

The Warrior's Broken Mate – Chapter 131

The morning sun filtered gently through the trees as Elias and I stood before the Ash Queen, both of us cleaned and clothed in simple garments that still carried a faint shimmer from the heart's power. It felt strange to be so ordinary again, after everything we'd been through, yet the weight of what we carried—our bond with the realm, the heart itself—made us feel stronger than ever.

The Ash Queen's presence was calm but commanding. She looked at us with her piercing eyes, though there was no longer any shadow in them. "You have done well." She said softly. "The realm is safe again, because of you. Because of the choices you made, the courage you showed."

I reached out instinctively, but she didn't take my hand. Instead, she bowed her head slightly, a gesture of quiet respect. "Remember." She said, her voice like a low hum, "this peace is yours to protect. Darkness may rise again, as it always does, but the heart is with you. It beats through you both now."

Elias stepped closer, his hand brushing mine. I could feel the warmth of his touch, steady and grounding, just as the heart pulsed in my own chest. "We'll keep it safe." He said, his voice sure. "We understand. We won't let it fall into the wrong hands. Not ever."

The Ash Queen nodded once, almost imperceptibly, and a faint smile curved her lips. "I believe you." Then, after a long moment, she turned and began walking away, her robes swaying around her as she disappeared among the regrowing trees. The sunlight danced on her crown, a soft glow that seemed to echo the rhythm of the world itself.

Elias exhaled, a laugh escaping him. "Well." He said, "that's that. Realm saved, world intact, Ash Queen impressed. Not bad for a day's work, huh?"

I chuckled, shaking my head. "Not bad at all." But there was no laughter long enough to mask the awe settling over us. The land stretched before us, forests regrown, rivers sparkling in the morning light, animals wandering freely again as if nothing had ever happened. This was what we had fought for. This was home—both for the realm and, somehow, for us.

We left the clearing hand in hand, walking in silence at first, listening to the soft hum of life all around us. It felt unreal, and yet more real than anything we had ever known. The bond with the heart made everything sharper, brighter, alive. It was as though the world itself was breathing alongside us.

When we finally returned home, the first thing we did was run. Run straight to the castle, our feet pounding across the familiar paths that seemed to recognize us, carrying us forward with a sense of urgency and joy we hadn't felt in months.

The castle doors burst open as soon as we reached them, and there was a collective gasp followed by cheers. Friends, guards, and pack members all followed us towards the castle, their faces alight with joy

and disbelief. “You’re back! You’re really back!” Someone shouted, and I felt tears sting my eyes at the sound of their voices.

Elias and I slowed to a walk, taking in the smiles, the hugs, the laughter. It was overwhelming, and yet it felt like the most natural thing in the world. After everything, after the darkness and the battles, after the heart and the Ash Queen, this—this was what we had fought for.

And then I saw him. Grayson. Our little boy.

He was sitting in the courtyard with Stephanie, his tiny hands clutching at a blanket, his eyes wide as he stared up at us. He hadn’t grown very much at all, just a small, perfect bundle of curiosity and light. It was strange, almost uncanny, until Luke walked over.

“When you locked the portal.” He said, his voice quiet but cheerful, “time synced up with the other realm. You haven’t missed any milestones here. Grayson’s grown just as he should, even while you were away. You can see him now, and everything is as it should be.”

I blinked, feeling a strange mix of relief and wonder. It was as though time had bent itself around our journey, protecting what mattered most. I knelt down slowly, careful not to startle him, and held out my arms.

Grayson’s little face broke into a grin, and before I could even blink. I scooped him up, holding him close, feeling the warmth of his tiny body, the soft weight of him against my chest. Elias crouched beside us, his hand resting on Grayson’s back, and the three of us sat together in the courtyard sunlight, breathing in the moment, the quiet hum of life around us.

“We’re finally home.” Elias whispered, his lips brushing my temple as he leaned closer.

I nodded, tears slipping down my cheeks, but this time they weren’t sorrowful—they were filled with relief, with joy, with everything we had fought to protect. “We are.” I said, my voice firm but soft. “And we’re not leaving again.”

Elias knew that there was a possibility that we would have to if the other realm ever got into trouble again, but I wasn’t going to let those thoughts ruin the time I had right now with my baby.

The castle seemed alive with celebration after that. Friends and family brought gifts, laughter rang through the halls, and every corner of the courtyard was filled with voices singing songs of welcome. But through it all, Elias and I remained focused on what mattered most: our little family, sitting together, safe and whole.

Grayson yawned against my shoulder, and I kissed the top of his head, marveling at the softness of his hair, the innocence in his eyes. “You’ve waited for us.” I murmured.

Elias chuckled, brushing a lock of hair from my face. “Sounds like we’ve got responsibilities, huh?”

“Responsibilities.” I agreed, looking around at the bustling castle, at the life we had protected and restored. “But we’ll manage. Together.”

And as the day waned and the sun dipped low over the horizon, the three of us sat in the courtyard, the soft warmth of evening brushing our skin. Grayson slept in my arms, Elias resting against me, his hand intertwined with mine. We were a family, bound not just by love, but by the life we had fought to protect, by the choices that had made us who we were.

The heart’s pulse still beat inside me, a constant reminder of what we carried, of what we were responsible for. But in that moment, it felt less like a burden and more like a promise- one we would keep, without fear, without hesitation.

Laughter and song floated from the castle halls, mingling with the chirping of birds and the rustling of leaves in the evening breeze. For the first time in a long time, the world felt entirely safe, entirely ours to cherish.

Elias tilted his head, resting his forehead against mine. “We did it.” He whispered. “All of it. And we’re here. All together.”

I smiled, feeling the steady beat of Grayson’s heart against my chest, feeling Elias’s warmth and strength beside me, feeling the world alive and whole. “Yes.” I said, my voice steady and full of certainty. “We did it. And we’ll keep doing it, every day, for the rest of our lives.”

The three of us sat there, a quiet bubble of peace amid the bustle of celebration, knowing the responsibilities that lay ahead but also knowing that we would face them together. The realm was safe, our family was whole, and life—simple, bright, and full of love—was waiting for us. For the first time, I allowed myself to believe it. Everything we had fought for had led to this. And in the warm glow of the setting sun, surrounded by laughter, light, and life, I knew that we were exactly where we were meant to be.