

Chapter 26

Casen

I take a deep breath, trying to steady my heartbeat before I lose control. The moment I've been waiting for — this opportunity to dig deep and find out the truth has finally come. But I need to hold onto my patience, keep my emotions from getting the better of me.

Andrei is no longer my Alpha, yet I've always respected him. Tonight, though, I can't ignore the strain in our relationship, which is only amplified by the tension between the pack and me. I am no longer one of them, that is obvious with the way they turned on me, then welcomed me back. Honestly, their reactions are giving me whiplash. It's like they are torn between what Rose and Andrei want.

A welcoming aroma of roast meat and simmering spices envelops me as I step into Andrei's pack house. Closing the door, I move toward the kitchen, where Andrei disappeared into.

Andrei stands against the kitchen counter, towering over Sage as she speaks in a hushed tone, her golden curls tumbling down her shoulders.

"You're going to cause more drama," Sage whispers.

"He's her mate, he has a right to know," Andrei replies firmly when I clear my throat. Sage turns, clearly not impressed with Andrei's decision to tell me whatever it is. However, I have a feeling I won't like what is going on.

"Casen," she nods, her lips pressing together as she gives me an awkward hug.

“I'm glad you are home, but—” her words trail off as she glances at her mate, my old Alpha. Andrei shakes his head and takes a seat at the table, and she sighs heavily. She nods toward the table, where Andrei pushes the chair out across from him with his foot.

“I don't like this,” Zyan tells me, My stomach drops, and my mind goes back to Casey on the swings, the sad look on her face that turned to fear the moment my brother called out for her to come home.

We eat in awkward silence, Sage casting nervous glances at Andrei, while I push my food around on the plate.

Halfway through the meal, the bomb drops, the words seeping like venom from Andrei's mouth, “Vince has been hurting Rose.” My fork stills, scraping the plate as I look up at him.

The room spins, tilting on its axis as his words replay in my head like a broken record. Vince, my own flesh and blood, abusing Rose. Our mate? I feel my wolf snarling inside me demanding to come forward, yet with minimal detail we can't be irrational, not that I need much after those words. My blood is boiling in my veins, simmering beneath my skin as I fight the urge to let Zyan have the control he craves.

“Dammit, Andrei!” I slam my fists on the table, splintering the wood. Sage whimpers, and Andrei glares at me.

Andrei sighs, a look of frustration crossing his face. “It's not as simple as that, Casen. If I kick Vince out of the pack, Rose might leave too. I can't risk losing her.”

Sage intervenes, her voice soft but steady. “Vince still holds some power within the pack, expelling him could lead to a power struggle.”

“As her mate he has influence, they know if Rose challenges me, they'll have to answer to him.”

Sage's voice is soft, a soothing counterpoint to my growl. “Andrei is right, Casen, it's not that simple...”

“Not that simple?” I scoff, rising from my chair, knocking it over in my rage.

“You're the Alpha, Andrei. You can exile him.”

He looks down, guilt shadowing his rugged features. “If I do, I risk losing Rose.”

“You're Alpha, are you not?” I demand. Andrei's growl is threatening as it slips from him, his wolf, Donnie, lurking beneath the surface, making his eyes flicker.

“So you've done nothing?” I ask.

I feel my blood boiling. “So you'll just let him continue to abuse her?”

Andrei's voice is tight with anger. “We're trying to stop it, Casen. We've spoken to him multiple times, but he denies everything. We can't just rip him out of Rose's life.”

“You've spoken to him? What about Rose?” I ask, only this time it's Sage that speaks up.

“We've tried, yet....” Sage's words cut off.

“Yet what?” Sage runs her fingers through her hair, looking exhausted; I can tell this is something they've both spent sleepless nights over.

“She denies it, and we have no proof. Casey refuses to tell us anything that happens in that house,” Sage finally answers.

“No proof? How can you know and not have proof?”

“Because she is of Alpha blood, she heals long before I ever get there. Each time I've intervened, Rose has threatened to leave the pack, Vince obviously denies what's going on,” Andrei adds.

“Of course he does, he's always been a fucking coward!” I snarl. “So what, you're going to let it continue?”

“No! I can't intervene since she is my daughter. I am not willing to risk losing her, have her leave and be returned to me in a fucking body bag. She is safer here, where we can at least get to her.”

“So, in other words, you're doing nothing?” I shake my head. I don't wait for more explanations. I storm out of the pack house, fury simmering in my veins. Sage darts after me, trying to stop me.

“Sage, stand down!” Andrei speaks, his aura casting out, but it doesn't touch me, it is directly aimed at his mate; a command I've never heard him use with her before.

Sage freezes in place, and I stop looking at her briefly, she is fuming and no doubt Andrei will have hell to pay for commanding her. She'll punish him for it, yet by the look on his face, his mate's wrath is something he is willing to take. Opening the door, Andrei speaks again.

“Do what you have to.” I peer back at him to find him standing in front of Sage, his hand cupping her cheek while she glares daggers at him.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Whatever you want it to mean. You've already been punished for killing him, so I can't really punish you again for something you've already done.”

Chapter 27

“What of Rose?”

“She has you, you can mark her.” I scoff, the man is delusional.

“It's not that simple.”

“Now you know my predicament,” Andrei answers.

“Go, you don't need to see the ass whooping I am about to be handed when I release her,” he tells me, yet his eyes remain on Sage. Her face twisted in rage, yet her eyes glassy at the betrayal of being commanded. He doesn't have to tell me twice, Zyan shoves forward, and I only just manage to stop him taking control.

My stride is long and fast, the forest a blur as I race towards Vince and Rose's house. Yet as I do, I notice something strange, Malik leans against the railing on the porch, a cigarette between his lips, a few others also stand out the front watching to see what I'll do. It only fuels my anger, they all just kept tight-lipped and allowed my exile yet have done nothing to help Rose and my daughter, but expect me to?

I'm ready for a fight, my every muscle tenses as I climb the steps. The sound of the TV reaches my ears and so does Vince's voice a second later.

“Get me another beer.” Rage bubbles inside me at his tone, a command, and what pisses me off more is the fact Rose allows it.

Knocking doesn't even occur to me in my blind rage. No, instead, I kick the door off its hinges. Rose shrieks and jumps, and Vince looks over the back of the couch startled. The moment his eyes land on me, his face twists in anger, a growl tearing out of him. Vince, in a haze of alcohol, lunges at me. He throws a drunken punch but I sidestep, grabbing his wrist and shoving him toward the busted door. He snarls, barely catching himself in time as I try to force him to leave the house, not wanting to

destroy the place completely. Yet he shifts, leaving me no choice as his wolf comes forward.

In an instant, the room turns to chaos, Vince lunges for me again and again. Rose screams in terror, watching as I dodge his claws, his teeth latching onto one of my arms. Blood soaks through my shirt from several deep wounds, but the pain is far away, rage taking its place as Vince refuses to admit defeat, despite being completely outmatched by my rage induced strength.

With a roar, he jumps at me, and I'm forced to defend myself again. Vince's wolf bites at my face, seeking out any vulnerable skin as we fight. We grapple one another in the center of the living room. Me in my human form and him in the suit of his beast. Rose screams for us to stop; it is utter chaos as furniture is thrown across the floor amidst our struggle. Our fight rages on with neither of us giving an inch, until finally Vince manages to get hold of me from behind, sinking his teeth into my shoulder, painfully.

Reaching back and gripping the back of his wolf's neck, my claws sink into his bloodied fur as I drop my weight forward hauling him over my shoulder. I slam his wolf down on the low coffee table; the glass top shatters with the impact, and the wooden base splinters. Vince groans before my fist connects with his face multiple times, leaving his drunk ass scrambling to get back up off the ground where he is lying amongst the glass and busted furniture. Peering around, the living room is in chaos, there is an imprint of his body on the wall, the furniture is upturned, bloody claw marks litter the leather of the couch, and the TV is smashed to pieces from when his wolf tackled me.

With a whimper, Vince shifts back and tries to stand. As he does, Rose slams into me, her fists hitting me wherever she can, when Vince falls on his knees. I haul him up, landing punch after punch, until he crumples, unconscious.

Turning to face Rose, a slap rings through the room, sharp and unexpected. Rose, her beautiful face marred by rage and betrayal. “Casen!” she screams, her handprint burns on my face.

I grip her face, her eyes burning with hatred. “Enough!” Zyan warns her when her hands slam into my chest, shoving me back.

“You have no right, why are you even here!” she screeches at me, her face turning red as yells at the top of her lungs.

“Why was my daughter at the park alone looking too terrified to go home?” I snarl, grabbing her shoulders. “How could you let Vince do this to you?” She recoils, but remains silent.

“He did nothing, you have no idea what you're talking about. Casey always runs to the park to play,” Rose says, but I can tell she is lying. I know this woman like the back of my fucking hand. I have seen her in every awkward phase of life, and yet she still tries to lie to me.

“I just had dinner with your parents, want to try again?” I growl.

“He’s drunk, Casen. You didn't need to destroy my house,” she mumbles, but I scoff, shaking her slightly.

“Drunk or not, you’re an Alpha, Rose!” My voice echoes through the room. “You're not meant to be beaten, not by anyone, least of all by my cowardly brother!”

“He doesn't...” I grip her shirt, the collar having the slightest tinge, but I can smell it is her blood staining it, not mine or Vince's.

“Try again!” I snarl, before letting her go. Her eyes turn glassy, and we stand there staring at each other, neither of us willing to budge.

Rose moves to check Vince, and I grip her wrist. “Leave him.”

“You didn't need to hurt him.”

“I did what had to be done,” I answer grimly. “I won't let Vince hurt you anymore.”

A strange mix of emotions crosses her face — anger, confusion, and something I can't quite decipher.

“You had no right, Casen!” she cries out. “He's my mate!”

“I am your mate!” I retort, anger flaring again.

“You *were* my mate.”

I grit my teeth at her words.

Chapter 28

Casen

“And that asshole being your mate doesn't give him the right to abuse you, Rose! You can't let him continue doing this.” She goes to argue back, but I see what Andrei and Sage mean. There is some serious fucked up Stockholm Syndrome crap going on here; she can't see reason.

“He's not abusing me!” she yells, then laughs nervously. Who is she trying to fool? Me or herself?

“You don't want my help. Fine, but I am not leaving Casey here,” I tell her, moving towards the hall when she speaks.

“You left me, Casen!” Her words cut through my rage, and my entire body tenses.

“You abandoned me, you banished me!” I yell at her, turning to face her. Tears well up in her eyes as she shakes her head.

“But I didn't think you would leave! I was angry! I would have forgiven you...”

“You banished me!” What part of that is she not understanding? “You had me escorted off pack lands! What did you expect!”

“To come back! I was 18, Casen, naive, and fucking 18!... but you didn't.... he did,” she whispers the last part.

In the tense silence that follows, Vince stirs. My wolf howls within me, ready to attack, but Rose steps between us.

My gaze goes back to Rose. “If you wanted me back, you should have answered the damn phone... Years, Rose, you had years to tell me about Casey! Did you not think I would come back for her?” Her lips quiver,

and she glances down at Vince when he groans. Shaking my head, I turn for the hall again.

“But would you have come back for me?” she whispers, and I stop. Why would she ever doubt that!

“Eighteen years I followed you around, kept you safe, 18 years, Rose. I'd follow you to the end of the fucking earth if I needed to, but you banished me. Said you hated me and wished it was me who was dead. What did you expect? For me to love you from a fucking distance, but never have you?” Her lips part, she is clearly hurting, but so am I.

“I... I...” she stutters terribly.

“You have to choose, Rose,” I growl, my heart pounding. “Him or me. Let me kill him, and everything goes back to how it should have been.” She takes a step back.

“You would really kill him again?”

“With no regret after what he's done. You think I betrayed you by taking him from you, but I wasn't going to let him take you from me.... I was the one there. I was the one who kept you safe, I wasn't going to let him steal you away from me.”

“But he was also my mate! You could have shared!”

“I was done sharing with him! He doesn't deserve you.”

“And what, you did?”

“I've fucking killed for you.”

“Oh, don't I know that? Any boyfriend I had mysteriously wound up dead. Anyone who looked in my direction wound up dead, Casen!”

“To keep you safe!” I snarl.

“No, you just wanted to make sure no one else could take what was yours! You were just as bad as her! Always smothering me! I was a kid. A fucking

kid, I was your prisoner,” she screams at me. Her words sting, and I swallow guiltily, Rose had a very sheltered childhood, but had I smothered her the way her mother did? Was I really that overbearing that I ruined her childhood, her teenage years?

She says nothing else, her silence speaks louder than any words. Then, we hear the patter of tiny feet. Casey, our daughter, enters the room in her pajamas, her eyes wide.

“Mommy?” she murmurs, her eyes wide as they go from Vince, to me, then her mother. “It's okay, sweetie. Go...”

Without a word, I scoop Casey into my arms. She clings to me, her tiny fingers curling into my shirt. Rose's protests fill the room, her voice desperate as she tries to reach for her daughter.

“Give her to me, Casen,” Rose cries out, lunging at me, but I step back, my gaze hard on hers.

“No, Rose,” I say, holding Casey tighter.

“This ends now, Rose,” I say, my voice low and determined. “I won't let my daughter stay in this toxic place. If you want her back, get your father to banish Vince. Or let me handle him.”

Silence blankets the room, punctuated only by the quiet sobbing of the little girl in my arms. Rose stands still, her expression pained and her eyes teary. She doesn't say a word, but her silence speaks volumes. Turning away, I stride out of the house, Rose's cries of protest dying away behind me while Casey thrashes in my arms, wailing for her mother.

I don't know what will happen next, but I'm determined to do whatever it takes to keep my daughter safe.

“Shh, Casey.” I try to calm her down. But she is inconsolable, her cries echoing through the night.

“No. I want my mommy.” She thrashes harder, kicking her little legs; when I see Andrei standing at the entrance to the pack house, he nods once as I kidnap my wailing daughter. When I hear Rose yelling for me to give our daughter back, I move faster toward Malik's place, not wanting to draw any more attention to us than necessary.

The lights are still on inside, and I can make out his distinct silhouette leaning against the railing. He opens the door, and his face falls when he sees me carrying a sobbing Casey in my arms. I don't need to offer any explanation, however, his eyes move to behind me. Casey's arms reach out for her mother as her wails fill the room.

He stands straighter, his hands reaching for Casey the moment I climb the steps; I let him take her just as I feel Rose grip the back of my shirt. Spinning on my heel, I walk back down the steps toward her, and she backs up.

Rose and I stand in the middle of the lawn, neither of us speaking, as she looks up at me with fear and confusion in her eyes. The only sound is Casey's muffled cry as she sobs in Malik's arms.

Finally, I break the silence. “You choose whose side you're taking, and until you choose the right one, you don't get her back! You know where I am when you want me to handle him for you.” With that, I walk inside, leaving Rose to make up her mind. I am not going to fight for her if she doesn't fight for herself.

Chapter 29

Eziah

As everyone parts ways, I lead Temperance down the halls, navigating our way back to the guest bedroom. The manor falls quiet, like the house is absorbing all sound. The manor's ancient walls seem to close in as I lead Temperance back to the room. When I woke up, for a few moments, I thought she had taken off, and I was back to having to look for her all over again. Shutting the door, she stands awkwardly, rubbing her arms against the coldness of the room.

“I don't like it here,” Temperance tells me. Her fear emanates through the bond and I nudge her toward the bed. She refuses, eyes stuck on the door.

“Have I hurt you?” I ask her and she shakes her head. “Have I let anyone hurt you?” I ask her and she shakes her head again. “And that won't change, so hop in bed,” I tell her, nudging her again. She chews her lip and my eyes immediately dart to the action. It takes me forever to convince her to climb into bed. Reluctantly she climbs in and I sit beside her.

“What's a Gemini twin?” she whispers as I lay down facing her. I sweep her hair back behind her ear.

“I'm a Gemini twin, same as Marabella, just like Dominic believes you are,” I tell her.

“You're not like your sister,” she tells me and I nod slowly, trying to find the best way to explain it.

“My mother is a Gemini Goddess....”

“So, the same as you and Marabella?” she asks, and I shake my head. “Yes and no, my sister and I were supposed to be Geminis but my mother died

when she was pregnant with us, her heart stopped and instead of our power remaining it split down the middle. My mother believes the shadows brought Marabella back, and attached to her, while light brought me back attaching to me. For the Moon Goddess to bring my mother back, a sacrifice had to be made, and the same with us. We sacrificed a piece of our magic while Selene, she sacrificed her life for my mother's," I explain.

"I thought you said your mother was the Moon Goddess?"

I sigh heavily, my family history and the curses that plague us are more confusing now that I am older than when I first learned of them. I have so many more questions now.

"She is but before her, Selena was, and before Selene, it was a Demi Goddess named Celeste. She created Lycans, and in turn, was cursed to the Moon Goddess realm until she could restore balance. The only way for her to leave was to find her replacement, that replacement was Selene, who in turn sacrificed her life for my mothers who replaced Selene," I try my best explain.

"But why would she sacrifice her life for your mother's?"

"Because she felt guilty for cursing her and her bloodline," I say and shrug. Temperance seems to think for a second, her brow furrowing, causing a deep crease above her nose.

"So does that mean I am cursed?" Temperance asks.

"That is what we're trying to figure out, but the fact you can enter the shadow realm, and also see the souls trapped here, I'm more leaning toward you being cursed by the Octavian bloodline, somehow." It's the only thing that could make sense, her bloodline has to stem from the Octavians in some way, how else could she enter a purgatory created to trap them?

"This place is the shadow realm," Temperance whispers, her eyes gazing around the room.

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“Shadow could feel it when we got here, it's the same feeling, but not, it's warmer here than it is there, but the sickly dead feeling is the same. The power that emanates from it.”

I think her words over, I will have to ask Dominic tomorrow, but it would make sense, a place like that needs power and this place is a never-ending battery source. This land is sacred to the Octavian coven, so maybe it's also their prison, forever trapped in different planes, but always home where it started and ended.

“Try to get some sleep,” I whisper to her, tucking the blanket higher, she closes her eyes and I watch her, my mind trying to make sense of the puzzle pieces I've been given. No doubt my mother could shed some light on this, but I don't feel up to asking her, not yet.

Temperance lies quietly next to me, her face pale, but for the most part, she is calm. Her eyes are closed, her breathing is steady. The night's chill seeps through the old stone walls, making the atmosphere heavy with an eerie thickness, like breathing in heavy fog. I resist the urge to reach out, to touch her, to reassure myself that she's real.

Instead, I give her space, knowing human touch, especially a man's touch, is not something she is overly comfortable with. Yet, she doesn't seem to mind mine, but after how freaked out she was, I don't want to push boundaries.

Just as I am finally closing my eyes, the silence is shattered when my phone rings, its shrill tone cutting through the quiet room. I glance at the screen, my brows furrow when I see Casen's name. Why would he call at this hour? I quickly answer, keeping my voice low, hoping my ringtone didn't wake her.

“Did you know?” Casen's voice erupts through the speaker. His words are jarring and abrupt, making me wonder if I misheard it being his voice.

“Excuse me?” I respond, thrown off balance by his sudden demand.

“About Casey?” The name is foreign and meaningless to me at this moment.

“Who's Casey?” I ask, now even more confused than before.

“My daughter!”

His revelation stuns me. The words sink in slowly, like stones tossed in a lake.

“You have a daughter?” I ask, stunned. My voice is barely more than a whisper as my mind tries to conjure up when he has a chance to knock someone up.

“At least someone wasn't lying to me. And yes, she is four,” Casen answers, exhaling loudly, the sound like a gust of wind in the room's silence.

“I'm going to assume this child that sprouted from your loins belongs to Rose?” I ask, trying to wrap my head around what he is telling me.

“Of course it's Rose,” Casen answers. “She had a baby, and no one told me!”

“So, how did things go with Rose?” I ask, struggling to regain my composure.

“Terrible! I kidnapped our daughter, fought with my brother, and half the damn pack when I got here!” His words tumble out in a heated rush, his anger palpable even over the phone. I fall quiet, trying to process what he's telling me. Casen's life, like Temperance's, has turned into a storm of chaos and surprise.

“Did you hear what I said?” he asks, his voice strained against my silence.

“I'm still trying to wrap my head around the fact that you have a daughter... and did you say, brother? As in, your dead brother Vince, he is alive?” My mind spins, attempting to keep up.

Chapter 30

Eziah

“Yes, damn it, listen! Now, I know this has something to do with your mother! I want answers, Eziah!” His demand sharpens into a growl, and instinctively, I snarl in response.

“Ask your mother!” He snaps. I pause, my heart suddenly feeling heavy in my chest. I haven't seen my mother yet. She's just another person to add to my list of people to see. Now I need to add Casen's questions to this already awkward meeting.

“I can't... I haven't seen her yet. I'm still at Marabella's,” I answer quietly, seeing Temperance stir. She rolls into me and I absentmindedly run my fingers through her hair.

“This is all a mess. I don't know what to do with a child, especially one I didn't know existed until...” He trails off, his anger giving way to uncertainty and confusion.

“Maybe you shouldn't have kidnapped her from her mother!” I retort, my patience wearing thin. Why am I the one that cops his anger any time it has something to do with Rose?

“Whose side are you on? I couldn't leave her there, not with Vince abusing Rose.” His words send a jolt through me.

“Pardon?” I ask, my voice barely audible.

“Yeah, some real Stockholm syndrome shit it is. I went away for four years and come back to this mess,” he rambles on, his words tumbling out faster than I can absorb them. I find that difficult to believe. Rose is an alpha? And Jonah would kill anyone that dares touch his sister.... unless he doesn't know?

“Casen, calm down. What do you need exactly? It's almost 3 am.” I attempt to bring the conversation back under control.

He falls silent for a moment, and I turn my gaze to Temperance. Her wide-eyed stare is fixed on the corner of the room. The chill in the air intensifies, making my skin tingle. I turn to see what she's looking at, but find nothing but shadows, a play of moonlight seeping in through the parted curtains.

“Where are you?” I ask Casen, my fingers instinctively reaching out to touch Temperance’s knee, watching her carefully. But the only response I receive is silence, punctuated by the chilling feeling of being watched.

“I don't know, I guess I wanted to yell at someone? I’m staying with Malik for now,” he offers.

“Well, in that case, can you call me back during daylight hours? I have a haunted manor to deal with, a spooked mate, and now I have your situation added to the mix, which I know will keep me up all night.”

Casen sighs heavily when Temperance suddenly sits up, eyes open wide as she brings her knees to her chest. What the heck is she looking at? “I don't know, but the way she is staring at thin air is going to make me crap my fur,” Malachi tells me, also pressing forward. “I just don't understand. I watched him fall off that cliff. I was so sure I killed him,” Casen whispers. His confusion is clear in his voice. “I need to speak with your mother.” I prop the phone on my shoulder, holding it to my ear before feeling for my magic.

It warms my hands, making them glow. I feel the power of it humming through my body. Using my light magic, I direct a beam of energy and light toward the shadowy corner of the room where she stares. The beam warms the room instantly, and the heavy foggy feeling dissipates instantly, forcing away whatever darkness is present. As I focus my magic, the room is illuminated with a bright light. Once I feel the coldness leave the room and can only feel the warmth of my power, I touch the iron bed head, infusing light into it. The metal glows red and then gold, creating a shield.

“Just give me a few days here. I need to look at a few things here. I'll pick you up on the way to my mother's, but if I see her before, then I will ask.”

“What have you got to look at in the city?” Casen asks curiously. “Nothing, it's more what I want to figure out. Dominic recognized Temperance, but it's more than that. She can see them,” I tell him.

“See what?”

“The Octavian ghosts.”

“I thought only family could see them, and how would Dominic know her? She spent her entire life in a cage.” Casen asks. “Exactly. Dominic knows her from the shadow realm...”

“The shadow realm? As in his family's purgatory?” Casen asks.

“Yes, and that is what I want to figure out. Only Octavian's can enter that realm and their mates.”

“Well, looks like you have your own shit storm to contend with. I will let you sleep. But contact me when you know more or hear from your mother. For now, I am going to figure out this father stuff, and what to do about Vince.”

“Take care of yourself, okay? I'm here if you need to talk.” I hang up and sigh. Now to figure out what to do next. Laying down, Temperance crawls on top of me; I tug the blanket up over her and press my lips to her forehead, shocked she wants my touch. “It's the bond. She knows she is safe with us,” Malachi answers my racing thoughts. That offers me some comfort, at least she knows she is safe with me. And she always will be.

“Are you okay?” I whisper to Temperance, and she nods against my chest. I pull back slightly to look down at her. “I don't like it here. And I don't like that old woman.”

“What old woman?” I ask her.

“Dominic's mother,” she answers, and I feel the hairs on my arms raise. I have heard of the wicked woman from Marabella. But knowing Temperance can see her kinda freaks me out. I can see shadows, but not enough to determine who they are.

“Tomorrow we'll go stay at the hotel, I promise,” I tell her, and she nods. I stare at the ceiling trying to sift through my thoughts, yet my mind wanders back to that time I was in the moon goddess realm trying to figure out who Temperance was, trying to figure out how to make the nightmares stop. It wasn't long before Rose ran away, and I peered into the fountain of life.

I thought it was a trick of my imagination that I saw Casen's vessel tethered to another. Now I wonder if he was tethered to his brother. At first, I thought it was a second chance mate, but now thinking back to how my mother freaked out, it makes sense why she wouldn't want me to see. But what I want to know is how she did it.

How she masked their daughter and hid Vince so well, with everyone thinking he was dead. There is something hidden about this entire mess of a situation. Why would she allow her niece to be abused? What is it that is so important, that she allowed any of this to unfold between Rose and even Temperance? What has my mother seen where this outcome is better than any alterations she tried to make?