

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 182-190

Chapter 182

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

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I groaned at the constant rocking motion. It felt like I was riding a horse but that didn't make sense considering the fact that I was asleep, right? I tried to sit up but realized that I couldn't. Something was holding me down and the more I tried to fight against it, the worse it got. I finally managed to open my eyes only to realize that I truly was on a horse. I had been thrown over and tied down so I couldn't escape. It was as if the more I tried to fight, the worse it got.

"Don't," I heard a voice behind me and it took me a second to realize that it was Kevin's voice. "You cannot get out of those knots on your own. You can keep trying but you are only going to hurt yourself. This will not take long, I swear, Rena just wants to meet with you."

I scoffed at his words trying to ignore the sting of betrayal deep in my chest. I was so concerned with what was happening outside and with Reina that I didn't even realize that there could be someone on the inside who was plotting against us. The idea of there being a mole was so foreign to me and Kevin would have been the last person I suspected. I wasn't sure whether to laugh or be disappointed.

"Why?" I asked but he said nothing. "We gave you everything, we treated you right and you have lacked for nothing. What did she offer you that we could not?"

"Nothing, I did this because I wanted to," he said finally and my brows furrowed. "Reina is a visionary. She has thoughts and plans for the

world that are truly amazing. She believes that the goddess is a cruel dictator and she has proof to back it up. She wants to take back power and control.”

“You sound insane,” I spat. “Can you even hear yourself? She wants to go against the very being that holds our life in her hands and you are stupid enough to join her. You will die.”

“Reina is more powerful than you think. It doesn’t matter now, I suppose, we have all played our parts. For what it is worth, I truly wish that it didn’t have to end this way, you could have been a great queen.”

Before I could utter any other words, the horse pulled to a halt. I couldn’t see much in front of me but I could make out some trees and the mouth of a cave. I heard Kevin dismount the horse and walk over to me. I heard him stop abruptly and couldn’t help but wonder why until I saw an unfamiliar pair of boots in my line of vision. It went without saying that the boots belonged to Reina. My thoughts were further

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I was hesitant to get up. I couldn’t help but wonder **if** she had any ulterior motives. People like her didn’t do anything without reason and the **fact** that she just stood there not saying a word had me worrying even more. I looked around slowly, it was just the both of them, if my powers had returned then I **could**

possibly break free and **run** away.

“You cannot use your powers,” her voice was a breathy whisper that carried with the wind. “I know all that you are capable of, Camilla. Do you really think I will give you an avenue to use that?”

I finally looked up at her and despite having a description from Briggs, I was still thrown off guard by her

appearance. Her hair was left to flow down her back. It was pin straight and was truly the color of spun

moonlight. Her eyes were pitch black, there was almost no light in it, it felt like looking into an endless

abyss of darkness and death. It was terrifying at best. Her lips were painted a bright red and curled up to

the side in a cruel smirk.

“Welcome, Camilla, we have a bit of a distance to cover before it is time,” she explained reaching out to help me but I ignored her hand in favor of getting down on my own. I looked between her and Kevin

trying to find a way to escape. She seemed to realize where my mind went because she sighed and

turned to Kevin.. “You know what to do.”

She touched his hand gently and blew out a gust of air. I smelled it before it hit him and it smelled like rotten flesh and a grave. The gust of air hit Kevin straight in the face and before my very eyes, his skin paled and his hands withered slightly. I was stunned that what took so much out of me to heal was created so easily.

“I will heal you once you return,” she promised and he bowed before getting on the horse and running off. Once he was gone, I turned to her with a raised brow. We both knew she couldn’t heal him, only I could. “By the time he returns, I will have control of you. I could heal him if I want.”

She snapped her fingers once more and the same bindings she took off me wrapped themselves around my wrists.

‘Come, we have a bit of a distance to cover and not enough time. The blood moon will be in the sky

soon.’”

On one hand, I could have refused to go with her but I knew she would simply force me. I forced my feet

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to move beside her at a steady pace. For someone so old, she looked so young, I couldn't help but

wonder how she managed to keep her youth. In fact, there were so many questions about her in my

mind. I figured it would be a good idea to ask them. She seemed like someone who had the tendency to

be narcissistic, getting her to talk about herself would be a good way for me to keep the attention off me and figure out a way to get away.

"How does someone who used to serve the goddess get to this point?" I asked and she stayed silent. "You used to be her priestess. What made you go into dark magic? You reek of death and destruction."

"It beats rainbows and gardens, does it not?" she mused aloud with a small smile but I didn't match her expression. "I found that there was more to life than what she was showing us. She had so many rules,

so many things we could and couldn't do. I found something without rules, something without borders. I found freedom and I don't regret it."

"You left the goddess because you didn't want rules?" I deadpanned and she laughed.

"You wouldn't understand considering you are still trapped within her claws. Let me tell you a story little girl. I was wandering the woods looking for herbs for a ritual when I came across the spell book. In there were spells I never knew existed, rituals she had never told us about. I found the truth, I found reality. She tried telling me to throw it away but I wouldn't so she left me. She said she would choose someone else but it was too late, I had already turned everyone else."

“Shouldn’t it have been their choice?” I asked but she just shrugged. It was clear she felt no remorse for what she had done and nothing I said would change that so I changed the subject. “How are you still alive? You should be dead.”

“It was a little trick that I learned,” she mused aloud and before my eyes, I saw her transform into an old woman.

There was something familiar about her black cloak and the way she was hunched over. It took me a second but I finally recognized her. She was the same old woman that we saw when we were on our way to the vacation house for the first time, the one I had touched who caused my powers to bleed out of me. She took note of the awareness on my face and smiled.

“Yes, I knew there was something special about you that day so I started looking in, I watched you for months until your guard was down and then I attacked. If it is any consolation, I never wanted to hurt you, I never wanted to hurt anyone, I just want what she put inside of you.”

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“Why?”

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“Because you are the only one who can undo what I have planned, you are the only one with the power to put a wedge in my plans and I cannot have that. She has been looking for a way to end me for years and I have always been one step ahead of her. I never knew about you because you were nothing for the

longest time. It was my mistake for not looking thoroughly but I have looked now and I promise you that

nothing will stand in my way.”

She looked away briefly and that was all I needed. I let the rope fall to the ground before kicking her

shin and kicking up dirt into her eyes. While she was briefly incapacitated, I turned on my heels and ran.

I heard her swear behind me but I didn't pay her any attention. I still couldn't use my powers but I could use my legs. I had no idea where I was going but I didn't care. I just wanted to get away from her.

"You are going to regret that, Camilla," I heard her callout but I ignored her and pushed my legs to **go** faster. "This will be so much easier on you if you just surrendered now. I don't want to hurt you but make no mistake about it, I will if I need to."

I didn't respond, I pushed myself to move faster. I didn't realize how fast I was going until I realized what was directly in front of me. The words died on my tongue and panic built up in my chest as I realize what I was looking at. I swallowed deeply not knowing what to do about the massive cliff in front of me.

"Finally you stopped," I turned to find Reina standing behind me. "Here I thought you would be more of a challenge."

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RYKER'S P.O.V

Lyla had written one word in the sand. I tried to imagine how much pain she was in and what it took out of her to use her own blood to write in the sand. I had no idea what it meant but at this point, I was ready to take anything. It was one simple word written so sloppily that you needed a special skill to be able to read it- hill. I wasn't sure if it was a clue as to where Reina was keeping Camilla or a clue into the

future, whatever it was, I was searching the hills first.

I rushed into the palace ignoring the others behind me as I rushed to search for the weapon we had

hidden. If I was to find

Reina then I needed to do it fast. I didn't know what she had planned for Camilla

but I knew that it couldn't possibly be good. Once I found it, I stashed it with my other weapons glad

that it easily blended with them. I was on my way out when Christine positioned herself in my doorway.

"Wait, you need to see something," she told me and it took everything in me not to lose my cool.

"I have immense respect for you as Camilla's cousin and as family," I began slowly, "but if you do not get

out of my way, I will make you and we both do not want that."

I made to side step her but

once again she stepped into my path. "I just need you to listen to me for five seconds. You don't even know where you are going and I might have the answer to that."

I crossed my arms over my chest. "Can you suddenly see the future now? You better have something good or this will not be a pleasant experience."

"Kevin was found in the woods and he

doesn't look good. I think he might have had an experience with Reina. He looks the same as the others, like he was touched by death's hand."

Of all the things I expected her to say, that wasn't one of them. I had completely forgotten that I had instructed Kevin to watch over Camilla. I muttered a curse under my breath

before taking off towards the front of the palace where Kevin was fighting furiously against the hold of the other guards. I couldn't make out much of their conversation but I could tell that he was trying his hardest to ensure that he was not taken to the physician's quarters.

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“My duty is to the queen,” he spat fighting against the numerous hands holding him down. “If we leave

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now then we can get her, we can find the witch and put an end to **it.**”

“Leave him,” I ordered. I didn’t yell or speak louder than I normally would but somehow, they all heard

my words and took slow steps away from him. Kevin turned to me and breathed a sigh of relief.

He truly

looked terrible. His skin was pale, flaky and withered. He looked worse than any of the other men we had come across. It was like her magic was becoming worse with each person that she touched and I wasn’t sure how I felt about that. His body shook with each step that he took, as if it were straining his entire body. Before he got to where I stood, he stumbled and a guard had to rush to steady him.

“What happened?” I

asked. I didn’t care for much except the whereabouts of my mate. I wanted to know how possible

it was that she went missing under his watch and no one in the entire palace was able to notice.

“She wanted to see you and

she told me that I could either go with her or go alone,” he whispered softly and I resisted the urge to pinch the bridge of my nose.

Camilla had always been stubborn but this was

another level entirely, even for her. There was no

reason for her to demand to see me when I was already coming home. It was something she could do and when I found her, I was going

to tie her to the bed and make sure

she understood the importance of her personal safety. It was almost as if she preferred to disregard it in favor of everyone else.

“What happened next?” I managed out through gritted teeth. “Where did Lyla come in? Where the fuck is my mate and where avej

Deen?”

He swallowed. “We were on our

by when Lyla came in yelling that we shouldn’t leave. The Queen

wanted to return but

she appeared. It all happened so fast, one second we were there and the next, Lyla was bleeding on

the ground. I tried to run out with the Queen but she cast some spell on me and when I woke up I was like this. I did everything that I could and I accept full responsibility for this.”

He bowed his head in shame and some illogical and irrational part of me wanted to blame

him for everything, wanted to make him pay but he had nothing to do with it. My

issue was with Reina and I was going to make sure that she suffered for every thing that she had done. I

clasped his shoulder and gave him a firm nod to let him know that I didn’t blame him.

I turned to Christine. “Get the guards ready, no one sleeps, eats or drinks anything until Camilla is back in this palace. I don’t give a shit how long it takes. I want half the guards here guarding and the other

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half combing the forest, am I clear?”

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She nodded and rushed off immediately I finished my sentence. I turned to Kevin. “You need to rest so

get Steven and have him watch my daughters. I don't care who walks into that room to see them, kill first and ask questions later."

He nodded in understanding and I turned to Juan who was already waiting for me. I knew nothing I

would say would change his mind so I didn't bother. Within minutes, we were on our horses

and rushing towards the forest. There were at least five different hills that I knew of. Lyla's

message was cryptic at best and while having everyone in one place would have been ideal, it meant we would be slower so I split us up.

I

hated every second of doing it but it was necessary that we found Camilla as soon as possible. The plan was to mind link

the others if we happened to find Camilla but I knew I wasn't going to do that. Reina was powerful, I wasn't sure

about exactly how powerful she was but I knew that she could wipe us all out if she wanted. There was a reason she took Camilla alone and I wanted to know why.

We combed through the woods in silence. I didn't want to risk alerting Reina to our presence. The best thing we had was the element of surprise. She didn't know that we had an idea

where she was. Hell, we truly didn't have an idea, this was a hunch and I prayed that it was a good one or else we would have wasted hours of our time combing through empty woods.

I had to ditch the horses the closer we got to the hills and follow up on foot. I tried to ignore the gnawing

feeling in my chest telling me that it was late and I was wasting my time. I prayed for even a hint

of her scent or something to tell me I was going the right way. I was so close to the edge when I got a whiff of something. It

wasn't Camilla's scent but I immediately knew it would lead me to her because it smelled like pure death.

"Stay behind me," I instructed the guards as I followed it.

The closer I got to it, the more

the trees looked withered and the stronger it got. I couldn't make out anything

but that scent. It was horribly suffocating and I had to pull my shirt over my nose just to be able to stand it.

The scent led me to the opposite edge of the same cliff and that was when I saw her- Reina. She was just as surprised to see me as I was her. I looked around hoping to catch a glimpse of Camilla but I couldn't see her so I quickly sent a mind link to the others.

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"I found Reina, Camilla will be nearby. Search for her and tell the others."

I knew it would take a while for the others to come and I secretly hoped I would be done with it all by the time they arrived. I wanted to say more but I quickly realized that I couldn't access my mind link

anymore. Reina smiled cruelly at me and I knew she was the reason.

I pulled out a dagger but she flicked her hand and it was like every bone in my body was on fire. The

dagger slipped free and with another flick, vines reached out to wrap around me.

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"You should know better than to bring weapons to this kind of fight," she clicked her tongue before

stepping back and that was when I saw Camilla, she was bound with the same vines in front of what looked like an altar. "We just have

some party guests that we are waiting for. They should be here soon."

"My guards will be here first," I warned. "You're done, Reina."

She cocked her brow. "Well then, I think it would be best if we kept them a little bit busy. Did you know that there was once a great battle here?"

“What does that have to do with this?”

She laughed. “You silly man, it has everything to do with this. You wolves have never been able to see past your own noses, have you? It will be the death of you.”

Before I could ask what she meant, she closed her eyes and stretched her hand out. She exhaled deeply and I watched as the ground began to rumble and a skeletal hand shot through.

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SEND GIFT

COMMENT

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I watched in pure horror as more skeletal hands began to pop up through the ground. Some even climbed up the edge of the cliff. There were too many of them to number and I watched them walk in a single file into the forest. They were headed for whatever backup that Ryker had planned. I fought against my bindings but it was no use, she had tightened it so much that I couldn't move an inch. I could feel hope slowly start to deflate as the reality of the situation seemed to dawn on me. I was going to die here and Ryker was going to witness it.

“That should keep your friends busy for a while, don't you think?” she hummed before turning to me. “I hate to say it, Camilla, but I expected more from you. You are after all the most powerful person on the planet right now and here you are stumped by a simple spell. It is disappointing to say the least but it works for me. Now, where are our guests?”

She seemed impatient and I couldn't help but wonder who or what she was waiting for. She paced for a bit before focusing her attention on the altar that she had set up. She wouldn't tell me much but I knew she planned to sacrifice me and take away my powers. I looked over at Ryker who seemed lost in thought.

ht. He was biting the inner corner of his cheek and refusing to look at me. I wasn't sure if it was because he couldn't or because he wouldn't.

I knew Ryker would be no help from where he was so I improvised. I found a sharp edged stone and started to cut through the bindings. It was torturous and slow and I felt like I was doing more damage to my hands than to the vines but I couldn't stop. I needed to get out of here and I needed a plan before whoever she was waiting for arrived. I was halfway through my bindings when I heard footsteps and a familiar scent filtered into my nose. I saw Ryker stiffen meaning he had noticed it too.

I turned to Reina. "This is some kind of sick joke, right?"

She just smiled cruelly at me. "I thought it would be good to have a family reunion, don't you think? I would never leave children as orphans. I am fair to all."

I watched as Kevin breached the clearing with both my children and a growl erupted from my throat. Ryker looked hurt and betrayed and I realized that he hadn't known that Kevin was behind it. He must have lied his way into the palace and of course Ryker believed him- he trusted him.

"If you hurt my kids," I warned but she simply waved me off. I watched her carefully as she sashayed over to my daughters. She stopped in front of Audrey who was staring at her with hatred in her eyes. "Hello, little girls."

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"I know you, I saw you," Audrey said and my brows furrowed in confusion. Even Reina looked intrigued by her

words. "I don't like you."

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That seemed to please Reina. "Good, because this would have been a lot harder if you did." She reached out to touch her but Audrey was faster, she kicked Reina in the shin and ran to Ryker who was closer.

Reina was pissed to say the least, her face burned a bright red and for a second, I feared she was going to do something. I was poised and ready to strike if she did but after a second, she exhaled deeply and smiled.

“Run if you must girl, I will find you, I suppose giving you some time with your father is no harm. Kevin, put the baby on the altar and get me the things I need. We barely have fifteen minutes to get this right. Time is of the essence.” I watched Kevin hesitate. “What is it?”

“You said you would heal me,” he said slowly and I saw a flash of something in her eyes, something akin to anger but it was gone within a second.

She made her way over to Kevin and took Aurora from his hands. I worked on my bindings faster wanting her blackened hands off my child. She placed both hands on Kevin’s cheeks and smiled. I didn’t know what was happening at first, but suddenly, he screamed. I watched as more life bled out of his cheeks. He fought against her hold but there was nothing that he could do about it. I watched the very essence of him bleed out until he was nothing but a lifeless shell that crumbled to the ground.

For someone who had just taken a life, Reina looked unfazed. She simply wiped her hands clean and walked over to the altar where she gently placed Aurora. I waited until she had taken a few steps away from my daughter before I broke free of the bindings on my wrists and worked on the others. She had her back turned to me so I had the opportunity to work a lot faster. By the time I was done, I took a protective stance in front of my daughter.

“This is how it is going to work,” I began slowly. “You and I are going to talk like adults and my family is going free.”

She raised a brow in amusement. “It is amusing that you think you can beat me but I will humor you this once. I’ll give you a minute head start. I have a few to spare before I kill you. Do your worst sweetheart but I’m not dropping the spell.”

She kicked Ryker’s fallen knife towards me. I could see that Ryker wasn’t pleased with my idea but he knew what he had to do. There were too many people who could get hurt here. I knew the exact moment he got free. Audrey had been helping him undo his knots and Reina was too proud to notice it.

“Run,” I whispered to my mate and he grabbed our daughter. Reina noticed as soon as Ryker stood to his feet and she cursed. She raised a hand towards him and I knew she was going to use her powers on him.

In that moment, I felt a panic stronger than I had ever felt in my life. I didn't even realize when the scream erupted from my lungs punctuated by a ringing in my ears. There was complete silence at first and then the roaring of water as it exploded from beneath her feet. She was thrown into the air and even Ryker stopped to look back at me. I couldn't believe that I was responsible for that, I refused to believe it.

Ryker turned with our daughter and took off. There was a cave nearby that he could drop her before coming back for Aurora.

My hands shook with the force of the water I was holding up but I only needed it for a second. Once Ryker was out of sight, I let it drop and Reina fell to the ground with a loud thud. She coughed out water and turned to me with eyes burning with rage and hatred. She slowly stood to her feet and I knew that I wasn't going to get it easy from her.

"I see you managed to break free of the bonds. Why don't we make this even, hm?" she asked before swirling her hands and revealing two balls of black fire. "Why don't we have a little fun?"

Before I could process what was happening, she threw them both not at me but at Aurora. I barely had enough time to erect a wall of water that broke on impact. She was terrifying at best with her eyes as black as coal. She threw ball after ball in quick succession and it didn't take me long to realize that she was just trying to wear me out.

"Where is your precious mate, Camilla?" she teased. "He left you here by your self. How does that feel knowing that he doesn't give a rats ass about you?"

I pulled up water from beneath her feet making her fall on her ass. There was a river beneath us that I could easily pull from. I just needed to get her close enough to the edge to push her into it. she was a strong fighter and an even greater witch, it wasn't going to be easy to get her there especially not as I was trying to defend both myself and my child. I looked around wondering where Ryker was. It shouldn't take him this long to get back.

"I don't want to hurt you, Reina," I offered up as she slowly stood to her feet. "We don't have to do this. We can end this peacefully."

“That’s so bad because I want to hurt you. I want to watch you plead for death and not get it. Most of all, I want to hurt your pretty little goddess, I want her to know that I took out her favorite soldier and there is nothing she can do about it. I am going to make it hurt and I am going to love every second of it.”

She opened her mouth and black smoke started to rush from it. I knew what it was immediately- it was death. There was nothing my water could do against it. Just as I had decided I was completely helpless, I felt something begin to buzz beneath my skin. My hands shook and the more I looked at them, the brighter they got until what looked and felt like warm heat burst out from my finger tips and hit her directly in the chest.

She was thrown back by the force and I saw the black smoke dissipate into thin air. That singular hit seemed to have done so much damage to her because she struggled to get back to her feet. There was shock and slight worry in her eyes. She never expected me to be able to do that.

“I-” she began but was cut off by the glint of a knife by her throat.

“I would be careful how you finished that sentence,” Ryker warned and I let out a sigh of relief when I recognized the dagger in his hands.

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

Reina stilled coming to the realization that she was cornered. If she made one wrong move, Ryker was going to slit her throat and she was going to die. He was going to do it either way and I was sure she knew that too because I saw anger fuel her expression. I couldn’t help but wonder how one person could be so hateful. How could one human possess so much anger? It seemed like a sure way to become bitter and vengeful and I couldn’t help but wonder what got her to that point.

I took slow and deliberate steps towards her and I felt my power thrumming beneath the surface, as if it were pulling me closer to her. Ryker watched every move I made carefully as I stopped in front of her. I could feel the darkness emanating from deep within her bones, I wanted to reach out to touch her but when I tried, she snarled and tried to bite my hands.

"If you push your powers anywhere near me, I promise you, I will fill you up with so much darkness that you will burst," she warned and I immediately snatched my hand back.

A light glow dropped on us and I made the mistake of momentarily looking away at the moon. That was all the time she needed to place a hand over Ryker's and he let out a pained groan as she seared off the skin on his hand. The dagger fell and before I could grab it, she kicked it away towards the edge of the cliff. I could have either rushed for her or Ryker but in that moment, my mate was the most important. I had completely forgotten about what lay behind.

I looked at my mate and the ugly dark burn on his hand. She had seared off the entire skin leaving nothing but cartilage and bone behind. It was horrible to look at and it smelled even worse- like burned and rotten flesh." Ryker tried to wave me off and assure me that he was okay but I wasn't buying it one bit. He looked like he had just gone through hell. I tore a fraction of my dress and wrapped it around his arm when I heard Reina clear her throat behind me. I planned to ignore her until I heard a cry.

I whipped my head around only to see her smirking as she held my youngest in her arms. Aurora was sobbing, her cheeks wet with tears and a bright red color. Reina looked pleased with herself as she watched the helpless expressions on our faces. I didn't need to be a witch to know that this was what she wanted all along.

"Let go of my daughter," I said slowly but she just scoffed. "You don't want her, you want me. I'm not fighting anymore, just give me my daughter."

"Why would I do that?" she mused bouncing Aurora on her hip but my daughter wouldn't stop crying. "The blood moon is high in the sky right now and do you know what that means? It means that I can perform my

ritual. You would have been an excellent candidate but a child, one devoid of any blemish would be even better."

"No." I warned but she ignored me.

"I heard something while I was in hiding about your children, that was why I wanted them here. One of them apparently holds powers that could rival mine. I would have liked to have both so that I could test the theory but one will do."

Before I could ask what she meant, she pulled out a dagger from her side and stabbed it into Aurora's chest. It felt like time had gone still for me. One second, my child was crying and the next she was still. Reina laughed as a

blood curling scream left my throat. Ryker snapped out of his reverie first but with a snap of her fingers, he was

thrown back against a tree hard.

"Do you want to try next?" she asked as she unceremoniously dropped my daughter on the altar.

I rushed for my child ignoring her. I couldn't feel a pulse on her skin neither could I feel any form of life coming from her. I refused to believe it. My daughter couldn't be dead. I had saved people I didn't know, I saved people unto my own detriment. I was going to save my daughter even if it meant crawling into the depths of the earth and getting her back.

"Come back to me, Aurora," I whispered digging in for my powers and pushing them into her but it seemed to find its way back into my body. "You are not going to die."

"She is already gone, Camilla. Unfortunately, even you don't have the power to bring someone back from the dead. You have the power to heal, you need the power of life to do that and you don't have it. Even if you did, bringing someone back would tear you apart from the inside, you would die. Do you want that?"

Her words settled in my mind and I couldn't help but remember a conversation I had with Lyla. She said I had the power of life. Reina didn't know that. All this time, she had been fighting me for mere healing powers not knowing I had so much more. I picked up my daughter and placed her on the ground while kneeling next to her. I closed my eyes and concentrated. I focused on the lull of the wind and the roaring of the sea behind me. I focused on the shining moon above me and exhaled deeply.

I opened my eyes and I saw her- the goddess- standing in front of me. I knew she wasn't truly there because she stood beside that very same mirror I had seen so many times. The gaping holes were worse than before and something white leaked from my body- my essence.

"If you do this," she began in a warning tone. "I might not be able to save you. You cannot tamper with life and death."

"If you had dealt with her then I wouldn't have to. She was your responsibility and you let her go free. You did this."

She exhaled deeply. "Reina was my child just as you are mine. I cannot hate my own. I cannot kill my own. I made an oath and I cannot interfere. I sincerely apologize, Camilla, I know what you have lost."

"No," I shook my head vigorously. "I haven't lost a thing because my daughter is going to live. She has so much ahead of her. I cannot watch her die. Tell me how to heal her."

"I won't do that."

I wanted to scream. I looked at the mirror in front of me, at the girl kneeling in front of a bleeding baby and the tears running down her face. It took me a second to realize those were not tears, they were silver like whatever was leaking from my body. I was crying out my essence and suddenly it all made sense.

"Whenever I healed those people, I gave them a part of my soul," I said and her face blanched. "Every single one of them carries something of me inside. If I want to heal her, raise her, I have to give it all."

"Camilla, you can have more kids."

"So can you," I shot back before closing my eyes and willing it all into my daughter.

The goddess faded away and so did everything else except my child in front of me. It felt like I was ripping myself from the inside out. I heard a scream and it took me a second to realize that it was coming from me.

I felt a phantom hand on my shoulder and a small voice in my ear whispering. "You are so strong. I couldn't have picked anyone better."

The voice disappeared after but not before I felt something hot enter my back. I couldn't focus much on it because my child was still in front of me. I pulled the damn dagger out and watched as her skin knitted itself up.

"No," I heard Reina say from behind me. "What the hell is happening? What the hell are you doing?"

I turned to her and raised a hand throwing her back with a wall of water that materialized out of thin air. My limbs shook and I heard Ryker's voice but I couldn't make out what he was saying. Everything was blurry and muddled in my ears.

Just as quickly as I started, I felt the power drain out of me and I had never felt so empty in my life. I knew I had barely minutes to finish things. I managed to get to my feet, trying to stand on wobbly legs. I watched my

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daughter, willing any sign of life and then I saw it, her chest rising and falling. I let out a sigh of relief.

"She's alive," I said more to myself than any. I turned to Reina who was watching with shock on her face and stumbled towards where she stood by the edge of the cliff. I had barely gotten close enough when my legs gave out and I fell on my face.

"You foolish girl, you killed yourself for a baby, a baby that you could have had again. Look at your mate, how will he live with that child knowing it killed you?"

"I didn't die trying to save my child," I managed to get to my feet. "I died trying to kill you."

Without warning, I plunged the dagger into her chest.

Her eyes widened in shock and I saw the red patch form on her skin. Her mouth opened and she tried to speak but no words would come out, only gurgled

blood. She tipped backwards and I thought it was over until she grabbed a hold of my dress almost taking me with her. I slipped over the edge managing to grab a hold of the ledge.

“Ryker,” I screamed and within seconds my mate was at the ledge trying to hold me up but his arm was badly burned and it didn’t matter how much he tried, he couldn’t pull me. “Please.”

My vision was blurring and I couldn’t hold on for much longer.

“You are not dying,” it sounded more like an order. “You cannot die right now. We have to go home to our girls. Just hold on a little longer, okay? The guards are coming. Someone is going to pull you up.”

Tears gathered in my eyes. “I love you, so much, you have no idea.”

*“Don’t say that, it sounds like a goodbye. Don’t f**king say it.”*

“I’m sorry, this isn’t your fault,” I whispered before my hand slipped out and I fell.

Chapter 186

RYKER’S P.O.V

There are moments in your life when something happens and it feels like you have been changed forever. As I lay by the edge of the cliff watching my mate’s body fall to the bottom, I couldn’t help but realize that maybe this was one of those moments. I couldn’t hold her up, I watched her fall.

The thoughts swirling in my head made me want to reach in and pull my own brain out of my head. It was too much.

I had to jump in after her. I rushed to my feet ready to go in when I felt a hard clamp on my wrist and I was tugged back from the edge. I fought against Juan’s hold but he was not willing to budge.

“Let go of me or I swear I will make you regret it,” I threatened but he didn’t release me one bit. “I have to find her. She is down there waiting for me.”

“Ryker, if you jump, you will die,” he warned but his words didn’t register in my head. The only thing I could think of was my mate pale and in pain as she fell. “Look, your daughter is right here waiting for you, you have to go to her.”

“I have to go to my mate.”

I fought against his hold but he wouldn’t let me go. I knew nothing save for incapacitation was going to make him release me. If I wanted that, I was going to play dirty but Juan looked like he was expecting everything. He was too level headed to let me do something as drastic as jumping off a cliff.

“What if it was Christine? Wouldn’t you go in after her?”

“I would go down like a normal person and search for her. I already mind linked the guards and they are looking for her as we speak. Your daughter is crying on the floor behind you, your other child is waiting in a cave with some other guards. You need to snap out of this and be their father.”

I stilled. He was speaking like Camilla was dead but she wasn’t. I could still feel our bond in my chest, it wasn’t gone- she wasn’t gone. “She is alive.”

“Ryker,” he began slowly but I shoved him off. “I am just trying to be realistic here. That fall could kill a person.”

“I know what I feel,” I pushed past him. He followed closely behind me as if worried that I was going to have a mental break. I walked over to Aurora who was squirming on the ground in tears. I slowly picked her up and she

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wrapped her arms tight around me. “Camilla is alive and it is only a matter of time. I need to get the girls home so that I can begin looking for my mate.”

He pursed his lips- a clear sign that he did not agree with me whatsoever but he knew better than to argue. He simply walked me over towards the cave where I had kept Audrey for safety. I couldn’t afford to go too far, Camilla needed our help. If I had only been faster, I could have taken

both girls, I could have slit Reina's throat when I had the chance. I wasn't sure why I hesitated. I never hesitated, it was not in my nature.

"Daddy!" Audrey exclaimed when she saw me. She threw herself into me and I felt moisture gather behind my eyes. "Where is mummy? Is she coming?"

I swallowed deeply. "Your mum is a bit hurt but you don't have to worry about it. I need you to go home with Juan so I can find your mother."

"That isn't happening and you know it," Juan whispered. "I am not leaving you alone when you are clearly not in the right frame of mind. You wanted to jump off a cliff."

"I am not jumping and right now, you are the only person I trust with my daughters. You can monitor me after but please take them home and leave them with Christine- only Christine. I'll be back as soon as I find Camilla."

He frowned and crossed his arms over his chest but nodded stiffly. I let out a sigh of relief and slowly handed Aurora over to him. My arm hurt from the burn and holding her up but I tried not to let it show. I couldn't have them seeing just how bad things potentially were.

Once they were safely in his hold, I gave them a warm smile and pressed soft kisses to the tops of their heads. "I'll be back soon, I promise you and I will be back with your mum."

"Ryker," Juan's tone was disapproving. "What is-"

*"Don't finish that sentence," I cut him off with a warning growl. "Your business is with my children. Focus on it and don't say another f**king word."*

Without another word, I turned on my heels and ran down the hill. I shifted despite the ache in my arms, ripping my clothes in the process. I healed faster in wolf form and my sense of smell was better. I was so concerned with the latter that I forgot to gauge how bad the wound would be in wolf form. I nearly stumbled over my own paws when the blinding pain hit me in wolf form. I let out a howl of pain and came to a rough stop at the base of the woods.

I looked at my front left paw which had a horrible burn. It didn't make any sense that it wasn't healing. Even if it

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was a recent wound, due to my Alpha genes, it should have started healing. It looked normal, if anything, it looked a little worse. I should have gone to check it but I didn't, instead, I rose on all fours making sure to keep my weight off it and starting my search for Camilla.

I tried to ignore the fact that her scent wasn't even in the air. She had fallen from the top of the cliff, her scent had disappeared the moment she hit the water. It was nearly impossible to search for someone that you couldn't smell or reach out to. Her wall was firmly up and I knew it was because she was probably unconscious. If I was to find her, I had to do it on my own.

"Your majesty, your leg," one of the guards began but I growled lowly. He swallowed deeply and took a step back. "Juan told us-

*I opened up a link between the two of us. "I didn't realize that Juan was the king. Get the f**k out of my way before I make you."*

He was smart enough to not test me. He hurriedly stepped aside leaving me to search for my mate. Everyone stayed out of my way but I could feel their worried and pitiful glances in my direction. None of them believed she was alive, none of them believed she was going to be found and there was nothing I hated more than the negativity.

*"Get the f**k out!" I saw each of them still the moment I spoke into their minds. "Drop whatever it is you are doing and walk away. I can do this on my own." No one moved. "Did I f**king stutter? Get the hell out right now."*

They moved in synchrony. I waited until the last person moved before I let out a growl loud enough to make the ground shake. If I was going to find my mate, I didn't need people who were negative around me. It was going to be much harder searching by myself especially when I had an injured leg but I could do it, I was damn certain that I would or I was going to die trying.

I searched in silence for what felt like hours, my leg kept getting worse but I ignored it. There was still no sign of Camilla but that didn't mean I

was going to give up. I could hear a waterfall in the distance and I headed towards it wondering if she had somehow drifted over that way. I was almost there when I heard a huff behind me. I turned to see a sandy brown wolf and I didn't need any introductions to know it was Juan.

"You can search the other end of the river," I said down the link but he didn't move. "Don't just stand in my way, Juan, do something."

"Your hand is bleeding like a bitch," he said simply and I looked down at my hand. I hadn't realized just how bad the bleeding had gotten. The skin was open and oozing blood profusely.

"It doesn't hurt, it will heal."

"It doesn't look like it is healing. If you keep going this way, you will infect it."

"Do you need something, Juan or are you here to bother me? We have to find Camilla. The longer we stay here speaking, the more time we are going to waste here. She could be hurting somewhere."

"Ryker," his voice was slow and patronizing. I hated the tone because it bode badly for me. He took a slow step back and I saw the dagger, the same one that went into Reina. It was lying on the floor with a scrap of fabric that looked like it came from Camilla's dress.

"That's good, it means she is close by."

"No, Ryker, I found it stuck in the branches by the edge of the waterfall. Even if she survived the fall, she can't survive that."

I scoffed. "I know what I feel. The mate bond is intact, she is alive. I don't care if you believe me or not. You can go back if you think she is dead but I will not allow you make me fear the worst. You can get the f**k out of my way."

I tried to take a step forward but my leg gave out and I fell. I let out a growl of frustration and attempted to stand but Juan was by my side in an instant and he growled. He never growled, he never raised his voice, he was never confrontational.

"Look, if you want to spend the rest of your life out here looking for her, that's fine, I would do the same if it were Christine but your daughters are in that pala

ce waiting for their father and you are going to die if you don't get that treated. They cannot lose two parents in a day. If you won't do it for you, do it for them."

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RYKER'S P.O.V

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I went back to the palace albeit reluctantly. Whether or not I wanted to admit it, Juan was right. I had two daughters who needed my help but I didn't want to abandon Camilla. She was alive somewhere and she was probably scared and waiting for me to find her but I couldn't. My hand hurt so badly that when I shifted, it started bleeding profusely. Juan and I had to wrap it in his shirt and hold it until we got back to the palace because it just wouldn't stop.

When we arrived, the physician was waiting out there for us. A small part of me had expected Christine to be there too but I was grateful that she wasn't. I wasn't sure I would be able to look her in the eye after what had just happened. How did I look someone like her in the eye and tell her that I wasn't smart enough or fast enough to stop her cousin from going over a cliff. It was insanely stupid at best and careless at worst.

"His hand is badly hurt," Juan explained and I rolled my eyes.

"I can speak for myself," I muttered with disdain as the physician made his way over to look at my hand closer. "It isn't anything bad, I just need you to wrap it up so that I can see my girls."

The physician pursed his lips. "Your majesty, this needs more than just wrapping. You are not healing from it. I don't know why that would happen and I need to find out."

I turned to him with narrowed eyes. "Let me make one thing clear. I came here for my girls. As soon as the sun rises in the f**king sky, I am out of here to find my mate. I don't care what you do or how you do it but you better f**king do it before then. Am I clear?"

He swallowed

deeply and I could smell the tangy scent of fear as it emanated from him. I wasn't like this on my best days and it should have said something about me that I was like this today but I couldn't bring myself to care. The physician nodded in understanding and gestured for me to come with him. We made our way to his quarters which was already prepared for me.

I made a point to ignore the bed

that had been perfectly laid and sat on the chair. There was nothing that was going to make me spend the night in this room. I didn't care if my hand was dangling off by a tendon and about to fall off. I would rather have one hand than both hands and my mate still be missing.

"It looks like a very deep burn, your majesty," the physician explained as he dumped rubbing alcohol into the wound. I couldn't stop myself from hissing out in pain. The wound was at risk of infection or so he kept

mumbling under his breath as he tried his hardest to clean it out.

Juan stood a few feet to the left. He was pacing quietly and I wanted to tell him that his presence was doing more harm than good but on second thought, I realized that it was best if I had someone here because he was giving silent emotional support whether I wanted to admit it or not. This wasn't the best time to be alone but admitting that meant admitting that something was wrong and as far as I was concerned- nothing was wrong.

"Where are my daughters?" I asked once the physician started to dress the wound. I didn't ask earlier because I hadn't wanted them to see me like that. "I need to see them. I came here for them after all."

Juan pursed his lips but nodded. He wanted me to rest, that much was certain but he also knew that save for tackling me to the bed, that wasn't going to happen. The exact moment the physician finished wrapping up my hand, I shot to my feet. I was a bit dizzy and it took Juan discreetly holding me up for me not to keel over.

"I believe it is my duty to inform you that whatever was done to your hand is preventing it from healing at an accelerated rate," the physician began. "I am of the opinion that it will heal but at the rate a human does so we are looking at two months at least. That burn bit far into your skin. I commend a lot of rest because you lost a lot of-"

“Stop,” I cut him off. “Thank you for dressing my hand. That is all that matters.”

I turned on my heels and walked off before he could say another word. Out of the corner of my eye, I managed to catch a glimpse of his expression and I would have preferred if there was annoyance or anger but instead I saw pity. I didn't need anyone's pity, much less him.

“I am going to see my daughters,” I said aloud before storming out of the room.

I could hear Juan rushing behind me but I barely paid any attention to him. He called out my name but I didn't stop. When he got close enough to me, I felt his hand reach out to grab me so I spoke in a cold and soft voice. “If you touch me, I will break every bone in your fingers.”

His hand stilled mid air. “I am just trying to help, Ryker.”

*“If you were helping, you would let me be out there looking for Camilla,” I said simply. “I don't want to have this conversation over again like we have been doing. It has gotten time consuming and exhausting. I didn't stop you from following me around but the least you could do is be f**king quiet.”*

I didn't hear him speak after that because he turned on his heels and walked off. I should have felt bad for running him off but I couldn't bring myself to. I made my way up the stairs to the girls' rooms only to find them

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missing. Panic had already begun climbing in my chest when I felt a nudge to check mine. Bristling with worry and anxiety, I slowly made my way over and pushed the door open. When I saw both my girls lying in my bed, I let out a sigh of relief.

Aurora was asleep but Audrey was wide awake. She was curled up on her side and whispering to Christine but when she saw me, her eyes widened and she leaped into my arms. I had to use my non-injured arm to grab her and I held her as close as I could manage.

I looked up at Christine whose eyes were red rimmed with tears. I didn't want to stare at her but I couldn't look away. There was something utterly damaged about her. I wanted to tell her that Camilla was fine, that I could feel it but I couldn't bring myself to say the words. They felt like lead on my tongue and ash in my throat.

"I'll give you a moment," she said finally before giving me a comforting tap on my arm and walking away. I watched her disappear and it was only after the door shut behind her that Audrey turned to me.

"Where is mummy?" she whispered and it felt like someone had taken claws to my heart and raked them over. "Is she coming up soon? I want to see her."

"Your mum is," I trailed off not knowing how to explain, "your mum will be here soon. You just need to be a bit patient for her, okay?"

She nodded. "What about the scary woman? What happened to her?"

I sat on the edge of the bed with my daughter in my lap and slowly stroked her hair back. She was clean physically but the mental repercussions were what

I was worried about. She was looking up at me with a mixture of fear and curiosity as if the mere thought of Reina was scary which considering how young she was, I could understand.

"Your mum got rid of her," I answered finally and her eyes widened to the point of saucers. "Your mother is so brave and she managed to kill the witch. She can never hurt you again."

"I want to be like mummy when I'm older," her little voice held awe. "Will you tell me how she did it?"

I looked out at the window. It was still pitch black and I knew I had to be out there. "Maybe later, right now you

need to rest."

"What about you?" she asked but I brushed her off. I carefully tucked her into bed but when I was about to leave, she grabbed my arm. "Can you stay with me until I fall asleep? I'm scared."

When she said it like that, there was no way that I could refuse. I climbed in between her and Aurora and held them both as close as possible. I looked at my youngest whose heart had stopped beating on that cliff edge. The raw pain I felt in that moment couldn't be quantified and Camilla had used up all of herself to bring her back to life. I still couldn't wrap my head around what had happened. It seemed insane to me.

At some point, I was going to have to come to reality about everything that happened on that cliff edge but I was only going to do it when I was with Camilla, I couldn't face it alone.

I sat there with Audrey waiting patiently for her to fall asleep. Her eyes had started to drift close when the door opened and Juan walked in holding a steaming cup of what smelled like coffee. He handed it to me without looking and my brows rose in confusion.

"If you are going out there, you need your strength," he muttered and I shot him a grateful look as I took the cup from him and downed everything. He stood there by the corner of the room just waiting and watching.

Once Audrey was asleep, I made to leave but it felt like my entire body was spinning on its axis. I couldn't even get to my feet. I turned to Juan. "Help me up, will you?"

"I'm sorry but I cannot do that," he didn't move from his spot. There was confusion at first before my eyes fell to the empty coffee mug. "You're going to kill yourself if you go out there like this. You need to be better for your kids. You are all that they have."

"You bastard," I snarled but he just turned away from me.

He stopped with his hand on the door. "You'll thank me for this later."

Chapter 188

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

There was darkness and my head was pounding in my skull. My entire body felt like it was being weighed down by a couple thousand tons and it didn't matter how much I tried to lift my hands, I just couldn't. I could smell dampness an

d hear the rushing of water but that was just about it. The more aware I became, the more my surroundings began to make sense. I could feel something soft beneath me, like cotton and I could hear footsteps but they were soft and gentle, almost cautious.

“I don’t know, look, I cannot think properly right now,” I heard someone whisper. The voice sounded feminine and a little older.

“What do you mean by you don’t know? There is a stranger in your home. Are you insane? She could be a murderer, she could be dangerous,” the second voice was also feminine but much younger- I would have guessed early twenties.

“She isn’t dangerous,” the first voice shot back with a scoff. “Look at her, she doesn’t look like she can hurt a fly.”

“She had blood on her when she came in. There was blood on her hands too. She could have killed someone.”

I forced my eyes open at that moment and it took a second for me to adjust to the brightness of the room. The room was fairly small with only a single bed that I was lying on and a table and chair in the room. My head was still pounding but I tried to drag myself into a sitting position. My movements caught the attention of the people in the room and they immediately rushed over to me.

There were two women there and it was obvious that they were mother and daughter. The older woman had salt and pepper hair that was tied neatly behind her neck. She had a warm smile on her face and she looked genuinely worried about me. The other girl had hair the shade of the sun with sharp and suspicious blue eyes. She glared at me with her hands crossed over her chest and I immediately knew she didn’t want me there. Regardless, I managed to give them a warm smile.

“How are you, my dear?” the older woman asked. “Do you remember anything?”

I shook my head which proved to be the wrong move because my head pulsed. I lifted both hands to try and stop the pounding but it did little to nothing. Th

the older woman rushed over to my side immediately with a wet wash cloth and placed it directly over my forehead.

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“We found you in the lake, I presume you came from somewhere upstream. You took a nasty fall somewhere because you had some bruising on your temple but you healed very well. My name is Peggy and this is my daughter, Marie.”

“Don’t tell her our name,” Marie hissed but Peggy waved her off. It was clear that Marie was distrustful of me and I couldn’t blame her, I would have done the same if I saw a strange woman at my doorstep.

“She isn’t going to hurt us.”

Marie ignored her mother and turned to me with narrowed eyes. “I have my eyes on you. If you try any funny business, I will gut you like a fish. Am I clear?”

“I have no intentions of hurting you or your mother. I don’t think I could even if I wanted to. I can barely stand up on my own.”

Marie stared at me for a second longer before turning on her heels and storming out of the room. She slammed the door hard and I flinched from the sound. Peggy shot me a comforting smile and her eyes brimmed with unspoken apologies. Neither of us said a word, me because I didn’t know what to say and her presumably out of embarrassment.

“Well then,” Peggy cleared her throat as she stood to her feet. “You must be hungry. Would you like me to get you something to eat? I can bring it up for you or you can go down.”

“I think I would prefer to go down, thank you.”

She gave me a warm smile and helped me to my feet. My legs buckled from the weight of my own body and I would have fallen over if she hadn’t kept her hands wrapped around me. The outside of the room was just as small as the inside, it held a simple living room with two couches, a small dining table and a kitchen to the left. It was a quaint house but it still had a homey feeling to it.

Marie was gone, the front door was left ajar and I saw Peggy sigh. I hated that I was causing some discomfort between them, it was never my intention. I just wanted to take some time and heal a little and then I would be on my way. Peggy led me to the dining table and helped me into the seat then disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a plate of toasted bread and eggs.

"I have some orange juice if you want," she offered and my eyes nearly watered.

"Thank you so much, Peggy, you have been kinder to me than anyone has in a very long time," I tried to blink back my tears as I spoke. "My name is Camilla, I realize I hadn't said that when you introduced yourself earlier."

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"It's okay, darling, just focus on your food and we can talk about the rest later, okay? I know you're not a danger to me. It is Marie that needs a little more convincing. She doesn't trust people easily, my little girl. She always sees the worst in people."

"I could understand why," I mumbled under my breath and she raised a brow at me. "I'm sorry, that was a bit too much. You have been so good to me."

"A lot of people aren't good, believe me, I understand," she squeezed my hand in a comforting grip. "Why don't you finish up your food? We can always talk later."

She walked out of the room leaving me to eat alone. By the time I finished, I felt stronger than before and I managed to stand on my own. I did the dishes and waited in the living room for Peggy to return but she didn't. I got antsy and decided to go out to check for her. I heard some noise coming from the back of the house and I went to inspect it not expecting to find Marie there instead.

She turned to me with hateful eyes and I raised both hands to show her that I meant no harm. "I was just looking for your mother. I didn't know you were here and I don't want to disturb you. I think I'll just-"

“Wait,” she called out and I froze. I turned to her and she crossed her arms over her chest as she turned to face me. “What do you want with us? We don’t have any money, we don’t live with the rest of the pack. If you wanted to spy on us or steal then I am sorry to say that you came to the wrong place. The most expensive thing we own is a craved table and it doesn’t even cost much.”

My brows furrowed in confusion and then slight embarrassment as she listed off all the reasons why I shouldn’t bother stealing from them. I tried to interrupt her a few times but she kept cutting me off. I understood her skepticism but I couldn’t help but feel a little insulted at her opinion of me. I wasn’t a thief and I would never try to hurt someone who had been nothing but kind to me.

“Stop!” I yelled when I couldn’t take it anymore and she immediately went silent. “I have no plans to steal from you, you have nothing to worry about. Your mother is one of the kindest people I have seen in a while.”

“Then what are you doing here?” she cut me off. “No one stumbles here by accident, no one comes looking for us. We are on neutral territory, we are rogues, what could have brought you here.”

“I don’t know,” I lied and she scoffed. “All I can say is that I didn’t come here looking for you, I don’t even know how I got here. Your mum says I must have washed up stream. I must have fallen when I was running.”

I slapped my hands over my mouth when I realized what I had said. Marie didn’t miss my words however and her spine straightened. She crossed her arms over her chest and took slow steps until she was standing directly in

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front of me.

*“What do you mean by running?” she asked but I stayed silent. “You are a criminal, aren’t you? You crazy bitch, you are going to bring trouble to our doorstep. You need to f**king leave, right now.”*

She grabbed my arm and began to pull me away when Peggy finally found us. She was walking into the house with a basket of herbs when

she saw Marie dragging me unceremoniously. She dropped the basket and rushed over to us blocking our way.

“Marie, this is not how I raised you,” Peggy hissed. “She is our guest, she is still healing. You cannot throw her out like that.”

“She is a criminal. She is running away from people and we have enough to worry about without having another mouth to feed especially when that mouth is a criminal.”

I could feel the air tensing as neither woman wanted to back down. Guilt filled me as I realized that I was the reason for their fight. I never wanted this, I just wanted to get away.

“Stop, please,” I whispered and both women froze. “Marie is right, I should leave. I never intended to come here and I am grateful for all that you have done for me. I am glad I showed up at your door and not anyone else’s. For what it is worth, you were more than good to me.”

I started to walk away but Peggy walked in front of me. “You don’t have to leave, Camilla. Tell me who you are running from, we can help you.”

“No, we cannot,” Marie cut in but Peggy ignored her.

“Tell me, Camilla, please.”

I debated it for a second. Saying it felt like it would finally be real but I managed to swallow down my words. “I am running from my mate, he rejected me.”

Chapter 189

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

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After I had told Marie and Peggy everything that happened with Tyson, they were very sympathetic- well Peggy was. She offered me the option to stay with them for as long as I needed and Marie didn’t protest once. I didn’t want to but the truth

was, I couldn't get far on my own. I was still healing and I had no idea where I was going. Everything seemed fuzzy to me. All I remembered was running, I couldn't remember the lake or how I fell. I didn't even know where exactly I was, but I was safe and that was all that mattered to me in that moment.

After about a week of staying with them, Marie walked into my room early in the morning. She had her hands crossed over her chest and for a second, I thought she was going to ask me to leave the house but she just stared at me for a full minute before speaking. "If you're going to stay here there have to be some ground rules."

I sat up immediately knowing that was as much of an acceptance statement I would get from her. She proceeded to explain how she lived with her mother on the outskirts of a neutral land and they work in the town. She explained that I would have to help them if I wanted to stay. I honestly didn't mind because I had spent so long working as an omega, it felt like a good change to be doing something not because I was being forced to.

The longer we spent together, the more I realized that Marie wasn't completely a bad person. She was just very tough and protective of her mother. She never spoke about her dad but it wasn't farfetched to say that he was not in the picture. She was tough as nails and very snarky. On my first few days of working with them in the bakery, I was terrified of everyone who walked in. She snapped at me a few times but I knew she wasn't trying to be malicious. She just preferred to give tough love.

She wasn't outrightly trying to kick me out of her house and I did hear her defend me to a few customers so I knew she didn't hate me. We barely spoke to each other outside of when necessary but we were almost always around. It was a good schedule that worked for both of us in the month I had been here and she taught me a lot of things just by watching her. I never imagined I could be anything but an omega but she taught me otherwise.

She grabbed me one day at the store and took me to the back after I had cowered when a man had yelled at me. "I don't give a shit what happened in your old pack so I want you to listen to me very carefully, okay?"

"I'm sorry, I messed up her order and-

*“Will you f**king stop apologizing?” she hissed. “You’re not an omega here. Everyone here is equal. You have to f**king stand up for yourself or you cannot stay here. Everyone is going to try to take advantage of you if you don’t grow some f**king balls.”*

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Ever since that day, Marie made sure to put me at the forefront with the difficult customers. It was difficult at first but I slowly got the hang of it. Marie never said anything about the new development, but I saw her smile a bit one afternoon after I had put a rude customer in their place.

“Camilla,” Marie’s voice snapped me out of my thoughts and I turned to her. “Is there a reason you are standing in the back and doing nothing? I need you to run home and get some spices from mum. I’m almost out and I need to do a fresh batch of cookies.”

I nodded and rushed out. For a small bakery, they had a lot of sales most days of the week. I was sure it had more to do with the fact that everyone knew Peggy. She was that kind old woman that everyone grew up with. She always went out of her way to help people and make them feel welcome. In my short time living with them, I had noticed that she never passed by an opportunity to help without doing something about it.

The house was a ten minute walk from the shop and Peggy was waiting for me in the rocking chair outside the house, a small basket settled on her laps. The plan was to take it and run back but Peggy wouldn’t let go. She tapped the seat next to her and I hesitantly sat down. I anxiously looked out onto the road as if Marie was going to find me. I could already imagine how much she would scream at me.

“Is everything okay?” I asked her and she nodded. “You don’t look okay. Do you want me to get Marie?”

“No,” she said immediately and almost too quickly. My brows furrowed in suspicion and she sighed. “I just wanted a little company for a while and I wanted to ask how the transition was. Do you feel safe here?”

I nodded. “Safer than I have in a very long time. Sometimes though, I worry that he will find me.”

"If you tell me his name then maybe I can help you look out for him. I can let you know if he is coming or not."

I shook my head abruptly. "The last thing I want to do is put you in danger. You don't know him like I do, he will hurt you and you have been nothing but kind to me. I appreciate the concern but I can handle myself and I can handle him."

"Just because you can doesn't mean you have to," she whispered softly placing her warm hand over mine. "Allow us help you, even Marie is worried about you despite the fact that she refuses to show it. She is worried about you."

I gave her a warm smile and stood to my feet. "You have done more than enough." I took the small basket from her hands and she let me. "I'll be back at the end of the work day. Please try not to get into any trouble."

She didn't miss the fact that I had changed the subject but she also didn't push more on it. She just gave me a

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small nod and allowed me leave. Her words filled my thoughts as I walked back to the bakery. It would have felt good to just tell them that I was running from Tyson but I couldn't. If I did, I could risk putting them in danger. Peggy liked to see the best in everyone and I wouldn't put it past her to go looking for Tyson just so that she can talk to him and I couldn't see that ending well for anyone.

By the time I returned, Marie was thigh deep in customers. She saw me and let out an exasperated sigh. "It took you long enough. What the hell have you been doing all this time? Can you stay here and ensure everyone gets what they want. Try not to get screamed at."

She didn't give me a chance to process what was happening before she grabbed the basket from my hands and went out into the back. I swallowed deeply before making my way over to the counter to take care of everyone. It was difficult to say the least and I had no idea how Marie was able to do it on her own. There were screaming customers, impatient ones and the occasional flirty ones.

I managed to clear out the area within forty five minutes and I was right on time too because Marie returned from the back. I could only guess that the cookies were baking. She helped me clear out the last customers and I let out an exhausted sigh.

"It was very full today," I mused aloud trying to make some conversation and she just shrugged. "Okay, I know you don't like me much but can we at least try to be friends? We practically live together. I don't want you to hate me."

She turned to me with her hands crossed over her chest. "I don't hate you and you should be less worried about what I think and more concerned about yourself."

"You act like you hate me," I shot back and she sighed deeply. "I just want to be civil."

The door

opened at that exact moment. "You can be civil by attending to the next customer while I go to check on the cookies."

The customer in question was a middle aged man and I could tell that he wasn't a supernatural. He didn't quite have the scent for it. I gave him a warm smile and struck up conversation with him while I packed up his pastries. I was in the middle of handing it over to him when I noticed something on the news paper in his hands. Somehow, in the past two months that I had been here, I had never asked for the date. It just never seemed important to me and also because I wanted to pretend like I was in another world

I was staring at the small numbers on the paper and blinked slowly. "That can not be right."

"What can't be right?"

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"I think there is a typo on your newspaper. It is six years ahead of when it should be."

The man furrowed his brows at me. "Is that a joke? I don't quite understand the punch line."

"is everything okay?" Marie asked as she made her way over with a steaming tray of cookies. "Camilla, give him the pastries and let the nice man leave."

I handed it over to him and he unceremoniously snatched it out of my hand before turning to Marie. "I think you should take her to a doctor or something. She sounds insane."

He stormed out and Marie turned to me with raised brows. "There better be a good explanation."

"When I left Tyson, it was 1827."

"That can't be right. It isn't 1827. It hasn't been for six years."

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Chapter 190

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I felt like I had been thrust underwater. Marie was speaking but I couldn't hear her. I saw her mouth moving but it came out garbled and like white noise. She apologized to the customer for the disruption and while they were talking, I took that as an excuse to walk away. The day wasn't over and Marie would have a lot to deal with but she could handle it. I just needed some space.

I didn't know where I was going to, all I knew was that I needed to go. I heard Marie call out to me but I ignored her. I needed some space to process everything that had just happened. How could six years pass and I wasn't aware. It made absolutely no sense to me. I was running from Tyson, that was the last thing I remembered doing. How could it be that six years had passed and I was only realizing it now?

I felt a hand wrap around my bicep as Marie pulled me to a stop. Her cheeks were red and her hair was a mess. She was breathing heavily as if she had been running and I noticed that she had the keys to the store in her hands. I ope

ned my mouth to speak but she held up a hand to stop me as she tried to catch her breath.

*“You walk very fast,” she managed out through staggered breaths. “Couldn’t you have waited a f**king second? I wanted to lock up the store. Are you alright?”*

“You can go back,” I said turning away from her. “I just need some space right now, okay?”

“You just found out that you lost six years of your life. I don’t think space is what you need. Except you were joking and that was some elaborate scheme to—”

“Do I look like someone who wants to spend her time on elaborate schemes to prank you?” I turned on her and she went silent. “Look, you don’t even like me, so you should have no problem returning to the shop. I just need to figure out what the hell is wrong and I don’t need you breathing down my neck while I am doing it.”

She raised her brows in amusement. I had never snapped at her like that before, not even when she was being horrible to me but my patience was at an all

*—
time low today. I had too much to worry about and I didn’t need or want to waste my time arguing with her. I turned to leave but I didn’t expect her to keep walking in step with me. I tried to ignore her at first but after a few minutes, I turned to her ready to rip her a new one when she cut me*

off.

“I don’t have to like you to know that you need someone right now,” she whispered softly. “Just let me do this, it would help with my crippling guilt.”

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I couldn’t stop the corner of my lips from curling up into a small smile. When she realized that I wasn’t going to protest, she winked at me. As much as I hated to admit it, walking with her made things a little easier to handle. It made me feel less alone as my thoughts went round in circles. I had no idea what this meant, what I was doing

and what I was going to do but at least I had someone.

When we got to the house, Peggy was nowhere to be seen. Marie and I sat in the living room and I watched as she made me a mug of hot chocolate. She placed it in front of me and gave me a small smile that I couldn't help but return. The hot chocolate warmed something inside of me and a feeling of nostalgia warmed over me which I found weird considering I never had hot chocolate in Tyson's pack. I couldn't help but wonder if it was somehow related to what I was doing over the past six years.

"So," Marie began slowly. It was shocking to see her at a loss for words. She never hesitated and she never doubted, but for the first time in a long time, she was confused. "You truly thought this was 1827?"

"I could have bet my life on it," I sighed deeply. "How could it be? I remember running from the pack. Everything about it is blurry though but that's all I remember. I thought maybe I had gotten hurt and wound up here."

"Okay, where is the pack?" I stilled at her question. "I know you don't want to tell me who your mate is and you don't have to but if you tell me where the pack is then maybe we can find a way to get you back home."

"No," I cut her off sharply. "I am not going back there. You have no idea what it was like for me there. I won't willingly go there, not for anything. He will still be there and if he gets a hold of me."

"Okay," she raised both hands in surrender. "You don't want to go back and I respect that but it might give me some idea as to where you came from. I just need a name Camilla. I need to know what to avoid in case he is still looking for you which I doubt because if it has truly been six years, he should have moved on."

"He would have, yes, but if he sees me again, he will do anything to get even with me for running away," I ran my hands through my hair in frustration. I didn't know what to do. Marie was trying to be helpful but she wasn't going to understand. "He raped me. He rejected me but he came to my room and raped me. As if that wasn't enough, he accused me of trying to trap him and publicly ridiculed me."

*Her mouth fell open in shock and anger. I could clearly see the hatred swirling in her irises. "What a bastard. Now I want the name so that I can beat his f**king a*s."*

I laughed. "Thanks for the offer but I'm good. I just want to forget that part of my life ever existed."

"I can respect that," she said finally as she squeezed my hand softly. "I'll go find something to do. You look like you could use some space."

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I gave her a curt nod, it was the best I could do without actually saying any words. It was one of those situations

where words weren't necessary, they would never have been able to fully express the length of my gratitude.

I sat there in the living room for the majority of the day. For the better part of it, Marie avoided me and stayed out of my way. I waited for Peggy to return but she didn't and by the time the sun was setting, I couldn't help but wonder where she had gone. She didn't leave the house so often and even if she did, she always found a way to tell us because Marie tended to worry.

It struck me weird that Marie hadn't asked once for her mother so I made my way into the kitchen where she was working. The smell of pie wafted through the air and she turned to me when she heard me clear my throat. Her hair was in a messy bun and she looked a tad bit unfocused.

"I see you're out of your self imposed exile," she mused aloud. "Are you ready to join us yet without me having to throw you a pity party?"

I rolled my eyes. "Where is Peggy? I haven't seen her since the afternoon. Did she tell you that she was going anywhere?"

Marie was confused for a full minute before turning to the window and when she saw how dark it was getting, she cursed. "Can you check out back for me please? Sometimes she goes out there and loses track of time. It is getting late and I don't want her getting hurt in the dark."

I nodded. "Where are you going?"

"To check everywhere else," she was already running out of the room when she said that.

It took me a second to get my bearings together and once I did, I ran towards the back of the house calling out Peggy's name but there was nothing but pure silence which was weird because the woods were never silent. There were birds and there was rustling of trees but this time, there was nothing. I called out to Peggy louder hoping that maybe she hadn't heard me but I still came up with nothing.

I cursed when I got to the base of the tree by the lake. "Peggy, where the hell are you? If I return to that house without you, Marie is going to skin my ass. You know she doesn't like me, let us not make this worse, shall we?"

I was about to leave when I saw a ripple in the water. It was subtle but it was there. At first, I thought I imagined it until I saw it through the bubbles, it was a scrap of grey fabric. I let out an ear splitting scream, one that I didn't even realize I was capable of.

"She is here!" I yelled out hoping that Marie hadn't gone far and could hear me.

I ran my hands through my hair in frustration. I wanted to go in after her but after knowing I was found in water, I

didn't want to take that risk. I heard footsteps and Marie rushed to stand beside me.

"Get here!" she exclaimed. "She's right there."

"Why can't you get her?"

*"I don't know how to f**king swim!" she screamed at me and my skin prickled as the weight of the decision settled on my shoulders. I didn't know what to do.*

Marie was still screaming at me to get her mother and in that moment, I couldn't help but just wish that the water would somehow part and spit her out or something.

Just as quickly as the thought dropped into my head, there was a disturbance in the waves.