

## Chapter 22

WARNING: SLIGHTLY MATURE CONTENT

Serena Basco

I woke up to Jon's alarm blaring loudly. I reached for his phone quickly and turned it o . I looked around. We were both sprawled on the floor, with Jon's arm wound tightly across me and his head resting on my stomach. I sat up, causing an empty bottle of tequila to roll across the floor.

I groaned as a splitting headache slashed across my brain. Memories of last night came flooding back.

Jon hoisted himself up and looked at the mess.

"You okay?" I asked.

He nodded, but choked suddenly. He raced to the bathroom and I heard him barf. I chuckled, but then the headache came back.

I quickly walked over to him bent over the toilet, puking. I crouched and stroked his hair.

"Let it out...come on..."

"How come you're okay?" He asked.

"I'm not, there's a chainsaw massacre up in my brain." I moaned, sitting on the bathroom floor. He flushed the toilet and began brushing his teeth. When he was done, he carried me up and began to undress me.

Whoa! Hold up!

"What are you doing? I'm still hungover...maybe later?" I asked, my voice dry and throaty. He laughed, his husky morning voice sending shivers down my spine.

"We need to have breakfast immediately since Father requested a meeting with us. We don't have time so we're showering together." He said. He then pulled o his own clothes and pushed me inside the shower.

I'd have gawked at his magnificent body had I not been very sleepy.

"If I didn't know better you just wanted to get me naked." I murmured. He rolled his eyes and laughed.

The warm water instantly soothed me. I moaned in delight and leaned against Jon's body.

"No. No, you're making this hard..." Jon growled. I laughed.

"Yeah I am." I winked lazily at him. His face turned red.

"I mean di icult...just...ugh...come on just shower..." Jon mumbled, pushing a bottle of body wash onto my hands. I sighed and leaned against the wall.

"I'm too tired. I wanna sleep." I said as the water pounded on me.

Jon sighed heavily, and suddenly I felt a soapy loofah being rubbed against my skin. I opened my eyes and cackled.

"Are you seriously doing this?" I laughed.

"Yes, because I don't have a choice." He retorted as he washed me thoroughly. All thoughts of inappropriateness vanished from my head as I relished the feeling of being cared for.

I tried to stand still as he tried to shampoo and condition my hair, but I just kept on giggling. He knew I was more than capable of doing it myself, but he could see I was enjoying this.

Hell, I knew he was enjoying this as well.

When he had washed me o completely, Jon carried me outside and dried me with a towel. I took the towel and wrapped it around my hair like a turban.

"I'll return the favor next time." I giggled. I was too hung-over to care that I was naked in front of him.

"You better." He said. He crouched down in front of me and I looked at him. He was holding a pair of my panties. I doubled down in laughter.

"Am I your doll, Prince Jonathon?" I asked as I let him dress me in the underwear and a thin spaghetti strapped tank top—I guess he didn't know how to put me in a bra. He then pulled a long sleeved shirt and a pair of black leggings on me.

"No, you're my mate." He said, punctuating his statement with a kiss on my forehead. He threw some sandals my way and began to dress in a black shirt and jeans. "Go brush your teeth."

"Aye-aye sir!" I trilled, feeling playful. I did as he said and tied my hair in a ponytail. I peed before washing my face again: there were heavy eye bags but I kind of looked fresh so I didn't care. I knew Jon and I would smell of stale alcohol, though.

"You ready?" He called. I groaned.

We made our way outside, with him tugging on me because I kept trying to fall asleep. It earned us strange looks. Finally, he had enough so he crouched down in front of me.

"Ride on my back." He ordered.

"I'd rather ride you." I mumbled.

"Serena..." He said warningly.

"Fine." I hopped and wrapped my arms around his neck, my legs curled around his waist. The feel of his warm back against my cheek made me even drowsier. He began walking.

"You steps thump too loud." I mumbled, nudging my cheek on his back.

"I am never drinking with you again." He chuckled.

"Then I want a divorce." I growled. He began to laugh heartily as his arms held on to my calves. "Don't laugh...it makes your body shake and I can't sleep."

"Breakfast first." He said, setting me down. "Let's both try and act normal, okay?"

"Yes sir." I yawned.

He pushed open the door to a small dining room. Only Patrick was inside, eating breakfast heartily. The sunlight was bright, very bright that I had to close my eyes. The headache in my brain pounded even harder.

"Morning..." Patrick started, but then he stopped. "What happened to you two?"

Jon and I guiltily looked at each other as we sat down. I frowned and rolled my eyes.

"What do you mean?" I asked nonchalantly before I gulped down a glass of water. I groaned instantly in relief as the water had a healing e ect on my body. Clumsily, however, some water spilled on my lap.

"Well, my brother looks disoriented. You seem to have lost some motor skills. What's going on?" Patrick asked, lazily leaning back on his chair.

I looked at Jon, but he seemed to be occupied with scarfing down an incredible amount food that could feed a whole village. I glared at Patrick, who in turn looked at me mischievously.

"We had a late night." Jon said between bites. I nodded eagerly to support his statement. Patrick's mouth slowly opened and his lips suddenly split into the biggest grin.

"Oh. I see." Patrick winked. "So you made up, huh?"

I almost choked.

"No...just...it wasn't like that." I hastily said. "We got drunk!" I defensively said.

"Serena!" Jon exclaimed. I shrugged at him helplessly. Did he not want his brother to know that he had gotten hammered with me?

"So that's what that smell is! Damn! Why wasn't I invited?" Patrick chortled.

"It was a private event." I snapped. Patrick doubled down in laughter.

"Yeah I just bet it was." Patrick suggestively wiggled his eyebrows. I threw my napkin across the table and it hit him square in the face.

"Shut up." I grumbled, helping myself to some breakfast.

"Are you actually going to meet with dad while you're hungover?" Patrick asked, leaning forward to look at Jon.

"I'm not hungover anymore." Jon stated as he polished o his plate.

"Amazing what a good breakfast can do."

"Oh I know you'll be alright. It's her I'm worried about." Patrick said. I hu ed as I helped myself to more food. Slowly, my headache dissipated.

"I'll be alright. Besides, all the meetings I had in the pack I attended either high, drunk, or hungover." I confessed. Patrick laughed.

"Is that true?" Jon demanded, his face set in a frown. I looked at him guiltily.

"Kind of." I giggled. "Don't worry, I don't plan on doing it here...again."

I looked down, feeling like I had been scolded. Patrick stifled a laugh.

"Ease up, Jon. You two need to be on the same side if you're gonna get through this meeting." Patrick rolled his eyes.

"Why does The King want to meet with us, anyway?" I asked.

"General Cra ." The two brothers said at the same time. I hung my head down and groaned.

"Oh Goddess. I'm sure everyone blames me for what happened. How am I gonna get out of this one?" I muttered to myself.

"I'm pretty sure no one feels that way. I think everyone's just scared." Patrick shrugged.

"Scared of me?" Jon growled.

"Scared of both of you. You two are going to be the first Gold Ranked King and Queen. People are wondering if you could balance each other out." Patrick said.

Huh. Jon and I were as di erent as night and day. But I guess people would never think that because they'd only see the identical bracelets we possessed.

Truth be told, I never even gave much thought to what others thought of me ever since I became a princess. Did they think I was a good princess, worthy of their prince?

"How do you know all of these things?" Jon tiredly asked.

"Oh, you know, around." Patrick nonchalantly said, but we all knew the truth. Patrick was the one they confided in. Sure, they all respected and supported Jon because he was a good prince to them, but it was Patrick they actually liked.

Me? What was my place in this court? I was a princess, a future queen. What was a queen supposed to do? A Queen was supposed to make sure no one second-guessed her king's ability to rule. In chess, the Queen had the power to move around with de and flexibility to ensure her king stood tall and proud.

Judging from Jon's actions the night before last, I hadn't been doing a good job of that.

"I'm making a mess of things." I murmured mostly to myself. I felt Jon tense.

"Serena, you're not..." He started.

I shook my head. I knew what I needed to do. I admit that a part of me had purposefully kept out of the war business, and I was wrong to do that. My place was beside my mate's in the front lines.

Only two months ago, I would have preferred to escape pack life. But now, everything had changed—I had two marks on my neck to symbolize that. .

I shouldn't have let Jon exclude me. I knew he was used to doing things alone but if we were both going to rule, then everyone needed to see us as a partnership. If not, they'd see point of weakness and exploit it.

This ended my.

"Jon, it's my job to keep you in check. If we want everyone trust our mating— us then you need to let me to do that." I said, gripping his hand tight.

That touch held a promise shoveled out of the depths of my heart. It was a promise that would force me into uncertainty and danger. A promise that sought a home with the brooding prince who had done nothing but show his care for me. A promise that didn't need to be said out loud.

You don't have to be alone anymore, Jon. You're my mate.

I hope that Jon saw all that I was willing to give him, and I prayed to the Goddess that he would trust me with himself as well. One step at a time.

First order of business, we needed to fix the problem in front of us.

"How much damage has been done?" I asked Patrick. He o ered an encouraging smile, as if he saw the turmoil and would do everything to help it go away.

I was thankful for him.

"It's...erm...well, you both need to be under the radar for a while, at least until the tribunal summons you, Jon." Patrick said. Ugh. I almost forgot about that.

"And you don't have to worry, Serena. The whole palace thinks Jon did the right thing to beat up Cra ." Patrick added. I instantly sti ened, and Jon growled warningly at Patrick.

Boldly, I leaned over to Jon and gave him a kiss on the cheek. I felt his breath hitch as my lips made contact with his skin. Smiling, I sat back down.

"Did you know I actually challenged Cra to a fight? I told him to name the time and place." I giggled.

"You what?!" Jon growled out. I grinned sheepishly at him.

"What I would giveto see that, sis." Patrick grinned.

"That is nevergoing to happen." Jon adamantly said. I rolled my eyes and gave Patrick a pointed look. I was about to make a rebuttal when someone knocked on the door.

"The king is ready to see you and the Princess, Prince Jonathon." It was one of the king's secretaries.

Jon nodded at him before standing up and o ering his hand to me. I graciously took it.

"Good luck." Patrick said, winking at me.

We were going to need more than luck. We were going to need a miracle for the Moon Goddess. The King was not happy about the situation, that I knew for sure. Each step I took felt heavy, and if Jon wasn't holding on to me I'm sure I would sink to the ground.

Jon was about to knock when I took a hold on his arm and tugged him to face me.

"Jon, the blame is on the both of us. If you go down, I go down. Don't forget that, okay?" I whispered.

"Serena..." Jon started. I knew he wanted to do the noble thing and take all the blame for himself, but I knew my faults and I'm sure the king knew as well—that was why we were both summoned. I wouldn't let my mate go through this alone.

Even if the tribunal summoned Jon a thousand times to question the legitimacy of our mating, I knew that there was no overturning this. Not only did he give me two marks, but these past two months we had invested in each other physically and emotionally. I knew we were both severely flawed. Our relationship was far from perfect. The pieces of the puzzle didn't always match.

But fuck the puzzle pieces. I'd be willing to saw them o to make sure Jon and I remained together.

There was no turning back. Jon was my mate, and my forever was with him.

"We're going to be together until they put us in the fucking ground." I whispered, swearing it to the Goddess. I knew Jon heard me. He always did.

Come hell or high water, Jon was mine. He was the one who saw something special in me that night during the Claiming. If he hadn't claimed me, I would have forged a path away from the wolves. Because of that, Jon is the reason I have a future in the werewolf world.

It was a future christened by the blood of Alpha Theodore. It was a future I was willing to bet on.

Jon nodded at me, smiling grimly.

"If you go down, I go down." He said.

I believed him.

A/N

This was just a flu y filler. Next chapter's gonna push the story more.

I'm happy to be celebrating two milestones: more than 15K reads and 1k votes! I'd like to thank you all because without your love and support for my story, this never would have happened.

We're more than halfway through the book now (I have this at strictly 40 chapters) and I've already written until chapter 30. TWPD was supposed to be just a summer fling for me and now I even have a sequel planned, and it's all thanks to you guys. Y'all give me much joy and love.

Please leave comments and votes, I really like interacting with you guys through the comments.

See you on Friday!

Continue to next part