

## The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 87

Chapter 87

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

I hated being stuck in the center of things. I loved having Riley around, she was my friend and she was Ryker's sister, Damein was his best friend but Christine was my cousin, she was the only person who I knew for a fact had my back in the palace. I didn't want to pick a side but I knew that in a situation like this, I would inevitably need to. I wanted to go after her when she first ran off, but Ryker told me not to and after he returned, he made me promise to stay out of it but I wasn't sure how well I could do that.

Over the last two days, she had become a shell of herself. She barely spoke to anyone and would mainly just stay locked up in a room with the children. If she saw Damien, she went the other way which meant that she didn't join us for any meals. I couldn't help but be relieved when I found out that they were leaving in two days. If it meant bringing back a semblance of peace to the palace then I was willing to take it.

I was aware that Riley and Damien came to ask Ryker's blessing for their mating ceremony but nothing had been said regarding that. When Damien suggested a small intimate outing, I knew it had something to do with that. I was torn on how to tell Christine about it when the door to the dining room opened and she walked in. She had her head held high and she walked like she owned the place. It was the first time I had seen her in over twenty-four hours.

"I apologize for my absence the past few days," she spoke aloud as she took her usual seat to my left. I caught her eye and I shot her a questioning look to which she replied with a smile. The smile wasn't there yet but it was an improvement. "We were trying to organize a picnic or some relaxation time at the stream, you should come," Riley began in a more cheerful tone than usual. She had been trying everything in her power to get Christine to like her. I wasn't sure if it was guilt or fear that spurred her to do that but I never bothered to ask.

"I don't think-" Damien began but Christine cut him off.

"If the kids will be there, I will too," she said and I turned to her with wide eyes and a raised brow.

Everyone in the dining room had varying levels of shock on their faces but Christine ignored us all. It was the first time she had initiated contact and I couldn't help but wonder if there was more at play. I waited until breakfast was over before I grabbed her arm and pulled her to a stop. I allowed everyone file out ahead of us before I turned her to face me and crossed my arms over my

chest.

“Camilla,” she began in a warning tone but I ignored her.

“Are you going to tell me what is happening or do I have to keep guessing?” I asked and she sighed. “I just want to know if you’re okay, Christine. You don’t have to do this if it hurts you. No one is going to hold it against you.”

“I will,” her voice was so soft that I wouldn’t have heard her if she was not standing directly in front of me. “I cannot spend the rest of my life avoiding them. The truth is that they will be here. Come hell or high water, they will be involved in your life and Ryker’s. If I don’t get used to seeing them together now then I never will and I will not spend the rest of my life hiding whenever they come around.” “You have the rest of your life to figure that out,” I whispered taking a hold of her hands. “Don’t force yourself into healing when you’re not ready. I’m worried about you.”

She smiled but it didn’t reach her eyes. “I’ll be fine. Call me when you’re about to leave.”

She walked out of the room without a second thought leaving me to wonder what exactly happened overnight to change her mind. I wasn’t the only one wondering because as soon as I walked into our room to change, Ryker was on me with questions. I hated the fact that we were both in the blind and I couldn’t help but feel like this was a recipe for disaster.

When it was time to leave, I didn’t want to call Christine, I was content with leaving her and dealing with her anger later. She must have known that because she was already downstairs when I got there. We split ourselves into two carriages and I panicked when I realized that Christine had to get into the same carriage as them because we were with the children. I saw her façade crack for a second before she suddenly shrugged and just walked inside like it was no big deal. I hated her nonchalant attitude.

We arrived after them due to having to move slower because Aurora was sleeping and I was shocked when I saw Riley and Christine conversing between themselves as they set up the little chairs in front of the stream. Damien was on the other side setting up the food table. For a second, I was convinced that everything could be fine between them but I didn’t know that things were about to go downhill.

The girls sat by the stream dipping our toes in as we took turns carrying Aurora. I sat in the middle of them in case something was to happen while the men chased butterflies with Audrey. It was a fun day and by the time the sun was beginning to set, Damien cleared his throat. If I was paying more attention to them, I would have noticed the look he sent in Riley’s direction or the flush that crept up her cheek. I would have been able to prevent the chaos that was about to happen.

“When we came, we said it was because we heard about what happened to

Camilla,” he began. “While that is partly true, we were already planning to come.”

Damien instantly had everyone’s attention. I sat up straighter and Ryker picked Audrey up to make sure she didn’t run off. Damien looked around and glanced at Christine hesitantly. It hit me what he was about to say and I tried to scream at him not to say anything. I couldn’t just jump in and interrupt him but I wanted him to stop.

“Please stop him,” I said to Ryker via our mind link. “This will break her.”

“I tried, he won’t listen to me. I could order him but that once again defeats the entire purpose. She is going to find out sooner or later.”

“I vote for later.”

“Camilla, you cannot protect people from everything. She needs to know and when is a better time than after a good day? Even if I agreed that she shouldn’t find out, how do you propose I do that? Should I interrupt him or send her off?”

“I don’t want her getting hurt.”

“I know but we have to stay out of this. It is messy and we don’t have all the pieces.”

I didn’t agree with him but I knew he was right, there was nothing I could do to stop Damien. I watched as he held out a hand to Riley. She was holding a sleeping Aurora and she quickly handed her off to me before going to stand next to Damien.

“We wanted to officially invite you to our mating ceremony in a few months,” Riley announced and everyone went pin drop silent.

I held my breath as I waited for Christine’s reaction. She had always been excellent at hiding her emotions so I wasn’t surprised when her face went completely stoic. Nobody dared to breathe for a few seconds until she raised her hands and began to clap.

“Congratulations, I hope you have a long and happy life together,” she said to both of them and I could tell she was being genuine. She offered them a small smile before standing and walking off.

I gave Ryker a look that clearly said ‘I told you so. He put Audrey on the ground and took Aurora from my arms. “Go to her,” he whispered and I nodded.

I gave Riley a hug. “I am happy for you both, truly, I just have to,” she waved me off as if she understood. “I just want you to know that this isn’t about you.” She laughed humorlessly. “Of course it is about me, Camilla, but the truth is that I don’t blame her. I have put myself in her shoes more times than I can count, I would hate me if I were her.”

“She doesn’t hate you.”

Riley looked like she didn’t believe me and although I wanted to stay and

reassure her, my cousin was more important. I dashed off in the direction she had gone and followed her scent to a clearing of trees. I heard sniffing and I found her seated with her back against her tree. She was staring at the setting sun and her nose was red but her eyes welled with unshed tears.

“Did you know that I was supposed to marry for duty?” she asked as I sat next to her. “My mother was your mother’s sister. She died in childbirth and I was taken in as a ward of the palace. The palace shas no use for spares so I was to be in an arranged mating for the betterment of the economy.”

She laughed humorlessly before continuing. “Your mother fought it tooth and nail, do you know why?” I shook my head. “She believed in marrying for love. She was mated to one of the worst mates but she still believed. If she could see me now.”

“She would be proud,” I cut in and Christine turned to me. “If my mother saw you, she would marvel at how strong you are. She loved you like a daughter and Christine, you will marry for love. It might not come the way you think but it will.”

A stray tear leaked from her eyes and I pulled her into a hug. “Thank you for that.”

“You don’t have to thank me,” I smiled but my smile fell the moment I heard a twig cr ack.

We were on our feet in an instant and I looked around. Although I couldn’t see anyone, I couldn’t shake off the feeling thatwe were being watched.

“We should go,” Christine whispered and I couldn’t have agreed more.

We immediately started back on the path towards the palace and as I looked back, I could have sworn that I saw a pair of red eyes staring back at me but the moment I blinked, they were gone.

## **The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 88**

Chapter 88

RYKER’S P.O.V

As soon as the girls left, I saw the guilt in Riley’s expression. I wanted to assure her that she had nothing to worry about but that would have been a lie. Damien comforted her while I balanced my sleeping infant on one hand and began clearing up the picnic. It was a good day but it could have ended better. Damien and Riley came to help but they did so in silence. I could feel the tension in the air and I knew it was only a matter of time before someone broke it.

“Should I have picked a better time?” Damien whispered once Riley was out

of earshot. "I didn't want to hurt her but I figured she was going to find out sooner or later."

"Are you asking because you want a genuine answer or because you want to make yourself feel better?" I asked and he shook his head with a small smile.

"I almost forgot how brutal you could be, Ryker," I glanced at Audrey out of the corner of my eye. She was playing by the stream and I wanted to make sure she didn't run off or get hurt. "I want the truth."

"The truth is that I don't know," he frowned at my response, it was clearly not what he was expecting. "Look, I know better than to comment on something that I don't have the full picture of. Only you know the answer to that question and I think the fact that you're torn up about it tells you everything you need to know."

He wanted to say something but footsteps filled the air. Christine and Camilla returned but I saw an expression in her eyes that had my spine straightening. I quickly called Riley over and handed Aurora over to her. She looked like she had a million questions but I didn't wait to hear them. I walked over to my mate and ran my hands down her shoulders. She gave me a small smile but I could see through her façade. She was shaking and her skin was a bit cold to touch.

"What happened?" I asked but she shook her head. I resisted the urge to growl because I knew it wouldn't help. I dropped my voice so it was soft. "Talk to me, Camilla. You look like you've seen a ghost."

"I thought I saw something in the woods but it was nothing, I blinked and it wasn't there."

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Camilla wasn't easily spooked so her reaction didn't add up to the picture she was trying to paint. I searched her eyes a hint of deception but there was nothing. She had convinced herself that everything was fine. I knew I was not going to get anything out of that conversation so I sighed.

"It doesn't matter anymore, you're fine," I assured her and she allowed herself lean into my arms. She mumbled something incoherent and I kissed her head. I looked over her shoulder and saw Christine staring at us with a longing look that bordered on envious.

I felt bad for her but I knew the last thing she wanted was my pity so I just gave her a nod. She smiled softly and turned away from me. No words were spoken again as we made our way back to the carriages. As we walked, I couldn't help but notice that Christine was the only person walking alone. We put the girls to sleep and as soon as we got to our room, Camilla fell asleep. She didn't even bother changing out of her clothes. I had to slowly take them off while trying not to wake her. I never realized how difficult a

corset was until I had to take it off without ripping it. I couldn't fall asleep because I couldn't help but think about what she had told me. I wasn't sure if I believed her yet about whether or not it was a big deal. It was too late to go looking for the guards in charge of patrolling the forest so I went to the ones guarding our room.

"Find any guards who are willing to do overtime and tell them to patrol the forest," I ordered and although they looked confused by my request, they nodded and rushed off to do as I asked. I knew I was taking a risk by leaving us unprotected but if it meant putting my mind at ease, then I was willing to do it.

I climbed into bed and Camilla snuggled into my side. I smiled when I realized that she was still asleep. Even in her sleep, she reached out for me. The knowledge had my heart beating harder in my chest. I stroked her hair and placed a soft kiss on the center of her head. She made a content noise deep in her throat.

"I love you," she mumbled still asleep.

"I love you, too," I whispered back and finally allowed the sleep to take me. I was almost completely dressed when Camilla finally woke up. She looked confused as to why I was getting dressed early and when I reminded her that it was Damien and Riley's last day, she practically leaped out of bed. We didn't have much planned but we were spending the entire morning with them. Christine had opted out of it and resigned herself to spending time with the children.

Camilla wanted to talk to her first and I used that opportunity to get some quality time with my sister. Since she came, I hadn't spent up to five minutes alone with her and I knew it was because she was avoiding me. I knocked on her door and she opened it without checking. When she saw me, her eyes widened and she swallowed deeply.

"Can I come in?" I asked and I could see her furiously looking for an excuse, I walked past her before she could say anything and took a seat by her dresser. I saw her exhale deeply before finally closing her door.

"I am kind of busy with packing right now. If you can wait a few minutes then maybe-"

"You forget that I lived with you for your entire life," I cut her off. "You probably finished packing two days ago and checked yesterday," the flush on her cheeks assured me that I was right. "Are you done avoiding me?"

"I'm not avoiding you," she mumbled and when I raised a brow, she sighed. "Is it weird that I am happy we are leaving today? I really wanted to spend time with you and Camilla but things with Damien and her-"

"Christine," I interrupted and she flinched as if her name were a slap. "Don't tell me that the sound of her name offends you."

"It doesn't, I just feel bad. Sometimes I wonder if maybe they were meant to be together. They are mates after all and another part of me is happy that I have him. Am I a bad person?"

"I'm the wrong person to ask. I have only ever loved one woman and she is my mate," Riley rolled her eyes and punched my shoulder making both of us burst out laughing. "You will figure it out, and honestly, I am glad you're leaving today because you are stressing Camilla out and what she needs after everything is a long vacation."

"You might have a point on that one."

She had her head down and I couldn't stop myself from walking over to her and pulling her into a hug. Riley was stubborn and I knew she would never ask by herself but it was what she needed. I felt her body go lax as I held her close.

"You'll figure it out, you are one of the smartest people I know."

"I don't feel very smart right now."

"Should I let you in on a little secret?" I asked and she hummed. "No one ever truly feels smart. You just keep moving and pray that it all works out."

By the time we were supposed to lead them back towards the carriage, I couldn't help but feel a pang in my chest. I would never tell Riley or Damien to their faces but I missed them. There was something lonely about the palace life. I loved being with my family but sometimes I wished I had actual friends. I was talking to Damien when one of the guards walked up to me. He was the one I tasked with sending people into the woods. He hesitated but I assured him that he could speak in front of Damien. I trusted him,

"We patrolled the entire forest but we didn't see anything out of the ordinary," he told me. "If there is something specific that we should be looking for then maybe-"

"Thank

you

for your help, you may go," I cut him off and he bowed then left. At least I was now certain that the forests were safe. I turned to Damien only to see a foreign expression on his face. "What is it?"

He looked around to make sure no one was listening before dropping his voice to a whisper. "I didn't know you believed the rumors."

My brows scrunched in confusion. "What rumors?"

"I thought you had your forests patrolled because of the rumors that had been swirling. I didn't think they had come this far or I would have spoken about it the moment we arrived."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"People have been talking about a creature in the woods that carries off

people. The bodies are never found until a few days later and when they are found, they are ice cold and drained of blood.”

“That sounds like a vampire,” I deadpanned and he rolled his eyes.

“I am aware that it sounds like a vampire but all the vampires are denying having anything to do with it. Anyway, I believe it is nothing but a rumor.”

“Even if it isn’t, the closest vampire coven is a long way from here and they will have to go past at least four different packs before getting here. I think we are safe.”

“What are you guys even talking about?” Camilla yelled interrupting our conversation. “it’s time for them to leave.”

I clapped Damien over his shoulder and we walked towards the carriage. He was about to get in when Riley froze staring at something behind us. I turned to see Christine walking towards the carriage. Riley cast a wary glance at me but I calmed her with my eyes. Christine was harmless.

Christine stopped in front of Riley. “I wanted to see you left. I figured it was only good manners for me to say goodbye.” Riley’s mouth dropped open.

“You don’t have to say anything. I just wanted to say that.”

Riley just nodded dumbly while Christine turned to Damien and offered him a curt nod. I could see the confusion on his face and he cocked his head as if to ask why he got a nod and Riley got an entire greeting.

Camilla was the one who snapped out of the stupor first. She grasped Riley’s shoulders and gently shoved her in the direction of the carriage doors. “You don’t want to be late.”

Riley and Damien got inside and we watched as the carriage rode off. I waited until they had gone a considerable distance before I turned to Christine. “You did the right thing.”

“I didn’t do it for them, I did it for me.”

## **The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 89**

Chapter 89

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I was so excited to finally have things settle down. It felt like ages since we had any form of peace and I could finally spend long parts of my day with my family. Audrey in particular loved that and she made sure to milk every hour we were able to spend with her. She played her cards well and managed to convince Ryker to take her to do whatever she wanted. I was just happy to see my family safe and happy, it had a very content feeling to it. It felt like I could finally breathe without feeling like someone was looking over my shoulder and waiting for me to fail. It was also an added bonus that I hadn’t



seen the elders in over a week. I was relieved and I prayed that the feeling would last.

I made my way towards the training grounds with apprehension in my heart. I had started training again full time thanks to Ryker's encouragement and it was still weird at first but I was slowly getting back into a comfortable point with my powers. There was still a small part of me that held a little bit of resentment to the powers but I was beginning to get over it. It also helped that Lois was one of the kindest and most patient people I had ever met.

He had been trying to get me to summon water from moisture but it was difficult. My brows were tinged with sweat and my head hurt but I was unable to do it. It felt as though it was just out of my grip. I could almost feel it but I couldn't get to it. I resisted the urge to scream in frustration and just bit down on my bottom lip. "Your majesty, forgive me for this but I don't think you are trying hard enough," Lois said slowly after I had failed to conjure up anything and I narrowed my eyes at him. "The water is all around you. It is no different from pulling water out of a stream, just pull it and use it."

"I am aware of what I am supposed to do but I suppose it is harder to pull water out of thin air considering that it is air," I couldn't keep the snark out of my voice.

Lois sighed and made his way over to me. "You remind me a lot of our mother. I didn't train her but I was present for most of her sessions. May I speak freely?" I waved my hands. "I see her stubborn streak in you."

"I don't think stubborn would be the first word I would use to describe myself."

"I don't mean it in a bad way at all. I meant that you both have mental blocks in your minds that are too stubborn to remove- or maybe, you don't want to remove them."

I crossed my arms over my chest and turned to him. "I don't know what you mean by that."

"I think that you don't want to use your powers anymore, at least, that is the vibe I am getting off you. It is almost as if you despise them for some reason. Your mother did too because she was never supposed to have them," before I could ask what he meant, he made his way over to the chairs and gestured for me to follow him.

I hesitated but ultimately took the seat next to him because I was more interested in the conversation than anything else and if it gave me the opportunity to pause training for a little while then it was an added bonus. For a second, he didn't say anything, just stared up into the distance.

"You know that your mother married into the royal family meaning she didn't have powers, or at least, she wasn't supposed to. She was eighteen when they were married. Your father had powers; he was one of the greatest

elementals to ever live. There was almost nothing he couldn't do with his powers- he loved them. Your mother was the direct opposite."

I hadn't known my father was an elemental like me. It was knowledge I could have done without because everything I heard about him up to this point did not make him someone I wanted to emulate or be reminded of.

"Your mother is distantly related to the crown. Her grandmother was the second daughter of the king. She already knew about the powers but was relieved to not have them. Now imagine her surprise when on her twenty first birthday, she begins to display them. She was furious, I remember she spent weeks looking for ways to get rid of them. She refused training and she would not speak about them to anyone."

"How did my father take the news?" I asked and he shook his head.

"Remember that I am just an outsider, I wasn't privy to most of their conversations and can only speak based on what I heard and saw the few times I was around them," I nodded to show that I understood. "He was jealous, he was used to being the special one but suddenly, that had been ripped away. I was told it caused a lot of problems for them. Your mother began to despise those powers. She felt they were responsible for the downfall of her family"

"Is this the part where you say that she finally looked inward and found that she was the problem?"

He smiled. "Not quite, the only reason your mother began training was to spite your father. They were an amusing pair, those two. I feel like in a different lifetime, they would have been soulmates," he cleared his throat before going back to the story. "She hated her powers every second that she trained and it wasn't until she was able to find a way to remove that hatred from her heart that she was able to reach their full potential."

"I'm happy for her, but I don't hate my powers," even to my ears, it sounded like a lie.

"You may not completely hate them, but if you could get rid of them right now, would you?" I hesitated too long before responding.

It was an appealing offer. My powers had never saved me in an emergency so it wasn't like I was going to lose anything except the title of being an elemental. "Exactly," he said when I didn't respond. "Until you deal with the source of that

rage, you will not be able to tap into your potential."

"There is no source. Water powers are practically useless. What is the best I can do with it? Probably party tricks."

He turned to me and laughed. By the time he calmed down, he was shaking his head at me as if I were unbelievable. "Did you know that the human body was made predominantly of water? Did you realize that there is water under

the earth? You can control almost anything as long as it has water inside of it. It is a more complex skill to master but it is not impossible”

My mouth was wide open in shock. I had never thought of it that way. It seemed like something I would be willing to learn but I was worried I would never be able to. Before I could say anything, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned to see Ryker with Aurora in his arms. Both him and our daughter were smiling as they made their way over.

“Am I interrupting?” he asked and Lois shook his head as he rose to his feet.

“We were just finishing,” he clasped his hands together and bowed to both of us. “Think about it, your majesty.”

He disappeared immediately after and Ryker turned to me with scrunched brows. “Do I want to know what just happened there?”

“I’ll tell you on the way inside.”

I told him everything that Lois had said and he listened intently. By the time I was done, he didn’t say any words. When I glanced at him, I knew he had a lot to say but for some reason, he was holding himself back. I waited until we got to the room and I was relaxing in the tub before I spoke.

“Just say whatever you want to say. You know I value your opinion.”

He sighed before speaking. “All of this started after our mother passed. Could it be that you feel some sort of responsibility in her passing? If you could conjure water from moisture at that point, you would have been able to douse the flames. Could that be it?”

I hated how accurate he was. I turned away from him and kept my gaze fixed on the wall. “That isn’t it, you’re wrong.”

“Am I, because you cannot even look at me?” he asked but I kept my lips shut. “Camilla, it was not your fault.”

“I know that.”

I heard shuffling then he returned to the room empty handed. Before I could ask where Aurora was, he crouched down by the side of the tub and cupped my face with both hands. “It was not your fault, Camilla. There was nothing you could have done then. Do not despise the gift you have been given over this.”

I swallowed and finally looked up at him. “I need to finish up.”

It was a clear dismissal and I hated doing it but I didn’t want Ryker breaking me. It wasn’t something I could handle. He sighed and took a step back with a nod. The

moment he walked out, I wanted to call out for him but it was like all the words had gotten stuck in my throat. I heard the door click shut and I realized that I was well and truly alone.

I didn’t leave my room for over an hour after that and thankfully, no one came to look for me. It wasn’t until my stomach grumbled in protest that I finally

found my way to the dining room. I was shocked to see the entire family seated there. I expected that they would have finished by the time I got down but to my shock, they were just about to start.

“Camilla, I was just about to call you,” Christine said with a smile and I knew that Ryker hadn’t told her anything.

I didn’t look at Ryker as I took the seat between him and Audrey. My daughter was all smiles and giggles as she spoke animatedly to me. I tried to match her energy the best I could but I felt drained. I think I did a good job because she didn’t complain once. When the food came, I used that as an excuse not to speak but I tried to listen to her as best as I could. It was hard though because I had a splitting headache.

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Lunch went without a hitch and by the time I was done eating, I prepared to make my quick escape but Ryker anticipated that and spoke.

“Christine, can you please take the kids and give us a moment?”

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Chapter 90

CAMILLA’S PO.V

“Of course,” her response was quick as she gathered the girls.

Audrey came over to give me a hug and I kissed her hair softly. When she got to Ryker, I heard her speak.

“Will you be there to tuck me in?” she asked softly and he nodded. She smiled wide at those words and kissed his cheeks before skipping over to meet Christine.

I wanted to leave with them but I knew that would only prove my guilt so I forced myself to stay still. The door

! shut behind me but no one spoke. For the first time, silence between us was suffocating and awkward, I expected him to pick up the conversation from where it ended before but he didn’t. To my shock, Ryker just held out his hand for me to take.

I hesitated for a split second which caused his eyes to narrow. He led me out of the dining room and out of the palace. It was windy but I could barely focus on the cold because I was so anxious to know where we were going. We walked in silence ignoring the guards who greeted and bowed to us. I thought we were going to take a walk but Ryker led me towards the royal garden.

“What are we doing here?” I asked but he ignored me and went to stand directly in front of the fountain. He gestured for me to come to him and I did so slowly. “Ryker, what is this?”

“We’re going to practice,” I raised a brow and he gestured to the water in the fountain. “I don’t know how long it is going to take for you to get over your resentment but that isn’t going to happen until you begin to enjoy your powers again.”

“I still don’t understand what that has to do with all of this,” I gestured around us. “I practice every morning with Lois. What good does an extra hour of practice every night?”

“This isn’t out of obligation,” I stared at him blankly and he sighed. “You used to sit here and make animals out of the water, do you remember? Audrye loved it. While you were pregnant, you would sit here and just play around with the fountain. You said it calmed you down.”

“I was stressed out, I’m not anymore but if you want me to make animals,” I waved my hand and a large ball of water rose from the fountain in the shape of a dog. I made a show of making it run around for a few seconds before dropping it into the water. “Is that good enough? Would you like me to create fishes too?”

“I am more of an amphibian person,” I conjured up a water lizard. “Try being a little more enthusiastic about it.”

His tone dripped with sarcasm and I flashed him a smile while doing it to which he laughed. I couldn’t stop myself from smiling too. I hadn’t felt so light using my powers in a while even if I was just using it to mock him.

“I don’t know what you want me to do, Ryker.”

Ryker made his way over to me and stroked my cheek soft. “That’s the thing, you don’t have to do anything. I just want you to sit here and remember. It is in your hands right now. This isn’t practice where you are obligated to practice.”

“So I can just sit down and do nothing if I want.”

He frowned. “I wouldn’t like that but yes. We only have half an hour so we can tuck Audrey in.”

I thought about it for a second then I sat down gently on the ground with my legs crossed in front of me. I saw the disappointment on Ryker’s face but I ignored it. After a split second, he sat down next to me.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m sitting with you,” he said simply. “Whatever you choose, I will do it with you. Every night, without fail, we will sit here if that is what you want.”

“You don’t have to.”

“I want to.”

So we did.

For the next half hour, we just sat there doing nothing. I rested my head against his shoulder and he wrapped his arms around my shoulder. By the time half an hour was up, Ryker helped me to my feet and led me into- the

palace. Audrey was already half asleep when we got there but she was excited to see that we had kept to our promise. We also checked on Aurora before finally making our way to our room.

I noticed that Ryker was weirdly silent as we got dressed for bed and I couldn't help but feel like I had done something wrong especially when I put on my favorite white night gown and he didn't seem to notice. He had his back to me so I made my way over to him and placed my hand on his shoulder. He stiffened before turning around.

"Are you mad at me?" I asked and he gave me an incredulous look as if I had asked him to grow an extra head. "You've been quiet. If I embarrassed you earlier-

"You didn't," he cut in almost immediately. I didn't believe him and he must have noticed because he sighed and closed the distance between us. "Do I wish you did something different? Of course, but Camilla, there is no timeline on this. You can move at whatever pace you want. I can't be embarrassed by you."

"You looked disappointed earlier and you have barely even looked at me."

"I was giving you space," he sighed. "You can be hard to read sometimes but I thought you wanted space." He kissed me softly. "I just want to know that you're alright."

"I'm alright." I assured him and just like that, everything was better.

He ran his eyes over my body. "Don't think I missed the night gown. You look exquisite and there are so many things I would love to do to you tonight."

"Do them," I whispered and the corner of his lips quirked up.

"I'm afraid that there may not be enough time."

It was late when we finally went to bed. I was wrapped up in Ryker's arms and buried under the blanket. Neither of us had bothered to put on clothes because we didn't expect to be woken up until morning. However, that wasn't the case because I heard frantic knocking on the door. At first, I thought it was a part of my dream but it became more insistent.

"Camilla, are you awake?" I quickly recognized the voice as Christine's as I roused from sleep.

Ryker was awake too and he looked as confused as I felt. He began to rise but I waved him off and assured him that I could handle it. I grabbed the closest thing which was Ryker's shirt and threw it over my shoulders: I pulled the door open and Christine stood there looking frantic.

"The guards have been trying to get your mind link for hours but you were both asleep. Thankfully, I was awake so they were able to get to me. I thought I could handle it because I wanted you to rest but, Camilla, this is beyond my pay grade, I have no idea what to do about this. I didn't want to wake you but-

“Christine,” her rambling had woken me up completely. “What is it?”

“I think you need to see it.”

I closed the door so I could get dressed. Thankfully, Ryker was already out of bed and getting dressed. I handed him his shirt and pulled on my night gown before throwing one large coat over it to give a sense of decency. I couldn't be bothered to get into a dress at- I glanced over at the clock- one a.m.

Christine was waiting outside the door and she quickly rushed off in the direction of the front doors. A carriage was waiting and I wondered where we could be going at such an hour that required a carriage. I could tell by looking at Ryker's face that even he was curious but no one said anything. We just held onto each other's hands and got inside. Christine was tapping her feet anxiously and she looked like she was five seconds away from throwing up. The carriage ride took less than ten minutes and by the time we got there, I noticed that there was a huge crowd. The guards were gathered at the edge of the woods. They bowed when they saw us and it was one of the generals who crossed the line to meet us.

“We are so glad you came, your majesties,” he said. “We didn't want to wake you this late but we didn't know what to do. We haven't touched anything.”

“Show us.”

He nodded and directed us to follow him. We walked for another five minutes before we came across another handful of guards. They were standing in a circle around what I realized was a body as I saw the leg sticking out. They parted the way for us and it was obvious that the man was dead.

“He is a miner from one of the lower towns,” the general explained. “He went missing a few days ago and he suddenly turned up here. There are no injuries or wounds on him but he is-”

“Dead,” I deadpanned. “Why is he so pale though? He almost looks like a statue. Did he die a long time ago?”

“That has been one of our major questions but I don't think so. His body hasn't started to decay yet. It seemed he died a few hours ago but I have never seen anything like this. He was so cold when I touched him, almost like ice.”

“Is that unusual?”

I stepped forward but Ryker reached out a hand to stop me. He turned to the general. “Inform his family that he has been found and convince them to have him buried as quickly as possible with minimal questions.”

“Do you know what happened?” I asked but he ignored me.

“Make sure no one breathes a word of this to anyone. If they ask, he died of poisoning and that is why he is pale. Am I clear?”

The general nodded and went off to do as he asked. I turned to Ryker with my arms crossed over my chest. “Are you going to tell me what it is?”

“I will. I have a hunch but I really hope I am wrong about it.”

“Is it bad?” I asked and he nodded. “On a scale of one through ten?”  
“I would say an eight,” my eyes widened. “I need to get you out of here first before I say anything else. I don’t want to risk anyone overhearing. Do you trust me?”  
“Always.”  
“Good, now come.”