

## Chapter 21

A/N

I originally meant to split this into two chapters, but it all just seemed to mould together and it would disrupt the strict outline I have for this book.

Brace yourselves, lovelies, this is gonna be a long one .

WARNING: MATURE THEMES

Serena Basco

I was already asleep when Jon returned from his talk with Clayton, but I did remember that last night, he held me tighter than he ever had before. In the middle of the night when I woke up to use the bathroom, I had to push at him hard so that he would loosen his hold on me.

He woke up before me in the morning, so I assumed that his talks had gone well and it was business as usual in the palace. I was still pretty shaken from yesterday's events and I was in no mood to interact with anyone today, so I texted Jon that I would be working from the study adjacent to our room today.

Caroline brought in my meals, and she was extra skittish around me today. I decided not to pry; maybe she was just in a different mood. I didn't have time to dwell on it as I spent the day typing away on my laptop. I was working on a progress sheet for the she-wolves and it was taking a lot of time for me to figure out excel formulas that I had to call Paolo a few times.

When that was done, I remembered that Patrick still had some files for me to computerize. I had locked myself to the room all day and now that the sun had set, it was time to stretch my legs. Besides, it wouldn't do if I just hid myself every time I faced conflict in the palace. I was still nervous—what if General Cra was still somewhere around the corner?

But I trusted that Jon must have talked some sense into him.

When I went outside, I was surprised when everyone stopped and looked up at me. I turned back to see Darien and he was just shuffling awkwardly, not making eye contact and just waiting for me to walk. I ran my fingers across my face—maybe I had a spot somewhere. Finally, I shrugged and just chalked it up to people being surprised that this was the first time today I was leaving the room.

However, when I began to walk towards Patrick's rooms, things started to get really strange. People would jump back to avoid me; some men even pressed themselves against the walls when I walked by. One woman almost bumped me and immediately cried and scurried out of my way. No one was looking me in the eyes.

I stopped.

"Darien, what is going on?" I demanded.

"L...it's...they..." Darien looked down and mumbled.

I groaned and continued walking, growling under my breath whenever people went out of their way to avoid me.

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. I grit my teeth and pushed open the door to Patrick's office. I was met with the sight of my new brother smiling widely up at me. There were two people in front of him, a man and a woman.

"Hey sis!" He grinned.

"Finally, a friendly face. Everyone's been acting like I have the plague or something." I cried out. Patrick chuckled.

"This is Beta Sanders from the South Ridge pack, and his mate Beth." Patrick introduced. I shook their hands.

"Thank you for your time, Prince Patrick, Princess Serena. I'm afraid we must be getting back to the south." Beta Sanders said.

We bid them goodbye and when the door closed, I slumped in the seat in front of Patrick's desk and groaned.

"Patrick, why does everyone suddenly hate me?" I mumbled.

"They don't hate you, it's probably because of what happened last night. Don't worry, it'll pass." Patrick casually said, yawning as he flipped through a folder.

"Last night? What happened last night?" I demanded. Patrick dropped the folder and narrowed his eyes at me.

"You don't know? Jon didn't tell you?" Patrick asked.

"Tell me what? I was asleep when he got back." I said, confused. Patrick began to laugh.

"Oh no...this is too...I can't..." Patrick began doubling up in laughter. I growled and slammed my palm on the table.

"Patrick what happened? Did Jon do something?" I demanded. Patrick stopped laughing and shook his head.

"Nothing, he only beat Clayton Cra bloody because of what he did to you. Speaking of which, what did the General do to you? Jon refused to tell me and I..." Patrick trailed off.

My face paled and I clenched my fists.

"JON DID WHAT?" I cried, standing up.

"He almost killed him too. That's why everyone's avoiding you, they don't wanna accidentally hurt you or something." Patrick shrugged.

"He said...he told me they were just going to talk!" I hissed in anger. "Oh, they talked alright. I wouldn't worry about it if I were you, Jon's always been protective." Patrick smiled at me.

"Patrick, you don't understand. HE LIED TO ME!" I growled, stomping my feet.

"Then take it up with him! I don't know what you're stressing about, I thought girls liked it if guys fought over them." Patrick chuckled.

I growled at him before exiting the room.

I was angry. No, I was livid.

Jon lied to me, and I didn't even see it! All this time, I thought he was just one of those honest ones and now, I'm beginning to have doubts. How the hell did he sleep last night holding me knowing he did something I considered so heinous?

He told me that he and Clayton were only going to talk and I felt betrayed. He knew how I felt about violence—I didn't want anyone fighting over me!

This is it.

Jon and I needed to talk. Something had been brewing inside the both of us for the past few weeks and we needed to get it out and just have it at. I was angry and in pain, but my instincts told me that he was in agony too. We needed to talk this out if we could ever have a chance at a healthy relationship.

I gulped. An idea just came to me.

Racing to the kitchens, I tried not to flinch as everyone still went out of their way to avoid me. Wordlessly, I grabbed a basket and filled it with all the stuff I needed. This was going to work—Jon and I were finally going to have it out whether he liked it or not.

When I had everything I required, I set everything up in the room before going to his office.

When I arrived, General Hassan was just making his way out. He bowed politely when he saw me.

"Is he done?" I asked.

"He's all yours." General Hassan curtly said.

I pushed open the door and stalked my way over to Jon. I put my hands on my hips and glared at him angrily.

"Care to explain?" I asked. He sighed defeatedly and slumped his head on the desk.

"I was going to tell you, I swear. I was just figuring out how..." Jon said. I rolled my eyes at that. I was done making excuses for him.

"The day's almost over, Jon. You really thought you could keep this from me? Jon you know how I feel..." I started, but he growled at me. Surprised, I clamped my mouth shut.

"Yes, I know how you feel and I have tried to be considerate of your feelings every since I claimed you, but you do not know how I feel so don't think you can judge me for my actions." Jon growled.

I see.

My eyes widened and I smirked. I sat down primly in front of him and crossed my legs.

"Oh I'm not judging you. By all means, go ahead and beat up anyone you want to, but don't think you can get away by saying you did it for me." I hissed. He slammed his fists on the table and looked at me. I didn't flinch.

"What is that supposed to mean?" He demanded.

"You wanted the fight, Jon. You know you could've just talked to him but you didn't!" I said.

He stared at me, and I could see a hint of guilt in his eyes. I suddenly occurred to me that I knew next to nothing about him.

"It's true isn't it? This has little to do with me and more to do with something else..." I stated.

He stayed silent. I remembered what Queen Robin had told me during my first day here. He needs to be more in touch with his emotions...maybe you can help him with that

"Jon, tell me, talk to me. What's going on? Something's different about you...there's been something gnawing at your mind and it kills me that you won't let me help you." I pleaded.

Is this what he meant when he said he was having dark thoughts? I was scared of the answer.

"Serena, I know you. The moment you find out about what's really happening...I'm afraid you'll...I don't know..." Jon helplessly said.

What's going on beyond the border?!

"Something heinous must be happening if you're scared my reaction will cause you to be more protective of me." I stated. "And now the whole palace knows what happens when Jonathon Lancaster gets protective."

"Since I met you, I've become stronger, yet more violent and reckless. I can't seem to be reckless." Jon growled

"So I am to blame for all of this?"

Maybe Clayton was right after all. Of course, I didn't have the balls to say that to Jon's face.

"No, of course not. But I fear...I don't know if anything can stop me, Serena. When it comes to you, I may just be capable of anything...things I don't even know." Jon hissed. "And therein lies the problem."

Why is he being so dramatic? I rolled my eyes at his statement, remembering my anger at his actions. There was no excuse for what he did.

"Was that supposed to be sweet? Because I didn't feel romanced at all." I sarcastically said.

He slammed his fist on the table and I winced.

"Is all this just a joke to you? We are entering a war and..." Jon started

"Yes, you keep saying that but I don't know what that means! What do you want me to do, Jon? If you want me to take this war seriously, then I will. But I refuse to do it half-assed so you have to tell me what's going on so I can help you!"

Jon leaned forward across the table and took my hands in his. I struggled in his hold but he was stronger.

"I need you to trust me that I'm keeping you out for your own protection so if you could just appreciate everything I do for you." Jon said in a deep, low voice that sent chills down my spine.

Excusez-moi?

I snatched my hands out of his hold. I can't just blindly support his every move, mating is supposed to be about partnership and if he was serious about seeing me as an equal, then he needed to show it.

My father was right. I needed to grow up. I was willing step up and take my place of responsibility in Jon's life. I knew what I was entitled to and it was time I took it.

"Appreciate? Am I supposed to feel grateful for being let out of my mate's trials?"

"As opposed to what? Feeling resentful? I don't have time for this, Serena!"

"You don't have time for what, a mate? Then you should've thought of that before you claimed me!"

"I'm beginning to wish I did."

Ouch.

That hurt more than I expected it to. It felt like a chill had taken over my heart.

The silence between us was thick and wounding.

"Serena I didn't mean..." Jon started. I sighed.

"Yes, you did." I whispered. He stared me down, his eyes asking me a million questions. I looked away.

It was time to end this.

Taking a deep breath, I stood up.

"Follow me." I said.

Wordlessly, he did as I asked.

People jumped out of their way when they saw us, their fear heightened by the brooding bulk of muscle hovering behind me.

"All your work for the week done?" I casually asked as he followed me through the halls.

"Yes."

"Good."

We finally arrived back to our room. When he saw what I had prepared, he choked and coughed. I smirked.

Beside our bed, I laid out a picnic blanket, and in the middle there were some drinks and soda. There was also a big bottle of tequila, two shot glasses, some limes cut up, and some salt.

Time to fight.

"Serena, what is this?" Jon asked. I closed the door behind him.

"This." I gestured to everything. "Was how my friends and I solved all our fights back in Eastern Claw. Sure, it didn't end pretty, but at least it fixed the conflict. Now, we're doing it."

"Get drunk?"

"Yes. God knows you need it, Prince Jonathon; you're about to go to war." I wistfully said. "When was the last time you got drunk?"

"I don't know...a few years ago?"

I rolled my eyes.

"Mine was a week before the Claiming. Jane and Christopher were fighting about...something and whenever we fight, we fix it through this."

"How does this..." He sat down and took the bottle of tequila, extra strong specially made for wolves. "Fix your problems?"

I sat down across him.

"The rules are: you can say anything you want about the ongoing party and either that, you take a shot. The one who ended party can't make a rebuttal or argue, he'll just say whatever made him angry too, and he takes a shot. Basically, you air out your grievances and the alcohol helps." I said.

"And then what? Magically the fight is over?" He asked suspiciously.

"Yeah, I guess. Somehow, that vulnerability brings us to a better place."

"Like the bathroom?"

"Haha, very funny. Now, sit down, we're doing this." I sighed and opened the bottle, filling the both of our glasses.

He stared at me, resolute and unyielding.

"I'm still not sure." Jonathon said.

Enough of this.

"Jon, we haven't actually talked lot about us. About our relationship, it's not as black and white as you perceive it to be. We need this. We're both too awkward to do this sober and you know it. I have problems with you and I'm sure you have problems with me. Now come on!" I hurried.

"Fine. If you think it will help." He sighed, his form taking on a more relaxed posture.

Great.

"I'll go first." I said, taking my glass and raising it. "I hate that I...didn't challenge you during the claiming. I hate that I went down without a fight."

Shot. Salt. Lime. Slight headache.

"Your turn."

Jon winced at me before shrugging.

"I didn't know having a mate was so fucking tedious." Jon said. I widened my eyes at that and bit my lip. Now we were getting somewhere. He did the same: shot, salt, lime.

It continued that way for a while, and slowly we let go of our inhibitions and started to really have it out. It felt good to be honest with Jon, and I tried my best to actually hash out all the issues I think we were having.

Some of our statements were serious and made sense.

"I never wanted to be a princess, this wasn't my choice!"

"My whole life wasn't my choice. Claiming you was probably the first choice I've ever made without the council or my parents."

"It makes me upset that you don't show your emotions, that I can't read you as well as I'd like."

"I'm going to keep killing and I'm scared you might eventually hate me for it."

Some statements were simply idiotic, but needed to be said.

"You cuddle me too tight sometimes!" I whined.

"You've gotten me used to washing my hands more than ten times a day." Jon groaned.

"Sometimes you forget to set your alarm and I have to do it for you." I rolled my eyes.

"Did you know I had the maids change the air freshener they used from lavender to coconut since I realized you liked the scent of coconuts?" Jon gumbled.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"Your bath stuff. Sometimes I read them in the shower."

"You're so weird. You don't even have Instagram." I groaned as I took another shot.

We were beginning to get very, very drunk.

Minutes turned into hours, and soon the moon was bright in the middle of the sky. It was already past midnight. By the end, we were dead drunk.

The things we said became even more honest and serious. We both became more vulnerable.

"I hate that I came between you and General Cra." I admitted. "What if this causes you to not work well together and it's my fault the war goes down on our side?"

"It was my honor, and duty to beat the shit out of that bastard."

"Still, it was just a disagreement and..."

"No. He laid his hands on you." He growled. "Clayton knows he made a mistake, and I'll make sure he works hard to make up for it. He won't cause you anymore trouble, I promise."

"I hate that you're so direct and upfront with me, because...you're only doing it because it's your duty. Sometimes I feel like I'm just a duty to you. I had hoped for a mate who would do all the things you do out of...a reaction." I sighed. Shot. Salt. Lime.

"But we're getting there, right?" He asked, taking a shot. I looked at him and smiled wearily.

Were we?

"I'd like to think so." I said.

"I don't like how reckless I'm becoming ever since I've met you. The last time my wolf took over that easily was many years ago." He said.

"What if one day you realize I'm not a worthy mate and you'll cast me aside?" I mumbled.

We both took shots. Pretty soon, we were both slumped on the floor leaning against each other.

I knew just how to finish this fight and for all.

"Tell you what. We each get to ask one question. Something we'd never have the courage to ask sober, a question that we take a shot." I said. He wearily nodded.

I knew just what to ask him. I cleared my throat to ask for his attention.

"Do you hate that I'm not the warrior princess you thought I was?"

There was silence.

"I was...disappointed." He admitted after a while.

It felt like a knife stabbed my heart. I feared I was going to cry, but then he spoke.

"But, I'm not anymore." He said. Shot. Before I could say anything else, he let out a cough. He swayed from left to right, clearly as drunk as I was. "Serena...why did they give you a Gold Rank?"

Silence.

"I can't answer that..." I said.

"You have to, I answered yours..." He slurred.

"I didn't mean that I won't...I will, eventually. When we're both sober. I owe you and myself that much. Ask another question." I said. He sighed.

It was comical to see the usually composed prince slurring and swaying. The alcohol had really gotten to him.

He finally straightened and looked me dead in the eye.

"Even if I kill...and keep killing...and do other monstrous deeds...do you think you could...eventually...love me?"

His speech was slurred, but his eyes spoke of unadulterated fear and truth. My drunk mind was not prepared for that question.

I knew the answer, and I was scared of it. I'd held on to my morals and principles my whole life and slowly, my walls were beginning to break. I knew that even if he decapitated every single one of his enemies in the most brutal manner, I'd still find a way to forgive him.

Was that because of the mate bond given by the Moon Goddess to preserve the sanctity of mating? A single mark would ensure my loyalty and fidelity to him, but I knew that two marks meant devotion. Of course, our bond was just beginning and we had not sealed our mating yet, so its effects weren't on full force.

I shuddered to think of how much of myself I'd be willing to give to him the more we progressed into this relationship. Would I still be myself at the end of this road?

I looked into his eyes. Wherever this road may lead, I knew it was too late to back down. At least, we would be traversing this road together even if it led us both to hell.

I climbed into his lap, my movements clumsy but sure. With all the strength and passion I could muster from my heart, I kissed him on the lips.

"Hell fucking yes."

His lips were pliant and so, surprised at my actions but it did not take long for him to return the kiss as fervently as I was. Light coursed through my veins as he held on to me as if I was his life.

Did he see me as his light?

I could taste the tequila in his mouth, but I didn't care. We began to kiss more, our tongues touching in heat as our hands roamed each other's bodies. Soon, my blood was heating up in arousal and I could feel him getting hard.

I was surprised when he clumsily pushed me away and I stumbled back to lie down, groaning.

"We can't. We're drunk." He growled frustratedly.

Thank Goddess there was a smart person in the room.

"Fucks." I whispered. "Last one. I hate that you're so sensible sometimes."

Silence.

I heard him groan as he laid down on the floor on his stomach. He was exhausted.

I was about to succumb to sleep with thoughts of the hangover I was sure to have in the morning, when I heard Jon speak. His voice was so, and if I wasn't paying attention, I would have missed it.

"I hate that you're becoming my only weakness."

I didn't know what to say to that.

Feeling the effects of the tequila hazing my brain, I gave in to the darkness and closed my eyes. I felt Jon crawl closer to me, and the last thing I heard was him snoring.

A/N

Well, you know, yay alcohol! That's what it's good for, right?

Disclaimer: I am in no way saying this is a healthy way to have an argument. These two have issues that are far from over.

Don't forget to leave comments and votes! I really wanna know what you guys think of the story. See you on Tuesdays!

Anyone wanna get a drink? TGIF!

Continue to next part