

MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Thirty-One

Future Beta Nate

I told Ayla I loved her before I left her room to find a warrior waiting in the hallway. I didn't want to leave her, but I knew I needed to learn their ways so I could better prepare myself for a fight against a mermaid.

"Beta Nate," the Warrior acknowledged me, and I gave him a nod before we made our way to the training room.

"Um, sir?" He hesitated.

"What's your name?" I asked him.

"Ryan, sir." He answered.

“And what is your question, Ryan?” I knew this had to be new for everyone to have a wolf among them.

“Is it true, wolves have fated mates?” He finally asked.

“Yes. Wolves have what we call a mate bond,” I told him.

“And you are fated to our future queen?” I nodded. He made a noise and I grabbed his arm, forcing him to stop.

“Is there a problem?” I demanded and he shook his head.

“No, sir. Sorry, I meant no disrespect. This is all new to all of us. And we never thought we would see our future queen. After her mother left, there were rumors about her having a child. And even her claiming

someone. The people always believed she would one day return. My mother would tell me stories about Princess Melody and how wonderful she was to her people. The kingdom was devastated over her disappearance,” Warrior Ryan explained.

“And what do you think happened to Ayla’s mother?” I asked him as we continued to walk.

“Everything is just rumors but the main reason is said to be because she fell in love with someone her parents didn’t accept. She ran away to be with him.” He answered.

“Was she set to marry someone else?” I asked, knowing King Samuel told us he was set to marry Ayla’s mother.

“I’m not sure. Again, rumors were she was to marry the king of the northern sea.”

“And how do you feel about having a wolf as the future king?”

“Honestly, I think it would be good for us. We need allies on land. There are far too many of us going missing. And I can’t even give you an accurate number. People don’t leave the island or the underwater kingdom. It’s always been unsafe for us but it’s escalating rapidly over the last few years.”
Sounding sincere in his response.

We both walked into the training room to meet Xander and the princes. I was eager to learn more about how mermaids train. I had a lot to learn if I was going to keep my mate safe.

“Nothing will happen to our mate,” Duke growled.

“I know but what will happen if she’s attacked in the

water? Are you going to swim?" I asked him and he huffed.

"Princes, Commander Xander." Ryan greeted the others.

"I'm surprised the princess let you out of her bed." Prince Silas chuckled and I rolled my eyes.

"Ignore him, he's just jealous," Prince Chase commented, and I laughed.

"If I wanted her, she would be mine." Prince Silas retorted and Duke let out a loud growl.

"Yeah, I don't think Duke would allow that." I laughed.

"Awesome," Ryan said, more to himself, but I heard him.

“And why do you have to be here if you have crazy wolf strength?” Prince Silas complained.

“I want to see how you train in the water. I can protect Ayla on land. Duke had even attacked his alpha for her, so I’m not worried about that. But I am worried about her being in the water,” I told them.

“Does someone need our help?” Prince Silas teased and the other prince pushed him.

“We could all learn something new. We are better in water than on land and Nate here can show us. We all need to keep Princess Ayla safe,” Prince Chase defended.

“Fine, but I’m only here to protect the princess.” Prince Silas retorted.

“Jealous.” Xander sang out and we all laughed except

for the prince.

“Didn’t you say you wanted your claim to love you?” I asked him with a smirk. And he pushed his lips into a line.

“Can we just train?” He exclaimed, throwing his arms up.

“You staying?” I asked Ryan and he looked at Xander.

“Warrior Ryan needs to get back to watch over Ayla,” he answered.

“It was good to meet you,” Ryan said, shaking my hand.

“You too, man,” I said before he left.

“Good chat?” Xander asked me.

“It was interesting,” I replied.

“He hasn’t shut up about meeting a wolf since you came to the palace. Someone might have a bromance starting?” Xander said, wiggling his eyebrows at me.

“Jackass,” I shook my head.

“So does the big bad wolf want to come out to play?” Prince Silas taunted.

“Do you have a death wish?” Prince Chase asked him and he shrugged. I pulled off my shirt, getting ready to shift before Xander interrupted me.

“You’re claimed?”

“Aren’t wolves supposed to heal faster?” Prince Silas questioned.

“Ayla bit me. Duke says she claimed me and it hasn’t healed, not fully, anyway.” I explained.

“She has to have a wolf in her, besides DNA. We don’t bite our claims.” Prince Chase informed me.

“Besides mating, how do you claim?” I asked curiously.

“We shift and remove the scale from over our hearts. We replace it with our claims scale. When we shift back, it’s embedded in our chest for everyone to see.” Xander explained.

“Then I wonder what the wolf on Ayla’s chest means?” I wondered out loud.

“I don’t know. I thought maybe that was your claim.”
Xander said.

“Mine will look like Ayla’s here. And I haven’t claimed her yet. She’s worried about me feeling her with Kaden if he gets her.” I admitted.

“She told me that as well. But we will do everything in our power so that doesn’t happen.” Xander tried to reassure me.

“I don’t think Kaden is capable of rape. I know him, even though we haven’t spoken in a few years. He was always respectful when we went out to parties. Even drunk.” Prince Chase informed us.

“People change.” I shrugged.

“But that’s a huge stretch. Being respectful one minute to raping the next,” Prince Silas defended.

“We won’t know unless we talk to him. But to be safe, we will protect Ayla.” Xander said, ending the discussion.

“Now, who wants to fight a wolf!” He nodded to me and I pulled off my shorts and shifted to Duke.

Duke made a point to growl at Prince Silas and I was having a hard time holding him back.

“Duke, calm down or I’ll shift back. He’s just being an ass. We have nothing to worry about. Ayla claimed us.” I tried to reason with him. He finally huffed and he sat down waiting for orders.

“Damn, he’s huge,” Prince Chase exclaimed.

“Okay, shift back. Now you need to explain how we can beat a wolf in a fight.” Xander asked, and I shifted

back, pulling on my shorts.

“So how do we beat a wolf?” Prince Silas demanded.

“I’m only telling you three this because we are going to be going up against a pack of wolves. But if any of you decide to use this against Duke, he’ll rip you apart. Understand?” All three of them nodded.

“Wolfbane. Coat all the weapons in wolfbane. It will weaken the wolf, forcing them to shift back. It also blocks our wolves from sharing their strengths with their humans. But it can become deadly,” I explained.

Xander spun around and walked over to the far side of the room. Great, I just gave this guy a way to kill me and steal my mate. I was cursing myself until he threw me something and I caught it. Looking at it, I wasn’t sure what it was. It looked like a CO2 canister, the small ones.

“First, we are going to test how long you can hold your breath underwater. And then I’ll show you how to use that. When you break it open, it will engulf you in an air bubble. You then have ten minutes to get to the surface.” He explained and I nodded.

“Seems like this guy is pretty decent,” Duke commented.

“Even if he does love, mate,” he growled.

Ayla

When I walked out of my room, I was greeted by a warrior. Was I now being watched at all times? There was never a warrior at my door before.

“Princess,” the warrior greeted me with a nod.

“Who are you?” I asked him.

“I’m Ryan, princess. Commander Xander has ordered protection for you.” He answered and I sighed. I wasn’t going to argue with someone who was following orders.

“Okay, Ryan. But please call me Ayla. And will you show me where the library is?” He nodded and motioned for me to start walking.

“How are you feeling this morning, Princess Ayla?” He asked me while we walked. I had to force my eyes not to roll at the use of my title and name.

“Much better, thank you. How long have you been working with Xander?” I asked him.

“Only a year before he went on his mission. He’s one of the best here, ma’am.” Ryan praised his

commander.

“He’s the best.” I smiled.

Xander was always going to be my best friend. I know my life is a mess right now and I’m bonded to Nate, but that doesn’t erase everything Xander and I have been through. He’s always been there for me when I needed him and I may be just an assignment, but he will always be more than that to me.

I know I love Nate, that I’m in love with him, but I love Xander. Poor guy puts up with so much of my crap, it’s hard not to love him. And Xander has been my constant for the last two years. I know when this is all over he’ll move on with his life and I would with mine, but I hope we stay friends.

Ryan opened the door to the library when we finally arrived. The palace was massive and it felt like a

mission to get anywhere in this place. Looking around, some of the bookshelves were still broken, and books we stacked up beside them. I sure made a mess in here.

“Princess Ayla, would you like anything? I could have someone bring you anything you’d like?” Ryan asked me.

“I’m okay right now. Thank you, Ryan. I’m just going to look through the library.” I told him.

I walked through the aisles of bookshelves, looking at the bindings of new and old books. I’m not sure what I was looking for but I was waiting for something to jump out at me. I was at the far end of the library when a book fell off the top shelf. I jumped and gasped when the book started to give off a blue glow. I didn't mean literally.

I hesitated before I kneeled to look at the book. Before I could make out what book it was, the wall opened up. What the hell? I thought as I stood up, the book was now forgotten. I walked over the threshold into darkness. My eyes adjusted much faster than before, and my night vision was much clearer.

When I turned around, the door was no longer there, only a stone wall. I started to panic as I tried to find a way out.

“Help!” I yelled, banging on the stone, but it was useless. No one would be able to hear me in here.

With my heart pounding in my chest, I turned around and looked down the pitch-black corridor.

“Sha told ma that as wall. But wa will do avarything in our powar so that doasn’t happan.” Xandar triad to raassura ma.

“I don’t think Kadan is capable of rape. I know him, even though we haven’t spoken in a few years. He was always respectful when we went out to parties. Even drunk.” Prince Chasa informed us.

“People change.” I shrugged.

“But that’s a huge stretch. Being respectful one minute to raping the next,” Prince Silas defended.

“We won’t know unless we talk to him. But to be safe, we will protect Ayla.” Xandar said, ending the discussion.

“Now, who wants to fight a wolf!” He nodded to me and I pulled off my shorts and shifted to Duke.

Duke made a point to growl at Prince Silas and I was having a hard time holding him back.

“Duka, calm down or I’ll shift back. Ha’s just baing an ass. Wa hava nothing to worry about. Ayla claimad us.” I triad to raason with him. Ha finally huffad and ha sat down waiting for ordars.

“Damn, ha’s huga,” Princa Chasa axclaimad.

“Okay, shift back. Now you naad to axplain how wa can baat a wolf in a fight.” Xandar askad, and I shiftad back, pulling on my shorts.

“So how do wa baat a wolf?” Princa Silas damandad.

“I’m only talling you thraa this bacausa wa ara going to ba going up against a pack of wolvas. But if any of you dacida to usa this against Duka, ha’ll rip you apart. Undarstand?” All thraa of tham noddad.

“Wolfbana. Coat all tha waapons in wolfbana. It will

waakan tha wolf, forcing tham to shift back. It also blocks our wolvas from sharing thair strangths with thair humans. But it can bacoma daadly,” I axplainad.

Xandar spun around and walkad ovar to tha far sida of tha room. Graat, I just gava this guy a way to kill ma and stal my mata. I was cursing myself until ha thraw ma somathing and I caught it. Looking at it, I wasn't sura what it was. It lookad lika a CO2 canistar, tha small onas.

“First, wa ara going to tast how long you can hold your braath undarwatar. And than I'll show you how to usa that. Whan you braak it opan, it will angulf you in an air bubbla. You than hava tan minutas to gat to tha surfaca.” Ha axplainad and I noddad.

“Saams lika this guy is pratty dacant,” Duka commantad.

“Evan if ha doas lova, mata,” ha growlad.

Ayla

Whan I walkad out of my room, I was graatad by a warrior. Was I now baing watchad at all timas? Thara was navar a warrior at my door bafora.

“Princass,” tha warrior graatad ma with a nod.

“Who ara you?” I askad him.

“I’m Ryan, princass. Commandar Xandar has ordarad protaction for you.” Ha answarad and I sighad. I wasn’t going to argua with somaona who was following ordars.

“Okay, Ryan. But plaasa call ma Ayla. And will you show ma whara tha library is?” Ha noddad and motionad for ma to start walking.

“How ara you faaling this morning, Princass Ayla?” Ha askad ma whila wa walkad. I had to forca my ayas not to roll at tha usa of my titla and nama.

“Much battar, thank you. How long hava you baan working with Xandar?” I askad him.

“Only a yaar bafora ha want on his mission. Ha’s ona of tha bast hara, ma’am.” Ryan praisad his commandar.

“Ha’s tha bast.” I smilad.

Xandar was always going to ba my bast friand. I know my lifa is a mass right now and I’m bondad to Nata, but that doasn’t arasa avarything Xandar and I hava baan through. Ha’s always baan thara for ma whan I naadad him and I may ba just an assignmant, but ha will always ba mora than that to ma.

I know I lova Nata, that I'm in lova with him, but I lova Xandar. Poor guy puts up with so much of my crap, it's hard not to lova him. And Xandar has baan my constant for tha last two yaars. I know whan this is all over ha'll mova on with his lifa and I would with mina, but I hoba wa stay friands.

Ryan opanad tha door to tha library whan wa finally arrivad. Tha palaca was massiva and it falt lika a mission to gat anywhara in this placa. Looking around, soma of tha bookshalvas wara still brokan, and books wa stackad up basida tham. I sura mada a mass in hara.

“Princass Ayla, would you lika anything? I could hava somaona bring you anything you'd lika?” Ryan askad ma.

“I'm okay right now. Thank you, Ryan. I'm just going

to look through tha library.” I told him.

I walkad through tha aislas of bookshalvas, looking at tha bindings of naw and old books. I’m not sura what I was looking for but I was waiting for somathing to jump out at ma. I was at tha far and of tha library whan a book fall off tha top shalf. I jumpad and gaspad whan tha book startad to giva off a blua glow. I didn't maan litarally.

I hasitatad bafora I knaalad to look at tha book. Bafora I could maka out what book it was, tha wall opanad up. What tha hall? I thought as I stood up, tha book was now forgottan. I walkad ovar tha thrashold into darknass. My ayas adjustad much fastar than bafora, and my night vision was much claarar.

Whan I turnad around, tha door was no longar thara, only a stona wall. I startad to panic as I triad to find a way out.

“Halp!” I yallad, banging on tha stona, but it was usalass. No ona would ba abla to haar ma in hara.

With my haart pounding in my chast, I turnad around and lookad down tha pitch-black corridor.

“I guess I’ll have to find another way out.” I gulped, walking slowly. If this was a horror movie, I would be the first one to die. Yes, Ayla, let’s wander into a dark room. I cursed myself for being so stupid.

It wasn’t long until I came to some stairs, descending into more darkness. My night vision was better than before, but I don’t know if I want to encounter what could be hiding in the dark.

A cold breeze blew, causing goosebumps to cover my body as I shivered. I had a bad feeling about this, but there was no other way out of this place.

“Please, don’t let me die in this place.”

Commander Xander

I was surprised when Nate gave up a wolf’s weakness. He must really want to protect Ayla if he is willing to give up information that could hurt him. With him being honest, I decided to share a way he could stay under the water longer.

I pushed my own feelings for Ayla down so I could focus on keeping her safe. But I was surprised she was able to mark him. I think I underestimated how strong this mate bond must be.

“Come on, Beta Nate, let’s get you in the water,” I told him, grabbing some spear guns off the weapon wall in the training room.

“Can you shift in the water?” Prince Chase asked him as we walked to the pool at the back of the palace. This pool is for training purposes and it should be empty.

“I’ve never tried before,” Nate answered with a shrug.

“It’s something you can try. I’m not sure how useful it will be, but we can see how Duke fairs in the water,” I told him.

“With the blood in the water, are you not afraid of sharks?” Nate asked and I chuckled.

“Sharks will attack if you are bleeding, but when it comes to us, our blood is different when we are shifted. You might have noticed when you saw the bodies. It doesn’t attract sharks but yours will.” I explained to him.

“Good to know.” He said as we came to the pool.

“Alright, Wolf Toy, let’s see how you fair in our playground.” Prince Silas taunted Nate before he stripped off his clothes and jumped into the pool.

“Don’t let him bother you. I think he’s still having a hard time dealing with Ayla’s charm.” I told him and he looked at me confused.

“Charm?”

“It’s a defense we have, it draws in a threat, distracting them enough so we can kill them. It doesn’t work on members of the same pod. And with Ayla not being a member, her charm has affected us all.” I explained to him.

“Did you not see her shift?” I asked him, when he still looked confused.

“She did, but I didn’t feel any more distracted by her than usual. Maybe it doesn’t work on mates.” Nate said.

“I’m not sure, but it can be intense and the sensation can be hard to shake,” I told him and he nodded.

“Alright, should we get in the water?” I asked him, changing the subject. I didn’t need him asking me about how her charm made me feel. I’m better at hiding my emotions than Prince Silas, but I still get lost in Ayla when I look at her.

Nate removed his shirt and jumped into the pool. Prince Chase followed behind him. I sat down on the edge with my legs in the water with a stopwatch in my hand.

“Let’s see how long you can hold your breath,” I told

him and he nodded. He took in a deep breath and dropped below the surface and I started the watch.

“Prince Silas, you shouldn’t make it so obvious,” I told him, while he swam over to me. Prince Chase was on the other side of me, in the water.

“And what am I making obvious?” He questioned. And I sighed.

“We know you like Princess Ayla. But she has made her choice, so stop being a dick.” Prince Chase shook his head.

“It’s the charm. Her charm is strong, the strongest I’ve felt. What you are feeling isn’t real.” I reminded him. It’s to protect her from someone trying to kill her.

“And is that how you are feeling?” He scuffed and I pushed my lips into a line.

“My feelings are irrelevant. She’s a princess and she has a mate.” I told him as Nate breached the surface, gasping for breath. I stopped the clock.

“Four minutes, that’s pretty good,” I announced, as Nate swam over to us.

“f**k, I wish I could breathe underwater.” He gasped and we all chuckled.

“It would make this easier,” I chuckled.

All the humor was lost as Ryan rushed over to us looking panicked. He looked terrified as I watched him.

“What’s wrong?” I demanded as I stood up. Ryan was out of breath as he tried to speak.

“Princess, library. I don’t know what happened.”

“Where the f**k is Ayla?” Nate growled out beside me. He must have climbed out of the pool and I noticed he was shaking.

“Commander, I took Ayla to the library and once in the library she just disappeared.” Ryan finally managed to get out.

“Did you leave her at any time?” I demanded and he shook his head.

“No, sir. I was standing by the door the entire time. No one entered and she didn’t leave. I don’t know what happened, but she isn’t in there now.” He explained.

“Organize warriors to search the island. Nate, follow me.” I commanded.

“Yes, sir.”

“Is there another way in and out of the library?” Nate yelled out as we both ran in the direction of the library.

“None that I’m aware of, but we will find her. They couldn’t have gotten far.”

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MY ALPHA’S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Thirty-Two



Ayla

I was starting to lose hope I’d ever reach the bottom of these stairs. It felt like I had been descending for

hours with no end in sight. I have to be below the ocean surface by now, but at least I can't drown, I hope. Can a mermaid drown?

I didn't know if I was hoping Nate was aware I was missing or still blissfully unaware. If I couldn't find a way out, they wouldn't be able to find me. Either way, I'm stuck here until I'm able to find a way out.

I stopped and leaned against the stone wall as I took a few deep breaths. My stomach twisted painfully as I thought about Nate and how worried he must be.

"f**k, Ayla! You have someone else to think about now. You can't just run into the unknown." I cursed myself out loud, like a crazy person. The staircase echoed as I sighed.

I continued my descent, as I wasted enough time on my pity party. There's no one to blame but myself for

being here. I should be more cautious. Curiosity is about to kill the mermaid princess. My mind just would not stop coming up with scenarios about what I'm about to walk into. But whatever it was, I was praying it would make my death quick and painless.

What felt like another hour passed and I finally came upon a light at the end of the staircase. It was a blue hue, but I couldn't see where it was coming from. I had to be far underground. When the stairs ended, I cautiously moved out into the open.

Looking around, it looked to be a cave of some kind and the blue light was from a pool of water. I assume it was water from the ocean. But it was the mermaid and the gorgeous woman waiting that made me jump. I didn't notice them at first until more light filled the cave.

"Where am I?" I stumbled out, hating my voice. I

sounded scared and pathetic. The mermaid chuckled as she brushed her long dark hair. Golden scales cover her body.

“It’s okay, Ayla.” The woman with the long white hair spoke. She was wearing a full-length, gold satin dress with a high slit.

“How do you know my name?”

“It’s okay, daughter of Alpha Atlas and Queen Melody. We are here to guide you.” The mermaid stated.

“We are our manners. I’m Selene and this is Amphitrite.” Selene introduced herself and her friend.

“I don’t understand, why am I here?” I asked them, confused.

“Selene is the moon goddess. She is the goddess of

the wolves.” Amphitrite explained, and then it hit me. Her name sounded familiar because it was.

“And you are the goddess of the sea, wife to Poseidon,” she nodded.

“But why are you both here? And why am I here?” I asked again. I had to be dreaming.

“We are here because we know you have questions that no one can answer. I knew my merpeople were being killed and I prayed to the moon goddess for her help. We need protection on land. And even in the seas, we are no longer as safe as we were before.” Amphitrite spoke.

“And how did you help her?” I asked Selene.

“I went to your mother with a plan to give birth to you. I also blessed you with a wolf. My wolves wait a long

time for their fated mates. They don't often take a chosen mate. This way, you were paired with a wolf," Selene answered.

"But my father didn't know. He was trapped by my mother. Why would you let one of your wolves suffer?" I demanded.

"I'm sorry, Ayla, but only your mother can answer those questions. We are both here to help you understand what you need to do." Amphitrite told me. But my mother was dead, so I was never getting those answers and neither was my father.

"So what do I have to do? And why do I keep blacking out? And why was I born a black pearl?" I rambled, starting to pace.

"You are the bridge between both of our worlds. You and your mate. Ayla, you have the strength to protect

your people on land and in the depths. But you need to learn how to control your emotions.” I stopped in my tracks and looked at both of them.

“Maybe if I had a better understanding of what was happening to me, I would have better control over my emotions,” I yelled.

“Soon, everything will be revealed and you will understand. But for now, read the book that is left for you. And when the time is right, everything will fall into place. The merpeople will have a queen to unite the kingdoms.” Amphitrite sang out and I sighed.

“But for now, our dear queen, we must leave you. Trust in your heart.” That was the last thing I heard before a bright light consumed them and I brought my hand up to shield my eyes.

When my eyes adjusted again, they were both gone.

And I was left wondering if this was all a dream. Or maybe I was drugged without my knowledge. But whatever it was, I still needed to find a way out of this place.

Looking around the cave, the only way out was the water. At least I didn't have to hold my breath the entire way, I told myself as I stripped off my clothes. I hesitated before I jumped in.

"Here goes nothing," I said before I was engulfed in freezing cold water. I let out a scream as my shift began and my body adjusted to the cold.

Opening my eyes, everything was clear and bright as I swam away from the cave. I didn't know where this was going to lead, but it was better than walking back up all those stairs. Swimming with schools of fish, I made my way out into the open ocean.

I cautiously swam to the surface before I breached. Looking around, the sun was starting to set and I knew I had been gone all day. Nate and the others definitely knew I was gone. I didn't see the island with the palace as I spun around, taking in my surroundings.

"Really," I huffed, throwing my arms up.

There was an island in the direction I came from, so I decided to swim to the island and climb to higher ground. I didn't know where I was, let alone the direction I needed to go to get home.

I made my way around the island's rocky coastline, hoping to find the beach. I was swimming mostly underwater and only surfacing to evaluate my position.

Swimming alone in the open ocean was eerie and I

felt like I was constantly looking around, making sure I wasn't being stalked by a predator, or worse. What if there are humans around? I couldn't just shift and go over to talk with them. I'd be in my dress and that would be suspicious. f**k, Nate was going to kill me if I got back alive.

A loud buzzing sound hit my ears and I looked behind me to see what looked like a jet ski, speeding toward me. I swam towards the bottom and hid behind a boulder. My heart was pounding in my chest as I watched from below. I was praying whoever it was didn't see me. With the clear water and me being black, I would be easy to spot.

I followed the jet ski until it docked. There was a massive ship out at sea and others were boarding another boat. I could hear muffled voices but I couldn't make anything out. A speed boat engine started with a roar and the boat took off towards the

ship.

I followed below the speed boat as it sped towards the ship. I was curious as to what was going on. Who were these people? It could just be a boat of fishermen, but I had a bad feeling it was something more sinister.

I heard the song of the humpback whale and my stomach sunk, twisting painfully. In the distance was a pod of whales, dancing and singing their songs. I swam as fast as I could in their direction. I needed to do something.

Maybe I'm wrong and the ship is full of tourists who are whale watching, but I'd rather be wrong than witness the killing of a whale. I was too late, as a whale let out a wail of despair and the water turned crimson.

“No,” I screamed. And the other whales howled with me as I tried to swim through the dark red water.

I was pulled back into something hard and I panicked trying to get away but they tightened their grip around my waist as I struggled to get away.

“Let me go!” I yelled, watching in horror as the whale was hit again.

“I have men here to help. But you need to come with me, princess.”

“No, I can help! Let me go! I can help!” I screamed as I struggled.

“Please, I can help!” I cried as I was pulled away from the whales. The scene faded and I turned my anger to the man holding me again against my will.

I turned in his hold and was pounding my fists against his chest.

“Let me go!” I screamed, my tears getting lost in the ocean around me.

“Ayla, please calm down.” The man said, snapping me from my assault against his chest. I haven’t heard that voice in over a year and I never thought I would hear it again.

Looking up, I found his emerald-green eyes staring down at me. Eyes I never thought I would see again. How can this be possible? He’s a mermaid, like me.

“Kyle?”

Future Beta Nate

Duke had been running around this entire island

trying to pick up Ayla's scent. Her scent vanished in the library and I haven't been able to smell her since. I was growing increasingly frustrated as I ran along the beaches. Where the hell could she have gone?

"You don't think Kaden was able to get her here?" Duke growled.

"How? I don't understand how he would have been able to swim in here and take her. She was supposed to be safe here."

"We are never leaving mate's side again!" Duke snarled. He let out a murderous growl as a warrior approached us and I shifted back.

"Commander Xander has news." The Warrior announced, and I shifted again. Duke took off towards the palace to find Xander.

I found Xander and the princes outside the front entrance and as soon as I heard her voice I shifted back.

“Where is she?” I yelled out, uncaring that I was naked.

“Nate?” I heard her and Xander held up his phone.

“Ayla, where the hell are you?” I exclaimed.

“It’s a long story, but I’m in the eastern kingdom.” She answered and my heart sank.

“How the hell did you end up there?”

“I’ll explain when you get here. I’m safe Nate. And I promise to tell you everything.” She answered, sounding nervous and my stomach twisted painfully.

“Ayla, we are leaving now and we will be there soon. If anything happens, you call me.” Xander told her.

“I’ll be here waiting.” She said before she ended the call.

“Nate, get dressed. We will leave in ten minutes.” Xander told me, throwing me a towel, and I wrapped it around my waist.

“Does he have her?” I growled out.

“All we know is she is at the Eastern kingdom palace. She told me she wasn’t hurt.” Xander answered.

“And you believe she was telling you the truth? This could be a trap.” I yelled, frustrated.

I cautiously swam to the surface before I breached. Looking around, the sun was starting to set and I

knew I had been gone all day. Nata and the others definitely knew I was gone. I didn't see the island with the palace as I spun around, taking in my surroundings.

"Really," I huffed, throwing my arms up.

There was an island in the direction I came from, so I decided to swim to the island and climb to higher ground. I didn't know where I was, let alone the direction I needed to go to get home.

I made my way around the island's rocky coastline, hoping to find the beach. I was swimming mostly underwater and only surfacing to evaluate my position.

Swimming alone in the open ocean was eerie and I felt like I was constantly looking around, making sure I wasn't being stalked by a predator, or worse. What if

thara ara humans around? I couldn't just shift and go over to talk with them. I'd be in my dress and that would be suspicious. f**k, Nata was going to kill me if I got back alive.

A loud buzzing sound hit my ears and I looked behind me to see what looked like a jet ski, speeding toward me. I swam towards the bottom and hid behind a boulder. My heart was pounding in my chest as I watched from below. I was praying whoever it was didn't see me. With the clear water and me being black, I would be easy to spot.

I followed the jet ski until it docked. There was a massive ship out at sea and others were boarding another boat. I could hear muffled voices but I couldn't make anything out. A speed boat engine started with a roar and the boat took off towards the ship.

I followad balow tha spaad boat as it spad towards tha ship. I was curious as to what was going on. Who wara thasa paopla? It could just ba a boat of fisharman, but I had a bad faaling it was somathing mora sinister.

I haard tha song of tha humpback whala and my stomach sunk, twisting painfully. In tha distanca was a pod of whalas, dancing and singing thair songs. I swam as fast as I could in thair diraction. I naadad to do somathing.

Mayba I'm wrong and tha ship is full of tourists who ara whala watching, but I'd rathar ba wrong than witnass tha killing of a whala. I was too lata, as a whala lat out a wail of daspair and tha watar turnad crimson.

"No," I scraamad. And tha othar whalas howlad with ma as I triad to swim through tha dark rad watar.

I was pullad back into somathing hard and I panickad trying to gat away but thay tightanad thair grip around my waist as I strugglad to gat away.

“Lat ma go!” I yallad, watching in horror as tha whala was hit again.

“I hava man hara to halp. But you naad to coma with ma, princass.”

“No, I can halp! Lat ma go! I can halp!” I scraamad as I strugglad.

“Plaasa, I can halp!” I criad as I was pullad away from tha whalas. Tha scana fadad and I turnad my angar to tha man holding ma again against my will.

I turnad in his hold and was pounding my fists against his chast.

“Lat ma go!” I scraamad, my taars gatting lost in tha ocaan around ma.

“Ayla, plaasa calm down.” Tha man said, snapping ma from my assault against his chast. I havan’t haard that voica in ovar a yaar and I navar thought I would haar it again.

Looking up, I found his amarald-graan ayas staring down at ma. Eyas I navar thought I would saa again. How can this ba possibla? Ha’s a marmaid, lika ma.

“Kyla?”

Futura Bata Nata

Duka had baan running around this antira island trying to pick up Ayla’s scant. Har scant vanishad in tha library and I havan’t baan abla to small har sinca. I

was growing increasingly frustrated as I ran along the beach. What the hell could she have done?

"You don't think Kadan was able to get her here?"
Duke growled.

"How? I don't understand how she would have been able to swim in here and take her. She was supposed to be safe here."

"What are you leaving my sister's side again!" Duke snarled. He let out a murderous growl as a warrior approached us and I shifted back.

"Commander Xandar has news." The Warrior announced, and I shifted again. Duke took off towards the palace to find Xandar.

I found Xandar and the princess outside the front entrance and as soon as I heard her voice I shifted

back.

“Whara is sha?” I yallad out, uncaring that I was nakad.

“Nata?” I haard har and Xandar hald up his phona.

“Ayla, whara tha hall ara you?” I axclaimad.

“It’s a long story, but I’m in tha aastarn kingdom.” Sha answarad and my haart sank.

“How tha hall did you and up thara?”

“I’ll axplain whan you gat hara. I’m safa Nata. And I promisa to tall you avarything.” Sha answarad, sounding narvous and my stomach twistad painfully.

“Ayla, wa ara laaving now and wa will ba thara soon. If anything happans, you call ma.” Xandar told har.

“I’ll ba hara waiting.” Sha said bafora sha andad tha call.

“Nata, gat drassad. Wa will laava in tan minutas.” Xandar told ma, throwing ma a towal, and I wrappad it around my waist.

“Doas ha hava har?” I growlad out.

“All wa know is sha is at tha Eastarn kingdom palaca. Sha told ma sha wasn’t hurt.” Xandar answarad.

“And you baliava sha was talling you tha truth? This could ba a trap.” I yallad, frustratad.

“So what do you want to do? Leave her there?” Prince Silas huffed and I was about to punch him in the face when Xander moved in front of me.

“We are all worried about Ayla. Go get dressed and meet us out here. The chopper is almost ready.” Xander commanded, and I glared at him.

“Don’t forget she is my mate and if anything happens to her, Duke will rip this entire kingdom apart,” I growled out before heading inside to get dressed.

I had a bad feeling about all of this. What couldn’t Ayla tell me over the phone? And how the hell did she get to the Eastern sea kingdom? Is she with King Kaden’s brother or is King Kaden there himself, with my mate?

“I swear, if he touches her, I’ll scale him with my teeth,” Duke growled and I agreed. I will make his death slow and painful if he has hurt my mate.

When I was done getting dressed, I met the others by the front door again. None of us said a word as we

walked to the helipad where the chopper was waiting for us. Xander climbed in the front beside the pilot and the princes and I climbed into the back. We all strapped in and put on our headsets.

“This is going to take about two hours,” Xander said, and I heard him through the headset.

I couldn't even enjoy the view of the ocean as my stomach was in knots and my panic was an eleven. Would I be able to feel it if he was touching her? She mentioned she felt something when I kissed Bailey but maybe it was because she watched it.

“You think the bond is all in her head and she doesn't feel it?” Duke asked me and I sighed.

“I don't know. She said she felt the tingles, but what if that's all she feels?” I said, sounding defeated. What if she no longer loves me after meeting King Kaden?

“Then we fight for her! She is ours and I’m not letting her go. I don’t care what you say, I’m claiming her the next time we are with her. There is no more waiting. Her claim is forever and I want forever with my mate.” Duke huffed.

“I can’t force her to stay. She could reject my claim. Or worse, we claim her and she cheats.” I retorted and he growled.

“She loves us, you i***t! She would never cheat on us!” He snarled, bearing his teeth.

“You okay?” Prince Chase asked, after pushing my shoulder, pulling me from my thoughts.

“Yeah,” I breathed out. Looking around, Xander and Prince Silas were also watching me.

“Nate, calm down. We will be there soon,” Xander told me.

“I can’t calm down. All I’ve heard is how much of a monster this Kaden is and he has my mate.” I yelled at him.

“Nate, he’s not a monster. I know him. His father may have been a monster and that’s why Kaden killed him, but Kaden is not his father. I don’t know why Queen Andrea is so worried about him starting a war. If anything, Kaden is working to stop the hunters.” Prince Chase defeated his friend.

“And how do you know that? Killing someone, especially one’s father, can change you. How do you know he isn’t after Ayla because she is a black pearl? Not that I have any idea what that even means.” I snapped back.

“The legend says the black pearl will bring peace to our kingdoms. Whoever is blessed will bring our people together,” Prince Silas said.

“But you aren’t at war?” I told him.

“Not with each other, but that doesn’t mean we aren’t at war. We are valuable and our people have been going missing, now more than ever. I have to agree with Chase. It doesn’t make sense for Kaden to want to start a war against his own people,” Prince Silas explained.

“Then why is Queen Andrea pushing Ayla so much to accept King Kaden?” I asked them. We all looked at Xander, he was turned around in his seat, looking at us.

“I have no idea. My orders were to protect Ayla. Fit in and make sure she is safe. I didn’t know about my

father bringing Ayla to meet her grandmother. And I didn't know about the plan for Ayla to claim King Kaden." Xander defended.

"Then who is feeding the Western Kingdom false information?" I asked, and they all looked deep in thought.

"The only person who would gain from Ayla stepping down would be councilman Andrews. His grandson would become king." Xander told us.

"Is that why Ayla was brought back? To prove she was alive and to take the throne? But then why would the queen want her to claim you two? Or now Kaden?" I asked them.

"I don't think we'll get any answers until we can talk with King Kaden and Queen Andrea. Something isn't adding up," Xander said.

“And then there’s how Ayla made it all the way to the Eastern sea? She was in the library and now she is with the supposed enemy.” Prince Chase said, and we all agreed. Something isn’t adding up and I don’t think it has anything to do with Kaden wanting to start a war.

The palace came into view and I let out a sigh of relief that we were finally here. Ayla’s palace was made of white and lilac purple but this palace was in black and crimson red. It looked grim the closer we flew toward the island where the palace stood.

My stomach was in my throat as the pilot started to descend the chopper to land on the helipad. The only one waiting for us was a younger man, with darker blonde hair.

“That’s King Kaden’s brother, prince Dante.” Prince

Chase told us.

“Now where is Ayla?”

If you find any errors (broken links, non-standard content, etc..), Please let us know < report chapter > so we can fix it as soon as possible.

MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Thirty-Three



Future Beta Nate

After meeting Prince Dante, he was leading us into the palace. He stopped in front of dark oak doors and was about to open the door when I heard Ayla yelling.

“How the hell could you do that to me?”

I was about to rush in there but Prince Dante moved in front of me.

“Ayla, I’m sorry, I left but I had no choice.” I heard a male voice pleading with my mate.

“You just left. You didn’t even say goodbye or explain anything to me. Did I really mean that little to you?” She cried and my heart twisted painfully.

“Baby, of course not. We were planning a life together. But I couldn’t stay. My father killed my mom and I had to protect my brother.”

“And you couldn’t have told me that? I thought we told each other everything! I’m sorry about your mother, I really am. But you could have told me.” I could hear the despair in her voice.

When I couldn’t stand to hear anymore, I pushed the

prince standing in my way and threw open the doors to find my mate on the verge of breaking down. Her cheeks were tear-stained as she jumped from the doors, coming in contact with the walls.

“Ayla,” I breathed out. New tears started to fall and I could see the guilt in her eyes. She slammed her eyes shut before turning away from me.

“Baby,” the guy pleaded. Duke growled and Ayla held up her hand, stopping him from getting any closer to her.

“Who the f**k are you?” He yelled, turning his attention to me.

“Kaden, what is going on?” Prince Chase asked the guy, and now I knew this guy was King Kaden, but how did he know Ayla? And why was he calling her baby?

“Ayla, are you okay?” Xander called out beside me. I quickly closed the distance between us. I wrapped my arms around her waist and pulled her back into my chest.

“Baby, are you hurt?” I whispered against her neck. She shook her head and covered her face as she started to sob.

I turned her around and she buried her face in my chest while I held her tight. I was whispering to her before my attention was pulled back to the others in the room.

“Kaden, how do you know Ayla?” Prince Chase asked him.

“It’s good to see you again, Chase. I met Ayla a few years ago. I didn’t know she was the heir to the

western kingdom.” King Kaden said.

“It was when you left the kingdom before your mother died?” Prince Chase questioned, and I saw King Kaden nod.

“I knew him as Kyle, not Kaden.” Ayla sniffed, moving away from me.

“I lied when I told you I was living in the city after my mother’s death. After I ran away from foster care, I sold everything, except my mother’s necklace. I found someone to sell me a fake ID and I boarded a bus to a little town a few hours north of the city.” Ayla explained.

“Why would you lie?” I asked her and she looked up at me.

“Because I wanted to forget. Kyle, I mean Kaden,

broke me. And I did what I always do, and locked my emotions away. I didn't want to answer questions about those almost two years. I thought it was better to lie." She admitted.

"Ayla, I didn't mean for things to end the way they did," King Kaden said.

"Kaden, it doesn't change anything. You left without saying goodbye. I came home and you were gone. You made me believe we were going to have this beautiful life together. We were making plans and you left. And you lied to me about who you were and your name." Ayla's voice cracked and I knew this was hard for her to say. Hell, it was hard for me to hear.

She was planning on having a life with this guy who left her. And she had already lost her mother and didn't know where her father was. How could someone be so heartless?

“Ayla, I was in hiding. Kyle is my middle name. And I didn’t know you were a mermaid until after finding your mother,” King Kaden said, and Ayla gasped.

“Kaden, you know my mother is dead.”

“I know you told me that, but I found her alive. My kingdom raided a hideout of the hunters looking for my mother when we found yours.” He answered.

“You have to be lying. There’s no way my mother wouldn’t have come to find me if she was really alive.” Ayla yelled, her body shaking in rage. I took her hands and placed them on my chest before forcing her to look at me.

“Baby, breathe. I know this is overwhelming.” I whispered to her, holding onto her cheeks.

“Ayla, who the hell is this?” King Kaden growled out.

“He’s her mate.” I heard Prince Chase answer.

“We don’t have mates,” he questioned.

“Ayla’s father is a werewolf,” Xander clarified.

“What the f**k, Ayla?” He yelled and Duke growled.

“I didn’t know! I didn’t know any of this until my grandmother kidnapped me!” Ayla screamed. And I pulled her against my chest.

“Nate, I want to go home.” She cried.

“And we will go home,” I told her.

“Not back to the palace. I want to go home. I want to go get Bluey and I want us to go home. Xander, you

can report back about Kaden not wanting to claim me and I can go home.” She pulled away and told us.

“Ayla, I know you are hurt but it’s not safe. Hunters are crawling all over that city,” Kaden told her.

“Then, I’ll find somewhere else. But I’m not staying here. I can’t do this anymore. My mother left, and my father was never in my life. Then you left and my mother is alive but never found me. And Nate, the moon goddess told me, she gave me you. You aren’t here because you love me or because you would have even chosen me without the bond.” She ranted and my heart twisted painfully at her words.

“Baby, I know you must be confused and hurt. And we will circle back to your chat with the moon goddess. But I’m here because I’m choosing you. Yes, the bond is there, but I could have rejected you. I could have walked away from all of this but I didn’t. Just because

we are given a mate bond doesn't mean we have to accept it. And I'm accepting you." I rushed out, trying to reassure her.

"Nate, that's not what I mean. I never would have been your chosen mate." She whispered, closing her eyes.

"Ayla, you don't have to be my chosen mate, because you are my soulmate. The moon goddess gave me to you for a reason. And just because I didn't get a chance to choose you, doesn't mean I wouldn't have." I told her. Duke was right. I should have claimed her already. I didn't care who heard me pouring my heart out to this beautiful woman. I just wanted to see a smile on her face.

"You say that now. But you'll grow to resent me when you finally realize I wasn't worth giving up your position or life for." She yelled, breaking out of my

hold. And now it was Xander's turn to help calm her down.

"Ayla, breathe," he said, moving towards her.

"Xander, this is all too much. I can't do this anymore." She cried. And he wrapped his arms around her.

"You are tired and hungry. Don't make any decisions until you can think clearly. I know Nate loves you and he could have walked away but he didn't. He was even trying to train in the water with us. He wants to be able to protect you." I heard Xander whispering to her. I don't know if the others were able to hear him, but I was thankful he wasn't throwing me under the bus.

"Ayla, it's late. I have rooms made up for all of you. And I know your mother would like to see you." King Kaden told her. It took a few minutes but I saw her

nod her head against Xander's chest as he held her.

"Nate, go with Ayla to your room. The princes and I are going to have a chat with King Kaden," Xander said. I closed the distance between Ayla and me. She pulled away from Xander and I pulled her into my side, wrapping my arm around her waist.

"Dante, can you show Ayla and her mate to their room?" King Kaden asked his brother, gritting his teeth. He glared at me while I followed his brother out of the room with Ayla pressed into my side.

He may have been stupid enough to leave Ayla, but I wasn't going to be making that same mistake.

Ayla

My emotions were overwhelming and I can't believe I haven't shifted yet. Finding out that my first love was

actually King Kaden was about to break me and I wished I could run. I lied about my past because explaining I was homeless was better than explaining my broken heart. I loved Kyle, aka King Kaden. We were planning a life together. He was the light in my life after my mother died. And then when he left without a word, I boxed up all those emotions and shoved them to the back of my mind. I never in a million years thought he would show up, let alone be the king everyone told me would want to kidnap me. And now my emotions are all over the place. I once wanted to build a life with him, but now I have Nate. And then I learned my mother was still alive but never bothered to find me.

I know I need to speak with her but I was feeling so much resentment towards her because of what she put my father through. And how did she end up breaking the bond with my father?

My mind was in overdrive and my body was on autopilot as I walked beside Nate. I just wanted to go home and be away from everyone so I could think. But now I will have to relive more of my past. Nate deserved an explanation. And as much as I wish I could hide away alone, I was glad Nate was here with me.

I said I wanted him to leave, but deep down I didn't. I wanted him to choose me. I wanted to be his world, but the fear of his resentment and leaving me later is holding me back from truly loving him. And then there's this mess with the hunters. I should be thankful Kaden isn't the monster everyone thought he was, but I think I would rather be dealing with a stranger than someone I knew.

I guess Kaden is a stranger to me now. I never thought he'd leave me. I truly believed he loved me as much as I loved him. Even though I was young, I had

him. I was pulled from my thoughts when Nate grabbed my cheeks.

Blinking a few times, I looked around to find us standing in a bedroom together. Nate rested his forehead against mine and I let out a sigh.

“I'm so sorry, Nate,” I whispered, not trusting my voice. I felt tears building in my eyes again. You would think by now, I would no longer have any more tears to cry.

“Baby, you don't have to explain everything if you don't want to. You have a past, even though I am surprised it involved King Kaden.” Nate told me.

“Than, I'll find somawhara alsa. But I'm not staying hara. I can't do this anymora. My mothar laft, and my fathar was navar in my lifa. Than you laft and my mothar is aliva but navar found ma. And Nata, tha

moon goddass told ma, sha gava ma you. You aran't hara bacausa you lova ma or bacausa you would hava avan chosan ma without tha bond." Sha rantad and my haart twistad painfully at har words.

"Baby, I know you must ba confusad and hurt. And wa will circla back to your chat with tha moon goddass. But I'm hara bacausa I'm choosing you. Yas, tha bond is thara, but I could hava rajactad you. I could hava walkad away from all of this but I didn't. Just bacausa wa ara givan a mata bond doasn't maan wa hava to accapt it. And I'm accapting you." I rushad out, trying to raassura har.

"Nata, that's not what I maan. I navar would hava baan your chosan mata." Sha whisparad, closing har ayas.

"Ayla, you don't hava to ba my chosan mata, bacausa you ara my soulmata. Tha moon goddass gava ma to

you for a raason. And just bacausa I didn't gat a chanca to choosa you, doasn't maan I wouldn't hava." I told har. Duka was right. I should hava claimad har alraady. I didn't cara who haard ma pouring my haart out to this baautiful woman. I just wantad to saa a smila on har faca.

"You say that now. But you'll grow to rasant ma whan you finally raaliza I wasn't worth giving up your position or lifa for." Sha yallad, braaking out of my hold. And now it was Xandar's turn to halp calm har down.

"Ayla, braatha," ha said, moving towards har.

"Xandar, this is all too much. I can't do this anymora." Sha criad. And ha wrappad his arms around har.

"You ara tirad and hungry. Don't maka any dacisions until you can think claarly. I know Nata lovas you and

ha could hava walkad away but ha didn't. Ha was avan trying to train in tha watar with us. Ha wants to ba abla to protact you." I haard Xandar whisparing to har. I don't know if tha othars wara abla to haar him, but I was thankful ha wasn't throwing ma undar tha bus.

"Ayla, it's lata. I hava rooms mada up for all of you. And I know your mothar would lika to saa you." King Kadan told har. It took a faw minutas but I saw har nod har haad against Xandar's chast as ha hald har.

"Nata, go with Ayla to your room. Tha princas and I ara going to hava a chat with King Kadan," Xandar said. I closad tha distanca batwaan Ayla and ma. Sha pullad away from Xandar and I pullad har into my sida, wrapping my arm around har waist.

"Danta, can you show Ayla and har mata to thair room?" King Kadan askad his brothar, gritting his

taath. Ha glarad at ma whila I followad his brothar out of tha room with Ayla prassad into my sida.

Ha may hava baan stupid anough to laava Ayla, but I wasn't going to ba making that sama mistaka.

Ayla

My amotions wara ovarwhalming and I can't baliava I havan't shiftad yat. Finding out that my first lova was actually King Kadan was about to braak ma and I wishad I could run. I liad about my past bacausa explaining I was homalass was battar than axplaining my brokan haart. I lovad Kyla, aka King Kadan. Wa wara planning a lifa togathar. Ha was tha light in my lifa aftar my mothar diad. And than whan ha laft without a word, I boxad up all thosa amotions and shovad tham to tha back of my mind. I navar in a million yaars thought ha would show up, lat alona ba tha king avaryona told ma would want to kidnap ma.

And now my emotions are all over the place. I once wanted to build a life with him, but now I have Nata. And then I learned my mother was still alive but never bothered to find me.

I know I need to speak with her but I was feeling so much resentment towards her because of what she put my father through. And how did she end up breaking the bond with my father?

My mind was in overdrive and my body was on autopilot as I walked beside Nata. I just wanted to go home and be away from everyone so I could think. But now I will have to relive more of my past. Nata deserved an explanation. And as much as I wish I could hide away alone, I was glad Nata was here with me.

I said I wanted him to leave, but deep down I didn't. I wanted him to choose me. I wanted to be his world,

but tha faar of his rasantmant and laaving ma later is holding ma back from truly loving him. And than thara's this mass with tha huntars. I should ba thankful Kadan isn't tha monstar avaryona thought ha was, but I think I would rathar ba daaling with a strangar than somaona I knaw.

I guass Kadan is a strangar to ma now. I navar thought ha'd laava ma. I truly baliavad ha lovad ma as much as I lovad him. Evan though I was young, I had him. I was pullad from my thoughts whan Nata grabbad my chaaks.

Blinking a faw timas, I lookad around to find us standing in a badroom togathar. Nata rastad his forahaad against mina and I lat out a sigh.

"I'm so sorry, Nata," I whisparad, not trusting my voica. I falt taars building in my ayas again. You would think by now, I would no longar hava any mora

taars to cry.

“Baby, you don't hava to axplain avarything if you don't want to. You hava a past, avan though I am surprisad it involvad King Kadan.” Nata told ma.

“I didn't know him as Kaden. I met him after I turned sixteen. I was working for the local motel. I did almost everything there for a small paycheck and a room. Most of the time, the older couple who owned it would feed me as well.” I told him as he led me over to the bed and we both took a seat.

“And that's where you met him?” He asked me and I nodded.

“He told me he was starting over as well. He started working and when he got his own place, he asked me to move it with him. That was about six months after I met him.” I explained.

“And then what happened?” I could see this was hard for him. It would be hard for me if the situation was reversed.

“Just before my eighteenth birthday, I drove into the city for a job interview at the law firm. He couldn’t come with me because he said he had work. We were planning on moving to the city so I could attend night classes. Anyways, when I got home, he was gone. And I never heard from him again.” I shrugged.

“Until today?” He asked and I nodded.

“And how did you end up here?”

“When I was in the library, a book fell off a shelf. It was glowing blue. And I know that sounds crazy. But when I looked up again, there was an entranceway into a dark tunnel.” I started.

“And you went in?” He raised an eyebrow at me and I nodded, pushing my lips into a line.

“Yes, and when I turned back around, the entranceway had closed. I walked down a stairwell for what felt like hours until I reached the bottom. And when I got there, a mermaid and a woman were waiting.”

“The moon goddess?” Nate breathed out.

“And the sea goddess Amphitrite,” I told him.

“The wife of the sea god Poseidon?” He asked and I nodded.

“And what did the moon goddess tell you to make you think I wouldn’t have chosen you?”

“The moon goddess told me that Amphitrite prayed to her for help protecting her mermaids. So Selene went to my mother with a plan so she would give birth to me. She also told me I was given a wolf because her wolves don’t take chosen mates.” I answered him. He pulled me into his lap so I was now straddling him.

“She gave you me and I you. I know you weren’t raised with the notion of a mate bond. And yes, we usually wait for ours. But it’s because our mate is our soulmate. And you, Ayla, are my soulmate. I’m sorry your heart was broken. But I would never leave you or resent you. Duke and I are choosing to leave our pack and position. It’s not just me making those decisions, Duke feels the same way I do.” He told me.

“I’m sorry, Nate. This is all just so much.” I cried and he wrapped his arms around me.

“I know, baby. And I’m here. I’m not going anywhere.

And in the morning, we can go wherever you want to go until you are ready for whatever comes next. I'm never letting you go." He mumbled against my neck.

There was a knock on the door, so Nate moved me off of his lap to answer it. I moved under the blanket on the bed and snuggled back into the pillows. I was exhausted from the events of the day and tomorrow I would be coming face to face with my mother again. And I had no idea how I was going to explain all of this to my father. He has moved on with his life but he still shared me with her.

Nate walked back over holding a tray as I was lost in my thoughts. I wished my life was easy. Have I not been through enough?

"Please, eat something, Ayla. Then we can get some sleep." Nate pleaded with me as he sat the tray down on the bed beside me. I nodded because I knew he

was worried about me. I felt like a child as I picked at the food.

I know I overreacted to all of this, but it's hard when I hide so many emotions for so long. I never had the time to break down and deal with anything. I always had to keep going, since I only had myself to rely on. I had Kaden for a while but I just wanted to be happy. It was great until it wasn't and then I had to take care of myself all over again.

"Baby, how did you end up here after your talk with the goddess'?" Nate asked. He was sitting in front of me, also picking at his food.

"After the goddesses disappeared, I swam out of the cave we were in. I was by this weird island and as I swam towards the island there were people.

Anyways, they were hunting whales and I tried to help and then Kaden was there. He and his men were

there hunting down the men that were hunting the whales." I explained.

"And you came back here with them?"

"I was scared. Being out in the open ocean alone was terrifying. And then witnessing a whale being killed. I'm sorry, Nate. I shouldn't have come here with Kaden but I didn't know what to do," I told him.

"I'm glad you're safe, baby. I was so worried about you." He said and I yawned, unable to hold it in. Nate moved the tray to the nightstand and crawled in beside me. He pulled me close and I rested my head on his chest. His scent calmed me in a way I couldn't describe. It was like a wave of peace washed over me as I snuggled close to him.

Maybe I had to experience so much bad to truly be thankful for having Nate and Duke.

"I got you baby, and I'm not going anywhere."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Thirty-Four



Future Beta Nate

It didn't take Ayla long before she was fast asleep beside me. I don't think I'll be getting any sleep tonight. I hated being in this place and knowing her ex was just down the hallway from us. She wouldn't choose him in the morning, would she?

"I'll kill him," Duke growled in my head.

“And then we'll start a war with the eastern mermaid kingdom,” I snapped. I know my mother said the most important things in life are worth fighting for, but I’m starting to feel like this is a losing battle.

“It only feels like that because she is scared. She loved that i***t and he left her when she had no one.” Duke whimpered. I looked down at my sleeping mate and my heart broke for her.

She has had such a hard life. And then to find out her mother was alive. I can see why she would be scared. Ayla believed her father didn’t love her and then her boyfriend. And now she believes her mother didn’t either.

“She feels unworthy of love. If her own mother didn’t come back for her.” Duke growled and I knew he was pissed.

“I’m angry about all of this as well. And I would have punched that king in the face if I wasn’t so worried about Ayla shifting again.” I told him and he huffed.

“I want to eat him and s**t it out!”

“Gross! I’m not eating him.” I exclaimed.

“He deserves to be turned into s**t after hurting our mate.” Duke retorted while I tried not to gag.

“But if he never hurt her, she never would be with us. He would have claimed her.” I countered. And he sneered.

“I still want to kill him.” He growled and I sighed.

“I know, buddy.” I sighed.

There was a knock on the door and I reluctantly moved away from my mate. I didn't want to be away from her. I answered the door to find Xander, the princes, and King Kaden. Just seeing him, I wanted to punch him in the face.

"How is she?" Xander asked me as I stepped into the hallway.

"She's sleeping," I answered.

"Did she at least eat?" King Kaden asked.

"And now you care about her well-being?" I scuffed.

"f**k you! You have no idea what happened." He retorted.

"I know you hurt her. You don't get to just start caring." I growled.

“And you’ve known her for a week. Get over yourself, wolf boy.” He snapped and I moved towards him with my fist clutched. Xander moved between us and I wanted to hit him.

“Nate, fighting with him won’t help Ayla.” Xander scolded me.

“But it won’t hurt her either. And it would make me feel a whole lot better about being here.” I told him and Prince Silas laughed.

“You should probably be thanking him. If he didn’t hurt her, you wouldn’t have her now.”

“I’m not going to thank him for hurting her. But you are right. If he had claimed her, I wouldn’t be with her now.” I said.

“If I would have claimed her, it would have put a target on her back. My father’s men were hunting me.” King Kaden confessed.

“So for every full moon, you just ignored her?” I asked him, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Jealous, I was her first?” He countered and I growled.

“Okay, both of you need to stop. The queen of the entire ocean is hurt. And this is going to affect all of us. This isn’t a pissing contest. We are talking about someone’s life here. So both of you grow up.” Prince Chase exclaimed and we all looked at him. I pushed my lips in a line.

I knew he was right but I wanted to protect my mate. This f**k face hurt her and he knew what he was doing was going to hurt her. And I didn’t want him to

think he could get away with hurting what is mine. Ayla may not think she is worthy, but she is worth more than all of us. And I may not have known her very long, but I know she's a good person. And she deserves more than any of us could give her.

"I've only just met her and I've never seen her happy. With her grandmother and all of this. She is going to break and you two are more worried about who is going to be her knight in shining armor. f*****g ridiculous!" He huffed, throwing his arms up.

I instantly felt guilty. I've seen her happy, but for the most part, I've only seen her in despair. And not even the strongest person would be able to handle everything she has had to deal with. So much of her life had been a lie.

"I think the best thing is to take her home. I will continue to train her and she can read up about all

things mermaid and werewolf.” I told them.

“And my mother can answer any questions about mermaids. And I’m sure you have someone, Nate, that can answer all of her questions about werewolves. I agree with Nate. She needs to be somewhere where she feels safe, not where we think she will be safe. And I think home is the best place for her.” Xander said.

“Why would the western kingdom be worried about you wanting to start a war?” I asked King Kaden. Everyone who has spoken about him, except Prince Chase, has said he was this monster. And I want to know why?

“I killed my father. That’s unheard of in our world. But my father was a tyrant. And when I left, he hunted me and eventually killed my mother and threatened to kill Dante if I didn’t return. I killed him and tried to hunt

down the hunters but I never found her,” King Kaden answered.

“And why didn’t you go back for Ayla?” Prince Silas asked the question before I could.

“My kingdom was a mess. After I took the throne, I was never going to have a normal life.” He confessed.

“So mermaids don’t claim humans?” I asked.

“Not royalty. Their child may not be able to shift. And royalty needs to be able to shift.” Xander answered my question.

“So you were using her?” I shook my head and the king growled.

“I wasn’t expecting to find someone like Ayla when I left. At first, I was trying to get the other kingdoms to

help me against my father.” He growled out.

“Why didn’t my father mention any of this?” Prince Silas asked him.

“Because after I found Ayla, I didn’t care about taking him down. My father hated me because I wasn’t his son. My mother was claimed by another and became pregnant with me. My father wanted her and he killed her claim and forced her to claim him. He didn’t think she would be pregnant by him because in most cases a baby isn’t conceived during a claiming. But I was. After my father found out, I was already gone and he was hunting me.” King Kaden explained. And I almost felt sorry for him. Almost.

“You tried to walk away.” Prince Silas said, and the king nodded.

“But when he killed my mother, I knew I couldn’t. I

shouldn't even be king, since that fucker wasn't my actual father but my brother asked me to take over."

"I just want to make this perfectly clear before we start working together against the hunters. Ayla is mine. Her being a mermaid changes nothing. You still left and I won't be giving her up. So unless you have plans to kill me, she's mine." I deadpanned. I knew Ayla would have to work with all the kingdoms, but I'm not going to allow this fucker to think for one second that Ayla could ever be his again.

"Unless Ayla herself tells me no, I'm going to do everything in my power to win her back. Don't pretend to love her. You barely know her." He smirked. I was about to punch this fucker in the face when Xander stopped me.

"And in those years, Ayla has changed. She isn't the same person you fell in love with. And she has

already chosen Nate. So unless you want to lose her forever, I wouldn't fight Nate. If you think for one second she would pick you over Nate, her mate, you are just going to be disappointed. And if you truly did love her, you'd want to see her happy." Xander lectured the King. I may not have been Xander's biggest fan in the beginning, but he is loyal to Ayla. He loves her and you can tell because he only wants her to be happy.

"Now, let's all head to bed. I'm not sure where Ayla wants to go in the morning." Xander told us before leaving to find his room.

"I'll have some clothes for Ayla sent up in the morning. Her mother would like to see her after breakfast." King Kaden informed me before he too left.

"Did Princess Ayla explain anything?" Prince Chase

asked me.

“She told me about Kyle, aka King Kaden,” I answered.

“And her chat with the moon goddess?” Prince Silas asked me.

“She talked with not only our moon goddess but the mermaid goddess as well. I’ll let her explain everything tomorrow.” I told them.

“At least we don’t have to worry about King Kaden.” Prince Silas sighed before he entered his room across from ours.

“Nate, you are a good man. I know Ayla has been through a lot but she has you now.” Prince Chase said, grabbing my shoulder. I nodded before he went to his room and I entered mine.

I stripped down to my boxers before climbing into bed with my mate. She immediately rolled and snuggled into me, chasing my scent. Prince Chase surprised me tonight. And even though I had some reservations before, I'm starting to trust they have Ayla's best intentions in mind. And they seem to respect that she has a mate.

"And I'll kill King Kaden and hide his body." Duke chimed in and I chuckled.

"If she wanted him, she would be in his bed, not ours," I told him, snuggling closer to my mate. No matter where we are, she always feels like home.

I awoke with a groan as sparks and tingles shot through my body. I opened my eyes to find Ayla licking her way up the contours of my abs.

“Good morning.” She purred, climbing on top of me. She was already naked, kissing her way up to my neck. Ayla licked over her mark and I shivered as goosebumps covered my body.

The only thing between us was my boxers as she rolled her hips, grinding her core into my now very hard c**k. I didn’t expect this wake-up call as her lips moved from my neck to my lips.

“Baby, how are you feeling?” I asked her, holding onto her cheeks. I pulled her from my lips before she could deepen the kiss.

“Nate, I need you.” She breathed out, looking into my eyes. I could see the desperation in her grey eyes as she looked down at me.

Instead of thinking logically, I flipped us and crushed my lips to hers. I rolled my hips down into her core,

feeling her wetness through the fabric between us. When Ayla moaned against my lips, I thrust my tongue into her mouth. Her taste was addictive on my tongue as she fought for dominance.

“And why didn’t you go back for Ayla?” Princa Silas asked the question before I could.

“My kingdom was a mess. After I took the throne, I was never going to have a normal life.” He confessed.

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“Not royalty. Their child may not be able to shift. And royalty needs to be able to shift.” Xandar answered my question.

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“I wasn’t axpecting to find somaona lika Ayla whan I laft. At first, I was trying to gat tha othar kingdoms to halp ma against my fathar.” Ha growlad out.

“Why didn’t my fathar mantion any of this?” Princa Silas askad him.

“Bacausa aftar I found Ayla, I didn’t cara about taking him down. My fathar hatad ma bacausa I wasn’t his son. My mothar was claimad by anothar and bacama pragnant with ma. My fathar wantad har and ha killad har claim and forcad har to claim him. Ha didn’t think sha would ba pragnant by him bacausa in most casas a baby isn’t conceivad during a claiming. But I was. Aftar my fathar found out, I was alraady gona and ha was hunting ma.” King Kadan axplainad. And I almost falt sorry for him. Almost.

“You triad to walk away.” Princa Silas said, and tha king noddad.

“But whan ha killad my mothar, I knaw I couldn’t. I shouldn’t avan ba king, sinca that fuckar wasn’t my actual fathar but my brothar askad ma to taka ovar.”

“I just want to maka this parfactly claar bafora wa start working togathar against tha huntars. Ayla is mina. Har baing a marmaid changas nothing. You still laft and I won’t ba giving har up. So unlass you hava plans to kill ma, sha’s mina.” I daadpannad. I knaw Ayla would hava to work with all tha kingdoms, but I’m not going to allow this fuckar to think for ona sacond that Ayla could avar ba his again.

“Unlass Ayla harsalf talls ma no, I’m going to do avarything in my powar to win har back. Don’t pratand to lova har. You baraly know har.” Ha smirkad. I was about to punch this fuckar in tha faca whan Xandar stoppad ma.

“And in thosa yaars, Ayla has changad. Sha isn’t tha sama parson you fall in lova with. And sha has alraady chosan Nata. So unlass you want to losa har foravar, I wouldn’t fight Nata. If you think for ona sacond sha would pick you ovar Nata, har mata, you ara just going to ba disappointad. And if you truly did lova har, you’d want to saa har happy.” Xandar lacturad tha King. I may not hava baan Xandar’s biggast fan in tha baginning, but ha is loyal to Ayla. Ha lovas har and you can tall bacausa ha only wants har to ba happy.

“Now, lat’s all haad to bad. I’m not sura whara Ayla wants to go in tha morning.” Xandar told us bafora laaving to find his room.

“I’ll hava soma clothas for Ayla sant up in tha morning. Har mothar would lika to saa har after braakfast.” King Kadan informad ma bafora ha too laft.

“Did Princass Ayla axplain anything?” Princa Chasa askad ma.

“Sha told ma about Kyla, aka King Kadan,” I answarad.

“And har chat with tha moon goddass?” Princa Silas askad ma.

“Sha talkad with not only our moon goddass but tha marmaid goddass as wall. I’ll lat har axplain avarything tomorrow.” I told tham.

“At laast wa don’t hava to worry about King Kadan.” Princa Silas sighad bafora ha antarad his room across from ours.

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said, grabbing my shoulder. I nodded before he went to his room and I entered mine.

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licking har way up tha contours of my abs.

“Good morning.” Sha purrad, climbing on top of ma. Sha was alraady nakad, kissing har way up to my nack. Ayla lickad ovar har mark and I shivarad as goosabumps covarad my body.

Tha only thing batwaan us was my boxars as sha rollad har hips, grinding har cora into my now vary hard c**k. I didn’t axpact this waka-up call as har lips movad from my nack to my lips.

“Baby, how ara you faaling?” I askad har, holding onto har chaaks. I pullad har from my lips bafora sha could daapan tha kiss.

“Nata, I naad you.” Sha braathad out, looking into my ayas. I could saa tha dasparation in har gray ayas as sha lookad down at ma.

Instaad of thinking logically, I flippad us and crushad my lips to hars. I rollad my hips down into har cora, faaling har watnass through tha fabric batwaan us. Whan Ayla moanad against my lips, I thrust my tongua into har mouth. Har tasta was addictiva on my tongua as sha fought for dominanca.

Her hands found the waistband of my boxers. Grabbing her hands, I pulled them above her head as my lips moved from hers and down her neck. She whimpered as she tried to fight my grip.

“Nate, I need to touch you.” She breathlessly moaned as I sucked and nipped at her collar.

“I want to taste you, baby,” I muttered against her skin as I let go of her wrists and kissed my way over her breasts.

I rolled a n****e between my fingers as I flicked and

sucked the other. Ayla moaned, her hands running through my hair as she held me to her chest.

“f**k, Nate.” She moaned as my mouth switched n****s before I started to kiss my way down her stomach.

I moved her legs over my shoulders and settled my face between her legs. Her arousal hit me as I kissed everywhere except between her folds. She was dripping wet as her p***y glistened in the morning light.

“Please, Nate.” She begged, breathlessly. Her fingers dug into my scalp as she rolled her hips into my face.

I held her down before running my tongue in between her folds. Her taste consumed me as I circled her clit and she moaned my name. When I sucked in her clit, she fisted the bed as she arched her back. Before I

could insert a finger, her legs began to tremor.

“Nate,” she breathlessly screamed as she came undone on my face. I couldn’t get enough of her as I lapped up her juices.

“You feel better, baby?” I asked her as I kissed my way up her body after I removed my boxers. She was trying to catch her breath as she looked down at me.

“So much better.” She breathed out as I settled myself between her legs.

My lips found her neck, as I reached between us. I nipped and sucked on her neck while I rubbed the tip of my c**k into her clit. Ayla was moaning and gasping as her nails dug into my shoulders.

I moved my tip to her entrance and with a groan, I was buried deep inside her. Her gasps turned to

moans as I pulled almost out before slamming back into her.

“f**k, you feel so good, baby.” I groaned, picking up my pace.

My gums tingled as the need to mark her as mine was strong. I wanted to but I didn’t get a chance to talk to her about it before she jumped me this morning.

“Please, mark me.” She moaned as he threw her head back, exposing her neck.

“Baby, are you sure?” I mumbled against her skin.

“Please, Nate.” She screamed as her nails dug into my biceps. Her walls clutched around my c**k. I grunted as I fought against my release.

I sucked on her skin before I sunk my teeth deep into

her neck. Her screams turned into a moan and I quickly released deep inside her as she came undone again. I could feel the bond fully forming as I stilled inside her. I pulled my teeth from her neck, licking over my mark. Ayla shivered as she lay beneath me, breathless.

“Nate,” she breathed out, as she looked up at me.

“Best wake-up call, ever.” I chuckled, looking down at her. My mark was now on full display on her neck.

She smiled before leaning up and kissing my chest. I leaned down and kissed her forehead before pulling out and moving off of her. I laid down on my back beside her and pulled her to my side. Ayla rested her head on my chest as she snuggled into me.

“Baby, how are you feeling?” I mumbled as I kissed the top of her head. She just shrugged and I pulled

her closer, an arm wrapped around her shoulders.

“I know this is a lot, but you aren’t doing it alone. I’m here, and I’m not going anywhere.” I told her. I could feel her uncertainty through our now fully formed bond.

Sparks and tingles exploded over my chest as she ran her fingers down the contour of my body. I could feel her curiosity before she even asked her question.

“The tingles feel stronger?” She mumbled, kissing my chest, and I let out a groan. I was still hard, and these stronger tingles and sparks weren’t helping to calm me.

“It’s the bond. It’s now fully formed. We’ll be able to feel each other’s emotions. And if you had a wolf, we would be able to mind link.” I explained and she sighed.

“I’m sorry, Nate.” She whispered and I moved down and to my side so she would look at me.

“I wanted to claim you. And I was going to talk with you about it but you jumped me.” I chuckled.

“I shouldn’t have hesitated in marking you or having you claim me. This is what I want. And I know you are going through a lot. I couldn’t imagine what and how you are feeling but I’m here, always. I’m not going anywhere, Ayla. You are mine and I am yours. And next full moon you will claim me.” I told her, and tears swelled in her eyes before she nodded.

“I know you think since everyone left, that I will too. But I promise I’m here until the very end. Until my last breath.” I said, pulling her against my chest.

“Thank you, Nate.” She whispered before she kissed

the mark she gave me. Goosebumps erupted all over my body, and my c**k twitched.

“Let’s go have a bath, baby. It should make you feel better before we have to go down for breakfast.”

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MY ALPHA’S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Thirty-Five



Ayla

I was resting against Nate’s chest as I sat between his legs in the bathtub. My body felt relaxed but the hot water did nothing to ease the anxiety I was feeling. I didn’t want to see my mother or have

breakfast with Kaden. I just wanted to go home, to my little house. Life was so simple when I only had myself and Bluey to worry about.

“Someone’s at the door.” Nate leaned down and whispered. He kissed my cheek before he hopped out to answer the door.

“Towel,” I called out to him and I heard him chuckle. My man was going to have his own fan club if he didn’t start putting on some clothes.

Nate came back a few minutes later wrapped in a bathrobe. He must have found it in the closet. He sat down beside the tub, watching me while I swirled the water around with my hands.

“There are some clothes on the bed for you. Breakfast should be ready soon.” Nate informed me and I sighed, my stomach twisting painfully.

“I don’t want to do this,” I whispered, and it was his turn to sigh.

“I know, baby. But the sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can go home. Or wherever you want to go.” He told me and I looked away from the water to look at him.

“Would you stay with me in the city?” I asked him and he nodded.

“Wherever you want to stay. I think it may be best to stay with Alpha Matt. But it’s up to you.”

“I would be able to get more answers about the Crimson Tide pack.” I shrugged.

“And the ocean is right there for you. I know being in the ocean makes you feel better. It’s a part of you,” he

said. Being a mermaid was fun in the beginning, but now I would give it up if it meant my life could go back to normal.

“Okay. But first I want to go back to the palace. I would like to get my things and talk with my grandmother. Then I’ll call my uncle.” I told him. He leaned in and kissed my forehead.

“Sounds like a plan, baby. Now let’s get you fed so we can leave.” He mumbled, before helping me to stand. Nate helped me out of the tub before he wrapped a towel around me.

I can do this. I told myself as I walked into the bedroom to get dressed. There were clothes placed on the bed for me and Nate, but I noticed he was putting on the clothes he wore yesterday. I don’t think he liked the idea of wearing something my ex gave him. But I don’t blame him, I wouldn’t want to wear

anything his ex gave me.

After I dried off, I pulled on the pair of panties and the sports bra. And of course, they fit. Kaden must have told them my size. The leggings were a little snug on my hips but the shirt fit perfectly. I pulled on the socks and slipped on the shoes Kaden gave me yesterday before I pulled on the hoodie.

It probably wasn't even cold but I felt better being covered. It's bad enough that every other aspect of my life has been exposed. I placed all my dirty clothes in the hamper before I made the bed. Then I put all Nate's unworn clothes on a chair, folded neatly. When I'm nervous, I clean. And I was feeling nervous about seeing everyone again after the show they witnessed yesterday.

Nate came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist. He snuggled his face into my neck

and I sighed, snuggling back into him.

“Everything will be okay.” He whispered, kissing my neck.

“Let’s get this over with,” I told him. He grabbed my hand and led me out of the room where one of Kaden’s associates was waiting for us. He bowed his head before motioning us to follow him.

With my fingers interlocking with Nate’s, we walked through the palace. Everything was done in dark colors compared to our palace. Maybe it represented more of Kaden’s father.

Kaden wasn’t a sinister man. Besides leaving without a word. He was always sweet and caring. Leaving me was unlike him. Or that’s what I wanted to believe. I knew he had a hard time with his father. He didn’t tell me much about his past, but he did say he was hiding

from his father.

We both had something we were running from and we had so much in common. He would make me smile when I felt like giving up. Kaden was my motivation when I wanted to give up on school and on life. He was the light at the end of my tunnel until he left.

Remembering that day still breaks my heart. I was so excited to get home to tell him I had got the job. I never got the chance to tell him. And now I understand why. And I do understand. I would do anything to protect my siblings and I don't even know them. I just wish he would have said goodbye.

Nate squeezed my hand, pulling me from my thoughts. This overwhelming feeling of worry flowed through me and I looked at Nate to see the worried look on his face. His emotions must be bleeding into mine. And he must have felt my sadness. I smiled at

him and squeezed his hand. I didn't want him to feel my sadness and pain for something neither one of us could control. And it was over a year ago, not that I've dealt with it. But I'll just move on. I didn't leave him, he left me.

We entered the dining room and the others were already seated. Xander stood up and came over to me. He placed his hand on my shoulder and I placed my free hand on his. I gave him a nod after he gave me one. He knew I would explain everything to him later.

I could feel the eyes of the others on me while Nate led me over to the table to take our seats. My stomach was in knots and I no longer felt like eating. I didn't want to answer any of their questions. I didn't even want to see my mother. I just wanted to get the hell out of here.

Nate pulled my chair out for me before taking his seat beside me. He rested his hand on my thigh as I looked around the table. Kaden was watching me intently when my eyes found him at the head of the table.

We didn't really get a chance to talk yesterday. It was more me in shock and then I was yelling at him the entire time. Then I would calm myself down just to yell at him some more. There was so much I wanted to say to him, but all of that didn't matter now. Even if I didn't have Nate, I don't think I would be able to forgive him.

Nate squeezed my thigh and I looked at him. I didn't realize I was lost in my mind. I was mindlessly rubbing over the mark Nate had given me this morning. I'm not sure why, but it gave me comfort.

"You okay?" Nate mouthed to me and I nodded. I

wasn't okay and I'm sure he would feel it through the bond, but there was nothing I could do about it.

"So, where are we going today, Princess?" Prince Silas broke the awkward silence.

"I need to head back to the palace. And then I'd like to go stay with my uncle. This way I can keep an eye on that pack we are worried about," I answered.

"What pack?" Kaden asked, but Xander answered him.

"There was a body of a female mermaid left on Ayla's father's pack lands. She was from our kingdom and was last seen by a pack near her uncle's. We are planning to investigate with the help of Ayla's father and uncle." Kaden nodded.

"What's the pack's name?" He asked.

“Crimson Tide,” I answered and his face fell.

“Ayla, you shouldn’t be anywhere near that pack,” he exclaimed.

“My uncle's pack is right there. I’ll be fine.” I told him. And he pushed his lips into a line.

“I wish you would take this more seriously. We are talking about your life here. If they get a hold of you. They will keep you in a tank and descale you every day until the salt water no longer heals you. It’s horrific not only to watch but to experience,” Kaden explained.

“I am taking this seriously. Even when others were telling me you would kidnap me and force me to claim you, I was still willing to do it to stop a war. But now that we know you will never do that, I can go home.” I

exclaimed.

“Who the hell was telling you that?” He yelled, slamming his fist against the table, causing me to jump.

“The only one who defended you was Prince Chase. Everyone on the western kingdom council was convinced of it.” Xander answered him.

“For f**k's sake!” Kaden yelled.

“And you would just willingly hand yourself over to a monster!” Kaden scolded me.

“It was better than starting a war. One life to save countless others. That’s what I was thinking. Would you not have done the same?” I retorted and he huffed, crossing his arms over his chest. Nate squeezed my thigh almost painfully as he listened to

my exchange with Kaden.

“And you were just going to let her?” He demanded, turning his attention to Nate.

“I wasn’t going to let her do anything. I didn’t agree with her plan, but she is an adult and can make her own decisions!” Nate retorted.

“It doesn’t matter, now. Now the plan is to hunt the hunters. There isn’t going to be a war between our kingdoms. Now we can work together.” I told them, trying to defuse the situation.

“Ayla, you don’t see the value you hold over our kingdoms. The black pearl stands for hope for all of your people. And if anything was to happen to you, we would all lose the fight we need to defeat the hunters.” Kaden pleaded with me.

“Then I’m the perfect bait,” I told him and I think I heard them all growl.

“f**k, woman, are you insane? Do you just like pain?” Kaden yelled.

“Don’t fucken speak to her like that!” Nate yelled back at Kaden.

“Bringing all the kingdoms together, Princess,” Prince Silas said, giving me a smirk.

“Will you both stop? This isn’t about me. This is about our people. They are kidnapping and killing them. And if that means I have to use myself as bait, I will. They want me and that will give you all the advantage of taking them down. I’ll implant a tracker into my arm and you will be able to follow the signal to their hideout. Then all the kingdoms can take them down.” I told them, and they all stopped to think about what I

was saying.

“That doesn’t mean I want you to be the one to risk your life,” Kaden said, and I rolled my eyes.

“And whose life would you rather risk?” I asked him and he pushed his lips in a line.

“Ayla, that isn't fair. There are plenty of female warriors that can go undercover. You don’t have to risk your life.” He sighed.

“Why are all of you holding my life above another? Maybe this is why I was born. Did any of you stop to think about that? My job is to bridge together mermaids and wolves. I don’t think it matters if I die as long as you all work together.” I told them and Nate growled.

“Not going to happen. As my mate, I hold your life

above anyone else's. I'm not going to let you die, Ayla. I don't care what the goddesses told you."

"Nate, we can talk about this when we get home. I don't think you and Duke would let me die. I'm just saying, I would feel horrible if someone took my place and they ended up dead. Trained or not. They want me." I clarified, and he wrapped an arm around my shoulders and pulled me against him.

The look of hurt on Kaden's face didn't go unnoticed, but I refused to feel guilty for moving on with my life. Things may have been different, but I'm not going to dwell on the past when I have someone who loves me and who I love. I let him mark me because I believe in him and us. There's no going back, not that I would give up Nate.

Wa didn't raally gat a chanca to talk yastarday. It was mora ma in shock and than I was yalling at him tha

antira tima. Than I would calm myself down just to yell at him some more. Thara was so much I wanted to say to him, but all of that didn't matter now. Even if I didn't have Nata, I don't think I would be able to forgive him.

Nata squeezed my thigh and I looked at him. I didn't realize I was lost in my mind. I was mindlessly rubbing over the mark Nata had given me this morning. I'm not sure why, but it gave me comfort.

"You okay?" Nata mouthed to me and I nodded. I wasn't okay and I'm sure he would feel it through the bond, but there was nothing I could do about it.

"So, where are we going today, Princess?" Prince Silas broke the awkward silence.

"I need to head back to the palace. And then I'd like to go stay with my uncle. This way I can keep an eye on

that pack wa ara worriad about,” I answarad.

“What pack?” Kadan askad, but Xandar answarad him.

“Thara was a body of a famala marmaid laft on Ayla’s fathar’s pack lands. Sha was from our kingdom and was last saan by a pack naar har uncla's. Wa ara planning to invastigata with tha halp of Ayla’s fathar and uncla.” Kadan noddad.

“What’s tha pack’s nama?” Ha askad.

“Crimson Tida,” I answarad and his faca fall.

“Ayla, you shouldn’t ba anywhara naar that pack,” ha axclaimad.

“My uncla's pack is right thara. I’ll ba fina.” I told him. And ha pushad his lips into a lina.

“I wish you would taka this mora sariously. Wa ara talking about your lifa hara. If thay gat a hold of you. Thay will kaap you in a tank and dascala you avary day until tha salt watar no longar haals you. It’s horrific not only to watch but to axparianca,” Kadan axplainad.

“I am taking this sariously. Evan whan othars wara talling ma you would kidnap ma and forca ma to claim you, I was still willing to do it to stop a war. But now that wa know you will navar do that, I can go homa.” I axclaimad.

“Who tha hall was talling you that?” Ha yallad, slamming his fist against tha tabla, causing ma to jump.

“Tha only ona who dafandad you was Princa Chasa. Evaryona on tha wastarn kingdom council was

convinced of it.” Xandar answered him.

“For f**k's sake!” Kadan yelled.

“And you would just willingly hand yourself over to a monster!” Kadan scolded me.

“It was better than starting a war. One life to save countless others. That’s what I was thinking. Would you not have done the same?” I retorted and he huffed, crossing his arms over his chest. Nata squeezed my thigh almost painfully as he listened to my exchange with Kadan.

“And you were just going to let her?” He demanded, turning his attention to Nata.

“I wasn’t going to let her do anything. I didn’t agree with her plan, but she is an adult and can make her own decisions!” Nata retorted.

“It doasn’t mattar, now. Now tha plan is to hunt tha huntars. Thara isn’t going to ba a war batwaan our kingdoms. Now wa can work togathar.” I told tham, trying to dafusa tha situation.

“Ayla, you don’t saa tha valua you hold ovar our kingdoms. Tha black paarl stands for hopa for all of your paopla. And if anything was to happan to you, wa would all losa tha fight wa naad to dafaat tha huntars.” Kadan plaadad with ma.

“Than I’m tha parfack bait,” I told him and I think I haard tham all growl.

“f**k, woman, ara you insana? Do you just lika pain?” Kadan yallad.

“Don’t fuckan spaak to har lika that!” Nata yallad back at Kadan.

“Bringing all tha kingdoms togathar, Princass,” Princa Silas said, giving ma a smirk.

“Will you both stop? This isn’t about ma. This is about our paopla. Thay ara kidnapping and killing tham. And if that maans I hava to usa myself as bait, I will. Thay want ma and that will giva you all tha advantaga of taking tham down. I’ll implant a trackar into my arm and you will ba abla to follow tha signal to thair hidaout. Than all tha kingdoms can taka tham down.” I told tham, and thay all stoppad to think about what I was saying.

“That doasn’t maan I want you to ba tha ona to risk your lifa,” Kadan said, and I rollad my ayas.

“And whosa lifa would you rathar risk?” I askad him and ha pushad his lips in a lina.

“Ayla, that isn't fair. Thara ara plenty of famala warriors that can go undarcovar. You don't hava to risk your lifa.” Ha sighad.

“Why ara all of you holding my lifa abova another? Mayba this is why I was born. Did any of you stop to think about that? My job is to bridga togathar mermaids and wolvas. I don't think it mattars if I dia as long as you all work togathar.” I told tham and Nata growlad.

“Not going to happan. As my mata, I hold your lifa abova anyona alsa's. I'm not going to lat you dia, Ayla. I don't cara what tha goddassas told you.”

“Nata, wa can talk about this whan wa gat homa. I don't think you and Duka would lat ma dia. I'm just saying, I would faal horribla if somaona took my placa and thay andad up daad. Trainad or not. Thay want ma.” I clarifiad, and ha wrappad an arm around my

shoulders and pulled me against him.

The look of hurt on Kaden's face didn't go unnoticed, but I refused to feel guilty for moving on with my life. Things may have been different, but I'm not going to dwell on the past when I have someone who loves me and who I love. I let him mark me because I believed in him and us. There's no going back, not that I would give up Nate.

"Ayla, we can talk about the plan later. We still need to talk it over with your father and uncle. Please eat something, I know your mother should be here soon." Xander said, and I looked at him.

"Now I don't feel like eating," I pouted. Instead, I turned my attention to Kaden.

"When did you find my mother?"

“About a month after I left. As soon as I was back here, I killed my father and went searching for my mother.” He answered. I closed my eyes and willed myself not to cry.

“How long was she there for?” Xander asked the question I couldn’t.

“I’ll let her explain to Ayla, herself.” He answered.

After that, I picked at my food as everyone else ate. She could have found me. Kaden knew where I was and he recognized her as my mother.

“If you found her mother, why didn’t you find Ayla?” Prince Silas asked King Kaden. My head snapped to Prince Silas before it snapped to Kaden.

“Please, don’t answer that.” I breathed out, trying my hardest to hold myself together.

“Ayla, it’s not what you think.” He started but I held up my hand, to stop him.

“It doesn’t matter. What's done is done.” I told him firmly, wanting this conversation to be over. He did what he did and there was no going back.

“Ayla, I truly am sorry.” Kaden sighed and I looked at him.

“I know. But something’s are just better left unspoken.” I told him.

We fell into silence once again and I was thankful for that. Whatever Kaden’s reasons are, it won’t change the outcome. I know he is sorry, I can see the regret written on his face, but it doesn’t change anything.

I’ll work with him and his kingdom for the victims. And

maybe one day we might actually be friends. Who knows what the future might hold?

A man entered the dining room and went to speak with Kaden. He whispered something to him and I knew my mother was now here waiting to see me.

“Your mother is here.” Nate leaned in and whispered before kissing my cheek. My stomach twisted and the little I ate wanted to come back up.

I should have been excited about seeing my mom but I wasn't. She had so much time to find me and didn't. I don't think I'd let anything stand in the way of me and my child. But like with my father, I don't know her side of the story. But what could possibly be her excuse?

I wrapped my arms around Nate's waist as we followed the others to where my mother was waiting. I

needed something to anchor myself to so I wouldn't run. My entire being was telling me to turn around and the moment I stepped into the room I knew why.

My mother was standing with a tall, handsome man with dark blonde hair. My mother looked the same but she had aged. She had some lines around her lips and eyes. One thing I never noticed before was her eyes. My eyes were more grey and hers were green.

But it wasn't until I noticed her round belly did I truly understand why I didn't want to see her. I don't know why, but seeing her pregnant and standing with another man's arm wrapped around her waist, twisted my heart painfully. She left me to start a new family.

I looked at Kaden and he was looking at me with pity. He knew she was pregnant and he didn't even warn me. He tried to step towards me but I took a step back, letting go of Nate.

I looked at my mother and she had tears in her eyes. Looking around the room, I felt only numbness. She moved on without me. Everyone has. Was I really that easy to let go of? To say goodbye too?

“Ayla, baby girl?” My mother called out, moving towards me, but I stepped back and she stopped.

“It’s not what you think.” She started but I interrupted her.

“And what do I think? How long were you held captive? And when did you meet him?” I asked, pointing to the guy now standing beside her again.

“I met Noah about four years ago.” She answered and I gasped.

“Before you left?” And she nodded.

“How did you break the bond with Atlas?” I questioned.

“Witches.”

“So you met Noah, broke the bond with my father, and left me, your child for your lover?” I summed it up.

“Ayla, that’s not what happened?” She pleaded with me and a growl filled the room. At first, I thought it was Duke, until everyone but Nate had stepped further away from me. They were all looking at me with worry etched on their faces.

“Baby girl, I’m sorry I left. I’m so sorry I hurt you. I didn’t ask for any of this.” She cried.

“I know. The moon goddess told me. I was a trap baby. And now I learn I am also an unwanted baby.” I

told her, shaking my head.

“I’m not sure what Atlas has told you, but that’s not true,” She retorted.

“And does it really matter, Melody? Now you and your claim can take the throne and I can move on with my life. Neither one of you wanted me. I just don’t understand why you wouldn’t have let Matt raise me?” I asked her. She stuttered but didn’t answer.

“I wish you and your new family all the best,” I told her before turning around to leave.

“Ayla, please don’t tell your grandmother.” She begged.

“She isn’t my problem anymore, just like I’m not your problem. Deal with it.” I told her without turning around to look at her.

I left the room with one mission in mind, leaving this place and never returning.

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