185 CHAPTER 185

Aella 1

I stumbled into the hall to see the soldiers and everyone gathered at a spot, they were surrounding something or rather someone.

I walked slowly, heart pounding in my chest, throat drying, my feets dragged itself across the tile, like it couldn't believe what it was being insinuated.

I caught that same flicker of silver once more and my eyes blurred, the pack members made way for me as I walked.

The noise slowly quieted as they noticed my presence, and just as I got to the center, there she was, Ragnar on her arms looking every bit the obedient nephew and Elysia tugging at her sleeves probably wondering who this ridiculously striking figure that resembled his mother was.

I choked down a sob, she finally noticed me. Her face cracked and then her expression softened, her lips tilted upwards, her eyes widening, she dropped Ragnar carefully and then stretched to face me.

"Hi kiddo." She opened her arms wide.

I blinked twice to make sure I wasn't dreaming, but everything down to the pin drop silence in the hall was real, I dove straight into her arms.

They wrapped around me comfortingly, just like I remembered — warm and cosy, I felt my tears flow, wetting the jacket she wore.

But I didn't care, just then I felt something wet drip onto my own clothes, we were both crying messes, we didn't even notice when the crowd dispersed.

Finally, after what felt like forever, we released each other, we stood alone, staring unblinkingly at each other, I was suddenly dumb stricken.

Everything I had to say, flew straight out of the window, but I didn't fail to note the glow on her,

"You look different," I was finally able to speak.

"Different in a good way or in a bad way?" Her voice was cool, smoother than it always was, her eyes glowed, literally, and there was a lightness when she spoke.

My brows furrowed, "I can't quite place my hands on it, but you seem different, happier, you're smiling more too."

"What, I can't be happy?" She teased.

My cheeks burned, "that's not what I meant," I intertwined our hands, holding her down, as if she would disappear if I left her alone.

"Aels, with the way you're holding Ice queen over here, one may think you're holding her ransome for stealing your favourite toy." I heard Brianne's teasing voice.

I stuck out my tongue, "You're just jealous."

She rolled her eyes, "Really? She looks like she's about to suffocate any moment from now." She chuckled.

"Yeah, Luna, if you end up suffocating Miss Lilith, Sage won't treat us anymore." A voice shouted from the crowd.

"Right Luna, she's back for good, she's not going anywhere." Another voice added.

Laughter roared in the room, as they teased.

I scoffed, ignoring them, "Come on, let's

get out of here, we've got a lot to discuss," I dragged her with me, paying no heed to their little taunts.

My hands clutched Lilith's tightly, what if this was another nightmare? Or dream? Was someone trying to mess with my head?

Was she real?

"You're touching her stupid." Ava said sarcastically

"I know." I whispered, still finding it difficult to believe, it's been a year, a full year, she was back?

"But, I still can't feel Lena." Ava mumbled.

I felt something cold down my spine, reaching out carefully, I checked for our bond, the one that connected us sisters.

Nothing. It was hollow, empty.

My hands disconnected from hers as if struck by lightning, my eyes narrowed with suspicion, we were in I and Eros's room.

"Who are you?" My voice was cold, harsher than I intended.

Maybe it was the exhaustion or the nightmares, or something else, but my voice

sounded similar to the one in my dreams, the same coldness I had spoken with.

"Your sister." She replied simply, eyes roaming the room, as if in search of something.

I looked at her, a bit conflicted, "She feels like her, every instinct is screaming that she's Lilith, but a dead person doesn't just crawl out of the grave right?" I mumbled.

"Except she wasn't dead." Ava replied, the doubt was laced at the edge of her voice, but it was neither positive nor negative, like she was lost.

"Still, it doesn't explain why I can't feel the bond. I can't even differentiate between what's real and what's fake anymore." Self mockery dripped from my voice at my own inadequacies.

"Don't sound like that." Ava said sadly, "try sounding her out, if anyone can tell whether she's real or not, it's you."

"Done gossiping with Ava?" She settled into the sofa, relaxing and resting her head on the back.

"Where's Lena?" I went straight to the point, there was no time or strength to beat around the bush, I was beyond exhausted.

"Ava told you I see." She sighed, "She's been asleep since I woke up, Mer said she couldn't bear the brunt of Ursa's essence, so she's been comatose for longer than me." She drawled.

"Right, mer. How didn't I think of her? She could help me know if this was really my sister or if I was going crazy."

"You look stressed— worn out." She noted a meaningful look on her face.

I sighed.

"Tell me about it." I couldn't get over the feeling of something clawing at my back, like there was something important I was forgetting, something I had to remember.

"You doubt my identity." Her voice was quiet, but firm, landing solidly in my chest.

"I can't feel our bond." I finally let out, "A lot has changed Lily, I feel like I'm going insane daily, between trying to find you, the nightmares, the emptiness, Azrathul, and the repairs, everything is just—" I collapsed beside her on the sofa.

I felt her body stiffen, then relax, I didn't miss the slight tremble either, but she covered it up quickly.

A quiet sigh left her lips.

"I don't know why you can't feel the bond, but concerning Lena, she's gone for now." Her voice came out tiny and down.

I understood her more than anyone, what it felt to lose a friend and partner, for one bonded to you to suddenly go quiet, like the bond never existed in the first place.

I approached her gently, relying solely on instinct, then wrapped my arms around her, this time no words were needed, we both understood exactly what was needed.

I patted her back patiently, "I'm sorry, I failed you." I whispered

She shook her head against me, "it wasn't your fault, I made the decision myself, I only survived thanks to Sage."

I remembered what the pack members had said concerning Sage, I drew back from the hug.

"What happened?" I asked, searching her eyes.