

# Traded To The Lycan King by MG Wattsons

## Chapter 81-85

### Chapter 81

“You knew what she was?” Hayes asks Leandra, looking angry. She looks up, blinking at him in a near catatonic state before she seems to come back to the real world.

“No...” she whispers. “I just...she always felt like fire...”

“That is what Percy wrote on the mirror.” I recall looking back at Caspian. “When he was fighting for control. When we asked him about it later, we all just assumed he was warning us about the dragons, but if the only species he knew to be fire was dragons....then he couldn’t assume it to be anything else but the m.”

Caspian muses quietly, his thumb under his chin and his index finger folded over his lips.

“You hate me.” Leandra whispers, and I look over at Hayes, who doesn’t respond.

Instead, his knuckles grow white as he squeezes the steering wheel and adjusts how he is sitting. He is being a stubborn jackass. Just as blinded by the mate bond as I was with Colette. It’s amazing how a gift can feel like pressure to accept something you aren’t sure you want.

“No,” I answer for him. “There is just a lot at stake right now, Leandra. He is the beta, his job is to protect me and our pack at all costs. That includes focusing all energy on finding our luna.”

“I have already offered a viable option to help.” She reminds me, her eyes watching the back of Hayes’ head.

“One we will revisit, but if I want her back safely, we need to have all the pieces. Not just fragmented memories from a lycan who was possessed.” I explain as quickly and as nicely as I can. She nods, but I see the way her lips quiver as she looks out the window, wiping at her face as her hair falls over her for coverage.

Caspian arches a brow at me, and I clear my throat.

“So a Phoenix.” I say, changing the subject. “What exactly does that mean for us?” I ask him.

“It means we have to get Colette back before they kill her.” His words are a matter of fact, but it feels like a silver dagger directly to the heart.

We have to get her back before they kill her. But if it was about killing her...then why would they have kidnapped her? What do they gain by taking her and keeping her with them? Unless they took her and killed her elsewhere in order to ensure we hunt for them. Then again, what would they want with us coming for them? There is nothing to be gained in that.

I rub my chest; the muscles aching at the thought of her already being gone. But I would have felt it right? If Percy could feel that he was losing his twin, surely I would feel it through the bond regardless of distance between us, right?

“What makes you think they want to kill her?” Hayes asks. I tilt my head in curiosity.

“Why else would they take her if not to kill her? Giselle is the one who threw a huge fit about Colette being a hybrid.” Caspian reminds us both.

But the more I think about Hayes’ posed question, the more I wonder the same thing. What reason do we have to think she wants Colette dead? Giselle tried to kill her, or so we assumed, with the fire balls she sent at her.

But it could easily have been assumed I would have jumped in the way. I didn’t hide the fact that I would willingly die for her. So maybe it’s not Colette she wants dead, maybe it’s me.

“She knew I would protect Colette with my life.” I murmur as we pull into the mansion we all abandoned days before.

“So Giselle is aiming to kill you?” Hayes asks, confused. “No offense brother, but what does killing you do? We have a hierarchy. Killing off an alpha will just pass the title along.”

“I don’t know,” I muse, pinching the bridge of my nose. “Fuck. Every time it feels like we get somewhere, it stops making sense.”

“Desperation often leads to outside of the box ideas.” Caspian says. “And right now, desperation feels like the only way to get to logical answers. Even if they seem illogical.”

“That feels like a whole lot of talking in a circle,” Hayes mumbles, annoyed.

We hop out of the car, the four of us wandering toward the familiar mansion doors, and I realize the roof on the other side seems to be replaced. Though I don't say much, it shouldn't surprise me he would have the place repaired already. As we push the doors open, we are met with a tasty smell of steak and seasoned potatoes. My stomach rumbling until I think about Colette.

What is she eating, if they are feeding her at all? They no doubt are aware of her abilities with water, so how weak will she be if they keep liquid away from her, not allowing her to hydrate? How the fuck am I supposed to eat when she is suffering a fate worse than death?

“You two should change into dry clothing, then we can eat and regroup in my den,” Caspian says, walking off toward the kitchen.

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It feels to me like Hayes is not trying to understand that Leandra has been through more than most. Her ability to make her own decision, shift on her own command, was taken from her. And all his anger and annoyance does is break her down further.

“Are you ready?” I ask her softly and she startles, her hand rushing to her chest before her cheeks flush pink and she nods.

“Yeah,” she clears her throat as we walk in silence, me unsure of what to say and her lost in her mind.

“Hayes will come around.” I tell her hopefully, giving her a tight smile.

“Maybe,” she sighs. “I wouldn't blame him if he doesn't. It's not like I am an ideal candidate. I mean...I didn't even know I was a lycan until I shifted the first time and then I was hijacked by Giselle and Lily. There is a lot I don't even know about myself.”

It's not that she wants or needs it, but I pity her. I feel sorry for everything that has been taken from her. What she has lost and what she may lose because of circumstances beyond her control. There is a lot in life to miss when someone else is at the helm and making you out to be a bad guy.

"We are always changing, constantly growing because of what we experience. Even if you had known yourself, you would be a different person tomorrow than you are going to bed tonight."

"I guess," she murmurs.

"Life IS change. You don't have to know who you are, Leandra. You only have to know who you want to be. What you want in life."

She smiles softly.

"Who I want to be is someone a part of something good." She whispers. "I want to help you find Luna Colette, any way possible. And I want to kill her for what she did to me."

"Oh, well, get in line to kill Giselle." I chuckle, shaking my head. "There are quite a few of us on the list."

She waves her hands. "No, not her. I want to kill Lily for living in my head, playing me like a puppet and taking everything from me, especially my choices."

"Mmm, well..." I exhale a deep breath as we come to her door. "Lily is yours for the taking."

She reaches out, and I arch a brow as I clasp my hand to hers and we shake.

"Deal." Then she turns and enters her room in much higher spirits.

I change quickly, wondering how all my clothes are already placed in the closet I shared with Colette, but I'm learning not to question the things the supernaturals can do.

Instead, I exit the room that feels suffocating without my mate's scent and move to the dinner hall. I hear low arguing as I come around the corner and I stop dead in my tracks.

“If you had anything to fucking do with this-” Caspian growls, his hands on the collar of none other than an unbothered Johannes.

“I told you already. I am here to help you, not for the vampires, but of my accord.” He tells Caspian, who scoffs.

“And what makes you think we want your fucking help? Better yet, what makes you think we need it?” I growl, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Because there is shit you don’t know...things unfolding you won’t understand.” He says plainly, but I can see the sincerity in his eyes.

“Oh? Like what?” I scoff. “Name one thing-”

“Lauren was a hybrid.” He says, flatly. “I turned her, and survived it as both vampire and lycan.”

“What?”

“And she may not be as dead as previously thought...” He says, looking away.

2/3

## Chapter 82

“What the fuck did you just say?” Hayes roars from behind me.

“That’s not possible.” I say plainly, refusing to fall into his emotional trap.

There will be no losing my temper, no allowing him to control how I respond with such heinous claims. Lauren is dead. Damn dead. I know this because we removed her damn head from her body.

“She is a hybrid. I don’t know what the hell she is capable of. She may be fucking immortal for all we know.” Johannes says, pacing a way with his hands in his hair.

He is disheveled, his eyes swirling red with hunger and his demeanor is frantic. I know he shouldn't be here. Caspian said it himself the vampires have bowed out of this fight, choosing to run and hide.

Unless they did create a hybrid, one they can't control and they want to escape the accusations and responsibilities that come from having created one.

"Johannes, take a damn seat." Caspian says in a threatening tone.

"There is no fucking time to sit and eat a fancy fucking meal, Fish man!" He roars. "Giselle and Lauren are working together, but they aren't the ones in fucking charge."

"It would be a lot easier to make a plan if we knew what the fuck was going on." I snap at him, losing my temper.

Lauren, being alive, does nothing but piss me off. It's not because of who she is or what she meant to me once. It's jealousy that she is well and alive and my mate might not be. Colette has done nothing to deserve the shit thrust on her from all these bitches moving behind the scenes.

Johannes' eyes burn with fear and fury as he plops into a chair, lifting his arms in a show of inviting us to take a seat with him. He is being a dick, one who is coming to make a show of sharing information like he cares, but he wants something. He always wants something when he wants to be cooperative. It's how vampires always are: selfish and needy.

"Explain how it is possible for Lauren to be a hybrid." I say. "And alive. Because as far as I know, burning a vampire at the fucking stake or beheading them are effective ways to kill your kind."

He sighs, leaning back in his chair as he glances up at the ceiling and then shakes his head.

"I knew you would kill her. There was no way you wouldn't, so I bit her." he says it's as simple as that.

But it's not. Werewolves and lycans can't survive a vampire's bite, not when they feed off of us. Not only that, if it did what it was supposed to, which is turn her into one of them, her mate's bond with me would have been broken. That is something I would have unmistakably felt.

Lauren didn't shield her fear or pain from me leading up to her death or as she was dying. I experienced every excruciating second of it until it snapped and she was gone.

"I said explain, not give me vague information that doesn't make sense." I bite out. "Our mate bond was intact until she died."

"I bit her wrist and fed on her. It healed almost immediately, but there was no change in her like to be expected. It was a long shot, but...I loved her." Johannes explains. "And until I went back to my coven after the attack and they showed me proof..."

Hayes snorts and shakes his head, unbelieving of his tale. Not that I blame him. It's all pretty far-fetched.

"Look! I am telling you the fucking truth here." He says like he is offended, we would assume he is lying.

"Fine, say you are being honest. Why the hell are you here, telling us all of this? Why wouldn't you just side with Giselle and her army of dragons?" Caspian asks.

Johannes glances away before he clears his throat and leans forward with a sardonic chuckle as he shakes his head. Then he looks up at me, his tongue sliding over his teeth.

"Because if she is unkillable, that means my position is at stake. Lauren, being a vampire hybrid, now has a claim to my title and my throne. And as much as I cared for her, I don't like that she is more powerful than me and will eventually come to take what is mine."

I push off the wall, stalking toward the table as I yank out a chair across from him and take a seat. His eyes watch me with curiosity before I look over at Hayes, who seems to consider what Johannes says. He meets my gaze and nods, then he takes a seat next to me.

“You are saying you are joining us because you are worried she will be better than you?” I ask.

“Yes!” he says, relieved we seem to understand. “I am the Vampire Heir. My parents are to finally hand me over their throne after hundreds of years of waiting. It is mine.”

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Chapter 82

“It’s not enough.” I shrug. “It is not enough for us to trust you, for us to believe you are on our side. I need more from you than a jealous streak and a fear of losing your throne.”

He stands abruptly, his chair clattering to the ground as he paces away. Then he groans in frustration and slams his fists on to the thick oak table. The wood creaks and a splintering races toward me, stopping just shy of the edge where I sit.

“I will swear a fucking oath.” He says, his voice dripping with honesty and contempt. The very thought is revolting to him and it’s noticeable.

“Let’s start with you telling us everything you know.” I say calmly, which I know only makes him angrier. Nothing pisses him off more than me being the cool, calm and collected one. “And I don’t want general assumptions. I want every fucking boring detail.”

“Giselle is not a dragon.” He says like it’s not news to us.

“We are aware.” Caspian says, playing with the water from his glass as it floats above his fingertips.

“She tricked them. They think she is because the Dragon lord claims to be her mate.” He says. “But with the use of Fae Magic, she can possess anyone who is weak-minded enough.”

His words are very clearly a dig at my luna and I growl low in my chest as a warning to him.



“Colette may be naïve in some regards but weak minded she is not.” I hiss at him and I see a flicker of amusement. So I lean forward, a twitch in my lip as my lycan resists flying across to throttle him. “Take another dig like that again, and Lauren will be the least of your worries.”

He throws his hands up in surrender.

“The dragon king was the only viable target. She is a Phoenix, so she smells like fire, like a dragon.”

“And how did you know she was a phoenix?” Caspian asks, sitting forward, the water sloshing back into the glass.

“Process of elimination,” he frowns. “She was able to use fire, but it was different from a dragon’s fire. It was...less controlled and she should have been able to just fly away on her own, but she didn’t. She needed to be rescued.”

“Exactly.” Caspian hums in thought. “Merikh, I would like to speak with you for a moment.”

He then stands abruptly and walks out of the room, expecting him to follow. I look at Hayes, who has his eyes trained on our enemy turned temporary ally. He waves me off with a simple flick of his wrist.

“I am fine, brother. If blood sucker makes a single fucking move and I will gladly end him.” He mutters, and I don’t doubt it. Hayes has a lot of pent up anger and he is looking for a way to let out. I have no doubt that Johannes would be the one to go down. Mostly immortal or not.

I stand, patting him on the shoulder once before I walk down the hall and find Caspian pacing back and forth, his hands on his hips. He looks distressed, his worried and tired eyes finding mine as he shakes his head.

“What is on your mind, Caspian?” I ask him with a frown and he shrugs.

“I am desperate,” he says, looking sad. “We have to find her, even if it means joining forces with Johannes.”

“Fuck that!” I hiss, “I don’t trust him. I killed Lauren. It wasn’t a simple stab wound or use of silver. I made sure there was no way out for her I fucking \_”

“Enough, Merikh.” He lifts his hand with a heavy sigh. “I am not saying I trust him or believe him. But he is willing to take an oath.”

“An oath is just fucking words,” I remind him, and he frowns.

“Unless you make him do a blood oath,” I can see the plea in his eyes.

“No,” I scoff and chuckle dryly, pacing away. “No fucking way. I will not have him linked to me with an oath,”

“This is Colette,” He reminds me. “Your mate, your luna.”

I drag my hands down my face, groaning as I nod and sigh.

“Fine. You are right.” I shrug and give in. He is right. This isn’t about him being the fucker who killed my father or one of my sworn enemies. This is about Colette, my little luna. And I will do anything, including keeping this fucker attached to me to save her.

Caspian clasps me on my shoulder in appreciation as he steers us back to the kitchen. When we walk in, we find that neither man has moved an inch. Both of them lost in a staring contest until I clear my throat.

“We will initiate the oath.” I announce, silencing Hayes with a stern glance and he growls under his breath.

“Fine.” Johannes says, standing, but I can see the tension in his shoulders. I half expected to call him out on his bluff, but it seems he is being

## Chapter 83

### •Colette

My body shudders involuntarily, the cold leeching in through the dirtied denim pants I have on and the thin shirt I pulled back over my head to retain whatever heat I can.

Mom breathes heavily just on the other side of the bars, as close as she can be without being too affected by the silver. I expected them to come back

for me, but as my mom expected, they are letting me heal before they start up again.

It seems they want it to last as long as possible. No doubt they get a sick sense of enjoyment out of our pain. But maybe that is how the dragons are, maybe instead of living for fire they live for others suffering.

“Are you still awake...” I whisper over to my mother. I hear her groan before she clears her throat.

“There is no such thing as sleep in this place.” She says back, her voice hoarse from dehydration.

“How is your pain?” I ask her, not really knowing what else to say.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of questions running through my head. Questions I have pondered for years, answers I had convinced myself that if I knew them, maybe I could be happier. But now when I have her here, I can't think of a damn one.

She chuckles before breaking into a coughing fit. My chest aches with every chest rattling expelling of dust she lets out and I press my head to the cement, holding back tears. After a moment, she clears her throat and I hear a heavy sigh.

“Ten years and these are the questions you ask me?”

“It seemed polite to have a little small talk first,” I joke, and she chuckles lightly.

“Well, at least my brother was good enough to teach you manners.” She muses. I don't have the heart to tell her he taught me a lot more than that but that it was quick learning at the end of his whip or the whim of her niece.

“What do they want from you?” I ask, deciding to skirt around the familial problems she may not know we even have with her brother.

The cell goes silent, then there is an exhale and the sound of shuffling. When she speaks again, her voice is closer, more hushed.

“At first, they wanted to know where you were. I assumed you were alive and that your uncle had come for you as promised.” She explains. I furrow my brows in confusion.

“Alpha Bentley didn’t come for me.” I say slowly, “I was left in the pack for him to find.”

“No, you are mistaken. He promised me he would come for you. I couldn’t reach Caspian and-” She trails off, going silent again.

“Melody...?” I whisper, and I hear a soft, quiet sob in the darkness.

“I need a minute,” she murmurs, and I hear her shift away from me.

There is a clatter as the door opens, echoing through the damp prison, lights flickering on as I cover my eyes, waiting for them to adjust to the sudden change. There is a shuffling and I can hear a sizzle to my right as I blink and look at my mother clutching the bars.

“Do the video.” She whispers, her eyes darting toward the entrance of my cage with fear written all over her face.

“What?” I hiss, ashamed she would back down so easily, though pain has been a constant for her for many years.

“The sooner your mate knows you are missing, the sooner they will come for you.” She mutters. “I can handle torture, but you need to get out of here. This place will kill you, my sweetheart. I need you to promise me you will say what they want you to, but don’t you dare show an ounce of pain or fear? Otherwise, they will storm the mountain and it will be their death.”

She recoils away as footsteps echo closer and the same dragon man from before stops in front of me, a permanent scowl on his face. He plays with the keys in his hands for a moment, his eyes trained on me in thought before he exhales and unlocks the door. As if to mock me, he holds it open and gives me a fake bow, showing I should exit the door.

My heart skips a beat, my eyes sliding to my mother, who stands now, watching me closely, and shakes her head as she seems to read the thought in my mind. Panic rises as she touches the silver that burns her, but she never seems to react to.

Everything in my body is telling me to run. I know I won't get far. How can I when he is so close and we are apparently on a mountain? No doubt this guy has wings when he needs them. One more glance at him reveals a small smirk on his lips, and I realize that is exactly what he wants, He

wants me to run.

1/3

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## Chapter 83

Instead, I exit my cage, stepping to the side, allowing him to close it as I wait patiently for him to point me in the right direction. His disappointment is noticeable as the smirk falls from his face, replaced by a sneer, as he reaches out and shoves me.

I jolt forward, stumbling for a few steps before catching myself on the silver bars, the metal sizzling as pain zips through my hand. I retract it, hissing as I hug it to my chest and glare up at his all too pleased face.

"You enjoy hurting innocent people?" I grumble at him and he chuckles.

"Innocent? No. But you aren't innocent, are you hybrid?" He asks, tilting his head while I try to understand what the hell he is talking about.

\*Just existing makes me guilty of whatever bullshit you decide I did?" I scoff.

He doesn't respond, and I roll my eyes. "Of course the evil ones get to dictate who they kill and make up lies as to why."

"You aren't supposed to exist." He says flatly.

I whip around, glaring up at him.

"I didn't create myself. A mate bond created me. To you dragons mates may mean nothing, but to us, to my kind, a mate is everything. It is a gift from our goddess and a refusal of that is the grave sin." I hiss at him.

He steps into me, forcing me to keep moving back as he glares down at me.

“Why would a mangy dog and a fish be given the gift of a hybrid?” He goads me. “A species who only fights and one that only hides. You were created as a weapon to be used against us. Our only weakness is now walking the earth instead of remaining where you belong, in the sea.”

I spin forward again, my mind whirling as I take in his words and digest them. Me being here isn't just because of their desire to kill off the werewolves and lycans. Though clearly there is some tension between our species, but they are using me to lure out Caspian as well. Fire and water don't mix, they can't.

So with the sirens restrained to their respective habitat and the dragons to theirs...everyone was safe. Until me, though, if what that last bitch said is true, then I'm not the first or only hybrid. So why do I get to be treated like a problem and not the other supposed hybrids?

“Turn left,” He grunts and I follow his instructions.

“Where are we going?” I ask curiously as the hallway grows warmer with every step, the air dry and suffocating until we break into a massive room.

“The king wants a look at you,” he murmurs, sounding displeased by this command.

as he continues to shove me along

The vast ceiling is light up with fire, providing a flickering light along the lava rock floors. Sweat beads at my brow and drips down my back and I see the walls lined with warriors all standing at attention, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

There is a fountain in front of me, not of the water I desperately find myself in need of, but of bubbling magma in the center of the long walkway. He pushes me to the right, and I trip on a protruding rock, crashing to my knees.

Heat burns through my jeans, as pain erupts over my knee cap and I cry out in pain. I place my hands down, trying to stand as fast as possible and my skin sears, the pads of my fingers and palm sticking to the rock as I tear them free with a gasp and hold them to my body.

“Help the pitiful creature up,” a man sighs in boredom. “Clearly, she has no taste for our preferred level of heat.”

“What is it you want from me?” I ask, my jaw clenching from the throbbing in my hands and knee. I am struck in the back and I groan.

“He is the king. Address him as such.” He growls in my ear.

“What do I want from you?” The Dragon King asks, sitting forward and out of the shadows. “That is a curious question to ask for a spy. I believe it is more appropriate to ask what it is you want from us.”

I furrow my brows and scoff in disbelief.

“Me? A spy?” I ask him, “Is that what Giselle told you?”

“Why else would you be here?” He asks me curiously as he stands and moves toward me with slow and stiff movements. It is clear he is suffering some type of injury, his eyes filled with pain with every step he takes.

“Do you honestly think I came here because I wanted to?” I scoff.

“Spies go where they are ordered, not because they want to go somewhere.” He shrugs.

“Your kind ambushed me and killed my gamma.” I growl, taking a limp toward him. “Giselle attacked first at the council meeting. Not the other way around.”

2/3

3/3

## Chapter 83

“So that is why you are here then, revenge on my mate?” He asks, arching a brow.

I realize now that the pain in his eyes is not from any physical ailment, but mental. The way he seems to beg for freedom while doing something he has no control over. He is under control of Lily and Giselle, and whoever else is in on their little shitty plan.

“There is no talking to you.” I whisper to myself in shock. “You are as free as I am.”

“Take her back.” He flicks his wrist at the man escorting me, who grumbles as he drags me out of the room.

After a few moments, he stops walking and allows me to stand on my own, his eyes scanning the area before he steps close and looks down at me with a look of determination.

“What did you see in his eyes that made you say that?” he asks.

“He is a prisoner just as much as I am,” I scoff. “Can you not tell?”

“I can, but no one else seems to...” he says, glancing around like he is paranoid that someone may be listening. “Well, Princess, I think we may be able to help each other...”

I narrow my eyes and click my tongue. “Oh, and what makes you think that?”

“I can get you out of here, if you help me first,” he offers, and I bite my lip warily.

“What do you need from me?” I ask, feeling hopeful for the first time in days.

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## Chapter 84

He looks down the hallway once more, taking hold of my arm, just above my elbow, as he forces me along. After a moment, the air grows cooler and my chest feels like a heavy weight has been lifted off of it. I inhale sharply, my eyes closing, relishing the fresh cool air that fills my lungs.

“What is she doing out of her cage?” someone asks and I snap my eyes open to see Jennifer standing in front of us, her hands on her hips, her eyes glowing like an ember in a waning campfire.

“Move,” the guard with me grunts out, taking an imposing step toward her. She rolls her eyes and shifts her hips before she glances at me and back up at him, a curious arch to her brow.

“No.” She insists. “Not a chance in hell. She shouldn’t be out of her cell, Tieran.”



“The king wanted to see her and when he was done, he demanded I take her back to her cell. Unless you think you are higher ranking than him, I

I suggest you step aside.” He bites out at her. She looks surprised, as her demeanor changes and she clears her throat, looking back down the way we came from.

“He is awake?” She asks, sounding a little worried.

“Of course he is.” He snorts.

“And he is down here? Why the hell is the king hiding in the depths of the mountain when he should be up-”

“The king goes and does as he pleases. He doesn’t owe you or anyone an explanation, so I suggest you stop questioning what he is doing and step aside.” He says, pushing me forward.

“It’s just that Giselle said...” she trails off for a moment and clears her throat. Her demeanor changes completely as she smooths her outfit out with her hands and steps to the side. “Carry on,”

Tieran frowns at her but ushers me along, looking over his shoulder before frowning as he turns me down a different hallway. He presses me into the wall, peeking around the corner for a second, and then he hums in thought.

It’s obvious something is amiss, but with not knowing either of them well and having no desire to know them any better than I currently do, I keep my mouth shut.

“Does she not seem suspicious to you?” He asks, absentmindedly.

“Uh, yes?” I give him a confused look, and he blinks down at me like he forgot it was even squished between him and the wall. Tieran takes a step back and clears his throat before looking around the new hallway.

“I need to follow her.” He frowns, he looks at me and groans in frustration. “Shit.”

“I can find my way back,” I offer, and he chuckles under his breath.

“Yeah, and I’m a fucking fairy.” He teases as he walks me down the new hallway reluctantly.

“Why don’t you tell her you don’t trust the king?” I ask quietly, and he snorts. “She already expressed she doesn’t trust Giselle.”

I recall the last time I was being tortured, and she was told that she was wanted upstairs. She threw a fit, and it seemed like she didn’t like the chosen mate of the king. If anything, he should work with Jennifer, not me, to figure out what it wrong with his king. Though, admittedly, I already know what is wrong with his king.

He is under the spell of Lily, and Giselle is using him how she pleases. That’s what she does. She manipulates everything and everyone to her whim. For what? Well, that is the question I am still trying to work out. Yes, they want me because I am a hybrid, but why do they keep me alive?

“Simple.” He mutters, “I don’t trust Jennifer either.”

I scoff, shocked by the lack of trust in the kingdom where everyone still fights for or what they are told, even if they don’t agree with it. Who the hell fights blindly for something they don’t believe in?

“Oh, and you think you can trust me?” I ask him, yanking my arm from his tight grip with a scowl.

“I trust your desperation.” He frowns, reaching out to give me a nudge forward. I skirt away from him with a hiss and he smirks.

“Why do you keep doing that? I’m walking!” I growl at him and he breaks into a full-blown smile.

“To ensure you remember who is boss here.” He shrugs. “And it’s amusing to watch you huff and throw a fit.”

I blink at him for a second confused, is he being friendly with me? Well, as friendly as a dragon can be? Because his smiles and shoving feel weirdly familial.

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1/2

Chapter 84

“How about we get to what you want from me so we can strike our deal and I can leave this literal hell hole.” I say, trying to calm myself so he doesn’t get the enjoyment of watching me get angrier.

He looks around frantically, then trains his annoyed gaze on me.

“Watch your volume,” he hisses at her as his name echoes down the stone walls. He freezes, his body going rigid as he looks around. He grabs me by the back of the neck, making me gasp out in pain.

But he is too distracted rushing down the hall to care about what he is doing to me. We twist and turn down the halls ; the air growing colder and damp until we finally break into the prison cell area again.

“Someone is calling your name,” I whisper, and he nods in acknowledgement.

“I am aware of that.” He grumbles, shoving me into my cell. I stumble, tripping over my feet as I grunt and land on the hard ground. I spin to scowl up at him just as Jennifer comes running in, out of breath, like she had been chasing us.

Tieran turns and looks at her, arching a brow like he hadn’t been expecting her.

“Are you looking for me?” He asks her and she grins.

“It’s time to punish them,” she grins. “The king himself said I could take it as far as I need to in order to make this one do what we want.”

Jennifer’s eyes land on me with an eerily giddy grin.

“You think the other one can handle more? She is healing much slower these days.” He reminds her and she rolls her eyes.

“You no longer outrank me prince Tieran, so how about instead of questioning me, you round the bitches up and bring them to the torture room, okay?” she pats him on the chest as I watch in awe. Prince Tieran? Yet he is stuck down here, escorting prisoners around like a lowly prison guard.

Jennifer prances off like a kid, excited about getting their way as she goes to wait for Tieran to bring me and my mom back to her to do whatever the hell she wants to get me to cooperate.

He turns and sighs, moving to unlock my mother's cage first. As she walks past me with her head held high, she meets my gaze, reminding me of what she told me earlier. To just cooperate so that Merikh at least knows I am missing.

When Tieran walks back for me after delivering my mom to the other room, I look around and then up at him.

"Prince?" I whisper and he frowns, looking away.

"That was a long time ago," He sighs. "I questioned my father's judgment, and now I am working my way back up to his side."

"And how does offering to help me get you there?" I ask, meandering.

"I'm not sure yet..." He says in a hushed tone.

Then he pushes me through the iron door and into the room that smells of blood and stale dirt. My body shivers involuntarily as I look at my mother strung up, preparing for the pain.

"Ah, the lady of the hour. I have this special little chair for you." She grins, pointing to a silver chair. "Come, have a seat..."

2/2

Chapter 85

\*Merikh\*

The air is warm and sticky, only adding to my already heightened irritation. I miss her; I miss her so damn much and I am angry every second of every damn day. What I want is my mate back at any costs and that is a dangerous thought to have. To give up my life to know she will be okay would be well worth it.

But I want a life with her. One with adoration and singing her praises so she understands how amazing she truly is. I want to give her everything, including a new me, a better and more improved version. The version who is better at co

communication and listening. She deserves a mate who will just sit in awe of her and let her be exactly who she is.

All I want is another chance even when I have had so many. But I've learned, I have grown and I am ready to alpha up and be everything she needs. Including a hero or a sacrifice to ensure she gets away from the assholes who have her.

"Merikh," Hayes hollers out my name, running toward me. Panic is written all over his face as he stops in front of me and my stomach drops.

"What is wrong?" I ask, swallowing the lump in my throat. "Did something happen?"

"Caspian received a box that was sent for you," He says.

I give him a confused stare.

"And?" I ask.

Hayes clears his throat and looks away before he exhales and shakes his head.

"It is...it smells of her." He mutters, unable to look at me.

"It smells like Colette?" I ask, my heart skipping a beat.

"Yes," he mutters. "It smells like her blood."

He clears his throat, and it feels like the world shakes beneath my feet. My mouth falls open to say something articulate, alpha like, but instead a shocked, pained groan tumbles out.

Then I break into a sprint, tearing through the garden, bounding over the pristine green bushes and breaking through the door. The second I hit the hallway to the kitchen, I freeze, picking up the faint scent of her blood.

Bile rises in my throat, my lycan howling and hiding in the back of my mind, too heartbroken at the possibility of what this might mean. I clear my throat, running both hands through my hair as I suck in a deep breath, preparing myself for the worst.

If it is confirmation she is dead, then I will stop at nothing to kill every fucking dragon and the last standing phoenix before allowing myself to meet her in the moonbeams.

“Merikh...” Caspian says as I walk into the room, unable to remain calm as my hands shake, pointing to the small box on the table.

“Is that it?” I ask him and he nods.

My fingers tremble as I take the little box, a streak of blood on the outside, and tear open the top. As I pull the flaps open, her sweet scent flows out, bringing tears to my eyes when I see a ribbon tied around a chunk of her soft hair. I lift it out, holding it to my nose and inhaling as my eyes fall closed, relishing this little piece of her.

Then I place it to the side and look at the phone in the box with a small envelope sitting next to it. I grab the white paper and pull out a small note card, staring at it.

“What does it say?” Caspian asks, his voice shaking.

“4362 here is a little surprise for you,” I read, placing it to the side as I pull out the phone and a lock screen pops up.

“What does that mean?” Caspian asks, picking up the card written in his daughter’s blood.

“It’s the passcode.” I mutter as I type it in and it opens to the video screen.

Everything fades away, my heart the only sound I can hear as it raps away in my chest, my lungs squeezing like there is no air to be found. I wanted to see her, get my eyes on her, to at least see she is alive. But this is worse, so much worse than I imagined.

“Alpha!” Hayes screams and I turn my head to look at him, blinking as I try to process the video screen I can’t bring myself to hit play on.

“What is it?” Caspian asks, reaching for the phone. He takes it and I don’t fight him as he gulps and closes his eyes like he is fighting off tears.

1/3

“We need to watch it.” I mutter, walking toward the massive living room.

"I can't..." Caspian says and I look over at him, his face as white as a mountain top mid winter.

"Hayes, figure out how to have it on the screen." I grumble, dropping into the couch preparing myself for the worst but also reminding myself I need to see this. I have to look for clues, find something to discover where she is.

"You want to watch it on that thing?" Caspian sneers, pacing over to me and standing in the way. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

"Everything." I grumble, leaning forward, my elbows on my knees. "Everything is fucking wrong when she isn't with me."

"Are you trying to punish yourself? Is that what this is?" He asks, confused, and I scoff.

"No, I am watching it because if she has to live it, then I should have to as well. We need to know what they are doing to her. I need to see it so I can return the fucking favor to them." I look up at him. "There could be clues about where she is," Hayes also says, and I know I can always rely on him to know why I am doing things.

"Shit," Caspian mutters, then he walks over to the other side of the couch and plops down. "Let's get this over with, then."

Hayes looks at me once he has the TV on and the phone screen sharing. The image of Colette is right before me. The little play button obstructed nothing but that barrier in my mind, screaming 'I can't do this'. But I have to.

"Hit play." I tell him.

Suddenly there she is, my perfect, beautiful little luna. Her face is sunken, her glow gone, but she is still as beautiful as she always is. It is clear they are starving her, giving her minimal liquids, probably because they are afraid of what she can do.

"Say it," a voice off screen says forcefully. Colette looks up at the person and rolls her eyes. Then she looks directly at the camera.

"Fuck yourself." She says, a small smirk on her chapped and bloody lips. A thrill of pride ripples through me, but it is short-lived.

“Suit yourself.” The woman says as she steps forward and lifts a metal bar.

I stand, growling at the screen as the woman swings it and slams it into her stomach, making the wind wheeze from my chest. I fall to my knees, my eyes watering and my body quivering with anger and no outlet.

Colette cries out in pain, her head falling forward as she struggles to suck in a full breath. All I can hear is her labored breathing that sounds like a heavy wheeze, and my chest is torn wide open. I love how strong she has become mentally, but I need her to give in, to stop herself from being a smart ass when she is on the line.

“Just say it, love,” I whisper, finding myself moving closer to the screen. “Just fucking say what they want.”

Another scream breaks through the TV speakers and I look at Colette, who is silent and unmoving. She lifts her fiery gaze to someone off screen and she fights against her restraints.

“Leave her alone!” She wails. “I will say it, okay? I will say it. Please, just don’t hurt Melody anymore.”

The woman saunters back in, moving behind Colette and placing her hands on her shoulders, digging her nails into her skin as she bleeds through

her shirt.

“I warned you, every time you resist I will just torture your dear little mommy.”

My eyes grow wide and I try to recall what Giselle had said before the meeting went up in flames.

“What?” Caspian gasps, and I look over to find him next to me. “Melody is really alive? I thought they were lying. That they were trying to evoke an emotional response and catch me off guard.”

“I’m sorry.” Colette whispers, tears on her cheek as she looks mournfully off the screen. “I will say it now. I promise.”

“Then get it over with already, your highness.” The bitch says in annoyance.



“Merikh.” Colette whispers, looking directly into my soul, pain in her eyes as she struggles to breathe still. “If you want me, come and get me. War is on the horizon, a barrage of fire and death is coming via the sky and you must choose. Me, or our kind-”

A fist connects with her ear and her head snaps to the left, a whimper breaking from her lips.

I growl again, my fists balled up and creaking as my bones ache from the pressure. This fucking bitch is going to

slow and painful death.

“His kind, not yours. You are not the same breed.” The woman hisses.

“Me or all of lycan and werewolf kind.” Colette whispers.

2/3

The video cuts off, leaving us all in stunned silence.