

The Rise Of The King

The Rise Of The King Chapter 51

-Noah-

After our lunch, we rested for about thirty minutes at the clearing and moved on to the next village. This one was significantly bigger and the meetings went just about the same as the previous one. There was a lot of confusion as to why I'd ask them to leave their land, until finally everyone was happy and clear with my stance. Really, having these meetings has enlightened me as to just how much the common folk are aware of the happenings between the Castle and the Families.

Just like Tom, most already know that this is me taking action against the Houses, rather than me being a charitable King; they saw through that angle quite quickly. This new angle, however, one in which I just want to stick it to the Families, is much more believable. Fortunately, most of them have decided to side with me on this matter.

Now that the second day of meetings is over, we are making our way back to the Castle in the shadow of night. I will attend meetings tomorrow morning as usual, and no one will suspect what we've been up to these past two days.

"Even if we only visited a few villages, rest assured that the message will be carried through. People are tired of being under the Houses' thumbs," Caleb says.

His comments brings me back to reality.

I simply nod.

"Do you think the Council will find out?" Mason asks.

"Probably, but by then there won't be much they can do. They know they're at a disadvantage. Challenging Noah was probably the worst thing they could've done."

"I just keep thinking they must have some plan in place. I doubt they won't see this coming." Ethan says.

"Nah. They're too arrogant. They think that by merely being backed by the Houses they have enough leverage. They don't," Eli says, resolute.

"Your concerns are not unfounded. I think we have to keep our ears and eyes open. Let's remember that not too long ago, Alistair had people very loyal to him within these walls. They too might play a part," I say. "The enemy of my enemy..." Mason says.

"Noted." Ethan says.

They both nod at us and disappear into the forest, going to cover their normal night shifts so as to not raise any suspicions.

"As for you, keep stalling the Council. We know Alcott has travelled back to his home to raise support for the Council's pretenses on the day of the trial. We still don't know in what manner that support might come." Caleb says. "We'll deal with it when the time comes. Thank you both," I tell Caleb and Eli.

They too, nod at me and go their separate ways and leave me to the back tunnels that lead to the library.

I enter the tunnels. The long, dark passageway giving me some time to think about a few things that have been on my mind.

Mainly, Vera.

I know she was happy to return home, even if it was tinged with some bittersweetness. I could feel this since our bond only got stronger when she marked me. When her emotions are strong enough, I can feel them as my own. Ethan's... issue... however, has brought forth something I hadn't even considered up to this point.

Pups.

Vera and I have never even talked about it, so I don't know if she even wants children. But do * I* want children? Absolutely.

Would I ever compromise Vera's health in order to get them?

Never.

But then again, my mother was a wolf and she was able to carry me to term and not...die... when I was born. So, even if Vera is a wolf, this doesn't mean she'd die necessarily.

Thankfully, wolves apparently have some form of pill they take every day in order to avoid pregnancies. It's the tiniest pill, I don't even know how it works, but it's kept her without a kid thus far. I'm grateful she thought of taking that; it will give us some time to figure things out.

Thinking of Vera makes me anxious; which is why I've been trying, but failing to avoid overthinking about her and her mission. I know she's strong, resilient, and incredibly smart, but I would feel a lot better if we could have gone back to wolf territory together. It sounds stupid, I know, and I probably wouldn't have been able to go to the Goldmoon's to begin with given that I'm a lycan, but it would have made me feel a lot better to know I am a short distance away from her.

When I reach the fake wall that leads to the library, I push it forward until I hear the distinct click."

Stepping out, I gasp, scared shitless.

"Goddess, Elden!" Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Elden is standing right in front of me, not looking the least bit amused.

I close the fake door behind me quietly while his expression is almost... annoyed?

"Come," he says and turns around, not giving me any explanations.

I don't even question him, I've learned that with Elden, I better just do as he says.

I follow him through the library. It's mostly deserted at this time of night, and only a few desks have their little lamps on with scholars finishing up their work. None of them raise their heads or acknowledge me in any way; it's why I like them so much. When we get to an end of the library, he leads me into a tunnel.

I frown, but again, I know better than to question him.

After a short walk, maybe ten minutes, we reach the end of the tunnel. When Elden opens the door, he sticks his head out, sniffing the air. Once he's sure that there's no one around, we step out.

We're at a part of the Castle where I've rarely ever been: the Beta's wing.

This just keeps getting weirder and weirder.

Elden begins walking, and I silently follow him towards Beta Caleb's old room. The entire wing is being remodeled to become part of Vera's clinic right along with the King's wing. There was just so much unoccupied space since Caleb decided to take a warrior's room and I decided to stay in my old room, it made no sense to not make use of them.

When Elden opens the door, his secretiveness suddenly makes overwhelming sense. Sitting at the middle of the room in a new chair, wrapped up in plastic, is Liam.

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-Noah-

When Liam notices us, he immediately perks up, smiling at us.

I come forward, hugging him and patting his back.

"Well, look what the cat dragged in." I tell him.

He hugs me back unlike the last time we saw each other.

"Always a pleasure, Your Highness," he says.

After a few more pats, we separate.

I take a good look at him. He looks like shit. His clothes are dirty. He's lost his shoes. Judging by the smell, he also hasn't showered in weeks if not months. His hair and beard have grown out so much he's almost unrecognizable. "So, is this a new look or a lifestyle change?" I tease him.

He rolls his eyes.

"Shut up," he says, but then realizes he's talking to his King - not that it matters to me - and adjusts his tone, "I mean, shut the f**k up, Your Highness," he says. We both laugh.

"It's good to have you back," I tell him, but pause, "why exactly are you here?"

We had agreed, or rather, *he* had agreed, that he wouldn't come back until he killed Harriet;

but for some reason this doesn't look like the face of a triumphant man.

He shakes his head.

"It's not what you think," he says, "we have to talk, Noah."

I turn to look at Elden.

"No no, he can stay. I actually think he *should* stay." Liam says.

"I already fed him, let's get into it," Elden says, wasting no time and taking a seat on one of the wrapped up chairs. Very down to business.

I raise an eyebrow, looking at Liam now.

"Yeah, he's the one who found me, actually. I was trying to get into the Castle through the tunnels out back but I realized, I didn't know where they were."

I nod, crossing my arms and giving him my full attention.

He begins,

"So, when I left the Castle, I was following Harriet's tracks, as you know I intended on killing her, but after about a month, her trail went completely cold. Instead of turning back to the Castle without accomplishing my mission, I decided to.... roam around... and see if she turned up anywhere. Another month went by and I was looking... rough around the edges... so to speak, and encountered a group of rogues right at the edge of our territory. To avoid an incomplete reading experience, visit Jobn'i'b.com. Because of my appearance, they assumed I was like them; exiled and forgotten. Of course, I went with them to see if I could find any information to help me find Harriet, but I had no luck. Instead, I became a... part of the rogues..."

I raise my eyebrows at this. It's not unexpected that Harriet was cunning enough to hide from him, but I never thought infiltrating the rogues would be this easy.

He continues,

"So, for the past couple of months, I've risen in the ranks within the rogues and finally got close to their leader. Noah, you have no idea how organized these people are. They have ranks, just like us, training grounds, leaders, a sort of... Council... and they're coming for all of you." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

I frown, noting that he said 'all of you' instead of 'all of us.'

"What do you mean they're coming for all of us? When?" I ask.

This is certainly not something I need right now. With Vera in wolf territory and my throne being challenged, I don't have the necessary manpower or Vera's intuition to win a war, much less the willingness to fight one.

"Soon," he says grimly. "But I really came down here because the timeline might have just been accelerated. There's a man, Alcott, I believe his name was, he started negotiating with rogues a few days ago."

This revelation does take me by surprise. That sneaky son of a bitch isn't negotiating with the Houses then, he went directly to the rogues.

"He promised the leader of the rogues that if they helped take you down, they could then have all the land they desired; the Castle even."

"So, the bastard has been planning a coup all along."

"He might have challenged your claim to the throne publicly to give him time to assemble the people he needed." Elden says.

"No," Liam answers him, "apparently he had already been in talks with some factions within the rogues. He only challenged your throne when he already had a meeting secured with the leader."

I finally sit down on one of the chairs, contemplating this new piece of information.

This changes everything. If Alcott is negotiating with the rogues in order to get himself an army, that's exactly what I need to be doing, too.

"What are the numbers, Liam? What kind of army are we talking about?"

His face turns grim.

"More than you can muster, that's for sure. At least seven rogues to one of yours. And they're mostly lycan."

I close my eyes, pinching the bridge of my nose.

This is perfect, just perfect.

"But that's not it," Liam continues, "I talked to Sadira, the leader, and her commanders. They don't actually trust Alcott, they want to use him to secure passage into the Castle, get rid of you, and then get rid of everyone else. There is not a single rogue that doesn't have beef with the Houses and the Families, there's no chance they'll be left standing after all of this."

"If they want to double-cross Alcott and the Houses, then why not take down the Families and leave the Castle alone?" I ask. It's a stupid question, but I need to understand the rogue's motivations in order to come up with a plan.

"Because, though we didn't realize it before, the Houses have been abusing their power and fucking people over for generations. Anyone who ever dared disagree with them or not pay up their taxes would either get beaten, killed, or in the best case, exiled. The rogue force we see now has been forming for a long time, Noah. And, justified or not, they blame the Castle for turning a blind eye."

Great.

I sigh, closing my eyes again and rubbing my hand through my hair, exasperated.

"How soon should we expect them?"

Really, the only real option I see now is to gather up whatever army I can and go to war with the rogues; maybe we can even hold the Castle and they can take everything else.

I just feel so defeated already. There's never ending shit coming our way and there seems to be no ending it.

"What do they want, really?" Elden asks Liam before he can answer my question.

Liam hesitates, trying to find the words.

"This is just my perception, right? But I've noticed most of these people just want... a home. They have cluttered up in numbers because it gives them a sense of belonging and safety. Some of them even liked the idea Alcott presented, of being given a home to come to, only of course, Sadira knows better than to trust a Council member."

"Have you told them I would have no problem in giving them land? A home?"

He rolls his eyes.

"Of course not, they think I was a prisoner of war here or something."

"Can you get us a meeting with their leader?" Elden asks.

"And discuss what exactly?" I ask him.

"That you are not your father's son, or your grandfather's grandson," he says, annoyed I'd even ask. "Noah, your father and grandfather were great men, the best this Castle had to offer, but what Liam is saying is true, they turned a blind eye to the abuse that the Houses had been inflicting on the common people, all because they needed their continued support. Maybe if we can convince them that you are nothing like that, and that your promise to them is legitimate, we

can negotiate with them to take the Council out, or at least, to not kill us all."

I turn to look at Liam.

"I'll see what I can do," he says, standing up and offering his hand to me.

I take it and shake it.

"You know, in the meantime, you could shower and whatever, you smell like death."

He chuckles.

"I smell like a wild animal for a reason. It helps disguise my scent, and yours. They'll never know I was even here," he explains.

I nod at him and he turns to leave with Elden, but suddenly, I remember something.

"Liam, have you had any leads on Harriet since? I need that bitch dead."

He turns to me, shaking his head.

"The trail has been cold for months now. Even with many rogues on the lookout, I have no idea where she went. It's like she just vanished beyond the western mountains."

He turns to leave again, exiting through the door behind Elden, heading towards the tunnels.

I grind my teeth.

I had hoped Liam had taken care of her already, but I guess that's one more thing to add to my list.

Harriet not only proved to be treacherous, she also proved to be cunning. I fear that given enough time, she will undoubtedly make a move against us at some point.

If Liam doesn't find and kill her, I will.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 53

-Noah-

"That piece of shit." Eli slams his fist against the table, causing it to lightly fracture.

"And you're certain of this information?" Asks Caleb.

"It's coming from a trustworthy source," I tell him.

"The source is Liam," Elden says.

I close my eyes, taking a deep breath. I was purposefully trying to keep my source a secret so as to not put him in danger, but Elden is too blunt for his own good. I trust all of the people here with my life, but this Castle, even now, has ears for walls. "Fuck, then it's true," Eli says, scratching his stubble, "So, what do you wanna do? Should we start raising an army?"

Of course, leave it to Eli to always look for the violent resolution in every scenario, looking quite content about it nonetheless.

"Liam will try to get us a meeting with their leader, Sadira I believe, and we'll see from there. If we can't come to an agreement with her, then yes, we would have to look for alternatives," I tell Eli. "What makes you think the rogues won't double cross us, too?" Caleb asks. SEARCH the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"It's a risk we will have to take. For now, let's all go about our day as we normally would. Eli, see into possibly raising an army, a few thousands if only to keep the Castle."

Eli nods and leaves, looking a little too happy about the task at hand.

"I never knew the problems ran this deep," Caleb muses to himself. He catches me staring, before, I mean, with Alexander, I never knew the Houses were terrorizing their people to this extent."

I stay silent. I never knew the man, but I don't like what I'm hearing thus far. He was the King, how could he not know what was happening right underneath his nose?

"He was a good man, Noah, he had the best intentions. Honestly, I strongly believe that's what got him killed in the end. He never understood that the people around him didn't have such a noble heart."

"I don't question his heart, Caleb, I question his intelligence."

Caleb purses his lips. I know he doesn't like me talking ill of Alexander, they were best friends after all, but he has to admit the man was not the most politically sharp.

"None of that matters anymore. Alexander's story was written the moment he decided to go against the Council and Alistair without a solid plan. Let us not make the same mistakes," Elden says, then he turns to me, "when is Vera coming back?" he asks. "Hopefully soon." I respond.

"Hopefully, for the sake of all of us," he says and turns around, leaving for his library.

I frown as I watch him go. I don't know if it's intentional or not, but every time this man speaks it sounds like a premonition.

I shake my head as it once again wanders to Vera and what she might be up to.

I walk towards the door, exiting with Caleb right behind. We have a meeting to go to.

After walking through several halls, we arrive at the Council meeting room where, just as expected, another meeting has been summoned.

Walking through the doors, the Council member seats are eerily empty; only a few Council members are at their seat including William. I take my seat at the head of the table and I'm about to speak when the doors dramatically open.

I make an effort to not roll my eyes. Why am I even surprised?

"Council member Alcott, I'm happy to see you still consider us worthy of your presence," I say.

"Oh, I'm sorry Your Highness, I had business to attend to back at my main House, nothing worth troubling you with, I assure you."

He takes his seat.

"Well, Council member Jeremiah had called for this meeting, but I see he is still not here. Does anybody know where he is and why he may be running late?" I ask.

"Your Highness, if I may," William stands up, "he had urgent matters to attend to at his home, you see, rogues have entered his territory and stolen a big portion of the crops gathered as taxes."

I stare at William, not amused that my time is being wasted.

"Well then, if I may." Alcott says, standing up.

William sits down.

"Your Highness, I really think all of these meetings should be halted until we have a resolution for... well for your case. Given that we actually have no proof of your lineage, it is questionable whether you should be allowed to make decisions until such evidence is provided," he says with a smirk.

"Should I go gather Alistair's remains, whatever is left of him, and show you why I should be here?" I ask him.

"Oh please, there is no need to be so crude. All I'm saying is, maybe if there is no real royal line left, then the future King should be someone selected through a popular election."

I remain quiet and rather serious. It unnerves him.

"So, I motion to resume these Council meetings once the matter of His Majesty's lineage is settled in four day's time, unless you'd like more time, Your Highness?"

Most of the Council members here voice their support for this motion, making these series of events all that more interesting. The majority of the missing members don't necessarily agree with Alcott and his methods, and today that he proposes a motion, they're all gone?

"I don't think that's wise," I interrupt them. "There are rogues moving into Council member Jeremiah's territory, meaning they are only a couple of days away from the Castle. It's closer than we have ever seen rogues come to us, we should address the matter, unless, of course, the present Council members would disagree with me?"

Alcott is surprised I'd even challenge him. Truth be told, most of the time, I just go with whatever is settle amongst them without any challenge; that's because most of the time, my mind isn't even here at all.

"I think His Majesty is right," William says, "if the rogues indeed have come this close. something must be happening, we must take action."

"I suggest we send a party of twenty, myself included, and go... negotiate terms... with the rogues," I say, causing everyone to look at me, surprised.

"Negotiate... terms... Your Highness?" Alcott asks.

"Sure, I've heard their leader, Sadira, is a great beauty, wouldn't you say, Council member Alcott? I sure would like to see this for myself."

He suddenly turns serious, the color draining from his face.

I stare at him for a long time, further unnerving him. It must be a great surprise for him that I even know her name; it's something that had never come up before.

"Well." I finally say, standing up. "if it is a four day vacation this Council wants, then I'm inclined to agree with you all. After all, I too have matters to attend to."

I make a point to stare at Alcott as I say this. He stares at me defiantly, but just a second ago, I saw him gulp.

I smirk and rise to leave the room.

Caleb follows behind me.

"You really didn't have to rattle him up like that," he tells me once we are out in the corridor.

"But it's fun, isn't it?" I respond with a smirk.

Caleb simply shakes his head in disapproval.

Thanks to Liam, I have hopefully now caused Alcott to rethink his entire strategy. That might give us a chance to talk to Sadira or for him to get desperate and make a mistake. Either way, throwing a wrench in the enemy's plan is always a good idea. Now, we wait and hope that Liam comes through with the meeting the rogue leader.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 54

-Noah-

Six days.

Six days without proper food or sleep.

Six days have passed and still I have no news of Vera.

Yesterday, I was hit with this... feeling... right in the pit of my stomach that has increased my anxiety tenfold. I still haven't figured out what it was, but it made me double down in the shower, like I couldn't breathe. It was a sharp pain, but I knew it was not physical

at all. It made me wander the entire Castle the rest of the day and at night, like a ghost roaming through the halls. Half of the time, I had the burning urge to run after Vera right then in the middle of the night. My lycan kept rising to the surface, ready to obey that urge.

Now, several hours later, the pain in my gut is gone, but that 'punch in the gut' feeling left me with a terrible sensation.

The truth is, I've been feeling more and more anxious the longer I go without news from Vera. I keep thinking that even if I trust the guys she's with with my life, hers is mine and mine alone to protect.

I grind my teeth unconsciously and don't even realize my aura, or whatever Vera called it, is sneaking up on everyone around me until Elden points it out.

"Noah, knock it off," he says, narrowing his eyes at me, annoyed.

This has been happening a lot lately, more so after yesterday, even when I'm not bothered or angry by anything; I think just being away from Vera is making... something... inside me very angry.

I look up, noticing Eli and Caleb have taken a calculated step back from the table. I always wondered why they did that; I'd never actually hurt them, but apparently their reaction is just by instinct and they can't control it. "Sorry, sorry, I got distracted," I tell them.

"As I was saying, I have managed to gather enough warriors to hold the Castle if it came to it.

Again, we could use the tunnels to hide and evacuate non-tactical staff, the only real problem would be that if the rogues do attack, it will probably be a surprise attack." Eli says.

"We have a timeline, though," Caleb says, "from what Liam said, the catalyst for the attack will

be the trial, that's tomorrow. That's if Your Highness didn't accelerate Alcott's timeline."

Elden and Eli turn to me.

"I may or may not have ruffled his feathers a little," I explain, shrugging.

Eli smirks, approvingly. Elden narrows his eyes at me again.

"And there has been no word from Liam, correct?" Caleb asks.

"None," Elden says.

"I imagine it's difficult to explain just how why he became our messenger," I interject.

"Well, either way, all we can do now is wait and see what happens. Even if Alcott has decided to accelerate the timeline, the rogues would be fools to not accept our meeting first," Eli says.

With that, we all agree to go about our usual day as we wait for Liam to come back with news.

Elden leaves for his library again, while Eli and Caleb each go their own separate ways. I know they probably still have things to do in preparation for the trial, but I can't concern myself with that anymore.

I've been feeling too volatile, too out of control, lately. It's something that I expected after letting my lycan fight free and unchecked in the woods all those months ago, but trying to keep this aura thing under control is starting to wear me down. So, I decide to spend the rest of the morning in the training grounds; it's the only thing that seems to keep me from worrying about Vera constantly, which is making the volatility worse.

When I enter the fighting ring, the new recruits stare at me in fear. They have never seen me fight, and they are not the least bit eager to fight me themselves.

After several hours, most of the morning has gone by. I have fought almost every warrior here. reminding everyone who the better fighter is. Some even have come back to try and defeat me, but have failed miserably.

One by one, warrior after warrior falls at my feet as I defeat them quickly.

When I finally stop and step out of the ring, I do so because I'm hungry, not because I'm tired.

Alan hands me a towel and water.

"I don't know if you fighting them encourages them or makes them fear you more, boss," he

says.

"Either way seems good to me," he says.

Off to the corner, I notice Mason coming in, his expression rather serious. When he locks eyes with me, he simply nods.

I nod back, understanding.

I hand the towel back to Alan and proceed to leave the training grounds, meeting Mason at the exterior courtyard; it's empty at this time.

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I got word from our resident rogue. The leader agreed to meet outside the Castle territory at midnight. She'll be accompanied, she wants to make sure no harm will come to her or her party," he says.

"Done. We will only be five guys, she can bring as many as she wants. It has to be within Castle territory, though. I can't guarantee her protection otherwise. Tell Liam to tread carefully, he knows the way in and out of the territory without being detected, but this knowledge might make them suspicious of him."

Mason nods and leaves.

I turn to look around, making sure absolutely no one was near us to hear the exchange. After a few minutes, I turn in the direction of the Castle, making my way to Eli's office.

When I get there, I enter the door and find him sitting in front of a map of the Castle.

"Your Highness," he looks up.

"We got word from our spy, the meeting will be tonight at midnight. She will be accompanied;

no harm will come to her or her party. We will leave a few hours before to scout out the area, just in case."

"Sounds like a plan," Eli says, standing up and taking the map, placing it in front of me, "I'll tell the others. Mason and Ethan will join us?"

I nod.

"Very well. Don't leave, we have a few strategies to discuss."

I eye the map. It's an old map of the Castle, one that shows every weak spot, but also the areas that are impenetrable.

After only a couple of minutes, Eli is back.

"Well, they are all aware and excited to meet this rogue leader. Now, the map," he says, coming to stand in front of me as we both stare at the map, "this," he points at the main entrance, "is our biggest weak spot. I recommend putting most of our warriors here in case the rogues breach; there's no time to reinforce the door."

"Where did you get this map?" I ask him.

"Elden. I asked for the oldest map he knows of and that's what he came up with," he shrugs.

I trace my finger on the map, careful not to damage it. I'm following a strange red line that flows through the castle. It's very faint, almost too faint to see, but it's there.

"What do you think this is?" I ask Eli.

"I

I figured it was an initial tracing of the foundations; they follow every bit of the Castle's outline.

My finger traces over the lines again and again, feeling like there's more to it. Then, my finger lands on the Beta's wing.

"Wait, look at this," I tell Eli, tracing the exact route that Elden took me on the other day when he took me to Liam from the library. "Eli, this is a map of the hidden passageways of the Castle."

Eli leans over, looking at the lines now under a new light.

"If that's the case..." he says, tracing a big square at the entrance, "could this be a dungeon or something?"

I notice what he's referring to. There's a rectangle a few meters outside the Castle entrance and it extends to most of the length of the stone wall.

"I don't know, but ask Elden, see if he knows what it could be."

Eli nods and once again leaves.

The rest of the day flies by quickly.

I grab a quick bite to eat, not really having an appetite just like the past few days. Then, I meet with Caleb, trying to figure out a plan to convince the rogues to switch to our side. To avoid an incomplete reading experience, visit Jobn'i'b.com. Quickly, the afternoon and night are gone as we even make plans for my trial tomorrow.

"Let's hope Vera makes it back in time and with the documents we need," he says, finally. The mention of Vera once again causes the ripple in my stomach to form.

"Ladies, it's time to get going." Eli says coming in, checking his watch.

Behind him, Mason and Ethan are ready to leave.

I straighten,

"Alright then," I say.

With Caleb, Eli, Mason, and Ethan, we make our way to the library, heading to the tunnels.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 55

-Noah-

Arriving at the clearing where we'll meet the rogues, we all pause.

I give them a signal and Eli, Mason, and Ethan disperse, scouting out the area. This is just a precautionary measure, of course, but I can't risk right now.

Only about thirty minutes later, to our surprise, Liam enters the clearing, with his arms raised.

"You Your Highness," he says, looking afraid.

I immediately catch on. He's faking his fear so that the rogues don't suspect he's really one of my warriors and friends.

I growl at him, still in lycan form. From the trees, Ethan, Mason, and Eli come back, flanking me.

"Our leader requests to have this meeting in human form, Your Grace," he says.

I'm going to have fun teasing him about this once this whole thing is over.

I turn to my human form, putting on a pair of sweats I brought with me; behind me, everyone does the same.

"Ah, now we can finally meet," someone says behind Liam.

Someone whom I believe to be Sadira, their leader, walks out of the tree line, followed by at least a dozen of her men.

I raise an eyebrow at this. SEARCH the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Oh, it's only fair," she says, "Afterall, you made *me* come to you. I must say, at least Alcott had the decency of coming to my turf."

Sadira steps closer to us, and so does the rest of her party, including Liam.

Now that I can see her up close, I can tell she's a lycan just by her physical build; human women or even she wolves are slightly smaller and She can't be over forty years old.

"Sadira, I presume?" I ask her.

She simply nods.

"It's nice to meet you, I'm Noah. This is Eli, Caleb, Ethan, and Mason."

They each nod at the mention of their name.

"Oh, I know who you are, Your Grace," she says, "is this the totality of your party?" she asks.

"Yes," I say.

She nods at two of her guys who quickly turn to their lycans and run into the forest, no doubt to check if I'm lying.

In a few minutes, they've come back and nod at Sadira, confirming that it is in fact, just us.

"Good, Your Grace, a man of your word," she says.

"Always," I reply.

She smiles, but it's humorless.

"What do you want. Sadira?"

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 56

-Vera-

The first thing I notice as the fog of unconsciousness starts lifting off of me, is that I'm excruciatingly sore.

I try to open my eyes, but they're too heavy. I try lifting my fingers and moving my toes, but this simple task seems monumental. I try to grunt, but my throat is too dry; I don't even have saliva to swallow. I must be dehydrated.

I try to focus on my other senses since I can't yet open my eyes to see my surroundings. I know that whatever I'm lying on is hard and cold, like stone. Wherever I'm at has to be some type of cave or somewhere underground where there isn't any ventilation; there is an intense smell of must and no air flow. I can feel my hair sticking to my forehead, which also means that it's quite humid.

Once again, I try to move my fingers.

"Mistress, she seems to be waking up," I hear a voice.

I freeze.

This is a voice I recognize.

Harriet.

"Is that so?" I hear a deep, elegant voice in the distance.

"I mean, she could just be twitchy, she could be having a nightmare," I hear another feminine, but childish voice. Someone else chuckles.

"When she wakes up, she's going to wish that nightmare was real," someone else says, a man, sounding cheery.

I remain still, not giving away that I've regained consciousness as I'm unsure if I'd even be able to stand up by myself at this point, much less fight these people off.

A million scenarios are running through my head, but the one I fear the most is the one I'm probably in judging by the ringing in my ears.

Harriet had said 'Mistress,' and I'm almost certain she means the Witch Mother; after all, Mehra had also called her 'Mistress' all those months ago.

My heartbeat becomes slightly elevated as adrenaline starts pumping into it. If I had more energy, this would be a fight or flight situation, but I'm not in any condition to do either.

I try to reach my wolf to check on her, but she's nowhere to be found. She must also be hurt somehow.

Slowly, memories of what happened start coming to me. The slashing of the trees, me trying to save the guys by making the ground collapse beneath them, passing out and someone taking me... I now can safely assume it was Harriet; I didn't recognize it then, but I smelled her back in the forest right before I became unconscious.

My senses become sharper the more I regain consciousness; the problem is, to actually know where I am and how many people are here with me, I'll have to open my eyes. If I do it now, it will undoubtedly give me away.

After what feels like an eternity, the elegant voice at the end of the room finally speaks again.

"Well, it seems like we had no luck today either. If she doesn't wake up by tomorrow, we'll have to use more extreme measures."

Slowly, I hear the shuffling of feet and the shutting of what seems to be a large, metal door as it frictions against stone.

Did she say 'today either"? How long have I been out?

When I'm sure I'm alone, I finally open my eyes.

I do my best to gauge my surroundings. I'm now sure that I'm in some form of stone cell. It's cold, it's humid, and I'm also dressed in some form of thin robe. Turning my head to a side, I can now see the outside of my cell. I start shivering, and not because I'm cold.

From what little I can see, this looks like the same place that I saw in my vision of the Witch Mother; that horrendous place where she tried for decades to create Spirit Wolves. Visit [Job n i b .co m](http://Jobnib.com) to read the complete chapters for free. There's a large, black caldron in the middle with a live flame right beneath it. There are also several gruesome hooks hanging for the ceiling.

I take a long look at the heavy, metal bars that guard my cell. They seem old and heavy; all in all, impenetrable.

If I'm going to escape, I'm going to have to do it once they take me out of the cell, if they even do. My eyes wander to my next obstacle though; that huge, metal door at the exit of the room.

Not only will I have to outrun these people in my state, it'll also have to be when that door is wide open. And even then, I have no idea what I'll be met with outside. Guards? Warriors? A maze? I try to gulp, but I can't. I'm parched.

Once again, I try to reach my wolf. The only other alternative to that impossible escape plan, is to fight the Witch Mother and everyone else here. Again, however, she's nowhere to be found.

Slowly, I again try to move my limbs. It takes me some time, but after a while, I can finally move my fingers. Then, my feet. Taking my time, I try to incorporate myself to a sitting position. As my strength returns, so too, does my mobility.

Now that I'm in a sitting position, I take my time to really take in everything around me. The space is quite large now that I'm looking at it. There are several cells just like mine, but I seem to be the only prisoner.

Looking up at the walls, floor, and cells, I realize that I am in fact in the Witch Mother's Castle; this is the same place from my vision, if only Goddess knows how many centuries older and run down.

I feel a tiny surge of hope, knowing that if I do manage to get through those doors, I may be able to make my way outside.

Suddenly, my wolf comes just to the surface. I close my eyes and look at her.

Hey, girl, I tell her, putting my hand on her cheek, "how are you holding up?

She simply stares at me, her gaze unreadable. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

I frown.

We have never really automatically understood each other, but she has always at least tried to communicate with me. This time, she just keeps staring at me. "What's wrong?" I ask her, letting go of her face.

I take a few steps back, trying to decipher her stare and stance. The hairs on her nape are raised and she seems afraid.

Then, her gaze lowers to my stomach.

My frown deepens, not understanding what she's doing at all or what she means.

When her eyes meet mine again, however, I gasp.

"There's no way." I whisper.

She walks the few steps that I put between us and gently lowers her snout to my belly.

When I open my eyes again, my hand flies to my stomach protectively as I look at it. My heart starts beating faster; dread settling in my gut.

If she's right, it's not only me I have to worry about now.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 57

-Noah-

I hear steps approaching us fast. I sniff the air; they're warriors from the Castle.

One by one, I have carefully taken the guys out of the crater-like hole in the forest. Fortunately, all of them sustained.

When the warriors get to us, including Lucas and Eli, I instruct them to take the injured warriors to the "Tell me everything you remember," I tell Arlo and Ezra, the only ones awake.

"I - I don't know *what* happened, Noah," Arlo begins, "but we were making our way to the Castle as s approaching us, fast. and it was slicing through the trees like they were butter. I have never seen anyt

I nod, letting the warriors know to take him away to the Castle like the rest.

"It was magic," Ezra says, behind me. He's being carried to the Castle by two warriors.

"What?" I ask, frowning.

"It was magic, Noah. It was as if the wind itself suddenly became as sharp as a sword. Vera kneeled do woman took her away."

I'm shocked at his comment. First, because as I turn to look at the giant hole in the middle of the fore much less that Vera is one.

As if reading my mind, he continues,

"I figured it out," he says, "she just confirmed it."

"And this other woman, what did she look like?"

"All I can tell you is that her eyes were white. Noah, be very careful," he says grimly.

My blood runs cold.

That could only mean one thing.

I nod, indicating to the warriors to take Ezra to the Castle.

re alive. Ezra and Arlo are conscious, but very banged up. Colt, Emmet, and Rowan keep drifting in and out of consciousness, presumably from a head injury to be treated. But before, I need answers.

ed, nearing the campsite, when Vera just... stopped... she looked terrified and she wouldn't say what was wrong. Then, from behind us, something was e it in my life. I don't remember much after that, I just woke up in that hole. I'm sorry," he says.

ng her magic to create this hole. If it wasn't for her, that thing would have sliced us all in half. She was barely conscious, if at all, when Harriet and that other

o enough to be a water hole, it's hard to believe Vera did this. Secondly, because nobody in this party knew for certain of the existence of witches and magic,

Unlike them, I stay behind and when everyone else is gone, I start looking for clues, anything that could point me in the direction of where they might have taken her.

I make my way around the hole Vera created, trying to find at least a trail, her scent, anything to guide me to her, but after an hour of meticulous tracking, it's impossible. It's as if she was never even here.

A realization hits me like a ton of bricks. What was it Liam had said about Harriet's trail? That it had gone cold because it was as if she had vanished? There is little doubt in my mind that she's working with the witches. But what does that mean for my efforts to track Vera?

I'm about to hurry back to the Castle to come up with a plan, when something catches my eye at the bottom of the hole Vera created. It's a dark duffel bag, the one Vera was carrying when she left the Castle.

I quickly slide back down the hole, retrieving the bag and opening it, almost willing a clue to be in here. [SEARCH THE website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

I don't find any clues, but everything smells like her. With this, I will at least be able to send scouts and trackers with her scent to try and find her. As of now, it's the only way I can think of finding her. I make my way back to the Castle, defeated, angry, and frustrated.

Had I found Vera's scent, I would be going after her right now, but if this is the Witch Mother we're talking about, which I believe it is, I have to be smart about it.

By the time I enter the Castle again, it's already early in the morning.

As I make my way to Eli and the others, ready to distribute Vera's clothes to my trackers to try and find her, I'm met with an almost sardonic looking Alcott at the courtyard with a crowd of people. "Your Highness," he greets me with a smile.

Eli, Caleb, and Elden are standing off to a side, with the entirety of the Council up front, waiting for me.

It takes me a moment to realize what's happening.

Today is day seven.

The day of the trail.

Something inside me begins to stir, but I take a deep breathe and try to control it. This is not the time to let my emotions get the best of me, particularly my anger.

I move towards Eli, handing him Vera's bag.

"Hand it out to the scouts and trackers, anything that has Vera's scent. She's missing." I tell him.

Both Caleb and Elden stare at me, shocked. Eli grinds his teeth and nods, taking the bag from me.

Slowly, I step in front of the Council to stand trial.

"Well, Your Highness, here we are," Alcott says, "and as none of us actually have time to waste, let us cut right to the chase. The documents proving your lineage, do you have them?" he asks. My answer is instant.

"No."

I hear a gasp and the thing inside me twirls again.

It's not taking kindly to wasting time right now.

"Well then, I guess the matter is settled," Alcott says.

Someone else speaks.

"Dear Council members, I believe this matter can't, in fact, be settled today. I don't know if my fellow council members are aware, but one of our scouting parties was attacked today. Luckily, no one was mortally wounded but it is a matter we have to look into, and for that we can't be in quarrels with His Majesty," William says.

"Oh, my dear William," Alcott says, "there is no quarrel. It's been settled! There is no document proving he is the legitimate King, and therefore, this Council has to take it upon itself to find a worthy King."

I grind my teeth.

"Do whatever you want, Alcott, I really don't have time for any of this. So, if you'll excuse me."

I begin walking out of the courtyard but apparently, I hit a nerve. Behind me, I hear Alcott explode.

"You dare address me in such manner, warrior Noah?! You have no respect for tradition, you have no respect for what this Council represents! That is why you are not

fit to be King! Not to mention, that little mutt of yours has been nothing but trouble since the moment you brought her here!"

I snap. This time for real.

Whatever awoke within me earlier in the forest is coming in with a vengeance.

I feel my lycan rise to the surface as I take long, quick strides towards Alcott, taking him by surprise. The height at which the Council chairs sit will do very little to protect him.

When I'm inches from him, my lycan ready to pounce, I stop.

This is something else, something I hadn't felt before. It feels unfamiliar to my lycan, but it feels very familiar to me. It's like a slow emanation of energy from within me, projecting outward.

I see Alcott and the entirety of the Council cower, frozen in place. They're staring at me with wide eyes and sweating profusely.

Without a second thought, my hand wraps around Alcott's neck, lifting him up in the air and choking him.

I watch the life drain out of his eyes as he claws desperate at my arm, unable to free himself.

Once he's dead, I let go. His body falls to my feet, unceremoniously.

The council is notably affected by this, but still, no one moves.

Eli comes in, standing next to me. He takes one look at Alcott's body and smirks.

"He had it coming." Eli says, handing me an envelope, "this was within Vera's bag, you might want to take a look at it."

I take the paper from him, hoping it's a clue, but instead, I find something else.

I stare at Eli and he nods, slowly.

"She got it for you, son," he says, putting a hand on my shoulder.

I growl slightly, feeling that energy within me again. This piece of paper, this Council, this whole fucking shit show is what put Vera in danger in the first place.

I toss the piece of paper in front of the Council before I crumble it in my hands.

"Here's your f*****g proof."

With that, I storm out, Eli following close behind.

"They're ready to go. I gave each of them a piece of their clothing and they've become familiar with her scent. Caleb, Elden and I are going as well; that old man has a better sense of smell than most." I nod, turning the corner of the courtyard towards the exit of the Castle.

As I'm about to exit, I hear loud footsteps behind me.

"Noah! Noah! Wait!"

I turn around to find Cassia running to catch up to us.

"Noah, I think I can help," she says, gaining my full attention.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 58

-Vera-

I didn't think it was possible, but I went back to sleep in that cold, humid cell after a few hours, uncon

I must have been very tired for this to happen since I spent hours racking my brain, trying to figure out how I had been careful, extra careful in fact. I had taken my birth control as usual all these months and even Then, I remembered.

I missed one pill the night that Noah and I slept together at House Cerulean.

One night.

One night is all it took.

Everything makes sense now. My wolf not wanting to turn, my weird food cravings, my sleepiness and But now, I have bigger problems to worry about.

I have to protect this baby. If the Witch Mother finds out that I'm pregnant, I don't know what she would do. Would she keep it? Would she use it for more sinister purposes? What's even more pressing is, is this My wolf and I have agreed that she'll stay under the veil, using her magic to guard the baby's presence Suddenly, the large metal door opens, creaking against the stone floor and drawing my attention. "Mistress! She's awake!" the cheery, childlike voice says.

When she walks in, I notice she does in fact, look like a child. She has short, curly hair and she appears indeed a powerful witch; and as I have seen, a witch can appear any age she wants to.

"I see," the elegant voice says with a melodic voice.

I hear her before I see her as she descends the stairs.

When the Witch Mother comes into the room, it's striking how beautiful she is. She has long, wavy blonde hair she's actually a

monster.

"Well, you're looking rather well, aren't you?" She says, approaching the cell and looking at me up and down. "Marcus, can you fetch some water?" She calls out.

My hand is guarding my stomach with my arm.

This* had happened.

Before leaving to the Castle; this shouldn't have happened.

My hand is guarding my stomach with my arm. The baby should be fine even with me turning to my wolf, since I'm not too far along. Most of the time, even if they're pregnant this early.

Magical at all? If that's the case, she might be able to feel him if we're not careful. Fully this will keep the Witch Mother from finding out about it.

She's a teenager. She looks innocent enough; her appearance is deceiving, however. As she gets closer, the ringing in my ears gets louder, indicating that she is

that reaches her hips. She has porcelain-like, fair skin and full, red lips. She's a vision and she walks with such grace and elegance; it's easy to forget that

I hadn't noticed, but a man had come in with her; he had stood at the door as the Witch Mother made her way to me.

He nods, turning around and ascending the stairs.

I say nothing as the Witch Mother paces in front of my cell, never taking her eyes off of me.

This goes on for some time, until Marcus returns with a jug of water and hands it to the Witch Mother.

"Here," she says, opening my cell and placing the water jug in it.

I eye it, but make no move to go towards it. For all I know, that thing could have poison in it.

"Dear, if I wanted you dead, you would be. You are no use to me unless you're alive," she says, closing my cell once again.

I didn't notice her using any type of key when she opened the cell; I make a mental note of that. It might be some type of magical lock or spell.

"If you don't drink this, I'll force you," she threatens, her voice sounding slightly menacing. SEAR*ch the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

It's a reality that I'm dehydrated; I can already feel the symptoms, and if I want to escape, I'm going to have to drink up.

I move slowly towards the jug, watching the With Mother carefully.

Once I grab it, I down it quickly, some of it spilling down my chin, landing on my robe.

It's cold and refreshing.

The With Mother smiles at me.

It's a warm smile. If I didn't know better, it could even lead me to believe she has redeeming qualities. But I have to remember that she doesn't know that I saw how Spirit Wolves are created; how she would t*****e mothers and force them to have babies, to then just discard them like trash.

In her eyes, this is the first time we're meeting, when in fact, I know her better than she'd probably like.

"Now that you're hydrated, we can proceed," she says.

The man, Marcus, comes into my cell. Again, I notice it's the Witch Mother who opens it. Maybe the spell is linked to her only.

Marcus grabs me by the arm, dragging me out of the cell. I don't put much resistance; I have to save my strengths for later.

Once out, he puts me in front of the cauldron in the middle of the room, cuffing my arms and feet to the floor with heavy chains, he lifts me up in the air by the turn of a lever on the wall.

My arms rise over my head, painfully suspended by the chains as he creaks the lever.

I watch the Witch Mother carefully, observing her every move.

She moves towards a table to the side and retrieves a finely decorated knife. It's unlike anything I've seen before, with true white metal and an obsidian handle; but just like my spear, there's a purple crystal dangling from it.

"This, my child, is a *extractionem* knife. Us witches use it to draw out power from each other.

You see, as much as you hurt a witch, we can always come back, unless you use one of these to drain us of our magic for good."

I gulp involuntarily.

"Yes, exactly," she says with a wide smile, enjoying my fear, "now, my dear Harriet here came to us some months ago to allege that she knew a witch outside these walls and that said witch had killed our beloved Mehra, but well, we had our doubts to say the least." She turns to look to her side and I follow her gaze.

Inside one of the cells, lies Harriet, seemingly unconscious.

"She believed we would take her in, you see. Since she no longer had a home to go back to, she assumed that if she came with us with this information, that she could stay here, with us."

To my side, the little girl laughs loudly, hysterically.

"But, well, you mutts are only useful for one thing and one thing only," she finishes, looking up at the hooks dangling from the ceiling.

Sacrifices. She means sacrifices.

"After all, we draw our magic from living beings." I hear her say, but to my surprise, she's standing right in front of me, and not a few paces away like she was a second ago. Quickly, she slashes her knife across my cheek, drawing blood.

I hiss.

For some reason, this wound hurts more than just a regular cut, considering it's a superficial one.

It must have something to do with what she explained about the knife.

She takes the knife to her lips, quickly dabbing her tongue on the blood.

Immediately, her eyes go wide, her mouth slightly gaping. Her white eyes take on a gleam that they didn't have before.

"She was right," she whispers after several moments.

"So, she's the one that killed Mehra?" The man asks.

The Witch Mother nods, absentmindedly licking her lips.

"Marcus, put her back in her cell. Bring her some food and water, she'll need it. Helena, come with me, we have to prepare everything. We start tomorrow."

"Yes, Mistress," they both chime at the same time.

Marcus again pulls on the lever, releasing the chains from the ceiling that kept me dangling.

This time, however, he doesn't remove the cuffs and instead, bring me into the cell dragged by the chains.

"It's finally happening." the Witch Mother muses, pure glee on her face.

I notice both Marcus and Helena are beaming with joy, too.

All I can do for now, is figure out what exactly this bitch wants, how I fit in, and how I'm going to get out of here.

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 59

-Noah-

"Noah, I think I can help," Cassia had said once she'd caught up to us.

I waited patiently for her to catch her breathe.

"I've been... I've been practicing..." she says.

I raise my eyebrow.

"I've been practicing some tracking spells that I found in the library working with Elden. I think,

I think if I can find something of hers with enough... essence... I think I can track her."

"And how long have you been practicing for?" Eli asks, cynical.

"Long enough," she says, narrowing her eyes.

Cassia is young, and from what Vera told me she doesn't have that much magic; not yet at least. But fuck if I won't try every method at my disposal. Visit Jobnib.com to read the complete chapters for free. "What do you need, exactly?" I ask. "Hmm... does she have like a childhood toy or something that's been with her a long time?"

"No, that's all back at the pack house and we don't have time to go there right now."

"Hmmm..." she thinks, turning everywhere, searching for ideas. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Does her toothbrush work?" Eli asks, sarcastically.

It annoys me that he'd joke at a time like this, but I let it go for the sake of moving along faster.

"Noah," I hear a small voice, "I think I know what can help," Charlotte comes towards us, slowly. She doesn't look so well.

"Charlotte! I thought I told you to stay in bed," Cassia says, offering her hand to Charlotte for support.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," she says, waving her hand dismissively, "the flowers, Cassia. Vera's flowers."

It takes a minute for this to register.

"Of course!" Cassia says, understanding what Charlotte means, and runs off into the Castle.

I stare at Charlotte, curious as to what she means and concerned that she looks so sickly.

"Are you okay?" I ask her, guiding her inside the Castle to one of the chairs in the courtyard. Thankfully, Alcott's body has already been removed and the Council has scattered. It's like nothing happened; not the trial, not his death. Nothing. "I'm fine, it's just this baby, it's kicking my ass," she says, sitting down carefully.

I'm about to offer to call Ethan, but Cassia returns, panting.

"This! This works!" she says, holding several flowers in her hands.

I cock my head, still not understanding a damn thing.

"When Vera feels stressed or anxious, she usually channels her magic through the Moon Peonies,

it's why they've grown so much and bloom year round."

"So, you're saying these flowers...?" Eli asks.

"These flowers have Vera's essence," Charlotte explains, "quite literally."

Realization dawns on me.

If that's the case, this could actually work.

My mood lightens up. For the first time since this morning. I feel hope.

"Cassia, do what you have to do," I tell her.

She nods enthusiastically and runs further into the Castle again.

"Charlotte, thank you, but you should really rest," I tell her.

She gets up.

"Yeah, yeah. It's just... when I heard... I had to come down here and at least try to help," she says, standing up.

"Charlotte!" Someone yells.

Charlotte rolls her eyes.

"Here we go," she mutters to herself.

Ethan approaches us with an angry look on his face.

Goddess knows this isn't something I want to stay for. I thank Charlotte again and leave her to Ethan.

Once I'm outside the Castle, I'm met with Elden and Caleb who are leading the trackers; each of them carrying something belonging to Vera.

"You didn't actually have to kill him, you know?" Caleb mutters when I'm close enough.

"He absolutely did, Alcott was a huge pain in the a*s," Elden says.

"It sends a message," Eli shrugs.

"Yeah, a message of fear. I don't know if that's how you want to lead your people," Caleb says.

"Listen, we can talk all you want about this literally any other time, but right now, please, let's focus."

"Very well," Elden says, "we will begin where Vera was taken, from there, we will each move into the forest, trying to pick up a scent. Remember, don't just focus on Vera's scent, focus on any other unfamiliar scent. They might have disguised Vera, but not themselves," Elden instructs. He promptly changes into his lycan.

It takes us all a minute to process the image. None of us, maybe with the exception of Caleb, had seen Elden turn. His lycan is notably old, but very, very lean under all that gray hair.

Eli and I share a look. Caleb just chuckles.

We have only ever seen Elden with an oversized robe too, but it seems like the old man is seriously lean under that. Afterall, lycans take after their human shape when it comes to physique.

Soon, we are all turned and ready to go when Lucas rounds the corner in his lycan form, carrying Cassia on his back.

We nod at each other and take off.

Running full speed in our lycan form, we get there relatively fast; perhaps in under four hours.

With the clarity of the day, the level of destruction is scarily clear. The scouts and warriors with us also have to pause to look at the trees and how cleanly they've been cut. Also, if lycans could gasp, I'm sure most of them would. The hole Vera created is enormous. She must have used all of her power to create it, which is why she probably passed out and became such an easy target.

Elden and the rest of the trackers start rounding up the hole with their noses up in the air; some of them are walking on all fours, smelling the ground. Beside me, Lucas has arrived with Cassia and she's setting up a map and taking the moon peonies in her hands. She sits in front of the map, closes her eyes, and begins some form of chant.

She opens her eyes again, releasing the moon peonies onto the map from above ceremoniously.

She frowns.

"No, that can't be right. Hold on," she says.

She retrieves the flowers, repeating the process all over again. When she opens her eyes again and releases the flowers, she frowns... again.

"Goddess, what am I doing wrong?!" She yells, frustrated.

She digs into her bag, retrieving an old looking book.

As she does that, I realize that maybe she does need a little more practice before we can rely on her to use her magic. Regardless, I appreciate her effort.

I make my way to the trackers, keeping my distance as to not interrupt their process. Elden is at the lead once again, his nose lifted to carefully sniff out any scent, whether it's Vera's or not.

This goes in for a while. Some of the trackers have even had to go back to their starting point to begin the process all over again. At one point, one of the guys thought he had something but it was just a small prey animal.

As the hours pass and we lose daylight, this whole situation gets more and more frustrating. We have repeated this process over and over, having to re start over and over as the guys, even Elden, lose the smell they were tracking. More than making Vera's scent vanish, it's like they scattered her scent everywhere, making it impossibly diluted with every other scent in this damn place.

After several more hours, the trackers have scattered all throughout the forest, looking for leads.

I rub my temples, not only because I'm tired and desperate, but because that *thing* inside me keeps pouncing in my head. I still don't understand it, but I don't have time for this. I have to find Vera. Now.

"I got it!" Cassia yells in the distance.

I make my way to her quickly, without hesitation.

When I'm beside her, I crouch down.

"Here!" She says, pointing at a mountain range far, far north. On the map, it connects to the mountains that spread all over lycan territory, but it's not part of it.

I shift back to my human form in order to talk to her.

"How sure are you of this?"

She stutters as she tries to speak, staring at me wide eyed.

Oh, right, I'm naked.

"Get over it," I tell her.

She clears her throat, her eyes returning to the map but it does little to hide her blush.

"Very sure, I did it three times. I'm sure it's correct this time."

I frown. It's so far off our territory that the map doesn't even show it completely, it cuts off right behind the mountain range, and that's where the flowers are piled up.

"I got something," I hear someone say behind me.

Elden comes towards us. At least he was more decent than me and put a robe on.

He comes over, pointing north.

"I didn't catch Vera's scent, but I did catch the scent of a witch and the wind carried it that way.

I nod. This is confirmation of Cassia's map, too.

On impulse, I change to my lycan, ready to organize this scouting party into a rescue party but a voice coming from the woods stops me.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

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The Rise Of The King Chapter 60

-Vera-

The rest of the day and night, I was left alone. Marcus only occasionally showed up to bring me food and water, which I ate and drank. I don't even care that it might have poison in it anymore. I have to eat to regain my strengths, not to mention I now have to. Being left alone, however, did very little to appease the pure anger I feel towards Harriet right now. If she was in the cell next to mine, I would have already figured out a way to kill her in her sleep.

consider that I'm pregnant; I have to look after my health more zealously.

How could we not think that this was a possibility? Why would we be so stupid as to allow Liam to handle her. How had she made it to the witches, anyway?

The longer I'm here, the more the anger festers, and I let it. In the end, anger might be the emotion I hold on to to make it out of here.

I barely get some sleep this time, with the cold stone providing very little in the ways of comfort.

I lay on my back mostly, thinking of ways I can get out and what the Witch Mother possibly could have meant when she said 'it's finally happening.' Could she be talking about reproducing my kind? Afterall, wasn't her main goal to create an army of us?

I also spend the rest of the night trying to reach my aunt and grandmother, anyone really, to help me, but it's no use. With my wolf preoccupied with the baby and my energy being drained, I can't contact them through her or my dreams. Afterall, it takes a lot of energy to appear in their realm.

On impulse. I get up and go to the cell door. I mean it's just a spell, right? Maybe I can break it if I try hard enough. I'm a freaking Spirit Wolf after all, this should be a piece of cake.

I put my hand on the lock, closing my eyes and concentrating on the magical presence of the spell, just like my aunt taught me. I take several deep breathes, steadying my mind and emotions. But after trying for a long while, it's no use. It's as if there is no spell at all. Wait, could it be?

I push the door rods, hard, willing it to open. But of course, it doesn't budge; it couldn't be that easy.

I exhale, frustrated, and start pacing the entirety of the cell, the chains dragging behind me, trying to come up with a plan.

Realistically, again, my only option is to wait until they take me out again, but what then? The heavy chains that are still around my ankles and wrists are impossible to break, not without my wolf anyway. And even if I do, I still have to somehow make it past the Witch Mother and her two assistants.

"Would you quit it?" I hear a voice coming from a few cells down.

Harriet.

I growl.

"Oh, shut the fuck up," she says.

"Me?! You stupid bitch! Do you realize all you managed to do is get both of us killed?!" I yell at her, furious.

"And do **you** realize that none of this would have happened if **you** hadn't come along?!" She yells back at me, coming forth in her cell.

"Oh, so you're not stupid, it's even worse, you're fucking delusional! I didn't force you to choose Alistair over your mate, you idiot! You chose your own path, and you seriously f****d up!"

"Is that what you think this is about?" She asks me; I can hear the smile in her voice.

I remain quiet, frowning as I wait for her explanation.

"He changed the "minute" you showed your stupid face in the Castle, and to not even be marked? Of course, he would take a liking to you! Even if you're just some stupid wolf!" She yells. My frown deepens.

"What the fuck are you talking about?" I ask her.

"I was going to be his Queen! But we couldn't be **really** together because I had a mate. Can you imagine how his men would view him if he took someone else's mate? That's why he sent Liam off to the woods alone to danger many, many times. He wanted him dead so we could be together! That's until you came along, and everything changed. He only wanted you because you were unmated. Why else would he want a f****g mutt?" she hisses.

I remain still, processing what she just said.

Harriet was jealous... of me... because I **attracted** Alistair...?

I start laughing, cathartically, for a long moment. I have to bend down and nurse my belly because it hurts from laughing so much. I have tears forming in my eyes.

She **actually** believes that Alistair **wanted** her, and was not just using her. In truth, he could have had Liam killed any time if that's what he really wanted, but he didn't, because he was just using her and her having a mate was the perfect excuse to not commit to her. When my laughing subsides, I wipe the tears off my eyes and sigh.

It's not even worth arguing with Harriet anymore; this woman is beyond delusional, and there's no arguing with that.

"Besides, they're only holding me here until they prove you're the one they're looking for," she continues.

I roll my eyes, but don't respond. They already tested me and she's still in there, because as the Witch Mother put it, we are of no use to her unless it's for sacrifices; but I'll let her find that out by herself.

I go back to the back of my sell, sitting against the wall. There really is no escaping this, is there?

I briefly close my eyes, but I'm awoken by the loud opening of the door.

"Rise and shine, darling!" The Witch Mother comes in, a dance in her step.

It's morning already?

Helena and Marcus come in right after her, carrying all sorts of finely decorated crystal jars.

They carefully place them on one of the tables the Witch Mother has prepared.

"Marcus," she says.

He nods and makes his way to me, opening the cell.

Again, I watch carefully how he managed to open it, but he didn't use a key. Even if I didn't detect any magic, I'm sure it's a spell.

He bends down, grabbing my chains and dragging me out by them. It takes him very little effort since I'm compliant. I still have to figure out what this witch wants from me.

He puts me in the same position as before, lifting my arms and pulling on a lever to essentially make me dangle off the floor. It's incredibly painful.

"Very well," The Witch Mother says, "we can begin."

She looks up to me, smiling warmly.

I narrow my eyes at her, but say nothing.

"Mistress, I did good, didn't I? She's the one you were looking for?" Harriet says from her cell.

"Yes, child, you did very good," the Witch Mother replies, not even looking at her.

"So, you can let me out! That was the deal," Harriet pleads.

"All in due time, child, we do after all need a sacrifice for the final spell to work, and, though, you're nothing special, you'll do," she replies, sweetly.

I turn to Harriet just in time to see her sink to her feet; whatever hope she had left that the witches would take her in has suddenly vanished.

"As for you," the Witch Mother turns to me, again with a smile, "I have bigger plans for you, my dearest."

She extends a hand to the side and Helena quickly approaches her with the knife she showed me yesterday and one of the finely decorated crystal vases. "Let's begin," she says.

She approaches me with the knife, plunging it into my leg without warning.

I squirm in pain. I don't think I've ever felt pain like this ever in my life. I don't know how to explain it, but it's as if that knife cut straight through my bone and then some; though from the amount of blood spilling out, the wound isn't that serious.

The Witch Mother puts the vase against my leg, collecting my blood. Once she's satisfied, she caps it off and hands it to Marcus, licking the remaining blood on the knife with her tongue.

I turn my head to look at what they collected, and sure enough, it's blood, but it looks... iridescent... in the crystal vase? Just like my wolf's coat.

I frown at it.

"That's your essence, child," the Witch Mother explains, "all living beings' essences are carried through their blood, witches and warlocks are no different. Only our essence is slightly sparked with magic, but yours," she holds the knife against the fire in the middle of the room and sure enough, the blood on it also appears iridescent, "yours isn't only *sprinkled* with magic, it *is* magic."

She smiles at the blood on the knife and then she turns to Marcus, nodding. [Search the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Marcus promptly leaves, taking the vase with him.

After several minutes, when my wound has already healed, Marcus returns, a shocked look on his face.

"Well?" The Witch Mother asks him.

He nods slowly, incredulous.

Helena squeals, jumping up in the air in excitement.

The Witch Mother claps.

"Very well, then, we proceed," she says, taking another vase from the table.

"Why are you doing this?" I ask her.

"Ah, she speaks," the Witch Mother says, coming to stand in front of me with an even bigger vase, "because you, my dear, will be our savior. You and you alone, will return witch kind to its former glory."

She smiles at me affectionately, quickly jabbing the extractionem knife into my other leg as I once again squirm in pain.

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