

Chapter 97

Miranda POV

I was so very thankful for having someone like Avalynn as not only a good friend but family. She has been a true friend day in and day out. She has shown me kindness at a time when I didn't deserve it or anything remotely nice towards me. I hugged her and thanked her for it. She would never know how thankful I was for her generosity and grace that day. She, along with Brent, seemed to calm the storm raging inside of me. It was like every ounce of my being knew what later tonight would bring. Her encouraging words and help along the way made my anxiety subside.

Brent and Everest entered the room. I watched as Everest escorted Avalynn out of the room and I was left alone with Brent. He looked dashing in his suit. It was tailored in all of the right places and cut to fit his body perfectly. I could feel myself mentally drooling over this magnificent specimen of a man. My eyes slowly made their way down his body, drifting along all of my favorite spots; his broad strong shoulders, his arms and the way the materiel managed to show his strength, his waistline and the surprise that hid just below the belt, and finally his long strong legs.

"You look amazing too." He smiled at me. I looked up at him and his eyes had softened as he looked at me. He stepped up to me and drew me up into his arms, growling possessively into my ear. "Mine." His breath was hot on my skin as he nibbled on my earlobe. I melted into his arms as he held me up.

"Easy, we may not make it to dinner, let alone the ceremony where I can finally mark you." He spoke low.

I took a deep breath, my eyes blinking quickly, as I spoke with a shaky breath "I... Know. Shit."

A chuckle vibrated through his chest. "Come with me. It is time. Everyone is waiting for our grand entrance." He placed a gentle kiss against my cheek. We left the room and made our way to the Ball Room where everyone was waiting. Tables were scattered around the massive room. Three clicks were heard and an announcement of his Royal Highness, King Brent and his mate, soon to be Queen Miranda.

I swallowed and Brent squeezed my hand in his for reassurance. I watched as the beautiful massive double doors slowly opened in front of us. The sounds of the chairs scooting against the floor and the ruffling of dresses as people stood to get a better look were heard. We slowly walked in together and made our way up to the front of the room. We, along with Everest and Avalynn, would be eating on a raised platform. We walked to it and walked up to the platform, walking up the steps. I could see everyone in the room from up here. We walked around the front of the table as Brent made a speech.

"Welcome to our home. We hope that you enjoy this evening's festivities that will lead to the marking of my mate, Miranda. We are so very blessed to have such support from the community from different backgrounds. From Lycans to witches, you will always be welcome here. Here is to a new dawn, a new day, a new way of life for us all. Enjoy dinner everyone!" Cheers erupted throughout the room. I watched him walk back toward me. His smile brightened my soul as he took my hand and led us to our seats. He pulled the chair back for me, allowing me to sit.

We ate dinner and chit-chatted. My eyes glanced around the room, frequently watching the room. I have never, in my entire life, ate more carefully than I have tonight. Every bite was super small and calculated. I was not about to ruin this beautiful dress. When the last course was served and finished, the tables and chairs were cleared by our staff members as our guests mingled and talked. Drinks were passed around by our servers and music began over head. We mingled and danced along with our guests.

Everyone that I spoke with was super nice and supportive of us being together. Brent and Everest were pulled away to speak with a few Alphas from the surrounding packs. Avalynn and I decided to use this as an opportunity to walk around the room together. As we were walking, I felt someone watching us, moving along with us. I turned my head in the direction I felt eyes coming from and a woman was looking at me.

She gave me a smile and moved closer to us. She stopped in front of us and raised her brow. Avalynn cleared her throat and the woman shot daggers at her as a warning. Wrong move on her part for not acknowledging a royal. Avalynn's arm darted out and reached for her. Her hand clamped against her throat and she growled at her "You know protocol. Step back away from her." Her words were laced with venom.

The woman's hands were wrapped around Avalynns, clawing at them and fighting against her. She was trying to free herself from Avalynn's grasp. Her feet were lifted off the floor and I never realized how strong Avalynn was until now.

"Submit!" She ordered and the woman stilled and she let her go, dropping her to the floor. The woman bared her neck and looked down at the floor. "Speak your truth." She gave her permission to speak now.

"I am Chloe. I wanted to tell you that you are making a mistake, getting with him. He is mine and I will do everything in my power to ruin what you share with him. You will never truly be one of us. You stupid bitch." She blinked, clearly shocked by the words that came from her own mouth.

"Is that really how you feel?" Avalynn questioned her.

"Yes." She frowned and shook her head no.

"Well then." Avalynn turned and looked at me. "Miranda, what should we do?"

I heard Brent's throat clear behind me. I hadn't heard him approach us but from the look on Avalynn's face, she knew they were there.

"What is the meaning of this Chloe?" Brent growled at her and put a protective arm around my waist.

"I want you to stop playing pretend and come back with me." She had tears streaming down her face.

"No. Just the fact of you saying what you said about my mate, your Queen, you are banned from the territory. You have a twenty-four hour notice to leave. If you are found in my territory, my people will not hesitate to end your life." Brent growled at her.

"Don't even think of retreating to the Northern Territory. You are banned there as well and there will be a kill on sight." Everest growled at her.

"Now, leave." I told her. Chloe glared at me and looked around at Avalynne, Everest, and Brent, who were all ready to pounce on her if she made one wrong move. I didn't need them though. When she didn't move fast enough, I used my magic as I forced her out the doors. "I said leave!" I yelled as she went flying back.

"Nice touch." Avalynn laughed as I turned to look at the three of them.

"Thanks." I smiled at her.

"You're going to make one hell of a Queen. Good job for standing up for yourself and having the courage to not back down." Everest concluded.

The rest of the evening was spent dancing and laughing with family and friends. When the party died down it was when Brent whisked me away. It was time to be marked by him. He led me to the room where I would be watched and kept a close eye on me. A team of the castle doctors and nurses were already there, waiting on us.

Brent led me to the bed in the room and placed a soft kiss on my cheek. "Let's get you into something more comfortable, yes?" He smiled.

I nodded my head and turned my back to him, allowing him to loosen the laces on the corset. Slowly the dress began to loosen its hold on my body. I held onto the front, not wanting to expose myself. "I will give you a moment to change." He placed a kiss on my bare shoulder as shivers ran down my spine.

I changed into a tank and some comfortable mesh shorts. I looked at myself in the mirror and laughed. My hair and make-up were so elegant looking and here I stood in comfy clothing.

I watched as Brent reentered the room and made his way to me. I turned around to face him. He leaned to me and placed a kiss on my mouth. My lips pressed back into his softly. He guided me to bed and took my hands in his own. He brought my right hand up to his mouth and pressed his lips against each knuckle softly. "Tonight is all about you, my dear. The marking will only be painful if you fight against it. It is meant to be a pleasurable experience, only if you allow it to be."

I nodded my head and smiled at him. "Okay."

"Are you sure you are ready for this?" He asked me as his finger trailed up and down my neck.

"Yes, I am sure." I tilted my head to the side, offering it to him, and heard him chuckle. I looked back at him, a little confused as to why he was laughing.

"My dear, I am not a vampire. I am going to make sure your entire body is ready for this moment. Ready for me, ready for your transition." He kissed me.

I returned the kiss to his lips. "I don't know what I am doing here. I mean, I thought you would just bite me."

He smiled down at me and brushed a loose strand of hair away from my face, gazing at me lovingly. "No, my dear, that is not how I would like you to receive this gift. Let's get you more relaxed." He handed me a glass of wine.

I took a deep breath and smiled at him. "Okay." I took the glass of wine from him.

