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ROMAN

While Abby grabbed a cardigan, Roman told the warrior guards outside that they were going to the Oracle's house and to give them some privacy.

He and Abby walked hand in hand across the meadow, and pack members who were out walking called out greetings to them.

Roman relaxed as the warmth and happiness radiating from Abby bounced around inside his body. The link was open, and he knew their connection was lighting up the pack lands and everyone in it.

Even though she was nervous, she was still comforting the pack. Did she realize what she was doing, or was it unconscious? He plucked a wildflower for her and smiled as she tucked it in her hair.

THE ORACLE

The Oracle opened the door and greeted the alpha and his graced luna with a deep bow.

Mara had called right after the lights flickered to tell her she'd just started her monthly bleed for the first time in two years. She was elated, and she said Logan was so emotional he'd had to step outside to collect himself.

Others, too, had called the Oracle to tell her their reactions to the surge of power that had swept through the pack.

"Come in, come in. You two have caused quite the stir."

"When the lights dimmed they all felt it?" Roman took a seat on her couch and pulled young Abigail down next to him, tucking her into his side.

The purr rumbling out of him was so strong, the Oracle's teacup rattled on its saucer. She picked it up and sat on the upholstered chair across from them.

"Yes. Do you know what that was?"

Roman puffed up his chest and squeezed his mate's shoulder. "Our souls trying to bond."

She eyed the powerful pair. "Partly. But the two of you coming together is an incredibly rare event. That surge was full of life power."

ABIGAIL

The Oracle squinted at Abby and Roman as she sipped her tea, then gazed into the distance, her eyes clouding over briefly before snapping back to Roman.

"The young pup Carson would have been a strict alpha, would have ruled by sheer force. A force that would have done significant damage. Abigail would have been helpless to stop him."

Abby stayed quiet, and the Oracle continued.

"What you are both feeling is all-encompassing power. The alpha powers you had before, Roman, are being amplified. Your strength, agility, protectiveness—everything is enhanced because of your connection to the graced luna."

Roman nodded. "I've felt invincible lately, and all my senses are heightened."

"Yes, and it's the same for you, Abby, with your speed, your physical strength. And your ability to heal others is far beyond that of a normal healer. Your luna powers are amplified by Roman's alpha powers.

"The two of you bonding is so powerful that it can't be contained. It's a blessing. When these surges happen, the entire pack benefits. It's how the Moon Goddess has chosen to bless the pack—through the two of you.

"She loves all her children, but Pack Luko is special to her."

Abby felt like things were clearer now—she was starting to understand what she was feeling and why. And it helped that the Oracle wasn't speaking in half-riddles.

The old woman cackled, and Abby jumped.

"You will learn my ways in time," the Oracle said with a grin.

Abby flushed, but Roman just chuckled, shaking his head. He hadn't even flinched. But she supposed it was difficult to take an alpha by surprise.

The Oracle's smile softened. "You have questions about marking each other."

"Yes, Oracle," Abby said, looking up at Roman.

"Everything will be more intense—the pain, the power—because the connection will be on an astral level. But don't be afraid. It's a blessing, and the Moon Goddess is patiently awaiting your union.

"Abigail, I know you'll feel different afterward, but I was unable to ascertain how so. It is my belief, however, that you'll feel reenergized and lighter."

"Thank you, Oracle, I feel much more at peace."

"You have other questions."

She did, but on a personal, woman-to-woman sort of level. "Not right now."

Roman frowned at her. "If you have concerns, Abby, you need to voice them."

THE ORACLE

The Oracle took another sip of her tea, hiding her smile. She'd been a young woman once, with the same sorts of questions she sensed in the young luna.

She couldn't force Abigail to ask them, she could only hope she felt comfortable enough to do so.

"Really, I'm fine."

Ah, the young luna did not want to talk about her heat in front of the alpha.

Roman gave a warning rumble and narrowed his eyes. "I can feel you're not lying, Abby, but you *are* omitting something."

Abigail flushed, caught. She opened and closed her mouth several times, but nothing came out.

The Oracle chuckled. "Your heat will be intense."

Alpha Roman raised his eyebrows as his mate put her face in her hands, then kissed the top of her head and stood.

“I’m going to speak to the warriors.” He winked at Abigail and grinned when she burst out in nervous giggles.

The Oracle let out a throaty chuckle. She couldn’t help it—watching the alpha flirt was heartwarming. It was obvious an affection was growing between the two of them.

She gave Roman a nod and, after he shut the door, turned to Abigail.

“Your first heat was terrible. To put you within smelling distance of your mate was akin to torture.”

ABIGAIL

It didn’t surprise Abby that the old woman knew this. She was an oracle, after all.

“Will it hurt like that again?”

“You will have the alpha this time, who is more than capable of tending to your needs. It will be intense, but it will not be torturous.”

Abby bit her lip. “I’m a little afraid. I don’t have any experience, and the alpha had a mate already. He’s older, and...I don’t know if he’s attracted to me like that, or if he’s—”

A loud growl came from outside, and she covered her face with her hands. “I want to make sure my mate is happy!”

She gasped when she felt Roman kick open the link.

“Mine!”

Abby put a hand over her mouth, stifling her embarrassed laughter.

The Oracle smiled, her eyes twinkling. “I believe you have your answer.”

Abby heard Roman talking on the phone outside, so she checked the time and was surprised to find so much had passed. He must be speaking with her parents.

“Trust the Moon Goddess, Abigail.”

She turned back to the Oracle. “Thank you.” Feeling drained, she sank back into the cushions of the couch. “Will I...still die?” she asked, her voice trembling a bit.

“We all pass from this life into the next,” the Oracle told her with a kind smile. “But now that your mate has accepted you, graced luna, you will live out the lifespan you were meant to have.”

Abby breathed a sigh of relief. Roman has told her as much, but it was nice to have confirmation.

“You should mark each other as soon as possible, however.”

“I’d really like my parents to be here,” Abby said, resting her head against the cushions and closing her eyes. Her arms and legs felt like weights. She nudged Roman through the link, hoping he could take her home.

“That should be fine,” she heard the Oracle say. “So long as they can be here in the next few days.”

ROMAN

Roman finished up his call.

The good news was Abby’s parents felt better after hearing what the Oracle had to say and agreed the marking should take place as soon as possible.

They were hoping to leave tomorrow and arrive late the next day so they could attend the mate’s pact ceremony and the after-celebration.

The bad news was that it might be tricky to get permission from Alpha Edward. Turns out, he *had* been the one responsible for Abby’s number being blocked, but it had been at his son’s insistence.

Once Carson had learned that Abby was a graced luna and that her powers would have enhanced his, he wanted her back as his mate.

According to the Canavers, Carson was causing a lot of trouble in Pack Oru, and Alpha Edward was having some health problems that were making it increasingly difficult for him to stand up to his son.

When Roman went back inside, Abby looked exhausted, like she could hardly move. He lifted her into his arms and looked at the Oracle with concern.

“She’ll be okay, Roman. She’s been carrying a lot of worry, though, and must rest.”

He nodded. “Thank you, Oracle.”

He hurried home, Abby curled in his arms with her head on his shoulder. “You need to eat,” he said as he went up the porch steps. Even though the Oracle had assured them she’d be fine, it worried him to see her so drained.

“Yes, Alpha.”

He deposited Abby on the couch and pulled a blanket over her before heating a container of soup from the freezer and pouring himself a stiff drink. When the soup was ready, he served it to her in a bowl with a box of crackers.

She thanked him, and he watched her while she ate. When she finished, she delicately wiped her mouth, then leaned back with a tired sigh.

Roman took her tray to the kitchen, and after setting the bowl in the sink, grabbed the bottle of whiskey and two glasses and returned to sit beside her. He poured Abby a drink and handed it to her.

He was trying to figure out how to bring up what he overheard her say to the Oracle. But since Abby was pure, it made everything a little more delicate.

ABIGAIL

Roman grabbed Abby’s free hand, startling her, and she almost spilled her drink. He took the glass and set it down on the coffee table.

“I know that we don’t have a history,” he began, “and haven’t had much time together, or even dates, but make no mistake, I *am* attracted to you. And I’d like to think you’re attracted to me too.”

She felt her cheeks turn red. “I am.”

“But you’re nervous?”

She nodded, embarrassed at her lack of experience. Though she was grateful Carson had never pushed her into physical intimacy. Especially since he'd been sleeping with someone else.

"You've had a mate," she said softly. "But I've never..."

Roman hushed her and pulled her onto his lap, her knees on either side of his hips. "You never have to be embarrassed in front of me, Abby. You never have to worry that I'm not attracted to you."

He settled her more firmly against him and kissed her until they were both breathless. Pleasure filled her with every stroke of his tongue, and every time she moved, their bodies pressed together. She let out a low moan.

Roman grabbed her hips and pushed her harder against him. "Feel what you do to me," he groaned, his voice husky and full of desire.

She did, and her body shuddered with her own arousal—and his. Every part of her was sensitized.

"I want you," she whispered against his lips.

Roman gave her a hard, brief kiss and pulled back. "You'll have me. Now, be a good girl until I mark you."

With a groan of frustration, Abby rolled off his lap and swatted at him. "Tease! Just you wait until it's time for me to shower."

She squealed when he growled menacingly, but she wasn't scared. She felt safer with him than she ever had in her life.