

Chapter 71 - The Vampire's Servant

[Gray]

When it looked like they were going to be later than planned, I went up to Victor's room and turned on his blanket. I made sure to text Echo, so she wouldn't worry. She messaged back with a thank you and a lot of little heart emojis.

I went to the kitchen for a snack. Fighting with Jean-Claude had been awesome. He taught me a lot and helped me work out a bit of residual frustration.

Forgiving Echo was easy. I just hated that it was my blood and her connection to me that caused her such a difficult time. I loved her so much and I never wanted her to hurt.

Deciding to become her servant was easy. I wanted to be with her forever. The idea of dying and knowing I would leave her behind one day twisted my stomach. It was an easy choice. Echo was my future, forever.

What was hard, was dealing with the jealousy and possessiveness that kept creeping up. It was partly me and mostly Rex. He really didn't like this arrangement, but I refused to give in to him and mark Echo. No one did that and kept going to human school. She wanted that experience. I wouldn't ruin it for her.

I was fixing a light sandwich when Talia came in the room. She hopped up on a counter and watched me. I hadn't spent a lot of time with her, but she seemed okay. She was really nice in all of the interactions I'd had with her.

"Grayson, may I ask you a few questions?"

"Please call me Gray." I sighed.

"Sorry. Gray, may I ask you a few questions?"

"Sure." I replied, focusing on my snack.

"Why are you following Victor's lead with Echo? Are you forgetting that she's your mate too? Is there something stopping you from acting on your own? Did he threaten you?" She asked.

“I don’t understand what you mean about following Victor’s lead. Of course I’m not forgetting that she’s my mate. Nothing is stopping me from acting on my own. And he threatens me a lot, so you’ll have to be more specific.” I answered.

“The way you treat Echo. You should act as your heart desires, not do what Victor wants. He’s one of her mates. You are not being permitted to be her mate. I see how you hold back with her. She’s going to need you if we don’t get this curse resolved.” Talia said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“There is a curse in this portion of the territory. It’s why werewolves here have to stay in the region. It’s why you don’t find your mate until eighteen, when every other wolf can find theirs at seventeen. And it kills every Master who claims the territory. Victor is trying to break the curse, but, if he doesn’t, it will kill him and Echo will need to know she can lean on you and you won’t be lost because you don’t have Victor to guide you.” She explained.

A curse? I needed to see if I could help. Echo wouldn’t do well if she lost Victor. Not if last night was any indication. She needed both of us.

“What do you recommend?” I asked, taking a bite of my sandwich and trying to play it cool.

“I hear Victor talking about what she’s ready for and what she needs. Have either of you even considered asking Echo what she’s ready for? I don’t think he’s ever considered asking Echo what she’s ready for and what she needs. He’s used to caring for others and, with vampires, that means doing what you think is best for them with very little input from the vampires.” Talia told me.

I nodded. It did seem an awful lot like how he acted. I had written it off to the imperious nature of vampires, but maybe it was just Victor. He thought he knew what was best for her, but maybe he was as clueless as I was.

Rex stirred at that. He’d had ideas about what he wanted to do with our mate ever since she marked us. I’d shut him down a lot of the time, but I knew I kissed her more roughly than Victor said I should. He told me all kisses should be soft and gentle until she changed them, to give her control of the situation.

Sometimes I wanted control of the situation, though. I wanted to show Echo just how much I loved and desired her. I wanted to go further last night. Maybe holding back is part of why she’s worried about losing us. She can tell we’re holding back and it’s hurting her.

“I’ll have to do something. I want Echo to be happy, but it’s so hard to figure her out. She seems so innocent and sheltered for the most part, but then she pulls out something I wasn’t expecting and seems so much more knowledgeable. It’s hard to pin anything down.” I sighed.

“Gray... did anyone ever tell you exactly what she has gone through over the last ten years?” Talia asked, looking concerned.

“Val told me what he saw a few months ago. Some vampire feeding on her and putting his hand up her skirt.” I answered.

It still made me angry that the people who called themselves her parents had allowed that. It was worse that no one had been able to save her from it, even after Val found out. I wished that I could have been there to help.

“Oh, dear. Let me tell you what Victor and Marius told me. You deserve to know everything. Echo is partly yours and how you treat her is important. I think you’ll understand your goddess’ intentions a little better afterward.” She said.

I followed her to the living room and sat on the couch next to her. Talia turned toward me and warned me to keep my wolf in check. That made me nervous. She then told me everything from the very first feeding to the things that had been running through Echo’s head when Victor saved her.

My anger was overwhelming. The things they’d done to her, said to her. Everything she’d had to go through every single week for ten years. I didn’t know how she hadn’t just given up on everything. The threats, the promises, the things people would pay extra to do to her.

No wonder she seemed amazed by everything we did. Others touched her like that, but none of them were gentle, loving, or kind. Every time with them had been a violation. I hated them for hurting her and using her like that. I was even more glad Victor had killed them all.

“Thank you for telling me. I can see how my earlier actions might have seemed like theirs. I wanted to own Echo. It wasn’t something where I stopped to think about what she wanted, only what I did. I won’t do that again.” I vowed.

“Good. But you see now how Victor has coddled her? Echo can’t grow if he’s guarding her experiences. You’re her mate as much as he is. You need to get him to loosen his grip on her.” Talia said.

“What exactly are you talking about?” I asked.

She couldn’t just be talking about in the bedroom, like I’d kind of thought she was. I’d had bedroom heart to hearts with Dillon and Amy. I didn’t realize she was talking about something else entirely.

“Aside from her training, Echo needs to experience life outside of vampirism. He may see her as not being ready to experience other things. She needs to have knowledge of all sorts of people and things. He was worried about her going to the mall because of how many people there would be. He was afraid she would get overwhelmed. There will be times that she will have to be comfortable in large crowds. Ones that will be paying more attention to her than people in a shopping center. I’m working on arranging his introduction ball. Echo will attend as his Solus Amor. She will be scrutinized as someone who is a link to getting a stronger connection or hold over the Master. Vampires will use anything they can to get power and recognition. Like Victor

will not be allowed in the dance you're taking her to, you will not be allowed in the ball. She needs to be able to handle some situations that would make her uncomfortable." Talia explained.

"I can take her out with some of my werewolf friends. Other than Cam and Harmony. I have some with mates who are... not as friendly to other females as they should be. That way, I can step in if they get out of hand." I offered.

"Good. I hate telling you to put her in these situations, but Victor seems to think that he can watch over her all the time. He can't and vampires are catty bitches so much of the time." She sighed.

"I'll take care of it. Victor has enough to worry about."

The door in the entry opened and I heard Echo chatting happily to Amy and Dillon. I smiled at how cheerful she sounded. I glanced over, then back at Talia.

"Go on. I'm sure you missed her as much as she missed you." She chuckled.

"Not possible." I grinned, standing and making my way to my mate.

I stopped in the arch into the entryway. Echo's hair was shorter. It really suited her, but I thought she was beautiful no matter what she did with it.

Echo saw me, dropped her bags and ran over, jumping up and wrapping her arms and legs around me. It reminded me of the way she'd jumped on me in the library.

She started kissing me firmly and passionately. When I responded roughly, she moaned and dug her fingernails into my back. It made Rex excited and I growled, making her giggle.

I licked my lips after she pulled away and put her head on my shoulder. I held her to me tightly. I felt so at peace when I had her in my arms. It was a little hard to let her go.

"We'll go start your clothes in the wash. Make sure you put the dry cleaner ticket somewhere safe. You'll need it to get your dresses." Amy told Echo as she went past us.

"Thank you, Amy!" Echo said as she cuddled more firmly against me.

"Are you okay, angel?" I asked.

"That was the best day. My sister came with us. I bought so many things." She smiled and kissed my neck.

"I'm glad you had fun. Victor will be up soon. You should go see him. You can tell us all about it at dinner." I said and kissed her cheek.

"Just a little bit longer. I missed seeing you." Echo replied softly.

I stood there, holding her. It was really nice to have my mate love me. She made me feel better. It made what I had to do harder. I wanted to make her feel better too, but taking her out with girls who would be mean and judgmental wouldn't do that. I nearly lost my resolve, until Echo started nibbling on my neck.

How many other things did Victor keep her from expressing by holding her back? Did he really not notice how much she held herself back? I couldn't imagine her doing this to Victor.

"Are you hungry, angel?" I asked.

"Mmm. Yes, but not for blood." She purred. "I want to touch you again, Gray."

I groaned at the heated tone in her voice. Goddess knows, I wanted her to touch me again too. She was a little like a werewolf with their mate. I loved it.

Putting her down, I saw the disappointment on her face. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. This way, maybe, I could open Victor's eyes to what Echo was ready for.

"Tonight, you pick what we're doing. You get to be in charge and make the decisions. We'll trust that you know what you want and that you aren't asking for anything you're uncomfortable with. I want you to focus on that this evening. Now, you go wake up Victor and I'll go see if they need help in the kitchen." I told her.

Echo looked confused for a moment, then seemed to grasp what I was saying. Her cheeks turned red and she covered her mouth. After a moment of watching her eyes go back and forth while she thought it over, she lowered her hands and looked up at me.

"Anything at all that I want?" She asked.

"Within reason. I'm not kissing him." I laughed.

"Then what's the point?" Echo giggled.

"Get out of here, dirty girl." I grinned and pushed her toward the stairs.

Once she was up the stairs, I started texting my friends about eating with us at lunch. I made plans with them for an evening date next Saturday. I knew Echo had plans with Sean earlier in the day.

I told my friends Echo had never been bowling and I wanted to take her out. They loved the fries at the bowling alley and agreed to go and bring their mates. It would be perfect for what Talia said she needed. She would have more attention as my mate, the girls would be fake friendly, and she would have to maintain a certain demeanor.

The most important part, is that I would be there to cut them off if it got too harsh, and I would know what was going on instead of being clueless. Catty wolves had to be easier to deal with than catty vampires. They didn't have as much practice.

What is Needed

Chapter 72 - The Vampire's Servant

During dinner, Echo talked all about her shopping trip. She described the dresses she'd picked out with so much excitement that I was eager to see them. She also went on about the stylist and her master. I realized, Victor couldn't properly marry Echo. He smiled and listened without so much as a twinge.

Technically, they were already married from the bite, but that wasn't the same. I wondered if Echo wanted to get married the traditional way. I knew my parents would want a wedding. I felt like I should bring it up at some point, but decided it would be better used next time Echo needed a distraction.

When we were done with the meal, Echo and Jean-Claude cleaned up. She told me she needed to work on her laundry and that I could help, if I wanted. I shook my head. I needed to talk to Victor more.

I wanted to help with the curse. If it could kill him, I had to help fix it. Echo wouldn't deal well with losing either of us. And I was coming to think of him as a friend. He tried to give me the tools to gain Echo's love and he wasn't that bad... for a vampire.

He was in his office with the door closed. I knocked and waited for him to call me in. It didn't take long.

Victor was sitting at his desk with a stack of files on one side and a folded piece of paper in front of him. I closed the door behind me and sat in the chair across from him. He raised an eyebrow at me.

"Is there something I can help you with, Grayson?" He asked.

"You could call me Gray...." I offered.

"I really haven't time for this, Grayson. If you're feeling lonely, go talk to the other werewolves." Victor said and turned his attention back to the paper on his desk.

"I was just trying to break the ice, Victor. Talia told me about the curse. I want to help. What do you need from me?" I asked.

“I need you to focus on keeping Echo happy while I resolve it. This is my territory. My responsibility. I don’t need help.” He replied coolly.

“Stop being an asshat. This is dangerous. Echo needs both of us. You’re my friend. I don’t want you to die. You don’t have to do this alone.” I insisted.

“Asshat? You have a colorful way with words, Grayson. I don’t know how you could help aside from keeping the fact that it could kill me from Echo. If last night is any indicator, we don’t want her to meltdown over something I plan to resolve. This isn’t as easy as it seems. I was just rereading the last update letter sent by the first Master of this territory. It’s vague and none of his previous updates even hint at what could have led to any of this.” Victor sighed.

“Can I see it?” I asked. “I might have a different perspective.”

He scoffed, but handed me the letter. I unfolded it. The paper was old and fragile, so I was as careful as possible while I read the slightly faded handwriting.

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To whomever it may concern,

This is my final message to the Council. I regret to inform you that a curse has been placed on this territory. The exact conditions of it are hard to describe. I physically cannot write them. I have tried repeatedly.

Suffice it to say, the union of my territory with the local coven of witches has fallen through and my negotiations with the werewolves is completely off the table.

The only way I can see to break this curse before it fully takes hold of the territory is to kill myself. By the time this letter reaches you, I will have met the sun. I have lost too much, in any case, to make this long life worth living. I do not fear my future undoing. I leave this territory in the care of my second in command, Thornton Graves. He will make an excellent Master and this territory should grow rapidly under the change of command.

I thank you for assigning me this post and giving me a brief happiness. I will carry this experience in my heart until I am no more. My apologies for not living up to your expectations. I am certain this is the only solution to this issue. Please, do not send anyone else out here until Thornton writes to say the curse is resolved.

Your most humble servant,

Grigori Drozdov

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I looked up at Victor. He was watching me read. This didn't sound great and it didn't say anything about the actual nature of the curse.

"He knew all about the curse, but couldn't write it?" I asked.

"Other vampires who know of the curse cannot speak of it. I spoke with a few older vampires in the territory. They confirm that there is a physical reaction to talking about the curse. I have gotten as much as I can from them." Victor said softly.

"What do you know now?" I pressed.

"Something happened between Grigori and the leader of the coven. I can't find any witches who know about it. The coven disbanded after the leader and his whole family disappeared. The light witches refuse to get involved. They believe that Grigori had the family killed when the negotiation wasn't going their way. I hope that Lila will be able to shed more light on it. Dark witches don't have the same... social limitations... light witches do. Maybe she had a grandparent or great-grandparent who wrote about what happened." He sighed. "Master Marius is bringing her here once Echo is asleep."

"I'll stay with Echo so you can meet with her. It sounds like Grigori was the focus of the curse. Why would it affect the werewolves?"

"We have no idea. I'm still working that out. Maybe there's a werewolf component somewhere." Victor shrugged.

I nodded. That made sense.

"What happened with the vampire that took over?" I asked.

"He disappeared soon after Grigori met the sun. So did the second support. Absolutely no one knows what happened to them. The next person who tried to take over ended up tripping and staking himself. Vampires don't trip. There are no awkward vampires. Even Springer was graceful from the moment he rose." Victor shook his head.

"Are there more letters from anyone or notes?"

"There are some journals. Some of them just seem to go from being intelligent people, to being raving lunatics. Others become less wordy until they just stop. People who would write two or three pages of descriptive information in their journals suddenly started being cryptic, as if they were being spied on, then stopped writing all together." He explained.

"Have you talked with Trent?" I asked.

"Not yet. I was hoping he would be willing to question some of the older werewolves."

“Our great-grandfather is still alive. Judging by the date on the letter, he would have been about twelve when the first master took his life. I could go ask him. He would just talk about Alpha stuff if Trent went. I can get more out of him. I’ll go tomorrow after school. I can have someone meet Echo at the bus stop, to make sure she gets in safely.” I offered.

“You wouldn’t be put out by it?” He asked.

“No. Like I said, you’re my friend and our Echo needs you to stay alive. The sooner we get this curse sorted, the sooner we can work on our happy ever after.” I grinned.

Victor laughed. “I can’t believe my ‘happy ever after’ includes the wolf who tried to steal my servant.”

“I can’t believe mine includes an ancient leech. Did I ever tell you how much I hate vampires?” I snorted.

“Probably as much as I hate werewolves. I suppose we all make compromises for love. Thank you for wanting to help with this. It was becoming quickly overwhelming.” He admitted.

“You can always come to me for help. I may not be able to do a lot, but I’ll do everything I can.” I told him.

“The same goes for you. We need to take care of each other so we can take better care of Echo.” Victor smiled. “Anything else?”

“I want to take Echo out bowling on Saturday evening. It’s her day off, but it may mean a cold bed for you.”

“That’s fine. I’m sure she’ll enjoy it. I’ll look forward to hearing all about it.” He replied.

“She might be too tired to stay up and talk. Echo is going out with Sean during the day. She told me he was taking her to play mini-golf.” I said.

“Echo said she has a friend called Sean. You’ve met him? Is he in love with her as well? I won’t share her with another man.” Victor growled.

“So far, it seems like a really good friendship. I’m not trying to talk her out of it. I am keeping an eye on it, though. There’s something about Sean that makes my hackles rise.” I sighed.

I didn’t know what it was about him. He wasn’t anything compared to me and Victor. There was no way that Echo could love him as more than a friend. That didn’t exactly relax me. There was nothing to stop him from being in love with her. It wasn’t hard to love her once you knew her.

“Let me know if we need to have a talk with young Sean. I would hate for him to ruin his friendship with Echo. I would hate to have to ruin that friendship for him....” He said in an icy voice.

“Calm down. I’ve got this. He won’t hurt our girl. I’ll make sure of it.” I promised.

“Good. If that’s all, I have some questions to put together before we see Echo off to bed.”

“I wanted to talk to you about that, as well.” I winced a little.

“You’re taking up a lot of my time tonight, Grayson. What about Echo’s bedtime did you want to discuss?” Victor asked with a raised eyebrow.

I shifted uncomfortably. This was really awkward to talk about, but we’d discussed the other things we were doing with her. I didn’t know what was making this difficult.

“Well... um... I was thinking, you keep saying we shouldn’t do things she’s not ready for, but we don’t actually know what she’s ready for. I told her that she would be in charge tonight. I want her to be comfortable telling us what she needs and wants.” I told him.

“She doesn’t know what she needs and wants, Grayson. That’s why we’re introducing her to everything slowly.” He sighed.

“I know, but what about yesterday? She touched both of us in the way she wanted to. Neither one of us prompted her or really told her what to do. She asked for instruction when she needed it, but wanted to explore how she could touch us. Talia told me what the vampires said and did to Echo. She isn’t completely ignorant. Just... innocent. I think that doing this will make her feel better about her power in our relationship and might lead to things that we hadn’t been planning for her in a while. We have to give her control, Victor. She’s not a child.” I insisted.

He looked at the desk. There was a thoughtful look on his face. I hoped that he was really considering everything.

“And you’ve already promised her this?” Victor said, finally.

“Yes. I figured you’d be on board. Echo deserves to have a say in our... activities.”

“If she’s already expecting it, I won’t object. You should talk to me before making these decisions, Grayson.” He replied. “I’m part of this relationship, too.”

“I know. I’m sorry. The idea popped into my head and I said it before I even thought about talking to you. Frankly, I didn’t really know if you’d agree to it, but she deserves it. I want her happy and relaxed around us, not trying to play a role we’ve dictated. I know our Echo will be the most amazing woman once she’s comfortable with herself and with us.” I urged.

“I understand. Anything else? Or can I get some of this work done before then?” Victor asked.

“I’ll head out. I need to call my parents and get some stuff done myself. I don’t think they’re going to allow me to miss another family dinner. Plus, my boss wants me to call about getting my schedule for the week.” I said as I stood.

“You know you don’t have to work, if you don’t want to. I can give you an allowance or pay you for work you do around here.” He offered.

“No, thanks, I want to earn my own way. It will give you and Echo time alone on the evenings I work. I’m sure you miss that time with her.”

“I did. Thank you for thinking of me. Good luck with your calls. I’ll see you in a couple hours.”

“And don’t worry, I told her that you and I aren’t kissing each other.” I snickered.

He chuckled. “Good. You’re not exactly my type.”

I laughed and got out of the chair. I needed to call my mom. She was probably going to be a little mad, but she’d understand once I talked to her about Echo’s healing and how much she needed me. Mates are very important to werewolves.

Echo's Decision

Chapter 73 - The Vampire's Servant

The alarm on my phone went off as I was resting on my bed. My mom kept going back and forth between being really understanding and reaming me out for not calling and keeping her updated. I was ordered to attend the next family dinner and bring Echo with me. My parents wanted to meet her.

I turned off the alarm and got out of bed. Before I’d made my phone calls, I’d showered and put on my pajama pants. It was a good plan, because I needed recovery time after the call with my mom. My boss was a lot more pleasant to talk to.

He wanted me to work my regular shift starting this Tuesday. Pierce totally understood when I told him that I needed last week off because of what happened to Echo. He’d called in a couple other people who were looking for more hours that week to cover for me.

Heading over to Echo’s room, I wondered what she figured out. I couldn’t wait to see her again. Would she do that cute bashful thing and blush the whole time? Would she be more forceful like she was when she came home? Would she be playful like the time in the library?

I loved that I couldn’t predict what she would do. Echo was a puzzle that I loved seeing every piece of. It made me rush to get to her as soon as possible.

Victor was walking in the door just as I got there. I came in behind him and looked around the room. Echo’s room had practically become my own in the past few days. I knew every inch of it.

“Did you get your calls taken care of?” Victor asked.

“My mom's gonna kill me if I don't bring Echo for family dinner next weekend.” I chuckled.

“Can't have that.”

“Did you figure out your questions?” I asked.

“Yes. I want to make sure I don't upset her, but that I also don't leave anything out. She may not even know anything. I just have to hope.” He sighed.

“I'm sure she'll have something or know someone who does. You have to think positive.” I replied with a smile.

“That's not how vampires work.” Victor said with a slight smile.

The closet door started to open. I was eager to see Echo in her nightgown again. It was so sweet and modest, it made me think of the dirtiest things.

She stepped out and my jaw nearly dropped. Echo wasn't wearing her sweet little cotton nightgown. She was wearing a babydoll nightie that barely came to the tops of her thighs. It had a lacy top and dropped, just under her breasts, into something light and gauzy. I had to make sure I wasn't drooling.

“Who else has seen you in this?” Victor asked with a slight growl.

Echo blushed and looked at the floor. She did that whenever she was trying to hide her expression. I realized, that she must have taken it the wrong way.

“What he meant to ask, was who was with you when you tried this on? He didn't mean that he didn't like it or you shouldn't wear it.” I explained.

“I was alone. Amy helped me pick it out. Dillon said even though he's gay, werewolves get possessive and you might get upset if he went into the lingerie store with us. So he went to another store and shopped until we called him.” Echo explained in a quiet voice.

Honestly, Rex had gotten a little riled when he realized what Victor was asking. I could feel my possessiveness creeping up as I was talking. Victor's response was strange, though. I thought he didn't do this possessive stuff.

“It looks amazing.” I smiled. “Do you want to come over so we can have a closer look at you, angel?”

She looked up and her eyes darted between me and Victor. I looked over at him. He didn't seem as upset as he had before. Actually, I think he looked a little embarrassed. I hadn't really known him long enough to tell the difference. Vampires were hard to read sometimes.

I held out my hand to her and Echo slowly made her way across the room. When she reached me, I took her hand and spun her around. The floaty skirt of the light blue nightie flew up and I could see she was wearing little white lacy panties.

Rex struggled with me. He wanted control. I reminded him that Echo was in charge tonight and I wouldn't mark her until I knew it was safe.

Victor stepped forward and took her other hand. He kissed it softly and smiled a little. I could see a fang popping out from under his upper lip. It looked like he was having control issues as well.

"You look radiant, Echo. I'm sorry if I scared you. The thought of anyone other than myself or Grayson seeing you in such a fetching nightgown made me behave badly. Please forgive me." He murmured.

"I'm sorry I worried you, Victor. I thought you two might like this, but I was nervous about anyone seeing me." Echo said with a blush.

"We definitely don't want anyone else to ever see you in it. You're so beautiful, sweetheart. I can't even think straight. It's a good thing you're in charge tonight." I smiled and kissed her other hand.

"Really? Anything I want. You agreed to this, Victor?" She asked.

"Of course. Anything you want, princess." He promised.

Echo bounced a little and it took a moment for my brain to start working again. She pulled Victor to the bed and sat him on the edge. Then she sat on his lap facing me. After some adjusting, she waved me over.

I approached slowly. What could she be planning with this position? I didn't have to wait long to find out. Echo pulled my pants down until I was exposed.

She pulled me until my knees were touching Victor's with Echo wedged between us. Her hands explored me for a few moments before she lowered her lips to my tip and kissed it gently. Her mouth opened and her tongue slid over my head. She slipped me into her mouth, sucking on me while her hands firmly slid up and down my shaft.

Victor gathered up her hair and held it back. Her hips started moving on him and he groaned. One of his hands went down and he held her stomach, keeping her from tipping forward as he watched her mouth taking more of me into it.

"A little more, princess. How much of Grayson can you get in your precious mouth?" He purred.

Echo pushed forward, made bolder by Victor's encouragement. I could feel my dick hit the back of her throat. She didn't even gag. I was surprised.

“Vampires don’t have gag reflexes. Some dhampyrs don’t either. Very good job, princess. You’re doing so well.” Victor said in a soft soothing voice.

One of her hands slipped down and she started massaging my balls like she had yesterday. I groaned a little at the feeling of her hands, mouth, and tongue. This wasn’t what I’d imagined when I told her she could do whatever she wanted.

Echo looked up at me while she worked her mouth on me. I caressed her cheek and she moaned lightly. The vibration of it reverberated along my dick. Rex was going wild in my head. I moved my hips a little, sliding myself in and out of her mouth.

“Are you going to let him cum in your sweet mouth, Echo? Are you going to let him fill your mouth with his seed? I want to see that, my precious princess. I want to see him lose his control in that darling mouth of yours, then I want you to kiss me.” He whispered.

She squeaked a little in response and nodded slightly. I was a little annoyed that he was kind of telling her what to do, but I was also excited to finish in Echo for the first time ever. Her hand started stroking me a little faster.

I watched her as intently as Victor was. She was beautiful. A light blush had spread over her cheeks and never gone away. Her eyes were full of desire and love. She was watching my face, which made me a little nervous. I always wanted her attention, but this was intense.

Soon, I felt my end coming. My breathing quickened as it grew closer.

“Echo. I’m almost there, angel.” I groaned. “Are you sure?”

She sucked a little harder in response. The look of determination in her eye made me happy. It didn’t take much longer before I exploded in her mouth. Her grip on me loosened and I saw her swallowing. She gave me a firm lick over my tip and let me go before she turned around in Victor’s lap and started kissing him.

I pulled my pants back up and sat next to them while they made out. Echo pulled back and moved herself from his lap into mine. She kissed me deeply and roughly. Her teeth nibbled at my tongue and I groaned at the feeling.

Echo moved her mouth away from mine. She kissed down my chin and neck. When she got to my collar bone, she nipped along it until she came to the curve of my neck and bit me. There were no fangs. It wasn’t for feeding. She sucked and bit that spot until I started getting hard again. Only then did she move back.

“Do I get a turn or was that it for me?” Victor asked.

She turned around in my lap and reached over to take Victor’s hand and tug him to move into the same position I had been in. A growl started in my chest. Rex really didn’t like this, but he’d have to get used to it.

With a firm yank, she pulled his pants down. Like with me, she explored his length. I watched her handle him. It was kind of hot.

Echo's voice sounded in my head. 'This should answer your question, Gray.'

I looked at her and remembered my insecure questioning from last night. He didn't seem to be much bigger than me. I was a little surprised to see that he was uncircumcised. I chuckled.

"Is something funny, Grayson?" Victor asked.

"I didn't expect you to be uncircumcised. That must have been what Echo was asking about when she was wondering about them being different." I explained.

"It wasn't common when I was human. Echo doesn't mind. Do you, princess?"

"I don't know what that means." Echo murmured before licking over his tip.

I held her hair back, like he had. I watched as her mouth closed around him. Her hips started moving on me. I could smell her arousal as she rubbed herself against my bulge while sucking and stroking Victor.

"Oh, sweet Echo. That feels amazing. You look so beautiful with your mouth full of me. I can't wait to return the favor and taste your sweetness directly from the source." Victor purred.

Echo moaned in response. How was he so smooth with her touching and sucking him like that? I could barely string two words together. It was almost like my brain stopped working completely and I was just existing in the moment.

I really needed to step up my game. I knew there was no winner or loser, but I felt like I was losing. I couldn't win at talking, but I could win in other ways.

Sliding my hand from her stomach, I made my way into her little lacy panties and down to dampen my finger with her wetness. Then I moved back up and started circling her clit. Echo whimpered and ground herself against me harder.

"You like when Grayson touches you while you're pleasuring me, princess? We can make that happen so much more often. I love the look of hunger and lust in your eyes. They're practically glowing. My precious little dhampyr." He groaned while he started gently thrusting into Echo's mouth.

I pulled Echo's hair a little and started nibbling her shoulder. When I would give her firmer bites, she would moan making Victor shudder. I loved the feeling of controlling their actions. Maybe this was how I could handle watching her touch someone else.

"Echo, you're perfect. I'm going to finish. May I use your mouth as well, my sweet princess?" Victor asked.

“Mmm.” Echo moaned around him with a slight nod.

I slid my hand down and started slipping my fingers into her wet core, making Echo squeal a little and I saw Victor tense and shudder again. I could see her throat working before she pulled him from her mouth and gave him a firm lick.

Victor dropped to his knees and pulled her mouth down to kiss him. It forced my fingers deeper into her. I found that little rough spot inside her and fluttered my fingers against it, making her squeal again.

When she pulled back, panting, I started to remove them from her.

“No. I’m so close, Gray. Please, don’t stop.” She pled.

I kept going as she squeaked and moaned. I felt her muscles gripping around my fingers as she threw her head back and cried my name. I removed my hand and cleaned my fingers. The taste of her release was incredible.

Victor stood and pulled Echo against him. He kissed her deeply. I wanted to kiss her too and stood behind her, spinning her around and capturing her mouth with my own.

“We’re not done yet.” Victor murmured.

Echo pulled away from my mouth and turned. “What do you mean, Victor?”

“We can’t just let you do that and not give you the same treatment, princess. Lay on the bed, we’re going to take care of you now.” He replied.

She blushed. “I don’t need that.”

“Please. We won’t be happy until we know you’re feeling as amazing as we are.”

“Please, Echo.” I whispered in her ear as I nibbled it.

Echo nodded and climbed into her spot on the bed. Victor followed, sliding his hands up her legs. When he reached her hips, he grasped her panties and started slipping them off.

He spread her legs and lifted the hem of her nightgown. I climbed onto the bed next to him. I reached out and caressed her. Our hands would brush each other as we explored her.

She whimpered and I realized we weren’t paying her all the attention she deserved. I moved up to start kissing her. My hand brushed over her breast as I saw Victor lowering himself to taste her.

Echo arched and moaned. I slipped my hand into the top of her nightgown. I loved her breasts. They were just under a handful and the perfect mix of soft and firm.

As I teased her nipple, I started to kiss down her jaw and neck. When I got to the curve of her neck, I alternated sucking and nibbling. I heard the sweet sounds she was making as I started making a temporary mark on her neck. I couldn't mark her yet, but I would make sure people would know she was mine.

"Oh, Victor, Gray. That feels so good." She cried.

I kept going, as she started moaning and whimpering. Her body writhed under me. I loved how it felt to have her like that. I wanted to have her entirely. We'd have to work the logistics of that out. I wasn't going to have our first time as a threesome.

When Echo and Victor were finished, he crawled up to lay beside her. He kissed her again. I knew Echo was enjoying his attention.

"I have to go to work now, princess. Will you go to sleep? You have school in the morning. Unless Gray was wanting to taste you as well... that could be a good enough reason to stay for a while." He said with a smile.

"I'll wait for tomorrow night. Over stimulating Echo wouldn't help her. We're going to go to sleep. We both have to get up early for school. I'll drive you tomorrow." I replied.

"I want to ride the bus." Echo whispered.

"Then, I'll wait with you at the bus stop. I have something I need to do after school. Someone will meet you at the bus stop every day. Okay?" I asked.

"Alright. I can do that. I'm tired." She said with a sigh.

"Let's get some sleep. Victor, I've got her from here. We'll see you in the morning." I told him.

Victor got up and straightened himself out.

"Good night, princess. Sleep well." He said before heading out.

I covered Echo up and held her to me. I was growing pretty comfortable with this arrangement. I really loved falling asleep with her in my arms every night.

Lila's Story

Chapter 74 - The Vampire's Servant

[Victor]

I made my way to my room to change into more appropriate attire. I needed to wash my face and brush my teeth. I couldn't face Master Marius with my breath smelling of Echo.

She was wonderful. I couldn't believe it was her decision to do that. Watching her pleasure Grayson was as enticing as watching her be pleased by him. I couldn't get the image of her taking him into her mouth out of my head.

It was as if my desire had taken over my mouth. She became even more aroused as I spoke and the scent of it drove me crazy. By the time I was able to put my mouth on her sweet sensitive parts, she was so wet.

I pulled her panties out of the pocket of my pants before I changed. They were delicate and lacy. When Grayson spun her and I saw them I was practically salivating. There were sides to my little Echo that I hadn't even realized existed.

Carefully, I cleaned up and changed into my earlier clothes. I headed down to my office after peeking in on Echo and Grayson. They were cuddled up close and already sleeping. I smiled. It was a long day for both of them.

It had surprised me to hear that Grayson regarded me as a friend. As I thought of it, I could see that I thought of him in the same way. We'd bonded in our search for Echo and, aside from some slight bickering, we were fairly close.

Ever since I came back to myself after my death, I'd hated werewolves. They were the reason I was forced to live the life of a vampire. I blamed all of them for the actions of one. The only reason I'd wanted the alliance with Trent's pack was to make it easier for my vampires to live in this territory.

Entering my office, I texted Master Marius to let him know that I was ready for him to bring Lila. I called out to Talia and Bellamy. They were a part of this as well. Bellamy wanted to rid the area of the curse.

I started arranging the office to make it a little easier to handle the questioning. I moved the two chairs from in front of my desk to the area across from the couch, then I moved my own chair over. Talia and Bellamy entered the room a few moments after I got everything settled.

"Victor. Did you have a good evening?" Talia asked.

"Quite a good one, thank you. How is your quest to read every book in my library?"

"I managed three today. I can do more, but I'm taking time with each of them." She chuckled.

"Thank you for allowing me to join you on this, Master Nightshade." Bellamy said.

"Of course, Queen Bellamy. As one of the other leaders in this region, I will gladly accept any insight you may have on this issue." I replied with a slight bow.

A few moments later, Master Marius appeared in the room with Lila. She was precisely as I remembered her, though a little pinker. Master Marius was a bit disheveled. I managed not to change my expression, but Talia snickered.

They sat on the couch and we took the chairs. Lila started rummaging through her bag. She pulled out a metal bowl, a knife, and an empty vial.

“I need my payment. Saliva from the rogue queen. While she’s working on that, I need you to bleed into this bowl for me. I want to check how much of a hold the curse currently has on you.” She said.

Bellamy grumbled and took the vial. “This won’t have the hold on me that anything else like blood, hair, or nails would, right?”

“That’s right. I’ve got this really cool spell, but it requires saliva from a powerful werewolf and those are hard to come by. The stronger you are, the better my spell will work.” Lila grinned.

I cut my finger over the bowl and let it bleed until it healed. Lila took the bowl and started adding things to it. We watched as the blood took on a darker shade of red.

“Hmm. Well, it’s started working on you, but it’s not strong. You could renounce the territory and still be free to leave it.” She said with a smile.

“I can’t. My Solus Amor is here and she’s lived here for sixteen years.” I replied.

“What is she? Humans wouldn’t be affected. Witches lose some power. She wouldn’t be a fae, they never mate with vampires. Only werewolves and vampires are the most strongly affected.” Lila explained.

“She’s a dhampyr. If this makes vampires weak, it could kill her and I don’t know that she would get her second life if it held her during the change.” I told her.

“Yeah. I can see that. Well, looks like you’re in a bit of a pickle. What did you need to know?” She asked.

“I need as much as you know, and can comfortably tell me, about the origin of the curse and its focus. I want to break it.” I said.

Her eyes widened for a moment and she looked at Marius. He regarded her coolly. She started laughing.

“Well, the last guy who tried to break it died and it still didn’t break. I hope you won’t be as stupid when it comes to resolution. I’d like to go see more of the world, but I won’t give up even a portion of my magic so I can leave here.”

“You know about the first Master to hold this territory? Do you have journals from an ancestor that might hold clues?” I asked urgently.

“I have journals from ancestors, but they won’t help you. I’ve lived in this territory for over two hundred years. I was here when Fenton and his family disappeared. I’m as stuck as the vampires and wolves.” Lila sighed.

“I thought witches only lived to be a little older than humans.” Talia said.

“Fucking dark magic. She killed someone for that life.” Bellamy snarled.

I looked at them. Bellamy looked like she wanted to kill Lila. Master Marius didn’t seem shocked or concerned at all. Lila looked exasperated.

“Yes. I killed a fae for his life. I don’t kill children. He was already a couple hundred years old. I just got the last eight hundred or so of his years. When my time is nearly up, I’ll hunt down another one. Don’t look like that. He was a total fucking degenerate. I did the world a favor. I did you a favor. No one could have broken that hiding spell. When you use dark magic, spells become stronger. A normal concealment spell can be broken by knowledge of it existing. This spell could only be broken by another spell. I was the only one who could do that. We all kill for what we desire. Some of us see it as a chore, others see it as a pleasure. That’s why Marius and I work so well together. We see it as a pleasure.” Lila winked.

“Please, ladies. I know that this isn’t the most palatable company for everyone to keep. Lila doesn’t care for judgement and Bellamy doesn’t care for dark witches. I would really like it if we could set that aside for the sake of the people who are being hurt by this. Wolves and vampires are unable to leave this region. The ones who do are getting weakened, becoming sickly, and even dying. I am in very real danger of dying in a truly embarrassing manner.” I told them emphatically.

Lila snorted. “So you heard about Aram. You should have seen it! I was there. I laughed so hard.”

Marius’ lips curved into a small smile while she laughingly described and acted out the demise of the young vampire. I had to admit, it was horrifyingly hilarious. Especially the way she flailed her arms like someone trying to fly.

“Oh, goddess. I haven’t thought of that for years. I moved to my home two hundred years ago. I met Fenton’s grandfather and promised him I wouldn’t cause problems if he let me live here. I knew Fenton from the time he was able to toddle about. He was a powerful witch.” She said.

“Tell me about him, none of the vampires could tell me much about that time without starting to feel sick. All of the information I have, came in very small pieces.” I entreated.

“Well, all the witches here will tell you that the coven broke up after the disappearance of Fenton and his family. That’s not true. He started doing things that made them think he was turning

dark. I'm not privy to everything, because I wasn't in the coven, but I know enough because I was sleeping with Fenton toward the end. That boy was gorgeous. Dark mahogany hair, nearly golden eyes, muscles from all that work on the farm. We'd been secretly meeting from when he was seventeen until he married at nineteen. We hooked up again a few months before he disappeared.

Most witches only have one elemental affinity. Fenton had two, so his parents arranged a marriage to another witch with a solid family line in an element he didn't possess. It was more likely to produce children with two elements, but they didn't have the goddess' favor. Out of five kids, they only produced one with two affinities.

Their oldest, Fenton Jr., was as dumb as a box of rocks. He was handsome as his father, but ended up lighting himself on fire at least once a year since his magic came in. Then there was Mary Katherine. She was pretty and a damned sight smarter than her brother. She was able to hear things no one else could. No one knew where she'd inherited spirit magic. Their middle child was Grace. The one with two affinities. She was a fireball. I loved hanging out with her. The youngest two were twin boys. Their mother died in childbirth with them. Roger and Franklin. They were quiet and kept to themselves. Like they were trying not to hurt anyone else. Poor things.

When the new Master came to town, he approached all of the other leaders in the area. He wanted to create alliances and make this place powerful. The wolves wouldn't come on board until they knew the witches would. Grigori approached me as the most powerful dark witch. I told him that the coven wouldn't ally with him if he allied with me, but I promised to help for a price. Just like with you.

Negotiations seemed to be going well. Fenton was always telling me how excited he was for the peace he foresaw with the union. The Alpha at the time, William, said that he was excited too." She told us.

"You knew the Alpha back then?" Bellamy asked.

"Yes. I found him, lost in the woods, when he was a little pup. I took him back home and he would go wandering while I was collecting ingredients from time to time. Soon, his parents would ask me to take him with me. They paid pretty well, and would grant me access to the pack lands. I like kids. That's why I don't kill them. William was lucky, if it had been another dark witch, he would have ended up dead." Lila replied with a nod.

"Thank you for saving him. His great great-grandson is important to us. Please, go on." I urged.

"All I know, is that things got dicey. Fenton was dealing with the negotiations and the arranged marriage for Grace. Grace wasn't taking the arrangement well. She fell in love with a boy in town or something. She wanted to marry him, but Fenton wasn't having it. He didn't tell me much except that it would ruin him. I guess he invested a lot into finding a powerful, double affinity, family for her to marry into.

Grigori started asking for something that Fenton said was impossible to give... he didn't really give me the details. I guess William sided with Grigori. That was why the werewolves were pulled into it. Fenton used dark magic for the curse. When I say that his family disappeared, it was only him, Grace, and the boys. Fen Jr. died twenty years ago. Mary died a couple years after that.

The fiancé and his family headed back east that night, according to the witches who would talk to me. They had been staying with the family and made it clear that they weren't amused by Grace's refusal. Everything just piled up on Fenton. He was under so much pressure. Maybe if I hadn't made him mad, I could have saved them.

Grace really was an amazing girl. Adventurous, brave, loving, kind. She had water magic and plant magic, like Fenton did. She would help during droughts, revive plants that had withered, refresh plants that had rotted. I watched her plant some strawberry seeds in a bucket and urge them into producing full grown strawberries in a matter of minutes, just because her little brothers wanted some and they weren't in season." Lila looked away.

For a moment, I thought that I may have seen a tear. I wouldn't mention it. Marius put his hand on hers gently. Talia was watching him intently. He picked up Lila's hand and kissed it tenderly.

"You couldn't have known." He murmured.

"How did you make him mad?" I asked.

"I told him that he should let Grace marry who she wants. Turning her into some broodmare for powerful witches was inhumane. She was so sad, she loved the other boy so much. I told him he needed to focus on the future of his people, not marrying his daughter off to the most pedigreed stud in the field." She growled. "I hate the arranged marriage thing. They still do it. Even today. 'This is the person we've decided will breed you, now be a good little bitch.' How can they pull someone away from the person they love just because of something that stupid!? It's half the reason I went dark. I watched my own sister forced into a marriage with someone she actually hated. He beat her. He was the first person I killed on my way to being dark. She never forgave me. He'd already broken her by the time I was strong enough."

Marius pulled Lila into his arms and held her tightly. I looked away. This was a private moment between lovers.

"The nature of the curse is laid on the Master of the territory and the Alpha of the Hallowed Moon Pack. When Grigori met the sun, the curse hadn't cemented. It was Fenton's first time using dark magic and he started big. It backfired.

I've looked at the curse. It started as two and blended into one with Grigori's death. It seeped into the land and started affecting all supernaturals, but is stronger with wolves and vampires. I have no idea how to break it. Fenton's house burned. It took the book he used with it.

Trust me, I don't want to spend the next five hundred years here. I've tried to break the curse. You aren't even the first vampire to think he can break it. If you want to live, renounce the territory and leave." Lila warned.

"I won't leave Echo. Thank you for your help. Maybe one of Fenton's grandchildren might have more information or a journal from their parent. Someone has to know why negotiations turned sour. There had to be a big disagreement if sides were chosen." I said.

"I can't force you to do anything. I'll help where I can, but I don't think this is going to have the ending you were hoping for." She shrugged.

"Come, Lila, I'll take you home." Marius said.

"Will you tuck me in, daddy?" Lila giggled.

"Don't call me that in front of other people, Lila." He quietly growled.

"Yes... Master." She purred.

They disappeared almost as soon as the words left her mouth. Talia's hand covered her mouth. I didn't know if it was the shock of Master Marius' interaction with Lila, or if it was the curse.

"Victor. I don't like how this sounds." Bellamy said. "You should heed her warning. She's been alive for a while. She saw all these things go down. Maybe renouncing it and coming to stay with my pack while we sort through the spell. We can take Gray and Echo with us. Just to get you away from any danger of being killed."

"I won't give up my territory. I've already worked too hard on it. I'll stay away from picket fences. My death will not be like Aram's. I have too much depending on me. I can't give it all up over a curse. This will be my primary focus." I vowed.

"What about Echo?" Talia asked.

"I can focus on her when I have time. She told me she understands. She loves how hard I work for my people. She loves the kind of leader I am." I replied.

"Time will tell. She may think that now, but her needs may change as she does." Talia said.

"I want to be here for every change. I can't marry her like a human would, but she's already my bride. I will live long enough to seal my bond to her as my Solus Amor. No curse will stop me from keeping my Echo forever." I told her.

She sighed and stood. Talia looked at me for a moment before shaking her head and leaving the room without another word.

“I will do what I can. I disagree with your decision too, Victor. I’ll back you up, though, for Echo’s sake. She’s a sweet girl and she deserves to be happy for as long as possible. Don’t let this be the reason she is unhappy. Don’t let your stubbornness break her heart.” Bellamy said softly before following Talia out.

I sat alone in my office thinking about everything I’d learned. True, there wasn’t a lot about the curse, but knowing more about the man who laid the curse helped. I knew I could start piecing the puzzle together. I returned to my desk and began typing everything into my computer. If something did happen, I wanted my successor to be as far ahead as possible.

Back to School

Chapter 75 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

I woke up feeling better than I ever had. Last night had been perfect. Gray and Victor let me have control and I got to try something I’d been thinking about since they saved me.

That wolf hadn’t been the first to introduce me to the idea. Mr. Caine had talked about it a lot. He would tell me what he wanted me to do, what he was going to do, how it would feel for him. He would tell me that I’d like it. I did like it, but only with Gray and Victor.

After dressing for the day, I went down to make breakfast. Gray had been gone when I woke up. I figured he went to train. Amy told me I’d train in the evenings during the week and mornings on the weekend while I still had school. I figured I’d have breakfast ready for everyone, it was the least I could do.

I finished putting everything on the table as Gray came into the kitchen. He came over to me and held me to him. I wrapped my arms around him and soaked in the heat of his body. He smelled like soap, but there was an underscent of something wild and woody. Gray started chuckling as I began sniffing him.

“What are you doing, Echo?” He laughed.

“You smell different. Like fall, when the leaves start to smell crisp and something else, kind of like Rex smelled when I hugged him the other night.” I told him.

“You can smell my wolf. The other must be my mate scent. You smell like a lemon sorbet. A little sweet, a little tart, very citrusy.” Gray said softly. “You must be much better this morning. I’m so happy, angel. I want you to be healthy.”

“What’s this?” Victor asked as he entered the room.

I let go of Gray and ran over to hug Victor. I sniffed him. He smelled like old books and mint. A thrill ran through me and I felt my fangs come out. I wanted to bite him.

“Are you hungry, princess?”

“You smell like mint and old books. I want to bite you.” I said.

He bent down and moved his head to the side. I licked his neck and bit him. It wasn’t for feeding, just the need to bite him. I licked the wound closed.

“Better, Echo?” Victor asked.

“Yes, sorry. I don’t know what came over me.” I replied with a blush.

“You smelled your Solus Amor for the first time. If you hadn’t bitten me, you would have had an irritable, itchy feeling until you did.” He explained.

I didn’t like how that sounded. I looked over at Gray. He looked a little sad. I went over to him and pulled him down, licking and biting him too.

“You didn’t have to do that if you didn’t feel like it.” Gray said.

“I love you, Gray. You’re my mate. It’s different with Victor, but I never want you to feel like I don’t love you.” I insisted.

“I don’t feel like that. I know it’s different. He doesn’t get to feel the sparks I do when I touch you and when you touch me. It’s okay to treat us differently, as long as you love us the same amount.” He told me.

“Sit down and have something to eat, Echo. Your bus will be here soon. It may be a little hard to focus if your senses are enhancing. I want you to do your best in school today, and don’t forget to get all your missing work from the teachers. We don’t want you to fall behind.” Victor said from behind me.

I gave them both one more hug before sitting down to eat. Gray ate with me. Amy came in when we were half through eating. She fixed her plate and told me there was a lunch packed for me in the fridge. I’d seen it when I was getting my orange juice and blood from the pitcher in there.

“Thank you, Amy.” I smiled.

“No problem. I’ll take care of the breakfast dishes. I don’t want you to be late for school.” She replied.

When we were done, we put our dishes in the sink and got our things together to go to school. Gray insisted that we drive to the bus stop so he wouldn't have to run back for his truck. We parked in the entry to the drive and walked to the spot where I stood for the bus.

The early morning smelled more amazing than it had ever smelled before. I was amazed by the colors as well. They were more vibrant than before. It was like I was experiencing the world for the first time ever.

I wondered what could've created this change. I didn't seem to be progressing this quickly before. Maybe I'd hit the point where everything was just getting better. Maybe it was being able to truly be myself for the first time.

When the bus pulled up, I kissed Gray goodbye and boarded. My usual seat was empty and I sat gratefully. Everything could start going back to normal. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. The scent of humans was interesting. I could actually tell that almost everyone on the bus was human.

There were some scents that were like lightning, bright, powerful, and static-y. I wondered at what that meant. There was someone on the bus who smelled like plants. Not like clippings, but like something growing and green. There was another person who smelled like fur. I wasn't able to pinpoint smells right now, but I was hoping it was something I'd be able to do as my abilities grew.

Sean sat next to me when we reached his stop. He talked to me about some of the stuff I'd missed in the classes we had together. He told me about the things that had happened in the popular group since Harmony, Valor, Gray, and Cam were all gone. Melissa tried to takeover and everyone suddenly decided to go reconnect with old friends at different tables during lunch.

Harmony would have to put Melissa back in her place after a week of thinking she was in charge. I knew everything would be put right before the end of the day. I relaxed in the seat and listened to him talk.

When we arrived at school, I actually managed to push myself into the flow of students coming off the bus instead of waiting until the end. When I stepped forward, the person near me froze. Her eyes widened and she let me out.

"Vampire." She whispered.

I blushed and hurried past her. Cam said I smelled like a vampire before, but no one ever said anything. Was my scent more strongly vampire now that I was healthier? I hadn't thought of that.

Harmony, Val, Cam, and Gray met me near the bus. We walked into the school and to my locker. I needed to put my lunch away before class. The girl from the bus walked by and stared at me.

“What’s wrong, Echo?” Gray asked, probably sensing my nervousness.

“That girl called me a vampire on the bus. Do I smell more like a vampire now?” I looked at Cam and Harmony.

“I wasn’t going to say anything, but you do. There’s something under it that isn’t vampire, but people who have very little experience with them wouldn’t know the difference. Don’t worry. She’s fae. They were a favorite food for vampires for a long time. Some of the younger ones hear old stories and are told not to go out at night or a vampire might eat them. Just do your best and be yourself.” Cam said with a smile.

“Are people going to hate me for smelling like a vampire? I’m not going to eat anyone.” I whispered.

“We know that. If anyone causes you any trouble, let us know. We’ll take care of it. We’re here for you.” Gray replied gently.

I nodded and they walked me to home room before heading off to their own classes. I approached Mr. Taylor. I could tell now that he was a werewolf.

“Echo, can I talk to you in the hall?” He asked.

“Sure.” I said.

“Posey, please come up and read the announcements. Feel free to do what you want after the announcements, everyone. I’ll be back in a minute.” Mr. Taylor told the class.

A girl from the back came up and took the sheet with the announcements. We headed into the hallway. Mr. Taylor looked around, and I grew nervous.

“Echo. I know what happened to you. I’m not going to give you any assignments for creative writing. I’ll consider you caught up. All I want you to do this week, is try to rest. If you can, write about what happened. You don’t have to show anyone. Write it in a journal or something. I want you to try and talk to the counselor here. Mr. Moxon. He’s a good man, and a member of the pack. He can help you through any residual stuff. All of your werewolf teachers were told to send you to him if you start having issues.” He said quietly.

“I don’t think I’ll have any. I’ve been fine all weekend. I even left the house a few times and I was fine.” I assured him.

A soft, pitying look crossed his face. I didn’t understand. Everything was fine. I was safe now. The men who took me were either dead or locked up.

“Sometimes these things can creep up on you. Just promise me you’ll go see him if you have problems. We can’t call your mate out of his classes with human teachers, but his wolf teachers

will release him if you need him. We can see about getting your sister or brother too. We'll find one of your supports to come help you." Mr. Taylor promised.

"Thank you. I don't think I'll have a problem, but I appreciate you trying to help. I'll go see the counselor if I need to." I replied with a smile.

We went back in the classroom. I sat next to Sean. He gave me a worried look, but didn't say anything. I was grateful for that.

I didn't have any trouble in my free period. I spent that time with Gray and Harmony, like usual. We talked about plans for the prom. It was in two weeks. I was excited about being able to go. I wanted to show off my new dress.

It wasn't until third period that I had a problem. We were working on an in-class assignment. It was really quiet in the room, when suddenly I heard several people running down the hall.

Without warning, my mind threw me back into that cell. I was hearing my ex-mother scream and beg for the wolves to stop hurting her. Tears welled up in my eyes and I couldn't seem to breathe.

Flashes of Daniel and his threats, the wolf who fed me in the beginning, and the nights hearing the screams from the next room, all crashed over me. I covered my ears and closed my eyes tight, but nothing blocked out the sounds.

I felt someone touch me and my blood turned to ice. I didn't want to be hurt again. I didn't want to be held down and forced to drink from that bottle. I jerked away from the touch.

"Echo. Echo. You're alright. It's Mrs. Davis. Everything is alright." My teacher whispered, pulling my hand from my ear so I could hear her.

I realized I was in class. In school. I felt my face turn red as I noticed people were looking at me. Harmony and Val came over to my desk. Sean was watching from a distance.

"We can take her to the counseling office, Mrs. Davis." Val said quietly.

"Good. Grab your things and take her to see Mr. Moxon." She replied softly.

She wrote us some hall passes and we headed to the counseling office. I was embarrassed. I really thought I was fine. We walked silently. My sister and brother on either side of me, protecting me.

When we got into the counseling office, they led me to one of the doors on the side. It was open, but Val still knocked to get the counselor's attention. He looked up and smiled tightly.

Mr. Moxon was a tall, thin, man with white hair. He was dressed in nice slacks and a plaid button up shirt. When he came around the desk, the scent of wolf got stronger.

“I was hoping you’d be able to make it through the day. Please, come in. Close the door, Valor.” He said.

Harmony ushered me to the couch and Val joined us. Mr. Moxon leaned against the front of his desk. He waited until we were settled before speaking again.

“Alpha Trent told me what happened to you. He gave me a brief overview of your life before you came to school with us and what your situation is. I passed on some of that information to a therapist in the pack. I want you to see someone about this and he was the best option. There aren’t a lot of supernatural therapists, and most of them are either in our pack, or fae. You smell too much like a vampire for a fae to accept you as a client. I want you to tell me everything. I’ll do what I can to help.” Mr. Moxon said gently.

“How much of everything?” I asked.

“All of it. I’ll help with what I can from it, but the more I know, the easier it’ll be for me to make a rescue plan for you when you’re at school.”

I held Val and Harmony’s hands and started telling him everything. I knew they only knew the things they saw. They didn’t know about all the things that had happened with the vampires. When I moved on to talking about the kidnapping, they listened intently, squeezing my hands from time to time.

Tears were in Harmony’s eyes when I described the sounds coming from the room next to mine in Daniel’s basement. For most of my life, I thought of Verity as my mother. Even though she hated me, on some level, I loved her. It was hard to hear her being tortured and abused like she was.

When I was finished, I looked up at Mr. Moxon. He had gone pale. I looked at Harmony and Val. He looked angry and she seemed terribly sad.

“Everything’s okay now. I have Victor and Gray to take care of me. They make me feel safe.” I murmured.

“That’s at home, Echo. Who makes you feel safe when you’re not at home?” Mr. Moxon asked.

“I… I don’t know. I really thought I was fine.” I replied.

“What happened in your history class?” He asked.

“It was quiet. I was working on the in-class assignment. Then I heard some people running down the hall. It reminded me of the first night Daniel gave Verity to the wolves. I couldn’t stop hearing her scream.” I said softly.

“I’m going to print off some grounding techniques. I want you to read them and practice them. If something like this happens again, ask for a pass to come down here. I’ll let all of your teachers

know. It would be best if you were near Grayson. As your mate, he can help you cope with overwhelming feelings.” Mr. Moxon told me. “I’ll make sure he’s excused when you are as often as possible. You can both come in here until you’re feeling up to going back to class.”

“Okay.” I answered.

“I’m going to let you three stay here until lunch time. I’ve notified Grayson and Cameron. They’ll come here before going to the cafeteria. Echo. You need real help to deal with all of this. I’m going to call my friend in the pack lands. I want you to start coming here for first period twice a week to talk. I’ll see if my friend can come out here during that time to start counseling you. Promise you’re going to come see me.” He said.

“I promise, I’ll come see you.” I replied.

“Good. Just relax with your sister and brother for now. I need to make some calls and get some paperwork done. Everything will be alright. You’re safe here.” He promised.

I nodded my head and leaned against Val. He stroked my hand with his thumb. Harmony leaned against me. I didn’t know what caused it, but I started to cry.

For the first time, in a long time, I was crying because of what was done to me. I was crying for the child I didn’t get to be and the person I had to become to deal with it. I was crying for the loss of my whole family, my parents who I’d never meet, my sister and brother who were kept away from me, and my fake parents who were killed or tormented because of me.

It actually felt like I was releasing something that had been bottled inside me for my entire life. It felt like I was finally freeing myself of that life. I’d been saved by Victor and Gray. They loved me in a way that made me feel complete instead of lonely. I loved them more than anything I’d ever known. Possibly more than I loved Val and Harmony.

Love and Relations

Chapter 76 - The Vampire's Servant

[Gray]

When third period ended I met up with Cam and we headed to the counseling office. I didn’t want to wait through fourth period. I linked my teacher in that class and let him know what was going on.

I wanted to get to Echo. I should've known something would happen. When I felt her fear through our bond, I tried to get out of class, but Mr. Hayes was human and wouldn't have understood why I needed to leave. He had a strict 'no hall pass' policy.

We rushed to Moxon's office and knocked on the closed door. He came out and motioned to the empty meeting office next to his. I didn't know why he was keeping me from Echo, but I went into the other office anyway. He closed the door behind us.

"Gray, your mate needs help. She's dealt with a lot of abuse in her life and the kidnapping added a whole level of trauma to her experience that she had never experienced before. I'm thinking about sending her home for the rest of the day. I know she lives with a vampire. Is there anyone who can come get her?" Moxon asked.

"Yeah, but it might be better if I can take her. She knows them, but there's no one she's really connected with at home. I can get her settled and be back in time for fifth period." I offered.

"That may be for the best. She'll want her mate with her. She fell asleep after crying for a while. I have Link coming to meet with her on Tuesdays during first period. He'll keep the time open for her after school ends, too. That way she can continue getting help." He said.

"Thanks. I didn't know how bad it was for her, before Victor saved her, until just yesterday. I've had some flashes of what happened when she was taken, but I didn't want to push her to talk about it."

"You're trying to take care of her, that's good. Just, don't let her sit with this. It can start eating at her. Letting her pretend she's fine isn't going to help either. I know you young pups all want to focus on the happy, easy stuff, but Echo needs to be able to talk about the hard stuff. I'm not saying make your whole life about it, but don't try to change the subject if she starts talking about it. Listen to her. Talk to her." Moxon instructed.

"Got it. Can I take her home now? I want to make sure she's safely with Victor. I know he's still sleeping, but she can rest with him until he wakes up and he can take care of her." I said.

"Go ahead. I had her teachers send her missing work and work for today down. She has a lot to make up." He replied.

"I'll help her as much as I can." I told him and turned to leave the meeting room.

When I entered the office, Val and Harmony looked up at me. Echo was curled up between them. It seemed that Echo's crying had affected Harmony. She had a hollow look in her eyes, as if she'd been crying too.

I crouched down in front of Echo and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. She opened her eyes a little and caught my hand. Echo brought my hand back to her cheek and rubbed her face against it. I smiled at her.

“Are you ready to go home, angel?” I asked.

“Did I sleep all day? I can ride the bus. You had something you were going to do after school today.” She answered in a breathy voice.

“It’s just about lunch time. We can go pick something up from a drive-thru and then I’ll take you home. You can lay with Victor until he wakes up.” I told her gently.

Echo looked worried as she sat up and rubbed her eyes. She glanced around the room nervously.

“I can stay at school today. I didn’t mean to get so upset.” Echo insisted.

“It’s not that, angel. You need more rest than we thought. Why don’t you go to the restroom and wash your face? We’ll head out as soon as you’re ready.” I said, pulling her to stand.

She left the room and I let out a relieved sigh. I thought she would fight more. Thank the goddess that she didn’t.

Harmony got up and went to hug Cam. “She said my name is Hannah. No one told me we had different names. Only that we were taken. She said we were already eighteen, too.”

“Yeah. She said the vampire told our mom she was wrong about our birthday. Is that true, Gray?” Val asked.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know much. I saw some flashes of things that happened to her there. She fed us information mentally, but she never said anything about her birthday or a different name.” I replied.

“Her name is Emily. I like that better than Echo. I wonder what our parents were like.” Harmony murmured.

“I bet they were great, babe. They made you. I think I like Harmony more than I like Hannah, though. If you want to change it, I’ll learn to love it.” Cam said.

“I like Harmony more, too.” She said softly.

“Echo kept telling him that her name wasn’t Emily. I will support her in whatever she decides, but I think she prefers Echo.” I told them.

“I think we all grew up with these names so it’s hard to think of being called anything else at this point. We should take some time to think about what we really want. I wouldn’t mind being called John, though.” Val chuckled. “I never really liked my name that much.”

“Will Echo be alright, Gray?” Harmony asked.

“She will be. Victor and I will take care of her. We’ll do everything we can to make sure she’s happy and healthy.” I assured her.

“I would prefer if Echo came to stay with us, so we could take care of her.” Val said.

“Supernatural beings need each other to be healthy. Before she had me and Victor, you and Harmony were enough. Now that she’s found her mates, being with us will be healthier for her. She’ll find more comfort and feel safer around us. Trust me, if being with you would heal her faster, I’d be packing her up right now.” I told him.

“I would just prefer if it were only you. I don’t like the idea of Echo depending on a vampire. They were the ones who hurt her. He could just be using her for her blood. Or whatever that other vampire wanted her for.” Harmony insisted.

“Stop that, now.” I growled. “You haven’t spent enough time around them to see the truth. Victor loves Echo. He loves her as much as I do. He’s her mate, too.”

“Just because she marked him, doesn’t mean he’s her mate!” She insisted. “You’re her mate. I can’t believe I’m the only one who can see that she belongs only with you, Gray! She can’t love both of you the same. Why doesn’t anyone else see it?! She only needs you! If you keep sharing her, he’s going to steal her from us. He’s going to make her a vampire and we’ll never see her again! Echo deserves to be loved, not used! She just doesn’t know any better and thinks she loves him!”

Echo came into the room. It was clear that she’d heard her sister. The look on her face was upsetting. She looked hurt and angry all at the same time. Echo closed the door behind her and stared at Harmony.

“This is the last time I will address this, so listen closely. My relationship is my own. The way I handle it is the business of me and my mates. It doesn’t matter what you think. What either of you think. Victor is my Solus Amor. Grayson is my mate. I will not give them up. They love me and I love them. I will not listen to you disparage either of the men I love.

Victor is the Master of this territory. We’re not going to leave. We’re staying right here. All three of us. You don’t know my mind or my heart, Harmony. Don’t try to pretend you do. I know you just want me to make smart decisions, Valor, but giving up on the people I love, any of the people I love, isn’t something I’m willing to do.

This arrangement may be unconventional, but it fits me perfectly. If I find either of you trying to control my relationship, I won’t speak to you for a month. These are my husbands. My mates. The men who will be the fathers of my children, when I’m ready for that. If you ever want to spend time with those children, or me, I suggest you learn your place, which is not in the middle of my relationship.” Echo warned.

She was beautiful when she was angry. Her eyes glowed like an angry vampire. I never thought I'd find an angry woman as sexy as I found Echo. I walked toward her and took her in my arms. Echo wrapped her arms around my waist and pressed her face into my chest.

"I... I didn't mean anything by it. It doesn't make sense to me. Everyone keeps pushing for you and both of them. It just doesn't seem right. What about when you do... you know... bedroom stuff?" Harmony asked softly.

"That's none of your business, Harmony. What I do with them in my bedroom is my business only. Stop this. I don't want to have to stop talking to you. I will, but it will hurt me more than it will hurt you. Just not as much as you saying mean things about my mates hurts me." Echo replied.

"Let's drop this for now. I'm taking Echo home. To our home." I stated firmly.

I guided Echo out of the office. We stopped so she could sign out for the day. I took her to my truck and helped her in. I drove her to a fast food restaurant and we grabbed a couple burgers and drinks. I took her to a park to sit and eat.

"Do you think I can't love you both the same? Am I being selfish by keeping both of you, Gray?" Echo asked after she finished her meal.

"You have the biggest heart of anyone I know. If either of us had a problem with sharing you, we'd give up." I assured her.

"Victor tried to give me up." She whispered.

"He was trying to be noble. We've gone over this. You need to stop focusing on the past. Only think of the future. Do you want a real wedding, Echo? Something where you get to wear a beautiful white dress and we stand in front of my Alpha, swearing to love each other and care for each other forever?" I asked.

Echo looked up at me with wide eyes. I knew that would pull her from her funk. She scanned my face, like she was checking if this was a joke or something. I smiled at her.

"I don't need a wedding, Gray. If you want one, we can do that. I want to be with you and make you happy." Echo smiled a little.

"Maybe we can have one once you're ready to start talking about babies." I said with a wink.

"Are you going to start asking me about when we get to make babies, now?" She giggled.

"I think we need a lot of practice before we start trying to make babies." I leaned over. "I think we should start practicing as soon as possible."

Echo closed the distance and started kissing me. She nibbled my lips and I groaned, pushing her back on the bench seat of my truck. After some maneuvering, she got her legs around my waist. I rubbed myself between her legs as we made out. Echo moaned into my mouth and worked her hips against me.

I started kissing her chin, jaw, and neck. Her skin was so soft and fragrant. I began sucking on the spot where I intended to mark her one day. My last hickey had disappeared. It looked like I would have to refresh them daily. I certainly didn't mind.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the window behind Echo. I looked up to see an angry looking woman. I reached over and rolled down the window.

"There are children here! What on earth are you thinking doing that where children can see you!?" She screeched.

"Sorry, ma'am. We'll move along now." I replied.

"You better or I'll call the police." She huffed and marched off to some benches by the play equipment.

"Sorry, angel. I got carried away." I murmured as I turned on the truck and started driving out of the park.

We were nearly to the house when Echo turned to me and put her hand on my arm. I glanced over at her. She was nibbling her lip and blushing a bit.

"Stay with me when we get home, Gray." Echo said.

"What?"

"Stay with me. Let's keep going. I want you. I want you to be my first." She said softly.

"Echo. What about Victor?" I asked.

"There are a lot of decisions I have to make in this relationship, Gray. One of them is who my first for everything will be. For this first, I want you. There are still other firsts. I can't be with both of you for my first time... please?" Echo whispered.

"Not today, angel. I have something really important to take care of after school. If I have sex with you, I'll want to hold you and cuddle you for hours. Maybe even do it again. I just... I really hate saying this, angel. I want to tell you yes. Please, trust me. I would be saying yes if it weren't so important that I get this done today." I told her.

"What is it? What's going on? Victor has a lot of important business and now you do too. Maybe I can help. Tell me how I can help you, Gray." She insisted.

“You can’t help with this right now. If there’s anything I can think of, I’ll let you know. I promise.”

I pulled into the driveway and punched in the numbers into the code box. The gates opened as Echo sighed sadly. I wished so much that I could stay with her, but I had to go talk to my great-grandfather. I had to help save Victor.

When we reached the house, I got out of the truck and helped Echo down. She grabbed her bag and we went in the house. I wanted to let Dillon and Claude know she was home. Talia had gone with Bellamy to see my brother about securing an alliance with the Eaten Heart Collective.

We entered the house. It was pretty quiet. We looked around, but didn’t see them anywhere. Echo looked down the hall and pointed.

“I think they’re in the library. I heard something that way.” She said.

I hadn’t heard anything. Her senses were getting better. I was happy to see that. It meant she would be stronger soon.

Heading down the hall, we got to the door of the library. It was wide open. When we walked in, we could see Dillon and Claude. They were on the couch, well, Claude was on the couch. Dillon was straddling him, pulling his hair back and kissing him deeply while rubbing his hips on Claude’s lap.

Echo giggled, breaking the spell of their make-out session. Dillon looked up at us, surprised. Claude rolled his eyes back to see who had come into the room.

“You could knock.” Dillon said.

“The door was wide open. We would’ve knocked if you were in your room where that stuff should be done.” I scoffed.

Echo elbowed me in the ribs. “Sorry. We were only trying to find you to let you know I’m home from school early. I had a... problem.”

Dillon got off Claude and made his way to her quickly. He looked her over, like he was checking for wounds.

“What happened, cookie?” He asked with a worried tone.

“She had a flashback to the kidnapping. The counselor thought it’d be best to have her come home to rest for the day. I was going to take her upstairs and get her tucked in with Victor, but we thought you should know so you weren’t waiting by her bus stop this afternoon.” I explained.

“Oh, poor baby. We’ll be here if you need anything. You need lunch?”

“No. Gray took me to eat something before we came home. He has to go back to school.” Echo said.

“Go on and get her settled, Gray. You just call for us if you need anything, okay, cookie?” Dillon smiled.

“Thank you, Dillon. Sorry we interrupted you.” She told him, ducking her head a little.

“No problem at all.” He replied.

I led Echo up to Victor’s room. It was really dark, but I could see pretty well in the dark. Echo climbed up into Victor’s bed and slipped under the covers. She wrapped an arm over him and curled up with her head on his chest.

Part of me was jealous. At least I knew he was in no position to really enjoy it. I reached over him to caress her cheek.

“I love you, Gray.” Echo murmured sleepily.

“I love you, too, angel. Get some rest. I’ll be home as soon as I’m done with what I have to do.” I promised.

“Good. I’ll miss you.” She smiled softly.

“I think I’ll miss you even more.” I replied and headed for the door.

Getting back into my truck, I sighed deeply. Rex was raging in my head ever since I turned her down. I couldn’t believe I did that. I guess it’s part of acting like a grown up.

Quickly, I turned my key and headed for the street. I may be working on changing, but I knew one thing for sure. If I stayed there for another minute, I was going to jump out of my truck, collect Echo from Victor’s bed, and spend the afternoon in bed with her myself.

Gammy and Grampy

Chapter 77 - The Vampire's Servant

I got into fifth period right before the bell. I managed to finish the rest of school without a problem. Harmony and Val asked after Echo and I told them I had made sure she was tucked in before I left her. They seemed grateful that I told them.

Harmony didn't say anything else about me being Echo's only mate. She got Echo's message. There would be no sympathy from me on this either. I was doing what was needed to keep Echo happy. She may say she loved us the same, but even I could see that she loved Victor more. I'd get there one day... I hoped.

While I was heading out of the building at the end of the day to go to my truck. I was stopped by Sean. He looked nervous and was having trouble saying what he wanted to. I really needed to get moving.

"What do you need, Sean?" I asked.

"I... umm... Well, I just wanted to see if Echo was okay. Was she still sick?" He asked, scratching the back of his head.

"She had a migraine and needed to go home. Harmony or Val could've told you that." I said.

"Oh, I didn't really think of that. You just spend so much time with her, I thought you would know. Are... um... are you two dating now, or something?"

I could feel my eyebrow raise like Victor's did. What the hell was he asking about this for? Was he in love with Echo?

"Yeah, she's my girlfriend." I told him.

"Oh." He sounded disappointed. "That's good, I guess. I better go, or I'll miss the bus. See you tomorrow."

"See ya." I said and went to get in my truck.

I hated that I was annoyed by him. Maybe he was just disappointed because he wanted another friend who was single. I couldn't get over the feeling that it was because he wanted Echo for himself.

The drive to the pack lands was filled with thoughts of what I would do to Sean if he tried anything with my mate. When I crossed our border, I relaxed. It felt like home. Not as much as being with Echo, but home in a different way.

On the way to the area where my great-grandparents lived, I saw some people I knew and waved. When stopped at a light, the person in the car next to me asked how I was doing. I loved the small town feel of our pack. Everyone knew everyone and we were all as close as family.

When I pulled up to the little cottage my great-grandparents lived in, I saw my great-grandmother pottering around in the flower beds in front of the house. She turned and waved with a smile as I was walking up the drive.

Ever since I was little, my Gammy had been my favorite of all of my great-grandparents. She was always baking something. Her hair was white as snow and she had glittering, pale blue eyes. Even though I was taller than her, and had been since I was twelve, she still called me her 'little Gray'.

"Oh! My little Gray! How did you know that I made your favorite pie? I swear, you have some sort of pie tracker installed in your stomach." She chuckled.

"Hey, Gammy. I'm actually here to see Grampy, but I'll take some of that pie off your hands." I winked.

She laughed and hugged me. I hugged her back. Werewolves are very family oriented. My great-grandparents had been part of my life as much as my grandparents had. They were older, but nothing seemed to slow them down for long.

We went into the house. Gammy led me to Grampy's study. He was reading a book and writing something in a notebook next to him. When I came in, he looked up and grinned.

His hair had been salt and pepper colored since my earliest memories. His eyes were dark brown, like mine. He stood and put his hand out. I hurried forward to take it and give him a firm handshake. Grampy believed that a good handshake was the sign of a good man.

"What are you doing here, Gray?" He grinned.

"I... well... I'm actually here on business, Grampy." I admitted as I sat in the chair across from him.

Gammy came in with a tray that had two large pieces of pie and two glasses of milk on it. She put them on the desk in front of each of us and smiled. I looked down at the pie. It looked just as fantastic as it always did.

"Your parents said you missed the last two family dinners because of your mate. Is she afraid of meeting your family?" Gammy chuckled.

"She actually got kidnapped. We just got her back on Friday. I was searching for her, then I was taking care of her while she healed." I told her.

She raised her hand to cover her heart. "Oh, goddess, the poor dear. Is she okay? I don't remember hearing about any girls in the pack being kidnapped."

"She's doing better, but it will take a while before she's okay. And she's not in the pack, Gammy. She's not a werewolf." I said.

"You smell like vampires, Grayson. Is your mate a vampire?" Grampy asked sternly.

"Kind of." I replied. "She's a dhampyr. Part vampire and part human."

Grampy stood up and went to his bookshelf. He pulled out a thick, old looking book. He returned to his seat and I saw the title. 'Shades of Vampirism'. He started looking through and found what he was looking for.

I could see that it was a chapter on dhampyrs. I ate my pie and drank my milk while he read about my mate. I knew he wouldn't want to be interrupted. Everyone knew, you didn't disturb an Alpha, retired or not.

When he was done, he pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. He closed the book and slid it aside. He pulled his pie close and scooped some onto his fork.

"So, are you here about how to save her from her sire, or how to hide her from other vampires?" He asked.

"Neither. She's the servant of the Master vampire of the territory and her sire is the vampire known as Death. She's safe from vampires. I'm here for another reason." I told him.

He raised an eyebrow. "Is that why you smell like you've been rolling around on a pile of vampires?"

"Echo smells like a vampire. It makes sense that I would smell like them, I've been sleeping next to her since we saved her. Are you going to let prejudice color your opinion of her?" I asked.

"I never had problems with vampires. That was your grandfather. I know my father nearly had an alliance with the first Master. You and Trent told us about the new alliance. It's what my father wanted. Peace between the species. If he can ally with the witches, he'll finish what was started almost one hundred years ago." Grampy said with a smile.

"I need to know more about the leader of the coven and the first Master, Grampy. I'm trying to help break the curse. The one that makes us unable to find our mates until we're eighteen and weakens us if we try to leave the state." I told him.

"Why would you want to break the curse? It doesn't really affect you, unless your mate is wanting to travel the world. But, I imagine she's as trapped as we are." He chuckled.

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"If she's supernatural, she's affected. If she's part vampire, then it will affect her like it does them. Simply, she can never leave, or she'll die." Grampy clarified.

While I stared at him and thought about what that meant for Echo, he finished his pie and milk. I needed to know more about what this did to vampires who weren't the Master of the territory. I had to make sure that Echo was safe.

"Grampy, please, tell me what you know about it." I pled. "I need to keep Echo safe. If someone takes her again and leaves the region, she could die. I'm bringing her to the family dinner on

Sunday. You'll see, she's the purest, sweetest, most innocent, angel on earth. She's nothing like a vampire."

"I was only a kid, Gray. I wasn't even training to be Alpha yet. My father told me that the Master killing himself helped to change the curse. He said that we were cursed for siding with the vampires, but didn't tell me what the conflict was about. I'll try to get to the basement and dig out his journals for you. He did tell me that he suspected the reason we couldn't leave the region was to keep the pack from hunting down the coven leader and getting him to reverse the spell. No one could figure out where he disappeared to." Grampy sighed.

"Do you know anything else? Did he say anything about what the curse was at all?" I pressed.

"Only that the moon goddess came to him in a dream and told him that she protected the wolves as much as she could. It was a nasty spell and used a sacrifice not many are willing to give to complete. My father always figured that the coven leader used his three children as the sacrifice. I don't know how someone could do that to their children. Dark witches are beyond evil." He shuddered.

"That's terrible." Gammy whispered.

"I'll get you what I can, but part of the curse was that those afflicted couldn't speak of it. They couldn't even write it down. He might have written down what led up to it, though. It's the best I can do, Gray. Now, tell me why you're so hot to break it. Your mate is protected; I doubt any vampires would be willing to cross Death." Grampy said.

"I'm not her only mate, Grampy. She has a whole second life after this one, as a vampire. With that comes a vampire mate. A Solus Amor. He's the new Master of the territory. This curse can kill him. I want to save him." I admitted.

I couldn't lie. Aside from him being a werewolf and an Alpha, he was my great-grandfather. He would know I was lying, and he would be really disappointed that I didn't trust him.

"You never shared anything in your life. I can't imagine you being willing to share your mate. Especially not with a vampire." He chuckled. "You aren't just doing this to avoid an easy win, are you?"

"Are you sure he's her mate, too?" Gammy asked.

"I'm sure. And I'm not competing with him. We both love her and we'll both take care of her. She loves us, too. I can't imagine making her choose now that I know how much she loves us. Trust me, Gammy. When you meet her, you'll see that Echo is more than capable of loving two people and making them each feel like they're the most important person in the world." I answered.

“You sound like you’re already whipped. If you think it’s for the best, we won’t question it. I’m a damned sight more open-minded than my son. You better make sure he behaves himself, or he could hurt your girl’s feelings.” Grampy warned.

“I will. I should probably head home. Victor is awake now and he’ll want to know what I learned. Let me know when you need help going through things in the basement. I’ll make time to help you out.” I offered.

“You never do work unless you absolutely have to. This girl really has changed you.” Grampy observed.

“Haha. You’re real funny, Grampy. I helped out with things when I was a kid.” I insisted.

“Actually, only if we bribed you. You only wanted to do fun things when you came to see us, so any work needed to be pulled from you.” Gammy said.

I blushed and ducked my head. I hadn’t realized that. As I thought about it, they were right. I couldn’t believe how selfish I’d been.

“I’m sorry. I’m learning I have major flaws in my personality. I hope you’ll be patient while I fix them.” I told them.

“We love you no matter what, my little Gray. Never ever doubt how much we love you. Would you like to take a pie home for your mate? I made extra.” Gammy offered.

“Yes, please. Echo will love it. Thank you!” I grinned.

“Just remember to bring her for dinner on Sunday. I want to meet the girl who taught my little Gray how to share.” She chuckled and pinched my cheek before she left the room.

“You really sure you want to try and break this curse? It could end up costing someone’s life.” Grampy said quietly.

“I hope it won’t come to that, but we’ll address it when we get there.” I replied.

“A very mature answer. Go on. Help your Gammy. She’s not as spry as she once was.” He winked.

I got up and went to the kitchen. Gammy packed up a cooler full of food, even though I told her just the pie was fine. She included some left overs of foods I liked, pies, cookies, a cake, and some homemade jerky. I laughed at the amount of food.

“She’s not a werewolf, Gammy.” I snorted.

“She went through a trying time. She deserves to have something tasty. Now, you don’t get any of this until she has what she wants from it, understand, pup?”

“Yes, Gammy. I promise, I’ll wait until Echo’s eaten.” I smiled.

“Go on, then. Tell her I can’t wait to meet her.” She said.

I kissed her on top of the head and hefted the cooler up so I could carry it out. After I got it settled in the back of the truck, I waved to my great-grandparents, and headed out. I was eager to get home. I missed my mate.

Echo's Revenge

Chapter 78 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

I was sitting on the couch in Victor’s office doing my homework. He’d told me to stay with him so he could be there if I needed him. I was glad that I didn’t fight too hard to stay at school. I ended up sleeping most of the afternoon, waking when my alarm went off to heat the blanket.

When Victor woke up, I told him what happened and he held me tight. I told him about what I heard Harmony say and how I’d yelled at her. The first time she’d started talking about my relationship with Gray and Victor, I’d been waffling on what I felt. This time, it made me angry.

My relationship with my mates was none of her business and she had no right to tell me who to love and how to love them. And I did love them. That should be what was important, that and the way they loved me. The way they made me feel safe and complete.

It was part of the reason I wanted to stay with them forever. I was never as safe as I was in our home. I was never as complete as I was in their arms. Having that for the rest of my life made me happier than anything before.

I was working on some math homework when I heard Gray’s voice in the house. I jumped up. Victor looked at me with amusement.

“Have you finished that assignment, princess?” He asked.

“Well, no, but Gray’s home. Can I take a break to go see him? Please?” I pled.

Victor sighed. “As long as you come right back to finish your work. You won’t get caught up if you don’t focus, Echo.”

“I promise, I will get caught up again, Victor. I just want to see Gray again.” I told him.

“Go on. I’ll be right here.” He smiled and turned back to the old book he was reading.

I hurried out of the room. Gray wasn’t in the entry way, but I heard him in the kitchen talking to Amy. I went in to see him.

He was unpacking food from a cooler. I wondered what sort of business involved getting a cooler full of food. Was I not doing a good enough job making sure he had enough to eat?

Gray turned and smiled at me. “Hello, beautiful. Come see what my great-grandma sent for you.”

I approached and looked at all the different foods in the containers. There were a couple pies, a cake, and a whole bunch of different dishes in Tupperware containers. They seemed like leftovers from different meals and they all smelled wonderful.

“Why did she send me food?” I asked.

“It’s just something she does. Gammy believes that anything can be fixed with food. When she heard that you were recovering from a kidnapping, she insisted on sending all this. No one is allowed to have any until you pick what you want. She also hopes to see you at my family dinner on Sunday. I hope you’ll be okay with going. Everyone wants to meet you.” He said.

Sunday dinners were a big deal in my house. I never got to have one after my parents started locking me in the basement on Sundays. I could barely remember the ones before then. I’d shut those memories away when I was very little. I didn’t want to remember the time before I was considered an evil monster.

“Are you sure they really want me there?” I asked quietly. “They don’t have to invite me just because I’m your mate.”

“I know for a fact that Trent, mom, dad, Gammy, and Grampy want you there. Everyone else is probably excited to meet you too.” Gray told me.

“Mates and family are very important to werewolves. Family is especially important to pack wolves. As Gray’s mate, you’re his family and their family. If any of them are asses to you, just go talk to the oldest male you see. If he doesn’t put them in their place, talk to the oldest female you see and she definitely will.” Amy winked.

I nodded. “I’ll go. You have to stay near me, though. You told me about your family. That sounds like a lot of people.”

“How about if I take you bowling with a small group of my friends the night before. After your thing with Sean. I saw that you have a video game of it, would you like to try it in real life? I have three friends I normally bowl with. They will bring their mates and you can see how werewolf couples, aside from your sister and Cam, are.” Gray offered.

“That sounds like fun. I want to try really bowling.” I said.

“Great! I’ll let them know you’re up for it. What do you want to do tonight?” He asked.

“I want to work on my homework. There’s a lot and I want to get caught up. It’s what I was doing before you came home. I only took a break so I could see you.” I told him.

“Where are you working at? I have a lot to get done, too. We can work on it together.”

“I’m working in Victor’s office.”

“I’ll grab us a couple slices of pie and meet you there. Will you take my backpack in there?” Gray asked.

“Sure.” I replied with a smile.

I grabbed his bag and took it into Victor’s office. Victor raised his eyebrow at me as I got seated and comfortable again.

“What is that?” He asked.

“Gray’s backpack. We’re going to do our homework.”

“In my office?”

“I figured I could focus more if I knew where both of you were and what you were doing. If we’ll be too much of a bother we can move to the living room or the library... if it’s free.” I bit my lip.

Finding Jean-Claude and Dillon kissing in the library had been a surprise. I didn’t know I could find anyone kissing anywhere near as interesting as I did when I saw them kissing. It actually made me think of Victor and Gray doing that.

I could imagine them in only their pajama pants. Bare chests rubbing against each other while Victor rode Gray’s lap. His fingers wrapped in Gray’s shiny black hair while their lips met, then parted giving that slight glimpse of Victor’s tongue entering Gray’s mouth. The deep, gentle moaning as they kissed. Gray’s hands sliding into Victor’s pants....

“Not going to happen, Echo.” Gray growled above me.

“Echo.” Victor said in a stern voice.

Heat rushed to my face. They’d seen what I was imagining. I had to be more careful about that. I couldn’t even look at them. I was so embarrassed.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know how to block these things from you.” I whispered.

“So you’re not sorry you’re thinking them?” Victor asked.

“No. They’re my thoughts and daydreams. I’m allowed to have them. I just need to make sure you can’t see them.” I replied.

He laughed. Gray chuckled as well. I felt a little of the embarrassment start to ebb away. It was lucky that they had a sense of humor about it. I didn’t seem to be able to stop. It made me feel warm between my legs when I thought of them touching each other and kissing each other.

“Where exactly were you planning on taking that little daydream, princess.” Victor stood and crossed to stand next to Gray.

“I… I don’t know. I guess I didn’t know where exactly it could go. I can always ask Dillon about it. I don’t think Jean-Claude would answer. He doesn’t seem to talk much, especially not to me.” I said softly.

“Do not talk to Dillon about what happens next. Goddess knows, he’d tell you. I really don’t want images popping up in my head of the things you might imagine Victor and I doing together.” Gray replied with a shudder.

“I need to figure out how to stop you from seeing things in my head when I think about you. I can’t stop imagining things, but when I get really lost in the scenes in my head, you two can seem to see them.” I explained.

“Thankfully, as outside observers. I can’t imagine what it would be like to experience that.” Gray said.

“I’ve never seen a fantasy where it’s just the two of us, princess. Don’t you ever think about the things we could do with you?” Victor asked.

“Of course I do, it just isn’t as strong. I think this is stronger because you both said it would never happen. It’s forbidden and taboo. My mates would never do that, so it’s much more interesting to pretend you would.” I giggled.

“Focus on your schoolwork.” Victor ordered.

He went back to his desk and Gray sat next to me. We worked on more math in peaceful quiet. Gray helped me with a few things I didn’t understand. He was in a higher level of math, so he already knew the stuff I was working on.

The comfort of being with both Victor and Gray made doing my work even better. I finished my math from last week a lot faster than I thought I would and moved on to science. I had nearly finished a third worksheet when Amy called us for dinner. I set my paper and pencil aside and Gray helped me stand.

We went into the kitchen to see that the table was set and Amy was dishing up our meal. I was happy that I didn't feel sick with solid food anymore. It didn't stop my craving for blood, but it wasn't as intense as it had been in the past few days. Talia came in the kitchen and wiggled her fingers at me as we took our seats.

"Victor. I needed to talk to you after dinner. Do you have time?" Amy asked.

"Of course. Did you need it to be private, or may I allow Gray and Echo to continue their schoolwork?"

"It's fine if they're there. It has to do with them a little. I'll go out and eat with the boys. I'll see you in a bit." She smiled and took her plate out to the porch.

"I really should have gotten a dinner table." I sighed.

"I can see if someone can take you to go purchase one when you're ready." Victor said.

"I'd really like that. It would be better if everyone could eat together." I told him.

"Anything you wish, princess." He replied with a wink.

As I ate, I thought about my imagination problem. My imagination had gotten me through some terrible times in the past ten years. I couldn't just turn it off. I wondered if I could make it work for me, though.

Earlier, I tried to get Gray to stay with me and make love to me. It hurt my feelings a little that he couldn't just arrange his schedule different for me. I knew that was selfish, but I couldn't help it. He was my mate and I wanted to be his priority. It would help if he told me what was going on.

I took a bite of my food and focused on Gray. I thought about the feeling of his touch, the rough kisses he liked, and the warmth of his arms. I saw him stiffen. I focused on the feeling of him kissing and sucking my neck, moving his mouth lower, the feeling of him sucking, nibbling, and licking over my breasts. The tingles that accompanied every caress.

Gray set his fork down and closed his eyes, the pace of his breathing changed. I squeezed my knees together as I thought of his hand trailing down my body, seeking the heat between my legs. I nearly gasped as I remembered the feeling of his fingers in my most sensitive spots, gliding over me, delving into me, making my entire body react.

Suddenly, there was a pain in my shin. Victor had kicked me. I glared at him. Talia was sitting in the chair across from me, giggling.

"What do you think you're doing, princess?" Victor asked.

"Nothing. Just thinking." I said innocently.

“Fuck, Echo. I almost came in my pants. Don’t do that at the dinner table. You should know better than that.” Gray growled.

I bit my lip and toyed with my food. He deserved it for getting me worked up and leaving me behind. He could scold me all he wanted, I wouldn’t feel bad about it.

“I won’t ask you to apologize, you seem to have no remorse for what you’ve done. I will ask that you don’t do things like that in situations that aren’t appropriate for it.” Victor said sternly.

That made me angry. I wasn’t a child. He wasn’t my father, or my sire. I got up from the table silently and walked to the bathroom, where I locked the door and sat on the floor in front of it.

Then, I started thinking of Victor. If he thought he could parent me, he’d learn what an unruly child I could be. I didn’t know what was coming over me, I was never stubborn... but then I remembered, I was just as stubborn as Harmony when I was very little.

I thought about him pinning me to the wall, his hands running over my body as he whispered to me about what a good girl I was and how much he loved me. I imagined him kissing down my body, putting my legs over his shoulders, and looking up at me while he licked and sucked like last night and I gripped his hair. I slipped my hand into my pants and rubbed myself while imagining that it was Victor’s tongue.

When I got close, I covered my mouth with my other hand and went further, mentally watching him as he pleased me up against the wall. I reached my peak and heard Talia start laughing loudly.

“Damn it, Echo!” Victor shouted.

I could have probably gotten Gray without as much effort, but I knew I was going up against someone who had centuries of experience. I wouldn’t use this as much. I was already aching with need from doing it to Gray. I would need to figure out different ways to use my ability.

Suddenly, there was a pounding on the door as the handle rattled above me. I could smell Victor on the other side.

“Open this damned door, Echo!” He yelled.

He sounded really angry. I covered my head, closed my eyes, and wished I was in my bedroom closet, hiding in the corner where my long skirts covered. All of a sudden, the pounding stopped and there was something brushing my knees.

I opened my eyes to see my skirts hanging in front of me. I was in my closet. How had that happened? Could it be another ability? Like Marius.

For a moment, I was excited, then I remembered, I made Victor really mad. This wasn't going to be good. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and dialed Marius. He picked up the phone after a few rings.

"Hello, Echo. What can I help you with?" He asked almost cheerfully.

"I think I just traveled like you do, but I need help I made Victor mad at me." I whispered.

Marius appeared in front of me immediately. "Echo. Where are you?"

I crawled out from under the skirts and wrapped my arms around him. The door to the closet burst open. Victor stood there, his eyes were glowing violet.

"When you've calmed down, I'll bring her back." Marius said, and we were instantly not in the closet anymore, but in a living room I had never seen before.

An Education in Abilities

Chapter 79 - The Vampire's Servant

There was some large, comfortable looking furniture scattered around the room we appeared in. Plants grew along the ceiling and walls. There were old paintings and pictures all over. It was a very homey little place.

Marius let me go and sat me on the couch. I was a little nervous. I hadn't really been thinking when I called him, but it kind of worked out. I just hoped he wouldn't be angry at me for what I did to Victor.

"Would you like to tell me what happened?" He asked.

My phone started ringing. I looked at it. Gray was calling. I sent it to voicemail and turned off my phone.

"Sorry." I murmured.

"Tell me what happened, Echo. I want to help, but I can't if you don't tell me." Marius said.

I took a deep breath. Maybe he could help with the controlling the imagination thing. My mind worked more like a vampire's not like a werewolf's. I needed that help.

"I... I made Victor and Gray see some things. At first it was an accident, but then I did it on purpose and that's why Victor's mad at me." I blushed.

“You imagined things and made them experience it?” Marius asked.

I nodded.

“Good. That’s how my ability to make people see their death works. It’s the death I imagine for them, not their real death... unless they anger me again.” He said darkly.

“I can’t make them feel what I imagine. They see it from my perspective.”

“Unless you were imagining yourself getting hurt, I don’t see how that would work to cause him to be harmed. Or what could have caused him to be angry.” Marius wondered.

“It wasn’t pain.... It was bedroom stuff.” I admitted.

“I never thought it could be used like that.” He replied, licking his lips and shifting his gaze down the hall. “I’ll have to test it later.”

That seemed a little weird. I blushed a bit as I realized that I had told someone I saw as a father about what I did. He was my best option to learn, though.

“Is there someone else here?” I asked.

“Lila is in her workshop. She spends a lot of time in there right now. She just received an abundance of ingredients and is like a child, giddy with excitement.” Marius chuckled.

“Do you love her?”

“Of course not. She’s just a way for me to relieve some tension and relax. She sees me the same way.” He scoffed. “We should get back on task. So, you looked at them and imagined bedroom things and they felt them?”

“I think they felt what I did. Earlier, when I did it on accident, they saw what I was imagining. They didn’t feel anything.” I explained.

Marius nodded. “You haven’t really learned how to project the feeling with the imagining. You’re working with the feelings you know, not the ones you can imagine.”

“And I wasn’t looking at them. I was in the bathroom when I did that to Victor.” I admitted.

“It’s more powerful if you can see them. It makes it easier to focus the feelings. Try this, I want you to look at me, then focus on the feeling of being slapped by Daniel Darknight. Instead of it being you, I want you to imagine it being me.” He said.

I did what he instructed. I looked at Marius and imagined him trapped in the cell, begging to be released, like I was. I remembered Daniel slapping me so fast I couldn’t even see it. I could see Marius reacting like I did. Being knocked to the ground hard with a yelp.

“Perfect.” He grinned as the vision faded. “Try it again with a different feeling, something you can picture easily.”

This time I thought of the biggest, warmest hug I’d ever gotten. I imagined Marius being wrapped in the arms of someone who cared for him and held tightly. I almost smiled at the image.

“That was much stronger.” Marius murmured. “You don’t like the idea of hurting me. I understand, you’re a sweet and caring girl. Now I want you to think of something you’ve never felt before. I want you to focus on my eyes. Imagine what it might be like to be stabbed in the stomach.”

With a nod, I thought of what cutting was like then married that feeling with being punched in the stomach. I figured it was a mixture of the two. I imagined the sudden impact of the knife, the slip of it into a soft stomach, the way it might feel like a sharp pain as the blade went through everything.

When I came out of my imagining, Marius was grasping his stomach. I leaned forward and put my hand on his arm. He smiled proudly.

“That almost felt exactly like being stabbed in the stomach. You have a wonderful imagination. Let’s take a break. I think we should practice every day. I want you to call me after your dinner and I’ll come to train you with this. I knew you were going to be a powerful vampire. I’m so proud of you, Echo.” Marius hugged me.

“You said that before. I don’t understand.” I mumbled into his shoulder.

“Most vampires can sense the power level of other vampires. I am a little more adept, like my other colleagues in the High Council. It’s something you get better at with age. I had the sense that you were weakened, but powerful when I met you. I didn’t get my traveling ability until I was about a thousand years old. I can travel to any place I’ve been before.

When telephones came into fashion, I found I could travel to the location of any person who contacted me over the phone. It was very unfortunate for the man who made the first call that angered me.

The way you communicate telepathically, is not an ability any living vampire has. We can only communicate with those bonded to us. Our servants, our spouses, our Solus Amors, and any we create a blood bond with. You seem to be able to communicate with anyone you focus on.” He explained.

“I can’t hear anyone, though.” I said.

“Talk with Bellamy. She can help with return communication. Rogues do not have the ability to mind link with anyone except their mates. She may be able to give you tips on that.”

“She wasn’t able to teach me how to put up walls with my imagination. She tried, but it didn’t work.” I sighed.

“She was trying to teach you how to deal with one ability, it may not work with the other. Image sharing is rare. It’s more powerful than just words and emotions. You are projecting to all of the senses. I would say, practice not focusing on anyone in particular if you are imagining things for fun.” Marius suggested.

That was going to be hard. Most of my imaginings had to do with people I knew. I would try not focusing on them as hard. Victor and Gray didn’t see any of the other stuff I imagined. Maybe if I wasn’t so immersed in what I was thinking of, I would be better able to stop them from seeing it.

I needed to also figure out how to control myself when I got angry. I was giving in to the urges the anger sparked in me. It could be that was just who I was now, but I could see why Victor was mad. I made him do something he didn’t want to just because I was upset at him for telling me what to do.

It wasn’t right. I needed to apologize. I needed to tell him why I did it and make changes in a way that was more mature and meaningful. I couldn’t just punish people because I was angry. I needed to apologize to Gray as well.

What I did to him wasn’t fair. I should have talked to him, too. The more I grew, the more I would have to focus on behaving like a mature person and not giving in to my urges. I knew that Victor managed to control his temper a lot. He wasn’t perfect, but he tried. I could do that much.

“I really messed up, papa.” I sighed.

“You are powerful for the first time in your life. You are entitled to a few mistakes, as long as you take responsibility for them. I would use this as a warning to them, but you aren’t as... harsh as I am. I think they value your innocence as much as I do. I think it leads you to more creative uses of your power. You could have projected anything, but you projected pleasure. You could have run away anywhere, but you chose to stay near them.

Once you knew you could travel, you could have kept moving, but you called me instead. Not as a shield, but as an educator. You wanted to learn how to control this. Yes, you had me take you from that situation, but you wanted to figure out your abilities, not run away. I assume you’re planning to go back.” He said.

“I gave in to my anger. I shouldn’t have done that. I asked Gray to stay with me and he refused. The anger I had from that just came back while we were eating and I decided to punish him.” I told him.

Marius chuckled. “You get that from me. It’s not always best to control your anger. With the people you love, yes, but the world is a dangerous place and there are some who would try to harm you for the entertainment of it. Promise me you won’t hold back when it’s not someone

you love. Even if it is someone you love, if they're trying to hurt you, I want you to do everything you can to not be hurt by them."

"I promise. I'll protect myself. Do you think Victor is going to hurt me?" I whispered.

"No. He would have probably scolded you. He was fairly upset. I don't believe he would have seen that look on your face and been able to actually harm you." He replied, gently.

I suddenly realized exactly what I'd done. By calling Marius, I'd subjected Victor to one of his fears. He told me he was afraid of Marius taking me away. I hadn't thought of it when I'd done it. Only that I needed Marius to help me. Traveling had scared me, but not as much as Victor's anger had.

It was all my fault, though. I made him angry and didn't stick around for the aftermath. I couldn't imagine what was going through Victor's head.

"You're frightened. You went from worried to fearful. Has Victor hurt you before? Is that why you were so concerned that he might hurt you?" Marius asked with a growl.

"No. I'm just used to getting hurt when people are mad at me. You were right, Victor wouldn't hurt me." I told him.

"It seems to me that you need to get the emotional part of this resolved. Do you remember how to travel, or did you need me to take you home?" He asked.

I thought about it. If Marius took me home, I knew that Victor would have to talk to me. I wanted to fix this, but using the threat of Marius to make him talk to me would be cheating. I needed to do it on my own.

"I can try it myself, but if I can't, would you take me home?" I asked.

"Go ahead. I want you to call me after you finish dealing with your husbands. Starting tomorrow, you will be training with me to better use your abilities. I'll teach you how to create fear in the hearts of any who cross you. I'll help you practice your traveling, and I will start your formal vampire education." Marius promised.

"Thank you, papa. I love you." I said hugging him.

"I love you too, daughter. Go make up with them. If I do not hear from you by eleven, I'm coming to that house and there will be trouble." He vowed.

"Of course. I'll remember." I smiled.

"Focus on where you want to be. Until you're more practiced, you will need to really focus. It can take time to do it as effortlessly as I do." Marius said.

I nodded and thought of where I wanted to be. I wanted to be with Victor. I wanted to be with Gray. I wanted to be home. I didn't know where Victor was, but I wanted to go to him first. Gray was probably mad, but Victor had been hurt after being angry.

Suddenly, I wasn't sitting on the couch anymore, I was in Victor's office. Sitting on his desk right in front of him. My feet dangled in the gap between his desk and his seat.

He stared at me. A relieved expression crossed his face briefly, but was soon gone beneath the businesslike mask that he often wore. The cool look that I didn't like to see him wearing.

"Echo." Gray whispered from behind me.

I turned and saw him in one of the chairs opposite the desk. He looked very happy to see me. I looked back at Victor.

"I'm sorry. I let my anger get the best of me and did something to you two that I shouldn't have." I said softly. "Please forgive me."

"You called Master Marius to take you away." Victor replied coldly.

"I was scared. You were so mad at me and I just traveled for the first time. I didn't know what to do, so I called him for help. I'm sorry I hurt you, Victor."

"You knew that I was afraid of him taking you, and you called him to take you away. I don't know how I can forgive that, Echo. Take your things and work on your schoolwork elsewhere. I need time." He said, looking away from me.

I slid off his desk and went to gather my papers and books. I deserved this. I deserved his anger. I would give him all the time he needed.

Once my bag was packed up, I looked up at them. Gray hadn't moved or said anything. He was probably mad at me too. I closed my eyes and thought of being in my room.

When I opened my eyes again, I was in my bedroom instead of his office. I sat my bag down and laid on my bed. I couldn't believe I messed up so bad. How long would Victor and Gray be mad at me? Would they come in for bedtime with me? Would Gray want to sleep next to someone who embarrassed him like I did.

Amy told me yesterday how proud alpha blood wolves were and male wolves. I would have to find a big way to apologize if I wanted to overcome that. I would miss having them with me. I would find a way to make it right again.

Allying with the Eaten Heart

Chapter 80 - The Vampire's Servant

[Gray]

After watching Echo disappear, I turned back to Victor. He had his phone out. He was probably texting everyone to let them know she came back.

“What the hell was that?” I asked.

“She obviously gained a new power.” Victor said with a shrug.

“That’s not what I’m talking about. Not even five minutes ago you were practically praying for her to come home and, when she does, you act like a cold ass bastard. What happened to ‘I swear I’ll never get mad at her again?’” I pressed.

“What she did was, not only a violation against both of us, but showed complete disregard for our feelings.” He replied in a cool, clipped tone.

“What she did was try to find help. She was scared. You’ve never been mad at her before and you know how she was punished in the past. That was total bullshit. You told her you don’t know if you can forgive her. She thinks you’re going to reject her! You already hurt her once by trying to give her up, how do you think this is going to go? You told her she was manipulating us before, now you’re manipulating her!” I growled.

“Grayson. She will keep doing things like this if I don’t put my foot down. A little bratty behavior is fine. It’s part of growing pains that come with gaining abilities and learning about herself. Running away to avoid punishment is not acceptable.” Victor said, shuffling papers on his desk.

“How would you have punished her? I couldn’t stop you from going after her. What exactly were you going to do when you got ahold of her?” I asked.

He didn’t look at me or respond. I became angrier at him as I sat there waiting for a response. I stood and reached over the desk, pulling his shirt collar so he would have to look at me.

“What were you going to do, Victor?”

“I don’t know. I wasn’t going to hurt her. I could never do that. It was like I couldn’t control my anger. I went from being amused by what she did, to being enraged. I snapped out of it as soon as I saw her with Master Marius. I’ve never had so much trouble controlling my anger, Grayson.” He sighed.

I let him go. “Do you think it’s the curse? You said people stopped acting like themselves. If you get angry enough and hurt her...” I couldn’t finish what I was saying.

“I’d either kill myself, or Master Marius would kill me. She’s my Solus Amor. We don’t hurt them. They’re precious to us. Just like mates are to werewolves. What would you do if you hurt her?” Victor asked.

“Same as you. I’d hurt myself, or let Marius hurt me. If I killed her, I would die.” I whispered.

“When I saw her, I was relieved, then the anger started coming back. The hurt at her having decided to leave. I know that I wasn’t in control and she needed to leave. Maybe Echo should go live on the pack lands with you and her family.” He sighed.

“I don’t think Echo will approve of that. She’ll want to be here for you. What would happen to your mental health without her? I know I would start falling into a dark hole if I couldn’t see her every day. I bet it’s the same for you.” I told him.

“It’s not safe for her to be here.”

“I’ll talk to her. I’ll explain things and we’ll make sure she doesn’t do anything like that again. She can do that traveling thing. I bet we can find a way for her to get far enough that you have time to calm down. Why didn’t Talia try and help you calm down, though?” I asked.

“She didn’t think I would hurt Echo. I’ll talk to her and let her know we think the curse is affecting me that way. You need to be careful too. If I hurt you, it would hurt Echo.”

“Her ability is pretty impressive, though. I didn’t realize what it felt like for her. No wonder she keeps pushing things.” I chuckled.

“You didn’t go all the way to the end.” He snorted. “I would love to try it again, when I’m not having dinner with my sire.”

“Yeah. I hope she doesn’t use it to tease us too often once we have this curse resolved. We should tell Echo about the curse. She should know that wasn’t you.” I insisted.

“No. I don’t want her to be afraid of me dying. I can fix the things I do wrong. You and Talia will help me to not hurt Echo. Trust me, Grayson, it’s for the best.” Victor replied with a smile.

There was a knock on the door. It was forceful, definitely not Echo. Victor called for the person to come in. The door opened and Bellamy came in.

She closed the door behind her and sat in the chair next to me. In her hands was a tablet computer. Bellamy tapped on a few things and handed the computer across the desk.

Victor looked it over. He scrolled on the screen for a while, reading through it slowly. I looked over at Bellamy.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“The alliance agreement I wrote up for your brother’s pack. I wanted to show Master Nightshade what kinds of benefits there are to being allied with my collective.” She said in a serious voice.

His lips curled briefly into a smile and went back to their usual state. He scanned through it intently. Bellamy just sat watching him. I never got to sit in on things like this back home. I wanted to see what would happen next.

“This is impressive, Queen Bellamy. If I were to offer an alliance, would these conditions apply to myself and my people?” Victor asked.

“We could think of a few things that are more vampire specific. Or we could work things out as we go.” Bellamy offered.

“I could see how an alliance could benefit my people.” He replied and started digging through some drawers until he pulled out a stack of papers and handed them to Bellamy.

She looked over the pages carefully. I had no idea what was going on really. This was outside of my experience. The only thing I did know, was that I could feel Echo crying. I was giving her time, like Victor said, to think about what she did, but I fully intended to go wipe those tears away at bedtime.

“I like this. Does this mean that you’re interested in an alliance with me?” Bellamy smiled at him.

“Of course. One doesn’t see a collective of your size and power and decide to not ally with them. That would be foolish on my part.” Victor smirked a little.

“And you are anything but foolish when it comes to your territory. Shall we seal this with a blood oath?” She asked.

“A wonderful idea. I am sure we can trust each other to write up an agreeable contract. I would prefer to have this sealed while I’m still in my right mind. I only have one condition that needs to be absolutely followed.” He said.

“What is that?”

“If I become unable to function, if this curse kills me, I want you to take Echo and Grayson to your territory and care for them until you can break the curse. I’ve rewritten my will. Echo will inherit all of my holdings. She can help pay for her upkeep. Once she’s safe from the curse, I’ve written instructions that she is to go to her sire for any additional education.” Victor explained.

“Victor. You don’t need to do that! We’re going to break the curse and you’re going to live.” I insisted.

“Gray. Victor’s just being responsible. He’s sure we’re going to break the curse. It’s a good idea to have a plan for the off chance that we don’t figure it out in time.” Bellamy said.

“Grayson, I would worry more if I didn’t have a back-up plan for Echo’s future. Getting her away from here will ensure that the curse doesn’t try to take her too. After what happened today, I’m fairly certain the curse has gotten stronger. My anger has always been cold, not hot like it was earlier. I can feel her crying because of me and it tears my heart in half. I want you to protect her. If it looks like I am not in control, I want you to take her to the Hallowed Moon pack lands. Promise me, Grayson.”

“Yes. I’ll make sure she’s safe. I still think we should tell her. Echo deserves to know what’s going on.” I told him.

I understood why he didn’t want to tell her. Echo would worry a lot if Victor could die. She would get as emotional as when she thought of me dying. Probably more. I wasn’t as simple as to think that she loved me more, or even as much as she loved Victor.

He shook his head. “Not yet. Give me time. If we can resolve this without worrying her, I would prefer that.”

Getting up, I went to the coffee table and started back in on my homework. I needed to get it done as soon as possible so I could be there for Echo. Bellamy and Victor talked for a little while longer.

After a bit, Talia came into the room with a bowl and a knife. She set the bowl in the center of the desk and held the knife. I watched curiously as she took each of their hands and sliced them.

The scent of blood seemed to fill the room. Victor and Bellamy pressed their hands together and held them there until the blood stopped dripping between them. Raw power swept through the room. I couldn’t help it. The Alpha aura was so strong, I dropped onto my knees between the couch and coffee table.

Something darker seemed to be chasing the power. It almost felt like when Victor made me submit. I saw Bellamy bear her neck to Victor. He leaned over and kissed her neck before bearing his own neck in return and getting a kiss from Bellamy.

She pulled her hand back as he straightened. “I can feel the rogues in this territory submitting to me. You shouldn’t have any more problems with rogues here. All of the ones who live here will suffer if they harm you and yours. They will come to your aid if outsiders try to take her again.”

“Thank you, Queen Bellamy. The vampires in your care are safe to continue to vow loyalty to you until I free them from this curse and prove myself to them.” Victor murmured.

“I have a request. If it’s not too much trouble. I would like my mate to come stay with us for the next week. Alpha Lucien is smart and hardworking. I think he might have some insight into this curse. He’s very good at puzzles.” Bellamy said.

“I would be more than happy to host you and your mate for the next week. Talia did tell me about his issue with vampires previously. Are you sure he would be open to staying here?” He asked.

“Yeah. He’s a lot better. It’s been nearly a year. He trusts Talia and she vouched for you in order to get him to stop objecting to me coming to stay. I’ve told him about you every day since we got here. He’s eager to meet you.” She smiled.

“Please let him know that he is welcome in my home.”

“I get to meet the Alpha of Lune Rouge?” I asked excitedly.

The growth of his pack was the hot news among the Alphas. My father, grandfather, great-grandfather had all talked about it with Trent for the last year. Every Sunday, they talked about the news of Lune Rouge.

No one could believe he took a rogue for a mate, especially not a rogue queen. After getting to know Bellamy though, I could see why. She was beautiful, friendly, kind, strong, and deadly. Feeling her power just nailed it for me. He didn’t pick her, she picked him and he had no chance.

Now I was even more eager for the family dinner. I would be the one to talk to him, learn from him, and actually find out the answers to some of the things they had wondered. I wouldn’t ask any of the dirty things I’d heard them wondering. They had a lot of nasty ideas about why an Alpha would take a rogue for a mate.

Bellamy laughed. “He’s eager to meet you too. He feels that you must be a very strong and brave wolf to have been willing to fight a vampire as old as Victor for your mate. And even more so since I told him the two of you share Echo. Like me, he doesn’t think he could share with someone else, especially not a vampire. Sorry, Victor.”

“No offense taken. Werewolves and vampires have been at odds for the entirety of my life time and well beyond that. I hope this means we’re ushering in a new era of supernatural relations.” He answered with a wink.

Talia and Bellamy left shortly after. I returned to my work. Victor sat, with his head in his hands.

“Are you alright?” I asked.

“She stopped crying. I think she may be sleeping now. I want to go to her, but I’m worried. What if the anger comes back?” Victor sighed.

“I’ll go up to her at bedtime. You try to make it in before she wakes up. I know seeing you in the morning will make her happy.” I told him.

He nodded. “I want to see her. I miss her smile and the way she says my name.”

I smiled. He sounded as love struck as I was. It was times like this that he seemed almost human. Right now, Victor was just a man in love with a girl. He was just like me.

I focused on my school work again. I was lucky to have a couple classes that didn't have a ton of work, I just had to study the teachers notes and make my own based on them. Some of the work was simple reading, some was work sheets. There was one paper that I had already been done with before the week off. I would edit it and have it ready to turn in tomorrow.

As much as people liked to tease me about not being smart, I was actually a solid A student. I may be crap at emotional intelligence, but I was smart enough that I didn't have to put in a lot of effort to pass my classes. I was learning emotional intelligence, though, Echo was teaching me to understand how I affect others. She may not realize it, but she was teaching me more than I had ever learned in school.

When my alarm went off, I packed up my things and looked at Victor. He was staring at his computer screen with an angry expression. I went to the door.

“Don't forget to see Echo in the morning.” I reminded him.

“Of course, Grayson. Thank you. Get some rest, take care of our mate. I'll see you in the morning.”

I dropped my bag off in my room and changed into my pajamas before heading to Echo's room. What I saw there startled me. She wasn't in bed. A pillow and the blanket were missing. I checked her bathroom, then her closet.

She was curled up in the corner of her closet with her blanket wrapped around her. Her hair stuck to her damp face and she sniffled a little in her sleep. Carefully, I picked her up and carried her to her bed.

Echo snuggled into my arms and shivered a little. The floor was pretty cold. I didn't understand why she did that. Why would she have chosen to sleep in her closet instead of her bed? Then I realized, she was trying to hide the fact that she was crying. We wouldn't have heard it through the closet and her bedroom doors.

My heart hurt for her. She thought she had to hide it from us. I was betting that she hadn't planned on falling asleep either. She was still in her clothes. The blanket and pillow were probably added soundproofing.

“Please, don't leave me, Gray.” She whimpered softly.

“Shh, angel. I'm here to stay with you. I'll go get your pajamas, you get those clothes off.” I told her.

“You don't hate me?” Echo sniffled.

“No. I love you. Victor loves you. We were mad about what you did, but that would never make us stop loving you. Promise you won’t do that again without us agreeing to it.”

“I promise. I was just mad that you wouldn’t change your plans and stay with me like I asked. Then I was mad at Victor for scolding me.” She admitted.

“We should talk when you’re mad. Not attack. Got it?” I said, heading to her closet.

“Got it.” Echo whispered.

We got her changed in to her pajamas and I curled up in bed with her. Her skin was cool. I held both of her hands after wrapping my arms around her and spooning her. I wanted to warm her up. I thought of my promise to Victor. I would protect her. She needed me too. One day, she’d love me like she loved him. I was living for that day.