

Chapter 39 – The Deployment

"It's only after you've stepped outside your comfort zone that you begin to change, grow, and transform."

— Roy T. Bennett

Third Person POV

However, Kiya had one worry. How would she confront Neron once he realizes who she is? How does a werewolf deal with being in the same presence, let alone the same house, as their rejected mate? It couldn't be easy, considering he was happy with someone else. Kiya was sure she felt nothing for her ex-mate but disgust and hatred.

What about her old family? 'I'm sure they've forgotten all about me.' She thought to herself, reaching for a photo frame on her vanity.

The photo displays her and her adoptive family, smiling with uncontained happiness. Her mother and father surrounded her siblings and her, posing like those cliché family photos she'd seen on television. Cliché or not, it's one of her most treasured photos. It made her smile to see, truly, what a family should be. It didn't matter by blood, but by how she is better off, happier, healthier, and safer, without the blood family members in her life.

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After packing the precious picture frame, she placed it in her travel bag and moved toward the door. She joined her family and friends in the dining hall for breakfast, filling her belly with the cooking she'll miss terribly. Afterward, she let out Artemis for a quick run for the last time in the territory she held dear to her heart.

She would miss the mossy scent of the redwood trees, the crisp breeze combing through her white fur, and the rich earth beneath her paws. Her heart and mind wanted to treasure these last moments before embarking on the next stage of her life, for it would be a long time before she comes back home. It's never been easy for Kiya to say goodbye. Homesickness became her best friend when she left for college for the first time. But, with Sapphire and Jacqueline at her side, it became easier to conquer as the days passed.

Having the people she loved at her side was more than enough. Not having to walk through the land that held all her traumatic memories alone is a gift she couldn't repay.

Despite the anxiety that settled in the pit of her belly, she was ready.

An hour later, Kiya loaded her suitcases and bags into Alpha's Anthony's Toyota Sienna. He would stay

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with them for the night but would return to Garnet Moon the following morning. High-pitched whimpers and cries caught her attention, looking to a wiggling Ximena in Luna Alesia's arms, chubby arms grasping at the air to reach her.

"Ti!"

"I'll miss you, pumpkin." Kiya took the pre-toddler into her arms, planting a soft kiss on her tiny forehead. Being away from her niece was the hardest part, they barely spent two weeks together since she returned, and now she is leaving her again. "Take care of your Mommy for me, okay? And don't give her a headache."

"Okay." She muttered, rubbing her face into the crook of her neck. Alesia drew Kiya into a tight hug, bathing her in her furnace-like warmth.

"Will you be okay?" She asked worry etched into her flawless face. "I can't imagine what you're going through, Little Bit."

"I'll be okay," Kiya reassured. "It has to be done. But the Moon Goddess and you all have given me enough strength throughout the years to conquer my fears. This is just another thing I have to conquer."

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“Well...” Her tanned hand went to Kiya’s curls, springy coils bouncing as they snapped back. “If you need to return home for anything, you call me, okay?” With another nod, the women hugged again, now with Ximena using her arms to hug her Aunt and mother at the same time.

“My little girl is growing up.” Lyra cradled her daughter’s face in her hands, pressing her lips on her forehead. “You be good, okay? I’ll miss you, and so will your father.”

“I’ll miss you too, Mom,” Kiya whispered, basking in the warmth of her palms. “I love you so much. Tell Dad I’ll miss him, and I love him too, okay?”

“Tell me yourself.” Nikolai chuckled, emerging from the packhouse. Kiya ran up and engulfed her father in a big hug, whispering confirmations of their love and care for one another. “Mi rayo de luna, you will change things for the better. Be strong.”

“I will, Dad. I promise.” While the father and daughter share a tender moment, one twin is reprimanding the other.

“I don’t want to hear you causing any trouble since I won’t be there to watch you.” Dwayne shook a finger at Jacqueline’s face, but retracted when she tried to

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bite it. "Hey!"

"You're acting like I would set the entire territory on fire." She rolled her eyes.

"Given your previous track record and impulsivity, I wouldn't doubt it."

"Don't worry. I'll make sure to set her straight when needed." Abigail shined a pearly smile, appearing from the rear of the van.

"I can't do anything straight," Jackie smirked.

"Neither can I!" Galen shouted, his head popping up from the roof of the car with the cheesiest smile on his face. Both he and Jacqueline shared a high-five, making Dwayne roll his eyes at their silliness.

"Babe, it's cute," Olivia smirked, pinching his cheek affectionately.

"And childish."

"That's because us gays are on the same wavelength 24/7. Deal with it!" Galen brushed his hand through his black hair before shooting his finger guns at his Beta. His stormy eyes darted to Kiya and Nikolai, having their moment together. "How come I don't

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get a goodbye like that?”

“Because no one would miss you,” Darien answered, throwing his bag at his friend who gracefully caught it with his arms. “Stuff that behind your seat, would you?”

Galen stuck out his tongue before doing as he was told. Sapphire emerged from the packhouse with her bright blue suitcase. “Hey, Galen! Catch!”

“Whoa!” The man caught it swiftly, but not without nearly tumbling from the roof opening. Sapphire chortled to herself, ignoring the glares. “Good catch, Gal.”

“Why even toss your damn suitcase to me? Do I look like a bellboy?”

“I mean if we could get an outfit in your size...”

“Screw you,” Galen mumbled begrudgingly before disappearing into the car, closing the roof. Sapphire trotted to the back door, shimming into her seat that happened to be next to Galen, who released an audible growl of misery.

“Kiya.” Phoebe walked up with a small bag at hand. “Here, I got you some more selenite for your stay.”

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Some I carved as jewelry. I think you might like it.”

“Thank you, Phoebe.” Kiya grinned, taking the jingling bag of crystals. “It’s a shame that you aren’t coming with us. How are you going to manage without us?”

“Oh, don’t worry. Between my craft and communicating with my goddess, I’ll be busy. I’ve also been tasked with helping the newly arrived families and children.”

“That’s great! Tell Hekate I said hello, okay?”

“I will.” The women shared a tight hug, silently telling each other to take care of themselves. Kiya loved Phoebe like a sister and vice versa, and not having her witchy friend around weighed heavy on her heart. But knowing she would be well taken care of eased the burden.

The trunk of the van was packed with suitcases and travel bags, blocking all light from the rear window. Alpha Anthony arrived not a moment later to bid farewell to his beloved wife, his coddling parents, and to his precious daughter who clung onto his neck like a koala. After being freed from the baby’s vice-like grip, he summoned his group into the van.

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Anthony sat in the driver's seat, Jacqueline flanked his left, Kiya and Abigail sat directly behind them, and Sapphire, Galen, and Darien in the very back.

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"All right you all," Anthony spoke up. "I expect you all to be on your best behavior when we arrive at Zircon Moon territory. I'll be staying the night and the morning after. After that, I'll leave you for the next couple of months. I have absolute faith in you all that you will train the Zircon wolves as hard and as best you can like you do here."

"Yes, Alpha." All responded in unison.

"We have a long drive ahead of us."

"Not to worry! I packed snacks!" Galen pulled out his smaller travel bag full of food and treats. Waving farewell to Luna Alesia, baby Ximena, Lyra, Nikolai, Phoebe, Dwayne, and Olivia, the car rolled out of the territory through the gates and now onto the road to northern Nevada. After a minute of complete silence, Kiya turned her body behind her to steal the bag of treats from Galen's lap.

"I smell chocolate."

"Don't fucking touch my kit-kats!" Galen warned, trying to snatch it back.

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“Hol’ up, you got kit-kats?” Jacqueline eyed the bag, her eyebrow arched. “What kind?”

Kiya gasped. “He got all the Japanese ones in here!”

“Mine!” The Beta grabbed the blue bag, but Kiya held onto it as tight as she could, her dark eyes challenging her Beta’s green. Alphas were known to be competitive, but they have nothing on two women with Beta blood. The women fought over the box of strawberry cheesecake kit-kats that bounced out of the bag, their growls and yells echoing through the van’s interior.

Galen used that opportunity to swipe the bag from Kiya’s lap, hugging it possessively. The cardboard box tore into two, launching the candy all over the women, including Abigail, who pressed her palm to her forehead in shame. “Women.” She muttered. The two attempted to gather the fallen pieces on the floor of the car, swiping piece after piece like children gathering candy from a pinata. ²

“So...what else do you have in there?” Sapphire peered, trying to take the bag, but Galen held onto it like the woman was trying to steal his baby. “I’m not after your kit-kats if that is what you’re thinking.”

“Oh! Good! So...” Galen passed some food and treats

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to his friend, including Abigail, who settled with a boxed sandwich and mango juice. The Betas still fought over the kit-kats, arguing over who had the most pieces.

As for the smiling Alpha, he ignored the chaos happening behind him, tapping his fingers to a silent tune in his head. He was used to this bunch being chaotic and troublesome at times, but he wouldn't change it for the world. It brought a new life to his army, their personalities so different from one another.

Yet, he came to regret it when Galen connected his phone to the aux cord and began blasting "Cotton Eye Joe" right next to his ear.

"Really?" Anthony shouted, but it was drowned out miserably when the others minus Darien began screeching the lyrics and rocking the van.

This is going to be a long ride.

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Chapter Comments

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Mary Fee

In California the steering wheel
for American cars is on the lef...



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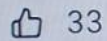
Angie G. de Muñoz

I had a sence of daja vu, those
road trips with my family to th...



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