

Chapter 119

My mother was looking at us like we were all idiots but I just shook my head. I didn't know if Dad, Týr or I were even close enough to smell them. It also probably would be even less noticeable since they were half-siblings. Dad looked like he was about to shift as he vibrated in his seat.

"How fucking dare you, Hector! I knew you pined after Auri all these years but you just happened to end up being her mate and have pups? Are you kidding me? I should fucking kill you for the disrespect."

Pipsqueak snorted. "I'd like to see that. Alpha King Logan finally dies because he bit off more than he could chew."

Mother slapped her upside the head. "You're not helping." She turned to Logan. "He didn't do it on purpose. Hector was captured and Oran used him against me. Forced us into heat and tried to use each other against one another. Hector left me in Hong Kong because of his feelings of guilt for what happened between us while we were captured. Hector didn't know about our children until a day before he proposed."

We all looked at Hector. "He made it seem like you left. Like you were the one who abandoned him."

Auri looked at Hector and he sighed. "I mean, I didn't confirm or deny what happened but I guess I made it seem like you left me on my own."

She slapped him in the chest and this time, it looked like she put some power behind it. He leaned over, coughing slightly and shaking his head.

"No wonder they had so little faith in me. I was off, trying to get my power in check, dealing with the changes with our vampire side, turning over Oran's labs, having our pups, and adopting children and they all thought I just abandoned you for it."

"Sorry. I really was broken. I was not in a good headspace." Hector tried to take a deep breath but he struggled.

I took a deep breath. "Alright. So, apparently, there was a lot going on." I smiled. "I'm not saying I forgive you but...I think there may have been more factors in you staying away than just feeling like we didn't need you."

Her smile was huge and I could see the happiness in her eyes. "It wasn't that I didn't think you needed me. It's just that you didn't need me as much. My kids needed me, and I did my best to work behind the scenes. You were always on my mind but I knew you could handle it."

"So then why are you here?"

The happiness that was there a moment before, disappeared almost immediately after my question. A darkness filled in and she leaned forward, lacing her hands together and resting her chin against it.

"The Vampire King is dead." 1

All of us looked at each other, confused.

I brought my ankle up to rest on my knee. "I haven't heard about this. We just spoke a few weeks ago. If anything...we would have heard about it immediately."

"It happened right after you signed the treaty with the Vampire King."

I started to shake my head. "I think you mistaken. I literally have gone in person to see him multiple times. He's alive and well."

My mother looked a little exasperated but she didn't waver. "The person you see as the Vampire King now...is actually Oran."

My heart dropped into my chest and stood up straighter. "What do you mean?"

"Oran has the power to take on someone else's skin. Sadly, that's literal. He wears their skin like a pajama onesie. It's disgusting. Uriel and I discovered the actual Vampire King, Julius, recently on one of our outings to a lab that was nearby. His body was skinned but with Pipsqueaks help, we were able to identify him."

AJ, Jax, and Bryan all look disgusted but I felt the blood drain from my face. Multiple times I had been within close contract of Oran. Shaken his hand and talked about peace between our kind. Somehow, I hadn't noticed and I felt like I should have. I tried to remember all our interactions after the treaty was signed but there wasn't much to our interaction that I felt like stood out that would say this wasn't the current Vampire King. 1

"Wouldn't they know? The other vampires?" Zeke asked, his voice taking on a nervous tone.

"Not necessarily. Their Kings are decided upon, usually by a mix of power, age, and political ability. It's not something that is passed down, nor is it that you killed the last one, that makes you the next one. A few of the older vampires get together as well and put their feelers out for some candidates." Morgan answered him.

Týr leaned forward in his seat. "So the vampire we have been speaking with since the signing of the treaty, has been Oran. Why not just come out and claim the throne? He seems powerful enough to just take it."

"A lot of people aren't happy with him. He's not popular amongst the vampires. Especially with what happened with the BloodHunters and what continues to happen. He's continuously forced vampires to be the villains because of his experiments or his need to built this perfect weapon. If he were to try and take the throne now, I believe even with his followers, he'd get the shit kicked out of him." Morgan answered again but there was an edge in his voice.

I tapped my finger on the table. "So, what's his goal?"

My mother leaned back and sighed, her body seemingly collapsing in on itself. "I think he was raising his army. I think he was trying to use the the Nova 2.0 to bring more to his side, even the odds but that didn't work. Not now. I'm not sure if his plan ever included me to stand by his side and help but it doesn't seem like it. From his mostly incoherent rants, he seemed to want me to take action on the kings of

this world.”

Zeke slammed his hands down on the table and stood up, shock written on his face. “You’re the rumored King Killer? Are you serious?”

His shock bled into me and I looked at my mother. “Mom?”

She took another deep breath. “Yes. Oran gave me the lovely nickname King Killer. That I would be powerful enough to defy any king that came to power.”

Morgan snorted though. “It’s really stupid. It makes it seem like a King even has a chance. If Auri deemed them unworthy, they would be dead where they stood.”

My mother rolled her eyes. “Papa, stop. That’s not true and you know it. I’m not planning on getting involved like that. That’s just what he wants.”

“Exactly. Right now, he’s playing Vampire King. He’s organizing behind the treaty’s back waiting for you to come out and kill him. Then what? Will he take on Uriel’s skin? Or maybe Vale’s?” Morgan was focused on my mother.

She growled at him. “I don’t know what he wants, Morgan. I don’t fucking know. I’m not about to play into his hands though. That’s why I’m here. To talk to Vale, the current Alpha King. I’m not going to dip into this and I’m not going to give Oran the satisfaction. When I kill him, it won’t be in the skin of someone else.”

Without meaning to, she was letting out an enormous amount of power. I struggled against it, but even I had my

head tilted slightly to show my neck to her. Everyone but Hector looked like they were affected by it.


"Love, calm down."

Three words and the power was sucked out of the air within an instant. Mother leaned her head against the back of the chair, her eyes closed. Hector got up and squatted down next to her. He was rubbing her leg and I could tell they were mind linking one another but she didn't react to whatever he was saying. After a moment, he stood up, kissed her forehead and sat back down. She still hadn't moved though.

"So, we need to do something about Oran, hard stop. Whatever his plans are, we need to stop him." I leaned forward on the table and rested my chin on my hands.

"Right. We kill Oran, the vampire's can pick a new King and we can continue with the treaty. We wouldn't need to worry about kids being taken or experimented on. We wouldn't need to worry about Nova 2.0. We wouldn't need to worry about this popping up every twenty or so years every time he feels like he can get away with something. We need to stop him once and for all." Morgan was looking at my mother like she was the answer to all our problems but she still hadn't moved.

I blew out a breath. "So, why don't we just invite the Vampire King out under the pretense of him going back on the treaty? I've already gotten several reports from other packs that the vampires are going back on the treaty and coming into the territory to feed. We just meet him and kill him. Killing the Vampire King would be killing Oran, right? Since he is


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wearing the skin of him?"

My mother moved for the first time and looked at me with a sad look on her face. "Can you kill him, Vale? Are you strong enough to go against one of the oldest Vampires that we know of? Against his power and multiple gifts? You can do that all on your own?"

My heart started to hammer in my chest. Could I?

 Comments

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'We need to make a plan, Vale. If we tried to go one on one with Oran, we would lose. We aren't alone though. We need to plan together.' Naresh piped up for the first time since this morning.

He had been very upset with me over last night, even before I snapped at Zeke. Naresh pretty much went on a silence strike but I felt him sit on the edge of my mind while we were talking about all of this. I was surprised when he didn't feel any issues when our mother said that she was still the Alpha King.

'She never said she was the Alpha King. Just that she still had the Alpha King power. Our mom isn't a threat. She didn't want the crown when she got it and she doesn't want it now. I truly believes she just wants peace. The problem is she has the power to do something about it but Mom is aware of the consequences and repercussions if she does take action.'

I sighed and nodded. 'I guess. I'm still not happy about it.'

Naresh chuckled. 'You're so moody lately. One would think you're on your period.'

I coughed and everyone turned to look at me. My mother had a smirk on her face as though she had heard Naresh but she didn't say anything. Everyone else just looked confused at my sudden choking on thin air. Dropping my foot and sitting closer to the table, I looked around at everyone.

"So we need a plan. We need to work together. In order to keep this peace that we have finally managed to reach, we need to step forward and get rid of Oran."

"Duh." Pipsqueak rolled her eyes and I was tempted to throw my shoe at her.

Dad shook his head. "I mean, we can just set up a meeting with him and have Auri cut off his head."

Hector growled. "So you're just willing to throw Auri under the bus? Why don't you go fucking do it, Logan?"

My dad growled and I knocked my hand on the table. "Quit it, both of you."

"I won't kill him unless it's Oran." My mother finally spoke and she looked at me. "I won't kill him if he's in another skin."

Whatever I was going to say, disappeared. I thought she would be gunning for him enough to just want to off Oran no matter what. Her mouth was pressed in a thin line.

"It's understandable." Zeke next to me spoke up and I turned to him, cocking my head to the side. He looked at me, feeling my confusion and reached out, running his hand on my leg. "Outside of this group, how many people know of Oran's gift? The Vampire King this time around is well liked. If Auri killed him, the masses would see her as the killer of someone who was peaceful and was looking to move our world forward past all this turmoil. Especially someone who signed the treaty."

Jax nodded, and added to Zeke's explanation. "Oran has already been doing his best to paint Auri in a bad light. Well, not bad but that she was willing to do anything for her own gain. It's going to get worse if she starts killing off Kings. So making sure that she is killing Oran, and not anyone else he is wearing..." He grimaced at the word. "...then it should be fine."

"So how do we get the man to shed his skin?" AJ asked.

My nose wrinkled. This was disgusting to think about. The mental image sent chills down my spine and I looked back at my mother. She had taken a pink flower from her chair and was spinning it in her fingers. Her brow was knit as she was thinking.

"Not only do we need to know how to get him to shed the skin but also not to take another one. What happens if he is going after all the kings? There are only two more." Týr was looking at me, a frown on his face. "This could get very messy, very quickly, if we aren't prepared."

My mother nodded. "I think we need to be under the assumption as well that Oran already knows we know. It's hard to be quiet moving around. I get picked out pretty easily and he has eyes everywhere. He probably already knows I'm here and he knows Uriel and I burned down the Russian lab. He's not stupid. If anything, he could have planned for us to find Julius' body. So we need to be prepared that he knows and it's not going to meet up like he has in the past."

Growling, I leaned my head back against the chair. "Then we

need to make it seem like he won.”

Everyone’s eyes were on me.

“If he feels like he has won, then he wouldn’t have need of anyone else’s skin. He wouldn’t need to hide. It would leave him open. Maybe not completely but it would be enough.”

“How do we make him feel like he won when we don’t even know the win condition?” Jax asked and I tapped my fingers on the table.

Pipsqueak asked the next question. “What if we just asked him?” All of us looked at her but she smirked. “If he knows we know, then a meeting will get more interesting. Just ask him. Ask him what he wants. In a very, the hero feels at a loss and doesn’t know what to do and so the villain explains his master plan.”

“Oran doesn’t see himself as a villain.” Mother added.

“Same difference. I think we should just ask what he wants. What’s the harm? What else we going to do? Fight him? Without Auri, an entire army wouldn’t be enough to off him. He’s not Micah. He’s the one who turned Micah, his sire.”

Morgan sighed and ran his hands through his hair. “He was my sire as well.”

There were a few inhales and I saw my mother turn, her eyes wide. “What?”

“Oran Beryford was from Ireland originally though he’s lost anything that has tried him to a country. I couldn’t tell you exactly when he was born but I can tell you it predates the

1400's at the very least. He's sired quite a few vampires because in between his mad scientist centuries, he works as a doctor."

"Well fuck." Hector rubbed his face. "That counts Morgan out as well."

I cocked my head to the side. "What do you mean?"

"A vampire can't go against the one who sired them. At least, that's the theory."

Morgan nodded. "Correct. I wouldn't be able to attack Oran."

"Can Auri?" Hector asked him and looked between my grandpa and my mother.

"Why would she not? She's not a vampire." Týr was looking between them as well.

Zeke sighed. "She is though, isn't she? The lack of scars, time seemingly rewinding, and the special juice for everything this morning. You and Hector are both part vampire now as well, aren't you?"

I looked from Zeke to Hector and my mother. She was smirking while Hector shrugged.

"Leave it to Zeke to sniff us out immediately." Hector nodded. "Yes, both Auri and I have vampire hearts. The only reason I'm alive is because of Auri and her power to keep me alive. Most of the time, the body would reject it immediately since we are werewolves. Auri kept us both alive."

"So are you fey as well?"

Hector shook his head. "No. Only Auri received Ilya's eyes. It was done before she received the heart as well. Oran thought she most likely needed the extra boost. The side effects of having the heart have been interesting to say the least."

"Like growing a whole foot taller?" Zeke laughed.

Hector shook his had. "Actually, no. Those were growing pains from Auri. When you're officially mated to someone who has as much power as she does, it bleeds into you. Not just from her putting it in there but also because it's like I was deemed to be her protector and so I needed to be bigger. You don't even want to see my wolf."

Dad shook his head and crossed his arms over his chest. "That didn't happen to Auri when she mated me."

Bryan chuckled. "Goes to show how much power you had."

Dad growled at Bryan who just growled back.

"We got off topic again. Jesus, you guys are the worst."

Pipsqueak shook her head. "How are we going to do this?"

"Start by getting ahold of the Vampire King." AJ looked at me.

I nodded. "We advise that we have been getting multiple reports that the vampires are not sticking to the treaty like they should. Both from fey and wolves and we need to figure out a solution."

"And if he says no?" Dad asked.

All of us were silent for a moment. Hector got up and started to pace behind the chairs. Everyone settled into their chairs in different ways, thinking. Zeke was rubbing my leg and every so often I would lose my train of thought as his fingers went a little too high on my thigh. Giving him an eyebrow raise, he chuckled and moved his hand lower to my knees.

"What if Vale turns me over to him?"

Hector growled, walking over to my mother and slamming his hand down on her shoulder. I thought with the force, he would make her fall out of the chair but she didn't even budge.

"Why would the Vampire King want you?" Týr asked.

"If he says no to the meeting, then it would be easy to assume that he knows it's a trap. That we are onto him. So we play it like we do know. We are pandering to Oran, not the Vampire King. Oran wants me. So, let's trade his obedience for me."

I shook my head. "We aren't going to do that. You might end up right back where you were. Not happening. We will figure this out a different way. One that leaves you free to kill the bastard when he sheds."

"What if we announce that the Vampire King is dead? And that the Fey and Werewolves recognize a new King?" Bryan was rubbing his beard, his eyes narrowing. "If we were able

to bring the Fey King and the Alpha King together, denouncing the current king..."

My mother sat up. "We could do that either with the meeting or with the fact that he wasn't willing to meet with Vale. If we can get it on record, we wouldn't even need to prove that the Vampire King died. Just that he was going back on the treaty. That he didn't care about his people or anyone else when all anyone wanted was peace."

I smirked. "That could work. Pipsqueak, I know, could make sure that we had all angles on whatever call or meeting we do. We would play it as though we don't know it's Oran."

"Once we expose him, then we back a new Vampire King." Hector smirked.

Everyone turned their heads to Morgan who was listening and nodding, probably thinking on the potential of the plan.

"We would need to find someone who could lead and is strong enough to..." He stopped mid-sentence and looked up at all of us. "Oh hell no. Don't you fucking say it." Slamming his hands on the table, he growled. "I am not becoming the Vampire King."

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"I think it's perfect."

"And you know those who don't want the crown make the best leaders."

"Everyone loves you and you care about the people. You always have."

"I also think he would be perfect for the role. I mean, you already run the mafia, that's just a slightly smaller group of idiots that you have to push around commodities and stuff. If anything, it would be great for business." Pipsqueak put her hands behind her head, smirking. "No more having to get the okay from the king for imports."

Morgan shook his head. "No. You find someone else. I am not powerful enough, nor am I old enough to take the role. No one would back me."

"I think more people than you think, Papa." Auri smiled at him. "I would say most of the population of vampires are younger than you."

"That's your doing, princess."

She waved him off. "I just think that the majority of vampires now would rather have someone that actually relate to them. Age doesn't matter so much now. I think you are plenty strong as well, Papa. I mean, it took me becoming part Vampire and part Fey in order to actually beat you."

Morgan huffed and crossed his arms over his chest. "It's not happening."

My mother got up and walked over to him, squatting down next to his chair. "Think of Felicity, and Sammy. Colton and when he was sent back from the fey family and the vampire family. You could give them a place to be accepted. That it's okay to be mixed. You would be their King as much as Uriel or Vale was. You would have the chance to make things better, for everyone."

"Princess..."

"I would actually be a princess then." She smiled and as much as I saw Morgan, fight it, he couldn't keep the smile off of his face.

She had him. If there was one thing he couldn't do, it was fight against my mother. She was absolutely his weakness. Us kids were probably second to that but it would always be my mother that he just wouldn't be able to say no to.

"You get him in a position that the populous would turn against him, and I'll be your figurehead. There still might be a chance I back out of this but for now, I'll allow it."

My mother stood and hugged him, kissing his cheek. "Thank you, Papa. I know you will be great."

He growled but didn't say anything, his arms still crossed over his chest defiantly.

I nodded and looked over a Pipsqueak. "So, we paint the Vampire King, aka, Oran into the worst light possible, much

like Oran did with Mom. Once that happens, we denounce his claim and step up with our own candidate. Whatever his plan with the Vampire King's skin gets foiled. What then?"

My mother sat back down in her seat and I watched as another wave of flowers bloomed in the chair. She pulled one down and smelled it, a frown on her face.

"We might be in for a battle. Even if we have the populous of vampires, fey and wolves, we can assume that he isn't going to put up a fight if he still thinks that the position is useful. It's hard to go off what he will do without knowing why he is choosing Julius to begin with."

Zeke leaned forward, tracing some of the tree rings in the table. "You mean a war? The one thing we have been trying to avoid this whole damn time."

She nodded, a sadness flickering over her face. "Unfortunately, yes. Except, in the case, it's against Oran and his followers. Not the entirety of the supernaturals."

"So against the BloodHunter Coven, again." My dad added.

"Not just them. Oran has monstrosities as his disposal that you wouldn't believe. Failed experiments that he uses to his advantage. I've seen some of the paperwork on them, it's horrific. There are going to be those of the BloodHunter coven who agree with him but then he has his own cult following. It wouldn't be an easy fight. Especially if we are looking to keep the fatalities down to a minimum."

Zeke shifted in his seat. "How easy would it be for us to fight him? The Golden Moon pack, a small force from the Fey

King, and a small force of vampires, plus all of us here. How easy would that be?"

The silence was unbearable as I watched the strongest people across from me weigh the strength and power. Even Pipsqueak was thinking, her leg bouncing a mile a minute. She looked over at my mother.

"It depends on how involved Auri wants to be."

Everyone else at the table chuckled but the frown on Mother's face was enough to not make me laugh.

"Mom?"

She looked up at me. "Oran is my responsibility as much as it is your Dad's. I will destroy him. The issue is that he is the master of manipulating people. Those who are working in his labs, they all understand what he stands for and what they are doing. They put their morals aside in order to fuel their own curiosity. But he will be in the skin of the Vampire King. People will follow him and I don't want them to die. They don't deserve it."

I hummed. "If they fight us though, then we will have to do something. If he has an army..."

"I don't be apart of that."

After a moment of keeping my mom's stare, I nodded. "Alright. If it comes to it, we will make a way for you to get to him. But it will need to be whether or not it's in the skin of the previous King. There will be too much at stake and with the plan, we will technically be fighting against the Vampire

King. So, he will be limited a little in that.”

It was her turn to stare at me before she gave me a quick nod. Slamming my hands down on the table, I looked at everyone individually. “Then that’s the plan. We start immediately. Zeke and I have enough information to reach out to the Vampire King in regards to meeting with him to discuss the terms of the treaty. Pipsqueak, we need to be wired up for that and also if he decides that we should meet in person as well. From there, we will start building a case.”

“It might be best to tease the media. Leak a little here and there. Let them follow the bread crumbs. They love that shit.” Pipsqueak was rubbing her hands together like a maniac and I just shook my head.

“We will need to loop in Uriel. He’ll need to know what is going on and what the plan is.”

Mom nodded. “I will. We were the ones who found Julius. He already knows most of it and I am sure he will approve of our choice.”

She winked at Morgan who groaned and shook his head. “I’ll start to shift things around in the mafia. Maybe we can get a little more dirt on what Oran is doing as he Vampire King. Otherwise, I’ll stay out of it until you need to play my part of a king.”

“Týr, I will need you to get the wolves together. You and Dad need to make sure the wolves know that no matter what, if the Vampire King promises them something, it’s not going to be worth the risk. That we aren’t going to stand for him. We need to be looking out for ourselves and the peace we

have now is worth it. Especially with all the Alpha's coming together to choose it. No promise of strength or power will change that."

They both nodded but Týr asked, "Do you need us to mobilize if it does end up in a fight?"

I shook my head. "No. I don't want more than the Alpha King's pack to fight. I don't want more bloodshed than there needs to be. Extra numbers might be good but it doesn't mean they are trained enough to handle what Oran might throw at us. That just makes them targets."

"Speaking of training, I'll hang around. I think between Zeke and I, we can have our warriors trained to handle anything." Hector smiled and flexed one of his muscles.


Zeke next to me groaned and I looked at him, confused. He waved me off though, a pout on his face. "Fine. We'll be subjected to torture while we are at it."

I chuckled and rubbed his back. "You're one of the stronger ones, Zeke. You'll be fine."

Zeke groaned and buried his face in his arms as Auri, Morgan, and Hector chuckled.

"Does this mean you guys will stay? You'll stay in Italy for a while?" I looked between Hector and Mom. "I can open up one of the homes in the pack territory."

"We have a vacation home on the outskirts of town. We can just use that. It's big enough to fit everyone. Plus, all our stuff is already there for the summer. The kids will enjoy it."

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Auri sighed and rubbed her eyes. "I'll work with my contacts and Pipsqueak in the background for a while. If you want to drop off Rowan and Reagan a couple times a week, feel free to. What's another two." She smiled but there was something in her eyes that made me think something was wrong.

"Then it's settle! We have a plan!" Pipsqueak stood up in her chair and she barely stood above the back of it. "Break!"

My mom laughed and clapped her hands together much like she did before. The room felt like it was ripped away and we all were suddenly standing in the living room of the house. There was a scream and we all turned to see Lucy, Felix, and Simon standing very confused in the kitchen. I gave them a quick wave.

"We've got some work to do."

 Comments

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Chapter 122

For the next week, the pack house was a furry of chaos. Everyone had their jobs and was working on those while still keeping up with the normal day to day pack duties. Already we had called the Vampire King, Oran really, and requested a meeting. Much to our surprise, he agreed. We set up a meeting place and Pipsqueak was already setting up the venue with a multitude of cameras and microphones to catch the meeting. That wasn't for a couple days, so we spent the rest of it gathering information.

Hector also made good on his word and I hadn't seen Zeke come home this sore since the first time Hector started to train him. He would soak in a bath before even attempting to sit down in a regular chair. It made me smile until Hector called me out for not showing up as well. He said it was either him or Mom and I chose to train with him three days a week. Those three days we sent Rowan and Reagan to Mom's in order to just prevent them from trying to attack us with cuddles. Neither of us could handle that after having our asses handed to us.

I was in the office with Zeke today and we were making sure that all the packs were up to date with the treaty when it sounded like a tornado hit downstairs. We both looked at each other and got up, heading out of the room to overlook the living room. All of my mom's kids were running around and chanting while Morgan and another vampire were chatting at the door.

"Morgan?" Zeke cocked his head to the side.

"Sorry guys! Didn't mean to bother you. We are picking up Rowan, Reagan, Simon, Jax, Lucy and Felix."

My brow furrowed. "What's the occasion?"

"Headed two towns over. They opened up a new bounce house activity warehouse...thing. I'm not completely sure but apparently, there was a side show presented to Auri. All the kids made their case as to why it was good place to go."

"Oh? And she didn't say no?"

Morgan chuckled. "She did at first. Then they came to me."

I rolled my eyes. "Yeah, we used to do that too. How did you get her to agree?"

"Bought out the place for the entire day just for us. Also have my guys watching the entirety of the location and we are using a caravan of SUV's that we use for my business. Plus, she wouldn't have to go with."

Barking out a laugh, I nodded and Zeke snickered next to me. "Is she home alone then?"

"She was working with Pipsqueak when I picked up the kids."

The door behind them swung open and Lucy, along with Simon, and Felix came in. AJ walked in from the garage, wiping his hands with a towel.

"We ready?" AJ asked.

"Ready as we will ever be." Morgan looked up at us. "Where

are the twins?"

Before I could open my mouth that they were in their room, Rowan and Reagan ran behind us, headed down the stairs. Luckily, Zeke was faster and he pulled them into his arms.

"You think you were going to just go without saying goodbye? Think again." He held them tight and looked at me.

I bent down and started to tickle the two of them, leaving the screaming and wriggling against Zeke. They were no match though, not after all the training with Hector.

"I love you! We go! Wo go!" Reagan was screaming and I finally stopped.

Kissing the top of each of their heads, I smiled. "Be good. You listen to Grandpa Morgan. No matter what, is that understood?"

"Yes, Papa."

"We will Papa."

I nodded and Zeke gave them kisses as well. He adjusted their shirts and gave them quick hugs before letting them thunder down the stairs to the other kids.

"Alright! Let's load up! Onto the adventure we go!"

AJ nodded up to us. "We'll take care of the kids. Morgan goes all out with this as well. Auri wouldn't let him take all of them if he didn't."

"I'll hold you to that. Make sure nothing happens."

He gave a quick wave and shut the door after all the kids raced out of the house. Suddenly, the tornado of sound and movement turned into silence. Next to me, Zeke took a deep breath.

"Well, this is nice."

I chuckled. "Bryan and Jax are in town for the day. Dad and Týr already left. Hector is training. We have an empty pack house for the first time in a long time."

Turning, I grabbed Zeke's pants and pulled him tight to me. "We are all alone and we can be as loud as we want."

The look on Zeke's face was anything but turned on. He looked a little guilty.

"What?"

"I am leaving in five minutes to go into town. I've got to meet the contractors for a meeting and then I have to meet up with Hector for training."

Sighing, I let my hands fall, dejected. Zeke chuckled and wrapped his arms around my neck. Kissing my mark, I sighed into his hold.

"I'm sorry. I promise to make it up to you."

I hummed. "Yeah. I'll figure out something. It's not like I was trying to avoid the ridiculous pile of work that is in the office."

He licked my neck and I shivered. Before I could do anything, Zeke stepped back and winked. "I'm sure you will

think of something.”

“Yeah.”

Heading down the stairs, I watched as Zeke grabbed one of the sets of keys off the wall. He turned, blowing me a kiss before heading into the garage. I listened as the roar of the engine from what sounded like the Ferrari before it disappeared down the driveway. Really, I didn't want to have to sift through the papers on the desk. We had actually done a lot and were ahead of the game. I could join Hector for training but the thought made me wrinkle my nose.

Morgan did say that Mom was alone. Maybe I could go over there. I had some questions for her and she hadn't so much as showed a hair since the day we finalized our play. I wondered if it was out of consideration for me but it made me feel worse. We had been so close. It seemed like a lifetime ago that she would come visit me at the High Council and we would sit in the corner of the library and gossip like two Lunas.

‘Just go, Vale. Stop overthinking it. She would be happy for you to come over. You guys need some alone time.’ Naresh snorted and his tail swished in annoyance.

‘Fine. Fine! I’m going.’

I went into our room, swapped out my sweats for some jeans and headed down into the garage. Zeke had taken the Ferrari and so I took the Mercedes. Hector had given me their address a while ago in case I needed to pick up the kids for anything but didn't have a chance to need it. As I drove, I listened to the Italian classical station and I smiled.

Zeke had a penchant for the Italian Opera and I had taken him a couple times and every time it was incredible. It wasn't something though that I could listen to on the daily.


It really wasn't too bad of a drive from the pack house to my mom's vacation house. Though, calling it a house was a disservice when really it was more like an Italian castle. Housing nine kids and two adults, sometimes three if Morgan decided to stay with them as well. He hadn't stuck around the pack house but he was in and out to give up information that he gathered. Pulling into the driveway, I parked next to another large black SUV and shoved my hands in my pockets.

I got to the door and put my hand up to knock but it swung open before I could even touch my knuckles to the wood. Looking in, I didn't see anyone who could have opened the door.

"Hello? Mom?"

I stepped in quietly but I couldn't contain my awe. It really was like a castle. There was a long red runner with chandeliers lining the long entryway. It was all stone that was only broke up by wood furnitures or paintings. I walked further in, only jumping when the door shut behind me. Still, there was no one there to shut the door. Looking around, I saw the dinning room and living room with a fireplace that almost took up the entire wall. There was a huge couch and a couple lounge chairs but it took the feeling of cozy to an entirely new level.

The whole place was decorated but still you could see the

 +25 BONUS

remnants of the kids everywhere. Whether it be clothes, toys, or cups, there was always one hiding somewhere. I continued to talk and stood in front of a double door. On both sides there were staircases leading up to the next floor. The power though, coming from the other side of the doors was enough to make the hair on the back of my neck raise. Grabbing the handles, I pulled it open and my jaw dropped.

This wasn't another room. The whole area had been turned into a garden and a huge tree rose above the castle and bloomed over it. I wondered how I missed the top of the tree when I pulled in. The trunk was huge and it had to be larger than the entire pack house. The power coming off the tree was immense and I saw my mother sitting at the base of it, a book open in her lap as her legs were draped over some of the roots.

Her head leaned back and she smiled at me. "Oh! Vale! What are you doing here?"

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