

Chapter 21 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Shane's POV

"Gross, isn't it?" Lucas laughed. "Imagine having to see that every single day."

"Yeah, no thank you," she snickered holding her hands up in front of her.

My body was frozen in place. I could feel my palms getting sweaty again along with my heartbeat speeding up.

She was exactly like how I remembered her. The same color hair, the same blue eyes, and the same laughter. She was exactly like she was back then, just older.

"Dad?" she questioned; her voice soft.

"It's you," I said as I walked to her.

My hand went to her cheek and as my thumb slowly caressed her, it caught a tear that had escaped her eyes.

"It's me," she said shyly.

What sounded like a mix of a sob and a snort came out of my mouth and before I knew it, she had launched herself into my arms. Holding her felt like a dream, but this... This was as real as it got. She was really home.

"I'm sorry," I muttered against the top of her head, feeling a few of her hairs move from the unsteady breaths that left my mouth.

"I'm sorry too," she spoke.

"You have nothing to be sorry about," I choked out. "Absolutely nothing."

"Neither do you so I assumed we were just throwing it out in the air for fun," she shrugged under my arms before pulling away. "I think I have heard enough apologies for a lifetime."

"Well," I chuckled while wiping my face.

I didn't care one bit that I had let my tears fall, nor did I care that I was showing my vulnerable state. Everyone here knew just how much this had tortured our entire family so this should not come as a surprise.

“Am I just a leftover thing?” it sounded from behind as heavy steps rushed up the stairs. “I mean I know I am no alpha, but where is my hello hug, and how come no one saves me some food before all you animals eat it all?”

I turned my head just in time to see Kyle turning around the corner.

“What are you all standing here for? Are we having some sort of family meeting I did not know about?” he grinned and before I could answer him or even prepare him for what was to happen next, Tatiana peeked out from beside me.

Ky stopped dead in his tracks only a few feet away from us, his grin faded slowly and from the looks of it, his breathing stopped rather abruptly.

“Is this some sort of cruel joke?” he stuttered out.

In a matter of seconds, we could hear Ryan from downstairs as he probably felt his mate’s distress, and not long after he was standing at the top of the stairs a few steps away from Kyle, completely out of breath.

“Kyle? What’s going on?” he panted as he stepped over to his very pale-looking mate. “Hello?” he cooed while waving a hand in front of his face and then before we could do anything to prevent it, the inevitable happened.

“Oh my god! Kyle!” Ryan grunted as he caught him just before he hit the floor. “What in the world,” he gasped while gently placing him on the ground.

I eyed everyone around us slowly and noticed both Lia and Lucas trying to hold in their laughs. Tatiana looked rather shocked, and Ryan was one big question mark as he took in the state of his unconscious mate.

“Will someone explain to me what the hell is going on?” he asked.

“What is going on is that I won,” Dani said approaching Ryan from behind with Hayden right in her tracks. “My money, thank you very much,” she grinned holding out her hand to Cross who came up the stairs shortly after.

“Not fair,” he grumbled and reached for his pocket. “You cheated. I don’t know how, but somehow you did.”

“First of all, there is no way I would be able to cause this, I just know my family and how they react to stuff, and second of all, quit being a sore loser and hand me my price.”

“Hello?” Ryan scoffed trying to get the attention back to him. “I still very much would like an explanation here.”

Tatiana stepped out from beside me and held up her hands.

“Just don’t pass out too okay,” she said slowly.

I carefully kept an eye on him and watched as his face first scrunched up in confusion at the small girl in front of him until realization hit.

“Tati...” he trailed off. “How?”

“You can thank your son for that,” I smiled and reached over to pat Hayden on the back who was now standing next to my daughter with his hand in hers.

Looking at them together warmed my heart, especially when I noticed how he was looking at her, but that didn’t mean that I didn’t still have some trouble with it.

“You? How? When?”

“Well,” Hayden chuckled scratching his neck. “I was just out scouting, and I found myself a bit further away than usual and so I had found shelter in a cave for the night and that is when I stumbled upon her.”

Ryan eyed them both and the way they were standing close to one another, their hands still intertwined.

“And she is?”

“My mate yes,” he smiled. “And this is one of my dads’. The other one is the one on the floor.”

“The moon goddess and her ways,” he breathed and shook his head. “And I do apologize for your uncle Kyle down there. He has a flair for the dramatic,” he said with an eye roll.

“What? What happened?” Ky’s voice groaned from the floor.

“Oh, dear God, get up,” Ryan snorted. “Typical you to pass out at a moment like this.”

“Sorry,” he grumbled as he picked himself up only to stand directly in front of Tatiana.

Ryan quickly stepped behind him, ready to catch him should he fall once more but this time he just grabbed her and pulled her in.

“Hi,” she spoke in a low voice against his chest.

“I’m so sorry,” he mumbled.

“I’m starting to think you guys don’t have any other words in your vocabulary,” she snickered. “Could we all just get past this state and just stop saying sorry?”

“Yes, of course! Sorry!” Kyle rushed out. “Oh, sorry. Dammit!”

“You weren’t far off,” Cross grinned.

“At least now we know what to get everyone for Christmas,” she added with a smirk.

“I love your thinking,” Cross exclaimed and went for a high-five.

Tatiana’s POV

We had all settled down in the private living room. Mom had made us all tea and coffee, while Dani had baked cookies. Kathleen had also joined us by now and the look she gave me told me that we all needed to have a talk.

“So, I know there isn’t a perfect time to talk about all of this and we don’t have to go directly into details, but I think that it is about time that we at least touch the topic, yeah?” she said while grabbing a cookie.

I sighed and looked down. I knew we had to, not because I wanted to talk about all of this yet, but because I knew that the chance of Killian and the rest of the pack, would let this go, was slim to none and that they probably would be out looking for me by now.

“I will start with the important things first,” I said and put my cup on the table. “The man I used to call my father is the Alpha of the Crescent pack where I was being kept and his name is Killian. He is a ruthless man; I know that from experience. I do not wish to go into details just yet, but we need to touch the subject like Kathleen said because he is most likely on a rampage after his hunters came home empty-handed.”

“His hunters?” mom gasped.

“She was being chased, hence why she ended up in the same cave as I,” Hayden spoke with a slight hint of venom in his voice.

“Why would they chase you in the first place?” Cross asked. “Didn’t you say that he was the Alpha? That would make you the Alpha’s daughter right?”

“Yes, it would, but in my case, it was far from a blessing and it is not a place I ever want to return to. I was always known as a freak because I had other powers than a normal wolf would possess. Some even questioned if I truly was a wolf and at one point I did too, but then one night, the night I ran off, I shifted for the first time. It came as a surprise because I thought my birthday wasn’t for another two weeks, but as it turned out, I was wrong. Some of my memories from when I was little, came back, and that is when I saw mom. I didn’t know who she was at the time, but when I met my wolf Amara and got to talk to her, things started to make sense. I always knew something was off and I finally got to know why. I didn’t belong there, I never did and so I ran, with the help of Kathleen that is. But Killian is a man who is used to getting whatever he wishes, so

when I did not return..." I paused and looked around. "Well, you can imagine how he reacted to that."

Everyone was listening quietly as I told the little part of my story that I was ready to tell.

"I learned later on from Kathleen... Well, you can tell them," I said and looked at her.

"I overheard a conversation and Killian is not exactly pleased that she got away. He wants her powers, and he wants her. No matter the cost and..." she trailed off.

"And?" Hayden and my dad asked at the same time.

"Not only will he kill everyone standing in his way, but once he is done with her, once her power belongs to him and only him, he will kill her."

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Tatiana's POV

The atmosphere in the room shifted quickly. Hayden growled while Lucas huffed, and my dad's entire body tensed up.

"He will do no such thing," my mom said in an angry voice as she got up from her chair.

"He won't even get to be alone with you," Hayden assured me, resting his hand on my knee. "There is no way that he will get to you in any way, nor will we let him off the hook for what he already did."

"You know we don't condone violence in this pack," Ryan said and put his hand on Hayden's back.

"Or revenge for that matter," Kyle added.

"Are we seriously just going to let him live after what he did?" Lucas snapped. "You are aware that he kidnapped her and kept her from us for thirteen years, right? And you heard her! It is not a place she ever wants to go back to which tells me that this wasn't exactly like a vacation for her."

"I am aware of that. You do not have to state it to me son, because I was there. I along with everyone in this room has lived through it but you better than anyone, know our laws," dad sighed.

"So what? We just have to sit here and wait until he comes knocking on our door before, we can do anything?" he asked in disbelief.

“Not necessarily,” I shrugged. “I know him. I know how he works, how he plans... I know how we can prepare ourselves for what is to come.”

“I thought you didn’t have a bond with him?” dad frowned.

“Trust me, I didn’t, but being the quiet freak kid has its perks and one of them is that you hear a lot of things,” I smiled trying to ease the blow of my words.

“And he won’t just barge in here without a plan either,” Kathleen pointed out. “That is probably what he is doing right now so we should be looking out for scouts around this area.”

“How can we be sure that he knows you are here?” Cross questioned.

“We can’t be sure that he knows that I found my way back, for all I know he could think I was wandering around somewhere, but seeing as he is the one who took me from here in the first place...” I trailed off.

“And seeing that I ran away with her, this is probably the first place he will check,” Kathleen added.

“We will add more guards to the border,” Ryan said.

“And I will manage a search team,” Hayden spoke and got up from his chair. “If that is okay with you of course,” he added as he turned around to look at me.

“By all means do not change the way things are around here just because I am back,” I chuckled. “I will find my way and adapt and maybe even find a way to be useful myself.”

He nodded and bend down a bit but stopped himself just as his nose touched mine. The heat radiated from the both of us and I had to force myself not to lean forward. His cheeks flushed red as he pulled back just as my dad cleared his throat.

“Then that is settled. I will talk with the Alpha’s around the nearest packs and see what else I can find out about this Killian,” he muttered. “And in the meantime, you will all remain here unless you have to attend business elsewhere but just check in with me first, that especially goes for you, Tatiana. I know you want to help, which you still can, just from a distance.”

“Yes, dad.”

I didn’t bother arguing with him about it. I knew he was right and besides, there was a part of me that, as hard as it was to admit, was scared, terrified even. I knew what Killian was capable of, he had shown it to me on multiple occasions, and I did not under any circumstances want to go back there. Not now, not ever. I had finally gotten the taste of the freedom I had longed after for so long and I was not willing to jeopardize

that for the sake of my pride. For the sake of my family's safety, yes, if it ever came down to that I would do it without question, but pride, never.

"You need to know a thing or two," I sighed as I leaned forward in the chair, resting my elbows on my knees. "Not only is he a man that is used to getting whatever he wants, but he is smart. He knows how to talk to people to get them to do his bidding even if they don't want to and should one stand against him or in the tiniest way show disloyalty, he won't hesitate to rip off their heads. People fear him and rightfully so. The people you know from around might say one thing to you, but if Killian already has them in a tight grip, they will only tell you a bunch of lies or tell you nothing at all."

"Great," Lucas scoffed. "So, we might not even be able to trust our allies."

"Maybe not all, but we have some that are loyal to none other than us," mom pointed out.

"And you are sure about that?" I asked with narrow eyes.

"I'm positive," she nodded.

"I hope you are right because if not, if we have a weak link or a mole, he will find a way to use that for his benefits and that will eventually be our downfall."

"We can't do this alone," Kyle told me in a gentle voice. "We have to put our faith in someone, and these packs stood with us side by side on the battlefield the last time we needed help and if Killian turns out to be just as big a threat as Tyson was back then, I have no doubt that they will jump in to help again."

"Tyson?" Kathleen muttered in a questioning manner. "I think I have heard that name before."

"You probably have," mom said. "He was the one who sat on the throne in the Royal family before Shane and I came along. It is the part of our history that you have yet to learn," she said smiling at me, but the smile did not meet her eyes.

"He was a gruesome man," Kyle hissed. "He killed for fun, he gave empty promises to his allies to make sure that they would stay by his side and when it became time to meet his promise, he simply killed whoever he owed."

"He killed my mom and dad in a fire, and he thought for a very long time that I had died with them."

I looked at my mom who had a frown plastered on her face as she spoke. This time she didn't even bother to hide her disgust whether it was in her voice or her face.

“And he did so simply to take the power that runs in the royal jewelry, to take over the pack and become the king no one should ever have to answer to. Entire bloodlines disappeared under his ruling. Women, kids, they were in his eyes no different than men and so he killed them in cold blood whenever he saw it fit. But of course, and luckily for us and the rest of our kind, my parents were smart. They, the day they made sure I would survive, gave me the Luna’s necklace with me which meant that Tyson couldn’t gain the full power he was craving, which annoyed him of course, and then when I one day showed up on his radar again, his new plan to kill me was set in motion.”

“He just didn’t count in the fact that she was with me and my pack then,” dad spoke.

“How did you end up in his pack?” Kathleen asked and it was clear to see from the look on her face that she was invested in the story. “Did your parents send you there?”

“Oh no,” mom laughed. “But I wish they did. Actually, I was set up for adoption amongst the humans and I had no idea that I was a wolf until I shifted for the very first time which was incredibly scary for me. You see my adoptive parents were awful people and one day when I was hurt badly, Kyle, who was my only and best friend at the time, took me to the hospital and then brought me here.”

“I had a suspicion that she was my mate the first time I saw her, but I also knew that something was off,” dad chuckled. “She didn’t smell like a human, nor did she smell like a wolf but two weeks later my suspicions were confirmed, and here we are.”

"Still going strong," she smiled.

"And that we will for as many moons as it has been fated."

I looked at both my parents and noticed the love radiating from their faces as they looked at each other and I could only hope that one day if Killian didn't get in the way of it, Hayden and I would get to experience the same thing.

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Tatiana’s POV

“So, this is your bedroom,” mom said. “I am having your usual bedroom restored seeing as we didn’t touch it at all, so it is a bit childish.”

I looked around my temporary room. It was very clean, very casual with light colors. The walls were beige with a hint of pink in it to make it stand out from the rest. The bed along with most of the furniture in the room was white except for the bookshelf which was pure black.

“It’s beautiful,” I smiled.

"I know it is not much and once your room is somewhat finished, we can go out just you and me, maybe, and find furniture and decorations for it if you like?"

"I'd love that."

And truth be told, I did. I never had a mom that was willing to do such normal things with me, so this was a dream come true.

"I will leave you alone then," she said with a slight smirk playing on her lips, and before I could ask her why she was saying that a small knock could be heard on the door.

"I hope I am not disturbing," Hayden asked as he stepped in.

"Not at all, I was just about to leave," mom nodded and headed for the door. "I will see you all tomorrow."

Hayden waited until mom was out of hearing range, then turned to me with a slightly concerned face.

"What is going on?"

"I just wanted to say I'm sorry," he muttered.

"For?"

"For earlier," he said sounding a bit unsure. "You know..."

A blush crept upon his face and his eyes immediately went to the floor.

"You need to specify," I chuckled. "Everyone has been apologizing since I came here so," I said dragging it out, but I knew what he was referring to.

"For almost kissing you in front of everyone," he clarified. "I shouldn't have done that. It was rather rash and not fair to you."

"Wait, how is it not fair to me? I'm your mate, am I not?"

"You are but-"

"-No buts," I chuckled. "I didn't mind that," I said and this time I felt my cheek heat up. "What I did mind though was that you pulled away so fast."

My words made his head pop up and he was now looking in my eyes with a rather shocked expression plastered all over his face.

“I’m your mate, and I’m also someone who knows how to say no, and did you hear me protest in any way?”

“No.”

“Good, now I’m not one to tell you what to do but I wouldn’t mind if you came over here and gave me what you wanted to give me earlier,” I smirked.

I had no idea what I was doing. I didn’t know how to do any of this, kiss, hug, sex... I had no knowledge of either of those things. Hell, I didn’t even fully know or understand how the whole mating process would go or take place, but I knew it would be intimate and I knew I wasn’t ready for that yet.

“Are you sure?” he asked sounding a bit unsure.

“I am,” I assured him. “It’s just... I have never kissed anyone before so I might not be good at it. I tried to sound all brave about it but in reality-“

“I have never kissed anyone before either,” he interrupted.

“What? Lie,” I snorted.

“No, I swear,” I exclaimed as he held up his hands in defense. “I learned from a young age that the entire mate process was something to take seriously and something to hold dear, so I didn’t want to jeopardize that in any way.”

“So, you have never had a girlfriend either? I mean, it’s just so hard to believe because you are not ugly at all.”

“Did you just call me handsome?” he grinned.

“Oh, shut up,” I laughed. “You know what I mean.”

“No, I never had a girlfriend before. I never kissed anybody, never held hands with others, well except my dads when I was younger, and I was never willing to have any other form of intimacy with anyone. I wanted my first to be with my mate.”

“Oh.”

I didn’t really know what else to say. I was so sure that he had tried at least kissing someone if not actually having sex. I mean, Hayden was a hot guy. He had pretty and memorizing eyes, his smile was dazzling and his body... Those muscles and the way they were carved... He was a dream man if I had any.

“Are you disappointed?”

“No, not really. If anything, I am actually quite relieved,” I admitted.

“Good,” he smiled. “Now about that kiss...”

He walked over to me slowly. Once he was right in front of me, his left arm snuck around my waist, pulling me as close to him as possible, while his right hand went to my neck and with one swift movement, he pulled my mouth to his.

I knew there were sparks between us, I had felt them before, but this was on another level. This was like fireworks erupting around us. The whole world disappeared as our mouths melted together. I yelped in surprise when his teeth grazed my bottom lips and gently bit down. He took the opportunity to slip his tongue into my mouth and as the softness of his caressed mine a sound I wasn't prepared for escaped me.

I didn't know whether to be embarrassed or not but when a groan left his mouth, I didn't think of it further. The only thing I cared about at that moment was the way his hand suddenly traveled from my neck to my lower back grazing my spine with his fingers while doing so. It sent shivers all the way from my shoulders and down to my feet, making me weak in the knees.

God, the way this man could make one feel was incredible.

“I think we need... I think we need to stop,” he murmured against my lips.

“I think so too,” I muttered, not really wanting to, and by the feeling of it he didn't either.

He didn't let me go at all, but our lips parted from one another and when they did, we both had to suck in a deep breath.

“That...”

“Was incredible,” he finished.

We were both worked up. My body felt hot and sticky and my fingers still tingled, ready to just grab him and go for round two, but I knew just like he did that neither of us was ready for it yet.

“Maybe I should go so you could get ready for bed,” he offered.

He still held on to me tightly and all in all, I didn't want him to let go yet. I was not ready for that. I liked having him around and that in itself said a lot. The only person I ever enjoyed having by my side was Kathleen and yet here we were.

I opened my mouth to ask him to stay when it suddenly hit me. Could I ask him that? Did he want to? Or did he tell me he needed to leave because he wanted to get out?

“What is it?” he cooed in my ear.

“I thought maybe if you wanted to, I mean you don’t have to,” I rambled trying to form a decent sentence, so it didn’t sound like I was some needy whore.

“Breathe,” he reminded me. “And then try again.”

That son of a bitch was amused over my nervousness. The way his grin filled up his face made me want to shut my mouth and let him hang, but my neediness got the better of me.

“Do you maybe want to spend the night in here? With me?” I asked. “Sleeping,” I added and looked to the ground as soon as the word left my mouth.

Idiot... Of course, we would be sleeping... Why did I even feel the need to add that...

“I would love nothing more,” he smiled and leaned down to give me a quick peck on my forehead. “I will go get ready and then I will come back. Okay?”

“Okay,” I sighed in relief.

He reluctantly walked out the door and once it shut behind him, I threw myself on the bed, covered my head with a pillow, and waited for the bed to swallow me and my embarrassing ass whole.

“Sleeping,” I muttered to myself. “Fucking christ...”

Chapter 24 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana’s POV

“But it wasn’t me, I swear! Please, dad!” I begged as he dragged me down the stairs.

“When will you get tired of letting those lies fall from your mouth?” he spat.

He dragged me through the living room out to the kitchen not caring that everyone in the pack saw it. Not that it mattered anyway because no one reacted. All they did was look down or continue their conversations, pretending that it didn’t happen.

Everyone... including my mom.

“Mom, please,” I cried but she did like the others and looked away.

“You have disappointed me yet again and this time I won’t stand by and think that you will correct yourself when it clearly isn’t happening.”

"I'm sorry!" I yelled. "I will do better, I promise."

But he didn't care. He continued to drag me out the French doors leading to the garden until we were standing in front of the shed that led to a hidden basement that actually was more like a crawl space—cramped, cold, and dark.

The very same darkness that had made the fundament of my nightmares.

"No! Please! Please don't take me there!"

"You give me no other choice," he sneered as he opened it and instead of letting me down the stairs, he threw me in, closed the doors, and locked it.

"No, please! Please don't leave me here! I'll be better! I'll do better!" I sobbed, but it was no use.

He had already left.

"Please," I cried. "Don't leave me here. Don't leave me."

But like everything else in my life, it was pointless.

I woke up, covered in sweat panting like a maniac. At first, I thought it was my nightmare that was the cause of me waking up, but when my eyes got used to the darkness around me, I saw a pair of very concerned eyes staring at me.

"Are you okay?" Hayden asked, his hand resting on my thigh.

"Yeah," I breathed. "Just a bad dream."

"Want to talk about it?"

"Not really," I said shaking my head. "Can we just cuddle for a bit?"

I could see his shape in the dark as he nodded before laying down with his arms open waiting for me. I tucked myself in next to him and felt him pull me close.

I listened to his breath and every time he inhaled and exhaled, I did the same. I could feel his heartbeat against my back and in a matter of seconds, I was calm again.

"He locked me up," I whispered.

"What?" he asked in a gentle voice, sounding rather surprised that I had said something.

“Whenever I did something, or more didn’t do anything, he would get mad. We had this crawl space in the garden underneath a shed in the far corner. It was cold, the floor was wet and the darkness... The darkness still haunts me to this day.”

“You don’t have to tell me,” he cooed.

“But I do, because I struggle with a few things as a result of that, like for example darkness and cramped spaces,” I sighed. “He first threw me in there when I was around six years old. I remember that I didn’t fully understand what I did wrong and looking back on it, it is easy to see that I didn’t, but in his eyes, I must have. I remember that I felt like I couldn’t breathe, like the walls slowly cramped in on me and that the darkness just swallowed me whole. The floor was always wet after a rainy day, there was nothing in there, no windows, no chair, no mattress no nothing so whenever I was thrown down there, I had to sleep on the ground.”

“How long did he leave you there for?” he asked shocked.

“It depended on a lot of things. Mostly it depended on his mood,” I shrugged. “I often got sick afterward, especially the times where he would leave me for a few days and that was also one of the reasons why the rest of the pack assumed I didn’t have a wolf. My immune system was broken radically over the years. I also remember that I was crying for him to come and get me, that I begged him not to leave me there, I even cried after who I at that time thought was my mom who of course never came, and so I guess it just stuck with me,” I sniffled.

“But you are here now, and I will not let anything hurt you,” he said as he pulled me closer, not that it was possible.

“I know you won’t, but the reason why I am telling you this is that I’m already hurt and I am on my way to healing, but I know that it won’t just happen overnight. I got my family back, I found you, I have my best friend here under the very same roof just like always and I am safe and sound. I can’t complain, but what I can’t either, is act like this hasn’t happened. Especially when my reactions to it all wake you up at night.”

“You can wake me up anytime, you can complain if you need to and most of all I hope that if any of this ever gets too much for you, you will come to me. Right?”

“Right.”

“Tatiana,” he said, his voice stern.

“Hayden?”

“I’m being serious here,” he sighed. “You need to come to me whenever you need it. Or at least someone else if you don’t feel like it is something you can tell me.”

“I know that but-“

“No buts,” he grinned.

“Using my words against me huh? I see how it is,” I snickered.

I felt his fingers run through my hair until he reached the end of a lock and started playing around with it.

“I don’t know how to explain it, and to a normal human this would sound rather rash or way out there, but you already mean so much to me. Your happiness is what keeps me going. The way you smile, the way you laugh, and the way your eyes light up whenever you find something amusing. You are mesmerizing to me, and I will do whatever it takes to continue to make you happy and safe.”

His words went straight to my heart, and I felt my eyes getting wet.

“I will come to you,” I mumbled, trying to hold back a snuffle. “Just don’t expect me to be good at it. I never had anyone besides Kathleen and talking to you about things is much more different than talking to her.”

“Can’t you just act like I’m her?”

“No, because then I would have to tell you about you,” I laughed.

“So, you talk about me?”

“If I had something to say then yes,” I said and thought back to what happened earlier.

“Are you going to tell her about earlier?” he asked, and I swear I could hear the smirk in his voice.

“Damn you, how do you do that?”

“Easy enough,” he shrugged. “I felt your body tense and your skin heat up. It doesn’t really take a genius to figure it out.”

“Sneaky,” I yawned.

“Get some sleep, my love,” he whispered and kissed me on the top of my head. “I will be right here when you wake up.”

And with the reassurance and softness of his words, my eyes grew heavier until sleep took over.

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Hayden's POV

It bothered me a lot to see her like that. The way she whimpered in her sleep while she tossed and turned around, concerned me, and despite now knowing what the cause was, I couldn't do anything to prevent it. For two nights now, she had woken up covered in sweat and tears and I had tried my best to calm her down. It worked for a while, but then again just when I thought it was over for the night, it began all over again.

What made it even more difficult was that she had begun thinking that we should sleep apart, so it didn't affect me and my sleep because that made her sad as well and I knew why. She didn't want to be a bother, but no matter how many times I tried to tell her that she wasn't, she just didn't believe me.

The second she told me that she and Kathleen would take a trip around the gardens and greet some of the pack members, I rushed to Lucas to get him to help me let some steam out.

"It hasn't improved at all?" Lucas asked while sparing with me.

"No," I grunted while throwing a punch.

The way the skin of the punching bag felt against my knuckles with every hit, was exactly what I needed at this moment. It frustrated me deeply that I couldn't do anything to help her when all she needed was help.

"And she won't talk to anyone about it," I added before throwing another. "I mean, she barely talks to me about it. She just told me a bit about it but without too many details."

"Not even Kathleen? I mean, she is supposed to be her best friend, right?" Lucas asked while adjusting his grip, getting ready for the next round.

"No, apparently Kathleen has some adjusting issues, and I don't blame her. Moving away from your entire family after finding out that they have lied to you your entire life... It must be hard," I sighed while wiping my forehead with my arm.

"And it is also the same thing that Tatiana is going through so maybe she is the one she should be talking to," he pointed out.

"I know, but she doesn't want to bother anyone and by adding her own problems on top of Kathleen's, well..."

"I see. She sounds very much like someone I know."

"Your mom, right?"

“Yeah, maybe she should talk to her about it? From what I know about my mother’s upbringing, it brought her some pretty bad dreams too.”

‘You could also just let me be there at night,’ Syx said sounding ever so confident.

‘You think that would help?’ I half huffed in my mind.

‘A scrawny man with hair like a woman or a big bad wolf? Do the math.’

‘Bad? I think you mean fluffy,’ I corrected with an eye roll.

“Is he at it again?” Lucas chuckled knowingly.

“Isn’t he always,” I scoffed.

“What does he want this time?”

“He wants to be the one to sleep with Tatiana at night,” I huffed. “He thinks he can keep the nightmares away.”

“Well, it could be worth a try,” he shrugged.

‘I told you.’

“Shut up,” I muttered to both of them.

I turned around quickly, lifting my right leg up, pulled it back, and before Lucas had the chance to adjust his stance, I kicked with all the power I had in me, sending not only the bag flying but him as well.

“For fuck sake,” he grunted as he landed on the floor. “A heads-up the next time would be nice.”

“I will give it to you if you stop agreeing with Syx,” I argued. “You are only making him more pompous than he already is.”

“You know, it is a good thing to sometimes try to be on the same page as your wolf,” he said casually. “And to be honest Hayden... What is the worst that can happen?”

“I don’t know,” I said as I scratched the back of my head.

‘Just face it, you do not trust me.’

‘I do trust you Syx, but Tatiana is fragile right now and you are quite frankly a bit of a wild card.’

'You think I would hurt my own mate?'

The disbelief was easy to sense and apart from that, disappointment could be felt, and I instantly felt bad.

'Not on purpose no, but she is not Amara,' I pointed out, trying to be as gentle as possible.

'I am aware of that but thank you for the trust.'

The connection between us shut off immediately and I knew it would be a day or two before he came out to me again. Unless I of course gave him what he wanted.

"Great."

I threw my hands up in the air, giving up completely.

"Shut you out again?"

"Like always," I sighed.

"You could just have a bit more faith in him," he chuckled.

"You know what happened the last time I gave him a bit more faith," I scoffed, the memories flooding back.

"It wasn't that bad," he said trying to hold in his laugh.

"Not for you no, but for me," I shook my head. "I will never be able to forget the words that were said or the amount of laughter from that day."

"Lighten up a bit," he mumbled while patting me on the back. "I need to go lay down, so I won't be sparring more with you for now. My freaking tailbone needs to heal," he grumbled while rubbing his lower back.

"Weakling."

"Scaredy cat," he yelled before he walked out the door.

I shook my head at his words, but I knew he was right. I also knew how Syx reacted the second he found out that Tatiana was his mate. He backed away so fast and let me take control so we could shift back, constantly asking me if she was okay, even after she woke up.

He was hurt. He was hurting over the fact that he had hurt her, and he hadn't wanted to shift ever since.

Maybe I should give him some more credit...

'You should.'

'Oh, look who is back and sooner than expected.'

'I'm gone again,' he huffed not exactly happy with my reaction.

'Wait, I am sorry, okay? And I am willing to give it all a chance but...' I paused.

'Great here comes the terms.'

'We ask her first, okay? We ask her what she thinks about it and if she says go, then it's a go.'

There was nothing more to say for him. I had barely gotten the sentence out before he tried to rush me out of the gym. He wanted me to find her right away and ask so he had something to look forward to and me trying to warn him that there was a chance of her saying no, was not exactly something he accepted.

I looked around the garden for a few minutes before I found her sitting on a bench all on her own. She looked... Sad...

I walked up to her with slow steps, but loudly enough for her to hear so she wouldn't get startled.

"What are you doing here by yourself?" I questioned. "Weren't you supposed to be with Kathleen?"

"I lied to you," she sighed. "I'm sorry. I am a terrible mate huh," she sniffled and it was then that I noticed she had been crying.

"No, no you are not," I assured her. "But I would like to know what's wrong if you don't mind sharing."

She nodded and scooted over so I could sit down next to her.

"She didn't feel like it," she sobbed silently. "I don't blame her for being homesick, I mean she did drop everything for my sake, and she has a bit of trouble trying to fit in, but I just miss her, and I miss her being happy and I feel incredibly selfish for sitting here crying about the fact that she doesn't have time for me right now."

She tried to laugh it off, but I could hear the pain in her voice.

“It doesn’t make you selfish to miss someone. It would however have made you seem selfish, had you forced her or guilt-tripped her to come out with you,” I pointed out. “You are allowed to be sad my love.”

“But I make you sad too,” she sniffled and looked at me.

I was about to protest but she beat me to it.

“I can feel it so there is no need to try and deny it,” she sighed. “I know this whole nightmare thing is taking a toll on you.”

“That is not what is taking a toll on me,” I said as I shook my head.

I reached out for her and lifted her up so I could place her on my lap.

“What is taking a toll on me is that my mate is so sad and constantly trying to be so strong on her own when all she needs to do is lean on someone and I know that’s not easy, and I am not blaming you for not being able to do it yet so don’t ever think that.”

She leaned her head against my chest and took a deep breath as she looked over the hills in front of us.

“Did you want something?” she suddenly asked. “Since you came to find me?”

“Oh, yeah, uhm Syx and I, well Syx,” I corrected when I heard him growl. “Had an idea.”

“What idea?”

“He wants to be the one to sleep next to you,” I said slowly while watching out for her reaction. “He thinks it might calm you down and besides he is big and fluffy and-“

“Okay.”

“Okay?” I repeated not sure if I heard correctly.

“We can try that,” she smiled and dried her eyes, and once she said that Syx was howling with joy.

Chapter 26 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Hayden’s POV

I was not entirely comfortable with the situation, but Tatiana was and for me, that was all that mattered. And for Syx as well.

Ever since she had agreed to try it, earlier during the day, he had been on my nerves. He wouldn't keep quiet for long, asking every hour when it was time for bed or telling me how wrong I had been with my assumptions. And to my own annoyance, I had to admit that I had been too quick. Too hasty.

I had jumped the gun and just done what I wanted or what I thought she would want instead of asking her and that had nearly ended in a fallout with Syx.

'Look at her,' he purred.

And I did.

She was standing in the middle of her room with her night shorts and my t-shirt on waiting for me to shift. Her eyes were focused on mine searching them for any sign of regret.

"You might want to turn around," I said feeling my cheeks heat up.

"Why?"

She had this curious look on her face, and I remembered that she had only shifted once and probably forgotten about the whole being naked thing.

"I don't really feel like ripping my clothes so I'm going to have to take them off," I explained and watched her entire face turn red.

"Oh."

She turned around and looked out the windows while I slowly stripped down.

"If you get uncomfortable or want me to shift back, just say so, okay? Syx will respect all of your wishes."

"Don't worry so much," she gushed. "We will be just fine. I am just as much his mate as I am yours."

I nodded despite her not being able to see it, took a deep breath, and let Syx take control.

Tatiana's POV

I waited patiently, somewhat nervous for him to shift. Not because I would be using a wolf as my pillow for the night, but because it was something I never in my wildest dreams had thought would happen. The only time I ever saw his wolf was in a blink of an eye the day we met but this time was different.

Before long I heard the sound of something making its way over to me. The sound of paws crossing my floor was heavy and after a few seconds, I could feel a hot breath on my neck.

I turned around slowly and had to look up. He was gigantic, bigger than most of the wolves back at my old pack. His eyes glowed in the dark room, his breath sounded heavy and with slow motions, I lifted my hand and gently ran it through his fur on the side of his head. I felt him lean against my hand while a soft purr met my ears.

His eyes were closed, his ears were leaned back and the more I scratched him, the more his head tilted to the side. He enjoyed it.

“Hi Syx,” I cooed. “It’s nice to finally meet you properly.”

His head was heavy and as if he felt my hand struggling to stay up, he lifted his head, leaned closer to me, and with his wet snout guided me to the bed. A bed that now seemed incredibly small compared to him.

“How about you go lay on the bed first, you know, make yourself comfortable, and then I’ll come after?”

The big furry head nodded, the tongue hanging slightly out of his mouth as he trotted around the bed and with one paw after another, climbed on top of it. The bed gave after under the weight of him while he examined the mattress. I looked at him with curious eyes as he patted the pillows around a bit with his front paws and watched as he plopped down on the bed with a thud, before rolling onto his side.

He then looked at me, waiting patiently for me to come over. In this position and with his tongue still hanging out of his tilted head, he looked more like a giant puppy than a wolf.

I, one step after another, walked to the bed and once I was there, I looked at him again with a smile forming on my lips.

“You comfortable?”

A small nod.

“It’s just... You are so big,” I said in awe, and even though I didn’t know that a wolf could smirk, I saw him do it. “Not in that way you pig,” I scolded, trying to hide my own amusement.

If wolves could laugh, I bet it would have sounded just like the wheezing noise he made. I rolled my eyes at the big animal in front of me before climbing into bed. I had no need for a pillow, which he also had made very clear seeing as he had thrown himself on them and so I pulled the cover off a bit, got under it, and let myself lean back against him.

His fur almost immediately swallowed me, the warmth from his body granting me a sense of comfort I hadn't felt before.

He rolled himself up a bit, so his head was resting next to mine, his cold and wet snout touching my right arm in the process. It was almost as if he was hugging me with his body. His giant paw was resting on my stomach and out of pure instinct, I laid my hand on it and started running my fingers over his fur. He instantly started purring and the vibrating sensation from his body from doing so, began lulling me to sleep.

"This is nice," I mumbled in a tired voice before letting out a yawn.

He grunted in response and when I turned my head slightly to the right, I noticed that he was staring straight at me, watching my every move. His eyes were soft and filled with what looked like concern and it was then I remembered that the first time we had met, he had accidentally hurt me.

"You look worried," I pointed out.

He let out a small whimper and put his snout under my arms as if to hide himself.

"You know," I began. "I'm not blaming you for the way we met the first time. If anything, I am really thankful that you are protecting Hayden like that," I spoke in a soft tone and watched as he slowly lifted his eyes to meet mine again. "And yourself for that matter. After all, you are both my mate and I care equally about you, and I hope that you know that."

He really was like a big teddy bear. He might look big and scary on the outside, but inside he was a softie who worried that he would somehow hurt me again.

"Don't worry so much. I trust you Syx," I cooed as I cuddled closer to him.

I felt his body relax, and with that, I relaxed as well. All the tension I had felt not only from him but also from myself, had disappeared and as darkness slowly started to cover the entire room, sleep fell over me, and soon I was in dreamland with no nightmares in sight.

I woke up to the sound of heavy snoring right in my ear. It was so comfortable, so soft, and for a second, I had forgotten why. I turned my head to the side and noticed Syx laying in the same position as when we went to bed. His eyes were closed, and his breathing was heavy, so I knew he was still very much asleep.

I turned on my side so my hand was able to reach the top of his head and once I started to run my fingers over him, he slowly began waking up.

"Thank you," I whispered to him before letting my hands drop around his giant head.

I pulled him, or more like I pulled myself in, for a hug and felt the way his head rested on my shoulder while doing so.

"I slept wonderfully," I added. "No nightmares, no nothing. Maybe this is what we are going to do from now on. Hayden during the day, Syx during the night," I teased with a wink and knew somehow that it would annoy Hayden.

Syx let his head fall back and the same wheezing sound from yesterday left his mouth while his tongue once again dropped to the side.

"Just kidding, just kidding," I grinned. "However, this will definitely not be the last sleepover you and I have," I added and rubbed him on his neck. "Next time Amara can join too. Now can I get Hayden out please?"

He tilted his head, his eyes glued to mine, and for a little while, I thought he would roll his eyes at me but to my surprise he with a very quick move let his tongue run over my entire face and I was not able to stop him.

"Mhm, thank you," I chuckled as he jumped off the bed, almost flipping me over when the mattress shifted under me. "Love you too bud."

I dried my face in Hayden's t-shirt as I turned around on the bed. Not that I had anything against seeing him naked, but I didn't know whether or not he would like it.

I waited patiently, trying to ignore the sound of bones breaking until I felt his arms around me.

"Was it that bad for you?" I asked him when he didn't release his grip around me.

"No, I'm just happy you got some sleep and I guess I just missed holding you," he said in a soft voice while he buried his face in my neck. "I had you so close and yet so far. I wasn't able to just reach out and pull you into my arms like I normally would do," he complained.

"First of all, you didn't really have any arms to pull me into, and second of all, you can hug me now," I smiled and flipped around so we were now face to face.

"Syx enjoyed it very much. I should have put more faith in him," he sighed.

"You really should," I nodded.

"You know, he tried to stay awake to make sure you were sleeping."

"He did what?" I asked shocked. "So, he didn't get any sleep at all?"

"He did eventually after I basically forced him to."

“Forced him how?”

“I told him that either he went to sleep, or I would force a shift and the second I said that he flipped me off and fell asleep not long after,” he smirked obviously proud of himself.

“Clever man,” I snickered and leaned up to kiss his nose.

"It was as much for his own sake as it was for mine," he shrugged. "Being in wolf form for that long is exhausting and takes some serious strength and determination."

"Why did you agree to it then?" I asked as I swatted his arm. "I wouldn't have said yes if I had known it wouldn't be good for you."

"Because both he and I agreed it might be good for you and that was what mattered," he smiled and kissed me on the nose. "Now let's go get something to eat because I am starving!"

He jumped off the bed and reached his hand out for me to take.

"Let's go then," I grinned and let him lead me to where all the magic happened in this house.

The kitchen.

Chapter 27 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana's POV

“The next time you decide to have a full-grown beast in your bedroom, can you then maybe, I don't know, warn us so we can find somewhere else to sleep?” Cross groaned the minute we arrived.

“Excuse you and morning to you too,” I snorted.

“No, seriously I got no sleep at all,” he whined.

“Don't be such a baby,” Dani snickered. “I slept just fine.”

“You can sleep through a nuclear war if that were ever to happen,” he huffed.

“Or maybe it is because I am used to having a full-grown beast in the bedroom,” she pointed out.

Cross who was about to make another statement opened his mouth only to shut it again.

“Now, that... That I can get on board with!”

“Oh honey, I think you misunderstood,” she said softly and placed her hand on his shoulder. “It’s not that you are a beast, it’s that you snore like one!”

I couldn’t contain myself and burst out laughing.

“Now that was a good one!” I exclaimed.

“Is it everyone against Cross day today or did I miss something?” he grumbled while playing around with his eggs.

“You know, you are just too sensitive,” I shrugged while filling my plate. “I slept next to him, and it didn’t bother me one bit.”

“You mean you slept through that amount of snoring?” he asked shocked. “I mean, no offense bro, but Syx needs to go see a doctor about that.”

“He is a wolf what did you expect?” Hayden sighed. “And as a matter of fact, she slept through the entire night.”

“No shit?! Really?” Lucas exclaimed from the end of the table. “That is only a good thing.”

“It sure is,” I nodded. “Now-“

I didn’t get to finish my sentence before someone came bursting through the doors behind me panting like an idiot.

I turned around quickly to see who it was and was shocked to find him standing so close to me.

It was a guy; one I hadn’t seen before.

He was tall with broad shoulders. He had tattoos covering both of his arms and from the looks of it, they continued inwards towards his chest area. His long dark hair was flowing freely, and his eyes were not just dark. No, they were black. So black that looking into them felt like falling into a hole.

Hayden who had already sat down, quickly got up and rushed to my side, not looking particularly happy about the closeness of this guy.

“There are issues at the border. The Luna and Alpha need you there,” he snapped.

I looked at Hayden who was already halfway out the door, before looking around. Everyone else had gotten up, completely forgetting about their breakfast, and headed

for the door where this mystery guy was now standing, looking like he was waiting for something. I hadn't even noticed that he had moved before now.

Once I neared him, he put his hand out in front of me to stop me from moving further.

"Excuse me what are you doing?"

"Everyone but you," he simply stated.

"Excuse me? Do you know who I am?" I asked shocked, debating with myself whether or not I could take this guy on.

He looked around to see if we were alone and when he noticed that everyone had already left, his entire demeanor changed, his eyes darkened, and a low growl could be heard.

"A little girl who obviously is causing more trouble than she is worth," he sneered, practically spitting in my face while doing so. "Now, be a good girl for once and stay fucking put."

I was too stunned to speak; too shocked to even try and stop him as he rushed outside to the others. How could someone I had never met, never even laid my eyes on, have such strong opinions of me and opinions filled with such hate?

The way he spoke to me, the tone he used once we were alone was filled with so much venom that it almost paralyzed me.

Almost.

Once the shock wore off, I shook my head and ran out. No way in hell was I going to let some haughty guy like him, think he could boss me around like that.

I had barely made it out the front door before I once again was stopped, this time he popped up in front of me scaring me half to death.

"Jesus mother!" I yelped.

"I had a feeling you would come out here no matter what I said... You don't really listen, do you?"

"You don't really understand, do you?" I fired back. "You think I will just take orders from someone I don't even know?"

"Moon goddess above," he murmured. "Listen, you might hate this and so do I, but I have been ordered to keep you safe and sound while this is going down."

“Ordered? Ordered by who?” I asked. “What is going down?”

He just flipped me off and began pushing me back inside.

“Hey! I asked you something for crying out loud!” I exclaimed while spreading my arms so much that they blocked the door entirely while my hands gripped on to the doorframe making it impossible for him to push me through it.

“And I decided not to answer!”

“Who are you to think that you can just treat me this way? I am more than capable of handling things on my own and I certainly am more than capable of protecting myself!”

“Listen, either you turn around by your own will or I will drag you in, now which do you prefer?” he asked while staring me down.

“Do you listen, or do you just wait to speak?” I snapped glaring right back at him.

“Do you speak to your mother with that mouth?” he smirked as he leaned against the railing.

“No, but I kiss my mate with it and I am pretty sure he would love it if you didn’t touch me,” I spat.

I don’t know what it was in that sentence that pissed him off, but before I could react to it, his arms went around me in a tight grip. One on my back and one just underneath my ass.

“What are you-“

I was cut off by my own scream as he flung me over his shoulder and began carrying me inside.

“Put me down this instant!” I yelled at him while hitting his back. “Hello? Are you deaf?”

“No but I will be if you continue to scream like that in my goddamn ear!” he complained as he put me down gently on the couch.

At least he didn’t throw me...

“What in the world! What are you? An animal?” I huffed as I straightened my clothes not really thinking about the words coming out of my mouth.

“Last time I checked, yes,” he chuckled. “Now stay put. I will not ask you again.”

The audacity of this guy was getting to me and I felt myself getting slightly annoyed.

"Listen, you said yourself that something is going on outside and if I can't go out there, then at least tell me what it is," I sighed.

"You can't mind link?"

"No," I mumbled and looked through the window. "But I wish I could."

He looked at me curiously, his eyes narrowing slightly before opening wide.

"You are not officially in this pack yet are you?" he questioned. "Well, you can't be since Zaya isn't here, which means you can't mind link. Not even with your own mate."

His last statement was meant more for himself than me as he said it almost as a whisper.

"Fine," he said as he shook his head. "There have been seen scouts around the pack land, some of them even tried to pass over the border but thanks to your dear mom, they couldn't without being noticed."

"So everything is fine then?"

"Not exactly," he said clearing his throat. "Some of the guards were attacked when they tried to keep them from getting in."

"I don't understand," I admitted. "You said they didn't get in right?"

"I said they didn't get in without getting noticed," he corrected. "Which is why you need to stay here."

"Wait!" I exclaimed as I jumped off the couch. "You mean that they are here? Right now?"

I stared him down, waiting for him to answer me, but the silence that had suddenly appeared between us was answer enough.

Chapter 28 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Hayden's POV

"What is going on?" I asked as soon as I saw my dad.

"There was a breach. The guards managed to fight down a few of them but..."

"But what?"

"A few of them managed to slip in..." he sighed deeply while rubbing his forehead.

“They can’t lay low here, mom will find them,” Dani pointed out.

“And she is desperately trying to do so but we still need to have our guards up,” he said. “I want Dani and Cross to circle around the inner section. Look for anything out of place, search near the houses and then meet up here again after. Lucas and Hayden, I need both of you to join Alpha Shane outside the border.”

“Dad, I can’t, I need to go be with Tatiana,” I argued. “We still can’t mind link with each other, and she probably has no idea of what is going on.”

“She is safe and sound,” was all he said.

“You don’t understand. She was following us out at first and then she didn’t. I don’t know where she is or if she is okay-“

“Hayden, listen to me, the best way you can protect her now is to do what I am asking. She is safe and sound and she did not follow you out because we have someone looking out for her. She cannot be out here,” he said shaking his head. “Not until we know it is safe.”

“And what if this protection fails? What if being inside the packhouse is bringing her in more danger?” I questioned and watched my dad’s face twist up.

“I suppose the pack house will be the first place to look,” he mumbled. “But she isn’t alone.”

“Well neither are the ones that got in,” Lucas pointed out from the side. “I am sure my dad will be just fine with my help and I am sure he would appreciate it if Hayden looked after my sister.”

My dad looked from me to Lucas before he let out another sigh.

“You two always seem to gang up against the adults huh?”

“You should be used to it now,” I said and patted him on the back. “Mind link me when it is safe or if there is any progress at all.”

I didn’t stay around for an answer. I ran directly back to the packhouse with only two things on my mind. Her and her safety.

In times like these, I could not, not be with her. The only way I knew she would be completely safe, was if she was next to me and not alone with some blockhead. I swear if Gabriel is the one watching her...

‘I will use his head as my new chew toy,’ Syx growled.

'You and me both buddy.'

I didn't need to look for her. Her voice echoed through the room just as I entered.

"Are you always this obnoxious or is it a new thing you are trying?"

"You know, you could try to be a little grateful here," he snapped. "Or at least show it."

'Gabriel,' Syx scowled.

I looked around the corner to see her standing in front of him, her arms crossed over her chest and her eyes, which were filled with fury, were staring him down. It was quite funny to see considering she was so much smaller than he was.

He was leaned back rather casually with his hands in his pockets, acting just as smug as always but the way he looked at her didn't match the tone in his voice when he spoke and I for one did not particularly like that.

"Oh, I will show you grateful," she hissed balling her fists.

I made myself present in the room by clearing my throat.

"I would appreciate it if you stopped bothering my mate, Gabriel."

Tatiana's POV

I hadn't heard him when he entered. I was too pissed off to focus on anything other than the obnoxious dog in front of me.

However, I did hear him when he spoke and the tone in his voice made a shiver run down my spine. There it was. That possessiveness he had shown me only once before.

"Oh, dear Hayden," he snickered. "I wouldn't say I'm bothering her, I'm more... keeping her safe," he grinned obviously taunting him. "Maybe it's not as much if I'm bothering her, as it is bothering you?"

"Shut up, and back off," he said through gritted teeth. "I don't know who chose you for this assignment, but I am here now so we will no longer need your service."

"Too bad," he shrugged. "The high-up man himself ordered me to stay here no matter what and sorry to tell you, but you go under that category as well."

He plopped down on the couch behind us just as Hayden crossed the room to get to me.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

“Me? Are you?”

I looked him up and down trying to see if he was hurt.

“I’m fine, I didn’t participate like the rest of them are. I came here instead. Now are you okay?” he asked again, this time his fingers held my chin so I would have to look into his eyes.

“Besides getting babysat by a twat then yes, I am fine,” I assured him.

“Twat? I have been called many things but never quite something like that,” he laughed. “Isn’t it British?”

“I don’t know what it is other than suitable for you,” I fired feeling Hayden’s body vibrate as he was laughing in silence.

“Again with that mouth of yours,” he smirked. “I wonder what else it can do.”

And that was it. I had no possible way of stopping or trying to prevent what was going to happen. Hayden sprinted away from me and within a split second stood leaned over Gabriel who was still casually sitting on the couch as if nothing had happened.

He grabbed him by his collar and pulled him up. They were both around the same size which meant that no one had the upper hand, so this could really go either way.

“Are you fucking kidding me right now?” he yelled.

“No, no not really,” he chuckled, trying to piss him off some more.

“Hayden,” I cooed from the side.

“If you ever speak that way to her again or even get near her like you did before I got here, I won’t hesitate to hurt you,” he growled. “Do you understand me?”

The way his eyes had darkened, the way the growls and sneers ripped from his throat made it quite obvious that if I didn’t get them away from each other, Syx would take control and probably actually rip this guy’s head off.

“Hayden,” I said again, this time sterner.

I walked to him and put my hand on his arm trying to soothe him.

“This is not the time for it, remember?”

I felt like a complete shithead for using the timing as an excuse, but right now neither of us knew what was going on outside and I was not ready to take any chances no matter how badly I wanted to see Hayden put him in his place.

“Please,” I begged and watched him relax.

He let go of Gabriel, took my hand, and dragged me to the other side of the room.

“I’m sorry you had to see that,” he sighed while looking down.

“What is it with you two?”

“Let’s just say we had some trouble in the past,” Gabriel said from the other end.

“I figured that much,” I groaned. “Can we at least-“

I was cut off by Gabriel who got up and went towards the door not caring that I was speaking to both of them.

“Where are you going?”

“Just let him leave,” Hayden sighed.

“Pretty boy is right, you should let me leave,” he nodded. “Besides my job here is done. They caught one and want you out there to put a name on the man. I’m pretty sure your mate can handle that much,” he yelled back as he walked through the doors.

Had Hayden not pulled me towards the other exit I would have jumped his face.

“I think it’s your time to calm down now,” he muttered as he gave my hand a squeeze. “But he is right, they are requesting us outside.”

“The nerve of that guy…”

“Tell me about it,” he huffed.

He opened the back door for me, and we didn’t walk for long before I saw Lucas standing next to dad who had his arms around mom, Dani and Cross next to them, and on the ground in front of them was a man on his knees being held down by Ryan and Kyle.

“You have got to be kidding me,” I murmured as we closed in on them.

“I take it you know him?” dad questioned.

“I wish I could say I didn’t.”

Chapter 29 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana's POV

I stared at the man in front of me, my heart racing and my palms getting sweaty but this time it wasn't because I was getting nervous, no it was because I was getting angry. A feeling that was very new to me and yet so familiar.

"Well, what do you know," he snickered from the ground. "I don't even have to look up to know that it is you. That annoying voice of yours and your scent surely is enough."

"Hello, Chad," I said just as he looked up as much as he could with Kyle still pinning him down. "Wish I could say that it was a pleasure."

"Likewise," he snapped.

Well, his attitude had not changed one bit, not that I had thought it would over such a short period of time.

"What are you doing here Chad? And do not try to lie about it. The more you lie the worse it will get."

"Shut up Cassie..."

"My name is not Cassie," I said through gritted teeth. "And you know that."

"Okay Cassie, but just so you know, I did my homework and I know that the royal pack won't condone violence or turn to it even, so I think I'm safe even if I don't speak."

Hayden stepped in front of me ready to punch his sorry ass from here until Sunday, but I grabbed his arm, shook my head, and pulled him back next to me.

"Oh, what is that? A little mate, is it?" he taunted. "So, miracles really do happen, huh. Good to know."

His arrogance pissed me off and he was wrong if he thought I would let him off the hook that easily.

"You better watch your mouth when speaking to my daughter," dad sneered.

"It's okay dad," I assured him. "You seem to forget one thing Chad," I spoke as I bend down to his level. "This is my home. My family. My pack and you are trespassing with ill intentions and that you can't lie about because my mom is a walking lie detector. You are, however, right in your assumptions. They won't turn to violence..." he looked at me with a smug expression. An expression that I knew would change very soon. "But I will."

“You? You wouldn’t even if you could.”

“Who says I can’t? Oh, did I forget to tell you? The elder witch who has to perform the ritual so that I am officially a part of this pack, well, let’s just say that I haven’t met her yet.”

It took a little while for him to fully understand what I was saying, but when he did, the smug grin disappeared, and he swallowed.

“So, you are not a part of the pack?”

“Officially no,” I chuckled. “And it did bother a lot. Until now. Because that means that my hands and I aren’t bound by the law like the rest of my family.”

“Come on man, you wouldn’t let her do that now, would you? I mean you are an oh-so-respected alpha that takes his laws seriously, right? Or is that all lies?”

He tried to hide the nervous tone in his voice, but he failed, and he knew it.

“That is the alpha you are speaking to, and you will address him as such,” Kyle said and pushed him further down to the ground.

“You may confuse me with my mate,” my dad said. “I might be the Alpha here, but she is the queen, and unlike your pack which I have already heard so much about, more than needed, here we respect our women. So, my dear, what do you think?” he asked and turned to my mom whose face was unrecognizable.

Her normally happy face, which was always covered with the biggest smile, was red with fury and her smile was turned into a frown.

“As a matter of fact, I think we should let those two get some privacy,” she grinned. “Take him to the barn first. I don’t want to have a mess all over my freshly cut lawn.”

She waved them off before she walked over to me and laid her hand on my arm. She looked back to see them just as they dragged him and his protesting ass inside and shut the doors.

“I know you won’t hurt him, you are not like he is, but don’t let him get to you either,” she said.

“Will you inform Kathleen?” I asked. “After all, he is still her brother.”

She looked at me quite shocked.

“The apple does fall far from the trees sometimes huh? Make sure he is tied up properly. We might not do violence here, but we sure can keep a trespasser as a

prisoner,” she pointed out. “And I will inform her about this and send her your way so be prepared.”

“Will do,” I nodded and looked to Hayden who hadn’t moved an inch. “I’m taking it you are coming with me?”

“Actually, we both are,” the obnoxious voice sighed from behind.

“Really? At the chance of sounding like a bitch, do you not have anything better to do than to follow me around?”

“As a matter of fact, no. I have been told to be your personal guard and that is what I will do,” he said and pushed himself away from the tree he was leaning against. “Ladies first,” he mocked, with a little bow.

I rolled my eyes, took Hayden’s hand, and walked with him to the barn. I rubbed my thumb over his, in an attempt to calm him down. I didn’t know what had gone down between those two, but whatever it was, it must have been bad for Hayden to get triggered by him that easily.

Kyle and Ryan stood at the entrance waiting for us when we arrived.

“He is all tied up now, are you good here?”

“We are,” I spoke in a clear tone knowing that Chad would be listening, and I was not about to sound insecure in front of him. “Thank you.”

They both nodded, gave Hayden a look, and walked away not even acknowledging Gabriel’s presence.

“I see your folks have the same thoughts about me as you do,” he chuckled.

“You don’t want to go there. Not now so shut up,” he sneered and walked inside.

I decided not to ask and just follow him into where Chad was currently being kept. They had chosen the smallest and darkest room to put him in and I couldn’t help but wonder if Hayden had spoken to his dads about what happened to me back then.

“Finally,” he breathed. “Took you long enough to get here. And I see you brought another little lap dog. Who is that?”

“He is none of your concern right now,” I stated. “What you should be concerned about, however, is what will happen from now on.”

“I’m not scared of you,” he spat.

“Oh, I know that,” I said casually while pulling over a chair that had been standing in the corner. “Why have you come here?”

“For the sightseeing.”

“You know, for someone in your position, using sarcasm doesn’t really seem like a great choice,” Gabriel pointed out.

“Just like that shirt wasn’t a great choice for you either, but I suppose we all make mistakes,” he shrugged.

“Enough,” I stated and stood up. “You are aware that your sister is here, right?”

“So?”

“So, why would you attack this place knowing that she could get hurt in the process?”

I never understood him; I never tried to, seeing as I didn’t like him but one thing, he always held dear despite not really showing it, was her. Whenever there was an issue with their parents, he took the blame. He even convinced their dad to go easy on her and as a punishment his dad would go double as hard on him, and he just took it without even complaining once.

“I’m not stupid. She is your best friend and I know she is safe here with you.”

“She is, but don’t you think that this would disappoint her?”

“It’s not worse than any of the other crap I have done in my life, so no, not really,” he said sounding bored.

“You know what...”

I got up from the chair, pushed it back so far that he couldn’t reach it, and then turned to look at him.

“I would have let her come and see you now, but I think it will be so much better for you to get some time alone, don’t you think?”

“Weren’t you going to question me?”

“Were you going to answer?”

“Not likely.”

“Then no,” I smiled.

"I told you that you couldn't do it," he laughed.

"Do what?"

"Torture me," he answered. "You have always been the weak one."

"Oh, but that is where you are wrong," I smirked. "Torture comes in many forms and sometimes being left alone for too long with no one to talk to, nothing to listen to besides your own thoughts, and not even a single ray of sunshine to touch your face, can be far worse than any physical pain," I spat and watched him gulp.

And as the memories of what happened to me resurfaced, I turned my back to him so fast that he wouldn't see the lone tear running down my cheek. My eyes lifted from the ground, and my lids blinked furiously to keep the rest of the tears in check as I kept my head as high as I could. He couldn't see my weakness. If he did, I would lose.

I looked to both Gabriel and Hayden, who both stared at me with intensity.

"We are done here."

And with that, we left, with the wonderful sound of Chad screaming my name out in frustration.

Chapter 30 - Lost II - The Royal Hybrid

Tatiana's POV

"Cassie! You better not just leave me here," he screamed just before Gabriel slammed the door shut, blocking his voice out.

"Are you okay?" Hayden asked as he pulled me into his arms while Chad's muffled screams and complaints could be heard in the distance.

"I will be, but I need to speak with Kathleen and explain things to her," I sighed. "Can you go find her for me? I don't really feel like going inside and facing a lot of people right now."

"Of course," he cooed and kissed me on the cheek. "I'll go get her now. I expect that you will watch her?" he asked Gabriel, not even bothering to turn and look at him.

"It's my job after all."

He rolled his eyes, took my head in his hands, and placed a kiss on my forehead.

"If he gives you any trouble, any grieve whatsoever, just kick where the sun doesn't shine, okay?"

“Yes, sir,” I snickered.

“I can hear you; you know.”

“That was the point,” Hayden yelled as he walked towards the house.

I turned around slowly and stared at the old barn in front of me. Chad was here. I thought that by getting away from the pack, that everything would be better, but I was naive. Of course, they would come looking for me and of course, he would be in on it out of all people. I hadn't realized that my body had started trembling before Gabriel spoke.

“Are you really okay or do you just not want to worry him?” he questioned; his voice softer than ever before.

“I-I'm fine,” I stuttered a bit startled by his tenderness. “I don't want him to worry. I don't ever want him to worry, but seeing Chad... It just...”

“Brought out bad memories?”

“Exactly,” I sighed. “And now I have to tell my best friend that her brother is here and that she can't see him because he is getting...”

“Tortured?”

“Punished...” I corrected.

“You really don't like that word huh?”

“When you have been on the receiving end of it... No.”

He looked at me, eyes as hard as rocks before he turned around so fast that I would have missed his movements had I blinked.

“It is over now.”

His voice was hoarse, and his shoulders moved up and down faster and faster as his breathing quickened. His hands were balled into fists and his entire body was shaking.

His reaction, his voice, his tone... It all resembled the way Hayden reacted whenever he learned something new about my childhood, something that he didn't like. I didn't know why he reacted that way and as much as I wanted to ask him, a part of me didn't want to. His mood shifted constantly making it very hard for me to keep up with it, and now that I was on his good side, or so it seemed at least, I wanted to stay on it. Going on and questioning his behavior was probably not the best way to do so.

“It’s over now,” he repeated.

His voice, the second time, was barely a whisper, yet the words he spoke were very audible and it was then that I realized that he was saying it more to himself than to me.

I opened my mouth to say something, anything really, to try and calm him down, but before I had the chance to do so, Kathleen came running towards me yelling my name.

“Kath,” I began once she was right in front of me panting from all the running.

“Where is he,” she interrupted.

“He is in there,” I told her and pointed to the barn.

“I want to see him.”

“You can’t.”

I tried to speak to her in a calm and collected tone to make it seem like everything was okay, while I on the inside was at my bursting point desperately clinging to the last bit of calmness I had in me.

“He is my brother,” she snapped. “And I want to see him. Now!”

It hurt me to see her like that, it really did. I knew she would react in some way, and this way was one of the many reactions she could have, but just because I was prepared didn’t make it hurt any less. The sorrow in her eyes, the disbelief, and demand in her voice... It hurt and what hurt me more was the fact that I had to try and reason with her. That I had to be the one to make her understand that I didn’t try to keep her from him out of cruelty, but out of safety. Not just hers, but everyone’s. But how could I be the one to explain to a sister that she wasn’t allowed to see her own brother? That her own brother could betray her and manipulate her to his benefit? I never had that bond that they do because I never knew my brother, but one thing I do know... Had I had one while growing up, I wouldn’t listen to reason now either.

“Kath...”

“You can’t see your brother right now and that is all there is to say,” Gabriel cut in just as Hayden returned.

“Who are you to decide that huh?” she screamed as she took a step towards him.

I grabbed her arm trying to pull her back, but she just shrugged me off.

“He is to decide that because your brother just trespassed onto our land with the intention of hurting Tatiana,” Hayden said, his voice dark and his eyes narrowing. “Your best friend.”

“You don’t know that,” she said shaking her head while standing her ground.

“I don’t? Well then, I can inform you of a few things. Not only did he and whoever he had with him, hurt a few of our guards to even get in, some are even in worse shape than we first thought, but our Luna felt the ill intentions of him and his men the second they set foot on the grounds, and despite him not saying anything about his plan with coming here, it’s seeming pretty obvious to me.”

“He wanted to take Tatiana back,” Gabriel growled making Kathleen flinch.

“You said so yourself when we left the pack,” I mumbled. “He knew about it all and he still works for Killian.”

“I know but...”

“We won’t hurt him,” Hayden sighed, clearly not satisfied with it. “But we will need to make him talk and once he does you will be able to see him, but not before then.”

“And why not?” she asked crossing her arms over her chest, not giving up the fight yet.

“Because of the simple fact that he is indeed your brother,” Gabriel shrugged. “That is the way you will see him and nothing more. He is your loving brother that you grew up with and love so very dearly and so when you talk, you might end up saying something that you shouldn’t.”

“So, just to be clear here... You are saying that you think I will betray you? That I will betray my best friend who I gave up my pack for? My entire life as I knew it?” she gasped sounding incredibly offended which I couldn’t blame her for.

“That is not what he means,” I tried.

“Oh, that is exactly what I mean,” he chuckled. “I have had the pleasure of listening to that guy for a few minutes and he is as manipulative as they come and I have no doubt that he will try to manipulate you as well, sister or not. A guy like him will exploit your weaknesses if he knows them and gets the chance to do it and he knows yours and trust me...” he paused as he turned and looked Kathleen directly in the eyes. “He will use it for his own gain and what will end up being your downfall.”