila, what do you want to do? Do you want to keep assembling the artifact?" he asked me.

I met Soren's gaze and bit my lower lip. Deep down, I didn't even care about the artifact anymore. The only reason I still wanted it was because I couldn't shake Helen's warning about needing it to save Soren.

A large part of me just wanted to forget about everything. I couldn't forget about it! Too much had happened.

"Are you trying to get the artifact to avenge your parents?" he asked, pulling me from my thoughts.

I shook my head. "If I ever ran into those responsible for killing my parents and pack, I'd do everything I could to make sure my parents are avenged. I'm not going to look for them, though."

"That's very wise of you," Soren said, grinning.

“There were too many packs involved. It’s not like I can kill them all. Even if I did, my pack is gone and my parents won’t be brought back. There’s no point,” I added.

“You’ve changed. I like it,” Soren pointed out.

My cheeks warmed but I ignored his compliment. “As for the artifact, my parents died because of it. If anything, I want to destroy it after all the trouble it’s caused!

“Then why are you still looking for the artifact pieces?” he asked, creasing his brow.

“I’m not going to lie to you, Soren, but I can’t answer that. So, please, don’t ask again,” I muttered, looking down at the floor.

Smiling, Soren reached for me. He pulled me into his arms and rubbed my back. I melted into him.

“You know, my offer still stands. If you don’t want to deal with all of that anymore, then come stay with me. It might not be a lavish lifestyle or comfortable mansion, but it is enough to keep you safe,” he told me.

I smiled and my heart swelled. I nuzzled against Soren and let him wrap me in his warmth.

He said exactly what I wanted to hear!

I slipped my arms around him and hugged him back, enjoying the peace between us as he held me.

There was still the issue of Soren being from some other place outside of Egoren.

“Soren... you’re not from here. Do you miss home?”

[Chapter 733](#)

Soren

I looked at Mila but I wasn’t really seeing her. My mind wandered back to the Realm of Light, my home. No one had asked me if I missed it because no one knew that’s where I was from.

“Yes, I miss it,” I confirmed.

No matter how much time I spent away from the Realm of Light, it would always be my home. It was where I grew up and where I had some fond memories. Even with the not-so-fond memories, it was still home.

I gazed at Mila and how beautiful she was.

There were some pretty fond memories in the Land of Dark, thanks to her.

Her eyes darkened slightly and her arms tightened around me. “Will you ever leave Erogen and go back to your hometown?”

What reason did I have to go back? Ethan and Rosalie were happy together. My presence would only interfere with their happiness. Even if I returned to the Realm of Light, I wouldn’t go there to see them or talk to them. I would watch from afar, like I had the last time.

The Realm of Light was a big realm but that didn't mean there was anywhere I could go that put enough distance between me and Ethan and Rosalie. I didn't belong there anymore. It might have been my original home but I had nothing left to offer that world. It was a good thing I made my way here.

I returned my gaze to Mila.

She looked sad and a little anxious, chewing on the inside of her cheek.

Suddenly, I wanted to tease her. She was so serious and nervous and I wanted to lighten her mood. I smirked and bounced my eyebrows.

"I don't know yet. If I left, would you miss me?" I teased.

Mila smiled warmly. She slipped her arms around my neck and pulled herself up on tiptoes, pressing her lips to mine.

Grunting, I put my hands on her hips and squeezed. Mila moaned, her passion rising. She rolled her body against mine and kissed me harder.

What had gotten into her?

She seemed angry and fervent with her kisses, needy. But I could feel her lips trembling against mine, her eyelashes glistening with unshed tears. Something was scaring her or making her sad. Maybe both.

Was she afraid that I would leave her? Was this kiss her attempt to keep me close? Or was there something else she needed from me?

My heart thudded at the idea and I tightened my arms around her, pinning her against me. If she needed to feel close, I had no problem holding her close.

The mate pull between us exploded. Her delicious, sweet scent filled my nose and overtook my senses. She was so forward and insistent, kissing me and rubbing against me. I liked her taking charge, at least for now.

Growling, I scooped her into my arms and carried her to the bed. Hovering over Mila, I kissed her lips vigorously, running my hands up and down her sides.

My pants tightened, my c**k pressing pleasantly uncomfortably against the denim. First, I needed to make sure that Mila had everything she needed. My only priority was giving her all the satisfying pleasure I could.

A powerful urge to tell Mila that she was my mate took me over. If I ever did leave the Dark Realm and go back to the Light Realm, I would take Mila with me...

I pulled my lips back and tried to tell her that we were mates.

Before I could speak, Mila pulled my hips down to her. She rolled her hips against mine, pressing deliciously against my swollen c**k. I groaned, closing my eyes.

Mila pulled me down to her, kissing my lips again. I couldn't pull away.

Her fingers unbuttoned my shirt hastily and then went to my pants, popping the button and pushing the zipper down. She ran her fingers up and down my chest, sending ripples of pleasure across my skin. Mila pushed my shirt off my shoulders.

I wasn't used to this eagerness from her. Not that I wasn't enjoying it but it felt like her desire came from a place of fear... the fear of losing me, or losing something.

My wolf was aroused and excited, wanting to claim more than just her body. I fought the impulse he sparked in me. We were already wrapped up together, her neck close to my mouth, her artery thumping against her skin. Marking her would be easy...

"Don't leave... please, don't leave me..." Mila murmured, pleading with me.

She didn't have anything to worry about but she seemed very upset by the thought.

Tears trickled from the corners of her eyes, streaking her cheeks. Her sadness softened me to her and it broke my heart to see her so saddened by the thought of losing me.

I cupped Mila's face. Leaning in, I licked her tears away trying to comfort her. Despite her sadness, she seemed so vulnerable and open to me. I kept licking her tears and wrapped my arms around her.

In my arms, even though she was sad, she was still unbelievably sexy and beautiful.

Primal desire took over and I growled, licking down her neck as I removed her shirt. I lavished her chest and breast with my tongue, tasting every inch of her as I moved down her stomach.

Mila gasped, writhing and twisting under my touch. I could never get enough of how responsive she was to me.

I pulled her pants off and licked my way up her shins, over her knees and up her thighs.

Mila trembled and parted her legs for me as my tongue moved up her thighs.

The strong, sweet, musky scent of her arousal filled my nose and I licked my lips. I roamed my tongue over her wet slit and her swollen lips.

Mila moaned and arched her back. She put her hand on the back of my head, pushing me against her. I chuckled and grabbed her thighs, squeezing them as I probed my tongue into her folds.

Her legs trembled, tensing around my head as she moaned and panted.

I searched her p***y for her throbbing clit, pressing the tip of my tongue to her pleasure bead.

A shudder ran through Mila's body and she cried out. She gyrated her hips, increasing the friction of my tongue on her. I swirled my tongue around her clit in slow circles, loving how she couldn't get enough.

Her fingers knotted in my hair.

My c**k ached with the need for release. I ignored it for now, focused on bringing Mila out of her sadness. I wanted to make her feel good so she stopped worrying that I'd leave her.

"Soren..." she gasped my name, her hips moving faster. "I'm... I'm going to..."

She cried out in ecstasy, her body trembling with pleasure as an orgasm ripped through her.

I kept moving my mouth against her, prolonging her orgasm for her and making sure she felt every pleasurable sensation she deserved.

She continued to pant but her muscles relaxed and her legs stopped clutching my head.

I lifted my head and pressed my tongue to Mila's waistline. I licked up to her belly button, swirling my tongue around.

She gasped and wiggled her hips. Every touch, lick, and caress had her squirming in my grasp. It was absolutely intoxicating.

I continued moving higher with my mouth, closing my lips around her left n****e. I rolled my tongue around it and sucked gently until her n****e tightened into a little bud. Moving my mouth to her right n****e, I repeated the action.

Mila moaned, her hands running down my chest. Her fingers traced the deep grooves of my muscles, sending shocks of pleasure straight into my groin.

I sighed, moving my mouth to her neck. I nipped and sucked at her skin.

She slipped her hands into the waistline of my pants and she pushed them down my legs. I wiggled out of them.

Her hand cupped my erection, gently massaging my heated flesh.

I bucked my hips against her, growling and groaning in pleasure. Burying my face in the crook of her neck, I breathed heavily as she continued to stroke my shaft. She guided my c**k to her slick entrance.

I lifted my head, looking into her eyes. My arms were around her back, keeping her pressed as close to me as possible.

Despite her forwardness, Mila still showed softness and vulnerability in her eyes. It was like she wanted to claim me so I wouldn't leave her. The entire time, she hadn't let go of me. Whether she had her fingers in my hair or arms around my back, she clung to me in one way or another.

Her need drove my wolf absolutely crazy! He was salivating and panting, urging me to mark her and make her mine, forever.

Was that the only way to make her understand that I wasn't going to leave her?

My wolf and I both wanted to protect her and devour her at the same time. The desire to mark her was about more than fulfilling those desires. I wanted to make her mine and I wanted to be a part of her!

I thrust my hips forward, pushing into her sweet, tight p***y.

Mila arched into me. She tilted her head back, her eyes rolling up. She put her hands on my shoulders, clinging to me for dear life.

I leaned down and kissed her hungrily on the lips. I nipped her lower lip and kissed again and again until her lips were swollen.

She moaned into my mouth, her fingers tightening on my shoulders. She whimpered and sobbed, trembling below me.

Mila wrapped her legs around me, locking her ankles together so I couldn't pull away. I was completely wound up in her limbs and I had no intention of pulling away.

I kissed her harder, her core tightening around me more. I grunted in pleasure and pushed into her faster and harder.

Mila turned away from me, gasping and sobbing as I moved inside of her.

I never knew a woman could drive me so crazy! She made me feel everything all at once. And I never knew a woman could feel so f*****g good!

I kissed along her jawline, then down her neck. Kissing back up her neck, I captured her earlobe in between my teeth and nibbled lightly.

She shuddered and clung to me harder.

"Mila..." I purred her name.

"Hmm?" she gasped out, drunk with pleasure. Her eyelids were half-closed, a languid, ecstasy-filled smile painted on her lips.

"Be mine, Mila. Let me mark you," I whispered.

I held her tightly, waiting for her response.

[Chapter 734](#)

Mila

I was losing my mind. Soren's arms tightened around me and his question echoed in my head. Had I even heard him correctly? Was my mind playing tricks on me?

Heat spread over my skin and I clenched my legs around Soren's hips, pulling him deeper inside. All I wanted was to give him whatever he wanted. I'd give him all of me if he asked.

Moaning, I rolled my hips to meet his thrusts, too caught up in pleasure to give Soren an answer.

His teeth nipped at my earlobe, his ragged breath sending butterflies into my stomach.

"Mila, let me make you mine," he purred.

I twisted beneath him and nodded.

"Y-yes," I gasped, nodding more vigorously.

Soren chuckled and nuzzled his nose into my neck. He ran his tongue along my artery, warm and wet.

I groaned and tightened my grip on Soren's shoulders.

"Do it!"

I begged him with my body, turning my head to the side and stretching my neck out all the way.

Soren growled and his lips parted. He bit down hard, breaking my skin.

I arched my back and cried out in pleasure. Locking my ankles and arms around him I held him close, preventing him from pulling away.

A strong sense of belonging filled me. I belonged to Soren, completely wrapped in his body and in his scent. I was wrapped in his essence.

My body hummed with pleasure and I could feel Soren's body humming, too. We were connected, we were one, and I'd never felt so safe, secure, and at peace.

Soren pulled his teeth away and kissed the spot where he'd marked me. He kissed gently and tenderly, soothing the sore spot.

I rolled my body against his, the pressure in my abdomen growing.

His c**k spread my insides apart pleasantly, stretching me to the limit, and stroking my inner walls.

Sobbing, I clung to Soren like my life depended on it. My mind and body were out of control. The pressure inside of me grew more and more until it finally broke.

Tearing and moaning in pleasure, my orgasm took me over. I shuddered and moaned, writhing on the bed, completely lost in bliss.

Soren's c**k quivered inside of me and he groaned, panting and sputtering as he released shortly after me.

My mind felt fuzzy and numb. My arms and legs still clung to Soren but they were loose, slowly turning to jelly. I felt light and heavy at the same time.

Soren's lips touched my ear again, his breath ragged and heavy. His lips moved and a soft whisper touched my ear.

"Mate."

I was too fuzzy in my afterglow to know if I heard what I thought I heard or if my mind was playing tricks on me.

Soren's head rested on my chest and I cradled him against me, my arms still rubbery and weak. He nuzzled his nose against me. His scent was so powerful now. I'd always been able to smell it before but now that he'd marked me, it was as if his scent was all I could smell.

Even as I felt exhausted from our lovemaking, my mind started to open and there was another presence there. It was Soren.

Just like his scent, I felt a glimmer of his thoughts and feelings. I tried to push into them and feel more of it. It was my turn to read his mind... only, there was something blocking me from going deeper.

Every time I got closer to catching one of his thoughts or feelings it slipped away too fast for me to fully grasp it. Maybe it was just my imagination or maybe it was the fact that I was still drowning in the afterglow of our crazy night. Whatever it was, I couldn't think about it too much. I was too tired and too happy to try and figure it out.

My eyelids drifted shut and I fell asleep to the mixing of our even breaths.

Yawning, I opened my eyes and stretched my arms above my head. Warm sun bathed me from the window and I could hear birds singing outside.

Memories from the night before flooded my mind and instinctively, I turned to look for Soren. He was lying next to me, head propped up on his elbow. He had a light smile on his lips and he was watching me with an affectionate gaze.

“Good morning,” he said. He reached out and brushed some of my hair out of my face.

Giggling, I shied away and pushed his hand off.

“It is a good morning.”

I smiled coyly and bit my lower lip. It was nice to wake up with Soren beside me. The one and only time that happened, our morning had been interrupted by Madam Scarlett. It had always been something important getting in the way of enjoying each other’s company.

Mostly Soren getting up quickly for business or already being dressed and treating our relationship like a business arrangement. It was nice to see him smile and look at me like that.

Soren reached over and rested his hand on my stomach.

“Do I have something on my face?” I asked.

He arched an eyebrow.

“Why?”

“You keep staring at me.”

He chuckled. “Why wouldn’t I stare at you?”

My cheeks got hot and a blush crept over my skin. I bit my lower lip and turned away from him. His eyes were so piercing and tender.

Suddenly, my stomach dropped and I covered my face with my hands.

Last night, I’d basically seduced Soren. I’d been so forward and needy. He hadn’t stopped me or pushed me away but how could I look at him now? He probably thought I was some floozy.

“You know... I should get up for the day,” I muttered.

I slipped out of the covers and grabbed a robe, throwing it around my shoulders.

“Where are you going?” Soren asked.

He grabbed my arm and pulled me back down on the bed.

“H-hey...”

“Stay here,” he purred.

He gently pressed me into the mattress and kissed my lips. Once, then twice, and then again. He was so gentle and careful with me.

I melted into his kisses, powerless to struggle away from him.

“Why don’t you rest here and I will get breakfast prepared,” he suggested.

“O-okay.”

Soren ran his fingers down the side of my face. My cheeks warmed again.

He got up and threw on his pants. In the next second, he was gone.

I hugged myself and kicked my legs back and forth, laughing giddily, but then, something came to my mind.

My moment of happiness faded and dread settled into my stomach. Like a stone in water, my heart sank. Soren had marked me. We were much closer than we’d ever been, but that meant he would be in danger soon.

If I didn’t get the rest of the artifact together, I wouldn’t be able to protect him or save him.

What did it mean that Soren marked me?

I knew how I felt about him but how did he feel about me? Were we mated or was this just his way of taking care of the woman that shared his bed? Did he love me? Was he my mate? Or... at least, were we boyfriend and girlfriend?”

Was last night just another passionate f**k for Soren? Was he only being a gentleman who would take good care of me because of my position? Not just the fact that we shared a bed but because of the promise he made me. Was this more of how he fulfilled our deal?

Until we had gotten the artifact together our deal still remained in place. He could be using this as a way to keep me protected, especially if he didn’t want me to run off again. Now, he’d be able to feel me and sense me everywhere.

No matter what Soren’s motives were, I was thankful that he’d come into my life. He had truly been a Goddesssend and I could tell that he wasn’t going to stop helping me, whether I continued to share his bed or not.

My cheeks heated again, even though there was no one there to see.

I still couldn’t believe just how forward I’d been with Soren!

Getting up, I stretched and rolled my neck on my shoulders. I’d been lounging around enough. Soren was going to have breakfast ready soon and I wanted to be ready and presentable.

I headed to the bathroom and started cleaning myself up. My robe was open in the front. There was no need to tie it while I was the only one in the room. I caught my reflection in the mirror as I wet a towel in the sink.

On my neck, there was a delicious purpling mark where Soren had bitten me. I touched the puckered mark. It was swollen and I gasped. The skin was tender but it felt good under my finger. A tingle shot all the way down into my toes.

The bite was surrounded by hickies and my entire neck was covered in nips and light bruises.

I blushed again. It spread from my cheeks, down my neck, and across my chest.

I started the shower to wash up. When I got into the warm water, my muscles eased and I realized just how sore I was from the night before. I massaged my thighs, arms, and shoulders under the hot water, working out the knots and relieving the stress and pain.

It wasn't even like we'd been that rough with each other the night before. But it had been intense and I had given my entire body to Soren. It had all built up in my muscles so tightly.

The shower felt really great. When I got out, I went back to the bedroom to find something to wear. My clothes from last night were in a dirty heap on the floor. I wasn't going to put them back on now that I was clean.

I dropped my towel to the floor, but my feet got tangled.

"Oh!"

I pitched forward and caught myself on Soren's dresser. It rattled and the top drawer popped open.

"Hey... that's perfect."

Even if all I found were some oversized t-shirts that would be all I needed while Soren and I enjoyed breakfast together.

I pulled the drawer open all the way and started digging through Soren's clothing. He had two stacks of t-shirts. I pulled out the one from the bottom when something else came with it, and fell on the floor.

A printed picture.

The white edge was slightly yellow. It was probably taken a long time ago. Could it be from Soren's past?

I knew I shouldn't look but I couldn't help it—more than ever, I wanted to learn about him, learn about the man who had taken my heart.

However, when I saw what was on it, I froze in place and immediately regretted my decision.

[Chapter 735](#)

I kept staring at the picture, too numb to form a clear thought.

In the picture, three people stood shoulder to shoulder. Soren was on the far left, and all the way to the right was a man, slightly older than Soren, but they looked very much alike.

Between the two handsome men was a woman—a stunning beauty. She had reddish, wavy hair and a sweet, tender smile. There was something in her posture that showed how soft and gentle she was.

The other man had his arm around her waist and I could tell the two of them were a couple. Probably married if the engagement ring on her finger was any indication.

I couldn't stop staring at Soren, though. He was young, and just as handsome and gorgeous as ever, however, he wasn't smiling into the camera like the other two were. It looked like at the last minute, he shifted his eyes to gaze directly at the woman.

I could never forget that gaze in his eyes.

He loved her. His love was deep, affectionate and intense. It couldn't even be masked in a picture.

And there was a scarf around Soren's neck.

Was that the scarf that Madam Scarlett had told me about? My instinct told me that the scarf was a gift from the woman in the picture. It had to be. No wonder he was so upset when he lost it.

I wasn't surprised that Soren had a romantic past. In fact, I'd suspected it based on some of the things he said about women and not spending a lot of time with them.

My breath caught and my chest felt like someone was standing on it.

I could barely breathe as I stared at the woman in the picture, my eyes darting over to see how Soren was looking at her.

Just a quick glance was enough to see that the woman looked like me... or rather, I resembled her. We had the same wavy reddish brown hair, fair skin tone, and even similar body styles. Looking at her, was like looking at myself.

My cheeks burned suddenly and I slammed the shirts on top of the picture. Humiliated and angry, I slammed the drawer shut. How could he do that to me!?

My heart cracked. I pressed my hands over my chest, trying to hold my heart in place to prevent it from falling out on the floor.

It all made sense now!

The way Soren looked at me and it sometimes felt like he was looking for someone else or looking at someone else. It wasn't me he was looking for, it was the woman in the picture!

It explained why he treated me differently than other women. So many of his friends kept asking him why I was special and why he couldn't just let me go. He had made it clear he didn't pursue long-term relationships with women.

He probably rarely spent more than a night with one.

But he kept tracking me down, kept wanting to see me safe, and insisted on helping me. He couldn't leave me alone because I was just a substitute for him. I was his chance to live the dream of the one who got away!

Tears sprang to my eyes and I shook my head. Last night had been amazing, but now, I woken up into a nightmare.

My knees trembled and I stumbled to the bed, leaning against the bedpost. I thought I'd fall on the floor if I didn't hold myself up.

The answers to all my questions... They were buried in the dresser drawer just inches from his bed and where he slept every night. I'd been curious to know the answers, I snooped, and now I was paying the price.

I was nothing more than a substitute!

I pressed my palm to my forehead and shook my head, trying to shake the tears away. Sniffing slightly, I wrapped my other arm around my waist, trying to hold my insides together.

My heart was breaking. My entire body was breaking.

I was foolish to think that I was special to him. What reason would a man like Soren ever have to even look my way let alone treat me differently?

He could have any woman he wanted. They threw themselves at him all the time. And they were practically lined up outside his door ready to offer themselves to him. But I knew he'd been single for years.

And that was because he was still hung up on someone else!

I was just starting to think that maybe his special treatment of me was because he had feelings for me. I knew it was a long shot but... I'd fallen into the dream. I thought that he liked me as a companion or perhaps... maybe even loved me...

But no, it had nothing to do with me. It all had to do with that woman. His one, true love.

I bowed my head and blinked, a few of my tears slipping down my cheeks.

I'd given Soren a scarf. It was supposed to be a thoughtful gift. Soren had really seemed to like it.

He'd been genuinely surprised but he'd also been really happy. I was starting to think that wasn't because he truly liked the scarf. It was because I was unknowingly imitating his past love.

The surprise had probably been due to unhappiness that I had done the same thing she did. It was just a reminder that I wasn't her... and he wouldn't want me acting like her. Mimicking her would be painful, wouldn't it...?

I was so stupid!

Now that I was thinking about it, I couldn't stop. My mind started breaking down every single interaction I'd had with Soren and I just couldn't stop!

When Soren had asked me to stay with him, he didn't want me. He wanted someone that reminded him of the woman he loved. He wanted to keep me with him so he didn't have to think about losing her and I could distract him from the loss of the woman he really wanted.

Taking a deep breath, I blinked the tears away and I shook off the humiliation and embarrassment.

My heart might be broken but I wasn't going to let Soren treat me like that. I refused to be a substitute for someone that he couldn't have.

Should I wait and confront Soren about the photo? Should I ask him what it meant in relation to me? What if I was jumping to conclusions?

But what if I stayed and Soren confirmed what I already knew? My heart wouldn't be able to take it.

Besides, what could Soren say? He wouldn't lie to me, of course. He might try to evade answering my questions, like he always did, but a man like Soren wouldn't tell me any flat out lies.

He could tell me what I already knew was true. Then he would just ask me what I would want to do and he'd support me, whatever I decided to do. He'd be respectful... unless I chose to leave. Then he'd follow me, like always.

I couldn't give him the chance to try and stop me from leaving.

I wasn't sure I wanted to leave but what choice did I have? If I stayed here, I'd be humiliated further, especially knowing that I was a substitute. If I stayed, I'd be letting Soren use me.

My heart ached again.

I really loved Soren. This wouldn't hurt me this much if I didn't. I'd known I had strong feelings for a while and that I was falling for him but now I knew the depth of my feelings.

If Soren was someone random, someone I didn't care about so much, then I could trade being a substitute for protection. But this was Soren! He was the man I loved... the only man I'd ever loved.

A shudder ran through me as I thought of the loving gaze that Soren gave the other woman in that photo. My heart cringed and I hugged myself.

This was unbearable!

I had to forget about everything that happened last night. It was meaningless. An old fantasy Soren needed to fulfill. I wasn't going to hang around to find out what fantasy he wanted to fulfill next.

Jumping up, I headed back to my room before Soren returned with breakfast. I immediately grabbed my backpack and started throwing my few belongings into it. I ignored the dresses that Soren got me.

They were nice but I wasn't bringing any souvenirs with me that would remind me of Soren or this place.

While I stuffed things in my backpack, I caught sight of my reflection in the dresser mirror. My long hair, so much like hers, bounced around, waving pleasantly around my face.

Sighing, I grabbed an old pair of scissors on the dresser and I grabbed fistfuls of my hair. Quickly, I hacked off big chunks of my hair and threw them on the floor. I only spent a few minutes evening out the ends and then I ran my fingers through my short hair.

I couldn't change the color right now but at least, I looked different.

Smirking at my reflection, I nodded to myself. I was satisfied that I looked different enough from that other woman.

It wasn't like we even looked similar enough to be related. Our differences were more than our similarities but it was enough to draw Soren to me. And because of that, I just wanted to look different.

Soren used to tell me that I was beautiful when I smiled. That was ironic, seeing as the other woman had such a sweet, gentle smile. That's why he liked my smile... because it conveyed the same gentleness and sweetness she had.

I glared at my own reflection, my eyes turning cold. If I could look at Soren now, he'd feel the icy glare I'd shoot at him. But I didn't want to see him again. I didn't want to give him a chance to explain because I loved him so much that I might actually believe him.

Reaching into my pocket, I pulled out a small vial. It was the last antidote dose for the Blackfire poison. An antidote Soren had gone to great lengths to get for me.

Had that all been a scam? It had to have been. When he looked at me, he saw her. Now it made sense as to why he would put himself in danger to save me. In his mind, he was saving the woman he loved... the real woman he loved.

Scoffing, I set the antidote on the dresser beside the clumps of my hair. Soren could find it and make whatever he wanted to out of it.

Turning on my heel, I left the room.

It was early enough in the morning that the inn was quiet. Soren didn't have people watching out for me anymore, either. Getting through the inn unnoticed and unseen was too easy.

Maybe it was wrong for me not to give Soren a chance to explain himself but he had had all the chances in the world to come clean.

I'd asked him a million times why he was so nice to me and why he was always helping me. He could have told me the truth any one of the times I'd asked. If he hadn't told me already, then he was never going to.

I left the inn and the rogue zone. At least, Soren wouldn't be in danger anymore because he wasn't my beloved.

[Chapter 736](#)

I managed to make it out of the rogue zone without Soren or anyone coming after me. I didn't want him to come after me but I was a little surprised that he hadn't noticed I was gone yet.

Maybe he just let me go. I'd left his dresser a little messy. He might have discovered that I found the photo and realized I knew the truth and wasn't going to bother convincing me to stay.

As I got onto the open road, a bush beside me rustled.

I hardly paused and kept walking.

Another bush rustled, even closer to me this time. I kept walking, not wanting to alert whoever was following me that I knew they were there. This time, I wasn't helpless. Soren wouldn't need to protect me.

Suddenly, the bushes exploded, and several wolves burst out. They surrounded me, snarling and licking their lips.

Several men appeared from between the trees and closed in around me. One of them I recognized immediately. It was Chandler from Norwind pack. These had to be his loyal followers.

Sneering, I shook my head. "Are you here to abduct me again?"

"I'm not that rude. Is that really what you think of me?" Chandler asked, scoffing. "This time, I'm here to invite you to be my guest."

"Why would I want to do that?" I snarled, crossing my arms.

"Well, because you're out here wandering alone. I figured you'd need a place to stay."

"That's very presumptuous of you. But you're wrong."

"Really? I don't think so."

Chandler smirked at me.

"Get the f**k out of my way!" I cried, throwing my arms out. I was not in the mood to stand there and deal with Chandler and his games. "Didn't you learn your lesson from last time?"

"Well, last time you had the big bad wolf, Soren, come to your rescue. I don't see him anywhere this time," Chandler said, grinning.

"You didn't see him around last time, either."

"Mila, Mila, be careful what you say."

"Get out of my way, Chandler, or you'll be sorry! You have no idea what I'm capable of and I'm not in the mood to deal with a slimy, selfish creep like you!"

Chandler growled and his wolves tensed. I could tell they were ready to pounce at any moment.

"I told you to watch your mouth, b***h! If you don't, I will teach you how to use it properly," he warned.

"Whatever."

I rolled my eyes and started walking away from Chandler and his group. I made it a few feet before Chandler snapped his fingers and his wolves circled around me again, blocking my exit.

"Where's your big bad protector now?" Chandler asked, laughing dryly. "Did the two of you get into a fight?"

I narrowed my eyes at Chandler. There was no way I was going to admit to anything and give Chandler more reasons to play games and tease me.

"I'm guessing you two did get into a fight. Otherwise, he wouldn't have let me get this close. You were just too easy to get to," he said.

"I told you not to get in my way!" I snapped.

Taking a deep breath, I started chanting a spell from the spell book Soren had helped me translate.

“Immo, rimo, tetha, banno,” I muttered, envisioning what the spell was supposed to do.

Magic welled up inside of me and the ground shook.

“What’s going on?” one of Chandler’s warriors asked.

“Stand your ground. It’s nothing, just a trick!” he ordered.

“This is magic!” someone cried.

The ground split open and roots burst out from the dirt. They wrapped around Chandler’s legs and the legs of his warriors, the ones in human form and wolf form.

The wolves yelped and struggled as the roots pulled them down to the ground.

“Stop it!” one of the warriors cried.

Even Chandler’s eyes widened with surprise and maybe a little fear.

“You little witch!” Chandler snapped.

He reached for me but the roots held him firmly in place.

I smirked and gave a satisfied nod.

“Guess I don’t need Soren to protect me after all.”

I adjusted my backpack on my shoulder and continued down the road. The sounds of Chandler and his men struggling and snarling against the roots made it impossible for me to stop smiling.

It felt really good to fight back and use my own skills to protect myself. Now more than ever, I was sure I could survive on my own outside the rogue zone and away from Soren.

Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap.

I whipped around as the echoing sounds of someone clapping reverberated off the trees. I couldn’t see anyone in the forest and when I looked back at Chandler and his men, none of them were clapping. They were still struggling against the roots.

“Who’s there?” I called into the trees.

Immediately, I started thinking of a spell I could use on another attacker.

A low, threatening laugh came out of the forest and a large, shadowy figure appeared between the trees. I couldn’t see his features or anything about his face. He was completely shrouded in darkness.

“Well done, little witch,” the voice said, deep and rasping. “I’ll be honest, you’re more interesting than I thought.”

I crossed my arms. “Who are you?”

My spell hadn’t worked on him. I’d aimed for anyone nearby, so he should have been stuck in the roots too. Even though he was all dressed in black I could tell that he wasn’t stuck in any roots.

Did that mean he was more powerful than me? He knew I was a witch and he wasn't affected by my spells.

Who was this guy?

"Want to see some real magic?" he asked, laughing.

The air closed in on me. It thickened until it was like a snake wrapping around me, constricting until I could barely breathe. Coughing, I tried to move my arms but I couldn't. They were pinned at my sides by the unbearable pressure.

My assailant stayed in the shadows, laughing. His laughter rang in my ears like an alarm and I couldn't shut it out.

Knees trembling, my legs got weaker and threatened to give out.

I tried to open my mouth and say a spell that would protect me or subdue my attacker but no words came out. I thought the words over and over again, trying to force the spell to manifest but nothing happened.

"And now, I'm just disappointed and bored," the stranger said.

I was getting light headed because I couldn't breathe. My legs gave out and I fell on my hands and knees, the crushing pressure on my back forcing me face down into the road.

"We'll meet again."

He was gone but the pressure still crushed me.

Footsteps thundered down the road as Chandler and his men approached. They were free from their bindings and I couldn't get up!

His men were on me in a second. They pulled my arms behind me and tied my arms and legs. The pressure eased and I could breathe again.

Immediately, I started fighting against them but I was already tied tight.

"Hold her! Gag her too! I don't want her casting any more spells," Chandler barked.

He grabbed me and I heard my clothes rip. Just a small sliver tore off. He grabbed at the bracelet that Soren had given me.

"No!" I cried; my voice muffled by the gag. It just sounded like a pained groan.

I twisted as much as possible to keep the bracelet out of Soren's grasp. He ignored my struggles and my pleas.

"Just hold her still," he repeated.

More hands came down on me and held me still. I was crushed under pressure again and I couldn't move. My backpack dug into my body, hands pressing it down on me.

The Blade of Souls sliced through my backpack and scraped my arm. It wasn't a bad cut but blood still dripped down my arm.

Chandler finally got his hands on the bracelet. He tore it off my wrist, breaking the clasp.

"You're trying to protect this," he pointed out. "Must be a gift from that wolf protector of yours.

Scoffing, he tossed the bracelet on the ground. It skittered through the dirt.

"Based on the bracelet, I would think he cared more about you. But apparently, he doesn't. Why don't I do you a favor? You and I are going to put this to the test, to see how willing he is to come to your rescue."

I shook my head and growled. There wasn't much I could say with the gag in my mouth. Chandler was completely shameless.

And yet... my heart tightened with bitterness.

Would Soren rescue me? I didn't think he'd come to save me this time.

In the past, he came to rescue me because of the deal. But the deal wasn't enough anymore. At least, I didn't think it was. He'd already fulfilled enough of it.

Besides, he'd know by now that I saw the picture in the dresser. Would he still come rescue me even though I knew about his past?

And if he did come to rescue me, would it really be me that he was rescuing or would he be coming to save the woman in the picture, the woman that was really in his heart?

"We've got to get moving," Chandler said, cutting into my thoughts. "Make sure she doesn't see anything."

Someone behind me hit me hard in the head. Immediately, the world around me went black.

Groaning, I opened my eyes. My hands weren't tied up any more but I was lying on the floor. Or the ground.

Glancing around, I knew I was inside but the floor felt cold, hard, and jagged. It was stone. I sat up and rubbed my wrists. They were still sore from the rope tied around me.

Behind me was another stone wall.

There were no electric lights or torches but there were soft light orbs illuminating the room I was in. They were luminous stones, which were expensive and rare. They provided a blue-green light that let me see my surroundings well enough.

With how expensive those light stones were, I figured I was at Alpha Chandler's. He had more money than anyone else except maybe the Alpha King.

My head ached and I took a deep breath, leaning against the wall behind me.

I should have been able to protect myself. But I couldn't! There was still someone more powerful out there, someone that knew my limits and had completely blindsided me.

I still felt a little weak, like all my energy had been sapped out of me.

The dim lighting in the room and the rocky floor and walls made it feel eerie. I had a feeling I was underground and there weren't any doors or windows that I could see.

Finally, I got to my feet. My knees ached and my legs protested. I leaned my back against the wall for support and looked around some more.

There was something in the center of the cavern. It looked similar to the light stones but it wasn't actually giving off light. It was refracting the dim light in the room. Since I wasn't tied up I could move around freely and I went to examine the large object.

It looked like it was made out of some kind of crystal. It was very hard and had smooth, glassy surfaces.

I moved to the head of the crystal. The way it was shaped made me uneasy. It was shaped like a coffin. A crystal coffin.

My stomach churned uncomfortably. Gulping, I looked into the glassy, clear surface at the top of the crystal coffin. There was a woman's face in there... eyes closed. She looked almost peaceful...

This place was a tomb!

[Chapter 738](#)

"This is far from good..." I muttered.

"Dylan?" Payne asked. "That isn't a very common name. There's only one Dylan I can think of."

"And it is probably the one we're thinking of too," Thomas said. He sighed and stood up, stretching his back until it popped.

"Dylan Crimson, the Alpha King's third or fourth cousin?" Payne asked.

"That's the one," Thomas agreed with a nod.

Payne creased his brow. "That's not possible... he's been missing for years."

"Before he went missing, Soren and I ran into a four-toed wolf. We fought and he was definitely strong. But the conflict didn't escalate," Thomas explained.

"I don't think he wanted us to recognize him. He ran off."

"But he was a great fighter. I remember both of us were impressed and thrown for a loop."

"So, when we got back from our patrol, Soren and I did our research. The only name we could come up with for a four-toed wolf was Dylan Crimson," Thomas added.

"I don't know much about him," Payne admitted. "Dylan shared the royal family's last name. He was King Sebastian's Beta for a while... until he disappeared. It was sudden, if I recall correctly."

"It was very sudden," I agreed with a nod.

“No one ever knew where he went.”

“We never saw him or heard from him again after that fight. It was such a trivial conflict we didn’t spend any more time investigating him,” Thomas said, motioning between me and himself.

“Why are you so sure that it is Dylan this time? Just based on the four claws?” Payne asked.

“That, and Mila told me to watch out for the Alpha King,” I said.

“Wait, she did?” Thomas asked. “That is a total can of worms you don’t want to open.”

“If this is Dylan, he’s part of the royal family, which means there has to be a connection. Mila wouldn’t give a warning like that lightly,” I assured.

“That’s reaching. We have to be very careful if we’re going to start suspecting the Alpha King,” Payne warned.

“We’re being careful. Besides, right now this is about Dylan and Chandler. I never expected the two of them to be together,” I said. I rubbed my chin thoughtfully.

“What should we do now, Boss?”

Payne asked, looking at me with wide, concerned eyes.

I could understand his concerns about putting the Alpha King on our enemy list. He was the most powerful man in the realm and we were definitely no match for him. Thomas was right, that was a can of worms I did not want to open.

No matter how hard I tried, I’d never be able to close it.

Right now, we had more important things to worry about.

“Don’t worry, Payne, I’m not about to declare war on the Alpha King. We do need to get ready to go after Chandler and save Mila,” I said.

“What do you want to do?” Thomas asked.

“We’ll have Ashley stay at the base with a small group of warriors to keep it safe. Payne, I want you to gather everyone else and prepare them to follow me. And Thomas, I want you to spread the word that both the universal artifact and the Blade of Souls have been stolen by Norwind,” I instructed.

“Um... Soren...”

“What?” I asked, arching an eyebrow.

“Once the word is out, Norwind will be the center of attention and focus for all our known and unknown enemies,” Thomas pointed out.

“And?”

“Well, that could bring destruction to their pack...”

I smirked. “Your point?”

We headed back to the inn to finalize our preparations. As Payne and Thomas were making plans, something occurred to me.

If I was seriously going to go after Chandler, I couldn't hide in the shadows anymore. This would be an act of war, whether he was able to fight back or not. I'd need to make sure my people had the organization and the structure to handle an attack like this.

"Payne, come here for a moment," I said, motioning him over when he came into the bar.

"We're almost ready," he said.

"We're going to have a small delay. Let me ask you, what would you think about calling me Alpha instead of Boss?"

Payne's lips quirked up in a subtle smile.

"I'd say it is long overdue."

"Gather everyone together. I want to make an official, formal statement. Everyone here has earned the right to be a part of our strange pack and to celebrate with us."

"Agreed..."

Payne sighed and didn't leave right away. His eyes shifted back and forth and he looked nervous.

"Payne, what's on your mind?" I asked.

"I support you Soren and I'm loyal to you, and I support this pack. Will you give me leave to rebuild Pomeni if the opportunity arises?"

I smiled lightly and nodded, clapping Payne on the shoulder.

"Yes. I will never hold you or Ashley back from that."

"Then let's celebrate!"

Payne gathered all my men and warriors together, along with all the new recruits that Thomas had been training.

Thomas had been out spreading rumors about Norwind but he returned in time for the announcement. Beers were being passed around and the kitchen had made plenty of food and snacks.

Everyone seemed happy and relaxed, despite knowing that we were about to mobilize on a mission to confront Norwind and rescue Mila.

"Can I have your attention?" I asked, standing up.

Thomas tapped a knife against his beer bottle, making a clinking, ringing sound.

The chatter died down.

“Thank you. I know you’re all aware of the venture we are about to take and I wanted to thank you for standing with me.”

“We love you, Soren!”

“We’ll stand by you forever!”

“You’re the Boss, Boss!”

I chuckled and shook my head.

“Well, we’ve all enjoyed the life of outcasts and outlaws but the one thing we’ve lacked is security, stability, and belonging. I want to remedy that by transforming our gang into an official pack,” I said.

Cheers and claps went through the crowd but I noticed some murmurs of confusion and hesitation.

“I’ve got Alpha blood in me and it is my birthright to lead a pack. I didn’t want a pack, I wanted this crazy group. But now, I want us to be a pack, and I want to be your Alpha, if you’ll have me.”

The inn erupted in cheers and clinking glass as everyone toasted each other.

Smiling, I took a swig of my beer. It was good to see that they all supported me and the transformation into a pack. I wondered how long it would take them to start calling me Alpha instead of Boss.

“Oh, one more thing, and then you can drink to your heart’s content,” I shouted to get their attention again.

Immediately, they fell silent.

“Mila is my mate and she’s going to be my Luna when we get her back,” I told them.

“We’ll get her back for you...”

“We won’t rest until your Luna is back at your side...”

“Norwind will pay for messing with our Luna!”

The vows continued and then they all began drinking and celebrating. I headed to a booth where Payne and Thomas were sitting.

Tomorrow, we’d mobilize and get Mila back. Tonight, the pack had the right to party, celebrate, and enjoy one last good time.

Due to what we were about to get involved with, they deserved a good celebration.

“Thomas, I want you to spread another rumor,” I said.

“What now?” he asked, arching an eyebrow.

“I want you to spread the rumor that Dylan Crimson, the Alpha King’s wayward cousin, has joined with Norwind to get his hands on the artifacts because he wants to claim the throne for himself,” I said.

“Soren, you’re insane. This is just asking for trouble.”

“I thought you said you weren’t going after the Alpha King,” Payne interjected.

"I'm not. But if we can get him to go after Dylan, that is one less person we need to deal with," I explained.

"Do you want Dylan to get attacked by other packs?" Thomas asked.

"I want him to be just as involved as the rest of us. He's not going to get to hide in the shadows of the forest this time," I insisted.

"You know a rumor like that can be damaging. It could repeat the tragedy from... well the last time," Thomas said.

I clenched my fists and glared at Thomas and Payne. We'd just established that I was Alpha and they were part of my pack.

Why were they questioning every move I made? This was how we were going to get Mila back and gain the upper hand. Turning our enemies against each other was the quickest way to divide their strength.

"Dylan is involved in this. Mila has grown strong and Chandler wouldn't have gotten the jump on her without Dylan's assistance. He's gone too far this time, provoking me..." I snarled.

"You're right," Thomas said, nodding.

"It doesn't matter if the same thing happens again. I don't care what happens to them as long as we get Mila back and she is safe!"

I slammed my palm on the table.

"I see you're upset, Soren, but you've got to think this through calmly."

I growled and sipped my beer to avoid saying more. What Thomas didn't realize was that I was thinking clearly. Just because I was angry didn't mean I couldn't strategize. As my Beta, Thomas did have the right to question me but, in this case, he was out of line.

"Payne, you can spread the rumor, since Thomas seems reluctant," I said, glaring at Thomas.

"Yes, Alpha, I'll see it done," Payne assured.

I smirked at Thomas.

"See, that is how you are supposed to respond," I told him.

"Hey, I'm your Beta. It is my job to call you out when I think you're being nuts, and getting the Alpha King and royal family involved tends to make me think you're nuts."

"And you're entitled to your opinion. But I will still delegate to someone else if I have to."

"I'll do it," Payne repeated.

"No, Alpha Soren is right, I will do it," Thomas said, holding a hand up to Payne.

He stood and left us in the booth, heading off to begin spreading the rumor mill. No one could spread rumors better than Thomas. He had the right charm and charisma and that went a long way towards convincing others that he believed what he was selling.

I watched Thomas speak to a few other people as he left the bar.

"I'm not going to sleep tonight, I'll see if I can get any leads on Mila's whereabouts," Payne said, standing up.

"Thank you."

He nodded and left.

I finished my beer and headed to my room. The rest of the pack would be partying late into the night but I wasn't feeling overly celebratory.

Lying down on my bed, I closed my eyes and relaxed every muscle in my body. Taking deep breaths, I reached out with my mind, focusing only on Mila.

Where was she? Could she hear me? If I could just establish a mindlink with her...

[Chapter 739](#)

Mila

I took a half step back from the crystal coffin and shook my head. She was perfectly preserved in there...

When the shock wore off, I approached the coffin again and looked down at the woman inside. Her eyes were closed and she looked peaceful. She was stunningly beautiful and she'd been dressed in an expensive, silk dress. Her hair was brushed and it looked like she had makeup on.

She was holding a bouquet of white flowers that were also preserved in the crystal with her.

The way she was preserved and the care taken to keep her looking beautiful. The coffin, the tomb, the eerie lighting, the magic to preserve her. None of that was cheap at all!

Who was this woman? Chandler clearly cared about her, even loved her. He wouldn't have gone to such lengths to do this for just anyone.

This wasn't a tomb and she wasn't a corpse. It was a showroom and she was a doll. Someone that he could kneel down beside and imagine she was still alive and they still had a future together. It was someone he imagined he'd get to talk to again.

"Beautiful, isn't she?"

I whipped around. The voice was familiar but it wasn't Chandler. When I saw him, I recognized him immediately. He was still dressed in black and I couldn't see his face but he was tall and imposing.

How had he even gotten in here?

He'd blocked my magic and incapacitated me with his own. Even though he didn't look all that intimidating compared to Chandler. He wasn't loud or boisterous or aggressive.

As he took a step closer, all the hairs on my body stood up in fear.

Ice slid down my spine. He gave off a cold, chilling vibe that made my bones ache. Instinctively, I knew he was more dangerous than Chandler. Given the chance, he'd be far more vicious and brutal.

He spoke in a soft, almost friendly tone, and he wasn't being rude or provocative like Chandler was. He stood proud and tall, almost regal. I could see that even without seeing his face. He was graceful as he strode around the room, closer to the coffin.

The stranger looked down at the coffin and touched the open glass window over the woman's face. He seemed somber and respectful. A truly graceful, nearly royal gesture.

I just glared at him.

"She was an innocent soul. One of the few in the world that was truly innocent. Kind, gentle, and beloved. Unfortunately, she died... as you can see." He chuckled.

I still kept quiet, just watching him. Maybe, if he kept talking, he'd reveal more about himself. I had no idea who he was or what he wanted from me. As long as he was willing to keep talking, I wasn't going to interrupt him.

"It truly was a tragedy when she died. And more of a tragedy that Chandler lost her. He spent years searching for a way to resurrect her without success. But you, my dear Mila..." he trailed off with another dark chuckle.

I arched an eyebrow, continuing to stay quiet.

"You give him hope," he said pointing a straight, gloved finger at me.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Of course, not."

He touched a finger to his nose. At least, I thought it was his nose. It was hard to tell with how he kept his face hidden.

"You seem to know my name. Don't you think it is only fair that I should know your name?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter who I am."

"Maybe it does to me. Seeing as you and Chandler want my help, don't you think I at least deserve the respect of being told your name and who you are?" I crossed my arms.

"You'll know when the time is right." he shrugged like the conversation was boring him.

Scoffing, I rolled my eyes.

"You know what? I changed my mind. I don't give a flying fig who you are. So, whoever you are, stay the hell out of my way!"

The man growled. He turned to me and pulled his hood off. His bright, steely eyes glared at me. He was verging on anger and the dark look in his eyes told me he had no problem killing me.

Biting my lip, I took a half step back. It probably wasn't a smart idea to provoke a man I knew nothing about. One that had already defeated me so easily and who I knew was more dangerous than Chandler.

The moment passed and he sighed. The hard look in his eyes didn't leave me.

“Do not try my temper,” he warned in a gruff voice.

It was the first time I’d heard his tone change and that was enough to put me on edge even more.

“I see the two of you are getting to know each other.”

Chandler walked in, a large bouquet of different colored lilies in his hand. He bowed his head to the stranger in the room.

“My Lord.”

That was odd. I’d never seen Chandler show anyone respect like that.

The stranger nodded back showing little interest in Chandler’s show of respect.

Chandler was an Alpha. If he was bowing and calling someone “lord,” the person he was talking to had to be... royalty.

I stared at the unknown man, Helen’s warning ringing in my head. I didn’t know anything about the royal family, other than my aunt had warned me that the king was dangerous. This wasn’t King Sebastian, was it?

Chandler ignored me. He went to the crystal coffin and knelt down. He placed the big bouquet of flowers on the coffin.

“My love, be patient with me. We’re almost there. Soon, you will be in my arms again.”

Seeing Chandler so soft and gentle was strange. Every time he’d interacted with me he was cruel and hard, mean and nasty. But he did have a gentle side. For some reason, that didn’t make me feel any better.

If anything, it made me feel worse. Something was coming and I didn’t like being in a room with the two of them.

Slowly, I backed away from the two of them.

“Alright, Mila!”

Chandler stood up and glared at me. His tenderness was gone now. He looked like a completely different person, like he’d put a mask on.

The hairs on my arms and neck stood on end.

He sneered at me. “For what Helen and your parents did, you deserve to be killed slowly and painfully, a hundred times over.”

A shudder ran down my spine. This was the Chandler I was used to. If the stranger wasn’t there, I wouldn’t be so nervous, but I wouldn’t be able to protect myself with magic while he was there.

“Do you know why you’re still alive?”

I glared at Chandler and bit back the remark that rose to my lips.

“You’re here because you need to make up for what the bitches of your family did. Helen, Jessica, they were nothing but selfish sluts! And Kaleb... He let them get away with everything. That asshole had his balls in a vice, Jessica’s hand. An Alpha that’s a slave to his Luna is weak,” he accused vehemently.

Swallowing hard, I braced against the insults he slung at me. He wanted me to react and I wasn’t going to give him the satisfaction.

The other man just stood there watching.

“And now, you’re going to resurrect my Luna.”

“What!?” I gasped, too stunned to hold back. I stared at Chandler. “Are you crazy? There is nothing in the world that can resurrect someone who’s been dead for years.”

“Don’t play coy with me. I know what it is you dug up from around the pack territories.”

“If you really believe there’s something that can bring her back from the dead, you’re losing your mind!”

Chandler growled.

“Do not challenge me!”

“I’m sorry, but you’re asking the wrong person. Only the Moon Goddess has the power to bring someone back from the dead, and you’ll have to beg her for it.”

“Well, the Moon Goddess must have heard my prayer because she sent me you,” he said, chuckling darkly.

“She didn’t send me to you. You forced me to come here against my will.”

Chandler clenched his fists. He growled and shook from head to toe, his cheeks turning red.

“You have a death wish, don’t you!?” he snapped.

Quick as a flash, he grabbed my throat and squeezed.

My breath caught and I coughed. I tried to claw at his hand so I could get more air into my lungs. Gasping, I struggled against him but he was too strong.

My mind raced with thoughts of my parents and my pack, how Chandler had been the one who killed them all for a power that didn’t exist!

After a moment of panic, my mind stopped racing and I stopped struggling. When I wasn’t panicking, I could breathe a little more, despite his tight grip.

I glared right at Chandler.

“f**k off! I don’t have what you want.”

“Don’t toy with me, witch! I will force you to help if I have to. And if you don’t, I’ll kill you. But if you help, you’ll live,” he hissed.

“I’m not the first person you asked to do this. You asked my aunt and my mom. Both turned you down, didn’t they? What makes you think that even if I had a way, I’d help you? I’d rather die!”

“You b***h!”

Chandler struck me across the face. I grunted, my head snapping to the side.

“Give me the Blade of Souls!” he demanded.

I shook my head. Even if I was willing to help, it wouldn’t do any good. Chandler had grabbed me before I got all the pieces of the blade. I thought of the two pieces in my backpack. They were useless to me and Chandler on their own.

I wasn’t about to tell him that.

“What are you talking about? I don’t know what that is!” I snapped. It was better to play dumb right now.

“Where is the artifact!? I know you have it. Your mother left it to you,” he insisted.

“Artifact? How can I be any clearer? I have no idea what you’re talking about!”

Chandler growled. He tightened his grip on my throat and shook me hard.

My skull rattled around in my head and my vision blurred. My head whipped back and forth and I thought my neck would snap.

“Chandler, that’s enough!”

Chandler glared at me, his fingers so tight I could barely breathe.

“My Lord... but...”

“I can persuade her. I believe that Mila and I have a better understanding,” he said.

Chandler huffed but he released me. He turned his back to us as the stranger walked over to me.

“What understanding?” I snarled.

“Even if you don’t mind dying, I’m willing to bet that the life inside of you would prefer a chance at living,” he said in a smooth, sly voice. He smirked.

“What?” I asked, dumbfounded.

Suddenly, he broke out laughing. “You don’t know? Oh... how delicious. Why, Miss Mila, you’re pregnant.”

[Chapter 740](#)

Soren

Mila’s scent got fainter the further I tracked it. The blood on the knife had been a good clue but the rest of her trail was almost impossible to follow.

We were moving along the edge of a forest, her scent coming and going.

“They must have been carrying her,” I muttered to myself.

The forest ran along Norwind's border. Just as we crossed into the territory, her scent disappeared entirely.

I stopped dead and tried to reach out with the mindlink.

"Come on Mila, tell me where you are?" I begged through the link.

There was no response. I couldn't sense her at all.

Dammit!

I'd gotten so comfortable with her, so used to her being there that I'd stopped having my men keep track of her and follow her. I'd convinced myself that I was all the protection she needed.

And the picture... How stupid was I to keep the damn thing in the drawer? I should have explained my past, taken the time to make her feel comfortable with it. I should have stayed by her side every second, especially knowing her habit of running off.

This was my fault!

I knew there were people after her and I'd stopped being vigilant and protective.

"What's going on?" Thomas asked, coming up beside me.

"We should take a water break. Let the trackers regain their senses," I said.

"And you?"

"I lost Mila's scent and we need to regroup."

"Soren, I mean what's going on with you?" He clarified, his brow creased with concern.

Sighing, I waved him off.

"I'm going to try and contact her with the mindlink again."

I turned away from Thomas, preparing to reach out again. I'd been using the mindlink so much that it was taking a toll on my energy levels. I was exhausted.

"This isn't your fault," Thomas called after me.

I paused and glanced back for a moment. Shaking my head, I closed my eyes and reached out with the mindlink again. It was no use...

There was nothing but absolute silence. I tried focusing on my sense of smell, honing in on Mila's scent and how rich and delicious it smelled on the knife. If only I could catch a little whiff of her.

"Soren."

I snapped my eyes open and saw Thomas holding a bottle of water out to me.

"You said we should take a water break."

Thomas smirked and bobbed the water bottle up and down in front of my face.

Scoffing, I snatched the bottle and took a big swig.

“While you’re drinking that water, I want you to promise me that you’re going to ease off the mindlinking and the scent tracking,” he said.

“Are you giving me orders?”

I arched an eyebrow at my old friend.

“I’m your Beta, right?”

I confirmed with a sharp nod and took another sip of water. Thomas was right, the water was refreshing and soothing. It helped clear my mind and help me think about what was going on more rationally.

“Well, then, as your Beta, I’m just trying to make sure you don’t succumb to exhaustion. There’s no way I’m ready to take over if you keel over dehydrated and dead.”

“Thanks ever so…”

“You keep trying to mindlink and I know you, you’re pushing your mind further and further. Do you really expect to get a response?”

“I have to keep trying,” I insisted.

Sighing, I wiped my brow. Now that we were stopping for a break, fatigue was finally catching up to me. I’d have to rally the troops to start moving again before I wanted to sit down.

“Payne has spread everyone out. They are all looking for the tiniest trace or clue of Mila and they will report back as soon as they find anything. Why don’t you wait for something?” Thomas suggested.

“I’m not just going to sit here and do nothing. I’m more of a man of action.”

“I know that, Soren. But if you take a rest, you’re technically still doing something.”

“I’m fine, Thomas. I just need to find Mila.”

Thomas sighed and shook his head. Clearly, I wasn’t convincing him of my status.

“You’re constantly trying to establish a mindlink and track a faint scent. That is very draining, you know that. All your mental energy is being expended and you’ve been going nonstop for days without sleep,” he pointed out.

“And I will keep going for as long as I have to!”

“And then what? When we find Mila, we’ll be up against Chandler, Dylan, and Norwind, one of the most powerful packs in the realm. Do you think you’ll be strong enough to fight them all?”

“I was last time,” I snarled.

“Last time, you hadn’t drained all of your mental and physical energy to locate Mila. You had the Camswell stone and were at your top strength.”

“I will be plenty strong when we catch up to them.”

“But you won’t last long. Wasn’t the whole point of telling other packs that Norwind had the artifacts so that we could get backup? It will take them at least a few hours to get organized.”

I shrugged absently, only partially listening to Thomas. It wasn’t that I didn’t value his input but I really didn’t want to wait around. I could be as strong as I needed to for as long as I needed to if it meant getting Mila back safely.

“We both know that if Chandler and Dylan are after the artifact, they won’t harm Mila. She’s the only one that can use it. I doubt she’s in any immediate danger and it would be better to have all the strength we can get,” Thomas added.

“They could do a lot to her that isn’t killing her.

“True... but she is a survivor and she will make it through. Right now, it is best that you rest for a few hours and regain your strength, okay?”

I shook my head and my mind spun.

“Oof.” I rubbed my temples feeling a little woozy. “You’re right Thomas but... I can’t just sit here... and... wait...”

Suddenly, I looked at Thomas, my eyelids heavy.

“Thomas, what the f**k did you... What did you do?”

I slumped down, my legs too weak to hold me up.

Thomas leaned over me and spoke. His voice trailed off and got quieter as I struggled to listen to him.

“I knew you wouldn’t listen. I popped a few sleeping pills into your water. Don’t worry, if anything changes, I’ll slap you awake. Otherwise, these few hours of sleep will be exactly what you need before a big fight...”

I thought I heard him laugh but I was already drifting into a dream.

My mind and body were too exhausted to struggle.

I held Mila in my arms. We were lying on a bed of satin, a feather mattress and silky sheets over us. The bed was outside. It was a perfectly sunny day with a soft breeze glowing. The scent of pine rustled in the trees around us and flower petals drifted around us on the breeze.

We were in a lovely garden.

Mila and I were both naked. I hugged her slight body to mine and I kissed her lips sweetly.

“My beautiful, perfect mate,” I said, running a finger down her cheek.

Mila giggled and smiled.

“This is a dream,” she said.

“Is it? How can you be sure?”

“Well, we are in a bed in the middle of a garden. That’s very dreamlike. And the day is perfect and... we’re together.”

I chuckled and hugged her tighter.

“If it is a dream, then it is a very good dream and I don’t think either of us have any reason to wake up.” I kissed her lips again and Mila quickly succumbed to the passion.

“You’re right, I don’t want to wake up.”

I kissed her again, running my hands up and down her sides. Mila moaned and shuddered in my grasp. I really liked feeling her smooth, warm skin rubbing against me, even if it was a dream.

“I’m coming for you,” I whispered against her lips.

“What do you mean?”

“You ran away from me again and got taken by Chandler. I wanted you to know that I’m coming for you. I’m not going to let anything happen to you.”

Mila frowned slightly.

“There are things in your past that I can’t face.”

“You don’t have to face them. But please, give me a chance to explain them. You’re my mate and after everything we’ve been through...”

“Soren, you have to let me go.”

“No! I’m not going to do that. I’m going to save you and we’ll have a future together,” I promised.

I ran my hand down the front of her body and rested it on her large, swollen belly. She was pregnant in the dream. I hadn’t noticed before.

Suddenly, my heart beat faster. I was filled with happiness, eagerness and elation. Mila was pregnant with my child.

Was this dream really Heaven?

“I’ve been here for you from the moment you wandered into my bed and I’m not about to turn my back on you now. Either of you,” I told her.

Mila scoffed and got out of the bed. She slipped a white robe on and kept her back to me. She was stiff and closed off, like she didn’t want anything to do with me.

I sat up and reached for her but she pulled away.

“I didn’t ask you to save me, Soren.”

“That doesn’t mean you didn’t need saving.”

She put her hand on her swollen belly and looked at me fiercely. “So, what do you want from me now?”

“Everything”

“I’m sorry,” I could feel the heartbreak and regret she carried. “I can’t be your second prize.”

She turned and walked away, taking my hope with her.

“Huh... wha...”

I sat bolt upright on the ground. My head pounded and I blinked repeatedly, trying to clear my mind. What kind of a dream was that? Was it some kind of prophecy? Was it possible that Mila was pregnant with my child?

A renewed sense of urgency overtook me. I needed to find Mila. I had to tell her about my past and make her understand before it chased her away completely. My heart pounded in my chest. I wanted to think more about the dream but Payne showed up in our camp again.

“I’ve got news,” he announced.

“What is it?” I asked.

Shaking off the last feelings of the dream, I stood up and brushed myself off.

“Many packs have arrived. Probably more than you anticipated.”

“That’s good.”

Payne nodded but he didn’t seem overly relieved or happy about the news.

“What is it, Payne?”

“Chandler is aware of the forces gathering against him. He has sent word that Norwind pack will welcome all its guests at the pack’s Moon Goddess Temple.”