

Chapter 56

Casen

My mind goes back to that day when I heard that name, Thana. I become trapped in it, reliving it.

"Then I guess you're not leaving at all," I tell him, letting my claws slip out. The boy's smirk fades into a look of shock.

Rose's boyfriend lunges at me, and I give myself over to Zyan to take control of my body. He is more than happy to rip him to shreds when I feel a sharp pain ripple up my side after we kill the third one. Glancing down, I see the blade's handle hanging out just under my ribs.

Zyan snarls, looking at the hand still holding it before lifting our gaze to the frightened teenager who decided to stab us. His eyes widen, and he backs away with his hands up in the air, looking like the frightened mouse he is.

"Wait, my father has money, we can make all this go away," he blurts, walking backward as Zyan stalks him. He pulls the blade from his ribs and groans at the sting, but we heal quickly.

"You can't kill me," he shrieks, his skin rippling, but in his state of shock and horror at what he did he even struggles to do that.

Zyan tilts his head, watching as he trips on his own feet, landing on his ass. He scrambles backward, trying to escape his wrath, but Zyan is feral as images of how we found Rose vulnerable and at their mercy flit on repeat through our head. "I'll pay you," the fool blurts like money means

anything to use. Zyan grabs him by his shirt with one hand, and he flinches, "You won't get away with this, they'll come for you. My father will come for you, do you have any idea who I am?" he shouts.

"Dead," Zyan growls before thrusting the blade into his throat. He gurgles and chokes, but Zyan uses the blade to hack through his throat. He then stands, catching his breath before looking back at the car.

"Give me control," I tell Zyan, and he immediately retreats, and I crack my neck before walking over to my car.

Rose is still fast asleep, passed out cold. Vince remains out of it in the back seat. Turning back around, I examine what we've done. This road is pretty deserted, hardly anyone uses this old highway, but that doesn't mean I can leave them here for anyone to stumble across.

So we set to work, dragging the bodies into the forest and a clearing nearby where I could hide the bodies. I drag two in yet upon picking up the third one I hear my car door open and I freeze, turning around quickly, her boyfriend's body over my shoulder. I try to figure out a way to explain this to Rose, yet I find it is Vince. He groggily steps out of the car, pulling a smoke from his packet and popping it in his mouth lighting it.

"Where are we?" he grumbles, looking at me. He blinks a few times, taking in me holding the dead body of Rose's boyfriend to the body barely a meter away from him. He gasps in shock, his smoke falling from his lips onto the road.

"Casen, Casen!" he panics.

"Shut it, Rose is right there, now grab the other body and fucking follow me, this is your mess. So fucking help me clean it up!" I snarl at him before stomping toward the forest.

"What have you done?" He panics and I growl, turning back to face him.

"What have I done? You mean, what have you done? This wouldn't be an issue had you not taken Rose to that fucking house!"

“You're trying to blame me, I never killed anyone, this is on you!” Vince retorts.

I scoff, he is unbelievable. “Where was Rose while you were passed out on the couch, Vince?” I ask him.

He shakes his head. “No, don't try to put this back on me,” he garbles.

“Well, it is on you because when I found Rose she was unconscious, about to be gang raped by these germs!” I tell him.

“You are lucky I got there in time or your body would be sitting right alongside theirs, now grab him and fucking follow me before she wakes up.”

“Andrei is going to kill us; he is the mayor's son!”

“I don't give a fuck whose son he is, they followed me, I was going to let Andrei deal with it until they hit his car and tried to take Rose, now grab him!” I snarl, stomping into the forest. Glancing over my shoulder, I see Vince gripping his hair, but he bends down, grabbing the other one. He follows me into the forest, to where the other body is in the hole Zyan dug for me. I drop her boyfriend's body in and Vince drags the next one over and he is about to toss him in when he gasps, dropping the body at his feet.

“What have you done?!” he gasps.

“No, no, I want no part of this!” he says, staring at the third body that is already in my hole. “No, they'll kill us, they'll fucking kill us,” Vince panics. I roll my eyes, they don't look like they'll be doing much of anything to me. I shove the other body into the hole before pulling branches over it. Not only that, but I need to move the car first and drop Rose home. I can come back to deal with this mess later.

Turning back around, Vince is almost frantic. “You have no idea what you've just done,” he chokes, clutching his hair.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” he screams, and I snarl, clamping my hand over his mouth.

“Shut the fuck up!” I snarl. He shakes his head, and my claws slip from my fingertips and slice into his face. “Calm down, now you need to get rid of the car while I take Rose home, I will meet you wherever, just get rid of it.”

“No, I want no part in this!” he says, his entire body shaking. I shove him backward, grab the keys I took from my pocket, and toss them at him. He catches them yet stares at them in horror like they are piping hot.

Storming past him, I head back for the car when I hear Vince call out. “His name is Brett Thana, Lorelei Thana's grandson!”

I stop dead in my tracks. Why have I heard that name before, why does it sound familiar to me?

Turning around, I waited for him to elaborate when he didn't, I ask. “Your point being?” I ask him.

“Dior Shivani's mate, head of the Reaper Wolves, that boy, is her grandson,” Vince says, stepping closer. “And you killed him,” he growls.

“There are no Reaper Wolves left. Dominic handled them when they attacked the pack,” I tell him.

“Besides, Dior and Lorelei never had any kids,” I state, and Vince laughs.

“You'll never get rid of the Reaper Wolves. Just because you haven't read about them in the papers doesn't mean they aren't still here. They've gone underground, and you just killed the ringleader's son.”

“And who is this ringleader? Lorelei is dead, and Dominic handled Dior. What are you going to tell me, I killed Santa Claus next?” I laugh, turning back toward the car and Rose. I get two feet before he tackles me.

We hit the ground with a thud, and he grabs my face. “Laugh all you want, but you better pray he doesn't find out. You should have given them Rose,

he wouldn't have killed her. But if he finds out you killed his son for her, he'll come for you, and when he does, he'll take her, make you fucking watch while he destroys her," Vince snarls before shoving off me.

"Who will?" I call out as he stomps off. "Vince?"

"You're better off not knowing," he calls out as I get to my feet. I walk back to the car to see Vince lean into Andrei's car to retrieve a lighter before he lights a smoke.

Chapter 57

Casen

“Meet me at the wreck in an hour,” he says, climbing into the other car. He then drives off, and I climb in with Rose. I head home, and luckily, the pack seems to be still asleep since it's early morning. However, to no one's surprise, Andrei is awake and waiting. He storms over to the car the moment it pulls up and tosses his hands up in the air when he notices the damage to his car.

“What the fuck!” he growls the moment I climb out of the car. He moves to rip Rose's door open and give her the scolding of a lifetime when I step in front of the passenger door.

“Let me take her home. Tell Sage she went out, I picked her up, and she stayed at my place if she asks,” I tell him, and he shakes his head, shoving me aside when I grab his arm.

He looks at me. “What the fuck is going on?” he growls furiously. I swallow, looking at Rose. I tell him the gist of it without mentioning any names except Rose's boyfriend.

“You took care of it?” he asks, and I nod.

“That's why you need to go with what I said. Sage can't find out.”

His brows furrowed in confusion. “What aren't you telling me?”

I glance at the pack house. “Vince believes one of the boys I killed is linked to the Reaper Wolves.”

“Reaper Wolves are gone. Why would he think that?”

And for the first time, I lie to my Alpha.

“No idea, but he reckons one of them looks like a Thana?” I tell him and he seems confused.

“Lorelei Thana?” he asks, and I shrug. “I will ask Dominic if anyone knows about the Reaper Wolves. It's him.”

“You can't tell him why, the fewer people who know about this the better,” I tell him.

“Dominic can be trusted,” Andrei tells me.

“Not if he thinks Thana is alive, you know he'll hunt them down and that will lead to more questions, ones where the answers lead back to here, back to Sage and Rose.”

“Sage can't find out, you know how paranoid she is about Rose. If she hears any mention of the Reaper Wolves, she'll spiral,” Andrei tells me, then sighs.

“Then make your inquiries brief.”

“He'll know,” Andrei answers.

“No, he'll be suspicious, as long as you don't confirm or deny anything, let him draw his own conclusions, if any Thana's are left, we would rather not lead them here,” I remind him.

“That is definitely true, Thanas don't go after one or stop with one, they'll come after the entire pack!” Andrei states before he curses under his breath and paces back and forth. “No, Dominic is a smart man. I know he wouldn't have left so much as a pebble unturned, Vince has to be wrong.”

“Let's hope so because if there are any Reaper Wolves left, why are they hiding?” I ask him. Andrei ponders that for a second before sighing.

“Fine, she went out, but you what? Brought her home, and she stayed at your place?” he asks, looking at his daughter, though he looks like he wants to shake her awake and demand answers.

“Yes, I need to go get Vince, he took care of the car.”

“Well, I can't punish her if you're lying for her. Sage will ask questions,” he mutters.

“So, what do you want to do?” I ask Andrei.

“Well, if I can't punish her, and I am supposed to believe whatever you feed Sage, that leaves only one option: you'll punish her,” he says before stepping closer.

“But mark my words, Casen, you ever lose her again while she's on your watch. I'll punish you,” he growls before walking back toward the pack house.

“Tell Vince to meet me at the river at lunch,” he calls, and I suck in a deep breath before putting Rose to bed in my room and then taking Andrei's car to get Vince.

As the memory floats away, my eyes meet Andrei's, and I know he is thinking the same about the same memory. His eyes dart to Sage briefly when we hear another car pulling up. Turning my attention to it, I see that it is Katya, Ezra, and lastly, Mateo. Eziah looks away, and I know he struggles with guilt for what he did to his father, but right now, he needs to suck it up because we need his mother. She is the only one with records of the past that could help answer this crap. Andrei and Dominic, thinking the same thing, move toward her car before she even has a chance to get out. She opens her door, rubbing her temples.

“Seriously, the entire drive here all I could see is you lot bickering waiting to pounce on me, you've already given me a headache,” she states. They back up, letting her get out, and Ezra glares at everyone, clearly not in the mood to deal with drama.

“Where are Heidi and Alisha?” Katya asks, reminding everyone why we are all gathered in one place.

“Down by the river,” Andrei answers.

She looks at him and groans. “Seriously, we can deal with whatever this is after the funeral, we have the dead to lay to rest, I would rather not be waking old ghosts right now,” Katya says.

“We think Satish is part of the Reaper Wolves,” Dominic states.

“Well, that explains so much,” Katya answers, seeming thoughtful.

“What do you mean?” I ask her, stepping forward.

“Explains why I’ve never seen him, why I struggled to see the Reaper Wolves in the past. They aren’t linked to the Moon Goddess Realm, not my circus, not my monkeys to keep in order,” she says, then glances at Temperance before her eyes go to Eziah. She goes to say something but is cut off by Dominic.

“What do you mean you can’t see them? You’ve seen them in the past when they attacked here,” Dominic asks.

“Yes, because it directly impacted my direct future, I could see them through my future, I can’t see them through another or see theirs. They aren’t connected to the Moon Goddess Realm, they are complete savages, do you think Seline would allow such filth back into her fountain of life? That I would?” Katya asks him.

“You should know better than anyone, Dominic, we can only see what we are allowed to see, nothing more and nothing less. But him being part of the Reaper Wolves makes sense as to why I could never find him who had Temperance when I searched if she was with him, I saw nothing, only the basement,” she says softly.

“But yet, you can see Temperance?” Eziah seems thoughtful.

“I can see her partially; I can see some things, but that is all.” We all think she’s done speaking when she turns to look at Kyan. “I think after the funeral it’s time for a family reunion, if anyone knows the past, Bain does because Celeste punished him to be the gatekeeper to it,” Katya tells him. “Now, first thing’s first, comfort the living while saying goodbye to our dead,” Katya says, leaving no room for argument as she starts walking off toward the river.

Chapter 58

Casen

As I carry the weight of the day, I am reminded of the gaping void Malik's death has left behind. Each step towards the pack's river is heavy, as if the universe is making me feel the gravity and absence of the man who was more than a friend to us—he was a father. The sky is painted with somber gray hues, reflecting off the river water.

Malik. Mentally, I know he's dead. I've seen his body, but it's like my mind hasn't quite caught up yet. Everything feels surreal. Someone who has always been around is suddenly gone, and I can't picture a life without him in it. He took Vince and me in when we were just two lost 16-year-olds with no direction and no purpose. We were basically strangers to him, yet he opened his home and his heart to us with an unconditional generosity that still baffles me to this day. The void his absence has left is immeasurable, and the wound raw and gaping.

However, the tragedy isn't just mine to bear. Rebecca, Malik's mate, is a picture of despair. Her hazel eyes, once lively and brimming with warmth, are now dimmed, echoing sorrow words can't adequately express. Clara and Lia mirror their mother's grief.

A familiar sting of anger courses through me, a toxic mix of betrayal, horror, and unspeakable sadness. Vince did this, and knowing that stabs through me hard. The brother I grew up with, laughed and cried with, murdered a man who took us in. A man who loved us like his sons. It's a truth that contaminates every memory, every shared moment, turning them vile, unrecognizable. The truth is, I haven't recognized my brother since before I believed I killed him. Haven't recognized him since Rose was a teenager. If I ever did know him at all, it's now becoming obvious

that the brother I used to know was just an imposter for the vileness he truly is.

The pack gathers by the river, a serene spot where the gentle cascade of the waterfall merges with the steady flow of the river—Malik’s sanctuary. He’d sit here for hours, lost in thought. Today, it’s where we lay him to rest, amidst the elements he so loved, but the beauty of the locale is lost, overshadowed by grief’s oppressive air.

As Andrei takes charge of the ceremony, his voice, usually strong and commanding, is now a fragile, broken whisper. This makes me truly realize how much Malik means to everyone here. I can feel everyone’s grief and sadness in the air. Malik’s absence is a reminder of how precious life is and how fleeting it can be. As Andrei speaks, each word breaks his own resolve further.

Eventually, Dominic steps forward and takes over, and suddenly, a calm rushes over Andrei. The air ripples and changes for a second, just a flicker, a hint of a change. At first, I think it’s Dominic using magic, but as I peer around, I notice Kat’s hand on Andrei’s shoulder, the soft glow giving away her influence.

When my turn comes, the reality of the moment crashes into me with crippling intensity as everyone pays their respects and places a rose atop his coffin. Lia has to pull her mother away, I can’t imagine what it must feel like to lose a mate, being rejected by one was crippling enough. I place a hand on the cold, hard surface of the coffin. It’s too final, too cruel.

Tears blur my vision. Each drop for a man who helped shape me. It’s hard to believe a man I saw as greater than life growing up is now reduced to a wooden box and soon ashes. When Lia steps closer, her hand brushes mine, making me glance at her. “Mom can’t do it,” she whispers, and I swallow. Turning to glance at her over my shoulder, she is racked with grief, and Clara too.

For generations, Andrei's pack has believed in burning away the physical bodies of their deceased as a way of releasing their souls and any karma they may be carrying. Andrei's father initiated this tradition, and it has been carried on ever since. The ritual involves burning the body in a deep hole in the ground and then burying the ashes and remains. This is believed to ensure that the spirit can be free to reincarnate, without being bound to the physical body. This feels fitting now that I know Kat, and we know where the Lycanthrope genes came from because we are merely but a vessel for our wolves.

Before Andrei lost Angie and Sage came along, Andrei lived his life by karma and was a bit of a hippy like Anthony. However, when he lost Angie, he became karma for rogues who crossed his path.

And man, did he make the rogues pay threefold for the things they did wrong. Some part of me believes Sage was his karma, though. She broke him and rebuilt him, as he did her. Which I find funny, given Kat is a Moon Goddess, how similar Andrei and Kat are yet also so different.

“Please,” Lia whispers, and I take the lighter before she passes me the torch. I swallow, lighting it with my shaking hands when the torch suddenly catches alight.

Eziah makes me jump off to the side in surprise, and I know he must have used the sun's heat when he noticed me struggling with the lighter. I tilt my head to him, and he returns the gesture before I set the wood beneath the coffin on fire. I wait for the coffin to lower into the ground and the straps are tossed in.

Then I drop the flaming torch in with him and step back as the flames instantly lick at the box that holds his body. We watch it burn for a bit before everyone turns and leaves, the waterfall's spray keeping the ground around it moist. I see Andrei speak with one of his men who will keep watch before later tonight, Andrei will close it with the dirt.

I know this was one thing he hated about Angie's funeral. She was not close by and buried alongside her ancestors, where the rest of her family lay at the cemetery in Ezra's pack.

Chapter 59

Casen

My chest tightens, and Rose's guilt pierces through me as I notice Casey asking her why we burned Uncle Malik. Survivor's guilt is thick throughout the bond. She blames herself for Malik's death. Believing wholeheartedly that if everyone hadn't been preoccupied with trying to save her, Vince wouldn't have had the opportunity to kill Malik.

As we get back to the packhouse, I notice Heidi approaching Kat. I hold my breath, waiting to see if she'll blame Kat. Heidi cries hysterically, and Kat reaches a hand toward her. I see Ezra move, attempting to grab her hand, but he's too late and Kat's hand rests against her cheek, cupping her face. However, I had noticed Kat during the service; how she remained calm and serene while everyone else cried.

Suddenly, Heidi jolts, the air around Katya seems to ripple, and her eyes bleed white. The next minute, Heidi throws herself into Kat's arms, making me wonder what Kat did when Dominic speaks. "It must be hard for Ezra not to keep her hidden and locked away," Dominic muses. I glance at him.

"How she does not go insane living between realms, constantly between life and death, continues to baffle me. Even though I considered the shadow world to be bad, it was as real to me as the real world, yet imagine living in limbo constantly, not belonging to either world," he sighs heavily.

"I guess that is why she was blessed by Seline because she is suited for it," I tell him, and Dominic laughs.

“I understand your perspective, Casen. I see how you might think that. Power is not just a blessing, but a curse. With power comes expectation, greed, decisions the mundane never have to make.” My eyebrows furrow. “It is easy to blame those who have power, but think about being the one who knows that they are ready to take you apart for having it. Judging and expecting, and then receiving their blame and hatred when you fail. It is impossible for me to imagine how that eats away at her. Furthermore, my own family's curse is a blessing in one sense. Because no one ever expected anything good to come from it, so there was never a world of judgment against me. Those that assumed expected rule, order, and an iron hand.” He looks at Katya briefly.

“Whereas with Kat, they expect her to change the world, to stop death while maintaining life. How do you decide between your loved ones and someone else? How will you set aside your grief, which will mirror theirs, if you choose incorrectly?” he asks before wandering off.

Rose is quiet, and her guilt radiates through the bond loudly as we attend the wake. Midway through, the walls close in, suffocating me, and I find escape by heading out the back for a smoke. The quiet is both a relief and haunting.

Sitting on the back step, I draw back on the smoke when movement catches out of the corner of my eye. Turning my head, I find it is Kat. Only at this moment, she is not the moon goddess, not the calm inside the mournful crowd, but a woman, broken and gasping for air.

“Kat?” I ask.

She freezes like she has been caught doing something she shouldn't and is embarrassed. As quickly as her composure shatters, it rebuilds. With a shaky breath, the goddess reassembles, sealing cracks in her façade. But I see them. I see her break, if only for an instant. And at that moment of vulnerability, I understand the unbearable weight of her existence that Dominic mentioned.

The sliding door opens, and Mateo steps out. His eyes, marred by burns and haunted by shadows, fixate on Kat. She's slipping through his fingers, a goddess overwhelmed by her mortality. She excuses herself, retreating into the confines of the packhouse.

"Kat, are you okay?" I ask, eventually catching up with her.

It's like a veil falls over her. One minute, she is breaking. The next, it's as if I didn't see her nearly falling apart.

"I'm fine. It's a little stuffy in there," she murmurs, only the slight shake of her voice indicating that what I saw had been real.

We stand there awkwardly for a second, both caught out. Eventually, she moves toward me, climbing the steps. "I should probably get ready to leave; I know everyone is eager to learn about Satish, but I can't do that from here," she laughs.

But I grab her hand from where I sit on the step. "I get it; I know you can't save everyone," I tell her. She lifts her chin and swallows.

"Saving them is easy, I wish I could bring every life back. It's knowing I can but knowing the risks if I do that are hard to live with," she laughs, the sound slightly manic.

"But the hardest part is seeing everyone grieving a life I could have saved but chose not to, ripple effect, everything happens for a reason. You change one thing, and you can change the entire direction of something else," she murmurs, her gaze getting far away.

"I get why Celeste created the dagger to make a god or goddess. It was never about having a backup Moon Goddess. It was to kill herself and leave the burden on someone else. Now, it's my burden. I'm glad the daggers don't exist, though. I know I'd be tempted to do the same," she whispers the last part.

"You don't like being the Moon Goddess?" I ask. To hold that kind of power would be amazing, yet I understand it would also be terrifying.

“Do I like having power?” she laughs. “Everyone loves power. It is the knowing I don't like, knowing what's to come before it happens, that temptation to change it is overwhelming. But how do you choose? I could have saved Malik, but who would have to take his place if I did?” she asks. Her eyes flicker, turning black when the sliding door opens, and Mateo pops his head out.

She smiles.

Chapter 60

Casen

“Just talking to Casen,” she says. But Mateo glances at me, and I know he senses something is wrong with her, yet he says nothing. However, my eyes are drawn to the burns that cover half his neck and one entire side of his body, the burns peaking out beneath the collar of his shirt.

I pull my gaze away, realizing I am staring. I know Eziah feels guilty about what he did to his father. Yet even with the severity of his burns, he refused to let Kat heal him. He would rather burn alive than allow his mate even to suffer slightly, knowing she would take on his pain.

Yet, I get it, having my own mate. Kat moves past him and heads inside. He watches her worriedly before turning to look at me.

“Should I be worried?” he asks me.

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“She took it. Kat took Heidi's grief; she already takes on more than anyone could possibly imagine, yet she couldn't deny her,” Mateo tells me.

That explains why Heidi after Kat touched her seemed okay.

“Casen?” Mateo asks, and I know he is asking me to confirm whether she simply came out here to talk to me. I feel protective of Kat and want to lie for her. However, being protective means keeping her safe, even if it is safe from herself.

“Yeah, you need to worry,” I tell him, and he nods once. I draw back on my smoke, and Mateo shuts the door. I expect him to go back inside, but he doesn't. Instead, he lights up, leaning on the railing and watching me.

“Since when did you start smoking?”

“Can't remember, Ezra and Kat hate it.” He shrugs. “Ezra and I will have to force her to shift again soon,” he says, sighing heavily.

I peer over at him. Eziah once mentioned to me that his father struggles to shift because of the scarring. It's agonizing for his father. Mateo usually avoids shifting because the burns don't like it. They are weakened, and they tear open worse every time.

Not knowing what to say, I nod, wondering why he is loitering around me when he finally speaks.

“Eziah has barely said two words to me,” he confesses. I look at him, drawing back on my smoke.

“He feels guilty. He's worried you hate him,” I tell him.

“He said that?” Mateo asks. “Is that why you two were gone for so long, why he never came back?”

I press my lips together. He should be talking to his son, not me. I don't want to get caught in the middle of it.

“No, we were heading back when we found Temperance,” I explain. He looks slightly relieved.

“So he was coming back?” I nod my head.

“Yeah, we were then.” I nod toward the door. He nods slightly when the door opens again. This time, it is Ezra.

“Kat wants to leave,” Ezra tells him. “Does she feel off to you? She is blocking the bond from me.”

“Yes, we'll handle it once home,” Mateo tells him, moving toward him before stopping in front of Ezra, who stands taller than him by almost a foot. “What about Eziah? Is he coming home?” Mateo asks.

“I'm not sure, but Marabella and Kyan are staying longer, and Temperance is getting antsy. He'll need to get her home soon anyway before her heat starts,” Ezra tells him, and Mateo tilts his head.

“She's in heat?” Mateo asks, looking nervous.

“Not yet, but Dominic and I noticed her scent changed. Andrei also had to send a couple of unmated pack members home that were getting too close, making Sage nervous.”

“She doesn't know?” Mateo asks him.

“I think she does, but she is oblivious to it. Apparently, Temperance has no knowledge of that stuff. Her wolves always blocked it out. Eziah is trying to figure out how to broach that subject with her. He mentioned he couldn't feel her wolves,” Ezra answers, and Mateo sighs heavily.

“Fuck, come on, we need to organize the pack to stay away,” Mateo says and rubs his temples.

“Eziah mentioned staying at Derrick's old place,” Ezra tells him, and Mateo nods.

“That means he is coming home,” Mateo says, smiling brightly after hearing this.

“Yes, he's coming home,” Ezra replies, pressing his lips to Mateo's forehead and wrapping his arms around him.

“Come on, I want to get our mate home. Maddox is nervous,” Ezra whispers. I turn my attention away from them, delaying the inevitable. I have to go in, at least, to say goodbye to Eziah and work out what comes next. We need to figure out this issue with Satish.

We have so many questions yet every time we think we'll get an answer, we only get more questions and fewer answers. Reluctantly, I get to my feet and walk inside, and nearly everyone is gone. Only family remains, wandering over to Kyan. He is watching his son Lucas, an anxious look

on his face. Dropping next to him on the sofa, I watch Kat say goodbye to everyone.

“Where is Eziah?” I ask, glancing around for him and Temperance.

“Already left, Dad is running Kat, Ezra, and Mateo home before following us home.”

“So she is in heat?” Kyan nods.

“Yes, I don’t know who looked more petrified, her or him.”

I sigh. I guess we won’t be getting answers then. “Years ago, Andrei asked me about the Thanas,” Kyan states, turning in his seat slightly to look at me.

“I knew something was up, but what I don’t get is how Vince got involved with them in the first place.” His question draws everyone’s attention.

Yet, I myself have no idea how Vince met them or how that came to be. I’m about to tell him that when Rose leans between us. “Not here, not around Mom,” she whispers, and I peer over at the stairs, where Sage is sitting speaking with Marabella and playing with her daughter. Kyan glances over his shoulder at her, watching her briefly.

“You know,” he tells her, and she nods, glancing around.

“I know what Satish told me and what I found myself after some digging.”

“You’ve met him?” Kyan asks.

Rose chews her lip but nods her head. “Mom, can you please watch Casey for me for a few minutes? I just want to show Kyan and Casen something back home.” Sage nods and smiles softly.

“Yes, you know she is fine here,” Sage assures her when Mateo pauses.

“Where are you lot going?” he asks us, and Marabella looks at Kyan curiously.

“Rose wants to show me something that might help,” Kyan offers, and Dominic looks over at us. Suddenly, we have an entire entourage coming with us.

Rose leads us back home to her house. “Wait here, I’ll be back,” she tells everyone, but I follow. I expect her to go to her room, but she pauses at Casey’s door before entering the room. My brows furrow, wondering why she is in here when she moves Casey’s bed away from the wall and pries a floorboard up. Reaching in, she pulls out a plastic zip-lock bag.

“What’s that?” I ask her.

“Newspaper clippings and old photos I found. Sometimes I would have to play taxi for Satish, or he’d make me run supplies out to some of the camps,” she tells me.

“Camps?” I ask her.

She nods, “Yes, Satish, travels around a lot.”

I open up the ziplock bag and pull out the pictures. “And you stole these?”

She shakes her head. “Not exactly, they fell out of his bag in my car, I kept them. This was when I first met him,” she tells me.

Turning the first photo over, I gasp, realizing how she recognized Temperance. It’s a picture of the girl in the cage like the ones we saw when we rescued her.

Yet, in the second picture, I nearly choke, stumbling over my words when I realize the boy I killed is in the picture too. Satish has his arm tossed over his shoulder, and a woman at his side.

“I know him,” I stutter, looking at the picture and pointing to the boy. Rose’s brows furrow.

“Yeah, he used to hang out with...” She glances away, she doesn’t need to say it, we all know she means her germ of an ex. “I’m surprised you know him, though?” she says as I walk out to the others.

“He never used to hang with us, I saw him at a few parties occasionally,” Rose continues as Dominic takes the photos, and Kyan peers over his shoulder to look.

“How do you know him?” Rose asks, and all eyes go to me. I swallow guiltily.

“Because I killed him,” I answer, causing her to take a step back from me and look at me in shock. This is not a conversation I want to have.

“Who?” Mateo asks, and Dominic hands him the photos.

“That woman must be the mother, then,” Dominic says, opening up the newspaper clipping.

“Wait, this is the rogue attack on your pack, Mateo. I wonder?”

Dominic falls quiet before looking at Mateo. “It can’t be,” he says, snatching the photo from Mateo. Yet when I lift my head, Mateo appears to be in shock.

“What?” I ask Dominic. He looks at Mateo, but Mateo just shakes his head.

“The newspaper clipping is from Ezra’s pack when the rogues attacked the school,” Dominic states. “I remember hearing about it,” he adds, looking at Mateo.

“What’s that got to do with anything? Why would he have that?” I ask when I recognize a resemblance between the black and white photo from the newspaper to the picture of Satish and his son with the woman.

“She was my first mate, kinda,” Mateo says, and my gaze goes to him. “I killed her to save Kat.”