

Silent Mate 111

Chapter 111 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Damien POV

What Winter did to our father will remain in my memories forever. But if I have to admit to anything, it's that she was determined enough to take him down all on her own. So what if she's half vampire? She's a badass as far as I'm concerned. The only thing bothering me now, are the words she spoke, once we got her back to the pack house. "Our mother is still alive Damien."

I wanted to scream at her that she had it all wrong, that mother had to have died in that rogue attack. Because if she didn't, then where was she? How could she have abandoned her children as though they meant nothing to her? What mother would willingly leave her children behind? But there never had been a grave to visit, a place to grieve our mother. Our father was a lying bastard, that was the truth and now I had to deal with the overwhelming guilt that Winter had been tortured for a reason that never existed in the first place. That is, if he spoke the truth. He could be trying to mess with our heads again, it wouldn't surprise me. I bet he never thought Winter would be capable of killing him.

I think back to one of my favourite memories of her. It's nighttime. I was always one of those kids who could never fall straight asleep at night. Most parents would be furious, but my mother would just smile at me and motion me to follow her. My little legs would follow her outside and we would lie down in the grass, staring up at the sky with all the twinkling stars above us.

"Damien look" she would say, pointing to a direct constellation and telling me what it was. "That one's the archer" she told me, her hair rippling in the wind.

I would cuddle next to her, my head on her shoulder, snuggling in as she held me. She always smelt so sweet, like flowers and her hair was soft and silky. She would kiss me on my forehead and hold me close. I was always so excited to spend this time with her. It was our little secret. Even my father didn't know that we went outside to spend time together.

We would lie there until I started to get sleepy. As soon as I started to yawn she would give a small peal of laughter and get to her feet, gently pulling me up as well. Sometimes I was so tired she would have to carry me, but she never once complained. She would tuck me into bed, pulling the covers over me.

"Go to sleep my little cub" she would tease, kissing me softly on the forehead and then disappearing out of the room. I always felt bad that I woke her up, but she seemed to like our time together too, or at least I thought she did.

As a little boy I had adored my mother and loved her beyond all reason. She was the one who hugged you and dried your tears. She made cookies when I was feeling sick, told me stories at bedtime. She always had a smile on her face and laughter on her lips. I remember the way she would hug me for no reason, other than she felt like I needed one. Winter and I had both loved her to bits. Our father had adored her as well, or at least that's what I remember. Is it possible my memories are wrong?

I storm into Langdon's house, my anger rising as I think about my mother. Winter had to have misheard father when he told her she was still alive. Either that or he was messing with her. That would just be like the bastard, to mess with our minds and break our hearts all over again. My hands clench into fists. I wish I had gotten there sooner, to hear the asshole tell it to me as well. I would have known immediately that he was lying. Winter was just too gullible for her own good, that was all. But I was lying, now to myself. Trying to make myself feel better and it wasn't working.

"Hey" I hear a soft voice and turn to see a concerned looking Langdon. "I heard what Winter said, are you alright?" he asks.

I don't know what to say. Am I alright? No, I'm no way near alright. I take a deep shuddering breath.

"I don't know."

He reaches over to embrace me. "I'm here for you, if you want to talk, or if you just want me to hold you. Just tell me what you need."

I explode, jerking out of his grasp and punching the wall, leaving a huge dent behind. My hand stings but I ignore the pain, enjoying the numbness coming over me.

"She can't be alive" I vent to Langdon who's watching wide eyed, his jaw clenched "father is just doing what he does best and fucking with our minds" I shout, punching the wall again. "There's no way that my mother would have just abandoned Winter and I" I almost scream, spittle flying everywhere "no

mother leaves her children behind, do they?" I ask him, turning to face him directly "I'm right, aren't I? No mother willingly leaves her children behind?" I stifle a sob.

"Oh Damien" Langdon breathes, coming closer and gripping my face between his two strong hands "listen to me. You can't let this break you. Your father could be lying, we'll work it out. But don't break down now on me. You're stronger than this" he whispers.

I lean into him, my whole body trembling, my head on his shoulder now as he hugs me tight. The silence is comforting. I hurt so much inside that it's like a pile of daggers being stabbed directly into my heart.

Langdon takes my hand and grasps it, gently tugging me towards the stairs and up to the bedroom. I follow without resisting, lost in my thoughts and the bitterness consuming me. We make it to the bedroom and he begins to pull the covers down, when I stop him, grabbing hold of his arm with desperation.

I kiss him, hard, rough, needing to feel his lips on mine. He responds, his hand gripping my hair, making me moan in delight. I need him, with a fierceness that frightens me. But Langdon seems to know it too. His tongue darts inside my mouth and begins to caress my own as I let out a moan. He tastes so good. My hands are gripping his shoulders, my body swaying gently as we kiss.

His hands slowly slide underneath my shirt and I shudder at how warm they are against my skin. He gently squeezes me and then, breaking off the kiss, slides my shirt up and over my head, throwing it across the room and letting it fall to the ground. He undoes the belt on my jeans and slowly pulls it away as I suck in a breath. He pulls my pants down slowly, looking up at me, his eyes gleaming in the darkness of the room.

My cock stands erect as I blush at him. But he doesn't seem to mind, instead licking his lips with appreciation. "Someone's excited already" he teases, before gripping hold of my thighs with his hands and kneeling in front of me.

"Wait Langdon" I say roughly, but it's too late, he's already lowered his head and licked the end of my shaft as I close my eyes and groan out loud.

"Fuck" I whimper as he slowly places his mouth over my cock and takes me inside his mouth. He begins to slowly move back and forth as my body tenses, the feeling of pleasure overwhelming me.

"Hold still" he growls and I obey instantly, still whimpering as he begins to move even faster, taking all of me inside of him. My body is tense and I can feel my impending orgasm.

"Langdon" I whisper trying to warn him "if you keep doing that I'm going to..." I trail off helplessly as he gives me a grin and continues. I shudder and then give a shout, spilling my seed inside of his mouth. Langdon drinks it all up and then stands up while I stand there, trying not to fall down.

"Get on the bed" Langdon purrs.

I climb on the bed and feel his arms adjusting me so that I'm lying on my side with my back to him. I glance over my shoulder and watch with anticipation as Langdon takes off his clothes. God damn that man is delicious. He gives a chuckle, seeing my wide eyes and blatant staring.

"Like what you see" he growls.

"Oh yeah" I mutter with a smile.

He comes up behind me, cuddling close. I feel his erect cock poking me in my bottom as I wiggle against him.

"Just a moment" he says sounding strangled. I smirk. I'm guessing he's dangerously close to his own peak at this rate.

I moan as his finger enters me, slowly stretching me out as I pant and writhe. Langdon begins to kiss the nape of my neck, hard, rough, making me submit to him. I would submit to this gorgeous man forever if I had the chance.

Another finger and I feel stuffed. He thrusts them back and forth slowly as I mewl, clutching the sheets. Langdon's breath is short, uneven as he bites me gently on the neck. "Can't take much more" he groans "are you ready for me?" he chokes out.

"Oh god yes" I moan, disappointed when I feel his fingers slowly withdraw. Then I feel him at my entrance and my head falls back as he slowly enters me, inch by delectable inch, until he's all the way inside of me, his hands gripping tightly to my waist.

He withdraws and then slowly thrusts inside again. God he's fucking huge and it feels god damn amazing, considering how tight I am. He's gentle with me, careful, my body rocking back and forth to meet his thrusts in a frenzy.

"Fuck you're tight" pants Langdon.

"God, I can feel all of you inside me" I pant. "You're massive" I say gruffly.

He lets out a small snort of laughter, then withdraws completely.

"Langdon" I complain, pleading.

He rolls me over onto my back and lines himself back up again, his eyes staring directly into mine.

"I want to see your face as I fucking cum" he says loudly.

He slams into me. Thank fuck. Right now I'm desperate for some rough fucking. He lifts my legs over his shoulders and begins to pound into me over and over again. I can't stop crying out. My whole body is quivering. He's hitting some sort of spot and my cock has gone fully erect again. My hands are clutching at the bedsheets and I'm whimpering over and over again as pleasure washes over me.

"Cum for me" he growls "cum for me Damien."

My mouth falls open, my head falls back. "I can't" I pant "hold on much longer."

"Dont" he roars and that's all it takes. My body tenses and my cock spurts out my seed all over the bed. Langdon gives me a wicked grin.

"Good boy" he says with a wink.

He's even rougher now, an intent look on his face, his eyes pitch black, meaning his wolf is close to the surface. He's biting his lip. He's in a frenzy now. "God damn" he whispers, and then I feel his body stiffen, his seed spilling itself inside of me. I cry out, Langdon slowly withdrawing his cock from inside of me, collapsing beside me.

"I needed that" I admit to him as he gives me a quick peck on the lips.

"I know" he answers. We both look at each other with a grin. "But I also think we both might need to have a bit of a clean up" he says wryly.

I chuckle. We both strip the bed and then wander into the bathroom. Neither of us is shy with each other. He starts the shower and motions me inside. I groan out loud and let the water wash over me. Langdon hands me the wash cloth.

"Thanks" I mutter.

I begin to wash myself, fully aware that he's watching my every move.

"Damien" he says lowly "I know you're hurting right now and that's okay. But would it maybe help if you told me a little bit about your mother and what she was like?"

I close my eyes under the water. "My mother was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen" I begin, getting lost in my memories.

Chapter 112 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

The dungeon is cold and dismal. But I don't dare complain. I had insisted they put me down here in the first place, for everyone's safety, even when they had tried to protest against it. But my actions seem

futile, stupid. I should never have bothered. Because if I wanted to, I could easily get myself out of here. There's the smell of old blood in the air. and it's disgusting, my nose wrinkling in disgust. I huddle underneath the blanket Kai gave me, shivering profusely and wondering at my actions. Will this really keep all of them safe? I doubt it. I can't get the image of my father out of my mind. What I did to him. The pervase pleasure I took in pulling out his entrails from his lifeless body, the screams that echoed through the forest. It was like another person had taken over, a different Winter, one who was evil and enjoyed every bit of harm she did to him. Who, even now, wished he'd put up more of a fight so that she could have hurt him even more than she had.

I feel numb, it's hard to explain. I should have felt happy, satisfied, joyful that my father was dead. After all, I certainly enjoyed killing him. But the happiness and satisfaction have worn off. Now I'm just glad that he won't ever touch or hurt me again, let alone Damien. He was a horrible person, the pack would be much better off without that drunken alcoholic loser member. I won't ever have to look over my shoulder again and wonder when the next hit is coming. Or feel his flesh as it smacks into mine, or feel his breath as he whispers things into my ear. That bastard is gone and part of me is guilty that I feel nothing over it, no sadness or guilt.

We need to get out of here. Why do you keep us locked up Winter? Why do you not embrace the power that you possess? You hunted down your father and he'll no longer hurt you ever again. Did you not enjoy it Winter? Hearing his screams and pleas for mercy. Forcing him to die as a pathetic human instead of a shifter? That man will never lay a hand on us ever again. Why won't you convince Kai to let us out of this pathetic prison? It won't be long now until we need to drink again and sate our thirst.

The voice is persistent, ever present in my mind, even as I try desperately to tune it out. It's loud though. More of a constant hiss than anything. A lot different to Sabriel. God I miss her. I would give anything to hear a bad or lame joke from my wolf right now. She would make me laugh without even trying. God damn she was a sassy wolf. Not to mention pretty. I'm sure she would have a solution to this problem. One that didn't involve a dungeon cell.

Heavy footsteps on the stairs. Kai walks down slowly, holding a food tray. He manages to open the cell door and place the food down on the floor without spilling a single drop. Reluctantly he closes the door again. I eye the food with interest. There's juice, a muffin, bagel and some fruit. I reach for the juice first, but the second the liquid hits my throat, I begin to gag and convulse, throwing up the contents. I wipe my mouth feeling miserable and slowly reach for the muffin. It tastes like dust in my mouth, I cough it up and the food goes flying across the room. I look at Kai who is staring at me grimly.

"I think we need to face the facts Winter. You don't need food or drink, you need blood" he breathes.

I shake my head. I refuse to believe that. I don't want to face the facts, I want to shy away from them for as long as possible.

Idiot, we drained your father's blood remember. It will only keep you going for a small amount of time until you need more. You will need more, I'm warning you. So I would start accepting that we are a vampire and get over it already. Unless you want to slowly starve yourself to death, which is a painful way to die. Be free Winter. Save yourself.

"I can't drink blood" I tell Kai miserably "I won't do it. There must be something else we can do" I say desperately, but he looks completely stymied.

"What if you just drank a little" he suggests quietly, a determined look on his face as he holds out his wrist. Surely he must be joking?

Something comes over me and I stare at the veins, licking my lips. I can hear the steady sound of his heartbeat and the sound of blood rushing through his veins. I begin to feel thirsty as I stare at it. Kai moves it closer to me.

"Kai, no don't" I say weakly, but he doesn't listen and shoves his wrist and hand through the bars of the cell as I look at him completely horrified. Does he have any idea what he's doing to me right now?

Doesn't his heart beat sound so nice and the blood pulsating through his body? We don't have to take all of his blood, we can take just a little. Enough to keep us going and get rid of this hunger and thirst. It's better than killing someone for their blood isn't it?

Damn this voice that won't shut up. But it's beginning to make sense. God, I feel disgusted in myself. Kai is holding steady, his eyes staring directly at me.

"Winter drink" he says with a low growl "I want to see if you can restrain yourself from taking too much. I want you to do this for me."

I sidle closer. I feel my canines (I hate calling them fangs so canines it is for now) slowly protrude out of my mouth. Kai's eyes widen but he doesn't move. I grab hold of his wrist tightly, making Kai wince in pain from the strength of my grip, and bring his wrist to my mouth.

Slowly, gently, I pierce the skin of his wrist and blood rushes into my mouth. It's sweet, flavorful and I moan out loud as I begin to suck, letting it trail down my throat. It's refreshing and I drink, until I see Kai's hand trembling. Feeling repulsed, I immediately drop his hand and move back away, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand.

I no longer feel thirsty or hungry. Instead I feel amazing, refreshed, like I could run ten marathons and never get tired. All my cuts and scrapes are miraculously healed and I find myself almost jogging in place. Kai licks across his wound and I feel overwhelming guilt. "I'm so sorry" I begin to apologise but he holds up his hand, stopping me.

"I told you to do it" he interrupts "and I would do it all over again. You can't see yourself right now, but you're practically glowing and you look much healthier." He sounds amazed. Like it's a massive transformation that's occurred right in front of his eyes.

See how good we feel with fresh blood in our system? Don't you want to feel like this all the time? Be this strong all the time?

"I guess the vampire side of me is stronger than the shifter side" I mutter without thinking, still disgusted in myself.

"Maybe, but you held back from taking too much. Now will you stop being so foolish and come out of there?" he asks looking exasperated. "I trust you Winter, not to kill me if that helps" he says trying to lighten the mood.

I can't help but laugh at that. But I'm still a little hesitant. Kai gives me puppy dog eyes. "Look vampire chick or not, I still love you as my mate, this doesn't change that. I will stay by your side no matter what" he promises.

I sigh and step back. "Fine, will you let me out please" I say lightly and he grins, opening the doors to the cell at once. I walk out slowly. It's like my eyesight has become sharper, even sharper than a shifter's as I take everything in. He grips my hand and gently gives it a squeeze. We walk upstairs together. I spot Damien on the grounds with Langdon, training. He looks ferocious and I'm impressed at how well he's doing against his opponent, as I slow down to watch. Kai follows my gaze. "I'm impressed that you can see the training" he comments "because while I can see it, I can't make out who is actually doing the fighting."

"Langdon and Damien" I tell him with a smile "and Damien is kicking ass."

"He's gotten really good" Kai comments with a grin "Langdon has really been training him hard."

"Are you sure that I should be back up here in the house?" I ask nervously "I still think the dungeon is safer for all of you."

"Let me decide what's safe for me. None of us wanted you to lock yourself up in the first place" Kai said sternly "that was all you. I'm willing to bet you're exhausted after spending a night in there."

I shake my head. "Not really. I feel like I could go and run for hours."

"Well I'm' hungry" Kai comments with a sidelong glance at me "how about we go sit in the dining room?" he suggests.

I'm more than up for that, sitting at the table while he grabs himself some sandwiches to eat. I swear the man can eat his body weight in food and still want more.

He munches on the food while I relax against the chair. I don't know how to feel. I should feel repulsed at being part vampire but part of me is slowly embracing it. I can't change what's happened to me, although if Thomas wasn't already dead, I'd be killing him with my bare hands right now.

"Kai what if we can't find a way to turn me back?" I ask hesitantly.

He swallows hard. "I have an idea about that. The werewolf king's wife is a witch. I thought we could maybe ask her for help. She might know a spell or ritual that would take away the vampire part of you so you would no longer be a hybrid."

I don't know how to feel about that, but I do feel a tiny bit of excitement at the thought that something could be done.

"When can we do it?" I ask hurriedly.

Kai shakes his head. "The werewolf King is currently on the other side of the world, visiting packs. We can contact him once he's back on our side of the world."

"Oh" I say quietly feeling a little deflated. I guess I shouldn't have gotten my hopes up so quickly. Silly Winter, I chide myself, at least Kai has come up with some sort of plan. It was better than nothing. It was a possibility and that was something to cling onto.

I twirl my hair with my finger, looking off into the distance.

You will not be able to get rid of me. I will never let you go. Foolish girl. Do you really think a witch is able to help you? You are stuck being a hybrid whether you like it or not. It is time you accepted it.

"Your brother is a little upset at the moment, but once he's calmed down, I'm sure he'll want to see you" Kai suggests.

"He's upset about what I told him about our mother, isn't he?" I ask lowly.

Kai gives a small nod. "How does he think I feel" I snarl, scratching the table top "finding out after all this time mother was alive, and father was lying while torturing me. Does he think I found it easy to listen to it? Or does he think I'm lying?" I hiss.

"Calm down Winter. I think he's finding it hard to come to terms with the possibility that your mother is alive" Kai says delicately.

I just grunt at him, feeling disgruntled. Stupid Damien.

My hand goes up to my neck subconsciously, tracing where the mark from Kai used to be until Thomas managed to remove it. I feel sad at the loss of it. Wait a minute, my eyes widen in disbelief. Is the reason that I can't hear Sabriel anymore, because I lost my mark? My mind begins to race, a mile a minute. If that's the case, then would having Kai mark me bring her back? My mind begins to go into overdrive. I feel a spark of joy at my idea.

I jump up and grab Kai by the hand, insistently tugging at him, almost dragging him up the stairs as he tries to keep up with the pace I'm setting.

"Slow down" he exclaims, panting.

We make it to the bedroom and I sit on the bed and regard him eagerly. He raises his eyebrows at the look on my face, clearly wondering what it is I'm thinking. I can't help but give him a goofy smile. God, let this work, I pray to myself, please let it work.

I clear my throat. "Kai, will you mark me again? This time I'm asking you to and consenting to it" I point out and watch his expression turn grim.

Chapter 113 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

I stare at Winter, unsure if I've heard her correctly. She's twisting her hands together, biting her lip, looking at me shyly, waiting for some sort of reaction from me. I can't help but remember the first time that I marked her without her consent and flush. This time she's asking me for it, but what if it does something to her? What if it causes her pain now that she's a hybrid? Is Winter really willing to risk it in order to have her wolf back again? I have to make sure. I can't just go into this blindly. But I do feel excitement stirring in my breast at the idea of having my mark and claim back on her neck again, where it rightfully belongs.

"You want me to mark you?" I ask, repeating her words slowly and watching her reaction.

She gives a nod. "Please, it might bring Sabriel back" she whispers "and maybe it will make the vampire side less, oh I don't know" she says desperately "aggressive. Besides I miss not being able to mind-link with you" she points out. Her voice is shaky now, her eyes pleading with mine.

I still feel hesitant, even as my feet move closer towards her of their own accord.

"We don't know what marking you will do though" I say softly "are you willing to suffer whatever consequences there might be doing this?" God, help me, I'm really considering doing this. All we can do is pray that nothing serious happens as a result. Besides, she's asking me, desperate to have Sabriel back and I can't blame her. I wouldn't know how to cope without Storm, my own wolf.

"I'll pay whatever price" she assures me, her eyes beseeching "I just want to be marked again. Claimed as yours" she adds softly, longingly. My breath hitches in my throat.

I think we should do it man. It's been bothering me that she doesn't have our mark on her neck. How are other wolves going to know she's ours?

Storm, she's going through a lot right now and you want to tell me her not having our mark is bothering you.

She said she's willing to suffer the consequences Kai, I think we should do it. At least this time, the marking will be on her terms instead of ours.

I'm worried it will do something or cause some sort of reaction. We could end up hurting her Storm. Then what?

We won't know unless we do it. I think it's worth the risk. Besides, can you really resist the fact that our mate is begging us to claim her as ours again? She's our mate. Our mark belongs on her neck to show we are her mate.

Damn you Storm. Why do you have to be so argumentative?

Damn the wolf for being so persistent. I slowly tug Winter up by the arm as she obediently stands, inhaling her scent and crinkling my nose. Her scent has been a little different since she changed, but it's still intoxicating to me. I bury my head in her hair. "I hope you're right about this" I murmur as she trembles beneath me "because once I've done this, there's no taking it back" I growl, my voice loaded with meaning.

She shudders. "I know" she stammers "please Kai. I want this" she whispers and I swallow hard. How can I resist her plea?

I move her head to the side, exposing her creamy skin and the nape of her neck. Where my mark used to be. I frown down at it. Storm's prancing around in my mind, encouraging me and I'm forced to block him. Slowly my canines withdraw.

"Get ready" I whisper and Winter stiffens. My head lowers down and slowly, I pierce her skin and bite down as she gives a jolt. I revel in the taste of her as I withdraw and lick the wound closed, my eyes gleaming with satisfaction that it's worked and that the mark is once again there for everyone to see.

Then Winter gives out a long, horrific scream, her legs buckling beneath her. I sweep her up and place her on the bed. Her face is flushed all over and she bucks and writhes on the bed, screaming her lungs out as I look at her helplessly. I have no idea what's going on. But I had dreaded something like this happening. I should have listened to my instincts.

"Hurts" she whimpers.

"What hurts" I say anxiously, kneeling beside the bed, desperate to do something to help her "what hurts sweetheart?"

"All over" she pants "feels like I'm burning from the inside."

I rush to the bathroom and fetch a wash cloth, soaking it in cool water and rushing back, patting her down with it. But the second it touches her she screams even louder. I drop the wash cloth. It's not going to help. Not when she's in this kind of state.

Screw this. I mind-link a doctor to come straight from the hospital. I'd take her there, but I don't want to cause her any more pain than she's already in. Several minutes later and I'm hovering near the doorway while the doctor checks on an almost unconscious Winter. "I can't tell you what's wrong" the doctor tells me puzzled "if I have to hazard a guess though, it's either a result of her wolf trying to claw its way back to the surface or both sides fighting for dominance."

"Will the pain stop?" I ask quietly, Winter lying there, panting, sweat dripping down her face. Her whole face is contorted in pain.

The doctor shakes her head. "I can't even say if the pain killer's I've given her will help. She doesn't appear to be responding to them, but she's also not screaming as much. I wish I could tell you more Alpha Kai, but this is something that's just way out of my knowledge and experience. Hybrids are so rare, that we haven't really had a chance to study them. I apologise for not being able to help you as much as I would have preferred."

I don't blame the doctor. "Will this stop?" I ask, pointing to Winter "will it stop if one side becomes more dominant over the other?"

She looks upset. "I hope so, but there's also every chance that this will also cause her to die, if it drags on too much. Her heart could give out from the shock."

I swear and rub my eyes. I shouldn't have marked Winter, I should have known something like this would happen. Fuck. I feel like I'm slowly dying alongside her. If she dies, I won't be able to control myself. I feel helpless, a rush of guilt washing over me. Goddamnit.

"If you should need anything else, don't hesitate to mind-link me again" the doctor says, and I usher her out, thanking her silently. Langdon and Damien come rushing up. "What's going on?" Damien blurts out, paling as he sees the condition of his sister.

"I marked her" was all I said pointing to her "and this happened. Now we could all sit here and lay the blame on me or we can do what we can to make her comfortable."

Damien glowers at me and pulls a chair up beside Winter, clutching hold of her hand. Langdon sits silently in the background, occasionally glancing at her, but giving myself and his mate privacy to be with the one we love.

"Mother" she cries out and my heart skips a beat. Damien looks at me pained. "Why" she sobs "why did you leave us."

Damien just clutches her hand even tighter. "Winter" he says quietly "Winter, I'm here for you" he promises. Her eyes are closed completely now and she's almost lifeless on the bed.

I suck in a breath. She's so pale, all over. Her skin is almost translucent. While she's not exactly writhing with pain anymore, she's barely moving and her whole body is heating up. My mark is clearly visible on her skin and I swallow, glaring at it. This could have been avoided if I had just told her no and waited to find out what would happen. This is all my fault.

"Damien" she moans and he leans over her, looking anxious. "Damien why do you hurt me" she whispers and he flinches.

"I think it's the fever, it's making her delusional" I tell him gently.

He just nods, focussing his attention on her while I sit on the other side, smoothing her hair from her face. Christ, she's burning hot. I don't dare get the washcloth after what happened last time.

'Father don't' she shrieks and Damien jolts. He swallows hard and re grabs her hand.

"Father's not here anymore" he tells her thickly "father can't hurt you anymore."

She stiffens and then her body relaxes again. Damien's voice must be getting through to her then. God, this is so painful to watch. I'm on edge and so is Damien, both of us unable to relax even slightly while Winter's in such pain.

I glance out the window. It's nightfall. The moon is glowing brightly in the sky. It's a full moon tonight, a night when shifters are stronger than usual.

"Do you think maybe we should put her in the bath or something?" Damien says a little desperately.

I look at him. "When I tried to wipe her over with a washcloth she screamed bloody murder. Otherwise I would have done that already."

He deflates. "She's just so hot" he comments.

Suddenly she sits upright "I won't let you win" she screams out loud "I won't."

She falls back down.

Damien looks worried. "This can't be good for her body to handle."

"It's not" I tell him glumly. I feel helpless and it's a shit feeling to have. My hands clench into fists. God if there was just something I could do, rather than sit here and watch my mate go through whatever it is she's going through.

That fucking Thomas, I think to myself miserably. He's the reason she's a hybrid. If I'd known what he'd done to her, I would have killed him far more slowly and tortured him as well. He'd gotten off lightly and it stung. Poor Winter was suffering because of that bastard and his sick obsession to have her. Who knows what else he might have done to her if we hadn't gotten there. I just wish now it was sooner. Maybe then we could have prevented this from ever happening.

There's a cracking sound and Winter screams, Damien and I jumping back as we see that her leg has changed to a wolf one. But it stays like that. Another crack, her arm changing to wolf form. She's still got her eyes closed and I'm wondering if she's even aware of what is going on. She's sobbing quietly now and my heart is breaking. Transforming shouldn't be painful, but this is her first shift after becoming a hybrid and it's not normal the way she's shifting. It's way too slow.

"Aaarghh" screams Winter as her other leg becomes a wolf one, breaking and adjusting.

Her body begins to buck and writhe as slowly her remaining limbs and body begins to break and shift into her wolf form. I blink as finally, after several long minutes of pained screaming, a wolf remains on the bed, her eyes closed, curled up in a foetal position.

I tentatively touch Winter's wolf. It's hot to the touch as well. Her eyes don't even open. I glance over at Damien. "Got any ideas?" I ask wryly.

He shakes his head and sits back down, looking at the wolf appreciatively. I admire her as well. When Winter first got here she was a runt, a tiny little thing. But her wolf has slowly been growing and now it's almost as big as mine. Such a lovely thing to look at. Now I have to wonder though, if Winter is going to be able to shift back to human?

She slumbers. Slowly, Damien, Langdon and myself begin to fall asleep, my head resting on the bed from my sitting position. I can feel her soft fur beneath me.

I don't know how long I've been asleep for, but my whole body springs back when I hear the sound of shifting. Damien lifts his bleary eyes and pushes his chair back as Winter's body begins to turn back to her normal human form. I touch her. Her body is now cool to the touch. Her fever has broken. Damien begins to blush as he realises she's naked, looking away in discomfort. Langdon merely stretches from his position on the floor where he's spent most of the night observing.

Winter's eyes open and she sits up, stretching out her arms, a small smile on her face. She stands up, walking experimentally, holding out her arms and watching them with wide eyes. "Kai" she breathes "I can hear her again. Sabriel's back inside my mind and I can shift back to a wolf again. I can control my vampire side too" she almost squeals happily, rushing over to me and giving me a massive hug.

"I thought you were going to die" I said miserably and she cuddled me harder.

"Sorry" she whispered "but don't you see? Now I have both sides of me. The shifter side and the vampire side. I can be a wolf again and go for runs. I needed this Kai. I'm sorry if I scared you though." Her voice is apologetic. I almost laugh. She shouldn't be apologising to me, if anything I should be apologising to her. Silly girl.

She'd done more than frighten me but I can't blame her for wanting her wolf back. One thing floats in my mind though. If she's strong as a vampire, will her wolf be stronger than an Alpha's now as well?

Chapter 114 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

I can't believe that I have my wolf back again. It's like hearing a lost best friend come back to me. Not only that but the incredible thirst and desperation for blood has abated. Like it was never really there. Sabriel is just as excited to be back.

Man have I missed you Winter. It was like being stuck in a danky old, black cave by myself. It was no fun at all and I couldn't get through to you. I had to talk to myself and it was sooo boring.

I missed you Sabriel, so much. That other voice was horrible, kept telling me to do all sorts of horrible things to Kai and my friends.

Well it might be gone, but you still have the vampire half to contend with, you're going to need to feed but it will be every few days or once a week now, versus everyday.

I don't want to be part vampire.

I know sweet girl, but we have to make the best of a bad situation. Besides, we look good as a pale chick. Totally rocking the goth scene. I dare you to challenge Langdon to an arm wrestle. You can totally beat him.

I'll consider it.

Or Damien even. He could stand to be taken down a peg or two. Have his sister kick his ass.

I blink my eyes and give Kai a watery smile as he embraces me hard. "I can smell your scent and it's almost normal again" he murmurs to me. I crinkle my nose at that. I hadn't realised my scent had changed. I can smell his scent though and it's intoxicating. "Do you feel the need to drink blood?" asks Kai tentatively and I shake my head. In fact, my stomach is rumbling for normal food.

"Actually I think I could use some food from the kitchen" I say shyly, rubbing my stomach with one hand and feeling sheepish.

Kai gives a loud laugh. "I can hear your stomach grumbling from here. Let's go" he suggests, taking hold of my hand and gently tugging me forward.

I glance down at myself and blush, Kai doing the same when he realises I'm naked. I hastily get dressed, leaving Langdon and Damien in the room as we head out to the kitchen.

"What would you like to eat?" he asks, digging around.

"Do we have any doughnuts?" I ask hopefully and he wrinkles his nose, looking quite disgusted, fetching some out of the pantry. "Juice too" I request and disgruntled he brings me a glass with the container of doughnuts. I inhale the smell of them, the sweet smell of chocolate and the musky scent of the sprinkles as I take one in my hand and examine it eagerly.

"World's worst breakfast" grumbles Kai, munching away on a piece of toast. I ignore him.

I take a bite and moan loudly as the taste of the doughnut explodes in my mouth. It's delicious, sweet, seductive. I can't get enough of it and it's staying down and not coming back up. A huge bonus for me.

"It's delicious" I mumble around the food in my mouth. Kai just shakes his head at me. He has no idea what he's missing. Doughnuts are a staple breakfast food.

Langdon and Damien come sauntering in, Damien's eyes widening as he sees me eating with Kai. "You seem to be feeling better" he mutters, sitting across from me. I push the container of doughnuts towards him and he grabs one, biting into it messily. Langdon scowls and grabs himself some cereal. Clearly he's of the same mind as Kai. Whatever. Damien's enjoying the food. I give him a wide smile.

"Well now Sabriel my wolf is back and I can eat normal food. What's not to enjoy" I say lightly as Damien gives a small chuckle.

"Don't get angry at Kai either" I warn him "I was the one who asked for him to mark me and he wasn't sure about doing it."

Damien just grunts and polishes off his doughnut, reaching for another.

"I'm glad to see you are feeling better" Langdon says to me quietly, between bites of his cereal. Kai sips slowly at his coffee, closing his eyes in bliss. I guess it is early this morning and he'd spent the night helping to take care of me. The poor guy must be absolutely exhausted. Maybe I should have suggested bed first. Too late now.

"Thankyou Langdon" I answer.

Damien's fidgeting with his hands now and looking at me uncertainly. What's going on? Surely he's not afraid of me? I've never once attempted to do anything, even when being taken over by my vampire half. Or is he wanting to ask me something and can't bring himself to. Finally I can't take the sidelong glances and biting of his lip anymore.

"Whatever it is Damien can you just spit it out" I explode "you look like you have something to say, so just say it."

"Fine" he shoots back "I think it was sheer stupidity for Kai to mark you. How did he know it wouldn't kill you" he exclaims throwing his hands up exasperated.

I narrow my eyes. It's almost like he wants to pick a fight. This isn't about Kai marking me, I have no doubts it's about something else.

"I already told you that I was the one who begged Kai to do it and as you can see I'm alive and well" I say evenly as Kai grips the table in his anger.

I begin to tap my fingers on the table top. Langdon is silent, pushing his bowl away from him and resting his head on his hands as he stares at the whole lot of us. I tense.

That boy is acting like he's got a stick up his ass, one that needs pulling out asap.

You're not wrong. I just wish he'd spit out the problem already.

Well you know you can make him. You don't have to sit and take his criticisms anymore girl.

What do you propose I do?

Bite him. Bite him good.

Trust you to come up with that Sabriel.

Well I was hardly going to tell you to kiss him!

"Damien just talk to me" I say tiredly "I had one hell of a night and I'm too tired to yell at you. Why don't you just say what's really on your mind?"

He looks at me with sadness on his face. "Did our father really say that our mother was still alive?" he asks slowly "could he have been lying. Trying to psych you out maybe?"

That could be a possibility, I acknowledge to myself. But something in father's voice had rung true when he told me. The way his voice had been dripping with malice when he spoke about her, the repulsive look on his face.

"Father told me she was alive and that she was seeing someone else" I say quietly "I don't think he was lying Damien. What would have been the point? It was more like a deathbed confession, he knew he was going to die and he wanted to hit me where it hurt the most."

It had hurt. Knowing I was tortured all this time and she hadn't even been killed by rogues as he'd told me. The fact he was punishing me in place of her. It gave me nightmares and it caused my heart to hurt.

Damien stared at the table. "All these years" he mutters "all these years and he was lying to me about mother and being killed by rogues. That it was your fault. I tortured you" he said thickly, glancing up at me "and our mother wasn't even dead. I hurt you for nothing, you did nothing to deserve it." He slams a hand down on the table.

"Damien I don't blame you. Father was a bastard who took pleasure in making us do his bidding. He's gone now. He can't hurt us anymore."

"Exactly right" growled Kai, while Langdon reached over and silently gripped my brother's hand.

"Blaming yourself is only going to cause you pain" I continue heatedly "don't let father win. Don't let him cause you any more regrets or pain." I stare Damien in the eyes. "You need to move on from father's influence."

I reach over and grasp my brother's hand. "All we can do is look to the future and leave the past behind. We can learn from it."

He holds onto mine tightly. "But Winter if our mother is still alive" he chokes out "then what do we do?"

I look at Kai who's listening intently, his arms folded over his burly chest, a grim expression on his face. Something tells me he already knows what I'm about to say.

"I want to find her" I tell Damien quietly, my eyes staring directly into his "I want to find her and get some answers. Like why she left and why she didn't take her with us. "

"We don't even know where to start" Damien points out, his eyes seeking Langdon's.

"Then we go from pack to pack" I say with determination "she has to be somewhere in this country right? I can't see her upending everything and disappearing to another one. It doesn't seem like Father cared enough to go searching for her either. For all we know she could be like two packs away" I say excitedly.

Damien looks less enthused. "Or she could be ten packs away" he grimaces. "I don't think I want to go to every single pack in the country Winter, it just seems like a lot."

"How else are we going to find her?" I burst out frustrated.

Kai clears his throat. "I don't think you need to go from pack to pack. It's too much traveling. What we can do is ring other packs and give a general description of your mother along with her name and see if it rings a bell with anyone."

My eyes are shining at him. "You would do that?" I ask him softly.

He gives a nod. "Of course. But are you really sure you want to find this woman? She abandoned the both of you and left you in your father's hands."

"I'm sure" I tell him firmly.

"Then it's done" he says with a light shrug.

"What is your mother's name anyway?" asks Kai "Maybe we could start from there."

"It's" I start and then flounder. I can't remember, I was so young when she left.

"Elena" supplies Damien "I wouldn't bother with the last name, she's probably changed it."

"That's what I think as well. Does she look like Winter?" asks Kai.

Damien looks at me and a small smile comes over his face. "The spitting image" he says with a chuckle "only mother is older of course. "

"It shouldn't be too hard to throw out a description then" Kai says calmly "I'll go and start making phone calls now. But I'm not going to promise anything" he warns "so don't get your hopes up too much. Nothing might come of it. I just want you to be prepared."

Damien and I nod furtively.

Kai gives me a kiss on the forehead and then vanishes down the corridor that leads to the study. I watch him go wistfully. Maybe I'll go and join him in a minute. "What if we find her" Damien is saying and I blink my eyes and try to refocus on what it is, he's actually saying. What if we find her?

"Then we ask the questions we need to" I tell Damien quietly. My mind is whirling around with possibilities. Part of me though is fearful that she might have died in the meantime. If that was the case, we might never get the answers to the questions on our lips. Damien looks excited at the prospect of finding her, but I'm not. Because I don't think there's any good reasons for abandoning your children like

she's done. My canines pop out of my mouth and my eyes begin to glow red. A small part of me, the hurt little girl inside, wants to kill her for what she's done.

Chapter 115 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

I can hear the desperation in Winter's voice when she speaks about finding her mother. I guess it's normal to want answers when you find out that the person you trusted most in the world is still alive and never came back for you. But she's going to get hurt in the process, I just know it. Even though I'll be with her every step of the way, I can't take the pain away from her or stop her from hearing the truth. All I can do is be there for her, even though all of my being wants to protect her and her brother Damien from the god awful truth.

Langdon seeks me out, shutting the door. "What do you think?" he asks softly.

I raise an eyebrow at him. "I think that the both of them are only going to get hurt. But who are we to stop them finding out the truth?"

"I know" Langdon says heavily "Damien's going to be in for a shock when we find the woman. But I can't refuse not to help him either."

I give him a tight smile. We both want to protect our mates and shield them from anything that could harm them. Was that really so bad?

"If it were me, I'd want to know the truth" I exhale "so I can't blame Winter for wanting to find out what happened either."

The phone rings. I hastily grab the receiver and put it to my ear. "Alpha Kai speaking" I bark out.

For a moment there's silence and I wonder if it's a wrong number. Then I hear his voice of all things, making me clutch the receiver tightly in the grip of my hand.

"Alpha Kai, it's Alpha Johnathon" comes his smooth unwavering voice. I frown. What the hell is he doing, calling my number.

"What can I do for you Alpha Johnathon" I say politely, glaring at the telephone. Damn kid. What's he want now.

"You told me to phone you if I should need assistance" he says grimly.

Great. I had told him that. Still I would have thought it would have taken him a lot longer to have the guts to phone me.

"What kind of assistance do you need?" I ask suspiciously.

"My pack is currently being attacked constantly by rogues. We've managed to hold them off but they're becoming braver and we could really use a hand in wiping them out. "

I consider it. I couldn't tell him no, not when I had promised to provide assistance. He sounded like he genuinely needed it. Plus, I realise, if I leave for his pack then phone calls to other packs about Winter's mother would have to wait until I got back.

"We can be there in a few hours" I growl "give us your location. Inform your men to expect us as well."

I slam the phone down once I've been given all the information.

"Fuck" I swear, running a hand through my hair. This was the last thing I bloody needed to deal with.

"I take it I'm coming as well?" asked Langdon. I shake my head.

"No, I need you to keep the pack running smoothly. I'll take a few men and leave. You can explain to Winter. . ." I trail off as the door to the study bursts open.

"Tell Winter what" comes her voice, her eyes staring hard at me as I swallow nervously.

"Johnathon called, he's having trouble with rogues at his pack and I told him I would assist" I begin.

Her eyes narrow. Damien stands behind her, looking apprehensive. "You figured I would stay here" she almost snarls "while you go and help."

I give a huff. "Be reasonable Winter."

"I am being reasonable" she snaps "I'm a hybrid remember, I can help. Not to mention that Johnathon risked his life to save me from Thomas. I owe him, Kai, we all do. I'm not staying behind on this one. I won't." She says firmly.

I look at Damien who gives a nod. He won't stay behind either. Langdon is frowning. He doesn't want his mate to go without him. I swear under my breath.

"Fine" I mutter "we'll all go. Langdon let Jeff know so he can take over the running of the pack. I really need to give him the Gamma title officially" I muse before glaring at Winter. "If you come, you follow all of my instructions, is that clear?" I demand "no going off on your own, no trying to take on several rogues at once. You listen to me and Langdon" I say heatedly.

"I can do that" she promises.

I grimace and plonk down on my seat, rubbing my eyes. This was going to be a very long trip, I could tell.

"Go and pack" I tell them with a sigh "meet me back here in thirty minutes."

They both take off like a shot. "Are you sure this is wise?" asks Langdon.

I glower at him. "Did it look like I had a choice. At least if she's with me, I know she's safe."

He nods thoughtfully at that and stands up. "Guess I better go pack" he mutters "you should as well."

I just chuckle and get up, heading upstairs to the bedroom where Winter has clothes skewn everywhere. I grab a backpack out of the closet and hand it to her, grabbing another one for myself.

"I just can't pick" she mutters as I stare at her incredulous. We're not going to a fashion parade for heaven's sake.

"Just pack some comfortable clothes, we won't be there long" I snarl.

I'm packed within five minutes, watching Winter as she debates over every item of clothing she has. Is this what all women are like when it comes to packing? It's nerve wracking watching her. I pull out my phone. "You have five minutes" I tell her tersely as she blinks at me panicked "otherwise we're going to miss our flight. "

It's almost amusing to watch her begin to slam random things into the backpack. I grab hold of it and walk downstairs, Langdon and Damien waiting patiently in the study. I bet Damien hardly took anytime at all to pack I think a little grumpily.

"We'll all go in the one car" I say evenly "seeming as we need to take a small flight. We'll rent a car when we get to the other side. Is everyone ready to go?" I ask, staring at Winter pointedly, who to her credit, merely blinks at me all innocent like.

"Yes" everyone chimes in.

We decide to take my suv. Winter gets in the front with me, Langdon in the back with Damien. I glance at them in the rearview mirro and shake my head. The two lovebirds are holding hands already and whispering things in each others ears. Winter fidgets with the radio as I pull out and head towards the main road.

"It will be nice to see Johnathon again" Winter says excitedly, a wide smile on her face.

Nice for her I think sourly, I could have happily lived my life without seeing the teenager again.

"I wonder how he's doing" she adds "he seemed so sad the last time I saw him. "

That was because he left while she had lost her memories I think bitterly. I wasn't naive. Johnathon still had feelings for Winter, even though he tried hard to hide it.

The flight seems to take forever. I hate confined spaces. It makes me feel claustrophobic. Even sitting by the window I curse the fact that I can't spread my legs out.; Winter on the other hand, is so petite that her legs spread out with plenty of room still.

"How long do you think we'll stay at Johnathon's pack for?" she asks turning to me, those pale pink lips of hers spread in a smile.

"A few days, maybe a week" I answer grumpily.

I glance over my shoulder to see Langdon is asleep with Damien's head on his shoulder. I gape. How the hell is he able to sleep in such tight quarters and uncomfortable chairs? It's not normal. Damien is awake but barely, his eyelids fluttering. I glance back at Winter and she's wide awake and chattering a mile a minute.

Slowly I drape an arm over her, pulling her across to snuggle with me. She nestles her head against my chest and I almost purr in contentment. She's gone quiet now and it's more relaxing. I can feel my whole body relaxing as well, closing my eyes, only to bolt upright again as the plane descends.

"Well that was fun" chirped Winter, tugging me out of the plane while I scowl at everybody. Langdon and Damien follow behind me, both with small smiles on their faces.

"Langdon, Damien, let's go" I bark, storming towards the car rental place and quickly securing another SUV. I drum my fingers along the steering wheel. I'm regretting this already and I haven't even made it to Johnathon's pack.

"Kai" Winter says in a small voice "I don't mean to make you upset" she says, fidgeting with both hands as she climbs into the passenger seat.

I grab hold of her chin with one hand, gripping it tightly and then lean forward, mashing my lips against hers. I'm rough, possessive, my tongue delving into her mouth and caressing hers. I want her to know that she's mine. She moans, her hands coming up behind my head. Aware of the passengers now coming into the backseat, I slowly, reluctantly, pull back, looking into her eyes.

"Just remember that you're mine" I purr and she nods, a smile on her swollen lips.

Langdon and Damien remain silent, aware of what just happened. I turn the key in the ignition. I pull out and glance out the window. The scenery is nice, the towns quite small. Winter is staring wide eyed at everything, but Damien refuses to look out the window, instead staring down at the ground and closing his eyes. What's up with that? Soon the scenery changes. It's more woodsy, less town like. We pull up to a back road and begin to drive through the woods, careful to keep a close eye out for approaching shifters. Although, if Johnathon's done his job right, they would know to expect us as it has in fact only been a few hours since this morning. I can see what has to be a pack house in the distance, forced to stop when several shifters leap in front of the car, growling, snarling, with their ears tucked back.

"Damnit Johnathon" I curse as Winter slinks back in her chair "you had one job damnit. One job."

"Stay here" I tell Winter grumpily, opening the door and getting out of the car awkwardly. The wolves snap their jaws at me.

They must have mind-linked their Alpha thankfully though. Because two minutes later Johnathon comes jogging up, looking extremely apologetic.

"Sorry" he says breathing heavily "I told them to expect you. You're able to go on your way now" he says, with a distinctively unhappy look at the wolves.

"Can one of them drive?" I ask, throwing him the key. He motions towards one of the wolves who shifts. Winter, Langdon and Damien hop out of the car.

"Drive this to the pack house" Johnathon says to the wolf, handing the young lad the key. He nods and gets in, driving away as we watch.

We begin to walk towards the pack house, a huge mansion but cabin style to blend with the forest. I keep a wary eye out and keep my ears pricked for the sounds of any approaching rogues. Luckily I don't smell one nearby. Johnathon looks on edge, glancing every which way. He doesn't look like he's slept a wink in days. "So tell me about these rogues" I request of him, all of us waiting for him to open his mouth and speak. They must be causing one hell of a problem for him to look this way. I'm annoyed as I haven't had a chance to put feelers out for Winter and Damien's mother yet. Besides, I fume to myself, how hard can it be to get rid of a bunch of rogues?

Chapter 116 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Johnathon POV

They're here, they're finally here. Winter looks as lovely as always, although there's something that's slightly different about her. I can't quite put my finger on it. She looks radiant but fierce, stronger somehow. It's unsettling and awe inspiring at the same time. Kai looks the same, same grumpy expression on his face, Langdon isn't much different but Damien looks more confident, settled. Being Langdon's mate really seems to suit him. He's more laid back as well.

"Tell us about these rogues" Winter says quietly as we gather in the study, my mother, bless her heart, thankfully gone for the day, otherwise she'd be butting her head in and asking what everyone wanted to eat.

"There's not much to tell" I say with exasperation "we've always had the odd one, here or there to take care of but there seems to be a pack of them now, just sitting and waiting. Anyone travelling this way is going to get attacked."

"Why haven't you just wiped them out" growls Kai looking at me with a raised eyebrow.

"I was waiting for your assistance" I admit "and your guidance" I say pointedly at Kai who has the decency to look semi ashamed of himself. Winter glowers at him and he shuts up.

"I think it's fantastic that you've asked for help" Winter says enthusiastically. For a moment her eyes glow and I stare at her stupefied. Did her eyes just glow red? Or was it a trick of the light?

"No Alpha likes asking for help, but there's been too many injuries on my side to ignore it" I say with a growl "my people are good fighters but not against a whole pack of rogues."

"Do you know their location?" asks Kai "where they have holed up for now?"

"They haven't moved. They're a little south of here, away from the border, but with a clear view of the pack. They can see our incomings and outgoings."

"Not good" Kai mutters. He takes a deep breath. "Tomorrow we'll hunt them down along with your best fighters. I have several of my own men still coming" he promises me.

"Thankyou" I mutter, my hands clenched into fists.

Winter is pensive. She's glancing out the window and frowning as I watch her, one hand under her head which is cocked slightly to the side. She's staring in the direction of the rogues. "These rogues" she mutters softly, looking over at me "they look rather thin and mangy don't they? Like they haven't eaten in days or even weeks properly. Are they really attacking your pack?"

I flush. "They're rogues. They don't need to be attacking to be eliminated. They're bad wolves who like to kill. It's better to kill them first." My voice rings out loudly.

Winter looks at me disappointed, turning to the others as I flinch from the look on her face. "I don't know" she mused "I don't believe we should kill, just for the sake of killing. If they're only hungry, why can't we just help them with food and water?" she asked Kai who looks taken aback.

Is she insane? You don't just go up to a rogue and say, hey, do you want some food. They'll attack you on sight. I wait for Kai to back me up, but he too is looking thoughtful.

"Kai, you can't honestly be thinking that she's right" I say annoyed "you know what rogues are like."

He exhales. "I do, but Winter has me thinking that maybe not every single rogue is bad. She helped one long ago and in return he helped you, did he not?"

I scowl. "That was a one off" I mutter "its not likely to happen again."

"We dont' know that" Damien cuts in. Great, another soft hearted shifter. Maybe I should have gone alone on this. It was infuriating listening to them give a damn about some pathetic, weak rogues.

Just then a mind-link comes in

Alpha Johnathon, the rogues are approaching towards our territory. They don't appear to be hostile yet, what would you have us do?

Continue to patrol and I want everyone prepared to fight if they get any closer. Is that clear?

Understood Alpha Johnathon. We will advise you if the situation changes.

See that you do.

I cut the mind-link off and stare around the room incredulous. "See" I accuse them, pointing and waving my arm in exasperation "the rogues are already coming closer to the boundary line. You can't tell me they aren't planning on attacking. Why else would they come so close."

"Food and water" shoots out Winter with a roll of her eyes. She glances at me and then scowls. Whoa. This is a totally different side to Winter than I've seen before. This one is more aggressive and loads more confident. I have to say, even if I don't like her attitude, I'm certainly admiring her for her convictions.

"Let's go check the situation out" Kai says pleasantly, putting his hands in his pockets.

"You better be prepared to shift" I warn grumpily. The last thing I need is a dead alpha on my conscience, because he was too stubborn for his own good.

"We'll be fine" Langdon says cordially as I begin to walk towards the doorway, feeling like a nervous wreck. These people are going to get me killed, I just know it. I stomp down the hallways and out to the grounds. None of them shift. I gape. Are they going to present themselves to the rogues as humans?

Winter raises her head and places her hand across her eyes due to the glare. "Which way do we go from here?" she shouts.

I point and then gape as she disappears. She's a complete blur. I've never seen a shifter move so fast. It's incredible. None of the others look worried at all.

"Aren't you worried she'll get attacked?" I say urgently.

I swear I hear Damien give a snort. "They should be worried about her" he mutters under his breath. I still hear him though.

Even Kai looks nonchalant about his mate going towards the rogues so fast. What on earth is going on?

I begin to run, shifting into my wolf form, the others doing the same and trotting towards the direction of the rogues. When we get there, Winter is standing directly in front of them, her hands held out like she was surrendering.

"I am not a threat" she yells out, the wind distorting her words "I just want to speak to you. Please, if one of you could shift, we could talk."

She's greeted with growling and snarls, but they don't attack. In fact they look like they might be mind-linking each other. I didn't even think that rogues could mind-link.

Damien and Kai's wolf come up behind her, Langdon behind them, all of them ready to attack at a moment's notice. I just watch in disbelief. I just wanted the rogues gone. Couldn't they understand that? This was foolishness. Stupidity at its best. Good intentions or not, they were going to get themselves killed, or at least Winter was. Not that she seemed to be aware of it. She continued to plead with the rogues.

One rogue in particular pushes their way to the front of the group. Its eyes search us all, but its red eyes rest on Winter for some reason. It cocks its head, its tongue lolling as it pants like a dog. Winter reaches over to touch it. Kai growls in warning but it doesn't stop her as she touches the fur and strokes it, the rogue letting her.

"Strange" Winter whispers "this wolf seems very familiar to me. Like I've seen it before, but I don't know where."

She sounds completely puzzled, staring at the wolf in fascination. It sits on its backside and views her quietly.

Kai shifts back to human form. He looks sheepish. "They don't appear to be attacking" he calls to me. I frown. That's what they want you to believe. I don't trust them for a single second. Then there's the sounds of bones cracking and adjusting, and one of the rogues shifts to their human form. He's thin, incredibly so, with long blonde hair that's matted, a long grisly beard and his eyes are red. His body is clearly malnourished. I feel sick just looking at him. He's been starving for a long time.

"Help us" the rogue says in a croaky voice, "please we are all starving. We were never going to attack, we just wanted food and water, supplies" he says, his whole body trembling. He can't be older than thirty but he looks so much older. Time has not been kind to him.

"Are there any more of you?" asks Kai, drawing back his shoulders. The rogue gives a small nod.

"There are some more women and children back there. "

God, I feel like a right bastard. I shift and walk closer, standing beside Kai. "I'm Alpha Johnathon, the Alpha of this pack. If you all need food and water, you are welcome to come on my lands" I say, taking a chance as Winter beams at me "but should you show any signs of violence. . ." I trail off thoughtfully.

"I promise we won't" the man says hastily. "and we can't thank you enough for the offer."

I just grunt. We'll see. I still don't trust them, but even I'm not a complete asshole. There's children starving for heavens sake. No one could ignore that. Well no one with a conscience anyway.

Winter is still staring at the wolf in front of her. "Will you shift?" she asks the wolf and it seems to hesitate.

"Please" cajoles Winter. I wonder what her obsession with this wolf is. But to be fair, Damien is also eyeing it strangely. Maybe they both know it from somewhere.

The wolf stands up and shakes itself all over. Then the sound of shifting can be heard and suddenly, instead of the wolf, there is a woman standing in her place.

Wow is my first thought. Even though the woman is dangerously thin, she's still beautiful. She reminds me of Winter, with her long hair and skin tone. They could easily pass for family members. Heck,, for all I know they are family members. The woman is silent, her head down at the ground. Winter is staring at her, her face pale.

"Look at me" Winter hisses, Damien moving to stand beside his sister, his own face ashen now and his body trembling all over. Kai seems to sense there's something wrong, standing protectively behind his mate. Langdon moves behind Damien, still in his wolf form, his jaws open at the ready.

The woman is hesitant. Or afraid. Her hair is covering her face completely. She's clutching both hands together tightly and not uttering a single sound. Winter looks excited and dismayed at the same time, one hand to her lips. Are those tears in the corner of her eyes? Damien's jaw is locked tight and his eyes don't move away from the woman. The other rogue keeps looking back and forth, unsure of what is going on.

Winter holds out a trembling hand, her sobs filling the air. My heart gives a pang. She sounds devastated. This rogue woman is completely affecting her. Kai grips her from behind and hold her as she begins to cry. Damien winces and gives his sister a sympathetic look.

"Will you please look at me?" Winter sobs "I feel like I know who you are. So what is the point of hiding it? What good is that going to do? Damien can see you too. We both can. Why are you trying to hide?"

The woman slowly turns her head. Progress. Slowly her head begins to move backwards until she is staring back at Winter, her hair still around her face.

Winter reaches out and smooths back the hair, revealing the woman's face to everyone, a trembling smile upon her lips.

"Hello mother" she whispers and then faints dead away while the woman lets out a shocked cry. I could not have foreseen this coming in a million years. Winter and Damien's mother was a rogue who'd been on the run for a very long time from the looks of it. The question was why?

Chapter 117 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

I can't believe that my mother is a rogue. I don't know if it was the shock of that, or just finding her so easily that made me faint. When I come to, I see that I'm lying on the couch in the living room, Kai, thankfully dressed now, hovering over me with a concerned look in his eyes.

"Where is she" I gasp, struggling upright. Kai pushes me back down.

"Hold still" he says firmly "she's gone to clean up and will be down any minute. I don't need you fainting again."

I glance over my shoulder to where Damien is standing, looking shell shocked. Langdon is holding his hand and rubbing it, in an attempt to get him to calm down.

Slowly, I sit upright, ignoring Kai's glaring. I want to see my mother. There are so many questions burning on my lips. Damien's as well, no doubt.

"She wanted to stay with you, but I insisted she get some food and clean up first" Kai says fixing his eyes on me. "She needed to eat as did all of them. It was a good call of yours Winter. These rogues meant no harm and you managed to avoid bloodshed. Not to mention found your mother at the same time. Strange coincidence that" he mutter darkly and I just scowl at him.

Coincidences happen all the damn time. Besides, the universe owed me a break, didn't it? After everything I've gone through?

"She better have a damn good reason for leaving us" Damien mutters from behind me, his tone dripping with resentment "or else I'm completely gone from here."

I turn to look at him. "I'm sure there was Damien. Who wants to live their lives as a rogue? Not to mention she was starving. Can't you just hold off your opinion of her until she tells us her story?" I plead.

He folds his arms across his chest and huffs. "I'll give her a chance" he promises "but I'm not promising anything."

"That's all I want you to do" I whisper shakily. I have complete faith that my mother will tell us everything and that nothing she's had to do was her fault. Father chased her away, he had to have.

Footsteps on the stairs make us all look towards it. Damien angrily. Myself eagerly. Kai sits beside me and holds my hand but I barely feel it, my whole body suddenly going completely numb. My mother awkwardly steps into the lounge room. I stare at her in awe. She looks so much healthier already, after getting a meal inside of her and getting cleaned up. Her hair no longer looks like a rats nest and her skin looks a lot smoother. Less dirty. She no longer resembles a rogue, except for the eyes which continue to glow red. A bit frightening and hard to look past, but I would try. She was still beautiful none the less and really did resemble me. It gave me a nice feeling to look at her.

She wrings her hands together. "May I sit down?" she asks in a hoarse voice.

"Of course" I say, watching as she sits across from me, looking up at Damien and then quickly away. Damn it, I told him to be nice. I glare at him and he raises an eyebrow at me.

"I'm sure you have all sorts of questions. . ." she begins nervously.

"We do" I interrupt "Like what happened to you? Father told us you were killed in a rogue attack."

She looks remorseful. "You have to understand" she begins "when your father and I met, the mate bond linked us together. In the beginning he was charming, kind, fun to be with and he was affectionate" she said bitterly. "But then he started to change. It was only one drink at nighttime, then two and then numerous drinks. I tried to stop him drinking so much, because he was an angry drunk, but he didn't seem to care. "

I lean forward, intent on hearing the rest of the story. "Back then, women were told to keep quiet and deal with it. I can't remember what set him off the first time. whether it was dinner was late or I accidentally burnt some of it, but it made him so angry that he hit me."

I gasp. I didn't remember any of this, but I'd been so young.

She looks away. "Then when you both came along" she said quietly "it went back to being good for a while. He really adored Damien and when Winter came along, he seemed to be really excited about having a daughter" she said with a small smile. "He stopped drinking, worked real hard and spent time with all of us. For a while at least, everything was perfect."

"But it didn't stay that way" I guessed, seeing the sadness in her eyes and the lines across her face as she spoke.

She gave a short bark of laughter.

"No it didn't stay that way" she agreed "he started to go back to his old ways. The only difference was that he hit me in the privacy of our bedroom, because he didn't want you guys to see it. But it was getting worse and there were times when I thought he was really going to kill me one day. There were times I could barely get myself off the floor and moving to take care of you both."

"Wasn't there someone you could have told?" I ask outraged "some other family members or the Alpha of the Pack? A friend?"

Mother shakes her head. "I no longer had any friends to contact. He had slowly stripped me away from everybody I had in my social circle. The Alpha of the pack was his cousin remember? So he wouldn't have done anything. As for family, I was an orphan when I met your father. It was one of the reasons I was so happy to discover my mate. I thought I would be getting the family I always wanted."

"So what happened?"

She sighs. "I met someone. A second chance mate called Lexus who wanted to save me and get me away from your father. He was determined to make sure I lived. But there was a catch. Lexus had been

banished from his own pack for daring to be with me, a mother with two children. He was a rogue" she said gently, "and I didn't care because he treated me far better than your father ever had."

"So you just took off with the rogue and left us" burst out Damien incredulously, glaring down at our mother who flinched. "What, we were too much of a burden for you and your new life" he kept going aggressively. "You figured, hey, I don't want kids anymore, so I'll just leave them behind?"

Tears welled in her eyes. "I would never" she choked out. "I wanted to take you with me. Was going to in fact" she said sniffing "but the day I was having a picnic with Winter, rogues did come. We fought them off, but your father was so angry and incensed with me. He'd somehow found out about Lexus before I rejected him and he used the attack to drag me off and beat me. He beat me so bad that I almost didn't make it" she whispered looking haunted "and he left me for dead in the trees. I couldn't move. If there had been any rogues left, I would have been a goner. Your father was so much stronger than me, especially in wolf form. It was nothing for him to force me to shift and take his abuse. Running away didn't work either" she admitted.

"So how did you survive?" I cut in, resting my arms on my legs and staring straight forward.

"Lexus came and found me. He'd known something was wrong and he'd come looking for me. He found me all bruised and bloodied in the forest and managed to hide me in a cave for a few days while I rested and recovered."

"Why didn't you come back?" I asked.

"I was afraid" she whispered "he'd told me that he'd kill me if I tried to take you both from him. His cousin was the Alpha. Lexus and I would never win in a fight with them. Plus, being with Lexus meant being a rogue and there was every chance you would die with us if we were attacked or forced to defend ourselves. I'm sorry" she sobbed "I have thought of you both everyday and wondered what you were doing. Whether you were still alive. I always remembered your birthdays. You were never far from my mind."

"You know he beat Winter too" cut in Damien angrily "you left your daughter to be beaten by him instead. How does that feel mother? Knowing it's your fault."

"Damien" I protest weakly, but my mother's eyes widen in disbelief as she stares at me horrified.

"Oh god Winter, he really did that too you? I had hoped he wouldn't touch you, prayed he wouldn't. I thought maybe it would be different because you were his children."

"As you can see, it wasn't" Damien said nastily.

"Damien stop" I plead "please, it's not like mother's had it easy. She's had to travel as a rogue all this time" I argue "cut her some slack."

"It's alright Winter" mother says "it's the least I deserve. He's not wrong. I can understand his anger. You both have a right to be angry."

But I wasn't angry. I felt incredibly sad for her. She's been running all this time. Starving. Her mate for company but no one else. Missing her children. Never having enough to eat or drink. Never having a real home. She'd suffered. We all had. Was being angry at her going to make any of this better? Would it heal the wounds and the trauma? Or would being angry just cause more suffering, more pain?

"Damien" I say quietly "I get that you're angry but you need to put yourself in her shoes. She had no choice but to run. If we'd become rogues we might have died. Sure, our childhood sucked, but getting angry about it now doesn't make anything better. It just makes you feel even crappier."

He sneers at me and I stare him down. Suddenly his body deflates and he looks miserable, rather than angry. Sad, rather than full of hatred. This was a shock to him too, I remind myself. He wasn't expecting this either and didn't know how to handle his emotions.

"Where is your mate?" I ask mother quietly and she gives me a sad smile, tucking her hair behind her ears.

"I'm afraid that he died last year" she said looking down at the floor "he was killed for going onto someone's territory by mistake. I couldn't get to him in time."

I feel so much grief for her. How terrible to lose your mate like that.

"I'm sorry for your loss" I whisper feeling choked up. Damien makes a small noise in the background.

"Thankyou" she says politely "I miss him each and every day."

I look over at Kai. He knows what I'm about to do and he agrees with me. I take a shaky breath and lean forward. "Mother, I would like you to stay at my pack with me and Kai" I say eagerly "you'd have a home to go to and a place to sleep. Food, water, everything you could ever need."

She looks at me bewildered. "I didn't think either of you would want anything to do with me" she said whispering.

"You thought wrong. Damien also lives at the same pack" I say shooting a glance over my shoulder. My brother gives a tight nod.

"If you're sure" she says thickly.

I get up and give her a hug, embracing her tightly. All of us have wounds to heal, some more than others, but this would be a step in the right direction. I only hope that Damien takes the step forward to and lets go of the past. Before it consumes him completely.

Chapter 118 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Damien POV

God help me. I know I should feel sorry for my mother, but something inside of me is so angry and resentful that it's overwhelming all of my senses. I'm not like Winter. I can't just forgive and forget. Our mother is lying. She could have come back to get us at anytime and we would have gone with her, no questions asked. Especially since it would have been infinitely better than living with our bastard father.

I shouldn't have stormed off. I gather my thoughts and walk back towards the living room, Winter and mother embracing. I swallow hard. "Did she tell you that she killed our miserable son of a bitch father" I spit out, Langdon sucking in a breath as I plonk back down on the chair. "That he was trying to get to us after being locked in a dungeon? It must have been so nice to have been free of all this bullshit" I snarl

"hooking up with your so called mate Lexus. . ." I trail off as I hear a strangled noise from the hallway. All of us turn and look. to see that Johnathon is standing there, looking extremely pale.

"I'm sorry to interrupt" he says quietly "I was just coming down to check on all of you. Did you say that your mate's name was Lexus?" he asks sounding like he's being strangled.

I narrow my eyes. What the hell is going on with him? Why does he sound so damn upset? It's not like his mother abandoned him, is it? Then I remember that his father left him to go hook up with another woman and never came back. God, I need to stop being such a bastard.

My mother looks at Johnathon timidly. "That's right, my mates name was Lexus" she says quietly, looking a bit uncertain "is something wrong?"

"What was his last name?" Johnathon asks, looking on edge. "Did he tell you?"

She cocks her head and thinks for a moment. "I believe it might have been summer?" she mused "we never really had much reason to remember our last names" she explained thickly. "We just called each other by our first names."

Johnathon was holding onto the doorframe now. His shoulders were shaking. There was a grim expression on his face. Winter was starting to look at him concerned.

"Johnathon are you alright?" she asked.

"What did he look like?" Johnathon said abruptly to our mother.

She gives a large exhale and then looks away for a moment. "When I first met him, he had silky black hair that he kept tied back in a ponytail. His eyes were blue and bright and he was tall and muscled. He looked stern, but he was anything but. He was a sweet and kind man. He loved me fiercely" she continued, her eyes softening as she reminisced "when he told me he couldn't go back to his pack because he'd been banished, I didn't hesitate to go with him anyway. I would have followed him to the ends of the earth."

Winter looked at our mother admiringly. She sounded so girly, when she spoke about him. Women and their romances. Even I felt a little touched. Johnathon looked sick.

"Oh god" he choked out, sounding like he was being strangled.

Winter leapt up and patted him on the back. "What's wrong Johnathon" she exclaimed "you're behaving so weirdly."

His eyes were pitch black. He raised his head and regarded Elena, our mother steadily as she cringed at the expression on his face.

"I'm acting this way because Lexus was my father and he left my mother to be with you" he snapped and all of us stared open mouthed at him.

My mother shook her head. "No, Lexus didn't have any children, I checked. He told me he was single, I believed him."

"Were you actual mates, or chosen mates?" Johnathon yelled.

"Chosen mates" she whispered. "I wish we had been true mates, but I loved him just the same."

Oh boy. Even I didn't see this one coming. Johnathon looks like he's about to explode. His hands are clenched into fists and his eyes have remained a pitch black.

"Oh my god" Winter whispers, her hand to her mouth as she looks at Elena, who is just as horrified.

"How could you have been so stupid?" I cut in derisively "he lied to you. He abandoned his child, just like you abandoned your children and you never even realised it?" I'm incredulous "come on, he must have let something slip at some stage."

Kai's eyeing everyone now, wondering when he's going to be needed to defuse the situation. Johnathon's like a bomb about to go off and explode, everyone subtly backing away from him and staring at him as he paces back and forth.

"I can't believe this" he growls "you're telling me that Lexus, my pathetic excuse of a father is dead?" he prods.

Our mother looks at him apologetically, tears in her eyes "he died going onto some Alpha's territory last year. But I'm not sure he was your father" she says gently.

I roll my eyes. Of course she's still in denial. Doesn't want to admit to her mistakes, and trust me, this is a very big and very bad mistake.

Johnathon comes in and sits on the couch. His eyes are cold as ice. "Lexus was my father. You described him perfectly to a tee" he growls furiously "I have no doubt in my mind that he is the one that died last year. He shacked up with you" he snapped.

A gasp from the doorway has us all swivelling our heads to look at the person, now clutching the doorway for support, her whole body trembling. I wince. Johnathon's mother has heard every word and right now she looks completely stunned. She's blinking back tears.

"What did you all just say" she whispers, sounding shaken. Her eyes rest on my mothers and narrow as she glares "your father shacked up with this whore?" she screams, spittle flying everywhere. I flinch, Winter cringes and Kai looks nervous as hell. Like he's completely out of his depth.

"He just disappeared one night. Never told me anything. Just left. He left his little son behind, me behind and for what?" she sneers, her tone cold as ice, her arms folded across her chest. Mother looks uncomfortable but stays silent, shooting the woman remorseful looks. As though that's going to accomplish anything.

"I didn't know" mother begins.

"You should have known. You should have questioned" screams Johnathon's mother "you idiot girl. You slut" she accuses "going off with someone else's man. You should have known better" she yells out.

Johnathon leaps up and goes over to her, trying to calm her down. Goodluck with that, I think to myself. It's like watching a car wreck. You know it's intevtiabile but you can't stop watching.

"Mother, please calm down" Johnathon begs, "Elena couldn't have possibly known. Why are you so angry at her, when it's father you should be angry at?"

The woman gives a huff, glaring around the room, no longer the nice, hospitable host she had been when we first got there.

"You say your father is dead" she storms "this woman is the reason for it. She took your father away from you Johnathon, why aren't you angry?" she screams.

Johnathon's lips tighten. "I am angry" he admits "but I can also see both sides to the story. It's not like she asked him to lie to her. If he was really like that, then weren't we better off without him anyway" he asks her firmly. He grabs hold of her hand "we did alright without him, didn't we? You raised me and I'm forever grateful to you for that. I love you mother" he says.

I've got to give it to him, his voice is dropping with sincerity. I'm a little envious. I didn't have a relationship like that with my own mother or father. I wish things could have worked out differently for Winter and me.

The other woman looks unconvinced.

"Please, I really didn't know" mother says to her, her voice shaking, her face miserable.

"Sure you didn't" Johnathon's mother spits out. "I will never forgive you for what you did. My son grew up without a father, because of you" she shouts and storms over to Elena.

Before we can even move to stop her, Johanthon's mother raises her hand and slaps mother across the face. There's nothing but stunned silence in the room.

"You will leave tomorrow morning and you will never come back. I don't want to clap eyes on you ever again, hear your voice speak ever again. Do you understand me" she challenges.

My mother nods, a hand raised to her stinging cheek, a red palm now on her face from the slap. "Yes" she whispers.

Johnathon's mother just glares then turns and storms from the room. "Make sure they leave" she shouts to Johnathon who looks at us embarrassed.

"I'm sorry about that" he apologises, but mother just waves the apology away.

"It's the least that I deserve" she says roughly "I must apologise, I never imagined that Lexus had another life he never told me about."

Johnathon just shrugged. "I've made my piece with it. Mother will come around eventually but I think it best" he hesitates "if you leave tomorrow morning as she suggested."

Mother nods.

"That's fine, we'll all leave tomorrow morning. You don't need us to hang around anymore anyway" Kai cuts in, glancing over at Johnathon meaningfully.

"Everything is under control, thanks to you guys" he answers.

Huh, bet he didn't feel that way when we got here and pretty much took it over. Smooth, Johnathon, real smooth.

"Then it's settled" Kai answers smugly, glancing around and leaning back in the chair "we'll leave early tomorrow."

But theres something I need to do. Something I wasn't even aware of until now. But every fibre in my being is begging me to do it. After all there's nothing to be afraid of anymore is there? Besides, there

might be something that will bring back memories, something sentimental to give to Winter. God knows she's the sentimental one out of us both. Right now she's busy fussing over mother. I clear my throat and look towards Langdon who merely raises an eyebrow.

"I have somewhere I need to go first" I tell them honestly "it's about time I made the trip back to the house anyway."

Winter lets out a startled gasp. "Oh Damien don't go back to that house" she says in dismay "it ought to be condemned."

I laugh. "It's not in that bad of a condition but I never stepped foot in fathers room or the basement. There might be something we want to keep. It's worth going through at any rate."

Winter bites her lip. "I just think it's such an evil place" she says forlorn "what if you get hurt or something?"

Langdon clears his throat. "I will be accompanying him" he tells Winter with a slow smile "I promise you that I won't let anything happen to him."

Why does mother look so nervous? "I agree, you shouldn't go back there" she says huskily "best to forget that place ever existed."

I cock my head at her. "Theres nothing you want brought back?" I ask politely. "Some memento perhaps?"

She adamantly shakes her head. "There is nothing in that place I would ever want to set eyes on again" she spits out. Her tone drips with resentment. "The whole place can burn down for all I care. It wouldn't make me cry that's for sure."

"I get it" Kai said calmly, clapping me on the shoulder "when do you want to leave?"

I just look at him "same as you, tomorrow morning. It's not far from here. You I'm assuming will be heading for the castle?"

"You bet your ass, we are" he glances at Elena "we'll drop you off on the way" he adds.

She looks annoyed but gives a slow nod.

I'm looking forward to tomorrow and revisiting the house. There's so much I never looked at, or wanted to look at now. But why is mother so adamant about me going there, and wanting it to burn down? What is she so afraid of?

Chapter 119 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Kai POV

Well that was a bit of complete fuckery. Never could I have imagined finding Winter's mother so quickly, let alone that she hooked up with Johnathon's dad. Johnathon was pissed and quite frankly I couldn't blame him. Winter can defend her mother all that she likes, even she has to admit that what Elena did was wrong. In so many ways.

Now, I don't know what it is about Elena's mother but I instantly dislike her. It could be her abandonment of her children, but I think it's the way she avoids my gaze and how she dodges questions she doesn't want to answer. Or the way she fidgets as she answers, looking uncertain like she's guessed it. My skin crawls being near her. But Winter seems to be unaffected by her mother, rising to her defence regardless of everything. My god, even Damien senses something's off. He's not a fool, even if I reckon he looks like one.

"How much longer until we reach the castle" comes Winter's voice, snapping me out of my thoughts. I glance down at the clock on the car and give a sigh.

"Hours yet" I say, looking over the scenery. "But wait until we get there" I say excited "the castle is something special to look at. Plus King Axel is a really nice guy. Down to earth and kind. I haven't met his wife yet, so I can't really tell you about her. He's been kind of cooped up since his marriage" I comment frowning "he used to like travelling to the different packs and meeting the Alpha's. Weird how marriage changes someone."

Winter shoots me an icy look. "Is that your way of saying you will not contemplate marriage?" she asked with a hiss and I gulp.

"That's not what I meant" I protest quietly "there was no offense meant."

She just grunts and sits back. Fantastic. Now I've managed to piss off my mate as well. It's going to be a very long trip. Nothing but silence from Winter who's staring out the window as I drive. I watch the scenery pass by in a scowl. Why can't I just learn to keep my mouth shut sometimes.

Seriously dude. You mentioned marriage in a derogatory term and didnt' think she was going to take offense? Are you really this stupid?

Shut it Kai. I wasn't meaning anything by it.

She's a girl. Girl's dream about being married. The white dress, the rings, the ceremony, the whole shebang and now she thinks you don't want to marry her. Smooth dude, real smooth. It's going to be your fault if she says no when you finally get the guts to propose to her.

I don't know if I'm ready to ask her yet. She still has this hybrid problem to deal with and it never seems to be the right time.

Hey, I don't care. Get with the program. I'll take over and ask her. She won't say no to me, I'm not the one she's pissed at. She can marry old stormy any old time.

Shut up Storm.

Your just jealous that our mate loves me more, admit it. Not my fault you're such a douchebag.

Stupid mutt. He really knows how to push my buttons. I cast a sideways look at Winter. She's slumped against the window, blinking furiously. Had I made her cry? God I'm an asshole. I clear my throat.

"Winter I wasn't saying I would never get married" I say firmly "just that I wasn't thinking about it right now."

She nods but says nothing. Sigh.

Thankfully the gate looms up and several guards swarm the vehicle, pointing their guns at us. Winter looks nervous as hell but this was to be expected. I merely wind my window down and smile at the guards.

"Name and purpose of your visit" one says abruptly, frowning at me.

I shrug. Can't make friends with everyone. "My name is Alpha Kai" I say slowly "and I'm here to visit King Axel, an old friend of mine."

His eyes go cloudy and I know that he's mind-linking the King. It's just a matter of time now. We sit patiently waiting. The guards never let their guns go down. I'm impressed. They are acting exactly like they should be, none of them letting their guards down at all. Nor have they moved a single inch. Winter looks at me in concern but I just wink at her, to show her that everything is alright. I've done this numerous times before, just not with her.

"You said Alpha Kai, didn't you?" the guard checks and I nod. His eyes go back to normal and he signals to his comrades to loosen their weapons.

"King Axel is expecting you in the throne room" he tells me "do you know where it is?"

I give a grin. "I know it, but shouldn't you guys be escorting me in?" Now I'm confused. Has King Axel gone a bit soft on his protocols. I've never been inside the castle without several guards escorting me in.

The guard shakes his head. "King Axel says you don't need to be escorted and I take my orders from him" he says calmly. He motions towards the others. "Fall out" he booms and they begin to walk away. I shake my head in surprise and put the car into drive. Winter looks relieved and a bit more relaxed. We drive forward, up the long driveway and park in front of the massive grey castle as Winter's mouth falls open in awe.

"It's so beautiful" she gushes, hopping out of the car and turning around to see as much of it as she can. "It's huge" she comments.

I give her a wicked grin "wait until you see the inside then" I point out "it's just as gorgeous as the outside, maybe more so."

We wander through the entrance, past the guards who wave us through, clearly expecting us. Communication is awesome between these guards. Winter's mouth falls open as we walk past artwork, intricate furniture and royal looking curtains.

"Wow" she utters.

I laugh. We walk towards the throne room and stop at the doors, two guards standing at attention. "I'm Alpha Kai and this is Winter" I say introducing her "I believe King Axel is expecting us."

Their eyes cloud over and then they nod, opening the doors and ushering us through. Winter thanks them quietly.

The throne room is large and elegant, a red rug running all the way to the throne chairs. We walk down, King Axel on his chair, smiling widely at the both of us. I frown. He seems to have aged somewhat since I last saw him. His black hair now contained silver tips and his eyes had wide dark circles beneath them. His green eyes were dull rather than sparkling and his short beard was thick and rather messy instead of well groomed like it normally was. He was dressed in black pants and white shirt, his normal uniform and he waved with slightly trembling hands. It was like he'd aged ten years or more since I'd last seen him less than two years ago.

"Welcome" King Axel declared jovially, standing up and rushing forward to shake my hand, his eyes lighting up. "It's been a very long time, hasn't it Alpha Kai? I can't remember the last time you came for a visit" he admonished.

"It's been too long" I agree before turning to Winter who is uncomfortably shifting her weight from one foot to another "this is my mate Winter" I said and he gave her a kindly smile.

"Winter, what a beautiful name, for a beautiful woman" he complimented her.

He keeps this shit up, I'm gonna knock him down to the ground. He's hitting on our woman.

No he's not Storm, he's being polite

If we're not careful, she'll prefer him to us. We need to make a grand statement. Propose damnit.

No she won't, you are being paranoid.

Throw a ring at her.

No. Stop being an idiot!

King Axel politely shook Winter's hand as she beamed up at him, completely charmed. I frown. Maybe Storm had a point.

"It's a pleasure to meet you" Winter says shyly.

"You must meet my wife" King Axel says with a chuckle "she's out for the moment but will be back for supper. She loves to meet my old friends. You haven't met her yet, have you?" he says frowning, as though trying to remember.

I shake my head. "Actually your wife is the reason that we are both here" I say politely "I have heard that she is a strong witch? One of the strongest in the country?"

"Well yes, she is" King Axel tells me proudly "no other witch can compare to her. But, tell me, why is it that you require a witch?"

I look over at Winter. "My mate was turned into a hybrid against her will. Now she's half vampire, half shifter. We were hoping that your wife, would be able to take the vampire part out of her."

King Axel looks at Winter Sadly. "You poor thing" he exclaims "to have that done to you. Is the person responsible dead? For I can send my men out right now to look for them."

"They are dead" Winter assures him "but thank you for the offer."

"hmmm, taking part of you out like that" King Axel murmurs thoughtfully "I'm not sure if it can be done. But if anyone can do it, my wife would be the one to come to. We must ask her at dinner."

"What is your wife's name?" I ask out of curiosity.

"Her name is Vanessa. I met her. . ." he trails off looking puzzled "well I'm not quite sure where I met her. I assume it must have been on one of my travels though" he said decidedly "and we decided to get married straight away. We both knew we wanted to be with each other forever, so it made sense and we've been happy since. It's been just over a year, if I remember correctly."

I'm a little puzzled. How do you not remember how you met someone? Especially when it was just over a year ago? I peer closer at my old friend. Is it possible that he's struggling with dementia? Can werewolves even get dementia? I've not heard of it happening to a shifter before.

"Congratulations on your marriage" Winter tells him sincerely "I'm sure it was beautiful."

He frowns. "Well yes, it was. But it was a small one. We felt it better to elope rather than have the large traditional wedding. So much more intimate" he mutters "but I do wish my parents could have been there. I've not seen them since I met Vanessa. They refuse to have anything to do with me."

He shakes his head and then sighs. "Well let's organise your accommodation and set up a time for supper. I can't wait for my wife to meet you. She'll be overjoyed" he babbled, leading them out of the throne room with large strides "she's always happy to meet my friends. So few visit me these days" he added with a frown "I suppose they are all busy with their own mates and wives. I must travel again one day, when Vanessa is up to coming with me. See how everyone is getting along."

I stare at him. He sounds so strange. Not like himself at all. I knew he'd be changed slightly once he had a wife, but this was a significant change.

He thrusts open the doors to a bedroom and motions us inside. "This will be your room for the night. Let's do supper at 7pm tonight" he says hurriedly, running a hand through his hair "I must go and do something."

He tears out the door before I can say anything.

"Well that was weird" comments Winter, frowning and looking out the door.

"You don't know the half of it" I mutter. I was curious to see this Vanessa at suppertime and how she acted towards her husband. Something was off. I could sense it.

Chapter 120 - The Alpha's Rejected Silent Mate

Winter POV

King Axel seems to be a lovely man, albeit a bit strange. Almost like he struggles with his memory somewhat and he appears to be far older than I had imagined a friend of Kai's being. It made me more than a little intrigued about this Queen Vanessa of his and what she was like. Would she be like King Axel or be the complete opposite?

Kai waited patiently for me to finish getting dressed. I had taken care and dressed up more than I usually did, but still refused to wear a dress. Instead I'd opted for a dressy blouse and skirt, topped with my favourite leather jacket. My hair shone from the amount of brushing I'd given it and I'd lightly applied some makeup. I looked beautiful, I saw with satisfaction as I gazed in the mirror looking at my reflection.

We look good girl. Ready for a night on the town.

Or a dinner date with the King of Werewolves? What do you think Sabriel?

I think our mate looks like he wants to take us to bed and I'm tempted to let him. Dang our man looks good.

He does doesn't he. Sigh. Not enough time for bedroom activities though.

Winter, when will you learn. There is always enough time for bedroom activities, it just depends how much you're willing to make the other people wait for dinner.

I'm not making a king wait for me Sabriel.

Figured. Shame. I'm feeling a tad neglected on the sex front lately.

Sabriel! Shush.

"You look beautiful" Kai murmurs in my ear, making me shiver with anticipation, as I turn and wind my arms around his neck.

"You don't look so bad yourself" I breathe, eyeing him suggestively. Damn Sabriel, she'd made me horny! But I couldn't help it. His pants clung tightly to his legs and buttocks and the white shirt he wore, slightly open just made my mouth water as I spotted part of his naked chest. His scent tantalised my nostrils and I breathed it in, feeling dizzy myself. He had no clue what he was doing to me.

Kai's eyes darted towards the bed "maybe we can put that to good use later" he whispers, with a smirk on his handsome face.

Maybe he does know how he's affecting me now. I stand up on wobbly legs and offer my arm to him with a smile.

"Shall we" I ask and he grins, taking hold of me and clutching me tightly.

He leads the way to King Axel's private dining room and as we walk, I look around at the various paintings on the walls and the odd ornament here or there. A lot of it pertains to greek mythology, a painting of poseidon laying proudly in the centre of one of the walls. "He likes his art" I comment to Kai who gives a nod.

"He's always loved art and he also has a keen interest in greek mythology" he answers. "So he combined the two when it came to decorating the castle. You have to see that he has a really good eye for paintings" he answers "whereas I have no clue when it comes to art. I just choose what I like, whether it actually goes with the decor of the pack house or not."

We reach the dining room and walk in slowly. King Axel looks up from his seat and smiles. "Welcome, welcome" he cries, gesturing at us both "take a seat. Vanessa is just running a bit late" he laughs. Kai pulls a chair out from me and I sit across from King Axel with a wide smile on my face. I feel nervous as hell. What on earth am I going to talk about? Kai slides in beside me.

"You look lovely" King Axel tells me with a raised eyebrow.

"Thankyou your highness" I say politely.

"Oh no it's just Axel dear" he says scandalised "I don't like being called King all the time. It gets rather annoying" he says in a whisper.

I giggle. Kai chuckles and shakes his head, reaching for a glass of water and taking a sip. "If it was me, I would insist on being called King all the time" he joked.

"That's because you have a big head Kai" Axel teases back.

I hear the sound of loud footsteps coming and turn in my seat to find a woman approaching. She's beautiful. ethereal looking. Her smooth, creamy porcelain skin was further enhanced by her bright red dress that clung tightly to her bodice and across her hips and bum. She had pale shimmery silver hair that cascaded over her shoulders and down to her buttocks in waves. She wore bright red heels. Her red lips curve into a smile as she greets her husband, who stands to attention.

I frown and rub my eyes complexed. Something is wrong with my eyesight. I can't seem to bring Vanessa's face fully into focus, the outside edges seem to be blurry as though it's moving. I shake my head slightly.

"Sorry for being so late" Queen Vanessa apologises as she kisses her husband on the cheek.

I blink. For a second there, it looked like there was some pale green light where she'd kissed him, but just as quickly it was gone.

"There's no need to apologise" Kai tells her.

His voice is husky. His eyes are staring at her intently, as though she's the only woman in the room. His mouth is slightly open in awe, and he's reaching his hand over to shake hers. I feel a flare of jealousy as she shakes Kai's hand, deliberately holding onto his hand for several long moments afterwards. I notice to my anger, that Kai doesn't yank his hand back and rather seems pleased by the attention.

Sabriel what's going on?

I don't know. Did you and Kai have a fight or something?

No, but at this rate we're going to be. It's like he doesn't even remember I'm sitting here!

Slap him on the head.

Tempting, but I can't do that in front of a royal couple.

Kick his leg? Stomp on his foot? Kick him between the legs and force him to sit down?

It's fine. It's just my imagination.

If that's what you want to think. But I think there's something fishy going on. I can feel it in my bones.

Then her eyes shift to me and her lips curl back. "You must be Alpha Kai's mate, Winter" she says slowly "what a unique" she coughs lightly "name to have."

It feels like a dig. "Please sit down" Queen Vanessa orders, but we all stand until she's taken her seat. Then we sit down, Kai barely even glancing my way. Ouch, that stings. I resist the urge to stomp on the bastard's foot and instead take a sip of water myself.

"It's so nice to have old friends of Axel's come out and visit" she says sweetly as her husband smiles and leans back in his chair, servers coming out and placing food on our plates. "Most just make a phone call" she says blithely "instead of making the trip."

She lifts her hand and drinks from her wine glass, a bead of sweat trickling down her breasts, Kai's eyes darting to it. I roll my eyes. Men, they were all the damn same. It's painful to acknowledge that Kai is like that, but the proof is right in front of my eyes.

"But isn't it lovely that Alpha Kai and his beautiful mate have come" King Axel says excitedly.

His wife gives a smile and kisses him on the lips, Kai looking sulky in his chair. I blink. There. This time, I'm positive that I'm not imagining it. I saw a green light flare where their lips touched. But what does it mean? Why the hell does Kai look like he's about to cry seeing it? King Axel is his friend for heaven's sake. Plus, doesn't he care how he's making me feel?

I grab a lettuce leaf and bite into it roughly. Queen Vanessa raises an eyebrow at me and delicately picks up her cutlery, smoothly cutting into her salad as I watched, placing it daintily into her mouth.

"You must be hungry" she trills and I shrug.

Kai reaches out and swipes some sauce away from the corner of her mouth. "Thankyou" she breathes and my heart gives a painful leap. What is he playing at?

"So helpful" Vanessa continues and Kai flushes, smiling wildly like a schoolboy. I glare at him and crunch loudly on my salad.

"Winter" King Axel says and I turn my head to look at the man, smiling despite myself. He's such a nice mannered man, it's impossible to be angry at him, even if his wife is pissing me right off.

"Yes King Axel" I answer.

"How long have you and Alpha Kai been together for now" he asks.

I stop. It takes me a while to think. After all I wasn't going to include being incarcerated in the dungeon by him or the times he pushed me away. "A couple of months" I say finally, looking at Kai who's still smiling like a loony at the queen "isn't that right Kai" I say raising my voice.

Kai looks confused. "Yeah, yeah, what you said" he finally mumbles, turning back to Queen Vanessa who's preening at all the attention he's giving to her.

"How did you two meet" I finally snap, looking directly at her. She blinks her eyes, bewildered, King Axel looking bemused in his own chair.

"Well it was on one of his trips to my pack" Queen Vanessa said, looking slightly worried. King Axel looked confused, biting his lip and looking away. She leant over and kissed her husband again, and the frown lines disappeared from his face and once again he looked calm and relaxed in his seat.

"Well anyway dear, these lovely people had a very good reason for coming to see us" King Axel said turning to her. Her eyes lit up with interest.

"Oh really" she said coyly "what would that reason be?"

Kai leans forward and grasps her hand "beautiful lady" he breathes "my mate Winter was made into a hybrid against her will. We've heard that you are a powerful witch and were hoping that you might be able to help us? To take away the vampire side of her so that she can be just a shifter again."

Vanessa's eyes glinted. Her lips curled back as she looked at me, her eyes sweeping me over. "A hybrid" she commented "that accounts for the nasty smell in the room" she hisses. Her face softens as she looks back over at Kai who's eyes are pleading with her. "I can help you, but it will need to be done under the light of the full moon" she says casually, "which is in three days time. It's when my powers are strongest and when your shifter side will be at it's strongest as well" she says, barely glancing at me, Kai listening to her every word.

"You would do that for us?" Kai says happily and she reaches over and grips his chin, smiling at him.

"Of course I will do that for you honey" she chirps "after all I wouldn't want you to be unhappy if I can fix it" she whispers. I scowl at her, Kai beams and her husband looks aloof, as though he's not registering a single thing she's doing. How are these two mates, if she acts this way towards other men? I look at their necks and they are both marked. It's the oddest thing. I've never seen mated and marked mates act this way towards others ever, especially not towards another marked mate. Kai is completely and utterly transfixed by her. My anger rises and eventually I can't take it any more. I stand up, pushing my chair back loudly.

"Please excuse me" I say quietly "it appears I've lost my appetite."

No one says a word as I leave and as I glance back over my shoulder, I see with sadness, that Kai's not watching me walk away at all.