

Chapter 51

As we leave the conference room, I agree to let anyone who wants to go for a run on pack territory after dinner go, as long as they are escorted by one of our guards to make sure they don't get lost or end up going over a cliff into the Blood River. She thanks me deeply and scurries off to let her sister know the good news.

Katherine steps forward, "Alpha Mason, thank you so much for making our pack members feel welcomed. Persephone will be relieved, I'm sure."

"Please, you can call me Alpha Bronx. Save the formalities for business hours," I bow slightly to her.

We watch as the blonde and red-headed women all head up to the guest suites, with the couple of men on their team following dutifully.

"What in the Goddess name is happening right now?" I ask out loud, "Uh, Milo, have a couple of senior guards escort anyone who wants to go for a run. We need to monitor whatever the Hell is happening right now."

happening right now.

“Yes Alpha,” he nods with his hands on his hips.

“D-did Amari say Persephone is her sister? Wouldn't that mean-”

I cut Reggie off before he finishes, “Yeah. All three are Manae. Did you see all their female staff? They were all either blonde or red-heads. I'm thinking they are all Manae.”

“Holy shit,” Milo whispers loudly, “What do we do?”

“We talk about it later. For now, play dumb and get ready for dinner,” I order.

“Kas?” I whisper into the phone. She was so sleepy when she called. I already know she has fallen asleep, but I just want to make sure. There is one thing you can always count on with Kas, she works hard and sleeps hard. I always try my best not to interrupt her when she's sleeping. I figure she had enough late nights and early mornings growing up that she deserves the sleep she gets now.

I smile when I'm answered with her little

I smile when I'm annoyed with her little snores. I wait another minute, closing my eye and imagining wrapping my arms around my sleepy little mate and burying my nose into her hair, breathing in her fresh rain and lilac scent. It's not the same as the real thing. I look at the phone but all I can see is her chin and the side of her scarred neck before I make myself end the video call.

I throw my towel into the laundry basket and put on my sweatpants. When I take a deep breath and notice Milo and Reggie's scents coming from outside the bedroom. I head back out into the living room; Milo and Reggie are both on the sofa, looking at their phones.

"What are you guys doing here? How did you get in?"

"Your parents let me use your key," Milo says, not looking up from his phone.

"Is Kas doing okay?" Reggie asks, not looking up from his phone.

"What the fuck? You were listening to my conversation in my own home?" I growl.

"Calm down, Lover Boy. We couldn't help but overhear. We came to talk about

calm down, Lover Boy. We couldn't help
but overhear. We can't talk about
whatever the Hell it was that happened
today," Milo retorts, dismissing my mood.

I relax a little, reminding myself that
these are my friends. They mean me no
harm.

"Yeah, Kas just fell asleep," I look at my
phone, wishing she was still awake, "
Gimme a second, I need to send some te
-."

Milo laughs maniacally before I finish my
sentence.

"What's so funny?" I drop my arms,
feeling a little annoyed at his outburst.

"I'm watching the video of Kas kicking
your ass around the training ring," he
wipes his tears of laughter as I hear
people oohing from his phone.

I roll my eye and motion to Reggie, "Let m
e guess, you're watching it too?"

"Ah, no. I'm watching Kas's speech to
Silver Moon. She looks so confide-," He
finally looks up at me.

A curious look comes over his face, "No
eye patch tonight?"

eye patch tonight?

“Nah. Kas got me in the habit of not wearing it around the apartment. Besides, it’s just the three of us. Nothing you’ve never seen before,” I wave him off. They were there when I lost my eye. They have seen me without the eyepatch thousands of times. I lean against the breakfast bar, taking out my phone.

Bronx: Leni make sure Kas gets into pajamas please? She fell asleep dressed

Lenora: No problem

Lenora: How was today?

Bronx: Weird. Find time to call tomorrow. I will catch you up - gn

Lenora: ok. I’ll try - gn

Bronx: Marco - food delivery service will be there tomorrow at 7am. Make sure she eats.

Marco: yes alpha im on it

“If he doesn’t make her eat-” Saint growls,

“Saint, I trust Marco to make sure Kas eats. She will be fine. It was just a big day for her. She was nervous, but you saw the

for her. She was nervous, but you saw the video. That is the Luna we both know she can be. We just needed to give her the chance," I do my best to calm him down.

He sounds like he is going to say something, but he changes his mind. He just paces in my mind before moving back to sulk. Sometimes I forget having Kas away from us is just as difficult on him as it is on me. It seems like even more so lately.

"Ah, no. You don't get to go sulk. Time for a talk," I scold him.

"No. Three sleeps until my mate comes back. I'm getting started now," he snarls and shuts down our link.

I send one more text before I sit down. This time to my therapist letting her know I need to make an appointment. Even with the medications I take to keep Saint calm, ever since Kas's birthday, he has been acting off. I explained my reasons for my behavior to Kas, but Saint has some explaining to do as well. I need to get both of us in check to avoid any more dangerous incidents. She texts back almost immediately with an appointment day and time.

day and time.

Alright, no more stalling. Time to talk business with my Beta and Gamma.

“Alright, let’s make this quick. I told Kas I was getting ready for bed and I meant it. So, what did you guys make of today? Was it as weird as I thought it was?” I ask, taking a sip of my water.

“Yeah. Weird is an understatement,” Milo shakes his head, “Tessa clearly recognized the women and vice versa. You saw the images. Did you see how wide their eyes all went? Their eyeballs practically fell out of their heads.”

“Yeah, I noticed that. The fact that we surprised them with each other could mean Katherine and Amari may not have been involved in Kas’s kidnapping,” Reggie hypothesizes.

“What do we do about Cora being Persephone, who we know was involved? Amari was the one who approached me asking if they could go for a run. If she is close enough to Amari to ask a favor for her benefit, do you think she would be able to hide the fact that she was there when Kas was abducted?” I rub the scruff on my chin and squint my eye, a little

Chapter 52

I quickly set the table, take the food out of the boxes, and put it on real plates just as Lenora steps in the room with my guards.

“Oh, I thought it was just take out. This looks gourmet,” Lenora looks impressed.

“Well, the plates help. Come on, sit down and let’s eat. I still need to get a shower before we get our day started,” I wave them over to the table and take my spot. The distraction of being able to eat with my pack members is exactly what I need to get my mind off of Bronx for a while.

When we finish eating, I get myself together for the day and we get started. Lenora and Tyree get settled in the conference room to help families with the relocation registration while Marco, Elder Randall and I push through building after building, house after house, assessing the value and determining what we can sell at auction. The pack members who choose to come to Blood River will be allowed to take their belongings, but most of the furniture and things like that are the property of Silver Moon. Most of what we find is shabby and run down. There is very little we will be able to sell. I mark most of

little we will be able to sell. I mark most of it to be donated to charity or to be incinerated.

Except for the lunch break Marco makes me take, we work straight through until dinner. When Marco makes me stop.

“Luna, please sit. You need to eat,” he calmly informs me.

“Marco, we’re almost done. Only six more houses, then we’re finished with this part,” I feel myself whine. I don’t need to eat. I need to keep busy to keep my mind off of Bronx.

“Kas, don’t make me ask twice. I got orders,” Marco hisses through gritted teeth. His professional voice erodes and his heavy Spanish comes forward, “Alpha says you need to eat, so you need to eat.”

I roll my eyes and cross my arms over my body, “Alright, fine.”

He pulls me out to the porch and sits me on the step while he goes to the car. He comes back with a cooler that has another to go box inside, “I should heat it up but there ain’t no microwaves in these places.”

pieces.

"It's alright. Where's yours?" I ask opening the box to see spaghetti and meatballs with two pieces of garlic bread inside. I stab at a meatball with the plastic fork and take a bite. It's delicious, even cold. I guess I didn't realize how hungry I actually was.

"I ate mine an hour ago, when you was at the pool house," he explains. He pulls out his phone and aims it at me to take a picture, "Smile for the Alpha."

"Huh?" I say as I shovel a fork full of pasta into my mouth. He snaps the picture.

"Alpha said to send proof you been eating like he ordered. No better proof than a picture," Marco chuckles as he sends the picture off.

"Really, Marco? That's the picture you sent?" I laugh as he shows it to me.

"Hey Luna, what better proof could I send him? It will make him laugh," he smiles with a shrug.

"Um, sorry to interrupt, Goddess, but you don't happen to have any extra, do you?" Elder Randall asks as he steps out of the little house. The expression on his face

Elder Randall asks as he steps out of the little house. The expression on his face makes me uncomfortable, but I can't pinpoint why.

"Sorry, Elder Randall, but no. I can ask Beta Lenora and Tyree to order something from the kitchen for you. It will be ready by the time we get back," Marco speaks for me, switching his tone back to his formal work voice.

"Thank you, uh, Marco is it? Don't worry about it. I will be fine. I can have an omega bring my meal to my suite when we get back," Randall holds his hands up and gives an awkward smile.

I inwardly smile, grateful that I don't have to confront Randall or share my garlic bread with him, but I want to talk to him about the way he has run the pack for the last two years. I look at Marco and tilt my head, trying to show I need a few minutes alone with the old Elder.

Marco takes his hand out of his pocket and looks at his watch. I recognize it as one I helped Musu pick out for his birthday.

"As soon as the Luna is done eating, we can get back to work. It has been taking

can get back to work. It has been taking fifteen minutes per house, so we should be done in about an hour and a half," he advises Elder Randall, "I'm just going to step over to the car to call my mate. If you or the Luna need anything, I just call for me, Sir."

I see Elder Randall's face darken slightly for a moment, then back to its usual uncomfortable smile. I wonder what that's about?

"That sounds just fine," he sneers slightly.

As Marco wanders away toward the car, I beckon Randall to sit down with me, "Elder Randall, please sit. A request from a goddess."

"Anything for you, Goddess Iokaste," he gives his fake smile again. I feel my back stiffen at him using my full name, but I don't correct him. He groans as he sits on the step with me.

"Randall, I want you to know I have spoken to Alpha Regent Bronx. Over the course of the last two years, you have run this pack further into the ground than a drunkard, abusive Alpha ever could. The

drunkard, abusive Alpha ever could. The treatment of the people here is appalling. As a member of the Elder Council, you should be ashamed of yourself," I scold the man in as calm a voice as I can, but I notice in the evening light, a slight aura is surrounding me.

"Goddess, I assure you, I have tried my best. The situation here was well, it was—"

"It was better two years ago when my former Alpha was whipping me nearly to death every night than it is now," I snap, "You have done this pack a disservice. Honestly, I don't believe you ever looked for a suitable Alpha for these people. I don't think you have put any effort into helping them at all and now you have made it Bronx and my concern."

I see his face blanch as his mouth opens and closes a few times, but he says nothing.

"What really gets me. Like really, really gets me angry," my aura glows brighter now, "is that you have been treating young girls of this pack as slaves. And don't deny that you haven't."

"Goddess, I did what I had to do to fulfill

"Goddess, I did what I had to do to fulfill my duties to the Council," he voice has an irritated growl.

"Then you have failed the Council, Sir. The Council is supposed to be composed of the best retired Alphas and Alpha Regents our community has to offer. If this is your best effort, you are clearly not part of the echelons you think you are," I use my words to hit him where it counts. Telling him he is not as elite as he thinks he is.

"Randall, not only have you done an abysmal job here, my Beta advised this morning that out of the four hundred adults, only two hundred and fifty have requested to come to Blood River. That's going to leave a lot of rogues and asylum seekers in my region to manage."

"Goddess, I won't apologize for what has happened here. I won't take responsibility for this pack who refused to take responsibility for themselves. We will finish tomorrow in the pack house with assessments and registrations for transfers. The following morning, you will go home and I have to stay here and deal with the aftermath."

“And what aftermath do you think that is?” I furrow my brow.

“Hope. You have given this group hope. The worst kind of incentive. A promise you cannot guarantee and now it will be difficult to control them,” his voice is cruel and cold now. 1

I control my breathing and will my energy to turn inward before something bad happens.

“Marco! We’re ready here,” I call out. He lifts his head in recognition and hangs up the phone while he jogs over. He takes the carton from me and leads us to the car so we can finish assessing the last of the run down cottages.

Chapter 53

Bronx's POV

I have some pretty dumb ideas sometimes. I'm man enough to admit that. Sending Kas away for five days, that is probably the dumbest I've had in a long time. I know because when I roll over to pull her into my arms, but she's not there. It's my own stupid fault. I have to settle for her green and gray blanket to get her scent. I growl into the empty blanket, upset that it is not my mate.

Only one more night, Bronx. You can do this, I tell myself. I look at the ceiling, thinking about the conversation I had with Kas last night. I was so proud to hear her tell me about her conversation with Randall. And glad to hear they only have to finish assessing the packhouse while Lenora finishes registrations. They will leave first thing tomorrow.

I let out a heavy sigh before I pull myself out of bed and get a shower.

I grab a towel and dry myself off. I throw it over my head and rub it through my hair, drying it as much as possible. When I pull the towel off, I swear I see a glowing

pull the towel off, I hear I see a glowing flash of purple in the mirror. I pause and look closer, but there is nothing. It must have been my imagination. I comb my hair back, then start shaving. The flash catches my attention again in my peripheral vision. I can see it on the side of my face where I have no eye. I snap my head around and look, but there's nothing there.

Lady Camille had told me she believed I was developing an aura like Kas because of how close our connection is. I was absorbing Kas's extra energy, and it was having a physical effect on me. She and I decided to keep a close eye on it, since she would be in town for a few more weeks with Delilah. I look down at my hands, but they aren't glowing. Whatever that light was, it's not coming from me.

I look in the mirror one more time and pause, trying to look around without moving my head, just shifting my eye back and forth. Whatever it was, it's gone now. I finish shaving and brush my teeth. When I get to the door, I feel a heat against my back. I quickly turn to see a purple light in the room suddenly fade. I can't tell where it originated from, just

can't tell where it originated from, just that it was in the bathroom and it was hot.

"James, I'm sorry to bother you, but I think I need Delilah to come to my apartment. Something weird is happening up here," I mind link Kas's guard.

"No problem, Alpha. We have an appointment with the specialist this morning. Do you need her before or can it wait until after?"

"After is fine. I have meetings all morning. If you two could meet me up here at lunch, that would be perfect."

"Yes, Alpha. See you then," James confirms.

I take another good look around the bathroom. Nothing seems suspicious or out-of-place now, so I go about my business and finish getting ready.

Milo and Reggie meet me at the landing of the third floor. Both looking chipper and ready to work.

"Morning Alpha! How did you sleep?" Reggie chirps.

"Fine. What are you so happy about?" I ask

ask.

“After our meetings yesterday, Ashley had a doctor appointment, and we found out we’re having a girl!”

“Oh man! That’s awesome!” Milo gives Reggie a big hug, “She and Codi are gonna be best friends just like their moms. I know it.”

I smile and shake his hand, “Congrats, Reggie. Very happy for you two.”

“Thanks, guys. Come on, Bronx. When is it your turn? We need a little mini Bronx running around this place,” Reggie laughs.

“Don’t worry, Kas and I are working on it,” I turn my head to the ground, not really wanting to make eye contact, and talk about my sex life in the hallway, “It’s not for a lack of trying.”

“Well, if you need any pointers-”

“Milo, whatever you think you are about to say, think twice. My little sister is your mate,” I warn.

“Oh, yeah. Reggie, give Bronx some pointers,” Milo laughs, elbowing Reggie.

pointers, Milo laughs, elbowing Reggie.

Reggie's face reddens a little, "Uh, yeah Bronx, if...you know...I mean...if you need any advice, uh...lemme know. Otherwise let's drop this conversation."

Milo and I laugh at Reggie's modesty. As we get to the landing of the second floor, there is a distinct change in energy in the air. It feels like static building around us, ready to spark. All three of us stop in our tracks.

"You feel that?" Milo asks, his eyes growing black and fangs extending. Reggie and I follow suit, letting our wolves come forward in case we are being attacked.

I look over the railing of the landing down to the first floor to see if I can see the source of the disturbance.

"What the...? Kas? Leni?" I must be hallucinating. They are supposed to be at Silver Moon, not here while Santoro Enterprises is here. I sniff the air but don't smell either of their scents. What is happening?

"Lenora? Sugar, what are you doing?!"
Milo rushes down the stairs.

I look again and realize Kas and Lenora aren't just standing on the main level. They are having an argument. I watch, horrified, as Lenora lifts Kas off the ground, holding her up with both hands by the throat. The smell of blood wafts in the air as Lenora's claws pierce the scarred skin on the sides of Kas's throat. There is a look of pure hate and rage in the black eyes of Lenora's wolf, Justice, as she strangles a thrashing Kas.

"Lenora! Stop!" I yell, skipping steps as I run down the stairs. Lenora finally looks up at me and her face turns pale. Her eyes turn back to their regular green and she lets go of Kas, letting her fall to the ground with a hard thud. Before we can stop her, Lenora takes off, running full speed out the door of the packhouse. Milo and Reggie take off after her.

"Kas? Are you okay, Baby?" I get to the bottom of the stairs and kneel next to Kas. I can immediately tell something isn't right when I touch her. There are no sparks of our mate bond. Her scent is off. So is her body posture and her energy. Is she falling into a vision? Goddess, please no. Not on the main floor of the packhouse

o. Not on the main floor of the packhouse where everyone can see her. She will be so embarrassed.

I keep my hand on her back, bending forward to see her face. Kas coughs as she catches her air, but she is doing something with her hands at the same time. I can't tell

"That's so cute, you call her Baby," Kas giggles softly between her coughs. What is she talking about? Something is wrong with her voice.

"Kas?" The energy coming off of her makes me feel slightly nauseous.

She finally looks up at me, and I see it isn't Kas at all. I feel myself freeze on the spot. What the fuck? She looks exactly like Kas, but it isn't her. This woman doesn't have Kas's scars. Her smile is cruel and cold and her violet eyes are calculating and careless at the same time.

"Oops, looks like Bronx just found out his mate has a look alike," her laugh is like a cackle as she looks at me.

"Who - who are you?" I whisper trying to process what I'm seeing. All the videos we

process what I'm seeing. All the videos we had seen of Kas's sisters showed women that looked similar to her, but never this close.

"Name's Leticia, Bronx. I would stay for tea, but I think that's my cue to leave," she looks behind me. I turn my eyes away from her and see James and Delilah standing near the front door, watching us with horrified looks. Delilah is starting a spell under her breath.

"NO! You have to protect her," Saint growls in my mind.

"What the Hell are you talking about you crazy ass wolf?" I ask him, trying to wrap my head around everything happening in the moment.

"You're her guardian, dummy. It's your fucking job to protect her. So do it! Don't let the witch hurt her!" Saint roars louder.

"This isn't Kas, Saint!"

"I KNOW! JUST DO IT!" He gives a frustrated snarl and takes over my movements, pulling me back from being in control of my body.

He positions me between this mystery

He positions me between this mystery woman and Delilah, blocking any spell Delilah is going to try to use against her.

Leticia sits up straight and throws her hands out away from her body. As she does, a focused point of light purple light shoots out from her chest into the middle of the room. It quickly grows and glows so brightly, I have to look away from it.

"Don't worry, Bronx, I'll be back," she pats the side of my face as she giggles. Before I can stop her, she jumps up and sprints for the purple light.

I try to scramble to my feet to chase her, but Delilah releases her spell, trying to knock the woman off her feet. Saint forces me to throw my body to block the pulse of Delilah's spell instead of chasing after Leticia. I watch as Kas's look alike dives into the purple light and it disappears. At the same time, Delilah's spell hits me and knocks me backward into a side table, smashing it to pieces. Saint conveniently gives back control just as I hit the ground.

"Saint, you have some explaining to do," I growl.

"I just did! You're Leticia's guardian. You

growl.

"I just did! You're Leticia's guardian. You can't let Delilah or anyone else hurt her. You really are dense sometimes," he scolds like this is all some sort of commonplace occurrence.

I sit for a moment with everyone looking at me. I can feel anger bubbling up inside me and I let it. Losing control inside your own packhouse? Unacceptable.

"What the fuck just happened in my packhouse?!" I roar, "James, Delilah, my office now! Reggie, find Milo. Get Musu from upstairs, You're all meeting me up there too."

Chapter 54

I throw open the door to my office, letting it slam against the wall, and pace in front of my desk as everyone else files into the room. My rage is flowing off of me but I don't care.

"Conference table," I snarl, pointing to the back of the room. James and Delilah quietly go to the table and take a seat. James looks at the table with his neck exposed to me. Delilah just looks terrified. I don't think I have ever seen her eyes so dark blue.

A moment later, Musu pokes her head in through the open door. Her eyes widen when she senses the anger.

"Alpha, you sent for me?" she asks innocently.

"Sit!" I growl at her, still pacing. She scurries over to the table and joins James and Delilah.

Saint is raging in my head, not because of a random portal opening in the packhouse, but because of the intruder who looked like Kas being attacked by a woman who looked like Lenora.

woman who looked like Lenora.

“Saint, knock it off!”

“We have to go after her! We have to help her!” he howls desperately.

“And how the fuck are we supposed to do that? You know where she went? You know how to get there? Do you know what she’s doing once she gets there? Because if you do, you and I have to have some really serious conversations about withholding information from me,” I seethe at him.

“Bronx, I don’t know how to tell you any other way. You are a Guardian. Yeah, you need to protect our mate, but there are other goddesses who need us, too. I don’t know where the Hell she went but we have to find her.”

“You’re impossible, Saint. I’m not even going to pretend to agree with you because I don’t understand...at all. Kas is our mate and our priority. All this other insanity is not our business. Well, it wasn’t until it started happening inside my packhouse.”

Saint groans and continues pacing restlessly, but doesn’t argue with me

again.

I know I need to calm down before I speak to the people sitting at my conference table. Anything that comes out of my mouth right now will be fueled by an anger that shouldn't be directed at them.

Reggie appears in the doorway, "Alpha, Milo's on his way. He should be here in ten minutes. It was Tessa, without the wig and contacts. Don't worry, we caught her."

"Good. Sit," I point to the table. The news feeds me a sense of satisfaction, but it does nothing for my temper. I take a breath and go stand at the head of the table, gripping the back of the chair tightly. I'm not sure how long it has been, but my patience is dissolving as I wait for Milo.

"Before Milo and Tessa get here...What the fuck just happened out there? How did that imposter of my mate breach our security? How was she able to create a portal inside MY packhouse?" No one answers me, making me even more angry. I slam my fist on the table, shaking the room, creating an indent in the oak table. So much for controlling my temper.

so much for controlling my temper.

"A-Alpha, I-I," Delilah speaks. James holds her hand to give her support.

"What is it Delilah?" I snarl, staring her down.

"Alpha, I placed wards over the packhouse grounds as soon as the Luna reappeared from the pool," she looks like she is going to cry but she keeps speaking, "Anyone who could have magic strong enough to get through them must be extremely powerful or using very dark magic."

"So that person impersonating Kas is a dark witch? Is that what you're saying?" I ask, putting my hands on my hips.

"I don't know for sure, but I will say, naturally occurring portals are always white. Her portal being violet instead of white would indicate it is not a natural ability for her. She had to gain it somehow. Gaining powerful magic like that is not usually of a light persuasion, Sir."

"Dark magic. That's what Musu's research has shown for the past year now. Delilah, Lady Camille is still here, right?"

"Yes, Alpha."

I put my head up and look at the ceiling, trying to think. There aren't any answers up there.

"James, take your mate to her appointment, then bring Lady Camille here. We need her and Delilah to boost those wards. That is, if you're able to Delilah, with everything considered," I allude to her pregnancy without actually saying it, "Don't put yourself at risk."

"Yes, Alpha," James responds, sounding grateful to be excused from the room. He stands up and walks out. Delilah pulls his hand, stopping him.

"Alpha, I will do my best and I-I'm sorry I hit you with that spell. I aimed it at that intruder. I-I was trying to stop her from escaping," she sounds like she is going to cry at any second. I finally stop looking at the ceiling and look at her.

"It's alright, Delilah. You did the right thing. I know it goes against your morals to attack someone. If anyone can handle it, it's me. I appreciate your dedication to Blood River and loyalty to Kas and to me," Her eyes are still deep navy blue, showing

Her eyes are still deep navy blue, showing how stressed out she is. I listen carefully for a moment. I can hear her heartbeat pounding. My tone softens when I continue, "Honestly, Delilah. You have nothing to worry about. You are not in trouble for using magic in the packhouse. It was an emergency, and you did what you had to do for our pack. You can relax."

She smiles slightly and turns to leave. James gives me a silent nod of thanks and leads her from the office.

I look at my watch. Twenty minutes until we are supposed to be in the conference room. I mind link Carly.

"Carly, make sure everyone from Santoro Enterprises is in the conference room. Including Persephone or Cora or whatever the fuck she goes by."

"Alpha, is everything alright?"

"No, but don't tell them that. Just stall until I get there."

"Yes, Alpha."

As I finish the mind link, I can hear a ruckus in the hallway. Reggie and Musu both stand up. Reggie touches her

both stand up. Regg touches her forearm and shakes his head slightly, motioning for her to sit back down. She twists her face in frustration but obliges.

Milo and one of the senior guards appear in the doorway, dragging Tessa by her armpits. She is wearing silver handcuffs. Her black ponytail is askew and her green eyes look wild.

"Let me go!" she snarls at Milo, with her fangs and claws extended and her eyes are pitch black. Milo and the guard ignore her and keep a firm hold of her armpits as she struggles against them. She can't shift with the handcuffs on. I'm surprised she's strong enough to let her wolf come forward at all.

"Let her go," I sneer at Milo and the guard, glaring at the woman. I feel my eyes turn black as Saint directs his anger at her, too.

The guard lets go of her, and Milo shoves her forward. I grab her by the collar and pull her toward me. I feel my breath getting heavy and I notice a purple aura surrounding me, but ignore it.

"The only reason I didn't throw you in the

"The only reason I can't throw you in the dungeon as soon as you walked through my packhouse doors earlier this week is because I promised my mate I wouldn't. Give me one reason I shouldn't snap your neck right now and tell her you took off in the middle of the night, Tessa?" Saint's gravelly voice booms from me. I stare her down inches from her face, letting his anger flow through me.

The black of her wolf's eyes recede, and they are crisp green again. I have to stop myself from thinking I am threatening Lenora. This is most definitely not my sister. I can sense fear coming from her, but something else too. As I look into her eyes, I can tell she is much older than her physical appearance. She has lived lifetimes through the same eyes. She looks at me like she's known me for an eternity. Maybe she has. Mixed in with her fear, I feel a sense of duty and responsibility. I feel the soul of a warrior, a soldier reaching out, not wanting to accept her fate. It's like she feels as if she's the only one who could be in her position right now.

"Bronx...I-I...S-Saint...please...it-it's not what you think...Leticia...she's gone too

what you think...Leticia...she's gone too far d-dark. I'm here to protect you and Iokaste. I swear," she panics and stumbles over her words, "Mother lit the harbinger lamp purple. I was trying to stop her. I-I wouldn't lie to you. I promise. Please. Please don't kill me."

I continue staring at her. Saint and I both try to decide if we should trust her.

"What's her deal, Saint? How come you weren't willing to hurt Leticia, but you have no problem snapping this woman's neck?" I ask him curiously.

"We are only responsible for the Mavri Magea. Contessa leads the Sentinel. She can kiss my fluffy white ass," he growls.

That was not helpful at all. Let's try this again.

"Sentinel? So she is some sort of guard or warrior or something?"

"Yeah. They all have giant sticks up their asses. Always worried about the 'rules'," he huffs.

I drag Tessa by the collar to the conference room table and force her down into a seat, "Watch her. Musu, follow me."

Milo and the guard nod and step forward while Musu stands up and obediently follows me. I move to the metal door on the far side of the room and punch in the security code on the pad to the left of the door. It silently slides open. I step to the side and let Musu enter first. Once we are both inside, I press the button to shut the door.

Musu takes a deep breath and looks around my private library. She spends a lot of time here, but she clearly doesn't understand why I pulled her in right now.

"What is Mavri Magea?" I ask her, trying to remember I have no problem with her.

"Uh, Greek. It can be dark magic or black magic," she nods confidently.

"You're sure?" I ask hesitantly.

"Yes, Alpha. One hundred percent," she confirms.

I sigh and rub my hands over my face, "Give me a moment, Musu. I need to have an argument with my wolf."

"Oh, uh, okay?" she gives me a confused look. Obviously, she gets along with her

“Oh, uh, okay?” she gives me a confused look. Obviously, she gets along with her wolf.

“Saint, you said Tessa leads this Sentinel group, right?”


“Yeah. Uptight assholes.”



“Is Kas the leader of this Mavri Magea group?”

“DING! DING! DING! Finally! Someone give the man a prize.”

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Chapter 55

“Musu, I am sorry, but you are about to see a side of me I rarely show to pack members. I’m just going to step over there,” I point to the other side of the room, trying to sound as calm as possible, “Please don’t be scared. I will be right back.”

Musu nods slowly, like she is questioning my sanity. Can't blame her. I'm questioning it too. I walk to the far side of the room and grip the back of the leather loveseat, with my back to her. My entire body tenses up and I feel my claws extend, tearing into the brown leather. A deep rumbling growl rips through me, making the entire room shake until my voice is a full on roar. When I have let out as much of my frustration as I can, I stand up straight and take a deep breath. When I turn around, I see Musu standing against the door to exit the library.

“I feel much better now, Musu. Again, I apologize for the outburst, but every dam has a breaking point,” I explain. When she doesn’t look like she is going to run for her life, I ask her to sit at a table with me. She sits at the edge of the chair,

me. She sits at the edge of the chair, looking at me suspiciously, just in case she needs to run.

I explain to her what Saint just informed me of and ask if any of it sounds familiar or makes sense.

She looks around for a moment, then stands up and goes to a bookshelf. She pulls out a giant book and puts it on one of the reading stands. I stand up and watch as she flips the pages.

“Alpha, this answers so many questions I had about this passage,” she says with a look of relief, pointing to a handwritten diary page.

I look at my watch, “Well, you have five minutes to explain it to me.”

When she finishes, I tell her to wait in the library for half an hour, then she is to go directly back to the suite next to my apartment. She nods in understanding and wishes me good luck before I push the button to exit the room.

I fix my suit jacket and sit down in front of Tessa. I smile, but she looks scared by it. Imagine that. It's not one of my genuine smiles Kas always talks about.

“Tessa, would you like us to take off the silver handcuffs?”

“Since when do you have a sense of humor?” She snarls, “Of course I want them taken off.”

“Good. Here are the conditions to your new found jewelry being taken off,” I lean my elbows on my knees and get close to her face so I can make sure she understands as I explain my terms.

When I get down to the conference room, we greet the Santoro Enterprises team and apologize for our tardiness. As we sit down and prepare for the first presentation, Reggie gives me a concerned look.

“All good, Alpha?” He asks.

“Uh yeah, but I need to take a break at lunch so Delilah can check something out in my apartment,” I try to sound casual.

“You need a witch to look at something in your apartment?” Milo asks suspiciously.

“Eh, I’m sure it’s nothing. I thought I saw a purple light in the bathroom. And I

a purple light in the bathroom. And I realize how crazy that sounds, but two full years of craziness with Kas around and this is bottom tier stuff. Delilah will probably just burn some sage in the bathroom and call it a day.”

“Alright, just let us know if you need us for anything,” Reggie concedes, seeing that I don’t want to get into more detail.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Katherine pretending not to hear our conversation.

“Amari, I trust those of you who went for a run last night found it suitable? Our guards were not intrusive?” Milo asks with a syrupy tone in his voice.

“It was perfect. Thank you so much again. Your hospitality has been so wonderful. We appreciate all the accommodations you have provided us,” she beams as she talks.

“That’s great. Oh, will Persephone be coming down to discuss the parcel of land?” Milo asks. He smiles before he continues, “We just want to help her out as far as the landscape in this area goes. I have some topographical and satellite maps to show her. I really just need her

have some topographical and satellite maps to show her. Really just need her for half an hour or so? We can let her go back to her suite right after."

"Yes, she should be here in just a few minutes. She just needed to get changed," Katherine chimes in.

"Alright, let's get started, shall we? We are short a few people this morning because of some mandatory pack training, but Milo, Reggie, and I should be able to handle everything. My assistant gave me all the notes I need," I say, holding up the papers Carly had given me at our breakfast debrief.

"That's fine," Katherine smiles.

We get started with the meeting and make it through a full presentation and question-and-answer session about physical security. There is a knock on the door and a woman wearing large dark sunglasses with her hair tightly wrapped in a silk scarf walks in. Her movements are elegant but guarded at the same time.

"Persephone, thank you for joining us," I stand, holding my hand palm up toward her. Letting her place her hand on top of mine is more primal motion than a

ner. Letting her place her hand on top of mine is more primal motion than a handshake. A silent way to show she can have dominance over the encounter. I feel a surge of powerful ambient energy come from her, raw and pure. The urge to shift flows through me but dissipates when I let go of her hand.

“Why did you let go? That’s the good shit!” Saint bounces off the walls of my brain.

“This is the woman you said I would never meet?” I ask him.

“Uhh, yeah. I guess I was wrong. There’s a first time for everything,” he laughs nervously, then crawls into the back of my mind.

I lead her over to Milo at the other end of the room so they can spread out maps and discuss the parcel. The rest of us break off into smaller groups to discuss more specific concerns about the contract until there is a knock at the door.

Carly pokes her head in, “Gamma Reggie, I’m so sorry but you’re needed downstairs. There’s a problem in the weight room that needs your attention.”

weight room that needs your attention.

“Sure thing. Excuse me. So sorry for the disruption,” Reggie says quickly. He bows as he leaves the room.

Before the door closes, Tessa pulls in a cart with drinks and snacks. She is back in her blonde wig and blue contacts, wearing her housekeeping uniform. She looks around the room and sees Milo sitting separately with Persephone. I can see her back stiffen slightly. Persephone looks up and sees Tessa. For a moment, I think she is going to stand up and go to her sister, but she just stares for a moment before turning her attention back to the maps.

As Tessa pours drinks for everyone when the door opens again. Carly peeks in, looking more frazzled.

“Alpha, Beta, I’m so sorry. We need both of you. Today seems like a day full of emergencies,” she says frantically.

I look at Milo, who shrugs at me and stands up.

“I sincerely apologize for this,” I bow as I back up, “We will be back as soon as we can. Tessa, would you mind staying and making sure our guests are taken care of

until we get back?"

"Y-yes, Alpha, of course," she smiles dutifully.

I follow Milo out of the room and close the door tightly behind us. He turns and nods at me, then waves me down the hall. We go to a small security guard room with dozens of monitors. Reggie and Carly are already there. Carly directs the guard with which cameras to pull up, then hits the record button on the touch screen. Within seconds, the Santoro Enterprises team all stand up and confront Tessa.

Katherine grabs her by the wrist and starts growling about Tessa leaving suddenly and scaring everyone. Tessa doesn't back down from her Luna. She swats her hand away and growls back about needing to protect the guardians.

"Who the Hell are the guardians?" Reggie asks, looking into the monitor with his chin in his hands.

"Don't worry. You will find out soon enough," I murmur, not looking away from the screen.

We let them bicker for about five minutes until we are pretty sure we have all the

until we are pretty sure we have all the information we are going to get. Then Milo, Reggie, and I all make our way back down to the conference room, talking loudly to make sure our guests can hear us coming. Everyone looks much more composed than they did a minute ago when we watched them on the monitor.

“Thank you so much for your patience,” I say as we enter the room.

Katherine nods her head curtly and shuffles the papers in front of her. Tessa goes back to serving drinks to the people around the table as if nothing happened.

As I take my seat, I hear a loud groan of pain and a glass shatter. I look up to see Tessa clutching her chest, doubled over in pain. Her eyes are wide and filling with tears.

“Tessa? What happened?” I stand up quickly and make my way over to her. Katherine, Amari, and Persephone do the same.

I watch as Tessa slides her shaking hand against her head and pulls off her wig, exposing her shiny black hair.

"Alexandros!" she gasps, trying to catch her breath while she still clutches her chest, "No no no no! Goddess no!"

"Who's Alexandros?" Milo asks as he helps her sit in a chair.

"Her mate," Persephone, pulls her sunglasses off, exposing her blood red irises. She kneels in front of Tessa looking at her with concern.

Tessa lets out a shrill cry of pain as tears stream down her face. She shakes and sobbing heavily as Katherine and the other Manae try to comfort her.


I know the feeling all too well, the sudden breaking of the mate bond when your mate dies. It's the most painful feeling in the world. Like a giant black hole tearing open inside you, sucking you into darkness.


We stand back, not sure what to do. This is not how we planned this. There is another urgent knock on the door, then Carly peaking in again.

"Alpha, just got a call from Silver Moon. Code Violet. And Gamma, your wife needs you immediately. There's a problem,"

Carly peaking in again.

“Alpha, just got a call from Silver Moon. Code Violet. And Gamma, your wife needs you immediately. There’s a problem,” Carly says with tears in her eyes.

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