

The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 81-85

Chapter 81

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

"You're out early," I began slowly as I got out of the water. "I thought it would take at least another half hour."

"It would have if you were still there," I cocked my head to the side. "I was going easy on him because of you, Camilla. I only needed five minutes before he agreed to give me a name in exchange for a night of rest." I was more shocked than horrified. I knew Ryker was brutal and feared but I didn't know it was this bad. He took a step closer to me. "Are you scared of me?"

I shook my head and I saw him smile.

He reached out with the intention of touching me but he noticed the blood on his hands and pulled away. "I should get cleaned up."

I nodded in understanding and stepped away from the tub. I was almost by the door when I realized I had another question. I heard him pulling off his clothes so I didn't turn back.

"The name he gave you- what happens now?"

"Now, we spend the night with our daughters. Tomorrow, we go and find him."

"What if he runs before then?"

"Trust me, he won't."

It wasn't until morning that I understood why he was so sure that the man would not run. I found that he was another trusted guard in the palace. I could not understand how Frederick had managed to get these people to turn on the crown. It was both annoying and heart-breaking because I was not sure who I could trust anymore.

By morning, out was obvious that we were weeding out traitors and about five people disappeared from the palace. It wasn't just guards who disappeared but maids too. A hunt had to be put out for them and according to the law, it was death on sight. I hated it but there was not much I could do about it. They had made their choice and I was not above the law.

The two men were still in the dungeons and Ryker was busy with them while I tried to create some semblance of calm in the palace because everyone was freaking out over the knowledge that there were spies. The

truth was that I was worried too but I had to remain calm. I met with the elders who dove into a self-righteous speech about how weeding out the spies was the right task which I found weird considering the fact that they were against it in the beginning.

I could only take five minutes of it before I turned to them with boredom in my eyes. "Are you going to sit here all day and sing your praises or do you have a ctual information that can help?"

There was a minute of shocked silence followed by mumbling before they stood to their feet and walked out. As soon as they left, I buried my head in my hands and muttered a small curse. I just needed a few seconds to myself before my next meeting with the spies to figure out what to do about the tunnels. I had completely forgotten about them until the head of the spies sent a message informing me that they were done exploring and mapping out the tunnels.

There was a small knock on the door followed by Christine poking her head in. "Is it alright if I come in?" I waved her in and she smiled as she shut the door behind her. "Before you ask, Aurora is fast asleep and Audrey is doing her lessons."

I couldn't help but smile softly at how well she knew me. The question had been at the tip of my tongue. "Thank you."

It wasn't just for easing my worries, it was because Christine had been my anchor during everything. She

didn't have to help me out with my kids every day or pick up where I slacked off but she did so without complain and I was eternally grateful for that. I knew if I tried to say anything more than a 'thank you' she would have picked offense.

As if she understood, she smiled and placed a hand on my shoulder. "It was no big deal. Now, Ryker asked me to sit in with you at the meeting with the spies. He is running a bit behind schedule because they found a few of the runaways."

"You don't have to," I began but she shot me a hard look and I went silent.

"You know that Ryker will not take no for an answer and frankly neither will I."

I laughed because I knew it was true so I stopped protesting and allowed – he sit down while the representatives of the spies walked in. They laid out their mapping of the tunnels and my eyes widened when I saw just how large and complicated it was. It looked like one giant maze and I knew it would take years to know it from memory.

"Are you sure?" I asked and the one closest to me—a female- nodded.

"We mapped it out from different entrances just to be sure, this is it. We also labeled it so you know where everything is. It is a huge network and it leads under the castle and out of it. It was adventurous if I were to say so myself."

I stared at the map and carefully rolled it up then placed it in my lap. "What would you suggest that we do?"

The spies looked shocked. They cast each other wary looks before turning back to me. "I'm not sure that I heard you right, your majesty."

"You did. You are the ones who had to explore the tunnels for weeks. What do you think is best?"

"I don't know," she began unsure. "Sealing them up would be the safest option but," she trailed off but I gestured for her to continue. "The tunnels are not general knowledge. As it stands, only the royal

family and the spies know about it. It could be useful in the case of an emergency evacuation. It would be a shame for the tunnels to go to waste.”

“That is true,” one of her colleagues cut in, “but what happens if it gets out? The tunnels are so quiet that unless you are directly next to a wall

when a sound is made, you will not hear it. It is a huge risk.

□□

The woman wanted to respond but I held up a hand to stop both of them. I had heard all I needed to and I was already aware of what I wanted to do, I just wanted to hear from them. I turned to Christine and cocked my head to the side. She knew what I was asking.

“I agree with her,” she began slowly. “It might be important later.”

“Then it is settled,” I saw Christine and the spy woman smile. “Breathe no word of this to anyone. Make sure no copies of this map were made. If anyone is found talking about this, they will be charged with treason and face death. Am I clear?”

“Yes, your majesty.”

your

I nodded and they all filed out of the room. As soon as they left, I turned to Christine and handed her the map of the tunnels. “Keep this safe with you. If it is left in the palace vaults then there are too many

unpredictable. Create a fake one and put it in the palace vaults in case someone decides to use it.”

Her eyes widened. “Are you sure?”

“If anyone is ever going to use the tunnels without our knowledge, we might as well make sure that they don’t succeed. Can you do this?”

She nodded and gently took it out of my hands. "I will make sure no one but me knows where it is."

Once that was done, I left in search of Ryker. I made my way towards the dungeons but was told that he had already left. I was confused as to why he would leave and not come looking for me. The confusion got even worse when I realized that he was not in our room. I began to worry when I tried his mind link and realized that I could not reach him.

I went out searching for him making sure to ask the guards but nobody had seen him. It was like he had disappeared from the surface of the earth. I forced myself to keep calm as I walked through the halls of the palace in vain. It took almost one hour before I felt a tug in the mate bond. It felt like confusion and worry but I knew it wasn't mine. I allowed it consume me and lead me out of the palace doors.

I found myself walking through the gardens until I got to the edge of the forest. It led me to a small stream and that was where I found Ryker. He was shirtless with his back to me and I saw his shirt lying on the floor stained with blood. I took slow steps towards him and he didn't notice my presence until I accidentally stepped on a twig. His head turned in an instant and for a split second, I saw a flash of the predator that everyone was terrified of before his eyes softened upon realizing who I was.

"I was searching for you," I spoke softly as I took the spot next to him. I reached out for his hand but he wouldn't let me hold it and I realized that it was because although he had tried to wash off the blood, his palms were still red. "I don't mind."

"I do."

"What's wrong, Ryker?" I asked and he shrugged. There was a look in his eyes that I couldn't decipher. "You could at least try talking to me."

"It's been a while since I have had to hurt anyone," he sounded like he was speaking more into the wind than to me. "I forgot how powerful it could feel. There is a rush that comes from having someone's life in your hands. It is addictive."

I didn't quite understand the appeal so I just listened.

"It brings a rush with it, your blood is rushing in your ears and you feel untouchable."

"So what's the problem?"

He turned to me. "Nothing, I just needed a second to calm myself before coming to you. If I didn't-"

He trailed off and that was when I realized what the expression in his eyes was- want. It was so intense that it threatened to knock me off my feet. All I could do was stare and swallow deeply. Ryker reached out and tucked a strand of my hair behind my ears. He grimaced when he looked down at his hands on my skin and tried to pull it away but I stopped him by grabbing it.

"Camilla," his voice was hoarse. "I don't think you should be touching me right now."

"Why not?" he tried to pull away again.

"I can't be gentle with you right now."

"I don't want gentle."

Chapter 82

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

He let out a groan and muttered something that sounded suspiciously like 'thank the goddess' as he kissed me- claimed was a more appropriate term for what he did. His hand cupped the back of my head to angle it just the way he wanted. I was practically helpless against him because I couldn't keep up with the pace he was setting. It was different but it was exhilarating at the same time.

He pulled me into his lap so I was straddling him. I landed directly over his erection and I let out a strangled moan which Ryker swallowed by slipping his tongue into my mouth. He devoured every inch of my mouth as his tongue explored me. His hand moved from my head to grip my hips and roll it directly over his in slow and torturous strokes. I was a moaning mess in his lap but I wanted more. My dress was too thick and it didn't allow for me to feel every

inch of him.

As if he were thinking the same thing, he reached down for the neckline of my dress and ripped it apart in one clean move. I let out a gasp and pulled back to look down at my exposed chest. Ryker pushed my dress off my shoulders leaving me in just my corset and under skirt. It was not the most sensual thing but he looked at me as if I were his favorite treat. Before I could speak, he reached out and ripped my corset the same way he did with my dress.

This time, he didn't push it off my body before he leaned down and took my nipple into his mouth. His mouth was warm and it had my head titling back especially when he grazed his teeth over it and bit down hard enough to make my vision blur. There was something erotic about the boundary between pain and pleasure. It was exhilarating and it stuck a cord in me that I didn't know existed.

I didn't notice when he lay me on the ground and pulled down my skirt in one quick move. He sat on his knees and began working the buttons on his shirt. "I want to taste you so bad and I want your mouth on my co ck but I feel like I am going to die if I don't get inside of you right now."

"I want you too," I moaned unable to keep the pleasure out of my voice. I was already wet, I didn't need him to do anything else but get inside of me.

I watched him shed his clothes and he settled between my thighs. He leaned down to press a soft kiss to my neck. The bite from the grass was at contrast with the softness of his kiss. He ran his hands down my body before coming to settle at my waist.

"You know that I love you right," he began and I hummed not knowing why he suddenly said it. "Good, I want you to remember that because for a second, it might feel like I don't."

I was about to ask what he meant by that but he suddenly flipped me over and ran his hands down my spine so he could position me just the way he wanted. It wasn't the most comfortable position to be arched down against the grass but when I felt the head of his co ck tease my entrance, all my discomfort was forgotten and I pushed my a*s back into him.

Ryker moaned and gripped my hips tight. "Do that again, f**k." I repeated the action swallowing the head of his co ck but he pulled out. "Not yet, baby, I need to know that you want it."

"I want it," the words left my lips before I even realized they had.

He leaned down so his lips were by my ear. "Beg for it. Beg me to fill you up with my c ock. Beg me to make you cu m, Camilla."!

Hi words had blood rushing to my ears. I felt i ke I was going to explode from the pleasure wracking through me. I knew that the moment he entered me, I was going to explode around his co ck. I moaned and tried to move but his

hands were firmly holding my hips. He knew what I wanted but he wasn't going to give it to me until I did what he asked. "Please," I begged unable to stop the crack in my voice. "I am begging you, Ryker, I will go crazy if you don't-"

The words were barely out of my mouth before he entered me in one quick thrust. My eyes rolled into the back of my head as my orgasm wracked through me. Ryker hissed through his teeth as he fought to not follow soon after.

"You feel so good clenched around my cock," his voice was hoarse from restraint. "You're so f**king tight, baby."

He didn't wait for me to recover from my orgasm before he started moving again. I had barely come down from the high and I was climbing that peak of pleasure again as Ryker f**ked me relentlessly. His hand wrapped around my hair in a makeshift ponytail and he used that to keep me just the way he wanted as he brutally assaulted me.

I couldn't match his thrusts so I just lay there as he moved inside of me. I could feel his moves becoming jerkier and I knew he was reaching his release. He reached around me to pinch my clit and I exploded just as he came. I would have fallen to the ground if it weren't for his hand holding me up. The force of my orgasm was like nothing I had ever experienced before. I was vaguely aware of when Ryker pulled out of me. I expected him to let go of me now that he was calm, but he pulled me close to him and stroked my hair affectionately.

"You're so good to me," he murmured as he placed a kiss on my hair. "How do you feel?"

"Good," I didn't have to think about it before I responded. "I am a little sore though."

"Let's get you back inside so you can take a bath and I can take care of you properly."

"You kind of ruined my dress," I mumbled and he at least had the decency to look a little sheepish.

His eyes went unfocused for a second and I knew he was mind linking someone. He rose to his feet once he was done and pulled his clothes back on. I watched him out of the corner of my eye unable to shake the thoughts of what we had done. I never would have considered outdoor sex before but it was something I genuinely enjoyed.

A few minutes after Ryker was dressed, I heard Christine's voice. Ryker went to retrieve the dress from her and I let out a sigh of relief when I realized she had brought a casual dress and not something for court. Ryker helped me into it and we walked into the palace hand in hand. All anyone needed was one look at us to know what we were up to but I didn't care. I wasn't ashamed of

having sex with my mate.

When we got to the room, he all but pulled the dress off me and led me into the bathroom. I was shocked when he sat at the edge of the tub and gently washed me. I couldn't help but stare with my mouth wide open. If he noticed, he didn't care and went on to washing my hair. His touch was so calming and relaxing that I almost fell asleep in the tub when his hands buried themselves into my hair. He helped me out and dried me off but wouldn't give me clothes to wear.

"Are you still sore?" he asked and I nodded slowly wondering why he asked. "It'll be gone by tomorrow. I'm just not used to that level of intensity."

Ryker didn't seem to be paying attention to anything I said as he led me towards the bed. He lay me gently against it and I watched him strip off his clothes from outside and exchange them for more comfortable pajamas.

"They say eating before bed is not advisable but I find that dessert before bed makes for a very restful night," as he settled between my thighs, I realized exactly what he was planning and my cheeks heated. "Don't you agree, Camilla?"

I opened my mouth but no words would come out. He chuckled when he realized I was speechless. He leaned down until his beard was brushing my inner thigh and I had to bite down on my bottom lip to prevent any sounds from escaping. He raised a brow when he noticed,

"Good luck keeping silent, I am going to make sure that I draw out every sound possible from those "

""

It was more of a promise than anything and as soon as he had said it, his mouth dived onto my pussy. He ate me out in slow and languid strokes that had me fighting the blanket and biting down on my bottom lip in an attempt to muffle the sounds. I tried to clamp my legs shut but his hands held onto my thighs and forced them as wide open as they would go.

*His pace was such a stark contrast to how he had f**ked me in the woods and it was more intense when he kept eye contact with me the entire time. Each time I tried to look away, he would graze my clit in a silent warning. It didn't take long before I was writhing underneath him and he teased my opening with one finger.*

"Come for me, baby," he pushed his finger in and sucked on my clit simultaneously and that was all I needed to explode all around his tongue. Stars danced around my vision and my body shook with the force of my orgasm.

He lapped up everything I had to offer and by the time I had come down from my high, he climbed over my body and kissed me deeply. I could taste myself on his tongue but I didn't mind because it was perfect.

When he pulled back, I smiled up at him in a daze. I cast a glance towards the window where I could see the sun beginning to set. "It's still early and I think we have a few meetings for the day."

He made a sound deep in his throat but didn't make any attempt to move. Instead, he settled in bed next to me and pulled me to his chest. "I believe we can take an early day. What do you think?"

I smiled. "I think that's a great idea."

Chapter 83

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Over the next few days, we managed to weed out a lot of Frederick's men. A few ran away and the spies were able to track some of them but others escaped into the woods. The entire town was on high alert because we hadn't heard a word from Frederick. It was unusual of him to remain silent while all of this was happening unless he had some sort of end game in sight and the fact that I had no idea what it was scared me. Ryker tried to assure me that we would be ready no matter what he chose to do but I couldn't find it in myself to believe that. Frederick had shocked us time and time again, I wouldn't put it past him to do something that would throw us off our balance. We had put guards at every possible entrance and even in the tunnels to ensure that a surprise attack wouldn't come from there.

The elders weren't helpful either because they were content sitting there and shifting blame onto everyone but themselves. I wondered how my mother managed to deal with them for so many years. I wasn't sure if I would be able to deal with them for as long as she did without losing my mind first.

"Your majesty," I was snapped out of my thoughts and gave a curt and cold smile to the elder who had spoken. "The townsfolk have been speaking and they are all worried- we all are. I was thinking of the best way to do damage control and maybe another appearance-"

A sharp look from Ryker and I was enough to make him fall silent. His cheeks heated pink and he bowed his head. Sometimes I wondered what they did to become elders. It was clear that they were not brilliant most times. Was it because they were old? Was it a thing they inherited from their parents?

Whatever it was, it was clearly not working.

"Do you have a secret dream to see me dead?" I asked and no one spoke. Ryker tensed at my choice of words and although I felt bad for putting him in that position, I felt like I had to talk about it. "I don't understand why else you would be so eager to throw me out to the wolves when I almost died the last time."

"The people respond better when they know you are not as terrified as they are. It was a suggestion, your majesty."

"A rather foolish one," Ryker shot back. "If appearances matter so much then why don't you make the appearance? Everyone knows you speak on behalf of the Queen." When he bowed his head in shame, Ryker leaned back into his chair. "Is there anyone else who wants to give foolish ideas or are you all out of it?"

No one dared to respond and I couldn't help but smirk softly.

Ever since he interrogated the moles, everyone developed a newfound level of respect and fear for him. It was amusing to see the same people who had looked at him as an intruder now look at him with respect and fear. I was proud of him especially in cases like this. It was factual that people respected a man more than a woman and it usually annoyed me but lately, I had found an appreciation for it since the man they respected the most happened to be my mate.

The tension in the room was brewing and I could practically smell the fear coming off from the elders and the annoyance seeping from Ryker. I placed a hand on my mate's arm mentally signaling him to calm down. He took a deep breath but there was still some rigidity to his shoulders. "The most important thing for now is to ensure that everyone is well fed and catered for. Inform the people to be on the lookout because -Frederick is not to be messed with. Be careful and report anything suspicious. That is all."

The words were barely out of my mouth before they rose from their seats and filed out. I rotated my shoulders trying to get the ache out of them. Sitting on the same chair for hours had developed an ache in my shoulders that wouldn't go away.

"Are you alright?" Ryker asked and I nodded. He narrowed his eyes at me in disbelief and I shook my head.

"Everything is fine, I just wish this would be over. Frederick has terrorized us for too long and for what? I don't think the throne is worth all of that"

"That is easy to say from where you're sitting," I turned to him and he immediately raised his hands in mock surrender. "Allow me to explain first."

"I'm listening."

"You have the backing of the kingdom, you have the crown, you have a family but he has nothing. All his life, he knew he was the son of a king but he lived like a servant and in comes this girl out of nowhere. She is the king's lost daughter and she is celebrated. She is given a crown and she rules. No one cared that she was raised by omegas, no one cared that she knew nothing about being a Queen. She was celebrated and welcomed but he wouldn't be. It is easy to get jealous."

I raised a brow. "it is funny how the tables have turned. A few weeks ago, I

was the one defending him while you were ready to crucify him, now look at you.”

“I’m not defending him. I can understand where he is coming from without necessarily agreeing with it and that is all I wanted from you. Make no mistake about it, his actions are wrong but his emotions are not,” I opened my mouth to speak but he cut me off. “I think that’s enough talk about Frederick for one day, don’t you think?” I couldn’t have agreed more. I stood to my feet with his help. “We have two daughters we haven’t spent a complete day with in a while, what do you think?”

We ended up in the palace gardens with the girls. Audrey was excited and beaming from ear to ear. Aurora didn’t really understand what was going on seeing as she was a baby but I chose to believe that she was also happy because she had her cute gummy smile and she made content gurgling sounds every few seconds.

It was an intimate family picnic and I watched while Ryker and Audrey chased butterflies around. My heart felt like it was going to explode in my chest. I couldn’t help but think back at what Ryker had said and feel bad for Frederick because he would never be able to experience this if he kept attacking. I didn’t want to feel pity for him especially since he tried to kill me but couldn’t help it. His life was like a tragic play and although I would have liked to believe that if I lived the same, I would have turned out different- I wasn’t sure.

”

“Mummy,” Audrey rushed up to me. “Look at this.” I glanced up and right there on her pointer finger was a beautiful yellow butterfly. “Daddy said it likes me.” “It really does. I’ve never had a butterfly do that for me before,” I exclaimed and she giggled trying her best to make sure the butterfly didn’t move. “I think that butterfly is your best friend now.”

Her eyes widened. “Can I keep him in my room? I promise to take care of him and feed him.”

You can’t honey,” I said slowly and her face fell. “Butterflies need to be outside so they can spread their wings and have fun. You wouldn’t like it if someone locked you in a stuffy cage, would you?”

She shook her head with a resigned sigh. “Will he come play with me another day?”

“I hope so.”

She looked like she wanted to say more but the sound of heavy running interrupted us. The butterfly took off immediately and Aurora started to squirm in my arms. I immediately rushed to my feet in an attempt to rock her back to sleep when Steven and a few other guards rushed up to us. The panic on their faces had my shoulders tensing.

“What’s wrong?” I asked but they didn’t respond immediately. They went to

work packing up the things we had laid out and I watched in confusion. Ryker was immediately at my side holding onto Audrey's hand for dear life. "Will someone tell me what is happening?"

Steven finally looked up. "We have to get you to safety, now."

I wanted to know more but I remembered I had kids with me so I forced down my questions and followed him. The guards dispersed into different directions and as we walked into the palace, I was shocked by the utter chaos it was in. People were rerunning around and there was so much noise. Aurora started screaming in my arms and I tried to quiet her down while following Steven. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Ryker carry Audrey and whisper some words into her ears.

Steven led us down the stairs towards a large painting and to my shock, he pushed down on the painting and it swung open to reveal a large room with chairs, snacks and Christine. Christine rushed over to pull me into a hug and she took Aurora and Audrey. As soon as she was out of earshot, I turned to Steven.

"What the hell is happening?"

"Frederick and his men launched a surprise attack. It started in the lower town. Apparently, the guards stationed there were spies of his. They are quickly making their way to the palace and we need to ensure that the royal family is safe."

"How long do we have until they get here?"

"Five minutes tops."

I cursed. "I could help out with my powers and delay them. How secure is this safe room?"

"It is the best you can think of. No one knows about it except for us and the elders. The elders don't even know exactly where it is."

"Good," it was Ryker who spoke and before I could process it, he pushed me into the safe room. I tried to step out but he blocked the entrance with his body.

"What the hell are you doing?" I whisper yelled and he smiled.

"I'm keeping you safe," he leaned down to kiss me and despite being pissed at him, I couldn't help but lean into the kiss. He pulled away abruptly. "I hope you can forgive me."

Before I could say anything else, he slammed the door shut.

Chapter 84

RYKER'S P.O.V

I could feel Camilla's annoyance surging through our bond and it took everything for me to pull that wall between us down. I knew that she wanted to help bu

t I wasn't willing to risk her safety. She was safest behind those walls and if that meant gaining her anger then it was a good deal. I could feel Steven's eyes on me but I ignored him and turned on my heels.

The guards and soldiers were already preparing with their weapons. I had very little interest in actually fighting a battle but if that was what Frederick wanted then so be it. As soon as the soldiers saw me, all eyes went on me and everyone went quiet.

"The important thing is to make sure they don't get into the palace," I reminded them. "Meet them as far away from here as possible. The guards will remain here in case something happens but remember that under no circumstance is anyone supposed to breach the palace walls. Defend it with your life, are we clear?"

There was a chorus of yes, your majesty before everyone dispersed. Steven kept close to me and I wasn't sure if it was because he was used to it or if there was another reason. He explained that they were coming from the East so majority of the soldiers gathered that way. The closer, we got, the more I could hear them. From what I could hear, he had a substantial army with him.

I stood in front waiting for them to arrive. When they did, Frederick raised his hands and they all stopped. I looked through the men around him and I saw a few familiar faces but I noticed that there were also rogues present: I couldn't help but wonder how he got so many rogues to agree to fight for him. He must have promised them something but the question was what.

"I didn't think would come out to welcome me," Frederick began with a small smirk on his face. "Where is

your sister? How is she doing? I was expecting to see her too. I may or may not have another special surprise for her."

my

dear

I knew he was trying to goad me into making the first move and as much as I wanted to rip his face off, I had to force myself into silence. Camilla wasn't here and he was never going

to get to her- that was what mattered. Once I was calm, I looked up at him once more and I saw his smile waver from my lack of response.

“This is your last chance, Frederick, call this thing off. You don’t want to die like this.”

He scoffed. “This is my birthright; the road was opened for me. I was supposed to be king but Camilla came out of nowhere and snatched it out from under my nose.”

“What are you even talking about?”

“Haven’t you ever wondered how she just managed to go missing?” he asked and the entire forest went silent. I knew what he was implying but I wasn’t going to believe it until he said it. “My mother did everything to ensure that I had a clear path to the throne and it was working until she came back.”

“Your mother took her away, didn’t she?”

He smirked. “That’s enough talking, I will get my throne, one way or another and the way I see it, I’ve already won.”

“Why is that?”

“Because, you stepped right into my trap.”

Before I could ask what he meant, my world exploded. We were thrown back by the force of the explosion and I was lucky enough to not be at the forefront. My ears were ringing as I struggled to get to my feet and I saw Frederick’s men attacking. It took me a second to realize that the explosion wasn’t to hurt us but rather to throw us off balance. It was only by luck I was able to deflect the strike of the rogue who attacked me because my arms felt like lead.

I looked around trying to find Frederick but it was almost like he had disappeared. I muttered a small curse knowing he was heading for the palace. I wanted to go after him but it was like he had instructed his followers to crowd us so that we couldn’t follow him.

A rogue rushed me and I quickly side stepped and stabbed him with my sword. I saw Steven battling off two men and I

rushed to his defense. Once both were handled, I dropped my voice to a whisper.

“Cover me,” I instructed and he nodded then I darted off in the direction of the palace. The few people who noticed tried to stop us but Steven was quick to cut them down.

As we got close to the palace, I couldn't help but know that he wouldn't walk in through the front doors. I would have followed into the tunnels but I didn't know them as well as he did, they were his territory and it would be a sure recipe into dying quickly. I mind linked the spies and instructed them to assemble in front of all the tunnel entrances while I scoured the palace in case he had somehow already slipped in.

Thirty minutes in and he was still nowhere to be seen. I had received a mind link saying that the main battle was already over and his men had been neutralized. That didn't give me as much comfort as I needed it to. Steven was still by my side like the trusted soldier that he was.

“Where do you think he is?” I asked and for once, he was completely speechless. “This doesn't make any sense, why would he leave his army. Unless he knew that they were going to lose. He had to have known.”

“Maybe the army wasn't his game plan, maybe he just wanted to get into the palace.”

“If you were Frederick, where is the first place you would go?”

He hesitated before speaking. “If I knew I was going to lose, I wouldn't attack in the first place. He wants to be king but he has to know that he can't.”

I facepalmed at how stupid I was. I didn't know how I didn't even think about it. “I know where he is, come with me.”

I didn't wait for Steven as I ran towards the throne room. It was the only place that made sense considering that the one thing Frederick wanted was to be recognized as king. As soon as I opened the door, I saw him seated on the throne almost bored. I held out a hand to Steven and he turned to me in shock and confusion.

"Stay outside," I told him and although it looked like he didn't want to agree, he did as I asked. Once the door was shut, I made my way into the room until I was standing in front of the throne. "I should have known you would be here."

"It did take you longer than I expected to find me. I was beginning to get bored."

He sat up straighter on the throne and I noticed that he had a knife in his hands but from the way he held onto it, I doubted he knew how to actually use it.

"This doesn't have to end this way," I began slowly.

If it were up to me, I would have just killed him and been done with it but I knew that if Camilla were here, she would have offered him the chance for redemption. She would want her half brother to have a chance and I was willing to give him that chance but something told me he wouldn't take it.

As expected, he sneered at me. "I don't want your pity or sympathy. I want what was mine by birth. I want what I was owed."

"You are not the heir to the throne."

"I am his firstborn son."

"What makes you think that?" I asked making him fall silent. "He could have easily had another child with someone else."

"It is not my problem if they are too weak to rise up and take the throne."

"You cannot have it."

"Then I will die trying."

He charged at me with the knife but all it took was one carefully planned maneuver and I had his own knife at his throat. A little pressure from me and he was going to die. I could tell the exact moment that awareness dawned on him because he slackened in my hold.

"This is the only chance at redemption that you will be given," I reminded him. I desperately wanted to just slit his throat but I had to remember Camilla. I knew what he did

to her but for some reason, she still had a soft spot for him. "Think about it, Frederick."

"I would rather die," he spat then he pushed me off. I expected him to attack me but to my shock, he lifted his hand and slit his own throat right at the bottom of the throne. I knew that image would be forever burned in my head.

I watched his body slump against the floor and I took a step back so the blood wouldn't seep into my shoes. I called in Steven and he took one look at the scene and grimaced.

"Call someone in to clean it up," I ordered. "But take me to my family first."

We walked back to the painting in silence and as soon as the door opened, I was ambushed by a tiny body. I held Audrey close to my chest wanting a semblance of normalcy with my child before I had to think about what had just happened.

"Did you beat the bad guys, daddy?" she asked and I nodded. How did I tell my daughter that the bad guy was her own uncle. "I knew you could do it."

"Audrey," Christine called out. "I think we should give your daddy and mummy some time."

Audrey reluctantly released me and I saw Christine offer me a small smile of encouragement before she left. Steven disappeared with them leaving just Camilla and I. I didn't need to be a mind reader to know that Camilla was pissed at me. I reached out to her but she shook her head and I had to let my hands fall.

"Frederick?" she asked and I sighed.

"He's dead, killed himself in front of the throne that he so desperately wanted."

"What about his men?"

"I assume they're all dead too. If any are alive, they will be in the dungeons." I waited for a response but all she did was hum. "Camilla, I'm sorry."

“Are you?” she asked and I fell silent. “You locked me in here without a second thought.”

“I was protecting you.”

“If you were then we would have spoken about it and come to an agreement,” she all but yelled. “You made a decision without me, that is what I am pissed about.”

Chapter 85

RYKER’S P.O.V

Camilla was getting on my last nerves.

Initially, she was angry with me and I understood that but I thought her anger would die down after twenty-four hours. I was right about that but I didn’t count on her giving me the silent treatment. She slept in the same bed with me but that was where it ended. She wouldn’t look at me and preferred to spend her time reading her father’s journals. Whenever I initiated the conversation, she would give me one worded answers or just outright ignore me. I understood why she was angry but it was beginning to grate on my nerves.

We were to have a meeting in the town square to inform the people that everything was fine and she was yet to look at me. I tried to get her attention a few times especially when I noticed that she was anxious about it but she was more concerned with ignoring me. Five minutes before the meeting, I grabbed her arm and turned her to face me. She didn’t protest but I could see her searching for a way out.

“Quit it,” I told her and she raised a brow. “Don’t you think it is time that you dropped the attitude?”

“What attitude?” she asked and I resisted the urge to growl at her.

“I get that you’re upset but I will not apologize for protecting you. If I had asked you before tossing you in here, would you have agreed?” she stayed silent but we all knew the answer. “The

way I see it, we can sit here and fight about this or we can come to the conclusion that neither of us agrees with the other's choices and move on."

"That isn't how these things work," she frowned.

"Ask me if I care," I shot back.

"I am the Queen and I have powers that can help. It looks weird if I just hide away during a battle"

"No one gives a shit about your powers. You are the Queen and that means you have to be protected at all times. Do you think your mother ever went into battle?" I asked and she frowned. "We have to talk to the people in less than two minutes and I am not going out there pretending like we are the picturesque couple when you won't even speak to me."

"Whatever," she rolled her eyes but I could see a small smile playing on her lips.

I didn't get the chance to respond because one of the guards came to tell us that everything was ready. I clasped Camilla's hand feeling relieved to finally be touching my mate after over a day. I could feel her anxiety as we made our way out to the raised platform. The square was even fuller than the first time.

"Can

you

address them?" she asked via the mind link. "I don't think I can do it."

"Are you okay?" I asked because she sounded like she was on the verge of throwing up.

She ignored my question. "Please, Ryker."

"Of course."

She broke off the link first and I turned to the crowd that was staring in silence before clearing my throat.

"We normally wouldn't do this but your Queen thought that it would be for the best if you heard it from us seeing as you had the misfortune of witnessing the direct attack from Frederick," I paused to make sure that

I had everyone's attention. "The threat has been dealt with you may return to your normal activities. The stream has officially been treated and is now safe to drink from. Life may return to normal."

I took a step back to signify that I was done when I heard a voice. "Is that it? Are we just supposed to move on and forget that the King had a child outside of the mating bond? What if there is another one? What if that one comes to claim the throne? What happens then?"

I felt Camilla tighten her hold on me and I squeezed her hand to let her know that I had her back and I would handle it. I

A

tried to search for the source of the voice but I couldn't find it. I knew it was a young person considering the pitch and tone and if were to give an estimate, I would say that she was around Camilla's age or younger.

"What the late king did or did not do should be the least of our worries. If he has another child then we will deal with it as the situation arises. There is no need bothering over hypotheticals or crying over spilled milk. We cannot take back his actions, all we can do is learn from them and prepare accordingly," I made sure to infuse a warning tone into my voice to signify that I was not going to entertain any questions. Thankfully, everyone stayed quiet so I nodded. "If that is all, then this meeting is over."

I pulled Camilla behind the curtains as quickly as possible and the moment we were away from the public's eye, she allowed her façade drop. Her shoulders drooped and she ran her hand over her face in obvious frustration and tiredness. She placed her head against my shoulder and I rubbed small circles over her back.

"They're right," she murmured to only my hearing. "What if he has another child? Can we really handle another Frederick?"

"I don't think he had another," I was partly lying for her sake but a part of me believed it. "If he did, he would have journaled it and so far, we have seen nothing. I think a part of him truly loved Eva and keeping the child with her wa

s his way of holding onto that.” I could tell that she wasn’t fully convinced so I sighed. “Let’s forget about your father for a few minutes. We won and I think we deserve a vacation, don’t you?”

She let out a small groan. “I could definitely use one of those.”

The drive home was long and I wanted nothing more than to just lie in bed with my family by my side.. I missed my little girls and although Camilla and I were always together, we had barely spent any time with each other. I missed when life was simpler and although I knew I should be grateful for what I was given, I couldn’t help but miss when I was just Alpha and didn’t have as much responsibilities on my shoulders.

Christine was waiting for us in the dining room. She was having lunch with the girls and she effortlessly slipped in. I took Aurora from her and cuddled her close to my chest. There was something about her baby scent that calmed me. Audrey’s chatter filled the room and I couldn’t help but smile to myself. It was moments like these that made me love my role because if Camilla wasn’t who she was then I would never have met her and I would never have met my girls.

We were in the middle of our meal when one of the guards arrived and whispered to me that there was a visitor at the door. I stood with Aurora still in my arms and went out to see who it was. I could feel Camilla’s inquisitive gaze on me but I assured her that everything was alright before leaving. I wasn’t expecting any visitors so I was shocked when I got out and saw the people standing at the palace doors.

I shook my head as my smile threatened to split my face wide open. Damien laughed before embracing me. He had grown out his hair a little more and he looked tired from the travel and probably the stress of the pack work but he looked the same. Standing behind him was my sister and I couldn’t hold back my smile as she wrapped her arms around my torso. She had grown so much over the past year.

As soon as she pulled away from me, she reached out for the infant in my hands. “I haven’t seen this little one yet. She is so beautiful.”

I watched her fawn over my daughter while I turned to Damien. “It isn’t that I am not happy to see you but why are you here?”

I loved my bestfriend and I loved my sister, I knew Camilla would be happy to see them too but there was a huge conflict of interest namely Christine. In the time I had known her, she had become like a sister to me as well and the last thing I wanted to do was cause her more pain. She didn't speak about it and I didn't want to push but there was so much that I wanted to know.

"I heard about what happened," Damien said oblivious to the fact that I was currently thinking of ways to avoid an explosion. "I wanted to come earlier but I needed to make sure things were settled back at the pack. How is Camilla? I also heard about the poison."

"She is great but Damien, you know why this is a bad idea."

1

He let out a deep sigh. "Look, I understand that you need to protect your mate and she is invested in this but I just need all of you to please stay out of it."

"She isn't invested, Damien. This concenis every doing."

"I do, you just have to trust me."

"You know I trust you but-"

I was cut off by a small squeal of "Uncle Damien."

Audrey brushed past me and threw herself into Damien's arms. He embraced her with a wide smile but I couldn't share in their joy. If Audrey was here then it meant Camilla was and so was- I turned around and Christine stood there with a mix of emotions swirling in her eyes as she took in the scene.

Camilla was standing next to her cousin and she looked like she was unsure of whether she should reach out to her or flee from the scene and I felt the same way. It was almost like stepping into a war zone. There were so many raw emotions that it almost felt like I was intruding on something special.

Riley was the first to notice her and she tried to be nice with a small smile. "Hi, Christine, you look good."

Christine took one look at Riley who was still holding Aurora before turning to me and I was almost thrown back by the intense betrayal in her eyes. She didn't say a word as she turned on her heels and walked off.