Chapter 10

Serena Basco

"You will act as a princess should. You will not embarrass our pack. I don't care if you hated all your pack duties, by fucking hell you will do all that is required of a princess. Do I make myself clear?"

My father's voice was cold and demanding. I had hoped to get one sliver of fatherly warmth before I left to begin a new life, but I was disappointed.

I saw Evan at the corner of my eye shuffling awkwardly by the bookshelf inside my father's office. The brother who I could once look to for support whenever my father scolded me was now avoiding my eyes.

"Yes, Alpha." I managed to ground out.

"Good. Now go to your mate." He ordered. I sighed and walked over to the door, but not before looking at Evan.

"Bye, Evan." I softly said. He looked me in the eye and sighed

"Bye." He curtly said, turning his back on me. I fought back tears as my father opened the door for me and I exited the office.

I woke up with a start, the memory was still fresh, and it felt cold and chilly to the bone. I blinked when I realized where I was.

I was inside Prince Jonathon's car. It was all black, but the seats were warm. I blushed when I realized Prince Jonathon had draped his black leather jacket over my sleeping form. I looked out of the window—we were on the open road.

I badly needed to pee.

"Prince Jonathon..." I started. He growled lowly and looked at me.

"Jon. You're my mate. Call me Jon." He muttered. I nodded and bit my lip.

"Jon, is there...umm...a rest stop coming up? I need to go to the bathroom." I murmured. He blinked at me and nodded.

"There's one a just a mile out." He said.

"Okay. Thanks." I said.

Silence followed. I guess he wasn't into music.

"Did you sleep well, mate?" He asked, his deep husky voice causing me to shiver.

"Yes. Thank you. And you? Are you tired?" I asked, looking at him. He still looked strong and intimidating, but his eyes held tiredness.

"A bit, but we have to get there by morning so I'll just fill up on coffee." He said.

"Maybe one day you could teach me how to drive so I can take over." I absentmindedly said. He looked at me curiously.

"There would be no need for you to drive." He said. I sighed. Silence followed as we pulled into the rest stop. I got out of the car and made a beeline to the ladies' room while he lined up at the Starbucks.

After I peed and washed my hands, I could not resist taking a look at my neck. It was still a new sensation, having two marks. The spot was still tender, but I could not help but feel a hint of pride. The wolf in me was proud—her mate had fought for her, and given her a symbol of his ultimate possession. The human side of me, however, was still confused and slightly offended and disgusted about this whole thing.

I wanted to hate him for what he did. But somehow, I could not.

I shook myself and exited the ladies' room, finding Jonathon about to order. I immediately rushed up to stand beside him. The woman in the counter was looking at him in awe and I could not help but feel a bit jealous.

"Can you get me an iced green tea latte, Grande?" I looked up at my mate. He glanced at me and nodded.

"Her order, and a Venti regular black coffee for me." Jon said. The woman took our order and motioned for us to wait at the side.

Subconsciously, my hand sought his for comfort. He didn't seem to mind, he even gave my hand a light squeeze. Our drinks were finally done and we made our way back to the car hand in hand.

"How long until we reach Lightwing?" I asked as we buckled in.

"We'll be there in a hour." He replied. Okay, he really wasn't much of a talker. To my surprise, he continued.

"I have to warn you, we'll be taking a shortcut...driving down a steep ravine. It's a path I've taken lots of times, but it might make you nervous. Don't worry, nothing will happen to you, I'll make sure of it." Jon said. I nodded hastily.

"I trust you." I said, causing a twitch at the corner of his mouth—was that him smiling? Well, I meant every word. I did trust him; after all, I was going to a place where I wouldn't know virtually anyone. My life was in his hands.

"When we get there...I want...no, I'm going to need you to show your bracelet off...and the marks." He said, taking a deep breath.

I just wanted to be as invisible as possible.

"Why?" I asked.

"People are going to ask questions, and I need you to appear every bit of a Princess." He muttered. I nodded understandingly.

"I think I may have a shirt that can achieve that." I gently said, grabbing one of my backpacks from the backseat. I fished an off shoulder top from the depths of the bag.

"Do you mind if I change?" I asked. He gulped and I resisted the urge to grin as some color flushed to his cheeks. He nodded and looked ahead resolutely.

I figured there was no use to being a prude. After all, he did mark me while he was nude.

As quickly and as gracefully as I could, I shrugged out of my sweater and pulled on the off shoulder top. I tugged the top so that it showed off the mark and I adjusted the bracelet so that it shone brightly against my pale skin. I braided my hair so that it hung over the shoulder opposite the marks.

Because the car felt a bit chilly without the sweater, I put on Jon's leather jacket, relishing the warmth and comfort his fresh smell provided.

"What do you think? I can take off the jacket when we arrive." I gently said. He glanced at me and nodded in approval.

"Perfect." He said. I hummed in happiness as I felt the mate bond between us glow.

The sun was just beginning to rise when I felt the car slow down. We must be approaching the shortcut.

"This is going to be a difficult drive. Are you ready?" He asked. I gulped and nodded. He cleared his throat and began the steep drive down.

He wasn't lying. The drive was fast and scary like some messed up roller coaster. I clutched at the side of my seat, occasionally grateful for the feeling of the seatbelt crushing against my chest. As we drove past one bump after another, my heart began to beat faster. I closed my eyes, feeling as if the car was going to fly off any second.

Just as I was about to hurl my insides out, the car slowly eased onto even ground and I sighed in relief.

Instinctively, I placed my right hand over my quickly beating heart. My left hand sought Jon's immediately and he squeezed it gently before giving it a quick peck.

"You did great." He soothed. I took deep breaths and tried to calm myself down.

I was calm for only a few seconds before we pulled over to the palace.

I had heard about the royal residence before. Lightwing was over hundreds of years old and it housed the royal family, some of their relatives, a few courtiers and warriors, and of course the staff and guards. A werewolf town was located nearby.

Lightwing was nothing like I imagined. It was large, around three to four stories high, and spanned over a few acres. The design looked to be French medieval, and I stopped myself from swooning because it was so beautiful.

Jon exited the car, but I couldn't bring myself to. The sun had just begun to rise, casting a lovely glow around the castle. I was surprised when Jon gently opened my door. He looked at me, and I bit my lip when I saw that all the hardness and ferocity was gone from his eyes and was replaced with anxiousness and worry. He gently unbuckled my seatbelt and helped me out of the car.

I hugged Jon's jacket closer to my frame, comforted by his familiar scent.

He put his arm around me and led me towards the entrance of the palace. I looked back to my things, but he was quick to reassure me that the servants would take care of it. I could see some guards roving through the fields, looking at us curiously. They didn't say anything, though.

Servants and guards. I don't think I could get used to that.

Just kidding.

He stopped when we came across a big oak double door entrance. He put his hand on the door to open it but I stopped him. He looked at me curiously, so I shrugged his jacket off and slung it across my handbag. He nodded in approval before pushing the doors open.

I was ushered into a grand foyer with a large crystal chandelier that was unlit during this hour. I wanted to stop and admire the interior decoration, but the sight of the King, Queen, and the Prince's younger brother standing sternly in front of a grand staircase caused me to gulp.

It took all of my bravery not to run for the hills.

With his arm still around me, Jon stopped when we were a few feet away from his parents. His father was as tall as he was, and they looked so much alike with the long face, dark hair, and intimidating aura. His mother was also tall with long brown hair tied neatly at the back. His brother, however, was slightly shorter than him and had curly brown hair and a mischievous look on his face. He looked like a happier version of Jon.

"Father, Mother. Patrick." Jon calmly said. I took a deep breath and tried not to appear weak. "This is my mate, Princess Serena Lancaster."

I blinked. Did he just give me his last name?

Suddenly, I felt a hand shackle my left wrist and I yelped as I felt it pulled.

"So it's true!" Patrick had my wrist in his hand as he stared in awe at my gold bracelet. Jon growled and wrenched his brother's hand away from my wrist.

"Don't touch her." He growled out. Patrick rolled his eyes and grinned.

"I'm Patrick, the fun one. Nice to meet you, sis." He playfully said. I gave a small smile back.

"You've chosen a beautiful mate, love." Queen Robin's twinkling voice flitted across the room. I was surprised when she drew me into her warm embrace. I stumbled slightly returning her hug.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, your majesty." I murmured.

"Please, call me Robin, or mom!" She gleefully said, causing my eyes to widen. I could see Jon closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.

"A Gold Ranked female. I commend you on your choice, son." King Armand curtly said.

Now I know where he gets it.

I let out a shaky breath that I didn't know I was holding. Jon nodded sharply.

Queen Robin put her hands on my arms and smiled.

"I'm sure you must be hungry...and tired. Why don't I show you to Jon's room and...oh..." Queen Robin suddenly stopped stared at my shoulder, gasping softly. I blushed, suddenly conscious. She was looking at my marks.

King Armand drew a sharp breath. Patrick's mouth hung open.

"Two marks? Sweetheart..." Queen Robin murmured, placing her hand on Jon's chest.

"Bro...I never took you for the possessive type." Patrick chuckled, leaning it to peer at my marks. Jon instinctively drew me closer. The King growled and pulled Patrick back.

"Come, Serena. I will take you to Jonathon's room to get rested." The Queen murmured, taking my arm and leading me away.

"It's our room now." Jon gruffly said. I blushed. The Queen giggled softly.

"Of course. My mistake. Come, I'm sure the King needs a moment with his son." Queen Robin softly said.

I let the Queen lead me across the palace. Once in a while we'd spot a courtier, servant or guard that she would greet. They'd try not to stare at my bracelet and my mark, but ultimately failed. Feeling self-conscious, I put on Jon's jacket again.

I made a mental note to ask Jon for a tour later. I was pretty good with directions, but the Lightwing seemed to be a maze.

"The dead Alpha, did you know him well?" Queen Robin gently asked as we walked across a richly carpeted floor. I gulped, not expecting the question.

"No. I was actually prepared to fight him." I replied. The Queen nodded softly.

"Don't say this to anyone, God knows my son might face the tribunal, but I'm glad that happened. If it meant my son could bring home a mate. How old are you, sweetheart?" She asked. I took a deep breath.

"18, your majesty." I said.

"Your first Ceremony, and already mated. That should be expected of a woman of your Rank." She murmured. I spied a glance at her bracelet—silver. I didn't know how to reply to that so I just stayed silent.

"Jon was not supposed to choose a mate at the ceremony." She murmured. I balked; does she think I seduced her son or something?

"Your majesty, no one was more surprised than I was..." I trailed off. She giggled.

"Oh, I know you had nothing to do with it. Whatever compelled my son to choose you, that was something inside of him." She brushed me off. I sighed in relief.

"My poor Jon has been locked inside work for as long as he can remember. He doesn't know anything else other than duty. It's up to you now to show him that there's a life outside of that." She said. I frowned, feeling nervous. How in Goddess' name was I supposed to do that?

"I tried so hard to get him to open up, and each time I failed. He needs to be more in touch with his emotions...maybe you can help him with that." She offhandedly said. I nodded nervously.

"I'll try." I managed to ground out. She looked at me and smiled.

"You are a Lancaster now, dear. You will not try. You will succeed." She stated. I gulped nervously. We stopped in front of a door at the end of a hallway.

"This is Jon's room. I had the maids clear out half of his closet to make room for your things. Take a short nap, I'll have Jon retrieve you for brunch." The Queen said. She pushed open the door and nudged me inside. Before leaving, she gathered me in her embrace and kissed me on the cheek.

What in the moon goddess did I get myself into?

Oh wait. I didn't get myself into this. Jon did.

I entered Jon's room and breathed in his familiar, piney scent. Too exhausted to think of anything else, I made my way to his bed but stopped before I sat down.

I was a total germ freak. Now that I was going to be using this bed, there was no way my outside clothes would be sleeping in these clean sheets. I cursed myself for not grabbing some spare clothes before leaving the car. I looked to his walk in closet.

Surely he wouldn't mind if I borrowed a shirt?

Feeling the exhaustion creeping in, I grabbed a black shirt and a pair of his boxers and quickly changed. His clothes were, of course, loose on me but I didn't mind. I folded my clothes neatly and set it on top of a table. I quickly washed my hands and face inside his bathroom.

Finally, I pushed all embarrassment to the back of my mind and climbed into the bed, untying my braid and letting my wavy red hair loose over the pillows. I fell asleep in minutes.

Sometime later, I was slightly awoken by a figure entering the room. In between sleep and consciousness, I recognized it as Jon. Seeing as I was too tired to do anything, I burrowed my head back in the duvet and tried to go back to sleep. I felt him slowly dip into the opposite side of the bed. I loosened my hold on the blanket so that he could climb under it.

I felt him tentatively reach over to me, gently pulling my form to rest against his. I was too tired to blush or react so I just went with it. It all seemed so domestic and familiar—why were we so awkward with each other when we were wide-awake? I brushed these thoughts away and tried to sleep.

He buried his nose in my hair and I breathed in his familiar scent.

My last thought before I completely succumbed to sleep was annoyance at the fact that he was sleeping in his outside clothes, and hugging me while wearing them.

Ugh.

Continue to next part