

## The Alpha's Mate Who Cried Wolf Chapter 160

'We should bathe before we have the meeting,' I say to Reaper.

Queen Maia laughs and points to a little hut, 'That's the bathhouse. Go freshen up.' She looks me up and down and frowns at my grubby, torn dress, 'And I'll have the villagers organise you something to wear,' she smiles.

'Thanks, Maia,' I smile back and retreat to the bathhouse.

The door creaks as I push it open. The wooden tub takes up half the room in the hut. I repetitively push down on the lever to pump the tub full of water. Reaper perches on the edge of the bath as I strip my dress off and step in. I scrub the slobber from my arms and face and then scoop my hands with water to let it trickle over Reaper. His wings expand and shakes. Water ices from his feathers onto the ground. He uses his beak to reach and clean the rest of himself.

As I step out, I hear a faint knock and open the door a tad. There's a plump middle-aged woman holding a dress with a towel folded on top.

'Thank you,' I smile as she pushes it through the gap.

'You're very welcome. It's the very least I can do for a Guardian of Mysteria. I will leave the shoes here outside the door, ready for you to step into,' she says and bows her head.

The towel smells of potpourri. As I continue to dry myself, the aroma tickles my nostrils, and I sneeze all over Reaper.

He opens his wings and gives them a shake before giving me an unimpressed look.

'Oopsies, sorry, Reaper,' I shrug.

I put the modest brown dress on. It reaches my ankles and has a straight cut above my breast, covering my cleavage. The sleeves are long but ruffled at the end. I take the thick leather belt and place it around my waist and buckle it up. I scoop water from the tub again to help rewash Reaper after sneezing all over him. He shakes it off and perches onto my shoulder. I open the door and slide my feet into the simple matching brown shoes that have a darker brown ribbon that is tied into a bow on the front.

I approach Maia and the others who are chatting amongst the villagers.

'Queen Maia and the Guardians of Mysteria. I require the presence of all of you at the pavilion, please. I'm afraid this conversation cannot wait any longer,' I inform them.

Alec takes my hand and walks with me to the large wooden table. The villagers return to their huts or to maintain the village grounds. I'm feeling nervous and having second thoughts about becoming a Goddess. But once we're all sitting, I stand and make eye contact with everyone.

Maia, Kadva, Yiselda, Hugo, Fern, Ria, and even Ember sitting on the chair in her fox form. I can't let them suffer and have their lives taken away so soon. Not just them but all of Mysteria. Saskia and many others have already lost their lives. I can't let the rest of them perish like them, knowing there was and is something I could do about it. I shake my head at any thoughts of backing out, and without this sceptre, I may not even be able to save Magnus, Damon and the others. It's my only choice and the only hope we have. It would be selfish of me to refuse this power and let everyone suffer Thypon's wrath.

Alec squeezes my hand reassuringly as everyone patiently waits for me to speak. I take a deep breath.

'Queen Maia, Guardians of Mysteria. Last night, whilst I was away. Something incredible happened. I was taken to the Celestial Realm, where I met the Moon Goddess, Selene herself, as well as Valkrim, Cerridwen and Ogrun.'

Everyone gasps and chats with one another.

Maia holds her hand up to silence everyone, 'Go on, Nina,' she says in a serious tone.

I nod at her in thanks, 'They are aware of the danger we currently face. They are aware Thypon is here with us. Unfortunately, they weren't able to enter to help us, but instead, they have given us hope by summoning what they call the divine sceptre. They want me and only me to use it. I will explain later as to why, but for now, I am to go and retrieve it and then I will go to Emerald Island to retrieve my book of spells and learn the spell to seal Thypon away forever. Alec, Reaper and Vermillion will go with me in case we face dangers along the way. In the meantime, you can stay here and wait till I return or use the star portals and port to other villages and safely reside there and help prepare other villagers to see to safety if required. Now any questions?' I say and look at everyone as they all suddenly raise their hands.

'Okay... Kadva,' I say.

'How did you meet Selene if she cannot enter Mysteria?' he asks.

'It was while I was asleep in my dream,' I reply.

They look even more confused now.

'Nina, we've all been through a lot recently, especially you. Did you consider your dream was just a dream and that you hadn't actually met Selene?' he says.

'I know it sounds hard to believe, but I can assure you all it wasn't a dream,' I answer.

Lilac raises her hand, 'But how'd do you know?' she asks.

This conversation was not going the way I thought it would. I sigh and facepalm my forehead in frustration and then stare at them all.

'Look, I just know, okay? I feel it here,' I say, placing my hand on my heart. 'And I know in my gut it was real,' I add.

Sir Hugo, all dressed in new shiny armour, taps his fingers on the table. Because he's wearing gauntlets, it's quite loud, and everyone stares at him. 'If Nina's dream was real, we will know when she returns,' he says.

'How?' Ria asks.

'Because if the sceptre she dreamt about exists, she will return with it. It will be proof the deities are watching over us and trying to help,' he answers her.

Queen Maia nods and approaches me. She places her hand delicately on my shoulder and the other on her swelling belly, 'When will you be leaving?' she asks.

'I'm hoping to leave right away if I'm not needed for anything else here?' I ask her.

She smiles, 'Go forth, Nina, retrieve the sceptre and your book of spells. We will be praying for your safe return,' she says.

We hug, and I take Alec's hand as we part and walk toward Vermillion. Just as I approach him, a villager runs to me and gives me a satchel that has a pouch of water, as well as a large chunk of bread and cheese in a thin wrap.

'Thank you so much,' I say to him.

'May the Gods keep you safe,' he bows and scurries away before I can reply.

I place the bag over my shoulder and climb onto Vermillion's back. I feel Alec against my back moments later. I look over my shoulder and smile, 'Ready to save the world?' I ask.

'With you, Nina, I'm ready for anything,' he smirks and winks at me.

I elbow him.

'What was that for?' he scowls, rubbing his rib cage.

'That was to distract you from your mischievous thoughts,' I grin back.

He rolls his eyes, and Vermillion's wings spread out as he lets out a loud screech and flaps his wings, descending into the air.

We fly over small mountains, large fields of flowers and some just fields of grass. Over a small forest. I begin to recognise my surroundings. We aren't far from where the dragons had attacked us. The lands nearby have been destroyed. The skeletons of the dead are scattered across the once lush and to now barren lands. Reaper ices above me but occasionally perches on my shoulder. I notice Reaper and Alec are mind-linking a lot.

I decide to join in, 'What are you two troublesome men conspiring?' I laugh.

'Nothing, we were just talking about...' Reaper trails off.

'The pretty raven of his,' Alec laughs. 'I was giving him some advice and pointers on how to swoon her,' he says.

'Oh, because you're an expert?' I reply teasingly.

He wraps an arm tighter around me, and his other hand glides up my thigh as he gently nips my neck, making me squeak.

'Well, I got you didn't I,' he whispers huskily in my ear.

I blush and slap his hands away. 'I suppose you might have some good advice for Reaper,' I laugh.

Vermillion hovers high in the air as I look at the map. There are mountains everywhere up ahead to the East, but there are also mountains to the North and South.

'If Moon Crest Castle is that way, then Oak paw mountain is to my North over there,' I point.

Vermillion ices towards the mountain to the North. He ices over the top and circles a few times.

'This mountain is massive. We might have to start at the base and walk up towards the peak until we find the sceptre. It could take us days, even weeks, to find,' I grumble.

'You're right. The forest covering the mountain is too dense to see the sceptre from up here. We're going to have to find it by foot,' he sighs, sounding just as dismal as me.

Vermillion ices to the base of the mountain and lands. The trees and bushes nearby shake from his landing. Alec slides down and then catches me as I slide down next.

'Let's spread out a few metres between us to cover more ground,' I suggest.

Alec nods, and with a dash, he is a few metres away.

'You too, Vermilion. You come over this side and start looking,' I say to him. He lets out a whine in protest.

'We will find it quicker if we work together,' I assure him.

Vermilion begrudgingly stomps over to my other side and begins to look at the ground and through the bushes. Reaper ices above us, hoping any sunlight will make the sceptre shimmer or shine from it.