

## Chapter 91 - The Vampire's Servant

[Gray]

When we returned home, Echo took her bag and ran off to find Victor. I wanted to find Talia and talk to her about Echo's reaction to the girls. In the end, they had caught on to her enthusiasm. She had the ability to make people as excited as she was.

Talia was in the library, laying on the couch, reading a book. I sat in the chair next to the couch. She looked up at me and closed her book before pulling herself into a sitting position.

"How did it go?" She asked.

"They were more than just catty. They attacked her verbally. They attacked our relationship. They even brought up my ex." I sighed.

"How did she take it?"

"She seemed worried in the beginning, then she just stopped. Echo realized my mind wasn't going to be changed. She realized I wouldn't give up on her because of them. She told them off and we actually ended up having a pretty good time." I admitted.

Talia nodded. "Good. She can judge situations and handle them effectively. No crying or screaming, right?"

"Right. She spoke like Victor does when he's all vampire-y. Echo was cool, calm, and dismissive. I hope it means tomorrow will go well. My grandpa doesn't like vampires." I explained.

"That could be difficult. I believe Echo will handle it well. It's good that we have this sorted. I finished with the preparations for the announcement of Victor's inheritance of this territory. It will be in two weeks at a vampire owned establishment." She said.

"Which one?"

"Sangre. It's an upscale restaurant. They've announced it will be closed for a private event. They will serve blood foods and drinks with blood. I love a good party." Talia smiled.

"What precautions are being put in place to protect Echo? After how Finn behaved the first time he met her, I don't trust other vampires around her." I told her.

“All in attendance have been informed that the Master’s Solus Amor is a dhampyr and they are not to touch her or bite her without her permission. This caused some questions. No one has ever seen a dhampyr with a vampire Solus Amor before they shifted into their second life. Some have even rejected their Solus Amor because of how that vampire treated them before they died. There is one ex-dhampyr who will be in attendance. He is interested to see a female who wasn’t raised the way they normally are. I think a lot of our guests are more eager to meet her than they are to meet Victor.” She chuckled.

“They’ve been told that her sire is Marius, right? I don’t want them thinking she’ll be unprotected if something happens to Victor.”

“Ah, well, Marius felt it would be better if that were announced while he was there. He wants to see them realize that she is more than protected. He likes the scent of fear. It has been worked into Victor’s speech that he will thank Marius for supporting him and will announce that Echo is Marius’ child in the same breath.” Talia explained.

“Good. I want them to know she’s off limits.” I said.

“I have this covered. Go on. It’s nearly Echo’s bedtime, isn’t it? She’ll miss you if you’re late.” She winked.

I got up and headed for the door. “Why don’t vampires know a dhampyr is their mate? It doesn’t make sense that they wouldn’t know. Or that the dhampyr wouldn’t know.”

“It’s a biting urge. All vampires are drawn to dhampyrs, dhampyrs only bite their mates. It would be a strange sensation that starts with their gums itching as their fangs come out. I think a lot of the vampires who were Solus Amors with dhampyrs just ignored it. They wouldn’t have wanted to work through the process of freeing their mates from servitude. It’s a sad statement about my people, but they probably it was best to wait until they were freed by death. I couldn’t imagine letting my Solus Amor live through the kind of treatment dhampyrs received in the past.” Talia responded softly.

“They didn’t deserve them if they wouldn’t fight for them. I know Victor would have fought for Echo if Daniel hadn’t lost her. He wouldn’t have stopped until she was his.”

“That is true. My Victor is as stubborn as you are. If he had found her being treated like a dhampyr by Daniel, he would have taken it to the highest court to free his Solus Amor.”

“Do you think she’ll ever love me as much as she loves him?” I asked.

Talia laughed. “If you don’t believe she loves you as much as him, then you need to get your head checked. Echo looks at both of you the same way. She talks about you the same way. She runs to see you when you’ve been away for any length of time. She cares for you both the same way.”

“You really think so?” I asked.

“Everyone in this house knows. Even Victor knows you are equals in Echo’s heart. Even if she started loving him first and used to love him more, she loves you both the same now.” Talia assured me.

“Thanks, Talia. I better go. I really appreciate your help.”

“That’s what I’m here for.” She waved, opening her book again and sinking down onto the couch.

I left the library feeling a lot better. My insecurities had overwhelmed me. I needed to get over that. I promised myself I would do better for her.

When I walked into Victor’s office, he was working at his desk, writing something using the silly pen Echo had bought him. Echo was sitting on the couch, cuddling her stuffed cat. I sat on the couch and pulled out my phone.

The feeling in the room was really comfortable. There was no tension of any kind. It was soothing. Like being truly at home.

“How’s the curse hunt going?” I asked.

“Finn is still tracking down whoever it is who can tell me almost everything about it. I’m trying to piece together what led up to it. Your great great-grandfather’s journals may hold the pieces to fill it out.” He said.

“I can talk to my great-grandfather tomorrow at the family dinner. It’s a big barbeque, now that it’s warmer out. We’ll head out around four and be there until after eight.” I told him.

“I see. Thank you for letting me know.” Victor replied with a slight smile.

“I… I think you should spend the night with Echo, in your bed.” I told him.

Echo looked at me curiously. Victor looked up from what he was working on. I felt my face redden.

“Look, she’s going to be with me all day and tomorrow night… well. You know. Anyway, I think you’re not getting as much time with her as I am. If you don’t have much going on tonight, then you don’t really have to be in here. You can lay down with Echo and just be with her all night.” I offered.

“Where will you sleep, Gray?” Echo asked.

“I can sleep in my room. It’s not like I don’t have anywhere to go, angel.” I chuckled.

“Are you sure, Grayson? There’s no reason you can’t sleep with us.”

“I’ll have her all night tomorrow night. She loves us both the same. There’s no reason to fight over time with her.” I said.

Echo moved closer and wrapped her arms around me. I leaned my cheek down on top of her head. We’d moved past my need for validation in Echo’s heart. It was finally time for me to back down and let my relationship grow the way it was going to.

“That’s kind of you, Grayson. Echo, let me know when you’re ready for bed.” He smiled.

“I have to get some laundry done. Probably another hour or so.” She said before getting up and bouncing out of the room with her stuffed cat.

“She really loves that cat.” Victor chuckled.

“We’ll have to buy her a lot of stuffed animals. I love how she smiled while she was talking about it. I can’t believe her parents took her toys away.” I growled.

“She was only a little girl. I have no idea how anyone could do that to a child they’d cared for since she was a baby.” He replied with a small snarl.

“Echo says she wants to have a baby with you first. I know you’re going to be a good dad. I’ll help out during the days.” I told him.

“She hadn’t told me that. Why did she tell you?” Victor asked.

“I asked her when she wanted to have babies. You know how werewolves are about family. We start as soon as we mark our mates. Bellamy is only a couple years older than us and already has twins.” I answered.

“You were eager to find out about when you could have a pup and found out you had to wait in line. That probably didn’t make you feel great.”

“Echo told me you lost your family. Family is important to werewolves. You’re my family as much as Echo is. Your babies will be my family. I want you to have back what you lost.” I said.

“Thank you. I didn’t know how I would feel about watching you and Echo have babies, knowing that she wants to have my child first makes me happy. I saw the ring you gave her. When are you planning to get married?”

“Two months. We’ll do it on the pack lands at night, so you and the other vampires can be there. I have four Lunas who will get everything arranged. Echo never has to know how much work it really is.”

“She deserves to have that. I wish I could marry her.” He sighed.

“You can always do a binding ceremony.” I offered.

A binding ceremony was a wedding for vampires. I read about it in one of Victor's books. He had a book on all of the different ceremonies vampires did all over the world. This seemed to be the closest to a marriage ceremony I could find. It was usually put on when vampires entered into a marriage agreement.

"Yes. That sounds like a wonderful idea. I'll start planning for one here. We can do it in the backyard near the garden. We don't need many people. Just us, her family, Rosy, Talia, maybe Bellamy and Lucien. Definitely Jean-Claude and Dillon. I will need Talon and Silence here. As my supports, they are at the top of the guest list for any events." Victor said and started typing on his computer. "Will you be taking her on a honeymoon?"

"Not if the curse isn't broken. I don't want to take her from you when you're still fighting this thing. I can wait. I want to take her to the ocean." I told him.

"She'll love that. I want to take her to Paris. She watched a movie with me that was set in France. I think she'll enjoy it. I have connections in Europe that can get us into museums after dark." He smiled.

Of course, he was able to do more than I could. I'd have to put in a lot of hours to afford the trip to the coast, but he could take her on a full tour of Europe without even blinking. I needed to get a better job.

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[Victor]

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After writing a quick plan for a binding ceremony, I returned to my work. There were little bits of information coming in every night on the curse or the people involved. Lila was one of the biggest sources of information for us.

Maeve, the leader of the fae, had reached out to me and given me her email address. She assigned one of the children in Echo's school to be her liaison. Maeve seemed very interested in the triplets. She said Echo was the primary reason that she'd even offered talk of an alliance.

Echo's ability to get people to like her was amazing. She didn't have the same mind control as Harmony. Master Marius said he didn't feel the same way when talking to Echo as he did when talking to Harmony. Whatever it was that Echo did, it was her personality, not some supernatural ability.

Slowly, Maeve was documenting as much as she could say by having the child who was Echo's liaison type what she said. He was her son. She decided to have another child, late in life, because she missed having someone close to her.

Thinking of that drew me to the conversation I'd just had with Grayson about Echo wanting to have my child first. I couldn't possibly express to either of them just how happy the idea of Echo having my child made me. As soon as the curse was ended, I intended to find out more about her plans for our family.

The idea of 'our family' made my chest swell. I wanted to make sure that Echo was comfortable in her role in the house. She wasn't just a servant anymore, she was my bride, my Solus Amor, my everything.

Soon, she was standing in the doorway, her hair framed her face and she chewed on her bottom lip. She glanced over at Grayson and looked a little sad. I stood and crossed the room, taking her into my arms.

"What's wrong, princess?" I asked.

"Nothing." She lied.

"Are you upset that Grayson isn't coming to bed with us tonight?" I pressed.

"He doesn't have to if he doesn't want to, I don't mean to pressure either of you." Echo whispered.

"That's not the reason, angel." Grayson said. "It's really not that I don't want to. I want to spend every night with you, I just want to be fair with Victor. You've had a lot of time with me today and you'll have even more tomorrow. You and Victor have had no time together, alone, in the last week. You went from being entirely his to being shared."

"You really aren't mad at me?"

"Why would I be mad at you?" He asked.

"Because I was mean to your friends." She said softly.

"They deserved it. I'm not mad. I just think this is the best idea for you two. It's my job to watch out for your relationship, too. If you're ready for bed, you should go. I'm heading up soon. No training tomorrow, so I get to sleep in." Grayson chuckled.

Echo slipped out of my arms and sat in his lap giving him kisses and a big hug. He gently pushed her out of his lap and stood. Grayson took her hand and led her back to me. I took her from him and led her upstairs.

She went to her room to change, while I changed into my pajamas. Echo came in with her computer. I was a little confused.

"I thought you might want to watch a movie with me in bed. I don't need to be up early, and I want to spend more time with you." She said.

“That sounds like fun, princess.” I smiled.

Echo climbed into the bed and arranged the pillows so she could sit against them. I crawled in with her. She opened the laptop and went to a movie rental service. She picked out a movie and we watched it, curled up together.

I never enjoyed a movie more, it was one of the plays of Shakespeare. Much Ado About Nothing. She cried a little at the accusation of Hero and loved the ending where everyone danced happily together, Hero reborn and married to Claudio, Beatrice and Benedick no longer sniping at each other, and all pain turned to love.

We closed the computer and I put it on the nightstand. Echo curled into the curve of my side and laid her head on my chest. She looked as sweet and innocent as the girl playing Hero had. I would never make the mistake of Claudio and would talk to my little princess if I encountered something like an accusation of infidelity.

“I love you, Victor. Thank you for saving me, both times. You’re the best man I’ve ever met. And the best vampire I’ve ever met.” She murmured sleepily.

“I love you, too, princess. You are my heart. I couldn’t live without you. I’m so glad I found you. I know I can face any future as long as it has you in it.” I replied. “Now, get some sleep. You have another long day tomorrow.”

She nodded and soon her breathing evened into that of sleep. She’d been so precious when she told me about everything she’d gotten to do today. I couldn’t wait for her to come home to me tomorrow with more stories.

Before the Barbecue

## Chapter 92 - The Vampire's Servant

I let my mind wander as Echo slept. I thought about all the things I wanted to introduce her to. I thought about the curse and what may have started it. Could it actually have been about a woman?

If Grace Aimes was Grigori’s Solus Amor, then it almost made sense. Her father arranged a marriage with a powerful witch family. He spent a lot on the dowry to make her more appealing. Losing his chance for the combining of the two families would have ruined him.

Modern day Americans didn’t like the idea, but most of them wouldn’t exist without an arranged marriage or two in their family history. My parents had arranged my marriage to Emma. They wanted to combine our family with the neighboring family.

They were friends since childhood and their farms were right near each other. We'd lived with her family until her parents passed, one cold hard winter. Even though we'd never been romantically interested in each other, our love had grown and I began loving her as if she'd been in my heart the whole time.

I would never have to grow to love Echo. I may have understood the reasoning Fenton Aimes had for pushing his daughter into the arranged marriage, but from Grigori's perspective, I would have died. Just knowing that my Echo was out there with someone else, would have killed me.

Was it enough to curse a whole city? What could have been the turning point? Did Grigori mark Grace? Was he showing that he intended to keep her no matter what her father said?

There was a lot to figure out still. Lila said Fenton started doing things that made his coven think he was turning dark. I needed to know more. He was probably starting to mentally warp already from dabbling in darkness.

Echo whimpered in her sleep. It reminded me of the nightmare she had last night. I stroked her hair and tried to soothe her. This time, it seemed to work. I was relieved. I hated when she suffered anything.

Her head turned a little and her neck was bared to me. I licked my lips, remembering the taste of her blood this morning. Echo was always amazing. I was happily surprised that she was willing to let me have some of her blood.

I shook my head to rid myself of the thought of biting her. It had come upon me suddenly and was hard to fight. I needed to go get some blood. I didn't want to risk whatever my urges were trying to get me to do with her.

Carefully, I climbed out of bed and headed downstairs. I knew Grayson was already in bed. He called it his 'time skip'. He would go to sleep and the things he wanted would suddenly be closer. I thought it was a charming way of looking at sleep.

In the kitchen, I poured some blood into a glass and looked at the time. It was about four in the morning. Still another three hours until Echo would wake for the day.

The front door opened and closed. I turned to see Finn coming in. I was hopeful for an update. He'd told me last time that he was looking into a few things and would let me know if anything came up.

"Oh, hey, Vic. Didn't expect to see you here." He chuckled.

"I was just getting a drink. I heard you apologized to Echo. I appreciate that." I said.

"I was in the wrong. It took a while before I could figure out a time. It looked like she needed a distraction yesterday morning."



“She had a nightmare. She was pretty shaken by it.” I told him.

“She left here in a much better mood.” Finn smiled.

“I noticed. Thank you for helping get her back to normal.”

“No problem.”

He poured some blood into a mug and heated it in the microwave. I didn’t like how that tasted, so I hadn’t done it after the first time. Bellamy had warmed some blood in the slow cooker, it was much better, but really made for more than one vampire.

“Do you have an update for me yet?” I asked.

“Something tells me that someone in the family of Fenton Aimes can tell us what we need to know. I was tracking down his living descendants. His daughter’s children have scattered, there were three of them and they all moved to other states after their mom passed. His son had two kids. The oldest, Fenton Aimes III, is in a nursing home. He never had kids. The youngest, a daughter, married and stayed in town. She passed a few years ago, cancer. She had a son and three daughters though. It seems the magic in the bloodline is fading. Only two of her daughters are witches. They moved away to marry into witching families, believing that their mother marrying a human was the reason their magic faded.” Finn explained.

“I see. And why do you think these descendants might have the knowledge we seek?”

“I can’t really explain it, Vic. It’s an urge that comes with my ability. Like going with my gut, but to a stronger degree. I just read through what you have written about the man and the curse, and my gut twinged at the name of the son. I had to go with it.” He shrugged.

“So you’re tracking down the families of the two remaining children. How’s that going?” I asked.

“The son was pretty easy. He married his high school sweetheart and had a couple kids. One of them is in college, the other is still in high school. The daughter is a little trickier. She married a few times and I’m still tracking her from the last time she disappeared with a new husband.”

I nodded. There was hope for the answer. Patience would be needed. I didn’t know how long I had before the curse progressed again. I didn’t know what it would do to me when it did.

“Your work is appreciated. I think I’ll be better once I know this isn’t some false lead.” I told him.

“Understandable. It can be hard to see it when all the pieces are still floating around. I’m trying to figure out how to get in to the nursing home to see Aimes. The visiting hours are during daytime and they only permit family. We need to get either Master Marius or your girl in there, then they can pop back at any time.” Finn said.

“I don’t want Echo too involved with this. If we fail.... She shouldn’t have to deal with the guilt.” I replied softly.

“She’s gonna feel worse if you don’t let her help and we fail. She’ll always think she should have done more to save you. You’re not thinking clearly. I think you need to give up leadership of the curse team. Let me or Talia take over. You focus on your territory and staying out of the sun.” He insisted.

“Maybe you’re right. I want to be a bigger part of this, but that may not be what’s best right now. You’ll let me know when I’m needed and let me help as much as I can, right?” I asked.

“Of course, big brother. Talia would never forgive me if I let anything happen to you and she knows how much you want to save yourself. I may not be trustworthy in a lot of things, but I’m not gonna let you die.” Finn said.

For a moment, I could see the solemn warrior and man he used to be. He was truly serious about saving me. This wasn’t just an amusement for him. It was a relief.

I rinsed my cup and gave Finn a handshake. He pulled me into a hug and I permitted it. I left him there and went up to be with my Echo.

She was curled innocently in my bed. I crawled in and slid my arms around her. She sighed and snuggled into my arms. Everything would work out. It had to.

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[Gray]

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It was only a couple hours before I was set to take Echo home to meet my family. Just a few more than that and I would be with her for the first time. I was happy Victor hadn’t had a problem with it being me.

I saw him this morning for breakfast. He informed the group that Finn would be taking over as the head of the curse breaking team. Victor said he felt he wasn’t in the proper mindset to be in charge of it anymore.

That was worrying. I looked over at Echo. She seemed upset. Everyone else took it in stride, with some looks cast about, but otherwise pretty calm.

“Are you feeling the curse more?” I asked.

“I think so. There has been a shift in my personality that others have noted. I would rather not risk it causing a hindrance to our endeavor.” Victor said curtly.

Echo reached out and took his hand. I saw him squeeze it. Suddenly, I was angry at the witch who had cast the spell. He was hurting my mate. He was hurting my friend. I wished he was still alive so I could kick his ass.

“Everything will be alright, princess.” He murmured to Echo in a reassuring tone.

“Promise?” She whispered back.

“Absolutely. Finnick will take over and he’ll be in charge of telling everyone where to go and what to do in order to get this curse resolved.” Victor smiled slightly. “Now, eat your breakfast, you have a big day ahead of you.”

When he’d gone to his room to sleep, Echo pulled me into his office and clung to me. I knew she was worried, I was too, but I didn’t tell her. She needed us to be strong for her. She needed to know we had this handled.

Now, I was in my room working on a bag to go with me while I stayed in Echo’s room for the night. I was nervous. Even though a lot of wolves indulged in sexual relationships before finding their mates, I had only ever dated. The most I’d done with any girl, besides Echo, was making out.

It wasn’t that I didn’t have offers, I just wanted to wait for my mate. I was glad that I did. This would be something we would experience for the first time, together.

Yesterday, I went to buy condoms. I didn’t know what kind to get, so I grabbed a small pack of each kind. The cashier at the pharmacy looked at me weird. I was embarrassed as heck.

I looked at all the little boxes lined up on my bed. They all had something special about them. I thought about asking Echo, but she would know even less than I do.

Cam was my only other option, I took a picture of them and sent it to him asking which one to use. He was no help. He just responded with a string of laughing emojis. I didn’t want my other friends to know, and I didn’t want to ask Val. I could only imagine his response.

So I stood there and waffled over several different types of protection. I looked it up on my phone, but I couldn’t find a lot that was definite. Every list seemed to have a different opinion on what the best option for your first time was.

There was a knock at my door, which was a bit of a relief. It took me away from the problem at hand, at least. I crossed the room and opened the door a little bit.

Alpha Lucien was standing outside my door. I squeezed out the door into the hall. His hand shot out and stopped the door from closing.

“I need to talk to you, privately.” He said.

“We can go down to Victor’s office.” I offered.

“We’re right by your room. What are you hiding?” Alpha Lucien asked and started pushing my door open.

“Please, don’t, Alpha.” I pled.

“Call me Lucien. I told you that. It’s not Echo, because I left her with Talia and Bellamy.” He tried looking around the door.

I saw Dillon and Jean-Claude coming down the hall. I swear I had more privacy in the pack house. With a sigh, I let him into my room.

Lucien walked in and immediately saw the lined up boxes of condoms. He looked at me, then back at the bed. I closed the door behind me.

“It’s your first time too, isn’t it, Gray?”

“Yeah. I was just... I’m freaking out a little. I have to pick the right condom or I could ruin everything. I have no idea what I’m doing. I’ve watched... you know... ‘educational’ videos. But I don’t feel confident.” I admitted.

“You didn’t talk to Victor about this?” He asked.

“No.... I didn’t want him to take it from me because I didn’t know what I was doing.” I replied with a blush.

He sighed and looked at the boxes before picking one up. He read the box and nodded. Lucien turned and handed me the box.

“Ultra-thin. That way you feel more. You don’t need the ribbed or anything for the first time. It’s going to hurt for her to start. You have to be gentle and listen to her, not just her words. Listen to the sounds she makes. Don’t use anything you saw when you were watching porn. At least... that’s what I assume you meant by ‘educational’ videos.” Lucien scoffed.

I nodded. “Yeah.”

“Those are male fantasies, rarely female ones. You know Echo, it’s not like you’re doing it with a total stranger. Just make sure she’s ready and do what your body wants to do. It’s completely natural, you’ll know what to do when the time comes.” He explained.

“Thanks. I didn’t know who to talk to about this.” I said softly.

“No problem. I expect I’ll have this talk with my own son one day. I wanted to talk to you about this dinner you’re taking Echo to.”

I cleared the boxes off the bed and waved for him to sit. I took a seat near him. Over the last week, I'd come to admire him even more. He was a strong warrior and a solid man. I changed my earlier opinion about Bellamy picking him and him not having a chance. It was clear that they were really in love.

"As you may have guessed, when I brought Bellamy home, it seemed that anyone who knew she was a rogue wasn't as welcoming about our relationship. There were a few who supported us, but that just made the ones who didn't hurt worse. I lost several good friends. They left the pack because of me taking Bellamy as my mate." Lucien said.

"People have been telling me to leave Echo since practically the first moment I saw her, when Echo practically rejected me herself." I chuckled. "I'm used to it by now."

"I heard about what happened at the bowling alley yesterday. Echo told Bellamy. You may be used to it, but she's not. Bellamy would have kicked my ass if I tried to protect her from the people who opposed us. Echo isn't like Bellamy. She is going to need you to step in a lot sooner and more strongly than you did last night." He warned.

"That's not a worry. Last night, I needed to see how she would handle things like that, but I found it was hard to watch. I never want Echo to feel hurt or unprotected. I'll take her out of there if I have to. The rest of my family, the ones who are eager to meet her, will make sure anyone who upsets her is dealt with." I assured him.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you how to do things. I am going to tell you that you need to make it clear as soon as possible that you will not stand for them insulting your mate. I know it's harder for you, because you have a bunch of ex-Alphas to deal with. You have to do this for her."

"I will. Thank you, Lucien." I said.

"Good. I only want good things for you kids. This alliance is good for my mate. When you and Echo are happy, Victor is happy. It makes agreements easier to come to." He admitted.

Lucien stood and crossed to the door. He turned back to me.

"Good luck tonight. And congrats on becoming a man." He winked.

He left my room chuckling. I felt like he was talking down to me a little, but in a friendly way. Could I be friends with one of the most powerful Alphas in the region? The thought was exciting.

Meeting the Family

## Chapter 93 - The Vampire's Servant

Echo looked nervously out the window of the truck as we drove through the pack lands. She had made a ton of cookies because she felt badly about not bringing anything with her for the dinner.

I offered to bring some blood food, but she said she didn't need something else pointing out that she was part vampire. I understood. It was scary going into a place where she knew people might hate her just because of what she was.

We pulled up in front of the house. There were cars filling the driveway and street. I rolled my eyes. My parents must have invited my aunts, uncles, and cousins too.

After I finally found a parking spot, I ran around the truck to help Echo out and help carry cookies. She looked around as I led her to my parent's house. I opened the front door and took her to the kitchen. We set out the cookies before I took her out the French doors to the backyard.

There were a ton of people, three grills going, and kids running everywhere. It was like a director had yelled cut from behind us. Everyone stopped what they were doing and turned to where we were standing.

My mom bounced up. Her short brown hair framed her face. She rushed over to us, followed by my grandmas and great-grandmas. My sister-in-law followed carrying my new nephew. This wasn't Trent's mate, but William's mate.

"Oh! Gray! We were wondering when you would get here." Mom grinned.

"Hey, mom. Echo, this is my mom, Elise Padua. My grandmothers, Trina Padua and Tillie Miller. And my great-grandmothers, Betty Padua, Daisy Miller, Greta Turner, and Gillian Duvall. That's my older brother William's mate, Farrah Padua. And my new nephew Isiah." I said. "Everyone, this is my mate, Echo Nightshade."

"Nice to meet you all." Echo said shyly.

"She's so cute!" Mom said and reached out for Echo.

Echo put her hand out and was pulled into a hug, that led to her being passed around and hugged by all of the women in my family. More started coming over. Lily was the last one.

"I'm the Luna of the pack, Trent's mate, Lily Padua. You let me know if you need anything. Don't let Alpha Martin get you down. He's an ass. If he bothers you too much, you come to me. I'll get all the ex-Lunas to get on him." Lily told Echo while she hugged her.

"Thank you, Luna." Echo smiled.

"Call me Lily. You're family now. You don't have to call me Luna unless we're doing something official."

“I appreciate it.”

One of my nieces, Lina, came up and hid behind Lily. I was nearby, watching to make sure everything went okay. She peeked around her mother.

“Mama, she smells weird.” Lina whispered.

Echo knelt down to where Lina was. She smiled and waved at her a little. Lina watched her carefully.

“It’s because I’m not a werewolf or a human.” Echo told her.

“What are you?”

“I’m a dhampyr. There aren’t a lot of us around, so you’ve probably never smelled anything like me.” She winked at my niece.

“What’s a dhampyr?”

“Just another special type of person, like you, but different.” Echo said.

I knew she was avoiding the word vampire so she wouldn’t scare Lina. Echo was doing so well; I was glad for it. I looked around, my grandfather was glaring over at her.

Turning my attention back to Echo, she had managed to get Lina to come out and was shaking her hand. Echo asked all the right questions of the little girl and I saw the adults in the area relax and go back to what they were doing.

Echo’s cookies were a huge hit with the little kids. My little sister sat on Echo’s lap and said she was going to help her learn how to be a werewolf instead of a dhampyr. I eventually left her side to go see my dad at one of the grills.

Trent and William each gave me a hug when I made it over. I was pushed over to my dad. He grinned at me.

“Looks like she’s good with kids. That’s good. I expect a ton of grandkids from you boys.” Dad chuckled.

“I hope you’ll accept some little dhampyrs along with hybrids.” I said.

“Of course. Family is family. Next time we have you over, we’ll do it at night so we can meet Victor.” Dad grinned.

“I can’t believe you actually want to spend time with vampires. What’s this family coming to that you’re willing to accept a bloodsucker as co-mate? Who ever heard of such a thing? No one has two mates! It’s just wrong.” Grandpa Martin growled.

“Grandpa, you’re entitled to your opinion, but if you say something like that to my mate, we’re gonna have a problem.” I replied.

“What are you gonna do, pup? I’m an Alpha. You’re just a kid.” He laughed.

“I’ve been training with Queen Bellamy and Alpha Lucien. I’ve been learning bear fighting moves. It’s only been a week. I may not win, but I’m pretty sure I can make you regret the fight.” I told him.

“There will be no fighting. This is a family event. There are children here.” Grampy growled.

“I disagreed with Trent making the alliance with the vampires. I disagree with you mating with one. This is going to kill our pack.” Grandpa snarled.

“How?” Echo said from behind me.

I turned. I didn’t know how long she’d been there or how much she’d heard. She didn’t look angry or upset, just curious. I reached out for her hand and she grasped my hand. She wouldn’t let me pull her away. I was surprised at her strength.

“I don’t need to explain my reasoning to a bloodsucker.” He replied.

“I’d certainly like to know.” Trent said. “I am the Alpha of this pack. Any concerns you have about the pack should go through me. How else am I going to determine what’s best for the pack?”

“I told you not to form an alliance with them and you didn’t listen. You insisted you knew better than I did. Now your brother is mated to one.” Grandpa said with a sneer.

I growled and gripped Echo’s hand. She stroked my hand with her other one, trying to soothe me. I was angry, though, he had no right to disparage her.

“What’s wrong with me?” She asked. “I love Gray. I feed him. I take care of him. He loves me and takes care of me. I may not have a wolf, but I’m strong and I’m learning how to fight.”

“And you feed on him, right? You sink your little fangs in him and drink his blood like he’s a fucking juice box.” He responded.

“That’s none of your business.” I growled.

“It is my business. The blood of powerful werewolves is like a treat for them. How long before she uses her hypnosis on you and makes you bring her your future Alpha for a snack?” Grandpa asked.



“I would never do that. My hypnosis doesn’t work like that. I don’t like drinking blood. I just have to have a little and I have it in foods. I use bagged blood and I haven’t fed on Gray since I got better.” Echo insisted.

“So you admit you fed on him. And how often does your other lover feed on him?” He pressed.

“Victor has never fed on me and it wouldn’t be your business if he did. It’s my blood and my body. I’ll do what I want with it.” I told him.

He snarled and advanced. I moved in front of Echo. I didn’t think he’d try anything, but I wasn’t going to test it.

“There is no place in this pack for a vampire or a vampire lover.” Grandpa stated firmly.

“Then there’s no place for me.” Trent said. “Because I like Echo and Victor. I think our pack is made stronger for having our alliance. We have the protection of the vampires which means fewer fights with them and less risk to our young when they go out for some fun in the city.”

“And there’s no place for me, dad. Because Echo has been sweet and kind. Her sister is one of the best female fighters I’ve seen and her brother is holding his own against werewolves. That’s almost impossible for a human. They both have vampire blood.” My dad said.

“That’s different. They’re hybrids. Even with predominately witch and vampire blood, the boy takes after his werewolf father. You can tell he’s one of us, just without a wolf.” Grandpa told them. “She isn’t. She’s one of them!”

Rex didn’t like the way he was talking and started trying to take over. If I shifted, it would be bad. It would mean I lost control and Grandpa would take that as his win. He couldn’t win this one.

Echo stepped in front of me and started rubbing my stomach through my shirt. I looked down at her and got lost in the hazel/green of her eyes. I could feel Rex still struggling to get free, though.

“Shh, Rex. I’m okay. Not everyone is going to like me. That’s fine. I’m learning to deal with it. As long as I have you with me, I don’t care if he doesn’t like me. Don’t come out. Stay there and let us take care of it.” She murmured.

‘You better deal with the old man.’ Rex growled in my head.

‘Just chill. We’ll win this by being calmer than him. We don’t need his approval. Everyone else loves Echo. Listen to her, she’s fine.’ I replied.

“What the hell did you just do?” Grandpa asked.

“What do you mean?” Echo said softly, still looking at me.

“It felt like.... No. That’s not possible.” He huffed and turned to go in the house.

“What did it feel like?” I questioned.

“It felt like when a Luna soothes an angry wolf.” Lily answered from behind me. “She has wolf blood. Mates of alpha blood wolves can gain some abilities a Luna has just because of the volatile nature of dominant wolves. He’s grumpy because you took the fight out of Gray and out of him. It’s something Lunas can do, Echo. That must be how your wolf blood comes in, you can soothe wolves.”

I caressed Echo’s cheek. She looked excited and grinned.

“What does this mean?” I asked.

“It means your mate is officially manifesting her werewolf blood. This has only been seen in werewolves mated to alpha blood wolves. Never to humans or any other species mated to them.” Lily explained.

The rest of the dinner went fairly well. Grandpa Martin pouted while everyone seemed to really warm up to Echo. The kids all loved her.

After we ate, Echo was playing with baby Isiah. She looked so good with a baby in her arms. I loved watching how she tickled him and talked sweetly to him.

“You’re a natural with children, Echo.” My mom gushed. “I can’t wait to see you with your own babies.”

Echo blushed and thanked her. I couldn’t wait to see her with our pups and Victor’s babies. I could imagine her reading to them and playing with them. She really was good with kids, even the really shy ones came up to see her.

I talked with Gammy and Grampy about the journals. On Wednesday the juniors at school would be testing and the other grades would have the day off. They did that for us seniors in the Fall.

We decided that Echo and I would come over first thing in the morning and help find the journals. We would probably spend the whole day with them. Echo was excited about the chance of finding another good lead on what caused the curse. She was hoping we could find enough that Lila could figure out the way to break it.

Lila had told Victor that she needed to know exactly what the curse was in order to be able to break it. There were several curses that seemed to cover the bulk of the issues we’d been having. They would all be tied to a primary curse, which hadn’t been on Grigori, or he would have broken it when he killed himself.

We had hope. It was pretty much all we had, but it was enough to keep pushing us. We’d keep going until the curse was broken, no matter what happened along the way.

At the end of the night, Echo had gotten phone numbers from half my cousins and all of the adult females in my family. She had recipes and tentative future plans to meet up for lunch or shopping. In all, it seemed like it had gone as well as could be expected.

I helped her up into my truck and we headed for home. Suddenly, my nervousness came back. I remembered that we'd be having sex tonight. Echo was rambling about everyone she'd met and how much she liked my family. It was nice to see that she wasn't as worried as I was.

"Gray. You're being quiet. Are you okay?" She asked.

"Yeah. Just tired." I replied.

"Oh." Echo sounded a little sad. "Too tired?"

I licked my lips and smiled. "I don't think so. Are you sure you want me to do it? Maybe Victor would be the better choice."

"You don't want to?"

"I do.... It's just.... I've never done it before. I'm nervous and I didn't think you'd want that." I explained softly.

"I do want that. Not you nervous." She giggled. "I want to share this with you. We can be each other's first. It'll be special."

"Yeah. It will be. I'll do my best. I'm sorry I'm nervous. You don't seem to be at all." I chuckled.

"Because I love you and I trust you, Gray. Victor already told me it will hurt, but I'm sure it won't be too bad." Echo said with a smile.

"You can tell me to stop at any point and I will. I promise." I told her.

"I believe you. I hope we get home quickly. I want to go to bed soon." She purred and stroked my arm.

I glanced over at her. She was nibbling her lips and squeezing her knees together. I could smell her arousal and nearly groaned. I wanted to go to bed soon, too.

Echo's First Time

## Chapter 94 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

When we got home, I went to have a shower and change into my pajamas. Gray was in my room when I came out of my closet in only the little nightie I'd picked out with Bellamy. He looked at me with heat in his eyes, like he could see I was entirely naked underneath the thin cloth.

"Would you mind putting on a robe and going to hang out with Victor while I get things settled in here?" He asked.

"What things?" I wondered.

"Just... things. Please." Gray smiled.

"I guess." I shrugged and grabbed my robe, tying the belt around my waist.

Before I left, Gray grabbed me and pulled me close. "You're beautiful, you know that, angel. I'm excited to get to be with you tonight."

A shiver went through me. I was excited, too. I had been thinking about it all day.

Gray kissed me passionately. I grabbed him around the waist and pulled him closer. I wanted him so badly I ached.

"Go tell Victor about your day, give him a good night kiss, and come back to me. I'll be waiting here." He said.

I pulled away reluctantly. I had no idea what he meant by settling things here, but it seemed important. I wouldn't say anything about it.

Victor was down in his office. I walked in and he seemed startled.

"What are you doing here, princess? I thought you and Grayson were being intimate tonight." He said with a small smile.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"I'm fine. The possessiveness grabbed me for a moment. I fought it back, though."

"Gray sent me down to tell you about my day. He said he had to settle things upstairs. I don't know what he means." I told him.

"He wants to set the mood and make it a night you'll remember fondly, princess. I understand. It should be something you remember with a smile." Victor said softly.

"Do you want to hear what I did today?" I asked.

“More than anything, Echo.”

I walked over and climbed into his lap. He chuckled and wrapped his arms around me. I leaned my head on his shoulder and told him about everything.

Gray’s grandpa made me angry, but I was able to control myself for Gray. He needed me to be strong and help him stay in control. I didn’t like the idea of violence around all those children.

His other family had been so nice to me. I talked to his mom and grandmas about the wedding things he’d talked about. They had no idea that Gray was wanting a wedding so soon, but they all started talking and planning.

One of Gray’s cousins told me it was a Luna thing. They all planned parties and events for so long that I would barely have to do anything. I liked that idea. The wedding wasn’t as important to me as the love I had for Gray.

“Did you want to do a binding ceremony with me, Echo?” Victor asked.

“What’s that?”

“It’s like a wedding for vampires. Since we can’t be married in the eyes of human law, we have our own ceremony where we make our pledges to each other.” He explained.

“If you want one, I’ll do it.” I smiled.

He reached into the top drawer of his desk and pulled out a fuzzy box like the one my ring from Gray came in. He opened it and it held a necklace instead of a ring.

The necklace had a tear drop cut stone that was held by a silver looking setting. The stone was swirled with black, green, and red. It was mesmerizing.

“This is white gold, so you won’t hurt Grayson. The stone is bloodstone. It’s a traditional engagement piece for vampires. I want you to wear it whenever you’re going to be around other vampires.” Victor said.

“I’ll wear it every day.” I replied looking at the pretty necklace. “Should I put it on now?”

“No. Let Grayson’s ring be the only thing you wear with him tonight.”

I slipped my arms around his neck and kissed him. Victor kissed me back, squeezing me even tighter against him. I sighed contentedly.

A few of the women in Gray’s family had asked me about being mated to two men. I tried to be as honest as possible, without revealing too much. A couple of his aunts had been fairly talkative about what they thought a relationship like ours was like.

I was a little embarrassed. They weren't entirely wrong. There was always someone to kiss and cuddle me. I felt safer when I knew both of them were around. I could feel that I was loved twice as much and the things we did in the bedroom were always amazing.

"Grayson is probably ready for you now. You should go, Echo." Victor whispered.

"Will you be okay tonight?" I asked.

"I will. Trust me. Grayson has a lot of interesting plans for the evening. You don't want to miss them making sure I'm okay. I have been alive a very long time, Echo. I can get along without you for one night. Go on. I love you." He said.

"I love you, too, Victor." I murmured and kissed him one last time.

I climbed off of his lap and headed upstairs. I paused outside my door and took a deep breath. I was starting to get nervous. Tonight was the night I would get to be with Gray the way I imagined. I hoped it lived up to the images in my head.

Opening the door, I was greeted by soft music and the light of candles. They smelled marvelous. Gray was standing in front of the bed. He was only wearing some silky looking boxer shorts.

My eyes scanned over him from top to bottom. The lines of his thick muscles were mouthwatering. I closed the door behind me. Quickly, I untied the belt of the robe and let it drop to the floor, then crossed to him.

"Are you ready, angel?" He asked.

"Yes, Gray." I replied and reached out to trace over his abs.

It was thrilling just to touch him. The sparks I felt seemed to intensify. It was like electricity passing between us.

He slid his hands down over my waist to the bottom of my nightie. His hands went to my thighs and up under my nightie. He gasped as he reached my bare waist with nothing stopping him.

"You aren't wearing any panties." Gray groaned.

"It seemed silly to get fully dressed if I was just going to take them off." I giggled.

Gray grasped the hem of my nightie and pulled it up, over my head. I stood, nude, in front of him. His eyes ate up the sight of me and he licked his lips.

I slid my fingers into the waist of his boxer shorts and pulled them down, ending on my knees. He was already hard and I couldn't resist touching him. I grasped around him and started stroking while I licked his tip, occasionally taking him fully into my mouth and sucking him.

“Angel, that feels amazing, but I’m going to need you to bring your sweet mouth up here.” He purred.

He pulled me to stand and I felt the hard length of him pressing against my stomach. I moaned slightly at the feel of him. Gray moved quickly and scooped me into his arms like I was a princess. He laid me out on the bed and laid on his side next to me.

Gray stroked a hand over my chest and stomach. He leaned in and took the tip of my breast into his mouth while his fingers played over the other. I could feel the twitches from his length against my leg.

His hand descended tracing over my ribs and stomach. It tickled along my stomach before he dipped between my legs. His fingers spread me and I opened my legs to him.

“You’re so wet already, angel.” Gray murmured against my breast before nipping at the tip roughly.

I yipped as the sensation seemed to run straight to where his fingers were tracing my opening. Slowly, his finger entered me and I sucked in a breath. We’d done this so many times, but it never felt like this before.

He moved his body between my legs, kissing as he sunk down between my legs. His tongue slipped over the spot that sent a thrill through me. I looked down at him and he smiled.

“Do you like when I lick you like that, angel?” He asked.

I nodded. “Yes, Gray. It feels so good.”

“Do you want me to suck your clit, angel?”

He’d said that word before, but I didn’t know exactly what he was talking about. It didn’t matter. I wanted it, and I nodded.

“Say it, angel. I want you to tell me what you want.” Gray said.

“Please.” I whimpered. “Suck my clit, Gray.”

His head dipped down and I felt him start sucking on the spot his tongue had gone over. I moaned as my back arched and my toes curled. His finger worked away in me. I felt my body tighten and grasp at him when my first orgasm hit.

“Mmm.” He hummed, making me squeal at the sensation.

“Two fingers. I want more, Gray.” I groaned.

I felt the pressure of him adding a second finger to me. He stopped sucking and ran his tongue in circles around my clit. I focused on the feeling inside of me. I focused on the way he fluttered his fingers over a sensitive area there every few strokes.

“More. I want more.” I sighed.

“Do you want my dick, angel? Do you want me to make love to you, Echo?” Gray asked.

“Yes. Make love to me, Gray.” I begged.

He pulled his fingers from me and licked them clean. Gray slid up over me and reached to the side. He was getting something from the nightstand.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“A condom. It’s so I don’t make you pregnant.” He said.

Gray tore open the foil wrapper and pulled out the condom. I watched as he slid it over his tip and rolled it on. I thought of how he would be inside me soon and licked my lips. I felt myself getting even wetter at the idea of it. I craved feeling him between my legs.

He slid his tip up and down in my wetness. It made my craving for him even more intense as I felt him pressing against my entrance. I whined a little when he didn’t keep pushing forward.

“You’re really sure you want me to do this and not Victor? He’s more skilled. He might do it better.”

“I want you, Gray. Please, make love to me. Fill me up with you and be my first. It has to be you, Gray.” I murmured.

“Why does it have to be me?” He asked.

“Because this feels right. It feels right that we do this together. Can’t you feel it? I love you so much, Gray.” I replied.

“You’re my everything, Echo. I don’t want to hurt you, but I know this will hurt.” Gray said softly.

“I talked to Amy. She said it only hurts for a little while. I’ll be fine.” I assured him. “I’m ready for this, Gray.”

I felt him press into me and my body stretched to accommodate him. I focused on taking deep breaths while he progressed into me. It really did hurt and I winced a little. Gray pulled back.

“I’m sorry.” He whispered.



I reached up and caressed his face. “Don’t be sorry. I love you. Keep going.”

He pressed in again and soon I was fully encasing him. Gray held still, his eyes searching my face. I smiled a little. We were connected. I felt so full of him.

The thought of being connected to the man I loved made my body react and I tensed. Gray groaned. His head dipped down and he kissed me gently.

“You can move, Gray. I’m fine.” I breathed as he pulled away from the kiss.

Gray pulled out and pushed in carefully. He groaned at the feeling and I did too. It was so good, with just the slightest twinge of pain remaining. I knew that would go away soon.

He kept his maddeningly slow pace up. The pain had long since passed and I was craving more. More speed, more strength, just more of everything.

“Faster, Gray. It’s okay.” I said.

Gray looked surprised for a moment, then grinned. It must have been what he was waiting for, because he picked up the pace and started thrusting harder. I was squeaking with each firm impact, loving how it felt.

His mouth dipped down to my neck and he started sucking and nibbling in the sensitive crook of my neck. I leaned my head away, giving him better access. He was mumbling between nibbles.

“Echo, oh, my angel. You feel so good. I didn’t know anything could feel as good as you do.” Gray murmured.

The mix of the feeling of him in me, his hot whispers on my skin, and having his body on mine built up in me and I felt myself getting closer to my peak. The sound of my soft moans seemed to float over the soft music, combining with it and making it sound sweeter to me. The beats seeming to mingle with all my other sensations.

I felt my body starting to squeeze his and his groans got even more intense as he pushed through my grasping muscles. My back arched and I dug my fingernails into his shoulder as I reached my climax.

“Gray!” I cried out, wrapping my legs around his waist and holding him to me.

It shortened his thrusts, but didn’t stop him. I felt him pick up the pace further and start thrusting harder.

“Oh, fuck. I’m gonna cum, Echo. Oh, goddess, I love you.” He groaned, striking hard into my body and holding himself there.

My fangs came out and I bit into his nearby shoulder. I couldn't help myself. I had to taste his blood. After a few moments, I licked the bite closed.

Gray stayed on top of me and inside of me. He was breathing heavily. I was feeling wonderful.

He moved out of me carefully and pulled off the condom, throwing it in the trash can off to the side of the bed. He laid next to me and traced over my collarbone, cheek, and chin. He was staring at me so intently that I started feeling nervous.

"That was amazing, Echo. I love you so much." Gray said, kissing me gently.

"I love you, too. I really liked that. How long before we can do it again?" I asked.

He chuckled and rolled over, grabbing his phone. Gray typed something in and waited on a response before putting his phone back on the nightstand.

"As soon as you're healed up." He replied. "Just stay here with me for a while."

I curled up in his arms, feeling closer to him than I had ever felt. I started feeling a little sleepy. I wanted to just cover up and sleep in his arms.

Suddenly, there was a tap at the door and Gray called out for the person on the other side to come in. I could only assume it was Victor, since we were both nude.

The door opened and Victor slipped in. He looked at us with a slight smile. I looked at Gray in confusion.

"It wouldn't be entirely fair for me to take you for the whole night. Victor, you want to heal her up?" Gray said.

Victor started stripping off his clothes and crawled onto the bed from the bottom. He had a heated, dark, look on his face that made my whole body quiver. I wanted him badly.

"I'll leave you to it. Let me know when you're ready for me to come back. Condoms are in the nightstand." Gray told him, getting out of bed, putting on his boxers and heading out of the room.

I stared at the closed door. Victor made his way up the bed. His hands slid up my legs and he spread them, sinking between my thighs. As his tongue entered the area recently vacated by Gray, I moaned. My body was eager for more and I couldn't wait to feel Victor filling me like Gray had.

A First Time for Everything

## Chapter 95 - The Vampire's Servant

Victor's tongue seemed to reach deep inside me. I felt him making love to me with his mouth. His tongue rubbed back and forth. My body grasped for him when I hit an orgasm. He swiped his tongue up and suckled at my clit for a few moments.

"There, princess. That should speed your healing." He said softly as he kissed up my body.

When he reached my lips, Victor kissed me deeply. I moaned into his mouth and raised my hips, encouraging him to take me. I wanted to feel him inside me, filling me.

"Mmm. Not like that, princess. I won't take you the same way Gray did. This is your first time. You've already had a man missionary. I want my own first with you." Victor murmured against my lips.

He rolled off me and reached into the nightstand for a condom. Victor was much more adept at putting it on than Gray had been. It only took him a few moments to open the package and sheath himself with the ring.

Victor sat on the bed beside me and patted his lap. I smiled and straddled him like I had yesterday morning. Victor grasped himself and rubbed his tip along my entrance.

His tip slipped into me and he put his hands around my waist. He slid me onto his shaft. It felt so different from when I was with Gray. I moaned at the feeling of his length filling me.

"You're going to ride me, sweet Echo. Like all those times you rode me while feeding on me, while enticing me, while kissing me. I want you to look down, sweetheart, and watch me filling you." He urged.

I looked down to where my body met his. He guided my motion with his hands, pulling me back and forth. I watched him fill me. It was like I could feel every inch as it went in and out of me.

"Yes, just like that, princess." Victor purred as I picked up the motion he was showing me. "Go as fast, as slow, or as hard as you want, Echo. You are in charge."

His hands rested on my waist, but I was the one controlling my motion now. I went really slow for a while, just watching him go in and out. Then I picked up the pace. I was bringing myself down fast and hard onto him.

I put my hands on his shoulders to keep my balance and dug my nails into his skin. Victor hissed and groaned. I loved the sounds he made.

Riding Victor was like second nature to me. I would pause when I came and he would start pumping into me at the same pace I had been going. It would prolong my orgasms and made my body shake.

As I started reaching another peak, I saw a look of determination come over him. I felt it like his body was speaking to me. He was trying not to finish.

At my next climax, I pulled him to me and pierced his skin with my fangs. Victor's hands tightened around my waist as he held me close. He let out a strained groan.

"That was perfect, princess." He said softly.

I licked the bite on his neck to seal it. "Really?"

"All vampires bite while making love. You are very in tune with yourself." Victor said, holding me in a hug.

"You didn't bite me." I replied.

"For vampires, or werewolves, to mark each other, they have to bite with the intention of marking. I desire you so much, I may accidentally mark you and I don't want to do that until you've finished school." He told me.

I sighed. I wanted to be marked by them. I didn't like waiting. They made me feel happy and I knew that marking me would make them happy.

Victor kissed my neck and nudged me off of him. He threw the condom away and retrieved his phone, probably messaging Gray as he headed back to the bed. When he was sitting on the edge of the bed, I wrapped my arms around him from behind and laid my head on his back.

"It feels like it's going to be forever." I said.

"It won't be. Just six more weeks, princess. You can hold on that long, right?" Victor asked.

"I don't suppose I have much of a choice."

The door opened and Gray came in wearing his boxer shorts. He made his way to the other side of the bed and climbed in. I turned to him and crawled over.

Gray smiled at me. "Did you enjoy yourself, angel?"

"Yes, but...." I was suddenly worried.

I had enjoyed myself. It felt really good to be with each of them, but I still felt like something was missing. It hadn't been quite right.

“But what, Echo?” Victor asked from behind me.

“Aside from kissing, we’ve done everything together. The three of us. I just feel like I need both of you.” I admitted with a blush.

Victor chuckled. “You’re not really ready for me to take you here.” His hand caressed my backside.

“A few days ago... you suggested one in my mouth and the other between my legs. I... I want to try that.” I said.

“Are you sure? You just had sex for the first time tonight. You don’t want to wait for tomorrow?” Gray asked.

“No. I want it perfect, tonight. It feels right to be with both of you at the same time.”

I heard the drawer from the nightstand open and Victor pulling out a packet. My body tightened with anticipation. I looked at Gray. He seemed torn, but then got up and took off his shorts.

He climbed back onto the bed. Gray was already hard and I could hear Victor opening the wrapper behind me. I wiggled excitedly. They were going to do what I wanted.

“Are you ready, Grayson?” Victor asked.

“As I’ll ever be.” Gray replied.

I felt Victor press into me and moaned. Gray rubbed his tip against my lips. I opened my mouth wide and felt him slide in. I moved my weight from my hands to my elbows.

It made him align more with my throat and I took him deeper. Gray groaned and started pushing in and out of my mouth. After a few moments, Victor started the same motion timed exactly with Gray’s movement.

They were flawless, moving in unison inside of me. I felt complete. Victor’s hands were on my hips, holding me steady as they entered and retreated. Gray’s hands were in my hair, tugging my head back a little.

I moaned again at the feeling of being between my two perfect men. I could feel them surrounding me and loving me. It was wonderful.

“Echo, your mouth is amazing, my angel.” Gray groaned and forced himself deeper into my throat for a few moments before pulling back.

“The scent of your arousal is intoxicating, princess.” Victor purred. “Watching you take Grayson while I’m deep inside of you is thrilling.”

A shiver went through me as their words reached me. Gray's deep, rough voice seemed to merge with Victor's more elegant and cultured tones. I whimpered as a spike of pleasure went through me.

This was exactly what I needed. I reached with one hand and started massaging Gray's balls while I worked on tensing my lower muscles when Victor was pulling back. Both were groaning, and saying my name over and over.

I basked in their attention, as Victor moved smoothly and Gray was a little rougher. Both were so different, but loved me the same. I never wanted to be without either one.

Gray's hands tensed in my hair as he started stroking faster. Victor's hands gripped me tighter. He didn't match Gray's pace this time, but kept up a steady pace. I moaned as another peak hit me. Gray struck hard and deep in my throat, choking me a little. I didn't think I'd like it, but I did.

I looked up his body to see his eyes were closed a little, before he pulled back and his eyes found mine. One of his hands released my hair and caressed my cheek gently. He slowed his pace and stroked in carefully, as if seeing how far he could go. I worked my tongue against him.

"Damn, Echo." He grunted. "That feels so good."

With a hum, I gave his balls a little extra squeeze. A swift breath left him and he shuddered. He wasn't finished, but I knew he was close. Something in me could seem to understand their bodies, what they wanted, what they needed, and what they were going to do.

Suddenly, I could hear Gray in my head. 'Mine, mine, my mate, mine, mine.' The voice repeated.

I whimpered and felt myself gush a little at hearing that. I forced a thought at him.

'I love you, Gray. My mate, my love, my husband.' I thought.

His body tensed and I felt him release into my mouth. "Oh, goddess, Echo." He strained.

He slowly pulled himself from my mouth and I let him go. Victor's hands went from my hips to my waist and he pulled me up to a kneeling position. One hand dipped down to circle my clit while the other held me firmly against him.

Gray came close. His large hands cupped my breasts while his thumbs traced over and around my nipples. His mouth came down on mine, kissing me roughly, nibbling at my lips, assaulting my mouth with his tongue.

Victor's mouth found my neck and he started drawing his fangs back and forth over the sensitive skin there. I wanted him to bite me so badly. It was strange that I had feared being bitten for so much of my life and now I was craving it. I wrote it off to the love I had for Victor.

I moved my head to the side. Gray saw what was going on and pulled away.

“Don’t bite her, Victor.” He growled.

“It’s so tempting. She wants it as much as I do. Look at how she surrenders to me.” Victor said with a groan.

“You’ll mark her. We agreed. Put them away.” Gray warned.

I whimpered again as I felt the fangs retract. “No.”

“Sorry, princess. I got carried away. We have to wait. I’m doing this for you.” Victor whispered.

He picked up his pace stroking into me and increased the pressure of his finger around my clit. It was enough to distract me as Gray turned his attention back to my breasts, sucking them, biting them, and squeezing them. I leaned my head back, against Victor’s shoulder enjoying the feeling of them pleasing and touching my body.

I was sandwiched between the men I loved, enjoying their attentions, when I felt an odd wriggling feeling in my mind. It was like something trying to break free in there. I focused on it and started faintly hearing something.

‘My Echo. My sweet Solus Amor. My only love. I want to taste every bit of you. One day you’ll be entirely mine. I thank whatever gifted you to me every day.’

It made me smile. I could hear Gray and Victor now. I knew they were focusing on me and that probably was why I was hearing them when I didn’t hear them before. It was unbelievably intimate to hear their innermost thoughts while they were making love to me.

‘I love you, my Victor. My hero. My Solus Amor. I’ll love you forever.’ I thought at him.

He bent forward and bit my neck. There were no fangs, just a normal bite, but it was enough to send me over the edge and I cried out as my body grasped him. Gray moved up to the other side of my neck and bit down as well.

His body pressed mine against Victor. Their scents merged and I cried out again. Victor let out a strained groan and struck firmly inside of me. I could feel him twitching between my legs.

Victor pulled out and took a deep breath. He started kissing over my shoulders and back. Gray kissed my neck and shoulder. I was panting from the exertion of the whole night. I was exhausted. My body was finally sated.

“Let’s lay down.” Gray murmured. “You look tired.”

They shuffled around until they were laying on either side of me. I was covered by the blankets and they were laying so close I could feel Gray's breath on my skin and every part of Victor's body seemed to be touching me.

I snuggled into their grasp. Gray kissed my ear and jaw. Victor traced along my stomach. They were perfect and tonight had been just as perfect as they were.

"Was that what you desired, Echo?" Victor asked, gently.

I nodded. "Yes."

"I'm glad we were able to make your night truly enjoyable." He replied.

"You were so fantastic, angel." Gray whispered. "I never realized I could share you like that and not feel jealous."

"Just because you're sharing me, doesn't make me any less yours, Gray. I told you, I love you both. I can let you both feel that love without either one feeling left out. I have more love inside me than you can imagine." I giggled.

"I knew you would be amazing, princess. No one could suffer what you did and be as full of love as you are. You never let them break you." Victor said.

"No one can break love. Not really. They can wound it, they can stifle it, they can bury it, but they can't break it. I loved my sister and brother enough to suffer for them. I love you both even more than that. I would die for you, if it was the only way to save your life." I admitted seriously.

"Never do that. I would rather die than live without you." Victor told me.

"Me too. I never want to have to live without you, Echo." Gray murmured in my ear.

I shivered. "I never want to live without either of you. You're my husbands. My mates. The first people to love me who aren't related to me."

"Then we'll all live and fight to live. It's as simple as that." Victor whispered.

"We'll fight together. Don't worry, angel. Victor won't let the curse get him. I won't let the curse get him. We're going to win this." Gray insisted.

I nodded again. I was so tired. I knew we would win. We had to. We deserved a happy ending. I drifted off to sleep surrounded by love, being held by my mates, and knowing that I would do anything I had to in order to keep them with me

.Monday's Surprise



## Chapter 96 - The Vampire's Servant

Monday was distracting. I wanted to ride to school with Gray, but I also wanted to ride the bus and talk to Sean. It just felt right to try and keep up my usual practices.

Gray kissed me like it would be weeks before he saw me again, instead of just minutes. There were hoots and cheers from people hanging out the bus window. I blushed and got on.

Instead of being in the back, Rosario was sitting in the bench behind the one Sean and I usually sat in. I smiled at her and took my seat. She leaned forward and folded her arms on the back of the seat.

Rosario was tall and trim, like her mother. She had medium length black hair and dark blue eyes that looked like pools of water. Her eyes were a little large and her mouth small with a heart shape to her lips.

She really was beautiful. I wondered what she really looked like. Her mother was normally beautiful, so I assumed she was as well. I wondered if I could see her in her natural form.

“Hi, Echo.” Rosario smiled.

“Good morning. How was your weekend?” I asked.

“Pretty bad, actually. I went to see my dad. Got to hear all the ways he was disappointed in me, again.” She sighed.

“Why would he be disappointed in you? You’re nice, pretty, and smart.” I wondered.

“Yeah. It’s just never enough for him. He wants me to be like him.” Rosario said.

“What is your father?” I asked.

“A wood elf, like my mom. He lives in the forests, though. When I was five, he told her she could raise me out with humans because I wasn’t living up to his expectations.” She replied softly.

“He sounds like a jerk.” I huffed. “You’re better off with your mom. I bet you’re going to be amazing when you grow up and he’s going to regret being so mean to you.”

She laughed. “I hope so. I still have a long time to go until I’m grown up.”

“How long?” I asked.

“I’m eighteen now, we don’t reach adulthood until we’re about one hundred. Elves have a lifespan of about a thousand years. If you take care of yourself, you can make it to fifteen hundred.” Rosario whispered.

“Then we can be friends for a very long time. Dhampyrs can live for a couple hundred years, then we turn into vampires. As long as we’re at least half vampire. The ones who are a quarter don’t turn into vampires and they only live one and a half the time a human does.” I whispered back.

Marius had taught me that as one of our first lessons. He wanted me to know about dhampyrs along with learning about vampires. I was grateful for the lesson.

“I’d like to be your friend for a very long time. You’re a lot nicer than I thought you would be. I was raised hearing horror stories about vampires. I thought a dhampyr might actually be as cruel as a vampire.” She intimated.

“Vampires are only cruel as often as any other living being. It isn’t their nature any more than it’s yours.” I said softly.

“I’ll remember that. Do you think I could come meet the Master of the territory some time? If he won’t try to drain me, then it would be good to get to know him.”

“He won’t drain you. Victor’s not like that. I’ll talk to him. We will have to talk to the other vampires in the house too. I know Talia wouldn’t do that, but I’m not sure about Finn. I can’t totally figure him out.” I sighed.

“That’s the nature of vampires, right there. They’re hard to figure out.” She chuckled.

I snorted. “They do seem like that sometimes.”

“Who seems like what?” Sean asked.

I hadn’t realized that we were already at his stop. I was having fun talking to Rosario. I looked over at her and back up to him. I didn’t want to lie, but I was told that humans didn’t always accept supernaturals.

“Cam and Harmony seem like they’re always five seconds from ducking into an empty classroom and going at it.” Rosario scoffed.

Sean laughed. “Yeah, they do.”

He sat beside me and pulled his book out of his bag. I explained his game to Rosario. She listened with a wry smile on her face.

“What’s your favorite race to play?” She asked.

“I don’t get to play much. I’m the dungeon master. When I do play, I like Sylvans. They have some good abilities and I can make a richer backstory because of their long lifespans. They’re not overpowered, like some of the races and they’re just classier and more beautiful.” He said. “I think they’re awesome.”

“Wow.” Rosario blushed. “That’s really cool.”

“What’s a Sylvan?” I asked.

“It’s another name for a wood elf.” She murmured.

I looked over at my new friend. She had the same look in her eye as Gray had when he looked at me. I didn’t want her to suffer. I focused on her.

‘Sorry, Rosario, I hope you’re not interested in Sean. He’s gay. Don’t tell anyone I told you.’ I thought at her.

She blushed deeper and looked away. It didn’t seem to help. She nibbled her lips for a little while before she started talking to him more.

I hoped she could get over her crush and become friends with Sean. He was really nice and I wanted him to have as many friends as possible.

Soon, we were arriving at school. Rosario rushed to get near Sean as he exited the bus. She walked with him into the building while I went over to where Gray was waiting for me.

“What’s going on with Rose and Sean? You didn’t try to hook them up, did you?”

“Of course not! Rosario isn’t Sean’s type and you said it wouldn’t be good for him to have a relationship with a fae. I don’t want my friends to be unhappy, Gray.” I said.

“I’ve never seen her look at anyone like that. I know guys hit on her a lot, but she turns them all down.” He shook his head.

“We were just talking about Sean’s game and he said he liked playing Sylvans. That’s what she is. I think she got a crush on him after he started talking about how cool they are. It was kind of weird. It was like she was totally normal, then a little interested. I warned her that she wasn’t his type, but then she kept getting closer and talking more.” I told him.

“Maybe she thinks she can change his mind about what his type is.” Gray chuckled as we walked toward the building.

“Mmm. I don’t think she can. He was pretty adamant about not being interested in me and in what his type actually was on Saturday.” I replied.

He shrugged and led me to my locker. I put away my things and we headed for my home room class. Outside the door, Gray pulled me into his arms and hugged me tight.

“I can’t wait to see you again, angel. Have a good class.” Gray murmured into my ear, sending a shiver down my spine.

“I’ll see you later.” I said and pulled away, heading into class.

The rest of the day was difficult. It seemed Rosario was talking to Sean at every chance. She sat right next to him, across from me, at lunch and hung on his every word. Other people noticed. Elle and Terry gave me a strange look and I shrugged.

Whatever Rosario was up to, she wasn’t sharing. The troll boys snickered as they walked past the table and she scowled and flipped them off. That made them laugh harder.

It wasn’t like she was touching him a lot or leaning against him. She was just really intent on him. Maybe I was reading it wrong. I couldn’t see her being the type to think she could change someone in that way. Dillon told me it wasn’t possible.

Sean finished his lunch and excused himself from the table to go to the library and work on a project for one of his classes. Rosario looked sadly at her food and picked at it. I ate slowly, so I would be able to talk to her.

Gray stayed by my side, touching me or trying to cuddle me. I didn’t want to be annoyed, but I did want to make sure Rosario wasn’t under the impression that she could change Sean. I didn’t want her to embarrass him like that.

‘I told you he’s gay. You need to leave him alone.’ I told her mentally.

“Echo, you don’t understand.” She sighed.

“What don’t I understand? Tell me so I can, because this is getting out of hand.” I insisted.

“Just... let me have this for a little while. I’m not hurting anyone and I respect that I’m not what he’s looking for. I just want to be around someone who likes people like me. I’m the only wood elf at school. You see how the others all group up. It’s like that at home, too. Mom and I are the only wood elves who elected to live outside the forest. I’m popular with humans because of how I look, but this isn’t even me. This is just a façade I put on so they won’t know what I am. Please, let me try to make a friend who might accept me if he ever sees the real me.” Rosario pled.

My heart hurt for her. Being outcast from my family made me identify with her a little. Never belonging even at home.

“I think I kind of understand. Just, don’t hurt or embarrass him.” I requested.

“I promise I won’t.” She smiled and picked up her tray to leave.

I shook my head and finished my lunch. Gray didn't say anything. He just sat with me and typed some stuff on his phone. I appreciated him not digging into what we were talking about. I wished he had left, though, so I could talk to her properly.

The rest of the day seemed to go by fast. I finished turning in all of my late work and was relieved that I wouldn't have a ton of homework anymore. It would free up a lot of my time in the afternoons.

Getting up early to train was actually a lot easier than training in the afternoon and I told Bellamy I wanted to stick with that schedule. She made sure Dillon knew. She and Lucien were heading home soon. She told me they were stopping by her old pack because her oldest brother was being sworn in as the Beta of his pack.

Gray told me that each pack had different rules for when the new leaders were sworn in. He said each family had their own tradition for handing over the title as well. His pack made it a pack-wide holiday.

I got on the bus and found Rosario in the same seat she'd been in that morning. She was talking cheerfully with Sean. He seemed to really be enjoying himself.

Sean moved from his seat so I could slide in. He told me that Rosario knew a lot about fae mythology and history. He sounded really impressed and seemed happy.

"So, Sean, are you going to the prom?" Rosario asked.

"Umm... yeah. My parents want me to go out and have the full high school experience. I just can't convince them that I'm not my sister. So they make me go to all school functions, sports games, dances, carnivals, all that stuff. I would rather stay home or hang out with my friends." He sighed.

"Are you going with anyone?" She pressed.

I shot her a warning look and she waved me off. I didn't like where this was going, but I didn't have anything I could really say. Technically, I was going with Gray and I would only be doing the picture because of our deal that got me Sean's other ticket.

"I needed to talk to you about that, Echo. I told my parents that I have a date and we were going to meet at the school, but they want to meet my date. I know you probably have plans with Gray, so I'm thinking about telling them you got sick or something." Sean said.

"I'll be your date." Rosario offered cheerfully. "If you didn't happen to tell them her name...."

"I actually hadn't. They were so shocked that I had a date, they forgot to ask it in their barrage of questions." He chuckled. "Don't you have a date? I thought I saw someone on the football team ask you months ago."

“I told him no. I’m not interested in football players. He was only asking because of how I look. I would rather go with someone I can talk to. I was just going to go with a bunch of friends, but I can be your date. I’ll borrow my mom’s car and come pick you up.” She smiled.

“That sounds great! Are you okay with that, Echo? I know we have a deal, but it would look weird if I got a picture with you and left with her.” Sean said.

“I guess it’s fine if that’s what you want to do. I just want you to have fun.” I replied.

“Thanks. You guys are awesome!” He grinned.

I loved seeing him happy. It was like he was a different person. I always wanted my friends happy. I would still keep an eye on her. It felt strange that she would just offer.

Sean got off at his stop and I turned to Rosario. She was leaning back in her seat looking dreamy and only half aware of her surroundings. I cleared my throat to get her attention.

“His smile is amazing. I’ve never seen him smile like that and I’ve had school with him since elementary.” Rosario sighed.

“You’re falling in love with him.” I whispered.

“Maybe a little. He listened to everything I had to say and told me I’m really smart and interesting. You have no idea how much I want to hear that more than some ogre calling me beautiful. Not a real ogre, mind you, they have different standards of beauty and I don’t fall in them even in my natural form.” She chuckled.

“He doesn’t like women, Rosario. He’s never going to love you that way. I don’t want you to get hurt chasing after someone who will never love you. You deserve to be happy.” I insisted.

“Let me worry about my heart, Echo. I appreciate the warnings. I know where I stand with him. I’d never expect him to change. I want him to love men and I want a man to love him. He deserves to have someone who really sees him. I just want to make him aware of his worth. I don’t think he sees how amazing he is.” Rosario said quietly.

“I agree. I don’t think he sees it either. I think of you as a friend. I love both of you that way. I don’t want either of you to suffer.” I told her.

“You’re a very sweet girl, Echo. I can see why people grow fond of you quickly. Even my own mother liked you almost immediately, and that just doesn’t happen.”

The bus stopped and I looked around. This was my stop. I stood and looked down at her.

“You’re very sweet, too. I hope this doesn’t hurt you in the long run.” I said, getting up.

“I hope not either.” She murmured.

Once I was off the bus, Gray smiled and took my hand. I wrapped my arms around his waist and hugged him tight. He hugged me back.

“Are you alright, angel?” He asked.

“I will be. Let’s go home.” I replied.

He led me to his truck and helped me in. I put on my seatbelt, even though it wasn’t far to go. This had been the strangest day. I wondered what else could happen this week.

Lost and Found

## Chapter 97 - The Vampire's Servant

On Tuesday, Rosario was still trying to get close to Sean. I didn’t know if there was anything I could do, so I just stood by. I knew this might not work out, but she wanted to make him more confident in who he was. She wanted to make him feel accepted.

Link told me I needed to be focusing on my own issues. I told him about the dream I had Friday night. He said it sounded like my mind trying to cope with the idea of being taken again. Like it was preparing for something I couldn’t be saved from. Link said it was pretty normal and that I needed to do affirmations of safety and security. I promised to try.

The day was like our new normal at school. Several of Harmony’s friends hadn’t come back from renewing old acquaintances. Melissa never sat with us anymore. Every table she sat at ended up clearing as she got there. I felt a little bad for her.

Rosario was always with us now. She told me she was my liaison to the fae. Her mother wanted her to pass along everything that I needed to know and she would pass back information.

For the most part, we were able to keep our true nature from the humans that sat with us. Harmony could mindlink with the pack, so she would talk to them that way. Now that I was able to hear Gray and Victor, Amy was teaching me her trick for mental communication.

She was a great teacher and I was starting to get the hang of it. We found that I didn’t need to be very close to communicate with people, but, for me to hear them, they needed to really focus on me. Amy said I would probably get better with it and not need as much concentration from others as I became healthier.

My manifestation of my werewolf abilities was a clear indicator to her that I was slowly getting better. She said I was starting to have the scent of pack wolf mixed with my natural scent. Lucien was a lot more relaxed around me because of it. I would miss them when they were gone.

Over the last few days, I'd found myself talking to Lucien and Amy as if they were my sister and brother. They always had answers to my questions, never talked down to me, and wouldn't tease when I didn't know something common. Not that Dillon teased, he just looked at me with such pity that I couldn't bear to talk with him about things.

Amy recommended that I did, though. She told me that Dillon taught her a lot of things about the world and he always treated her as if she was an equal and not an innocent for not knowing things. I was probably different. Everyone said how innocent I was all the time.

It's not like I enjoyed being innocent. I wanted to be confident and take charge. I wanted to say the things on my mind. I was just muted from years of being taught not to speak without permission. I was still figuring out who I was outside of my old house.

When Wednesday finally came, I was thrilled. I wanted to find something useful. Something that would give us what we needed to figure out the curse. I wanted the curse to be in the past. I didn't like it hanging over our heads like it was.

After training, we said goodbye to Amy and Lucien. They would be heading to her old pack before going home. She said she wanted to be there early enough to see her family before the ceremony began.

"We're kind of working against the clock." She chuckled. "Very soon, my heat is going to start and we need to be somewhere comfortable."

"What's that?" I asked.

"It's the mating urge that wolves have. Rogues only get it every six months, instead of every month like pack wolves. It's been six months since my pups were born. My friend, Cara is already pregnant with her first pup. We wanted to try and have our babies together, so I'm going to ride that Alpha until I'm pregnant again." She winked.

"My sister will have that?" I asked.

"She probably already has had her first heat." Amy said.

"Will I have one?" I wondered.

"I doubt it. It's really a shapeshifter thing. I bet you'll be more like a vampire that way. They don't actually lose their fertility, in females at least, until they've been dead a year. They don't have heats or periods, though. When was your last period?" She asked.

"What's that?"

"It's that time once a month when you bleed." Amy explained.

"From where?" I asked.



“You’ve never had a period, have you? You would know from where when I talked about bleeding if you had.” She laughed. “I think you need to talk to Talia or Marius about vampire fertility. I only know that females lose the ability to get pregnant a year after they’re reborn.”

“I need to figure it out. Gray and Victor both want families. I want to be able to know when the best time is. One day, I want to be a mom, too.” I admitted.

“Make sure you’re ready. Babies change your entire life.” Amy smiled.

“Were you ready?”

“Ready and eager. I can’t even tell you how happy I was when I found out I was pregnant. I’ve always wanted a family. I very big, loving, family. Lucien and I are thinking about a dozen kids.” She said.

“I don’t think I could handle that many. Maybe four. Two for Gray and two for Victor. I think I could handle four.” I replied.

“You should talk to them about it and talk to Talia about birth control options. Some human methods might actually work for you. Like, other than condoms. You need to decide when the best time is and you need to make sure you don’t leave out your mates. They’re as big a part of your family plan as anything else.” Amy told me.

I nodded and went to get ready for going to see Gray’s great-grandparents. They told me to call them Gammy and Grampy. They made me feel so happy and accepted, I couldn’t wait to spend the day with them.

When I met Gray in the entryway, he was also wearing comfortable jeans and a t-shirt. I was fairly certain I had made the right choice, but that made me feel better. He smiled at me and took my hand.

“Ready for a long day of hard work?” He asked.

“It’s been a while, but I’m pretty sure I remember how to work hard.” I giggled.

“I hope so. I’m counting on you to do most of the heavy lifting while I eat all the pie Gammy has in her house.” Gray joked.

“Sounds like you know your skill set then.” I laughed.

“If you need a pie eaten, I’m your man.” He winked.

I hadn’t noticed Dillon enter until he started laughing. The confused look on our faces made him laugh even harder. We shrugged and headed out to the truck.

During the ride to his great-grandparents' house, I talked with Gray about school stuff. We were going into the last few weeks of school. It was my first time experiencing the close of school. He told me about how graduation would go, we would actually graduate half way through May and wouldn't have to go to school after that.

It seemed a little silly that I was just there for a month and a half of school. Victor had wanted me to have the experience and the diploma. It was the least I could do for him after everything he gave me.

When we arrived at Gammy and Grampy's house, Gray helped me down. I didn't really need help, but it made him happy so I would wait on him to help me in and out of his truck. We went up the walk and knocked on the door. It wasn't long before we were being pulled into the house and Gammy was taking us to the kitchen.

She had made pie, like Gray had said, and insisted we have some before heading down to the basement. No matter how much I wanted to save Victor, the thought of spending a day in a basement made my stomach twist. Picking at the pie was a way of gathering myself before I went downstairs.

Gray looked very happy. He was smiling and talking to his great-grandmother. She pinched his cheeks and called him her 'little Gray'. It made me smile a little. He loved her very much, I could tell she loved him just as much.

"Echo, sweetheart, are you feeling alright? You've barely eaten. I don't want you working on an empty stomach." She said.

"I guess I just ate a lot at breakfast." I replied softly.

"You know you can't lie to a werewolf, don't you?" Gammy chuckled.

"I forgot." I cringed a little. "I'm just nervous about being in a basement. It's nothing against you or anything. I just haven't been in one since... since I was saved by Gray and Victor."

"Oh, dear. I totally forgot about your kidnapping. Grayson, you go help your Grampy and bring boxes up here to Echo that might have what you're looking for. She can say whether or not it will work for what you need. I'm not letting her go down there." She insisted.

"I'm sorry, angel. I wasn't thinking when I volunteered us for this job. I'll make sure that you don't have to go down there. Stay with Gammy, maybe you can talk about wedding stuff. It will be a while before I come back up. Eat your pie, angel. I'll be back as soon as I can." Gray said.

"I'm sorry. It wasn't until I was thinking about it today that it really hit me. I didn't mean to be difficult." I apologized.

“You’re not difficult. You’re simply wounded and we don’t believe in picking at wounds. You stay here with me and look over some dress options. I want to know what sort of thing you want to wear for the wedding. Let me go get my books!” Gammy grinned.

“That’s my cue to run for it. I’ll be back in a little while.” Gray smiled and headed for a door that led downstairs.

The scent of basement came from that direction. It was a mixture of dust, stone, damp, and wood. I hadn’t minded the smell when I was living in the basement, but I grew to truly detest it while in Daniel’s care.

Gammy returned with an armful of books and magazines. She talked about dress length and necklines. I looked over the picture with her.

It reminded me of my mom looking at dress magazines with Harmony. I always wondered what it felt like to have that kind of attention and caring. Gammy had her arm around me as she flipped through the pages.

A couple hours after we arrived, the door to the basement opened and Gray came out with a medium sized box. It had some faded writing on it. Gray was grinning.

“Alpha’s journals 1910 through 1919. There are actually a few boxes. This is just the first one. It seems to be about two years to a box. Great great-grandpa William wrote a lot in his journals. Once we figure out which box has the year we’re looking for, we can start looking for the two or three months that cover the time we need.” He said excitedly.

“Do we know what year? I can work on sorting.” I offered.

“The year was 1919, according to the letters from Grigori. The boxes down there are super out of order, so I don’t even know which years these are.”

“Go on. I’ll look.” I told him.

I opened the box and pulled out a book. It was for June 1911. I picked out another one. October 1910. This wasn’t the box we needed.

While I waited for him to come up with the next box, I organized the books by month and year, then we wrote the years on the box directly, to make it easier for whoever needed to look through them later.

When the next box came up, Gray grabbed the one we’d dealt with and took it back to the basement. I swiftly opened the box and started looking through the journals. January 1915. April 1914.

We organized and labeled the box. The next two boxes didn't have what I needed either. I knew we would have it eventually. That was what I held onto as we worked. The journals were there, and we would find them.

Finally, Gray brought up a box and the first book I pulled out was December 1918. I hugged it to my chest. This was it. The box we'd been searching for.

I quickly sorted the journals by date and marked the box. We set it aside and worked on making a large lunch. The men came up to eat.

"That was the last one from the right time frame. We were just organizing a little more. That was the one, right?" Gray asked.

"Yes! I organized it. Now we just have to figure out the months." I smiled.

"It was right around Christmas time that the Master came to town." Grampy said as he sat at the table.

"I actually pulled out that month first. So we need the journals covering December to February?" I asked.

"I would go to March. Just to be safe." Grampy told me.

We ate our lunch with a happy air around us. Gray wanted to get started. I did too. It would be fast to just pull them out here and mark the passages that marked the start and stop of the Master's arrival and departure.

After Gammy and I cleaned up from lunch, we pulled out the journals from December 1918 to March 1919. We each took one. Grampy got us some sticky notes from his office, so we could mark anything interesting.

We went into the living room and started reading. I found the passage about the arrival of the Master of the territory. I couldn't believe it. We were really going to break this curse. This had to be what we needed.

If Alpha William wrote about the curse, as much as he could, after it was set, then we would have a lot more information. I marked the arrival of the vampire, followed by some mentions of Fenton Aimes.

Soon, it was time for us to go. Gray carried the box of books down to the basement and I packed up the other books, which now had a collection of yellow sticky notes popping out of the top. I finally felt like we were getting somewhere.

We were going to save Victor. I wouldn't lose him, or Gray. I just knew we'd break it. I grinned the whole ride home. When we arrived, I went up to warm Victor's bed and ran back to the office to start reading. I needed to know what happened.

## Chapter 98 - The Vampire's Servant

[Journal, Alpha William Padua, December 1918]

December 15, 1918

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The long nights mean vampires are out more. Tonight was different in one thing. A vampire came to the territory and begged an audience with me.

He stated that he was a messenger for the new vampire Master of the territory. He seemed proud to be acting as a go between. He was respectful, which was rare with them.

I agreed to meet with his master tomorrow night. I didn't want to go into this meeting without knowledge. I looked through all the information I had on vampires.

Masters of territories are responsible for the actions of the vampires who live in the territory. They are the law, not like a mayor, like a king, a sheriff, and a parent rolled into one. The behavior of their people directly affects them.

No one knows the actual history of vampires. Some say that Cain was turned into one by Adam's first wife, Lilith. Others claim that vampires started off as a living species, but the dead vampires soon outpaced them for creation of new vampires. They turned the living ones into slaves, writing off the power and abilities of them until they died and became the undead.

Vampires fed on blood. They preferred live blood of humans and supernaturals. They could drink animal blood, but were not fond of it. Fae were in the most danger from vampires. Their blood was magical and would imbue vampires with some fae like abilities for a short time.

Some fae were hunted to extinction by vampires because their blood enabled the vampire to walk in the daylight without burning. I mourned for the lives lost in pursuit of the ability that I so took for granted.

Myths and legends surrounding vampires were just that. Stories. Though some took on a ghoulish appearance after death, there were others who looked just like a normal human, but pale. I already knew that, but it was good to be prepared in case this Master was one of the ghoulish ones.

Vampires are not weak against religious artifacts. They are not affected by garlic or running water. Their reflections are just as ours. They are simply powerful beings who are not alive.

To kill a vampire, they need to basically be destroyed. Fire and sunlight were the best ways to kill them. Vampires were not more flammable than other living beings, except the ghoulish ones. They had little to burn before the fire got to their organs.

The best way to kill a vampire was to remove its head and heart. Guns worked without silver bullets if they were guns that did massive damage and fired true. Head and heart was a precaution. Destroying the heart didn't work in some vampires.

I will leave my Beta, Wilson, in charge of the pack and I will take my Gamma David, with me. The meeting is set for just after sunset tomorrow evening. I'm prepared to fight my way out if I need to. Goddess, watch over me, my pack, and my family. Don't let me die tomorrow night.

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December 16, 1918

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I met with the vampire Master, Grigori Drozdov, this evening. He was everything I'd heard a vampire could be. Nothing like the vampires I'd experienced before.

He was calm and elegant. His eyes were a deep red that almost looked like the most expensive rubies. He was shorter than me. I'd place him around 5'11" with dark blond hair. Though he's thinly built, he is not ghoulish.

My pack was not the only group invited to this meeting. In front of the vampire's home, I was met by Fenton Aimes. The leader of the witch coven in the area. Lila had introduced us once, but we didn't do business often enough for me to remember his look.

Fenton was over 6'0" tall. Close to my 6'2". He had dark brown hair and fae eyes that nearly looked gold. I knew that look from some of the fae in the area. The closest a human would call it is hazel or amber unless they got a close look at it.

Lila was attracted to him, but I didn't see why. He had the look of someone who smelled something decaying. Though, I probably had a similar look. The smell of vampire was strong.

We knocked together and a vampire answered the door, guiding us into the house and to a well-lit study. Grigori was waiting for us, standing and focused on the doorway. He made sure we understood that he saw us as important enough to stand for.

I add the following conversation from the best my memory serves. We introduced ourselves and Grigori asked us to have a seat across from him. It seemed he had actually been here for a few weeks. The house was well appointed and put together.

“I want to thank both of you for accepting my invitation. Unfortunately, Mistress Maeve of the fae did not. I hope to earn her trust in the time to come.” Grigori started.

“What exactly do you want of the coven?” Fenton asked.

“And of my pack.” I added.

“Ah, yes. Straight to business. I suppose it was a little foolish to think we could get to know each other first. The fact of the matter is, I want to form an alliance in the territory. Ideally, I would ally with every pack in the territory, and every coven, and all the fae. I want to create a place where all supernaturals can live peacefully and watch out for each other. With fictional horror books and motion pictures about our peoples coming out, more humans are turning hunter. We can’t just watch our own backs.” Grigori insisted.

“So you want to start with those of us near your home and expand out? You honestly think that witches and wolves will ever take this seriously? The fae will never join with vampires.” Fenton scoffed.

“I would be interested.” I said. “The safety of my pack is my priority. If you and your people will fight for us, we will fight for you. What other benefits can you bring in an alliance. My people will be wary of allying with vampires. There hasn’t been a master here in the entire time my pack has been here. The vampires out here do as they please.”

“Yes, I have spent the last couple weeks working to deal with the worst offenders. I am open to negotiations. I want to make this an equitable agreement, Alpha Padua.” He smiled.

“Vampires rarely get along with light witches.” Fenton huffed. “What could you possibly offer my people?”

“Aside from peace? Protection. If we see hunters after a witch, we will take care of the hunters. If a witch needs vampire assistance for gathering night plants, we can send someone with them.” Grigori offered.

“Have you already spoken with the dark witches here?” Fenton pressed.

“I have spoken with Miss Lila Thorne. She informed me that she could not be allied with me without a price.”

I snorted. “That sounds like Lila. Nothing without a price.”

Fenton smiled briefly before schooling his face. I knew he and Lila were an item. She told me the last time I took her out picking ingredients in the pack lands.

“What do you want from us?” Fenton asked.

“Spells, occasional feedings, daylight protection. One thing I would like to ask for while we’re getting things settled, is someone to take care of my daylight needs. I have no human servant as of yet, mine is back home working on packing my old house to move here. Might you have someone who could work as a daylight servant for me. It would simply be cleaning up around the house and being here so no one breaks in while I rest.” Grigori requested.

“Most witches are wary of vampires. I can offer you use of my daughter. She has finished school and is awaiting her fiancé’s arrival. She has nothing to keep her busy during the day. She must be home no later than an hour after dusk and you must be the one to deliver her.” Fenton insisted.

“Why would you offer your daughter?” I hissed.

“If he feeds on her there will be no deal. She’s mine to do with as I please. I have a housekeeper. I don’t need her there. This will work in my favor. Until her fiancé arrives, my daughter shall work for you. As long as she returns home in the same condition as she left, I will sign on to your alliance.” Fenton said.

I couldn’t believe he would offer a defenseless girl to a vampire. There was something wrong with the man. I wouldn’t offer any of my children to a vampire, no matter the conditions.

“I need to know that she won’t try to kill me as I sleep. Vampires are also wary of witches.” Grigori said.

“I will simply order her not to kill you. My daughter is an obedient girl. She does as I command.” Fenton smirked.

“How do I know you won’t order her to kill me?” Grigori asked.

“This is how we establish trust. I send you my daughter, a witch with two affinities who is important to my coven. You do not molest her; she doesn’t kill you. We gain trust for each other.” Fenton offered.

“Deal. Call your daughter. I would like to meet the woman who will have my life in her hands.” Grigori said with a slight smile.

It seemed like he had gotten exactly what he wanted. It almost appeared that he was holding back his happiness. It made me wary of him and his intentions. Maybe he had just really wanted a servant, I decided to stay and see.

Fenton used Grigori’s phone to call his home. His daughter would call a carriage to bring her to us. Grigori used this time to try and get an idea of what we were needing to seal our sides of this agreement.

An hour later, the girl arrived. She had her father’s strange eyes and black hair that was tied back in a braid. She was short and slight, almost fragile looking.



“This is my daughter, Grace.” Fenton said proudly. “Starting tomorrow, you’ll be coming here every morning to care for Master Grigori’s home.”

She kept her eyes down and curtsied. When she did look up, I saw that she had soft looking petal lips. Her cheeks blazed with a blush, as she looked past me.

I turned to look at Grigori. The look in his eyes told me this was more than just getting a servant for him. No one was that happy to gain a servant. Something else was going on. Fenton didn’t see it, and I was under no obligation to tell him.

This alliance would be beneficial, but I wouldn’t get involved in a war between the vampires and the witches. The girl was pretty, but not worth the lives that would be lost if a fight happened. I would have to see how it all played out before I threw in for one or the other.

If nothing else, this would be an interesting few months. I looked forward to the negotiations. I wanted to see what this vampire truly had to offer.

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December 31, 1918

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I went to Grigori’s home today while the sun was out. I wanted to talk to Grace and be sure that she was safe. I hadn’t liked her father just giving her away like that.

There was no answer when I knocked. There was no bell, so I started walking around the house, looking in every window I could. When I got to the shaded side of the house, I found her.

She was sitting on the desk in Grigori’s office with her arms and legs around a man who was kissing her like he needed her to breathe. For a moment, I thought her fiancé must have arrived early, but they pulled apart and I saw that it was Grigori. I had no idea that vampires could wake before the sun went down.

He caressed her cheek and gazed at her with love. She was looking up at him with the same expression. I got as close to the window as I could so that I could hear.

“I love you, my flower. What shall we do this afternoon?” Grigori asked.

“I just want to be in your arms, Grigori. I want to enjoy my time with you.” Grace replied.

“Let me make love to you, Grace. I want to be one with you, my flower.” He murmured. “My Solus Amor.”

“Not yet. I want to be sure my father truly isn’t going to storm in here or do more than a skin check for bite marks.” She giggled.

“You remember your part for getting your fiancé to reject you? He comes soon, right?” Grigori asked.

“Of course I do, my love. What if my father tries to marry me off to another witch again?” Grace sighed.

“We will keep making them reject you until I’m the only option. I’ll send my vampires after any man who lasts more than a day with your annoying act.” He chuckled.

“I will be the most tedious woman in existence. No man will want me. I just need to keep my father from figuring it out.” She smiled.

“He never pays you enough attention to do that. If he did, then he would have realized that I’ve already taken your heart.” Grigori said, kissing down her neck.

“My father doesn’t think women are anything but property. Why would anyone waste time listening to a mere unthinking creature when there are men about, who actually have brains? Speaking of that, I have something for you.” Grace said and pulled a pouch from her pocket. “It’s a protection charm I made. I know you’re not worried about spells, but I am. This will keep him from making you forget me.”

“I could never forget you.” He told her, taking the charm and setting it aside.

“Please. Light witches can’t do much, but erasing a person from someone’s memory isn’t considered a dark ability. If he finds out... I’ll need you to find me and make me remember you. Promise me you’ll keep this on, my love. Grigori, it’s important to me.” She pled.

“I will wear it for the rest of my life if it makes you happy, my flower.”

He put on the charm and they started kissing again. I snuck away as quickly as I could. When I returned home I looked up the words he said. A Solus Amor is a vampire’s mate. I’d have to let them know that I knew.

Mates are too important to us to let Grace’s father separate them. I would help them in any way possible. Imagining my life without my mate made me feel sick. From the way he held Grace, I was betting Grigori wouldn’t want to give her up either.

Digging In

## Chapter 99 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

I closed the journal for December of 1918. There were tears in my eyes. I was right, she was his Solus Amor. They wanted to be together, but her father wanted her to marry someone else.

What he said about her being his to do with as he pleased reminded me of that nightmare. I could almost imagine him pulling her out of the house instead of my father pulling me out. Had I somehow connected with the past? That would be so strange.

Gray was sitting next to me reading silently. He had a grim look on his face. I leaned my head on his shoulder and read what he was reading.

Alpha William offered to take Grace to the pack lands to collect ingredients. He told her that he knew about her and Grigori and she begged him not to tell her father. He was describing how scared she seemed.

The door to the office opened and Victor came in, followed by Finn and Talia. I looked up at him with my teary eyes and he rushed to my side, pulling me into a hug. I needed it. There was no happy ending for Grace and Grigori. It made me very sad.

“Echo was right.” Gray said softly. “Grace was Grigori’s Solus Amor. My great great-grandfather knew about their relationship. He tried to help. It... didn’t work out, I guess.”

“I read through December. There were only a couple mentions.” I told him.

“I was reading January. There was more. He really wanted to help. The negotiations were going well. He was making sure to address the needs of the whole pack at the time. They were doing okay. He was working on getting Maeve to meet with Grigori.” He explained.

“Let me take over. This seems to affect Echo deeply. I’ll make sure to tell you everything of importance.” Talia said.

I handed her the journal from December. Gray handed her the one from January. I agreed. I didn’t think I could handle watching a father tear his daughter from the man she loved. I couldn’t accept it.

Grace had found the man she was meant to love forever. If her love for Grigori was anything like mine for Victor, that would have torn her heart in half. She was meant to be with him. Not the man her father engaged her to.

“Why don’t you go help with dinner, Echo? I’ll stay and help here.” Victor murmured.

“No. You take her and stay with her. She’s just read about a girl losing her Solus Amor. Our Echo is sensitive. She needs to have both of you with her to be sure she knows where you are and that no one will take you from her. Finn and I will take care of this. Go, Victor. Take the night off and be with your family.” Talia urged.

“Come on, Victor. Echo needs us more than Talia and Finn do.” Gray said softly.

Victor nodded and held out his hand to help Gray up from the couch. We filed out of the office. I didn't want to let them go. I never would.

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[Talía]

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The door closed behind them and I sighed. Victor really was my favorite. He was constantly impressing me. I was proud of all of my children, but Victor was above and beyond the others.

"We'll save him, Talía." Finn told me.

"Of course we will. I didn't take the time to make him and train him just to watch some witch's spell kill him." I scoffed.

I settled onto the couch with the journals. This would, at least, tell us what had caused the curse. It was possible that Marius' witch would be able to figure out what the curse was.

"You look worried." Finn said.

"I look worried? No one else seems to think so." I chuckled.

"I know you in a different way than any of them do. Tallie, you know that this isn't your fault."

"The High Council approves all bids for territories. I knew there was a curse here and I still gave it to Victor. How exactly is this not my fault?"

"Did you know that the curse would kill him? Or did you just know there was a vague mention of a curse in a letter from a hundred years ago? Did you even know Grigori?" He pressed.

"I did. He was a thousand years old and wanted a challenge. He was getting bored and cruel. We sent him to Oregon at the same time we sent Clarissa to California. She's still alive and well, and he's dead. I came to this territory almost twenty years ago to investigate. It's why I've been in one region for so long. I thought Victor could sort it out. I didn't know." I sighed.

"Victor has done a good job. I know you see that. He started as soon as he knew she was safe. Having Echo will keep him fighting the curse. He won't want to leave her." Finn said.

"I know. Poor Grigori. A thousand years without a Solus Amor and she's taken from him in such a manner. I need to read and find out what happened." I told him.

"I'll leave you to it. Let me know if you need me." He smiled and left the room.

I settled in with the first journal. I enjoyed William's writing style. He added a little flair that almost made it seem like a novel.

The way their relationship grew wasn't entirely covered here. Only the things William saw were documented. I took notes on the things that were important. The dates, the interactions that involved Fenton, any hints to retribution that occurred.

When I reached the point where Grigori had tried using Grace as a bargaining chip, offering ingredients that were only options for dark witches to retrieve. Killing without a threat to a witch's life would turn them dark, but accepting parts from someone else's kill was an acceptable work around.

All he asked was for Fenton to break his arrangement with the witch family and give him Grace. Grigori even offered to pay him double Grace's, already given, dowry. It was an enticing enough offer for Fenton to think over for a couple weeks.

It seemed that Fenton had thought before acting. One afternoon, he came into Grigori's house to retrieve Grace, probably intending to have her on her way to her new home before Grigori woke for the day and not realizing that he woke several hours before sunset. He used some sort of ability that William described as having fire searing him from the inside.

Fenton dragged Grace out of the house. By the time it was safe for Grigori to leave the house, and William recovered, the Aimes house was on fire and nearly burned to ash. There was no sign of Grace, Fenton, or the boys. Just the strays that lived in the barn dashing around, catching mice that were running out of the fire.

There was a letter for William at his pack house when he returned. It stated that his meddling had caused the part of the curse that was on his people. They would forget their bond with their mates. Their wolves would never find another mate and they would have to take chosen mates.

For wolves, that was a torturous idea. We would marry, but they never loved anyone but their mates. My pheata had found her chosen mate, but she knew she didn't have a destined mate. Not a truly destined one.

To know that they had a destined mate, but would never find them, would be terrible. If Grigori hadn't killed himself before the curse solidified, it would have ended up like that for them. William wrote about a dream from the moon goddess saying she helped. It took several days for him to put the information down.

It seemed the moon goddess used the gap left by Grigori's sacrifice to obscure mates for a year for every generation that came after those who were living. It actually ensured that people would find the mate they were intended to have, but she couldn't save them from having to stay in the territory.

If not for that, Gray may not have been born and we wouldn't have had this lead to go on. I was grateful for it. She enabled us to save my Victor in the future. I'm sure this was something she foresaw and she twisted it to work in a way to save her people.

I continued reading. The curse was cast in the middle of February. It started with the younger generation, seventeen year olds felt their mate bond disappear. Their wolves felt agitated, they didn't want anything to do with their former mates.

Grigori disappeared for a week. He came back weakened and told William that he made it a night's drive outside the territory until he couldn't keep going. He felt like he was starving and nearly drained a donor, but was able to stop before killing him. His hunger stayed with him, though, until he was back in the territory.

My phone started ringing as I was just finishing March's journal. I looked at the caller ID and smiled. My pheata had impeccable timing.

"Good evening, Bellamy. I thought you would be busy with your mate." I chuckled.

"It's two in the morning, Talia. Lucien went to find us some food. My parents are keeping the twins until next week. So it's just him and me. I wanted to know how the information digging went." She replied.

"They found the journals with the Alpha's account of what happened. Victor and Echo were correct. This had to do with Fenton's daughter. Grigori tried to make her part of the deal, but Fenton wasn't having it. He took the girl and sent her off with the man she was intended for. At least we know she didn't burn with him." I sighed.

"How could he do that to his own child, though? She had a mate. Someone she was meant to love and who was perfectly matched to love her. It's what every supernatural child dreams of. How could he not want his child to be happy?" Bellamy growled.

"His pride was more important. I bet he would have been more willing to accept it if his wife were still alive. William said Lila told him Fenton became a little darker after he lost his wife. She said they'd fallen in love even though their marriage was arranged. It doesn't always take much to turn a witch from the light." I replied.

"Does this help with anything at all?" She asked.

"It should give Lila a good idea of the curse on the wolves. It was painstaking, but William wrote as much as possible about it and the moon goddess dream he had. We have a little information on what happened to Grigori when he left the territory. We need to confirm it with the other vampires. And we know from Echo's letter, that the fae lost the ability to use their glamour for more than eight hours. Originally, it was supposed to no longer work at all. Grigori obviously caused a shift with his death." I answered.

“Oh, Lucien’s back. I’ll have to let you go. Look, I’ll be up for helping as soon as my heat is over or I’m pregnant again. I’ll call you.” Bellamy promised.

“Good luck, pheata.” I said and hung up.

I looked over my notes. This was the best I could hope for without having the journals for the rest of the year. I would present it to Finn and Victor later.

Secrets Revealed

## Chapter 100 - The Vampire's Servant

[Sean]

The energy around the school was electric. The senior prom was tomorrow. Even I was excited.

I told my mom and dad about Rosario being my date for the prom. They hung on my every word about her. She was actually really cool and planned to come to my game night next weekend.

This morning, on the bus, I finally got her to talk about herself. All week, she’d just asked questions about me or my game. She never offered information about herself.

Even though we’d been in school together since we were little, I actually didn’t know much about her, except that she often got grades as good as mine. Rosario told me that she did archery in her spare time. That was awesome. I asked her if she would teach me and she said she knew the owner of the archery range. She would ask him if she could have the keys on Sunday.

I was thrilled. Maybe this would be something I could pursue in college. I wanted to change myself, and my life while I was there.

This week, I’d been working on dealing with my lingering feelings for Gray. Echo was always there for me if I started looking down. She was a good friend and I was glad that she didn’t hold my feelings against me.

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It was morning break and I had snuck into the stage area in the auditorium. I did my best thinking there. It was dimly lit and had almost a cave-like feel to it. I created some of our best adventures there. I wanted a good one for Rosario’s first time.

I was working quietly, when I heard the stage doors open. I nearly sighed with frustration. Sometimes a couple would sneak in here to get intimate during the breaks. I would sneak out once they got into it.

“Come on, angel.” Gray said.

I froze. I couldn't sit here and let them start. It hurt too much still. I didn't want to hear my crush making out with my best friend.

This couldn't be happening to me. I needed to call out to them and leave. They would understand. I knew they wouldn't want to be watched either.

Taking a slow, steady, breath, I started to get up from the floor. I needed to move before they got into it.

“You didn't have enough blood this morning. Your fangs are out, angel.” He whispered.

That stopped me in my tracks. Fangs? Blood? What the hell was he talking about?

“I'm sorry, Gray. I just got caught up in what everyone was talking about, I forgot to eat my pudding. Are you sure it's okay for me to feed on you here?” Echo asked softly.

“No one really comes in here and, if they do, they'll just think we're making out. We don't have time to argue this. Bite me.” Gray insisted.

I peeked around the corner. The light was just enough that I could see Gray sitting in a chair, baring his neck. Echo sighed and leaned in. When she opened her mouth, I could see that she had long fangs as she licked his neck.

She pulled back and bit him. Gray groaned like it felt good. Echo started sucking on his neck and he pulled her to straddle his lap. I watched in horror as my best friend drank from my crush like she was a vampire.

Remembering our conversation, the first day I met her, I said all vampires were evil because they fed on human blood. She told me not all vampires were bad, just like not all people were bad. Was she talking about herself?

Could Echo be a vampire? I saw her eating real food, she went out in the daylight, we'd just spent hours out in the sunshine on Saturday. Vampires couldn't go in the sun... or could they? She was awfully pale and currently drinking Gray's blood.

I had to save him if she was a vampire. I didn't want to think of her being the type to hypnotize him, but what if that was how she got him to be a willing participant in all this? Did she hypnotize me too?

“All done, angel?” Gray asked.



My attention was pulled back to them. She was licking his neck again, then started kissing and nibbling up his neck. He growled playfully and started moving like he was doing the same. I moved back where they wouldn't see me.

“We should get going, or we'll be late.” Echo sighed. “Thank you for feeding me, Gray. I don't know what I would have done if my fangs came out during class.”

“I figure a little werewolf blood won't be too bad for you, sweetheart. At lunch, you'll get more human blood and that should temper it.” He said.

Werewolf? Wasn't that against the law or something? In everything I had ever read, watched, or heard, vampires and werewolves hated each other.

Would they kill me for finding out their secret? What did I do now? Just keep pretending that I didn't know until graduation?

Oh, my god, I had a crush on a werewolf! Val and Harmony were her cousins. Were they vampires too?

“You go first, angel. It might be bad if we both came out at the same time.” Gray told her.

“Okay. You're almost healed, anyway. I'll see you in class.” She replied and left.

As soon as Gray was gone, I could head out. I would be a little late to class, but most teachers knew me and I could just tell them I was helping another teacher or the librarian out. I didn't hear anything, maybe I missed him leaving.

I gathered up my things and started heading out, only to find myself being held against the wall. Gray had my shoulders pressed back and I was actually not standing on the ground. Along with a thrill of fear, I felt myself getting a little turned on. What the hell was wrong with me?

“I couldn't tell her you were here or she wouldn't have eaten. Echo needed feeding. You're the only human who knows our secret. If hunters come for us, I'll know it was because you said something.” He growled.

“I... I won't say anything. Please, don't kill me.” I pled.

“I'm not gonna kill you unless you do something like that. Hunters will kill us without even checking to see if we're decent people. They don't care about anything but wiping supernaturals out. I don't want you going out and doing something stupid.”

“Can you let me down? This isn't comfortable.” I asked.

“Promise you won't run away?” Gray said.

“I promise.”

He let me down and I was grateful to be on the ground again. Gray stared at me intently. My mind was full of questions. I didn't even know where to start.

"I always heard werewolves existed. My parents told me there were more things in the world than people wanted to acknowledge. Sometimes there are little things on news sites online about werewolves. I didn't know vampires really existed. Why is a werewolf dating a vampire?" I asked.

"She's not a vampire." He responded with a snarl.

"She has fangs and drinks blood. How does she make it seem like she's eating real food? Vampires in my games only drink blood."

"She's a dhampyr." Gray replied.

"Oh. Those are in my games too. Half vampire and half human." I smiled. "That's why she can go out during the day and stuff."

"I guess those games know a lot more than we give humans credit for." He chuckled. "Are you afraid of us? I just don't want you treating her any differently."

"Is she gonna feed on me? Are you going to hunt me down on the full moon?" I pressed.

"No, and no. Our shifting isn't affected by the phases of the moon. It's just easier to see at night when the moon is full." Gray explained.

"I get why you didn't tell me. How many other supernatural creatures live here? What else is out there?" I wondered.

"There are a lot. Most of the kids that transferred in when I did are werewolves. There are some other shifters, witches, and fae in the school. I can't tell you who. It's their secret to reveal." He said.

"Harmony and Val are her cousins. What are they? They aren't as pale as her."

"It's not my place to say. Most of the people we eat with are supernatural."

"Except me, Elle, Terry, and Rosario... right?" I asked.

"That's not for me to say. You're not going to treat Echo any differently, are you?"

"I don't see why I would. She's never been anything but nice to me. She never tried to drink my blood. I don't think she ever hypnotized me. Did she?"

"No. Echo wouldn't do that to you. She uses her abilities in good ways. She's really just as good as she seems. She really loves you as a friend." He insisted.

“I... I just don’t know, Gray. I went from these things being fictional to being real. What else in this game is real?” I said, holding up my game books.

“Let me see.” He told me and took the books from me, sitting on the floor.

I sat near him as he flipped through the books. He pointed out a lot of things as real. Elves, ogres, orcs, goblins, fairies, shapeshifters, vampires, witches, warlocks, demons, sprites, and just so much more. The whole world seemed to have turned into a strange place I didn’t recognize.

“Are you going to be okay? You don’t seem to be taking this well.” Gray said.

“I just learned that there are more than humans and the occasional werewolf in the world. I learned that my best friend is half undead and most of the people I’ve grown to see as friends are all not human. I think I need time with this. I promise, I won’t tell anyone. I just need space.” I told him.

“I think we skipped class. Echo’s gonna be mad at me. Don’t tell her. Will you eat with us at lunch?” He asked.

“I will. I just might not talk much. I’m processing.” I promised.

“See you then.” Gray said, getting up and heading out.

I sat alone with my books. There was a lot of new information in my head. It mingled with what I already knew. I heard the bell for the end of the period ring. I’d just tell my parents I was late and the teacher marked me absent if they got an attendance call from the office. I never skipped. They’d believe me.

Leaving the stage area, I dropped my books at my locker and grabbed my books for the next class. It was the first time in my life that I wasn’t paying attention in class. I seemed to drift for the rest of the day.

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The day ended, and I got on the bus. Rosario and Echo were waiting for me. They both smiled. What if Rosario wasn’t human either? What could she be?

Taking my seat, I smiled slightly at them. Echo took my hand. I never noticed that her hand wasn’t really warm, especially compared to the heat from where Gray held me up against the wall.

“Are you okay?” Echo asked.

“I’m fine. Just a mix of excited for tomorrow and exhausted.” I replied.

“I’m more excited for Sunday. Dances are boring.” Rosario sighed.

“What’s going on Sunday?” Echo questioned.

“I’m taking Sean to the archery range to learn how to shoot a bow. We’ll have it all to ourselves. That means fewer people distracting him while he learns.” Rosario said.

“When are you showing up to get me tomorrow?” I asked Rosario.

“I was thinking around five. My neighbor owns a restaurant and they didn’t get all booked up for prom, so I figured we would go have some dinner. Get you out of the house a little sooner. If you like it, we can go there for lunch on Sunday.” She grinned.

“Awesome. I can’t wait.” I said.

We talked about the prom and plans until we arrived at my stop. I got off the bus and watched it roll away. I walked home solemnly, still sussing out everything I’d learned today.

I went to my room and looked around. Everything here was the same, as if the whole world didn’t just change. I needed to really think about what this meant for me and my relationships with my friends.