

THE REJECTED WEREWOLF PRINCESS

Chapter 206

RYKER'S P.O.V

I hadn't brought up Camilla's confession in a week. I wasn't sure if it was cowardice on my part or if it was because I didn't want to jeopardize what little civility we had formed with each other. She acted like nothing happened and somewhere in the back of my mind, I decided that it was the right way to go so I said nothing about it either.

Despite my silence, I didn't forget that she had agreed to the date and already started working on something. I wasn't sure if her general likes and dislikes had changed but I hoped they hadn't because her newfound 'family' was of no help at all. There was something off about them- especially the daughter- and I wasn't sure if it was because she didn't like me or if there was something else at play that I didn't quite know of.

A knock on my door snapped me out of my thoughts and I looked up just in time to see Christine make her way in. "A letter came from your sister and Damien. They want to come visit-"

"They can't right now," I cut her off and she rolled her eyes at me before continuing.

"If you had let me finish, you would have heard where I said that I told them now would not be a good time. They still don't know that anything happened so I made up an excuse about the workload being too much and promised to let them know when they can visit."

I wasn't sure why I ever doubted Christine, she was one of the most efficient people I knew. When Camilla went missing, she didn't hesitate to pick up most of the slack and even now, with Camilla

present, she still did a lot of work because she felt it was better to slowly integrate Camilla back into the work space instead of dumping everything on her at once.

"Have you seen Camilla?" I asked and she shook her head.

"You're the one that sleeps in the same room with her, why are you asking me?" she crossed her arms over her chest. "You can check with Marie or Peggy. If she isn't in her office then she will be there. Why are you asking?"

"Can you help me get her in an hour?" she raised a brow in amusement. "I have something planned for the both of us. She doesn't know what it is about, so don't tell her. I just need her."

She opened her mouth to speak but decided against it and made her way over to my desk. She took the seat opposite me and looked me square in the eye as she crossed her arms over her chest. Christine had a naturally terrifying gaze about her. I wasn't sure where she got it from or how it came to be but it came so easily to her. It was the kind of look that could make a grown man cry for his mother.

"Are you sure about this?" she asked and I cocked my head in confusion. "All of this that you are doing to win her over, are you sure? I love my cousin and my loyalties will always be to her. I want her to be happy with you but most importantly, I want her to be happy. Camilla runs, it is what she does best."

"For someone who loves her, you have such little faith in her. Camilla used to run, she doesn't anymore. If she

did, she wouldn't have even agreed to stay. She is different now.'

“”

“She is still Camilla,” she cut me off. “I don’t want you to chase her away because you want her back. I would much rather have her here as someone who hates us than not have her as all.”

I pursed my lips suddenly feeling bored of the entire conversation. I didn’t expect everyone to understand my reasons for doing the things I did, but I at least expected from support from Christine. Camilla had changed and it seemed like I was the only one who could see that. She wasn’t going to run, she wasn’t going to hide.

“She will get her memories back.”

“And if she doesn’t?” she asked. “What happens when she is unable to ever glean them back? Will all of this stop then? Will you stop trying to fight for her? If all of this is about her memories then this might be a good time to stop.”

“If she never regains her memories then we will make new ones. I am making new ones and if you were just able to get rid of your fears for five seconds, Christine, you would want to make new ones too.”

She clicked her tongue before standing to her feet and I knew I had hit a nerve. She turned on her heels without another word and headed straight for the door. I didn’t expect her to say anything but at the last moment, she turned to look at me.

“I might be scared and I might be the one that’s running, I can admit that, but you also need to admit that you are scared shitless too and that is why you are doing this. You can see exactly what I can and that is that Camilla isn’t ours anymore. She hasn’t been since the moment I found her.”

She slammed the door shut behind her as soon as she was done speaking and I cursed as I ran my hands through my hair. Her words were like a plague, like a slow acting poison that threatened to carve me from my insides out. I didn't want to give them much leverage but they had latched onto my insides and threatened to wreck everything I had struggled hard to build.

It was difficult to concentrate, difficult to think, Christine's words floated around in my mind unhindered and I couldn't take it for more than half an hour before I pushed to my feet and decided to take a walk in the palace gardens. I needed the fresh air and I was alone, or so I thought until I heard someone murmuring curses under their breath so quickly they would have made a sailor proud.

I followed the sound despite my initial need for solace and found Marie there struggling and failing to grab an apple from the top of the tree. Expletives were leaving her mouth faster than I would have ever thought possible and she was so fixated on her task that she didn't realize I had walked over to her until I reached up and grabbed that fruit she had been struggling with.

She stilled and as if in slow motion, she turned to face me. Her cheeks heated and she couldn't look me in the eye as I handed it over to her. "Thank you."

"You are more than welcome. How long had you been at it?"

"Long enough for it to become embarrassing. If I had any self respect or dignity I would have let it go but I would rather die than let a stupid fruit get the better of me. It is a fucking apple for goddess sake."

"You have a rather colorful vocabulary," I mused and her cheeks heated once more. "Do you always speak like this?"

"No," she said too quickly before clearing her throat. "I really apologize. I should never have-

I held up a hand to stop her. "I have no interest in crucifying you for your language. I only came here because I could hear you from the other side. If there is nothing else that requires my assistance then I can-"

"Wait!" she yelled out halting me in my tracks. "It is about Camilla. I just wanted to ask a question. I hope I am not over stepping any boundaries."

She looked sheepish which was a stark contrast from the woman who was swearing the place down. I wasn't *sure if it was worry or something else that was in her eyes but simply because I had heard Camilla's name, I found myself waiting. She took a few breaths to calm herself before finally speaking.

"She is never coming back, is she?" he asked and I stilled. As much as I wanted to say no, it was not my place to do so.

I would much prefer for her to never go back but the truth was that Camilla was her own person and I couldn't control her any more than I could control another. I could implore her to stay and I could find her if she ever ran away but that wouldn't get me her loyalty and that would not be able to get me her love which was ultimately what I wanted.

"I think you should discuss that with Camilla. Her staying or leaving remains her choice."

"Just drop the political stance for one day, your majesty.

"You can call me Ryker," I told her and she stilled "Camilla's friends are my friends and she sees you as family. That makes us family by extension."

"Ryker," my name sounded strange on her tongue. "The thing is, she cannot just walk away from this. This is an entire kingdom, they will come for her if she tries to village will be the first place they check. She

leave and she has a duty here.”

“Perhaps, but it still remains her choice.” Content © NôvelDrama.Org 2024.

“She will not leave. I know her well enough to make that assumption,” she chuckled under her breath. “I guess that means we have no business here anymore. If it is alright with you, my mother and I would like to return to our village.”

I thought about it for a second and I understood her desire to leave but I couldn't have that yet. “If it pleases you, would you mind staying a little while? Camilla doesn't understand the palace yet. She still feels like a stranger. It might make her feel better if she has people she knows around. We can make a home for you here if you so desire but if you do not, we will just keep you a while and send you on your way.”

She smiled softly. “I can see why she loved you and if you keep this up, she will again.” She bowed low. “Thank

you, Ryker. The weather does look pretty out here. I am sure Camilla would love to see it. I should tell her about

it.”

Chapter 207

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

The moment Marie started trying to get me out into the garden, I knew there was something else going on which was part of the reason why I wasn't surprised to see Ryker there. We hadn't spoken since I somewhat agreed to the dates and I expected some kind of heads up before he planned anything but it seemed I was wrong because he stood there completely stoic in front of

a fruit tree. His back was to me but I knew he was aware of my presence. It was obvious in the way he was unnaturally still.

“What are you looking at?” I decided to break the silence and he turned to me. “Let’s not beat about the bush with each other, please. I would very much prefer if we were just honest. Did you ask Marie to get me?”

“No,” I could tell he wasn’t lying but he also wasn’t telling me the truth. I crossed my arms over my chest and he sighed. “I helped her with something and we had a conversation. She decided to come get you, I didn’t ask her. to. If anything, I had asked Christine to get you in a few minutes time.” Content © NôvelDrama.Org 2024.

“The date,” I deduced and he nodded

I wasn’t sure how I felt about it. Some part of me wanted to stay, wanted to experience it and see what was going to happen. I wanted to be brave, I wanted to take risks but at the same time, I was also scared. No one ever realized how scary it was to not know who they are. It was the one thing that drove us and sure, I knew I was using it as a crutch but I needed something to latch onto and I didn’t have that.

“If you don’t want to,” he began but I shook my head.

“I’m fine, I’m just trying to mentally prepare myself.”

“We can reschedule it for another day. We don’t have to do anything.”

“Audrey is in school, Aurora is asleep and everyone is busy. I think this is the best time that we will get to ourselves,” I joked and the fact that he didn’t disagree with me led me to know that I was right. “It is a harmless date, I can handle it. Lead the way.”

I saw relief settle on his shoulders and for the first time, it hit me that Ryker was also having a hard time. I never stopped to think about just how difficult

this could be for him. He had his mate but couldn't completely have her. I wasn't the only one suffering as a result of my lost memories- we all were. Us, the children and everyone else involved who had to deal with the fallout. It was terrifying and to me, it resembled the blind leading each other.

Ryker didn't say a single word as he led me into the woods. I would have thought that there would be some form of fear at being alone in the woods but the truth was that I had never felt as protected. There was something about Ryker, something that led me to know that under no circumstances would he allow any kind of harm to come to me. He wasn't doing anything extraordinary, he was just holding my hand as he led me deeper but I had never felt so safe in my life.

"Are you okay back there?" he asked snapping me out of my thoughts and I turned to him. "You have been deathly quiet. Is something wrong?"

"No," I said almost too quickly. "I was just thinking about something but you don't have to worry about it. Where are you taking me?"

I knew he noticed the change of subject but to his credit, he didn't push or delve on the past topic, he embraced the change. "Why tell you when I could just show you

"You do realize that you are leading me into the woods and it would be completely normal for me to assume that

you

wanted to kill me."

He stopped, turned to me and burst out laughing. "Did we trade your memories for a sense of humor?"

"It would seem so."

“I don’t know about you but I think it’s a fair trade,” he winked and I couldn’t help but roll my eyes playfully.

“Just tell me where we are going already.”

“if you were not so impatient, you would realize that we were already here.”

Ryker pulled back some leaves and I was struck with one of the most beautiful sights in the world. There was a small waterfall that emptied itself into a clear stream. There were flowers littered all over the place and a picnic *table had been erected. There was something awfully familiar about it but I could not place my finger on it. I

turned to Ryker only to find him already staring at me with a mixture of anticipation and worry.

“Do you like it?” he asked and I nodded.

“It’s beautiful, although I feel a sense of déjà vu coming on. Have I been here before?”

“We had a thing here once with the family. My sister was here along with Damien. It was a while ago, I hoped it would spark some memories.”

I gave him a sad smile. “Nothing, unfortunately, I just know it seems similar. I know that isn’t what you want to hear but-”

“That is more than enough,” he cut me off before leading me over to the picnic table. “I don’t know if it is your powers but you have always loved places like this. You loved the plants, you loved the water, there was always just something, you know? I never really put two and two together.”

“What about you?” I asked and he turned to me. “Do you like places like this or did you only tolerate them because of me?”

“I never minded anything if I am being honest. Seeing you happy has always been worth it so the answer would be yes, I liked them, but it was mainly because you liked them.”

“That is such a non answer,” I mumbled trying and failing to hide my smile.

Ryker was a good man, that much was certain. He was gentle and kind and he was the kind of man that anyone would kill to have. Every few I

conds, I would glance at him out of the corner of my eyes, he was handsome, only a fool would have been unable to see that and I was no fool. He was seated so close to me that I could smell his scent and it bordered on on
whelming.

“How about a swim?” I asked after a minute of trying and failing to ignore his scent that was all over my space. I didn’t wait for him to respond before I got to my feet and made my way to the edge of the water. “Do you think we can swim inside of it?”

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I knew I was acting weird but I also knew

if I didn’t get away from that scent, I was going to end up doing something absolutely stupid. I wasn’t sure if he knew why I rose abruptly but he didn’t protest as he came to stand next to me.

“We can but there are no swim clothes, Camilla. Do you want to risk getting your entire dress wet? I know have powers over the water but even with that, you might drown”

you

I scoffed. “I can swim with my undergarments,” I offered and he hesitated for a second before finally nodding.

He was stiff as he helped me undo the ropes on my dress. If I were a better person, I would have asked but I was so transfixed on his hands that were movie

against my spine. He never touched my bare skin but just the heat from his body behind me was enough for every thought in every thought in my head to fly out.

He helped me out of my dress and corset leaving me in just my undergarments. It was scandalous at best and he turned away to give me some privacy as he took off his clothes. I didn't know what I was doing and I found

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myself asking what the hell I had started but I didn't have an answer for that.

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I got into the water trying to ignore the goose bumps that showed up on my skin or the way my nipples perked up from the cold. It could easily be hidden so it wasn't much of a problem- or at least, it wasn't until Ryker made his way over to the stream in nothing but his briefs and they were perked up for another reason entirely.

"It's cold," I mumbled sounding almost stupid and he raised a brow at me.

"Why don't you swim all the way over there and I can stay here and we can."

Before I could form one more word, he made his way over to me and grabbed both my arms. He pulled me flush against him and I could have sworn that in that moment, I felt nothing- nothing but him, the feel of his skin against mine, his warm breath and in that moment, in the swirling cold water, I felt like I was on fire.

"Camilla," he began and I bit down on my bottom lip.

“Please don’t say my name like that,” I whispered and he had the audacity to look confused. “You’re here, and you’re touching me and you’re saying my name and I cannot think. I need to be able to-”

He pulled my hair back out of my face and cupped both my cheeks. “Camilla.”
“Yes?”

“Shut up,” he mumbled before kissing me.

I stilled for a full minute and then it felt like fireworks had exploded all around me. It felt like everything was suddenly right in the world and despite knowing that I shouldn’t, despite knowing that it was incredibly stupid to do so, I kissed him back. One of his hands moved to my waist as he pulled me impossibly closer and I felt just how hard he was underneath the water. I couldn’t help but wonder if he could feel everything else as well.

“You’re thinking too much,” he mumbled against my lips before biting down on my bottom lip and I released a soft moan.

Everything was perfect, for one split second it was perfect and then I felt it. I pulled away from him and ran my hands through my hair in frustration. He reached out for me but I moved out of reach.

“That shouldn’t have happened,” I whispered despite knowing how much it broke me to utter those words. “I’d like to go back now.”

He looked confused but at last, he nodded. “Okay, we can leave now.”

Chapter 208

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

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I couldn’t look him in the eye as we packed up to return home. I was soaking wet but I couldn’t be bothered as I laced up my dress, I just needed to get into

the palace and get away. I could feel Ryker's eyes on me soft but questioning and as much as I wanted to give him an answer for my actions, as much as I wanted to let him know that this had nothing to do with him, I couldn't, because the truth was that it had everything to do with him.

The walk back was tense and filled with unspoken words and anxiety. Every few seconds, Ryker's hands would brush mine and I knew he wanted to intertwine our fingers but I couldn't- I wouldn't. I pulled my hands closer to my body and wrapped them in tight fists. To say he wasn't annoyed would have been a lie but to his credit, he managed to keep it hidden.

We got to the palace and I was just about to rush in when Ryker grabbed my upper arm pulling me to a stop. He stared at me for a split second and I thought he was going to speak so I cast a wary glance at the people around. There were guards and maids who could potentially overhear our conversation. They were already staring at us with varying degrees of curiosity. Ryker noticed that as well because the next thing he did was place both hands on my waist and step close to me.

I could feel every ridge and contour of his body and his scent was all over my nose. I shut my eyes trying to keep a level head despite my senses threatening to overwhelm me. His hands didn't move an inch from their position and I could feel the heat from them searing into my skin.

"Ryker," I began but he shook his head slightly. "People are staring."

"We are mated, let them stare," he said simply before dropping his lips to the side of my ears. "I don't know why you pulled back suddenly at the lake, I don't know what changed but I know like I know my own name that you felt that."

"That isn't the point," I mumbled and he scoffed. "What I felt was wrong."

“Is that what you want to tell yourself to make yourself feel better? You are a lot of things, Camilla, but a liar is not one of them,” his voiced was laced with amusement. “You felt that, you felt us, I know what it feels like to kiss someone who isn’t willing and that was not you.”

I tried to turn away from him but he wouldn’t let me. His fingers wrapped around my chin and he forced me to look at him. I crossed my arms over my chest and tried to keep my expression stoic but there was something in his eyes, something that stopped me from being able to hide how I felt. He was reading me like an open book and for the life of me, I couldn’t tell why it was so hard for me to hide.

“Why?” he asked and I cocked my head to the side in confusion. “Why are you hiding from me? Why are you pulling away from me?”

I debated telling him. In that moment, I was willing to damn it all to hell and speak but when I opened my mouth, I heard something like hurried footsteps behind me. The momentary distraction was all that I needed to pull away from Ryker and smooth down my dress. I turned to check the source of the distraction and it was Marie. She looked between us with wide eyes and an amused gaze.

“Am I interrupting something?” she asked with a small smirk on her face. “I could come back later if you want. I was just searching for-”

“You weren’t,” I cut her off clearing my throat. “I was just leaving. Can you come with me please? I need some help working on the ties on my dress.”

“Of course,” she said trying and failing to hide her smile.

I couldn't look at I I

Vker as I walked away but I could feel his eyes boring holes into my spine. I couldn't believe that I had almost shot everything to shit. There were certain things that should never be spoken and I had almost broken that rule. Marie said nothing the entire way to the room but I could tell that she was buzzing with excitement. To her credit, she remained quiet until we walked into the room and she turned to me with raised

brows.

"Tell me everything," she whispered, her voice brimming with excitement and glee. "How did it go? Was he nice? Did you like it? Do you like him?"

"One question at a time, please, if someone were to see, they would think you were the one who went out with him based on how wide you are grinning," I mused and she rolled her eyes. "Can you help me

take off the dress

'please?'"

She mumbled a few choice words under her breath before helping me out of my clothes. It was a relief because the undergarments were still wet and it finally felt like I could breathe. She raised a brow but didn't say anything at least not until I had changed and was in a pair of clean clothes.

"Are you going to explain now?" she asked and I sighed deeply.

"Nothing serious happened, we just ate and swam a little," I shrugged keeping the most important detail to

myself- the kiss. it wasn't something I wanted to share yet, it was private and intimate and I wanted to keep it

that way. "I got tired because the water was cold and I asked to return early. It is Content © NôvelDrama.Org 2024.

no big deal.”

She stared at me unblinking for a full minute before scoffing. “That is so boring. You didn’t even try to kiss him or anything? The man is gorgeous and he is literally eating out of the palm of your hands.”

“You sound like you want him,” I drawled and her cheeks heated. I stilled and raised a brow in her direction. “That was a joke.”

“I know it was,” she mumbled. “I am just saying that it would be nice to have someone who was as concerned with me as he is with you. He obviously feels for you.”

“We’re mates, of course he does,” I was getting annoyed with the conversation and it wasn’t something I could hide for much longer. “I have some work to attend to so I think I’ll go do that now. Thank you for helping me with my dress.”

I turned on my heels and walked out without another word leaving her in the room. She was shocked by my abrupt departure but she followed after me calling my name. I refused to stop so she grabbed my arm and made me look at her.

“I was kidding, Camilla,” she said but I remained silent. “I would never think about trying anything with him. Why would you even assume that I would?”

“I don’t think you would do anything. I don’t know what this is about.”

“This is about you being jealous,” she crossed her arms over her chest. “You like him, don’t you? You are trying to hide it but I can see that you do or else why would you be jealous?”

“I am not jealous. You are seeing things,” the lie slipped effortlessly off my tongue.

'The words felt like ash in my mouth but I needed to make it believable for her. I didn't want to give her any

reason to think otherwise. She stared at me as if she were trying to see into my soul and for the first few seconds, it was uncomfortable. Just as I was about to tell her off, she shrugged.

"You must be harder to please than I thought. If I had a man drooling over me the way he was, I would have folded a long time ago," she made to walk away but she stopped next to me and dropped her voice to a whisper. "For what it is worth, I think he is a good man and you should give him a chance."

Without another word, she walked off leaving me alone in the hallway.

I finally found my way into my office and buried my head into work all day. It was meant to help me forget about everything that had happened by the lake but it did the direct opposite. Being alone gave my thoughts room to fester, it was almost like nothing I could do could stop them and soon I was burying my head into my arms in an attempt to calm my mind.

A knock on my door had me looking up and it opened long enough for Audrey to come running in. She threw herself on my lap before I could even process that she was the one. She had a wide smile on her face and I couldn't stop myself from forming one in response.

"How was school?" I asked smoothing her hair out of her face and she shrugged. "When did you get back? Who brought you here?"

"I did," I turned to find Ryker walking into the room. Every nerve in my body stood on end as I watched him make his way inside. "She wanted to see you and I figured it was a good chance for me to do the same."

I swallowed deeply before turning my attention back to Audrey. "Are you hungry? We can go have lunch together out in the garden. What do you think?"

It was clear that she was excited because she squealed and rushed out of the room before I could say another word. I tried to ignore the fact that it was just Ryker and I in the office and made to side step him but he had my way blocked.

“Ryker,” I began but he cut me off by brushing his lips against mine. I was transfixed and unable to move. “What are you doing?”

“You’re not giving us a fair chance, so I’m not going to play fair either,” he said simply before taking a step back. “I’ll see you at lunch.”

Chapter 209

RYKER’S PO.V

Camilla was hiding something and I knew my mate well enough to know when she was being secretive. Something had made her stop at the lake. She had fully given in to me and she just randomly came to a halt, just like that. I knew there was something suspicious about it. Also, when we got back to the palace, it looked like she wanted to tell me something but Marie had interrupted.

I was determined to get to the bottom of it no matter what but it seemed like Camilla wanted the exact opposite. She wasn’t doing anything to outrightly show that she was avoiding me but it was all over her mannerisms. I was already in the dining room when she finally came down for dinner. There were two available seats, one by my side and one on the other end of the table. She took the one by my side but pointedly ignored me. It was more amusing than anything if I was being honest.

I raised a brow in her direction willing her to look at me but she focused all her attention on the girls. She was good with them without trying just like I knew she would. She effortlessly made them smile and when she was with them, you would never have guessed that she couldn't remember them. Watching her with them had slowly become the highlights of my day.

"Ryker," Peggy's voice snapped me out of my thoughts and I turned to her. "I don't feel like we have ever had a decent conversation, wouldn't you agree?"

I wasn't sure where she was going with it but I decided to play along. "I would, we could rectify that if you want."

"I just- I see Camilla as a daughter especially after she saved me from almost drowning. I just want to make sure that we are doing the right thing by allowing whatever this is play out."

"Peggy," Camilla whispered in a warning tone but Peggy waved her off. "You don't have to do this, I am an adult and apparently I am twenty four years old. This is embarrassing."

"I don't mind," I told Camilla as I discreetly dropped my hand on her thigh underneath the table. She stilled but made no move to brush my hand off. She narrowed her eyes at me but I pretended not to see her and turned to Peggy. "Ask whatever it is that you want to know and I will answer to the best of my abilities. There is nothing you would ask that the people in this room wouldn't already know the answer to."

She smiled before turning to Camilla with a smile on her face. She mouthed the words 'he is fun, I like him' and I saw Camilla roll her eyes. My hand was still on her thigh and seeing as she hadn't done anything to push it off yet, I decided to let my hand go a tad bit higher. She inhaled sharply but thankfully, no one else caught the sound. I could have sworn that would have been the moment she would push my

my hand off but her pride and need for the silent treatment seemed to be greater because she focused on the girls.

“How did you and Camilla end up here? How did you manage to meet the Queen? Was she Queen at the time?”

“Camilla and I’s story is very complicated. She was not Queen when we met.”

“Mummy was a princess and she was mad at daddy so he didn’t come for a while,” Audrey announced making us all turn to her. I hadn’t even realized she was listening to the conversation. “Mummy said that daddy was mean but I don’t think he’s mean. He is the best daddy in the world and he loves mummy so much. They’re always kissing and my friend says it gives you germs.”

“Why are you talking about kissing with your friend?” I asked and her eyes widened as she realized exactly what she had said. She buried her face back into her food but I wasn’t going to drop it yet. Têxt © NôvelDrama.Org.

“Audrey Valentina, you are not going to be kissing anyone until you’re fifty.”

She crinkled her nose. “Kissing brings germs. I won’t do it ever.”

Good girl,” I whispered and she beamed. Once she was back with her food, I turned back to Peggy who was watching the scene with amusement. It is a lot more complicated than what Audrey said but I think that sums it up perfectly.”

I slid my hand higher up on Camilla’s leg and she seemed to have had enough because she stood up abruptly. The chair scraped behind her and all eyes turned to her. She opened her mouth to speak and I knew if she did, she was going to lose her shit. She seemed to realize that too because at the last minute, she exhaled deeply before turning to Christine.

“Do you think that you can watch the kids for a while? I just need to take a breath.”

Before Christine could even agree, Camilla walked out of the room. Everyone was left shocked and confused while I was trying and failing to hide my smile. She was pissed, yes, and although that wasn't the reaction I had hoped to get, it was better than nothing because it meant that she felt something. Annoyance was always better than nonchalance and I had successfully gotten it out of her.

The rest of us ate our lunch in silence and I was the first out of the room. I was going to find Camilla when the door closed behind me and I heard Peggy calling after me. I had half a mind to ignore her but the more I thought about it, the more I realized how unfair that was to her. I forced my feet to a halt and turned to find her out of breath and trying to get to me.

"I didn't quite hear you when you first called," I lied and she snorted.

"Please, I am old but I am not stupid yet. I understand though, you wanted to get back to Camilla," she winked on the last part but I kept my expression carefully neutral. "I think you're good for her, Ryker. You and her, you will make an extraordinary duo. She needs someone like you, someone who can keep her grounded and help her explore the power that she has."

"Power?"

"Yes, you

didn't know?" she leaned in and dropped her voice to a whisper. "Camilla can control water. That is how she stopped me from drowning. That is extreme power that people would kill to have. She needs someone who can protect her."

I let out a sigh of relief because I had already started thinking the worst. I thought her powers had come back. I didn't want to take away from her, I wanted her to be the best of herself that she could be but if she never rediscovered her healing powers, I wouldn't have been upset. I just wanted

peace and we were never going to get that as long as she possessed the power of life.

“I will keep Camilla safe, you can count on that. I promise you.”

She smiled. “Well then, I shouldn’t keep you any longer. You should find her before she plots something against you.” I opened my mouth to deny any involvement but she held up a hand to stop me. “Once again, I might be old but I am not stupid.”

I watched her walk away with a small smile on my face. She was nothing like Leonor but she reminded me of her. She seemed like the kind of woman you never wanted to double cross. There was an edge to her, despite her smiles and warm demeanor, I could feel it. I was glad that she was on Camilla’s side.

I made my way to our room and to my surprise, I found Camilla pacing inside. I wasn’t sure why I had checked the room first but I hadn’t expected to find her there and she obviously wasn’t expecting to see me because she jumped and stared at me for a full minute without blinking.

“I am leaving,” she announced but once she made to brush past me, I grabbed her arm and pulled her to a stop. She tried to wrench her hand out of my grip but I wouldn’t let go. “Please, I can’t do this game with you.”

“Cannot or will not? Those are two very different things.”

“What do I need to do for you to stop?”

“Tell me why you pulled away at the lake,” she stared at me incredulously and scoffed. “I know you better than you know yourself at this point. You wanted it, but something stopped you, dare I say that something scared you.”

“I just didn’t want to do it,” the lie flowed easily from her lips but I could tell that it was a lie. “Why can’t you just accept that I didn’t want anything to do with you? It is quite sad that-”

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Her words died on her throat when I backed her into the wall. She opened her mouth to speak but suddenly no words could come out. She looked between me and the door presumably trying to find an

escape route but I pressed into her until there wasn't even an inch of space between us. Her breath caught in her throat and that was enough of a tell for me that she wanted this.

"You were so full of words a second ago," I teased. "Why aren't you saying anything now? Are you scared that I will see through your lies?" she still said nothing so I leaned forward and brushed my lips against hers. "In three seconds, I will kiss you if you do not push me off and I don't mean feeble attempts, I mean actually push me. Am I clear?"

The air crackled with electricity.

"Three," I began slowly but she still hadn't made a move to leave.

"Two," this time she lifted her hands and placed them on my shoulders but didn't shove.

"One," I whispered it slowly then waited another painful two seconds before finally claiming her lips.

Chapter 210

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

He kissed me and all I could think of in that moment was how much I didn't want it to end. I could have pushed him away, he gave me more than enough time to do so but I couldn't bring myself to do it, I couldn't bring myself to utter the words stopped because as much as I pretended not to, I craved him. I

wanted him in a way that I could not understand. I wasn't sure if it was the mate bond or something else but I couldn't find Ryker. I neither had the energy nor the willpower to do so.

There was something captivating about Ryker and it went past the mate bond. I wasn't sure if it was how gentle he had been with me, how patient he was or how he strived to push me without crossing my boundaries. He was the perfect man and I knew he could have anyone he wanted but he wanted me. He patiently waited for me. That alone was more than enough reason for me to kiss him back.

His hands settled on my hips as he pulled me impossibly closer to him. I was gripping the collar of his dress shirt for dear life as his tongue slipped into my mouth. A moan left my lips and he devoured the sound with ease. His kiss was a claim, it was a brand and if any part of me doubted that I belonged to this man, it was gone like the wind. It completely disappeared.

My hands found themselves moving of their own accord as they slipped up his chest to his shoulders before finally wrapping themselves at the back of his neck. He let out a groan as my nails grazed the hair there. That sound was like a catalyst, I wanted more of it so I repeated the motion again. He cursed against my lips before pulling back from me. I was panting as I stared deep into his eyes that were now no less than bottomless swirls of lust and desire. He ran his thumb down my bottom lip ever so gently before pushing it into my mouth.

"You're fucking gorgeous," he whispered as his eyes grazed my lips. I was sure they looked just as red and swollen as his did. The image of it in my head alone was enough to have me clenching my thighs.

Before I could stop myself, I wrapped my lips around his finger and sucked on it hard. His answering groan reverberated round the room. He pulled back like I had burned him before walking us backwards until my knees hit the edge of

the bed and then he paused. His self control was admirable because I couldn't have brought myself to stop if I were him, I didn't want him to stop. There was no other thought in my head right now except for him. I felt like I was on fire and yet he somehow had the know how to pause.

"Camilla," he said my name like it pained him to do so, like it took a considerable amount of strength. "The goddess knows how much I want this but I need to be sure. I need to know that you will not just run out on me."

"I won't," I assured him but he shook his head.

"I need you to say it. I need you to tell me this is what you want or I swear I will stop. I don't want to do this until I am very sure that this is what you want. I need to hear your words."

It was admirable that he was heavy on the topic of consent. He wanted this badly and it would have hurt him to stop but I knew he would have, he never joked with the idea of consent. "I want this. I want you and I am not going to run from you."

He uttered something under his breath that sounded suspiciously like thank the goddess before kissing me again. His hands were anywhere and everywhere all at once eliciting a path of flames as they moved around my body. I felt him work on the knots behind my dress and in record time, he had it pooled on the ground beneath us. I barely had time to recover from that before I heard a loud ripping sound. I pulled back long enough for the chemise I was wearing to give way.

Without thinking, my hands came to hold it up. I was completely naked underneath it. It was the last remaining barrier between us and he was fully clothed. He was looking at me like he wanted to devour me and while I didn't quite have a problem with that, I couldn't stop the instinctual nature. He frowned

at my hands but did nothing to pull them apart. Instead, he slowly turned me around so that my back was pressed into his chest.

I could feel just how hard he was and my eyes nearly rolled into the back of my head. I tried to keep my gaze on the bed in front of me knowing exactly what was going to happen on it but all thoughts flew out of my head when he pressed an open mouthed kiss to my collarbone. I hissed arching my back into him as he continued to pepper the length of my neck and collarbone with kisses.

“Ryker,” I moaned and his hands gripped onto my waist tighter. “What are you doing?”

“Kissing you, isn’t it obvious?” his words were laced with mirth and amusement but there was nothing remotely amusing about the way he lit my skin on fire.

His lips closed around my mark and a loud moan left my lips. My hands that were previously holding onto my chemise for dear life let go as I lifted my hands to wrap around his neck. That was exactly what he was looking for because no sooner than the moment I did that, he trailed his hands up my sides and cupped my breasts. He let out a shaky breath by my ear and I felt my core weep in response.

“Fuck, you feel even better than I remember,” he whispered as he tweaked my nipples ever so slightly. He was barely touching me and yet I felt like I had been wound up so badly. I want you in my mouth.”

Before I could process what he had said, he turned me around before laying me flat on the bed. He pulled what was left of my chemise off my feet before climbing over me and claiming my nipple into his mouth. His teeth grazed against the hard bud and I could have reached my orgasm there and then. I

felt so starved and he was like a drug pumping through my veins at record speed. It felt too good, too much and I couldn't have enough.

While he sucked on one stiff bud, he lavished the other with attention from his fingers. All I could do was grip his hair while trying my hardest not to cum from just his mouth on me. Ryker seemed lost in the motions because soon he was placing open mouthed kisses all over my torso and stomach. With every kiss, he moved lower until he was nipping at the skin of my thighs. I had a faint idea of what was coming next but I didn't fully process it until he parted my legs and licked me.

"Oh, fuck!" I screamed. I felt Ryker chuckle from his position between my legs. He pulled back to watch my face and my cheeks heated in embarrassment. "You don't have to do that."

"I wouldn't if I didn't want to," he said simply before burying his face in my thighs.

He feasted on me, never giving me more than a few seconds to catch my breath. It was clear that what he was doing was more for his pleasure than for mine. He enjoyed what he was doing which somehow made the thing more erotic than it should be. He sucked on my clit hard and I could feel myself reaching for that bliss but before I could get there, he pulled back. I whined in protest as he stood to his feet but I noticed that he was shedding his clothes.

"The first time you cum today will be on my cock, do you understand me?" my mouth dried up so all I could muster was a nod. He leaned forward to grab my chin. "That's not enough, I need words, Camilla."

"Yes," I managed out. My voice was barely over a whisper but that was enough for him because he kissed me softly before pulling back long enough to shed his clothes.

Ryker had a body built for sin. He looked like a man hand carved by the goddess herself and my mouth watered as I stared at him. As soon as he shed the last of his clothes, I couldn't stop myself for reaching for him. His surprise was palpable, he had been the one to take the lead and yet this time, I couldn't stop myself.

Our kiss was a clash of teeth and tongue. I wanted everything and I was tired of pretending I didn't, tired of pretending like this man was not the absolute love of my life and the man that I wanted. I needed to tell him the truth.

"Ryker," I mumbled pulling away from the kiss. "I need to tell you something."

"Tell me after I have my dick inside of you," he groaned laying us both on the bed.

"Ryker- oh," the words died on my throat when I felt him nudge my entrance. I was soaking wet and there he was, hard and proud. He pushed into me ever so slowly stopping when the head was in.

"What did you want to say?" he asked and I nearly punched him. All thought had died out of my mind. "This is your last chance to say something, Camilla. I like to pride myself on my self control but even that isn't unbreakable." Content (C)

"Just shut up and fuck me," I muttered and he whispered something that sounded like thank fuck before pushing into me in one quick and blinding thrust.

"Whatever you want, baby."