

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 103-110

Chapter 103

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I felt extremely weak and exhausted but I somehow managed to open my eyes. It felt like I had the weight of a thousand carriages on me. I could barely lift my hands or even move my eyes but I managed to fixate them on the window outside. It truly was a beautiful night and I couldn't stop myself from saying as such.

Ryker literally froze. His entire body tensed and he slowly turned to me as if scared that he would see something else. The moment his eyes settled on me, I managed a small smile and he practically threw himself into me. I couldn't help but smile as he held me tight. It was something I had missed so dearly especially when he peppered kisses all over my face. He pulled back in disbelief and stared at me as if he had seen a ghost.

"Tell me this is real," he whispered and tears gathered in my eyes. "Fuck, baby, I thought I had lost you. The vampire and the physician, they said that there was no cure."

"There isn't," I cut him off and his brows furrowed. "Can I have some water first?"

He instantly rushed to get me a glass and helped me into a sitting position. Once I was a little more refreshed, I told him everything. I told him about my limbo state and what my mother had told me. I knew I sounded absolutely crazy but if there was one thing I could count on from Ryker, it was that he would always listen no matter how absurd I sounded. By the time I was done speaking, he looked lost in thought.

"I don't know how she fixed the balance or what she plans to do but I'm guessing she did," I shrugged but Ryker didn't look convinced.

"There has to be more to it. We will find that out soon," as soon as he said that, the smile on his face disappeared and he turned to me with hard eyes. "What

the hell were you thinking when you went out by yourself? Why didn't you just wait an extra day for me so we could go together."

I had expected that he would be upset but I didn't think he would start yelling at me soon. For what it was worth, he looked more scared than upset. I knew he was talking from a place of worry. If anything had happened to me, Ryker would have lost his mind literally and figuratively and I didn't think about that before I left.

"I'm sorry, I just wanted to help."

"What do you mean by help? You have done so much already."

I sighed.

"You have been on top of everything since day one. You live for this lifestyle, things are easy for you. I feel like I am in way over my head here and I just thought that if I could figure out something then maybe it would make everything better. It was stupid, I know."

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Chapter 103

Ryker went completely silent and then he sighed. He sat at the edge of the bed and pulled me into his side. "There is nothing for you to prove. You are the Queen, Camilla. You have already done more than enough for the people in his palace and every day you risk your life for them. You are the only person who thinks you aren't doing enough."

I looked down. I didn't know if he was saying it just because I was his mate or if he actually meant it. I chose to believe that it was the latter.

"You should rest," Ryker said finally. "We can talk more about this tomorrow. The vampires have been going crazy over the past few days and I know they are going to do a lot more."

“You mean, Alastair?” I asked and his brows furrowed. “That’s the vampire king. He was the one who bit me. He’s responsible for everything that has happened.”

From the look on his face, I knew he didn’t know that bit of information. “Rest, Camilla, tomorrow can wait for us.”

That was exactly what I did. I lay my head against his chest and slept. By the time I woke

up, I felt great. When the physician came to see me, he was also shocked to see that I had made a full recovery and advised that I stay another day for observation but I couldn’t. I had spent too much of my time in the past month unconscious. I needed everyone to know that I was fine and we were going to get to the end of things.

Christine came to the physician’s quarters to bring me some clothes and as soon as she saw me, she threw her hands around me. She sobbed into my shoulder and it hit me that this was the first time I had ever seen her cry. My eyes welled with unshed tears and I had to blink in order to stop myself from crying as well.

“I am so glad that you are okay,” she whispered to me. “The girls have missed you immensely. I am sure that they would love to see you.”

“I missed them too,” my heart ached for my children. I felt like such a bad mother considering that I hadn’t seen them in so long and even when I saw them, I was too busy to even spend proper time with them. I just wanted things to settle down so that I could be with them like a proper mum.

I finished getting dressed and the idea was to go to the girls first but the moment I saw Ryker’s face, I knew there was work to be done. I let out a sigh because I couldn’t outrightly complain, this was the life I was born into and it didn’t matter what I wanted, I had a duty to the people first.

“I’ll be sure to see them today, Christine, don’t say anything to Audrey. I want it to be a surprise,” she nodded and immediately rushed out while I turned to Ryker. “What do we have on the itinerary today?”

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Chapter 103

“A guard’s body was laid out in the town square yesterday and he was completely torn apart by the vampires,” I could only imagine how horrific that was. “The people are terrified and asking a lot of questions. We need to meet with the town heads and the elders to figure out where to go from there.”

My expression soured at the mention of the elders but I said nothing as Ryker led me by hand towards the council room. I was still unsteady on my feet so he kept a firm grip on me to ensure that no one noticed. When we walked in, all eyes turned on us- well, me to be specific.

Everyone bowed and it was the elders who spoke first. “Your majesty, I didn’t think you were joining us. The prince said that you were a bit preoccupied.”

I was grateful to Ryker for telling them that instead of unconscious. I squeezed his hand in a silent thanks and he just gave me a discreet nod back. I turned to the elder who had spoken.

“I had to go on a last minute trip, elder. I only returned late last night.”

“I hope the findings would be useful to us in this meeting. There is already so much happening and a miracle would be preferred right now,” he sounded somewhat genuine and desperate. I turned to Ryker wondering if they had gotten a personality replacement in the past two days but he wouldn’t meet my eye.

The corner of his lips twitched and I didn’t need a witch to tell me that he was somewhat involved in whatever had happened to them. Ryker and I claimed out seats at the head of the table and everyone bowed once more. The elders sat closest to us while the town head sat close to the other end of the table.

“Your majesty,” the first town head spoke, she was the youngest of them all- maybe in her mid thirties and she had bags under her eyes like she hadn’t slept in days. “The people are terrified. They do not know who is next. They need some assurance that they are protected.”

“I understand how they must feel but assure them that we are working overtime to ensure that this horrible man is brought to justice. For now, make sure no one goes into the woods alone at night. They are lurking at every turn looking for a new victim. Their preferred victims are men, so the women are somewhat safe.”

“How do you know that?” her interruption was not to be rude, she was genuinely curious.

“My impromptu trip was to find whoever was doing this and I did. He does not kill women but he will not spare any man. The men need to be careful until we can bring him to justice.”

She pursed her lips but nodded. For the next few hours, we discussed how we were

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Chapter 103

going to align the guards to keep watch and reduce the risk of casualties. Even though we didn't know much, I was able to use a little bit of the information I gathered from Alastair before he bit me.

We finished the meeting after almost three hours and I thanked them all for coming. As they were leaving however, Christine rushed into the council room. Everyone looked at her with furrowed brows but it was the panic on her face that had me sitting upright.

“Everyone, out!” I ordered and I watched them all scurry out. They were curious, it was written on their faces but they could not refuse a direct order. I waited until I heard the door shut before I turned to her. “Talk to me, is there another body? What happened?”

“It's not a body,” she could barely speak. I could barely hear her voice. She mumbled a few words under her breath but they were unintelligible.

“Christine, what is going on?”

“Audrey!” she finally managed out. “I don’t know what happened but we were playing in the garden and she wanted to climb. I was watching her, I swear I was but I looked away for one second and she fell. There’s so much blood.”

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 104

Chapter 104

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I had never felt panic like that in my entire life as I rushed towards the gardens. My heart was pounding rapidly in my chest. My vision blurred and my ears rang. It felt like I was in an alternate reality, I couldn’t get a grip on myself and for a second, I didn’t even remember where I was. As soon as I got out of the palace, the scent of blood flooded my nose and I feared my heart would beat its way right out of my chest.

My feet came to a halt in front of the tree that Christine had said they were playing at. I vaguely noticed the guard who was holding a wailing Aurora in his arms. I couldn’t focus on anyone else except Audrey who was on the ground. Her body was shielded by the physician who was looking over her but there was so much blood. I heard screaming and it took me a second to realize that the sound was coming from me. Ryker was holding me but I could barely feel his hands on my skin. I pushed him off and rushed over to my daughter.

I didn’t care that my dress was sitting on her blood, all I could see was her. Her head was so bloody. I reached out to touch her and my vision blurred. I felt something hot slide down my cheeks as I stroked back her sweaty hair. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Christine clearing everyone out.

“Your majesty,” there was a sad tone in the physician’s voice and I already knew that I wouldn’t like what he had to say so I shot him a hard look.

“If you aren’t going to tell me that my daughter will wake up in the next five minutes then I suggest you shut up unless you want to lose your head,” I spat and he

immediately went silent. I turned back to my child and cradled her gently in my arms. “Audrey, sweetheart, I’m here now.”

She was so stiff and immobile. This wasn’t the girl I knew, my child was hyper, she was always jumping from one place to another. She was always talking non-stop. She didn’t just lie down like that. It wasn’t in her nature.

I stroked her hair and I could barely see from the tears clouding my vision and dripping all over her skin. “Mummy is here, please get up. I’m not even mad at you for climbing things. I love you my sweet girl.”

I leaned down to place a kiss on her forehead. While trying to do that, I had placed my hand on the ground and accidentally cut it on a sharp rock. I felt the

sting but I ignored it because I knew it would heal and cradled her face with my hands. Ryker was next to me and he was holding onto her hand. There were tears in his eyes but he was holding himself together.

I couldn't explain what happened next if I wanted to, one second, we were just sitting

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Chapter 104

there and the next, I felt a rush of energy leave me. It left in a rush of wind and I looked down in confusion only to see my bloody hand glowing. I almost dropped Audrey in surprise. I glanced up at Ryker who was looking at me in surprise. No one dared to speak until the hand stopped glowing. I held my breath wondering what was happening when Audrey sneezed. It was light and barely audible. Her eyes fluttered open and she looked up at me in surprise.

"Mummy?" she asked and I nodded. "Why does my head hurt so bad?"

I pulled my hands back from her face in shock and I watched before my bare eyes as the cut on my hand healed. I glanced from my hands to Audrey and pulled her into a tight hug and she squeaked in surprise before quickly reciprocating. There was still blood on her but whatever wound she had that was leaking blood was healed because she looked fine. I didn't want to think about the mechanics in that moment, I just held my daughter in my arms.

Once I released her, Ryker pulled her in and she giggled.

After he had let her go, she frowned. "Why is my head so heavy?"

She reached up but I grabbed her arm to stop her. "You just have something on you. Come with me, I'll give you a bath and help you wash your hair. Is that okay?"

She nodded and I couldn't resist picking her up. I didn't want to be away from her for a second. The physician was still kneeling on the ground and he was watching me with a scrutinizing gaze. I knew there was a lot to be unpacked there but it could wait. Ryker walked with me to her room and he stood by the door while I gently combed through Audrey's locks.

She was so oblivious to everything that happened and I planned to keep it that way. All that mattered was that she was okay and breathing. She was her usual loud self as she splashed the water on both Ryker and I. My heart was still pounding rapidly as if I had finished running a marathon.

Once she was cleaned, she started to yawn. For the first time in a long time, I helped her into her nightgown and tucked her in bed. She smiled dreamily as I tucked the blankets around her.

"Can you read a book to me?" she asked and I nodded immediately.

"Of course," I pulled the nearest book from the shelf and turned to Ryker.

"Would you like to do it?"

He hesitated but Audrey turned to him. "Please daddy, you do the voices

better than mummy.”

At this he laughed and took the book out of my hand. He sat on the other side of the bed and read. It didn't take long for her to fall asleep and when I was sure she was just snoring softly and not dead, I took a step back. I watched Ryker put the book back on

Chapter 104

the dresser and come to stand behind me.

He wrapped his arms around my shoulder and pressed a kiss to the side of my head. I immediately relaxed into his hold and he somehow held me tighter.

“We have to talk about what happened,” he whispered to me and I shrugged.

“How did you do that?”

“I didn't do anything,” I whispered but I wasn't fooling anyone. It was so glaringly obvious but also so unbelievable. “I am an elemental. I control water. I don't heal people.”

“Camilla,” his voice was soft and soothing as if he was talking to a child. “The evidence is staring us right in the face. Look at her.”

“She could have been waking up on her own,” I offered. “We need to ask the physician to check on her. I don't want any complications later.”

He just sighed and nodded. “If that's what you want.”

When we got to the physician's quarters, it was obvious that he had been waiting for us. He was pacing across the room and immediately he saw us, he let out a sigh of relief. There were multiple books open on the bed in front of him and he looked like: who was seeing candy for the first time.

child

“Your majesty, that was incredible,” he looked at me as he spoke. “It is unheard of for a royal to have more than one power trait. This is equally remarkable and terrifying.”

I opened my mouth to speak but Ryker shot me a look. They didn't understand, I didn't want to have another power. There was already so much and the last thing I needed was to have another power that I needed to master and dominate. I simply crossed my arms over my chest and stared at them.

“Pardon me, your majesty, but your daughter was,” he hesitated before saying the next words, “she was dying. There was nothing that could have been done for her. I saw it.”

“That's not true, she is lying in her bed and she is perfectly fine. She is alive.” you did

“Now she is, but she wasn't when she lay there in the field. I don't know what but you healed her. You brought her from the brink of death,” it seemed to be unbelievable to me. I couldn't wrap my head around it. “Your majesty, if you could walk me around what happened while you held your child. I know it was

a traumatic experience but every detail might be the difference between right and wrong.”

The events were hazy but I tried to explain it as best as I could and he made notes. Ryker just stood by my side holding my hand and giving silent comfort. By the time I was doing, the physician sighed.

07:53 Fri, 12 Jan

Chapter 104

“I have a theory but I will need your help to confirm it,” he began. “Would you be willing to give a sample of your blood?”

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“Why?” I asked and it hit me. He thought it was my blood that had the healing properties. I nodded and he walked over to me with a knife. I watched as he created a small gash on my palm and allowed the blood drip into a vial. “Who are you going to test that on?”

“Whoever walks in here next. Hopefully, it’s sooner rather than later. The quicker we get answers, the quicker we can get an answer to our questions.”

I nodded. I was barely listening at this point. I felt overwhelmed. Ryker realized it because he responded to the guard and pulled me out of the room. He walked with me until we got to a deserted hallway and he placed my back against the cool wall. His hand wrapped around my chin and he tilted head up.

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“Look at me and breathe,” he ordered and I struggled to do as he had asked.

“Do it again, until you calm down. I need you to breathe. You look dazed and you’re sweating.”

“I can’t.”

“Try,” there was sheer power in his voice and I couldn’t help but do as he asked. I felt the knot in my chest begin to lighten and he kissed my lips. “Good girl, how do you feel?”

“It’s too much,” I told him. “There is too much happening all at once.”

“I know baby, but we will get through it. I just need you to trust me. Can you do that?” I nodded. “Whatever happens, it is me and you, okay? Always.”

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 105

Chapter 105

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

We stood there alone for what felt like seconds but in reality was half an hour. By the time we got out, I was relatively calmer about everything. Ryker and I went back to his office where I found all the books I had taken from the library. They were arranged on his desk in a neat pile and I couldn't stop myself from running my finger over it slowly.

"Did you read them all?" I asked and he nodded. "Why?"

"I needed to make myself busy. You were unconscious and I needed to feel like I was doing something to help you. I read it to you sometimes, a part of me hoped that you could hear me or something."

It was the first time he was speaking about what happened while I was unconscious and there was something painfully vulnerable at the way he spoke. It sounded resigned, I had never heard him sound that way before.

"I did hear you, sometimes," I whispered and he looked up at me. "It was like a limbo of sorts. I could hear sometimes and other times it was radio silence. It was the only thing that kept me sane."

He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to my forehead. I didn't want to think about my time there so I cleared my throat in a bid to change the subject back to the books.

"Did you find anything useful in the books while you were looking?" I asked and he shook his head with a scoff.

"Not at all actually, I got more information about vampires from you than I did from these books but it doesn't make sense," I scrunched my brows in confusion so he explained. "If there was a war, wouldn't it have been smarter for people to document everything they could about vampires? If I knew I had an enemy, I would want to know everything about them and I would keep that information readily available just in case something like that ever happens again."

"You're right," I muttered under my breath. "My mother told me to forgive myself and my father and that would help me get to the bottom of things but I have no idea what she meant by that."

“Are you upset with him?”

“I don’t think **so**. I don’t know him well enough to have any sort of feelings about him. I’ve never even asked Christine about him. I just don’t care much.”

“At this point, it is the best lead we have. Do you want to talk to her about it?” I wanted to say no because a part of me **was** scared about what I would find out but just like

07:49 Sat, 13 Jan

Chapter 105

Ryker said, it wasn’t like we had many options **so** I just shrugged.

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Instead of forcing her to come all the way to us, we went to her. She was seated cross legged in the nursery with Aurora who immediately started gurgling when she saw us. I picked my daughter up and inhaled her scent to help calm me down. Christine looked confused and curious as to why we were there but she didn’t say a word.

“Is everything okay?” she asked and I nodded. “You came at the right time honestly because she just woke up from her nap.”

“We didn’t really come to see her,” I began slowly and Christine instantly sat up. “I wanted to ask about my father. You met him right?”

She nodded slowly. “I did but not for very long. Why are you asking?”

I shrugged. “I’m just curious about a few things. What was he like?”

She hesitated as if trying to think of her next words carefully. “Honestly, I don’t know. I never interacted with him outside the usual greetings. He was a very private man. I think the only person who knew him well was your mother considering that they were married to each other. He was always locked up in his room. Sometimes he would be in the palace and people wouldn’t see him for almost a week.”

“How did he manage that?”

I couldn't be gone from the palace for a day before people started asking questions. I found it almost impossible to believe that he could disappear from the palace for a week with little to no consequences.

"He was the king," she shrugged sadly. "He got away with a lot of shit. From what I saw, he was very charming. Everyone loved him. If he ordered people to jump then they were going to ask how high. He was feared and respected. I don't know if it was because of who he was or because he could summon enough fire to burn down this entire palace if he was pissed off."

"Did he have any ties with vampires?" I asked the question that had been plaguing me and she looked up at me.

"I don't think so. There were never any issues with the vampires while he was ruler. I don't think I ever heard him talk about it at all," she slowly stood to her feet. "What are you thinking? Do you think he had something to do with this? Did you see or hear something?"

"No," I assured her quickly but she didn't seem convinced. "It was just something I was told. If he had ties with the vampires, where would I find out about it?"

"Honestly, I don't think you will. His room would be the best place to check but as soon

Chapter 105

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as he died, it was combed for anything that might be of use. No one found anything. You're more than welcome to check it out though. I can take you there."

I knew where it was but I couldn't stop myself from saying, "yes please."

I held onto Aurora while she led us towards the room. We had just gotten to the steps when a guard rushed up to us. He looked worried and we didn't even need to wait for him to speak. I turned to Ryker who I saw looked just as exhausted as I felt.

“Take us to it,” he ordered while I gently handed Aurora back to Christine.

She made grabby hands at me and tried to hold onto my dress and while I wanted nothing more than to stay with her, I had duties to attend to. I placed a soft kiss on her forehead and forced myself to walk away despite the fact that she was trying to reach

out to me.

It broke my heart each time I had to leave her and I was sure Ryker felt the same way. It wasn't easy to leave our children in the care of others but there was so much to be done, especially now and I would much rather leave her for a few moments than leave the kingdom in disarray and risk her getting hurt as a repercussion. Ryker must have sensed my unease because he quickly threaded his fingers with mine.

We got to the front of the palace but everything looked fine. I turned to the guard who had led us put. “What are we supposed to be looking for?”

“They should be here soon,” he kept glancing in the distance.

“The guards who are patrolling the lower towns mind linked me us and said there was a woman who was bitten by the vampires. She stumbled out of the woods crying and when people got to her, they noticed that she was turning blue. She passed out right after.”

I wasn't sure why Alastair had suddenly changed his strategy. He told me he didn't like women so it was weird that he suddenly chose to bite a woman. Was it because he had somehow found out that we told the women they were safe? Did he know that I was alive and was he trying to punish me in some way? I was so lost in my thoughts that I almost didn't notice the horses steadily approaching. Ryker had to pull me out of the way so I wouldn't get dust in my eyes.

I saw the guards carrying the woman and my heart broke when I realized just how young she was. She looked to be around my age with a huge mass of curly red hair on her head. She had fair and pale skin with full lips. I could see her chest rise and fall with

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every steady breath and I let out a sigh of relief when I realized she was still alive.

“Her pulse is weak,” the guard who was carrying her said. “We need to take her to the physician now or she will die.”

I nodded and followed closely behind as we made our way to the physician’s office. As soon as the girl was brought in, his eyes widened in recognition. I couldn’t help but

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Chapter 105

wonder if this **was** how I looked when I was brought in by Ryker. He couldn’t look directly at her and I knew it was stirring up bad memories for him.

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“You don’t have to stay here,” I whispered to him but he shook his head and squeezed my hand tighter. Once the guards had laid the girl on the bed, I turned to them. “Thank you for bringing her. Go in groups and check out the forest. Find out if the vampires are still there. Try your possible best to keep this away from the public. The last thing we need is people panicking, am I clear?”

They nodded and I watched them all file out. I waited until they had shut the door behind them before I turned back to the physician.

“Are you going to try using the blood?” I asked as I saw him bring out the vial containing my blood and he nodded. “What happens if we are wrong? What happens **if** it doesn’t work for her? I don’t know how to use these new powers.”

He tipped the vial straight into her mouth and I couldn’t help but cringe slightly as he did so. Once he was done, he turned to me.

“Let’s pray to the goddess that we aren’t wrong,” he whispered. “She isn’t as strong as you are. If this doesn’t work, she will die before the end of the night.”

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 106-109

Chapter 106

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I couldn't bring **myself** to leave her side. I wasn't **sure** if it **was** going to work at all but I couldn't just let her be alone. We didn't know anything about her life or **her** family and no one deserved to be alone during a time like this. Ryker had to go and check in with the guards to scout the place she was found. I must have slept off sometime while

I was sitting because the next thing I knew, I felt a warm hand on my back.

I looked up to see Ryker smiling softly at me as he gestured for me to get up but I shook my head. "Nothing is going to happen to her here. You need some rest."

"She deserves my attention," I whispered back. "She is the first female that he has bitten and she might die. If that happens it will be completely my fault. I cannot let that happen. You have to understand that."

"I do, but Camilla, you have never watched someone die in your arms. That is not something that you want to be burdened with for the rest of your life," his voice was soft, almost pleading. "You have done everything that you can for her. You need to sleep."

I glanced over at her. She was still immobile on the bed but at least she was breathing and despite it being very shallow and not visible, I hoped that counted for something because I was about to lose my mind.

"She's someone's daughter and someone's mate, I would hope that if your child is in the same position then someone would do the same for her," I told her. "If I had just mastered-

"No," he cut me off. "This is not your fault. You cannot blame yourself for this. You didn't ask for any of this and you know that. You have done all that you can for her, okay?"

I reluctantly nodded and he helped me to my feet. I wrapped my arms around his torso and we sta

yed there for what felt like hours. When I finally pulled away, he kissed my forehead softly. He walked me out of the room and when we got to the door, I glanced back over my shoulder at her. I could have sworn that I saw her finger twitch but before I could analyze it further, Ryker had pulled me out of the room and shut the door behind us.

I tried to explain to him what I saw but he assumed it was my way of trying to convince him to let me go back and sit with her so he dismissed it and said that the physician would handle it. He didn't let me go until I was safely under the covers in our room and despite trying to fight it, I was asleep within seconds.

Chapter 106

When I woke up the next morning, my thoughts immediately went to the girl. As soon **as I was** dressed, I rushed over to the physician's office hoping that she would **be** awake but she **wasn't**. The physician was already there and he was doing a routine check on her when I entered. He bowed but I waved him off. I wanted to know what **was** wrong with her.

"**Is** she going to wake up?" I asked and he shrugged. "I need more than a shrug **as a** response, physician. You said she would not make it **past** the night if it didn't work. She **is** still alive as far **as** I can **see**."

"I think it might have worked to an extent. Let us wait and see how she progresses today. I think it might be working but once again, I cannot make a definite statement. The poison **isn't** moving through her system again. I can tell you that much for certain," he pulled me to another corner of the room and dropped his voice to a whisper. "Remember that you have the blood coursing through your veins. It would have worked a lot quicker for you than it would for her and that is if it works at all."

I ran my hair down my face in frustration. I opened my mouth to thank him but the door to the room opened and Ryker walked in. As soon as he saw me, I knew that something was happening. I muttered a small curse under my breath and rushed over to him.

"What is it?" I asked but he didn't respond immediately. "Did someone else get bitten?"

"No, I just wanted to know if you were here. You have to stay here, do not come out."

My brows furrowed. "Not a chance in hell. What is going on? Is it the elders? Did they do something? I need you to talk to me."

"There are some disgruntled members of the town. It doesn't matter, I can handle it, don't worry," he started to leave but I grabbed his hand and shook my head. We stared at each other blankly for a few seconds before he sighed. "Fine, but just stay close to me. People do the most out of pocket things when they are angry. The last thing we need is for you to get hurt, okay?"

I waved him off which he didn't like considering that he gritted his teeth but he said nothing. He held my hand tightly as he led me down towards the front of the palace. I heard the people before I saw them. There was a lot of shouting and crying and I saw a number of guards rushing that way presumably to hold the peace. I glanced at Ryker briefly but he just squeezed my hand in support.

I wasn't sure what I was expecting but when we got there, I saw about a hundred people of all shapes and sizes. They were yelling but I could see the same fear evident in their eyes. Ryker was talking to one of the guards and trying to figure out what happened when I broke free from his hold and made my way towards them. He tried to grab me but I weaved through the guards until just one line of defense stood between me and

Chapter 106

the people.

They all went quiet the moment they saw me. **They** probably didn't think they would see any of **us** and had not planned for that possibility. I heard Ryker whisper yelling my- name but I ignored him and faced the people I had been tasked with protecting. They **were** all staring at me wondering what I was going to say but even I was quiet. I couldn't **say** a single word. All I could do was try to feel a fraction of what they did.

"I thought you were going to send a representative to talk to us like you did last time," I didn't know what he meant by that. I assumed it happened while I was unconscious. "Do

you see us now, your majesty? How many deaths did it take for you to finally **address** this?"

"I've always seen you," I kept my voice deliberately soft. "A million apologies will never take **away** your pain but the truth is that I am sorry. No one ever wishes for something like this to happen. I didn't think that this would happen in my wildest dreams."

"Did you do something to piss off the vampires?" he asked and I shook my head. "Then why do they want us? What do they want from us?"

"I don't know," I admitted. It was a weird thing to admit but I had to say it. I didn't know why Alastair wanted us. I didn't know why he chose this time to attack us. I couldn't lie to the people about it. "All I know is that one day, a power hungry vampire decided that he was bored and wanted to play with lives. We have been at peace with the vampires for over a century. The vampires want war on us for whatsoever reason but we haven't left you stranded."

"You haven't even been seen," one woman shouted from the back. "You deserted us. You went to safety while we suffered."

"I went into the mountains to find the vampire," they all went silent. "I wanted to broker peace for your lives. You are that important to me. I tried to find him, I found their home but no one was there. It is our main priority right now to make sure that no one else gets hurt that is why we keep the curfew and the borders. Until we can catch the vampires who are guilty then you have to stay safe. This is a war zone and there will be casualties. What matters is that we win it at the end."

To one spoke for a full minute afterwards. I didn't know whether they would scream at me or agree with me so I held my breath. After what felt like hours, they sighed and I saw the first person turn on their heels and leave. Slowly, they all walked away in resignation and I finally allowed myself to exhale deeply.

Finally, it was just the man I was conversing with. HE had a foreign expression on his face as he regarded me.

"My son was one of the people killed," he said slowly and I felt my heart break for him. When you find the bastards that are responsible, I want you to make sure that they

Chapter 100

suffer.”

“I will.”

It was the least I could do for him.

Once I had said that, he sighed and turned on his heels. I watched him disappear and Ryker rushed over to my side. He looked furious and I gave him a shaky smile.

“On a scale of one to ten, how pissed off are you at me right now?” I asked and his eyes narrowed at me. “I will take that as a ten. Listen, they just wanted to know that they were being heard. I was able to give them that.”

“I know but that doesn’t mean that it was not reckless as hell. You were putting your life in danger. You need to learn a lesson on security.”

“Your majesty,” a guard walked up to us effectively cutting off her conversation. “The physician asked that you come to his quarters. He said that it was important.”

Chapter 107

RYKER’S P.O.V

The girl was awake.

She was seated up on the bed with a bowl of oats in her hands when we walked into the quarters. She looked a thousand times better than she did when she was brought in. As soon as our presence was noticed, both of them bowed and the physician rushed up to us. He looked excited. I could practically see him floating in mid air.

“I can’t believe it worked, your majesty,” he whispered more to himself than any of us. I glanced over at Camilla to see how she felt about everything but she was staring pointedly at the woman. “I can only imagine the things your blood can do. If it is powerful enough to heal the vampire bite then-”

“There is company in the room, physician. The walls have ears. You should try keeping your excitement down to a minimum,” I said in the most bored

tone I could muster.

“I understand your majesty but this is the discovery of a lifetime. I have never heard or seen anything like this before. It is absolutely-”

“This topic can be addressed another day, physician,” I cut in and he looked a little sheepish as he bowed and walked away. I dropped my voice to a whisper once he went back to the patient. “Are you alright?”

“Yes, I am just shocked, that’s all. Let’s go talk to her.”

She slipped her hand out of my grip and made her way over to the edge of the bed. The girl realized we wanted to speak to her and placed her half eaten bowl on the bedside table. Now that she looked a little healthier, I was almost certain that she was slightly older than Camilla. She had a mature air around her.

“Thank you, your majesties, I thought I was going to die. I don’t know how I will ever repay you,” her voice was deep and husky. Up close, I could see the color of her eyes and there were a deep green color, similar to the color of dark leaves.

“You don’t have to thank us, we were doing our job,” Camilla assured her with a soft hand on her shoulder. “What’s your name and what happened to you?” She swallowed deeply and turned to face the window. There was a tension in her shoulders that I knew came from having to remember such a traumatic experience. If I could, I would have told her not to bother but it was important that we knew if Alastair was the one causing this and what happened before she was bitten.

“My name is Alara. I was born here but I left for a while to live with my uncle. I returned a year ago after my mother died. I was out collecting herbs in the evening

Chapter 107

when it happened. I assumed that because it wasn’t completely dark yet then I was safe. I had ventured too far into the woods. The trees were so tall and thick that it was a struggle to get through. I heard him before I saw him.”

She shut her eyes and a shudder went through her. Camilla instantly wrapped an arm around her shoulders and gave her soft words of encouragement.

Alara’s eyes were wet with unshed tears. Camilla glanced over at me as if silently asking if we could just let her be but I shook my head. It was important that we knew everything so we could know how to properly handle the situation.

“What happened next?” I asked and she inhaled sharply.

“He called out from the trees. He told me to run. He said he would give me a two minute head start and if I managed to avoid him then he would let me live. I left the basket in the forest and I ran. I thought I was getting away but he grabbed me. He pinned me to a tree and said I was pretty,” her brows

furrowed. "Why would he say that to me?"

"I don't know," Camilla's voice was soft and soothing. "You are pretty but maybe he just wanted to throw you off your game. It's okay, tell me what happened after that."

"He said that he wouldn't usually go for me but I would be good enough to pass the message across and the next thing I knew, he bit me. It felt like a thousand needles were being pierced into me at once. I was on fire but I couldn't scream. I thought I was going to die from just the pain alone. It was like nothing I had ever experienced before. It was-

"It was ice cold and burning hot at the same time," Camilla cut in and Alara's eyes widened. "It felt like your insides were being peeled out. It felt like pure death and at that moment, you were more than willing to embrace death if it meant that the pain would stop."

"How did you know?"

"I experienced it too," Camilla's smile wavered slightly. "Did he leave you there?"

"No, he dragged me over to a more open part of the forest. I could hear voices there. He dumped me there and told me that he would be watching. The next thing I remember was being picked up by the guards and now this. Why me? What was so special about me that he chose this?"

"He is a psychopath and you were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I am so sorry that you had to go through all of that," Camilla embraced her in a tight hug. "You should rest for an extra day. By tomorrow, you will be healthy enough to return to the village, is that okay?"

The girl nodded and Camilla made to move but she grabbed onto her arm. "I feel like

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Chapter 10?

he will come back for me. I don't have any family to protect me. I know it is a lot to ask, your majesty, I know I am not the most important member of the town but if I could have some form of assurance that I will be safe."

"Of course," Camilla said immediately. "You will have guards watching over you. Nothing will happen to you, I promise."

"Thank you your majesty," she released her arm and the moment Camilla was close enough to me, I wrapped my arm around her side.

"You should rest," I said to Alara. The physician will make sure that you have everything you need.

We walked out of the room but Camilla didn't say a single word. I could see all

the wheels turning in her head. She was getting lost in her thoughts and overthinking. I was sure she didn't even know where I was leading her so I stopped in front of my office and turned her to face me..

"What's going on in there?" I gestured to her head and she sighed.

"My blood can heal," she stated and I nodded. "Do you realize how dangerous that information is? Alastair prided himself on knowing that his bite was fatal. If he finds out that Alara is alive, he will come for her and try to find out why she is alive. He will kill her again and he will come for me next."

"What do you propose?" I asked and she shrugged. "He has to know that you are already alive, right? He is probably already wondering why you are alive. The way I see it, we can use Alara to our advantage."

"What do you mean?"

"We can feed her some bulls hit about a rare plant mixture and a spell that reverses the effects of the vampire bite. She will most likely tell her friends in the town and somehow, the news will get to Alastair. It might take him off our backs long enough because he would want to make sure that no one else is able to get healed that way again. It will give us some time to come up with a proper plan to get rid of him."

She went silent as she pondered over my words. "That might just work. You are absolutely brilliant Ryker. What do we do in the meantime?"

"You need to make sure that not a single soul knows about this healing property of yours. Focus on your other power. I have never heard of a royal having more than one power so that alone is something worthy of envy. You cannot do your solo expenditures anymore. Right now, there is a lot at stake. If someone is able to get their hands on you, they would be practically unstoppable."

"Ryker," she began but I cut her off.

Chapter 107

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Chapter 107

“I need to know that you understand what is at stake here. Your powers are dangerous at best and world ending at worst. I don’t know why the goddess chose this but you need to be careful. Am I clear?” I asked and she nodded.

“Good, for now, we go back to our investigation of the vampires as usual. If we are to get rid of them, we need to figure out how. Where were we before everything happened?”

She cleared her throat and looked away from me. I could tell she was still pondering my words and while I could have told her in an easier and softer way, she needed to understand what was on the line here. Lots could die if she got into the hands of Alastair. She was no longer just the queen, she was a potential weapon and needed to be treated with the utmost care.

As I watched her, I made a me ntal note to get some guards to watch her from a distance. I couldn’t trust that she wouldn’t make a hasty last-minute decision that would jeopardize her life if given the opportunity.

“We were looking into my father,” Camilla said suddenly snapping me back to reality. “Christine was offering to take us to his room I think.”

“Isn’t his room the one next to the secret library?” I asked and she nodded. “Is it open?”

She shook her head. “It’s locked up but I know where the keys are.”

“What are we waiting for then? Our investigation awaits.”

Chapter 108

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I stood in front of the large double doors that led to my father’s room and I stared. Ryker stood right behind me not saying a single word but he didn’t need to. I was almost certain that he could hear and feel every single thought that was going through my mind at the moment. I slowly slipped the key into the lock and pushed the door open and the first thing that went through my mind was how large the room was.

The bed there could have fit at least five adult people. There was a huge chaise lounge at one end of the room with smaller chairs around it. At another end of the room was a large workspace with books placed carefully over it. The room looked almost spotless and dirt covered every surface. It looked like no one had gone into the room since he died. I had to bury my nose into my elbow to prevent the dust particles from bothering me as I walked in.

“It seems he was very minimalistic,” I drawled as I took in the extravagant nature of the room. It was one fit for a king and despite my sarcastic words, I found the room intriguing.

I immediately went towards the book and picked the first one up. I flipped through the pages hoping to see something useful but it only turned out to be some notes on the palace. It wasn’t anything that could have helped us with what was going on. I flipped through all the books on the desk while Ryker went through the closet but we couldn’t find anything.

“There has to be something here,” I told him as I patted down the bed. “If there wasn’t, my mother wouldn’t ask me to come here. Maybe we just aren’t looking hard enough.”

“That might be a possibility but Camilla, this room is empty. Christine said it was combed through after he died. If anything was here, it might have been taken away and burned with his other things during the cremation. That is the culture, is it not?”

I didn’t want to think of the possibility of him being right but it seemed more believable as the seconds ticked by. I knew we were not going to find anything but I still couldn’t brush off the feeling that there was something in the room. My mother asked me here, not directly anyways and unless I misunderstood her, then I knew that there was something for me to find, I just needed to look through it.

“Okay, wait, let us take a step back and think about this,” I told Ryker and he nodded. He walked over to me so he could give me his undivided attention.

“What do we know about my father so far?”

“He was very powerful, he was the king and he was a people person,” I nodded and gestured for him to continue. “I believe he was also very private.”

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Chapter 108

“You’re right, she said he would spend days on end in here or in the library. What does that tell us?” Ryker seemed confused so I sighed. “The library is hidden, it is a secret, is there a possibility that he has a secret door in here as well? That might be where he hid all his important things. I know it is a reach but it seems like the only viable explanation.”

Ryker paused for a second before sighing. “That is a possibility but how likely are we to find that secret room or entrance? It will most likely be well hidden and this room is large.”

I thought about it for a second. I knew he was right but I wasn’t willing to give up so easily. I knew asking for help would make it a lot faster but a part of me was worried that the things we would find were not things that I wanted the public to see.

“We can start by using deduction. We don’t know him well enough to make accurate assumptions but I believe that it is a good start,” Ryker offered and I nodded. That was our best option at that point.

“Well he would want to put it in a place that people wouldn’t find but was also very easy to reach. The paintings are too obvious so I think we should scratch those out,” I began and Ryker nodded.

He walked over to the closet. “This would be the next place another would think to look. A secret door inside or at the back of your closet is too predictable. It would have to be within reach but also very unpredictable.”

“The desk is out of the question. I presume he was at it a lot so people would want to cross that off the list as well,” I looked around the room for anything that was out of place and I noticed the bedside table. One of the legs was a little lower than the other. “What about this? It could be from being pulled around.”

Ryker pulled the table out of the way and dropped to his knees. He knocked on the floor a few times before stopping at a particular spot. He shook his head and took out a small pocket knife from his slacks.

“This should be stone but it doesn’t sound like it,” I watched as he used his knife to lift up a part of the ground which turned out to be wood. “I think we found it.”

Inside were scrolls and books. I reached in and picked them out slowly. I was

trying my hardest not to rip or damage them considering that they had been away for a very long time. I opened the first page of one of the books closest to me and I realized that it was my father's writing. I wondered why he kept these hidden but left his other journals out in the open.

"We have a lot of material to cover," Ryker said as he put everything back in place. "Come on, the quicker we start, the quicker we can get through it."

Chapter 108

We returned to our rooms and split the material evenly so we could get through it all in half the time. I was going through one of the books which I realized held a lot of details about his powers. He spoke about them and how they felt. Reading through my father's eyes, I could see just how much of a narcissist he was. He spoke about the first time my mother got her powers and I was shocked to see that he was trying to find a way to rid her of them because it made him less special.

"Have you found anything yet?" Ryker asked and I shook my head.

"Nothing of importance," I wanted to tell him about what I was seeing but I felt a nudge in my head as if someone was trying to mind link me so I pulled my wall down.

"There's a problem in the lower towns," Christine's voice immediately filtered into my mind. "That girl that came in before, it looks like someone tried to attack her again. One guard is dead and a few are injured."

"I thought she was supposed to stay in the palace today so she could be looked over properly?"

"She was adamant on returning so the physician let her go. No one knew this was going to happen."

"We are on our way."

I turned to Ryker who was staring at me intently. "Is something wrong?"

"I'll explain it to you on the way but we have to leave now," he didn't contest or ask any more questions, he just got to his feet and rushed out of the room with me.

I didn't know why but there was a part of me that bonded so well with Alara. We got into the first carriage and within minutes we were already on our way to the towns. I saw the smoke before we got there and everyone was gathered around a house that was currently on fire. Ryker helped me out of the carriage and kept a firm grip on my hand presumably to stop me from running off towards the danger.

"Brief us," Ryker said immediately one of the guards walked up to us.

He explained how they had taken Alara back home and while guarding her, they had noticed some vampires in the trees. They refused to interact with them for fear of bringing the vampires to the humans but they caught a glimpse of Alara and got upset. They set fire to her house while she was still

inside and attacked the guards. They were able to kill two vampires out of the four that attacked but one guard died and the other was bitten.

“Alastair was here then,” I whispered to Ryker. He was the only one I knew who could bite people. Unless I was wrong and there were others then he was present.

Chapter 108

We were led towards Alara’s house, She sat on the floor with a blanket wrapped around her and as soon as she saw us, she bowed her head to the ground.

“Your majesties,” she whispered. “I should not have left. I know that now. I just thought I was doing the right thing.”

“I know,” I assured her then I turned to the guard who was turning a nasty shade of blue, I knelt beside him and ran my hands gently over his hair. I knew there was no way I could give him my blood without anyone noticing. Ryker seemed to realize what was happening because he stood behind me blocking everyone from my view. He slowly handed me the pocket knife and I nicked my finger a little then allowed the blood drip into his mouth. I wiped away all the evidence and stood to my feet.

“Take him to the physician, now! He had a remedy that is guaranteed to cure him in a few days,” the guards rushed to do as Ryker asked while we made our way back to Alara’s house. She was staring at what was left of the house.

“Do you have anywhere else to stay?”

She shook her head. “I’m sure I can ask one of the neighbors to accommodate me for a while. I would need to get my bearings back so that I can leave town to start over.”

Ryker went silent and it looked like he was debating something. Finally, he spoke. “You’re coming with us to the palace.”

Chapter 109 CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I never would have expected Ryker to be the one to invite a complete stranger to live with us but judging by the way things were. I couldn’t bring myself to blame him. She was currently homeless and her life was in danger. If I knew anything, it was that Alastair wasn’t going to let things slide that easily. He wanted her and I knew he was going to stop at nothing until he got her. We were unable to save her things from the fire so she just sat in the carriage with us.

I watched her during the ride and I could clearly see the sadness etched on her face. I couldn’t blame her considering that she was leaving everything she knew and everything that she had grown up with. I couldn’t imagine how I would have felt if I were in her shoes. I tried engaging her in a conversation a few times but once I realized that she wasn’t really into it, I just let it slide. Once we arrived at the palace, she was the first to get out of the carriage. She

looked uncomfortable and out of place amidst the glitz and glamour of the palace and I couldn't help but feel for her considering that I felt the same way the first time I found myself here.

"Come," I told her. "I'll take you to your room."

Her eyes widened and for a second, I thought she was actually going to refuse but at the last minute, she nodded and followed me. She kept a steady pace behind me despite how many times I tried to close the gap between us. She took everything in with wide eyes and I couldn't help but smile to myself each time she let out a small gasp.

We got to the guest room and I ushered it inside. Thankfully, it was always cleaned so there were already fresh sheets. Her eyes widened to the point of saucers as she took in the room. She ran her fingers over every surface gently in awe. I stayed back by the door so that she could have her moment. There was no reason for me to intrude or make things worse.

"This is amazing, are you sure it is for me?" she asked and I nodded. "Thank you so much. I don't know what I would have done if not for you, your majesty. I promise to be out of your hair as soon as I can."

"You can stay as long as you need. Ryker extended the invitation to you. No one will question why you are here," she looked like she was going to cry so I crossed the length of the room and hugged her. "You don't have to join us for meals but if you want to then no one will protest."/

"I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I am, your majesty," she pulled away from me. "I probably reek of smoke. I should take a shower." She began in the direction of the

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Chapter 109

bathroom then cursed. "I don't have any clean clothes."

"That is fine, I will have a maid send you clothes."

"Oh no, you cannot possibly do that. This is too much."

I waved her off. "I have more clothes than I will ever need. It is nothing. I want you to be as comfortable as possible. For the duration that you are here, you are a guest of the

crown. Do not hesitate to ask for anything."

"I don't know what to say."

"Then don't say anything. I know what it is like to have nothing and depend on others. It feels horrible but not everyone is out to hurt you," I gave her a small smile. "You should get your shower. I hope to see you for dinner."

I walked out of the room and the first thing I did was mind link Christine to give one of my less elaborate owns to a maid to give to her. I made a mental note to send someone to get clothes for her tomorrow. I wanted to make sure that she was as comfortable as possible.

I was so lost in my thoughts about her that I didn't even realize I had walked past Ryker. He wrapped his arms around my waist and pulled me to a stop. I jumped the moment I felt his hands touched me but I let out a sigh of relief once I realized that he was the one.

"You scared me," I whisper yelled as I slapped his chest. "You could have called out to me instead of grabbing."

"I did, more than once actually, but you didn't hear me."

I smiled sheepishly.

"Is she settled?" he asked and I nodded. "Good, the guards returned from the woods and although there was no trace of Alastair, they found the lighter fluid that he used and another vampire."

"Did they kill it?" he shook his head. "Is it here in the palace?" He hesitated but that was all that I needed. "Can we go talk to him?"

"No," he didn't hesitate this time and I frowned. "You seem to forget what happened the last time you were within vicinity of a vampire. Maybe tomorrow I will change my mind but as of today, you will have nothing to do with any vampires."

"Whatever," I mumbled.

"I was on my way to check on the guard who was bitten. Do you want to come with me?" despite still feeling slighted about not being able to see the vampire, I nodded.

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Chapter 109

I followed him towards the physician's quarters. The physician was fussing over the guard trying to fluff his pillow and make sure he was as comfortable as possible. He muttered a few words under his breath and all I could make out was cure and blood. I cleared my throat and he turned. As soon as he saw me, he sighed.

"Your majesty, thank goodness you are here. I don't know how much longer I can keep him alive. He needs blood. The guards told me that you said I had a formula that would work. I had to hound them into leaving because they wanted to learn what it was."

"Relax, I already gave him some blood. Does he need more?" the physician nodded and I held out my hand without any protest. I flinched slightly as he made a cut. "Is there a particular amount that they need or do you just guess?"

"I'm still working that out but I know they need at least a vial. I think it depends on the wolf and how long ago they were bitten. With the lady, she was bitten merely minutes before she was brought in. With our gentleman here, it has been over two hours."

I nodded even though I couldn't understand it fully. "When you figure it out, let me know. We need to keep this as quiet as possible and I need to know how much is required of me."

"I am doing my very best, your majesty. Once he wakes up, I will let you know and if I find anything, I will make sure that you are the first to know."

I turned to Ryker who was looking at the guard on the table attentively. There was something in his eyes that I couldn't place my finger on. It was rare for him to hide his emotions from me but that was exactly what he was doing.

"Where is your son, physician?" Ryker asked suddenly and the physician nearly jumped from hearing his voice. "You are usually attached by the hip."

"He went into the palace gardens to get some herbs. He went with some guards just to be safe."

As if on cue, the boy returned and Ryker's shoulders sagged in relief. "We will be in touch."

We walked out after that and I waited until we were a distance away before I spoke. "Why were you asking for the boy?"

"I found it weird that he wasn't by his father's side. I wanted to make sure that he was accounted for. If anything happens to that boy, the physician will drop everything to make sure he is safe including telling your secret."

Awareness dawned on me. "What are we going to do?"

"I will make sure that guards are watching them at all times. Alastair is going for them

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Chapter 109

first if he wants to know anything. We cannot risk it."

I felt tired to my bones. I wanted the world to pause for a while just so I could get rest but unfortunately, life didn't work that way and we had to spend some time with our children. Alara didn't join us for dinner and we broke the news to Audrey that a friend was going to be staying with us so she wouldn't ask too many questions upon seeing her. We couldn't explain everything but we explained the fire and her first thought was to give her a toy to help her sleep better.

After dinner, we took Audrey to bed and returned to the room to flip through my father's books. Ryker tried to convince me that going to bed was the best idea and as tempting as that sounded, I couldn't do it. I needed to get to the bottom of things before anyone else got hurt. I had a feeling that things were only going to get worse.

I managed to keep my eyes open for two hours. I was falling asleep into my book when Ryker called out my name. I ignored him the first time but he called out to me again and this time I made a show of groaning out loud: “You were the one who told me to go to bed and now that I’m trying to do that, you’re calling me,” I mumbled. “What do you want?”

“I think I found something,” it took a while for my brain to register the words but once they did, I sat up instantly. All traces of sleep had vanished from my eyes.

“What is it? Show me.”

He handed the book to me and placed his finger on a line. It took me three tries to read it right and once I did, my mouth fell open.

“Is that?” I asked and he nodded.

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The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 110

Chapter 110

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I read over the words a few times wondering if I was reading properly and I couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw it. It was just a few sentences but it had shifted the trajectory of everything that we had been working on. They read: I met Alastair in the woods today and I was almost caught. We have to be more careful next time. If anyone finds out what we are doing, it could cost us our lives.

I couldn’t believe that my father knew Alastair and they were friends of some sort. I almost laughed. It seemed like every single problem we had tied back to my father and his actions. In that moment, I couldn’t help but wish that the man was alive so that he could deal with the consequences of his own actions instead of leaving them up for me to handle.

“I can’t believe it,” Ryker muttered as he flipped through the pages. “There are no other mentions of Alastair on this page but I know there has to be something else. What were they doing? What is it that he didn’t want anyone to know.”

“My father was smart apparently. He may not have put it out directly but it will be there. It has to be somewhere.”

We were almost done with the books. We had finished half of the pile. If we didn’t find anything then we were ultimately back to square one. Ryker tried to convince me to go to bed but after that discovery, I couldn’t even force myself to feel tired anymore. We read straight into the early hours of the morning. I didn’t realize the sun had come up until light began peeking through our

curtains.

I was exhausted- we both were- and we hadn't found anything else which put a damper on our spirits. I was practically a walking corpse as I made my way out of the room. There was no hiding the tiredness in my eyes despite washing my face a few times in the hopes that it would make me look better. I got to the dining room with Ryker in tow. and stopped in my tracks when I noticed that Alara was already there. It wasn't her presence that took me off guard but the fact that she was seated in my chair which was directly next to Audrey and on the other side of where Ryker would sit. She was locked in a conversation with my daughter so she didn't immediately realize when we walked in.

"Mummy," Audrey squealed when she saw us and that was what made Alara notice. Audrey glanced between me and Alara before dropping her voice to whisper. "You're in my mummy's seat."

Her

eyes widened. "Your majesty, I am so sorry. I had no idea. Please forgive me."

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Chapter 110

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She started to rise but I waved her off. She was having fun with Audrey and it was just a chair. There was no reason for anyone to make a fuss over a piece of furniture. I could always sit somewhere. It wasn't the end of the world.

"It is fine," I assured her as I took another seat. She didn't look convinced but she didn't say anything else. "How was your first night here? I hope you slept well."

"Like a baby, your majesty. I have never felt so refreshed in my life. Also, thank you for the clothes. Someone gave them to me this morning and said that they were from you. I could never thank you enough for all of this."

"You don't have to worry about it. It is what any decent person would do."

I stopped talking after that and focused on my food. It took everything not to fall face first into my bowl a few times but no one seemed to notice except Ryker who kept glancing at me every other second to make sure I was fine. I knew if he had his way, he would have dragged me back into the room and forced me to go to bed but there were a lot of things that demanded our attention today and for once, he had something else to worry about that wasn't me.

After breakfast, Christine came to take Audrey for her lessons. Alara tried to be friendly with her but Christine practically ignored her. I was taken aback by

her actions because I was used to her being kind and accommodating. I made a mental note to talk to her about it later. I saw Alara's face fall and as much as I wanted to comfort her, I couldn't make it seem like my cousin had done anything wrong so I forced myself to stay still.

She left within minutes after that interaction and as soon as she was gone, Ryker turned to me.

"Are you sure that you don't want to take a day off?"

"Would you be taking one with me?" I asked and to my surprise, he nodded.

"Are you joking or did you actually mean that?"

"We are both exhausted, Camilla. If we both need rest then we should take it. We aren't of any use to the palace or the people when we aren't at our best. At this point, I wouldn't notice if a man was attacking until he got very close. I haven't slept properly in over two weeks."

I felt bad instantly. I was part of the reason he was so tired and sleep deprived. Instead of dragging on the conversation for longer than necessary, I stood to my feet and stretched out my hand to him. He wasted no time in intertwining our fingers and we walked out of the dining room together. We had barely gone a few feet when one of the elders approached us. I looked at him with a raised brow wondering what he was doing standing there alone without his usual team behind him.

"Your majesties," he bowed but it felt more mocking than anything. "We were expecting

76%

Chapter 110

a meeting today with you."

"We didn't plan a meeting with you," I deadpanned and I saw his jaw tick. "Is there a reason that you wanted this meeting? Is it important?"

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"I would believe so. There are matters of the state that need to be discussed. Surely you would realize the importance of that."

I was exhausted and I was annoyed. I had to breathe deeply through my nose before I responded. "We spend over an hour in there talking every day and nothing comes out of it. Forgive me if I would rather spend my time in a more productive manner that is more viable to produce results. There is nothing you can give to me that I cannot give to myself. I see no need for meetings with the elders every day. I will only call for them when I feel they are important."

"Your majesty, it is tradition," he practically hissed. "Every king and queen before you has done the same and they have been able to rule the kingdom the right way. We know best."

"You knew best, maybe, but there is a big difference between leading a

kingdom during a time of peace and during a time of war. Every second counts and right now, you are wasting my seconds.”

eyes

He was shocked, it was evident all over his face but there was something else in his that was a little harder to decipher. It looked like pride but that didn't make sense considering I had just insulted him and thrown away everything he had said. I waited patiently to hear what he would say in response to that but instead of speaking, he just bowed.

“Perhaps you are right,” I had to blink twice to be sure that he wasn't an apparition. “The daily meetings do not have to be a thing but we would prefer to be informed about things happening, your majesty. We were unaware that a guard was attacked and a girl was now living in the palace.”

“Those things do not concern the elders,” it was Ryker who spoke. “Your business is the well being of the palace and the royal family. Your job begins and ends with advising the ruling family- nothing more.”

“That might be true but we cannot give accurate advice if we are unaware of what is happening,” he sighed. “I do not want to be your enemy. We can work together and do this but there needs to be trust.”

“Are you speaking for yourself or for the entire team of elders?”

“I cannot speak for my colleagues. Everyone has their plans and intentions. I just want peace. I have grandchildren in this pack and I do not want them to become victims of this. That is all I am asking, your majesty.”

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Chapter 110

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I glanced at Ryker in a silent question. He was better at reading people's intentions and honesty. It took him a second but he nodded discreetly. He trusted what he was seeing and hearing so I did too.

“Okay, I will keep you informed,” he bowed and began to leave but I stopped him. “What is your name elder?”

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“No one has referred to me by my name in a long time,” he smiled softly to himself. “My name is Caius.”

He walked away after that leaving Ryker and I in silence. Once again, all traces of tiredness had vanished from my eyes but I still found myself going up the steps towards the room. The least I could do was sneak in an hour long nap and then get back into my work. I didn't even bother changing out of my clothes as I landed face first into my bed. Ryker chuckled from behind me and leaned over to place a soft kiss on the spot between my shoulder and neck. I turned over so I could watch him undo his buttons and place his shirt gently on the chair. He took a much calmer approach as he got into bed and I

couldn't stop myself from crawling over to him and placing my head on his chest. He wasted no time in pulling me close. I could hear his heartbeat from my spot on top of him.

"I should be training right now," I mumbled to which he laughed. "Loris wouldn't mind if I come in an hour later, right?"

"He definitely will but the question is if there is anything he can do about it," he quipped and I couldn't stop myself from smiling. "You deserve this. Forget about everything else."

"I will. It is just weird for us to have an entire hour to ourselves. I am completely shocked."

"Don't jinx it then. Take what you've been given and enjoy it." As if on cue, someone knocked on our door and I let out a groan. "Ignore it. If it isn't important, they will go away."

We ignored it hoping they would leave but the knocking only became more frantic.

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COMMENT

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