

Chapter 11 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Cassie's POV

I couldn't explain the feeling I had, and I didn't even want to try to put words on it. On one side, I felt extremely powerful and, on the other, very weak.

I felt my entire body stiffen, my muscles tightened, and my mouth dried up like the Sahara Desert.

Before I knew it, or could even react to it, my whole body felt like it was floating, and I was then looking at people I did not know.

"Ouch!" the woman in front of me yelled as she lifted her hand.

"Lia!" a man exclaimed as he rushed to her side.

Lia? Where had I heard that name before?

"Guess I'm not made for cooking," she sighed as she held her hand at chest level while she looked down at the little kid in her who instantly reached out for her hand.

Her little hand rested on the fingers just as a little flick of blue light appeared and disappeared just as fast as it came.

That power looked an awful a lot like when I tried healing myself.

"What was that?" the woman asked, shocked.

"Lia..." the man breathed. "Look at your hand."

Lia? Oh... My...

"Did she just..." she trailed off.

"She did," he answered, sounding just as shocked as she did.

I looked back at the little girl who giggled lightly before resting her head against the chest of her mother and I realized... That little kid had healed her cut finger and not only that... That little girl was me.

With a swooshing sound as if someone had opened a window to let in air while driving super fast, I was back in my own body which was being shaken violently by something.

"What just happened?" Kathleen exclaimed sounding slightly panicked.

“Are you okay?” Hayden questioned at the same time; worry written all over his face.

“I-I don’t know. I’m not really sure,” I said sounding out of breath.

“One minute you were here and the next... Your body just went still, your breathing slowed down and your pulse and heartbeat were so low that I wasn’t sure it was even beating at all!” she almost cried from the backseat, and it was only then that I noticed her shaking hand on my shoulder.

I turned to look at Hayden, who looked as if he was about to pass out. He was clenching the steering wheel so hard that his knuckles turned white and so I leaned over and rested my hand on his, trying to get his grip to loosen up a bit and to make him relax.

“I’m okay,” I assured them both. “But I can’t explain to you what happened,” I said shaking my head. “It was so surreal that I for a second didn’t believe that it was actually happening.”

“I think...” Hayden began slowly, wetting his lips before continuing. “I think it might have something to do with the land.”

“The land?”

“You might not be able to see it, but right ahead is our pack land and your home. I don’t, as I have said before, know how the magic works completely, but I believe that whatever just happened there, had something to do with it or happened because of it.”

“That would make sense,” I mumbled more to myself than anyone else.

“Why?”

“I saw myself...” I trailed off.

“You saw yourself? Like some sort of out-of-body experience or?” Kathleen questioned.

“I guess,” I shrugged. “But I was only a toddler. I didn’t know at first what I was looking at. The woman carrying the baby cut her finger and a man came rushing in... Soon after, the baby grabbed the woman’s hand and a bright blue light erupted just like it does when I heal myself and suddenly the woman’s finger was completely healed...”

“That sounds...”

“Insane,” I finished for her. “But that’s what happened.”

“That was the first day your mom and dad learned about your powers,” Hayden said offering me a small smile as he quickly turned his head to me before focusing back on the road. “We all heard that story. On how the legendary hybrid was discovered.”

“So, the people I saw there?”

“They were your parents,” he nodded, and I felt myself tear up. “Your real parents. And I think this was the land's way of telling you that it remembers.”

I nodded slowly, trying to take it all in, until realization hit me like a brick in the face, startling my entire body.

“Wait, we are here?” I gulped when I remembered that he had almost just told me that my true home, the place I belonged, the place I was taken from, was right up ahead.

“We are.”

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Cassie's POV

It was with hesitant steps that I got out of the car. I focused so much on the green field ahead of me that the sound of two car doors slamming behind me barely met my ear.

I couldn't explain what I was seeing or hearing for that matter. In front of me was a barrier barely visible to the eye, but if one focused enough, you could see the light shimmer of it, all the way from where I was standing and down the line of the grass to both my sides. The sound was... Like someone calling me but without any words. It was more of a gush of wind than it was a voice.

It was... scary, yet mesmerizing.

It wasn't until Hayden stepped up next to me and put his hand on my shoulder that I remembered I wasn't alone.

“Are you ready?” he asked me.

I looked up at him, seeing his soft and loving eyes, and that gave me the courage to nod.

“You should go over first,” he said.

“Why?”

“If we walk in together, I don't know if she will sense you right away,” he explained. “don't worry. We will both be right behind you.”

I watched as he took a step back before I turned my attention back to the barrier. I very slowly and carefully lifted my hand as if to touch it, but the second I met it a shockwave went through me, and my hand went right through it.

And for the first time, I was able to see everything so clearly. The great land, the green grass, and what I would assume was the packhouse, if it could even be called that. It looked like more of a castle to me. In the distance, I could hear children laughing, people chattering and the sound of someone coming straight at me.

Talia's POV

"Mom?" Dani's voice rang through the hall.

"In here," I yelled back as I put another box down.

Her footsteps came closer and closer until I could sense her right behind me.

"What are you doing?" she questioned with a weird look on her face.

"Oh, uhm," I mumbled, not knowing what to answer. "Just packing away some stuff."

"Is that..." she trailed off.

"Your sisters' things, yes," I admitted with a sigh. "I... You must not think that this means that I am done looking for her, that any of us are, but I-I can't keep looking at this when I can't look at her. It's about time to pack it down."

"Mom..."

"It's okay," I assured her, waving my hand around like a maniac.

But in reality, I knew that it wasn't, and judging by the look that she was now giving me, she knew it too. But it was too painful. I had longed for her for so long. We had done multiple searches, not just within these lands but even across state lines, and not once did her scent appear. I knew it probably had something to do with her power, but still, we should at least have been able to sense her somehow.

"You don't have to, you know."

"I know," I smiled weakly. "But it's for the best. For all of us."

For so long I had been waiting for good news. I had been waiting to see someone walk through the door with her in their arms or for someone to come and tell me that she was dead.

A mom's worst nightmare had become my reality and my life for so many years and it had put a toll on my family, on my pack. I couldn't allow that anymore.

I would never stop looking for her, but in order to minimize my pain, I had to at least try and move forward, even if it was just a little.

“This is not something you should carry alone mom,” she sighed. “It is as much my fault as it-“

“Don’t you dare say it. Don’t you dare tell me that you are at fault here because, Dani, you aren’t!” I argued. “I know that you have felt like that ever since that day and I hear you cry yourself to sleep some nights when the search party had come back home empty-handed... But it is not and will never be your fault!”

“I know you say that, but I could have done something.”

“You were a kid,” I scoffed. “you did the right thing.”

I walked to her and put my hands on her shoulders before pulling her into a hug.

“I couldn’t have survived if I had lost you too,” I whispered. “And besides...”

I was cut off by a feeling I hadn’t felt in a while. A familiar yet strange sensation ran through my body, and I stiffened.

“Mom?” Dani asked worried as she pulled away from me. “What’s wrong?”

“Someone... The border,” I said confused.

“Who? Is dad home again?”

I had so long waited to feel this. So long that I was now questioning whether this was real or not.

“Mom? Do I need to call the guards?”

“No,” I said shaking my head and wriggled out of her grip before I bolted for the doors.

Even if this was my mind playing tricks on me, I had to see for myself.

“Wow! Lia, why are you in such a rush?” Ky called as I nearly ran him over in the process.

I didn’t have time to answer, I just kept running.

I ran through the halls so fast that I with every turn, forgot just how slippery the floor could be, but I didn’t care. I needed to know and once I reached the grass area outside, where the wind was coming from the direction of the border, I did. I knew.

I only stopped for a brief second as I took a deep breath before I once again bolted ahead and as I got closer to the border line, I could sense yet two more presences, but only one of them was my priority.

I came to a quick halt when the small silhouette came into view. Her small frame, her golden hair the same as back then, but longer, and once she felt me, she looked up and our eyes met. Her beautiful blue eyes that I thought I would never see again.

“Hi,” she said, sounding so shy and so very nervous.

“Hi,” I said back, my voice cracking as I fought so hard to hold back my tears.

Cassie’s POV

I could sense her, or it was more sensing myself from somewhere other than my own body. It was strange and not something I had ever felt before and when I looked up, there she was, only a few feet away.

“Hi,” I said trying to hide my nervousness, but failing miserably.

“Hi,” she said back in the same tone, but her voice cracked in the process.

I was fighting to hold back my tears as I watched the woman in front of me tear up. A woman who was my mom.

She took a small step forward, as did I until we were right in front of each other. She raised her hand slowly but stopped mid-motion and put it back down. I could see the hesitation on her face along with the hurt and longing and so, without giving it much thought, I launched forward and into her arms, which she opened wide for me when she noticed me moving.

She released a choked cry as she held me tight while we sank towards the ground.

“Mom?” someone breathed from behind her. “What is going on?”

I looked up at her and once her very confused eyes met mine, her mouth opened as a shocked expression spread across her face and she too sank to her knees.

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Cassie’s POV

I could hear the shuffling of feet around us, the grass shifting slightly underneath the weight. I could feel the warmth from my mom’s shaking arms as her crying turned into light sobbing.

My eyes were closed, pressed shut as hard as I could, scared that if I opened them, everything in front of me would disappear like when waking up from a really good dream.

I hadn't noticed I was crying myself until a light touch wiped the tears away from the side. I didn't have to open my eyes to find out who was crouching beside me. The touch from my mate was not to confuse with any other.

"Hayden?" she sniffled, and I opened my eyes just as she lifted her head to look at him. "You?"

"Technically she found me," he chuckled. "I only brought her here."

She focused her eyes on me while her hands traveled to my cheeks. She held my face in her hands for I don't even know how long before she took a deep shaky breath.

"I have so many questions," she admitted. "I know you're probably tired from the trip but..." she trailed off and I could see the uncertainty spray across her face.

"I'm not that tired," I lied with a shrug.

The fact was that I was indeed tired, but I had just as many questions as I guessed she had, and I also didn't want to part with her already. I was still scared that this was one of those dreams that were too good to be true and that with one wrong move, it would all dissolve.

"Should we maybe go inside?" she asked in a small voice, and it was then I understood that she was just as nervous as I was.

I nodded slowly and let Hayden take my hand in order to pull me from the grass and just as I had gotten to my feet, my mom took my other hand with a small insecure smile before she guided me over the field with Kathleen right in my tracks.

The place was taken straight out of a fairytale. Small houses could be seen around and in between the big oak trees and the bushes filled with flowers that led up to what I assumed was the packhouse but in a bigger version than what I was used to. The entire place was beautiful and obviously well taken care of, but I wouldn't have expected less from the Royal pack.

The further ahead we got, the more people came out with a wondering look on their faces, even the guards stopped in the middle of their rounds to look. Not that I blamed them. After all, their Luna was, with tears in her eyes, showing two complete strangers around their pack lands.

Or, I wasn't a complete stranger, but most of these people probably couldn't remember me.

"So down here we have the side houses connected to the main house where the beta and gamma live with their families," she explained as we walked past. "And behind

those, we have the family houses for everyone else, along with a pond, a playground, and our main gym.”

“You have more than one?” I asked.

“Yes, we have one for the younger wolves and one for the warriors,” she smiled. “We learned rather quickly that the younger ones would like to join, but training with the warriors is something else than training your wolf. They needed their own space to do that, so we established it for them a few years back.”

“And it turned out to be rather resourceful,” Hayden chipped in.

“Especially for you,” she laughed. “Hayden is the one in charge of training the pups,” she explained. “And he is also helping your brother out with the warriors from time to time.”

“My brother?”

“Lucas,” she smiled warmly. “He is not here right now. He is with your dad out on a mission along with a few warriors. They should be back either tomorrow or the day after and they will be so thrilled to see you, stunned even.”

“Oh,” was all I said.

I remembered that Hayden had mentioned a girl and a guy before we got here. Lucas and... Dani? If this Lucas was my brother, then was the girl behind me Dani, and what exactly was she to me?

Before I could continue my thought or even ask about it, my mom spoke.

“This way,” she guided us as we walked through the doors of the packhouse. “This is the packhouse. The basement along with the first floor belongs to everyone. Down there is the kitchen and a huge dining room along with a ballroom to the right. We use it for special events and gatherings. In the basement is the bar area and a place for people to hang out, as you young folks call it. The second and third floors along with the attic belong to us,” she said as she pointed up the stairs. “We use the extra rooms we have for when another pack’s alpha and Luna visits.”

“Does that happen often?”

“At least once a month,” she shrugged. “We have a lot of friends and got a lot of new allies over the years. Allies that later turned into unbreakable bonds.”

“It’s so...” I trailed off looking for the right word as I eyed everything around me.
“Homey.”

“Well, it is your home after all,” she said with a nervous little laugh. “Are you hungry? We can go to the office, and I’ll have some food and water brought up if you’d like? Then I can have someone prep your room while we talk,” she offered.

“That would be nice.”

I offered her a smile in return, not so much because I felt the need to smile or even wanted to, but more to settle her. Her anxiety could be felt all over just like I assumed my own could. It laid over us like a thick cloud, almost suffocating us. I needed to at least try and ease her now when I couldn’t ease myself.

We all followed her as she continued up the stairs to the first floor where she took a sharp left and opened a giant wooden door, revealing the biggest office I had ever seen. Normally there would be one desk with one chair, but here there was a desk going from wall to wall with two chairs.

“This is where both your dad and I take care of pack business,” she explained when she noticed my confused look.

“At home...” I stopped speaking and quickly changed my wording when I noticed how my mom tensed at the word home. “Where I lived before, I was used to the Luna not really having a say,” I muttered under my breath.

“Not many do it the way we do, but still, in many packs, the Luna definitely has a say. Only those who live off of their power would take the power away from their equal,” she breathed. “It’s not common, thank you god, but it happens.”

“My... I mean Killian used to do that a lot.”

“Killian?” she questioned with narrow eyes. “He... He is the one who took you?”

I could see the pain in her eyes, hell I could feel it in my bones. The very same pain I felt. She grabbed the back of the chair as she stared out the window, waiting for me to answer. Both Kathleen, Hayden, and the girl from before had gone silent behind me.

“I don’t know who took me,” I said as I scratched the back of my neck. “To be honest, I haven’t learned much yet about how it all happened or who was at fault. When I found out... When I found out that I didn’t belong there, that all they wanted was my power, I just simply left,” I shrugged not really knowing what else to say.

“You fled because you were being chased,” Kathleen’s voice spoke, breaking the silence and speaking some of the words I couldn’t. “And where you may not know much about it, I learned a little.”

“What do you mean?” both my mom, Hayden, and I asked at the same time.

“I never fully understood what it was about, but my father kept these letters from one of our ally packs. I found them one day and as much as I ended up regretting reading them back then, I sure do not regret it now. In it, my father talked about a great power that Alpha Killian would soon get his hands on. He mentioned something about a necklace and a ring if I remember correctly, not that it made much sense to me.”

At the mentioning of it, my mom’s hand flew to her necklace and a gasp left her lips.

“What?”

“There is a lot you have to learn about your past, your inheritance and the role you will one day get and one of them is about the royal jewelry, the jewelry passed down from the moon goddess herself,” she muttered. “Many believe them to be a legend, as they believe both you and your brother to be a legend too, I will get to that later on,” she said quickly when she saw my interest. “However, the Luna queen has a necklace, the alpha king, a ring. Separately, they only show your status to the world, but together...” she trailed off shaking her head. “Together, and with enough strength from the one trying, they can, with a ritual, strip a dying alpha of his powers and store those powers in the ring, for whoever is wearing it, to use at free will. And the worst part... There is no limit to how much power it can store.”

“So, if Killian got his hands on both the ring and the necklace and were to kill an alpha after doing the ritual?”

“That Alpha’s power would go to him if he were the one to possess the ring,” she nodded. “And every Alpha he would kill after that... Well, he would get those powers too until he would become too strong to stop.”

“But what does that have to do with me? Why take me when all they needed was the jewelry?”

“As I said, you and your brother are very, very special and I don’t just say that as a mom,” she chuckled. “It is said that once every 500 years the royal bloodline will carry hybrids, meaning that not only would the newborn be a werewolf, but have the powers of a witch as well. You were the first to show your powers and, believe me, you had everyone amazed and spellbound and, as it turned out, you were the royal hybrid. Now that was rare enough as it was, but shortly after, Lucas, your brother, showed his powers too. Royal hybrid twins. It had never been heard of before and I knew already then that you would be in great danger if anyone were to find out. So, we tried to keep you safe, to keep you hidden from the world outside without stripping or binding your powers, and as you know... That didn’t work out too well.”

Her voice cracked in the end, her eyes teared up and she ended up turning her back to us once again. I walked to her with slow steps and put my hand on hers that was still resting on the back of the chair.

“It may not have worked out back then,” I whispered. “But I still found my way back home.”

“I failed you...”

The way the sadness in her voice hit me, made me tell her something I had only just realized myself.

“No, I think you were the only thing keeping me sane all those years,” I chuckled, making her whip her head around to look at me, confusion spreading across her face. “I used to have these dreams of a woman and a child and I could never remember the dreams, but I always remembered her and her voice. I used to think of the woman’s voice whenever my dad, I mean Killian, didn’t treat me nicely or whenever I felt alone and the day I shifted I had a flashback to this woman. I saw the child, the child I now know is me. I was scared of the darkness and the woman said-“

“The darkness can be a scary thing,” we said simultaneously.

“But remember that I will be there lighting up the way for you,” she finished. “I remember saying that,” she smiled. “It was one of the last things I ever said to you.”

“It turns out that that woman was you. The voice belonged to you all this time,” I sniffled. “You didn’t fail me. You were actually there when I needed you the most.”

Chapter 14 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Cassie’s / Tatianna’s POV

It had been one hell of a day. We had spent every minute we had been there, talking about everything between land and sky, trying to avoid some of the major topics that we at some point would have to pick up, just not now.

“And that is when you found Hayden?” she questioned before sipping her tea.

“Well, I don’t exactly remember much of it,” I chuckled and frowned when I felt the sudden feeling of regret streaming from my mate’s body.

I turned to him and grabbed his hand.

“Don’t worry. I don’t blame you for it and I am pretty sure that I would have done the same had the roles been reversed,” I cooed.

“What is going on here?” my mom asked, her eyes darting between Hayden and I, with a look that told me she already knew.

“Well, when we met-“

"I thought she was a rogue, so I pounced on her," he mumbled, cutting me off, looking down at the floor.

"What a way to meet your mate, huh?" she laughed.

"You knew?"

"Of course. First of all, I could sense it, and second of all, I noticed how he was capable of calming you down outside," she smiled. "Only one's mate has that special touch that just instantly gives you relief."

I nodded at her response, not that I knew much about it, but it explained a lot. I did feel much calmer with him around and, despite me having met him not long ago, Hayden had my trust, which was not easy to get.

"You will get used to that," Hayden nudged.

"What?"

"To her knowing everything. If there is one thing I have learned over the years, it is that you can't hide a thing from our Luna."

"Well, not only because it is my job to know about everything, but also, the fact that the land here is connected to my very own body makes it quite hard to hide anything in general," she smiled, but the smile did not reach her eyes and I knew why and, so, before I could stop myself the words had already left my mouth.

"Then how did you not know back then?"

The silence filled the room, and I was pretty sure that even without our werewolf hearing, we would have been able to hear a pin drop had that been the case.

"Excuse me?"

"You say that you are connected to the land, and I know that you felt me when I stepped foot over the border, so why..." I shook my head as I tried to choke down the tears that welled up in my eyes. "Why were you too late?"

I regretted everything that I said the moment that I did, but looking around this place, the big rooms filled with expensive furniture, the pictures nicely put in frames on the walls showing off every single family member but me, and the way that every pack member showed love to one another... It was all just too much, and it was all something that should have been mine, that would have been mine had I not been taken away, and even though my anger was towards my old pack, my fath... Killian, I couldn't help but let some of that anger out now.

No one said anything. They barely even looked my way, as no one knew what to truly say. Because the fact was that she and everyone else were too late to save me back then and, despite the fact that I knew that they to this day still looked for me, I couldn't help but feel let down in some way.

"I tried," she whispered. "We all did, but once they had you, they made you use your power, and every single trace of both you and them disappeared as if neither of you had ever been there."

"I know about my power. I have learned a lot about my powers over the years," I said as I stood up, making the chair behind me shriek as it was pushed slightly across the floor. "Every day, beaten half to death, forcing myself to heal after trying to force my powers out so they could benefit the ones I saw as parents. Powers that I did not know how to control, and I can with absolute certainty tell you, that my powers didn't fully work until now and even now I still can't control them fully, so why... Why couldn't you find me before when my powers stopped cloaking me? Why did I have to lose my family and why was I the one who had to be tormented and bullied day after day after day..."

"Tatiana..."

"I need to go for a walk," I interrupted. "Alone," I added, when I felt Hayden get up beside me.

And with that, I left the room, everyone's eyes on my back as I did.

I knew I screwed up. On the first day back with my family and I just flipped out on the very few people that weren't to blame for this.

"Good job," I mumbled to myself as I made my way downstairs. "Well fucking done."

I ignored the multiple stares I got as I walked out of the packhouse. I could sense them looking at me, not that they were trying to hide it much anyway and I didn't blame them. The lost princess was finally home after years of imprisonment blah blah big news. So why couldn't I be as happy for myself as those strangers were for me?

I walked straight past everyone and stopped when I reached the green area that we crossed when we first got here. For some reason, the tree on the top appealed to me, and before I knew it, my feet carried me over the mushy grass. I needed a place to breathe; to think, and this was here.

I didn't lie before when I told her that she didn't fail me; when I told her that she was there when I needed her, because she was. In the only way she could, that was. I felt awful for the way I had just spoken to her, for the way I had made it seem like I hated and blamed her despite telling her otherwise, and I hated the fact that I could sense the heaviest sadness over my body when I told Hayden to basically stay put like he was some dog.

Maybe I should have stayed with my other pack. At least back there, I knew what every day would bring me. I knew the people and I could prepare for everything, but here it was all new and I knew nothing about no one and even though I wasn't alone, I, at this moment, felt lonelier than I had ever felt before.

"Tatiana?" a small voice broke behind me.

I turned and looked at the girl who until now had kept quiet. "I'm Dani. I don't know if you remember me at all and I don't know if you want to talk or not and it's totally okay if you don't. I mean if I were you, I don't think I would, but I wouldn't want to be all alone either, so is it maybe okay if I just sit here with you?"

She was right. I didn't remember her at all, however, there was something soothing about her, something comforting, and so I nodded before I once again turned my head and let my gaze run over the green fields in front of me.

Chapter 15 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana's POV

"The sky is so beautiful today, isn't it?" she asked, trying to get me to speak.

But she tried in vain. I was not in the mood for talking, hence why I had walked out to be alone.

So much for that.

"And the tree," she shook her head slightly while a small smile played on her lips. "This tree has been here on the land for ages on and will probably be the last thing remaining here, at least that is what Zaya once told us when we asked if it was a special tree since you would always sit here. Actually, when you could first walk you walked up here and put your hands against it, closed your eyes, and just relaxed. You told us that you could feel its energy flow into the roots, out into the grass and that it called on you that way, so even if we hadn't known already from the pregnancy that you had powers or weren't like the other pups, it would have shown then that you were special."

I opened my mouth but closed it shut when I realized she was succeeding in making me talk, not that I wanted to show her, so I stood my ground and didn't budge. Besides, I wanted to see what else she had to tell, hopefully, something involving who she was. All I knew was her name. I had a slight idea of what her part in the family would be, but I wanted to have her explain it to me. From the moment her eyes collided with mine, I sensed her joy, her excitement, the disbelief, and then the guilt. Her guilt, however, felt worse than my mom's and I wanted to know why.

She chuckled lightly while leaning back against the tree, a deep sigh falling off her lips.

“You know, I get why you feel the way you do. I won’t sit here and tell you that I understand what you’ve been going through or that I understand what you are experiencing right now, but what I will say is that we went through it too. Not in the same way, but we were on the other side of it. You don’t remember it, but everyone here does. Everyone here had to live with the fact that you were gone and they had to remember it, whereas you, luckily, were too young to be given that burden of knowing.”

Her voice was suddenly small, almost as if she was scared to speak. I turned my head slightly as I looked at her from the corner of my eye. Her head was hanging low, her eyes settled on her fidgeting fingers in her lap. The tone of the conversation had shifted and so I straightened myself because I could sense where this was going.

“You don’t remember me, I can see it in your eyes, but I remember you. I-“ she took a deep breath, so deep it almost sounded painful. “I was the one playing with you that day. Both you and your brother. Uncle Ky was there too, thankfully so, because if he hadn’t, the outcome would have been very different.”

“How so?”

I asked even before I registered the words leaving my mouth and I noticed how the corner of her lips twitched upwards a bit.

“It was the day of your fifth birthday. I had just finished wrapping your presents and so I asked mom if I could go out and play with you like we always did.”

Mom? She called her mom. She had called her that too out on the field at the border when we first got here, but I had been too overwhelmed to even take note of it. So, she was my sister.

“Uncle Ky was watching from the distance and at first everything was normal until suddenly it wasn’t. You were further ahead of me while Lucas was right by my side, so when everything went down, I turned and tried to run for you, but Uncle Ky screamed at me to take Lucas and run inside while he ran for you. I didn’t want to leave you, but I did as I was told. I ran straight to mom who told me to take Lucas to my special hiding spot and when I saw them again, I expected to see you there with them. However, as you already know, that wasn’t what happened. Uncle Ky had been overpowered, was severely injured, and had to stay in the pack’s infirmary for a long time, and you...”

“You remember all that?” I asked, feeling a lump forming in my throat.

“Of course. It was the worst day in my life, in all of our lives. I used to sneak out every night to try and find you. Of course, with mom’s powers, I was quickly caught but that didn’t stop me from trying again the day after,” she sighed. “Everyone tried. No one slept for the first month, they barely even ate and every day since that day we have been looking for you. I know you may think we didn’t look hard enough, seeing as you actually weren’t that far gone and that you weren’t cloaked all the time, but you need to

remember too that we couldn't go everywhere. A lot of the land all around belongs to different packs and-

"-And you can't just intrude without the risk of declaring war," I mumbled, knowing the exact consequences of that act.

Seems like I got something good out of being Killian's daughter for all those years after all. Knowledge.

"Exactly," she nodded.

"God, I am an awful daughter, aren't I?"

"No, you are not," she said with a small smile as she reached over and placed her hand on my knee. "You are hurt and have been for a long time. No one blames you for anything."

"I have been here for less than a day and already now my mood has switched five times... I wanted to be understanding. I wanted to not put any pressure on any of you, to not put gasoline on the still-burning flames, and yet I exploded right in her face."

I put my head in my hands while I tried to take a few deep breaths. I could feel my calm slipping away again ever so slowly and I could not have another breakdown now.

"I didn't mean any of it. I didn't mean to make her sad and I especially did not mean to hurt Hayden... He has been so supportive despite only knowing me for a few days and I just dismissed him as if he was nothing... That is not what a mate does," I frowned.

"You did not dismiss him and you are not a bad mate," she huffed. "Hayden is a wonderful guy. I grew up with him, well I kind of grew up with him" she smiled. "That is his story to tell," she added quickly when she noticed my curious stare. "He is patient and understanding, which he will need now that he is your mate, because, in all honesty, the females in our family can at times be a bit much, myself included, and seeing as you look so much like our mother, I think you will turn out to be just like her behavior-wise as well."

I smiled at that thought. I knew we looked alike. The same hair, the same eyes, so why not the same behavior?

"She said that Lucas and dad were away and would be returning soon..."

I let the thought hang in the air for her to pick up.

"And you want to know what they are like?"

"If you don't mind," I shrugged.

“Well, dad is great. He is wonderful in every way. He is the perfect Alpha, and everyone respects and admires him. This pack here has a lot of history, history that you will learn later on when you have settled in properly, but for now, let’s just say that the people here have had it rough in the past and, so, respect and trust are something you have to earn and it, can take a while, but he did as I am sure you will too. Where you look like mom, Lucas looks a lot like dad, but after you were taken, Lucas closed himself off a bit. Or to me he did.”

“He blames you?” I asked shocked.

“He never said it, but I can sense it. I was the elder sister, and I was supposed to protect you, in which I failed miserably.”

“But? You weren’t supposed to protect us? How old were you? Like ten maybe?”

“Eleven,” she chuckled. “And I know that I couldn’t have done anything but get us all either kidnapped or killed, but Lucas, he didn’t see it like that. He, for a long time after, and especially when he got older, tried to explain to us how he felt hollow inside, that he felt...” she trailed off waving her hand around looking for the right phrasing.

“As if he had been ripped away from the one thing that made sense,” I muttered remembering how I felt each and every day while sitting in that small cold corner in the dark room where Killian used to train me.

“Yeah,” she spoke slowly.

“I never knew what I had been ripped away from or what I was missing, so I had a hard time looking for something to fill that emptiness. I just thought that I was lonely,” I shrugged.

“Were you?”

“What?”

Chapter 16 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Shane’s POV

“Still nothing,” Kyle sighed. “We have looked through the whole ground over and over again. It was another dead end, Shane.”

“The rogues mentioned this pack for a reason, so why?”

“To save their own ass from getting killed,” Lucas huffed. “That is why. Nothing else but that and you know it.”

“Lucas,” I warned.

“Rogues will say whatever they can if it will benefit them in any way. I don’t understand why you didn’t just kill them right away,” he sneered.

“Enough!” I yelled. “They were not killing rogues, Lucas, and you know it! They are living without a pack but in peace and are therefore not a danger to any of us! I get why you are frustrated-“

“Do you? Do you really dad? Because if you did, then you would stop now.”

“Stop what?”

“Stop the search, stop the asking around... Just fucking stop everything!”

“You do not speak to me that way, young man!”

“Why do you do this to us? To yourself? This is pure torture. If she was still alive, we would have found her by now.”

“Not if she is cloaked,” Ky pointed out.

“She can’t possibly be cloaking for this long. Another thing you know yet you don’t want to face,” Lucas argued. “I have been training with Zaya herself and not even I can keep my powers up for more than a few days at a time, so how in the world do you think she will be able to do it without the proper training and practice? She is gone. And I think it is for the best if we all just come to terms with that and move on with our lives. The sooner we do that, the sooner mom will be free of sitting at home with her hopes up every single time we leave.”

I looked at my son, stunned and unable to form a word as I watched him shift and run off. He wasn’t just speaking of Lia... He was speaking of himself. He was tired of getting his hopes up every time only to be so gravely disappointed in the end. I knew it was hard on him. I had been watching it change him over the years. He used to smile and play outside with the pups while he would help the young ones train and now... Now he was on his way to completely, disappearing into the little shell he was hiding in, and I had no way of stopping it.

“Just let him be,” I sighed when Kyle made a movement to go after him.

“What do you want to do?”

“Let’s just return home,” I said as the words my son had spoken filled my heart. “There is nothing for us here and she is clearly not anywhere around here. Let’s just... go home.”

"No, no you don't get to do this to yourself now Shane," Kyle said as he stepped in front of me. "Don't let his words affect you this much. I know you suffer just as much as we all do, but the only way we can live on is by having just a little bit of hope, so do not, for the love of God, take that away. Do you hear me?"

"I do, but I also don't see the need to stay here any longer and, besides, I'm pretty sure that Lucas is on his way home and if he gets there without us, it will just shake up Lia more," I said shaking my head. "I am not giving up nor am I losing hope. I just need another plan and another clue that hopefully will lead us closer than now."

Tatiana's POV

"Are you ready to go back inside or do you wish to stay here a little longer?"

"I don't know, it just seems so... crowded compared to what I am used to," I admitted. "I don't know how to act with them. I realize how difficult this must be for them too, you as well, and I just don't know how to speak to them about all this without..."

"Lashing out?"

"Yeah..."

"It is okay to lash out. But what is important to remember now is that you are back home where you belong with all the people that love you and never once gave up on finding you. Yes, it will be difficult to speak about and, yes, it will be hard to have to relive all the stuff that has happened to you while you have been... there... but I also strongly believe that this is what will help you heal. That this is what will help us all heal. You don't have to sugarcoat it for the sake of us if you don't want to. What you need to think about now is how you will get past this the best and what you need to be able to do it."

"I'm just not used to that," I sighed. "Thinking of myself like that I mean. Back there, everything I ever did was in order to please everyone else but myself. Not because I wanted to, but because I knew that by doing so, I would save myself from the trouble I would be in if I didn't."

"I'm truly sorry that things have been like that," she sniffled. "But I hope you know that you are safe here. That you are free here and can do whatever your hearts wish to do."

"I know, I just think it will take some time to get used to," I smiled. "Not only that, but also having a real family. I have to get to know you all, all over again as you do me and I just know that by getting to know me, that in order to do that, you will have to hear about some of the not-so-good stuff that went down," I shrugged. "And I don't know if mom will be able to hear it. Or dad, for that matter."

"They will, and not just because it will let them know their daughter, but also because it will let them in on what enemy they are dealing with. The more you can tell us about

that place and their Alpha Killian, the more they can do to protect you from them and in the end, punish them for the crimes they committed.”

“Punish them?”

“Kidnapping the princess of the royal family is not something to be taken lightly,” she winked. “Don’t worry, you will get your revenge for what they did because they will be held accountable for their actions in due time.”

“Does it make me a terrible person if I tell you that the thought of that made me not only relieved but kind of happy too?”

“Nope,” she said popping the p. “Not at all. Now come. I think it is time we headed back before your mate and his wolf grow impatient,” she chuckled.

“Oh, that is another thing,” I said shyly as I got up.

“Yeah?”

“I don’t know much about mates, let alone about having one, and I would appreciate it if maybe you’d tell me about it sometime?”

It came out more as a question than a statement which made Dani laugh.

“Of course. It will be my first official sister duty,” she spoke proudly.

We had barely made it through the doors of the packhouse before I was engulfed in a hug.

“I’m sorry,” Hayden’s voice cooed.

God, this man, and his sweetness would be the death of me.

“I don’t know if I did something but-“

“You didn’t,” I assured him, cutting him off before he would go into a full-blown spiral of apologies. “It just got to me, that is all.”

“I should have taken your feelings into consideration,” my mom’s voice sounded from behind Hayden. “I don’t blame you for feeling all those things, not in the slightest, and I don’t want you to feel like you can’t tell me exactly what is on your mind like you did just before, because you can. I guess I just didn’t think about what all of this must have been like for you. Not the being away part, but the coming back; seeing everything you have missed out on through the years. I was just so excited and for that, I apologize.”

“There is no need to apologize,” I said as I stuck my hands in my pockets. “This won’t just take time for me to get used to. It will take time for all of you as well and, as Dani and I talked about, getting to know one another at new will mean that you will have to get to know some stuff that might not be pleasant for you to hear and that I will hear some things about how it was here while I was away that will maybe make me feel left out and that is okay because you know I won’t end back up there and I know I won’t miss out on any more than I already have.”

“You sound just like your dad,” she chuckled as she walked towards me.

Her hand was raised to rest on my cheek as she wiped away a stray tear I hadn’t noticed.

“So, so wise,” she cooed.

I smiled and leaned into her hand, closing my eyes, just enjoying the feeling of warmth radiating from her.

The feeling of home.

I was home.

Chapter 17 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Lucas’s POV

I couldn’t keep staying there. Every time we got a new lead, or we heard something from the far off corner of god knows where, we would throw whatever we had in our hands and dash off to check it out and every time we would travel for days only to arrive and search for another number of days and for what? For nothing. They have been searching for her ever since I was five and ever since I was old enough to join them, I did. It wasn’t because I didn’t want to find her, I really did, but at what cost?

Whenever a new lead came in, my hopes began to rise at new, my body filled with strength to go save her, to save my mom and dad from the pain, to save Uncle Ky and Dani from the guilt, and in the end, I had no one to save.

The disappointment from each time had begun getting to me a few years back and yet I still continued. But now... Now I was lost. I was lost in my own mind, in my own body, and now the hope was beginning to fade away too.

I was beginning to question the fact that she was even alive and, despite the hollowness inside me being so big that I didn’t think it could even get bigger, the thought of her being dead enlarged it.

‘She is alive,’ my wolf Kuma stated.

'You don't know that,' I growled.

'No? If you are so sure that she is dead, then why do you continue to look? Can't you feel it?'

'Feel what?'

'The shift in your powers?'

I could feel him grin in my mind as he pointed out something very obvious. My powers had shifted a bit since yesterday. I didn't know what it was, so I had chosen to ignore it but now...

'Does it mean...?'

'Well, she certainly isn't dead you moron,' he huffed in clear annoyance, as if I was missing a point.

'Kuma,' I warned.

'What? I am only stating it as it is.'

'If I am a moron, then what are you?'

'I'm the clever one in this combination. Obviously. At least until you meet Amara.'

The way he said the name, so longing, so hopeful, made me stop dead in my tracks.

'Amara?'

'Her wolf.'

I didn't have time to think. I shifted on my heel before giving it a second thought and dashed back to the open area I had left both my dad and uncle Ky at. He could sense her, and he had waited for me to feel it too. A feeling I had dismissed out of pure agony and spite. If he could sense her wolf, that would mean that Tatiana-

'-Is alive and well,' Kuma interrupted. 'Like I said, moron.'

'Shut up.'

Shane's POV

'Dad!'

I could hear Lucas calling me over mind link already before I could see him, his voice getting louder the closer he got.

'Is everything alright?'

'You were right, I'm sorry!'

'About what?'

I couldn't determine if the sound in his voice was panic or not, but as soon as I heard the sound of his paws hitting the ground with immense force coming closer with every second, I knew it was something important.

'Amara!'

'Amara?' I repeated, confused, while Ky gave me a 'what-is-going-on-look', to which I just shrugged.

Before I had the time to ask him what he meant, his wolf came flying out of the bushes, his legs struggling to find footing with the amount of speed he had on as he took the turn which sent him straight to the ground.

"For heaven's sake," I sighed, trying to hold down the laugh.

Kyle, on the other hand, burst out laughing, bending over and clutching his stomach while he roared out loud.

"I must say, Lucas," he said in between breaths. "That was the least and yet most elegant shit I have ever seen you do."

Lucas spat out the bag he had in his mouth, rolled his eyes at Kyle's statement, and shifted back.

"This is serious," he said through gritted teeth while getting dressed.

His flushed cheeks were the last straw and I myself burst into a fit of laughter.

"What is so important?" I asked trying to catch my breath.

"It's Kuma," he began. "He can sense her."

"Sense who?"

"Amara," he said as if it was the most obvious answer in the world.

"And Amara is?" Kyle questioned as he wiped away a tear.

“Tatiana’s wolf.”

His words made the laughing stop. Around us, everyone grew quiet.

“You were right dad. She is alive.”

Tatiana’s POV

I had just gotten the news that the rest of the family should be arriving today. After the good night’s rest, I had, my body was filled with energy and for some reason, I wasn’t as nervous about meeting them as I was yesterday. Today I was more excited, more ready, and oddly enough, longing after it.

Mom told me that they hadn’t told them that I was here. They wanted it to be a surprise and also, they didn’t want them to only have that in their heads when traveling through the land to get home. Apparently, Lucas was known to have one of dad’s traits, the recklessness, and she didn’t want them to forget about their surroundings or do anything stupid in order to get here faster.

I agreed with her decision, besides, I wanted to see the look on their faces when they got home from searching for me only to find me already standing in the doorway.

‘Kuma.’

‘Amara?’

‘Kuma.’

I hadn’t heard from her in some time, and I was surprised to hear from her at all. However, the only thing she ever said was that. A name I believe it was and the way she said it, so longing, so sorrowful... It made my heart ache for her.

I shook it off of me as I walked down the stairs to the dining hall where I knew both mom and Dani were waiting for me.

“Tatiana!” Hayden called from behind, making me turn around to see my mate trying to catch up with me.

“Huh? Sorry, I didn’t hear you coming,” I mumbled.

“You don’t say,” he chuckled. “I called you like five times while you walked down the hallway.”

“Oh god, sorry I’m just... Distracted?” I asked more than stated.

"It's fine," he smiled as he took my hand in his and gave it a small squeeze. "Today is a big day after all. you'll get to meet both your uncles, my dad's, your dad, and your twin. It is a lot," he shrugged. "Where is Kathleen?"

"Oh, she wanted to sleep in today. Yesterday was a bit more hectic than what she is used to," I grinned.

"And what about you?"

"I couldn't sleep longer even if I tried," I chuckled.

"Early bird?"

"You could say that," I said with pursed lips thinking back on the time when I first was pulled out of the comfort of my bed before the crack of dawn.

"A penny for your thoughts," his sweet voice cooed in my ear.

I hadn't noticed that I had stopped walking until his arms snuggled around my waist.

"I was just thinking back."

"On something specific?"

His question was hesitant, yet it was still asked, and knowing that I at some point would have to open up anyway, I'd might as well just get on with it.

"I never got to sleep in. Not once," I grabbed his hand and pulled him with me as I continued down the stairs. "When I was old enough to start training, or when Killian saw me as old enough that is, he would come into my bedroom, approximately around 3 am, yank the covers off of me and drag me by my feet out of my bed until my back would hit the floor."

He stopped walking mid-step and turned me around to face him. His face was twisted up into a frown and behind those so usually soft eyes lured a wave of anger I had not seen until now threatening to close in.

"You're kidding me, right?"

"Nope," I said popping the p. "That was his way of making sure I would just crawl back into bed until training was over which would be around dinner time, sometimes a bit later than that."

I had barely finished my sentence when a growl ripped from his throat while his eyes turned to the shade of black. I out of pure instinct took half a step back as his arms around me kept me from moving more.

“Hayden...” my voice croaked.

He looked so angry, so frustrated, and yet even as I probably should have been scared, I wasn't. His grip on me tightened, but not in a way that caused me any pain. He wouldn't hurt me; I knew that, and I also knew why he reacted the way he did.

I lifted my hand to his cheek and gently caressed it while I placed my other hand on his heart, trying to calm him down.

“I'm sorry,” he sighed, his eyes turning back to his usual blue color. “I-I don't know what came over me.”

His eyes searched mine, for what I did not know.

“I-“ I began but was interrupted.

“It's called protection instinct,” Dani said as she passed us on the stairs. “You will get used to it,” she chuckled and patted him on the back. “Now, I suggest you both come down for breakfast unless you want to starve.”

“Dani,” Hayden warned. “We have talked about this.”

Her laugh could be heard throughout the hall while she continued to walk.

“Yeah, we have and as I told you, it ain't gonna change,” she yelled as she walked through the kitchen door.

“Did I miss something here?” I asked, looking confused at my now irritated-looking mate.

“The patting on the back,” he grumbled as he slouched over and paddled down the steps.

“Patting on the back?” I mumbled to myself before following him down. “Hey, wait up, will you Mr. Grump?”

Chapter 18 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana's POV

All eyes were on us when we arrived at the dining hall.

“Someone got a bit possessive ay mate?” a guy I hadn't met yet grinned while stuffing his plates with pancakes.

“Oh, leave the boy be Cross,” Dani smirked. “It’s all new to him. Remember when it was you?”

At first, it may have sounded like she was backing up Hayden, but the taunting tone in her voice told me otherwise.

“If I remember correctly, you nearly ripped off Ryan’s head when he was training with dear Dani,” mom pointed out. “And good morning darling. I hope you slept comfortably enough.”

“I slept nice,” I nodded. “Is he your mate?” I questioned.

“You haven’t told her about me?” Cross fake pouted.

“Stop pouting you, big baby,” she snorted while slapping his arm. “And no. I wanted her to feel a bit at ease before meeting the tornado of the pack.”

The way they all were gathered around the table, joking with one another was yet another thing I had never experienced. Despite being the alpha’s daughter in my old pack I was never really a part of anything, let alone the conversation.

“The tornado huh?” I smiled.

“The energy of that creature is out of this world,” she hummed while waving her fork in the air.

“Creature,” he huffed in an offended manner. “You love me for it.”

“That I do,” she said and this time the joking tone was gone, leaving nothing but admiration to be heard.

“If you ask me, the moon goddess matched you two perfectly,” mom chipped in. “You yourself aren’t an easy woman Dani and it takes someone with his energy level to keep up with you.”

“Not to mention the patience,” Hayden added.

“Do you need another pat big boy?” she teased and before Hayden had the chance to answer I joined in, asking the question I had on my mind.

“What is it with the patting?”

“Patting is something you do to the young and inexperienced pups,” Cross explained. “They either get a pat when they do something good or when they learn something new. Dani here likes to taunt Hayden with it because he was the least experienced pup we ever got, of course, he improved over the years.”

The most inexperienced pup they got? I remembered my conversation with Dani yesterday where she mentioned something about Hayden and the story he had to tell. Maybe this was a part of it?

“Until he found his mate and now is completely clueless about what to do with you,” she snickered from the sideline earning a swap from mom. “What?” she complained.

“You weren’t much better yourself young lady,” she scolded. “Now, stop teasing the poor boy and let him eat in peace.”

I had only been here for a little over a day and yet I already felt more like a part of this family than I ever did in my old one. Dani showed me a side of her today that she did not show me yesterday. Yesterday she was caring and soft and today she was the complete opposite. She did it with love, but she was more hard-handed with all the others than me, not that I blamed her for it. She as she said herself wanted me to ease into it before being thrown to the wolves. Literally.

I grabbed a plate myself before sitting down at the table between Dani and Hayden. I looked over the table not really knowing what to taste first. It wasn’t that I hadn’t tasted things like pancakes before, it was just not very often I had the opportunity. Usually, I wouldn’t get to eat before everyone else had already eaten and what I got was what was left whether it was a lot or a little, and more often than I would have preferred it was the latter. Either that or what Kathleen managed to sneak up to me before the others would take it all.

My mom must have seen my indecisiveness because without saying another word, she took my plate and began to fill it up.

“I-I can do it,” I managed to say, but she just waved me off.

“Don’t mind me,” she uttered. “I haven’t exactly been able to do this for you before and besides you looked a little lost.”

No one dared ask why I didn’t fill my own plate and for once, I gratefully enjoyed the silence as mom finished and put the plate in front of me.

“Thanks,” I almost whispered, a blush creeping up on my face, somewhat embarrassed that I got so startled over something as normal as food.

I felt Hayden’s hand on my thigh in a reassuring way. It was only for a brief second, but it was more than enough to calm me down. I without turning my head offered him a little smile that I knew he noticed because I could sense his eyes on me. It was a weird thing, the thing with mates. I hadn’t quite learned much about it yet but from what I had experienced first-hand by now only showed the bond between mates and how strong it is.

I had noticed how Hayden reacted to my words, my feelings, and to my touch. It was the same way I reacted to his. Even without putting words on it, he would be able to sense whatever I in the moment was feeling, and I was able to do the same with him.

I took a mental note to ask Dani about it later.

“So, what is the order for the day?” I asked trying to sound as casual as possible.

“We are going to await your dad and brother's return,” mom smiled. “You must be anxious to meet them.”

I just nodded. Anxious was the right word. I was nervous as hell and so very scared of what would happen when they would see me. Like, what they would say or do... What I would say or do.

“Don't worry,” Hayden said from the side. “They will be thrilled to see you.”

“Thrilled is the understatement of the year,” Dani laughed. “I'm pretty sure one of them will pass out.”

“Sure enough to bet on it?” Cross joked.

“Actually yes,” she grinned.

“My bet is on Alpha Shane,” he quickly said.

“Mine is Uncle Ky,” Dani shrugged.

“No bets on Lucas?” Hayden asked.

It grew dead quiet really quick.

“I'm not actually sure how he will react,” Dani admitted. “Either he will run to you...”

“Or?”

“He will run away,” mom finished with a sigh. “He is not good with his emotions and sometimes lets them get the better of him. He does things without thinking them through so just so you are prepared if it should happen that he runs away, just know that it is not you but the fact that he doesn't know how to handle it or to be in his own body.”

“I wasn't planning on taking offense,” I said, and it was the truth. “You have all gotten somewhat used to the idea by now but you Dani, didn't speak to me for a few hours, Hayden, you jumped me, mom you cried, and I ended up lashing out at everyone. I know people react differently and seeing as he is my twin, I have a feeling he will react the same as me.”

“You think he will lash out?”

“I think it will be too much for him and his emotions will take over, yes,” I nodded, and as much as I was sure I was right, I also hoped I wasn’t.

We rather quickly cleaned up after breakfast and while everyone did what they usually did this time of day, I decided to take a tour of the place on my own.

I had so far seen the entire first floor and now was the time to explore what else was there. I didn’t go for anything specific but when I reached the floor that belonged to the Alpha and his family only, a scent caught my nose and it ended up triggering my curiosity as well. The weird thing was that I knew I never smelled that scent before and yet it smelled familiar. It almost smelled like my scent, the same yet... Different?

The scent ended up leading me to a room, the only room up here that had a closed door. I know I should probably have left it that way but I was never one to back down and so I let my curiosity get the best of me.

I didn’t know what I had expected to see when I stepped inside but what I saw was definitely not it. It was a normal bedroom. On the wall to the left was a giant bed. The opposite wall had a huge dresser and a tv on top of it as well as a door that led to a personal bathroom just like I had. Other than the clothes on the floor, the room was squeaky clean and not very personal. Whereas I should probably just have walked out, I took another step inside. I was so caught up that I didn’t notice that I no longer was alone.

“What are you doing in my room?” a dark voice rumbled behind me.

I turned around in shock and surprise so fast that I would have fallen down, had I not had the dresser to lean against and when I looked up to see the one talking to me I nearly fell on my ass.

Chapter 19 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Shane’s POV

I had barely made it through the door before Lia met me with open arms like always and like always it was just what I needed after a long time from home.

“Where is Lucas?” she asked while squeezing me half to death with her small arms.

“He should be here-“ I was cut off by our son rushing up to us, giving his mom a quick kiss on the cheek, before he continued past us and up the stairs. “-Somewhere.”

I had only finished my sentence when Lia’s voice rang through the hall.

“Lucas! Lucas, you have to come back here!”

But he was long gone.

“Don’t worry, he will be down when he is ready,” I chuckled. “We won’t stay for long,” I began explaining. “Kuma had something interesting to tell while on our search and... Why are you looking at me like that?”

She took a step back, her hand firmly placed in mine.

“I have something to tell you and when I do, I need you to continue breathing.”

“Something to tell me? Lia, is everything alright?”

I looked her up and down and watched as a smile played on her lips, her eyes getting glossy.

“I believe by now that Lucas knows,” she muttered while pulling me through the door and over the threshold. “Breathe in,” she told me. “Tell me what you smell.”

I looked at my mate confused and slightly worried. What in the world was going through her mind?

“Just do it,” she urged and so with my eyes narrowed and focused on her, I took a big whiff.

Something was different, yet... not. I couldn’t quite put my finger on it at first and then it hit me like a brick wall that had collapsed on top of me. My eyes darted to the stairs where my son had disappeared to and back to my mate whose smile grew even bigger as she gave me a small nod.

“It can’t be,” I staggered out, not really knowing if my mind was playing a trick on me or not.

“But it is,” she whimpered while a few tears dropped.

“S-She’s here?”

“She is.”

Lucas’s POV

We had only just arrived home. I was so eager to continue the search after what Kuma told me and so I rushed to my room, ignoring my mom’s constant calls for me, but seeing as she didn’t go after me, it couldn’t be that important.

I reached the top of the stairs and stopped abruptly. Someone had been up here. Someone I didn't know. The scent was strange, familiar yet foreign. I followed that scent until I was standing in front of my own bedroom door.

"What are you doing in my room?" I growled in a deep voice and watched the small frame in front of me turn around with a gasp.

I held my breath.

I took a step back.

I felt my heart starting to pound incredibly fast in my chest, so fast, it felt like it was about to pop out.

I couldn't believe what was in front of me and for a second, just a small second, I thought I was hallucinating due to all the pressure I had been under lately, but that was not the case. This was very much real.

It was like looking into a mirror. Big blue eyes, my eyes, were staring back at me wide open, her mouth slightly gaping while she gripped my dresser as if her life depended on it.

She was small, maybe 5'3, her hair was long and blonde, the same blonde color as my own, and the shape of her face was a dead copy of mom's.

I felt my chest tighten as my breathing became shallow.

This couldn't be.

It couldn't be her.

'Oh, but it is,' Kuma whined in my head.

"Tatiana?"

My voice was barely a whisper, and I without registering at first, took a step towards her half expecting her to take one back but instead she stood still, her grip on the dresser easing up a bit.

She didn't look scared, on the contrary. But she did look rather confused as she was taking me in, probably because she was seeing the same things I saw. All the similarities.

"Lucas?" she questioned with narrow eyes.

Her voice was shaky, and my name was spoken like she was trying to take a breath, but failed. She took a step toward me when I didn't answer her and before I could stop myself, I threw myself into her arms which opened just in time to catch me.

I wasn't the type to cry, especially not in front of people, but right at that moment, I couldn't contain myself. I was sobbing uncontrollably, the tears flowing from my eyes, wetting her shirt while strange sounds erupted from my mouth, and instead of stopping me or trying to pull away, she held me tighter as we both sank to the floor, and she let me get it all out.

Tatiana's POV

I hadn't known what to expect. At first, it had seemed like he was ready to run as far away as he could, but instead, he surprised me, and caught me completely off guard as he jumped into my arms. I barely managed to open them, but the second he was in my embrace something clicked. That piece I had been missing without knowing, that constant unsettling feeling, the feeling of being empty and hollow like a well that had dried up, was now gone.

He was crying so loudly that I hadn't noticed that I myself had started crying. The tears of the lost one and it was then I realized that it hadn't just been me who had been lost. He had too.

We sank to the floor, me still holding him and him still grabbing my shirt as if he was scared of letting go.

I felt happy, yet also so very sad. All this pain I had in me, he had too and now we both had the opportunity to rid ourselves of that pain and start the healing.

I closed my eyes and leaned my head against his while I gently stroked his back.

"It's all going to be okay," I whispered.

"You are here," he choked out. "You are r-really here."

"I am," I cooed. "I'm home and I'm not going anywhere ever again."

"I couldn't protect you," he sobbed. "I-I couldn't find you either."

"Shh, it is okay. It is all going to be okay. I'm here now."

Chapter 20 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Shane's POV

They had been upstairs for a while and knowing my son, he could react in one of two ways. Either he would react in a good way or... he could react badly and lash out.

Lia had filled me in on a few of the things that had led up to this, like for example Hayden showing up with her on the border and the fact that he was her mate, but other than that she had kept quiet. She wanted to give Tatiana the chance to explain a few things herself. One part of me, the part of me that couldn't wait to have my daughter back in my arms, was excited, to say the least, and over the moon that she was finally the back, but the other half of me wanted revenge, wanted blood to be shed for all the pain she had gone through wherever she was being kept all those years. Lia didn't tell me about it but she almost slipped up and when she did, I could see the pain radiate from her face. Sometimes, not saying anything, was telling more than actual words would have.

"What do you think they are doing?" Cross asked.

"I don't know," Dani muttered. "But at least he didn't leave."

We hadn't heard anything from them since he went upstairs. Neither of them had come down and when we tried to listen in on their conversation, all we were met with, was silence.

I wanted to go up there so badly, and it looked like I wasn't the only one. Hayden was sitting on the edge of the chair, his leg bouncing up and down while he tapped the wooden table with his fingers.

"So," I said breaking the silence. "You and my daughter?"

I didn't fully understand the feelings that were currently running through my body, but for some reason when I learned that Hayden was my daughter's mate, I felt anxious. I had only just gotten her back, I had yet to hold her myself and now he had a claim on her and one I could not deny him.

I knew better than to question the way the moon goddess fated people or question who they were fated to, and if I had to choose a mate for my daughter myself, I would have probably picked Hayden as well, but still, the nagging feeling was there, and I knew I had to deal with it somehow.

"Yeah," he answered.

"Lia told me you were the one to bring her home."

"I was," he nodded.

"Hm."

“Is everything okay?” he asked me while staring me dead in the eye.

“Just... Just look out for her, okay?”

I had nothing more to say at the moment, well I did, but the itching feeling in my body that kept growing would have made my next words some that shouldn't be spoken and some I would definitely regret.

“Okay, I think it is time that you and I go up there don't you think honey?” Lia spoke while getting out of her chair.

I was out of mine so fast I nearly tripped the chair and had it not been for Lia holding my hand with a firm grip, I would have rushed up those stairs not caring about anything.

“They have been awfully quiet, haven't they?” she asked once we passed our bedroom.

I couldn't help but notice how close we were to Lucas's bedroom or how sweaty my palms had gotten from we got to the top of the stairs to here.

“Maybe I shouldn't...” I trailed off not knowing how to finish my sentence.

I stopped walking and looked around to avoid the curious look my little mate was now giving me.

“Shouldn't what?” she questioned. “Shane?”

I didn't know how to explain to her what was suddenly going through my now very clouded mind. All the doubt just came from out of nowhere and I didn't know how to stop it or the other feelings that came along with it.

“Shane?”

“I just... Maybe it isn't such a good idea?”

“What isn't? I'm not following here.”

“I couldn't find her Lia. I couldn't protect her and now she is back, she is safe, but who says she wants to see me? Who am I to just walk into that room and act like a father when I couldn't even be one when she needed me the most?”

It pained me to admit it, but it was the truth. As much as I wanted to just barge in there I just simply couldn't. A minute ago, I was ready, I was on my way to go see her, but the closer I got, the worse I felt. The guilt from not being able to save her back then grew with every step I took toward her.

“Shane,” Lia sighed.

She looked to the ground while shaking her head and for once I was sure she was going to agree with me, that she was going to tell me just how much I had actually let, not only Tatiana down, but all of them. But she didn't. Instead, she took a step toward me, placed her hand on my cheek, and forced me to look into her eyes. Those beautiful blue eyes that could make everything go away with just one single glance.

"I know that this isn't easy for you, and I know it hasn't been ever since that day. It hasn't been easy for any of us and to that degree I will agree with you, but I will not stand here and let you speak so ill about yourself. No, we didn't find her and no, we could not save her back then and you know just as well as I that nothing we could have done, could have prevented what happened, but she is back now, and she needs us. She needs her dad. We couldn't be there back then or for all the years that came after and up until now, but what we can do is be there now."

"I know that, but—"

"No, I don't want to hear no buts," she interrupted. "I know you have been blaming yourself for not being there that day and I heard you cry at night in the bathroom when you thought I was asleep. I know you haven't been well, and I know you have been extra hard on yourself. You have buried yourself in work or been away looking for leads and never really taken the time to be here with us and I understand why you did that, but you must understand something now too and that is that she is home now. She is here home with us exactly where she belongs, but even though she is here, we both know that this is far from the end of it."

She let go of my hand and began pacing around in front of me, a thing she only did when she was frustrated.

"We both know that whoever did this, will try to get her back or maybe something even worse so you have to stop this pity party that you are hosting for yourself and start being here because this is it. This is the time that will be the hardest to get through and this is when she is going to need us the most and I can't do this alone like I have been most of the time when you were away and don't mistake this for blaming you or hating you for leaving because I get why you had to, but we need you here now."

"I am not going anywhere," I assured her.

She turned around, her head tilting slightly while giving me a pained look.

"I know you say that, but I also recognized that look you had on your face before," she whispered. "You wanted to seek out revenge for her, for us, but in order to do that you will need to leave, and I just can't have that. Not this time, not again."

This was the first time she had ever told me this and the amount of guilt I felt before was now doubled. How had I not noticed that by doing what I did, I left her to work twice as hard every single day and then for so many years?

I sighed as I put my head in my hands slowly rubbing my temples before dragging them down my face.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I promise that I won’t leave, and I promise to do my very best. I didn’t know you felt this way,” I admitted while scratching the back of my head. “How come you’ve never told me?”

“There never really was a right time for it,” she shrugged. “You were mostly away and when you actually were here, I didn’t want to put this on you. I didn’t want to put that extra amount of guilt on you that you are feeling now.”

“Lia,” I cooed as I took her in my arms and held her against my chest. “Your feelings matter to me, okay? Your feelings are valid, and you are allowed to tell me about them whenever you need to. You don’t have to wonder if I can take it or not because if there is one thing in this world, I always have room and time for, it is you and our kids. End of story.”

“How about we make a promise then?”

“Any suggestions?”

“We lean on each other. No one takes the entire toll alone. If you want me to lean on you, you lean on me, understood?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I grinned and pulled her in for a kiss that quickly heated.

Her hands snaked around my neck pulling me closer until there was no gap between us. I bit her lip gently and when I felt them part in surprise, I took the opportunity to sneak my tongue into her mouth savoring the taste of her that I had been in need of ever since I left home.

“This is so not how I imagined it would be like when I would finally meet you,” a soft voice chuckled further ahead.

My head quickly snapped back as both Lia and I straightened ourselves and I looked past her to see the person who was talking to me.