

Chapter 68 - The Awakening

"Heroes get remembered, but legends never die." — Max Holloway

Neron

An epic force of pure energy blasted my body into the walls of the packhouse. Bricks groaned on impact, shifting out of place. Kiya's scream rebounded through the territory, shaking the windows to their breaking point.

I slumped to my knees, weakened by the searing pain through my torso. The hole was healing, but slowly. I tried to push the pain aside as I squinted through the bright light before me, trying to spot Kiya.

Moon Goddess, please tell me that thing didn't take her! The light began to fade and all that was left was thick dust. I prayed desperately for a sign that she was still there. That she was safely away from that monstrous thing that sprouted from my undead uncle.

Please, oh Goddess, please!

When the dust cleared, my eyes widened like saucers at the scene before me.

It was Kiya, yet it wasn't. My Kiya's beautiful curls were black as obsidian, but the curls I saw before me were white as moonstone. They gently danced with the wind, waltzing to a silent melody. White markings delineated with glowing blue etched into her brown skin. The prominent contrast of the colors enhanced her beauty. The markings swirled and danced across her skin, like tribal makeup or henna. Kiya lifted her hands to examine them.

“Kiya...?” I had to be sure she was still in there.

She turned around. It was her, no doubt. Now, instead of deep brown, her eyes were the brightest, most electric of all blues. The same white markings on her arms and back were present on her face, exposed chest, and stomach.

She looked like an *actual goddess*.

“Neron?” Kiya asked, her voice layered with Artemis, echoing with each syllable. “What happened to me?”

I couldn’t answer her. I didn’t know what was going on either, but the power radiating from her was intense. Her beauty was enamoring; she looked beyond radiant. I tenderly pushed myself back upon my feet and moved closer, my hand reached out and cupped her cheek. Her skin felt warmer. It was a soothing warmth, like hot tea before bed. Her eyes bore into mine, concern swimming behind the lens. I don’t know what happened to her.

The rogues slowly began to reform around us. They circled and snarled until one of them broke form to charge at Kiya. Her concern melted away as she tore her eyes from mine, attention back to the rogues.

“**Leave!**” Her voice was firm and powerful as an ancient deity. The mutts whimpered and writhed before falling, their bodies deteriorating like wet paper. Mangled limbs of different wolves rotted away. My uncle’s dismembered body rotted along with them, already adding to the foul stench in the air. Kiya’s eyes widened in shock, pointing at what she did. It was unbelievable. She ended the ambush as it started with a simple command.

“What’s happening?” She whispered in wide-eyed shock. “What the hell is going on? How was I able to do that?”

“I think you have the goddess’s power,” I noted flinching on the last word. I rubbed my chest, careful to not graze the wound. Her worried gaze went to the wound in my chest, “You’re not healing fast enough. Does it still hurt?”

“A little.” I lied, it fucking hurt a lot. I knew she detected my dishonesty. Her fingers lightly graze across the wound, fingertips staining red. I was about to stop her, to let her know I was fine and that she didn’t need to worry about me when suddenly, I was bathed in a cooling sensation. It was like swallowing cold water after chewing mint gum. The skin around my wound began to regenerate faster than ever before, until it closed completely, leaving behind a barely noticeable scar.

My eyes widened in absolute dismay. Did...she *heal* me?

“She did!” Onyx yipped in pride. “Our mate is amazing! She is special!”

“**Holy shit! I just healed you!**” She smiled in dismay. Her eyes held a sparkle of excitement at her newfound ability. She was adorable, I could watch her like that all day.

“Selene’s beloved avatar has finally awoken.” I turn my head to see my father standing tall in the clearing, surrounded by rotting rogue corpses. I scowled at him, remembering what he had the nerve to say to me at the hospital. Whispers of commotion from warriors and remaining pack members breezed around us.

“*She is Selene’s avatar?* *What a beauty!*”

“*Our Moon Goddess blessed us with her grace and protection!*”

“*A goddess in her own right...she holds more power than many packs combined!*”

“Holy crap, Little Bit...” Kiya turned to face her friends. Sapphire’s smile widened, “So, this was hiding in you all this time? I knew you were a powerhouse, but this...”

“I’m still so confused...” Kiya whispered, examining her hands again like she was expecting something to sprout out.

“How do you feel?” I asked her in a whisper.

“...Powerful.”

Her friends got on one knee in front of her, their gazes full of wonder and happiness. My warriors followed suit; their heads bowed to Kiya. Pack members that were hiding inside the pack house filed out of the house to observe what took place. One look at Kiya and they knew, they dropped to one knee and bowed their heads in respect. The respect that always should have been hers.

“The avatar of our beloved matron goddess in our presence! This is a sign of good things to come for those who bear witness to her true glory.” My father gushed with a smile in his voice. “And she is the fated mate to your Alpha. Our newest Luna is as beautiful as she is fearsome! She deserves nothing less than our respect!”

There was something in his voice that I didn’t like, especially when he regarded Kiya as my Luna. Yes, she was my mate and rightful Luna, but she doesn’t want to be. It was her choice to accept the position and my father was pushing it onto her in front of everyone. The pack members all praised Kiya as their new Luna, I felt her twitch slightly beside me with discomfort.

How much do I know about our Moon Goddess’ avatars? Not much. I admit, I slacked heavily with my historical lessons, but what I did know was that her avatar, the white wolf, holds incredible power. More powerful than all the Alphas combined because she was directly created

from Selene's own body. The wolf's power was Selene's power. They symbolize good luck, prosperity, wealth, and unimaginable strength.

I didn't deserve Kiya. How was I destined to be the mate of the legendary white wolf, given my past actions? Kiya, my love, she deserves better.

Better than me.

I dropped to one knee, taking her hand into mine. I placed a soft kiss on her palm, her skin warm against my lips. My eyes found hers once again, relaying a silent message of loyalty and protection.

I'd give my life for her.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" She shouted, her head darting all around the territory. "This is what we're NOT going to do! I'm not royalty and would never be royalty, so don't treat me like I'm someone important. Don't—!"

I stood, furious at her self-depreciation. "You are important! You are special, Kiya, and our goddess clearly believes so too."

"Don't put me on a higher pedestal, Neron." She growled, jerking her hand away. "I don't want special treatment from you or anyone!" Her head jerked to her friends. "As for you four, treat me any different, and I will kick all of your asses!"

All four shot to their feet, dusting off their knees. Kiya sighed, running her fingers through her clean, white curls. "Jackie, Abigail is in the hospital. Orion took her there when—!"

Beta Jacqueline shot off the battlegrounds in a blur, taking huge strides toward the hospital. Her friends trailed behind her. Kiya wasted no time running after her group, her hair flailing behind her in the wind.

“Son.” My father came up to me, his tall stature towering over mine.
“Remember what I said. It’s your time to claim her as your mate.”

“Now isn’t the time, Dad!” Turning to the pack, I ordered the corpses to be burned and the pack members to help the wounded.

I took off after Kiya.

Unknown

My Moon had finally awakened.

The worthless cur I brought back did its job. Yet, it failed to capture her before her awakening. But that was no problem, Zain Prince was merely a pawn in my game. A distraction and a portal, a portal to bring the girl to me. Did he expect to have his chance for petty revenge? Ha!

He thought small. I think grander. Once My Moon is in my arms, I’ll execute my plan. The Prince family—no, this world would pay for what they’ve done to me and my people. It’s about time someone cut those filthy mutts down a peg. All I have to do is capture their beloved avatar.

And she will be *mine*.

Kiya

The power that surged through me was incredible. It was like I was being bathed in vibrant warm waves rolling over my skin. It felt energizing. As much as I want to focus on this insane, sudden, yet amazing development, I couldn’t. Not when Abigail’s hurt.

My friends and I surrounded Abigail's hospital bed, unsure on what to do. Slumped in a chair, Jacqueline's pained expression broke my heart. She looked absolutely defeated. I could her eyes watering with tears as she stared at Abigail's peaceful face in complete silence. Abigail was lying unconscious with heavy bandages over her stomach. Her wound was so deep that she had to be sedated. It hurt to see my best friend so... vulnerable.

I had to do something.

I thought back to the battlefield when I healed Neron's chest wound. If I healed Neron back there, I could heal Abigail too, right? The only thing was, I didn't know how I did it before. Maybe all I had to do was touch her?

"Jackie, I'm going to try something." I jumped. My layered voice scared the shit out of me. It was like both Artemis and I were speaking at once. Jackie, for a moment, got defensive over Abigail, her green eyes glazing black. "I won't hurt her. I promise."

Jackie's eyes softened, registering what I've said. Eyes shifting back to emerald green, she leaned back in her chair in silence, stifling the sobs threatening to escape from her throat. Sucking in a deep, shaky breath, I gently pressed my palm on the gauze, careful to not pop any potential stitches underneath.

What do I do now? Or even say? I was expecting a bright laser show as I had seen in movies, but nothing happens. My mind raced back to the battlefield, trying to recall how I healed Neron. What was happening at that moment? What was I thinking about? What was I feeling?

Concern, and the desire to take his pain away. That was all I remembered.

And it happened.

White light shined from underneath the bandages, illuminating every fiber of the cotton. We all watched with bated breath as the light glittered before disappearing. Abigail groaned softly, opening her coffee brown eyes. The first person she saw was Jacqueline with tears swimming down her face.

“My Butterfly...” She cooed, caressing her cheek. “Are you okay?”

Abigail nodded, “Y-Yes...I don’t feel pain anymore.” She tenderly propped herself up against her pillows and slid the gauze downward to her navel to reveal a flawless flat stomach. “H-How? They clawed me, I—!” Her eyes met mine, and she did a double take, “When did you...Your hair is white.”

“I’m figuring this thing out too.” I chortled, holding her hand. “I healed you...I think. It’s the second time this happened today.”

“How did this happen? You look so...ethereal.”

“I think it came from—” Without warning, I became lightheaded. My world went hazy. All the energy was draining from my muscles quickly. My legs gave out, I expected to hit the hard hospital floor, but I didn’t.

“Don’t worry, I got you.”

I’m so tired...

Before I blacked out, I felt my protector, his sparks, his warmth...the person that was slowly changing into my safe place.

Neron.

Neron

“Don’t worry, she fainted,” I reassured her friends. I adjusted Kiya’s body in my arms. Her white hair faded back to its natural beautiful black, and any inkling of her tattoo markings disappeared beneath her skin. She must be exhausted from exerting so much power.

Her scent changed. It’s much sweeter than before, tempting me to kiss her as she slept. Goddess, I think I’ve fallen deeper in love with her.

“You won’t do anything to her, right?” Darien asks, eyeing me suspiciously. I grunted, offended he thought I would do such a thing. Kiya was more precious to me than diamonds, and I’ll do nothing to break her trust.

“On my honor, I won’t. I’ll take her to her room and then I need to assess the damage and loss from today’s ambush.” I held Kiya against my chest, careful not to disturb her. Each breath she took was light as a feather, tickling my bare chest.

While leaving the hospital, I spotted my father again, eyeing me with firmness. Regardless of what he says, I refuse to put Kiya’s trust at risk. Today, I witnessed the unadulterated power my father alluded to me.

All this time, she was Selene’s avatar. I should have known the moment I saw her shift into a white wolf. I didn’t know Kiya held this much power within her body. But now, with her identity exposed to the pack, there was no telling what would happen from here on out. She would be hunted for her power as history states. She’ll be in more danger, and I couldn’t let that happen.

I would die before I let anyone touch her. I know I don’t deserve her, but I was still hopeful for the day I am worthy enough for her to allow me to call her mine. My woman. My mate. My heart. Until then, I will be her protector.

Whoever dares to try and bring any harm to her, will die by my hand.

I swear it.

Chapter 69 - The Promise

*"Keep every promise you make and only make promises you can keep." -
Anthony Hitt*

Kiya

I woke up in my bed with a splitting headache. Exerting my newfound powers must have drained me and knocked me out cold. The last thing I remembered before blacking out was Neron's arms grabbing me before I dropped to the floor. Thank goodness he had been there, or else I would have woken up with worse pain.

Rising from my pillow, I ruffled my hair and stretched the corkscrew curls to examine them. My hair had changed back to my natural color as I slept. Not only have I '*fully awoken*' as Selene called it, but my appearance dramatically changed when I did.

"Good Goddess..." I mumbled, rubbing my forehead. Selene's power seethed beneath my flesh, warming sensations more prominent than before. I felt weird like I wasn't in my own body. Having a separate energy source that was out of my control weighed on me mentally. How much power was stored inside my body? Was I like a ticking time bomb? Could my powers hurt me or others?

I wish Phoebe were here. She would help me, especially since she was a fellow avatar. She always made me feel safe. Her motherly energy, despite being four months older than me, was something I needed now.

"You're awake."

I jumped, spotting Neron sitting at my desk. His large body in a smaller chair was an interesting sight. "Yeah, I assume you brought me here?"

He nodded. "You fainted at the hospital. It seemed fitting to bring you here."

"I'm half surprised you didn't take me to your room." Now that I've mentioned it, I've never seen his room. I was never allowed near it, not even to clean it. Curiosity piqued my interest, what sort of things would Neron have in his room? Pictures of women? Was everything carved out of wood? Was it made to fit royalty?

"That thought crossed my mind." He confessed. "But I thought it'd be best for you to wake up in a familiar room."

"How did you get in?"

"Door was unlocked."

"Oh..." Right. I rushed out as soon as I heard the screams. Locking my door was the least of my worries. "Um...thank you, I guess."

"It is my pleasure." He shuffled out of the chair, albeit noisily, and stretched his arms toward the ceiling, almost touching the ceiling. Goddamnit, he was so tall. Fucking skyscraper. "How are you feeling?"

I shrug my shoulders. "Okay, I guess." Honestly, it was difficult to put my feelings into words. The only word I could describe was strange. I transformed into something else. Instead of shifting to a wolf, I shifted to this...*being* who shares power with Selene. I didn't notice Neron moved to sit on my bed until it dipped under his weight.

"Something's on your mind." He folded his hands in his lap. "You must have so many questions about what happened to you. Believe me, I do too."

I stay silent, unable to find the words to reply, so he continued, "How long have you known that you're an avatar?"

“For a while,” I answered, not willing to reveal the complete truth. “My powers came about 2-3 years ago during training back home. I accidentally hurt a fellow warrior, but I thought I figured out how to control it through a friend.”

“A friend?”

I nodded. “Phoebe is her name and she’s amazing. She’s a witch whose part of my pack and the avatar of Hekate, the Goddess of Magic.”

His eyes widened in shock. “There are more avatars out there?”

“It looks like it. But I haven’t met anyone else outside of Phoebe.” I sighed, rubbing my temple as my headache throbbed. “Goodness, this is too much.”

Neron bit his lip, pondering deep in thought “I know how you feel.” I eyed him incredulity as he continued, “Being overwhelmed with the sudden weight of responsibility put on your shoulders like there’s already so much you have to do, but then life throws you in for another loop. It makes you feel like... you’re not in control.”

“Dude, you’re in control of everything.” I retorted. “You’re an Alpha by birthright, inheriting this entire pack. You have the power that other low-ranking wolves would kill for. You’re telling me you felt burdened by it?”

“Believe it or not, Kiya, I never wanted to become Alpha.” My eyes grew a bit wide at his confession. “I hated the lessons and training my father instilled in me since childhood. He carved me out to be his perfect son and the perfect Alpha when all I wanted is to be a normal werewolf. Mom used to tell my Dad to lighten up, to allow me to enjoy being a kid.”

My heart sunk in a pool of pain at the thought of Luna Celeste, a beautiful woman that I looked up to along with my birth mother. She

was firm, but never overbearing. She cared deeply for everyone, treating all pack children like her own children. She truly was the embodiment of what a true Luna should be.

I miss her. I miss Nuria too, my spunky partner-in-crime.

“Your Mom would have been proud of you,” I whispered, “Even though you didn’t want to be Alpha, I think she still would have been proud.”

Neron shook his head with a sad frown on his lips, “No, she wouldn’t. I broke the one promise I made to her. That if I ever found my mate, I’d treat her right and never make her question my love for her. I’m sure she’d be ashamed of me. Nuria too.” He smiled bitterly. “She’d probably smack me upside the head with something harder than her stuffed puppy toy.”

Old memories rose to the surface at the mention of the toy. Nuria carried that thing everywhere, even when we’d have a sleepover in each other’s bedrooms. It was a big, black and white dog, with stuffing that made it as soft as the clouds in the sky. We would tease each other about who had the better toy, her with her puppy or me with my bear.

I hated how my heart twisted at every thought of her, my first best friend. Why did those with good hearts have to die? I was convinced the Grim Reaper was a confused son-of-a-bitch.

“Kiya.” Neron held my gaze for a moment. In his eyes, many emotions swam in his cobalts, but the one I saw most was grief, “You have every right to hate me as you do now. I was a terrible person back then, and I deserve every ounce of your hatred. I’m surprised you stuck around me for this long.”

“It’s not like I had a choice.” I shrugged again, calm. “We’re living with each other until the end of summer.”

His eyes looked pained. “I...I’m not looking forward to when that day comes.”

“Neron...” I sighed, closing my eyes, “You helped me, even when I pushed you away. You helped me through my heat, my poisoning, and now, with this... awakening of mine. I want to believe that you’re doing this out of the kindness of your heart, but I can’t help but think you’re doing because you’re compelled to.”

“The bond has a little to do with it, yes.” He nodded. “But I also know that my feelings for you are true. I love you, Kiya and I’m a fucking idiot for realizing that after you died.” There was a brief pause before he asked, “How did you survive that fall off the cliff?”

“That’s another story for another day,” I say, looking out the window. The sunlight peeks through, spotting my blanket. “You say you love me Neron, but you said those words to Odessa too. You also loved her for a time.”

“I did. I won’t sugarcoat it, I loved Odessa, she was my first love. Now, I can’t say I love her the same as before.” He rubbed his face, expelling a deep sigh. “When I reflect on who I was back then... I hate it. I hate *that* Neron, someone so selfish, abusive, and tyrannical. Coupled in with the pressure of my father and the swimming negativity going on in the pack, it reflected on me as Alpha. I did things I wasn’t proud of, Kiya. Having Odessa at my side made me feel better because she loved *that* Neron. A 20-year-old Alpha without his true Luna, full of grief and anger...and I took it out on you when I shouldn’t have.”

I knew Neron felt grief for what he did to me, but I was also still in pain from it. I couldn’t just let the past go and start over, not with everything they did to me, “You marked me for death.”

“Unjustly.” He nodded, unable to meet my gaze. “If Kwame and his family hadn’t uncovered the truth, I’d most likely still believe that you

deserved what you got from me.” His hand encased my own, sending intense sparks of warmth to my palms. “No number of apologies could ever change what I’ve done to you. I ruined your mind, your body, and your soul. I was a terrible person, Kiya, but I’ll never be that person again. I don’t want to revert to the beast that took advantage of you.”

“Your father seems to have other plans,” I revealed, pulling my hand away. “I heard what he said about us when I was at the hospital. He wanted us to mate. He wanted me to give you my power.”

“He always held pride for his pack, but that same pride misguides him. I don’t know what would happen if you and I ever mate, even if this mysterious power exchange would take place.”

“He sees me as a tool, Neron. A tool to elevate you and this pack. He doesn’t care about me at all.”

“He doesn’t, but I care. I fucking care about you, Kiya, so much.” A deep rumble in his chest echoed in the silence between us. “Whether or not he accepts it, I won’t force you to become my Luna. I don’t want this power or this so-called ‘greatness’ he alludes to. I’m supposed to help my people, not just myself.”

Going against the former Alpha was trouble. He didn’t hold the title, but he still had command within the pack. I held no bond to Zircon Moon, but he still scared the living shit out of me. He was willing to sacrifice me for Neron. That was some twisted parental love he’s got. His mate’s death did more than put him in grief. Jonathan Prince could be going mad.

“Kiya. I’ll make a promise to you on my honor.” Neron shuffled on the bed, now sitting directly in front of me. “I promise you I’ll do nothing to hurt you. To never break your trust or betray you. I promise to put you and your well-being first before my own. You’re your person, and you deserve autonomy. I promise to defy all orders that would pose a threat to you, whether it be from my father or anyone else. You’re my heart

and soul. You're my treasure, and I'll fight all the gods in heaven to keep you safe."

His face leaned in close to mine, our lips a few inches apart from each other. "You don't have to trust me. May the Moon Goddess strike me down if I ever were to hurt you."

The heaviness of his promise almost made me choke. There was so much emotion in that declaration. He believed his words, truly. I believed him. He will protect me; he will keep me safe at the expense of his health and well-being. Words of denial and apprehension were stuck at the base of my throat as his eyes gazed at me with boundless love and promise.

"Neron..." I whispered, my eyes eyeing his pink lips. His lips aimed for mine, but in the last second, opted to kissing my forehead. The touch of his lips was delicate and light as a feather, but the emotion pouring from them was immense. Through them, I felt his promises to protect me from all harm. His ambition, dedication, and love poured from that single gesture. My heart pounded rapidly in my chest as he grinned. "I'll s-see that you uphold your vows."

"I will, my love. I promise." He shot me a wink that colonized my cheeks with fire. "There is another thing I want to ask you. It might be inappropriate to ask now, but I'll take that risk."

I quirked an eyebrow. "What is it?"

"Will you go on a date with me?"