

## Kings Breeder 971

### [Chapter 971: Not Safe](#)

\*Sasha\*

A hand on my arm pulled me from a trembling, sweaty nightmare.

"Sasha sweety?" Lucas murmured, stroking my arm up and down.

When I opened my eyes, he took my hand, threading his fingers through mine.

"Lucas," I croaked. "She was here—that old priestess."

"I know." Lucas looked away from me, shame written on his face. "She disguised herself somehow, I think using magic. We all thought she was the doctor. I should have known better."

"Lucas, I thought she was a doctor too... until her eyes changed," I sighed, squeezing his hand.

Lucas shook his head. "This is a bad development. I... I need to talk to Brady. You just rest." He smoothed the sweaty hair off my face. "How's the head?"

I turned my head this way and that. "Well, whatever she did, whatever evil she might have in mind for the future, I think she did actually cure my concussion."

"That's good, at least," Lucas mumbled. He kissed my hand, then tucked it next to me. "I'll just be in the office. Brady and I... we're going to come up with a plan."

I reached for Lucas when he stood, and he looked back at me. "Maybe I can help?"

"Later, princess," Lucas said, settling my hand back beside me again. "For now, Brady and I can talk it out."

"Hmph," I grumbled as Lucas walked out of the bedroom. Overbearing ass.

I slipped out of the bed and padded down the hall after Lucas.

Phoebe was hovering outside the office already. She put a finger to her lips.

I had to stop myself from laughing as the two of us crept close to the partially-open door to listen in.

"... can't risk taking the orb to court. And I can't risk King Xander or Queen Lena knowing about it. They'll probably start calling in experts and poking and prodding the thing, and Goddess knows what that will do to Sasha," Lucas was saying.

"Agreed," Brady said after a moment. "The fewer people who know about it, the better... I mean, at least until you figure out what this mission from the Goddess is. At least now that you have the orb, Sasha's been returning to you. If it falls into the wrong hands—"

"Exactly," Lucas sighed.

I snuck a peek and saw the orb was laying on its silk covering, exposed, on the desk between them. It was still blue from my last journey, but was not glowing or pulsing anymore.

"I think the two of you would be able to hear better if you came in here," Brady called, and Phoebe and I both blushed and slunk into the office.

Lucas frowned at me, but turned back to Brady. "What do you suggest?"

"If it's an artifact of the ancient Church of the White Queen, I think... well... wouldn't your mother be the ideal source for information?" Brady asked slowly.

Lucas groaned. "Really? We really need to bring her into this?"

"I would say so," Brady said. "You should start packing for the Light Realm. Hell, we all should. Those assholes overran the house!"

"And we did f\*\*k all to stop it. I hate that old woman, I really do," Lucas grumbled.

"Maybe I should just keep working with the orb?" I suggested.

Brady and Lucas fell silent and looked at me.

"Say what?" Lucas gaped.

"Maybe I should just keep working with it, see what it wants and what the Goddess wants," I said. "I mean, that seems to be the best possible way to research it, right? It's talking to me, and the Goddess gave me a mission to do using it. Maybe if I work with it just a bit more—"

Lucas cut through the air with his hand, making a slashing motion. "Absolutely not. I'm not letting you near this thing. You are never to touch it again, do you hear me? I'll throw it in the sea first!"

I rolled my eyes. "Again with the sea."

"You'd better believe it," Lucas grunted. He wrapped the orb back up and quickly shoved it in his safe before I could say another word about it.

"I don't think that it is as safe as you think."

He raised an eyebrow but didn't budge.

"You know, technically that's mine. The Goddess wanted me to have it," I tried again.

"If she can get it out of my safe and hand it to you, then you're welcome to it," Lucas replied, raising his chin in defiance.

"You have no sense of hubris," I hissed, wondering if he had just called down the wrath of the Goddess.

"And you have no sense of self-preservation," Lucas shot back.

I folded my arms over my chest and got ready for a big blowout fight.

Prudently, Brady tugged Phoebe away. "Gee, I think I might have left something in the oven. Better go check." He and Phoebe scurried away.

"It's my orb," I reiterated. "The Goddess gave it to me the mission was for me and—"

"Technically, it's my orb. Brady and I found it," Lucas said, cutting me off.

"She didn't give you a mission," I replied, thumping my foot on the floor. "She gave me a mission. I have to follow through or Goddess knows what will happen. She needs me to save someone. I'd like to know who, when, and how, honestly."

Lucas crossed his massive arms and puffed out his chest. I wasn't too irritated with him to notice just how hot that stance was. I took a steadying breath to stay focused.

"I only care about keeping you safe, Sasha," Lucas said and my next argument died in my throat. "I got you into this mess, and I'm getting you out of it."

"Lucas... I don't think that's true...."

He furrowed his brow and opened his mouth to argue, but I held up a hand.

"You didn't make me a dream dancer and...." I rubbed my tongue over my tooth. "I'm quite certain this is something my mother has been trying to protect me from my whole life."

"Your mother? What does your mother have to do with this?"

"I don't know," I said, shying away from telling him everything.

"What aren't you telling me, Sasha?"

I fumbled with the emerald hanging around my neck. "I can't really explain what I don't understand. I just always thought my mother was superstitious because she came from a superstitious pack. But now...." I subconsciously circled a finger around my wrist.

"That bracelet," Lucas picked up on what I didn't want to talk about. "You said it was for protection from your mother. Did she give you a new one? Where is it? Maybe it can help."

I looked down at the floor. "It's not working."

"Oh...."

I could tell he wanted to ask more questions, but he looked me over and nodded his acceptance of what I told him.

"Well, we are headed to the Light Realm. We should talk to your mother as soon as possible to see what she knows. Until then, I will do whatever I think is necessary to keep you safe."

"Like throwing the orb into the sea," I snorted.

Lucas shrugged. "Whatever it takes."

"What if I have to go diving in after it?" I asked.

"That's one of the only reasons it's not already at the very bottom of the deepest point of the ocean," Lucas responded. He had put himself between me and the safe, preventing me from getting to it, as though I'd be able to open it anyway.

I threw up my hands. "You're impossible!"

"You're sexy when you're mad," Lucas said with the slightest of smiles.

I walked over and punched him in the shoulder. "You just see if you ever have s\*x with me again, Lucas Black."

"Hey, if it keeps you safe from that orb, I can be celibate," Lucas replied.

"You can't make decisions for me, Lucas. I want to work with the orb," I tried reasoning with him.

"I know I can't make all your decisions for you, but on this point, you're not going to get me to budge," Lucas said firmly.

I sighed. "I did come back to you, you know. I heard your voice, and I came back."

"Yeah, after being comatose for most of a day," Lucas reminded me. "You didn't even wake up when we were in the water. You scared the ever-loving s\*\*t out of me, and I'm not letting either of us go through that again."

"Lucas, you're being unreasonable!" I shouted.

Lucas snorted. "You're the one who's being unreasonable. This isn't something we should be f\*\*\*\*\*g around with."

"I'm not 'f\*\*\*\*\*g around.' I was given a mission—" I began to explain again.

"Yeah, and we had the house invaded by a crazy priestess who wants you to fulfill it. I don't think that's a ringing endorsement for whatever you're meant to be doing," Lucas said.

My eyes narrowed. "You don't believe me about seeing the Goddess and getting the mission?"

Lucas touched my shoulder. "I believe you saw what you saw, but that it might have been a trick by these crazies who are after us. I want to be sure before we proceed any further, okay? Just... let's go to the Light Realm and talk with our parents to see what they may know, do some research. What's the hurry?"

"The old priestess said time is of the essence," I said.

"Like we want to do anything on her timeline? Just let it go for now. Mom will take a look at it, we'll do some research. Just slow down, Sasha. That's all I'm asking," Lucas pleaded with me.

I both appreciated and hated his heavy-handedness at the same time. "Sometimes you are a real pain in the ass, Lucas Black."

"I don't remember trying that one, but if you're game...." Lucas teased, clearly trying to change the subject.

I swatted him on the arm. "You can't hide the orb from me forever. Eventually, I'm going to get my hands on it and figure out what all this is about."

"Doubt it," Lucas said. He put an arm around my shoulders and began guiding me toward the office door.

I thought of shaking him off, but that would just be cutting off my nose to spite my face. I liked his touch. I wanted him to touch me more.

"Shame you're putting a stop to our bedroom activities," Lucas smirked, as though reading my mind. His arm slid off my shoulders, going lower on my back, then lower still to cup my backside. He gave a teasing little squeeze.

I had to stand firm, for the honor of women everywhere. I deliberately took his hand off my ass and placed it at his side. "No, no, no. Not until you let me work with the orb."

"Celibacy it is," Lucas grunted. He bumped his hip against mine as we walked.

I looked up at him, and lust curled in my gut.

Just how long was I going to be able to hold out?

Lucas licked his lips, knowing full well I was watching him.

"You're mean," I muttered, looking away.

"You like it," Lucas teased.

I felt myself pout. "Just half an hour with the orb? Then we can spend all night...."

Lucas shook his head. "Nope. Now let's get you back to bed. I'll be in, in a minute.

I frowned at him, suspicious. "What are you planning to do now?"

"Just get in touch with my brother and tell him we're on our way," Lucas said. "Nothing sinister."

"I didn't say I'd go to the Light Realm yet. What about my work-study?" I responded. "And Amanda? What if our trouble ends up finding her?"

"I'll make sure Amanda is taken care of. I was worried about retaliation from Donovan, anyway," Lucas grunted.

I scowled. "That asshole."

"No arguments here." Lucas surprised me by lifting me as soon as we reached the bed, settling me down in his satin sheets and even going so far as to tuck me in. He leaned down and gave me a kiss on the forehead—not exactly where I wanted the kiss, but I was the one who'd changed our arrangement in the name of pride.

How I was going to sleep next to this man without letting him have his way with me, I had no idea.

## [Chapter 972: Oh Brother](#)

\*Lucas\*

I made sure Sasha was all tucked in, then went back to my office, a slight smile on my face. We'd see who could hold out the longest. I had a sneaking suspicion Sasha was going to relent sooner rather than later.

A few papers were out of place on my desk, so I organized them, dragging my feet on what I had to do next. It wasn't as though I had any problem with Oliver, my brother, but I did worry about bringing someone—anyone—new into our little circle of orb hell.

Finally, after an hour had passed of me fiddling with things that didn't need fiddling with, I picked up the phone receiver and dialed Oliver's number.

"What's wrong?" Oliver answered without preamble. It didn't surprise me a bit that my brother was in his office at this hour. He was a very dedicated Alpha of Pack Drogomor.

"Does your poor mate ever see you?" I joked, trying to lighten the mood.

"Yes. What's wrong?" Oliver repeated.

I sighed. There was nothing to do but tell him everything.

"How do you always know when something's wrong?" I grumbled, glancing balefully at the wood panel that hid my safe.

"You don't call unless something is wrong," Oliver reminded me.

I winced. I really needed to be a better brother. "I'll work on that."

"Ahuh. So, don't keep beating around the bush, tell me what's up," Oliver said.

I swallowed. "I... well, it's a very long story...."

"Highlights."

That was Oliver. Down to business. "I'm in trouble. Me and Sasha Wentley. And... well... the people who are close to us... perhaps the world at large...."

"More details than that," Oliver demanded. "Though how you ended up with Sasha Wentley after the tormenting you gave her growing up is another tale I'd love to hear."

"Yeah, and I'll fill you in on it when we get to Drogomor," I said.

There was a short silence. "You're coming back to the Light Realm? With Sasha Wentley?"

"And maybe a few other friends," I said. "Look, we're being hunted down by a priestess from Levis and some shifters she has under her control, not to mention...."

"You'd better start mentioning," Oliver growled.

"I found something at my job site, something I can't even bring to Alpha King Xander or Queen Lena. It's just too big a risk," I sighed.

"You found something you can't even bring to your own cousin?" Oliver protested. "Lucas, those are some dangerous words. How can you not bring something to the attention of the king?"

"Not everyone in the Alpha King's court can be trusted and... I'm... afraid of what will happen," I replied. "This thing... it's connected to Sasha somehow, and I don't know what will happen to her once experts

start poking and prodding it. I think it's an artifact from the ancient Church of the White Queens. But it... it makes people disappear. Or, rather, it makes Sasha disappear."

I heard some rustling on the other end of the phone. "Hang on. I have a feeling this is going to require a brandy," Oliver grunted.

The liquid swished, and I waited as Oliver took a long gulp.

"You were saying something about Sasha Wentley disappearing?" Oliver prodded.

"Yes. I mean, not just disappearing. Disappearing as though she never existed in the first place. No one remembers her. I'm the only person who knows her. It's... creepy," I said.

"Sounds disturbing," Oliver agreed. "And we aren't just throwing whatever it is into the ocean because...?"

I liked how my brother and I had similar thinking. "I'm afraid the orb will call Sasha after it. She's convinced the Goddess has given her a mission having to do with the artifact. And from what she described to me, that's entirely possible. But we're also being chased by an old priestess who possesses at least a little magic, so I'm wondering if Sasha, you know, saw what she saw."

"An old priestess from Leviss," Oliver said.

"Yes." I thought of the old woman and my blood burned. She would never touch my Sasha again.

Oliver was quiet again. "You're particularly possessive and growly. Is Sasha Wentley your mate?"

The thought made my insides warm, but....

"I don't know. She hasn't had her birthday yet."

"You'd like her to be," Oliver inferred.

I shrugged, then realized he couldn't see it, and replied, "It wouldn't be the worst thing in the world."

"You sleeping with her?" Oliver asked.

My face heated up. "That's not really the point...."

"You are sleeping with her," Oliver said. I could hear him take another swig.

"Technically not now. She's a bit miffed over me keeping her and the artifact separated, so she's gone and decided I don't get to have any if I don't let her do what she wants with the orb," I responded.

"There are other women. As I recall, you're even rather popular with them," Oliver suggested.

I saw red. "There are no other women."

"Yep. As I suspected." Another long swig. "You've got it bad, little brother."

I rubbed the back of my neck, wondering when the exact moment had been that I'd forsaken all others for Sasha. I couldn't pinpoint a time, but I knew it was true. I didn't want anyone else. "Can we talk about the artifact and leave the rest alone?"

"Sure," Oliver said. "You're coming here anyway, you said. So we'll have plenty of time to talk about other things when you get here."

I groaned inwardly. "Yes, plenty of time."

Oliver chuckled, and I wanted to punch him, but of course I couldn't through the phone. Pity. "Oh, the things we're going to discuss, little brother."

"So, there won't be any issue with my coming? I don't know yet if it's just going to be Sasha and me or if Brady and Phoebe will be coming as well," I said.

"How is Brady? And who's Phoebe?" Oliver asked.

"Phoebe's a shifter and his fiancée. He's on cloud nine over being engaged to her," I replied. "Which is another reason why this situation sucks. Brady should be basking in engaged bliss right now, but instead he's getting tangled up in this mess."

"Hmm. Well, they're more than welcome here." There was a clink as I imagined Oliver set his glass aside. "Getting caught up in save-the-world type s\*\*t. You just have all the luck, little brother."

"Yes, well, when I bring the artifact your way, you'll be caught up in it, too," I informed him.

That made Oliver go silent again. "Our pack is strong. If there are any outside threats, we can deal with them." He paused. "But Lucas Black, I swear to you, if something happens to my mate as a result of having that 'artifact' here, I will break your spine."

"Noted. Hell, if something like that happened, I'd break my own spine," I said.

"I take it you ultimately want Mother to take a look at it?" Oliver guessed.

"Yes. I was going to have Eliza look at it, but then it disappeared with Sasha for a day, and all Eliza could think of was that the orb has something to do with time, which makes sense because when Sasha disappears, I go back to the day before and have to live a whole day in a universe where she doesn't exist." I noted that my voice sounded pained.

"Relax, brother. We'll figure it all out. You just keep Sasha away from that orb, at least until you get here and Mother can look at it," Oliver said soothingly. "Now, you go pack... or convince your probably-mate to sleep with you, or both. You sound like you need a hug from a sweet-smelling female."

I snorted. "Yeah, more than a hug, but I have every intention of winning this little war between us. Even if it means I have to be celibate for the rest of my life, she is not touching that orb, not ever again."

"Spoken like a true Alpha male," Oliver chuckled. "Alright, I'll see you when you get here. Take precautions. I don't want to hear you got snapped up by a little old lady and her band of bullies."

"Noted," I said. "I'll try to stop that from happening."

"Good." Oliver creaked back in his chair. "You've given me a lot to think about, little brother. We'll discuss it more when you get here."

"Thank you, Oliver," I responded, relieved he was going to take us in.



"You're welcome." The line cut.

I closed my eyes and leaned back in my own chair, thinking of the mess we were in. It was tempting for me to get my own glass of something strong, but I wanted to stay sharp, just in case, by some evil magic, the old priestess got in again.

After another hour, I left my office and returned to my bedroom, where Sasha was sleeping soundly.

I sat down next to her and ran my fingers through her beautiful blond hair.

She stirred, then blinked up at me with sleepy eyes. "You're still not getting any," she mumbled.

I laughed. "I kind of figured. No, I called Oliver. We're going to start making our way to the Light Realm in the morning. We're going to Drogomor, where there are plenty of shifters to protect you."

"Us—protect us," Sasha corrected me.

"Mmm. I'm more concerned about you, Sasha sweetie." I trailed my fingertips along her jaw, then ran my thumb across her lower lip.

Sasha moaned, and I felt it in my groin. "You don't play fair," she complained, her lust-filled blue eyes boring into mine.

"Right back at you, princess," I said huskily, and I brushed my lips over hers.

She didn't stop me. I knew she would, eventually. We hadn't finished our little dance. But I was willing to go as far as she'd let me.

Sasha swayed into my arms, and I pulled her into my lap, cursing the fact I'd tucked her in so tightly that I was holding a Sasha burrito. It didn't exactly leave room for what I had in mind.

"Didn't think that one through, did you?" Sasha teased, and I growled.

In moments, my satin sheets were shredded, and there were feathers from the comforter everywhere. Sasha was on her back, gasping as I pressed my erection right where I knew she wanted it—right where I wanted it.

"Mmm, Lucas!" she gasped, tugging on my hair as I rubbed against her sensitive spots through our clothes.

"Sasha sweetie..." I purred. I kissed and nibbled my way along her neck. "Is there something that you want?"

"You know there is," Sasha groaned. She tugged my head down and I lapped her tight n\*\*\*\*e through her shirt, then pulled the peak into my mouth.

Sasha trembled and moaned. "Lucas...."

"Mhm?" I responded around her n\*\*\*\*e.

"Please... PLEASE let me use the orb," she whined.

I chuckled. Clever minx. "Not a snowball's chance in hell."

Sasha sighed, then pulled my lips away from her body using her grip on my hair. "You are so evil."

"Don't you and I know it," I grinned. "So, is this where we leave off... for now?"

"Yes," Sasha said, squaring her shoulders. "This is where we leave off."

"For now."

"For always if you don't let me work on the mission the Goddess gave me," Sasha warned me.

"Mhm. I'll believe that when I see it." I got off the bed and stripped off my shirt and pants, not caring she could see how my boxers were tented for her.

I could hear a little squeak behind me, and I gave her an innocent look. "Something wrong, princess?"

"Nope, not a thing." Sasha gathered what was left of the comforter around her and promptly rolled away from me.

I stifled a laugh, then got into bed next to her. "Sweet dreams."

Sasha groaned into her pillow.

### [Chapter 973: Visions of Future Past](#)

\*Sasha\*

I stared down at the packet that had been delivered to me from Amanda. Apparently, it had come to the dorm, but since I wasn't staying there for the foreseeable future, Amanda had decided it was important enough to send to Lucas's.

She was right. Inside the packet was my new assignment from Professor Augustine. Stone Hamline had requested that I be transferred to the capital building project.

I sighed and pinched the bridge of my nose, feeling the weight of the decision on my shoulders. The capital building project was a coveted position, one that could lead to a bright future in the world of architecture.

It was an opportunity of a lifetime, one that no one would be able to pass up... except I had to. I had a mission from the Goddess, an orb to find to complete it, and an ornery Lucas Black to deal with.

I shivered. I hadn't gotten a wink of sleep last night, trying and failing to push the image of Lucas in silk boxers, sporting an erection for me from my mind. He'd taken himself and that erection right to bed next to me—a challenge if there ever was one.

But I'd held my ground. Aside from some kissing and over-the-clothes stuff, I'd stopped him from going any further. I was making my female ancestors proud.

I was also so sexually frustrated I was starting to find reasons to bend.

Sighing in disappointment, I set the packet from Professor Augustine aside and padded down to Lucas's office to get some paper and pen to write my regretful reply.

Lucas himself had been gone in the morning, leaving a letter that said he was getting supplies for the journey. Phoebe and Brady were gone as well, and I wondered if they'd gone with or if they'd taken themselves off somewhere to be safe from the old priestess and her cronies.

I was left to my own devices, and before the packet had come, had been quite bored.

Now, I had a future to tank.

As I stepped into Lucas's office looking for pen and paper, the first thing I saw was an open duffle bag... with a familiar bit of silk hanging out.

No way....

Forgetting all about my rejection letter to Professor Augustine, and, by extension, Stone Hamline, I crossed quickly to the bag.

Sure enough, there was the orb, nestled in its silk covering.

Excitement thrilled through my veins. Here it was, the answer to all our questions. And all I had to do was touch it.

I didn't want Lucas interrupting me, though, and he surely would if I stayed here in the office. Besides, I wanted a more comfortable place to return to than the office floor.

Careful not to touch the orb yet, I scooped the silk package out of the duffle bag and headed to an unused guestroom. I closed the door and then sat on the bed and slowly unwrapped the silk around the orb.

There it was, still blue as ever.

Closing my eyes, I placed my hands on it. And....

... nothing.

I peeked one eye open. The orb's color hadn't changed, nor was it pulsing or showing any other signs of magic.

Frowning, I poked and prodded the orb, rolling it between my hands. For some reason, this time, the orb didn't want to take me anywhere.

I wondered if it was channeling Lucas Black's dire warnings.

Thoughts swirled in my head. Just how was I supposed to operate this thing?! Just wait for it to sweep me away at the most inconvenient moments?

Setting the orb in my lap, I waved my hands over it. "Hocus pocus?" I tried. "Abracadabra?"

The orb was unmoved.

I let out a sigh of frustration and leaned back on the bed, staring up at the ceiling.

I finally just closed my eyes again. I drew on my dream dancer powers, wondering if there was something I could learn about the orb using them.

A strange sensation rippled through me. It wasn't like anything I had ever felt before, like a sudden rush of energy that made my skin tingle and my heart race. I opened my eyes, sat up, and looked down at the orb in my lap.

It was glowing, pulsing with a bright purple light that illuminated the entire room. I could feel the energy coursing through my veins, like a current of electricity that threatened to overwhelm me.

Suddenly, I was in a new place, holding the orb, which was now purple. I stood behind an altar, next to a richly-robed woman—a religious figure, if I had to guess. She didn't see me. Neither did the people assembled in front of her.

The people were chanting, the woman leading them. They swayed back and forth, offering up praise to the Goddess, and prayers, and... pleas?

Sure enough, there was desperation in the air, and it was felt in every corner of the temple. I clutched the orb, wondering why it had brought me here.

Eventually, the woman at the head of the altar held up her hands and the chanting stopped. "Children of the Goddess," she said, looking sad. "We must risk returning through the portal to follow the White Queen to the Realm of the Goddess. We are not safe here."

There was a low murmur that rippled through the assembled. One young man snorted, locking defiant eyes with the priestess. "And how do you propose we do that?"

"Yes, it's impossible," another said, and the majority of the room agreed.

The priestess reached into a pocket of her robes.

And pulled out the orb—white as it had been in the beginning, but still the orb.

"This is the key," the priestess intoned. "We will use it to return to the motherland."

"How exactly is that going to work? Looks like a rock to me. Are we going to chuck it in the air and hope for the best?" the first young man scoffed.

The priestess's expression turned sour. "Ye of little faith. No, we are not going to 'chuck it in the air and hope for the best.' There are those who can wield the power of the Slipstone and use it to bring us back to the Realm of the Goddess. Once we have found one such, we can...."

Sasha!

I felt my whole body shaking. No, Lucas, not now!

"... and then by touching the Slipstone, they will be able to...."

Sasha!

Lucas, no!

"... transport...."

"SASHA!" a final yell brought me back to my senses.

The temple left and reality snapped into place as though someone had thwacked my brain with a rubber band. "Ow," I moaned, rubbing my forehead.

"Ow?! What do you mean, ow?! Where are you hurt? What did it do to you?" Lucas asked, running his hands over me.

I would have been a bit turned on if I didn't have such a throbbing headache and deep disappointment about missing out on the instructions the priestess was giving on how to use the orb. "You couldn't have waited five more minutes?"

"Five minutes? Five minutes?! Your eyes were all glassy and that stupid piece of s\*\*t was glowing purple. I knew it was going to take you away from me," Lucas snapped, yanking the orb out of my hands and tying it back into its silk covering.

"It wasn't. It just gave me a vision this time. It wasn't trying to suck me in," I explained, exasperated. "I was using my dream dancer powers."

Lucas turned nearly purple himself. "You used your dream dancer powers on this thing?!"

"Well, it worked," I grumbled. "I was just about to find out its purpose and how to use it, but then you started shaking me and I missed it."

Lucas shook me again. "What did I tell you about using this thing?! WHAT DID I SAY?!"

I looked away from the pain in his eyes. "You said not to."

"Damn straight I said not to!" Lucas all but roared. Then he yanked me into a crushing hug, and whatever I might have replied was lost on a wheeze. "Do you know how worried I was? You know every time you mess with that thing, you disappear and I have to live a whole day without you... without you ever existing! And then I don't know if it's going to bring you back!" His body shook.

I wrapped my arms around him, feeling a bit guilty now. "But I didn't disappear this time. It just gave me a vision."

"I don't care. I don't care if it sang and danced and learned how to juggle on a unicycle. I don't want you touching it. Please, PLEASE, Sasha," Lucas begged.

"Lucas... you know I can't promise that. It's my mission—" I began.

"f\*\*k your mission!" Lucas yelled.

My heart squeezed, and I pushed him away. "You don't believe I have a mission, do you?"

"I believe, if the Goddess gave you one, she needs to select someone else," Lucas said, taking deep breaths to calm himself. "I can't handle it, Sasha. Honestly."

Tears welled in my eyes. "You don't think I can do this?"

Lucas shook his head and took my hands. "Sasha sweetie, you're the bravest, most capable person I know. I know you can do this. I just don't know if I can."

I sighed and crawled into his lap, letting him hold and rock me while I stroked his arm. "Lucas, I feel the

same way about you. I... I understand if you can't do this with me, though..."

"Oh, f\*\*k that and the horse it rode in on. I'm with you until the end," Lucas growled. "Whatever happens."

"But you just said—"

"If I'm not going to convince you to see sense, then all there is to do is go along with it. But I don't want you touching the orb. Please just let me have it looked at or something first," Lucas said.

He stroked my hair when he said this, his voice soothing. I could tell he was deliberately trying to butter me up, but I couldn't say he didn't have a point. We knew so little about the orb, and the 'prophecy,' and all the rest of it. "I'll try not to touch the orb until we have it looked at by your mother."

"Try really, really f\*\*\*\*\*g hard," Lucas replied sternly.

I snorted. "Yes, master."

"Oh... that gives me ideas...." Lucas rumbled in my ear, and my mouth went dry.

"Still not letting you have s\*x with me," I told him primly.

Lucas nibbled along the shell of my ear. "Still not going to give up trying."

"You're bad," I whispered, and turned my head so he could kiss me.

"The worst," he agreed, tangling his tongue with mine.

I moaned against his lips, and I felt him harden underneath my ass. I ground against him, and he hissed.

"Now who doesn't play fair?" Lucas groaned, his kisses growing hungry.

"Me." Unrepentantly, I gave him a little push, and Lucas stopped ravaging me with a sigh.

"We need to talk about what I saw," I explained. "It's important."

Lucas squeezed his eyes shut, his erratic breathing evening out. "Okay, tell me about what you saw."

"Well, like I said, before I was so rudely interrupted, I was about to learn about how to use the orb and what its purpose was...."

#### [Chapter 974: Heavy Handed](#)

\*Sasha\*

"So, what you're telling me is that that thing might have the power to transport multiple people to some kind of different continent or universe that they're calling the Realm of the Goddess?" Lucas said, giving me an incredulous look.

"Well... yeah," I replied.

Lucas shook his head vigorously. "Nope, nope, nope. You're not touching it ever again. It's far too powerful, whatever its true purpose."

I raised my chin. "You said we'd consult your mother first. I never said I'd never touch it ever again!"

"I'm saying it." Lucas wriggled me off of his lap and snatched up the orb in its protective covering of silk. "I'm putting this back in my bag. I don't want you messing with it, agreed?"

"But—"

"Let's just agree until my mother looks at it. Then we can fight all we want," Lucas sighed.

I ground my teeth but nodded. "Fine. As long as we don't need it before we meet with your mother, I won't touch it."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Lucas's eyes narrowed.

"Well, what if the Goddess is trying to get a hold of me? What if it starts glowing and it wants me to—"

"You're not going anywhere, princess, not again... not if I have anything to do with it," Lucas grouched. He stood and headed for the door.

"Hey!" I protested. "We're not done talking!"

"We're done talking," Lucas disagreed.

"But—"

"Take a nap, Sasha... or pack, or do whatever. But do not go near this orb, do you understand me?!" Lucas barked, turning to give me a stern look.

I pouted. I knew I was pouting, and I pouted anyway.

"Don't you give me that face. I know that face. You swear to me you're going to leave the orb alone," Lucas demanded.

I folded my arms over my chest. "As long as it doesn't need me."

Lucas growled under his breath. "Should just throw it in the ocean...."

He turned to go.

"Wait, where are we going in the Light Realm, and when?" I asked.

"Oliver is going to meet us in New Dianny. And we're leaving first thing in the morning. So pack," Lucas said gruffly.

"Lucas Black, you can be such an overbearing asshole sometimes, you know that?" I griped.

That got him to crack a smile. "The worst," he agreed.

"Well, am I under house arrest? I was hoping to see Amanda before we left," I huffed.

Lucas frowned at me. "You're not my prisoner, Sasha. But I would caution you...."

"Great." I walked past Lucas, preceding him through the door. "Don't wait up."

"Sasha!" Lucas protested.

But I was already grabbing my purse. "Ian, I want to go into town. Let's go to the Coffee Bean."

"Yes... ma'am...." Ian replied uncertainly, looking past me.

Unsurprisingly, Lucas was standing behind me.

"You make sure she's safe," Lucas ordered Ian.

"Yes, sir," Ian said crisply.

Lucas nodded and swiftly kissed my temple before I could protest. "See you soon."

"Maybe."

"Definitely," Lucas responded with a thunderous expression.

I rolled my eyes and followed Ian out to the sedan.

"I mean it!" Lucas called after me.

"He can be such a turd," I muttered as I slid into the back seat.

Ian choked on a laugh, which he covered with a cough. "To the Coffee Bean, ma'am?"

"Yes, thank you, Ian," I said.

Thirty minutes later, Amanda and our friend Chelsea were seated around a table near the fireplace with me, sipping lattes and giving me an account of what I'd missed.

"... and then the bartender grabbed my drink and dumped it," Chelsea said with a shiver. "Thank the Goddess that guy was arrested."

"Trying to roofie a girl. That's sick," Amanda replied.

"Sick," I agreed.

Chelsea and Amanda turned to me. "So," Chelsea asked. "Still making goo-goo eyes at Donovan?"

I must have turned some shade of green, and Amanda's lip curled.

Chelsea looked from one of us to the other. "What?"

"Turns out Donovan is a bit of a psycho and serial mating marker," Amanda put in before I could speak.

"He... what?" Chelsea squawked.

I sighed and explained the situation.

"Sweet mercies of the White Queen, what a creep!" Chelsea exclaimed. "Goddess, they're just crawling out of the woodwork! Don't tell me Lucas Black is trying to get in your pants, too!"

I coughed self-consciously, and both girls leaned in, ready to hear something juicy.

"Well, he didn't roofie me or try to mark me, if that's what you're asking," I replied with a swallow.

"You lost your V-card!" Amanda all but shouted.



I looked around and winced, motioning for her to keep her voice down. "Okay, fine, yeah, but let's not announce it to the world."

"And what a way to go!" Amanda said dreamily, but at least at a more tolerable volume.

"I'm never going to lose my V-card," Chelsea mumbled.

Amanda patted her hand. "Don't worry. We all do. And besides, eventually, you're going to get a mate. You'll sure as hell be losing your V-card to him at least."

Then Amanda's eyes lit up, and she turned back to me. "Speaking of mates, do you think Lucas Black is yours?"

I blushed and managed a shrug. "I won't know until my twenty-first birthday, will I?"

"I'll bet you are," Chelsea gushed. "You just couldn't keep your hands off each other. It was love at first sight...."

Amanda burst out laughing. "Nah, it wasn't. They grew up together in the Winter Forest in the Light Realm. He was a bully and an ass."

"Oh." Chelsea sounded disappointed. "Well, then, love at second sight...."

I pushed my hair behind my ear. "I'm not sure if I love him yet."

"What? How could you not? You had s\*x with him!" Chelsea gaped.

"Oh, Chelsea, there are sooo many things I need to explain to you," Amanda clucked.

"I like him, absolutely. I respect him, and I care for him. But... how would you even know you're in love until you know for sure he's your mate?" I asked.

Since neither of the other two had mates, either, the question couldn't be answered at our table.

"I'm just hoping Donovan doesn't turn out to be your mate," Amanda said anxiously.

Chelsea and I both stared at her in horror.

"I mean, worst case scenario...." Amanda held up her hands in surrender.

"If he is, I'm rejecting him the minute I turn twenty-one," I replied flatly.

"Fair enough," Amanda said.

"Absolutely!" Chelsea agreed.

I rubbed the back of my neck. "I'm a little nervous about going back to the dorm, just in case he's there...."

"Don't even worry about it. Lucas has two guards posted on me, and besides, they took ALL your s\*\*t. There's really nothing to go back for," Amanda informed me.

"Plus, I saw him boarding a train heading west this morning, so I doubt he'll be around," Chelsea said.

"Oh." My nerves evened out, but my temper flared—more heavy-handedness from Lucas. "Even the drawings are gone?"

"Especially the drawings. I think he had an actual library curator show up and put them between sheets of rice paper," Amanda said.

My emotions began conflicting one another. On the one hand, it was very sweet what Lucas had done, especially taking such care with my drawings. On the other hand, he'd hired strangers to go through and pack my things without asking me. I wasn't sure how I felt about that.

"We should go shopping for your trip," Amanda suggested after I was silent for a while.

That perked me up. "Yeah, we should. I'd like to get a few lighter outfits if we're going to New Dianny."

"New Dianny?" Chelsea made a face and fanned herself. "Ugh. Jungle weather."

"Yep, humidity up to my eyeballs," I said. "But hopefully a good trip just the same."

Chelsea and Amanda got up and tugged me out of my chair, Amanda throwing down a few coins for the coffee and a tip.

"Hey, I could have paid for that," I began.

"Call it a going away present. Okay, so, let's get started!" Amanda said.

Ian was completely unfazed by three giggling girls entering his sedan. He simply put down his paper and turned to me. "Where to, ma'am?"

"Capitol Drive. I need some clothes," I explained.

Ian nodded and moved us out into traffic.

Chelsea and Amanda talked excitedly about the newest fashion trends, the purse Chelsea had seen that she was determined to buy if it was still at Moonlight Boutique, and Amanda's shoe fetish.

I pushed my hair behind my ear and asked, "Do you think at this time of year they're going to have any kind of summer selection?"

We all took a look down at our sweaters.

"Oh dear," Chelsea said.

"We'll find something." Amanda's confidence was infectious. "They'll at least have something at Howler's. That place has everything."

I winced. "Not very high quality, though."

"Does it matter? Lucas Black is just going to be ripping it right off you, anyway," Amanda teased.

I turned bright red down to my toes. "That's not true."

"Pfft. Yeah, right. I've seen the way he looks at you. Hell, even from that first night at the bar he was eyeing you like a prime rib set before a starving man," Amanda said.

"I wish I'd been there," Chelsea sighed wistfully.

"You could have been," Amanda replied. "But you were busy with that i\*\*\*t Jayden Cooper."

Chelsea frowned. "Hey! Jay's a good guy!"

"I asked him if he wanted lasagna bolognese. He said he didn't like foreign films," Amanda snorted.

I coughed to cover my own laugh, and, as it turned out, so did Ian.

Chelsea blushed. "Well, not everyone is into haute cuisine."

"Uh-huh," Amanda chuckled.

We stopped in front of the Moonlight Boutique and Chelsea sprang from the sedan, bowling me over to get to the display window. "Ooo!" she cried. "It's still here!"

"Better snap it up then," Amanda advised.

"Oh, I am," Chelsea replied and ran into the boutique.

Amanda and I trailed behind her. Amanda bumped her shoulder against mine. "You sure you're okay?"

I sighed. "As okay as I can be. I know Lucas is going to take care of me, and I have this overwhelming sense that everything is going to be fine, I just... I just wish there wasn't all this hassle in between."

"Life is a hassle, Sasha," Amanda smiled. Then she pointed at the discount section at the back of the boutique. "I think our best bet for summer clothes is there."

"Good thinking," I said, and made my way to the back of the store.

As I began searching through clothing, I didn't notice the five shifters meandering outside the boutique... or the old woman who was with them.

That was, until Amanda touched my arm as I was debating between bikinis. "I think your old friends are here."

I glanced out the store windows and groaned. "Great. Just great."

"I don't think we can leave," Amanda murmured. "I'll go tell Chelsea."

"Well, at least make sure she gets her bag," I sighed. I rifled through the discount clothes with much less enthusiasm, looking up now and again to see my "friends" were still there.

Lucas was going to kill them, and then me.

But first them.

### [Chapter 975: Old and New Friends](#)

\*Lucas\*

"You're sure this guy is on the level?" Brady asked as we stepped into the seediest dump of a bar on the edge of the capital.

"Oh, I'm one hundred percent sure he's not until I hand him this," I said, subtly jingling a leather pouch of coins. Money wasn't exactly something you wanted to draw attention to in a place like this.

"I suppose that puts everyone on the level," Brady mused.

"Money talks. A lot of money sings and dances," I quipped. I scanned the bar, which was difficult in the low lighting. Most people were hunched over their drinks, though I could feel their eyes on us.

"You lost?" the big, burly, tattooed bartender asked as he mopped out a mug.

"Pretty sure we are," Brady muttered, but I elbowed him.

"They're with me," an unfamiliar voice said from the deepest of the shadows.

The bartender turned his head that way and nodded.

Taking a deep breath, I walked into that darkness with Brady.

"Lucas Black," the squat little man at the table in the darkest corner said.

I let my sight adjust to the near-complete obscurity, my eyes and Brady's beginning to glow. "I'm Lucas Black," I confirmed.

The hunched little man jerked a thumb in Brady's direction. "And him?"

"He's a friend," I explained. "May we sit?"

"What's your name, friend?" the little man asked without inviting us to sit down.

"Brady," Brady replied. "I'm a doctor."

The man nodded slowly. "You're gonna need one if this turns out to be some kind of trap. I'm Crispin. Sit."

Though he was small, I got the feeling Crispin could efficiently and ruthlessly slit my throat before my ass left the chair if things went south. Brady looked at me, and I could see in his eyes he had the same thought.

"So, you're the big man who made big problems in Leviss," Crispin said, cracking a feral smile. He snapped his fingers and three heaping mugs of beer appeared quickly at the table.

Yep. Dangerous as f\*\*k.

"It wasn't intentional, I assure you," I replied.

Brady politely sipped his beer when Crispin gave him a look.

"Good man. Vampires aren't usually up for beer. But since we're friends...." Crispin trailed off as Brady swayed in his seat.

I put a hand on his shoulder, alarmed. "What's going on?"

"It's sleepy time for the help," Crispin said. "I don't deal with lackeys."

I gently lowered Brady's head to the table and made sure he wasn't going to fall out of his chair. "You could have told me. I would have sent him out."

Crispin shrugged. "You could have told me you were bringing someone else. I don't like surprises."

"Noted," I grunted. "So... you were saying about Levis...."

"You raised all holy hell, and probably unholy hell as well," Crispin replied cryptically.

"And that means?" I asked.

Crispin gave another half smile. "You've raised the witch."

Oh, f\*\*k. I had an idea where this was going. "The old priestess?"

"Right. Let's call her that," Crispin chuckled. "I guess that's what she calls herself."

"She's not a priestess?" I hazarded.

"Pfft. She's an old witch, a dark witch... a real one, buddy. And you've got her on your tail," Crispin said.

I sat back in my chair. "f\*\*k. A... powerful witch?"

"Probably not as powerful as the dream dancer you have hanging around with you, but that's just going to pique her interest even more," Crispin replied.

"H-how did you know about Sasha?!" I gaped.

Crispin tapped a grubby finger on the table. "Since you've been through Levis, everyone knows about 'Sasha.' There's a reward for her there, and you. They're calling you criminals."

"Goddess, why did she even bother with that? She's here with her goons," I sighed, raking a hand through my hair. "I figured she'd do her dirty work herself."

"Pretty sure she's going to. If I were you, I'd go somewhere beyond the borders of Egoren, maybe the Light Realm." Crispin held up a hand. "Don't tell me where. I can see on your face that's exactly where you're going. And for enough coin, I'd tell the devil himself where you were headed. So wherever you're going in the Light Realm, keep it to yourself."

"Thanks...." I said, wondering if that was the right thing to say to that.

"You're welcome. Now, you had a favor to ask?" Crispin asked.

I reached into my pocket and pulled out the full pouch of coins and a letter I'd addressed to Eliza.

"Please get this letter to Eliza and Jared Crimson. It's of the utmost importance," I said, pushing them both over to Crispin. "Obviously, we can't go west ourselves."

"Obviously." Crispin weighed the bag of coins in his hand, took one one, bit it, then nodded. "This is enough coin to get me to take your letter all the way to the Miltern Pack, if you wanted. You just want me to go as far as the Crimson Pack?"

"Yes," I responded, "as fast as you can."

"Then there's no time to waste, is there?" Crispin took his mug and drank the whole thing down in one great gulp. "Be seeing you again sometime, I'm sure."

"I'm sure." I watched as Crispin wandered, whistling, out of the bar.

Then I began shaking Brady awake. "Brady. Brady!"

"Snrrrk?" Brady mumbled, wiping a bit of drool off the corner of his lip. "What the f\*\*k happened?"

"I made a small mistake, that's what happened," I said. "Now, get up. I don't want to stay here a second longer than we have to."

Brady stood, still looking laggy. "Yeah, let's get the f\*\*k out of here."

I supported Brady as he weaved out of the bar like a drunkard. Very soon, he was able to walk under his own momentum, and I thanked the Goddess that whatever Crispin had given him didn't have any lasting effects.

Ian had parked several blocks away from the bar, unwilling to risk the sedan getting stripped for parts while he was held at gunpoint. He silently opened the back door for us when we arrived, cold and hungry, after a fifteen-minute walk.

"Sirs," Ian said as we launched ourselves into the back of the car.

"We want to go home by way of...." I looked at Brady.

"A fried chicken restaurant," Brady filled in the blank, shivering.

I figured he'd been knocked out, so he deserved to choose the food we were having.

"Very good, sirs," Ian replied and closed our door, keeping the sharp wind out.

My house was on the opposite side of the capital from the seedy bar we'd just left, which led to us devouring chicken in the sedan.

Ian did not appreciate this and kept hemming and hawing at every crumb we dropped, even though we tried our very best not to make a mess.

"So, when are you going to tell me about Sasha being your mate?" Brady asked around a drumstick.

I coughed, choking on breathing. "What now?"

"Sasha Wentley... mate... yours," Brady repeated.

"Brady, she's not my mate," I said, though saying it out loud made me feel like I'd been stabbed under the ribcage.

"You sleep with her. You fight with her. You're completely obsessed with her. She's your mate, mate,"

Brady responded, proud of his little pun.

I snorted. "Stop with the nonsense. I'm just trying to get her through a difficult time. When we've got this all resolved I'm... I'm sure things will end."

"They all say that," Brady chuckled, and I could hear a suspiciously similar noise from the front of the car.

"Who all says what?" I grumped.

"Every time two people bump heads the way you two do, and then share the kind of passion you do... they're always mates. ALWAYS," Brady said.

I snatched up the last chicken wing, and Brady scowled at me. I munched it slowly in front of him. "I'll believe that when I see it."

"Shouldn't take long. She'll be twenty-one soon," Brady reminded me.

I felt a little flutter in my stomach. What if she was my mate? What would I do then?

"It would be very unprofessional and probably detrimental to her career to mate her...." I speculated.

"Now we're getting somewhere. You're assuming you'd have to be her supervisor. She could always work under Stone Hamline," Brady said innocently.

I growled, low and rumbling and taking over the entire sedan. "I'll be damned if that f\*\*\*\*\*g leech comes within fifty feet of her."

"Mates," Brady called to the front of the car, and Ian nodded.

I groaned and tossed the bones of the chicken wing back into the bucket. It almost missed, and Ian's eyes bulged in the rearview mirror. "You really think we're mates."

"I do," Brady said.

"f\*\*k me," I muttered.

"Seems Sasha's already doing that for you," Brady replied, examining his fingernails.

I punched him in the shoulder. "Don't talk about her that way. And... we're not. We had a bit of a fight. Now we're playing the 'who can hold out longer' game."

"I'll bet she's winning," Brady grinned.

I shook my head. "She wants to play around with that orb. I'll never sleep with her again if I have to, to stop that from happening."

Brady's expression turned serious. "She still wants to work with the thing?"

"Yeah, and she used her dream dancer abilities on it," I responded. "I don't want her to have anything to do with it, but she's convinced she needs to keep messing with it in order to fulfill some prophecy—a prophecy we don't even know or understand. I just want to take that thing, stick it in the ground, and go after it with a jackhammer."

"Knowing your luck lately, it'd probably just make it stronger," Brady muttered.

"No doubt," I grumbled.

"Did you leave her alone with it?" Brady asked suddenly.

"No. Already made that mistake today," I grunted. "She went out with friends and I put the orb back in the safe for the time being."

Brady relaxed. "Good."

There was a crunch of tires on pea rock gravel as we reached the front of the house. I hopped out of the sedan before Ian could open the door. "Sasha?" I called. "Sasha!"

"He's got it bad," I heard Brady say to Ian behind me.

I ignored them. "Sasha...."

My housekeeper opened the door for us, obviously having heard me yelling. "Mr. Black, Miss Wentley still has not returned from her outing."

I looked at the setting sun, feeling the deepening chill cut through the air. "She's not back yet?"

"No, sir," she responded.

I closed my hands into fists and swore proficiently. "Brady, go ahead inside and at least make sure Phoebe's there. Ian, stop fussing with the chicken crumbs and take me to the last place you dropped her."

"Yes, sir," Ian said sourly, holding open the door to the sedan for me.

I folded my arms over my chest as the door shut, both from the cold and out of frustration.

Sasha f\*\*\*\*\*g Wentley.

She was going to be the death of me, I was sure.

#### [Chapter 976: Doing the Research](#)

\*Sasha\*

It was hours before Amanda had the bright idea to have Chelsea dress like me, and then give me a chance to get out of the boutique. The two of them walked out of the boutique, chatting merrily as though they were completely oblivious to the danger outside.

As hoped, the threat followed them.

I knew I had mere minutes before they figured out Chelsea was not me. I slipped out of the boutique, gave a quick look around, then booked it for the closest safe space I could think of—the Great Egoren Library.

From there, if necessary, I'd be able to walk just a few blocks to the castle, though Lucas's worries about the royal court made me hesitate on that idea. I trusted Queen Lena implicitly, but as Lucas had said, the orb was a powerful artifact, and there were those who might use the knowledge of it against not only us but the king and queen as well.



A thick must of books surrounded me like a protective shroud as I entered the library, the heavy door closing behind me with a soft thump. Even the doors here were too frightened of the Grand Librarian to make noise.

Speaking of whom, he looked down his nose at me from a perch atop a tall desk, no doubt taking in my disheveled appearance and panting and wondering if I'd brought in disruption with me.

But when the door stayed closed and my breathing evened out, the Grand Librarian's gaze went back to the book in front of him, which he was carefully repairing at the spine.

I bobbed my head respectfully and went to find a place to sit and bask in the ambiance of tall stained glass windows depicting great legends from our past, legends that could be found in these very books.

By sheer coincidence, I ended up sitting next to the religion section. It occurred to me that the places the orb had been bringing me were, well, mostly religious. Perhaps there would be some answers about the orb here.

I kicked myself for not thinking of it before. In twenty minutes, I had armloads of religious texts, mostly Lycennian since the orb reacted to my dream dancer powers. Some were so old that a cloud of dust curled upward when I set them down on the table, and delicate yellow pages crinkled ominously.

A woman in white gloves, clearly a curator or librarian of some kind, was quickly at my side, carefully removing the oldest texts from my fingers before handing me a pair of white gloves from her pocket. "Sorry," she said. "I should have noticed earlier. Some of these are very close to disintegrating. It's a pity we don't have more space in the glass cases for some of these books, but given all that are here, we have to pick and choose, you know?"

"I understand. Thanks for the gloves," I replied, pulling them on and waiting for the woman to give the crumbling book back to me.

"I'm Jennie," she said instead, keeping hold of the book. "I'm a librarian here. Is there anything I can help you find?"

Since I'd been striking out in the religious texts, even the one she was holding, I debated whether to ask for her help. A librarian would certainly know the library subjects and where they were shelved better than I would. "I... um...." I glanced at the Grand Librarian, who was staring sourly at us since we were whispering in his holy place of silence.

Jennie looked behind her and smiled a bit. "Don't mind Gregory. He's just an old fuddy-duddy. I'm just saying you've been sitting here for nearly two hours and you just seem to be getting more and more frustrated...."

This was true. I sighed, and came up with an excuse. "I'm looking into the power of time travel... for a project... for school. I thought maybe there would be something in the religious texts...."

"Well, looking in the Lycennian texts was a good start," Jennie complimented me. "But what you really wanted was magic, dream dancer magic. We have a few texts about that." Jennie closed the yellowed book I'd been looking at and lifted the heavy pile of books easily in her arms. She quickly filed them away before taking me to a completely different part of the library.

Tomes were sparse here, very old, and very faded. Even the gold leaf stamped into the leather covers was nearly entirely chipped away.

"Not a large selection," I said, disappointed as I helped Jennie take down the entire collection—all six of them.

"Magic is still kind of a taboo subject. Gregory doesn't like to curate books on it, and if he does, he vets them to see what is 'safe' to put on the shelves and what needs to go in the vault. Unfortunately, he'll never let you in the vault, and I don't have a key," Jennie responded.

"So... these are probably pretty tame," I inferred.

"Very," Jennie said.

With a sigh, I started putting them back on the shelf. "I don't think I'll find my answers in here, then."

Jennie c\*\*\*\*d her head at me. "If you really want to know about magic, you want to talk to a real live witch."

I shuddered, remembering the old priestess. "Been there. Done that. Lived to regret it."

"Oh. You met a bad one, then," Jennie said sympathetically. "I actually have a very good friend who is a witch, a good witch. An older witch... don't make that face at me. You might have ended up facing some evil old crone, but this friend of mine is good, and kind, and very knowledgeable. I can bring you to meet her, if you like."

I pushed a lock of hair behind my ear. "I don't know...."

Jennie shrugged. "If you don't try, then you never will know."

The woman had a point. "Okay," I relented. "But, fair warning, that old hag is still on my tail, with some shifter cronies."

"Oh, that's why you burst in here like an oncoming storm. I thought poor Gregory was going to have a heart attack," Jennie grinned. She removed her gloves, then plucked mine off, and put both sets in her pocket. "Gregory!" she called, and the old man nearly unseated himself. "I'm heading out for the day. I'll see you tomorrow!"

"Jennie, do learn to keep your voice down," Gregory hissed. But he nodded at both of us and made a shooing motion with his hands. Clearly, he was glad of our departure.

Jennie popped her head out the door before me, looking both ways. "I don't think they're around," she whispered to me, then took my hand in her warm one and tugged me out onto the street.

We passed the castle and moved closer and closer to the most ancient part of the city. It still had a partial wall around one side from the medieval battlements that had once been. There, nestled between two leaning buildings, was a cottage, older still than anything around it.

"Wow," I said. I'd been to this part of town before, but I couldn't believe I'd never noticed the cottage before.

"Magic," Jennie explained. "We don't like unwelcome guests, like your old hag."

I glanced up at her. "We?"

"My mother and I. Sorry, I said she was a friend, but I had to see if you were trustworthy first. Since you can see the cottage, then that means you're a good person," Jennie said.

"Uh... great?" I replied.

"It is great. Now, my mother's name is Rochel, and the minute she sees you she's going to insist on making tea. But after that, you can ask her as many million questions as you want. She likes having company, and there are fewer and fewer safe people around," Jennie said sadly.

I nodded. "I hear you there." I was sure Lucas would murder me for doing this, but I got a good vibe from Jennie, so I followed her over the threshold of the cottage.

A woman with gray-streaked brown hair was standing over a table to one side of the cottage, under a window, organizing dried herbs into jars. She looked up when we entered and smiled.

"Jennie, dear, it's been so long since you brought a friend home," she said.

"City people keep getting more and more corrupt," Jennie lamented. "But I did find someone I have a good feeling about today. She has questions about time travel and dream dancer magic."

"I see. Well, my terribly rude daughter has not yet introduced us, so I'll start. My name is Rochel," Rochel said, moving away from the herbs and, as Jennie had predicted, to a teapot.

"Sasha," I responded. "Sorry, she couldn't be polite. I never gave her my name."

"Ah. Yes, it is good to be cautious in these times, especially when you are being chased by a dark witch." Rochel hung the kettle over a low fire.

It was as though I'd been transported through time. There were no electronics here, probably no indoor plumbing. Just a fireplace, a table and chairs, a bed on this floor, and a small loft above. It also boggled my mind that, although the cottage was trapped between two large buildings, light poured in through all the windows.

"Magic," Rochel winked. "I like to use a little for comfort, and sunlight is so uplifting, wouldn't you agree?"

"Yes," I said. "If I had the power, I'd probably project sunlight everywhere, too."

Rochel blinked at me. "Oh, but you do."

"I... do?" I echoed.

"Of course. Every dream dancer would easily have that power. I mean, it has been a very long time since I've been in the presence of a dream dancer, but that doesn't mean I don't recognize one when I see them," Rochel said.

My mouth opened and closed... opened and closed.

Jennie patted me on the shoulder. "You don't have to stand there gawping like a fish. Mom is just very good at what she does. There is very little that she cannot see."

"Lycennians don't come this way often. They tend to keep to the Light Realm," Rochel continued. "But every once in a while, one will get a hankering for adventure. Not that adventure is what brought you here, but it's what you're on now... a quest of great importance, if I don't miss the mark."

"Well... yes, actually. I mean, the Goddess herself... how do you know all this?" I gaped.

"You stand here before me. There is much I can sense." The tea kettle whistled, and Rochel turned back to the fire. "Please, have a seat. If you don't mind, I will let Jennie and you deal with the tea. I was just in the middle of cataloging some very interesting herbs, and I figure I can talk while I organize."

"That sounds fine," I said weakly. Jennie motioned for me to sit and poured me the best cup of herbal tea I'd ever tasted.

"Now, my dear," Rochel continued with her back to me. "About this quest from the Goddess?"

### [Chapter 977: Tales of Old](#)

\*Sasha\*

"... yeah... I don't know how much to say about it..." I winced. "I mean, not just for my safety, but for yours. You're right, there is a dark witch after me. And she brought reinforcements."

"She can't find you here," Rochel replied, rubbing herbs between her fingers as she deposited them in different jars. "Your secrets are safe here as well."

I pushed my hair behind my ear, going back and forth in my head about what to say.

"Are you trained?" Rochel asked after a while.

"Am I trained?" I repeated.

"As a dream dancer... have you had training?" Rochel went on.

"Oh. Yes, Rosalie, a very powerful dream dancer in the Winter Forest, trained me herself. I... just don't use my powers very often," I said.

"Hmm. It's probably for the best. People around these parts are still quite superstitious about magic," Rochel responded, bobbing her head. "I imagine your quest is something big, though, for a dream dancer of your strength to be called upon to fulfill it."

"Mom, I think you're making her uncomfortable," Jennie said, pouring me another cup of tea.

"Quests are uncomfortable subjects," Rochel replied.

I took a bracing swig of tea, then set my cup down. If I wanted answers, I couldn't keep dancing around the subject. "There... well... you know they had decided to rebuild the northern library, right?"

Rochel stiffened. "They... had decided? They're not anymore?"

"Well... it turns out there was a temple underneath it. The Lycoans came to see it, but it's actually dedicated to the Goddess. There were... so many bodies down there and... um...." I began.

"Goddess no, you found it," Rochel gasped. She swayed on her feet, and Jennie and I both sprang up to guide her to a chair.

"Technically my boy—my friend Lucas found it, but yes," I said in a small voice as Rochel fanned herself and Jennie poured her a cup of tea.

Rochel nodded faintly. "Your Lucas found something that never should have been found."

"He says the same thing," I sighed, putting a comforting hand over Rochel's. "But the Goddess has decided I'm supposed to use it to... do... something. I don't know what yet."

With a shake of her head, Rochel's green eyes turned hard. "No. It is best if it is destroyed or hidden once more. Though the Goddess may have called you, child, the Slipstone is not something anyone should be messing around with. So many people will want it... so many bad people... and they can use it to do... unthinkable things."

"Where does it come from?" I asked.

"The Morrighans," Rochel said softly. "A group of people who lived at the same time of the Lycoans, but were driven underground. I suppose you could say literally underground. The Lycoans, of course, did not like the Morrighans' Goddess worship. They tried to destroy them but... the Morrighans used the Slipstone. But then there was a Lycennian... and the girl was killed...." Rochel's lips clamped closed. "No. It matters little. You must destroy the thing."

"Oka-ay," I responded. "How do I do that?"

Rochel wet her lips, but nothing came out of her mouth. She looked pale and faint.

"I think you should go for now," Jennie murmured. "But come back soon. Maybe she'll be better, and will be able to help you more."

"Okay." I squeezed Rochel's hand. "Thank you for what you've been able to tell me. I'll be back later—"

"It may be difficult for you to find the cottage," Rochel said flatly.

Jennie's eyes widened. "Mom!"

"Go. Go destroy it. Then we will talk," Rochel whispered.

I rose. "Thank you for the tea and the conversation," I said sincerely.

Jennie came around the table and gave me a hug. "Good luck," she murmured.

"Thanks. I think I'm going to need it," I replied.

When I stepped out of the cottage, I did indeed get a wash of confusion, and suddenly couldn't see it anymore. In fact, I got turned around in the whole neighborhood.

"Damn," I grumbled, finally managing to make my way to the old wall and follow it back to more modern parts of the capital.

With Ian gone, and Amanda and Chelsea also no longer with me, I knew my next step was going to have to be to find a phone and call Lucas.

I thought of the library, but I really didn't want to give poor Gregory an aneurism. I also thought of Nostalgia or any one of the coffee shops I would pass on my way back to the boutique. To protect me, and them, Amanda, Chelsea, and I hadn't agreed on a meeting place. I was just supposed to call Amanda at the dorm later to let her know I was safe.

Now that I was outside of Rochel's cottage, I felt as though evil was lurking around every corner— people who wanted the orb, people who wanted me.

I nearly shrieked when I bumped into a random stranger, who stared at me as though I had two heads.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Sure, yes, fine. Sorry," I said and hustled away.

It was like that for blocks. I jumped at every flake of snow, every leftover dead leaf, every person or pet who was just minding their own business.

The only way I knew I'd feel safe now was to find Lucas.

I started toward Nostalgia, hugging my arms as the cold winter wind found clever ways to tickle my skin through my heavy sweater.

When I turned the corner to walk down the street where Nostalgia and several other clubs were located, I caught sight of shifters I recognized... the old priestess's shifters.

I was getting confused about what she wanted. She wanted me to fulfill this prophecy I still knew nothing about, that much I was sure of, but I wasn't sure if she was trying to kidnap me, protect me, or intimidate me. In any case, I was intimidated and had no desire to find out what exactly it was she wanted, so I quickly ducked down a narrow alley and made my way to another street.

Of course, I hadn't been stealthy enough, or perhaps the old witch was powerful enough, but I was found the second I left the shelter of the alley.

"Hello, Sasha Wentley," the old priestess said with a smile, now leaning on a cane. "Did the white witch tell you about your purpose?"

I was getting really tired of everyone around me knowing everything about me and my 'purpose,' but not telling me. "No," I seethed, looking up and down the street to see if there were others around who could help me if I screamed.

The old priestess chuckled when I saw only her goons. "You are adorable, thinking you can escape me."

"What do you want?" I asked, exasperated.

The old priestess raised an eyebrow. "The orb would be nice, but it's worth little without a competent dream dancer, such as yourself, to wield it. Right now, you seem to be on the right path, so I have decided not to interfere. But I would caution you not to step off that path." She poked me in the chest with a bony finger. "Then, I would have to intervene."

"Gee, as much fun as that sounds.... I muttered.

"No. No, it would not be fun," the old priestess said flatly. "Not at all."

"Are you threatening me? I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing yet!" I shouted. "How can you people keep telling me about how important this quest is and not tell me anything about it?!"

The old priestess chuckled. "It's not my place, dearie. I know that much. If I told you the vision I have for this world... well... you might become resistant. But so far, you've been going along just fine."

"That does not make me feel warm and fuzzy," I said. "If I'm helping you get something you want, I'm obviously doing the wrong thing."

The chuckle turned into a cackle. "You might call it the wrong thing, but it will end up so right in the end. You'll see. And, if you give me what I want, I won't have to torture the life out of your... Lucas."

I swore the old hag was making a reference to when I had been stuttering Lucas's relationship to me to Rochel. "How could you know these things?" I whispered.

"Why, you stand before me," the old priestess grinned toothlessly. "How could I not know?"

If I managed to get through this "quest" of mine unscathed, I swore to the Goddess I was going back to Rosalie to learn some kind of magic self-defense, if there was such a thing for dream dancers. I didn't like white or dark witches rifling through my head. "Look, if you're not going to help me, could you just let me go on my way? You say I haven't stepped out of line yet, so... piss off?"

"I like you. You're spunky," the old priestess said. She made a motion to her entourage and they just melted away into the shadows.

I breathed out a deep breath I hadn't known I'd been holding. "Sweet mercies of the White Queen," I sighed under my breath and traced my steps back in the direction of Nostalgia.

This time, when I rounded the corner, as though by some white or dark magic, Lucas was there. I sighed with relief, and started walking his way, when I noticed there was a blonde bombshell in front of him with her hand on his chest.

Her hand was on my Lucas's chest.

And she was standing far too close to him.

And she was far too pretty.

I could tell they knew each other, and it made my guts roil.

Lucas's gray eyes flicked up to mine, and he stepped away from the woman, physically taking her hand off his chest and pushing her away.

I was happy about that, but still suspicious of this strange woman and their relationship.

Honestly, it was all just too much—white witches, dark witches, quests... and now Lucas being pawed by some beautiful woman I didn't know.

I turned on my heel and started making tracks toward campus. Now that the old priestess had agreed to back off, there was no reason not to go home. Whether my stuff was there or not, Amanda would be, and I could at least sort out this jumble with her.

"Sasha!" Lucas called, but I ignored him.

"Lucas, baby...." The woman's voice filtered through the air behind me.

I felt sick.

"Sasha!" Lucas said again, this time closer.

He'd left the woman in the dust, that much I could tell without turning around. And I didn't turn around.

I wouldn't.

### [Chapter 978: Blow-Ups and Bombshells](#)

\*Lucas\*

Ian dropped me off at Nostalgia, which I thought was as good a place as any to start looking for Sasha. It irked me that she was still gone. It irked me that I couldn't reach her at her dorm. It irked me... well, Sasha just irked me in general, and not always in a bad way.

What I should have done was left Ian with the women and driven myself, or had Brady drive, to the seedy bar where we'd met Crispin. But, hindsight was twenty-twenty and, at the time, I'd thought we'd need the numbers if something went wrong.

My eyes swept the sidewalk outside of Nostalgia, but, not seeing Sasha at any end of the street, I decided to go inside.

The atmosphere was the same, and a thousand times better than the bar I'd recently left. It was still old-timey but in a cultivated way, not in a well-we-just-decided-to-never-make-repairs way.

"Goddess, Sasha," I grunted, looking around the bar. It was just starting to get crowded with the evening clubbers, and if I didn't make my way around soon, there'd be no finding her even if she was here.

I hunted every corner, every nook and cranny, from the bar to the high-tops to the dance floor. By the time I was finished, I had to turn sideways to get between people who were chatting and having a good time.

Just as I was about to make my way back out and look for Sasha elsewhere, I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Lucas Black!" a familiar voice trilled.

My heart sank and I turned to see Quinn, my ex, standing there with a martini in hand. "Quinn," I said noncommittally.

Quinn curved her perfectly-manicured nails into my shirt, reminding me of the talons of a vulture. "It's been sooo long, Lucas."

"Not long enough." I turned away, but Quinn pouted her plump lips and didn't let go.



"Aw, don't be like that, Lucas. Don't you remember what we meant to each other? Isn't that worth just a little time?" Quinn simpered.

I wanted to smack her hand off me and be on my way, but her blue eyes were swimming with crocodile tears, and the me that had once been in love with her just couldn't stand to see her cry.

"Five minutes. Outside," I grumbled, leading her out the door.

Quinn carelessly balanced her martini glass on a passing waitress's tray and traipsed out the door after me.

I figured if I was outside, I could at least watch a few minutes to see if Sasha showed up before moving on. "What do you want, Quinn?" I asked, frowning at her.

Quinn pouted again and pawed my arm. "I miss you."

f\*\*k. "I don't miss you," I said flatly.

Quinn stepped toward me, rubbing her X-rated breasts against my chest. "That's not true. I know you miss me."

I took a step back. "Quinn, you're being inappropriate."

"When did you ever care about appropriate? I remember having s\*x in the bathroom at the back of—"

"Do you need something?" I interrupted her. I didn't want to walk down that particular memory lane. Everyone had been young and stupid once, but not everyone liked to reminisce about it.

Quinn pawed me again. "I heard you were dating a college student. I didn't know you were so hard up."

I scowled at her. "You know better than to listen to rumors, Quinn."

"Do I?" Quinn dallied her fingers along my collarbone.

I caught her hand and stopped her. "You do. Though I'm glad I heard some rumors about you back in the day."

"I was young and dumb, Lucas. And I don't remember you being much better." Quinn licked her lips. "I could be so good to you," she purred.

"And you're hoping my bank account will be good to you," I accused.

Quinn winced. "Well, I mean, when I thought you weren't getting a penny... you shouldn't have lied to me, Lucas."

"That's exactly what I should have done. And I caught you out, didn't I?" I said.

"Well, you weren't being entirely fair. I mean, looking like this isn't cheap," Quinn replied, gesturing to her perfectly toned, hourglass figure.

I hadn't known how much a woman could disgust me until now. But there it was. The young pup in me who'd loved Quinn desperately even recoiled. I didn't want her body. I didn't want any woman's body. I just wanted Sasha's body.

"Wow, that's a look," Quinn sniffed. "Guess you found your mate, then."

"Maybe. Maybe not," I responded. "Either way, it's no business of yours."

"Of course it is! You don't know if she's your mate because she's some young pup. Not even old enough to shift yet," Quinn said. She leaned in close again, touching my lips with her fingertips. "I'm a real woman."

I didn't answer her, simply frowned.

"You don't want to go playing with a pup when you've got me on the string," Quinn continued.

"I don't have you 'on the string.' I want nothing to do with you," I sighed. "Goddess, Quinn, I thought you wanted to come out here to tell me something important, or catch up on old times, but you're just making a fool of yourself."

Quinn raised her chin. "I am not. I'm telling you what's on offer. And it's a lot better than some slutty college pup."

My eye ticked. "First," I growled, "you will never, ever, ever call her a slut again. Second, as to slutty behavior, I can think of a few things you're doing right now that would qualify. And third, I want nothing, nothing to do with you, Quinn. If you can't accept that, that's your problem."

Quinn put a hand on my chest, right over my heart. "Lucas, baby, I'm sorry. Please take me back. Please. I promise I'll be your good girl."

"I already have a good girl." Speaking of whom, I saw a flash of movement at the end of the street in the waning evening light and felt my heart leap when I saw it was Sasha.

Sasha, who was looking very pissed off, and watching another woman paw me.

"f\*\*k off, Quinn," I muttered, shoving her hand off me and pushing her aside so I could go to Sasha.

Sasha, unfortunately, didn't seem to be receptive to my approach. She turned on her heel and began to run away.

Damn Quinn anyway. I picked my pace and jogged after Sasha, shaking my head in amusement that she thought she could get away from me.

I was also frustrated because she wasn't giving me a chance to explain.

Then again, if I'd seen her with another man, pawing her....

Well, I'd have broken the fucker's neck, thrown Sasha over my shoulder, and broken this little impasse between us with a long, long night of apologizing.

Now it was me who needed to apologize, and she wasn't letting me.

"Sasha!" I called.

She just kept running.

"Sasha!" I said again.

Sasha ducked into a coffee shop.

I followed her inside, muttering under my breath. "Woman," I barked, loud enough for the whole coffee shop to hear. "We need to talk."

"I don't want to talk," Sasha replied, her voice trembling.

I felt like an ass. But I was going to correct every misconception she had about Quinn before she had a chance to sit and stew on it.

"Here, coffee's on the house," I said, tossing some coins at the barista and grabbing Sasha's arm. No one protested as I dragged her out, too focused on their free coffees.

"Let go, Lucas! Lucas Black, you let go of me RIGHT now!" Sasha snapped as I pulled her into an alley.

I pinned her against the rough brick wall, chest to chest, hip to hip. "I'll let you go when you listen to me."

"Fine." Sasha's lower lip trembled. I wasn't sure she noticed it, but I sure did. "Talk to me."

"That woman...." I began.

"Oh. Right. Sorry I interrupted," Sasha snarked.

I transferred her wrists to one hand and put my other hand over her mouth. "Let me finish."

Sasha glared at me, but there wasn't much more she could do now other than let me speak.

"That woman is an ex-girlfriend of mine, a real b\*\*\*h and a golddigger. I don't know why I decided to talk with her—maybe for old times' sake—but she's still a b\*\*\*h. She's still a golddigger. And she's still my ex. I didn't want her to touch me. But she was pawing at me even though I tried to get her to stop...."

Sasha bit my palm and I yanked my hand away. "Yeah, it looked like you were really suffering."

"I was suffering. I was suffering because that woman was touching me. And it wasn't you," I sighed, rubbing my palm on my thigh. My Sasha had some strength in those jaws.

"I'm supposed to believe that?" Sasha asked, ending on a snuffle.

I nodded. "Yes, Sasha baby. You're supposed to believe that. You're supposed to believe that because I'm telling you. And I wouldn't lie to you."

On some level, it was gratifying to see Sasha so upset and possessive about me being mauled by another woman. But it broke my heart to see her cry, knowing it was my fault for not shoving Quinn off me to begin with.

A tear trickled down Sasha's cheek. "You're really confusing, Lucas Black."

I kissed the tear, then leaned my forehead against hers. "Let me un-confuse you. All I think about, all day, every day, is the night we spent together. All I want all day, every day, is to make love to you again. Please, let's end this stupid war between us, and go share our bodies like we were meant to."

Sasha swallowed. "That's what you want?"

"Yes," I whispered.

"That's... all you want?" Sasha asked.

I chuckled bitterly. "Not by a long shot, but let's start there for now. Let's go home."

"No," Sasha replied, and I groaned.

"Please, Sasha..." I all but begged.

"I have to think of the orb—"

"f\*\*k the orb!" I snarled.

We stared at each other in silence for a while, then Sasha sighed. "We're not going home," she said again.

"Why?" I asked, exasperated. "Why not?"

"Because it's too far away," Sasha murmured, then lifted her lips to mine.

Judging by the kiss that followed, and the way my pants began chaffing in private places, I had to agree with her. Home was far, far too far away.

"Dorm," I grunted, releasing Sasha's wrists so I could lift her, wrapping her legs around my waist.

"Dorm," Sasha agreed.

I was not surprised to find Ian at the mouth of the alley, waiting for us.

"Campus, Ian. Miss Wentley's dorm," I said, my voice strained with desire.

"Of course, sir," Ian replied.

If he said anything after that, I didn't hear it. Sasha was in my lap, grinding against my d\*\*k, her sweet lips on mine.

This was just the touch I wanted.

### [Chapter 979: Orb Schmorb](#)

\*Lucas\*

Amanda was there when we arrived at the dorm Sasha and she shared, but she saw our flushed states and the fact I had Sasha wrapped around me like cling plastic, and quickly stood with the book she'd been reading.

"I'm going to go bake something in the washing machine," Amanda said, scampering out of the dorm and closing the door firmly behind her. She even did us the courtesy of locking it.

"Your friend has good instincts," I murmured in Sasha's ear, squeezing her ass tightly and pulling her hard against my erection before tumbling her to her bed. I followed her down, kissing her, cupping her breasts through her sweater.

"Too many clothes," Sasha complained, starting to wriggle her way out of her sweater.

I couldn't have agreed with her more. I stripped off my own sweater and T-shirt, then helped Sasha out of her T-shirt and bra, letting it all join her sweater on the floor.

"Better?" I whispered, gently licking Sasha's lips until she allowed me entry.

Our tongues tangled while I started tugging up Sasha's skirt. I wasn't sure it was going to survive this encounter. Her underwear sure wasn't.

"Lucas!" Sasha protested weakly as her underwear shredded in my hand.

"What?" I asked innocently, skimming my fingers along the warm, wet of her. It made my brain nearly explode to feel how much she wanted me.

"You're going to be buying me new underwear every day if you keep that up!" Sasha said. But her hands went to my chest, her palms skimming over my n\*\*\*\*s.

I hissed, then groaned as her hips bucked desperately against mine. "Sasha baby, I promise to go slow next time...."

Sasha grabbed my hair and her burning blue eyes bored into mine. "Now. I need you. Now, Lucas. Now."

There was a sweet sting that accompanied her tug on my hair, and I pulled her to me, fusing our lips as I fumbled with my fly. I couldn't get in her fast enough.

When my c\*\*k sprang free, I was relieved. When I pushed into her warm, wet, tight entrance, I was caught up in a feeling of bliss.

"Lucas... oh goddess... don't stop. Make love to me," Sasha moaned into my shoulder as she gripped me with her hands and wrapped her legs around my waist, drawing me in deeper still.

"Sasha, the only thing you need to worry about is whether or not I can stop making love to you," I said, taking her hips in my hands and thrusting sharply.

Sasha cried out, clutching me to her as I rode her hard. I wanted to be gentle, I really did, but her soft body and desperation that matched mine made it impossible.

Thankfully, Sasha didn't mind a bit. Her nails dug into my back, marking me. I wanted to mark her in return—a real, true mating mark. The strength of my desire to do so shocked me.

In any case, it was too soon. She was too young. So I satisfied myself with sucking the side of her neck, knowing it would form a very obvious bruise, marking her as mine in some small way, at least.

Sasha shrieked and came in a warm rush, her inner muscles clamping around my c\*\*k. I groaned and came as well, releasing deep inside her body.

I didn't lose my hard-on, though, and Sasha giggled.

"Need something?" she teased me.

"Oh yes," I said. I rolled onto my back and took her hands in mine. "Ride me, beautiful."

Sasha looked positively delighted. She moved her hips, grinding on me, and I could have died a happy man right then, watching her perfect breasts bounce and jiggle with every movement, feeling the softness of her thighs pressed against my hips.

The way she felt going up and down on my d\*\*k? It was indescribable. Sasha was glorious in her newfound power, and I wasn't going to interrupt the show I was getting.

"This good?" Sasha asked, releasing my hands and changing her angle, leaning her weight on my shoulders and letting her hips swing more freely.

I tossed my head back, murmuring incoherent words of pleasure.

"I'll take that as a yes," Sasha grinned.

She kept going, and I kept holding back, until finally I couldn't take it anymore. "Sasha sweetie," I said, cupping her face between my hands. "I'm close. I want you to come with me."

Sasha's eyes flickered with passion, and she guided my hands to her hips. "Help me," she whispered.

I didn't need to be asked twice. I gripped her hips and began thrusting sharply up into her, causing us both to moan. Sasha whimpered, bracing herself on my upper arms as I took her hard and fast.

"That's it, Sasha sweetie. Feel it. Come for me," I said, pulling her hips tight against mine one last time.

She began to orgasm, throwing her head back, her hair falling all over the place as her body arched.

I groaned and nearly saw stars this time when I came inside her. "f\*\*k me, you're fantastic," I wheezed as we came down from our high, and Sasha lay on my chest. I combed my fingers through her now-erratic blond hair.

"Better than what's-her-name?" Sasha hazarded.

I chuckled, smoothing a stray lock of hair behind her ear. "No comparison, Sasha sweetie. This is so much... more."

"Good," Sasha said primly, snuggling me.

I stroked my hands up and down her back. "Why, you jealous?"

Sasha swatted me and I chuckled. I deserved it.

"I would never stoop to such an immature emotion," she sniffed.

"So, yes, then," I teased.

Sasha laid her cheek back down on my shoulder. "Yes."

I leaned my chin down so I could kiss her temple. "There's nothing to be jealous about, not a thing. She didn't love me. She just wanted my money. She had all the ambition of a sloth. You're... so much different, Sasha, better in every way."

"Good. I mean, not that she was a gold digger and had no ambition. That must have been hard to find out," Sasha observed.

I shrugged. "Sometimes the path isn't exactly what you thought it to be, and it's painful at times, but it brings you to something better."

Sasha leaned up so she could look me in the eyes. "Am I that something better?"

My heart squeezed. "Yes, Sasha, you are that something better."

Sasha laid her head back down and dallied her fingers over my chest, following my scars. "You're very surprising, Lucas Black."

"I guess I am these days," I whispered.

After a long silence between us, Sasha reached down and stroked me intimately.

I grinned, a little sad about the break in the mood, but happy to go another round. "You sure you want to go again?" I asked anyway. "I seem to remember someone yelping at every bump we hit in the sedan the last time we—"

"Shut up, Lucas," Sasha said, and I snapped my mouth shut.

Her hand felt good, but she was inexperienced, so I reached down to help her get me hard. As I expected, Sasha was a very good student, and soon I was panting for it.

I rolled her underneath me and nudged her legs apart. But I was in the mood to take my time this time, so instead of thrusting right in, I teased her with my fingers and lowered my lips to her breast, lapping her n\*\*\*\*s and nibbling along the lower edge of those perfect globes.

Sasha spiked her fingers through my hair and held me to first one breast, then the other, grinding against my hand. "Lucas," she begged.

"In a minute," I said, nuzzling the bruise I'd made on her neck. Until it was time to properly mark her, I'd simply have to keep that bruise fresh, so everyone would know she was mine.

Again, the intensity of my feelings overwhelmed me, and I stopped, breathing against Sasha's soft skin.

"Lucas?" Sasha asked.

I licked the spot, then kissed my way slowly up to Sasha's lips. "It's nothing, Sasha. Just thinking."

"Could you think later?" Sasha replied, s\*\*\*\*l frustration clear in her tone.

I smirked. "I could..." I twisted my finger to hit her right where she'd feel it most inside. "But it had to do with you."

Sasha shrieked, coming around my fingers.

I withdrew my hand and brought my fingers to my lips, giving them a long lick.

Sasha looked as though she might pass out. "Lucas, you're not being fair!"

"I wasn't planning to fight fair." I moved over her, the head of my c\*\*k probing her now-soaked entrance.

"Goddess, Lucas. Please, please don't make me wait anymore," Sasha said, wriggling her hips closer to my d\*\*k, making the head push shallowly inside her.

"Sasha, I'm willing to give you everything... everything," I whispered, and meant it. Even if Sasha were a gold-digging sloth, I'd keep her. I'd take her to my bed and perhaps never stop making love to her.

Hell, if I was being so hard on her underwear, I would quite happily let her buy every stitch of lingerie from every store in every kingdom around the globe, just to see her wear it for me.

With another tug of impatience, I had mercy on Sasha and thrust deep inside her.

Sasha cried out and scratched my shoulders, drawing blood.

A pup... Sasha was no pup. She was more woman than Quinn could ever hope to be.

"Lucas... Lucas it feels so... goddess... Lucas," Sasha babbled, her body swaying as I thrust powerfully inside her.

"Sasha...." I sighed, feeling a rightness to this. When we were together, even when we were fighting, everything felt... right.

With another cry, Sasha came around my throbbing c\*\*k, and I pulled her hips tight to mine as I came as well.

"Ngh..." Sasha said, finally worn out.

"Ngh," I agreed. I slipped out of her, then wandered my hand between her legs with the corner of a sheet. "How you feeling, princess?"

"Like Lucas Black just screwed my brains out," Sasha moaned. She spread her legs a little more for me, allowing me to clean her up.

I kissed the spot I'd made on her neck. "Think you'll be able to sit down this time?"

"Maybe on the way home," Sasha mused, "but probably not after we spend some time at home."

"Good point." I stroked my hand down her back and teasingly squeezed her ass.

Sasha snorted. "That's not going to help the situation."

"Who said I wanted to help the situation?" I grinned.

Sasha rolled her eyes, then looked over the side of the bed. "You know, because of you, I won't have any underwear to wear home. You took all my things."

"Yes, that's true," I said.

"That means I'm going to be walking around in a skirt without underwear," Sasha despaired.

I laughed. "I'm not seeing the problem here. In fact, I see it as an opportunity—"

Sasha swatted me again. "Up. Let's go home."

"Yes," I said, thumbing the mark I'd made on her neck. "Let's go home."



## [Chapter 980: Don't You Know I Love You](#)

\*Sasha\*

Lucas's fingertips skimmed over my bare back as I lay on my belly next to him. As predicted, I was sore, but delightfully so.

He'd finally settled down, no longer trying to ravish me. But the aftermath of his light touches was even more arousing.

I knew soon, we'd both want more.

"What's on your mind, Sasha?" Lucas asked, brushing his lips over my shoulder.

I couldn't exactly say "you," so instead I said the second-most pressing thing on my mind. "The orb."

Lucas hissed as though I'd burned him, and I turned to look at him. "What?"

"Seriously? Right now you're thinking about the orb?" Lucas groused.

I blushed. "Well, and other things...."

"How about we just stick to 'other things,'" Lucas suggested, kissing my shoulder.

"I'm just... I just think...." I began.

Lucas kissed me. "If you start thinking again, I'm going to have to put a stop to it."

"You're very good at that," I snorted as he lazily slipped a hand under me and started playing with my n\*\*\*\*e.

"Mhm, I like to think so," Lucas said.

I put my hand on Lucas's wrist. "I talked to someone about it today."

Lucas's fingers stilled. "What?"

"The old priestess was trying to corner me at the Moonlight Boutique, with her goons, but Amanda and Chelsea drew them away...." I said.

"What?!" Lucas interrupted me, sitting up. "You ran into that old hag again?"

"She finally pinned me down a block over from Nostalgia, but that's not the point," I tried to explain.

"If that's not the point, I would LOVE to know what is!" Lucas said.

I nodded. "Well, back to the boutique...."

"Did she hurt you?" Lucas asked, looking me over.

I sat up so he could have a better view, turning at my waist so he could see the only marks on my body were the ones he'd put there. I was certainly going to bruise here and there, and luckily, neither of us gave a damn.

Lucas trailed his fingertips over my hip and back, scrutinizing my skin. "Still, the old bag was there."

"Well, that was after. She was just telling me so far I'm doing what she wants, so she won't interfere. Must mean I'm doing the wrong thing," I sighed.

"Possibly. I guess if she thinks it's the right thing, it just might be the wrong thing. But it's not as though you've really done anything at all yet except give me a heart attack," Lucas said.

I patted Lucas's thigh. "I haven't been hurt yet. You worry too much."

"Obviously, I don't worry enough," Lucas muttered. He rubbed his temples, then said, "Alright, starting at the boutique."

"Right. We hung out there a few hours hoping they'd go away eventually, but they didn't, so Chelsea dressed up as me and she and Amanda led them away," I repeated. "I ran to the library because it was the closest place I could think of that was safe. I mean, I could easily get to the castle from there if I needed to."

"We decided we're not telling the king and queen about the orb, remember?" Lucas reminded me.

I rolled my eyes. "Yes, Lucas, I know that. But I didn't have the orb with me, and all I had to say was that I needed a safe place to stay for a bit."

"Queen Lena would ask questions," Lucas said.

I waved a hand. "It doesn't matter now. I didn't go to the castle. I met this wonderful librarian named Jennie who brought me to the ancient part of the city where her mom lives—her mom is a white witch—and Rochel, the mom, told me a very little bit about the orb—"

"A WITCH?! You talked about the orb WITH ANOTHER WITCH?!" Lucas shouted.

I winced as his yelling rang in my ears. "Yes, I did. Keep it down, won't you? I want to still be able to hear when I'm sixty."

"f\*\*k that. You're lucky I don't wring your fool neck!" Lucas bellowed. "Sasha, you can't go around telling people about the orb!"

"I didn't," I replied with emphasis. "She knew. She already knew. The poor thing nearly fainted when she put two and two together. She said we need to hide it or destroy it—"

Lucas nodded sharply. "Finally, something I can agree with."

"Lucas. We don't even know what the Goddess wants yet. She just wants me to use it. It's the key to something. Until I find out what it is...." I said.

"Nah, I'm with this white witch Rochel. We need to take it back to the construction site, grab a jackhammer—"

I put my hands over Lucas's mouth. "No! Lucas, we NEED to know what's going on first! What if destroying it is exactly what the black witch wants, too?"

Lucas frowned. "I can't imagine a black witch and a white witch agreeing on anything, but if both of them thought it was dangerous, it might not be a bad idea to take precautions."

"Exactly. Precautions," I said. "So, I'll just take the orb and use my dream dancer powers to try to find out more information—"

"Precautions like throwing it in the ocean when we cross to New Dianny," Lucas interrupted flatly.

"Hey! No, we can't do that!" I argued.

"We can. And I'm this close, Sasha, this close." Lucas pressed his thumb and forefinger together in front of me.

I folded my arms over my breasts. "You can't keep bossing me around, Lucas. I'm not a child."

"You're not a grown-up, either, not for a week," Lucas said.

My eyes widened. "Are you keeping track?"

"Maybe," Lucas replied evasively.

I slowly crawled into his lap, which elicited a soft grunt from Lucas as I looped my arms around the back of his neck. His d\*\*k perked up beneath me. "Why are you keeping track?" I whispered.

Lucas drew a long breath. "You know why."

"Do you... do you want it to be me?" I couldn't stop myself from asking.

Lucas's hands settled on my hips, his forehead pressing into my shoulder. "Yes."

I swallowed. "Why?"

"You know why," he said again.

I cupped his cheeks and raised his chin so I was looking into his stormy gray eyes. "Tell me anyway," I breathed.

Lucas groaned. "Sasha..."

"I want to hear it," I said.

Helpless, Lucas pressed his lips to mine, tilting my hips in his lap so his erection slid inside my sore passage. "Because I... I have feelings for you, Sasha. Deep, confusing, sometimes even exasperating feelings, but feelings."

I wrapped my legs around Lucas's waist. This time, it was my turn to bury my face so he couldn't see my reaction. "I..." my muffled voice came out.

"Shh." Lucas rolled me underneath him and began making slow, careful love to me. "You don't have to say anything, not anything at all. I just... I want to be with you a while longer... just in case we..."

"Just in case we aren't?" I finished for him.

Lucas nodded, moving his hips with aching slowness.

My stomach felt tight with nervous energy. What did I want from Lucas Black? Did I want him to be the one, my true mate?

The idea that he wasn't made me feel sad to my bones, so I decided I must really want him to be it for me, as he wanted me to be it for him.

Still, before I could say anything, the brute managed to infuriate me again.

"You are not to use that orb, Sasha," Lucas said, ruthlessly using his body to persuade me.

"Not playing fair, again," I panted as he picked up the pace, bringing me to the edge, then slowing down, just to start all over.

"Nope. I'm not. Promise me," Lucas ordered.

I swiveled my hips, turning the tables and making him groan. "I won't promise you that. You can't make me."

It was a losing battle, and Lucas knew it. I wasn't going to win. He wasn't going to win. But by the Goddess, we were going to enjoy losing together.

I came when Lucas did, holding him tight as he shoved deep inside me and found his satisfaction.

Panting, Lucas stroked my hair, misty sweat on our bodies mingling as the ambient air cooled our fever.

"Still don't want you to use that orb," Lucas said.

I played with the wavy hair on top of his head. "Still going to."

Lucas growled. "You're impossible."

"You like that about me," I teased.

"Goddess help me, I think I might," Lucas muttered under his breath. He pulled out very carefully, as though knowing I was sore, and cuddled me into his side. "You know we're going to keep fighting about this, right?"

"I know," I said.

"All the way to New Dianny," he continued.

"Yep."

"All the way to the Winter Forest," Lucas said.

I sat up slightly. "We're going to the Winter Forest?"

"There's no place like home," Lucas quipped.

"That's good. We can see what my mother knows about all of this."

"Have you talked to her yet?"

"No, this is a conversation that needs to happen face-to-face."

He nodded his agreement. "And maybe your mother will be able to talk sense into you."

I glared at him.

Lucas shrugged. "Someone has to. Now, we'll make sure you're packed by morning. Brady and Phoebe agreed to come with us, for their safety. I got two cabins on the ship—"

"What if I want my own cabin?" I sniffed.

Lucas raised an eyebrow at me. "Tough. There were only two left."

"Then maybe Phoebe and I will bunk together," I suggested. "I'm still mad at you, you know."

"You can be mad at me while you're screaming my name," Lucas said.

I felt my cheeks get hot. "I don't scream."

"Oh, you scream. You think I was loud earlier...." Lucas chuckled.

"It's not very gentlemanly to point out things like that," I mumbled.

Lucas traced his fingers along the chain to my necklace, then played with the emerald. "Maybe you don't make me think gentlemanly thoughts."

"One of those thoughts being keeping the orb under lock and key so I can't use it?" I grumped.

"That's one of the thoughts, yes," Lucas said.

I sighed and snuggled my cheek into his shoulder, throwing my arm across his abs as I got myself comfortable to sleep with him. "Still mad at you," I responded. "Even though you do have feelings for me. And I...."

"Still mad at you, too. And you go ahead and think about your feelings. You don't have to have an answer for me right now," Lucas said softly.

Ugh. If only the big dumb i\*\*\*t would stop interrupting me....

"Fine," I replied and closed my eyes. "Just so you know, I won't be screaming your name again anytime soon."

"We'll see about that," Lucas said.