

Chapter 61

Daisy

“Taria.” Xavier snarls in his human form. Our victory has been wiped away with her single appearance. This fight is far from over. Taria laughs in response, a melodic sound that contrasts heavily with the threatening air she exudes.

“Are you not tired of fighting yet, Xavier?” she coos, eyes revealing nothing but painted amusement. Her voice is silk and poison, a paradox of allure and danger. Xavier doesn’t answer. It makes Taria laugh. “Don’t worry. I will take care of you later. First, I will destroy the traitor,” her eyes lock onto Caleb, “Because that’s what you are for choosing the werewolves.”

Caleb doesn’t flinch. In fact, he surprises us all by stepping forward, shooting the vampire queen a dark smile that’s equally chilling as her own. “Destroy me if you want, but I still won’t regret fighting for my mate and Alpha’s side,” he places a hand on my shoulder, a small smile on his lips. “I’m loyal to Daisy.”

“Ah, Serena’s reincarnation,” Taria looks disgusted as her eyes fleet over me. “Just as weak and insignificant as she was. The words leave her lips like venomous daggers, but I stand tall,

refusing to let her words get to me, I turn back into a human to talk to her.

“Serena might have been weak in your eyes, but she tried her hardest to save this world by locking you up in the magical realm.”

“But eventually, her magic wasn’t enough to keep us locked in the other realm.” Taria points out. I smirk at that despite the fear in my heart.

“But how many years did it take for you to break free? A hundred? Three hundred?”

“More like a thousand!” Taria snarls. “Then it took two hundred years for my powers to recover.”

“And what about the vampire prince?” I ask.

Her lips curl into a twisted smile. “My son’s powers should be fully recovered. I brought his reincarnation to this world twenty-eight years ago. Anyway, shall we begin? Who wants to die first?”

I don’t expect anyone to be reckless enough to attack the vampire queen, but Yato rushes forward in his wolf form with the wind behind him. All of his magic is focused on giving him insane speed. But he doesn’t stand a chance. Taria lifts her hands, looking almost bored as she grabs him and slings him

into a nearby tree with such force that the ground under our feet trembles with the impact. Dust and debris rise in a cloud, and Yato is out like a light.

“Next!” Taria laughs. “And this time, send someone who lasts more than a second.”

My heart lurches painfully at Yato’s defeat, but I swallow my despair and step forward, feeling a deadly calm wash over me. “I’ll go.” I announce, my voice ringing out clear and loud.

Xavier and Caleb both stare at me. “No, we should attack together,” Caleb says. “You won’t stand a chance trying to take her on alone.” But I don’t heed his warning, already pooling my energy for an offensive attack.

“Everyone had their chance now it’s my turn,” I reply without looking back. My magic crackles around me in a vibrant light show. The fear is still there, but it’s soft and muted against the drumming.

“Oh, so you’ve awakened to your magic already?” Taria looks more curious than afraid. “Then maybe coming here won’t be a total waste of energy.”

I ignore her jab, focusing instead on channeling my magic. Drawing from an untapped well deep within me, I let the power surge and overflow, sparking in my fingertips before I shoot a beam of light at the vampire queen. Caught off guard, Taria

raises her hand with the intention to block my attack, but the force sends her sliding backwards. A victorious smile tugs at my lips. This is my chance; I can feel it. But as quickly as it comes, it's extinguished as she regains her footing and starts laughing madly.

"Oh, how delightfully unexpected! A spark of light in this pathetic band of misfits, after all!" Taria jeers, her eyes gleaming with a sadistic pleasure that makes my blood run cold.

"She...she thinks this is fun?" I ask Sera. I think the answer would be yes.

"Ah, I've waited for a formidable opponent," Taria locks her yellow eyes on mine. "Sadly, you're not strong enough to be exciting. Let me show you true power!" With the speed of light, she dashes forward. A silent gasp escapes my lips. But, before she can grab my neck, Caleb and Xavier leap forward in an improbable synchronization, slamming into Taria and knocking her off course. The shock on her face as she skids across the floor is almost comical.

"Get back!" Caleb yells at me. "You can't die here. As the light wolf, you're our only hope of defeating the vampires!"

Taria snorts an amusement. "You think that little freak will be able to defeat me? Pfft, I won't let it come to that-I will just kill all of tonight!" Laughing, she springs to her feet, her eyes glinting in the moonlight. She raises her arms and pushes Caleb

into a tree before later kicking Xavier's wolf form into the side of a cliff. Caleb is quick to get up and attack her, but she dodges, landing a forceful kick on his chest and sending him sprawling to the ground again. "Anyone else?" she asks. Xavier, despite his bruised form, springs at her from the side.

But Taria is faster and more powerful than any of us. She prevents Xavier's attack and casts him aside like a rag doll. He hits the ground hard, and Taria smiles before turning her attention back to me. "And how do you want to die?" she snaps her head mechanically to the side. "How about being choked to death by my hand?"

"Depends," I shoot back, "do you charge extra for that?"

Taria laughs, a sound like bones snapping in a blizzard. "Oh, this one's got spirit. But it won't be enough to defeat me!" She rushes forward with the speed of lightning, grabbing me by my neck with her long, cold fingers. I'm choking, gasping for air, and clawing at her vice-like grip.

"Sera?!" No answer. My magic is dwindling, the well within me dry and barren. I can feel the edges of my vision darkening and the world closing in on me. How do I get out of this? 'I don't think you can. Sera sounds quiet, almost mournful in my mind. "You are the light wolf, but you haven't had enough training to beat the vampire queen."

Taria cackles, her grip squeezing tighter around my neck. “Any last words, light wolf?” Her voice is a cruel sneer, echoing eerily through the deserted forest. Her cold eyes are like meeting death itself-cold, unfeeling, and infinite. I don’t want to die, but I’m powerless in the vampire queen’s grip.

Yet I somehow force words. “Last words?” I choke out, mustering as much bravado as I can. “Only that you’re mistaken if you think you’ve won.”

Fury washes over her features. “Always with the smart remarks. It’s going to be your downfall.” She lifts a clawed hand, ready to slash me, but Xavier’s voice stops her. “Wait!” he shouts, entirely breathless. “Don’t you want the battle of a lifetime? If that’s the case, then you should spare her.”

“Battle of a lifetime?” Taria echoes, her eyes glittering with a sinister delight. “That would indeed be fun...” With one last look at my face, she turns her attention to Xavier. “Tell you what, if you remove that anklet from around your foot, then I will let you decide the fate of this little one.”

Xavier pales at the offer. The anklet is the only thing keeping his vampiric powers in check, and he shoots me a hesitant look before placing his hand over it. “Do you promise not to kill her?” he asks.

Taria smirks, amusement glittering in her frosty eyes, but she gives a curt nod. “I promise. She will not die by my hand today.

But I cannot make the same promise for you.” He falters but does not withdraw his hand from the anklet. His gaze turns to me, locking eyes with mine, searching for a sign- of approval. And while I want to tell him no, that there has to be another way I’m not sure there is. So, I nod my head slowly, swallowing the lump in my throat. Xavier gives me one last lingering look of regret before ripping off the anklet.

Darkness immediately surrounds him as his vampire powers surge through his veins, electrifying the still forest air. He grits his teeth, trying to control the overwhelming power that hasn’t flowed freely within him since the day he was born.

“That’s it.” Taria whispers. “Let go of the person you once were and let the vampire prince be born.” I gasp. “V-vampire prince?” Her eyes return to mine. “Twenty-eight years ago, I needed to find a host for the vampire prince. I had originally planned to place him in the body of a vampire, but then I had a better idea what would happen if I had a child with the strongest werewolf I could find?” Fear and realization must be mirrored on my face because Taria laughs in amusement.

“That’s right,” she says. “I sired Christian Reeves. We had sex, and the result? It turned out better than I could have imagined. A vampire-werewolf hybrid, something that had never existed before. Not only that but the child was born with both fire and magic. And that child was Alpha Xavier.”

I tremble at the weight of this revelation. Taria is no longer choking me but holding me steady regardless. "Of course, I had to ensure Xavier wouldn't grow up siding with the werewolves. So, I sealed away his vampiric side with a magical anklet, and trust me, his vampiric side isn't happy about that. Xavier didn't accept what or who he was, which means the vampiric side will treat him the same by pushing away every trace of the Xavier you knew. He won't remember you, especially not since you haven't marked each other."

Reality comes crashing down with every word that Taria utters. My head is spinning, and so is my world, when she releases her grip around my throat. I fall to the ground, clutching at the moist earth below me as I try to regain my bearings. Where is Xavier! I look around, pausing when I see him. Darkness surrounds him, and his aura radiates power. He is staring down at his hand in silence, but once he lifts his chin. I can see that his once-green eyes are entirely crimson. 'He has rejected his werewolf side.' Sera says. 'And with that, all of his memories of you are gone.'