

The King's Mate by Lady Xquisite

Chapter 1. Prologue

“T-Tamara,” a frantic shook in her arms and a trembling voice from her mother woke her up.

“Mom,” she sleepily called her while she was still in her dream state and getting up from her comfy bed.

She focused her eyes while trying to look at the clock placed on her bedside table. It said that it was almost midnight.

Why would her mother visit her at this hour? Her eighteenth birthday was last two days ago. Would she receive another birthday present?

Her heart beat fast and smiled sweetly due to her excitement — however, her mother’s face said otherwise, which wiped up her joyous smile for a moment.

“Get up, Tamara. Y-you need to get away.”

Her mother was quivering, and that made her wake to her full senses, making her heartbeat speedily — now because of worry.

Is this some kind of a joke or a prank?

But her mother wasn’t a fan of any kind of prank, especially not like this. She was always tenderly strict towards her. Her forehead creased as she saw her bothered face looking at the locked door to her room.

“What is happening, Mom?” she asked as she was trying to be calm, though her senses were in a panic mode now.

Her mother looked at her with watering eyes that made her bump with abrupt edginess and discomfort.

What is happening?

“Honey, y-you n-need to go. Remember the forest that I told you to go to in case of emergency? Someone will pick you up there. Now, off you go, my child. I-I love you. Your dad and I love you s-so much.” Her voice cracked as her fresh tears flowed down from her cheeks.

Tamara hugged her mom tightly, never wanting to hear those words as if it was the last time they would see each other. Her eyes blurred with unshed tears as she tried to comfort her mother and her heartbroken self.

“W-what is happening, Mom? Where is Dad?” she repeatedly asked. Her lips were quivering and her voice hoarse from containing her mixed emotions.

Her mother broke their embrace and locked her face with her cold hands. They were so cold that she wanted to close her eyes and give her warmth — however, she was quietly curious about her abrupt actions — it intensified her anxiety.

“There’s no room for questions now, Tamara. You need to go. You know there’s an exit in your closet, right? Go there. Faster, please,” her mother grabbed her hand, and she was immediately out of her bed.

Her mom quickly assisted her in front of her massive closet and opened it widely.

A sudden bang and crashing of glass broke the lull silence inside their house, making both of their eyes widened in shock.

Tamara heard a loud growl and gasping, mixing through the air that reached her ears.

She could feel her mother’s trembling hands.

“M-Mom, w-what is happening? I can’t leave you h-here. How about you and D-Dad?” She nervously asked for the nth time while her gaze moved towards the locked door.

She was more worried and horrified now. Her mother cleared the lump in her throat, and she could feel her restlessness. Her dark brown eyes filled with fear and sadness as they looked at her. She became more anxious as the seconds passed. She was close to hyperventilating now, but she wanted to portray her strong façade.

“Tamara. Please, just get out of the house! It is more important that you’re safe. And please don’t ever look back,” her mother pleaded and pushed her gently inside her closet.

It is where her parents built an emergency exit down to their basement and a little pathway that leads to the forest.

She was using this way whenever she wanted to escape from her parents — now to escape someone she doesn’t even know.

She could feel her mom’s shuddering cold hands holding her arms. Her mother looked at the locked door of her room and then back at her. They heard a loud thud and a snarl.

“But M-Mom—”

“Enough! Save yourself! Promise me, don’t look back. You need to run! Please.” Her voice became low and pleading.

She saw how determined and hopeless her mom was — determined to get her out of the house and hopeless on something.

“P-please... Promise me, huh?” She begged desperately.

She slowly nodded her head as she stifled her unshed tears.

“P-promise...” Tamara breathily answered.

Her mother gave her a warm and loving smile and kissed her forehead before pushing her down the exit door.

It was a slide way down to the basement. Tamara’s tears flowed upon her cheeks. She didn’t know what was happening, and she was frighteningly shocked.

She finally felt the soft cushion and it made her realize that she was already on the basement floor. Her legs were wobbling — she could hear the tinny noise coming from the upper part of their house where her room was.

She tried to stand up while her eyes were blurred by her tears. She accidentally nudged the antique ceramic vase standing near her. It created a loud crash sound followed by a loud and eerie growl.

Her spine shivered as she heard that menacing growl.

She pulled herself together, trying to find the pathway that would lead her to the forest. Her heart was pounding tough and fast, making her chest ache a bit. She heard debauched and loud steps getting nearer to where she was.

Finally, she pulled the cover of the pathway to open it. It was just a small tunnel-like and she needed to crawl in it. It was just as big as her size so it made it difficult for her to move. She did a nonstop crawl, never wanting any chance for the intruder to catch her.

She was doing her best to crawl as fast as she could — no matter how difficult it was for her. She could hear scratching sounds echoing in the tunnel that made her flinch. She ignored the foul smell, even her bruised knees and elbows caused by the concrete pave way.

She heard a loud snarl followed by gasping and panting, then a weakened cry.

She closed her eyes firmly as the tears flowed freely.

After minutes of nonstop crawling, she finally reached the end of the tunnel.

She tried to push the cover for it to open and she stopped a bit to gasp for air. She just realized that she's holding her breath for a moment already.

She tried to push it again, but it just wouldn't budge. Her eyes started to water once again. Her nose was now red and icky from all her crying.

She felt hopeless. She felt weak. She felt tired.

Then, she heard a cracking sound coming from the other side of the tunnel.

"N-no," she silently whispered.

She was trembling and couldn't even move an inch — because of fear.

She was about to crawl back to the house when the cover burst wide open.

A man who looked like in his mid-fifties met her eyes.

"Good thing, you're already here, Tamara. I'm Benson," his voice was low but signified authority.

His eyes were as dark as the night. He had little freckles visible on his forehead and some were on the upper part of his cheeks. His hair was grayish and neatly done.

He offered his firm hand to her for her to grab on to, but she didn't even bother to accept nor look at it.

The man was muscular and quite tall. His face was laced with no emotion — at all. It was plain and blank — that made her inaudibly cry out because of unsolicited fear.

She just looked at him, still confused and shaken from everything that was happening.

"Come on, Tamara. I won't hurt you. I'm here to fetch you," he said. His tone never faltered — it was still low and authoritative all throughout.

She couldn't fathom whether he's telling the truth or not. Besides, her parents told her not to trust anyone easily. But she remembered that her mother had told her that someone was waiting for her in the forest.

She was hesitatingly reaching for his waiting hand, and he pulled her. His muscular biceps contracted as he carried her full heavy weight. He didn't care though — based on him having no reaction — as if she was just as light as a feather.

Her legs swayed as it stepped to the ground, making her lean on the tiny tunnel behind her to find strength and support. She clenched her fist as she tried to compose herself, taking a deep breath and embracing the cold wind that passed through her delicate skin.

She wasn't trusting this man — or anyone. For the meantime, she wanted to get away from whoever trespassed on their house and find out what was happening. For this man, well, she'll just cross the bridge when she gets there.

It was past midnight, and the new moon wasn't helping her see the surroundings so much as the flickering lamp post standing near them.

Her eyes were bloodshot, and her tears flowed endlessly. Her lips quivered as she tried to control her sobs that mixed with the low growling sounds and the owl hooting that echoed the entire forest.

"Who are you?" Her voice was gruff as she asked him.

"I'm Benson," he answered, just repeating his name and nothing more.

Tamara's palm flew to her forehead, trying to stifle her mixed emotions.

"What I mean is why are you here? Why won't you help my parents? Why did you know me?" She hysterically asked.

Her voice cracked as her trembling hands motioned to their house which was covered with many lofty trees and couldn't see where they were standing.

"We need to go," Benson told her and turned around. He started walking to the depths of the woods ignoring her pressing questions.

"H-how about my parents?" Tamara eagerly asked as she languidly followed the man as if she had any other choice.

"They were dead," he informed her without any sign of remorse — or any other emotion at that. He just said it as plainly as if it was just a common thing during a conversation.

While her heart sank to her stomach and her heartbeat stopped for a second before its beats doubled. It was a bomb to her ears, making her deaf for a matter of seconds. It weakened her knees and she almost fell to the ground, if not to the trunk of the tree that supported her weight.

"W-what?" She unbelievably asked in a low voice.

She would not believe what he just said — or maybe she's hoping that she heard him wrong.

He stopped walking and heaved a deep sigh, as if he's extending his patience to her, still not facing her.

"Winston and Ameia, they were dead," he said casually.

As simple as that.

He mentioned her parents' names. He knew them.

"H-how did you know?" She hopelessly inquired, still trying to collect herself for the hasty news.

Tamara tried to control her emotions by looking for loopholes in his answers. That certain statement that answered her questions lingering inside her mind, making her head spin in madness.

She would not believe this man. Her parents weren't dead. They...

Tamara gritted her teeth as she tried to compose herself, but the tears pooling her eyes and streaming endlessly down to her pale pink cheeks wasn't helping her at all.

She could feel her strength was slowly vanishing from thin air as she tried to clench her hands firmly as if it would help her regain it and hold onto it.

She stifled her forlorn sobs, but the sound of it still resonated with the melancholic ambiance in the dark woods.

Benson finally faced her. Despite her blurring vision, she saw how his eyes glistened and turned pitch black — his face was still void and cold. He pressed his lips tightly, and before she knew it — her entire system was shaken for the following words he said.

"Because I can already smell the strong scent of their flesh and blood." With that, her mind went black, and she instantly fell to the ground.

POV: King Hades Pierce

"They were already making a step, my king," Arlan, the second-in-command, eagerly revealed the news to him.

King Hades' forehead creased while he raised his eyebrow and directly looked at him. He was in the throne room thinking about something nonsense when Arlan graced him with his presence, breaking the passive silence engulfing the entire room.

"And so?" Hades asked mercilessly. His voice was pitch dark — without any sign of any emotion — and just plain blank and void.

It was his typical reaction, though — having no reaction at all. He was trained to be at that without anyone else by his side. Bitterness crept on his tongue as it reached his stomach, which made him grit his teeth tightly. He didn't want to do anything with this kind of feeling anymore. He was already done with all of it.

“But Your Majesty—” Arlan stopped stating his reasons the moment he raised his hand and warningly stared at him.

Arlan swallowed hard as he was silently hoping that his shaking legs would also fade away like the lump in his throat. He didn't want to make him mad, but this wasn't the time for him to wear his well-made and tough mask.

“Your regina was in danger, my king,” he restlessly proclaimed as he watched how the king clenched his fist on the armrest of his golden throne.

His eyes turned pitch black, and it narrowed directly at him, making Arlan's heart beat in an unusual manner — faster than normal — as his legs wobbled down and bullets of sweat gathered on his forehead due to fear and edginess.

“I don't have a 'regina,’” King Hades' jaw gnawed firmly as he loudly growled at him, making his canines bare.

Arlan trembled more in fear, but his face remained stoic. The king's aura turned authoritative and irrefutably held power as darkness covered his entire being.

He was the Alpha King of All Wolf Borne — as a matter of fact — that statement could already send chills down anyone's spine. And Arlan wasn't an exemption regardless of how long he's been serving as one of the loyal and efficient kingsmen.

He undeniably knew what he could do to anyone like he could kill him in a matter of seconds to where he was standing right now by using only his bare hands. But being one of his subordinates, he also needed to do his duties, even if it meant sacrificing his own life.

“But—”

He curled up his lips upward — his notable devilish smirk appeared in his face — that could make anyone totter in terror.

“Choose now, Arlan. Do I need to cut your throat this instant, or do I have to care about your rubbish nonsensical words?” His menacing deep voice sent shivers down his spine, making him bite his tongue and swallow his unsaid words.

For Arlan knew the king's words — once sealed, and it could never be broken.

Arlan bowed his head as he clenched his both fists to stop trembling, “I apologize for my despicable behavior, your Majesty.”

With that, he knew he couldn’t do anything right now.

POV: Tamara Davis

Meanwhile, in the depths of the woods, Tamara was running so fast as she tried to escape someone.

Thick fog enveloped the lofty trees as the hooting of the night owl continued echoing to the depths of the forest, making her more distracted and petrified. She didn’t know where to go, nor she didn’t know where the heck she was.

“Run!”

She could hear someone screaming as it resonated through the trees and mixed up with the hustling wind. Birds were flying, leaving their nests on the tall trees because of the unexpected sound that broke the deafening silence.

Her vision was spinning so as her mind was in deep haywire. She was gasping for air, but she didn’t stop in her tracks and continuously ran without knowing where exactly to go — until she was outbalanced and painfully fell on the ground.

She felt the pain slowly crept into her palms and knees, but she didn’t care. She tried to stand up, but her knees trembled and couldn’t find their strength. Miserable sobs escaped through her trembling lips as it clogged her throat.

Tamara felt so helpless and miserable — for the very first time in her life.

She was wretchedly lying on the ground and squeezed shut her eyes tightly.

She needed to gain strength — something was running after her. She needed to escape — and fast. A loud terrifying snarl reached her ears, making her shudder with intense fear.

She slowly opened her eyes, but her blurry vision blocked her sight to whoever was sneering down at her. The sound of the strange animal moved closer and closer to where she was lying. She was glued to the ground where she was — she couldn’t even move an inch. She gasped loudly as a blatant growl echoed at her feet.

A large wolf was ready to attack her, and she screamed as hard as she could!

“No!”

Tamara shrieked and forcefully got her body up to where she was.

She instantly looked at her feet and tried to look around — full of bewilderment.

Her temple throbbed as she sought to do that. Her sight was whirling for her hasty move. She held her aching temple with her soft palm as she tried to compose herself while her eyes were shut tightly.

“I’m okay, I’m okay,” she whispered as a mantra to herself, while her other hand went up to her chest, soothing the tense crawling of her entire being.

Thank God!

It was just a dream.

“It was just a dream, Tamara. It was just a dream,” she breathlessly whispered to herself repeatedly, trying to calm her raging nerves.

She heaved a deep sigh and opened her eyes once again. She placed down both her hands and shook her head moderately.

Though an abrupt realization flashed her mind when her eyes met those blank cold eyes in the rear-view mirror.

“It’s good that you’re awake now,” he plainly commented as he moved his eyes to the road and continued maneuvering the car.

Yes.

She was sitting in the back seat of a moving car that led to God knows where. She looked at the window — and all she could see was darkness. Tamara’s forehead creased.

“W-where are we going? W-what are you g-going to do to m-me? W-what is happening?” She nervously stammered and felt a shiver down to her back.

She couldn’t stop the questions that kept on popping up inside her mind. She was restless and she needed someone to answer her questions this instant!

At least just to answer her — regardless of whether it was the truth or not. It was her judgment to decide whether to believe it or not.

Benson let out a deep sigh as he took a quick glance at her.

“Just wait and your questions will soon be answered once we arrive at the Lunar Mansion,” Benson replied, still void of any emotions.

Tamara cleared her throat as she inquired.

“L-Lunar Mansion?”

“Yes. That is what the Lunar Pack House was called,” he simply responded as he took a swift look at her.

She was so confused but she couldn’t find her voice to ask more about what he was trying to tell her.

“W-where are my p-parents? W-who are r-running after us?” Her eyes began to water again as she slowly realized why she collapsed a while ago.

She had left her parents — she was an awful daughter for leaving them behind. She wanted to know more about what happened to them or to at least assure her that they were okay.

“They were already dead, Tamara. They were killed by rogues,” Benson replied as a matter of fact.

Tamara’s heartbeat hitched as she heard those words and unbelievably looked at him.

“Rogues? What rogues?” she unbelievably questioned.

Benson’s forehead creased — the first time she saw a bit of emotion — but it immediately wiped away from his face and once again turned into a plain stoic one.

“Rogues are bad werewolves,” he said it as simple as that as if it was just a common thing to him.

Tamara’s eyes widened in shock and tried to calm her nerves.

“I-is that even possible?” she let out a nervous and low chuckle, trying to cover the sudden presentiment she felt.

She saw how Benson took a glimpse at her once again but didn’t say a word. What the hell was he talking about?

Rogues?

Weren’t they non-existent?

Maybe she was just trying to scare her, but she couldn’t take away the fact that she was with this man. She didn’t know whether he was the one her mother was talking about or not. So still, she couldn’t trust anyone, and she needed to escape — and fast.

If she couldn't find answers from him, she would find it on her own.

A light bulb nimbled her mind as she contemplated her plan. Good thing, she was wearing a black moto knit jogger and a large purple shirt — her typical style when she was sleeping.

“Uhm, I-I need you to stop the car.” She tried to grimace as she looked at him.

He looked at her plainly.

“I need to— uhm, nature calls,” Tamara's face turned pale pink as she said those words.

Though she was just partially acting, she was still embarrassed to say those words to a skeptical stranger.

“Can't it wait? Some of the rogues can still catch us.” Benson basically said to her, his forehead creased more.

Now, she could finally see worry and irritation plastered on his face. Maybe, if they were in a different situation, she would tease him about it though.

“I can't hold it anymore,” she dramatically stated and deceitfully contorted her face and aggressively clutched her stomach with her both hands. Her acting was worst, and she just knew it, but she was so desperate to escape at once.

Benson swerved the car so sharply at the side of the road that she almost hit her head on the car window. Tamara rolled her eyes because of her deep irritation.

“Don't go too far and make it fast. It's too dangerous,” he warned her as he sighed and unlocked the car door.

She just nodded her head and immediately opened the car door. She was seriously wanting to pee, but she's more eager to escape from him.

She slowly walked away while he was looking at her like a hawk to his prey.

She instantly tied the lace of her pants as she looked around. She was approximately ten meters away from Benson. Tamara peeped through the tall tree where she hid. He was out of the car, and she saw him speedily walking towards her.

She instantly trembled in fear, and she ran fast — away from him.

“Tamara!”

She heard him call her name, but she didn't even bother to look back — then a loud roar and the sound of scraping claws resonated in the depths of the forest, making the birds fly instantly.

Her lips quivered and she jolted to a sudden stop, then turned around to look at Benson.

Her heartbeat speeding up and she just saw the most horrific scene of her entire life — Benson was surrounded by five huge wolves that were deviously showing off their bared canines.

They all looked like they were ready to attack him in an instant.

She covered her open mouth with both of her hands to stifle her loud gasp. She was glued to her feet as she watched how Benson instantly twisted his body and shifted into a bulky wolf!

He was a werewolf!

“Oh my God! Oh my God!” she silently whispered over and over again to herself. She was trying to control her voice as low as possible, for she needed to let out her hyperventilating emotions.

His sleek grayish fur gleamed brightly in the middle of darkness. He let out a loud and lengthy growl thrice.

Tamara shakily and gently took a step behind her, and the sound of the snapping twigs made the enormous wolves turn their heads to where she was!

Her whole body started to tremble as she stared at those wicked eyes she had never seen in her life.

POV: Rania Vikesh

“Did Benson already find her?” The woman asked the muscular man who was standing and staring at the huge window glass from their huge mansion.

She was sitting on a single deep forest green sofa while sipping her favorite lemon and mint tea. She was wearing a white sundress that flowed freely, reaching her knees, which was paired with nude flat shoes.

Her burgundy hair was neatly done into a messy bun. The woman had an aristocrat aura that was purely intimidating, added to by her narrowed eyes looking at the man.

She was in her late forties and undeniably still younger to look at.

He didn't answer her question and just continued puffing his stale tobacco while looking at the moon in its state — the new moon at its darkest form.

“Lorenzo,” the woman called him — pure irritation was heard in her voice which was directly at him, for not answering her question.

The man called Lorenzo let out a loud snarl and faced her — she shuddered but she composed herself and raised her brow as she placed back the teacup down to its saucer.

“Just stop it, Rania. You know, we couldn't have her here.” Lorenzo emphasized every word and tried to make her understand his point, but his face said otherwise because it reflected his hopelessness and pure concern.

Rania let out a defeated sigh and roughly cleared her throat. Her desperation was getting out of her, and she couldn't do anything to stop it.

Her husband, Lorenzo, turned his back at her and faced the huge glass window once again. He was wearing a black simple shirt and dark blue denim pants that fit perfectly in his entire body. He had this abnormal muscular size — one that radiated authority and an intimidating aura. It was already given because he was no other than the Alpha of the Lunar Pack.

“But the plan was now ruined, Lorenzo, and you know that. We only have one last draw left and we needed her to execute it.” Rania reminded him as she clenched her fists tightly, turning her knuckles into paperwhite.

Lorenzo let out a deep sigh as he shook his head gently and remained silent, still thinking thoroughly about how to move on with their plan.

“What if—”

She was about to say something when she was cut off by the huge wooden door which suddenly banged open.

“Mom, we have a problem,” their daughter, Shahara, told them with a hint of urgency in her voice.

Rania turned pale while her gaze darted towards Shahara. Lorenzo, on the other hand, without a hurry put down his tobacco on the ashtray that was lying on the table lamp and looked directly at her daughter's worried face. He might be wearing his normal reaction but deep inside him was full of unadulterated concern.

Their hearts beat speedily as they both looked at her — and based on their daughter's face who was nodding disappointedly at them, something terrible might have happened.

POV: Tamara Davis

At that very same time, Tamara was running as fast as she could to God knows where, ignoring every sharp branch and vine that brought painful scratches and bruises all over her entire body.

After she witnessed how Benson turned into a freaking large wolf, as well as those wicked and fearful rogue's eyes — her own reflexes told her to instantly run, and she immediately did. She fought her wobbling legs and gathered all her strength, for all she wanted was to escape.

To escape from everything that was insanely happening towards her that she almost couldn't comprehend why and how. Her mind was spinning as her forehead was full of bullets of sweat that were gradually flowing down her face.

She was gasping for air and looked behind as she wiped that trail of sweat in her forehead that streamed down to her cheeks — her extensive fear turned into a raging fuel that made her move expeditiously.

Thank God!

No one followed her.

She stopped her tracks for a second and took a deep breath as she placed her both hands on her knees, hunching her back.

Tamara consciously looked around as she was embraced with a deafening silence and the night's darkness. The hooting of the night owl stopped and only the sound of the crickets resounded the place — wherever it was.

The gushing cold wind aided in easing down her maddening hyperventilation a while ago.

She let out another deep breathy sigh before she continued walking in her unknown tracks when in a split second an enormous murky wolf appeared before her!

His large and bared canines were evident as it maddeningly snarled at her — ready to attack.

Tamara instantly flinched as she suppressed her breath — her heart beat sped up intensely while looking at those vicious eyes.

She could still remember this one huge wolf that surrounded Benson a while ago. He had a mix of dark brown and dirty white fur. He was the largest among those other four

wolves, making it hard for her to forget. Her deadly eyes looked at her, making her breath stop for a matter of seconds and raging chills sent down her spine.

He took a very slow-paced step towards her, leaving a deep paw mark towards the muddy ground as she took one slow step behind. Her legs began to crumble, but she never looked away from the massive beast's eyes. Tamara braced herself with her both arms, soothing herself and praying for someone to save her.

Her dark brown eyes were now blurred with unshed tears. She wanted to run, but how? She might just face her dreadful death that instant if she instantaneously did so.

The huge wolf was about to attack her, and she covered her face with her arms, bracing the sudden impact that it might've caused her. But then, another large wolf with an auburn fur instantly jumped at his side and did a counterattack for her.

It let out a loud snarl, giving a perilous warning towards the massive wolf. Its long sharp and bared canines were obviously seen.

Tamara cringed with shock but also amazed at the same time.

The auburn furred wolf looked at her and slowly nodded her head, as if telling her to go while the rogue growled loudly.

Her eyes watered and mouthed 'thank you' and 'sorry' before turning and running away.

Guilt crept within her entire system while she was running madly fast. She couldn't stay there — she just couldn't.

Her fresh tears flowed freely as she continued running to nowhere. She couldn't even protect herself nor had the strength to fight but that wolf with an auburn hair could. It could protect itself from whatever that bad wolf was.

She needed to run — and fast. She needed to live and find out what happened to her parents. She needed to because that was what she promised. She needed to find out why someone would run after her. What do they need from her?

She needed to save her own life — not just for herself but to find out the truth and give justice for her parents — whatever happened to them.

She wiped away her tears through her arms as her stifling sobs filled the cold wind that was brushing her skin. She was silently praying to survive — the only thing that keeps her going now.

After hours of continuous running, the darkness slowly dazed by the golden rays of the sun. A mix of a little black, mauve, orangish, gray, and cerulean colors filled the horizon.

If she wasn't in her forlorn state right now, she might have loved the tantalizing hues painted in the sky — like she always did.

Tamara roamed around and could now slightly see the place she's in.

She was still in the middle of the suffocating woods, but she finally saw a glistening river. She plopped down on her knees on the riverside and drank the running water as if it was the first time she had it.

She was so thirsty and her raging stomach growl, but having this clear and fresh water to drink was enough for her to gain her strength, at least.

She washed her face unconsciously, feeling the freshness and coldness of the running water to ease herself. Then, she suddenly stopped when her eyes met her mirrored self.

It reflected her messy wavy crimson red hair that tied knot to one after the other because she didn't even have time to comb or tie it. Her dark brown almond-shaped eyes were bloodshot red as her pointed nose. There was a large black bag under her eyes. Her lips were quivering and whitish while her cheeks were full of tear stained. Her fair skin with a touch of rosiness was now paperwhite — like a ghost in a scary movie.

All in all, she was certainly a total mess.

Her eyes started to water again for her unending tears, but she wiped it away just before it flowed down to her cheeks. She was really weak, and she already knew it. Yet her strong will to find answers to her questions kept her alive — she needed to, and she's determined to continue it in doing so.

Tamara took a deep sigh as she tried to compose herself while she stared blankly at the space in front of her. She was trying to think about what she should do next.

'What now, Tamara?' She thought as her reverie fled, and she was still sitting on the muddy ground at the riverside. She didn't even mind whether she was now getting wet with the running water.

Tamara let out a deep sign as she abruptly jumped a bit and dragged her in reality by a sudden loud and nasty growl — her senses heightened, and her body started to tremble again because of anxiety and fear.

Another growl followed that echoed within the woods — this time, it was a little low and weak with a hint of pain in its tone.

A devious laugh trailed after that mixed with a couple of panting and snarling.

The hair at the back of her neck stood up as she shivered just by hearing those sounds resonating the entire depths of the forest.

Tamara wanted to just stay away from whatever it was, but her feet moved closer to where the sounds were coming from — uncontrollable and as if they had their own minds. She wanted to stop, but she couldn't, as if something was telling her to go and she hated it.

She slowly walked towards the large trees covered with vines. Tamara could hear her own heart beat hammering inside her chest, making it ache a bit.

She swallowed roughly and found herself standing in the two tall thick trees that twisted their trunks together. It was a secluded area and the other trees overlapped each other creating a fence-like trees around the shed. She immediately hid in the great bushes and wild grass.

She saw a small open lounge barn which was made of bamboo and hay. At the barn, three tall men were standing, and one was lying on the ground.

The three men were totally bulky, and they were all wearing black shirts and pants. While the man lying on the ground had nothing in to cover him.

"I already told you to never dare cross us, you coward jerk," one of the bulky men clearly stated, his voice laced with anger and annoyance.

One of them — the tallest — grabbed the neck of the man lying on the ground and spit at him. Then, he let him go forcefully and kicked his stomach. The man grunted miserably and coughed with blood.

She jumped in terror and covered her mouth to stop her gasping in hopes of being quiet and never heard by any of them. She inaudibly turned around and hid herself more, embracing her body using her trembling arms.

Tamara saw how hideous the scene was.

Would she witness someone's death?

Here?

In the middle of nowhere while she was all alone?

The rustling sound of the lofty trees enveloped the entire place as the hair at the back of her neck stood making her shiver.

POV: Someone

A loud crashing of an antique vase broken on the floor echoed throughout the whole receiving room. Three tall and bulky men started to tremble as their eyes were laced

with undeniable fear. Their heads bow down and their legs shake, for they knew that with one mistake their loving life was at stake — or worse, they had to say goodbye to it.

“What the hell did you say?” A woman in her late forties was holding three sharp and long daggers in her hands, asked violently as she narrowed her eyes and looked at them with pure irritation and ferocity.

The woman was sitting on the single black sofa wearing a silky delicate red maxi dress that flowed down and reached the floor, emphasizing her fair skin. It was paired with red three-inch pumps.

Her straight light ash blonde hair flowed freely at her back. Her narrowed eyes were decorated with dark black mascara and black eyeliner that contoured and defined her gray eyes. Her pouty lips are covered with deep red lipstick, causing the three men to be intimidated more.

The woman entirely screamed of high authority, class, and power, and no one could ever break loose once she unfolded her true color. She was well-known for that — indisputably wicked and ruthless.

She held her head high and raised her brow as her face laced with a sarcastic smile, waiting for an answer while playing with the daggers in her hand.

The bulky man in the blue jacket cleared his throat, trying to find his own strength and ease his trembling voice before speaking.

“The lady had escaped,” he nervously answered.

His forehead was slightly damp with bullets of sweat due to his intensifying fear.

In an instant, the man who had just spoken lay down on the floor, his breathing hard and uneven, gasping for air and whimpering in pain. A pool of warm crimson red blood streamed down from his chest as he stopped breathing and lost himself from this world.

The two men who were left standing shut their eyes tightly, feeling sorry for their pack companion but couldn't do anything for him at the same time.

“Find. Her.”

That was just what they needed to hear and eagerly dismissed themselves out of the room, or else they might also meet their tragic demise at the hands of the devilish woman.

POV: Tamara Davis

Meanwhile, it took a couple of minutes more before the three men in black shirts finally left the poor man on the ground. He had endured a few more kicks, making her realize that he might already be dead.

That possibility made her shiver down to her spine — her chest clenched tightly. She wouldn't have wanted to witness any of that, for her mind was now haywire.

Tamara heaved a deep slow and inaudible sigh as she tried to calm her raging nerves.

Everything she heard was the shaking trees in the woods caused by the strong wind, embracing her and sending her further chills.

Tamara clenched her fist tightly, finding her strength to finally face the barn.

The three men were already gone, but she wouldn't take any chances. She observed and looked around the passive place for a matter of minutes more before completely finding the courage to step closer to the man lying on the ground — dead... or hopefully not.

Tamara gently walked forward — her slow-paced tracks contradicted the fast beating of her heart. She took out a long stick to defend herself if anything happened as if it could do something for her.

She saw a small blanket resting near the barn and used it to cover the man's nudity. Her cheeks turned red as she tried to put the blanket on him while her eyes were looking at the other side.

Her forehead creased as she studied the lying man, whose face was badly beaten — almost unrecognizable at that.

She slightly shook her head, feeling sorry for the poor man.

His left eye was swollen and started to get dark circles around it. His lips were bloated a bit and had a cut at its side — his left arm had a long scratch of a claw, which she deemed were the splattered blood on the ground came from.

He was quite slim, and having three men as opponents, he was definitely outnumbered.

"Is he dead?" Tamara whispered to herself as she tried to reach for the man using her long wooden stick, tapping his feet to at least get any reaction from him.

She saw him whimper as he whispered inaudible words. Tamara didn't try to move closely at him to understand what he was trying to say. Knowing that he was not dead was enough for her, for she was still shaken and uncertain about him — the only thing that was making her stay was her conscience.

She heaved a deep sigh and bit her lower lip. She was thinking of what to do next. Of course, she couldn't bring the man wherever she wanted to go, because even though he was slimmer than an average man, he was quite tall... and he was a man she didn't even know.

Tamara decided to look for any medicinal plants around — to cure the man's arm, which was continuously bleeding. She found a white cloth inside the empty barn, some arnica flowers and river water to treat his wounds.

She couldn't carry him to the hay, so she decided to put some hay under him instead — to at least keep him warm. She tended to his scratched arms and covered it with a white cloth.

She also found some fruits from the trees and shrubs around the barn to relieve her starving stomach.

While eating some wild berries, something caught her eyes — something that brightened as some light rays hit it. She instantly went up and moved closer to where it was — a golden tag necklace that had the word 'Aeron' written on it.

Tamara's forehead creased and looked at the lying man, then shrugged. Maybe she would just give it back to him once he was already awake. And maybe he could also help her find her way home to her parents.

She heaved a sigh as she sat up and bent down the huge tree near the barn.

The sky was already filled with different hues — shades of mauve, deep orange, wine red, grey, beige — all were enveloped by darkness.

Time flies passed, but Tamara still couldn't comprehend what was truly happening to her.

Her mind was floating in the midst of the night. She watched how the crescent moon formed from the dark and lonely sky — she bitterly smiled. The stars glistened so brightly — the same with her eyes, which were now moistened with tears that she immediately wiped as she tried to stay strong.

She missed her parents so much that it made her realize that she needed to contemplate a plan on what to do next. But nothing came to her mind — it was null — and she heaved another deep sigh and continued watching the stars.

Her eyes flew to the man, who was already sleeping soundly while she was wide awake. The sighing of the trees swayed by the wind, didn't do good on her. The owl hooting and the birds shrieking sounds made her flinch to the ground where she was currently sitting.

Tamara braced herself for the moment of deafening silence as her sobs came out painfully. She was soothing herself from the cold wind brushing her skin, making her feel so petrified and so alone.

POV: Luna Rania

At the same time, in the Lunar Mansion, the Vikesh Family who led the Lunar Pack, was settling down in the receiving area of their huge place.

“I’m so sorry, Alpha Lorenzo, Luna Rania. I failed you,” Benson held his head down as Doctor Dreyson — the salutary or official herbal wolf of the Lunar Pack — treated his wounds.

Benson needed to break the news to them before letting the physician take him to his barn house near the mansion.

Benson, being the Beta of the Lunar Pack — headed by Alpha Lorenzo and his Luna Rania — was tasked in fetching Tamara from Winston and Ameia’s house. They learned that their enemy had already made their move to attack them, so they needed to protect Tamara — at all costs.

It was one of his vital and crucial missions and he failed to execute — now, all of their plans were already crumbling down to ashes. Tamara escaped and was nowhere to be found.

“It’s okay Benson. We just hope she is safe, and the Dark Wood Pack doesn’t have her either.” Rania answered firmly.

Her hands were in a tight closed fist and her jaw clenched, trying to compose herself. Benson kept his head down a little bit more by hearing the Luna’s tone of voice.

Rania and Lorenzo quietly stayed to where they were sitting from as the intense silence enveloped them. But Shahara immediately broke it by letting out a heavy sigh and clearing her throat.

“I saw one of Aeron’s hunters running after her.” Shahara infuriatingly informed them.

Rania’s eyes widened at the sudden news while her hand flew in front of her agape mouth.

“And I’m sure he is there when the attack happens. I can smell him in the air. That shameful coward,” Shahara added while gritting her teeth and nodding her head with her raised eyebrow.

“Shahara,” Rania’s tender voice gave her a hint of warning.

Rania, being the Lunar Pack’s female leader, didn’t tolerate any ferocity and wickedness in any form — even in words — towards any person as much as possible, even if that person was one of their enemies.

“Sorry,” Shahara cutely smiled at her mother and made a peace sign.

Rania just sighed, “Are you certain at that?” She patiently asked for her daughter’s confirmation.

Shahara nodded, looking directly into her mother’s eyes, who massaged her temple lightly and squeezed her eyes shut, taking in what she had just said.

“I just badly hurt one of his hunters, though,” Shahara proudly said as she smirked evilly.

Rania snarled in protest, and Shahara just pouted.

Lorenzo cleared his throat. “Anyway, let’s all leave that to the moon’s fate. I have important and urgent news to announce.”

All of the eyes in the room darted to the Alpha of the Lunar Pack — Lorenzo — waiting for him to continue his words.

“The king announced an urgent meeting. All members of the pack holding a high position needed to be at his castle tomorrow afternoon.” He seriously uttered.

Their eyes widened in surprise as Lorenzo, on the other hand, clenched his jaw. Their minds suddenly bombarded with diverse questions — all the same. The king abhorred gatherings in his castle, and if they needed to have a meeting, Arlan, the second-in-command, always did it in the pack meeting house just near the castle and not inside the castle.

‘So, why now?’ They thought.

“H-how come?” Rania curiously asked.

Lorenzo shook his head — even he couldn’t decipher what was in the king’s mind right now.

“I just hoped it wasn’t about the ‘regina,’” Lorenzo whispered lowly, but low enough for the people there to hear him.

“The Were Elders’ Council was asking him to settle down already. As if they could do something if the king didn’t want it to happen,” he added, and laid his back on the single forest green sofa where he was sitting.

All of them now were seriously contemplating something on their mind — all were hoping it wasn’t about the ‘regina,’ but the possibility was making them more agitated.

“We need to find Tamara as soon as possible.” Shahara pressed her lips together as those words escaped from her mouth.

No one contradicted her because all of them were thinking the same thing.

POV: Tamara Davis

She woke up with a stiff neck and back ache. It was still dark and cold. She believed she slept on the wrong side of her bed — but wait, she wasn’t on her bed, nevertheless on the ground inside the barn.

She inspected her bruises — which were swiftly healing as she tended to them, too, yesterday — while slowly walking out of the barn.

She decided to go inside to keep her warm from the icy cold gusting wind.

But her forehead creased as she stopped her tracks and looked at where the man was lying — now, all she could see was empty hay.

Tamara scratched the back of her neck as she heaved a deep sigh.

‘He didn’t have the guts to thank her.’ She thought as she shook her head in disappointment. Then, she suddenly remembered the golden tag necklace that she had forgotten to give the man.

She was about to look for it in her pants’ pocket, but before she could make a move, a glimmering extremely large black wolf appeared in front of her, making her jump a bit in shock. She began to panic as she looked at the pair of pitch-black eyes, making her tremble in fear.

And once again, darkness consumed Tamara as she fell into the cold ground.

POV: Tamara Davis

Tamara woke up with a tremendous headache — her temples throbbed in pain, and she kept her eyes shut tightly. Flashes of what had happened to her immediately woke her senses up.

She got up in an instant with wide eyes and her vision spun for her sudden move, so she instantly shut her eyes to collect herself and opened it again. She was welcomed with a stinky smell of dead rodents. Her stomach churned and she almost gagged — she covered her nose as she looked around.

She was now sitting on the cold and filthy floor — thank God she didn't see any rodents around making it tolerable for her or else she would really freak out, but it still stank.

She was like in a prison cell with brick walls — well, it was more like a box with a locked rustic metal bars enclosing the cage where she was jailed.

Jailed?!

She blinked her eyes and unbelievably stared at the metal bars.

She remembered her parents, then, Benson, who became a wolf! Chills went down her spine as she remembered that and how she was almost attacked by a huge bad wolf and was saved by an auburn furred one.

Tamara held her throbbing temple. Then, she tended to an unfamiliar man, who had just left without her knowing and...

Her eyes widened in a mix of anxiety and fear when she remembered an extremely huge black wolf that appeared in front of her, and everything went black. Her heart hammered in terror as the hair at the back of her neck stood.

She once again looked around her, making sure that she was the only one there. She wouldn't know what to do if a massive wolf suddenly jumped at her.

She shivered at that thought.

Good thing, she was the only one there.

But wasn't it odd that she was there?

Where is she?

What happened to her?

Who sent her there?

Was it the large black wolf?

Tamara suddenly panicked and took a swift glimpse towards her whole body and heaved a deep sigh — at least she was okay — she was alive and kicking.

She stood up with the entire length of her body trembling, and she gradually walked towards the metal bars, looking at possible people she could talk to — to at least ask for help.

She bit her lower lip to stifle her shaking nerves.

The rays of the sun from the high windows, almost touching the ceiling, made her see the unlit torches along the pathway.

Her eyes glittered with hope as she looked at the guard, who was standing like a statue near the main door.

“Hey! Where am I? Can you get me out? I don’t know why I’m here!” She pleaded as she tried to speak coherently.

Her hands shook the metal bars as if she could break through it to at least get the guard’s attention.

However, she didn’t get any reaction at all — not even a quick glance in her place. He was just standing like a cemented sculpture and was deaf to her pleas.

“Hey!” Her voice cracked for her unshed pathetic tears.

Tamara swallowed the lump in her throat as she tried to yell again — this time a little bit louder.

“Don’t you hear me? I said—”

But she was clearly cut off by loud and enraged howls, coming from the numerous prison cells that echoed in the entire room.

She was stunned at where she was standing. She couldn’t see what it was, but she had a tiny little clue of what they could be. Her heart beat hitched and her eyes widened as chills crept at the hair on the back of her neck, making her shiver in so much fear.

A loud and maddening snarl from the guard, who were just standing afront, made the enraging howl into weakened and frightened whimpers until it ended with a raucous silence — again.

She couldn’t move by what she just saw and heard. It was making her maddeningly crazy. She couldn’t comprehend what the heck had happened.

A low chuckle brought her senses back, and she snapped her eyes to where it came from — a man was comfortably sitting on the floor, leaning his head at the back of his hand while his elbows were resting on his thigh. He was in the other prison, facing her

and smugly looking at her. Her blood boiled in just a mere sight of him — like he was mocking her or something — and she hated it.

“Don’t waste your time shouting, pup,” he conceitedly smirked at her.

Tamara creased her forehead as she looked at him like she was shooting daggers at him. She didn’t know him; besides, he was also in prison — he might be a ruinous loathsome pestilent person.

Unlike her, she knew she didn’t do anything bad — well, except for leaving the auburn-furred wolf in the woods and even Benson. Well, they weren’t dead yet, right? Tamara shook her head lightly, trying to erase the depraved thoughts in her mind.

“Why are you here, pup?” The man asked her with a hint of contemptuousness in his voice.

She was kind of irritated with his haughtiness and for calling her a pup — she was not a puppy, for goodness’ sake! She wanted to roll her eyes upwards, and she did!

Tamara pretended not to hear anything. She’d rather stay quiet than talk to this filthy man. Well, just being hypercritical — the man was wearing a huge torn murky dark blue shirt and ripped muddy black loose jeans — he looked more like a bum beggar.

His long jet-black hair fell messily that reached his nape. He had thick brows that matched his dark gray eyes and tan skin. He wasn’t muscular — just a toned one.

“Are you deaf, pup? Well, I heard you a while ago, maybe the cat got out your tongue, huh? Well, I don’t think you wouldn’t have the chance to get out of here so perhaps we can just have a little chit-chat. What do you think? Hey, pup—”

“Will you please stop calling me ‘pup’! I am not a puppy.” Tamara finally said infuriatingly, stressing every single word she had just said.

The man just raised his both hands, as if surrendering to her — well, sort of — because he was still wearing his smug look anyway.

Tamara was about to unleash another murderous litany when the main door creaked wide open. Her eyes broadened as she saw a pint of hope to be finally free from this place.

Two men wearing black shirts and black denim jeans entered the jail room. Their faces were stoic and blank while walking along the pathway holding an intimidating dark aura.

One of them was taller than the other. They almost looked the same, though — equally muscular and tanned. Their eyes were both dark amber and they had pitch black hair.

The guard watching the main door followed them behind like they were one of the bosses there. Tamara swallowed hard as she thought that maybe they could help her out. They stopped in front of the prison cell of the arrogant man who vainly called her 'pup.'

The conceited man crossed his arms and just gave them a plain bored look — gone were his proud looks a while ago, making her blink in confusion.

"So, you're here again." The taller man commented as his lips curled upwards sardonically. His eyes were viciously looking at him.

"It depends, perhaps you want to think I was just a pigment of your imagination, then — go on." The man inside the cell plainly answered, making the tall man clenched his jaw in annoyance.

Tamara just watched them with her lips slightly ajar — her eyes gaze moved from one to the other, with her brows furrowed and completely confused.

"Just get him out of here, Dillion." The other man said, crossing his arms in front of his broad chest.

The man named Dillion motioned the guard, who immediately obliged and unlocked the cell for the conceited man to get out.

The arrogant man just made a face and shrugged, then boringly stood up. He shook off his pants as if it wasn't already filthy as it were, and proudly walked through the aisle while one of his eyebrows raised, then stopped in front of the two men and smirked.

The two men just clenched their jaws and turned around — they didn't want to get provoked by the crazy man as they started to walk away.

Before the man in prison followed the two, he gave her a side glance and winked at her before he languidly turned around and started walking.

She watched him walk with mouth ajar, swallowing hard before she finally found her voice.

"Wait—" she called them with a hint of panic in her tone.

She let out an inaudible gasp the moment her eyes found theirs. She slightly nibbled her bottom lip to contain herself from trembling under their intense gaze.

"I... I... Uhhh..." She couldn't find the right words to say — her mind was in haywire and the way they looked at her wasn't helping her either.

The two authoritative men just gave her a boring look while the arrogant man gave her an amused one. Tamara heaved a deep sigh before fighting their intense stares.

She clenched her hands, trying to stop her hammering heart beat inside her chest.

“I shouldn’t be here. I don’t know why I’m here. Can you please get me out, too? I need to get out from here.” She begged like her life depended on it — her eyes started to water again.

Their forehead creased just by watching her with unshed tears — no amount of pity in their faces and as if she was just a lowly person who begged for her useless life.

Her heart was clenching achingly at their minuscule stares.

“I don’t know what you are saying, pup, but tomorrow is judgment day. Besides, you will not be here if you didn’t commit a grave sin. All of the prisoners will be executed tomorrow, so brace yourself.” The taller man called Dillion answered plainly, as if it was a common thing for them to say, and not about her precious life being taken away.

The conceited man just shook his head as if he was just disappointed at her.

Her mouth went agape as her ears suddenly became deaf from all those words she had heard. She absentmindedly looked at the men who were now walking away from her as if nothing had happened.

They simply left her there — alone and miserable, without a tiny hint of doubt that she might be innocent as if they were all just right in accusing her or enlightening her of her supposed-to-be sin.

Whatever the heck was that!

She could even hear her own heartbeat speedily echoing in her ears as she slammed the metal bars with her bare hands.

“No,” she shakingly whispered.

“No! No! No!” This time making it louder as it filled the entire room, ignoring the stinging pain in her both hands and arms as she smacked the jail bars hard and continuously.

“No! Please! No!” She miserably cried.

She was undeniably desperate and scared.

She was losing hope as she felt weakened while slapping the metal bars in front of her. Her fresh tears streamed down her face endlessly.

Tamara embraced her frail body using her bare forearms, slowly losing her faith as she collapsed gradually on the concrete cold floor.

Would she not see her parents again? Would she not find justice for them? Would she not fulfill her promise to them? Would she be facing her miserable demise?

Her bloodshot eyes — which were visibly deprived of sleep and complete rest — were full of tears that raced down her cheeks. Her hard pants and heartbroken sobs filled the prison cell as she covered her mouth with her cold and sweaty palm.

She feebly curled her body into a small ball as she sat and leaned on the brick walls from behind. Tamara lost sight of every light in her eyes as she closed her lids.