

I knew it!

Chapter 131 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

MELIAN POV

We stayed in the park until it was time for lunch. Instead of eating in the cafeteria of the pack house, we went to a Chinese take-out place nearby. We ordered enough to feed an army and went back to Josh's place. He was surprised to see us with so much food, and Phoenix actually having an amazing time. We laid out all the food on the kitchen counter, and told Josh to make himself a plate. I made Phoenix a plate of rice, chicken and veggies, and Liam put him in his booster chair. As he ate, I made myself a plate and joined him at the small table he was eating at. I could tell he was starting to get tired, so I offered to lay him down for a nap. Josh said that it would be very helpful, especially since the Alpha wanted to meet with my mates and Josh. I picked the little guy up and took him to the bathroom to wash up. I laid him in his twin bed, and sat at the end. "MeMe lay with me?" he asked. I gave him a small smile, and nodded my head. I grabbed the blanket I was sitting on and laid down with him. He snuggled close, and I put my arm around him securely. I was already feeling a bond created, and it made me happy. I think this is what I was meant to do in life. I was meant to take care of people. I was meant to be a mom.

We had both fallen asleep, and I don't know how long we had been that way. I was startled awake by a man yelling Josh's name. He hadn't yet awakened Phoenix, and I wanted to make sure he didn't. I walked into the living room and asked the man, "Can I help you with something?" Confused, he looked me up and down. "Who the hell are you?" he asked. I informed him that I was Luna Melian Young of the Blood Moon pack, and he smirked and introduced himself to me. "So, you are the great Luna of Blood Moon. The demon slayer. Liam and Loki's special mate. Little girl, I am Beta Malcom Nightwater. I am the grandfather of one of your mate's children. I am here to see said child." he slurred. Great, a drunk Beta with an ego. "Well, Beta Nightwater, it's nice to meet you. You can't see him right now because he is asleep. Please don't wake him from his nap. A child needs rest." I recanted. You would have told him that the sky was green by the way he looked at me. "Sleeping? This late in the afternoon?" he asked. I nodded at him, my eyes never leaving him. "He has had a very busy morning. It tuckered him out." I replied. He stood in the middle of the room, slightly swaying with his hands on his hips. He started to nod slowly, and turned his heel and left without another word. I quickly grabbed my phone and phoned Liam. I explained what had happened, and he told me to just lock the door, and they would be home soon. I went into the kitchen and made myself a cup of tea, and sat at the small table and picked up a book that had been sitting on it.

Liam and the others came in not too long after our call, and with them was the Alpha. Alpha Markus Downing. I can remember Scott and my dad talking about him. He was a ruthless but fair alpha. He demanded respect, but was also quick to return it if warranted. "Luna Young, it's nice to finally meet you. I am Alpha Markus, I want to apologize to you for my Beta's actions. Trust me when I say he isn't himself lately. Losing his daughter has caused him great heartache and he is being irrational. Your mates have expressed that you are willing to take the boy with you, whether he is Alpha Liam's or not. I approve your decision, but if he turns out not to be Phoenix's biological father, I would like to arrange a meeting with my Beta and his mate, along with the three of you, to make sure that everyone is on board. I know Malcom only wants what is best for his grandson, even if he isn't acting like that. I have known him since childhood, and I know his heart. I think he is being pressured by his mate, Rita. She isn't Rochelle's mother, and I think she is pushing him to rid any existence of his previous mate now that his daughter is no longer with us. That would include his grandson. I don't have proof, just a suspicion, but I wouldn't doubt that I am right either. She isn't a very friendly woman," he said. I had my own suspicions about how Beta Malcom was acting, but I chose to keep them to myself. I just politely nodded and thanked him for his apology. "Thank you, Alpha. I can understand his grief. However, I hope you understand whether he lost the loss of his daughter or not, his behavior is horrible. It is not a good representation of a pack when their Beta bursts into someone else's home unannounced, and sloppy drunk. In that condition, I wouldn't have let him see the boy, even if he was awake. Children are impressionable, and that isn't a good impression to make," I explained. Thankfully, he agreed with me and apologized again. We agreed to meet with him tomorrow after we find out the results to see where we will go from there. Liam mentioned that no matter the results, he would still like to meet with Beta Malcom. He wanted him to know that, no matter what, he was always welcome in Phoenix's life. No one was going to exclude him from anything, but there would be guidelines and rules he would have to follow concerning Phoenix's raising and parentage. The alpha agreed with us, and took his leave. Phoenix had awakened from his nap, and came into the living room. He climbed up onto Liam's lap and cuddled with him until he was fully awake. The rest of the evening was spent getting to know the boy and letting him get to know us better. We watched cartoons, colored in books, played with cars and blocks, and after dinner, Liam gave him his bath and helped get him ready for bed. I hoped in the morning my husband would get the news he wanted to hear.

We were all so exhausted we fell asleep rather quickly, and slept peacefully through the night. We were awakened by the ringing of Liam's phone. He picked it up and groggily answered, "Hello, Alpha Liam speaking." I could barely hear the voice on the other end, but could tell it was a female. "Yes, Hi. Alpha Liam, this is Maggie. I have your results. Would you like them now or would you rather come in?" she asked. He turned to me and Loki and his brother told him they would go in. We wanted the test results in hand, so it was better to do it this way. "Uh, yes, Maggie. Thank you for letting me know. We will get dressed and come over immediately. Thank you again." He replied. An hour later, we were at the physicians' clinic. Maggie came in with a smile and handed Liam an envelope. On the front it had Liam and Phoenix's names, and Liam held it in his hands like he was almost afraid to touch it. He looked at his brother and handed him the envelope. "I can't. Will you please do the honors, brother?" he asked. Loki shot him a smile and nodded his head. Loki quickly opened it and read through the results. He took a deep breath and a huge smile spread across his face.

"When it comes to the paternal parentage of Phoenix Skye Nightwater, it is with 99.99999% surety that Alpha Liam Joel Young is the father," Loki read. A squeal left my mouth in excitement, and Liam jumped out of his seat and clapped happily. "Woo! Hell yes! I knew he was mine. I just fucking knew it," he exclaimed. I was so happy for my mate, and so was his brother. Loki was excited about being an uncle again. However, that isn't how Liam wanted it. "Loki, I don't want you as his uncle. You are co-dad to our other children, and that is how I want it for Phoenix too. All of our children are ours equally," he explained to his brother. Loki fell back to his seat and tears filled his eyes. "Yes, absolutely. I would be honored to hold that title for that little guy. Thank you, Liam." he whispered.

A Grandfather's Explanation

Chapter 132 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

LIAM POV

He's mine! I knew in my heart this would be the result. Especially after seeing him with my own two eyes. My mate was just as happy as I was. In just a very short time, she had become very protective and close to him. This has turned out better than I could have ever thought. I overheard Loki say something about being an uncle again during all the excitement. I stopped in my celebration, and corrected him. "No, Loki. You don't get it, do you? There is no Uncle Loki. You are co-dad to all our kids. ALL of our kids. It won't be any different with Phoenix. You will be a dad, just like me. We share the same DNA, we shared the same womb sack, and we will share everything else in our life. We haven't been 'separate' a day in our life other than personality-wise. Why start now?" I told him. The joy that filled his eyes warmed my heart. He thanked me multiple times, and agreed that is how it would be. He was honored that I thought of him like that. We left Maggie's office after she agreed to get all of Phoenix's files copied for us. She wanted to make sure we had all of his records for the pediatrician at Blood Moon.

When we returned to Josh's cottage, Phoenix was awake and eating breakfast. He was about to go to preschool for the rest of the morning, and we were going with Josh to Alpha Markus's office. He had left us a message while we were at the clinic, and said that Malcom had agreed to meet with us. He promised he would be sober, and we would work things out. Malcom didn't know the results of the paternity test yet, and I hoped that would make things easier. Knowing he was with family, and not just a stranger who was willing to take him in and raise him. I had fond memories of Rochelle, and I never faulted her for wanting to be with her mate. I just wish she would have talked to me, and told me about her pregnancy. Explained what was going on instead of just getting up and leaving. I would never have held her against her wishes, and I would never have made her feel guilty. I would have been happy for her, and we would have worked out a

suitable situation for our son. We can't change the past, but I would make sure our son had a brilliant future.

We went with Josh to drop Phoenix off at pre-school, and went upstairs to the pack office. Josh knocked and we were summoned in. I held onto Mel's hand, because I could tell she was nervous about seeing Malcom. I whispered to her that everything was going to be fine, and she gave me a little smile. Markus gave us a hearty welcome when we walked in, and Malcom stood and shook our hands. "Luna, I want to apologize personally for my actions yesterday. I've been kind of a...well, mess, since my daughter was killed. It doesn't excuse my actions, but it does explain my state of mind," he explained. She gave him a warm look, and she approached him cautiously. She reached out for him and embraced him in a hug. "Beta Malcom, I understand grief. It does crazy things to our minds and souls. I couldn't imagine ever losing one of my children, and to be honest, I hope I never have to experience it. I know you are hurting, and I can imagine that your wolf is in a lot of pain as well. I don't want you to see Phoenix coming with us as a loss, but as a gain for more family," she said to him. I could see his body physically softened, and that he was fighting tears from falling from his eyes. "Thank you, Luna. I appreciate your kind words. It has been extremely hard. Please, sit. Let's get this underway so that you can get back home." he replied.

I can't say I was shocked at how short he was with Mel, but I didn't expect it to be so curt. Mel sat in between Loki and me, and Josh and Malcom sat across from us. Alpha Markus sat at the head of the table, and started the meeting by saying, "I'm thankful we were all able to get together to make sure there are no hard feelings or ill will towards whomever the child stays with. I am fond of the little guy myself, and want what's best for him." He turned to Malcom, and asked him very sternly, "Malcom, I am asking you here and now, why is it so important to you to send the boy away? I was under the assumption, by your actions and things you have said, that he was of great importance to you." Malcom lowered his head and said softly, "Markus, it's more for his safety than anything else. I don't trust Rita around him." So there it was. The hard truth. "Is she a danger to him?" I quickly asked. Malcom didn't need to say a word, the answer was written all over his face. "So, she is. Then maybe it's best he comes home with me," I stated matter-of-factly. His head whipped towards me and our eyes met. "It's not that she is a danger, at least I don't think. I think she has always felt like she lived in the shadows of my first mate. Which has never been the case. Rochelle never took to her in a motherly manner. When our son came along, it was insisted by Rita that he come first before anything, even my daughter. When she had my grandson, Rita's insistence became relentless. She insisted that Barron would be my replacement as Beta once I retired. She even knew that wasn't how it worked here in Northern Sun. When Rochelle was attacked and died, she hadn't been at the coroner's for long. I hadn't even had a chance for her proper send off. She told me that I needed to find a different situation for Phoenix. Then, when Rochelle's mate committed suicide, she more or less demanded that I made arrangements immediately. To me, it felt like a threat to my grandson, so I met with Josh and Markus and asked them to contact you, Liam. I know I look like a schlep for allowing her to send him away, but if something happens to me, I would hate to see what would become of him. I would really like to remain in his life, and come visit, if that would be alright." He said. I told him that we wanted that to happen. "We want you to be a part of his life, Malcom. However, there will be conditions that will need to be agreed on. Are you OK with that?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "I guess it will depend on the conditions. What are they?"

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MALCOM POV

Conditions? What conditions would there need to be to see my grandson? My flesh and blood. I asked Liam to go further in detail, and he did.

"Well, since he is young, he will grow up knowing Melian as his mother. We will never hide Rochelle from him, and if permitted, we would like some of her ashes to put in a small urn in his room. That way, his biological mother is always with him. You will need to respect my mate as his mother. He will still know you as grandpa, and you will have access to him whenever you want. However, because of the threat of your mate, it will be on Blood Moon's property. I will make sure you have time alone with him, but until he gets older, there will be a guard posted at the cottage we will provide for your stay. As he gets older, things will adjust, and he will learn more and more about Rochelle. You will have to respect the fact that Loki will be a co-father and not his uncle. His uncles and aunts will be those who help take care of him. We don't want to exclude your son, Barron, from his life, but your mate will never be welcome on Blood Moon's property. We have four other children; triplet daughters and a son who is almost 2. Maddix is adopted and will be treated as an equal by everyone he comes in contact with. He may not be mine or Loki's blood, but he is ours. Just as the others are. So, if you have an issue with that, then you need to keep it to yourself. Other than that, everything else that will come up is negotiable," he said. What he asked wasn't impossible to abide by. I didn't like the fact that he would be calling another woman mother, but the Luna seemed sweet enough. I had a feeling she would be a wonderful mother figure to him. Phoenix deserved that. He was a good boy, and had so much love to give. I was thankful that Liam and his family were as excited about him as they were. This could have been disastrous if they hadn't been so accepting. The Liam I knew when he was with my daughter was a good man, but he had his issues. He wasn't as attentive as he should have been, and that's why Rochelle never told him about the baby.

"I agree with those conditions. How long before you have to leave? I want to make sure you have her ashes, and I would like to say goodbye to him. I miss seeing him every day, but the current living situation is for the best considering everything," I told him. He explained that they would be leaving that evening, and asked if we could all have lunch in the park after my grandson got out of school. I agreed and told them I would grab some pizzas, and they would grab the drinks. I was going to make the most of the day with Phoenix, because I wasn't sure when the next time I would see him would be. We all sat and signed the required documents that would be needed for Liam to take guardianship of Phoenix, and the document relinquishing my grandson as a member of Northern Sun. Signing those papers was more difficult than I imagined it would be. I fought

back more tears that were threatening to fall from my eyes. I had to keep telling myself that it wasn't the end of our relationship, that it was just a different path for it.

Paperwork was signed and in the hands of the alpha. Markus made copies for Liam, and that was that. The alpha told them they were free to leave, and thanked them for being so understanding. He also thanked them for promptly responding to the situation. They took their leave, and told me they would see me in a couple of hours. I was honestly looking forward to it. Some fun time with my grandson was just what I needed at that moment in time.

"OK, Malcom. Spill it. I know you aren't being fully honest about all of this. What gives?" Markus asked as soon as they left. "What do you mean? I told the truth. What wasn't I being honest about?" I asked him. He started to laugh and leaned forward on the table. His face grew serious, and he replied, "Rita. I know there is more than her just not wanting Phoenix around. You need to tell me what it is. If she is a danger to you, or this pack, she will have to go. I've expressed my concern about her behavior several times, and this will be the last time. Are we clear?" He had figured out that I wasn't as forthcoming as I should have been, and I finally just let it all out. I nodded yes, and I started to tell him about Rita's threats towards my grandson, and that she had mentioned that either I would take care of the 'problem' or she would. I knew exactly what she meant by the threat, and it would mean my daughter's son would either be abandoned somewhere, or she would take him out. It was no secret that she hated anything that still tied me to my first mate, and she always resented that she was always considered second best as a second chance mate. I told her that I would remove him from our home, and seek out his biological father. Me, myself, not even knowing fully if Liam was that person. Markus sat back in his chair, and closed his eyes shut tight. The stiffening of his jaw told me that he was fully upset. Blowing a breath out of his mouth, he opened his eyes and looked at me. Shaking his head, he spoke very bluntly to me. "Rita is clearly a threat to anyone she doesn't agree with. I can't have that type of person here, Malcom. Especially with you holding the position you do. You are my oldest and dearest friend, and I don't want to cast you aside. However, she cannot stay on Northern Sun pack lands. Period. The choice is yours. If you choose to leave with her, I will have no ill will towards you. If you choose to stay, and deal with the bond breaking after I banish her, I will help you be able to keep Barron and deal with the pain. You have lost enough, my friend, and I hate putting you in this position, but it is strictly for pack safety." Defeated, I asked him to give me a couple of days to adjust and make my decision, and he agreed. I shook his hand and left to grab the pizzas and meet the others.

The rest of the day was bliss, and it hurt my heart when I had to say goodbye to Phoenix. He hugged me tight and told me he loved me. He told me I was the best papa, and that I needed to be a good boy. I laughed at his sweetness, and gave him a final squeeze. I told him I would see him soon, and I turned to leave. "Beta Malcom?" I heard the Luna say. I turned to her, and she took my hands in hers. She had tears in her eyes and said the sweetest thing. "Papa Malcom, you aren't alone in all of this. I promise you. If you ever need a shoulder to cry on, I can lend that shoulder to you. No questions or judgments ever."

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Melian POV

We loaded up everything that was coming with Phoenix, and I called Grace. "Hey Gracie, I know you have a lot on your plate right now, but I need another favor. I'm sorry," I apologized. She started to laugh at me and asked what I needed. "Well, you have another nephew. It turns out, Liam did have a son. He is coming home with us, and I want to set up a room for just him and Maddix. The girls can keep the nursery, but I think we should move the boys to the room on the other side of Tara's room. That way, she is in between them. We can put another door connecting her room to theirs as well," I told her. I told her I would call and warn Tara about it, so it wouldn't be a surprise, and she said she would take care of it. I was blessed to have Grace and I would make sure she was handsomely rewarded for all her sacrifices she makes for us and the pack.

Pulling away, Malcom and Josh watched us until we were out of sight. A pang of guilt hit my heart, but knowing it was in Phoenix's best interest, made that pang go away quickly. We made arrangements for Malcom to come for Christmas morning, and he excitedly accepted. "Liam? You know Christmas is quickly coming, we need to get some shopping done." I informed him. He gave me a slight chuckle, and said, "That we do. Let's go tomorrow," he said. Loki agreed, and we were going to have a date for it. I asked if it was too soon to leave our son with the nanny, and Loki said we would just see how he adjusted to her when he met her. OUR SON. I loved the sound of it. I thought of not having more kids tore a hole in my heart that I wasn't sure would mend. With one meeting, Phoenix filled that hole. My heart was full. This little boy needed me, and I needed him. He was truly special to me, and I would show him every day just how much.

We arrived home at mid-afternoon, and everyone was outside to meet us. As soon as we got Phoenix out of the car, he started waving hello to everyone. He didn't hesitate to go up to each one standing there and introduce himself. "Hi, I'm Pee-nix," he would tell them. Even the biggest of them all, Rico, got all giddy at the introduction. "Hello there Phoenix, I am your uncle Rico. It's my pleasure to meet you. You are going to have to help me keep your ol' dads in line over there," he told the little boy. A serious look spread across Phoenix's face, and he turned to look at the twins. "Uncle Weeco, those dads aren't old," he stated. Everyone broke out in laughter and Liam thanked his little buddy for the nice words and scooped him up to his shoulder.

As we made our way inside, Loki took the little one from Liam. "So, Phoenix, did you know that you have 3 little sisters and a little brother here?" he asked.. Phoenix shook his head and said, "Noooo, can I see them?" Loki nodded his head and said we could go right then. Phoenix got agitated, and nodded his head. We went up to the nursery, and sat Phoenix on Mel's lap. We first

introduced him to the girls, and as he looked at them, and repeated their names as they were told to him, he kept his eye on Maddix's crib. "Brudder?" he whispered. Liam picked Maddix up from his crib and Maddix rested his head on daddy's shoulder. Both boys, being bashful, took their time greeting each other. It didn't take long before Maddix walked up to Phoenix and pulled him in a hug. Maddix would kiss him on the cheek and Phoenix would crack up laughing. He couldn't say Maddix, and he called him 'Magic', and it fit. Their relationship was magic. It was as if they had always been best buddies, and never the strangers they were less than 10 minutes ago.

I needed to go and meet with Grace and check on the status of the boys' room as well as the ball. The twins needed to take care of some pack business, so we asked Gretchen to stay with Tara until the boys were completely alright. It gave Phoenix time to bond with his grandma and nanny, as well as his younger brother. I took one of the monitors with me since I was going to be in the pack house. I found her in the boys' new room, and I was amazed that all the adult furniture was gone and replaced with everything 2 little boys would need. "Oh my goddess Grace! This looks fantastic! Thank you!" I exclaimed. "I take it you like it?" she asked through her smile. "Like it? I freaking love it!" I was on the fence about painting the walls blue, but seeing the crisp white walls with the blue sailboat-themed decorations, I decided against it. It was perfect. Grace and I went to Coffee & Thyme to have some lunch and discuss the ball and what else needed to be done. It was pretty much set, but there were odds and ends to take care of. She had a detailed list of things to finish, and then the setup would be handled by our most trusted Omegas. It was going to be amazing. Not only do we fully introduce our girls to the pack during the ball, but also our son. I couldn't wait to see our boys in their little black tuxes and our girls all frilled up. Their little tutu dresses would match my gown. A gorgeous emerald green with silver accents. Grace promised to email me full details and we went our separate ways. I took my time going back to the pack house, and found myself sitting at the edge of the training field on the big rock near the barracks. I found myself going over the events of the last several months, and I honestly felt more blessed and at ease with myself than I had ever in my lifetime. Sure, the Goddess had thrown more than enough curveballs at us, but each time we hit those balls into home runs. I pulled my coat closer around me, as it was getting colder, and started to walk back to the packhouse. I wanted to see my kids and mates. I was about half way there when I started to see it. Snowflakes, and they were as big as cotton balls. It was snowing, and it was so beautiful.

Christmas Morning.

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Loki POV

It's Christmas morning, and the boys have already opened all of their gifts. It was cute watching them show each other what they got, but the not-so fun part was listening to them fight with each other over them. I had to laugh though, because they literally both got close to the same things. I can remember Liam and me as kids, and it was always the same thing. Fighting over each other's toys, even when they were identical. We didn't start receiving gifts that were suited to our personalities until we were almost teenagers. Liam had given Phoenix and Maddix Melian's gifts, and they immediately ran them to her. "Open Meme," Phoenix said excitedly. "These are for me?" she gushed. Both boys nodded their heads rapidly, and she sat on the floor with them to open them. She gasped when she opened the first one. A pair of diamond hoop earrings. "They are beautiful. Thank you so much," she said. She opened her second gift, and it brought her to tears. "Oh my Goddess, Liam! Loki! This is the best Christmas gift I have ever gotten." She took it out of the box and asked me to put it on for her. It was a necklace with 5 little stars. In each star was a precious stone representing each of the children's birthstones, 3 topazes for the girls, an emerald for Phoenix and a Garnet for Maddix. In the middle was a sapphire, representing their mother. She jumped up to hug us both and then fell back to the floor and roughhoused with the boys. This is what life was about. Family would always come first, and everything else would fall in line after.

Mel opened the door to our suite and allowed the Omega to push the cart in to set our table. We had decided to spend the day with just the three of us and our babies. We had already celebrated Christmas with our friends and family at the Holiday Ball last weekend, so today was just us. Something intimate to start new traditions. Melian had expressed at the ball that she hadn't had a good Christmas since her mother was alive, and all she wanted was a day with her kids without interruption. That is what she was going to get. She went into our room and came out with 2 gift bags. One for each of us. Liam started to pull out the paper from the bag, and stopped and looked up at her. He pulled out an original leather-bound hardback book of Moby Dick. It was Liam's favorite book from when he was a kid, and my father was the only one who had a copy. He then pulled out a framed picture of our mate and our babies. "It's for your desk," she gushed. He pulled her in for a kiss, and told her how much he loved the thoughtful gift. She handed me mine, and I followed the same actions as Liam. What I pulled out of the bag, shook me to my core. In the bag was a duplicate of the picture she gave Liam. For my new desk in our office. I then pulled out something wrapped in brown paper. As I removed the wrapping, my heart thudded hard within my chest. It was my father's pocket watch. It was still inscribed on the inside with a message from my mother to him. "Forever My Love, Forever My Heart." When my parents passed away, our aunts came in to clean out their belongings. I thought his watch had been given to one of their children, but here it was in my hands. "How did you do this?? We thought they were.....gone." I asked. She just smiled and said that Roxy had them still, and she begged Roxy to let her have them.

How did we get such an amazing mate? They may have been hand me down gifts, but to Liam and me, they were treasures of a forgotten time. A time that sometimes I wish we could get back. Liam, Rebecca and I felt like time stood still back then, the old traditions gone forever. Little did we know that our mates would bring that spirit back into our hearts. We laid the kids down for a nap after lunch, and decided to take a quick nap ourselves. It had been a long time since we had a time like this, and I, for one, was going to relish it. I slept the best I had in a while. No nightmares had haunted me for quite some time. Life felt like it was finally moving forward

instead of falling backwards. No one had crossed us threateningly since the incident with former Dark Star rebels. No weirdo family members coming to avenge some idiotic bullshit from a time none of us were even born. Lastly, no one but us, as a family, are united. Things couldn't get any better than they were right now, except for maybe Mel's health to get better. We both see how easily tired she is getting lately, but she insisted she wait until after New Years to have her ovary removal. We didn't argue, because it was a logical request. No one wants to be miserable on the holidays.

I felt my mate start to stir, and I pulled her closer to me. "How did you sleep baby?" I asked her. She let out a soft moan and said she slept amazingly. I kissed her forehead and held her tight. "Anything special do you want to do before dinner?" she shook her head and said that she just wanted to remain resting until the babies woke up. I told her we could have Tara take care of them, and she could rest as much as she wanted, and she said it wasn't necessary. We did just as she asked. We both lay there in each other's embrace until Liam and our babies woke. There was snow outside, and the boys wanted to try out their new sleds. We bundled all the babies up, and took them out to play. Liam and I took turns pulling the boys around, and Mel sat on the porch with the girls watching us. I was right where I needed to be today.

Ruby Meadows

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LIAM POV

6 months later

The weather is so warm today, and I am beyond excited about it. So much has happened in the past 6 months. Not just for the pack, our coven property, but also for our little family. Maddix just turned two in January, and Phoenix just turned four last month. The girls are almost 7 months old now, and are getting so big. They are crawling everywhere, and starting to eat solid foods. Whatever we eat that is mushy, we let them try it. So far, Adelina is our pickiest eater. She will eat nothing green, but she loves some mashed potatoes and gravy. Alette won't eat the potatoes unless one of us has sweet potatoes, but she will eat everything green. Asteria, she eats it all, and will eat until she can't swallow another bite. Even then, she would still try. I was laughing a few weeks ago that she must have the highest baby metabolism in the world, because she eats like Loki, but is still so tiny. He didn't find that as humorous as I did.

Rico and Grace had a beautiful little girl, with bright red hair, and sparkling blue eyes. They named her Ivy Hopper. Grace was hesitant about her middle name, but Rico insisted. He said, and I quote, "Nick was a piece of us both, and his legacy will live on!" It was announced that

Loki and I would be her godfathers and Melian would be her godmother. That sent Mel over the moon. I have never met another person who was as obsessed with children and keeping them safe as my wife. I loved that about her. She has been busy the past couple of weeks helping Christy get ready for her and Tobias's wedding. It would have already happened, but Christy insisted on a beach wedding. That is what we are doing this weekend. I know the whole wedding thing is a moot point when you are a werewolf and are already bonded, but sometimes being bound also by name is comforting. Knowing you are a part of one another completely in heart, soul and name, to me, just solidifies it all together. Loki, Rico, Tim and I are taking Toby out to a local pub tonight, and I am the designated driver. Which is fine with me.

As far as my wife, she is a trooper. She had her surgery after Maddix's birthday, and thankfully it wasn't cancer. The biopsy on the organs after her surgery showed her ovaries were filled with cyst type tumors that were infected. The infection caused her blood platelet levels to be wonky, and because the cysts were likely to return, it was still better that they were removed. For about a month and a half later, she wasn't herself. She was depressed and very melancholy. She started to see Peter again, without any urging from us, and soon after started to come back to us better than ever. She said that what we have right now is perfect, but once the girls are a little older, she would like us to adopt another boy to 'make things even'. Loki and I are totally onboard with that idea.

Today, Loki and I are at the coven property, Ruby Meadows. Our first market season is underway, and we just wanted to check on things. Walking through the shops that have been opened and the farmers' market with Gretchen has been exciting. So many cool things are sold, and the quality of the vegetables and fresh meats in the market is awesome. We bought a plethora of veggies, beef and chicken to take back home with us, and even talked with Luke and Pablo about opening a tourist diner near the market. The shops and market are packed with tourists and residents of the nearby towns. We think a mom-and-pop diner, with freshly made dishes, desserts and breads would be a hit. I told them we would get together after the wedding to make plans. As the day went on, I noticed Gretchen tiring quicker than normal. Even for a woman in her 70s, she was usually a spitfire of energy. Seeing her tiring like this was concerning. I pulled Ginger aside and spoke to her about my concerns. "How long has grandma been tired so easily?" I asked her. Her eyes lowered, and she whispered, "For about the past 3 months. Please don't tell her I said anything. Mom and I have been trying to get her to see a healer, but she says that she's getting older, and she doesn't need a healer to tell her that. Mom thinks she is getting closer to having to do a transference ritual, and dad is throwing a fit about hearing it." My heart broke for her. A transference ritual is where the elder witch of the family who is ready to pass on transfers the powers that they hold on to a family member who they deem best to carry the responsibility of said powers. It's basically the last deed they do as an elder witch. It is an intimate and private ceremony for just those closest to the one passing. I'm not sure how my mate, Jason, or their uncles are going to take this news. They had all just found each other less than a year ago. To lose her now would devastate them.

I gave Ginger and Gretchen a huge hug before I went into the bakery to grab Mel some of their fresh baked apple raisin bread, and a chocolate raspberry cake. It was a very specific request, and we were threatened with being shunned for a week if we didn't bring it back. She knows we can't stand to be away from her, so that is always the threatened punishment. We all know she won't

make it a day away from us, but we oblige her anyway. I also grabbed the kids a bag of snickerdoodles, and some brownies, and a cheesecake for Loki and me. I had gotten some fresh strawberries, raspberries and blackberries from the market, and they would go perfect with the cheesecake.

Bidding everyone farewell, Loki and I got into our truck and pulled out of the gates. Apparently, my brother noticed my mood, and instantly questioned me. I didn't want to go against Ginger's trust, but knew Loki wouldn't say anything if I asked him not to. I explained what I was told, and his mood also dropped. Loki loves Gretchen a lot, and losing her would affect him greatly. She has become somewhat of an advisor to him. Someone for him to confide in when he doesn't feel comfortable talking to anyone else. It was going to be hard to keep this from our wife, but I wanted it to come from the source. If it became too much, I would have to talk to Ginger about telling her.

The love of friends

Chapter 137 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

MELIAN POV

Man, I am so thankful that life is slowing down. It's been a lot of peaceful and easy days for quite a while now. I had my surgery in January, and I had no cancer evident in the ovaries. Just very big cysts that would reoccur. The surgery was for the best, so I wouldn't stay in pain or sick from the infections they caused. I was sad at first, but after talking to Peter for a while, I didn't see any point in being sad anymore. Not when I had so much to be happy about. We decided that in about a year from now we would adopt a little boy. Just to make things even. Our babies are growing like little weeds, and are so stinking smart. Phoenix just turned four and can already read basic stories. It's adorable to watch him read simple books to Maddix. They are super close, and Phoenix is very protective of his little brother. Both boys are beyond protective of their little sisters, and it's so cute to watch them get onto their daddies when the girls cry.

Last weekend we celebrated Christy and Toby. They held their wedding ceremony at Cannon Beach, Oregon, and it was beyond beautiful. The weather cooperated perfectly, and everyone had such a good time. I got to see my uncles, brother, and my mother's side of the family. Grandma Gretchen had pulled me to the side to speak to me after the ceremony, and I didn't like what she had to tell me. She wants to do a transference ritual with Luke soon. Usually, when an Elder Witch wants to hold her transference ritual, it means she is close to passing. However, she assured me this wasn't the case this time. She said the older she gets, the harder it is for her to hold the energy that her magic requires. She wants to live a happy and lively life, and just can't deal with the weight her powers put on her anymore. She wanted to make sure that I wasn't upset

about her giving them to Luke, and not me. Personally, I am beyond thankful she didn't choose me. Luke is much better suited in that department. I am happy with the Fae magical traits I have, and I hope that no others surface. My life is full, and I don't need it any heavier. To prove that she wasn't near her end, she had Luke show me her future. We definitely had a lot more time with her. The last vision Luke had was all of us, including grandma at Trinity's wedding. That would be years away considering Trinity just recently turned 3 years old. I squeezed her tight, and thanked her for showing me she would be around for us all, and told her that I loved her very much. She then informed me that Liam and Loki had known about the ritual for a couple of days, and it explained their dreary moods. I asked her if it was alright if I shared what the vision had shown me with them, and she told me that I had better. I kissed her cheek and went to find my mates.

"I heard you both got disturbing news at Ruby Meadows a few days ago," I said as I approached them. Liam immediately started to apologize, and I flashed him a sweet smile, showing that it was OK. "I have an upside to the news you both heard. Grandma isn't dying. She is just tired of the heavy burden her powers give her. That's all. She will be around to torment you both for many more years," I told them. Loki's eyes widened, and his mood perked up. He kissed me on the forehead and went to find grandma. Liam tried to apologize again, and I stopped him in his tracks. "I know you were sworn to secrecy, and I understand why. I am no longer a weak girl, babe. You don't have to worry about me crumbling. I know dying is part of life, especially when you get up there in age. Don't ever worry about talking to me about things like that, OK?" I said as I wrapped my arms around his torso. He nodded his head and held me closer. "I have a pretty phenomenal wife, did you know that?" he asked. I started to giggle and told him I knew, and he had best not forget it.

The rest of the night, we ate, danced, drank and had a great time celebrating our friends. Christy and Toby looked beyond happy, and everyone had an amazing time. Rico and Grace danced like they were newlyweds, and the love they had for each other showed every time they looked at each other. I couldn't wait until they had babies. With Christy's dark hair and Toby's crystal blue eyes, they were bound to be gorgeous. Speaking of gorgeous babies, my goddaughter, Ivy Hopper, is a beauty. I am beyond in love with this little girl. I know Nick is watching over them all with love. I to this day strongly believe Nick encouraged the goddess to pair Rico and Grace together. His best friend and his mate needed love, and he made sure they would find it together. Now he is their little ones' guardian angel, and when I am around them, you can feel Nick's spirit. It warms my soul. Tim and Hazel have finally quit apologizing, and have both earned their places back in our group. Timmy loves Hazel so much, and they just took in a pair of 6-year-old orphaned twins from Jason's pack. Kyle and Kelsey. They are so smart and silly, and fit in perfectly. Hazel also just found out she is expecting, and I am so excited for her.

Sometimes life doesn't always go the way we think it should, but in the end, it turns out how it is supposed to. The goddess puts people in our life that either enrich it or make us learn a lesson, and in my case, she did both. I don't think I would have the heart I do now without me going through the turmoils I have in my life. Thank you, Moon Goddess, for enriching my life with these amazing people.

Transfer

Chapter 138 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Gretchen POV

3 weeks after the wedding

Tonight is a full harvest moon. It's the night I chose to perform the transference ritual with Luke. He has become such a strong and thoughtful young man, who is firm in his beliefs and faith. His own magic is powerful in its own right, and he doesn't abuse it. That made it easier to choose where he was concerned. His mate, Rory, is a strong wolf from a formidable family, and she is honorable. She is patient and kind, and perfect for my grandson. He needs that kind of woman in his life. I don't think chance intertwined our families together in more ways than one. I fully believe the goddess did it on purpose. Only the immediate family is invited to a transference ritual, and I have all of them with me, minus my daughter, who is here in spirit.

When it was close to midnight, Luke and I entered the ritual circle. Pablo and Ginger finished sealing it, and Luke and I joined hands. We casually spoke to one another before the midnight hour struck, and I made sure he was solid in his choice to accept my gifts. He reassured me for the millionth time, and gave me a peck on the cheek. "We are good, Grandma. Quit worrying," he whispered. The midnight hour came upon us, and Luke and I both closed our eyes. I started to chant the beginning and my part of the ritual, and the wind started to swirl around us. I prayed Luke remembered to wait the allotted time between where my part of the chant ended and his started, or the transfer might not work, and if it did, it would be rushed and could hurt him. After I finished my part, I started to count for myself in silence. 2 minutes, that's all we needed, 2 minutes. I kept counting, 115..116..117..118..119..and when I got to 120, Luke started his part. He must have been counting along with me in his head. As Luke finished his part of the ritual, both of our hands went into the air and we both repeated "aistrigh na bronntanais seo ar mo éileamh" three times. "Transfer these gifts at my demand.'

Suddenly, the wind stopped, and the candles went out. Both of us fell to the ground, and I could hear Melian and my boys try to enter the circle. They were stopped by Pablo and Marion, saying if they entered now, it could be dangerous. Pablo assured them that we were fine, and would awaken shortly. Less than 3 minutes later, both Luke and I started to cough. I sat up, and opened my eyes. I stared intently at my grandson, and when he sat up and opened his eyes, I knew the ritual had worked. Where his beautiful emerald green eyes once were, there was now a radiant gold glow to them. Glowing gold flecks intertwined with the brightest emerald green. We both stood across from one another, and I deemed him the carrier of the 7 almighty powers. The candles once again came alive, and I knew that he had done it. I smirked at him and whispered, "Show off," and we both started to laugh. The ritual worked. I could now just rest and enjoy the

rest of my days. Of course, I would be there for guidance and advice, but he now carried the knowledge and capability of using our family powers for those who needed help.

We all retired to our respective lodgings after the ceremony. I was exhausted, but when I returned to my home, Loki was sitting on my porch. "I'm sorry to bother you grandma, but I need some advice again," he said. Loki and I have become extremely close, and I know he trusts me greatly. He doesn't open up to just anyone, and I was blessed enough to be someone he would open up to. "What's troubling you, Loki?" I asked him. "No, nothing is troubling me. Not really, but Liam wants to have a discussion when we wake up about which of the children will be our heir. I hate to even talk about it, because in my heart, Maddix is our heir. I knew at the beginning, before we knew about Phoenix, it was decided Maddix was heir. I think it should stay that way. I don't know what Liam is thinking, and it scares me. What if he thinks Phoenix should be heir because he is Liam's blood son and the oldest? I can't agree with that choice. I feel like it makes me selfish, but I will fight for it to Maddix to remain heir." he explained. I, too, had a soft spot for Maddix, and I already knew that Maddix would remain heir, but I couldn't voice it. It would have to be a decision made between the brothers, without outside interference. So I just said, "Loki, dear, you and Liam will come to the right choice. No matter what that choice will be. However, you both need to remember there is another factor here. You both can't just shut your mate out of the equation because you are the alphas. Hear what she has to say too." He nodded and thanked me. I gave him a warm hug and sent him on his way. I was ready for bed.

Waking up the next morning, and finishing my daily tasks, I felt lighter than I had for a long time. Instead of going into the village center, I stayed close to home. I tended to my flowers and herbs, I picked from my own personal garden, and went to my kitchen to bake. After making 3 loaves of fresh bread, and some cupcakes for Mel and the twins to take home to my great-grandchildren, I decided to make some fresh pasta and homemade sauce. I invited the family over for dinner, and everyone came except for Leif and Jorma. They had to return to Starry Moon, and I made sure to send some food home with them when they came to say goodbye. Last year, I would never have thought that possible. As we ate our dinner, Loki was sitting to my left. He took my hand and whispered, "You were right, I just needed to trust in things." I smiled at him and thought to myself how I already knew that. I chuckled and nodded my head. The rest of the night, I watched my family interact. This is what life is truly about to me. Family.

A Solid Choice

Chapter 139 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Loki Pov

11 years later.

If you had told me 12 years ago that I would be getting ready to start training our son to take over as alpha in 6–10 years from now, I would probably have laughed in your face. Hell, if you had told me 12 years ago I would have 6 kids, I would have run to the hills. Yet, here we are. Not only do we have the best mate in the entire universe, but 6 of the most amazing kids I have ever met. We have our triplet girls, and our 3 boys. Adelina, Alette, and Asteria are almost 12. Maddix just turned 13, Phoenix is 16 and River is 10 and almost 11. We adopted River right before the girls turned a year old. His mother was a member of our pack, and went into labor with him prematurely. She was weak due to a mate bond break when her mate was killed during a rogue attack. She didn't survive his birth. Melian insisted he was the one for us, and that day we chose to adopt him. River Nikolai Young. We couldn't use Nicholas, because Jason and Rebecca had used it. So, we chose something close.

We thought it would become a problem as the boys got older, about who would become the next alpha. However, to our surprise, Phoenix wasn't mad at all. He explained how he wanted to be a psychiatric doctor, and would rather not hold a ranked position. We respected his decision, and appreciated his understanding. We told him about his birth mother when he turned 13. His papa Malcom was there, and helped us through it. He was upset with us at first, but came around pretty quickly. He and Malcom had a special bond, but unfortunately, we lost Malcom about a year ago. His bitch of a second chance mate had left him, knowing with his age he wouldn't be able to handle a rejection. He ended up dying from it. I had heard she also didn't fair well from the rejection and died not long after. As for their son, Barron, he may have been a Beta's son, but never rose above an Omega status. It made some wonder if he was actually Malcolm's at all. Phoenix, being the amazing kid he is, still keeps in touch with his uncle, Barron, but unfortunately, we have to limit how much. The last few times he had reached out to Barron, his uncle demanded money. He had become a pack drunk, and had developed a bad gambling problem. Northern Sun's new Alpha had already threatened to banish him if he didn't straighten up, and we had to break the news to Phoenix that if that occurred, he wasn't welcome to come to Blood Moon either. Our son completely understood, and only said that he hoped his uncle would come to his senses.

Maddix starts his Alpha training on Monday. He will tend to his regular studies in the morning, and from lunchtime on he will shadow Liam and me. I fully believe he will be a great Alpha. He is compassionate, loving, and fair. He is a peacekeeper, but also not afraid to disturb that peace if necessary. After what we went through with Phoenix, and the situation with his birth mother, we decided that our adopted boys would be told about their parentage also. Not necessarily their complete character, but who they were, and how they came to be with us. I dreaded the conversation with Maddix. His parents were not good people. His mother might have been good at one time, but in the end, not so much. None of us had any good memories of Eric, so we asked Jason to sit in on the conversation when it happened. Jason could barely remember any, but had a little bit from when he was a boy. We just hoped that Maddix wouldn't spiral afterward. Tonight is that hard conversation. We decided to talk to him right after dinner.

Dinner went smoothly and all the kids were happy to see their uncle Jason. Phoenix asked if he could be with Maddix during our talk, and Mel insisted that it was fine. Maddix was going to need all the support he could get. After we ate, Liam, Jason and I took the boys to our office. Mel took the others to the nanny, and met us there. As she was coming towards our office, she linked

us, and asked us to step outside for a minute. We grabbed Jason, and met her outside the door. "I have this awful feeling that we need to be completely honest about his parents. The good, bad, and ugly. If he finds out from someone else in passing, it could make things worse," she said. I had to agree with her. We agreed we would tell him everything, and my stomach was tied in knots. We all re-entered the room, and the boys stared at us as we sat down. Mel decided to start the conversation and moved closer to the boys. She took Maddix's hands and I could see the worry in his face. He glanced at us, and Liam nodded his head at him. "It's OK son, you aren't in any trouble," he told him, and Maddix's eyes diverted to Mel. She gave him a soft smile, and started to explain everything to him. He listened to her with his complete attention. There were moments of tears, moments of anger and disbelief, but in the end, he thanked her for being honest with him. He was thankful she didn't sugar coat the truth. He plainly said, "You are my parents. Those people may have given me life, but you and my dads made me the person I am today. I'm sorry you went through that terrible ordeal, mom, but just like you, I will rise above them and be the man I was destined to be. No one will ever be hurt like that under my watch. Not our pack, not our family, no one. All of you have shown me what it is to be a good person. That is what I will take through life. Not what I could have been subjected to if those monsters were still alive. Phoenix and River, those are my brothers. Through and Through. I don't care if it's only documents that tie us together, our bond goes past all that. Nothing changes. My sisters, I will die protecting them if I have to. No one will ever hurt them, mom. Not on my watch." I was a proud poppa listening to him speak. I looked at Liam and said, "He was a solid choice for Alpha. I have no doubts about it anymore."

Final Entry

Chapter 140 - Their Bullied and Broken Mate

Melian POV

8 years later

23rd of January

Dearest Diary,

It has once again been years. So much has happened since I last wrote on your pages. Our family has grown. We have lost a few along the way, but they are always with us. My girls will be 18 soon, and I think I am more excited about meeting their wolves than they are. They are too worried about finding their mates. Their father's and brother's, however, are not thrilled about that. Liam seems to think that the girls' mates are going to have their hands full. Adelina would need a fierce man, not mean, just fierce. She is Liam through and through. She loves to train and

fight. She is hardheaded and stubborn, but also has a heart of gold. She is loyal to a fault, and loves with all her heart. Alette, well, she needs a patient man. She is spontaneous and flighty. She goes where the wind takes her. Our wild child, as Liam calls her. She is much like Loki. Ready to have fun, but also prepared when seriousness is called for. Her sense of humor definitely matches Loki, and she can make you laugh until your belly hurts. She and Maddix are the closest as far as the brother and sister bond is concerned. Adelina has a soft spot for her little brother, River. Then there is our runt, Asteria. She is our quiet one. She may be quiet, but she is also the most observant. She doesn't miss a beat. If she is in the room with you, best believe she knows everything you have done or said while there. She has a photographic memory. She is graduating with honors, and is going to attend law school in Seattle. We only agreed to let the girls attend schools close by. With their over-protective brothers and fathers, it's lucky they were able to go away to college at all.

By now, all of our adopted kids know their story. All of them have taken the news amazingly. True to his word, Maddix didn't let his birth parents affect him at all. It only made him more determined to be a good person, and an even better Alpha. He met his mate, Riley, at Ruby Meadows this past summer. She moved into the pack house just a couple of weeks ago. He went back and forth for months, so that she could finish her training with grandma. Eventually, grandma sent her here. She said that there wasn't anything more she could teach Riley that wasn't already within her. Riley is a super sweet girl, and I believe she will make a great Luna. It has been decided that they will take over just after Maddix turns 20 in January. Maddix's wolf, Franz, is Ruby's pup. The one shown to me by the goddess herself. When she said he was special, she was right. Maddix has chosen Grace's sons George and Henry as his Beta and Gamma. They are the best of friends and will be a perfect fit.

Phoenix has become our pack psychologist. When he found out about Rochelle's first mate committing suicide over their breaking bond when she died, he wanted to study everything he could about the bonds we form. He wanted to study each one and see if there was something that could be done to help people through it better. That way, things could be handled differently. I was beyond proud of the man he had become. He met his mate, Valarie, at med school in Portland. She is human, or so we thought. Turns out she is part Fae. Of course, it took meeting Grandma Gretchen and uncle Luke to point it out. She is having our first granddaughter in February. I am beyond excited, and the twins are over the moon. The only downside is, Trinity is getting married in February. That is a good thing, but the memory of seeing my grandmother passing not long after, tears my heart apart. My grandchildren would never really know her in person. Just through stories and memories from everyone else. She feels differently than we do. She said she would know them and they would know her, but in a different way. I suppose she is right, but it doesn't make missing her presence any less painful.

River, our sweet boy. He is our scholar. He is quiet, and an avid reader. I think he had read every single book in the history section of our pack library. He spends a lot of time with Chris and a little girl he adopted right after we got River. Her name is Maisy, and it wouldn't surprise me if her and River were mates. They are inseparable most days. He has decided that he will go to Oregon state and study in their history program once he graduates. He hopes to be a curator one day. He likes deep conversations with his dads, though most times I think he confuses Loki with what he's talking about.

As for me and my mates, I am looking forward to our retirement. As much as I have loved being Luna of Blood Moon, I am ready for things to be just us. No pack duties in the way all the time. I want us to travel and see the world, and eat at exotic locations. I want to be able to pick up and go visit family in other packs without having to make arrangements to have Rico or someone watch the pack in our absence. Just to have a little freedom is going to feel heavenly. I know eventually the excitement will go away, and my mates will help Maddix whenever he needs it, but things will be a lot easier for us. As soon as the boys took over, Rico, Grace, my mates and I had already decided to go on a cruise in Alaska, and then a trip to Greece. So, to say things are changing and moving forward, is also saying that there are also new beginnings happening for us. I am looking forward to our future and seeing our children pave a new path for their generation. The only way from here is up and I, for one, am ready for the ride.

Until we meet again, dear diary. I can't promise it will be in the near future, but as long as life keeps us on our exciting journey, I'm sure I will have plenty to tell you when we do meet again.

Love,

Melian