

My Promised Rejection

chapter 51-60

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[1,711 words]

Olivia POV

“How do we know that the pup hasn’t been coached to say these things” Gregory asks. “Are you insinuating that we told her to say those things? That the pup is lying about the things she just told you.” “I don’t think that is what Gregory meant and I apologize if he has offended you. Our only goal here today is to do what’s best for the pup. It would be helpful if everyone present wasn’t firmly on Ace’s side because of his connection to all of you in one way or another,” Finn says.

Gregory goes to open his mouth, but I speak first. “Kevin, can you ask Amber to join us please?” “Of course, Oli” he says before rushing from the office. “Who pray tell is Amber,” Gregory asks. “That is my mother-in-law“, Ace says. The two men look at him confused. “Amber is Candace’s mother.” “So your former mother-in-law, since you are no longer with Candace,” Gregory says. “Just because Candace decided she didn’t want to be with me anymore, doesn’t mean I no longer recognize Amber as my mother-in-law,” Ace says.

Before Gregory can say more, the door to the office opens and Amber steps inside. “Amber, this is councilmen Finn and Gregory. They have some questions for you about Candace,” Connor says. “Amber, your daughter has requested that Della live with her as she is the child’s real mother,” Gregory says, but before he can say more, Amber snickers. “Amber, do you have something to say about what Gregory just said,” Finn asks.

“Yes, as a matter of fact I do. My daughter has never been my granddaughter’s mother. A mother cares for her pup and doesn’t abandon her for a man. The only real parent my granddaughter had until Olivia came along was my son-in-law, Ace” she says. “How could you say such things about your own pup,” Gregory asks. “Would you prefer I lie on her behalf,” she asks. I want to fist pump the air. Amber has changed so much since those ba**ards have left.

“No, we wouldn’t want you to lie, but you must understand how difficult this situation is, Amber” Finn says. “I’m confused why it’s so difficult. The woman left her pup a year ago and up until he found me she said not one word about wanting Della. Now all of a sudden, she is desperate to have her pup back. I call bullsh*t.”

Gregory's eyes flash black and Ace steps in front of me. Gregory laughs and I step back by Ace's side. "Don't worry human, I would never attack an untrained female, no matter how disrespectful she is" he says. "Gregory, enough," Finn says. I can tell Gregory doesn't like being reprimanded, but he stays quiet. So Finn must be above him in the council hierarchy. "Alpha Connor, do you think it would be possible to speak with the former Alpha since he was in charge of the pack the day Candace signed the papers to transfer," Finn asks.

"I'll link him," he says and his eyes haze over. "He will be here in a moment. He hadn't realized that the council was here, or he would have already greeted you," Connor says. I notice Gregory sits up straighter as he looks toward the door. Xavier steps inside and bares his neck to the councilmen. "That isn't necessary Alpha Xavier," Gregory says. What a kiss a**? He isn't even Alpha anymore. "Of course it's necessary. I have the utmost respect for the council," he says. Boy, he is a really good l*ar. He is the one that told me we didn't want the council here.

"I apologize that my Luna and I weren't here to greet you. She is currently resting, or she would be here too," Xavier says. "We heard she is with pup. Congratulations Alpha" Gregory says with a little too much excitement. Five minutes ago, he was a total d**k, and now he is kissing Xavier's a**. "So I assume you wanted to speak with me for a reason. What can I help the council with," he asks.

"A request has been made by Luna Candace and Alpha Roman for her pup to be reunited with her mother," Gregory says. "However, in light of information provided here in your pack today, I'm not sure if that is the best option for the pup. We were hoping you could shed some light on what happened the day that Candace left the pack," Finn says. "That was over a year ago. Why on earth would she want the pup back now," he asks, and for the first time since I met Xavier I could hug him. I won't because gross, but I could.

"She is telling us that she never intended to leave the pup here permanently. She signed over the rights to her pup under direst and misses her terribly," Finn says. Xavier throws his head back and laughs. "My apologies, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but that girl couldn't leave this pack quickly enough. She made it perfectly clear she wanted nothing to do with Ace or her pup" he says before turning to look at Della. "I'm sorry little one. I should have asked them to take you out before I said that."

"It's OK Alpha, I have a new mommy now, and she loves me," Della says. Xavier smiles genuinely at Della before he turns back toward the councilmen. "Do you have any other questions gentlemen? I don't like to be away from Evie for too long," he says. "No Alpha, I think we have a clear picture now. Thank you for your time," Finn says, and Xavier leaves.

"Well, I think we have taken up enough of your time today. Della Morris will remain in Alpha Connor's pack under the care of Ace Morris and his mate Olivia Morris," Finn says before looking at Gregory. He stands to face us. "I do apologize for my

antagonistic behavior. It is a tool we use during interviews to try and fluster those we are interviewing so they will slip up. If it's any consolation, I believe you both, but we always have to be sure," Gregory says. Kevin leads them out of the office and I look at Ace.

Ace POV

"Do you think he was being honest or was he trying to save face?" "I couldn't feel any deceit but he was pretty much just making snarky comments. I'm not sure that I would be able to detect lies. We didn't ask him a lot of questions. I still think he's an a**hole even if it's part of his job. Did you see the way he practically kissed Xavier's a**? What the hell was that?" "I might be able to answer that. Today was not the first time I've seen councilmen Gregory. He used to visit Xavier's father frequently. They were friends growing up. I think he might even be Xavier's godfather, but you have to ask him for sure," Amber says.

"Why wouldn't he be able to trust Gregory if he was his godfather? Now I'm even more confused. He acted like the council were all evil ba**ards when he spoke to me about them," Olivia says. "Maybe he just meant some of them. The council is made up of six wolves. So maybe only a few are evil" Amber says. "Maybe, but something feels off about the whole thing."

"Hey, I want to meet my pup in person. Besides, if these people are our family, I want to meet them too," Ryker says. "I don't know if that's a good idea. What if someone feels our power in your form?" I swear he rolls his eyes at me in my own mind. "I have already told you my royal blood makes us special. We have the power to conceal even in my form," he says. "Fine, but only the people in this room can know about us."

"Of course, I didn't plan on shouting it as we ran through the pack," Ryker says. Now it's my turn to roll my eyes. "Ace, are you linking," Connor I asks, bringing me out of my conversation with Ryker. Olivia smiles like the

cat that swallowed the canary as Connor waits for an answer. "I actually have something to show all of you, but you have to promise to keep it between only the people in this room and Rain. If you v > grab her, Kevin, we can head to the woods near the falls."

It doesn't take us long to reach the place I've come to many times when I needed to think. Della rushes toward me and Olivia while everyone else stands around us. "I have something important to show all of you."

"Not something, someone a**hat," Ryker says. "I'm sorry, someone. I stand corrected."

I take a step away from everyone and give over control to Ryker. "What the f**k? How is this possible, Connor asks. We stand to Ryker's full height and we tower over everyone. We bend to nuzzle our pup before we do the same with Olivia. When I stand back up, Becca is crying. "Becca, why are you crying," I ask through our link.

“After all the sh*t you took from the pr*cks in school and look at you now” she says.

Ryker bends down and opens his arms to her. She steps into his arms. This woman is my best friend. The one that has always defended me. “We both love you, Becca” we say in unison. “I love you both too. What is your name, Lycan’s best friend?” she asks, and I chuckle. “Ryker” he says. Ryker goes to each person and bends to place his head against theirs.

“What the hell are you doing,” I finally ask. “I’m marking them as family. We will be able to link all of them in either form. They are under our protection now” he says. “Thank you Ryker.” “You don’t have to thank me Ace.

We are one. They are important to you, which makes them just as important to me,” he says. Standing in this pack surrounded by these people with the last piece of myself has my heart feeling full.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,726 words]

Candace POV

“Candace come to my office. The council members have returned with your brat,” Roman says. I smile as I pull on my dress and look down at the handsome omega, I just f**ked. “You tell no one about what we just did, because if you do, I’ll say you forced yourself on me. If you’re a good boy, we might make this a regular thing.” “What about the Alpha, Luna? Won’t he feel the pain from us f**king,” he says more out of fear than loyalty to Roman.

“You let me worry about that. You just remember what I said, Samuel. Now get out and if anyone asks you were up here to clean.” “Yes Luna,” he says, rushing from the room. I noticed Samuel a few days ago when I was in the garden. His build is similar to Ace’s and, despite being an omega, he f**ks like a champ. He’ll do until I can get Ace back into my bed. I spray the room and myself to cover his scent before I head to Roman’s office.

When I step inside, I immediately notice that Della isn’t with them. They must be forcing Ace to bring her to me. I smile to myself as I move to stand next to Roman. “Gentlemen, I trust you were able to straighten everything out,” Roman says. “Yes, we were and after speaking to your ex-husband, Olivia, Della, Amber, and Alpha Xavier, we found quite a few interesting details about you Luna Candace.

My heart starts to race with each name he lists. He talked to my f**king mother and Alpha Xavier. F**k, why the hell were they involved? Xavier isn't even the Alpha anymore. "I have no idea what details you could possibly mean. I've done nothing wrong." "Do you really want me to list your offenses, Luna," Finn says. "How can you possibly take the words of a pack and man she left" Roman asks.

"What of her mother and daughter? What reason would they have to lie," Gregory asks. "Please let me just talk to Della. I told you they are poisoning her against me. She is just a pup she doesn't know any better." "Luna Candace, did you reject your fated mate when you were eighteen years old because he was an omega in your birth pack," Finn asks. I debate about lying but the pr*ck still lives in the pack. If they find out I lied, it will make it worse.

"I did, but I had my reasons. I am of Beta blood. I needed a strong mate. He was weak." "So you rejected a wolf mate for a human, and you stand here talking about weakness. Even an omega is stronger than a human. So what was the real reason," Finn asks. "I couldn't be mated to an omega. At least Ace was going to be the pack doctor. I deserved better than a mate with an omega rank." "So you lied about Roman being your true mate," Gregory says.

I'm tempted to tell him he's my second chance, but we all know that wolves that reject their mates without good reason don't get a second chance. "I deserved to be Luna, besides I love Roman. I can't help that I fell in love with him. That is not a crime." "You are right Luna it's not a crime, but it definitely is in poor form. The goddess doesn't make mistakes," Finn says.

I fight the growl that wants to escape my throat as my wolf paces in my mind. How dare these two ba**ards question me? "Did you ever tell your pup she was bad and call her a half-breed," Gregory asks. "I most certainly did not. I love my daughter. Where on earth would she hear such a word?"

"I don't know Luna Candace, but the child is very articulate for her age and I believe she is telling the truth," Finn says. I go to open my mouth, but he raises his hand to silence me. "I cannot prove it but even your own mother said that you never acted as a mother to your pup. Why on earth would your own mother say such a thing?" "I have no idea. Maybe she is angry because she is all alone. She has no family, and she is taking it out on me by telling lies."

"Finally, we spoke to Alpha Xavier, who said that you ran out of the pack, and you made it perfectly clear you wanted nothing to do with your daughter. Based on all of this, Della Morris will remain in the care of Ace and Olivia Morris," Finn says. "You can't be serious. You can't keep me from my pup." "Candace calm down," Roman says. "No, I will not calm down. This isn't fair. I am Della's mother. I have the right to raise my pup."

"Correction you had the right to raise your pup before you abandoned her. Choices have consequences, Luna Candace" Gregory says as they both stand. "We will take our

leave, but I do hope that you will respect our ruling, because if you try to do anything against what we've said you will be imprisoned for kidnapping, Finn says. "Kidnapping my own pup." "No, kidnapping Ace and Olivia Morris's pup," they say before turning to leave the office.

My wolf is pushing to the surface and I know I need to get outside. She is as pissed as I am. Ace is ours, and he doesn't get to live happily ever after with that b**ch. I rush from the office ignoring Roman calling my name. As soon as I step out of the pack house, I shift shredding my clothes. "We have to figure out a way to get to Della. It's the only way that Ace will listen." "Get that pack sl*t take her and bring her to us," Laney says as we run through the trees.

"That's brilliant. She can get her out of the pack and bring her here. If she doesn't get caught, I'll have Roman offer to take her in. Hell, she can even be his mistress for all I care. It's perfect." She turns running back toward the pack house. When we reach the tree line, I shift and grab a dress from one of my bins that no one else can touch. I make my way inside and up to our floor. The sound of things breaking has my steps faltering..

A loud growl has me backing up. The door flies open and Roman steps into the hallway. His eyes are black, and I know Oscar is at the surface. "Why do I scent a male in our room," he says, taking a step closer to me." Roman, what the hell are you insinuating? Do you not trust me? How could you even think I would ever betray you?" "Then explain why there is the faint scent of another male," he says.

"Roman, I think one of the omegas was up here cleaning earlier. You know if I did something so vile you would feel it Roman. We are bonded. I would never do that to you." His features soften, and his eyes return to their normal brown color. He takes a step toward me and I take a step back. "I can't believe you would accuse me of such a thing. I am many things Roman, but I am not a cheat," I say, tears running down my cheeks.

This time, I let him pull me into his arms. "I'm sorry Candace. I wasn't thinking. I was just so angry at the thought of another man touching you I didn't stop to think. You're right. I would have felt the pain if you cheated and I didn't. I am going to make sure that only female omegas clean this floor so Oscar and I don't lose our sh*t. Do you forgive me my love," he asks. "I do, but you owe me a really good I'm sorry gift, like a necklace or a ring." "Of course, whatever you want," he says before he lowers his mouth to mine.

I pull back before he can deepen the kiss. I need to make that phone call to Ebony. "As much as I would love to feel you buried inside me Roman, I'm just not in the right frame of mind after that sh*t with the councilmen. I think I'm just going to lie down for a while." "Of course, I'll come get you for dinner in an hour," he says before pressing a kiss on my forehead.

Once he heads down the hallway, I step into our room. What the f**k? That spray should have covered Samuel's scent. I'm going to have to make sure we f**k

someplace else the next time. I grab my phone and dial Ebony's number. She picks up on the second ring. "I haven't gotten close to him, Candace. Honestly, I don't think I ever will," she says. Good, I really don't want her touching Ace anyway.

"What about Della? Can you get close to her?" There is a long pause of silence. I look at the phone thinking the call dropped, but her name is still on the screen. "Ebony, are you still there?" "I am, what do you mean about me getting close to Della?" "Ace refuses to give me back my pup. They made me sign a paper giving up my rights when I left the pack, but I need my daughter, Ebony. I need your help to get her out of the pack and bring her to me." "I don't know Candace" she says, and I roll my eyes.

"Ebony, please. She is my pup. My heart is broken thinking I'll never see her again. Plus if you do this, you can join our pack, and I'll suggest you become Roman's mistress." I swear I can hear her thinking. "You'll share your mate with me," she says. "Yes, I don't love Roman. I simply wanted the title of Luna. I'll gladly allow you to be his mistress if you bring me my daughter." "Fine, but if you screw me Candace, I'll sing like a canary," she says. I disconnect the call and smile to myself. F**k the council. I always get what I want.

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[1,723 words]

Ebony POV

Sh*t am I really willing to take Ace's pup from him? I know how much he loves her and she is a sweet pup. He has always been kind to me. It was one of the reasons I wanted him so desperately. Most of the men I've been with have only wanted s*x and once they got it they became total pr*cks to me. Not that I've slept with a lot of them. That was the gossip after I slept with a boy I had hoped would be my mate. It ended up he already knew who his mate was, but he wanted to have some fun before he accepted their bond.

The girl and her friends found out, and they tortured me all through school until I became friends with Candace. She offered me her protection from the b**ch brigade, as I used to call them, and in return I became her lackey. I pretty much did whatever she told me to stay in her good graces. She even got her father to deal with the girl and her three friends.

Truth be told, Candace was the one that slept around even after she was with Ace. She would go away on her trips to the human city for her "modeling jobs" and take human men back to her hotel. She would come back and tell me and her sister all about her wild nights of s*x. Her sister was no better with the boys in the pack. She had her sights

set on Kevin. I was glad that Rain was his mate because I knew she would screw around on him too if the goddess paired them up. They both believed that they were better than everyone else.

Honestly, I was only their friend to protect myself from the b**chy she-wolves who hated me. I have no idea how they both became such mean girls, since their mother is one of the nicest she-wolves I've ever met. They were even cruel to her. I guess they both took after Bart. He treated his mate like a slave while he screwed around with females in the pack. I still don't understand how she endured the pain of his betrayal.

There were many times over the years I wanted to distance myself from her, but crossing Candace was never a good idea. Her father let his little bit of power go to his head and Alpha Xavier never seemed to notice. I think a lot had to do with pack members being afraid. Between the two of them, they would make the person's life miserable if they pissed them off. I watched it happen with many members of the pack. Rain's only saving grace was that Bart no longer held his position and Kevin would kill for her.

I was glad when Candace left with Roman. I figured I wouldn't have to deal with her orders anymore. That was until she called me about sleeping with Ace. I thought it was my chance to finally be with a nice guy. I'm twenty-five and I still haven't found my mate. I thought maybe, since she f**ked him over, he would fall in love with me if I showed him loyalty and became a good mother to Della. Never did I expect him to have a mate.

I've seen them a few times and I know, despite what Candace said, he'll never be with me now. Ace respects the bond and he loves Olivia.

I still can't believe Candace offered for me to be her mate's mistress. The more I think about what she said, the more I know I can't do it. The question is, do I tell Alpha Connor or go right to Ace about what she wants me to do. I don't know if Ace will even believe me after the sh*t I pulled at the hospital. "Just talk to the Alpha Ebbie. You shouldn't listen to that evil b**ch. Despite the bullsh*t the pack members put you through, you need to do the right thing," Coral says.

I take a deep breath and throw on my sneakers. I make my way through the pack house a knock on Alpha Connor's door. When the door swings open, Becca is standing there with a smile until she sees it's me. She doesn't glare at me, but I know she doesn't like me. I don't blame her. She knows that I tried to come between her sister-in-law and Ace. I bear my neck to show my respect. "Luna, I was hoping to speak to the Alpha." "I will be staying for your conversation," she says. "Of course, I apologize I didn't mean alone?"

She looks taken back by my words. She steps aside, allowing me inside. I bear my neck to Alpha Connor, and he motions for me to have a seat in front of his desk. My heart races despite knowing this is the right thing to do. "What can I help you with Ebony,"

Connor asks as Becca comes to stand next to him. "I know I've made mistakes, and I'll make my apologies to Olivia and Ace when I see them, but I also apologize to the two of you. I should never have tried to come between Ace and his mate."

I can see that they are both skeptical, but I figured an apology was the best way to start this. Besides, I mean it. After that day at the hospital, I thought about how I was treated in school, and I didn't even know the ass hole had a mate. What I did now was ten times worse because I knew this time. I'm ashamed of myself for even thinking about breaking their bond. "As much as I appreciate your apology, I'm confused about why you're offering it now," Becca says.

"Honestly, there is something important I have to tell you, but I wanted to apologize for my part in it." "Now I'm truly confused. Your part in what Ebony?" Connor asks. "After Candace found out that Ace had found his mate, she wanted to break their bond. She still wants Ace even though she is mated to Roman. She basically wants to make him a side piece." They both growl and I drop my gaze to the floor, feeling overwhelmed by their auras. The heaviness fades and I manage to pick up my head to look at both of them.

Despite the anger rolling off of them, I can tell at this moment it is not directed at me. "She wanted me to have s*x with Ace even if I had to drug him to do it. I couldn't bring myself to do such a vile thing, so I kept putting her off when she called. Not long after the first night in the hospital, I realized I couldn't do it."

"I saw how Candace destroyed Ace and, honestly, I wanted to be with him, but I realize now that it is not meant to be." "What about your own mate, Ebony? Don't you want your gift from the goddess," Becca asks. "I'm twenty-five Luna and I have yet to find him. Ace has always been kind and attractive. I've given up on mate. He is either in a different pack far away or dead. I'll just have to find a chosen mate but one that has no chance of having a mate."

I see sympathy in her eyes. She really is a good Luna. Candace was always jealous of Becca, especially because of how close she was to Ace. "I don't think you should give up yet. You never know he might be out there," she says. "Thank you, Luna but I'm alright with finding love the human way. The reason I came here today specifically is I received another call from Candace after the council refused to return Della to her."

"She wants me to kidnap the pup and bring Della to her." Growls that shake the walls erupt from the two of them. "She wanted you to kidnap my niece. Why is she so interested in having Della returned to her? I know

damn well it's not because she is interested in actually being her mother," Becca says. "She thinks having Della will be a way to control Ace. She tried to tell me it's because she loves the pup, but I know that's a lie."

“I’m glad you did the right thing and came to us, Ebony. I promise you that if you had followed through on the plan there wouldn’t have been a banishment. Taking a member of my family would have an automatic death sentence,” Connor says, and I simply nod. I would expect nothing less. “Now, I have no desire for war against Roman’s pack, but Candace needs to be punished for even suggesting such a thing. We will need your help once we come up with a plan. Are you willing to help us, Ebony,” Connor asks.

“I am. I owe Ace, Della, and Olivia that much for my part in her bulls*t.” Becca comes to sit takes my hand in hers. “I’m glad you aren’t letting your past mistakes dictate your future. A., are grateful to you for coming to us, Ebony. To be the person you were truly meant to be instead of Candace’s croney. You were never like her and her sister. I’m glad you see that now” she says.

“Thank you, Luna.” “I’m going to link Ace and Olivia to join us. I’m sure they will feel the same way Ebony. They will appreciate that you didn’t help Candace rip their family apart. Ace will probably even agree with you returning to the hospital if that’s what you want,” Becca says.

“Not if it’s going to make him and Olivia uncomfortable. I love being a nurse but I jeopardized that by listening to Candace.” She squeezes my hand and her eyes glaze over. I think I’m even more nervous about talking to Ace and Olivia. “I’m proud of you, Ebbie. You did the right thing. I also think the Luna is right. We shouldn’t give up on finding our mate. We deserve a chance to have our goddess’s chosen mate, Ebbie,” Coral says. I say a prayer that maybe they are both right.

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[1,777 words]

Ace POV

Della’s hand is in mine while her other hand is in Olivia’s. We make our way the short distance to the house that Connor suggested we make our home. Doing something as simple as walking with my daughter and mate feels monumental. I never thought I would have this happiness. I look back on the time I spent with Candace and I realize just how different being with her was compared to the bond I share with Olivia. She is kind and loving. She loves our daughter.

She is happy and she makes me happy. Unlike Candace, who was always concerned about what she didn’t have or material things she thought she deserved. Even now our daughter is a pawn in some game she is playing. I’m not sure what her end game is but I know I won’t let her hurt Della. She abandoned her, and now she thinks she can rip her away from me and Olivia. I’ll never let that happen.

I know without a shadow of a doubt Olivia would protect her with everything she has and not just because she is Della's guardian. She couldn't love our daughter more if she gave birth to her. How can the woman that gave birth to her simply walk away while Olivia would fight tooth and claw to stay with me and Della?

I push thoughts of Candace from my mind in time to see Kevin and Rain sitting on the porch. The house is definitely a lot bigger than the cottage we are living in now. I'm not sure what the inside looks like, but the outside is amazing. The porch wraps around the house and the windows are covered in dark blue shutters. A bay window overlooks a huge yard. I can picture Della and our future pups playing as we snuggle on the couch.

Kevin tosses me the keys before he and Rain head back toward the pack house. Della is bouncing up and down with excitement. "Is this going to be our new house, daddy?" "If we want it to be, it will. Uncle Connor and Aunt Becca think we will like it." As soon as the door is open Della tears inside. I motion for Olivia to walk in ahead of me and she gasps. I move around her and I realize that Connor has made almost an exact replica of the house they grew up in.

The layout is the same. The color scheme and pictures I saw at Olivia's house in the human city are the same. I smile at my brother-in-law's thoughtfulness for his sister. Tears streak down Olivia's cheeks as she moves from room to room. I follow behind her, giving her space to take everything in. I smile when I notice Della sitting on a bench seat that is built into the bay window. The house isn't just beautiful, but it's completely furnished. There is even a toy box in the corner that Della hasn't noticed yet.

"Della, why don't we go check out the bedrooms," Olivia says. Della hops up and rushes ahead of us. "Slow down, sweet pea, so you don't get hurt," When we reach the top of the stairs, I notice five doors. The door at the end of the hall is larger, so I assume it's the master. Della pushes the first door on the right open and squeals. The room is decorated with Disney princesses, which Becca knows are her favorite.

I smile at the amazing woman that is my best friend. "That's an awesome room, Becca. You will have to make sure to thank Aunt Becca and Uncle Connor for decorating it for you." "I will, I will, I will," she says as she jumps on her bed. Olivia and I continue to move down the hall, opening room after room. The three other bedrooms are simply white with no furniture. Olivia slides her hand into mine and I know is thinking the same thing that I am.

This will be another pup's room. Will it be a boy or another little girl? I wonder how many pups Olivia wants. I want as many as she'll bless me with, but the decision is hers since she has to carry them. "I want at least three siblings for Della," she says with a smirk. I pull her into my arms and press a kiss on her lips. When I pull back, I look into her eyes. "I can't wait to see your belly round with our pup." "Me either" she says before pressing another quick kiss on my lips.

We check out the bathroom in the hallway before we move to the master bedroom. When we step inside, I'm in awe. The room is huge. It even has a sitting area with a fireplace. I picture nights alone after the pups are in bed just sitting on the couch and Olivia. "Hell with sitting on the couch. Check out the size of that bed. I can't wait to have her in bed under us," Ryker says. "Really, you are worse than a teenage boy."

"Please we both know that you would be buried inside our mate 24/7 if you could. Don't act like you weren't thinking about it when you saw the king-sized bed," he says. He isn't wrong, but I have a little more control. "Not much" he says and I roll my eyes. "Oh my goddess, this tub is amazing," Olivia says, bringing me out of my conversation with Ryker. I walk into the bathroom and smile when I see Olivia lying in the empty tub that can seat at least two people. Ryker immediately projects images of what we can get up to in the tub.

Olivia stands and winks at me. "I agree with every one of those ideas." "How" I say. "Apparently our bond allows us not only to share feelings and thoughts but images. If Della wasn't with us, I'd strip right here," she says, and I groan. She goes to open her mouth but her eyes haze over. Connor or Becca must be linking her.

When her eyes return to normal, I can see whatever was said pissed her off.

She steps out of the tub and moves to stand in front of me. "Ebony is in Connor's office. They want us both to join them." "What's going on?" "Becca didn't tell me exactly she just asked me to come to the office with an open mind," Olivia says. What the hell could that mean? We grab Della and head to Amber's room. We knock, and she lights up the minute she sees us. "Could you keep an eye on her again, Amber?"

"Ace, you never have to ask. The answer will always be yes. I love spending time with her," she says. "As long as you don't mind. We still need to leave the pack in a little while. I'm not sure how long we will be gone, but we should be back by her bedtime." "Why don't you just let me keep her overnight? Della and I can have a sleepover. We can watch princess movies and have snacks." "Can I daddy and mommy? I want to have a sleepover with nana," Della says.

"Absolutely. We will come to get you in the morning so we can all have breakfast together." We both kiss her and head to Connor's office. I can't imagine what the hell Ebony is doing in Connor's office and what it has to do with us. I swear to the goddess she had better not try anything, or she'll lose more than her job. Where the hell did that come from? "That came from our need to protect Olivia. Our need to keep our mate safe at all costs. She may be Della's guardian but we are both their protectors."

Olivia knocks twice and Connor calls out for us to enter. I'm shocked to see Becca sitting near Ebony and holding her hand. What the hell game is she playing that she has garnered support from Becca. I don't trust this woman as far as I can throw her. She was Candace's best friend. She is just like her, selfish and entitled. "Why don't you two have a seat. This isn't going to be a quick conversation," Connor says.

Olivia POV

We take a seat on the couch in the corner of the office. “I know you two have every right to be distrustful of Ebony, but she came here today to make amends,” Connor says. I’m just about to open my mouth to call bulls*t when my brother raises his eyebrows in warning. “Go ahead Ebony,” Becca says. that she would offer this little witch support after she tried to interfere with my bond with Ace.

Ace takes my hand in his, feeling my sadness through our bond. “I just wanted to tell you I’m sorry. I should never have listened to Candace” she says. “What do you mean you listened to Candace? She tells us about Candace’s plan to shatter our bond. I can’t stop the growl that escapes me and Ebony drops her gaze to the floor. “Why are you telling us this now? It isn’t like you didn’t follow through on your plan. If you had succeeded, I would have left, and you would be no better than that conniving b**ch.*

“You’re right, Olivia, and I can’t apologize enough. I know you will probably never forgive me and I understand why, but I came here today because Candace reached out to me again. She is angry that the council didn’t side with her. She wants me to kidnap Della and bring her to Roman’s pack.” Danica pushes to the surface and I feel like I’m losing control. “She wants to hurt our pup. The goddess showed me images, Olivia. Images of what she plans to do to Della if she gets her hands on her,” Danica says.

Images of Della being abused pops unbidden into my mind. Bile rises in my throat as Candace hits my daughter and treats her like a slave. I will rip that b**ches throat out before she ever touches my pup. “Olivia, you need to calm down. Della is safe. You and Ace won’t let anything happen to her. Becca and I won’t let anything happen to her. Danica give control back to Olivia now. We will protect your pup. Please, Olivia, we have to go stop Ace,” Connor says. Danica hands over control and fear rolls through me. I have to stop Ryker from exposing his existence and putting him and Ella in danger.

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[1,740 words]

Ace POV

I listen to Ebony talk about Candace’s plan and with every word the rage inside me intensifies. I can’t believe she would go this far. What if Ebony hadn’t come to Connor? What if she took Della? What if she was just as evil as Candace and hurt our pup? Ryker’s anger intensifies my own. I can feel myself losing the battle as Ryker starts to pace in my mind. The minute the first image of Candace slapping Della across the face pops into my mind, the little control I had snaps.

We are on our feet and heading for the door. I can hear Connor and Becca shouting my name, but the overwhelming feeling of rage won't let me stop moving through the pack house. People try to talk to me but quickly back away as I stalk past them. They have never seen me this way. I'm normally relaxed and kind, but at this moment I feel murderous. If I had Candace in front of me I'd probably snap her neck, and I've never been a violent man.

I'm reaching for the handle of my car when I hear Olivia's desperate voice in my head. "Ace, please. I need you and Ryker to come back. You can't go there and show who you truly are. I'm as angry as you are, but I can't lose you and Della. If you go over there and shift to Ryker, the council will be pounding on our door. We have to have a plan. I promise you that they will pay for even thinking about harming our daughter. Please just come back," she pleads.

We both know she's right. The anger was blinding, and I'm grateful that Olivia got through to the two of us before we put our pup at risk. I guess she isn't just Della's guardian wolf but ours. Ryker recedes in my mind as he grumbles about tearing Candace and Roman apart. I take a few deep breaths before I start to walk back toward the pack house. "I'm on my way back, Olivia. I'm sorry I scared you. I love you" I say before I cut the link.

I just reach the pack house when the back door flies open and Olivia launches herself at me. The feeling of having her in my arms has the remaining anger fading away. She's right, they will pay for even thinking about hurting our pup. I lift her, and she wraps her legs around my waist. I kiss her like she is the air I need to breathe. A throat clearing makes me smile against her lips. "If you two can tear yourselves apart, we need to finish our discussion," Connor says.

I set Olivia on her feet but pull her close to my side as we make our way back to Connor's office. Ebony and Becca look worried when Olivia and I step back inside. "What's wrong?," "Ace you looked possessed when you ran out of here. If I didn't know better, I would have thought you were a wolf because of how scary you looked. Are you alright," Ebony asks.

"Yes, I'm sorry. I lost control of my anger, and I wasn't thinking. I know I'm no match for Alpha Roman, so we have to come up with a plan to make Candace pay. I appreciate what you've done, Ebony. I know you considered Candace a friend." She seems to accept my explanation. "No, she was never a friend. Candace doesn't care about anyone but Candace," she says.

"I am truly sorry for trying to come between the two of you. I won't rehash everything that I told Alpha and Luna because it doesn't justify what I did, but I promise you I would never hurt Della or of you. In fact, I'm willing to help you in any way I can to try to make amends," she says. Ebony. I forgive you, but just remember what my right hook feels like if you ever think about going after Ace again," Olivia says.

Ebony chuckles. "I promise I'll never forget. Besides, I think I'm going to try to find my own mate again." "I think that is a really good idea. You are not Candace, Ebony. You won't throw your mate away because of something as stupid as rank. You deserve a mate that will treat you well." "Thank you Ace. Candace never deserved you. "I'm just sorry I didn't tell you the person she was while you were together," she says.

"Tell me what" I say. Not because I give two f**ks about Candace, but I have a right to know exactly what she did while she pretended to be my mate. She looks at me confused before she finally answers. "I'm sure you wondered why she never marked you." I nod and wait for her to keep going. Olivia holds my hand in hers, calming the anger that is simmering below the surface. How did I not know how evil she truly was? Was really that blind?

"Every time she went away to the human city she would cheat Ace. She didn't mark you because you would have felt it. I remember her ranting one day about how if you had a wolf, she would simply have given you wolfsbane but because you were human. She couldn't take the chance that you would feel her betraying your bond," Ebony says, dropping her gaze to the floor. The guilt is practically rolling off her.

She may not have told us everything, but I know why she clung to Candace and Collette. Dane decided to use her crush against her. Once he got what he wanted, he made sure his mate found out. You would think he would want to keep it a secret, but he liked the she-wolves fighting over him. He was an a**hole, but back then I couldn't get involved. He was a wolf and I was a human. I knew I would always be to blame because I was the outsider. Maybe if I had gotten involved none of this would have happened.

"You can't do that, Ace. Everything happens for a reason. Goddess, I sound like a fortune cookie. I just mean that good and bad experiences mold us into the people we are meant to be. Ebony chose to do the right thing despite all her past mistakes. That's what makes someone redeemable, regret," Olivia says. I turn pressing a kiss on her temple.

"I think the best thing to do is act like Ebony is going along with the plan. Ebony can insist that they meet outside the pack lands. It will give us an opportunity to involve the council," Connor says. I go to open my mouth, but he raises his hand to silence me. "As much as I would love to just snap her neck, Ace killing a Luna has to be sanctioned by the council unless the wolf can prove they were in imminent danger," he says.

"So, basically, we need their permission and, in order to get their permission, we need to spend more time around them." "I'm afraid so, but I don't think it will be an issue. Everything was fine during their last visit. You know I wouldn't even bring it up if it wasn't absolutely necessary Ace," Connor says. "I know that, Connor, but

it doesn't make this any easier. I still don't know enough about the council or Hudson."

“Who is Hudson” Ebony asks. “He is Ace’s uncle. He didn’t know about him till recently. They haven’t gotten to spend much time together to get to know each other, so Ace is a little on edge about Hudson’s intentions,”

Olivia says, quickly covering for my mistake. As much as I appreciate what Ebony has done, there is no way for us to truly know if we can trust her yet.

“When do you want to do this? I’m sure I’ll hear from Candace soon. What should I tell her,” Ebony asks. “Just tell her that you are hopeful that you’ll be able to get Della alone over the next few days. Tell her that you’ll call her as soon as you escape the pack. Insist that you’ll meet her in the woods just outside the human city,” Connor says.

Something passes in her eyes and her cheeks turn pink. Before I can ask her what’s wrong. She speaks again. “I don’t know if she will go for meeting outside her pack. She offered me a place in Alpha Roman’s pack and to become his mistress if I successfully brought her Della” Ebony says. “What the f**k? Is she for real? She offered for you to f**k her mate. Chosen or not, that is sick” Olivia says.

“She insists she doesn’t love him. She only wants the title. That’s why she wants to control Ace. She wants him back in her bed,” Ebony says and Olivia growls. I quickly pull her into my lap, and she buries her head in my neck. “Ebony, the next time you speak with her, try to get her to say how she really feels about Roman. I have a feeling he will throw her to the wolves if he finds out that she feels nothing for him,” Connor says.

Before Connor can speak again, his eyes haze over. As soon as his eyes return to normal, he is up and out of his seat heading for the door. “Connor, what the hell is going on,” Becca yells after him. He turns and when he speaks, the blood freezes in my veins. “Rogue vampires are at the border demanding to speak to Olivia.” The growl escapes me before I can stop myself and Ebony’s eyes get big. Connor walks back toward her. “You will not speak of what you just heard or saw,” he says using his alpha command.

“I wouldn’t have said a word, I swear” she says. Olivia is up, and I am on her heels as we move through the pack house. What the f**k could rogue vampires possibly want with Olivia? It doesn’t take us long to reach the border and my steps falter when I see the man that is being blocked by several warriors. Olivia looks just as shocked as I am? What the f**k is happening right now? “Hello Olivia, long time no see” he says with a smug smirk.

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[1,615 words]

Unknown POV

“You had one simple task, Nicholas, and you couldn’t accomplish it. I thought you had some type of power to make women fall at your f**king feet,” she says. “I do mistress. I have the power of compulsion, but Olivia isn’t an ordinary woman and we both know it. I did everything I could to make her fall into my arms, but she was still hung up on that human. Hell, I thought we were golden when she stayed away from that f**king pack for five years. If she hadn’t found him she wouldn’t have been a problem.”

“I still don’t understand why you insisted she not be taken or killed.” Anger whirls in her eyes as she stares down at the picture in her hand. She has been more volatile the closer we get to the delivery of the midnight wolf. She slams the picture down on to the table before she stalks towards me. Her palm connecting with my cheek has me taking a step back before I do something I’ll regret. “There is no one without the other.”

“If something happens to Olivia, the midnight wolf will not be born. Xavier’s pup will be nothing but an Alpha wolf. I am in charge here, Nicholas, and you do as I say without question. I am the only reason that you and your band of rogue vampires have survived this long. If it was up to your sire you’d all be dead by now. You owe me your lives,” she says, anger swirling in her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Mistress, you’re right. I simply wanted to please you. What would you have us do now that she is living in the pack? She is practically untouchable.” “Her mate is her weakness. I want you to go to the pack. Demand to speak with her. Despite the fact that he is a human, he will follow her. It’s pathetic how fragile they are but they still think they can defend their mates. Find a way to bring him here. She will do whatever she has to in order to protect him,” she says, turning toward the door.

“Yes, mistress.” “Oh and Nicholas, don’t fail me this time or a slap will be the least of your worries,” she says, stepping out of the room and closing the door behind her. A shiver runs down my spine at the coldness of her words. After a few seconds, I head out of the large house that sits in the center of the coven. I make my way through the streets and gather three of the vampires that are the fastest.

I won’t underestimate the wolves, especially Olivia. I know how protective mates are of each other. I almost feel sorry for her being saddled with a pathetic human. Not sorry enough that I won’t follow my mistress’s orders. We run for a good thirty minutes at full speed before we arrive at the pack. I know enough not to draw too much attention. I don’t need them calling every f**king warrior to defend the pack if they think we are here to attack.

When the first wolf approaches, he growls deep before shifting back into his human form. “What is your business here, vampire,” he asks, clearly irritated by our presence. “I demand to speak with Olivia Crocker.” Two more wolves approach as the man’s eyes glaze over. When he looks back at me, I wonder how many more of these mutts will show up. “Our Alpha is oh his way” he says. “I don’t want to see you’re f**king Alpha.

I'm here for Olivia."

All three growl and I take a step back. It doesn't take long for a big black wolf to break through the trees. I know immediately he is the pack's Alpha. He shifts pulling on a pair of shorts. "Who the hell are you and why are you asking to speak to my sister?" "That really isn't any of your business Alpha. I think I'll just wait for her to arrive since she is the one I've come to see." His eyes turn nearly black as he takes a step toward me. "I wouldn't even think about it if I were you."

"I haven't stepped a toe into your territory and four vampires are no match for your pack. You have no right to put your hands on me. I'm no threat to you." He crosses his arms and glares at me until I notice Olivia and f**king Ace stalk in our direction. As soon as they notice me, I smile at the shock on their faces. Olivia's eyes meet mine and I take a step forward but ensure I don't cross the line. "Hello Olivia, long time no see." "Nicholas, why the hell are you here? How are you a vampire?"

"Well, that's a rather long and boring story that involves a woman, but it's of no importance right now. The reason I'm here is for you. Had I known you were a wolf I could have let you see the real me. I still think we could be good together, Olivia." I smirk when Ace looks like he is ready to rip my head off. "Are you out of your f**king mind? I have a mate and even if I didn't, you are a creeper and not because you're a vampire," she says. Anger rushes through me and I tighten my fists at my side.

How dare she speak to me that way? She should be grateful that I even looked in her direction. "Now why the hell are you here," she asks again. "I have my orders." As soon as the last word leaves my mouth, the three vampires with me flank my sides as I use my speed to reach Ace. One punch to his jaw, and he's out for the count.

I throw him over my shoulder while the others deal with the wolves. I can feel Olivia's wolf gaining on me as I move through the trees. It's cute how she thinks she has a chance to catch me. Vampires are known for their speed. I move through a tighter group of trees which would be almost impossible for her wolf to maneuver through.

The pounding of her paws becomes more distant, and I smile knowing that I've lost her. I have no idea if the others survived, but right now the only thing that matters is making it back to the coven with my prisoner. I need to make sure that Ace is secured in the coven before the wolves coming looking for him. Once I enter the gates, I head straight to the cells. I smile when I throw Ace on the ground, and he still hasn't woken up. The sound of the cell door clicking shut has relief washing over me. Time to let my mistress know I didn't fail.

Olivia POV

As soon as that ba**ard reaches Ace, I shift. His fist connecting with Ace's chin has me almost feral. Danica lunges but one of the other pr*cks jumps in front of her. She wastes no time dispatching him before we turn and take off after Nicholas, who has Ace slung

over his shoulder. I know vampires are strong, but could he really have knocked Ace out? My answer comes a few seconds later as we weave through the trees.

“I’m alright Olivia. You know I’m not weak, but the punch stunned me. Ryker and I are fine” he says. “Then kill the pr*ck and come back to me.” “Not yet. Ryker thinks that we should let him take us wherever he planned to. There is a reason he took me Olivia, and he could have something to do with Della. I promise you I’m safe,” he says.

“I don’t like this Ace. I know how strong you and Ryker are, but it doesn’t mean I won’t worry.” “I know Olivia. I would be worried too, but I promise you I wouldn’t do this if Ryker didn’t think it was important. I trust Ryker like you trust Danica,” he says. “Not fair using the trust we have in our beasts. Fine, but you had better come home without a scratch on you Ace Morris or so help me goddess.” I can feel his love through our bond.

The ba**ard weaves through a set of trees that Danica will never fit through and she stops. I say a silent prayer to the goddess that Ace and Ryker truly know what they are doing. I can’t lose them. We turn and run at full speed back toward the pack. We shift and rush to grab shorts and a t-shirt from behind the tree. When we step out, I’m pulled into strong arms. “I promise you, Oli, we will find him. The vampires with that ba**ard are dead,” Connor says and presses a kiss on the top of my head.

I pull back and offer him a reassuring smile. “Connor, Ace linked me. He is awake now. Ryker insisted he allow the vampire to take him. Ryker feels that all of this has something to do with Della.” “Why would taking Ace possibly benefit them,” he asks. “I don’t know. Nicholas was the doctor I worked with at the hospital. He must have known the whole time I was a wolf. I had no idea what vampires smelled like, so I never suspected- he was anything but a creepy human.” “Come on, let’s get back to the pack house. I think the only thing that is going to make you feel better right now is holding your pup,” Connor says, and he’s right.

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[1,709 words]

Ace POV

As soon as I know I’m alone, I get to my feet. I look around the room, which is made up of four cells and the door which must lead inside. “Ryker, what is the plan here?” “The plan is to listen. There is a reason we have been brought here. We need to know exactly what that reason is so we can protect our mate and pup,” he says. The door to the room creaks open and that pr*ck Nicholas steps inside first.

He smiles at me when he notices I'm awake. "Our guest is awake, mistress," he says to a woman that steps into the room behind him. "She is definitely a witch and a powerful one at that," Ryker says. I want to ask him why the hell a witch and a vampire would be working together, but I can't let them know about Ryker yet.

"I see that Nicholas. Leave us," she says. I can see he wants to argue, but like a good lapdog he rushes from the room. The door closes and she smiles at me. "Hello Ace, my name is Cassandra. I'm sorry we are meeting under these circumstances, but your mate is interfering in my plans," she says. It's all I can do not to growl. "Don't worry though, I won't harm her. I actually need her very much alive so you can rest easy," she says.

"You also won't be harmed. Once I have what I want, you'll be returned to the pack. Depending on your behavior, I can make your stay here a lot more comfortable," she says. "You might want to tell your buddy the blood sucker that. He seems to want my mate and he doesn't like me very much." She chuckles before conjuring a seat to take. Once she is seated, I study her features. They seem familiar, but I know I've never seen this woman before.

"You don't have to worry about Nicholas. He knows the penalty for crossing me. He also wants me to be happy. Truth be told, I may have given him a little something to make him love me. Black magic is potent, especially for the weak. It makes him easier to order around," she says. F**k, as much as I hate the guy no one deserves to be toyed with. "Why am I here? What is Olivia doing to interfere with your plans?"

"I'm sure you realize by now that your mate isn't just an ordinary wolf. She is a guardian. Not just any guardian but the guardian of the midnight wolf. The most powerful being to walk the earth. She is said to be a direct descendant of the goddess. She can even cross realms," she says. I won't tell her I already know all this, because I have a feeling that the more she talks, the more she reveals.

"Being human, I'm sure all of this is overwhelming. I'm still confused about why the goddess chose you for such a special wolf. Don't get me wrong, you are a very handsome man, but you are human. Her mate should have been a powerful creature like an alpha wolf or Lycan" she says with a smirk. "You seem amused by the thought of a Lycan having my mate. The goddess doesn't make mistakes. I would think a powerful witch would know that."

"Careful Ace, I like you, but I don't tolerate disrespect from any creature. Besides, I'm amused because the last of the Lycans are hiding in a prison of my making. They believe I rescued them many years ago, but really I just needed to keep a few alive and who better than the king." The story Hudson told us comes rushing back.

"Honestly, after that b**ch Evelyn gives birth, I won't need them alive any longer as long as her child proves to be the midnight wolf. My visions of her child are cloudy at best but the fact that Olivia was drawn to that pack means the child will be born there. The Alpha

wolf makes the most sense.. I know the goddess is trying to hide the child from me, but she won't be able to hide them for much longer," she says.

My heart starts to race thinking about Della. She will not take my pup. "What do you plan to do with the pup once you have it?" "Goddess, Ace, I don't even have to be able to read your mind to know what you're thinking. I'm not that evil. I plan to raise her as my own. She will make me Queen of the Supernatural world. With her by my side, I'll rule for centuries unopposed by any creature. I will have ultimate power of the supernatural world," she says.

"You say you're not evil, but you wiped out the Lycans. Beasts that trusted you from what you've said. That sounds pretty evil." "Had the King taken me up on my offer of becoming Queen, none of this would have been necessary. Instead, he was enamored with some wolfless woman. He believed she was his mate. As if the goddess would pair a Lycan with a woman who was basically human," he says.

I'm barely holding onto control as I listen to this evil b**ch talk about my mother like she is nothing. She is the one that made sure Ryker stayed dormant. She is the reason my father and mother couldn't be together. "She was unimportant anyway. Watching the king's heart break as I took her away was the most satisfying part after he rejected me. When I cast the spell to ensure her son never met his beast, I planted a seed of death that would in time grow and end her pathetic life," she says, as if she is talking about the weather.

I'm on the verge of shifting when the door to the room opens and a**hat rushes inside. "There are trackers mistress, just outside the coven walls. Do you want us to deal with them," he asks. "No, I'll deal with them, Nicholas. Go get our guest some food and be nice. I will not be pleased if you upset him. After he eats, we can call the pack with my demands" she says. "What demands" I ask but she leaves without answering and Nicholas just smirks.

"Ryker, we can't stay here. I want her head now." "I know so do I, and we will have it, but we need to see if she will spill about the council's involvement, if there was any. I'm not sure her so-called vision of the attacks by the council was anything more than her own well thought out plan to kill the Lycans and imprison our father.

If she is working with someone other than the council, we need to know. We are here now. We need to make sure we know everything before we tear that b**ch limb from limb," he says. As much as I know he is right, it doesn't make staying in here while that b**ch is out there thinking she's won. She will never have my daughter. She is going to pay for every person she has hurt.

Olivia POV

Della and I are lying in bed in one of the guest rooms on the Alpha floor. Connor insisted until Ace got back he wanted us close. The minute I stepped into the pack

house, Della was waiting. I scooped her up and held her close just like Connor suggested. She laid her head on my shoulder, so her mouth was close to my ear. "Amethyst said daddy is safe. Ryker will protect him, mommy. He'll be home soon," she said. I fought back tears as I followed Becca upstairs to this room.

I haven't heard from Ace since the brief conversation when I was running through the trees. I'm afraid to link him and alert whoever has him. I know that sounds silly, but I have no idea what's happening or what powers they have. "I'm fine, my love. I promise you," his voice breaks through my thoughts and I fight back tears as I hold Della tighter.

"Where are you? What's happening?" "I'm in a coven, but I'm not sure which one or exactly where. I have so much I need to tell you, Olivia, but I need you to know how much I love you. I can feel your fear through our bond and it's killing me. I promise you that I'm not hurt. I've been fed, and I was even given a mattress," he says. "Basically, saying you are a prisoner isn't helping me Ace. Why can't you just shift and break out?"

"I've already learned so much about the past, Olivia. I need a little bit longer. The witch who ordered me to be taken likes to talk. In fact, since I'm just a pathetic human she is basically spilling her guts. I'm not a threat to her. She insists you are interfering in her plans, but she doesn't want to harm either of us," he says.

"Well, that's good at least. So what does she want?" "She wants the midnight wolf" he says, and Danica pushes to the surface. Little hands on my face have my body relaxing. "Don't worry mommy. I'm safe. Amethyst will protect me. You'll protect me," she says. I press a kiss on her forehead. "Thank you, sweet pea." She lies back down next to me enjoying her cartoons like nothing happened.

"The witch's name is Cassandra, Olivia. The witch my father thought saved him from the council is the reason all the Lycans died. She was responsible for the attack," he says. My head is spinning. None of this makes sense. Before I can ask him what else she said, the link is cut.

Someone must have walked in and he didn't want them to know he could link. At least that is what I tell myself. I know he isn't hurt or worse because I would feel it. Our bond is strong and blazing like a flame. I won't lose him or Della. I say a silent prayer to the goddess to keep him safe and return him to me soon.

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[1,842 words]

Olivia POV

I wish I could say I had a peaceful sleep, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. Sleeping without Ace is impossible. I kept waking up and reaching for him. Della slept with me last night and is still snoring next to me now. I press a kiss on her forehead after brushing the curls off her cheek. I throw the blankets off and grab my clothes before heading into the bathroom. Once I'm inside, I adjust the shower and step around the hot spray.

My mind is still reeling over everything that Ace told me last night. How could one witch wipe out the Lycans? She had to have help. The question is, was it the council or some unknown Alpha? Hell, was it someone or something we know nothing about? Maybe I should go to Hudson and tell him what's happening. I know he said that he had to remain inside the barrier, but knowing she was the one that betrayed him is that even true.

Della's voice startles me. I cover myself with a towel that is hanging nearby. "Sweet pea, you scared mommy. Did you need something?" "Amethyst says we should go see grandpa today. I didn't even know I had a grandpa. Can we mommy," she asks. I guess Amethyst answered my question. I should let Ace know before I take our daughter to meet him. I take the chance that he'll be alone and nudge our bond.

When I meet resistance, I don't try again. I know Ace trusts my judgment and I think going to Hudson is what we need to do right now. I step out of the shower after wrapping the towel around myself. "Let's get dressed and go talk to Uncle Connor and Aunt Becca before we go see your grandpa."

I grab her clothes, and she dresses quickly in a pair of leggings and a flowered t-shirt. I do the same for myself, wearing comfortable clothes. I take her hand; leading her to Connor's office. When we reach the hallway, my steps falter when I see Miranda and Xavier standing close to each other at the end of the hallway.

A feeling of unease washes over me. He wouldn't do that to Evelyn, would he? Xavier notices us first. He walks toward us with Miranda following behind him. "Oli, is everything alright" he asks. Something feels off.

He hasn't called me Oli since I warned him when we first met that only my family called me Oli. He has always respected at least that request. "Oli, I was worried when I hadn't heard from you. It is important that we spend time together before the pup is born," Miranda says.

Danica is growling in my mind. "Both of them are hiding something." The power bristles along my skin, making my heart race. "I'm sorry everything is a little crazy right now. Besides, Evelyn has a few months before she delivers. She is only a little over two months along." "Werewolves aren't like humans, Oli. Wolf pregnancies only last around five months and with Alpha pups it could be even sooner," Xavier says.

I'm sure there is a look of shock on my face. Becca and I never discussed pregnancy when she gave me my crash course on being a wolf. "I hadn't realized that our pregnancies are so much shorter than humans." "Well, they are Oli and you need to take this seriously. You are the pup's guardian wolf. You need to be prepared when the pup is born. Miranda came all this way. You need to make time to spend with her. I'm sure your mate can take care of the pup," Xavier says.

I notice something flash in Miranda's eyes as she steps closer to Xavier. "Xavier, it's fine. Oli is right. We have time and it's not like Evelyn is having the pup tomorrow." Miranda pulls something from her pocket and offers it to me. It's a necklace with a large pink stone. I take it in my hand but make no move to put it on.

"This is a locator stone. I want you to wear this. It will allow me to come to you when you call out to me" she says. "Don't you dare to put that f**king necklace on. Something isn't right Oli. Last time she was here I felt no deceit, but right now my wolfie senses are screaming at me. I know you can feel it too," Danica says. She's right. I do feel it like spiders crawling on my skin.

"I really appreciate that Miranda. I'm not much of a jewelry wearer, but if I leave the pack I'll make sure I put it on." "Don't be ridiculous Oli put it on now. This isn't about fashion. It is for your safety. Do you know what it would do to your mother if something happened to you," Xavier asks.

Miranda places her hand on his arm and I find myself angry on Evelyn's behalf. A low growl escapes me and Miranda immediately drops her hand to her side. My eyes move between her and Xavier. A hundred questions flit through my mind but the one that is playing on repeat is did Xavier only find and mate my mother to create the midnight wolf. I'm not that angry child that wouldn't care if she suffered anymore. I don't want that for her. I hope to the goddess I'm wrong.

"It's fine Oli, as long as you wear it when you leave the pack" she says. "Of course, now I'm sure you have important things to take care of and Xavier needs to check on—his pregnant mate." I try to keep the accusatory tone from my voice but I fail miserably. "Oli, I think you are misunderstanding my relationship with Xavier" Miranda says. "I hope so because I'd hate to see my pregnant mother betrayed by her fated mate."

"Don't be ridiculous. I love your mother. I would never betray her. She is only here for you, Oli." "That's a big fat f**king lie," Danica says. I fight the urge to say what Danica just said in my head. I simply nod, and they turn walking down the hall toward the stairs. I quickly knock on Connor's office door and push it open before he tells me to come in. Both Connor and Becca's eyes snap to mine. Connor's eyes are black until he sees it's me.

He is on his feet and rounding his desk to come to stand in front of me. "Oli, what's wrong," he asks, looking between me and Della. "Is Ace alright," he asks. "Yes, Ace is

fine. Connor have you seen Miranda and Xavier interact?” “Yes, why” he asks. “I just saw them in the hallway and I swear they were too close for my comfort.”

“What do you mean” he asks and his eyes darken. “I mean they were standing very close at the end of the hallway where I’m sure they thought no one would see.”

Before I can stop him, Connor’s eyes glaze over. When he cuts the link, confusion and disgust mar his face.

“Oli, didn’t you say you just saw Xavier and Miranda in the hallway before you stepped into my office?” “Yes, why do you look like you’re about to throw up?” Connor reaches out, covering Della’s ears before he whispers. “Xavier couldn’t have been in the hallway, Oli. I just interrupted mom and him having,” he says, making big eyes at me. My heart starts to pound against my chest. I knew something felt off.

“So if Xavier is with mom, then who the hell was with, Miranda?” “Could you feel anything with your powers,” Becca asks. “Yes but the only thing that was a lie was when the fake Xavier said he would never betray Evelyn.” Connor growls and goes to step toward the door. I quickly grab his arm.

“No, I don’t know who the hell that was or what they have planned, but they want me to believe that was Xavier. I need to talk to Hudson. I need you to talk to Evelyn and Xavier.” He goes to open his mouth, but I raise my hand to cut him off. “You don’t need to tell them everything, but I don’t want her seeing the fake Xavier cozying up with Miranda and losing the pup. Even if she can’t feel the pain, seeing with her own eyes, might have her ability to reason fly out the window.”

“What if I just insist that Xavier stay with mom at all times? I’ll tell him there is a threat to her, and I’ll have a guard assigned to them. I don’t trust Xavier not to fly off the handle about Miranda’s betrayal” he says. “Fine, just ensure that Evelyn and the pup are safe.” A smile spreads across his face, but I ignore it. Evelyn and I may not have the relationship we once had, but I don’t want to see anything happen to her or our sibling.

“I’ll accompany you to meet with Hudson,” he says. “No, you can’t. Only Lycan’s can pass through the barrier.” “If that’s true, then how did you get through?” “Ace’s blood runs through my veins. I promise you I’ll be fine. I’ll link you before I step through the barrier.” He pulls me into his arms and hugs me tight. Then he bends down and does the same to Della. Becca hugs us both next. I turn to leave when I remember the necklace.

I explained to them what Miranda said about it and I could see Connor was ready to smash it under his boot. “No, lock it away. I have no idea what magic it truly holds or if she’ll be alerted if it breaks.” He nods taking it from my hand. I lead Della outside and down to my car. Once she is strapped into her seat, I slide into mine. When the car passes through the gates, I pull out onto the main road. If I didn’t know better I would think I had made this drive a hundred times. It’s like the place is calling to me.

When we pull off the road in the same place we did last time, I smile to see Liam from between the trees.

How did he know we were coming? “Amethyst told him. She can talk to his Lycan,” Della says, answering the question I hadn’t voiced. I step out and unstrap her. When we come around the car, Liam looks like he can’t believe his eyes.

“She is beautiful. She looks like Lorraine. She is yours and Ace’s pup?” “She is. Della, this is Liam. Liam, this is my daughter Della.” He reaches out, and she places her little hand in his. “He is going to lose his mind. I

didn’t tell him she reached out to my beast. He has no idea she exists,” he says. “Well, let’s go introduce her to her grandpa.”

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[1,699 words]

Hudson POV

I can’t imagine why the hell Liam just ran out of here like his a** was on fire. We were in the middle of a conversation about Ace returning and he jumped out his chair and took off. I retake my seat back behind my desk expecting him to return any minute. A knock on the office door has me sitting back in my chair.

When the door opens a little girl steps inside followed by Olivia. My heart starts to race. I study the little girl’s features and I can see bits of my mate Lorraine in her features. I fight the tears that threaten to fall as I stand moving around my desk.

“Hudson, this is your granddaughter Della. Della this is your grandpa,” Olivia says. Her words break the dam and the tears flow down my cheeks. The little one moves toward me. When she comes to stand in front of me she reaches her hands up to me. My beast whimpers as I reach down and scoop her up in my arms.

The minute she is in my arms I feel whole once again. I’ve had this dull ache ever since I lost Lorraine. It became part of me but now having Ace and Della the hole that was left behind by my broken bond has been filled. “Where is your daddy?” “Liam do you think that you can take Della to get a snack while I talk with Hudson” Olivia says.

I didn’t even realize that Liam had stepped into the office. “Of course, my queen” he says. I smile at the surprise on Olivia’s face. She will be queen if Ace takes his rightful place some day. I reluctantly set Della on her feet. “It’s alright grandpa. Now that I know about you we can spend lots of time together” Della says. Warmth spreads throughout

my chest hearing this precious little girl call me grandpa. I missed out on seeing my own pup grow up but I refuse to let the same thing happen with Della. Liam takes her hand and they close the door behind them.

“Thank you, Olivia. I never thought I would find Ace but to know that not only do I have a son but a granddaughter has given me a new sense of purpose. I am also grateful to have a daughter.” She smiles and I’m so glad that Ace found her. “Of course, Hudson. She was excited to meet you. I promise you can spend more time with her before we head back to the pack but I needed to speak to you first” she says.

A feeling of unease washes over Waylen and I. I’ve noticed that he has gained so much of his strength back since we’ve met Ace. Now he is at the front of my mind wanting to hear every word Olivia has to say. “Of course, what did you need to speak to me about?” “I’m not even sure where to begin” she says. “Take your time and let your wolf lead you.”

“I had rejected Ace because he was married when I realized he was meant to be mine.” I try to keep the look of shock and anger from my face. When Ace and Olivia were here together I could see how much she loved him so I knew she had her reasons. “Della’s biological mother left Ace and Della a year ago. My brother is the Alpha of the pack we live in. When I returned for his Alpha ceremony Ace and I found each other again,” she says.

“This time there was nothing stopping us from accepting our bond. I found out shortly after that my wolf was special.” I look at her confused. “I am a guardian wolf.” My heart starts to race again. The only time a guardian wolf is born is to protect a midnight wolf. I look at the door my granddaughter just walked through before I look back at Olivia. She nods confirming my fear. Della is the midnight wolf.

“Have you spoken with her beast?” “We have. Her name is Amethyst.” “Does anyone else know of her existence?” “Yes, only people we trust. My brother and sister in law and the Beta and Beta Female of our pack. They are our family and I trust them with my life,” she says. “Even people you think you can trust can betray you Olivia. You need to keep her wolf a secret for as long as you can.” “That’s actually why we are here, Hudson. Someone you trusted has betrayed you” she says.

My body bristles at her words. None of the men here would betray me. They have been the only family I have had for the last thirty years. I trust these beasts with my life. I’m just about to tell her that isn’t possible when she speaks again. “Cassandra the witch you spoke about betrayed you Hudson.”

Now I’m even more confused. “Olivia, Cassandra died. I watched rogue vampires bleed her dry. There was nothing I could do trapped behind the barrier. I hated myself for a long time for failing her but I promise you Cassandra is very much dead.”

“Hudson, I am sure that you did see what she wanted you to see but I promise you she is very much alive. In fact she is so alive she is holding Ace prisoner as we speak,” she says. I can’t stop the growl that escapes me. I stand to my feet Waylen trying to take control. “My son is in danger. Why are we hear talking if your mate is in danger” I ask, harsher than I mean too. Despite my anger Olivia smiles at me.

“Ace allowed himself to be taken. We knew the vampires attack had something to do with the midnight wolf but Ace was hoping to get more information by allowing them to kidnap him. Believe me I wasn’t happy at first but I trust Ace and Ryker,” she says. “What does any of this have to do with Cassandra being alive?”

“When I was able to talk to Ace last night he told me that the person who was pulling the strings was Cassandra,” she says.

“That could be a coincidence. I’m sure there is more than one witch named Cassandra in our world.” “I know you don’t want to believe this Hudson but I promise you its the same Cassandra. She has no idea that Ace is a Lycan. She apparently likes to talk and because she thinks that Ace is human and not a threat, she is talking a lot” she says. Could this really be the same Cassandra? What could she have possibly gained by killing the Lycans?

I see sadness in Olivia’s eyes that makes unease wash over me. “She wanted you to choose her Hudson. Not because she loved you but because she thought your mating would result in creating the midnight wolf. She wants to have control over the midnight wolf. When you refused her she decided to take matters into her own hands. We have no idea who else is involved but she is the one that killed the Lycans. Ace isn’t sure yet if she had help but she is the reason that Ryker was dormant for so long,” she says.

The spell she put on Lorraine to protect our child. It wasn’t for protection. I can feel my claws extending and Waylen wants blood. “Hudson, I need you to calm down. You need to know everything” she says. I take some deep breaths and sit back in my chair. I nod signaling for her to continue. “Not only did Cassandra spell Ace to keep his Lycan dormant but she planted a spell of disease inside Lorraine. It was what ultimately took her life. In the human world we would call the disease cancer.”

This time I can’t stop Waylen when he pushes forward. We shift and stand to our full height. “Where are they holding my son?” In this moment I don’t care if the council comes for me. I will help my son. If this truly is Cassandra he is underestimating her powers. The words a mix of mine and Waylen’s voice. “We aren’t sure yet. Ace is in control right now Hudson. Believe me it’s making my skin itch to not know where my mate is but we have to trust him.” Waylen turns picking up the chair from behind us and chucks it at the wall.

It doesn’t take long for Liam and my other men to rush inside. When Della steps inside behind them I expect her to be scared of Waylen but instead she moves to step past

Liam. When he reaches out to stop her Waylen growls. "Waylen won't hurt me. Amethyst said he is a good beast" Della says. "What does she mean Waylen?"

"Our granddaughter is truly the midnight wolf. Her wolf can talk to any beast. She told me how much she loves us already. I can feel our connection to her. I believe Olivia, Hudson. I know you have lived with the guilt over Cassandras death all these years and you don't want to believe she would betray us, but she has" Waylen says. The feeling of a small hand on Waylen's hairy leg has him bending down to Della's level. She grips the side of his snout before placing a kiss on his nose.

My big bad beast nuzzles our granddaughter and I smile. When he stands back up Della is in his arms. "I think the question now Hudson is do we continue to hide here like a scared animal or do we deal with the evil b**ch that betrayed us and all those that helped her," Waylen says.

"It's time to leave this place grandpa" a voice similar to Della's says in our mind. I look at my granddaughter through Waylen's eyes and she smiles. "It looks like we will be leaving this prison and finding witch that put us here. She better pray Ryker kills her first because if I get my hands on her she will wish for death."

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[1,748 words]

Ace POV

That pr*ck hasn't left the room since he returned last night. When I felt Olivia nudging our bond this morning, I wanted desperately to reassure her that I was fine, but I knew he would notice. He kept looking at me like I was his next meal. I have no idea how often vampires feed because I haven't spent any time with their kind, but I imagine they need to drink at least daily. I look toward Nicholas and the whites of his eyes are turning pink.

"I know we are trying to wait this out, Ace, but if that blood sucker even shows me a fang, I'm shifting and ripping out his neck," Ryker growls. I can't answer, but I totally agree. "You are so quiet Ace. I thought you would have lots of questions," he says. I don't respond, but he keeps going. "You know I envy you. First, you graduate at the top of our class. Then you end up mated to the guardian wolf. Not just any guardian but a f**king hot one. That Olivia, she is a fine piece of a**. I'm hoping before all this is said and done I'll get to at least have a taste," he says, bearing his fangs at me.

Ryker has had enough and is just about to take control when the door to the room opens and Cassandra steps inside. She looks at Nicholas and she immediately steps toward him. "Pet, why didn't you call for me.

You are minutes away from the thirst taking control," she says as she comes to stand in front of him.

"I didn't want to disappoint you, mistress," he says. She lifts her arm toward his mouth and lust swirls in his eyes. He grips her wrist, pulling it to his mouth. I swear to the goddess, it's like they have forgotten I'm here. I'm not sure what I expected, but when he bites down on her wrist, and she reaches for his c**k, I turn away from them. I have no desire to watch their f**ked up show.

A few seconds later their moans and grunts fill the room. "I don't mind if you watch Ace. I've never f**ked a human. I wouldn't mind letting you join us," Cassandra says. I make no move to respond to her disgusting proposition. It doesn't take long for them both to scream out each other's names and I fight the bile that rises in my throat.

"That felt so good, mistress," Nicholas praises her. "You did well, my pet, but next time you feed before the thirst takes over. I can't have you killing our guest" she says. "As if he could kill us. I would rip his throat out before he got one hit in," Ryker says. I smile, knowing my beast is right. "Now go, so I can speak to Ace alone," Cassandra says.

When the door clicks shut, I turn around and regret not waiting. Cassandra is standing completely naked and smiling at me. I quickly turn away. If she thinks her body affects me, it doesn't. There is only one woman that my body responds to and that will never change. "You don't have to be so shy, Ace. I still have a beautiful body even after all these years. Why don't you turn around and take a good look? It can be our little secret," she says.

"What are you a pervert? Next you'll be offering me candy to get into your van. I'm good I'll pass. Your body couldn't compare to Olivia's." She screeches and things slam behind me, but I make no move to turn around.

"You would do well to remember what I'm capable of Ace. Maybe I should give you a little of the potion I've given Nicholas. How would Olivia feel about you betraying her? You would probably lose your little mate when she felt the first pain as you thrust your c**k deep inside me," she says.

"It will never happen, Cassandra. You'll just have to use your f**boy. Besides, weren't you the one that said you wouldn't hurt Olivia." "I'm not going to continue this conversation with your back toward me. Turn to face me like a grown man and stop acting like a child, I'm dressed," she says. I turn and, thankfully, she isn't lying. She is wearing a long flowy dress. "I said I needed her alive. I never said I needed her happy. Actually I'm quite irritated with her at the moment," she says.

My heart starts to race and Ryker is pacing. Her words are like a cold bucket of water. I would rather die than betray Olivia. "No one is betraying our mate. We are not human or a weak vampire, Ace" Ryker says. His words ease the fear that threatens to overwhelm me. "Why would you be irritated with Olivia?"

"I've given her a special gift and she isn't wearing it. I fear she is smarter than I've given her credit for. So I think she deserves a little bit of punishment for being an ungrateful b**ch," she says. Before I can ask her what she had planned, she appears in front of me. A pink mist envelops me. "Ryker, what the hell is happening," I ask before my head becomes foggy and darkness takes me under.

I'm not sure how much time passes or what the hell happened when I feel someone shaking my shoulders.

"Ace, babe, wake up. I swear you are going to sleep the whole day." I force my eyes open and confusion swamps me. Where the hell am I? This place doesn't look familiar, but the woman looming over me is very familiar.

"Olivia" I whisper. "Of course, it's me. Who the hell else would be waking you up," she asks. "No one. Where the hell are we and where is Della?" "Ace, you promised me these few days would just be about us. Della is safe in the pack. She'll be fine without us for a few days. She can't always be with us," she says, placing her hand on my cheek. I wait for the familiar tingles to erupt on my skin, but they never come.

What the f**k is happening right now? My mind feels so foggy, and our bond feels weak. I try to remember what brought us here and why Olivia would want to be away from Della? That's not Olivia. She loves our daughter as much as she loves me. Her hand begins to move down my neck to my chest. I wait for the feeling of need to flare inside me, but instead, all I can focus on is the fact that I feel nothing.

I'm missing something. A piece of me that's important. Her hand continues to trail down my stomach until she reaches the top of my sleep pants. My hand moves of its own accord, stopping her before she dips her hand under the waistband. Her eyes meet mine and I know without a shadow of a doubt this isn't right. "What the hell Ace? You don't want me. Fine, I'll go find someone that will," she says, hopping off the bed.

I should be angry at her declaration, but I feel nothing but relief to see her leave. What the hell is wrong with me? Olivia is my mate. I roll off the bed and move toward the door that I assume is the bathroom. When I step inside, I quickly use the bathroom before I come to stand in front of the mirror. I stare at myself feeling empty. What the f**k is wrong with me? I don't know, but I need to figure it out before Olivia comes back.

Hudson POV

"Hudson, are you sure about this? What if the council was part of this? What if they can sense you outside the barrier," she asks, her voice laced with worry. round the desk

and pull her into a hug. I always wondered what it would have been like if none of this had happened. If I could have convinced Lorraine to accept me.

Would we have had more pups? Maybe a daughter like Olivia. She seems so strong and capable. Knowing how much she loves my son makes me so happy.

“We can’t hide anymore, Olivia. I refuse to allow that witch to steal anymore from me than she already has. If the council comes for us, then we will fight. If you are worried that we will put the pack at risk,” I start to say, but she cuts me off. “No, I’m not worried about that at all. I know my brother and he is an amazing Alpha. If the council is shady, he will never let it slide. He will stand with you, Hudson,” she says.

I press a kiss on the top of her head and take a step back. “I can’t tell you how happy it makes me that Ace found you, Olivia.” “Me too” she says. I take one last look around the place that has been our prison for the last three decades. Della grabs my hand as we make our way down the stairs and stalk toward the barrier. My heart races as the closer we come. I’m just about to pass through when Della tugs my hand.

I look down and smile at her. “Grandpa Amethyst wants to talk to you. Can you pick us up,” Della asks. “Of course, sweet girl.” I scoop her up and her eyes change to a purple color I’ve never seen. The last midnight wolf was born far before me. “Hello grandpa. I know you’re scared and worried, but our family will protect you just as you will protect us,” she says before she presses her forehead against mine.

I realize immediately she is accepting our familial bond. I had hoped it would happen when she truly got to know me, but I never expected it to happen so fast. When she pulls back, her smile has warmth spreading through my chest. “You are our family. I will accept your men once I get to know them, but you are our family right now,” she says. Her eyes return to Della’s and she kisses my cheek. I hold her in my arms as I take my first step outside the barrier. I smile looking past the trees that surrounded the house, knowing that everything has changed at this moment.

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