

The Rogues Who Went Rogue Chapter 111 - Tips

0 8 minutes read

Greg's answer made everyone even more stunned. Lucianne gritted through her teeth when she asked Kate, "Earlier, you told me that you didn't know where the discretus who invaded Blue Crescent was supposed to take you. Now, the trace is showing that your boyfriend is from the Forest of Oderem. Are you saying that you didn't know where he was from?"

"No."

"Then how are these two contradictions both the truth?"

"My boyfriend wasn't going to bring me to the forest first. He said he needed permission to do that, not just the leaders' but also the forest's permission. I was supposed to go to a transit location. And he said that if permission was ever refused, we'd just live somewhere else."

Margaret spat sarcastically, "Oh, how ROMANTIC! Risk having the whole pack found and elope with a lover you don't even know!"

Kate shot a glare at Margaret when she countered, "I've known him for two years. He loves me. I know him better than you know your mate you met less than a month ago!"

"That. Is. Enough." Lucianne started to make Kate slowly stop breathing, then made her slap herself on both sides of her face with force, leaving her own handprints on her cheeks before the queen asked everyone around her in a low, shivering voice, "Does anyone have any further questions?"

Zane asked innocently and softly, too shocked to speak any louder, "Did anyone else know about you and your boyfriend?"

Lucianne reluctantly let Kate stop holding her breath, and Kate's lungs began replenishing itself with the sudden air supply. Lucianne didn't allow her to fully recover before compelling her to give a response. Since Kate couldn't speak yet, her eyes went to a fair-skinned man. Zane and everyone else followed her gaze to him before Zane murmured, "Oh, you've gotta be f*cking kidding me."

Azalea managed to land a punch on the guy's jaw before Phelton held him by his arm and brought him before the king and queen, kicking his knees to make him kneel.

With her sapphire eyes, Lucianne began, "Howard, right?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

"How long have you known?"

"A year and a half."

"Why didn't you tell anyone?"

He was beginning to look ashamed. But Lucianne's power eventually made him mutter, "I was promised that I could go with them if they ever succeeded, that I could be in a polyamorous relationship with Kate and Rudolpho."

"Have you met Rudolpho?"

"No."

"But you are sure he is okay with the plan you have in mind?"

"Yes."

"Why is that?"

"Because Kate told me that it was okay."

"When did she tell you that?"

"About a year and a half ago, after I caught her seeing Rudolpho. He ran away before I could meet him. Kate told me to keep it a secret and told me that I could go with her when the time was right, that three in a relationship wasn't a problem for them."

"So, you also knew about the plan to 'remove' me?"

Xandar's grip around her abdomen tightened as he waited.

"No. I thought it was a simple escape when no one was noticing, like wandering off to find supplies and just never returning to the pack."

“And the escape during the Blue Crescent attack?”

“I didn’t know I was supposed to escape then.”

“When did you think you were going to escape?”

“I don’t know. I was waiting for Kate to give the signal.”

“Which never came, I presume?”

He nodded in confirmation.

“Where did you catch them on their rendezvous?”

“Bordure.”

Lucianne turned back to Kate. “Do you have a picture of Rudolpho?”

Her pressed lips were no match for the Lycan Queen’s power. “Yes.”

Greg swiped through the tablet he was holding and murmured, “There are hundreds of photos of men here,” he turned the device to face Kate before he asked, “Which one?”

It was baffling that Kate was still trying to be defiant. There was already no way out. Cooperating would give her better chances of getting a more merciful outcome yet she still chose to remain adamant.

Lucianne repeated, “Which. One.”

The many random pictures was a precaution that Kate took in case someone went through her phone, a precaution that she didn’t expect would backfire. Kate reluctantly studied the screen and muttered, “Seventh row, second one from the left.”

Greg tapped into that image, showed it to her again. Once Kate nodded, Greg murmured in Lucianne’s way, “I’ll deploy a few mavericks to ask around in the rogue world, My Queen.”

The duke then handed the device to Toby, who came forward and muttered like he was talking to the screen, "I'll get the lycan and wolf warriors to search the kingdom."

Xandar then said, "If there are others with Rudolpho, retreat. They might be decipios. We're not risking lives for a few bees. Let's see if we can use him to find the nest hiding the rest of his friends."

"Goes without saying." Greg muttered as he swipec through his phone.

"Yeah, will do." Toby murmured casually as he took the picture of Rudolpho using his own phone.

"You'll never get to him." Everyone's eyes darted to Kate, who added, "It'll be a mistake to go after him and the others. You will lose. It wouldn't matter if you brought the empress and her vampires. You all will still lose. Look what happened in Blue Crescent."

Xandar's thunderous growl made every other growl in the room inaudible. He lifted Kate by her neck and started strangulating her slowly. When everyone heard the first few crackling sounds of breaking bones, Lucianne stood on her toes and pecked a kiss on Xandar's cheek before she whispered affectionately into his ear, "Thank you, darling. I'll take it from here."

"No," his immediate response came in a low rumble.

"Please?" Lucianne's softened voice and the way her hands circled his biceps made their eyes lock. His animal was trying its best to fight against her doe eyes and tender touch but it knew it was losing.

"Baby, no," Xandar said again, much gentler and with more desperation than firmness.

Every single creature in the room knew who was going to be the ultimate winner. Toby was just waiting for his best friend to win again while he sent out Rudolpho's photo to every Gamma and lycan warrior with attached instructions. Christian was counting the seconds before his cousin gave in, wondering if the queen was going to break her record again, making a mental note to tell Annie if that happened.

Funnily enough, Dalloway was secretly counting the seconds too. He couldn't be more thankful that the queen always calmed the king whenever he or his

colleagues had to deliver bad news, and when it wasn't him that she was saving, he found it entertaining to just know how long the queen needed to cool the angry king.

"Please? For me?" Lucianne asked in a small voice while innocently blinking her large eyes.

After Xandar pinched his nose bridge and sighed, he placed...or rather threw Kate back onto the chair, and Greg's ready foot tilted the chair back so that Kate didn't fall off.

While Kate took her time to heal and catch her breath, Xandar was rewarded with his wife's smile and a quick kiss at the corner of his lips before she whispered, "Thank you, darling."

His frown eventually turned into a smile when he linked, 'You didn't play fair, sweetheart.'

With a cheeky smile, she replied, 'I know. Thank you for letting me win again, my love.'

Her response made him kiss her forehead in return before he whispered into her ear, "Anything for you, Lucy."

Despite still being slightly breathless, Kate choked out, "What? You stopped your mate from choking me to death just to make yourself better by doing it yourself?"

Even Toby paused from replying to a long line of incoming messages, looked at Kate and said, "You and the cult you want to join takes recklessness and ruthlessness to another level."

"Says the ones who support an empress whose father set out to slaughter hybrids!"

Lucianne insisted, "That isn't confirmed. There are no records or evidence showing such a thing. If Rudolpho told you that..."

Kate cut her off, "If the f*cking empress told YOU that, you're dead stupid!"

Another round of growls followed as Lucianne used her Authority to mute Kate and to make sure that she didn't move from her seat. Lucianne's finger and

thumb lifted up Kate's chin and she began squeezing it so tightly that Kate felt her fingernails digging into her skin as the queen conveyed a chilling promise, "I'm not going to kill you today, Kate. Unfortunately for you, I'm not that nice. As promised to the government and to you when the offer was spelled out, I'm going to break you slowly until I'm satisfied. I'm going to find Rudolpho, and the three of us are going to have a private rendezvous to get to know each other. On that day, you're going to wish that I killed you."

Kate's eyes shot wide open. She wanted to scream but nothing came out. Lucianne's force on Kate's chin increased to the point where the bones there cracked and broke. Kate's fingers dug into the flesh on her thighs on her own accord to cope with the pain. Tears and cold sweat were evident on her face but no one cared, not even Howard or Phelton. Lucianne's fingers then rested on Kate's right cheekbones and the torture continued there. Even when Lucianne smelled blood from the area where Kate's slightly protruded claws dug into her own skin, the queen still didn't stop.

Lucianne said, "You think this hurts? How do you think the creatures who trusted you feel? How do you think the creatures who gave you a chance feel? You didn't just make us look stupid, Kate. You turned against everyone who has been protecting you. You turned against all of us over someone who can't even guarantee your safety. You'd best pray your boyfriend's theory on hybrid-slaughter isn't fiction, or you'd spend a long time behind bars in a never ending cycle of torture and recovery."

After her cheekbones broke, Lucianne broke Kate's nose and right ear, which made her continue screaming voicelessly. The queen then instructed Dalloway, "Take her into custody and start running through the archives for any crimes which left a scent trail that matches hers, Chief. The prosecution can start building their case against her."

"Duly noted, My Queen. And the...other one?"

Lucianne's eyes went to Howard, which was when Xandar answered in a commanding voice, "Same procedure."

"As you wish, My King."

As Dalloway and his forces took Kate and Howard away, something beeped, and Greg went to extract the thumb drive from his laptop before handing it to Toby as he muttered, "Your copy."

“Uh...thank you, Your Grace,” Toby blinked in shock before accepting it. He then locked eyes with a much calmer Lucianne when he linked her, ‘I haven’t lived very long but that was, by far, the weirdest sh!t that’s ever happened to me in my life – Greg Claw handing me information without being asked.’

Lucianne simply responded, ‘It just shows that he can be nice if he wants to.’

Toby replied, ‘If he’s doing this because he’s in love with me, I’m going to k!!! myself.’

Lucianne narrowed her eyes and shook her head as Toby chuckled at his own joke. Xandar decided to ask what that was about later. Lucianne had been making more time to speak to Toby lately just to make sure he was okay, that she was there if he needed anything, so Xandar knew better than to interrupt them, especially now when Toby needed her more than ever.

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As soon as the vigils returned to vampire territory after the investigation of the hut and hideout in mid-afternoon, they made their way to the castle once again. Outside Pellethia’s study, Duica took a deep breath, knocked twice, and waited.

“Who is it?” Pellethia’s familiar voice came from inside.

“It’s VIG 001, Your Majesty.”

“Come in, Duica,” came the reply.

Duica was surprised. That was the first time the empress had said his name. Dominic nudged him and teased through their mind-link, ‘She might have a favorite after all!’

After Duica rolled his eyes, he opened the door and Pellethia, who was seated looked up from the map spread open on her desk, Octavia was half-seated on the armrest of the empress’s chair with one leg on the floor as her furrowed brows flattened just slightly to acknowledge the vigils’ presence.

They were trying to guess where the tunnel of the hideout from the Forest of Oderem could lead to before Duica’s knock came. The lycans had moved the rocks and boulders but it just led to a dead end because Klementine

demolished her accommodation after everyone left her place, thus covering her end of the tunnel.

“Your Majesties,” the vigils addressed the rulers in unison.

Pellethia did a mental headcount and asked, “What did you find, and why are there only twenty-four of you? Where are the other two?”

Duica responded, “One of our own was injured, Your Majesty, and the other one brought her to the hospital. Her leg went right through the floorboard of a dilapidated hut in the forest behind the beach we were sent to, and the accident was actually how we found this.”

He came forward, placed the pen on her desk and stepped back to wait. Pellethia glanced at the pen before her eyes scanned the vigils again, and she asked, “Who’s injured? Portia or Bernadette?”

“B-Bernadette, Your Majesty. My apologies, I should’ve been clearer.”

“It’s no issue.” Pellethia muttered monotonously.

When did the empress even learn their names?

The truth was that Pellethia and Octavia had always known their names, all twenty-six of them, but because of the constant need to make their authoritative position clear to the vigils and the ministers watching Pellethia instructing them, the empress had chosen to address them by their code ever since she ascended the throne.

Recently, Pellethia had watched how Lucianne and Xandar addressed everyone by name, regardless of their position, and the empress liked the fact that everyone, even her own people tended to speak more freely when they were addressed by name, so she decided to give this change a chance.

Pellethia lifted the pen that Duica placed on her desk to study it. Out of curiosity, she opened the cap and scribbled on the square notepad, which was when Duica said, “I tried that, Your Majesty. The ink dried up long ago. But what is peculiar is the carving.”

“Yes. A...patterned-circle,” Pellethia murmured as she studied the carving with her consort.

“Anything else?” Octavia prompted them to continue.

They gave information about the smell, the covered trails and the hideout underneath the abandoned car. Pellethia groaned aloud when they said whoever was there escaped. Again. And how the downpour only made things worse.

“How long do we have to keep doing this?” Pellethia murmured to herself.

As Octavia stroked her tense shoulders, Duica said, “We’re d-doing everything we can, Your Majesties. Finding the abductees has never been anything but our top priority, I can assure you.”

The rulers realized that there had been a misunderstanding. The vigils thought they were being blamed when Pellethia was just complaining out of fatigue and frustration. She said, “We’ve never doubted that, Duica. We know you’re all doing your best.”

Her sights returned to the pen that meant absolutely nothing to her before she declared, “I’ll ask their Highnesses about this, and we’ll see if there are any leads from there. For now,” her eyes went to the grandfather’s clock as she said, “I only need two of you to stay behind to help with the talk I’m going to have with Maddock in fifteen minutes. The rest of you can go home after checking on Bernadette. Send us a status on her condition once you do.”

A shocked pause before they snapped out of it as they uttered, “As you wish, Your Majesties.”

Duica and Dominic stayed behind, and they were asked to stay in the study when custom dictated that they waited outside. They stood around awkwardly until Octavia gestured them to the chairs in front of Pellethia’s desk.

Their immediate, conventional response would be to refuse such a gesture since they weren’t going to be the one who was going to be questioned soon, but seeing that the consort insisted and the empress didn’t object as her eyes returned to the map, they sat in the very comfortable sapphire-colored chairs.

Dominic was even beginning to get very comfortable feeling the velvet of the seat with his fingers, and where he sat offered a very good angle of the

grandfather's clock that was passed down from the late Emperor Kosh. It fascinated him because he had the same one given to him by his parents.

Octavia handed the vigils the file that would concern Maddock's matter when he arrived, and the two vigils combed through the papyrus pages together, realizing very quickly that it wasn't as thick as it was made to seem. A third of the thin document had been redacted.

At two minutes to 5 pm, there was a knock on the door. After Pellethia gave permission, the servants allowed the former Viscount to enter. He bowed, and took the only empty seat left after Pellethia gestured him there. Maddock didn't even bother masking his surprise when he saw the vigils seated. Had their Majesties forgotten yet another royal custom that they were allowing such disrespect from commoners?

Pellethia began by going straight to the point, "Maddock, what do you know about hybrids?"

Maddock made a wild guess, "It sounds like what the word suggests, Your Majesty. The product of two different species."

"Like a vampire and a lycan, yes?"

"I suppose."

Pellethia then asked, "Do you remember any vampire being with a lycan by any chance?"

The vigils were watching his reaction as well. Maddock checked his cards and said, "Once."

"And what happened in that case?"

"If memory serves me, the late Emperor Kosh ordered the execution of Lady Luisa Lybarth and her mate, a lycan official named Heros Pas."

"And?"

"That's...all I know, Your Majesty. I suggest studying the file containing this particular c—"

"I have studied the file, Maddock, and do you want to know what I found?" Pellethia lifted the folder she handed to the vigils earlier, and flipped to the

pages that troubled her before she lifted it up and showed it to him as she said, “Most of what I want to know have been redacted. So here’s my question: why?”

“I wouldn’t have the faintest clue, Your Majesty. The execution was a closed case long before the late emperor’s death.”

“You don’t know who redacted a case in the royal archives, despite being the only one who will be given access to do such a thing because you led the case?”

“I didn’t do it, Your Majesty, if that is what you’re suggesting.”

“What I’m suggesting is that you know more than what you want me to know.”

A brief moment of silence followed, and Maddock looked between the increasingly angry rulers before he eventually said, “When the plan was executed, I was sworn to secrecy, Your Majesties.”

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Maddock spoke softer when he continued explaining, “Lady Luisa and Heros Pas were assassinated for what your late father deemed to be treason, which many couldn’t imagine how. Rosalie was never a royal aid or anything close in the first place. That decision did not help with the tension with the lycans at all. The untimely death of Heros Pas, one of the most prominent lycan officials, was one of the strongest propaganda used by their kind to instigate hate and encourage the wolves and lycans to kill us.”

Pellethia refuted, “Rosalie was closer than a royal aid. She was practically family. My father did what any ally would have done – avenge her death. As for Lady Luisa, wasn’t she a close family friend of yours, Maddock?”

“She was, though I don’t see how that’s relevant.”

“You both went to the same schools, took very similar courses, and went to the same events. Before she met Heros, you’d be her companion in many social events.”

Maddock cleared his throat and uttered, “You’re suggesting that I was in love with her, Your Majesty?”

“Were you?” Pellethia looked him dead in the eye, as if daring him to blink.

Maddock simpered before he murmured, “That was a long time ago.”

“Are you saying you both were no longer friends at the time of executing the plan to get rid of her and her mate?”

The last part made Maddock stiffen slightly. “We weren’t as close as we once were. That’s all I can say about it.”

Pellethia glanced at the folder again, before she questioned, “When my father asked for someone to take lead for this particular task, I understand that you volunteered?”

“I did.”

Pellethia continued, “And you expect me to believe that your initiative had nothing to do with wanting to help Luisa escape?”

Maddock considered his options, and since Pellethia didn’t have the Empress’s Authority to choke the truth out of him, and anyone who was involved in the task had passed on, Maddock chose to say, “I delivered what was asked of me. The...task increased in its scope when we discovered the presence of two children. Never mentioning the infants...was a precaution taken to make sure that the late emperor didn’t have to abdicate the throne for cold-blooded murder.”

Despite the uneasiness in her chest, Pellethia remained composed when she asked, “So, the twins were killed after their parents?”

“That is my understanding, Your Majesty.”

“You didn’t see the children being killed?”

“No. My assignment was the parents. The twins were a separate task on their own because their governess took them away as soon as Luisa and Heros heard rumors about our plan. The search team took months before they were able to track down the governess, and ended her along with the children she took.”

Octavia questioned, “Luisa sent her children away WITHOUT going with them herself?”

“Yes,” Maddock asserts innocently, “And it’s quite clever if you think about it. It would’ve been easier to find her children if she were with them since we were already hunting her down. To keep her children safe, to give them the best chance of survival, she had the governess take them away.”

Pellethia continued questioning in disbelief, “How was Heros even okay with that? He didn’t do anything to keep Luisa safe, even if it meant temporarily separating her from their children?”

“I am not privy to what went on in the lycan’s head, Your Majesty. All I know is that they were going to leave together on the night we found them in one of the Lybarth holiday estates, almost done packing when we knocked on the door.”

Pellethia continued studying Maddock as she asked, “And what were their reactions when they saw you and the two vigils you brought?”

Maddock remained unperturbed when he replied, “They begged and pleaded. Luisa was in tears, asking me to let them go for old time’s sake. But I gave the signal for the vigils to fire the beta-keratin arrows. We retrieved their bodies and returned.”

Duica then asked, “How did you know that there was a child if there weren’t any there to begin with?”

Maddock was surprised that a vigil spoke without being asked, and locked eyes with him in a disapproving manner, as if waiting for an apology for what he saw as discourtesy.

His wait backfired when Pellethia prompted, “Did you not hear the question or are you buying time to come up with something to cover a lie, Maddock?”

Maddock’s shocked eyes returned to the empress before he spoke, “I’m simply surprised that he spoke without permission, Your Majesty.”

“If Duica and Dominic are in this room joining the discussion, they have been given permission to speak whenever they deem fit. Now, answer the question.”

He tried his best to mask his discontentment when he answered effortlessly, "There were pacifiers and some of the infant's clothes were left behind."

Dominic then asked, "And how did you know there were twins? Those could belong to one child."

"Not if there were two sets of items that had each child's name on it," Maddock's sights returned to Pellethia when he continued with the names, "Audax and Saxum."

The word 'Saxum' was a dreaded thing to hear. Pellethia then asked in a softer tone because she was too afraid of the answer, "Where were the children found?"

"The team reported it was in a nursing home where the governess later sought shelter and employment."

Octavia asked with even more suspicion, "Why is it that you speak as if you cannot assure us about what truly happened to the children, that what you know is merely from an orally-given report? What was the evidence showing that the twins ended in the gruesome way that you're suggesting?"

"Unfortunately, technology wasn't with us at that time, Your Majesty, so I can't provide any pictures to prove what I'm saying. If necessary, I'll happily provide a deposition to replace those redacted pages."

After a long moment of silence, Pellethia spoke calmly, "That would be helpful. We'll ask our lawyer to contact you for the session within the next three days."

The empress stood, signaling Maddock's cue to leave. He stood with a smile and said, "I look forward to it, Your Majesties. I shall take my leave now. Thank you for your time."

He stepped out, and the moment the door shut behind him, Duica felt that it was his duty to say, "Your Majesties, I'm not saying that whatever that Maddock was a lie but not everything may be the truth."

Pellethia murmured, "I agree. We're taking whatever he said with a grain of salt."

Octavia complained, "Or a pot of it. The downside of digging up the past is that there is no one else to verify or debunk his facts."

Dominic, being encouraged to speak aloud when Duica did it, said, “The facts about the late Lady seemed rather unbelievable if you asked me. Did anyone see the way he spoke when he described the assassination?”

Duica replayed Maddock’s expression and said, “He showed no sadness or remorse. It’s odd.”

Dominic continued, “Even if he had moved on from the Lady, which I doubt seeing how his voice softened when he spoke about their past, there would be some kind of emotion when you talk about killing an old friend or a past lover. There has to be some anger, at least. Or jealousy. Or loss. Guilt, even. The fact that his face remained straight is very concerning.”

Pellethia felt angry and helpless that she didn’t have an Authority like past rulers to just extract the truth out of Maddock, and started wondering whether the Forest of Oderem would be so kind as to curse whoever lied to those it gifted its protection marks to. She doubted it. Nothing in history recorded such a thing ever happened.

Octavia suggested, “With time, I’m sure the truth will reveal itself. For now, let’s just wait for the deposition while we send word to the lycans about this pen you retrieved, and we’ll notify all twenty-six of you once we get an update.”

The vigils got the cue to leave, so they bowed and left, leaving the rulers alone. Pellethia went straight to the point with her wife, “Sometimes, I wonder if what Aunt Lucy said is true – that I have the Authority but it’s not...awakened.”

Octavia felt her earlier disappointment, which was why she spoke in a way to close the discussion for Pellethia to fully express how she was feeling in private. As Octavia continued stroking her shoulders, the consort tried to assure her as best as she could, “Well, she was never wrong, was she?”

The rhetorical question made Pellethia smile as she said, “I keep wondering how she manages that. Never being wrong. Not about dad. Not about me.”

Octavia’s hand went to Pellethia’s cheek, before she gently lifted up her face for their eyes to lock. Her emerald eyes were a sight that would make Octavia melt in happiness every single time, even after being together for so long. As her thumb stroked Pellethia’s smooth cheek, she muttered, “Lucy saw something in you when she was Rosalie. She still sees something in you now.

Perhaps it's time to see yourself through her lenses, Pelly. Remember what she said the other day? About you being not any less extraordinary without that power?"

A soft smile graced Pellethia's features, and she reached out to stroke Octavia's hand as she whispered gratefully, "Thank you, my love."

Octavia pressed a kiss in her hair before pulling her out of her seat because it was time for their short nap, but not before sending a photo of the pen to Lucianne first.

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At her end, Lucianne forwarded the message to the ministers, alliance members and Greg. Greg studied the pen after reading about the vigils report on...nothing. That was what the report was on – absolutely nothing. As he mumbled to himself on how the bad weather cursed the already less-than-competent bloodsuckers, he found his ranting come to a stop when he saw the familiar carving of a planet near the tip of the fountain pen.

He sat up and stared at it for another few more moments before he murmured, "You traitor."

He didn't even run things through with Lucianne before he linked his top four in an anger-suppressed growl, 'Locate Neptune. Now.'

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In the part of lycan territory that was near the border of vampire territory, Gerella and the others were in Neptune's warehouse, where Neptune claimed no one ever came unless he authorized them to come. He had an older warehouse too, but he, Klementine and Saxum all agreed that using the old one as cover wasn't smart since the authorities would've already found the abandoned hut. If the duke somehow managed to figure out the hut was Neptune's, he might send his followers to other old properties that were dormant.

This was simply a precaution because Neptune doubted Greg Claw would know the hut belonged to him when he deliberately left it out of the duke's annual check on rogue assets. Greg did this check to ensure that rogue

assets either remained off the authorities' radar or that it was registered to be legitimate in the authorities' systems.

The hut was in a well-hidden location, and Neptune liked it to be kept from the duke because it made him feel superior to Greg in a way, that he knew something that Greg didn't, even if it were about something as petty as an abandoned shelter.

In the warehouse, Isla and five other children were falling ill. The coughs were making their throats sore and voices hoarse. At first, it became a game among the kids to see who had the greatest change in voices, but the playful mood ended when their bodies weakened. Two of them were struggling to keep their eyes open as their bodies slowly heated up. Their parents, including Isla's, pestered Gerella to bring it up with Saxum, to tell him that whatever the Callows are doing might be causing their children's illnesses.

The administrative hybrids stood at the corner for a discussion on their next move with Neptune and Klementine in their circle.

Saxum began, "Rudolpho knows a few good spots in wolf territory. He explored it with a friend of his. We can go there next. I particularly like Bordure's location. It seems like the safest spot out of all our options."

Klementine questioned skeptically, "Is that even wise, Saxum? The Blue Crescent attack would've placed every other wolf pack on high alert."

"We won't have to hide there long. The Callows have the modified chemical ready. We're waiting for the delivery of the capsules. The decipios will ingest it, and we'll be able to control the king from there. The rest of us hybrids will be ingesting the shell, just in case. We should discuss our plan of attack, so..."

Gerella backtracked the discussion when she questioned, "Saxum, what do you mean we're leaving for wolf territory?! Have you seen some of the kids? They can't travel."

Saxum glanced at the sick kids and back at an almost-fuming Gerella as he calmly explained, "We have to hide."

“We are hiding! Running to wolf territory is not a good move, especially after angering one of the strongest packs. And you’re saying that you’re certain about the safety of this new location because Rudolpho’s friend says that it’s safe?! Have you ever met this friend of his?!” Gerella gestured at Rudolpho, who looked offended and was about to say something.

But before he could, Saxum responded instead, “No, but I’ve met Rudolpho and so have you. He’s standing right here among us. Look, we don’t have a choice but to move, Ella.”

“We do have a choice, Saxum. The choice is to NOT go there and open ourselves to getting caught.”

“We have the decipios to help if wolves do eventually find us.”

Gerella challenged, “You’re certain that the decipios amongst us are enough to hold off a wolf attack, bearing in mind that the children can’t run fast enough, some adults are tired and weakening?”

Gerella’s eyes burned into Saxum’s orbs that were in a deep state of melancholy which only got clearer after they buried Delancy in the forest behind the warehouse. Saxum knew Gerella. He knew her to be obedient her whole life, and if she was speaking against this, there must be a reason.

He reluctantly asked, “What do you suggest we do?”

Without hesitation, Gerella hissed in a whisper, “Pull the plug, Saxum. Tell the Callows to stop.”

Chong exclaimed, “Are you mad?!”

Regina added, “That’s beyond outrageous. We’ve already come this far.”

Gerella gestured to the sick ones as she hit back in an angered whisper, “And look what it has cost us!” Her sights went back to a contemplating Saxum as she uttered, “You have to admit that this can’t be a coincidence. Delancy only died a day after the Callows killed their first vampire. They’ve been tampering with the vampire children’s anatomy to modify the chemical, haven’t they, Saxum?”

Saxum mumbled, “It was the most malleable component they needed, children being less susceptible to heeding to any authority.”

Gerella took a step closer as she uttered with angry tears, “The deal was that the children remained OFF-limits, Saxum. This is crossing the line. We didn’t agree to this.”

“Look, Ella. I understand you care for the little ones, but we’ve come this far...”

“You’re still going through with this?!” Gerella asked in infuriation. “So it doesn’t matter that more of us are going to die?”

“The deaths would be in vain if we didn’t finish this. Stopping now won’t bring the dead back to life, Ella.”

“This isn’t just about Delancy, Saxum. It’s all of us. Look at those parents, do you want them to end up feeling what you’re feeling?”

Saxum could see that the inferno in Gerella’s eyes was nowhere near the cooling edge, and to him, she wasn’t in a good state of mind to listen to reason. So all he said was, “Why don’t you go for a walk and calm down first, Ella. When you come back, we’ll talk.”

That got her even more infuriated. He actually thought she was being the unreasonable one?! “I am not the one overreacting here, Saxum. I’m the one trying to keep them safe. You can’t possibly disagree that the more we push this, the more likely we’ll lose lives. Is it even worth it?”

Without hesitation, Saxum said, “It is. If you’ve lived in the shadows for as long as some of us have, for as long as I have, you’d know that harmonious reconciliation is naïve, wishful thinking. The only way to guarantee safety for everyone is to fight for control.”

Gerella couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Their original plan of having something to shield them from danger had now turned into a plan to control the highest power at all cost, even if it meant sacrificing their own. How was he even okay with this? How was it that none of the administrators but her have an emotional attachment to the other hybrids, especially the kids?

Registering her silence, Saxum prompted, “Go for a walk, Ella. You’ll feel better.”

Gerella angrily took heavy breaths before she stormed out of the warehouse. She barged into the forest and stepped on every twig in her path, savoring the

sound in each snap. After the silence and thickness of the forest cooled her a little, she thought about Isla.

Gerella felt so helpless when she held the girl in her arms earlier that morning. How was she even an administrator of the hybrids when she couldn't even fight against sacrificing more lives. Then, it hit her.

Maybe she wasn't as helpless as she thought. With each step she took, she began forming a plan – a plan that may save Isla and the rest of the weakening children. She had seen an old map of wolf, lycan and vampire territories in one of the old books, so she roughly knew where she was and where the routes around her led to.

When Gerella mentally ran through her plan for loopholes, she began sprinting when she realized that there was only one thing she needed to make sure everything went smoothly – speed.

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07 minutes read

It was evening when the royal family members, alliance members, ministers, warriors, Margaret and her followers, and ten vigils were at Bordure, the part of wolf territory that was most susceptible to rogue attacks when attacks used to be frequent because of its significant distance from larger and stronger packs.

They were also here because these packs were the closest to vampire territory and, according to Greg, rogue lycan territory. None of the pack leaders reported seeing any rogues or proditors, but the fact that this was the most vulnerable part of wolf territory AND a rendezvous point between Kate and Rudolpho made them pick this particular location to stand guard.

They stood between the wolf packs and the neighboring territory ahead, hoping that nothing would happen. The instructions were simple: stand guard, and if nothing happens, half will return to Polje for decipio practice for the night.

Everyone formed temporary mind-links, just in case. Juan was pleasantly surprised that all Xandar did when Lucianne was forming a mind-link with Greg was stand and watch. Even after the link was formed, Xandar didn't grab her hand and !ck it like Juan thought he would. As soon as Greg moved on to

the next creature, as did Lucianne, Xandar shifted his attention elsewhere as well when he locked eyes with his brother-in-law.

Juan linked, 'Surprising improvement, Xandar.' His chin gestured at Lucianne as he pointed at his own hand.

Xandar smiled when he admitted, 'I'm trying. It still bothers me sometimes.'

Greg hadn't been inappropriate thus far, just annoying. Plus, it wasn't as if Lucianne had shown even the mildest interest in his cousin, so Xandar and his animal came to terms that there wasn't a need to show who Lucianne belonged to for now. Everyone knew, and everyone respected that.

When the links were formed, Xandar went to Lucianne and slammed her into his chest. He looked into her eyes and muttered, "If and when he links you, tell me, okay?"

He didn't even need to be precise for her to know that he meant Greg. She simply responded, "Of course, just as you will tell me if any woman happens to link you, I presume?"

The tone she used showed that she was joking even though Xandar wasn't. Xandar's mood lightened before he pointed out the obvious, "Babe, you know I tell you everything."

"As do I...except for that time when Margaret almost attacked us. Then again, I WAS going to tell you...just not right away." Lucianne's eyes darted to his shoulder when that thought came to her, recalling the events from the other day.

Xandar's nose gently nudged hers to get her attention again, and with furrowed brows, he insisted, "Right away this time, promise?"

Lucianne was pulled into the only pair of lilac orbs that was capable of making her melt as her lycan cooed, and with her doe eyes, she whispered affectionately, "I promise."

Xandar smiled blissfully at the sight of the most beautiful pair of eyes penetrating into his soul before he closed his eyes for his nose to press against her hair, where he inhaled deeply, feeling the warmth and sense of calmness that Lucianne's scent gave him. Only after that did he give into his little freesia's pestering about needing to take their places.

A team of ten was sent to the exact location where Margaret and her followers used to reside, to check the vicinity for a probable rendezvous point. Jade had been keeping tabs on Kate's phone, waiting for incoming calls or messages but there was nothing. He even impersonated Kate by sending a few messages to Rudolpho, but there were no replies.

Jade would have suspected that Rudolpho was alerted about the forceful change of ownership of the device, but the thing was that the last message was days before Kate was caught, so the only logical conclusion was that Rudolpho ghosted her.

Temporarily or permanently? No one knew. Not even Kate knew this when Lucianne made the trip to the police station to ask her the additional questions that the mavericks needed answers to. Kate did say the rendezvous point with Rudolpho was somewhere in the forest where the trees grew so high that their branches and leaves formed a canopy, dimming the forest.

The team of ten with a mix of lycans and vigils, along with Margaret and Tate, marched through forest trees. As serious as things were, Tate couldn't stop himself from lacing his fingers with Margaret's, whose insides fired up in excitement when she felt his rough skin against her smoother one. She wondered if it was even possible that her heart felt like it was pulled closer to his simply by holding his hand. The sensation was as soothing as it was magical.

When Margaret's thumb began nervously stroking the back of Tate's hand, the Alpha was so surprised that he paused in his steps and looked straight at his beautifully-flustered mate. He didn't expect her to make a move, especially not now when they weren't even on a date.

Tate's lips curled upward before he leaned in to peck a sweet kiss on Margaret's left cheek, which was when Margaret pulled his lips into a deep kiss. Tate's eyes shot wide open in disbelief at first, but his impatient wolf got him to snap out of it, and his lips began responding to hers with equal enthusiasm. His tongue danced with hers before it delved deeper to explore her inner walls, tasting her as the sparks coursed through their bodies.

When their lips parted, they slowly came back to reality, and came to terms that those with them were either looking away out of courtesy or looking straight at them with teasing smiles.

Tate still couldn't believe that Margaret chose this time for their first kiss. It was more than perfect to him, but it was also unexpected. He peered into her shining rosewood eyes as he muttered in a tease, "Looks like I'm not the only one with a serious timing issue, Mar."

Margaret started barging forward again when she murmured meekly while struggling to suppress a smile, "You started it by holding my hand."

Tate chuckled before he matched her pace and slid his hand into hers as he replied, "Well, if poor timing ends up with us making out, I really don't see the point in doing things at the right time anymore."

Just when Margaret's mouth opened to deliver a retort, her eyes turned bright red, and Tate's humor was instantly replaced with frantic worry when he held her close to ease the ordeal that was on the verge of hitting his mate.

What Tate didn't realize was that, unlike the previous times, Margaret felt very little anguish even without their skin contact. It was as if when Margaret chose to take a leap of faith, to start welcoming a new life while making peace with her past, she was liberated. She was liberated from feeling like an outcast. She was liberated from letting her upbringing in the majority-conventional society of Fleet Wood dictate how she, as a rogue, was supposed to feel, how she should react, how she should live. Freeing herself from her past gave her strength, allowing her red wolf to amplify its power.

Margaret focused on the vision presented to her. She saw how the wolves and lycans were battling with eyes darkened from being manipulated; how they were manoeuvring their way around as their noses sniffed the space around them; and that there were many new faces that were snarling as they attacked. Margaret tried to concentrate on the surroundings to find that precise location. The moment she recognized it, her vision ended.

###

After the team of ten left, everyone else took their places along the border separating the two territories. After a while, Lucianne picked three leaves from a plant nearby and started weaving as she stood guard. When she felt a stare on her, she traced it to the source and found herself looking at her husband, who had his arms crossed with a wide smile as he watched her.

'Focus, My King. You're supposed to be looking up ahead, not at your side.'

'Mm...but I prefer the view at my side, My Queen.' His coquettish response came, and his animal saw the need to emit the dangerous and alluring growl through their link.

She noticed the six smiling creatures standing between Xandar and herself took a step or two back to give the king and queen an unobstructed view of one another, one of the six being her brother. This made Lucianne's cheeks heat up when she linked Xandar, 'Maybe I should stand a little further away to make things easier for you, darling.'

Xandar's eyes widened and his smile faltered before he said, 'You wouldn't.'

'Then eyes up ahead, Xandar.'

Xandar shifted his body so that it faced her before he replied, 'I am looking up ahead.'

Lucianne was more frustrated by her inability to press back her smile and control her blushes than she was of Xandar twisting her words. She was now trying very hard to cool down her burning cheeks with the back of her hands, and her reaction tickled Xandar's heart so much that his animal began cooing and wagging its tail while his human part smiled even wider at the gorgeous sight. He felt like the luckiest creature alive to have such an effect on the most amazing creature ever created.

But that blissful moment was brought to a stop when he and his animal felt Lucianne's humor and irritation die down – when her eyes glazed over. Her confusion was evident from her face and their bond.

Juan wondered if his sister's sudden change in demeanor could be that his youngest son was linking the favorite aunt again. He quickly checked in with Hale to make sure everything was fine in Blue Crescent. Luna Hale assured him that nothing was happening out of the ordinary, and Liam was right next to her, reading a book.

When Juan came out of his link, his eyes locked with Xandar's still-perplexed ones, and the Alpha shrugged when he said, "Not a message from my pack, Xandar. It's probably from Tate or someone else from the team of ten."

Lucianne was concentrating on what the creature was linking her as she tried to wrap her head around how this person managed to link her without them ever forming a mind-link in the first place.

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0 5 minutes read

As soon as Gerella stepped into the civilization of vampire territory, wondering if she was in the right place. She pulled her grey hoodie up, trying to draw as little attention to herself as possible, wondering if it was smart to go invisible. She decided against it because she didn't want other discretus to think that she had something to hide. She was glad to see that whoever else was on the street hid their heads as well, but they did it because they hated the early evening sun, and wanted as little of it as possible.

On her way here, Gerella already knew that she had to hide her eyes since its blue color did not match the green ones from the population. She was trying to find something that would hide her peculiarity until something outside the subway station caught her attention. It was an advertisement for contact lenses in five distinct colors, and the model's eyes were blue like hers.

When Gerella was trying to wrap her head around the concept of contact lenses, two ladies with shopping bags and blood-flavored slushies in their hands noticed her discombobulated state. Their nosiness forbade them from taking another step, and they joined Gerella at the advertisement board when one of them said, "Don't bother with this brand. It's a safety hazard."

Gerella blinked in surprise when she asked, "W-What?"

The same lady pointed at the advertisement and explained, "They should've taken this down two days ago. Someone bought a pair of contacts from this company, but the color from it peeled and entered her eyes. After the surgery to remove the color fragments, she filed a suit, seeking damages to cover the medical cost. I think she bought the purple ones."

"Oh," Gerella responded, not knowing what else to say.

The other one was sucking on her slushy before she said, "If you're looking for good contacts, try Optimum. That one's been around here forever. No lawsuits whatsoever. Where do you get yours, by the way?"

"Uh...Optimum, actually." Even Gerella was surprised by how smoothly that lie came out. She wasn't even sure she heard the lady right.

The lady turned to her friend and said, "See, I said it remains the most popular brand, and I was right. That other woman we saw earlier uses Optimum, she uses Optimum..."

They were walking away before Gerella called out, "Hey, um...could you tell me where the rulers live?"

They turned, blinked and the second one questioned, "The empress and consort?"

"Yes."

They found her question rather odd, and started studying her attire to try to figure out which region she may be from. Everyone in their town knew where the castle was. But Gerella's clothes were too generic for them to pinpoint her origin, even with the knowledge they had on stereotypical dressing about foreigners.

They didn't want to be late for their ride, so the first lady pointed to her right and said, "Go around the corner, walk until you see the custodes station, then make a right, keep going forward until you see the castle."

"Thank you!" Gerella exclaimed out of pure relief and dashed away.

The two friends exchanged odd looks before scanning their transit cards and waited on the platform. One asked, "What do you think? Is she from Occidens or Orientem? Her accent IS different from ours but I can't tell how. Like, from which region?"

###

Gerella followed the directions and after a minute, she began wondering whether she was being too trusting to only ask one set of individuals, but her doubts were put to rest when she walked past the custodes station, where she saw creatures in uniforms. She turned right like she was told, and blocked out Saxum's link for the third time since she left before she continued walking as quickly as her legs could manage.

The sight of the castle sent a stream of pure relief through her. The upward curl of her lips showed her elation, until she saw the guards.

How was she going to get in?

###

Pellethia heard the knocks on her bedroom door. She was waiting for Octavia to get ready when she got up to answer it. At the sight of one of the castle's guards, she asked, "Yes, Dolly?"

Dolly looked apologetic when she said, "Forgive my intrusion, Your Majesty, but there's a young woman requesting an immediate audience with you and the consort. She claims to be a hybrid."

'Is this Maddock's trick?' Pellethia wondered.

Dolly continued, "She said her name is Ella. The guards at the gates tried to get rid of her, but she said something about needing to warn you that the Lycan Queen will be in danger, and something about hybrid children dying because of some experiment. And she said she was a bonded mate of Tobias Tristan, claiming to have met him on a beach. Isn't Tristan one of the kingdom's ministers, Your Majesty?"

Octavia was right next to her by now, and Pellethia took a moment before she stepped out of the room, pacing down the corridor in quick steps while asking, "Eye color?"

"Blue, Your Majesty."

"What did she smell like?"

"Apples and gardenias."

"Send her in."

The guards brought Gerella from the guardhouse, and when she stepped into Pellethia's study, she started blurting out everything she knew and begged Pellethia and Octavia to find a way to stop the whole thing before any more hybrids were sacrificed.

Dolly and her colleague kept looking at their Majesties throughout Gerella's confession, waiting for the signal to arrest this woman for treason, abduction, false imprisonment, and a whole line of other things that could make a very

lengthy case in court. But Pellethia and Octavia's eyes merely stayed on Gerella the whole time.

At the end of it, Gerella was already taking quickened breaths when Pellethia asked, "Do you have any idea whether they've moved on to the next location without you by now?"

Gerella shook her head as she uttered, "No. I've been blocking out Saxum's links, Regina's as well."

Octavia clarified, "If they chose to move, you said that they'd be going to wolf territory?"

Gerella nodded.

"Which part of wolf territory?" Pellethia asked as she held her breath.

The moment Gerella said, "It might be Bordure", Octavia immediately linked Rafael and the rest of the vigils and custodes at their disposal. Pellethia rummaged through the papers on her table for her phone as she muttered, "C'mon, where is it? Where is it?"

Pellethia's urgency and the persistent way she was picturing Lucianne in her head made something miraculous happen. Before she realized it, her eyes glazed over and her rummaging was brought to an abrupt halt when she heard Lucianne's confused voice ringing through her mind, 'Pelly, I don't recall forming a mind-link with you.'

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0 6 minutes read

Pellethia blinked for a second before she skipped over the formalities to the more pressing matter at hand, 'Aunt Lucy, Ella is here. In the castle. She said the next location the hybrids are planning to move to is most likely Bordure.'

Lucianne held her breath as Pellethia continued, 'She doesn't seem to be lying. And she's probably betraying the hybrids because the children are falling ill. She kept emphasizing the need to end this before any little ones die. Octavia and I are leaving for Bordure now. We're bringing Rafael, Amber and anyone else at our disposal. Aunt Lucy, should you see the hybrids first...please don't engage in battle until we get there.'

A sudden howl echoed through the air, the kind of howl that wolves and lycans used to warn each other about an incoming attack. Lucianne's head turned to where the team of ten was sent where she saw the vigils, shifted wolves and lycans retreating.

When Lucianne noticed a few foreign faces, she ran towards them as she linked Pellethia as calmly as she could, 'Pelly, get here as soon as you can. We might be able to slow this down, but there's no doubt that the battle is starting soon.'

Pellethia cursed before Lucianne ended the link as she growled in a way that made the new faces halt. Some of them even took a few steps back. She placed herself between them and her people, as did Xandar, Greg, Christian, Phelton and the alliance members, who stood by her side, claws already out.

Xandar's hand at Lucianne's abdomen made sure she didn't take another step further as they assessed the situation.

Lucianne linked the vigils by her side, 'Anyone familiar besides Rudolpho?'

'Not at the moment, Your Highness.'

Everyone couldn't help but take a slightly longer look at Rudolpho, who was scanning faces, undoubtedly looking for the only one that mattered to him.

Lucianne put his search to a stop when she said, "Kate isn't here."

Rudolpho was getting muttering questions which basically was, "Who's Kate?" It was surprising for all those on Lucianne's side to see Rudolpho mouth, "My contact."

Your contact? That was it? A few hybrids began asking him whether someone called Hilda knew about Kate, and what she thought about him having 'contact' with another female. They all knew he had a contact in wolf territory, but they assumed it was a man.

Alissa shook her head when she saw the traits of a cheater who had been caught red-handed. Lucianne and Greg locked a brief gaze when they too understood the game that had been played against Kate.

Lucianne felt sorry for Kate, but Greg's animal was scoffing at how Kate just got double-crossed after double-crossing Howard and betraying everyone who gave her a chance at redemption. 'Karma at its finest,' the duke thought.

Saxum linked his people to get them to stop interrogating Rudolpho, and claimed that Rudolpho was given full authorization to do what he did. Although the hybrids obeyed their leader's command, their mental gears were still turning. Some even began linking Hilda in secret, only to find out that Rudolpho's partner of three decades had never heard of Kate.

The moment Saxum's eyes cleared, he was pulled into the penetrating gaze from a pair of black-and-lilac orbs. Lucianne asked, "Are you Saxum?"

Saxum registered Xandar's aura and then Lucianne's own before the leader noted, "You must be the queen."

He would've guessed who she was even without her aura announcing so since she truly was as beautiful as the rumors went. Even Saxum, who had seen so many females in his lifetime, had to admit that Lucianne's beauty was only second to Delancy's. It was a pity that they were on opposite sides.

Lucianne got to the point, "We are not out to kill hybrids, neither are the rulers of vampire territory. End this. We can give you a place. You don't have to kill to secure yours or your people's safety."

Many were shocked by whatever they just heard. How did she know so much? Saxum connected the dots and linked it to the still-missing and unreachable Gerella. He scoffed darkly while everyone behind him started calling bullshit on whatever Lucianne just said, thinking that she was simply trying to see if they were naïve enough to fall into her trap.

Lucianne and those on her side knew for a fact that their opponents were going to attack soon, and Lucianne began to wonder whether her Authority would work on hybrids. They were technically half of the species that she could control. She was thankful that there weren't any children present...unless they were all already dead? The thought sent a surge of sadness into her heart.

Xandar retracted his claws and stroked her hand as he issued a low warning to the hybrid leader, "Whatever you've been told about a hybrid massacre,

Saxum, there has to be a flip side of the coin that you don't know about. The empress was given a different set of facts. Ask your people to stand down and let's discuss this."

"Discuss?" Saxum uttered the word like it was a strange term to use when he scoffed darkly and said, "You think you can discuss a slaughter that happened before you existed?"

Xandar countered, "If you are right about what happened, you should consider the fact that we are not our ancestors. Just because our predecessors didn't treat your kind right, it doesn't mean we won't. We have nothing against hybrids. There is no need to challenge us to feel safe. The rogues you're collaborating with aren't worth the..."

Saxum's chuckles intending to humiliate Xandar cut him off mid-way, which made Lucianne's eyes flare with rage as she attempted to step forward, only to be pushed back by her overprotective husband. Those by the king's side took their positions, ready to charge.

Saxum spoke, "For a king, I expected a little more...ferocity, if I were being honest."

Lucianne took over, "We have a separate term called 'cold-blooded' if that's what you mean, Saxum. And for a leader, I expected you to possess more common sense if I were being honest."

The leader's taunting sights turned into ones of fury when he glared at the petite queen. Before he could get a word in, Lucianne proceeded to say, "If you do this, what makes you better than the ones who you think killed your family?"

Saxum noted with a cocky smirk, "I will win."

"No, you won't. At least not without a price." Although Lucianne looked confident on the outside, she was struggling to remain calm within, wondering how much longer she could delay the hybrids before Pellethia arrived.

What Lucianne said caught Saxum's attention, and his eyes showed that she had his full attention, so she continued, "You already know how we know so much. She came to us because she didn't want another hybrid to die from your expedition of trying to kill me. How many hybrids are you willing to

sacrifice before calling it quits, Saxum? Is losing the creatures closest to you really worth all of this?"

Saxum swallowed a lump in his throat and bit his teeth to hold back the tears before he spat, "The one closest to me is already dead. I will fight this because I will not let her sacrifice be in vain."

"Did she sacrifice FOR the quest, or was she sacrificed BECAUSE of the quest, Saxum?"

This didn't just get Saxum thinking, it made every other hybrid grow contemplative.

Xandar stole a glance at his mate before keeping his eyes forward once more, thanking Goddess for spoiling him when she decided to bond him to this impeccable creature that was capable of influencing an entire population with nothing more than a few words.

Saxum's train of thoughts were pulled to a stop when he looked at Lucianne with intense hate as he said, "You're playing with me. You're tricking me into surrendering."

Lucianne simply responded, "I do want you to surrender, Saxum. But none of what I said was trickery. Your own logic can tell you that whatever I said is the truth. This is going to cost lives. It's going to sacrifice not just my people but yours as well. Don't do this."

Chong started having second thoughts. Regina and their toddler were still at Neptune's warehouse because their child was too sick to travel. All the children were. Those who came to Bordure were just here to scout the site after Gerella expressed her skepticism, so not all of them came. They didn't expect to run into anyone.

Chong had been with Regina for almost a century before they were blessed with a child. He didn't want to leave without watching his little boy grow. He was confident about their plan at first, but now he wondered if what the queen said was true, that some of them really might end up dead. And it was odd to him that neither the queen nor king had used their Authorities on him, a pure-bred wolf, yet.

With much hesitance, he linked Saxum, 'What if they're right?'

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0 6 minutes read

Saxum glared at Chong, who was standing right next to him. Saxum replied, 'We have the chemical to overpower the King's Authority. They have nothing to challenge that. That's why they're asking us to give in, Chong!'

'What if the Queen's Authority overp—'

'Look at them!'

Chong did. The king and queen looked like a very close couple, a very devoted couple, one that would put each other's lives before their own.

Saxum linked him again, 'She. Won't. Kill. Him.'

'But should he k!!! her?' Chong questioned in dismay. He wouldn't mind if Regina k!!!ed him because of a decipio's manipulation but he could never forgive himself if he was manipulated into k!!!ing the love of his life. He might just take his own life out of remorse and heartbreak.

'Listen here, Chong. We have business deals to uphold, promises to keep. Delancy had already given her life for this. There's no...''

'Delancy didn't give her life for this, Saxum. Her life was taken because of this. There's a huge difference. She was k!!!ed from an unknown illness after the first abducted vampire was sacrificed during the triplets' experiment. That's how the Forest of Oderem works. A life for a life. The forest took away the creature you loved most because the one who died must have been someone who had a significant other as well. We can manipulate the king to k!!! the queen but it's not going to end well for us in the long run. The forest's curses overpowers everything.'

Saxum turned to face the creature he thought was his loyal friend and follower, who would support him no matter how high the stakes were. First the obedient Gerella went rogue, now Chong wanted to chicken out?

'Chong, think very carefully about the stand you're taking. Ella's rebelliousness will not go unpunished.'

Chong's eyes drilled into Saxum's when he declared, 'Ella went against all of us because the sick children were the last straw for her. She asked us to pull

the plug but we paid no heed to what she was yelling to our faces. If she can stand for our people without having any blood relationship with any of them, it doesn't take much difficulty to comprehend that I will stand with making sure my son won't end up dead.'

'Your son is going to join Delancy if we don't follow through with what we've started. Rudolpho already said that the king and queen share close ties with the empress and consort. Should the latter pair ask for our decimation, what do you think the former would do?'

Chong didn't know how to answer that, so he walked around the question. 'Saxum, all I know is that neither of them are using their Authorities on me or on any other pure-bred wolf or lycan here. They don't want this fight.'

Saxum took one step closer and asked, 'Do YOU want this fight?'

In a firm, defiant tone, Chong said aloud, "No."

Chong howled in anguish when Saxum's claws went right through his gut, ripping it out before snapping his neck. At the warehouse, Regina drew everyone's attention when she shrieked at the sudden abdominal penetration that no one could see.

When Chong's neck was snapped, Regina's screams and wails filled the entire warehouse as those who had no children came to see what the commotion was about. The physical excruciation ended only to be replaced by an emotional loss when the other end of the mate-bond became cold and barren. Lifeless. Non-existent.

On the battleground, Lucianne's eyes bulged wide as her breathing got heavy. When Chong's lifeless body fell on the ground, Saxum's eyes immediately locked with hers, and her look of dismay was replaced by one of disappointment and anger. There was nothing that could stop Saxum. He was determined to finish this.

Greg knew it too, so he linked his followers, 'Everyone knows the drill: protect her at all costs.'

'Yes, Your Grace.'

Saxum scoffed at Lucianne's expression when he said, "Your mind tricks works on some people, probably because he was your kind, but not on me."

They exchanged hard stares for the next few moments before Saxum taunted, "Still don't have the urge to commence attack even after what you've seen?"

Lucianne simpered. "I know how this will go down in history. Until you attack, don't expect us to make a move."

Saxum found himself matching her smirk when he stated the obvious, "When one is in power, history...is something that can be rewritten. If you talked this long to buy yourselves time, then your luck just ran out. It's time to play."

The moment Lucianne felt the mental walls building up, she allowed her animal to push forward. The thickest stripe on her tail glowed in bright blue as she not only broke the mental walls but also tried to compel every opponent that she could compel to stand down. Xandar used his Authority as a shield, to help his people push back the manipulation like how Lucianne did for everyone back in Blue Crescent, and they began charging forward.

It was on the tip of Greg's tongue to say that it was going to be too easy seeing that they had been familiarizing themselves with a decipio's power and both the Authorities were obviously giving them the upper hand, but the duke chose to save that c0cky declaration for later, when they actually won.

Some hybrids found it harder to move but Lucianne soon realized that she couldn't completely compel them since the vampire part of their genes wasn't tailored to heed to a lycan's Authority. Those with a dominant wolf or lycan genotype were easier to compel whereas those with a dominant vampire genotype, like Saxum, were much more difficult to coerce.

Many vampires were trying to distract her by appearing behind her or getting in her way, which made holding the hybrids with her power slightly more difficult. It was especially hard to target the discretus-hybrids since she couldn't see them to compel them. Her allies came to help her but this in no way made it easier to pinpoint her targeted creatures.

As Xandar held the shield for his people, he targeted the proditors who were in his way of getting to Saxum. The king landed punches and broke his victims' limbs before throwing them at trees to render them unconscious or kill them if the proditors were still stubborn about attacking despite being injured. He found that beating them was surprisingly easier than he anticipated.

Then again, he had been training with his wife for months, even beating her almost half the time now, so his speed and agility had improved tremendously with the consistent practice. Even the veloxes couldn't rival the king's speed. The fortis were the easiest to beat. And after the manipulation practices with Pellethia, the mental attacks by the decipios on the ground weren't as insurmountable. The most annoying, thus far, were the invisible discretus.

The king even had a second here and there to briefly glance around the battleground to see how the others were faring, especially his wife and family. Lucianne had help, and as soon as she was done tripping her opponent with her tail and kicking them in the head to knock them out cold, she and the one or two creatures with her moved on to the next one.

Christian was doing well too, swiftly dodging attacks before delivering his own attacks with techniques that Xandar himself had never seen him use before, deducing that Lucianne must have taught his cousin those new tricks during their weekly private training sessions.

Greg seemed to be enjoying himself, smirking right before he injured or killed his opponents. Juan and the alliance members were doing better than fine too.

The only advantage Saxum had was in numbers. However, this so-called advantage was being neutralized when more and more hybrids and any proditor or rogue on their side were either being knocked out or eliminated. Even the discretus were dwindling in numbers when the vigils took them down one at a time.

After more attacks and kills, Xandar managed to reach Saxum. The king growled in rage as he pounced on the leader, which was when Saxum yelled, "NOW!"

Xandar broke Saxum's left elbow and tore off his right arm, neither indulging nor caring about the sharp shrieks coming out of Saxum's mouth even as he broke the leader's knees. But the moment the king reached for Saxum's neck, he paused. His eyes alternated between dark green and onyx, and the intrusion made Lucianne kill her opponent so that she could see what was going on with her husband.

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The thirty decipio-proditors who were given the capsules created by the triplets stood safely in the high branches of the trees as they manipulated the Lycan King. The shield that the King's Authority created for the lycans and werewolves was torn down with the king losing focus and control over his own power and autonomy.

"Fvck." Greg muttered when he and the others felt the protection from his cousin vanished.

"Got that right." Juan, who was right behind him, agreed.

Saxum managed to crawl out of the king's hostage when his elbow was healed, and he watched how the toughest animal in the kingdom was struggling to fight off the manipulation effects, internally cursing the triplets for not improving the chemical enough to take control of the king from the very first second of the manipulation.

Of course, the leader didn't know that Xandar's mental strength was now superior to past Lycan Kings since he was the only king in history to practice with the second most powerful decipio in the empire. So the lack of effectiveness in the chemical was technically not the triplets' fault. There was simply a variable that they didn't know had to be taken into consideration.

When the vigils were close to reaching Saxum, the proditors made Xandar shift before knocking the vigils away. Instead of trying to reach the leader again, the vigils went for the proditors, only to discover that there were more than thirty of them. Yes, thirty were manipulating the king. But there seemed to be a Team B with another forty decipios making sure the thirty were undisturbed as they intruded the minds of anyone who attempted to reach for Team A.

Lucianne tried to reach Xandar with her Authority, but three discretus caught her by surprise, tripping her before attempting to plunge their claws through her gut. Lucianne caught their scents and tripped them with her tail. She pounced on the seemingly empty space and found herself standing right on top of one before her canines dug into the discretus's being, making her shriek and coming into view.

One of the other two was the female discretus's mate, and he too shrieked in pain and came into view as he pushed Lucianne off. Ivory arrived and broke the discretus's limbs before ultimately snapping his neck, then throwing his lifeless body at Hailey's opponent.

The third discretus was sneaking up on Lucianne, and her claws were inches away from Lucianne's chest when her animal identified her scent, narrowly dodging her attack by backing away before attempting to land a punch. That was when the discretus's claws went through her arm, and she groaned while pulling the discretus's arm right off with that attack.

As the discretus came into view with nothing short of anguish, anger and hatred, she used her last ounce of strength to pounce on Lucianne, making her fall to the ground. Before Lucianne could push her away or kill her, the discretus bit into her shoulder, collarbone and chin, letting the venom enter the queen's bloodstream.

Lucianne only managed to scratch her opponent's face once before she started losing strength. Toby came to kick off the discretus and his claws went straight into her chest. The minister turned the body over to avoid the creepy, sinister smile of accomplishment on the now dead discretus's face, and turned to see what was happening to his best friend.

Lucianne quivered as her immune system tried to fight off the high concentration of venom. Her own Authority that held their opponents wore off, giving them a surge of energy and unencumbered liberty to attack and defend. Those on her side were still holding up fine, but many were glancing at their queen just to make sure that she remained safe while trying to heal. Hailey, Ivory, Toby and Dominic surrounded her, fighting off incoming attacks.

Lucianne was trying to reach Xandar with her Authority again when she heard him groan in pain, which was most likely because he was feeling her pain. Juan linked Lucianne, telling her to stop trying to exert her Authority in the midst of recovery because it would only slow down the process.

Whilst breaking necks and kneecaps, the big brother told his sister to focus on herself first if her ultimate aim was to help everyone else. Lucianne gave in because she couldn't find a plausible counter argument to that. But she began desperately trying to reach Xandar through their mind-link. Her animal cooed and whimpered through their link, and they could tell that his animal felt her, but he was struggling to connect with her.

Toby shook his best friend by her forearms to get her to stop as he exclaimed sternly, "Lucy, quit it! If you want to stop him, you need your full strength and you know that! Stop trying to use up whatever you have left in your reservoir.

Your Gamma mind knows that we can only slow him down. You can stop him, but only if you just fvcking let yourself recover!”

She continued quivering as she linked, ‘O-kay. Je-ez.’

To take her own mind off whatever Xandar is going through, she chanted the word ‘recover’ over and over again. She couldn’t deny the difficulty to try and block out Xandar’s struggle, but she reminded herself and especially her animal that they were playing the long game. The proditors wouldn’t k!!! Xandar, at least not before making him k!!! her, so Xandar was going to be fine.

The vigils and lycan warriors headed for the trees as soon as they could, but the decipios were annoyingly skllled at jumping from b.ranch to b.ranch as they continued trying to collectively take control of the king’s mind. And Team B was making their victims see things that weren’t there, so many chose to close their eyes and used their noses to find their way around. Sure, they knocked into a few bushes and each other but that didn’t stop a few of them from finding their way to those in the b.ranches, who were petrified when they discovered that their mental tricks weren’t as effective as they expected them to be.

Xandar felt Lucianne’s agony but he couldn’t see her. He felt her but he didn’t know where she was. His awareness of reality slowly diminished along with his mental strength. With the final shred of awareness, he and his animal reminded each other to trust the scents and the warmth or lack thereof of a specific creature before k!!!ing. His eyes turned fully dark green, and he snarled before charging towards his wife.

Greg noticed this, and he muttered, “Goddess damn it.” The duke then linked the creature he had hoped that he wouldn’t have to link, ‘Blackfur! We have to slow our d*ck cousin. Let’s go!’

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Christian ignored the way Greg was describing his best friend because he was focusing on sprinting towards Xandar. Greg tripped Xandar just in time, and Christian pinned his knees to the ground. A fortis-vigil came to pin Xandar by his left arm while Greg placed his full weight on Xandar’s right arm.

Greg was beginning to question the Moon Goddess's intelligence and rationality when she decided to strengthen a creature with the mate-bond. Did she even consider such circumstances? Even with three of them holding the Lycan King, they could feel that Xandar would eventually break free.

When Greg saw Christian's eyes going to Lucianne before glazing over, he immediately linked him first, 'Don't even think about hastening her, Blackfur. She's already trying as hard as she can.'

Christian gave into his burning urge to argue with Greg as opposed to doing what he wanted to do before he was interrupted when he said, 'What is it with you and always thinking you know everything?'

'Well, am I wrong?'

'Yes, you are. I was just going to ask the vigils when the empress and the other decipios were arriving. I wasn't going to link the queen.'

'It doesn't really matter when the other bloodsuckers will arrive, does it? Unless they can teleport here, we're on our own until they actually arrive.'

In the midst of their bickering, Xandar registered his cousins' scents, and was made to think that his late father was still alive and was compelling Christian with his Authority, which was why his best friend was stopping him. It was easy to believe that Greg would take his favorite uncle's side without question.

Xandar growled in a way that shook the battleground as he spun his body to fling the vigil away before throwing Greg at a tree and flung Christian to another tree. Both dukes grunted upon the impact but only Greg had the strength to mutter, "Goddess, I hate you, cousin."

When Greg saw how close he himself was to some of the decipio-proditors, a lightbulb moment came. He picked up a few rocks and pebbles and started throwing them at the decipios. His aim wasn't perfect but he managed to make two fall from the trees when they lost their balance.

The ones who fell met their demise when the wolves on the ground went straight for the kill. A few of the Team B decipios started trying to control Greg, and the duke managed to make one more proditor fall before his own animal made him close his eyes to avoid acting on reflex based on sight.

Once his nose confirmed the scents of those on the ground, his eyes opened and he killed every single creature whose scent he didn't find familiar, even though they were portrayed as his loyal followers and in one case, Lucianne. That last one was, by far, the most difficult one to see his claws plunging through, and he had to pause and breathe heavily for a moment as he and his animal kept reminding one another that the creature stank too much to be Lucianne.

Xandar was made to think that the ones around him were warriors and guards who were loyal to his father, and they were trying to stop him from attacking the parent that he was after. He was made to think that the late King Lucas and the late Queen Vera influenced Lucianne to sever their mate-bond. He 'remembered' how painful it was to hear the words of rejection coming out of Lucianne's mouth, how he begged her to take it back and give him a chance, to which she further refused, albeit with tears.

The manipulation went on to convince Xandar that Lucianne was held in some underground dungeon that only the late king and queen knew the location of, and they were doing everything they can to keep Xandar from finding it while waiting for the next full moon for the mate-bond between their son and the worthless wolf to be severed by default. Xandar seemed to think that his current plan was to choke the location out of his father. If that failed, the plan was to kill his father, and then use the King's Authority, which he would subsequently inherit, to force the truth out of his mother.

His animal smelled warriors all around it, but felt that it didn't have the time to kill. It needed to find its mate! Xandar sprinted towards Lucianne who could finally feel her limbs as she slowly stood again.

When she saw her mate charging in her direction, she frantically linked those around her, 'Get out of here, all of you!'

Toby was the first to respond, "Not a chance, Lucy."

Ivory insisted, 'We have strict instructions to...'

'Damn it,' she either pushed or kicked away those stationed to protect her when she saw Xandar pouncing her way with his claws protruded. Her timing was impeccable. One second later and Ivory would've been dead, and Dominic could've broken more than a few bones. Lucianne only retained a light scratch along her arm which healed within seconds.

Lucianne dodged Xandar's attacks as she tried to use her Authority to reach his animal. The decipios in the trees saw the lycans and werewolves heading for the queen, and they got Xandar to emit his Authority to keep them at a distance. It was as if Xandar's power had created an invisible wall, forming a circle that stopped any wolf or lycan from entering the area. The manipulation told Xandar that it was his own father who kept those around them at a distance, wiping out the memory of channeling the power himself.

The warriors and alliance members looked at each other in dismay, as did the mavericks. How were they going to protect the queen when they couldn't even reach her?