

## Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 146

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 146—"NO!" Kieran roared.

And right as the dagger pierced the surface of my shoulder, Daniel was promptly pushed off me.

"I said \*don't touch her\*," he growled.

The weight of his words fell over everyone in the room, and once again I experienced the tangible sway of his order.

"Kieran," Daniel huffed out, unable to get back up to his feet. "She-."

"No, enough! You're hereby forbidden from moving until further notice," Kieran said. "That goes for you too Allison. Sit down. Now. And I don't want to hear another word from either of you."

Allison gritted her teeth but did as she was told.

"What... What is that?" I asked. "What did you do to them?"

Kieran looked defeated as he straightened back up, unable to meet my eyes. He simply stared at two people he held dear as they were trapped on the floor.

"An Alpha heir order," he said. "It'll only hold them long enough until a full ranked member arrives though."

"Kieran-."

"Leave... Rae," he said quietly. "I can't do anything else for you now."

The pain in his voice was clear, an echo in it that stung me. I didn't want to upset him further, and so, with one hand covering the shallow new wound to my shoulder, I hobbled back to my feet to grab the book and dagger.

"There's a cupboard to your left which has an emergency hidden staircase inside it. Use that and follow it all the way down. It'll take you to the car park outside safely without being seen."

Just as he'd said, upon inspecting the cupboard, there was indeed a staircase inside. But as I stared into the dark passage ahead, I hesitated once more.

...This was the last time I might see him. Did I really want to leave things like this? With lies intended to push him away and a head full of questions?

"Kieran... I...", I said, my voice trailing off.

So many things I wanted to say, to explain, to ask about. All of which would take too long to get through. And so, in the end, I settled for one thing.

Just one line.

"...I'm sorry," I whispered.

And I slipped through the doorway without another word, beginning the descent down.

"This isn't over, Rae," he called out behind me. "I'll find you. I promise."

But I just wiped at the stray tear that had escaped my eye and kept walking.

There were a lot of promises that were made lately. Too many.

"Do yourself a favour for both our sakes, Kieran," I said quietly. "...Forget about me. My survival might just rely on that very thing."

I knew what awaited me now. The only remaining path left.

A path that would lead me to the one place I ever truly belonged.

Back into the shadow of my father.

But first... first I had a job to do.

And as I got into the car and drove like hell out of Ashwood, I was reminded of the fact that my absence had been long. Perhaps too long for an impatient man such as my father. I knew it would be punishable to return like this empty-handed.

I felt numb as I went through the motions. I wasn't quite ready to acknowledge everything that had happened, simply just trying to get through the day without breaking down. To keep moving without remembering his face or how much....

-No. I couldn't think about Kieran anymore. He didn't exist as of today.

Now, it was only me vs... them.

Long gone were my naive days of the past. Now, I'd need to work even harder to hide my presence, an entire species probably soon intending to hunt me down. Because if a war could span over fifty years because of one pack, then I was sure that they weren't keen to just let me die of old age naturally.

The look of hatred on Allison's face still haunted me every time I blinked.

"Here you are..." I said to myself in the confines of a dark office.

The safe stared up at me from within the floorboard, promising to give me the very thing that had started all of this. What my father had been desperate to get his hands on all this time.

"My entire life was ruined because of you. Perhaps if you'd never existed, I could have lived my life in ignorance until death came for me. That sounds better than this... than now living with this pain."

I bit my tongue. There was no pain because I was fine. Completely fine. Just... a girl doing her job. And I pushed back the feelings threatening to break me.

It only took a couple of minutes to crack into the lock, Miles clearly not investing enough in security, but soon enough I caught my first glimpse of the coveted contents.

...The documents my father had been after.

And I could see why.

It was years worth of business transactions, photos and other pieces of evidence that would be enough to crumble my father's business to dust. Yes... Miles was a smuggler, but at some point he must have switched sides. Probably working for someone who had it in their best interest to see my father finally go to jail. Some of the information in here would have taken years to acquire.

This was... everything. Enough to risk it all to get back... even if it meant losing his daughter. All to save the business.

Though, as I was shuffling the papers back together, I did catch one thing. Something that wasn't quite like everything else. It looked almost like a journal entry in my father's handwriting, one dated a few years ago.

Miles had written pencil notes around it, wondering if the passage pertained to an associate or partner in crime but... but I wasn't so sure.

'... The woman came to me again last night and I basked in her glory,' it read. 'What I have, I owe to her, and I am reminded of that fact every day by my fortune; with my business and my Raven. It is through her continuous instruction that I have loyally served and been rewarded for my efforts.'

I frowned as I read the snippet, confused by who he was talking about. Because for as long as I could remember, my father had always been alone; both in business and in personal life. Never even so much as bringing a casual one-night stand over to the house, let alone ever speaking about a woman with such adoration; not like in the way he did in this entry.

No, the way he wrote here... it was nothing like the man I knew of. Not the cold-hearted, business focused father who I'd lived with for years.

Not Eric Reid.

...And I instantly snapped the folder of documents closed, no longer wanting to read anymore.

I shouldn't have gone looking through it to begin with, such a thing would get me in trouble. But I'd figured since I'd already broken every rule, that adding 'snooping' to the list wasn't that bad.

However, it seemed I'd been wrong about that, if only for unexpected reasons. The new information merely added more questions to my already confused head.

And I sighed.

It felt like the more I looked into the reality of my world, the more dark truths I discovered. Truths that would only lead me into situations I was better avoiding. Just like how chasing after Kieran had led me to the state I was in now.

Feeling... broken... evil... a mistake. Undeserving.

I gritted my teeth and got back into the car, throwing the documents on the passenger seat. My father could have them back and secure his business, just as he wanted. It was a testament to my loyalty, if nothing else.

But it was as I threw them down that the juxtaposition of my life really came into focus.

...Because it fell next to the book I'd stolen

from the Ashwood Archives. One I'd picked up out of curiosity at the time but then somehow hung onto during the chaos.

And it now opened a new path of opportunity for me to take, one that could possibly lead to more answers.

I stared at the two choices as they laid side by side.

My father's documents... or a book with a title topic I was slowly starting to despise.

"The Council of the Silver Mist" the front cover read. 'A history of The Winter Mist and Silver Lake'.

A book of my birth family's history. Or... as was told by Ashwood, at least. I could only imagine the bias I would find inside upon reading. Though some information was better than nothing. Better than... being spat. at for being a Devil.

But was I really going to chase down another search into who I was?

And as I thought about it some more, my heart ached for Kieran for the millionth time. It felt as though I'd had a part of myself torn away when I'd left, tearing more and more the further I went.

My other half.

My... mate.

The person I lo-.

No.

No, I wasn't going down this path. Not again.

I wasn't Rae or Rheyna... I was Raven.

And it was time for me to go home.

Which is exactly what I did.

It took several hours of driving before I finally got back to Lockdale City. The familiar scent of my home greeted me as I entered the house, the place quiet now within the late hour of the night. This was my longest time being away and it felt almost... safe being back here. An odd feeling considering the nature of my life, but a welcome one.

A needed one.

Atop of the staircase, a light shone brightly through, emanating from down the hallway. I knew what it meant.

...My father was awake.

I felt nervous confronting him. Would he be angry? Had he somehow discovered what I'd been up to in my absence?

A part of me resented him for everything he'd put me through and yet, despite that, I still craved his presence now. Because if his cage could keep me trapped this whole time, then it could keep others out. Only he had the power to make me disappear once more. He'd already done it once, doing so without realising just how important it was to my survival growing up.

I was only alive because of him. Because of his name.

And had he not put me through the rigorous training and pain he had, I never would have made it out of Ashwood in one piece.

I needed him.

He was... all I had left.

...And so I knocked on his office door.

"Come in," said his voice.

I took a second to calm my breathing before entering, the documents in hand.

"Father... I'm-."

"Raven," he quickly said, looking almost surprised to see me. "You're home... You're ... bleeding?"

I looked at my clothes, now covered in my blood from where the silver dagger had pierced both my hand and shoulder. Both thankfully healing... albeit painfully.

However, the physical pain was the least of my worries.

"I'm fine," I said, brushing off the concern. "Nothing I can't handle. I'm sorry it took so long but I-I got the documents for you. Here ... see?"

Looking upon his face again, those grey eyes. ... I hated how comforted I felt. But, at the end of the day, he was still my father. The person I'd loved for over sixteen years.

"Who did this to you?" he said, walking over. "The boy?"

But I shook my head, feeling as my eyes started to water over the mention of Kieran.

I couldn't cry here though. My father hated it when I cried.

Just a little bit longer and I could go to my room to be alone.

"Was it Victor? Someone else in the town?"

But I just shook my head again to both.

"I need to know, Raven. I thought this was just infiltration. If someone attacked you whilst undercover then I ne-."

"Please, daddy... I'm fine," I said as tears escaped me involuntarily. "Please let it go. I- I got what you wanted. I got the documents. I -I did it... I did it for you."

And as I feebly held them out towards him, he simply took them from me and placed them back down on the chair next to us.

...He placed them down... and proceeded to pull me into a hug.

I tensed in his embrace for a few seconds. until everything crumbled inside, sobs wracking through my body. It was as if all my pain surfaced all at once, everything I'd pushed down deep inside.

Kieran... Ashwood... my birth family... the confusing devil revelations....

...The fact that I was finally home, safe, under the protection of my father. The only person able to now protect me from being hunted.

All of it overwhelmed me as I clung to him, crying into his chest.

"I didn't know if you were coming home," he said. "I haven't heard from you in weeks."

"I-I'm sorry."

"I'm just glad you're back, my Raven. You're safe now."

And as he patted my head, I momentarily let go of my anger towards him. Long enough to lie to myself that there was at least one person who could truly accept me for what I was. One person who knew of everything I'd done, of what I was, and could still love me.

Yes... this was fine. 5

This was my life. The only one a devil deserved.

## **Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 147**

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 147—Two months had gone by since my escape from Ashwood.

The day still haunted me whenever I thought about it, remembering the faces of loathing, remembering the fear and confusion... remembering the pain of leaving Kieran.

It was that pain which was still the hardest. to deal with, like an aching that never left me. A constant thorn in my side to remind me how we couldn't be together... and it wasn't just thoughts either.

With the suppressors assumedly now completely worn off, for the first time I was experiencing living with what I imagined our entire species did; feelings that belonged to a creature inside you. Every single day it was like I could feel its pain crying for Kieran, whimpering internally as if I'd amputated its arm off. It was exhausting... and it only made it more difficult.

Sometimes, in my darkest hours, I contemplated taking the suppressors again. There had been one bottle left behind which now stood atop my bedroom dresser, staring at me with the promise of making the wolf go silent once more. To numb myself to the extra feelings that came with being a werewolf and fall back into my days of ignorance.

I would reach my hand out towards the pills ... but stop myself every time.

And, instead, I would drink.

Alcohol. No fancy ingredients required, just good ol' liquor. Just enough to take the edge off. Enough to distance myself from the chaos in my head as I continued my work, slipping back into routine with my father.

Things between us had been better, my absence clearly a needed one. He seemed more aware of me now, even more... gentle?

If that was even possible for him. But nevertheless, I was certain that Ashwood would have found me already had he not done such an extensive job at hiding my existence all these years.

And in return for that protection, I did what I always did.

...I did my job.

"Raven, can I get you another drink?" asked the man, Jack Hamilton.

I sat on a plush expensive couch inside a high -end bar, attentively chatting closely with the man seated next to me. He owned the establishment that we were now tucked away in the private corner of. Just the two of

"That's okay," I said, smiling. "Thank you though."

"You know... I've never seen eyes quite as mesmerising as yours before," he said, leaning forward. "The golden colour is fascinating."

... And it was then that his hand reached over to touch my thigh, the intention obvious.

I knew that this would be the case. In fact, I'd been trying to establish this connection. I was here for information today and that was always made easier when a man stopped thinking with their head.



However, it unfortunately caused a stir of something else inside me... because I felt as a small growl rumbled through my chest in warning. A low threat in the tone. Not my doing, of course... but my wolf's. Now choosing to make my life difficult with her inability to let me work. To her, only Kieran was allowed to touch us.

I quickly coughed to disguise it and smiled.

"Apologies... I think I might actually get that drink after all," I said. "I'll go get it though. Stay right here for me."

And as I stood up, I gently touched his cheek to seal the promise. A gesture that caused another stir inside me, taking all my control to push the wolf back.

Goddammit. They were making this so unnecessarily difficult.

"Your strongest whiskey, thanks," I said to the bartender. "Add it to Jack Hamilton's tab."

They gave me an odd look but did as I asked, and I downed it the second he stopped pouring.

"The person you're pining for has a family trying to kill us," I said quietly to my wolf. "Stop making this harder than it needs to be."

And slowly, I closed my eyes briefly as I let the alcohol wash over me, feeling as the wolf quietened inside once more. It wasn't as good as the suppressors had once been, but it was enough.

"...You're not the only one who misses him," I whispered sadly.

No... not the only one. But some things were more important than desires.

Things like... surviving.

And it was with that very thought in mind that I then walked back over to my assignment.

"Tell me, Jack... is this the only bar you own?" I started, touching his arm intimately. "I just adore it so much. Please tell me you have others in the city. Perhaps closer to town on Central Avenue? I'm dying to visit more often but this one is a little far from my home."

"Well... now that you mention it," he said, leaning in closer. His gaze was switching from my eyes to my lips, but I bit back my discomfort. "Just between us, I happen to be placing a bid to purchase an upcoming lot shortly. It's too soon to publicly announce it but...."

And as he proceeded to tell me all of his plans for purchasing, I felt myself regress into my mind a little bit more, going through the motions of doing what I had to do. Giving him my attention in exchange for the information my father asked for.

...Wishing he was Kieran whenever he touched me.

I left the bar that night feeling hollow inside but with a job successfully completed. Which is all that mattered in the end.

Just... living to see another day.

Doing what I needed to do.

...What I had to.

I stumbled back home with a headache, taking a taxi back to my house. I was welcomed home by the sight of my front gate, the smell of familiarity in the air stemming from the place I grew up. It was here that I took a moment to finally relax, breathing in deeply several times to calm myself.

Because I was fine. I could do this. Just... one day at a time.

But as I went to open the gate, I heard as someone then called to me. My mind immediately jumping to who had spoken.

“Rae.”

I looked up sharply, my heart pounding. An overwhelming rush of adrenaline pumping through me over who it was, needing so badly to see him again. To touch him, to tell him I was sorry for leaving. To tell him that I lo-

...But as I turned around to face him, I found that it wasn't Kieran who had spoken... but Zac.

I'd been so desperate for him to be here that I'd tricked myself into thinking it could be real. That Kieran somehow knew where I lived and had come for me.

But this wasn't a fairy tale. Not anymore.

“...Hi, Zac,” I said, the disappointment thick in my voice.

I'd been avoiding him since coming back, not wanting to deal with the line of questions I knew he had. Truthfully, I just wanted to be left alone. To wallow in my own self-pity by myself.

Something that apparently wasn't very subtle as he immediately called me out on it.

"You're avoiding my calls and refusing to meet with me," he said. "I've been trying to get a hold of you for weeks."

"I've got a new phone," I said. "The last one was lost."

"That doesn't answer any of my questions, especially when I've called your house phone a thousand times asking for you. I highly doubt the extensive list of excuses the maid gives me are all valid."

"I've been busy lately."

"I know you have... which is exactly why I needed to talk to you," he said. "You've had me covering up Noah's existence for months now, had me do errands for you that jeopardise my own life. I need some answers on what exactly you expect me to do from here. Or... I don't know... some help? I'm doing this all by myself and I'm freaking out."

Irritation flared inside me as I didn't want to deal with this right now. I'd had a long night entertaining a rich man for some business plans and just wanted to sleep.

"Not now, Zac," I said, turning back to go inside. "Just drop it and we can talk another time. I've just finished a job."

"No, not again," he said, stepping closer. "If I let you go inside, you're going to start dodging my calls again. Give me some answers. Just... at least tell me why we're doing this. Just give me that."

"Another time."

But as I went to push open the gate, he walked over and grabbed my hand to stop

"No. Seriously," he said. "This isn't fair that I have to-."

And he suddenly paused mid-sentence, his nose scrunching.

"How much did you drink, Rae? I thought you said you just came from a job? Since when do you-."

"\*Don't call me that stupid name\*," I snapped angrily, ripping my hand away. "Just leave me the fuck alone already\*."

It had triggered something inside me, my frustration coming to a boil over hearing the nickname again. It was as if everything from tonight and the past few weeks hit all at

once, erupting in a mess of emotions that I wasn't sure how to process.

But as I said the words, it was if something came over Zac.

He froze in place, his eyes relaxing as his whole demeanour then changed. Instantly, his attitude switched.

"You're right," he said, stepping back. "I'm so sorry, Raven. I shouldn't have said that."

"What...?"

"I shouldn't have pressured you into talking to me, please don't be mad at me. I didn't mean to upset you."

"What are you doing? Is this sarcasm?"

His eyes widened in genuine concern. "No! Of course not! I really am sorry. I'll leave you be. I hope you'll come talk to me soon though. I'd hate for this to have ruined our friendship."

I stepped closer towards him cautiously, to which he kept moving backwards to give me space. Just as I'd originally wanted.

...But not like this. Not in this way which felt so... wrong.

"You were just arguing with me and rightfully so," I said, immediately sobering up. "I have been a complete bitch to you for weeks."

"No, not at all," he said. "You clearly have a lot going on and it was my fault for bothering you."

"Zac, stop this."

"Stop what? You're absolutely right that I went too far."

"No, I wasn't," I argued. "I was being unreasonably horrible because of things going on in my life that are not your fault."

What was this? He wasn't acting like Zac at all. It was like he'd been replaced by an overly polite doll who just said whatever I wanted to hear.

Was this an 'order' of authority like what

Kieran had done to Sterling, Allison and Daniel?

...But, no, that couldn't be the case. That was a system built on hierarchies of werewolves, able to be broken by leaving the pack as Sterling had. Zac was human and hadn't sworn loyalty to me. This didn't feel like he was obeying an order, it felt more like he was trying to... please me.

And it was then that Allison's words all came back to me, her description of the Devil's 'siren call' and how it influenced those with an aura of reverence.

And I realised what it meant.

...That this was my doing.

Proof that I really was what they said I was.

A monster... a devil.

Had my life actually improved at all since discovering the truth of my identity? Or had I been better off before all of this? Before

Ashwood, before Kieran... before I knew what else was out there?

"Go home, Zac," I said quietly. "I'll... call you when I can."

"Of course! I hope we can talk again soon!"

And I quickly opened the front gate, entering my house to head directly to my room.

I knew what could help with this. What could stop me from doing this ever again.

I just needed to go back to where it all started. Back to when my biggest problem was making sure my wolf didn't misbehave, scared of my father's punishment. Back when I was weakened... when I was more contained. When it was just me. Only me.

I opened the bottle and stared at the pill in my hand:

...Just one tiny thing to make half of my problems go away.

To lessen the burden.

To be... almost human again. Or close enough.

I could put the blindfold back on and pretend like all these months had just been a bad dream. Just a mistake.

Hesitantly, I brought it up to my mouth, closing my eyes... and, right before I was about to take it, I felt a force of something protest inside me, freezing my hand.

...Like an invisible barrier stopping me. Just like when I'd tried to kill Noah and Daniel.

It was only more confirmation that something was deeply wrong with me.

My father had known all along that I deserved to be taking this medication. He'd known just how dangerous I really was. I'd resented him for it and yet I didn't realise just how much I'd needed it. I—.

...Wait.

He knew.

...\*He knew\*.

This wasn't just to do with me being a werewolf anymore. Somehow, he'd known the extent of my abilities and had perfectly countered how to suppress it. Almost like he was aware just how problematic it could be.

...And the words from his diary entry then came to mind.

"...I am reminded of that fact every day by my fortune; with my business and my Raven, 'it had read. 'It is through her continuous. instruction that I have loyally served and been rewarded for my efforts.'

"...Her continuous instruction.' As in, someone else was helping him. Could she have been the one telling my father who I really was?

...Was my adoption perhaps more planned than I thought?

I leaned backwards, my back hitting my dresser with a loud thud, and, slowly, I sunk to the floor.

I hadn't been back to the orphanage since the day my father had come for me. Whenever I thought about it, I still recalled the blood of the children I'd hurt. My time there had not been pleasant. Only full of fear and pain. Longing for a family I couldn't remember.

...But what if I was missing something? What if my records had information in them that could help me learn more?

...What if... what if there were others out there who knew what I was? That alone could be incredibly dangerous information.

My eyes glanced over to where I'd stashed the stolen Ashwood book under a pile of clothes. Out of sight, out of mind. Or so I'd thought.

It was clear that there were still many pressing questions that were left unanswered. Questions that I knew my father would not answer easily. And, besides, if all of this was a misunderstanding, I didn't want to drag him into the mess I'd created. If I was going to accuse, then it was best I understood more first.

Well... if I was really going to go down this path, then I guess I should stop being self-destructive.

And it was with that new determination in my head that I then slowly picked myself back up, grabbed the book... and left a note for my father.

'I'm going back to where it all began,' it read. 'Be home soon.' 2

'Sincerely,

Your Raven.'

## **Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 148**

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 148—This was the riskiest venture I'd done since returning from Ashwood.

Not only was I now leaving the protection of my father's reach, but I was willingly jumping down a rabbit hole that could potentially bring more problems in its wake. Opening myself up to secrets I might eventually regret uncovering.

But I couldn't go on like this anymore.

To continue as I was would only lead to destroying myself or others, possibly bringing more harm than I knew how to fix. \*If it was even fixable. I could only hope that Zac would recover and stop treating me like... whatever that was.

However, it was clear that there were things at work behind the scenes that weren't immediately obvious. Things that might come back to bite me whether I liked it or not.

And so I had to start with what information I did have.

... Information that led me to staring at an old iron woven gate, a chilling familiarity about it.

Because it was this very gate that belonged to the place I'd called home for some time.

The orphanage I'd been adopted from.

I took a moment to calm my nerves, contemplating whether this was really a good idea. But the drive here had already taken several hours to arrive, it now being morning already, and it was time that I'd spent mulling over this very dilemma.

And, ultimately, I went through with what I came here to do.

....I entered through the gate.

The orphanage looked to still be in business, several children running around in the distance on a grassy green field. From the path, I could hear their laughter, hear how they were all enjoying themselves. A vastly different experience than what I could remember of my own. time here.

“Can I help you?”

I was greeted inside by an older lady attending the counter. She looked vaguely familiar, assumedly someone who had been here during my residency. I hoped that was a good thing.

Upon walking in, her eyes immediately scrutinised me.

“Hi... yes,” I said, approaching. “I’m sorry to bother you, but I was just looking to get some information. I ah... I used to live here and was hoping that you might have my old records still available. My name is-.”

“Rheyna,” she finished, her face lightening in recognition.

“You remember me?” I asked, a little shocked.

It’d been sixteen years since my adoption.

She had to have seen thousands of children come through these doors since then.

“Yes...,” she said slowly. “It’s not often kids leave such an... impact... as you did.

Your time here was as memorable as your distinctive appearance. It’s hard to forget golden eyes such as yours.”

“Ah...,” was all I could say.

I was sure the memorable impact was referring to the incident I’d caused. Hospitalising children was sure to traumatise a person.

“I’m happy to see you’ve grown up well despite having a difficult time here,” she said, a small smile on her lips. “A successful adoption is all I can really hope for the kids here. To this day, it still breaks my heart whenever I see any return. Failed adoptions happen only too often. Though....”

She then paused to look at me closer, confusion showing on her face. “I am a little surprised to see you back here. Mr Reid paid a significant donation to our facility upon your adoption. It was clear that the lifestyle and devotion he could provide for you was a head above the rest for candidacy. I would have thought that you’d have all but forgotten about your time here.”



Something about what she'd said struck me as odd and, as I took a moment to think about it more, I realised what it was.

... 'Head above the rest for candidacy.'

As in, there was more than one candidate asking to adopt me.

In a place where children were lucky to have even one person express interest, this seemed very odd to me. Especially considering the behavioural record I must have had here.

"My father provided me with a... fulfilling life," I said carefully. "To this day, I continue to work for the family business with him closely."

"I'm happy to hear that."

"But... I naturally have questions about my past," I continued. "If possible, I was hoping to look at my records. Perhaps anything to do with my adoption or... how I came to be here."

She looked serious as she listened to my request, the lines on her face creasing.

"...You are of age now," she said slowly. This request is within your rights. Please wait for a moment as I find them."

And with that, she disappeared through a back office door where she remained for some time. I paced in the lobby as she searched for the records, doing my best to remain as patient as possible despite the loud thumping in my chest.

I'd stopped caring for my birth family once I'd been adopted. I never so much as had an itch to go looking for them. To me, only my father had mattered. The one who had lifted me out of this place and given me shelter. Given me a life and purpose, someone to nurture the issues I'd presented with as a child rather than fear me for it.

Now I knew that some things couldn't be ignored for long. That I couldn't change my blood, change who and what I was. Ashwood had made that perfectly clear.

"I should start off by apologising to you first," said the lady, entering the room once more. "From the very beginning, your time here was filled with difficulties outside your control. I can see you've grown into a well-adjusted, beautiful young lady, and I tell you these things now not to upset you, but to provide you with some understanding."

I walked back over to the desk and saw she'd retrieved my records. Only, in the place where my name should have been, it looked like someone had gone over it with a black marker to censor it. Almost as if someone was removing my identity from it. Perhaps just another way my father hid my existence.

"Please tell me," I said, tearing my eyes away from the folder.

She took a deep breath in, her expression becoming solemn.

"From the very beginning, you were treated... different," she started. "It was something I was aware of but not in its entirety. I now know that the extent of that treatment went beyond the norm... and I need to sincerely apologise for my lack of vigilance. I should have tried to protect you better."

I frowned. "You mean the bullying from

the older children?"

She paused before shaking her head. "...]

wish it had just been from the children. After your adoption, I started to hear whispers of how happy the staff were to see you gone. I was appalled. Especially since the horrific incident that day could have cost us significantly in potentially losing Mr Reid's donation, something we were in dire need of. Immediately, I began looking into it and realised that I'd missed all the signs. It became obvious that most of the bullying was being orchestrated by the staff, urging the children to be cautious of you. All because

She paused, looking unsure how to proceed.

"I won't hold any resentment towards you," I said, trying to encourage her to continue. "I can't change the past now. All I'm looking for is the honest truth. No matter how difficult that might be."

Slowly, she nodded her head in understanding.

"...It was because of the circumstances surrounding your arrival," she finished.

"How I came to be here?"

"Yes...", she said. "The staff were... spooked, I suppose. You were found by a truck driver on the side of the road, miles away from here. Nothing in sight for as far as the eye could see. Just an area completely overrun with deserted woods. You were brought to us covered in blood... and wouldn't speak a word."

I looked down at my hands and, for a split second, thought I could remember a flash of the memory. The feeling of being numb and afraid.

"You didn't speak a word for two whole months, no matter how hard the police and I tried to find out where you came from or what happened," she continued. "You'd just... stare at us with those intense eyes of yours silently. An air about you that unnerved

many with uncertainty, wondering what your true origins may be. It wasn't until we found you playing with a large dog one day that you did eventually speak."

...A large dog?

"...You spoke... and told us your name, she said. "But it was unfortunately too late to stop the rumours and superstitions from the staff at this point. I found out later that this bias would go on to create the foundation of your mistreatment. I wish I'd known back then how bad it really was. Maybe then I could have stopped... no, maybe I could have helped you feel more accepted, having no need to lash out as you did."

I swallowed back the discomfort from her words and tried to focus on what I'd come here to do. But it was difficult not to realise what she was saying. I'd been so worried that the incident was going to make getting answers problematic but, instead, she was the one apologising to

...She was saying that it hadn't been my fault.

"Did you... Did you ever find out anything about my birth family?" I asked, clearing my throat.

But she shook her head. "No... nothing officially."

Though I found that a strange way to phrase it.

...What about... unofficially?"

And she immediately hesitated, confirming my hunch.

"We normally can't disclose information relating to other parties...", she said slowly, placing a hand on my file. "However, I feel as though your time here was filled with... special circumstances."

And I watched as she then opened my folder up and began rifling through the papers inside.

"There was one other person bidding to adopt you," she said as she looked through it. "They... claimed to be related to you."

My breathing stopped at hearing that.

"She seemed like a sweet girl, albeit looked very young, however we unfortunately couldn't verify her," she said. "She had no papers or identifying documents. Nothing to prove her relationship to you. Unfortunately, we couldn't hand you over and she was subjected to the normal channels of the adoption process. Of which, she failed in almost every aspect. She couldn't even hand us a driver's license."

...She was a werewolf. She had to be.

Kieran had mentioned that Ashwood had only opened up trade with humans in recent times. Before this, they had kept completely to themselves. So, of course she had no paperwork... their entire lives were separate and secretive.

But it still left one very important question;

...Who was she?

The same person who was helping my father? But if that was the case, why hide her existence from me? She was clearly trying hard to adopt me. Seems like a lot of effort for someone to go through before erasing herself from my life entirely.

Perhaps there were more people involved in this than I realised.

"...Did they leave any contact details? A name?" I asked. "A phone number?"

That seemed like wishful thinking considering it was a punishable offence to use a cellular device, but I had to try.

"No... it was too long ago for me to recall her name. She also didn't have a phone.

Yet another of her oddities," she said.

And my heart sank. I knew it had been too much to hope for.

"That being said...", she continued, and my eyes immediately snapped back up to look at her. "...She did leave an address. If that's what you can call it. It was the only bit of information she filled in on her application."

"...Where is it?"

"I don't think it'll help much," she said. "There's no specific street name provided. Just the name of a place I've never heard of before."

"Where?" I pushed anxiously.

And she proceeded to turn the folder around for me to look at the form in question.

Just three words printed there that I wasn't expecting to see, knowing immediately what it meant.

"..."The Silver Mist'," she read.

And, instantly, I felt myself freeze up.

The Council of the Silver Mist, created by the forming of two packs: The Winter Mist and The Silver Lake.

The place of my birth family's pack. A pack said to all be dead now after losing the war with Ashwood.

It was information that therefore meant one very crucial thing....

Either, someone had left this here as a trap to one day bait me into showing myself or....

... Or I might not be the only survivor.

## **Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 149**

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 149—The possibility of having family still alive felt a little too good to be true, though it was hard to disregard what the lady was saying. A lot of time had passed since I was a child, yet there was potentially someone out there claiming to be related to me, to be from the same pack I apparently once belonged to.

'Claiming' being the keyword.

It would be naïve to completely believe it so easily. I'd already been burnt by Ashwood for trusting too much and I didn't wish to repeat this.

But if she *\*was\** my family... could that maybe mean...?

"Be careful, Rheyna," the lady added in my silence. "I can see you're eager to find whoever this is but... I wouldn't get your hopes up. Even putting aside her inability to provide documents, she was also vague on *\*how\** she was related to you, something that seemed a little strange. I know you might wish her to be your mother, but there wasn't much resemblance between the two of you."

She pointed out the same concerns I'd already thought of, killing the small piece of hope I'd had that maybe my birth mother was still alive. If anything, she now made me warier about tracking her down.

"I appreciate the insight and your time," I said genuinely. "You've been extremely helpful."

And as I said my goodbyes, I then turned around to leave, heading back to my car with a feeling of relief. I didn't want to stay here any longer than I had to, the place still making me uncomfortable.

Even if things really hadn't been my fault as she'd said, it still didn't magically make me reminisce fondly.

As soon as I was back in the driver's seat,

I reached over to grab the stolen Ashwood book and began skimming through it for information, hoping to try and find something to tell me the location. This was the only source of information I had access to that might shed some insight into the Silver Mist.

From what I was able to read, the town within the pack was supposed to be completely abandoned now, having been destroyed during the war. And, just as I'd already assumed, the book mostly boasted about Ashwood's successful victories against them more so than any real information. A few notable figures, a few strategies used....

...But then I found it.

A map.

A way to get to the remote location, seemingly miles into what I'd thought was just woods my whole life.

This was it. My way of finding the Silver Mist.

...And as I placed the book back down, I immediately started driving towards it.

Getting to the Silver Mist was significantly more difficult than I'd anticipated. I suppose I should have expected this given they'd gone forever undetected by the human world, but I'd thought there would still be some easy way in and out available to those who needed to know.

Of course, I'd been wrong.

According to the map, the Silver Mist was surrounded by packs on all sides, its land on top of a mountain deep within the woods. And, though there was a network of roads that travelled independently between these packs, there was still the issue of \*getting\* to those roads.

Roads that were seemingly guarded by other packs to gain access to them. Almost like gatekeepers scattered along different entry points where it bordered human territory.

It seemed a little crazy to think that they needed to travel through someone else's land just to enter the human area, but I suppose they had no need to go there. Or, as I thought on it more, I realised there possibly was another option... though it was not available to me. An option of shifting... and running through the unclaimed woods as a wolf.

Alas... I was going to be reliant on my car for this one.

The closest gatekeeping pack wasn't too far from the orphanage, just a few hours' drive west. With any luck, this place had a way for me to drive through it without any problems.

However, this immediately proved difficult as the first major obstacle revealed itself; being able to just find the pack's entrance.

From an outsider's perspective, it looked like an average dirt driveway to someone's house. But after going past it multiple times, I realised that it was in fact what I was looking for. The only possible option. And, cautiously, I proceeded to drive up it.

Already, it was clear how different it was from Ashwood. Where one had opened trade with humans and established a way to access it easily, this pack appeared to want to keep people far, far away. I was several metres down the road when I started to see the signs that were posted.

Big red ones with the words 'private property – keep out'.

But I remained undeterred.

Slowly, I crept up the road as quietly as possible, going only far enough until I could see a structure in the distance. It was here that I parked and began to look around.

If I had to take a guess, I'd say that the building was a house for border control. What I needed to find though was an alternate route around it... maybe try to find a-

\*knock\* \*knock\* \*knock\*

I violently jumped in my seat as someone tapped on my window, taking me by complete surprise. They must have walked up in my blind spot as I was focused forward.

"Hello? Miss?" said the man. "Can you wind your window down please?"

Okay... okay... time to think fast.

My mind started to whirl with what to do as I complied with his request, flashing a bright smile in the process.

"Oh! You scared me!" I laughed. "Sorry about that. I was lost in thought."

He didn't seem to share my enthusiasm. though, maintaining his stoic expression.

"What are your intentions here?" he asked, cutting straight to the point.

"Oh... uh, I'm just trying to pass through. Hope that's not too much trouble."

His eyes narrowed as he peered at me closer, sniffing several times.

"Which pack are you from? The Silent Forest wasn't informed of anyone coming through here today."

Oh, fuck.

I didn't exactly take the time to memorise the geography and knew that looking down at the map next to me would probably be a dead giveaway.

...Which only left one option. The only place that came to mind.

My smile tensed as I forced it in place.

"Ashwood," I answered. "I'm from... Ashwood."

"Ashwood?" he repeated. "What brings you through here then? Ashwood has their own access point."

"R-right," I agreed. "But I just came from doing business in Lockdale City and I'm heading directly south now. Was hoping to avoid driving all the way up north again first."

"They allowed you into Lockdale?...Who are you anyway? What's your name?"

Were unranked members not allowed in the city? That sounded vaguely familiar but didn't think it would be this much of an issue. It was starting to feel as though I were sinking in quicksand with these lies, my knowledge sorely lacking to navigate the situation.

"...My name?" I delayed, thinking through my options, but it was clear there was only one choice here. Only one female from Ashwood who could possibly pass as important enough. "My name is... Allison."

Allison Lycroft."

"Alpha Victor's daughter?" he asked, surprised.

"Yep... that's me. I'm... Victor's daughter," I said. "Uh... Kieran's... sister."

He seemed taken aback by my claim, only adding to his confused expression.

"What's down south for you?" he asked. "I didn't think Ashwood had any business in that region right now. If there was an alliance meeting, we would have been made aware."



"I'm... visiting a friend."

"From which pack?"

Goddammit. This wasn't going to work.

Time to switch approaches.

"Is that any of your business?" I asked pointedly. "I've already told you who I am and why I am here. This interrogation is incredibly disrespectful."

Kieran had said that Ashwood climbed to power after the war. Since this person mentioned an alliance, I was hoping that it meant the Lycroft name came with some weight and associated perks.

"If you can't help me," I continued, "

then just say so. But I'll be sure to let my father know about my experience here toda-."

"No, no, please, I apologise," he said quickly. "I meant no offence. It's just we can't be too careful with outsiders these days. I'm sure you're aware of the inflated rogue problem since the war."

"Right..." I said. "Those... damn devil rogues."

The man spat on the ground. "Good riddance. Best damn thing Ashwood ever did was create those suppressors. Your father is a hero."

The book had mentioned something about the rogues, this being the issue I assumed he was referring to. After the war, the unranked who didn't repent for their loyalty to the Silver Mist were condemned to live the life of a rogue.

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Given the size of the pack, this created a rather large shift in the prior population.

And as for the ranked members...? Well, there wasn't a population issue there anymore.

"Yes... I'm so blessed by our Great Mother to have him as my father," I said, hoping it sounded like something Allison would say.

To my relief, he nodded in complete agreement.

"Praise Selene," he said.

I thought that this was a good sign that he would finally let me through... but then he took a step backwards.

"Well, I hope you don't mind waiting. I'll just need to grab one of the ranked members here to verify you," he said. "Should be a friendly face. You would have met Beta Kevin a few months ago when he came to visit. Give me a-."

"WAIT," I said, a little too loudly.

He turned back around at my outburst in surprise.

"Wait... I, uhh... I think you should just let me through."

I couldn't even think of any more lies and was in full panic mode.

"I'm sorry? What did you just say?"

"Let me through," I repeated. "... Please."

"I will, but I need to get Beta Kevin first

"No."

"No...?"

If there was ever a time I wanted to use this stupid ability, it was now. This thing that made me the devil they saw me as, yet couldn't seem to control.

Was there like an on-switch or something ...?..

"Why are you protesting this?" he asked. "That's awfully suspicious...."

And as he moved to retrieve a weapon, I knew I was out of time. The jig was up.

This was it.

Sink or swim.

But right before I was about to accept that combat might be my only choice, I thought I felt something inside.

A spark. Something that calmed me as I reached for it, my body stilling just like that time in Ashwood with the guard.

...And as I grabbed it, a burst of energy flowed through me.

"I said... \*let me pass through\*," I repeated. "\*\*Right now. No more questions.

His body then seemed to hesitate, his hand relaxing on his weapon.

"...Of course," he said, his voice distant." My apologies, Miss Lycroft."

I stared at him for a moment to make sure it was real, not wanting to risk being exposed. But when I was confident that he really was going to let me pass without issue, I didn't waste any more time.

I stepped on the gas and started driving through the Silent Forest pack as quickly as I could. Driving without stopping until I finally found the main connecting road leading out. At which, I began my long journey south, silently praying that this would all be worth it.

That I hadn't just jeopardised myself for the sake of a trap.

And so I drove.

And drove... and drove. For what felt like hours. Probably made worse by constantly checking my rear-view mirror in fear, but I was in a completely new world now, no way to escape easily if I were caught.

...Which, luckily, I wasn't.

There was no mistaking when I did finally arrive, the Silver Mist fitting the description from the book perfectly.

...Because as I was greeted by the sight of destroyed buildings everywhere, I was reminded of how this place was now said to be cursed.

It was an abandoned ghost town, a silent eeriness about it that sent a chill through me. Reverted to just a wreckage of what looked to have been a thriving town once upon a time.

Was this really the place I had been born?

Somewhere in this... rubble?

I parked the car and decided to travel on foot, searching for signs of life. But, as I explored, I only felt a hollow aching inside, a sadness from being here. I might not have consciously remembered this place, but as I walked by a park full of dead grass, it seemed at least a part of me deep down did.

A line of what looked to be restaurants and cafes then passed me by, their windows now shattered and paint all faded. Just a broken shell of what used to be there. Across the street, it was much the same, some clothing stores mirroring a similar appearance.

It was overwhelming to look at.

People had lived here once. This was their home.

...And it was all gone.

All... destroyed. Nothing left.

I walked in a daze, allowing my feet to move on autopilot. Wandering aimlessly through the empty streets of the place I should have been allowed to call home growing up. But it was as I walked that I eventually found myself standing before a building.

...One appearing somewhat untouched, unlike its neighbours.

There was something about it, a certain quality that felt different. Almost as if it was... maintained.

As if someone had been here recently.

I sniffed at the area, checking the perimeter, and it wasn't long before I found a trail to confirm my suspicion.

...Someone was living here.

Was this the girl who had tried to adopt me all those years ago?

I guess there was only one way to find out

And, silently, I pulled out my dagger... approaching the front door carefully.

Despite my attempts of stealth though, it seemed I hadn't been subtle enough.

Because before I could even make it to the first step, I watched as the door then swung open before me.

It swung open... and revealed a young girl with brown hair standing there, a weird familiarity about her. She didn't look much older than me, possibly mid- twenties.

...This meant she couldn't have been the girl from sixteen years ago.

"Who are you?!" she demanded, holding a dagger of her own towards me. "You have some nerve coming here-."

But as she finally took a moment to really look at me, her blue eyes instantly grew wide, the dagger slipping from her fingers.

“Oh... Oh, Goddess...,” she whispered. Rheyna? Rheyna, is that you?!”

Tears started to fall down her cheeks, a sob leaving her chest, and all the while this happened, I felt frozen in place. I wasn’t sure what to do or how to act.

“Goddess... it is you... it is you...,” she continued to cry. “Those eyes....”

And she immediately ran forward, pulling me into her arms.

“You’re home. You found your way home ... I can’t believe it. I was starting to lose hope that I’d ever see you again.”

I remained tense as she held me, not immediately recognising her, and yet unable to deny her clear affection towards me. She wasn’t acting like an enemy... so did this mean my family really was still alive? Perhaps she was a slightly older cousin?

“I’m sorry...,” I said a little awkwardly, pulling away. “But I, um... I don’t know who you are.”

However, she didn’t seem offended in the slightest and simply wiped the tears away from her face.

“No, I should be the one apologising,” she said. “Of course, you wouldn’t recognise me. We never had the chance to meet properly when you were a child.”

And as she grabbed my hands in hers, she proceeded to introduce herself as someone that made me think I’d misheard her.

No, I had to have misheard her... because....

“...My name is Myra,” she said, gently smiling. “...I’m your great-great- grandmother.”

## **Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 150**

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 150—‘Beware the Silver Saintess, her hair as silken thread. With her consort mate of power, the people wept and bled.’

‘And beware the Siren’s call, his eyes as gold as ore. With whispers of manipulation, they’ll hold you in their thrall.’

‘And if you breathe despite this, a devil still awaits.’

‘Because forever lives another....’

‘...The deathless angel mate.’

The words of Allison's recited passage repeated through my head, echoing like a bad dream. An impossible dream. How could she be...?

But there was no mistaking it. With the confirmation of who she was, I realised why she looked so familiar. I'd seen a painting of her inside Ashwood's Moon Goddess temple.

They'd depicted her with sapphire-like eyes and shadowy wings.

So... did that mean she really was...?

"...I... I'm sorry, I'm not sure I'm following" I stuttered out, struggling to wrap my head around the new information. "Did you say... great-great-grandmother? ...How are you alive?"

Myra just laughed though and moved a hand to cup her cheek. But despite this abashed outward demeanour, I thought I caught something in her eye. A look of... sadness. As if she'd seen many things in her lifetime.

"I've been asking myself that question for a long time....," she said. "I'm sure you have a lot of questions and I'm happy to explain everything I can. First things first though...." She then tugged on my hand gently, indicating for me to follow. "Come inside. and have some tea. You look tired."

And, stunned, I followed mutely behind her, unable to do anything else.

This was a so-called Devil of the Mist? The way Allison had spoken, I'd assumed my entire family were bloodthirsty savages, the worst of the worst.

However, Myra seemed so sweet, so... normal. Well, except for the fact she was claiming to be over a hundred years old.

That bit felt a bit... surreal.

She walked us through the front door and into a living room, a cosy vibe about it. I'd assumed this place was maybe an apartment complex but it seemed more open and... homey.

"Make yourself comfortable," she said before walking into the next room.

I could hear as she began brewing tea, just as she said she would, and I was left to stare at my surroundings. I looked around at the old furniture, but it was a set of portraits on the wall that drew my attention the most.

"My parents," she answered a few minutes later, returning with two cups. "The last generation to live here. After my children were born, things got a little... busy. The family business wasn't as important in the grand scheme of running a pack."

"And what business is that?" I asked, taking the tea from her.

"This used to be an orphanage," she explained. "Though... I imagine we ran it a little differently than the human one you lived at briefly."

"So that really was you then? All those years ago?" I asked. "You were the one who tried to adopt me?"

Her expression became forlorn and she looked away.

"...I did everything I could..." she said quietly, her voice sounding distant. "When they refused to listen to me, I began trying to get my hands on some forged human documents. However... when you're being hunted by even your own kind, it's not easy to find friends willing to help you. When I inevitably gave up on official methods, I decided to try and steal you away instead... only I was too late. Someone had adopted you and miraculously it was as if all trace of you had vanished."

My father. So, he really had been responsible for covering it up at the orphanage too. I'd had a feeling the censored-out folder was his doing. The large 'donation' made sense now.

"Where did you go, Rheyna...?" she asked, looking back to meet my eyes. "I searched everywhere I could."

My mind flashed with the answer, recalling the upbringing I'd experienced, and immediately felt uncomfortable. It wasn't an easy topic.

"...I was adopted by a human," I said vaguely.

"And were you happy? Did they treat you well?"

Not really....

But it was clear that she felt guilty for not being able to find me. She was looking at me as if she needed me to tell her that I'd had a great life, that I'd been completely fine despite losing my real family. That I hadn't suffered at all.

And so I just smiled, hoping I looked believable enough.

"Oh... it was okay," I answered. "Pretty average. Nothing you need to worry about. Just your typical-."

\*CLAPP\*

I flinched backwards as Myra abruptly clapped loudly in front of my face, taking me by surprise.

“Why did yo-.”

“No influencing,” she said crossly, scolding me as if I were a child. “Not under my roof.” But then her features quickly softened, a small sigh leaving her. “Please don’t feel like you need to lie for my sake, Rheyna. You don’t need to sway me with reassurance. I’m tougher than I look.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, still stunned in place. “I wasn’t doing anything....”

“I raised generations of Knight children. It’s very obvious what you were doing.”

And she gave me a stern look.

....Had I actually been doing something? I had planned to lie about my upbringing, sure, but I hadn’t intended to try and ‘influence’ her. Not intentionally. Did this mean I was doing it without realising?

“You seem quite skilled at it, I’ll give you that,” she then pointed out, her head tilting a little. “Had I not been on guard, you might have actually fooled me. That would have made you the first since....”

Her face then turned sad once more, a pain showing in her eyes. Perhaps someone she lost?

...Though if she had lived for as long as she’d said, I imagined that list was quite long.

After a minute went by, she quietly sighed to herself and shook her head, breaking her own chain of thought. When she did finally look back towards me, I knew she was trying her best to lighten the conversation. “With those eyes, I shouldn’t be surprised that you’d manifest with it. Though, truthfully, I don’t know if that makes me happy or sad.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, curiously.

This was something I’d been wanting to know for a long time. About my ability and what made us ‘devils’. Hell, even an explanation for how I was able to talk to her at all right now would have been appreciated.

“Our lineages are a bit muddled currently,” she started. “But whenever a child is born, the universe sort of... flips a coin. A fifty per cent chance that the eldest will manifest with one ability or the other. The second eldest child will then inherit the remaining one. That is if they even show signs at all. Merely having the potential inside isn’t always enough to harness it. Some of the children never show any aptitude at all.”

“So that means I could have ended up like you?” I asked. “Would I also not...?”



“...Not age?” she provided with a small smile. “No, my circumstance is a little... unique. At most, those who take after me, remain looking youthful for a bit longer... but, unlike me, they do eventually pass on... everyone always does.”

There was a hollowness in the way she said that. I could feel the weight of her grief, imagining what it was like to watch everyone she knew slowly die.

...To have loved ones, and yet to always be left behind when they passed.

It must be horrible.

“Tell me more,” I said, pressing for answers. “I want to know everything about what we are and why I’m like this. Why... I’m a devil.”

“Hey!” she snapped suddenly, a crease forming between her brows. “No. We don’t use that term.”

“What?... ‘Devil’? Isn’t that what we are though?”

“I don’t know where you heard that, but we don’t use that language here,” she said.

It was a bizarre feeling of being continually told off by someone who looked around my age, yet spoke like someone much older. She somehow managed to keep making me feel like a child despite her appearance.

“The lies that spread, due to fear from small -minded people, do not make you a devil,” she said, still frowning. “What we did here... we made history. Amazing strides of equality that revolutionised our kind’s archaic ways of life. But as with all greedy people in power who’d prefer what only benefits them... they chose to rely on rumours and half-truths to weaponise their agenda. Our abilities that they feared so much gave us a position to dictate change in our world unquestionably, unable to be defeated in battle nor denied... so they resorted to methods belonging to cowards. An effect that rippled through the generations until it resulted in what it unfortunately did.”

...So, we’re not evil?” I asked. “These abilities weren’t used to hurt innocent people?”

And she immediately set her tea down and held my head in her hands.

“No,” she said firmly. “Our abilities are merely a manifestation of our lineage. Ties to the original werewolves, the embodiment of Thea’s power. Or... that is true for you at least. I am not a direct descendent... more like an adopted one.”

“This isn’t making any sense to me,” I said honestly.

And she relaxed, moving back once more as her smile returned. “I had the same reaction when I was your age.”

Before I could ask her to clarify further though, she moved onto the sofa and patted the space next to her, indicating for me to join her.

“Let me explain...,” she said, taking a deep breath in.

...And what she proceeded to say only made me more convinced I was losing my mind. That perhaps I was asleep and this was some wild, made-up dream I was in.

“At the beginning of our history, werewolf kind was birthed by the revival of five children, each imbued with a piece of the now dead Goddess Thea, Selene’s mother,” she explained. “One child held the ability of strength, another with foresight; one with perception manipulation, another with influential reverence... and one with youthful longevity. These are the five abilities that made up the original lineages, of which, only three had initially survived into modern history. The other two had been lost after being reclaimed by Thea in her quest

Once she saw how confused I still was, she waved her hand. “That one is a long story. Perhaps too complicated for now.”

“But I still don’t understand how this works,” I said. “How is it that you’re able to remain ageless if you’re not from these... lineages?”

Though that question seemed to be met with some hesitance, causing her to shift uncomfortably.

“Ah... well, you see...,” she said slowly.

When I was sixteen, I... died.”

“What...?”

I tensed up, wondering if I was really hearing this right.

“When one is brought back from the dead by Selene, they are marked upon their back with a double crescent moon. This gives them an ultimate authority with the title Saintess,” she said. “But it is a piece of a God that allows the person to return to the living. The original children manifested with abilities upon their revival and, like them, this same process was applied to myself. One of the lost pieces Thea had reclaimed was then bestowed upon me during my restoration. The mark itself amplifies whatever latent ability is inside, making it so

I could not age.

“How is it possible to return from the dead though?” I asked.

"The last Saintess, Aria, was distraught by my death and felt responsible," Myra said. "She petitioned Selene to gift her with my return... but I don't think she realised the full consequences of doing so. And don't get me wrong, I've had a very long, fulfilling life ... however, as awful as it might sound, I sometimes wish she hadn't of done it. I harbour a lot of regrets, a lot of pain... losing you just being one of many.

Aria... that was Ariadne, the Silver Saintess?

The one said to be insane?

If Myra was telling the truth, it seemed none of the things Ashwood had told me were accurate. Just what else was false?

"I had a choice to make," she continued. "When my closest friends all died, I soon realised that, even though I may look young, I didn't feel like it inside. My time had already passed even if my body remained. I was tired and just wanted to grieve in peace. It was therefore my decision to leave the pack to the next generation, to let it go on as was intended... and I left the Silver Mist. I hid myself away in isolation, needing a break from it all. It was only once I returned to briefly meet my great-great-grandchildren that I discovered the place was entirely destroyed. I was... too late."

She must have left before the war, not even realising it was happening.

"I should have done more to find you, Rheyna," she admitted. "I wanted to keep scouring every town for you, to not sleep until I did, but... things quickly changed. I had another choice to make... an impossible one at that."

"And what would tha-."

But before I could ask, I then heard something from upstairs. It sounded almost like...

...Coughing?

Immediately, I stood up on high alert.

"Is someone in the house?" I asked, reaching for my dagger.

But Myra was quick to follow and hold her hands up to stop me.

"Woah, it's okay," she said. "It's not an intruder. Let me introduce you." Introduce me? Was this another family member? The place was so quiet that it seemed strange for someone to be in the house and not come down upon my arrival.

They would have had to have heard Myra and I talking.

But I decided to not question it and, instead, followed behind Myra as she led us up a flight of stairs and down a hallway, walking until we finally reached a door. It was here that she then lightly knocked and opened it

There was a bedroom on the other side, nothing too special, but it was a lump under some bedsheets that instantly drew my attention.

...Because it was those bedsheets that then moved... and a girl heaved herself upright into a sitting position.

Her appearance instantly made me take a step backwards in shock.

She looked just like the Silver Saintess depicted in the temple. Possessing unnatural features that made it hard not to stare. With long silver hair and violet eyes, the similarities were uncanny. But, unlike in the painting, this girl seemed a lot younger and sickly.

Dark circles ringed her face, her complexion as pale as her hair. And she was weak...

incredibly so. Appearing to have trouble just sitting up, with no strength to support her tiny frame.

"...This is Clarissa," Myra said next to me. Born to the other lineage line. She is a descendent of Aria and her mate, Aleric."

However, before I could speak, the girl just simply coughed painfully and looked up at me completely unimpressed.

"Rheyna," she wheezed out slowly. "...What took you so long?"