

## The Rejected Werewolf Princess by Didiadeyemi Chapter 91-95

Chapter 91

CAMILLA'S P.O.V

Ryker was acting weird but I didn't want to push too much. Since we saw that man, he was off his game. He was quiet the entire carriage ride back and he seemed to be lost in thought. When we got back to the palace however, he led me back towards our room and locked the door. I waited patiently for him to say something but he didn't.

"Ryker," I began and he sighed.

"I'm thinking of the best way to say this," he explained. "When Damien was here, he told me about a rumor that was going around of a creature who steals people in the night and returns their bodies in the middle of the woods drained of blood."

"That sounds like a vampire."

"That's exactly what I said and now a body turns up in the middle of the woods freezing cold and pale."

I couldn't help but shake my head at him and smile. He was cute when he worried but I couldn't believe that a vampire was attacking citizens. I grabbed both of his hands and led him to the bed where I pushed him to sit down. He tried to speak but I held up a hand to stop him. Once he was quiet, I crawled up behind him and began massaging his shoulders. He looked confused but allowed me to do as I wished without putting up too much of a fight. I waited until his shoulders slacked with relief before I spoke.

"We have never had any interactions with vampires prior to this," I reminded him slowly as I kept my fingers moving on his shoulders. "I find it hard to believe that a random vampire came out of nowhere and decided to drain blood from someone in the town."

I saw him frown. "When I heard it from Damien, I thought the same thing but now- you saw the man."

"There's no confirmation that a vampire killed him. It gets very cold at night and if he was wandering and unable to shift, he could have frozen to death which would explain why his skin was so cold," I combatted. "Until we have proof that he died from a vampire attack then we shouldn't jump to conclusion."

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His frown remained and I briefly wondered if he wanted it to be a vampire attack. It made no sense. If it were me, I would have taken the excuse I was giving and run with it but then again, I preferred to run from my problems while Ryker loved to face them head on.

“Do you know how many pack members are lost to vampire attacks on a monthly basis?” I asked and he shook his head. “I don’t either but I am sure there is a number somewhere. This could just have been an accident or a lone murder. It probably has nothing to do with what Damien told me. Your mind is just playing tricks on you.”

I felt him tense. I knew it would be hard for him to let go of his preconceived notions. Was there a possibility that he was right? Sure, but I really hoped he wasn’t. I wasn’t sure the palace could handle another attack right now. When I spoke, I was trying to convince myself as much as I was trying to convince him. The idea of a rogue vampire causing problems among wolves was something that I was sure the covens had heard and I knew that even if it were true, they would do everything in their power to make sure it was handled to avoid another war.

The last time there was a war between vampires and werewolves was over a century ago. According to what I heard, it was brutal and it lasted for years. So many people were lost and a treaty was signed to ensure that none of it happened again. The vampires decided to move into the mountains after that while the wolves stayed in the forest. I doubted that anyone wanted a repeat of that war.

“You’re right,” Ryker said finally. “If I hadn’t heard about that from Damien, I wouldn’t be worried. It is probably nothing.”

“Good,” I leaned down to kiss him. “We were having such a good night. I’m sure we have a lot of paperwork to do in the morning about the boy’s death.” I took my hands off his shoulders and he turned to me. He looked a lot better and I couldn’t help but smile. He wasted no time in getting under the covers with me and pulling me into his chest. I pretended not to notice that he held onto me a little tighter than usual.

The next time I woke up, Ryker was already out of bed and it was almost seven. I never planned to sleep in and I cursed when I realized that he would have met with the elders without me. I got ready in a rush and started towards the council

to take a detour when I heard Aurora crying. I had to take a detour and feed her first. It wasn’t until she was peacefully sleeping that I could finally leave. By the time I got to the council room, they were already deep in their conversation.

“Your majesty,” one of the elders drawled. “How kind of you to join us.”

I didn’t miss the undercurrent in his voice and my eyes narrowed. “Thank you for waiting. Children can be so unpredictable sometimes. The last thing any of us needed was a screaming child in our meetings.” His cheeks heated and he turned away. “Is there something in particular that we are talking about?”

“Not exactly, his majesty was briefing us on the boy that was found at the

border. It was such a sad accident, I am sure. Thankfully, he doesn't have any family in the area. He was much of a loner."

"Thankfully?" I couldn't help but ask and I saw the elders shrug.

"It would have been a shame if there was family that we needed to break the news to."

I wanted to speak. They wouldn't have been doing anything, I would. It infuriated me when they acted like they had the worst jobs when all they had to do was just sit here like kings and reap the benefits. The words were at the tip of my tongue when I felt Ryker's hand intertwine with mine. He wasn't looking my way but I could feel him all the same and he was asking me to calm down.

I exhaled deeply through my nose and forced my shoulders to relax before turning to the elders. "If you are done discussing then I assume the meeting is over."

I watched their faces contort in disbelief that I had just dismissed them before they finally filed out of the room. It took all my willpower not to throw something against the wall. Ryker kept his hand intertwined with mine presumably to keep me grounded and prevent me from doing something I would most definitely regret later.

Once they were all gone, I turned to him. "Why didn't you wake me up earlier?"

"I wanted to, but you looked like you needed the rest. This is the only thing we had scheduled for today and I honestly thought you could use one day without having to sit opposite them and listening to their bullsh it."

I couldn't help but laugh. "Is there a way we can change the elders? How are they even given their position?"

"I have no idea," he admitted. "But we can definitely try. Who would we even put in their place?"

I shrugged. "Anyone is better than them right now."

He was about to reply when someone knocked on the door and I saw a guard poke his head in. he glanced over at me and I immediately knew what time it was.

"You have to train, don't you?" Ryker asked and I nodded. "You'll do fine."

"I hope so."

I didn't do fine. I couldn't do anything more than what I usually could and even at that, it drained me more than it should have. Loris told me that my anger had a deeper hold on me than I thought and I needed to find a way to work on it. I knew he was right and I knew that if Ryker was present, he would tell me the same thing but I didn't want to hear it from any of them. I was good with pretending that all was good because it wasn't like my powers were going to come in handy.

We were rounding up training when I heard scurrying feet. I turned to see Audrey rushing over and she practically threw herself into my arms. She was supposed to be having her lessons so I couldn't help but wonder how she got out.

"Aunt Christie said you were doing magic," she whispered and I couldn't help but raise a brow. "Can you show me some?"

"Shouldn't you be having lessons? I asked and she hid her face from me.

"Audrey Valentina, what did do?"

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"Nothing," she was quick to defend herself and throw her hands up. "I just wanted to see you so I left."

"You have to go back," I saw some guards rushing out of the palace. There was no doubt in my mind that they were looking for her.

"Just show me one trick, please," she gave me those innocent eyes that I could never say no to and I ended up sighing.

I didn't want to let her down so I thought of something that I knew would blow her mind. I stretched out my hand and created an arch over her heads while drawing water from the stream nearby. Her eyes widened and she clapped in glee. I decided to go a step further by making little animals. I couldn't remember the last time I concentrated so hard. I didn't want a single thing going wrong. Her cries of excitement were worth the pounding headache I knew I would have later.

I let the water fall back and turned to her. She was grinning from ear to ear.

"That was amazing, mummy. You're the bestest magic person ever."

I couldn't stop my own smile as I kissed her head. "Thank you, sweetheart. You have to go back now."

She frowned. "Will

"I will."

you do some more later?"

I put her down and watched as she ran off towards the guards. I was still watching her when I heard Loris speak.

"That was the happiest I've seen you while using your powers," he mentioned casually. "Perhaps we should have the princess sit in while you train. It might serve as some form of motivation."

I laughed. "There is no way my daughter is sitting in just to watch me embarrass myself."

I had expected a frown or something at that but instead, the corner of his lips tilted up in a smile as if he had just figured out the answer to all his problems.

"I'm beginning to think that there is still some hope after all."

## Chapter 92

### CAMILLA'S P.O.V

After training, it was basically just me sitting in my office doing nothing. By the time evening came around, Ryker made good on his promise and we sat in the garden alone. **He** offered to bring Audrey and I knew he had spoken to Lois **but** I didn't want her to see me like this. I didn't want my child knowing that I wasn't as special as she thought. She thought of me like this super amazing person and I didn't want to ruin it for her because a part of me wished I could be that for her.

I felt a longing and a pull towards the water but I couldn't bring myself to act on it. My fingers itched and it took everything in my power for me to resist that pull but I did. I could feel Ryker's eyes on me the entire time almost as if he could **sense** my internal struggle and was trying to find out a way he could help me. When our thirty minutes were up, I subconsciously reached my hand out towards the water but I caught myself.

"Why?" he asked but I stayed silent. "Is there a reason you keep denying yourself something that you obviously want?"

"I don't want it," I lied and he shook his head.

"Do you know what this reminds me of?" he asked but I stayed silent. "When you first came to the pack, you were so hesitant to receive even the slightest bit of affection. You fought me at every turn even though you knew that I was just trying to help you. Why do you do that?"

"That's not what I'm doing."

"Isn't it?" he asked and I couldn't bring myself to answer because I knew **he** was right. "Just accept help where it is given, Camilla. All I am asking for is for you to try. You want to, so why don't you?"

"Because **I** know I'm going to fail," my voice was a soft whisper as I spoke and I saw something crack in Ryker's eyes. He sighed and reached out for me. I wanted to pull away but I let him hold me. I allowed him wrap his arms around me and I reminded myself that he could protect me. I allowed myself to feel safe in his arms.

By the time he pulled back, there was something softer in his eyes. It was almost as if he could finally see me for the first time. “Just try something.”

“I don’t know what to do.”

“Anything.”

There was a soft encouraging tone imbued in his voice. I reached out my hand and hesitantly willed the water to me. As if it could sense my hesitation, the ripples began but they weren’t stable. I tried to get a stronger grip on myself and tugged it towards me. The water rushed out of the fountain towards my hand and just held it suspended in the air in a bubble.

It was the simplest thing in the world but Ryker was looking at me with so much pride. I felt moved to do more so I tried some of the earliest tricks I had first learned. I remembered the feeling of glee and excitement when I did them for the first time. I remembered how I showed it off to Christine every chance I got and she responded with pride and adoration.

“I’ve never seen your powers in action,” Ryker’s words snapped my concentration and the **water** went splashing back into the fountain. I turned to him in disbelief.

“You’re joking, right?” I asked and he shook his head. “I could have sworn that I used them around you once.”

“I never joined one of your training sessions and there was never a time for you to use them. Your mother was the one who told me about them. I was always curious but I never wanted to push.”

“I’m sorry,” I didn’t know why I was apologizing but I knew **that** I felt bad for some **reason**.

He pressed a kiss to my temple. “It doesn’t matter. You did good, baby. Do you think you’ll be up to try again tomorrow?”

This time, when I nodded, I meant it.

I was in a better mood the entire day. Maybe it was **because** I had finally decided to give training **a** chance but in reality, I

knew that it had everything to do with Ryker. Loris noticed **the** change but **he** asked no questions in regards to what brought it on. I still couldn't conjure water out of thin air but I was getting better at controlling large bodies **of** water and manipulating them. It drained me more because of the size so we were working on my stamina.

By the time training was over, my shoulders ached and my muscles protested. I wanted an ice bath with a massage to relax. I was trudging back towards my room when a guard approached me. He looked hesitant and a bit young, I had a feeling he was one of the new guards hired to replace the traitors. When he got to me, he bowed low and his sword clattered to the floor.

I leaned down to pick it up and as I handed it over to him, he looked mortified. "I am so sorry, your majesty, I am very clumsy. That wasn't supposed to happen."

"It's fine, I can be too," I waved him off. "Is there anything you need?"

"I was asked to escort you to the physician's quarters by the Prince Consort."

My brows scrunched in confusion. I tried to reach Ryker via mind link but his will was firmly in place. It was weird that he would send a guard instead of getting me himself but I decided not to question it too much and followed the boy. He walked ahead of me and I noticed him paying extra attention to **his** feet as if willing them not to mess up.

When **we** got to the physician's quarters, Ryker was waited outside. I thanked the boy and made my way over to my mate. "What is happening?"

"The physician said it was important. I waited for you."

I smiled at him softly. I could tell he was a bit worried, it was in the creases around his eyes and the way he gripped my hand lightly. I decided to make the first move by pushing the door open. The physician and his son were muttering to themselves and they jumped when they saw us. The room was just as I remembered- there were vials and jars lining every wall filled with weird liquids. Books took up the rest of the space and of course, the little bed where the victim was lying down.

“Thank you for coming,” he rushed over to welcome us. “I hope I am forgiven for requesting your presence but this wasn’t something that could be uttered outside of this room. The walls have ears and if anyone gets a wind of this, it could be disastrous.”

I cast a wary glance towards Ryker. His eyes met mine and I could **see** that his emotions mirrored mine. He squeezed my hand in silent solidarity and we turned back to the physician.

“There is nothing to forgive,” Ryker was the one who spoke because I couldn’t trust my voice. “What is it that you wanted to show us?”

He beckoned us over to the body and I couldn’t help but feel a pang of pity as I looked down at the boy. He couldn’t have been older than mid-twenties. The physician didn’t seem to hold the same concerns I held in regards to the body because he just walked by it and began flipping through his notes.

“I noticed something when I was looking over him. I would like to preface by saying that I am a physician and sometimes, I may be wrong. I doubt that I am wrong here because I have checked three times just to be certain,” he cleared his throat before continuing. “This boy was dead only a mere three hours when he was found. There is also no indicator that he had been out in the cold long before then.”

“Why **was** his skin so cold then?” I asked. “He looked like he could have frozen to death.”

“I wish that were the **case**,” he paused as if wondering how to continue. “I am sure you have heard about the blood being the life force **of** an individual. Your blood **is** part of what warms your body and regulates the temperature.”

I nodded not quite understanding where he was going but trying to follow nonetheless.

**He** turned the head of the boy to the side and pointed to **two** barely there puncture wounds.



I felt Ryker tense beside me and I couldn't help but remember what he had told me earlier about the vampire. I refused to believe **that was** what happened. Maybe it was **just an** accident. Maybe **we** were **just** overthinking and reading too much into things.

"This is a vampire bite. Normally, I wouldn't be too bothered about it because **we** have the **occasional** vampire roaming around. In my time, I have handled three vampire cases but this is different."

"How so?" my voice was barely over a whisper. I was scared to ask because I was scared to know **the** answer.

"This man was somehow drained completely of blood."

"Why is that weird?"

"When vampires bite, it is for two reasons- to feed or to turn. They rarely ever completely drain bodies of blood, not even the newly turned make that mistake. The only time a vampire would make that mistake is if they lost control and this man wouldn't have a head if that were the case. I believe this was a deliberate action on the part of whoever did it."

No one dared to speak. It was one full minute of Ryker and I staring at the body and not knowing what to do. Our worst **fear** had been confirmed- the rumor was true and for some reason, the vampire was here.

Ryker was the first person to snap out of his reverie. He straightened his shoulders and faced the physician eye-to-eye. "Do not breathe a word about this to anyone. Tell the family whatever you need to in order for them to let this rest as quickly as possible."

"But your majesty-"  
his son began speaking for the first time and Ryker leveled him with a sharp gaze.

"If anyone breathes a word about this, they will have to pay, am I clear?" he asked and they both nodded. "Go over the body one more time and tell me if you missed anything"

Without another word, he grabbed my hand and pulled **me** out of the room. I had so many questions but I didn't know where to start so I stayed silent.

SEND GIFT

COMMENT

## Chapter 93

### RYKER'S POV

I hated being out of my element and this was one situation where I couldn't control that.

From the moment I saw that body. I knew it was a vampire attack. I tried to convince myself that maybe it wasn't the one from the stories. I allowed Camilla convince me that I was overreacting but now the evidence was directly in front of my face and I couldn't deny it. As we left the physician's room. I couldn't help but run my hand down my face in frustration. For the first time, I was at a disadvantage- I knew nothing about vampires.

I knew nothing about the rumors as well because I had completely dismissed them. If I had just chosen to investigate it a little then I would have a little information on hand instead of walking completely blind. I wanted desperately to punch something.

"Ryker," Camilla began slowly from her spot by my side. She sounded almost hesitant as if she were unsure of whether she should speak.

The last time she sounded like this was when she was still getting to know me and didn't know how to trust me. I turned to her almost immediately, all thoughts of the vampire were forgotten. I never wanted my mate to feel like she needed to walk on eggshells around me.

"What's wrong?" I asked and she hesitated for far too long before responding.

"What do we do now?" she asked. "I don't know where to start."

"We don't start anything. The last thing the people need is to panic. We are going to summon the elders and convince them to implement a curfew for the people."

“They would want to know why. No one panics more than them,” she added the last part with a snort. “Why can’t I just put the curfew?”

“If you do it then people will realize that something is wrong. If we make the elders believe that it was their idea then they will have to come up with a reason behind it. Just leave the talking to me, I can handle them.”

She nodded and I couldn’t help but bask in the complete and absolute trust she had in me. Her eyes softened and I could see in her eyes that she would have done anything I said in that moment. There was something euphoric about knowing that and I swore that I would never do anything to make her second guess that blind faith she had put in me.

It took half an hour to get the elders assembled in the council room. It would have taken longer but to our relief, they were already in the palace when summoned. There were varying levels of confusion on their faces and I prayed to the goddess that I wouldn’t mess things up.-

“if I am correct then it is your job to keep us up to speed with everything happening in the palace, correct?” I asked and they all hesitated before nodding. “Then explain why I didn’t find out until today that people have been getting lost in the woods. in the dead of night.”

It was a huge stretch. I knew of only one person who got lost in the woods and that was the man who was currently lying on the physician’s bed being examined. The elders looked like deer caught in headlights and I wondered if it was because something similar was actually happening or if they just felt incompetent.

“Your majesty,” one of them began. “Every year, at least five people get lost in the forest at night and cannot find their way back. So far, there have only been three cases that have reached our ears and one has been found recently although the physician hasn’t released the body.”

That means there are two more people waiting to be found in the woods.

“Didn’t you think it was something that should be handled?” I asked and he opened his mouth to speak but I cut him off. “What kind of leaders are we if we just left our people to suffer without offering solutions.”

“What are you suggesting?”

“I am suggesting nothing. I was unaware of the plight until today. You chose to keep it a secret so you will all handle it yourselves,” I looked over them all slowly. “I don’t know how you plan to stop people from going into the woods especially at night so they don’t get lost but it is out of my hands now.”

I leaned back in the chair and grabbed Camilla’s hands under the table. The ball was now in their court, I had planted all the seeds necessary and all I needed was for one person to say the words ‘curfew. I waited for an antagonizing thirty minutes before someone finally got the hint.

“What about a curfew?” he asked. “It is one way we could keep people in line. They would never go against that. The question is, what is the reason we will give them?”

“I am sure you can figure out something.” I sat up straighter. “The last thing I want is for any of you to throw the people into panic.” I stood to my feet and pulled Camilla up with me gently. “You are all dismissed.”

I could see that they all had more to say but there was nothing they could do about the dismissal. I watched them file out and disappear. It wasn’t until the door to the council room clicked shut that I could finally breathe. That entire time, I was in a state of panic wondering if my plan was going to work. That was not something I wanted to feel again. Helplessness was not something I enjoyed.

Camilla breathed deeply. “I didn’t think we would be able to pull that off. What do we do now?”

“We do nothing.” she scrunched her brows in confusion. “You continue your duties as usual.”

“You have got to be kidding me. How do you expect me to pretend like nothing is wrong when we have a vampire on the loose? They might attack again. They have probably already attacked again.”

“I know. We need to avoid suspicion. The elders will be looking at us now. Just keep doing your thing. I will go to the library in my spare time and find everything I can on vampires.”

She frowned. I wasn’t fooling her that easily. “I want to help. You can’t stop me from helping.”

“I’m not stopping you from helping, I am trying to keep you safe. Focus on your training. You will be able to help that way.”

She pursed her lips and I knew there was more that she wanted to say but the truth was that it didn’t matter. She could have given me all the excuses in the world and I still wouldn’t have agreed.

I placed a kiss on her head. “I can handle this, trust me.”

“I do trust you,” she murmured before sighing. “I’ll let this slide just this once.”

I watched her walk out of the council room. I waited until she had left before I grabbed the nearest bottle of ink. I needed to write to Damien.

I told him briefly what was happening and asked for the names of the packs where the rumors started. I knew it would take at least a day or two to get the letter to him and another day or two to get a response. I sealed it with wax to ensure that no one could read the contents before taking it personally to the office of the people responsible for correspondence.

“Your majesty,” they bowed. They looked shocked to see me and I didn’t quite blame them. I had never willingly walked into this place before. “Is there anything we can help you with?”

I handed the letter to the man closest to me. “Ensure that this gets to my old pack as quickly as possible. Time is of the essence.”

I could see the curiosity etched on their faces but they couldn’t ask any questions. They bowed and rushed off to do as I had asked. I didn’t wait to ensure that they did what I asked- I knew they would and I had more important things to handle. I needed to find the general library.

I knew where the normal one was but I had a feeling that there was another- there was always another. A place where they kept the older texts that they didn’t want people knowing about. I didn’t know where it was but I knew someone who might.

“Christine, are you there?” I called out down the mind link and it took a second for her to respond.

“Yes, sorry. If you’re worried about Aurora, she is out like a light. Camilla came here a while ago and she is watching over

her.”

“It isn’t Aurora, I need your help. I’m in front of the palace library.”

She didn’t say anything for the next second. “I’ll be there right away.”

True to her word, she appeared in less than five minutes. I could see the confusion and unease on her face as she made her way over. She was trying her best not to look like she was in a hurry and if not for the fact that I knew her as well as I did, she would have deceived me too.

She came to stand next to me and we both turned to face the doors. I waited for the guards behind us to walk past before I spoke. “Is this the only palace library?”

“That’s a weird question,” she answered immediately. “Is there a particular reason for it?”

“I don’t have the time to explain things, Christine. I need you to answer me truthfully. Is this the only one? Lives could be depending on your answer.”

“No,” she answered after a beat of silence. “But you already knew that, didn’t you? You’re not stupid, Ryker and neither am I. I was told about the man in the woods before you were. If I am going to be honest with you then you have to award me the same decency.”

I knew she was right and I also knew that I couldn’t do this without her help so I sighed. “It’s vampires. I need access to the other library to see what I can learn.”

“What do you mean by vampires?” she whisper yelled. “Do the elders know? Do the people know? How bad is it?”

“I don’t know,” it pained me to admit but it was the truth. “What I do know is that right now, I need access to that library and I need it as soon as possible.”

There was shock and confusion on her face along with a million questions but instead of asking them, she nodded. “Come with me.”

## **Chapter 94**

CAMILLA’S P.O.V

I didn't see Ryker for the rest of the day and I honestly thought I would be grateful to not do the extra practice session with him but I found that I actually missed it. I went looking for him around the entire palace and even asked a few guards if they had seen him but no one could tell me anything. I ended up retiring to my room in the hopes that he would come to bed while I was asleep.

By the time I woke up the next morning. I knew he hadn't come to bed. His side of the bed was still neat and cold. I tried to search for him for as long as possible before training but it was as if he had disappeared into thin air. Christine was too busy helping me with Audrey for me to ask and right after training, I had to spend over an hour trying to calm Aurora down because she just wouldn't stop screaming.

It was almost noon when she calmed down and I was already at my wits end. Christine offered to help me with her while I went ahead with my work but I knew that if I put her down, there was a huge possibility that she would start screaming again. I balanced her in one hand and went to my office to finish up some paperwork. It was hard trying to do that with a child in my arms but I managed.

It took twice as long as it should have and by the time I finished, I was exhausted.

Aurora was passed out in my arms and I had planned to go into my room to relax when one of the elders approached me saying they needed to meet with Ryker and I. I couldn't tell them that I didn't know where he was so I made up an excuse about him being busy and followed them.

I could see the relief on their faces when they saw that I was alone. It should have annoyed me that they feared Ryker more than they respected me but I didn't quite mind. It was the life I lived and it served me well on a good day. I sat down at my usual spot but it felt different without Ryker's steady presence next to me. I squared my shoulders and plastered on my stoic expression as I faced them.

"We delivered the news of the curfew today," one of the elders began. "The people are murmuring. They will not be held down like this for long. We need to come up with a more permanent solution."

"What do **you** suggest then?" I asked and there was an awkward silence.

“You are the Queen, your majesty, it is your job to come up with these things,” his tone was condescending. He spoke like I was a child that needed explaining to. “Our duty is to help as best as we can but ultimately, we cannot make the decisions for you.”

“That sounds very convenient,” I shifted in the chair when Aurora began to stir. “I’m not asking for a solution from you, I am asking for suggestions. You kept it a secret for so long so I assume you thought about potential outcomes. That is within your job description, isn’t it?”

I was tired of dealing with them. I decided to play on the same cards that Ryker used yesterday. I knew I wouldn’t be as good at it as he was but I figured it would be enough to leave majority of the brainstorming to them. They cast wary looks at each other but neither of them spoke. I knew I had trapped them in a tough position where they could either admit that they were slacking on their jobs or they could think of solutions for me.

“Your majesty, with all due respect, this is all very last minute” one began.

“I am sure that gives you an idea of how I feel about this then. I will leave you to the thinking. In **the** meantime, pacify the people. Divert their attention to something else. Do not make them feel trapped. Everyone will love a cage if it is presented as a gift. Make them feel safe and get me the names of the two other people who went missing.” There was a brief moment of hesitation and I knew there was something

they weren’t saying. “What is it?”

“Someone else went missing.”

My first instinct was to scream but the sleeping infant in my arms reminded me that I couldn’t do that instead, I focused on breathing calmly and I crossed my hands over my chest. “Why am I just hearing about it now? Who is it?”

“He is a homeless man. The only reason we know about it is because there is a guard who takes food to him every day. He realized the man hadn’t been there for a few days. We have it under control.”

“That doesn’t explain why I was not told.”



“It happened last night but we couldn’t find you. We assumed it wasn’t important. Especially since it was a homeless man.”

“That was not your decision to make.”

“Pardon me, your majesty but it is hard to know what you take seriously when your mate isn’t even here for the meeting. You are always busy with one thing or the other and you never treat this council room with the respect that it deserves,” his voice rose and Aurora whined from her spot in my arms.

“Lower your tone elder,” I narrowed my eyes at him. “You will not wake my daughter.”

“A council room is no place for a child,” he all but yelled. “You were not raised in the palace and you do not know the ways of the palace. You are a long step away from being the Queen that your mother was and you will not get there if you keep treating this room with contempt.”

While he was speaking, the door to the council room opened and Ryker walked in. He was in fresh clothes but I could tell that he was not well rested. I was relieved that he was there because I was certain that conversation was destined for a downward spiral.

“Get up,” Ryker ordered and for a second, I thought he was talking to me but his eyes were fixated on the elder who had spoken.

He tried to look brave but I could see the undercurrent of fear in his eyes. It was general knowledge that Ryker did not shy away from confrontation, that was my job. Where I was gentle, he was fierce and he never tolerated disrespect from anyone, especially when it was directed at me. The elder rose to his feet. and Ryker slowly made his way over to him.

“Repeat those words,” his voice was deceptively calm but everyone could smell the storm brewing. When the elder didn’t speak, Ryker grabbed the collar of his shirt. “Is there a problem elder?”

The elder shook his head. “Not at all, we were just talking.”

Ryker smiled darkly.

“If you ever speak to my mate like that again, you will lose your tongue. If you cannot respect her as your Queen then respect her as my mate.” He pushed her away harshly then turned to the others. “That warning goes for all of you. If you disrespect her again then I will personally make sure that immensely. Is that clear?”

you suffer

They were quick to nod. Ryker ignored them and quietly took Aurora from my arms. Thankfully, she hadn't woken up. He helped me up to my feet and we walked out of the council room together.

He waited until we were out of the council room before he spoke. “You need to defend yourself, Camilla. I can't always protect you from them and they need to respect you for you and not because they are scared

of me.”

“I know that,” I mumbled under my breath. “I just don't know how to.”

“You're going to have to learn, Camilla. This is your kingdom and until you start acting like you own it then no one is going to treat you like Queen. Those men in there respect power and authority. You need to show them that you have it and you are here to stay. Do you understand me?”

I knew he was right but that didn't mean that I had to like it. I decided to change the subject instead of answering. “Where were you yesterday? I searched for you everywhere.”

He

rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. “I was in the library but I lost track of time and I fell asleep. By the time I woke up, it was almost noon. I rushed over as quickly as I could.”

I narrowed my brows in confusion. “I checked the library last night. It was one of the first places I checked when I realized that you were missing.”

He looked around to make sure no one was listening before whispering. “Come with me.”

We put Aurora to rest in her room first before Ryker led me towards the stairs. I had no idea where we were going but I knew he wouldn't hurt

me so I decided to trust him. He led me towards the top which was mostly unused. The only room that had been occupied in the last century was my father's room. I had never been in there and I wasn't sure I ever wanted to.

Ryker led me past what used to be his room to a large and elaborate tapestry. He looked around to make sure that we were alone before pulling at one of the edges and to my shock, it opened to reveal a narrow hallway. I turned to Ryker in confusion.

"How many secret passages does this palace have? Were you exploring the tunnels?"

"This isn't a tunnel. You have to go in."

I hesitated at the mouth of the hallway. "How did you even find it?"

"Christine showed it to me," I was shocked. I had asked Christine where Ryker was and she just shrugged in response. I opened my mouth to speak but he cut me off. "I made her promise not to tell you so you didn't

demanding to help me. Just come in and see."

end up

I huffed and made my way into the narrow hallway. I kept both hands on the wall to guide myself but it was more of Ryker's hand on my back that led me. The hallway wasn't as long as I expected it to be. Within minutes, we were standing in front of what had to be the largest library I had ever seen. My mouth fell open in shock and I turned to Ryker.

"What is this place?"

"Welcome to the secret palace library. It has everything on anything including forbidden texts."

Chapter 95

CAMILLA'S POV

The library was amazing. The shelves were as high as the ceiling which was more than three times my height. It was chilly and I assumed that was because the books weren't exactly books, they were scrolls and

bound parchments. I was almost scared to touch anything because everything looked ancient like it was going to fall apart if handled wrongly. I couldn't fault Ryker for losing track of time here, I would have too.

It was lit up by torches on either side and all the windows were closed but there was still a breeze blowing through. The walls were pure cement and there were only two tables that I could see. The crest of the kingdom was etched on each shelf and on the walls. I couldn't help but wonder how many people actually knew about it.

He led me with a hand on my lower back to a table where papers were arranged in a neat pile. I could tell that was where he sat because it still had his faint scent around it. As we got closer, I noticed some of the drawings and writings on the texts and I realized that he was reading about vampires. I turned to him with a raised brow and all he did was shrug as if it were no big deal.

"Were you able to find out anything?" I asked and he sighed.

"Not exactly. Vampires aren't like us, they're immortal and they can have one king for a millennium. It is unusual for them to document about their leaders so that others don't realize who they are. I tried going as far back as the last war but I couldn't find anything about his identity. I'll keep searching but I doubt we will find anything here about them."

"Have there been any vampires so far who have done things like this in the past?" I asked and he shook his head.

"None that I have found," he ran his hand through his hair in frustration.

"Our best bet is to find the vampire king and request a meeting with him. He is the only one who can keep his subjects in line."

I bit my bottom lip as I debated what to say. All we could do was keep searching because fighting vampires was bad enough, but fighting vampires that we knew nothing about was even worse. I picked up the closest text to me and stuffed it under my arm,

"I hope we can take them out," I murmured. "This place is too stuffy for me to stay in all day."

The corner of his lips tilted up. "You're the Queen, you can do whatever you want."

We picked out a few books that we thought would help and returned to our room to ensure they were kept safely before making our way to the dining room to spend time with our daughters. When Christine saw me, she must have immediately known that Ryker had told me about the library because she offered me a small apologetic smile. I narrowed my eyes at her playfully and she laughed.

Dinner was long and fun. I hoped after dinner he would forget about practicing but Ryker was nothing if not disciplined. I tried to argue that we had to read about the vampires but he was adamant that it could wait. Audrey joined us this time and we spent our exact hour outside and despite my protests, I ended up having fun. Audrey made demands and she squealed whenever I got it right. It felt relieving to not have the burden of powers on my shoulders and to be able to use it for something as miniscule as entertaining my daughter.

While we were packing up to leave, I felt a cool breeze at the back of my neck. I straightened instantly and turned towards the woods behind us but it was too dark to make out anything. I couldn't shake the feeling that someone was watching us and I started in that direction but Ryker's hand wrapped around my wrist pulling me to a stop and snapping me out of my thoughts.

"What's wrong?" he asked and I glanced towards the woods but Ryker grabbed my chin and turned me to face him. "Look at me, what are you looking at?"

"Nothing, I just thought-"

I began in that direction again but Ryker wouldn't let me go. I couldn't pull my eyes away from the woods. I knew there was something there and I could have sworn that I saw a flash of red in the trees.

"Camilla!" Ryker rarely said my name unless it was important. "Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know," I admitted. "I thought I felt something there. I felt it that day with Damien and Riley."

Ryker frowned. "Take Audrey and go inside." I opened my mouth to protest but he cut me off. "Just do as I said. I'll see you when I'm back, I promise."

I would have stayed there to argue if Audrey didn't yawn loudly. I picked her up and reluctantly walked towards the palace. She clung to me like a spider and buried her face into my neck. I led her to her room and helped

her change into her pajamas before tucking her into bed.

"Where is daddy?" she yawned and I kissed her forehead.

"He had to work on something. He'll be here tomorrow morning, okay?" I whispered and I doubted she heard me because her eyes were already drooping. "I love you, baby."

"I love you too, mummy."

I pulled her blanket up to her chin and walked out of the room.

I waited in our room for Ryker anxiously. I debated just going into the woods to find him myself but I knew I was more likely to get lost. I paced around the room for what felt like hours but in reality was just thirty minutes. When he walked in, he looked exhausted. It wasn't in his face but in the way he moved. He ran his hands through his hair in frustration and shut the door behind him.

'Did you find anything?' I asked and he shook his head.

"The woods were empty,' he whispered and I froze in my place. "Well, it was empty of vampires."

"What do you mean?"

"There was another body," his words dropped like a bombshell and there was a ringing in my ears. I blinked twice wondering if I heard wrong but by the pensive look on his face, I knew I hadn't. "The physician has taken in the body to analyze but I figure it is going to be the same."

"We have to figure out something."

“We will,” Ryker assured me as he grabbed my palm and squeezed. ‘Just forget about it for tonight. You should rest.”

“What about you?” I knew he had no plans of resting. “Well then, I guess we can get through the material faster if we both read.”

“You don’t have to.”

“You’re always reminding me how I’m queen. Don’t you think it is time I started acting like it?”

I fell asleep sometime during the early hours of the morning and by the time I woke up, I was in my night gown and already lying in bed. Ryker was still hunched over the desk and I knew he hadn’t slept. I slowly made my way out and placed a hand on his shoulder. He jumped slightly but relaxed when he noticed that I was the one standing there.

I placed a kiss on his cheek. “You need to rest, Ryker. Today is going to be a very busy day and you know it. We have to see the elders and the physician.”

He smiled softly. “I’m fine, baby. If I’m tired, I will rest.”

“I don’t like this.”

He stood to his feet and placed his hands on my waist. He pulled me into him and kissed my lips softly. He was obviously tired but he was trying to put up a brave face for me. I knew there was nothing I could do save for drugging him and in that moment, I was honestly contemplating it. He didn’t give me the chance to say anything because he just side stepped me and began bringing out clothes for the day. I sighed and just got ready.

Like I predicted, the first thing we had to do was meet with the elders. They were in a more agreeable mood since yesterday and I knew it had more to do with Ryker’s presence than anything. It was obvious that this was out of their league because no one knew what to do. Apparently, the body that had been found belonged to a family in the lower town and

they were already searching for their son. News was beginning to spread and I knew it was only a matter of time before we would have to tell them that he was found.

All we could do was double down on the curfew and try and blame his death on the elements. I knew it would

be a hard

sell considering werewolves rarely got cold but **it** was the best **that** we could do at that point. The elders were not too happy about having to break the news to the people but they went to do it either way.

Our next stop was the physician and there was nothing new for him to tell us. He died in the same manner

as the last person and had only been dead for a few hours before we found him. He offered to cover up the bite marks so the family didn't see it and I was quick to agree. As we left his office, I turned to Ryker.

"How long has the boy been missing for?" I wanted to fact check something.

"According to the elders- two days."

"If he only died last night then that means that they are being held before they die. The question is why? What does he gain out of holding them captive for days? Is it a fear tactic?"

"It could be but somehow I doubt it. If it were that then they should have signs of torture but there is nothing. I have a feeling there's more to this than we realize."

I knew he was right but it was so frustrating to think about. I couldn't help but wonder why us? Why were we the ones to be targeted? There were thousands of werewolves and hundreds of packs all over the world so why were we the target?

"You're the Queen," Ryker began and I realized I had spoken out loud. "There is no greater show of strength than being able to overthrow the werewolf monarchy. Everything goes through you. If you fall then they all fall with you."