

# Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 31

Zora

The days that followed the awakening of my wolf, I felt a lot like a baby deer walking for the first time. Everything was so much more sensitive. My feet could feel every rock and pebble under them, even in my thick running shoes.

Smells were so much more prominent, so much so that! gagged myself when I sniffed myself after basics.

Then, there was my new friend.

Or rather, my old friend who decided to show up more than usual. The wolf inside of me was a constant looming voice in my head. She had comments for everything and it was truly enough to drive me wild.

For example, I'd started up my training with Valentin again. He was coming at me harder than he was pre-wolf.

One particular day, he threw me to the ground with such force, I struggled to breathe for a second.

Get up! Getupgetupgetup! My wolf chanted in my head.

Jesus, can you give me a second to breathe? I thought back. I felt her tail swishing in the back of my mind. I had come to learn that happened when she was impatient.

Jesus will not answer your prayers so quit laying around and GET. UP!

I huffed and blew my sweat soaked hair off of my face. I'd tried to slick it back in a braid that morning but the punches Valentin was throwing were causing tendrils to fly out and stick to my face. I pushed myself onto my elbows and glared at Valentin.

"We've been going at this all morning," I groaned. "It's Saturday. Can I at least have an hour of freedom on a day without classes?"

"No," Valentin said. He stood in the striking stance he'd taught me and circled me. "Your wolf is still weak. We need to build up your strength and speed. It will help your body become more accustomed to her powers."

I grunted and pushed myself up to my feet. "You both are exhausting," I huffed under my breath.

I heard that,

Good, I scoffed. You were supposed to.

Another tail swish. You know, we'd be much stronger with a mate, she goaded.

I took my sparring stance and circled Valentin as he was doing me. My arms ached with overuse but I kept them high. I threw two punches at Valentin. He blocked them easily.

Too bad we got rejected, I threw back at my wolf. I was trying to concentrate on sparring. I blocked a high kick by Valentin then threw it right back at him. I clipped him under the jaw and he grunted."Good," he said before firing back at me.

My wolf's tail continued to swish. There certainly other people besides the Knight that can make us feel all tingly inside,

I balked at her comment. Valentin took the opportunity to sail a swift punch to my ribs. It was one that would've cracked me in half a week ago. But with a wolf, my bones stayed intact and my body flew across the sparring mats like a boulder.

I slammed into the padded wall of the gym with an "oof." I flew a plethora of curse words at my wolf as I righted myself into a sitting position. She snickered before bouncing off into the back of my mind. I bushed my hand over my face again, chest heaving as I tried to catch my breath again.

A hand extended into my vision. I looked up to see Valentin standing over me. His brown hair was slick with sweat like mine. Seeing him, chest heaving and face slick with exertion did something weird to me. Half of me was proud that I'd given him enough of a fight that he had to actually put effort into throwing himself at me.

The other half was a turning of arousal, deep in the pit of my stomach. My mind began to wander to the other things we could be doing to get all hot and bothered. I took Valentin's hand and stood up. A jolt of electricity burned down my arm and into his.

I told you, my wolf said.I yanked my hand out of Valentin's. He blinked at me as if he was confused. Don't you have other things to do?

My wolf started to clean her paws leisurely. Just this until you figure out how to shift and let me run free,

Good luck, I snorted back at her. I rubbed my palms against the side of my pants. Valentin's brow knitted together.

"Are you okay?" he said, softly. I nodded quickly. Valentin | brushed his own hair off his face. He sighed then looked over his shoulder at the clock.

"It's half past one," he said. "The Queen has requested you call her at three. Shower off then meet me in my office."

I nodded, still slightly afraid of what words would come out of my mouth. I brushed past Valentin and towards the locker room. I was halfway across the gym when Valentin called my name. I turned back to face him. He smiled at me softly.

“Keep up the good work,” he said.

I rolled my eyes then saluted him. “You got it, coach.”

This is the worst flirting I’ve ever seen, my wolf chimed in as Valentin laughed at me. I rolled my eyes again and started back towards the locker room.

It’s not flirting, I told her. Secretly, I kinda agreed but she didn’t need to know that she was right. Of course, she heard that and started snickering in the back of my mind. I stripped naked in the locker room. Seeing as it was a Saturday, no one was in there. Most of the students were hanging in the campus lawn, drinking and lounging like normal wolves who deserved a break.

I was not a normal wolf and thus, breaks eluded me.

I turned the showers on to the hottest setting and let the burning water soothe my aching muscles. This was my fourth training session this week with Valentin. That was on top of Basics which I had every other day. I don’t think | | truly gave my body a break since before Mateball.

I scrubbed my body with soap before I started on my tangled mass of hair. I gingerly worked it out of its braid before wetting it and slathering it with soap. When I was finally done, I turned the water off and felt the clouds of steam around me. I closed my eyes slowly and took a deep breath in. The silence was comforting.

It was ruined by the rattle of creaky wheels on the tile of the locker room.

My eyes flew open and I ran towards my towel. I barely grabbed it to cover myself when someone came around the corner and into the showers. They stopped short and I froze with them. As I recognized who it was, my face turned into a scowl.

“What the fuck are you doing in here?”

Maximus crossed his hands over his chest.

“I could ask you the same fucking question,”

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“This is the girl’s locker room, Maximus,” I snapped.

“Oh I was unaware,” Maximus said sarcastically. He rolled his eyes. “It’s Saturday. Shouldn’t you be in the lawn with Loren or something?”

“Shouldn’t you?” I threw back.

He gestured to the cleaning cart next to him. “Clearly, not,” he snapped. “Thanks to you, I’m stuck on Saturday cleaning duties for poor behavior.”

I blinked at him. Had I really caused that? I shook my head. That didn’t matter. I was stark naked with only a flimsy towel to cover me in front of a man. Furthermore, a man who I had weird tension with and also wanted to punch in the face.

I wrapped my towel tighter around me. Maximus’s eyes widen as his pupils blew wide. I motioned towards the door.

“You can clean when I’m done,” I said. “I’m not in a position to run off now, am I?”

Maximus’s eyes were still fixed on me. He took a step towards where I was in the doorway of the showers. I felt the water trailing down my back from my hair. Maximus took another step towards me. Soon, we were merely inches apart. I was frozen as he reached forward. He wrapped a finger around a loose red curl, winding it up into a coil.

“You know,” his voice dropped low and sultry. “I think I prefer your hair this way. The straight at Mateball was nice but something about this is so—” He let the curl go and it sprung back into its natural form. His eyes pierced me.

“Tempting,”

“I don’t believe I asked for your opinion,” I threw back. I tried to fight the shake in my voice but it was hard. There was this electricity floating through the very small sliver of air between us.

Maximus’s eyes were still locked with mine. His hand was in the same spot where he’d let go of my hair. It inched slowly towards my face. I scanned his eyes, trying to figure out what his motive was. I watched his Adam’s apple bob as he swallowed. The urge to press my lips to it made me shudder. I closed my eyes gently and bit my bottom lip.

Maximus’s hand made contact with my face. Electricity surged through me in the shape of his hand. I opened my mouth slightly, breath catching. My eyes flew open. His gold ones were locked on me still.

“I’ve never seen eyes like yours,” Maximus whispered. “No other Alphas look like you do. The way you look, it’s like you were made for me.”

I couldn’t help the whimper that escaped from my mouth. Maximus’s tongue darted out to wet his lips and I closed my eyes again. His thumb stroked over my cheek bone.

“At Mateball,” he whispered again, thumb still tracing my face. “I felt my mate. I felt you.”

I shook my head, eyes still closed. “You couldn’t have,” I breathed. “Thorne was my mate.”

“Was,” Maximus repeated. I felt his breath ghost over my lips. I parted my lips more, arching my face towards his. “You’re still unmated, Zora.”

My name sounded like candy on his lips, in his voice. I tilted my chin up higher. My nose hit the side of his. A deep rumble exploded in his chest. Then, the thrumming returned.

Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub...

Was Maximus my fated mate as well?

Oh Gods, my Inner wolf said. Do it. Kiss him. Show him how you feel.

I couldn’t argue with her anymore. The desire to wrap my arms around Maximus’s neck and slam his lips to mine was innate. I needed it like I needed water. I skimmed my nose along his again. Our breathes were melting into one in the centimeters between us. His hand was still pressed to my cheek. All I had to do was just ... close... the gap...

“Mr. Wolfham,” a voice boomed.

I gasped and flew back from Maximus. My eyes snapped open. I was still in just a towel in the locker room.

Maximus had flown back from me as well. His chest was heaving with his breath. His hand was white knuckling the cleaning cart. The other one was precariously covering the bulge in his pants. I ripped my gaze from him to the sound of the voice.

Valentin was standing in the doorway to the locker room from the gym. His mouth was set in a thin line. His white-gold eyes seemed to be glowing. His pupils were blown wide with anger. His fists were clenched at his side.

“This is highly inappropriate,” Valentin snapped.

“Sorry Professor,” Maximus mumbled. He gestured to me. “I didn’t realize there was anyone in here. I was just doing my assigned cleaning as you wished.”

I furrowed my eyebrow. As Valentin wished? Did Valentin punish Maximus for his actions towards me. I looked back at my Professor.

“As you should,” he snapped at Maximus. “But you should’ve knocked before entering. Miss Smith was training with me this morning. She has a right to privacy in her locker room.”

“Noted,” Maximus bit out before licking the front of his teeth. He placed his other hand on the cart and pushed it towards the door. He glanced sideways at me.

“I’ll leave until you’re finished,” he mumbled. I nodded once at him.

“Thanks,” my voice was barely a squeak.

Maximus continued to push the cart out of the locker room, past Valentin. The door slammed shut behind him.

Then it was just Valentin and I, still in my towel and dripping onto the floor.

“I started.

“It’s two thirty,” Valentin snapped. His eyes were still dark, fixated on me. His fist was so tight I could see his nails making marks in his skin. “You’re going to be late.”

I swallowed and nodded sharply then scurried off into the locker room. I got back to my clothes and pressed my back to the lockers with a sigh. The door to the room slammed as Valentin left.

What the fuck? I thought.

I told you, my wolf said, tail swishing again. Lots people to make you feel tingly inside.

I ran a hand over my face before sighing. I let the towel drop to the floor and quickly shrugged on my shirt and pants. My heart was still thundering in my chest. Partly from the situation with Maximus and partly from being caught by Valentin. I almost felt guilty for letting Valentin catch me about to kiss Maximus. I blushed at the thought.

I slunk down to the bench to put on my shoes. My heart and mind were still going a mile a minute. I’d just felt some type of way about Valentin then, mere moments later, Maximus.

How do I feel this way about multiple wolves?! questioned my wolf.

She started to clean her paws again. Seems someone needs to get laid,

Oh, fuck off, I scowled, feeling the blush begin on my cheeks. I thought I was only supposed to have one fated mate. There’s been electricity with Valentin, Thorne and Maximus. What is that about?

We don’t know nearly as much about fated mates as it would seem, my wolf mused. I paused. Something about the way she said it made it feel like I didn’t know as much as she knew.

You know something I don’t, don’t you? I pressed my wolf.

Her tail swished in my mind.

I am you, she said. I only know what you know and what you feel. You've felt the electricity. The lust. I am only acknowledging them.

I bit my bottom lip as I finished lacing my sneakers. There was something weird going on. Something that was being kept from me. Luckily for me, I had a phone call with the Queen at the top of the hour.

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Valentin's eyes were still dark when | arrived at his office.

His jaw was clenched as he pushed the rotary phone on his desk towards me. He said nothing as I picked it up and held the receiver to my ear. I ducked my eyes down, away from his white-hot gaze.

"Hello?" I mumbled.

"Well?!" Victoria said. "I can't believe it's taken me this long to call you post Mateball. Part of me was hoping you'd be enjoying mated bliss."

"Oh," I rubbed my eyes. "No, sorry."

- Victoria sighed. "What happened?"

"Well," I huffed. No doubt she was going to be disappointed. "I felt the pull of a fated mate," I said. "But then, when I found him, he - uh - rejected me."

"Rejected?!" Victoria squeaked. "Oh, Gods above, I am so sorry, my love."

"Yeah," I dropped my hand in my lap to fiddle with the hem of my shirt. "It kind of sucked. Really hurt, actually."

"Could you break it back?" Victoria went on. I opened my mouth to answer but she cut me off. "Well, you're here so I'd assume so."

I froze. "What do you mean?"

"The bond of a fated mate is very strong magik, Zora," she explained. "When one mate reject it, the other mate must reject it back or else the magik that makes us wolves will be sucked away by the bond. It could've drained you dry.

Killed you."

Well, add Thorne to my list of future husbands who tried to kill me. It was looking like Valentin was the only one without murder on his mind.

Further reasons to court him, my wolf chimed in. I ignored her but then remembered that she existed now.

“Oh!” I said to Victoria. “That reminds me. My wolf. She presented.”

“That makes sense,” my mother mused. “She probably had to present to allow you to have the strength to break the bond. This is great news!”

“Yeah,” I mumbled. “I was beginning to think she wasn’t going to show up.”

“My wolf swished her tail. I’ve always been here, I ignored her again.”

“Me as well,” Victoria chuckled. “But back to this fated mate bond, who was it that you had been fated to?”

I groaned. “Does it really matter? My wolf showed up and I’m still alive so I don’t really need a mate anymore, do I?”

I wondered what Victoria would do if she knew it was Thorne, her own Knight, who’d wound up fated to me. Fated and then rejected, that was. Would she punish him?

Kick him out of the royal court? I shivered in morbid curiosity. The last thing I needed was have another target on my back.

“That’s true,” Victoria said through the phone. “But remember what I said about your second gift, Zora. It was prophesized to only be unlocked by the accepting of a fated mate bond.”

“How does that even work now?” I asked. “Now that I rejected my fated mate bond? Do I get another chance?”

I knew the answer was in some way, yes. Given that I’d almost made out with Maximus in the locker room showers had Valentin not showed up. I glanced up at the aforementioned professor and saw his eyes were still dark with some form of bitter jealousy. I averted my eyes back to my lap. There was also whatever that was going on over there.

Victoria sighed. “In many cases, no,” she said. I blinked in confusion. “Some wolves do get a second chance in the form of a chosen mate. I wonder if that is what the prophecy brought forth your five suitors for.”

“Five?” I frowned. “But you only mentioned four. Valentin.

Maximus. Thorne and Kairos.”

I almost could hear Victoria fidgeting through the phone.” Yes, but the prophecy mentioned five suitors,” she said. “I didn’t tell you until now because we haven’t been able to identify the fifth. There is no other High Alpha pack.”

Shock and confusion washed over. There was a fifth option? A man I had yet to meet who was somehow a High Alpha yet didn’t exist in the world as of then. Was I supposed to become a cougar and leave my gift unlocked until one of the other four popped out a kid for me to weirdly become attached to?

Then what did the interactions with Valentin and Maximus mean? If wolves weren’t usually given a second chance at a fated mate, what the fuck were all these signs and symptoms I was suffering through?

I pinched the bridge of my nose. My head was beginning to pound trying to process all of this. “Let me get this straight,” I said to Victoria. “I will not get a chance at a second fated mate, the only thing that’s supposed to unlock my super, secret special wolf power. Unless, of course, my chosen mate can do that. Which is one of four people who either hate me or don’t want me-”

I noticed Valentin shifting uncomfortable in his chair across from me.

“-Or,” I continued. “Some other wolf who is not currently available, meaning dead or not even born yet. Then I’d have to bond to one of the five and maybe, just maybe, i’ll get this random super wolfly ability that is apparently critical for some secret reason you won’t tell me about.”

There was a silence on the other line as I finished. I heard Victoria finally sigh, along with the creak of wood that

told me she, too, was fidgeting.

“Basically, yes,” she mumbled.

“Great,” I deadpanned. “Happy Saturday to me.”

Any insight would be great, I threw at my wolf. She continued to lick her paws and ignore me. I couldn’t help – but roll my eyes.

“Keep training,” Victoria said through the phone. “It’ll all work itself out and reveal itself in time.”

I huffed. “Can you tell me what this stupid prophecy about me is?”

“You’re not ready,” Victoria said, solemnly. “When you are, I will tell you.”

“Okay, and when will that be?” I pressed. “I’m keeping up with Valentin now. I’m excelling in my classes. Don’t you think I have a right to know the prophecy about my own life?”

“Not now, Zora,” Victoria sighed. I could tell she wanted to help me. In not doing so, it made me even more frustrated. I huffed and shoved the phone back at Valentin before getting out of my seat.

“Yes. Yes. No,” Valentin said softly. “I’ll let her know. I have to go.”

The phone hit the receiver just as I pushed out of the door to Valentin’s office. He called my name but I kept pushing ahead towards the door of the Admissions building. I heard the telltale sounds of him running in his loafers to reach me. He grabbed my forearm and spun me around.

The force and accompanying jolt of electricity whipped me towards Valentin. I gasped and yanked my arm out of his grasp, glaring at him in the process.

“What now?” I snapped. “More rules and demands and secrets?”

“Zora, please,” Valentin said under his breath. “You must know that every secret we keep, every demand we make or rule we create is to keep you safe. Your mother and I care about you more than anything.”

His eyes told me he was telling the truth. I could also tell he was holding back. His hands shook slightly and my skin prickled from the after effects of the electricity he’d surged into me. I shook my head at him and took a step away.

“The more you keep from me,” I said, sharply. “The more you hurt me and the less of a fuck | think you actually give.”

I turned on my heel and marched out of the building, leaving Valentin alone in the empty admissions building.

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Valentin didn’t try and meet with me for the whole week after my outburst in his office. I didn’t blame him, I didn’t want his help at all. I continued to train on my own, sometimes with Loren, without him. I wanted to be strong but I didn’t want his attempts at “help.”

They were only dragging me down.

The Monday after my altercation with Valentin and Victoria, classes resumed as usual. Loren no longer felt the need to walk me to shifting, given that I had my own form of protection in the shape of a sassy wolf in the back of my mind with a swishy tail. Monday

morning, I walked to the forest alone. I was eager to see what my first shifting class with a wolf would hold.

Don't get your hopes up, she said in the back of my mind.

Shifting is hard.

I can do hard things, I retorted as I rounded into the clearing of the forest where shifting class took place. The rest of the students were already there, bags on the floor.

There were a few new additions of wolves who had awoken their wolves as well.

You can, my wolf agreed. But this is exceptionally hard.

You've only just woken me up. So don't beat yourself up if you can't get it to work.

I rolled my eyes. She was so pessimistic. If I could shift to break the fated mate bond, I could shift in a normal assclass. I heard a few snickers from my right as I finally made my way to the rest of the class. I turned my head towards the sound.

Two male wolves I had seen, but never talked to, were laughing at me. The one, super tall and lanky with black hair, jutted his chin towards me.

"Nice of you to join us," he sneered. "Shame the only way you got your wolf to show up was by breaking a fated bond."

"Kind of stupid," the other wolf, more toned muscle than the first with blonde hair with black roots, said. "Breaking a fated mate bond as a wolfless."

"Firstly, I'm not wolfless anymore," I snapped. "Secondly, I didn't really have a choice did I?"

"No," the lanky wolf laughed. "You didn't. Which makes it even worse for you." He nudged the toner wolf. "How embarrassing. Being one of the few who gets a fated mate and being rejected by them."

I felt a growl low in my throat as I glared at them. I balled my hands into fists and felt the same fire wash over me that happened right before I shifted at Mateball.! wondered if it was a sign that I was about to shift.

It is, my wolf chimed in, somewhat surprised. But it's not worth it for those idiots. They don't know who you are.

Ignore them."Smith!" I heard my surname be barked into the air. I unclenched my fists and the fire extinguished from my body. I snapped my head towards the voice. Sure enough,

Kairos was glaring at me from across the forest.

I forgot he was the fucking teaching assistant of this stupid class.

My wolf started to clean her paws, leisurely. Stupid class, she mocked. As if it's not the most important part of being a wolf.

Do you ever shut up?

My wolf "humph"ed before darting off into the back of my mind where I couldn't see her anymore. I was still death staring at Kairos when I returned my attention to the forest. Professor Valencia was standing next to him, arms over her chest and white eyebrows raised.

"Control yourself," Kairos barked at me.

"I'm fine," I snapped back.

"Clearly not," Kairos hissed. "Your hands started to turn.

We control our shifting in this class. We are Alphas not common wolves."

A growl started in the back of my throat and the fire in my started again. The, Professor Valencia stepped forward.

"That is enough, you two," she snapped. "Mr. Moonraiser, you should know better. I know you and Miss Smith have had your differences, but I expect decorum from myteaching assistant!"

Kairos shot another murderous glance my way before looking at Valencia. "Sorry, Professor," he said. Though, I don't think I sensed a lick of remorse. "I didn't want Smith shifting and tearing Rigert's throat out."

Professor Valencia looked at me. She ran her eyes from my toes to the tip of my head. I felt the urge to crawl in a hole. Something about her was blood curling.

"Very well," she said before moving to the center of the open circie. "Today we're going to split into two groups.

The more seasoned shifters will be with me, working on running shifts. The younger shifters will be with Mr.

Moonraiser working on shift control."

I didn't even need to ask to know which group I was going to be in. I threw Kairos a glare. He returned back the same look, licking the front of his teeth. Clearly, he wasn't in the mood for my bullshit either.

"Split up," Valencia continued. "Smith, Rigert, Hanson with Mr. Moonraiser. The rest of you are with me."

I looked to my left and saw the two asshole who were taunting me walk towards Kairos. Great, just great. I huffed before walking in towards Kairos. Valencia and the rest of the wolves shifted immediately and took off into the forest in a flurry of paws and tails.

Then, we were alone with Kairos.

"Controlling your shifting is important for a look of reasons," Kairos said, pacing in front of the four of us. "If you can't control your shift, it'll be hard to do so when you're under pressure. Your emotions fuel your wolves.

Any dramatic shift of them will cause your wolf to take over. It is because of this that we must keep a level head at all times."

Rich of him to say, I thought.

Moonraiser does have anger issues, but he controls his wolf and that makes him strong, my wolf chimed in. I rolled my eyes.

Who's team are you on?

The winning one.

I twisted my face. Kairos caught it and used it to glare back at me. Level head, my ass.

"Now, in order to practice keeping level, we're going to focus on some meditation," Kairos stopped pacing and stood in front of us, hands behind his back. "Take a level stance with your feet hips width apart. Hands slightly to the side. Close your eyes and breath in through your nose for four seconds, then out for four seconds."

I narrowed my eyes at Kairos as I assumed the stance. He must be crazy to think I'd take my eyes off of him while there was no Professors around. Who knows what sort of fuckery he'd get up to.

Besides me, Hanson and Rigert both closed their eyes and sucked in a deep breath. I followed suit, eyes still pierced on Kairos. He smirked at me.

"Eyes closed, Smith," he teased. Rigert and Hanson chuckled next to me. The flames licked my body again as I glared at Kairos one last time before slamming my eyes shut.

Keep in control, my wolf added. I'm trying, I gritted through my mind.

I kept breathing with Rigert and Hanson, aware of every shift in the grass around me. I could hear Kairos move closer to the three of us. He started with Rigert then walked down besides Hanson.

“Good,” he said. “Remember this when things become too” intense, emotionally.”

He around Hanson and stood behind us. I took another breath in, trying to calm myself but something about him being so close to me set me in a rage. I remembered the times he'd pinned me down. The way his hands were locked around my wrists.

I heard Kairos step away from Hanson and towards me.

The hair on my skin immediately perked up. I bit my tongue to keep myself steady, focusing on my breathing.

Then, I felt a hand snake around my waist.

Immediately, electricity surged through me. I slammed my mouth shut, biting my lip to keep the whimper from escaping my lips. It felt heavenly but I knew who was behind it. The hand kept pressed to my hip while Kairos's chest came against my back. Another pulse of electricity. I tried to keep my breathing even.

Control, my wolf warned.

Then, Kairos's head dropped down, his mouth ghosting above the place where my shoulder connected to my neck.

I let a noise escape from my lips as I continued to breathe. My eyes squeezed shut even more.

Then, Kairos's mouth met my skin. An explosion of electricity erupted within me. I yelped and flinched away from him, letting the fire simmering in the low point of my chest consume me. I felt the cracking sensations I'd felt the first time I'd shifted all over again. My yelp turned to a pained animalistic noise.

I landed flat on my stomach, paws pinned to the forest floor as Kairos stood above me, mouth set in a disturbing thin line.

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Rigert and Hanson burst into laughter. I scrambled to get up on all fours. I barked at them, teeth bared. They both scramble backwards as I inched closer to them. Then, Kairos

stepped in front of them. I felt my ears go back, submissively. Kairos crossed his arms over his chest and glared down at me.

“This is exactly what I was talking about,” he snapped.”

Letting your anger control your shift.”

I paused and blinked at him. Anger? That was certainly not what I felt a few moments ago when he'd kissed my neck. I growled at him. He merely raised an eyebrow.

“Shift back, Smith,” he spat.

This time, I did let the anger control me. My bones and joints cracked again as I stood up straight. I wound up on two human feet, glaring at Kairos as he glared back at me.

“Maybe if you didn't piss me off,” I spat. “I wouldn't have shifted.”

“My job is to piss you off,” Kairos sneered. “I'm supposed to tempt you to shift. That's the lesson. Resist the urge to shift. Rigert and Hanson clearly could. Why couldn't you?”

Hanson and Rigert were still cackling behind Kairos. I managed to shoot them another glare that stopped them.

They kept their smiles though. With another glare at Kairos, I stormed across the forest and grabbed my bag. I slung it over my shoulder and left the class without a second glance at any of them.

Later, I met up with Loren in the cafeteria for lunch. News of my faux-pas had clearly traveled quick across campus.

Between that and my rejection two weekends ago, people stared and glared at me as Loren and I took our seats at lunch.

“Gods,” she shook her head. “Why does he have it out for you?”

“I don't know,” I mumbled. I poked at my sandwich. “You'd think winning the fight would've gotten him to back off a bit.”

Loren hummed and stabbed at her salad. “What was his part of the deal again?”

“I kneel,” I cringed and shoved my tray away from me.”

Fuck that. I'm not doing that.”

Loren shrugged and took a huge bite of her salad. “I don't disagree with you,” she said around a huge bit of lettuce.”

But maybe it would appease him enough to leave you alone.”

I groaned and looked across the cafeteria. Kairos, Thorne, Maximus and Petyr were all in their usual spot. Alessia, Loren’s sister, was sitting next to Petyr, arm wrapped around his bicep. Meg, Maximus’s sister, was perched on the table, looking around the room. When she made eye contact with me, she sent a wink my way before chomping into the apple in her hand. I grimaced and looked back towards my sad sandwich.

“What did he even do to set you off?” Loren pondered.

I blanched. “Sorry?”

“Kairos,” she forked another bit of her lunch. “Or was it just his prescience that pissed you off?”

I bit my lip and poked at my sandwich again. I thought could trust Loren. I knew I could trust Loren. She’d asked no questions about Pietha being my stylist for Mateball and she never pressed me about why I was always off training with some mysterious mentor (Valentin).

But from what Victoria had told me, it was extremely rare for a wolf to have a fated mate and even rarer for a wolf to get another fated mate after rejecting the bond with their first fated mate. If I told Loren the jolt I’d gotten from Kairos kissing me or about how Valentin and my hearts always were synched, I doubted she wouldn’t have any questions. That whole thing would mean revealing my biggest secret yet, that I was the Princess of all of the wolves.

Something about that just didn’t feel right, yet.

I shrugged. “General being in my line of sight,” I tried to keep my tone as casual as possible.

Loren laughed. “That’ll about do,” she said. “Hey, did you do the magiks homework yet?”

“No,” I shook my head, grateful for the change in topic. “You need help?”

“Yeah, the way that question four is written is confusing.

What do you mean you add wolfsbane to the sleeping potion...”

I let her trail off, half listening as | looked back across the cafeteria. Kairos had somehow procured a blonde woman to sit on his lap in the five minutes I’d taken my eyes off of him. She was running her long, pink nails down his chest.

He looked bored. Yet somehow, the flames within me started to burn hotter deep within my chest.

Is this... jealousy? | balked. Over fucking Kairos?

You tell me, my wolf quipped in response. I ignored her because I knew she was right. This was jealousy. I scowled to myself and looked back into my sandwich.

Lunch ended and Loren and I made our way across campus to Magiks. I helped her with her homework in the cafeteria, but she was still trying to process it as we crossed campus. I couldn't help but stare into the backs of Maximus, Thorne and Kairos as they walked in front of us.

All three were in our Magiks class. All three were my supposed to marry the Princess – who, unbeknownst to them, is me. All three made me feel some type of weird jolty electricity that had been explained to me as a sign of a fated mate. I couldn't help but wonder why I was drawn to all of them when they were all such dicks.

A wolf needs a mate, my own inner wolf mused. It's simple biology.

But do I really? I threw back. In fact, you showed up when I was breaking a mate bond.

Because I wanted to save us from death, my wolf snapped.

She was getting snippy with me a lot recently. Breaking a bond is known to cause death. The Queen even told you so. Only pushed my way out to save you. But I am still weak. A mate would fix that.

A mate would fix that.

But what if I didn't want a mate? Especially when the three mate options were the douchebags in front of me.

Or some random fifth mysterious mate.

Or High Alpha Lunerly, my wolf mused. I scowled at her.

He's off limits, I said back. By his orders.

He is not the Queen, my wolf said. If she wishes you to mate him, then mate him you may.

Loren and I rounded the corner and pushed into the classroom. The three wolves in front of me were already at their place in the back left of the classroom. They were either ignoring me or were unphased by me as Loren and I sat down in our seats.

I huffed as I sat down next to Loren. She frowned. "What is it?"

I glanced over my right shoulder. The three wolves were now laughing amongst themselves. Kairos, fully, Thorne had a slight smirk and Maximus was chuckling. I looked back to see Loren watching me.

“Nothing,” I said softly. “Sorry.”

She patted me gently on the shoulder. “Don’t worry about them,” she said. “Max and Kairos will be graduating at the end of the year then you won’t have to see them ever again.”

“Yeah,” I mumbled. If only she knew how wrong that was.

## Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 36

I was about to leave class, blissfully unbothered and conversing with Loren when I felt a hand on my elbow. I whipped around, eyes wide and hands coming up to fight.

I was shocked to see Thorne standing behind me, hands up in defense.

“Gods above,” he hissed. He dropped his hands. “Are you always so quick to attack people?”

“Seeing as everyone at this fucking school has it out for me, yes,” I dropped my hands. I gestured to Loren to continue out of the classroom. She frowned but went ahead. I turned back to the wolf in front of me.

” “What do you want, Thorne?”

“You know my name,” he said softly. “How?”

I froze. He didn’t know I had stayed in the same castle as him. He didn’t know I knew who he was and he still had no clue who I was.

“You’re always with Maximus and Kairos,” I said quickly.”

Friend of my enemy is my own enemy and all that.”

Thorne smirked. His bleach blonde hair was braided back from his head. Two stray strands sat against his forehead.

His black eyebrows looked funny next to the bleach blonde. They hung over his canary yellow eyes, not quite as deep gold as Kairos’s but not the white gold that Valentin’s were. Maximus’s eyes sat in the middle of Valentin’s and Thorne’s. I wonder if there was a relation between eyes and status.

Mental note for later, I thought.

You own pens and paper, my wolf drawled. I am not your secretary.

Once again, I ignored her, She was getting on my last nerves. I shifted my attention back to Thorne. He swung his backpack higher up on his shoulder and blinked at me.

I realized I'd been off in la-la land once again.

"Sorry," I mumbled. I pointed to my head. "Wolf, ya know."

Thorne nodded sharply. "It's hard to tone them down in the beginning," he said. "But if you use the same tactics for turning off your hearing, you can at least make them not as loud in your head."

I nodded. Why was he helping me? Didn't he hate me like Maximus and Kairos...maybe? Did they even hate me anymore?

They certainly feel something, my wolf mused. I ignored her again. I had to start working on shutting her out.

"Thanks," I mumbled to Thorne. "But was that really wanted to tell me?"

"No," Thorne shifted awkwardly on his feet. The Professor had retreated to his office and Loren was outside. We were the only two left in the classroom."I have a new assignment," Thorne said. "I don't know if you know, but I am one of the Queen's Knights. She assigns me to protect people of interest."

"Oh," I said. I knew where this was going and | already hated it.

"Yeah, so," Thorne rubbed the back of his neck and sighed:

"The Queen has assigned me to protect you for whatever reason. So I'll be following you to and from classes for the rest of the semester."

I knew exactly what Victoria was doing with this. She was trying to force Thorne upon me as a chosen mate. As if him rejecting me as a fated mate wasn't enough of a "no, thank you" from him. Anger bubbled in the back of my mind. I clenched my fists and felt the familiar warmth of a shift start in my toes.

Stay calm, my wolf demanded. Two outbursts in one day will not bode well for you.

Go away, I threw back. She darted off into the back of my mind.

"Tell her I politely decline," I said sharply before turning on my heel and starting out of the classroom.

Thorne grabbed my elbow again before I could get far. I felt the familiar hum of electricity from his grasp. It was dull, but it was surely there. Thorne clearly did to by the way he dropped my arm."Look, I'm not happy about it either," Thorne spat. "But you don't 'decline' the Queen."

"But I am. Declining, that is," I threw back at him. I ushered him away from me. "So bye."

I turned and started out of the classroom, leaving Thorne behind to stew in his own rage. Loren was standing just \* outside the classroom and looked confused as left. I furrowed my eyebrows at her.

"What?"

"The Queen wants you protected?" she asked. She shook her head. "What's going on, Zora? First the most popular designer shows up at our room before Mateball. Then the Queen starts protecting you? Are you some kind of spy?"

I grimaced. I should've known she'd been listening in. I immediately felt guilty for lying to her. I started to walk down the hallway away from class and she followed. I waved my head back and forth on my shoulders.

"Uh, sort of," I said.

Loren snorted. "You can tell me, you know," she said. "I won't go run off and use it against you."

"I didn't think you would," I replied. "But it's not exactly a secret / want to get out yet. Promise me when people do begin to learn, you'll be the first to know."

Loren glanced sideways at me. She huffed before sighing and throwing her head back. "Fine," she said. "But if I'm not you'll hear from my lawyers!"

I laughed at her and bumped our shoulders together. "Do you even have lawyers?"

"No," Loren said quickly then smirked. "But my family does."

The two of us giggled our way across campus back to our room. When walked up the stairs to our door. No one seemed to bother us along the way, though they were Looking at us like they wanted to. I ignored all the angry glances.

When Loren opened the door, a slip of paper with my name on it slid from the frame. I frowned and picked it up.

Loren raised an eyebrow at me.

"Another secret?" she asked. I gave her a half a smile.

When I didn't answer she sighed and pushed past me into the room. I stood next to the door and unfolded the letter.

The handwriting was all I needed to see to know it was from Valentin.

Gym. Tomorrow. 7 in the morning.

I sighed and shoved the note in my desk where the rest of his notes were. I threw my bag on the floor and then flopped myself onto my bed. I grabbed my quilt and pulled it up to my chin while I stared at the ceiling. I was beginning to grow tired of my secret life.

## Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 37

Then next morning, I trekked across campus with my hoodie over-my head. I arrived at the gym a little past seven to see Valentin standing on the middle of a sparring mat. His arms were crossed over his chest and he looked anything but pleased.

“You're late,” he bit out.

“Sorry,” I shrugged my hoodie off and threw it on the floor

—

before starting into some stretches. I knew our schedule by now. “I didn't expect to be here.”

Valentin blinked at me. “Why?”

“Dunno,” I shrugged. “I didn't see you all last week. I thought you were done with me.”

“I'm not,” Valentin said sternly. I watched his jaw tick.” Especially after hearing about what happened yesterday.”

I groaned. “Is this about shifting class?”

“Professor Valencia told me about your outburst,”

Valentin snapped. “How could you let your anger towards

Kairos get the best of you?”

Anger? Yeah, no. Something more like... hot and bothered,

My wolf snickered.

I'm not telling him that, I threw back at her. Of course, she swished her stupid fucking tail. A little jealousy never hurt anyone, she mused.

"He continues to rile me up," I said, switching to hamstring stretches. "It's not my fault he's a massive dick."

Valentin's expression turned smug. "You cannot let your emotions get the better of you," he said. "You are a young wolf. It could wind up hurting yourself or someone else."

Need I also remind you that you are the Princess and heir to the throne?"

I snorted. "No need," I mumbled. "It's an ever-present looming thought in my head."

Valentin ignored my comment and waved me back to the sparring mat. I dropped my stretches and went back to face him. I put my hands on my hips and raised my eyebrow.

"We're going to practice voluntary shifting today," he said.

"Tell me what you know about the Shift."

"It happens," I said plainly. Valentin stared at me as if he wanted me to continue. I shrugged. "That's all I know."

"The Shift is a result of the chemicals within our bodies and the High Magiks colliding," Valentin went on. "It's very much so charged by the specific chemicals that emotions release. However, you can focus on your Magik to be able to shift without a high emotion."

"Okay," I drew the word out. "I'm acing Magiks right now so this should be easy." Valentin shook his head. "The Magiks they teach you in class are lower level Magiks," he continued. "These High Magiks are harder to control. They directly correlate with the strength of your bond with your wolf and its overall strength."

And my wolf was weak and annoying.

Great.

Rude,

I crossed my arms over my chest. "So how do I strengthen my bond and my wolf and my shifting all at once?" I asked. "Seems like they all feed into one another."

"They do," Valentin said. "Acceptance is the first thing."

Learn to stop fighting the wolf. You and her are one within the same body. See her as she sees you. Equal."

You must certainly do not think I'm your equal, do you?! asked my wolf.

You are, she surprised me with. I am you. If you were not equal to me, I would not see myself as highly as I do.

Still with the sass. Was I this sassy?

"Okay," I said to Valentin. "I think we're working on that."

"Good," Valentin walked so he was standing next to me." Second, is touching the high Magiks. Close your eyes and focus on the feeling under your skin. It should almost feel like a flame." So that's what that was.

I slowly let my eyes flutter shut and sucked in a deep breath through my nose. I focused on the burning sensation, trying to remember how it felt the first and second time I shifted. If I dug deep enough, there was a flicker of heat behind my lungs.

"I think I feel it?" I mumbled, eyes still closed.

I felt Valentin move besides me. "Where do you feel it?" he asked. "You should feel it—" He lifted his hand and pressed it right on my sternum. "-Here."

All at once, the fire that was a flicker turned into a roar as the High Magiks flooded my body along with the electricity I'd come to associate with the fated mate bond. The sensation was insane. I gasped and stepped back, eyes flying open and hand coming to my chest.

Valentin stepped back from me as well. Eyes wide yet dark with exploded pupils. His mouth was slightly unhinged. A wave of desire washed over me. I pulled my Lower lip into my mouth and bit hard to keep from moaning.

"Sorry, I—" Valentin sputtered. "I forgot. That - sorry."

"You forgot there was a bond you were ignoring?" I spit out.

Valentin frowned. "Zora—"

"No, I can't be here right now," I sputtered. I grabbed my hoodie and took off out of the gym.

My emotions were all over the place as I fumbled my way out of the gym. People were starting to walk to the cafeteria and caught me looking distressed walking from the gym. The whispers started up again around me. I ignored them and ran off towards the forest.

I needed space. I need to be able to breathe without being succumbed to lust or electricity or whatever other

nonsense was going on in my brain. I darted into the forest and found a clearing. I sunk to the floor with a massive sigh.

My heart was beating erratically in my chest. I placed my hand over it and tried to take a few calming breaths but it was no use. All of the thoughts of the past few weeks were swirling in my head like a storm cloud. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't wipe them from my conscious.

Then, the fire started within me. Right where Valentin had touched my sternum. I shook my head. This was the last thing I wanted right now.

Just let yourself live as you should, my wolf soothed. Let me take over. Let us run.

I stopped fighting. I let the fire consume me as the High Magiks took over my body and shifted me from a human to a wolf. The dirt under my paws felt nice. It felt right. I sprung up from my hind legs and tore off into the forest.

I ignored all responsibilities and let myself run until I couldn't taste the air in my lungs. When I finally stopped, gasped as the fire consumed me again and threw me back into my human form.

I collapsed on the ground and passed out.

## Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 38

When I woke up, it was dark out. I cursed myself for missing a whole day of classes for a temper tantrum and tried to stand up. My legs felt wobbly under me. I followed the light from campus to get me out of the forest and wound up in front of my dorm building.

I winced as I walked up the steps and threw my body into my room. I landed on Loren's shaggy pink carpet with a thud. My roommate gasped from her bed and immediately jumped up to help me.

"What happened?" she grabbed me by my elbows and helped me sit up. "Was it Kairos? Are you okay? Should I get the nurse? Professor Lunerly?"

"No!" I shrieked with much more gusto than I expected.

Loren looked at me with wide eyes. I shook my head slowly. "Not Lunerly, please."

"Zora," Loren said quietly. "What's going on?"

I broke into a cacophony of tears and fell into Loren's chest. She wrapped her arms around me as I cried, her hand stroking my back.

I cried for my human life. I cried for my broken relationship with my mother. I cried for the rejected fated mate bond. I cried for Valentin's rejection. I cried for everything I possibly could think of that utterly sucked. I don't know how long I cried but Loren sat there with me the whole time. When my sobs finally turned to sniffles, I sat up and looked at Loren. Her shirt was wet with my tears. Her own eyes were glossed over as if she'd been tearing up. She stroked a wet piece of hair off my face.

"I'm sorry," I sniffled. "I just - I feel so alone."

"You're not alone," Loren said gently. "I'm here for you. If you'll have me."

"I want to tell you everything, Loren, I do," I babbled. "But I- I'm afraid of what you'll think of me."

Loren shook her head. "We're friends," she said. "Unless you killed someone I don't think we'll ever not be friends."

I snorted unattractively then ran my wrist under my nose.

"Not yet," I mumbled.

"Then you're fine," Loren said. Her hand went back to my back, rubbing circles. "You're the first friend I've had at this school, you know?"

I blinked at her and sniffled again. "How?" I breathed. "

You're so bubbly and fun. And nice. How has no one wanted to hang with you?"

Loren shrugged. "I think I'm too much," her voice was sad and small. "And so unlike sissy. People were scared of my energy." I dragged Loren back into a hug. She sighed into my shoulder.

"I don't think you're too much," I said softly. "I think you're perfect." Loren pulled back. "Thanks Zora," she settled back on her heels then swung her legs around to sit criss-cross in front of me. "Now, what the heck is going on with you!?"

I pinched my nose. "What isn't?" I mumbled.

"Well, what can you tell me?" Loren asked.

"Not much," I shifted so I was sitting much like Loren. "But you know about the rejection of my fated mate bond."

Loren shook her head. "I don't know how Thorne could be . so selfish," she said. "Fated mates are so rare. To break the bond is...unheard of."

“He broke it for the Princess,” I mumbled. I debated Lamenting on the fact that I was the Princess.

“Still,” Loren furrowed her brows. “The Queen is understanding. She would’ve valued a fated mate. Plus, everyone knows that Maximus and Kairos are also in line to marry the Princess. It’s not like she doesn’t have options.”

“Right,” sighed. “Them.”

“Are they still harassing you?” Loren asked.

I fidgeted again. “Harassing is the wrong word,” I mumbled. “I just feel weird around them.”

Loren’s eyebrows knitted. “Weird?”

“Like-” I struggled to find a word that didn’t scream “mate bond.”

“Jolty.”

“Jolty?!” Loren’s eyes damn near popped out of her head.

Like mate bond-y?”

I slapped my hands to my face. There went my big secret, number two. I peered at Loren through my fingers.

“For all of them?” she squeaked.

I nodded. “And Professor Lunerly,”

“Oh, Heavens and Heits!” Loren exclaimed. “You know that’s super rare right?” I nodded sharply. Loren sighed then fidgeted again. “That explains a lot.”

I balked. “What do you mean?” I said quickly. Did everyone else see right through me as well?

Loren patted me on the shoulder. “Don’t worry,” she said. “I’m highly observative. It’s a Moonbeam trait. I don’t think anyone else would’ve noticed. Except, maybe sissy.”

I groaned and fell over into the fuzzy pink carpet, hands covering my face still. Loren patted me gently on the thigh.

“But it does explain why you’re never in the room in the mornings,” she continued. “And why Kairos caused you to shift.”

“What do you mean?” I said from the floor.”From what I heard,” Loren mumbled. “You exploded.

Much like at Mateball.”

I blinked as I tried to remember the feeling. Sure enough, I did feel like I exploded. The heat raging through my was like a fireball of emotion. Hooked back up at Loren.

“That doesn’t happen from anger or internal emotion,”

Loren shook her head. “It happens from bonds.

“Fuck,” I swore. “Do you think everyone else knows?”

Loren looked away from me and shifted in her seat again.

She looked incredibly uncomfortable. I groaned and threw myself back onto the carpet.

“What are they saying about me now?”

“I heard Bella talking to some other first years,” Loren mumbled. My heart sank to my toes. “She was telling them how she caught you and Professor Lunerly. In the gym. Naked.”

Leave it fucking Bella. I sat up straight. “That’s bullshit!” Loren squeaked from my tone. I went on regardless.

“We weren’t naked. We were training,” I snapped.

“Every morning?” Loren asked.

“Yes!” I threw my hands up. “Because I was wolfless and Kairos was trying to kill me and I failed the first Run and so Valentin said he’d help me and-“I stopped as I noticed Loren cringing. I recounted what id just told her. It certainly looked like we were in some sort of secret love affair. I threw my hands up and fell back into the pink fluffy carpet with a scream.

Then, there was a sharp banging on the door. I flopped over onto my back. “What now!?” I screamed at the ceiling. Loren scrambled to her feet to the get the door.

“Who could possibly make this day even worse!?”

“Gods, do you ever shut up?”

I whipped around on the floor to look at the person who had been banging on my door. Sure enough, there was Maximus Wolfham, glaring down at me like I was the worst person in the world.

Guess the day could get worse.

## Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 39

“What do you want?” I snapped as I pushed myself off the floor.

Despite standing on my feet, Maximus was still a half a foot taller than me. I tried to tip my chin to glare at him but failed. Maximus’s gold eyes bore into me.

“To be able to sleep without hearing you scream,” he spat.

“Do you even know what time it is?”

“No,” I threw back, petulantly.

Maximus stepped into my room. The door slammed shut behind him and Loren jumped. He yanked the matching fuzzy pink clock off her desk and shoved it into my face.

The cord swirled out from her desk and clattered across the floor.

“It’s eleven-fucking-thirty,” Maximus snapped as he pushed the clock into my chest. I fumbled it slightly before looking back at him to glare.

“Oh I’m so, so sorry for disturbing your beauty sleep, your highness,” I mocked. I even added a fake bow at the end.

As I stood back up, Maximus was still glaring at me.

Loren’s eyes were darting back and forth between the two of us.

Maximus sucked in a deep breath, nostrils flaring. For a second, I thought he was going to tackle me. Then, he took a step back. His hand went to our door and he wrenched it open.

“Just, keep it down,” he spat before he left. The door slammed shut again and then Loren and I were alone once more.

“That was some serious sexual tension,” Loren whispered.

I threw the fuzzy pink clock at her, and she caught it effortlessly. I threw myself on my bed.

“Now that you know my secret, are you going to over analyze every interaction I have?” I said.

“Yep,” Loren jumped up on her own bed. “But don’t worry, I won’t comment unless I feel the need to.”

I rolled my neck on my pillow to look at her. She looked like a tiny pixie on her massive pink bed. She cocked her head to the side in thought.

“But, no promises,” she said.

I groaned and threw my pillow over my head so I could scream into it. Loren laughed. I threw my pillow to the side to look at her again.

“Seriously, though,” she said. “Thank you for telling me. I know you probably have a thousand more secrets but I’m grateful you told me what you did. I won’t say anything to anyone unless you want me to.”

I smiled at her. “Please don’t,”

She mimicked zipping her lips up and throwing the key away. Then she shimmied off her bed and started towards our bathroom. I followed suit and began to get ready for bed.

It took me a while to fall asleep that night. I was second guessing telling Loren. I supposed the potential mate bonds between the school’s assholes was the least of my secrets. Being the Princess was number one and I still kept that one to myself. But, if Loren could handle my weird feelings and my secret meetings with Valentin, maybe she would be able to handle the big one.

We woke up the next morning and quickly got ready for class. I didn’t have anything until ten in the morning and Loren had nothing until eleven so we made our way to the cafeteria for breakfast. I’d become used to people staring at me when I walked in a room but that morning it was especially prominent.

I nudged Loren. “Does it seem like people are especially look-y today?” I mumbled under my breath. Loren did a quick sweep of the cafeteria before looking back at me.

She wrinkled her forehead in confusion.

“Do I have something on my face?” she asked.

“I think they’re looking at me,” I whispered.

Everyone seemed to be glaring or scoffing at me. I reached into the back of my mind and let some of the people’s voices I’d been staving off in.

“Did you hear? Apparently the reject is sleeping with Professor Lunerly as well?”

“Really? Gods, she’s such a whore. You think she’d take a second to chill after breaking her fated bond. Guess she’s really desperate.”

I cringed at the names but shifted my hearing to another conversation.

“-she’s sleeping with like half the school! So desperate for attention after being rejected it’s kind of sad.”

“Do you blame her? I mean she had one of the rarest bonds and rejected it. Couldn’t be me-”

Another conversation flooded my brain.

“-saw Maximus Wolfham leaving her room last night!

She must be sleeping with him too!”

“What a slut. I’d be so embarrassed if I was her-”

I Slammed my walls back up, entirely shocked at the accusations being passed around about me. I looked towards Loren. Her face had gone slightly pale, a frown melted into her lips.

“You heard?” I whispered. She nodded slowly then gestured to in front of us.

Bella was standing in the space we needed to walk passed to get food. Her arms were crossed over her chest and she was glaring at both of us. Two other girls were flanking her sides. The one I recognized as the blonde wolf who’d chased me the first day of the hunt. I think her name was Mallory. The second was even scarier than Bella with brown hair and deep black eyes. She looked like she wanted to kill me.

Loren and I stopped short of Bella and her lackies. Loren immediately puffed up her chest and tried to make herself look taller than she actually was.

“I didn’t know the bitch club was meeting in the cafeteria,” she spat. “Personally, I’d pick a better place to meet.

You’re kind of in everyone’s way.”

“Fuck off, Moonbeam,” Mallory sneered. “This isn’t about you. It’s about the bitch who can’t keep her legs closed.”

Loren made a noise of fake concern. “Everly, that’s no way to talk about Glass,” she mocked, motioning towards the scary brunette. “She’s literally right there!”

“Mallory wasn’t talking about Kate,” Bella snapped. “She was talking about Sleazy Smith.”

I blinked at the nickname. It surely wasn’t the nicest name I’d been given. Yet, somehow, wasn’t the worst.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” I said as evenly as I could to Bella. “So if you’d move-”

“We’re not moving anywhere until you admit it,” the scary brunette, Kate, said.

“Admit what?” I said.

Mallory sneered at me. “Don’t play dumb,” she snapped.”

We all know your fucking our boyfriends.” My eye twitched. I glanced towards where Kairos, Maximus and Thorne usually sat. All three of them were watching the altercation with Bella and company. Kairos had a wicked grin, Maximus’s face was neutral and Thorne rolled his eyes as he looked back towards his meal.

“Your boyfriends,” I said slowly. I looked back at the girls.” Right. Yeah. I’m not fucking anyone.”

“Liar!” Kate hissed.

She raised her hand and slapped me hard enough across the face that the crack echoed through the cafeteria. My head whipped with force and I skittered across the floor. I brought my hand to my pulsing cheek. It was hot to the touch. Slowly, stood back up.

Everyone who wasn’t looking at us, was after that. Even Thorne, who seemed annoyed with the whole altercation, was staring now. He was looking back and forth between Bella and I like he was debating intervening. Maximus was up on his feet, nostrils flaring again and eyes pinned on Kate.

I looked back and forth between Kate and Maximus. In the blink of an eye, Maximus was marching across the cafeteria. I squeezed my eyes shut, waiting for him to start bashing on me as well. However, I was surprised when I opened my eyes and saw Maximus’s back in front of me.

The man who’d screamed at me for being too loud the night before, was now standing between me and the woman who’d slapped me across the face. I’d never been more confused in my life.

## Their Hidden Princess – Chapter 40

Maximus

Maximus had not felt a rage like that since before he'd started school at Alpha Academy. He knew the girls were ganging up on Zora. Whenever Kairos had started shit with her, he couldn't bring himself to stop it but Mallory wasn't Kairos. Neither was Bella.

"Maxie?" Mallory cooed. "What are you doing, darling?"

"I'm not fucking Zora," Maximus snapped.

"But you were in her room last night," Kate spat. "Do you think we're dumb?"

Maximus felt Zora shift slightly behind him to look at the girls. He turned his attention back to them. Bella and Kate both still had scowls on their faces. Mallory was bating her eyelashes at him like she was trying to win him over.

He felt the anger swelling in his chest.

"Only you, Kate," He retorted. He jerked his gaze towards Bella. "-think you know exactly what you're doing."

Bella's lips pursed into an even deeper scowl. Kate looked livid.

"Maxie!" Mallory squeaked.

Maximus whipped his head back to glare at Mallory. He was feeling spiteful and bitter. His sister would've killed him if she heard him speak to Mallory in the way he was about to. But Meg wasn't there and he had all the fire fueled inside of him.

"And you," he spat. "Just because you beg me to fuck you one time doesn't mean I'm your fucking boyfriend."

A bunch of "ooh"s and snickers erupted from the rest of the cafeteria that was watching the spectacle. Mallory's face twisted to look like she'd been slapped across the face, not Zora. She let out a cry of frustration before storming out of the cafeteria, heels clicking on the tile floor.

Maximus turned back to Kate. She still had a pissy expression on her face. Maximus took a step towards her.

"I've warned you once that if you touch her," he pointed towards Zora. "I'll do whatever you did to her in tenfold to you. So, I suggest you fuck off before I make good on my word."

Kate glared at Zora from around Maximus. She balled her hands into fists and stormed off after Mallory. Then, it was just Bella. Maximus took a step towards her. Bella seemed unphased but he knew deep down, she was shaking in her boots.

“You think you’re clever, don’t you?” He dropped his voice low and menacing. “Spreading rumors to get everyone to gang up on her. What was your goal?”

The two stared at each other, nostrils flared and chests heaving. Maximus heard Loren step up next to him. He smirked. visit [jo:b\\_n?i\\_b.:c:om](http://jo:b_n?i_b.:c:om) for fast updates He admired the Mini Moonbeam’s loyalty to her friend. Bella glared at Loren then back at Maximus before she huffed.

“I wanted her to stay away from my mate,” Bella grit out from her teeth. She threw a hand at Zora. “Just because her fated mate rejected her doesn’t mean she gets to whore it out to my mate!”

“You know just as well as I do that is not the case,”

Maximus snapped.

The two locked eyes. Maximus knew Meg had told Bella about his weird feelings for Zora. He’d wrestled Meg to the ground in anger after she’d told him but now he was using it as a way to get Bella to back off.

She looked at Maximus with one more scathing glare before turning towards Zora.

“Stay away from Valentin,” she hissed at the redhead.

With that she turned on her heel and followed her friends out of the cafeteria.

There was a thick silence in the air as everyone watched the door slam after her. Then, slowly, all the students in the cafeteria started to talk again. The noise filled the air and squashed the silence. Maximus refused to look at where his friends were sitting. He knew Kairos was going to be up his ass about why he defended Zora.

Maximus didn’t have a good enough excuse yet. Slowly, he turned around to face Zora. Her eyes had become more golden since Mateball. They felt like pools of honey he was constantly getting stuck in. Her red hair was plaited off her face. A few pieces hung down her cheeks like a halo. Maximus wanted to curl one around his finger again. He watched Zora’s lips move but heard nothing. He blinked twice to see she’d started waving at him, erratically.

“Hello?!” she called, jutting her chin out towards him.”

Thank you!?”

Maximus grunted in reply and looked at Loren. She smiled softly at him.

“We could’ve handled them,” the pixie-like wolf said.

“Doubt it,” he said. “Those three are ruthless. Mallory and Kate you could’ve taken with wit. Bella’s too smart.”

Zora sighed. She gestured to the table where Max had come from. He couldn’t bring himself to look.

“I don’t get it,” she said. “He’s assigned as my Knight and he just lets the three werewolf Barbies attack me?”

Maximus blanched. He jerked his head back towards his friends, They were all chatting like nothing had happened.

Kairos and Petyr were chatting and Thorne’s head was shoved in yet another tome.

For the second time that day, a very particular type of rage exploded in Maximus’s chest. Thorne had been assigned to guard Zora? Why hadn’t he been assigned to guard Zora? He was in nearly every one of her classes. He lived next-door to her. Hells, he gave more of fuck about her than Thorne did. That asshole had his head shoved in a book more often than not, completely oblivious to the world around hm.

Maximus knew that he was jealous. But could anyone blame him? He had some inkling that Zora was his mate.

Thorne then got the chance to mate Zora and rejected the bond. Maximus would’ve killed for that opportunity. Even with the wolfless girl who barely could keep on her feet.

He turned and started to march back towards the table.

He heard Zora and Loren calling out after him, but he ignored it, B-lining for Thorne. When he reached the head of the table, he grabbed Thorne by the back of his shirt collar and wrenched him from his seat.

“What the fuck, Max!?” Thorne protested, hands trying to pull Maximus off his shirt.

“Why didn’t you step in?!” Max growled.

“What are you talking about?!” Thorne scrambled to try and get the upper hand but it was no use. Maximus was stronger and bulkier than Thorne and held him stiffly in place.

“Just now!” Maximus shook Thorne and a slight tear formed in the back of his shirt. Maximus jammed a finger towards Zora. “You’re her knight! For someone who preaches about honor and doing the right thing, you sure as shit doing do anything there.”

Kairos got to his feet. “Max, drop him. Thorne, what is he talking about?”

“-I don’t know!” Thorne stuttered. He still scrambled to get out of Maximus’s grasp, causing his shirt to rip more.

“You know!” Maximus reared. “She is yours to protect and you did nothing.”

“I’m not getting in the middle of a fucking petty girl fight,”

Thorne snapped, tone going from nervous to angry.” Who’s fucking who is none of my business.”

“It is when you were sworn as her Knight!” Maximus yelled.

“Wolfham!” Kairos barked. “Drop him now! Or I’ll make you do it.”

Maximus glared at Kairos. He was begging Kairos to attack him. Maybe then Kairos would get a taste of his own medicine. Maximus would beat him to nothing but bone dust and fur. He’d show Kairos who was in charge.

He’d show Kairos who the real alpha was-

A gentle hand pressed itself to Maximus’s bicep. He looked down and saw Zora peering up at him with those honey pool eyes. Her thumb stroked his arm. A wave of calm washed over him.

“Put him down, Max,” she said softly. “It’s not worth it to fight over.”

Maximus blinked at her twice. She’d called him Max. The name made his heart flutter slightly. Slowly, he released his grip on Thorne. His hands unclenched and Thorne darted out from under him. The whole time, his eyes were locked with Zora’s.