

## The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 176-181

Chapter 176

RYKER'S P.O.V

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*It was like there were two warring parts of me. One side wanted to step back and allow Camilla make her choices, allow her do the thing she thought to be right which included healing Briggs despite the repercussions it might have on her. The other part of me wanted to protect her from everything and everyone- including herself, especially herself. She didn't realize it yet but she was her own greatest adversary. She put herself in danger more than any foe we had faced and sometimes it scared me.*

*As I watched her pushing a part of herself into Briggs, I had to dig my feet into the ground to prevent from going to her. I never thought that after everything, it would end with us back here. Of all the places for the coven to have stood, it just had to be this place. Sometimes I wondered if the goddess had a sick sense of humor or if the late king was just a meddling asshole who set his own child up for failure. Every single thing almost always came back to him. I wasn't sure how I felt about that.*

*I had to look away from Camilla and my gaze fell on Lyla. She was staring at the scene in front of her with a mixture of sadness and hope. It was almost as if she was staring through them. I cleared my throat and she turned to me.*

*She tried to hide her expression but it was already too late. I had seen what I needed to. She gave me a small smile in an attempt to pretend but when she saw that I wasn't buying it, she sighed.*

*"What are you hiding?" I asked but she shrugged. "This is one of the thin you saw, isn't it?" her silence was enough of an answer for me, especially when she looked away. "How does it end, Lyla? Tell me and I will do everything in my power to prevent it."*

*"If I tell you, it will happen."*

*"It is already happening, I can see it in your eyes. This way, I can prepare for it, I can fix it or at least try to. If you tell me, I will do everything I can. You know I will."*

*She shook her head. "I am bound by my oaths to the goddess. If I say it, I will die. I cannot risk my life like that. Besides, the future is filled with many different paths. This is one of the things I saw, yes, but there are still many roads in the future, there are still many alternate endings."*

*"How many of them end happy?" I asked and she looked away. "How many end with everyone happy and intact? Tell me, Lyla, I deserve to know. On this*

*path that she has taken, what is the likelihood that we all come out alive?"*

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*Her voice was soft, quiet, barely over a whisper that if I wasn't standing so close to her, I would not have heard it. "One."*

*A gasp cut out conversation short and I turned to find Camilla trying to stagger to her feet. On the bed in front of her, Briggs looked healthier, he wasn't breathing as hard and he seemed to be resting peacefully. I rushed over to Camilla and as soon as I reached her, she leaned into me as if it was too much of a strain to hold herself up. Her nose was bleeding and I cursed as I put a handkerchief to it. She was weak and one second away from passing out if I was judging by her drooping eyes.*

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*"Can you hear me?" I asked and she nodded slowly. "I'm going to carry you into the main house, can you stay awake from me until then?" she didn't respond but I didn't need her to. I lifted her bridal style and walked out of the room with Lyla following close behind me. There was a maid in front of Briggs' door and she made to go in when I stopped her. "No one goes in to see him until I say so, am I clear?"*

*To say she was shocked was an understatement but she nodded. "Of course, your majesty, whatever you say."*

*She turned on her heels and walked off. I didn't wait to see where she was going before I rushed towards the main house. Camilla was not speaking at all and I could tell that she was barely awake. I moved on autopilot, the only thoughts going through my mind were about her. By the time I got to the room, she wasn't bleeding anymore but that didn't mean she looked any better.*

*"Is she going to be okay?" I asked Lyla who nodded slowly. "I don't need a half assed answer, I need facts, Lyla. Will she be fine?"*

*"Yes, she will," she sounded more self assured. "She just needs to rest and right now, you are hovering. You aren't doing her any good like this."*

*I realized she was right so despite the war in me, I nodded and took a slow step backwards. I placed a soft kiss on her forehead and watched as her eyes finally drooped closed. It was hard to do nothing but it was what I needed to do. She looked miserable and I didn't want to leave her but I forced my legs to lead me out of the room. It felt like*

*my*

*chest was tightening more with each step I took further away from her.*

*"She will be fine," Lyla said and I hummed. "I cannot tell you much but I can*

tell you that.”

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“I don’t want to talk about that,” I ground out a little more harshly than I would have liked. “If you want to talk to me, then talk about something else. If not, I would much rather sit in silence.”

She was silent for a full minute. I turned away from her pacing the length of the living room. A part of me thought she had actually left until I turned and found her seated on the couch. Her hands were crossed in front of her and

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she was staring at the open fireplace. There was a faraway look in her eyes as if she were here but not here.

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“Did you know that this was where the witches would offer sacrifices?” she asked and I furrowed my brows in confusion, “This very spot where we are staying is where they would stay while the leader would stand by that fireplace and make the sacrifices to the goddess.”

“How do you know that?” I looked around trying to see if there were any carvings or markings that could have told her as such but there was nothing. It was a brand new house.

“I can feel them,” she explained. “That would explain why the witch herself wouldn’t come here. The presence of the witches that died is heavy here.

They are angry and sad, I can almost taste their emotions. If she were to come here, she would run mad or die, or perhaps both.” She turned to me.

“Do you mean to say that you cannot feel it?”

I shook my head. “Everything looks and feels normal. I have no idea what you are talking about.”

She shrugged. “I suppose it is because you are a wolf, I guess. Your kind has never been in touch with the spiritual side of things. You are more brutal, more into bloodshed. If you took some time to just smell the you would be shocked at what you would discover.”

“We don’t have the luxury of smelling the grass.”

“If Camilla was awake, she would be able to feel it.”

grass,

I went silent again as the mention of Camilla brought back the earlier tension. I couldn’t help but glance over my shoulder and up the stairs. I wanted to be next to her, I wanted to be with her but I wasn’t helping from there, there was nothing I could do except pace and worry.

“You are sure she will wake up, right?” I asked Lyla and she gave me a pitying

smile. I couldn't help but imagine what it was like to be her. She had no family and no obligations except her work. It was a lonely life, but it was also a simple one.

"She will, I swear it on my life."

Lyla and I didn't speak after that. I stayed in the living room for half an hour before I gave up and made my way over to Camilla's side. I held her hand making sure to stroke it softly as I spoke to her. I wasn't sure if she could hear me but I wanted to try anyway. I never wanted her to doubt that I was with her and by her side.

I sat there until the sun began to set and she didn't stir once. Lyla tried to get me to go down for dinner but I

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wasn't going to eat a thing until I was sure that my mate was fine. Her words managed to ease some of the tension but I couldn't trust her. Lyla was a blind follower and like she had said, she was bound by her duties to the goddess.

She would risk lying to me if she thought it was what the goddess wanted and I wasn't sure how I

felt about that.

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A small knock on my door had me looking up. Lyla walked in with a small smile on her face and I immediately knew what it was about. Instead of having her hovering around me, I had asked her to monitor Briggs. He was the entire reason we were in this mess and I had to be sure that he was healing well.

"He is awake," she whispered trying and failing to hide her grin. "He is up and talking and he is asking for her. He says he has something important to say."

She was grinning from ear to ear and a part of me couldn't help but wonder if she had somehow forgotten that Camilla was still knocked out. There was no way they could converse if she wasn't even awake yet.

"Is he healed? Is he breathing properly?" I asked ignoring the latter part of the sentence and she nodded. It was good to know that Camilla's sacrifice wasn't in vain. "Good, when Camilla is awake we can tell her."

"Tell me what?" a small voice asked.

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*My head was pounding and I was a little groggy but I otherwise felt fine. For the first time since I started using my powers, I didn't get to see the large dark room with the mirror. I didn't know what that meant for me but I could only hope that it was something good. Ryker turned to me and the relief in his eyes was palpable. I tried to give him a small smile, tried to tell him that I was fine but he just shook his head and blinked back moisture from his eyes. I could see that he was hurting, this whole endeavor was hurting him just as much if not a lot more than it was hurting me, he just didn't know how to show it especially since most of the attention was on me.*

*"How are you?" he asked, his voice as soft as cotton as he stared deep into my soul. It was almost like he was searchin for injuries below the surface but his eyes weren't deep enough to see the injuries that marked my soul. "Would you like something to eat or do you want something?"*

*"Some food would be nice," I managed out after trying to pull myself up into a sitting position. "Could I have some fruits with that please and some water? I am famished."*

*He nodded and glanced over at Lyla who immediately rushed out of the room leaving us in complete silence. Ryker helped me sit up and ran his hands through my curls in a comforting manner. His eyes were cold as usual but underneath that wall of ice he had erected for himself was sorry and anger although I couldn't tell who it was pointed at. I wanted to ask but I knew I wasn't going to get a response, at least not from him.*

*"What were you talking about earlier?" I asked. All I was able to hear was my name and I was already assuming the worse. I tried not to jump to conclusions but sometimes it was very difficult especially at a time like this. "Is there something wrong with me?"*

*"No," he said almost immediately. "Briggs is awake and he was asking to see you."*

*My eyes widened in shock and I immediately tried to get out of bed but Ryker grabbed me. His hand was firm around my waist as he pulled me back into bed. He stared at me as if I was out of my mind. I tried once more but he was faster.*

*"I will tie you to this fucking bed if I have to, Camilla. You are in no shape to go out to see anyone. You need your rest and Briggs does too. If he feels better, he can come up here but I am sure you can wait a few hours for the answers that you want."*

*I crossed my arms over my chest in defiance but he had no plans of letting up. He was used to my stubbornness,*

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*more than anyone if I had to assume. He knew how to handle it and he knew how to ignore it. He indulged me a few times, more than he should have and more than any other mate would but there were certain things he was never going to budge on and this was one of them.*

*I let out a sigh and just sat in bed knowing that he wouldn't let me leave any way. We waited in silence for Lyla to return. It took her almost half an hour and she returned with a tray filled with food. She gave me a small smile and placed it gently on my laps. There were oats, fruits and a lot of other things.*

*"I cannot possibly eat all of this," I mumbled as I picked up the fruits first.*

*"Thank you, Lyla, You have done so much for us. You didn't need to come here."*

*She just shrugged and gave me a small smile. Neither of them left the room and although it was uncomfortable to eat in their presence while they weren't eating, I was too hungry and tired to think about it. It wasn't until I had finished eating that I even realized that they were both looking at me with attentive eyes. I tried to hide from their gaze but soon came to realize that there was no hiding from it.*

*I cleared my throat and looked out the window. "Where is Briggs? Is he still awake?"*

*It was Lyla who responded. "He is, he is completely healed but he doesn't want to alarm the people. He would prefer if your meeting was secretive. He to ease the others into his recovery. There is no rush to see him, he doesn't mind waiting."*

*"No," I cut her off immediately. "I need to see him right now."*

*I couldn't explain why I needed to see him. There was an unease around me, it was something about the air. I didn't know what it was but it had the hair at the back of my neck standing on edge. There was something about this place that just had me feeling like I needed to be quick and get out of here. It was almost like I was being watched, I couldn't explain it, it was just there. I knew Ryker didn't want me leaving the room but if I stayed here for far longer than necessary, I was going to run mad.*

*"I know," Lyla said slowly and I furrowed my brows. She sounded like she was reading my mind but I had known her long enough to know that was impossible. "I feel them too, I was talking to your mate about it before you woke up. It is the presence of the witches who had died here. Their presence is strong because of their anger. The coven leader's rise must have triggered them."*

*"That explains it," I mumbled as I turned to face Ryker. "I cannot be here for longer than necessary, please. I just want to get in and get out. Leaving the pack unguarded was dangerous, anything could be happening. She has us by our tails right now, I want to be back by tomorrow."*

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*He sighed deeply but I could tell he still didn't agree. "Alright, let us do this."*

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*He helped me out of bed and together, we went to Briggs' room. It was empty just as Ryker had ordered before we left although a maid was outside the room pacing. When she saw us, she rushed over with a sigh of relief.*

*"We haven't been able to take dinner to him yet," she explained. "Your orders were very clear and you haven't been around all day. Can we take it to him now?"*

*"Give it to Lyla, she will bring it for him, is that okay?" I asked Lyla who just waved me off. She didn't seem to mind one bit.*

*I gave her a small smile before walking into the room. It was amazing just how quickly the effects of my powers came to be. Briggs looked even better than he did the last time we were here. He was seated up with a wide smile on his face and he was breathing properly. Before, he had a small hunch to his shoulders but it was completely gone now as if it were never there.*

*"You look amazing," I told him and he smiled.*

*"You look like s hit," he countered and my eyes widened as a small smile played on my lips. Not many people got to talk to me like that since I became queen, I never realized just how much I missed it. "I don't know what you did to me, but thank you. I feel young again. There was a permanent ache in my bones but it is gone. Did you know that? It is almost like you breathed life back into me."*

*I didn't tell him that was exactly what I did. Instead, I just shrugged and took the seat in front of his bed. He knew I was here for business because slowly, the smile slipped off his face and was replaced with a serious expression.*

*"Is everything alright? I presume that your visit here isn't just because you wanted to see me," he joked and I gave him a tight smile. "What is wrong, Camilla? How can I help?"*

*"When you were sick, I asked if you knew what this house was built on and you said yes," his face darkened considerably. "I need answers in regards to that. It is a matter of life and death. Tell me everything that you know."*

*He sighed and stood to his feet. He paced the length of the room until he was standing in front of his dressing mirror. Lyla chose that exact moment to walk*

*in but barely anyone acknowledged her presence. My eyes were fixated on Briggs who looked to be struggling with his words.*

*“When I was a young boy, we lived in the town not far from here. My father had told me stories about the witches who lived up the hill. He spent a lot of time with them. They were kind and loving, they were servants of the*

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*goddess and every month, they would bring food to the village. Everyone loved them and their visits were the highlights of the town’s year.”*

*“I feel the need to preface this by saying everything I say is what I heard from my father. He was alive when it happened. He said that one day, they brought some food in baskets but that evening, they were all filled with maggots, rotten to the core. That was when they knew that something was wrong. They took it to the coven leader, her name was Reina but she didn’t seem to care. If anything, she dismissed the humans.”*

*It was a relief to finally have a name to the woman doing everything. I hated having to call her the witch in my head. Anonymity bred fear but now with a name, she was just a person like the rest of us.*

*“After taking it to Reina, the visits stopped. The witches isolated themselves. I cannot tell you what happened between them. All I know is that the people saw fire coming here and the entire coven was burned to the ground and Reina was missing.”*

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*“What do you mean that Reina was missing?” I asked in confusion. “The bodies were burnt weren’t*

*they? How would you have been able to identify her?”*

*“The witches wore different robes to signify their positions. There were three levels in the coven. There*

*were the servants who ran errands for the others, they wore simple robes that were burnt to a crisp in the fire. The next level was the coven priestesses.*

*They were involved in the rituals and the sacrifices.*

*They wore bright red robes with some embellishments on them. You could*



make out the designs, even in the fire. It wasn't hard to see as they were etched into the fabric." "And Reina?" I asked. Her name felt like ash on my tongue and simply mentioning it had the air in the room growing colder. I remembered Lyla's words about the souls of the other witches and I couldn't help but wonder if they were feeling angry about the fact that we were openly speaking about her.

I tried to put myself in their shoes. I would be furious, beyond a reasonable doubt. She not only led them down the wrong path, but she betrayed and killed them all- for power. It was disappointing but it was the way of life. Cruel people did whatever they could to remain in power- it was their way. I blinked away all thoughts of them realizing I was getting swarmed by it and turned back to Briggs.

"Her robe was pure silver as if it had been spun from moonlight. My father said it was embellished with precious stones and it looked like it was worth a fortune. Around her neck, she wore a talisman shaped in a crescent moon that she used to communicate directly with the goddess. After the fire, people stormed the coven grounds in search of her body so they would steal the stones but she and her robes were gone."

"She set the fire and escaped," I deduced and he nodded. "So there is a possibility that she is the one doing this to us."

He shook his head. "It isn't a possibility, your majesty, it is a fact. If there is anyone who has the power to do this to a person- it is her. Besides, I saw her."

My eyes widened in shock and I stared at Briggs with my jaw slack. It was comforting to know that I wasn't the only one who was stunned by his admission. Ryker and Lyla were staring at him with varying

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degrees of shock on their faces. I would never have expected to hear that. No one in the past had ever mentioned seeing her, not even Riley. Why would she choose now to appear to Briggs? What was she playing at?

"What did she look like?" I asked and he opened his mouth to respond but I cut him off with more questions. "What did she want? Why did she appear to you? Did she say what her plan was? Did she say why she was attacking us?"

"One question at a time, please," Briggs held out his hand to stop me but I was too agitated. There was so much that I needed to know. "I was walking in

*the gardens trying to get some herbs when I wandered into the forest. I came across a young woman, I immediately knew she wasn't meant to be there. She was beautiful with silver hair and eyes so dark they looked unnatural but there was something about her aura that was off. It was almost dead. It felt like she was radiating death."*

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*many*

*"I tried to leave but she called out my name and told me that she had a message that she needed me to. deliver. I offered to take her in but she refused. She said that she couldn't set foot on those grounds bad memories for her. I hadn't even put two and two together when she grabbed me. It felt like I was dying, I could almost feel the life seeping out of me and before my eyes, she grew younger. She told me to pray that you came this way because you were the only one who could save me. Then she said to tell you congratulations on passing her test because you are now ready for the endgame."*

*"What does she mean by endgame?" Ryker asked but no one answered.*

*I could tell that Briggs didn't know and neither did I but Lyla knew. Something dark passed through her eyes and she had to turn away from us. Ryker took a step forward but I stepped in front of him. She already told us a million times over that she couldn't talk to us about the future. She could risk her life and I wasn't going to demand that of her. She had already been a great help to us and that was more invaluable than knowing how this was going to end.*

*We had already fought so many enemies, maybe not on the same scale as Reina but that didn't mean we couldn't defeat her. I trusted that we would, it was just going to take some time and planning.*

*"Thank you, Briggs," I placed a hand on his shoulder. "You have been an amazing help to us. You should go back to rest. We will be leaving tomorrow but I will come to see you before I go."*

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*I turned to leave when he grabbed my arm. "Wait, I think there is something that might be able to help*

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*you in your upcoming war. I would get it for you but I don't want to give the people a scare. Is it alright if I describe it for you?"*

*"Of course," I said immediately. "What is it?"*

*"I don't know what it is per say, I never opened the box. It is in the attic, there is a large carved box in the center of the room. It was the prized possession of the witches. My father saw it and stole it. There were some writings on it but it was in Latin. He was too terrified to open it for fear of incurring the wrath of the goddess. You might want to check it out."*

*I thanked him once more before rushing towards the attic with the other. A part of me was already braced for disappointment but the other part of me hoped for a better outcome. We needed all the help we could get and if this could help us then it was going to be a relief.*

*We found the attic and the box very easily. It was larger than I imagined, reaching above my knees. It was burnt around the edges but otherwise unchanged. It was carved from wood and overlaid with gold. I could understand why Briggs' father stole it- it looked expensive. I ran my fingers over the words on the box and turned to Lyla.*

*"Latin is the language of witches, is it not?" I asked and she nodded slowly. She looked hesitant and unsure as she made her way over. She went to her knees beside me and trailed her hand over the writing. She exhaled deeply before speaking. "For every beginning, there is an end and for every start there is a finish, to the goddess we are born and to her we shall return. That is what is written there."*

*"What do you think it is?" I asked Ryker. "It talks about beginning and end, life and death, do you will tell us how we can kill Reina?"*  
*think it*

*"I don't know," he admitted running his hand down his jaw. "There is only one way to find out." He stood in front of the box and turned to me. "I need you to take a step back. I don't know what is inside this box and I will not risk your life."*

*"Are you insane?"*

*"Now, Camilla!"*

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*Before I could protest, Lyly grabbed my arm and pulled me away. She shook her head slowly telling me that it wasn't worth it. I crossed my arms over my chest and watched. The box was apparently locked and there was no obvious key. I watched Ryker try to pick the lock but it wouldn't budge. The longer I stared at the box, the more I realized that there was something different about it. It was almost pulsing with... life?*

*"This is going to sound absolutely insane," I began making Ryker turn to me. "But could you cut your thumb and put it in the keyhole?" he looked at me like I had grown five heads. I knew how absurd I sounded but something told me it would work. "Just try it, please."*

*He muttered something about witches under his breath before doing as I asked. The moment his thumb came in contact with the keyhole, the lid flew open. I couldn't stop my smile as it grew on my lips. Ryker stared in shock and confusion as I rushed towards the box. There weren't many things in the box, in fact, there were just two. There was a piece of parchment paper with some writing on it and a smaller box.*

*I picked up the small box and opened it feeling grateful that I didn't have to cut myself for it. Sitting inside was a single dagger. It was simple with a golden hilt and a blade that glistened under the sun. There were writings on the blade but it was too tiny to make out. I closed the lid and turned to Ryker who was holding the piece of paper in his hands. His eyes moved over it fast as he tried to digest the words as quickly as possible.*

*"Does it say anything?" I asked but he held out a hand to stop me. I waited two minutes for him to be done.*

*"Apparently you are holding the only known weapon that can kill the priestess of the goddess," he said simply and my eyes widened. "It cannot be wielded by another witch. That dagger is the only thing that can kill Reina."*

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## **Chapter 179**

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

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*We were ready to leave the next morning and despite not wanting to scare the others*

*with his fast healing, he came out to see us off. I was a bit terrified of what we were going to meet at home. I couldn't*

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*keep myself from fidgeting the entire ride. I hadn't heard from Christine or the kids and I was worried about them. Ryker intertwined our fingers the entire ride. He didn't say a word but I could feel his presence. I could feel his comfort and his reassurance.*

*By the*

*time we got to the palace, I didn't even wait for the carriage to come to a halt before I rushed out. Christine was already waiting in front of the palace with the girls and they rushed into my arms. Despite the persona I was to hold as a Queen, I couldn't bring myself to care about that, I rushed to my knees and pulled them into my arms. I pulled them impossibly closer and let out a sigh of relief when I realized they were fine.*

*I had not realized how much I missed and wanted them to be fine. Audrey was telling me about everything she did while we were gone and in all honesty, I wasn't paying attention to her words, I just wanted to hold her. Ryker walked over to me and they immediately pulled away from me to embrace their father. He picked them up with ease and I watched as he whispered kind words into their ears.*

*"I take it the trip was successful," Christine hummed from beside me and I nodded. "Come on, I made lunch for you, we can talk over lunch."*

*We walked into the palace and I couldn't help but look around anxiously almost expecting something bad to have happened. Everyone was all smiles which to me was weird. Reina had never gone this long without hurting someone first. I couldn't help but think back on Briggs' words. What was her endgame? What was she planning? Had she already done it or was she waiting for me to return before she did it? No matter how I thought about it, it still looked bad and I was exhausted.*

*I didn't realize how hungry I was until I walked into the living room. The smell of food assaulted my nose. and I rushed over to the table and piled my plate high. I heard Ryker chuckle beside me but He didn't say a word, he **just** simply joined me. Audrey and Aurora kept babbling on and despite how tired he was, Ryker listened **to** them patiently and whispered small answers to them. I felt a pang of jealousy that they preferred their father over me but I at the **same** time, I also didn't mind. I enjoyed watching their relationship with him. **It was** something I never had and I wanted them to have it.*

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*"Did anything happen while we were gone?" I asked Christine and she shook her head. I felt relieved but there was something else underneath it, something akin to worry.*

*"It has been perfectly normal if I am being honest. I was bracing myself for some kind of trouble but nothing happened. There have been no unrecognizable illnesses, no dead crops, nothing. She may have just given up."*

*"She hasn't," I cut her off and her brows furrowed in confusion. "She said I was finally ready for her endgame. I don't know what that means but I know it isn't anything good. Something bad is coming, I don't know what it is but it has to be something bad. It has to be worse than whatever it is that she has done right now."*

*Silence descended over the room as my words settled in everyone's hearing. I hadn't meant to bring fear but I needed to say it. I couldn't have them walking around in ignorance before the worst hit. We We were in the dark before the storm and whatever we did now was going to shape the future. I turned to*

*Lyla who was looking at me with a sad smile, there was something deep in*



her

eyes that, out, something I couldn't make out. The longer I watched her, the more annoyed I got. Of having a seer if she couldn't even help us.

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was

She blamed it on the goddess but why would the goddess willingly keep information from us? It made **no** sense. She was of zero help to me right now and only seemed to make my anxiety worse. She opened her mouth to speak but I turned away from her. I didn't want to hear her proverbial stories that had no discernable meaning. The most important thing for me now as to make sure that everyone I loved was safe and was braced for the hit.

A knock **on** the door snapped me out of my thoughts and I turned to see Riley walk in. She looked exhausted, like she had just woken up from sleep and she did a double take when she saw us. She rushed over to her brother first before finally coming to embrace me. As I held her close, I realized just how much danger she was in by staying here. She pulled away from me with a small smile and I knew she **would** hate me for my next words.

**"You have to leave,"** I said and she stumbled back. All eyes tuned to me and I saw Ryker raise a single brow in **my** direction. **"I love you and I love having you here but you need to return home**

now."

**"What are you talking about?"** she crossed her arms **over** her **chest** and turned to Ryker. **"Are you being for real, right now? You're both just going to chase me away from here. You're my family and we are meant to stick together. I don't want to see Damien, I don't want to be around him."**

**2/4**

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+5

*"She is right," I knew the words pained Ryker to say. "Something is going down here and you do not need to be around when it happens. You should be safe at home and if that means being with Damien*

*then so be it."*

*She*

*stared at the both of us in shock. The room was completely quiet, even the girls had stopped speaking as if they understood the gravity of the situation. I hated having to put Riley in that spot, I hated having to send her away. She wasn't ready to see Damien, she wasn't ready to face the truth but that truth was better than whatever was about to go down. I didn't know what it was but I could tell that it was going to be disastrous. I could feel it in my bones.*

*"You*

*w what, fuck you all," she spat turning on her heels. She stomped over to the door then paused*

*and looked over her shoulder at us. "I don't know what you think family is but this is not it. Family is*

*meant to stick to ther despite the storms. I would have stayed."*

*"I know," I answered saving Ryker from the pain of having to. "That is exactly what makes us family because we don't want you to. One day, you'll understand."*

*She flipped me off and stormed out of the room. Once she left, it was obvious that she took a portion of the warmth in the room with her. No one could speak or even move. The first person to break the spell was Juan, he slowly stood to his feet and took both girls from Ryker. They didn't protest once and allowed him lead them out of the room. Christine followed closely behind him and I watched as they left the room leaving just us and Lyla.*

*"It was bound to happen that way, there is no path you had taken that wouldn't have ended like that," Lyla whispered and I whirled on her.*

*"A little heads up would have been nice, don't you think?" I spat and she flinched. "Your job has been to sit there and give us shit after things go south. What use are you as a seer if you cannot help us avoid the **bad?**"*

*"**I already told you**, even if I wanted to help you, **I couldn't**, the goddess would-"*

*"Enough with **the** goddess bullshit," I cut her off. "You are **of** no help **to me or** anyone else here for that matter. All **you have done is** follow **us** around for some **excitement**. I am done accommodating you, you **can** get out **now**."*

*She **opened** her mouth to speak but at the last minute, she **decided** against it and stormed off. I*

**3/4**

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+5

*watched her disappear as guilt filled me. I should never have spoken to her like that, but I was furious, I was angry and she was the closest person that I could take my anger out on.*

*As soon as she walked out, Ryker opened his mouth but I cut him off. "I know, that was insensitive and rude. I will talk to her tomorrow and apologize. Right now, I just... I just need a break. It is too much all at once. I don't know if I can do this."*

*"You can," he whispered reaching out to place his hand over mine. "Part of being Queen is making the hard choice. Riley doesn't have to agree with your choice but you did it for the greater good. It was a hard as fuck one but it was the right one, I can talk to her for you if you want, try and calm her down" before tomorrow."*

*"Yeah, I'll appreciate that."*

*He gave me a small smile and leaned over to kiss my temple. "You're doing a great job, Camilla. Everything*

*you have done has been to protect this kingdom and this family. No one might have told you yet but you are a damn great Queen.'*

*I sniffled. His words weren't meant to make me cry like that. "Thank you, that means a lot."*

*"No, thank you, Camilla," he gave my shoulder a small squeeze before rising to his feet. "You should probably go up to bed. You've had a very long morning. Everything else can wait. I will meet you there."*

*"But-"*

*"Now, Camilla, I wasn't asking."*

## **Chapter 180**

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

+5

*Riley left the next morning. Ryker had tried his best to speak to her and explain that it wasn't about her but the situation, she wasn't even willing to listen. She was furious and while I couldn't blame her, I did the right thing for everyone's safety and I wasn't going to regret it. Despite her being pissed at me, I still stood by the entrance of the palace to see her off. She pointedly ignored me in favor of the girls and Ryker and I kept my face stoic so as not to show her how much it hurt.*

*When she departed, Audrey slowly walked over to me and tugged my arm. "Aunt Riley is very mad at you. Did you try telling her sorry? Sometimes sorry makes people feel better."*

*I smiled down at my innocent daughter.*

*"Yes, baby, I did, but sometimes sorry doesn't fix things because your feelings are hurt. Sometimes some people just need some time to get used to it."*

*Her brows furrowed. "But daddy said that if you say sorry, it makes everything better."*

*How I wished she was right. The world would be such a better place if you could just say sorry and be done with things. Regardless, that wasn't how things worked. I gave her a small*

smile and led her back into the palace. I could see the wheels in her head turning as she tried to figure out how and why the world wasn't a picture perfect place.

A part of me was happy that despite everything that happened, I was still able to keep her in that fairytale world that every child lived in. I was happy that it hadn't been tainted for her and that she still had a few more years to enjoy herself in. The other part of me was sad, upset that one day, this spell would be broken and that one day, she would be just like us, cynical, cold and unbelieving. I couldn't help but wonder what it was that changed. What was that thing that made us go from hopeful children to cruel adults? Was it a force of nature or was it our own prejudice?

"Don't you have school today, Audrey?" I asked cutting **her** off and she gave me a sheepish smile. I rolled my eyes at her and nudged **her** towards the stairs. "**Come**, you're already late, we barely have five minutes **to** get you **dressed**."

She made **a** sound between a **squeal** and **a** laugh before running **up** the stairs **and** leaving me to follow after her. Within ten minutes, she was dressed, her hair was **tied in a** neat bow at the back **of** her head

1/5

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+5

and she was sent off with the

deeply. It was

guards to school. Once she was gone, I let the smile fall and exhaled

getting hard to put on a persona for them but I needed to. At least now that she was gone,

I could focus on the other things like Reina.

*She was still quiet. I stayed up almost the entire night waiting to hear that she had done something. It*

*pissed Ryker off to no end but he stayed up with me. The truth was that he was just as anxious as I was but he managed to hide it better. By the morning, I half expected a guard to tell me that someone had died or something but it was quiet, almost too quiet and I wasn't sure if I was overreacting but I was*

*confused and a bit scared.*

*"Camilla," a voice snapped me out of my thoughts and I looked up to see Christine. Her brows were furrowed in concern as she took me in. She was standing in the middle of my office and I didn't even know when she had walked in. "Are you alright? You look a little lost. Did something happen?"*

*"Nothing happened, that is the problem," I ran my hands through my hair. "I cannot be the only one who thinks it is weird that she has not said a thing or done anything yet. This isn't like her, there was one attack a day."*

*"Maybe she knows you have the weapon that can kill her. She could be bidding her time over it."*

*I thought back to the weapon currently in Ryker's possession. I didn't trust myself to hold it or keep it safe so I asked him to hold onto it. I didn't know where he kept it and for good reason to, I couldn't trust myself not to let it slip if I were to heal someone and get weak. Besides, it was better that way if only one person knew of the whereabouts.*

*"I don't think this is about the weapon," I mumbled crossing my arms over my chest. "I don't think she even knows about it. If she did, she would have demanded that we give it to her, don't you think? Something else is at stake here and I don't know what it is."*

*"Have you considered asking Lyla? She is a seer after all, she might know what's going on," I snorted. "Come on, Camilla, she could be of help."*



*“She could but she will not. She keeps saying that the goddess doesn’t want her to and I think it is a bullshit excuse. She **isn’t** of any use **to us.**”*

*Christine frowned. “I know this is **exhausting** for you but **what** if she actually cannot tell you. We don’t know how **these** things **work** but there **could** be **consequences.**”*

2/5

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*“People are dying, those are enough consequences.”*

+5

*Christine sighed and stood to her feet. She looked just as exhausted as I felt. This thing was weighing down on every single person in the palace. “Maybe just enjoy the silence, Camilla. We don’t know how long it is going to last and goddess knows we could use some silence in our lives.”*

*She turned to leave but when she got to the door, she paused. “By the way, Ryker asked me to tell you that he got called away urgently to one of the towns. It isn’t anything serious, just some people trying to*

*I not be back until later*

*and he asks that you stay in. You don’t need to go*

*get some work done. He might on*

*out to help him.”*

*I flushed pink at that. It was funny how he knew exactly what was on my mind. I was already rising slowly to meet him there but at those last words, I flopped back into my chair. She gave me a warm smile before walking out of the room.*

*I stayed in my office well into evening waiting for Ryker to return but he didn’t. I tried mind linking him a few times but his wall was up. It rarely ever happened but there were times when he was busy and didn’t want any interruptions. I was so lost in my thoughts about him that I didn’t reali*

ze where I was going and bumped into someone rounding a corner. I realized it was Kevin when he began profusely apologizing.

“I’m sorry, your majesty, I should have been looking where I was going,” he began but I waved him off. “I was actually coming to find you. The Prince asked me to send for you. He said he might be a while and he could use your company.”

“Of course,” I said immediately as relief coursed through my veins. I was already thinking of the worst case scenarios before now. “We can take one of the horses and leave right away.”

\*He nodded and we rushed outside towards the saddles. He was prepping the horses when someone walked in through the stable doors. It was Lyla and she looked a mess. Her hair was messy as if she had pulled at it one **too** many times and there were bags under her eyes from lack of sleep. She looked between Kevin and I with worry and skepticism. I turned away from her when she finally spoke.

“You cannot **go** with him,” she announced and I stilled. I opened my mouth to speak but she cut me **off**, “I know he fed you some bullshit story about Ryker and fuck, I am **not** meant to **be** here but you were right. I shouldn’t just **sit and watch**, forgive me goddess. **He is lying.**”

**3/5**

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I stilled wondering what the hell was going on. “What do you mean? Kevin is one of my most trusted guards.”

“She is rambling, your majesty,” he walked over in front of me blocking my view of Lyla. “We need to leave right now”

“He is working with her- with Reina,” she exclaimed and my eyes widened. “I saw them together in a vision. I didn’t realize it was him at first but he is going to-”

+5

*Her words died on her throat as Kevin walked up to her. At first, I didn't realize what had just happened until I saw blood drip from the side of her mouth. I gasped in shock and alarm as Kevin stabbed her over and over again until her body slumped to the ground. //*

*to me brandishing the knife he had used to kill her.*

*"If you say a single word, I will kill you as well. She might hate me for it but it saves my life," he warned and I stilled. I couldn't help but glance over at Lyla's body. She wasn't moving or breathing. "Eyes off her, you are coming with me."*

*I dug deep trying to reach the water in the stalls and he notices the flick of my hand because he laughed.*

*"It won't work, Reina planned ahead of that. The walls of this building are spelled. As long as you are in here, your powers will not work. I don't want to do this the hard way, you just need to come with me. Reina isn't as bad of a person as you think."*

*At that moment, I decided to make a run for it. I had barely gotten far before Kevin grabbed the back of my dress and pulled me hard. He slammed me head first into the wall of the stables and everything went black.*

*The last thing I remember was him standing over me with a cruel smirk on his face.*

## **Chapter 181**

**RYKER'S P.O.V**

+5

*Camilla was working when the call came in for us to meet at the border. I could have asked her to **go***

*with me but I figured she could use the rest and went on my own. A part of me had hoped it would just be a simple problem th*

at could be resolved within seconds but I had never been more wrong. For starters, I couldn't explain what the actual hell was happening. The guards in charge of patrol has gone missing after going to investigate a strange sound and we found them in a completely different part of the woods confused and without any prior knowledge of how they got there or what they were doing.

As if that wasn't enough, I heard the same sound they did. It was a scream, a child's scream, small, high pitched and full of fear. I followed it as best as I could with guards by my side but it was almost like the closer we got, the further it actually was. It took me less than an hour to realize that it was probably a trick from Reina but why would she waste her time trying to scare the guards? It made no sense except she just wanted to instill fear and that meant she had to be close by so we set out looking for her.

The less people who went with me, the better, I took only five people who I thought would cause less trouble for me and we set out trying to find Reina. At first, it seemed like we were just going around in circles because we kept trying to follow the sound of the screams. We followed it for about half an hour before I realized that we were wasting our time.

"Why don't you try the opposite, your majesty?" one of the guards asked after we had just come out of a cave with nothing to show forth. "It seems the more we get close, the further we actually are. What if it is a trick and we are meant to go in the opposite direction?"

As soon as he was done speaking, he looked away as if scared of offending me. I thought about his suggestion and it didn't make sense to the average person but I had come to find out that it was mostly

the **things that** didn't make sense that always worked out in the end.

"I think **it** is worth trying," I said finally. "Would you like to lead?"

He smiled like he had won the lottery and nodded eagerly. The others whispered underneath their breaths, shocked that I had agreed in the first place **and** even more shocked that I allowed him to lead,

It was an honor to be in charge of a search and I had given it to **him** without as much as a fight.

1/4

“...”

I was exhausted already and couldn't

wait to be done with all things Reina. She was a thorn in my side

at best and the bane of my existence on

a bad day. I tried not to think about all the things I could have been doing with Camilla at the moment, instead

I was in the middle of the woods with a bunch of strangers

because Reina decided that she wanted to play a game of hide and seek.

I tried mind linking Camilla but her wall was firmly in place, It didn't matter how many times I tried to coax it down, it didn't

budge. I assumed she was busy and resigned myself to

try again later when I heard an exclamation from the man in charge. I still hadn't bothered to learn his name and I doubted I would in the long run. I made my way over to him and he pointed to a cave just a few feet ahead of us.

“It is completely silent from where we stand,” one of the other guards said, a hint of jealousy audible in

his tone. “If anything, the screams are going to be on the opposite side of the forest. You led us on a wild goose chase for nothing. This has been a waste of our time.”

I turned to him. “Repeat those words, will you?”

His eyes widened. He was probably expecting me to agree with him but the thing was, I was already in a

shitty mood and he just got on my last nerves. I had agreed to this and **in** his fit of jealousy and rage, he

forgot that. I usually didn't care what soldiers said to themselves but this was my order and it was

essentially me that he had just disrespected.

"I didn't-" he swallowed. "Your majesty, I was just saying that we have been going in circles since he

started to lead us."

"Did I ask him to lead us?" I asked and he nodded. "Good, and you heard me say that, did you not?" his answering nod was punctuated by a loud gulp. "You are relieved of duty, you may return home."

The shock that rippled through the air was palpable. There was an audible intake of breath as everyone 'waited **to** see what he would do or say in response. He opened his mouth to speak but closed it almost immediately and turned on his heels. He had taken a few steps before he finally found the courage to face me again.

"Is it just for today?" he asked. "Am I allowed into work tomorrow?"

"You are relieved indefinitely." I clarified and he swallowed deeply. I could tell **he** was not pleased with me at all but he bowed **and** walked away. I **watched** him leave before turning **to the** others. "Does anyone else have anything **to** say?" there was silence all around. "Good, now lead us into the cave."

2/4

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+5

The cave was dark and empty, the air was punctuated with a chill and the smell of something old and almost rotten. A part of me wondered if truly we had been on a wild goose chase or if we were going to find something. I prayed



*for the latter, I prayed for something tangible to leave with or else I risked looking like a cruel ruler.*

*We walked further into the cave using only our eyes and the occasional filter of light from some cracked walls as guidance. I was about to give up when a chill and ear splitting scream cut through the air. It was*

*shrill and I had to place my hands over my ears to protect myself from it.*

*“What is that sound?” someone yelled but over the screams, it sounded more like a whisper. “Where the hell is it coming from?”*

*“I don’t know, just come with me!” I instructed and to their credit, they followed close behind me.*

*The further into the cave we got, the louder it got until it got to the point where I felt like my ears were*

*about to be ripped off. Hell, I wanted to rip my own ears out at a point. The sound got almost*

*unbearable until we got to the middle of the cave and then I saw it, or at least what I thought it was. It*

*was a tiny shrub, erected in the middle of the cave and it vibrated with each scream. My only weapon on hand was a small dagger so I was going to have to get close.*

*“Stay here,” I instructed the guards. They looked confused and a little relieved at my order. I swallowed deeply before making my way over. As I got closer, I could have sworn my ears began to bleed.*

*It was almost ironic that something this small was doing so much damage. I took out the dagger and*

*sliced the shrub clean down the middle. Almost immediately, the screaming stopped and I let out an*

audible sigh of relief. I nearly collapsed to the ground in relief but I had to keep my composure in front

**of** the others.

\*“Fu\*ck,” I heard someone swear behind me. “My ear drums are ringing.”

I couldn't help but agree. I heard them whispering behind me but my main focus was on the small slip **of** paper lying beside the now dead shrub. I picked it up and turned it over. There were only four words

on it but those four words had me panicking and muttering prayers under my breath as I cursed and ran

out **of** the cave. I could feel **the** confusion **of** the guards behind me but I didn't care much about them. I

had a goal **in** mind and that included getting to the palace. The sun had almost finished setting and the moon was high in the sky already. I couldn't help but notice **it** was **a full moon. It only** seemed befitting

in a way.

3/4

Chapter 181

I rode as fast as I could trying to reach Camilla as I did but her wall was up. It seemed like everyone's walls were up. I tried more times than I could count and each time I met that stone structure, I nearly screamed. By the time I got to the palace, I rushed over to Camilla's office. Her scent was already stale there meaning she hadn't been there in a while.

e..!

I

muttered a loud curse when I heard footsteps behind me, I saw Christine and Juan approaching and rushed over to them. “Where is Camilla?”

“I don't know,” Christine and slowly.

*“Have you tried her office?”*

*“I don’t know,” Christine reds*

*“Yes, she isn’t there,” I ran*

*ny hands through my hair. “How could we fu\*cking lose her?”*

*+5*

*“She isn’t lost,” Christine began but I  
tossed the note to her. I already knew the four words written on it.*

*How is your mate?*

*She opened her mouth presumably to tell me not to jump to  
conclusions but I wasn’t interested. I walked away before she even  
started speaking and started making my way to the stables. I needed a faster  
horse.*

*I got close enough when the scent  
of blood filled my nose. I rushed in only to find Lyla on the ground in a pool of  
her own blood. She wasn’t breathing. I cursed  
ready to call the guards when I noticed something written in the ground in  
what looked like blood.*