

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 151

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 151—"You know me?" I asked, surprised.

She'd somehow known my name and implied we'd met already once before. Had we been childhood friends maybe? But that would have been back when I was five years old, her maybe even younger than me. That would be such a long time ago to recall.

Despite this though... I had a nagging in my head as if I'd heard her name recently. Somewhere I couldn't quite place... At Ashwood perhaps? No... that didn't seem right.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to think on it for long though.

At my question, Clarissa instantly looked even less enthused, her eyes narrowing slightly.

"...What kind of dumb question is that?" she replied curtly.

"Clarissa!" Myra snapped. "Where are your manners? Apologise. Right now."

"But, Myra...", she whined. "It's not-."

However, Clarissa wasn't able to finish her sentence, another coughing fit wracking through her chest.

"...Stupid girl," Myra sighed, walking over to her bedside.

She wrapped the tiny girl back in her blanket and forced her to lie down once more.

"Rest... you can talk later when you're feeling stronger," Myra said. "You won't do yourself any favours by pushing yourself."

"But I'm not feeling that b-."

Assumedly, the new fit of coughing contradicted whatever she was about to say.

"Rest," Myra ordered.

And all I could hear was mumbling complaints from the bedsheets as I was ushered back outside the room.

"Sorry about her. She can be a bit... blunt sometimes. Thinks she always knows better than everyone else."

"It's fine. No offence taken," I said, waving off the apology. "I am curious though... would it be okay to tell me what's wrong with her?"

Myra's face then grew serious, her eyes casting down.

"I wish I knew...", she said slowly. "She's been prone to sickness ever since I found her. Over the years it got progressively worse, though it was still manageable. But then, one day, it was as if she suddenly couldn't get out of bed at all anymore. Like a switch overnight. She was still mostly okay one day... and then the next she became what you see now. The poor thing...."

Since Myra found her...? So, that meant.....

"You couldn't keep looking for me all those years ago... because you had to take care of Clarissa," I stated, putting the pieces together.

Myra became quiet and, after a moment had passed, reluctantly nodded her head.

"...You had to choose between us."

"I couldn't drag a four year old around, especially whilst we were being hunted," she explained. "And Clarissa isn't like you... her appearance wouldn't pass as normal as I knew yours would be able to. Then adding into the mix that she was sick as well....? It meant I would be endangering her life for the small chance that I would be able to find you. A chance that felt slimmer than finding a needle in a haystack."

"...Clarissa needed you more."

I didn't say it with a tone of understanding, more so like it was an irrefutable fact.

"I'm all she has. Everyone else from her family has died," she said quietly. "I might not be related to her by blood but... every time I look at her... it's like I can see my best friend still alive. I couldn't just abandon her."

Myra was all I'd had as well, my only blood family remaining. Didn't that count for something?

I felt as tears began to sting at my eyes over hearing this, listening to how I'd had to suffer growing up because Clarissa was made a priority. Did I resent her for that? I wasn't sure. If I did, then I knew it was incredibly selfish of me to think so. It wasn't anyone's fault, least of all Clarissa's.

"...But I know now that I made the right choice," she continued, looking back towards me. "It's a relief to finally see that."

I frowned. She was happy that she chose her over me?

"What...?"

Myra moved closer and touched under my chin, lifting my face up.

"You clearly grew up to be so smart... so beautiful," she said. "I can feel an aura of strength surrounding you, something that tells me you were more than capable of looking after yourself. It's obvious that you didn't need me, Rheyna."

I bit back at the tears threatening to fall, holding my face firm.

Because I'd never intended to become strong. I'd had to in order to survive. Every single day was another trial, another test... another assignment. Failure was considered worse than death.

And not just that, but being poisoned... to have no control over my wolf. To not understand my ability, nor myself. To be unworthy of my mate. My life was a mess...

I* was a mess. A danger to anyone who got too close.

"...I'm far from perfect, Myra," I said honestly, trying to keep my voice steady. "I wouldn't praise me for anything. My upbringing was incredibly challenging, one where I had to do terrible things... a basis for many of the issues I'm still battling to this day. I have almost no control over any of it."

"Well... I might not be able to fix what is already done...", she said, looking as if she was about to cry herself. "But I can perhaps help you with what I can. Like for example, your ability... It's important that you learn how to keep that in check. Firing it off without realising can be dangerous, especially when you're quite gifted with it as you seem to be."

...Yes, that was just one problem of many plaguing me.

However, part of me wanted to argue back, to point out that things couldn't be fixed that easily by just helping one thing. But I knew this would be a very petty reaction, one stemming purely out of my exhaustion and from the emotionally charged atmosphere of the situation.

No, just as she had said, she couldn't fix the things already done. There was no point blaming her for everything that had gone

Book Two-Ch. # 42 wrong in my life.

...And so, I just sighed, forcing myself to relax.

"...I'd appreciate that," I said quietly.

Just one problem that was able to be helped ... yet what felt like a million others still waiting for me.

"You should rest," Myra said, clearly picking up on just how tired I was. "I imagine your trip here was probably not easy."

"That would be an understatement," I replied.

She nodded in understanding. "I'll prepare you a room. Tomorrow, I can help you with your ability and answer any more questions you might have."

And that was the last thing we discussed that day.

Before long, I found myself in a strange room, staring up at the ceiling as I waited for sleep to take me.

There had been so much information thrown at me, most of which was hard to digest. A lot of revelations and discoveries that I couldn't make up even if I tried. A part of me still wasn't sure if this was even real.

What did this mean for me now...? Did I stay here with Myra and Clarissa, hiding myself away in the ruins of my birthplace?

What about my father? I left him a note saying I would be home soon. There was no doubt in my mind that he had people out there trying to find me currently, unhappy with my abrupt departure.

Well... it was clear I couldn't change the past ... and I couldn't predict the future. For now, I was here. That was all that mattered.

And as I drifted to sleep, I dreamt of the same thing I always did these days. The very thing that always made me long for something I couldn't have.

...I dreamt of Kieran.

It was very late into the night when I awoke.

The house felt quiet, the window showing me just how dark it was outside. And, all the while I laid in bed, desperately trying to fall back to sleep, the feeling of my wolf whimpering inside was becoming unbearable.

"I know," I groaned in frustration. "Please... stop."

Their cries for Kieran weren't as easy to deal with now I wasn't at home. Normally, I could have had a glass of something to soothe me, but here...? Well, I doubted they had much luxury when it came to supplies. Myra was probably having to hunt for their food.

Annoyed, I tossed onto my side, trying to drown it out. But, in the end, it proved too much. Between the dull pain from a headache and the wolf crying, it really did feel like it was impossible to sleep.

Maybe some fresh air would be better?

I heaved myself out of bed and slowly made my way out of the room, heading back to where I remembered the front door. As I walked, I noticed how there was something about being here that seemed so eerie. Like an unnatural silence about it. Though I suppose that was due to being so far away from civilisation. Unlike Ashwood and the city I'd grown up in, this place was almost entirely uninhabited.

But as I made it back to the living room, my ears did pick up on one thing.

...The sound of quiet snores coming from the sofa.

As quietly as I could, I inspected the source of the noise and found Myra had fallen asleep there. With a book in hand, her body was curled up comfortably, looking as if she'd passed out even before turning off the lamp next to her.

She looked... so young.

Perhaps even younger than me as she slept, a peacefulness about her that erased the signs of pain she carried whilst awake. Just what did someone over a hundred years old even dream about anyway? So many things. must have happened, so many different people met.

But as she shifted her body slightly on the sofa, I seemed to get my answer.

"...Cai," she whispered. 2

They must have been incredibly important to her, able to still consume her thoughts even after all this time. I could only hope to be that important to someone one day.

And as my mind flicked back to Kieran, I was reminded of why I'd come downstairs.

I swallowed back the painful thoughts threatening to remind me and decided to continue on my way outside. However, before doing so, I stopped to pull a blanket over Myra, grabbing the book out of her hand.

...Something that accidentally caused her to stir.

"Mmmm... what?" she mumbled sleepily, waking up. "Cai? ...Oh. Rheyna?"

"Sorry... I didn't mean to wake you. Was just going outside for some air."

She sat up and rubbed at her eyes. "No... you're fine. I must have fallen asleep whilst reading. I find books help get my mind off of things.'

An escape. I could definitely relate to that right now. Only, her idea sounded far healthier.

"Anything good?" I asked, sitting down next to her.

But she gave me a small smile and shook her head. "Just a dumb fantasy novel. It's my favourite though. I've lost count of how many times I've read it."

I could see that. The book looked like it was barely holding together, possessing several makeshift repairs with duct tape. I guess she really didn't want it to fall apart.

"Couldn't sleep?" she asked, bringing my attention back.

"I slept a little," I admitted. "Just... there is a lot on my mind."

And she nodded. "It can be an adjustment at first. When you're not used to it, the information can make you feel like you're drowning."

Yes... That was accurate.

"I was unranked before... all of this," she continued, filling the silence. "No one even looked my way most of the time. I went from what felt like the very bottom of the pack, barely knowing anything... to being one of the core people involved in its management, a keeper of our kind's oldest forgotten secrets. It was a hard learning curve, particularly when I thought the biggest highlight of my life would just be settling down with a mate one day." 1

"...Did you ever get that wish?" I asked curiously.

"Yes... and much more," she said. "My Cai gave me a life beyond anything I could have hoped for. He was one of the first people to make me feel like I mattered, that I could be more than... just the girl who worked at their parent's orphanage. My happiest days were back when we were all together at high school. Just Cai, Aria and myself. Back when things were a lot more... simpler. For me, at least."

"...Does it still hurt? Being away from him, even after all this time?"

"Always," she answered. "A mate will give you the highest of highs... but their absence will bring you to your worst. When they die, it really is as if a piece of yourself goes with them. Like an aching in your soul... a void you cannot fill."

...Did that mean I had to feel this way forever? Right now, it was just a constant longing to return to them, but the way Myra explained it, it sounded as if it would only get worse as time went on.

"Don't ever let them go," she said, a hollowness in her voice. "Hold onto that feeling they bring you, cherish it for as long as you can. One day it will be gone whether you want it or not."

"And... what if they belong to another pack?" I asked hesitantly. "What if... what if their family is the enemy?"

Her face turned towards me slowly, holding an expression that reflected the pain in her tone. "A destined mate is selected at the time of one's conception, it cannot ever be changed. They are your other half, the person chosen to balance and improve you. If you're not open to that possibility, that is entirely your decision. Your decision, and no one else's. This is regardless of prior history."

I turned my eyes towards the ground, staring at a rug intensely.

It sounded as if she were telling me to find him. That being with him wasn't entirely impossible. But could I really...?

"Be warned though, Rheyna," she then added. "Just because a deity chose them for you, it doesn't always make it correct. In my experience and from what I've been told, Goddesses are no more perfect than mortals. Merely people with a higher power who are still very much fallible in their actions. A destined mate is still a choice... but just a choice by Selene."

"I'm not sure I'm following," I said.

But as she then turned to look out the window, a slight frown forming between her brows, she simply continued to speak as if in a daze.

"Regardless of how far away it is, the moon still controls the tide...", she mumbled, almost as if speaking to herself now. "You might like to think it cannot touch you... but it could nevertheless cause you to drown."

I wasn't sure I knew exactly what she meant by that, but I didn't press the topic anymore for that evening. It seemed that perhaps some things were best left unsaid for now, there always being tomorrow.

...And I had a strange feeling that the day was going to mark a new beginning in my life.

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 152

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 152—"Breathe," Myra said, gesturing with her hands for me to inhale. "Breathe and hold it."

We'd been at this for a few hours now, Myra doing her best to teach me what she could. She seemed to know a lot about how the ability worked despite not possessing it herself. Though, as she had already previously pointed out, she'd raised a few generations of Knight children.

Truthfully, I didn't expect to feel as comfortable around her as I did. We'd only just met but there seemed to be a deeper connection, something that was drawing me to her. A feeling of safety and reassurance in her presence, perhaps.

"...I am," I muttered.

"Then ask me for this pen," she said, holding it up in front of me. "Remember to dig deep inside, connect with that spark, and pull it forward."

I did as she instructed, doing my best to reach for it. But it was difficult, increasingly so. The more we did this, the worse a headache was pulsing in my mind, slowly becoming worse.

I reached... and reached... and reached... and when I thought I could feel the spark, I grabbed a hold of it.

"Myra... could you please give me the pen?" I asked, trying to maintain it.

I watched as her eyes dilated for merely a second, her hand twitching towards me. However, she quickly snapped out of it, clapping her hands to sever the link.

I'd learned this was a method of breaking the influence, the loud noise intending to startle me. Though she had warned me that this may not always work, especially once I become accustomed to the abrupt distraction.

"I know you can do better than that," she said, pursing her lips.

And I sighed in exhaustion.

"You're struggling to connect," she noted. "Are you holding yourself back? Don't be afraid to rely on your wolf if you need to. They can help if you let them."

And I bit the inside of my cheek, uncomfortable.

"I'd... rather not," I said.

She tilted her head. "Why? What's the matter?"

"Well... we just don't, ah... get along, I suppose," I admitted.

"But you're the same person?" she said, as if it should have been obvious. "Your wolf is just an extension of yourself."

And yet I hated that creature with a passion.

"If you are warring with your wolf, Rheyna, then it just tells me you have a lot of conflict inside. To hate her is to hate yourself. And to put blame on her for something she did is merely a method of scapegoating her for your own mistakes, your own guilt."

I let her words sink in, unsure how to feel.

...Could that really be true? I guess I had blamed the beast for most of my problems despite my own actions being not much better. Anything it had done, I had technically done as well.

My struggle was born out of fear, out of anxiety that things would go wrong if I allowed it even an inch. It was out of a hatred for losing control... out of feeling a painful longing for things I missed.

"How about trying... an emotional stimulus," she then said, making me look up confused.

She held a finger to her chin as if she were thinking.

"Aria had trouble with her wolf also. She once told me that she learnt how to use her ability by using emotional energy," she continued. "This is why stressful situations tend to heighten the effect. Perhaps try thinking of something that conveys a strong emotional response for you... then hold onto it as you go again."

The only strong emotion I was feeling right now was immense defeat and a keen desire for a relaxing bubble bath... but I doubted that would be good enough for this exercise.

And so I paused to think a little deeper.

I had no shortage of emotionally charged memories. I'd lived through enough pain, fear and heartbreak to last me a lifetime. But they were dangerous to use, requiring me to dredge up feelings I'd purposely buried for my own protection.

Though... I guess there were some more recent events that could work....

"Think... then breathe," Myra instructed. "Hold it in your chest and concentrate. Connect."

Connect. Right. Okay.

Connecting deep inside myself... to the newer emotions surrounding my time here....

Something that simply caused my headache to worsen, but I pushed through it.

"...Can I please have the pen?" I asked.

Only... it came out flat.

"Hold it, Rheyna!" Myra instructed sternly.

And she shoved her hand roughly against my chest, almost forcing the air out of my lungs as a crease formed between her brows. I knew she was just trying to help illicit an emotional response from me.

"You're not concentrating enough."

I thought about my time here, about my connection to Myra. How she felt somewhat like a mother figure, something I'd never known. A gap in my life being filled without even realising it had been sorely missing.

"...Please... give me the pen," I repeated, gritting my teeth.

"No," she replied, and shoved her hand against me once more, clearly not convinced.
"Try harder."

And so I dug deeper, to the feelings I was suppressing.

To the pain of being abandoned... to the anguish of having to grow up alone....

...To the jealousy over Clarissa, that she had been allowed to grow up with someone who treated her with love and kindness. To the betrayal that Myra had chosen her over her own blood.

"...Give me the pen."

Tears were starting to sting at my eyes now, but I did my best to hold on to the emotions, hoping that this was enough.

And, finally, Myra seemed to hesitate. Only if slightly.

Her body paused, a confusion coming over her... but it still wasn't enough.

I needed more... I needed to push past the barrier in my head... to grab a hold of the deepest corners of my mind.

...And I saw flashes of memories as I did so.

Memories that made no sense.

Of blood... of wolves... of a night filled with stars above.

And running.

So much running.

"Give me the pen," I huffed, unable to stop the tears from flowing now. "Give it to me, Myra."

Her hand twitched towards me, ever so slowly....

"Give me the pen, Myra!" I yelled.

...And she finally gave me what I'd asked for.

"Of course," she said, her voice in a dreamy state. "Whatever you want."

But I'd dug into something inside that went beyond anything I'd intended to, the memories starting to flash with more frequency. Just still images that perplexed me, snippets that I couldn't piece together.

But... I could feel it. Feel the emotion instilled within it.

And it was unbearable. All stemming from the memory... one where...

"...Don't leave me," I cried. "Promise me you won't stay behind."

I wasn't sure who I was talking to anymore but Myra's expression changed to one of confusion, the influence clearly still working but the context of the request unclear.

"What do you mean?" she then asked.

...And I blinked.

At the sound of her question, I blinked and pulled myself out of the memory, my body now shaking uncontrollably.

Too far. I'd gone too far.

I knew now that there was a barrier there for a reason, things I didn't want to recall. And as retribution for this carelessness, the excruciating pulse of the headache only became worse.

I took a moment to breathe and then, slowly, I looked back up towards Myra, finding her still quietly watching me in a daze.

It had worked. Maybe too well. An accomplishment in itself given how resistant she was to being influenced.

It was uncomfortable to see her like this, to be completely docile and willing to do anything I asked. In the wrong hands, an ability like this could be used for terrible things.

The kind of uses my father would make quick work of utilising. I knew that adding this to my already fatal skillset would only make the damage I could create far worse.

A cost maybe too great.

...And, as I took one final look at Myra... I proceeded to clap my hands.

"Oh... what?" she said, coming back to reality. "Did it work?"

She looked around the room, getting her bearings before finally focusing on my face.

"Rheyra? What's wrong? Oh... you're bleeding," she said, and began to fuss over me with a tissue, dabbing it against my nose.

I didn't move as she worked, instead choosing to further calm myself down.

"Don't try to force it so much," she scolded. "You'll learn how to use it eventually. It takes practice. These things aren't overnight."

She didn't seem to have any memory of what had just happened, much to my relief, but it still didn't make me feel better overall.

It was clear that this had more potential for harm than I ever realised.

"...I don't think I'll be training this anymore," I announced. "I appreciate your help though."

She looked instantly taken aback, her hand freezing. "What? Why? Rheyra-."

"Raven," I said quietly. "I go by Raven these days. It's... fitting."

I expected her to ask more about it but, instead, her expression became confused before slowly spreading into a small smile.

"With all the beauty from your Sullivan mother and the Knight eyes of your father," she said. "I'm almost sad that you don't take after me at all, but... it's not necessarily a bad thing. Just like that nickname of yours."

“Myra...?”

“Your maternal great-great-grandmother sat upon the original Council as well,” she continued. “She hailed from the Hidden

Moon pack, situated in the east. By far one of the most beautiful women I’d ever seen.

And, just like the rest of us, the people forcefully assigned her a nickname upon joining....”

She then stood up and retrieved a book from the bookcase, bringing it over to show me a picture inside. It contained the four faces I recalled from the painting in Ashwood, Myra’s unchanged one included, but also two other individuals that were new.

...One of which looked a lot like... me.

“The Silver Saintess, The Handler...,” Myra said pointing them all out. “The Siren... The Angel of Death.” Myra had sighed before saying her own, clearly unhappy with it. ” And then The Spider, who was Elder Luke Hastings... and The Raven.”

“...The Raven?”

“Iris Sullivan,” she said. “With pitch-black hair as dark as a raven’s wing and all the intelligence to match it. Your great-great- grandmother. She was a vital person in the establishment of the Silver Mist but, after her father passed, she did eventually return home to lead as Alpha there.”

I stared at her picture, the resemblance unquestionable.

“...Did Iris hurt people?” I asked cautiously. ”

A raven is... it’s a symbol of death.”

But Myra simply placed a hand on my shoulder, making me look up.

“A raven is a symbol of change. After all, that is all death is anyway. It is the end of one thing... and the beginning of something new, something better. A rebirth. Iris lived her life completely devoted to seeing the revolution of our kind. The death of the old regime.”

A symbol of... change?

This was my first time hearing this interpretation. I’d always associated it with the worst qualities of myself, using the name as both a justification and a reminder of who I was.

"Don't fear yourself... and don't allow people to label you," she said. "You are exactly whoever you say you are. No one else has the power to tell you otherwise."

I wanted to reciprocate her smile, but it came out more like a twitch of my lip, my heart not really in it.

"We continue tomorrow," Myra said, noticing my exhaustion. "Rest for now."

And I was grateful for the reprieve.

After she left, I continued to stare at the photo of the council, questions continuing to swirl.

Questions like... did my mother also look like Iris then? Were there photos of her and my father somewhere in this ghost town?

And then another thought crept in, one I hadn't considered yet...

...Did this mean my mother's family was still alive? Hailing from the Hidden Moon?

...Or were they also destroyed due to their alliance?

It was a lot of information and entirely too much to process for now. Perhaps something for another day.

...And, slowly, I closed the book.

It was very late when I awoke once more.

Just like the night prior, it was completely dark outside, the world feeling still as I laid in the strange bed.

I tossed and turned for some time, agitated, but I couldn't seem to shake the feeling of discomfort. Something that ultimately led me to decide on getting some fresh air to soothe my tension.

...And I headed out the bedroom door once more.

However, unlike the day before, there did seem to be one key difference on this evening.

...It wasn't so quiet.

"Rheyna... Rheyna..." someone called out, over and over again.

The voice was coming from down the hall, approximately in the direction I remembered Clarissa's room to be.

Was she calling for me...?

I approached slowly, following the sound all the way until I found myself outside her door. And it was here that I opened it.... finding her inside.

"Clarissa?" I asked hesitantly. "Was that you yelling my name?"

She heaved herself up and coughed a few times. "Where the hell have you been?" she snapped. "I was waiting for you all of last night."

"I'm sorry...? Did you ask Myra to see me or something...? I wasn't told."

But her eyes simply narrowed at me, her frown deepening. "What? No... we...."

And then something seemed to hit her, a realisation spreading across her face.

"Wait... you really don't remember me... do you?"

I tried to recall back to my childhood but unfortunately came up blank. I truly didn't have any idea who she was.

"Ah... no... I'm sorry," I said. "My memories are a bit faded. I don't remember much from when I used to live here. Were we friends?"

Though this seemed to be the wrong thing to say, her face somehow looking even paler than before as her eyes turned to the ground.

"So... if she doesn't...", she mumbled almost inaudibly, talking to herself. "Then...."

And her gaze then snapped back up to mine, now wide with panic.

"The guard!" she abruptly blurted out, making me flinch. "The guard who stopped you at the Silent Forest's gate. Was it a man with blonde hair or brown? What method did you use so he'd let you in?"

"W-what? What are you talking about?" I stuttered, taking a step back. "How do you

"FUCKING TELL ME, RHEYNA," she screamed, an urgency in her voice unlike anything I'd heard before. "DID YOU PERSUADE HIM OR-."

But her sentence was cut short.

Because in the eerie silence of the destroyed town, a place where not even a mouse dared to squeak... it was then that the sound of inhabitants loudly filled the air.

...The call of wolves howling in the distance. And it didn't sound so friendly.

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 153

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 153—"Is that...?" I tried to ask.

But I didn't get the question out as I heard Clarissa begin cursing next to me, doing so whilst struggling to get out of bed.

"What are you doing?" I gasped, seeing her shaking with the sheer effort required.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" she snapped. "Fucking help me up already."

"Hey! Stop being so rude to-."

"No!" she yelled, cutting me off. "From here on out you shut up and listen to my instructions. Now pick me up."

"What?"

"Pick. Me. Up. Onto your back. You'll need to carry me for this."

Stunned, I started to help her out of bed, but couldn't stop myself from asking another question anyway.

"What's happening, Clarissa? Are those howls...?"

"What's happening is that we're going to run and get Myra," she said, speaking as if I were a child. "Hopefully before it's too late."

"Too late for what?"

And she paused then for a moment, just long enough to look up and allow me to feel the full gravity of her words.

"...They're here," she said. "The hunt begins."

I didn't ask anything else after that, simply following her instruction. Something told me that I probably needed to listen to her if we were going to make it out of this.

"Myra is asleep on the couch," she directed as I lifted her up onto my back. Her arms immediately wrapped around my shoulders to hold on. "Once we find her, we'll only have two minutes to get out of the house."

"How do you- Nevermind."

And I started running down the stairs to where Myra's tiny frame had passed out, just as Clarissa had said.

"Myra, we need to go," Clarissa yelled.

They've found us. This idiot led them to our doorstep."

"...What?" Myra mumbled, waking up. What's going on?"

"We're running. Come on, we don't have much time."

Myra's eyes instantly became alert, the situation finally settling in. "Who?" she asked.

"Silent Forest."

Evidently, Myra knew exactly what this meant without further explanation and nodded her head.

"Okay, let's go."

But I hesitated, unsure how best to leave here safely, especially noting that I had Clarissa on me.

"I have a car," I provided. "It's parked a few streets away. If we can make it there, I can

"No," Clarissa cut off. "We have to go out the back and into the forest. They find us before we get to the car, not to mention it's too easy to track."

"They find us'...? Didn't she mean 'they *will * find us'?"

The way she kept speaking, it was almost as if she knew what was going to happen. But that was impossible, right...?

Unless...

And Myra's words then came to mind, listing off the different abilities of the original children.

'...One child held the ability of strength... another with foresight....'

Foresight.

Could she really...?

“MOVE, RHEYNA,” Clarissa then yelled in my ear, snapping me out of it. “Time to run.”

And I found my legs kicked into gear automatically, sprinting towards the back door where Myra was heading.

We ran into the night, the crisp air holding a chill within it, and at the pace we were going, it wasn't long before we entered into the forest. The branches and sticks tore at my clothing and skin, stinging me. But all I could really feel right now was the adrenaline pushing me to run faster.

“About one minute,” Clarissa then said suddenly.

“One minute...?” I huffed out. “Until what?”

“...Until the first encounter.”

I swallowed back my discomfort and kept my head straight, forcing my legs to keep moving.

Was I meant to fight the person off? That was going to be difficult with Clarissa on me. Maybe Myra was stronger than she looked?

But as I recalled her defensive greeting from the other day, I realised she hadn't appeared that natural when holding the dagger. Perhaps I could give her Clarissa to hold instead?

“Can we maybe swap-.”

Only, I didn't get the question out.

The sound of twigs snapping and leaves rustling quickly caught my attention, coming from somewhere to our left. Just as

Clarissa had said.

“Myra!” I yelled. “Get back!”

She had been running ahead of me to lead the way, her clearly knowing the woods far better than me. This had been the place she'd grown up, after all.

At the sound of my voice, she slowed down to regroup and turned to the direction of the noise.

“Someone is here,” I said, my eyes scanning the area.

The only light source was dim, coming from the moon above through the leaves. It wasn't nearly enough to spot anything through the thick brush.

"Where?" she asked.

But the question was then quickly answered as a wolf leapt towards us.

"MYRA!" I screamed

She noticed the wolf a second after I had and reached towards it, grabbing it by the throat mid-air. Despite her looks, she did seem to have a lot of strength in her small body. It was just her skill that was lacking in terms of actual fighting technique... as was evident in how she clumsily put the dog down.

"Time to keep going," Clarissa hurried once it was done.

And Myra quickly nodded her head, running to the front to continue leading the way.

"The others find the body soon," Clarissa said, a few minutes later. "We need to make sure that we're already past the clearing by the time the main group finds it."

"And if we don't get past the clearing?" I asked.

But Clarissa didn't reply.

I took that to be an answer in itself.

Faster and faster, I pushed my body to move. Putting more into this than anything else I'd ever done, the weight of their lives on my shoulders. Because I had done this. It was my fault. Clearly, whatever I'd done at the Silent Forest pack hadn't been enough, leaving a trail right to our location. It probably hadn't taken long for my claim of being a Lycroft to be proven false, it then bringing a revelation from Ashwood that a devil was still alive.

...And why else would a devil be heading south?

No, I had to keep going... keep moving... but, just as I saw the clearing up ahead, I then heard Clarissa's voice behind me. Words I hadn't wanted to hear.

"...We're not going to make it," she said quietly.

And my heart dropped.

"What do you mean?" I asked, panic rising inside me. "What's going to happen?"

But she didn't reply, her silence incredibly foreboding.

“...Clarissa?!” I yelled. “What’s going to happen?!”

However, she just wrapped her frail arms around me a little tighter.

“...Keep running,” was all she said.

And I tried to do just that.

...Holding on to hope that she was wrong and things really would be okay.

Because everything was going to be fine. ...Right?

A chorus of howls then sounded in the far distance behind us, assumedly finding the body we’d left there. They were only minutes behind us... and their numbers were large. I didn’t need to see it for myself, the noise

alone was enough to tell me that we were outnumbered.

Severely so.

“...Myra!” Clarissa then called out.

“We need to keep moving,” I insisted. ”

Don’t distract her.”

But she didn’t listen.

“Myra!” she yelled again.

And I watched as Myra came to a stop in front, turning around to face us.

“What’s wrong?”

“An ambush,” Clarissa apred. “Up ahead, behind those trees. They’ve been hunting in two groups and now the second one has caught up, cutting off our escape. We’re trapped.”

“Well, then... Myra can look after you, Clarissa,” I said. “Let me fight them off.”

“There are too many. Before you’re even halfway through, the rest of their pack shows up behind us. Fighting all of them takes too long.”

“Then what are you saying?!” I yelled. “Just speak plainly, goddammit! I don’t know-.”

“...Okay,” Myra said quietly, interjecting with a nod towards Clarissa. “I understand.”

There was something in the way they looked at each other, as if saying something without speaking. Something I wasn't privy

"Wait... what's happening?"

But everyone seemed to ignore me as Myra began walking towards the trees ahead of us. To where the ambush was waiting. The only thing I could do was follow behind, the sounds of howls still catching up in the distance behind us.

Just as Clarissa had said, a large number of wolves then emerged to block our way as we approached the tree line. An impressive number that must have been at least half their pack.

"Don't make this difficult, Devils," someone then shouted from within the forest. "

Surrender to your death peacefully."

This didn't seem to deter Myra though.

No, she kept walking confidently, her head held high. Almost like a shimmer around her as the moonlight streamed down, now bright in the open space of the clearing.

"...What is she...?"

"Shhh," Clarissa said. "Just... wait here and let her do what she needs to do."

Apparently, what she 'needed' to do was continue walking towards the enemy, completely unarmed and allowing herself to become surrounded. The wolves encircled her with warning growls and bites snapping towards her, though all of them were too afraid to get close to her. It seemed they were just as confused as me.

But then before too long had passed... it finally happened.

Just as Myra had majority of the ambush wolves around her... something impossible occurred.

"...Myra," Clarissa whispered quietly. "...The forgotten second Saintess."

And I watched as Myra then planted her feet firmly on the ground, breathed in deep... and yelled.

Only... it wasn't any normal kind of yell.

"*DISARM YOURSELVES AND YIELD*!" she ordered, her voice ringing out clearly. "*I COMMAND YOU ALL TO KNEEL*." 1

...Immediately, the air rippled with her authority, waves of pressure washing over the wolves surrounding her. Something that

I could feel the weight of despite it not even being directed at myself.

And it worked.

One by one, the wolves slowly surrendered, submitting themselves to Myra. It was truly amazing to see, to watch her power as she commanded so many at once.

Such a thing seemed impossible, too powerful for one person to possess. Was this the ultimate authority she had spoken of? The true power of a Saintess?

It was... incredible... yet terrifying.

However, not everything was apparently as it initially seemed.

Because after a minute went by... it was as if an exhaustion overcame Myra.

She fell to her knees, her legs giving out from under her. Even from the distance I was behind her, I could clearly see her breathing heavily, struggling to cope with whatever she'd just done.

"...Myra never wanted to be a Saintess," Clarissa said. "She never learnt how to harness its full power; her caring nature loathing the true authority it gave her. She believed its potential for oppressing others wasn't her place to dictate. History now only remembers her as a Luna, as an Angel of Death... yet always forgets Saintess."

"We need to help her get up," I said, starting to move towards her. "We need to...."

Though, to my horror... I then saw as a man appeared out of the woods, running towards her with a dagger in hand. Clearly unphased by the order Myra had given, or, at least, able to have broken out of it.

"...MYRA!" I screamed, my pace quickening. "MYRA, GET UP! YOU NEED TO GET UP!"

They were gaining on her, clearly going to make it before I could. But I couldn't allow for that... I couldn't....

But as Clarissa's grip then tightened on me, her head moving closer to my ear... she proceeded to speak words that made me momentarily forget how to breathe.

"...Don't watch this part," she whispered.

And as her hands tried to cover my eyes, I was forced to wrestle her off just so I could resume running.

“No, stop! NO... No.... I....”

I had to do something... This couldn't be... I...

But the second I turned back around... the worst possible outcome happened.

A literal waking nightmare.

Under the moon and stars of the night sky above, the bodies of frozen submissive wolves surrounding us...

...I was forced to witness as the man's dagger came crashing down towards Myra's weak body. Now too exhausted to even raise a hand in her own defence.

There was nothing I could do.

“NOOO!” I screamed, the sound blood- curdling.

It had really happened. It really...

And I watched as my last living family member was killed right in front of me.

...No... no... no... this wasn't... I can't...

My vision then quickly turned red... my body beginning to shake... as if reality itself was slipping away.

...But the universe cruelly refused to give me even one minute to breathe.

Because it was then that five others emerged from the forest slowly, some shifted, others. not. Assumedly stragglers who hadn't been in range during Myra's order. But all of them now looked towards me as I approached, readying themselves for combat.

Except I didn't see them*....

No... I only saw their deaths.

“*Don't move another fucking inch!*” I screamed, feeling the spark inside. “You're all going to pay... I swear....”

And, like a woman possessed, I found myself moving on instinct with lightning speed.

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 154

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 154—I was a devil.

Never before in my life had I felt those words to be truer than in this moment. This very second as I stood above the bodies of several enemies as they bled out around me. Nothing but rage and pain consumed me inside, feeling absolutely no remorse as I had ripped them to shreds.

From one person to the next, I had methodically ended each of them, an incredible speed in my movement as if I were maneuvering purely by muscle memory alone. Not that I had really needed to act so quickly. Because the entire time I had attacked, they had just stood there completely still, awaiting their turn. Like lambs to the slaughter, unable to move even an inch... just as I had told them to. Only a flash of fear in their eyes betrayed them as I stole their last moments.

Now, I breathed heavily, still shaking from the ordeal... still completely in human form, yet feeling as if I'd had no control over myself.... Nor had I wanted it.

No... I might have moved without being fully aware of my actions... but I didn't fight it.

I'd relished it.

But as I started to come to grips with what was happening, there was apparently one thing that was finally able to break my trance.

Just one sound capable of bringing me back to reality.

...The soft whimpers of Myra behind me.

Immediately, I spun around and ran to her, finding her body growing colder as the wound gaped open. A sight that made me sick to look at.

"...Mmmm... Cai? Is that you...?" she asked, struggling to really see me.

I quickly reached for her wound, trying to apply pressure.

"No... It's Rav- it's Rheyna," I said. "I'm here. I'm... I'm going to get you out of here."

But her lip twitched into a faint smile, her eyes turning upward towards the sky.

"Rheyna... I'm not immortal," she said softly, her voice so quiet. "Youthful longevity does not make me invincible. Besides... I think this is the universe's way of finally correcting itself. I think... I think I was always meant to die in this clearing. No ... I was told that I did die here once. In another timeline. How... poetic."

"Myra... Myra, you're not making any sense," I said desperately. "Timelines? I don't.... I don't understand."

And she closed her eyes, shaking her head ever so slightly.

"No... I don't suppose you would..." she said, slipping away.

"Hey! Myra! You need to open your eyes now

I'm going to get you out of here," I cried, trying to shake her a little. "I'm going to save you. I'm going to... I'm..."

"Rheyna... leave me... behind. My time... is done..." she rasped, her breathing becoming more shallow. "Please... save Clarissa. Promise me... you'll save her."

"NO! Don't say that... I refuse. You're not allowed to stay behind..."

It was getting harder to see her through my own tears, yet it was clear that she was quickly losing consciousness despite everything I was doing to try and save her.

"Did you hear me, Myra?!" I choked out. "I said you can't stay here. You can't... you can't leave me."

Her body then seemed to relax, a calm washing over her... and as I felt her last breath slowly leave her, I could have sworn I heard something whisper from her lips... Something like....

"...Cai," she sighed.

...And it was over.

She was... gone.

A strangled sob escaped me as I knelt over her, choking with so much agony and yearning. To have had something so briefly, something that gave me hope and filled a hole that had been sorely missing... only to be taken so soon.

...This world was too cruel.

Almost like a game of giving me what I'd always wanted... only to rip it away. Just like with Ashwood. Just like with Kieran.

It was sickening.

"Time to go," Clarissa then said to my left, limping towards me. "We don't have much time."

It looked like I'd hurt her during my attempt to run to Myra, having thrown her to the ground in haste. But...

But now she walked up to me as if nothing had happened, her focus remaining only on the trees ahead. Never looking at Myra. As if the woman who had raised her didn't just die.

It was enough to reignite that same spark of fury inside me from earlier.

"You knew..." I said, thinking back to how she'd tried to cover my eyes. "You knew and you didn't say anything. If you'd just told me sooner, I could have helped... I could have saved her."

At this, her eyes finally snapped to meet my own, irritation flaring within.

"And then what?!" she bit back. "You'd miraculously carry both me *and* an exhausted Myra to safety whilst we're being hunted? Get all three of us killed when you're inevitably slowed down severely? I know you're strong, Rheyna, but even you have limits. Stop taking this out on me and realise that this was the only way. That this was... what she wanted."

Her attitude quickly made me angrier, standing back up to confront her.

"Are you insane?! What she 'wanted'?" I shouted. "Are you actually implying that she wanted to get killed? Because that's-."

"...Yes," she interrupted calmly. "That's exactly what I'm implying."

"What the hell are you even saying right now?!"

"I'm saying that, for Myra's entire life, she had always put family and friends above everything else. Everything. Even to the point of living these past sixteen years purely for us," she said, turning her attention back towards the trees. "But she grew tired of being alive a very, very long time ago, Rheyna. She knew that commanding all of these wolves would mean she'd become incapacitated, and she was prepared for this very outcome. She was ready. And now she has died in a way that honours the very thing she always held dearest; her commitment to those she loved, the only thing that has kept her going for so long. Don't discredit her sacrifice due to your own selfish desires for a mother figure."

"Take that back! Right now!" I growled, barely able to stop myself from attacking her. "How dare you bring up my upbringing! At least you had someone, Clarissa. At least you got to know what it felt like to have a-."

And as I finally caught sight of her face once more, just the tiniest of glimpses from the side, I could have sworn I saw a bit of moisture near her eyes.

“...You’re right, I did know the feeling of a loving mother figure. And no matter how many times I see her death, it never gets easier,” she said quietly. “However, at the end of the day....”

“...What?”

But she ignored me, rubbing her face before turning to look at me once more. “At the end of the day... all of this is going to be in vain if we don’t leave. Right now. Did you really want her to die for nothing, Rheyna? Surely, not even you are that petty.”

And I gritted my teeth, the tiniest morsel of sympathy I’d had for her instantly diminishing.

...Though I did realise she was right. On one thing, at least.

I didn’t want to make Myra’s sacrifice mean nothing.

“Come on,” she snapped. “Pick me up. We don’t have much time.”

Truthfully, she should feel lucky if I didn’t just leave her ass behind for how she was treating me. But... Myra had wanted me to save her. It was her last dying wish.

...And so I felt like I had no choice.

Something that ultimately led me to do as she instructed, the two of us quickly sprinting into the woods once more.

...Where am I going?” I asked after a minute, though I hated to do even that.

Myra had been my guide and now, without her, it really was like I was running blindly in the dark.

“Turn left here,” Clarissa said. “We’re going to start looping around the edge and heading south now.”

“South?” I asked confused. “Why? We’re already so far north.”

“Exactly,” she muttered, irritated. “As we speak, they’re sending people to the northern border. They’re expecting us to try and cross there since that’s the direction we’ve been running up until now.”

“They’ll just track our scent and follow us,

I pointed out. “Besides, I can’t run forever... they’ll catch up eventually.”

"I'm aware, Rheyna. And I've already got a plan for that. But, just for now... keep running."

And I did as she said, choosing not to argue further.

We ran for some time, a length that

surprised even me since I expected my endurance to give out long before it did. But somehow I managed to push through it, unwilling to fail again. Even if it was just for an entitled, bratty girl who I was quickly starting to loathe.

It was only after an hour or so later that a new scent finally did hit me, something clean and refreshing. Like... water.

"You can slow down now," Clarissa said, much to my relief.

I really was at the end of my rope at this point, pain shooting down my legs and back. Clarissa was quite tiny but even her weight was quickly taking a tax on me.

"There is a creak just up ahead," she instructed. "You need to walk into it and continue south."

"...Into it?" I clarified, panting.

"Yes... it's so they can't trace our scent," she said. "The water will make it incredibly difficult for them to follow, especially if they don't know where we're going in the dark."

"...And where **are** we going?"

"...To an unmarked cave," she answered. "An old rogue's den. They won't find it on any of their maps."

...I didn't have the energy to ask any more questions after that.

As it turned out, trekking through the water was exceedingly tough in my exhausted condition. At several points, I found myself almost tripping on the slippery rocks under the surface, the almost knee-high current constantly pushing me away. It took everything I had just to keep putting one foot in front of the other, knowing that if I slowed too much, I might come to regret it.

"...It should be somewhere here," Clarissa said after another twenty minutes had gone

By this point, I didn't even have the strength to reply, just completely focused on moving as she searched the area around us.

...A task that didn't take too long.

"There! There it is," she said, pointing over my shoulder. "Behind those bushes, you can sort of see the outline of a cave entrance behind it."

And she was right. Just barely visible and easy to miss, I could sort of make out where the cave was meant to be. A good hiding spot considering that it was so hard to see.

"You're almost there.... Just a little bit further, Rheyna," she said, pausing to cough a few times. "There is a larger opening at the end of the main tunnel. We'll find some old beds there. Nothing too fancy but it's better than the floor. We can rest there safely for the night."

...Just a little bit further. I needed to go... just a little bit more.

I could do this.

These were the thoughts I kept repeating in my head as I forced myself through the intense pain I was now in. Never had I pushed my body to this level of extreme exhaustion, not even close. Which was saying something considering my long history of extensive training.

"...You're almost there....," she encouraged a minute into the dark tunnel.

And I gritted my teeth.

So close now. I was so close.

Close enough to vaguely see where the darkness opened up ahead, indicating a larger space was there.

...Close enough to see the outline of walls... of furniture... the basic shape of beds.

...Close enough to find myself then collapsing on top of one, unable to move another muscle.

Soon, the only sound in the cave was that of my laboured breathing filling the air, my body at its absolute limit and crying out for rest.

And as I found myself quickly passing out, the sweet relief of sleep swiftly approaching to release me, I felt as Clarissa's hand then gently touched my head.

"...Sleep well, Rae," she whispered.

...And then the darkness took me.

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 155

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 155—I wasn't sure how long had passed, but I did eventually awaken to the sound of violent coughing near me.

...A noise that instantly reminded me of my current situation.

"Wakey, wakey," Clarissa said nearby.

And I groaned, rolling onto my side as the pain returned.

My entire body was aching, completely stiff along every joint and bone. I would have given anything for even the tiniest bit of pain relief medication.

"Come on, Rheyna," she nagged. "You can't stay in bed forever."

...However, the more I did slowly wake up, the more I took in.

I could vaguely hear her shuffling around nearby, coughing every few steps she took. Clearly feeling a bit better despite her limp earlier. And not just that either. I could also smell... something. Food, of some sort.

... Was she cooking?

At that, I mustered all my energy to pull myself upright, hissing from the pain that shot through me. And, sure enough, there she was.

Like a little cave goblin waddling around a fire. It seemed she actually was making something to eat.

"Hungry?" she asked, crouching down to stir the pot.

I stared at her in disbelief.

"...How did you manage to find something worth cooking? I doubt you went out hunting."

But she pouted a little and kept stirring.

"It's just a soup made out of some plants I found. Luckily, I didn't have to go far."

I curiously got up to inspect the inside contents, discovering some sort of green... goop within. I couldn't help but scrunch my nose at the sight of it.

Definitely not my definition of 'food'... but I suppose it was better than nothing.

"Yeah, okay, would like to see you do better, princess," she snapped, reading my expression. "Can't always live off daddy's five-star meals, like some people. Just be grateful you're getting a meal at all."

That was awfully... specific. Had I mentioned my father at the house?

Nevertheless though, I frowned at her attitude, my irritation already starting to quickly spark, and I hadn't even been awake for five minutes by this point.

"I didn't say anything," I argued, sitting down by the fire begrudgingly. "Besides, I... appreciated the effort."

"Yeah... yeah...", she mumbled. "Like I don't know what that means."

But I was far too tired to put up with this today, especially since I was in so much pain right now due to saving her stupid ass.

"What the hell is your problem with me anyway, Clarissa? Like stop mumbling complaints all the time and just tell me already. Or are you just being a bitch for the sake of it? Because it feels like you've had it out for me since I first arrived."

Her eyes instantly snapped up at me then, a quiet rage within her gaze.

"Oh, *I'm the one with the problem?" she asked, her voice as cold as ice. "You have no freaking idea how ironic that is coming from you of all people. I'd laugh if doing so wouldn't make me die from coughing. Think you've already killed enough of our kind for one day. Wouldn't want to give you the satisfaction of another so soon."

...That did it.

It hit a spot deep inside, hurting enough to make me stop caring who she was.

"You don't know me, you stupid brat!" I yelled. "And even if you did, what good would knowing me as a five year old be? What... did I push your face in a sandbox too hard? Tug on your pigtails? Trip you during hopscotch? Get over yourself already. Imagine holding a grudge for sixteen years. Ridiculous."

"I KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU," she shouted back. "In fact, I know you better than you clearly know yourself! The absolute audacity you have to say that to me when I'm not the one cowardly pretending as if nothing happened, Rae."

"Don't call me that!" I growled. "And how do you even know that name?!"

"Oh? Are we still in the disliking 'Rae' phase?" she mocked. "Then which name are we choosing today, huh? Rheyra Knight? Raven Reid?-"

“-How could you possibly kn-.”

“How about what others call you? The Rogue Luna? Devil of the Mist? The Lycroft heir’s whore?! -.”

“-I’LL KILL YOU-.”

*

“-YOU ALREADY ARE!” she screamed back, taking a few seconds to cough before continuing. “...But don’t you dare say I don’t know you. I know EVERYTHING about you. Everything*. I know about your father and his abusive treatment. I know about Kieran, about how you still dream of him every night. I know about the day you were adopted, the children you hurt... I know about your first kill, how when your father handed you that manila folder, it caused you so much anxiety that you threw up in the toilet for hours afterwards.”

“Have you had someone spying on me this

whole time?! What the fuck is wrong with

“-I know about your wolf... your poisoning ... I know about your greatest fears, your biggest regrets, and about every single secret you have ever harboured. And once you finally decide to wake the fuck up, we can stop these stupid pretences and get back to work.”

“How do you know all of this?!” I screamed, terrified. “I don’t understand how you could possibly-.”

“BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME!” she shouted. ”

YOU. TOLD. ME.’

“No, I didn’t!”

And she cried out in frustration, turning back to the pot in front of her with a look of defeat.

“You’re pathetic, Rheyna,” she spat. “I bet this is just your way of hiding from reality instead of facing the truth. You think I don’t want to do that too? Play ignorant? I already told you that this was it from now on. I’m not going to enable you in this memory loss crap.”

All of the screaming had done nothing except give me a pulsing headache, accumulating with my already painful muscles and joints. And now, on top of that, I was coming to the realisation that Clarissa was probably not quite right in the head.

"... You're insane," I said in a daze, staring ahead at nothing. "Like... certifiably insane. Weren't you descended from that alleged crazy Silver Saintess? Was it hereditary? Your ability probably... I don't know, gives you insight into people's lives and now you've deluded yourself into thinking we know each other."

-*SLAP*

My face instantly spun to the side, shocked more than anything that it had happened. Sure, it stung a little where her hand had connected, but her strength was far too weak to really do anything.

No... it didn't hurt.

But it did piss me off.

"Hey! Don't-."

"No, YOU don't," she interrupted. "You should know better than anyone how it's exactly lies like that which are part of the problem. The reason we're trapped in this dumb cave right now."

And I did feel a little bad.

She was right. It was misconceptions and rumours that had apparently brought our pack to its doom, its fall from grace. Even implying it was true during the heat of an argument was too far. After all, so many people had died because of that very thing.

A thought that then made me bite my tongue, stubbornly looking away as she continued to stir the soup. Every few seconds she would grumble under her breath, doing so between coughs.

Truthfully, by this point, my vision was getting blurry, my headache only becoming worse. I probably needed rest more than I needed food. But before I could voice this observation, my ears did manage to pick up on something from her unintelligible quiet rambling.

...Something hard to miss.

"...Going through this again... suffering for nothing..." she mumbled. "...Should have let her stay dead."

"...What?" I asked, turning back to look at her. "...What did you just say?"

"Dead!" she repeated loudly, her expression completely serious. "I should have let you stay dead! I don't have the energy to babysit you through this again. I needed you on

your A-game, your peak, the infamous Raven who could make people shake in fear by just the mention of your name alone. Not... whatever this is."

"...What do you mean... 'dead'?"

And I felt as another pulse in my head caused me to wince, needing to bring a hand up to touch my temple.

"So, you do know!" she accused. "I can see it all over your face!"

"No, I don-... ahh."

Flashes.

My head started to flash with images that caused more pain. Pushing against the barrier in my head.

"Yes, you do," she insisted. "You have to. Just think, goddammit!"

"ENOUGH."

But the response had been automatic, leaving my lips without realising. A force behind it that remained adamant.

... Though I attributed it to her pushing this absurd narrative on me.

I quickly stood up and walked towards the bed, now needing to lie down more than anything.

"Don't you dare walk away! Remember, Rheyna!"

"NO."

"How have you been lying to yourself all these months? Haven't you found it weird that you seem to know things that happen? Feelings of recognition with people you've never met? Echoes of memories you can't seem to recall where from?"

Blood. Pain.

So cold... I'd been so cold.

"Stop it!"

"Look at your back, Rheyna! You want to deny that too, huh?"

"There's nothing there. Just a raven tattoo."

"Is that so? You truly believe that?"

"Of course..." I said, struggling to breathe.

Only, she didn't seem deterred in her relentless quest.

"Then prove it," she snapped.

And she shakily stood up, walking over to a corner where a blanket covered an old mirror. She pulled it off and simply pointed at it, gesturing for me to approach.

But I immediately felt as tears began to fall from my eyes, shaking my head slowly.

"No... I don't need to. I don't...."

"Do it, Rheyna."

"No. I-I...."

"DO IT."

...And I cautiously stepped closer, the pain in my head increasing.

Because I shouldn't look. I didn't need to. I only had a raven tattoo, I knew that.

There was nothing there.

There was nothing wrong.

Clarissa was just crazy. She was....

And I slowly pulled my shirt up, turning my back towards the mirror... my tears continuing to fall....

"Rheyna, the infamous devil Saintess," Clarissa said. "The Raven. Known as the harbinger of death. Marked in her rebirth, granting ultimate authority within her title. And yet, in all her glory, eventually came to a slow, excruciating end. One where she, despite her best efforts, was unable to prevent the death of our lineage."

"...No..." I whispered.

But she was right.

I could keep lying to myself, keep refusing to look... but there was certainly more than just a raven tattoo there....

It was almost like... bite marks. Semi-circles littering my skin, overlapping in their design to the point where it was almost impossible to make out what they were.

...Unless you knew. Unless you knew exactly what you were looking at.

And if someone is marked with a double crescent moon upon their rebirth then...

...How many times?" I asked, the air choking in my throat. "...How many times. have we done this, Clarissa?"

I couldn't look away, my heart racing as I stared at the irrefutable evidence...

...The branding on my skin impossible to miss....

...And I proceeded to hear words I never expected to hear.

"...Seven," she answered. "This is the seventh time... and it is the last."

Read Novel A Gift From The Goddess Chapter 156

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 156—"Seven times?!" I gasped. "H-how...? How is this possible? And why can't I...."

I could see the faintest traces of memories, but they were all nonsensical, just painful flashes of random images rather than providing any sort of insight. Yet the more I tried to dive deeper to look, the more it pushed back at me.

"Come on, Rheyna! Look!" Clarissa demanded, pointing at my marks. "Doesn't this look familiar? Don't you remember?!"

"I-I... I don't know... I don't think so. I just ...")

"GODDAMMIT!" she yelled, a fury in her eyes that made me flinch. Though it only flashed for merely a second. Just a second before her gaze then slowly fell to the floor, a look of defeat washing over her. "...God- fucking-dammit. Why now?"

It was the first time I'd seen her look so upset. Not angry anymore, just... sadness. An emptiness as she accepted that I wasn't able to tell her what she needed to hear. A change from her normal bratty attitude.

"Clarissa... There's no point in wasting time if this really is all true," I said awkwardly, doing a bad job of trying to navigate her mood. "You'll just... need to explain to me what's happened. Does this mark thing have something to do with why you're sick?"

Her little body sighed and was quiet for a moment, assumedly trying to pull herself together. The news of my amnesia had hit her incredibly hard.

“...I’m not sick, per se,” she started after a minute had passed. “Sick implies you can get better. The truth is that I’m just... slowly dying. Again. The first time being when I was just a small child with my parents. The war was soon ending and we were ambushed. There was nowhere we could go, nowhere we could hide. I remember being scared... and then there were enemy wolves surrounding us. But we’d drunk that spiked suppressor water. Everyone had for months. And inevitably we were all cut down.”

“But if you were brought back, doesn’t that also make you a Saintess then?” I asked.

“Well... not quite,” she said. “No, I’m... I’m a bit different.”

I went to ask what she meant but, before I could, she pulled aside the top of her pyjama shirt so I could see her skin better. And though the small campfire light wasn’t great, I could still make out what I needed to. I could still see her inflamed red skin, her veins spreading in an incredibly painful- looking manner.

“Clarissa...,” I whispered, having too many questions.

“I contain the immense power of a God, yet it’s trapped within the frail body of a mortal. Not just a tiny piece to help revive such as you, but enough so that it burns away at me from the inside.”

“But... why?”

“Selene,” she answered as if it should have been obvious.

“The... Moon Goddess? The one that apparently created werewolves?”

“The one who broke her natural laws to create us, yes,” she corrected. “My great- great grandmother, Aria, had been the one to originally discover her dirty laundry. Turns out that making a sub-species of humans breaks whatever contract she had with the new Gods for neutrality. It’s how Aria bargained for Myra to be brought back to life. Blackmail, if you can believe it.”

“This is a lot...,” I said, struggling to follow.

“Look, long story short, Selene needed a way to hide. From what I’ve been able to piece together, the Gods were on her back and wanted to start digging into what she’s been up to. And she knew what they would find. So when the war inevitably killed off the ranked Silver Mist members capable of being a vessel, she chose me of all people to be the guinea pig. Shoved a large portion of her power into me so she could pass herself as a mortal to hide. Got the idea from what she did to her dead mummy-dearest, Thea.”

“So... you’re a Goddess now?” I asked.

"No. As I said, I'm a mortal. I don't have any omnipotent higher understanding and the things that I do know, I only know because we've both been figuring the puzzle out slowly with every timeline. But I did pick up her ability for rebirth, assumedly since foresight at its core foundation is just a type of time manipulation. Though it's not as strong as Selene's, of course. Not to mention that every time I use it, I burn up my insides. more and more. Which is why we can't fail this time, Rheyna. I-I can't... I can't do this again. One way or another, this is my final battle."

"So then how does it end? What do we need to do?"

And her expression slowly became dark, a cloud of hatred forming around her. A seriousness to her that took me off guard.

"More than anything... at whatever cost... we need to stop Allison."

If I'd been surprised by her quick change in manner before, I was far more surprised by this revelation now. To think the young girl could do anything that warranted this kind of reaction was hard to comprehend.

"...Allison... Lycroft?" I asked confused. "Kieran's sister? What? How is she involved in all of this?"

"Because no matter what we do, no matter how many wars we win, something always happens... and the little psycho brings forth doomsday."

... It must have been the reason why I'd hated her from the beginning, an explanation for why I'd always had the urge to rip her to shreds. I must have retained some sort of recollection. Deep down, I must have known that I needed to stop her. But in my ignorance and forgotten memories, I hadn't gone through with it. I'd played nice with her for Kieran's sake.

...But something still seemed strange.

"How could she even manage to start doomsday, anyway?" I asked slowly. "From what I can tell, she's just a kid... a bit religious crazy, sure, but that's not entirely her fault, I guess. I don't see how she could. be some diabolical mastermind, thwarting our plans in all the past timelines."

Clarissa scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Well, I'm certain that 'kid' is the key to stopping all of this."

"But how?" I pressed.

"Because something always happens...."

"What happens?"

I was getting agitated at this point, but it was her next words that made me freeze up, a fear chilling its way through my body.

“...To Kieran. Something always happens to Kieran.”

I stared at her, too scared to ask for details, yet also wanting so badly to know. A confliction that brought a sharp stinging pain to my head, making me wince.

She took a second to allow her words sink in but, after a moment had passed, slowly proceeded.

“Whether he goes missing, is killed, gets captured... it’s always enough for Allison. She wastes no time in praying to Selene for vengeance,” Clarissa said. “She prays for the demise of all us ‘devils’. Only... Selene isn’t taking calls right now as she’s living her best mortal life. And so, instead of Selene hearing the prayer... another receives it instead. A Goddess by the name of Nemesis, one who presides over balance, law and retribution. Of course, it doesn’t take her long before she discovers what Selene has been trying so hard to hide. No, worse than that, it doesn’t take her long to discover *us

*, two creatures worse than simply mutated wolf people, but mortals who hold pieces of Gods. ‘Abominations’ as she kindly put it.”

“You spoke to her?” I asked, surprised. “To this Goddess, Nemesis?”

“Of course,” she answered. “She is doomsday. The end. It’s not the wolves who kill us, they’re not nearly powerful enough to stop us, but there is nothing we can do against a fully powered-up Goddess with the ultimate authority to bring balance to the world. And she wins. She always wins. And at that point, I’m forced to burn myself up inside more and more just to bring you back in time a few months to try again. Or, at least, that was the case before. No... as I already mentioned, this is it, Rheyna. No do- overs. I can barely even stand up anymore.”

I stared her up and down. It was true, she looked in terrible shape. I could only assume then that the dramatic overnight change in her health, the one Myra had spoken of, was therefore because of me. Because of the day we must have come back in time to. Though this did tell me something else as well.

“You didn’t tell Myra,” I stated as a fact. “You didn’t tell her what was happening. Why would you keep this from her? She could have helped-.”

“You think I hadn’t tried that?” she snapped, pain filling her eyes. “You think I’d keep it from her without a good reason? Simply knowing what will happen doesn’t make things always end perfectly, Rheyna. If so, we would have already fixed our mistakes the second time. No, at best, we’d only figured out how to prolong her life for a month before the universe finds some way to claim her.”

She maintained eye contact, staring at me intensely for a moment, before finally breaking.

"So, you tell me. Should I have let her die thinking she had unfinished business in stopping doomsday? That she was leaving us to fend off more danger?" And she turned around to seat herself by the fire, clearly exhausted from the duration of standing. "... Or should I have let her die in peace, allowing her to reunite with her Cai without worrying about us? Because I know that's all she had truly wanted."

"I...."

It was something I couldn't answer, which she already knew. To make such a decision on Myra's behalf was one I was sure she didn't want to have to make. But... if she was right, and there really was no way to guarantee she lived every time, then... then maybe it was the kinder thing to do.

Though, I couldn't help but feel a pang of emptiness. Because if we really had managed to prolong her life even for a few weeks, then that was time I'd spent getting to know Myra. Time that I now couldn't remember. It was no wonder I had felt such a connection to her.

"...We have a lot of work to do, Rheyna,"

Clarissa then said, breaking me from my thoughts. "So much to catch up on and organise. I won't be able to do this alone... but your missing memories are going to make this so much harder. Especially since that now means you can't fill me in on the small details of how the last timeline ended."

"I'm... I'm sorry," I said feebly. I wasn't sure what else I could say. "I'll just do my best to make up for it. No more questioning anything you say, no more fighting. Just... tell me what I need to do, and I'll do it."

So much had changed in just a few weeks. From simply living as a weapon for my father, to then learning of my real past and purpose... to now planning to stop the end of a whole species. This seemed more like the sort of thing a great hero in a story would be qualified for, not... someone like me. But if it meant I could save Kieran... save lives... then maybe this was my redemption. Maybe in the past I'd been fighting to redeem myself.

...So just who was I back then? A version of me who had lived through six timelines of pain.

"We need to start from the beginning," Clarissa said. "If you have no memories, then I can only assume that this timeline aligns closest with the original one; the timeline in which we were living through the events for the very first time."

I nodded. "That makes sense. If we can pinpoint the issues in that one then we can apply it here and build a plan around it."

"Right... then I assume Allison personally knows who you are? You would have met her after following Kieran to Ashwood for answers."

"That's right," I confirmed. "...But does that make a difference?"

She looked grim at my reply. "Yes... yes, it makes her more emotional. Fragile. She feels betrayed that you lied to her about who you were, not to mention angry from seeing how you treated Kieran. We'll need to be careful to plan around that."

'How I treated Kieran'? What did she mean by that? Like how I was reluctant to involve myself? From what I could recall during my time at Ashwood, Allison had never given off any vibe that she disapproved of our relationship. No, in fact, it was quite the opposite, or, at least, that was the case up until she learned who I really was. Though I guess Clarissa would know best.

"Okay... so then how did the first timeline end?" I asked, now curious. "If all this is following true to what you know, then how does she get triggered? ...What happens to Kieran?"

And my heart started to beat loudly, asking the question I'd been dreading since hearing Clarissa explain all of this. To think that anything would happen to him hurt enough, let alone thinking that I might not be able to do anything to stop it. Six times I'd apparently failed to do just that.

But Clarissa simply stared at me a little strangely, looking up and down as if analysing me. Almost as if she was trying to figure out who I was and how to answer.

"Clarissa?" I pressed when she didn't speak. "...What happens to Kieran?"

And then she stopped, looking me dead in the eye as her head tilted slightly. Seeming as if she were conflicted by my question.

"To Kieran?" she started. "Well, in the first timeline... you killed him."

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A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 157—"What?!" I yelled, feeling as if my legs were going to give out from under me. "What did you just say?"

... You killed him," she repeated, stating it in a matter-of-fact way. "Why are you so surprised? I don't think I've ever seen you look so queasy about killing someone before."

Was this some kind of sick joke? How could I not be surprised to hear that? I owed so much to Kieran that even the thought of ever physically hurting him seemed unthinkable.

“...Rheyra... the way you’re acting...,” she started, looking confused again. “It’s almost like... well, it’s just... you don’t have feelings for him, do you?”

Instantly, I became flustered feeling put on the spot. This conversation had taken such a turn that I didn’t know how to react.

“Well, I... I-I mean...,” I stuttered. “He did so much to help me....”

And Clarissa’s face paled even more, clearly not expecting that answer. “...I thought you were just joking. I never expected you of all people to fall for him, let alone give a shit about the mate bond. Rheyra, his sister literally tries to kill you, not to mention she brings doomsday. He’s just like the rest of them-.”

“-No,” I said, cutting her off. “No, he’s not. He’s different.”

But Clarissa just shook her head slowly in disbelief. “...This is a bad dream. I can’t believe this is happening right now,” she whispered to herself.

How could I be so different to my past self? None of this was making any sense. If this timeline was meant to align with the first one, then how was it that we had completely different mindsets towards Kieran? Let alone have it in me to... do that to him.

...Almost as if I’d never changed from the Raven I’d been for my father.

“You need to reject him as soon as possible,” she then said. “I mean it. There is a war coming, one that we will emerge victorious. But I can’t have you distracted from what needs to be done in order to achieve that.”

“Reject”? I already told him we couldn’t be together...,” I said, unsure of her meaning.

However, she sighed, clearly annoyed by my ignorance. “I mean you need to break the mate bond. Officially reject him. Normally, it’s one of the first things you do upon returning. Once there is no connection between you, it removes one more catalyst for Allison. Plus, it’s not like you usually care about magical bonds anyway.”

...But it wasn’t really the mate bond that had made me fall for Kieran. It was merely something that added to it.

“I need to warn you that it’ll be incredibly painful,” she added. “But the pain will become bearable if you just don’t pay attention to it. After a while, it’ll... sort of become like background noise. Or so you told me. Though I don’t think the dreams. ever truly stop, unfortunately.”

"That sounds horrific..." I pointed out. How the hell would that help either of us?"

"...Because if there comes a time where you finally have a chance to end Allison once and for all..." she started darkly, "...then I need to know you won't hesitate in doing what needs to be done. We can't have anything holding you back from our mission."

I stood perfectly still, conflict flowing through me. She wasn't wrong in thinking it had been Kieran's influence that had stopped me from attacking Allison sooner, but... that didn't mean I wanted to go through with what she was proposing.

"Rheyna," she said, snapping me from my thoughts. I looked towards her tentatively. "I need you to promise me that you'll do this."

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That you're committed to the cause and doing whatever it takes."

"I..." I fumbled.

Hadn't I told Clarissa I'd stop fighting her and do exactly what she said? To put my faith in her? And whilst I hadn't expected this... wouldn't my pain still be worth it if it meant ultimately saving so many people?

"I... Okay," I said, though my voice lacked any real confidence. "I'll... I'll reject Kieran when we next cross paths."

Clarissa immediately looked relieved. "Good. I'm glad at least some sense can get through to you."

She continued to talk after that, rambling off about how the rejection process worked, but the entire time she spoke, I just stared down at my hands. Almost as if I were seeing them coated in the blood of doing something unspeakable to Kieran... and it reminded me of something.

Weeks ago, when he had convinced me to try shifting in the Lockdale City Hotel, the time I had awoken from the blackout believing I had killed him... it had felt so real. I'd seen the blood everywhere, saw the large gash across his chest.

...Had that image of him actually been a... memory?

And a cold shiver then went through my body, nausea filling me.

Perhaps it was for the best I didn't recall my past lives.

"Rheyna!"

I looked up sharply again.

“Are you listening?”

“Y-Yes...,” I stuttered, trying hard to stop thinking about the memory any further. “Sorry... just trying to process everything. It’s a lot of information.”

“I know, but you need to stay focused,” she said. “We’ve still got a long journey ahead, though... speaking of which, we’ll need to start moving soon.”

My body ached at just the thought of carrying her again so soon.

“To where? Aren’t we still being hunted? It’s not like we can go back to the Silver Mist...,”

I pointed out.

But she shook her head.

“Obviously, there is only one place we can go to stay hidden,” she said. “You don’t need your memories to figure that one out.”

Internally, I went through the options presented, but none of them seemed right. The safest place to hide from Ashwood had recently been with my father... though I wasn’t sure how to explain who Clarissa was, nor if I even wanted him to meet her.

But she sighed before I could come to an answer, annoyed by my lack of deduction.

...Who else knows how to hide a body? Or... in this case, two?”

...And recognition instantly clicked... followed by confusion.

“Wait... you don’t mean....”

We set off two hours later. Just long enough to eat the soup and mentally prepare myself for the long trek ahead.

Clarissa explained about the territories we’d pass through, detailing how we’d find a car within the next town to help us travel but that we would need to make the last part of the journey on foot. She didn’t need to explain further about why. My first attempt at crossing the human border in a car had already gone terribly. Something made completely impossible now due to the fact that they were actively hunting us.

But it did lead to an interesting explanation.

Because I learnt about the differences between influence and orders. This had been something nagging at me ever since Clarissa had demanded answers about the guard during the escape.

Apparently, to order someone was within the authority of a Saintess, one holding the power of the Goddess. An irrefutable command that forced the other to do as they wished, regardless of the pack they hailed from.

However... my birth ability, this influence over others... it was something that made the person believe it was their own decision, their own choice. Completely undetectable as they took all responsibility for their actions. And this had been the deciding factor in how long we were able to stay at the house in prior timelines... how long Myra had lived for.

...I'd just needed to influence the border guard.

In my fear of being caught though, I'd ordered them. Demanded that they allow me through. Something that was noticeable to those around them, instantly alerting them to the discovery of someone capable of placing alpha orders over a person who was not from their pack.

...An ability only a Saintess could do... or, more specifically in recent times, someone from the Silver Mist.

And I knew then that it really had been my fault.

The entire journey ended up taking around three days. A day to make it to the next town where we stole the car, a half day to then drive as close as we could to the Silent Forest pack... and then, finally, one and a half days of trekking until we eventually made it safely across the border. A task that was made exceedingly difficult as we had to constantly be on the lookout for patrols.

...But we did successfully make it.

"What now?" I huffed, continuing to walk down the main road out of habit. "It'll be another few days if we try to walk on foot to the closest human town."

"I'm aware," Clarissa said.

"So, then what's the plan? You're not actually expecting me to walk all the way there, right? I'm already exhausted...."

"You won't have to. We made it just in time."

And, just like that, I could hear the sound of a vehicle then approaching behind us. A large one at that.

"We're hitchhiking?" I asked incredulously.

But she simply answered by holding out her little thumb over my shoulder.

"How am I meant to explain why we're out here? There's nothing around here for miles."

"You'll think of something," she said.

And I watched as a huge transport truck then started to slow down, pulling over to the side of the road.

"Goddammit, Clarissa...", I mumbled, walking over to the passenger side.

"You kids okay?" asked the man. "What are you doing out here?"

...Think...

"Hi, there! Ummm... we were camping and my little... cousin... got sick," I said awkwardly. "Car battery died and I'm trying to get her back to Lockdale City. Are you heading that way?"

"Poor things...", he said. "Yeah, I'm heading back to Lockdale. But wouldn't it be better to drop you off at Swanston? It's a lot closer and there is a hospital there."

"Oh! She has a... rare medical condition. Her specialist lives in Lockdale," I said.

"If she really is that sick though, then wouldn't it be better to get her checked-."

"*Please*," I interrupted. "If you could help us get to Lockdale, we would *really* appreciate it..."

He held my gaze for a few moments, his expression softening as he took in my request, and then finally he nodded in confirmation.

"Right, Lockdale," he agreed. "Better to see the specialist. I'll give you a hand to lift her into the truck."

And I sighed in relief.

Without wasting any more time, I pulled Clarissa off my back and waited as the man started to get out of the truck to assist.

"You could have helped me," I grumbled quietly to her.

"Why?" she whispered back. "If I'd told you what to say, you might not have been able to influence him to take us to Lockdale, the literal worst-case scenario. Failure meant he would have driven us to Swanston hospital and he even alerts the police too, fearing for our safety. The guy thinks we're runaways or escaping from something darker. So, I get you might not like it, but stress is an emotional energy and you're having to learn how to fluently influence from scratch again. You should be thanking me."

Somehow, I had the feeling this wasn't the last time she would use my ignorance as a teaching method.

It took a few minutes and a little maneuvering, but the man and I did finally manage to lift Clarissa into the truck, and it wasn't too long afterwards that we then began our final journey to Lockdale.

...To a place I never expected to find myself given the recent events.

Knock *Knock* *Knock*

"Are you sure about this?" I asked.

"Yes, Rheyne, it'll be fine," she assured. "We do this every time."

"But what if-."

...And the door suddenly swung open, cutting me off before I could say anything else.

It caused an odd feeling of relief and stress to rush through me all at once as I came face -to-face with the familiar lanky, young man with blonde hair.

"...Raven?" Zac asked surprised. "It's so good to see you. You know, I've been so worried about last time and whether I offended-."

CLAP

Clarissa had jumped off my back as he'd spoken and waddled to the door quietly. It seemed she knew about the influence without needing to be told and clapped in his face, breaking whatever I'd accidentally inflicted on Zac from the last time we'd met.

"What are you....))

And his attention then slowly moved away from my face to the one of Clarissa's instead.

She didn't say anything immediately, just simply looked up at the stunned boy. Which I could only imagine the thoughts going through his head as he looked at her. It was obvious how unusual her appearance was, not to mention it was odd for me to show up suddenly with a random girl in tow.

"Who...?" he tried to ask.

But Clarissa spoke before I could explain.

"Hey, Zac," she said, a tone that would imply they were close friends. "How've you been?"

And without even waiting for a reply, she then waddled right past him to go inside the house, a familiarity in her movement that suggested she could have lived there.

Zac and I simply stared as she did so. Him. probably out of confusion from the whole situation, me more so over how I was going to even begin explaining her behaviour or what was happening. And, after another few seconds passed, he finally turned back towards me.

"Uhh...? What's going on?" he managed to ask. "...Who's the ghost-looking girl?"

"She's my... um... cousin," I answered, feeding the same lie I'd told the truck driver. "Long lost blood relative."

It was close enough. We were once from the same pack, I guess.

Though the explanation didn't make him look any less confused.

"It's a long story," I quickly added, brushing it off. "But it's understandably a weird situation now. Especially given my father, you know? So, we were kind of wondering if maybe... Well, would it be okay if we stayed. with you here for a-."

...But then I heard it.

A piercing scream coming from somewhere inside the house, a shrill to it that made me flinch. One that I immediately knew was coming from Clarissa.

And though I instantly sprinted into action, running to find her without any hesitation... there was one thought that did manage to cross my mind.

Because for a girl who knew exactly what was going to happen next...

...Just what could make her so afraid?

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A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 158—"Clarissa!" I screamed, pushing past Zac to run inside.

He was still too confused to move, struggling to understand the situation. Only,

I did know the situation. I knew that something had to be so very wrong.

“Clarissa!” I yelled again, scanning through the rooms.

And, finally, her voice called back.

“Rae!” she cried.

The kitchen.

I bolted to her location and found Clarissa on the ground, shaking as she stared up at a man holding a knife.

...A man I knew as Noah Kennedy.

“Who is that!” she screamed. “How did he get in here? H-he shouldn’t be here. He could have killed me!”

Noah simply appeared stunned by the whole situation and slowly looked down at the knife in his hand. A kitchen knife that he was using to cut an apple.

“This is wrong,” she whispered to herself. “No one is ever at Zac’s house. How is there someone here? It’s supposed to be completely private.”

“Woah, calm down,” I said. “Nothing is going on. You’re fine. This is Noah.”

The way she had moved around in Zac’s house, it really was as if she were walking into her own home. I suppose it would give her a fright to suddenly see someone after six prior lifetimes of the same empty house.

“Who?” she asked, still confused. “Who the hell is Noah?”

“Uhm...,” I started. “Well... he’s the younger brother of Miles Kennedy....”

“The smuggler? Why the hell is the dead smuggler’s brother here? You’ve never even mentioned he had a brother.”

“I don’t know? I didn’t know where else to

put him after I didn’t kill him. Thought he’d be safer here at Zac’s house rather than somewhere my father would find him.”

And she immediately looked at me as if I had two heads, her eyes wide in confusion.

“...What the hell is up with you?” she whispered. “This timeline... it’s all wrong.

“Um... hi,” Noah then said next to us, quietly watching all of this unfold. “How’s it going?”

It was enough to break the intense staring contest Clarissa and I were currently having. Though, she still refused to acknowledge him.

“I’m going to my room,” she finally said after another few moments passed, and slowly picked herself back up. “I-I need to rest.”

I didn’t try to stop her and she rejected my attempt of trying to help her up. Clearly, she needed some time to figure out what was going on, and even I felt too exhausted to deal with this right now.

↳*“ — You don’t have to do this... You don’t need to be Raven. “*”

Kieran’s words. The voice in my head that had stopped me on multiple occasions. Like a buzzing in my brain that had been incessant, stilling my hand from killing both

Noah and Daniel, the Ashwood Beta heir.

It had been his influence that had changed me from who I was before. A change that I’d thought was for the better.

...So just what had I done in my past timelines?

Maybe something had happened in the last one that even Clarissa didn’t know about.

How else could things have diverged so much?

“Raven, right?” said Noah, his tone awkward. “Nice to finally meet you without the... you know... the whole trying to kill me thing.”

I sighed.

“A pleasure,” I said dryly.

Thankfully, Zac found his way into the kitchen at that moment. Though, I knew he would be wanting answers.

“What the hell is going on? For real?” he asked. “Where’d that girl go? Is she okay?”

“She’s fine... everything is fine,” I said, unsure if I were trying to reassure him or myself. “But....”

And as I looked around his fancy house, I did wonder something. Particularly, something to do with Clarissa.

"Hey... how many rooms does this place have anyway?" I asked.

"Well, there's-."

However, his voice was then cut off by the frustrated scream of Clarissa down the hall.

"My room!" she whined in the distance.

It seemed as though Noah had moved into what normally would be her bedroom. An assumption that was then confirmed by the sound of what must have been Noah's possessions being thrown outside.

"What are you doing here? Really?" Zac then asked, a seriousness to him despite the absurdity of Clarissa in the background.

I quickly bit my tongue, hesitating. How did I begin to explain? From werewolves to wars, to Gods and abilities. It was a lot to casually explain to someone in one sitting. Hell, even I barely understood.

"Just... we're in a bit of trouble and need to hide out for a bit. Not even my father can know I'm here, okay?"

"I... I don't know... this has already gone pretty far," he said, uncertainty thick in his tone. "First Noah... now this?"

I could influence him, sway his mind to convince him that we could stay. It had worked once before to make him ease off with his questioning. Only... only it somehow felt wrong to do that.

"Zac... I...", I started. "Look-."

****BRRRRRRRT** **BRRRRRRRT****

****BRRRRRRRT** **BRRRRRRRT****

His phone then rang, cutting me off. But it was his expression that I was most worried about as I watched it then pale, his eyes deliberately shifting back up to meet mine.

...There was only one person it could be.

The person who had been paying well enough for Zac to afford a house like this.

"Zac... no... please, don't...", I begged.

And he slowly picked up the phone, holding it to his ear.

“...Mr Reid,” he answered.

My heart sank.

“Did you need some cleaning done? -At City West hotel? And what time would this be?”

But then it happened. A moment right towards the end where Zac paused and frowned at me, almost as if debating one last time if he should do it. Come clean and remove the risk of being caught in a lie.

“Zac....”

And his eyes closed.

“Nothing... sorry, sir. I’ll be there tonight.”

He hung up the phone and a wave of relief instantly washed through me, knowing it was one less thing I’d need to worry about.

“You’re going to be the death of me, Rae,” he sighed. “Literally.”

Well, I wasn’t sure if Clarissa could confirm that, but I at least hoped it wasn’t true. However, for now at least, I could rest.

I was safe.

Zac’s house was pretty large and nicely isolated from the main part of the city. I hadn’t been expecting that, but it turned out to be pretty beneficial for us.

The upstairs consisted of three bedrooms, the downstairs a study and living space... though, most interestingly, Zac told me about a secret dungeon area at the very bottom. A space where he apparently kept the majority of his cleaning supplies and... anything else he didn’t want people to find.

I wasn’t sure if I wanted to know the exact details of that one.

Clarissa, without asking, had forced Noah to move into the study downstairs. He seemed a little annoyed until he looked over at me, probably remembering the night I had found him. After all, as Clarissa had said, he wasn’t even supposed to be here.

Things around here were... certainly going to be interesting.

“I need you to send a letter,” Clarissa said, seating herself down on the couch next to

She had a pen and paper in hand.

It was the first time I'd seen her so lively in two days. Before now, I had briefly been dropping food off for her but she'd been bedridden for the most part as she recovered.

"To who?" I asked.

"To your cousin," she answered. "The Alpha of the Hidden Moon pack. They swore to cut ties with the Silver Mist after the war but that was under the assumption you and your mother had perished in the fighting. Even if you didn't grow up in the Hidden Moon as she did, this loyalty should naturally extend to you, her daughter."

Right... my mother. Myra had told me she was born to the Hidden Moon pack. Though, I wasn't aware of any cousins.

Yet it still didn't sit quite right with me. Almost as if believing I had more blood relatives seemed a little too good to be true. I didn't really want to get my hopes up after what happened with Myra. Not after....

I swallowed back the memory of her dying.

"...Cousin?" I managed to ask, pushing past

"Alpha Jax Sullivan," she said. "He's about ten years older than you and, like those in the Silver Mist, he was raised with the true knowledge of werewolf origins, Selene, and our abilities. Their alliance to our pack was once thicker than even blood."

"And I'm supposed to write him a letter?" I asked. "He probably doesn't even know who I am, let alone will believe me. I can't exactly verify my identity."

"But you can," she said, taking my hand. "You're the spitting image of your great- great grandmother, Iris, with the golden eyes of a Knight. You can't fake that."

"Clarissa...."

I was getting tired of being described this way. As if it bestowed some greater responsibility to live up to.

"Hey... only you can do this. No, you have done this. Multiple times. We need their support if we're to commence preparations. An army behind us is crucial."

Right... for the war that she mentioned. It sounded like some big battle full of casualties. The kind of thing that ruined our lives to begin with. Just thinking about it left me feeling a little uncomfortable.

Because even if Clarissa knew we would be victorious... was this really the right way? "

"I need you to trust me," she then said, churning the confliction inside me further. We're racing against the clock to stop Allison, but there's no way in hell we can just waltz into Ashwood as we are currently. We're not strong enough to take them all on alone. But with the Hidden Moon behind us? In all their power and wealth? Well... we become unstoppable."

I could believe that. Yet, that wasn't the issue making me hesitate.

"...Write the letter, Rheyna," she said, holding out the pen. "Become who you are meant to be and let me help you. Stop hiding from your past and embrace it. Do this and I know we won't fail this time."

Slowly, I took the pen from her hand, but I could only stare at it tentatively.

"You are Rheyna Knight, the infamous devil Saintess," Clarissa said. "Blessed with a title that honours both your life struggles and your true heritage. A symbol for the Hidden

Moon to rally behind, one that reminds them of their alliance."

And I knew what she was referring to. The only name that encapsulated my entire life, my pain, my fight. A name that had haunted me, yet protected me. A way for me to always push aside the wrongdoings I had done, to blame it on that side of me.

And it was a name that had once belonged to Iris Sullivan. A symbol that, to the Hidden Moon pack, was one of allegiance, of hope, of change. A promise now of the tide in war finally changing, and one that foretold the return of our old ways. The ways of the Silver Mist Council.

I knew Clarissa was right.

...Only I could do this.

And so I sighed, closing my eyes in acceptance.

I guess there really was no running away from it now. No way to truly change. This was who I was always meant to be, who I am now meant to become.

It was the last thought I had before I took the paper from her, beginning to write...

"Keep it short and go easy on the specifics," Clarissa said. "Should the letter get intercepted, we don't want to leak any details that might screw us later."

"Got it..." I mumbled.

But it ended up being briefer than even she probably expected. Just a short note that was sweet and to the point.

...And one that was signed under a name I knew they would recognise...

‘Rheyra Knight....’

‘...- The Raven.’