

Chapter 101 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

I found myself in the center of the evergreen grasses. Swaying my feet through the tender earth, I plummeted forward with my arms stretched out. The air was a gentle caress in the fields, carrying the sweet fragrance of blossoming flowers.

The sun emerged on that beautiful day, casting a warm glow upon the meadow, and the grass beneath my feet danced in response. Butterflies painted the air with delicate strokes of color and even the sky above was a canvas of pastel hues.

I sucked in a deep breath through my nose and lips as I approached the banks of a crystal blue river. There, I came to a halt. The winds fluttered my face and blew right through my hair. I laid amidst the grasses and my heart resonated with the gentle breeze.

Time had lost its grip in this world, and everything else seemed suspended. My arms fell wide to embrace the earth beneath and then I closed my eyes.

It was only when I did, that I was whisked back to my reality. My soul and body plunged through the realms until I jerked forward. Now, I was laying on the bed in Denver's arms. And he held softly around me, that he was the first thing my eyes saw when they opened.

And I realized it was only a dream. The beautiful grasses, the butterflies, the blissful air, the peace...it was all a dream.

My eyelids shot open, bearing the burden of my realization and I didn't know when the tears welled up in my eyes. "Hey" Denver whispered, squeezing my hands in his and he pulled me closer to him.

"It's okay" I remembered it all at that moment. The Hybrid Curse, Aurora, every terrible thing that still existed in this world. And my heart wrenched in my chest but for one thing, I was thankful.

And that was the fact that Denver was safe now, that he was here.

So I rested my head upon his shoulders, allowing his arms to grip around me. His scent trickled up my nose and his mere presence was comforting enough. I heaved in a deep breath whilst his arms smothered along my back. This was something I once took for granted,

—the safety and peace that I felt when I was in his arms.

He kissed my forehead before letting his lips fall to my ears. "It's okay" He said again. Now, he knew I was pregnant. I'd already told him the night that he was rescued and Denver had already been through a gazillion of emotions, most of which I didn't even see.

But right now, all he said was all he's ever said.

"We'll figure it out. We'll figure everything out" And he was a firm believer in those words. I pulled away to gaze into his green eyes while I nodded. "We will" Because he was a firm believer, I was too.

I believed in him.

At that moment, the doors pulled open from behind and I threw a look back at my Grandma and she'd come with both Ivan and Blake and—

"Elijah!" I squealed as he ran towards the bed. My heart melted. I'd never been this excited to see him. He jumped onto the bed and fell right in my arms. "Mommy!" He yelled. There was a crack in his little voice.

"I missed you"

"I missed you and Daddy!" He withdrew from my arms only to fall into Denver's. "Careful!" I softly exclaimed as Denver shut his eyes. He still had wounds on his body from the car crash. Some were healing but it was evident the pain was still there.

He looked at me, shaking his head. He didn't care about the pain, he was only happy to see his son again. And his large arms held around Elijah.

"What happened to you here?" Elijah plucked at his eyebrows which had a scar running through the hair and I scuffed. "It's pretty cool, isn't it?" Denver replied him with a half-smile and Elijah chuckled.

"It is!"

"Now, I want one" He said. For that moment, my heart exploded with laughter. Denver's too. But my Nana reached for his hands. "Absolutely not" She chimed in, roping him away. But only to give Denver his medications. She handed him a tray of her signature herbal tea.

Very awfully scented, even for a Werewolf but it worked like magic.

Denver was fairing well in no time.

"And you..." She turned to me. "Glad to see you've finally rested" She muttered. And I couldn't remember the last time I'd actually slept. It's no wonder I dreamt like a newborn. But now, I was awake.

And being awake meant confronting every truth, every hanging uncertainty that still existed.

"Where's Dad?" I climbed out of bed, slipping my hands through my robe and Nana walked over. "Eliana," She softly called. "I've gotten enough sleep. But it doesn't mean we can afford to take a break. We don't have much time. He already told me the truth—"

"He told me too" Nana replied. "Of Dante, and the little boy. I couldn't even believe it. All this time, I thought your mother hated me and that was the only reason she stayed away" Nana said.

"All that time, she was just in love and pregnant and you know frowned upon that was in the past. Especially as a Hybrid" I stood up. "I can't even imagine how tough it would've been for my brother back then."

"You're sure he somehow escaped from the Witches?" Nana asked me and I nodded. "Well, Aurora being back is the exact answer to that question. If they had him, the curse would no longer exist and they would not need me now" I replied.

"You're right" Nana heaved. "But Aurora?" She was still trying to wrap her head around that fact like I was. My heart stomped once I threw a look back at Denver.

"Is he okay?" My Grandma asked and I pushed a hard lump down my throat. "It's not him I'm worried about. It's Blake" I muttered. If anyone knew how much he loved Aurora, even undoubtedly still does, it was me whose life he almost took to bring her back.

And now, she was.

"I don't understand, why Aurora though?" I asked Nana, perhaps she understood the twisted minds of the Witches.

"Torment" She simply replied. "She has a past with the brothers, one of whom is now married to you, a Hybrid, the key to ending the Curse" She added. I shook my head. "Doesn't make sense" I whispered.

"What part of it?"

"The lengths they're willing to go." I said. "You brought back Nora, so you of all people know how easy it is to bring someone back" Nana said.

"But it upsets the balance of nature, my mother warned me herself. When I wanted to bring her back, she said it could have devastating effects. The Witches know this, and they still went ahead to bring Aurora back?" I pushed a hard lump down my throat.

"You said it yourself," Nana shrugged. "The lengths they're willing to go"

"For a century-long curse, it's understandable" Nana muttered and there was a flash of guilt in her eyes. "And it's all because of me" She added.

"No, Grandma. We're way past that."

"We just need to find another way to break the Curse, or maybe a loophole. There's always plenty of that. But what we aren't going to do is blame ourselves" I said. "What if there is no other way?" Nana asked.

"There always is" Denver confidently strutted forward and I darted my eyes to him before letting them fall back to her. "And we're going to figure it out" He added, walking up to Ivan. "While Eliana devises a plan to find her brother" Denver added.

"How are you even going to find him if you don't have any idea what he looks like now?" Nathaniel piped up and I'd only just realized he was in the room. "I guess I'll just keep looking. I am, after all a Witch."

"So there's that." I whispered.

"I also spoke to your father, he's agreed to give out some of your mother's things—the ones he kept behind. Hopefully, there's something in there that could lead you to him. A photo, a clue..."

"I could help with that" Nathaniel offered and I looked at him. "While Denver, Ivan and your Grandmother work on the Witches Curse, we could work on the Hybrid one. There's no one more fitted, trust me. I've been obsessed with this study since I first heard about it" Nathaniel added.

"Fine" I nodded. "I'll need help going through most of the things anyway—" But before I could even say anything, a voice echoed from behind.

"And what about me? Where do I help?" I turned back to look at him.

"Blake?" I heaved out an exhale and he shrugged his shoulders. "You know maybe I'd just go with Eliana. Need something to do to get out of my head" He faced Denver whose lips were pressed together.

He nodded.

"That's okay" I gulped. Blake ran his hands through his messy hair as he walked out of the room and I trailed right behind him. "I guess I'll see you later" I murmured to Denver. Nathaniel and I scurried down the halls.

Until we reached the inventory at least.

I pushed the door open and my eyes scanned the ceiling-high boxes of the things my father kept that belonged to my mother. "We're going through all of this?" Nathaniel widened his eyes and I heaved out a deep breath. One of these could hold the key to finding my brother.

"All" I muttered and the three of us shared a glare. Blake readied himself by clearing his throat and Nathaniel nodded before his lips parted.

"So where should we begin?"

Chapter 102: In Search Of Clues And Answers.

Chapter 102 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

We'd been at this for more than five hours.

Secluded within the four-cornered inventory that was home to what was left of my mother—the things my Dad had kept that belonged to her which were boxes and boxes of photos, and clothes.

And Jewelry.

My hands flicked through the dusty pile of papers as I heaved out a sigh. I only just realized how much of her things my Dad kept. It was almost everything she had, every dress she wore, down to every photo of her. I had gone through about a hundred up until now.

In search of clues and hints that may be able to lead me back to my brother. I didn't even know this place existed until today. Before, it was only a room wedged with a tightly sealed door where the rest of the Pack were prohibited from coming close to.

I always wondered what was behind it. Little did I know they were the memories of my Mum that my Dad was trying so hard to keep alive. Only God knew how many times he came down here—to feel as close to her as I did at that moment. But I wasn't the only one there.

Nathaniel was right beside me, he was helping with the heavy boxes and Blake was by the shelf. The room was silent, only the echoes of our deep breaths were audible. I fell back against the wall, haven gone through was seemed to be my thousandth box but these were just her things.

Nothing that pointed to my brother's existence still. It was almost futile.

Beads of sweat formed along the lines of my temples before I wiped across them with my sleeve. I stood up. Just then, my eyes fell on Blake.

His large hands were lifting the boxes we'd checked on top of each other but that wasn't what caught my attention. It was the expression across his face. One filled with wry and anger, and hurt. And his eyes blinked at me with as much bloodlust as he could conceal in them.

But I could see through Denver's brother. His heart swelled in his eyes like a pastel of all his overwhelming emotions. He let out a sigh once our eyes locked into each other and I sauntered closer to him.

Ever since Blake had saved me that day, we'd become closer. His journey of self-redemption has been something I'd admired for so long and he was on the right path. He was doing so well until he saw her again.

Aurora.

I just knew it was about her.

But how could I even blame him? Perhaps how he felt losing her was how I felt when I'd lost Denver the last few days. Or when I thought I'd lost him. He was so disheveled, although trying to pick himself together. But I could see the pain in his eyes, and the heartbreak but still the anger.

I inched closer to him, slipping my hands into my pocket and he looked at me with a deep exhale. "What is it now?" He asked with a voice, deep and stoic that was able to mask how he truly felt.

"Blake" I called his name and there was a crack in my voice.

"Are you here to ask me if I'm okay like you've done a hundred times already today?" He scoffed and I pushed a hard lump down my throat.

"Because I am. I don't know what else you want me to say but I am. I'm okay. I mean it's not as if the woman I've loved my whole life whom I thought was dead for more than a century just magically showed up still in love with my brother by the way. It's not like that will affect me" He echoed with a subtle chuckle.

That was before his eyes shimmered and I reached to him.

“It’s okay, Blake” I whispered and he sucked in air through his lips. “I mean it’s not like I’m still in love with her or anything” He shook his head and there was a crack in his voice. “It’s okay” I nodded.

“You don’t have to explain anything to me.”

“You just have to feel it. I know it’s a lot, even for me. But you have to feel it. You can’t just turn away from the hurt and the pain and everything” I continued and his eyes were fixed into mine. I looked over my shoulders back at Nathaniel but he was a distance away from us.

Right now though, we were two people behind the shelf. Two people who had been through the hardest of days, just comforting each other. Blake closed his eyes and a tear rolled down his cheeks.

“Just feel” I smothered his arms.

“It doesn’t make any sense. My whole life, I’ve wanted nothing more than to see her again. I was willing to do everything I could and now she’s just here and I froze the moment my eyes met her. I froze because it was like all those years ago that I never felt.”

“I was only just feeling it now” Blake added and I nodded. “It’s because of your humanity now.” I said. The truth was Blake was no longer the way he was. Ruthless, and bloodthirsty. As a Werewolf, living like that could give you the ability to shut off your feelings.

To completely close down to the rest of the world. And it could be a blessing as much as it could be a curse. Because it means that when you finally let that shard of humanity in and you can finally feel, it can be a little overwhelming because it’s not what you’re used to.

Denver had been through that and now I watched Blake go through the exact same thing. It was like he was twenty again, this guy who had just met this beautiful girl and was smitten by her. So much that he would give the whole world to her even though she never deserved it.

She never deserved him.

“It’s okay” I comforted Blake with the only words I seemed to have. Like I didn’t also need comforting too. Like Aurora being back here didn’t haunt me as much as it did to Blake.

Especially knowing that a part of her still loved Denver. And we’d only just gotten married. We thought we were on the precipice of our happy ever after when all of this seemed to befall us.

And I was worried. I was angry. I was just as hurt.

“Now, I wish she could just go. That she could disappear to wherever she came from” Blake said. “It was better off without her anyway” He added.

“At least she isn’t breathing down on our neck like Elyndra was” I let out a scoff and Nathaniel crept closer. “It doesn’t mean we don’t have a time frame. We don’t know exactly when she’s going to come back” He replied. “And something tells me that it’s going to be far from pleasant.”

We looked back at him.

“But we’ll find a solution before then” I bit down on my tongue. Nathaniel let out a chuckle. “Look around, we’ve been searching for hours and we don’t even know what we’re looking for—“

“We’re looking for answers, any sign that points to the fact that my Mum had another child. Surely, she kept something around like a journal or a photo or anything. We’re looking for that” I replied him.

“And what are the chances we’ll find what we’re looking for?” Nathaniel asked. I arched my brows, a little taken aback. “For all we know, the child was taken even before she came here. Before she made all these new memories. This whole room is her life after the tragedy and not before.”

“He’s right” Blake chipped in, gulping a hard lump down his throat. “We could be looking in the wrong place. These are the things she left to your Dad and how much really could he possibly know about Dante?” We looked at each other and the idea seemed impossible to me.

“Are you saying we have to find someone else who knows about Dante and my Mother?” I questioned. “We don’t have that much time. Where would we even begin?” Nathaniel replied. Once again, all three pairs of eyes met. “So what now?” I shrugged my shoulders.

“We’ve checked everything in here.”

And at that moment, I took a step back only for the wooden floorboards to creak loudly. And I darted my eyes up. “What was that?” Nathaniel asked before I looked to the grounds again.

“We have checked everything IN here” I echoed before falling to my knees and my hands picked at the wood beneath me until a piece fell into the hollow void and staring right at me was one box we hadn’t checked.

A brown box that was laying in the foundation of this very room—the perfect hiding spot.

“But no one checked UNDER” I reached for it, hefting it out of the darkness and dust. It was quite light and a little smaller than the rest. “You were right,” I turned to Blake at that moment.

“We were looking in the wrong place.”

“What could be inside it?” Nathaniel asked and color drained out of his cheeks from the suspense. I let my eyes fall on the box again as my heart pounded in my chest.

“It could be the answers we’re looking for. My mother’s past, before she even met my Dad” I muttered and both Blake and Nathaniel crept forward. “Dante,” They chorused.

“And my brother.”

Without any hesitation, I opened the box and my eyes widened. “What is inside?” Nathaniel asked. A hard lump formed in my throat.

“It’s a…”

“It’s a journal. It’s my Mum’s journal.”

Chapter 103: The Journal.

Chapter 103 - Rejected Mate’s Secret Baby

ELIANA.

“I had no idea your mother had a journal” My Dad, standing a few inches away from me said as he let his eyes fall on the brown book laying across the chamber table. I arched my brows.

“But these are her stuffs that you kept…surely you must hidden the box” I replied him. Nathaniel nodded but my Dad seemed just as surprised at this as we were. I could see it in his eyes.

“I had no idea, Eliana” And he was telling the truth. I knew this had to do with Dante, my mother’s first mate and seemingly her first love so I get it was a hard topic to bring up to my father. I also get why he would want the box hidden away for eternity.

But he still stood by his claim, that he didn’t do it.

“I have no idea what’s even inside. You say it was just the journal in the box?” He stepped forward and I nodded. “Me neither” I pressed my lips together, folding my arms across my chest.

“Then what are you waiting for?” It was my Grandma that chirped in next and when I looked at her, a soft sigh escaped my lips. “The journal was sealed tight when we found it. None of us have been able to open it till now” I replied her.

She stepped out of her wheelchair with a furrow between her brows. Her legs were frail and brittle but could walk nonetheless.

“What do you mean?” She questioned. I shrugged my shoulders. “I don’t even know myself. It’s like it’s been sealed with a spell. Like she didn’t want anyone to ever read it. Even if you found it, there’s no way to get inside the pages. It’s not like a normal journal” I said to Nana.

And she reached for the book across the table. There was a glimmer across her face that was hard to decipher and a hard lump that gulped in her throat. “Grandma” I called. When our eyes met, hers grew moist.

“Do you know anything about how we could get into the journal? Anything at all...because it’s like we’re grasping at straws right now and this is the only lead we have in locating my brother. We believe that whatever it is that my Mum was trying to hide inside the book could be the key. Maybe she wrote about him.”

“Or maybe she knew where he was” Nathaniel added and it took Nana a moment to collect her words. “I had no idea it was sealed” Alas, when she spoke, there was a crack in her voice. My Dad looked back at her.

“What?” I asked softly.

“I’ve seen this journal before but it was a really long time ago when your Mom came back to the Pack. She was with your Dad then...” She met his eyes. “The day I brought her home?” My Father recollected and Nana nodded. She swallowed yet another hard lump down her throat.

“It was that day. She was writing something and when I asked her, she said it was her diary. A hobby she picked up while she was away. When Susannah came back with your father, she was so different. I had no idea then of anything that had happened. Of Dante, of the little boy”

“All I knew was she disappeared one day only to come back as Luna of the Pack. The woman who had caught the Alpha’s eyes. And I should’ve been happy for her but I just knew something was different. Something had changed. Like the Susannah I knew was no longer in there” She said.

“Now I understand why, no one should have to lose a child especially the way she did and knowing it’s one more thing that can be traced back to me doesn’t hurt any less” Her eyes welled up with tears.

“You can’t possibly still blame yourself for falling in love, Grandma!”

“For falling in love, no. But for falling in love with a werewolf, I can” She replied. I shook my head. “There was no way you could’ve known” I said.

Then she heaved out a deep exhale.

“This journal was something your mother took everywhere with her when she got back. It never left her side and she never let another person see it. I knew that the answer to wherever she might have been all those months would be inside it” Nana continued.

“She never spoke about it to me after. Your Mum always complained about how distant I was when we got back with my Alpha’s duties and responsibilities” My Dad added and I hummed. “She probably felt alone.” I put two and two together.

“Maybe that was why she wrote down the things she thought she couldn’t tell anyone else. This journal was her safe space, maybe that’s why she spelled it shut.”

“Have you even considered the possibility that she hid her in the floorboards herself?” Blake asked and I stroked my chin. “But why would she?” There was a crack in my voice.

“Unless, she hid it before the day she gave birth to you.” Nathaniel said. “But that’s the day she died” My Dad echoed and I shook my head, afraid to confirm what I already feared. “No” I whimpered. So did my Dad. “Are you saying she knew she was going to die? She knew about the Hybrid Curse all this time??” My Dad asked despairingly.

Biting down into his lips, he fought to hold back the tears in his eyes.

“It sounds an awful lot like a Susannah thing to do” My Grandma added as my Dad turned away. At that moment, my eyes met Nathaniel’s. He was leaning against the wall when a hard lump slipped down his throat. He was uneasy and I could hear the rapid heartbeats in his chest.

“So what do we do now?” He asked. I faced the journal again and Blake was on the opposite side of the table. “There aren’t any spells that could break the bind so we could get through?” He asked. I shook my head.

“I’ve tried an unbinding spell, an unlocking spell, nothing worked.”

“So how do we get in?” Nathaniel inquired and it hit me at that moment—a wave of idea. “The same way she got in. Maybe it’s not entirely a spell that’s keeping it sealed. Maybe it’s a key.”

“Something that we need to know”

“And the only people that know are the only ones able to open it?” There was a stint of doubt in my voice but still, I was sure. We’d tried everything else, but it didn’t work. My Grandma took a step back.

“I have no idea” She muttered.

“Me neither” My Dad sniffled through his nose and at that moment, my shoulders sank because once again, it felt like we were back at square-one. “So what are we going to do now? You think it has something to do with the missing boy?” A voice echoed and I lifted my eyes to Nathaniel.

The only person just as curious about this as I was, maybe even more. He batted his eyelashes in a way that made me realize how involved he was in all of this—someone I had no idea of before now. But who seemed to know everything about me and my family and the Hybrid Curse.

I tilted my head the moment our eyes met and he suspiciously pushed a hard lump down his throat. Nathaniel knew something that he was telling anyone else. It was either that or he wasn't the person he claimed to be.

There was that unmistakable sensation that knotted my stomach and if you knew me, then you'll know my gut feeling has never been wrong.

Chapter 104: All This Time.

Chapter 104 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

"*Spiritus antiquus, umbra lucis. Verba arcanis, potestas magica*"

My voice echoed through the walls as I sat on the ground, hands spread across my thighs and my eyes closed. Abruptly, there was a wave of breeze that swept by the room, blowing off all the candles I had lit.

It was then that I opened my eyes, a heavy sigh escaping my lips.

"What are you trying to do now?" Nathaniel asked. It was just the both of us left in the room. My Dad and Nana had gone with Blake who promised to come back. But I told myself I wasn't going to leave until I cracked a way to open my mother's journal.

Seeing my determination, Nathaniel chose to stay with me too. Although, he had done more talking than actually helping. I stood up from the floor, running my hands through my hair.

"I was trying to see if there was a way to contact my mother. Maybe her spirit, anything that could help us" I muttered. But that even was to no avail. As if my mother hadn't already warned me about summoning her, my powers weren't exactly working for this either.

So for the umpteenth time, here we were, back to square one.

"Let me guess, it didn't work?" Nathaniel's voice seethed from across the room and I lifted my eyes to him. With one hand against the wall, he tipped his left foot up and our eyes met.

"No, it didn't" I pressed my lips together. I still had my doubts reserved about Nathaniel but I wasn't just going to come at him like that. I could utilize this time that we were both here to try to get something out of him—whatever it was that I could sense he was hiding.

The first thought that came to my mind was that he was an insider, maybe from the Aurora or the Witches because of the way he seemingly appeared out of nowhere but then again, it was obvious something was going on between he and Ivan. Even though neither of them had said anything and would only claim each other as friends, deep down, I knew.

I could see it in their cautious glances and the beaming chemistry whenever we were all in the same room. There was no way he could be an intruder so reluctantly, I ruled that out. My mind raced with questions but the most prominent one however was what escaped my lips.

“Why do you even care?” I blurted out to Nathaniel and my question always caught him off-guard. I took a step closer to him. “You know I’ve been wondering to myself, asking myself why you’re so involved in all of this. Why you have so many questions and know so many things about me and my family but I didn’t even know who you were until now” I said.

Nathaniel heaved a deep breath.

“Did you ever ask?” He paused. “Alpha Eliana”

I batted my lashes, facing him. “You haven’t answered my question. Why do you care about all this? Finding my brother and breaking the Hybrid Curse? What’s in it for you?” I bit down on my teeth and he inched closer to me.

“What’s in it for me?” Nathaniel echoed.

“My freedom.” He gritted through his teeth and I arched my brows. “What?” I asked. “You’re aware of my study, that’s what is in it for me. Because if I could help you, Alpha Eliana. If I could be the one who helps the Hybrid Alpha break the impossible curse, I know for certain my life would change” Nathaniel added.

“For starters, I won’t have to work in a tiny laboratory as an assistant Doctor being looked down on by everyone when I dare to tell them about my big dreams of making it out of here—“

“Out of the Pack?” I asked. “No,” He paused. “Out of Oakland. If this study proves successful, imagine how many more hybrids we could help with the cure. How much more good we could do?”

“And your name would be put on the map?” I questioned with an almost hysterical laughter. Nathaniel furrowed his brows. “I think you’ve forgotten one little minute detail,” I whispered to him.

“How are you going to leave this place as a Werewolf? All those dreams...” I said and a smile curled Nathaniel’s lips. He didn’t seem bothered or fazed. “I mean you did it” He replied.

“You left...Tuscany, was it?”

“But I came back, Nathaniel. I never said those years were easy. Hiding who I really was did more harm than good.” I replied him and he cleared his throat. “So you never would’ve left?” He threw the question back at me and my words got caught in the back of my throat.

Color drained out of my cheeks, remembering who I was six years ago.

“You see” He made a point. “You can’t tell me you don’t think about going back out there from time to time, I can see it in your eyes. You’re just like me” He said. I shook my head. “I’m Alpha, Nathaniel.” I said to him, brushing off that thought.

“Alphas take vacations, just saying” He added. “When all of this is said and done and it’s all over, you could use one you know” Nathaniel locked his eyes into mine and I swallowed a hard lump down my throat.

“And I’m going to help you so there comes a time when all of this is actually over. I’m doing this also to help you, Eliana. Trust me when I say I understand what you’re going through.” I scoffed at his words.

“Help me?” I echoed.

“Do you not believe that?”

“I’ll help you, Alpha Eliana. And in turn, you will help me because I have a dream and it’s far bigger than here, than this.” He continued. I slouched back a bit. “And how will I help you?” I asked.

“How about just believing in me for now? Believing me...” He added. “I can sense it on you, you’re having your doubts about me” He scoffed. “I don’t even blame you” He said and I furrowed my brows with unease.

How could he do that?

“I swear,” Nathaniel added. “I mean after everything you’ve been through, I can only imagine how hard it is for you to trust anyone other than yourself.” His words brought tears to my eyes which I held back.

Nathaniel inched closer to where I stood and his gaze towered over me.

“Have you even processed it all? Rather than just diving yourself into finding whatever is in that diary. Have you actually felt it?” He whispered.

“I heard what you told Blake, I just wish you could listen to your own advice” Nathaniel said and I blinked my eyes to the tears that fell. My heart leaped into my throat at that moment and I turned away.

“It’s okay, Alpha Eliana.”

“It’s okay to not be strong all the time. It’s okay to feel everything too.” And Nathaniel was right. Not many people were but he was. I may have cried, I may have yelled but it didn’t mean that I had truly felt. I mean, after everything that had happened, I thought if I just pushed myself into doing something else, I could run away from my overwhelming emotions.

But at that moment, they all came flooding back to me.

From the fact that my mother knew that she would die when she gave birth to me and she still chose to do so, to all the childhood years I survived. Having Elijah, and then finding out I was having another child.

Only to be told my fate was no different from my mother’s. And I could either choose my own life or the life of my unborn child. No one understood why I couldn’t.

I shouldn’t even have to choose between any of those.

It was like being a Hybrid set my life up to be even more difficult than it already was being just a Werewolf and sometimes I understand my mother when all she wanted was just a way out of this. That’s why I missed Tuscany—it may have been hard pretending to be someone I was not.

But what if that person was who I wanted to be deep down?

Humans, they didn’t have to worry about all of this. They had everything, the freedom, the day. The big cities and having to live without this burden of secrets and guilt. They had everything.

And although I was thankful for being an Alpha, it didn’t mean that there weren’t days when I thought about just being human.

I lifted my eyes to Nathaniel and the tears were free-flowing down my cheeks. I had to swallow a hard lump down my throat.

“I was really looking forward to it” There was a vicious crack in my voice as I sat on the ground and Nathaniel did right opposite me too. “I was really excited and happy the day I got married to Denver because I thought it would finally be our always and forever. Our happily ever after”

“How foolish I was to have thought that it was all over” I cried. “That I would finally get what I wanted and that was a family. To give Elijah what he wanted. And when I thought about all of us that day, we were happy. We were married and there were four of us this time.”

“I had my little girl and oh, Elijah loved her so much too. He was so excited to finally have a little sister. To be a full family. I was happy, Nathaniel. Nothing could’ve compared to the joy that I felt in my heart that day but then the curse just came and it took everything from me.”

“It took that happiness and just shattered everything. And then that dream I had with Elijah and his sister seemed so far from reality all of a sudden but man I really wanted to have hope. I still do, so badly” I said.

“That’s why I can’t”

“I can’t bring myself to make the hard decision. I can’t let her go, Nathaniel and you’re right, I’ve been running away from feeling all of this. Because I wanted to bury myself in something else so these thoughts don’t consume me. So, I’m not sitting here, looking like an absolute mess because I’m an Alpha, the first woman Alpha at that and I can’t be weak”

“I can’t give anyone the right to say ‘I told you so’. All I want is to be strong but how am I strong if I can’t even bring myself to tell Elijah the truth yet? I don’t think I can see him get any more heartbroken than I did. I don’t think I can so I tell myself, every second of every day.” I paused.

“That we’re going to get our answers and I’m going to find my brother and a way to break this goddamn curse. Because I can’t die, I can’t do that to the both of them and at the same time, I can’t let one go either. My mother didn’t and that’s the reason I’m here” I stared into Nathaniel’s eyes and a tear dropped down his cheeks.

He cupped his heavy chin and I pushed a hard lump down my throat.

I had never poured it all out to anyone else than I did to him. “You’re not just choosing between your life or the unborn child’s, you’re also choosing either her or Elijah because without the cure, you could never be with the both of them” He parted his lips with a whisper, shaking his head.

“No one should have to go through that” He opened his hands, sucking a deep breath through his lips as his eyes grew moist. Nathaniel sniffled through his nose. “But the thing is, even the hardest decisions,” He halted his words and I lifted my eyes to him.

“Even the hardest decisions have to be made, Alpha Eliana”

And at that moment, I arched my brows because I could hardly believe the words that came out of his lips. “What?” I coughed and Nathaniel’s voice grew deeper. “You’re still going to have to choose, with or without the cure. Just like your mother...” He paused.

And then, his eyes darkened and a gasp escaped my lips.

“Just like...our mother.” Nathaniel gritted through his teeth as he sharply groped my hands before I could even process everything. My jaw was hanging and my eyes were wide open.

Does that mean...

He glared right into my eyes, squeezing my hands and his lips parted.

“And God, I really wish she had chosen me.” He muttered. “Now, you’re going to have to live with that choice too” Grasping my hands, Nathaniel pulled me closer before clamping my

temples. A sudden wave of weakness filled me as I fell to the ground and that, was the last thing I remember.

Alas, I was right about Nathaniel—all this time, he was hiding something.

He was my brother.

He was Boy.

Chapter 105: A Secret I Took To My Grave.

Chapter 105 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

SUSANNAH.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

Today, I found out that I'm pregnant.

I wrote in my journal for the first time in a really long time. You see, when I came back with Gerald to his pack, all I had were his promises of a better life but I also had this journal. Sometimes, I think it's the reason I was able to get over what happened with Boy.

Or at least, I'd like to think I was over it but the truth was, I was not.

Sometimes, I even still blamed myself for what happened to him. Perhaps, if I had never left that day. Perhaps, if I was careful enough, maybe he would still be here with us. With me.

And with that blame came an insurmountable amount of grief and self-loath. Gerald was able to move on quickly, I didn't blame him. Boy wasn't his son and regardless of everything, he still had a Pack to rule.

The earth could crumble to the ground but he'd still have to rule the next day. That was a challenge that we had when we moved, one we hadn't really thought about. Being an Alpha came with an enormous amount of required devotion and responsibility and love.

Sometimes, I think the Pack is Gerald's first love. Just like Dante was mine. I didn't blame him. At least he was there for me through it all—my good days and most especially, the bad.

Once Boy passed, I realized how much I needed him. How much we needed each other so he was able to convince me to finally come back with him. I was a strange Luna to the rest of the Pack, of course they had no idea I was a Hybrid. It was dangerous for us around this time.

The only good thing was I got to see my mother again. Lying to her was the hardest thing I had to do because she had no idea about Dante, and Boy and where I had been all these months. Coming back, it felt like it was all erased. Like it never happened.

Like it was a dream, or worse, a nightmare.

That's how most of the months after felt like. I was only breathing and each day was a survival of the fittest. There wasn't a moment that I didn't about him, my child. My son. But I had to move on. I forced myself to. I had to be okay, after all, I was Luna.

Now, for the first time it just hit me that it had been two years since we came back here. Two, long, hard years. I was yet to still get over it but I had never been more hopeful until the moment I found out I was pregnant again.

"You're pregnant, Susannah" It was my mother who broke the news after I'd gone to her with a slight fever. Her grin was wide and her eyes were gleaming with joy. "I can't believe it, you're pregnant!" She exclaimed.

It took a moment for the news to settle in and as the winds swept into my face, tears welled up in my eyes. I blurted out an exhale. "I'm pregnant?" I echoed. She nodded. "I'm pregnant?" Now, she had no idea exactly what I was feeling. Only those who knew, knew.

Because not a lot of people get second chances but I was fortunate enough to get two—with Gerald, and now, with a second baby. And I wanted it to be a boy again but my joy knew no bounds when I eventually found out it was a girl.

I grasped my journal in my hands as I wrote down.

A mini-me, even better!

I can't wait to tell Gerald tonight. I can't wait to see his reaction.

It was the Moonlight Ball that night, a Blood Hound annual tradition that we were to attend as a couple. I would tell him then, I resolved.

Sitting back in my chair, my mother gently squeezed my shoulders. Her eyes fell to my crystal blue gown and across her lips was a smile. Our eyes met and at that moment, I swear I wanted to tell her everything but I just couldn't bring myself to say it.

I'd just felt so distant from everyone since it happened, that all I had was my journal but at least now, this felt like a step towards healing. Towards the rest of my life, or so I'd thought.

"I can't believe it" Abigail heaved and tears welled in her eyes. "He would be so happy" She added and I nodded. "He would be" I replied.

"Not as happy as I am" She joked before exhaling a light scoff and I chuckled softly. "You have given me the greatest gift I could ever ask for" Mum continued and I knew how much she wanted her grandchild.

Her hands fell to mine before she squeezed it.

"This child is going to be a great woman. I can feel it already. The hope, the love and I would make sure she has everything growing up. I'd make sure she's safe" Her eyes darted to my stomach and I forced a hard lump down my throat. "But she's still going to be a hybrid..." I paused.

"So is she ever really safe?" My mother took a step back and for a brief moment, there was silence. Even though she had no idea about Boy, I'd come to learn about the Curse she made and how having to break it required the blood of a Hybrid. Maybe that was why they were after me.

Why they took Boy.

But I'd be damned if I let anyone else lay a finger on this child. I'd die before anyone even touches her. What happened with Boy is never going to happen again.

"Luna Susannah" The doors drew open to the maid who curtsied and I threw my eyes over my shoulders. "The Ball is set to begin" She announced and I stood from the chair.

"I'd be right there" Sniffing through my nose, I looked into the mirror one last time and my hands smothered down the side of my flowing dress with my mother's voice weaving through the air.

"You're beautiful, Susannah."

And those were the very first words I'd heard from Gerald too. I made my way down the stairs to where he was waiting by the ballroom floor. He was dressed in a stormy grey suit with his hands held tight before him.

And when our eyes met, there was a sensation that sparked in my chest.

I inched closer to him, his hand was already outstretched which I took and the music had started slowly in the background. The Pack had given way for us. Gerald roped me closer to him with his eyes falling to my lips.

"Hey beautiful" He whispered and I blushed slightly.

“Hey stranger” I replied because it felt like I’d barely seen him before this. He was always so busy with Alpha duties and I guess I understood, but some days, I still missed him. I wish I didn’t have to break the news of our baby on a dance floor but here we were.

“Oh” He chuckled softly, bringing his eyes away but his hands settled on my waist. The music was slow and classical, and I glided my hips to his every move. We danced slowly in the center of the hall, an opening act.

“I’m sorry” Gerald heaved out of his lips. “I know it does feel like I’m distant lately but I promise you it won’t always be like this” He whispered and my lips pouted. “I really hope so” I replied.

“Because it’s not just me anymore. It’s not just us” I told him. Gerald was so confused at first that he furrowed his brows. But his eyes fell to my stomach and my hand was already on top of it.

He stopped in his tracks and his lips fell wide open.

“Susannah” He called softly and there was a crack in his voice. “No!” He shook his head in disbelief and I nodded mine. “Yes” I told him.

A tear glided down his cheeks as he let out an exhale.

“I’m pregnant” I said. Immediately, Gerald jumped for joy and he grasped me in his arms to the onlooking surprise of everyone else. He was mad with joy that he didn’t even care about the scores of eyes looking at us.

Me neither. I just stayed in that moment as he swung me gently in his arms and bringing me closer, Gerald placed a kiss on my lips. When I pulled away, I looked into his eyes.

His breaths were heavy and labored but I could make out his words.

“We’re pregnant?” He echoed. I smiled at him. “We’re pregnant” I said.

“Again” His voice was soft and for that brief moment, I could tell we both were thinking about Boy and the misfortune that befell us. The grief, the loss and the darkness over the last two years. But now, this was good news. This was a step into the light.

This child was the light.

She came at a point when we both needed her, when the entire Pack needed her. “Eliana” I whispered and the name clicked almost instantly. It means light, sun. It means that God has answered my prayers.

“It’s a girl?” Gerald realized and I nodded. “It’s a girl” I muttered, wiping the tears in my own eyes. “It’s our girl” He roped me in for a hug and perhaps it was the hormones or just the

overwhelming emotions but I was a mess that day. The Ball hadn't even begun but I'd cried so much.

"I'll tell the rest of the Pack" Gerald said and I nodded. I withdrew from his hands, sniffing through my nose. "I think I need some air and my makeup to be touched up a bit" I scoffed, facing the door and Gerald let go of my hands. He nodded his head with a smile.

"I love you" He mouthed inaudibly but I heard. I heard it.

My hand reached for the handle as I paused. My lips curled too.

"I love you too."

And it felt like the dream was nearing over, the nightmare that had been the last two years. For the first time, it felt like I could actually move on from this. I was no longer feeling just the grief that made home in my heart but I was feeling everything—the love, the joy. The possibilities.

I made my way onto the front porch, heaving a deep breath of fresh air.

And I just stood for a moment but then suddenly, I heard footsteps creep closer to me. There was a shadow that appeared right next to where I stood and a flicker right in my chest.

I clutched it with my hands, turning to the figure next to me. It was a young man in a brown trench coat and dark, curly hair.

"Isn't the night so beautiful?" He asked and then his eyes met mine in a wave of thunderous familiarity. I took a heavy step back and my breath was caught in my throat. I realized at that moment.

"Isn't the night beautiful, mum?" He asked. And I could tell almost immediately that this was a connection we could both feel. Our eyes met and time seemed to freeze.

Recognition flickered in his gaze, and disbelief was evident in mine.

"Boy" That word softly escaped my lips. He was alive. He was standing right in front of me. Someone I'd mourned and grieved for so long—I couldn't believe this was him and he was grown. Like a very young man.

But he was grown, and he recognized me.

"You know me?" My voice broke as I reached for his face with my fingers. He clenched around my hand with a smile. "Of course I do. I've been looking for you, Mother" He whispered. My heart stomped in my chest and tears streamed down my face.

“Oh” I exclaimed, my voice trembling with a mix of longing and disbelief and I looked down his neck to see the scar I knew which had now grown with him and I was certain this was Boy. This was my son.

“It’s really you.” I muttered. The child, once lost and now found, stared wide-eyed and a fragile smile crept to my lips. “It’s you, Boy.” He held my hands in his and slowly, his lips parted.

“It’s not Boy anymore” He paused. “I go by Nathaniel now.” And although it felt like a fever dream, he really was here. The truth was I had met him before I died. Gerald didn’t know, no one did.

It was a secret I took to my grave but it would all make sense soon.

Chapter 106: The Missing Hybrid.

Chapter 106 - Rejected Mate’s Secret Baby

SUSANNAH.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

“Do you know how you got that scar on your neck?” I whispered, lifting my eyes to Nathaniel as I made him a cup of coffee. The stove flames cracked in the silence of the room before I spoke. He was only just sitting in that chair, staring blankly around the chamber walls.

Then his eyes met mine, just as he shook his head. “No” There was a crack in his voice and a faded smile that crept to my lips as I remembered that day.

“I used to take you out in the sun, you would cry every afternoon if I ever forgot so one day, I was cradling you in my arms. I just needed you to stay still for a moment,” I scoffed. “So I placed you in the wooden bassinet for just a second while I went to attend to something inside.”

“And before I knew it, you’d rolled out of it and fallen to the ground. You scratched the side of your neck against the floor but the thing is you didn’t even cry. I think that was the moment I knew you were very strong and Gerald could tell too because he’d met you a couple of times” I said.

“Gerald,” Nathaniel echoed coldly and I stretched out of the coffee to him. He took a sniff before reluctantly collecting it. “Gerald is not my father” He didn’t fail to add and a hard lump slipped down my throat.

“But he would be happy to see you nonetheless, Nathaniel we all thought you were gone, we thought we would never see you again. I mourned, I grieved you and my heart was so full all the time and now” I fought to hold the tears back in my eyes.

“I can’t believe you’re okay” But I couldn’t. So I whimpered, and a few dropped down my cheeks. Nathaniel paused before he parted his lips again. “I’d just...I’d just rather no one knows that I’m here” He replied.

“Not even Gerald. They’re not why I’m here. The only reason I came back, the reason I searched and searched even the ends of the earth was because of you, Mother” Nathaniel spoke so fluently, that I could only wonder where he had been all this time and he was so grown in such a short time too. And then I realized—

A Hybrid baby usually develops so fast, much faster if his dominant side was a Witch or a Warlock in Nathaniel’s case. My mother had told me that was the way Witches were. They literally grew so fast in their first years, breezing into adulthood in the blink of an eye.

There, they would finally take a pause but a downside would be all the years they’d missed and all the catching up to do. Staring at Nathaniel now and how fast he’d grown over the last two years, I realized he’d gotten the most part of my Witch side. That was the only explanation.

Being a Hybrid didn’t necessarily mean fifty percent Witch and fifty percent Wolf. There are instances when one side is usually much more than the other. I was the first Hybrid so I had a lot of reading to do in my spare time while I was carrying Nathaniel.

While away from my mother, I knew I had to understand why I was the way I was and how to survive the way I was. Only in my case, I grew up thinking I was a Wolf alone until my Mom told me. It wasn’t that I didn’t have my doubts or there weren’t moments when the magic would kick in.

For me, my dominant side was just my Werewolf side. Maybe it was like that for females and vice versa for males.

I looked at Nathaniel at that moment, reaching to touch his face across which was a thin layer of beard. His very existence and presence could never not strike me. I had a million questions racing through my mind.

“Have you seen your Wolf?” I blurted out that one, no idea why but I did and Nathaniel shook his head. “I haven’t. I think I’m more Witch” He replied and my heart dropped in my stomach. I stared into his eyes.

“More Witch...that means you know what you are” I whispered softly.

Nathaniel looked back at me while his lips parted. “A Hybrid” He replied. I pushed a hard lump down my throat. “How?” My face was impaled with shock. “There were a lot of things I had to figure out on my own” Nathaniel added. “As I grew up, I could feel my wolf coursing through

my veins but I could also feel the magic. I could lift things with my mind and make myself invisible, teleport through the rooms.”

“I knew I was different, even before Greta told me the truth” He continued and I arched my brows. “Greta?” I echoed. Nathaniel nodded.

“She told me I was a Hybrid and she told me everything about my Grandma and how she met my Grandpa in the Great Fire, she told me about the Curse and even where to find you” He said. “Greta is a Witch, I met her when I was captured as a baby” He added.

“So it was the Witches?” I questioned.

“Of course it was them, this particular one, her name was Elyndra. She was the one who wanted me. She told me my blood was the only thing that could break the curse her sister created. Because I was a Hybrid” He muttered and then, I had no idea Elyndra was my mother’s sister.

But I knew she created the Curse, it was one of the reasons I was mad at her before I left the first time. The Witches had been onto me for a while in the forest, long before they finally took Nathaniel.

“Greta was Elyndra’s servant, she was a Witch who took care of me. Fed me, and nurtured me while I grew more and more by every second of every day. Sometimes I think Elyndra had something to do with the reason I grew up so fast because she knew she couldn’t use the blood of a child for the sacrifice”

“She had to be patient, so she waited. I was locked in the basement for most of the time. Only Greta was allowed to see me, she was told to

make sure I never escaped but little did Elyndra know that she was going to be the one to ultimately free me” Nathaniel explained.

“As Greta told me everything about my Past, she took a liking to me. We had this connection, like a child would to my mother. I never got to experience that until Greta” He said and tears welled up in my eyes. “So, the day of the sacrifice, Greta realized she couldn’t do it. She couldn’t lead me to my death so she made the brave decision and she let me go”

“She snuck me out into the forest in the dead of the night and held my hands firm. She told me to go back to Oakland, a million miles away from

here and find you. She took the biggest risk that day. I’m not sure she survived it but that was the day I escaped.” Nathaniel said.

“I think back at Greta now and how much I owe her my life. The rest of the last few months were spent in the forest as I tirelessly navigated through in search of you. I had targets on my back, bounties on my head. It wasn’t easy but everything led me here, Mother” He continued.

“Even though I’m not certain I’m safe here, I had to come and see you”

“I needed you to know that I was alive. I needed you to know that you had family because I...” Nathaniel paused, covering his head low. “Dante” He sharply called and my heart stomped. I looked into his eyes.

“I know everything, mum.”

“Sometimes I see him when I close my eyes. I can hear the rate at which your heart is beating right now. I know you still think about father, I know you still miss him” Nathaniel stood up, inching closer to me but I shook my head. “No” Came a subtle whisper.

“We can be a family again Mum. What if I told you that we could bring him back to us? What if I told you that you could?” Nathaniel asked and I stared at him with wide eyes like he’d gone crazy. “What?” I exclaimed.

And he reached into his bag for a big book which he held in his hands.

“I’ve been reading, all the spare time I had in the forest, I’ve been reading this book that I found. It’s an ancient book about Hybrids and supernaturals. It has everything you need to know about magic and witches and werewolf and I came across a resurrection spell. It’s literally just going into the other side and bringing back whoever you want to”

“No” I blurted out, almost immediately.

“That’s...”

“That’s what, Mom?” He quizzed and I shook my head. “That’s wrong” I replied, remembering what my mother told me. “As Witches, we’re here to ensure the balance of nature and as soon as we start to mess with that balance, there could be dire consequences.”

“But we’re not just Witches, we’re Hybrids...we’re special” Nathaniel gloated and it was clear how much of this had gotten into his head. I saw the ambition in his eyes, the fuel and the dark passion and for the first time that night, I’m not sure I recognized him at all.

He had been through so much that his morality had been weaned off him. I was staring at him, he was just a child—a child who was forced to grow up so fast and a child who desperately wanted a family. His family.

“Why don’t you want to bring him back?” He sobbed, looking at me.

“I don’t understand, why don’t you want us to be a family again?” Nate asked and there was a crack in his voice. “Because,” I paused. “Because Dante is gone, Nathaniel. Your father is dead and it was just as hard for me as it was for you to accept that fact but I had to nonetheless” I said.

“You do too” I squeezed his hands in mine but Nathaniel withdrew from them. “This is about Gerald” He exclaimed and I batted my lashes. “You have moved on, Mum. You’ve found a second mate, you’ve found a Pack, you’ve found a new family. You’ve moved on from me and from Dad.”

“It’s not fair!” Nathaniel burst into tears and my lips fell wide open. “No” I shook my head with tears in my eyes. “I didn’t move on, Nathaniel”

“I searched for you, everywhere!” His hands slammed into the table. “But did you ever search for me?” His voice broke. “You were too busy marrying Gerald to become a Luna of a Pack you don’t even care about.”

“A Pack that doesn’t care about you. I mean does any of them even know that you’re a Hybrid? Does Gerald know?” Nathaniel yelled and I pushed a hard lump down my throat.

“Nathaniel...please” I whispered.

“That isn’t fair of you to say.”

“I searched for you. We both did—“ “Clearly not enough. I mean after all, you were with him when I was taken, weren’t you?” Nathaniel’s words sliced through my chest like a sword and I took a step back. My hands clenched my stomach firmly as Eliana stiffed around.

“Oh my God” Nathaniel’s eyes fell to my hand on my stomach and I could tell he put two and two together at that moment.

“Nathaniel” I called and he took a step back this time. “You’re pregnant, aren’t you?” He asked and tears streamed down his cheeks. “You really have moved on, mum. I came here because I wanted a family with you but you’ve already found yours, haven’t you?” He walked toward the door but I launched myself at him.

“No, Nathaniel. Where are you going? We could live together, all of us”

“We could all live together as one big, happy family” He pulled open the door and I could barely hold him back. “Where are you going?” There was a crack in my voice and he grasped his big book in his hands before walking out. But he threw one last look at me.

“It’s clear I don’t belong here anymore. I’d rather be gone.” He muttered.

“Nathaniel!” I couldn’t even finish his name before he disappeared into thin air and I clutched my chest with a river of tears flowing down my face. “No!” I had lost him again, just as quickly as the first time.

My heart shattered in my chest because now, I feared for certain that I may never see him again but I was wrong. Because two months later, a knock drew me towards the door and I opened it to Nathaniel again.

He stared me dead in the eyes with that book in his hands.

“Nathani—”

“You can't have that baby” He interrupted and I furrowed my brows. “Excuse me?” I echoed. “Have you ever heard about the Hybrid Curse?”

“The Witch thing?” I quizzed but Nathaniel shook his head.

“You can't have another child or it's going to kill you, mum. That's the Hybrid Curse—You can't have a second child” Nathaniel broke the news and that day I found out, was really the beginning of the end.

Chapter 107: The Ultimate Choice 1.

Chapter 107 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

SUSANNAH.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

"I don't understand..." My moist eyes fell on Nathaniel as my heart leaped into the back of my throat. My mind was racing with everything he'd just said and I could barely even believe his words.

But I could see it in his eyes how sure and certain he was of what he said, no matter how outrageous it did sound. I hadn't seen my son in four months, you know how it ended the last time but here he somehow was, back on my doorstep, delivering the absolute worst of news.

A tear dropped from my eyes and a snuffle went up my nose. I turned around while Nathaniel walked in. "I don't understand" My hands swept through my hair. "I thought...I thought being a Hybrid would mean that you're stronger. I mean I thought it makes you stronger" I muttered.

"But you're basically saying that my body isn't strong enough to house a second child and see her to delivery?" I stared in astonishment back at him and Nathaniel pushed a hard lump down his throat.

"I've come to learn that it isn't about strength—"

"Then what is this about then?" There was a crack in my voice. "There was a time long before when the first hybrids existed and the people believed it was such a bad thing to be one of them. Everyone believed that they were evil, even the Witches, the so-called guardians of nature. They saw the Hybrids as a threat to that balance" Nathaniel explained.

"Because we weren't even supposed to be here, mum. You're a love child sprung from betrayal and even the ones that came before, they believed it was never supposed to happen. That's what it's in the book" He paused. "So they placed a curse on us that the most we can birth is one offspring. Planning a second would ultimately lead to our death."

"That way, they could keep our numbers on a low while inadvertently still wiping us out. And the worst part is the first hybrids had no idea of the Curse, they were just plagued by each other's deaths one after the other until they were all gone because of the curse but also because of pain and heartbreak and loss. Grief. It eventually led to their extinction and the world was relieved of Hybrids—" Nathaniel locked his eyes into mine.

"That is until me" I whispered. He nodded.

"Until us" Stepping forward, he took my hands firmly in his and I cupped my chin. "No" I whimpered. "This can't be happening" I shook my head. "I'm so sorry mum" Nathaniel comforted.

"Not only for showing up out of the blue to tell you about this but I just—I just felt I had to. Because I didn't want to lose you, mum. I hate how we left things off and I know I was an asshole but I was just hurt. I had been alone my whole life and I thought when I would finally meet you, that as selfish as this sounds but you'll be alone too and we'll reunite and live the rest of our lives happily" His eyes welled with tears.

"But I was hurt to see that you moved on because it meant that you moved on from me." He pulled away for a second and my hand held the back of his head. I shook my head. "I'm sorry" Nathaniel said.

"I never moved on from you, Nathaniel. In fact, I still had hope for the day that you would eventually come home. I was devastated, broken" I replied. "But Gerald, he helped me. He was the light in my darkness and I know for a fact that he cares about you too" I said to him.

But his hands withdrew sharply from mine.

"You still can't tell him though" Nathaniel requested. "That I'm here or about the Hybrid Curse. No one knows about that book, and if they did, you have no idea how many would come for it. For now," Nathaniel said.

"We just have ourselves until all of this is over. Until—"

"Over?" I furrowed my brows and he paused. "I know someone, mum. I met this doctor in the forest and he could help you stay alive" His voice was like a sharp ring in my ears and I gulped a hard lump down my throat.

"What?" I asked Nathaniel softly and he reached for my hands again. "You can't have the baby, mum. And there's no way to break the Curse"

"It doesn't mean I'll just give up" I replied. Nathaniel bit down his lips.

"I don't want to lose you" He said and I only collected the book from his hands. "I can't lose this baby too" I yelled and Nathaniel was taken aback. "You know she's a girl and I feel her every time I rest my hand on my belly. I feel her when I wake up in the morning, through everything"

"It has just been a few months but I feel her so intensely and I was going to name her Eliana, I still plan to do. I still plan to hold her in my hands and kiss her forehead and for Gerald to meet her and have a chance to fall in love with his daughter. I can't do that to him. I can't do that to myself so if this book has all the answers, I'm very sure it can tell us how to break a stupid curse and I would find it" I stared at Nathaniel.

"I have to find it because right now, that's my only choice."

"And what about me?" Nathaniel whispered and my heart stomped in my chest. "Because if you choose her, I lose you." He added. I shook my head so confidently. "Not if I find a way out and I'm going to" I assured.

Nathaniel locked his gaze into mine and his eyes flickered with doubt, although he didn't say anything but I could tell he was scared. I was too.

Even as he left that night and I crawled into bed with that big book, ravaging through the thick brown pages in search of answers and knowing full well that this was my last hope, my only hope. I had to find a way to break the curse and birth Eliana and still be alive to watch her grow.

I just knew there was something about this child. I could feel it, that she was special and a mother's intuition is almost never wrong. I had to find a solution and at the end of the day, I did.

Not in this huge book but in the Witch's spell book that belonged to my mother. They call it a Hybrid Curse because it only affects Hybrids and for the longest time, I've hated being one.

I've hated having both sides of a terrible coin. The reason Nathaniel was taken in the first place was because of what we were. And all the pain and loss I had endured was also because of what we were.

I was sick and tired. Just done but finally, right in front of me was a solution—the ultimate choice. And suddenly, I knew exactly what to do.

Chapter 108: The Ultimate Choice 2.

Chapter 108 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

SUSANNAH.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

Months later, Nathaniel was standing right opposite me and I broke the idea to him. His jaw was agape but I could barely tell what he was thinking.

"It makes sense, doesn't it?" I questioned, eyes bright on the pinnacle of a solution but Nathaniel heaved a sigh. "It's way too risky, mum. You can't do that. You can't suppress your Witch side just like that" He said.

"You can, there's a reason the spell is in this book, a reason it exists. I'm tired, I'm just done. I don't want to be a Hybrid anymore, sometimes I just want to be a werewolf like Gerald. Like everyone else, I'm tired of being different and the good thing is, killing one side would also free you"

"Think about it, the Witches would no longer be after you, after any of us. We could be a family, Nathaniel. You, me and Eliana. She won't have to go through what I went through because she would be normal too and if normal means just a werewolf, I would take it in this instance" I argued.

"Being a Hybrid comes with so much pain and these hard decisions, I don't want her to have to make these choices too—" "You're still doing this for her, aren't you?" Nathaniel whispered.

"It's always going to be for Eliana, forgetting that you have another child because if this spell doesn't work which I doubt it will, you're going to be gone and I'm going to lose you. Eliana will too, so what then would be the purpose of all this?" Nathaniel asked and my voice broke.

"At least she'll be safe. I'll watch over her knowing that she's safe."

Nathaniel's eyes were filled with tears as he looked away. "And Grandma, does she know about your grand plan to erase your Witch side? Gerald too?" He asked. I exhaled a deep breath.

"You were right. They don't have to, maybe I'll tell them when all of this is over but right now, I just need to figure out a way to do the spell. I'm only a month away now from putting Eliana to bed" I muttered and when Nathaniel looked at me, he could see how much my mind was already made up. This was my only choice, this was the ultimate decision.

It was to choose between my life or my daughter's but I found a loophole that could save us both and I had so much hope. So much faith.

"It says the spell requires a lot of dark magic" Nathaniel cooed. "There could be consequences, mum. Serious, dire consequences even if it does work. I don't think stripping yourself of being a Hybrid is something we're supposed to do" He said and I reached for his face with my soft hands.

"I'm fighting back, that's what this is" I whispered.

"And it's not just for Eliana. It's for us, all of us. I'm fighting for your future too because one day you're going to fall in love too with a woman and you're going to want a child. Children in fact. She's going to be the light in your life and you're going to want her to fight too."

"The thing is I don't want you to have to go through that decision" I said but Nathaniel shook his head. "I don't think so" He gritted through his teeth. "Don't think what?" I asked him.

"I don't think I'm going to fucking fall in love with a woman" He yelled. "That's not what I want, what I want is for you to be okay Mum. Have I not been clear about this like at all? I want you to be okay" He continued.

"I want you to choose me for once, Mum. Because I'm scared and you should be too but you're willing to do everything in the world than just stay right here, with me. Aren't you?" His voice broke.

"And you've already made up your mind, haven't you?" He scoffed. I pushed a hard lump down my throat as our eyes met for a sore moment. Nathaniel took a step back.

"I'm sorry, I have to try" I said softly and he bit down into his lips, nodding his head. "You're right" He sniffled. "So what is this spell?" I arched my brows at his question.

"The least I can do is help you so you don't have to do it alone" He said and in that moment, I grasped him into me for a hug. Many times through my short-lived life, I was very thankful I had Nathaniel. Even though there could have been better ways that I could have shown it, I loved him.

He was my very first love, the gift from it.

And he stood by me through every day of that soul-crushing month. My stomach was the size of a basketball and we were nearing closer and closer to the day I would perform the ritual. He helped me prepare through it all and slowly, his doubt and fear faded.

I made a good witch as much as I was a good Werewolf and I was brought up by one of the best—of course I could perform the spell. Of course I wanted.

As I sat there, surrounded by all the candles in the dark room of the Haven basement, I caught a glimpse of my future and it was so bright that it was blinding. Eliana was there, Nathaniel too

around the people that they loved. I saw Gerald and my Grandma and I was so close to them even when I was miles away.

I opened my eyes with a smile across my face. Nathaniel stood outside the cracking flames and our eyes met one last time before I thrust myself into the world of black magic, the only way I could do the spell.

"I love you" I mouthed to him and he nodded. "I love you too, mum."

After about ten tireless hours, I opened my eyes again. I was laying across the cold hard floor and the candles had already burned out around me. Nathaniel helped me up before I realized I was bleeding from the side of my head and my nose.

"Are you okay, mum?" He wedged an arm against my back. "You were saying the spell and then all of a sudden, there was this rumble and quake and then you fell to the ground. I was worried" He clamored. I looked around me, heaving a deep breath from my lips.

"I'm okay" My heart still pounded in my chest but I really was. I felt okay—almost like it had worked. I felt freer. "I am too." Nathaniel whispered.

"So," Nathaniel heaved. I looked up at him, already knowing his next words. "Did it work?" He asked. I pushed a hard lump down my throat with my hand resting on my stomach.

"There's only one way to find out" I replied.

Nathaniel helped me up from the floor and helped me clean around. I mean I was alive, I was breathing plus I felt different so meant it worked, right? I even tried lifting things with my mind but it didn't work.

None of the little spells worked.

I was no longer a Witch—I was no longer a Hybrid.

This was the answer, this was the key to breaking the Curse, the only way to keep myself and my children alive. I mounted the stairs late that night, finding my way to my room.

"Goodnight Mum" Nathaniel whispered as I pushed open the door. I smiled back at him.

"Goodnight" Making my way in, my eyes suddenly fell on Gerald. He was sitting on the bed with his arms folded and his eyes burned into mine.

"Where have you been?" He asked softly and I exhaled. I climbed into bed and his hands held around me. "I've been looking everywhere for you. You said I was distant before, now it's you doing the same thing" He said and I looked up into his eyes.

"I'm sorry" I heaved. "I've just been busy, with the baby coming soon, there's a lot to prepare for." A faint smile brushed my lips and Gerald ran his hands through my hair.

"I just want to be here for everything, be by your side Susannah for as long as I can." He whispered. "Make sure you're okay" I squeezed his hands in mine, nodding my head. "I'm okay" I replied, because now I was.

"We're going to be okay." Now, I was hopeful that the spell had worked. Because I was certain that was the only way but then, I could've had all the hope in the world but it would've never been enough to change my fate. You know all of my fate.

That soul-crushing day came, when I finally gave birth to Eliana and I held her in my hands. "She's beautiful" Gerald whispered beside me. I looked down at her closed pup eyes. "She is" I muttered.

"She's everything I thought she'd be and even more. Eliana, that's her name" I said to Gerald and then to my mum. "Please, take care of her for me" I whispered with tears in my eyes and her brows arched.

"What are you talking about?" My mum asked but at that moment, I knew something was wrong. I could feel it inside of me—I didn't have much longer. "It didn't work" I muttered but only Nathaniel would know what I was talking about.

The tears streamed down my face as I rested upon the grassy grounds. I could feel my heart pound against its sternum, what started off as strong slowly started to fade away and my lungs began to collapse too. My breathing became labored and life drained from my face.

"Something is wrong!" Gerald started to yell as the Pack doctors scavenged for everything they could do but it wouldn't matter. No one can save me from the Curse, I couldn't even save myself. I tried and failed but it wasn't just enough.

"Susannah, stay with me!" Gerald leaned into my face, crying with all his might. "Susannah please. I'm nothing without you. I could never do this alone. Please stay with me" His voice drowned into my ears as I blinked.

"I..." I could barely get the words out but I hope he knew what I was trying to say. I loved him. I loved him so much, both of them.

"I love you, Susannah" He nodded. "I love you." He knew. He got it.

And that was enough for me.

My eyes fell to Eliana, wrapped in her silver blanket one last time and a faint smile curled my lips. For a moment, I swear I caught a glimpse of Nathaniel in the forest a distance from me. And there were tears in his eyes. He knew how much I loved him too.

How much I tried and why I did what I did. I just wished I'd fought harder.

I wished it was enough.

That moment, I breathed my last underneath the setting Oakland sun and Gerald's hands never left around me. That was the day I died, but you already know that. And I died without feeling a single regret.

Each and every day, I watched Eliana grow over the last few years into the strong, beautiful young woman that she was, it assured me that I made the right decision.

That choosing her was the best thing I could've done. I just hoped the day would never come that she'd be faced with that same decision. I hoped to be the one to save her but alas, I couldn't.

Because the Hybrid Curse would forever remain unbroken.

Chapter 109: Her Words, Her Soul.

Chapter 109 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

THE PRESENT DAY.

My eyes fluttered open to the fluorescent lights and it took a while for me to adjust to it but when I did, the first person I saw was Denver. He took a seat right next to me on my bed, running his hands through my hair.

His eyes met my half-open ones as I struggled to sit up. Looking around, he wasn't the only person there. My Nana was too and my Dad. And there was something intense about the searing silence around us.

"What happened?" My head rang with a migraine as I sat up. Denver caressed my face. "You're okay" He whispered. The hairs across my arm remained stiff and my memory was a blur. But that was seconds before it hit me.

"Nathaniel" I muttered, looking over my shoulders. "Where is he?" His last words flooded back to me and my stomach tied into a knot. "I remember" I whispered to Denver. "It's him. He's Boy—all this time, it has been him" I said and he hefted out something in his hands.

It was my Mother's journal and it was open.

"It opened, Eliana" Denver whispered. It didn't take me a second to reach for it and a sigh of relief escaped my lips. I lifted my eyes back to him.

"And Nathaniel?"

"How can I say this?" Denver asked. "He's not exactly to trust, Eliana. When we walked in, he had knocked you unconscious. And before that, your father and I had overheard him speaking about how you were to blame for what happened to your mother." Denver added.

"We just happened to walk in at the right time. Your father and I took everything under control" He said and I arched my brows. "Took everything under control? But where is he?" I questioned.

"Where's my brother?"

"He's safe, Eliana" My Dad interrupted and I tore my eyes towards him.

"He tried to kill you so for now, he's going to be locked in the dungeon until he no longer poses a threat" He continued. "All you have to do now is focus on getting better" At that moment, I ripped off the blanket to climb out of bed. I squeezed my eyes shut to hold back the pain.

"I'm better right now" With a convincing tone, I heaved. And Denver held my arms back. I threw a look back at him. "What?" I asked softly.

"Like this hasn't been what we've been waiting for?" Clenching the journal in my hands, I gritted through my teeth. "I'm not wasting any more time. We've got a lot to figure out" I added.

Denver pretty much realized that there wasn't any more he could do to stop me so he let my arms loose at once. I climbed out of bed, running my hands through my hair but our eyes met one last time.

"Just..." Denver paused, finding his words. "Prepare yourself, Eliana."

"Sometimes, the truth can be a lot more than we bargained for" Denver added and by the look on his face, something told me that he already knew something—perhaps he had read the journal himself.

At that moment, my eyes dropped the book and there was a piece of paper peeking through. I drew it out to find a photo on the very first page and it was one of the both of them—my mother and Nathaniel. He was a little boy in her very big arms. There was a smile across her lips.

It could've been anyone but that scar across his neck was unmistakable.

It was a truth I've known for a while now but the fact that Nathaniel was my brother only hit me at that moment. A bittersweet arch carved between my brows as I pushed a hard lump down my throat.

"I'll see you later" There was a crack in my voice as I turned around. I walked out of the doors, and up the stairs until I got to the Alpha's chamber. Like a robot, I retired to my bed where I sat

with the book in my hands and flipped through the pages that really were just an entrance into the mind and soul of my own mother.

Her handwriting was beautiful, her words were poetic. Tragic.

'There is no day that goes by that I think about my missing son' She wrote on the first page.
'Sometimes I wish it was me they'd taken'

"I'm a mess'

'I blame myself' 'I hate myself' 'Will I ever get over it?'

Every word was every thought penned down on a piece of paper and it was a raw escape into her grieving mind.

'Everyone says journalling will help but I won't lie, I feel like shit more and more every day.
When will it get better? When will I stop feeling this way?'

Tears welled in my eyes as I swiped through the pages. Even a drop soaked the edge of the book but I carried on. For more than half of the book, she wrote about Nathaniel. Her love, her loss, her grief.

Everything.

She wrote everything that she felt.

A few lines belonged to my father, about how he'd saved her. Brought her to the Pack as his Luna after everything had happened but she didn't tell anyone about Nathaniel or what happened to him. Or why?

'How could I tell anymore I was a Hybrid—in this world that we are?'

'When will they finally stop hating us'

'When will I stop hating myself?'

'I want to be free, some days, it feels like I'm trapped in a prison that is my life. I want to be free. God, I want to be free. I want to escape and I want to be normal'

'I hate being a Hybrid. I hate it! I hate it but no one will understand. Mother never will and I don't blame her for anything. I myself had fallen for a pure Werewolf, twice but I hate living like this.'

'Sometimes, I close my eyes and wish it was gone. I'm doing it right now' She wrote at the last line of the paper and I kept diving in, more pages and more pages. Time seemed suspended and I had no idea when an hour passed and then two hours and then three.

This journal was her life's story. It was deeply personal, it was my mother's soul—that's why she sealed it.

'Today, I found out that I'm pregnant. I'm planning to tell Gerald later at the Moonlight Ball' I read her entry that day and it was like I could almost hear her joy-filled voice read it back to me.

'He's so excited and he's told everyone too!'

'But you won't believe it. Something strange happened today, I saw Boy again. He goes by Nathaniel now. I don't know how he came up with the name but I think I love it!' I read, sitting up straighter and drowning the tears in my eyes.

'He's alright, and he's grown but he's safe. He made it out because of a witch named Greta and he spent the last few months looking for me'

"He seemed so different in such little time but he made me promise to not tell Gerald. I don't know why but I'm just happy he's back and he's safe. I'm happy I get to see him again. Maybe I no longer hate my life."

'Nathaniel knows he's a Hybrid but he's more of a Witch than a wolf. He figured it out pretty early and that was because of Elyndra. My mother had mentioned the evil witch one too many times. She was the one who took him' A hard lump slipped down my throat at the thought of Elyndra.

No one was spared from her wrath.

'Today, Nathaniel found out about his little sister but he wasn't so thrilled. He had a breakdown thinking I was going to replace him. I really wanted him to like Gerald but it doesn't seem like that's going to happen'

'He left and I'm devastated again. I've lost him again but this time, I don't think he's going to come back' Fast forward to months later, she wrote. 'Nathaniel came back today with awful news'

Attached to that page was every single research that she'd done about the Hybrid Curse including pictures from the century-old book too.

'I have to find a way to break this Curse.'

'Each day that passes, I fall more and more in love with Eliana. That's right, I've come up with a name. It means the light given to us by the goddess. It means she answered us.'

'I just know that she's going to come out beautiful. She's special, I can feel it and I would be a fool to let her go, to give up without a fight.'

'It's seven months today, I can't wait to meet my baby girl. Gerald is just as excited too, sometimes I think even more but I haven't told him about the Curse. I hope I never have to. The plan to find a solution and I think I'm getting close to one'

I held the book in my hands, pausing for a second and I heaved in a deep breath through my lips.

'My due date is on Winter Day, the doctors just told me! Isn't it beautiful—I can't wait to meet her and kiss her on her head and call her by her beautiful name. I can't wait to hear her first words. For her to open her eyes to me. I can't wait to see my beautiful, beautiful daughter'

'Eight months today' She wrote on one page and there was a blank one right after before she wrote hugely across.

'I'VE FIGURED IT OUT'

'I can mutate my Witch side and finally be just a Werewolf. That's the key to everything. If I'm no longer a Hybrid, the curse can't affect me. I could still live to watch my daughter grow and she won't have to go through all that I had to because she won't be one too'

'Elyndra would never come after her and Nathaniel too. I can't believe I've figured it out. There's a spell in my mother's book but it's a dangerous one, it requires a lot of dark magic. She warned me about it but I don't care about the repercussions. This is my last hope. It's my only hope'

'I have a strong feeling I'll be able to do it'

I arched my brows as I swept through the pages. Adrenaline fired in my chest as I read through the lines.

'Nathaniel hates the plan, he doesn't think it's going to work but I'm strong. I think it is. It's the only way to save my daughter's life and mine so she doesn't have to be alone. Both of them, it saves Nathaniel too'

'I'm ready!' The rest of the journal entries were scanty and as the days passed, the fewer her words got. 'I'm ready' She wrote again.

'I think I can do this'

'Today was the day! I did it, and I have a really good feeling that it worked. I can't do magic anymore, Nathaniel too! I think I may have saved my bloodline. I'm going to see her.'

'I'm going to see my daughter soon'

A week passed, and she wrote nothing but on the final page, my eyes fell to her words—
'Tomorrow, I give birth to a Queen. Her name shall be Eliana. I'm ready to meet her...but I'm not sure I feel so good. My heart is beating faster than it usually does and my stomach is tight'

'I don't think I like this gut feeling. Something tells me I won't make it. I'm strong, I keep telling myself. I'm strong but I don't think I am. I did everything, I did everything I could but it wasn't enough'

'I'm sitting here, penning my goodbyes and preparing for the worst.'

'I don't think I want anyone to find this journal except for Eliana which is why these are going to be my last words, in the hopes that she does find it. Because if I don't make it, I would still want her to know how much I love her and how much I never stopped looking after her'

'Everything I did, every risk I took, it was for you Eliana. And I would do it all again in a heartbeat because you are my greatest gift. I hope you never have to face the same choices I had. I also hope you and Nathaniel meet one day. You were the reasons I lived that long anyway.'

'I'll see you again, I promise'

'Or you'll see me, Susannah.' My eyes squared at the bottom of the page.

Susannah, she wrote.

The tears escaped from my eyes at that moment. Those were the last words she wrote because like she thought, she didn't make it that day.

My heart was full and swelled in my chest as I closed the book finally. I looked out of the window to find the moon in the skies. I had been here all morning. Twelve hours, I spent reading the journal.

And there were a lot of takeaways, but one quite stuck with me.

At that moment, there was a knock on my door before Denver walked in.

"You still in here?" His eyes fell on me as I let out a light scoff. Wiping my tears, I stood up from the bed. "I'm done" My voice broke and Denver slipped his hands into his pocket. His lips were slightly parted.

"And?" He echoed.

"And," I paused. "I think I've found a way" I looked him dead in the eye.

"I think I've found a way to break the Hybrid Curse"

Chapter 110: For Better Or Worse.

Chapter 110 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

“Eliana!” Denver called as I brushed past his shoulders. For a moment, his hands slipped through mine but he was unable to grasp me backward. Something about my last words has struck him like a blow. He was riled up while I, on the other hand was manic.

Everything had come down to this—the moment I realized my mother had indeed found a way to break the Hybrid Curse and even though I knew the risks, I was still willing to take them. Because just like her, I think I don't want to be a Hybrid anymore and I don't want Elijah nor the baby when she's grown to have to face these difficult choices.

Having to constantly look over your shoulders, spending your whole life waiting for the next shoe to drop because as long as you're this, there's always going to be something and I was just done. But most of all, I sought a way to protect my kids.

No one would understand that, I resolved. Not even Denver.

“Are you out of your mind?!” His voice broke, echoing through the halls as he paced right behind me. “Eliana!” He finally called before groping my hands back. I was drawn to a sudden halt and I looked back at him.

“What?” There was a crack in his voice. “What solution, Eliana?”

I locked my eyes into his and a hard lump slipped down my throat. Denver suddenly shook his head. “No” He could see it, he knew. What he feared was that he knew. “Absolutely not” He replied.

“Don't tell me you're even considering what your mother did?” He gritted through his teeth and I let go of his hands. “There is no other way” A tear dropped my eyes and Denver let out a hard scoff.

“That is outrageously risky, Eliana. And stupid” He replied. I shook my head at him. “You won't understand, Denver. This is the only way I can protect my kids and protect myself—“

“Yourself?” He echoed.

“You know I read the journal and you know who else said those words? You know who else thought that they were doing the whole world some good by laying their life on the line, Eliana? Do you know who?!” Denver raised his voice and the walls thundered around us.

A vein popped through the side of his neck and a chill soared up my spine. I’d never seen him this way, not in many years at least. But I get it. He was only trying to protect me. I just wish he understood that this was also me trying to protect me and my kids. And him.

His hands swept through his hair.

“Your mum” His voice fell flat and I sniffled through my nose. Turning away, I heaved out a deep breath. “I can do it, Denver” I said reassuringly. “It’s a spell, perhaps she made a mistake and that was the reason why it didn’t work but I can figure it out. I can figure out the mistake and all I have to do is ensure that I don’t make it again. But—“

“But Denver, I have to do something. I have to do this” I looked at him and his eyes shimmered in icy tears. “What more is there to know?” He asked me. “You already know how it ends, she thought she could break this curse too and it clearly didn’t work” Denver’s voice quivered but I turned around, making my way away from him.

“Eliana” He called again and this time I sprung at him.

“Okay so what do you suggest I do?!” I snapped. “Just sit and wait until

it’s too fucking late, Denver and we can’t do anything to save our baby?” I looked at him and he heaved a sigh.

“Our baby” His voice was barely audible but I heard him.

“That’s right, our baby, Eliana. Don’t I get to have a say in what happens too? Do you think it’s easy for me? Do you think it doesn’t plague me every second of every day what could happen to her?” He questioned.

“Because I can assure you, it’s just as hard for me as it is for you to come to terms with all of this. I want her, Eliana. I want a world where we can live with our two or three beautiful children. I want that so badly, Eliana.” He said.

“But I want you more. I want you alive. None of that will matter if you’re not here, don’t you understand?” He inched closer to where I stood. “Look what happened” There was a crack in Denver’s voice.

“Look who your father turned into once she left. See what leaving made him into—“ “Denver” I softly called but he shook his head. “But it’s true. Is that what you want for me? Is that how you want to leave me?”

“I’m not leaving, Denver” I assured him. “I promise.”

“You can’t promise that, Eliana. You know that yourself” Denver was now inches away from my face and his hands sizzled next to mine. He captured my gaze firmly in his eyes.

“What do you want me to do then?” I whispered. “Listen to your grandmother. Listen to me, it’s way too risky doing the spell. I mean black magic?” He arched his brows.

“I’m doing it for her. We don’t have a lot of options—”

“And what about us?” He asked and my heart leaped into my throat. “I’m fighting for us too, Denver.”

“But you’re pushing me away” He whispered. “You’re pushing me away and you’re doing this alone, making all these decisions, acting on impulse. It doesn’t have to be like this, Eliana. If you’re patient enough, I’m sure we can always find another way, a safer way or a loophole in all of this.”

“When have we not made it out—together?” Denver muttered. “We always do it together and we make it. We just need time, Eliana” His hand reached to caress my cheeks softly and I rested in his palms.

“That’s the one thing we don’t have, Denver” I replied and he squeezed his eyes shut, withdrawing his hands from me. “If I do the spell and it’s all right, do you know Elijah would not only have his little sister but he could actually have a shot at having a normal life. Do you know that?”

“He won’t be a Hybrid anymore which means the Witches would never come for him and he’s free from the Curse, the nightmares end too and he can actually fit into the Pack. The both of them, Denver. And I’ll be here, I’ll be alive and I could watch them grow—“ I paused.

“We could watch them grow, you and I. Together.”

“We could actually have a shot at a happily ever after. Am I the only one of us willing to fight for it?” There was a crack in my voice and Denver was awfully silent. I took a step back, pressing my lips into each other.

“I see a way to save everyone. I’m going to take it, Denver”

“But who saves you?” He asked and his words ran cold through my ears. I pushed a hard lump down my throat. “If you don’t let me, Eliana. Who saves your life?” Denver questioned.

“They’re…” I heaved a deep breath. “They’re my life. My kids”

“But you’re mine” Denver replied. “What about me, Eliana?” He asked and I inched closer to him, gazing deep into his eyes. “I need you, Denver. I’ve always needed you. I need you right beside me, every step of the way. I need you to assure me and to hope and love me.”

“To tell me everything is going to be okay. To tell me that I can do it. I need you just like I’ve always needed you, please.” I whispered.

“That’s the only way we even have half a shot at making it out through all of this because in the end, it’s us. You realize that, right?” I added and although Denver’s eyes glistened, he clenched his jaw and nodded.

I heaved a fiery sigh out of my lips and a sting burned through my lungs.

My hands settled on Denver’s shoulders as my head merged into his chest. The sound of his racing heartbeat reverberated through my ears. I held onto him for a moment, a much-needed moment that I needed to breathe for a second. I realized I hadn’t even processed half the things I read in my mother’s journal and it came flooding back to me.

My ears were full and a million thoughts were racing through my mind but that moment that I held around Denver and took in that deep breath, everything seemed to quiet down. Just for that moment.

There was calm, there was peace. I was safe.

He held me closer to him, resting his chin on my head and I looked up at him. “What do we do now?” Denver asked and a faint smile crept to my lips. There was just something about the way he said 'We'. I knew he was always going to be there. I could always count on him.

Through life’s toughest battles, through the hardest decisions, through better and through worse, I had Denver. He was my rock, he’s my hope.

I let go of him, parting my lips slightly.

“I need to see Nathaniel now” I replied. We were directly in front of the stairs that led into the dungeon where they’d locked him up. “There are still some questions he has to answer” I continued but there was a sudden thud that came from right below us.

Denver’s eyes charged at me almost immediately.

“What was that?” We chorused, quieting for the abrupt silence that followed right after. There was a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach as I rushed down the stairs. Denver too.

He pushed open the door that led into the dungeon and the cold, sinister air slapped me in the face. I walked down the narrow corridor flanked by iron barred cells and the air was heavy with the promise of an impending doom. My stomach tied into a knot with each step that I took.

Until finally, I reached the cage I presumed Nathaniel, my brother was kept in. Only to meet the shock of my eyes—

“Denver” I called out, hearing the echoes of his approaching footsteps.

My lips fell wide open as we both stared with disbelief at the cell door hanging open. The eerie creak of rusty hinges echoed through the suffocating silence as I turned to Denver.

“I think he’s gone” I looked around the room to find sheds of his fur laying around and claw marks scarred into the ground. “Fuck his Werewolf side” Denver cussed. It had to be the only way he was able to escape his chains and the cage.

Nathaniel had finally come into his wolf.

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To Be Continued. (Updates will now be on Monday, Wednesday, Friday)