

## Kings Breeder 751

### [Chapter 751](#)

\*Mila\*

“What do you mean we can’t leave?” I asked.

I pulled away from Soren and looked at everyone else in the room as they stared at us. Whenever I made eye contact with one, they looked away quickly.

“Soren, what’s this all about?”

“Don’t mind them, they are just feeling a little cooped up. As I’m sure you noticed, Mila, it is pouring rain out. It has been since you passed out.”

Soren walked to the closest window and pulled the curtain back. Rain pelted against the glass and I heard another clap of distant thunder.

“So...”

“The explosion that trapped us in the mountain also took out a lot of the main roads. They were either destroyed or blocked by rubble. After digging us out, Payne and the others didn’t have time, or the strength, to clear a road out of here, and then the rains came,” Soren explained.

“You’re telling me that every single road out of Norwind territory is destroyed?”

Soren smirked. “Only the main ones were impacted by the explosions. The rain has washed out all the smaller ones and flooded others. It is too risky to try and leave on flooded and damaged roads.”

I groaned and bowed my head.

“So, we’re trapped... again!”

Soren shrugged and closed the curtain.

I narrowed my eyes at him.

“You don’t seem all that worried.”

Grinning, Soren took my hands and held them between his.

“Is this so bad? I mean really, it could be worse. We’re not in a hurry, are we? Unlike those ambitious conspirators, we don’t have anything to hide or run off with. Unless... you have an agenda in mind?”

He bounced his eyebrows at me.

Sighing, I shook my head. “No, I don’t.”

I glanced around again at everyone in the pack house. Other than Thomas and Payne, there were at least 50 of Soren’s warriors inside.

Outside, I could see some figures moving around in the rain. Hunched over and moving slowly, they looked completely defeated and broken.

I still couldn't believe that the Norwind warriors had run off and left their most defenseless people behind to fend for themselves.

Before Soren had formed his official pack, I doubted even his rogues would do something so horrible.

They were far more honorable than Chandler's men...

Those poor people. Their home was broken and destroyed, their pack house robbed and in shambles.

We must have seemed like such a strong, powerful group to them. Just fifty warriors and they kept their distance, obviously afraid of the strangers in their pack house. We were in their territory and they were afraid of us!

That seemed backwards to me.

"It's not like before, Mila," Soran said, cutting into my thoughts.

"What isn't?" I arched an eyebrow at him.

"Being trapped. The raiders didn't want to waste time carrying anything that wasn't valuable, so they left behind all the food, clothes, and provisions we'll need right here in the pack house," he explained.

"So, we're not going to run out of air?" I teased.

Soren shook his head and squeezed my hands.

"Not this time. The leftover provisions should last us a couple of weeks. By then, the rain should have stopped and the flooding receded."

"A couple of weeks?"

I gasped, my eyes popping out of my head. Soren expected the fifty of us to stay crammed in this pack house for a couple of weeks!?

"And if there is still water lingering, there's plenty of material lying around to make some boats or rafts to float us out of here."

"Why can't we do that now?" I whined.

"Because it is still pouring rain. We're too large of a group and we'll die from exposure before making it to safety."

I sighed again and nodded.

Soren was right. We still had to be safe and careful. We weren't going to be like Chandler or the other greedy, selfish packs who sacrificed their own warriors for their greed.

I could survive until it was safe to travel... even if it meant staying in this one house... with fifty men that hadn't bathed in days...

"Hey, check it out! The rain is slowing down!" one of the warriors shouted.

Payne opened the curtain to the nearest window.

My heart fluttered and I ran over, pressing my nose and forehead to the glass. The dark clouds were thinning and the sky above looked lighter. The rain was falling in a light drizzle now, no longer a complete downpour.

Soren touched my shoulder.

“Looks like you’re our good luck charm, beautiful. Now that you’re awake the rain is slowing.”

My cheeks reddened and I felt a warm blush cover my skin.

“Oh, this is such good news!”

“I can’t wait to get out and stretch my legs.”

“Come on, sun. Just peek out a little.”

Everyone crowded around the windows. They seemed so excited for the rain to stop.

I could understand that. They’d been cooped up for days in a dingy house without much to do. Waiting around for me to wake up, waiting around for the rain to stop. It was a lot of waiting around.

They’d probably been bored out of their minds.

If it wasn’t for me, they wouldn’t be here waiting. They could have left the same night they dug us out, before the rains got bad. Or, they could have left before that if I hadn’t been trapped. And I was only trapped because I’d run away from Soren.

My stomach sank and I bit my lower lip. This was all happening because of me. I couldn’t help but feel guilty about the situation with all these people being stuck here.

I had to get better soon and fast, for their sake.

They’d been through enough for me, coming to save me, digging me out of a hole, waiting around for me.

It was my turn to put the work in.

Absently, I put my hand on my stomach, thinking of the baby again.

I looked over my shoulder at Soren.

He was talking to Payne and Thomas. I loved seeing the way Thomas joked with him, and the slightly appalled look Payne always shot Thomas, like he thought Thomas was being disrespectful.

But Soren seemed to enjoy Thomas’s teasing. Otherwise, he never would have allowed it.

I was glad I didn’t tell Soren about the pregnancy when we were trapped in the cave. As much as I’d wanted to tell him, my mind had been clouded from blood loss.

Now that I could think clearly, some parts of it didn’t make sense.

How would Sebastian know I was pregnant? How did he find out before I knew? It could have been a lie or a trick he used to get me to cooperate. I needed to know for sure before telling Soren.

The last thing I wanted to do was tell him I was pregnant and get him excited about a baby only to find out that it was a trick and I wasn't pregnant at all. It would be devastating, for both of us.

I needed to be sure before I told Soren about this baby.

Boom!

"What was that?" I gasped, a shudder running down my spine.

The last time I'd heard a sound like that, a mountain exploded around us.

"It's okay, Mila," Soren said, rushing to my side.

Bang! Crack!

Objects kept thudding against the front door and outside wall of the pack house.

My heart leapt into my throat and my knees wobbled. I couldn't push the memory of the mountain exploding out of my mind.

Soren put his arm around me.

"I think it is just some locals throwing rocks," Payne said, looking out the window.

"Go check it out," Soren insisted, pointing to the door.

Immediately, Payne, Thomas, and several other warriors got up and ran out the door. A few of them shifted.

Soren kept his arm around me as I walked out the door and looked at the gathered crowd.

I could tell that there were children in the group. I guess the others were women. They wore rain jackets with hoods and it was hard to see their faces.

Bang!

A rock struck the doorframe.

Soren grabbed me and pulled me behind him.

"Stay back."

"What do they want?" I asked.

Before Payne and the warriors could get there, the gathered shifters started pelting rocks at the pack house. Like bullets, they hammered against the front.

Soren slammed the front door closed. We went to a nearby window to watch.

Payne, Thomas, and the warriors easily dodged around the rocks being thrown and raced toward the Norwind group.

"Awhooo!"

One of Soren's warriors howled and all the women and children dropped their rocks. Women grabbed their children and ran off. I could practically smell their fear, even at the distance I was at.

"Get out of here you filthy murderers!"

"You're not welcome, scoundrels!"

"This is our pack house! The blood on your hands stains it!"

"You're robbing, greedy heathens and we don't want you here!"

They shouted at the warriors as they ran off into the run-down houses in the nearby village. I could hear their voices now that the rain and rocks stopped beating the house.

"What was all that about?" I murmured to Soren.

"I think we've overstayed our welcome."

Payne, Thomas, and the others returned; they were a little damp.

I glanced at Soren and raised an eyebrow.

Soren raised his hands in surrender and shook his head innocently. "Don't look at me like that. I didn't do anything to them. Nor did my men."

"I wasn't accusing you," I clarified, shaking my head. "Do you know why they said that? Why are they so mad at us? We didn't do anything to them..."

Soren sighed, his face somber.

"They've lost something important to them. In situations like that, denial is the first feeling. Then, they get angry and they try to find someone to blame so they can let out their anger."

"And they're blaming us? We're the only ones that didn't steal from them."

"I know, Mila. But it is natural. This pack had a lot of healing to do. Right now, they aren't ready. They're just trying to express their frustrations and we are the easiest targets to take it out on. They're also scared and don't want us to think they are weak because they don't want us to mess with them."

"That's really sad," I whispered, glancing out the window again.

"We'll be gone in a few days. Don't let it bother you. They'll be able to heal once we're out of here."

I sighed. Soren reached for me and pulled me into his arms.

As much as it saddened me to see what was left of Norwind, I had too many things to worry about in regard to myself. I didn't have the energy to worry about others.

"Thomas, Payne, organize a patrol. I want you to avoid conflict but don't let them get close to the pack house," Soren ordered.

"Yes, Boss," Payne said. He saluted and headed off.

"We'll take care of it, Soren," Thomas agreed.

Soren turned back to me and cupped my face in his hands.

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine.”

“You’ve been up for a while. I don’t want you to overdo it. Let’s get you back to bed so you can rest more.”

I nodded and let Soren guide me back to the bedroom.

Soren laid down with me and I snuggled into his arms.

I closed my eyes and I was drifting off to sleep...

Bang!

## [Chapter 752](#)

This is All About Food

I tried to sit up in bed but Soren held me tightly.

“It is just more rocks, Mila, you’ve got to try and sleep,” he murmured.

I took a deep breath, trying to calm myself down, and closed my eyes again.

“You murderers!”

I groaned and put a pillow over my head, trying to muffle out the shouts and the sounds of rock throwing.

Every time it died down, I started to drift off, and then another rock hit the house, waking me up again.

“You thieves!”

“Monsters, get the hell out of here!”

“Soren, how could you sleep through this?” I muttered, my arm over my eyes.

“The patrol won’t let them cause any damage or harm to the pack house. We’re safe and our temporary base is safe. Don’t worry about them.”

“It’s not the building I’m worried about. They’re attacking my hearing, though. With all the banging and the cursing...”

“You killed our Alpha!”

“You don’t belong here!”

“Greed turned you all into monsters and murders!”

Soren sighed and nuzzled my cheek with his nose.

“If you close your eyes and relax, you can shut it out, I promise.”

I let out an exasperated breath, but I tried again. I closed my eyes and took some deep breaths.

“You hideous bloodsuckers!”

“Curse you. Curse you and your families!”

“Bastards, you killed my husband!”

“Okay, that’s enough,” I said. I sat up.

Soren sat up too. He looked tired, with bags under his eyes, but he didn’t seem angry.

“Do you want me to scare them away again?” he asked.

I shook my head. “They wouldn’t buy it.”

Soren’s men didn’t chase after them or hurt them. Once they realized Soren wasn’t really going to attack them, they would come back again.

“Well, I get cranky and scary when I’m tired.”

I rolled my eyes and swallowed my giggle.

“But you’re right, they’re only being this bold because they don’t think I’ll hurt them,” Soren said.

“You shouldn’t hurt them. They are so broken and... desperate.”

“Alright, then you and I will have to try to ignore them again,” Soren smirked. “Payne and Thomas will scare them off again if they get too close.”

I sighed, “Let’s keep things as low-key as possible. I don’t want to draw more attention to ourselves. These people have been through enough.”

He lay back down and held an arm out to me. I laid my head on his arm and snuggled closer to him. He sighed, “As long as you’re okay with it.”

They were all women, children, and elderly. I didn’t want Soren or his men to fight them. They had the obvious advantage and it wouldn’t be fair.

Many of those women had lost their mates, children had lost their fathers, and mothers had lost their sons. It wasn’t right to pick on them or kick them when they were down. No matter how loud and rude they were being, especially since they didn’t really physically attack us.

“Get out here and face us, you cunt!” one woman screamed. “We know your name, Mila Hathaway!”

“What?” I frowned.

This time when I sat up, Soren did too, a scowl on his face.

The same woman screamed out again. “You’re a terrible jinx. You made us lose everything and now you’re hiding in there like a coward! You don’t even dare to come and face us! How dare you stay in our territory after what you’ve done!”

Soren’s face turned red and he clenched his fists.

“Okay, now they’ve done it!”

He jumped off the bed and ran to the window before I could stop him.

“Soren!”

“They can say whatever they want when it is about me or my warriors. I’m not going to let them talk about you like that,” he snarled.

He leaned on the window frame and stared out at everyone. “I normally don’t hit women, but leave Mila out of this. That’s the only warning you get!”

His voice was cool and calm but the power he emanated as Alpha made everyone on the lawn fall silent.

I went to the window and stood beside him, reaching out, I touched his shoulder, trying to pull him back.

It was quiet for a moment. I could see the fear and terror in their eyes, even in the dark. But Soren didn’t move.

He just narrowed his eyes and stared at them, his gaze like ice. I’d seen many people cower under that look before, me being one of them!

The woman who had shouted my name stepped forward. At least, I assumed it was her. Who else would be so bold?

She tilted her head back and glared at Soren. Almost like she was daring him to act or trying to call his bluff, thinking he was just making hollow threats.

“We are just telling the truth!” she insisted.

“That’s right.”

“We know what she did.”

Other murmurs backed the woman up but they were a lot quieter.

“She sits in our pack house, refusing to face us. Instead, she sends you out to threaten us... Women, children, and the elderly, and she demands a big, strong Alpha to threaten us?”

“Yeah.”

“What’s that about?”

“And you... an Alpha of your stature is willing to do something so shameful against us? We’re entirely defenseless!”

Soren glanced at me, a frown on his face.

“Mila, I’ll handle them. You should go back to bed.”

“No...”

“There she is! That b\*\*\*h!”

“You stupid w\*\*\*e!”



“What kind of a monster are you, to send your attack dog after us!?”

I winced at all the accusations. They hadn't seen me by the window until I'd moved closer to Soren.

I noticed that none of them spoke my name and most of their curses were whispered this time. Whispered harshly, so that I would hear.

“Soren, let me handle this.”

“Mila—”

“Trust me. Whether they are emotionally hurt or not, they have the right to face me. Besides, I have to tell them the truth about their pack and their Alpha.”

He sighed, “Fine, if that's what you really want to do.” He reached out and touched my cheek with his thumb.

“Besides, you'll be with me to protect me, right?” I asked.

“Always.” Soren nodded. He stepped away from the window and I stepped up, facing the crowd.

I cleared my throat and spoke loud enough for the crowd below to hear.

“I'm Mila Hathaway. I heard you call my name, and everything else... I'm here to answer your accusations. Call me all the names you want but it won't change the fact that I'm not the one who caused your pain and suffering. You can't use me as your scapegoat.”

“What is she talking about?”

“She dares blame us?”

“She is responsible for...”

“Lying bitch.”

The murmurs continued but they weren't yelling at me or speaking directly to me now. It was like they were hesitant to shout right back at me now that we were face to face.

“I will defend myself and the group that travels with me. You can shout at us all you want but we have the right to tell you the truth. No, the obligation. And the truth is, we didn't do anything to your people.”

“Lies!”

“That's not true. We saw what they did.”

I held a hand up, hoping that would silence them.

“If you want to know the real story, it was your Alpha that kidnapped me. He brought me here against my will. He conspired with a dangerous enemy to resurrect his dead mate. Trust me, I'm not saying this to shift blame...”

“Alpha Chandler wouldn't do that.”

“He cared for us. If he kidnapped you, then you deserved it.”

Beside me, Soren tensed and cracked his knuckles. I shook my head slightly.

“Your Alpha made a mistake!” I insisted. “It isn’t fair that he left all of you to bear the pain and it isn’t fair that what remained of your pack warriors abandoned you. But... it also isn’t my doing.”

“Don’t think you can stand there and act all innocent while talking s\*\*t about our Alpha!”

“Listen,” I said more firmly. “I know you’re all hurting. But harassing us won’t help you get what you need. Nor will it make you feel better. If I were you, I would mourn for your lost beloved and move on... or, you could seek revenge on the parties that actually caused your suffering.”

“That’s what we’re trying to do.”

“We’re facing off with you, aren’t we?”

“Just because we haven’t fought back doesn’t mean you’re right in your accusations,” I pointed out. “Let me ask you this. If we were really the barbarians who had no problem robbing or hurting you, would you still be standing there right now?”

Another round of murmurs went through the crowd. This time, I could barely hear them. That gave me a moment of hope. Were they finally questioning their beliefs?

If I could just get them to back off for a moment and think about it... all the robbers, looters, and warriors that had not been killed had left in a hurry. We weren’t like that and if they could see it, maybe they’d let me get some sleep!

“Momma, momma,” a child called, grabbing his mother’s arm. He tugged at her sleeve.

“What?” the woman asked harshly.

“Momma, I think she’s right...”

“Shut up! What do you know? You’re just a kid!”

The little boy burst into tears. Sobbing, he clung to the woman that yelled at him.

“I just know... all those bad men stole from us and ran away. Our protectors left. But they didn’t run off. They might not be bad,” the boy wailed, pointing to the pack house.

“That’s just stupid,” the boy’s mother hissed.

“I don’t know, Mama, I’m so hungry. I can’t think I’m so hungry!”

The crowd erupted in more wails and sobs as the other kids started crying and clinging to their parents, too.

Seeing these children crying and wailing made my lips tug down. I wasn’t an overly sympathetic person, but those kids made my heart ache. They’d lost everything, just like Payne and Ashley had. Just like I had.

I glanced from face to face of the people gathered around us. Most of them looked scared and tired but I could also see how thin they were. Many of them looked like it had been days since they'd eaten.

Kids and adults looked... famished.

I glanced at Soren, eyes wide. He shrugged helplessly, just as shocked as I was.

The mother of the crying boy glared at me. "You sound like you're some innocent angel, passing wisdom onto us. But you're no angel! If you were, you wouldn't be here. You wouldn't be in our pack house, stealing our food! We lost everything... our children are starving... we're starving..."

Another woman broke down, hugging her child tightly.

"What are we going to do!?" she wailed.

The other adults started sniffing and glancing at each other with deep, sad eyes. A dark, gloomy cloud hung over them all.

Soren reached for my hand and squeezed gently.

I swallowed hard.

"This is all about food?" I asked.

He nodded. "That's the real reason they are here... food."

### [Chapter 753](#)

"If you're here for food, why didn't you ask?" I called down to the sad group.

"You think we're stupid? It's not like you would just give it to us. We know that you're bloodthirsty leeches!" the crying boy's mother shouted.

I closed the window and looked at Soren.

"Mila..."

"They're hungry. We have the food."

"You can't go out there."

"Watch me!"

I hurried out of the room and down to the kitchens. It wasn't much, but I grabbed some loaves of bread.

Through the walls, I heard the women shouting at me.

"I knew it! I knew it!"

"You selfish, greedy freak!"

"You're hoarding it all to yourself!"

When I opened the front door, they all stopped talking. I went to the kids and tore off chunks of bread, passing them out. They stopped crying immediately when they took bread from me and quickly started chewing on it.

Soon, the air was filled with the sound of munching and crunching from the hard crust of the bread.

I made sure each child got some, ignoring the adults.

“Take it slow. If you’re too hungry, eating fast will make you sick,” I warned.

The boy that started all the crying blushed when I patted his head.

All the adults were dead silent, staring at me as I checked on the children. Even if they wanted to hurt me, I was in no danger. They were too shocked and awed to do anything to me.

Soren came out onto the lawn. I was a little surprised he hadn’t rushed out right after me.

The women closest to him trembled and cowered away from him.

“My apologies,” he said, nodding his head to the crowd. “Had we known that you’d run out of food, we would have acted sooner. I have my men preparing soup now. Come inside and eat. With everyone here, we can recalculate how much food is left and daily rations to make sure it lasts as long as possible.”

Soren held his arm out toward the pack house door.

Murmurs went through the crowd and I saw the way they looked at each other. They were suspicious, like we were inviting them into a trap of some kind.

None of them said anything. They stared at Soren and they stared at me. I understood their reluctance to accept our help but I hoped they would, for the sake of the kids.

The smell of the soup wafted out of the open front door and suddenly, they all perked up. Licking their lips and salivating, they headed inside.

Soren and I followed.

Already, his warriors had the tables set and were dishing up bowls.

Soren sliced up hunks of bread and passed them around with the soup. If they hadn’t had anything to eat in days, something light like this was the best option. They needed to take it slow, give their bodies time to digest and absorb the nutrients they were missing.

I sat at one of the tables and the first woman who called me out came down and sat next to me. She plopped her soup down, staring at me like I’d pounce on her and eat her if she took her eyes off me for a moment.

“Hi, my name is Ben, thank you, Miss Mila.” a boy asked, sitting beside the woman.

I recognized him. He was the one that first started crying and complaining about being hungry. He sat close to the woman and I was pretty sure she was his mother.

“You can just call me Mila. It is nice to meet you, Ben.”

“Can I have some more soup, Mila?” he pushed his empty bowl toward me.

“I’m sorry, Ben, but not right now. You need to let that food settle first. Having too much all at once isn’t good for you when you’re as hungry as you are.”

Ben sighed and bowed his head.

My heart melted and I reached into my pocket, pulling out a small hard candy. I pressed it into the palm of his hand.

“How about something small and sweet...?”

Ben’s eyes lit up and he smiled, lifting the candy to his face. He opened his mouth like he was going to pop it right in but then he stopped. He kept it in the wrapper and put it in his pocket.

“Ben, may I ask you a question?”

“Yeah, okay.”

I glanced at the woman sitting next to him. She was still closed off and watching me carefully.

“Why did you all run out of food so quickly? We thought the intruders didn’t care about food or steal any.”

Ben looked up at the woman next to him.

She sniffed. “Because those bastards dumped our food.”

By “bastards” I knew she was referring to the looters from the other packs and even some of the Norwind warriors that deserted.

“They didn’t take any with them but they destroyed as much as they could... They burned our storehouses, shredded our perishables, and dumped all our produce into the muddy river. They came into our houses and ransacked them for valuables, but whatever they couldn’t take with them, they did their best to ruin it.”

I creased my brow. “How did the pack house food stores survive?”

Soren came over and sat beside me. From the look on his face, he’d been listening in. He took my hand and held it in his lap.

“Payne had already sent our men here as a temporary headquarters. They secured what was left and kept it safe,” he explained.

The woman next to Ben scoffed. “Brutal barbarians, all of them! Of course, they would bully the weak. They knew we’d be afraid of them and they took advantage of it.”

“But why would anyone want to do something so vicious? Was it just to be cruel? It’s not like it did them any good, right?” I asked, glancing at Soren.

Soren’s eyes flicked to the woman across from me. He sighed.

“They destroyed the food so they could destroy that pack.”

It was a horrible thing to do. It was a slow way to kill another pack.

Why would they go through the trouble of dumping food?

As if Soren was reading my mind, he replied.

“Because they were afraid.”

For a moment, I thought our mindlink was reestablished. When I tried to say something back, it didn't work. Sighing, I squeezed Soren's hand. Ever since he rescued me, the mindlink had been broken.

“You meant the raiders were afraid of the Nowind villagers?”

Soren nodded. “People's potential is unlimited, especially when under a lot of pressure and in threatening circumstances. If the raiders threatened to kill everyone in town, they'd have a battle on their hands. They wouldn't want that.”

“They would be scared of non-warriors?”

“Yes, because the Norwind villagers outnumbered the raiders. If Norwind survivors all banded together, the raiders could have lost or been overpowered. It was too big of a risk for those cowards.”

Soren looked at the woman sitting with us, a somber look in his eyes.

“Instead of taking all your hope and risking a big fight, they dumped the food. They didn't have to fight or kill you all in the moment but they left you all in fear and unwilling to fight back, with death looming over your head,” he told her.

The woman nodded stiffly and popped a spoonful of soup into her mouth before gritting through her teeth. “Damned raiders. They'll pay for this. Even if I can't make them, the Moon Goddess will!”

“I hope so,” Soren agreed.

“Thank you for feeding us. You saved our lives,” she said, her lips twitching. “I'm Angelica. My sister Lilian is there.” she motioned to her sister, another one of the women that called me out.

Lilian noticed us looking at her. She turned up her nose and refused to look at us.

Angelica chuckled. “She's still a bit cranky. Sorry about that.”

“I understand,” I said.

“Momma!”

Ben slipped out of his seat and Lilian looked up.

So, she was Ben's mother and Angelica was his aunt. That explained why he was so friendly with her.

I watched Ben go to his mother. She held her hand out and Ben put the candy I'd given him into her hand.

Lilian's eyes narrowed for a moment but then she smiled. Her face softened and she hugged Ben warmly.

I sighed and rested my head on Soren's shoulder while everyone ate and warmed up.

I didn't expect everyone to like me. Lilian probably never would. And I was okay with that. I felt bad for the Norwind pack members who were left behind. They'd face hard times ahead, even with the rations from the pack house.

But I didn't belong here. Neither did Soren. It was their pack, their fate, and their trial to work through. They'd have to figure it out on their own.

All we could do was not add to their grief. After all, we'd be leaving soon.

"Hey, Ben has candy," one of the other kids said.

"Where'd he get it?"

All the kids were looking at Ben. I saw him point to me.

Suddenly, all the kids turned to me with big, wide, puppy-dog eyes. So innocent, so full of wonder. They were adorable as they silently begged me for sweets.

Again, I absently touched my stomach, thinking tenderly of the life growing inside me.

My heart melted for all of them.

"Oh, I can't say no to any of you," I gushed.

"They didn't say anything," Soren muttered.

"But look at their eyes and their little pouts. You can't say that they aren't the cutest things ever!"

Soren chuckled and ran his thumb over my knuckles.

I got up and started passing out candy to all the kids. They smiled so brightly and one of them hugged me. I wasn't prepared for it and I paused.

"Oh..."

Gently, I hugged the little girl back and patted her head.

My heart swelled and for a moment, I hoped I'd have a daughter.

As I hugged her, I looked up and met Soren's eyes. He watched me with a curious expression. My cheeks got hot and I looked away quickly, releasing the little girl.

Suddenly, the front door burst open and someone from Norwind hurried in. His face was flushed, and he was panting and clutching his chest.

"We found Charles," he blurted out as silence fell in the dining room.

There was a long pause and then all the adults sprang to action.

"Where is he?"

"He's in bad shape. He needs help."

They rushed around us, getting some supplies together.

Whoever this “Charles” was, he was an important figure to Norwind.

#### [Chapter 754](#)

Angelica ran back inside and gave Soren an imploring look.

“We need to get Charles to a bed. Can he come in?”

“Of course. There is a room at the top of the hall,” Soren said.

Several women and elders came through the door, carrying an even older man. He was unconscious and pale with white, messy hair. He had to be at least sixty years old.

His arms were covered in bloody scratches, some really deep, and his pants were torn with similar scratches on his legs. Something had worked him over really well.

“Oh no!” a woman sobbed, covering her mouth.

“Charles! No, please not Charles!”

“Get him upstairs to a bed,” I said, pointing to the stairs. “You should call in your healer immediately.”

The people carrying Charles paused looked at me like I was crazy. But if Charles didn’t get help soon, he would be dead!

Lilian cleared her throat. “Elder Charles is our healer. He’s... none of us can help him...”

I frowned and my stomach sank. No wonder he was so important to them and why his condition upset them.

“How did he get injured?” I asked.

They started carrying Charles back upstairs but Lilian, Angelica, and several others stayed downstairs with me.

“The last we heard, Charles went to the temple mountains looking for more survivors. He thought there would be Norwind warriors that could use his help after the explosion. He must have gotten injured...” Lilian explained.

Angelica sighed and looped an arm around herself.

“If Elder Charles dies...” She sniffled and covered her mouth with her hand.

I could see how heartbroken she was in her eyes. There were other sniffles from women in the crowd. Charles was well loved and clearly a symbol of hope in the pack. If he died, I worried their entire spirit would be destroyed.

This group had lost their warriors, their defenses, their families, their food, and now... their healer was down. How could they survive as a pack going forward? Were they even a pack anymore?

“Everyone should stop crying!” A young voice echoed in the hall, loudly and clearly. “My grandfather isn’t dead yet. We can save him!”



Instantly, the women stopped sobbing and sniffing.

From the crowd came a young man. He was only about fourteen or fifteen years old. He was tall and lanky, hadn't grown into himself yet, his eyes brimming with tears. He held his breath as he came toward me and I could tell he was trying not to let his tears fall.

The boy examined Charles' wound. After a while, he sighed and bowed his head.

His grandfather might have been training him to be a healer, I guessed based on the other's reactions.

However, Charles's wounds were beyond the boy's skill level. I could see it in his eyes.

The boy's jaw tightened and he came over to me and Soren, his face set in a firm, determined mask.

He met my eyes for a moment and dropped down on one knee in front of me.

I bit my lip and looked at Soren. What was this kid doing? He didn't owe me any respect or fealty.

"Enzo, what are you doing?" someone from his pack asked.

"Don't kneel before an outsider!"

"She's not part of our pack. Get up!"

The boy, Enzo, ignored them. He looked up at me with pleading eyes.

"Please, Miss Mila Hathaway, help my grandfather. Please, I beg you."

He reached for my hand.

He might have been young, but he had fierce determination in his eyes. He clearly didn't care what the others had to say.

"I'm willing to repay you for the rest of my life. To serve you if you save him..."

"I'm not a healer," I said, shaking my head.

"No, you're much more than that. I heard Alpha Chandler call you a witch. My grandfather has taught me a lot about healing and he said that witches are powerful people, with healing magic... Please, you must have a way..."

The rims of Enzo's eyes turned red. He blinked several times, keeping his tears back. How could I turn him down?

"Help him, please!" Angelica also pleaded, her voice brimming with hope.

"We'll do whatever we can to assist," Lilian also assured.

So many eyes were on me. So much weight.

Sighing, I finally nodded.

Helen was a powerful healer and I was her niece. Maybe I had some of her powers. And the spellbook was bound to have healing magic in it, and some recipes for medicines that would help Charles.

"I don't know what I can do, if anything. But I agree, we can't just sit here and do nothing. Come with me, Enzo, we'll try our best."

I motioned for Enzo to come with me. We headed upstairs to my room and Soren followed close behind.

I dug the spellbook out of my belongings and started flipping through it. There were so many plants in there and I didn't know which ones would be most effective.

"You've been taught some healing?" I asked Enzo.

"Grandpa showed me some things."

"Do you know about herbs?"

"Yes. I helped him pick more herbs. He taught me plants and their properties." Enzo replied.

"Good, because we don't have any medicines with us and our own healer is away. So, we need to make everything from scratch. It'll take a while."

"That's okay..."

"You know the herbs that grow around this region?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Good. Look through this journal and pick out any plants that are available around this region. Preferably the ones that promote healing and keep away infection."

I handed Enzo the spellbook. He creased his brow.

"It's not in any language I know..."

"That's okay. There are pictures of the plants and I've written their common names in there."

Enzo nodded. I gave him a piece of paper to start copying down the herbs he thought would work.

Soren sat on the opposite side of the room. He didn't say anything, just watched us.

I took out my own notebook and started flipping through it. Ever since Soren got injured and Eros gave him the wrong plant medicine, I'd been keeping my own notebook of mixtures, poultices, and tonics that were good for healing.

I didn't want to be in a situation again where Soren was hurt and I couldn't help him.

I copied down a few spell recipes from my notebook and circled the ingredients that we had in the pack house already.

"How's it going?" I asked Enzo after a couple of hours. His eyes were scrunched up and his tongue stuck out the corner of his mouth in concentration.

"I've got a good list of herbs here. They're all local and I know where the best places are to find them."

"Let me see."

I held my hand out and Enzo passed me the paper. Quickly, I glanced over the herbs he'd selected. Then I looked at my different recipes.

There were a few medicine recipes I had that would work for Charlse but I had to make some substitutions with the herbs Enzo would be able to collect.

"What do you know about plant substitutions?" I asked. I showed Enzo the herbs in my recipes we'd need to swap out.

"Oh, I know a lot. Every time we go out herb gathering, Grandpa tells me all the properties an herb has and then makes me list off other herbs that have the same properties. We can swap all these out with this one here."

He pointed at the herbs as he spoke about them.

I nodded and scribbled down some notes on the recipe.

"Great. And you can gather these three herbs locally?"

"Yeah. I know just the spot."

"Perfect!" I closed the journal, "Let me just draw up pictures to make sure we collect the right ones... we had a mishap recently where the wrong herb was used..."

I didn't go into details about Eros mistreating Soren's wounds because I wasn't sure if Enzo would be interested at this moment.

I grabbed a fresh sheet of paper and sketched out the plants we'd need, along with their names and a few other descriptions. With the pictures, Payne, Thomas, or some of our men could go with Enzo and obtain the necessary plants.

"We'll make a poultice to put on the wounds and promote healing. We'll also make a potion to keep any infections out of his blood," I told Enzo. "Take a look. Based on your knowledge, is there anything we shouldn't mix together?"

I nodded and handed the recipe page over.

Enzo scanned them and pointed out a couple of ingredients that he had concerns with.

It took a couple more hours for us to fully finalize the recipes. I was impressed with Enzo's knowledge. He already knew more than I did. That wasn't too surprising since I'd only just started learning.

But for a kid his age, he was very proficient.

"Soren, I think we're ready to send someone for the herbs," I said, turning to him.

He gave a stiff nod and left the room. Moments later, Soren returned with Payne. I handed him the sheet of paper with the herb sketches on it.

"Each of us can keep a copy of this, that way we can split up for the sake of efficiency."

"Yes, of course," Payne said, nodding. "There are plenty of nearby fields."

"I can help, too. I know some of the best places around here," Enzo offered.

"Is it alright if Enzo comes with us?" I asked Payne.

"Of course, Miss Mila."

"Thank you. Just give me a moment to get ready. I'll catch up with you downstairs."

Enzo and Payne left my room. I hurried around, gathering my knife to cut herbs and a small foraging pouch I had.

"I'll be back," I said, blowing a kiss to Soren, but he only lifted his eyelids to glance at me. Nothing else.

He had been awfully quiet for a while. Why?

However, Payne and Enzo were already downstairs. I didn't want to keep them waiting too long, so I carried on getting ready. Just as I got to the bedroom door, Soren's fingers curled around my arm and he gently yanked me back.

"H-hey..." I arched an eyebrow at him.

Soren frowned. I could tell he wasn't happy.

"What's wrong?" I asked, eyes widening. What could be bothering him?

Soren sighed heavily. "Well, you helped Enzo. You're going to help his grandfather. But what about me?"

I creased my brow. "What about you?"

"I need help too..."

"What do you need my help with?" I tilted my head to the side.

Soren's frown deepened. "You've been ignoring me for hours... so busy with your work and that boy..."

Was Soren jealous? He'd been sitting right there! It wasn't like anything inappropriate had happened. He saw all our interactions.

It wasn't like Soren to get jealous like that. I couldn't understand what he really meant. Something in his eyes made me think he was joking, but his face was so serious.

Suddenly, a light clicked on in my head.

This was Soren's way of reminding me that he'd promised not to let me out of his sight.

I sighed and rolled my eyes to the ceiling. It was sweet and a little funny, the way he was pointing that out.

Smiling sweetly, I leaned in and gave Soren a big, passionate kiss.

"My apologies, Soren the Great. Since I've been so negligent of you, would you kindly accompany me as we go herb hunting? I would feel much better with your strength protecting me and it would give me great pleasure to have you with me."

I coated my words with as much fake, sweet sarcasm as possible.

Soren remained serious. He lifted my hand and kissed the back of it. "My lady, it would be an honor to be your escort and protector."

I burst out laughing, unable to help it anymore. He was being so goofy and it was very sweet.

Soren smirked for a moment. He laughed and then his soft gaze fell on me, his smile faltering.

"Soren, what's wrong now?" I asked, creasing my brow.

Soren shrugged one arm. He caressed my cheeks with his thumbs. "Nothing is more beautiful than your smile."

### [Chapter 755](#)

My heart flooded with warmth and I took Soren's hand. He squeezed my fingers and smirked. With a sharp tug, he pulled me along.

We caught up with Enzo and Payne by the front door.

"It shouldn't be too difficult to find the herbs, right?" I asked.

Enzo shrugged. "I know some good places to look. But there's been a lot of rain..."

"Lead the way." Payne pointed toward the door.

Enzo led us out to the front yard. The ground was soggy and squishy under my feet, oversaturated with water.

Water still drizzled around us but it was more like a mist than a rain shower. Natural mist, not magical mist.

We walked toward the mountains where the Moon Goddess temple had been. I moved a little closer to Soren, remembering what happened the last time we were there.

"Oh, crap!"

Enzo's curse pulled me from my thoughts.

"What's wrong?" Soren asked.

"The road ahead is washed out. The only way around is to wade through that flooded lowland over there."

He pointed to the flooded area.

"It looks like we're getting wet," I muttered.

We all stood at the edge of the flooded area. It was impossible to tell how deep the water was and, in the darkness, I couldn't see the other side.

"I'll go first and test the depth of the water," Payne suggested.

Before Soren could say anything, Payne plunged into the water. It devoured him quickly, until he was just a head above water.

“It doesn’t get any deeper than this, and the other side isn’t too far off. We might have to swim a little, but there’s no current, so it should be easy,” Payne reported.

“Let’s go, then.”

Soren went in next, leading me by the hand. Enzo followed us.

When we got deeper, where I couldn’t touch the bottom anymore, Soren swung me onto his back. I wrapped my arms loosely around his neck as he waded through the deeper water.

If I thought finding the herbs would be easy, I was sorely mistaken...

On the other side of the flooded land, the ground sloped upward. We’d be going into the mountains, which meant no more flooding.

“Come on, there are good herbs this way,” Enzo said. He motioned to us to follow him.

As we climbed the hill, I noticed a lot of the nearby plants weren’t doing so well. They’d been completely waterlogged and it was killing them. I hoped the herbs we found were healthy.

If they were dying, they wouldn’t be as potent for the medicines.

Enzo stopped dead and Payne nearly ran into him.

“What is it, what’s wrong?” I asked, seeing the dark shadow in Enzo’s eyes.

He bowed his head and whispered softly under his breath.

I looked where he’d been looking and I gasped.

It was the mountain where the Moon Goddess temple had stood. The mountain looked... half of the mountain was completely blown away. There were huge chunks of rock and rubble piled around the base of the mountain.

If anything had been there, it was completely smothered now.

There were only a few scraps of the temple left, glinting in the moonlight.

“Enzo?”

I placed a hand on his shoulder. He squinted his eyes shut and shook his head, keeping it bowed.

“Are you okay?”

I saw his jaw tense and he clenched his fists.

“Do you see the rocks at the base of the mountain?” he asked, pointing to the rubble. “That used to be very fertile farmland. The majority of Norwind food production came from there. A lot of people worked on those farms and now...”

His hands trembled and he snarled.

I thought I saw a glint of tears at the edge of his eyes.

“Now, they’ve been flattened by the explosion and flooded by the rains. All the equipment has been crushed and the land too damaged to grow again.”

“I know. It is awful. I’m sorry, Enzo.”

“How... how could Norwind turn from one of the most wealthy, powerful, prosperous packs in the land to ruins overnight?”

He ground his teeth together, anger flashing in his eyes.

“It might not be as bad as you think. Once the flooding recedes, you and your people can look over the land and the extent of the damage. It could still be salvageable,” I suggested.

Enzo smiled tightly.

“You’re very kind, Miss Mila. I might be young but I’m not naïve. Norwind is no longer the pack it once was.”

“But that doesn’t mean it can’t be again.”

He sighed. A boy his age shouldn’t have to sigh like that. “We’ve got a lot of ground to cover, we should keep going. Grandpa is counting on me.”

He led us further into the mountains.

I could tell that Enzo was still upset, so I went and walked beside him.

“You know, when the rest of your pack was ready to give up hope, you spoke up on behalf of your grandfather. You gave them hope again,” I told him.

He scoffed.

“Hope isn’t what they need. It can’t feed them or protect them.”

“Perhaps not, but sometimes all it takes is one strong voice to make others start fighting for themselves and their needs. Enzo, you’ve opened the door. Don’t be surprised if the others start to follow you.”

“The warriors are gone. I might not be strong enough to protect everyone but that doesn’t mean I just give up without trying.”

“That is a wonderful quality, Enzo.”

“Well, my grandfather taught me how to support the pack. That’s always been his job as the healer. He needs to know everyone, their allergies, their medical histories, all of it. It is what makes him such an exceptional healer and why his loss would destroy what is left of their will.”

“I think you’ll find that’s untrue. Your grandfather taught you well and I think that the pack will look to you... if he doesn’t make it.” I hated to bring up the unpleasant likelihood that regardless of what we did, it might still not be enough to save Charles.

“He’s going to make it!” he declared in such a confident voice that it sounded like a fact.

“You’re right, Enzo,” I smiled, “and we’ll do everything we can to save him, I promise.”

“Thank you, Miss Mila.” He nodded to me and then pointed ahead to a patch of plants. “Those are some of the herbs we need.”

He took off ahead of me and started gathering them.

When I caught up, I crossed one herb name from our list. The plants weren't completely waterlogged but they did look a little weathered. I wasn't sure they'd be completely useful.

“There aren't as many here as I hoped. I guess the rain took a lot of them out.” Enzo sighed as he filled his forage pouch.

“Well, we will take what we can get.”

I knelt down to help. The grass around the herbs was also in trouble. It was stringy and slimy, probably from too much water and not enough sun.

Just based on the rain damage, it would take a long time for the land in Norwind to be good for growing crops again. The mud and floods would make it difficult to rebuild homes. They were already starving.

The Norwind territory wasn't the best place for these people to stay anymore.

If they had their strong warriors, then they could fill the workforce and reclaim the land, make it useful again. However, women and children wouldn't have the strength to rebuild homes and reclaim farmlands fast enough.

It would be difficult for the survivors, especially with their low food rations. I didn't think the food would last them until next spring!

The pack land couldn't support them and they couldn't make it prosperous again on their own. What could the remainder of the Norwind pack do?

I watched Enzo collect herbs so determinedly. Had that thought even crossed his mind?

Quickly, I glanced at Soren. He shook his head subtly. It was like he knew the exact thought I had in my mind and he didn't want me voicing it with Enzo around.

Luckily, Enzo didn't notice me pause. He was focused on saving his grandfather. Other issues hadn't crossed his mind yet. It was probably for the better.

We were able to obtain some of the herbs we needed for the medicines. Not as much as I wanted but it would make do for now.

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The first thing we all did when we got back was take warm showers and change into dry clothes. It wouldn't do any of us any good if we caught colds or pneumonia from being out in that soggy, damp weather.

I met Enzo in the kitchen and we got to making the medicines.

“You're good at following those recipes,” I commented.

“I've been watching my grandfather for years.”



“Have you ever made any medicines on your own before?” I arched an eyebrow as I ground some of the herbs up with a mortar and pestle.

“A few. Grandpa was having me do a lot more of the prep. His hands have been bothering him, so I’ve been helping with the cutting, grinding, and mixing. He always kept a close watch on me.”

Enzo smiled slightly. It was a bittersweet smile, full of fond memories and also worry for his grandfather.

We made a poultice for the cuts and a tonic to keep away infection as we planned.

Enzo joined me in the bedroom where Charles was set up and we spread the poultice over his wounds.

“Hold his head up and his mouth open,” I instructed.

Enzo tenderly cradled his grandfather’s head and parted his lips with a gentle thumb.

I poured the tonic into his mouth.

“Close his mouth and slowly lower his head so the tonic goes down without choking him.”

Enzo did as I told him. He pulled up a chair next to the bed and we sat, waiting.

One hour, two hours... a whole night.

Then two full days passed.

Soren and I had decided to delay our departure. The way to leave the pack had been turned into a wide river, and in order to leave here, our men were building make-shift boats. Besides, we also wanted to stick around for Enzo and Charles.

By the end of the third day, Charles’ external wounds were mostly healed but he still didn’t wince or move or start to wake up.

“What’s wrong, why isn’t he waking up?” Enzo asked as I walked into Charles’ room.

I frowned and checked his pulse. It was thready and weak, his skin was cold and his wrist felt thin. “I don’t know, I’m sorry, Enzo.”

Charles’ body needed nutrition, but if he didn’t wake up soon...we would have to prepare for the worst.

## [Chapter 756](#)

“Miss Mila...” Enzo tugged my sleeve, pulling me out of my thoughts.

I glanced at Enzo, who had large dark circles under his eyes. He must be exhausted. Yet, he didn’t want to leave his grandfather’s side.

“I can’t lose him...” he murmured. Enzo moved around the bed, fluffing Charles’s pillows and tucking him in gently.

I wished there was more I could do. However, after looking through the journals multiple times in the past couple of days, I was at my wit’s end.

I sighed. “Enzo, it is late. We’ve done all we can for the night. You should get some rest.”

“No! I’m not leaving his side. What if—”

I put my hand on Enzo’s shoulder. “You’re no good to your grandfather if you don’t keep up your strength. Why don’t you grab a bite to eat? I’ll watch over him.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I need to keep up my strength.”

Enzo wiped off the tears that threatened to fall from his eyes, stood up and walked towards the door. He parted his lips as if he was about to say something, but he didn’t. He knew I’d done what I could. There was no use for more pleading.

Before he left the room, he gave me a look. A look that was desperate, helpless and yet...still hopeful.

And it broke my heart.

I sat next to Charles, watching his pale face. Life was leaving his body.

The sad glance from Enzo lingered in my mind. I thought I’d seen that similar look before...I wished I could do something, but the only thing left to do was pray for a miracle from the Goddess.

The bright moonlight shone through the window, covering Charles. I closed my eyes, my hands folded together.

“Goddess above, please hear my prayer. Your light shall guide us and your mercy shall be praised...”

Suddenly, something popped into my head.

It was a distant memory, something that I’d known so long ago. The words were similar, possibly deep from my memory.

That was right. It wasn’t just something I’d known, it was a spell. A spell I’d used to do something important...to save a young boy.

The words came to my lips before I could stop them.

“Amina hasteth corro sinat, amina hasteth corro sinat.”

Then I chanted again, and again. “Amina hasteth corro sinat, amina hasteth corro sinat...Amina hasteth corro sinat, amina hasteth corro sinat...”

Suddenly, my head slumped and my legs and arms shook. All the strength left my body and I could barely keep my eyes open.

“Miss Mila!”

Someone called to me but his voice sounded fuzzy and far away.

I tried to get up, but my body felt like it was coated in cement. Enzo came in. He looked blurry.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah... I’m just a little...”

I pushed myself to stand up, but my legs were shaking so hard I thought I might collapse.

“Miss Mila, you look pale, what happened?”

I shook my head, having no energy nor desire to explain. I didn't want to tell Enzo I'd tried to use a spell to wake Charles because I knew it would just upset him further if it didn't work.

Was he too weak for the spell to work? Or...did the spell even do what I thought it would do?

“Please wait here.”

Enzo left but he returned quickly with Soren.

“Mila, Mila, look at me,” Soren said, grabbing my shoulders and giving me a little shake. “What did you do to tire yourself out?”

I glanced at Soren, then shifted my eyes to the bed and sighed.

Soren wrapped an arm around me, waiting for me to answer him. I looked up at him, my vision clearing slightly. I whispered so Enzo wouldn't hear me. “Soren... I tried... I tried, but I failed.”

Soren squeezed my hand. “Mila, it's okay.”

He didn't ask anything further, but he had a knowing look in his eyes and understood what I said.

“It's not okay...Soren, you have no idea how I wish—”

Soren looked me in the eye and his deep voice whispered into my ear. “Shhh...You've done more than expected and that is worth more than you know.”

His words were kind but they didn't make me feel any better. Unless Charles woke up soon, nothing would ease my disappointment. Meanwhile, I leaned against Soren, still feeling weak and shaky.

“Miss Mila,” Enzo looked at me worriedly, “Please get some rest yourself. If anything changes, I'll let you know immediately.”

Soren agreed with him and said to me, “Let me take you back to our room.”

I sighed. There really wasn't anything else I could do, so I nodded to Soren. He helped me up.

Then, just when we were about to exit the room, I heard Enzo gasping, “Grandpa! Grandpa! You're awake!”

Enzo's pleased cry filled me with strength and hope. Soren and I turned around, my vision clearing.

The teenager was leaning over his grandpa, slowly helping him into a sitting position. Charles grunted and Enzo propped several pillows up.

I glanced at Soren, my heart fluttering in my chest, a smile tugging at my lips.

Soren grinned and leaned down. He whispered in my ear, his breath tickling my neck. “You've done it! See, I told you not to underestimate yourself. You saved Charles. So proud of you.”

My stomach dropped like a stone and Soren kissed my neck quickly. A shiver ran down my spine and I leaned on him again.

Charles leaned back on the pillows and sighed, nodding to his grandson.

I watched Enzo caring for his grandfather. The older man was still coming out of his unconsciousness but as long as he remained awake, the full recovery would be just a matter of time.

He hadn't noticed us yet. It was obvious that he was still disoriented. We patiently waited, giving him time to adapt to his surroundings.

Without me knowing, tears welled up in my eyes.

Soren hugged me against his side. "You should be smiling, not crying," he chuckled in a low voice only the two of us could hear. His tone was full of pride and his eyes were filled with admiration. "You have no idea what an achievement you've accomplished."

I was lost in his proud gaze for a moment.

I always felt that Soren was so giving in our relationship. He had been saving me, protecting me, and fighting for me. I never thought I could give as much back.

Yes, he was more powerful, but it didn't change the fact that I wanted to do the same for him.

I wanted to help him and support him in my own way, but I hadn't been able to find my strength, until this moment—I saved Charles all on my own, with my own power and knowledge!

Knowing Soren, he would treat me the same regardless of whether I was an ordinary omega or a mighty witch, but I wanted to be a good match for him. It wasn't fair for him to be the only one who bore the burden of whatever dangers came our way, especially when those dangers were mostly brought by me.

I wanted to help. And at this moment, finally, I felt I was able to do something useful.

I was finally one step closer to him. If I continued to work on controlling my witch power, perhaps one day I would be a good match and a peer for him.

"Mila, why are you staring at me?" Soren beamed at me, but seemed a little confused.

"I'm happy..." I whispered and breathed in his indulging cedar wood and amber scent.

"Enzo?" Charles's voice rasped as he spoke his first words, drawing my attention. His eyes filled with tears and he blinked rapidly.

"I'm here, Grandpa," Enzo said, hugging the old man.

"I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry, my boy," Charles said, hugging Enzo back.

I could tell that his arms were still weak, but the color had returned to his cheeks.

I stayed close to Soren, enjoying his closeness and the warmth of his body. I didn't want to intrude, though, so we stayed quiet, letting Enzo and Charles have their reunion.

"You have nothing to be sorry about," Enzo murmured.

"I didn't make it in time!" Charles blurted out. "I tried... I did. But all I could do was pull a few bodies out of the debris pile..."

He sniffled but Charles didn't let his tears out. As upset as he was, he was still holding himself together.

"I couldn't save anyone. I wanted to give them proper burials but the rain... it caused a mudslide and I was almost buried alive!"

"It's alright, Grandpa. It isn't your fault. You did what you could. I'm just happy you're alive."

He comforted Charles, sitting on the bed beside him and putting his arm around Charles's shoulders.

Charles creased his brow like he'd just thought of something.

"Before I lost consciousness... I remember, I was wounded, all cut up..."

Charles pushed the blankets back and checked his arms and legs for his wounds. He frowned slightly.

"All healed. How strange. I wonder... I felt like I was drowning in the dark for a long, long time. And then... oh, the most beautiful light came to me and guided me out of the blackness. What happened?"

Charles finally got the chance to look around the room. When he slowly looked at the two of us, his brow furrowed and he narrowed his eyes. "Enzo, who are they!? Why did you bring them here?"

"Grandpa, calm down!"

"How could you be so reckless? Trusting someone you don't know... have you not seen the damage caused to our pack?"

Enzo quickly explained. "They saved you!"

Charles still looked wary. "Really?"

Enzo motioned to me and assured him, "Really, Grandpa. We're really lucky. If not for Miss Mila, I don't know what would have happened to you...Look, your wounds are all healed thanks to her!"

Charles' eyes landed on me for a moment. Then, as if he thought of something, his expression softened and he tilted his head slightly.

"I apologize for my rude reaction," he said to me and Soren.

"It's okay," Soren nodded, "We understand it's quite an unusual circumstance your pack has undergone."

"Thank you for saving my life." He slightly lowered his head towards me. It was a very respectful gesture for a pack Elder like him to do.

I was about to say "You're welcome" when he continued with something I didn't expect to hear.

"It is nice to see you again, young miss, and out of harm's way."

My eyes widened. "You know me?"

"Grandpa, you know Miss Mila?" Enzo asked almost at the same time, creasing his brow.

I looked at Soren. He was frowning slightly and I saw new suspicions in his eyes. He clearly didn't like this older shifter knowing who I was when we didn't know much about him.

“Excuse me, but I don’t think I’ve met you before, have I?” I asked.

## [Chapter 757](#)

Compared to the wariness Soren and I had, Charles’ expression was quite relaxed.

“Alpha Chandler brought you to the pack house. You were in pretty rough shape, knocked out by a hit to the head. It was several days ago, before all this...craziness started.”

Soren tensed beside me. We hadn’t had a chance to talk about all the things that had happened to me while we were separated and I had a feeling he was reacting to the knowledge that I’d been hit on the head to knock me out.

“I was summoned to treat some of the warriors that had gone out with Alpha Chandler. They had strange wounds... like they’d been attacked by vines.” Charles sighed and shook his head.

“How strange,” I muttered nervously.

“Well, it’s not often to see young ladies like you mixed up among his warriors. You stood out in my mind.” Charles touched the side of his head.

Alpha Chandler had me examined by a healer? Was that how he knew about the pregnancy? It made sense...

“You were still unconscious. I was going to give you some medicine for the head wound but Alpha Chandler stopped me insisting that you were okay. I still insisted on doing a quick checkup just in case. It’s my job as a healer to treat all my patients, regardless of what the Alpha wants.”

“But he didn’t tell you who I am?” I asked, arching an eyebrow.

Charles shook his head. “No, he didn’t. Alpha doesn’t let others ask him questions... Ever since our Luna died, he changed. He became cold, stubborn, and paranoid.”

Sighing, I crossed my arms. I wasn’t interested in hearing any more about Chandler. He was old news now and he wasn’t a threat anymore.

Now that Charles was better, I suddenly realized that I could ask him about the pregnancy. Even if he wasn’t the one that told Sebastian, as a healer, he could confirm it for me.

Charles sighed heavily, getting my attention again.

“I always knew that his delusional persistence would bring trouble to the pack. I just did not expect that, instead of trouble, he would bring destruction...”

Charles sighed again, showing a moment of sadness. It passed quickly. As a healer, he’d probably seen a lot of deaths. His eyes were wise and mournful, but not bogged down with sadness.

“Anyway, we can’t change what’s happened. All we can do is look forward,” Charles whispered. “I’m glad to see you’re safe, Miss, and thank you for saving me. I guess I’m lucky that there happened to be another healer nearby...”

I smiled and nodded. “You’re welcome. I’m glad that I was able to help.”

Enzo touched Charles' shoulder.

"Grandpa, Miss Mila isn't a healer. She's a witch!"

Charles's eyes snapped to me again.

"Umm..." I took a half-step back.

"A witch? No wonder... no wonder..."

I shifted my weight from one foot to the other. What was he getting at?

"No wonder what?" Enzo asked.

"No wonder I saw what I saw..." Charles looked directly at me again. "You're the one who guided me and walked me out from the darkness. I owe you my life."

My cheeks warmed and I felt a blush spread over my face and down my neck. "You don't need to thank me. I wasn't sure whether it would work. I just gave it a try... I had to."

Charles nodded and then frowned. He stroked his chin. It was like he was sifting through memories, still jumbled from his recent unconsciousness.

"You used a spell to heal me and wake me up?" he asked.

"Enzo and I made the medicines together. While those helped to heal your wounds, they weren't enough to wake you up. Then I tried something in addition...I think it was a spell. Something I've known since I was a little girl."

Charles continued to frown. He looked concerned about something.

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"Miss Mila, I cannot thank you enough for saving my life. However, please refrain from using too much magic."

"Huh?"

"It isn't a good time for you to be overexerting yourself, especially now."

What was so important about right now? I'd been practicing some simple spells lately when I got the chance for a while.

"I don't understand. Why do I need to be careful with my magic?"

"When you use your magic, you exhaust your energy. Physical and mental energy. Haven't you felt tired lately?"

"Yes, but I figured it was just from not having enough sleep and going out into the rain."

Charles tapped his temple lightly with his forefinger. "How did it feel after you cast that spell to wake me? I imagine you felt very weak and shaky. Isn't that true?"

I nodded.

“If you overexert yourself, that can be dangerous to your own health. And right now, you have to worry about more than your own health.”

I held my breath.

“If memory serves, you’re pregnant. Practicing magic and casting spells won’t hurt the baby directly. But as the expecting mother, it’s probably best not to exhaust yourself.”

I froze, and my heart caught in my throat.

Immediately, I looped my arms around my stomach.

What Charles said sank in and I wasn’t listening to him anymore. Instead, I looked at Soren.

He was frozen in place, staring straight ahead. He looked like he’d been turned to stone!

I bit my lower lip.

This wasn’t exactly how I planned to verify my pregnancy, and it certainly wasn’t how I wanted him to find out, either!

My heart hammered crazily in my chest as I waited for Soren to respond or react. There was nothing in his face, his eyes were blank, and his expression was hollow.

What was he thinking? I couldn’t read his face at all. He looked so shocked.

I couldn’t help but start getting worried.

Was he upset about me hiding the news from him? Was he just so shocked that he was stunned? Or... for whatever reason, was he not happy about the baby?

I tried to push the last thought out of my mind because it really upset me.

Ever since Soren saved me from Dylan and Chandler, we hadn’t really talked about our relationship. I’d been injured, then we had been busy handling everything that was going on with Norwind pack.

There hadn’t been the right opportunity for a serious conversation, nor did I feel strongly that we needed to have one.

His confession in the tomb was as fresh in my mind as it was just said to me, and I trusted him. I believed in every word he said, and thus, I felt we’d come to a mutual understanding that we had accepted each other as mates, and we would be together.

I knew he cared about me, therefore we didn’t have to specifically discuss how we felt about each other. When the time was right and when I knew for sure whether I was pregnant or not, then we could sit down and plan for our future together.

However, his expressionless silence made it hard for me to breathe...Was I wrong about the whole situation?

\*\*\*

\*Soren\*



I stared at Charles for a moment, my mind processing what he just said.

Had I heard him correctly? I lifted a finger to my ear, pressing against it.

It was true. Mila was pregnant... with my child.

My heart hammered in my chest as reality crashed over me like devouring waves.

I was going to be a father. Mila and I were going to be parents. She was going to have my baby... our baby!

Extreme happiness washed over me, I wanted to shout out and announce it to the world, but the words caught in my throat when I saw Mila's expression.

She was pale and she was staring dead ahead. Then she frowned. It was like she was trying to avoid eye contact with me.

My heart sank.

What was she thinking? Why couldn't I see joy on her face?

Did she know about the pregnancy? She looked too shocked to have known.

Most importantly, how did she feel about it?

Her gaze landed outside of the window and her face was blank. It was impossible to tell what she was feeling.

If she had known about being pregnant, why wouldn't she tell me? We'd had plenty of chances for her to say something since she'd recovered from being kidnapped.

If she didn't know about this until just now, why couldn't I see any cheerfulness on her face?

My mind raced.

I clenched my fists and shook my hands, trying to stop the tremors.

Instinctively, I looked at Charles again. I searched his face for any hint that he was lying or toying with us. All I saw in his eyes was the truth.

A little life...

Slowly, Mila looked at me, her face still a mask.

I couldn't tell what she was thinking. If only she'd taken that last dose of the antidote! Our mindlink still only worked sometimes because she hadn't completed the Blackfire antidote course.

If there was ever a time when I wanted to be able to read her mind and sense her feelings, it was now!

My heart beat even faster and I looked at Mila. She suddenly looked like she was glowing, radiant and beautiful. My chest swelled like a balloon and I just wanted to pull her to me and hug her.

This was great news! She had to feel the same way as me!

I grabbed her hand and tugged her out of the room. She didn't even try to pull away or resist.

“Excuse us.” I nodded quickly to the healer and his grandson.

Thankfully, Enzo and Charles let us go without saying anything.

I took Mila down the hall to our room and shut the door behind us. Grabbing her shoulders, I pushed her up against the door, pinning her in place.

“Mila, is it true?”

“I... I think so... I mean...”

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier!?” I tried to soften my tone, but it might still have come out a bit rushed.

I narrowed my eyes slightly.

Mila swallowed hard and gave me a weak smile. “Dylan... I mean Sebastian... he kinda mentioned it. I wasn’t sure if he was lying though, and I didn’t want to tell you before verifying—”

“Are you not happy about it?” I interrupted her.

“No, I mean, yes, I’m very happ—”

I pressed my lips to hers, cutting her off again. That was good enough for me.

I slipped my arms around her back and kissed her passionately on the mouth, moving my lips vigorously against hers.

I’d been working toward building my pack and I’d already announced that Mila would be my Luna. This couldn’t be more perfect. Of course, I had planned to settle down with Mila and start a family... The Moon Goddess surprised me again.

I pressed my body to Mila’s, feeling her stomach against mine, through our clothes.

There was already a piece of me inside the woman I loved with all my heart. Growing. There was no greater way that I could express my affection for her than to share this.

Mila gasped and pulled away from me, casting her eyes down.

“Are you mad at me? I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I really wasn’t trying to hide anything from you. You have no idea how happy I was when I learned that. I just wanted to be sure because....” Mila explained, her face as red as a delicious apple. I caressed her cheeks.

She continued, “What if that was a lie? I was excited about the news, but what if it wasn’t true? I’d be so heartbroken and disappointed. I thought about it, and I didn’t want to get your hopes up for nothing, you know.”

“Mila, just kiss me,” I ordered.

## [Chapter 758](#)

Without waiting for her, I leaned in again and captured her lips, parting them with mine and pushing my tongue into her mouth. I rolled my tongue over hers, ran it along her cheeks, and battled her for dominance. I tasted her completely.

She moaned against my lips and pushed off the door, wrapping her arms around my neck and holding herself against me.

We kissed until we needed a break for air. Sighing, I pressed my forehead into the crook of her neck. I tightened my arms around her, pressing my palms to her back. Inhaling, I took in her scent.

I could smell my scent on her now, too. All over her and in her. It was a sign that she was pregnant with my child. It was so early, the scent was faint, barely noticeable.

I wrapped my arms around her as much as possible and smothered her against me, trying to make her a part of me. I never wanted her to leave my embrace or to leave my side.

She sighed slightly and I loosened my arms. I had to be gentle with her now, for the baby.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, tilting her head back and looking into my eyes. She creased her brow and looked at me apologetically. "I don't want you to be upset with me. I promise I wasn't trying to keep it from you. I thought that Sebastian was playing games but I have been praying to the Goddess that it is true."

"Mila," I murmured her name.

I pulled her close, cradling the back of her head.

She whimpered and clung to me. "Please, Soren, forgive me?"

My voice almost cracked. "You have no idea how happy you've made me, do you?"

"Soren..."

Warmth spread through me and I held her tenderly. I wanted to be a part of her. My body ached with the need to be so much closer to her.

Strong emotions welled in my chest and I didn't know what to think or feel. Tears wet the corners of my eyes.

Mila held my head in her hands and lifted my eyes to hers so that I was looking into her beautiful, relaxed face. She didn't look worried anymore. She smiled slightly and licked her lips. The paleness in her cheeks was gone and she looked like a bright and beautiful sunbeam.

My throat tightened.

Something glistened in her eyes too. Tears...

I took Mila's hands and led her to the bed. Gently, I sat her on the edge. I took a knee in front of her and squeezed her hands.

Grinning, I moved my hand to her belly and caressed her softly. It was still mostly flat, but there was the slightest roundness that was just starting to become noticeable to the touch.

I pushed her shirt up and leaned in.

Mila leaned back on the bed, propping herself up on her elbows.

I kissed her stomach. “My sweet, sweet baby. Our baby. Do you know how much we love you already?”

Smirking, I lifted my eyes to meet hers again.

Mila bit her lower lip and reached out, putting her hand on the back of my head. Her eyes were glistening still, full of pure love and tenderness.

She was so gentle, her cheeks flushed, her whole body glowing like she was an angel. Her fingers gently massaged my scalp.

My pants tightened and a pulsing ache filled my abdomen as well as the throbbing organ between my legs.

She was my mate, my love, and she was carrying my child.

I wanted her badly, more than I’d ever wanted anything in my life!

Growling, I stood up, pushing her shirt all the way off. Mila lay flat on the bed and gasped as I ran my hands down her chest. I molded my palms around the curves of her breast, down her abdomen, and caressed her sides.

I grabbed the waist of her pants and pulled them down, kneeling to take them off her legs. I grabbed her calves, massaging them gently as I worked my way up to the back of her knees.

Mila moaned and writhed on the bed.

I squeezed her legs gently. As much as I wanted to dominate her and claim her I knew I had to be gentle with her—the cuts on her belly were almost scabbing, but I didn’t want them to get torn open again.

Mila put her arms around my head and pulled me down to her. My cheek pressed against her stomach and I scooped my hands around her ass cheeks, squeezing and rubbing. She whimpered and twisted back and forth.

I kissed her belly button and moved my hands up her sides. Standing up, I hovered over her, kissing her lips sweetly.

She bent her legs and squeezed my hips with her knees.

I kissed her warmly, pushing her lips open with my tongue. My hands moved to her breasts, rubbing her n\*\*\*\*s with my thumbs until they were tight buds.

Then my lips gently sucked on her neck and I slid my hands down her stomach. As I roamed my hands to her inner thighs, my mouth kissed between her breasts and down her stomach.

She moaned and shuddered the further south I moved.

The overpowering desire to taste her came over me.

\*\*\*

\*Mila\*

My knees bent over the edge of the bed. Soren's hands pushed my thighs apart and his lips grazed my belly button, then my mound.

I shuddered, my legs trembling in his grasp.

My core ached with desire and warmth pulsed from inside of me.

I put my hand on the back of Soren's head. He grunted and dipped his head between my legs. His tongue flicked against my folds.

Heat shot through my core and my insides tightened.

I gasped and arched my back. It wasn't enough, I wanted to feel more of him!

The warm, wet tip of his tongue pressed against my slick entrance. My legs quivered. Soren ran his tongue up and down my slit.

He pushed his tongue between my folds, the tip stroking my most sensitive parts. Deeper he probed.

My swollen clit throbbed and I lifted my hips, silently begging him. He chuckled against me and his lips closed around my p\*\*\*y.

Soren's tongue circled slowly around my clit.

"Mmmm!" I threw my head back and covered my eyes with my arm.

Sparks of pleasure shot through my abdomen and my insides clenched. His hands tightened on my thighs and in a slow, deliberate, tantalizing motion, Soren swirled his tongue around my clit again and again.

His fingers ran up the inside of my thigh, the tips grazing my hot, sensitive skin. He stuck the tip of his finger into my entrance, bending it and teasing my insides.

I clenched my thighs and lifted my hips, encouraging him.

He slid an additional finger inside of me, rubbing in and out, stroking my inner walls. My p\*\*\*y clenched on his touches.

Soren flicked his tongue against my aching clit, fast, light strokes, driving me completely insane! I was going to lose my mind. His head bobbed between my legs while he knelt on the floor.

Pressure in my core built and heat spread over my body.

He scissored his fingers, spreading me apart deliciously. My legs shook and I moved my hips to feel more friction from his fingers and his tongue.

"Soren..." I cried out his name. My body tensed and shuddered as I climaxed.

Panting, I melted against the mattress like a puddle of goo.

Soren stopped touching me and I took my arm from my face. He was stripping off his clothes. I bit my lip, my eyes settling on his thick, hard c\*\*k. I licked my lips and pulled myself the rest of the way onto the bed.

Smirking, Soren crawled onto the bed toward me. He slipped his arm around my back, lifting me from the bed slightly. With a growl, he swooped down and kissed me hard on the lips.

I felt his c\*\*k press against the inside of my leg. A warm wet bead of precum slid against my skin.

My core tightened and I bent my legs, cradling Soren's hips between my knees.

He kissed my neck, nipping gently and sucking on my skin. Fire spread over me and I wanted him. I wanted him inside of me!

I whimpered and rolled my body against his.

Soren chuckled and positioned himself at my entrance. My inner thighs were coated in my own arousal and I wiggled myself to meet him.

"Please," I begged, "don't make me wait any longer!"

Fire flashed inside his gorgeous gray-blue eyes. Without any delay, he pressed the tip of his c\*\*k to my entrance and pushed inside of me.

"Ah..." I moaned.

He filled me completely, his shaft stroking my walls, spreading me apart in a painfully pleasurable way.

Groaning, I arched into him.

"Oh, Mila," he called my name in his low voice, which sent another shiver down my spine. Soren wrapped his arms around me, pinning my body to his. I could feel his heart thudding against my chest.

I locked my ankles around his legs and rolled my hips. He grunted and tightened his arms around me.

I tightened my inner ring of muscles around him and his c\*\*k quivered. He thrust into me harder, his pulsing c\*\*k reaching deep inside.

"Mila... I love you so much, baby," he whispered in my ear.

I moaned and trembled in his grasp.

I rolled my hips, meeting his thrusts. Our hips slapped together and it felt like no matter how deep he went it wasn't enough! I wanted to be closer to him, I wanted to be part of him.

I clung to his back, panting and whimpering. I was totally losing control.

My insides tightened and clenched and my legs shook. Another strong orgasm rippled through me. I bit his neck and chest, moaning and gasping as pleasure crashed over me wave after wave.

Soren's arms tightened around me and he groaned. His c\*\*k trembled and pulsed as he released into me.

It took us several moments to pull apart. I thought Soren might cling to me like that all night. His breath trembled and I could still feel his heart pounding.

My breathing slowly started to even out and Soren eased his grip on me. He slipped his arm under my neck and put his other hand on my belly.

“That wasn’t too much, was it?” he asked.

I sighed in satisfaction and shook my head. “It was perfect.”

I leaned closer, pressing my forehead against his chest. Soren wrapped me in his arms and held me close. I fell asleep quickly in his warm, loving, safe embrace.

## [Chapter 759](#)

\*Soren\*

I woke up and saw sunlight across the bedroom. It was the first sunlight I’d seen in days!

I smiled and hugged Mila. She was curled into the crook of my body. Sighing, I nuzzled my nose on the back of her neck and slipped my hands over her belly.

Mila giggled and squirmed in my grasp.

“What has you in such a good mood?”

“The sun is out,” I said, nibbling lightly on the back of her neck.

She giggled again and turned in my arms, facing me. I gasped and pushed some hair from her face.

“And now, it is even better because I can look at your beautiful face.”

Mila bit her lower lip, her cheeks turning crimson. Her eyes roamed over me and she drank me in. I got the sense that she felt the same about seeing me in the morning as I felt about seeing her.

I could feel her heart beating in her chest, erratically. Every now and then it skipped a beat.

“I can’t get used to it,” she whispered.

“Get used to what?” I arched an eyebrow.

“How handsome you are...”

I chuckled and shook my head. Swooping my arms around her, I hugged her close, burying my face in the crook of her neck.

“Soren.”

Mila ran her fingers through my hair and kissed the side of my head.

I growled. “I didn’t thank you last night.”

“Thank me for what?”

“Mila, this baby...” I put my hands on her stomach. “It means the world to me. You both do. So, thank you, for being the mother of my child.”

Mila gasped in my ear, her arms tightening around me.

I smiled, kissing her shoulder and her neck. The sunlight seemed to have her in a good mood, too.

“Now that the sun is out, we should be able to leave soon,” I told her.

“Good, because I can’t wait to go home.”

“Then let’s get ready. Charles is awake, he can handle things for now. It is time for us to go. We have a lot to do to get ready for the baby.”

I threw the covers back.

Mila groaned and grabbed at the sheets. “Do we have to?”

“Soren, are you awake yet?” Thomas’s voice came through the mindlink.

I pursed my lips. Mila immediately picked up on my change of mood.

“What?” she mouthed to me. She sat up and touched my shoulder.

I tapped the side of my head and put a finger to my lips. She nodded.

“What is it, Thomas?” I mindlinked back.

“We need to talk... like now.”

“What happened?”

There were few things in the world that Thomas would classify as urgent but his tone was filled with urgency. If it had him shaken, then it had to be big.

“Long story short... After Charles woke up, he told the others that there are basically no other Norwind survivors, except for the ones here... and Enzo told them that the packland is damaged. Some fighting broke out.”

“What kind of fighting?”

“The kind that split them into two groups. Half of them wanted to stay and rebuild the pack, the other half wanted to leave and make their own way.”

I rubbed my forehead.

“That’s unfortunate.”

“Well, I tried to tell you last night but when I got to your room... I heard some... interesting sounds from your room,” he relayed in a teasing tone. “I figured you were preoccupied with... your mate... and I didn’t want to interrupt.”

I cleared my throat.

“Soren, what is it?” Mila asked. “Is everything okay?”

I nodded and cupped her face. Leaning in, I kissed her forehead.

“Don’t worry, everything will be fine. Thomas is looking for me... We’ve got a few things to take care of. Why don’t you go back to sleep and rest some more? It is good for you and the baby.”

“If something is wrong, Soren, I want to help.”



"It's nothing. I'll talk to Thomas and get breakfast ready."

She smiled lightly and nodded, lying back on the bed. I gave her a quick kiss and got up to take a shower.

Once the water was beating down, I contacted Thomas again through the mindlink.

"I know this isn't great news but we can't fix all of Norwind. Now that Charles is awake, he is an elder and they'll have to sort this out themselves."

"I know, Soren, but..."

"What did Charles say when the others wanted to leave?"

"He suggested they wait a week to see what happens with the water. Then they can reevaluate the damage to the packland and make a decision together."

"That's what I would do. If that was the suggestion, then what is the problem?"

From what Thomas said, it seemed like Charles was already taking control of the situation. So far, he hadn't told me anything about Charles being unable to handle things.

"Give me some credit," Thomas teased. "If all that happened was a little dispute, do you think I'd be interrupting your lazy morning?"

"What else happened?"

I toweled off and grabbed my clothes from the back of the bathroom door.

"Before we knew what was happening, the people that wanted to leave stole our boats and all the food rations we had in storage. They vanished into the night!"

"What!?"

Now, that was news!

"Give me two minutes, I'll be right down."

"Soren, that's only half the problem."

I stared at my reflection in the bathroom mirror, glaring. What could possibly be worse than us getting stranded here without any food?

"How so?"

"The people that left... we found them this morning... dead..."

"Damn! I'm on my way."

\*\*\*

Mila insisted on coming with me after I told her that half of the refugees had been killed in the night. Thomas gave me instructions on where to find him and the others.

We met them near the border of town where several bodies were scattered.

There was no sign of the boats or stolen food. That meant these bodies were a message. They'd been placed here on purpose, not killed here.

"I know you were eager to leave, Mila, but we need to find out what these deaths mean," I told Mila after finishing the brief update.

"I know."

I looped my arm around her shoulders and reached out to Thomas with the mindlink.

"Thomas, I want you to go back to the mountain and look for any evidence. Be discreet. I have a hunch and I want you to confirm it."

"Yes, Alpha."

Many of the Norwind survivors had gathered, except for the kids. I'd made sure Enzo and my soldiers kept the kids at the packhouse. They didn't need to see this kind of c\*\*\*\*\*e.

"I don't understand..." someone murmured.

"How did this happen..."

"They got what they deserved. This is the Moon Goddess's justice for what they did to us!"

Lilian was there, too. She stared blankly into the flood waters; her eyes distant.

I could see different reactions from the gathered adults. Some were angry, others looked lost and grief stricken. It was hard to determine what they were feeling and why.

I approached Lilian, keeping Mila at my side.

There was a body in the water that Lilian was staring at. Her sister, Angelica... an arrow had pierced her body and was still stuck through her heart.

"My sister..."

"She wanted to leave?" I asked.

Lilian looked at me and sighed. "I told her we should stay and follow Charles's guidance. As a mother, it made more sense than trying to take my son off into the unknown. She didn't agree... She wanted a fresh start."

"I'm sorry, Lilian," Mila said, hugging the other woman.

"What are we going to do? If we stay, it means hard work to restore the packland and... but we can't leave, not now..."

"You can't seriously be grieving their loss," another woman butted into Lilian's sadness.

"They betrayed us! Instead of working to help the whole pack, they stole our food and fled!"

"They left us nothing!"

“Look, I understand that this is an explosive situation,” I said, holding my hands up. “You were mad that they stole the food and ran off, abandoning you. But instead of anger, you’re facing grief because they are all dead.”

I could sense the tension among the remaining Norwind members. They were confused about what to feel.

How were they supposed to feel?

Betrayal, anger, and grief all rolled together without any outlet. It had to burn in so many ways. They were stuck and they’d torture themselves for answers about why and how forever.

“Alpha,” Thomas broke into my thoughts with the mindlink.

“What did you find?”

His voice became somber. “I’m afraid your guess was right... they’re still here...”

“Thank you. Head back now.”

I sighed heavily and held my hands up again to try and silence everyone.

They were a powder keg waiting to go off, and the news Thomas gave me would ignite panic and terror. They’d fully explode.

Mila could sense the change that came over me and she tried to catch my eye. For the moment, I didn’t make eye contact.

Charles came over to us, bowing his head. “Thank you for coming. You didn’t need to.”

“You just woke up from a coma, this is a lot to handle,” I said, waving off his concerns.

“Why did this happen?” Lilian asked, her voice trembling.

“Why? Because those selfish assholes only care about themselves! Stop mourning those traitors!”

“She was my sister!” Lilian snapped.

I clenched my fists. Already, tensions were rising. There would be infighting soon and even more panic. I had to try and diffuse the situation.

“They don’t deserve your grief, Lilian!”

“Do you think she thought of you as her sister when she left you and your son here to starve?” someone asked.

“She’s dead. What more do you want from her?” Lilian snapped.

“How about some food? Sure, they died, but they also took our only food! It is useless now. If they wanted to get themselves killed, that’s their business, but they didn’t need to leave us to die too!”

Murmurs of agreement went through the crowd.

I glanced at Charles and he nodded.

“Everyone, listen to me,” he shouted. “You’re focusing on the wrong thing!”

I put my arm around Mila and hugged her close. We gave Charles our full attention to show respect. I hoped it would get the others to fall in line.

“Let’s put aside our emotions for a moment and focus on the key problems. First and most importantly, how did they die...?”

“Arrows!” someone snapped.

I shook my head.

“That’s not what I meant,” Charles argued.

“What does it matter? They got what they deserved!”

I stepped away from Mila and stood beside Charles. The murmurs quieted and everyone stared at me. My presence was more intimidating than Charles’s. I’d help him keep things under control.

“It matters because these people were killed trying to get out of Norwind. Look around, there are no boats, the food isn’t here. These bodies were planted as a warning to us. We’re all stuck here, me and my men included,” I said.

“Someone wants to bury us, along with any memories of Norwind. We have to be careful or it will be us next,” Charles added.

I glanced sideways at him. I wasn’t sure if he’d guess who that “someone” was. Charles didn’t ask and he didn’t offer any theories, so I remained silent.

If they knew what I suspected, they’d panic and emotions would be even more out of control.

“Exactly. We are lucky right now... the flood waters are keeping whoever “they” are away from us. In a boat on the water, we’d be easy targets,” I said.

“Sooner or later, the roads will clear. We need a plan before then,” Charles agreed with a nod.

“Yes.”

Lilian clenched her fists and glared. “Who... who would want to kill all of us? What did we do!?”

“Perhaps it is the same people that blew up the mountain,” I suggested.

“Do you know who that is?” Lilian asked.

Slowly, I shook my head. I looked at Mila and she nodded. I could see it in her eyes. She’d come to the same conclusion as me.

The one who wanted to kill them all was... The Alpha King.

## [Chapter 760](#)

\*Mila\*

“Lilian, let’s not waste time trying to guess who is out there,” Charles said, shaking his head. “We know there is danger out there but right now, we need to focus on a plan.”

Rubbing his hands together, Charles turned to the others.

I stepped back and Soren did too. It was Charles’s place to lead Norwind and guide them. They had to look to him, not to Soren or me. We both understood that. The more Charles asserted himself, the more they would trust him.

“It is no use debating who is at fault or whether or not they got what they deserved. We need to focus on the more pressing matters at hand,” Charles continued.

I could practically feel the shift in mood among the Norwind survivors. They quieted down and started really listening to Charles.

“First off, we’ve all had a long night. We need some time to recuperate, calm our nerves. I want everyone to return home and search for anything that could be useful, any supplies,” he ordered. “We’ll regroup at the packhouse in a couple of hours and take stock of what we have.”

“What good will that do?” someone asked.

“It is a starting point. Now, go... if there’s anyone that wants to remain and help bury the deceased...”

“My men can help with that,” Soren suggested. “Everyone else, do as Charles instructed.”

The survivors nodded and murmured and wandered off.

Charles sighed and turned his attention to Soren. “We cannot be more grateful for your help... and I do apologize for the loss of your boats and supplies. I’m sorry you’re stuck with us for the time being.

Soren scoffed. “I am sorry for your loss, and this complicated situation.”

I lowered my head in solidarity.

In the past week in the packhouse, I’d banished Chandler, Sebastian, and Dylan out of my mind, for the most part.

Naively, I thought that Dylan and Sebastian would fight it out and that conflict would be contained between the two of them. That they wouldn’t bother us anymore...

I’d forgotten that the Alpha King wouldn’t want anyone to discover his true identity and he’d kill anyone that he thought knew the truth. Dylan, or Sebastian in Dylan’s body, had been here in Norwind.

No one who’d been here could leave, or it would risk revealing the truth about Dylan and Sebastian. Whatever happened in Norwind had to stay in Norwind.

Right now, we were safe. The flood waters created a barrier between us and the cruelty of the king. If we couldn’t get out, they couldn’t get in.

But that wouldn’t last long...

“I’ll help with the bodies. Angelica was family, after all,” Lilian said.

She and Charles went to the bodies. Some of Soren's warriors arrived and immediately began helping gather the bodies and dig graves for them.

Thomas and Payne arrived, coming straight to Soren and me.

Soren watched Charles with a distant look in his eyes.

I took his hand and squeezed his fingers. "What's on your mind?"

He looked at me and gave a dry, humorless smile.

"If we decided to leave, no one could stop us. Me and my men are too well trained to get caught off guard."

I nodded slowly. "That may be true. With you, Payne, and Thomas working together, I'd lay the odds in your favor..."

"You don't sound so sure," Soren said. He reached out and cupped my cheek.

"Soren... no one could stop you but what about the rest of Norwind?" I flicked my eyes toward Charles and Lilian.

"What will happen to the rest of them if we leave?"

Soren sighed and squeezed my hand. "We can't save everyone. Norwind has to stand on their own. They've got Charles and Enzo to lead them. They have to make their own destiny."

I shook my head. "But Enzo and Ben... they are just children. Once we leave, they won't have any warriors for protection."

"They will find their way."

"Even if no one attacks them, they have no food, no workforce to rebuild. They're helpless. We'd be leaving them to die, whether by arrows from their attackers or slowly. I can't... I won't leave them to die."

"Mila, you are very kind hearted..."

"They aren't a pack anymore, Soren. They are just helpless survivors. If we don't help them, are we any better than the ones picking them off and forcing them to live in terror?"

I glared at Soren. He smirked at me and shook his head gently.

"I'm not afraid of the Alpha King. My warriors are strong, but we are limited in number. If we try to bring everyone with us, more people will die. We can't protect them all."

I frowned and bowed my head. It wasn't what I wanted to hear. There had to be another way out of this mess! The Norwind survivors couldn't stay here, they'd starve. They couldn't leave through the main roads, because those roads were being watched.

"Mila, you know that if you asked me, I won't say now. If you'd like, we can at least try to sneak the kids out."

Soren's words were sweet. My heart fluttered but I shook my head.

"No, I don't think trying to sneak them out is the best idea. Besides, if we force our way out, the Alpha King would know I'm still alive and he'd come for us."

Soren tilted his head to the side. "Do you have an alternative idea?"

I'd been thinking of more discreet ways out of the packland and I thought I had an idea but I wanted to see if the others thought I was crazy."

"I... I don't know," I muttered.

"Mila, what are you thinking?" Soren pressed.

"Well, you're probably going to think I am crazy... but this whole time we've been acting like there are just two options. Stay here and die or take the main roads and die..."

"You think there is a third option?"

"There have to be other ways out of Norwind packland, other than the main roads, right?"

Soren smirked.

"You might be onto something, darling. Payne, Thomas, what do you think?"

Payne and Thomas came closer. They'd been standing nearby trying not to listen to me and Soren, but I knew they were both listening.

"I found a map of Norwind," Payne said. He pulled out the map and laid it on the ground. We all knelt around the map, studying the roads in and out of the packland.

I scanned the map. The mountains we'd been trapped under were along the southern border. That same mountain range extended along the north and west sides of the territory. That meant all the major roads in and out of the packland were on the east side.

The Alpha King's forces would be focused on the east roads.

"Moving through the mountains will be difficult. Especially, with children," Thomas said, motioning to the mountain ranges.

"The attackers won't suspect us to go that way because of the women and children. They are most likely concentrated around the main roads," Payne agreed.

"What's beyond those mountains?" I asked.

Payne shrugged. "We don't know. There could be entire armies waiting for us."

"I doubt it. That would stretch the forces too thin," Soren said.

"Going into the unknown is better than just sitting here waiting for the flood to recede and the attackers to come," I muttered. "It's safer for us to leave here before the roads are well enough to travel."

"I agree. Though, I never expected we'd be back to these old explorations," Soren said, smirking at Thomas.

Thomas grinned.

“Honestly, I’m actually a little excited. It has been a while since we’ve done any fun exploring. Which directions should we scout?”

“All of them?” Payne asked.

Thomas shrugged. “It would take too much time. We don’t have food; we need a faster solution. We shouldn’t spread out too much and stick together.”

“West? That is the opposite direction of the roads,” Payne suggested.

“Southwest,” I said, pointing to that corner of the map.

“Why so certain?” Soren asked.

I glanced at him, meeting his gaze. Quickly, I shifted my eyes to Payne. I tapped the edge of the map.

Payne’s eyes widened. He gasped and met my eyes again.

“Because that’s the direction to Pomeni packland! Mila, you want to lead them to Pomeni?”

Soren chuckled and nodded. He took my hand and squeezed. “That’s a great idea, Mila! You’re always surprising me.”

Thomas smirked and jumped up. “Let’s get this show on the road! This is going to be fun!”

I sighed and shook my head. “Now, I just need to see who is willing to take the gamble and come with us.”

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Two hours later, Payne and I joined the Norwind survivors at the packhouse.

Thomas and Soren had gone ahead with the warriors to ensure that the way was clear. I didn’t think they’d run into any issues.

Pomeni was a barren wasteland. Even the Alpha King wouldn’t think we’d try to escape from one bad packland to another.

I stood in front of all the Norwind survivors until I had their attention.

“Listen up, everyone, I may have found a way out of here for all of us. Now, we can’t guarantee everyone’s survival. There is a risk to the path we are taking out of here but if you stay, you will be in just as much danger,” I said.

No one spoke up or responded. They all just stared at me, waiting for me to continue. I hoped that meant they were willing to give this a chance.

It wasn’t that I was invested in the survival of Norwind, but I couldn’t in good conscience leave without offering them a potential solution. If they wanted to stay, that was on them. I’d know I did whatever I could to save them.



“We’ll wait for a half hour at the southwest border of town before leaving. If we don’t see you, then we’ll assume you’re remaining behind and we wish you the best of luck. If you choose to stay, please take care.”

I nodded to everyone. They turned to each other and started murmuring.

“Let’s go, Payne, if they want to join us, they will.”

I led Payne out of the pack house. We headed southwest to join Soren, Thomas, and the others.

“Mila... you didn’t tell them you’re leading them to Pomeni, or even another packland for that matter,” Payne pointed out. “If they knew the truth, they’d be more likely to come.”

“I know. And that’s why I didn’t tell them. We both know Pomeni is not perfect. The packland needs to be restored, the village rebuilt... it will all have to start from scratch.”

“And you think they wouldn’t come if they knew?”

Payne arched an eyebrow at me.

“These people have seen a lot of betrayal. They are filled with resentment. I don’t want them to bring that with them.”

Payne grinned. “So, you gave them the option as a way to filter out who would leave that anger and resentment behind?”

I sighed. “Payne, my intention isn’t to rebuild Pomeni, let alone pick out pack members... A lot of the people here are innocent and kind. They deserve the chance to rebuild, without the bitterness of resentment,” I explained.

Payne nodded slowly, his face reflecting how deep in thought he was.

“Anyone that trusts me enough to follow or who wants to fight for their own survival, who’s willing to take risks, they’ll appreciate the life I’m offering them.”

“You’re right, they will.”

“We both know the journey won’t be pleasant. I need them to figure out for themselves whether it is worth the risk. Whoever chooses to come only has to know we might not make it. They need to make a decision on the worst possible scenario... otherwise, they aren’t the kind of people we want around.”

Payne nodded, his eyes fixed on me. I wasn’t sure what I saw in his face. I bit my lower lip and looked down.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“Miss Mila, I’ve said it before... I’ll say it again... if and when you decide to rebuild Pomeni, please allow me to stand beside you.”