

Chapter 85 - The Reunion

"Family and friends are hidden treasures, seek them out and enjoy their riches." - Wanda Hope Carter

Kiya

“Why didn’t you tell me you’re a mermaid?”

“Why didn’t you tell me you’re a werewolf?”

“...Touché.”

The smell of burning wood and concrete encompassed the surrounding air. Violetta, Phoebe, and I made it out of the river and were walking toward where the packs are. We trembled under the chilly breeze, which did not make for a fun time since the three of us were barefoot and drenched from head to toe. Phoebe’s leg was injured with the bullet wound, so we supported her during our slow walk.

Guided by my powerful sense of smell, the scents of the wolves got stronger the closer we approached. I could smell the other avatars, and it brought me relief to know they were safe. We were all safe.

“Is your pack nice?” Violetta asked, pushing some of her wet hair behind her ear. “They won’t eat me, right?”

“Most don’t like seafood, so you’re good.” I chuckled, even when she reached over and flicked my forehead. That laugh was needed. I saw a smirk etched on her face, even Phoebe’s. “There are two different packs here. One is mine and Phoebe’s, who are nice. The other one... well, are allies. Can’t say much about them.”

“Ah.”

Shuffling got louder and noises cleared to the conversation. As we advanced, I could make out the faces of many wolves of Garnet and Zircon Moon alike, including my friends. Our gang of friends is the first to notice us. Phoebe’s shout of pure relief tugged at my heart.

“Guys!” Sapphire screamed, ripping herself from Isaiah, running towards us. Everyone’s heads snapped in her direction, including the avatars who all had blankets or jackets around them. I noticed a few of them were snuggled with the warrior men and women. They found their mates!

“Take care of Phoebe and Violetta first, please,” I say, handing the wet witch off to them. Phoebe wrapped her arms around Galen, who caught her before she fell.

“I missed you guys...” She muttered, resting her head on our friend’s chest. Galen, looking like he won the lottery, squeezed back.

“We missed you too! Get kidnapped again and I’m beating your asses.” He growled with a grin as Mikhail came over with a thick towel.

“Says the one who spent all night praying and crying for their safety.” He wagged his eyebrows, making Galen blush. I urged Violetta to head towards Jackie and the others to get taken care of. That just left me.

A sweet heavy scent of peaches and mangos smacked me in the face.

“*Mi rayo de luna!*” My mom shouted, hugging my wet body with all the strength she could muster. “Oh, my baby, are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?”

“Mom, I’m okay,” I admitted through her chest. I don’t know if she could hear it considering my face is pressed against her bosom. Patting

her arm for release, she pulled away, revealing her tear-stained face. "I'm sorry for worrying you."

"Oh, I'm just glad you're okay." She muttered, planting kisses on my cheeks. Dad came over and hugged me too, whispering how much he missed me and how happy he was to see me. Even Anthony came over and gave me a bone-crushing hug. It must have felt strange to the wolves of our pack to see their big, tough Alpha crying and swinging his little sister around.

I, for one, didn't mind it. It meant he loved me and that's all that mattered.

I spotted Steven and Ashley behind my family, regarding me with a sad look. They took several steps away and focused on everyone else. I didn't care. Why should I?

Once I was put down, my family gave me a warm towel. The dark wet splotches on their clothes served as a reminder. Raina came over and hugged me and, strangely, I hugged her back. Turning my head, Neron approached. His face wore multiple expressions of happiness, sadness, and worry. When he got close enough, he leaned in to hug me but recoiled when I landed a solid punch to his chest.

"Ow!" He rubbed the sore spot. "What the hell was that for?"

"For almost dying for me, you fucking idiot!" I shouted at him. Before he could react, I sprang forward and hugged him. All this time I was convinced he died. Images of Neron lying on the grass in a pool of blood haunted me, but I was so glad to be confirmed wrong. He looked as if the injury never happened. "Never do that again, Neron. I mean it."

"I'd do it a thousand times over if it meant you're safe." He cooed, squeezing me in our hug. Tingles and preordained sparks erupted within my body from his touch. "I'm glad you're okay. Really."

I'm glad too. I was glad everyone was okay. The hellscape burns behind us. That place would never hurt and harm innocent avatars again. It died in the flames of its sins, charred black in punishment.

I could only hope Osiris and Cerberus died in that fire.

It took hours to return to Zircon Moon territory. The afternoon sun began its beginning stages of departure. Activity boomed across the land as both Alphas worked on arrangements for the avatars to return to their homes, including by car and by flight. Some avatars ran away from home, while some had significant others and families they must return to. They made arrangements to accommodate their needs.

Adonis tackled me into a hug the moment he saw me. The spunky bundle of joy rambled on about how he wanted to play with me and how he missed me. I smiled and hugged him back, telling him we'll have a playdate after things settle down. The answer was more than enough for him because he kissed me on the cheek before scampering back to his parents.

"Hey, guys." Phoebe and I looked up to see Violetta walking towards us, dressed in her usual gothic-like gear. Some she-wolves lent her clothes since we only came in dresses. "Thank you. Really. While this was one hell of an adventure I don't wish to repeat, it is great meeting you two."

"Likewise, Violetta." Phoebe beamed, her fingers dancing across the gauze wrapped around her calf. "Have you contacted your partner?"

"Well, partners." She grinned. "And yes, I did. They're eagerly awaiting my return, so I best get on moving." Reaching in her pocket, she pulls out two slips of paper and hands them to us. "My number, in case you guys want to hang out. I like to get to know my fellow avatars better."

I felt almost giddy with happiness. “Does this mean we’re friends?”

Violetta regarded us with a look before breaking out into a smile. “Yeah. We escaped hell together, so that means we have something to bond on. Trauma bonding for the win.”

We three shared a merry laugh before Violetta hopped into a vehicle that would take her back to her place. She’ll be resuming her music career after this. I knew with the support from her partners, my new friend would be alright.

A dull pain throbbed on the side of my neck, reminding me of what Osiris did. There were holes in my memory from all my encounters with him, and that worried me. Blood held memories, old and new, and he enjoyed himself while drinking from me. He knows all about me. I shouldn’t worry, right? He is gone!

However, those wishful thoughts didn’t make the uncomfortable feeling leave. It settled, weighing on my heart and psyche. Even as our friends came over and hugged us, I still felt it. It bothered me.

This madness was over, right?

Later in the evening when the afternoon commotion ended, Phoebe and I cuddled on the couch in warm pajamas with a blanket wrapped around us. I lent her some of mine to wear since she is spending the night. Hot tea supplied an extra layer of warmth as we watched TV.

It felt right. It felt peaceful knowing what happened was put behind us. But just in case, I was going to contact Mayra to talk about it. The last thing I needed was added trauma on top of the fuck ton I already have.

As *Steven Universe* played on the television, Anthony rushed in with the others trailing behind him, holding his cell phone. Mom was teary-eyed, and Dad was patting her shoulder while giggling.

“Alexi was just born.” He announced. Phoebe and I sat up in shock and excitement. “Alpha Dimitri sent me a photo.”

“I’m a grandmother again!” Mom cried, blotting her tears with her handkerchief. “My grandson is so handsome!”

“Hey, I wanna see the picture!” I complained, earning chuckles from everyone. When my big brother handed us his cell phone, my heart burst with absolute joy. In the photo was Lyria holding onto her newborn son, looking at him with all the love the universe failed to hold. So small and already cuddled up to her mother. I have a new nephew and he was so beautiful.

Although, Alpha Dimitri throwing a peace sign in the second photo sent me into orbit with laughter. There was something so riveting about Alphas acting silly. It made them human.

“I’m going to spoil the hell out of that boy!” Jackie proclaimed, hitting her chest once. “I can’t wait to teach him how to throw people into trees.”

“None of that now, my love.” Abigail laughed, hugging her mate. “The boy is barely a day old and already you’re planning on corrupting him.”

“Ouch.” Jackie faked hurt before laughing. “When we adopt, I’ll be corrupting them too. Our babies will be strong just like their mommies.”

“Not to forget a weirdo like one of them.” Darien chuckled to himself, dodging a punch to the arm. “If Dwayne is here, he’d say the same thing!”

“Nah. He’s busy tending to his pregnant wife. He doesn’t have time to make fun of me.”

“Wait!” I shouted, eyes widening along with my lips. “Olivia is pregnant? Since when?”

“Since a few weeks ago?” Jackie replied more like a question, scratching the back of her neck. “When I called Dwayne earlier today, he told me! I’m going to be an aunt!” She grabbed Abigail’s hand and kissed the back with unbearable sweetness. “We’re going to be aunts!”

“I’m so happy for you!” I sprang from my seat and hugged the Beta couple as tight as I could. Their family is growing! Olivia is pregnant! With all these babies popping out left and right, I wonder who would become parents next. My money is on Sapphire!

Happiness after a day of chaos. I can breathe again!

The Garnet Moon family continued to share joys, appreciations, and laughs. They took the loss of Phoebe and me hard. I never knew how much our presence affected them until today, and it made me happy to hear how hard they worked to get us back. While we were fighting for ourselves, they were right behind us, fighting for us.

I met Endo for the first time and enjoy the spectacle of blushes on Phoebe’s cheeks. She’s got a crush! It was so adorable! They looked good together, they acted as if they knew each other forever. I smiled at them, silently rooting for them to get together.

Mom, Dad, and Anthony would return to California in the morning. I think spending the night would do them some good, and me. Having my family around means the world to me.

As I walked to my room, I spotted a body sitting on the front steps of the packhouse, staring out into the moonlit sky. Neron. His large back faced me with the strands of his black hair flowing with the gentle breeze.

As quiet as a mouse, I opened the front doors and took a seat on a stair next to him.

“We need to talk.”