

Kings Breeder 431

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My Mate and My Beloved

The trip to Maggie's pack didn't take too long.

Vaner pack was one of the biggest packs in the northwest of the Egoren Kingdom. It may not be as rich as Sophia's Pomeni Pack, but at a minimum, they were similar in terms of territory and population. It was a good pack for a member of the royal family to marry into.

Along the way, Warren and I didn't have much else to do except talk about his sister.

haven't seen Maggie in a long time. I think it was her wedding the last time I saw her," Warren explained as we rode alone in the hired car.

"You haven't seen her since she left home?" I arched an eyebrow.

Warren shrugged. "She hasn't let me come visit. I remember how tender and loving Demarco, her husband, was to her at the wedding. They hadn't known each other long, but he was so... devoted. They're fated mates. I always hoped that when I found my mate, we'd feel that strongly toward each other."

"Why hasn't she let you visit?" I asked, glancing at the changing scenery. We had to go around the road that had the cave in and that made the trip a couple hours longer.

"I don't know. She won't ever tell me. And she hasn't come back to the palace, either. It is almost like she's being kept

away. But I know Demarco would do anything for her," Warren said, sighing.

"Well, I'm sure she'll be happy to see you, whatever the reason. You are her brother," I said, smiling.

"She's not going to have a choice this time. I'm showing up to surprise her. I mean, I'm sure everything is fine, but I do want to check on her." Warren gave a bashful smile and looked outside the window.

I thought it was cute that he wanted to check on his sister. I wondered how close they were before she got married. Warren seemed pretty bummed that she wouldn't let him come visit.

"Has she ever let Theo visit?" I asked, curiously. "Or anyone else?"

"Not that I know of. I don't see why she would. Theo is only our half-brother," Warren reminded me.

Maybe that was why Theo always seemed annoyed or exasperated when talking about Warren. He made it seem like a chore. I wondered if Theo had felt isolated or disconnected because he wasn't their full sibling.

"Were you and Maggie close when you were growing up?" I questioned. I hoped I wasn't pestering him too much. "Sure. She is my twin," Warren told me, chuckling.

"Wow! Twin sister! I bet she is a beauty!"

"Thanks," Warren smiled. "She's always kind and gentle. A very graceful woman. She... well, she took care of me while we Mate were growing up."

There was a border patrol checkpoint that we had to pass through before going into Vaner pack territory.

"State your name and business," the border patrol shifter said, looking down his nose at us.

"I'm Prince Warren and this is Ciana Black. We're here to see my sister, Maggie," Warren said, pointing between the two of us.

"Greetings, Your Highness! Please go ahead." The border patrol shifter lowered his head to bow to us and waved our car through the checkpoint.

As far as I knew, Pack Vaner had very few problems with rogues and wars with other packs. With how tight they kept security, it was no wonder.

The car drove us right up to the pack mansion. My breath flew out the window as I stared at it. Pack Vaner was much wealthier than my pack, if the exterior of the mansion was any indication.

We went up a private cobblestone road lined with blooming magnolia trees. The grounds were beautifully landscaped with all kinds of gorgeous gardens. It looked like we were approaching a royal palace.

The mansion itself was very well cared for on the outside and there were lots of people moving around, trimming the hedges, and cleaning the windows.

"This place is beautiful," I whispered as the car came to a stop.

"That's all thanks to my sister." Warren smiled, puffing up his chest with pride.

A servant was waiting for us on the steps. She hurried us into the main dining room where Maggie and Demarco were already expecting us.

Maggie's lips curved up in a warm smile, but I could see the hesitation in her eyes.

"Warren, why didn't you tell me you were coming? This place is in no shape for guests," Maggie scolded softly, shaking her head.

It reminded me of the way a mother would dotingly scold a child, anyone could tell she wasn't really upset. Warren had said Maggie took care of him, she did have a strong maternal presence.

"Surprise!" Warren opened his arms for a big hug. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

"Of course, I am, you big goof," she chuckled, gently using her finger to tap on Warren's long, straight nose. Then she gave Warren a quick hug and stepped back.

"Welcome to Vaner," Demarco said, also hugging Warren.

"It is good to have you."

"Thank you. And you're crazy if you think this place isn't ready for guests. It is immaculate, as always," Warren told them with a big, boyish grin.

"You're silly," Maggie said, waving dismissively

"Who's this lovely young lady that you bring?"

She looked at me with a warm smile, but then coughed a couple of times.

I noticed how Demarco quickly turned to her and stood like he was going to catch her, as if he expected her to fall.

Maggie just cleared her throat. Still, Demarco went to her side and touched her shoulder, a deep look of concern in his eyes. He was so tender and devoted, just like Warren had told me. They'd been married for years and he still took such good care of her.

If only we were all lucky enough to find a love like that.

I took a closer look at Demarco. He was familiar and I wondered if I had met him before. He might have known my parents, or maybe I'd met him when I visited this pack when I was a child. I couldn't place where I knew him from.

"This is Ciana Black, daughter of Alpha Soren Black of Pack Alvar," Warren introduced me, motioning for me to step forward.

"It is very nice to meet you both," I greeted them both respectfully.

"You're lucky, Warren, to have found such a beautiful mate," Maggie said, winking at her brother.

"Mate, no... we're..."

"That's not what.."

Warren and I both rushed to explain. We exchanged an awkward glance and Warren chuckled.

"Ciana and I are just good friends," he explained.

"Oh. Well, you are still welcome to stay here. Any friend of Warren's is a friend of ours," she said. Maggie held her arms to both of us.

She dropped her arms quickly and took a half-step back. Clutching her chest, she started coughing again.

Demarco wrapped an arm around her and handed her a handkerchief.

"Maggie, are you okay?" Warren asked, holding an arm out to her.

"I'm fine. I must have just caught a cold. It'll be gone in a few days. Come, sit, let's catch up."

Maggie took a seat at the dining table and Demarco stood beside her. Warren and I sat and the two siblings started to catch up.

"Tell me everything that is happening. How is father, and how is that wayward brother of ours?" Maggie asked. She reached out and put her hands over Warren's, a motherly gesture.

Warren told Maggie about some of the things that had been happening in the palace. He told her about King Sebastian's plan to get Theo to marry. Maggie seemed to be quite surprised, but then, she simply nodded and moved on to other topics.

I was simply grateful that Warren didn't tell Maggie I was one of the chosen candidates for him.

As the conversation wore on, I saw Maggie slump down in her chair. Demarco put his hand firmly on her shoulder. She

smiled at him but her eyelids were drooping and her skin looked pale.

"I think that is enough for now." Demarco stepped in. "I'll get Maggie upstairs to rest. It is a nice day out. Why don't you two take a walk around and I'll have guest rooms prepared."

"That sounds like a good idea," Warren urged. "Maggie, you shouldn't be moving around like this while you're sick! Go rest please."

"We'll catch up later," Maggie promised, waving to him as Demarco guided her out of the dining room.

Once they left, I stood up and stretched. I was still a little stiff from sitting so long in the car.

"So, do you feel better, seeing that your sister is being well taken care of?" I asked as Warren and I headed to the pack grounds.

He smiled and nodded. "I am worried about her sickness, though."

"She doesn't seem to be worried," I pointed out.

"That's true. Hey, do you hear that? It sounds like carnival music... Come on!" Warren grabbed my hand and pulled me around the packhouse.

He stopped dead and stared as Nelson, Tallis, and the entire carnival came into view. They were working hard to set up the tent. Well, everyone but Tallis. He was just standing there, but what more did I expect?

"What are they doing here?" Warren asked as we got closer to the carnival.

Tallis—Theo turned around and saw us, equally surprised.

I pulled my hand from Warren's.

During our travels, I hadn't told Warren that the carnival was coming here. I didn't want to tell him it was one of the reasons I agreed to tag along.

Didn't we just leave you behind?" Tallis asked, glaring at Warren and me.

"We're here to visit my sister," Warren said. "We don't need your permission for that."

Rolling my eyes, I shook my head. "We'll stay out of your way if you stay out of ours," I suggested.

Tallis sniffed but nodded.

"Prince Warren! Please wait a second," Demarco called, hurrying up to us.

His timing was perfect, because Warren and Tallis were still bristling at each other. Immediately, they both turned to Demarco. As soon as he caught up to us, Demarco gave a heavy sigh and looked down at the ground.

He had bags under his eyes, clearly tired, and the way his eyes darted around, he seemed really worried.

“Demarco, what is going on with Maggie? Is it just a cold she’s fighting off?” Warren obviously sensed that something wasn’t right.

Demarco shrugged and refused to meet Warren’s eyes.

“She’s my sister, man. I have a right to know what is going on,” Warren pressed.

“She doesn’t want you to know, but I can’t handle it on my own anymore. I love her and I’ll do anything to help her,” Demarco said, his eyes a little frantic, even though his voice was haggard.

Doesn’t want me to know what?” Warren asked.

“She’s sick...” Demarco sighed. “Really sick. She has been for a while and that’s why she doesn’t let you come visit.”

Warren gasped and shook his head. “No. No. She can’t...” His face paled and he shook his head again.

My heart ached for him and I wanted to comfort him but I didn’t know what to say. When I looked over at Tallis, I saw his eyes were wide as saucers as well, although he was perfectly still, like a statue.

So, he could show concern for a half-sibling

“I’ve tried everything to help her get better. Nothing I do works,” Demarco vented, finally letting loose his emotional upset. I could tell it had been a long time since he’d talked to anyone about this.

“Th-there’s nothing anyone can do?” Warren asked, stuttering slightly.

“She is my mate, my beloved. I would do anything for her. But alas, we cannot save her. There is only one thing left we can do,” Demarco said.

Slowly, he looked at Warren, then at Tallis, and finally

looked at me. He looked at me the longest, and then looked back to Warren.

“What is it?” Warren urged.

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Thank You for Telling Me the Truth

Theo

Somehow, I had allowed myself to get sucked into this waking nightmare. Then again, it was for a good cause. If Maggie wasn’t so sick, I wouldn’t have allowed this.

So, I found myself in the carny tent, sitting on a stool in a circle with Ciana, Warren, Nelson, and other carnies, running lines.

This was an absolute disaster!

I'd been working secretly to ensure that Ciana's pack was safe after Raymond was killed and to investigate the rebellion group "Shadow". That meant eradicating all of Luther's influence. Since Vaner was one of the closest packs to Alvar, I wanted to make sure Luther hadn't been here, influencing Maggie or her pack.

It wasn't like I could just reach out to Maggie and ask her directly. We'd grown up in the palace together, but we'd never been close. For the past five years, she'd been here in Vaner, married. Before that, I'd spent most of my time away from the palace, running errands and missions for my father.

I hadn't spent a lot of time at the palace until after she had gotten married.

Even when I was younger, my dad kept me separated from my siblings. He had all that special training for me, and he always prioritized that to me spending time with basically

anyone other than the ones I was supposed to kill.

I'd come here to protect Ciana's pack, and instead, I somehow managed to get roped into playing the Big Bad Wolf in a play called "The Luna's Choice."

Two days ago, Demarco had come to us and told us how Maggie was sick and dying. He wanted to do something nice for her, lift her spirits, and that was to put on her favorite play.

"The Luna's Choice" was an exclusive performance that usually only royalty got to enjoy.

Not a lot of traveling carnivals had the know-how to put it on.

But with Warren there, Demarco thought we could pull it all together. I found that unlikely, seeing as I wasn't a real Carny, Ciana wasn't a real actress, and Warren wasn't a real director—him walking around and barking at us to say our lines a certain way didn't make him an expert.

I blamed Jake.

Me disguising as a carny had all been his "brilliant" idea. He arranged to have me work under Nelson, who didn't even know my real identity and just thought I was someone important and needed an undercover way to travel around.

NOW, I was stuck as a carny in this damned play!

When I got home, Jake was going to get an earful from me. Clearly, I could never trust him to make these arrangements for me again. My focus needed to be on stopping Luther and protecting the northwest packlands, not the performing arts.

Truthfully, if I had to pick any play to perform, it would be this one. I'd seen it half a dozen times already and I did have a fondness for it.

"The Luna's Choice" was a legendary play where an Alpha's daughter was kidnapped by a rogue wolf because she could help return his soul to him. The rogue shifter didn't harm her. Eventually, she warmed his heart.

When a powerful Alpha led an army to rescue the girl, she chose to defend the rogue. She helped the rogue shifter find his lost soul, which restored his lost memory. He was actually an Alpha King and the girl was his mate. He declared her as his queen and they lived happily ever after.

My eyes flicked to Ciana. Somehow, this story touched a soft part of my heart. My stomach shifted uncomfortably and I twisted my script in my hands.

Nelson's voice cut through my thoughts.

"But you, my dear lady, your face is as beautiful as the finest flowers and your eyes twinkle like the brightest stars." He held a hand out to Ciana to dramatize his compliments.

I rolled my eyes.

"Okay, Tallis, you're up," Warren said, waving a hand in front of my face and tapping the script in his hand.

Sighing, I looked at my script. I had one line, or one word, rather.

"Roar," I deadpanned.

"Cut, cut, cut!" Warren cried, throwing his arms up. He

looked at me sharply.

If Warren knew who I really was, he wouldn't look at me or talk to me like this. The things I did for family... and for someone else I had grown fond of. I glanced at Ciana again.

"Tallis, your roar has to be a mix of pain and anger. It can't be flat and lifeless," Warren instructed.

"Roar," I tried again.

Warren shook his head. Louder."

"Roar!"

"Make it longer, too!"

"FRO AAAAR!"

Warren tapped his cheek with his finger. "Can you make it sound more heartbroken?"

Groaning, I tossed the script on the ground and stood up.

"Can I just get a different part?"

"No. Tallis, this is the easiest part with the fewest lines to remember. You can do it," Warren encouraged with a smile.

Again, if he knew who I was, he wouldn't be talking to me like I was a child.

"The most important requirement for this part is your handsome face. But you still need to put some effort in," he said, chuckling.

Bloody hell! Why had I agreed to this? I wasn't a carny! I was the Dark Prince. People performed for me, not the other way around. Sighing, I looked over at Ciana. She looked so studious and serious about her part.

This was for Maggie, as her dying wish. It certainly helped that Ciana had used a convincing tactic to bribe me to play along... a sweet, intimate kiss.

I stood on the side stage where we were going to be performing "The Luna's Choice." We'd only been given a week to put the whole production together. I was a little nervous because I wanted everything to be perfect for Maggie.

If this was her dying wish, then I wanted it to be exactly what she needed to lift her spirits.

Demarco had told us that this was his big surprise for her. She had no idea we were putting on her favorite play. He said once we had everything set up, he'd bring her to the stage and get her comfortable.

"Are you nervous?" Warren asked, coming up beside me.

"No. Well, a little. Only because I want it to be perfect for your sister," I said, beaming at him.

"Thank you, Ciana, for doing this. It will mean the world to her and to me, too." He put a hand on my shoulder and squeezed.

"I'm happy to help. Your sister is so nice. She deserves a great night at the theater with her favorite play."

Truth

"We couldn't have done this without you." He looked at me with half-lidded eyes.

Nervously, I shrugged his hand from my shoulder. "I'm sure you would have found someone just as competent for my role."

"No, not just that. I mean, you're the only one that seems to be able to get Tallis to cooperate and participate." He chuckled.

"Right, well, again, it is my pleasure. I just... I wish there was more we could do for your sister," I said, looking down. "She doesn't deserve to be sick like this."

"Ciana, I.. I have a question for you."

"What is it?" I asked, creasing my brow.

He looked worried and that made me worry. He hesitated for a moment.

"I've wanted to ask for a while... Well, here it goes. If I wasn't the teenager you met in the woods when you were younger, would you still like me and want to be my friend?" he asked. He kept his eyes down like he was bracing himself for some kind of rejection.

It was a strange question. Why was he asking that now? We'd already talked about the past.

"Of course, I would. Regardless of how we met when we were young, it is the man you are today who I think is wonderful and sincere. I'm honored to be your friend. Why do you ask?" I raised an eyebrow at him.

"Well..." he trailed off and looked around like he was worried we would be overheard. "Remember when I told you that a very special girl gave me this bracelet?" He held his hand up and showed me the bracelet on his wrist.

'Yeah. I thought he'd meant me, but at the time, he hadn't seemed to recognize me. Not until I reminded him.

"I didn't lie about that. But it wasn't you that gave it to me, it was Maggie," he explained.

"But I.. why did you.

"I didn't tell you the truth at first because I... I was falling for you. I didn't want to disappoint you or make you feel selfconscious for opening up to me," he said quickly. "Besides, I thought you wouldn't want to stay close if you knew it wasn't me.'

Warren sighed and shook his head. He chuckled like he was laughing at his own foolishness. I was too shocked to form a full thought.

"The more I got to know you, the more I respected you and wanted to do right by you. Now that you're helping my sister, I feel like I shouldn't be hiding it from you," he continued. "I respect you too much to keep this lie going between us."

"I... well, thank you, for telling me the truth," I muttered, still unsure what to think.

"Ciana." Warren took my hands in his. "Are you okay? Are you mad at me? I know I should have told you sooner..."

Shaking my head, I snapped out of my distant thoughts.

No, I'm not mad at you, Warren. I think you're very honorable for telling me the truth."

"Can we still be friends," he asked, giving me a hopeful look.

"Of course!" I squeezed his hands and let them drop.

I was glad that Warren told me the truth, finally. Surprisingly, I didn't feel upset at all. I thought I would, because I was back to where I started—I would have to keep searching for that person I met when I was 12.

However, I didn't feel upset. All I felt was relief. I didn't even feel strong enough to continue looking for that person in my memory. I had friends and important people around me, wasn't that enough? Why would I bog myself down with my past?

We all should move on with our lives, shouldn't we?

"Thank you, Ciana, you really are an amazing person.'

I suddenly realized something. I had thought Warren was the one because of his eyes. He wasn't the only one with eyes like that, though.

If it hadn't been Warren... then who? Who could I have mistaken him for?

My eyes wandered over to Theo.

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Open Your Heart To Me

I watched as Tallis talked to Nelson about something. I watched the way his jaw locked in place and his eyes focused

on the piece of paper he was being shown.

Could it have been him? Could he have been the one I met so many years ago?

So many thoughts swirled in my mind at that moment. Tallis was Theo. But he could also potentially be the boy from the forest. That thought made my heart flutter.

Warren's deep sigh drew me back out of my reverie.

He followed where my gaze had been. "You're looking at

Tallis."

"I wasn't," I tried to deny it. "I was just deep in thought. Tallis and I are just mere acquaintances."

Acquaintances who had kissed on multiple occasions. But Warren didn't need to know that.

Tallis and Nelson walked off somewhere and then Warren turned to me. From the look on his face, I knew that he wanted to say something, something that I wouldn't like to hear at this moment.

He stepped toward me and I instinctively took a step back. It was unintentional but based on his expression, I knew what I did just now was hurtful to Warren.

o Ooi "Sorry," I muttere<. I didn't know why I was acting so awk-

: OPM TO Me ward. But being under his gaze like this really unnerved me.

He cleared his throat and bored his eyes into mine. "You know how I feel about you, Ciana, I made it clear months ago and my feelings have never wavered since that moment. You came into my life by pure chance. You were there in the palace for my brother but somehow I feel like you were sent there for me."

He took a deep breath, stepped toward me, and grabbed my hands. "I have feelings for you, Ciana and they run deep.

I gulped

My heart hammered like crazy in my chest and my palms began to sweat. I didn't want him to say the words. I didn't want to hurt him. His heart was too pure and too good to break.

But I also couldn't lie to him.

"You said you needed time. That you had to sort through your feelings and I have given you that time." His hands squeezed mine. "Ciana Black, you are an extraordinary woman. Will you please do me the honor of being mine? I know we can be so good together. Just...say yes."

Time stood still.

His eyes glistened against the light that hung above us. I could see the hope and fear in his eyes and it broke me. This was not what I had wanted.

I had thought that maybe if I waited long enough, his feel-

ings would fade, or he'd realize that what he was seeing in me was only friendship.

A while back, maybe there was also another part of me that thought one day I would be able to see more in him. But that day never came.

I could never see him as more than just Warren, a friend, to me.

Even as he held my hands right now there was no spark. There was no fluttering feeling in my belly.

"Say something," he pleaded, "please."

I looked down at our hands and then met his gaze once more. There was a small smile playing on his lips that had my heart breaking even more.

I was struggling to get the words out. "I...can't."

I watched as the light slowly dimmed from his eyes and his smile slipped from his face.

He dropped my hands from his. "Why?"

I let out a shaky breath and wrung my hands together. "I can't be with you, Warren, because I don't view you in the way you want me to. I wish I could give you what you wanted but I can't. I can't force that feeling when it's not there. And it'll never be there."

He flinched at my words. It was like I was throwing daggers into his chest and he was just standing there taking it.

"I knew it," he scoffed at himself bitterly, "I wonder if I had never told you what I did just now, would anything be different?"

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He let out a helpless chuckle and turned his gaze to the distance. "Well, at least that made me feel a little better, and not regret telling you the truth."

"Sorry, Warren. All I can say is that I'm grateful to get to know you, and that you're my friend.

Friend," he spat the word like it was bitter acid. "We are friends. You're right."

"I am sorry."

"The truth hurts, but I can't continue to lie to you, just like you can't and shouldn't lie to me. No need to apologize. Thank you for being honest."

"Warren.

"Has my brother confessed to you?"

"What?" My eyes widened.

He took a step away from me, placing a comfortable distance between us, his face looking a bit pale.

"Well, I hope he figures out how he feels about you before it is too late..."

Warren's words left me in a bit of a daze. Since when had he become an advocate for me and Theo being together?

"Um," I cleared my throat, trying to find an accurate word to describe my relationship with Theo, but failed.

"You're in love with my brother, aren't you?"

My eyes nearly fell out of their sockets. "What? No."

"Then with Tallis? I see the way you stare at him when you think no one is watching. At least, he is a more interesting fellow than my brother."

I nearly choked on my own saliva.

Oh, Warren. If only you knew that they were the same person.

Before I could say anything, Tallis decided to make an appearance.

"I heard my name." He walked up beside me. "What were you guys talking about?"

A pregnant pause passed between us. What was I supposed to say?

Warren glanced at Tallis with mixed emotions and Tallis looked confused. I was not about to get in the middle of their little brothers' tiff again— I'd learned that lesson before.

"Hey hey! Good that you're all here." Nelson came toward us with wide eyes and a topper hat in hand.

"It's showtime people. Let's take to the stage and wow Maggie."

Phew! Whatever was going on here could wait. Or never be addressed again.

"Yes, sir! Break a leg!" I responded to Nelson and waved at the royal brothers before scurrying away to stand in my area on the makeshift stage, waiting for the curtain call. "What's that scowl about?" Tallis followed me.

"What scowl?"

He raised an eyebrow.

He was in what looked to be some kind of raggy costume. However, even with the torn clothes and disguise, it didn't make him any less attractive. The more I looked at him, the more I couldn't stop myself from appreciating his god-like face and perfectly fit body.

"Don't comment," he said in a deadpanned tone. "I wasn't in charge of the wardrobe."

More and more often, when he was this close, I felt the butterflies in my belly and the weightless feeling.

"You look great, still regal like the prince."

He rolled his eyes at me which only caused me to chuckle.

"Ready for the show?" he asked me.

"I should be asking you. You're the real star of the moment."

"I just feel bad for these people who are forced to watch me act."

"Aren't you part of the company?"

He shrugged. "Pure luck."

I hummed in agreement and looked out to the crowd. Maggie was sitting in the front center, waiting for the show to begin. Demarco sat beside her, his hand in hers.

The lights dimmed, signaling the start of the show.

"You never answered my question. What were you and Warren talking about? It seemed intense." He drew his lips so close to my ear I could feel his hot breath.

91. Orm Hean To Me

I really didn't want to tell him. Fortunately, the narration of the performance began just in time for me to step away from him.

Tallis gave me a disapproving look and turned back to the stage. He walked onto it and lowered himself so he could shift into his wolf.

I watched with bated breath as he shifted into his impressive big wolf. His fur was not that midnight black I'd seen. It was slightly lighter, like gray. Whoever helped him with his disguise obviously also figured out a way to alter the color of his fur.

The play started and everything went well.

When I took a peek at Maggie seeing her grinning from ear to ear, I knew that the show was a success.

Finally, it got to the part where the Rogue was able to find his soul and his memory, he finally shifted back to his human form. When Tallis appeared back on the stage as the Alpha King, the spotlights shone on him, making his regal and handsome appearance look like the incarnation of a deity.

He didn't need to say anything, he didn't need to act. At that moment, the stage was his.

Everyone gasped, and Maggie's reaction was even more dramatic. Her mouth was slightly ajar, her eyes fixed on Tallis, and she could not hide her surprise even if she tried. It took her a few seconds to snap out of her trance.

I knew that Nelson did a great job setting up the stage special effects during rehearsal, but judging by Maggie's reaction, it must be even more impressive to the audience who

Open Your TO saw it for the first time.

When the show ended, we received great applause from our audience. Tears welled up in Maggie's eyes and she clapped loudly for at least two minutes straight to show us her appreciation until Demarco gently reminded her to go back to her room and take some rest.

She was so sick that sitting for a couple of hours straight to watch the show had taken a heavy toll on her body.

I sighed internally and again felt terrible for Maggie, as well as Warren.

The crowd had dispersed and it was time to finish taking down the stage and packing everything up.

"That was incredible, Warren. You directed a spectacular show," Nelson walked over to us, "You too, Tallis and Ciana."

I smiled back at him. "That was incredible. And most importantly, Maggie seemed to love it too."

"She did," he smiled. "Well done, guys. I think we all deserve a drink or maybe even seven!"

Nelson bounced off to where some of the other caste members were and started speaking to them animatedly too, leaving Tallis, Warren, and I on the stage.

I picked up one of the makeup boxes and was about to place it in the crate when I heard my name being shouted out loud by Tallis and Warren.

"Watch out!" Warren shouted.

I looked up and saw a huge cage falling from above.

In the next moment, someone pushed me through the air. As soon as I hit the ground, I also heard a loud noise of metal hitting the ground.

I turned around and found both Tallis and Warren in the cage.

"Ciana, run!" Tallis yelled at me.

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Betrayal of Blood

Demarco stepped out of the shadows with a somber look on his face.

Demarco, what are you doing?!" Warren shouted. He was beyond baffled.

"I'm sorry." Demarco stared at Tallis and Warren in the cage, looking pained and conflicted.

“Why?” asked. The anger and confusion in my voice could not be hidden.

This was not at all how I envisioned the rest of the night going. I got up from the ground to face Demarco.

Let them out! You are supposed to be our friend and Warren is your family!”

Theo, on the other hand, remained silent and composed. His gaze fell on me, and he instructed, “Ciana, get out of here. Now.’

How could I run away without at least getting some clarification of the situation?

“Forgive me,” Demarco shook his head. “I had no choice.” “What do you mean?” I asked.

Demarco shook his head. “She is dying. The only woman I have ever loved is dying and not one healer is capable of curing her. I can’t watch her get weaker by the day. She is my mate, my entire world... I can’t lose her!”

“We can help too, Demarco.” I tried to reason with him.

“There are royal healers—”

Theo’s voice echoed again, a bit harsh this time. “Ciana, get out of here!”

I looked around and realized that we were surrounded by Demarco’s warriors, and the rest of the cast members were blocked just beyond the stage area.

Crap! Theo was right, I needed to get out of there.

I started to move toward the woods, trying to draw as little attention as I could while Demarco looked at me sadly and sighed, ‘I’ve tried everything. Like I said, I have no other choice.”

“So what are you going to do with us?” Theo finally spoke to Demarco. I knew he was trying to distract Demarco and buy time for me. “Unless we possess some incredible healing abilities that we don’t know about.’

“Ha ha ha, you don’t have incredible healing abilities.” A familiar laugh pierced through my ear and my heart sank. “But Alpha Demarco is willing to exchange your life for his wife’s well-being!’

Luther walked out of the shadows. His whole body was clad in black. Had he been there watching the whole time?

Without even thinking it through I bolted away from the men, but it was too late. Large arms circled my waist and twisted my arms behind my back.

“Let me go!” I demanded, fighting against whoever was holding me.

‘Shhh... be good.” Luther smiled, and his tone was almost gentle and doting, yet that made every single hair on my body stand up.

“I thought you would be happy to see me.” I could hear the amusement in Luther’s voice. “Bring her back to me.’

The man who subdued me walked me to where Luther stood.

Hello princess, I missed you so.” He stepped toward me and brushed his finger against my cheek. He had a triumphant glint in his eyes.

Don’t touch her!” Theo’s voice roared and he shook the cage.

Luther let out a little chuckle and then turned to him. Prince Theo, how nice to see you again. It’s not often to see you lose your temper. Either I’m special to you...” Luther lifted my chin and leaned forward. His face was only inches away from mine. or she is.”

“I will spill your blood on this floor if you touch her again!” Luther laughed at his remark.

“Why did he call you Theo?” Warren looked at Theo. His eyebrows furrowed in confusion as he examined Theo’s face. I watched as realization dawned on him and then his eyes widened.

“You... You ‘re Theo?!” He looked at his brother. “But how

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Of did you...why did you...what the hell?!”

Luther shook his head with a playful smile on his face. “Prince Warren, it seems like your brother doesn’t trust anyone, not even his own siblings!”

Warren’s mouth hung open as he stared at his brother who was glaring at Luther. Luther just looked like he was enjoying it all.

“Here is what’s going to happen. My men are going into the cage to put these chains on your wrists. And you aren’t going to fight them...”

“As soon as this door is opened, I’ll gut you alive, Luther,” Theo stated coldly.

“Your empty threats bore me, Theo. You see, that is why I have my leverage,” Luther chuckled, and pulled me closer to him. I tried to fight back, but he was too strong for me.

“I have your precious Ciana, Theo,” he picked up a strand of my hair and kissed it. “If you are to try anything funny, I can’t promise I won’t accidentally slice her throat, or... mark her in front of your eyes.”

Theo let out a warning growl, but he didn’t say anything this time.

NOW, none of these things will have to happen if you just obey. The choice is yours.”

‘Don’t listen to him,” I shouted, shaking my head at Theo. His eyes bored into mine as he thought over the request.

Then he turned his attention back to Luther. “Fine.”

” ‘knew you would see things my way.” Luther grinned. “First, I want you to call off your little bloodhounds. I know you have a dozen men surrounding us right now. Tell them to stand down and move away from us. At least 10 miles. Or else I’ll cut off one of her fingers for every one of them my men spot!”

“Theo, no!” I yelled, but someone covered my mouth tight with some thick cloth and I could no longer talk.

Theo bit down on his jaw, and fury filled his eyes. He was quiet for a moment, and I assumed that he used mindlink to communicate with his hidden warriors.

“Greg and Sherry, ask everyone to back off at least 10 miles.”

Theo didn’t have to say it aloud, but he did anyway to show Luther he was cooperative. After a short moment, he looked at Luther. “Done.”

If Theo sent his men away, that meant, at this point, we only had the three of us to rely on to get out of this trap!

Luther was pleased with Theo’s cooperation. He nodded, “Great. Second, my men will chain you up, and you can’t fight back.”

Theo narrowed his eyes and before he gave his answer, Luther sighed dramatically and nodded to the man who was holding me.

The man tightened his grasp on me and twisted my arm.

I tried to hold back from making any sound in agony, but I couldn’t stop my face from twitching in pain.

“Fine!” Theo shouted, “Just don’t hurt her.”

Luther smiled brightly. The venom in his voice was potent; and deadly. “Chain them.”

My heart sank to the floor. Theo and Warren were in danger, but there was nothing I could do.

Two of Luther’s men came out of the shadows and entered the cage with chains in their hands. I could tell the pungent smell of the wolfsbane on the silver even from where I stood.

I scrunched up my nose trying to turn away from the poison.

As soon as the metal touched Theo and Warren, I heard the faint sizzling sound as the wolfsbane burned their skin.

I couldn’t imagine how painful it must be, and my heart ached for both Warren and Theo.

“Ahh!” Warren gasped and sucked in the air and let out a low curse, while Theo only frowned slightly.

My gaze landed on Theo as he lifted his head, I could see a thin sheen of sweat seeping through his forehead. Through his quivering, thick eyelashes, I saw a pair of determined dark eyes. Then he slightly moved his lips.

“Don’t worry,” he said silently.

At that moment, it was like a thousand daggers thrust into my chest and I couldn’t breathe. The flood of my emotions broke through the barricade holding them back, and tears poured down my cheeks. I frantically shook my head,

Theo snapped his gaze back to Luther. “You’ve been after

me for a while, Luther. Now that you've got me, why don't you let them go?"

Luther glared at Theo for a moment, and then his smile faded. Slowly, his handsome face twisted and it turned into a cold sneer.

"Who do you think you are?" Luther's voice was as cold as ice, and his expression turned livid. "A savior? Trying to sacrifice yourself for others? Humor me! You are no one but a mur-

"This is between you and me," Theo reiterated in a leveled tone.

All of a sudden, Warren let out loud and boisterous laughs that had all of us turning toward him.

'Now you care?" He turned to Theo with a disgusted look. 'Now you want to show some semblance of humanity inside of you? We are literally in this fucking situation because of you!"

His eyes were bloodshot, and I could see veins bulging on his forehead and neck. I couldn't believe what I heard and never before had I seen Warren so enraged.

Was it truly how Warren felt about Theo? I knew sometimes the brothers didn't get along, but his words stunned me.

I looked at Theo, how would he take it?

"I don't know what you're talking about, Warren," Theo responded flatly.

"My, my, what do we have here? A little brotherly tension?"

"Don't know what I'm talking about?" Warren shouted out aloud, raising his voice at Theo, "When you followed through with Father's orders, did you question him? When you wiped out those packs, did you even blink your eyes? Of course not! Why would a monster like you care?"

"Enough!" Theo bellowed.

Warren snapped back, "Hell no! And now here we are again because of you. It's all your fault, Theo! I've been wanting to say this to you for a long time! Since we're both dying today, I have to let this out!"

"Is that any way to treat the brother you so dearly love?" Luther had a large grin on his face, clearly loving every bit of this.

"Love?" Warren sneered, "I hate this jackass to the core of my being. If I am being honest I want this man bleeding on the floor at my mercy."

I gasped, still unable to make a sound.

HOW could Warren think that way? He couldn't have! I took a deep breath to calm my racing heart, but I knew no matter how hard I tried, I could not erase the horror painted on my face.

Theo remained passive and unmoved, as if he didn't care what Warren just said about him.

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Luther walked to the cage. "If you hate him so much, then prove it."

Warren sneered at Luther, "Get out of my face, who the hell are you? I hate Theo, but that doesn't mean I like you!"

"How about I give you an opportunity?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, beat up your brother, Warren. Make him black and blue the way you say you want to." Luther nodded to his guard, "Release his chains."

I looked at Warren with terror and I fought against the man who had me subdued, but to no avail

"Um...um...eh!"

I watched as the guard untied Warren and then released him from his chains. Warren looked at Theo with fury in his eyes. There was no hesitation, no second thought, and he punched Theo right in the gut, knocking the air out of him.

Warren continued his assault on Theo's stomach until Theo toppled over, but he didn't stop there. He connected his foot to Theo's arms, back, and legs. He kept going and there was nothing Theo could do to defend himself.

The wolfsbane was keeping Theo's wolf from surging forward. He just laid there and took it all because his hands were pulled back by the chains, which were now locked to the bar of the cage.

My heart ached so much as if every one of those hits were on my body. Tears streamed down my face, and I couldn't

After about ten minutes of beating, Theo couldn't maintain his stance and dropped to his knees.

"How pathetic!" Warren looked down at Theo. "Serves you right!"

Then he stopped and turned to Luther. "Happy? Satisfied?"

Luther grinned. "Extremely. I think we can be good friends, Prince Warren."

However, Warren scoffed, "Friends? With a man like you? Never."

Luther didn't seem to be offended by Warren. Instead, he studied Warren's face and let out a chuckle. "Prince Warren, why don't you reconsider? With me as your ally, and your brother and father out of the picture, you will be the sole heir to the throne. Imagine all the good you could do for our people."

Warren didn't immediately retort back this time.

I was panicking... Was he really thinking about it? No, no, he couldn't be!

"Fine. I will be your ally, Luther. But if we do this, we are going to play by my rules." Warren looked to Luther. "Those are my terms and conditions."

My heart sank, and the blood in my body ran cold.

Luther clapped his hands together.

"Wonderful! Guys, open the door and let us welcome our future king."

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 435](#)

Why Did He Come Back?

'Theo•

Warren, that bastard, he wasn't pulling any punches.

The cage opened, and Warren walked out without sparing me another glance. I only hoped that the poison hadn't taken full effect on him since it hadn't touched him for very long.

He gracefully walked out from the cage and towards Luther, carrying himself regally, just like a king. Luther was pleased with himself and smiled at my brother. "What an honor, Your Majesty!"

Then, before anyone could react, Warren shifted into his wolf and charged at Luther.

The guy holding Ciana was stunned for a moment, and Ciana took the chance to jam her elbow into that guy's ribs.

In the next second, Warren leaped and landed between Ciana and Luther. She was free!

His mouth opened wide and his fangs flashed as Warren threw his head back, howled, and began running away with Ciana.

I Yincd and smiled. Watching them from the corner of my eye, I was finally relieved when they were a safe distance away. Warren had pulled through and saved Ciana, but I wondered if he meant the things he said earlier.

His voice had sounded so resentful, so full of anger. He

hadn't held back that much with the beating he delivered. Of course, I knew he'd know I could handle it and he needed to convince Luther through his action, but I still wondered whether part of him had been truly upset with me.

However, I didn't have time to process all of it.

Theo, you'd better take care of this!' Warren told me in the mindlink.

'Just take Ciana and run!' I responded.

Most importantly, she was safe, and there was nothing else holding me back!

Luther's guys tried to close the cage but it was too late. I'd already• hauled myself to my feet and charged out of the cage. That damn chain couldn't hold me back.

They call me a monster and murderer, and now they would get a taste of what a real monster was like!

Luther snarled and charged toward me. In mid-air, he shifted, jaws snapping as he came toward me. I reached up and attacked his throat. He growled and slashed at me with his paws.

I kicked Luther in his rib, he fell on the ground and he whimpered. My side ached from Warren's beating, and I clutched it for a moment. Inhaling deeply, I closed myself off to the pain as Luther rose and shook himself off.

He turned to me, making eye contact and showing me his teeth.

I glanced at him and motioned with my hand for him to come at me. As he charged, I shifted and met him head-on. We collided together in a fit of fur, claws, and snarls.

That was right, wolfbane, or whatever the poison they used had limited effect on me.

I pushed him back, hooking my shoulder against his side, trying to break his ribs. Luther spun away from me and rose up on hind legs. He swatted at me with his front paws, catching me on the face and tearing a gash along my cheek.

Snarling, I shook the blood away and I charged at him.

Luther howled and suddenly, several of his wolves ran onto the stage. They surrounded me, teeth gnashing, tails swishing.

wasn't at my top strength. If Warren hadn't beaten me, taking on Luther and ten or so of his cronies would be easy. Now, I wasn't sure I'd have the upper hand.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Demarco skulking through the shadows, off in the direction that Ciana and Warren had run.

I growled and jumped over the wolves that were closing in on me. Catching up to Demarco, I jumped on his back to pin him down.

He whimpered, his legs buckling under my weight.

Snarling, I smacked down on his leg with my paw and I could hear his bone snap upon impact. I'd like to see him go after them with a broken leg!

The other wolves swarmed around me, jumping on me

from all directions. They bit and scratched. In a fury of fur and spittle, I fought them off.

I grabbed one around the throat with my teeth and shook until his neck was covered with blood and he went limp. Tossing him aside, I pounced on another, crushing him into the floor. I raised my front paws and slammed them onto his spine until I heard his back break with a crack!

Warren had injured me to gain Luther's trust and rescue Ciana. I respected him for that, but he hadn't left me in great condition to fight this army of wolves.

Throwing myself to the side, I tackled another of Luther's followers. He smashed into the bar of the cage. Wheezing, he tried to get up, but his legs trembled, and he collapsed onto the ground, his breathing labored.

The wolves thinned around me. I'd killed off enough to shift my attention back to Luther. I locked eyes on him, and he stamped his foot on the ground, challenging me.

With an angered roar, I charged at him, breaking through the remaining wolves and tossing them aside like used towels.

Luther ran at me too and we collided, head-on. I headbutted him, his skull cracking beneath mine, and he groaned, falling backward. Luther staggered from side to side. He tried to shake it off, but a cracked skull was a serious injury.

I gave a satisfied snort as Luther fell on his side, breathing heavily. When I walked up to him, hovering over him, Luther winced and shifted back to his human form, still panting.

Snarling, I lifted my lip and showed him my teeth. I was ready to destroy him for all the trouble he'd caused.

Wtly Old Comp

I raised my paw to deliver the final blow but Demarco howled. I whipped my head to the side and Demarco hobbled over, dragging his broken leg. He laid across Luther.

Groaning, I shifted back to human form. I glared at him, and he shuddered, but he wouldn't stop protecting Luther.

Demarco, I'm not going to ask you again. Because you're Maggie's husband, I'll spare your life, but this is your last warning. Move!" I demanded.

Demarco whimpered and shook his head. As far as Demarco knew, Luther was the only one that could save Maggie. Of course, he wouldn't move. He wouldn't risk Maggie's life. He loved her too much.

"Your funeral," I muttered.

I shifted back into wolf form and faced off with Demarco. He pulled himself up on three legs and I realized he had pretty good balance on those three legs.

I lunged at him and Demarco jumped back. He let out a wail when his broken leg hit the floor, but he recovered quickly, snarling at me and diving for my front paw.

Pivoting, I stepped away from him and got ready to tackle him when the hair on my neck and spine stood on end and a cold, paralyzing chill ran down my spine.

From the corner of my eye, I saw something shiny slicing through the air toward me.

A silver dagger.

Luther's eyes and smug grin were reflected on the blade

93: Did Come as it shot toward me. I didn't have time to roll away!

I planted my feet, bracing for the impact, but the knife never hit me. Someone jumped in front of me, grunting as the dagger embedded in his shoulder.

Warren groaned and fell to the floor with a heavy thud. I heard him gasping for breath and moaning. 'Warren!!' I shouted through the mind link.

Why the fuck did he come back?!

Forgetting about Demarco, I ran to Warren. Anger fueled me. All my fatigue and pain vanished and all I could think of was getting to Warren's side.

Three of Luther's remaining wolves raced to intercept me. Snarling, I pounced on them one after the other, delivering a fatal blow to their necks. Blood dripped from my claws as I left them bleeding out in a rush to get to my brother.

'Warren, what the hell are you doing here?!' I asked in the mindlink, coming to his side.

'To help you... of course...' Warren said, his voice quiet in my mind.

'You shouldn't have... I don't need your help!' I told him bitterly

Hadn't he just said how much he hated me? It didn't seem like he was completely lying and I hadn't been able to tell if it was the truth or not, but why did he do this? Why did he... protect me? He should've just left!

Warren looked very weak. His face was pale and his eyes

bloodshot. He sat up, wavering slightly and blinking like he couldn't see clearly.

'Why do you have to be so arrogant? Listen, I didn't lie earlier. I haven't liked you ever since we were young. You're cold, you're arrogant, you're ruthless... yet Father favors you. I did everything I could to please him, but he wouldn't even spare me a glance... And Ciana... Ciana also chose you over me,' Warren told me, sticking to the mindlink.

I heard nails scraping the floor behind me. Snarling, I whipped around and knocked Demarco back. He yelped and hit the floor hard. He made one attempt to get up but when I growled, he laid his head down, ready to surrender.

What was I supposed to say to Warren's confession?

but, you're my brother.. I just don't want to watch you di...', Warren chuckled and his voice trailed off, 'you know... you could've just said thank you....'

Warren sighed, his eyelids fluttering. He let out a soft gasp and slumped back, completely unconscious.

'WARREN,' I shouted in the mindlink and howled at the same time. "Aho—!"

When I turned to Demarco and Luther again, more wolves gathered around them, but all I could feel was the desire to kill, to rip their hearts from their chests, smash their own bones into pieces, and tear them into shreds...

Whoever stood in front of me, they must die!

I ran right back into the fight, not caring how outnumbered I was or what injuries I had sustained. When I tore into

the pulsing jugular of one wolf, pouring into me.

Again, fear, longing, terror, and resentment all rushed into my body and my mind.

This time, those didn't come from my hands, but from my fangs!

And I didn't care.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 436](#)

Never Again

'Ciana*

After Warren left me to go back, I ran through the garden to get away from the stage. Instead of running away, I knew I needed to help. Warren and Theo were in danger!

The only other person that cared about them both was Maggie. If anyone could stop this, it was her.

I found Maggie in her room. She looked much better than she had before the play. I guess she really did feel a lot happier after seeing the performance. What a difference being in good spirits could make.

"Maggie! Please help! You have to stop them," I panted out the moment she looked up at me.

Maggie creased her brow. She rose from her bed and grabbed the footboard, steadying herself. She was still pretty weak. Suddenly, she started to cough, and was barely able to catch her breath.

I saw a pitcher of water next to her bed and I went over, poured her a glass and handed it to her. She smiled in thanks and took a few sips, which seemed to soothe whatever was bothering her.

"Please, tell me what happened?" she urged after she was finally able to talk, her eyes lit up with confusion.

"Warren and Theo are in danger," I blurted out, getting straight to the point.

The glass I just handed her trembled and slipped from her fingers, smashing on the floor. I grabbed Maggie's arm to pull her away from the shards before they cut her bare feet.

"Warren and... did you say Theo?" she asked, creasing her brow.

"No time to explain much but Tallis is Theo. Demarco is working with Luther to try to capture them both. You're the only one who could help... to persuade Demarco. Please help!" I begged, tightening my hand on her wrist.

Maggie's brow creased deeper, like she was processing the few details I gave her. "Right, let's go," she said with a nod.

I looped my arm through hers for support and I hurried back to the stage area, as fast as I could. Maggie had a little trouble keeping up and I didn't want to make her worse by rushing her.

When we arrived, I stopped dead and stared, gasping. Beside me, Maggie sucked in a sharp breath and I felt her arm quiver in mine.

Theo was in wolf form, bearing down on Demarco. Maggie's husband wouldn't last much longer against him. He looked beaten and bruised, and I was pretty sure his hind leg was broken.

A few dozen wolf bodies lay scattered on the ground, dead. Their eyes were frozen in the last emotion they'd ever felt, and a lot of them reflected absolute, chilling terror.

I felt ice sliding down my spine, paralyzed by what I was seeing.

“That’s s... is that really... Theo?” Maggie whispered small, surprised, and seemingly frightened voice.

“Yes, that is Theo, I promise,” I said, nodding. I wasn’t sure if she still didn’t recognize him or if it scared her to see her brother like that.

Maggie’s face got even paler and her arm slipped from mine. I was about to run after her when I saw a familiar form on the ground.

‘Oh Goddess.. I gasped as I recognized it was Warren and immediately ran to check on him.

He was so pale and bleeding from the shoulder. It looked like he lost a lot of blood. There was a small pool of red under him.

A silver dagger laid not too far away from where he was. It looked to me that he was wounded by it.

“Warren, Warren, are you alright?” I asked, shaking him a little. He mumbled something, but he was unconscious.

I checked his pulse. Thank the Goddess he still had a heartbeat! When I looked up, I saw Maggie running toward Theo and Demarco.

“STOP!” she cried, holding her arms up to them.

Warren blinked several times, catching my attention again. He slowly opened his eyes and tried to smile at me. I smiled back, but my face fell when I saw Warren go even paler.

“NO—!” he cried. He sat up abruptly and reached out his arms to Maggie in the air.

I spun around, and saw Maggie’s body collapsing down on the ground in front of Theo as she gasped, please.. spare Demarco..

Theo’s wolf seemed to be as shocked as Warren. Both of them had the same bulging eyes as they stared at Maggie’s frail body. She twitched and turned her head to look at Warren.

“Thank the Goddess...Warren... you’re alright...”

Her voice trembled as she spoke, and then her eyes faded and she was gone.

Demarco shifted back to his human form.

“Maggie!” he cried out in pure anguish and desperate pain.

No, oh no, no.... Maggie, MAGGIE—I” He crawled up and pulled Maggie’s soft body into his arms, tears streamed down his cheeks.

His handsome face twisted. After a few moments of sobbing, he turned to Theo and yelled hysterically, “You killed her! You killed your own sister, you fucking monster! Now you’re happy? You sick, twisted fuck!”

Demarco wobbled on his broken leg, but I could see in his eyes that he still had enough strength in grief to attack Theo.

Theo shuddered and turned back into human form. He covered his face with his hands.

"I didn't mean to... What have I done?" he whispered, his

- 28 eyes on Maggie in utter disbelief.

Luther let out a wild, maniacal laugh. I'd almost forgotten he was there!

"Yes, YEEES! You see! You're just a freaking murderer! You can't control it! You can't help it!" he cried out joyously, "Starting with Maggie, kill them, kill them all! Those who you care about and those who care about you, kill them all! And you, you pathetic monster, you deserve the longest, darkness, endless loneliness and pain!"

Everything happened too fast. Time seemed to have stopped and I couldn't follow what was going on until Warren's weight sank back into my arms.

At that point, all I could force out was one word.

"Theo..."

Theo

I didn't want to see Maggie's dead, lifeless eyes, but I couldn't look away. My hands weren't enough to shield my eyes and I saw her final expression, frozen in place for all eternity. That expression seared itself onto my brain.

What had I done?

No. No. This couldn't be happening!

Shaking my head, I looked around at the others. My body and mind were completely numb.

Demarco was screaming at me and pointing. He hobbled

again around on a broken leg, the hatred in his eyes enough to fuel him in a fight against me. I could see his lips moving but I

couldn't hear the words he was shrieking.

Whatever he had to say, I deserved it.

My own half-sister.. I'd killed my own sister!

My eyes traveled to Warren. He had passed out again. Moments ago, he'd been willing to take a dagger for, me. Now... he'd probably never look at me again.

No one should ever look at me again!

Ciana... I couldn't look at her. I turned away from all of them.

Muffled voices rang in my head but I couldn't make sense of them. Over and over again I blinked, but that look on Maggie's face was all I could see. When I closed my eyes, it was there. When I opened them, it was still there.

The moment of terror when she realized I was taking her life; that fear when death gripped her, and the blank, staring gaze when life finally left her eyes.

I could never remove her final expression from my mind!

I shouldn't. I should be reminded of what I did forever. Maybe now... Maybe now I'd finally accept that I didn't deserve to have the privilege of being close to anyone.

"Theo..."

My name was the only word I heard through the fog and numbness. Who was calling me? My brain wasn't able to tell.

Neg•« Again

I looked over my shoulder and spotted Luther on the ground, laughing and looking completely crazy. However, his reaction was irrelevant.

Whoever he was, a sly rebel, a deadly foe, or a cunning conspirator, at this point, it didn't matter.

Howling, I ran off the stage and out into the gardens. If anyone called to me or ran after me, I didn't need to stick around to find out. I just needed to be far away as fast as possible.

How had I let myself get that out of control? I didn't know. What was even more horrifying was that I did it without touching her, or without feeling anything!

Was it a sign that I was finally, really, fully going out of control?

Why did this happen?

Was it because Warren took a dagger for me? I'd never had anyone that would do that to protect me. It infuriated me to see him hurt like that, because of me.

So I'd just unleashed it all and I hadn't been able to stop!

And then, to repay his kindness, what did I do? I took Maggie's life in front of Warren's eyes!

All Maggie wanted... All she wanted was to help.

Goddess, even if I was doomed for my fate, what did either of them do to deserve such cruelty?

No, they didn't. It was just me. My mother's words from many years ago rang in my ears.

They died because you.

I forced myself to act on what had to be done.

Opening my mindlink, I made my first order. 'Greg and

Sherry, you guys come back to Vaner. Protect Warren and

Ciana.'

'Got it, Alpha. Is everything O—'

'Don't look for me,' was my second and last order before I cut the connection.

"Theo!"

Again, someone called to me, but I had to shut my mind off to the voices and the emotions. If I let them overtake me now, I'd lose control all over again.

There was only one thing that mattered at this point— it was getting me out of here before anyone else got hurt.

My paws pounded into the soft, grassy ground and I ran, panting. I ran until my lungs burned and my legs ached, the injuries from my fight and beating from Warren finally catching up to me.

When I made it to a quiet, dark place in the woods, I flopped down on the ground, laying my head against my paws.

The only thing left for me to do was hide and keep this hideous monster away from the rest of the world.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 437](#)

Farewell, Dear Maggie

- Ciana*

I stared at the empty spot where Theo had been standing seconds before. He'd been like a zombie, so distant and dazed. I'd never seen him like that... almost like he was scared.

Theo was the Dark Prince, he didn't get scared! Did he? Had he even heard me shouting his name?

'Luther!' a new voice shouted.

Some of Luther's men ran to the stage. I recognized them from when I stayed at his mansion. Thankfully, they didn't even look my way. They just helped Luther to his feet.

"Won't be long now," Luther chuckled as his wolves helped him off the stage. "Soon, even Sebastian will find that monster too destructive to keep, then it'll be our time to strike."

My heart quivered. Would Sebastian turn on his own son?

"Maggie, my dear, sweet love," Demarco crooned.

I watched as he kneeled beside her. Tears continued to streak his face and he sobbed. He kept rocking her, like he was hoping that she could hear him and open her eyes magically, but she didn't respond.

"Maggie... my love," he sobbed.

Suddenly, he threw his head back and let out a long, grief

stricken roar. His body shook and in the blink of an eye, he shifted, his roar becoming a long, mournful howl.

I imagined he was too devastated. He'd risked everything to try and save her.

It was all for nothing.

Again and again, Demarco howled, sitting awkwardly with his broken leg out to the side. He sniffed Maggie and whimpered, even nosed her gently. But after he touched her once, he scurried into a corner, whimpering with his tail tucked between his legs.

I'd never seen a wolf lose their mate before. My heart screamed in my chest and tears wet my eyes, just from seeing Demarco's reaction. I knew he was working with Luther and he'd betrayed us, but the loss he was feeling... It was overwhelming.

My mind drifted to Theo... I refused to believe that Theo would choose to kill Maggie on purpose. Knowing him, even if they weren't close, he wouldn't go after his own family like that, would he?

He wasn't the most in touch with his emotions, and I knew he could be ruthless. I'd seen it. But he'd always acted in selfdefense, or in defense of me and others.

Was he really so far gone that he'd kill his own half-sister?

No! I didn't think that.

Looking around at Demarco in the corner and Warren, who dragged himself with his good arm over to Maggie, I knew it wasn't the right time to defend Theo. Neither Warren nor Demarco would want to hear it.

"Why?" Warren asked. He sat up, unsteadily, and pulled Maggie's body into his lap.

Crying and rocking back and forth, he clung to her lifeless form, sobbing as tears dripped from his cheeks onto her dress.

"Why would he do this to you? Why, Theo? Why out of everyone would you kill Maggie?" Warren wailed, shaking his head.

"Warren," I said. I came up behind him and put a hand on his shoulder.

He whimpered and pulled away from me.

"She's gone. My sister is gone. Theo took her from me! Why?" he cried again. He trembled and crumpled forward, heaving as he passed out again.

I looked around. Demarco was still in the corner, but he needed to be alone. Luther and his wolves, the ones that had survived, were all gone. There was nothing left but corpses.

Warren still had a knife wound in his shoulder. I needed to get him somewhere safe to rest and heal.

"Alpha Demarco, Prince Warren needs some rest, do you think I can use one of your rooms?"

However, I got no reaction from Demarco. With Luther and Theo gone, Demarco had no interest in Warren or myself. He was still staring at Maggie, barely blinking once in a while.

So I sighed and decided to take the liberty and move Warren into one of the guest rooms.

"Come on, Warren," I murmured. I shook him a little.

He perked up enough for me to get my shoulder under his arm and he stumbled along as I supported him all the way back to his room. I got him into bed and put the covers around him.

"Rest here. I'll be right back," I said, touching his forehead.

Once I got Warren settled, I sent someone to help Demarco and handle the rest.

Demarco's mansion was huge and there were plenty of servants and maids working there. I found some maids in one of the mansion hallways. They didn't seem to know what had happened.

"I need medical supplies for Prince Warren. Alpha Demarco is still in the theater where we put on the play. He's going to need your help, and any other spare hands you can find," I said with enough authority to get them to obey me.

"Medical supplies are in the closet down the hall," one of the maids said, pointing the way.

I grabbed what I needed and went back to Warren's room. His eyes were open and he was propped up on the pillows. Blood was seeping through his shirt at his shoulder. I wished he hadn't pulled the dagger out. There seemed to be a lot of blood for the size of the wound.

"Maggie is..." Warren sighed and shook his head. He groaned suddenly and coughed, blood spewing from his mouth, down his shirt.

"Warren! Take it easy," I said. I rushed to his side and rubbed his back. "You're okay. Let me just see that wound."

"No, it doesn't matter anymore," Warren groaned. He slumped down on the bed and closed his eyes.

"Of course, it matters!" I touched his forehead. He was pasty with a fever.

Warren mumbled something and he seemed unconscious. I grabbed a pair of scissors and cut his bloody shirt off. The wound in his shoulder wasn't that bad, but it was bleeding a lot and it already looked infected.

I got a cool washcloth from the bathroom and draped it over Warren's forehead to help with the fever. I pulled his covers up as far as I could without covering the wound and tucked them in around him.

With another wet cloth, I wiped the blood away from his mouth and found a third one to start cleaning out his wound.

Between this injury and his grief, Warren would need days to recover. I wasn't going to leave his side.

"Ciana..."

"I'm here, Warren. I'll take care of you," I said, grabbing his hand and sitting on the edge of the bed.

Warren coughed a little again. No blood came up this time.

"You don't need to. I'll be okay."

He sighed and passed out again in his fever.

'S Maqq•e

Some water and a warm lunch. I made a mental checklist.

I didn't know when he'd be awake again, but I wanted to make sure he had everything he needed.

It worried me how depressed he was. Maggie was his twin, so they had to be close. Still, I'd never seen Warren like this. Shaking my head, I sat next to him again and took his hand.

I once heard that losing one's twin was like losing half of oneself. I didn't know whether me staying there and comforting him would make him feel less depressed and lonely, but that was the least I could do to feel I was doing something.

His fever started to go down and after I'd taken care of the wound, it started healing quickly. Warren slept mostly, but when he was awake, he would just stare into space and remained silent.

I practically had to force feed him just to make sure he was getting the nutrients he needed.

"I'm going to stay by you until you get through this," I assured, giving him some soup.

Warren just stared at me and shook his head. Then he laid down and rolled away so his back was facing me.

He was starting to worry me.

Several days had passed and Warren had not shed a single tear.

I hated seeing Warren like this. The kind, warm eyes I had

Maybe he was holding it in, but he needed the release. I feared that if he didn't let it out then, it would fester inside of him like poison and morph into something dark.

I didn't want that for him.

I looked to the side and saw Warren looking out of the car window.

We were traveling to Warren's vacation home.

I reached my hand over the console and gave his hand a gentle squeeze. The action caused Warren to look at me with a blank expression. He hadn't spoken a word for the past three days.

He had dark circles under his eyes and his cheeks had hollowed slightly. The only thing he could stomach lately was soup. As a wolf he needed more than that to suffice his body's basic energy needs.

"Thank you." He whispered and then turned back to the window. He didn't let go of my hand. Instead, he threaded his fingers through mine and held on a little tighter.

I rubbed my thumb across the back of his hand and sighed, I would be here for him in any way he needed and for however long he needed, as a friend, to provide the support he needed.

The car wound around a narrow road deep within the mountains completely surrounded by pine trees. All that came into my sight were serene views.

The body had already been transported there and now waited for our arrival to finally lay her to rest.

Demarco was in the car behind us. I sighed at the thought of him. He wasn't eating, nor did I think he slept at all. He looked like the shell of the man he used to be.

He went from having hope that his wife would be healed one moment only to lose her the next.

I closed my eyes as my mind wandered to the third man who lost his soul in this accident.

Theo. I wondered where he had been, what was he doing, and how was he feeling? I remembered when the bloodlust had ended in his eyes, I saw the shock and devastation. That also ached me to the core.

What a terrible accident...

Yes, I chose to believe that the entire tragedy was an accident. However, accident or not, how could Warren and Demarco ever forgive Theo?

Maggie and Warren were the most innocent ones in this whole situation, yet, they were the ones who were hurt most.

Life, was too cruel.

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 438](#)

Help Me Destroy Theo

We came to a halt at a large iron gate with a royal crest designed on it. The guards let us through and we made our way to a house that sat at the very top of the hill.

It was not what I was expecting when Warren told me that we were going to his summer home. I had thought it would be something similar to the palace.

Luxury. Extravagance. Grandeur.

But this place was quaint, beautiful and peaceful.

Warren let go of my hand and stepped out of the car without a single word. I did the same and inhaled the fresh scent of the area. I could hear the faint humming of birds in the forests that surrounded us.

Demarco's car came to a halt behind ours and he stepped out dressed in a black suit and sunglasses. Even without seeing his eyes, anyone could tell that he was a man in pain.

Warren walked up to him and whispered something in Demarco's ear. Demarco nodded and patted him softly on the back. They both loved Maggie and no one in the world would understand their loss more than the two of them.

The servants came and escorted us toward the back of the beautiful cottage where her body would be laid to rest.

The ceremony was enclosed, Neither Warren nor Demarco wanted Maggie to be disturbed any more than she had already been, and they both needed the privacy to grieve.

We walked a little way away from the cottage and went to the burial site which was a short walk past the treeline. A few dozen servants all dressed in black surrounded the area where her coffin hung

suspended above the ground.

Through my veil, I saw Warren in a fitted black suit and the royal sash with an adornment of medals. He was a prince after all. He had to follow some of the formalities.

The king was aware of Maggie's tragic demise but Warren had refused to extend the invite. I think in a way he also blamed his father for Maggie's demise. He had always favored Theo and in doing so left Theo to 'run wild'

I didn't know the full dynamics of that relationship but I knew that at this moment, Warren was resentful toward his father.

As we drew closer to the site, Warren grabbed my hand and led us to where an elder adorned in a white robe stood at the end of the coffin. In his hand, was a bowl of morning dew from the mountain.

The morning dew was a tradition at all funeral ceremonies where the elder of the pack would sprinkle it on top of the coffin so the soul of the deceased would go in peace. It was also done so that the soil where they are laid would be fruitful and bring more life. Almost like a rebirth in nature.

It was a beautiful sentiment. One that I did not fully appreciate until this very moment.

We came to a standstill and then Warren signaled for the elder to begin.

"As the Moon Goddess giveth, so does she taketh. We

FWp Destroy T know that this life is not the end of the journey for there is a new journey ahead for this young soul."

The elder paused for a second and continued, "May she find her way into the arms of the Goddess, and may she be free from the burden of this world and reunited with the ancestors from times passed. We will meet you again, dear one."

The elder splashed the clear water on top of the white coffin. Each person stepped toward the elder and dipped their hand in the bowl.

I could hear the faint sniffs of servants all around me. Everyone was broken. I could tell Maggie had touched each and every one of their hearts in some way or another.

When it was my turn to sprinkle the water, I hesitated for a second. How I wished this wasn't how we parted ways with Maggie.

Warren gently pushed the small of my back.

I sprinkled the pure liquid on top of the coffin.

"Go well, Maggie," I whispered and moved along so Warren and Demarco could say their farewell too.

After the service was completed, the coffin slowly began to be lowered into the ground.

Demarco lost it at that moment. Every cry he uttered broke something inside of me.

What was it like to lose your light and hope? That was what I had been told losing a mate was like. It was an experience I dearly wished I would never know.

Warren placed his hand on his back.

Warren stood beside me with silent tears streaming down his face. He held onto my hand so tightly his knuckles turned white.

Even though my hand hurt from Warren's grip, I didn't pull it back, as I knew it was nothing compared to the pain in Warren's heart.

After the burial, we all gathered inside the cottage, apart from Demarco who needed a moment to himself.

As for Warren, he spent the rest of the day sitting next to Maggie's gravestone, keeping his silence.

'Ciana, if you don't mind, I want to talk to Maggie for a little while.'

I nodded in understanding. "Take your time. If you need me for anything, just let me know. I'll be around."

I patted his shoulder gently and walked back to the cottage.

From the pieces and bits that I picked up from the servants, this summer home wasn't just a random property that Prince Warren happened to own. In fact, it was the place where both Maggie and Warren spent many of their childhood summers with their mother.

The inside of the cottage was as beautiful as its outside. Hardwood floors were in every room apart from the kitchen, which had white tiling. Again, not that it was expensively lav-

ish, but it was elegant, classy, and still welcoming and homey.

On the walls were some pictures. Most of them were Warren and Maggie, and a few with a graceful woman. I assume it was their late mother, as she had the same gentle, graceful demeanor that Maggie carried.

In most of the pictures, young Maggie and Warren were smiling. They were adorable, and their smiles brightened the gloomy mood hovering over the place, and brought an upcurl to my lips.

There was only one picture where Warren clearly didn't have a good day, so I leaned forward to take a closer look.

'That was the day I lost a tooth.' Warren stepped up beside me with a glass of something strong in hand. I could see that little Maggie and Warren wore matching wetsuits, standing next to a lake.

"When we were young, Maggie and I fought, just like any siblings. That day, we had been racing along the bank when she tripped me and I hit my face against a rock. It hurt, and she won." He chuckled remembering the fond memory. "However, Maggie felt so bad that she promised to be my humble and faithful servant for a month. Ever since then, she had always been there for me."

He looked down at his drink and then back at the picture. His face was softened and there was a spark in his eyes. However, soon the glimmer dimmed and pain swam back.

"Can we go into the gardens? I want to show you some-

_thing.”

I nodded and allowed him to lead the way.

Me

We walked out the back door and into the well manicured garden. In the center of the garden was a large oak tree.

His hands caressed the tree trunk, and my gaze followed where he was touching

In the dimming sunlight, his fingers brushed across letters carved in childish writing, “M. W. T. Forever.”

‘Maggie, Warren, Theo, forever?’

Warren pulled up a wry smile. “How naive, isn’t it? One summer, Theo came here with us and spent a week here. He was little, four or five, maybe? At that point, our oldest halfbrother Justin was Father’s favorite. I remembered both Theo and I were upset about that.”

“However, Maggie told us it wasn’t a bad thing, because the three of us got to hang out together. We had a lot of fun during that week. Before Theo went back to the palace, he came here, and left this mark.”

If it was any other time Warren mentioned this story to me, I’d say it was cute and heartwarming, however, my intuition suggested that I wouldn’t like what he was about to say.

Warren sat down, pushing his back against the trunk. I sat down beside him as he settled into a deadly silence.

Warren sipped on his liquor quietly. I didn’t know if this was his fifth or eighth drink.

“I hate him,” he gritted through his teeth after some time.

He didn’t need to say a name. I knew exactly who he was talking about.

“He killed my sister and ran away like the coward he is. He couldn’t even face me or her mate.” He downed the rest of the drink. “I would have killed him then and there had I had the chance. And to think I took a dagger for that asshole... What a dumbass jerk I was!”

Venom dripped from every single word he uttered. He jerkily turned to the tree trunk and punched on the carving that young Theo left as hard as he could, leaving a blood stain covering the childish writing.

‘My sister is dead and she will never receive justice for her murder all because Theo is father’s dearest favorite!’ He clutched onto the glass so tightly that I feared it would break. Fuck him. Fuck the King. Fuck life. Fuck everyone!”

My heart sank. He was upset and angry and maybe rightfully so, but hatred was never a real remediation for grief. It would only bring destruction, to others, and to himself.

“Warren, you’ve had a few drinks today,” I sighed, “If Maggie was here, she would be worried seeing you like this.”

"The world is unfair. Maggie didn't deserve to get sick and she damn sure didn't deserve to be killed!"

I wanted to say that everyone was hurting. Demarco, Warren and even Theo. I wanted to say that Theo was not a monster and it was an accident, but of course I couldn't say any thing.

Not right now, at least. Right now, Warren only needed a listener.

"Help me," Warren turned to me with this look in his eyes that bordered determination and the darkness and gloom I didn't want to see.

"What can I do?" I asked, even though I knew I wouldn't like the answer.

"I need justice for my sister and Theo must answer for his crimes." He leaned toward me, his sharp breath fanning my face.

I opened my mouth but no words escaped. I didn't know what to say.

Help me destroy Theo." Darkness consumed his usually warm, dark, brown eyes.

"This is not a request. I'm not asking. This is an order."

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 439](#)

Never Had it Easy

"Warren, Theo is your brother. You're mad at him right now, but you won't feel that way forever," I tried to reason with him.

"Maggie was my twin. I have more loyalty to her than to Theo!" Warren argued, shaking his head. "Are you refusing to help because you still care about him? How could you, after what he did?"

"Maggie's loss is devastating, but we don't know the whole story. Theo ran off and... it could have been an accident..."

I hadn't wanted to bring up my thoughts before, because Warren was so sad. Now, I had to present them. I wanted him to consider the possibility that Theo wasn't evil. Not because I cared about Theo but because I didn't want Warren to destroy himself with revenge.

"An accident? I know my dear brother too well. The Dark Prince doesn't do anything by accident! He kills. That's all he's good for," Warren scoffed.

"Warren I reached for his arm.

He jerked away, glaring at me. "You're really not going to help?"

I don't want to lose you. If you go after Theo and take revenge without even giving him a chance to explain, I will." I bowed my head, but my words were firm.

Less than a week ago, Warren had been so worried that a lie would end our friendship. Maybe, he still cared enough about our friendship to consider losing me a negative consequence. I'd keep reasoning with him until I could get through.

"No, if I go after Theo, I'll destroy him," Warren said. "Admit it, Ciana, admit that you care more about him than what he did to Maggie."

Warren threw his arms out to the side, his eyes wild and ravenous. I could see now that I wouldn't be able to talk him down. He wasn't in denial anymore, he had moved on to anger. It wasn't just anger, it was pure fury.

"This isn't about what I do or don't care about your brother. I only asked you to give him a chance, and give yourself a chance to learn the truth!"

"Truth? What other truth do I need when I saw it with my own eyes?! Ciana, you're defending him because you're in love with him, aren't you?!" Warren asked. He grabbed my arms and clamped his hands around me like a vice.

"Ow! Warren.."

I tried to struggle away from him but he wouldn't let me go. My arms pinched and pain shot down my sides.

"You're hurting me," I ground out through gritted teeth. "Say you'll help me!" he demanded, shaking me slightly.

"I... I can't," I gasped.

Warren growled and leaned in closer. My heart pounded in my chest and I wondered what he was going to do to me.

What would he do to force me to help him?

Before I could come to any conclusions, Warren's lips were on mine. He pressed hard and hungrily against my mouth.

I squirmed and tried to push him off me but Warren held me so tightly I couldn't get away. Finally, when he pulled back, he breathed raggedly against my face. His eyes were wild and intense.

Did he even know what he was doing?

"If you aren't going to help me now, you can stay here until you change your mind!" he snarled.

"What? You can't force me like this!"

Warren kept holding one of my arms and he half-dragged me through his summer home to a room in one of the farthest wings. He kicked the door open and threw me inside.

I stumbled across the floor, catching myself against the side of the bed. Whipping around, I headed back for the door Warren pulled it closed and I heard the lock click. With a howl, I pounded my fists against the door.

"Warren, let me out!" I shouted.

"Just say you'll help me. Then you can come out!" he roared.

“Warren, listen to me... You have to calm down first. You don’t know what you’re doing! There must be a reason why

‘heo—”

I heard him laugh on the other side.

‘Even now, you’re still defending him, Ciana! You said we’re friends. Am I really your friend?!”

“Of course you are!”

“Then why won’t you help me?”

‘I will help you to find the truth! Open the door. Warren, you can’t do this to me!”

“Ciana, I don’t want to, but you left me no choice!”

I heard his footsteps getting farther and farther away. Sighing, I stopped pounding. It was no use injuring myself just to get his attention. I rubbed my arms where he had squeezed me so hard.

Warren was acting crazy. I was worried about what he would do, and not just to me.

Walking to the bed, I sat on the edge and looked around the room. It wasn’t a luxurious room and the mattress was a little stiff. At least, it had an en-suite bathroom.

It wasn’t a prison cell or dungeon, though. The bed was large, there was a bookshelf, towels in the bathroom, and cozy lighting.

Unfortunately, none of that made me feel any less like a prisoner.

I stood there for a few moments to let my head cool down when I heard a soft wind rattling the glass in the window.

Some fresh air would help.

As I pushed the window open, a window box of roses

Near greeted me.

I picked one up, and said to it, “What should I do now?”

It was big and colorful, then I noticed right away that it didn’t have any thorns. Not only this one, but all the rest of them in the window box.

Somehow, I remembered in the Moonlit Crystal world, I was assigned to pick roses, and my hands were hurt... somehow it ended up with Theo destroying the entire garden,

I drew my thoughts back and re-studied the one in my hand. I’d never heard of roses without thorns before. It was nice to play with pretty roses that couldn’t cut me and make me bleed.

“Miss Ciana, may I come in?”

I jumped to my feet and ran to the door, ready to try and escape Warren. The doorknob turned, and in came an older woman with graying-silvery hair and wrinkles at the corners of her eyes.

She had a motherly smile, warm cheeks, and gnarled hands.

Immediately, I stepped back. I wasn't about to knock an old woman out of the way, even if I was being kept on house arrest.

"I'm Aurora," she introduced herself. "I was Warren and Maggie's nanny when they were younger."

"H-hi," I said, waving awkwardly.

"Are you comfortable? Is there anything I can get for

you?" she asked, shutting and locking the door behind her.

So, she was a nice, caring old lady, but she still had orders from Warren not to let me out.

I walked back toward the bed and slumped down on the edge of it. "I'm okay."

"You seem down, dear, what can I do for you?" Aurora asked, coming over to me. She sat on the bed next to me and covered my hand with one of her boney, knobby ones.

"I'm not sure how long I'm supposed to be here," I said, shrugging. I didn't want to say mean things about Warren, especially to the woman that had helped raise him.

Besides, Warren was still grieving his sister's death. I didn't want to vilify him.

"Are you in a rush to leave? Warren would take that hard," Aurora said, her smile fading slightly.

"Would he?" I asked, more to myself. After everything he said, I wasn't so sure.

"He would. He likes you a lot. I can tell. This afternoon, he asked the staff to fix up this place. He even told us to strip the thorns from the roses so you wouldn't get hurt," she explained.

"That's... that was kind of him," I admitted, glancing toward the roses again.

"I always looked after Maggie and Warren. It's such a shame. Those poor kids. They... they never had it easy," she said, shaking her head.

I got the feeling that Aurora didn't have many people to talk to. She was taking care of Warren's house and he was mostly living at the palace. She probably got lonely.

"What do you mean by that? They are royalty," I said, arching an eyebrow.

'King Sebastian was never a sympathetic or genuine man. Lady Odelia, Maggie and Warren's mother, was the king's lover. He kept her and promised to make her his Luna. She loved him deeply. But before they wed, King Sebastian brought another woman to the castle.'

Wait, this story wasn't going the direction I thought it would go, was it?

'Even though Lady Odelia had been taking on the responsibilities as King Sebastian's Luna, he eventually chose to marry the other woman, and their son, Justin, became the crown prince. Poor Lady Odelia was cast aside,' she sighed.

"That's..."

I was at a loss for words. Not only did I know about the story, I'd lived it in the Moonlit Crystal world.

My eyes widened. Even in my wildest dream, I had not expected what we went through to be the past of Maggie and Warren's mother! She was the last one to use the crystal, and her wish was to have King Sebastian marry her.

So the person that Sophia had played must have been the late Queen Regina.

Overwhelmed by the information, I took a breath and tried my best to connect the dots.

Justin, the oldest son of King Sebastian, was the crown prince before he was sentenced to death due to treason, and I'd met his young son, Alexander.

I shook my head. Sebastian was truly cruel, even to his family members.

"Despite King Sebastian marrying Queen Regina, the queen was still jealous of my lady and her long relationship with the king. Also, because the king did not send Lady Odelia away, but instead, made her into a loyal lady, the queen thought he still had feelings for her. As a result, Queen Regina lashed out her jealousy and resentment on Lady Odelia."

My hands covered my mouth. Lady Odelia suffered too much.

"Over the years, Odelia grew depressed and closed off. Combined with her grief over losing the love of her life, she couldn't take the mental torture and she... she got very sick and never recovered," Aurora continued, pulling me from my thoughts.

I then realized something very important.

She never got her wish. Instead, she tried to get back at the king by having an affair with her guard. But if she'd slept with someone else, her two children... Warren and Maggie... who was their real father?

I shook my head vigorously and threw that thought away as fast as possible. I wasn't going to go there.

"With an absent, cruel father, and a sick, distant mother, it is lucky that Maggie and Warren turned out as well as they did. They were both so kind and gentle," Aurora went on.

"They did luck out," I agreed a little absently.

"Unfortunately, King Sebastian always ignored the two of them. No matter how wonderful they were, the king didn't care. Warren was sick once, and he didn't come to visit. Maggie and I looked after him. We were the only ones that ever did."

"Luckily, you were here for them."

"I'm here for them, but it's not the same." Aurora sighed. "The only positive thing was, they had each other until.

"Until now. He's lost the only family he could count on," I filled in the blanks.

Aurora nodded somberly.

"Will you help take care of him now? Warren is all alone, and I am too old. He cares about you so much. Can you be there for him?"

She looked at me with wide, pleading eyes.

"I'll be his friend if he lets me," I assured her with all my heart.

"No, dear. He needs more than that. He needs someone to love him and care for him. I think you'd fall in love with him the more you get to know him."

I jumped off the bed.

"Can you give him a chance and date him?" she clarified.

I stared at her for a moment, and slowly shook my head.

"I'm sorry, but that I cannot do!"

[Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 440](#)

The Ultimatum

Aurora sighed, "I felt really sorry for him."

"Me too. But I can't lie to him. That would only hurt him more in the future."

Aurora smiled wryly, "Maybe you're right. Miss, it was nice talking to you. Here's your dinner. If you need anything else, please do not hesitate to tell me."

I watched her leave the room, and I didn't bother to try to escape. There were guards outside, guards from Vaner.

Demarco probably would be more than happy to share his resources to help Warren get to Theo.

Since that night, Warren had come to check on me every day. I tried to carry calm conversations with him during his visits, but with each passing day, I saw him consumed more by darkness and I started to lose sight of the Warren I was familiar with.

Gone was that warmth in his eyes. Now all I could see was vengeance.

I stared up at the moon and looked to the sky.

"Maggie," I whispered, "he is in so much pain and I don't know how to help him. What should I do? What would you

I let out a heavy breath and wondered whether I should try to sleep, which had been a distant dream for me as of late.

Warren and Theo took their turns to show up in my dreams, keeping me tossing and turning all night.

As days went by, I thought of Theo more and more. I wondered what he was doing and how he was keeping.

A knock at my door drew my attention. Then it was opened from the outside.

As Warren walked in, I let out a sigh.

He was here to ask me the same question, and I would give him the same answer.

Tonight, his hair looked like he had run his hand through it multiple times and his face had begun to stubble. I could see the bags under his eyes and the crazed look in his eyes.

"What do you say, Ciana?" "You know my answer."

"Why? Why won't you help me?"

"You need help, but not from me. A healer would be more valuable for you than your prisoner."

"I'm fine!" he snapped back. "I'm sober and I've never been so clear on what I want to do!"

Do you really think that will make you feel better Warren? Put aside the fact that he's your brother and has no motivation to harm Maggie, just think for yourself! Killing the crowned prince, and having the entire wolf population after you. Is that what Maggie wants for the rest of your life?"

"Not the entire wolf population. Demarco wants him dead

98 The too. I'm sure there are more people like us out there."

"Demarco worked with Luther, and somehow they don't take any blame for this?"

"Don't you worry! Once I take care of Theo, Luther will be next! He's a vile psychopath that wants to destroy the crown. That traitor will answer for his crimes. I will feel his blood run through my fingers and pool at my feet if it's the last thing I do. But that's all after Theo's demise. At this point, I'm not picky about my allies, even Luther."

He had lost it.

"Warren, have you heard what you just said? You're blind by your rage, and you know what, I'm tired and want to go to bed. You should too. When was the last time you slept more than two hours in a row? We can talk when you can carry a real conversation."

"You will not leave this place until you join me, Ciana."

"Then I guess I will just die here."

I decided there was no point in arguing any further. So I walked to the bathroom, closed the door, and started washing my face, hoping he would just leave me alone.

Regardless of how unreasonable Warren had been lately, one thing he wouldn't do was violate my privacy by barging into my bathroom, that I was sure of.

"You can't just walk away like that!" he shouted loudly, clearly frustrated by my cold shoulder.

Of course I could. I just did.

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I decided to ignore him, but then I heard him pounding on the bathroom door. He didn't just break in — there wasn't a lock, but I knew he wouldn't. Thank the Goddess.

"Ciana, you love him, don't you?"

What?

“Otherwise, why wouldn’t you help me? Why would you be able to forgive his crime?”

That was it! I flung the door open.

“Warren, listen. Just because I didn’t agree to hunt down your brother, doesn’t mean that I must have romantic feelings for him. You’re not being rational right now and you’re not seeing things with a clear mind!”

“Between you and me, who is the one lying? Ciana, can’t you see, only when I mention him, do you get this upset? In the past, you’ve done so much for him, and what has he done in return for you? Nothing! And yet, you are always seeking him out! Why?”

I couldn’t explain to Warren in a few sentences what happened between Theo and I. It was too complicated. I wouldn’t even know where to start.

“See, you can’t even answer me!”

I sighed, “Warren, it’s not like that.”

“Then tell me, what is it?”

What was it? I didn’t even know.

30 9”. At our first encounter, he could not have left a worse first

impression. The ruthless, callous prince who would take out lives without a blink of an eye. Later, somehow, we just kept running into each other, and while he was mean and aloof, I realized that he wasn’t really bloodthirsty as rumor had it.

Then, ever since the night at the pavilion, since that very first kiss we had, things were different. It was like fate was messing with us; one thing after another, we’d been through many journeys together, he’d saved me many times, and I’d also seen his struggle.

To me, he wasn’t just a distant, symbolic, royal prince, but someone that I cared about as a friend, and without me even knowing, becoming more and more important in my heart.

When I looked back, I actually didn’t know how to describe what was between us.

We were definitely not enemies, but were we friends? Perhaps, it depended on the day.

We were definitely not lovers, but did we like each other that way? I thought of Theo’s attitude toward me, and realized that I had no clue.

The more I thought about it, the more I was confused.

“What is it then?” Warren kept pressing.

I... I don’t know.” That was the most honest reply I could come up with.

Warren stared at me, his handsome face was pale and his look was stony.

"You don't know? Ciana, you—"

78 t_numatum Bang!

Loud noises of heavy things hitting the walls and floor echoed through the hallway, and footsteps mingled with different people shouting could be heard.

'Stop him!'

"No, not that way! Ahhh!"

Bang—

My door was broken from outside and a large black wolf let out a low growl at us.

"Theo!" My eyes widened and my heart jumped into my throat.

His teeth were out and his eyes ablaze. Time seemed to stand still as his eyes scanned the room until they landed on me. They gave me a once over and quickly averted to Warren.

I followed his gaze as he came to place himself between me and his brother.

"Apologies mean nothing, Theo!" Warren scoffed as he kept his distance and walked a semi-circle around the Dark Prince's defensive stance in wolf form. "He thinks he's protecting you, Ciana. What a joke!"

"He wants you to let me go, Warren." I voiced for him. I realized then that they were talking through the mindlink, however, even without hearing their conversation, I just knew the reason that Theo was here tonight.

He came for me.

I was not certain of Warren's clarity of mind as he laughed derisively, but there was no tremor in his voice or wavering in his step as he came closer and stared eye to eye with his brother's wolf.

I looked from one to the other and knew that Warren would be no match for Theo, despite the fact that Warren was a top warrior himself.

The immediate tension shifted as a clamor of Warren's guards, some as their wolves, flanked into the room, standing at his back as they all faced Theo who began to growl menacingly.

Taking them all in, I could see they were already badly injured in one way or another. They were the guards Theo faced to get inside. He must have held back in order not to kill them.

Leave us," Warren told them, "This is between my brother and me."

"Are you sure?" a guard asked, looking relieved and worried at the same time.

"Yes, go... Now."

"But, sir—

Leave!" Warren shook as he raised his voice.

I felt myself shudder at the heartbreaking pitch in his voice and watched as tears filled his eyes. Something clutched in my chest as well. Pity.

The guards obeyed and filed out of the room. Theo shifted back to his human form, grabbed a towel to wrap around

his waist, and stared at his brother as if on guard, but he remained silent.

Warren sniffed back his tears as he looked from Theo to me. The defeat in his eyes was plain to see. Even in his human form, there was no way that Warren could challenge Theo. I was ready for him to give up and let me go.

“Ciana,” he began quietly. I held my breath and braced myself to hear what he had to say for himself.

“You have to choose. Right here, right now. Me or him?” I felt my brow furrowed in confusion.

“Warren, I just want to leave and go home.”

“Choose!” he shouted again, shaking more violently this time. “Me or him, Ciana. You can no longer have it both ways. This time your choice is final. You stay with me and you cut Theo out of your life completely and forever. Or if you go with him, then I never want to see you again, not even as a friend

“Warren...” I felt breathless and heartbroken that he could even pose such words to me. “After everything we’ve been through.

“Exactly! After everything, Ciana. After all I’ve done to help you and be there for you. How quickly you turn your back on me in my time of need to be with my sister’s murderer! You’re either with me or you’re against me, Ciana. Make your choice!”

I maintained eye contact with Warren as Theo turned to face me. I didn’t need to look at him to feel the warmth and strength in his gaze.

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I knew in my heart that it wasn’t commanding or possessive. It was kind and protective. He was here for me, to see me to safety and freedom. I trusted him.

“Warren, I care about you, but that doesn’t mean you have the right to make such an awful demand. Theo is my friend and one day you will get past this pain and recognize he is also your brother.”

“You’ll end up just like her,” he said desperately. Warren’s voice was shaky now but I knew he was talking from a place of agony. I side stepped Warren as Theo led the way from the room, but Warren blocked me before I could reach the door.

“Whether I will or not, it’s not going to change my decision. Have it your way and cut me out of your life if you must. But, I am leaving here today.”

“You’re cruel if you go with him, Ciana.”

Coming from anyone else I wouldn’t have cared, but from Warren, the words stung.

“Warren, who I decide to be friends with or where I decide to go is my choice,” I told him firmly. Feeling more angry than I wanted to. “Please move aside.”

Suddenly, Warren took out a knife and pointed it to his neck.

"I can't just sit here and wait for the day that it's your grave I'm standing over when he loses control yet again. Please Ciana, can't you see how much I need you? If you choose him, I promise you will never see me again!"

His words were desperate and stone cold.

I gasped and took several shaky steps away from him. Theo repositioned himself between us protecting me from whatever unhinged move Warren made next.

Heartbreak and anguish clashed inside of me as I realized how far gone Warren was. Maggie's death had taken so much away from the kind and gentle soul I'd come to know. That Warren was all but gone now.

I couldn't move. I couldn't even breathe as I looked at him silently. There was nothing I could say.

"You know, I don't have anything left. I have no mother, and my father is almost non-existent. My sister was killed by my brother and the one special person who brought happiness to. my life has also decided to leave me forever. Tell me, Ciana, what is the point of my life?"