

# The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 191-194

## Chapter 191

### RYKER'S P.O.V

*I was a mess.*

*That was the only accurate way I could describe myself. It had been almost two months and if I wished, I could have given the exact number of days and even hours but I was so strung up that most times I could barely remember where I was. Everyone watched me like a coiled spring ready to snap. Maybe it was because I hadn't spoken about it to anyone or maybe it was the fact that the last time they tried, I forbade anyone from speaking. The only people who got to see me smile were my daughters and even then it felt forced.*

*I wasn't sure how to do this whole ruling thing without Camilla and I couldn't help but wonder what exactly was stopping her from returning. I knew she wasn't dead, I could feel the bond, albeit a bit smothered probably due to distance but I could feel it and I knew that she was alive but I didn't know where she was. It didn't stop me from looking for her every second I could spare.*

*My days were filled to the brim with palace work, my daughters and trying to find Camilla. Juan and Christine helped out where they could but I could tell they did it more out of pity than anything. Even I could see how it could potentially look pathetic but I knew what I felt and I knew that Camilla was alive. There was nothing that could make me stop believing that.*

*I shook my head to clear the thoughts out and stacked up my files as neatly as possible. It was sometime around seven if I were to guess and I knew it was only a matter of time before Audrey came to me to tuck her in bed. She had been suspiciously quiet since Camilla disappeared. She asked for her mother every day for a week and I explained as best as I could to a child her age. Her mother was missing. To say that she was distraught would have been an understatement but she didn't fight me on it, she didn't even cry.*

*I found her in her room seated cross legged on the bed. She was already in her pajamas and she was struggling with the fish braids on her head. I immediately rushed over to assist and she reluctantly let me. She didn't say a word, only kept her eyes fixated on the moon in the sky.*

*"Do you think mummy is staring at the moon too?" she asked and I shrugged. "I like to think she is."*

*"I would like to think she is too," I whispered in agreement. "She will be back, I promise."*

*Audrey didn't say a word as I brushed her hair, she simply shrugged. I wanted to reach out to her but I didn't know how. I tried all that I knew to do. Camilla had always been better at these things than I was. I didn't know*

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*how to offer verbal support, I just knew how to be there and so I was. I stood there brushing her hair until she leaned backwards into my arms and then I picked her up.*

*My skin itched with the need to be out there searching for Camilla but my daughter needed me. It was clear from the way she clung to my neck and wrapped herself around me. I let out a deep breath when I felt the first tear drop on my shoulder. It broke my heart to see her cry and it hurt even more when I realized she was trying to stay quiet. She was a child, she had no reason to smother her cries.*

*"It's okay," I assured her. "You can cry, it's just me and you." She sniffled into my shoulder. "I'm right here. I am not going anywhere until you are fine."*

*"I knew she was going to die," she whispered and I stilled. I pulled back so that I could look her in the eye.*

*"Your mother is not dead. I don't care what you heard or what anyone may say, she is alive."*

*"I saw her," she cut me off. "She fell off the cliff with the mean woman. I saw it. I saw the blood and Aurora and mummy-"*

*Her voice cracked on the end but there was only one thing that bothered me and it was the fact that Audrey was nowhere near present when any of those things happened. She was in the cave where I had kept her safe. I reluctantly pulled away from my sobbing daughter and placed her on the bed. I sat down in front of her and clasped her hands in mine. Her eyes were still cast down and tears dripped freely from her cheeks.*

*"I need you to listen to me, Audrey, and you are going to answer me, okay?" I asked and she slowly nodded. I wiped her cheeks clean. "What do you mean by you saw it happen? You were in the cave, weren't you?"*

*"I was," she agreed.*

*"Then how did you see it? If you were not there then how did you know?"*

*"I saw it in my dreams," she explained and my brows furrowed in confusion. "I told you before when we met Lyla the first time. I didn't remember until after mummy went missing."*

*It took me a second to realize what she was talking about and when I did, I ran my hands through my hair while muttering curses under my breath. I had completely forgotten about the dreams she had. It seemed like a lifetime ago. I had pushed it into the corners of my mind because Lyla said when she did the spell that she*

*erased her memories.*

*"Wait, you remember?" I asked and she nodded slowly. I ran my hands down my jaw and forced a small smile on*

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*my face. I placed a comforting kiss on her forehead and pulled the covers up to her chin. "It's okay, your mum is alive and everything will be fine, I promise."*

*I turned to leave but she called out to me. "Daddy, can you do something?"*

*"What is it, princess?"*

*"It's mummy," she began slowly. "Please find her."*

*"I will."*

*I walked away from the room and the moment I was gone, I went in search of Juan and Christine. They were the only two who completely understood everything that was happening. I didn't have to search for them long because I found them outside the council room.*

*"Thank the goddess that you are both here. There is something that we need to talk about."*

*"That's good," Christine began awkwardly. "We want to talk to you too."*

*It was the tone of her voice that had me taken aback. There was something off about it, almost careful as if she didn't want to risk offending me. I narrowed my eyes between her and Juan and that was when I noticed that they were both fidgeting.*

*"Spit it out," I frowned. "You're going to piss me off either way so you might as well just go along with it."*

*Christine sighed. "We are worried about you. All of us, including the elders and they have come to the decision that you need to take over from Camilla officially until Audrey is of age."*

*"She's not dead."*

*She opened her mouth to speak but Juan cut her off. "Let's say that I agree with you- they do not. You have been searching for two months. Everyone is just about ready to move on. I know it is absolutely f\*\*king terrifying but the world needs to move on and so do you."*

*"I am not leaving her out there alone. She is alive and I am going to find her."*

*"We just wanted to warn you so they don't spring it up on you tomorrow," Christine interrupted. "We are on your side, Ryker. I have watched the girls while you went looking for her and Juan has helped you search for her. I want her to be alive more than anything, if not for you then for the girls. They deserve their mother."*

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*"Then help me convince the elders. I need more time. I will find her if I have more time," she opened her mouth to interrupt but I cut her off. "Audrey's visions are coming back. She remembered one of the old ones. She told me exactly how Camilla fell off that cliff."*

*They both stilled. Neither one of them said a word. I looked in the hallway to make sure no one was there before pulling them into the council room with me. Once we were alone, I explained everything that had happened in Audrey's room. By the time I was done, they looked just as shocked and terrified as I felt.*

*"Lyla isn't here anymore," Christine spoke first and I nodded slowly. "If her visions come back, none of us will be able to control it."*

*"I know," I whispered. "We need to find Isabella. Audrey is going to need her mother during this. There has to be something that we can do to buy me more time."*

*"I can try to talk to them," Christine didn't sound convinced even as she spoke. "There was an old tradition. It stopped over two hundred years ago but it was a three to five week long mourning process for the ruling monarch before the next ruler was announced. I can try and convince the elders to host it for Camilla but it will only buy you approximately a month."*

*It wasn't ideal but I knew I wasn't going to get a better option than that so I nodded. "It'll have to do. I will keep looking. I have searched the towns around the lake. I am going to extend the area just in case she wandered off a bit too far. Thank you, Christine."*

*I turned to leave when she spoke. "If she is alive, then why didn't she come back home?" I stilled. "Surely, you have thought about that."*

*"I have," I admitted.*

*“Camilla loves her family, and you know it. If she were alive, she would have rushed back here, so why hasn’t she?”*

## **Chapter 192**

### **CAMILLA’S P.O.V**

*The water began to move, almost as if someone were controlling it. It started with a small wave that quickly grew angrier. Marie was screaming some words but I couldn’t hear her. I could hear the roaring of waves in my ears. The waves rose highly and with them did Peggy’s body until the water was almost lifting her out and washed her onto the shore. Marie and I stood there for a full minute, no one dared to speak or move as we tried to process what had just happened.*

*I broke free of my spell first and rushed over to Peggy. She wasn’t breathing and she looked paler than I would have preferred. I wasn’t sure how but I knew exactly what to do. I dropped to my knees in front of her and started to push hard on her chest willing her awake but she wouldn’t. I wasn’t at it for long when Marie’s hand came onto my shoulder and she pushed me back almost harshly.*

*“What the hell just happened?” she yelled out loud as she took over from me. I wanted to help but she shot me a scathing look. “What was that back there?”*

*“I don’t know,” I admitted. She looked terrified and I should have been too but I felt more curiosity if I was being honest, I stared at the water again trying to ignore the soft tug I felt in my chest towards it.*

*“Are you going to stand there or are you going to try to help me?” Marie snarled and I turned back to her. She was furiously pumping her mother’s chest but there was no change in Peggy and I cursed.*

*I didn’t know what to do. I could barely remember my own life, how was I expected to know how to help Peggy? I froze in place staring at Marie’s grief stricken and panicked expression. Peggy was her only family and she was so close to death’s door, I could almost smell it. The best I could do was utter a small prayer to the goddess hoping that the same way she heard my prayer about the water, she would hear this one.*



*“Don’t just f\*\*king stand there!” she exclaimed. “Help me you bitch. She saved your life, so come over here and help me pump the f\*\*king water out of her chest goddamit.”*

*She was crying now and her movements were becoming sloppy. I gently pushed her away from her mother’s body but she wouldn’t move. She was clutching her like her life depended on it. I knew I couldn’t do much about that, so I maneuvered around her and took over. I wasn’t sure how long I could last pumping her chest but I could try and try I did. My eyes welled up with tears and I repeated the same prayer under my breath until my*

*throat was sore.*

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*“Please,” I whispered, my voice cracking on the end. “You cannot die right now.”*

*As the words left my lips, Peggy’s body seized. It was slight and I thought I had imagined it until I heard Marie gasp*

*beside me. She asked a few questions but I couldn’t focus on her words. My eyes were fixated on Peggy and the tug beneath my fingertips. I could feel something tugging at my wrists and it felt like muscle memory as my hands moved. I didn’t know what the hell I was doing but I watched as Peggy’s mouth opened and water flowed out almost following the movements of my hands.*

*My eyes widened in complete and utter shock. My finger shook and Peggy coughed snapping my attention back to her. The water sloshed over me and before I could even figure out what had just happened, Marie pushed me to the side. She took a protective stance in front of her mother and narrowed her eyes at me in slits.*

*“What the f\*\*k are you playing at?” she spat with narrowed eyes. “You can bend water?”*

*“I don’t know,” I glanced down at my hands unsure of what had just happened. “I can’t- I don’t remember.”*

*"Did you push her in there?" she asked and my eyes widened in shock. "Don't look at me like that. What the hell do you want me to think? One second you are here and the next you are pulling her out of the water with powers that you didn't tell us that you had."*

*"I didn't know I had the powers!" I exclaimed. "I don't know what the hell is happening. This is as terrifying for me as it is for you."*

*"You're lying," she snarled. "You're a witch aren't you? Get out of my house or I will make sure that you leave in a body bag."*

*"I didn't-"*

*"Leave or I will tell the entire town that you are a witch."*

*I opened my mouth to speak but was cut off by a groan that came from Peggy's lips. Marie turned away from me to focus on her mother. Her hands were gentle as she stroked her hair which was a sharp contrast from how she had spoken to me a few seconds ago.*

*"What is all the yelling about?" Peggy groaned but Marie waved her off. "Don't yell at Camilla, she had nothing to do with this. I fell in while I was trying to touch a lily pad. I knocked my head on something and blacked out."*

*"She's a witch," Marie tried to explain but Peggy waved her off.*

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*"She smells like a wolf, Marie, she isn't a witch. Listen, can we talk about this later? I am freezing my ass off and I would like a warm cup of tea first, okay?" Marie nodded and helped her mother to her feet.*

*She kept her eyes on me as if worried I would do something. I couldn't help but scoff at the stark contrast to how she treated me in the afternoon. It took less than half an hour for her to hate me more than she did when I first arrived. Due to her stares, I couldn't even find it in myself to go after them. They were almost to the front door when Peggy stopped and turned to me.*

*"Are you going to stand there? Come in."*



*I let out a sigh of relief. I could tell that Marie wasn't pleased but in that moment, I was just relieved that Peggy was not upset with me. Still, I kept a respectable distance so as not to piss anyone off. Peggy was dried off and brought back to the living room where a blanket was slung over her shoulder and she was sporting a cup of tea.*

*"Now," she began clasping her hands together. "Is someone going to tell me what the hell happened outside?"*

*I opened my mouth to speak but Marie beat me to it. "She controlled the water. She made waves so big that they spat you out and she controlled what was inside of you. Do you know how insane that is? Why would she keep it a secret? How could she hold that kind of power?"*

*"I didn't know I had those powers," I tried to reason but Marie ignored me. "If I did, I would have told you. All I wanted was to get her out. I had no ulterior motives."*

*"Of course," she snorted but Peggy held up a hand to silence her.*

*"Cut her some slack, Marie, she cannot remember the last six years of her life. Even if she remembered and forgot to tell us, it isn't her fault," Marie crossed her arms over her chest in defiance. "She didn't hurt me, she rescued me. If anything, you should be thanking her."*

*"No one should have those kind of powers."*

*"It is unwise to fear everything that you cannot explain," Peggy whispered and Marie opened her mouth to protest but changed it at the last minute and stormed off. I heard the door to her room slam and Peggy winced. "Please, forgive her, she is a very untrusting child. She has been that way ever since—"*

*"Since?" I asked and she hesitated.*

*"I'm not sure it is my story to tell."*

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*I completely understood that. There were some things that were better heard from the lips of the one who experienced it. I nodded and gave Peggy a small*

*smile as I stood to my feet. I wanted to give her some privacy and was almost at the door to the kitchen when she spoke.*

*“She loved a boy, we do not speak his name anymore. They went out into the woods*

*for a night out under the stars. The girl she considered her best friend had planned with the boy to betray her. They wanted to be with each other and thought to get rid of her. She overheard them and was able to run away.”*

*I stilled. “That must have been horrible.”*

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*“It was and when she tried to tell people, no one believed her. She is fine now but some scars are not visible. Give her some time, she will come around.”*

*“Of course,” I agreed. “I’ll just take a walk outside. You should rest.”*

*I stayed outside, not because I needed fresh air but because I just needed to be away. I stared at my hands shocked that such little things were capable of housing such power like the one I saw earlier. Before I could stop myself, I found myself walking back towards the lake and sitting cross legged in front of it.*

*I felt stupid as I reached out over the water but I needed to know for sure if it was a fluke of nature or if truly I had these powers. I exhaled deeply and focused on the movement of the water, I listened until it had settled in my soul, until my heart moved with it in one slow beat.*

*My hands started moving before I even realized what was happening and I heard the sloshing of the water as it moved with me. I cracked one eye open shocked to see that the water truly was following the movements of my hands. I stared in disbelief which quickly turned into glee as a small laugh left my lips.*

*“Oh my goddess,” I whispered watching the water. I had never felt as alive as I did in that moment. It felt like every nerve cell in me was on fire. “I can control water.”*

*“For someone who claims not to have known, you sure are good at it.”*

## **Chapter 193**

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

*I let my hands drop slowly and so did the water. I turned to Marie who had her hands crossed over her chest and a frown on her face. She still looked upset with me but at least she didn't look like she hated me. I opened my mouth to speak but she held up a hand to stop me from speaking.*

*"I didn't trust you when you first came and goddess knows that I still don't trust you but I was starting to and you come out of nowhere able to bend water and you say you didn't know but for someone who claimed not to know, you sure are damn good at it."*

*I sighed deeply. "It just comes out of me. I don't know how else to explain it, Marie. It feels like muscle memory. My hands just know what to do even when*

*my mind doesn't. The water- it's a part of me."*

*"That part of you almost killed my mother. She could have drowned and you just- we just stood there staring. I couldn't jump in because I couldn't swim and you- you froze."*

*"I was just as scared as you were, Marie. I didn't know what to do."*

*"Would you have jumped?" she asked and I stilled. "If for some reason, you couldn't control the water, would you have jumped in to save her or would you have stayed there while she died?"*

*"I-" I wanted to say I would have. I wanted to tell her that I would have done everything possible to make sure that I got Peggy out but the truth was that I didn't know. "I can't answer that question, Marie and you know it. I froze and I panicked and I shouldn't have but you cannot control how the body responds to stress and you cannot blame me for doing the exact same thing that you did. We both froze and that doesn't make either of us bad people."*

*She laughed humorlessly. "That's the problem, don't you get it?" she asked. "I am not mad at you. I am mad at me. It was my mother and I, that was how it had always been but then you had to come in and you had to make her believe that we could be a family. You had to make me believe that maybe you could fit in."*

*"I'm not quite following- what does this have to do with anything?"*

*"I was looking to you!" she exclaimed. "If you were not here, if it was just both of us, I would have figured something out. I would have found something to do but because you were standing next to me, I figured that you would have helped and that was my mistake. It is my mother and I, that is how it has been and that is how it*

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*will continue to be. I forgot that and I won't forget it again."*

*Before I could say anything, she walked away leaving me in the darkness. I stared out at the calm waves and I couldn't help but wonder if things would have been different had I been unable to control the waves and she was unable to get out. The longer I thought about it, the more I felt like I was going mad.*

*With one last longing stare at the waves, I stood to my feet and walked away. I couldn't push away the feeling that there was something I was missing.*

*I couldn't sleep properly. I woke up by three and was unable to lay in bed anymore. Instead of just sitting in bed doing nothing, I decided to go down into the kitchen and find something to do. I ended up cleaning the entire house twice and starting with breakfast. I moved around the kitchen with no thought in mind, my head was completely empty and that was the problem. I needed something to fill it with.*

*"Camilla!" I had to shove my hand into my mouth to smother a scream. Peggy stood behind me with a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. She cocked her head to the side in confusion and I gave her a small smile. "Why are you awake so early?"*

*"I couldn't sleep," I shrugged. "Why are you awake? You had a near death experience."*

*"I find that those make it hard for you shad a near death experience."*

*joked as she made her way over to me.*

*As she got closer, I smelled something almost metallic and slightly pungent, like dried blood. I didn't want to ask out rightly so I just ran my eyes down her body subtly. She wasn't making it easy for me because she kept moving around the kitchen trying to figure out what I was making.*

*"Do you want to take the blanket off?" I asked and she turned to me with unfocused eyes then shook her head. "It's a little hot in here. You might want to put it down."*

*There was something in her eyes as she shook her head. She turned away before I could get a good look and I realized that I needed to pull it off her and figure it out as soon as possible because the smell of blood was getting worse. She busied herself around the kitchen and when I got closer, she would move in the other direction. I let it slide for the first few minutes thinking I was overreacting until I heard footsteps coming down the steps.*

*Marie walked into the room rubbing sleep from her eyes. There was a small smile on her face but when she saw me, it quickly faded away.*

*"You don't have to do anything around here anymore, Camilla. I can take care of myself and my mother."*

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*"Marie," I began but she turned away from me. "I'm here right now, just let me help, please. If you want, I can be out of your hair within a month. Just give me some time, Marie. Don't do this."*

*"Marie," Peggy scolded but Marie had already turned away from both of us. Despite the frown on her face, she still walked into the kitchen and took a bite from the sandwiches I had made.*

*“What’s that smell?” Marie asked and we both turned to her. “I don’t think it is from the food, it smells like blood or something. Is some one hurt?”*

*When Peggy turned away and tried to sneak away, I knew immediately what I had to do. I wrapped my hand around the blanket and tugged. She tried her best to keep it on but it tumbled to the floor and in the process, exposed her red and bleeding arm. It was healing by the second and she was making it worse at the same time. She was scratching it and by the looks of things, she had been doing it for a long time.*

*“Mum?” Marie’s voice was soft and almost broken but Peggy wouldn’t look in her eyes. “Why would you do that?”*

*“I keep seeing the water,” her voice was almost broken. “I keep seeing my life flash before my eyes. This is the only way I can remind myself that I am alive—that I didn’t die there.”*

*“Why would you—” Marie began but I cut her off.*

*“I understand,” I whispered.*

*Both eyes turned to me and I linked my hand with Peggy’s. She was still picking at her skin, I held onto her hand tightly and gestured for her to come with me. She was fidgeting in my hold and I could tell that she wanted out of my grasp but I wasn’t going to let that happen.*

*I walked with her to the chair and let her sit beside me. Marie was watching me with narrowed eyes but I ignored her. I didn’t care about her approval for this, I didn’t need it and neither did I want it. This was about Peggy and I. She could be pissed all she wants but that didn’t mean I was going to leave the woman who had taken me in to suffer when I could help.*

*“Sometimes, it feels like I am in a tunnel with no way forward,” I began slowly. “I have nightmares that I can barely remember. All I know is the water that I was found. These powers are meant to give me some form of reprieve but they only remind me of the fact that I was found half dead in a lake and I don’t know my past.”*



*“Camilla,” Peggy began but I cut her off.*

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*“They say water holds memories and some days, I hope that is true. Some days, I want to go in there, go under and not come back up until I remember but it doesn’t work like that, does it?” she gave me a small smile. “I know how you feel. I know how hard it is to come back but this,” I gestured at her bruised hands. “This isn’t going to fix anything. You are going to hurt yourself and you will still remember.”*

*She shook her head but the tears were already falling down her cheeks. “I am an old woman. I should be the one giving you advice and not the other way around.”*

*I couldn’t help the laugh that bubbled out of my lips. I clasped both of her hands in mine and locked eyes with her. “It gets better, I promise.”*

*With one last smile, I stood to my feet and made my way out to give the mother and daughter some space. I was almost at the door when Marie rushed up to me and she grabbed my shoulder.*

*“Does it?” she asked and my brows furrowed, “get better, I mean, does it get better? You told her that it does and I—I’ve been through some things.”*

*I knew she was talking about her experience with her best friend and the young man. I hesitated, thinking about my next words. “I hope it does because if not, then I just lied to a sad old woman.”*

## **Chapter 194**

### **RYKER’S P.O.V**

*The elders sat in their usual formation around the council table. Their eyes held pity and slight disgust as they stared at the empty chair behind me. Camilla’s presence was obviously missed and it stood out like the elephant in the room. I crossed my arms over my chest waiting for the man who would have the balls to be the first to address the situation but no one dared to say a word.*

*“Did you call for a meeting just for me to sit here staring at you?” I asked unable to keep the sarcasm out of my tone. “There are more important things that require my time and attention.”*

*“Like searching for the Queen?” someone asked and I raised a brow. He turned away in embarrassment and his cheeks tinged pink. He looked like he wanted the ground to open up and swallow him and truthfully, it would have been a better alternative than me getting my hands on him. “It has been a while, your majesty.”*

*“I am aware of how long it has been. If that is what you came to talk to me about then we might as well put this whole thing to an end. I know how long my mate has been missing.”*

*There was a collective wince at my choice of words. They all believed she was dead and I couldn't blame them, if it were someone else, I would have probably believed the same thing but I knew better. I could feel her.*

*“The Lady Christine came to us and suggested a funeral ritual. It is customary that we come to you on that. You ultimately have the final say on it,” it was Caius who spoke and his voice was soft and careful. “You would have to sign a legally binding contract that states that you know she is dead. You cannot back out from it at any moment. It is for your safety as well as ours because most often than not, mates find it hard to admit-”*

*“Admit that their partners are dead,” I finished for him and he nodded. I knew what he was getting at and I desperately wanted to remind them that she was alive but I knew it would only solidify what they were saying. “I understand and I am ready to sign it.”*

*The words felt like ash on my tongue and I could see the shock on their faces. That wasn't the response that they were expecting from me and as the paper was slid over to me, I couldn't help but feel like I was failing Camilla. This was giving me at most six weeks to find her and there was a nagging voice at the back of my mind telling me that I was going to fail. It felt like the weight of the world was on my shoulders and it felt like everything was bearing down on me as I signed my name across the pages.*

*As I stared at the drying ink on the page, I couldn't believe that I had done it. I heard Caius speaking but his*

*words barely settled in my ears. I made an unintelligible statement before rushing to my feet. All eyes were on me but in that moment, I could not bring myself to care. I had signed away every right I would have after the next four to six weeks.*

*"If you will excuse me," I began clearing my throat. "Now that this has been signed, I presume my assistance is no longer necessary."*

*"Your majesty, due to the sensitivity of this issue we are going to fast track everything and try to round up within two to three weeks," I turned to the elder who had spoken and the intensity of my gaze had him looking away. "The people have gone on for too long. It has been two months. She deserves to have the best and her memory needs to be preserved."*

*"You want to rush things?" I repeated dumbly. "Would it kill you to do things the right way? What if I demand that it has to be done in six weeks?"*

*"Unfortunately, your majesty, the only person who has the authority to do that is the Queen. As she is not here, the power lies with us. The decision has been made. It is unhealthy for you and for the princesses to live like this. You have our deepest condolences."*

*I didn't wait to hear the rest of his statement, I just walked out of the room. I could hear their whispers behind me but I didn't give a shit. They deliberately refused to tell me about the sped up time line because they knew I would never have signed it. My blood boiled with rage and frustration. I wanted so badly to scream but I kept every emotion bottled up as I walked out of the palace. The guards glanced at me in concern and confusion when I ignored their bows and greetings.*

*"Ryker," I heard Christine call out to me but I ignored her. Her brows furrowed and she started to follow me. "I wanted to talk to you about something. Were you able to talk to the elders? Do you have any idea when you are going to start-*

*“Just stop!” I ground out as I whirled on her and her spine straightened. “I do not want to speak to anyone right now. I am not in the mood for a heartfelt conversation so this is the part where you walk away before I say something that we will both regret.”*

*She looked taken aback. “I am just trying to help here. I have no idea what is going on and you’re just offloading on me. We are all worried about her.”*

*“You all think she is dead,” I shot back and she pursed her lips in anger.*

*I turned away from her and kept walking towards the woods. What I needed was a long run to get rid of the*

*frustration building up under my skin. I had walked a few feet thinking that Christine had returned to the palace when she suddenly walked in front of me blocking my path. I tried to sidestep her but she was quick to step in*

*front of me.*

*“I don’t have time for this,” I warned. “I don’t have anything to say to you.”*

*“Good, then you can listen because I have a lot to say,” I wasn’t sure if it was her bravado or the fact that I knew standing in front of me scared her that had me staying still. Nothing scared Christine, but I could see the slight tremor in her stance. “I know this is hitting you harder than it is hitting the rest of us. I understand that you feel like complete shit but you cannot take this out on me.”*

*“I am-”*

*She held up a hand to cut me off. “Just let me finish, goddamit.”*

*I crossed my arms over my chest and gestured for her to keep going.*

*“I don’t want to think that she is dead. Do you really think I want to be here without her? Camilla is the only family that I have left. Do you think I want to be telling the girls stories about their mother? Of course not. I want more than anything for her to be alive but her being alive would mean that something is wrong, something is keeping her away from home. Call me selfish, but I would rather she be dead than she be suffering somewhere. So yes, I think she is dead but that is because*

*se I just want her to be happy. She has been hurt so much, she deserves at least this much.”*

*I didn't know what to say. On one hand, I understood where she was coming from and if I were selfless enough, I would think the same but I never pretended to be a good man. I never claimed to be a better person- that was her. I was going to be selfish and I was going to fight tooth and nail to bring her back.*

*“You are a better person than I am,” I said simply and that was all she needed to know that I wasn't going to drop this. She let out an exasperated sigh and buried her face into her hands. “I have to go, I don't have enough time.”*

*“You have six weeks.”*

*“I have two,” her mouth fell open. “They decided that too much time has been wasted. I have two weeks to find my mate and bring her back home so excuse me if I don't have the time to discuss with you right now. There are towns I have to visit and it is going to take the entirety of the two weeks. I might not even be able to get them*

*all.”*

*“Let me help,” she began and I opened my mouth to refuse but she cut me off. “If Aurora is who you are worried*

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*about then someone can watch her while we search, you need all hands on deck for this one. You cannot do it alone. Let Juan and I help you.”*

*I ran my hands through my hair as I debated what to say. On one hand, she was right but on the other hand, I didn't want to leave my child alone.*

*“You know you need our help.”*

*I opened my mouth to accept when I felt a sharp pain in the center of my chest. It felt like my chest was being ripped open with a hot knife. The last time I felt pain like this was when Reina burned my skin. It took over a month for it to heal and the scar remained. I fell to my knees and Christine was by my side immediately.*

*“What is going on?” I heard her ask but I couldn’t make out a response. “Do you want me to call the physician? Is something wrong? Did something happen to Camilla?”*

*“I’m fine,” I ground out as the pain subsided. I managed to get to my feet but my body felt weak from what had just happened.*

*“What the hell was that?” Christine looked genuinely spooked. “You looked like you were in pain.”*

*“You know how I told you the mate bond was there but dormant, as if something was keeping it muted?” I asked and she nodded. “Well it isn’t dormant anymore. Something just triggered it.”*