# Chapter 31

Jonathon Lancaster

I have always been a man of action.

My upbringing ensured that. Whenever a problem was brought to me, instead of dwelling on it I immediately demanded for solutions and set to implement them. That mindset is what made me who I am today—an effective war commander and a future king.

But this tragedy, I found myself helpless.

There was no solution. There was no second plan. There was just pain, and suffering.

That pain demanded to be felt.

I saw the sorrow in my Serena's eyes. I wanted to take it all away. If I could, I'd tear out her suffering and put in on my shoulders. My beloved did not deserve this. She did not deserve to the feel torment and shame that was in her heart. Her soul was too pure to be tainted by such a catastrophe.

I could feel it—my mate's misery gnawed at my heart and had my wolf aching. I eagerly abandoned my own pain to focus on hers. Did I want pups? Definitely. But I didn't want to bring one into the world right now. I wanted my pup to grow up with a father he could call a hero. I knew Serena would make a good mother, but I also knew that the time wasn't right.

Why?

Why did Serena think it was her fault? It wasn't. If anyone was to blame it was me! I was older—I should have been more responsible. We should have talked about it. Why had I not been even more careful? It wasn't like birth control wasn't available for our kind—I had just let my desires run amok and there was no excuse for that. I had already forced her into a life as my mate, and now my foolishness could have forced her into motherhood before she was ready.

My foolishness was the cause of this tragedy.

Some fucking mate I was.

She didn't deserve me.

In the days that followed, Serena was like a ghost—a shell of her former self. Her smiles were weak, her movements frail, and her demeanor muted. Her eyes lost all that sparkle—she was still ineffably beautiful, that was for sure, but there was hollowness layered in it that I could not describe.

It didn't take long for word to get out. Gifts and letters of condolences poured in from all across the territory. My mother would read them to her, but even she could see that Serena's mind was elsewhere in a dark abyss. Patrick tried to cheer her up, but not even my brother's liveliness could bring a smile to her face. Mother just said to give her time, and father allowed me to take time off my duties so I could be with Serena.

She barely slept—I tried everything short of sneaking in sleeping pills. There were bags under her eyes and I knew she cried whenever I wasn't around. She ate little, and I was constantly trying to control my temper because I've been so damn close to just force-feeding her. She just floated in and out of rooms silently, often looking out on windows, sitting in couches staring into space, and muttering to herself. I caught her trying to talk to our pup once.

"There's so much space to run around in Lightwing, Hector." She absentmindedly murmured as she sat in front of a mirror and brushed her hair.

"Serena?" I asked, looking up from my book.

"Huh?"

"You were saying something?"

"Oh...nothing...sorry..." She muttered, going back to brushing her hair.

I talked to my mother, some healers, and even Clayton at one point and they all said the same thing—to just give her space.

"You can't fix this, Jon." He said, and I began to get angry but he interrupted. "I'm right and you know it. There's no solution for this. Just let her know that she's not alone."

I tried to talk to her, and every time we were together I always made sure I was holding her in some way. She just kept saying that she was fine, but I knew better. She wasn't fine. Finally, in the fifth day after her miscarriage, I had enough. My mate should not be living like this.

So I formulated a plan.

"Serena?" I gently called as I entered the study. She was there holding a doll she had brought with her from Eastern Claw. It was obviously handmade, and it looked like it had seen better days.

"I forgot I brought this..." She murmured. "Evan made me so mad he said it looked like a horse. I made it in arts and crafts when I was seven...look at the stitching here..."

She held it out to me, and sure enough the stitching was crooked and uneven. The yarn she had used to sew it together was thick, and I was surprised the object hadn't fallen apart yet.

"It's beautiful." I said.

Serena sighed wistfully, looking into my eyes.

"Jon...I..." She started, but stopped and looked down. "Never mind."

I knelt in front of her and tilted her chin so that she looked at me. I gave her a gentle smile.

"What?"

"I...I don't....it hurts...I mean..." She murmured, a tear falling down from her eye.

"Where does it hurt, my love? Do you need a healer?" I asked.

"No...I mean...not like that...it just...hurts..." She sighed. I shook my head and kissed her hand.

"I know..." I said.

"You're hurting too, I know it..." She said, tilting her head.

"I am." I admitted. "My wolf has been miserable. We feel the loss so strongly that it's wounding. But it also hurts me that you're suffering. I can't let you torture yourself, Serena." She shook her head.

There was silence.

"We don't deserve to feel like this..." She whispered.

"I know."

"Why did it happen? And don't say that it was the plan of the Goddess because if I hear that one more time I'm going to—" She sobbed, but I interrupted her.

"Serena...listen to me, we can question this for ages and not have an answer, or we can pick up the pieces and just try to heal." I said.

"How?"

"Come with me. I have an idea." I said, standing up.

"What?"

"It's a surprise. Come." I said, helping her stand up. Thankfully, she was pliant. I led her to our room and into the closet where I took one of my ties. I gently wrapped it around her head.

"Jon, I'm glad you're...umm...adventurous but I'm not into this kind of kink and the healer said to wait a week before—" She started to say but I chuckled and gathered her in my embrace.

"There's that sense of humor. I missed it." She gave a weak smile. "Just follow my lead, okay?" I asked.

"The last time I was blindfolded, my friends pushed me into a freezing lake." She grumbled.

"I am not pushing you into a lake." I said.

"Jon, I can't walk around blindfolded." She huffed.

"I wasn't expecting you to." I said. As gently as I could, I lifted her up and carried her in my arms.

She said nothing as I walked, snuggling closer into my hold. As I moved through the halls, people stared at us but said nothing. They had all been treating us with kid gloves ever since the tragedy, and I was thankful that no one was being particularly bothersome.

I exited the palace, feeling the sunshine warm my skin. There was a cold breeze, and I held Serena tighter as she shivered slightly.

"We're outside?" She asked.

"Yes."

I walked a few paces into the forest until I spotted what I was looking for. Gently, I set her down.

"Ready?" I asked.

"Yes."

I untied the blindfold and watched, mesmerized as she adjusted to the sunlight. She had not been outdoors since her miscarriage, and I could tell that she missed it. She gasped when she saw what I had prepared.

There was a small shovel, a small box, and a few pots of yellow flowers all under a very large oak tree in the middle of the beautiful forest. I had already dug a hole up, and all that was left to do was earth everything up.

"What's all this?" She asked, crouching down to touch the flowers curiously.

"The healers cremated the bloodied dress and sheets—all that was left of little Hector. It's all inside this box. I was thinking we could bury it and say goodbye to him. Then we can plant the flowers to mark the grave." I said.

Her head snapped to look at me, and I saw her eyes immediately pool with tears. She crumbled into my embrace, bawling her eyes out. I gently stroked her back, murmuring comforting words.

"Jon...this is so sweet...you thought of all this yourself?" She sniffled.

"Yes." I proudly said. She continued to sob.

"Jon, this is..." She looked at me, and immediately I felt my heart warm. "I don't deserve you."

"You deserve better than me, my love." I murmured, planting a kiss on her head. I drew a handkerchief from my pocket and gave it to her. She wiped the tears from her face and blew her nose.

"Now come, let's bid our pup farewell." I said, taking her hand.

Serena picked a few white flowers from a bush nearby and placed them inside the box. Then, together, we placed the box in the hole. I was about to secure the potted yellow flowers above it when Serena stopped me.

"I think we should say something..." She said.

"Alright." I said, helping her stand up. "Ladies first."

She smiled and looked around, and I realized that was the first real smile I've seen from her in days. Sighing, she put her hands on her lips and raised her palm to the sky, calling out to the Moon Goddess. I put my arms around her waist and pulled her back against my chest.

I gave her a kiss on the cheek, nudging her to start.

"My baby..." She whispered. "I don't know what to say. Umm...hello. I...I know we weren't together for long but...I feel your absence so much in my...heart. You...I want...I think I want to keep you because you're a part of me, and Jon...I...your dad and I made you together. I keep imagining all these things about you...if you'd have my hair, or your dad's nose...if you'd like the color purple or...whatever... But...I...I can't keep doing it. I have to stop...because...I can't keep you. I have to say goodbye because your dad and I have a lot of things we need to do..."

Her voice broke, and I felt tears escape my eyes. I held her closer as I tried to compose myself. Some of her tears dropped into my arm wrapped tight around her waist.

"You're going to have brothers and sisters someday and we're going to make sure they live in a better world because Hector, this world that you were torn away from...it's not a good world...it doesn't deserve the joy you would have surely brought. Losing you hurts so much but...I can't be haunted by pain forever."

Serena inhaled deeply, and hastily tried to wipe her tears away.

"I love you so much, Hector. You'll always be in my heart." She whispered.

Serena gulped, breaking down into sobs again. She detached herself from my hold and sprinkled a few white petals on top of the box. She looked up at me and sighed, nodding heavily. I helped her up and gave her wet cheeks a kiss. She looked at me expectantly and I cleared my throat.

"Hector." I said, testing the name out. I chuckled before wiping some tears off my cheeks. I didn't realize I had been crying as well. "What a strong name, named after the tamer of horses himself ..."

Serena looked at me encouragingly and I held her closer.

"I always thought that the only thing that mattered in this world was winning the war and being a good ruler. Now, I know there are more important things to worry about. Like your mother, for instance..." I looked at Serena, and she in turn stared at me curiously.

"Your mother is the most important thing in this world to me, little pup. That's why I want to, no, I have to say goodbye to you. She's hurting. You have no idea how happy you would have made us...but dwelling on that will only make things harder. I don't want that for your mother, pup...she deserves much more. I want to help your her heal and I hope that you'll help me." I let out a ragged breath and I looked intently into the patch of yellow flowers.

"Goodbye, little Hector. Please say hello to your grandmother for us..." I said, touching my lips and raising my palm to the sky. Serena let out another sob, curling into my embrace.

"Come..." I said, taking Serena's hand. We knelt down and situated the potted yellow flowers on top of the box. I took the shovel and placed the soil on top of everything so that only the yellow flowers showed.

"These flowers remind me of you." I whispered. "Yellow. Light. You're my light, Serena."

She said nothing, only patting the soil snug. I reached for the watering can beside the tree and sprinkled some droplets onto the flowers. Just then, a white rabbit hopped out of nowhere and nudged some of the yellow flowers gently. Serena gasped, and looked up at the tree.

"What is it?"

"Jon...this is the tree...how did you know?" She demanded, her eyes widened.

"What tree? I just picked one at random." I shrugged.

"After we had our fight I stormed out and climbed this tree...I sat down on that branch." She pointed at a thick branch a few feet above us. "I know because of the way that one branch is sticking out like a person's arm..." She murmured.

"Seems like we have the same tastes..." I chuckled.

"In trees?" She looked at me, scrunching her nose up. I laughed.

Silence followed. All we could hear were birds chirping, and I could feel the cool breeze blowing against my skin.

"Thank you for doing this, Jon. You have no idea how much it helped. Already I feel...lighter..." She said. I looked at her, basked in the glow of sunlight. She definitely looked like a heavy weight had been lifted off her.

Yes, it would take time before she fully recovered, but already I could see the sparkle return to her eyes—a small one, easily undetectable but there nonetheless. I just knew she would survive this—that we would survive this. I don't care how long it took.

Slowly—agonizingly slowly, but surely.

"Come, we have to go back to the palace. You have to take your medicine, and I have another surprise." I said.

"Another?" She asked, looking up at me with her big green eyes. I nodded and led her inside the palace, walking hand in hand. We entered the infirmary and went inside the private room for her. A healer entered and gave us a bottle of green liquid.

"After drinking this, you need to just lie in bed for the next five hours. Don't worry, this is the last one." The healer instructed. She nodded; this was the third time they had asked her to take this particular medicine. I made sure never to leave her side during the hours that she was confined in bed.

The healer exited, and I helped Serena lie down on the bed. I put the bottle to her lips and she drank it. Judging from the look on her face, it didn't taste good.

"I am officially bedridden. Does this surprise of yours involve turning on the TV?" Serena asked. I chuckled, giving her a fond kiss on the forehead. There's that witty chatterbox I had been missing! I looked at my phone and smiled—the surprise was all ready.

"I'll be right back to get it, okay?" I said. She nodded.

I exited the room, making sure to close the door securely. I walked to the lobby of the infirmary, and I was instantly greeted by nine new faces.

"Alpha Santino, I'm glad you could make it." I said, taking the Alpha's hand and giving it a firm handshake. I looked at Serena's father, and for the first time, I noticed that they shared the same eyes. Only, they looked guarded, as opposed to my mate's vulnerability.

"Thank you for informing us, Prince Jonathon." Alpha Santino said.

"Beta Jasper, it's good to see you again." I said, shaking the Beta's hand. "Are you sure your Gamma will be okay being left behind?"

"He'll manage." Beta Jasper said.

I then greeted Serena's brother Evan, who looked like he hadn't slept for days judging by the bags under his eyes. Then Beta Jasper introduced me to his wife, and they also brought along Erica.

Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder spin me around. I came face to face with a girl with black, pixie cut hair. I remembered from Serena's stories that her name was Melanie.

"How is she?" Melanie demanded. Someone then pulled her back and I recognized by his silver bracelet that he was Christopher.

"Mel, you can't talk to the prince like that." Christopher hissed.

"LIKE HELL I CAN'T SHE'S MY BEST FRIEND AND..." Melanie yelled but she was interrupted by a tall blonde haired girl who clamped a hand over her mouth—Jane.

"Mel, you promised you'd behave!" Jane scolded. "I don't care if you keep licking my hand!"

Melanie continued to speak with a muffled voice.

"Apologies, Prince Jonathon. We're just...really worried..." Another male said, the lanky blonde one named Paolo.

"I'm glad you could all come." I said, addressing them all. "Serena's inside on bed rest. She'll be happy to see you all."

Melanie lunged forward, but her friends held her back. Jane's hand was still over her mouth. Alpha Santino shot them a warning look and they all looked down apologetically.

"Can I go see her first?" Evan said.

"Try not to overwhelm her." I murmured, opening the door for him. He only gave me a hard, curious look. I was stunned—for a moment I thought I saw Serena. I never realized how identical they looked.

I was unsure about letting Evan see Serena first, seeing as they've never had the best relationship during the recent years, but who was I to argue with the only sibling my mate had left? I reluctantly stepped aside to let Evan enter.

A good war general knows when to call in the reinforcements, after all.

A/N

How are you guys liking the story so far? Nine more chapters (plus an epilogue) until we say goodbye to this story (sequel, anyone? LOL). Don't worry, there are more surprises to come!

I am beyond exhausted this week. I have a workshop on Thursday and my other playing is opening on Friday in another country. It's gonna take a while for me to respond, but do comment! It gives me so much joy.

Leave comments and votes!

**Continue to next part**