

## His Sunshine Baby Chapter 91 - Tips

I drive us back to my place, Estelle sipping her hot cocoa in the back seat, happily talking to me about how happy she was to see her mom.

I still can't believe it, either. I was prepared for anything, for Elena to scream or yell at me. I wouldn't even have blamed her if she punched me a few times. I'm still waiting for it, actually. I take a glance at my baby star in the back seat. How did she raise such a precious, perfect little girl alone like that... I take a deep breath.

I need to make things right. It's not just Estelle, I want to resume my relationship with Elena, too. Even if it takes years, I want to earn her forgiveness. Have them both back in my life, stop being that ghost I've been for the past four years. I'm the most selfish man there is, for sure, but honestly, I'd rather die than miss my chance again.

I finally parked in front of the residence, escorting my baby star out of the car. She is amazed by the view of the sea behind us.

"Daddy! It's the ocean? It's so big!"

"Yes, Baby Star. Come, you will see it even better from my apartment."

"Really?"

She takes my hand and follows me inside. The concierge, Harry, opens his eyes wide, seeing me walking in with a kid. Aside from Elena or my family, he's never seen me bring anyone else home...

"Good evening, M. Black. May I ask who is the little miss with you?"

Estelle, a bit shy, exchanges a glance with me before smiling to him.

"I am Estelle, mister."

"Nice to meet you, miss Estelle, I am Harry. Please let me know if you need anything."

"Thank you, Harry!"

"Thanks, Harry," I say, a bit proud.

While we walk to the elevator, Estelle suddenly stops. You can see the pool from the other side of the glass wall, and she is stunned.

“Daddy! There is a huge pool too!”

“I know. Do you want to go later?”

She frowns, turning to me.

“I don’t know how to swim... And I don’t have a swimsuit...”

“Alright, then we can buy you a swimsuit later, and you’ll come with Daddy so you can swim, okay?”

She nods with a big smile, her eyes turning to the pool again. It’s cute how she can barely manage to hide her excitement. We take the elevator to my apartment, and when she walks in, she doesn’t dare to walk away from me, even after we took our shoes off.

“This is... Daddy’s house?”

“Yes. Go on. Don’t you want to explore it?”

“But... You live alone, Daddy?”

“Yes. Your uncles come sometimes. But your mom is the only girl who came here before you.”

“Really?!”

With excitement, she finally walks in, looking at everything around her. Now that I think about it... Maybe Estelle was even conceived here. Not a lot of things have changed since then. I like a sober, neat style. Liam always says my flat looks like it’s for sale, since it’s so clean you could barely guess someone lives in... Well, I usually only come here to sleep and shower.

“Daddy! There are so many rooms!”

I hear her running from one room to another, and I laugh. That place really is big... Damn too big for myself, actually. I remember, I bought it because I had the means to get what’s best, but for one man alone, it’s ridiculously big. What was I thinking? I understand Damian better, now. He just rented the place

above his office, with just one bedroom, and waited to have a wife and family to get a huge family house...

"Estelle, come see the view!"

She comes back from one of the rooms, while I put our shopping bags in a corner. I take her to the balcony, which offers an incredible view of Silver City, its buildings and the sea, on the left. She stays silent, but I can tell she's stunned.

"Daddy... It's so big, like a forest of buildings..."

I nod, and take a seat next to her. Elena loved this view, too. I remember sitting here so many times with her, to watch it while listening to her music... Even when it rained, she would lay in the couch and face the glass wall to watch it. Estelle goes to the end of the balcony, looking at everything for a long time, commenting sometimes about some funny-shaped building, asking me what is this or that, and making me point out the directions to our Company, the Hospital where her mom is and her auntie Nora's house.

"I miss mommy already..." She says, turning to me with a bit of a sad face all of a sudden.

I open my arms, and she comes to sit on my lap. I gently push her blonde hair behind her ears, looking at my daughter from up close.

"I miss her too, baby star."

"Do you think mommy can go out of the hospital soon?"

I nod.

"Of course. Your mom is super strong."

"How soon? Tomorrow?"

"I don't know, baby. It's for the doctors to decide."

"Okay..."

But I can tell she's unhappy, looking down. How do I cheer a four-year-old up, especially without her mom?

“You’ll stay with me until mommy can get out, okay? And we will go and see her every day, I promise.”

“Really?” She asks, her eyes shining again.

“I promise. Meanwhile, we can do all you want. Go to the sea, to the movies, to your auntie’s house...”

Estelle smiles wide again, making me feel I did something right.

“Can we eat more pizza?”

I laugh.

“You’re already addicted to pizza? It’s really genetics... How about I make you some homemade pizza tonight?”

“Is it okay? We had pizza yesterday...”

“Then... I can make something else if you want? Or we can even eat out?”

“I’ll eat what Daddy makes!”

After a while, we agree to make some mac and cheese, and rent a Disney movie. As expected, she had never seen one... We end up seeing two more Disney together before she falls asleep on the couch with me, and I take her to the bedroom.

Damian gives me a call that night, making sure everything’s fine. I don’t think I’ve ever been so grateful to my older brother. He’s always been on my side, but... It’s a strange feeling, helping me become a good father. He gives me a few tips about what I could do with Estelle, what kind of food I should try with her, and so on. He’s been a dad for two years, but I’m all of a sudden with a four-year-old. I guess I may be doing something right, if she’s happy staying with me so far. I also realize my place isn’t very child-friendly... I could use a few more toys and less corny furniture...

The next day, I let Estelle decide on one of the bedrooms to become her own. She’s so happy about getting her own room at my place, and picks one with a good view of the sea, but more importantly, the closest to mine. I tell her we will renovate it to her liking, and we spend the next day going to furniture and toy stores. After a while, she goes for a winter theme, chosen after her new

favorite Disney movie. She is most excited that we will paint it over together, after she picked some turquoise paint.

We visit her mother in the afternoon, but as expected, Elena only wants to see her daughter... We barely exchanged a few words. I'm fine with just seeing her for a while, though. I spend more time discreetly enquiring with her doctor. She's getting better and should be discharged soon, much to my relief.

After two hours, Estelle agrees to leave, a bit sad to part with her mom again, and we spend the rest of the evening painting, as she was excited to start remodeling her new bedroom, and finish the night by watching more Disney movies with my delicious homemade pizza.

While putting my daughter to bed, I realize I completely forgot about work, but Isaac didn't call me, neither did my secretary, so I guess it's fine...

The next morning, Damian calls me.

"Elena can leave the hospital."

"What...? Really?"

I'm busy preparing breakfast for my daughter who's still asleep, and I almost drop the pan. She... Elena can leave the hospital? Already?

"Yeah," says Damian. "Her shoulder is still injured, so her arm is not healed completely, but her legs are now fine. She can walk, and apparently, she insisted a lot of leaving..."

"Wh... when?" I ask, fidgety.

"She'll be discharged after they give her a new cast and she gets all the clearance, so... In an hour or so."

"O...Okay... Can you hold her? I want to bring Estelle there before she leaves."

"Fine, I'll talk to the Hospital Director. But hurry up."

"Yeah. Thanks."

I hang up, and notice Estelle woke up, walking to me half-asleep while walking with her bunny plushie.

“Good Morning Daddy...” She says in her sleepy voice.

I walk over to kiss her cheek, carrying her. Even her eyes are still fighting not to stay open.

“Baby, I got good news from your uncle.”

“Uncle Damian...?”

“Yes. Your mom is leaving the hospital today.”

Suddenly, she’s completely awake and excited, her big eyes looking at me.

“Really? Really, daddy? Mommy can leave? Today?”

“Yes, Baby. So you should eat your breakfast and we can go see her.”

“Okay! Daddy, I’ll eat fast so we can go right after, right? Daddy... What is this?”

“It’s crepes, baby. My mom used to make them when we were young, with your uncles... I made ones with chocolate and sugar so take what you want, okay?”

“Can we save some for mommy?”

“Of course.”

She smiles and starts eating happily, faster than usual. I may be more excited, though... I barely eat, just gulping down a coffee. I’m so anxious... I get dressed, some T-shirt and jeans, and help Estelle get ready before we go and drive to the Hospital.

I decide to stop on the way, just buying some flowers for Elena’s discharge. Is that too much? Estelle can give it to her, it will be less awkward that way. If only I could calm down... I hurry to the Hospital, park and walk inside with Estelle.

Damian is already there, discussing with Elena and some guy from the medical staff. Calm down, calm down... I try to calm myself, holding our daughter’s hand a bit tighter. Elena notices me first but turns back to the doctor.

“Is that all?”

“As long as you take the medicine and get lots of rest, you will be better in a few days, Miss Whitewood. Please don’t stand for too long, and watch out for your arm. I will recommend a check-up in three days, just to make sure.”

“About the hospital bill...”

“Elena, don’t,” says Damian with a frown. “Nora will scold us both. Don’t you dare talk about money.”

She sighs, turning to Damian.

“Can I at least say thank you...?”

I see the beginning of a smirk on my brother’s face. Since when are those two so close...? I let go of her haNd, and Estelle runs to her mother with the flowers.

“Mommy!”

“Baby star!”

She painfully gets down to hug her daughter. Is she alright crouching? Her arm is still in a sling, and she looks tired too. I quickly join them, grabbing Estelle to carry her. Elena barely looks at me...

“Mommy, can you really get out now?”

“Yes baby, I’m leaving the hospital.”

“Really? Look, we got you flowers! And you can come and live with Daddy and me? We painted my room! It will be dry in two days!”

Elena hesitates, looking at me. I take a deep breath, stepping forward.

“How about... we discuss a bit first? Maybe mommy wants some breakfast too, baby?”

“We made some crepes!”

While she tells all about her morning to her mother, Damian settles the last details with the hospital, so that we can leave; Elena is obviously trying to

avoid my eyes, while still talking to her daughter meanwhile. I take deep breaths, trying to calm down and act rationally. It had to happen sooner or later, right?

“Alright, it’s settled,” announces Damian. “I have to go home, Nora asked me to watch the kid this afternoon.”

“She’s not working?” I ask, worried.

“No, but Tonia is taking her shopping for the baby.”

“Didn’t you said you didn’t know the gender yet...?” Asks Elena, surprised.

Damian nods.

“We don’t, but they still want to look for more baby toys and things to get prepared for the birth. Nora is scared it will be premature like James. Anyway...”

He sighs and says goodbye to us, giving a kiss to the girls and leaving.

Okay, now I’m left with the two girls... I take a deep breath and turn to Estelle.

“Do you want hot cocoa, baby? So you can finish eating your crepes with mommy?”

“Yes! Come, mommy! Daddy, we can get another one for mommy?”

“Of course, baby.”

Elena stays silent and follows her to the Hospital Cafeteria. It’s so awkward... I take a deep breath and follow. I insist on paying for the drinks, getting myself an americano and two hot cocoas for the girls, and we sit down, a bit awkward.

“Do you like it, mommy?”

“It’s good, baby star,” says Elena.

We stay silent a bit longer, and it’s the most awkward we’ve ever been... I really need to say something, now. It’s the time, if I ever want to make things up...

“Are you going home with us now, mommy?”

“I... I think I'll go and live with aunty Nora for now, Baby Star.”

Estelle immediately makes a sad face, turning to her and me alternatively, worried.

“But... Daddy has a lot of rooms... And the Disney movies... And he said you liked it at Daddy's place before...”

She's almost crying, and I immediately feel so guilty about it!

I turn to Elena, talking very seriously.

“Elena... You could come to my place.”

“Oh, heck no, Nate. We are done.”

“I'm not asking you to go back to me. I... You know I have a lot of spare rooms, and I can...”

“Your place is not a hotel, and I am not that desperate. Nora can host me anytime, and we both know it.”

“Yes, but I want to see my daughter, and we can't split her between my place and Damian's all the time. And Nora is pregnant, and tired, she can't host all three of us.”

“I'm pretty sure Damian can get me a room anytime I ask for it, Nathaniel.”

“Elena, I'm... just asking you because of our daughter. You don't have to go back to me, just consider living in the same place as me.”

“Nathaniel, do you even know what you're saying! It's not just like we could be flatmates!”

“Why not?” I ask, very seriously. “Elena, you know I want you back. I'll be very clear right now about that. I owe you a hundred apologies, and we need a good, long talk. I'm asking you we have it now, for Estelle's sake. But my place would be better than a Hospital's cafeteria. You... You're free to go back to Nora's place with Estelle after that. All I'm asking is... you just give me time to talk to you before that. Seriously.”

## His Sunshine Baby Chapter 92 - Tips

I take a deep breath, trying to get my thoughts in order. I don't want to give in to him, not now, not so fast.

"Nate, we had that talk... about four years ago."

I see his pained expression, but his eyes are resolute.

"You know I didn't have all the pieces of the puzzle, Elena. It was unfair. I'm not saying it was your fault, but you can't... I mean, anyone would have had doubts. You had my medical records and the paternity test..."

I get furious just thinking about that damn, fvckingd up paternity test.

"I told you, my cousin...!"

"Elena."

I calm down, remembering where we are. Moreover, Estelle is staring at the two of us, anxious and a bit lost. She is holding on to her hot cocoa, trying to grasp what's going between her father and I. Don't get mad now, I hate causing a scene...

Nathaniel sighs.

"Elena, I'm just asking we go to my place, for now, to talk. I don't want to just pick a random place, and Estelle's stuff is there too, she can just watch a movie while we discuss calmly, like adults."

"Mommy, Daddy and I watched Disney movies yesterday! It was very, very funny, and I even know the song a bit!"

I caress her cheek, thinking. Am I ready to step into his place again? We have so many memories there, just the two of us... This is the last place I saw him, too. Moon Goddess... I thought I had time to prepare myself, but I'm in a whirlwind of emotions right now.

I was not ready to see Nate when I woke up, I am still not prepared. My heart is driving me crazy, torn between so many memories and desires. Seeing him again awoke some feelings I thought I had buried, but they rose up again in a snap. I sigh.

“Fine, but... Just talk, Nathaniel.”

He nods, looking suddenly relieved.

“Of course. I promise you’re more than welcome, but I won’t hold you back if you want to go to Nora’s.”

Why am I so happy to see him relieved? This is so stupid... He grabs my bag for me, and we leave the Hospital, Estelle happily walking between us, telling me all about her new room and the movies she watched with her Dad.

Nathaniel and I sit in front of his car, but we don’t exchange one word. I was unconscious when he brought me back, so I can’t help but watch Silver City while he’s focused on his driving and chatting with our daughter. It didn’t change that much, in four years... It’s the same buildings, the same streets, even if they look a bit more crowded now. Is it because Nora and her mate got rid of the borders between the werewolves packs? I remember how I used to be careful whenever I would venture to the Blood Moon territory, but it all seems so easy now...

I do my best not to watch Nathaniel, or at least make sure he doesn’t know. Moon Goddess, he really... changed for the better. He’s got more muscles, I can see he’s bulkier under his shirt. His hair is cut shorter, and he’s sporting a beard. Back then, he would always have a clean shave. Shit... I didn’t think he’d get more handsome.

We finally park in front of his residence. It’s the same concierge, greeting me politely enough, and he looks like he’s befriended Estelle, too.

I’m so nervous while the elevators go up... It’s so damn fast, too. The door opens, and we walk in. This place hasn’t really changed at all... It’s so close to my memories, in every detail. Nate never had many things, to begin with, it’s like a furniture magazine in here. Except that now, my daughter left her drawing set in the middle of the table, there is a box of strawberry biscuits next to it and a pink plaid cover on the couch. Estelle, who already visibly settled well there, runs to get her latest drawing.

“Look, mommy! Daddy and I, we picked some really nice pencils! I did this yesterday!”

“It’s beautiful, honey,” I say, a bit quieter than I wanted.

Nathaniel gets on one knee to talk to her gently. I never get tired of seeing him interact with his daughter, so gentle and... fatherly.

"Baby, can you be a good girl and watch another Disney Movie? Mommy and I need to talk a bit."

"Okay, Daddy! I remember how to pick a movie!"

She runs to grab the remote and climbs on the couch, ready to watch. I sigh, and Nathaniel puts my bag on the kitchen counter, going to the fridge.

"Do you want to drink something?"

"I'm fine."

He only pours one cup of water for himself, turning to me while behind us, Estelle's movie starts with music. I follow Nate on the balcony. This way, we can keep watching Estelle from where she won't hear us.

Damn, I really loved the view here... Nathaniel drinks water and sits, but to my surprise, he doesn't take out a cigarette.

"...You stopped smoking?"

He nods.

"Yeah, about two years ago... I stopped a lot of things."

What does he mean by that? I take a deep breath, trying to sort things out in my head, focusing on what really matters.

"Alright... I guess we need to discuss some things about our daughter."

"Elena..."

"Nathaniel, no."

I know this voice of his. I'm not going down that lane.

"We discuss Estelle. Because she's your daughter and if you have questions, I'm ready to answer it. Nothing else."

“Elena, it’s not just Estelle I want to talk over with you. I know I... I really owe you an apology.”

“Nathaniel, I...”

“No, listen.”

He puts his hand on mine before I can take it away, and when his electric blue eyes are on mine, I don’t dare to say anything. I’m just struggling not to cry or yell at him, a big knot in my throat.

“Elena, I’m so, so sorry. For not believing you back then. No matter the numbers, the tests, the hospital... I should have... I regretted it so many times, I swear. Even before I even knew Estelle was really my baby, I wanted to bring you back and apologize. I didn’t even care who her father was, I just wanted you back. You have no idea... How many times Damian and Liam kept me from doing some really, really stupid things.”

What stupid things? What did he do? I want to ask, but once again, I know I’m going to fall apart if I open my mouth right now.

“I was a fvcking\*g i\*\*\*t, Elena. Because I was blinded by the idea you could have been with someone else. I died of jealousy. I just couldn’t swallow it. When the results came back, I felt like you were betraying me a second time, and I lost it. I swear I never, never meant for you to leave Silver City. I had no idea you would go somewhere I couldn’t reach you.”

I take a deep breath, trying to think about how to answer that.

“Nate, I didn’t just leave because of you. So many things happened back then... I had no choice. Yes, you were part of the problem, but... It wasn’t just about you.”

He looks at me, frowning, obviously confused.

“Your... Because of your pack? And your relationship to Nora?”

I growl back, a bit annoyed.

“I’m not saying it wasn’t partially your fault! But... yeah. Because of all that sh!t. And Estelle... As soon as I claimed I was pregnant with your child, things became complicated with my pack.”

I see his alpha aura going wild, with anger. I can feel it from here, though he's trying not to display it too much in front of me.

I look down. What do I say next?

"Elena, why did you left?"

I feel like he already knows part of the answer. I glance at Estelle, biting my lip. Nate follows my eyes.

"She's... a Royal?" He asks.

I nod.

"Why didn't you told me? About your relationship with Nora?"

"It was so complicated, even for me, Nathaniel. I was barely sorting out who I was, no one wanted to talk to me about my origins. Even with Nora, we did nothing but guess until the truth came out."

"So it's true? You're... cousins?"

I nod. I explain to Nathaniel everything that happened back then. How I felt our bond, how we both looked for answers on our side. What I learned from Reagan and Sylviana, including about my own mother and father's story. Nathaniel keeps reacting to my words, but he doesn't say anything until I was done.

"So that's why you're not Royal... But Estelle is?"

"Yes," I answer. "Your Alpha blood is strong enough to awake her Royal gene or something like that. Daniel would explain it better than me..."

I brush my hair out of my face, while Nathaniel is still taking in all that information. I sigh and take his cup of water. This conversation is going better than I would have thought...

"Okay," he says after a while.

I frown.

"That's it? Okay?"

“What did you expect me to say? My daughter is a Royal, and you are Nora’s cousin, though not Royal, because your mother was human. I am not saying I wouldn’t have wanted to know earlier, but it doesn’t change much. I want you and Estelle back.”

“She is your daughter, I never said otherwise,” I remind him, wary.

“You know what I mean, Elena. I still love you.”

Holy sh!t, how can he drop a bomb like that... I look away, embarrassed, and more awkward than ever.

“Nathaniel, no.”

“I’m not going to do anything. I just needed you to know, Elena. I still love you, maybe even more than before.”

“Can we just focus on Estelle for now?”

He nods and looks at our daughter again, with a faint smile on his face.

“Okay. I just want what’s best for Estelle, right now.”

I can tell that, from that overprotective look in his eyes. He looks at our daughter, like any werewolf would look at his pup. He turns to me again, and I look away one second too late.

“I still want both of you to stay here.”

Moon Goddess, how much more stubborn can that j.erk be!

“I understand you want to spend time with Estelle, but don’t include me in...”

“She is our daughter. And I don’t want us to have to split our time with her, Elena. I’m not asking you to... Think of me like that. I mean, I do want us to get back together, but I know the most important right now is that we both stay with her. I have this vast apartment, with enough rooms you can lock anytime. Estelle likes it here, too. And I know you also do.

Damn it...

I’m so close to crying. I try to hold my tears back, I don’t want to show Nate that.

I hate him, I hate him when he says stuff like that... When his words make me weak. Now I'm really hesitating. I know I'm really considering that stupid offer of his. Truth is, I could stay at Nora's place, but my cousin is pregnant and already busy as it is with her two-year-old and her responsibilities as a Luna. Daniel moved to a Studio with Boyan, and anyway, living anywhere on the White Moon territory is out of the question for me.

Nora did mention the Sapphire Moon Clan could host me, but they are strangers to us... While Nathaniel is my ex, an ex I still fvcking\*g love, and Estelle's father. Moreover, that i\*\*\*t is right: my daughter obviously likes it here. She's waving at us from the couch, singing to some Disney tune.

A part of me doesn't want her to have to spend more time away from her Dad. That same part of me that reminds me every second that I still love Nate, despite everything. While I'm still hesitating, Nathaniel nods.

"You can think about it until tonight, Elena. I know it's complicated for you to forgive me, but I'm not going to change my mind about anything I said. So... Whether you live or you stay, it's up to you. But I do want you here, and Estelle too, of course."

"Daddy!"

Our daughter came running, getting tired to watch us from behind the window. She runs to him, all excited with her pink cheeks. She puts her hands on Nate's knees, acting all cute to him. Moon Goddess, seeing her act like this with him, is the most beautiful thing I want to witness...

"Daddy, in the movie, they were eating bolognese spaghetti! With big meatballs, too! Can we eat that for lunch?"

I chuckle, to Nate's surprise.

"I... I was making bolognese before we left the house..."

"You made bolognese?" He asks, a bit surprised.

"Mommy burnt it! With crunchy parts!"

Moon Goddess, Estelle, can you stop embarrassing me in front of your father like that! Nathaniel laughs and stands up, carrying her.

“Alright, how about you let daddy cook for lunch? No crunchy or burnt parts and I’m sure we can find some big meatballs for you to eat!”

“Mommy! We’re having some spaghetti!”

I sigh and smile at her.

“Alright, baby star, let’s try daddy’s cooking.”

## **His Sunshine Baby Chapter 93 - Tips**

“I almost said yes, Nora, I swear...” I sigh.

My cousin smiles behind her cup of tea. She’s curled up in front of me on her couch, in her night gown, her long hair braided over her shoulder, white as snow. I can’t get used to that odd thing.

“You shouldn’t worry too much, Elena,” she says. “You and Nathaniel have always had your differences, and your fight was genuine, but... He’s changed a lot from then. He’s a different man.”

I’m not sure. To me, he’s always the same annoyingly sweet man, he’s only gotten more handsome than before. The way he’s with Estelle plays a big part, too. I watched him all day with our daughter, but I couldn’t find anything he did wrong. He’s being the most careful, patient and loving father to her.

“I don’t think I can’t endure it a second time, Nora. I was... heartbroken when I left, and that pain is still there.”

She nods, frowning a bit. I called her before coming to give her a heads-up, and she stayed up so we could chat when I arrived at her house, despite being obviously tired from her pregnancy. We are taking our time in her veranda salon, on some huge couch, with the night sky above us behind the glass roof.

It’s a bit late, I waited until Estelle was asleep to leave, but I didn’t want to spend a single minute alone with her father. Who knows what could have happened...

“You know, Nathaniel is only like that towards you, Elena,” she says. “I only get to see him lose his mask when you’re here, or Estelle is. I could never call

him Nate, or be as close to him as I am to Liam. Nathaniel has... a facade and I don't get to see behind that often. It got even worse while you were gone."

"What do you mean?"

She sighs.

"He was... A wreck, Elena. I'm not saying he's not at fault, but it was really painful to watch him, four years ago. He avoided us, and fought so many times with Damian and Liam... It was a big shock that you had left. He still believed the baby wasn't his, but he really thought you left because of him. At one point, he was almost... suicidal."

I almost choke on my cup. Nate? Suicidal? What the hell?

"Nora, what do you mean? What did he do?"

My cousin bites her lip, a bit unsure.

"Well, first, he started drinking a lot... His best friend Isaac tried to watch him, Damian and Neal too, but they found him passed out several times. He would drive while being drunk, too, until Damian went really mad. It happened after I got pregnant, but he had a big car accident. Once he was completely healed, Damian sent him to rehab, with specialists and all. Nathaniel only got better about a year ago, but now it seems he's been overworking, and Isaac thinks he suffers from insomnia, too. Well, it was probably true until you came back..."

It takes me a few seconds to take it all in. sh!t, I wouldn't have suspected any of that from seeing Nate today... He looks fitter, not like he survived alcoholism and depression!

I put my cup down, trying to take it all in. How did he abandon himself like that? I'm even mad at him for almost dying so stupidly, putting himself in danger! If it wasn't for his older brother, Estelle could have lost her dad before she ever got to meet him!

"That idiot..." I growl.

"I know," sighs Nora. "That's why I'm glad you're back, and he knows Estelle is his daughter. I feel much better with everyone being home, here in Silver City, too..."

I frown. Something else didn't make sense... Nora notices my expression, tilting her head.

"What is it?"

"Back then... We know Iris falsified the paternity test, but Daniel said Nate's sterility was real, and my cousin couldn't have falsified those documents, they came from the Black General Hospital. I knew she was his because he's the only man I slept with, but... Truth his, scientifically speaking, it shouldn't have been possible. So how was Estelle conceived?"

Nora takes a bit of breath, looking a bit guilty all of a sudden. What's wrong...?

"I... I mean Damian and I have a bit of theory about that. I didn't know about Nate's sterility issue back then, and Damian didn't know the whole issue about the paternity test, so..."

"Nora, what is it?"

My cousin hesitates, fidgeting with her fingers.

"As a Royal, I have... an extra power that you might actually have too."

"Nora, I'd know if I had another power, by now."

"It's not something very visible, especially for werewolves. Our... I mean, my k!ss can heal people."

I stay in shock. Wow, that's... new. Werewolves are fast-healers, anyway, so how would she know that? The only thing is that she and I are actually slow-healers, the one weak point of the Royals... Nora nods from seeing my doubtful expression.

"I know, it's a bit strange, but I can heal people even faster than a werewolf's natural ability, and even... Sort of creates some sort of miraculous healing. When Damian and I met, many, many years ago, it happened. He was about to die, and I k!ssed him. It healed him when he should have died. I passed out, so Damian realized this was taking from my own strength, and refused to tell me for a long time."

"Nora, it sounds really crazier than a lot of stuff we've heard about..."

“No, Elena, it’s real. Our grandmother, Queen Diane, she had that power too, and my mother too. I think it only works for female Royals since there is no trace of your father having that kind of power. But it’s the truth. I used it again four years ago, after the battle.”

I take a moment to remember. That’s right... Nora came back gravely injured, but she was still in better shape than the King. People were saying he would die... But all of a sudden, their situations changed. Nora was in a deep coma, while Damian Black was perfectly fine when I met him before leaving. I didn’t think too much about it back then because I was too caught up in my own mess, and Nathaniel’s injury, but...

“You’re telling me you... healed your husband? With a k!ss?”

She nods. I take a few seconds.

“Nora, you realize that’s...”

“A bit unbelievable, I know. But that’s why I got into a Coma. I discussed it with William too, he said it looked like our grandmother’s power, from what he heard. Sylviana, too, she knew about it.”

“...You’re saying I healed Nate? When we... k!ssed?”

“Elena, try to think about it? Would you feel tired afterward? While Nate was fine?”

“Well, usually we had se.x involved, Nora, so yes, that was the usual pattern...”

While my cousin blushes, a bit embarrassed, I try to recall more seriously. I do remember being really tired after having se.x with Nathaniel, especially the first few times... While that i\*\*\*t seemed in top shape. Back then, it didn’t really catch my attention, but now that Nora says it...

“Holy Moon Goddess...” I whisper.

Is that why? Nathaniel was cured because of... Because we... k!ssed so many times? We started seeing each other in early summer, and Estelle was most likely conceived around September... Until then, does that mean I was healing his... body functions? Moon Goddess!

“Why didn’t you tell him!” I exclaim, astonished.

“I wanted to, Elena, but... If Nathaniel realized your baby really was his while you were gone, Damian was afraid he would... do something stupid.”

“You mean look for us?” I ask, annoyed. “He would have known I wasn’t lying!”

“Elena, the situation was too complicated to tackle! Nathaniel was already overwhelmed with guilt just thinking he had driven you out of Silver City! What if we told him he was really wrong, and he had kicked you on a mistake? The only thing he could hang on to was that the baby couldn’t be his!”

“You thought he would have...”

“Elena, he wrecked his car! He was already in a very bad place, and didn’t listen to us. He would be dead if he wasn’t a werewolf. If we had told him the truth, Damian was scared his brother would have really... He said Nathaniel could really commit suicide.”

I almost lose my breath on that sentence. No, no, no. Nate wouldn’t go that far. Even if he was in such a bad state Nora said, I didn’t think he... Right?

“I swear Elena, I really wanted to tell him, but Damian and I discussed it many, many times. His only reason of living was that you would come back one day, and he would realize the truth by himself. But by then, he would know his daughter, and be better.”

It takes me a few seconds until I start crying. It’s just too much for me. I can’t imagine what Nate went through, I can’t picture it. And all this time, I was so fvcking\*g stubborn! I could have come back to Silver City two years ago, when Nora woke up! But no, I was so heartbroken, I just couldn’t bring myself to go back and instead, I spent two more years away instead of letting Estelle meet her father!

“Elena...” whispers Nora, rubbing my valid shoulder. “It’s okay. It was no one’s fault things happened this way... I think it’s even a bit of a miracle, isn’t it?”

“W...What?” I ask, still sobbing.

“Nathaniel and you should never have met in the first place, let alone be able to have a baby together, right? Yet, Moon Goddess made sure you too met,

and you healed him with a power we didn't even know you had. Isn't it a bit of a miracle?"

sh!t, no I want to cry even more because she said something like that. A miracle... I always thought my baby was a miracle, but when Nora puts it like this... I keep crying for a while longer until Damian walks in.

"Sorry..." I hear him say.

I throw my shoe at him, annoyed. Those damn brothers! He doesn't care, and goes to sit beside Nora.

"I'm not going back with Nate," I say.

They exchange a look, not answering anything.

"I'm really not!"

"Elena, I understand. But... We may not have much longer before something happens," whispers Nora.

"What do you mean?" I ask, suddenly wary.

Her husband sighs, visibly angry.

"The dark witch is coming closer... we spotted movements closer to our turf than we initially thought. Sylviana says it's a matter of weeks."

I lose my breath again. A matter of... weeks? We only have a few fvcking\*g weeks? A wave of fear takes me by surprise as I turn to them.

"What do we know, so far? About her attack?"

"She's gathered vampires... A lot of vampires. We can't tell if they are obeying her willingly or not. Sylviana thinks they don't, but... Anyway, their strength is growing every day. We try to have all our wolves ready in case something happens soon, but we can't have more warriors than we do now. Sylviana will do her best, too."

"You're telling me we will die?"

"No. So far it looks more like the strengths will be even."

“So not everyone will die, but we can’t be sure. Can’t we do anything?” I ask, impatient.

“The closest werewolf turf is way too far to help,” says Damian. “But we will be fine... As long as we kill the water witch, everything will be over.”

“Sylviana said so, too. If we get to the witch, the vampires will know the fight is lost for them and stop attacking...”

I growl. Those two are way too confident about this!

“Nora, the first attack, we already lost people. I lost friends! And now you’re telling me this one will be even worse? How can you two be so calm!”

“Because we don’t want to panic everyone!” Says Nora. “You think I’m not scared? Every day I pray I can deliver my baby before her attack, even if I know it will give her one more target. I’m probably the most scared person around, Elena. But I can’t do anything about it for now. Sylviana already goes to the border every day to try and buy us some time.”

“Things will be different, too,” adds her mate. “Now, the Packs are all united. We will attack as one, unlike last time. The White Moon took a huge blow because we were late to respond, and some packs didn’t help. All the Alphas work together now.”

I had forgotten about that... Nora and Damian did that. All the Alphas now collaborate under the King’s command. It might indeed be our best chance...

I sigh.

“That Witch... she dominated me so easily, Nora...”

“I know. But you were alone, Elena, and she took you and Reagan by surprise. This won’t happen this time. We will be ready, with Sylviana, too.”

“Well, I hope our local witch is all fired up...”

My cousin nods, and no one adds anything for a while. We are sleepy, it’s late and quiet. At some point, Nora falls asleep, and her husband gets up, carrying her. I follow behind him.

“You can take the room on the left,” he whispers. “Are you going back to Nate’s place tomorrow?”

“Probably around lunch... I’m going to burry Reagan with Daniel tomorrow.”

“I see...”

He gently puts Nora to bed, careful not to wake his wife, and leaves their bedroom to walk back to me. I cross my arms, laying against the wall across him.

“Nora told you? About Nate?” He asks.

I nod. How awkward is it to talk about his whereabouts with his older brother... Damian sighs, without adding anything. How does he feel about me being back...? Just like Nora can’t decipher Nathaniel, I feel like Damian Black will always remain a mystery to me...

“You’re not going to tell me to get back with him, are you?” I ask, a bit annoyed.

He shakes his head.

“I don’t think I need to say it. It’s on both of your faces...”

I roll my eyes. Am I that transparent? Why does everyone think it’s a given will be back together? Danny, Nora, now Damian Black too... I decide to change topics.

“About that war... Sylviana didn’t say anything about the outcome? You know she is a seer, don’t you?”

“She did.”

“What?” I ask, surprised. “What did she say?”

“...She said she can’t see it.”

She can’t see it...? What does that mean? Is it still too unsure to know? Or did she not want to peek that far into the future? Or is it too scary to tell...

I feel a cold chill in my back, tell him good night and leave in a hurry to my room. This is so scary... Not only to think someone could die in this war, some people I love, but... Not being certain of anything is so scary. I keep thinking about it in my bed.

If it wasn't just this... Probably my relationship with Nathaniel would be so different. Why do we need to count the days now? I... I already lost so much time.

...and I don't know how much we have left before it's too late again.

## **His Sunshine Baby Chapter 94 - Tips**

"Daddy! Daddy, look!"

She runs to me, showing off her new drawing. This time, she used her new Disney stamps all over, and a lot of blue glitters. Way too much glitter... I'm starting to regret buying her so much glitter. I really need to learn to refrain myself when it comes to shopping with my daughter. I feel like my black leather couch and white rug both won't stay so neutral for long...

"It's pretty, baby star. Our daughter is an artist! Do you want to sell your drawings when you're a big girl? Or you can be an architect, and draw buildings and houses?"

"No, I want to bake cakes! I want to make cupcakes with lots of sparkles. I'll have one shop for pink cakes, one for blue cakes and one with... mh... Orange cakes!"

"Woah, orange cupcakes? Alright, my daughter will be a Patissière, then."

"A what, daddy? Pati... sha?"

I chuckle.

"A Patissière, baby. Like a baker, it's a chef who makes princess cakes."

She nods, all proud of herself, and comes to my knees, trying to peek at what I'm doing.

"Daddy, are you busy?" She asks, frowning at the numbers on my screen.

"Just catching up on some work. I'll finish later when you're in bed, okay? Are you hungry?"

"Mh... No, I'm okay!"

I smile. We had crepes again for breakfast, and I think my daughter is slowly getting addicted to my cuisine. We discuss her drawing a bit longer, and I close my laptop. Isaac's emails can wait, I guess. To my surprise, someone knocks at the door, and Estelle runs, curious.

It's her mom, who was waiting behind for me to open the door. Elena looks tired, in the same jeans as yesterday and wearing an oversized unisex T-shirt. Did she borrow it from Daniel?

"You can just come in next time, Elena," I say. "The digit code hasn't changed... Are you okay?"

She doesn't look okay. Her eyes are red, and I realize she probably cried. I know she went to bury her mentor with Daniel and his brother this morning... I can't imagine how tough it must have been for her.

She nods, ignoring me to look for Estelle with her eyes. To my surprise, she gets on her knees, taking her hand gently and talking to her very seriously while I close the door behind them.

"Baby star, mommy needs to tell you something."

"Are you okay, mommy? You look sad..." Says Estelle, looking worried.

"Yes baby, I'm very sad. Because Reagan left."

Estelle looks a bit confused for a second, glancing at me before looking at her mom again.

"...She left? Why? Where did she go?"

"She... She went to be with the Moon Goddess, Estelle. Aunt Reagan won't come back, baby."

I don't know how much of this a four-year-old can understand about death, but Estelle starts tearing up, biting her lip. She looks at me again, as if she was expecting me to say something, but when her mother and I both stay silent, she starts crying slowly.

"...She won't come back?"

"No, baby star. But she is with the Moon Goddess, and with your puppy heart, okay? If you want to cry, you can cry, baby."

“O...Okay...”

Estelle cries silently before her mom hugs her. Elena’s grief is obvious too. I barely knew Reagan, but it breaks my heart to see both of them like this. I step away, I don’t know what to do... I know how tense things are right now, but the worse thing is, I’m just happy they are both here.

After a few minutes, Elena comes back, followed by Estelle.

“...Can I have a coffee?” She asks, to my surprise.

“Of course. Baby, do you want a hot drink too?”

My daughter nods, wiping her tears clumsily.

“Can I get hot cocoa, daddy? With the pretty sprinkles?”

“Sure, baby.”

I start preparing it, while Estelle proudly goes to show her latest drawings and new drawing tools to her mom. Thank Moon Goddess, Estelle and I went to buy some groceries this morning, as it appears taking care of a child requires a bit more things than I thought, including but not limited to hot cocoa powder, chocolate sprinkles, and hazelnut paste. Once the coffee and hot cocoa are ready for the two women of my life, I proudly hand it to them.

“Here you go, young Lady!”

“Thanks Daddy!”

“Estelle, baby, why don’t you go and make another drawing to show your aunt Nora later? Mommy and dad need to talk.”

“Okay! Wait here mommy, I’ll do one with the princess stamp!”

She runs off to grab her pencils and get installed on the table, her messy blonde ponytail flying off behind her, while I prepare another coffee for myself. I really need to get better at styling her hair... After a few seconds of watching her, while I’m pouring my coffee, I realize Elena’s eyes are on me.

“Nathaniel...”

“Yes?”

She puts her cup down, looking serious all of a sudden. Her amber eyes are a bit hesitant and shy, and she puts a strand of her hair behind her ear, her gesture when she's embarrassed.

"I... thought a bit about the situation. You're right on some things. I think Estelle should live with you, with her dad. She didn't get to know you from the day she was born, so you have a lot to catch up, and you're a great father so far, and... I want her to be able to."

I almost drop my cup, completely taken by surprise. Really? I... I did hope Elena would give it some consideration, but to think she would change her mind so fast... Did Nora or Damian tell her something? I haven't heard from them since Elena slept at their place last night.

She continues, looking down at her coffee, not showing too much of her emotions.

"I never wanted for her to live away from you, to begin with. It was just... Too hard for me to come back."

"I know I'm partially to blame for that, and..."

"Shut up, Nate, let me talk first. I was in the wrong too. No matter how much grief I had against you or my pack, it was my own selfishness that kept Estelle from meeting you two years earlier. I should have come back when Nora woke up. I'm... sorry I didn't."

I'm... speechless. I expected many things from Elena, but not anything that could seem like an apology. I don't know how to react. I don't feel like I deserve it, to begin with. I was the one that acted like a jerk, and didn't trust her. Why would she be the one sorry...?

"I was given a lot to think about, after discussing with Nora, and... I realized it wouldn't be fair that you're the only one to apologize, when we're both in the wrong. I'm not saying I'm forgiving you, remember that. I'm just saying... I don't want us to lose any more time in fighting and bickering."

...Wow. I'm speechless. I never thought she... would come so far, so fast. I know I'm still far from being forgiveness, but I'm glad she's willing to give me a chance, even if it's for Estelle's sake. I can do with that.

"...you can talk, now," she says with a pout.

But I can't talk. I'm just smiling, like an i\*\*\*t. A happy i\*\*\*t. Elena growls.

"Say something!"

"I love you."

She immediately blushes, taken by surprise, and looks away.

"A...anything but that... You idiot."

I chuckle. Moon Goddess, she's almost as cute as our baby girl. I lean closer, taking a gulp from my cup of coffee. Elena sits back, crossing her arms and looking away, but I can tell she's still blushing a bit, embarrassed. I love this woman.

"Then, does that mean you will agree to live here?" I ask.

"...Yes. Temporarily."

"That's fine by me. And the room next to Estelle's and across from mine is fully furnished and available. You can move in your stuff any time you want."

"Nathaniel, I don't have any stuff... I left my house in a bit of a hurry, remember? I only have this outfit, and a few T-shirts Daniel lent me, to be honest."

I doubt they are the right size... Nora and Elena may be related, but they don't have much in common, and Elena's body is curvier than her cousin's, and taller.

"I can lend you a couple of shirts, but you should order something."

"It will take days before it gets here!"

I smile and take my phone out. Giving a quick call to my building's concierge, I make sure enough outfits for an adult woman will be delivered today, with a couple of pairs of shoes, giving Elena's size and body build.

"Yes, M. Black, it will be delivered today before 6 pm. Do you have any preference of brand or color?"

"I'll leave it to you, Henry."

I hang up, before Elena's shocked expression.

"Your concierge does your shopping?" She asks, shocked.

"Rich people privilege. He gets some nice tips for such services."

"...I don't know if I should be shocked or annoyed."

"It's okay. You can thank Henry later."

Elena rolls her eyes and gets up, going to check the bedrooms. I follow a few steps behind. She stays speechless in front of Estelle's room, one of the walls half painted with blue and purple. It's a bit of a mess, actually.

"What the heck happened here?" She asks, frowning.

"We started painting yesterday. It was funnier than I thought, actually."

"Mommy!"

Estelle, who heard us, runs to her mom's leg and shows her room, excited.

"Did you see, mommy? It's the same color as Elsa's castle! And when it's dry, we can put some stickers, too!"

"Elsa's castle...? Baby, are you going to redecorate all of daddy's apartment with a Disney theme?"

"I... I think we'll try to contain it to her bedroom for now," I whisper.

"Welcome to the nice world of a four-year-old," she whistles, amused.

I guess she had to go along with it long before me...

Elena turns around to check the other rooms, but as expected, she picks the one I mentioned, leaving her backpack on it. Then, she turns to Estelle.

"What were you going to do with Daddy today, baby star?"

"We will finish painting my room! And then, we can build the Princess Castle Daddy brought!"

"Daddy opened his wallet, huh?" Says Elena, sending me an annoyed look.

Stop buying her everything, I don't want my daughter to be too spoiled.

I'm just making up for four years... And she isn't spoiled. She is well-behaved and reasonable. Like her mom.

Mmh...

"Come on baby, let's go change before mommy gets really mad at me," I say to Estelle, taking her to the bathroom.

Actually, we picked 3 of my T-shirts, and spent most of the afternoon ruining it with paint. It was the most fun I had in years, thanks to them. We had to be careful because Elena's arm isn't fully healed, and though she won't admit it, I can tell it's painful for her.

She's relieved when we finish painting that wall, and head to the living room to watch another Disney movie, to Estelle's demand. Elena actually picks her favorite, one with greek gods and a lot of new catchy songs for our daughter to learn. Thank Moon Goddess I subscribed to that new channel...

"Daddy..."

I hear a little whisper coming from the other side of the bar. I finish putting our plates in the dishwasher, and turn to her.

"What is it, baby? You wanted more veggies?"

She frowns. I did notice she wasn't fond of the carrots in the ca.sserole.

"No... Daddy, mommy fell asleep..."

"Oh, okay, I'm coming baby. The movie is over?"

She nods, and walks back to the living room, with me following her. Indeed, Elena is profoundly sleeping on the couch, while the movie's closing credits are playing on the tv screen. I gesture for Estelle not to make any noise, and she smiles and covers her little mouth.

I pull a blanket on Elena, and take Estelle to bed. Because of the fresh paint in her room, she'll have to sleep with her mom tonight, but I don't think it bothers either of them.

"...Daddy?"

“Yes, baby?”

“Mommy will live here too, now?”

I chuckle. She’s sure smart, for her age, isn’t she?

“Yes, baby, I think so. I hope so, baby star. But it’s mommy’s choice, okay? So now, do you want me to read your book? Where did we stop last night?”

After reading a few pages of another Disney Princess story, Estelle is deep asleep, and I can silently leave the room. I clean the living room a bit, turning the TV off and putting Estelle’s toys aside.

Suddenly, I hear some cry. On the couch next to me, Elena is frowning in her sleep, looking in pain. sh!t, where are her meds? Can she take more? I kneel to her side, unsure what to do, panicked. It’s surely her shoulder wound, she keeps moving in her sleep, looking for a better position... Is it too late to call Tonia for advice?

“..you got some alcohol?”

Damn it, she’s awake.

“It’s been disinfected already.”

“Not for that, idiot...”

She sits up painfully, with my help, but she’s sweating and frowning a lot.

“Elena no, not with your meds. I don’t have any anyway.”

“Nate, it’s only been 5 years,” she says with a gr0an. “I remember your minibar.”

I shake my head.

“It’s long gone. It’s been destroyed, emptied and thrown out a while ago. You can ask Damian, he’s the one who went havoc on it.”

For a few seconds, she stays silent, and sighs.

“fvck, why did you have to go sober now...”

“Come on, I’ll help you to the bed. Or do you want me to call Tonia? We can ask her if you can take anything else...”

“Help me to bed, then. Please,” she sighs.

Gently, I take her to the bed, next to Estelle, who’s still asleep. As soon as she sees her next to her, Elena smiles despite the pain.

“How did we make such a pretty baby...” She whispers.

“You tell me. You’re the mom.”

She smiles, caressing her blond hair. I sit on the side of the bed, watching them, unwilling to part. Elena’s face betrays the pain she feels, but she won’t complain. At one point, I realize she’s clenching her teeth, to endure the pain.

Elena...

Shut up.

I sigh, and move to sit behind her, putting my arm under her head.

...What are you doing?

Bite me.

Excuse me?

Bite me, Elena. You’ll hurt your teeth if you keep going. And you’re too stubborn for me to call you a nurse, so bite me.

I can bite myself!

I heal faster, Elena. Stop being so stubborn, for once, okay? Even if it’s for one hour, and I promise I’ll go.

...Stay.

What?

You heard me. Just... stay. Please.

I don't know what to answer to that. But, to my surprise, she catches my hand and holds on to it, tightly. We stay like this for a long time, until I slowly lay behind her, with gentle movements. I can tell she's not sleeping, but she doesn't move, and rests her head on my arm, breathing slowly.

## **His Sunshine Baby Chapter 95 - Tips**

I slowly wake up, with that familiar feel of the sunshine on my skin. Where am I? I look around, but nothing's familiar. sh!t, it's painful... I look down on my arm and remember. I am at Nate's place, with Estelle. What time is it? I'm alone in bed, but I'm pretty sure I fell asleep with both of them by my side.

I struggle to sit up, putting my slide in the most comfortable way possible. sh!t, I really wish I could heal normally... fast like a normal werewolf. Wait, I'm in my panties? Who the hell took my pants off? I growl, annoyed.

Why can't I hear anything? It's quiet in there, isn't Estelle awake? She usually plays when she's awake early...

I get up, and it takes me ages to put those damn jeans on. When I'm done, I'm exhausted, but still walk out of the room. Now that the door's open, I do hear a bit of music... Disney, again? I walk to the living room and, as expected, Estelle is quietly playing with some toy castle, humming to the Disney music. Looks like Nate managed to trade a movie for a playlist this morning...

"Good morning Mommy!"

"Good morning baby star. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes! Daddy said to let you sleep so I was playing, but Daddy said we should go out later so I am playing now!"

"Good girl."

I give her a quick k!ss and listen to her a bit before leaving her alone and heading to the kitchen. I dangerously need coffee at such a time... Though it's probably later than usual. I freeze in the kitchen's entrance, though.

Nathaniel is standing there, half-n.aked. How dare he be half-n.aked so early in front of me! He already had a nice body back five years ago, but now, he looks like a damn gravure model, stepped out of a magazine. Who wears only jeans in plain sight, in a kitchen like some se.xy movie! Gosh, I hate him. And

his stupid abs. I close my eyes a second. I need to adjust or I'll literally jump on him...

"Good morning, Sunshine."

And his damn morning husky voice. I'm doomed.

"Hi..." I grumble, trying to evade him while grabbing the coffee pitcher.

Coffee, I need to wake up and drink that damn coffee... Don't look, Elena. Don't look at those abs.

"You slept well?"

"Fine... By the way, did you take my pants off?"

"Huh, you asked for it. Around 2 am, actually, you were gr0aning a lot and basically kicked me a couple of times, saying you wanted to... Undress."

Moon Goddess, if you're there, please have me die. Like, right now.

I take a deep breath. He's seen me n\*\*\*d hundreds of times anyway, right? No big deal that I was left in panties. Damn, what was I wearing again?

"I need to take a shower," I suddenly declare, gulping down my coffee.

"Do you need help..."

"Nathaniel Black, you stay out of the damn bathroom, or I swear I'll bite."

I hear him chuckle as I exit the kitchen, but I don't care. He's playing with my nerves!

Taking a shower with one arm injured is even harder than I thought. I struggle to und.ress, struggle to take that damn slide off and struggle to shower without soaking my bandages. What a mess... My legs still have those scars, too, so I guess it isn't going to heal at all. I sigh. At least I'm alive and have all my limbs, I guess...

"Elena? Everything okay?" I hear him yell from behind the door.

"I'm fine!"

If he enters that room while I'm n\*\*\*d, I swear I'll lose it. I hurry up, making sure to clean myself the best I can, and grab a towel to wrap myself in, and... Damn it. I forgot to bring in new clothes... It was delivered last night, but I left it all in the dressing. Crap. I need to cross the hallway in that stupid towel.

It's okay, he's seen it all already anyway. Just act chill, Elena, you've been in worse situations than walking around half-n.aked in your ex's apartment...

"Nice view."

"Why are you being this damn door, Nate?"

He chuckles, glancing over without mercy.

"I was wondering if you needed help..."

"Oh, shut up and let me through!"

I push him out of the way to get to the closet, torn between anger and embarrassment. I want to punch him, if only my arm was fine enough. I grab whatever clothes I can find in a hurry. Thank Moon Goddess, it's the right fit, and Henry has good tastes. I find a black underwear ensemble, and a comfy sleeveless jumpsuit from an Italian brand I don't recognize. At least I don't spend half an hour putting it on or off, I can slide in right away.

"Still don't need help?"

"No!"

I hear him laugh and leave the room. He's doing this on purpose, isn't he?

"...Elena?"

"I'm almost done, Nate, can't you just..."

"No, I think you should come and... see."

His voice changed, and I realize something's wrong. He's in the living room? What is it? Did Estelle do something? I hurry over, and I can't see my daughter for a few seconds, making me panic. Until I realize Nate is behind the couch, looking down. Is she crouching...?

I walk over and stand there speechless. Oh, Moon Goddess. Nate looks at me, totally stunned too.

"I... think we have a problem," he says.

I nod. Estelle is there. But not as a human.

My daughter turned into an adorable wolf pup, with perfectly white fur and big, blue eyes.

Oh, Moon Goddess... She looks like a mini-Nora. Like, a perfect Royal. White as snow, really, and blue eyes like her dad. Holy Moon Goddess. Nathaniel is as helpless as I am, staring at her, not knowing what to do. I don't know either.

"Estelle, baby."

Mommy!

The puppy turns and scampers to me, all excited. How did she shape-shift? How can she even shape-shift when she's not five years old yet! I kneel down to her. What am I supposed to say? I've never dealt with a werewolf cub, not one so young! Is it dangerous if she stays like that? I turn to Nathaniel, but he's already taken out his phone.

"Damian? It's Nate, huh... We have a little bit of an issue here. Estelle shape-shifted... Yes, I know, but I swear, Damian, she's right in front of me, and she's a pup. No... Yes, yes, okay. I'll do that. Can you... Yes, please. Thanks. See ya."

He hangs up.

"What did he say?"

"He said to bring her over. He'll call Tonia so she can check."

"Check what? Tonia is..."

"A nurse, now. And she knows a lot about shape-shifting and all, Boyan was a super precocious one too."

He grabs his car keys, turns off the tv and I see him run to the bedroom. What did he get? How, a change of clothes. I feel totally useless, but my daughter looks fine, playing around in front of me and nibbling some toy. Is this okay...?

“Elena?”

Nathaniel walks up to us, carrying a backpack. He crouches down, smiling confidently to our daughter.

“Let’s go see aunty Nora, baby? And your uncles?”

Now? Are we going now, Daddy?

“Yes. Come here...”

He carries her in his arms, while I’m still completely at a loss. Nate notices my expression and takes my hand.

“Come on, let’s go. It’s okay, Elena.”

I nod, but really, is it okay? We leave his apartment and get in the car, but while Nathaniel drives, I can’t settle down. What does that mean? Won’t the dark witch spot Estelle even more easily now? Is she in danger? How can she already shape-shift, she’s four years old! I have so many questions, I just can’t calm down.

Next to me, Nathaniel is acting confident, talking to Estelle, who sat down behind us, looking at the window.

“Do you want some music, baby?”

Yes!

He puts on the same playlist as earlier on his phone, focusing the volume on the back seat. I leave out a deep sigh. Before I can react, Nate puts a hand on my knee, whispering so she can’t hear us under the music.

“It will be okay, Elena.”

“She’s just four! How can she...”

"You know it happens. It's fine. Tonia will just make sure she's fine, but she doesn't seem in any pain, and nothing about her werewolf aura has changed. It's okay."

"When Nora shape-shifted, I felt it. I..."

"You weren't here when Nora shape-shifted for the first time. You probably only felt something because you were close, and her kin. Calm down, it's going to be okay. In any case, Sylviana can probably do something."

"Do what? We can't forbid our daughter from shape-shifting! She probably doesn't even make the difference!"

He sighs but doesn't answer to that. Meanwhile, I can't stop glancing at the puppy behind us, who's happily nodding to the tune. At least she doesn't seem too perturbed...

Nathaniel finally parks in front of Damian and Nora's house. They are both waiting for us on the porch. Nora opens her mouth wide, seeing Estelle confidently jump out of the car.

"Moon Goddess... She's so cute!"

Is that all she's thinking? Am I the only one literally freaking out? Damian seems to notice my expression and walks up to me.

"It's okay. Come on in."

We sit in their living room, and Boyan walks in, carrying James. Of course, the two-year-old is overjoyed when seeing the puppy, and runs to him. The two kids start playing a game of tag, while I sit next to my cousin, anxious.

"How come she shape-shifted? She's too young to shape-shift!"

"It's okay, Elena. Bobo shape-shifted for the first time when he was about her age, too. And she is a Royal, she might be a precocious one because of that."

"I don't want her to be precocious, Nora! Look at her, anyone can tell she's a Royal like you!"

"I can barely feel the change in her aura, Elena, calm down. We called Tonia and Sylviana, they'll be here any minute, okay? Let's have some tea."

Nora gets up to pour some tea, kicking Damian out of the kitchen in the main time. I can't calm down, though. Boyan is watching over the two kids running around in the living room, laughing so much while chasing each other. Neither of them seems disturbed by the fact that my daughter is a white cub...

When Tonia finally arrives, I almost jump at her, but she frowns and gestures for me to shut up.

"No, don't start. First, yes, it can happen that werewolves shapeshift that young. No, she doesn't have any health-related issues because of that and yes, she is fine. Okay, now you can ask."

"How can that happen?"

"Like any werewolf kid! Excitement, anger, any strong emotion can trigger our first shape-shift, Elena! The only problem with Estelle is that she is too young to even realize she shape-shifted! It's so natural to her, she doesn't care much about it. So chill, mama, she's fine, okay? Now, where are the b.rats."

Tonia dismisses like so, and walks in, grabbing Estelle by her neck when she runs close to her. I don't like seeing my baby manipulated like this, even if she's in her puppy form. Right away, Tonia starts inspecting her, ignoring my daughter's annoyed growls.

"She's a normal size... With those paws, she'll grow to be your size, I'd say. Good fangs... Hey, don't bite or I'll bite you back. Her eyes are fine too... Her tail's a bit short but that's okay. Fine, you can go now."

She lets Estelle go, and my daughter runs back to play with her cousin. At least she's okay... I take a long sigh, and Nathaniel comes to sit next to me, putting his arm around me. I finally accept Nora's tea and, for a few minutes, we just watch the kids play.

"I wonder if James will be all white too or jet-black like you..." Whispers Nora to Damian, who's caressing her big belly.

"Definitely white," replies Tonia. "His Royal aura is even stronger than Estelle's. No way he gets black fur."

"Too bad... Well, white is cute."

Damian chuckled.

“Nora, you should...”

“If you tell me to rest again, Damian Black, I’ll kick you. I’m pregnant, not disabled.”

It’s my turn to chuckle. I can’t pick sides on this one, Damian looks genuinely worried for his wife. Nora is almost seven months along now... Werewolf pregnancies are a bit shorter, so my cousin might actually give birth within the next two months.

“Good Morning everyone!”

Sylviana just walked in, followed by a tall black wolf. Did Liam Black get bigger? He’s lost all of his teen attitude... Immediately, both James and Estelle run to them, excited by the presence of another wolf. Damn, it’s going to be crazy in here if we have more pups able to shape-shift... starting by Nora’s next baby. I notice Damian’s frowning a bit too, probably thinking the same as me. How many werewolf pups can we handle at the same time? Those two have been running around for twenty minutes straight!

Sylviana smiles and sits on the floor to hug James, who’s apparently very familiar to the witch, and Estelle is happily playing with her too.

“Elena freaked out,” says Tonia right away.

“It’s fine...” whispers the witch.

“She will feel it, won’t she?” Asks Nathaniel before I do.

Sylviana nods.

“Yeah... Estelle’s Royal aura just increased, she won’t miss something like that. She probably is waiting for the right moment, though.”

“What is the right moment?” I ask. “Why would she delay her attack?”

The witch stays silent for a while, and Liam takes over in playing with the kids, pushing Estelle around and letting James chase him. Sylviana stands out, crossing her arms.

“I’ve been thinking... about what would be a good time... I think she’s scared of Nora, mostly.”

“Scared of me?” Says my cousin. “I’ve never fought her...”

“No, but she has experience with the Royals... With your family. I was wondering why she hasn’t attacked sooner. First, I thought the Black brothers had scared her after pushing all the vampires away four years ago, but... I think that now, you’re the one she’s scared of. Nora, you’re probably as powerful as your grandmother was, and the... the dark witch was never able to attack until Diane committed a mistake.”

“You mean when she lifted the barrier for Reagan?”

“I think so. I think she is probably sensing that Nora is... protecting Silver City in her own way. And Damian protects Nora, and all of the packs protect them. She doesn’t want to make any mistakes this time, so she’ll wait until Nora is vulnerable and she can attack her.”

“Define vulnerable?” says Nate, frowning and glancing at my cousin.

“The one moment Nora won’t be able to fight her off...”

Nora is frowning, confused, but next to her, her husband’s eyes are already murderous. He understood, too.

“...She’s waiting for Nora to go into labor.”