

The Warrior's Broken Mate Chapter 31

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We moved through the town, and Elias was walking quickly, not sticking to a straight path. We kept turning onto different streets and looping around for a while. I didn't know what he was trying to do, but I trusted

him to get us out safely.

"What happened to all of your cars?" I asked.

"Most of the other pack members took them, and a few got destroyed during the attack," he said.

"I can't believe they found your pack. Elias, this is all because of me. Wouldn't it be easier if you were just

alone?" I asked, stopping in place. He glanced around at everything nearby before easing up a bit, stepping

closer to me, and placing his hands on my arms.

"Lyra. You're my mate. I'm not going to leave you. If it means giving up my whole pack and making Luke

the Alpha so I can keep you safe, then that's what I'll do," he said.

"Why? You don't even really know me. You could reject me anytime you want. Honestly, I'm shocked you

haven't already," I said.

"Because I'd never do that. You don't just need someone—if I walked away, I'd spend my whole life

wondering if you were okay. I'd miss you forever. No one else could ever take your place. Not for me," he said, looking right into my eyes.

"I just don't understand. No one's ever cared about me before," I said.

"Well, that was them. I'm not them. You're everything to me," he said. I gave him a nod so he'd know I

understood what he was trying to tell me.

He leaned in and kissed me, then wrapped me in a hug again. He could tell I was still uneasy and guilty about the trouble he was in because of me. But he was doing all he could to show me how much I

mattered to him.

We had to keep moving, and we kept weaving through the town until we finally made it to the highway. But fields surrounded us again, making us feel exposed, though we could spot the forest up ahead. That was

our goal—we needed its cover.

Once we got to the woods, we were able to slow down a bit. My legs were sore from how fast we'd been

going, but we knew we weren't out of danger yet. I kept wondering what else my father had in store for me. He already had witches and creatures under his control—ones I used to think were just myths. Realizing they were actually real was unsettling. It made me question what other things might be real. And what else could still be coming.

It was honestly terrifying. But I didn't want Elias to know how scared I was. He already had enough on his plate—he didn't need to worry about how I was feeling too.

I could tell he was in full-on warrior mode now. He kept scanning our surroundings, using all his senses to check if anyone was following us. It was a totally different version of him than what I saw back at the

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camp where they lived.

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And it made me wonder even more. How exactly did they live? None of them had normal jobs. They just trained all day. Where did their money come from—for food, clothes, everything? And what about this second location—how much would it cost to have a backup place ready in case something happened? It was a mystery I'd have to ask about later. Just not right now.

We were still walking when the sun set, and we kept going for a few more hours after that. We didn't stop until Elias found a safe spot for us to sleep—a cave in the woods. We went inside, but we couldn't risk lighting a fire. That would just give away our location. Luckily, we had night vision because we were

werewolves, so we didn't need any light.

Once we were settled inside, I sat against the back wall, opened my bag, and pulled out the royal family

heritage book again.

"Is that why you won't let me carry that bag?" Elias asked.

"What do you mean?" I asked, confused.

"Because I told you to only grab the essentials. You didn't want me to know you brought those books," he

said.

"Well, these are essential to me. I need to understand all of this," I replied.

"I get that. I'm not upset that you took it. How far have you gotten?" he asked, settling down beside me.

"I'm still in the 1300s. The King and Queen had ten children. Three of them died when they were little, and one of them got married but didn't have any kids. Another one was exiled after being disgraced, but I don't know why yet. I'm going to try and find out. But from the five who did have children, that gave the King and Queen forty-one grandchildren. Clearly, no one knew what birth control was back then," I said while looking at the first family tree.

"No kidding. Well, I guess they figured it out eventually since you're the last one left," he said.

"Yeah, seems like it. But now I'm starting on their kids, and that's going to take some time," I said, picking up my notebook and pen.

"I'll keep watch," he said.

"Alright. If you want to rest, just tell me. I can sit at the entrance and keep guard," I offered.

"It's fine. You'd be surprised how long I can stay awake," he replied with a smirk, heading back to the cave's

entrance.

I stayed there for a while, writing in my notebook, when Elias came over to check on what I was doing.

"What are you working on?" he asked.

"The year is 1410 now. At this point, the King and Queen have 172 great-grandchildren. I'm trying to track what happened to each of them," I answered.

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"That's a lot," he said.

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"I know. But I need to if I want to figure out what really happened to the royal family. I'm still going through the story part before I get to the family tree of all 172 great-grandkids," I explained.

"Okay," he said.

"By now, the King and Queen are already dead, and their oldest son has taken the throne. So after these great-grandkids, it moves on to the next King's grandkids. That's where it starts getting more complex. A lot of them don't stay in the royal line and are basically cut off. It kind of restarts with the new King's grandkids," I said.

"Yeah. If they aren't direct descendants of the King, they basically get pushed aside. That could explain how the family got so small. You might have more relatives out there than you think," he said.

"I don't know. But I'm going to keep looking into the whole family. I want to know if any are still out there," I

said.

"You should. Just follow everything from the original King and Queen. That should tell you what happened to everyone. Does it have full records?" he asked.

"Yeah. They just don't show up on the actual family tree. So I've got a lot of reading ahead," I replied.

"Yeah. It's going to take some time," he said.

Then we heard something outside. It sounded like a twig snapping, and Elias immediately turned his head

toward the cave entrance. He moved toward it quietly, signaling for me to stay put.

He stepped outside, and only seconds passed before I heard the cracking of bones and Elias letting out a

loud growl. I got up and went to the entrance, staying in the shadows, and I saw him standing face to face

with three men. They were in human form, and right away, I could tell they weren't werewolves. But Elias

clearly didn't like them.

They looked straight at me like they could see me even though I was in the shadows, and I noticed

something strange about their faces. Black veins ran up their cheeks, and their eyes were glowing red. Long fangs hung from their upper jaws, and they stared at me with a threatening look.

"Princess," they all said together.

"Vampires," I gasped.

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Elias realized they had seen me standing there, and he stepped between us, telling me to get back inside

the cave.

Vampires and werewolves had always been enemies. They'd been fighting each other for hundreds of

years, and when they weren't in battle, they were plotting how to wipe each other out. But as I stood there

in front of these vampires, I could tell something about them didn't feel right.

I didn't listen to Elias's command. Instead, I walked out of the cave and stood behind him. I could see the

worry on his face. He clearly thought this was going to end with me getting hurt—or worse. But the

vampires weren't attacking. They were only staring at me.

"You're not here to kill us," I said.

“What are you talking about? They’re vampires. Of course they’re going to kill us,” Elias snapped.

“No. They’re not,” I said firmly. And I noticed how the vampires’ tense posture eased a bit.

“You really are the princess,” one of them said. Elias looked at them, wary. He shifted back into human

form, and I tossed him a pair of shorts.

“What do you want?” Elias growled at them.

“We want her. We need her,” the other one said, pointing at me.

“That’s never going to happen,” Elias said.

“We heard she’s mated to an Alpha. You finally escaped from your father’s hold,” the first one said.

“How do you even know that? Everyone believed I died during childbirth,” I said.

“News travels,” he replied.

“What do you want her for?” Elias asked.

“We don’t know. Our leader just told us to come and get her. He needs her for something, but he didn’t say what,” the vampire said.

“He’s going to hurt me,” I said.

“That’s not the feeling we got,” he replied.

“I know he will. I can feel it. He didn’t tell you on purpose—so I’d trust you. But he is going to hurt me,” I said, clutching Elias’s arms.

Elias raised his arms protectively in front of me, and I heard a growl rising in his chest.

“We’re not here to fight,” one of them said.

“Well, you’re getting one,” Elias said, his voice low as his fangs began to grow.

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"We've been watching you, princess. You helped bring down a werebear. And you survived everything that witch threw at you. Do you understand how strong you have to be to do that?" the vampire asked.

"I'm not going with you," I said again.

"We have to take you. I mean it. If we don't bring you back, our leader will kill us," he said.

"If you try to take her, I will kill you," Elias growled, fur already sprouting along his arms. He was about to

shift again, but I knew he wouldn't fully change while I was right beside him.

"I said no," I repeated.

"You don't have a choice," one of them yelled, lunging at us. Elias shoved me back into the cave and transformed fully, launching himself at the vampires.

The vampires were fast—scarily fast—but werewolves weren't exactly weak. We weren't created just to destroy vampires, but we were the only kind of supernatural being fast and strong enough to actually kill

them.

Elias being an Alpha gave him an edge. He was larger than most wolves. He got hold of one vampire while

the other tried to slip past him to reach me. He was fighting both at once, and they both came at him

together. I could tell he was struggling. Two against one was tough. But he was strong, and he was holding

them back. Still, I could see they were doing real damage to him.

Panic overtook me, and I dropped my head, shaking it from side to side. This was all because of me, all of

1. it. They were after me, not him. They're going to kill him because of me. They're going to kill him. They're

going to kill him. Then I suddenly shouted "NO!" and a blast of glowing blue light shot from my body,

knocking all three of them to the ground.

The force threw me backward too, and I landed flat on my back, but I got up much quicker than the others

and ran straight toward Elias. He was slowly rising, and one of the vampires was barely moving on the

ground while the other stayed completely still.

I cautiously walked over to check, and the one who wasn't moving had already died. A tree branch had pierced straight through his heart. The other wasn't able to get up because he'd been pinned down by

another branch. The wood itself was weakening him.

I heard Elias shift back into his human form, and when I saw the wounds on him, he looked furious seeing

the vampires lying there. He grabbed a thick branch from the ground, walked over to the vampire who was

still alive, and drove it straight into his chest. His body shriveled, turned gray, and then he died.

"Holy s**t," I muttered. Elias turned to face me. I was standing there, trembling. I couldn't make sense of what had just happened. I had no idea what I had just done. My mind was a mess, still trying to piece

together what just occurred.

Elias took hold of my arms and looked me straight in the eyes. He tried to speak to me, but everything

came through muffled and distant, like echoes. So he led me back to the cave.

He slipped into a pair of shorts, packed all of my belongings into a bag, and we left the cave again. I wasn't

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reacting to anything, so he had to drag me along through the woods.

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I was in complete shock. I couldn't comprehend what was going on. I knew something had changed in me on my sixteenth birthday. My body had changed, and I knew somehow I belonged to the royal family. But now everything felt too real. No one ever said the royals had powers. No one ever told me they could

defeat enemies with abilities like that.

Somehow, I had blasted away two vampires who were trying to kill Elias. Somehow, I had grown to the same size as a werewolf. Nothing about this made sense, and it was all happening too quickly. I didn't

know what to believe anymore—my mind was spinning with confusion.

Elias looked at me with deep concern while pulling me through the trees. He could tell I wasn't dealing

with any of this well. Then he suddenly stopped, pulled a shirt out of the bag, and pressed it against my

face. That snapped me out of the fog.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Your nose is bleeding. I think you pushed yourself too hard back there. You're not used to using that kind

of energy, that's all," he said. I took the shirt and held it to my nose.

"I don't know what the hell happened back there," I said.

"I know," he replied. "But now I'm starting to understand why your father is so determined to get you back."

"Who the hell were those vampires working for?" I asked.

"Probably the vampire council. I've never seen them before, so I can't say for certain. They might belong to a different vampire coven. It's hard to tell. There are so many of them out there," he said.

"I wouldn't know," I replied.

"Alright. Don't worry about it right now. We just need to get back to our pack. Then you'll be safe," he said,

looking at me with such concern it made me uneasy.

“You still want me? Why? I’m too much trouble,” I said. He scoffed at that.

“You’re not too much trouble. Right now, I know I need to protect you more than anything. More and more

people are discovering who you are. If you were out there alone right now, you’d be dead,” he said.

“No, I wouldn’t. I’d still be a slave,” I corrected him. He nodded. He knew that no one would kill me

because they wanted my powers. They would break me until I used my powers however they wanted.

“Our new location isn’t far from here. If we keep moving, we’ll get there in a couple of hours,” Elias said. I nodded and we started walking again.

“Elias. They said they saw us take down that werebear. How could vampires have seen that? It was broad daylight and we were out in the open. There wasn’t even any shade from the woods to hide them,” I said,

confused.

“Daywalkers,” he said.

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“What?” I asked.

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“Some vampires can walk in the daytime. We don’t know how, but they can,” he said. I realized we needed

to get back to the pack even faster now.

We moved much more carefully this time, in case there were more vampires lurking nearby, or more

people hanging around. But we didn’t stop.

We finally arrived at a small town that seemed to have only a few hundred people. The houses looked nice, and one house at the top of the town stood out—it was much fancier than all the others.

But I noticed there were no shops or stores. Just houses.

“Welcome home,” Elias said.

“This is the new location?” I asked, completely shocked.

“Yeah. Why? Were you expecting another camp out in the woods?” he asked.

“Yeah, kind of,” I admitted.

“Well, we have this place because no one would expect us to live somewhere like this. People think we live simple lives in the woods. So instead, we built this as a backup. No one will find us here,” he said.

Soon, we were surrounded by the rest of the pack, all happy we had arrived in one piece—even though I

wasn’t sure we would.

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Elias brought me to the house situated at the highest point in the village—it was clearly the largest one there—and when I stepped inside, I was genuinely taken aback by what I saw.

The house felt quite new and was beautifully maintained inside. Apparently, his entire pack had secretly constructed it themselves. This explained why there were far more people here than I had initially assumed were part of his pack. It seemed there were many more members spread out, possibly working on this building or elsewhere, so no one really knew the true size of his army.

They had built Elias a two-story home, though it wasn’t nearly as grand as Father’s packhouse. It wasn’t a mansion by any means; it felt much more like a cozy, lived-in home than anything extravagant.

Elias led me upstairs and showed me my bedroom, which was located directly across the hallway from his own room. I was relieved that he still wasn’t pushing any expectations on me. His room had an ensuite bathroom, but there was another bathroom right next to mine, which I found perfectly acceptable.

After that, Elias went to settle into his room while I closed my door and gazed out the window. The view was a clear, unobstructed look out into the forest, where I could see wolves patrolling the territory.

I decided to take a shower since we had been in hiding for a few days. Once clean, I changed into fresh

clothes, returned to my room, and closed the door behind me.

Looking at the bed, which seemed incredibly inviting, I lay down and found it was just as comfortable as it

appeared.

Eventually, I drifted off to sleep.

“Your Majesty, the vampires are drawing dangerously close. The war is approaching the castle. I strongly believe the royal family should evacuate,” a guard informed the King.

“We aren’t going anywhere. If the vampires come here looking for a fight, they will get one,” the King declared firmly. They were seated in the throne room of a very old castle, dressed in garments reminiscent of the 1400s. The scene felt surreal, and his Queen, sitting beside him, looked utterly

stunning.

“My love, please think carefully about what he is saying. We are losing members of the royal family due to targeted vampire attacks,” the Queen pleaded.

“They aren’t true royals,” the King dismissed.

“They are your family—your cousins, second cousins, members of the royal bloodline. They just don’t descend directly from the heir to the throne,” the Queen argued.

“I’ve only heard that a few have been killed by vampires,” the King said casually.

“Try thirty—six. I’ve been keeping track. They are systematically wiping out everyone with royal blood. And

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next, they will come for us—for you and our children—anyone who might hold any power against them,” the Queen said with eyes full of desperation.

“There’s nothing I can do for my relatives. They are isolated in their own villages, and I don’t even know where most of them are. They move around too often. But if the vampires dare approach my home, they

will face the full strength of royal power,” the King asserted.

“I don’t even know what the true force of royal power is,” the Queen admitted quietly.

“That’s because I’ve never had to wield it before. But our children will be safe. I will be safe,” he promised.

“What about me?” the Queen asked, fully aware she wasn’t truly royal by blood and held no powers—not

even after being marked by the King.

He simply looked at her, then away, refusing to answer. He believed casualties were inevitable in war and

was prepared to find another mate if necessary.

When I woke up, the smell of something cooking downstairs immediately caught my attention, and it

smelled absolutely delicious. So, I got out of bed and headed downstairs, where I found Elias once again

in the kitchen.

“You really enjoy cooking, don’t you?” I asked, leaning casually against the doorframe.

“Yeah. It helps me relax. After everything lately, I needed it,” he said.

“Makes sense,” I said, grabbing a drink from the kitchen.

“How was your nap?” he

“It was good. Why didn’t you nap? You look tired,” I said.

“I’ll get some sleep tonight,” he answered.

“Alright, if you say so,” I replied.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” he assured me.

After he finished cooking, we sat down at the table to eat. I already knew this entire pack was made up of

kids who had been abused but had grown into incredible warriors, now one of the most respected packs in the country. Still, I found myself increasingly curious about Elias.

He'd told me his father was an alcoholic and that he and Luke had run away together, but that was all he'd

shared. He seemed to know so much about me, yet I hardly knew anything about him.

"You want to ask something—I can tell," Elias said, watching me.

"It's nothing. None of my business," I replied.

"Maybe I should decide what's your business," he countered.

"I was wondering about your life before the pack," I admitted, waiting for his answer. His expression was

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unreadable.

"You mean living with my parents? Where my father abused me?" he said.

"Yeah," I said.

"Not much to tell. He was just brutal," Elias said.

"Any brothers or sisters?" I asked.

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"Yeah, but they're all older than me. By the time I ran away, they had already left. Dad had worn them out with his beatings, and they got out as soon as they could. So, I was the last one left. There was a big gap between me and the sibling before me, so I spent a long time alone in that house," he explained.

"Did your mother ever try to stop him?"

"She tried sometimes, but not very hard. She knew how bad his temper was, and I think she preferred him

hitting us kids instead of her," he said.

“So after you left, he only had her,” I pointed out. Elias nodded.

“Yeah, I guess I never really thought about that before. I suppose she had no choice but to take the beatings once I was gone,” he said, looking somewhat satisfied with that realization.

After dinner, I cleaned up, washed the dishes, and put everything away. Then we sat down to watch a

movie. Elias pulled me close so I was resting against his side, with his arm wrapped around me as he

gently rubbed my arm.

While we were watching TV, someone knocked at the door. Elias called out for them to come in, and Luke entered carrying a tablet. He showed it to Elias while we were still sitting on the couch.

I glanced at the screen too. It was surveillance footage from another pack—children of very young ages lined up outside, naked, being whipped and punished by the Alpha.

“Where is this?” Elias asked quietly.

“It’s from Ironcliff Pack. The Alpha there is a complete piece of work—based on what we’ve seen, he’s abusing most of the kids in his pack. And it’s clear he gets some twisted pleasure out of it. These photos just came through,” Luke explained, and both Elias and I leaned in to get a closer look at the tablet.

“We have to get those kids out of there,” I said firmly. Elias looked at me in a way I wasn’t expecting—almost like he was proud, like he was relieved that I understood what this pack stood for. That I recognized our mission was to save victims and offer them safety.

“Yeah. We absolutely need to get them out—sooner rather than later,” Elias agreed.

“I’m already assembling a group of warriors. We’ll start working on a strategy right away,” Luke said. So Elias and I stood and followed him to the gathering area where everyone was meeting.

Liam, the head warrior—aside from Elias—was already there with a map laid out in front of him.

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“Alright, here’s what we know. The Alpha’s name is Rhydian. He took control of the pack around fifteen

years ago, after his father mysteriously died. Officially, it was blamed on a rogue attack, but most suspect

that Rhydian murdered him to take power. And honestly, no one would be surprised. Everything we’ve seen

points to him being a violent, sadistic bastard, and it’s only been getting worse. The pack is located

roughly eight hours from here. We’re going to be away for a few days. Luckily for us, their borders are wide

open, which makes this a very viable target. An ambush won’t be difficult to pull off,” Liam briefed the

group.

It wasn’t the entire pack gathered there, but there were a good number of people present. I had a feeling

Elias was going to tell me to stay behind. And even though I didn’t want to be left behind if he was going, I

also knew I couldn’t fight. I wasn’t trained, so I wasn’t sure what I’d contribute in an actual mission.

Everyone was discussing tactics, and the whole process moved swiftly. They planned everything with

such skill and accuracy, it was clear they’d done this kind of thing many times before. After the meeting

wrapped up, Elias and I headed back to the house.

“You okay? You were pretty quiet out there,” Elias asked as he shut the door behind us.

“You guys are the professionals when it comes to this stuff. I was just there to observe,” I said, starting to

walk off, but he caught my hand before I could.

“There’s something else on your mind. I can feel it,” he said.

“You’re going to be gone for a few days, and I already know you’re going to ask me to stay behind because

I can’t fight. I get that—I do. But that doesn’t mean I want you to leave,” I told him honestly.

“I know it’s not easy, but this is what we have to do. And once I’m back, we’ll dive straight into your

training. If everything goes well, this will be the last mission you’ll have to sit out,” he promised.

“Yeah. Alright,” I replied, forcing a smile that I hoped looked more convincing than it felt.

But he didn’t buy it—he pulled me into a hug instead. He understood that I wasn’t thrilled about him going

away, even if it was only for a few days. Still, I knew this was exactly why he formed this pack in the first

place—to save kids from situations like the one at Ironcliff. His job was to protect them. So I wasn’t going

to make a big deal out of it. I just needed to keep my emotions in check and let him do what he was

meant to do.

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I understood that Elias really needed to get some rest, but at the same time, reaching that pack and

rescuing those children was urgent.

The pack was an eight-hour drive away, and Elias had made up his mind to get some sleep in the car

during the trip.

I was completely on board with that—as long as he actually got the rest he needed. The last thing I wanted was for him to end up getting hurt or making a mistake during the mission, especially if it turned into a

fight. Ideally, they would get in and out without being seen, but realistically, that was unlikely.

While Elias was busy packing his bag, I could feel the weight of his thoughts—he was tense and clearly trying to focus, but it wasn't himself he was worried about.

"You don't have to stress about me," I said, breaking the silence. He paused and looked up at me, puzzled.

"How did you know I was thinking about you?" he asked.

"I just knew. You've already arranged for twelve warriors to be stationed around the house at all times. They're rotating in two shifts—six on each, twelve hours apiece. There's no way anything could get past them without me noticing or without me having time to escape," I replied.

"I know that's all true. But it doesn't really ease my mind. I still need to know for certain that you'll be alright," he said.

"I will be. You're taking thirty warriors with you, which means I still have a hundred and seventy left here keeping watch," I reminded him.

"Yeah," he said with a faint nod.

"I'm sure I'll be fine," I reassured him.

"I've left Chris in charge while I'm away. He's fully informed about everything that attacked us while we were on our own. He knows about the werebear and the vampires. So he'll be keeping a close eye out for them specifically. And he also knows the werebear was cloaked by a witch's magic," Elias explained.

"Alright. Sounds like everything's under control," I said.

"What do you think you'll do while I'm gone?" he asked.

"I'm not sure yet. Maybe try to get to know some of the pack better. Something like that. But I don't really know how to go about it," I admitted.

"I get that. But you'll figure it out," he said reassuringly.

"I'm not exactly the best at starting conversations. Honestly, I've never really had to before," I told him.

“And they’ll understand that. Which means they’ll probably go out of their way to make it easier for you. Don’t stress about it. They’re all good people, and even though they haven’t lived your exact experience,

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they’ve been through similar things,” he said.

“Alright. I’ll give it a shot,” I said.

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I followed Elias downstairs, where the warriors were already waiting outside next to the vehicles. Elias kissed me goodbye, and I stood there, watching as they all drove off.

After they were gone, I headed back inside. I made myself a cup of coffee and sat down at the table, opening the book I had been reading about the royal family.

By the year 1410, the King and Queen had ten children, and those children had produced a total of forty-one grandchildren and one hundred seventy-two great-grandchildren.

By that point, their eldest child had assumed the throne, making him the second King in the line. He went

on to have seven children of his own and sixteen grandchildren.

But then the war began, and those numbers dropped drastically. A large number of the King’s nieces and nephews were pulled into the conflict with the vampires, and many of them died. The royal bloodline suffered heavily as a result. Still, the reigning King managed to keep his immediate family away from the

front lines. They somehow succeeded in keeping the vampires from breaching the castle, managing to

preserve the lives of the royal household.

Yet I couldn’t forget that this King had been willing to sacrifice his own mate just to ensure his and his

children’s safety—simply because she didn’t have the pure royal blood.

Now I had reached the year 1450 in the book. His eldest son had risen to the throne, becoming the third King. I couldn’t even pronounce most of their names—some weren’t written in English at all—so I had taken to giving them nicknames in my notebook as I tracked the lineage. Just trying to keep it all straight.

While I was sitting at the table, absorbed in my reading, a knock sounded at the front door. I stood up to

answer it and found Chris standing there.

"Hey," I greeted him.

"Hey. Hope I'm not interrupting anything important," he said politely.

"Not at all. I was just doing a bit of light reading. Nothing urgent," I replied.

"Good. Elias mentioned you were thinking about getting to know the pack a bit more," he said.

"I was considering it. Are you here to play the role of my guide?" I asked with a half-smile.

"Elias told me you were feeling a little uneasy about it, and he asked if I could show you around," he

explained.

"No problem. That actually sounds good," I said, then closed the door behind me as we began walking

away from the house.

We made our way toward a wide, open field where several warriors were in the middle of training

exercises.

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We stayed off to the side, watching them for a while. Chris explained what they were doing since most of it went completely over my head. Before long, a few others joined us.

"Lyra, this is Cee, Hailey, Joey, Theo, Roan, and Carl," Chris said, introducing the group.

"It's nice to see you again. I'm guessing you've probably forgotten all of our names," Joey said with a

teasing smile.

“Yeah, I did. I’m sorry,” I admitted, a little embarrassed.

“No worries. You’ve had a lot of names thrown at you,” she said kindly.

“Yeah, I guess that’s true,” I replied.

“Don’t let this crowd intimidate you. We’re all pretty sure Elias will have you fighting alongside us in no

time,” Cee said.

“That’s kind of the intimidating part,” I said with a nervous laugh.

“So, what are you all up to now?” Chris asked.

“We’re heading over to Hailey’s place for lunch—it’s her turn to host today,” Roan answered.

“Mind if we come along?” Chris asked.

“Not at all. Come on,” Hailey said, motioning for us to follow.

We walked back into town to one of the houses, and there was plenty of room to sit around in the living

area. Everyone talked casually with me, and I appreciated that they weren’t treating me like I was

someone special—no Luna, no royalty, just one of them. And I really liked that feeling.

I wasn’t great at making conversation, and they clearly noticed, but they did their best to include me.

Whenever I started getting quiet, they gently pulled me into whatever topic they were discussing.

After being shut away in an attic for most of my life, socializing was definitely not something I had any

experience with. It was something I’d have to learn. But they were patient, and their efforts didn’t go

unnoticed. I was grateful for how welcoming they were.

Still, it felt strange, sitting there talking casually like this. I'd never experienced anything like it before. And

honestly, this was the first time I hadn't been attacked since Elias rescued me from my father. That

absence of danger made me feel a little off-balance.

It was like my mind was still waiting for something bad to happen. I was so used to chaos, I had to remind

myself that there would be calm days too. And this one—I actually liked.

The people in this pack were warm and genuine, and that meant a lot. They didn't look at me with

suspicion or disdain. No one acted like I didn't belong. And for once, I felt like I truly fit in somewhere. It

was strange, but also something I hoped I could hold on to. Maybe even grow into.

I ended up leaving Hailey's house around sunset after spending the entire afternoon with them. Chris walked me back to the house, and I thanked him for what had turned out to be a really good day. Then I stepped inside and closed the door behind me.

I made my way to the kitchen and flipped on the light. But the moment the room lit up, I saw a shadow

move across the floor behind me.

I spun around, and standing across the room was a shadowy, spectral figure—staring directly at me.

"Hello, princess," he said.

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I stood frozen, staring at the ghostly shadow figure lingering across the kitchen. My mind raced, trying to make sense of what exactly I was seeing.

"What... what are you?" I asked cautiously.

"I've been sent by the Black Witch," it answered, its voice cold and otherworldly. "She says you can't hide."

"Then why isn't she here to say it to my face?" I demanded.

"Because you're surrounded by werewolves," it replied simply.

"Bullshit," I snapped. "That didn't stop her last time. She doesn't even know where I am."

"She will. She always finds you. As long as you carry that power, she'll seek it out," it said, voice low and steady.

"That's how she sent you here," I muttered, more to myself than to the creature. "She's sensing my power-

using it like a beacon. But that means she still doesn't know where I actually am."

"Enough. She will always find you," it hissed.

"Is that you speaking now, Black Witch? Are you using this thing to talk to me?" I asked.

"Of course I am," it replied.

"Well, good luck next time. You didn't manage to catch me before—you barely even scratched me," I said.

"That was before I understood what you truly are. Next time, I'll be ready," the shadow answered, its voice chilling.

"Get out of my house," I said coldly, lifting my hand toward it.

The ghost immediately began shrieking, its wail high-pitched and piercing, as if it were in unbearable pain.

I knew right then—ghosts don't feel pain. This was the witch reacting through her puppet.

My front door burst open as the warriors stormed in, weapons raised, but they froze when they saw the

shadow.

In an instant, the ghost dissolved into a black, swirling mist and shot out the window, vanishing into the

night.

“Are you okay?” Chris asked, hurrying toward me.

“Yeah, I’m fine. It didn’t touch me—it was just here to scare me,” I said, brushing off the chill that still clung

to my skin.

“Who sent it?” he asked.

“The Black Witch,” I said simply.

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“She knows where you are?” he asked, concern in his voice.

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“No. That’s exactly why she sent that thing. She’s grasping. She doesn’t actually know where I am—she’s just trying to find me,” I explained.

“Well, that’s... a bit of a relief,” he said with a sigh.

“It’s alright. You guys can head back. That thing wasn’t enough to scare me,” I assured him.

Chris gave the order for the warriors to clear out, but insisted on checking the house from top to bottom

before he left. He double-checked that I really was okay—only then did he finally go.

Once I was alone again, I headed upstairs and took a long, hot shower.

After I finished, I came back downstairs to find all of my things still spread across the table—books,

notebooks, papers. I poured myself a fresh cup of coffee and sat down again.

But I decided not to keep reading the royal family history for now. Instead, I needed to shift my focus to something else—something more relevant to who I was. I needed to learn more about werewolves, about

the mate bond, and everything that came with it.

Yes, I was a werewolf—but I had never been taught anything about mates.

I'd learned bits and pieces over time—that we all eventually get one—but that was the extent of my

knowledge.

I knew there had to be much more to it. And for Elias's sake, if nothing else, I needed to understand.

I flipped through the pages until I found the chapter on mates—mating, marking, and what it all truly meant. It was the first time I was reading any of this in detail.

I wasn't clueless—I understood what s*x was—but I had no idea how much deeper the bond ran between

true mates. How intense it could really be.

Suddenly, Elias's words from before made so much more sense. Why he kept telling me he wouldn't rush me, why he always said he'd wait for me to be ready. It was never about hesitation—it was about respect

for what this bond truly was.

I'd noticed marks on people's necks around here, but I'd never asked what they were. Now I understood- they were the physical sign of being marked by their mate.

It was all a bit overwhelming, even a little frightening. And it forced me to recognize how naïve I still was

about a lot of things.

I started making myself something to eat when my phone began ringing on the counter. I reached over

and answered it.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Lyra. It's me," Elias's familiar voice said through the speaker.

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“Hey. How’s everything going?” I asked.

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“Pretty well. We’re almost at the pack now. We’ll set up camp tonight and move in at dawn,” he said.

“Yeah. Planning a surprise attack, then?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Exactly. That’s the hope, at least—we’re counting on the element of surprise,” he replied.

“You guys better be careful out there,” I said, concern edging my voice.

“We will. I just wanted to call and check in with you. Everything going alright on your end?” he asked.

“Yeah, things have been fine. I’ve seen the warriors stationed outside the house, and Chris dropped by

earlier,” I said.

“Did you get a chance to meet anyone today?” he asked.

“I did. I met a few new faces, actually. I ended up having lunch at Hailey’s place and stayed most of the

afternoon. Chris took me around to introduce me to some of the pack members—that’s how I met Hailey

and a few others,” I said.

“That’s good to hear. I’m glad you’re getting out there and starting to connect with them. Are they treating you any differently?”

“Not at all, which was a huge relief. They all called me Lyra. No one called me Luna or princess or anything

like that. That meant a lot,” I said.

“Yeah. That’s really great to hear,” he said warmly.

We stayed on the phone, talking for a while. It was comforting hearing his voice until he eventually had to go. After hanging up, I had a quick dinner and headed upstairs.

I went into my room, laid down on the bed, and stared out the window, but something didn't feel right. A

strange uneasiness crawled under my skin, and no matter how I turned or repositioned myself, I just

couldn't fall asleep.

Eventually, I got up and quietly walked down the hallway to Elias's room. The moment I stepped inside, I

caught his scent lingering in the air and instantly felt calmer.

I curled up in his bed, but he hadn't slept in it yet, so it lacked his usual scent. I reached over and picked up

the shirt he had worn earlier, brought it into the bed with me, and buried my face in it. That helped a lot—I

relaxed almost immediately and finally drifted off to sleep.

Somewhere in the middle of the night, I was jolted awake by a loud banging noise echoing through the

house.

I sat up, heart pounding, and scanned the room, but there was nothing out of place. No movement. No shadows. Nothing.

I slipped out of bed cautiously and made my way to the door. Peeking into the hallway, I saw nothing but darkness. I started making my way downstairs, step by slow step, trying to stay composed.

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I turned the corner into the kitchen—and froze. All of the cabinet doors and drawers were flying open and slamming shut over and over, with no one around to touch them. No visible force, no physical presence—just chaos unfolding on its own.

I stood there, transfixed, watching it all. The ghost that had appeared in the kitchen earlier flashed through my mind—was he back to haunt me again? Or was this the Black Witch’s doing, trying to rattle me?

I wasn’t sure. But if the witch had been using that ghost to tap into my energy, then she’d only seen what he saw—this kitchen. And now, it was the only room being affected. That couldn’t be a coincidence.

Then, just like that, the ghostly figure reappeared right in front of me. I jumped as he materialized from

nowhere.

“Well, hello again, Princess. Lovely to see you,” he said with a cruel smirk.

“Get the hell out of my house,” I snapped.

“But your dear father is so desperate to see you,” he said, mockingly.

“My father can rot in hell,” I spat.

“That’s exactly what I was hoping you’d say,” he replied, and suddenly he thrust his arm forward, pressing his hand directly against my chest.

A sharp, agonizing pain tore through me and I screamed.

But then, something happened. A brilliant, white-hot light burst from my chest, shining so brightly that I

had to look down.

The pain stopped abruptly—he wasn’t burning me anymore. Instead, he was the one screaming now, trying to yank his hand away. But he couldn’t. His hand was stuck, fused to the light pouring out of me.

My guards burst into the house and came rushing in, only to stop in shock at the scene before them.

“Lyra! What do we do?” one of them called out, panic in his voice.

I tried to answer, but the ghost looked up at me with a twisted grin. That evil look in his eyes returned and

he shoved even harder into my chest.

The pain reignited, searing through me worse than before. I dropped to my knees with another scream, overwhelmed by the burning that wouldn't stop.

I kept shaking my head, desperate, trying to find a way to end it—but I had no idea how. His hand felt like it

was branding itself into me.

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As the warriors stood by, unable to intervene, I somehow summoned the strength to push myself back up

onto my feet. The ghost's smug grin faltered as I met his eyes, locking my gaze with his. Drawing on the

last of my energy, I let the light within me surge brighter, blindingly so, until it let out a high-pitched

screech. The ghost released its hold on me and was forcefully pulled from the house once more.

The light faded just as quickly as it had intensified, and the moment it disappeared, my legs gave out

beneath me and I collapsed. The warriors rushed over, their faces pale with shock.

One of them gently swept my hair aside to inspect my chest, revealing a deep burn in the distinct shape of

a handprint. I could see in their eyes that they were unsure of how to help—completely at a loss.

Chris arrived not long after, responding to their mind-link message, and I quietly asked him to help me get

back to my room. There wasn't much anyone could do at that point.

"What the hell was that thing trying to do?" Chris asked as he helped me settle into bed.

"I honestly don't know. He definitely wanted to hurt me. But beyond that... I have no idea what his actual goal was," I admitted.

"Alright. You need rest either way. I'm placing two guards inside the house tonight, just in case he returns,"

Chris said firmly.

"I don't think he'll be back tonight," I replied, my voice tired.

"I'm not taking any chances. If Elias finds out I didn't do everything in my power to protect you, I'm a dead man. Two guards are staying inside. End of discussion," Chris insisted.

"Okay," I said softly.

"I also called for a doctor to take a look at that burn. It looks nasty," he added.

"I've had worse. There's no need to fuss. With any luck, the werewolf healing will have taken care of it by morning," I said with a shrug.

"Maybe. But either way, the doctor's already on her way. She should be here in a couple of hours," he

replied.

"Alright," I murmured.

Chris left the room, though I never heard him actually exit the house.

He settled in the living room with the two guards, keeping watch while I tried to relax and get some sleep.

But rest didn't come easily. I tossed and turned, still shaken by what had happened.

I kept thinking about the ghost and what it might've wanted, and the more I dwelled on it, the more my head throbbed with the weight of unanswered questions.

Eventually, Dr. Eris arrived. She came directly to my room, sat with me for a while, and examined the burn.

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She looked completely baffled. She admitted she'd never encountered anything like it before.

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She took a few photographs of the wound—for her research, she said, and to document the case in case

anything similar ever turned up again.

She gave me a special ointment to apply to the burn, though she confessed she didn't know if it would actually help. At that point, I could only hope that my werewolf healing would kick in and erase the damage quickly.

Eventually, I did manage to fall asleep for a short while. But as soon as the first light of dawn crept through the window, I woke up again.

I headed downstairs to find Chris and the two guards still awake and stationed in the house.

I went to make some coffee and offered it to them all—they gladly accepted. They had been up all night,

after all.

I sat at the table and Chris took the seat across from me, his eyes watching me carefully.

"Are you feeling okay?" he asked.

"I honestly don't know. Have you told Elias what happened last night?" I asked in return.

"I tried calling him, but I couldn't reach him. I think their team already moved in on that pack," he said.

"Well, don't tell him yet. If he hears about this now, he'll just get distracted—and that'll only put him at

greater risk. Wait until he's back," I said firmly.

"Yeah. Are you worried he's going to get hurt?" Chris asked gently.

"A little. But this is what he does. He seems to know how to handle himself," I said.

"He does. And you don't need to worry—he'll come back in one piece," Chris reassured me.

"Yeah. I'm sure you're right," I said with a faint nod.

“Elias told me you were thinking about sneaking back into your father’s pack,” Chris said after a pause.

“Eventually, yes. I have to know what happened to my mother. And I believe there’s other important information hidden in my father’s office—stuff that matters to me,” I said, my voice steady.

“About what you are,” he said, his voice quieter now.

“Yeah. About my connection to the royal bloodline. My ancestry. Anything I can uncover that might be useful to me,” I replied.

“Well, Elias didn’t look too thrilled when he found out you were thinking of going back there,” Chris noted.

“I figured as much. But he understands that it means something to me,” I said simply.

Chris didn’t stick around much longer after that. Despite barely getting any rest, he had responsibilities around the pack that couldn’t wait. He still had to make sure everything was running smoothly.

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After I changed clothes, I headed outside. I found my way to the training grounds and sat down, quietly observing the warriors in the middle of their morning drills.

I was genuinely captivated by their techniques—the way they moved, the strategies they used, the way they supported and challenged one another in combat. Every detail held my attention.

They weren’t bothered by my presence, probably because they could tell I wasn’t there to scrutinize them. I needed to learn how to fight, and with Elias away, this was the best opportunity I had. Watching them

might teach me something.

Once training ended, I wandered back toward the residential part of the pack. I meandered between the houses, occasionally stopping to chat with people. Most of them had to reintroduce themselves since I couldn’t remember anyone’s name, and honestly, many weren’t part of the old village. There were so many

unfamiliar faces.

I still didn't know how many people actually lived in this pack. I wasn't sure if Elias even kept official

records like a standard pack Alpha might.

Because, well, this pack was far from ordinary.

By mid-morning, I returned to the house. I poured myself a glass of water and sat at the kitchen table with

a book, reading quietly. That's when my phone started to ring.

"Hello?" I answered.

"Lyra. It's me," Elias said.

"Hi. How are you? Did you manage to get the kids out safely?" I asked.

"Yeah, the kids are all safe. But what about you?" he said, concern creeping into his voice.

"What do you mean?" I asked, a little puzzled.

"Chris told me what happened last night," he said flatly.

"I specifically asked him not to say anything until you got back. I didn't want you to be distracted," I replied.

"Too late for that. I'm already on my way back," he said.

"What about the kids? Are you bringing them back here?" I asked, startled.

"No. Luke has arranged homes for them—foster families in other packs. He's going to take them there. That's what's going to take a few days," Elias explained.

"I just didn't want you worrying about me while you were in the middle of a mission. What if you got hurt?"

I said, guilt tugging at me.

"What did the doctor say?" he asked.

"There wasn't much she could do. She's never seen anything like it before. She gave me a topical

treatment for the burn, but that's about it," I said.

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“Has it started to heal at all?” he asked. I glanced down and gently tugged my shirt away from my chest to

look.

“I think so. It doesn’t look as inflamed now,” I said.

“I knew I shouldn’t have left you alone,” he muttered.

“Elias, there’s nothing you could’ve done to stop this. It’s the black witch—she’s the one controlling the ghost,” I said firmly.

“I don’t care. I need to be with you. I’ll be home in a couple of hours. And I’m not leaving you again,” he said.

“You and I both know that’s not something you can promise. You’re the Alpha of the Vanguard. People are always going to need you,” I reminded him.

“I don’t care. No one needs me more than you do. I’ll see you soon,” he said, the finality in his tone undeniable.

“Alright. I’ll see you then,” I said softly.

I stayed home for the next while, tidying up and reading to pass the time. The place wasn’t messy—I just needed something to keep me occupied.

Later, while I was doing a load of laundry, I heard my phone ringing again from the kitchen, so I walked

over to answer it.

“Hello?” I said into the receiver.

“Hello, princess,” came the reply.

“Who is this?” I asked, instantly uneasy.

“Oh, don’t tell me you’ve already forgotten your fiancé’s voice,” the man teased.

“Neil. How the hell did you get this number?” I demanded.

"I thought you'd be happy to hear from me," he said smoothly.

"I never wanted to hear your voice again," I snapped.

"Who the hell is Neil?" a voice asked behind me. I spun around—and there was Elias, standing right there.