MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-One

Future Beta Nate

Ayla quickly stripped before jumping into the pool on the balcony. I watched from the balcony door as she transformed. Her beautiful scales shimmered under the morning sun. The pool was deep but there was a wide shallow step on one of the sides.

Ayla swam over to the shallow end. Instead of turning back, she climbed onto the step and curled her tail underneath her. She then crossed her arms and rested her head on the side of the pool.

I didn't have to see her face to know she was hurting.
I could feel every single one of her emotions through
our bond. It was an overwhelming feeling of sadness

that was even trying to consume me. I've never felt this kind of sadness before and my heart aches for my mate.

I stripped down to my boxers before walking over to her. The morning air was crisp and cool. Being here reminded me of home but with the added scent of the sea. This is what home is supposed to smell like, I thought as I sat on the edge of the pool beside my mate. The water was warm on my legs.

She had her eyes closed and I ran my fingers through her hair. With her eyes still closed, she moved her body between my legs and rested her head on my thigh.

"Nate?" She asked, kissing my thigh.

"Yes, baby?" I replied, still running my fingers through her hair. I was trying to keep myself calm so my d**k

wouldn't poke her in the face.

"What's your favorite color?"

"What?" I chuckled, not expecting that question. I don't think I've been asked that since elementary school.

"I just want to get to know you and you me. I know it bothers you that Xander knows more about me than you do. But to be fair, he's been in my life for the past year. He was my best friend." She shrugged and I sighed.

"Is he no longer your best friend?" I asked her and she shrugged.

"I was an assignment." She whispered, but I could hear the pain in her words.

"As much as I wish Xander was a girlfriend and not a guy friend. I know he cares about you. If he didn't, he wouldn't be here. He would have signed another warrior to protect you." I reassured her.

"I'm sorry that it bothers you." She said, looking up at me.

"And I'm sorry you feel the need to apologize. I just don't want to have to share you. As irrational as that sounds, wolves are very protective of their mates," I explained to her. She leaned back on her tail, her hands on my thighs.

"How many have you been with?" She breathed out. I could feel her nervousness.

"I had a couple of girlfriends in high school. They moved on to find their mates."

"Oh, so a couple?"

"What? No, I've been with you. The others weren't serious, and we fooled around, but not intercourse." I explained. Her nervousness turned to guilt.

"Ayla, stop. I know you have a past and it's okay. I waited because the thought of anyone but you having my pups, stopped me. And you didn't know about mates." I told her, taking her cheeks in my hands.

"I'm sorry, Nate. I would have waited if I had known about mates and your world. I didn't expect any of this." She sniffled.

"And how would you have known? You don't need to feel guilty about your past. I may not have been your first, but I'm your forever," I said. She leaned up and pressed her lips to mine.

"Thank you, Nate. I don't deserve you." She mumbled against my lips and I wrapped my arms around her. Tingles shot up my arms where my skin came in contact with her scales.

"Ayla, I wish you could see you the way I do. You are perfect, even with all the flaws you think you have." She smiled before pecking my lips, her arms wrapped around my neck.

"I love you, Nate. And I'm so thankful for you. I would hate to be on this ride without you." She said, snuggling her face into my neck.

"I'll always be here baby, and it's blue," I said, kissing her forehead.

"I knew it!" She exclaimed. And I chuckled.

"Let me guess, purple?" I laughed and she pulled

away.

"How did you know?" She gasped. I looked her up and down, her purple and black scales glimmered in the sunshine.

"Lucky guess," I shrugged and she laughed.

"Now food?"

"Steak," I replied.

"Oh, that's good. Yummy." She moaned and I laughed.

"Is that your favorite?" I chuckled.

"It's a close second, but I love breakfast. Pancakes, waffles, French toast, bacon." She was dreamily listing off food when her tummy growled. She grabbed

her stomach before she burst into laughter. Her laughter was music to my ears and it warmed my heart to see a smile on her face after the morning she had.

"Come on my starving princess. Let's get you fed and then we can meet up with the queen."

Queen Laura

I could feel my king's confusion and then anger through our bond. It had never been as strong as a bond should be because of his love for Melody. But after seeing her today, I pray he can move on. I knew what I was getting into when I claimed him. Samual has never lied to me about his relationship with Melody. I just didn't think it would take eighteen years for him to move on from her.

Samual stormed out of the dining room when Melody

left with her claim. King Xander followed Melody out, probably to discuss where she was going to go.

"Well, that was a s**t show," Silas exclaimed.

"Son, watch your mouth. But yes, it was." I breathed out.

"Mom, what do you know about being a black pearl?" My son asked me.

"I'll explain everything to all of you. But I think it would be best for King Kaden and you two to learn everything about the black pearl. It will make keeping her safe easier." I said, pointing at my son and Prince Chase.

"Queen Laura, as the lead warrior in charge of Ayla's safety, I'd like to be present," Xander announced to me.

"It would seem you and Ayla are more like friends," I pointed out, and he shifted on his feet.

"You and the princess?" Silas accused the warrior.

"Of course not. My orders were to protect her," Xander retorted.

"Just because it started as an order, doesn't mean that's how it ended. Clearly, Ayla has faith in you." I told him and he sighed. He didn't get a chance to say anything because King Kaden came back into the dining room.

"King Kaden, when Ayla is ready, I'd like you all to accompany us. I think it would be best for all of you to learn what the black pearl is. But all of you need to swear your loyalty to Ayla. This information can not get out. It would put her and her mate at risk," I

explained and he scoffed.

"I will swear my loyalty to both of them," Prince Chase informed us.

"Mom, I will as well. I've seen firsthand what she is capable of," Silas answered, and I smiled at him. We all looked at King Kaden.

"I will, but if he hurts her, I'll kill him. My loyalty is to Ayla, not that wolf." He growled.

"I guess that will do for now," I said.

"Nate isn't going to hurt Ayla. So there's no point in you pouting." Xander commented, and I noticed King Kaden ball up his fists.

"Okay, there has been a lot of tension in here already this morning. Silas, honey, can you show King Kaden a room, please? I need to go find your father," I said.

"I'll get everyone organized, go make sure dad is okay. That couldn't have been easy." He said and I smiled at him. I gave him a side hug and a kiss on the cheek before I left to go find my king.

I knew he would probably be in his office, so that was the first place I checked. I knocked before I entered to find him sitting at his desk with his head in his hands. Closing the door, I walked over to him, leaning my bum up against the desk beside him.

"I'm such a fucken i***t. I wasted so much time loving someone who didn't even love me back. And who just abandoned their daughter. I wasted so much time stuck in my grief, a time I could have been happy with you. A time I could have been loving you. And you wasted so much time loving a fucken idiot." He ranted and I let him go on, to get out all his frustrations.

And it's not like he hasn't loved me. Some days were better than others. I knew I shared his heart with another. He was honest with me and I chose to be here with him.

"f**k!" He roared. He threw his chair back against the wall as he stood up. He started to pace the room.

I watched my claim and I felt his pain. I love Samual. I didn't want to see him in any pain. I know I should be like 'I told you so' but it hurts me to see him like that. I took his hand and led him over to the couch in his office. He took a seat and I took a seat in his lap, straddling him.

"You must hate me." I took his cheeks in my hands so he would look at me.

"I don't hate you, my love. I love you so much and

seeing you like this hurts me." I told him before I pecked his lips.

"I don't deserve you." He said, squeezing my ass.

"Maybe so, but I believe our relationship is worth it."
He crushed his lips to mine, and I've never felt so much love and passion from him. I licked the seam of his lips and he thrusts his tongue, tasting every inch of my mouth. I was left breathless as he kissed down my neck, undoing the buttons on my blouse as he went.

"f**k, Sam." I moaned as he kissed the top of my breast. My fingertips dug into his shoulders as I rolled my hips down into him.

Nothing could ruin this moment, even when the door was thrown open, we didn't stop.

"Close the fucken door!" Samual yelled out, still kissing and sucking my chest.

"Mhm, sorry, sir." I think I heard our son before the door slammed shut.

"We may need to start locking the door."

Ayla

I felt better after eating and getting to know Nate more. Not only is he incredibly sexy, but he's funny and a big goofball. It's nice to be able to laugh after having to deal with my mother this morning. And the only good thing that came from all of it, is that, hopefully, my grandmother and I will have a better relationship. I do really want to get to know her.

Now, Nate and I are walking hand in hand as we stroll through the palace. It amazes me that he knows

where he is going and soon we run into Xander, the princes, and Kaden. Prince Silas looked white as a ghost and the others were smirking and chuckling.

"Oh no, what happened?" I exclaimed, worriedly.

"It's fine Ayla, he just walked in on his parents, 'doing the deed'. " Xander laughed. And I squealed, scaring all of them.

"Oh my god, this is so exciting!" I squealed, hugging Prince Silas.

"Ayla, what the hell?" Xander scoffed and I looked at him.

"What? This is a good thing. Right? Prince Silas was saying he believed his parents didn't love each other, but this is good. Now that he has seen my mother for who she truly is, he no longer loves her and is

working things out with his claim. Which, to be fair, is a knockout," I pointed out.

"Stop, talking! That's my mom!" Prince Silas whined.

"I know! I still can't believe you came out of her." I retorted and he gagged while the others laughed.

"He could have just been stressed." Xander shrugged and I smacked his arm.

"Don't you dare ruin this? This is a win." I scolded him and he rubbed his arm.

"So we should probably give them a few minutes, then?" Prince Chase shrugged.

"No, we should probably give them at least an hour. I'm sure he has a lot to make up for." I chuckled, wiggling my eyebrows.

"Stop!" Prince Silas exclaimed.

"For all the crap you've given me and now you are being such a baby." I rolled my eyes.

"What crap?" Kaden growled and I pushed my lips in a line.

"Nothing I couldn't handle," I told him, resisting the urge to roll my eyes.

"Okay, that was different. They're my parents and I didn't need to see them." He huffed.

"You may get a sibling? Oh my god, you'd be the best big brother." I cooed.

"Someone is cheery?" Xander eyed me.

"I ate." I shrugged and he blew out a breath.

"That explains so much."

"And I'm going to go stab something sharp into my eye." Prince Silas announced, being dramatic.

"Oh, stop being so dramatic. Besides, you need to show us around your kingdom and you can't do that with no eyes." I bopped him on the nose.

"How?" He asked Xander and I chuckled.

"I'm adorable." I smiled.

"I think she means to say a cute pain in the ass." Xander corrected and Nate growled.

"Yeah, I agree." Kaden chimes in and Nate pulled me back against his chest.

"All of you are ridiculous!" I huffed, throwing up my hands.

"You're the one excited about my parent's s*x life!" Prince Silas retorted.

"Because it means they love each other! f**k, no wonder you guys are single. Dumbasses," I exclaimed.

"I think you mean to say, hopeless romantic." Queen Laura said, walking up behind her son. She had a smile on her beautiful face and she was glowing. Her son let out a groan.

"It could have been worse, she could have walked in on you," I told him and he gagged again.

"Do you just not like me?"

"I'm mean because I like you," I told him, and his mother laughed.

"It's not being mean, it's being comfortable. And all of you are going to be working together, so you had better get comfortable. Now, all of you should go get ready for a hike." The Queen said.

"Really?" I questioned.

"Yes, I'll explain everything on the way. I'll have packs ready for all of you and I'll meet you on the back veranda. I'll ask one of the staff to meet you at the bottom of the stairs to point you in the right direction. Now, go get ready." She finished. I nodded before taking Nate's hand and rushing back to our room.

I was so excited to get back into nature. I've been in the ocean, but it's not the same as walking through a thick forest with critters all around you. The sounds of the forest and the smells. Like the ocean, it feels like home but in a different way. I could spend forever in just a cabin in a forest by the ocean.

As soon as Nate opened the door to our room, I rushed into the closet to get changed. I pulled on a pair of tight-fitting jeans and then I layered on some shirts before I pulled a sweatshirt over my head. I found some warm fluffy socks and a pair of boots. Queen Laura knew what she was planning when she stocked the closet.

"Baby, what's the rush?" Nate asked. He was leaning against the door frame of the closet.

"I'm just excited about getting outside and exploring. And you should let Duke out for a run. I'm sure he'd enjoy that." I told him as I tied up the boots. "We'll see about me letting Duke out. He doesn't like the other not-mated males around you." He explained as he got himself dressed.

I sat there and watched as he pulled on a pair of jeans that fit him just right. And when he took off the shirt he was wearing, I flushed as I watched his muscles flex with each movement he made.

"Baby, what are you doing?" He chuckled as I played with my bottom lip.

"Just admiring what's mine," I told him, running my tongue along my bottom lip. He pulled on his shirt before he came over to me. I was sitting on a bench. Nate slapped his hands down on my thighs before leaning over and crushing his lips into mine. Before I could deepen the kiss, he pulled away and rested his forehead against mine.

"If we didn't have people waiting, I'd rip all the clothes you just put on and take you right against the wall."

He purred and I was dripping just thinking about it.

"Then you better put more clothes on, Beta Nate, or I might be tempted to rip yours off instead," I said before I licked his lips. He shivered before slapping my thighs again and I gasped.

He pecked my lips before pushing back up. He pulled on a sweatshirt and after finding some boots, he came to sit beside me.

"f**k, I love your cheekiness." He groaned and I chuckled.

"It will be so much better when we are home," I told him, and he turned to look at me.

"I mean, if you are staying with me in the house my

grandmother just gave me. You don't have to. And I guess we should have talked about it before I said anything and just assumed you'd be staying with me." I rambled until Nate kissed me quiet.

"Of course, I'm staying with you, baby." He mumbled against my lips and I smiled.

"Now are you ready to find out what being a black pearl means, so we can head home?" He rubbed his nose against mine.

"Absolutely."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Two

Ayla

Nate and I were the first ones to meet the queen on the back veranda. I was so excited about going for a hike with Nate. Finally, we could spend some time together away from the bedroom, not that I didn't love him inside of me. This is just another way we can connect as a couple.

Queen Laura had a few packs in front of her as we approached. She was in a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt. Even in her casual clothing, she still demanded respect. Her demeanor was powerful and I held so much respect for her.

"Excited?" She asked me and I nodded. I didn't notice she was holding a handgun until she held it out for me to take.

"Do you know how to use one of these?" She asked as I took the gun. I released the magazine as I inspected the pistol. This one was similar to the one I own. I returned the magazine before c*****g and pushing the safety.

"I think I can manage," I told her as I fitted it in the back of my waistband on my jeans.

"Why are you giving Ayla a gun? What is out there?" Nate asked her, concerned.

"There's nothing out there that we need to worry about. But Ayla will need to prove herself to the Guardian of the black pearl. It's just in case. I've been passed down the knowledge but I've never been inside. Only the black pearl themselves can enter and until they prove themselves, none of us will be able to follow." Queen Laura explained and Nate growled.

"I'm not letting Ayla do this!" And I grabbed his arm.

"Nate, it's okay. I can do this, I hope."

"What's going on?" Xander asked as he and the others approached.

"It's nothing. I'll have to prove myself and Nate is worried." I answered him.

"The queen gave her a gun!" Nate exclaimed, throwing up his arms. Xander looked at the queen.

"She needs to prove herself. I don't have all the answers because I'm not a black pearl."

"But you know someone who was?" I questioned and she nodded.

"About two millennia ago, the first black pearl was

born. His parents were a mermaid and a witch." She started.

"He?" I asked her.

"He. Ayla, you are the only black pearl female. But I'll get to all of that, but we should start moving." The queen said and the king came to stand by her side. He grabbed her hand and gave her cheek a peck. Prince Silas turned away and gagged.

"Then maybe you should learn how to knock." The king smirked.

"I need a new office. Ayla, you have my permission to blow that one up." He whined and I laughed.

"What makes you think that was the first time?" I asked him and he blanched.

"Do you just hate me or something? Why do you put those images in my mind?" He exclaimed and I shrugged.

"Honestly, you make teasing you so easy." I smiled sweetly. And the others laughed.

"Alright, boys, grab a bag." The queen announced. Her son stuck his tongue out at me and I smirked before blowing him a kiss.

We started our hike and I was in awe at how lush the forest was. It was like walking through a rainforest. And the smell was heavenly. I could finally relax a little, even if I was carrying a gun and walking into the unknown.

"Ayla, I should probably start explaining everything before we get there." The queen said, linking her arm with mine.

"Okay, I'm ready." I breathed out.

"The first black pearl was half witch. He was a great leader and the mermaid world thrived under his rule. But after a few centuries, and the magic blood faded, the mermaids were still thriving. It wasn't until the Great War happened that my family was asked once again to step up to produce the black pearl."

"The black pearl has always been a part of your family?" I asked her and she nodded.

"Then how am I a black pearl? I don't understand." I sighed.

"I'm not sure but I think it might have something to do with the last black pearl. He failed. He failed to prove he was true of heart and he was killed by the guardian." She said and I stopped in my tracks.

f**k, I internally cursed as I tried to get my breathing under control. My chest constricted painfully and my breathing became labored as I leaned forward, resting my hands on my knees.

"Baby, breathe. It will be okay." I felt Nate rubbing my back.

"And what if I can't? What if I died? Oh my god, and you will feel my death since I marked you." I shot up, panicked.

"You marked him?" Kaden growled.

"Ayla, I know you are scared but you need to do this. If you don't, your wolf won't be able to come forward. And the outbursts you've been having will become worse and they will kill you. I know you can do this." The queen said reassuringly. And Nate pulled me

against his chest.

"Ayla, you've got this." I heard Xander say.

"What was the black pearl before me?" I asked the queen, pulling away from Nate.

"He was half vampire. I only know the stories of him and he wasn't a good person. He was unable to prove himself to the guardian and he was killed. And then there hasn't been anything until you." The queen said.

"Vampires are real?" I exclaimed before I shivered.

"They are. But don't worry, even after everything that happened, we are on good terms with them." The king said, and I looked at Nate.

"I've never met one, so I don't know about their relationship with us," Nate answered my question

before I was able to ask.

My mind was racing as I tried to calm my rapid breathing. I had to prove myself and I didn't even know how. How am I going to prove to anyone that I'm a good person and I deserve to be the black pearl when I have no idea how to be the black pearl? Nate pulled me against his chest again and I let him. This was overwhelming. I didn't know what to expect, but it sure wasn't that.

"So, I have a wolf?" I asked, turning my head to look at the queen.

"Why do you think you were able to mark Nate? She's there, but the magic of the black pearl is suppressing her. Everyone else is either born with one or the other, never both. The wolf on your chest is your wolf, not Nate's." she explained, and I was left speechless.

"And the outbursts?" Xander asked.

"That would be her wolf. She is strong enough to have broken through the magic. She was trying to protect you, Ayla. And I know you have nothing to worry about with the guardian. You are more than worthy of being the black pearl." Queen Laura told me with a smile.

"We should get moving." The king announced. Nate took my hand as we walked behind the king and queen.

My stomach was in knots and I could no longer focus on this place's beauty. I can't afford to fail. I would lose my life and Nate would lose his mate. I couldn't put him and Duke through that.

"You okay?" Xander asked, walking up beside me.

"No. I didn't realize my failure would be linked to my death. I won't be able to walk away after this. If I survive, anyway," I breathed out.

"You're scared?" And I chuckled, nervously.

"I'm terrified. I don't think I've ever been this scared. Even being attacked by rogues couldn't compare to this." I confessed. Kaden whipped me around to face him and I was forced to let go of Nate's hand.

"When the hell were you attacked by rogues?" He yelled and I flinched at his anger. I've never seen Kaden like this before.

"A few weeks ago, I guess now." I stammered before Nate pulled me behind him, protectively. Xander also stepped closer to Kaden.

"And that must have been your fault, Wolf boy." He

growled at Nate. Duke let out a growl that had the birds fleeing from our location.

"What the f**k are you implying?" Nate growled.

"I'm not implying anything. Why the f**k were you not there to protect her? And where the f**k were you during all of this?" Kaden turned his attention to Xander. I moved from behind Nate and stepped in between him and Kaden.

"Stop, please?" I pleaded, looking up at him. Nate wrapped an arm around my waist.

"Were you hurt?" He asked, looking down at me.

"I suffered from a few cuts. Nate's mother treated the wounds and they healed up. Kaden, it really wasn't anyone's fault. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time." I tried to reassure him.

"Why the hell were you alone?" He growled, looking at Xander.

"This happened before I knew any of this. And I was supposed to be out there with my boyfriend at the time. He canceled and I went alone. I met Nate and a few of his pack members and after I set up camp I was attacked. Nate killed the rogues." I explained.

"Boyfriend?" I sighed and Nate growled.

"That's a story for another day. But right now, I can't take any more fighting. I'm about to crumble under this pressure and I can't deal with this." I breathed out, pinching the bridge of my nose.

"Can we get moving? We only have a little bit to go before we can stop for a break." The queen interrupted. "Yes," I answered, moving away from all of them and over to the queen. The queen linked her arm with mine and we started walking once again.

We walked in silence after that, and I was grateful to just hear the chatter of the forest around us. I swear if anything else is said, I'm going to explode. Kaden has no right to question my relationship with Nate or anyone for that matter. He left me. I understand why, but it doesn't make the pain of what I went through any easier.

And now I had to work with him because he's the king of one of the kingdoms I'll be overseeing. If I survive this anyway. But what the hell was the black pearl supposed to do anyway? The kingdoms seem to be running okay. I don't know because I have no idea what to even look for. I'm not trained for any of this and now I'll have to prove myself worthy or die.

"Queen Laura, what are the responsibilities of the black pearl?" I asked her.

"When the first black pearl was born, he was supposed to bridge the mermaid and the witches. Which he did. He took on a mermaid mate and a witch mate, to balance the alliance between both species." The queen answered and I stopped. Two mates? She can't be serious.

"Baby?" Nate asked as he wrapped his arms around my waist from behind. The queen turned to look at me with a smirk on her face, as I looked at her in horror.

"Ayla, I didn't say you had to. I was just telling you what the first one did. No one is expecting anything from you. The wolves help to stop the hunters, maybe. But when it comes to mates and future children, that is all up to you," Queen Laura said, and

Nate squeezed me tighter.

"Mates?" He gritted his teeth.

"The first took on two mates. I know wolves are different. They have a fated mate, which I assume you are, Nate. No one expects Ayla to take a mermaid mate as well. I was just explaining the first black pearl." She explained.

"So, I'm just supposed to hunt down the hunters with the wolves' help. And then what?" I asked her.

"Then, you rule over the kingdoms. If something were to happen, you'd step in to help. But for the most part, after the hunters are destroyed, you will be the hope that keeps the people going. The face of the mermaids, if you will." The queen said. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

"We know this is a lot to take in, princess. But the goddess' wouldn't have blessed you if they thought you would fail. They believe in you and we all do as well." The king spoke.

"The other one failed, what makes you think that I wouldn't?" I sniffled with tears in my eyes. I know I needed to stop doubting myself, but this was just all too much. I never got a chance to breathe before being thrown into something else and I was so tired of trying to live up to someone else's expectations.

I didn't know how to do any of this, thanks to my mother. And now I need to learn so much in such a short amount of time. How can I be so important and not know a thing about what I'm doing? I have no idea how to be a princess or a queen. Not even a beta female. I'm so lost in all of this.

"It's okay, Ayla. We are almost at the break stop. Just

breathe. I have faith in you and your ability to rule over us. Just have some faith in yourself." The queen said.

"And how am I supposed to have faith in myself when everyone I've ever loved has left me so easily? People don't love me, they leave me. I wasn't worthy of their love, so what makes you think I'm worthy of being the black pearl? I have no experience of any of this and I couldn't even protect myself from rogues. How the hell am I going to take down hunters?" I cried, everything bubbling to the surface.

The queen took my cheeks in her hands and whipped away a few tears with her thumbs.

"I know you've been hurt. And it's hard to trust again when so many have let you down but you have so many people who love and care for you. I know you think you aren't worthy of being loved, but you are.

After everything that has happened in your life, you have always picked up the pieces and moved on."

"Because I had to. I didn't have a choice," I whispered.

"You buried your feelings and hid your pain to help others. After my king found out you were a black pearl. He called me and I began my investigation into your past. Everything you have done has been for others. Even in the foster home." She told me.

"I don't understand, how would you have known about that?" I asked her, confused.

"The day you went missing is the day the foster monster was found dead. There was an investigation and statements made. One of the girls made a statement about you. And how you took the brunt of the abuse. Why did you do that?" She asked, softly.

"The look of horror in her eyes. I couldn't let her go through something like that, so I did. And then I ran away and left them. I didn't know that he had been killed. But I chose to leave them with a monster." I sobbed and Nate buried his face in my neck as he held me from behind.

"Ayla, you were fifteen, everything that happened wasn't your fault. And I read that girl's statement, she called you a hero, her guardian angel. And then I spoke to the older couple who you worked for after you ran away. They had nothing but wonderful things to say about you. They even referred to you as the daughter they wished they had. Despite everything you've been through, you are always thinking of others. When was the last time you did something for yourself?"

"Nate. I know he deserves better but I can't let him

go." I whispered to her, my heart twisted painfully at the thought of letting him go.

"I don't think he could ever let you go. The mate bond is a truly wonderful thing. You may think that he would never choose you without it, but it's there to make sure two halves of a soul are brought together. He's your home as much as you are his. Embrace this, you are capable of anything and everything. Now, let's get you to the guardian so he can see how truly wonderful and deserving you are." She finished with a smile. I nodded in her hands and she kissed my forehead.

"Come on, we are almost there." She announced before walking over to her king. The others followed while I stayed rooted to my spot with Nate still holding me.

"I love you so much, baby," Nate mumbled against my neck.

"I love you so much," I told him, turning in his arms.

"You can do this, Ayla. I've never met such a strong alpha female before. Alpha's protect their pack, just like you protect others." He said before his lips brushed mine.

Nate kissed my forehead before he took my hand in his and we followed behind the others. I need to be strong and not show fear, even if I'm scared to death about the unknown. I have Nate and the others and I wouldn't let them down. Or I'll die trying.

I've always helped others, even when no one was around to help me. I always tried to be a good person and fight for others. But it's hard to keep fighting when you need help and no one is there for you. And I know I'm broken and insecure. I have been left so many times, the fear of someone I love leaving will most

likely always be there.

I was going to need so much therapy, I thought, as we took a seat on a log with the others. Queen Laura was handing out sandwiches and drinks to everyone when a strange sound caught my attention.

Leaning back to look around Nate, the sound buzzing to the right of me. Listening carefully, it was more like a hum than a buzz. Looking back at the others, they didn't seem to notice.

"Does anyone else hear that?" I asked and they all looked toward me.

"Hear what?" Nate asked, as I stood up and followed in the direction of the sound.

"It's like a humming sound. I don't know, it's hard to describe," I said, heading away from them.

"Ayla, come back, it's not safe." I heard Nate call out.

"It's okay, Nate." I turned to see that I wasn't too far away from them. They were all standing now watching me.

I let out a scream as the ground shook and gave way under my feet, plunging me into darkness before my feet hit the ground and I was forced forward, falling on my hands and knees. I could hear the others yelling as I tried to compose myself, waiting for my eyes to adjust to the darkness.

I felt something watching me as I looked around me. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up and I let out another scream as two glowing red eyes glowed in the darkness in front of me. There was no turning back now.

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Three

Future Beta Nate

My heart ached for my mate. There's only so much a person can take before they break and she was at her limit. She had always tried to help others, but then when she needed help, everyone left her.

"We are never leaving her. She is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen and she is mine," Duke growled.

"I would never leave her or give her a reason to leave me. I love her and will protect her with my life. Duke, you know this," I told him.

"She's a true alpha female and you will respect her."
He lectured me.

"Does she really have a wolf?" I asked him.

"She does, and she will rule us all." He purred.

"You are going to submit to her?" I questioned him.

"Only in the bedroom. Everywhere else we are equals."

"Duke, I'm not an alpha. And she doesn't have a pack. How is she going to rule?" I asked him, confused.

"You'll just have to wait and see like the rest of them," he said before retreating.

That wolf of mine needs to stop speaking in riddles. I need to be able to help and protect her and he isn't helping. I was pulled from my thoughts when Ayla stood up from her seat beside me. She said she was hearing something, but I could only hear the sounds of the forest.

"Ayla, come back, it's not safe," I called out to her, standing from my seat on the log.

She stopped and turned to look at us. I don't remember if she said anything before she let out a scream and the ground swallowed her up.

"Ayla," I screamed as I raced towards her, just to hit an invisible wall, knocking me back onto my ass.

Xander and Kaden were also on their asses and scrabbling to get up as we heard Ayla scream again. The only one not panicking was the queen. The rest of us, including the king, was pounding on the wall with our fists.

"What the hell is this?" I screamed, frustrated that I couldn't get to my mate.

"Everyone, take a seat. Ayla will be okay. This is her test with the guardian. There is nothing we can do but wait." The queen told us.

"I need to be with her," I yelled, and the queen shook her head.

"This is something she has to do alone. I'm sorry Nate, I know this is difficult but there is nothing we can do until she proves herself and the magic is lifted." Queen Laura sighed.

"f**k!" I screamed, punching the wall again. Ayla let out another scream and Duke was ready to shift.

"Nate, I understand," Xander growled out beside me. He was glaring at the wall.

"Nate, you need to trust in your mate. She is more than capable." The queen spoke calmly and I grumbled, her calmness was irritating. I would never forgive myself if anything were to happen to her and I wasn't there to protect her.

"All of you come and sit. I'm not sure how long this is going to take. And all of you should eat." The queen ordered, and I reluctantly walked back over to the group with Xander beside me. He was cursing under his breath and I could feel his tension.

We both sat down and Prince Chase passed down a

couple of sandwiches and bottles of water. I didn't feel like eating. My stomach was in knots with worry about my mate. I haven't heard any more screaming, but I'm not sure if that was a good or a bad thing.

"Mom, the first black pearl took two claims?" Prince Silas asked and I almost spit out the bit I had just taken. My chest rumbled loudly.

"He did, yes. But he was never asked to, as far as I'm aware. I don't expect Ayla to take another claim. Wolves are different than witches and mermaids. They mate for life, do they not?" The queen turned her attention to me. I swallowed before I answered her.

"Not in all cases. Even after marking, we can still reject our mate. But I would like to say in most cases it's for life. Mermaid's claim seems to be forever once it's done."

"It is, but it can be broken if the scaling part hasn't been completed. Once we mate under the full moon, we take the scale from over our hearts and replace it with our claims. It digs painfully into our skin until we shift and it heals in place. It bonds us forever with our claim." She explained.

"And females can only get pregnant by their claim?"

"Yes, under a full moon. But I'm not sure what will happen when her wolf fully emerges. From my understanding, wolves can get pregnant any time." She said and I nodded.

"It's more likely during their heat, but male wolves can get any female pregnant, not just their mate."

"So no multiple mates?" Prince Silas chuckled and I growled.

"I wouldn't want to share her either," King Kaden scoffed, and Prince Silas laughed. And we all looked at him confused.

"I think Xander has a better chance of being Ayla's second mate." Duke let out a growl, not happy about this conversation. King Kaden glared at Xander.

"Honestly, you can't blame me. I'm not the one who left her without a word." Xander shrugged and I smirked. He's not wrong. I don't want anyone else touching my mate, but I can see myself being friends with Xander.

"I didn't leave because I stopped loving her." King Kaden growled out.

"King Kaden, this is her destiny. She was always meant to be with a wolf. And it's her choice to take on

a mermaid mate as well. The fact that you met her was a consequence." The queen told him.

"So everything that has happened, happened because it was supposed to? Princess Ayla was always supposed to find Nate and everything else was just bs?" Prince Chase asked and the queen nodded.

"I know it's hard to hear, King Kaden. But her mother was right to keep you away from Ayla. It would have been even more devastating when she met Nate."

She told him.

We all jumped up when we heard Ayla screaming again.

"Why the f**k does it have to be goddamn spiders?" She screamed and I looked at Xander.

"She hates spiders. She is absolutely terrified of them. One time she called me over in the middle of the night to kill one in her shower," Xander answered.

"Spiders?" I raised an eyebrow and he nodded with a smirk.

"It was big for a spider but nothing you'd think she'd be able to handle." He chuckled. The gun going off, caused me to panic and my heart to race.

Silence filled the forest around us. The only thing I could hear was the beating of my own heart.

The next sound was Ayla's bone-chilling scream before we were all thrown back by a strong force. I landed on my back and the air was knocked from my lungs as I scrambled to get back on my feet. The forest was eerily silent as I walked over to the invisible wall to find it gone. I rushed over to where Ayla fell

and there was no longer a hole.

On my hands and knees, I started to dig with my hands and Xander was also digging. This can not be happening, she can't be dead.

"Boys, stop. She should be at the temple. Calm down." The queen said and I snapped my head up to look at her.

"She's okay?" I rushed out and she nodded.

"Did you feel the bond break?" She asked me and I shook my head.

"The magic disappeared. Which means she either died or is at the temple. And since you didn't feel the bond break, I believe she'll be waiting at the temple for us. Get your bags, and let's get moving. We don't want to keep her waiting." The queen said as she

walked past me. Xander and I stood up and the princes passed us our packs before we followed behind them.

"Is she really okay?" I asked Duke, as I walked.

"Can you not feel her?" He asked me.

"I can't feel her emotions. I still feel the bond but I can't feel her." I confessed, trying to control my panic.

"The bond is still there. She's alive but I'm not sure about the rest of the bond. If her wolf is not released, then we should be feeling the full efforts of the bond now." Duke told me.

It took about twenty minutes for us to walk up to a cave. It didn't look like a temple. It was just a cave you would find in any mountain. The only thing that caught my attention was the power I felt coming from

inside the cave. And then her scent hit me.

"She's here," I yelled as I slid the pack off and rushed inside the cave.

I didn't care what I could be running into, I just needed to get to my mate and make sure she was okay. My heart was pounding against my chest as I followed her scent and the others followed behind me. It's a good thing, wolves have great night vision, as it was dark here. I wouldn't have been able to see my hand in front of my face the further I moved into the cave.

The tunnel finally ended and I entered a massive space. The sun was shining through cracks in the mountains that were above us. The room had pillars and stairs leading up to what looked like a throne. My mate was casually sitting with her legs crossed, looking down at us.

I stopped in my tracks as I watched her stand. She was now covered in scales that covered her body in a skin-tight suit. The only bare skin that was showing was her face. The black and purple opalescent scales covered her body like armor. And it left nothing to the imagination as she walked down the stairs, swaying her hips.

Ayla's lips were painted a dark purple and her eyes were smoky. Storm clouds replaced her eyes and I was lost in them as she approached me. I forgot all about the others as Ayla ran her hand down my chest. My breathing hitched as her eyes turned back to normal.

"Hello, mate." She purred as she ran her hand back up my chest. She gasped when I grabbed her hips and pulled her against my chest, burying my face into her neck.

To my surprise, when my skin touched her scales, they receded, revealing her skin. Tingles shot through my hands and up my arms, causing me to shiver. Duke purred in my head as the bond flared to life with just a touch. It was much stronger than before. Her scent engulfed me, and my c**k strained against my jeans.

If we didn't have an audience, I would take her right here and now. I can't believe how much of the bond was suppressed and I needed her desperately before. Now it was going to be impossible to be away from her.

"Baby, are you okay?" I mumbled against her neck, as I held her close.

"My child, your achievement was exceptional beyond my expectations. You proved yourself after the first challenge." The moon goddess's voice echoed off the walls of the room.

Ayla pulled away and we both looked up at the moon goddess, who was now standing by Ayla's throne.

"Thank you, my goddess." Ayla beamed up at the goddess.

"And with you being so exceptional, I will grant you one wish. Something that can be just for you," The goddess told her.

"I would like to gift the mermaids with the mind link," Ayla spoke without hesitation.

"Ayla, are you sure? You could ask for anything." I asked her and she nodded.

"I'm sure. I believe the mind link would help the mermaids, especially against the hunters. Each kingdom would be like its own pack and they could link with each other. I think it would be highly beneficial for the mermaid species." She answered.

"And you would use your one wish on others and not yourself?" The goddess questioned her.

"It's my job to protect my people. This will help protect them. And I don't need anything. I have everything I need right here." Ayla said, taking my hand in hers. The moon goddess smiles down at us.

"You are like no other I've ever met, Ayla. Your selflessness has no boundaries. And you will be such an exceptional queen." The goddess praised my mate.

"Moon goddess, I can't hear my wolf?" She asked, concerned, and the goddess chuckled.

"She will be with you soon. You've been through so much today. Now, should we get to the claiming?"
The goddess clapped her hands together.

"The fun part," another female voice exclaimed, walking out from behind the throne. She was dressed in a similar dress as Ayla when she shifted back, but hers was gold and deep blue.

"Goddess," The mermaids all bowed their heads. She must be the mermaid goddess.

"Amphitrite, what do you mean by claiming? It's not a full moon." Ayla asked her and she giggled. The moon goddess and she walked down the stairs, stopping in front of us.

"That's only half of the claiming. Now, my dear child, you will give your wolf a piece of you." She explained.

"The scale over her heart?" I asked and the goddess nodded. Ayla looked up at me confused.

"I would also give you mine if I had one." I chuckled. Ayla smiled, shaking her head.

"You may want to strip down, wolf, you'll be shifting soon." The goddess Amphitrite purred at me, her eyes glancing over my body. Ayla let out a growl before stepping in front of me, blocking the view of my body with hers.

"Your wolves really are possessive?" She chuckled, looking at the moon goddess.

"Can you really blame her?" The moon goddess smirked.

"No, I suppose not. He could easily pass as a god himself." Her eyes lingered longer than they should,

and I just pressed my lips together feeling extremely awkward.

"Nate, you will need to shift, and Ayla will need to see your chest." The moon goddess said and I pulled off my shirt, leaving my pants. I didn't need Ayla to attack a goddess.

Ayla turned to face me and ran her hands down my chest. I couldn't help the shiver that ran through me or the goosebumps that covered my body. Her touch was electric now, and she stared up at me with a smirk on her lips.

"Ayla, take hold of the scale over your heart and remove it," Amphitrite explained.

"But won't that hurt her?" I questioned.

"It will only hurt for a moment. You should really be

worried about yourself." She smirked and I gulped.

I turned back to Ayla when I heard her whimpering and her breathing had picked up. She was now holding the scale. Looking at her chest, it was now bleeding. I leaned forward and licked the wound, causing Ayla to gasp as she dug her nails into my shoulder.

"You okay?" I asked her, lifting my head. I was now nose-to-nose with her.

"Yeah," she breathed out.

"Now, push the scale into his chest, where his heart is located." The mermaid goddess instructed.

"Will it hurt him?" Ayla asked, worried. I squeezed her hips.

"Only for a moment. Once it's in place, he will shift and the claim will be almost complete. On the full moon, after you consummate the claim, you will be forever bonded to each other." Amphitrite answered.

"Are you ready for this?" Ayla asked, looking up at me with her big doe eyes.

"Whenever you are, baby," I told her, kissing her forehead.

Ayla didn't even hesitate as she pushed the scale into my chest, knocking the air from my lungs. I wasn't expecting it to burn like fire against my skin. The more she pushed, the hotter it burned.

"My wolf, shift." The moon goddess commanded. And I quickly shifted into my massive black wolf.

"I'm so sorry, are you okay?" Ayla asked, kneeling.

Duke licked the spot on her chest that was now missing a scale, before nuzzling against her. As soon as I shifted, the pain stopped.

"Now, I think it's time for you all to get back to reality. Ayla go to Alpha Matt's pack. That's where your journey will begin. Good luck to all of you." The moon goddess announced before she clapped her hands and darkness consumed me.

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Four

Ayla

I awoke with a start, sitting straight up. I was breathless as I looked around to find I was back in my room. Nate was asleep beside me, and we were both naked. Looking through the window, the sun was just setting.

My head was spinning with the events that happened earlier. Did I really succeed or was it all just a dream? But why would Nate and I be asleep this late in the day? How did we even get back here in the first place?

The door flew open, causing me to jump and Nate sprung up, gasping, until he saw it was Xander and he laid back down. I held the sheet to my chest as Prince Silas, Prince Chase and Kaden came rushing in behind Xander.

"Ayla, are you okay?" Xander breathed out. Nate was drawing circles on my bare back and I was trying to

hold in the moan from his touch.

"I'm good, Xander. Did everyone make it back?" I gasped out, and Nate chuckled.

"We are all back. We'll meet you in the dining room when you two are ready," Xander said, before turning around and pushing the others out. My eyes locked with Kaden's and my heart twisted. It wasn't my intention to hurt him. I still care about him deeply, but I love Nate.

Once the door was closed behind them, Nate leaned over and kissed my thigh. The simple act caused me to shiver as goosebumps covered my body and my n*****s hardened. I looked down at him and smiled. I wasn't going to apologize for being with Nate or loving him. I'll always care about Kaden but he needs to move on from what we had.

"Are you okay, baby?" Nate's voice was husky and I was instantly wet.

"Perfect." I purred, licking my lips. I pushed Nate onto his back and climbed on top of him, straddling him.

I gasped as I finally noticed the mark on his chest. It was now two black wolves howling up at a full moon. The full moon was the scale I gave him to fortify the bond. I ran my fingers over the mark and Nate shivered.

Nate moved my hair out of the way, causing me to shiver as his fingertips brushed over my mark.

"Baby, it's beautiful," he breathed out.

"So is yours." I moaned as he bucked his hips. He chuckled as he ran his hands down my hips.

The tingles brought my body to life and I rolled my hips, my hands gripping his chest. Nate's c**k pushed into my folds and I moaned loudly as I almost came undone. Nate groaned and I no longer cared about foreplay. I need my mate inside of me, I thought, as I reached between us.

"f**k," I moaned as I pushed his tip into my clit before I moved it to my entrance. I sat back and his girth filled me up perfectly. The sensation clouded my mind with lust as I gasped for breath.

I thought s*x before was intensive, but this takes the cake. I don't ever want to leave this bed again. A growl rumbled Nate's chest before he flipped us.

"f**k, baby, you feel like heaven," he groaned against my neck as he pounded into me.

My legs wrapped around his waist as he filled me

completely. And I swear I forgot how to breathe as my orgasm ripped through me with so much intensity I was seeing stars.

Nate let out a groan as he quickened his pace, turning me back into a moaning mess. I never want this man to stop.

"Nate," I screamed as we released together. He grunted and groaned before he stilled on top of me. We were both gasping as we stared at each other.

I may not have liked Amphitrite checking out my mate, but she was right, he was a god. And he was all mine. I cupped his cheeks and he turned his head to peck my hand. I pulled Nate down and pressed my lips to his. Tingles from our touch filled my lips and I wrapped my arms around his neck, pulling him down on top of me. I needed him closer, as I licked the seam of his lips. As he thrusts his tongue into my

mouth, he lifted my arms above my head, holding me in place as he rolled his hips.

"Nate," I moaned against his lips. He kissed his way down my jaw, to my neck.

"We aren't even closed to being finished." He groaned against my ear as he nibbled on my earlobe.

"Just let me touch you," I begged, and he pulled away to smirk down at me.

"I love it when you beg, baby."

It took us two hours to get down to the dining room to meet the others. Honestly, I didn't care about seeing any of them. My mate had become my addiction and I couldn't get enough of him.

"I feel the same way, baby," Nate whispered in my

ear, reading my thoughts, before we walked into the dining room. His breath against my skin caused me to shiver.

I didn't realize how hungry I was until the doors were opened and the aroma of food hit my nose. My tummy rumbled loudly and Nate chuckled.

"I'll need to get you some midnight snacks," he smirked, and I giggled. He pulled me to his side and kissed my temple.

"Ayla, how are you feeling?" Queen Laura greeted me. She rushed over and wrapped me in a hug.

"Honestly, I feel great. I've never felt like this before," I told her.

"Powerful?" She asked.

"Peaceful." I breathed out. I finally felt at peace. This was my path in life and I knew what to do. I may not know what to expect, but I can handle anything with Nate at my side.

"That's wonderful, come on, you both must be starving." She smiled, pulling me towards the table.

"I love the new mark." She whispered and I smiled. I love it also. It was perfect. The moon was now full with my wolf and Duke, etched in my skin. All of it was opalescent with black and purple like my scales.

Nate pulled out a chair for me and then we both sat down. Queen Laura sat down beside her king again. Xander moved to sit beside me. I wish I was able to spend more time with him. I may have Nate, but I loved hanging out with Xander. We would always have so much fun together.

"How are you doing?" He asked me, wrapping his arm around my shoulder, and giving me a side hug. I leaned up and kissed his cheek, smiling at him. Nate squeezed my thigh and I placed my hand over his.

"I'm doing good. I still haven't heard my wolf, but besides that, I feel good. Stronger than before. Has the mind link shown up yet?" I asked him.

"That's good. I'm not sure. No one here is a part of my kingdom." He said, removing his arm.

"It hasn't yet, princess," Prince Silas answered.

"When it does, remember to build a wall in your mind. It will make it so everyone won't be able to hear your thoughts unless you want them to." Nate explained.

"Anything else we should know?" King Samual asked.

"There is a distance restriction. But other than that, I don't think there's anything else. All of you will be fine. It will make things a lot easier for all of you," Nate answered.

Dinner was finally served and I couldn't help but stuff my face. I was so hungry. I don't think I've ever been this hungry before, it's like I was starting to eat my own stomach. Both Nate and Xander chuckled as I let out a small moan.

"Baby, it's because of your wolf," Nate said, and I just nodded.

"Or she's pregnant." Prince Silas chuckled from across the table. I heard Kaden growl as my head shot up to look at Prince Silas.

"Oh, don't look so surprised princess. If you're going to f**k like rabbits, it's going to happen." Prince Silas

grinned and I gulped.

"Son, with all this baby talk, I think it's a perfect time to tell you, your father and I are going to try for another baby." The queen grinned at her son and he gagged. I should have laughed at his situation but I was just so stunned by the 'me being pregnant' comment, I couldn't think straight.

There's no way I could be pregnant, right? I'm following more of the mermaid side. I already had my period and mermaids can only get pregnant under the full moon. I won't be able to know anything until my wolf finally speaks to me.

"So, princess Ayla, what's the plan?" Prince Chase asked me, pulling me from my thoughts.

"Oh yes, the plan," I stammered out and then internally facepalmed myself. Nate squeezed my thigh

and I took a deep breath.

"I think it's best if everyone returns to their kingdoms. As of now, we need to collect intel on the Crimson Tide pack. When we have more information and a plan, then we can attack together." I explained.

"And where are you going to be?" Kaden asked me and Nate's chest grumbled.

"I'll be in my uncle's pack. It's located beside the Crimson Tide pack. That's where Nate and I will be. But I do think all the kingdoms should have a select team in place for when we do call upon you for your help." I answered him.

"And what about the western kingdom? Are you going to take over as queen?" Prince Silas asked me.

"Honestly, I was thinking that the kingdom could be

split three ways between the three of you. I trust all of you completely. I don't know the person who will take over, since my mother is no longer fit and I'm her illegitimate child. It was something I was going to talk to my grandmother about." I shrugged.

"My dear, you'd give up your kingdom?" The king asked, and I nodded.

"I have no idea how to run a kingdom and I know all three of you would never let me down. And if the western kingdom was being fed false information so this other person could rule, then I wouldn't trust them to rule. As I said, I'll have to talk it over with my grandmother and see if it's something that could even happen." I explained.

"The goddess' chose wisely, when they chose you."
The king winked at me.

"I have a lot to live up to," I told him with a smile.

"I'll make arrangements for our travels tomorrow," Xander informed me.

"Xander, I want you to head back to the western kingdom," I told him.

"Ayla, absolutely not. My orders are to protect you. I'm not leaving you, especially being so close to a hostile pack." He protested.

"I'll be with Nate and my uncle's pack. What could possibly happen?" I gave him a pointed look.

"Nate, will you help me out here!" Xander yelled, irritated.

"Hey, that's not fair!" I scolded him. And he glared at me.

"Ayla!"

"Xander!" We glared at each other until Nate cleared his throat.

"Xander, I need you to get a team together. You can't do that if you're with me at the pack." I sighed.

"I already have the team ready. They will be staying in the house your grandmother gave you. We will be patrolling with the wolves to keep you safe." He declared proudly.

"Really?" I huffed.

"I'm a commander for a reason. And what the hell did you think I've been doing?" He asked me, raising an eyebrow. "I don't know, sleeping?" I shrugged.

"Ayla, I have orders to protect you." Xander sighed.

"So I'm back to being an order then? I whispered, playing with the food on my plate. I was no longer hungry.

"Ayla, it might be a good idea to have the mermaid and the wolves working together. It will build trust between them." The queen said, and I looked at her.

"If that's the case, then all of the kingdoms should have men there providing protection," Kaden said.

"Honestly, talk to Xander about it. I don't even know what I'm supposed to do?" I told him and Xander sighed beside me and Nate squeezed my thigh.

Everything I was feeling earlier was wiped away in an

instant when I realized I had no idea what I was doing. Everyone else seemed to know, but I had no idea about anything. I wasn't a trained warrior and I didn't strategize.

"My men will assess the situation first and when we need reinforcements, I'll call upon the other kingdom. The plan is to not draw attention to ourselves. I'm hoping we can blend in as much as possible." Xander explained to Kaden.

"I'll send warriors to watch the waterways," Kaden told Xander, and I gasped.

"Absolutely not! If the Crimson Tide pack is dangerous, I'm not putting anyone else at risk of being taken. Everyone will hang back until we are ready with a plan or something changes." I said.

"Ayla, you can't order me in my own kingdom. As long

as I'm in my kingdom, I can do as I wish," Kaden declared. And Nate growled beside me.

"Wow, really, Kaden? I wasn't saying that to boss you around. Why ask if you are just going to do what you want?" I exclaimed.

"And why do you trust everyone else but me?" He retorted and I was taken aback.

"What the hell are you talking about? I'm willing to give you a third of the western kingdom because I trust you. I just don't want to see you or anyone else get hurt because you think you have to prove something." I defended.

"And what the hell do I need to prove?" He scoffed.

"I don't know, Kaden. What are you trying to prove? I'm trying to keep you safe and you're being a dick." I

yelled, and the chandelier hanging above the table shook. The crystals chimed when they hit each other.

"I don't need you to keep me safe, Ayla. I can take care of myself." He growled, standing up from the table.

"Yeah, I can see that. But we are all working together on this and you need to be a team player." I smashed my hands on the table as I stood up.

"Why do you keep fighting me?" I breathed out.

"You are making a mistake." He grumbled.

"That's enough. You have no right to speak to her like that." Nate yelled, standing from his seat.

"I do if I feel like she is making a mistake. Everything she does affects all of us." Kaden yelled back. "The only mistake she is making is trusting you," Nate growled and Kaden clenched his jaw.

My emotions started to bubble to the surface again and I felt like I might explode. What the hell was happening? I felt so confident when I woke up and now I'm just this weak little girl again. And how can I ask any of them to trust me when I have no idea what I'm doing? What if I get everyone killed?

"Stop!" I yelled out, unable to contain myself. My eyes were clamped shut and I didn't know what was happening as I was thrown to the floor followed by a deafening crash.

"Baby, are you okay?" I heard Nate and I opened my eyes. He was hovering above me, concern was written on his face.

"What the hell happened?"

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Five

Ayla

Nate moved off of me and I gasped when I saw the damage I had caused. The chandelier was now lying in pieces on the dining room table. Everyone was standing around, staring at me.

"I am so sorry, Queen Laura," I breathed out as Nate helped me to stand.

"It's fine, I needed to remodel this room anyway, and I hated that chandelier." The queen giggled.

"My mother gave us that chandelier," the king retorted.

"And now I have the perfect reason why it needs to be replaced." The queen smirked.

"Kaden, you need to stop questioning her. Ayla has made her choice and you are just going to have to live with it." Prince Chase told him.

"Ayla, I apologize," Kaden said to me.

"Don't apologize. I want you all to question what is happening. I'm just going to have to learn how to control, whatever that is." I told them, and Nate wrapped his arms around me.

"Well, how about we retire to the library then? I would love to hear what happened during your challenge."

Queen Laura asked and I nodded.

"Ayla, are you sure?" Nate asked, concerned.

"We should probably talk outside so I won't destroy the library," I told the queen.

"Nonsense, I'm sure you'll be fine. Also, that was your wolf. She doesn't like being disrespected." The queen smiled.

"Oh," I said, surprised.

"Now, if you boys would stop being so dramatic, maybe Ayla could actually relax." The queen scolded them.

"What? I didn't do anything?" Her son whined. And

she glared at him.

"You know exactly what you did, don't play innocent," she exclaimed, before taking my hand.

"Let's go have tea, I want to know all about what happened." She smiled at me.

Queen Laura led me out of the dining room and through the palace to the library. Entering the library, I was in awe of how impressive this library was. It was three stories high with shelves overflowing with books.

"This place is wonderful," I breathed out, as I looked around. She led me over to a sitting area with a grand fireplace with a fire blazing.

The others followed behind us. I was going to sit down on a couch but Nate grabbed me as he sat

down in a chair, forcing me to sit in his lap. I yelped, not expecting it, and he chuckled, wrapping his arms around my waist.

The others sat down on the furniture around us and I moved to sit sideways on Nate's lap. He snuggled into me as I wrapped my arms on top of his. The king and queen snuggled together and Prince Silas gagged as he watched them being cute. I smiled, happy they could finally be rid of the elephant in their relationship.

"Princess Ayla, what happened when the ground swallowed you?" Prince Chase asked me. He was sitting on a couch with Kaden.

"Well, we know there were spiders." Xander chuckled and I shivered.

"Don't remind me." I gagged. I know the fear is illogical, but they still freaked me out.

"The first thing I encountered was what looked like a dragon. It was bioluminescent, with markings I'd never seen before. It had a long neck and red eyes. I don't even know what color it was because all I could see was the glow of the markings." I began.

"And what happened? Did it try to hurt you?" Nate asked.

"Not physically. It was more with words and a feeling of dread or death," I answered.

"And what did it say?" Kaden asked and I looked at him.

"That's not important," I told him. I was embarrassed to tell them what the monster had said to me. His words cut me deep and will forever haunt me.

"Anyway, then spiders came and I could only see them because of the light from the dragon. And Xander can tell you how much I like spiders. The spiders covered me but it wasn't until I noticed a massive spider attacking the dragon did I stop worrying about myself." I explained.

"Is that when you shot the gun?" Prince Chase asked and I nodded.

"I killed the spider that was attacking the dragon and all the other spiders disappeared. The dragon turned its attention to me and I thought it was going to attack. I opened my eyes to find myself in the throne room." I finished.

"So you saved the thing that was originally attacking you, why?" Kaden asked me, and Nate squeezed my waist.

"When I saw him, it looked as terrified as I felt and I only had little spiders. I don't know, I just needed to protect it." I confessed.

"And that was it?" The queen asked and I nodded.

"The experience was more terrifying than anything. I thought it would be more physically demanding. It wasn't what I expected," I said.

"Ayla, you passed the challenge because you protected the guardian. It was testing your mind before the attack. It wanted to see that even with all the hurt it caused you, you would still do the right thing. And you did. You could never walk away from something in need and you proved that. Even if the people in your life have hurt you the most, you will never walk away from them in need. The need to protect others proved you would make the perfect black pearl." The queen praised me.

"I don't feel like much of a hero. And I am surprised that thing didn't kill me. That's more my luck. Save it because I feel bad, just so it can kill me." I shrugged.

"Things will get easier, Ayla. And you can have access to the library. I do have a few books for you to read. I wish I could give you more answers but I only know so much." Queen Laura told me and I nodded.

"I would like to look around the library for a bit. My mind is racing with so many questions, but I don't think any of these books would hold those answers either. I'm just going to have to wait until my wolf shows up to answer them. And hopefully, she will have some answers."

A young lady came into the library with a tray of tea and placed it on the coffee table between us. My story was so short, we didn't even get to enjoy tea. "Ayla, I'll go get you those books while you look around the library. And please have some tea, it will calm you. I understand this is overwhelming and you may be feeling out of place again, but don't back down. Powerful men will always try to push back if they mean to or not. Never back down. Stand your ground and always do the right thing." She told me before she and the king left the library, leaving me with the others.

"Ayla, I didn't mean to overstep." Xander apologized.

"Xander, you didn't overstep. A little heads-up would have been nice but I'm new to all of this. I'm going on gut feelings while you have experience with this. If you feel like your plan is the best option, I will respect that." I told him.

"And my plan?" Kaden asked me.

"Xander, what do you think about Kaden's plan?" I asked him.

"I think we should observe first. If they are hunting for mermaids, we shouldn't have any in the water. They will be expecting that. We should stick to land for now." Xander answered and I agreed with him.

"Fine, but nothing better happen to Ayla, or I'm bringing the army," Kaden exclaimed and Nate growled.

"Are you implying I can't protect my mate?" Nate retorted, squeezing me into him.

"Will both of you stop? I can take care of myself. And this is becoming ridiculous. This isn't a pissing contest. We are doing this to save lives." I scolded both of them.

"Let's leave Ayla and Nate to do some research."

Prince Chase announced, trying to help me defuse the situation. I swear these boys are going to be the death of me.

"I'll get things organized so we can leave in the morning. I already had your house cleaned out and your vehicle was taken to the house, along with your things. Alpha Jim would like to bring Bluey himself." Xander informed me, before they all left, leaving me and Nate alone.

"Do you always have to fight with him?" I sighed.

"Why are you defending him?" He retorted.

"I'm not defending him. I know this is hard on him. It would be hard on anyone in his situation. You could show him a little more compassion." I defended

myself and Nate sighed.

"I'll try, but I can't promise anything. It takes everything to hold Duke back from ripping him apart."

"Thank you, that's all I'm asking," I said, before pressing my lips to his.

"Now, should we have some tea?"

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Ayla & Kyle

Hey guys. You don't have to read this chapter to continue the story. I just want to give some insight into

Ayla's life with Kyle aka King Kaden. Thanks for reading!

Ayla

Three years ago...

The bell rang above the door alerting me that a customer had just entered. I was in the back room of the motel, trying to get some of my schoolwork done on this dinosaur they call a computer and the slow as f**k internet. It would take me all night to do the research I need to write this report. I'll have to ask Jessica to go to the library after I check this customer in. At least they had up-to-date technology.

"Hello," I heard a man call out.

"I'll be right there," I called back out. I hurried up saving whatever I had written and made my way up to

the front desk.

As soon as I walked out into the lobby, I was staring at the back of a stranger. His light brown hair was cut short on the sides but long enough to run your fingers through on top. His arm and back muscles were bulging, threatening to rip free of the shirt he was wearing.

When he turned to face me, I was met with the most vivid green eyes I had ever seen. A girl could definitely get lost in them. Not only that, but he was incredibly handsome. The sexiest man I've seen in this town and I'm pretty sure I've met them all.

"Hi, sorry about the wait. What can I help you with?" I asked him with a smile, as I settled myself behind the desk.

"Hi, miss, I'd like a room." He answered, leaning

against the desk. Even his voice was sexy.

"Of course, Mister,"

"Kyle Grant," he finished with a grin.

"Mr. Grant, how long will you be staying?"

"I'm not sure, but I'm sure you can do something longterm," he asked and I nodded.

"Yes, we do. Is it just you?" I asked him.

"Just me," he smirked. I was having a hard time focusing and making my brain function. I was going to need a cold shower before I headed to the library.

"Okay, I'll just need a piece of identification and a credit card please?"

"I don't have a credit card but I have cash to pay for the month," he told me.

"I haven't even told you the total yet?"

"The total doesn't matter. I'm here for work and need a place to stay." He confessed.

"Well Mr. Grant, you're in luck. I have one single double bed left. It's not booked up, so it's yours for the entire month." I smiled and he grinned. I gave him his total and he paid in cash. I also photocopied his identification and had him sign all the paperwork that all our guests had to fill out.

"We serve breakfast from 5:30 am-10:00 am each morning. It's included in your stay. There are also a few washers and dryers where the ice machine is located, with a couple of vending machines. You are going to walk right past it on your way to your room.

Walk all the way down this hallway, go up the stairs and your room is the first to the left. 220." I explained everything, handing him his key.

"Thank you, miss,"

"Ayla. If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask." I smiled at him.

"Thank you, Ayla. I'm sure I'll see you around." He smiled before he walked away down the hallway.

"Good lord," I breathed out when he was gone.

"My my my, he was handsome," Jessica said from the doorway, frightening me.

"Jessica, don't do that!" I gasped out and she chuckled. Jessica and her husband Clyde owned the motel where I've been working for almost a year now.

I also live upstairs in one of the rooms.

"He must be new in town." She smirked and I turned away to organize the paperwork.

"Aren't you happily married?" I questioned.

"A girl can still look. And that man demands attention." She exclaimed and I rolled my eyes.

"Did you forget that I'm only sixteen? I'm too young for him and you are old enough to be his mother." I gave her a pointed look as I walked past her and into the back office.

"Now, that wasn't very nice young lady. I may be an older woman but I still have needs." She scoffed and I pulled a face. I didn't need to know about her and Clyde's adventures.

"Okay, I'm sorry. You can look all you want, he'll be here for at least a month." I told her as I packed up my books.

"Where are you going?" She asked me.

"To the library to finish up some homework. If I'm going to study online, you may need to upgrade your internet," I answered.

"I'll have Clyde look into it. We have been talking about getting wifi for the motel. You will probably need a new computer or something?"

"I'm okay right now. I can just go to the library. But I may need to take after the breakfast rush off until late afternoon, so I can get some work done." I told her.

"Is it becoming too much?" She asked, concerned.

"It's just a lot. I know I have nothing to worry about but I like to be here to help you and Clyde out." I shrugged.

"Well, get going, young lady. I can cover everything from here and I'll see you in the morning to help with breakfast." She shooed me out the door.

"Thanks, Jessica."

The next morning, I was in the kitchen early to get breakfast ready for the guests. We make most things on demand to cut down on wasted food. But I had to prep everything to make life easier for me. I'm usually the only one cooking and serving as Jessica handles the checkouts.

I was serving other customers when Mr. Grant, looking rough in his jeans, shirt, and work boots, walked into the dining room. I had to look away before I made a fool out of myself. Not that he would ever be interested in someone like me. And then there was my age, but there was no harm in looking, right?

He took a seat at the counter as I finished with the other customers. All the other people were secretly watching our newest visitor. Most people who stayed with us were a part of the construction company. They moved around a lot so they would just stay here until they had to move on.

"Good morning, Mr. Grant, would you like some coffee?" I asked him with a smile as I rounded the counter. He was looking at the little breakfast menu we had.

"Please call me Kyle. And I would love some." He said with a grin. I could feel his eyes on me as I filled up the mug in front of him.

"Ayla, I see you've met my newest recruit!" Frank came up to the counter, smacking Kyle on the back while he took the seat beside me.

"I have Frank. I checked him in last night." I told him with a smile before filling up a mug of coffee for him as well. Frank was Clyde's younger brother. He owns the local construction company.

"The usual, Frank?" I asked him. He orders the same thing every morning. And the only reason I feed him is that he's Clyde's brother.

"I'll take two, one for Kyle here as well. Ayla, here, is an amazing cook and baker." Frank was talking with Kyle as I made my way back to the kitchen to get their breakfasts cooked. I hope Kyle can eat because there is going to be a lot of food served.

Once everything was done and plated, I knew I was

going to have to make a couple of trips. One plate was filled with eggs, potatoes, bacon, and sausages. Then there was still a stack of pancakes and toast. I placed a plate in front of each of them before handing them a set of cutlery. Then I went back to the kitchen to get the rest of it.

I noticed Kyle's eyes went wide as I placed even more food in front of him. It was definitely a lot of food but if he was working for Frank, he was going to need it. It's going to be one hell of a first day for him.

"Can I get you anything else?" I asked them, as Frank was shoving food into his face.

"Coffee, please Ayla," Frank mumbled and I rolled my eyes.

"Refill?" I asked Kyle as I filled his cup.

"Please, and this is fantastic." Kyle grinned.

"Thank you, I'm glad you like it."

"Ayla, how's school going?" Frank asked, between bites.

"It would be better if your brother would update the internet," I called out, and Clyde looked around the corner at me.

"Guy's coming today." He grinned.

"Oh, thank goodness," I breathed out.

"Clyde, you will still need to update the dinosaur in your office," Frank called out.

"It's not that old!" Clyde huffed, coming over to stand with me behind the counter.

"I'm pretty sure it's older than me," I told him with a pointed look.

"Fine, we can go later to look for something newer. But nothing too fancy. You don't need to be playing the computer games or talking in those chat rooms." He scoffed, like a protective grandpa.

"Clyde, you act like I have time for boys or games. Advanced calculus is the only love of my life right now," I teased him.

"Clyde, let the girl live a little. She's smart, she's not going to pick no dummy." Frank retorted. And then the fight was on.

"Advanced calculus, what are you planning on studying?" Kyle asked me as the brothers bickered beside us. "I would like to be a lawyer but we'll see what happens. I still have a few classes to take before I graduate." I told him.

"High school?" He asked me and I nodded.

"I'm taking online classes so I can still work," I said.

"Ayla, here, is one smart cookie. I'm sure you'll get in." Frank praised me and Clyde wrapped his arm around my shoulders.

"It's not about being smart. University is expensive.

But we'll see what happens. Will you guys excuse me,
I have to get the kitchen cleaned up before I can get
some homework done?" I told them with a nod.

"Good luck," Kyle called out before I entered the kitchen.

"You too." I looked back at him for a moment before going into the kitchen to start the cleanup. I was thankful we weren't very busy this time of year.

Kyle Grant AKA King Kaden

It was finally lunch time and the crew I was working with decided to hit the local diner in town. After the massive breakfast that Ayla cooked, I wasn't feeling very hungry but I went anyway. I needed to fit in here as this was going to be my new home.

The six of us squeezed into a booth by a window facing out to the street. The pretty blonde waitress came to take our order and I just ordered a soda and then turned my attention back out the window.

"Dude, the hot waitress was just checking you out," the guy beside me grabbed my shoulder.

"I'm sure she wasn't." I rolled my eyes.

"What are you just allergic to pretty girls?" Another chuckled.

"She's not my type," I told them.

"Sexy, isn't your type?" Another raised an eyebrow at me.

When their food finally showed up, they all shut up and ate, thankfully. She, our waitress, was pretty, but I don't think I need any of that right now.

While looking out the window, Ayla walked by. She was just in jeans and a white shirt but she was beautiful in her simplicity. Her copper hair shined in the sunlight as she walked with a backpack on her shoulders. I couldn't help but stare. I knew she was

only sixteen and being twenty-one is definitely an age gap, but I couldn't help myself.

"Oh, you're into jailbait." One guy roared in laughter when he noticed who I was staring at.

"It's not like that," I tried to defend myself.

"It doesn't matter anyway. Both Clyde and Frank would kill you if you touched her. And then Jessica would cut you into little pieces." Another one said.

"Are they related?" I asked, and he shook his head.

"She showed up here about a year ago. Clyde and Jessica took her in. We think she was running from someone, she never talks about where she came from." He answered.

"She is a mystery but also underage. So don't touch."

The oldest told me, pointing a finger at me.

"Hey, I was just asking." I held up my hands in surrender.

When they were finally done eating, they paid the check before we went back to work. I couldn't stop thinking about Ayla. She would have only been fifteen when she showed up here alone. Who was she running from?

Ayla

A few weeks later...

I was working at the front desk, trying to finish this last assignment from this class. I was so close to graduating, and then I could just focus on working and saving up the money I needed for school. I'll have to wait until I'm eighteen since I don't have a parent or

guardian to sign anything, so that gives me almost two years to save.

The internet was finally updated and Clyde even updated the dinosaur he calls a computer. I've been busy updating the system to digital when I wasn't working on my homework or actually working.

The bell above the door chimed and I looked up to see Kyle coming in. It was late in the evening already. We've been friendly towards each other, but I think my age freaks him out. I am at the age of consent but I know Clyde would kill him.

"Kyle, you're back pretty late?"

"Yeah, it was one of the guy's birthdays." He answered, coming over to lean against the desk.

"What are you up to so late?" He asked me and I

could smell the alcohol on his breath.

"Just working." I shrugged.

"Is that all you do?" He raised an eyebrow at me.

"I like to go hiking but I just haven't had the time. Bills aren't going to pay themselves." I chuckled.

"I also enjoy the great outdoors. Do you know of any good trails around here?" He asked me.

"I do actually, there's an amazing trail that leads up to a waterfall." I rushed out, a little too excited and he chuckled.

"Sorry, it would seem, I'm due for a break. Maybe I'll be able to get away this weekend for an afternoon. If it's not busy here." I could feel myself blushing.

"Maybe you can show me. I have the weekend off." He shrugged.

"I'd like that. As long as I get all of this done. I feel like my brain is going to explode." I sighed and he chuckled.

"I can give you a hand if you'd like?" He offered.

"You know advanced chemistry?" I asked suspiciously, and he grinned.

"I'm more than just a pretty face." And I knew I was blushing. He was more than a pretty face because he also had the body of a god.

"Come on, let's sit in the dining room and I'll help you. Two brains are better than one."

"Alright," I told him.

He helped me move all my books to a table in the dining room. He was definitely more than just a sexy body and face. Kyle was incredibly smart. In no time, I was all done and I truly understood and was ready for my final exam in the class.

Looking at Kyle, I wished I was older or he was younger. My heart fluttered when he was around. And I could see myself falling for him.

Almost two years later...

Kyle Grant aka King Kaden

I was holding Ayla tight, not wanting to get up out of our bed. We've been living together for over a year now and I couldn't see my life without her. She is driving into the city for a job interview at a law firm, today, finally. We'll be moving to the city soon for Ayla's night classes and work. And I'm still looking for another job closer to her. She has been working and saving everything she can so she can do this. My girl was determined to make it as a lawyer even after everything she had gone through.

"I wish you could come with me to the city today. We could have dinner at one of those fancy restaurants."

She pouted while tracing over the contours of my abs.

"I'm sorry, baby girl. But I need to work if we are going to move. I still haven't found anything in the city." I told her, kissing her head.

"I know, and hopefully one day soon, money will stop being an issue for us." She mumbled, kissing my chest. "One day, but right now we both need to get up and get ready. I know you are going to get the job, baby girl." I said, and she looked up at me.

"I love you so much."

"I love you so much, baby girl," I leaned down and kissed her lips. This girl has been the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I'm never letting her go.

She made starting over so much easier. I was feeling guilty for leaving everything behind me until I met Ayla. She has been worth all of these struggles. I never had to worry about money before, but I'd rather worry about money than my father.

Ayla's lips never left mine as she climbed on top of me. My hard c**k pushed into her wet folds and I swallowed her moans as my tongue explored her

mouth. She moved her hips until her entrance found the tip of my c**k. She sat back and my girth filled her, as she moaned my name into my mouth.

"Kyle, she moaned, sitting up with her hands on my chest.

"f**k, baby girl," I groaned, moving her hips down into me.

"f**k, babe," Ayla gasped as I rolled us, sinking deeper into her.

Her legs wrapped around my waist and her nails dug into my shoulders as I pounded into her. My lips found hers as we came undone together. Kissing down her jaw to her neck, I groaned against her skin as Ayla moaned, biting into my shoulder. She never broke the skin and I loved her kink.

"How did I get so lucky?" Ayla breathed out, her grey eyes sparkling up at me.

"I was thinking the same thing." I chuckled and she gasped.

"How dare you?" She pouted and I kissed her.

"I'm the lucky one, baby girl. Now let's get ready, you have a drive ahead of you."

After we were done getting ready, I was saying goodbye to Ayla beside her car. I had been able to save up enough money to buy her one since she moved in with me. She had to drive to work. And I needed my truck for getting myself to work.

I hugged her when I noticed a black car across the street. The person leaning against the hood was someone I never thought I'd see again. Dante. What

the hell was my brother doing here? And how did he find me?

"Babe?" Ayla pulled me from my brother who was standing across the street.

"Yeah, sorry," I mumbled, looking down at her.

"I love you and I'll see you tonight. I'll bring something special home." She beamed.

"All I need is you, baby girl. I love you too. Drive safe and text me." I told her, before kissing her one last time. She climbed behind the wheel and I closed the door behind her.

She blew me a kiss before backing out of her parking spot. I watched her drive away before I walked across the street. I leaned against the hood of the car beside my younger brother.

"I'm not going back." I scoffed.

"He sold mom. I can't find her. I need you, Kaden." Dante said, and my heart broke.

"He did what?" I yelled.

"I'm sorry, but I need your help. Please?" He pleaded. My heart twisted painfully for my mother and my brother. I needed to find her, but what about Ayla? If my father finds her, he will kill her just because I love her. I didn't want to leave Ayla. I love her more than anyone, but I can't leave my mother to the hunters.

"f**k," I yelled. I wanted to hit something, anything. But instead, I pulled out my wallet and handed my brother my bank card.

"Go to the bank and clean out the account. I'm also

going to need all the cash you have on you. I'm not leaving her with nothing if I have to leave." I demanded. My brother stared at me for a moment before he nodded.

I headed back inside our apartment to pack what I needed. The thought of what I was doing made me want to be sick. Ayla will surely hate me after this, but I can't tell her who I am. I was supposed to be free of that world. I wasn't the next in line for the throne. He wasn't even my father. But here I am, packing up my s**t, to leave the love of my life to clean up this mess. I swear, he's a dead man.

I called Frank to let him know I couldn't come in today as my brother walked into our apartment. He handed me an envelope full of cash as I hung up the phone. My phone chimed, telling me I had received a text message.

Ayla: halfway there. I love you, babe. Xoxo.

My heart twisted painfully in my chest.

Me: I love you, baby girl. Good luck. Xoxo.

I grabbed my pack and keys before leaving the home I share with Ayla. My heart was breaking and there was nothing I could do. How can I say no to helping my brother and mother? And if my father ever found out about Ayla, he would kill her just to see me suffer. Leaving her was my only option.

Dante told the driver to follow us and he climbed into the passenger seat of my truck. I didn't want to leave as I gripped the steering wheel.

"I'm sorry, Kaden," Dante muttered.

"It's not your fault. But he's going to die not only for

hurting mom but for making me leave the love of my life." I growled out before starting my truck and taking off towards the airport.

Ayla deserves better than me.

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Six

Future Beta Nate

Xander, Ayla, and I were finally on a plane heading home. It was a six-hour flight from the closest airport to the Northern kingdom. Queen Andrea had sent her private plane to take us to Alpha Matt's pack. Which

means I should probably contact my dad and Alpha Atlas.

Last night was a whirlwind of emotions. King Kaden left and Ayla was a little too close to him for my liking. I know they have a past and Ayla wants to be friends with him, but I can't trust him. I know he would never let anything happen to her, but I can't trust he won't push himself onto her.

I know he wants her to take on a second mate, but I'm not willing to share her with anyone. She is all mine. I don't care if he has had her, he will never have her again. And no amount of guilt will change my mind.

Ayla was deep in a book while Xander sat across from us. I knew he had questions about their relationship. Hell, even I did. King Kaden was the same age as Prince Chase, which means he was five years older than Ayla. When they met, she was only

sixteen and he was an adult. Maybe she doesn't know him as well as she thinks she does.

"Ayla, can you tell us more about your relationship with King Kaden?" Xander finally asked. I had been nudging him for a while now. We talked while she was saying goodbye to him yesterday.

"There's not really much to say. I met him when I was working at a motel and he was just starting to work for a construction company. Then we eventually moved in together. We lived together for over a year before he left." She shrugged, looking up from her book.

"Did he lie to you about anything?" He asked her.

"Like his age?" I asked her. She looked from Xander to me.

"I know what both of you are thinking, but it's not true.

Kaden never lied to me about anything. Besides the mermaid part. But I knew his age when we first met. And before both of you try to say he was manipulating me, he wasn't. We talked about everything. He was always so supportive of my dream of being a lawyer. I don't even think we ever had an argument. In boyfriend standards, he was the perfect boyfriend." She told us.

"Until he left you," I scoffed, and she sighed.

"Yes, he did leave. But he did leave me with about ten grand. Not that money makes up for him leaving without a word. But in his own way, he was taking care of me. He didn't want his father to find me because he knew his father would kill me to hurt him. And then he left me all the money he had saved up. Our relationship didn't end on a happy note, but I understand why it ended." She explained.

"He left you money?" Xander asked and she nodded.

"It's how I was able to move back into the city. I'm not sure where he got all that money from. We didn't have secrets about money. Or how much we made. Our finances were an open book." Ayla told us.

"I wonder if whoever found him left the rest of the money for you. Like, since he had to leave, he wasn't going to leave you with nothing." Xander pondered. I still hated the guy but that was thoughtful of him. f**k, I really want to hate him.

"I still want to eat him," Duke growled and I rolled my eyes.

"I know, neither one of you trusts him, but I do. Yes, he broke my heart, but I understand why. I would do anything to protect my siblings. And I know he would protect me with his life, even though I would never

ask him to." She said.

"Ayla, I was just concerned about his intentions when you first met. He was an adult and you were a teenager." Xander told her and I agreed.

"I know both of you are just trying to protect me but I was already on my own for a year when I met him. I had to grow up really fast, even with Jessica and Clyde's help. I wasn't immature or naive. I knew full well what I was getting into." She defended.

"And I'll trust your judgment about him."

"Thank you, Xander." She told him and then looked at me. I sighed and nodded.

"I trust you, baby," I said, resting my hand on her thigh.

"I trust both of you completely. We need to trust either other if we are going to succeed in this. We can't be battling each other when we are battling the outside world." And with that, she turned her attention back to her book.

I knew she was trying to keep herself awake to avoid another incident like the helicopter. Also, she was determined to find out everything she could about what was happening to her. She even called her grandmother to find the book that she left in the library after she met with the goddesses for the first time. But nothing was found. I wonder if Ayla was the only one who could see it.

"Nate, are you going to run a patrol?" Xander asked me.

"I think so. I was going to ask Alpha Matt to join his pack. This way, I'd be able to mind link with his pack.

Did they mention the mind link yet?" I asked him and he shook his head.

"Nothing when we left and I won't know until I see my men. It would be incredibly useful when it does show up. I assume it's a tall order, that's why it's taking so long." He said and I agreed.

"We can organize where there is a wolf and mermaid together on patrol so we can always be informed on what is happening," I told him.

"That's what I was thinking. If Ayla was a part of the pack, would she be able to mind link you?" He asked me.

"I'm actually not sure. I know wolves have mated with humans, but I don't know any of the details. And I'm sure mermaids have mated with wolves as well, but I don't know what happened with the link." I said.

"I read about that earlier. Apparently, anyone in the pack would get the link, regardless of blood. So, if I was a part of my uncle's pack, then I would have the link. And I would still share the link with my kingdom if I had one. I think, anyway. I should probably write a book for the next black pearl." Ayla said, without taking her eyes off the pages.

"And that's why you're the smart one." I chuckled, squeezing her thigh. She had borrowed three bags of books from the northern kingdom. She and Queen Laura had also become best friends overnight.

Even with King Kaden's interruption in the northern kingdom, it was a productive visit. Not only has Ayla become stronger, but she has found people she can truly trust. Wolves have their pack and mermaids should have their pods but Ayla didn't have any of that. She trusted people based on their character.

I'd like to believe I could trust my pack blindly, but even I know bad people are hiding among the good.

The plane finally landed and I was feeling anxious to get my feet back on the ground. And to go home with Ayla. It will be nice to be in our own place, even with all the warriors with us. At least it will be ours.

Which means I should make a quick trip home to pack up some of my s**t. And to say goodbye to my alpha. It's going to be a change moving away from my lifelong friends but I'm doing this to be with Ayla. I'm not going to be like Kaden, she is my family and I'm never leaving her.

"Baby, I should go back to my old pack in a few days. I'll need to pack up my stuff and get my truck." I told her, as we sat in the back of the vehicle that was taking us to our new home. Xander was riding

shotgun, as one of his warriors came to pick us up.

"Do you want me to come with you?" She asked me.

"Ayla, I don't think that would be safe. With the threats your father's pack has received, and that you have received. I think it would be best if you stayed at the house." Xander explained.

"I think that would be best, and it would only be overnight at the most. I'm just going to pack up some of my stuff, say goodbye to everyone, and then leave with my truck." I said.

"I understand," she sighed and pulled her closer to me.

"I won't go for another few days. Let's get settled first."

I whispered and she nodded her head against my chest.

Ayla fell asleep before we arrived at the house, and thankfully she didn't blow up the vehicle. I would never worry her, but it made me nervous when she was asleep and we were in a moving vehicle. She could kill us all and not even mean to.

Ayla

I was awoken when the vehicle stopped and I shot awake. I was panicking until I saw that everyone was okay. I needed to keep my emotions in check, even in my sleep.

"It's okay, baby. We are here." Nate pulled me back into his chest and kissed my temple.

"I don't want to hurt you," I whispered to him and he kissed me again.

"I know, but we are all okay. Now, let's go get settled, it's been a long day." He said, opening the door at his side. He climbed out before extending his hand to me. I chuckled as I took his hand and he helped me out of the vehicle. I could do it myself, but I think it makes him feel needed.

As soon as we were both standing outside, Xander and his warriors all cried out, grabbing their heads.

"Xander," I yelled out, rushing over to him. He was hunched over with his hands on his head.

"It must be the mind link." I heard Nate say.

"Xander, build a wall. Close the link." I told him, leaning down beside him.

"Damn, that hurt." He breathed out, finally standing to his full height. I stood beside him, rubbing his back. "We should get you inside to sit down." I rushed out, worried. I couldn't lose Xander.

"Ayla, I'm fine, the pain is minimal now." He reassured me.

"At least take tonight off. You need to rest just in case." I told him and he raised an eyebrow at me.

"This could be seen as favoritism, my queen." He leaned into my ear and whispered.

"Do you want me to give all the men the night off?" I whispered, looking up at him. He gave me a smirk.

"What, I'm not your favorite now?" He chuckled.

"You are, but they don't know that," I told him, pointing at the others. We smirked at each other before we

both burst into laughter.

"Hey, I thought I was your favorite?" Nate pouted, wrapping his arms around my waist from behind.

"He's my favorite best friend/assistant/bodyguard and you are my favorite mate," I told them.

"I better be your only mate," he mumbled and both Xander and I laughed.

"Where's my Ayla bear?" I heard my uncle call out.

"Matt bear," I exclaimed before pulling away from Nate and rushing over to my uncle who had just walked up. I wrapped my arms around his neck while he squeezed me in a bear hug.

"How's my girl?" He asked, putting me back down.

"I'm good, tired. And glad to be somewhere familiar." I told him with a smile.

"Good, I'd like to introduce you to my son, Jonathan." He grinned, grabbing a young man out of the group of men he had brought with him.

"Jonathan, it's nice to meet you," I said, smiling at him.

"So, you're really uncle Atlas' kid?" He asked and my uncle growled beside me. I just chuckled.

"I am. So that would make us cousins, future Alpha Jonathan." I teased.

"Son, you are going to be working alongside Commander Xander and his warriors," my uncle told him. "And me alpha Matt," Nate said, coming up beside me.

"Nate, it's good to see you again." Matt shook my mate's hand.

"And you as well, sir."

"Jonathan, this is my mate, Nate." Both men shook hands.

"You're a wolf?" Jonathan asked him.

"Yes, future beta to your uncle's pack," Nate answered him.

"And you were mated with a mermaid?" He questioned.

"I'm half wolf too. And I'm standing right here." I

scoffed.

"I meant no disrespect. I have never heard of a wolf being bonded to a mermaid. It's always been a choice, that's what I've heard anyway," Jonathan said.

"We are bonded." Nate clarified and Jonathan nodded.

"We'll let you two get some rest. And we will discuss everything in the morning. Nate, have you decided what you want to do?" My uncle asked him.

"I have," Nate answered.

"Good, we can get it done tomorrow. All of your men can rest for the night and can start patrol tomorrow after we have set up a schedule. I've set up extra patrols on the border with share with Crimson Tide, just to be safe." My uncle informed us.

"Thank you, Matt. I really appreciate everything you are doing for me and my mate." I told him with a smile.

"Anything for my Ayla bear." He said, giving me another hug.

"Awe, who's a big softy?" I teased.

"Only for you and mom. Anyone else he would have killed." Jonathan chuckled.

"And don't you assholes forget it," Matt growled, before kissing my forehead.

"I'll see you in the morning." He said to me.

"Good night," I told them before Nate and Xander led me into the house. I was starving and exhausted. I just wanted to eat and sleep. Everything else could wait until morning. But I had to ask Xander a question that had been nagging at me.

"Xander, if Kaden's mother was claimed by another before she was claimed by the king, how did she have Kaden's brother?" I asked him as he led me and Nate through the house to our room.

"Ayla, the only way you can get another mermaid pregnant who has been claimed is by their claim to be not only dead, but you have to rip out the scale that was given to you. The practice is barbaric and, in most cases, will kill the person. King Kaden's mother must have been a strong woman to be able to not only endure that amount of pain but to survive along with her unborn child." Xander explained and I gasped.

"What a monster?"

"He hid it very well. Only members of the palace knew the extent of his cruelty. King Kaden did the world a favor when he killed the man everyone believed to be his father." He told us.

"Thank you, Xander, for everything. How are you feeling?" I asked him as we stood outside our room.

"I'm better and the link is working. We will talk about everything in the morning. I'll have dinner sent up for the two of you." Xander said, and I was confused.

"Sent up? What are you talking about?"

"We have staff. What, you thought your grandmother would give you the massive house without staff to help run it?" He asked, raising an eyebrow at me.

"Fine, but this is weird and you know it. I don't have a staff. I am the staff." I huffed.

"It's something you'll have to get used to, my queen," he said before turning on his heel and walking away.

"Everything will be okay, baby. It's something you'll have to get used to." Nate said, before opening the door to our room.

It was different than the room I was in before. It was more like an apartment than a bedroom. There was a sitting area around a fireplace that looked over the ocean through floor-to-ceiling windows. There was a huge bed facing the fireplace. The windows looked like they were tinted since it seemed darker in the room even with all the windows.

The closet was stocked with clothes for both of us.

And the bathroom was easily the size of the apartment I shared with Kaden. It was done with white tiles and a deep teal color. I can't believe this will be my home from now on. And I get to share it with Nate.

"Is everything okay?" Nate asked as he sat on the edge of our bed. He pulled me towards him so I was standing in between his legs. I kissed his forehead before I rested mine against his.

"Everything is perfect."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Seven

Ayla

A knock on our door pulled me from my make-out session with my mate. Which I guess it was the perfect time for an interruption since we were both still wearing clothes. I chuckled when Nate groaned against my lips.

"It's fine," I told him, pulling away from him. He hesitated but finally let me answer the door.

Opening the door, I found one of Xander's warriors. I recognized him from earlier. He bowed his head, which is something else I'll have to get used to.

"Sorry, to bother you, my queen. Commander Xander asked me to bring up your bags from the vehicle," he said politely.

"Of course, I can take those," I said, grabbing them off

of him. He looked at me surprised. The bags were heavy but nothing I couldn't manage.

"Thank you, have a good night," I said, before closing the door with my foot.

"Are you just allergic to shirts?" I rolled my eyes as I walked over to the sitting area. Nate was now standing by the bed in just a pair of grey sweatpants.

"Don't act like you don't like it, baby," he purred. I placed the bags down and looked at him.

"I just don't like anyone else seeing it," I told him, playing with my bottom lip.

He smirked but before he could move toward me there was another knock on the door. Nate moved to answer it while I started to organize the books I had borrowed.

I heard a woman gasp before she stumbled into our room, carrying a tray. She sat it down on the coffee table before rushing out and closing the door behind her. Not once did she make eye contact with me. I looked at Nate and raised an eyebrow. He just shrugged his shoulders before coming to sit down on the couch.

"Have you always drawn this much attention from girls?" I asked, stacking up the books.

"I never noticed. Why? Does it bother you?" He asked and I shrugged.

"I'm just asking. I just thought maybe you were used to it. I know why they react to you the

way they do." Nate pulled me back onto his lap and I squealed, not expecting it.

"I'm sure you received all kinds of attention from guys." He growled against my neck as he kneaded my breast through my shirt.

"Never," I moaned, giving him better access to my neck.

"I find that hard to believe, baby. You're fucken gorgeous." He groaned as I turned so I was now straddling him. I rolled my hips as he continued his assault on my neck.

"I was always a dork. f**k, Nate," I moaned louder, as his lips found my mark. With my hands on his shoulders, I rolled my hips down harder.

"I think that's hard to believe," Nate breathed out, grabbing my cheeks so I would look at him.

"Before I locked eyes with you and knew you were my mate, I knew you were the prettiest woman I've ever seen. And then your eyes locked on mine and I was lost. And not only are you the prettiest, but you have a wild personality." He praised me.

"Wild personality?" I smirked.

"Wild and free. And I get to spend the rest of my life with you." He murmured before his lips crushed mine. My heart swelled with so much love for this man. He truly loved me for me. Even if I was crazy and unpredictable.

I gasped when he stood up from the couch, and I wrapped my legs around his waist. He pushed his tongue into my mouth, tasting every inch, and I was lost in the feel of this man's touch. The tingles were consuming my body as he lowered me onto the bed.

He settled himself on top of me between my legs. His lips moved from my lips, to my jaw, and down to my neck. I moaned as he left open mouth kisses down my body. I sat up just enough for Nate to pull my shirt off and unclip my bra.

He bit down gently on one of my n*****s before flicking it with his tongue. Both my n****s were hard as his tongue played with one and his fingers pinched the other one. My hands were in his hair, holding him to my chest. I never wanted Nate to stop touching me as he switched breasts.

My body was on fire and I felt like I would explode at any moment when he licked down my stomach. He kneeled on the floor between my legs as he slid down my leggings and the thong I was wearing. When I was finally lying there naked in front of him, he kissed up my inner thigh. The anticipation of his tongue on my p***y had me rolling my hips. He chuckled as he

sucked on my hip.

"Nate, stop teasing," I moaned. I could feel his hot breath on my core.

"I love it when you beg." Nate groaned before his tongue licked up between my folds. My body trembled and goosebumps covered me as he sucked on my clit.

"f**k, Nate," I gasped, as he worked his tongue faster around my bud.

He pushed me over the edge when he inserted a finger and curved it up, hitting just the right stop. I gripped the sheets as Nate slowed his pace.

I was gasping for breath when he pulled away. He stood up licking his fingers before he pulled down his pants. With his c**k now free, I licked my lips before

looking up at him. Before he could say a word, I sat up and ran my tongue up the tip.

Nate groaned, bucking his hips. His hands were instantly in my hair. I moaned when the precum hit my tongue.

"f**k, baby," Nate groaned as his tip hit the back of my throat. I swirled my tongue as I took him in and out of my mouth.

Nate roughly gripped my hair as he controlled the pace. My entire body heated with need as he took control and I loved every second of his harshness. My nails dug into his hips as he f****d my mouth, chasing his release.

Nate grunted and groaned as he forced me to take his full length. His hot cream filled my mouth, tripping down the back of my throat. I moaned as Nate let me

go, giving me back control.

"Goddess, Ayla." Nate groaned as I released his c**k and looked up at him.

"Mhm, you taste so good." I moaned, licking the tip again. Before I knew what was happening, Nate had pushed me back onto the bed and flipped me. He pulled my ass up before rubbing his shaft into my folds from behind.

"Nate," I moaned, gripping the sheets. Nate slammed into me and I forgot how to breathe as he almost pulled out just to slam back in.

With one hand on my hip, Nate leaned forward and wrapped his other hand around my neck. He pulled me up against his chest, his pace growing harder.

"You feel so good, baby," Nate groaned against my

shoulder. That's all it took for my body to tremble as I came undone.

I reached back, digging my fingertips into his hip while the other gripped his arm that was wrapped around the front of me. My moans turned into gasps as Nate released deep inside me. He groaned and grunted in my ear, causing goosebumps to cover my body.

Nate left open mouth kisses along my shoulder as we both caught our breath. I felt like putty in his hands as I came down from my high. This man could do what he wanted to me and I would never protest.

"We should probably eat, baby," Nate mumbled as I flopped down on the bed.

"Yeah," I breathed out, snuggling into a pillow. I heard Nate chuckle before he covered me with a blanket. We should have eaten first before we played, I

thought, as exhaustion consumed me.

I awoke with a start. Sitting up, I started to panic until I heard Nate breathing beside me. I let out a breath as I calmed my racing heart. Looking around the room, memories of the night before came rushing back. I was so exhausted, I just passed out.

I sighed when my tummy rumbled. I quietly climbed out of bed, so as not to wake Nate. I went into the closet and found a robe before sitting on the couch. The fireplace was still going strong, casting the room in an orange hue. I placed the tray of food beside me after I grabbed the book I was reading earlier.

I was learning so much about what it meant to be a mermaid, not so much about being the black Pearl, but from what I gather from reading the first black pearl's journal, it's about being a beacon of hope for the people. I don't fully understand it, and he was a

half-witch, so I'm not even sure how my wolf comes into play here. I still haven't heard her. I was worried she was never going to show up.

I was so deep in my thoughts and book, I jumped when Nate touched my shoulder.

"Is everything okay?" He grumbled, his voice thick with sleep.

"Yeah." I gasped, clenching my chest.

"I didn't mean to scare you." He moved the tray and took a seat beside me.

"I was just in my thoughts. I didn't expect you to be awake," I told him and he chuckled.

"While it is morning." He pointed outside.

"How long have you been awake?" Nate asked and I shrugged.

"I don't know. I woke up and was hungry. I ate while I read and now you're up. I didn't look at the time."

"What's wrong?" He asked as he wrapped his arms around me and held me to his chest.

"I'm worried my wolf will never show up." I sighed and he squeezed me before kissing my head.

"She'll be here when she's ready. And there's no rush, baby. We still have to figure out what is going on first. Then we can come up with a plan and, hopefully, no more mermaids go missing in the meantime." He tried to reassure me.

"But what if I need her and she's not there? How am I going to get the wolves to trust me when I don't have

my wolf?"

"That's why you have me. I'm your wolf until yours shows up. Even after, I'm still your wolf. They will trust you, because of this mark on your neck." He mumbled, running his fingertips along my mark. I shivered as warmth filled my body.

"And I have your mark on me. And when the moon is full, you will claim me completely." He said, and I looked up at him.

"And you're sure you're ready for that? There is no going back."

"I've never been more sure about anything in my entire life. You belong to me and Duke and we are never letting you go." He said with so much conviction. It warmed my heart. I couldn't help but smile at his handsome face.

"We should probably talk about birth control if I'm claiming you in the next couple of weeks." He gave me a look and I sighed.

"I'm not ready for a baby, yet. I do want them, and with you. But not now." I told him and he smiled.

"I'm okay with that. I'm ready whenever you are, baby. There is no rush for babies. Even though I do have fun practicing." He purred and I chuckled.

"We can just keep practicing," I smirked before I kissed his lips softly.

"Are you worried about being pregnant now?" Nate suddenly asked, changing his mood.

"Maybe, I don't know. If I do have a wolf, then I don't know if I'll get a heat or if it will be the full moon. I

would be happy but it would put us both at risk right now. That wouldn't be very responsible of us as parents to put our child in danger. I'll talk with Xander about speaking with his mother. I was thinking when you head back to your pack, I'll head back to the palace. I need to find that book." I told him.

"I don't want you going there without me." He sighed.

"I know, but it will be a quick trip if I swim and Xander will be with me the entire time. I'll be safe, babe." I said, wrapping my arms around his neck.

"Babe?" He smirked.

"Well, you call me baby, so I need a pet name for you.

Or I can call you baby boop?" I teased and he chuckled.

"Babe, I like it. I think it suits me." He grinned and I

giggled.

"Yes, because you are such a babe," I laughed and his grin grew wider.

"Only for you, baby."

A knock on the door pulled me out of the conversation with my mate. Nate kissed my forehead before he got up to answer the door.

"I didn't wake you, did I?" I heard Xander ask Nate.

"No, we were up. Come on in." Nate opened the door wider and Xander walked in carrying a tray.

"Good morning, Ayla." Xander greeted me. He sat down in the chair beside me, after placing the tray with mugs of coffee on the coffee table. "Good morning. Someone is chipper. And you brought coffee," I giggled.

"I know you are grumpy in the morning without your coffee." He chuckled and I huffed.

"Maybe, a little bit," I mumbled, crossing my arms over my chest. Nate sat beside me and chuckled while handing me a mug.

The smell of the roasted beans warmed my cold dead soul. I took a sip and it was heavenly. Xander makes the best coffee.

"So, what's the plan for today?" Nate asked Xander before taking a sip of his coffee.

"First, we are going to meet with Alpha Matt. Then Miss Queen here is going to train when we step up the schedule." Xander informed us.

"Tomorrow, I'll be heading back to my pack," Nate said.

"And we will be going back to the palace so I can look for that book," I told him.

"Are you sure, Ayla?"

"We'll swim. It didn't take us that long before to get there. But I need to find that book. The goddess' said it held answers." I pleaded with him.

"Fine, but I'll have to get some more warriors here before we can leave. All the warriors here have to stay here. Let me make a few calls." He sighed.

"Thank you." I smiled.

"You're so demanding. Is there anything else?" He

rolled his eyes.

"I am not. But you could have brought some chocolate." I smirked and he chuckled.

"Chocolate, for breakfast?" He asked and I shrugged.

"Chocolate is the perfect snack for any time of the day." I sipped my coffee. Both the guys chuckled.

"I'll have your room stocked," Xander said.

"You don't have to. I can go to the store myself to get some chocolate." I told him.

"Ayla, you can't just go to the store anymore. You can order things online. Everywhere you go now, it is going to have to be perfectly planned. I know it's going to take some time for you to get used to it. But it's best for you to stay around the house," Xander

explained, and Nate agreed.

"But no one knows who I am. Why can't I go out? It's not like you can tell I'm the black pearl like this?" I scoffed. I've been independent for so long, and I wasn't ready to give it up.

"We can't risk the hunters finding you. I'm sorry, Ayla. I know this will be an adjustment for you. But right now, it's for the best." Xander sighed. And Nate squeezed my thigh.

"Fine. I promise I'll stay with someone at all times or be in the house. But I'm not happy about always having a babysitter. And we still need to go to the palace. I'm not going to sit around while Nate is gone." I told them.

"I'll be gone overnight at the latest. Besides, I need to get a new phone. I should let them know I'm going. Also, I'll need to denounce my Alpha and pack if I want to be a part of Alpha Matt's pack." Nate said.

"I have phones for both of you," Xander said.

"You can't belong to more than one pack?" I asked Nate.

"Only one," he answered.

"But won't that make you a rogue?" I exclaimed.

"More like a lone wolf. Duke is too strong to be a rogue," Nate answered, wrapping an arm around me.

"So, we have a plan. Get ready and meet me downstairs, we can have breakfast before we go and meet with Alpha Matt." Xander said before standing up from his seat.

"And wear something comfortable, Ayla. You will be training." He told me before leaving the room. I huffed and Nate chuckled.

"Come on, baby. You could try to kick my ass."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Eight

Ayla

After breakfast, Xander, Nate, and I decided to walk over to my Uncle's pack house. This was all his pack now and I knew I was safe. Even though I wasn't worried about the hunters or the Crimson Tide. I knew

I was powerful when I needed to be. Now I just need to be able to control it. After training, I was going to start pulling at the pressure and seeing if I could bring it on without my emotions.

"Ayla," I heard my name being called and I turned to see Jonathan walking towards us.

"Good morning," I greeted him.

"I'd like to apologize for yesterday," he said.

"Are you heading back?" I asked him and he nodded.

"Walk with me," I said, linking our arms. Nate and Xander followed behind us as I walked with Jonathan.

"I appreciate your apology, even if it wasn't needed. Is it because you are hesitant to work with mermaids?" I asked him and he sighed. "That's one thing. But the other is because my father never told me anything about you. I didn't even know my uncle had another child and with a mermaid."

"To be fair, I was only allowed to spend time with your father. My mother kept me away from Atlas. He wasn't even able to sign my birth certificate and he wasn't present at my birth. I think he was just protecting me. He even asked my mother to adopt me but she refused. I don't know what she was thinking but she only hurt me and Atlas in the end." I told him.

"I'm sorry, you didn't get to know Uncle Atlas. He's a good man."

"I'm getting to know him now. And his mate, Thea, is wonderful. I feel more like a part of their family than I ever did with my mother. And Matt Bear will always be my favorite." I giggled.

"He loves you. The only one he's like that with is my mother. And this is the first time I've heard about all of this, probably because it was none of my business. But I always wondered why it took Uncle Atlas so long to find his mate." He shrugged.

"That was my mother's doing. Mermaids can only get pregnant once they are claimed. So, she claimed my father. Four years ago, she broke the bond with him and he was able to find Thea." I told him.

"Are you worried about working with the mermaids?" I asked him. His attitude from yesterday showed hesitation. Which I understand, this world is new to them.

"Not worried. But I am concerned about the Crimson Tide and starting a war with them." He confessed.

"I'm not here to start a war with them. If they are kidnapping my people, I need to stop them. My grandma gifted me this house and I gifted the land to Uncle Matt. Unfortunately, this fight will be on land. If it was in the water, we wouldn't have asked for your help." I explained.

"That's the reason she was paired with a wolf," Nate said, grabbing my hand.

"And to her people, she is a queen and will be treated as such," Xander said, walking up beside Jonathan.

"Queen?" He stuttered.

"Will you both stop? I'm just Ayla to you Jonathan. We are family." I told him and he nodded, nervously.

"Ayla bear!" Matt exclaimed, walking up to us. We had just walked into the backyard, which looked like a

training field.

"Good morning." I greeted him and he wrapped me in a hug, pulling me from my mate.

"I hope my son wasn't being a fuck." Matt growled and I chuckled.

"Not at all. Besides, he is helping to keep me safe."

"I can't believe I'm related to a queen." I heard Jonathan mumble.

"Anyways, what's the plan?" I asked my uncle.

"First, I'd like to see Nate's wolf." He said.

"Why do you want to see Duke?" I asked him.

"I need to know the wolf I'll be adding to my pack.

Atlas said he can be a little temperamental." Matt answered and Nate's chest rumbled.

"Well, your brother did say some hurtful things about his mate. Duke was just defending her." Nate defended.

"He's more loyal to his mate than his pack?" My uncle questioned.

"Without a doubt. Ayla will always come first," Nate stated. Both of them stared at each other and I couldn't read them. I didn't know if that answer was good or bad.

"Then let's see Duke." My uncle commanded. Nate nodded before he pulled off his clothes and shifted into his big black wolf.

I watched as my uncle's eyes went wide in surprise.

The other wolves with my uncle, including his son, all took a step back as Duke bared his teeth. I, on the other hand, kneeled to get some love from my wolf.

"There's my sweet, fluffy Duke." I cooed as he moved over to me. I stroked his muzzle as I gave him kissy lips.

"Ayla, you should be terrified of him," Matt said, and I stared up at him.

"Why?" I asked, confused.

"He's bigger than any alpha I've seen. Atlas said he was big but I didn't expect that." He scoffed.

"Uncle, I'm not terrified of him. He's my wolf. I know he would never hurt me. But maybe you all should be a little worried." I chuckled when Duke ran his tongue up my cheek. "I have no idea what position to give him. Anything less than an alpha would be an insult." My uncle said and I was worried.

"So, you won't accept him?"

"Ayla, it's fine. Duke is willing to be a lone wolf. We don't need a pack." Nate startled me by shifting back.

"But wolves need packs. That's why we came back." I argued as he got dressed, and I stood up.

"Ayla, after your grandma brings you into the pod, you can bring Nate in. At least that way we can mind link." Xander told me. And this was not how I expected this morning to go.

"Ayla, you know I would do anything for you, but my wolf won't allow me to accept a wolf who could be a

threat to him." My uncle told me as Nate got dressed and I sighed.

Most of this, I didn't understand. Why wouldn't you want to have a wolf like Duke in your pack? Wouldn't you want a strong wolf on your side?

"Ayla, there are no hard feelings. Duke understands and so do I. It's just how things are done." Nate reassured me. He wrapped his arms around me and kissed my neck.

"So what do you want to do then?" I asked him.

"We can figure things out later. You need to train and we need to come up with a schedule while we are here. There's no rush," Nate said.

"Ayla bear, all of you are welcome here for as long as you like. There is no rush. I'm sorry I can't offer him a

position in my pack." My uncle said.

"But if you can't give him a position in your pack, then where would that leave my wolf?" I questioned. And all the other wolves looked at me confused.

"We don't sense a wolf," Jonathan said.

"She hasn't shown up yet. But the moon goddess assured me, I do have one." I explained, and they gasped.

"You met the goddess?" Matt questioned and I nodded.

"The three of us have. We met both goddesses after Ayla proved herself." Nate told them.

"Wow, okay, well I'm lost for words." My uncle stammered.

"Let's just get the schedule done. That's something we can control," Nate said.

"And I'll train with Ayla," Jonathan offered.

"We'll be right over there," Nate pointed at a table on the veranda. And I nodded.

"Give him hell." He said, kissing my lips before he and the others walked towards the house, leaving me with Jonathan.

"Have you had any training?" He asked me.

"I know how to use a gun. But I don't have any handto-hand fighting skills," I confessed.

"That's okay. We will fix that. Now, let's do some stretching before we start."

"Aren't you tired?" I asked him as I started to stretch.

"I'm okay. I'll take a nap later. Besides, I'm more of a night owl anyway."

After we were both stretched out, we both got into our fighting stances. I watched him carefully as he started to move. I moved in the opposite direction.

"I just want you to go off of instinct. I won't make contact with you. I just want to see what I have to work with." He said and I nodded.

"Ready?"

Nate

"Don't be disappointed about joining this pack. The only position Ayla deserves is Luna." Duke told me as

I walked with Alpha Matt.

"She's worried about us not having a pack." I sighed and he scoffed.

"We have our own pack. She is all we need. And Alpha Matt is right. The only position good enough for us is alpha." Duke said as he retreated.

"You okay?" Xander nudged me.

"I'm worried about Ayla." I sighed.

"And she's worried about you. She truly feels that you need a pack to be happy." Alpha Matt said, and we took a seat.

"Duke doesn't need one. I knew after I met her that I would have to give up everything I knew. And it doesn't bother me." I told them, watching Ayla as she

stretched.

"And she really has a wolf?" A man sitting beside Alpha Matt asked.

"Nate, Xander, this is my beta, Lincoln." He introduced his beta.

"Good to meet you." I shook his hand and then Xander did.

"She does have a wolf," I answered his question. I pulled down my collar to show Ayla's mark. The scale she gave me was how mermaids claim, but her bite mark was all wolf.

"She claimed you?" Alpha Matt gasped. And I was surprised they didn't see the mark earlier. I wasn't hiding anything when I shifted just minutes ago.

"And I've marked her," I told him and he nodded.

"Let's get to the schedule so we can keep Ayla safe," Xander said, and we all agreed.

We all needed to protect Ayla. The moon goddess is also involved in this, which means all the wolves should submit to Ayla. She's the closest one to the moon goddess herself.

"She's a queen and as soon as her wolf makes her grand entrance, everyone will bow down to her." Duke purred.

We were organizing the night patrols and having a few warriors with Ayla at all times. If Xander or I were with her, then they could take a break but still be in the area just in case. No one was getting through Duke and I knew Xander would protect her with his life, but she would be devastated if anything

happened to Xander.

We were finalizing the schedule when I heard a commotion coming from where Ayla was supposed to be training. Looking up, I saw she was now covered in black scales. Jonathan lunged at her and she jumped over him, flipping her body and landing on her feet behind him.

Every blow he tried to land, she would easily deflect. She moved at lightning speed and I was having a hard time keeping up with her. She may not have been trained, but her instincts were impressive.

I was instantly turned on watching her kick the Alpha's son ass.

"Mate is perfect." Duke purred, coming forward to watch his mate with me.

"We should probably go save Jonathan," I said, getting up from the chair. The alpha and his beta were stunned and didn't move as Xander and I walked toward Ayla. The crowd parted and we walked through to stand on the sidelines.

"I thought you said you didn't have any training." I heard Jonathan panting.

"I don't." Ayla shrugged. f**k, she looks hot in her scale suit.

"Then what the hell was that?" he exclaimed.

"Jonathan, take a break," I called out, taking off my shirt. Ayla rolled her eyes and I chuckled as I walked closer to them.

"She's a beast. Good luck." Jonathan breathed out, moving to the sidelines.

"Did you really have to remove your shirt?" She huffed and I smirked.

"It's my distraction." I chuckled.

"Why did you shift?" I asked her and she shrugged.

"I don't know. I moved, and he landed a blow and I just shifted. I knew this was training and he wasn't going to hurt me, but maybe this was an automatic defense that I can't control."

"Okay, well, how about you hit me?" I said and she stood up out of her stance and crossed her arms over her chest.

"Absolutely not. I don't want to hurt you." She exclaimed.

"And I'll heal. I want to know if you can protect yourself." I told her and she sighed. She shook out her arms before getting back into her stance.

"Fine." She grumbled.

I lunged at her and she blocked me before she twisted my arm and threw me over her shoulder. I landed on my back, knocking the air from my lungs. It all happened so fast, I didn't even see it coming. Duke was purring in my head as I tried to force air into my lungs.

"Oh my god, babe, are you okay? I'm so sorry." Ayla rushed out, kneeling beside me. She grabbed my cheeks, forcing me to look at her.

"Don't apologize, baby. I feel bad for the poor bastard who pisses you off." I breathily chuckled.

"There you go, Ayla." I heard Xander praise her.

"Ayla bear, that was incredible. You should be teaching." Her uncle exclaimed.

"I can't teach if I have no idea how I did any of that. I was going off of instinct, which I didn't even know I had." She said, helping me to stand.

"Are you sure you're okay?" She asked me worriedly. I wrapped my arm around her waist and her scales receded, exposing her skin.

"I'm good, baby." I kissed his temple.

"This is incredible," Alpha Matt breathed out, touching Ayla's arm. The scales seem to only recede under my touch and no one else's.

"She is ours and we are hers," Duke purred.

"It's like a suit of armor," the alpha commented.

"It's something that happened after I proved myself.
I'm going to have to learn how to control it. I didn't
mean to shift." She told him, and his eyes snapped at
hers.

"Does your father know?" He asked her.

"I haven't talked to him since I talked to him about the murdered mermaid. And then s**t happened and I don't even know what happened to my phone." She told him.

"I'll call him and ask him to visit. He needs to see this. Not only are your scales amour, but with your fighting skills, you are the perfect weapon." He said and I pulled her closer to me. She may be a weapon, but I'm not going to let anyone use her.

"I meant no disrespect, Nate. I would never do anything to hurt my niece." He said, reading my mind.

"I don't understand. Weapon? I thought I was a beacon of hope."

"Don't worry, we will figure all of this out. But I'm glad you can kick ass." I told her, and Xander chuckled.

"Better you than me."

"Xander, the body of scales isn't normal, is it?" She questioned and he shook his head.

"Only you, my queen." And she rolled her eyes at the title.

"Anyway, I'll be leaving tomorrow for my old pack. I need to pack up my things. Ayla, are you still traveling

to the palace?" I asked her and she looked at Xander.

"We will be ready to leave after Nate does," Xander answered.

"Ayla, why do you need to head to the palace?" Alpha Matt asked her.

"I need to find something. But I'll be back the day after and then I can meet up with Dad. And maybe Jim can bring Bluey here. Is that okay with you?" She asked him.

"Of course. No one here will hurt Bluey." He told her.

"Now, Jonathan, you should get some sleep. It's going to be another long night." The alpha commanded.

"Do you need help with anything, Matt?" Ayla asked

him just before he was about to leave. He turned back, a look of confusion on his face.

"I have a few meetings and a stack of paperwork to get done," he said.

"I mean, around the pack. Is there anything I can help with?" She clarified and he smiled.

"Just focus on learning what you need to learn.

Everything else we have covered. Also, when you get back, I'll introduce you to the warriors that will be in charge of your protection. Not that I think you need it. I'll be in my office if you need anything, Ayla bear." He said, walking closer to her. He kissed her forehead.

"I'm so proud of you."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Forty-Nine

Ayla

"Great, now how do I shift back?" I huffed after my uncle left with his son. I looked around at Nate and Xander.

The group watching us started dissipating, while I tried to figure out how to shift back. I could just go for a swim but wanted to see if I could shift back without fully shifting. I closed my eyes and focused on my skin.

I heard gasps and a growl that caused goosebumps

to cover my skin before tingling covered my body and I hit something hard. I opened my eyes to find Nate, glaring around us.

"Nate?"

"Baby, you're naked," he growled and I chuckled. He looked down at me.

"I thought wolves were okay with nudity?" I smirked and he grumbled.

"Not your nudity. What the hell happened?" He growled.

"I thought of my skin and I guess I shifted back," I explained.

"Nate, it's no big deal, you shift back naked," I said and he growled. Xander came up beside him and handed him his shirt. He snatched it before pulling it over my head.

"Really, babe?" I gave him a pointed look and he crushed me to his chest.

"Mine," he grumbled.

"Yours." I breathed out.

"But you'll have to catch me," I said, pulling from his grip and taking off towards the beach.

"What?" I heard him while I took off at full speed. I don't think I've ever run this fast before.

"You are in so much trouble!" I heard Nate yell out behind me. I laughed as I got closer and closer to the water.

"Gotcha," Nate yelled, but I sped up and he just missed me. I could feel his fingertips brush against my arm.

"Not yet." I laughed.

As soon as my foot touched the ocean, Nate pounced and we rolled with me landing on top of him. We were both laughing as the waves crashed against us. I resisted the shift as I straddled him.

"f**k, baby," Nate breathed out, sitting up. Before he could say another word, my lips were on his. He swallowed my moans as I tasted the sea on his lips.

"Goddess, you're sexy." He purred and I giggled.

"Even if you did just show your ass to half the pack," he grumbled.

"But you're the only one that gets to smack it." I purred, rolling my hips. Nate groaned, squeezing my ass.

"f**k, Ayla."

"Do you want to go for a swim with me?" I mumbled against his neck before I sucked his mark.

"I'm surprised you haven't shifted."

"I'm trying to control it." I breathed out. I pushed my chest against Nate. I knew he could see my n*****s through his shirt. It was white after all.

"There's no way I'm letting you walk back to the house with just my wet white shirt on." He growled and goosebumps covered my body. My core heated and I rolled my hips. I didn't care who was watching.

"You are such a tease, my naughty mate," Nate groaned.

"Tell me you don't enjoy it?" I purred. I licked up his cheek before I slipped through this grip. I shifted as I swam under the swell.

When I breached the surface, Nate was out of the water, kicking off his now-soaking shoes. Before he could strip off his sweatpants, he turned around. I saw Xander walking over to him.

I sighed, knowing our moment was now over. It was fun while it lasted. But now it was time to get back to work. I dived below the swell as I swam back towards the beach. I shifted back before I surfaced. I could feel Nate's anger through our bond and knew something bad must have happened.

They were arguing about something when I waded

out of the water. But as soon as Xander saw me he shut up and jerked his head. Nate shut up instantly and turned to face me. Both of them looked worried and my heart sank.

"What happened?" I demanded, crossing my arms over my chest.

"Ayla, something has happened and we need you to come back to the house. We will explain everything." Xander said.

"We are ready to leave," Jonathan announced before I noticed him.

"Ready to leave? Nate, what the hell is he talking about?" I exclaimed and his guilt hit me.

"Baby,"

"No, if you are leaving, then I'm coming with you." I insisted.

"Give him a few minutes," Xander told Jonathan before he left us. Nate closed the distance between us.

"Ayla, please listen," he pleaded, grabbing my arms, but I pulled away.

"No, Nate, I'm coming with you. We are in this together and I'm not letting you run into danger without me." I yelled.

"Ayla, there was another body found in your father's pack," Xander said, and I gasped.

"What?" I breathed out.

"Baby, I need to go with the warriors that Alpha Matt

is sending to help your father. I can't take you back there until this mess is cleaned up. I won't risk you, Ayla." Nate explained, pulling me against his chest.

"But what if this is what they wanted?" I mumbled.

"You will be leaving with Xander after I leave. It's no longer safe on land for you. Ayla, I'm sorry." Nate said, resting his forehead against mine.

"Nate, I can protect myself. I can go with you and investigate this. I'm not useless." I pleaded with him.

"I know you can, baby. I know you are strong and brave, but I need you away from here until I can get back. It's not safe here for you until I return. Please, Ayla, I would go insane if anything were to happen to you." He said, desperately. I could feel his fear. All I could do was nod, as I closed my eyes and willed myself not to cry.

"Go get packed, we'll meet you at the pack house. Warrior Ryan will have your phone." Xander told him, walking up beside us.

"I love you, baby," Nate mumbled against my lips before wrapping his arms around me tightly. I snuggled my face into his bare chest.

"I'll be back as soon as I can. You go find that book and we will meet back here once it's safe." He said, kissing my forehead.

My arms felt empty and my heart twisted painfully as I watched him run back to the house. The bond screamed at me to run to him. To beg him to stay here with me. Before, when he was just leaving to pick up some of his stuff and now he was walking into unknown danger. With my mark on his chest, it puts a target on his back.

"It will be okay." Xander wrapped his arm around my shoulder and I jumped. I was so lost in my thoughts I forgot he was standing with me.

He pulled me to his side but his comfort did nothing to ease the pain I was feeling. If anything were to happen to Nate, I would rip this world apart. How the hell were we ever going to be apart?

Nate walked up to the front of the pack house as soon as Xander and I did. Xander walked me the entire way, with his arm wrapped around me. Why does my life have to be such a s**t show?

Nate pulled me out of Xander's grip and into his arms. I snuggled into his chest, wrapping my arms around his waist.

"I'll be back as soon as I can. I love you, baby." He

cupped my cheeks so I would look up at him. He crushed his lips to mine as I gripped his shirt for dear life. I needed him like I needed air to breathe.

"I love you," I breathed out when he pulled away.

"Xander, keep her safe," Nate told him before he pecked my lips one more time.

He climbed in, riding shotgun with Jonathan driving. There were three SUV's and I know all of them were full of warriors. When the SUV driving my mate away was out of sight, I turned my attention to my uncle. He was watching me intently.

"Can I see the report?" I asked him.

"Ayla, that's not a good idea," Xander said, and I shook my head.

"This is my job, to protect my people. And if I can't be there I want to see that damn report," I snapped.

A man standing beside my uncle handed me a folder and I opened it to find a picture of a female mermaid. She was just covered in pink blood and there were no scales left to cover her body. She was also missing her head.

The more I looked at the picture, the more I gritted my teeth. The horrors this person must have endured were heartbreaking. And all of this was to get to me. I heard gasps and I looked up to find everyone staring at me.

"Ayla bear, are you okay?" My uncle asked, approaching me slowly like I was a predator ready to attack.

Xander snatched the folder from me before grabbing

my wrists. He was now standing in front of me and he placed my hands on his chest. I could see fear as I looked up at him. I noticed I had shifted, my arms now covered in scales.

"Breathe, Ayla. I know you are angry." Xander said.

"Angry? I'm furious! Someone is killing them to get to me. And there's not a damn thing I can do about it!" I yelled.

"Okay, I understand but I need you to breathe,"

Xander said softly, and I instantly felt guilty for yelling at him. It wasn't his fault and he is just trying to defuse this situation.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Xander was right. I needed to calm down before I did something stupid.

"I need you to contact Kaden. The mermaid belonged to his kingdom." I said, and Xander looked at me confused.

"How could you possibly know that?" He asked and I stammered.

"I don't know," I breathed out.

"Sir?" Ryan said, handing Xander a bag.

"I'll contact King Kaden, Commander," Ryan nodded to him.

"We should get going. We have to meet the other warriors halfway since this was all unexpected," Xander told me.

"Are you sure she is going to be safe?" My uncle asked.

"With the way, I'm feeling right now, I dare them to attack me," I growled, and my uncle pushed his lips into a line.

I know this wasn't their fault but I was furious with all of this. I needed to stop this, but I can't do that with them thinking I'm weak. I'm not weak. I have alpha and royal blood. I can do this and it would all be over if they would stop protecting me.

"Ryan, contact Nate and let him know as well. Ayla and I need to leave." He told him.

"Be safe, Ayla Bear." My uncle came to hug me.

"Thank you," I told him, hugging him back.

I didn't wait for Xander as I took off running for the ocean. I need to find that damn book and, hopefully, it

will tell me how to get my wolf to come forward. I had a feeling I was going to need her soon.

I was also going to have to have a chat with Nate and Xander about my involvement. This is why I'm here. I understand they want to keep me safe, but by doing so, others are dying. And I can't have that. I'm supposed to be their hope, not their death sentence. And if the two goddesses can believe in me, then they should as well.

My stomach twisted, painful for the mermaids I couldn't save. This was getting out of hand and the villains were getting too cocky. They believe they are untouchable and I can't wait to prove just how wrong they are.

As soon as my feet hit the water, I jumped, driving under the swell of the waves. I didn't even hit the sandy bottom as I swam through my shift. I didn't

even care if Xander was following me. I was running on instinct.

"Ayla," I was whipped back into something hard, fingers gripping my arms.

"Xander, let's go," I demanded, but he didn't let go.

"Can you please calm down?" He exclaimed and I glared at him.

"And can you just listen to me? I'm not useless. This is my job. And I'm so sick and tired of you and Nate treating me like I'm made of glass." I yelled. My chest was pounding against his and we started at each other.

I just wanted to have a normal life. I was tired of all of this. I was tired of waiting around, hiding while my people were being killed. Xander's face softened, and one of his hands let go of my arm to caress my cheek. My face softened under his touch. I know he wasn't doing any of this to hurt me. It's his job to protect me.

"I'm sorry, Ayla. I just need to keep you safe. I believe in you, like no other. I know you can do this but I don't want them to kill you. I couldn't live with myself if I let anything happen to my best friend." He sighed.

"Best friend?" I asked, hopefully.

"You're not just my queen, you're my best friend. I'm sorry I didn't say anything about Jordon. I should have. And I should have been camping with you that weekend. It's my fault you were attacked by these rogues." He confessed and I wrapped my arms around his waist.

I listened to his heart pounding against my ear. We stayed gliding in the current, holding each other until his heart rate returned to normal. Most women never meet their soulmates, but here I was with three men I could spend forever with.

"Let's get you to the palace," Xander said as he let go. I nodded before I followed him.

"How did you know the mermaid was from King Kaden's kingdom?" He asked and I shrugged.

"I don't know. I just know." I answered him.

"Ryan told me he texted Nate and he was going to give King Kaden a call. I'm sure we will both have a few messages by the time we arrive at the palace," he said.

"So are we heading to the palace because I need to

go there or because you think it's safer for me?" I asked him and he sighed.

"It's safer for you. All the palace islands are protected by magic. Humans won't be able to get to you there." He answered.

"And what if they aren't human? I could have witches, vampires, and other wolves after me. There could even be other mermaids. None of us are safe anywhere until I can find whoever is behind these deaths," I told him.

We swam in silence after that. We had no idea who or what we were up against and until we got those answers I would always be in danger. My sadness about missing Nate was replaced with a determination to end this.

I missed Nate terribly, but I was never going to have

the life I wanted with him until this threat was taken out. That's what I need to focus on right now. Saving my people and living happily ever after with Nate. And if that meant being away from him until this was all over, then so be it. I would just have to live through the pain so another mermaid wouldn't have to go through the horrors of being kidnapped, descaled, and then death.

Some of Xander's warriors met us out in the open ocean. I didn't even know where we were or how far we had to go. I was just thankful to be swimming. I needed to exhaust my body, so maybe by the time we arrived, my mind would be able to rest.

Ayla, how are you doing?" Xander asked me. His warriors surrounded us as we swam.

"I'll be better once this is all over," I told him.

"I promise, you'll be able to kick ass soon."

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MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Fifty

Nate

I was riding shotgun with Jonathan, driving to my pack with two more warriors riding with us. There were two more SUVs following us with warriors. Alpha Atlas had called Alpha Matt after seeing us this morning to inform him of another body.

I was brooding in my seat as I stared out the window. I'm even more worried about Ayla now. I didn't even

want to think about them ever getting a hold of her.

My new phone chimed in the pocket of my jeans. I pulled it out to find a text message from Ryan. f**k, what could have possibly happened now?

Ryan: Princess Ayla told us the victim was a part of King Kaden's kingdom.

"For f**k sake," I growled.

"Everyone okay?" Jonathan asked me and I grumbled.

"The victim is from the eastern sea kingdom." I groaned.

"Is that bad?" One warrior asked, from the back seat.

"It is when Ayla's ex is the king." I scuffed.

"f**k, dude. That's rough." Jonathan breathed out.

"She dated a king?" The other warrior asked and I cursed.

"It's a long story," I growled, looking out the window again. Can this day get any fucken worse? And then my phone rang. The number was unknown and I was immediately worried it was about Ayla.

"Beta Nate," I answered.

"Nate, where's Ayla?" King Kaden yelled into the phone and I growled.

"She is with Xander. Not that it's any of your fucken business," I snapped.

"She's my queen, so it is my business, Wolfboy!" he

retorted.

"What the hell do you want?"

"I'm going to the Diamond Mountain Pack to collect a body and I wanted to make sure Ayla was okay. I called her and she didn't answer." He said and I growled.

"That's my pack and you don't need to go there. And Ayla is fine and you shouldn't be calling my mate." I said through gritted teeth.

"Then I guess I'll see you there then. I've already spoken to the Alpha." He told me before he hung up.

I squeezed the phone in my hand, taking deep breaths before I crushed it. I wish it was his body we found.

"Good, now I get to eat the fucker." Duke growled.

"Nate, what was that about?" Jonathan questioned.

"Apparently the king feels he needs to visit my pack," I snapped.

"This day just keeps getting better and better for you." Jonathan chuckled.

It had to be the longest drive of my life getting back to my pack. I needed to go for a run and to rip something apart. The only good thing is that Ayla isn't here to see King Kaden. I hate their relationship and I wish she could cut him off completely.

"Or we can kill him and hide his body in the mountains," Duke chimed in.

"Don't fucken tempt me, right now. I was having such

a great morning with Ayla until all this bullshit happened." I snapped at him.

"It's not my fault you didn't kill the bastard when we had the chance." He scuffed.

"And that would have hurt Ayla!" I retorted. And he shrugged.

"She will get over it." And I sighed.

"We would hurt her and I don't want to do that. I hate him but I can't kill him." Duke grumbled as he returned to the back of my mind.

Finally, we pulled up in front of the pack house. The alpha and his very pregnant Luna were waiting on the front steps for us.

"Dad, we're here." I mind-linked him.

"I'm with the body. I'll be there soon. Make sure you see your mother." He answered.

I exited the vehicle to greet my alpha and Luna. As of right now, it's probably best for me to stay a part of this pack until Ayla and I have figured everything out.

"Alpha Atlas, Luna Thea," I greeted them. Alpha gave me a nod while his Luna wrapped me in a hug.

"It's good to see you, Nate. How are you and Ayla doing?" She rushed out.

"We are both doing well. A little on edge after this morning, but she headed back to the palace," I answered.

"Auntie, Uncle," Jonathan came up beside me.

"Jonathan, look at how much you've grown." Luna Thea exclaimed, wrapping her nephew in a hug.

"My man," I heard Mitch call out to me.

"Mitch, how are you, man?" I smiled, greeting my best friend.

"What, too good now to text us, peasants, back?" He teased.

"If I knew where my old phone was, I would have. But I think it's at the bottom of the northern sea." I chuckled.

"And where is Ayla?" He asked.

"She's safe at the palace," I answered.

"Mitch, take Jonathan and the warriors to see Beta

Will for their orders," Alpha Atlas commanded.

"Yes, sir." Mitch nodded.

"We'll talk later," I told him.

"Nate, to my office." The alpha growled. Great, what the hell did I do now?

"Be nice," Luna Thea told her mate, grabbing his arm.

I nodded to the Alpha before I made my way into the pack house to his office. I'm not sure why he would be pissed at me. I made sure Ayla was safe before I came here. Even though she was pissed at me about it.

I pulled out my phone to text her. I knew she was probably still in the middle of the ocean and I didn't know if she even had her phone with her.

Me: I miss you baby. Be safe. Xoxo.

I didn't have to wait outside Alpha's office for long before he came marching toward me. He threw his office doors open before stomping in. I followed and took a seat in front of his desk while he paced behind it.

"Alpha Atlas, did something happen?" I asked him when the silence became too much.

"Nate, why the hell is the man who I was told would be trying to kidnap and rape my daughter calling me and demanding to see the body?" He yelled. His aura hit me but I was able to fight it.

"Right, well, it turns out that King Kaden was actually Ayla's ex. They met when she moved away from the city after running from foster care. He told her his

name was Kyle." I explained. He took a deep breath before he took a seat.

"And why is he coming here?" He growled.

"Ayla saw the report and told us that the body was from his kingdom," I answered.

"How the hell would she even know that?" He questioned and I shrugged.

"I was already on my way here. One of Xander's warriors texted me. And then King Kaden called me. He wants Ayla back." I scoffed, crossing my arms over my chest.

"Do I even want to know what happened?" He sighed. I went back and forth about whether I should tell him about Melody or not. I decided to let Ayla handle it. And hopefully, King Kaden keeps his mouth shut.

"His father, the king of the eastern kingdom, killed his mother and he had to leave to protect his brother. They were planning on moving to the city so Ayla could work at the law firm and attend night classes. He left her without a word while she was in the city for her interview." I informed him.

"I hate this fucker already." He growled.

"You and me both. But Ayla trusts him. So just be smart when he gets here." I told him and he raised an eyebrow at me.

"No disrespect, Alpha. It would hurt Ayla if anything happened to him," I said, and he sighed.

"Fine, I'll refrain from killing him."

"And I'll try to keep Duke under control. He really

wants to eat him." Alpha Atlas chuckled.

"I heard my brother couldn't give you a spot in his pack?" He asked and I nodded.

"No hard feelings. But I would like to remain a part of your pack until Ayla and I have a plan. With everything going on, we still don't have a plan," I explained.

"Nate, you are always welcome here. Even if Duke is the size of a grizzly bear. I think he made my brother s**t his pants when you shifted." He laughed.

"I wish I had been there to see his face."

"All but Ayla was terrified of him. We are happy to become a lone wolf if that's what has to happen. Duke just wants to be with his mate and so do I." I told him.

"I think my brother is making a mistake. Having a wolf-like Duke in his pack would be beneficial. And you are also well trained and a great leader." He praised me.

"Thank you, sir."

"We are family now. If you are worthy of my daughter, then you are worthy of a spot in my pack."

Ayla

We finally arrived at the palace. Not even the hours of swimming could improve my mood. I know women love a big strong man to save them, but I didn't want to be saved. I wanted to be his equal. I'm at the center of all of this and I need to know what is going on.

Nate shouldn't have just run off without at least going

over a plan with me first. I had no idea what he was walking into and I was terrified. This could all be a trap and I wouldn't be there to protect him. Or to protect my family. I hated that they held my life above others.

I waded out of the water and onto the beach, tying up my dress so that it would cover my lady bites. I haven't said a word since my last conversation with Xander. I just wanted to get here and get this over with.

I marched through the sand and up the stairs to the palace with Xander and the warriors following me. I didn't expect to find my grandmother waiting at the front door.

"Ayla, my goodness, are you alright?" She exclaimed, rushing over to me. She threw her arms around me.

"Grandmother, what's wrong?" I asked, worried.

"I've been waiting for you, my dear. I needed to make sure you were safe." She explained.

"I'm okay. I just came to find that book. I didn't mean to impose," I told her as she led me into the palace.

"This is your home, Ayla. You can never impose. I'm worried about you, granddaughter. Atlas called me, informing me about another body."

"The victim belongs to the eastern kingdom. And no, I have no idea how I know that. Nate is there now, helping my father. I'll be heading back tomorrow after I find that book." I told her.

"Ayla, you aren't heading back until Nate is back,"
Xander informed me and I huffed, crossing my arms
across my chest.

"I'm pretty sure I can protect myself. I'm here for the book, not because there was another body found. Now, please excuse me, grandmother." I said, kissing her cheek.

"Your room is ready for you. And please come to dinner. It will be ready in an hour." She said and I nodded.

"Thank you," I told her before I left to find the library.

"Ayla, I know you are upset but this is all being done to keep you safe," Xander said, catching up to me.

"So I'm more important than that mermaid who was kidnapped and murdered?" I exclaimed and he sighed.

"You're a princess. It's our job to keep you safe. If we

can't keep the princess safe, what kind of message does that send to the people?" He retorted. I stopped walking and pinched the bridge of my nose. I've felt nothing but anxiety and fear for the last two weeks and my mind and body are exhausted. How can anyone run a kingdom for a lifetime?

"Ayla, did something happen with Nate?" He asked and I looked at him.

"Why would you ask that?"

"Because you haven't asked to call him. I have your phone. I've already checked mine to find messages from King Kaden. I'm sure Nate has left you a few." He said and I sighed.

"I'll call him after I find the book. I'm sure he's busy." I said before I continued to the library.

"I understand, both of you are just trying to protect me, but I should be included. This is my life."

We walked in silence after that, and Xander had to lead the way since I was only getting myself lost. I don't remember this place being so big. When Xander opened the door to the library, my stomach twisted into knots.

I was finally going to get some answers but I'm not sure if I was ready for them. I rushed to the back of the room where the wall had disappeared the first time. I know I dropped the book on the ground but no one was able to find it before.

"Ayla, what are we looking for?" Xander asked behind me.

"A book that glows blue." I shrugged.

The more I looked, the more anxious I grew. Where the hell could it have gone to? I should have brought it with me. But the goddesses wouldn't have let just anyone be able to read it, would they?

I took a moment to sit down on the floor across from where the wall opened up. I was looking up at the bookcase, trying to slow down my breathing. This could be everything and I lost it.

"If you could fall off the self again, that would be wonderful," I called out, and Xander chuckled.

"Do you really think that will work?" He asked, sitting down beside me.

"I don't know. I thought about it before and the book fell. I thought I would test it." I shrugged.

"We'll find it." He tried to reassure me.

"Is there something about Nate that you're not telling me?" I blurted out and Xander's body tensed.

"Xander, what the hell aren't you telling me?" I yelled. But before he could answer, a book fell off the shelf in front of us. It wasn't glowing but there's no way it could have fallen on its own. I reached for it. My heart was pounding in my chest. Finally, some fucken answers.

The book didn't have a title embossed on the leather binding. There was nothing to indicate what the book could actually be.

"Is this the book?" Xander asked as I sat back.

"It has to be," I said as I held my breath before flipping open the front cover. The page was blank.

I kept flipping to find all the pages were blank. I started to panic as I looked through the book again to find all the pages were still blank.

"What the hell is happening?" I exclaimed.

"Ayla, calm down. It must not be the right book." Xander said.

"But it has to be. What other book would fly off the shelf like that?" I yelled.

"I'm sorry to disturb you both," a voice said, and I snapped my head up to find a young woman standing by the bookshelf in front of us.

"Dinner is almost ready." She announced before she left the room.

"Come on, princess. I know you are hungry. We will

come back after and keep looking." Xander told me, standing up. He reached down to help me up and I followed him out, still clutching the book in my hand.

I had a feeling this was the right book, but now it was empty. What was I going to do now?

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