

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 46-50

Chapter 46

I ran as fast as I could from the office and back downstairs but I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone what I had seen. I could barely form the words to tell myself but that didn't matter.

I tried my best to act composed and casual the entire day but I could tell that everyone was worried. Riley kept asking me questions about the mating ceremony and I wanted to just scream at her that I didn't want the ceremony anymore. I wanted to go home to my own bed and just sleep.

When the day was over, Ryker came as if nothing had happened and pressed a kiss to my forehead. It took everything in me not to pull away or cringe and I took a discreet sniff of him but he didn't smell like her at all. He must have found a way to wash her scent off him.

I wanted nothing more than to confront him over the entire issue but my lips couldn't form the words. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't bring myself to say anything. Not while we were in the carriage, not during dinner and definitely not when we were alone in bed at night.

I hoped he would tell me about it himself. Maybe it was the naïve part of me hoping that it was all a mistake and that I had somehow seen wrong. I tried my best to believe that he would tell me himself but he didn't. Not even in the morning when I pointedly refused to train with him.

Although at that moment, he stopped and analyzed me with a sort of look that had me feeling like he was turning my skin inside out and looking at the deepest parts of me.

"What's wrong?" he asked, "You've been acting weird since last night."

"Nothing," I lied, "I just don't want to train."

He sighed deeply and moved until he was crouched down in between my legs and he was staring up at me. I tried to avoid his gaze and when he tried to get me to look at him, I pulled away from his touch.

I could see the hurt etched on his face but he swallowed down whatever retort he had and he sighed.

"Camilla," Ryker breathed softly. "Remember what we said about communicating, I don't know what I've done wrong and if you don't tell me what I've done wrong then I can't fix it."

I looked up at him incredulously. How can you not know what you did wrong? You were five seconds away from having sex with Lauren in your office. I tried so hard but it was like each time I opened my mouth, a chord wrapped around my throat and the words wouldn't come out.

I tried and I tried but no sound will come out and in the end I settled for

crossing my arms on my lap in front of me and looking away. Ryker sighed and rested his forehead against my arms.

“Whatever it is that I did,” his voice was muffled from the position. “I am so sorry, and whenever you’re ready to tell me what it is, I will be here to listen and fix things.”

He placed a soft kiss to one of my wrists and then he was on his feet and out of the room. Unease and doubt started to rush through me and I wondered what if I had seen the wrong thing?

Breakfast was another terse affair. I went down for breakfast early because I didn’t want to spend more time than was necessary with Ryker until I had the time to think. I thought my plan was foolproof until Ryker returned from training early and somehow, Riley decided that she wanted to come down for breakfast early.

No one was speaking or even looking at each other and the tension between the three of us could have been cut with a knife. It was worse when we had to go to the pack house because we were all stuck in the same small space called our carriage, our knees were basically brushing but we couldn’t- wouldn’t- speak to each other.

As soon as the carriage stopped, Ryker was out and he was helping me out but I ignored his outstretched hand and came out myself. I saw the hurt cross his features and I knew he wanted to speak about it but he clamped his mouth shut tightly and was called off by some people. “Is everything okay between you guys?” Riley asked as soon as we were within the safe walls of the pack house and I nodded. “It doesn’t seem that way, this is the longest I have seen you guys go without actively touching each other. Are you sure everything is fine?”

“Everything is fine,” it was a chore to speak those lies. They threatened to choke me but I forced them out, “I just don’t feel really good.”

She gave me a look that clearly said that she didn’t believe me but she didn’t push it. Instead she nodded and took a seat right next to me on the couch.

“Well if you’re ready then we can go ahead with more of the preparations,” she gauged my reaction as she spoke and it took everything in me to keep a neutral expression. “Unless of course, you would like to do something else.”

I opened my mouth to refuse but just like before, the words were getting stuck in my throat. I wanted to know what the sudden cause of my selective muteness was because I have never experienced this before. Riley had opened her mouth to say something else when I caught a flash of white out of the corner of my eye. I turned to the source and was shocked to see Lucy in her doctor’s coat walking through the halls.

“Is that Lucy?” I asked to be sure that she was the one I was seeing and Riley

nodded.

“What is she doing here?”

She made to stand but I held out a hand to stop her and followed the path where Lucy had gone. She disappeared through turn after turn until she stopped in front of a single room. I don't know why I didn't just call out to her, I wanted to know why she was sneaking around the pack house.

I followed behind her and settled for listening at the door when I heard two voices. It took me a while but I recognized the second voice.

“Are the results out?” Lauren asked and I heard Lucy hum. “You have to tell me now, we can't wait any longer.”

“I don't know why you didn't just come to me yourself. You didn't have to send the Alpha.”

I was confused by her statement. What did Lauren send Ryker to do? What were they talking about and why don't I know about it?

“We didn't want to risk anyone finding out,” Lauren whispered softly, “Ryker wanted us to try again but he also didn't want to risk her finding out.”

“Well she is going to have to know because the results are back and you're pregnant.”

It felt like someone had taken a sledgehammer to my sanity and my entire world. I could almost hear the glass shards that were my life shattering. The pain I felt in my chest was unexplainable; it was like someone had reached in and taken my heart out then squeezed it into dust between their fingers.

I couldn't bring my feet to move and I heard as they rejoiced together and Lauren spoke about how excited Ryker would be because they have been trying for so long to have another baby after she lost the first one.

I wanted to believe that it was all a lie and that I was dreaming but the more I pinched myself, the more real it became. If it was just Lauren I wouldn't have believed it but this is Lucy giving the news. Ryker trusts Lucy more than anyone so it would actually make sense that he would put her in charge of this.

If he wanted a kid with Lauren and he wanted to be with Lauren then why didn't he just tell me? I would have taken the news well and I would have left immediately but he kept me around probably for show.

I forced the tears back and took steady breaths to calm myself. I walked until I found myself in front of the pack house and without speaking to anyone, I walked over to the carriage where the foot man was sitting. “I don't feel well,” I told him, “I want to go back home.”

He rushed to his feet immediately and within a few minutes, I was back on the bumpy ride to the house. I knew they would tell Ryker that I had left but I couldn't bring myself to care. I felt numb and I just wanted the constant ringing in my head to stop.

As soon as I got home, I felt my legs carry me in the direction of Ryker's office. I searched through the number of files and papers on his table hoping that I would find something that would tell me that it was all a lie. but I didn't. Everything here was strictly for work except for a file that had my name on it. It contained a map to reach the royal family and some notes in the prophecy that he was so determined that I was a part of. Maybe that's why he kept me, because I'm supposedly part of this prophecy.

I took the file and was walking out of his office when Eve saw me. She took one look at me and sympathy filled her entire face. I held out a hand to tell her to stop because I knew if she spoke to me then I would lose it.

Instead, she walked over to me and wrapped her arms around me. The tears started to flow at this point and I couldn't do anything to stop them. "What happened?" she asked but I couldn't bring myself to speak the words, "Tell me, Camilla."

"Everything hurts," was all I could say, "And I need to leave."

She froze at those words and pulled back from me, "What are you talking going?"

"I don't know," I admitted, "But I can't stay here. Not after what I just saw and not after everything."

"What did you see?" she probed but I couldn't tell her.

I knew that if I told her then she would tell Ryker and the last thing I want is for Ryker to feel like he has to look for me. Let them all think that I left of my own accord, that way he can be free to mate with Lauren and they will have their child freely.

"Eve, I have never asked anything of you," I began slowly and she pulled away from me.

"Then don't start now because I'm not going to do it."

"You said that we look out for one another, right?" I didn't wait for her to respond, I grabbed a hold of both her hands. "I'm not asking you to help me leave. I'm asking you to pretend like you didn't know about it at all. I only told you because I respect you so much."

"You don't have to leave, Ryker will fix whatever it is."

"He can't fix this."

She was crying but when she saw how serious I was, she nodded. She pulled her hands free of my grip and wiped away her tears.

"All I can give you is ten minutes then I have to tell Ryker that you're missing. You can't get out of the pack in ten minutes."

"This won't be my first time running from an Alpha. Ten minutes is all I need."

"Be careful Camilla," she said and then without another word, she turned on her heels and disappeared into the kitchen.

Chapter 47

FOUR YEARS LATER

The air was crisp and cool against my skin. It was my fault for choosing to wear a dress without sleeves but then again, I didn't expect that it would get cold this early. The cold air usually comes around September but for some reason, this is August and it is already here.

This time of the year usually reminds me of Ryker because it was around August I left him. I can't help but think about how he is and how he might be doing. It would be a lie if I said that in four years I haven't thought about him once. I tried my best but I just couldn't get him out of my mind and due to some unforeseen circumstances, I am forced to think about him every day. When I ran, I had no idea where I was going or what I was going to do. I had no idea if he was going to come after me or what was going to be of me but I just ran. I decided that a good first option would be to find the royals. I don't know why but my wolf encouraged it and it took almost a week but I finally got there.

I was dirty and matted and I didn't know where or how I was going to introduce myself to the royals. But then, a young girl around my age walked over to me. She introduced herself as Christine and asked what I was doing there. I was so speechless because I knew she was a royal and in true Camilla fashion, I tripped.

She caught me before I fell but my shirt had slipped and revealed the birthmark. She tried to rub it off to see if it was a fake but when she realized it wasn't, I was dragged to see the queen as messy as I was.

I took one look at her and I immediately knew that we were related. I was the splitting image of her and she instantly ordered that I get cleaned. I was too tired to debate but I gave one little request and told her all about Ryker and how I never wanted him to find me. She must have heeded that request because he hasn't till now.

I would like to believe that leaving was the best thing for me, especially because of how it has shaped me. Within the first month I felt out of place and I wanted nothing more than to just go back to what I was used to.

Christine who I found out was my cousin, found me in tears in the bathroom. She sat me down and told me, "If you don't grow a backbone then this palace will eat you alive."

It took a while but with Christine's help I would like to believe that I managed to do it. She quickly became my best friend and confidante and even when I had to come to the reality of my powers and how they worked, she was right there by my side to help me through it.

"Think fast," I barely had time to gather my thoughts when I saw her toss.

some water in my face. I shot my hands out and it froze mid air.

I glared at Christine who was responsible for it and when she shot me a crooked grin, I threw the water back in her face. Her long black hair was slicked back straight and stopped right below her armpits and her hazel eyes similar to mine sparkled with mischief.

“My hair,” she shrieked as she attempted to pat it dry, “You are a terrible person.”

“You could have ruined my hair,” I told her and she shrugged.

“It’s all part of your training.”

“Training ended almost an hour ago,” I deadpanned and she shrugged again.

“Try being one of the royals without magic and then you’d understand my need to constantly see it in play.”

Only the royals in direct line of the throne are able to unlock their powers. It was a gift bestowed upon us by the moon goddess herself and they come to play on our 21st birthday. That was last year and I found out that I had the ability to control water.

She walked in stride with me as we made our way into the palace. Her dress was similar to mine in length and style, it was long and grazing the floor and the material swished around her figure freely. The only difference was that hers was the color of soft grass and mine was the color of the sky.

“Have you seen the Queen today?” she asked and I shook my head. I still don’t know why Christine refers to her as the Queen but I have never brought myself to ask seeing as I only started referring to her as mother a while ago.

“Is anything wrong?” I asked and she looked around to make sure no one was looking before she leaned in.

“I heard some of the servants whispering that the Queen is planning something big,” she whispered, “She hasn’t told me anything but I was hoping that she had told you.”

I shook my head, “I don’t know but you know how she can get. She will keep it to herself until she has no other reason to. I’m sure it’s nothing to worry about.”

“I don’t know,” she began, “it seems large from the whispers. It seems like it is definitely something big and I am kind of worried.”

“Everything will be fine,” I assured her, “Now can we go inside, I have things I need to check on before I go for the council meeting.”

She nodded and we were halfway up the stairs when I heard hurried footsteps behind us and someone cleared their throat. I looked over my shoulder to see a guard standing at the bottom of the stairs looking up at us.

I don’t know his name; I don’t know the names of half of the guards in the palace. I tried but they are just too many and I focused on learning the names

of the people who work directly with me and my family. "Can I help you?" I asked and he cleared his throat.

"The Queen has asked that you see her in the council chambers immediately," he glanced at Christine, "She has asked for the both of you."

I turned to face Christine and I saw that she had the same confused and half scared expression that I did. I nodded to the guard and he turned on his heels to lead the way. I couldn't deny that I was worried but I also knew that part of my role as princess meant that I have to hide my emotions.

I kept my face carefully neutral but when Christine slipped her hand into mine, I felt them shake slightly. The Queen wouldn't request for me if it wasn't important or dire and I am scared to see which one it might be. The guard pushed open the doors to the council room and my mother sat with her ankles crossed at the head of the table. She was wearing a dress of blood red and her hair was tied in a perfect chignon. She looked bored out of her mind and was all but glaring at the council elders who were squirming in their seats.

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Queen Leonor is terrifying at best and sometimes I don't think she plans it. I think it just happens and it is her default setting to look like she about to twist out your insides with her bare fingers.

She flicked her hand and the door shut behind us. Then with another wave of her fingers, two chairs were pulled out and she gestured for both
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of us to take a seat. I swallowed down the lump in my throat and took my seat right next to her with Christine on my other side.

"You sent for me," I said once I had settled down. "Is everything alright?"

"We were thinking," she began with a glance at the council elders, "They came up with an idea, didn't you?"

I swear one of them actually whimpered and I could feel their fear permeating the air. They nodded eagerly but they couldn't bring themselves to form the words.

"They will piss themselves," I told her as I leaned back in my chair. "What do you want mother?"

"You are twenty two. It is tradition that a princess is crowned after she receives her powers on her twenty first. Due to certain circumstances, I allowed it slide but the world is expecting to hear about the new heir and I want to retire soon."

I knew why this was such a big issue. If she announces it to the world. then that means Ryker will hear and if Ryker hears then my hiding is over. I will have to see him during the ceremony or even before. This is why she wanted Christine and the elders here so I had no way of erupting.

"Do I have a say in this?" I asked and the blank expression on my face let me

know my answer. "Is there a way to prevent him from knowing. You know why I don't want him to know."

"I do Camilla and that is exactly why I cannot do this any longer," she sat up with her hands crossed in front of her, "You are the princess and you cannot hide because of a dumb Alpha. If you want to reject him then this is your chance but you cannot spend the rest of your life hiding from him."

"I'm not hiding from him."

"Aren't you?" she asked, "What is it that I have done if it is not hide you from him. He came looking for you shortly after you arrived and I told him that you were nowhere to be seen. I have hid you for four years. You can either rise up to your duties or you allow me crown Christine." Christine squeaked and her eyes widened at those words. I know more than anyone that Christine wants nothing to do with the crown. She shot me a panicked look and I squeezed her hand softly. Mother won't actually do that, it is simply a threat.

"I don't want to be crowned then I will give it to Christine," she said simply, "The monarchy needs a ruler. What is your choice?"

"I never had a choice to begin with mother," I leaned further into my chair, "When are the invitations going out?"

"They went out this morning," she had a sly smile playing on her lips and I shook my head.

I knew she was just bluffing earlier. Mother will always do as mother wants and there is very little that any of us can do about it. She is the Queen after all and her word is law.

"If that is all, then I would like to leave." I was barely done with my sentence when the door to the council room creaked open.

My first thought was that whoever it was must have a death wish because no one interrupts council meetings except for the people in this room or direct members of the royal family. Even I don't do it unless it is absolutely necessary. To be fair, the guard who did it looked terrified to his toes.

"Your majesties," he bowed, "I couldn't exactly refuse her."

As he spoke, a small figure walked in through the doors and I let out a breath of relief. She had her long dark brown hair flowing down her back and she was wearing a silk silver pajama set even though it was already ten in the morning. She clutched a stuffed animal in one hand and her soft grey eyes scanned the room carefully until they came to land on me. "It's fine, you can go." I waved the guard off and he wasted no time before rushing out of the room.

The little girl wobbled over to me and I wasted no time in pulling her into my lap and pressing a soft kiss to her hair as she buried her face into my chest. All eyes were on me but I didn't care and I knew they wouldn't say a word, not

even my mother.

One thing they all learnt the hard way is that when it comes to my daughter, I don't play games.

Chapter 48

Audrey Valentina Caine was born about seven months after I ran away from Ryker. I didn't even know I was pregnant, I didn't even suspect it. The day that I found out was the day that Christine found me crying in the bathroom. I didn't know what to do and I wasn't sure that I could raise a kid by myself.

Christine was an amazing help during my pregnancy and weirdly enough, so was my mother. She missed out on a lot with me and she has been determined to get that time back through Audrey. The little girl is so loved and she doesn't even realize the half of it. She has everyone in this palace wrapped around her little finger and she doesn't even try. I named her Audrey because I liked the name but I wanted to give her something of Ryker's. He is still her father regardless of everything so I had my mother find out Ryker's mother's name and that's what I used as her middle name. At some point he is going to meet Audrey and I want him to feel like she has something of his other than his last name.

"Mummy," Audrey mumbled into my shirt and I immediately shifted my attention to her. "I was waiting for you all morning and you didn't come back." I kissed her curls softly, "I'm so sorry sweetheart, I swear it won't happen again."

She somehow wrapped her arms tighter around me as if she didn't want to leave, which knowing her, is exactly her intentions. Audrey might be young but she knows that people aren't allowed to interrupt our meetings but she does it anyways.

I went off on a council elder once when I was still breastfeeding because he told me that babies shouldn't be in the council room. Needless to say, none of them have ever spoken out of turn in regards to her again. "Are we done here?" I turned to face my mother, "I need to take care of Audrey."

"We are," she gave me a small but patronizing smile then reached out to stroke Audrey's hand softly. "You made the right choice Camilla."

"You make it sound like I had one in the first place."

She pursed her lips but I didn't give her another chance to speak before I was on my feet. Audrey wrapped her legs around my torso so I was carrying her in a front piggy back. Christine got up as well and followed us out of the council room.

Over my shoulder, I could see her making funny faces at Audrey who was giggling and squealing. We passed a few maids and guards who would stop and bow. I remember when I first came, I was so

uncomfortable from the attention and I would try to have a conversation with each of them.

I grew to realize that most of them don't actually want to have conversations with you. They just bow to show their respect and go back to their work. Most times I just zone them out and focus on the task at hand or else I will get swept into pleasantries and never get to my own tasks.

I walked up the stairs until I got to Audrey's room and I pushed open the door. Her room is right next to mine, there's an interconnecting door and all. Her room is bigger than the one I had back at Ryker's pack and it has more space than any three year old would need.

Her large four poster bed was complete with handles on each side to prevent her from rolling off because she tends to move a lot at night. The sheets were pink and there were various stuffed animals arranged by her pillows. She had a dresser filled with clothes and toiletries and a vanity larger than what any three year old should need.

I tried to convince my mother that it was too much, especially when she bought Audrey more clothes than I care to even count but Queen Leonor does as Queen Leonor wants. I just make sure to try and keep Audrey as humble as possible so she doesn't get swept up by the material things. "Do you want to take a bath first or you want to eat first?" I asked her as soon as we were situated in the room.

She tilted her head to the side as she thought about it and I patiently waited while she drew her own pros and cons in her head. At the end of the long five minutes, she chose a bath first and I led her into the bathroom.

While I gave her a bath, Christine left to probably inform the maids to bring her breakfast. Bathing first seemed to be the better option because I had just finished dressing her for the day when Christine walked back in with three maids walking right behind her.

They set the trays of food on the large coffee table in the room and left. Audrey wasted no time in stuffing her mouth with oatmeal and I watched her with nothing less than complete and utter awe. Sometimes it still feels surreal knowing that I have a daughter of my own and even though I have made some shitty mistakes when it comes to parenting her, I know that everything I do is for her benefit.

"What are you going to do?" Christine asked and I turned to her. "Are you going to reach out to him and tell him about her?"

"No," I admitted, "Honestly, I'm not even sure if I want him to know about her."

"He's her father," she dropped her voice so Audrey wouldn't hear us, "He deserves a chance to at least know her. He is missing out on the most amazing little girl in the world."

"He wouldn't be if he didn't fuck the woman who put me in harm's way every

single opportunity that she got.”

She winced, “you’re right, I’m sorry.” She sighed deeply, “He will be here for the crowning and there is a very high chance that he will see Audrey.” “I will do everything in my power to make sure that he doesn’t see Audrey,” I said with finality, “And it’s not just him, it is Tyson too. I don’t know if he has forgotten about me or if his ego will still be bruised. The last thing I need is for my daughter to be caught between some weird Alpha pi ssing contest.” I didn’t realize my voice had risen until Audrey turned to me, “There’s a contest for pee?”

“No sweetheart,” I ran my fingers down my face in mortification, “I meant a pretty contest. It is a contest to see who is the prettiest.”

She went silent for a second before exclaiming, “You would win the pretty contest mummy.”

My heart warmed at her gentle innocence and I leaned down to place a kiss in her hair. She squealed and practically melted against me and I let out a small sigh.

I turned back to Christine who was watching us with an unreadable expression. I excused myself from Audrey and gestured for her to meet me outside. We shut the door behind us and I turned to her.

“I can’t risk them finding out about her,” I said finally, “You have to help me.”

“I don’t agree with this,” she began, “No one should have to miss out on their child’s life but I understand why you’re doing it so I’ll support you.” “Thank you,” I breathed and she pulled me into a hug. “I just want her to be safe.”

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“I know.” Christine suddenly froze around me and I knew who was behind me. She pulled away and shot me a wide eyed look but I calmly assured her with my eyes that I would be fine.

She nodded then turned on her heels and I was left alone with my mother.

“I know you’re upset that I sprung that decision on you,” she began and I turned to face her. “I just want you to know that I am doing what I think is best for you.”

“What about what I think is best mother?” I asked, “I don’t even care about me but what about Audrey? Did you think about her when you made that decision?”

“He will find out about her sooner or later,” she said simply, “And you simply cannot keep leaving things half finished. It has been four years. Camilla and you are still hung up over him. You cannot spend the rest of your life pining over a man.”

“I’m not pining over a man mother,” I resisted the urge to run my hands through my hair in frustration. “Look, the most important thing to me right now

is Audrey. I don't even know what is going on with Ryker or his life. I don't care-,"

"That's not true," she cut me off, "If you didn't care then you wouldn't have asked me to keep all information about him away from you."

"That's not what I meant when I asked for that."

"Isn't it?" she asked and I fell silent.

I hate it when my mother does this but she knows that she is right. Maybe I didn't want to see or hear about Ryker mating with Lauren. I think I would have felt if he did but the distance and the time and the fact that my wolf and I have shut him out all these years. We also never had an official ceremony so the bond isn't as strong as it can be.

I tried to focus on my daughter and give her the best version of me that I could. I would not have been able to do that if I spent every second of my day crying over my mate like I did while I was pregnant with her.

"Do you remember how you felt when you looked at her for the first time?" mother asked and I hummed. "Do you remember how full you felt and how it felt like your heart was going to burst from the amount of love that you felt for her."

Emotion gathered in my throat and I nodded.

"You will do anything for her, am I right?" I nodded again because I couldn't speak. "That is how I felt when I saw you after all those years. It felt the same like it did twenty two years ago when I gave birth to you. The same way you will never do anything to hurt Audrey is the same way I will never do anything that I think will hurt you."

"I don't want to see him mother."

"I know," she cooed, "But you have to do it sooner or later. You have to either close that door completely or you open it up again."

"I know that." I sighed, "When are they arriving?"

"Most people won't arrive until two weeks but knowing the situation, I would give him a week,"

I swallowed and nodded. I have a week to prepare my mind for anything that might happen. I nodded and started to go back into the room when she stopped me.

"I know you wouldn't want to know," she began, "But he hasn't mated with anyone yet. Do with that information as you will."

Chapter 49

The preparations for the ceremony were underway immediately. I was swept into meeting after meeting and lesson after lesson. I was taught ways that a crowned princess should speak and act and walk. I was taught the things I was allowed to say in public and the things that I wasn't.

It was as frustrating as it was exhausting and every night I climbed into bed hoping it would be my last lesson but they just seemed to keep going on.

Audrey didn't really understand what was going on, all she knew was that there was going to be a large party and that I was unusually busy.

Christine helped me with her a lot especially when I had a lesson running late or a last minute meeting but I knew she still wanted to spend time with me which is why I requested that both our dress fittings be done together and on the same day. Once again, Audrey didn't understand the magnitude of the situation, she was just excited and skipping over the prospect of pretty dresses.

When I arrived in the room that would be used for dress fittings, the women all bowed immediately. Audrey was so shocked by them that she rushed behind me and buried her face into the skirts of my dress. "They're not going to hurt you," I whispered as I bent down to her level, "They bow because that is how they greet us."

She poked her head out from behind me, "Do you pinky promise?" "Yes, I pinky promise," I hooked my finger with her tiny one and she finally came out of her hiding spot but kept her hands intertwined with mine.

The coronation has three main events that I need to be dressed for. The first is the official introduction to the various Alphas; it is a dinner that will be held in the grand hall where I get to be seen for the first time. The second is the actual ceremony where I am crowned princess in front of everyone and the third and final is the after party where I have to mingle with everyone and get to know them for myself so I can have a good guess on who are our allies and who are enemies.

There isn't a dress scheme for the first or third events but for the second, it is tradition that whatever color I choose has to stand out and no other person would be allowed to use that color. It will most times serve as the color that I am known for. Take my mother for example, on her coronation, she wore a dress that looked like it was dyed in fresh blood

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and people nicknamed her the Red Queen. I haven't chosen my color yet and I was dreading it.

"Mummy look at all the pretty dresses," Audrey got over her initial fright and ran over to the many rows of clothes, "That one is pink, can I have the pink mummy?"

"You can have whatever you want," I assured her, "But you need to try it on first to see if it'll fit."

Unlike me, Audrey only has to attend one event- the coronation. A part of me doesn't want her there but I know there is little to nothing I can do about it. While she was gushing over the many dresses, I tried on a few ideas for the first and third events.

Prior to this, I had given them an idea of what I wanted so it wasn't difficult to choose something. For the meeting, I chose a simple off the shoulder silver dress. It had an A line skirt and it flowed down to my ankles where it pooled out into a small train. It wasn't too much but it was enough to draw attention. For the after party, I chose a dress made from the softest fabric that looked like a cross between grey, silver and blue. It had a mesh corset like bodice with silver straps and the skirt wrapped around my legs in a way that was both decent and exciting. The material was sheer and I knew it would raise a few brows but I loved it.

I was about to take it off when Audrey appeared in a dress that was almost the same color. It was blue with a ball gown skirt and it had butterflies all over the skirt. She had a butterfly crown in her hair and she was smiling so wide that it looked like her face would split open.

"It's the same," she squealed as she rushed over to me and I managed to grab her hands before she put them on my dress. "You look pretty mummy." "So do you," I gasped, "You are the most beautiful person here." She giggled with excitement and I felt my heart ache as I watched her. "Why don't you go take it off so you can help me pick out another dress?" She nodded eagerly and allowed the woman lead her back into the dressing room. I was stripped out of the blue dress and I stood in a robe as they showed me color after color but none of them seemed to call out to me.

Audrey returned and I pulled her into my lap and opened up the book of colors in front of her. Her eyes widened and she looked over each page as if she wasn't sure where to look first. She would hover over a color then flip the

page and realize that there were more colors there. It felt good to know that I wasn't the only one who was confused by the entire thing.

"How long do I have before I need to choose a color and a design?" I asked without looking up.

"Three days at most," I don't know who answered me but it was enough to put a damper in my mood. "We would need enough time to get the fabric and depending on the complexity of the design."

"I understand," I closed the book and handed it to the person closest to me, "I

will get back to you in exactly three days.”

They bowed and helped me put on my dress before excusing themselves from the room. I sat there with Audrey for a few minutes longer and she rested her head backwards on my chest.

“Are you okay?” she asked and I hummed, “Are you sad because of the dress?”

I laughed softly as I shook my head, “I’m not sad, I’m just exhausted- it means tired.”

“I’m sorry, do you want a nap?”

I had to stop myself from laughing out loud. I wish I was the kind of tired that required a nap but unfortunately that won’t help my case. I kissed her forehead softly to let her know that I appreciated her thoughts.

“Thank you, maybe I’ll get a nap later.”

“I’m hungry mummy,” She pulled herself off my leg and gestured for me to stand so we could go.

I got up and she opened her arms for me to pick her up. When she was settled on my hip, I made my way out of the dressing room and towards the large dining room.

On my way there, I was ambushed by Christine who looked like she had something really urgent to tell me. I put Audrey down and asked her to go and wait for me in the dining room seeing as she was impatiently squirming in my arms. I knew guards would go with her so I had nothing to worry about and I turned to Christine.

“What’s the problem?” I asked and she pulled me into a corner before speaking.

“I heard that an Alpha crossed our borders today,” she said and it felt like my entire world shut down.

With those nine words, all I could hear was a ringing in my ears. It felt like my world was suspended on a tight rope that was about to snap. Mother told me I would have a week; it has only been six days. I thought I would get the exact seven days or at least a little more time. I am nowhere near ready to see Ryker.

“The Queen says they won’t be staying in the palace,” she assured me.

“Some will be staying at a hotel and some will be staying in the palace. guest house depending on the arrangements that she has made. You may not have to see him until the ceremony.”

“What do I do if he seeks me out?”

“You ignore him,” she said as if it was the simplest thing in the world.

“It is not that easy.”

Christine grabbed my shoulders so I was staring at her and the look she gave me was enough to make a lesser man squirm in his boots but I know her and I know she would never hurt me so I stood there and I stared her right back in the eye.

“You are the crowned princess,” she began. “You do not owe anyone much less him an explanation. He should be on his knees begging for a second of your time and if you decide that you do not want to give it to him then that is fine. You are not obligated to do that. If you don’t want him in the palace then all you have to do is say one word. Everyone in here lives to follow you. Do not forget that.”

I swallowed and nodded, “You’re right, I should get Audrey. She must be waiting for me.”

Christine smiled, “I think I could use a snack too.”

We walked towards the dining room and I was confused when I pushed the doors open and the only people there were my mother and a maid. I looked around at first and checked behind the doors wondering if Audrey was playing hide and seek.

“What are you looking for?” mother asked and I finally acknowledged her by looking up.

“Where’s Audrey?”

Mother raised a brow, “She was with you.”

“Yes but I asked her to come here, didn’t you see her?” she shook her head and I didn’t waste any time before I was sprinting out of the dining room to look for my daughter.

I checked her room first to see if she had gone back but she hadn’t. Her room looked the same way it did when we left it this morning. I could feel myself begin to panic but I was desperately trying to calm down. “Relax,” Christine whispered, “The guards will never let her go far. I’m sure that she is somewhere in this palace.”

I ran my hands through my hair and made my way down the stairs when I almost bumped into one of the guards. I know him as Steven because he watches Audrey a lot of the time. When he saw me, he breathed out a sigh of relief.

“I was looking for you my lady,” he bowed, “The princess managed to run away from us when we were out in the garden. She is speaking to one of the visitors and she refuses to come with us. We cannot touch her as we are not allowed and I was hoping you could get her to come back.”

I exchanged a look with Christine and we were sprinting to the garden. I prayed to the moon goddess that it wasn't what I was thinking and I drew to a harsh stop when I saw her.

Audrey was standing with a tiny flower in her hand while he was crouched down next to her. He was smiling down at her and listening with rapt attention while she spoke about something I couldn't hear. I immediately pressed myself against the wall so they wouldn't see me and I saw Christine glance at me carefully as she registered the scene in front of her.

Ryker had officially met his daughter.

Chapter 50

"Christine, I need you to get her for me," were the first words out of my mouth once I was able to calm my breathing.

Christine raised a brow and crossed her arms over her chest. I wasn't sure if she wanted to smack me or yell at me or walk away- possibly all three. She heaved a heavy sigh as she leaned back a little to see what was happening. I did the same and it was still the same scene, Ryker was talking animatedly with Audrey but I could also see that he was looking around to see where she had come from.

I quickly hid beneath the pillar once more, "Please," I begged, "Before he asks who her mother is and she mentions me. I'm not ready to see him. or tell him." Christine rolled her eyes but she walked into the garden without another word. I hid behind the pillar so that I was covered but I could still see and hear what was going on. As she walked towards the duo, Ryker lifted up his head and saw her.

He stood to his feet and gave her a small but respectful bow which Christine acknowledged with a small nod. She placed a hand on Audrey's shoulder and I saw Ryker's eyes narrow slightly as he took in the scene. "Audrey, I think you should go inside now." Christine said with no room for arguments, "Everyone is waiting for you to eat."

"I'm sorry," her eyes fell, "I was just talking to my new friend. His name is Riley."

Ryker chuckled under his breath, "My name is Ryker, little one."

My heart warmed at the way he spoke to her and the wide smile she gave to him. She had barely met him but she was already enamored by him. Imagine if she knew he was her father, imagine if he knew that she was his daughter. My wolf nudged me towards them, nudged me to tell him that was his child but I couldn't. Not after everything that happened, I couldn't bring myself to do it. He doesn't deserve that little girl, no matter how amazing she might be or how much he might seem to love her.

"Are you her mum?" Ryker asked suddenly and I saw Christine turn to him.

“No,” she said simply and didn’t offer up any more answers. Instead, she turned to Audrey, “Go inside now, you shouldn’t be talking to strangers.” Audrey bristled at the chiding but she knew that Christine was right. She might be young but she knows her status and I have tried to teach her to be careful because people are always trying to attack the palace and the royal family. I wouldn’t want her to wander into a situation that she shouldn’t be in just because of her curiosity.

She waved to Ryker and turned around to disappear into the palace. I waited until she was out of sight from everyone before I rushed towards her and pulled her into my arms. She relaxed against me and hugged me back but I couldn’t help but realize how she probably doesn’t even know why I am holding her like she is about to let go.

I kept her next to me and watched Christine and Ryker. Christine had turned on her heels to make her way back in when Ryker stopped her. “I know I shouldn’t ask,” he began, “But I recognize you from the day I went looking for her. Is she okay?”

I was confused by his words because Christine never told me that she met him. I was under the assumption that she didn’t even know who he was.

Camilla is fine if that is what you’re asking.” She answered and Ryker opened his mouth to ask something else but she cut him off, “If you want to know anything about her then you can wait until the meeting where you will see her. I cannot give out information on anyone in the royal family.”

“You’re right,” he took a step back, “My apologies, I just wanted to know that she was safe.”

“There is nowhere safer for her than here. I think you should let the guards lead you to your hotel or wherever it is that you are staying.” The jab was clear in her words and I saw Ryker’s expression as it settled. Without another word, Christine turned on her heels and walked right into the palace. Ryker stared at her retreating figure for a while but then he cleared his throat and walked away once a guard walked up to him. Audrey was still in my arms but she looked confused as to what was happening. As soon as Christine walked up to us I let her see all the questions I had in my eyes but she pointedly ignored me and turned towards Audrey.

“Do you want to have lunch now?” she goes “I’m starving.”

asked and Audrey nodded. “Let’s” Christine walked past me leaving me to follow behind her but she knew I was nowhere near done with my questions. Lunch might be a temporary distraction but believe me, I will get those answers out of her even if I have to lock her in my room to do it.

We made our way to the dining room where my mother was just finishing up. She ran her hands through Audrey's locks softly but then she gazed at Christine and I and she must have felt the brewing tension and unanswered questions.

"Where was she?" mother asked

"In the gardens," I answered not wanting to tell her the real truth and hoping she wouldn't notice but she did.

She hummed in disbelief and looked at me with an expression that had me feeling like she could see inside me and see every decision and thought I had made. For a while I actually thought she could and that her powers were mind reading but I was disappointed, she just has very piercing eyes.

"Okay then," she said finally and then without another word, she walked past me.

The three of us ate lunch together with Audrey doing most of the talking. She droned on about Ryker and how nice he was to her and how he picked the flower for her. I tried my best to keep a neutral standpoint as I listened to her but I wanted nothing more than to just ask her to stay as far away from him as possible and to never speak to him again.

A part of me wondered if I was being selfish. If I was punishing Audrey for her father's mistakes by not letting them know each other. I wondered if I was being the villain in their story and if I was doing the wrong thing. I also wondered if my actions were unjustifiable. He may have cheated but he didn't hurt his daughter. If anything, I know he will love Audrey with all his heart.

Maybe I am doing the wrong thing. "Mummy," I was snapped out of my thoughts by Audrey's voice, "You're not listening to me."

"I am," I forced a smile on my face, "What did you say?"

She went back to talking about Ryker and I noticed Christine staring at me.

She had a look that told me she knew exactly what I was thinking of and I shot her a look that told her that we needed to talk.

After we all finished eating, I cleaned Audrey up and walked with her back to her room. I know her and I know that she will fall asleep within thirty minutes. She cannot eat without taking a nap right after. She has been like that since she was a baby and I have found it very useful because once she sleeps, I can go ahead and start planning my day and doing the things that I have to do.

Once she was carefully in her room, I had to sit with her and play dolls. It is the only way I'll be able to get her to sleep. This time however, she added an extra doll and called it Ryker and made up a plot line about Ryker saving the princess from a dragon. I played along even though my heart was pumping a mile a minute and the moment she yawned, I carefully plucked the dolls out of her hands and carried her into bed.

It didn't take long after that for her to fall asleep. Within the next ten minutes I was out of her room and looking for Christine. I didn't find Christine in her own room or the council room, I decided to check the library because I know it is her favorite place in the castle and I found her standing between the shelves browsing through the books.

She sensed me when I walked in, I saw her shoulders stiffen but she didn't look up, not even when I was standing next to her. She kept on browsing books like she didn't have a single care in the world and I knew she wasn't going to make this easy.

"What did he mean by he recognized you?" I asked but she didn't respond.

"You never told me that you had met him."

She still didn't respond and I finally took the book out of her hand and turned her to face me. She had a resigned look on her face and she sighed as she took a seat in one of the empty chairs there. She gestured for me to sit opposite her and I did hoping it would spur her into speaking.

"After you told the Queen that you didn't want him to find you, she asked me to go back to the packs, to the exact spot where you found us," she explained,

"While I was there, he came around and he was asking of you. Obviously I told him I had never seen you before but he was adamant that he finds you."

"He didn't even care about you being a princess, he didn't even mention it once. He just kept talking about how his mate was missing and he suspected she would come here first. He stayed there for a week hoping you would show up and at one point I almost told him the truth but the Queen came and she spoke to him. I don't know what promises she made him but he left soon after. That is all there is to it."

As I looked at her, I knew that was a lie. There was more to the story or at least, more than she was letting on. There was something else hidden in her eyes and I searched them trying to figure it out for myself but it was like she had her emotions on a tight leash and I couldn't read them.

"What aren't you telling me?" I asked and she couldn't meet my eyes. "Did he say something to you? Did he do something to you?"

"He wouldn't dare," a small smile grew on her lips as she spoke.

It isn't pride or anything, Christine is one of the best fighters that I know and there isn't a werewolf alive that I know who can best her except for our trainer, he is the palace's official general and trainer. He is the fastest. and strongest wolf I have ever come across. I was honestly terrified of him the first time I met him.

"What aren't you telling me Christine?"

She sighed and looked me deep in the eye, "I know you're upset with him. and I know that he hurt you. But the man who came looking for you did not look

like h could hurt a fly.”

“Are you saying I’m lying?”

“No,” she said quickly and she looked offended that I would even suggest that.

“What I am saying is that there has to be some kind of explanation to this. He is either an amazing liar or he truly made a single mistake and he wants to fix it. At the end of the day, it is your choice because you’re the one who is going to spend the rest of your life mated to him or not.”