

# THE REJECTED WEREWOLF PRINCESS

## Chapter 201

### CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I couldn't stop myself from fidgeting as I walked out of the room. I had never felt so at war with myself before. I knew that girl- at least, my body did- but my mind could not conjure up a single memory of her. I knew fiercely in my heart that I loved her, I knew that if I had said those words, they would be true but I couldn't. I couldn't bring myself to say them when I didn't even know who she was.

"Camilla," Marie wrapped her hand around my bicep and pulled me to a stop. "I cannot keep running after you. You need to stop."

"Did you see that?" I asked and she shrugged.

"She looks like you," I shot her a hard look and she laughed. "If I had any doubts that those were your children, they have been mate and away. It was like looking into your past. Damn, Camilla, you have daughters, you have a mate and a cousin, you have a family."

"That's the problem, I don't remember them," I whispered harshly not wanting anyone to overhear me. "I feel like an imposter. I feel like they w

want

like an imposter. I feel like they me to be this person and I cannot be her because I do not know her. I am not the girl they think I am and that has to be one of the most horrible feelings because I would give

anything to be that girl.”

Her eyes softened and she pulled me in for a hug. I was surprised because Marie was not the affectionate type. She was the kind of person cared about someone and yet here she was, embracing me like her life depended on it. Her shoulders were stiff and her arms were a bit cold, but it was contact nonetheless and it was something I needed.

O would rather put her hands into the mouth of a bear than actually show that she

We stayed there for a full minute not speaking or even breathing too loud before she finally pulled away. “That is all the warmth I have in me for the next year or so.”

I couldn’t help the laughter that bubbled out of me. “Thank you, Marie. You don’t know how good it feels to know that I have at least one familiar face here. If you and Peggy weren’t here, I would lose my mind and it has barely been forty eight hours yet.”

“You will get used to being Queen, Camilla. This is who you are and I am sure that one year here will show you that.”

I scoffed. “I don’t think this is something I will ever get used to. I don’t know if I can last an entire year. I just want to go back to the town. I want to go back-”

“Are you kidding me?” I was shocked by the venom and anger in her voice. I looked up only to find her features contorted into a frown. “You want to give up all of this.”

“In case you haven’t realized, Marie, I am not cut out to be queen.”

“Stop with the woe is me pity party, Camilla. It was good for a few days but now this is getting embarrassing,” she crossed her arms over her chest. “You have been given a once in a lifetime opportunity. So many people will kill for

the chance to just get out of that town and live in a pack. You got the chance to be Queen and you want to throw it away?"

"Marie-"

"No!" she cut me off and I frowned. "I never pegged you as a quitter, Camilla, I thought you were better than that but apparently I was wrong."

She stormed off before I could form any words and I let out an exasperated sigh. I wanted to go after her but knowing Marie, she needed some time alone. This wasn't just about me, it was clear that there was more to the story than she was letting on to. I decided to give her some time to come to terms with her emotions on the matter before turning on my heels and walking straight out of the palace.

I let my feet lead me. The guards whispered as they watched me, I tried to pretend like it didn't affect me but it did. I kept my head high and briefly acknowledged each of them as I made my way out of the palace. I walked down the side until I got to what I realized was a beautiful fountain. It stood there in the middle of the open garden and I couldn't help but feel a strange pull towards it.

Before I could stop myself, I was seated cross legged on the floor in front of it. I reached out a hand and willed

it the water to come to me. It flowed so easily and I let out a sigh. Despite it being the thing that almost killed me, was the one thing that managed to give me some form of comfort.

"I didn't expect to see you here, your majesty," the water sloshed to the ground as I nearly jumped from the strange voice. I turned to see an older man wearing a coat. He had salt and pepper hair and his eyes were kind. "It is good to see you back here."

“It is good to be back.”

“As much as I hate to admit it, I was one of the few who truly believed you to be dead. It would have been a

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shame for someone with such raw power to lose herself before she got to the extent of it,” he said as he took the

spot next to me and I immediately knew he was Loris. Ryker had told me about him. “Although, I did hear that you managed some impressive feats on that cliff. I was proud.”

“I don’t want to talk about the cliff.”

“Of course,” he looked a little sheepish. “I have never really had a filter and I never learned how to streamline my thoughts before saying them out loud. What you went through must have been traumatic for it to have taken you over two months to recover from it. Did you come here to train?”

I thought about it for a second before shaking my head. As appealing as training sounded, I just needed some time to myself. I wanted to think and this seemed to be the only place where someone wasn’t looking for me or expecting me to be Queen Camilla.

“Well then, I suppose I will take my leave,” he bowed. “Whenever you feel the need to get back into it, you know where to find me.” he started to walk away but at the last minute, he stopped and turned over

his shoulder to look at me. “If you are looking for a challenge, then I don’t think animal shapes is the way to go. You can do those in your sleep.”

I laughed. “Fishes have always been the easiest.”

“What?” I turned to see Ryker staring at me in shock and confusion. Loris bowed and walked away leaving me with my mate who was staring at me with

apprehensive eyes. He made his way over to me and there was something predatory in his gaze that had my spine straightening. He stopped directly in front of me and I couldn't stop myself from looking away.

"You're standing too close," I whispered but he made no move to leave.

"You said that fishes have always been the easiest. How would you know that?"

"I was just making conversation, Ryker. I know you want me to remember and some part of me does too but I don't. I was just saying something I thought I normally would," I whispered but he still wouldn't stop staring at me. "I am sorry that I didn't say I loved her back. I was just overwhelmed and I ran. I seem to be doing a lot of that recently."

He didn't say anything. I thought he would walk away and leave me but to my surprise, he just sank to the ground next to me. Our knees were brushing and every fiber in me screamed at me to get loser. There was something about him that was welcoming and called out to me, I wasn't sure what it was but even I knew I wouldn't be able to fight it for long.

"Did we love each other?" I couldn't stop myself [01] asking unu nothing about us. Why would you do that?"

"Because I don't want to tell you that you love me, Camilla," he sounded tired as he ran his hands through his hair. "I could tell you in a million different ways that I love you. I could tell you that it started the moment you stumbled on my pack while running away from Tyson. I could tell you all the stupid things I did that nearly drove you away from me. I can tell you about me but I will not tell you about us." NôvelDrama.Org holds this content.

"I love you, it hasn't changed and it won't change because you don't remember. I can tell you that every day if you want but I will not tell you that you love me. I will not remind you of how you felt because deep down, you

know. You might never be the woman I met before and that is fine. I don't need you to be her. I need you to be you. You are the one I love, Camilla, and if you are ever going to feel something for me ever again then I want it to be of your own accord."

I didn't know what to say. His words had cut through whatever walls and defenses I thought I had put up. I opened and closed my mouth repeatedly but no words would come out.

"What if I don't?" I asked finally. "What if I never feel anything for you? What if you cannot bring back those emotions?"

He leaned forward and placed a lingering kiss on my forehead. "If I have to make you fall in love with me a second time then I will. I will cross every ocean, climb every damn mountain and I will come for you, Camilla. I don't care if the gods themselves want to keep us apart. You are my mate."

With one last chaste kiss to my temple, he stood to his feet and walked away leaving me with a bunch of emotions that I didn't think I would need to handle so soon.

## Chapter 202

### CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Ryker never came to the room at night. I spent the entire time fiddling with my fingers and anxiously waiting for the moment he would come. I had no idea what to expect from sharing a room with him but he never came. I should have been excited about it but for some reason, I couldn't find it in myself to fall asleep. I just sat cross legged on the bed the entire night while I waited.

He didn't return until sometime around four a.m. and he looked even worse than I felt. His eyes were tired and I could tell that he hadn't gotten any sleep

either. He was trying to sneak into the room but when he saw me awake, I saw shock take over his features. I gave him a small smile trying to hide the fact that I hadn't slept a wink but he noticed- I knew he did. It was in the way his eyes narrowed at me and the way he crossed his hands over his chest.

"Rough night?" he asked and I shrugged. Words wouldn't have been able to describe it. "I thought you would feel more comfortable on your own. After last night, I figured you would want some space from me so I slept in my office."

I hadn't asked but for some reason, I was grateful he gave it to me. My mind had conjured up the worst case scenarios and even though it wasn't something I should have been worried about, I had been wondering if he was seeing someone. My wolf was convinced he could never, I wasn't sure how she knew that but I decided to trust her on it.

"I couldn't fall asleep. Everything just feels so different yet so familiar and it is a very overwhelming feeling," I laughed humorlessly. "Do I have to do the speech to the town today?"

"You don't have to do anything. That is the beauty of being Queen, you could call it off right now and no one will fault you for it. What you went through was-

"I want to do it," I cut him off running my hands through my hair. "It just- will you be there?"

"I have to," I tried to hide the relief on my face. I needed someone who knew what they were doing next to me so that I didn't mess up. "I'm always going to be there, Camilla." My cheeks heated and I forced myself to look away. He sighed softly before standing to his feet. "I'll go check on everything for the speech. I can send Christine up to help you get ready."

"Can you also send Marie or Peggy?"

He pursed his lips at my request and I knew he didn't like it but he nodded. I was barely able to whisper a thank you before he walked out. I wasn't sure what I was doing but I hoped I wasn't making things worse.

Marie arrived first and to say she was in awe of everything would have been an understatement. She spoke about the food and the large buildings and in all honesty, she was making my anxiety worse. I understood her excitement, I would have been as excited as she was if I didn't feel like the weight of the world was on my shoulders. I had asked for her in the hopes that she would understand what I needed and she would be able to offer me silent support but she was in too much awe and she couldn't see past that.

"Can you stop?" Christine spat with a frown. Marie froze, her cheeks turning pink as embarrassment filled her. "You are making even me antsy. Have you ever tried shutting up for five seconds?"

She was being rude, that much was certain but in that moment, I was relieved. There was peace and quiet for the first time since Marie walked into the room and it felt like I could finally hear myself think. Marie turned to me with wide eyes as if asking if I was going to let that slide. All I did was shrug in response and she scoffed.

"I was talking to Camilla," Marie mumbled. "She doesn't seem to mind at all. She understands. Just because you grew up in a palace all your life doesn't mean-

Christine turned to her with a harsh look. "For once will you just shut up, please?" I cannot think over the sound of your yapping. Camilla has an important speech to give today and you haven't once asked how she feels about that. All you have done is to sit there and yap about the big buildings and the servants waiting on you hand and foot. If you even cared about

your friend, you would be trying to ease her anxiety but what do I know, I just grew up in a palace?”

She put the brush down that she was using on my hair. She gave me a small smile that I couldn't help but return. I was grateful for her outburst whether I wanted to say it or not..

“Ryker will be here to call you when it is time,” she told me before walking out of the room.

The minute she walked out of the door, Maric erupted. “Who does she think she is? How dare she talk to me like that and accuse me of not caring about you? I was trying to distract you from everything going on and take your mind off things. I am a good friend. Why didn't you talk to her?”

“Honestly, she was right,” I mumbled and Marie looked offended. “I just- everything is happening so fast and I need something to keep me grounded. I am freaking out about the speech and how everything could possibly go wrong. You didn't even ask.”

“I didn't know I had to ask. If you had a problem then you could have just told me. Why would you sit there and allow me look like the bad person?”

“That wasn't what I was trying to do. I just wanted some peace and quiet,” Marie scoffed. “Come on, Marie, you cannot seriously be pissed about this.”

“I am not pissed about this. I am pissed that you wouldn't just use your words and tell me when you are upset with me. I understand that you think you have the weight of the world on your shoulders and what not but I am also finding this hard. I left everything I knew to come here to support you. I left my life and my job that I loved to be with you.”

“You can't compare that to having to be Queen and ruling over a bunch of people,” I muttered before I could stop myself and her eyes widened.

“I see, have a good day, Queen Camilla,” she gave me a mocking bow and before I could stop her, she had stormed out of the room.

She tried to slam the door shut behind her but Ryker was already standing there. He held it open and shot me an inquisitive look but all I could do was shrug. It wasn't important anymore and I didn't want to waste any more time thinking about it.

“Is it time?” I asked changing the subject and to his credit, he didn't push or force me to answer any questions, he just nodded. “Good, let's go.”

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I tried to keep some sense of false bravado during the journey but by the time I saw how many people were gathered to hear

speak, it all evaporated from me. I thought I was going to throw up or pass out and it made matters worse that there was no one I remembered around. Marie had refused to come after our argument and Peggy chose to stay with her daughter. She told me she wasn't upset with me but she didn't want Marie to think she was choosing sides. I understood where she was coming from, that didn't mean I had to like it.

“I can't do this,” I whispered when I saw the number of people standing out there and waiting for me. “What am I to them?” Christine just shrugged. She looked uninterested and bored. “I am freaking out.”

“I know and frankly, I don't care.”

“If that is your idea of an encouraging speech then I hate to say it but-” I began but she cut me off.

your tail

“You can do this, you know you can, it is the nerves talking and if you allow them, you will run out of here with between your legs. You have two options/that has never changed, you can either do this or you can run. It is up to you, Camilla. The goddess knows that you have been very proficient at running in the past so I will not balk if you decide to do it again.”

“Excuse me?” I asked but she ignored me.

“The clock is ticking. If I had to guess, I would say that you had about five minutes or less before you are called out onto that

stage. If you want to run, now is a good enough time to do it. What do you choose?” Please check at [Nôvel\(D\)rama.Org](http://Nôvel(D)rama.Org).

I was silent for a full minute trying to digest her words. If it were anyone else, I would have thought they were being rude and condescending but somehow, I knew that wasn't her aim. The words were harsh but they came from a good place. She seemed like the kind of person who practiced a lot of tough love-rough on the exterior but soft on the inside. I couldn't help but wonder what kind of relationship we had before this.

“Has anyone ever told you that you are terrible at words of encouragement?”

“I believe you may have said something along those lines once or twice,” she shrugged. “When you need to be coddled, I will coddle you but we both know that isn't what you need right now, you need to be pushed. You are the Queen and whether or not you remember that, it is who

you were born to be. You can do this so shut up, stop whining and get on that stage before I push you on.”

Before I could respond, Ryker made his way over to us. He had been talking to some of the elders so he wasn't privy to our conversation. He looked between Christine and I, a crease forming on his forehead.

“Is everything alright?” he asked and I nodded. “They are ready for you whenever you are.”

I glanced over at Christine before clearing my throat. “I’m ready.”

## Chapter 203

### RYKER’S PO.V

I didn’t need to be a mind reader to know that Camilla was worried. She always had her tells and it was good to see that her memory hadn’t changed that. She was fiddling with her fingers and she couldn’t stop herself from tapping her feet. She was also looking everywhere but at the crowd that she was to speak to. It was subtle but it was there and anyone who knew her well knew that she was anxious about this.

I softly and discreetly nudged her when we got there. A part of me felt cruel for this entire exchange. The truth was that she didn’t have to speak to them herself, she didn’t need to be here. We could have sent someone to read out a letter to the people but I wanted to put her on the spot, I wanted to see if something about this would jog her memory. The last time we did something like this was incredibly traumatic and although I didn’t want to traumatize her again, I wanted her to remember.

“First of all, I want to thank all of you for taking time out to come here. I want to thank you for mourning me when you thought I was gone. It might sound slightly narcissistic but it makes me believe that I did something right,” she joked before clearing her throat. “I am grateful for all your support and I would just like to let you all know that this is an open platform.”

I turned to her in confusion. She had never done that before and I wasn’t quite sure why she chose to. Open platforms tended to get messy. You couldn’t give everyone the right to speak and not have some people take advantage of

that right. Soon there were going to be people yelling at the top of their lungs and saying things that they shouldn't. Regardless, I said nothing and just let her lead. It was her speech, it was her choice.

"I know that you have a lot of questions," she began after a deep breath. "I know you are all eager to hear what happened but the truth is that nothing happened. I was away for a while because I was healing from extensive injuries. I couldn't have come back even if I wanted to."

"If?" someone in the crowd asked and she stilled. "Did you not want to return, your majesty?"

"That is not what I meant," I could see the nervousness beginning to return. She was already out of it and panicking. "What I meant was that I couldn't return. I was badly hurt and unfortunately it took longer than I thought it would to get healed. I was also in a small town that I didn't even know existed. I had no way of knowing how to get home."

The man who asked the question looked content and she let out a sigh of relief when she realized she had handled that. Despite knowing I shouldn't, I placed my hand on the small of her back. It was a gentle touch but to her credit, she didn't still or shy away from it. I wanted her to remember that I was here. I was her support if she needed it.

"If that is all," I began ready to bring an end to it when someone cut me off. It was a woman, she looked no older than thirty and she had her hands crossed over her chest.

"How could your healing have taken time when you healed everyone else?" she asked and Camilla turned to me looking a tad bit lost. I hadn't told her about her healing powers mainly because I thought that no one else knew. I had hoped that it would have died when she fell off that cliff because there was so much that I couldn't explain.

“I don’t understand what you mean,” Camilla began but I squeezed her waist softly. It was best if I handled this.”

“What the Queen means is that those were unfounded rumors. She had nothing to do with the healing of all those people. It was the brave work of the physician that allowed each of those people to walk.”

“I saw her,” she yelled. “That night in the town house, she snuck in and she went to every single person, she knelt over each of us and she put her hands on us. I felt life rush into me after she left. She was responsible.”

“The Queen prayed over you,” I knew I was making her look like a crazy person and if I were a better person, I would have felt bad for it but this was my mate and the mother of my children. I was going to do anything possible to keep her away from any controversies. “Anything you felt must have happened inside your head.”

“I am not insane.”

“I never said that you were. I simply said that you were misjudging a situation because you were sick. You didn’t have proper comprehension over what happened because you were at the doors of death and it was taking some time for the medication the physicians gave to kick in,” I kept my voice cold and uninterested. “I understand the need to believe that something greater went on and I hate to say this but your healing was purely medical.”

everyone was staring and

Her cheeks flushed pink and I saw tears gather in the back of her eyes when she realized that whispering. A few went as far as to point in her direction. I felt bad for her but there was nothing I could do as she turned on her heels and ran. Beside me, I could feel Camilla’s anger and frustration. She must

have felt the same way I did but between the two of us, I was better at hiding it.

Everyone was quiet once she disappeared so I took the opportunity to call things to a close.

“Thank you all for your time. The Queen and I are nothing short of grateful for the support that you have given us. It is an honor to serve you.”

Without another word, I led Camilla behind the curtain. She said nothing the entire time, just let me lead her like a doll. Christine met my eyes once we were safely behind the curtain but I shook my head, this wasn't the time for questions. Normally, we would have waited a while as the elders wrapped things up but I knew that Camilla needed to get away so I called for our carriage and in less than five minutes, we were on our way back to the palace.

She didn't say anything the entire ride and a part of me began to worry. It was clear that she had a lot to say, whatever her reason was for choosing not to say them could only be bad. I watched her the entire ride home which on hindsight did sound a little creepy but I was worried about her.

She didn't say a word as we walked up to our room. She just kept in sync with me and kept her eyes fixated forward. It wasn't until I closed the door behind me that she finally whirled on me. Property © NôvelDrama.Org.

“Is there anything else that you haven't told me or are you going to wait until we are in public so that I can embarrass myself again?” she asked. I opened my mouth to speak but she cut me off by raising her hand. “I wasn't done. Do you know how stupid I looked and felt up there? Apparently I have healing powers and I don't even know. Don't even try telling me it was a rumor because I know you were lying to her.”

I sighed deeply. “Yes, you had healing powers. I can admit that. The only reason I didn't say anything was because I don't know if they still exist.”

“What do you mean?”

“Whenever you used your powers, you gave a bit of yourself out and when we were on that cliff,” I shuddered just thinking about it. “On that cliff, our daughter was stabbed. You poured all of yourself into her, you should have died, but you didn’t. I don’t know if it was your powers that saved you or if it was the goddess. I don’t know and I don’t want to talk about things that I don’t know.”

“I deserved to know.”

“Maybe, but I don’t regret not telling you and I will do it again. I made what I thought was the best choice for the both of us. You would have gone out there trying to find people who were sick so that you could heal them.”

“I would not have. You can’t pretend to know what I would have done.”

“I can because I know you!” I exclaimed. Do you realize how difficult it was watching you the last time? You would go out of your way to heal every single person who came by even after knowing it was to your detriment. You were killing yourself and your memory might be gone but that is still who you are at your core. You put everyone else’s life over your own so screw me if I decided that keeping it from you was the best thing because I would rather those powers were gone.”

She looked stunned by my outburst and I couldn’t blame her. I didn’t lose my cool. I prided myself in being able to properly regulate my emotions. I ran my hands through my hair and stepped closer to her with the intention of apologizing but she

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held up a hand to stop me.

“You think you know me because in some past life I was your mate,” her voice was a soft whisper. “I don’t know that girl that

you

that you knew but she is not me anymore. I get that you want your mate back but I’m here to tell have been good with you keeping things from me before but if you do that right now, I will walk

“What are you saying?”

you never will. I may

“I am saying that whatever you thought you knew about me before, you don’t anymore. Wipe every prejudice you had. I am not your mate, Ryker. I will never be that girl again.”

“If that is what you want then so be it.”

What hurt most weren’t her words, it was the fact that I could see that she meant it. I scoffed and turned on my heels making sure to slam the door behind me.

## Chapter 204

### CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I felt bad for speaking to Ryker that way but it was important that he realized. It was important that he didn’t get his hopes up too high. I didn’t want to hurt him in the long run but the truth was that he was already hurting. He expected me to fit into this carefully curated box that he had placed for his mate but I couldn’t. I could barely get through the day, much less be the woman he wanted me to be. Still, that didn’t stop me from feeling bad for him. In a

second, he had lost everything and now, he had the chance to get it all back. If I were in his shoes, I probably would have done worse.

It was so exhausting, more tiring than I realized it would be and I wanted to be her- sometimes I thought it would be easier- but how could I be someone I didn't even remember. Sometimes it felt like I was getting a flash of memory but it would be gone before I could even process

what was going on. I remembered the rooms, I remembered the paths but I couldn't remember the people and somehow, that felt like the worst punishment.

A knock on my door snapped me out of my thoughts and I turned to find Peggy standing by my door with a small smile on her face. She made her way inside and I didn't realize how little time I had

spent with her until she actually walked in. Luxury looked good on her, she looked well taken care of and less stressed than she did back in town. I tapped the spot next to me and she didn't hesitate before taking it.

"I just had to listen to an angry rant from Marie a few hours ago and I saw that fine man storming out of here," she began and I exhaled deeply. "I am not here to scold you, Camilla. Honestly, I don't

you. Camilla al know if I have the right to do so. Do you want to tell me what happened?"

"Everyone expects me to be happy about this. They think I should just be grateful that I am Queen and that it fell into my lap when it is what people would kill for. Why would I do that? I didn't ask for all of this. I didn't want all of this. It just feels like no one understands the pressure that is on my shoulders right now."

"You shouldn't expect them too. Only the person who wears the shoes knows exactly where it pinches," i didn't respond and she wrapped an arm around my

shoulder in a comforting manner. “Everyone has expectations of you. You should have known that the moment you agreed to do this. To these people, you are their Queen, their family, their mother, their mate, their sister and you cannot expect those expectations to go away. The minute you came here, you resigned to being the woman that they know.”

“I only agreed to one year.”

“Did you really?” she asked and I stilled. “Did you think that you would be able to leave after a year? You are smarter than that, Camilla, don’t insult your own intelligence. You know exactly what you signed up for and this is it. It is hard and it is scary and I cannot pretend to understand what that feels like but you are in this already. There is no backing out now.”

“I had powers,” I said suddenly and she fell silent. “I was this Queen who saved everyone first. I was this

person who put my life in danger for others. I wouldn’t do that now. I wouldn’t heal people at my own detriment especially if I knew I had kids to come home to. I am not that girl.”

“You don’t have to be that girl. People change and people grow. Imagine the old Camilla as a

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caterpillar, you are a butterfly. You have grown and you have changed but deep down, you are that girl. You just became better.”

I lay my head on her shoulder in a silent thanks. My mouth couldn’t form the words so I hoped my actions would. She wrapped her arms around me and we sat there in complete silence for a full minute. I didn’t realize just how much I needed someone to validate my feelings. I needed someone to tell me that I wasn’t overreacting and that it was normal to be scared. By the time I finally pulled away, I knew exactly what I had to do and Peggy did too

because she gave me a soft smile and squeezed my hand softly before walking out.

I had two places to be but I went to the lesser of two evils first which was Marie. She was in her room seated cross legged on the bed. She looked excited to see me at first but it was as if she remembered the fight and turned her back to me.

“I am not going to apologize because I stand by what I said, you don’t understand what it is like to be in my shoes.”

“If you are not here to apologize then what are you here for? I have nothing to say to you.”

“Then listen,” I cut her off. “This is all you have ever wanted- a life of ease, a wonderful life and I will not fault you for that. I didn’t even have the chance to want anything. I am still trying to find my footing and remember what happened in the past six years but I cannot. I don’t just have the life of ease, I have kids now and a mate and it is hard to navigate on my own. All I am asking for is my friend to support me.”

“I do support you.”

“No, you support me as long as I stay in this life. Would you support me if I decided to leave? If I said I was done and I wanted to fake my own death and go back to that small town. If I said that was the life that I wanted would you support me?”

Her silence was enough of a response.

“I need my friend, Marie. I don’t need you pushing me to take the choice that best aligns with your dreams. I need a friend who is going to stick by my side and let me know that no matter what, it is me and her against the world, not her against me because I don’t want what she wants.”

“But why wouldn’t you want this?” she asked. She sounded almost confused and a little hurt. “Why would you look at this life and say that it wasn’t for you? You have everything you could ever want. You have a mate who scoured the ends of the earth to find you, you have children who adore you and you have a life of ease. I don’t understand.”

“You shouldn’t have to,” I whispered and she crossed her arms over her chest. “I never said I didn’t want it. I just said that I needed some time to come to terms with it. I am not going to be the picture perfect person within days. It doesn’t work that way.”

There was a moment of silence before she sighed. “Fine, I support you. Whatever it is that you choose to do, I will have your back.”

“Thank you. Now if you will excuse me, I have one more thing that requires my attention.”

I could feel the confusion in her gaze but I didn’t bother waiting to explain it to her. I walked

slowly, almost dragging my legs in the direction of that room. With each step, I felt heavier than the last but I was determined to see this through. I needed to do it before I lost the courage, I needed to face the fear and embrace the new chance at life that had been given to me. This content provided by N(o)velDrama].[Org.

I pushed open the door slowly and everyone stilled. It was just Christine, Ryker and the girls. It felt like everyone was holding their breath and waiting to see what I would do. They regarded me as one would a wounded animal that they were scared would run but I ignored them and headed straight for Audrey.

I took a seat cross legged in front of her and gestured for her to come to me. It required no hesitation on her part before she immediately walked into my

hands. I pulled her so that she was sitting on me and she brushed her hair out of her face.

“Why isn’t your hair in a braid if you don’t like it in your eyes?” I asked and it was Ryker who responded.

“She wanted you to do it.”

He was gauging my reaction but instead, I lifted Audrey and placed her in front of the vanity while I retrieved the brush and began braiding her hair down. I could feel the confusion in the room but, I tuned them out and focused my attention on the little girl in front of me who was grinning from ear to ear. I looked over my shoulder at Aurora who was straining in Ryker’s hands to come to me.

“Do you want me to braid yours too?” I asked and she nodded. I wasn’t sure if she could completely understand me but I hoped she could.

Once I was done with Audrey’s hair, I pressed a soft ki\*ss to the center of her head.

“I love you,” I whispered and it was like someone had lit up a beam in her eyes. She threw her arms around me and squeezed tightly. I tried to ignore the pit in my stomach as I held her the way I would have wanted to be held as a child.

“I knew you would say it back,” she whispered before pulling back to smile at me. She turned to Ryker. “Did you hear that daddy? She said it back.”

Ryker wasn’t looking at her, his eyes were fixated on me. “I heard, princess, I told you she would say it back.”

## CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I could feel their eyes on me the entire time, carefully watching as if expecting me to blow up any minute. I tried to ignore the feel of Ryker's gaze on my skin, it was piercing and I felt it all the way down to the tips of my toes. I focused on the girls in front of me. I braided Audrey's hair and made a show of brushing Aurora's and holding it up with a pretty bow before kissing her head.

"I need to borrow your mother for a second, okay?" Ryker said the moment I released Aurora and without any warning, he grabbed my upper arm and began to pull me out of the room.

I didn't even bother protesting, I knew it was going to come sooner or later. To his credit, he didn't take me very far, we just moved a few steps away from the room before he turned to me. His hands were crossed over his chest and he had a look on his face that was wary and apprehensive. If I thought having him looking at me with love was uncomfortable, I wasn't prepared for this one. I didn't know why but having him guarded around me seemed even worse.

"What are you playing at?" he asked but I stayed silent. "Those girls are not toys to be played with. You cannot go to them as you see fit and run away as you see fit. I am on your side, I always am but I am also on theirs and they deserve better."

"If you would just-"

"I am respecting your wishes and your desire to be left alone. I am respecting the fact that you don't remember and all of this is too much for you. I can respect all of that but I am asking for you to not. – play with the emotions of our children. They are too young to understand what is going on and with them, you have to either be all in or all out. There is no in between and they are going to get hurt. They are already hurt."

"Ryker-"

“Do you

know how difficult it was to keep them distracted the last few months? I felt like I was losing my goddamn mind. I had to tell them that you were gone even though I kept searching for

I didn't want them to hope in vain and now you're here. They don't understand it, hell, I don't even understand it and I am an adult so for their sakes will you-  
you.

“Stop!” I cut him off and he went silent. “If you would just let me speak for one second you would hear that I am not trying to play with anyone's emotions. Goddamit, Ryker, you have been talking about how you feel for ages so why don't you let me speak for once?”

He fell silent and I saw a slight sheen of embarrassment creep up his ears. I understood, I really did and even though I didn't know what it meant to be protective of someone to that degree, I could somewhat relate to where he was coming from. I wouldn't want anyone to play with the emotions of my children, I wouldn't want them to be hurt. He was a royal but he was still a man at his core, he still hurt and he still felt. He was willing to put his own hurt aside for the children and that was one of the most endearing things I had ever seen in my life.

“I wanted to apologize for what I said earlier. It was a cheap shot and I know it. I was- it doesn't matter what I was. It is an excuse and I shouldn't be making excuses for my behavior,” I began slowly but he didn't say a word, he just watched me. “I don't know how to be the woman that you  
want me to be and I think that's okay.”

“I don't want you to be anyone, I just want you to be you. I don't care what version of you that it is, as long as it is you, that is all that matters. Don't you

get it? You want to be someone you're not so badly and that is what is causing all of this tension."

"But everyone needs-

"I don't care what everyone needs," he cut me off. "This is about you and no one else. You are the one who has to go through this, you are the one who has to work your way around it. You are the only one who matters."

I could see how I could have fallen for him before. He was a kind man, soft spoken and warm. He seemed like the kind of person who would hold your hand through a difficult time and talk you through some of the worst moments of your life. I could see myself falling for him again and I couldn't tell whether that was

going to be a good or a bad thing.

"Anyways," I cleared my throat to change the subject. "If we are going to do this, we need to set some rules. I don't want anyone getting disappointed or feeling like the other person isn't doing enough. It was my fault for not setting rules in the first place."

He cocked a brow before crossing his arms over his chest. "What did you have in mind?"

I was shocked that he was agreeing so easily. A part of me had thought that he would need some convincing and had come up with an entire speech in my head but everything suddenly flew out the

moment I heard him agree. I opened my to speak but no words would come out. It was like someone had taken a knife to my vocal chords.

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“Do you want to sit down first?” Ryker suggested and I nodded. He led me to a nearby bench and helped me into a sitting position.

He held my hand while doing so but even after I had sat down, he wouldn't let go and I didn't do anything to take my calming about

hands out of his. He was warm and the

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rush me to speak, he just sat down beside me, my hand wrapped in his and he waited patiently until the first words left my lips.

knowing that he was with me, so I left it. He didn't push, he didn't

“I need to know everything,” I told him and he nodded slowly. “I will not

I need to know my last schedule, how I worked, what I did, what I said 80 out looking like a fool.

“Done, is that all?”

everything that happened- I

I shook my head. “I need some time to get used to the girls, okay? I care for them, I don't know why but I do and my wolf knows they're ours but I need some time. I want to help out with them but I want you

to be there. I don't want to mess things up because like you said, they don't understand, they don't deserve this.”

“Okay, is that it?” he asked and I nodded. Those were the main things. I just wanted to take things at my pace. I didn't want to be rushed. I needed time. “I have one rule of my own.”

I stilled. “You do?” he hummed. “Is it something crazy?”

“Not really, I want one date every week,” I opened my mouth to speak but he cut me off. “I will take everything at your pace, you will be in charge but I want a fighting chance here.”

“Ryker-”

“Do you want to know the most messed up thing about all of this?” he began. “It isn’t that you don’t remember, I could deal with that. It isn’t that you are different now because in all honesty, I love it. The most difficult thing about all of this is the way you look at me.”

“I don’t understand. How do I look at you? I didn’t realize that I was doing-”

“It isn’t the way you think. The last time I saw you, you looked at me with so much love in your eyes and now you look at me like a stranger. You look at me with caution, apprehension and sometimes it’s like you want to run the other way. I understand though, you don’t remember who I am but I would give anything for you to look at me the way you used to.”

I opened my mouth to speak when the door to the room opened. Without realizing what was happening, I pulled my hand out of Ryker’s grip. I felt his disappointment but I couldn’t look him in the eye, I didn’t want to see it. I didn’t want to see how much I was hurting him. Christine looked between the both of us and I could see a silent question in her eyes but I ignored it and stood to my feet making sure to dust off imaginary dirt from my skirt.

“The girls are asking for you,” she said after a beat of long silence. “Aurora is half asleep and she keeps crying for you- Camilla.”

“Of course, I’ll be there soon,” I told her and she looked between Ryker and I before turning on her heels and walking back to the room. When she was gone, I finally risked a glance at Ryker and his expression was carefully neutral. “Ryker-”

“You don’t have to accept the dates,” he cut me off. “Respecting your boundaries also means respecting the ones you put in place against me. I understand that this is all new for you.”

“I don’t mind the dates, that isn’t the problem.””

“Then what is?”

“I’m scared,” I admitted and he waited for me waiting, he sighed and walked towards the door elaborate but I didn’t. After a full minute of His hand was on the knob when I finally spoke.

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“It isn’t that I’m scared of you or of you hurting me. I am scared because I can see why I would have fallen for you in the first place and if I do this, it isn’t a matter of if I will love you again, it is a matter of when and that scares me.”