

The Vampires Promised Bride Chapter 66

Freya hugged Lucy tight. “That was a very brave and selfless thing you did for your brother.”

“He would have done the same thing for me.” Lucy leaned back as her father patted her head gently.

“Also... given the situation now with Aiden and him finding his mate I think it is more appropriate for him to return back to the pack. He will need to get Diana acclimated there as well. And since we know they are immune to the potion there shouldn’t be a problem.” Lucy watched Wyatt nod his head slowly.

“I think you are right. Besides... he will need his privacy with his mate for a while. I’m sure there is a lot for her to adjust to. Like our way of life now.” Wyatt stared into his daughter’s green eyes. “Do you want to come back too?”

Lucy shook her head and smiled. “My place is with Derek. And I need to also get acquainted with the vampires there.” She felt Derek come up behind her and she leaned her back into his chest. His mind was speaking of much more private agendas for the two of them.

Alexis walked in and her eyes met with Lucy.

“It seems your mate came to our rescue again.” Lucy said with a faint smile.

“He is really making me frustrated. I swear I am going to punch him when I finally meet with him. The man is infuriating me.” Alexis huffed out angrily though there was a smile at the corner of her lips. “I am glad he is taking care of my important people. But he has another thing coming if he thinks I am just going to let him do his thing. I don’t care about Erebus. I am not going to let one crazy deity keep me away from my mate.”

“He is really crazy Alexis... and dark.” Lucy said quietly.

Alexis’ face fell and she gave Lucy a sympathetic smile. “I don’t want your efforts to be in vain either...”

“Lex you aren’t. That is your mate out there. And they tend to push their feelings over ours.” Lucy nudged Derek playfully. “If it was me I would be fighting too. This is your life. Call your own shots and track him down. Wear him down. And place your mark on him.”

Alexis smiled warmly and nodded. “Thank you Lucy, I knew you’d have my back.”

“Aba, do you mind if I borrow you for a moment before you head back to the vampire kingdom? I want you to take something to Lucy for me.” Freya looked up at the demon who nodded his head. “Thank you.”

“You and dad still better stay out of the fighting,” Lucy said with a smirk. She was the one who had the one up on them now.

“Jasper and Brian were still looking for the witch but things have been quiet. I think she has gone into hiding.” Wyatt sighed and rubbed the back of his head.

The door opened and Justice walked in with his parents, Jin and Jason. “We going back to the vampire kingdom now?”

Lucy nodded her head as Levi walked in with Rhea and Titus.

“We have Aiden and Diana set up at the far end of the castle. Do you want one of us to interrupt...” Titus asked with a chuckle.

“No need. He will be coming to the Diamond pack. Rhea can open him up a portal when he comes up for air.” Wyatt rubbed the back of his neck. Having mates was a normal part of life and it reached a very primal part of their beasts. Almost hard to control. He was sure if things were going well between them they wouldn’t be waiting long to seal their bond.

“You guys should all plan to attend one of the days during the mating party that will be coming up. You know Titus... I was thinking there should be a rededication ceremony or something? Where we get to feast on our mates publicly again.” Cody felt Kelsie elbow him into his side and he grinned widely down at her.

“I’m down with that.” Lee said, smirking down at Rhea.

“Haha nice try but no.” Kelsie snorted.

“Wow, you guys are embarrassing sometimes...” Raine sighed quietly.

“Micah, you should really think about taking a mate. Just for the ceremony.” Justice beamed over at him.

“Yeah, and what if I end up with someone like one of your cousins here? No thanks. Alexis is enough trouble already.” Micah chuckled, shaking his head. These women may have scarred him from ever taking a mate. As of now, it wasn’t his thing. He took his role very seriously, similar to Tristan. Playing with the ladies was one thing but having a committed relationship was another. But who knows if that would change in the future.

“Oh Micah you are just jealous that none of us ladies want you.” Alexis said, sticking her tongue out at him childishly.

“You got me Lex. That’s it.”

“Well it has been a very interesting couple weeks and a crazy day.” Derek watched as Lucy nodded up at him.

“Lucy... if you ever decide that you miss that part of you... I know it isn’t the same but... I know Kade didn’t want any part of it. He didn’t want to take on another wolf and that was his personal choice. I know a lycan and werewolf are different but there are also similarities.” Wyatt watched Lucy flash him a wide smile.

“I know where to find you daddy. But... I’m okay. At least right now... I think I’m alright... Okay... I guess this is goodbye for now. See you all soon.” Lucy opened up a portal. This would be linked to the last portal that was opened by Aiden. “Where will this open up at?”

“Should open up into our room. Aiden opened the portal as soon as we got the pearl piece.” Derek looked up at Aba. “See you back at the castle.”

“Mom tell sis I said hi next time you talk to her.” Justice grinned at his mother before walking into the open gateway.

Derek smiled as they walked into his room. Ryan and Jasper were still out looking for the witch. He would need to regroup and replan things but for now... he couldn’t think about what to do next with the witch.

“We need to find my parents and fill them in on all the events.” Derek said with a tired sigh. He looked at his bed wistfully. He had a lot more he wanted to do even though he was tired. But he wasn’t sure if Lucy was really up to it. She had been through a lot.

And maybe that is exactly what I need. Lucy smiled as she intertwined her fingers with his walking down the hallway.

“We need to put a deity proof barrier up or something. Isn’t that what the merrow Queen has around her place? Where did she get one?” Justice recalled the last time he was here and how everything went amiss because of that damn Erebus. There had to be a way to prevent that in the future.

“I don’t know... I guess we can talk to grandma or Aunt Rhea about it. Maybe one of them would know? I don’t think it will be a problem now according to what Aken said.”

“Still... if there is a way to put that type of barrier up I am all for it. I am tired of deities and their nonsense.” Derek said with a low growl.

“Don’t forget it is also a deity who saved us earlier and who saved me.” Lucy said with a smirk.

“Yeah and it was deities that put you in both of those situations.” Derek scowled and Justice nodded his head in agreement.

“I think it is worth looking into for sure.” Justice wasn’t going to bank on Erebus not being vengeful and knowing he was going to die coming in to kill Lucy first. It would be best if they could at least create a safe area.

“And then what guys? I never leave the safety of the bubble you put me in? That isn’t happening. What does it matter if I am safe in the castle or castle grounds? But as soon as I leave I would be exposed again. And you are not keeping me locked up. It isn’t happening.” Lucy looked at the two men. “I know what has happened lately... well it has taken a toll on all of us. But for the most part, we know this isn’t the normal.”

Derek looked up to see his parents walking towards them.

“Oh Lucy, we are so glad you are back.” Willa said, wrapping her arms around her.

“Thank you. I’m all healed up finally.”

“That must have been quite an ordeal. Derek has filled us in about Rogio getting involved. You should be safe now. He has always looked over our family well when he was awake.” Alaric looked over at Derek. “It’s good to have you back son.”

“Thank you. We had another interesting experience today as well.”

“Well come walk and talk with me son.”

Derek sighed. He really didn’t want to have a lengthy conversation right now. But his father deserved to know about all the recent events as well.

“Mira.”

“Sire.” The pale girl materialized in a kneeling position.

“Please escort Lucy back to the room and stay with her until I return. I’m sure she wishes to take a proper shower and relax after the day we have had.” Derek could see Lucy protesting until the moment he mentioned shower. He smiled reading her adorable thoughts on how wonderful a real shower would feel.

“I’ll stay with Lucy too, until you get back.” Justice felt extra anxious and protective after what happened last time.

Lucy watched as Derek reluctantly walked one way with his parents while she went the other.

“Lucy I am so happy you are back with us.” Mira said as she guided Lucy into the bedroom.

“Thank you. It will be nice to take some time to acquaint myself with this place as my home.” Lucy looked up to Justice who nodded his head. This was Justice’s home now too and he also needed to get familiar and comfortable with the place.

“Well if you two don’t mind I’ll be getting a much-appreciated shower. No more sponge baths for me.” Lucy cheered.

“Well unless it’s part of your foreplay right?” Justice chuckled and Lucy tossed a pillow at him from the couch.

“Do you wish for me to accompany you in the bathroom Lucy?” Mira asked.

“No, thank you. I think I am perfectly safe getting a shower.” Lucy giggled at the banshee’s protectiveness. But she guessed she had more reason to be on edge after what happened. A member of the royal family had been taken from under her nose. Something the royal guard dog was not used to. It had never happened before.

Lucy enjoyed a long hot shower thoroughly cleansing herself before she dried off and put on fresh clean clothes. She walked out into the room to see Aba was back sitting with Justice and Mira. When he saw her he immediately stood up holding a bag in his hands.

“What is that?” Lucy asked with a curious smile.

“This is what your mother asked me to bring to you. She said you would know what it is and why...” Aba said, handing the black leather bag to Lucy.

Lucy smiled and took the bag over to the table. She sat it down and opened it up to see what her mother had sent her. She looked at the contents in the bag. Silently she stared at the bag. Hot tears began to stream down her face and she clutched the bag tightly bringing it to her chest. She closed her eyes tight and began quietly sobbing. Everything was hitting at that moment. And she was being crushed with another heavy blow.

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Aba vanished from the room instantly and Justice walked up to Lucy’s side. He knew Aba was going for Derek. He watched as Lucy lowered the bag back down on the table and sifted her hands in the contents. Tears streamed down her face.

Justice looked into the bag and pursed his lips together. He placed his hand on Lucy’s back and rubbed it gently. “It’s okay Lucy. You are allowed to grieve for what you lost.”

Lucy turned into Justice and began crying. Her soft sobs and hiccups muffled into his shirt. What her mother had sent her wasn’t supposed to make her feel sad but it was a message telling her she was still strong. It was a huntress outfit, with daggers, silver stakes, throwing knives and black combat boots. But what it made Lucy realize was the part of her that she sacrificed. She had always trained with the mixture of her skills but now it came down to the skills her mother taught her. She had witch and fairy magic too but when it came to physical combat she could no longer fight as a lycan. It would all come down to her hand to hand combat training.

The past events just all hit her. The a*****n, her giving up a part of herself, her lips and body being touched by someone other than Derek. And it hurt. Like being crashed into a wall. She thought she was okay... with everything. But her mental wall had been hit hard and it was all finally sinking in.

“Okay everyone I’ll handle everything from here.”

Lucy felt her body being spun around as she was wrapped tightly into Derek’s chest. The sound of the others leaving was heard, followed by the door shutting.

“Oh, Lucy.” Derek’s voice was soft and soothing. He rubbed her back gently and breathed in slowly as he felt her emotions hitting against him. Her pain was his pain.

“I’m sorry... I don’t know why I’m so emotional over all of this.”

“Baby you’ve been through a lot. And you are trying to be strong through it all. Lean on me, okay? Let it out. Let me feel it too. Don’t close it off inside of you as you did before.” He kissed the top of her head as his fingers continued to trace over her back gently.

Lucy wept into his chest. Her quiet sobs filled the room while Derek continued to hold her and soothe her with his voice. She could feel him comforting her both on the outside and inside with his positive thoughts and emotions. He was there for her and sympathized with her. He was also hurting for her too. She gripped her fingers into his chest, leaning her forehead into him. It was so nice to have a soul mate. She didn’t need to explain anything to him. He just knew. And he knew exactly what she needed. She loved him, she missed him... and she was desiring him.

“Lucy, baby let’s wait.”

“No.” Lucy looked up at his face with her damp eyes and smiled. She wrapped her arms around his neck bringing him down to her and crashed her lips into his. Greedily and desperately. She needed him to make her body his. To erase all the touches with his own. And she simply just needed to feel connected to him like this. It had been weeks after they had newly mated. Far too long. They both needed this.

She thrust her tongue into his mouth and listened as he growled in approval. She danced with his tongue, sucking on it gently and nipping at his bottom lip. She felt him lift her body up and she wrapped her legs around him. Her hands tangled

in his hair as the kiss became more frantic and urgent. She could feel his emotions and knew exactly where his thoughts were. And he was still worried about continuing on with this in the back of his mind.

She forced her mouth away from his and continued to hold his hair in her hands. “Derek. I need you. That is what needs to be healed right now. I’m not blocking anything from you. You can feel my emotions.” She nudged her nose into his cheek and peppered him with light kisses working her way down to his neck. She licked over the mark on his neck and teased it with her teeth. Biting at it and remembering the taste of his blood.

When she had marked him it was as both her vampire and lycan self. So establishing the mark wasn’t necessary. But she wanted to taste him again. The memories of the party came into her mind and she couldn’t contain her want. She sank her teeth into his neck and he moaned out in pleasure. Liquid desire and want filled her up as her body heated up needing more.

“Mmmm, Lucy.” Derek moaned with a slight growl and collapsed on top of her on his bed. A wave of pleasure rippled through him as she removed her fangs from him. He reached out and quickly tore her clothing off of her before discarding his own clothes carelessly. It was now his turn. He also desired to taste his mate. A primal growl sounded from his throat as he extended his fangs down into her neck. His hand wandered over her warm flesh below him as he drank the ecstasy from her. She rolled her hips into him and across his arousal. He lifted up slowly, licking her neck carefully for any escaped droplet. Before crashing his lips into hers frantically moving against her. He slowly slid his hand down and he cupped one of her mounds.

As he played with her body he moved from her lips and began claiming every inch of her as his own. Trailing his tongue over her sensitive skin, nipping and playing with her body while his hand continued to tease her buds heightening her senses.

She was going crazy with need as he played and toyed with her body. She felt his hot breath and soft lips creep up her inner thigh and gently kiss her center that was craving him.

“Derek...” She whimpered out. She needed him now and she knew he knew it, he knew exactly what she needed and was feeling. His lips trailed up her stomach and he took a moment to take one of her buds into his mouth. She arched her chest into him and gasped from his hot mouth. His tongue flicked over her and she reached down gripping into his hair, pulling him up to her.

His lips crashed into hers as she felt him gently knee her legs apart for him. They were both more than ready for this. She felt the head of his arousal near her entrance and with a deep thrust he was filling her up. They began dancing the dance of

passion meeting each other thrust for thrust. The sound of their heavy panting and moaning filled the air as they both reached their highs together.

“Gods Lucy...” Derek collapsed into her chest. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead. “I missed you so much baby.” He said leaving light kisses on her chest.

“Mmmm me too.” Lucy smiled in contentment as she wrapped her arms around his head running her fingers through his hair.

And for a moment they just stayed like that. Their two bodies against each other catching their breaths, feeling each other’s chests rising and falling and listening to the sound of the hearts beating. This was their moment. This was about two separate bodies that were one existence. They were soaking in one another and their passionate moment.

“You know my sweet Luce Luce...”

Lucy’s lips tugged upwards as his thoughts raced into her head.

“I have a filled refrigerator in here. Plenty of drinks and we can live on the contents of the food in there for a couple of days...” Derek lifted his head up and grinned at her mischievously. “And I really want to taste you again...”

Lucy giggled as she felt his desire rising already. “If you think you have the stamina to keep up with me...” She bit her lip coquettishly and felt his body lift upwards slightly.

“Let’s see how long we can last before exhaustion kicks in... you up for the challenge?” Derek smirked. “After all... that only took the edge off...”

She watched as his eyes darkened with desire as he began to lay siege upon her body again... and again... and again. Throughout the day and night, they continued to reach for each other, satisfying their desires completely. Taking a small break for fluids and one for a shower that ended up not just being a shower. They stayed locked up together for days absorbing every moment they could.

Derek helped her get dressed, gently kissing her bare shoulder before covering it with clothing... the first time they had worn clothes in days. He continued to mentally praise her body over and over.

“Will you stop it?” Lucy giggled out swatting at him.

He grabbed her hand and pulled her into his chest. “Never. I’ll never stop praising my perfect little mate.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “Alas... the small remnants of nonperishable food is gone and we can’t live off of each other.”

“I want a whole stack of pancakes!” Lucy smiled and thought of her brother. He always wanted her to make pancakes. She wondered how things were going with him and his new mate.

“We will visit them soon.”

“I know we will. I plan on stopping there on the-“

“No-“

“I’m not asking... On the way to find Beryl.” Lucy was going witch hunting very soon. Enough was enough. And she knew Derek planned to go back as well and she was going with him. Lycan’s weren’t affected and even if they were she wasn’t one now. She was a dhampir like her mother except she had strong fairy magic. “I can see you looking for some sort of loophole around this. There isn’t one. I won’t ever be parted from your side again. And I am not staying in the dragon kingdom waiting around for you. Besides, Justice needs to see some action too so he can test out his guardian skills.”

“You’re right my little mate. We aren’t good apart and I can’t be worrying about you the whole time. We will capture this witch together.” Derek smiled and leaned his forehead into hers. He felt dumb that for a second he planned to leave her at the dragon kingdom. Of course, that wouldn’t work with Lucy. Not after everything. And especially now knowing she isn’t in danger from the potion.

“But that isn’t right now... not today. Today is a relaxing day.” Derek said and Lucy giggled.

“What were the days before?” Lucy giggled.

“Oh, those are fun days but not relaxing. It takes work pleasing a woman like you. Very satisfying work.” Derek grinned and tugged her into his side, walking her out the door. “Today we are going to show the kingdom that their princess is safe.”

“After food though?” Lucy listened to his chuckle.

“Yes. Food is first on the agenda. Mira.” Derek called out.

“Sire.”

“Please ask the kitchen staff to prepare a breakfast feast. The princess and I are famished.”

“My lord.” Mira bowed her head with a faint smile and vanished.

“I hope Justice has managed to keep himself busy.” Lucy looked around wondering where he was.

“I’m sure he is just fine.” Derek winked down at Lucy. “He’s your guardian sweetheart. You’re not his.” She had a bad habit of trying to look after and take care of everyone. But she was the one who was the most precious. She was his most precious and perfect little mate.

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Derek and Lucy were finishing their breakfast when Justice strolled in the room with Aba.

“Luce Luce, Derek! Perfect. Just the people we needed to see. We weren’t sure if you were ever going to emerge.” Justice chuckled, taking a few pancakes onto his plate. “The thing is Aba and I have been talking and we both think you need to recall the soldiers. Maybe leave the elite team there secretly but call everyone else back.”

“If the witch has gone into hiding we need to make her think it is okay to come out of her rabbit hole.” Aba added. This was something he and Justice had been going over extensively. The witch was not going to make her appearance if she thought she was being watched.

Derek nodded his head slowly as he met with Lucy’s eyes. A smile spread over his lips. “Yes, Lucy. This means we can bring Jasper home. I’ll have to leave Ryan though. But... you’ve made an interesting observation. We can search for her for years and not find her at this rate. And the elite soldiers are very good at not being seen.”

“I like this idea. Besides, we still need to think about how we want to handle the witch. I mean we can’t just lock her up forever, right? Isn’t that risky? And we can’t kill her because then Erebus will get her soul.” Lucy frowned and looked up at Aba. “Is there a way to break that contract?”

“A soul contract? It would have to be by Erebus himself.” Aba frowned and rubbed the back of his neck. “But... well... it’s cruel... but in this witch’s case she deserves it... but we can drain her of her magic. She would be just like a regular human.”

Lucy turned and looked at Justice while hearing Derek’s thoughts. Both men were thinking this was a good idea.

“Okay... let’s say we do this... can she just have it reversed somehow?” Lucy wasn’t sure if this would just be creating a more vindictive enemy in the future.

“No, the effects can’t be reversed. It is another type of blood potion. It would make magic unable to exist in her body permanently. But this wouldn’t stop her from trying to reach out to demons again. But since she knows her soul will be devoured without her magic she probably wouldn’t try anything... or... I take that back. She is so desperate for revenge she wouldn’t probably do anything...” Aba furrowed his brows as he thought carefully. “We could always curse her to a place. Make it so that she can never leave her island. Of course, that is a bit dark for a fairy princess but it isn’t for me.” He chuckled with a shrug.

“Aba... can you relay these orders to Ryan and Jasper. Tell Jasper to escort the soldiers back and inform Ryan of our plan for him to stay with the elite soldiers. At any sign of the witch, they may capture her if they have an opening.” Derek watched Aba bow slightly and vanish. “We will think more about the witch. But I am thinking draining her of her magic wouldn’t be a bad thing. Of course, we should probably discuss this stuff with your family.”

“We can send them a messenger fairy.” Lucy said with a smile and Derek’s eyes lit up.

“I can see them now too, right? I haven’t seen one of the invisible fairy’s yet.” Derek listened as Lucy giggled.

“Well with the guardians around they keep the other fairy’s away with their aura. The brownies and such are considered pests. Which they can be but they are adorable.” Lucy listened as Justice growled in annoyance. “Oh Justice, push that aura down some.”

“I don’t want brownies going through my stuff. It’s worse than mice. What if they poop in there or something.” Justice pouted with his brows furrowed.

Lucy giggled and shook her head. “Quit acting like a child. At least bring it down enough so the messenger fairies don’t have a hard time. What if someone tries to send me a message? So just enough for them but not enough for the sprites and brownies...”

“Deal!” Justice beamed happily. He had never been a fan of the little pests. The only ones he could tolerate were the fae dragons because he thought they were neat looking.

“Okay well let’s go and take a walk around and greet the people.” Derek said, extending his hand out to Lucy.

She nodded and smiled up at him. They needed to reassure the vampires that everything was fine and that their princess was back safely.

It only took a few days for Jasper to return with the army. Lucy’s family wanted to take a more wait and see approach with the witch. They wanted to talk with her before they decided her fate. They were all in agreement though that her magic would be removed. But after that they weren’t sure.

Lucy was adjusting to her life here at the vampire kingdom. And she was now out on a stroll among the little vampire town. She was wearing a cloak over her head that blocked her scent so she could walk around without being detected. This way she could spectate the other villages without them being aware of her presence. Mira, Aba, and Justice were all with her. Mira though stayed out of sight, while Justice also wore a similar cloak. Derek and Jasper were not far; they were just on the other side tending to the vampire soldiers.

Today Lucy had decided she was going to meet with Stella. This was Sabrina’s cousin and she thought it would be nice to be on good terms with her. Especially since Sabrina would be joining them in the castle as one of the elite soldiers. She didn’t want there to be awkwardness between them. She didn’t hold any ill feelings towards her over what she did.

She noticed Stella sitting on a bench on the outside of the town. She was sitting alone and honestly... she looked horrible. She turned and motioned for Justice and Aba to stay back. She didn’t want them startling the young lady making her think she was in trouble.

“Stella?” Lucy watched as the girl jerked her head up and immediately lowered herself in respect to Lucy. “That’s not necessary Stella. I was thinking maybe we could talk and be friends?”

“Y-y-ou... wish to be my friend?” Stella whispered out quietly.

Lucy smiled at her kindly. “Yes.”

“Don’t you hate me?”

“No, I don’t hate you. I’m sorry you felt like you couldn’t just be honest and needed to create a fake relationship... but I am not upset with you over it. The only way I would be truly angry is if you were really after what is mine.” Lucy smiled sheepishly with a half shrug. “Where are all your friends at?”

“Friends...” Stella frowned. “After what happened... no one will talk to me anymore. I guess they weren’t really my friends. And no one wants to be seen with the woman who angered the princess.”

Lucy frowned. “Well, those don’t sound like very good friends. You know Stella... if you are hanging around people that make you feel like you have to lie to belong then those are not real friends.”

“Yeah... I guess so.” Stella whispered out quietly. She lifted her eyes up at Lucy and her bottom lip quivered. “I am so sorry. I didn’t mean any harm. I just didn’t want to be pressured into sleeping with others... I’m sorry.”

“It is all water under the bridge. Let us move past this okay? I want us to get along and be friends.”

“I would like that very much.” Stella smiled up at her.

“Good. From now on just call me Lucy and no more bowing and such.” Lucy giggled and winked down at her. She wasn’t sure what happened but suddenly the world blurred together and everything seemed to spin. As if she was in a funhouse the land swirled together as a wave of exhaustion hit her body.

She felt Aba’s arms around her steadying her as Justice ran up from the distance.

“Lucy? Are you alright?” Justice asked, taking her face in his hands. Her body started swaying unnaturally again and Aba pulled her into his body to stabilize her.

The dizziness continued to beat against her and she had to lean her body into Aba’s. She was losing the strength to stand on her own.

“Justice, go and get Derek. I’m taking Lucy inside.” Aba said, teleporting Lucy back into her bedroom. “Are you alright?”

Lucy felt like the world was swirling around her and her eyelids were becoming heavy. It was like a wave of exhaustion seized her body. She couldn’t even form coherent thoughts as her mind started shutting down on her. Her vision began to tunnel and she blinked hard trying to restore her sight.

“Lucy?” Aba eased her body onto the couch and knelt by her side. “What are you feeling? Did something happen? Did she say something?”

“Tired...” Lucy whispered out as she fought to keep her eyes open.

Aba nodded his head slowly and sat his hand on her forehead. “Yes... I can see the little light has become stronger.”

Little light? Lucy flickered her eyes up to Aba who had a faint smile resting on his face. “It was just a tiny light that day of the ball. Which is why I wouldn’t let Derek give you the vervain. But your light has grown and is sucking the energy of yours up.”

“Oh my goodness... because I am the fairy princess now... so... How is that all going to work? Oh my gosh?! And why didn’t you tell me?!” She dropped her hands to her stomach with a new surge flowing through her of excitement. It was able to hold the fatigue at bay.

“Ha Ha sorry. I was curious how long it would take for you to notice... honestly, it is much quicker than I imagined... As far as the princess thing... perhaps things have been forever changed now. Maybe there will always be another fairy princess. Another type of self-preservation, perhaps? You’ll have to ask your grandmother, but I imagine the burden will still be on Alexis and her child. But if Alexis never has an heir...” Aba watched as Lucy closed her eyes.

“So I am going to be trapped next to Derek’s side just like all the other fairy princesses were with their mate before?” Lucy watched as light flashed in Aba’s eyes.

“Well, the difference with you is you have a servant. I can feed you my energy as a minor supplement. Which is why you are even still awake right now.”

“Oh, I thought it was from my excitement.” Lucy chuckled. “Thank you.”

“Do you want me to put a mental block up before your prince arrives? Or do you just want me to sneak out of here and stop the others from entering? I’m sure he is going to be thrilled. This is also huge news for the vampires to have a new heir already brewing inside of you.”

“Oh goodness. But this will be a daughter promised to the fairy kingdom... Until Alexis at least has her daughter...”

Aba cleared his throat and stood up. “Well, I guess you and Derek will just have to have more children. I think you two can work out those details.” He chuckled and ran his hand through his hair.

“Don’t worry about blocking anything. I want him to know. Besides, he will be in a massive panic. It will be easier if he can just read my thoughts.”

“I think that is the best move in this situation. I’ll just be waiting right outside then. He will be here in a few seconds.” Aba chuckled as he heard the frantic running sounds in the castle. Just as he opened the door Derek appeared along with Jasper and Justice. “Go on in Derek... you two I need to speak with.” He allowed just enough room for Derek to squeeze through before shutting the others out. He would explain to them so they didn’t worry. But this should be a private moment for the couple.

Derek rushed to Lucy blindly and froze right in front of her. He dropped to his knees as his eyes began to water up. He inched closer and placed his hand on her belly and leaned his forehead into hers. This moment was everything. So much had happened in such a short amount of time. This happened sooner than he expected but he couldn’t help the joy he felt. And their happiness together bonded them more. This was what they created from their love. The little energy growing inside of Lucy.

“I never think I can love you more and yet you continue to make me burst for you. I have never been this full inside in my life.” Derek kissed her forehead. “I love you my little mate...” He rubbed her stomach gently and moved his head down to kiss her stomach. “And you too, my little love.”

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The kingdom had a big celebration in honor of the future heir to the vampire kingdom. Wyatt and Freya along with Lilly stopped by to visit a couple of days ago too. She found out that Aiden and Diana are doing okay. Diana is trying to adjust to her life here and they have told the pack about the two of them being lycans. The Diamond pack was very excited about their future leaders being lycans and what it would mean for the packs.

Lilly was able to confirm that Alexis’ child would be the first heir to the fairy kingdom. But it seemed that things have changed in that as of now there will continue to be two fairy princesses. Maybe had Alexis gotten pregnant first that would have changed. So there is a chance that if Alexis’ daughter conceives first then things will go back to there only being one princess at a time. Who knows since fairy magic has a will of its own.

Her grandmother told her that she will need to come with Derek to pick out a future guardian for their daughter. There was no doubt about it that the first child would be a girl. Though Derek wasn’t so certain and planned to prepare for either gender.

Derek was being adorable with how he treated Lucy. He was always rubbing and kissing her stomach. He would have conversations with his little love and tell them how important they were to him already. He would also brag to Lucy at times about how good he actually was at making babies since it happened from their first time together. Though she had to tease him that it was the heat that played the main factor in it.

For the most part things have been fairly quiet. The elite soldiers were still silently waiting for the witch to emerge. And Lucy had about a two to three-hour time window before she needed a recharge from Derek or Aba. Though usually Derek never left her side except when she demanded girl time.

That was the other thing. Stella and Lucy had been getting along well together. Stella was actually a very sweet girl who wasn’t malicious at all. She was a bit weak and allowed herself to be bullied. Because she wasn’t strong enough to stand up for herself she made up a fake boyfriend.

Overall life was good right now. No, it was perfect. Willa and Alaric were over the moon excited and when her parents were visiting, they were deciding on grandparent names. Willa took Mimi and Alaric Papaw while Wyatt and Freya elected just to be grandpa and grandma.

Derek had been overly doting and Lucy had needed to take a couple of days each week for her ‘de-smother’ time. That’s what was happening right now. She was walking down the hall with Stella. They were going to take a quiet stroll through the garden. While Derek, Aba, Jasper, and Justice were holding a sportsman sparring competition. The three of them would be attacking Justice and testing his guardian skills. Just a muscle-flexing competition if you asked Lucy but whatever got the smothering men out of her hair. Though Justice never used his sword while sparring with him. I guess he felt like he didn’t need it or he was afraid to accidentally hurt them.

Lucy and Stella entered just out of the palace when they saw Mira holding a guard by his throat. Her eyes were the color of a storm and this tiny fragile looking girl had this man lifted up with one hand.

“Tell me who!?!” Mira growled lowly.

“It’s everyone... everyone is saying it. Please... I didn’t mean anything by it.” The guard stuttered through a strangled breath.

“Mira.” Lucy said, shocked. “Put him down.” She walked up to the banshee who immediately obeyed. “What seems to be the problem?”

The guard fell to the ground and bowed sprawled across his stomach. “Forgive me princess. Please. I promise I didn’t mean anything by it. I was just asking a question. I didn’t know.”

“Didn’t know what?” Lucy asked as Stella came closer to Lucy’s side.

“He is talking about the rumors...” Stella whispered out quietly looking down at the man.

“What rumors?” She looked at Stella confused. Stella looked away and wouldn’t make eye contact with her.

“You don’t need to know. They are just vicious rumors.” Stella whispered quietly.

Lucy looked up to Mira who would give her the answers she wanted. “Mira, what is being said?”

Mira's eyes softened and sadness flickered in her eyes. "They are saying... they are saying that the child you are carrying is not that of the prince's. That you are carrying the deity's child in your womb. He forced himself on you and that now they are saying you are bearing a false heir to the throne."

"But that isn't true. Erebus never touched me like that." Lucy watched as the soldier lifted his head, his eyes looking relieved.

"Thank goodness. So you really are carrying the prince's heir."

Lucy was shocked. It was clear by his eyes just how much he believed it. This would be how much they all believed it. It was like being blindsided. She was obviously happy. And this... this wasn't something that was easily fixed. Sure, Derek could make an announcement. The king and queen could make a decree. But all the vampires would be sympathizing with the royal family over this tragedy. They wouldn't believe in the child until they were born and could smell the pureblood themselves.

"Should I kill him?" Mira asked coldly.

"You'd have to kill the whole kingdom." The soldier said horrified.

Mira shrugged. "We can build again. And build again with more loyal vampires."

"Leave him Mira. He is only repeating what has been spread around. Though you should have told me Stella." Lucy looked at her sadly.

"How could I tell you something like that?" She shook her head sadly. "You don't need to think about such things."

"Mira... see if you can find the roots to this rumor. It started somewhere." Lucy watched as Mira nodded her head.

"Do I kill them?" Mira asked with a small smile reaching her lips.

"No, Mira. You bring them to the palace."

Mira lowered her head and bowed. And instantly she vanished. Lucy did not doubt that Mira would be able to locate the source of the rumors. Lucy looked at the soldier and sighed. "You are free to be on your way."

The soldier stood and bowed. He apologized once more before he left.

“Lucy, are you okay?” Stella asked with worry.

Was she okay? It was more to it than that. It wasn’t just the gossip in itself. The truth is this rumor brought back the pain she had forgotten. It brought back the memories of the weeks she was kidnapped and abused. She remembered the feeling of helplessness and the pain she felt. The desperation that plagued her. It all flooded inside of her once again. It was haunting her all over. Then to top it all off they were calling her child that was created with love a false heir.

Her own pack would never have doubted her. She could go to them right now and they would welcome her and the child she carried. She could go to the dragon kingdom... hell in any of the four dragon kingdoms and she would be welcomed and treasured. And obviously, she would be precious in Elysium. But for this malicious rumor to be started and spread as it did... it meant there was still a long way for her to go as far as being accepted. At a time when this place started feeling like home... she was now back to feeling like a stranger. And not just a stranger, but an unwanted one. Someone who they thought would be ruining their vampire legacy by the child she carried.

Meryl thought Freya was an abomination and even now her granddaughter hunted the bloodline down. All because they were an existence that was unwanted by them. The purest of witches couldn’t stand for the contaminated bloodline. How many vampires actually felt this way? It was clear by these rumors that there were many who did not approve of her. Regardless of the blood bond... she wasn’t wanted.

Derek told her she would be their precious princess. She would be treasured by the vampires. No. She was treasured by the royal family but not the vampires. To the vampires, she was still an outsider. And though she was speculating she imagined they didn’t deem her worthy of being mated to their prince. Anyone who loved their princess wouldn’t make up such a nasty rumor. And as her mind wandered she began to really miss her pack... her home.

Lucy cleared her throat and gave Stella a sad smile with half a shrug. “I’m a little sad... and the rumor leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. I’m sorry I really don’t feel up to taking that walk anymore. Maybe next time?”

“Of course. Hey, don’t let it get to you. The truth will come out when your baby is born. Then they will all feel horrible for their bad judgment.” Stella watched as Lucy nodded to her with the same sad smile.

“I know. Thanks Stella.” Lucy walked Stella back in through the castle and saw her to the exit. She waved goodbye to her friend and closed her eyes inhaling slowly in long deep breaths. This was not one of those situations where you wanted to hear everything would be alright... eventually. This is one of those times she wanted to go out and show these vampires their princess. She wished she could unleash her hurt and anger and smash them into submission.

Her mother Freya, spent most of her life in solitude until she met her father. She was unwanted by the Briar coven but she was not part of that witch's group. But if there was someone who knew how it felt to be unwanted it was her grandmother, Lilly. Lilly came from a pack where she was unwanted because she wasn't a pure werewolf. That has long changed now, but Lilly grew up unwanted by her own pack. While Lucy had always been wanted up until now. She was a tri princess. Princess to the wolves, vampires, and fairies. Two of them would gladly welcome her... she was a rare gem in their eyes. Because of this she felt even more slighted by the vampires. Why were they so much better than the other two species?

Derek would be welcomed by the fairies and the werewolves if they lived there. Malicious rumors would never be spread about him. She knew her pack and trusted them. If she would have been the one to bring Derek to the Diamond pack and he was taking his place by her side there... Yes, she knew without a doubt nothing like this would happen if it was reversed. Were there some wolves that would be against it? Yes, like Kyle and she was sure there would be select wolves but not like what she was experiencing here. And they were doing it maliciously behind her back and talking about her in secret. They were not even giving her a chance to refute it. To them, this is the situation and there is no changing their mind.

She reached down and touched her stomach lightly rubbing it. She felt sad for her baby even being thought about as an illegitimate heir. She knew Derek was going to be livid. He would more than likely plan to come down hard on his people. And whoever started the rumor... she wasn't sure what would happen. If it was a higher-ranked noble they would probably be exiled, but a lower-ranked member might be killed. Then what would happen? The people would view this as an act of the prince protecting his mate and they would just be more cautious about their thoughts in the future. But this wouldn't change anything. They would still continue to think and feel like they do now.

She could admit it. She was angry. And because of this, she was lumping all the vampires together. Because one person started a rumor that spread around she assumed they all didn't like her. It could be true and it might not. But that soldier from earlier seemed to really believe the rumor. But he didn't look at her with contempt. If anything he looked relieved for her when she said it wasn't true. Almost as if there was pity. She supposed this could be true too. Maybe some did pity her, thinking the deity forced himself on her. But one thing logically hit her... for this to be so well believed there was no way the rumor came from someone low ranking. This must have come from a prominent family. Only someone with a lot of clout and connection to the royal family could have their words believed this much.

She rolled her eyes at herself for the drama she just created. Luckily her mother taught her to keep thinking until she reached a logical conclusion. The logical conclusion was that someone with connections to the family spread these rumors which is why they spread with so much belief.

Had someone close to her family said something about them it would spread through the pack as truth too. This wouldn't be a malicious act but would show their faith and trust in this person. If Sam said it, it would be as if her father said it. The pack trusted him that much. Who was like this in the vampire kingdom? There is Jester and Jasper... but she trusted them and they had a great relationship with her family. It wasn't them.

She really didn't know the prominent members that well to know who had the most clout. She walked back down the long corridor slowly. Mira would find out... she wouldn't have to worry about figuring it out and she was starting to feel tired. She walked back into her room and laid on the couch. She embarked on an emotional ride there that took her for some mental loops but luckily she arrived at the most logical conclusion. At least it was the conclusion she needed to believe in. Because if she felt that the vampires really didn't want her here...

She grabbed a blanket off the back of the couch and pulled it up over her body. She couldn't think like that. Derek trusted his people too and he said she would be treasured there. There was someone who didn't want her here... someone had a problem with her.

The door to the room opened and Derek walked in, followed by Jasper, Justice and Aba. They were laughing and jabbing at each other. The moment Derek's eyes fell on Lucy his face fell. His lips pursed tight and his knuckles turned white with the fist he was making. He walked up to Lucy and knelt next to the couch wrapping his arms around her. He pressed his head into her neck and squeezed his eyes shut.

"I'm so sorry, Lucy." Derek whispered. His mate had been hurt. She had been mentally suffering. How dare his people spread such a rumor about HIS child and HIS mate. He kissed her neck gently and leaned up looking over to Jasper. His black orbs were full of rage. His fangs were slightly elongated as he snarled. His whole body was trembling now in a very dark fury. There was no quelling his wrath... someone was going to die for this.

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Jasper came a couple of steps closer looking between Lucy and Derek. “What happened?” He could see Derek’s hands trembling in anger. It was one of the rare moments calm and collected Derek had looked like this. He saw him like this when Lucy had been taken so he knew this was serious.

Lucy reached up and intertwined her fingers with Derek. “Let’s take a moment here and be calm okay. I’m okay. I worked it out in my head... I mean I was upset and still am but-“

“But nothing Lucy!” Derek growled angrily, raising his voice at a level she had never heard before. She could feel his anger but also his hurt... he was also in pain because of the rumors. She watched as his eyes softened towards her immediately. She could feel how his emotions were not directed at her and it was just the result of his frustration.

“I’m sorry Lucy. I’m not yelling at you. I would never... I am losing my temper but in no way is it directed to you. I didn’t mean to raise my voice there. I’m...”

Lucy reached forward and cupped his face in her hands. “Derek. I can read your thoughts and emotions. What are you stumbling over an apology for.” She giggled and pecked his lips.

“Thank the gods for the soul mate bond.” Derek sighed out, reining his emotions in. He wouldn’t upset his pregnant mate. He would approach this calmly and rationally. He looked up at Aba, Justice and Jasper.

“Mira is out searching for the culprit now. But apparently, someone has started a malicious rumor that...” Derek set his jaw, it made him sick to even have to say it. “They are saying that the child Lucy is carrying isn’t mine. That it belongs to that bastard Erebus. And they are believing the rumor. Which means...”

“Which means it must come from someone close to your family.” Aba said darkly, his eyes turning black. “I can swear an oath in front of your people that I knew Lucy was pregnant before she was taken. As her servant, I felt the energy inside of her. Which you already know now why I didn’t let you give her the vervain.”

Derek nodded his head. “Thank you Aba. But that isn’t necessary. We will find the culprit and peel his skin off his body publicly and defang him. We will proceed to pour vervain over his exposed skin giving him a slow and torturous death.”

Jasper squeezed his hand into a fist. “Damn it, who the hell would try something like this? They know how important Lucy is. How could our people spread something like this around?”

“I don’t think they were being malicious but it was out of pity... maybe even worry about their future.” Lucy watched as Justice shook his head angrily.

“This wouldn’t happen back at the pack.” Justice growled out and folded his arms over his chest.

“What if Sam or Adam had told the pack something? The pack would believe them and take their word for it right? This is probably a similar situation here. And who knows how long this vampire had been around. They are immortal after all. They could have a lot of clout.” Lucy could feel Derek’s pride brimming at the top for her. She looked at him and gave him a reassuring smile.

“I won’t allow it, Justice. Just as your father wouldn’t either. No one will mistreat Lucy. And I will make a very bold public statement making an example out of whoever did it. Regardless of who they are.” Derek reached out to Lucy and pulled her into his chest. “I am going to hold a public meeting. I am addressing this issue immediately. And once the culprit is found... Mira should be able to track down the source. That is what her goal is.”

“Should I assist her?” Aba said with dark orbs filled with anger.

“No... but I want you making your way through all those on the castle ground. Please make sure you dispel this rumor among all who are inside of the castle. Don’t kill anyone... but get through to them.” Derek said darkly as Aba quickly nodded and vanished. He wouldn’t tolerate rumors in his kingdom let alone his own castle. This was their safe space. And the rumor was insulting.

Derek reached down and placed his hand over Lucy’s stomach. His unborn child had been insulted too. This was something he couldn’t take lightly. His little love was already someone he was incredibly protective of.

“Derek... calm down.” Lucy smiled up at him. His anger was storming and raging in energy spikes. But it was more than that. His fairy magic began spiking a red aura that flickered around him. It was a curious energy and she wanted to touch it so she could know it better. But it seemed hot. There was a heat that radiated off of it. She had never seen a fairy energy like this and wondered if it had something to do with mixing with his pure vampire blood?

Derek looked down at his body trying to see whatever Lucy was seeing. But he didn't have the gift to see the energy.

"That looks like some pretty wicked stuff there." Justice said as he walked closer. As a guardian, he could see it. And since Derek was Lucy's prince he was also his guardian too.

"It's different, isn't it Justice?" Lucy said, looking for traces of the energy that disappeared.

"Very different. And angry." Justice chuckled and slapped Derek on the back. "Thank you though. I'm glad I am not the only one livid. It helps calm me down seeing how angry you are." Justice chuckled.

Jasper stood there quietly deep in thought. In his head, he was going through everyone that could have a problem with Lucy. The best candidates that were potential threats. Someone that was an established vampire whose words would be taken as truth. A lord or lady among the vampires who had been there through the ages. Was it someone jealous of Lucy? This would lead to a lady... Or was it someone who had a problem with her coming from the werewolf pack? Maybe it was someone wanting to cause discord through the royal family.

"Don't bother Jasper. It will drive you nuts. Let Mira do her job. She will get the answer through any means necessary." Derek looked up at Jasper and knew what he was doing. It could be anyone and it hurt to think about someone doing this to them. And then there was the why...

"Lucy, I'm going to speak with my parents. They need to know about this immediately. Do you want to come with me? Or stay in the room? Those are your only two options my sweet little mate." Derek's lips curled up as he felt her playful agitation. He reached his hand out and brushed it through her hair. "Stay here and rest. My loves are tired." He leaned in and brushed his lips against her forehead. "Jasper and Justice will stay here and keep you company. Why don't you lay down and maybe try to get a nap in."

"Napping alone is no fun." Lucy said with a small pout.

"Baby, if I was napping with you we wouldn't be napping." He winked at her and looked up at the two men. "Stay in this room. Under no circumstances is she to leave until I return."

Lucy watched him walk away and she looked at her guards. "Well, he is gone so what is the plan?"

Justice chuckled. “You want to rest on the bed or couch? If we turn the television on will that be a bother?”

“I’ll rest on the couch and watch you guys play. What are you going to play? Anything interesting?” Lucy watched Justice pulling out the games for the game consoles.

“Eh... some sort of fighter game or something. I need to take my frustrations out on killing something. Virtual killing will have to do for now.”

“Sounds good to me.” Jasper said, sitting on the couch patting the seat next to him for Lucy.

She smiled and sat down beside him, tucking her feet up underneath her. Justice came back, handing Jasper a controller and taking the seat on the other side of Lucy. She was safely sandwiched between the two of them. And honestly... it was an incredibly safe and relaxing feeling.

She leaned her head on Jasper and tucked her feet under Justice making herself comfortable. She wondered how Willa and Alaric would feel hearing about this news. It must be upsetting for them too. The people they ruled over and protected were spreading something hurtful about their family. She wondered how they would want to handle it.

She closed her eyes and let her mind wander. She wondered... and a thought popped into her mind there but she tried to push it away. Yet, it came back. As if this nagging idea was being put in there by someone. She furrowed her brows slightly and sighed. She would bring it up to Derek when he came back and see what he thought. This would also depend on what Mira found...

For now, she would just have to wait for Derek...

—

Alaric paced across the room angrily as Willa and Irene stayed seated watching him. Jester was quiet but the darkness in his eyes showed the fury that was building up inside of him.

“Mira is investigating the matter now. I don’t care who it is father... I want the person dead for this.” Derek said with absoluton. He watched his father slow his walk and pause. He lifted his head up and met with Derek’s amber eyes.

“You do realize what you are calling for...” Alaric said carefully.

“I’m calling for whoever is against my princess to be destroyed. I won’t allow them to live, not even in exile.” Derek growled lowly.

“It isn’t so easy... This could cause an uprising.” Alaric shook his head slowly.

“This could already cause a war. You think the werewolves will tolerate malicious rumors about their princess without proper retaliation? Hell... I won’t tolerate it. If you won’t just execute the person then I will challenge them to a duel. This should appease any sympathizers.” Derek felt his composure slipping again as his anger surged. It was ridiculous. No one was above being punished.

“If this was an act against Jasper you would see to the person being executed.” Jester said firmly, meeting his gaze with his brother’s. “You must do the same for Lucy. She is your daughter now too.”

“Hell I know that. Don’t you think I am angry?!” Alaric sighed bitterly.

“Not angry enough!” Willa finally spoke out loudly. “I want this person caught and eliminated. They tried to cause doubt and division. They were saying our grandchild isn’t worthy. OUR grandchild!” She roared. It was so hard for her to conceive and Derek was her precious baby. The dream of being a grandmother was finally going to happen and her people were saying the baby wasn’t a legitimate heir?! The always composed Willa released a dark aura in the room as her anger grew. This was not something she could ever tolerate. She didn’t care who it was... there was only one path for them. Death.

Alaric rubbed the back of his neck and looked down. “I know Willa.” His voice was soft and somber. Yet the fire in his eyes showed his own rage he was trying to battle. There would be consequences if they put to death a vampire who was centuries old. Oddly enough age did play a factor because the longer you have been around the more allies you can have. And some of the prominent families had been around since before his time. Some of them were close to demons. Though demons were no longer the power like they were twenty years ago. Still... you don’t want to involve yourself on their bad side. The other problem is some were devout followers of Rogio. Angering their deity would not be a smart move.

It was best to see who the culprit was and go from there. They would be severely punished. But he couldn’t immediately say it would be by death. And as strong as his son was he wouldn’t want him dueling with any of the older vampires. They were sneaky and have well developed their unique skills.

Being a leader meant you had to put your personal feelings aside and do what was best. He needed to make the decision that would not cause trouble later. It would be like covering up a fire thinking you put it out but it was really smoldering underneath. And when your back was turned it would rage on with a burning vengeance. What happened wouldn't be tolerated... but he was going to have to really think about how to handle the situation.

"No decision will be made right now. First, we find the culprit. That is my command. Now... we need to address our people though. I don't want any more of this nonsense being spread about. Jester, call an emergency meeting. I want all to gather below the upper balcony where I will address everyone. Mandatory all should be there within one hour!" Alaric turned to Jester who nodded his head.

Derek balled his hand up in a fist and turned to storm out.

"Derek!" Alaric said in a crisp fatherly voice. "We can't just rule with emotions. There will be justice. I promise."

"I won't rule like that father. I don't care how long someone has done their due diligence. A vicious rumor like this has only one outcome...death. What if it was a slanderous insult against mom? Would this still be the same route you would take?!" Derek snapped and glared at his father in defiance.

"Yes, it is. Because we need to remember our actions can have trickling effects. Solving one problem now could create a mess in the future. We must not just think about the now but what could come. You are young and hot-headed."

"Hot-headed? That is my mate and child that those rumors are about. Calling my child an illegitimate heir to the throne... and I am just supposed to remain calm. I should sit across from these people and discuss this rationally over tea?" Derek scoffed angrily. "I will never rule that way father. And I will say this once. If I feel this situation isn't handled well I won't stay here with Lucy. Jasper can have the damn crown. I don't want it if this is how my family will get treated."

"Derek!" Willa said mortified.

"Derek, I am not saying anything right now. Only that we should think about this is all. I am not saying yes or no. I am just wanting to speak to whoever did it and go from there."

Derek shrugged. "Do what you need to do. I've said my peace and I mean it." There was a deadly calmness to his voice as he turned and left the room.

“He’s just upset.” Jester said quietly.

“He is hurting. He feels betrayed by his own people too... Alaric...” Willa said in a whimper.

“Willa, I’ll handle the situation... both of them. Derek is young. But sometimes the best thing you can do is approach things at a calmer pace. You can see more clearly and not make rash decisions. I’m angry too. I’m hurting for him too. I love Lucy and the baby she is carrying. I love them too!” Alaric shook his head. “I would approach it the same way no matter who the rumor is about. It isn’t easy to be a father and a leader. My first instinct is to rip apart anyone who hurt my son and family. But as a leader, I need to think about my decisions. I just need time to think.” He whispered out, rubbing his hand over his face.

“Jester, please see to the announcement and have the arrangements made.”

Alaric watched Irene and Jester walk out of the room together. Willa came up to Alaric and he pulled her into his arms. He leaned his head down into her neck and breathed in her scent.

“I hate this...” Alaric whispered out as his hands shook slightly. Being a king was not the easy job a lot of people think it is. Often the crown that is worn can be very heavy. This was one of those moments.