

Chapter 125

ARTEMISIA

As the first day of the trial begins, I feel exhausted and depressed.

Actually, perfect for standing in front of a bunch of old men with funny wigs, next to your own family who is attacking you, and concentrating objectively on a matter.

After telling Cayden that Rick saw my wolf, it was impossible to convince him that his brother's theory was ridiculous. Now he wanted to know about my wolf at any cost, but either Cassy didn't know or acted dumb as she wouldn't tell Aiden anything about any special ability of hers.

Also, as I was pregnant, Cassy refused to shift as it would endanger the baby.

So, bummer.

"Is it correct that you have five mates, but only three of them are fated?" the judge sitting in the middle asks, staring at a piece of paper before looking at me over his small glasses.

"Yes," I shake my head, scoffing. "I mean, no, your honour. Four of them are fated. Alpha Cayden Blackwood is my chosen mate."

"Vampires don't count as fated," Riccardo shouts from the back, making me close my eyes enraged to keep my cool. But other than me, Fynn was never made to stay calm.

"Shut the trap, Richie!" He shouts back, making me press my lips together to suppress a laugh.

The judge hits his fist on the bench repeatedly, yelling at my mates sitting behind the stand in which I'm standing. "Order! Order!"

Fynn clicks his tongue, crossing his arms. "I apologise, your honour, I just must have missed the crowning of Alpha Richie as the new Moon Goddess!"

"Mr. Blackwood!" The judge sitting on the right reprimands him, and Cayden shoots him an annoyed look.

"That's enough, Finnegan."

"I met Cayden before my fated mates. We were in love already as his brother came to pick me up in my pack. So, my mates accepted our bond," I continue as if the interruption didn't take place.

"Alpha Blackwood," the judge calls, making him stand up.

"Yes, Your Honour."

He eyes him up and down, before scribbling onto the piece of paper. "Can you confirm what your Luna said?"

"Yes, Your Honour." I can hear the smile in his voice without having to turn around. "It was love at first sight, Your Honour."

Lowering my gaze, I hide my blush with a smile as the judge interrogates Cayden further. "And how did this bond work out, seeing that she met her mates?"

"To be honest, Your Honour, I was crushed when I found out that she was my brother's mate. But as imposed by our laws, I let her enter my territory and kept my feelings to myself, thinking she would lose whatever she had felt for me due to the mate bond." Cayden clears his throat as he shifts on his feet. "I didn't want to pressure her or make her feel uncomfortable."

The judge takes a deep breath, looking back and forth between the two of us. "But you never lost your feelings for him, even when you met your fated mates?"

"No, Your Honour," I shake my head, kneading my fingers. "But just like him, I kept it for me, fearing it would hurt my mates."

"It was me who convinced them to stop suppressing their emotions," Fynn boasts, puffing his chest.*w.w.n.O.e!W.o@M.cOM*

The judge sighs, repositioning the glasses on his nose as he takes another document off the huge piles standing between him and the other judges. "Looks like it was a strong bond as well."

His mumbling makes my heart jump, giving me more hope about the outcome of the trial.

"Alpha Guerrieri, do you have something to say about this?" the judge asks my brother who is standing in the stand beside me.

I straighten my spine, raising my chin as he wets his fingertips with his tongue, before shifting his weight on his feet.

This is the international sign that he is about to say something incredibly uncomfortable to him, making my heart sink into my stomach.

"My only question, Your Honour, is how this bond can be so strong if he then fails to protect my sister from his mate attacking her in plain daylight?"

A low gasp goes through the room, making the judge hit his fist on his bench again.

"Order! Order! Luna Blackwood, is that true? Were you attacked by one of your mates?"

I'm just about to answer the judge's question as my brother steals the words out of my mouth, acting as if he is only here to save me from my agony. "She won't answer you truthfully, Your Honour. She was totally brainwashed by them. We have a witness-"

"You have a witness?" I interrupt him, looking at him for the first time. "You have a witness who tells you about attacks in my pack? Who would this witness even be?"

Giorgio clenches his jaw as he tears his eyes off me, ignoring me as he answers my question to the judge. "The witness is, of course, too afraid to testify, so they won't appear here to underline our concerns."*W(w)x.Nôx&LwDr(m).(c)o@*

"How practical," I scoff, shaking my head. "Why didn't you bring mom? She could have been a witness! She could have told the judge that everything was fine."*wWw.N(c)Ve&wD(r)m.Com*

The judge sighs, scratching his forehead. "Don't talk directly to the plaintiff, Luna Blackwood. Talk to me. What has your mother to do with this case?"

"Judge, my mother called me frequently, sometimes even two or three times a day, to see how I was doing. She could have been here to testify what I told her, and that I rarely missed a call of hers. And that only because I was working," I explain, fighting to keep my voice from shaking. "I even spoke on the phone with my brother every week, and he never uttered any concerns. That's why I was so shocked about all these allegations as he never addressed them with me."

My brother chuckles coldly, shaking his head. "We weren't allowed to utter any concerns with her directly, Your Honour. We were rather sure about her being watched and controlled. The phone calls were only answered at specific times of the day, and she wasn't her joyful self anymore."

"This is outrageous. And a lie!" I yell at my brother, causing the judge to hit his bench again.

"Luna Blackwood."

Taking a deep breath, I roll back my shoulders, focusing back on the judge. "Your Honour, I have my phone with me. If you want to take a look, you will see that I was in contact with several members of my pack and my family and that the hours are totally random. On top of that, you will be able to see that I text freely and without any constraint or fear."

The judge crosses his hands, looking at me with furrowed brows, "Do you have an idea why your brother would say that you weren't as joyful as usual? Maybe you share some of his preoccupations?"

"Not at all, Your Honour. But I can imagine that in the beginning, I was a bit crestfallen. I was missing home, and just about to settle in a new pack. I feared their reaction about me having more mates than just one, and how they would accept my decision to accept a chosen mate as well. And apparently, my worries were justified as they are now attacking us without any reason. My mates have always respected and loved-"

"What about the attack then?" Giorgio interrupts me, but I ignore him, raising my voice.

"My mates have always respected and loved me. There is nothing they wouldn't do to protect me."

Giorgio exhales annoyed, repositioning on his feet. "How long did it take you to rehearse this phrase?"

"You are impossible," I whisper, keeping my gaze directed to the judge. "How much is Rick paying you for this?"

Before he can even finish growling, the judge is already hitting his bench again. "ENOUGH!"

His roar gets us to flinch, making me lower my head. "This is a court, and not some playground to come and fight out silly disputes between siblings."

Sighing, he settles back into his seat, taking another document from the huge piles. "Alpha Guerrieri, please, stop addressing your sister directly. Luna Blackwood, I'd like to see your phone, please."

He gestures to one of the guards to step in front of me and I hand him my phone with a smile. "Thank you."

"Your Honour," Giorgio pushes out a breath, obviously feeling lost. "This is surely staged as well."

The judge looks at him over his glasses, looking daggers at him. "Are you implying that I wouldn't recognize staged evidence when it is handed to me?"

"No, of course not, Your Honour. I apologise," Girogio murmurs, making me smile contently.

After going through my phone, I actually have to hold back as he is practically immersing himself in my most intimate sphere. As he giggles, I look at him expectantly, but he doesn't look up.

I bite my bottom lip as he continues to scroll through my phone and ignore Giorgio's gaze that is burning into my skin as the judge suddenly looks up, scanning the room with his eyes. He lifts his index and middle finger, gesturing towards the small crowd standing behind me. "Ramona!"

"Yes, Sir," she skyrockets out of her seat, and he moves his fingers, gesturing to her to come closer and sit on the witness stand next to the judge's bench*wW(w).x.DVe!Worm.cO(m)*

She casts me a worried look before she follows his instructions, sitting in the small cubicle.

"Will you state your full name and your relationship with these two people to the court, please," the judge instructs her in a monotonous tone, moving his hand towards us.