

Their Warrior Luna Chapter 111

Knox:

“I was right, Cass. It was her mother. There’s something else though... I saw Lennon there.” Cass was focusing on Lennon. He had been trying to contact her via the mind link since yesterday.

“Did you hear me, Cass? Lennon was with her mother.” I yelled.

“CASS! Come back to me, man. We need to figure this out.” I snapped in his face, making his galaxy-filled eyes snap at me with blazing fury.

“NO, what we NEED is to get our girl back.” That is the second time he has referred to Lennon as ours, which does something to me. Something I am too scared to admit or even think about.

“That is what I am trying to do, Cassius. I felt Lennon’s mother dying, so I went to her. Lennon was there, Cass, and she was covered in blood. She was panicking, going in and out of her spirit and solid forms. She repeated something about her dream self. I think her dream self has her somehow.” I was rambling at this point. He still wasn’t paying me any attention. He was like a stone sitting there between his wolf wanting to rage and him trying to find her through their link.

“We have a problem.” Harley and Fallon came through the door of Lennon’s hospital room with their arms intertwined. Both of them had bloodshot eyes and pale skin. Their visions are intertwined but are different. Fallon draws her visions, while Harley is taken by her guides into what the fates need her to see.

Fallon handed me her sketch pad, and I froze. I knew this drawing was Lennon, but it didn’t look like her. It looked like a decomposed version of whatever was left in that little Podunk town that didn’t appreciate her. Even with everything so detailed and clearly being Lennon, the eyes were all wrong. This isn’t our sweet innocent Lennon. The Lennon that nearly combusts in her own embarrassment seeing a man naked in front of her. No... this is something far more evil.

I handed the sketchbook to Cassius, and it was like he didn’t even see it. He just looked past it at the girl in the bed. Fallon walked over to her twin and took him by the face. She was letting him see what she could. Both of their eyes rolled back in their heads, allowing the purples and blues to swirl in their eyes.

Cass grasped Fallon’s wrists and gasped for air when the vision ended.

“She is in The Nothing. I know that darkness. It only exists in The Nothing” he growled. He held his hand high to cut a portal into the realm he knew he could no longer enter.

“Cassius Andrew Grimm. You know what will happen if you do what you are about to.” Harley roared somewhere between Queen and mama bear.

“I could care less.” He snarled at her.

“You will die before you ever make it to her. Now sit!” Harley roared. Cassius is one of the most powerful beings right next to me. But I will not even go against Harley if I can keep from it.

“Fallon, tell your fathers we are leaving. You and I are the only two who can get our Queen.” Fallon nodded, taking her mother’s message to her fathers.

“I will bring your mate back. But so help me, Cassius. If you even think about opening that portal, I will bust your a*s.” She turned and left us in the silence of our anger and worry.

“We should tell her when she wakes up. You know? About our bonds with her. She should know.” Cass’s voice was desperate and pained.

Maybe he’s right. It could make a difference in the way we all live. Or it wouldn’t. Maybe she wants to be friends. Perhaps we’re just the overprotective big brothers, and that’s why it embarrasses her so badly to see us naked. Could Cass be right? Should we tell her? Or should we just let ourselves remain as we are and let fate take its course?

Lennon:

I sat in the darkness, but somehow, I could see her better now... or me. I could see the other me. It was like she just disintegrated into the walls of this place. Like she sleeps or dies again. Over and over until she is ready to ruin everything, I’m trying to build.

I thought of what Harley had said about my mental and physical training. But no matter what I did, I couldn’t seem to shake this darkness. My cognitive state is intact for now, but I sometimes feel more willing to sink into anger like the dark me had. So I lay down on the cold of whatever in the hell I was lying on, and I just investigated the never-ending darkness. Why are there no lights here... no color? Is this place my mind... did I create this hell for her?

“I’ve got sunshine on a cloudy day. When it’s cold outside, I’ve got the month of May.” I sang the little tune and thought about the light Knox and Cass had put in my heart. I found myself willing so many times to forget what happened to me the night that I died and everything that my mother had done to me and say f**k the walls that I wanted to build back up so badly. It would be so easy to give myself to their light instead of the darkness of my past.

I closed my eyes and thought about the view from the bluff in Knox’s charm and the way the sun brought life to the gray sky in his little bubble. That’s what they did for me. They brought sunshine into my otherwise dark heart.

“What the f**k do you think you are doing?” The dark me had come out of the walls or shadows or wherever she hid, and the evil dripping from her tone had my eyes springing back open in surprise. Streaks of orange and hues of purple danced across the dark floor, spreading out in swirls from where I was lying. The colors reminded me of the sunset from the beach the day I met Cass.

I didn't even have time to taste the joy of that day before she yanked me up by my hair and thundered into my head with her fist. It was comical, really. I hit like a flea, so her thuds didn't phase me. After what Grant and his friends had done to me, it would take something cracking my skull to hurt. I grabbed myself by my shoulders and thought about the colors, Knox's orange eyes, and how Cass's chest rises and falls with the beat of my heart. Then she took over my body again. Seeping into my skin, choking me out, blinding me.

“You are an ignorant little girl.” She spat. But I found her weakness in the lights and colors. I should've known all along. Shadows disappear in the morning. Evil disappears in the good, and Knox's words hit me like a freight train.

“You have to survive the ugly.” I will. I will survive this the same way I have survived everything else.

I will get back to the only thing that has ever been good in my life, and when I do. I will make sure this place and this version of myself... and anything resembling my own hatred is painted in the colors of the sunsets that have helped me grow. f**k her, f**k this place... f**k being angry over the shitty hand I have been dealt. With my new freedom came peace, and I'll be damned if I let this hateful b***h or anyone else take that from me. I thought of the colors... I thought of my friends, and I sank back into that darkest part of my mind where she had tried to lock me away, and I started painting my joy on the walls of my mind.

Knox:

Harley and Fallon returned to the hospital room to let us know they were about ready to go. They were decked out in weaponry with their long hair in braids. Harley gripped the sword made from the bones of my predecessor, and Fallon had her bow and a quiver of arrows.

“We're going, Knox. Keep my son safe, and I will be sure your girl gets back to you two. But, please, don't let him follow us. No matter how long it takes, we won't return without her.” I turned to look at Cass, whose mind was still in a catatonic state.

“I'll keep him safe. You have my word. You all be careful.” I hugged them both. I had watched Cass and Fallon grow from birth and had been close with Harley in our attempts to run things smoothly. Hell, as she said, she had practically raised me too.

Harley raised her sword and sliced into the fabric of existence, opening a portal to the realm that had swallowed our girl. I clutched my chest when they entered. For the first time since Cass made me hide away my gray, I let it have me. If, even just for a second, I needed to feel what Cass was feeling, and damn, does it hurt like hell!

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Knox:

“What do you mean closed off, Gio?” Gio is the soul seeker I hired to collect the souls while I trained Lennon. She had snapped Cass out of his stupor with what she had claimed.

“It is, as I have said, your deathliness. The Nothing is closed off. No souls in, no souls out. I have been trying to do a drop for days, but it isn’t working, so I came to you. I apologize.” She bowed to me, and Cass had come to join in on the conversation.

“There must be some kind of mistake. My mother and sister just walked through a portal into The Noth—” Before Cass could finish, the portal that Harley and Fallon had created reopened and spat them to the floor. They landed so hard that the air that left their lungs was audible. Cass rushed to them with fear in his eyes.

“What happened?” He pulled his mother and sister to their feet and hugged them.

“We managed to get just a portion of the way in before something kicked us back out of the realm. But that is just the start of it. The souls are all gone, Cass. Nothing is left. It is back to the original layout of things. Darkness and silence. Everything that mom changed after you were sucked in there has been erased, and it is like a doorway has been created to keep everything out.” Fallon said, rubbing a scuff on her chin.

“Or in,” I murmured, looking back to a sleeping Lennon.

“We have to do it. We have to go after her.” I turned to Cass. He hasn’t been allowed into The Nothing since he accidentally got sucked in as a child. No one knows what happened while he was there because he couldn’t remember. But whatever it was, it had almost cost him his life. He walked over and kissed Lennon tenderly on the forehead, then turned back to me and nodded.

“Let’s do it.” He said, raising his hand to cut a portal into the realm that almost ate him alive.

“NO!” Harley roared.

“I am your king, and it would do well for you to remember that mother. I have sat by long enough. I am going in there to get my mate, and I will return to you whole. But I am going

in there to get my little ray of sunshine, and Nothing or no one will stop me!” his aura was spreading around the room, and just for the dramatic effect of things, I placed my hand on his shoulder and magnified his aura using my own. They all left us, and now we are preparing to go.

Lennon:

The pain in my stomach was like a chainsaw cutting through my intestines. I curled in on myself, still lying on the dark floor of the nowhere abyss. I wouldn't cry out again. No matter how bad the pain gets. The last time she heard me whimper, she offered to take me back into the human realm and let me have the souls of the men that raped and murdered us. But I don't want them. I want Knox's rough hands to cup my face and make the pain go away. But he isn't coming. No one is coming. She told me she locked this place down so tightly that not even the Moon could get in, and I needed to figure out how to do this on my own.

I had been lying here for so long that the pain had been going on for what felt like days. The sweat had soaked me and then dried. My skin felt like clay crumbling away, and some part of me wondered if I was turning into the version of myself that was keeping me trapped here.

“You're dying. It's time now.” Her voice called to me, but I couldn't open my eyes to see her. Instead, I felt her soaking into my dry skin. Again, she had taken control of my body and mind; this time, I didn't fight. I was ready. Grant's soul was mine from the moment he chose to help turn me into this creature, and Chad too. They belong to me, and now that my starvation has taken the reins, I would be willing to accept them both at once to make this pain ease, and with a wave of her hand, we were in the human realm again inside the lake house where my life changed forever.

I heard wailing and screaming like the trauma of my past was played like a song bounding across the walls for my ears only.

The smell of their souls made my mouth water and the pain worse. I was doubled over on the banister as the pain ate me alive. Then, I heard pleading sounds. Sounds of something so important being taken away from me... only it wasn't me. I don't recognize that voice. Who was she? I pushed the pain back and walked through the door I had begged my body to run out of.

I turned the knob and opened the door, and the scene before me set me off. It snapped something inside me that I don't think can ever be repaired.

“Help me!” A petite brunette girl was tied to the same bed that I had been. Her underwear wasn't off yet, and I felt relief knowing they never got that part of her. Seeing that let my hunger return with a vengeance.

“Grant!” I roared, feeling a fire run through my skin.

As soon as his eyes met mine, I felt it. That relief of that starvation washed through me, making me moan. Grant jerked and pried at his throat like he knew his life was over. I saw every bad thing he did. Every girl he ever wronged. Surprisingly I was the first he deflowered, but something was born in him that day. He created a vile creature with disgusting intentions when he forced himself inside me. He needed more.

Chad ran over to him, trying to help his partner in crime. But the minute he noticed I was there, I went from feeling relief to feeling whole. The brunette was sobbing with the ease of not being stolen by two boys she would have to look at every day to get her education. But I saved her. I kept her from the same trauma I had felt.

The dark me chuckled and distracted me from the boys I had killed. They weren't even boys. They were monsters who would've grown into fathers and husbands, and God only knows what those children would've had to answer to.

Her vile mind retook control of my body, and the moment she turned to the girl with images of ripping her to shreds playing in my mind, I fought against her.

"I won't allow you to do her like you did, my mother. She has suffered enough for the night." I stood firm in my decision and was relieved when the darkness overcame me again.

"I am not a monster like them; you will not turn me into one. I will let us both die before you take my choices from me." I was still riding the high of my feeding when I started backing her into a corner. The look on her face went from smug to fearful, and for a split second, I saw something that didn't belong. A color that wasn't my usual green...

"Who are you?" I asked her while trying to use my aura to take up as much of the room as possible.

She waved her eyes across my face, and before me was a woman with a vile look.

"I was once referred to as Adoria, but now I am just as much nothing as this place." I had her backed into a wall, but the fear I had once put in her eyes was fading.

"I'm going home, and you will let me out," I growled. But, as always, her dark laughter echoed in the darkness before she disappeared into the walls the way she always did. This isn't over, though. Not by a long shot. Now I just need a plan to kill her.

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Cassius:

Just for a moment, when the portal lights flashed in my eyes, I was hesitant about stepping through it. The last time I was there, I was only six; it was the place that

nightmares are made of. I told them all that I didn't remember because, even then, I felt like being fearful was a weakness a true Alpha King shouldn't possess. But I remembered every second until my mother came in swinging her sword, and then I blacked out.

I was playing in the forest when the whoosh of wind behind me startled me badly enough to make me turn and see what was looming just behind me.

I remember the smell of the earth as the dark-eyed creature dragged me across the forest floor.

I remember the creature's touch burning into my flesh like hot silver.

I remember it tying me down in its lair and hearing the agonizing screams of the souls surrounding us.

I remember every slice it made into my flesh, trying to find my heart.

That hesitance passed as quickly as it crossed my mind, though. Lennon is more important than anything, and the fear of losing her is greater than any fear birthed from being dragged into this place a lifetime ago.

"Are you ready?" I asked Knox, who gave me a wicked smirk and pulled his hood over his head. It isn't even necessary for him to wear that damn robe to do his job as death; he just does it because he likes the looks the humans give him when they see him.

"Let's go get our girl." He said, stepping into the persona of death and letting the cold tendrils of air whip wildly around him. With one deep breath, I stepped inside. Fallon was right. The dark silence surrounded the walls of this place.

Something is feeding in this place, and something tells me it isn't Lennon because I can't even sense her down here.

"I have an idea, but it may be stupid." Knox's gray hand slid into the hood of his cloak, scratching his forehead.

"I don't think we have room to be picky right now, do we?" I asked him.

He held his hand out, and a dark purple flare of light ignited in his hand. A soul farted out of his hand and flew away with a wail.

"Ha. It worked" The hood of his robe shook with his laughter.

"I don't get it. So, you let out a soul. What now?" I shrugged, fighting the urge to look around me for the creature who dragged me in all those years ago.

“That soul should have stood still. But it was pulled toward them because something is down here feeding.” He looked into the area the soul was sucked into and took off walking in that direction.

“Why were we able to get in?” that question had been nagging at me since he told me we had to come to get her.

“This is my realm. I feed and maintain it. Its magic is a part of me. Nothing can keep me out.” I wished that I could stand as tall as he is right now. But truth be told, my skin broke out in a cold sweat, and I could feel something in the darkness watching us.

“Can you feel it too?” he whispered.

“If by it you mean something watching us from the shadows, then yeah, I feel it too,” I whispered back.

An all too familiar snicker echoed around the walls. I knew it was here, lurking in the shadows. I knew it. Knox and I put our backs to each other, walking in circles to keep each other safe. He flung purple balls of fire into the darkness, igniting their paths, but nothing could be seen.

Something tells me Lennon was dragged in here by this thing, and if that’s the case, I know exactly where she is.

Lennon:

I crawled from the floor at some point. I had been standing looking into the darkness. I could feel Grant and Chad’s souls still energizing me, and it felt good. Just like she said, it would. But the funny part is, it didn’t feel good for me. It felt good because I could see the relief on that girl’s face. I could feel it roaming my veins like I could feel their deaths.

I wonder if darkness plays tricks on your mind the way they say it does... I could’ve sworn I heard Knox’s laughter lighting up the darkness. But maybe it’s just playing with my head. She said she locked everyone out, and nobody could get in.

But I could have sworn I had seen the first streaks of purple lighting up the darkness since I lit the ground up thinking about my friends. I squinted my eyes, waiting to see them again, and when they came, I could’ve sworn I saw Knox and Cassius. I ran in the direction that I had seen the lights and was knocked short and slammed into the ground with a thud.

“I’ve been waiting for this boy for years. Keep your sorry f*****g head down, or so help me God, you will never get out of here again. Understand?” I nodded to her. I knew I couldn’t make a peep because they would come for me if they heard me. I couldn’t risk them like that. Not yet, anyway. I knew damn well I wasn’t letting her get her crusty f*****g hands on them either.

I let her flee away, and then an idea struck deep in my mind. She feared the light. I got on my knees and thought of the happiness they gave me. I thought of my mother dancing around the kitchen, all wrapped in yellow with a smile on her face, cooking dinner, and then I thought of the run down the bluff. The further, the faster. The taste of freedom and the wind from running that cooled my burning skin. I sank my hands deep in the ground under my knees and pictured the sunset and the sunrise and the yellow wrapping around my mom, and I thought of Knox and of Cass and the day Harley and I rolled on the ground after too much wine and champagne and the laughter that bubbled from us.

“Lennon!” Cass called out to me.

I opened my eyes to find the darkness lit up in pastel sunshine, and Cass and Knox ran at me in full force. Cass looked like he could cry, and I couldn’t see Knox’s face through his robe hood, but I knew he was smiling at me too. I could feel it.

Nails on a chalkboard-type screech stopped them in their tracks. I caught a glimpse of the b***h that led me on a rampage, and she was coming in hot, turning my pastel happiness to the blackest of nights on a trail behind her.

She lifted her hand to attack the same way I had watched her do with my mother, and my lungs collapsed under the fear of losing them.

“ADORIA!” I yelled at the top of my lungs, throwing off her focus. I removed my hands, willing the darkness to return, and when it did, I could breathe again. I ran towards them. I closed my eyes and used my other senses to guide me. I could hear them in front of me, fighting for their safety. I heard Adoria losing her s**t because her first attack was missed. She was off to my left, somewhere, recuperating for a second go at them. I wanted to stop realizing I had no fighting skills, no self-defense skills... but I kept running because what I could do was eat souls. I focused on her. I could hear her shuffling to stand where she had fallen in her first failure. She went back to the sky and was heading for my guys, who didn’t seem to be able to find the direction she was coming from. I thought of the injured wolf and how I had taken them all down just by looking into that one wolf’s eyes. But I took Grant and Chad without hurting the girl. I know I can do this too.

I let my mind wander to her less-than-human eyes, rotting smile, and cracking skin. I jumped in front of Cassius and Knox just before she was about to attack. Then, when I could feel the darkness sinking into my skin the way it did when she controlled me, I fought it. This is my body, and those men are my family. I pictured the happy yellows and bright whites consuming the darkness inside of my bones, and once it was all gone, I collapsed into the yellows and bright whites. I fell on my back, cracking my head against the ground. I let myself look at the ceiling for the first time since discovering this strange new world, and what I saw put me in awe. My sunsets were painted across the ceiling above us, and before my eyes fluttered closed, one hard sob wracked my tired body. I had gotten out from underneath the off-white popcorn ceilings, after all.

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Lennon:

The flickering of candles danced across the bedroom. Cass, Knox, and I were playing Monopoly at the coffee table. Lightning and thunder were waging war in the night sky, and with the generators out, the shadows danced across the castle walls like the wisps from the forest.

“I know a game we could play.” Knox’s hooded gaze had heat dancing in my stomach.

“I’m up for whatever. I just don’t want to go to sleep yet.” I have always hated storms like this. I pretended as a child the angels in heaven were bowling when the thunder would crack across the sky. But as I grew, those precious fantasies seemed to shrink.

“Strip poker.” Cass’s husky voice seemed to echo through the room, snapping me out of my haze. My mouth was so dry from his suggestion that I could barely swallow. Yet, for some reason, I feel brave, like I can do whatever I want without consequences.

“Sure.” I casually shrugged like I wasn’t about to be in a room with possibly naked gods, who were also my best friends. I swore I wouldn’t catch feelings, but that rule doesn’t apply to looking... does it?

“What’s the game?” I asked ignorantly as possible. If they think they can call my bluff, I can have them both naked before they even start.

“Five card draw?” Knox cracked open another beer and took a drink without letting his scorching eyes leave me. I nodded and sat back, sipping my beer while Cass shuffled the cards and passed them out.

I picked the cards up and immediately frowned. I don’t want them to have any indications that I have a halfway decent hand. So I discarded and finagled until I was satisfied with the cards in my hand. Again, I kept my face neutral, and by the fourth round, I was feeling myself.

“Cass. Your turn. Pants off.” I smirked, revealing my hand.

“Royal flush.” Now both were down to underwear and socks, and I couldn’t help but admire them. Who knew the body could be so damn perfect. I often looked myself over in the mirror, repulsed by my scars, thick a*s, and thighs. I felt too tall for a woman and yet too short to be tall. My a*s was alright, I guess. But I was cheated in the t**s department, yet here they both are... flawless works of art. Even their scars made their bodies that much more intriguing.

“Round five.” Knox’s brows jumped around when he picked up his hand. I gathered my cards, frowning for real this time. This hand is a wreck. I had high hopes of getting them in their birthday suits before they even got my shirt off, and with a hand like this, it isn’t happening, and I had never regretted not wearing a bra until now.

“I’m good.” Said a smiling Knox, who laid down a royal flush.

f**k. I have definitely lost this round.

“Same.” Cass fanned his cards out on the table, showing us a full house.

I did everything possible to build my hand, but they had me.

“Go ahead, princess.” Knox sat back in his underwear, drinking his beer with his muscled chest heaving as I stood to remove my shirt.

From this angle, I had a much better view of between their legs, and I almost choked on my spit at the sight of them standing in attention like I was on a stage performing for them. I let my fingertips dance shakily under the hem of my shirt, and slowly I pulled it over my head. The thunder exploded in the sky, and a low growl erupted from a dark-eyed Cassius. Knox’s orange eyes were lit like the candles, still happily flickering around the room, and despite the heat in my cheeks, I gathered the cards, shuffled them, and passed out round six. Then, with a repeat of round five over my head, I stood, hooked my fingertips in my joggers, and slid them down, and I regretted more than anything that I looked up. If I thought they stood attention before, I was wrong. Both were massively erect and begging to be tasted. My tongue danced behind my teeth, wondering if they tasted as good as they smelled.

“You look like you want something, sunshine... care to share with the class?” Cass’s words wrapped around me, sending crackles through my soul.

“I want you to get down on your knees and taste me.” I shuddered at the words that fell from my mouth. My bulldog mouth had clearly overrode my puppy dog a*s because when they both fell to their knees, I stumbled backward, falling to the couch. Cassius was the first one to make it between my thighs.

His warm lips started kissing a trail of fire up my thigh that had me gripping the plush couch cushions instantly.

Knox took a knee on the couch beside me. His hand cupped my jaw, forcing my gaze from Cassius to him. I caught his masculine scent as he leaned in for the kiss, and the moment his lips touched mine, every pulse point in my body ignited in carnal need.

“mmm.” I groaned, licking his lips, taking the initiative to taste his tongue. Cass’s mouth had reached my hips, and I was eager for friction. My p***y was wet and ready for

whatever they had planned. But visions of getting my way made stars dance behind my closed eyes.

I shivered when the sound of my panties being torn echoed around the dimly lit room.

Cass's mouth was back on me instantly. His tongue was eager to reach my center while Knox and I were locked in a feverish kiss. The second Cass dipped his tongue inside my p***y I arched against his face breaking my kiss with Knox. I carefully gathered Cass's curly locks into my left hand, admiring how f*****g perfectly he was eating me.

"f**k, just like that." I let my head fall back against the couch. Knox kissed his own blazing trail across my jaw and down my neck, where he lazily dragged his tongue over my nipple.

"Knox." I panted.

He looked up at me with blazing eyes, and the only thing I could think about was him teaching me exactly how he wanted his d**k sucked, but I couldn't articulate those words in any other way than throat f**k me. So instead, I pulled him from his boxers and leaned forward, taking him into my mouth.

"For the love... f**k, Lennon." He groaned, gathering my hair. Pushing himself deeper into my throat.

Right before I came on Cass's handsome face, he pulled away, stood to his feet, and knelt between my legs on the couch. The moment he freed himself and the warm head of his c**k slid through my juices, a tiny bit of reality slapped me in the face.

"You shouldn't do that." I moaned, fighting the urge to drop myself onto his throbbing length.

"Do you want to stop?" he went to pull away, but I had already wrapped my legs around him in a vice.

"No. But I think you should know that you will be mine the minute you decide to stick your d**k inside me." My chest was rising and falling with the anticipation of his choice.

"Oh, f**k!" I moaned out when he slid the tip into me. The waves of pleasure that had dwindled with the loss of his mouth on my clit returned with a vengeance the deeper into me he thrust himself.

"Baby girl, you were ours the minute you spread those delicious thighs for us," Knox said, reaching between Cass and me to continue the assault on my clit.

The thunder exploded again, and with it, so did my o*****m.

“CLEAR!”

Another round of thunder and lightning.

“Still nothing. Charge again.”

“CLEAR!”

“We have a normal sinus rhythm.” My eyes fluttered open to see a blood-soaked Cass and Knox beside me. I tried to pull out whatever was in my mouth since it clearly wasn’t Knox anymore.

“Stop. Don’t fight it, princess. They are going to take excellent care of you. Cass and I will be right here.” He turned to look at a pale Cassius.

“Don’t worry, red. We’re back home now, thanks to you. Everything will be okay.” He leaned over, kissing my forehead, causing those once intense crackles in my soul to erupt in a light tingle across my skin. My eyes closed again, wanting to go back to my filthy game of strip poker with the two of them instead of whatever in the f**k this was.

I relaxed into whatever I had been lying on with a huff. I clearly wasn’t getting to return to that haven anytime soon, so I might as well sleep away the euphoria they had left on my body. When I wake up... if I wake up... I will still just be their friend; if that is all I ever get of them, that will still be enough.

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Cassius:

“Adoria!” Lennon yelled out, and then all the colorful beauty lighting this place turned black again.

Even in the pitch-black darkness, Knox and I ran in the direction that Lennon had once been, and then a sick rip echoed around us, and it was like the lights to this place had been turned on again. Bright white lights danced around the room like a laser light show, and at the center of those lights was Lennon and the creature who had dragged me to hell all those years ago. Lennon had jumped in front of her to save us; the beast had torn through Lennon’s abdomen and been trapped there. The thing’s head whipped wildly as Lennon sucked the evil b***h into her like a sponge after water.

The creature was wailing and screeching, but Lennon looked like an angel with her arms spread wide and long loose curls falling down her back. Her eyes were looking to the sky, and I don’t know what she was seeing, but I had never seen anyone seem more at peace, and that scared the s**t out of me. My feet wouldn’t move an inch, and I grasped Knox

like he could keep the pain from ripping me away. I knew I was feeling everything Lennon felt, and that killed me.

The lights were fading now. The creature was gone, and the gaping hole she had torn into Lennon was dripping blood around her feet. Knox and I ran to her; he tore his cloak off and wrapped her in it. He picked her up into his arms and cut a portal. I still felt so confused. I didn't help her; I couldn't help her. Instead, she saved us. That thing was after me, and it took her to get to me, and I was too blinded by her existence to keep her safe, and now I don't even know how to help Knox help her.

Knox:

The minute she stepped in front of the thing attacking us, she had done the one thing I had tried so hard to keep from happening. She nurtured the bond. It might have been different if she had sacrificed herself to keep Cassius safe. But she did it for me and Cassius, and when she stepped in front of that thing, she gave us the ultimate act of love. She was so willing to ensure we were safe that she was ready to die to make sure we were. I grabbed my chest, fighting the urge to fall to my knees, when our bond snapped in place, thriving between the three of us like one of us had stepped on a land mine.

I spaced out... when I came to, she was in my arms, wrapped in my cloak. The fabric was sinking into her wound, mending it from the inside out with its magic. I tapped into my soul hoard and gave her a continuous feed. Finally, I stepped through the portal I didn't recall creating and laid her on a bed in the pack hospital. I was sure she would die from the poison coursing her veins and the extent of her injuries, but with the help of my cloak, her wound was almost nonexistent. I can only hope that the souls I was feeding her would help filter the poison from the creature's soul out of her.

Lennon:

I knew I was dreaming again when I felt the grass on my bare back and smelled the earth and wildflowers. I was just shocked back to life, though, so this may not be a dream. Their loss wrapped me in grief for a second. If I'm dead, I have lost the only people I have ever truly cared for. I sat up, letting my eyes adjust to the heavens I had found myself in. My hair wrapped wildly around my body and under my back in the warm breeze. The red tone of my hair was almost blinding under the warm sun. Peace... that's what this place is.

"You are not dead, daughter. Just sleeping." My head snapped up, looking for the melodic voice that had called for me. But I couldn't find her.

I stood to my feet, embarrassed by my nakedness. The urge to cover myself was overwhelming.

"Don't worry, daughter. Embrace your skin. It is as beautiful as the flowers in the field and the birds in the sky." I looked around for her again until my eyes settled on the forest.

A path carved through the thick foliage was calling to me. Begging me to enter. I was at the tree line when her voice called from behind me again.

“Not yet. But soon, you will be ready.” I turned to see the woman dressed in greens and browns. A goddess.

“Are you the sun?” I scrunched my nose up when she chuckled at my question.

“No, daughter. I am Mother Gaia, and you, sweet girl, are the last of my direct descendants. I have seen your struggle. I have witnessed your pain. The moon and I have been whispering, and we think we have a plan. Do you want to hear it?” I nodded at her, still fighting the urge to cover myself.

“Good. Let’s get started.” I turned back to the entryway, and from it stepped a woman of pure grace with a fearless attitude.

“Lennon, I want you to meet Queen Penthesilea. She is a brave leader of women. The moon and I think she will be the perfect person to train you in your spirit. Despite your battle today, your body is fighting a war against the creature who wants to roam freely. If she breaks free from the prison you created inside of yourself to keep her, your mate will suffer.” What does she mean, mate? I don’t even know who it is.

“I haven’t found him yet.” I hung my head feeling a pain in my chest.

“Yes, dear, you have. You have found him, and then another found you.” Her words confused me, but I turned to the queen to change the subject.

“How do I keep Adoria from breaking free?” Her head lowered to look me in the eyes.

“You die.” Her words were more confusing than her mother’s.

“I am already dead.” I made sure to speak the confusion across my face because how can you be dead and then die again?

“You only died physically, daughter. Your spirit is thriving. But unfortunately, your spirit can die as well. If you choose to keep her trapped, your spirit will die. But, on the other hand, if you choose to free her and fight, you will have an eternity with your mates.” She never took her eyes off me, and I could see deep in the honey-brown orbs that those were my only two options.

“Fight. I want to fight.” My heart was beating against my ribs like a raging drum, but I knew that was the option. Even if it wasn’t for the mate part, I might not even like the guy. The rejection is still on the table. But I can’t live my life in nothingness. I need Knox’s snarky a*s comments, and I need Cassius’s calling me Red with a smirk on his face because he doesn’t know I love how he looks at me when he says it. I need Harley and more drunken nights shooting arrows, and I need Fallon to teach me how to dance and

have fun. I found the family I have always dreamed of, and fighting for that feels effortless.

“Come then. We will begin.” The foliage opened for the queen, and when her feet entered the forest, the beating of drums started welcoming her home.

We walked for what felt like an hour. Deeper into towering trees, vines of blooming flowers, and plush grass under our bare feet. We went down a stone-carved staircase, and before us was a wooden door as tall as ten men surrounded by forest stones. She quickly pushed the doors, letting them creak and groan, opening to a place that was unlike anything I had ever seen.

“Hakuna Matata,” I mumbled in awe of the rushing waterfalls and crystal blue waters. Flowers of so many different kinds, you could spend the rest of your life still discovering new ones. Healthy fruits hung from the trees, and everything seemed too perfect to exist. Too beautiful to disturb with touch.

“Welcome home, Lennon. The warriors here are some of the most skilled women in existence. If you choose to stay, you will be welcome; if you decide to leave at the end of your training, we will feast the day you leave. You will learn everything you need to know to be a fearless warrior here. When and if you leave here, I am certain that you will end any battle bathed in the blood of your enemies with a smile on your face!” Her words forced me to stand a little taller. She clearly doesn’t know the range of my fighting abilities.... my nonexistent fighting capabilities. I laughed internally, thinking of Cassius and Knox trying to teach me to spar. Something tells me this will be a long journey, but life without them isn’t worth it.