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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 121

Bronx's POV

The portal closed.

Kas is gone.

She left with them.

She chose the Mavri Magea over our pack.

I look back at Lenora in my arms. I feel myself rocking back and forth. It isn't for her comfort. Lenora can never be comforted ever again. I take the hem of my shirt and try to clean the blood away from her face. All it does is smear it down her chin.

"Leni. Come back. Don't leave me. Don't leave us. I need you. So do Milo and Codi and the pack. Please Lenora, come back to us," my lip trembles, pleading with her. Tears drip down from my chin onto her forehead as she looks blankly at me. I look into her green eyes one last time before I run my hand over and close her eyelids. Now she looks like she's sleeping. I pull my shirt off and lay it over her, trying to hide the gaping wound on her neck and chest. I can't bear to look at her that way.

When the searing pain of our family bond and pack bond breaking at the same time hits me, I pull her closer. I cry out in an Earth-shaking roar at the crumbling feeling in my chest. Pack members howl in the distance as they feel her bond break, too. What am I going to tell them? How can I possibly explain her death? How can I explain what their Luna has done to all of us?

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"Bronx! Lenora? Where are you?!" I hear people yelling from the hallway. No. Not people. Milo. I hear Lenora's mate, my Beta, looking for me. Looking for his mate.

Shit.

"Milo! We-we're in here!" My voice cracks as I call back to him.

I hear scrambling coming down the hall, and Milo appears in the doorway.

Reggie is right behind him. Milo's eyes widen when he sees me holding Lenora. He rushes forward and takes her from my arms. Reggie stands in the doorway in disbelief.

"No. It's not real. Lenora, no. This can't be true. Moon Goddess, please no. Bring her back. I need her back," Milo repeats over and over as he holds her against his chest. He buries his head into her neck and cries. His pleading words turn into distressed sobs as he pulls Lenora away from his body and smooths her hair away from her face, "Please, Sugar. Please don't go. I want you here. I need you here."

His eyes flash black when Ghost comes to the surface. When he throws his head back, Reggie and I both join him in a howl of mourning.

we

"Have you heard anything from her?" Reggie asks quietly, helping me straighten my tie.

"No. And we aren't talking about it right now, Reggie," I growl quietly, "Today is about Lenora. If Kas wanted to be here, she would be. She made her choice."

"Bronx, I'm just going to say this," Reggie puts his hand on my shoulder and looks me in the eyes, "Kas clearly needs help. She wouldn't have left with them on her own if she wasn't being forced or corrupted by dark magic. For her to abandon us? It shows just how much she needs our help right now. She's your mate. Don't turn your back on her."

"Go take your place, Reggie. It's time to get started," I dismiss him, shrugging his hand off my shoulder. I watch him go stand next to Ashley, to the left of Milo and my parents.

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Kas has been gone for two weeks. We haven't heard from her and the Mavri Magea have all but disappeared off the face of the Earth. We have found no sign of them anywhere. Any activity we had recorded before Kas went through the portal has completely stopped. No phone calls, no video footage, no grainy photos from Musu's informants, no news stories about unexplained events.

Nothing. Complete radio silence from all ten of them. The paparazzi have assumed Kas left me, although we put out a statement that she would be out of the public eye for a while. Even our black ops teams have caught no wind of them.

I look at my phone one more time with the false hope that Kas sent me a message. Her phone is at the packhouse, but I hoped that maybe she would have found a way to contact me. I was wrong. I know she isn't dead because our mate bond didn't break. She's out there somewhere, not trying to make her way back to me. I put the phone back in my jacket pocket and step out in front of Lenora's pyre, facing the pack.

Milo is standing at the front of the crowd with Codi in his arms. She has her little head leaning heavily against his shoulder. She doesn't understand what is happening, just that her mommy won't be coming home. My parents and his parents stand on either side of him, whispering comforting words and rubbing his back to comfort him. Reggie and Ashley are to their left, standing stoically to support their Beta.

The rest of the pack is standing behind them, looking forlorn.

The crowd quiets down when they see me and pay closer attention. I look out at the sad faces, sniffing and wiping their eyes.

"Get this over quick, Bronx," Saint whines, "I need to go for a run. I have to get the fuck out of here before I lose my mind."

I try to ignore him. We already discussed all the things I need to do after the ceremony before I can let him out for a run. Once I have everyone's attention, I start my memorial speech.

"The last words our female Beta said to me before the Moon Goddess called her home were, 'Justice said to protect you,'" I address the crowd, "Even in their final moments, Lenora

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and Justice were loyal to their Alpha and to their pack. Lenora died the way she lived, fighting for what was right and for the ones she loved. This time, it was until the last moment of her life. Her unwavering dedication to Blood River will be her legacy and we are all better wolves for being able to say we knew her.”

I put my hands in my pockets and look at my feet. I clear my throat and compose myself before I continue, “You all know Lenora wasn’t just our female Beta. She was also my sister. She will always be my sister. Her strong-willed personality, her direct, yet sage advice...all of us will miss her caring nature. Especially me. No one will ever be able to replace her in our lives.”

“Our Beta Milo has requested privacy at this time. He will take a few weeks to mourn the loss of his mate and care for his daughter, Codi. Let’s be sure to give him the space he needs,” I gesture to Milo with a sad smile. He gives me a nod in recognition while he wipes his eyes, “If you need anything you would normally take to him or Lenora, please come to Gamma Reggie or myself. We will do our best to help you.”

“If you would all join me in a prayer to the Moon Goddess,” I turn toward the pyre and look at Lenora one last time. I raise my voice so they can hear it far and wide, “Selene, Goddess of the Moon, Mother of Werewolves, the Blood River pack prays to you. Please welcome your daughter, Lenora, home with open arms. Comfort her spirit in your loving embrace. Protect her from mortal pain and bless her with your strength. Allow her to look over us and follow our journeys until we can be reunited with her once more.”

I step aside and wait while Milo hands Codi to his mom and steps up to the pyre. I watch him gently caress

Lenora’s face and give her a soft kiss on the lips. Tears roll down his face as he whispers something into her ear, then presses his forehead against her cheek. I watch his silent sobs for a minute until he can finally compose himself. He stands up and swallows hard, stepping to the pedestal with a lit torch. He hesitates for a moment before he picks it up and turns back to the pyre, touching the edge of the flame to the kindling on the structure.

We all stand back and watch as the fire consumes the pyre, taking Lenora’s beautiful, brave spirit to the Moon Goddess for safekeeping until we can be with her again.

I throw my head back and lead the pack in a howl that will be heard for miles.

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 122

Katherine's POV

The estate is unusually quiet when I get home from work. I don't notice the usual hustle and bustle, but I chalk it up to coming home later than I normally do.

I push open the door to my darkened office, pour myself a glass of scotch, and make my way over to the desk. I turn on the desk lamp and sit down, taking a deep sip of my drink.

"Hello, lokaste," I lean back in my chair, addressing the woman in the tall wingback seat across the desk, "You look like shit."

"Hello, Katherine. Thank you for the compliment," she snarks at me and leans forward from the shadow, letting me see her pale skin and sunken eyes be more clearly. Her spindly hand supports her chin. The longer I look at her, the more I realize she is way too thin.

"K-Kas. Are-are you alright?" I stammer when I see her true condition.

"Don't worry about me, darling. You never have before. I'm here because I need you to do something for me. I'm going to give you a choice on how you do it," she says, steeping her fingers in front of her face.

I laugh dismissively, "You're going to tell me what to do? Darling, not in this lifetime."

"Well then, your precious Maven, Amari's Giatros, and Tessa's Fuoros will stay with me until the end of their lifetimes," she counts on her fingers casually.

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"What are you talking about?" I stand up and try to mind link my sisters.

"No one's here, Katherine," lokaste's voice rings back in my mind, "They came willingly when I asked."

"You're a fucking liar. The Maven won't go any where with you," I slam my hand on the table at her falsehoods.

lokaste leans her head back against the chair and cackles dryly at me, "You're supposed to be so damn smart. You're just as conceited and foolish as the next person, Katherine."

She stands slowly, supporting herself against the arm of the chair.

"You're already-" my eyes grow wide.

"Prepared to force my will on you if you don't comply with my request? Why, yes. Yes, I am," she interrupts, "So which do you choose, Katherine? Compliance or force?"

I nod my head as I look at her in disbelief, "Kas, please let me help you. Whatever got you to this point, I can help you."

"Too little, too late, Katherine. Sit," she commands, rolling her eyes and swiping her fingers downward. I'm compelled to obey as she uses manipulation combined with telekinesis.

"Perhaps you didn't understand me the first time," she leans forward on my desk and tilts her head while she tells me what she wants from me as gently as if she is telling a bedtime story. I feel goosebumps at how calm she is.

"I- How can I agree with that?" I growl at her when she stands up straight.

"Why? Do you suddenly give a shit about anyone but yourself? Are you going to deny that you haven't done it before? Do I need to compel you?" she shrugs, "Like I said, it's your choice, Katherine."

"Fine, but you can't have my Maven, lokaste. They're mine," I cross my arms in front of me, "When do you want me to leave?"

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"How about...now?" her cold eyes look into my soul as she claps her hands in front of her.

I feel a dizzying sensation and appear in the middle of a windy, snow-covered field. The moon is low in the clear dark sky. In the distance, I can see glowing red eyes looking at me from the tree line.

I sigh heavily, take off my high heels, and remove my suit, "Seraph, time to shift."

"You're going to do what she wants?"

"Stupid wolf, I'm not listening to that degenerate. I'm going to talk sense into the Agrios," I snap.

"Do you think that's wise, Katherine? There's a reason Agrios means feral."

"Shift, Seraph," I order. My bones crack and elongate and fur sprouts from my skin as we take wolf form. We pad our way to the tree line toward the wolves guarding of their territory.

"Geia sas, adelfés! Psdchno gia tin Cora. [Hello sisters! I'm looking for Coral," I call through a mind link.

"Hello, Seraph. Kas spoke to Katherine?" Cora steps out from behind a thicket of trees in human form. Her voice is calm and reserved, "She spoke to me. I made my choice. I leave my fate in your hands."

She stands with her hands out to the side and lowers her head, exposing her neck. I look around and see nine sets of red eyes glaring at me from all angles. I can't escape.

"We have to do it, Seraph. Iokaste trapped us. If we don't, they will kill us. If we do, they'll kill us, anyway."

"So you would rather die with blood on your own hands?"

"What's another drop in the bottomless bucket, darling? Just get it over with." Seraph launches herself at Cora, clamping down on her throat. Her body stiffens, but she doesn't fight back. Her windpipe and neck snap in one bite. Seraph releases her grip and stands

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back, watching the light of Cora's spirit leave her eyes. My only solace in taking my sister's life is knowing Lokaste will feel the pain from Cora's death.

We shift back into human form and face the Agrios wolves, who are all mere feet away from me. I look around, trying to find an escape, but there is none. I stand tall and look at the wolves surrounding me.

"I accept my fate as well, darlings," I hold my arms out and close my eyes. I can only hope for a better ending in the next lifetime as I feel the first painful bite clamp down on my arm.

Kas's POV

I feel the agonizing crumbling sensation in my chest when Katherine completes her task. I let myself fall into the chair and embrace the pain of Cora's death. A few minutes later, another wave of agony confirms Katherine's demise. I relish her death for different reasons. Her need for control over everyone made it too easy to get her to do my bidding.

I cast the spell to numb the pain, then look around. I send fireballs from my hands into the hallway and around the office. By the time anyone realizes there is a fire, nothing will be left except ashes. As the flames build around me, I create a portal and step into a large room with twenty-seven patiently waiting women in a comfortable green and gray lounge.

"Sisters, it's done," I look solemnly at the sad faces, "I'll give you the evening to mourn the loss of your Luna. I will see you in the morning."

"Kas, we want you to know that we don't blame you," one of the Frouros steps forward and admits, "What you are doing is brave. It's the right thing... for all of us."

Around her, the women nod and smile through their tears while they comfort each other.

"Thank you, Celeste," I nod my head respectfully, "I couldn't do this without all of you. We are going to make things right for all the Manaes. The women standing in this room are just as instrumental as the members of the Blood River pack, who are carrying the next generation of Leaders and Guardians. We will leave the Agrios to their own devices. If they choose to join us, we will welcome them with open arms, but the rest of us no longer need to operate in segregated factions."

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"We will remember your sacrifices for lifetimes, Kas," an auburn-haired woman says. She looks like she wants to take my hand, but thinks better of it. I nod slowly and make my way to my bedroom. There is still so much more work to do and I'm already so exhausted. I lean against the closed door, listening to the din of my sisters trade stories about their lifetimes. Part of me is jealous that I don't have the energy to be out there with them.

The effort and energy it has taken to create the Waiting Room compound has been monumental. Forming the rooms into the places I want them to be, areas of rehabilitation and respite instead of settings for torture, forces me to use magic that no one has performed before. Dark magic transforming a place created for dark magic into a refuge of light and healing was impossible until I did it.

It is a place that repels dark magic and corrupt souls. Any spell attempted within its confines will fall flat before it can hurt anyone. Anyone who goes out and comes back with a corrupt mind or soul won't be able to make it past the threshold. A caring group of women will meet them to help them find their way back to the light.

When we first started building the Waiting Room, Melinoé and I would take brief breaks. In that time, I created a spell to enter the dreams of all the Manaé being led by Katherine at the same time. Every single one willingly listened to what I had to say. They agreed we need a change and are amenable to my plan. They all want to help be a part of the solution, so when the time is right, I bring them to the Mavri Magea apartment. While I build, they work together to come up with a rehabilitation program.

With the help of Melinoé, feedback from the Manaé, and using the powers I collected from werewolves, gods and goddesses, I create the impossible ten times over and more. A refuge for the Manaé to support each other and live their lives outside the prying eyes of the world, if that's what they choose. A safe place that can morph, grow, and become whatever we want. Love, caring, camaraderie, and collaboration will furnish this place, not control, anger, and spite. :

They present me with the rehabilitation program and a charter everyone needs to obey to live in the Waiting Room. All twenty-eight of us agree and sign it. I assure them that once the Mavri Magea are rehabilitated enough, they will also review, add their thoughts, and sign if they want to. We will always welcome anyone who leaves back when they need the support of the rest of the Manaé. My sisters also change the name from Waiting Room to Kardia tou Manaé, which means Heart of the Manaé in Greek. When their leaders, who are being raised

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by the Blood River pack, are of age and have all their memories, we will take measures to ensure they are not dangerous before we let them sign as well.

The women listen carefully when I explain my concerns about the Mavri Magea. One Manae from each faction agrees to partner up with one of the Mavri Magea and form support groups. They will all live together in their assigned Kardia tou Manae apartments, helping each other heal from eons of being influenced by their leaders, myself included, and finally being allowed to think for themselves.

In the time I've taken to get to know them, I have found each Manae has their own unique, beautiful personality.

They deserve the chance to have relationships with all of their sisters, not just the ones in their assigned factions. I also discover they have all but given up on finding mates. In the rare instance one has found a mate, their leader has ordered them to reject the werewolf our Mother has fated for them. Keeping this in mind, I make sure Kardia tou Manae can expand to include future mates, creating a werewolf pack.

It's been three months since I brought the Manae here and almost four months since I have seen my mate. It has been almost four months since I have had the support of my Blood River pack. Almost four months have passed since there has been any comfort in my life at all. I understand now why I was put through so many challenges as a child. I would not have been able to make it through this if I had not survived the trials of my childhood. If pressure makes a diamond, I have created an entire mine full of them.

"I'm so proud of you, Kas," Lex coos at me lovingly, sending calming energy to me as I fall asleep on our last night in the apartment, "You have given everything you have and more to help your sisters. They will remember this for the rest of their spirits journeys."

"Lex, I hope you will understand if I don't feel like I can continue this lifetime after... mean, I'll try, but I'm just so tired," I sigh.

"We will be okay once we get back to our mate, Kas. Have faith in our Mother."

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 123

Bronx's POV

Halloween comes and goes. Thanksgiving comes and goes. Winter Solstice is only a couple of weeks away. The frigid Montana winter trudges on. The world keeps turning as if Kas never existed.

Last week, I heard Katherine Santoro's abandoned estate in Greece burned down to the ground. No fatalities and no signs of the other residents and staff who lived there several days prior. A few days later, hunters found Katherine's naked body, along with an unidentified woman, both mauled by wild animals in a wooded area of Mongolia. The artist's sketch of the other woman is clearly Cora.

As soon as they confirmed Katherine was dead, I had my people get to work on acquiring Santoro Enterprises. Within several months, I will be the CEO, absorb the company into MasonCo and create a logistics division. If there are any Manaes hiding among Santoro Enterprises staff, I will flush them out and throw them into the dungeon to rot. It's what they deserve.

If Kas ever dares show her face again, she will get the same treatment. She will pay for having my sister murdered, abandoning the Blood River pack, then hiding Goddess only knows where, like the fucking coward she is. °

Saint is pacing in my mind like he has been since the day Kas walked through that fucking portal. Every time I let him out for a run to calm him down, he goes straight to Jimmy's BBQ. He thinks we are going to find Kas anywhere, it will be there. It doesn't make any sense, but he has become obsessed with the place. :

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I went to the therapist, who gave me medication to calm him down, but it didn't help. He would just wander around more confused until we ended up at Jimmy's, so I stopped letting him out. Now he just spends his days torturing me by pacing back and forth, making me anxious. If I drink enough, it helps block his antsy demeanor out. *

I take a sip of bourbon from my glass and set it on the side table. I never used to allow food or drinks in the archival library, but it's the only place I have found where pack members will leave me the fuck alone, so I have made an exception for the three bottles of liquor I drink a day.

The snow is falling heavily outside. It looks beautiful, but I know less than twenty minutes in human form could kill you out there. Beautiful but fatal. Just like Kas. I close my eyes for a moment and envision her beautiful violet eyes and her sparkling silver hair. I can practically hear her sweet little laugh. The pain of being away from her overwhelms me again. I take another sip of my drink to stave it off. There is a small knock at the library door. I consider not answering for a minute until they knock again. I roll my eyes and pick up the remote control to open the door.

"Come in," I say when I hear the door slide open.

"Alpha," Ashley's quiet voice comes up from behind me and she stands next to my chair.

"How can I help you Ashley?" I ask, without looking away from the window.

"Bronx, it's Musu. She went into labor this morning. I was hoping we could let Marco go be with her when the pups are born?" She sounds calm, but I can hear the fear in her voice.

"No."

"Bronx, please. This is for Musu. She has done everything you asked of her. Please give her this one thing," Ashley steps in front of me and puts her hands over her large belly, "Bronx, don't let your feelings about Marco take a father away from his pups. Just for one day."

"No, Ashley. He didn't just betray me. He betrayed our entire pack. I would be stupid to trust him again. Musu is going to have to be disappointed because he isn't getting out of the dungeon anytime soon. Not even because his mate is giving birth," I try not to growl. I'm not

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mad at Ashley, but I'm sure as fuck mad at Marco for knowing Kas was planning on letting the Mavri Magea into the packhouse and not saying anything. He is just as much of a traitor as she is.

"Bronx, if you would just listen to-"

"Ashley, get the fuck out of my library," I snarl, slamming my glass down on the table. It shatters into a thousand pieces, cutting my hand.

"Serves you right, Bronx," she sniffs and walks out.

"Shit," I shake my hand while I wait for Saint to heal it.

"No. Fuck you. I'm not healing your stupid ass," he seethes at me, "You've been blocking me out for weeks. You want me blocked out fine. I don't owe you shit. All you do is make my life miserable. Heal yourself, dummy. See what happens when you block your wolf." :

Before I can argue with him, he goes to a far corner of my mind and blocks our connection.

Fine. I get up and go to my office. I grab a napkin from the table and press it to my hand before I realize Ashley left the door open when she left. Milo and Reggie walk by with a binder in their hands, speaking quietly.

"Hey, what are you guys doing up here?" I call into the hallway.

They stop in their tracks and look at each other before they look at me and turn around.

"We were in her office looking for clues," Reggie says, holding up the binder.

"What did you find?" I ask. Whatever it is, it's probably another trick. Another distraction to lead us away from wherever she is hiding, "You know what, I don't want to know."

"Bronx, we wanted to wait until our regular weekly meeting. You know, the one where you aren't supposed to be drunk at eight a.m. on a Monday morning, but if you want to look at it now," Milo says, elbowing Reggie. Reggie looks at Milo tentatively, then hands me the blue binder. The front has a sticker adhered to the front that says 'Manae Notes' in Kas's curly

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handwriting. I flip it open to find plastic sleeves full of note cards, pictures from home decorating magazines, clips from newspapers, photographs, and other colorful bits of paper sticking out at all angles.

“What is this shit?” I flip through the pages and look up at my Beta and Gamma.

“It’s everything. It has all the details of her plan,” Reggie says, holding his hand out to take the binder back. I look at him blankly. He must be crazy. There is no way she didn’t put some sort of dark spell on this binder.

I turn around and walk into the library. Milo and Reggie follow me.

“Bronx, what are ya doin’ buddy?” Milo asks, “You wanna sit and read that all now? It’s gonna take some time to get through.”

I make my way to the enormous fireplace and throw the binder into the crackling flames without a second thought. ~

“What?! WHY DID YOU DO THAT?!” Reggie snarls. He tries to grab at the binder, but it’s too far in the fireplace for him to reach without getting severely burned.

“Dude. What the fuck? That was everything. That’s all we had,” Milo looks into the fire sadly.

“Welp, I probably just saved you from being cursed. You’re welcome,” I say dryly before I pick up a fresh glass and pour a drink.

“Bronx, that binder had Kas’s plan all spelled out. She wasn’t-”

“ENOUGH!” I roar in my Alpha voice, “I never want to hear that name again. Do you understand?”

My Beta and Gamma look at each other again.

“ANSWER ME!” I let my anger boil over.

“Yes, Alpha,” they answer in unison and walk out of the room without another word. °

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I put down the glass and pick up the bottle instead, taking a deep swig. I go back to looking out the window.

As the sun sets, the snow stops and the clouds clear away, exposing the night sky full of stars. I look at the bottle in my hand. Only a few gulps left. I turn around and accidentally kick the other three bottles on the floor. When did those get there? I shuffle around them and make my way downstairs and out the back door.

My mind swims as I look out over the sky until I find the moon.

"Leni, if you're out there, I know you're gonna be mad at me, but I gotta do it. I can't live like this anymore," I whisper to the large white orb.

I take the bottle to my lips and drink the last few gulps down before I throw it to the ground.

"Bronx, what are you doing?" I hear Saint say, "What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

I look up at the sky and raise my voice, "I, Bronx Andreas Mason, reject the goddess Kas Latmus Mason as the fated mate bestowed upon me by Selene, Goddess of the Moon. I break the sacred bond between us and release her. We shall no longer be bound to each other in the eyes of the Mother of Werewolves." The gaping hole of the mate bond breaking instantly consumes me from the inside out. I drop to my knees and clutch my chest, letting out an earth shattering roar.

"You killed us. You just fucking killed us!" Saint howls over and over.

I rock back and forth as I hear people run up from behind me. Milo's face appears in front of me.

"Bronx, what are you doing out here? What did you just do?" He asks, with a concerned look on his face.

"I let her go, Milo. I broke our bond."

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 124

Kas's POV

I wake up in the morning feeling stiff and sore. I slide out of bed with a groan and look in the mirror. Even more than yesterday, I don't recognize the reflection I see. Pale skin with dark bags below my eyes. All the violet from my irises is gone, replaced by a gray so light, it could be mistaken for white. I gently run a brush through my brittle, thinning hair. It is no longer gray and glittery. It's turned into a dull shade of white that matches my eyes.

I put on a loose dress and a heavy long cardigan to hide the joints protruding from all my angles before I go out to address my sisters for one last time before escorting them to Kardia tou Manaë.

When I first met Lenora, bruises from my nose being broken upset her. What she would think now at my self-imposed deterioration. I turn to the side and admire my growing belly. I let myself smile when I feel the impatient little kicks coming from inside.

I spend time with each team of sisters and make sure they are still on board with the plan before I introduce the Mavri Magea they have agreed to help rehabilitate. Most of the Mavri Magea are grateful for the opportunity. Some are indifferent and others, as expected, are defiant. I create a portal and take each group to the Kardia tou Manaë apartment we assigned them to and show them around the common areas they will use as they see fit. I give them instructions on how to come and go from the facility and place protective spells over everyone before I go.

When it comes time for Desiree and Leticia to meet their new support teams, I sit with them in their rooms and carefully explain my expectations as their Leader. After I'm certain they

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won't cause any problems, I remove the hexes so Desiree can speak again and give Leticia her mouth back.

"Kas, what if there's no hope for me," Leticia cries into my shoulder, reluctant to go with her new team of sisters.

"Leticia, I have faith in you. Mother would not have sent me on this quest if she didn't think there was hope for you," I embrace her and pat her back, "No one is saying it's going to be easy, but I know you can do it. Hopefully, when I come to visit, you will show me a ton of progress. Make me proud to be called your Leader."

She wipes her tears away and looks me over, "I can't believe what this has done to you, Kas. If you change your mind and want me to use my abilities, I'm sure I can help you."

"No thank you, Leticia. I have accepted my fate for this lifetime. My physical appearance is only a small part of who I am. My spirit will heal and that's what's important."

After leaving the last group in Kardianou Manaia, I portal back to the apartment and sit on the sofa.

"Well, old friend. Your work is done," I look around and address the eerily quiet apartment directly, "You have done a good job and I thank you. I have one more spark of magic in me. You can rest now."

I hear groaning and cracking of wood and the popping of nails as the apartment closes in on itself from the far corners. When I see the edges of the sitting room disintegrating, I create one last portal and step through.

kk

"Luna?" the guard says with his mouth hanging open when he sees me standing on the other side of the front gate to Blood River's pack territory.

"Hello, Sam. Am I still welcome here? It's cold and I would like to go home," I say, making sure my cloak doesn't expose my frail features to him. I pull the hood down lower to hide my eyes, "If this is no longer my home, I can find another."

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“Oh Luna, I’m so sorry. Of course. I...we thought...I mean...I just...” he runs into the guardhouse and pushes a button, allowing the gate to slowly swing open. He rushes out and takes my hand, helping me over the snow and ice into the guardhouse.

“Thank you, Sam,” I smile at him as he sets me on the chair next to his desk.

“Jamie! Link the Beta and Gamma. Hurry!” he says to someone as he grabs a heavy wool blanket and wraps me in it.

“Why? What’s...Oh my Goddess!” the other guard exclaims as he peeks his head around the corner, “Luna, you’re...”

“Hurry, Jamie! I’ll get another blanket.” I watch as the guard named Jamie’s eyes glaze over when he sends a mind link. Sam comes out of a back room with another blanket and wraps it carefully over my lap. He is very sweet, asking if I’m sure I’m alright and if I want some hot tea.

After about ten minutes, I see an SUV pull up to the guardhouse. Milo and Reggie jump out and come running inside.

“Kas?” Milo says tentatively when he sees me. He kneels down in front of me and pulls the hood of my cloak back. His face contorts as he sees my transformed features, “Wh-What happened to you, Little Sister?”

“Please don’t be scared, Milo. I look like this because all the magic is gone. All of it and more. I had to use my part of my spirit to make things right. There aren’t even any more abilities. I’ve used them all up,” I try to smile, but it turns into a frown. For the first time in months, I can feel tears turning my cheeks wet, “I’m so sorry for what happened to Lenora but I-I’ve taken care of it. Something like that won’t ever happen again.”

“We found your binder, Kas,” Reggie steps forward and kneels next to Milo, “We know what you had planned. Does this mean it worked? Are you here because you created that place?”

I try to speak, but my lip trembles and sobs start coming out instead. All I can do is nod and put my hand over my mouth. All the hard work I have put in over the last four months, all the

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emotions I pushed down, every moment I dedicated to other people, putting my own needs and wants aside, get released in a giant wave of emotion.

"I'm so sorry. I had to leave. No one was supposed to get hurt, Milo. I swear," I cry, not being able to contain it anymore. I feel Milo's hand take mine and he pulls me into his lap and holds me tight.

"I will not forgive you, Kas. You did nothing wrong. Nothing I need to forgive you for," Milo says as he rubs my back. I feel him stop and he pulls me away from his body, "Shit, Little Sister. You're so skinny."

He pulls the blankets away and lifts the cloak over my head. The four men in the guardhouse stare at me in awe.

"You're so..." Reggie murmurs.

"Pregnant? Yeah. I know," I chuckle between my tears and place my hands on my belly, "Twins. One, for sure, is a girl. I don't know about the other."

Milo immediately points to the two guards, "Not a word of this to anyone. If people know she's even here, let alone pregnant, your Luna's life could be in danger. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Beta," they reply in unison.

"Come on, Little Sister," Milo says and wraps the heavy blankets around me again, "Let's get you something to eat. Reggie and I will see if we can talk some sense into your mate."

Reggie picks me up and carries me to the car. He sets me in the back seat and buckles me in before taking his spot on the front passenger side.

"Talk sense into Bronx? Milo, he broke our bond. He doesn't want me as his mate," I say once we are driving. I do my best not to let my voice quiver at the thought.

"Yeah, but you didn't accept the rejection. Did you?" Reggie asks.

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“Well, no. I guess I hoped I could convince him to change his mind” I lean back and close my eyes, letting the heat of the car warm my cold nose and cheeks.

“Exactly. Things have been...well...not good, Kas. You know how he can be. Think of that but like times a bajillion,” Milo looks at me through the rearview mirror, “He isn’t the same guy you knew when you walked through that portal four months ago.”

I look out the window at the passing frozen woods, “Whatever he decides, I’ve accepted my fate, guys. As long as my pups are safe, it doesn’t matter what happens to me. I know Cora will be born soon and I will have done all I could do in this lifetime.”

“That sounds so morbid, Kas,” Reggie turns in his seat and looks at me, “It’s going to be okay. We’ll keep you and your pups safe, but first order of business is to get you a grilled cheese, a banana, and a protein shake.”

I can’t help but smile when he includes the protein shake into my first meal home, “How are everyone else’s pups? How are Codi and Katie?”

“And Musu’s pups, Inez and Deago. They were born before the Solstice. Wait until you see Katie, Kas. She looks just like Ashley,” Reggie beams.

“And Codi is doing a lot better than you would think,” Milo says, “I’m sure you must have heard about Katherine. Ever since then, she is back to being like a regular toddler. Still interested in kittens but we can’t all be perfect.”

In the two miles it takes to get to the packhouse, I fall asleep. When I wake up, I am in Milo’s apartment on the sofa, covered by three heavy blankets. There is a grilled cheese sandwich, two bananas, and a milkshake on the coffee table. There is also a note that says ‘ Don’t leave this apartment’

I can’t remember the last time I ate much of anything, but I have little sense of taste these days, so the few bites I take of the grilled cheese aren’t nearly as satisfying as I hoped. I put it back down and pick up the milkshake instead while I wait for Milo and Reggie to come back.

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Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future chapter 125

Milo's POV

Marco had told us to find her binder before Bronx ordered us to lock him in solitary confinement. He said Kas kept note cards and binders for everything. We just had to find the correct binder to figure out what she was up to. He couldn't tell us anymore because of some sort of potion he had swallowed. He was right. We rifled through dozens of binders in her office until we found one in her desk drawer that had a sticker labeled 'Manae Notes'.

It detailed everything, complete with cute pictures of rooms and furniture she wanted to use magic to create so her sisters would be comfortable in the home she was building for them. Some of the note cards were actually thin sheets of parchment that looked like they were hundreds of years old. Others were thick handmade papers that were crumbling on the edges. There were at least six different languages among the cards. Musu helped us translate most of them, but a few she said were in dead languages she wasn't familiar with.

Regardless, they all pointed to the fact that Kas has known for centuries that there were problems within the Manae that needed to be fixed, and she was taking it upon herself to fix it. Looking at the notecards, it all seems very hopeful and sweet. In any other format, you recognize she is a damn genius.

It just seems like she went about things in kinda fucked up ways over the course of her lifetimes. From the information James has got off Kas's server blade, it's hard to tell if she was playing a part or she really didn't know any better. Either way, history shows, Kas isn't afraid to get her hands dirty.

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I wish she would have felt like she could have told us, but after reading about the things she has done in the past and knowing Kas as well as I do, I bet she was embarrassed to have to admit to some of those things. She is also the type of person who thinks she can't share her problems with others, so I can see where she felt like she was on her own little island with all this stuff.

We kept our discovery a secret for a few weeks until we walked by Bronx's office one day and the door was wide open. We had taken the binder out of Kas's office so our MasonCo tech team could start scanning and archiving everything. Bronx stupidly threw it into the fireplace before we could have time to do that. Then he ordered us not to talk about Kas anymore and wouldn't listen to reason. If he would have just let us tell him about her plan, about what she was really doing, maybe he would have changed his mind and not rejected her. Maybe we could have convinced him to go look for her instead.

Reggie and I assumed when the guardhouse mind linked us, they were bored and fucking around or it was some sort of magic trick by the Mavri Magea. Either way, we needed to check it out. There is no way Kas would come back, would she? We all assumed she got corrupted by dark magic and left us. As soon as I get out of the car, I can smell her cinnamon roll scent and I know it isn't a trick.

My heart breaks for her when she cries and apologizes for what happened to Lenora. I can see how much it pains her and any doubts I had, whether she was involved or not, have been alleviated. Kas may have kept secrets from us, but it was for good reason and she doesn't have it in her to be dishonest.

What I wasn't ready for was her physical appearance. Kas isn't just too skinny, she also looks like shit. Her hair isn't sparkly gray anymore. It has turned completely white in just a few months. Her skin is dry and blotchy and pale. The dark circles under her eyes make it look like someone punched her, and she didn't defend herself. Her eyes...I don't know how to even describe it. They went from violet and full of life to practically white and devoid of anything. It seriously looks like she could be in one of those zombie movies as the main character that got bit but hasn't died yet.

Alarm bells go off in my brain when we see how pregnant she is. I know Bronx hasn't been the easiest wolf to deal with the past four months, but I'm sure if he knew Kas was pregnant when she left, he would have never rejected her. He would have fought harder to find her and his pups. How the Hell did she survive the pain of being rejected, anyway? Who knows?

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We just need to be grateful that she didn't accept the rejection. He would have become impossible to be near.

"How are we getting her into the packhouse?" Reggie whispers when he looks into the back seat and sees her sleeping.

"Up the back staircase. We can take her to my apartment. Codi is at daycare, no one will have a reason to go into my place," I say not taking my eyes off the snowy road, "I think the real question is, how the Hell are we going to get Bronx to listen to us?"

Reggie heads to the kitchen to get a snack and a protein shake 'for himself, while I take our Luna up to my apartment. She doesn't even try to wake up when I lay her on the sofa and lay another blanket to put on top of her.

I write her a quick note to stay in the apartment before Reggie and I step into the hall. He stands outside my door with his hands on his hips.

"Milo, I'm trying to be hopeful here, but let's be honest. This is bad," he whispers softly.

"I know, but we can't keep it a secret from him," I clap my hand on his shoulder.

"He's gonna throw her in the dungeon."

"He isn't gonna do shit, Reggie. He's gonna make us do it. We can only hope that he's sloppy about it and we can still take care of her."

"Do we tell him about the pups?"

I look around for a moment, "Yeah. I think it's the ace up our sleeve. I don't think he'll listen otherwise."

We knock on his office door and wait for him to tell us to come in. He is at his desk reading the newspaper, but he has yet another bottle of bourbon on his desk, so I don't know how much he is really getting out of the article.

"Bronx, we need to talk to you," Reggie says calmly.

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"Well, that's why people usually knock on the office door, Reggie. Not because they want to stare at me in silence," Bronx says without looking away from the paper.

Reggie rolls his eyes and waves his hand at me. Okay, here we go.

"Bronx, she's back. And she's-"

"Who's back?" He puts the paper down and looks at me with glassy eyes. Fuck. He's already drunk. It's not even two p.m.

I try to say her name, but I can't. Then I remember he ordered us not to say her name in front of him anymore, "Our Luna."

"Take her to the dungeon," he says like he is ordering a steak and goes back to his newspaper.

"No. Dude, she's-"

"Did I stutter?" He puts the paper back down and glares at me.

"Bronx, she needs a doctor and needs to be fed. She's-" Reggie tries to step in.

"No fucking doctors. Let her use her wolf and her precious magic to heal herself. If she can't, let her rot," he snarls with anger, pounding his fist on the desk.

"Dude, will you listen? She's pr-" I start, but he interrupts me again.

"SHUT UP!" He roars in his Alpha tone, " Take her to the dungeon. She doesn't get access to a doctor or anyone else in the fucking pack. Security twenty-four, seven and feed her scraps from the trash, like the pig she is." »

I have never felt so much rage roll off of Bronx. I can't believe he is saying this about Kas. He can't really feel this way. He can't expect Reggie and me to treat her that way. She's our Luna. We both step back, forced to bow our heads and show him our necks.

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“GET THE FUCK OUT” he roars again. I look at Reggie and turn and leave. He slams the door behind him. ‘

“Now what?” he asks, “I can’t believe he didn’t let us get a word in. How are we going to tell her she has to go to the dungeon?”

“What choice do we have, Reggie?”

“We don’t. Come on,” he waves me on to follow him.

“If he really does this. If he really allows her to die in the dungeon without even going to see her and see what the fuck he’s doing, I’m done. I’m going to figure out how to find the Mana, take Ashley and Katie, and go. Katie is going to need them as she gets older,” he whispers as we walk down the hall. °

“Did you read my mind or something? I was just thinking, maybe it is time to take Codi and find somewhere else to be. Are we really able to give up on him like that? It has to be both of us or nothing. If one of us stays, they will be miserable. There won’t be any escape after that,” I say to him seriously.

“I have to do what’s best for my family. If Kas dies in that dungeon, I’m out, Milo,” his light blue eyes stare at me intently.

“Yeah. I can’t imagine staying if he stoops that low,” I agree, “We have to keep trying to get him to go see her though, agreed?”

“Agreed.”

I open the door to my apartment to Kas sitting on the sofa. She looks over at me sadly.

“It didn’t go well, did it?” she asks.

“Ah, no. How did you know?” I ask, rubbing my hand on the back of my neck.

“I heard him all the way from here,” she nods and looks at her lap.

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"We tried, Little Sister," I sit on the sofa next to her and take her hands in mine,

"He's so blinded by anger, that he won't even listen. We couldn't even tell him about the pups."

"Kas, we have to take you to the dungeon. He said no doctors and uh, only food from the trash," Reggie says remorsefully.

"It's okay, you guys. I told you, the most important thing is that my pups are safe. I have accepted my fate. There is nothing left for me to do in this lifetime except give birth to these babies," she takes her hands out of mine and puts them on her stomach.

Reggie rubs his forehead with his hand, "Kas, you deserve better." '

"Reggie, really, it's okay. All I ask is that I have some warm blankets. I have been so cold lately. If my old green and gray blanket is still around somewhere, I would love to have that," she smiles, "Oh, and you can bring me as much garbage food as you want. I'm not eating it. That's disgusting."

"Kas, you-" I try to reason with her.

"Let me just finish this sandwich and bananas, then I will willingly go with you. Okay?" she swallows hard and smiles, "While I eat, please take a couple notes. I need to give you information so you can reach the Manaes when the time is right."

"Of course, Kas. Take your time," I nod and wipe a tear away from my eye and pull out my cell phone. I don't know how she can be so stoic right now, but I know Reggie and I need to be strong for her.

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