

## The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 41-45

### Chapter 41

We didn't see Lauren again during our entire stay at the pack house. I braced myself for the possibility that I might run into her but thankfully, I didn't. Riley had noticed how jumpy I was but she didn't ask about it or force me to explain, she would just occasionally ask if I was okay and I realized that was something that Ryker would have done.

By the end of the day, I had been given years worth of knowledge in one day and I felt a little bit more confident in the planning of our mating ceremony. I was still scared by the idea but I felt a lot better and at ease at the idea.

Riley came back with us in the carriage; she pointedly ignored Ryker and I, not that I blamed her considering Ryker was rubbing circles on my palm and whispering in my ear. I couldn't help but wonder how uncomfortable it was for her and I told Ryker using our mind link. He just laughed and assured me that she is fine.

When we got home, Riley got out first. She was about to pull me to her when Ryker held on to my waist.

"Why don't we go for a run?" he offered to me then he turned to Riley, "Eve is inside; you should rest after your trip."

Riley nodded and grabbed her small bag but when Ryker wasn't looking, she sent me a discreet wink. My cheeks heated but I barely had time to respond or react to her because Ryker was already pulling me towards the forest.

We walked for a while in silence. His hands held mine tightly and we walked until we got to our spot in the forest. I have started to think of that lake as our spot since almost every good thing that happens around us happens at that spot.

I was shocked however to see that the entire place had been transformed. There was a picnic blanket laying there with a closed basket and a bottle of wine. I turned to look at Ryker with wide eyes but I noticed his cheeks were stained with a little pink.

He gestured for me to go ahead of him and I went with wide eyes as I took in the entire scene. I sat cross legged and he sat right next to me, never once letting go of my hand as he pulled open the picnic basket.

In it were different pastries like scones and pies and the aroma was so overwhelmingly good. My stomach grumbled loud and I flushed pink because I didn't think I would be this hungry especially after the sandwiches I ate with Riley.

"There's no need to be embarrassed," Ryker said as he handed me a scone, "Your body is trying to regulate the amount you need because of your wolf."

For the next week or two you probably will be eating a lot more than you ever have.”

“It just feels weird,” I said finally, “I’ve never been one to eat much so it just feels different.”

“I know, but you’ll get used to it. I promise you.”

We sat in silence while we ate the snacks that Ryker had prepared.

Occasionally, he would ask me a question and we would spend a few minutes talking but then ultimately we would drift back into our comfortable silence.

I liked that something about the silence was just comfortable and not strained.

There was no rush to fill it in with words or ramblings. I was comfortable just sitting there with him and no one else without feeling the need or the pressure to do anything more than what I needed to.

I don’t know how it happened, but somehow I ended up with my head lying across his lap while he ran his fingers through my curls softly. In an almost patronizingly soft manner as if he was trying to calm me down or get me to sleep.

“Camilla,” he began and I hummed, “What do you think about moving into my room.”

The question caught me off guard, “I already sleep there.”

“Yes, but your things are in your room.” He continued, “It feels like you’re preparing for a storm that might never come and keeping that place as a backup option.”

“I didn’t realize that’s what I was doing.” The more I thought about it, the more I realized he was right. I was unknowingly keeping that place as a second option should things go out of control. “I’m sorry.”

“There’s nothing to apologize for love. You can still have your room and should you ever need your space then it is yours. Nothing is ever going to change that. I just want to do this with you, completely.”

I felt tears prick the back of my eyes and I furiously tried to blink them away, “I don’t know how to do this.” I admitted.

His hands stopped moving and I felt his eyes on me compelling me to look up at him. I didn’t want to but I knew I had just opened a can of worms so I did. I let my eyes move to his.

“What are you scared of baby?” he asked and when I didn’t respond he sighed and leaned over to press a kiss to my forehead, “Tell me.”

“I get scared that you’ll one day realize that I’m not what you want and you’ll leave. I’m worried that this is all for show and I’m just worried that I’m going to get hurt.”

He sighed and pulled me off his lap. I expected that he would get upset and tell me I was being unreasonable but instead, he turned me around so I was sitting directly and facing him. He ran his hands down my face. until they

settled and cupped my cheeks.

"I know it's stupid. I know but I just-,"

"Camilla," he breathed and I went silent, "it isn't stupid to feel that way after everything. It isn't stupid to want extra validation. It isn't stupid to say that you're worried. I don't know how to make those feelings go away but I will do everything in my power to make sure you never feel that way again."

"I know you've done everything and that's why I'm saying it's stupid because you've literally been nothing but nice and I should be able to deal with all of this."

"Camilla," I stopped mid rant to look at him, "It doesn't matter, I don't care or mind doing all of this. If you don't feel safe then it is my job to make you feel safe. If you still feel the need to worry then I'm not doing something right, not you. I will try my hardest to make sure that you never have to worry."

He ran his thumb across my cheek to get rid of a tear that I didn't know had slipped free from my eyes.

"I promise you that I will never do anything that makes you feel like you have to second guess us or our mating. All you have to do is talk to me and tell me when something makes you feel uncomfortable and I will do everything I can to make sure that you never feel like that."

By this time, I couldn't control the tears that were slipping. I hadn't expected him to bare it all out for me and give me the reassurance that I didn't know I needed. All I could do was nod as he wiped away my tears and pressed a lingering kiss to my forehead.

He didn't say another word, until the tears had stopped falling. He just sat with me silently and pulled me into his chest. His arms wound around me tightly and for the first time in a very long time, I felt completely at peace in someone else's arms. I felt like there was nothing I had to worry about.

When I was a little more composed, I pulled back from him and I could see him searching my features to know if I was alright or not.

"I'm fine," I assured him as I wiped my face clean with my hands, "I think I just needed that." He chuckled under his breath, "I'm sorry I put a damper on the mood."

"You didn't," he held onto my hands tightly but it was obvious from the expression on my face that I didn't believe him, "To show you that you didn't, I'll tell you the reason I actually brought you out here."

My spine straightened as curiosity burned through me. I wanted to ask him to tell me immediately but no words could come out. I saw the corner of his lips quirk up because I knew my wall was down and he could feel my burning curiosity.

He reached into the picnic basket and retrieved a book that I didn't even realize was there. He slowly took his time flipping through the pages and I felt

my anticipation burn across my skin. I knew he was doing it on purpose to keep the suspense at an all time high and I was determined to not physically show him how eager I was to find out.

“I was doing some research today,” he began slowly, “And I came across this book. It is old; at least eighteen years old if I’m not mistaken and it contains an updated information guide on the royal family.”

I haven’t heard much about the royal family but from what I know, they are the highest ranking werewolves in the world. A rumor says they aren’t actually werewolves and they were blessed by the moon goddess herself which is why they have powers they can control. Most of their lives are a secret and the rest of us only know what they want us to know.

“What about that did you want to show me?” I asked and he placed the book in my lap and tapped a passage.

I didn’t need to read it out because it seemed he had already memorized it and he read it out for me while my eyes ran over the words.

“The princess was kidnapped from us. Our priestess tells us that she will not be found now or within the next decade. She may not remember us when she is so I will tell you how to spot her.”

“She has hair the color of warm chocolate and eyes shaped like almonds. She will not shift until after she is marked by her mate as is tradition for our family. Her fur color is to be determined but her eyes will be amber and the most important thing to note will be the birthmark on her shoulder in the shape of our family’s crest.”

When I was done reading, I looked up at Ryker and when I saw the look in his eyes I shook my head.

“You can’t believe this is me,” I pushed the book back to him, “I’m not a princess, I’m an omega.”

“You have everything listed there Camilla, down to the mark on your shoulder in your wolf and human form.”

“It’s not me.” I shook my head and stood to my feet, “I want to go back home now.”

I could see that he didn’t agree with my choice but he nodded and slowly gathered up the picnic supplies. I expected him to be annoyed that I shut down his idea but he gave me a warm smile and held out his hand for me to take.

“Let’s go home.”

## Chapter 42

I avoided Ryker for the rest of the day. It was a bit difficult considering we slept in the same bed and live in the same house but I would like to believe that I did my best despite the circumstances and situation.

Throughout the day I couldn't help but think about what he had told me and the more I thought about it, the more farfetched it became. I'm sure there are a million brown haired and brown eyed women who didn't shift until they met their mates and have bird like tattoos on their shoulders. I cannot be the only one, right?

I can't be a princess. It would make zero sense in the grand scheme of things. I am an omega, that's what I have always been and that's what I will always be. It would make no sense for me to be a princess, not after everything that has happened.

A part of me wondered what if it was true. I couldn't help it but a part of me was genuinely curious and intrigued about the idea but I just couldn't find it in myself to consider the slim possibility.

As I glanced at Ryker who was sitting next to me on the dining table, I could tell that I was just being unfair to him. His eyes had never once strayed from me all morning. In fact, his eyes had never strayed from me since yesterday when I abruptly ended the conversation.

He had walked next to me silently, he never once pushed for a conversation but just simply followed me around and waited until I was ready to speak to him. Riley noticed the tension between us and I noticed she would glance between us at different times but she never once said a word.

"Are you going to work today?" Ryker was shocked that I was speaking to him but I saw a small smile grace his lips.

"I was thinking of working from here." He offered with a small shrug, "My beta, Damian is returning from a retreat."

I saw Riley perk up at the mention of Damien and I knew there was more to that story than she was telling me. I decided to file that information away for future use and decided to focus my attention on patching things up with Ryker.

"Will he be visiting?" I asked and he shrugged.

"Damien does what Damien wants most of the time. If he feels like he needs to visit then he will. Although I doubt that, he would probably want to lie in bed and knock out for like a few minutes."

There was a scraping of a chair and Riley stood to her feet. She wiped the corners of her mouth with a napkin and cleared her throat. "I should be going back upstairs. I will see you all later."

Before waiting for a response from either of us, she turned on her heels and left. I watched her retreating figure and noticed how she sped up her steps as if she was running away from the conversation and from us. It had me raising a brow and turning to Ryker who seemed oblivious to the entire situation.

"Did you notice that?" I asked and he cocked his head and turned to me with scrunched brows.

“Did I notice what?” he reminded me of a puppy when he looked like that, “If it is Riley don’t worry about it, she just likes her space most of the time.”

I shook my head and tried to hide my smile. Men can be so oblivious sometimes it hurts. Something is clearly up with Riley and Damien and the curious part of me will not rest until I am able to find out what that is. “I think I should still check on her.” I stood to my feet but Ryker grabbed onto my upper arm.

“Please wait,” he had reversed to his soft tone as he stared up at me. “Can we talk?”

As I stared at him I realized that I owed him that much considering the way I had ignored him all through yesterday. I nodded and I saw him let out a sigh of relief, almost as if he was doubting that I would have agreed to the conversation.

He rose to his feet and led me out of the dining room and towards the doors that I recognized as leading to his office. We walked inside and he locked the door behind us quietly. It was awkward between us for the first time ever and I didn’t know how to respond or react to that.

I took a seat on the free chair that I knew wasn’t his and kept my gaze down on my hands in my lap while waiting for him to make the first move.

I heard his footsteps as he settled for leaning against the table in front of me. He could have sat in his chair on the other side of the table but instead he chose to have the conversation from right here- that had to mean something.

“Camilla,” he began softly, “I want to apologize.”

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I was taken off guard by his words because that was not what I was expecting. What does he think he did wrong? If anything, I should be the one apologizing to him. I should be the one saying sorry for flaring up when he was trying to help and that is exactly what I did.

“I should be the one apologizing.” I looked up at him, “You were just trying to be nice and trying to help and I got upset.”

“I should have respected your decision to not want to pursue it further. I just thought it would be worth a try.”

“And you were right, it would be. I just, I just don’t see a world where I am a princess.”

“That’s a rather pessimistic way of looking at it but at the end of the day, it is your choice and if you are sure that you don’t want to pursue it then I promise you, I won’t.” he held my hands in his, “All I ask is that you think about this closely and carefully. What if it is your fear that is stopping you?”

I thought about it for a minute and although I didn’t want to admit it, I knew he was right. It wasn’t that I didn’t think I could be princess; it was that I didn’t

want to believe it. I couldn't imagine a world or a future where I was the princess. It just didn't seem like something that could be real.

"Fine," I said after a beat and Ryker turned to me with raised brows. "What do you mean by fine?"

"You can do whatever you need to about the princess issue," I could see a smile beginning to form on his lips. "I still don't believe that I'm the princess or whatever. But there's no harm in trying, right?"

"Right," he agreed and then he leaned down and kissed me.

When his lips met mine, I realized that he had been holding himself back all day because of me. His hand moved to cup the back of my head as he deepened the kiss. He lifted me from the chair and turned us around so that I was sitting on the desk and he was standing right between my legs. My cheeks heated as I remembered the last time we were in a position like this and what he had done.

"I really need to work," he muttered against my lips, "And if I'm not mistaken, Riley is right outside this door."

He pulled back after the last words and it took me a second to fully come to terms with what he had said. By that time, he was already at the door and he pulled it open to reveal Riley there with her hand raised as if she was about to knock.

She quickly put her hand down and stuck her head to the side until she sighted me, "Is it okay if I talk to you for a while?"

"Sure," I was off the table before another word could escape her lips.

By the time I got to the door, Ryker stopped me with his arm. I thought he was going to say something but instead, he pressed a kiss to the top of my head and stepped back for me to pass. I could see Riley's eyes follow his action with a somewhat sad look but there was something else buried underneath it, something like envy.

I stepped out with her and she walked in silence all the way up the stairs. and into the room she was currently occupying. She opened the door wide for me to walk in and as soon as I was inside, she locked it behind her.

The room was-busy- that's the best way I could explain it. Sheets of paper lined the floors and there was charcoal everywhere. Different potted plants lay at her window sills and basically the room was just in disarray. It looked a mess but somehow it didn't feel so messy. It was some sort of disorganized chaos and the longer I glanced at it, the more I realized that there was an order to things.

All the charcoal and sketch things were in one corner of the room, the plants were in another and so were the clothes.

"You seemed to be busy in here," I began as I made my way over to the edge

of her bed and sat, "What did you want to talk about?"

"I wanted to do something nice for Ryker since I had just returned after a while. I considered getting him a plant but I know he would just kill it and I was thinking what does he absolutely love and the answer is you." She said all that in one breath and I raised a brow, "A sketch or a painting of you would be the perfect gift for him."

"You want me to sit while you sketch me," I repeated just to be sure and she nodded, "Okay, but I have one condition."

"Anything," she said quickly and I wondered if she would regret those words just as quickly once I said my condition.

"I want you to tell me about Damien," she opened her mouth to begin but I cut her off, "Not just the surface things but about whatever it is that went on between both of you."

"I don't know what you're talking about." She couldn't meet my eyes as I spoke.

"It's alright if you don't want to but I'm not Ryker. I can clearly see that something happened."

She went silent and I could see the wheels in her head turning as she debated whether or not it was a good idea.

"Fine," she said finally, "But you better sit tight because it is a long one."

## Chapter 43

The story between them was more complicated than I thought it was but I still had a feeling that she was hiding something. She liked him and had been trying her best to get his attention but he has been adamant on ignoring her. I believed that but the way she pointedly refused to meet my eyes led me to believe that there was more to this story.

I didn't want to push more than what she was willing to give so I smiled at her when she finished her story, told her that I agreed that it was complicated and swore myself to secrecy to never repeat another word of what had been said to the hearing of Ryker.

Her words actually made me intrigued to see Damien. I wanted to know what it was about him that she was so enamored by. She is just fifteen; at that age, I couldn't imagine myself having a crush on anyone, much less a crush of the magnitude that she has on Damien.

She finished with her drawing but refused to let me look at it because according to her, she still had to color it in and add the finishing touches. She all but threw me out of her room so I wouldn't peek over at what she was doing and I laughed the entire way to my room.

I stayed locked in there all night and didn't even know when I fell asleep until I woke up this morning to Ryker running his fingers over the bare skin of my



arm. It was a very innocent action but something about it just felt unnecessarily intimate and it made me want to burrow into his hold and never leave.

“Can we skip training today,” I began, sleep had clouded my voice and it was barely audible but Ryker heard it because he chuckled under his breath. “I just want to stay in bed and sleep.”

“I know that baby,” he leaned down and kissed my temple. I felt my inner walls clench at the nickname but I was determined not to blush. “You can stay in here and I’ll go for training alone.”

He started to move but I grabbed his hand and pulled it over my body. I could feel his body vibrating from the force of his chuckles and I knew I was being unrealistic and unnecessarily clingy but I didn’t want to leave the bed and I didn’t want to leave him this morning for some weird reason I cannot explain. It just felt right to be in his arms and although I knew he had things to do, I wasn’t open on the idea of letting him go and do them.

“Please stay,” I muttered, “Just for five more minutes.”

“Five minutes will turn into the entire day,” he argued but I could already feel him settling back into bed behind me.

“I don’t see a problem with that,” I fought back a yawn as he kissed my shoulder blade.

He turned me around and pulled me closer to him so my face was buried in his chest. His hands wrapped around me and held me so close that I felt like I was cocooned by his presence. It was overwhelming in a good way and I never wanted to leave.

He would press soft kisses to my forehead and various intervals and I could feel my entire body turning to jelly in his hold. I wanted nothing more than to melt into him and never leave.

I don’t know how long he stayed there with me but then I felt his entire body tense. I looked up at him and saw his eyes glazed over and I tried to push down my disappointment. I know that anyone who would mind link him wouldn’t do it for anything that isn’t important.

By the time he was done with the conversation, he gazed down at me with a sad look and I just knew that he had to stand. I sighed deeply and pulled away first because I knew he wouldn’t and I forced myself to roll out of bed.

“Do you want to come with me to the pack house?” he asked and I turned to him with raised brows. “I know you don’t want to go anywhere and I can’t promise that it will be fun but Riley is going with me and it might give you some time to hang out with her. Besides, Damien might arrive today and I want you to meet him.”

Sometimes I hate when he sounds so nice because it means I cannot be unnecessarily stubborn or hard headed. I liked his suggestion so I nodded and

walked slowly into the bathroom.

After freshening up, I got dressed and I waited for Ryker to finish up. I will never not be shocked by how little time he spends in the bathroom and dressing up. When he was done, he held onto my hand and led me down the stairs.

Riley was already waiting and she was finishing up her breakfast when we got down. I realized that we hadn't eaten breakfast yet because of my initial refusal to leave the room. Just as my worry and guilt started to take over, Eve appeared with a little flash in her hands that she handed to me.

Ryker took it before I could and when I turned to him in confusion, he explained that it was breakfast for me. I asked about him but he assured me that he would get something to eat at the pack house

By the time we got to the pack house. Ryker was dragged off to do something but he handed me the breakfast flask first. In it were pancakes and bacon and because eating alone felt weird, I shared it with Riley who was more than happy to join me.

We ate together while Riley told me all about her time abroad.

Apparently she schools in some up town boarding school there. It is for children of rich and very famous people in our world. Ryker didn't want her to go there at first because it was so far away but she managed to convince him and she has loved it ever since.

She told me about the mean people and the nice people. She told me about everything that she thought was valuable information and I actually enjoyed hearing her speak. She seemed to love her school and the way she spoke about it so animatedly showed that too.

By the time she was done speaking, I suggested that we go for a walk. She was quick to agree because- and I quote- she wanted to see the hot guards during training. I was quick to remind her that her brother wouldn't take so kindly to those words and she flashed me a mischievous grin.

The more time I spend with Riley, the more I realize that she is a really mischievous child. Not in a bad way, but more of in a 'do what I want' kind of way.

"Ryker will lose his s hit," she muttered to herself as we made our way around the field towards the training field. "If he asks, we were walking around and got distracted."

I turned to her with raised brows, "Are you really thinking of a lie right now?" "It is always best to have your exit strategy in place," she shrugged as if it were the simplest thing in the world. "It isn't when we are caught that we will plan how we are going to get out of it."

"What happened to telling the truth?"

"Where's the fun in that?"

I shook my head at her and I wanted to speak but we were already at the training field. I heard and smelled them before I saw them and when I did, it took everything in me for my mouth to not fall open.

Different guards stood at every inch of the field training. Some were running, some were spotting each other and there was a small clearing in the middle of the field where two people were sparring.

I noticed that it wasn't only the guards there but also a few maids I had noticed around a few times. I found it admirable that even the maids were allowed and even encouraged to train. The more things I see about this pack, the more I realized that Tyson's was a terrible place to be. "There is so much testosterone." Riley muttered as she fanned herself with her hand, "I could just pass out from this."

I couldn't help my small smile and she shot me a look that said she had something up her sleeve. I was thinking of how to stop her before she did anything crazy when I noticed someone coming up to us. She was already too close for me to pretend I hadn't seen her and everything went to a standstill. Riley stopped her dramatics and held onto my arm in a tight grip and that was when it hit me that she may be uncomfortable around Lauren just as much as I am.

"I wasn't expecting to see you here," she began as she looked over us both. "We were just leaving." Riley was the one who responded and she turned to leave when Lauren stopped us both.

"Did you come to train?" she raised her voice so it carried and everyone paused what they were doing to turn to us. "It would be amazing if we could see what you've got. Perhaps you wouldn't mind sparring with me unless-," She trailed off but the notion was clear. She had a sardonic smirk on her face and I knew what her entire plan was all along. If I say no, I risk looking weak or like I'm scared of her and if I say yes, then she will have the freedom to embarrass me in public because I know she's a better fighter than me.

"I don't think I'm at the point where I can spar with you." I began after a beat of silence, "I mean you were general," I saw her frown at the use of past tense. "I would assume there was a reason for that. Maybe when I have time I could spar with the actual general."

Her cheeks flushed and I flashed her a small smile.

"It was a pleasure seeing you Lauren."

She opened her mouth to say something and I cannot guarantee that it would have been nice, but before she could speak, I saw her freeze and I knew that someone was behind me.

I smelled Ryker before I felt his hands around my waist. I looked up at him with a smile and he pressed a kiss to the middle of my head.

"I've been looking for you," he mumbled into my hair, "I need you with me."

I could see the barely concealed jealousy swirling in Lauren's eyes but I ignored her and turned to Ryker. He intertwined his fingers in mine and pulled me away from the training field. I barely even noticed the amount of whispers and stares that followed us.

Comment

Chapter 44

I spent the rest of my day in Ryker's office. He was a welcome distraction but I was able to read up some more on the mating ceremony and start making a vague draft of what I wanted. Ryker worked silently in front of me but I knew that ever so often, his eyes would snap up to find mine and occasionally we would lock eyes and smile.

At one particular moment, we locked eyes and I knew Ryker was about to say something when the door to his office opened. I knew without looking up that it had to be Riley because she is the only person who would just waltz into his office at any given time.

This time however, she looked panicked and she rushed over to my side. and grabbed my hand. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Ryker eyeing his sister with concern and worry and I knew he was one wrong word away from blowing his fuse because she looked spooked.

"He's here," she leaned in to whisper in my ear so Ryker wouldn't hear, "We need to go home, disappear, maybe change our names and start a new life." It took everything in me not to burst out laughing at her reaction. What happened between Damien and her shouldn't elicit such a dramatic reaction but then again, it is Riley and I am beginning to see that she can be a little dramatic.

"Everything will be fine," I assured her, "Just ignore everything."

She glared at me as if to say I should know better. She was about to say something again when a figure filled the open doorway, I saw her entire body freeze up and even though I had never met him before, I knew that the person standing there was Damien.

He was around Ryker's height but he was built like a machine. His hair was a soft brown color that settled in curls over his head and his eyes were the color of melted chocolate. His eyes held mischief but they also held a sort of wisdom that I guess can only come with the kind of position that he holds. He had a bag slung over one shoulder and his eyes roamed the entire room taking everyone in it.

They settled on Ryker first and then Riley, I saw the corner of his lips tilt up when he looked at Riley and then he turned to me. There was awareness and a bit of confusion but he tipped his head as a form of greeting and all I could do was nod back because I wasn't sure how to

respond to that.

“Sorry I’m late,” his voice was like gravel. “Apparently, people don’t understand the meaning of a retreat and prefer to spend the entire time arguing instead of working out an agreement.” He turned to Ryker, “You’re going next time.”

Ryker’s lips tilted up and I watched him rise from his seat as he embraced his friend in one of those male hugs. They clapped each other on the back and when they both pulled away, they were grinning from ear to ear.

Riley still had a death grip on my hand and was trying to tug me out of my chair but I was enjoying the scene and I wanted to see more about Damien.

Ryker stepped back and gestured to me, “This is my mate, Camilla.”

“When you said you had met her, I thought you were joking at first,” Damien tipped his head forward in my direction, “It’s a pleasure to meet you; you too Riley.”

Riley all but squealed when he mentioned her name, “Camilla and I need to do something really quickly.”

Before I could protest or argue or even refuse, she had successfully pulled me out of my chair and out of the room. We brushed past the two men and she didn’t stop until we were out of the building entirely. That was when she stopped and took a deep breath.

“Did you see that?” she asked, “He was mocking me with his eyes?”

“I didn’t see that actually,” it was hard smothering my laughter, “Have you ever considered that maybe you’re reading too much into this?”

“Don’t tell me he has you fooled as well,” she frowned. “He is the absolute worst. I swear it, he is just waiting until you all aren’t around and then he will show his true colors.”

This time, I couldn’t stop the laugh from bubbling out of me. I had to clutch my side because it hurt so badly and although Riley was frowning, I could see the corner of her lips lift up from time to time.

I wiped a stray tear from my face as I stood up straight and crossed my arms over my chest and stared down at her. She met my eyes and the more she tried to convince me that Damien was horrible, the more my smile grew as I shook my head at her.

When she was done with her rant, she let out a loud sigh and leaned

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against the wall to catch her breath. I walked over and stood directly next to her and before I could say another word, she had sunk to the ground and sat with her legs crossed in front of her.

I debated it for a second then decided it was just grass and it couldn’t hurt me, so I crossed my legs and sat right next to her. She laid her head on my

shoulder and we just sat there staring at the open field and trying to shield our eyes from the sun.

“He’s not a terrible person,” she said finally and I hummed, “I just didn’t want to see him. I wasn’t prepared to see him.”

“I know,” I wrapped my arms around her shoulder because I knew what she needed at that time was comfort, “You would’ve at some point, it’s good that you got it out of the way.”

“I guess so,” she mumbled unsure.

She wanted to say something else but footsteps made their way over to us and when I looked up, I saw Lauren in all her glory. Riley glanced at me in concern but I squeezed her shoulder to let her know that everything would be fine.

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Lauren stopped in front of us, “Riley, your brother is looking for you.” I could tell that Riley didn’t want to leave immediately but I slowly disentangled her from my body and gave her a soft smile. She still hesitated but at the end of the day, she stood up and disappeared through the doors.

As she went, I decided that I had no reason to be out as well so I stood to my feet. Just as I was about to side step Lauren, she grabbed my upper arm. I froze and glanced at her arm that was wrapped around my bicep, I tried to tug it out but she only made her grip tighter.

“You might think that you have Ryker wrapped around your fingers,” she began in a soft whisper, “But I’m here to tell you that you are in over your own head. He doesn’t want you and he doesn’t love you.”

“I don’t need you to tell me how my mate feels.”

“I’m just trying to help you but you’re being difficult,” she stepped even closer into my space, “The things he tells me about you would make your skin crawl. I’m being a girl’s girl, I’m saving you from further heartbreak. Stay away from Ryker.”

I didn’t believe her. I have learnt the hard way not to believe just anything that Lauren says unless there is proof. I rolled my eyes and tried to move but Lauren is stronger than I thought because her hand held me right in place. She didn’t hold me hard enough that I would bruise but it was hard enough that it hurt.

“Stay away from-,” before she could finish her sentence I heard a voice call my name.

I looked up to see Damien standing there. From his vantage point, he couldn’t see that she had my arm in a death grip. It would have looked to him like she was just leaning over and whispering things to me. She let go of my arm but not before shooting me one last warning look and disappearing into the pack house.

Damien walked over to me and I plastered on a neutral expression so he wouldn't see the panic or annoyance on my face. He glanced over at me slowly as if he was trying to figure out what was happening before he arrived. "Are you okay?" he asked and I hummed, "Was she bothering you at all?" "Everything is fine," I said ignoring his question. "She was just telling me how grass stains are a b itch to get out. I was sitting on the grass."

Damien didn't believe me, hell, I wouldn't have believed me but I plastered on the widest smile I could muster and there was nothing he could do. He couldn't just call me a liar and he also didn't know me well enough to push for more information so he nodded.

"Ryker sent me to get you," he said finally, "He sent for you earlier but Riley was the one who came."

All the more reason why I wouldn't believe anything Lauren says without proof. I nodded and told Damien I would be there and he reluctantly left me alone in the field.

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I took in large calming breaths to make sure that my face was the epitome of calmness and composure and I plastered on a smile before going to Ryker's office. I met Riley at the door and I could see all the her eyes about what had happened outside with Lauren but just like with Damien, I assured her that everything was fine and that nothing had happened.

I could tell she didn't believe me and I knew she wanted to push, I knew she would have pushed. But thankfully, Damien appeared and her need to avoid him trumped her need for information so she scurried away. Damien turned to me with an inquisitive look as if asking if I knew why she was avoiding him. I responded with a shrug.

than he turned Janua

"That's usually her first hiding spot."

Damien turned back to me with an unreadable expression on her face, "Thank you."

"You're welcome, just don't hurt her please."

A dark look crossed his face and I could see that he wanted to explain something, he even opened his mouth to speak but at the last minute he thought against it, closed his mouth and nodded.

Before anyone could say another word, he had disappeared round the corner and I was left staring at his retreating back. As he walked away I knew I was right earlier, there is definitely more to their story than I am aware of and I so desperately want to find out what it is..

## Chapter 45

I was shocked when I returned from training with Ryker and saw Damien in the living room. He was fully dressed, seated on the chair and talking with Eve. I snuck a glance at Ryker and saw that he was surprised as well and that was when it hit me.

If Ryker didn't know he would be here then neither would Eve. One part of me wanted to sit back and watch how things would unfold but the other part of me wanted to warn her so she wouldn't be surprised. I didn't have to think about my choice for long because I heard her skipping down the stairs and when she saw Damien, she turned on her heels and went back.

I turned to Ryker wondering if he had seen what happened and he had but he still looked confused. I shook my head and mentally face palmed at how oblivious he is to the entire situation. I wonder how he will react when he finally sees what everyone has been seeing for months- probably years if I am not mistaken.

After Ryker exchanged pleasantries with Damien, we went upstairs to get changed but unlike yesterday, I decided to have breakfast at home.

Ryker was still getting dressed when I left the room so I sat at the dining table where both Damien and Riley were already sitting. They were both ignoring each other but the tension between them could have been cut with a knife. Eve glanced at me and then between the other two. I knew what she was trying to ask and I just shrugged in response. I couldn't tell her what was going on because I'm not even sure Riley told me the full story. She sighed and handed each person a plate of food then disappeared.

I was praying that Ryker would be down soon so I wouldn't have to spend so much time with the two of them in that awkward space. My prayers were answered because as soon as Eve walked away, I heard Ryker's footsteps coming down the stairs.

I let out a sigh of relief as he placed a kiss in the middle of my hair then took the seat right next to mine. I smiled up at him and he squeezed my palm in silent solidarity. I like that most times we don't actually have to speak to be there for each other. It is in the soft touches and the little kisses.

I felt eyes on me and I looked up to see Damien staring at Ryker and I with an unreadable expression. I could tell that there was a storm brewing in his mind but instead of saying anything, he met my eye and promptly looked away.

Throughout breakfast I debated whether or not to ask him about it but by the time we prepared to leave, I figured there was no use.

Damien came with his own carriage and Riley had to go with him. I could tell she wanted nothing more than to claw her own eyes out but she also didn't want to make a fuss so she quietly stared at Damien and his carriage.



My heart ached for her but I knew she had to handle whatever problems she had with him so I slowly disentangled her grip on me and allowed Ryker lead me away. Until he shut the door, I was still staring out at Riley who had a somewhat haunted look on her face.

As soon as the carriage doors were shut, Ryker grabbed my face in his hands and kissed me. It was breathless and it was merciless and it took a few seconds for me to come to terms with it but I felt it all the way to my toes. I kissed him back and one of his hands trailed to my waist to pull me impossibly closer.

The carriage went over a bumpy road which forced us to pull away and a small laugh left my lips. Ryker shook his head and laughed alongside my but he tucked an arm around my shoulders and pulled me into his side. I allowed myself relax completely against him and he placed a soft kiss to my temple. "I wanted to do that all morning," he murmured, "That is exactly why I enjoy living alone."

"So you can kiss me whenever you want?"

"So I can have you whenever I want," he corrected, "Do you know how many times I have thought about having you spread over the dining table?"

Just like that, I was impossibly wet and the scent of my arousal fluttered through the air. Ryker let out a small groan and buried his face into my hair. I wasn't sure if it was to get more of the scent or to get away from the scent but his grip on me tightened.

"I have never tried my self control as much as I try it whenever you're around." He kissed my head once more. "I cannot wait for Riley to move out."

1 house Ruker was pulled away for work while I was pulled away by Riley to finally begin planning the mating ceremony. There wasn't much planned for today, I was just supposed to pick a color scheme and I thought that would be easy at first until I saw the millions of colors to choose from.

Whoever knew that there were over twenty shades of white alone and apparently you can't just use any shade with any other color. There's a color wheel and complementary colors and color charts.

As the woman whose name I don't remember read them all out to me, my eyes widened in panic. I glanced to the side at Riley who was sitting there with an amused look on her face as she bit her lip to stop herself from laughing.

She leaned in to whisper, "This is exactly why I am glad I wasn't born first." I didn't know what I was doing half of the time but we spent at least four hours choosing a color scheme. At one point I wanted to just tell her to do whatever she thought was right but I knew I couldn't seeing as it was my ceremony and the entire pack would be looking forward to seeing my unique touches on

things.

By the time we were done, I wanted to bury my head into a pillow and never have to look at another color again.

“At least the rest will be easier,” Riley said in an attempt to make me feel better. “You already have your color scheme so looking at the other decorations won’t take as much time.”

“Don’t tell me we’re doing that today.”

“I mean, we could,” she began and I was about to pointedly refuse when a maid walked up to us.

She bowed to me, “The Alpha is looking for you.”

I glanced at Riley who wiggled her brows at me and I smacked her arm playfully. I stood up and followed the maid out of the room and up the stairs to where Ryker’s office lays.

When we got to the stop of the stairs she froze. I looked at her carefully watching her body language and hoping that this wasn’t some sort of ploy to get me away from Riley.

“Is everything okay?” I asked and she nodded.

“My sister just mind linked me saying she needs some help in the kitchens. Is it okay if I leave you here and go to help her?”

I searched her face and there was sincerity in them. She was either telling the truth or she is a very good liar. If she is telling the truth, I will feel bad for not allowing her help her sister. If she is lying, then there is a possibility that I would get hurt.

I looked at the distance from the staircase to Ryker’s office. It wasn’t far at all, I would get there in under a minute and I looked back at the maid who was tapping her feet anxiously and waiting for my response. I let out a sigh, what is one minute?

“You can go,” she let out a sigh of relief and thanked me profusely before disappearing down the stairs.

I rotated my shoulders and tried to mind link Ryker but his wall was up. I figured he was doing something important or he had forgotten it that way and I made my way towards his office. The first thing I noticed was that the door was ajar slightly which was weird. Ryker never leaves his doors open, they are always shut and although I’ve never asked why, I just know it is something he does.

I smelled her next- Lauren’s signature perfume and scent. My body was on high alert immediately and I quietly poked my head in to see what was happening. The sight shocked me to my core and I had to slap my hand over my mouth to prevent me from making a sound that would alert them to my presence.

Ryker was leaning against the table with Lauren standing in between his legs.

Her hands were in his hair and he was kissing her. I stood there and watched for what felt like hours hoping and praying that he would push her away or something but they stayed tangled in each other's arms. Bile crawled up my throat as I forced my feet to lead me away from the door. My heart was pounding wildly and my vision was starting to blur but I was determined not to cry. Maybe it is all a mistake or a misunderstanding. Maybe I am reading too much into it.

What if it was someone who just looked like Ryker and not actually him? That would beg the question of what he was doing in Ryker's office with Lauren. I went back to the memory but it seemed to hurt the more I thought about it. I tried to make myself believe that I had imagined it and against my better judgment, I found myself going back to the office to see if I had seen wrongly. This time, when I saw them, he had her pressed into her desk facedown and he was lined up behind her. Her dress was bunched around her waist but he was still fully clothed and then I heard her moan. It went through the air and struck me in my chest like an arrow.

A sob caught in my throat and this time, the tears started to flow freely. In that moment, I did what I knew how to do best. I hiked up my shirt. and I ran down the stairs and out of the pack house. I ran into the woods and I sat on the wet grass and allowed the tears free fall.

I guess Lauren was trying to look out for me all those times. It is too bad that I didn't listen.