

Chapter 121 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Melian POV

2 weeks later

The uncles are coming today, and they will finally have a sit-down conversation with grandma Gretchen tomorrow. I know she is beyond nervous, and so are they. I've spoken to them all several times over the past couple of weeks, and it was Jorma who needed the most convincing. He held a little resentment towards her because, even after everything, she still chose to stay away from them. It was only by a fluke that she was exposed and had to come forward. He was so upset that he didn't take into consideration that she thought they were dead for years. Just like the rest of us. I think it took that realization to set in for him to come to terms with it all and agree to come and speak with her.

"Leif and Jorma are coming today. Are their rooms ready?" I asked Liam. He nodded his head without looking up at me, and I decided to mess with him a little bit. I knew he wasn't fully listening, so I started with something small. "Maddix said 'poop' today," I started. "Mhmm...that's good," he replied. "Did you hear about the elephant in the room?" I asked. "Yes, babe. Is it new?" He asked. I started to laugh, and he still didn't look up. "Are you even listening to me Liam?" I asked again. He laid down the paper he was looking at and picked up another and said, "If you are fucking with me, Melian, you are going to have to do better than asking me random questions and statements involving the kids." he said, and my mouth dropped open. He started to chuckle at me and glanced my way. "I heard every single word. I just wanted to mess with you too." he stated. I walked over to him and grabbed his manbun and shook his head a little and then planted a kiss on his temple. "You big goof! I fell right into that one," I laughed. He wrapped his arm around me and said, "Yes you did. However, yes, their rooms are ready, and I have reserved the small community room for their meeting with Gretchen tomorrow. I wanted them to have privacy with a little comfort. There will be lunch waiting for them also." I thanked him and told him that I was asked to sit in with them. He said that it was probably a good idea, and the three of them probably needed support. I left his office after our talk and went to the kitchen to grab some soda. Loki was walking out as I got to the doorway, and he pulled me up into a huge hug. "Hello gorgeous," he said as he kissed my neck. I wiggled in his grip and kissed him back. "Where you off to baby?" I asked. "Training grounds," he replied. "We have some new recruits and I wanted to sit in on their first day to see if there are any hopefuls." he continued. I asked him about Tim, and it seemed to still be a touchy subject for him. I let it go, and he started to leave. He stopped after taking a few steps, and without looking back he said, "He's working hard

trying to prove himself again. It...it just feels different though." I knew how he was feeling with just that sentence, and he continued on his way.

I took out my phone and called Rory. I wanted to see if she had sensed any distress in Gretchen's moods. She said that she didn't seem like herself, but considering the situation, it was to be expected. I asked her to keep an eye on her, especially since my uncles were coming today, and she assured me she would. I knew from the last time I spoke with her that her nerves were on edge and the guilt she carried was eating away at her. I hope that getting everything off of her chest will help ease her mind a little. I have a meeting with Hazel, and it is the first time we have spoken since everything went down. I have been putting this meeting off, but I can't keep avoiding her. I felt a little betrayed and scorned even though I understood the reasons, and my mates said the way I was feeling was justified. They felt the same way about Tim, especially Loki. Once trust is broken, it's hard to get back.

I entered Coffee & Thyme and saw Hazel sitting at my usual table. "You are just in time. Food just came out." she said meekly. I knew deep in my heart she regretted her actions, and I didn't want to come off as standoffish with her. I bent over and gave her a hug, and took my seat. "It smells wonderful, Haze. Is this a new concoction?" I asked. She nodded her head, and said that the sauce was a balsamic vinegar-based sauce, and she created it with me in mind. She named it 'The Luna'. It was a large flatbread pizza with a vinegar-based sauce, and was topped with clumps of mozzarella cheese, basil, onion, red olives, tomato and arugula. It had crushed red pepper flakes sprinkled on top. I took a bite and melted into the savoriness of the taste. "My Goddess, Hazel. This is heavenly. Girl, if you never did anything else other than create pizzas, you could live like a queen." I raved. She flashed a small smile and thanked me. We ate with casual conversation, but I knew the inevitable was coming. "Mel... Luna, I just wanted to apologize again. I should have trusted you enough. I've made such a mess of things, not only with you and the alphas, but with my mate and his friends. Things are awkward between Tim and me right now because of all the secrets and the fact that I wouldn't let him reveal we were mates right away. I just hope I will still be able to fix everything between all of us. I know Tim is his own person, and wasn't forced, but we all know how the mate bond works. I wish they would just punish and blame me, instead of taking it out on him. He was proud to be Head Warrior, and now he feels like he's nothing. All because of me." she said. I hated she was being so hard on herself, and that Timmy was being even harder on himself. I had to fix this. I chose to forgive her, and talk to my mates about the same with Tim. Life is too short to hold grudges and be spiteful to those who you love. People do things for various reasons, and sometimes they are big things that may not deserve forgiveness. I don't think this qualifies as one of those big things.

Rekindling Emotions

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Gretchen POV

Today is the meeting with my boys. The biggest hope I have is that they fully hear me out before judgment. I didn't know what their dad had told them, and I am sure it wasn't the whole truth. I wish Tomas had been here with me to confirm how hard I tried, but unfortunately, he went to be with the Goddess a long time ago. I had Pablo, but he was too young to remember, so I had to hope they were able to at least remember some things from back then. I noticed it was almost 10am, and I started to get ready to leave. Melian was coming by to pick up Luke and I at 10:30, and I wanted to be ready. I appreciated her being so active in trying to get this reunion organized, and I was blessed to be able to start building a relationship with her. She is truly remarkable. I sense that Alette and Asteria carry more of the Fae gene than Wolf. Adelina, I don't sense Fae at all. Not that I couldn't be wrong, but as of right now, it's what I sense. I think the witch gene is so diluted now, that there may not be another among my daughters' children and grandchildren. Out of all her boys, Todd always held promise of carrying on that gene. I believe when he went feral, so to speak, all his magic, Fae and witch went with all that was good in him. I heard the horn honk, and I slipped on my shoes and jacket. Luke helped me out the door. I asked Luke to attend because, like Melian, he holds the power of truth. He also holds the power of projection. He can take someone's thoughts and memories and turn them into a visualization in thin air. I also carry that trait, but I think it would be more believable if someone else could show what is in my head, than if I did it myself.

He helped me into the car, and Mel greeted me. "Good morning grandma, sorry I'm a little early," she said. I wished her a good morning and told her it was alright. I was ready to do this, and hopefully start making amends with my twins. "Are you nervous?" she asked. I shrugged my shoulders and flashed her a meek smile. "Maybe a little, but it's more so that I'm ready to get this under way." I told her. She told me that my boys were just as ready and just as nervous, and that I shouldn't stress it too much. They were kind men, and knew that their childhood wasn't the roses their dad had tried to portray. She also warned me that Jorma may seem closed off, but he was the one who had a harder time recalling times of the past. She assured me that he was willing to remember and willing to listen, but to be aware that I may have to be more patient with him. It was always that way though. Leif was my carefree adventurer, and Jorma was always more cautious. Questioned everything. I remember when I had gotten pregnant with Lily, he was the one to ask a million questions. How did she get in there? How was she getting out? Why was she so tiny? Will she grow up to be a boy? Why was Leif a brother and Lily a sister? If it was a question to be asked, you can bank on Jorma asking it. It appeared he was still that same young man who had to know all the facts. We pulled in front of the pack house and Luke held onto my hand. "Are you ready grams?" he asked. I nodded my head and patted his hand. He helped me out of the car, and together we walked into the house.

I stood in the foyer, and spoke briefly to the alphas. They knew how nervous I was, and asked me if I needed anything, to have Mel get a hold of them. I expressed how I would like to see my great-grandchildren afterward, and they promised they would make it happen. They were good men, great mates, fantastic fathers, and even better alphas. Blood Moon was lucky to have them, and my family was even more blessed that they were part of it. With Luke on one side and Melian on the other, we walked hand in hand to the community room that was reserved for us. My sons were on the other side of the door, and I took a shaky breath before entering through it.

As I entered, the men I had birthed all those years ago stood to greet me. Leif enveloped me in a hug, and Jorma simply shook my hand. Which was more than alright, given the circumstances. Luke and I sat across from them on a dainty love seat, and Melian sat in one of the side chairs. Far enough to give us space, but close enough to give me comfort. After staring at each other for some time, I started the conversation. "I know finding out about who I am was probably a shock for you boys. I should have told you during the whole alpha demon debacle, but I figured there was enough going on to put more shock and stress on everyone. I never had intentions of not telling you, I just needed the right time. It was by chance that our sweet Melian found out before I could. I'm willing to answer all your questions, and if you would like, Luke here could show you my memories to show that I am telling the truth. Plus, your niece would be able to confirm whether I am lying to you or not. Before I start, however, I want you to know how much I love you boys. How much I loved your sister, and even your father. You have a family that are anxious to meet you both, formally, and not just like some witches who were willing to help out. Before going into detail, I would honestly like to know what you both remember about that time." Leif leaned forward and Jorma stiffened in his chair. "The only thing we remember about you, was that our dad called you Rose, and that you left us when father found his mate and got married. There are things that might be memories, but only you can answer if they are or not. Our early childhood was a blur to be honest," Leif explained. This was going to be a long and emotional day, but I was ready to face it head on.

I Could Never

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Jorma POV

I had to get over the jitters of seeing her. She was my mother for goddess's sake. While we were waiting for our niece to get back with her, the alphas handed us a couple shots of moonshine to calm our nerves. It was still morning, but I gladly accepted the gesture. I wasn't even this nervous when we confronted David the day he shot us, or when Meribeth told us she was pregnant. We could only remember what our dad had told us about her, but Leif admitted that he had flashes of what he thought might be memories with our mother. He wanted to make sure before he held on to those flashes, because if they weren't memories and just wishful thinking, then it would be silly to hold on to such things. Loki had received a text from Mel, and it said they were almost here. The alphas left us, and went to greet them. Liam assured us everything would be alright, and that we should relax. "Gretchen is a great woman," he praised. I hoped he was right, because I didn't know if I could handle another psycho mother figure.

Before long, the door opened again, and our mother, nephew and niece came in. We stood to greet her, and she walked towards us. Even though I knew she was my mother, I still only saw

the woman who helped us destroy a demon. Leif embraced her and when they separated she turned to me. I wasn't ready for that level of intimacy, so I extended my hand to her. She shook my hand firmly with both of her hands, and my nephew helped her over to the small love seat to sit down. She started to stare at her hands and then looked up at us both. She started to speak, and my whole body tensed. I was ready to hear what she had to say, but I wasn't going to stand for her bashing our dad. I was ready if it came to that. She apologized for not coming forward sooner, and then let us know she had wanted things to die down before approaching us. It was admirable since there was so much going on at the time. She even offered to allow Luke to show a projection of her memories so that we knew she was being honest. She even mentioned how much she loved us, Lily and even our dad. I took in a deep breath at that comment, and had to remember that she thought we had been dead for a long time. Everyone did. Leif sat forward and replied to what she had told us.

"The only thing we remember about you, was that our dad called you Rose, and that you left us when father found his mate and got married. There are things that might be memories, but only you can answer if they are or not. Our early childhood was a blur to be honest," Leif explained. He looked over at me expecting me to chime in, so I closed my eyes and said, "I think we would like to see the projection. I think we will be more willing to hear things about the past, by also seeing it. I don't want to have doubts whether you are speaking the truth or not, because I'm sure there are going to be some not-so nice things that happened involving our dad." I watched as she relaxed, knowing that we were willing to be open-minded and hear her whole side, no matter how ugly or painful it was for us to hear. She explained how it all worked, and that Melian would confirm as the projection played out whether it was truth or a lie. Mel came and sat between Leif and me on the couch, and held each of our hands. "This is a good thing," Mel stated. I gave her a smile and kissed the back of her hand. Finding her and Jason was a blessing all around. Once Luke and my mother were ready, they joined hands. My mother started to speak about her past and how she met our dad. Once she had spoken for a few minutes, Luke opened his eyes and, almost like a movie, her memories played in midair. It showed everything from the time she found out she was pregnant with Leif and me, to the court cases, to the time she found out we had been shot and left for dead. It finally ended with the night we destroyed the demon.

Luke closed his eyes again, and my mother slumped over. Obviously, the projection had drained them both. Leif started to get up, and Mel stopped him. She shook her head and told him to give them a moment. She confirmed that what Gretchen spoke, and what we saw was the truth. The complete raw truth. She asked if we had any questions for her, and we both shook our heads. I gave her a tight hug, and Leif followed me with a hug of his own. I looked at my niece and cupped her cheeks and said, "Thank you little bird. As bad as some of it hurts to watch and hear, it answered so many questions." Leif agreed with me, and suddenly my mother sat up and took a deep breath, while Luke's eyes shot open again. Leif and I went to be by their sides, and make sure they were alright. "Are you alright mother?" I asked. She nodded and started to shed tears. "I'm better than I have been in many years, my boy. Thank you for making the choice to listen." she cried. Luke looked at us and said, "I wish all of you could have grown up around grandma. She spoke of her lost children often, and about how much she missed and loved all of you. It used to break my grandpa, uncle Marcus and my dad's hearts when she would talk until the tears soaked her cheeks. She never got over it, and her kids and grandkids she had with my grandpa never replaced you all." With a faint whisper I heard, "I could never." come from my mother.

Dear Diary

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Melian POV

1 month later

21st December

Dear Diary,

It's been years since I have decided to write in you. I honestly thought I lost you a long time ago. However, when my mates and I returned to the former Mystic Shadows and had to clean out my sperm donor's house, I found you in a large box in my old closet.

Things have been amazing lately. The pack is thriving, and so is my Starry Moon. We are having our Christmas/New Years ball next weekend, and I have a lot of things left to prepare. Rebecca and Jason will be bringing those in their pack who wish to attend later today, and we have made accommodations for those coming at Nick's Place. So far, the only orphans we have still staying there are George, Henry and Jack. Rico and Grace are in the process of adopting them though. Grace said she couldn't bare the thought of them living somewhere else and calling some other woman mom. They are good boys and love her very much. Rico and George are thick as thieves, and he adores all three boys. I can't wait until their new little addition comes along.

My girls are getting so big, and Maddix will soon be 2 years old. He loves his baby sisters, and is such a daddy's boy when it comes to Liam. He is close to Loki too, but I think if he had to choose between them, he would choose Liam every time. As far as the girls, I think that my grandma is right about their genetic traits. I feel a wolf in all of them, but more so in Adelina. The trait is there with the other 2 girls, but Adelina is definitely an Alpha. Speaking of wolves, grandma says that she thinks Maddix is an Alpha, and not a Beta. He does come from Alpha's on my side, and his biological mother's side. My mates are dead set on him being the first heir, and dare anyone to challenge their decision. Just as they dare anyone to challenge their decision to choose him to be their son. They don't see him as their "adopted", he is theirs and only theirs.

Both of my mates have been so busy helping Jason get the proper channels for income, and I think with their help, Starry Moon will be a close tie with Blood Moon very soon. Where Starry is located is close to the ocean, and they have decided to open a fishing business, as well as a fishery. Oregon weather can be tricky in the winter, but I think with the determination they have, they can make it work. They are also helping Jason get other means of pack income, in case of

bad fishing times. No matter what happens, they won't allow our family and their pack to suffer. Jason has taken on some of the same projects as we have going here, such as a new group home for orphans, and a safe house for women and children who have been abused or are being abused. He has started programs within their pack for anyone who needs them in regard to any form of abuse, men included. Until everything happened, I had no idea that Jason was also a victim of sexual abuse. Once, when him and Rebecca were visiting, he asked me to meet him for coffee so that we could have a heart-to-heart. He told me about every little thing he had endured growing up, and how our dad knew about Todd doing things to him. He told me about how he felt like the most worthless human alive because of it, and because of what he was being made to do to me. He even admitted to me that he didn't know if he would ever feel worthy of love from anyone, but he would gladly accept it, and be a better man because of it. I explained to him how our past doesn't and can't define us, that we can't control what has happened to us, and we can only learn from it and move on. Holding grudges destroys your spirit and heart, and what good would it be to have a heart so damaged that we can't share the goodness of it with others? He promised to start putting the past behind him the best he could, and we both agreed not to bring it up to each other unless completely necessary.

As far as Tim and Hazel, they are going above and beyond what was requested of them. It has gotten to the point where Loki and Liam have started giving Tim more responsibilities, and it's looking hopeful for him to earn his spot back soon. Hazel's aunt had passed away 2 weeks ago, and the alphas had even allowed her and Tim to attend her funeral without any warriors going with them. Her aunt had left her a small inheritance, and she planned on opening a bakery with it. She is going to focus on pastries, donuts, breads and pre-made pizza dough. I, for one, am beyond excited for it to open. I have been helping her decide where on the pack grounds she plans to build. She said something about just building onto Coffee & Thyme, but I suggested she separate the two, and split her time in between them. Christy has proven to be an amazing asset to her, and has even turned out to be Tobias's mate. We took Rico and Tobias to lunch one day, and it was magical. As soon as he walked in, it was over for them both. They have been inseparable ever since.

Now, I would like to say that everything has been hunky-dory with my uncles and grandmother. Leif and my grandma have become extremely close, and he has even started to build a relationship with Pablo and his family. Jorma, on the other hand, is cordial and respectful towards them all, but doesn't go out of his way to build anything with anyone. He is still reserved and awkward with everyone, sometimes including me. I think it's just who he is. I can't say I blame him. My uncles and mother had a weird beginning to their childhood. My grandpa Albert thought he was doing right by them, but in the end, I think it just messed Jorma up more than the others.

As for me, I am actually doing great. My visits with Peter have been fewer and further between, and he says I'm healing nicely in my mental capacity. The nightmares have stopped, and my memory progression has increased. I can remember more and more every day, and I handle them in stride. The good memories from when mom was still alive are coming slowly, but any memory with her is a good one. I have an appointment with Roxy today. I have been having a lot of cramping, and I hope everything is OK. I will be positive though until given a reason not to

be. Ruby and I have discovered more of our abilities, and our bond with one another has become solid. She is still sassy, but I know she only bucks up when she feels it's important.

I have to sign off for now, but I will return to share more with you really soon.

Love,

Melian aka Mel

Toddler On Board?

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Loki POV

To say life has been crazy busy is a solid fact. I knew Jason was going to need a lot of help with getting acclimated to being an Alpha of a pack, especially without Alpha training. What I didn't expect was the crazy mess that Callum left this pack. It took him and his uncles almost a full month to get the paper work organized, and to see exactly where the pack stood financially. Let's just say that it wasn't a surprise when we found out that it wasn't ideal. If he didn't come up with a solution to bring in sustainable income to help supply what the pack needed, there would be no pack. He called a meeting with his uncles, me and Liam, and financial advisors of the Royal Council. Starry Moon qualified for a small grant to help them out until they could get a business going, but that grant would only stretch so far. Liam and I donated a substantial amount of materials to help them build some much-needed facilities, and repair the buildings that could be repaired. Our lumber business was booming, and had plenty to spare. Benefits of owning many acres of wooded land. We also donated funds that matched the grant, and that gave them double what the council could help with. We weren't going to let our brother-in-law and sisters pack fold. They earned what they have at Starry Moon, and the people of the pack deserved a chance with a new and improved Alpha and Luna.

Two weeks ago, we had to go to the disbanded Mystic Shadows. The council was about to either bulldoze and sell the land, or they were going to offer the pack to another qualified person for the Alpha position. They would need to start from the bottom with regard to everything. Members, business, everything. Liam and I thought about purchasing it just for the land itself, and using it for another business venture. Whether that would happen would remain to be seen. Mel and Jason insisted on going with us, to help clean out their childhood home. I worried about Mel going, because she had done so well in her healing. I worried returning, even for a brief visit, would trigger all the bad memories again. Luckily it didn't. She found some things that she really

wanted to hold on to, a lot of them her moms. At the end of it all, Mel and Jason were able to torch their prison of evil and torment. The look of pure relief on their faces was priceless.

After we talked to Gretchen and Pablo, we decided to purchase the land. Their coven would move out of the Mill house and into the new land to work the grounds. They would be able to use part of the land to plant their herbs and whatever else they saw fit, and we would work a large part of it and use it for crops and other sources of food. In exchange for living freely, they would tend to the planting and taking care of the fields and any livestock that we would have. This venture would not only help the packs and the coven, but we would be able to open up a farmers-market type business from spring to late fall. It was close enough to human towns and tourist spots near the pacific coast that we had no doubts it would do well. The coven members insisted they would take care of it for us, and it felt good to know that some positivity would come out of a place that previously carried so much negativity. We are tearing down the old pack house and building a house on the property for us to stay in when we are there. We offered it to Gretchen and the rest before we decided, and she said there was too much dark energy and would prefer something else. Who were we to deny grandma Gretchen, and what she wanted, she was getting. We were going to name the property Ruby Meadows, our mate's idea, of course, and her grandma loved it.

Melian had an appointment with Roxy today. She hasn't been feeling well. I hope that there is good news for her, and it's just something minor. We are going to meet with Rico, Tobias, Tim and their mates for dinner in our private dining room to celebrate Tobias and Christy getting married soon. We wanted to take them out to somewhere special, but Christy was adamant about doing something cozy and intimate. They also wanted the kids to be there, because she adored them all. A long while back she had found out she wasn't going to be able to have kids of her own, and for a moment it was an issue for Toby. However, they worked it out and as soon as they found the right child, they were going to adopt. They thought our journey with Maddix, and Rico and Grace with their current 5 kids was inspirational and that's what they wanted to do as well. I hope they find what they wanted soon, because I know Toby is dying to be a dad.

Sitting at our desk in our office, the phone started to ring. No one ever calls this phone, so I was curious as to who it was. "Hello? Alpha Loki Young speaking," I answered. "Yes, Alpha Loki, this is Gamma Joshua Travers, of The Northern Sun pack. I was hoping to speak with your brother, Liam. Is he available?" he replied. Why would this Gamma want to speak with Liam? "I'm sorry, but my brother is unavailable at the moment. Is there something I could help you with, Gamma Travers?" I diverted. He was briefly silent, and then dropped a bombshell. "Well, I suppose so. Could you give him this number and tell him that I need to speak with him urgently? I have a 3-year-old child here that is his, and I need him to come retrieve it." He said. My jaw hit the ground, and I wasn't sure how to respond. I told him I would deliver his message, and hung up the phone. Holy fuck, this cannot be real.

One step forward...4 steps back

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Liam POV

I was at Starry Moon for the day, helping finalize the documents for our funds transfer for their rebuild. Their grant from the council was finally available for transfer and \$500,000 from the council, and the \$500,000 match donation we offered will help them so much. We have already found 8 fishing and crab boats, and a storefront location in the tourist town of Astoria to set up a fresh seafood shop. The man who owns the shop is allowing them to open up, rent-free, for 6 months and then afterward, the rent would be extremely cheap. He is a wolf mated to a human, so he lives in Astoria with his mate. He used to be part of Dark Star, and was overjoyed that Callum was gone and no longer had control. We had just walked out of Jason's office, and my phone rang. I saw it was Loki and I quickly answered. Melian had an important doctor appointment, and I was worried something had happened.

"Hey brother, what's up?" I answered. I could tell he was anxious by the sound of his voice, and he asked me to go somewhere private, so we could talk. I told Jason I needed to use his office for this call and that it was important, and he told me it was fine. He said he would meet me at the pub in half an hour. I waved him off and closed the door. "OK, I'm alone. What has got you all worked up?" I asked. He quickly answered, and explained the strange call he had received on the office phone. "Who were you with almost 3 and a half years ago, Liam?" he asked. My mind was racing trying to recall, and then it hit me. Rochelle. Rochelle Nightwater was the daughter of the Beta of the Northern Sun pack. I heard she was attacked and killed by a rogue recently, and honestly, this child could very well be mine. I wanted a paternity to prove it, but I wouldn't turn my back on a child in need. "You don't remember, Lok? Rochelle Nightwater, her and I dated for almost a year before she got up and left one night to go back to her pack," I told him. "Holy shit! That's right! What the hell are you going to do, and how do we explain this to Mel?" he explained. I wasn't sure, but I wasn't going to hide it from her either. I told him I would be heading out soon, and that I promised to have a beer with Jason to celebrate things coming together. When I was done, I would head out. He acknowledged what I said and promised to keep things quiet until I got home. I needed to call the Gamma, but I would wait until I was with my brother so that I had a witness to the conversation.

I went and used the restroom, and splashed a little water on my face. I looked at myself in the mirror and noticed how tired I looked. My beard was as unruly as my hair, and the bags under my eyes were the evidence needed to prove I hadn't been sleeping well. I needed a short vacation to relax and rest, and after I spoke with the Gamma, I was planning that trip. I left the restroom and headed out the front door of the packhouse. The pub wasn't far, and I decided to walk and breathe in the fresh air. I waved at the occasional pack member I passed, and even spoke with a few of them. The consensus was that Jason and Rebecca were just what the pack needed. It

warmed my heart to know we had a part in helping this happen for them all. I walked into the pub and Jason was already seated at the bar with Leif and Jorma. They waved me over, and I took the stool next to Jason. The bartender plopped a large glass of their home-brewed house ale and a shot of their finest whiskey. "Drink up brother! We have reason to celebrate", Jason hollered and clanked his glass against mine. I gave a slight chuckle and gave the ale a good swallow. I then picked up the shot glass and poured the warm liquid down my throat. I knew I couldn't drink any more than what was in front of me, because I needed to leave as soon as I finished. I explained that I had to head out soon, and Jason understood. I didn't tell him anything other than I wanted to be there when Mel got home from her appointment.

I finished my drink and said goodbye to my family, and jumped into my truck. I rushed home as quickly as I could, and I saw my mate as I was driving up the lane. Why was she so far away from the pack house and hospital? I pulled up beside her and rolled down the window. She didn't even look my way. I hollered her name, and it startled her, and I knew she had been deep in thought. "Mel, baby, are you OK?" I asked her, and she shook her head without saying a word. I jumped out of the car and took her hand. I led her to the passenger side of the truck and helped her in. After climbing back into the truck myself, I turned to her and asked her what was wrong. She looked at me, fighting the tears forming in her eyes, and simply said, "We need to find Loki first." I started to panic, but held a calm composure for her. I took her hand and pulled her closer to me and held onto her as I drove to the pack house. I linked Loki to go to our room, and told him something was wrong with Mel. He said he would grab the snacks and meet us there. Loki knew snacks were always a comfort to our mate, and I told him that it was a good idea. I closed the link and concentrated on trying to talk to Mel. I told her about everything going on at Starry, and she only replied with short responses. I was thankful when I saw the pack house and I didn't even bother parking in the garage. I parked out front and helped her out of the car. We intertwined our fingers and walked up to our bedroom. Walking in, she saw Loki already sitting on the sectional and had a grand spread of snacks and drinks waiting for her. She flashed a small smile, and walked over to sit next to him. He pulled her close and she snuggled into him. I sat on the other side of her and held her hand. "Talk to us baby girl," Loki said. She took a deep breath and said, "Possible ovarian cancer." Loki and I looked at each other and were at a loss for words.

The "C" Word

Chapter 127 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Melian POV

I had arrived at the hospital clinic earlier than I was scheduled, and decided to visit the children in the children's health ward. There had been an outbreak of the flu, and there were several children hospitalized from the pneumonia it ended with. I was thankful that our doctors and

nurses were able to get it under control rather quickly, but hated that there were kids who ended up really sick from it. I made sure to leave little surprises in the form of candy for them at the nurses' station, and made my way back down to the maternal clinic to see Roxy. "There's my girl," she said. Roxy and I had become seriously close, and it was good having her as another motherly figure. She always had the best advice when it came to my mates, her nephews. She brought me a paper gown and sheet and told me I knew the drill. I gave her a smile, and changed into the latest in 'paper fashion'. It wasn't long before she came back in, and we discussed what had been going on. I told her I was having bloating issues, as well as weird cramping pains in my ovary area, and that it was getting worse. She asked me to lay down, and she started to feel around with utter concentration. She pulled out the stirrups and placed my feet in them. After doing her exam, she asked me to stay for an MRI. She explained that it was just a precaution, but the look on her face told me that it was just to confirm what she had already seen. While waiting for the lab to come get me for the MRI, another nurse came in to get blood for lab work. I was starting to get nervous, but kept being reassured by those who noticed that it was 'all procedure'.

Finally, returning to my room, Roxy returned as well. She told me I could get dressed, but wanted me to come to her office right after. A million thoughts swirled through my head, and I dressed quickly. I knocked on her door, and heard her tell me that it was open. She smiled at me as I walked in, and it gave me some kind of reassurance. However, that reassurance would quickly fade away. "You know how I am, sweetie. I am a straight shooter. The reason for the MRI was to basically to confirm what I found during your exam. You have a pretty large mass on your right ovary, and one just slightly smaller on your left one. I will have the results of your MRI and your blood labs by the end of the day. Do you want me to call you or come by to give you the results?" she explained. I must have been staring into space, because she started to wave her hand in front of my face. My head snapped at her and I replied, "Are you implying that I may have cancer?" A defeated look came across her face and she slightly nodded her head. "Unfortunately, that could be a possibility, sweetheart. If it is, ovarian cancer is treatable with surgery," she replied. I knew that it also meant I would never be able to have another baby of my own. I mean, we have 4 kids right now. That was enough. Right? She went around her desk and embraced me with a warm hug, and I thanked her for being honest and looking out for me. I left her office with more questions than she had answers for at the moment, and decided to take a walk through the forest. Ruby wanted to shift, but I couldn't at the moment. I needed to think, and if I let Ruby take over, I wouldn't be able to do just that.

The sun had started to set, and the forest was getting pretty dark. I decided to go out of it and walk the dirt road back to the house. I heard a honk, but paid no attention to it until I heard Liam yell my name. I slowly turned to him, and he asked how I was. All I could muster to say was that we needed to find Loki. I didn't know how to even tell them what I had just learned, but I knew I had to. Liam didn't force me to speak anymore, and we walked hand in hand up the stairs to our bedroom. Walking in, I noticed Loki sitting on the couch watching the game. A huge display of snacks and drinks filled the coffee table. I let go of Liam's hand and made my way over to Loki. I snuggled into him, and he turned off the game. "What's up baby doll?" he asked. I waited for Liam to sit with us, and I was finally able to release the words I dreaded so much. "Possible ovarian cancer." I said. I felt them both get tense, and Liam admitted he knew cancer was serious, but knew nothing about the ovary kind. I took a deep breath and sat up straight. I explained that I would need to have surgery and a biopsy done. I wouldn't know the results of the

blood labs and MRI until after Roxy left the clinic, which should be soon. They both comforted me the best they could, and I asked Loki to turn the TV back on. I needed a distraction until Roxy arrived, and snacks and TV seemed like a good distraction. I didn't even care if it was the basketball game Loki had been watching before. He took the remote and turned it back on, and the Portland Trail Blazers were winning by 21 points. I picked up a sandwich and a bag of Doritos. I grabbed a can of Mt. Dew and sat cross-legged between my mates. We continued to watch the game, but I couldn't help to keep checking the time on my phone. As I checked it for the 100th time, a text popped up. It was from Roxy, asking me and her nephews to meet her in their office. I showed it to the twins and we left our room. My bag of Doritos is still in my hand.

When we got to the office, she was there waiting. I knew the look on her face already held my answers. Liam opened the door for us, and we filed in one by one. After we were seated, Roxy laid a large envelope on the desk. These are the pictures of my MRI. She pulled out one sheet of paper and went over the blood labs first. My blood count was seriously bad, and the MRI had confirmed that there were definitely large masses on my ovaries. I let out a whimper and my chips hit the floor. My mates were immediately by my side, and the three of us listened closely as she explained our options. Or should I say, option. Removal of the ovaries and any tissues that the masses had touched was the only option. Surprisingly, my mates took it better than I had. Liam came in front of me and cupped my face and said, "Baby, you are what is important here. We have four beautiful babies already, and if we want more, there are other options. There's adoption, and surrogacy." A smile across his face. It was good that they didn't think it was the end of the world, but I wasn't sure I could agree. Just the mention of someone else carrying my babies made my skin crawl.

Coming To An Understanding

Chapter 128 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Liam POV

Maybe it was dumb of me to open my mouth and mention surrogacy. I mean, I understand where she is coming from, but it would be 100% our baby. Just someone else carrying it. We can harvest and freeze her eggs before her ovaries have to be removed. I will not mention it again though, because the look in her eyes could have killed me if it were possible. My heart breaks for her, and I would go to the ends of the earth if it would help her from being sad. How do I tell her about the possibility of me having a child before I met her now? I need to do it soon, because she is going to question why I have to leave to go up north. I linked Loki and asked him what I should do, and he said that I should probably just rip the band-aid off and tell her now. That way, we can handle everything together now, before it becomes too late. I had to agree with him. We stood up to leave Roxy's office and my aunt wrapped her arms around Mel. "Sweet girl, you are

strong and resilient. You and my boys will get through this together, just as you always do. I am only a phone call away. Liam, eventually your feet will start to taste like garbage. Try and keep yours out of your mouth, please." she smirked as we were walking out the door. I heard Mel snicker through her tears and I just shook my head. Roxy always had a way with words, and this time, I walked right into it.

Walking back to the pack house, Mel took my hand and leaned her head against my arm. "I'm sorry," she whispered. Loki and I stopped in our tracks and I looked at my mate and said, "No, baby! You have nothing to be sorry for. Not at all. I am the idiot who should be apologizing to you for making the surrogate suggestion. Neither Loki nor myself hold this against you. As long as you are healthy, and our current babies are healthy, that is all that matter to us. We are a family with more than enough love to get us through the worst of times. I think the past has proven that. Roxy is right. Come hell or high water, we will get through this as a TEAM!" She seemed to relax a little and nodded her head. "You are right, we will. It's just scary is all. If I were a full-blooded wolf, I wouldn't have to be worried about this at all. Ruby has barely spoken to me today, and I'm afraid she is angry with me. My body has taken her right to carry more children as well." she said softly. Her eyes glazed over and Ruby must be speaking to her at that moment. When her eyes cleared, I heard Loki ask, "Ruby?" Mel nodded to him and said, "She said I was overreacting, and that she was just sad for me. She says we have more than enough kids and that we should be happy with what we have, not what might have happened. She said there was a possible chance we may not have been blessed to have another child anyway. When I think about it, she is right. There was no for sure chance I would have conceived again in the first place." I pulled her into my embrace and held her until she pulled away. "Are you OK, Liam? I can feel the tension in your body." she asked.

It was now or never, I guess. "No, not really. It's more than just me worried about your condition. Let's go check on the babies and get back to our room, and then we will talk, alright?" She looked at me wide-eyed and gave a slight nod. We took care of our kids, and made sure they were tucked in tight, and then went to our room. Loki called down to have a late dinner delivered to us, and I let the nanny know that we were going to need some privacy for a few hours. That way, if any of the kids woke up, she knew to make sure they were alright. We sat on the sectional and again, Mel snuggled into Loki for support and I sat facing her. I didn't know how to start things off, so I just started with the phone call from Gamma Travers.

"Earlier today, Loki received a call from the Gamma of a pack we hadn't spoken to in almost 3 years. We don't have any alliances, and we aren't enemies. We just simply don't associate. The reason behind that is, I used to date their Beta's daughter Rochelle about 3 and half years ago. We had dated quite awhile and one night while I was helping with patrols, she packed what things she had here at Blood Moon and left. She, herself, never told me why, but her father, Beta Malcom Nightwater of the Northern Sun pack, called me one day a few months later and explained. She had been for a brief visit right before she left, and had found her mate. He was a new warrior who had transferred from another pack, and she tried to fight it and stay here with me, but she couldn't stay away from him. She didn't want to hurt me is what he said. Anyway, today when Gamma Travers called and spoke with Loki, he mentioned that I needed to come and collect my child. I had heard not long ago that Rochelle was attacked and killed by rogues, but I never knew she was pregnant after she left. I had no idea that I had a child with her until today. I

swear it, Mel. I have asked for a paternity test, just to make sure the child is mine. I have to go there in two days to have it done. I want you to come with me, but if you don't want to, I understand. I'm not even sure if the child is a girl or a boy, but if it is mine, I can't abandon it. It would be like me walking away from our girls. I just can't," I explained. I had to look away from her briefly to collect myself, and when my gaze fell back upon her, her eyes were clinched shut. "Mel? Please talk to me. I'm sorry for the timing, but I really didn't want you to be in the dark about this. No secrets, remember?" I said quietly. Her eyes popped open, and she said, "I'll go. I was speaking with Ruby. I can't be upset about this, Liam. It was before me, and the child didn't ask to be put in this position and neither did you. I know if you had known, you would have stepped up. You are an amazing father, baby. Not only to our girls, but to our son too. If this child is yours, you have to let me do one thing, and I need you to promise I can." By this time, Loki was sitting up staring into her eyes just like I had been, and I asked her what promise she needed. "If he turns out to be yours, he is mine too. I will get to adopt and raise him as mine. His family at Northern Sun won't be shoved out of his life, but they will not be forced to be in it either. They will respect our decision that I will raise him as his mother, and when he is old enough, we will tell him about his birth mother. If you can't promise me this, I can't stand behind you." she spoke without hesitation. I dropped to my knees in front of her, and laid my head on her knees. I started to weep and whispered to her, "I would promise you anything in the world. You already know this. I promise you that you will be this child's mother if he turns out to be mine." She ran her hands through my hair and said softly, "Even if it isn't yours. If they don't want the child, it is ours. OK?" I nodded my head and Loki kissed her temple. He answered for me and said, "We promise you, babe. The little one comes home with us."

A Brother For Maddix

Chapter 129 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

MELIAN POV

Talk about a double whammy. First my diagnosis, and then the possibility of Liam having a love child from a previous relationship. I can't fault him for that. It was before me, and I knew they weren't virgins when we found each other. They are also a bit older than me, and it would have been crazy for them to be completely alone. If it weren't for what happened to me, they might never have even found me at all. I am beyond thankful that Liam didn't try and hide the information from me, and told me the truth. Shitty timing, yes, but still, we promised no secrets ever. After he had explained everything to me, I had to speak to Ruby. I was hurt and angry at first, but after what she said to me, I knew I was overreacting and what I wanted to do with everything he told me. Ruby spoke to me and explained the reasoning why the way I was feeling was valid, but also a little overboard. It was before me, and if they had an inkling of where I was, or even who I was, it would never have been a situation he would have put himself in. He

wouldn't even consider it. She said it was even a way to add to our family, just like I wanted. I knew she was right, and it was before me. Damn, it was even before Jason had met Rebecca. Not long before, but before. That is when I opened my eyes to look at him, and asked him to make me a promise. THE promise. I wanted to go with him, and be there for him every step of the way. Regardless of whether the child was his or not, if Northern Star didn't want it, I did. We were going to make this work.

I will contact Roxy tomorrow, and schedule my surgery for when we return. I want that part of my life done and over with. Sooner the better. I will let Liam, however, tell his aunt about the child. I just wish we knew if it were a boy or a girl. There were so many questions running through my brain, and I knew neither of my husbands knew the answers, so they would have to wait. I was starving and dinner had just arrived. Pasta with a garlic cream sauce, lots of bread and a Cobb salad. I was literally in heaven. We watched the movie A Christmas Story, and ate our dinner. We needed something to lighten our moods before we went to sleep. As we were eating, something dawned on me. The Holiday Ball. There was no way we could have it this weekend. I called Grace and hoped she was awake. I asked her if she thought it was too late to reschedule, and she said that she wasn't sure. It was more likely to have to go on as scheduled. Our trip to Northern Sun would have to be a quick one.

I explained to Liam and Loki about the ball, and they agreed it was too late. Too many invitations had already been sent out, and too many preparations had been made. We came up with the solution of leaving for Northern Sun tomorrow, doing the paternity test immediately. We would stay until Thursday evening and be back by that night. Hopefully with a little one in tow. I got up and gathered my bedclothes and went in to take a shower. Liam was going to get hold of Rico and make sure him and Grace could handle things for a few days. I had already called my grandmother about watching the kids, and she said that her, Marion and Ginger were going to stay at the packhouse and keep an eye on the kids for us while we were gone. They were over the moon that we asked. It gave them bonding time, but they had to promise no witchy rituals or blessing the babies unless we were present. They got a good laugh out of that and promised they would behave. After my shower, I made one last trip to the nursery to check on our children. They were sleeping peacefully, but I noticed that Asteria was in Adelina's crib. A little confused, I knocked on the nanny's door. Thankfully, she was still awake, and I asked why our little runt wasn't in her own bed. Tara, the nanny, explained that Asteria got very fussy, and the only way she would calm down was when she was next to her sister. Tara had a system when it came to getting the kids ready for bed. She would put the girls in one crib and change them all. Then, one by one, she would make sure they were tucked and settled in their own cribs. She said she had tried to wait until Asteria was fully asleep and move her, but when she tried, she got fussy again. I told her it was OK, and to just leave her where she was comfortable. I wished her goodnight and went back to my own bedroom and crawled into bed between my already sleeping mates.

Morning time came quickly, and I was still so tired. Half asleep, I went into my closet and threw on some leggings and a baggy sweater. I slipped on my Uggs and grabbed my jacket. It was comfort over style today, but I personally thought I looked cute. My hair was in a loose bun at the nape of my neck and I didn't bother with anything but mascara and a light lip gloss. The twins had packed me a bag, and once grandma and the others arrived, we left for our journey. It

wasn't an awful long drive, but long enough to where I was ready for breakfast once we got there. Gamma Josh had met us at the packhouse, and thankfully there was no tension between him and my mates. Liam asked where Beta Nightwater was, and the Gamma explained that he would like to stay out of the dealings with Liam. Liam looked slightly confused by that admission, but the Gamma told him that he had taken his daughter's death extremely hard, and wanted no dealings with anyone who would remind him of her. That is why he was sending his grandchild away. I personally thought it was cruel to do that to a child he had bonded with while his daughter was still alive, but it was going to make our request easier in the end. Especially if the child turned out not to be his. He told us that he would join us for breakfast, and then that he would take us to the boy to do the test. A boy. A brother for Maddix.

Spitting Image

Chapter 130 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Liam POV

Speaking with Gamma Josh Travers when we arrived, I learned 2 things.

1. Beta Malcom Nightwater had lost his sense of family when Rochelle was killed.

I wonder what his mate must be going through, and I would bring that up to Josh later.

2. The child was a boy.

He was almost 3 years old, and his name was Phoenix Skye. He had been given Rochelle's mate's last name, but that was easily changed. I asked Josh what had happened to her mate after she passed away, and he informed me that he had dropped the boy off at the Beta's with nothing but the clothes on his back, and went into the forest and killed himself. The pain of the breaking of his and Rochelle's bond had been so bad that it drove him mad. This poor boy had lost the only parents he ever knew, and now his own grandfather was casting him aside. I was here now, and it had already been decided that whether he was biologically mine or not, he was coming home with us for good. He would be Phoenix Skye Young for the rest of his days.

There was a lot of small talk and formalities spoken during breakfast, and my mate listened intently. Taking everything in that Gamma Travers spoke. I knew she was retaining everything to memory just in case we would need it later. She asked a lot of questions, and the Gamma answered each of them as accurately and kindly as he could. He even expressed his dislike of the way Phoenix has been treated in the past several weeks. "Gamma Travers, if Beta Nightwater has basically shunned the boy, who has been taking care of him?" she asked. Straight and to the

point. He explained that he had been looking out for him the best he could in hopes the Beta would change his mind. When he didn't, the Gamma approached the Beta's mate, and he said that her exact words were, "I don't care what happens to my daughter's bastard child." My heart shattered. He was an innocent child, not a bastard, and not disposable. "That is when I went to the Alpha for advice," he said. Josh went on to explain that the Alpha, though he felt bad for Phoenix, suggested that he contact us. Especially since I was the one who had been with her prior to her being with her mate.

We had finished our meal, and Josh led us to his cottage. The only family that lived in the pack house here was the Alpha. Everyone else had their own cabin or cottage. The one Josh had was the one he grew up in, and he was happy he still lived there. His parents had moved into the senior home several years back, and he kept the cottage. When we walked in, there sat a little boy playing blocks with an older woman. Laying eyes on him for the first time, I had no doubts he was biologically mine. His resemblance to Loki and me was uncanny. From the dark hair to the light brown eyes. To the expression on his face. I knew the paternity test was a formality at this point, but it was only going to confirm what I already knew. By the look on Melian's face, I knew she realized it too.

"Phoenix, come here buddy. Come see uncle Josh. The little boy watched the three of us strangers with caution but ran straight to Josh. He hugged Josh's neck and told him that he missed him. My heart melted a little at the interaction, and I couldn't wait until he was that comfortable with me or Loki. I couldn't wait to get him comfortable enough to climb into Melian's lap, so I could watch her cuddle him and rock him like she did Maddix and the girls. Josh gently sat him on his lap and introduced him to us. We all shook his hand and his little bashful smile grew bigger by the second.

"Phoenix, we are going to see Maggie, and she is going to take a sponge on a stick and swirl it around your mouth for a minute. Maggie is going to do the same thing to Alpha Liam. OK?" Josh asked him. He looked at Josh and asked him why, and Josh tried to explain the best he could. He started to stammer, because honestly, how do you explain to a child this kind of situation? Mel noticed him struggling and asked Phoenix if he would like to sit on the floor with her and play with the blocks some more. He happily agreed, and as they were playing, Mel started to speak with him. "So, Phoenix. Does it scare you that Miss Maggie is going to put the sponge in your mouth?" she asked him. He shook his head no. "Is it exciting that Alpha Liam is going to do that with you?" He nodded with a smile, and then asked her why I had to do it too. She got down on his level and looked him in the eyes. She held onto his hands and said in the sweetest voice, "Well, Alpha Liam, Alpha Loki and me want to see if maybe you and the Alphas are family. The only way to tell if you are is if you and Liam get your mouth tickled by the spongy stick." Phoenix studied her face for a moment and then asked, "It tickles?" She giggled with him and nodded her head. She started to tickle him and said, "It tickles..just..like..this!" His giggles filled the room, and it was right then that I knew they were going to be the best of friends. Phoenix held Mel's hand all the way to the clinic, and when we walked in we were greeted by Maggie, the pack pediatrician.

"Welcome Gamma Josh, Alphas, Luna. There's my Phoenix! Have you been a good boy?" she asked. He said he had been very good, and she promised him a lollipop when he was done for being so good.

She took Phoenix and me into a room. It took him so coaxing, and finally, with the agreement that Mel could come too, he followed Maggie in. Mel sat in the chair next to me, and Phoenix securely in her lap. Maggie took out the test kit, and showed the little guy the test sponge. She used my mouth first to show him that it wouldn't hurt, and I even laughed a little, pretending it tickled.

She put it in a pouch and labeled it with my name and put father on the line under my name. She then took out a smaller spongy stick and Phoenix opened his mouth wide. He let out a giggle or two when she swabbed the inside of his mouth, and she placed his specimen inside a pouch as well. She said she was going to put a rush on the results, and we would know by morning. We thanked Maggie, and, as promised, he got his lollipop. We asked Josh if he was free the rest of the day, so that we could take Phoenix to the park and to dinner. We wanted to spend some time with him before just taking him from the pack he had grown up in. We wanted him to want to come with us. Josh said he had some work to do, but when he talked to my son, Phoenix said that he wanted to go with us. He waved Josh away, and ran back to Mel. Then off to the park we went.