

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 141

The air in the room that we'd gathered in was stuffy. Was it because of the number of people in it? Maybe. It was more likely it was because my mother, the Queen of all wolves, had just dropped a truth bomb on everyone, made her mage knock out a student and then had just left like it was any other day.

At least I learned where I got my flare for dramatics from.

I could tell everyone was uncomfortable by the way they were all fidgeting. Valentin looked like he was two seconds from tearing off Thorne's head. Thorne, himself, was half awake and trying to stay that way from the way he was blinking erratically. Maximus kept shifting his eyes back and forth between me and my mother. Kairos looked smug as fuck, probably bitter he had to share me.

My mother, however, looked as prim and proper a Queen as usual. She sat at the desk of the small office we'd commandeered, one leg crossed over the other in her long purple-red robe. She sipped a cup of tea one of the guards had brought her and seemed to be entirely unbothered by everything that had happened in the atrium.

"Val," she said before lifting her cup to her lips. "Where's Finare gone?"

"He wanted to see the school's alchemy labs," Valentin grunted. "He was under the impression a position may be opening soon."

Victoria hummed and sipped her tea. She gently put it down on the saucer and folded her hands in her lap. She turned her attention to the rest of us. She didn't wear a smile but her tone was less ominous than it'd been during her lecture. "I assume you have questions," she drawled.

"Did they know?" Kairos bit out. "When you made the deal with our father's for the Princesses hand, did they know you weren't talking about Amara?"

"No," Victoria said plainly. "No one knew about Zora except for Valentin. It was kept that way for a reason. The more that know, the more it's likely for the information to be leaked to the vampires."

Kairos licked the front of his lips but said nothing in return. He slumped back against the wall and continued to pout.

"Did you know we were all her fated mates?" Maximus pressed.

"I had a hunch," my mother said. "There was a prophecy of someone 'born to royalty' and 'bound to five.' Both Valentin and I suspected that the five fated mates would have to be incredibly powerful for Zora to sustain all five bonds."

“Five?!” Kairos snapped, pushing off the wall. His head jerked to glare at me. “There’s another one?”

“Apparently,” I said. “I don’t know who the last one is, or I would’ve told you when we spoke.”

Karios silently fumed again, standing straight up next to Maximus, who also seemed shocked. “What else does this prophecy say?” he asked.

“I’m telling you this because you are now part of it,” Victoria stated. “But as did we keep the secret of Zora quiet, I’d like you to withhold the prophecy itself. The intel we have said the vampires know of us, but not the exact verbiage. If they do, they could solve it before us and gain an upper hand.”

“Understood,” Maximus said. He looked at Kairos. The two nodded at one another. Victoria nodded at them then brought her cup back to her mouth. Before she sipped, she nodded at Valentin. He gave her a dirty look but still brought his hand up.

A shimmering orb of light materialized in his hand. With it came a booming voice that seemed to be both outside and inside my head. I slammed my hands over my ears the moment it started to speak.

“Born of royalty, bound to five,

The collision of dark and light,

Remaker of olden times,

Night to his knees,

Light to rise,

Balance is once again in sight.”

There’s a small pop as the light orb shrivels down in size and disappeared from Valentin’s hand. He closed his fist and set it back down at his side before recrossing his arms over his chest. He raises an eyebrow at me, questioning.

“That sounds nothing like me,” I scoffed. I turned to my mother. “Are you sure it’s me?”

“Sure as the day you were born,” Victoria smiled gently at me. “I have no other children and have always thought to be barren after an accident in my youth.”

“It sounds like Zora’s a weapon for defeating the vampires,” Maximus stated.

“Precisely,” Valentin finally spoke up. “Which is why we’ve kept her identity a secret and yet had you all training with her. She’s our weapon against the vampires. We’re her defense.”

“You didn’t keep her secret to keep her as your own?” Kairos snapped.

Valentin narrowed his eyes at the alpha. “Despite your obsession with not sharing, I don’t mind,” he snapped. “Zora was kept in the human world away from everyone for her safety. Period. End of story.”

Maximus and Kairos snapped their necks to look at me. I felt like crawling into a hole and dying. They both watched me as if I was something to study. As if everything about me suddenly made sense.

“There’s something else,” Victoria said. All of us turned to look back at her. She cocked her head to the side. “It’s the reason I’m actually on campus.”

“So you didn’t come to shut down the trial?” I asked.

“Not originally,” she said. “But Val informed me that you’d been detained and I decided I’d had enough of this.”

I frowned, still somewhat disappointed that she’d told the entire atrium and my fated mates about who I actually was. I was thankful she’d made them take a silence vow, but still, the decision wasn’t mine.

“The prophet,” Victoria continued. “He’s coming to us with more information.”

“More?!” Maximus balked. “What more could someone add to that?”

“I don’t know,” my mother said. “All he said was that he missed two lines when he was decoding the prophecy. He knew the sensitive nature of the prophecy so he wouldn’t relay it via phone.”

“So when will hear it?” Kairos asked.

“We?” Valentin snorted.

“Yes, we,” Kairos stood up straight. “You told us we’re part of this now, whether we like it or not. Additionally, I stand by my mate. If something involves her, it involves me.”

“And me,” Maximus chimed in.

Valentin licked the front of his teeth and looked down at my mother. She smiled as if she was proud of how her scheme had all come together. Then, she turned back to me.

“He’s on his way now,” she said. “We’re to meet him in Valentin’s office.”

I nodded and looked at the alphas. They both nodded in return and the three of us followed Valentin out of the small office we’d be crowded in. Two royal guard flanked Valentin while two stayed behind with my mother. I looked back to see if she was following but frowned when I saw her still seated.

“I’ll be there shortly,” she said before turning and glaring at Thorne, who was barely awake. “I have something to attend to first.”

I couldn’t help the smile on my face. It seemed Thorne was finally getting what he deserved.

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Thorne

The door closed behind Zora and Thorne turned to look at his adoptive mother. Rage seemed to be spilling out of her like smoke out of a chimney. He was suddenly far more awake than he’d been for the whole time they’d been in the office.

He’d barely remembered getting into the office, honestly. He’d felt ground under his feet and wind rushing by him but other than that, it’d been a blur. Fuck that fucking mage and whatever spell he’d been hit with.

As he looked back at the Queen, he realized now was not the time to be complaining about one of her employees. He swallowed thickly and opened his mouth to speak. Victoria shot a hand out and stopped him.

“You’ve done enough talking, Thorne,” she said, so calm it chilled him to his core. He almost shivered as Victoria dropped her hand and met his eyes with her own. He cursed himself as he realized they were almost the same color as Zora’s. How had he been so daft?

“I understand that I have not been a very attentive mother,” Victoria continued. “And so many this acting out is part of my fault, but Gods be damned Thorne. A succubus?!”

“The patterns fit,” Thorne said sharply. “Had I not been kept in the dark, maybe I would’ve let them go.”

Victoria jammed a finger in his direction and rose to her feet. “You don’t get to be angry with me right now,” she snapped. “You have no right when you’ve endangered my daughter”

“Your daughter I didn’t even know existed!” Thorne cut off the queen. He cursed himself internally for being so brash and felt heat flare up in his cheeks. He took a half a breath in to calm himself then continued.

“I mean, she had Amara arrested, Victoria,” Thorne said, gentler than before. “Do you really care more for the kid you had sent away than the one you raised her entire life?”

Victoria brought her bottom lip between her teeth before sighing and closing her eyes. “No daughter of mine drinks vampire blood,” she whispered. Her voice was shaky and he knew how disappointed she was in Amara. She straightened back up and looked at Thorne plainly.

“Besides that Zora is my daughter,” she said. “She’s also a student of this school. One who came here with no knowledge of who she was or what she is. And instead of being kind and taking her under your wing, you and your friends sought her out as a target.”

“Then why aren’t you saying the same things to Max and Kairos,” Thorne said back. He laughed, humorlessly. “Is it because they’re now plot piece in your plan?”

“You could’ve been too,” Victoria snapped. “Had you not broken your bond because she was wolfless ”

“Well, I fixed that for her, didn’t it?” Thorne hissed. He rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands before dropping them in his lap and looking at his adoptive mother. “You must know I did this all to protect all the promises I made you.”

“Promises I never asked you to make,” Victoria shook her head. She frowned. “I would’ve liked you to be happy with your fated mate over rather than married because I asked you to. I had no idea that your fated mate would be the same person I’d be asking you to marry.”

“None?” Thorne scoffed.

Victoria tilted her head. “Not with any certainty,” she said. “I knew Zora would have to be fated to the strongest of our bloodlines. Given that the Blythwitch legacy is strong, it makes sense. But my first thought was the High Alphas.”

Thorne scowled. “Which my father should’ve been.”

“I regret not standing up for his title,” Victoria said, solemnly. “I’ve told you that every time we’ve talked about it. But it doesn’t negate what you’ve done here.”

“I’ve protected what I’ve known,” Thorne threw back. “I’ve been loyal to the crown.”

Victoria gave him a said smile. “Something that would’ve made your father proud,” she said. “But me? I’m just disappointed you didn’t lean with the empathy I imbued in you.”

Thorne stared at her, utterly unaware of what to say next. Victoria knew her words cut him deeply. She'd always tried to emphasize empathy over loyalty to the crown. And he'd gone and fucked up every lesson she taught him.

She stood up and the guards left with her stiffened and got into formation. She was leaving and leaving him there, alone. She looked at him one final time.

“Until you earn forgiveness from Zora, consider yourself uninvolved in the fulfillment of the prophecy,” she stated. “You’ve been stripped of your knight role to Zora. You are to follow orders from your usual commander in event of a vampire attack. Do you report to Zora. Understood?”

Thorne paused for a moment before silently nodding his head. Victoria nodded in return. She gathered her robes and swung her red curls over her shoulder. It was nearly identical to how he'd seen Zora wrangle them before. Another knife wedged its way into his heart.

Victoria turned and left the office without another word. Her royal guard flanking her sides. Thorne felt like there was a gaping wound in his soul as she left. He had nothing now. He wasn't a knight. He wasn't part of the prophecy fulfillment.

He.

Was.

Nothing

He considered getting drunk off his ass again. Maybe he'd feel better. Then, he remembered the brash decision he'd made the last time he'd been that drunk.

Instead, he aimlessly left the office and the atrium building and wandered through campus. It'd been about noon when the trial had started. The sun had since begun set that day. The sky was a hazy set of orange that made him think of an old sailor's tale his father used to say.

“Red at night, sailor's delight. Red in the morning, sailors take warning.”

He tried to recall if the sun was red that morning as it rose up into the sky. Had the universe been warning him he'd made a grave mistake? He only could laugh as he realized he'd missed another sign.

Signs were all around him, in bright yellow, and yet he'd missed every one of them. He could only wish he'd fated Zora when the bond had struck him. But all that longing, all the need he'd been filled with, had scared him from the thing he'd been working his entire life for: loyalty.

In the end, loyalty had given him nothing in return. Any status he'd earned, he'd been stripped from. The only thing he had left was himself and the empathy that Victoria had thought she'd imbued in him. Loyalty was no longer the God he prayed to.

Forgiveness was.

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Zora

We were only alone without Victoria for about five minutes before she joined us. However, it was the longest five minutes of my entire life.

Kairos and Maximus sat opposite Valentin and I. The two of them seemed to be glaring daggers at Valentin and I. As per usual, Maximus seemed markedly less angry than Kairos. He looked hurt more than anything but his expression kept changing from hurt to some type of understanding and then back.

I gnawed on my bottom lip enough that it started to bleed. The metallic tang of blood made me nauseous. I kept looking at Valentin as if he were going to explain something. He only opened his mouth once but otherwise was silent.

Finally, my mother strolled through the doors. Her robes billowed behind her. Her jaw was tightly closed. I could only imagine the horrible conversation she'd had with Thorne. However, I was thankful that she broke the silence.

Behind her strode in Finare. Now that I was closer to him, I could sense how different he was to the rest of us. His ears were high and pointed, the same pale tone of the rest of his skin. His hair was equally as colorless as his skin. It was long but pulled back slick to his skull then tied at the base of his head. His eyes were a blue so light, they almost looked white. They also seemed to glow. I must've been staring at him because I caught his eye and he smirked at me.

"Never been around an elf before?" He asked. His voice was smooth and seemed to be almost trace-like.

I shook my head. "No, sorry," I said. "It makes me wonder if succubi really do exist."

Valentin snorted besides me. "They're fairytales that old wolves told in order to scare young wolves."

"Elves are fairytales in the human world," my mother chimed in.

"Touché," Valentin acknowledged with a raise of his eyebrow. He pushed off the desk he was leaning on and went closer to my mother and Finare. "Where's the prophet?"

“My guard has gone to get him,” Victoria said. She peered around Valentin to look at me with a small smile. “I suppose you have questions.”

“A million,” I said with a sarcastic laugh.

Victoria gave me a slightly pained look. We stared at each other in silence for a moment before the door opened behind her. One of her royal guard came in, still in his full armor. Behind him was a small man in cream colored robes. They were adorned with gold threads and appliqués.

“Your highness,” The guard stated. “A scribe of the prophecies, Beta Kline.”

“Beta Kline,” My mother addressed. “Thank you for honoring us with your prescience.”

The scribe bowed towards my mother. “Queen Luna. High Alpha Lunerly. Thank you for meeting me here.”

“I’d like to introduce you to Zora Luna,” my mother said. “She is who we believe the prophecy to be about.”

The scribe turned to me and blinked a few times. Clearly, he was shocked by my appearance. He also took careful eye of Kairos and Maximus standing in the corner.

“Well met,” he said slowly, eyes still lingering on the other High Alphas. He looked back at my mother. “Everyone here is sworn to secrecy, I assume?”

“Yes,” Victoria said. “The others in the room are the sons of High Alphas Wolfham and Moonraiser. They are Zora’s fated mates and, thus, also part of the prophecy.” “Right,” the man nodded. “Well, as I previously told you, I have additional lines of the prophecy to report on. I mis- translated the last line and it turns out it’s actually not the last line.”

“How do you mis-translate a prophecy?” Valentin questioned.

“There was a— a line break of sorts,” The scribe’s eyebrows furrowed together, eyes darting back and forth on the floor. “I’ve never seen one before. I had me thinking that was the end. Then, the prophet was reciting the prophecy and I caught an extra sound that I hadn’t heard in the last twenty years. I realized I’ve been stopping the prophet before it’s finished. For twenty whole years.”

He shook his head as if he’d been burned. “Stupid,” he muttered. “Utterly stupid.”

Victoria reached forwards and gently laid a hand on his shoulder. He looked up at her with bright, wide eyes. She gave him a soft smile.

“Mistakes happen in the prescience of anomalies,” she said. That seemed to placate the scribe. He nodded slightly before he stood up straight. Victoria dropped her hand from his shoulder.

“I can play it now, if you’d like?” The scribe said. My mother nodded and motioned for him to continue. He looked at me and the others in the room. “It’s a bit loud, just to let you know.”

“Thanks for the warning,” Kairos deadpanned. I didn’t miss the glare he shot towards Valentin.

The scribe swallowed thickly before holding up his hand, just like Valentin had done in the other room. A ball of white light appeared in his hand, identical to what Valentin had produced. Then, the booming words of the prophecy filled our heads again.

“Born of royalty, bound to five,

The collision of dark and light,

Remaker of olden times,

Night to his knees,

Light to rise,

Balance is once again in sight.”

There was a pause. It was long enough that I could completely understand why the scribe thought the prophecy was over. Then, the voice in our heads changed. It became garbled and gritty and sounded possessed. I gasped as it filled my ears.

“And when the evil rises,

It’s seduction a trick,

Darkness surrounding her,

Will threaten the balance needed to be met.”

The orb swirled in the scribes hand before disappearing with a pop! I dropped my hands from where I’d slammed them over my ears. I looked at the others in my room and they seemed to look just as shocked as I was. Valentin’s lips were set in a thin line. Kairos looked enraged, again. Maximus looked confused. Victoria was gnawing her lip in a way I knew was identical to the way I chewed on mine.

“Was some of that...French?” Maximus asked, breaking the silence.

“Yes,” the scribe shook his head. “I don’t know what it means -” “I do,” Valentin stood up. His face curled into a grimace. He looked at Victoria. “The vampires are rising from where we sealed them away.”

Victoria gasped. “Renault,” she jerked back to look at me. I immediately felt the intensity of her glare.

“Who’s Renault?” Kairos snapped.

I turned to look at my fated mate. I made eye contact with him, swallowing down the lump in my throat before I spoke.

“The vampire king,” I said. “He’s rising.”

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In a matter of seconds, everyone was scrambling around the room. Finare immediately ducked out to make calls. The guard took Beta Kline, the scribe, out of the room. A whole other fluster of guards came rushing in.

Valentin directed them to different parts of the room. Maps were unfurled. Calls were being made by guards in hushed words. They spoke to their palms then released them into the air in little sparks of light. Valentin immediately began to pace as the rest of us looked on.

“What do you think their plan is?” Valentin said towards Victoria. She pressed her index finger to her lips in thought.

“We don’t know enough with the intel we’ve received,” she said. “They could be gathering. They could be waiting. All I can tell is they want us to know that they’re there.”

“And where was the most recent sighting?” Valentin asked the room.

Victoria crossed the room to where a large map was. I could vaguely make out the shape of the United Kingdom. There was a dot for London and a dot for the school, just west of London in the forest. Around the school dot, there were a plethora of red Xs. My mother tapped one of them.

“There,” she said to Valentin. “Thirteen miles south of the school.”

“Fuck,” Valentin hissed. He ran his hand over his face. “They’re getting closer to the school.”

“You think they’re coming for her?” Kairos asked. He stepped up to stand shoulder to shoulder to Valentin, though not really because Kairos was a few inches taller than my other fated mate.

Valentin shrugged. “Perhaps,” he said. “I don’t think anyone knows of the prophecy besides us.”

“Unless someone’s leaked the information,” Victoria said. There was pregnant pause in the room as we all settled on that information. Could someone really be selling us out to the wolves?

Valentin shook his head. “No,” he said. “No one’s high enough to know of the prophecy besides the people around this table.” He lifted his head as he heard the door open. His lips thinned into a line.

“And I guess, now the general,” he grumbled.

I turned around to see what he’d been looking at. Kairos and Victoria followed suit. Striding into the room was a man dressed in army greens. He had dark hair that was cropped short to his skull. His jaw was terse and strong. His eyes were a color gold that was eerily familiar to me. However, there was something lacking in them that I couldn’t quite put my finger on.

“Alpha General Wolfham!” Victoria called. “I see Finare sent for you.”

I looked behind the general to see Finare strolling behind him. He looked – wait did she say Wolfham!?

“Wolfham?!” I repeated out loud.

“Will?”

I whirled around to see Maximus staring at the general with wide eyes. The general seemed to balk as he realizing who was standing behind my mother.

“Max?” he blinked rapidly. “What are you doing here?”

“Your brother is involved in our plans to squash the vampire uprising,” Victoria cut in. She cocked her head to the side with a slight smile. “Given that he’s fated to my daughter.”

Brother? My eyes looked down at the hand hanging to the left of the general’s body. It was an iridescent gold that looked to be perfectly molded to hold a sword. I swallowed thickly. This was Maximus’s brother who lost his arm protecting the wolfless.

At the same time I was processing this, the general jerked his gaze away from his brother. His eyes raked all over me in a way that made my stomach churn. His face remained emotionless. He finally nodded and looked back at the Queen.

“It is a Wolfham’s honour to serve,” he said. His jaw ticked slightly, eyes looking back to his brother.

“We were discussing the prophecy,” My mother continued, turning back around to the map. She braced her hands on the table and raised an eyebrow at the general as he came to stand across from her. “I assume Finare shared it with you?”

“He did,” the general confirmed. He looked towards me. “The weapon that will destroy the vampires?”

I gave him a half smile. “So they say.” He didn’t return the smile before looking back at my mother. Guess he was all business.

“The most recent attack was here,” he tapped closer to the school than the other Xs but east. We all watched as he did. “Three bloodsuckers. Took a local woman from her home. The wolves living nearby managed to get her kid out but the woman was killed before they could save her.”

“Shame,” Victoria murmured, eyes darting across the map as her head spun. She stood up straighter and looked towards one of the guard. “Get Finare to supply that area with additional support. For humans and wolves both.”

The guard nodded then scurried off. My mother turned back to the General. “What’s your thoughts?”

“Well,” the general sighed. “We can place the weapon here. By doing so we can cut off what seems to be where the supply of vampires is. That way they won’t funnel around the school. Then we can move the weapon-”

“Wait, wait,” Maximus chimed up. “We’re sending Zora into war?!”

“What good is a weapon behind the walls of a school?” the general said.

“She’s not ready,” Valentin snapped.

“She is right here,” I grumbled.

“What good is telling me about a weapon if you won’t let me use it?” the general barked.

Maximus glared across the table at his brother. “She’s just starting to get ahold of her powers. Give her a bit.”

“We may not have a bit,” the general said. He jabbed a hand towards the Xs cluttering the map. “We have no clue on how many there are or how powerful or where they’re coming from-”

“She’s not ready for battle!” Valentin cried. “She’s too untamed.”

“She’ll learn-”

“On the job? No thanks-”

“-you’ll get her killed!”

“I’m right fucking here!” I yelled, high above everyone.

The room went silent. I glared at them all and wove my hands with a huff. “I’m right fucking here,” I said again, calmer this time. “I – I’m not ready. I’m not worried about getting myself killed but I am worried I’ll kill others. My power it’s – it’s not easy to control. If I let it go, someone could get hurt. Again.”

I sucked in a deep breath through my nose. The image of the guard’s charred hands was ingrained in my mind. Maximus gently locked our pinkies together out of sight of everyone at the table. “Fine,” the general finally said. “But I’m getting you out of here then. I need you safe until you’re ready to be of use.”

“Then you’ll have to take all of us,” Kairos replied. I looked at him with a frown. He raised an eyebrow in reply. “I’m not letting you out of my sight if the vampires are coming for you.”

“Ditto,” Maximus said.

“Guess we’re all going into hiding then,” Valentin grumbled. “You’ll need someone to keep you training.”

“It’s settled then,” Victoria stated. “You’ll all be going to a safehouse.”

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After that, there wasn’t much else to be done for myself and my fated mates. Valentin stayed behind to strategy with Victoria and the General. Kairos slunk away from Maximus and I when we weren’t looking. Given all the information he’d received that day, I wasn’t surprised.

I left before Maximus, who stayed behind to whisper hurriedly with his brother. They both seemed frantic as the spoke. After the General caught me staring twice, I excused myself out of the room.

I walked back across campus towards my dorm room. We were to be leaving as soon as possible. I was supposed to be packed and ready by nightfall. Given how little I owned, I wasn't concerned. I was about halfway across campus when I heard my name called over my shoulder.

I looked to see Maximus running after me. He stopped short of me and stood there for a moment before he huffed out a breath.

"Hi," he said.

"Hi," I repeated, half a laugh. I shifted my weight. "So, the safe house?"

"The safe house," Maximus said, nodding his head. "Yeah. You going back to pack?"

"Yeah," I jerked my head over my shoulder. "You coming?"

"Yeah, yeah," Maximus started walking towards our dorm. I walked in stride with him. The only noise was the crunching of our feet on the dried, frozen grass. The silence was so heavy and awkward that all I could do was let out a weird laugh.

"Alright?" Maximus asked.

"Sort of," I half-laughed. "Just taking it all in."

Maximus hummed. "Taking in being a Princess?"

"No. I mean - yes but-" I groan and stopped. I threw my head in my hands. "Sorry. I'm bad at this. I just - I want to explain."

"So explain," Max crossed his arms over his chest. His raised eyebrow told me I had a lot of it to do.

"Can I come over?" I said quickly. "Before we leave. I'll tell you anything you want to know. Anything, really."

Maximus sighed and looked off over my shoulder. He poked his tongue out slightly then started nodding. "Yeah, alright," he said.

"Thank you," I sighed in relief before I continued walking.

We got to our dorm and walked up the stairs to our respective doors. We shared one more look before parting. The anxiety was stirring in my chest as I opened my own door. It was made worse as I walked in to see Loren waiting for me on her bed.

"Hi?" I said, confused.

“Hi,” Loren slid off her bed.

She immediately started ringing her wrists in her hands. Her mouth was set in a frown as she approached me. I peeled off the disgusting sweatshirt I’d been wearing since the guards had taken me and threw it in my laundry. I looked back at Loren and watched her pace across the floor between our desks.

“Loren?” I said, gently. “What’s wrong?”

She sighed, her eyes slipping closed. She gnawed on her bottom lip before she huffed another breath and spoke. “So, um, I didn’t get a chance to tell you,” she squeaked. “But rules here are a little different. We – we have a council of sorts. A student jury.”

I slammed my own eyes shut. Fuck. Fucking, fuck, fuck.

Loren was in the atrium.

She knew who I was.

“Loren, let me explain-” I started.

“I get why you did it,” she cut me off before pacing back across the room. Her hand was still wrapped around her wrist. “Really, I do. If I was some super-secret, special royal, I would probably keep it hidden too. For my safety.”

I cringed as I heard her speak. “Loren-”

“But I just wonder why you didn’t think you could tell me,” Loren finished. “Because, well, I thought we were friends.” “We are,” I rushed forwards and pried her hands off her wrists. I held them in my own. “We are. I just ugh, it’s complicated. I didn’t want special treatment here, so I didn’t come in as the Princess. visit [j-o\)b:ni,b>co:m](#) for full story Then, it became more about keeping me safe than anything and – and at that point the lies just piled up and up and I kept doing it when I could’ve just told you the truth and -”

“Zora,” Loren said. She squeezed my hands. “Just, stop. I get it. I do. Well, kinda. I’m hurt but I understand.”

I blinked at her, water pooling in my eyes. “You’re not mad?”

“A little, yeah,” Loren cocked her head. “But I’ve never been in your position. I can’t claim I’d know what to do if I was you either. I mean, you’re a secret princess!”

I half-laughed and half choked out a sob. “A secret princess,”

“That’s, like, so bad ass,” Loren giggled. “I mean my best friend is a bad ass!”

The two of us erupted into a fit of hysteric giggles. I lobbed my arms around Loren's shoulders and yanked her to me. We both sniffled slightly as we held on to one another. We stood for a moment before I pulled back.

"No more secrets," Loren whispered.

"For real," I agreed. I frowned. "Which, well, I guess I should tell you I'm leaving."

"Leaving? Now?" Loren said.

I nodded. "They're sending me and all my fated mates to a safe house. They want us to be safe from vampire attacks while we continue to train."

"All your fated mates," Loren repeated before shaking her head. She scoffed. "Should've known anyone with more than one fated mates would be royalty. No one I know even has two!"

I laughed along with her. The two of us separated and I went to my drawer to start packing. I shoved the three shirts in my one drawer on top of my bed. Loren hopped up next to them, her legs hanging off the side and swinging.

"So, Queen Luna is your mom?" she said.

"Unfortunately," I mumbled. "She's the lady who picked me up at the orphanage."

"Wow," Loren kicked her legs more. "That's fucked up. She dropped you off and picked you up?"

"Yup," I popped the "p" as I went to the next drawer and pulled a bunch of pants out of it.

"Do you know where you're going?" Loren asked.

"Nope,"

"Do you know how long?"

"Uh, I guess until I can fight vampires?"

"And like save us or whatever?"

"I guess,"

"Wow," Loren breathed. She sat up straight. "How am I gonna talk to you?!"

I paused my packing. "Do you not have cellphones?"

“Not really,” Loren said. “Why have cellphones when we have magiks!”

As she said the last word, a purple orb appeared in her hands. It looked like a mix between the ones the guards were whispering two earlier and the one that the scribe had produced with the prophecy. It seemed to be pulsating with energy in a way that made me shrink away from it slowly. “Sorry,” Loren mumbled. “Not my best work but it’ll do.”

She grabbed my wrist and pulled my palm face up. She gently guided the orb into my palm. I felt the energy humming against my skin. It felt warm and bubbly and homely. All of the things I’d come to associate with Loren.

I pulled my fingers in and watched as the orb sunk into my palm. The energy flooded my skin then radiated across my entire body. I blinked as I neutralized myself. I looked back up at Loren.

“There,” she said. “It’ll always be with you! You just have to think of me and it’ll come out. Then, we can talk.”

“Thank you,” I said. “Genuinely. For everything.”

“Don’t talk like it’s goodbye forever,” Loren said. “It’s just a see you later.”

I smiled brightly at her. “Just a see you later.”

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 146

Maximus

Maximus was in his room for about thirty minutes, blankly staring at the floor before he finally moved. Even then, it was only to flop on his back and stare back up at ceiling.

His last twenty-four hours had been whirl wind to say the least.

Firstly, he was dating a princess. The Princess of the wolves. Maximus also seemed to deduce that Zora knew she was a princess from the moment she stepped on campus but was keeping it a secret. That didn’t quite sit right with him but he didn’t know whether to be angry or confused or what.

Secondly, she was part of a prophecy that would lead to her saving the wolves from the vampires. The imminent danger was looming close enough to the campus that they were being shipped off to some safe house in Gods knew where.

Lastly, his brother was the leader of this whole ordeal from the wolf army side. Which was ... interesting to say the least. Maximus closed his hand in a fist as he remembered what his brother had pulled him aside and said.

“Your fated mate is the princess?” He’d whisper-yelled, human hand clasped around his upper arm.

“Apparently,” Maximus sneered. He shook free of his brother’s hand. “I just fucking found out too. So, don’t give me the ‘ why didn’t you tell me’ speech.”

“Gods be damned,” Wilhelm brought his hand up to run down his face. “You sure it’s her?”

“Don’t be stupid,” Max snapped. “Of course it’s fucking her. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t.”

The elder Wolfham shook his head in disbelief. “My brother, fated to the fucking Queen to be,” another shake of his head. ” How fitting.”

“Will, don’t,” Maximus warned.

“Don’t what?” Wilhelm cocked his head. “Tell you how wonderful it is that my baby brother has now both the High Alpha of Wolfham title and the King Consort title? When I’ve been relegated to the fucking sidelines to play chess with the other old cunts. When I should be on the fucking field.”

Maximus shook his head. “I didn’t ask for this,”

Wilhelm turned over his shoulder and Maximus watched as his eyes started at Zora’s toes and worked their way up her body. He lingered on her waist for long enough that a growl worked it’s way up Maximus’s throat. Wilhelm turned back to his brother with a smug smirk.

“She looks good,” he mused. “You’ve been teaching her what I taught you. But I can’t help but wonder...”

He paced around Maximus before jerking his gaze back towards Zora. He and Maximus watched as she stood between Valentin and a guard, speaking with her mother. She shifted her weight between her feet in a nervous way. Wilhelm turned and brought his lips close to Maximus’s ear. He dropped his voice low.

“Didn’t you say you were helping a girl who was previously wolfless?”

Maximus slammed his jaw shut to keep himself from lashing out. Wilhelm walked back around to face his brother head on. His face was schooled neutral. Max knew he was about to unleash his wrath on Max. In the careful, poised way he always did.

“I bled for this world,” he said. “For this pack, our pack. When it was over, and I was left without the means to keep myself strong, they pushed me aside and they handed it to you.”

Maximus stiffened. Wilhelm's eyes were sharp now. Violent behind the careful façade he'd built. "Don't make the mistake of thinking sacrifice earns you anything," he snapped. "Power doesn't respect loyalty. It respects what it can't afford to lose."

With that, the general turned away from his brother and walked back to the Queen. He gingerly touched her on the shoulder before extending his hand to Max's fated mate. Max locked his jaw to keep from exploding.

Wilhelm's words meant nothing to him. They hadn't since he'd lost the title of High Alpha. Yet, Max couldn't help but linger his gaze on Zora.

Was what Wilhelm said true? Would she throw him away as soon as he was nothing new?

The thought was pinging back and forth in his skull as a sharp rapt came to his dorm room door. He shuffled across the floor and gently brought the door open, half in a daze. Standing in his doorway was none other than Zora.

She had two bags on her shoulders and a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. It seemed to be a quilt of sorts. He vaguely remembered it from her bed.

"Hi," she breathed.

"Hi," he said back.

"Can I stay here tonight?" Zora said, softly. She half smiled at him. "Valentin just sent word. We're leaving early tomorrow. I don't want to wake Loren in trying to leave."

"Yeah," Max stepped back to let her in. "Course."

"Thanks," she mumbled.

She walked past him and he let the door close gingerly behind her. She dropped her bags on the floor next to his unpacked one and threw her blanket on his bed. Then, she turned around with a smirk on her lips and a raised eyebrow.

She toed his empty bag. "Lots of packing done, huh?"

"Yeah," Maximus half laughed. He rubbed the back of his head. "I was thinking. Didn't get much done."

Zora's smirk fell. "About...today?"

"Yeah," Max nodded. "And the days before today. About you, really. And us."

"I told you I had secrets," Zora whispered.

“Hell of a secret, yeah?” Maximus snorted. He lifted his gaze from the floor and met Zora’s eyes. Her hazel irises held the hurt of his words. He immediately deflated. That was not his intention.

He crossed his room and sat down on his bed. He gently patted the space next to him. Zora slowly followed and sat down next to him. She wrapped her blanket around her shoulders before curling into his side. He lifted his arm to rest on her back. He rubbed slow circles against the quilt as Zora breathed into his side.

“Are you mad?” she finally whispered.

“I don’t know how to describe what I feel,” he said back, equally as gentle. “I wish you’d told me. But I know why you didn’t. Yet, I’m still mad that you wouldn’t.”

“I didn’t have much of a choice,” Zora sighed. “Once the vampires started showing up, Valentin and my mother made me keep it a secret. They figured someone would be on to us. Before then, my mother was dying for me to tell everyone.”

Maximus snorted. “I’m sure she wanted to show you off,”

“I was wolfless,” Zora sat up to look him in the eyes. “And knew nothing and had no idea what I was doing. I don’t know what about me there was to ‘show off.’”

The mention of wolfless made Wilhelm’s words lurch to the forefront of Maximus’s mind. He frowned. Zora sat up taller. “Hey,” she reached up to cut his face in her hands. “What’s wrong?”

“I just “Maximus huffed. “I wonder if, once all’s said and done, you’ll forget me. When you’re all powerful with a High Alpha King Consort and another one, you’ll forget who was there for you first. It’s petty and stupid but I can’t help but feel like everything we built will get thrown away.”

“Max,” Zora said, slowly. “You were the first person to stand up for me. The first person to see something worth it in me. You were the first thing that made me feel like I belong here.”

She sighed deeply before shaking her head. “I can’t pull the foundation out from under me and expect the house to still be standing, can I?”

“But Valentin and Kairos-”

“Are good supports,” Zora cut him off. She stroked her thumb over his cheek bone with another shake of her head. “But aren’t you.”

Maximus stared at her for a moment. She was stunning, all hazel eyes and red hair that was curled up into ringlets, slightly damp from her shower. The freckles splattering

across her nose were like constellations in the night sky. She scanned his face, looking for something.

“You’re not something I’d survive without,” she said quietly. “So, you don’t get thrown away.”

That was all Maximus needed. He wrapped his arms around Zora’s middle and yanked her close to him. He buried his face in the red mass of curls around her face and breathed in. She smelled like honey and bergamot and home.

She smelled like his.

His arms held on to her tighter for a few moments before she laughed and pulled back. Her hands went back to his face. They angled it up so she could gingerly press her lips to his. They locked eyes for a moment, forehead to forehead, after. Finally, Zora sat up straight.

“Come on,” she whispered. “I’m tired and you still haven’t packed.”

“I’ll do it tomorrow,” Maximus mumbled. He pulled Zora further into his bed, tucking them both under the giant blanket she’d dragged into his room. “Bed, now.”

“Okay,” Zora said softly, leaning into the way he held her. That night, his hands didn’t leave her skin once.

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 147

Zora

In the morning, I woke up comfortably warm. Maximus’s body was wound around me like a snake and he was lightly snoring into my shoulder. I blinked to adjust my eyes in the darkness before nudging him awake. It was quarter to five. We were to meet in front of the admissions building in half an hour.

Maximus grumbled, pressing his face further into me before I fully rotated and shoved him in the chest. Then, one of his eyes snapped open.

“Come on sleepy,” I grumbled, voice thick with my own exhaustion. “Your bag is empty and car leaves in thirty, so we leave in twenty.”

Maximus grumbled again, this time something about being a drill sergeant, before wrenching back my quilt. He stumbled out of bed and began rummaging through his wardrobe. He threw things into the empty bag on his floor with an admirable lack of care. Then, he chucked in a few of his toiletries before zipping the bag up and hiking it over his shoulder. He picked up one of mine and jerked his chin towards his door.

We walked out of his room, and I made sure to give my own door its own sad little wave of goodbye. I had no clue when I'd be seeing it again, if ever. Then, we trudged down the stairs and out of the dorm hall.

Campus was near silent as we trekked across it. The snow had mostly melted but a crust of frost was still lingering on the dried, wilted grass. Our feet crunched as we walked across it. With two minutes to spare, we arrived in front of the admissions hall.

A black sedan was parked outside. Valentin stood next to the driver's side. He was wearing tactical gear in all black and had a black beanie on his head. His eyes were glued on his phone, but he slowly lifted them as he saw us approaching.

"Bags in the back," he said, shoving his phone in his back pocket. "Wolfham, you're in the front with me. Moonraiser will sit in the back with Zora."

Max gave him a curt nod then opened the trunk of the car. He loaded in our bags before walking around to the passenger side of the car. He returned back to press a kiss to my temple before hopping in. As his door slammed, I watched Kairos emerge from the path to his house.

"You're late," Valentin barked from the driver's side.

"It's the bloody ass-crack of dawn," Kairos hissed. "Give me a break."

"Vampires don't take breaks," Valentin snapped back. "They don't even fucking sleep."

He dropped his ass into the driver's seat as Kairos rolled his eyes so violently, they almost disappeared in the back of his head. He threw his bag in the back before looking at me. He gave me a curt, robotic nod before moving around the side of the car to sit behind Maximus.

I cringed. I really needed to talk to him.

"Coming, Princess?"

I looked up to meet Valentin's eyes in the window he rolled down. I gave him a pointed look before getting into the car with the rest of them. The door slammed shut and Valentin put the car into drive. The admissions building slowly faded to nothing in the rear window.

Just like that, Alpha Academy was a thing of the past.

I lost track of how long we were in the car. I think we all passed out again. Valentin drove right along as were something he did normally. Sleep dragged my body in and out of consciousness. I woke with a start at one point, to someone shaking me. My eyes flew

open as I gasped. My eyes immediately fixed on familiar dark gold ones. Kairos held his hands up in defense.

“It’s me, it’s me!” he said quickly. He dropped his hands when I breathed a sigh of relief. “We’re here.”

I sat upright and tried to catalog my surroundings through the blacked-out sedan windows. I huffed when I got no hints and threw the door open. As I did, I saw Kairos kick the back of the seat in front of him. Maximus stopped snoring with a jolt and jerked up as well. He turned around and gave Kairos a glare, cursing under his breath at the same time. I tried to smother the smile on my lips.

When I got out, I was smacked in the face with the smell of salt. I looked out to see waves crashing into rocky cliffs. The sound of the ocean roared against my ear drums. I turned to my left and spotted a small cottage off to the side. The entire thing was old and sad looking. Its roof seemed sunken into the second floor, dipping in the middle. The windows were boarded in some places and blown out in others. There was a bed of dead flowers in front of it and patches of grass scattered around in the dirt.

“Gods be damned,” Maximus cursed. I turned to see him stagger out of the car. He looked around. “The fuck are we?”

“Cardiff.”

We both looked towards Kairos. He shrugged.

“My mum’s from here,” he said, nonchalantly. “Keywolf pack.”

I looked out at the roaring ocean again. Waves smacked against the rocks with reckless abandon. I frowned and turned back to Kairos. “Do people swim here?”

“Yeah,” he stepped closer to me. “When it’s not freezing out.”

“Where’s Valentin?” I asked.

“Warding the place,” Kairos pointed towards the cottage. I frowned again as I spotted Valentin coming from around the back of the house.

His hands were held up and he seemed to be moving them in repetitive pattern. Every once in a while, a ripple would come out of his hands and he’d move to the next spot. I looked back over at the car.

Kairos and Maximus had gotten the trunk open and were pulling our bags out. I went over to help them and together we unloaded the car. We brought all of the bags over to the cottage. Valentin was waiting for us at the door. He kicked it open with his foot and gestured us all in.

“Welcome to your new home,” he deadpanned.

I stepped past the barrier of the hut and into it. I was half expecting it to be a shithole. Instead, it was just as nice as Valentin’s house on campus was. j-o)b:ni,b>co:m It was full of dark wooden furniture with gold carvings. There were several dim lamps littering the room along with a few velvet chairs. The entire hut seemed to be a mirage for a seemingly normal house.

“Quaint,” Maximus chimed in, dropping his bags next to mine. I met his eyes and gave him a soft smile.

“Smells like moth balls,” Kairos grumbled.

He too dropped his bags next to mine. But he kept a much more sizeable space between us than Maximus had. I tried to give him a similar smile, but he avoided looking at me. Something within me twinged with sadness.

“Right,” Valentin pushed into the hut himself. “There’s two rooms upstairs. One has bunk beds and one with a queen. Boys, you can take the bunk beds so Zora can have her own room. I’ll take the smaller room downstairs since I won’t be here as often.”

“Top bunk,” Maximus said. He glanced at Kairos who just scowled at him. Maximus stuck his tongue out when Kairos turned back to look at Valentin. I smothered my laugh with my hand.

“Go drop your things,” Valentin said. “Then we can get started on training.”

“Training?” I balked. “Here I was thinking today would be a day off.”

Valentin shook his head. “Sorry, love,” he gave me a soft smile. “We don’t know when the vampires are planning the attack. We need to get your powers under control as soon as possible.”

My cheeks heated slightly at the pet name. Valentin cleared noticed, eyes flickering with something nefarious. He turned away and gestured to the bags at our feet. Each of us picked up a bag and walked towards the grand looking wood stairway.

I went up first, the boys following behind me. I veered off to the left at the top of the staircase and wandered down a hall. The first door was a bathroom, clean and neat. The second seemed to be my room.

There was a four-poster bed with a white linen bedspread and five pillows. There were several other matching pieces of furniture and a large chair in an ugly floral print. I set my bag down on the floor as the murmurs from the opposite side of the hall echoed through the walls.

It seemed Kairos and Maximus were arguing over who got the top bunk. I sat down on the bed then threw my back down against it. I stared up at the ceiling and listened to my fated mates argue.

All at once, my life had changed again.

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 148

Zora

An hour after we'd arrived, Valentin had already had us all outside in a field. We were all in training clothes and shaking slightly with the way the wind was whipping off the ocean. Even Kairos looked chill, goosebumps rising on his arms.

"We don't have anywhere to train inside?" he threw at Valentin.

"The fight against the vampires won't take place inside," Valentin said back. "We need to train in the elements so we don't have a secondary weapon against us. Vampires aren't effected by temperature in the way we are."

"I know," Kairos growled. "I took fucking Vampires 101 with you. Two years ago."

Valentin gave him a fake smile. "And if I recall correctly, you barely passed."

Kairos grumbled under his breath while Maximus and I giggled slightly. Kairos turned to jab his fist into Maximus's arm. Max cursed and punched him back. Kairos went to return it then locked eyes with Valentin and dropped his fist. Our headmaster looked like he had no patience for bullshit that morning.

"Right," he clasped his hands behind his back. "So, I'll be blunt with you. You all don't use your magiks enough."

Kairos raised an eyebrow. "Why would I use my magiks when I can rip the fucker in two?"

Valentin mirrored Kairos's expression then twisted his face into a smile. Then, he threw his arm out. A ripple of air and the strange gust came from his palm. Then, Kairos was flying across the field. He landed with an "oof" and rolled through the tall grasses before landing on his back.

Valentin dropped his hand back to his sides. "That," he said, ever the teacher. "Is why you should use your magiks. It'll enhance the tenacity you already have from your fighting skills. I could've ripped your head off with my hand, yes, but what if I did it with my mind instead?"

Maximus jerked his head back to Valentin from where he was staring at Kairos's flayed out body. "You're a kinetic?"

"I am," Valentin nodded. "I've always been more adept with kinetic magiks. Something happened when Zora and I completed the bond. My kinetic magiks are now really the only ones I wield well. And they're far more powerful than they were."

I blushed a bit at the mention of Valentin and I sleeping together. Gods, I needed to get over that if I was going to fuck them all. I could've sworn I heard Mona speak in the back of my mind at that moment. I frowned when I realized she didn't. Where had my wolf gone?

"Now," Valentin snapped me out of my trance. I needed to check in on Mona later. "I know from experience to tell you that each of you should feel an affinity to a type of magik that you associate with Zora. I want you to materialize that in your palms."

Immediately, Maximus held out his hands. In between them, a small yellow ball formed. It crackled and spit like it was full of electricity. I watched as he moved it between his hands and then looked up to show Valentin.

"Good," he nodded at Max. "What does it feel like?"

"Like Zora," Maximus said slowly. "Like lightning in my palms."

I blushed again. Maximus caught my pinkening cheeks and smiled at me. He extended his palm and the small lightning orb floated across the space between us. I held out my other hand to cup it. The orb seemed to be pulsing with energy. It felt like a toned down version of what I felt when my skin brushed Maximus's.

I curled my fingers in and watched as the orb pulsed then grew in size. I gasped as I watched expand.

"Careful," Valentin warned. I extended my fingers back out and the orb shrunk back to the size Maximus had procured it to be. I gently pushed it back into Maximus's hands. He curled his fingers in as I had and the orb shrunk down then disappeared with a small pop!

"Brilliant," Maximus breathed.

"That was good, Wolfham," Valentin said. "I want you to keep working on that over there. Try sending it into the grass with force. As if it were a weapon. Just don't set the entire field on fire."

Maximus nodded with a half laugh and a shrug. "I'll try."

He took off across the field, procuring the orb back in his hands again. It watched as he gently pushed it off of his palms and sent it towards the ground with more speed than he sent it to me. It looked more weapon-like in that moment than before.

“Moonraiser,” Valentin said. “Your turn.”

“Zora and I have bonded,” he said plainly. “But she feels like fire to me.”

“Fire?” Valentin raised an eyebrow. He looked at me. “I was under the impression-”

“No,” I shook my head. I looked at Kairos for help in an explanation. He gave me nothing, staring at me like I was the reason we hadn’t bonded, not his possessiveness. I blinked at him.

“Okay,” Valentin drew the word out long. “I don’t know how well this will work but try and materialize the fire in your palms as Wolfham did.”

Kairos nodded then brought his hand up. He pulled his eyebrows in together and I watched the veins in his forearm pulse as he strained. Sure enough, a small puff of a flame appeared in his extended hand. He huffed and it disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

“Fuck,” he hissed.

“That was good without having Zora’s bond,” Valentin crossed his arms over his chest. “It’ll become easier when you’ve completed the bond.”

Kairos nodded and brushed his hair off his face. He refused to look me in the eye. I rolled my eyes. Was he still angry about having to share me? I looked over his shoulder as I caught something across the field behind him. I gasped and staggered backwards when I realized what it was.

A hoard of ten vampires was surging across the field in broad daylight. They all had sickly pale skin and bright red eyes that were manic. Their arms flailed wildly as they ran, snarling and hissing like feral animals.

“Run!” I shouted. “Run!”

“Run?” Kairos said. “Zora, what-”

“Look!” I jabbed a finger towards the hoard. I started to backpedal and stumbled, tripping over my own feet. The vampires were getting far too close. I scrambled back on my hands just as one vampire got to Valentin.

He grabbed my fated mate by the head and wrenched his neck to the side so he could sink his fangs into Valentin’s neck. All at once, my mate’s body went limp. I shrieked, fear

coursing through me like an explosion. As the first vampire dropped Valentin's limp body at his feet, a second grabbed Kairos and did the same to him.

"NO!" I screamed. "NO!"

A third vampire came close to me. He squatted down and grabbed my chin in his hand. He pulled me close enough to him that I could see the pulsing pupils on top of his ruby red eyes. He smiled at me, tongue coming out to lick the pointed canines he had. I tried to pull back but his grip was iron.

"Hello, Princess," he drawled.

"Stop!" I shrieked, slamming my eyes shut. "Stop!"

"Zora!"

I flung my eyes open and was met with a warm gold instead of a pulsating ruby. Maximus was holding my chin instead of a vampire. I cried out in relief and wrapped my arm around his neck, pulling him close to me.

"Oh my god," I sobbed. "Oh my god. I thought I thought -"

I looked over his shoulder. Both Kairos and Valentin were starring at me intensely. Valentin turned to look at Kairos. He placed a hand on the younger alpha's shoulder.

"The hysteria is starting to get worse. It's time," he said. "You need to complete the bond."

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 149

Kairos

The wind whipped across his face and burned his cheeks. It was as if someone was smacking him repeatedly. Like when he was younger, and he kept mouthing off to his mother so she'd smack his cheeks. He lifted his hand to his cheek fondly, remembering his mouth.

Gods, he'd been a cheeky little shite.

Kairos always wondered why he turned out the way he did. His parents were kind and compassionate towards him. They never hit him, not unless he deserved it for being the aforementioned cheeky shite. His childhood was good enough.

Why was he such a cunt?

A gust of air slammed into his cheeks again just as the waves curled against the beach. The swelling sound hummed in his ears. He sighed and dropped his hand back to rest on top of his knee. His ass was sat in the wet sand as he looked out at the beach in front of him.

He couldn't believe Lunerly had brought them to fucking Cardiff. Of all the places, a secluded beach only three hours from campus was not any safer for Zora. If he was in charged, he'd have brought her North. To his family's heavily guard, heavily armored manor in the Scottish Highlands.

But was he in charge?

No.

The thought made him grumbled and dig his heels further into the sand. The whole thing was bullshite. He was the song of a High Alpha, the future for his family's namesake. He was less than six months away from leaving Alpha Academy and taking over the Moonraiser throne.

And he had to listen to fuck-ass Valentin Lunerly tell him what to do? Tell him how to wield his magiks? Tell him when to fuck his mate?

He yanked one of the shells next to him off the sand and chucked it into the ocean as hard as he could. He barely heard it " plunk" in the water over the next waves crashing into the beach. His anger was consuming him again bringing him back to his original point.

Why was he such a cunt?

His anger had always been hard for him to control. He figured that had to be part of it. The consuming fire that tended to spark in his chest at even the littlest of inconveniences. It had always been there, urging him to lash out or snap at people. But then there was Kairos's issues with control.

He always had to be in control. In control of his life. His women. His fate. When suddenly smacked right in the middle of a situation he had no control over, his anger would start boiling up all over again.

He suspected that was why he'd hated Zora so much at the beginning. She wouldn't let herself be controlled by him. He told her to leave campus, and she pretty much laughed in his face. Then he tried to get her to submit by force and she wouldn't do that even when violently outmatched. She slammed her fucking skull against his instead of giving up.

He smirked to himself as he thought of her in that moment. She was so strong. She would've splintered him into the floorboards of the gym if he'd challenged her again. She was everything he wanted in a woman.

So why was he so afraid of consummating his bond with her?

Kairos had fucked other girls before. He'd fucked loads of girls before. Sometimes two at once. But the thought of having sex with Zora Luna absolutely terrified him. So much so that even thinking about laying her naked body on a bed sent chills down his spine and made his dick shrink into his balls.

He scoffed and lifted his head. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a figure moving towards him across the beach. He tensed his muscles, sniffing the air slightly for the pungent whiff of vampire. The scent he got back was nothing but wolf and made him scowl. He knew it well.

"Fuck off, Wolfham," he snapped. "Not in the mood for your shit."

Maximus ignored the warnings. He plopped down next to Kairos in the sand and took the same position, leaning his arms on outside of his knees. He didn't look at Kairos, just stared off into the ocean like a fucking soap opera star.

Kairos fought the urge to roll his eyes.

"You ever come here?" Maximus asked.

"No," Kairos said sharply.

Max hummed; eyes still fixed on the horizon. "Kinda reminds me of that beach we went to when we were kids."

"The one for the High Alpha meeting?" Kairos raised an eyebrow. Maximus nodded and shifted with a slight groan. He leaned back on his hands, palms planted in the sand. He smirked and finally looked at Kairos.

"Thorne got in trouble for nicking a sword from the armory," Maximus said. "The three of us got dragged into the meeting by the scruffs of our necks. Thorne and I stood there and took our punishment." His smirk became a full-blown grin. "You talked back."

Kairos snorted. "Someone had to," he said. "They didn't want us touching their shit then they shouldn't have left the fucking door unlocked for us to wander in."

"I'd never heard that room go so quiet," Maximus laughed. "We were like, ten, and you had the balls to tell the guards they were idiots."

“And I meant it,” Kairos said, firmly. He looked out of the corner of his eye towards Maximus. He was still grinning like a fucking idiot. Kairos huffed and turned towards the other man.

“What?”

“You ‘member what broke the silence?”

“No.”

“Lunerly.”

“No, it wasn’t.”

“It was,” Maximus half-laughed. “He looked at the guard screaming at Thorne and I and asked him whose job it was to man the armory. The guard said something and Lunerly said ‘inform him he’s been relieved of his duties. Permanently.’”

Kairos let out a half laugh. He shook his head and turned back to face front. Maximus chuckled alongside him. There was a beat where neither alpha said anything. The waves lapped against the ocean in the cold air.

“He’s not that bad,” Maximus finally said.

“He’s a pretentious dick,” Kairos snapped. “He saved us from vampires once and now he thinks he knows how to do it again? Twenty years have passed since then.”

“I mean, he’s like a hundred,” Maximus shrugged. “And, to your point, he did do this before.”

“But telling me what to do with my relationship?” Kairos protested. “My fated mate?”

“Is also his,” Maximus shook his head. “And mine. And were concerned about her. We’re sick of waiting for you to get off your ass and do something.”

“So now you’re on his side?” Kairos sneered. Anger, once again, threatened to boil over.

“I’m on Zora’s side,” Maximus said, completely unbothered. Kairos watched as Max’s jerk tensed and untensed. He seemed to be stewing on something. Finally, he turned back to look at Kairos. “What are you so afraid of?”

That it’ll mean so much to be and then be so quickly ripped away when I inevitably ruin it, Kairos thought. He grumbled and looked back down between his legs. He wouldn’t tell Max that. He couldn’t. Weakness was a plague that Max would never let him live down.

“Dunno,” he settled on.

Maximus nodded and the two sat side by side in silence for another moment. Finally, Maximus nudged their shoulders together. Kairos lifted his head and looked at his oldest friend. He couldn't believe they lived in the same house yet barely spoke for the last few months.

"She doesn't need someone else," he said, softly. "She needs you. Good and bad. Whatever that means."

Kairos met his friend's eyes. Inside them, he saw the little boy he'd stood up for all those years ago in the High Alpha's meeting. He saw someone who knew him. Good and bad.

Kairos nodded slowly. "Yeah," he said. "You're right."

"I know," Max said. Kairos turned and punched him in the ribs, sending Maximus flailing backwards into the sand in pain. When he sat back up, he was grinning at the other man.

"Race you back?"

"Don't start a race you'll lose."

"I was always faster."

"We'll see about that."

Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 150

Zora

I cracked my fingers against the table for the hundredth time causing Valentin's head to jerk up from the reports he was scanning. He raised one eyebrow, and I slunk back into my chair.

"Sorry," I grumbled.

"Why don't you go unpack?" he suggested. "Maybe take a nap or something. A shower?"

I smiled slightly at him before I trudged up the stairs and to my room. I walked in and threw my body onto the bed, much as I had hours earlier. After my second episode, Kairos had shifted and taken off. I didn't know why but the whole thing made my stomach turn over. Why was he so hesitant towards bonding me?

A soft rapt echoed through my room. I lifted my head, expecting to see Valentin checking on me but I was met with honey gold eyes. I scrambled to get up and meet Kairos where he was lingering in my doorway.

“Hi,” I said, quickly.

Kairos said nothing.

I frowned in response and opened my mouth to explain or apologize or something. His hand came up and covered my mouth. I squeaked in shock as he did. It wasn't a rough hold, just brash.

“Don't say anything,” he said. “You don't need to apologize. I do.”

I furrowed my brows, expecting him to drop his hand. When he didn't, I rolled my eyes and gestured for him to continue. He sucked in a shaky breath.

“I am sorry for how I treated you,” he said, slow and measured. “I am sorry for not thinking you should be at the school. I am sorry for trying to run you off and continuing to do so until you finally showed me that I shouldn't have.”

He took a deep breath again, less shaky this time, and spoke again.

“I am sorry for every time I hurt you,” he continued, quicker this time. “Physically and mentally and everything in between. I am sorry that I don't know how to undo that. That can't give you a version of me that never hurt you.”

His gaze never left mine as he slowly shook his head.

“But I will do everything I can,” He said, sternly. “To prove to you that I will never, ever hurt you again. If I do, it will be my undoing. It will be the worst thing I've done up to this day and it will be my worst fuck up.”

He lifted his eyes, honey-gold and open in a way I'd never seen.

“Because you have become everything to me, Zora,” he finished. “Everything that challenges me, that terrifies me, that makes me second guess everything I've ever done. You are the goodness I didn't know I needed. The light I didn't know existed. I'd do whatever you said. I'd break this bond for you. I'd watch you bed a thousand men who thought they were your fated mates. I'd do it and then I'd fucking apologize again. Just so you knew how sorry I was.”

I stared at him, slack jawed behind the hand that was still covering my mouth. He slowly dropped it to hang loosely at his side. I didn't have words at that moment, only actions. I surged forwards and wrapped my arms around his neck, tugging his lips down to meet mine.

The flames inside of me felt like they'd been doused in gasoline. They surged higher and higher and soon I was more aware of the burn than I was of the way Kairos was straining to kiss me back with just as much bite.

His hands slid under my ass and he lifted me off my feet. He nearly sprinted across the room to pin me to my bed. His hands were everything, everywhere and all at once. They shredded my shirts as they ripped it off my body. Then, with a juxtaposing gentleness, were kneading my chest.

He slipped his fingers under my bra and thumbed my nipple. I arched up into him, moaning into his mouth as I went. He took the moment to work his tongue further into my mouth, nipping and sucking. As I was riding the high of his hands on my chest and tongue in my mouth, he ripped my bra straight down the center. I gasped as he moved his mouth down to suck one nipple into it.

My eyes flew open, the white ceiling blurring slightly as the pleasure reached every fiber of my being. Unfortunately, it disappeared just as quickly as I noticed the door to my room was still wide open.

“Kairos,” I said.

He hummed against my nipple, causing me to moan and arch more. I pressed on his shoulders, trying to force him off. He growled and pulled off of me, eyes narrowed.

“The door,” I said, quickly. “The other’s I-”

“They left,” Kairos said against the skin of my stomach.

“They left?” I gasped as his teeth started to pull my shorts down.

“Give us privacy,” Kairos murmured against the fabric. “Can I continue?”

I sighed in relief, eyes fluttering back shut. “Please.”

He crawled further down my body but then stopped. I jerked my head up to see what was going on, only for it to be whirled around. I found myself face down on the bed, hands spread out wide.

“What-?”

Then I felt the sharp sting of Kairos’s teeth biting into my bare ass cheek. The pain and pleasure sent the flaming roaring up the sides of my insides. I cried out in a way that I never had before. Just as my body was coming down, I started riding high again as Kairos placed his face in between my legs and directly on my cunt.

“So fucking sweet,” he growled against my pussy.

I grinded back on his tongue, writhing against him. His forearm kept me pinned to the bed so he could suck and lap at all of the wetness that had pooled between my legs. Blinding, white hot fire hit me as my orgasm coursed through my veins.

Then, I was flipping over again. Kairos pulled every inch of clothing left on my body off then rid himself of his pants. I tried to look down at him but was stopped by Kairos's hands on my shoulders. He kept me pinned to the bed as his one hand came up and gently stroked a stray curl away from my face. I couldn't read his expression as he looked at me. Something about him seemed to be stuck. I pushed up against his hands and took matters into my own.

I pushed his chest so he was seated on the bed. His long legs dangled off the side but his hips were fully surrounded by the mattress. It would have to do.

I climbed up to straddle him, looking down at his eyes the whole time. I fished my hand around in between us to find his cock and line it up at my entrance. I didn't even need to look at it to know it was thick and throbbing with need.

"Okay?" I whispered.

"Very," Kairos grunted in return.

I held onto him as I lined him up with my entrance, teasing the head of him where he'd made me the wettest. Then, I sunk down on my knees and took him deep inside me. The two of us moaned in sync as I got the first bit of him into my sopping wet cunt.

Despite the orgasm, it was still a tight fit. Kairos was huge and the fullness that came with him was pain and pleasure mixed. It was ironic, given that I had come to associate the mix with the man himself.

His hands squeezed my hips with a reckless tenacity as I sunk down so his cock was completely sheathed within me. Then, he picked me up and slammed me back down on his cock again. I cried out, my own hands covering his as he continued to slam me into him.

At one point, it became too much. I ripped his hands off me and pressed them to the mattress besides his head. He writhed a bit at first then released the breathiest moan I'd ever heard. "Sorry," I said. "I just—"

"Don't fucking stop," Kairos whined.

I took that as a sign and started bouncing on his cock. I kept his hands pinned next to his head and he shook under me with relentless pleasure. His breathing started to become labored, and his abs were tensing under me.

"Zora, I'm gonna—"

I moved my left hand from his wrist and wrapped it around the base of his throat. The moment my fingers touched him, he gave a guttural groan and jerked his hips up against me. The movement was enough to send me spiraling over into my second orgasm.

More white hot pleasure burned through me and I felt it spilling into Kairos as I twitched and clenched on top of him. Exhausted, I fell limp against his chest.