

## The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 121-129

Chapter 121

RYKER'S P.O.V

I could see Camilla's confusion and I could practically hear the unasked question that was swirling through her mind. "Wasn't the entire point of keeping it here to find out if he had someone in the pack?" She opened her mouth to speak and I knew that was what she was going to say so I cut her off by speaking directly into her mind.

"The halls aren't safe anymore, someone might be listening. We don't want to give them a reason to think that there might be more somewhere. Until we are sure that whoever it is has been dealt with, you should speak directly to my mind. Just go with it."

I saw understanding dawn on her features and she nodded. "What are we going to do now? We don't even know who took them or how to get some more, it will take some time."

"I will go to the generals and the maids and find out every single person who was in the palace at the time of the attack on the school. Someone must have either seen or heard something or even been part of the people who took it."

"You think there was more than one person?" she asked and I shrugged. "It could have been a solo mission."

"In a palace this big, someone was bound to have seen something or heard something. Even if the other people weren't directly involved, they definitely had something to do with it," I dropped my lips to her ear and whispered. "Go to Christine and make sure that the others are safe. I will come to you later."

I pulled back and watched as she nodded and disappeared. I looked around the office with a sigh. It grated on my nerves to see it in such disarray but at least we knew to be on edge. The most annoying part about it was the fact that I couldn't get a hit on the scent. Whoever did it had found a way to keep their scent hidden. They managed to come in, rummage and get out without leaving anything behind.

I walked out of the office and made a mental note to handle it later. I immediately went to the generals for the list of guards who were in the palace at the time. I didn't tell them what I needed it for, only that I needed it and they didn't waste any time in producing it for me. Apparently, they had a schedule and he just handed it over to me.

"The problem with this is that some people left their duty posts to help with the fires," he explained as he handed the schedules over to me. "There is no way of knowing the exact people who were present and absent at that time but this

is the best I can. I can talk to the guards myself and figure out—”

“No,” I cut him off and his brows furrowed in confusion. “I do not want a word of this

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breathed to anyone else. Pretend like this conversation never happened, am I clear?”

He nodded, “Of course, your majesty, but if I could just ask, what is this about?”

“I don’t think it is of any concern to you right now. You have done your part and you have my gratitude for it.”

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I could tell that wasn’t the answer he was looking for but it was all he was going to get from me and he knew better than to argue. He nodded and turned on his heels to walk away. As soon as he was gone, I began flipping through the schedule. There were over a thousand names and I knew there was no way that I was going to interrogate them all. The moment I started with one person, the news was going to spread so I needed to be extra careful with who I focused on.

I left the generals and went to the maids. I got the same kind of schedule and the exact same explanation. Because of the fire, a lot of people were forced to leave their duties and help out elsewhere. There was no exact list that could give me what I wanted. By the time I got back to my wrecked office, I was already frustrated and I buried my head into my palms. I took both lists and sat at my desk. I spread them open in front of me and looked through the names.

I still recognized a few from when we were looking for Eva. There were some that jumped out to me whose names I could remember but that didn’t mean anything. I decided to call for the guard who was guarding the hallway leading up to my office. He was the safest bet and if anyone saw anything then it had to be him.

He arrived in my office less than ten minutes later and when he took in the entire room, his eyes widened.

“Do you want me to call a maid, your majesty?” he began but I shook my head and his brows furrowed. “They will be able to get it fixed before tomorrow.”

“You can call the maids later, I want you to take a seat,” I gestured to the chair opposite me. I could feel the confusion radiating off him but he still did as I had asked. “You patrol the hallway leading up to here, am I correct?”

He nodded. "Yes, your majesty."

"Who came in this way?" I watched his face for any trace of emotion but he didn't let anything slip. It was either he didn't know anything or he did and he wasn't saying it. "The thing is, someone took something from here and you are the last line of defense to this place. I am sure you can see how that looks. So you are going to tell me who took it or you are going to produce what was taken."

He threw his hands up immediately. "I have never come in here, I swear. I had nothing to do with it at all. I didn't see anyone."

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"You are permanently stationed at the hallway. How could you not see someone walk in and out? This doesn't look too well for you."

"I went to see my girlfriend," he blurted out and my brows furrowed. "I'm seeing one of the girls in the kitchens. She came to me after she heard about the fire and she was freaking out. I left my post for maybe five minutes but I came back right away. I didn't notice anyone suspicious leaving. I swear, I had nothing to do with it. Please, don't kill me."

I ran my hands down my face in frustration. Of course, he would have taken the time the assailant wanted to use as a break to see his girlfriend. I didn't know if I was upset with him or just frustrated because of the situation. I simply sat there staring at him not knowing what to say.

"Get out," I said finally and his eyes widened. "You're stupid, yes, but you aren't the person I am looking for. Leave, and if you utter one word of this to anyone, you are dead."

"Thank you, your majesty."

I waited until he had gotten to the door before I spoke. "Get the maid to fix the office before tomorrow morning."

I knew that I wasn't going to find the person responsible. They had taken careful precaution but at least I had some more information. Whoever was behind the attack was someone who knew the guards well. They must have known that he would go to his girlfriend or that his girlfriend would go to him. They would have watched for a while and that meant being at the palace for a long time. I had been suspecting Alara but there was no way she could have figured that out in such a short time, not when her every move was being monitored by me.

I let out a sigh of frustration when I heard my office door creak open. I saw

Alara walk in wearing something similar to what the maids usually wore and my brows rose. The last time I checked, she had been training with Steven because of her anger towards the vampires.

“When did you start working with the maids?” I asked and she shrugged. “I just felt like I wasn’t doing much one day so I asked the Queen’s cousin, Lady Christine and she said it was alright. I hope that is fine by you. The others are coming soon but they sent me to get a head start and figure out just how messy the office was,’ she looked around as she said it.

I figured it was best to give them the privacy to do what they needed so I stood to my feet and made to walk out of the room. Just as Alara was trying to walk past me, she tripped over a piece of wood. I reached out to grab her upper arm immediately and somehow, she grasped onto my shoulders and neck to keep herself steady. Her hands

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on my skin grated on my nerves and I wanted nothing more than to let her go and let her drop on her as s but even I knew that was rude so I allowed her get back to her feet.

She still didn’t let go of me immediately and I opened my mouth to berate her when I heard someone clear their throat behind me. I knew who it was immediately and I pushed her off. I turned to find Camilla standing by the door watching the two of us with a blank expression. I couldn’t tell what was going on in her mind but fear gripped my throat.

The last time she left me, it was over a perceived incident like this. I could only imagine what she would do now when she seemingly caught us together. I opened my mouth to speak but she held up a hand to stop me and I cursed under my breath.

I was screwed.

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I had forgotten the exact reason I came looking for Ryker the moment I saw him with her. I expected some kind of anger, some perceived form of emotion but there was nothing. As I took in the scene, I knew there was something I was missing. Ryker wouldn’t cheat on me, I knew that with every fiber of my

being. I wasn't the insecure child I was all those years ago when I left his pack. We had children and he would never jeopardize that for anything or anyone so I knew there had to be an explanation as to why they were standing like that.

He opened his mouth to speak but I held up a hand to stop him, it wasn't a conversation I wanted to have with her in the room. I tried to get a read on her but her expression was blank. There was remorse in her eyes but I wasn't sure if it was genuine or not. It was almost as if the more I tried to figure her out, the harder it was for her.

"Alara, you said you had family in another pack, right?" I asked and she nodded. "I figure now would be a very good time to send a letter to them, don't you? I presume this entire thing with the vampires will be over soon. We wouldn't want to keep you away from your family any longer."

I saw the moment she understood the true meaning behind my words. She bowed her head in shame and nodded. She awkwardly made to walk past me. She stopped directly in front of me and opened her mouth as if she wanted to say something but at the last minute, she thought better of it and walked out. As soon as she was gone, Ryker started speaking.

"It isn't what it looks like, I swear. I don't even know how it happened. I don't want you to think that anything happened."

"I know nothing happened."

"I was coming to you and she was slipping so I-" he paused and turned to me.

"Wait, what did you say?"

"I said I know," I made my way over to him. "I trust you, I'm not worried about what I saw because I know it was nothing. You don't have to explain every second of your life to me, honestly, it doesn't matter."

"Are you sure?" he asked and I nodded. "You aren't even the least bit jealous?"

"Did I enjoy seeing her hands on you? No, of course, not, but I'm not going to overreact because of it. Besides, it is only a matter of time before she leaves, don't you think?" I saw the relief hit him like a ton of bricks and he rested his forehead against mine before kissing me slowly.

08:11 Wed, 31 Jan

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"Have I mentioned that I love you?"

"Not lately," I shot back and the corner of his lips tilted up.

"I love you," he whispered. "So much, and when this is all over, I'll make sure that I show you exactly how much."

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We were forced to pull apart when we heard footsteps. I saw a maid standing awkwardly by the door and Ryker explained that it was to clean up his office. He held out his hand to me and I wasted no time in taking it. We still had a very busy day ahead because of the school, I still wasn't sure what we were going to do about it. It wasn't safe to send the kids back until Alastair was dealt with and that meant keeping Audrey at home. Christine said she would try her best teaching her at home but I knew that would only work for some time.

We spent the rest of the day trying to make sure that everyone was safe from the school. There had been two casualties of guards who were standing outside when the fire was set and were unfortunately caught in it. Ryker and I had to inform the families and it was one of the most devastating things I have ever had to do. I wasn't sure how you could tell someone their son died like a hero but not expect them to feel that pain. Hero or not, they were people's family. One of them even had a pregnant mate. My heart broke for them and I wished it was possible to help all of them but I couldn't. There was nothing we could do except offer financial assistance but even that felt like it wasn't enough.

I was barely able to fall asleep at night despite being wrapped up in Ryker's arms. It felt like everything was falling apart and I tried to remind myself that the darkest hour always came before the dawn. I could feel Ryker's steady breathing in the darkness and instead of getting the usual relaxation it gave me, I was worried because very little kept him awake at night and this managed to do so. I could tell we were thinking the same thing but neither of us wanted to voice it out.

By the time morning came, I was tired of everything and I called for a meeting with the elders. Ryker was shocked when I asked because it had been a while since we sat with them.

"Are you sure about this?" he had asked and I nodded. "What could they possibly do for us right now?"

"I think we are too close to see this properly. I need an outside perspective and unfortunately, they might be able to offer that to us. We need to put an end to this as soon as possible, Ryker and you know it too."

He didn't protest again after that.

The elders were waiting for us in the council room with varying degrees of annoyance and curiosity on their faces. Caius gave me a small smile when he caught my eye and I

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responded with a curt nod. Ryker and I took out seats opposite them and the

room delved into complete silence. If I strained my ears, I could hear their heartbeats- it was that quiet.

"I need your help," I said simply and many eyebrows rose. "You have seen everything that has been happening so far. I need a means to get rid of the vampires."

"How are we supposed to help?" one of them asked. "We don't know anything about them. You have kept your findings a secret from us. Your father would never have done that."

I took out my father's journal and slid it on the table. "How come none of you knew that the late king had met with the very same vampire who is plaguing us now? Were you just that unobservant?"

"He was very secretive."

"Or

you were just bad at your job," I shot back and they all fell silent. "Listen, I don't have the time or the energy to mentally spar with you today. There are innocent people dying and I need somebody to come up with something that can work."

"We could attack them first," Caius suggested. "It would be a bloody war but if we were to do it during the daytime then we would have the advantage. They are considerably weaker in the daytime."

"Yes, that could work but the problem is that they live in the mountains. They have lived there for centuries. If we walk into there, we are walking into a slaughter house. It is as dark as night there and they will win."

They all went silent when I mentioned that, it seemed like they didn't know. We sat there for what felt like hours but it only seemed like I was getting worse answers than the last. I pinched my forehead with my forefinger and thumb in frustration as I realized that I wasn't getting the answers I wanted. After a while, I was about to call the meeting to an end when Caius spoke.

"What does he want?" he asked and I turned to him. "You haven't told us directly but if I know for certain then he wants you, am I right, your majesty?" I nodded. "This might be unorthodox but why don't you lure him out?"

I felt Ryker tense beside me but this was the best idea that I had gotten all day so I sat up.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't think he wants you dead considering the fact that he hasn't tried to kill you yet," I kept my lips shut about him biting me. "There has to be something that he wants from you. If you could lure him out into an ambush then it would be easier to kill him."

As he spoke, a grander idea formed in my head, one where we could use the night lock

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ed that look in my face instantly.

you, Caius,' he said before turning to the rest of the elders. "You can all leave no." We watched them all file out and the moment the last of them had gone, he turned to me. "I am not allowing you to be used as bait."

"It is the only thing that will work. Caius was right, I am the one that he wants. He wants to get revenge on my father using me. If we can lure him out after I have eaten the berries and he bites me then he will be incapacitated. We can kill him and everything will be over."

"I don't like it."

"It is the only plan we have, Ryker, please, I just need you to think about it."

I could tell he was going to refuse again but he was saved from responding when the door to our office opened. I expected to see a guard but not Christine. She stumbled into the room with blood splatter on her clothes and the side of her face and she looked like she was about to pass out. I instantly stood to my feet and rushed to her side.

As soon as I got to her, she slumped into my arms. "What happened?"

"The vampires, they attacked us, we were just going for a walk."

"Where are the girls, Christine?" she passed out before she could answer me.

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CAMILLA'S POV

I rushed forward to catch her while Ryker ran straight out of the room. I gritted my teeth as I fought to carry Christine's entire body weight. I dragged her over to the small lounge in the office and gently lay her on it before rushing out to call the physician. I was torn between wanting to make sure Christine was okay and wanting to find the girls but I figured since Ryker was already on that then I could handle Christine.

Thankfully, the physician wasn't occupied when I got to him and he wasted no time in rushing into my office to look over her. While he watched her, Ryker returned with both girls in his arms and I wasted no time in rushing over to them. I ran my hands through Audrey's curls and glanced over at Aurora who looked to be fast asleep. I ran my eyes over their body for any obvious signs of injury but I let out a sigh of relief when I realized that they were good.

"Thank goodness you're okay," I breathed unable to take my eyes off them.

"What happened? Are you guys okay?" I turned to Ryker. "Where did you find them?"

"They were in the palace. I don't think they were with her."

I turned back to Audrey to confirm this but she just shrugged, "Aunt Christine



said she would be back but she never came back.”

I hated the fact that relief poured through me. I felt horrible in the seconds after I felt it. I hated what had happened to Christine but I was glad that my children were not there when it happened. Underneath all that relief however was concern, I turned to Ryker and saw that he had the exact same expression on his face. Alastair was crossing boundaries he shouldn't and he was putting the girls in danger.

“Camilla,” I heard a broken voice from behind me and I turned to see Christine rising slowly. “My head hurts so badly.”

I rushed over to her immediately and crouched down by her side. She looked fine and I was relieved when the physician informed me that the blood on her body did not belong to her and she just passed out from stress and worry. She looked like crap and she seemed a little disoriented but other than that, she seemed fine.

“Do you remember what happened?” I asked and she nodded slowly. “Can you tell me?”

“They came out of nowhere. There were only two of them but it was enough to terrify me because I only had one guard on me. We went into the woods because I was looking for a picnic spot. I know I shouldn't have been there but I just wanted a sense of normalcy, you know. We fought them but I was worried that they had come into the palace or something.”

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“The palace is well defended. Everything is fine, the girls are too,” I assured her and I saw her breathe a sigh of relief. “They're with Ryker by the door right now, he probably doesn't want them to see all of this. Do you think you can stand?”

She didn't respond but she tried to pull herself to her feet. I had to help her and although she stumbled, she was able to find her footing. She tried to assure me that she was fine but there was no way that I was going to let her go on her own so I stayed by her side and led her up to her room. I couldn't count the amount of times that Christine had helped me when I was weak or wounded and I would be damned if I didn't return the favor. Ryker wasn't at the door when we got there and I assumed that he had gone to put the girls back in their room.

No sooner than Christine got into her room, she was out like a light on the bed. I took a warm washcloth and slowly wiped the blood off her face and skin then helped her out of her dress and into something more comfortable. It was a testament to how exhausted she was because she didn't stir once and I

knew for a fact that she was a very light sleeper. By the time I was done, I stepped out of the room only to see Ryker waiting there for me.

"How is she?" he asked and I shrugged.

"She's good, she will be good at least but, Ryker-

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"I know, I heard," he cut me off with a sigh. "He knows they are the object of our focus and he wants to hurt them to hurt us."

I couldn't imagine why anyone in their right minds would try or want to hurt a child but then again, Alastair wasn't in his right mind. He was a crazy immortal vampire who had no internal moral compass to differentiate between right and wrong. I could see now that there was no reasoning with him or explaining things to him. There was nothing that we could do or say save for getting rid of him permanently.

"What do we do?" I asked. "I don't want to leave them out here where he could easily just get them."

"Is there somewhere we could send them away for a few days, at least until we are able to get rid of Alastair."

"Christine once told me about a vacation house that my father had not too far from here. I doubt Alastair would know about it though because no one did. She said she only found out about it because she followed him one day. We could send them there. What do you think?"

"Perhaps we should wait for her to wake up first."

Christine slept the entire day away and it wasn't until late in the night that she finally rose from her slumber and joined us in the dining room for dinner. She looked

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shocked that we were still down there waiting for her but the truth was that we had already tucked the girls into bed and just needed a few seconds to ourselves to think. We were not even expecting to see her there.

"Thank you for earlier today," she whispered to me but I waved her off. "I am sorry if I scared you with the way I rushed into your office. I was just so terrified and I didn't know what to do."

"It's alright," I assured her. "But that brings us to a problem and I need your help with it. Do you remember the way to my father's cabin?"

She looked at me confused for a second before nodding. "Do you want me to take you there?"

"I want you to take the girls there," she looked taken aback by my suggestion.

"Tomorrow, it will be for a few days. Go in the morning when you are at a lower risk of being attacked by the vampires. Take some guards with you and

do not take a carriage, it will be easier to spot.

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“You’re sending us away,” she deadpanned and she almost looked hurt by it. “I am keeping my kids safe,” I corrected. “You are the only person that I trust them with and I need to make sure that they are safe. You are the only person who can do that for me. Please, Christine, I don’t want any more accidents.” She let out a deep sigh. “I guess I better start packing.”

I tossed and turned the entire night because I knew come the next morning, my daughters would be gone. I didn’t see them much during the day but the knowledge that they were within reach was always good enough for me and I didn’t know how I was going to handle not knowing that. As if Ryker knew what was going through my mind, he held me extra close at night but it still couldn’t stop the ease or discomfort.

I briefly wondered if we were doing the right thing or if I should call off the entire plan but when I thought back to the fire in the school, I realized that it was a risk I was willing to take to ensure that I was never that scared again in my life.

Sooner than I would have liked, the sun rose and Ryker and I made our way to Audrey’s room. It was the first time in a long time that she had woken up with us already waiting for her and I could see the huge smile that took over her face. It pained me to know that after today, it was going to be a while until I saw her.

I pulled her into my arms and carefully explained the situation as best as I could. She wasn’t happy about it. She screamed and cried and begged me to reconsider and it broke my heart each time I had to say no. Ryker sat by me and tried to explain it to her as well but she didn’t want to listen. We spent the better part of an hour trying to calm her down before she agreed more out of anger than anything.

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The plan was for them to leave as soon as possible so we got her dressed in comfortable riding gear and carried her towards the back of the palace. We didn’t want people to realize what was being planned and that was why we chose the early morning to do the transfer. Christine was there with Aurora and I carried her so I could inhale her soft scent once again.

“Be safe,” I whispered to Audrey who nodded glumly. “I promise this won’t be for too long. I’ll personally come get you once things are safe, okay?”

I looked over at Kevin and Steven who were riding with them. “Please keep them safe.”

“With our lives,” they answered almost immediately and I reluctantly handed

my children over.

Tears pricked the back of my eyes but I forced to keep a small smile on my face. I wiped at a stray tear that broke through the gap and I felt Ryker's hand on my waist tighten almost affectionately.

Christine started to mount her horse but at the last minute, she stopped and walked over to me. I didn't know what I was expecting her to do but I stayed immobile while she leaned her face towards my ear to whisper.

"The berries are in the flower pot by my bed."

Hidden in plain sight. "You didn't have to tell me that."

"You might need it while I'm gone," she straightened. "I hope you know what you're doing Camilla."

"I hope so too."

"I'll watch over them like they are my own. I promise you, I would have to be dead for any harm to come to them."

"I trust you," it wasn't a lie, I knew she would. I watched as she climbed her horse and they disappeared from view.

Ryker turned to me with a questioning look but I shook my head. There was no need

repeating what she had said until absolutely necessary.

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### Chapter 124

#### CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Throughout the entire day, I felt the absence of my daughters and Christine. It was like a song hidden beneath the walls that called out to my soul. I could feel their absence as clearly as I could feel the walls next to me or the soft wood from my table underneath my fingertips and although I tried, I couldn't brush off the ashy taste in my mouth that came with feeling so alone. There was no way for us to know when they had arrived, we would just have to wait and hope that everything worked out just the way we had planned.

As soon as they left, Ryker and I threw ourselves into work. Their absence was a necessary evil and now we needed to focus and bring an end to this. We needed to find a way to get the vampires out of the equation and draw Alastair out long enough for us to incapacitate him. We had all the

equipment that we needed, we just needed a foolproof plan. One that was bound to work and I knew exactly where I was going to get it. I just needed Ryker to agree to it first.

That was how I found myself at his door sometime around noon and I knocked slowly. I never knocked so when I pushed open the door, there was concern on his face. I moved with deliberate slowness, maybe it was to draw out the inevitable conversation or maybe it was to give myself some sort of morale- I wasn't sure. Ryker was on edge as he watched me, like a coiled viper ready to strike at any moment.

"I know that face," he began and I raised my brows in shock. "It usually means that you want to ask for something that you know I will refuse. Tell me, Camilla, what is it this time?"

"I know a way we can get Alastair to come out," I said slowly and I watched as his expression went from amused to intrigued in less than a second. "It is a rough plan and it needs some work but I believe that this is the only one that we have."

"I'm listening."

"Use me," he opened his mouth to refuse immediately but I held out a hand to stop him. "He wants me for some reason. At first, it was for revenge but I don't think that's what it is anymore. This is more than that. He could have killed me that night he attacked the town but he didn't. There is something that he wants and if we can make him think that he will get it then we might be able to corner him."

"How do you plan to execute this?"

"He's always watching, right? I can give him a show. He will be in the forest at night, or his men will be."

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"Don't tell me you want to walk straight into the forest when you could be taken. That is absurd, Camilla, even for you. There is too much that can go wrong."

"It is our only option."

“There is never only one option and you know it,” he shot back immediately and I knew that there was no way he was going to agree to this. “We will find another way, something else that doesn’t involve you putting your life at risk for a half baked plan that is going to shit anyway.”

I flinched at his words and I saw guilt cross his face. He ran his hands down his face with a sigh and he reached out to me but I made no move to sway from my spot. I understood his frustration and worry- I truly did- but I was trying and right now, there was nothing else that could be used to draw Alastair out. The fact that he didn’t want to accept it did not negate its truth. We were stuck and that was the only way out.

“I didn’t mean to insult you,” he stood to his feet once he realized I wasn’t going to him and came to me instead.

“You have to think about this, Camilla. This isn’t a game anymore, there are lives and people at risk. If this plan fails, you will die and everyone in this palace with you.”

“If I die then you can be king,” I joked but his mouth didn’t as much as twitch. He didn’t find it amusing at all. “We need to act fast, Ryker, he will notice sooner or later that the kids are gone and he will search for them. We have no way to reach them there and if anything happens, we will never know.”

He framed my cheeks with his hands and leaned down to kiss me softly. “I know, believe me, I do. I thought about sending them away every second of the night and I wondered if it was the right thing to do but we are keeping them safe and that is all that matters. We can handle things from our end and we will. They’ll be back soon.”

“Okay, what do we do now?”

“Now, we ask for reinforcements. I sent a letter to Damien a few days ago asking if he could spare some men. If we kill Alastair, we will be declaring war on the vampires. That is a battle that I don’t think anyone is ready for. We will need everything and everyone we can muster.”

“Do you think he will come?”

“I hope so, I never got a response but then again, Damien was never good at responding to letters. He will come maybe today or maybe tomorrow. But I will not feel

comfortable attacking Alastair until we have all our defenses in place. That would be a rash and immature move.”

“You’re right,” I whispered and for the first time, the corner of his lips tipped up.

12:42 Mon, 5 Feb

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“I am always right. You just need to calm down a little.”

He leaned down to k i s s me again and I wrapped my arms around his n e c k to deepen it. With everything that was going on, I couldn’t remember the last time I just melted into his arms and enjoyed his presence. The heat from Ryker’s skin felt like bliss against mine. When I moaned into his mouth, I felt the c o r n e r of his lips pull up. Someone else. would have called what we were doing unhealthy. We were using each other to forget but I didn’t care. I wanted him i n every way, shape and form I could get. He was a healthy coping mechanism and one that I was not going to apologize for.

Ryker lifted me by my waist and placed me atop his new desk. It was cold in c o n t r a s t to the heat that was radiating off him. His hands wrapped into my hair and he tugged sharply eliciting a small gasp from me which he drowned out a s his tongue slipped into my mouth. His hands leisurely ran down my body not removing my clothes but burning a path on my bare skin regardless. I wanted to rid myself of the barriers between us. I wanted to feel his skin on mine but when I reached up to touch his shirt, Ryker grabbed both of my hands and p i n n e d them by my side.

“Just let me enjoy you,” he whispered against my lips. “Let me k i s s you for hours on end until I forget where you start and where I end. Just stay with me in this moment, will you?”

“Yes,” the answer was quick and it flowed from my lips easily, “Anything.”

He nudged my knees apart with his leg and stepped between them. He had b o t h of my hands pinned behind my back with one hand while the other trailed t o the small of my back and he pulled me flush against him. Our centers touch e d and I hissed out in pleasure. Ryker moved his hips slowly against mine as he pulled his lips from mine to plaster warm and wet k i s s i n g down my n e c k and to my exposed torso over my bodice.

“I thought you said just k i s s i n g,” my words were barely over a breathy whisper and I felt his lips quirk.

“I did, I just never said where.”

He rocked his hips into me with purpose as his lips continued to trail a path of fire on my skin. He had barely even touched me but I felt like I was losing my mind. I thought I was going crazy and there was nothing or no one that could bring me back to reality. Just as I was getting lost in the movements, I heard a knock on the door. Ryker stilled for a second before choosing to ignore it in favor of k i s s i n g my l i p s once more.

The knocking came again, a little louder this time and Ryker cursed as he pulled back. “Someone better be f\*cking dying.”

He stepped back and admired me for a second. I could only imagine how wanted I looked with swollen lips that probably matched his, my skin flushed red and my hair a mess. He closed his eyes as if wanting to savor the image before turning and opening

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the door slightly so I was obstructed from view.

I saw the exact moment that his shoulders tensed and I knew that whatever we had started here would need to be continued later. I slowly let myself down from the table and righted my clothes in time for Ryker to turn around and hold out his hand for me which I didn't hesitate before taking. The guard in front of us led us down the hallways until we got to the front of the palace. I didn't know what we were looking for at first until I saw him. He was one of the guards that had gone with Christine and the girls. He didn't look unharmed so I chose to take it as a good sign.

“Did they arrive safely?” I asked and he opened his mouth but closed it again promptly. Fear gripped at my chest. “What happened?”

“He knew about our plan. He came so fast. He sent me back to tell you what happened. We tried to fight them but-”



His words were cut off when Ryker stormed over to him and grabbed the collar of his shirt. "What are you saying?"

"The vampire king has all of them."

## **The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 125**

### **Chapter 125**

#### **CAMILLA'S P.O.V**

It took a second for those words to register in my head. I blinked a few times trying to realize if he had said what I thought he had. Ryker snapped out of his haze faster than I did because by the time I came around, he was barking orders at people. I couldn't hear much save for the ringing in my ears. It was so loud that I wanted to pull my ears out but I knew that wouldn't go over well.

"Camilla," Ryker turned to me but his voice sounded garbled, almost like he was under water. He stood directly in my line of vision forcing me to meet his eyes. "I need you to go inside. Stay with your guards. Can you do that?"

"He has the girls and Christine," I repeated dumbly and he nodded.

There were a lot of emotions swirling through his eyes and I could very well see that he was a second away from shifting. He was fighting to get his wolf under control and yet he still took his time to try calming me down. Ryker had always been the better one of us, he was fiercer and he worked better under pressure. When he saw that I wasn't leaving, he grabbed my shoulders and physically moved me towards the door. Once I was within the safety of the palace walls, he turned on his heels and disappeared.

I think it was his leaving that finally snapped me out of my reverie and the severity of the situation finally settled on me. I muttered a curse under my breath and turned to follow him but he was already gone. My heart was pounding wildly in my chest as I thought of all the

possible things that he could be doing to them. I tried not to think about how terrified the girls would be. I knew there was nothing I could do outside so I rushed into my office.

I rushed into my office and grabbed the notebook where I had been making notes about everything we found out regarding Alastair. There was no force on earth that was going to make me wait this out. He had my daughters and I would be damned if I allowed the week end with them still in his grasp. I went over everything we knew to see what I could use then I penned down a letter for Damien. I needed his armies here as soon as possible. I wasn't sure how he would react to the news about Christine. I wasn't sure what the relationship between them was but I simply hoped that for her sake, he would be here soon.

Once I had sent the letter, I turned to return to the palace but I saw Alara watching me carefully. I stopped in my tracks and met her eyes making her flush pink and look away. I still remembered what I saw in Ryker's office but now was not the time to dwell on it and I had more important things to focus on. I started to walk away but she rushed towards me and stopped directly in my tracks. I raised a brow in her direction and a small pink hue grew on her cheeks.

"Your majesty," she bowed and it took everything for me to not just walk away from her. "I just wanted to apologize for what happened a few days ago. That was never my intention. It was simply a misunderstanding and-"

"Is there anything else?" I cut her off and I saw her flinch from the harshness of my voice.

"No,"

"Good, then you can leave."

I didn't care that I was being rude, the last thing I wanted to do was talk with her. I had more important things to handle like my kids being taken by one of the most psychopathic men I had ever come across. Hurt flashed through her eyes but she said nothing as she bowed and walked away. As soon as she had left, I let out a sigh of relief. There wasn't much I could do on my end save from running right into Alastair's hands and as much as I wanted to do that, I was smart enough to know from the first time that it was reckless so I did the next best thing- I called for Caius.

“What do you mean that he has them?” Caius asked and I pinched the bridge of my nose before responding. I didn’t know how much clearer he wanted me to make things. I had already explained it the best I could.

“He took them while they were leaving to safety. I don’t want the other elders to know yet but now would be a good time for you to give me some brilliant idea. I don’t know when Ryker will return but I am not letting the sun set without doing something to find them.”

Caius looked confused at best but he nodded. I saw the wheels turning in his head and it was obvious that he was coming to the same conclusion that I was. There wasn’t much that he or I could do and I hated it. I hadn’t wanted to face that reality which was why I had called for him. I hoped that maybe I was just too close to it and couldn’t see other alternatives.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered softly. “The only option would be to send a rescue team to get them but he is probably expecting that and will anticipate their arrival. I don’t know what else to do,”

I let out a sigh and ran my hands through my hair. It was a mass of curls around my face and if it were any other day, I would have panicked because it was very un-queen like but right now, I didn’t care.

A guard appeared at the door to the council room and I immediately knew that Ryker was back.

I rushed out to see if he had any luck but as soon as I saw him, I knew. I hadn’t realized just how much time had passed until I got out and saw the dark sky. His clothes were dirty and I could feel the anger and disappointment rolling off him in

waves.

“I found the place where he took them,” he said carefully as if trying to decide what he should say and what he shouldn’t. “He killed the horses, there was a lot of blood but as far as I know, none of it belongs to them. The trail went cold a few miles off from there but it wasn’t headed towards the cave.”

“It wasn’t?” I asked and he shook his head.

That was weird. I would have expected him to go straight to his cave for safety but the fact that he didn't meant that this was about something else. I thought deeply about it and it hit me like a freight train.

"This is about revenge right," I asked and Ryker's brows scrunched up in confusion as he watched me carefully but he nodded. "He would want to take this to the very same place where he lost the first time."

"I'm not following."

"He might have gone to the place where my father took him down the first time," I explained and his eyes widened as understanding filled his features. "I don't remember exactly where that is of course but I can always check. I think he noted it down in one of his books."

Ryker grabbed my cheeks with both hands. "You are bloody brilliant."

I smiled for the first time today and opened my mouth to speak when the sound of hooves cut through the air. It was loud and fast that Ryker pushed me behind me in a protective stance. A horse was heading straight for the palace and the collective shock had everyone freezing before quickly forming a protective stance around the entrance. A few of them had their spears pointed at the driver and I tried to peer over Ryker's shoulders to see who it was.

"Ryker, move," I mumbled as I tried to look over his shoulder but he wasn't budging. I managed to peer over his side and I instantly recognized the rider. "Stop, it's Damien."

He turned to me in confusion. "I wasn't expecting him until tomorrow."

"I sent him a letter. I explained what happened. He must have been closer than we thought for him to get it and be here by now." Ryker frowned but he stepped aside for me to pass and I spoke to the guards. "Stand down, he is an ally."

As soon as the words left my lips, the guards put down their weapons. Damien had a cloth thrown around his face probably as protection from the wind. He threw it off and dismounted the horse. I looked around for any sign of his army but didn't see them. I didn't care at that moment because it was a relief to see him. I crossed the length of the hall and threw my hands

around  
his mid section and he hesitated for a second before embracing me back.

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“Thank you for coming,” I whispered and I felt him nod tensely before I moved back. “Do you want a room to-”

“When was Christine taken?” he asked and I froze. “I got your letter a few hours ago. I left the army and came here. They should be here soon though. I want to know what you have planned to get her back.”

“I think I might know where he took them-”

“Good, figure it out so that we can leave now.”

I was taken aback by his words. I had expected concern but not this- there was real fear in his eyes. I turned back to look at Ryker who had come closer and was now listening to the conversation with something akin to a frown on his face. He took in the entire scene with his usual watchful eyes.

“Where is Riley, Damien?” he asked the other man.

“I left her at home but this isn’t about her, this is about Christine. We can’t leave her there so you either figure out where she is and we leave tonight or I’ll go on my own but either way, I’m not letting the sun rise without doing anything.”

## **The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 126**

### Chapter 126

#### **CAMILLA’S P.O.V**

Ryker calmed Damien down while I just sat in my office scrolling through the books mildly shocked by what had happened. I knew there was something between them but I couldn’t wrap my head around it. Damien was mated or at least about to mate with Riley, the last thing he needed was to be having

that kind of outburst about another woman. It didn't matter that a part of me wanted them together, I wasn't going to do that to Riley. She deserved better.

Ryker walked into my office about an hour after leaving with Damien and he looked frustrated. I opened my mouth to speak but no words would come out. I had never seen him so put off in a long time and I didn't blame him. He already had so much to deal with and the last thing he needed was to be worried about Damien and his sister's relationship.

"Tell me the truth," he began slowly and I turned to him. "You saw him out there, didn't you?" I nodded. "Did that look like a man who was ready to be mated to my sister?"

"I can't-"

"Yes you can," he cut me off. "Answer the question because I need to know what the fuck is happening. I need to know what the hell kind of mess is going to come out of this and how I am going to fix it. How do I tell my sister that the man she is in love with might quite possibly love someone else?"

"It might just be the mate bond."

"Then why doesn't he break it?"

I couldn't answer that because I had asked myself the same question over and over again. I didn't have the answers he was searching for and the painful part was that I was also searching for them. I needed those answers as much as he did. It wasn't just him who had something to lose- I did too.

"I found the place," I decided that changing the subject was a better idea. "He didn't say much about it but I tried to piece it together from other entries. All he said was they went into the woods but at other times, he spoke about going to a waterfall with Alastair. I think that might be where he is waiting with them."

Ryker ran his hands down the face. "I will brief the men. Damien was right about one thing, we cannot let them be with him until tomorrow. We need to get them out tonight and it might be dangerous so we need to set out the plan now. If we make one wrong move then we lose."

I nodded. "I'll get ready then."

I went to change because I knew that I was walking into a war and a dress was not the right attire. I changed into my riding leathers and grabbed the night lock berries from Christine's room. I didn't take them immediately and instead stuffed them into my pocket. While Ryker briefed the guards I figured it would be a good idea to talk to Damien and see what I could get out of him.

I made my way to his door and knocked but there was no answer. I tried again and pushed it open only to see the room completely empty. I walked in calling out his name but there was no answer. I was about to turn around and leave when I saw a note on the table. It held one sentence but that was enough to have me cursing and taking off in Ryker's direction.

"He's gone," I yelled out once I was close enough and Ryker turned to me in confusion. "It is Damien, he left a note and he is gone."

Ryker took the note from me and read the words: I'm sorry, I couldn't just sit around and do nothing.

He muttered a curse under his breath and turned to the guards. "Ready the horses, we leave now." Ryker turned to me. "You can stay here if you want. We don't have a plan and there is a possibility that this is going to go to shit."

"If we do this then we do it together," I reminded him and he nodded. I could tell it wasn't what he wanted but at least he wasn't forcing me to stay in.

Within minutes, we were out and on our way towards the waterfall. We tracked Damien's scent in that direction as well and I knew for a fact that he probably overheard Ryker and I talking and decided to take it upon himself to play the hero. It was incredibly stupid as well as brave and for a brief moment, I understood how Ryker felt whenever he had to deal with me. It was dark but we kept moving using only the moon as light.

Once we could hear the waterfall, we stopped. I turned to address the guards. "We have to go on foot from here. Vampires have better hearing than us and right now, the

y might not be able to hear the horses over the waterfall but if we get closer, they might be able to.”

Everyone understood and instantly dismounted. Ryker split everyone up into three groups and spread them out to attack from different parts. We went with the first group and went straight ahead. As we got a little closer, I saw Damien’s horse tied to a tree. At least he was in the right place. We stayed close to the trees and the mud to hide our scent and I prayed to the goddess that Damien hadn’t been hurt.

“Stop,” Ryker whispered harshly all of a sudden and everyone froze. “I think I can hear something.”

Everyone went quiet and I took out the berries in my pocket and popped them in my

mouth just in case it was a vampire. I heard shuffling from the right and I thought it was a vampire too, at least until Damien came rushing out of the woods with his weapon raised. Ryker was quick to intercept it and had his friend pinned against the tree.

“Are you fucking crazy?” he yelled in his face. “What were you thinking when you came out here on your own?”

“I was helping,” Damien spat and I could tell that Ryker wanted nothing more than to bash his face in. “I already know where he is keeping them. I was on my way in when I heard the noise.”

“We had a plan and you just ran out and ruined it,” Ryker pushed him back. “Well then, since you wanted to be so brave, tell us what the hell you found out.”

“He has a few vampires guarding the waterfall. I think he has them inside of it, there is a cave. I can’t see in so I don’t know if he has more men inside.”

“How were you planning to get through them?” Ryker asked but he stayed silent. “You’re an Alpha now, act like it, and when this is over, there is a lot that we have to talk about.”

“As long as we save them, I’ll answer whatever question you have.”



That seemed to be enough for Ryker because he turned his back on him and faced the guards. One thing I loved about Ryker was how easy it was for him to think on his feet. In less than a minute after hearing that from Damien, he had come up with a plan and he shared it with all the guards. Once everyone was briefed, Ryker and I stepped out into the clearing.

Just like Damien had said, here were a few guards there, I could count about four of them. As soon as they saw us, their lips curled up in sneers.

“It took you long enough,” one of them drawled as he came closer to us. “Put your weapons down and we will take you to our king.”

“Why don’t you bring me my cousin and daughters and we can leave and pretend like this never happened,” I offered up with a small smile and he frowned deeply. “You took what was mine and I only want it back.”

“You have no negotiating rights here. You came to us and in case you have forgotten, we have the upper hand here. You and your mate cannot take all of us so I don’t think that is going to happen.”

“I’m not going with you.”

“We can just take you anyway.”

“We both know that’s not going to be possible.”

“And why is that?”

“Because you’re on my turf now.”

He rushed towards me but I already had my plan in motion. As soon as he was close enough, I pulled a tugged the water from the river beneath the waterfall, and knocked him off his balance. In a second, Ryker had cut his head off with his sword.

“Your king probably forgot that I excel in this terrain.” I turned to the other vampires with a smile. “Who wants to go next?”

## **The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 127-129**

## CAMILLA'S P.O.V

They seemed to realize that this wasn't going to be as easy as they thought but that didn't stop them from blindly charging. This time however, they charged towards Ryker. We had already anticipated that because no sooner than they did, the other guards burst out of the woods in their wolf form. The distraction was all we needed to run in between them and dive into the river. Damien was hot on our heels as we swam towards the inside of the cave.

We burst out on the other end and I was shocked at how empty it was. I had expected to see an entire army of vampires but there were only three of them. Two stood next to Christine and the girls while the other was Alastair. I ignored the king in favor of my children and I ran my eyes over them to check for any obvious signs of injury. They looked relatively unharmed but Christine had crusted blood on the side of her head and she was shivering.

"Christine," her head snapped up at the sound of Damien's voice and I saw many emotions go through her at the speed of light. She stared at him with wide eyes and the relief in them was palpable.

"What a beautiful reunion," Alastair drawled drawing everyone's attention back to him. "I thought you would be here sooner but it doesn't matter. Now that you are here, please join us. Keep in mind that any funny business will result in the death of one of those three and I can tell that they mean so much to you."

"I'm not playing your game, Alastair," I told him as I got out of the water. He raised his brows in an almost challenging manner. "You don't get to touch my kids. They aren't a part of this."

"Everyone in your line became fair game when your father stabbed me in the back," he spat. "Do you know he did it right here? I was the one who found the place. I picked it because the water countered his fire powers. I should have chosen somewhere else considering the water is your domain but sentimentality trumps it all, I guess."

He waved his hands dismissively and gestured to a gathering of rocks.

"Sit or not, I don't care but we are going to talk and if we come to a fair agreement, your kids and cousin can go."

“What if we don’t?” Ryker threatened and he smiled widely revealing pointed fangs.

“Let us hope it doesn’t come to that. My men over there are new vampires, they cannot exactly control the blood lust. If one of them happens to take a bite, I don’t think they will be able to stop,” he made a sad face that was obviously faked and exaggerated. “Now, are you ready for us to talk?”

I already knew he was going to do something like this and so did Ryker because his expression was carefully blank but Damien looked pissed. He was a loose cannon and I couldn’t predict him and that was scary in this kind of situation.

“We will rather stand,” I said finally and Alastair shrugged as if to say ‘suit yourself’. I turned to Christine. “Are you okay?”

She didn’t speak but she gave me a subtle nod. My eyes met Audrey who had her eyes closed. I wasn’t sure if she was sleeping but I genuinely hoped so because the last thing she needed was to witness this entire thing.

Once I was satisfied that my family was okay, I turned back to Alastair. “What do you want? You have us here now. Do you want the deal that my father cheated you out of? If that was what you wanted then taking my family wasn’t the right way to

“It was my aim at first but now, I have decided that I want something else,” he took a step closer and Ryker let out a warning growl! It only seemed to edge him on more because although he didn’t move, he smiled and turned to face him. “You’re the one who killed my advisor, aren’t you? I suppose I should hold a grudge for that but he was well overdue to die. Thank you for that actually”

I realized in that moment that Alastair was not like any enemy we had faced. He was genuinely insane and he had nothing to lose, that was what made him so dangerous. He had lived for thousands of years and he had learned how not to form

“Do you know her name? My beloved, I mean.” he asked and I shook my head. “I gathered as much. I don’t think you’ve heard my entire story, Camilla, would you like me to tell you?”

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“We don’t want to-“Damien began but I cut him off with a sharp glare.

“Let’s make a deal. We will sit through your story and not interrupt and you give me my daughters.”

“I’ll give you the baby,” he countered and I realized it was the best I was going to get from him so I nodded.

“You have a deal.”

He clapped his hands in glee before taking a seat atop a jagged rock.

“I’m sure you have heard of how she died and I tried to bring her back in exchange for my soul. What you didn’t know was the true nature of the vampire curse. Because I had risked so much for a woman, the gods decided to curse me for it. Every few years, there would be another witch woman born, she was my lover reincarnated. It went on for a millennium and each time I would be cursed to watch her have the same brutal and tragic end where she died with her lover. Do you want to know how I stopped it?”

I nodded.

“I killed her myself,” I wasn’t expecting that answer from him. “When the moon goddess saw what I had done, she knew I had become the monster she truly feared. She warned me of a time where she would raise one powerful enough to stop me. I suppose she meant you. I thought it was you father. When he fed me the night lock berries, I thought he was going to kill me but he didn’t. I see now that she was talking about you.”

“Are you asking me to kill you?” I asked and he laughed.

“No, you foolish girl, I am asking you to join me,” he stood to his feet. “Think about it, when have the gods ever helped us? If they cared about you they would have taken me out long ago. I took your family, I have terrorized you for months. I even sent some spies to your mate’s sister to feed her poisoned berries.”

Damien growled. “You fucking bastard.”

I shot a quick glance at Ryker who grabbed Damien by the shoulders and stopped him from attacking Alastair. I could tell that even Ryker was debating attacking him but we all knew that was exactly what he wanted. If he were to strike now, he would die.

“You did all of that so that I would join you?” I asked again and he nodded.

“We will be unstoppable together. With your powers and my long life, I could turn you and we will be the most powerful people on the planet. You cannot tell me that it doesn’t sound the least bit enticing.”

“If I join you, will you

let all of them go?” I asked and he nodded. “Okay then, I agree to your terms.”

“No!” Damien, Ryker and Christine yelled all at once but I ignored them.

Ryker tried to reach out for me but I brought up a wall of water to separate him from me. I took Alastair’s outstretched hand and I shivered at how cold it was.

“If you planned for any funny business, this is a good time to remind you of how fast I move,” he whispered in my ear but I kept my face immobile.

“Release my family first,” I ordered and he let out an exasperated sigh before waving his hands.

The vampires dragged Christine and Audrey to their feet and pushed them into the water. Alastair laughed as I immediately tugged on the water to carry them out to safety. I turned to him with anger in my eyes but he didn’t seem the least bit fazed, in fact, he looked very proud of himself.

“That wasn’t part of our deal. They could have died.”

“That would have been on you,” he shrugged. “Now, say goodbye to your mate.”

Before I could let out another word, he bit me.

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I felt the blinding pain first and I wondered if my plan had gone to shit but then Alastair froze and began to convulse. He fell backwards and his eyes held intense hatred as they stared at me. The berries had worked just as I had planned. The other two vampires seemed to realize what was happening and they started in my direction but I slammed the entire force of the river into them and held them there long enough for Ryker to leap over and sever their heads.

Once they were dead, I turned back to Alastair. "I don't want to kill you but I would be damned if my children have to deal with you too."

Ryker came up to me and handed me the sword.

"For what it is worth, we could have been great allies," those were my last words before I drove the sword into his throat and just like that, the infamous vampire king was gone. I looked down at the body and couldn't even bring myself to feel an ounce of pity for him. "We should get out of here. The vampires will have to regroup without him."

Ryker and I walked out of the cave together to where Damien had taken our family out to safety. He was on his knees in front of Christine and the way he looked at her, that wasn't an innocent look at all

I noticed that the guards had slaughtered all the vampires save for one. I made my way over to him and dropped Alastair's severed head at his feet.

"I don't want to deal with you anymore and I am sure you feel the same way. If you do not bother the wolves then we do not bother you. We don't need to be at peace, we just need a ceasefire. Do we have a deal?"

He sneered at me but knew better than to refuse because he nodded. "Yes, we have a deal."

"Good, now get out."

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

242%

You could not have pulled Damien away from Christine even if you tried and believe me- we tried. He was determined to stay by her side and he never let go of her, not even for us to look over her and make sure she was fine. She looked relatively unhurt and she told us she was good but I still wanted a professional to look after her just in case. She rode with Damien back to the palace while Ryker and I got the girls who were wide awake but her quieted down and were not saying a single word.

By the time we got to the palace, the sun was beginning to rise and I was shocked when I noticed who was waiting for us. I glanced over at Ryker to see if he had noticed her as well and his jaw was set. There was relief in her eyes when she saw us but that relief quickly turned into hurt when she looked past us and saw Damien and Christine. She stared and blinked twice before disappearing back into the palace and it was at that moment that I knew I was done with everything.

With Aurora in my hands, I made my way over to Damien. "You better have a fucking good explanation because you are about to blow this entire thing to filth."

"I don't need to explain anything to-"

"Yes you do," I cut him off. "You aren't playing with toys, Damien, you are playing with people- with lives and you have the rest of the morning to get your story together and figure out what the hell it is that you want because this afternoon, you have to give answers."

He looked pissed but he said nothing because he must have finally come to terms with the fact that I outranked him and I reserved the right to order him around however I saw fit. He nodded tensely and he made to go forward with Christine but I held out a hand to stop him.

"She goes alone," I ordered and he opened his mouth to protest but then Ryker was instantly by my side.

"You have done enough for today, Damien, Christine goes with us and she goes alone. Why don't you focus on fixing whatever it is that you just broke with Riley."

"There is nothing to fix, I did nothing wrong."

“Do you really believe that or are you just saying that to make yourself feel better?” I asked and thankfully, he didn’t answer.

We led Christine into the palace and she was completely quiet. She stayed close to us but she never said a single word. I looked her over and there was just pure exhaustion on her face.

“Why don’t you go freshen up?” I asked once we got to the top of the stairs. “I just need to clean up the girls and then I’ll be with you, okay?”

“You don’t have to come and check on me. I’m fine, just focus on your kids.”

“I know you are, but it doesn’t matter. I’ll be there in an hour or so.”

When she realized I was not going to budge, she nodded and I could see the ghost of a smile on her face. Whether she wanted to admit it or not, she wanted to be cared for, she just didn’t know how to ask for it. Ryker and I left her side and focused on our girls. I was thankful that Aurora was a child meaning there was a huge likelihood that she would not remember what happened but Audrey was older and she had already been through one traumatic thing. I didn’t want to think about what this could do to her.

We didn’t ask her any questions about the vampires because we didn’t want her thinking about it yet but as soon as I started to bathe her, the words began pouring out. She told me how they stopped them and whispered that they weren’t going to hurt them. She told me how she was blindfolded then given something so she would fall asleep and the next thing she knew, she woke up in the water.

“I’m sorry” I whispered trying to keep the tears at bay. “That must have been so terrifying and I am so sorry that I couldn’t stop it.”

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“I wasn’t scared,” she said finally and I raised my brows.

“You weren’t?”



She shook her head. "You have water powers. I knew you would save me. I wasn't scared at all."

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I couldn't explain how those simple words brought tears into my eyes and I pulled her into a tight hug which she wasted no time in reciprocating. Once she was clean, I put her into a comfortable nightdress and carried her to bed. She already started falling asleep in my arms and for the first time since she was an infant, I held her until she fell asleep. Ryker met me holding her, he had Aurora in his hands because he had cleaned her up.

Together we held our daughters for far longer than necessary before finally placing them in their respective rooms.

Once we were sure that they were sleeping, we quietly made our way outside. I had barely shut the door before Ryker spoke. "How bad do you think this is going to be?"

I knew he wasn't referring to the issue with the vampires. "Honestly, I don't know. From the get go, I knew it was a recipe for disaster but it seems worse now because Damien cannot seem to make up his mind."

He smiled sadly. "He has always been like that, wanting to eat his cake and have it too. I can talk to him if you want."

"Later and we will both do it," I cut him off. "For now, I just want to get cleaned and see my cousin. Goddess knows what is going on in her mind right now."

It took me another half hour to get cleaned and make my way into Christine's room. I was in a flowing white nightdress when I knocked on her door and it took her five minutes to open it. I knew she was debating whether or not she should bother but I was relieved when she did. She led me over to her bed and as I looked around, I realized that I didn't enter her room much- perhaps that was something that needed to be rectified.

"What is going on?" I asked softly and as soon as the words left my mouth, she broke down in tears.

I was stunned because Christine did not cry, she was the strongest woman I knew and yet she had been reduced to a blubbering mess. I wasted no time in pulling her closer for a hug and she leaned into me for comfort.

“I feel like such a terrible person,” she mumbled into my shoulder.

“You’re not, you didn’t ask for all of this. You are the most selfless person that I know. You have done so much for us even without us asking. You are not a bad person.”

“Yes I am,” she pulled back and wiped at her tears. “I should have rejected him myself when I knew he wasn’t going to do it. I should have tried to put an end to this but I didn’t because I wanted him to change his mind.”

I stilled. “What do you mean?”

“I tried to be happy for them, I swear I did, but a part of me hoped that he would look at me and change his mind. A part of me hoped that he would see that I was good for him, you know. I wanted what you and Ryker have and I know that doesn’t make it any better but I wasn’t thinking”

“Christine,” I began slowly and she sniffled. “It is not crazy or wrong of you to want to be loved and I don’t blame you for that. You cannot take the sole blame for this because you never went out of your way to try to sway his decision. Damien is the one who got into a relationship with Riley and he is the one responsible for being faithful to her.”

I didn’t know if I was being biased just because of who she was to me but I didn’t care. I wasn’t going to let her shoulder the blame for this. She was not at fault. She tried her best to stay out of their way and she didn’t deserve any of this.

“I’m just tired” she said after a beat of silence. “I am trying to imagine how Riley feels and I just feel so sad for her?”

“That shouldn’t be your concern right now. What you need is to rest because after what you have been through, you deserve it, okay?”

She nodded and was silent before asking “Can you stay with me please?”

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“Of course, you don’t have to ask.”

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I sat by the headrest while she lay her head on my lap and I stroked her hair softly until she fell asleep. Even after she was sleeping, I couldn’t bring myself to leave just yet because I knew how much she needed that comfort.

By the time I finally left her room, I was drop dead exhausted and I could barely see ahead of me. I got to my room expecting Ryker to be asleep but he wasn’t. He was pacing by the door and as soon as he saw me, he let out a sigh of relief. I opened my mouth to start explaining what I knew but he stopped me.

“You have spent the entire night comforting people, let me comfort you for once, okay?” he said and I nodded. “Good, we can talk about all of this later. I know it is a cluster fuck right now but you need to realize that we cannot do anything about it. This is between the three of them and the best we can do is offer advice.”

“I know, I just don’t want to see anyone hurt,” I mumbled as he led me towards the bed. “There are at least two people hurting tonight as a result of this.”

“I know, baby, but the thing is, this is a matter of the heart, we would be lucky if any of them gets out of it unscathed.”

## Chapter 129

RYKER’S P.O.V

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Damien had been a permanent fixture in my life from the first day that I could remember. He always did things his way regardless of whether I agreed with it or not. We were very different, both on the surface and in every way

that think of. There were times that his actions would piss me off but never to this magnitude. It took a considerable amount of

could

effort to not drag him by the hair and beat him to a bloody pulp while we all sat in the private living room.

For the first time in forever, Riley didn't make an effort to sit next to him. She was always in his space and begging to be noticed by him. It was a wonder I didn't notice it earlier but today, she did none of that. She sat on one end of the room, Christine on the other and Damien sat completely alone. At least he had the decency to keep his head down because he knew that he had fucked up badly.

"Does anyone want to start talking first?" Camilla asked from her spot beside me. She was seated upright with her hands folded in her lap like a regal ruler. Everyone avoided her gaze.

Damien's eyes met mine and I simply stared at him blankly until he exhaled deeply. He knew I was pissed, there was no hiding it. It didn't matter that I was lounging on the couch with my arms around my mate, that was simply a countermeasure to prevent me from hitting him.

"Do we really have to do this?" it was Riley who asked. "There is nothing to talk about. I just want to go back home and get to work. I have so much to do."

"If that were true then why did you come?" I asked and she narrowed her eyes at me. "If you were swamped with so much work then why did you bother to leave?"

"Because," she hesitated and I raised a brow. "I heard that you were all in danger and I wanted to help. I got to the camp and they told me that he had run off without an explanation so I came. It isn't a big deal. Everyone is safe, can I leave now?"

She started to rise but I shot her a hard glare. "Sit the fuck down, now."

I had never raised my voice to Riley, not even when she was a teenager and she was the brattiest person in the world. I always believed in talking to her gently and after spending years with a father who did nothing but scream and

yell, I was determined to be different but if yelling was what I needed to do in order to get to the bottom of this then I was more than happy to oblige.

She sat down but her eyes burned with anger and unshed tears. “This is none of your concern, Ryker. This is my life and my business and I don’t see why you are so interested in it. Are the problems in yours not enough for you? Why do you want to barge into mine?”

“That’s not what he is trying to do,” Camilla spoke softly. “This isn’t just about you anymore, Riley. This is about all of you and it affects us as well. The pack is basically an extension of the palace, we will see you sooner or later and we don’t want this to affect anything.”

“If this is about professionalism then I can be professional,” Riley shot back and Camilla turned to me as if to say this was going nowhere.

“Look, Riley, no one is upset with you,” I cut in because I knew my sister and I knew that was probably her biggest worry. “You did nothing wrong, this is about Damien and his inability to make a fucking choice.”

In hindsight, I probably should not have said that out loud but I was not going to let my sister shoulder the blame for something that she had no say in. She didn’t choose who she fell in love with and she didn’t choose for him to have another mate. Damien was responsible for the chaos that was happening and it only made sense that he should shoulder the blame. “That’s just rich,” he scoffed. “Put it all on me, would you? I was just trying to get her to safety. I came to help just like you asked and now I am the one at fault? If I knew this was going to happen, I would never have come. I thought I was doing the

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right thing.”

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“We both know that wasn’t your thought process at that time,” Camilla whispered and he turned to her and opened his mouth to speak but when I let out a warning growl, he went silent. I could tolerate his absurd yelling but if he directed it at my mate for even a second, I was going to kill him and he knew it.

He ran his hands down his face. “Look, I made my choice, a long time ago. I chose Riley and we were going to mate with each other. This is not as big of a deal as you are making it out to be.”

I glanced over at Christine to see how she was taking the news. She sat like a marble statue and if I didn’t know her, I would have believed her to be a sculpture. She stared blankly ahead of her but ever so often, I would see a crack in that mask and see the hurt in her eyes. I wished I could protect her from whatever was happening but I couldn’t. No matter how this ended, someone was going to get hurt.

“Why didn’t you reject her then?” Riley yelled out in frustration. Everyone turned to her in shock but I just sighed deeply. I knew an outburst was coming but I didn’t know when. “You tell me that you made your choice and I am the one you want but your mate bond with her is still intact. Are you keeping her as a backup option?”

“I am no one’s back up choice,” Christine cut in speaking for the very first time.

“Then why?” I wasn’t sure if she was asking them or asking herself. “I thought I could do this but I can’t. I need to know.”

Damien stood from his spot and made his way over to Riley. He took the spot next to her and reached out for her but she shied away from him.

“Riley,” he began slowly. “I’m sorry that I made you feel like a choice. There is no choice, it has always been you. This is just a large miscommunication and if it makes you happy then I will reject her.”

“I don’t want you to do it because it makes me happy. I want you to do it because you want to.”

I glanced over at Christine and mind linked her. “You don’t have to stay for this.”

“That would defeat the entire purpose of the meeting, would it not? You need to close the chapter and my leaving would hinder that. I am fine, Ryker, but thank you for checking in on me.”

“Christine, you don’t have to pretend and you don’t have to keep hurting yourself by staying here.”

“I want what belongs to another. I brought this upon myself.”

She severed the mind link before I could say anything else and I turned to see that Damien still hadn’t spoken or moved since Riley had said what she wanted. There were a million thoughts running through his head and I could almost see the wheels turning.

“Let me make this easy on all of you,” Christine began as she stood to her feet. “I reject you as my mate, Damien. I would not want to be a hindrance to your love story.” She turned to Camilla and I. “May I be excused?”

I had barely nodded when she stormed out of the room. No one dared to speak after she had gone. Damien stared at the door that she had disappeared through and there was hurt shining brightly in his eyes. Riley didn’t miss it because she scoffed.

“I think I’m done with this too,” she stood to her feet and rushed out immediately after. What hurt the most was that Damien didn’t even try to follow her.

I turned to Camilla only to find her looking at me and I could see the silent questions in her eyes. Had we made things much worse? Did we just potentially hurt all three of them? I was asking myself the same questions but before I came to a conclusion, I wanted to speak to Damien. I communicated that with my eyes and she sighed before standing to her feet and leaving.

## Chapter 129

Once she was gone and it was just Damien and I, I began speaking. “Do you know why I made

you Alpha?”

“It was because I was your Beta and the next in command.”

“No, it wasn’t,” I said and his brows furrowed in confusion. “In all honesty, Riley should have been the Alpha because she was next in line but she was too young to shoulder that kind of responsibility and she was a free spirit. It would have hindered her and broken her wings.”

“So I was the next available candidate, that is what I said.”

“You didn’t let me finish. I made you Alpha because although I knew it wasn’t the right time for Riley, I knew she would make a good ruler. I also knew how she felt about you and in some warped part of my mind, I had hoped that by making you Alpha, I would ensure that she would rule too.”

“I already chose her, she will rule. I don’t see what this is about anymore.”

I pinched the bridge of my nose between my fingers and exhaled deeply.  
“Fatherhood might have made me calm but do not think for one moment that I will not hesitate to kill you if I decide that is necessary. You need to get your shit together, Damien. Riley is my family, long before ever were and long after you cease to be.”

“I raised my sister and I love her like I do my daughters. If you hurt her again, I will kill you and no, it is not a threat, it is a promise. Clean up your act and figure out what you want. If you choose Christine then stick to it and if you choose Riley then stick to it. Just know that whatever choices you make will have consequences and you better be ready to deal with them. as they come.”