

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 111-120

Chapter 111

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Ryker went to answer it and it ended up being Alara. I had no idea what she was doing in front of our door. He spoke to her for a while before she left and that was enough time for me to get the sleep out of my eyes. I was already on my feet and preparing to leave the room by the time he returned. I raised a brow in a silent question and he just shrugged in my direction.

"Apparently she was lost and wandered over here but she couldn't find her way back. I told her to ask one of the guards to direct here," he explained and I hummed. "Where are you going?"

"Training, I might as well just get it over with."

He looked like he wanted to protest but at the last minute, he said nothing and just allowed me walk past him. By the time I got to the training field, Loris was seated on the chair and tapping his foot impatiently. Once he saw me, he sighed and waited for me to approach before speaking.

"Did

you plan to come, your majesty?" he asked and I shook my head. "I figured as much. Maybe next time you can inform me so I don't spend half an hour sitting outside while I wait for you."

"I apologize. Things have been very hectic lately with the vampires. A lot tends to slip my mind."

"I understand," he gestured for me to begin and while I was working, he spoke again. "I heard there is someone new in the palace- a girl. Are the rumors true or unfounded?"

"I never took you for a gossip, Loris," I teased and he shrugged with a smile as if to say 'it is what it is. "Yes, there is someone staying with us in the palace until further notice. She was attacked by the vampires and I have good reason to believe that they will try again. Now, are we going to stay here and gossip or are we actually going to train?"

He smiled. "I believe it is my turn to offer up apologies, your majesty. Let us begin."

Training went on smoothly despite the fact that I was still unable to conjure up water from moisture. I was beginning to think it was a waste of time. I would have tagged it impossible but from where I stood, I wasn't sure I would ever tag anything as impossible again considering that I now had two powers instead of one and the second was still some sort of a mystery and I couldn't speak about it to anyone. I wanted to tell Loris considering that he had trained with both my father and mother on their powers

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but I couldn't. I couldn't risk putting anyone else's life in jeopardy because of my powers.

"It seems like we have an admirer," Loris spoke close to the end of training and I turned in time to see Alara watching us from behind some bushes. I immediately dropped my hands making the water I had raised from the stream splash back.

"How did she get here?" I asked more to myself than him. I turned back to Loris. "I think we can stop there for today. I will see you tomorrow."

He didn't protest or say a word as he stood to his feet and walked away. I made my way over to Alara and she panicked briefly when she noticed that she had been caught. She instantly dropped her face to the ground and began fiddling with her fingers anxiously. I gave her a warm smile to let her know I wasn't upset but she couldn't even meet my eyes to see it.

"Are you alright?" I asked and she nodded. "Do you need something or did you get lost again?"

"Not at all, your majesty, I was just taking a walk when I felt that there were people around. I decided to go and investigate. I should have left but it was just so beautiful to watch. I have never seen anything like it before."

"You don't have to explain," I assured her but I could tell that she still felt guilty. "I tend to be a little curious myself but this side of the palace is off limits to a lot of people. Do you understand?"

She nodded immediately. "I promise you that it will not happen again."

"Good, I can walk you back in if you would like."

We walked back into the palace together and I was making my way back to my room when the physician rushed up to me. He looked panicked and terrified. There was a light bead of sweat on his face and his clothes looked like a mess. I instantly stopped in my tracks because I knew that something was wrong. He was always so put together and now he was the complete opposite.

"You can go back to your room," I said to Alara not wanting her to hear anything that could be said. She nodded and rushed off and once she was a few feet away, I turned back to the physician. "What is wrong?"

"My son," he could barely get the words out due to the rapid rising and falling of his chest. "I can't find my son. He hasn't returned from going to get herbs and I just know that something bad has happened to him."

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“I’ll get Ryker and we will meet you.”

“Your majesty, my son is missing in the woods. He could possibly be dead.”

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“I know that, but I cannot go running into the woods blindly to save him. I just need you to sit still in your office while I get Ryker. We will take some guards and we will find your son.”

He didn’t look like he wanted to leave but I called over some guards to ensure that he made it safely to his office. I mind linked Ryker immediately and told him what happened. Within two minutes, he had found his way to my side. He looked conflicted and very frustrated but he said nothing as we went to the physician’s quarters. The physician was a mess and so was his office but we had to put on a brave face for him.

“Tell me where your son was going, I will personally go with some guards to check the area and make sure that he is brought back to you,” Ryker said to the old man.

“He went to the woods behind the palace. There are some saffron leaves there and I needed some for the poultice that I was making. I would usually go by myself but I am getting older and my back hurts sometimes. He didn’t want to go but I forced him.”

“It is not your fault,” I whispered but the old man wasn’t listening to me. I turned to Ryker. “Come, we have a boy to find.”

Once we were out of the room, Ryker grabbed my hand. “You are not coming with us. I have no idea what we are going to encounter out there. I don’t want you where it isn’t safe.”

“I am coming whether you like it or not. The way I see it, you can either agree or you can spend the entire time being upset about it,” I shot back and he frowned. “I cannot just sit here and do nothing. I want to help and I need to make sure that the boy gets back to his family. I don’t even know his name.” Ryker hesitated for a second before sighing. “You have to stay close to me and do not wander off. I don’t care what you see. Am I clear?”

I nodded and it was settled. We carried an entire battalion of guards and spies to go searching in the woods. The space behind the palace was large and the sun was already beginning to set so we had to split up into three groups. We had less than three hours to search and return to the palace before the sun set and we officially became food for the vampires but we were determined to do it right and find the boy.

The first hour proved to be fruitless and I could tell that Ryker was losing hope. We were getting into a denser part of the forest when I felt someone staring at me. I turned

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in time to see a pair of red eyes in the trees. I was about to yell vampire when he put his hands to his lips. I looked around and it was amazing that no one else but me had noticed him. He stepped out from behind the trees a little and I realized that he was the vampire who had led me to Alastair all those weeks ago.

I was confused as to why he was out until he jerked his thumb over his shoulder. I immediately understood what he was saying. He disappeared almost immediately and I turned to Ryker.

"I think I saw something there," his brows furrowed but he nodded and gestured for the guards to follow us.

I just hoped the vampire wasn't leading us into a trap. The trees were denser in that part of the forest and a lot harder to navigate but we managed to get through. As we got further, I smelled something that had my b*dy tensing.

"Do you smell that?" I asked and Ryker nodded.

"Blood."

We pushed through the trees until we got to a clearing. There was no b*dy but there was blood around. It wasn't enough to think that someone had died but it was enough to know that they were badly wounded. I wasn't sure who it belonged to until I saw the coat on the floor. Ryker ordered one of the guards to pick it up and as soon as it was displayed, I had to shut my eyes.

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"It's his," I whispered and Ryker nodded.

"Mark this area, it is getting late. We will come back tomorrow and investigate further. Take the coat with you," he turned to me. "How did you know he was here? What did you see?"

"A vampire told me."

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RYKER'S P.O.V

Due to everything that had happened lately, I had come to the conclusion that anything was possible but the last thing that I expected to happen was for Camilla to tell me that a vampire told her where to find the blood. As she explained what she meant, I was just left with further confusion. Was he dead? Did they want us to know that they had killed him? Were they trying to

tell us that he was alive? There were so many unknown variables and the more I tried to deduce it, the more frustrating it got.

We managed to get back into the palace just as it was getting very dark. The physician was waiting at the door for us and I felt my heart clench. I had never enjoyed giving bad news to families. I could see the trepidation on Camilla's face so I reached out to squeeze her hand softly.

"You can go up, I'll talk to him," there was instant relief on her face but it quickly morphed into concern for me. "I'll be fine, don't worry about it. I have done this more times than I care to count."

She sighed and nodded. I waited until she had walked away before I told the physician what we had found. To see a grown man break down like that, it was gut wrenching. I felt his pain as if it were my own. I had daughters, I couldn't imagine hearing that there was a possibility that they were dead. I would have lost my mind instantly. I wanted to comfort him but there was nothing that I could do. I couldn't conjure his son out of thin air no matter how badly I wanted to. The physician passed out after his breakdown and I ordered the guards to make sure that he got to his room safely and that he was well guarded.

Once I was sure that he had been handled appropriately, I made my way up the stairs and towards Audrey's room. Camilla was trying to tuck her into bed when I walked in and her entire face beamed up. I allowed myself to take it all in and I pulled her into my arms. She was speaking but I could vaguely hear it. I just wanted to know that she was safe.

"I love you, princess," I whispered and she smiled as if I had just placed the world in her little palms.

"I love you too, daddy."

We tucked her into bed and I went to see Aurora as well. I just wanted to look at them. I wanted to bask in their presence and be reminded that my children were safe. Camilla never said a word throughout the entire process, she just stood to the side and gave me

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the much needed peace and privacy that I craved.

"Do you want to talk about it?" she asked as soon as we got into our room and I shook my head. She stayed quiet and I heard her slowly move until she was standing behind me. "Are you sure?"

"I think it is better if I don't," I could tell that was not the answer she was hoping for and she was disappointed but she said nothing. I turned to her and pressed a small kiss on her lips. "I am fine, Camilla. Right now, I just want to

forget about everything and be with you. Is that okay?"

She nodded and that was the end of it. She just curled into my side and allowed me hold her tightly. Sleep didn't come early for me and when it did, it was plagued with my worst fears- that we would lose this and they all would die.

By the next morning, I had a lot to do. While Camilla went for her training, I made my way to see the physician. He was in a near catatonic state and he could barely speak or give me answers but I did leave with some new information about what his son was swearing and the paths he would usually take. I gave the information to the guards who were responsible for finding the boy. I would have gone with them myself but as the king, it was banned. Instead, I went with another group of soldiers to go and analyze the spot where we found him. Upon getting there, I immediately realized something that I hadn't before. There were no signs of a struggle. Excluding the blood, it was almost as if he vanished without a fight. There were no broken twigs or fallen leaves. It was perfect and nearly untouched.

"Go maybe five miles from here and see if you will find any signs of a struggle. I don't think he was picked up from here," I ordered some of the guards and they immediately rushed to do as I asked.

I started analyzing the blood splatters better under the light and I realized it was poured in a weird angle. It was almost as if someone had just splashed blood over the area. There was no way for me to tell if it was human or not but I somehow doubted that it was. It was almost as if they had gone through so much to establish a fake abduction site but the question was why? Did they want us to stop looking for him? Did they want us to assume he was dead?

"Your majesty, I found something," I heard someone yell and I instantly rushed over to the sound of the voice. As soon as I got to the clearing, I knew. "Is this enough of a struggle?"

The bushes were scattered and some of the branches of the lower trees were broken. I

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could tell that there had been a fight here. There was no blood at all leading me to believe that they wanted him alive and not dead. Now the question was to whether they wanted to use him for food or if they wanted to extract information from him. Neither was pleasant and I couldn't bear to think about what he could be going through.

"This is good work," I clapped the guard on the shoulder. "At least we know he is alive. That has to count for something."

Since we had found the abduction site, we took a step back for the spies. They were the ones who would comb it from top to bottom in the hopes of finding anything that would help us find out where they had gone. While they did that, I returned to the palace. As much as I would have liked to stay with them, I was determined to finish reading that book and to find out whatever it was that the king knew about Alastair.

I had three books left so I locked myself up in the comfort of my office and began reading.

Most of them were about himself and his powers which just showed me how much of a narcissist he was. I wanted to get out of his head as soon as possible. It was almost unsettling to read. I could have never imagined that someone could be so full of themselves. I had gotten to the last book and I was beginning to think it was a wasted effort until I started reading. I had never thought there would be a reality where I would feel bad for Alastair until I got to the end of the book. It started with little name droppings here and there. He would talk about going to see Alastair in the mountains but never mention why or what he was going to do.

He even spoke about bringing Alastair to the palace in the dead of the night when no one would see them. It wasn't until the last few pages that he finally revealed everything and by the time I was done reading, I was in absolute shock.

"I led Alastair into the woods today. I told him that we were supposed to broker a deal to make things better for vampires. He hates his stuffy little cave but he had to have known I was never going to do that. Once we were away from his vampires, I blasted him with a flame so hot that his leg was charred. They heal quickly but fire is one quick way to dispose of a vampire."

"I should have disposed of him but I wanted to see him suffer. I gave him night lock. It is the one thing that I know works on him. He isn't like the others, he is older, more powerful. He told me his story. He told me that night lock was the only thing that would work on him. The effects of night lock can last for decades. My only hope is that I am long dead before that happens. He won't be able to get revenge on a ghost."

"He should be happy anyways. If he doesn't get better- if the goddess decides that he doesn't need to get better- then he will finally be able to see his precious mate. Maybe

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in the next life he will not experiment with blood magic. It was his fault and I was simply repairing the balance of the world. I did nothing wrong.”

I could barely move my legs as I stood to my feet. I carried the book in my hands and rushed over to Camilla’s office. She was seated peacefully on her desk with a pile of paper in front of her. She didn’t even notice I had come in until I was standing in front of her. She immediately dropped everything to focus on me.

“Did you find the boy?” she asked and I shook my head. “Is he dead? Please tell me that he isn’t dead.”

“He isn’t dead, but this isn’t about him,” her brows furrowed in confusion and I placed the book on her desk with the page opened. “Read that, what can you see?”

It took her longer than I would have liked to read the paragraph and by the time she was done, her eyes were as wide as saucers.

“Alastair is the first vampire,” she whispered and I nodded. I still couldn’t believe it myself but I had come to realize that anything was possible in this world. “My father double crossed him and now he wants us all to pay. How could anyone think of double crossing someone over a thousand years old?”

“He was over confident that he wouldn’t be caught and that Alastair would be incapacitated for long. But keep that aside there’s one more thing,” I reminded her. “We now know two different ways to get to him. We know how to kill him.”Chapter 113

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I couldn’t even focus on getting rid of Alastair with everything I had just heard. I had known that Alastair was old but I never expected to find out that he was the first vampire. I couldn’t help but wonder if my mother knew and that was why she told me his story. I felt bad for him, it couldn’t have been easy living for so long without the person you loved and having no way to get to them except death. It would have built up anger and resentment then on top of that, my father had decided that it would be a good idea to double cross him. I couldn’t blame him for his actions but it still didn’t justify the innocent lives that he was claiming.

“How do we proceed from here?” Ryker asked and I looked up at him in astonishment to which he laughed. “You are the Queen, Camilla, what do you suggest that we do?”

“We need to find night lock first,” I said in an unsure tone and he nodded as if to encourage me to go on. “Then inform the people that fire works well against them. Let them always have lit fires in their houses and if they need to go out

then they should use torches.”

“Good, now you’re thinking like a Queen,” he stood to his feet. “I will speak to Caius and the other elders. They will inform the people. You can get a head start on the night lock. If it is something that important, it will either be in one of his books or in the secret library. I’ve gone through all of mine and that is the only mention of night lock there.”

“I have one more book, I’ll be done with it in a little over an hour. I’ll let you know if I find anything.”

I watched as he walked away and I let out a deep sigh. Why couldn’t people just be black and white or good and evil? It would have been much easier to deal with Alastair if he was just a power hungry vampire who hated werewolves. He didn’t need a sad back story that tugged at my heart strings. He didn’t need the sad life that had me wanting to feel bad for him. This was the reason why I doubted I deserved to be Queen because I almost always felt bad for the wrong people. From his back story, he seemed like a genuine guy. He just wanted to be with the woman he loved, he just wanted to be happy and all that was ripped away from him. He wasn’t the real villain, it was the witch packs that pursued them.

I knew thinking about it wouldn’t change anything so I forced all those thoughts out of my head and focused on the book in front of me. I skimmed through the pages as quickly as I could looking for two simple words ‘night lock. I prayed to the goddess that he wrote about it in his journal because going to the library would have been another battle entirely. I wouldn’t know where to start there since the books weren’t labeled by topic, just by their year of publication. I was getting to the end of the book and I had started to lose hope when I found it.

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It was two lines, it would have been easy to miss and you probably wouldn’t have thought much about it unless you were looking at it. He had said: I never thought something so small would be so hard to find. It looks like a tiny blueberry. They only grow at the top of the snow capped Northern mountains. It is such a rare plant that very little is even there but it had to be enough.

Alastair can never know about it or he will destroy it.

Joy bubbled up in my chest and I practically squealed. I tried to mind link Ryker but I couldn’t get to him so I left the book and rushed to find him. He was still talking to the elders when I found him in one of the hallways. As soon as he saw me, he ended his discussion and rushed over to my side. There

was hope in his eyes.

“Did you find it?” I nodded. “F uck, you are amazing. Tell me about it.”

“It

grows at the top of the Northern mountain. It says they look like blueberries,” I explained everything to him and he listened intently to each word. “We have to send guards to get it. If we leave, it is at least a four day journey. We cannot afford to be gone for that long. Alastair will notice and he will either come after us or the people while we are gone.”

“You’re right,” he thought about it for a second. “I know exactly who to send. Come with me.”

I followed him and he led me outside to where the guards were training. I felt ashamed that I still didn’t know any of them except Steven and Kevin by name. Speaking of both of them, they were on the field training a small squadron of soldiers. Once we approached them, they stopped everything that they were doing and bowed.

“Come with us,” Ryker instructed both of them and they glanced at each other with worried looks before nodding and following us to a corner of the training field where no one would hear us. “There is an important task that requires the utmost discretion while performing. I want to entrust it to you, can you do it?”

“Of course, your majesty,” they responded immediately then Steven continued. “Whatever it is, we will do it.”

“I need you to take a small team of guards, ones you trust and who can face the Northern Mountains and any potential vampires you will find on the way,” I began slowly. “There is a plant that grows at the top of the mountain. I need you to get as much of it as you can but leave enough that it can keep growing in case someone else needs it.”

“When do you want us to leave?” Kevin asked and I glanced over at Ryker who responded.

“As soon as possible, I want you at first light tomorrow. Can you do that?”

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They glanced at each other and I could see worry in their eyes but they nodded. “We will not let you down your majesty.”

They were about to leave but I stopped them. “I trust you both. My mother trusted you both. If you can succeed, you will single handedly bring an end to everything that is happening right now. Do not fail us. There are lives that are depending on your success.

That might have been a lot of pressure to place on their shoulders but they needed to know exactly what they were dealing with. This was the last piece of the puzzle and if we could get it then we would win. That would be everything. I could almost smell the victory. It finally felt within reach and I couldn't just let it go.

Once they had left, I turned to Ryker. "I need to return to my office. I will come to you later."

He placed a kiss on my head and allowed me to slink away from him. I walked with a bounce in my step and a small smile on my face. I was so excited and happy that I didn't even notice that the door to my office was open until I got closer. I stared at it in confusion knowing perfectly well that I had closed it before I left. I pulled it open to find Alara standing by the door as if she was about to leave. She jumped as soon as she noticed me.

"Can I help you?" I asked slowly as I tried to do a quick sweep with my eyes to make sure that everything was in place.

"I was looking for you, your majesty," she explained. "One of the maids gave me some of the new pairs of shoes and I just wanted to thank you. They fit perfectly and they are so beautiful."

She raised the hem of the dress for me to see the

and I couldn't help but smile softly at her. I mentally berated myself for thinking the worst about her when she was

just coming to thank me. I had been on edge ever since

worst about her when she was since I heard that my father was the reason for our problems. It hit me that it could have been the reason that the moon goddess said I would have to forgive him. She knew I would find out what a horrible person he was.

"Your majesty," Alara called once more snapping me out of my thoughts. "Are you alright? Should I get you something?"

"I am fine, I was just thinking," I offered her a smile. "You are more than welcome about the shoes. I wasn't the one who sent for them, maybe you should ask Ryker, he might have been responsible."

She nodded and I took a good look at her dress. I realized that the waist was cinched tight and the bust area seemed to almost be suffocating her. Her breasts were almost spilling out of it. I couldn't believe that the maids had gotten her ill fitting clothes. I had

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She nodded and 1 Bailly released ther. I made a men tal note to talk to the maids before the end of the day.

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I was in the office until late evening when I was beginning to feel very stuffy. I decided to leave the office and take a walk into the garden. I didn’t expect to see Ryker sitting there in the private garden. He was in front of the fountain and he was just staring. He noticed me immediately and gave me a warm smile as he gestured for me to make my way over to him. Once I was within arm’s reach, he pulled me over so that I was sitting directly next to him and tucked under his arm.

“We really shouldn’t be out here,” I whispered and he shrugged. “We have a direct path into the woods. Tyson once used it to spy on me.”

Ryker frowned at that information. “I have guards stationed all over with torches and there are torches lining every inch of this garden. I always take precautions, Camilla.”

I shook my head at him. “Of course you do, I don’t expect anything less.”

“Why are you here? Did you want to train? We haven’t done that in a few days.”

“Not really, I just wanted some fresh air. It was getting too stuffy on the inside. I had been thinking and you know how they say that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, well I haven’t seen the darkest hour yet and I am terrified that we will not be able to handle it.”

“We will,” he assured me. “We will get through it together and we will come out on the other side just like we always do. We can handle anything thrown at us. Do you understand me?”

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I nodded. I opened my mouth to speak when I heard something. it was a crack like someone stepping on a twig. Ryker heard it too because he immediately stood to his feet and took a protective stance in front of me. He reached under the bench we were seated on and took out a wooden torch which he lit using one of the already lit ones in front of us.

“Stay back,” he ordered me as he brandished his torch forward. I saw a figure step out of the woods and I immediately recognized him.

“Ryker, put your weapon down, now?” I could feel his confusion so I explained. “That is the physician’s son, look at him.”

I didn’t know how I recognized him in the darkness or how Ryker didn’t but as he turned the torch in his direction, I noticed him properly. He had been beaten up badly and there was dried blood on his body and head. His entire body was covered in bruises and I could see some burns. Ryker was still in shock from seeing him standing there so I pushed past him and rushed over to the boy.

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As soon as he saw me, he started crying. “I am so sorry. I tried everything. I don’t know how they got me.”

“It’s okay, you don’t have to say anything,” I assured him. He tried to take a step forward but he wobbled and leaned on me. He weighed more than I thought but I braced his weight on my shoulders and turned to Ryker. “I need a little help here.”

He quickly dropped the torch and took all of his weight off me. The boy was still crying and apologizing but I couldn’t care to listen to him. I was just happy that he was alive. Ryker started walking in the direction of the palace while I followed behind them. As soon as the guards saw us, they rushed over and I could see the shock and confusion in their eyes. They quickly took the boy from Ryker and carried him to his father’s quarters.

I tried to follow but Ryker grabbed my hand, keeping me in place. “Don’t you think it is weird?”

“What do you mean?”

“He just walked back in here alive.”

“Barely, look at him, he looks like he has gone through so much.”

“I know that but think about it. Alastair took him for a reason and he wouldn’t send him back unless he got what he wanted. If he was useless then Alastair would have just killed him, don’t you think?”

My eyes widened and I cursed. Within seconds, we were already at the physician’s quarters. He was fussing over his son and checking his injuries. Ryker spoke to the guards to scour the area that he had come through and check for any vampires or clues as to where he was held. While he spoke to them, I walked into the room. As soon as the physician saw me, he rushed over and fell to his knees in front of me.

“Thank you for finding him and for bringing him back,” tears gathered in his eyes and I was forced to give him a small smile.

I grabbed his hands and helped him to his feet. “I didn’t bring him back. He walked into the palace.”

His brows furrowed. “What do you mean? Why would he do that? How could

he have done that?”

“That is exactly what I want to ask your son,” I looked over his shoulder to find his son staring directly at me. “Why don’t you tell me what happened and we can go from there, okay?”

He nodded. “I was out gettin~ L

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were so quiet and I tried to fight them off but there were three of them and they were too many. They knocked me out and when I woke up, I was in a cave. I was tied up and they told me that they wanted information from me. I tried not to tell them but they did so much to me. They were so strong and I had to tell them-”

Ryker walked in at that exact moment and I turned to him. I didn’t need to ask, there was only one thing that he could have told them that would mean that much. Ryker knew too because he immediately reached out for me. I moved over to him and intertwined our fingers. If Alastair knew then that meant play time was over, he was going to come at us with the full strength of his arsenal. “What did you tell them?” the physician asked in a soft voice.

The son looked directly at me as he spoke. “I told them about her blood.”

At that exact moment, the bells began to ring. I had never heard them before so I didn’t know what to expect or why they were going off. It was the physician whose eyes

widened and he cursed under his breath.

“What does that mean?” I asked him.

“It means there is an attack in one of the lower towns and it is bad.”

“It must be Alastair. Stay here and look after your son, we will go and check it out,” turned to Ryker with a nod and we were out immediately.

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We couldn’t take a carriage because it would be too slow so horses were saddled for us. When I got to my horse, Ryker stopped me.

“I really don’t want you out there right now, Camilla,” he began slowly and I sighed. “You’re the one he wants. He knows what you can do.”

“If

my thoughts are correct then he is out there biting people just to bring me out. If I don’t go

then all of them will die and their blood will be on my head. I am their Queen, Ryker, it is my duty to keep them safe at whatever cost.”

No one knew more about duty than Ryker and that was why I knew he would understand. He muttered a curse under his breath then helped me onto the horse. “Stay with your guards at all times. If I think your life is in danger in any way then I am sending you back here. Do we have a deal?”

“Yes.”

We rode out immediately to the lower town being attacked and I wasn't prepared for what I saw there. It was pure mayhem. The people were trying to hold on their own using fire and I could see a few burnt vampires but Alastair was swooping in like a ghost and biting people. He was the turning tide in the battle. It seemed like he was the only

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one who could poison the others seeing as he was the only one who was doing it.

"Take me to the wounded and fallen," I instructed the guards and they nodded.

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We got off our horse and weaved through the people. Wherever I saw someone who was bitten, I would make a cut in my palm and feed them from my blood. I had to slice the place open more times than I could count because it kept healing over. I could feel the confusion of the guards but I decided that it wasn't the most important thing and could be handled later.

Ryker had joined the other guards to fend off the vampires who were attacking, I hoped the battle would be over soon because I was giving away so much that I was beginning to feel very lightheaded. Still, I didn't stop, I wasn't going to until every single person was healed.

I wasn't sure how long we were walking around but I started to hear the noise of the battle fading and I knew that everything was being settled. I couldn't see any more vampires and I knew that they had either been killed or they had run off.

"I think that's the last one, your majesty," a guard said and I sighed in relief.

"We would have to do another sweep after the place has been cleared."

"That's fine, I just need to take a second to just sit down."

"Are you tired?" I recognized that teasing voice anywhere. I turned to see Alastair standing by the edge of the woods. "You look a little green, Camilla, would you like some help?"

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

They started in his direction but I raised up a hand to stop them. "No, leave him, he isn't a threat to me."

"That might be true but I can still bite them as much as any other person," he waved his hand in the direction of the guards. "The way I see it, if you give out any more blood tonight, you'll pass out. That would be the perfect opportunity for me to take you."

"What do you want, Alastair?"

"From you? Absolutely nothing. I am just curious."

“What do you want to know?”

“Why did they choose you?” he asked and my brows furrowed. “I have heard stories about you, Camilla. I know how you came back from near death twice, I know now that you have two powers instead of one. Why are you special enough for them to bend the laws of nature for but she wasn’t.”

He was talking about his lover. My heart ached for him and I gestured for the guards to step aside and they did.

“I am sorry about what happened to her.”

“Do not speak of her,” he growled and for a second, I thought he would attack me but he didn’t. He remained rooted by his spot next to the tree.

“I’m sorry,” my dizziness was getting worse but I managed to stay upright. I knew one of the guards would have mind linked Ryker already, it was just a matter of time until he appeared. “To answer your question, I don’t know why they chose me. I don’t know how they think or why they would prioritize one life over another. It isn’t what I would have wanted but they want to keep the balance of the world.”

“It doesn’t matter now, does it? She is dead and you are alive with healing blood running through your veins. If I bit you now, you would simply heal again,” he pushed off the tree and took a few steps forward. The guards held out their swords to try to keep him away and he shook his head. “Do they know that I am fast enough to kill you and run away before they even take a step?”

“They know, so do I, which brings me to the question, why aren’t you doing anything?”

“Are you asking me to kill you?”

“No, I’m just curious.”

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“Killing you would serve no purpose, they would simply give your healing blood to someone else,” the corner of his lips quirked up. “You will serve much bigger purposes for me.”

I heard some rustling behind me and I immediately knew that it was Ryker. I hoped to delay him a little more but he already heard it and I could already see him poised to run.

“We will meet again, Camilla, I hope you stay alive until then because I have so much in store for you.”

“I’m sorry

about what my father did to you as well,” I blurted out and his eyes darkened

with anger. "I just found out recently. You don't have to get revenge on me for that. I had nothing to do with it, none of these people did. You are punishing innocents."

"Live for as long as I have, Camilla, then you will be equipped enough to give me advice." He winked and then he disappeared through the trees.

The weakness came immediately and I wanted to crumble to the ground but I managed to hold myself upright. I was the Queen, the guards didn't need to see me fall. As soon as I saw Ryker walk into the clearing where we were, it was as if all the energy had been drained out of me. Once he was within reach, I threw my arms around him and I sagged against him. He cursed and held me impossible tighter. His hands ran down my back affectionately before coming up to my face to frame them.

"Are you hurt?" he asked and I shook my head. "What did he want?"

"He just talked, he wanted me too tired to run so that he could talk. He really is the first vampire but I don't think he is as angry with my father as we initially thought. His

anger

is about the first woman he loved. He thinks the gods have favored me over her by bringing me back to life twice when they wouldn't bring her back once."

He sighed and ran his hands through his hair. "Come, we need to get you to safety. The guards will finish up here."

We took a step forward and my legs buckled. "I don't think I can walk right now. I gave out too much blood, I feel dizzy and sick."

He debated it for a second before putting his hands underneath my knees and picking me up bridal style. I tried to protest but he ignored me and carried me all the way to where the horses sat waiting patiently. I noticed a few guards staring at us but none of them said a single word. A few of them cracked smiles and I couldn't help but bury my face into Ryker's shoulder to avoid their gazes.

Once we were by the horses he gently deposited me on top of the horse. "Can you ride on your own or do you need me to ride with you?"

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"I am tired, Ryker, not dying, I can do this, I promise. you didn't need to carry me. I just needed a few seconds to get myself together again."

He rolled his eyes and ignored my last statement. "Are you sure? I can always ride with you and the guards will bring my horse back."

"I am more than sure, don't worry, I will be fine."

He didn't look like he believed me but he let me be. It was a real hassle to get

back to the palace. Each movement of the horse had my head spinning at an alarmingly fast rate and I thought I was going to throw up. I had never been so relieved when the horse stopped but I couldn't even get off it immediately because I felt like I was going to throw up or pass out or both. Thankfully, Ryker had already called on my bluff and he knew exactly what was wrong with me. He helped me off the horse and I allowed the fresh breeze to hit my face and calm me down.

"Are you guys alright?" Christine asked once we were in front of the palace and I nodded. "Audrey wanted to stay up and wait for you but I thought it would be a great idea if she just went to bed early. I wasn't sure when you would be back."

"Thank you for everything, Christine, you have been a great help but right now, I just want to get to my room before I pass out."

Her brows furrowed. "Are you alright? Do you need the physician?"

"No, leave him with his son. It is just blood loss, I will be fine by tomorrow." She nodded in understanding and stood by my side. She didn't make it too obvious that she was helping but she did what she could. I smiled softly at her at least until I noticed Alara standing off to a corner. She looked worried and confused.

I turned to Ryker. "Can you please talk to her? She must be worried since she heard the bell and it might have triggered something from her attack. I just want her to know that everything is fine."

"Are you sure Christine shouldn't do that? She is better with people than I am," he began but I shook my head.

"You were the one who offered for her to stay. I think it would mean more if you spoke to her instead."

He sighed and nodded then gently took a step away from me. "I'll be with you soon."

Christine bore my full weight as Ryker went to speak to Alara. She helped me into the room and out of my heavy dress. I thanked her but I couldn't wait to get into bed. I planned to wait for Rykér, I hoped he would be back soon but I could barely stay up. Before I knew it, I was fast asleep. I didn't even hear the door open or him come in.

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I woke up to a hand caressing my back and I wanted nothing more than to lie in bed all day and never leave. Ryker's hand was rough but capable of immense softness and care as he gently ran his fingers down my spine. I turned to face him and found him sitting on the edge of the bed with a small

smile on his face. He was dressed for the day and it took me a second to realize that the light that was filling the room was too bright for very early in the morning.

I sat up immediately, "What time is it?"

"Calm down, it is around noon but it doesn't matter," he held out his hands in a sort of patronizing way as if he knew I was one wrong move away from freaking out. "I cleared out your schedule for the morning, you needed to rest."

"Are you kidding?" I ran my hand down my face. "I'm sure the elders would want to speak to me about everything. I know the news of my powers would have spread by now. Why would you let me sleep in?"

"You lost a lot of blood yesterday, you needed to rest and I have handled the elders for today, you don't have to worry about that."

"Okay," I said after a beat and he seemed to relax considerably. "if you've handled them why are you here? Is something else happening?"

"I needed your take on something. Christine told me that Audrey would need to be moved into an actual school. She has done all the lessons she can and our daughter is brilliant. She can't do more from home. It was amazing to hear but I was worried because of-"

"Everything that's happening," I finished for him and he nodded. "Do you should send her?"

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"It would be good for her education and she will be able to make friends. Christine told me about the school she went to and said it would be good for her. The security is top notch and we can have guards pick her up and take her every day."

I bit my bottom lip as I thought about it. "She will be safe?"

"I'll do everything in my power to make sure that she is."

"Fine then, let her go."

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RYKER'S P.O.V

Camilla got dressed so that we could take Audrey to the school. I wasn't going to let her go just anywhere without knowing what it entailed. It was a simple two storied building but it had a very tall wall at the entrance that I knew would be hard to climb over. There were guards lined around the entrance to keep it safe and I felt some of her worry ease a little. Audrey grabbed onto my hand and she squeezed tightly. I glanced down at her and gave her a small smile which she quickly returned.

The headmistress was waiting for us in front of the building. She looked to be in her mid-forties and she had a soft and kind smile. Her hair was tied in a

neat bun at the base of her neck and she was in a long pleated skirt and a white shirt. She looked like the kind of person I would want to be around my daughter especially when she greeted Camilla and I then turned to greet Audrey as well. She bent over so she was at eye level with Audrey.

“Hello darling,” I liked how she didn’t speak like she was speaking to a dumb infant but rather another person. “You look beautiful, I love your dress.”

“Thank you,” Audrey smiled but she still didn’t let go of her tight grip on my hand. “You’re very pretty.”

“If it is coming from you then it has to be true,” she stood to her feet. “Please, come on in. The students are in class right now so we will not be disturbed.” She led us to her office and I took in the entire building with careful eyes.

There were guards at every turn and it gave me some sort of ease to know that there was protection available and that Audrey would be well protected. When we got to the office, the headmistress gestured for us to take a seat and she shut the door behind us to give us a semblance of privacy.

“I know you’re busy people so we can make this as quick as you want,” she began as she took her seat. “The students you see here are children of some of the highest ranking people in the nearest vicinity. We have students from other packs as well who come here. Even Elder Caius has a granddaughter who schools here.”

I raised a brow because I didn’t know that. “You don’t need to sell the school to me, Christine already did that.”

She smiled at the mention of Christine. “I knew her, she was one of my favorite students while I was here. I was a new teacher and she was an amazing girl. How is she doing?”

“She’s good, she wanted to be here but she had some things to do,” it was Camilla who

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responded to her. “We can see that you have good security in place but with everything that has been happening, we need assurance that Audrey will be safe here.”

“I understand your worries, your majesty, your daughter will be more than safe. There are guards everywhere and you will be allowed to bring guards from the palace if you wish as well. There are fires lit every night even though the kids won’t be here by then. I promise you that the safety of our students is

the utmost priority.”

Camilla glanced at me and I nodded at her. If Christine trusted her then so did I, besides, it was only for a few hours a day. She would be back home by three every day at the latest. I turned back to the headmistress who was watching us carefully.

“When can she start?” I asked and she smiled widely.

“Tomorrow is a good day if you want, it all matters on Audrey. We need her to be comfortable here. Of course there are uniforms for the children to prevent favoritism; I hope that isn’t a problem.”

“It isn’t,” I assured her, I actually liked the idea. I didn’t need any special treatment towards Audrey because of who she was. She was going to get enough of it in her lifetime. “We will discuss it with Audrey on the way home and she will be back tomorrow.”

She walked us out of the building and I waited until we got into the carriage before I turned to Audrey. She hadn’t said a single word and her expression didn’t let anything slip. Her hand was still intertwined in mine and she had her eyes fixated on the window. I couldn’t tell if she loved the school or hated it. I waited until we had driven a distance away before I spoke.

“What do you think?” I asked and she shrugged but didn’t say a word. “Tell me, Audrey, if you don’t want to go then you don’t have to.”

“I’m scared,” she whispered and I saw Camilla stiffen. I pushed away all the worst case scenarios that were bubbling in my mind and focused on her.

“Can you tell me what exactly is scaring you?”

“I don’t know if I will make friends,” she whispered. “Do you think that they will like me?”

“Of course,” Camilla’s voice was soft as she spoke. “You are an amazing little girl. I can promise you that they will love you. What’s there not to like?”

“Are

you sure?” she asked and we both nodded. She thought about it for a second before nodding. “Okay, I’ll go tomorrow.”

When we got back to the palace, Camilla took Audrey back to her room while I decided

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to make my way to the general library. I needed to check out the history of the school. I needed to squash the remaining doubts in my chest. It was quiet

when I walked in and that was why I didn't even think that there could be another person there. I had found the large book on the school and was taking it out when I bumped into someone. I heard books fall to the ground and I immediately dropped to pick them up.

"I am so sorry," it was when I heard that voice that I realized who was in front of me. Alara had a small sheepish smile on her face as she tried to pack up her books. She looked embarrassed and couldn't even meet my eye. "I should have been looking where I was going. This is my fault."

"I wasn't looking either," I said in an attempt to make her feel better. I helped her to her feet and handed her the books I had gathered.

I looked her over and nodded to myself when I realized that she looked a lot better than she did when we got her out of that fire. She looked like she had been well fed and rested. Her clothes did look a little ill fitting and I made a mental note to get it handled.

"Please forgive me, your majesty," she began but I waved it off. "I have probably already messed up your day. Is there any way that I can make it up to you?"

I didn't want to think too much into her words but it sounded like there was an alternate meaning to her words. I didn't know if it was the way she said it or the fact that she was looking up at me innocently but I suddenly felt uncomfortable and I took a step back from her. I could have sworn that I saw a frown on her face but it was gone too quickly that it almost seemed like I had imagined it all.

"I should be leaving, I have a lot of work to do," I said and I glanced at the books in her hands. Only one book had a visible title and I saw that it was on the royal family. "Do you have an interest?"

She looked confused but I gestured towards the book and her eyes widened. "It has always been an interest of mine. We don't have access to as many books as there are in the palace and I just thought I should take this opportunity to find out more. I hope that is okay, if it isn't, I could put them away."

She dropped the books on the closest table before I could say another word. I wanted to assure her that it was fine but suddenly she was in my space and her hand was on my arm.

"Please don't get me in trouble, your majesty, I didn't know it was against the laws."

I slowly removed her hands from my body and took another step back. "You're

allowed to take the books, they just have to be checked out and they must be returned within a week. As long as you are in the palace, the library is open to you.”

She let out a sigh of relief. “I thought I had broken some rules and I was about to be

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thrown out.”

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“Have a good day, Alara,” I brushed past her without another word and I could feel her eyes on me the entire time. I tried to convince myself that it was all in my head but something told me there was more to it. I wanted to tell Camilla but I didn’t want to bother her in case it turned out to be false so I forced the thoughts out of my head.

I was on my way to my office when a guard rushed over to me. He bowed to me and handed me what looked like an envelope. I was confused at first because I wasn’t expecting any letters but when I saw the familiar scrawl that I had come to recognize as Damien’s writing, I remembered the letter I had written him all those weeks ago. I had completely forgotten about it when I didn’t receive a response.

I tore it open almost immediately and read his response. It was very brief and it had me worried.

I’m sorry it took so long for me to respond to you, I don’t know any more about the vampires.

There were some attacks at the pack and something happened to Riley.

She got sick out of nowhere and we have done everything we can to get her better but it wasn’t working.

She seems to be stable now but I am worried that it will come back. Lucy couldn’t find out what was wrong with her but she wrote a note with her symptoms.

I just wanted to know if your physician could look at it and figure out what is wrong.

Please, Ryker, I’m worried that she is dying.

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

As soon as Ryker rushed into my office, I knew that something was wrong. He

could barely speak and he looked like he had seen a ghost. I stood to my feet instantly as he closed the door behind him to give us a semblance of privacy. "What's wrong?" I asked the moment he was within reach, it was obvious that there was something wrong from the expression on his face but even I couldn't deduce it.

"I need your help and you know I would never ask unless it was important especially not after you almost drained yourself."

"Whatever it is, I will help as best as I can. Just tell me what it is."

As soon as the words were out of my mouth, he handed me a letter. I wasted no time in taking it out of his hands and reading and with each line, my mouth fell open further. I wanted to see Riley with my own eyes, I wanted to make sure that she was okay and I couldn't believe that this had been going on for so long and Damien didn't say a word until now.

"I already gave the physician the symptoms to work up a poultice but just in case it doesn't work, we need-"

"My blood," I deduced and he nodded.

"It is the only way that we can be certain it will work. Please, Camilla, I wouldn't ask this of you."

"You don't need to ask, of course I will help her. Riley is my sister too, I want to make sure that she is healthy. I'll give whatever she needs and more."

I saw relief settle on Ryker. He looked like someone had taken a huge weight off his back and I immediately followed him to meet the physician. The physician and his son were in their working space when I got there but neither of them would look me in the eye. I could tell there was still a little guilt from the son over what he had told Alastair and I didn't know how to tell him that I didn't blame him. I knew he didn't have a choice and he did what he thought he needed to do in order to stay alive. It was what anyone would have done. Each time I opened my mouth to tell him that, he would scurry away as if terrified that I was going to say something to hurt him.

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By the time they were done taking my blood, the son rushed into the inner portion of the room and didn't come out again. The physician finally met my eye and he sighed deeply. He had bags under his eyes like he hadn't slept in a while and he looked like he had aged ten years since the last time we met.

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"Forgive him, your majesty, he just needs a little more time to adjust," he said

softly. "He will be better by the time you see him next."

"He can take all the time that he needs. I just want him to know that I hold no grudges.. He did nothing wrong."

"He told your secret to the vampires. The attack yesterday was because of-"

"It was because of Alastair. It had nothing to do with your son. I do not hold him responsible and neither should he. I am sorry about what he went through and if he ever needs to talk to someone, there are people all around the palace who would be willing to lend a listening ear, even me."

I could see the gratitude in his eyes so I smiled at him and turned on my heels. Ryker followed directly behind me and he waited until we were out of the physician's office before he pulled me into a bone crushing hug. He pulled me as close to him as our bodies would allow and he buried his head into my neck.

"Thank you," he whispered and if I could answer I would have told him that it was nothing and he would have done the same thing for me if the cases were reversed. I was only doing what the goddess had put for me to do- be useful. It took him a full minute to pull away and there was more emotion in his eyes than I had seen in a very long time. He had been truly terrified and I understood. If something happened to Christine and I wasn't able to stop it, I would have lost my damn mind.

"I have to ensure that the mixture gets sent out safely, I will come to you after, okay?" he asked and I nodded. "Where will you be?"

"I don't know," I began slowly. "I wasn't really doing anything in my office and I want to see if there is anything more I can learn about Alastair. I might be in my father's room."

He nodded and kissed me softly on the lips before leaving.

My feet moved of their own accord until I was standing directly in front of my father's room. Ever since the last time we entered, I didn't return the key. It had laid neatly in my pocket every day as if I knew I would come back. I wanted to but I couldn't bring myself to do it knowing that he was the reason everything had been going haywire.

I pushed the doors open and took in the dusty room once more. We had cleared out that entire spot by the bed but from what I had read, my father was a very cunning man. There was no way that he would keep all his eggs in one basket. He must have had a lot of hidden places all around his room in the occasion that someone found one of them so I began searching.

I checked the closet and under the bed but I couldn't find anything. I checked the

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bedside tables again and behind the paintings. I was about to give up but I decided to go near the fireplace. There was something off about it so I started tapping on each of the walls slowly until I got to one that sounded hollow. I smiled to myself as I took a fireplace poker and slowly pulled out the hollow brick. It came out easily and in its place was an hidden compartment filled with letters.

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I pulled them all out and immediately sat cross legged on the ground so I could flip through them. Most of them were correspondence between him and Eva. I couldn't help but think to myself about how useful it would have been if I had found them while Frederick was alive. It would have made the entire search easier. He spoke about a place beyond the creek where they used to meet and I knew from his words that a part of him either really loved Eva or he was just a good liar because it was almost impossible to sit down and pen down the words that he was saying without feeling some form of emotion for them.

I put aside his letters to Eva because it felt like I was intruding on something special and then I found them- letters between him and Alastair. At first, they started innocent with my father mentioning how he bumped into Alastair on a hunting trip. I would have mistaken them for friends who made it till the end of time if I didn't already know that the story ended with a betrayal.

From Alastair's letters, he trusted my father. He told him about his lover whose name was Sienna. It sounded like a beautiful name for an even more wonderful person. He told father about the spot where she died which was supposedly near the palace but I couldn't figure out where exactly it was because he never mentioned it by name. He spoke about how tiring it was living for so long and the more I read, the more I realized that Alastair wasn't necessarily a bad person, from his letters, he sounded like someone who was ready to pass on but he couldn't because there were things the younger vampires needed to learn from him still.

I didn't know how long I sat there reading until I heard the door creek open and Ryker walked in. He saw the letters in my lap and the open compartment and shook his head with a slight curse.

"I should have known," he mused more to himself than to me. "What did you find out?"

I told him everything and just like always, he sat there and listened to me

patiently as I spoke. He frowned a little and I knew it was because he could hear the undercurrent of sympathy I held in my heart/for Alastair. I tried to keep it out of my voice because I knew he would never agree but I couldn't help it.

"Do you feel pity for him?" Ryker asked finally but I stayed quiet. There was no use denying it. "Have you forgotten everything that he did? He could have killed you, he killed guards, he has killed people all for nothing. Have you forgotten what happened yesterday, Camilla? All those people lying on the ground that you had to heal."

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"I know that, I can't forget it. It is just that he is hurting. That's why he is doing all of this. I am not saying that his actions are right but you cannot ignore the fact that he was hurt first and he is just lashing out the only way he knows how. He thinks he is doing the right thing whether people will like it or not. It is just like when you killed your father."

Ryker was taken aback by my words and the moment they came out, I wanted to take it back. I reached out for him but he held up a hand to stop me.

"Those things are not mutually exclusive at all and the fact that you would even compare them is alarming," he cleared his throat. "Alastair is a monster and I will do everything in my power to put him in the ground whether you agree with it or not. Am I clear?"

When he spoke like that, he reminded me of the feared Alpha that everyone thought he was. I nodded and I saw his shoulders release some tension but the words still hung between us. I opened my mouth to apologize when I caught a flash of movement by the door as it creaked slowly.

We rushed to our feet instantly and rushed out to see if we could catch a glimpse of whoever had been spying but the hallway was empty and there was no trace of their scent. We searched around but it was like they had disappeared into thin air.

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

We were on edge after that because it meant that someone was onto our plan but whoever it was didn't come around us again. It was almost like they were

trying to be careful so as not to draw more attention to themselves. By the next morning, we still weren't any closer to finding out who they were but I was excited because the team that went out to find the night lock were supposed to be returning any day from now. I wasn't sure if I wanted to use it on Alastair but it felt good to know that we had a backup plan if need be. I knew Ryker didn't feel the same way, he wanted to get rid of Alastair as soon and as quietly as possible.

We were at breakfast getting Audrey ready for her first day when they returned. I was itching to see the infamous plant that could incapacitate someone as powerful as Alastair but my daughter was more important. She was terrified about her first day and hadn't stopped gripping onto mine and Ryker's hands for dear life. We took the carriage to the school and I could see her bouncing her feet anxiously. I could tell that if given the opportunity, she was going to sprint the other way without looking back.

"Everything will be fine," I dropped my voice to a whisper and she looked up at me with wide and hopeful eyes. "I promise you, this will be the best time of your life and you are going to love it."

"Are you sure?" she asked and I nodded. She still looked a little hesitant but at least she had stopped bouncing her feet. "Will you come get me after school?" "I don't know, sweetheart, if we are busy, we might have to send some guards to get you but we will be waiting for you at home if that is anything. We will be counting down the moments until you get back."

She didn't seem happy about it but she nodded. Once we got to the school, there were other students going in at the same time. Some arrived in carriages just like us but others were simply walking in. Ryker helped Audrey out and she looked so small and timid. I was unsure of what else I could say to make her feel better when a little girl walked up to us. She was in the grey uniform that everyone else was wearing. Audrey got hers last night because we were adamant that she doesn't stand out from the crowd so as not to make her first day awkward.

"Hi, are you new?" the little girl asked and Audrey nodded slowly. "My name is Maya, do you want to come in with me?"

She was a beautiful girl with blond pigtails and bright blue eyes. Audrey hesitated before nodding and taking her outstretched hand.

"My name is Audrey," she said slowly and Maya beamed wide enough to rival the sun.

III

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"You're really pretty."

"You're really pretty too, come on, I'll show you all my favorite places."

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That seemed to calm Audrey down because she smiled. She waved to us and I watched as she disappeared into the building. Tears burned the back of my eyes and I blinked rapidly to prevent them from falling. It was one thing to know that your child was all grown up but it was another thing to see it and I was seeing it in person. Ryker kept a hand at the small of my back and ushered me back into the carriage. I could tell that he was just as emotional as I was but he was better off at hiding it.

"She will be fine," he assured me. "There is no better place for her than here."

When we got back to the palace, I had to push aside all my emotions to focus on what was happening. The guards along with Steven and Kevin were in the training room. They looked exhausted but at least they had changed out of their gear. As soon as they saw us, they got to their feet and bowed.

"How was the journey?" I asked and Steven sighed deeply.

"It was tough but we got it. The mountain was nothing like we had expected.

We lost someone on the trail, there was a landslide and he got caught in it," he reached into his pocket and brought out a carefully wrapped package.

I gingerly took it from him and opened it slowly. It was much smaller than I had imagined and I wondered how you could get someone like Alastair to take that. I decided that it would be a problem for another day and wrapped it back up. Steven was looking at me with anticipation as if wanting to know if he had done correctly so I smiled.

"Thank you, all of you. You have been a great help," his shoulders sagged in relief and I turned to Ryker. He seemed to get the hint so he thanked them too and we walked out together. As soon as we were out, I started speaking.

"What do you think?"

"Obviously he can't eat it like that, he would never agree. The question is, how did your father manage to get him to ingest it? Did he make it into a powder and throw it on him. Did he incapacitate him first and then force feed it to him?"

"I don't know," I answered honestly. "I don't really know about the plant and its

properties. It could be possible that my father ate it himself and then got Alastair to bite him thereby transferring it but I don't even know if that would work."

"It is a good place to start, the question that remains is where do we keep this? We already know that someone is watching us."

I was about to answer when I noticed someone walking behind us. I jumped slightly then let out a sigh of relief once I realized that it was Christine. She raised a brow at my

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panic.

"If you don't want people listening in, then you shouldn't have conversations in public," she grabbed my arm and pulled me into the nearest room which so happened to be the dining room. "Now, what is it about ingesting that I am hearing?"

We explained everything that we had been up to lately and if she was upset for not being included, she didn't let it show. She just listened intently and by the time we were done, she let out a deep sigh.

"I think your idea seems the most probable," she said to me. "There is no guarantee that we will be able to incapacitate him long enough to feed it to him by force, but, do you even want to do this, Camilla?"

"What do you mean?" I asked and she shot me a bland look.

"When you spoke about it, you sounded weird, almost as if you weren't fully into it. I'm not trying to put you on the spot but, I mean-"

"It doesn't matter, okay? I just sometimes feel bad for him because he is as much a victim as we are," I said slowly and I felt Ryker tense beside me. "I am not condoning the things he did and I understand that he needs to be punished for his actions but I can feel that and also feel pity for who he was and what was done to him before. Two things can be right at the same time."

Ryker wanted to respond but was stopped from doing so when the door creaked open and Alara walked in slowly. She had her head bent low and she was wringing her fingers. At first, I thought something was wrong but then she started speaking.

"I know I shouldn't have been listening," she began slowly, "but I heard you talking about him and I just, I'm sorry for eavesdropping."

"What's wrong?" I asked as I gestured for her to come closer.

"I want to help, in any way that you will have me. He ruined my entire life, he

took away my childhood and everything that I know. I don't want to just sit here and wait for him to be caught. I want to be useful and I know I'm just a random girl from the town and I probably don't have any skills but I would like to help."

I glanced over at Ryker because I was unsure of what to say. There was truly nothing she could do to help. I didn't want anyone digging into my father's things and unless she could go out with the guards then she was better off in the palace than helping. I shot Ryker a 'help me' look and he sighed.

"Alara, I understand, but the best thing you can do is to stay safe."

"No, you don't understand, your majesty," she shot back. "That house was all I had left

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of my parents. It was everything to me and he took it. I have nothing left of my family. Please, I will do anything."

She dropped to her knees and I saw fresh tears in her eyes. I glanced over at Christine who I could see was also moved by her. Maybe it was because she had also lost her parents but we understood her pain and at least I was able to get rid of the person who killed my mother, she wouldn't get that privilege. Ryker glanced over at us and I nodded.

"Okay," he said finally and I saw her eyes widen in shock. "There isn't much that you can do here but there is a guard, Steven, and I am sure he would be more than happy to train you. I will not be putting you out on the front lines but you will be learning how to protect yourself. Is that okay?"

She nodded and I watched as she launched herself into Ryker's arms. He stiffened and cleared his throat and she immediately pulled away. "I apologize, your majesty, thank you, I won't let down."

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Chapter 119

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I watched as she walked out of the room and I waited until she had shut the

door behind her before I turned to Ryker with a teasing smile. "Looks like you have a new fan."

He rolled his eyes at me and turned back to the table. "We were discussing something very important before she came."

I raised my hands in mock surrender. "I guess it is settled about the night lock. I can't take it unless we are very certain that we will see him. Where do we keep it until then?"

"We can keep it in one of the offices or in our room," Ryker began but I shook my head. There was no guarantee that no one would keep it safer than he would, the problem was that everyone else would expect it.

"If someone were to go looking for it, that would be the first place that they would look," I dropped my voice to a whisper in case of any more eavesdroppers. "I think Christine should hide it, probably in the same place that you hid the map of the tunnels. No one else can know where it is, not even us."

"Are you sure?" she asked and I nodded. "What if you need to get it and I'm not there?"

"We will deal with that if it ever comes to it but right now, I don't want to risk it getting taken. I'm not saying we have any spies in here but I am just trying to be safe."

She thought about it for a second before nodding. "Fine, but what if you kept some in Ryker's office like he suggested. Just a small amount of it so that if anyone goes looking for it, they will think that they found everything and they wouldn't expect you to have any more hidden away."

I realized that was a brilliant idea and we all agreed to it. Ryker and I took the small quantity of the berries and hid it safely in his office. Fortunately, they had a long shelf life so I wasn't worried about them getting spoiled within the next week or so. It gave us a little time to figure out how we wanted to do this. If it exceeded a week then I had no idea how we were going to deal with it or handle the situation. Ryker tried to assure me that everything was going to be fine but I couldn't ignore the nagging feeling that something was going to go terribly wrong.

He met with the guards while I went out for training, Loris wasn't out there so I trained on my own. I had come to find it relaxing rather than a painful reminder of all I couldn't do. There was just something about the water that soothed my nerves. It was almost like an extension of myself and I loved it. I didn't know how long I stayed there, I just knew that I was moving. I felt formidable and untouchable for the first time in a

long time. I let the water slide back into the stream and was about to leave when I decided to try something.

After Loris had realized I wasn't making any progress in getting water out of the moisture in the air or out of the ground, he had decided to let it be and he focused on other aspects of my powers. I looked around to make sure no one was looking and crouched down to the ground. I could feel the water- I always had. The problem was that I could never reach it. It didn't matter how much I pulled or tugged, it just never came within my reach.

I closed my eyes and tried to pull on the water but it wouldn't rise. I could have sworn I felt it move an inch but that was it. I muttered a curse under my breath and huffed as I kicked a small stone in my path. I turned to return to the palace but was surprised to find Ryker standing there. I was surprised that I hadn't noticed him earlier.

"How long have you been watching me?" I asked and he shrugged.

"Not long, you're doing much better than before."

"I still can't get to it," I gestured off handedly to the floor and he shrugged. "I just never thought it would be that difficult, you know."

"You'll get to it sooner or later," he kept his tone soft and encouraging. He reached out to me and I wasted no time in letting my hand slip into his.

Just as I did, there was a noise behind us. His hold on me tightened and he pulled me behind him. I could barely see over his shoulder and I think that was his plan because he made sure that I was hidden behind him. You wouldn't have even known I was present if you had walked in.

"Ryker," I began but he held up a hand to stop me. "It was probably just the wind or something. There is no one here."

"Yes there is," he said simply and when I opened my mouth to protest he shot me a hard look. I decided to stay silent for the sole reason that he had more experience than I did when it came to people and fighting so he probably knew more. "Walk away slowly and go back to the palace."

"Are you crazy? I'm not leaving you out here."

"Camilla, do you ever listen to me?" he sounded annoyed but underneath all of that, there was a hint of admiration. "I don't want you to get hurt."

"I am getting a toothache from just watching you," I turned to the woods and I saw a vampire leaning against the trees. It was the one who had led me into the mountains. I hadn't seen him in a while and a part of me had hoped he was dead. "You wolves need better protection. You have no idea how easy it was for me to get in here."

Ryker growled and I saw a flash of fear in his eyes. He even took a slow step backwards. It was good to know that they were smart enough to ascertain when someone was a genuine threat to them and that was exactly what Ryker was. He was the most patient and loving partner on the planet but that didn't

mean that he still wasn't the Alpha everyone thought that he was.

"You have two minutes to get the fuck out of here before I rip your head off your shoulders," Ryker warned.

"I'm not here to hurt either of you, relax," he held up his hands to show that he meant no harm. "I simply came to relay a message."

"I'm not interested not fuck off. You have just one minute left."

"I figured you wouldn't want to listen. Well, Alastair is a bit upset that you would consider hurting him when he has been nothing but kind to you over the past few weeks," I raised a brow at his words. Did he really say the words kind when Alastair had killed more wolves than I cared to count. "He was upset at the number of vampire casualties at your town and he has promised to right the wrong."

"You have a lot of nerve coming to my home and saying that," Ryker took a slow step towards the vampire who took one back. "What's stopping me from killing you where you stand?"

"I'm just the messenger. Your fight isn't with me."

Ryker moved so fast that I barely had time to register it. One minute, he was standing by me and the next, he had his hands around the vampire's throat and was squeezing tightly. The vampire clawed at his hands and despite the blood dripping down his arms, Ryker never made one move to let him go. I stood fixated in my spot and unable to say anything.

"If you kill me, you will incur Alastair's wrath. I was the first man he turned, I am his closest ally and confidante."

"I don't give a shit."

"You should, we could wipe out this pack in a matter of seconds. You should think about that, Alastair would not be pleased in the slightest," I could see that he was just trying to buy time to save his life but Ryker wasn't having it.

"He should have thought about it before sending you here. Let this serve as a warning to the rest of you. If any of you comes near my home or my family, you will die."

I thought Ryker would let him go to deliver the warning but to my shock, he twisted his neck and I watched as the vampire crumpled to the ground.

Ryker stood over the body and turned to me. "Get me a torch, now."

That forced my legs to move. "Is he dead?"

"No, you can only kill them with fire or by tearing off their heads. I just twisted it. He will be up in an hour or less and we cannot have that happening."

I watched in shock and slight horror as Ryker lit a fire over the body of the fallen vampire. He stood there and watched it burn. I couldn't even look at the body, my eyes were fixated on Ryker.

“You could have kept him for questioning,” I began slowly and he shrugged.

“Why didn’t you?”

“He was a threat to you,” he said simply. “If you weren’t here then maybe, but I had to think of the possibility that he would try to attack you and I couldn’t risk that. It doesn’t matter now, he is dead, come.”

I was shocked by how casually Ryker was saying everything but I took his outstretched hand and walked in step with him.

“He said that Alastair wanted to even out the numbers, what did he mean?”

“I don’t know and honestly, I don’t think I want to find out.”

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Chapter 120

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

For the next two days, I was on edge, I kept waiting for Alastair to attack the palace and take revenge for the death of his friend but he never did. If anything, he was quieter than before. I began to wonder if the other vampire had been bluffing just so we wouldn’t kill him. I wanted to tell Ryker about my worries but I didn’t want to jinx it. If nothing had happened yet, then I was more than happy to keep it that way. Things were going perfectly, we had the night lock and the guards were training. The town people had become more vigilant and there were fires set at every boundary. There hadn’t been any deaths in two days and I found that to be a record.

“Damien wrote back,” Ryker’s voice snapped me out of my thoughts and I found him at the door to my office. “He thanked us for the poultice and even asked what was inside. He also mentioned that he was going to try to visit soon because he had been hearing about everything that was happening.”

“Are you going to respond?”

“Not right now, there are more pressing things on ground,” he shrugged as he made his way into the office. “We need to figure out a way to get rid of Alastair permanently. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life looking over my shoulder wondering if you are safe.”

“I know,” I sighed as I ran my hands through my hair. “I’m just here hoping that he is going to change. I know it is fantastical and it is not going to happen but you can’t fault me for believing, right?”

He was about to answer when the bell started to ring. I was out of my chair in seconds and we both rushed out of the room. There were guards already getting ready to ride into town. They were so engrossed in their work that none of them even turned to pay heed. Kevin made to walk past me but I grabbed his upper arm pulling him to a complete stop.

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“What is happening?” Ryker asked and Kevin hesitated before speaking.

“You’re not mute so don’t start now.”

“It’s the school,” he explained slowly and that was all I needed to rush into the stables and grab my horse. I couldn’t even wait for someone else to saddle it for me, I started doing it all on my own.

“Camilla, stop,” Ryker said to me but I ignored him. “I don’t want you there.”

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“I don’t care, my daughter is out there so I am going. You can either deal with it or you stay behind. Nothing is stopping me from going,” my eyes burned but I tried to convince myself that she was fine- she was safe. Audrey was not going to die much less at the hands of a vampire.

I couldn’t help but shake my head as I thought of Alastair. We had hit him where it hurt so he was trying to do the same thing. At this point, I didn’t care about anything, if I saw him then I was going to kill him myself. I got on the horse and didn’t even wait for Ryker before I started riding in the direction of the school.

I felt the heat before I saw the fire. A good portion of the gate was on fire. No one could go in and out. I could see the guards trying to weave their way in to get the children from inside. I got off my horse immediately trying to see if I could get an opening to go in but there was nothing. Suddenly, I felt Ryker by my side.

“I’m going to get her out,” he whispered and before I could process what he had said, he literally dashed through the flames. I tried to reach out for him but one of the guards held me back.

“Why would you let him go in there?” I screamed but I still wasn’t allowed to move forward. I felt a pair of eyes on me and I looked around.

It was like a magnet directed me to Alastair. He was standing in the trees and once he saw that he had my attention, he tipped his head forward. There was a sick smirk on his face and I saw a torch in his hands. He was the one who had set the fire. He knew he could have died from it but he risked it just to hurt us.

“Good luck,” he mouthed before disappearing into the woods and I felt blood bubble up in me.

I wanted to chase after him but my major concern was for my family that was currently stuck in the flames. I noticed the guards were rushing in and out of

the woods to get the water so I closed my eyes and tried to feel for the source. It took me a few seconds but I felt it- it was a stream with a waterfall a few feet away. it was further than anything I had tried to reach for but I wasn't going to give up now.

I pulled as hard as I could and with a scream, I heard the rush of water. Everyone stared in awe as I swirled the entire stream overhead. A few looked at me with awe while others looked at me with fear in their eyes. I figured that I would handle that problem later as I dumped the entire thing over the burning building. The fire was out but I felt so dizzy that I could barely stand on my own. I didn't know how much energy it would take to maneuver that much water over that kind of distance.

I stumbled back a bit but the guard behind me who I realized was Steven kept me

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stable. He had a hand on my shoulder and I watched as the other guards rushed in to retrieve the people who were inside. I stood with baited breath watching the people going in and out and waiting to see my family. I saw Audrey's hair before I saw her. She ran straight from me and despite how tired I felt, I still allowed her throw herself into my arms.

Ryker reached me next and he placed a kiss on my forehead. "That was incredible, I saw the entire thing."

"You're a hero, mummy," Audrey whispered and I couldn't stop the tired smile that grew on my face. I handed her over to Ryker who was more than happy to take her from me. He had soot on his clothes but overall he was fine.

"Did anyone die?" I asked but he shook his head.

"Not from the students, no, I haven't checked with the guards yet, so I am unsure of that," he stopped mid sentence to look at me. "Are you alright? You look a little green. Do you feel sick?"

"No, I'm fine, I just didn't know it would take that much to hold that much," my vision. was hazy but I managed to keep myself upright as I leaned on Ryker's arms. "I just need a second or an hour or a very long nap to recuperate."

"Do you want me to call a carriage for you?" he asked but waved him off because I knew shaking my head would be a very bad choice.

"I can ride, I promise."

It wasn't that I was going to pass out or anything, I was just tired and everything hurt. Ryker kept his arms around me as he led us back to our horses. He had to help me get on mine because I couldn't do it myself then he got on his own with Audrey in front of him. We rode back to the palace at a slower speed than the one we did to get to the school and I knew it was for my

sake so as not to make the dizziness worse.

By the time we got to the palace, I just wanted to get a snack and take a nap. Christine was in front of the palace holding Aurora and Audrey rushed into her arms. I saw relief pool over her features as she embraced her. Ryker took Aurora from her and I leaned over his shoulder at my sleeping infant. I knew how much this issue with Alastair had pulled me away from her but I was determined to make things work as soon as we got him where he belonged. I didn't care for peace anymore, he came for my daughter and I was going to make sure that he died a very slow and painful death.

"I got you some chocolate," Christine produced a bar from behind her back and I thanked her as I took it from her. I wasted no time in biting down as Ryker and I walked into the palace.

"I need to get something from my office first," he told me. "Do you want to wait here for me?"

"It is fine," I assured him. After eating the chocolate, I felt relatively better. I followed him to his office and right from the door, I knew something was wrong because Ryker never left his door open.

He handed Aurora to me and I held her close as he pushed the door open. I braced myself for an attack but what I saw was even worse. The entire room was in disarray, the papers on his table had been thrown all around, his bookshelf had been destroyed and everything was a mess. It was almost as if there had been a fight in there.

"Did they come looking for you?" I asked but he shook his head. I watched as he rushed towards his dresser and he pulled it open. He muttered a curse under his breath and wiped his hand across his forehead. "What is it?"

"They got the berries," he said simply and my eyes widened. "The school was a distraction. He wanted the berries and he got them."