

THE REJECTED WEREWOLF PRINCESS

The Rejected Werewolf Princess Chapter 261



RYKER'S P.O.V

The very last thing I wanted to deal with right now was a potentially psychotic wolf but here we were. I glanced over at Camilla and despite how tired I knew she was, she looked just about ready to comb every inch of this palace until she found this person. She was always prepared to do the right thing, no matter how much it inconvenienced her and that was one of the things I loved the most about her.

"Close all the exits to the palace," she said to the guard who was there with us. "Inform as little people as possible, I don't want to risk telling the attacker and having him run off. In the meantime, please escort these people to the physician's quarters and let him have a look at their friend."

The guard stared at her for a second, probably wondering why she wouldn't just ask for him to be taken to the morgue. His confusion was etched on his face but he didn't ask any questions. Many sentences in this chapter have been removed because you are not reading them on He just nodded and escorted them. They wouldn't let him touch their friend, together, the three of them picked up the bruised body and carried it down the halls. It was at that moment Christine saw it and out of the corner of my eye, I saw her hide her face in Juan's chest.

"You don't need to be here right now," I told them both but Christine waved me off over her shoulder. "You should be getting some rest. Camilla and I can handle it."

"You need as many hands as you can get right now," she mumbled as she pulled back from her mate. She took in a few deep breaths before crossing her arms over her chest. "I probably won't be able to sleep right now anyway, so it doesn't matter. What is the course of action?"

I glanced over at Camilla to see if she had anything but she seemed lost in thought. I gently grazed her back with my hand and that snapped her attention back to me but I could see that she hadn't thought up anything yet. I couldn't blame her, it was jarring to know that someone within your walls was capable of such violence unprovoked.

"Wake the fucking elders," I said finally. "This is the bullshit that they need to be dealing with, not us. We have enough on our plate as it is." Christine nodded and within a second, she was off. After that, I turned to Juan, "I need you to find out from the guards everyone who walked into the palace within the last thirty minutes. I want names and where they were coming from."

"Consider it done," he gave me a curt nod and was off in an instant leaving just Camilla and I.

My mate was still lost in her thoughts and she was anxiously biting at her fingertips. I doubted she even realized what she was doing because the moment I touched her arm, she pulled her hand away like it had burned her.

"Did you say something to me?" she asked but I shook my head. "Why would someone do something like this? Do you think it has anything to do with... your magic?"

I shook my head. "Not everything has ties to magic, Camilla. Two things can be happening at the same time and have nothing to do with each other. This

is happening because whoever did it is barbaric and has a desire to cause chaos. We will find them, I swear it to you."

She nodded although I could see that she hadn't eased one bit. I gestured for her to walk with me and she didn't hesitate before threading her fingers in me. She looked exhausted to the bone and if I had my way, I would have dragged her straight to bed but she had to be here for this. It was off to the council for us and thankfully, once we got there, the elders were already there.

Most of them still had that sleepy look in their eyes. They looked a mix of tired and annoyed probably that we had woken them from their beauty rest but I would be damned if Camilla and I spent our time and exerted ourselves to do something that they could easily do. It was all about delegation and I wasn't going to let us run ourselves to the ground.

"Your majesties," they bowed in unison before one of them decided to keep going. "I would not dare try to question your motives but is there a reason you woke us up at the odd hour of the night?"

"You wouldn't dare question but that is exactly what you did," Camilla snapped and he turned away in shame. "Were you all aware that while you slept, someone, presumably from this palace stepped out and attacked innocents, killing one of them?" There was silence and then murmuring. I resisted the urge to pinch the bridge of my nose in frustration as they all conveniently decided to stay silent. It was like being in a room with children. I couldn't understand for the life of me why they were not saying a single word. It wasn't magic, neither were we asking them to do the impossible.

"Our deepest apologies are with the deceased," Caius said finally and that was when I snapped.

"Your apologies are not going to bring the dead back to life," I levelled each of them with a hard look. "What you will do is get off your asses and do

something about it. If you want to continue being useful to this court, you will find out who is responsible for the killings."

"But, your majesty, we have been doing exactly as you asked, we have been useful-"

I didn't even wait to see who was speaking before cutting him off. "Clearly not useful enough if someone can do this right under your noses. This entire castle is on a lockdown for the next forty-eight hours, you will use that time to find out who killed this boy and why. I don't care if you do not eat or you do not sleep, but no one rests until the killer is found, am I clear?"

"Yes, your majesty."

I turned to Camilla to see if she had anything more to say but she was silent. Once I was sure there was nothing more to be said, I thread my fingers with her and pulled her to her feet. She needed rest and she needed it now. Something was bothering her terribly and it was causing her mind to drift.

We were a few steps out of the council room when I heard someone clear their throats behind me. I turned to find Caius, he had his head bowed to the ground but it was clear that he wanted to see us.

Camilla glanced over at me, a silent question in her eyes and while I could have ignored him and gone on my way, there was a part of me that was always going to respect him for the help he had been to us. "You go," I told Camilla finally. "I'll meet up with you." "But-"

"Our room, Camilla," I whispered and although she frowned, she turned on her heels and left. I waited until she was gone before making my way back over to Caius. "There better be a good reason for this."

"Do you truly believe this person to be one of the palace staff?" he asked and I simply stared at him blankly. "What I mean to say is that couldn't it be a

possibility that the innocents in question killed their friend and came into the palace as a distraction."

I frowned. I hadn't thought about that, but it was plausible. "Perhaps you should pursue that lead if you believe it to be true. I don't care what angle you pursue, as long as you catch whoever did this."

He nodded but I could tell there was still more that he wanted to say so I waited until he spoke. "Will this truly determine if you cut some of the elders?"

"Does it really matter if I do or I do not?" I asked. "End this before it even starts. There is a potential killer in our walls and you should all be more concerned about the possibility of him killing again rather than the possibility of you losing your jobs. This is about lives that are at stake, the last thing anyone should be focused on is their work."

He frowned and pursed his lips. "You are right, I will get on questioning the friends. I will report back to you as soon as I can, your majesty."

I didn't hang behind, in case he had more questions. I immediately headed straight for Camilla's office because a part of me knew there was no way she would have gone back to the room with all of this happening. Sure enough, I found her pacing the length of the room and when she finally noticed me, she stopped like a deer caught in headlights.

"I couldn't just go to bed," she mumbled and I raised a brow. "There could be more deaths. There is a killer."

"I know," I said simply as I walked into the office. "But, the fact remains that the elders have this under control. You need to get better at delegation."

"What if they don't do it right?"

"They will."

"How could you be so sure?" her voice was barely over a whisper. "They barely do anything right. They are like children who need their hands held."

"They barely do anything right because most times, it doesn't directly concern them. Their lives and livelihood is on the line here, Camilla, I am sure we will have answers within the next twenty-four hours."

"You seem sure."

"I know men, and I know men in power. They will do almost anything to remain in power. They are used to a certain life of luxury and it would be a shame if all that was stripped away from them. They will have answers and they will have them soon." She seemed to understand what I was saying. Her shoulders relaxed slowly and she wasn't standing on edge, so much anymore. She also stopped pacing and turned to face me.

"So all we have to do now is wait?" she asked and I nodded.

"All we do it wait."

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CAMILLA'S

P.O.V

It wasn't in my nature to go to sleep while the entire palace was on a countdown timer, but somehow Ryker managed to drag me into bed and lull me to sleep. When I woke up, I was equal parts relieved that I had rested and embarrassed that I was able to do so easily.

It took me a second to remember what happened last night and as soon as I did, I was on my feet in an instant. I got ready in record time and found Ryker in his office. He looked like he hadn't slept a wink all night and I felt guilty that I slept so freely and he hadn't rested at all.

"Anything?" I asked but he shook his head. "What about the elders? Have they found anything yet?" Content provided by

"No, the palace is still on lock down and I have people watching the girls to make sure that they are safe and unaffected by all of this."

I hummed. "We have less than two days to figure this out because we cannot keep the palace on lock down forever. We have to do something but I don't know what. I cannot just leave this to the elders. They are going to do a shit job." Ryker sighed. "Do you want to go talk to the friends? We might be able to get something out of them."

"You don't have to come with me. I can do it myself."

He snorted. "As if I would leave you to do this alone. My powers can wait, Camilla, they aren't running away. They will still be here once we are done."

I didn't think it was possible to love Ryker any more than I already did. He was being incredibly selfless. If he had chosen to sit back and handle his own issues, no one would have held him to a fault, but he put his aside for the betterment of the entire palace. It was one of the reasons I knew for a fact that he was going to get the best of this entire ordeal. There was no way Ryker would ever become like Reina, it was impossible. They were two completely different people. Where she was self serving, he was not. He was good, at his core, that was who he was. Even when he did not so good things, he did them for the right reasons.

The friends were all huddled together in the same guest room. They hadn't changed from their last night's clothes and I could tell that none of them had

slept. They sat close together on the bed and the moment they saw me, they rushed to their feet and bowed. "Did you find anything yet, your majesty?" one of the girls asked and I opened my mouth to speak but no words would come out. I saw the hope in her eyes deflate as she sank back onto the bed. "I presume they are long gone by now." "The palace is on a complete lock down, I promise you, no one can go in or out right now without my permission," I assured her. "We are doing everything we can to find out who did this to you but I wanted to ask you a few questions if you are willing to answer them."

"If they will help us find out who did this, then sure," she nodded with her spine straight. It was clear that she was the unofficial leader in the group. Everyone turned to her for support and she was the only one speaking directly to us. "I already told the other guy what happened but I would be happy to recap."

"Other guy?" my brows pulled in confusion. "Can you describe this other guy? Or did he tell you his name?"

She shook her head. "He said he was one of your elders or something and you had asked them to look into it. I don't like him much, he was an a*****e but I was much too tired to care last night?"

"It might have been Caius," Ryker spoke directly into my mind. "He thought that it was possible they were lying to get access into the pack and asked for permission to question them. I can talk to him after this to be sure."

"Thank you," I told him before turning back to the girl. "I'm sorry that one of the elders was rude to you. After all that happened, that is the last thing you deserve. I already have most of the story from what you told me last night but I need to know more about the wolf that attacked you."

"It was a dark brown color, it wasn't black but it was very dark and I could be mistaken. It was on the big side and I think it was male. It came out of nowhere. We were so scared that we just ran. It managed to get a hold of," her words caught in her throat and she wiped at some stray tears that leaked from the corner of her eyes. "We rushed at it with everything that we had. We threw sticks and stones but it wouldn't let go. It was almost like it knew what it was doing."

"I am so sorry," I whispered at the same time Ryker handed her a handkerchief to dab at the corner of her eyes with.

"Once it was done with him, it took off in the direction of the palace. I tried to chase after it but it was faster. I figured the palace guards would have seen a large wolf run by but no one did. I presume it shifted and walked in."

It did seem like the only likely possibility. I let out a sigh and gave her a small and comforting smile. "I will make sure that whoever was responsible for this is punished, you have my word."

"What if you don't catch him?" she asked and I stilled. "You just gave your word. What happens if he isn't caught?"

"He will be," I said simply before standing to my feet. "If you need anything at all, there will be a maid positioned right outside of your door. She will get you breakfast and anything else."

"Thank you, your majesty," the girl bowed. "Not many people would have taken time out to come to us. I am truly grateful."

I didn't know how to respond to that so I just nodded. Ryker and I walked out hand in hand and it wasn't until we had gotten a few feet away from the room, that I let out an exhausted breath. There were thousands of people in this palace on any given day. How the hell was I meant to find out the person who had gone in and out at that time.

"Camilla, Ryker," I turned to find Juan rushing over to us. "I finally got the list that you needed. It was a hassle to get from every entrance or exit but there were about three hundred names. I crossed out all the people who were accounted for at every second within the vicinity of the palace- mostly maids- but now, we are down to about fifty."

"So we have fifty plausible suspects," I deduced and he nodded.

"Can you cut out any females," Ryker suggested and Juan crossed a few names off the list.

"We still have around forty."

"What about cutting off any of the lower ranking males. I'm thinking the very low servants who would have smaller wolves," I offered and it took a little longer this time but Juan crossed off more names. "Twenty."

I didn't know what else we could cut out so I nodded. "Thank you, Juan, I think we can take it from here."

"Are you sure?" he asked and I nodded.

"Go and be with your mate, you deserve it."

He nodded and disappeared leaving Ryker and I with the list. There were twenty suspects and I didn't know where to start. How were we going to find out who attacked them? Would we call them all out and make them shift in front of the friends to see if they recognized the wolf? It seemed like the only plausible solution but the fact remained that if one of them was guilty, and they caught wind that we were onto them, it could prove disastrous for the rest of us.

"What do we do?" I asked Ryker who just shrugged. He seemed as confused as I was. "We can gather all of them and question them."

"We can, but we cannot let them know why we are questioning them."

Finding everyone on the list proved easier than I had imagined. Perhaps it was because the palace was on lockdown. We were halfway through the list when I noticed Caius walking towards us. I immediately remembered what the girl had told us earlier about his being rude and walked up to him. It took Ryker a second to realize what I was doing but as soon as he did, he was by my side.

"Your majesty," Caius bowed the minute he saw me. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"There is actually, I would hope that you would treat our guests with a little more curtesy than you did before," I said simply and his brows furrowed.

"I am afraid I am not following."

"You went to question them, did you not? I am afraid that your manner of approach was-

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"I apologize for the interruption but I didn't question them. I wanted to, I asked for permission but by the time I got there, I was told they had already been questioned by another elder."

At this point I was confused. "What are you talking about?"

"That is exactly what they told me. I assumed someone else had the same idea I did so I let it slide. It was very annoying if I am being honest especially since the only reason I didn't ask them earlier was because I heard some commotion in my room and found it a bit messy. Now that I think about it, I-

He was interrupted by a guard rushing over to me. "Your majesty, we have a problem."

As if the day couldn't get any worse. "What happened?"

"It is the guests, one of them was poisoned."



RYKER'S P.O.V

I had always hated the domino effect. When one bad thing happened, it always felt like others were just at the cusp. It was one thing after another and it just kept falling and falling until nothing was left. It felt like I was inside a domino effect. First was the magic and then this, I couldn't help but wonder if it was finally over or if there was more to come.

"Where are they now?" Camilla asked.

"In the physician's quarters, your majesty."

The guard had barely finished his statement before she took off in that direction and I had no choice but to follow after her. I could sense her panic down the bond, I could almost taste it- or maybe it was mine. I hadn't been able to shake the feeling all day that something was going to happen. I didn't know what, but it was there, buzzing under my skin and reminding me, keeping me focused. Something bad was at the cusp and I could feel it.

We got to the physician's quarters and sure enough, they were all there. What I didn't expect was to see that the girl who had been talking to us was the one who had been poisoned. She lay in the bed, her eyes closed and if not for the steady rising and falling of her chest, I would have thought she was dead.

"What happened?" I asked making all of them turn to us. Neither of the other two spoke, they just sat by her bedside sniffing. Camilla rushed up to their side offering silent support but that wasn't what we needed right now, we needed answers. "What the f**k happened?"

"The maid brought us some food and she wanted to taste it first to see if it was safe, next thing we knew, she passed out," it was the guy who spoke and he was stumbling over his words. It was a miracle I even managed to understand him at all. "The physician says she will be okay but she isn't moving. She is never this quiet."

"She will be fine," I ground out. "Who was the maid who served you?"

"She didn't tell us her name, but she looked young and she had brown hair."

I turned and Caius was at the door. He wasted no time before bowing. "I will find the maid and bring her to you now."

He left immediately after and I ran my hands through my hair in frustration. Someone was trying to make this extremely difficult for us and it pissed me the f**k off. We were close to finding out who it was, that much was certain because no one lashed out and acted like this unless they had something to lose.

I wished I could offer support to them but I couldn't bring myself to move. My eyes were fixed on the girl lying in the bed. I could see her aura, it had almost become like second nature now, the way my eyes adjusted to seeing people's aura's. It was strong, she was alive and she was a fighter, I knew for sure that she was going to survive this but my question remained 'why her?'

Was there something special about her or had she been a victim of circumstance? I wasn't sure which was better and it wasn't as if I could go out of my way to ask when she was confined to a bed and unconscious. Her friends were no help at all, they had spent their time crying and blubbering. I wasn't sure if it was cruel of me to think, but a part of me had wished that someone else had taken the poisoned food first, that way, she would have been awake to ask the questions.

I stood awkwardly to one corner while I waited for Caius to return. While I waited, the physician made his way over to me. "Is it alright if we speak, your majesty?"

"Of course not," I waved him closer. "Please, go ahead."

"I just ran some tests and what she was given was an intricately produced blend of wolf's bane," he explained. "I have seen it before but I cannot for the life of me remember where because it was such a long time ago. It is mixed with a special plant that grows just outside the palace gardens."

"A poisonous plant grows in the gardens and no one thought to tell us?"

He shook his head. "The plant on its own is not poisonous but when mixed with wolf's bane, it is. That is what struck me as odd because it hasn't been used in a very long time. For someone to know this, they would have to either be very good with history or they would need to know this first hand."

Before I had the chance to respond, the door opened and Caius returned with a maid in tow. She matched the description perfectly but what had me convinced was when the friends looked up at her and their eyes burned with anger.

"She is the one who tried to kill us!" they exclaimed at the same time and that was all I needed to drag the maid by her elbow out of the room. This is from I could hear screams of indignation behind me but I ignored them and turned to the maid who was cowering in my hold. I knew instantly that although she might have been the one to give them the food, she was definitely not the mastermind behind it. Someone else had used her as a pawn.

"Who did it?" I asked but she said nothing. "I don't have time for games and I am sure that you do not want to be the one to take the blame for all of this because the real culprit has killed and attempted to kill another."

"I can't," she whispered in a broken tone. "He has my sister. I can't tell you or he will kill her."

I let out an exasperated sigh and ran my hands through my hair in frustration.

"Is your sister in the palace right now?" she nodded. "Where?"

"I don't know, but she is with him."

"I will get your sister back, I swear it," I promised her. The moment the words left my lips, I knew I should not have said them but it was too late to take it back. I was just going to have to deal with the consequences later. "Who is it?"

"It is one of the elders," she answered after a while. "He came to me in the kitchen and handed me a vial of a liquid. He asked me to put it into the food. I said no at first then he told me that he had my sister and he was going to have her killed if I didn't. I just did as I was asked. I didn't want her to die, I promise."

"Which of the elders?"

"I don't know his name. I don't know any of their names, but it wasn't the one who came to get me. I know his face."

"Will you point him out for me?"

"Will you save my sister?"

It was too late to back out now. "I will."

I called for a meeting with the elders and explained everything to Camilla and Caius. As it was, Caius was the only elder I could trust seeing as the maid had vouched for and said he wasn't responsible. She stood by my side as all the elders filed in. when the last of them was making his way in, he locked eyes with the maid and I knew instantly that he was guilty even before she spoke.

"It's him," she whispered just as he took off and ran.

"Catch him!" I ordered the guards. I had no interest in chasing after anyone. I trusted the guards to do their job. While they ran after him, I turned to Caius. "What is his name?"

"Ansel," Caius answered simply. "I have known him since we were infants. I cannot believe that he would do something like this."

We waited patiently for the guards to bring him back. He fought hard against their hold but he was an old man and they were trained guards, there was nowhere for him to go and he knew it. He was brought to our feet and pushed to his knees. I watched him, carefully assessing his aura, there was nothing to say that he was inherently evil, he was just ambitious, that much I could tell.

"Why?" I asked simply and he shrugged. "You didn't do it to be cruel, so why?"

"You were choosing elders. If I created a problem and I solved it then I would stay on the council. It was a fool proof plan, but then you locked down the palace."

"And you were cornered and scared that they would figure you out. You were on the list of people who was seen leaving the palace."

"I was," he admitted.

"Now what? You're caught, this is over."

He smirked. "Not quite. I always knew there was a possibility I would be caught today, so I put plans in place."

"Where is her sister?" Camilla cut in. "Let her go and we will consider banishing you instead of having you executed for what you have done."

"I have no interest in dying, your majesty, but you would want to hear what I have to say before making your demands," he mused. Camilla started to

speak but I held up a hand to stop her. I wanted to hear what he had to say.
"Speak, you have five minutes."

"Have you checked on your children lately?" he asked and fury rose up in me like a storm. "The tunnels are vast and wide so I'll make this easy. Both your children and her sister are in the woods. I have a map to each of them." "The palace is on lockdown," I said and he smirked.

"You would be surprised with what an elder can get away with," he mused. "The thing is, the people holding them will only answer to the both of you. If they see anyone else, they will kill them. You can save one and the other dies. I know I'm going to die regardless, so this will be fun."

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RYKER'S P.O.V Owned by

He wasn't bluffing, that was the first thing I knew. The second was that it couldn't possibly be this easy. It sounded like an absurd thing to say considering the fact that we were to save both people but it still seemed too easy. There was something else he wasn't saying and until we knew exactly what it was, we couldn't make an informed decision. I pulled Camila by her upper arm away from everyone else so that we could talk. "There's something he isn't saying."

"I know," she mumbled under her breath in agreement. "It doesn't make sense why anyone would just allow the girls walk out of here with complete strangers," she paused before adding. "Unless they didn't walk out with complete strangers."

"The only people who could get away with leaving with our kids are Christine and Juan and you know as well as I do that they would never put the girls in danger, not even at their own detriment. Something else is going on here."

I turned to face Ansel who was still kneeling innocently and without a care in the world. There was something else at play and I felt like I had an idea but I couldn't be sure. I made my way over to him and sat in front of him with my hands crossed over my chest. He had a sly smirk on his face that only seemed to infuriate me but I kept a tight lid on my emotions.

"Who is with the girls?" I asked and he shrugged. "I know it isn't Christine, it cannot be her or her mate. Why don't you tell me what is really going on here?"

He just shrugged. "I have said what I am willing to say. It is your job now to figure out the rest. You can spend time torturing me or you can go and find out yourself."

I stared at him for a second but he was right, every second I spent here, they were out there. I held out my hand and he knew exactly what I wanted. He reached into his pockets and pulled out two scrolls of paper. As soon as I had taken them, I grabbed him by the collar of his shirt. Many sentences in this chapter have been removed because you are not reading them on J o b nib.c(o)m." If either of them gets hurt, I will make sure your death is cruel and painful. You will plead for the sweet mercy that would be dying and you will not get it, am I clear?"

For the first time, I saw something akin to fear flash across his face and as much as I hated to admit it, it felt good to see. I pulled open both maps and analyzed them. They led to different paths of the forest, there was no way that we could get to both of them in time. I couldn't condemn either of them to death.

"Go after her sister," I said to Camilla whose brows scrunched in confusion. "Just do it and trust me," I stepped closer and dropped my voice to a whisper. "If anything goes badly, use your powers, kill them all. Do you understand me?" She nodded. "Where will you go?"

"I'll go after our children. I don't know about you, but I don't believe he would put them in actual danger. He knows what the consequences of that would be and he doesn't strike me as a man who wants to die a painful death." I could see that Camilla still wasn't convinced. "I don't think we should split up."

"Take two guards at the most. We don't want to alert them to your presence," I could have tried easing her worries but that was going to take too long and there were lives on the line. "We will meet back here, I promise you."

I kissed her temple before grabbing one of the maps and walking out. I didn't want anyone by my side as I did what I needed to do. Something told me that things could potentially get ugly but I was sure I could handle it on my own. I knew I could.

The path was rather straight forward. There weren't a lot of twists and turns. It was dead quiet for the majority of it, until I came to a small shed in the middle of the woods. It was so tiny and so old that I doubted anyone could live in there but it was the final stop on the map. I took a step forward when I heard a snarl close to my right. I

froze and listened, trying to ascertain where the sound was coming from when I heard another from my left. In that moment, I was relieved that I had told Camilla to go with guards because if she was going to encounter rogues on her way then at least she was going to have protection.

"What do you want?" I heard someone ask. The sound came from my right and when I turned, I saw a rogue hidden between the bushes. His hair was a matted mess and his eyes were a bright red color. "You shouldn't be here."

"Neither should you," I said simply. "This is palace property and you don't belong here."

"I'll take a wild guess and say that the girls inside are yours," he mused and I gave off a warning growl which only seemed to make him laugh. "Don't worry, I won't hurt them yet. I have strict orders and I want to get paid." "Your employer is dead," I kept my tone monotonous and cold. "You aren't getting paid. If you leave now, you can still go on with your life. If you don't, you will die."

"There is one of you and so many of us. How do you plan to do that?"

As he spoke, I saw more rogues come out of the woods. There were at least five of them. I could handle one, two was fine, I could maybe even deal with three, but more than five was a far stretch. I would do some damage but ultimately I was going to lose and they knew it. As they drew closer, I felt something stir inside of me- something dark and old and powerful. It almost seemed to purr at the thought of danger. I didn't need to think long to know what it was, "Let me," I heard audibly in my head. "I will finish this before it even starts."

"You cannot kill them," I wasn't going to risk tasting death with shadow magic, it already seemed like a recipe for disaster. "Hurt them, knock them out, I don't give a shit, but do not kill them."

"You are no fun," was the last thing I heard before I felt power gather under my skin. It was an electrifying feeling and I could completely understand in that moment why Reina had been lost to it.

It was the kind of feeling where you knew you had power and you relished in that knowledge. I saw shadows gather at my fingertips and the rogues had the sense to halt in their steps. They watched me with careful apprehension.

"What the f**k kind of party trick is that?" the leader asked and all I did was smirk.

"Why don't you find out?"

I waited until he attacked me first. It felt like I wasn't in control of my body as the shadows shot forward and grabbed him by the throat. I could feel the very essence of his life pulsing from his skin and I wanted nothing more than to have a taste. It was inviting, almost pulling me in, but I wasn't too far gone yet that I didn't know that it was absolutely insane. I threw him hard against a tree, snapping it in half before turning to the others.

If they were wise, they would have run away but they didn't. They also tried to attack and it was a blur of bodies and movement. The rush of power had my head swimming and by the time they were all lying on the floor, the buzzing still hadn't left my skin. I wasn't sure how to pull back and in that moment, I didn't care. There was one thought at the back of my mind and that was to get my children. I took a few steps towards the house when I heard a weapon draw from behind me.

I wasn't sure if it was the power, or my daze to get to my children but I couldn't recognize the person. All I could see was a being and a sword trying to keep me from my family. I let out a warning growl, it was the only warning that I was going to give before I struck. "You asked me to kill you if you ever let the power overwhelm you," I heard and I immediately knew it was Juan. He was the only one I had told that too. "I don't think you're too far gone yet so you have the chance to turn back now but I will not let you go in there like that."

I cocked a brow. "Will not? Do you think you can stop me?"

"I will do everything in my power to do so."

I could almost hear a nagging voice at the back of my head asking me to kill him and just move on. On one hand, I knew I shouldn't, he hadn't done

anything to warrant it, it was the magic speaking but the pull was strong. There was almost nothing I couldn't do with these powers, no foe I couldn't vanquish and there was more-

"Daddy?" I heard a soft voice behind me and I stilled. Even through my lustful haze, I recognized my daughter's voice. I couldn't turn to her, couldn't let her see me like this. "Daddy are you okay?"

"Think about it Ryker," Juan spoke again. "Do you want her to see you like this? See you like the witch who

threatened your family for months?" He threw the weapon to the ground. "I won't kill you, so if you are going to kill me then do it, but know that your daughter I watching you. What do you want her to see?"

The Rejected Werewolf Princess Chapter 265



CAMILLA'S

P.O.V

The moment I found the girl bound and alone in the woods, I knew it had been a trap to separate Ryker and I. She was terrified but relatively unharmed. As soon as she was free, she rushed over to me and in that moment, I wasn't the Queen, I was just the person who had saved her. She was younger than I had expected, she couldn't have been any more than sixteen and I couldn't imagine all that she had to go through.

"Are you alright?" I asked once she pulled back and she nodded.

"I apologize for rushing towards you like that, I-"

"You don't have to apologize," I waved her off. "Do you want to tell me how you got here or would you like to see your sister first? She is in the palace."

"I can explain," she cleared her throat and stood up straighter. "One of the elders came to me, he said that you wanted the palace off lockdown. He asked me to come with him and the next thing I knew, I was here."

"Thank you for explaining, that was-" my words died in my throat when I felt something tense in my chest. It almost felt like someone had wrapped their hand around my heart and was squeezing tightly. I could see the girl and the guards watching me with wary expressions so I forced a neutral look on my face. "Take her back in, make sure she is given clean clothes and take her sister to her. There is something I must do."

"Your majesty," one of the guards began hesitantly. "We were under strict orders to not leave you alone."

"And I am releasing you of those orders," I snapped.

He knew better than to directly disobey so he bowed and walked off. As soon as he was gone, I allowed myself to stop pretending. I placed my hands on my knees, trying and failing to catch my breath. The pressure on my chest was getting worse and I wasn't sure how, but I just knew where to go. I allowed instinct guide me until I was much deeper into the forest. I saw a house in the distance and what I saw there had me freezing.

There was Ryker, with shadows coming out of his hands, it was a terrifying but beautiful sight. His eyes were black, almost like they were the last time I spoke directly to the magic inside of him. Weirdly enough, it wasn't Ryker who shocked me, it was the people around him. I couldn't recognize either of them, they seemed to be rogues. The first one- a man- stood in front of him and there were two more - a woman and a child- behind him. As I got closer, I started to hear exactly what they were saying.

"You don't want your own daughter to see you like this, do you?" the man asked, a cruel smirk playing on his lips. I wasn't sure what game he was playing at, but the girl behind Ryker was not our daughter.

"Don't listen to him!" I yelled out and all eyes turned to me, including Ryker's. "Ryker, they are lying to you. Our daughter isn't here."

The rogue narrowed his eyes at me before turning back to Ryker. "You can see the witch, can't you? This is a test, she wants you to fail. Don't be swayed by her words."

My brows furrowed in confusion when Ryker cocked his head to the side, almost as if he were actually listening to the rogue. Did he not hear that his voice was different? Couldn't he see who or what he was? "I am not a witch, you know who I am. Look around, they are rogues."

I tried to take a step forward but it was almost like there was something blocking me from doing so. It was like an invisible field of air. I pushed against it but all to no avail. When I glanced back at the woman standing behind Ryker, she had an amused expression on her face. I immediately knew that she had something to do with it. They weren't rogues like I had earlier thought, they were probably witches but it didn't make sense that they were trying to drag this out because witches would have just killed him.

I tried to mind link Ryker but there was a thick mental wall between us. It was much stronger than his usual wall and it felt and smelled suspiciously of darkness and death. I wasn't sure how I knew, but this felt like Ryker's test, the one that would determine if he was going to be lost forever or not.

"Ryker, please, listen to me. It's me, you know that it is. I would never lie to you. These people aren't who you think they are."

"Ryker," the woman spoke and even I fell silent. There was something melodious and charming about her voice, something that seemed to almost

sing out to me. "She's a witch, she's trying to make you think that she is your mate, but I am. Look, I have our daughter here with me, look at us and you'll see."

I was so confused, I was even more confused when Ryker turned to her and he seemed to smile softly almost as if he was seeing what she said which made no sense at all. I banged my fists against the barrier between Ryker and I. If I could just reach out to him, if I could just touch him, then perhaps I could have saved him. If he could have just touched me then he would have known that I was his mate- not them.

"The witch wants to separate us," the woman said once more. "Kill her, please. Protect us."

"No!" I screamed. "Kill them, they are trying to use you. They are lying to you. Our daughters are at home, they are in their rooms probably sleeping. You said it yourself that there was no way that he would have been able to get them out of the palace and you were right because he didn't. They aren't here. It is just me and you."

"She's lying daddy," the little girl chimed in. "I'm scared."

If Ryker was seeing and hearing what I thought he was then I knew that was going to be his undoing. There was little to nothing he wouldn't have done for our daughter so I wasn't completely surprised when he stretched out his hand towards me and the shadows started to slither closer.

I tried to defend myself, I threw balls of water at it, I tried to make an ice shield but as I came to learn, you couldn't really defend yourself against shadows because all his magic did was crawl over it until it was wrapped around my feet. The moment I came in contact with the magic, I felt cold and empty. I smelled death and decay in his powers as it crawled up my body. I couldn't move, couldn't twist my fingers, couldn't even use my powers if I wanted to.

"Kill her," the witches said in unison.

Their smiles grew wider and bloodier with each passing second and that was when I noticed the abnormal teeth that they had. It wasn't normal like werewolves or witches and it didn't have the fangs I had come to associate with vampires. They had rows upon rows of jagged teeth like it had been filed to look that way. My blood ran cold, it was utterly terrifying.

"Ryker," my voice came out softer than I intended.

His magic was coiling itself around me so tightly, like a snake. I couldn't breathe, couldn't think. I knew that all I had was a few seconds before he killed me and I was determined not to waste it. If he was going to remember my last words, then I needed him to remember me well.

"Witch," Ryker snarled, his voice wasn't his. It was much deeper and guttural. It was the first word he had spoken since I got here.

"I know you think I'm a witch," I managed out. "I know this isn't your fault and when whatever magic they used on you wears off too, I want you to know that I forgive you. I want you to know that I don't blame you. You didn't know, you didn't have a choice." His hand faltered a little, his magic slowed, but he didn't stop so I continued.

"I want you to know that the years I spent with you were the best of my life. I would have never thought that I could have a family and yet, somehow, you found me and you loved me more than I could have ever imagined. I will never regret the day you found me in those cells Ryker Caine. It was the best day of my entire life."

As soon as the words had left my lips, his hand dropped and the magic uncoiled around me. I took in a deep breath, trying to get air into my lungs as I crashed to my knees. The reality of what almost happened hit me like a freight train and my shoulders shook with fear and relief.

"No!" the female screamed. "You were meant to kill her."

Ryker's eyes narrowed in her direction and she seemed to realize at that moment that it was her life on the line. Ryker erupted with a roar and I watched transfixed as the darkness seemed to flow out of him. One second, it was bright and the next, we were in pitch darkness. I heard screaming, high pitch and pained and I knew that he was killing them.

I dragged myself to my feet and took a step forward. The barrier was gone. I moved blindly, trusting my heart to lead me to the right person and the moment my fingers came in contact with bare skin, I knew it was him.

"Don't kill them," I whispered not knowing if he could hear me. "You are better than this- than them. We need them alive, we need to question them."

I was met with silence.

"Ryker, please, I need you to stop, now!"

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

As if on cue, everything stopped and the darkness dissipated. It seemed to retreat back into Ryker's skin and I watched the entire thing unfold. The moment the air was clear, I slowly looked up and relief filled me when I saw that his eyes were back to normal. I threw my arms around his neck and he wasted no time in pulling me impossibly closer and burying his nose into my hair. "I am so sorry," he whispered but I could barely focus on his words. I was just glad to have him. I was glad that he was alive. "I almost killed you."

"It doesn't matter. I'm here now, and so are you."

I pulled back from him and finally took in the scene in front of me. There were so many bodies and I could tell just by looking that although the woman and the child were unconscious, the male was dead. Blood was pouring out of his nose and ears and his chest was still. I gauged Ryker's face for any kind of reaction but it was carefully still.

"I'll mind link the guards to meet us here," he said finally before turning to me. "Are you-" he swallowed. "Did I hurt you?"

"No," I told him earnestly. I wasn't lying, he hadn't gotten the chance to hurt me yet. I reached out for him and gently stroked my hand down his face. He let me for a second, his eyes closed as he leaned into my touch. "We are fine, you did it, you beat them and that is the most important thing."

"I would have killed them," he announced as he opened his eyes. He glanced over at the woman and child that were still unconscious. "I was going to do it. I wasn't out of control of the magic. It was me, I knew exactly what I was going to do."

"But you didn't do it." Many sentences in this chapter have been removed because you are not reading them on Jobnib.com. "That doesn't mean that I still don't want to," he ran his hands through his hair. "I saw Juan and Christine. I saw Audrey. How did I not see the witches? It doesn't make sense."

"I don't know," I wished I had an answer for him, it would have made everything easier but I didn't. "I saw them as they were."

"Were they in my mind? Did they find a way to warp my perception of reality? What kind of witches are they anyway? They didn't try to kill me, they just wanted me to kill-" he paused mid-sentence. "Something isn't adding up."

"That, I agree with, but look at the bright side, that could have been your test. I heard one of them say something about a test. What if it was your test and you passed?"

"So what? I am now completely joined with the magic?"

"I don't know, I'm just saying that there has to be something positive that came out of this. We will find it."

He just hummed but didn't say anything else until the guards returned. The unconscious woman and child were bound and gagged and carried to the palace dungeons. I still didn't believe they were just witches but to be safe, we had them placed in the specially designed cells to nullify magic. Until I was sure what we were dealing with, I wasn't going to take any chances with anyone's safety.

We went to Ansel first. To say that he was shocked to see us both would have been an understatement. He opened and closed his mouth a few times but no words would come out. He was chained to the wall and judging by the smell of burning flesh emanating from his wrists, they were silver chains.

"You went through a lot just to get us out of the palace," Ryker drawled as he stood in front of Ansel's cell. Ansel at least had the decency to look a little terrified. "How did you know we wouldn't check before leaving?"

"You love your children," he answered simply. "Any parent would act first and think later if they thought that their child was in danger."

"How did you know that Ryker would go to the kids and I wouldn't? You had those people already waiting for him," I added and Ansel shrugged. He turned away from both of us and I knew he was done speaking. "Whether you speak or not, you will die the most painful and brutal death imaginable."

"All the more reason I should remain silent. If I speak or not, I will die, I might as well die with a little dignity."

Ryker moved before I even had the chance to process what was happening. He reached through the bars and dragged Ansel by the shirt pulling him until he was flush against the silver. His scream could only be described as ear splitting. His hands were strained against the chains holding him pulling at the already burned flesh and his face against the bars was charring with each passing second.

"You act like you have a choice in the matter," Ryker growled before pushing him back. Ansel was crying- the once great elder of the palace was in a cell with tears streaming down his face and I felt no ounce of guilt or remorse.

"You will tell me who the f**k those people are and you will do so now or I swear, I will make the rest of your life as miserable as possible. You will cling to the promise of death because that will be the only place you will find refuge and even that will not be granted to you."

Ansel sniffled and took a step back. I glanced over at my mate, he was furious, which I expected so this was nothing out of the ordinary. I wanted to comfort him but I didn't want to risk him appearing weak in front of Ansel so I remained fixed in my spot only going as far as to send gentle assurance down our bond. His eyes flashed to me for a split second, letting me know he felt me and he appreciated it.

"It was never meant to go this far," Ansel said finally. "I just wanted them to scare the pack so that I would save them, but they are persuasive. They sing things to you and you want to do it. They can warp your reality with just a few words. I didn't know what I was walking into."

It sounded suspiciously similar to what they tried to do with Ryker.

"Who are they?"

"An ancient supernatural breed. They are dangerous and the only thing they love more than themselves, is their family. If you were to kill one-"

"I killed one," Ryker said and Ansel's eyes widened.

"Then goddess help us all."

I would have been a liar if I said I wasn't terrified but I kept my hands crossed over my chest as I spoke. "What are they?"

I heard a loud scream come from the top of the steps and I turned to Ansel who smirked. "They are sirens."

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CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I wasn't sure if I wanted to stay back with him and figure out what he meant or identify the source of the sound. After hearing another scream, I rushed towards the other side of the cells with Ryker in tow. The cell door was open and the guards were on the floor bleeding profusely from gashes in their sides. "What the hell happened here?" I asked as I rushed to my knees trying to put some pressure on the blood but it was too much. Nothing I did seemed to be able to stop it. "Where are the prisoners?"

"I'm sorry," one of the guards whispered. His voice was shaky and blood was dripping from his lips. "I don't know how it happened, I swear. I didn't mean for this."

"Tell me what happened," I tried to keep my voice firm but soft at the same time. His friend was dead and I knew he would be too, the last thing I needed to do was stress him out. He was bleeding out by the second despite the pressure I was applying.

"I came down here and I saw you," he explained me. "You were in the cells and you told me that they had put you in. I wanted to get you out, I just wanted to do the right thing. After I opened the door, it was like someone had cast a spell on me because you weren't there anymore and they were. They attacked me and they asked me to tell you that they were coming for you. I am sorry, your majesty."

"It isn't your fault," I whispered softly. "Did they say anything else?"

He shook his head barely. "They said we would all live to regret it because his majesty killed her husband. I tried to stop them, I swear I did."

Behind me, I felt Ryker stiffen. Ansel had warned us barely seconds ago that they would rain hell on us for what we did. I would have been lying if I said fear didn't grip my heart but I knew that for the sake of the brave man in front of me, I couldn't panic. I turned to him with a small smile. "You are a brave soldier, thank you for everything you have done. You were doing your job. We weren't prepared for them. You did the right thing."

His eyes watered. "Did I, truly?"

I nodded. His eyes were already gazing over and I knew it was just a few seconds away. I kept pressure on his side with one hand and reached out for one of his hands with the other. His hold was shaky and loose but he managed to hold my hand but I couldn't let him die alone, not when this death could have been prevented.

I wasn't sure how long I stayed there holding his hand but the physician and some other guards rushed in. I still didn't release him, I didn't know how to. I could feel their eyes on me but I didn't care, I only cared about the man on the floor in front of me. He couldn't have been up to thirty. He had the entire of his life ahead of him and it had been taken away from him just like that.

"Camilla," I felt Ryker's hand on my shoulder in a comforting manner. "He is gone. You need to let go of him so that the guards can take him away."

I still didn't move, so Ryker gently pulled me to my feet. My hands and the hem of my dress were covered in blood but I didn't care. I couldn't peel my eyes away as they carried the bodies. They were both so young, they didn't have to die. They shouldn't have died. It was us that the sirens wanted.

"What about the sirens?" I asked Ryker. "Did anyone see them leaving?"

He shook his head. "They are long gone but I sent a mind link to all the guards. Everyone needs to wear ear plugs until further notice. I know it puts us at a disadvantage but I believe it is necessary. I don't know much about sirens but I do know that if you cannot hear them, they cannot deceive you."

"They are dangerous," I was still in a daze but he nodded. "Can we go back to Ansel now?"

I could tell he was worried about me, and on another day, I would have tried to ease his worries but there was much to be done. I didn't even wait for him before I started making my way back to Ansel's cell. He was still seated where we left him and he had an amused look on his face as he took me in.

"Did something happen?" he mused aloud. "You don't look so good."

In that moment, something bubbled inside of me, something dark and dangerous. He had the audacity to smirk after he was the one that brought them to our doorsteps. He wasn't even remorseful in the slightest. He had done this over something as fickle and stupid as an elder seats and now lives had been lost and probably more to come.

I reached out for him, I didn't need to touch him, I knew exactly what I wanted to do. The body was a fascinating thing, it was made up of seventy percent water. All I needed to do was reach out and touch it. I knew the exact moment I had his life in my hands and I squeezed. I watched as blood gathered in his

mouth. There were a million things I could have done, I could have frozen his blood inside of him, I could have made him bleed out slowly, or I could have watched him choke on his blood. All of them sounded very appealing but none brutal enough for what he had done.

"Camilla," I felt Ryker's presence behind me. "Let him go or you will kill him."

"He deserves to die."

"That is true, but not right now. Death will be too easy for him, he needs to tell us all he knows first."

I didn't respond at first and then I felt darkness envelop me. I knew instantly that Ryker had done it. I should have panicked, but there was something almost calming about the darkness, it didn't fill me with fear or panic, but rather ease and comfort. I didn't even realize when my shoulders began to sag and I dropped my hand. I vaguely heard Ansel cough and splutter as the darkness dissipated. I was still pissed, but the haze of murder was gone from my eyes.

"Give me one good reason why we shouldn't kill you right now," I told Ansel who stayed silent/ At least he had learned not to smirk so much. "Where did you find these sirens and tell me everything you know about them."

"I don't know much. I thought they were a myth. I was doing research of what I could do to create some conflict in the pack that I could easily solve and I read about sirens. They were known as masters of manipulation. You could get a siren to do your bidding if you paid the right price. I went with all the money I had, I thought it was enough, but I didn't account for how rich I saw them to be. I didn't know it would end like this."

"Did you miss the part where they called them manipulators?" I spat. "If they are still doing your bidding then call them off."

He laughed, but there was nothing amusing about it, it was bleak and humorless. "They were never at my bidding. They only wanted me to think that. This was always about them. Sirens thrive on conflict and violence, they wanted to spill blood on their terms and now you have given them the chance. What were you thinking when you killed one?"

"What were you thinking when you enlisted the help of one?" I shot back and he went silent. I squatted so that we were at eye level before dropping my voice to a cold whisper. "I will only say this once so listen to me carefully. If any harm comes to any member of my family because of you or what you have just done, I will paint the walls of this palace with your blood and I will make sure to rain fire down on your family in return, am I clear?"

His eyes flashed with anger. "Leave my family out of this."

"You better pray to the goddess above that my family comes out of this alive, Ansel, or I swear, you will live to regret it."

I didn't wait for him to respond, I just turned on my heels and walked away. He was screaming after me but I couldn't be bothered to turn back. As I got out of the dungeons, his voice became nothing but a distant memory at the back of my mind, there was more that needed to be attended to.

I could feel the shocked eyes and hear the gasps from the guards and maids as they took in my blood stained arms and dress and while I knew I should have gone to change, there were a lot more important things that I needed to attend to. "Camilla, I think you should change," Ryker whispered as he walked up to me. "You need to get cleaned."

"No," I didn't even hesitate. I tried to walk past him but he grabbed my arm keeping me in place.

"You can take five seconds to get cleaned."

"And that is five seconds more that those sirens are on the loose. We need help, Ryker, we need help, we need to know what we are dealing with."

"Camilla, baby-"

"Our children are in danger," I whisper yelled. "Did you hear what he said? They are coming for us, they are coming for our kids. Remember what Audrey said about the palace bathed in blood?"

His brows furrowed in confusion. "What are you talking about?" It hit me then that I never told him. "Camilla, what are you hiding from me?"

"A few weeks ago, Audrey came to me to tell me that she had a vision of the front of the palace bathed in blood. I think this is what she was warning us against."

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RYKER'S P.O.V

I stared at Camilla for a few seconds wondering if I had heard her properly. I could tell that she was embarrassed and felt guilty about the entire situation but what I couldn't tell is if she would have done things differently if she had the chance. She opened her mouth to speak but I held up a hand to stop her because I wasn't ready to listen to any excuse that she had to make up.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I asked but she said nothing. "Camilla, I need you to say something or anything right now."

She let out a sigh and looked down. "I don't know, I just didn't want to bother you. I just wanted you to focus on the actual problem which was your powers. I thought I could handle it."

"Clearly you couldn't," I mumbled and when her face fell, I realized I had said something wrong. I reached out to her and ran my hand through her hair softly. "I'm sorry, baby, I shouldn't have said that, today has been a very weird day."

I was still reeling from what had happened outside with the sirens. I couldn't understand what was going on, I could feel the magic buzzing under my skin every second. I couldn't help but wonder if this was how Camilla felt when she had her magic and if this situation wasn't happening right now, I would have asked her about it or spoken to her but right now, I needed to focus on Audrey's vision.

"Tell me exactly what she said," I told Camilla and this time, she didn't hesitate.

"I can't remember it for sure, she just said something about the front of the palace being bathed in blood. I was more focused on trying to make sure she wasn't panicking anymore. It was one of those days you went out with Juan and I didn't want to bother you when you came back."

"You should have, she is as much my daughter as she is yours. It is mean to be our problem to solve."

She sighed. "I know, I just- when she came to me, she didn't even want to talk to me. She wanted you and it was so hard to just get her to open up to me because it is always the both of you. Many sentences in this chapter have been removed because you are not reading them on J o b nib.c(o)m.I know it sounds stupid but to me, it isn't. It always feels like you both put me on the sidelines and for once, I just wanted her to know that I could help her and that she could come to me."

I never realized that was what we had been doing but as I thought about it, I could understand where Camilla was coming from. Whenever Audrey had a

problem, I always led her away and it wasn't because I was trying to hide her from Camilla, I just wanted her to feel more comfortable. I never stopped to think about how it could have been affecting Camilla especially seeing as I never told her about it after.

"She knows that," I whispered cupping her cheeks. I placed a soft kiss on the top of her head. "She loves you and she trusts you and I'm sorry if we didn't show it to you properly."

"I just wanted to help."

"You are helping, we can do this together, okay? As long as we are open with each other, we can handle this," I pressed a lingering kiss to her head. "We need to talk to Audrey and figure out if there are any more details that she left out. She tends to do that sometimes."

"What next?"

"Next, we find out everything we can on these sirens. Ansel has served up his usefulness, he doesn't know more than what he said before."

Her brows furrowed. "How do you know that?"

I thought about her question and the honest truth was, I didn't know. I just knew on my inside that he didn't know any more.

"Call it a gut feeling," I said finally and she just nodded. She didn't ask for any more explanation, she just nodded and thread her fingers with mine.

The girls were with Christine when we got there. Christine was lying on the bed while Audrey and Aurora poked her growing belly. Their giggles filled the air and I couldn't stop myself from smiling at the scene. I remembered how Audrey had been when Camilla was pregnant, the idea fascinated her, probably because she couldn't quite understand it at the time. She loved

poking Camilla's stomach so that Aurora would kick and she would giggle about it.

Christine noticed us first and once she did, the girls did too. There were squeals as our daughter scrambled over to get to us. I wasn't surprised by their reaction, we hadn't come by to see them in about twenty four hours which was more than unusual for them. We were always there, whether it was at night time or in the morning, but we always made sure to see them.

There was a lot of squealing and kisses involved but we finally got the girls to calm down. Aurora was happily nestled in Camilla's arms, her head lying on her shoulder. She had always loved her mother more, although Camilla would have disagreed with you in an instant. Her eyes were drifting shut as Camilla swayed and stroked her hair away from her face and I turned to Audrey.

"Princess, your mum and I wanted to talk to you about something," I began slowly and her smile fell but she didn't look surprised. "You knew we were coming, didn't you?"

She nodded slowly. "I wanted to warn you, but I couldn't. The goddess said it was your test and you had to do it yourself. I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to worry about," I assured her and I could visibly see my words take a weight off her shoulders.

It had been clear she had been carrying this around for so long and I was pissed, pissed because she was my child and she wasn't meant to worry about me, I was pissed because she was too young to be handling all of this. I was pissed because she deserved better and I couldn't do anything about it. If I could take the powers away in a second, I would have.

"You told your mum about blood in front of the palace," I began slowly and her shoulders sagged. She glanced over at Camilla who had been quiet the entire time. "We need to know everything about that."

"I told her everything," Audrey began but I knew she wasn't telling the truth.

Camilla sighed before taking a step towards our daughter, she was still holding Aurora. "Audrey, I know how scary it can be, but we need to know. People might be in danger and what you tell us could make a very big difference. I just want to know and I don't want to put so much pressure on you, but I would really appreciate it if you spoke to us. At the end of the day, the choice is yours." Content © exclusive by

Audrey was quiet for a full minute. I could tell she was mulling over her mother's words and after a while, she took a seat at the edge of the bed. "I saw a woman, she was crying and she was singing and the blood started coming and it was everywhere. That's all I saw.

"Are you sure?" Camilla asked and she nodded.

"I pinky promise," she didn't even hesitate before speaking. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you, mummy. I was scared."

"I know," Camilla leaned forward to kiss her hair. "It's okay to be scared, we all get scared sometimes but that's why you come to us because we will make everything better." Audrey's eyes lit up. "Do you promise?"

Camilla held out her pinky finger and I saw Audrey beam like she had just won something. She hooked her finger with Camilla's and grinned from ear to ear. I couldn't stop myself from smiling at the both of them. Despite everything that had happened today and how today started, it was turning out to be a good day.

I lingered for a while, interacting with both Audrey and Camilla. Aurora was fast asleep and had been for a while when I offered to take her to her room. Camilla thought nothing of it and didn't hesitate to hand my daughter over to me. Her room was directly opposite Audrey's so I didn't have to walk far.

I was laying her in bed when something shifted. My vision became hazy for a second and then I felt it, there was something in the air, something that almost screamed danger. The air seemed to pulse with it, seemed to vibrate with it and I heard it, like a shrill scream. Thank the goddess I had already laid Aurora in bed because I couldn't stop myself from clamping my hands over my ears.

The scream was ear splitting and I felt it within the corners of my soul. It was over within a second and I was stunned that Aurora had slept through it. I had expected her to wake up bawling but she didn't, she just lay in her tiny bed completely unaffected by what had just happened.

My entire body was still shaking and reeling from what had happened that it took me a few seconds to gather my bearings again. I managed to get to my feet and stumbled over to Audrey's room where Camilla and Audrey sat. Neither of them looked affected. "Did you hear that?" I asked but they both looked at me with confused expressions. "The scream, it was like my ears were being blown out. Did either of you hear it?"

"I didn't hear a scream," Camilla said carefully. "Are you alright? Did something happen to you?"

"No," I shook my head. "Sorry, I must have been lost in thought."

"Ryker-"

"Don't worry about it," I forced my lips into a smile. "What were we talking about?"

Chapter 269



CAMILLA'S

P.O.V

After the talk about a scream, Ryker started to act weird. He was almost fidgeting in his seat and looking over his shoulder every few seconds as if he expected someone to attack him or something. I understood that he was concerned about the sirens, so was I, but

could tell that there was more.

He stayed for about half an hour after that before finally excusing himself and disappearing to goddess knows where. Audrey didn't ask for her dad once, I wasn't sure if she was too distracted that she didn't notice or if like me, she had noticed that he had been itching to leave. I managed to put her down for a nap and went out in search of my mate. He had his wall firmly up so that I couldn't detect even a hint of his emotions. It was definitely infuriating but I couldn't exactly blame him. It had been an exhausting day. I was searching for him when I bumped into Christine. She had a bowl of fruits in her hand and she looked up at me like a child caught with their hand in the cookie jar. I raised a brow at her and she shrugged.

"I'm pregnant with twins apparently," she mumbled through a mouthful. "I'm allowed to eat like a pig."

"I wouldn't dream of judging," I teased and she rolled her eyes. "Have you seen Ryker yet?"

She shook her head. "Is everything okay? No one will tell us what happened, I don't even think anyone knows what happened. All I know is that one of the elders is in the cells and the guards are now tasked with wearing ear plugs." "Not just the guards- everyone," I corrected and her brows furrowed in confusion. "You would want to sit down for this, it is a very long story."

I led her towards one of the closest benches and told her everything. Her eyes widened with each word but when I got to the part about what happened to Ryker, I glossed over it because it was his story to tell and not mine. I wanted him to be comfortable enough to let it out and if he never was then it was going to be our secret.

By the time I was done, Christine just sat there staring at me for so long that I thought I had spoken a different language. She opened and closed her mouth a few times before letting out a deep sigh.

"I was wondering why you were covered in blood," she mumbled after a while and I couldn't stop myself from laughing. With everything going on, I couldn't believe I had forgotten to get myself cleaned. "Come, I think you have scared enough of the soldiers with the way you look. No offense, but I don't know how your kids didn't scream their heads off."

"Aurora probably thought it was paint," I said more to myself than to her as I stood to my feet and followed her up the stairs. "Audrey might have known what it was but then again, there isn't a lot that Audrey doesn't know right now. She knows more than we do." Christine hummed in agreement. "So we have sirens on the loose. Do we ever get a break around here? First we had to deal with vampires and then witches and now sirens? Do you think your mum had it this hard?"

"Honestly, yes," I responded after thinking about it for a while. "My father had to deal with the vampires too and that is the only one that we know of. Although, I definitely think we have it worse."

We got to the room and she helped me out of my dress and into the bath so I could scrub the blood off my skin. Most of it had dried off and I watched the water slowly turn pink while trying my hardest not to think about the innocent guard that had lost his life because of us. He was someone's child, someone's

friend, someone's lover and he had died, just like that. He seemed so pure and innocent, even the way he spoke to me, all he wanted to do was help.

"Camilla," Christine snapped and I turned to her. "Your skin is turning red, you need to stop scrubbing."

I didn't realize I had been scrubbing at my skin that hard. I mumbled an apology although I wasn't completely sure what I was apologizing for. I got changed into something more casual than I would have usually never worn around the palace but I couldn't bring myself to care. There was so much that we had to do and find out.

"I need to find Ryker," I told Christine once I was dressed and she nodded.

"I know you do."

"I don't know the first thing about beating sirens."

"We'll learn," she reached out for my hand and squeezed. "This won't be the first time we go into a battle blind and we haven't lost so far, have some faith in yourself, we aren't going to lose now."

"There's a lot at stake," I whispered. "You didn't hear about Audrey's vision, the palace front of the palace bathed in blood, you don't-" I stopped because I remembered that Audrey had a vision about her too, one I couldn't bring myself to say out loud. "We have kid now."

"I know, and I would be lying if I said it wasn't terrifying. I still don't know what exactly happened out there but if it scares you this bad then it scares me. I cannot imagine facing an enemy that speaks and I see something completely different. This is uncharted territory and I could spend my time losing my mind or I could do everything possible to make sure that my kids come into a world without sirens trying to kill their aunt."

I couldn't stop myself from laughing. "We'll figure it out."

"I know you will, now, let's go find Ryker for you."

It took us nearly another hour before we found him. We searched the private library, his office and even the gardens. I was just about ready to give up when we walked past my mother's old bedroom and I heard a sound. I hadn't even thought to check it but Christine had opened the door and Ryker sat on the bed turning over one of her carvings in his hands.

"Can you take it from here?" she asked and I nodded. She squeezed my shoulder slightly with a smile. "Good luck."

I waited until she had gone back down the hall before walking in and closing the door behind me. It was just us in complete silence and it wasn't until I stopped in front of him that he finally looked up at me.

"You changed your dress," it was a statement of fact so I felt no need to respond. "At least you got the blood off you."

"I would have liked your help."

He said nothing in response to that, simply gestured to a book I hadn't noticed on her dressing table. "I got it from the library. It has a few things on sirens. Did you know that they are considered one of the most brutal and blood thirsty species? They lure predominantly men to their deaths with singing and the charm in their voices."

"Is that why I wasn't affected?"

He shook his head. "They can infect women, they just choose not to most times. I'm not willing to take the risk though. They also have a knack for revenge, they will go to the ends of the earth to exact vengeance on one they feel wronged them." "They're not going to stop until you're dead."

He shook his head. "No, she doesn't want to kill me, she wants to kill you."

I cocked my head to the side. "You killed her husband, why would she want to kill me?"

"Because, death would be too much of a gift. She would want me to suffer, she would want me to feel the same pain that she feels and her daughter feels. She would make me watch you die and that would be her vengeance."

I swallowed deeply as I asked my next questions. "How do you know that?"

"Because it is what I would do," he cleared his throat and stood to his feet. He tried to walk past me but I grabbed his upper arm.

"You didn't pass the test, did you?" I asked and he stilled. He knew what I was talking about, there was no need for me to elaborate.

"Not completely, no. I didn't kill you, so I passed, but I killed him and killing someone with magic does something to you. I don't know how to explain it. I can feel it, you know? I can feel the pulse beneath my fingers, I can feel the very essence of your life in this room and I know that I can take it away in a second. Does that scare you?"

"No."

I wasn't lying either. There was nothing about Ryker that could scare me. I knew him arguably better than I knew myself and I knew that no matter what, he would not hurt me. I didn't care if he had the powers to turn the entire world to ash, he would never hurt his family and that much was certain.

"It scares me," he admitted. His voice was barely over a whisper, I wouldn't have heard him if I wasn't standing very close to him. "It terrifies me to know that one wrong move and I could kill someone. I didn't even touch him and the worst part is that I don't feel bad for it."

"I wouldn't either," I shrugged eliminating the final bit of space between us. I thread my fingers with his and lifted it to show him. "You're touching me and I'm not dead. I don't care if you didn't pass completely or if you passed by a

hair's breadth, what matters is that you passed and you beat this thing so I need you right now so we can beat the sirens too."

"I don't want you near them."

"Tough shit, Ryker, this is about me and you now. We're in this together whether you like it or not so you can

either sit here and throw your pity party or we can find out how to kill that bitch. It is your choice."

Chapter 270



CAMILLA'S

P.O.V

The only thing I truly hated about having the sirens on the loose was not knowing when or how they would attack. With every enemy we had faced so far, we had a deadline- something to look forward to. With Frederick, we had a week, with Allister, we had a timeline and with Reina- we knew, but right now, we were walking blindly. These were unlike any enemy we had faced before and I wasn't sure how we could possibly prepare for something that we didn't even know was coming. Ansel had been of zero help, he had said everything he knew and we were left grasping at straws to find out whatever we could about sirens- the sirens we were facing to be more specific.

"Please tell me that someone found something," I mumbled as way of greeting as Ryker and I walked into the council room. It felt a lot emptier than usual, Ansel's empty chair had been moved away but the empty space mocked us,

almost sneering at me in a jesting way. "It has been twenty-four hours, we need answers."

There was silence amongst the elders for a full minute before Caius got the courage to speak. "Nothing yet, your majesty, perhaps if we could know how her partner died-"

"That is none of your concern," I spat. I had shut down every question about what happened out there. The last thing I wanted to do was put Ryker's newfound powers on blast especially not when we were not completely sure what we were dealing with. "They had tried to attack Ryker and he killed the husband. It was a battle, lives are lost in a battle, move on."

"Yes, your majesty," he bowed but it was clear that he didn't believe me. "We don't know what they look like. We have sent descriptions out to the towns and have asked everyone to be on edge but so far, they haven't turned up. The moment they do, we will know, they cannot hide when everyone is on the lookout."

"The aim is to find them before they attack," Ryker drawled having not said a single word since the beginning of the meeting. "Seeing as we cannot find them, has anyone found any ways we can kill them? Surely something must have come out of the last twenty-four hours."

It was another of the elders that spoke. "I am sure you understand how difficult things have been lately, your majesty, one of our own-"

"Betrayed us," Ryker cut him off. "He threatened the crown and tried to have us killed. The only reason the entire palace doesn't know is because I am trying to prevent a protest. Many sentences in this chapter have been removed because you are not reading them on Job nib.c(o)m. I would rather focus on the enemy outside than the enemy within but make no mistake about it, I have not forgotten what happened and while threatening to take you away from

your positions might have caused this, I will gladly pull each and every single one of you from that position and banish you without the shadow of a doubt."

There was a hint of darkness creeping into his voice and as I looked down at his hands clenched in his laps, I saw shadows slowly slithering out of his fingertips. He didn't even notice because he was still staring down the elders. Discreetly, I slipped my hand into his and intertwined our fingers. He stilled ever so briefly that if you hadn't been carefully analyzing him, you wouldn't have noticed. The shadows slowly retreated and he glanced at me briefly, he didn't speak, but I could clearly see the gratitude in his eyes. He exhaled deeply, calming himself in the process before finally looking up at the elders whose faces held varying degrees of fear and wariness. I knew if they were to continue communicating with each other, nothing was going to stop Ryker from exploding and that was the last thing I wanted, so I cleared my throat making all eyes turn to me.

"We need whatever we can on these people, the lives of everyone in this palace are at stake. You all saw what they did to the guards and how easy it was for them to slip out of here. They are masters of disguise. All they need is to catch you off guard one time and it is over. Keep your guard up and for the love of the goddess, find something."

"We have, your majesty," it was Caius who spoke again, his tone much softer than before. "We did everything we knew to be possible but we are still searching and reaching out to our contacts in other packs. We just need time."

"We don't have time," Ryker ground out. "Time is the one thing that we don't have enough of to spare. No one sleeps or leaves this f*****g palace until we have something tangible to work with."

He stormed out without another word and I just sat there staring at the exit he passed through as the door slammed shut. The elders stared at me, varying looks of concern and apprehension on their faces but I couldn't bring myself to

say a word. It was still the same Ryker we all knew, he was just on edge with the number of things weighing him down.

"Just find something," I said in a much calmer tone than the one Ryker had used. "This isn't just about us. If you think she is coming for us then think again. She will kill everyone and everything in her path, including you and your families. I don't want that as much as you don't."

I stood to my feet and walked out of the room after that. No one dared to stop me, no one spoke. It was complete silence and I didn't blame them, there wasn't much to say. I followed Ryker's scent out of the palace and into the garden. He was standing with his back to me but I knew that he could sense my presence. I walked over to his side, not touching him but staying close enough that I could feel his body heat.

For the longest time, neither of us said a word. We just stood there watching the clouds go by. I wanted him to break the ice first because I knew if I said the wrong thing, I could risk pushing him away even more.

"You can say whatever it is that you want," he whispered after a few minutes. "I am not a ticking time bomb."

"I don't want to say anything," it wasn't a complete lie. There was a lot I wanted to say, just not right now. "I think the sky is very beautiful today. It reminds me of the oceans waves."

"Camilla, please," he ran his hands down his face. "I need you to say something. I hate the silence. I already feel like a stranger in my own body. I don't want to feel like a stranger to you too. I need to know that you still recognize me."

"I do," I told him without any hesitation. "I see you even if you don't see yourself. I already told you, you weren't lost after that test. What matters to me

now is that we get rid of these sirens. What do we already know?" "They like water, not just any kind of water, salt water."

"Good, there are three saltwater bodies around here. I can have guards patrol-"

"No," he cut me off. "I don't want to put anyone's lives at risk. We need to know for certain and take the battle to them. If we let them go on the offense, then we are finished. They are stronger than we realize and-"

He trailed off into silence and I knew that there was something he wasn't telling me. I wanted to push and it took all of my self-control to not push and demand that he tells me. Instead, I folded my legs and sat on the ground. Ryker looked at me, confusion etched

in his brows as I gestured for him to take the seat next to me. It took him a second but he finally did as I asked and I rested my head against his shoulder. He stiffened for the barest second before wrapping his arms over my shoulders.

"Are you going to tell me what it is you stopped yourself from saying earlier?" I asked and he tensed up. "I won't stop asking until you do."

"I can hear them," he didn't even hesitate before he started speaking. "I don't know if it is because they have been in my head before but I heard a scream two days ago. I was trying to tell you about it. I heard it again last night. It felt like raw pain, like someone was trying to claw out my heart."

"Why didn't I hear it? I've heard her too."

"No, not the way I did. She was inside of my head, Camilla, I saw them as Christine and Juan, I saw her child as Audrey. She made me see things. You heard and saw her for what she was but I felt her magic, I felt it inside of me in a way that I never want to experience again. She is grieving for her partner and she is hurt. She will come for revenge."

"We will be ready," I squeezed his hand. "You need to trust that. We just have to find out where she is."

"We will but I don't want you there when we do," I opened my mouth to protest but he cut me off. "Allow me do this alone, Camilla, the way it should have been from the very beginning. Let me make things right. I want to make peace." "You know she doesn't want peace."

"I know, but it doesn't hurt to try and I can't do that with you there. It will only fuel her rage. I need you to trust Juan and I," he was asking a lot of me, more than I was willing to give. "Please, Camilla, let me do this." I nodded. "Okay, I will."