

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 195

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Ever since Peggy's incident with the lake, I found myself returning to that exact spot every night to practice my newfound powers. I wasn't sure if I was just a natural talent or if I had learned all this in my six year mind gap and it was just slowly coming back to me. Whichever it was, I couldn't help but imagine just how cool it must have been for me to own these powers. I felt unstoppable.

Marie had let go of her grudge and sometimes sat down by the lake with me and watched me practice. She said it made her feel safer being around the lake knowing I was there and could pull her out if need be. I wasn't sure if that made us friends but I **was** glad that she wasn't trying to run me out of the house. Speaking of the house, I had to move out soon.

I hadn't told either of them but I didn't want to be a bother anymore and it seemed like everything was going haywire. I didn't want another situation like the one where Marie completely hated my guts. I didn't want to make anyone uncomfortable and I had already started searching for a new job without saying anything to them. It was proving to be difficult considering we lived in a small town where everyone knew everyone. I knew it was only a matter of time before things got out.

"Camilla," my

my door slammed open and Marie walked inside with her hands crossed over her chest. For a split second, I thought she had found out about the job but she simply looked me over. "What are you still doing here? We have to be in town in a few minutes. Today is market day or have you forgotten."

I muttered a small curse under my breath and leaped to my feet. I was so lost in my own thoughts that I forgot we had something else to

1. do. I shoved my journal under my pillow and grabbed the basket by the foot of the mat. She rolled her eyes when she saw me scrambling but didn't say a word.

The market was a considerable distance away from where we lived which was why we limited market errands to once a month. It was a hassle walking the entire way there and back and in that moment, I would have killed for a horse but only the rich were able to afford them and rich wouldn't have been the right words to classify us. We were barely above water as it was.

"We have to be quick," Marie whispered to me. "I want to be in and out before mid- afternoon. You know that is-"

"That is when the market becomes rowdy. I know, Marie, you have repeated this to me more than five times in the past two days alone," I drawled and she rolled her eyes. "Why don't we split up? I can handle a portion of the list and you can handle another. That way, we can get it done in half the time and you can return home as early as you want."

I saw her turning my words over in her head. It was hard for someone like her to concede control. She loved being able to watch over everything but unless she wanted to be in the market for far longer than necessary, then my way was the best way. She debated it for far too

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long and I sighed.

"Delegate, Marie, you cannot do it all," I whispered and she let out a defeated sigh.

"Fine, but we meet at Joe's café once we are both done, okay?"

I nodded.

The market was a small but busy place. Everyone was talking, everyone was moving, it could have been overbearing to the wrong people but to me, it felt like a breath of fresh air from the unusual quiet of the house. The smells clashed against each other and sometimes, it gave me a pounding headache but I still loved it. It so unded like the beginning of a toxic relationship.

I made sure to meticulously check everything off my list. I didn't want to give Marie a reason to hate me or get pissed off. I was getting the flour which so h appened to be the last thing when I heard someone clear their throat behind me. I turned to see one of the older women in the town. I didn't know her name, but I knew she owned a cleaning service and she was one of the people I had approached for a job.

"Cressida, is it?" she asked and I gave her the fakest smile I could muster.

"It's Camilla," I corrected. "Do you need some help?"

"No, I just wanted to know why you were leaving Peggy," she muttered the name with some disdain in her tone. "She is all perfect, so why would you want to leave? Is there something that we don't know?"

She resembled a predator looking for fresh meat. Her eyes were alive with the potential of possible gossip and I knew without the shadow of a doubt that she was not the kind of woman I wanted to be working for under any circumstances. I gave her a small smile and slowly removed her fingers that had latched onto my other arm.

"I just wanted a second job," I lied. "I had no plans of leaving Peggy. She truly is as amazing as you think she is. There is nothing to be told and if that is all—"

"I came to tell you that you got the job," she cut me off. "But on the condition that you stop working for Peggy and work for me only. What do you say about that?"

"I don't think so. Thank you for the offer though."

She looked taken aback. She was what you would call wealthy and although she still underpaid her workers, she paid more than Peggy would ever be able to pay me but I couldn't betray her like that, especially not to someone who looked at us like we were dirt at the bottom of her shoe. Her mouth was agape with shock so I gave her a warm smile and turned on my heels only to bump into Marie.

Her expression was carefully blank and I couldn't help but wonder how much of the conversation she had heard. I opened my mouth to explain but she beat me to it. "I was

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looking for you. You spent way too much time on your part of the list even though I gave you the shorter one."

"I got roped into a conversation."

She glanced over my shoulder at the woman. "Clearly; are you done now? I want to grab something to eat before we return home."

She was acting weird but I couldn't say anything. I wasn't sure what she knew and I didn't want to risk telling her more than necessary. We made our way over to Joe's café and she ordered scones for us and some warm chocolate. We sat on a chair outside which I noticed was a bit secluded from the others and she waited until our order arrived before she finally spoke.

"When are you leaving?" she asked and my brows furrowed. "That is what you were talking to her about, wasn't it? Don't play dumb with me, I just want to know."

"I'm not leaving."

"Then why were you talking with her? Why was she offering you a job?"

I let out a sigh and explained everything. I started from the beginning and by the time I was done, she had a frown on her face. "I didn't want to be in your hair too much so I thought a job would-"

"No," she cut me off and I was taken aback by the sheer determination in her voice. "I am not letting you leave. If you want to be paid then we can pay you. It won't be much because we cannot afford what she can but you aren't leaving."

"Marie-"

"Mum brought you in! I let you in. You cannot just pack up and leave when you see fit. This is not a matter of payment or not, this is family, you do not leave family. I know you have only been with us for a little over two months but you are still family and I am not letting you leave. If you want to, then you are going to have to fight me."

I stared at her for a second. She had her hands crossed over her chest and she tried to feign indifference but I could see through her disguise. "I am not leaving. When she offered me the job, I knew I couldn't. There is nowhere better."

She seemed surprised but she quickly wiped it away. "Good." She wanted to say more but was cut off by a gasp followed by the sound of hooves. I was taken aback because it sounded like an entire army. "What the hell is going on?"

I managed to get to my feet but so did everyone else as the horses finally made their way into the market. There were at least five and the men on them had some sort of sigil on their upper arms. I couldn't make it out but Marie let out a gasp and she grabbed my arm tight enough for it to hurt.

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"That is the sigil of the royal family," she whispered in my ears. "I have never seen any of them before. They never come this way. What could they want?"

“I don’t know, now please stop squeezing my arm, you are cutting off my air supply.”

She released her hold as one of the horses came closer and I realized that the rider was a woman. Her hair was a similar shade to mine and she looked somewhat tired. She looked around and her eyes landed on me. There was something akin to recognition in them and her hand flew over her mouth. I felt awkward from the way she was staring at me so I took a step back.

“I think we should go,” I whispered but Marie wouldn’t move.

“Is she staring at us? Why is she staring at us?”

“I don’t know but I want to-”

The woman dismounted and everyone parted for her as she made her way over to us. I watched with apprehension and baited breath. She was gorgeous and she looked a tad bit intimidating but I kept my shoulders squared.

Once she reached me, she threw her arms around my shoulders. “I’ve been looking everywhere for you.”

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I took a step back and eyed the stranger with a wary look. “I’m sorry but who are you? Why have you been looking for me?”

She opened her mouth to speak but at the last minute, she decided against it and cleared her throat. Marie was clutching my arm and I wasn’t sure if it was for my sake or hers. The stranger looked familiar but that was all, I couldn’t put a name to her face and I couldn’t tell if I had actually met her before.

“My name is Christine and I am a representative of the royal family. You have to come with me,” she announced and my spine straightened. I turned to Marie in a panic and she pulled me closer to her.

“Why do you want to see her?” Marie asked, her voice shaky but fierce. “You cannot just come in here and demand to see her for no reason.”

Christine raised a brow and I saw a small smirk grow on her lips. I could have sworn I saw something sad in her expression but I blinked and suddenly it was gone. “I could have you taken by force or you can come with me free of charge. Either way, you will come to me, how it happens is your choice.”

Marie pursed her lips and I knew she was going to defend me again so I gently released my hand from her grip and turned to her with a small smile. “I’ll be fine, I promise.”

“You can’t just go!” she exclaimed but I didn’t want to make more of a scene. We already had the entire market staring at us and I didn’t want to make matters worse. She pulled me down so she could whisper. “What if your mate is the one who sent them? What if they are here to take you back to him?”

*“Then I’ll go back,” I responded simply. “You don’t want to be a part of this, **you** should go*

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home.” I handed her my basket and turned to Christine. “Lead the way.”

She seemed surprised that I agreed to go with her. I was led towards the horses and I was stunned when one of the guards dismounted his horse for me. I blinked at them, wondering if it were some kind of mistake. Guards didn’t just dismount for random people but neither of them blinked and I just assumed it was some kind of courtesy.

I struggled to get on but by the time I was seated, the rest came almost naturally. I

couldn’t help but wonder if I had done it sometime in the past six years. The ride was quiet and tense and I noticed Christine glancing over at me every few seconds. I wanted to shrink away but I hadn’t done anything wrong so I kept

my shoulders squared and pretended not to notice her. if her tactic was to scare me then she was going about it the

wrong way.

We arrived at their residence and I was stunned. It was one of the larger inns in the town and from what I could see, they were the only ones who stayed there. I could see the maids and the footmen watching with varying degrees of curiosity and amusement. Most of them already knew who I was from Peggy's bakery.

I was led into one of the rooms and before I could say another word, the door was shut behind me leaving me alone. I wasn't sure how long I sat there alone but it felt like hours before Christine joined me. Up close, she was slightly intimidating but there was also something fragile about her. I looked her over and noticed the tie around her wrist and I couldn't stop myself from smiling softly.

"Do you have children?" I asked and she cocked her head to the side so I gestured to the tie. "It seems like something a child would make."

"A child did make it but she isn't mine. She's my niece," she explained and my eyes widened in understanding.

"You must be close to your sister. Where is she?"

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"I don't know," she admitted finally before gesturing for me to take a seat. I hesitated before doing so. "What's your name?"

"Don't pretend like you don't already know," I mumbled. "Look, I know Tyson sent you. I appreciate you coming all this way to look for me but I am not going back to him. I don't care if you're the royal family or not. I will run the first chance I get."

"Wait a minute, Tyson?" she asked and I nodded. "Tyson has been dead for almost two years now. You should know that."

I sat there trying to marinate her words. Tyson was dead. It sounded insane, it sounded crazy to think. He was alive, he should have been. He was the entire reason I had stayed put. He was the one thing that I feared. To hear that he was dead was a breath of fresh air but it also made the hair at the back of my neck stand up because her last sentence finally dawned on me. I turned to her with furrowed brows.

“What do you mean by I should know that?” I asked. “Was I there when he died?”

“What do you mean by were you-” she cut herself off mid sentence and cursed. “This is why you didn’t come home. You don’t remember anything.”

*“Home?” I asked but she was saved from responding when a guard burst through the **door**.*

He was talking too quickly for me to piece together his words. I could have if I tried but I was more focused on her slip up. Did I know Christine? What did she mean by home? There were too many things in my mind and I was learning too much too quickly. My head was starting to hurt and I just needed a second to myself so that I could breathe. While I was still trying to calm my raging pulse, two more people burst through the room and I let out a sigh of relief when I saw Peggy and Marie.

“You cannot take Camilla!” Peggy exclaimed with her arms crossed over her chest. “She has done nothing wrong. She has been with us for the past six years. Whatever you think

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she did-”

I was stunned that they were defending me and lying for me. I was a stranger and yet they were going through such extents for me. The corners of my eyes welled up with tears and I tried to discreetly wipe them away.

“No one is taking or hurting anyone,” Christine seemed frustrated. “Can everyone just take a breather and allow me speak for a second. Goddess help me.” Peggy and Marie

glanced at each other but stayed silent. "I don't want to hurt Camilla. I came to take her

home."

"You are not taking her back to that deranged bastard who tried to hurt her. You are a woman yourself, why would you even do that?" Marie sounded disgusted as she spoke. "You are part of the royal family and you should be protecting all the wolves and not -"

"Will everyone shut up!"

Everyone went silent. It felt like even the air had stopped to listen to Christine. She ran her hands through her hair in frustration and turned to me. "Look, we don't have a lot of time to explain because Ryker will be here soon and he is not going to be as patient as me."

"Who is Ryker?"

She opened her mouth to speak but was cut off by some heavy footsteps. She muttered a curse under her breath and rushed towards the door. I could hear her talking but I couldn't hear who she was talking to. Marie and Peggy turned to me with furrowed brows but I was just as confused as they were.

I heard Christine shouting after someone and the voices started to get closer. Marie must have seen the panic on my face because she rushed over to stand in front of me. She intertwined her fingers in mine and in that moment, I knew what it was like to have a sister and a friend. She gave me a small smile and despite the fact that she was just as terrified as I was, she stood facing the door waiting for the threat to emerge and when he

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finally did, I was left mouth agape.

He was hands down the most handsome man I had ever seen in my life. His eyes were a stormy grey and as he took me in, I saw a thousand different emotions go through him. He opened his mouth to speak but no words came out and he ran his hands down his five

o'clock stubble.

"If I were you," Christine began in a soft voice with her eyes fixed on Marie, "I would take a step back because you don't want to be in his way."

Marie ground her teeth but refused to move and a warning growl erupted from the man's chest. I assumed he was the Ryker that Christine was talking about so I placed my free hand on Marie's shoulders. "I'll be fine, I promise."

She was not happy to say the least but she nodded curtly and stepped away. Ryker's eyes never left mine but I could tell that he had noticed her movement because some of the tension bled out of his shoulders. I could feel my wolf stir inside of me which was weird because I hadn't shifted while in Tyson's pack. It must have happened during my six year gap.

Ryker took slow and deliberate steps towards me, his eyes running over me like I was an apparition and he was scared that I would disappear. He reached a hand up to touch my cheeks and I felt sparks erupt from where his skin touched mine.

"Camilla," my name on his lips was like a prayer and I saw raw and undiluted hurt in his eyes. "Where have you been?"

"I've been right here."

*"Fu*ck," he cursed before cupping the back of my head and pulling my lips to his.*

It was one touch but it was electric and it solidified everything I needed to know. Tyson was dead and the man in front of me- Ryker- was my mate.

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RYKER'S P.O.V

On hind sight, I shouldn't have kissed her like that but I was too impatient. I hadn't seen my mate in months and seeing her standing alive in front of me was like a breath of fresh air. I had tried to believe that she was alive but a part of me had started to lose hope and finally seeing her standing there with her warm eyes, I couldn't stop myself. Her lips were soft to touch and she stiffened against me. For a split second, she kissed me back then it was as if something slammed into her because she pushed me off.

"What the hell?" she exclaimed taking a step back from me and my brows furrowed. I turned to the others in the room and the two women who I assumed were mother and daughter were staring at me with wide eyes. Christine had a sad look on her face. "I get that you might be the king or whatever, but you can not go around kissing random people."

"I am the king? No, baby, you're the Queen, I'm your consort."

Her eyes widened to the point of saucers and she opened her mouth to speak but Christine jumped in. She cleared her throat and grabbed my arm. "Is it okay if I pull you away for a second?"

She pulled me away before I could even ask any other question. She pulled me to the corner of the room and her next words threatened to snap my reality. "She doesn't remember anything."

"What do you mean?"

"She was asking me about Tyson. She thought he sent me to get her," she explained and I saw just how much this was hurting Christine. Her eyes were welling with tears and she managed to wipe them away before they dropped. "I don't know what happened when

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she fell off that cliff but she might have lost a part of her memory. I don't know if it is short term or not but she has no idea who we are and that means she doesn't know the girls.

either."

I cursed loudly before turning back to my mate. She was whispering with the other women and I felt a pang of possessiveness and jealousy in my chest. I was the one she whispered with like that, I was her confidante and now I wasn't anymore. I turned back to Christine.

"What do I do?" I asked. "The elders need to know she is alive or they will go on with the ceremony. We have a few days left. She has to return to the palace."

"I know, I just don't know what we can do. She might not even agree to come with us. She seems to like her life here."

I ran my hands through my hair in frustration. "I'll figure something else."

I made

my way back to the center of the room and I didn't fail to notice that Camilla took

few discreet steps

back from me. I tried to pretend like it didn't hurt, but there was a hole in my chest that I knew only she could fix. I wanted nothing more than to pull her into my arms but I couldn't. I was going to scare her if I tried that.

"I apologize for kissing you like that. I was under the impression that you remembered everything. It was never my intention to make you feel uncomfortable," I began slowly and I saw the guarded expression relax a little. "As it is right now, I am about to upend your life here because you cannot stay here."

"And why not?" the younger woman asked and I leveled her a look that had her shrinking back. Once I was sure that she wouldn't be a problem anymore I turned to Camilla.

"You are the Queen, Camilla, and the kingdom needs you. You have been missing for a few months and they are about to declare you dead and hand it over to the next person. You need to return to your subjects."

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"Who would it go to?" she asked. "Wouldn't it go to some

Stant relative?"

"It would go to our daughter but seeing as she is too young to rule, I it until she is old enough."

have to hand

She blinked twice before placing her hand against the side of her head. "I think I need to sit down for a while."

I helped her into a chair and to her credit, she let me help her. She placed her head into her hands and for a full five minutes, she didn't say a word. I began to panic that something had gone wrong but Christine kept me in one place. That didn't stop me from watching her carefully and trying to discern what it was she needed.

"What if I don't want to return?" she asked carefully and I stilled. "Being Queen seems like a lot of work and I don't remember anything. I might just make things worse. Wouldn't it be better if I just continued pretending to be dead?"

I had to breathe deeply before responding. "What about the girls?"

"I don't remember them. I don't know the last thing about being a mother. I think they will be better off without me. They have you and her," she gestured to Christine. "I'm sure they love you both. They'll be fine without me."

Even as she was speaking, I could feel the hurt in her words. She had on an iron clad expression

but I could feel the longing deep in the mate bond. I cocked my head to the side and analyzed her. She might not remember us but the truth was that she still felt for us. Nothing could possibly change that no matter how much she wanted to.

"Let's make a deal," I offered and she turned to me. "You get to come back with us for a year. All I am asking for is one year and if you don't remember anything or want to stay then you can leave. We will fake your death or whatever and you can return to this life."

She didn't say anything but I could tell that she was seriously contemplating it. "You

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swear that I will return and you will never come looking for me again?"

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"I swear it on our bond," the words hurt to speak and I could feel my wolf clamoring in my head but I locked him out.

I had no intentions of letting her go. She was only speaking like this because she didn't remember. I was certain that a month in the palace was more than enough for her to regain her memories again. It was just a matter of time and I just needed her to agree to come with. She turned to the other woman and a look passed through them.

While they silently spoke, I tried to analyze the other women. The younger one reminded me a lot of Christine. She had that fierce and protective nature about her. It was clear that she wanted to protect Camilla but would otherwise do whatever she wanted. The older woman was a lot harder to get a read on. She had a neutral expression on her face and her eyes were cold towards us but warm whenever she looked over at Camilla.

"Fine," Camilla said after a moment of deliberation. "But, I have a condition."

"Name it."

"Marie and Peggy have to come with me. I won't leave them here. If I have all this power that you say I have then they deserve to partake in some of it. After all, they have been watching over me since I was pulled out of the water."

"Fine, they can come. I suggest you start packing your things. We leave for the palace tonight."

She swallowed deeply and nodded. I watched her leave with the women and I had to fist my hands to my sides to stop myself from reaching out to drag her back. As soon as she was gone, I buried my face into my hands and sunk into the chair she had just evacuated. Her scent was everywhere and it was both a blessing and torture. Her scent had been stuck in my head for the past few months, now it was around me and I couldn't even touch her.

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"Ryker," Christine began but I held up a hand to stop her. I just needed a second to bask in

the scent.

I exhaled deeply after a minute and looked up at her. "I'll be fine."

"Are you sure this is a wise idea?" she asked. "The girls will not know the difference. They will not understand that their mother lost her memory. They will be expecting Camilla. What will we do about that?"

"I don't know, Christine, for fucks sake. I don't always have the answers. I am trying to take this one step at a time. I have never dealt with a mate who lost their memory before."

"I'm sorry, I wasn't trying to put any pressure on you," she placed a hand on my shoulder. "I'm sure everything will sort itself out. You don't have to worry about it."

I didn't move from that spot until evening. Christine left to purchase extra horses for our new companions. It wasn't until I was told that Camilla was around that I finally dragged myself out of the room. She was a sight to behold but I could see that she was a bit worried. I couldn't blame her. She was going to a life that she couldn't remember and it was daunting.

When she saw me approaching, she tried to hide her fears but I had already seen it. Marie and Peggy were a few feet away so I knew we had a bit of privacy.

"It was brave of you to agree, thank you for that," I told her and she smiled.

"I can definitely see why I would have picked you. You are nicer than most of the males I remember," she said simply and I couldn't stop myself from smiling. It was refreshing to see her with a bit of a bite. "I'm not going to act like I am not worried as hell. You said we have a daughter. How do I do this? I don't remember her."

"We have two daughters actually," I corrected and her eyes widened. "But I will be here the entire time. You and I will be together and I will remind you of everything you need to

know as the need arises. Before we return however, I need to tell you about some...

powers.”

“I can control water, yeah, I found out,” she threw it out like it was no big deal. “If we do this, do we have to pretend like we are actually mated?”

“You know we are mates,” I said dumbly and she nodded.

“I can feel the bond. It feels weird but it is there. Do we have to-” she trailed off.

“We only do whatever you want to do. We take this at your pace, okay?”

She nodded. “Okay then, let us do this.”

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CAMILLA’S P.O.V

The ride back to the palace was tense and difficult to say the least. I could feel Ryker’s eyes on me the entire time and it wasn’t just him, it was everyone. I felt like a prized cattle on display and it was exhausting to say the least. Ryker wanted us to get to the palace as soon as possible so there was no room to pause and breathe. With each step our horses took, I felt like the noose around my neck was tightening and I couldn’t breathe.

I didn’t know the first thing about being Queen or about being a mother and here I was being told that I had two daughters and I had been ruling for the past two years. I couldn’t do it and it felt like everyone was counting on me and waiting for me to actually do it. I wasn’t queen material.

“Camilla,” Marie’s voice was soft and almost probing. I turned to her and I realized that she was trying to whisper. I nudged my horse closer to her. “How did you learn how to ride like this? I feel like I am about to fall off.”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. “It almost feels natural to me. It must have been something I knew how to do before my... accident, I guess.” She hummed and I

knew there was something more that she wanted to say but she was holding herself back. “Just ask, Marie.” wanted to say but she was holding h

minute you were in the town

“How do you feel about all of this?” she asked and I shrugged. “One and now you are on your way to being Queen. It seems like a fairytale.”

“I don’t really have a choice in the matter, do I?” I joked and she frowned. It was clear that wasn’t -the answer that she was expecting from me. “I don’t know how to answer your question, Marie. I

don’t know how to feel about all of this. I am trying to take this one day at a time or I will explode. I will lose my mind. Try asking me in a few weeks after I have figured out the kids and the mate. Ruling is the last thing on my mind.”

“I’m sorry,” her cheeks heated with embarrassment. “I didn’t

ven ask about that. How are you going to deal with the children? Are you going to pretend to remember them? Are you going to ignore them?”

“I have to pretend. They don’t deserve any of this. They are innocent and they at least deserve their mother, even if I don’t remember who she is.”

Marie gave me a soft smile. “You are a better person than I am. I would have taken off for the hills if all of this was thrust on me.”

I couldn’t stop myself from laughing. I felt Ryker turn towards me but I did everything possible not to look at him. His gaze was always piercing and there was something about him that had the hair at the back of my neck standing on edge. Even if I couldn’t remember him, the mate bond did and I could feel it working overtime trying to pull us closer to each other.

“I want to **run**, believe me,” I said in response to Marie’s earlier statement. “What good would it do though? I want to remember my past. I want to know what happened to me and there is only one place I can find that out. It is daunting but I can do it.”

“I’ll be by your side every step of the way if you need my help.”

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“Thank you, Marie, that means a lot to me.”

Ryker’s stare started to become overbearing and I could feel Christine’s along side his. I gave Marie a small smile and turned to face forward not saying another word.

I knew the exact moment we were almost at the palace. The roads seemed familiar and some part of me knew that I could lead myself there but I stayed silent. I wasn’t sure if it was my memory coming back because I couldn’t connect any event to the roads, I just knew them. I didn’t want to say anything so as not to give anyone false hope. I didn’t want Ryker thinking he was getting his mate back and then it turned out to just be a fluke of muscle memory.

“The girls will be in their rooms,” Christine explained to me the closer we got to the palace. “I can hide your appearance from them for today but Audrey is sneaky and if she hears that you are here, she will come find you.”

“How old are they?” I asked not wanting to be hit with surprise when I saw the children. “Can you also give me a breakdown of their personalities? I want to know how to relate to them.”

“Audrey is four years old. She is the sassiest little girl you will ever meet. She adores you but she loves me more,” Ryker seemed in love with her as he spoke. I couldn’t stop myself from smiling. He was definitely a great father, that much was certain. “She is very emotional as well and she-”

He trailed off on the last word and I saw a dark look cross his face. He shared a glance with Christine and I couldn’t help the pang of jealousy I felt at that which I thought was completely irrational. I didn’t even know him, what right did I have to be jealous?

“Aurora on the other hand is one year old. She walks but she loves to be carried. She loves you

and since you disappeared, she has been extremely frolicky. Her first word was mama and you adore them both,” I didn’t miss the fact that he didn’t finish whatever it was that he was saying about

ut Audrey. "They will be excited to see you and Audrey might be a little much at first. I'll be there to try and keep them calm in case you get overwhelmed."

"I'll be fine," I wasn't sure if I was telling him or myself. I just knew that the words had to be true. I couldn't risk breaking down in front of everyone. "What kind of a queen was I?"

"A good one," it was Christine who responded. "Everyone loves you. You saved them countless times and you have done everything possible to ensure that the people are protected. You are a good Queen, Camilla and I know you will continue to be one."

I couldn't say a word mainly because we were standing in front of the palace. It looked large and daunting in person and it took everything in me not to turn the horse around and hightail out of there. I was in over my head when I agreed to come, that much was certain because there was no way that I was going to make it.

There were guards in front of the palace and I saw varying degrees of shock on their faces as we got closer. They looked confused on what to do but as soon as we stopped the horses, they all bowed embarrassingly low. My cheeks heated but I quickly remembered that I was meant to be Queen and queens did not blush at the sight of servants kneeling to them. I lifted my chin and tried to keep my face a carefully neutral mask.

"Your majesty," one of them finally whispered. "I thought we all feared the worst. I have to tell the elders. They need to stop the ceremony."

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Ryker made his way over to me and held out a hand to help me off the horse. I hesitantly took it trying to ignore the sparks that danced across my skin where we touched. With one hand in mine, he placed the other around my waist and helped me down. I expected him to let go of me but instead, he pulled me closer and dropped his lips to my ear.

"That is Steven, he is one of your most trusted guards. He watched over you when you first arrived. Your mother put him in charge of you," I stilled at the mention of my mother. I couldn't remember her. How

could I have a mother that I couldn't remember? "I will explain everything to you later. For now, everyone is watching."

He pulled away from me keeping one hand on my waist and I turned to Steven with a smile.

"It feels good to be back," I lied with a smile on my face. "I have missed you Steven. You have no idea."

"Do you want me to get the princesses?"

"No," I said almost too quickly before clearing my throat. "You should inform the elders. I want to make sure that when I see my daughters, I will not be interrupted."

Steven bowed and I was led away by Ryker.

If I thought the stares outside were terrible, I was in for another treat inside because everyone was looking at me. I felt so self-conscious that it proved a challenge for me to keep my head up high, If not for Ryker's hand around my waist, I would have taken off, that much was certain.

"I will take Peggy and Marie to their rooms," Christine announced and I nearly panicked. I wasn't sure how I would deal without them much less when I was alone with Ryker. "Ryker will take you to your room where you can change into your clothes. The elders will want to see you and you would want to be dressed for that. They can be a bit much."

I swallowed deeply. I wanted to refuse but she walked away without another word. Marie turned to me and I knew if I had asked her to stay, she would have but I could see in her eyes that she wanted to explore. This was a lifetime opportunity for her. I shoved my prejudices aside and gave her a

curt nod.

I saw relief fill her features as she mouthed. "I'll come looking for you later."

I watched her disappear with Christine leaving me alone with my mate. Against my better judgment, I turned to face Ryker only to find that he was already st

aring at me. There were so many emotions in his eyes that I feared I would lose myself trying to figure out them all.

“I take it we shared a room,” I began slowly and he nodded.

“Yes, but I can have another room prepared for you if you
you want.”

“It would raise shoulders, would it not?” he nodded again. I exhaled deeply before squaring my shoulders. “Then no, one room is perfect. Lead the way.”

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