

Alpha's Rejected 91

Chapter 91 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I was floating on a high after those kisses from Stefan and the first date he had organized. It had been so romantic, so sweet and we had grown comfortable with each other. I had told him my story about Darius giving me up in exchange for marrying my sister and about Rowan who had been unable to decide between myself and Stacey his ex-girlfriend. Stefan had been shocked by how mistreated I had been and swore he would never be that way with me, that he wanted me and would show me it often, wanting me to be comfortable in his castle.

In return, I learned about Stefan's parent's death. They had been traveling between various packs when they were set upon by a bunch of shifters, presumably rogues, who didn't like vampires. Stefan had been a child at the time, but with their death, he was forced to grow up quickly and become the King, something he sometimes didn't feel like he was suited for. He hadn't imagined being placed in the role so soon and I found myself incredibly saddened for the little boy who had lost his parents and then been thrust into learning his place in the kingdom all at once.

I found myself seeking out Teresa once more in the kitchen, signaling for her to join me at the table. She hesitated, but another omega nodded at her, giving her permission and she came over with a wide smile, sitting down in the seat beside me.

"I hope you don't mind" I started and she shook her head at me, her eyes twinkling.

"I don't mind at all. Besides as the King's mate, you could order me to sit with you and I would have to" she said frankly as my mouth gaped open.

"I'm not forcing you to," I told her hurriedly and she laughed.

"It's fine, I enjoy speaking to you and it gives me a break from chores," she said, leaning back against the chair. "Is there something I could do for you? Would you like a cup of coffee?"

I hesitated. I knew I wasn't supposed to drink too much caffeine with the baby but surely one cup would be alright? I was craving it something fierce.

"Coffee please, but only if you make yourself one as well" I requested.

Teresa grinned and hopped up. I watched as she made two mugs of coffee. "Milk, sugar, cream?" she asked sweetly.

"Cream and sugar please"

She brought them over, sipping hers slowly as she sat, while I placed my hands around the mug grateful for the warmth. I really needed to speak to Stefan about getting some warmer clothes instead of wearing the dresses that got left out for me each morning when I woke up. As it was, I was already missing him but I'd been informed he was out doing some business and would come to visit me shortly. I was a big girl and decided to amuse myself, visiting Teresa was a spur-of-the-moment decision and I was glad. She seemed like such a lovely girl or woman.

"So how are you finding it here?" asked Teresa warmly, still sipping her coffee, her eyes closed in bliss.

"Strange" I admitted, "I mean it's so different to what I'm used to and this castle is huge, much bigger than a pack house."

"I imagine it would feel very weird for a shifter to be in a castle surrounded by vampires though" Teresa mused "I know I would feel lonely in that scenario."

I flushed. "Yes, I suppose I am a bit lonely. Stefan is busy a lot of the time" I admitted.

"Oh but he adores you," Teresa said in a hushed voice "he's always talking about you to others. He seems to be enamored of you actually and I don't blame him. You're gorgeous" she admitted shyly. "I especially love that red hair of yours."

I blinked in surprise. I had always viewed my red hair as being a disadvantage, I guess because my parents had despised it so much. I never thought that someone would admire it as much as Teresa seemed to.

"Thank you" I stammered "but I actually love your hair," I told her sincerely, loving the way it gleamed in the light.

Teresa looked startled and then smiled, touching her hair absent-mindedly and laughing. "We're both weird, aren't we" she chuckled. I chuckled alongside her.

"So what are you up to for the rest of the day," Teresa asked with interest.

I sighed. I didn't know what I was going to do. Part of me was desperate to go for a run, but I still remembered Stefan's warning about the council using me if they found out I was a special wolf. Lilac wanted to stretch her legs and I just wanted to enjoy the outdoors and the feel of it beneath my paws.

"I wish I could go for a run," I said a little sadly "but I can't let my wolf be seen."

Teresa leaned forward, her eyes searching mine. "Why not? Is it because you're scared of what we vampires might think?" she asked. I shook my head and leaned closer to her. "It's because Stefan told the council I was just a plain silver wolf when I'm not. I'm rare" I whispered, "so now I feel like I have to keep it a secret from them."

"Oh," said Teresa wistfully "that sucks. I mean the keeping it secret, not the being a rare wolf thing" she added hastily "I wonder what it feels like to go for a run."

"It's better than you could imagine," I told her warmly "the sun on your face, the wind in your fur, the speed of the run, it's all amazing" I declared.

"I bet it's better than our own running" agreed Teresa, giving me a sympathetic glance. "I'm so sorry" she apologized.

I stared at her incredulously. Why was she apologizing? It's not like she'd done anything wrong.

"Maybe you could check out the training ring on the grounds where we train" suggested Teresa "that might prove to be interesting to you. Maybe you could even join in."

I liked the sound of that but knew I would only observe if I went there. But it was a great idea and I thanked Teresa profusely. At the very least it would stave off my boredom.

Thwack. I heard the sound of a loud slap and the sound of a girl letting out a shriek. I whipped my head around, to see none other than that bitch, Elaine, standing over a poor servant, who was holding a hand to her stinging cheek. "You gave me the wrong coffee" she screeched, and the servant girl let out a sob. Teresa put a hand to her mouth. I was in shock. How could she treat an innocent servant girl that way? Teresa leaned over to whisper in her ear "his ex-girlfriend has always had a temper and treated the servants poorly."

I got to my feet, the servant girl surrounded by broken shards of the mug and spilled coffee while Elaine stood there, looking disgusted, her eyes staring down at the poor girl with contempt.

"Do you have any idea who I am" she hissed at the girl, who was sobbing pitifully now "I am the King's girlfriend and you would do well to remember that."

Now I was annoyed, as I helped the servant girl to her feet, staring at Elaine with a look of anger. I focussed my attention on the poor girl as Teresa silently grabbed a dustpan and brush and began to clean up, another servant girl wiping up the spilled liquid.

"Are you alright?" I asked her softly.

The servant girl nodded, still clutching her cheek. It was already beginning to bruise and swell. "You should get some ice on that," I told her as Elaine folded her arms across her chest and glowered at me.

"How dare you interrupt me" she hissed.

I raised an eyebrow at her, not cowed in the slightest. "How dare you hit a servant girl? What is wrong with you?" I demanded heatedly.

"I can do what I like. They are beneath me and she made a mistake, which she will now learn from."

"You are not the king's girlfriend," I said firmly, the servants all stopping in their tracks to listen unashamedly "I am his mate, and you would do well to remember that," I told her.

"I will be his girlfriend" she denied "once he realizes how pathetic and weak you are. Who wants a mangy mutt for a queen" she exclaimed as the servants began to mutter amongst themselves.

"Stefan does," I said quietly "and I am not a mangy mutt" I snarled. My hands clenched into fists, my body trembling. If it wasn't for the pregnancy I might have already shifted and attacked her. She tossed her long hair over her shoulder and smirked.

"The vampire people are very proud. They will not want a person of another race ruling them" she snapped. Then she had the audacity to poke me in the chest. "You are not worthy to be queen. I am."

"Don't ever touch me" I warned her, my chest heaving up and down "I'm warning you, Elaine."

She reached out and tried to slap me, but I caught her hand mid-air and twisted it, causing her to cry out in pain. Teresa stood beside me, looking upset. "Miss Elaine you should leave before King Stefan finds out what you have done" she advised the woman, as I reluctantly let go of her hand.

In answer, Elaine's eyes began to glow a bright vivid red color. She was going full vampire on my ass. I grimaced. This was not going to be pretty. She let her fangs show. My nails began to grow longer in response as I prepared myself for the inevitable attack.

"Miss Elaine, please stop" pleaded Teresa.

I hastily pushed Teresa behind me and then dodged to the side just in time as Elaine suddenly rushed forward. We grappled, the both of us, Elaine's strength overwhelming. I suppose I should have expected that from a vampire.

Her nails struck me across the face, drawing blood. I gave a small hiss, punching her in the guts and watching her double over, She let out a yelp and then stood upright, kicking out but thankfully missing my stomach, which she had intentionally aimed for. There was a commotion as servants began to file out of the room, others standing in the corner and watching wide-eyed. I didn't wait around, shifting to my wolf form and tackling Elaine to the ground. I was tired of her insults, tired of being called a mangy mutt. She had gone too far this time. I clenched my jaws around her arm and bit down, before shaking my head and yanking it, breaking it as she screamed. I backed away, watching her, waiting for her next move as she cradled her arm. I let out a low growl, furious, ready to re-tackle her, but she surprised me, backing away, whimpering in a pathetic voice. Only then, did I see Stefan in the doorway with a grim expression on his face. I shifted back to human form immediately.

"Stefan" whimpered Elaine, holding out her arm "look what she did to me."

He glowered at her and she paled. "I saw enough Elaine and the servants told me what you did. I think you need to spend some time in the dungeon until you've learned your place."

His guards filed in and took custody of her, dragging her kicking, and wailing out the door. I stood there, suddenly realizing I was naked and Stefan's eyes widened as he realized that too, taking his shirt off and hastily throwing it towards me. I grabbed it and gratefully put it on.

"Stefan I know I shouldn't have shifted" I began to apologize.

He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "You just showed everyone what a rare shifter you are. Even my people know that a white wolf is rare and unique. I'm not angry at you, I'm just worried" he admitted, crossing the room and grabbing hold of me, pulling me in and hugging me tightly.

"I'm sorry" I whispered and he sighed, stroking my hair and kissing me on the forehead.

"It's fine, whatever happens, we'll deal. I just hope the council doesn't hear of it, but something tells me that Elaine won't keep her mouth shut, especially now that she's being punished."

Chapter 92 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

It's slowly killing me inside, knowing where Amber is and that she's carrying my child. It isn't easy, to continue to pretend to be the loving husband and perfect chosen mate in regard to Sophie. All I want is to find my way out of here and I figure, now is as good a time as any to visit the so-called monstrous Alpha at his home. My mother of course is fretting when I tell her the news, astonished at my willingness to leave Sophie at the moment. "What on earth are you doing, going there?"

"I'm worried about Amber, mother, she hasn't checked in with Sophie in a while. I must make sure she's alright" I explained firmly, my tone brooking no arguments.

"She's just an undesirable" my mother countered with a shake of her head "who cares if she hasn't spoken to Sophie in a while, I'm sure she's been busy. Heck, she's probably married by now" she added, not knowing how angry that statement would make me.

My father looked just as confused. "I don't get it, but if Sophie is worried about her sister, then so be it. It might even help with her ahem" he coughed looking embarrassed "recovery from the miscarriage."

I grinned. My father, was, of course, being the soft-hearted man that he usually was. My mother looked indignantly at him. "It's going to be a complete waste of time," she said with an arched brow "but if you feel you must, then go for it."

"I'll be back later tonight" I promised, grabbing hold of my wallet and keys off the study desk and pocketing them. My mother gave me a gentle hug while my father shook my hand. "Good luck" was all he said, "and let us know how Amber is."

I walked towards my car, a bright red Ferrari, marveling at its beauty as I slid into the passenger seat and started the engine. It roared to life and I peeled out, heading for the main road and towards Alpha Rowan's pack. It was a fair amount of time, before my car was stopped before the boundary, the patrol warning me to remain seated.

"State your business" growled one of the men.

"I'm here to see Alpha Rowan. Tell him that Darius is here, he should know who I am" I said drily. I was fairly certain Rowan would remember my presence from last time.

It took several minutes of mind-linking before they permitted my car to go forward, toward the pack house, where Alpha Rowan was evidently waiting. He stood there, at the front door, his arms folded over his chest and a look of sourness on his face. I smirked to myself. He was making it clear how much he despised me, but that was okay because the feeling was mutual.

"Darius" he greeted me cordially, raising an eyebrow and gesturing for me to follow him inside the house. We walked through several long corridors until we came to the study, where he motioned for me to sit down. He looked at me impatiently.

"Thank you so much for your hospitality," I told Alpha Rowan politely "but may I ask where Amber is? I was hoping to visit her while I was here."

Now he looked disgruntled, a flash of annoyance crossing his face. "I haven't seen her in weeks," he said quietly "since she rejected me, she's been awol. God knows what's happened to her." He sounded slightly miserable as well to my surprise. The man must have really liked Amber and boy had he fucked up if she'd rejected him. I was quite pleased by that, even if I had to try very hard not to show it.

"You have no idea where she is or where she's gone?" I queried, unable to believe it.

"She was heading west through the boundary line. That's as far as I know, after that, she was gone" he said fidgeting with his hands slightly and avoiding my gaze. My eyes narrowed. Was he ashamed? Was that why he couldn't look me in the eyes? I felt more than a little angry towards the man for losing my precious Amber. Now I was going to have to search for her, which would be no easy feat, as there were dozens of packs nearby. She could have gone to any one of them and decided to make a home there. I sighed. At least I was soon to be Alpha, which meant that the other Alphas of the pack would willingly cooperate with me when I started to search. But it wasn't something I had anticipated, that was for sure.

"We believed she was safe with you," I told the Alpha with a bit of a hiss, "we thought you would keep her here."

He looked at me silently, looking pensive and forlorn. "I tried to keep her here" he pointed out with a grimace "even used my alpha tone on her. Somehow she managed to ignore my commands and reject me."

That was an interesting tidbit of information. How had Amber managed to override an Alpha's directions? It was unheard of for a shifter, any shifter, to have the power to do that.

Suddenly his eyes glazed over and I could tell he was being mind-linked by someone. He jumped to his feet suddenly and his eyes went pitch black. "Rogue attack" he shouted, "stay here" he hissed at me and before I could so much as utter a word or sound, he was out the door and running. I cocked my head and then sighed, getting up and walking to the doorway. Outside I could hear the sounds of shifters as they changed into their wolves and the sounds of shouting and chaos as pack members ran to safety. But it was what I was hearing, very distantly, inside the house, that was enticing me. I walked, with my ears straining, through the pack house, knowing Alpha Rowan could be hours before he came back. I could hear the sounds of distant sobbing and it led to a staircase from behind a door. It of course led to the basement, which would of course also be the dungeon.

I walked downstairs slowly, feeling the balustrade, my feet clacking on the steps as the sobbing intensified. "Hello" I called out, and I reached the ground floor, walking towards the cells, where I could see somebody lying down on a threadbare mattress. I sucked in a breath. It was a woman and she was pregnant, not heavily so, but part of her stomach was slightly swollen and I could detect the baby's heartbeat. She was beautiful, with long hair and big dark eyes that stared at me blankly, pale skin, and a petite body. She was shivering slightly from the dampness and slight breeze through the barred windows.

I eyed her thoughtfully, wondering what kind of crime this woman could have done to be punished in such a manner while pregnant. She stared at me, her eyes widening, her sobs stifled, as she gazed at me with something akin to hope in her eyes.

"Please" she begged me "please let me out of here."

I frowned and stared at the cell, looking down at her shackled arms and legs. There were no keys anywhere that I could see and I still needed to know what she had done.

"What are you in here for?"

She gave me a pleading look. "I used magic on Alpha Rowan to make him believe he was in love with me. I shouldn't have done it" she said sniffing "but I wanted him so bad and all he could think about was that girl Amber. I did what I had to do" she cried, beginning to break down again.

I felt nothing but pity for her. Clearly, she had enlisted the help of a witch to entrap the Alpha, which explained her confinement in these cells. It seemed cruel, to place a pregnant woman in the dungeon though, where the air was damp and smelt dank, the metallic scent of blood in the air. It was surprising she wasn't being sick from the sheer smell alone. It was enough to make me gag and I wasn't pregnant.

"What are you willing to do to be free from here," I asked her as a thought sprang to mind. She licked her lips nervously and gazed downwards, whispering "anything you desire."

It took a minute for me to comprehend what she was offering. I shook my head in repulsion. I certainly didn't want Alpha Rowan's sloppy seconds. Yuck. "That's not what I meant," I told her evenly "I may have a certain job, I wish for you to do for me, in exchange for your freedom."

She looked hopeful now. She got up and shuffled over to the door of the cell, careful not to touch the bars, even though her flesh was burning where the restraints on her hands and ankles were.

"I will do anything you want, but please you must hurry. Alpha Rowan could come down here any minute now."

"He's busy with a rogue attack," I told her, watching her eyes light up.

"Then now would be a perfect time for me to escape" she breathed "Rowan keeps a key to the cells and restraints in his study, please, please hurry" she pleaded.

I considered her request and then sighed, turning around and making my way back upstairs. I got lost once or twice, making my way to the study and searching the desk for a key. I found it easily, in the top right-hand drawer of the desk, and holding it triumphantly, I made my way back into the dungeon, where the woman was waiting impatiently for me.

"About time" she hissed and I glowered at her. How dare she speak to me that way! I could always refuse to let her out, but I needed her for my plan.

I brandished the key at her and set to work, undoing the door to the cell with ease. It sprang open with a definitive creak and then she held out her wrists to me.

"Not so fast," I said quietly "first we discuss the job that I have for you."

"We don't have time" she hissed "best we leave first and discuss this job later."

But I wasn't about to let her go and find out she would double-cross me. I undid the shackles only and her ankle restraints, putting the key back into my pocket as she looked at me with daggers in her eyes.

"I'll undo them once we've had our discussion," I said calmly and she glared, before shoving past me and making her way to the stairs. "I hope you have a car," she said hoarsely.

"It's right in front of the pack house," I said "but you're going to have to keep your head down until we're gone. Is that understood?" I asked.

She nodded, waiting for me to get to the front door first. The coast was clear and I led her, while her body trembled and shook, towards the Ferrari, covering her up with a blanket in the passenger seat and then climbing back into the driver's seat and starting the engine. The patrol was still busy with the rogue attack and it was almost laughable how we were able to get out undetected. I knew that Rowan would know it was me who freed her, but I didn't care. What was he going to do? Come to my pack and accuse me? So what, it's not like he had proof. Nobody had seen us leave together.

I pulled up just in front of the boundary line to my own pack and pulled the blanket off the woman who blinked at me before she took in the scenery with a small smile on her face. "I'm free," she said gleefully.

I shook my head. She wasn't going to be free until she agreed to the job I wanted her to do. She held out her wrists and this time I undid them, watching as she threw the offending pieces of metal to the forest floor and rubbed her wrists which were raw where the silver had touched them.

"What is it you want me to do then?" she asked tiredly. She looked exhausted, and haggard, with dark circles under her eyes. I was willing to bet she hadn't slept much or had much of a good meal lately. I was sure she would be more accommodating once I organized for her to get clean.

I leaned forward to murmur in her ear. "You see, I have this wife Sophie..."

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"What is it you want me to do then?" she asked tiredly. She looked exhausted, and haggard, with dark circles under her eyes. I was willing to bet she hadn't slept much or had much of a good meal lately. I was sure she would be more accommodating once I organized for her to get clean.

I leaned forward to murmur in her ear. "You see, I have this wife Sophie..."

Chapter 94 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

It's slowly killing me inside, knowing where Amber is and that she's carrying my child. It isn't easy, to continue to pretend to be the loving husband and perfect chosen mate in regard to Sophie. All I want is to find my way out of here and I figure, now is as good a time as any to visit the so-called monstrous Alpha at his home. My mother of course is fretting when I tell her the news, astonished at my willingness to leave Sophie at the moment. "What on earth are you doing, going there?"

"I'm worried about Amber, mother, she hasn't checked in with Sophie in a while. I must make sure she's alright" I explained firmly, my tone brooking no arguments.

"She's just an undesirable" my mother countered with a shake of her head "who cares if she hasn't spoken to Sophie in a while, I'm sure she's been busy. Heck, she's probably married by now" she added, not knowing how angry that statement would make me.

My father looked just as confused. "I don't get it, but if Sophie is worried about her sister, then so be it. It might even help with her ahem" he coughed looking embarrassed "recovery from the miscarriage."

I grinned. My father, was, of course, being the soft-hearted man that he usually was. My mother looked indignantly at him. "It's going to be a complete waste of time," she said with an arched brow "but if you feel you must, then go for it."

"I'll be back later tonight" I promised, grabbing hold of my wallet and keys off the study desk and pocketing them. My mother gave me a gentle hug while my father shook my hand. "Good luck" was all he said, "and let us know how Amber is."

I walked towards my car, a bright red Ferrari, marveling at its beauty as I slid into the passenger seat and started the engine. It roared to life and I peeled out, heading for the main road and towards Alpha Rowan's pack. It was a fair amount of time, before my car was stopped before the boundary, the patrol warning me to remain seated.

"State your business" growled one of the men.

"I'm here to see Alpha Rowan. Tell him that Darius is here, he should know who I am" I said drily. I was fairly certain Rowan would remember my presence from last time.

It took several minutes of mind-linking before they permitted my car to go forward, toward the pack house, where Alpha Rowan was evidently waiting. He stood there, at the front door, his arms folded over his chest and a look of sourness on his face. I smirked to myself. He was making it clear how much he despised me, but that was okay because the feeling was mutual.

"Darius" he greeted me cordially, raising an eyebrow and gesturing for me to follow him inside the house. We walked through several long corridors until we came to the study, where he motioned for me to sit down. He looked at me impatiently.

"Thank you so much for your hospitality," I told Alpha Rowan politely "but may I ask where Amber is? I was hoping to visit her while I was here."

Now he looked disgruntled, a flash of annoyance crossing his face. "I haven't seen her in weeks," he said quietly "since she rejected me, she's been awol. God knows what's happened to her." He sounded slightly miserable as well to my surprise. The man must have really liked Amber and boy had he fucked up if she'd rejected him. I was quite pleased by that, even if I had to try very hard not to show it.

"You have no idea where she is or where she's gone?" I queried, unable to believe it.

"She was heading west through the boundary line. That's as far as I know, after that, she was gone" he said fidgeting with his hands slightly and avoiding my gaze. My eyes narrowed. Was he ashamed? Was that why he couldn't look me in the eyes? I felt more than a little angry towards the man for losing my precious Amber. Now I was going to have to search for her, which would be no easy feat, as there were dozens of packs nearby. She could have gone to any one of them and decided to make a home there. I

sighed. At least I was soon to be Alpha, which meant that the other Alphas of the pack would willingly cooperate with me when I started to search. But it wasn't something I had anticipated, that was for sure.

"We believed she was safe with you," I told the Alpha with a bit of a hiss, "we thought you would keep her here."

He looked at me silently, looking pensive and forlorn. "I tried to keep her here" he pointed out with a grimace "even used my alpha tone on her. Somehow she managed to ignore my commands and reject me."

That was an interesting tidbit of information. How had Amber managed to override an Alpha's directions? It was unheard of for a shifter, any shifter, to have the power to do that.

Suddenly his eyes glazed over and I could tell he was being mind-linked by someone. He jumped to his feet suddenly and his eyes went pitch black. "Rogue attack" he shouted, "stay here" he hissed at me and before I could so much as utter a word or sound, he was out the door and running. I cocked my head and then sighed, getting up and walking to the doorway. Outside I could hear the sounds of shifters as they changed into their wolves and the sounds of shouting and chaos as pack members ran to safety. But it was what I was hearing, very distantly, inside the house, that was enticing me. I walked, with my ears straining, through the pack house, knowing Alpha Rowan could be hours before he came back. I could hear the sounds of distant sobbing and it led to a staircase from behind a door. It of course led to the basement, which would of course also be the dungeon.

I walked downstairs slowly, feeling the balustrade, my feet clacking on the steps as the sobbing intensified. "Hello" I called out, and I reached the ground floor, walking towards the cells, where I could see somebody lying down on a threadbare mattress. I sucked in a breath. It was a woman and she was pregnant, not heavily so, but part of her stomach was slightly swollen and I could detect the baby's heartbeat. She was beautiful, with long hair and big dark eyes that stared at me blankly, pale skin, and a petite body. She was shivering slightly from the dampness and slight breeze through the barred windows.

I eyed her thoughtfully, wondering what kind of crime this woman could have done to be punished in such a manner while pregnant. She stared at me, her eyes widening, her sobs stifled, as she gazed at me with something akin to hope in her eyes.

"Please" she begged me "please let me out of here."

I frowned and stared at the cell, looking down at her shackled arms and legs. There were no keys anywhere that I could see and I still needed to know what she had done.

"What are you in here for?"

She gave me a pleading look. "I used magic on Alpha Rowan to make him believe he was in love with me. I shouldn't have done it" she said sniffing "but I wanted him so bad and all he could think about was that girl Amber. I did what I had to do" she cried, beginning to break down again.

I felt nothing but pity for her. Clearly, she had enlisted the help of a witch to entrap the Alpha, which explained her confinement in these cells, It seemed cruel, to place a pregnant woman in the dungeon though, where the air was damp and smelt dank, the metallic scent of blood in the air. It was surprising she wasn't being sick from the sheer smell alone. It was enough to make me gag and I wasn't pregnant.

"What are you willing to do to be free from here," I asked her as a thought sprang to mind. She licked her lips nervously and gazed downwards, whispering "anything you desire."

It took a minute for me to comprehend what she was offering. I shook my head in repulsion. I certainly didn't want Alpha Rowan's sloppy seconds. Yuck. "That's not what I meant," I told her evenly "I may have a certain, job, I wish for you to do for me, in exchange for your freedom."

She looked hopeful now. She got up and shuffled over to the door of the cell, careful not to touch the bars, even though her flesh was burning where the restraints on her hands and ankles were.

"I will do anything you want, but please you must hurry. Alpha Rowan could come down here any minute now."

"He's busy with a rogue attack," I told her, watching her eyes light up.

"Then now would be a perfect time for me to escape" she breathed "Rowan keeps a key to the cells and restraints in his study, please, please hurry" she pleaded.

I considered her request and then sighed, turning around and making my way back upstairs. I got lost once or twice, making my way to the study and searching the desk for a key. I found it easily, in the top right-hand drawer of the desk, and holding it triumphantly, I made my way back into the dungeon, where the woman was waiting impatiently for me.

"About time" she hissed and I glowered at her. How dare she speak to me that way! I could always refuse to let her out, but I needed her for my plan.

I brandished the key at her and set to work, undoing the door to the cell with ease. It sprang open with a definitive creak and then she held out her wrists to me.

"Not so fast," I said quietly "first we discuss the job that I have for you."

"We don't have time" she hissed "best we leave first and discuss this job later."

But I wasn't about to let her go and find out she would double-cross me. I undid the shackles only and her ankle restraints, putting the key back into my pocket as she looked at me with daggers in her eyes.

"I'll undo them once we've had our discussion," I said calmly and she glared, before shoving past me and making her way to the stairs. "I hope you have a car," she said hoarsely.

"It's right in front of the pack house," I said "but you're going to have to keep your head down until we're gone. Is that understood?" I asked.

She nodded, waiting for me to get to the front door first. The coast was clear and I led her, while her body trembled and shook, towards the Ferrari, covering her up with a blanket in the passenger seat and then climbing back into the driver's seat and starting the engine. The patrol was still busy with the rogue attack and it was almost laughable how we were able to get out undetected. I knew that Rowan would know it was me who freed her, but I didn't care. What was he going to do? Come to my pack and accuse me? So what, it's not like he had proof. Nobody had seen us leave together.

I pulled up just in front of the boundary line to my own pack and pulled the blanket off the woman who blinked at me before she took in the scenery with a small smile on her face. "I'm free," she said gleefully.

I shook my head. She wasn't going to be free until she agreed to the job I wanted her to do. She held out her wrists and this time I undid them, watching as she threw the offending pieces of metal to the forest floor and rubbed her wrists which were raw where the silver had touched them.

"What is it you want me to do then?" she asked tiredly. She looked exhausted, and haggard, with dark circles under her eyes. I was willing to bet she hadn't slept much or had much of a good meal lately. I was sure she would be more accommodating once I organized for her to get clean.

I leaned forward to murmur in her ear. "You see, I have this wife Sophie..."

Chapter 95 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Stacey POV

I glared down at the young girl writhing on the floor, giving her a good kick for measure. "Will you shut up" I growled as she continued to fight, completely naked except for her underwear as I rolled her over and made sure that she was tied securely. She continued to shout for help in the gag I'd placed across her mouth, muffling sounds that although would not be heard, were still annoying me. I rolled my eyes and then bent down, looking the young girl right in the face. Her big brown eyes were swimming with tears, and her dark auburn hair was matted, and disheveled, her ponytail coming loose. She had freckles all over and she wore a plain bra and panties, her dress or rather uniform, now belonging to me. I smoothed the dress down. It was cute, reminiscent of a maid's uniform, and consisted of a little black dress and white apron with practical shoes. I looked down at the shoes regretfully. Unfortunately, they didn't fit and so I was stuck with the plain black flats that Darius had gifted me with, the clothes I had been wearing, now piled in a closet nearby.

"mmm" mumbled the girl, wriggling in her restraints. I sighed. She really wasn't going to shut up now was she? I thought to myself with a grimace. There was only one thing for it, I bent down over her and swung my fist toward her face, as hard as I could, effectively rendering her unconscious. Great, now she was finally silent, I thought to myself smirking. I cursed under my breath as I moved her towards the closet. For such a tiny thing, she sure was heavy. I plopped her inside the closet and shut the doors carefully. With luck, she wouldn't wake up until I had completed my task. My right hand checked the pocket of the dress and I sighed in relief, finding the small vial that I needed still in there.

I opened the door to the hallway and peered out carefully. There were servant girls milling about the pack house and it was nothing to blend in with them all. But I had someone in mind, someone specific I

needed to find and I walked, towards the kitchen, where a servant girl was busy wiping down the kitchen.

"Excuse me," I said ever so politely "but Master Darius and his wife have requested that I bring them some sweet tea."

The girl looked a little surprised. "Sure, just give me a moment to organize it. Where are they?"

"They are outside, I can take it out there if you show me where to get everything."

The girl, a mousy-looking thing with light brown hair and big blue eyes, began to scramble, grabbing a tray and several cups, plus a pitcher of sweet tea. I wondered about the drink and why it was kept so readily at hand.

The girl read my mind. "Miss Sophie is partial to sweet tea," she said quietly ", especially on warm days."

She loaded me up with the tray and led the way to the front door. She opened it for me so I wouldn't have to struggle with the tray in my hands.

I gave her a grin and a smile. "Thanks a lot" I gushed cheerfully.

The girl smiled back. "Anytime, say hi to Darius for me" she said with a squeak, pointing at her name tag. Of course, her name was as plain as she was. It read simply, Jane.

"Sure, I'll do that," I said, turning my back and rolling my eyes.

The grass was soft and lush and I struggled to make sure I didn't accidentally turn my ankle or sink into it. The glasses clinked together and I was relieved that the pitcher didn't roll over or spill. I headed in the direction that Darius had instructed me to, a small cabin on the outskirts of the woods, where he had planned to get Sophie and himself alone together. When I got there, I could hear the sounds of voices inside, and being me, decided to eavesdrop.

The soft, musical voice had to be Sophie's. "Darius, what are we doing here? I think you've made it perfectly clear that you have no interest in what happened. Heck, it's all your fault that I lost the baby."

Darius's voice "I apologized for that Sophie. I lost control, Can you blame me? You basically accused me of cheating on you. When it couldn't have been further from the truth."

Sophie's voice "Liar. I know you've been cheating on me, don't deny it. You're not a very good liar Darius."

Darius "I haven't cheated on you. Would you stop being so damn paranoid? I brought you out here so that we could spend some time together and have some privacy."

I was intrigued by their discussion. Darius had given me most of the sordid details of their relationship with one another, but he hadn't told me that Sophie had lost a baby. Part of me suspected that he was responsible, as Sophie claimed. Especially since he seemed to be enamored with Amber, the same as Rowan. But what had he done to her, to make her lose the child? Had he hit her? Made her ingest something? Or was she merely blaming him for something that was little more than a tragedy?

"Sophie, please, you're going to be Luna soon. Don't you think we should put what happened behind us and find a way to get along?"

Sophie "I will never ever forgive you for what you did Darius. I don't care how many times you tell me that you're sorry. You're a son of a bitch" she declared.

I had heard enough and quietly knocked on the door, struggling to hold the tray with one hand. A few moments passed and then Darius appeared in the doorway, looking relieved to see me.

"Damnit Sophie if this is how you're going to be," he said loudly with emphasis on his words so that they would carry on the wind "then I'll leave you here alone to stew."

He stomped past me, giving me a wink on the way, and headed directly towards the training grounds. That way he'd have an alibi later when he was questioned. I tentatively walked inside, finding the girl that Darius wanted dead, just inside, sitting at a table, with her head buried in her hands, crying softly.

I quietly placed the pitcher of sweet tea on the table, and she hastily wiped her eyes and then looked up at me. She was a gorgeous, dainty little thing, with golden blonde hair that cascaded down her shoulders and all the way down to her tailbone. Her eyes were a vivid blue reminiscent of the sea and she had the palest most creamy skin that I had ever seen. This was none other than the future Luna.

"Forgive me for intruding," I told her gently and she shook her head, wiping her eyes and blinking back tears.

"Not at all," she said politely.

So she was one of those people. Well-bred, wealthy, and polite. Figures. I almost feel a tad bit sorry for her, but only a little bit. I still wanted my freedom too much to back out now.

"Is this for me?" she asked indicating the sweet tea.

I gave a small nod. "Yes, Master Darius ordered it to be brought to you. I am told you are partial to sweet tea" I said with a friendly smile.

My hand crept into my apron pocket, fingering the small vial carefully.

"Well I guess that was nice of him" she muttered sounding frustrated. I noticed her eyes dart toward my stomach which was swollen slightly with the pregnancy.

"How far along are you?" she asked forlornly.

"About four months," I said quietly "the father is no longer in the picture" I added. Well technically that wasn't a lie, but it wasn't the whole truth either. The father was dead and it was my fault, but she didn't need to know that.

"Congratulations," she said wistfully.

I hesitated. "I am sorry for your loss," I told her feeling a little awkward. "I know you must have been looking forward to the birth of your child."

She blinked back a sudden onset of tears. "Thank you. "

I gestured towards the sweet tea as she gazed out the window. "Would you like me to pour you some?"

Slowly, I pulled the vial out. She wasn't even looking at me, let alone the tea. She appeared to be lost in her thoughts. "Please" she whispered "but only if you pour for yourself as well. Please, have a seat" she added quietly. I wondered if she was perhaps a bit lonely. I shrugged and sat down, pouring the tea. A little bit of sleight of hand and the poison was quickly poured into her glass as I gave it to her.

"How long have you been working for Alpha John and Luna Marian?" she asked me with curiosity as she began to sip. To prevent suspicion, I took a long gulp of my own glass.

"About a year" I lied through gritted teeth. Part of me wanted her to hurry up and consume the whole damn glass.

She frowned, taking another sip. "Strange, I don't remember seeing you before," she said.

"Well, I'm sure you don't really take much notice of us omegas," I said pleasantly "and I do tend to work odd hours."

That seemed to placate her and she took a bigger gulp of her drink as I silently rejoiced. "This sweet tea is a tad bit bitter" she commented, "but I guess someone else must have made it this time."

"I'll let them know when I get back, to make it sweeter" I promised, feeling like I was on tenterhooks.

"Thanks," she said smiling "I just prefer it sweet over bitter."

"Don't we all" I laughed, taking a small sip of the drink.

"Do you know what you are having yet?" she asked.

I knew that I was having a girl but I wasn't quite ready to share that yet. "No idea," I said with a shrug "but as long as it's healthy then it doesn't really matter to me."

She sighed. "I felt the same way" she murmured "I just wanted a healthy child."

Come on, come on, I thought to myself, glancing at the window, hurry up and drink already!

She took another long sip of her drink, placing it gently down on the table. "Darius thought this cabin would make the most romantic getaway," she said a little bitterly, waving her arms around "but it's just a cabin, one that's been empty for months. Could it be any less romantic" she demanded.

Oh Darius, you really know how to pick them don't you, I thought with a sigh.

"No it's not that romantic" I admitted to her.

She picked up her glass, downed it, and slammed it down like she was in a bit of a temper as I cringed. I wanted to laugh. She'd finally done it, she'd consumed the poison. It would take effect almost immediately.

Sure enough, she stood up and wavered on her feet, much like a drunken imbecile at the pub. Her mouth opened in astonishment and she gaped at me. "Wait, what" she slurred, before dropping to the floor on her knees. Her mouth began to froth and then she collapsed onto her back, staring up at the ceiling as I walked over to her side. She raised a shaking hand, pointing it at me. I smirked, no longer needing to pretend to be nice. "Darius sends his regards" I whispered into her ear as she began to convulse, writhing on the floor. Within moments her heart stopped beating and she died. I felt no regrets. All I wanted was my freedom back, something that was guaranteed now that I had done as I'd been ordered.

I stood up and looked down at the body, feeling a slight pang for how young the girl was. But I also couldn't afford to be seen in here, or captured. I lay the glass next to her, so that they would know she was poisoned and then I made my way towards the back of the cabin, opening the window and then

shifting into my wolf form. I needed to keep going before Rowan found me or Darius changed his mind. Now all I had to do, was figure out exactly where it was that I was going.

Chapter 96 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

It was a dark, dismal day, with thunderclouds rolling overhead. There was a slight chill in the air, and the sky was bleak, matching everyone's mood perfectly. I flashed back to yesterday afternoon when Sophie's body was discovered by another omega no less.

We heard the screams first, coming in from the southwest, all of us puzzled by the sound. Well except me, I had been expecting it and had been on tenterhooks waiting for the inevitable sounds as someone found her. A young omega girl, with auburn hair and dark brown eyes, came crashing through the grounds, near the training ring, hysterical, her hair disheveled, her clothes slightly torn from branches as she'd run.

"The Luna" she babbled, falling to her knees as she was surrounded by curious pack members and the patrol "the luna is dead" she cried, placing her head in her hands and sobbing wildly. I strode over to her, grim-faced, hauling her up by the arm "what is the meaning of this? What on earth are you talking about?" It wasn't the Luna she meant obviously but the luna to be.

"Your wife" she sobbed, pointing behind her towards the cabin near the outskirts of the woods "your wife Sophie is dead, Master Darius" she cried.

I dropped her arm and turned towards patrol. "Fan out, whoever is responsible for her death may still be here. Gather up any strangers that you find" I ordered, striding towards the woods, several patrol members behind me, the omega still crying where she sat.

I entered the cabin cautiously, finding the pitcher of sweet tea overturned and the glasses both empty of liquid. Sophie lay on the ground, splayed out, foam at the corner of her mouth. Her big blue eyes were clouded over and she stared blankly at the ceiling, her body still and completely immobile. I knelt down beside her, checking her pulse, and then closed my eyes in regret. There was no pulse, she was gone. I was careful to act the part of the grieving husband as I gathered her up in my arms, closing her eyes with one hand and turning to the other men who awaited instructions.

"My wife is dead," I said harshly "and I want the person responsible to be found, is that clear?"

A search party was started. Another omega was found, in her underwear in a closet, tied up and restrained, as well as gagged. She babbled on nonsensically about a woman who had knocked her out and taken her clothes. The patrol began to search for the woman using the omega's description but Stacey, thankfully, was long gone, after having completed her task. I wasn't surprised when they didn't find her, grateful she'd run off and put as much distance as possible between herself and my pack.

The funeral was set for the next day, the whole pack surrounding myself, my mother and father, and Clarissa who was now weeping silently beside me.

"We are gathered here today to mourn the loss of our beloved Sophie Henderson" began the minister and I blinked back tears, trying to comfort Clarissa who was beside herself.

"Why" she sobbed pathetically, as my mother also tried her best to comfort her "why would anyone want to hurt my Sophie" she sniffled.

Beta Mathew was on the other side of the pack, swaying slightly on his feet, already drunk the poor bastard. He was glowering at Clarissa who had served him divorce papers, looking upset as his daughter was put to rest.

The crowd began to disperse as the coffin was laid down in it's resting spot, the earth being flung onto it by members of the pack as they walked past. Beta Mathew made his way to our side and I cringed, knowing he would cause a scene, but not blaming the man in the slightest for it.

"This is your fault" he hissed at a startled Clarissa who blinked her big blue eyes at him, her lip quivering in distress as she straightened her shoulders to glare at the man.

"You wanted her to marry him" he snarled, pointing at me as my father moved to intercept him.

"Now, now" soothed my father "we're all upset," he said quietly trying to avoid a fight.

"Upset" barked Beta Mathew "I'm more than a little upset," he said slurring his words, swaying back and forth on his feet "my daughter is dead and I blame all of you for it" he hissed.

"Please, just stop," said Clarissa, with a sob "this isn't the time or place Mathew" she hissed, gesturing towards the coffin which was gleaming despite the darkness of the sky and the lack of sunlight.

"I think now is a perfect time," said Mathew loftily "don't you Darius? I mean look at you," he said quietly poking me in the chest as I stumbled slightly backward "you don't even look that sad for a man that's lost his wife" he snarled. "I bet you had something to do with it, didn't you?"

My mouth fell open but Clarissa stunned us all, stepping forward and slapping Beta Mathew with all her strength in the face. Smack. We all cringed as we saw the bright red open hand mark on his cheek, the Beta putting a hand to his cheek in shock, staring at his ex-wife in astonishment.

"Our daughter has just been buried" Clarissa snarled "show some damn respect for once in your life, you drunken fool."

For once Mathew seemed speechless. My mother looked at Clarissa with something akin to pride in her eyes. She loved it when Clarissa showed some back bone and spunk, especially towards her ex-husband.

"How dare you" stammered Mathew finally.

My father had had enough now, grabbing hold of Beta Mathew's arm and spinning him around the other way, turning him so that he could see the coffin. The man crumpled to his knees. "Sophie" he whispered "Sophie" and began to cry loudly and noisily.

"I'll stay with him," my father said grimly "the rest of you go to the wake at the house."

Clarissa gave a sob and my mother enfolded her in her arms, hugging her tight and walking beside her as they walked towards the pack house. I wiped my eyes, which were red and puffy from pretending to cry, and began to walk behind them. We walked in silence, all of us, my father standing beside Beta Mathew who had lost it completely.

My mother halted at the door "I'll see you inside in a moment" she murmured to Clarissa who was holding up well considering the circumstances.

Clarissa gave a nod and then disappeared inside, but not before shooting me a suspicious look. Did she blame me, as well, for her daughter's death? Or did she suspect me for being the one to organize it?

My mother reached out and grabbed me by the arm. "Darius," she said, with tears in her eyes "I can't believe that Sophie is gone. I can't imagine how you're feeling. First the loss of your unborn child, and now, the loss of your wife. I'm so sorry son" she whispered. I patted her on the shoulder, feeling awkward.

"It's difficult for me to say much" I choked out, "but I want to thank you and father for your help in organizing the funeral and helping me to grieve."

My mother looked touched. "Of course Darius, we would do anything to help you, you know that" she breathed "we were so looking forward to our grandchild and for you and Sophie to become the Alpha and Luna of the pack. If there's anything you need, anything at all, just say the words and we'll help you with whatever it is. Ignore the rumours" she advised me, looking a bit stricken "I don't believe for one minute you had anything to do with Sophie's death. I know how much you loved her, the pictures you took on your special honeymoon attest to that."

The pictures on the honeymoon were a lie. A way to keep Sophie from constantly feeling like she was nothing but second best to Amber. I had played the perfect role of a loving husband who had forgiven his wife all her indiscretions and for forcing him to marry her. I had told Sophie back then, that I would give us both a chance and while I had been willing, my thoughts had been on Amber the entire time. Still, the pictures showed me adoring her and showed that I had loved her if only for a short while. My alibi was concrete, having been at the training ring when Sophie was discovered, but it hadn't stopped the gossip mill from saying I had something to do with it. I would find out who was talking like that and stop them from continuing to malign me, but it looked like mother was already doing that.

"Thank you mother, for everything" I said quietly, "but now I must focus on the future and what it means for me."

She looked a little taken aback. "Of course" she stammered "but you don't have to think about that now, Darius, today is a day for grieving and mourning. Your father still has every intention of making you Alpha of the pack soon. But for now, let's just grieve the loss of your beautiful wife."

I gave a small nod and that seemed to placate her, as she turned and walked into the house, no doubt searching for Clarissa. I could hear her weeping from the front entryway and I flinched, not wanting to join the crowd in the pack house. But it had to be done and I forced myself to keep walking into the living room and join the crowd of pack members who all began to offer me their sympathies. My mother watched me approvingly from across the room as I shook hands, and hugged people, some of whom were complete strangers to me. By the time the room was empty of people, I felt drained and exhausted, not wanting to hear one more damn word of sympathy or well wishing.

Clarissa went to lie down, leaving me with mother and father, Beta Mathew having stumbled drunkenly back to his own place earlier apparently. "So son" my father said quietly "what are your plans now?"

I gave them a small smile. One that didn't quite reach my eyes. "Well I was thinking" I drawled, glancing at my mother who was pale as a sheet and looking tired "that I would try and find Amber."

"Of course" my mother murmured "no one knows where she is, so she doesn't know about the funeral or her sister's death" she said sadly.

"Poor thing will be so shocked when she finds out" muttered my father.

I took a deep breath. "I of course, want to be the one to tell her, I think I owe it to Sophie" I said with a hint of concern "she would want her sister to know. Sophie and Amber were so close" I exhaled, shaking my head regretfully "Amber is going to be devastated when she finds out."

My mother sighed. "I think I might want to go and lie down. It's been a very big day" she said softly, turning to me and placing a hand upon my arm "if you should need anything, anything at all. . ." she trailed off.

"Yes," father joined in "anything at all you just say the word son."

"I will" I promised them, watching as father took hold of my mother's hand and gently tugged her towards the stairs. I waited until they were gone and then poured myself a bourbon, downing it back in one gulp. It was refreshing but also burnt the throat slightly it was that strong. I poured myself another and sat down on an armchair, folding my legs over. Thank god the funeral was over and done with. I didn't know how much longer I could pretend to play the grieving husband today and thank god I hadn't

let anything slip. I sipped at the bourbon thoughtfully. Now all I needed to do was find Amber and the baby of mine she was carrying. That shouldn't be too hard and wouldn't my parents be pleased to find they were expecting a grandchild after all? Even if it was from a person they least suspected.

Chapter 97 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Rowan POV

We sit in the car, tight-lipped, my father Teddy looking absolutely furious with me. He looks so much better now. His skin doesn't look translucent and pale anymore, but rather tanned and slightly golden, his hair no longer shaggy but gleaming and full of vibrancy, his eyes sparkling in spite of his anger, his body beginning to fill out instead of his stick-thin weak physique from the hospital. Amber had healed him before leaving and I couldn't be more grateful to her for what she had done for him. Teddy, on the other hand, was angry that I had let Amber slip through my fingers.

"I just can't believe it," Teddy said sadly, "she was so perfect for you Rowan. How could you have chosen Stacey over someone like Amber? She was just so damn angelic" he commented.

I sighed. We had been over this more than once and no amount of telling him that I'd been under a spell had swayed the man into feeling sorry for me.

"You should have known better" he barked, staring out the window, his lips curled back in a snarl. "The mate bond is sacred, damnit" he hissed.

"I said that I was sorry" I snapped "alright, she should never have slipped through my fingers, but I don't have time to keep arguing with you right now."

My father fell silent and I could feel his disapproving gaze from here. He was beyond pissed at me, not that I could blame him. He had really enjoyed Amber's company and I knew he'd been a big fan of hers.

"Where are we going anyway?" my father said grumpily. He hated long car rides and would have much preferred that we run to the pack we were traveling to in wolf form.

"We" I snarled "are going to see Darius, Amber's ex-boyfriend. He has to be the one who released Stacey from the dungeon. The question is why" I muttered under my breath "what could she have possibly offered him in exchange for her freedom?" The boy had been a foolish mutt, releasing the bitch from my dungeon while I had been busy with a rogue attack. As if I wasn't going to know it was him.

"Who cares if Stacey is gone? How much damage can she possibly do now that she no longer has a witch to do her bidding?" asked my father puzzled.

"I care," I said heatedly "she lied to me and put me under a spell. She deserves to be punished for that."

We stopped inside the boundary line, a swarm of warriors preventing the car from going any further. A tall man, heavily muscled, with the physique of a Viking, stepped beside the window.

"State your business," he said tiredly.

I made a mental note to inform Alpha John of his men's boredom in patrol. Someone who had slow reflexes and didn't care much for the job could get another man killed.

"I'm Alpha Rowan Craven and I'm here to see Darius," I said firmly, my eyes almost pitch black as I bored holes into the man's eyes. He gave a little shrug and I saw his eyes cloud over. I waited impatiently, my fingertips drumming on the steering wheel, while my father readjusted his seat trying to get more comfortable.

The warrior's eyes became clear again. "Alpha John has permitted for you to proceed," he said gruffly "please go right to the pack house."

I put the engine back into gear and peeled off, driving straight towards the elegant mansion of a pack house and parking right in front of it. Somehow I wasn't too surprised to see that Darius was waiting by the front door, his arms folded over his chest and a smirk on his damn face. My father awkwardly got out of the car.

"Father," I said firmly "go into the house."

He vanished inside. The second he did, I raced over to Darius and grabbed hold of the teenage boy by the neck, squeezing it tightly, seeing a red haze in front of me, I was that angry.

"Where is she?" I demanded, watching his feet dangle uselessly, his fingernails clawing and scratching at my hands "where is the little bitch?" I hissed "I know it was you that let her out."

"Alpha Rowan" came a shocked voice, Alpha John stepped out of the house, and looked at me in shock "I must ask that you release my son immediately."

I hesitated, then dropped the boy to the ground, turning towards the other alpha with my lips curled back "your son is responsible for letting one of my prisoners escape."

Darius coughed and spluttered from his place on the ground. His mother, Luna Marian, came up beside Alpha John, looking displeased as she eyed me.

"What proof do you have?" asked Alpha John, glancing down at his son with a warning look in his eyes.

"He was the only one in attendance besides my people the other day. I was busy with a rogue attack and your son took advantage of that fact to release my prisoner."

"He's lying" coughed Darius "and I find it insulting that he would go this far."

His father looked thoughtful. "You did go to Alpha Rowan's place the other day" he rumbled "and came back in a hurry. Darius are you sure that he's not telling the truth?"

Darius hesitated. "I'm telling you that it's all lies" he exclaimed.

My father stepped outside and grimaced. "I hate to say it, but Rowan is being truthful. So at the moment it's a case of he said, she said" he muttered.

Alpha John gave a grim nod. Luna Marian looked pained. "So what do we do about this?" asked Alpha John.

Darius stumbled to his feet. He glowered at me. I smirked at him, reveling in his bright red face and disheveled appearance. "I challenge you to a fight" he snapped at me.

I stared at him incredulously. Did the little pup really think he could beat me? I, an experienced Alpha who trained regularly? His father was also rather incredulous. "Darius I don't believe that's the ideal solution."

"No" shouted Darius, backing away and looking me straight in the eyes, "he thinks he can just come over and make a fool out of me."

"Rowan," said my father disapprovingly "don't kill him."

Luna Marian turned towards her husband who merely sighed and shook his head. "It's his lesson to learn" was all he would say. Darius was clearly impatient, no longer happy to wait around and before anyone could stop him, he shifted into his pure black wolf form, which was several inches shorter than my own.

Daemon was more than happy to take control and I shifted, my paws thudding loudly against the floor. Luna Marian, Alpha John, and my father stayed by the door as Darius and I began to circle each other, Darius's jaw clenched tight. I waited for the perfect opening and then struck, jumping onto his back and swiping furiously down, leaving a long gash along his midsection as I dropped to the floor and rolled away, facing him once again. Darius didn't look so cocky now, racing towards me as I dodged to the side and swiped again, getting him across his hind legs and eliciting a small whimper from him.

I cocked my head to the side and watched his form, knowing he was tensing his body to take a leap. I met him in mid-air, clawing and biting, Darius getting several hits of his own as we fell to the ground. I backed away, heaving and panting, blood trickling from several small gashes, my fur matting with blood. Darius looked the worse for wear though, blood beginning to pool beneath him. He let out a low ferocious growl, that made birds leave their perches in flight, trees swaying from the sound. I tensed, preparing myself, and dodged, jumping up and landing on his back, my jaws biting down on his neck, He sent me flying into a nearby tree and I hit it with a large thudding noise, my body dropping to the floor.

I got to my feet and eyed Darius warily. He was strong, stronger than I imagined but not as strong as Daemon and I were. This time, I waited until he got on top of me and then bucked, sending him crashing into a nearby tree, his body thudding to the floor. I heard Luna Marian give a shriek of distress and saw

my father and Alpha John doing their best to comfort her as she turned her face away, a hand to her lips.

Would this pup never give up? Did he not understand that he couldn't win? For he wasn't giving up quite so easily and I was impressed with him, despite myself. I noticed he was limping slightly on his hind leg and knew that he'd broken a bone when he went crashing into the tree. The blood was pouring faster now as well, staining the forest floor and debris as we fought. Darius raced towards me, and I jumped up high, leaping into the air, landing on his back, and digging my claws in, to prevent him from bucking me off. My jaws clenched tight around his neck. Forfeit, I thought to myself furiously as he wriggled and writhed beneath me, forfeit and acknowledge that you have lost.

He continued to fight, before his body completely slumped on the floor, my jaws slowly and reluctantly letting go. Blood pooled around his body. I heard Luna Marian give a shout of anger "you've killed him you bastard" as I slowly changed, my bones shifting and breaking, readjusting to my human form. I stood there, naked, vulnerable, Darius doing the same so that he lay naked on the floor. I knelt beside him and checked for a pulse. He was still breathing. Good, I hadn't killed him by accident then. He coughed and spluttered where he lay.

"Tell me where she is?" I asked quietly as he moved his head to peer up at me, blinking against the bright sunlight.

"Don't know" he heaved "she didn't tell me where she was going."

I frowned at him in annoyance. All this fighting had been for nothing then. Why had he instigated the fight, when he couldn't even give me the answers I needed! Sure I was angry at him and had been spoiling for a fight, but it didn't need to come to this.

Luna Marian shoved past me. Darius' eyes were fluttering open and closed. I looked down and noticed he was losing quite a bit of blood and fast. "Darius" she wailed "my poor baby."

Alpha John was quicker, racing over to grab hold of his son, and cradling him to his chest. "Mind=link the hospital" he growled at Luna Marian whose eyes were clouded over as she began to do just that. He stopped beside me for a moment, holding fast to his son.

"I don't blame you for the fight," he said hurriedly "Darius started it but I must ask you to leave for now."

"I understand," I told him, watching the man's eyes alight with relief. He began to run across the grounds, so fast he was almost a blur, heading towards the hospital I assumed. Luna Marian began to follow behind him, her eyes are no longer cloudy. She shot me a look filled with daggers and loathing over her shoulder, before joining her husband's side.

My father let out a low whistle "well son, that was no help for you at all was it" he said with a shake of his head as we walked towards the car. "I take it you learned nothing?" he asked.

But I wasn't so sure. Stacey wasn't the kind to go to other packs when she knew I might be looking for her. She was smarter than that. If she hadn't told Darius it meant she hadn't trusted him either. Where would a shifter go, to seek sanctuary, when they weren't wanting to be a rogue and needed to find employment?

Chapter 98 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

He was so sweet. I smiled to myself as I accepted the large bouquet of purple roses, my favorite flowers in the whole world, sniffing them appreciatively as I placed them into an empty vase on the dresser. I still slept in a guest room and Stefan hadn't been pressuring me at all to sleep in the same room as him, being a perfect gentleman. Perhaps, I thought a bit forlornly to myself, he was being way too kind and too gentlemanly. I kind of wished he would make some sort of move, to cement our relationship a bit further, but I wasn't quite sure what it was that I expected of him.

"Aren't they beautiful" beamed Teresa from her spot on the bed. We had been having a grand time chatting away and I was being naughty by keeping her from her duties. But what was the point of being Stefan's mate, if it wasn't to occasionally flaunt my status? I doubt Teresa would have been loaned to me otherwise. I didn't like drawing attention to the fact I was Stefan's mate, sometimes it felt awkward doing so, but the more I spent time with the man, the more I was falling deeply, madly, in love with him.

"You're so lucky," Teresa said with a sigh and a wistful expression on her face "I wish I had someone to buy me flowers and send me little love notes."

I smiled at her. "One day you'll find your mate, just like I have and I bet he's going to be worth the wait" I added.

"Still though," Teresa said enviously "I mean, your mate is the Vampire King for heaven's sake. He's the dreamiest man alive" she almost squealed as I rolled my eyes.

I mean she wasn't wrong about the dreamy part. All I had to think about was Stefan's heavily muscled body and his brown hair, the way he smiled, or the darkness of his piercing eyes, and my mouth would go dry. Just touching him was enough to send tingles down my spine and the sparks that flew between us were like fireworks. I couldn't imagine how I'd respond to him if I slept in the same bed as him. Just the mere thought of him, sleeping in the nude, with nothing but a blanket covering him, was enough to make me drool. I blinked my eyes and looked over at Teresa who was giggling at me.

"Earth to Amber" she was saying with a laugh "you were thinking about Stefan again weren't you" she teased as I threw a pillow at her.

"Maybe," I said with a grin "but it's his fault for sending flowers. Teresa, why can't I stop thinking about Stefan so much? My heart races every time he comes near me" I sighed.

"Because you love him," Teresa said calmly "and you're too afraid to say it."

I was afraid to say the words. Past experience had taught me that love was fickle and could be gone within an instant. Darius had taught me that it didn't matter how badly you loved someone, sometimes it wasn't enough. He certainly hadn't fought very hard to keep me as his girlfriend and it had hurt, so bad when I had seen him marry my sister. The pain of my past still lingered. Not to mention then there was Rowan who fought the mate bond instead of giving in to it. He hadn't wanted to make a decision and had left me basically waiting, for him to make a choice between me and his ex-girlfriend Stacey. I had understood he had been in a difficult position, it couldn't be easy when your ex claimed to be pregnant with your child, but it also hadn't been easy for me to be stuck in what I liked to refer to as being in limbo.

"Yes, I love him" I admitted sheepishly "but what if he changes his mind and doesn't want me, Teresa? What if the council manages to change his mind? "

Teresa shook her head at me, her auburn hair bouncing from its ponytail "the man is crazy about you. There's no way that the elders will manage to convince him otherwise. He chose you Amber, and he's been keeping his promises, hasn't he? Didn't he come past and steal you for a walk in the woods the other day?"

"Yes" I answered with a gentle smile, remembering the way we had walked and talked for what seemed like hours "but then he got interrupted with more business to take care of," I said with a grimace.

Stefan sure was busy a lot, but I supposed that came with being the King. Not to mention he was still persuading the elders that I would make a perfect queen, something I wasn't so sure about. What did I know about being queen? Especially to a different race than my own? My hand crept to my stomach which was churning with nerves. I wondered what Stefan was up to at the moment and whether he would come and see me shortly.

"He is the king," Teresa said wisely, "he will always have a lot to do, but he does make you a priority Amber, which should tell you how he feels. It can't be easy in his position, to steal time away to spend with you."

She leaned forward and searched my eyes a wry smile on her face "what was it like to kiss him?" she asked with curiosity. "Were you just blown away by it? Did he sweep you off your feet?"

"You read too many romance novels," I said laughing out loud. Then I stopped and thought about it. I remembered the softness of his lips as they touched mine, the way his hand had twined in my hair bringing my face closer to him, the way his tongue had lightly caressed my own, and the possessive way his hands gripped my arms, holding me in place. I blushed just thinking about it.

"With a love life like mine, can you blame me" laughed Teresa "romance novels are about as much action as I'm going to get?"

A voice sounded from the doorway, startling us both. "That sounds a bit sad," said King Stefan, leaning against the doorway, a wicked grin on his face as he folded his arms and surveyed us both.

"King Stefan" gasped Teresa, getting up off the bed and giving an awkward curtsy, her cheeks a bright blushing red "forgive me" she stammered.

Stefan waved her apology away. "No apologies necessary. I believe I am the one who is interrupting your little ahem" he coughed looking amused "chat."

"Nonetheless, I should get back to the kitchen and my duties. It was really nice visiting you Amber. Your highness" she babbled, curtsying again.

"Oh Teresa" I started to say, protesting that she didn't need to go, but she disappeared out the door in a flurry of activity, pushing past Stefan who raised an eyebrow.

"She seems like a nice girl" he commented as he unfolded his arms and stood upright "a bit nervous though" he muttered.

I hid my grin. Stefan didn't seem to realize that the reason that Teresa was so nervous was because of his presence. Barely anything flustered her otherwise.

"She's my best friend," I told him honestly. "I don't care that she's an omega, you don't mind do you?" I asked a bit worriedly, biting my lip. I mean he didn't seem like a snob, but then who knew? He might think he was superior to omegas and not like me mingling with them. Not that that would stop me from seeing Teresa but I wasn't wanting to rock the boat either.

"Mind," he said puzzled "why would I mind? A lot of the omegas are lovely people" he mused "and I'm glad you've managed to find a friend that you can confide in. "

I smiled at him thankfully. "Thank you for the flowers," I told him, indicating where they were on the dresser "they are beautiful by the way."

"You told me you loved purple roses when we were walking in the woods," he said with his eyes twinkling "and I remembered."

He reached out and took hold of my hand, pulling me gently to him. I willingly went to him, my face mere inches from his own.

"God I've missed you" he whispered lovingly, gently stroking my hair "you won't believe what kind of day I've had."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

He shook his head resolutely. "No" he murmured, "I'd much rather do this."

He pulled me to him and bent his head, mashing his lips against mine as I moaned from the delicious taste of his lips and the intoxicating scent of him. He smelt so delicious, so divine, and his tongue delved inside my mouth, demanding access which I willingly gave him. He lightly touched my tongue and began to caress it, his hand going to the back of my neck and tugging lightly on my hair. I raised myself on tiptoes, locking both hands behind his neck and giving back as good as he gave, reveling in the small growls he gave me as we lost ourselves in the pleasure.

I was in a daze. All I could do was feel, wanting more, craving him as I'd never craved a man before. His hands gripped my arms tightly, while I continued to plunder his mouth back, my hands touching and stroking his hair. He was like an aphrodisiac, I couldn't get enough of him. I felt his hand moving up to cup my breast and gave a hiss of satisfaction, my nipple becoming hard as I became highly aroused.

"God" he panted "you taste so damn good."

He pulled back and I gave a small mewl of protest, not wanting to break the contact. He leaned his forehead against mine. "Sorry princess," he said quietly "but if we keep going, I can't be responsible for what happens next, and let me tell you, it involves that bed there" he pointed to the bed in the room "and our very naked bodies."

I felt a flash of excitement at that thought, my ardor cooling slightly. I kind of wished he had led me to the bed. Then I felt his fangs at my shoulder and I stiffened, waiting to see what he did next.

"I want to mark you so badly" he growled, "get rid of this mark that was left on you by that son of a bitch Alpha Rowan, and show everyone that you're mine and mine alone."

I shivered at his words.

"Do it" I told him hoarsely, surprising even myself "do it, Stefan."

He hesitated, his fangs still above the nape of my shoulder, his dark eyes piercing mine "are you sure?" he asked slowly "because once I've marked you, you're mine forever baby girl."

I met his eyes squarely. "Do it" I hissed and then gulped as he slowly lowered his fangs so that they were lightly touching my flesh. Gently tenderly he bit down into my neck as I arched my back and gave a small cry of pain. The feeling of his biting me was intense and painful, making my shoulder throb as he slowly retracted his fangs and licked the wound clean. Both of us gazed down at my shoulder. I don't know what it was that I was expecting. Maybe to see that Rowan's mark disappeared completely, especially after the rejection and everything else that happened between us. But his mark remained, as solid and as dark as ever. Instead, another tattoo appeared one of a tiara, on my shoulder. I gasped, looking over at Stefan who looked a bit put out.

"I had hoped that Rowan's mark would disappear, but apparently it's being stubborn," he said with a scowl.

"I'm sorry" I whispered, hanging my head.

He put a finger beneath my chin and tipped my head up to look at him. "don't be sorry" he told me with a low growl "you have nothing to be sorry for. You still possess my mark and now everyone, who comes into contact with you, knows that you are my mate and future queen."

Chapter 99 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

It was a nice and warm sunny day, the sun was shining, the sky was a beautiful clear blue and birds were chirping happily from their perches on the trees. The castle was quiet for once, the usual hustle and bustle seemingly gone. It didn't make me feel any less nervous though. Instead, I felt grim, detached almost from anything that was happening around me. I was on tenterhooks, waiting for Stefan to appear, and wondering if this was something best done on a different day. But it had to be done. We both needed to know. But what was there to gain from it? Other than finally knowing what it was?

I placed a hand protectively against my stomach and smiled down at the small swell of my belly. I was starting to show now, and my clothes had gotten tighter. Stefan made fun of me, but in a gentle loving way, organizing more clothes for me as I got bigger. I knew I needed to contact my mother and sister at some stage, but I had no desire for Darius to know where I was. I was having second thoughts about him getting custody of the child at all. Why should he get to carry on as though he hadn't hurt me? Why should I make it easy for him, considering he'd dropped me like a hot potato for my sister? Not to mention he was having a baby of his own. I felt like I'd been too much of a doormat lately and that needed to be changed. I needed to consider my own desires.

"You look nervous" chirped Teresa as I turned to her, raising my eyebrows.

"Of course I'm nervous. The council is still angry that Stefan has chosen me to be queen. There's no telling what they will do once they find out that he's marked me as well."

"Isn't it cool though? Although I don't understand why you've got two marks instead of just one" murmured Teresa thoughtfully.

I didn't understand either. I had assumed, Stefan as well, that when he'd marked me that Rowan's mark would disappear, considering I had rejected him. But had he accepted the rejection? That part I didn't know, I had just assumed he would have. Why put yourself through the pain of having your mate with someone else if you didn't need to? Not to mention he was with Stacey now. I hoped they were both getting what they deserved, which was living with each other.

"The council aren't going to do anything" Teresa admonished me, from where she was sitting cross-legged on the bed. "I'd be more concerned about that bitch Elaine" she countered "she's going to freak out when she sees your mark. It stands out, being a crown that's for sure."

I frowned. Teresa had a point the crown, or tiara as I liked to think of it, was standing out in contrast to my pale skin. Maybe I should cover it? But Stefan had been so proud to see his mark on me, that I couldn't picture myself doing it.

"She won't do anything" I answered but I wasn't so sure. She was still hanging around the castle, making a nuisance of herself after all.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that. She's always had a crush on Stefan and she was devastated when he broke it off" Teresa said glumly "she was practically telling us she'd be queen when the council invited her back."

"Well unfortunately for her, that's not going to happen," I said quietly, eyeing myself in the mirror and wondering if I should get changed. I was wearing a short blue dress that gathered beneath the bust and then flowed outwards to my hips. It made the bump stand out prominently, but I didn't mind. I liked seeing it, it reminded me of what was growing inside of me.

"Certainly not," said a voice from the doorway. I smiled at seeing Stefan standing there, looking so at ease, a smile on his own face. He glanced at Teresa who awkwardly got up to curtsy.

"I think we can forgo the curtsy," he said hurriedly "Teresa, isn't it?" he asked and she beamed at him.

"Yes, your highness."

I placed a hand against Stefan's arm, admiring the muscles, and looked up into his dark piercing eyes, swallowing nervously as I felt tingles down my spine. Teresa wisely stayed silent, watching in awe as Stefan bent down and pressed his lips against mine, gently kissing me as I felt myself becoming aroused. Just the touch of his hand and the kissing of his lips was enough to turn me on these days. I moaned into his mouth, feeling his hands grip me around the waist and draw me in closer. My breathing became shallow, and his tongue dived inside my mouth as I willingly gave him access, both our tongues darting and winding around each other. I could have happily stayed like that all day, in my mate's arms, but eventually, he pulled back to my disappointment.

"As much as I would love to kiss your gorgeous lips all day," he said, his eyes twinkling with good humor as I licked my lips, "I believe there is somewhere we need to be."

I felt so nervous as I turned to wave goodbye to Teresa who gave me a hug and then shook Stefan's hand to his amusement.

"Congratulations and good luck" she called as we began to walk towards the hospital wing, both of us holding hands, Stefan giving mine a gentle squeeze on the odd occasion as a way to comfort me. My heart was beating fast and my hands felt clammy. I felt my mouth becoming dry.

The hospital wing loomed up ahead and Stefan opened the door, ushering me inside. I walked in and blinked in amazement. It looked exactly like a hospital, from the white walls and ceilings to the nurses bustling about, taking care of patients sitting in the waiting room. Stefan held tightly to my hand as a nurse, with blonde hair and blue eyes, came walking towards us, a friendly smile on her face. "King Stefan," she said inclining her head and staring at me curiously, "what can I help you with today?"

"My mate Amber is here for an ultrasound," he said evenly, a small smile on his face.

The nurse gaped for a moment and then recovered her composure. "Of course" she stammered, "this way please" she directed us, sending us to an empty hospital room. "If you wait right here, then I'll grab Dr. Cindy," she said ducking back out.

I lay down awkwardly on the bed, Stefan never leaving my side, as he pulled a chair to sit beside me. We were quiet, both of us lost in contemplation. A woman, with long black hair and green eyes, that reminded me a lot of Stacey except for the spectacles she wore, came walking in, holding a clipboard in her hands.

"Amber Henderson?" she asked and I gave a nod, Stefan staying right where he was as the doctor gave us both a wide smile.

"I'm Dr. Cindy," she said introducing herself.

A nurse came in with an ultrasound machine, which she left in the room before leaving herself.

"I assume you are here to find out the gender?" asked Dr. Cindy, eyeing my small bump.

I flushed. "Yes please," I said in a low voice.

"Do you know how far along you are?"

I blushed profusely. "Um, I think about twenty weeks."

"That sounds about right for the approximate size of your bump, but let's take a closer look shall we," she said brusquely, going over to the ultrasound machine and plugging it in. She began to wheel it towards both Stefan and me. I watched her as she began to place gel on the probe.

"The gel will be cold," she told me "can you lift your dress up please."

I felt exposed, wriggling so that my dress was above my bump, blushing as I realized that Stefan could see my lacy underwear, but he took no notice, too busy staring at the ultrasound machine with a frown on his face. I wondered what he was thinking about.

I hissed as she placed the probe, gently it must be said, onto my swollen belly and began to move it around.

I stared in fascination and awe at the machine, watching the monitor closely with Stefan. The image of a baby came up on the screen and I gasped, tears coming to my eyes as I clutched Stefan's hand even tighter.

"Your baby is well developed," Dr. Cindy said, scribbling away on her clipboard "their heartbeat is strong and they appear to be very healthy" she commented, moving the probe around to look at the limbs.

"I would say that your baby is definitely about twenty to twenty-one weeks old" she murmured, as I gave a smile, blinking back the tears. I'd been right but then losing your virginity isn't something that isn't easily forgotten.

"The baby is beautiful" Stefan whispered, bending down to murmur it in my ear.

"Can we please know the gender?" I asked eagerly. I wasn't phased by whether it was a boy or girl, but I wanted to find out. I could picture a small boy much like Darius or a girl that was like me, with bright red hair and green eyes. Either way, I was going to love it, but Stefan was a whole other story. Was I asking too much of him to take this baby on as his own?

"Alright, let's find out the gender," said Dr. Cindy with a knowing smile.

She moved the probe around. I watched, sucking in a breath, feeling a sense of longing.

"Okay, the baby is being super cooperative" laughed Dr. Cindy, "are you ready for it."

Stefan grinned. "We're ready Dr. Cindy, let us know what we're having."

"A boy" declared Dr. Cindy, removing the probe and beginning to wipe it over. She handed me some paper towel to clean myself up and I clutched it, still staring at the now empty screen.

"A boy" I whispered, tears forming in the corner of my eyes.

Stefan grabbed the towel and began to wipe my stomach, tenderly, his eyes meeting mine as Dr. Cindy began to unplug the machine and wheel it away. "A boy" he whispered thickly, sending butterflies fluttering in my stomach.

"Are you happy?" I asked nervously.

He paused for a moment, throwing the towel into the nearby wastepaper basket. Then sat down and leaned back against the chair.

"Am I happy?" he asked slowly and teasingly "I'm ecstatic. We're having a baby boy Amber. I hope he has red hair like yours" he said with an exhale "but even if he doesn't I'm still going to love him as my own."

Now the tears were trailing down my cheeks. I couldn't believe my luck in finding a mate so perfect for me as this one. Already he was starting to come up with baby names as I watched. It was endearing. But I also feared Darius's reaction when he found out that I had found another mate, one who wanted to raise his child. Something told me Stefan was not about to agree to shared custody of the child.

"Um Stefan, what about the father?" I asked tentatively "he wanted shared custody last time we spoke."

Stefan took a deep breath, his eyes flashing a deep bright red. "Is that what you want?" he asked.

I shook my head. "I agreed to it, but I really don't want to," I said in a small voice.

"Then we won't be sharing custody," Stefan said calmly "there's no one around who would deny me and quite frankly the father deserted you, so there's no reason he should get it. I have the world's best lawyers if it comes down to it, but it won't," he said confidently. "Only an idiot would take on the Vampire King."

Chapter 100 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Darius POV

I woke up in pain, the monitors making incessant noises, with all the beeping and shrieks, it was driving me insane. I glared at the white-washed walls and ceiling, knowing I was in the hospital and knowing that one man, that son of a bitch Rowan had put me there. My mother was sitting in the armchair, dozing lightly. I wondered how long she had been there for. My father was awake and as my eyes looked over at him, he got up with ease from his own seat and wandered over, gently grabbing my hand and squeezing it.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Like I got hit by a truck" I rasped, feeling a little ashamed that I had lost the fight. My father said nothing for a moment, but his eyes turned black, a sure sign that he was pissed off.

"Did you really let a prisoner out from Rowan's pack?" he prodded.

I shook my head, lying for all I was worth. "I went looking for Amber remember? I didn't see any prisoners while I was there. Someone else must have let the prisoner go and he's blaming me. Using me as a scapegoat" I said hoarsely.

My father hesitated. I knew he wanted to keep questioning me, but his eyes continued to scan the room and the machines, and I realized he was afraid to push too far while I was in this condition.

I moved experimentally and winced. My ribs felt like they were cracked, and bruised. Surely they would have healed by now? But then again, I had been injured by another alpha and not an ordinary shifter or rogue.

"You're going to be hurting for a while," my father said gruffly, a sympathetic look in his eyes.

"Where did Alpha Rowan go?"

My father narrowed his eyes "Alpha Rowan Craven went back to his own pack. He will no longer be welcome here" he hissed.

"As he should expect" my mother cut in, getting up from the chair and walking over to my bed, gently stroking my forehead from where she stood, on the opposite side of my father.

"Oh, sweetheart" she sighed "you've been through so much, what with the loss of your wife and child. It's really not fair, is it? What a horrible man that Alpha Rowan is."

I shrugged and flinched from the pain. "He was well within his rights, I'm the one who instigated the fight" I admitted sheepishly.

My mother shook her head. "I don't care, he didn't have to injure you so badly" she cried out. "he went overboard."

I personally considered myself lucky, to be honest. If Alpha Rowan had wanted to kill me, then I had no doubts I would be lying in a morgue right now, stone-dead cold. I never should have provoked the man into fighting, but he'd made me so damn furious.

A pretty nurse came sauntering in, clutching a clipboard in her hands. Her gorgeous blue eyes lit up when she saw me awake and she tossed her long brown hair over her shoulder. "You're awake," she said unnecessarily.

"Yes," I said hoarsely as she put the clipboard down and began to check my vitals.

"Your blood pressure is good," she said "and your pulse is steady" she added.

My mother let out a sigh of relief. "So he's going to be okay?" she asked, biting her lip.

The nurse gave her a reassuring smile "I believe that Master Darius is going to be fine. He just needs to remain in the hospital for a few more hours while we observe him and while he continues to heal. He's going to be fine Luna Marian" she added quietly, before giving a respectful nod and sailing back out the door.

There was a tentative knock on the door and we all glanced at the doorway where Clarissa, Sophie's mother, was standing there, leaning against the doorway, looking nervous. Her blue eyes were red and puffy from crying and her blonde hair was disheveled. She had looked like that since the funeral and she hadn't gotten any better it looked like.

"May I come in?" she asked quietly.

"Of course," my mother told her, quietly rushing forward and grabbing hold of Clarissa in a tight hug "how are you doing dear?" she added.

Clarissa gave a watery smile "I'm doing alright" she said quietly "but I would love to visit my other daughter Amber who needs to know her sister has passed away. Darius" she added, looking at me intently "I don't suppose that Alpha Rowan let slip where Amber was?"

I gave a reluctant shake of my head. "He claims she rejected him and just left" I snorted disbelievingly. "But I think he's lying" I added.

Clarissa took a deep breath. "Never mind," she said sweetly, coming over to my side "how are you feeling Darius? It must be painful," she said.

Was it my imagination or did I just see something akin to glee on her face? I blinked but when I looked again, Clarissa just looked concerned and a little worried.

"I'm in a little bit of pain" I answered "but it's not too bad," I said drily.

My father gave me a small pat on the shoulder. "I'm glad son," he said briefly "you gave us quite a scare."

"Yes," my mother said faintly "you lost quite a bit of blood you know."

I did know. I still remembered it trickling from my wounds and pooling beneath me during the fight. It would explain the slight dizziness I was feeling. I settled back against the pillows, content to just lie there quietly. It seemed too much of an effort to talk. Besides, there wasn't much to talk about.

"Perhaps it would be better if I left," Clarissa said shrewdly but my mother wasn't having any of it.

"Oh Clarissa, you're family. There's no need to leave" she said quietly. Clarissa fidgeted with her hands. "Nonetheless, I think I'll go and get a cup of coffee or something. Darius do you want something? John, Marian?" she asked.

"We're fine" my mother assured her and glanced at me "Darius what about you?"

I shook my head. My stomach was churning at the thought of eating something, let alone drinking coffee or anything hot. "Thank you but no thank you, Clarissa," I told her tightly and she gave a small nod and smile, before walking towards the door.

"If you change your minds" she called out over her shoulder "just text me."

"Sure will" my mother called back.

I sighed. My father was still looking at me grimly and I knew he didn't believe a word I said about going looking for Amber or the reason behind it. My mother was distraught, not just by my injuries but at the loss of her future grandchild.

"Mother, father," I said quietly "I went to go find Amber for another reason. One that I know is going to make you angry and annoyed with me."

My mother put a hand to her mouth but my father remained unsurprised and looking nonchalant "I suspected as much" was all he said to me. He was definitely the quiet type my father.

"Well, why did you go then? I mean, what was so important that you had to go looking for that undesirable?" my mother almost snarled in disapproval.

"I went to go and find Amber because she's carrying my unborn child," I said in a rush and waited for the penny to drop as an awkward silence filled the room.

"Unborn child" muttered my father, crossing his arms and glaring at me. "Since when has Amber been pregnant and why is this the first time we're hearing about this?"

I swallowed hard. My mother was pale and trembling, a hand still to her mouth.

"She got pregnant before I married Sophie" I supplied slowly, between gritted teeth.

"Why was nothing said?" barked my father "it would have changed what happened between the two of you."

I flinched. Sorry, Clarissa but I was about to sell you and your husband Mathew out. "Clarissa and Mathew told Amber not to say anything to me or to you both. They wanted it kept a secret so that I would still marry Sophie" I explained tiredly.

My father looked saddened. "It's because she was an undesirable, wasn't it? They wanted Amber gone and they knew we would want the child she was carrying."

My mother's eyes were flashing now "as if I would have let you marry that slut" she hissed "Sophie was perfect for you, do you understand that? She would have made a perfect Luna in the future if she hadn't died."

"Amber would have been perfect, if you had just been willing to see her," I told mother firmly, sitting upright and staring directly into her eyes which were flashing daggers at me.

"There is no way I would have let you marry an undesirable" my mother said hotly.

I gave a chuckle. The irony was that Amber was no longer an undesirable and had her wolf. A rare wolf, it was to be believed if Stacey had been telling the truth.

"She has her wolf now mother," I said drily.

My mother looked stricken. "She does" she stammered "but how is that possible?"

I shrugged. "I don't know but she does. Besides, I thought you would care that she's having your grandchild" I pointed out, watching my mother's lips flatten as she glanced over at her husband.

"I think that we might be needing to get our lawyers involved," she said with a large exhale and grimace "that is if you want custody of the baby Darius? I'm assuming you do because I want that grandchild to be in our lives and I want her away from Amber."

There lay the problem. My mother would do anything to get her hands her hands on her grandchild, but she still wanted nothing to do with Amber.

"Mother, I plan on marrying Amber," I said quietly but with determination, my tone brooking no arguments "you took her away from me once, but I don't intend for you to do that again."

"Marry her," my mother said incredulously. "You cannot be serious Darius!" she stormed.

But I was. I was deadly serious. My father looked thoughtful. "It would be far easier to have Darius marry her if she's willing that is than to have a long drawn-out legal battle over custody," he said wisely.

My mother glowered at him. "I would rather the legal battle," she said sharply "we have the best lawyers. No one would be able to win against us. Not unless she was hooking up with the werewolf king or something and we both know" she laughed "that that would never happen."

"I want to marry Amber" I cut in.

"Don't forget Darius" she said, glancing nervously towards the doorway "that you have just lost a wife and child. You're meant to be in mourning, not thinking about marriage to the sister of the wife you have lost!"

"Screw being in mourning" I hissed "Amber should have been mine in the first place. You should never have interfered in my relationship with her and I won't allow you to do it again."

My mother sighed. My father grimaced at her. Both looked down at me pensively.

"I'll contact the lawyers just in case," Mother said quietly, "in case your plan doesn't exactly come to fruition."

My father nodded "do that but just in preparation. I believe in giving Darius a chance to persuade Amber to marry him. It is what would be best for the child."

We heard a scrambling at the doorway and my mother gasped, but when she went over to check, she saw only a nurse walking away, her heels clacking on the ground. "It's alright" she assured us all, a small smile on her face "nobody overheard us, so we're perfectly safe. "

But we had all completely forgotten about Clarissa by that point.