

## 5 princes and I Chapter 51-55

### Chapter 51 Enter Sanver

The ride took about 30 minutes based on my estimation. Although I am not quite sure since it might have taken longer than that. We traveled in silence or at least everyone except the twins who kept talking about random stuff that I didn't bother to be interested in.

The forest was getting thinner and I was starting to see a path that led to a clear landscape.

"Just a little longer." Said Dan. "We just need to pa\*\* this neighborhood."

Neighborhood?

I looked up ahead to see that there were broken buildings up ahead that looked like it was burned or something. Piles of rubble are s\*\*\*tered everywhere and just to my far left is a tall broken-down building that looks sus\*\*\*iously like a castle.

I noticed that the prince's expressions turned grim and that made my curiosity tingle. "What is this place?" I asked them.

"It's the ruins of the former kingdom of Gija." Said Nate. He rode beside me so he could speak to me more clearly. "This is the kingdom of the Tamers. They control beasts and do their bidding."

"What happened to them?"

Nate's face hardened. "You don't want to know the details, but I'll give you a hint. There."

So it was the kingdom of Tereau who did this?

"Why? Why would they attack this kingdom?"

"Because they are cowards." I looked ahead to me and towards Ren who had his back to us. "They were afraid of the power that the people had."

"It's not the only kingdom they destroyed. They also burned down Iroca. The kingdom of the shifters. A close family to the were." Said Dan. "They can manifest into any form. Be it human or animals."

"Enough dwelling on the past." Ace suddenly spoke. "Talking about it now won't change anything. Let's just hurry up and get outta here."

No one objected to his idea as we started to enter the dead kingdom. For some reason, my body started to shake at the sight of the ruins that I have to avert my gaze. Something moved in my peripheral vision and I turned to see what it was. It was standing by the ruins of the castle and I could just make out its golden brown fur and curious eyes as it watched us.

A wolf. By its small size, I know that it isn't a werewolf. It must be an ordinary wolf. A young one judging by its size.

It suddenly turned its head and it looked me in the eye. I gasped.

"Rose? Are you alright? Rose?" I was broken from my trance as I averted my gaze from the wolf to Nate. He was holding my arm and was looking at me intently.

"There's a wolf by the ruins of the castle," I said and pointed out at the spot.

Nate and the others followed my hand. "Nothing's there," said Nate, giving me a worried look.

"Impossible it was just-" I paused and my brows furrowed in confusion when I looked up to see that the wolf was gone. My jaw dropped and I looked at them in embarrassment. "It was right there! I swear I did see a wolf." I insisted.

I saw Ace staring at me silently before looking at the twins. "Ren, Dan, did you feel any wolf nearby?"

The twins shook their heads. "No."

"Sorry. No wolf here except us."

Now I was getting more confused with the whole situation. "I think you're just tired and imagined the whole thing, Rose. Maybe a good rest at Sanver will help," said Nate.

No. I was sure that I did see a wolf and I was not imagining it. As much as I wanted to argue more, I didn't because I have a feeling that no matter what I say they won't believe me unless they saw it for themselves.

Everyone seemed pretty eager to move away from the ruins of Gija that there was a thickening silence forming in the air. We followed the path for a few more minutes when the twins suddenly stopped. "We're here," Ren announced to us as he gazed down the slope which led to another village – this time buzzing with life.

Dan turned his horse around to face us. "Alright, I'm just gonna say this once. As soon as we enter you guys better be ready for a run."

“What do you mean?” Ace asked as his face hardened. He grabbed the hilt of his sword like he was about to pull it out of its sheath. “Are there rogues down there?”

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“Woah Woah Woah, Prince Ace. It’s alright. No rogues here. The village is heavily guarded and safe.” assured Ren.

Ace seemed unconvinced though as he dug in further. “Then why warn us about running?”

Ren and Dan exchanged glances before they looked at us with sheepish grins. “It’s nothing,” Ren said. “Just something personal,” Dan added.

“What did you guys-”

“Rose, I suggest you ride between Ren and me. I think it would be safer that way,” said Dan as he cut off Nate. Then he tapped a finger to his chin as if he was thinking of something. “On second thought, stay close to Ren since I’m pretty sure that I would be leaving you behind when things get worse.” He then finished it off with a laugh.

“Selfish b\*\*\*\*\*,” Ren told his brother.

As Dan had asked, I positioned myself between the twins. Once that was settled, we started to head for the village. Like Vertez, you can see that the kingdom was well kept judging by their fine and sturdy house and the clothing of the citizens. The only difference between the two kingdoms is that Sanver was surrounded by trees.

“Greeting everyone! Your princes have returned.” Dan announced as soon as we came.

“And we come in peace! For real this time.” Continued Ren as he and his brother raised their hand to wave at them.

There was a very pause as the people turned to look at their prince. At first, nothing happened and it gave me the chills and a feeling that something bad was about to happen. And something did.

“GET THEM!” Someone yelled and suddenly they brought out pitchforks, sticks, and shovels that shone brightly from the sunlight and looked ridiculously sharp.

Yes, even the shovels.

And yes, even the sticks which is weird.

Still smiling at the man, the twins held onto Cloud by the reigns. “Run.” They said in unison.

I looked at them in confusion. "What?"

I almost fell from my horse when they suddenly took off and dragged Cloud and me along with them. I grabbed onto the reins tightly so I wouldn't fall. When I said that I have gotten used to riding doesn't include running!

"What the heck is going on here!?" I screamed. I dared to look back to see Nate and Ace following behind us. Ace looked annoyed while Nate looked terrified. Just behind them are the townspeople.

"Why are they chasing us?" Nate wondered out loud. "I haven't even done anything to their women yet!"

At this, Ace looked at Nate. "The fact that you said 'yet' means that you are planning on something."

Nate blushed. "Prince Ace? Are we gonna have this conversation now?"

"I just pointed out the obvious." Ace said.

"You two frightened my chickens that they weren't able to lay eggs for two weeks!!"

"One of you was chasing my sheep that they s\*\*\*tered!"

"You vandalized my roof!"

"You broke my fences!"

"Stole one of my shoes!"

"Shaved my tree!"

"Broke my door!"

"My daughter likes one of you and I don't even know which!"

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Hearing the complaints of the villagers made me wonder what kind of prince they were. Like wow? They did all that? To be honest, I am not surprised. "What the heck have you guys been doing to your people?"

"Exactly as what they've said!" Ren sounded frantic.

"But it was a long time ago!" Defended Dan.

“It was before you left for Thalia!” The people screamed.

“Exactly!” Replied the twins.

I think we can all agree by now that they deserve whatever wrath the people are supposed to give them.

“Almost there.” Said Dan as he looked ahead of us. I followed his gaze to see that we were approaching the castle in the middle of a huge green landscape. The castle was surrounded by tall stone walls and in the middle is a gate made of steel bars crossed together.

“As much as we are glad that you seem to have taken a liking to our home I must remind you that we have angry villagers chasing after us.”

I turned to glare at Ren. “And who’s fault is that?!”

Ren chuckled before looking at Dan. “Have you called the guards yet?”

Dan nodded. “Yeah. I just used my link to tell them to open the gate. Look.” He pointed at us and to where the gate was starting to lift open. We dashed in and entered the gate. Once all of us were inside Ren commanded the guards to close it.

We got down from our horses – Nate helping me down. “Phew! For a second there I thought we wouldn’t make it,” said Dan as he started to laugh. My hands balled into fists and I stalked him and hit them both on their heads.

“Exactly what kind of princes would play pranks on their people?” I was about to hit them more when surprisingly Ace held me back.

“Calm down. What’s done is done and we can’t do anything about that now.” He said calmly.

I took his words in as I relaxed my fist. I glared at them one more time before I sighed. “Thanks for stopping me. I wouldn’t know what I would have done if you haven’t.” I told him.

“No. It’s I who should thank you because if you hadn’t acted then I would have done something much worse,” he said and from my peripheral vision, I could just see that he was gripping the hilt of his sword.

Oh.....

“Prince Ace.” Nate suddenly appeared beside him. His eyes turned cold which was really out of his character. “If we kill the princes of Sanver, how many years do you think we will be placed in the dungeon?”

Ace, with the same fierce and cold look as Nate, replied, “None. We’re princes of other kingdoms so surely we can use our power and influences to make our way out.” Then both princes turned their gazes towards the twins and they emanated a dark aura with them that I have to back away myself.

Demons. I knew it. Any minute now Ace and Nate will have a long and pointed tail growing at their b\*\*\*s. But whether my theory was right or wrong, I didn’t have any proof since the guard announced something and the double doors of the castle opened.

As if on cue, we all stopped what we were doing and collected ourselves to appear more proper, which horrified me because once upon a time, the old me would not try to act properly or princess-like.

Coming out of the door is a man and a woman in their mid 40’s. The man was muscular and tall. His hair was brown and of the same shade as Ren and Dan. He wore a tight gray shirt tucked in brown pants and boots that clicked as he walked. Although his clothes don’t look that much, his stance and the way he walks screams authority. The woman has dark hair and brown eyes – like the twins. She’s tall and has an amazing figure which was emphasized by her t\*\*\*\*\* shirt, slim pants, and boots – the girl version of the man’s outfit. She has a gentle aura coming out of her as she always wore a smile.

The man looked at us until his eyes settled on the twins. “I have heard of a few trouble makers in town and I wasn’t wrong to a\*\*ume that it was you two.” He smiled and looked amused.

I looked at the twins to see them grinning from ear to ear before they ran to the man and tackled him in a hug. “Dad!” The man laughed as he ruffled their hair. “Welcome home my boys.”

The woman looked at them and she smiled herself. “Indeed. Welcome home, my children. Would you like something to eat?”

I blinked as I looked at them. The way the man held on to the twins and the way the woman smiled gently at them. Are they their parents? Does that mean that these two...

As if noticing my stare, the twins broke off from them and led us towards us. They paused as they started the introductions. “Rose, Prince Ace, Bloods\*\*\*er meet King Dominic and Loisa Rutledge, the king and queen of Sanver and also our parents.” Introduced Ren.

I knew it! So they are their parents! But they don’t dress like royalty though.

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“Mom, Dad these are Prince Ace Ferraden, Prince Nathaniel Denver, and Princess Rosalie – Oh! By the way...” Dan suddenly dragged their parents aside as he whispered something to them that I couldn’t hear. I was curious about what he said to them so I looked at Ren and Nate since they both have sensitive hearing, but apparently, Ren and Nate told me that they could not hear anything. They said that Dan must have used his alpha link. But I bet Nate knows what they were talking about because he seemed amused by this.

“Oh really!?” The king suddenly exclaimed.

“Dad! Shh!” Dan hissed and shushed his father.

“Oh my.” The queen giggled while blushing.

When they headed back towards us again, I noticed that they have a grin on their faces that looks sus\*\*\*ious. Suddenly, the queen grabbed both of my hands. Her face and eyes suddenly brightened as she did. “It’s a pleasure meeting you, dear. Call me mom.”

“What?”

“Mom!” Both Ren and Dan said while the King placed a hand on his wife’s shoulder.

“Darling, step away from the girl right now. Don’t get too excited.” The kings said. The queen pouted as released my hand as she stepped back.

The king cleared his throat. “Now.” He started as he looked at me. “Princess Rose, how would you like to live in our castle forever?”

“Huh?” I asked again. Hang on.....are they telling me that they want to adopt me?

Dan stood in between me and his father before he pushed him. “Dad, you are far worse than mother. Stop embarra\*\*ing your kids! And don’t you and mom have to go?”

The king laughed at his son and patted his head. “Sorry, son. I can’t help it. You two are growing up so fast.” He said and looked to his right as he called for a servant.

Immediately a woman appeared and bowed to the king. “Have the guards carry their belongings and take care of their horses. Also, please lead them to the guest room to rest. Have some servants on standby to attend to their needs.”

The servant nodded and she motioned for us to follow her. We followed her and just as I was about to enter, Ren grabbed my arm.

I need to talk to you. He spoke in my mind. There was a hard and serious look on his face that told me that it was important that I found myself nodding yes.

I turned to the other princes and waved at them. "I'll catch up on you guys later," I said as Ren grabbed my hand and dragged me away before any of them could ask. He led us towards the back of the castle. He stopped and looked around us.

"I think this is safe enough." He said.

"Ren, what-"

"Rose." He cut me off and turned to look at me. "I-I 've noticed something about my brother lately." He looked away. "The way he acts when you are around me. He becomes so...quirky and cheerful. And he always has a goofy grin on his face when he sees us talking."

I stared at Ren like he was crazy. Like wow. He only noticed this now? "Doesn't he always do all that?"

He shook his head. "No. It's different this time. It was as if he was pa\*\*ing on a message. I wasn't sure what it meant at first but I do have an idea though." He said. "And it all made sense today when he spoke privately with mother and father. It finally became clear to me."

"What the heck are you talking about?" I asked. Seriously, he's not even answering my questions. He's just having a monologue.

Ren turned to face me. His eyes became soft. "The way my mother and father acted after the whole conversation proved it. How could I have been so blind all this time?" He sounded frustrated.

"You mean they wanted to adopt me?"

"No." He said and started towards me. He grabbed me by the shoulder and pulled me towards him and gave me an intense look in the eye.

"R-Ren?"

"Rose, I-I...." He paused. His face turned bright red and he looked away for a second before he shook his head and face me again. This time with a more determined look that made me squirm uncomfortably.

"Ren? W-What is it?" I stuttered at this new side of Ren. It wasn't like him to be this serious.

With his eyes boring into mine, he said the following words in a very very serious tone.

"I think Dan likes you and he doesn't even realize it."

## Chapter 51 Welcome the Princess

Dan grinned widely as he watched his brother and Rose walking away. His senses tingling and if he has his tail right now, it would be swaying back and forth in excitement.

By the looks of Ren, he seemed really serious about something. I need to know what it is! Dan thought.

“Um...I have some errands to do so I'll see you guys later.” He told them and quickly made his way to the back of the castle where he suspected they would – he means-where he knew they would be because of his senses.

He made his way to the opposite side so they won't notice him following them. He made his pace and steps as light as possible knowing fully well that his brother could hear him if he was not careful.

“I-I 've noticed something about my brother lately.” He paused when he heard them talking.

Ren sounded really serious about this! Dan thought in excitement.

Hurriedly, he made his way to the edge of the wall and he peaked. He saw them standing there with Ren's back facing him.

“The way he acts when you are around me. He becomes so...quirky and cheerful. And he always has a goofy grin on his face when he sees us talking.”

Wait, is my brother insulting me!? He thought.

“Doesn't he always do all that?” And then there goes Rose agreeing.

If this is a talk about insulting me behind my back then I no longer want to hear any of this! He turned his back at them furiously and started to leave. The backstabbers!! After all I –

“No. It's different this time. It was as if he was pa\*\*ing on a message. I wasn't sure what it meant at first but I do have an idea though.”

He stopped abruptly and went back to listening. His heart pounded in excitement at what he had just heard. Is Ren finally realizing it?! I mean, he is, right? Tell me that he realizes it please!!

“Danielle, is that you?” He almost jumped in surprise when someone grasped his shoulder. He turned around to see his mother and father giving him curious looks. He frowned at them and placed a finger to his lips to be quiet before he pointed towards where Ren and Rose were talking.

They exchanged confused glances at first so he motioned for them to take a peak. Together, they spied at the little love drama unfolding right in front of their eyes.

“And it all made sense today when he spoke privately with mother and father. It finally became clear to me.”

Dan heard his mom gasp so his father and him quickly placed a hand over her mouth to silence her.

That is Ren, right? His father asked me through their alpha link.

Yeah. He confirmed.

Is he confessing!? He is right?! He could hear the excitement from his mother.

I think so. This is great! If the girl accepts then the wedding shall be held two days from now!

Will you both shut up!? And dad, don't you think you are pushing it a little?

“What the heck are you talking about?” Rose asked with a confused look on her face.

Wow. The girl is dense. Just like our boy. His mother said in amazement.

Well that makes them perfect! Said his father. Now....about the names of our grandchildren..... Trilled his father.

“The way my mother and father acted after the whole conversation proved it. How could I have been so blind all this time?”

Dan nodded in agreement to what Ren has just said. Yes, brother. How can you be so blind all this time!

“You mean they really wanted to adopt me?”

Dense just like Ren. Said his mother. I like her.

I wonder if they will have a girl or a boy? Well the gender doesn't matter. I want lots of grandchildren. They better give me at least 10!

“No.” They watched as Ren started towards Rose and held her by the shoulders. He pulled her towards him and it was enough to make them restless that they had to cover each other's mouths to prevent them from screaming and ruining this wonderful moment.

I feel like crying. Dan told them. After all my sacrifices and hints, he finally realized it!

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His father patted his back as his mother hugged him. You did well my boy. Very well indeed. I am proud of you.

My little boy is growing up! Uhh! I can't take it.

“R-Ren?”

They snapped out from their train of thoughts as they brought their attention back to them.

“Rose, I-I....”

Say it boy! SAY IT!

Come on, brother. You can do it!

“Ren? W-What is it?”

They held their breaths in anticipation as they watched Ren. He is gonna do it! He's going to say it!

“I think Dan likes you and he doesn't even realize it.”

...

...

...

...what?

What?

WHAT!?

Dan's mother started to cry while his father drew her close to him and tried to comfort her. His eyes glistening like he was also about to cry but he was just suppressing it.

Dan doesn't know what happened to him at that moment, but he remembers laughing a bitter laugh while his mother and father looked at him like he was crazy.

Dan?

Without even thinking, he picked a fist sized rock and played with it for a bit and measured its weight. He grinned darkly and took a glance at his brother. He drew his hand that was holding the stone back and took aim. His nerves getting excited as he imagine the rock making contact with his idiotic brother. He was laughing like a mad man.

Just as he was about to throw the rock, a hand grabbed his wrist, stopping him from his evil and good natured plot.

Father let go. I am doing us a favor!! He grunted.

My boy, I know you are upset. Believe me I am devastated. To think that my son would be such a fool! Dan could hear the anger and disappointment in his father's voice. He suddenly looked at him in the eye. But, Daniel, no matter what happens, no matter how much of a fool your brother is he is still your brother.

He's right. Even though his brother is a retarded fool – no scratch that he is worse than a fool – he is still Dan's brother.

He suddenly felt numb. His hand fell to his side and dropped the rock that he was holding. He looked up at his father.

Father, I am sorry. I tried. I tried to make him understand. He said.

I know you did. He placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. You did your best and I am very proud of you, my son.

Dan let out a sigh and ran a hand through his hair in frustration. Thank you, father. I promise to keep on supporting him.

Good. That's good. Just don't tell him, alright? Make him realize it for himself. Lock him up and the girl in a cell for a month if you have to! There was a dark maniac look on his father's face as he said it.

Dan scrunched his face at the idea. I have no idea if you are serious or not, father. Dan said before he mirrored his face with his own devious look. But I am liking that idea.

So..... My father trailed off. Okay?

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Okay.

Then they both rubbed their hands evilly at the sudden plan.

“Your highness?” They were so hung up on their evil plan that they jumped in surprise and whirled around to see PRINCE Ace and Nate standing before them.

PRINCE Ace looked at them with a stone expression that was clearly hard to read while Nate was trying to suppress a laugh by covering it up with his fist. From the looks of things they knew – or heard – of what happened to Ren and Rose’s conversation. The only difference is that PRINCE Ace knows how to mind his own business by not showing anything.

Dan grew tired of seeing the amused look on the vampire’s face that he kicked a pebble from the ground making it fly to Nate’s forehead. The impact made Nate stop and point a glare at him.

Dan’s mother was the first one to break the silence. “Yes, Prince Ace? Do you need something?” She smiled warmly.

“Yes, your highness.” Said PRINCE Ace and bowed respectively – always the formal one. “I would just like to ask your permission to look around your borders. I am interested to see how your people are doing.” He said.

His mother nodded. “Permission granted. Would you like a few e\*\*\*\*\*s to the town?”

“None, your majesty. I would like to be unrecognized if possible.”

“And if I may. I would like to go along with PRINCE Ace.” Added Nate.

“Very well.” Nodded his father.

“Hey, can I come along too?” Dan asked.

All of the sudden, all heads turned to him like he was crazy or something. “No.” They said in unison.

\*\*\*ROSE\*\*\*

I really really think that Ren ate something bad because what he’s saying is absolutely ridiculous. “I think you are being delirious, Ren.” I told him.

“What are you saying? Don’t you see or notice him? He likes you.” Ren urged.

“And he likes you too. And Fred, possibly PRINCE Ace, but not Nate. What’s the point?”

Ren sighed. “Rose, I am not talking about liking someone in a friendship or platonic kind of way. I am talking about the romantic way. You get me?”

I shook my head. I refuse to believe it. Even if it were true, then what? The queen probably poisoned him with a potion just so she can have her romance fantasy.

“Geez. You are hopeless when it comes to love.” said Ren in exasperation. “Dan, likes you Rose. In a romantic way.”

“In a romantic way?” I tried to imagine Dan being romantic and all and found myself cringed. “Blech no. I just don’t picture it. But seriously, Ren. Dan having romantic feelings for me? That is absurd. Crazy even.”

“But the way-”

I held my palm up, cutting him off. “I just don’t think it’s right, Ren. Just picture it, Dan and I a couple? No offense to your brother but he isn’t my type nor can I picture him being romantic and all.”

Ren pulled back and looked up ahead as if he was picturing Dan and I as a couple. A second later and a frown was drawn at his forehead. “N-No. I guess not.” He stammered.

“See?” I said and placed a hand on my hip. “And besides, if you think about it, I think his actions are more related to you than to me.”

Ren looked at me in confusion. “What are on to?”

I took in a deep breath as I looked at Ren seriously. “I think the reason that he acts that way is because he’s jealous that you are spending more time with me than with him. I think he’s having a fit.” I explained.

Ren looked like he really thought of my words. “I see.” He nodded and started to rub his chin. “So that’s what it is. He’s jealous because of my lack of attention to him. It all makes sense now.”

While Ren was busy pondering over my words, I caught a slight movement to my left. I turned towards it. The kingdom of Sanver is surrounded by trees that for a moment, my eyes scanned the bushes looking for something that moved. My eyes then locked onto the same wolf that I saw in the ruins of Gija. It’s head poking by the bushes and when it saw me staring, it locked eyes with me and started to emerge from its hiding place.

“Rose?”

“Ren, look.” I said in awe as I approached the little brown wolf. I kneeled before it and grinned as it made small cautious steps towards me. I looked back at Ren, who now regarded the wolf with a grim expression. “It’s the wolf at the ruins. I saw it earlier. It must have followed us here.”

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I returned my gaze back at the wolf and reached my hand out to touch it. It looked at my hand curiously, sniffed, and was just about to make a contract when Ren suddenly appeared beside me. He let out a feral growl that made the little wolf scamper away in fear. It disappeared behind the bushes and never appeared again.

I got up and whirled towards Ren in anger. "What was that all about?!" I burst out. "You scared him!"

He snorted. "It was no wolf." said Ren, still looking at the spot where the wolf vanished. "It's scent was distinctive and not like that of a regular wolf."

"What do you mean?"

This time, Ren turned to me. His eyes were cold and ready like he sensed a threat. "It was a spirit. I don't know why it followed us here, but I suggest you stay away from it or call me when you see it again." Having said that, Ren started to turn away and leave.

As soon as he left did I realize something crucial. I have no idea where I am supposed to go. That jerk.

It didn't take me awhile to find my room. As soon as I entered the castle I immediately asked one of the maids where I would be staying. They were really eager to help me especially when they learned that I'm 'princess Rose'. They rushed me into my room and I didn't even have time to have a good look since they started to usher me into the bathroom telling me that I need to wash off the filth on me. I would have taken that comment as offensive but since I was too tired I let it slide.

Heck, I didn't even have the strength to fight them off when they started to strip me (Really since they have werewolf strength). But anyway, I didn't mind it either since being pampered also feels good.

I was dressed in a fine silky pale yellow tube dress that ends just 3 inches below my knees. I found it really comfortable and easy to move. When the maids sat me in front of the vanity table and started brushing my hair and giving me ma\*\*ages, I noticed something.

They were friendly. Too friendly for my liking. They keep looking at me like I was someone special and kept attending to me even though I don't call for them. It is making me uncomfortable.

"Um..." I started. My eyes going back and forth at the three maids at my aid. "Is there going to be a party tonight because really. You guys have done enough."

"Princess, we don't mind." Said the first maid.

"We are honored to be at your service." Said the second.

"Especially for the future of this kingdom." Added the third.

At the last statement, I looked at the third maid from the mirror. "Future? What future?"

The first maid glared at the third before looking at me with a kind smile. "It's nothing. Please forget about it, princess."

I gave her a weirded out look. "Alright." Was all I said after that as I let her continue brushing my hair. These guys are hiding something and it's creeping me out. I remember the king saying to have maids on standby in case we needed something. Are Ace and Nate also being pampered like this or is it just me because I am a girl? Either way, I don't like this. Is this a beast man thing? To be really clingy?

The brushing suddenly stopped. "Princess, I am done brushing your hair. Would you like something to eat? I'll have someone bring food here and then we'll feed you."

Feed me? "Uhh...I'm not. Thanks for the offer."

"Princess, are you tired? Would you like me to carry you to bed?" The second maid asked with a serious face.

Now things are really getting creepy here. They are treating me like a child. Surely the maids back at Thalia aren't this clingy. Heck, just thinking about it now makes me want to run back to Thalia and lock myself in my room.

a\*\*uming that the nymphs would let me.

"Would you like new clothes? I'll have someone shop for you."

"Princess, I made your bed."

"Princess, would you like me to style your hair?"

I felt like I was suffocating with the amount of pressure and attention these maids are giving me!! I need some time out! Anything! Anything will do!

There was a knock on the door and I could not explain the surge of relief when I suddenly found my escape.

"Princess, I will-

"No, I got it!!" I said quickly and made my way to the door before they could protest. But as I opened the door, all hope vanished when I saw Nate standing there. His face and white polo shirt covered in blood. Shock and horror filled me.

“P-Princess.” He stammered and wobbled forward.

## Chapter 52 The Twin Princes

I reached out and steadied him. “Nate? Nate! What happened?!” I asked worried as I held him close. I placed my ear to his chest and tried to listen to his pulse. It was still steady and strong.

“I-I-” He broke off.

“What is it, Nate?” I urged him to continue as I feared for his life. He reeks of blood and I kept thinking where his wounds could be. Nate started to mumble something that I could hear. “What?” I asked. My voice almost broke.

I heard him taking in a deep breath. “I said you smell so good. Can’t we stay like this forever?”

It took me a while to process things, but finally, I got to my senses. I kicked him in the groin making him lose his grip on me before I slammed the door to his face and glared at it.

That b\*\*\*\*\*! It was all a joke!! And to think that I was worried.

Nate was persistent as he knocked on the door. “Hey, I’m sorry. I was just kidding.” I could hear the amus\*\*\*\*t in his voice.

“Come on, Princess. Can’t you take a joke?”

I opened the door again and glared at Nate. I crossed my arms over my chest as I looked at his appearance. He was indeed covered in red. “Seriously, Nate. Sometimes, you take your jokes too far.” I chastised him. “Look you even put fake blood on yourself.”

“About that...” Nate looked away laughing nervously. “It’s real blood. Animal blood that is. Look. I learned how to skin a squirrel!” Nate brought out a cloth and started to unfold it revealing a dead and skinned squirrel. He looks so happy and proud as he raised it.

My skin crawled at the sight and I could feel my face scrunch up in disgust. “Ugh!” I stepped back and slammed the door once again at his face.

“Princess? Hey! Princess, open the door!!” Nate yelled from the other side while knocking.

“You are so disgusting, Nate! Why would you even bring that here?”

"I was trying to learn how to skin so the next time we travel we can hunt and get to eat it!" He said. "And I was hoping that you can come along so we can learn together. Pleaaaa\*\*seeee?"

"Not a chance!" I growled at the door.

"Princess." I turned around to see the maids looking at me in concern before glaring at the door. Crap, I forgot about them.

"Would you like us to dispose of that vampire?" There was a seriousness in their words that I felt afraid for Nate. These guys are serious!

"Princeesssssss Rosalie Amber Staaaaaann, COME WITH MEEEEEEEE~!" Nate wasn't helping either especially since he started singing. Like wow, where did he get all that energy from?

"Princess." Called the maids.

"Princcceesss~!" And you can probably guess who that was.

Great, now I have to make a decision. It's either staying here with the creepy maids or going with Nate and learning how to skin poor animals.

But let's be honest here, I would rather go along with Nate than stay here with this trio.

Sighing I turned back to the door and opened it. "Smelly prin- Oh there you are!" Nate started yelling insults at the door but stopped as soon as he saw me. "Thought you would never open it again." He grinned.

"Shut up," I told him as I excused myself before closing the door behind me. I looked at Nate. "And did you just insult me?"

Nate scratched the back of his head and muttered, "Well you wouldn't open the door so – ow!!" Nate hissed when I hit him.

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"Well, I guess I deserve that. Shall we get going?"

"Yeah yeah. Lead the way, Vampy."

As Nate brought me outside of the palace kitchen. It was a wide vacant space and I could see that he took his practice seriously with the basket full of dead squirrels, a knife, another empty basket, and a steel container smeared with blood.

"Wow, Nate. You sure did a number on this..."

“Hey, I only have 10 squirrels.” He pouted. He looks ridiculous that I chuckled.

“Who taught you?”

“The cooks at the palace.” He answered. “They taught me how so now I am helping them skin these squirrels for our dinner tonight.” He grinned proudly. He started rolling up his sleeve and headed for the basket of squirrels. He took one out and crouched on the ground. He picked up the knife and I had to avert my gaze as he started to skin it.

I pictured some big dogs catching squirrels and cooking them to eat. Squirrels. Typical dog behavior... I shook the thought away as I was starting to laugh. I can't tease them. Not with all the beast-men around.

“Um...” I said uneasily and stood behind his crouched form. “W-Where do I start?” I asked even though I have no desire to skin a squirrel. Just the thought of it makes my skin crawl.

I heard Nate laugh over the sound of ripping and cutting. “I take it back, princess. I don't want to teach you.” He said and gave me a side glance “Wouldn't want to miss your pretty dress.”

“What?” I looked at him – or at least the back of his head. “Then why did you call me out here?”

He shrugged. “When I saw the relief on your face the moment you opened that door, I had a feeling that you wanted to get out of that room. Maids giving you a hard time?”

“Sort of,” I said and tried to peek at what he was doing.

“Don't look. I'm gutting it.” He said and I could just hear him taking out its organs and felt my stomach churn at the thought.

“So,” I said trying to distract myself. “Why on earth would you volunteer to learn skinning am\*\*\*st our group? Don't you find it...gross? I mean, for a prince like yourself you should have thought how gruesome this is.”

I notice Nate pausing and breathing in. He dumped the newly skinned squirrel into the empty basket beside him. “Well I am a vampire and I have done more gruesome things compared to this.” He said shortly.

Silence.

I froze at his statement; wondering what he meant. Nate must have sensed my uneasiness because he started to change the subject. “By the way, princess, PRINCE Ace and I went to town today to have a look.”

I raised an eyebrow at him until I remembered that he couldn't see it. "The town? Didn't they chase you off as they did earlier?"

Nate chuckled. "Yeah, but this time they didn't chase us." He said and started to get a new squirrel. "There's a chair over there that you can sit on." He pointed to his right where I saw a wooden chair 10 feet from his.

Walking towards it, I dragged it until I sat just a few feet behind Nate. "Why would you go to the town?" I asked after the long pause.

"Well, it wasn't my idea." He grunted as he tried to work while talking. "It was more of PRINCE Ace's idea. I was just tagging along."

"Ace? Why would that lazy bookworm want to go?"

"I don't understand, but the reason why PRINCE Ace wandered the town was to investigate why the townspeople chased us." I could hear the ripping of flesh from Nate so I continued talking.

"But we already knew that, remember? They said so themselves." I reminded him.

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"True, but the elven PRINCE thinks there's another reason so he investigated. And guess what? There was another reason."

Another ripping sound. "Turns out the people don't hate the twins. They love them."

"What do you mean love them? Vandalizing a roof is a good thing?"

Tossing it to the basket and getting a new one from the other. "Actually when you think about it, it is a good thing. When a prince such as them vandalizes the roof of their citizen and complains to the king and queen, what do you think happens?"

I thought about it and came up with a simple answer. "They provide them a new one?"

"Exactly!" said Nate and let out a curse when a little blood splashed on his shirt. "You see the roof that the twins vandalized was old and rusty. It wouldn't even hold off the rain. The broken fences? It started to splinter. Stolen shoes? It's old and couldn't be much of a use. Shaved tree? A poisonous snake was living there and kids tend to play on its branches. Broken door? It was already broken so they broke it even more. As for the daughter having a crush on one of them? I don't even know. Point is, they are trying to help their people in their way by pretending to damage things that are already broken so their parents could replace them."

I started playing with my fingers as I took it all in. "I did not expect that," I whispered. "But are you sure that it's not just a coincidence? If it isn't then why did the people chase us?"

"It wasn't a coincidence. Everything that they broke is either harmful to the people or is already broken. As for why they chase them, they sense that they don't want their gratitude or for them to treat them differently. So the people are just playing along and pretending to chase them off as if they hate them, but in reality, it is the opposite."

"Again. Wow." I let out a breath and gaze up. "What you just said is hard to believe."

Nate laughed and I heard the basket rustle, he's probably done with another one. "Yeah. I was even shocked. I thought they might have done something worse – like maybe they secretly have a kid there or something."

I looked at Nate's back and smirked. "Nate, you are more likely to do that sort of stuff."

He gasped. "Now I am offended, princess!!" He said as he faked hurt by placing a hand to his chest and cursing when he remembered that his hand was covered in blood. I laughed. "But they kind of earn PRINCE Ace's respect there." He said. "I saw his eyes soften for a bit."

I grinned. "Well if that's the case then they will become great kings someday."

"True. But the problem is, there is only one king." He pointed out.

"Yeah, but they have the same faces." We laughed a little bit before Nate turned his head to me. His forehead and cheek is smeared with blood as he regarded me curiously.

"By the way, princess. How can you determine which twin is which?" He asked.

I winked and gave him a mischievous smile. "It's a secret."

Nate scoffed and whisked his hand towards me and splashed the ground beneath my feet with blood. I quickly moved away and glared at him. "Hey!!" Despite my glare, Nate only laughed. After our trip to Nate's place, it seems that he and I have become a bit closer.

After Nate finished skinning the squirrels and handing them to the cook he pulled up another chair and sat beside me. We continued to talk the whole afternoon about random stuff like politics, flowers, kinds of snoring, 10 ways to die from heels, and just Nate being vain.

"I still don't understand the girls in this kingdom. How can they resist my charm?" Wondered Nate.

“The fact that you are a vampire could be it,” I said in a duh tone.

“The fact that I am a vampire should be the reason to drool on. I mean come on. Strength, speed, charm, abs what more could they ask for?!”

“A werewolf?” I offered. Enjoying the pissed-off look on Nate’s face.

“But I have abs! Hard abs.”

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“A big stomach?” I snickered.

Nate pointed glare at me. “These babies are not fat!” Nate got up from his seat. “Feel it.”

“What?”

“Feel it.” There was a determined look on his face as he said it. “These abs are real h\*\*\*\*\* muscle that I worked hard for! I will not let you insult them. Feel it. Come on.”

He started towards me. I got up from my seat as I backed up. “Woah Woah easy there, Kangaroo. You have a great build. Okay. I don’t have to feel it.”

Nate wasn’t convinced as he stared at me blankly. “In that case tell me I’m s\*\*y.”

“Wha-”

“Say it.” He said and lifted his shirt and exposed his (no joke) 8 pack abs. “Say it to them.”

“Geez. You are one sick vampire, Nate.” I told him and he just grinned. “But alright. You are – cough – s\*\*y.” That seemed to satisfy him.

Would it bother him that I was looking at the bird on the tree behind him and not his abs? No, I guess not. As long as he won’t know.

As soon as we noticed that the sun was starting to set, Nate excused himself to go and wash off. I, on the other hand, decided to stay outside for a little longer as I watched the sun descend. My gaze fell into the forest and I suddenly remembered the strange little wolf earlier. Ren said that it was a spirit that I should stay away from. Well, it’s not like I was the one approaching it in the first place. It’s more like it’s following us.

But what could a wolf spirit want? Even going out of its way to follow us here? At the sudden thought, the hairs on my arm started to stand.

Don't tell me....are we being hunted? Hunted by a wolf spirit!? Oh crap no!! I hate ghosts! Sure I watch zombies but ghosts are a different story.

The light started to fade and I started to panic. Great! Just great, Rose. Scare yourself in the dark. Yeah. That should help! Idiot.

I started to get up and head back to the palace when I heard something rustle behind me. I froze. I looked back towards the bushes but there was nothing there. I laughed nervously. "M-Must is the wind," I told myself and trudged forward.

There was the rustle again and this time I did not dare to look. It was getting dark out and I hurried my pace to get to the door. Once I got there I finally let out a sigh of relief.

Good. I'm safe. I thought until I tried the door handle. It didn't budge. Huh?

I tried it again. Pulling and kicking but it did not open. My heart slammed against my rib cage when I heard the rustle again. It was getting louder. I gulped and started to knock on the door. "Hello? Open up!! Quickly.....QUICKLY!!" I was sweating even though it was cold.

I was breathing heavily especially since I started to hear a couple of footsteps behind me. "I SAID OPEN UP!!" I yelled in panic.

I should have gone with Nate when he left! Now the ghost is going to get me.

"Damn it!" I rattled the door.

Suddenly, I felt hands grab my shoulder and felt a hot breath on my neck. "Well don't you look tasty?"

"Should we have a bite?"

I screamed and started throwing my fist in every direction. My eyes were closed but I felt that I made contact. Twice.

### Chapter 53 Wrong Twin

Honestly, I'm going to kill these twins one day. I thought as we walked towards the dining table with the twins on either side of me. There was a very red handprint on either side of their faces from where I slapped him. As we walked, they kept apologizing to me but I just ignored them.

"We're sorry, Rose. Promise we won't do it again." Said Ren.

"Yeah. And if you like, I'll slap my brother for you." Dan offered which earned a glare from his brother.

Despite their continued apology, I ignored them even until we reached the dining hall. Once we got there, I greeted the king and queen and apologized for my tardiness. Nate and Ace were already there.

The king looked up, took a glance at his son before we laughed. "I suppose my sons did something to deserve it?"

"Yes, your highness," I said without blinking.

"Well I would like to have a word with Daniel but I can't tell which of them is which." said the king making the twins beam brightly as they fist bump each other.

"Well father, you have to guess that for yourself."

"The one with the handprint on the right is Ren. On the left is Dan." I said before I settled down on the seat next to Ace.

Believe me, I don't want to sit here but the only vacant seat is between the king and Nate and the king clearly said that he wants to have a word with Dan. The other seat is beside the queen and I would not take that seat either.

As I settled myself beside Ace, he took a glance at me. I offered a small smile in which he did not return as he took a sip from his soup. I had to fight the urge not to grab his soup and throw it at him. Well, it's just my luck. Seated beside Ace, rude and mute PRINCE, and Ren, who I am currently pissed off with.

The dinner was fun and lively. The king and queen were chatty with us. I was even surprised that Ace participated in the conversation especially when they talked about politics. It even got livelier as soon as I flicked the green peas from my plate out of boredom. It hit Dan in the forehead who abruptly looked up to look for the culprit. On instinct I pointed at Ace, who glared at me, making me point at Ren instead. Poor Ren looked utterly confused and wasn't prepared when Dan made his attack by throwing a green pea straight to Ren's mouth, which was currently open as he was about to take a bite. He choked on the green peas so I got up and punched him below the rib. It was effective as he was able to spit it out on his plate. Ren grinned at his brother as if to say game on and started throwing his veggies at Dan resulting in a full-on food war – believe it or not – the king and queen joining in.

Of course, Nate and I followed because of having a potato thrown at your face? Please. They are seriously asking for it. I think that the only person who didn't join was Ace and by some miracle, he didn't get hit.

After dinner, everyone retreated to their room except for me, Ren, and Dan. They invited me to do some exploring in their castle saying that they want to give me a tour. They started at the second floor where they showed me the library and its numerous books that held the history of their race. Next, we went to the third floor where they

showed me the paintings of their ancestors and different artifacts that have stood there for hundreds of years.

Ren did most of the explanation while Dan just added things here and there. It seems to me like Dan was preoccupied with something, but when I asked him about it, he just waved me off saying it was nothing.

Finally, we reached the dead-end of the East wing and we're just about to go back when the door to my right suddenly opened and I was pushed inside. The force made me fall to the ground and before I could look up, the door slammed shut and Dan was knocking on it furiously. We were in a large rectangular vacant room with pretty much nothing except for a few chairs and old rags. It was pretty dark and the only light in the room was from the moon coming from the window behind me.

"Hey! Let me out! You got the wrong twin. I'm Prince Daniel and I've got a red slap mark on my left cheek to prove it!" Dan started to scream and pound at the door. Cursing here and there when no one answered. "Locked." He cursed again. "YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG TWIN I SAY!"

"Dan?" I started to get up and dust myself.

Dan stopped knocking as he whirled around to face me. His expression changed into one of bewilderment. "Dan? What are you talking about, Rose? I'm Ren." He said.

I blinked and stared at the person in front of me. I observed the way he stands and listens to the way he talks. Finally, I narrowed my gaze at him. "Nope." I crossed my arms over my chest. "You're Dan. That's for sure."

"No no no." Dan shook his head. "I'm Ren." He insisted.

I bit the side of my cheek and strode towards him giving him the darkest look I could muster. "Listen, Dan. I don't know what you're playing, but I am not a fool that you can trick so easily. So unless you don't want me to karate chop you on the head you behave. Understood?"

"Yes ma'am!" Dan gulped.

"Well then," I said while backing up a little. "Where do you think we are?"

Dan, still standing by the door looking uneasy, answered. "We're actually in Ren and I's the old playroom. As you can see we don't use it anymore so it's just basically a room to store old stuff." He explained.

"I see." I turned my back to him as I took in another look at the room. It does look abandoned, but not that abandoned because there isn't that much dust on the floor or by the window.

I suddenly heard the door behind me open before it was closed again. I quickly turned around. "Hey you open-" I paused as I took in the person now standing where Dan was a while ago. "Ren? What-" I paused and tilted my head in confusion. "What are you doing here? Where's Dan?" I walked right beside him and tried to open the door. It was locked.

Beside me, I heard Ren growl and started pounding on the door. "Dan, you b\*\*\*\*\*! Open this door now."

"What the heck is going on!?" I screamed looking at Ren then back at the door where I assumed Dan was standing behind it.

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"I don't know!" Ren said, still glaring at the door. "I noticed that you and Dan went missing so I went back to check. I heard you guys talking so I opened the door and Dan pulled me inside. He slipped away and locked the door behind him."

"Success!" Dan yelled from the other side.

"Dan, wait till father-"

"Good job, my boy!" Another voice said from the other side. I could hear a slap and I imagine them giving each other a high five.

Was that the king?

"Dad?" Ren looked surprised.

Yep, it's the king.

"Good luck, son!" Then I heard footsteps getting fainter and fainter until there was nothing.

"Did -Did they just left us?!" I cried and tried the door again and shook it with force. Nothing. "This isn't even funny!"

"I'm going to kill you, brother!" Ren said in frustration as he kept pounding on the door making it rattle. I hope that he breaks it. Finally, after a few more pounds, Ren gave up. "It's no use. Knowing my brother he won't open it till morning." He gritted his teeth in frustration.

"Can't you break it?" I asked hopefully.

Ren shook his head in dismay. "I can't. This castle was built infused with magic to withstand werewolf strength." He said and leaned his back against the door before he dropped to the ground.

I groaned and sat beside him. "Don't tell me....we're stuck here for the night?"

"I believe so," Ren said without looking at me.

"For real!?" My voice rose. "No. We can't stay here for the night!"

The snore. I can't stand it. I won't be able to sleep again! "No. Just no." I shook my head at the thought and started pounding on the door again. "Yo! Werewolf people, open the freaking door! I know you can hear me with that super hearing ears of yours! I have a stick. I'll play fetch with you if you do!"

"Rose?"

"A tree branch, yeah? I bet werewolves looooves tree branches." I continued.

"Rose, bribing us with sticks and tree branches won't help. Also, making a joke out of it will only make it worse. You're gonna piss the guards off." Ren said.

At this, I faced Ren and raised an eyebrow at him. "Who says I was joking?"

"Give me a break here." Ren ran a hand through his hair before facing me again. His eyebrows are drawn together. "Wolves are not dogs, alright? We are far more superior than them."

"Can dogs break this door?"

"Of course not even I can't break it."

"THEN YOU'RE A DOG!!"

Ren looked frustrated right now as he messed up his hair. "Look, Rose." He sighed. "I don't see what the problem is. If you're getting cold I'll lend you my jacket."

"Um.." I started as I thought of an excuse why I don't want to spend the night here. "Err..it's dark." I don't want to tell him that he and his twin snore like a pig.

"We sleep in the forest. Don't you consider that as dark?"

"But there's fire," I argued.

"Yes. But there's also the light from the moon. And if I remember, you sleep back at Thalia without much light. Why is now so different?" He asked.

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“S-Spirits,” I said and gritted my teeth. I am running out of options. Please just shut up, wolf boy!

“What?”

I reached out and grabbed Ren by the shoulders and started shaking him. “The spirits! The ghost. Remember? The little wolf spirit that you told me to stay away from. I saw it at Gija and earlier I saw it by the bushes. It’s following us!”

Ren stared at me like I was crazy. “You are being paranoid, Rose.”

“Am I?”

“Yes.” Ren grabbed my hand and removed it from his shoulders, but he didn’t let go. “Maybe I should explain things to you.” He paused and took in a breath. “Rose, that little wolf you saw? It was indeed a spirit.”

“Ah-ha!”

“Will you let me finish? Anyways, it is not a spirit that you should be afraid of. It is a good spirit. A familiar that wanders around in the ruins of Gija. Remember? Gija was the city of the tamers. I bet that that little guy is one of the familiars who still live there.”

“I’m confused,” I admitted and drew my hand back from Ren. “If they are good spirits then why did you ask me to stay away from it?”

“Because,” Ren trailed off as if he was thinking of the right words to say. “It...it just doesn’t make any sense to me. Familiars only approach tamers, not strangers. It’s weird especially when you told me that you think it’s following us. None of us are tamers.”

I leaned my back against the door, hearing it rattle at my weight as I thought of Giga and the little wolf. “Who knows? Maybe it’s just lonely.” I said.

I felt Ren shrug. “Probably.”

We fell silent for a few more minutes until we heard a howl. I stiffened and my body started to shake as I looked at Ren. “W-What was that?”

Ren stared at the window. “It’s just Dan.” He said before looking at me with an amused grin on his face. “Why? Scared?”

The look on Ren’s face somehow annoyed me making me want to throw him in a well. “No. I’m not.” I denied.

Another howl. This is the time it was louder making me gasp.

Ren looked at me and studied me for a bit before he rested his head on the palm of his hand. "Geez." He took off his coat and dr\*\*\*d it over my shoulder as he got up. "Wait here." I watched him marching up to the window, opening it, and screaming,

"Dan, you good for nothing twin! SHUT UP!" I saw him pick something from the floor and threw it out. I heard a slight whimper and I am guessing he hit his target.

I cringed at the loudness of his voice. After he screamed, he closed the windows back. A pause. Then he opened them again and started to look up. I saw a grin spread across his face before he ran back to me and offered me his hand. "Come on." He said and pulled me up.

"Where?" The coat slipped from me when I stood up and Ren picked it up and led me by the window. He dr\*\*\*d the coat once again over me, fastening the b\*\*\*ons below my chin to secure it.

"I found a way out." He said. Before I could ask again, he threw me over his shoulder and jumped at the edge of the window.

"Ren!?"

"Hang on tight, Princess." He said. "And don't look down."

"Well, it's hard for me to do that when I am facing your freaking b\*\*\*!" Ren seemed to flinch after I said it.

"Well um...close your eyes then." He sounded rather self-conscious that I kind of regretted what I said.

I closed my eyes and felt the air shift as Ren jumped upward. I heard him grunt as he pulled us up before he jumped once again and repeated. I once let out a yelp when I felt him slip but he somehow managed as he kicked the wall in front of him to jump. It probably took him about a minute or so before he finally settled me down.

"You can open your eyes now." He said.

Slowly, I opened my eyes and found out that we were now standing at the roof of the castle. "Eeep!" I squeaked and held on to Ren in fear of falling.

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"Hey, stop pushing. You're gonna kill us both." Ren looked back behind him to the something – footfall that would surely kill us if we fell. He didn't push me back though, he just held me at arm's length and gripped my arm tightly, and gave me support.

“You could have warned me,” I said shakily. My mind started to cloud in fear and panic. “R-Ren, how does a wolf stuck on a roof howl?”

Ren looked at me curiously. “I don’t know.”

“A-roof!”

I saw Ren’s lips twitch in a sarcastic smile. “Rose, I am going to drop you if you won’t stop.”

“I’ll stop,” I said quickly.

“Good.” He said, “Now, I want you to wrap your arms around my neck tightly.”

I looked up at him and studied his face. “Are you being a pervert?”

Ren looked at me and blushed. “What? No! Y-You’ve got the wrong idea.” He cleared his throat as he started to explain.

“We’re going down from the other side. Can you remember where your room is?” He asked.

“Not really,” I admitted. “But I did remember seeing a large pine tree from the balcony.”

“Do you remember what floor?”

“Second.”

“Second?” I could hear the surprise in his voice. “Second floor and a pine tree....” He trailed off and looked at me. “Alright then. Grab on, Rose.”

I did what he said and wrapped my arms around his neck. “Hang on tight, alright?” I couldn’t bring myself to answer him so I just nodded and swallowed nervously. Ren, with me clinging behind him, ran to the far left side of the roof before he jumped down. I tightened my hold on him and he made a sound like he was choking and slipped when he landed on the balcony railing.

We fell back and I let out a yelp.

Lucky for us Ren managed to grab a hold of the railing. I felt his muscle hardened from the effort of pulling us both up. Using one arm, he brought me over to the other side before climbing in himself. Once we were on the balcony floor, I let out a breath that I didn’t realize I was holding while Ren collapsed on the floor; panting. “Geez, Rose. When I told you to hang on tight I didn’t mean for you to choke me.”

“Um...sorry.” I apologized. “I was surprised.”

Ren didn't seem to respond. He gazed just gazed up at the stars and closed his eyes. I, on the other hand, crawled next to him and poked his cheek. "Ren?" I poked him again. "Are you dead?"

"No." He said without opening his eyes. "Can you check and see if your balcony door is open?"

"Sure." I got up from my sitting position. My legs were still a bit wobbly but I managed to reach for the door and turned the handle.

It opened. I looked back at Ren who was still lying down on the floor – probably on the verge of death or something. "Ren, it's open," I called out to him.

He started to get up then, using his elbow to push himself up until he was standing. He started to rub his eyes and let out a yawn. "Good. If you don't mind, can I come in and exit at your door? I kind of locked my balcony door so I can't get in." He said.

"Um...sure," I said while stepping aside. "I mean, it's your place and not mine."

I could tell that Ren was sleepy since he was dragging himself in my room and headed for the door. I walked beside him in case he might fall asleep and land face-first on the floor. Once we reached the door I handed him back his coat. "Thanks for this," I said as I returned the coat.

Ren seemed to stare at it for a while before he took it. Our fingers brushed and he withdrew his hand from the touch as if I pricked him. He stared at his hand in shock before looking back at my outstretched hand holding the coat. Cautiously, he reached out for the coat and I couldn't help but notice him avoiding contact. "Y-You're welcome." He muttered and we stood there for a couple more seconds before Ren seemed to gather himself and looked at me. A small smile played at his lips. "Well then. Goodnight, Rose. See you in the morning." He said cheerfully and hurriedly walked away from me.

Meanwhile, I just stood there and watched his retreating back as I wondered about Ren's weird behavior. Thinking about it made me recall our conversation earlier about Dan's behaviors too. I couldn't help but laugh as I remembered it.

"You both are weird," I whispered into the dark hallway. "No doubt you guys are twins. Goodnight, Ren." Then I closed the door behind me.

## Chapter 54 Lost

"I'm sorry, Princess Rose."

"Sorry, Rose."

The king and Dan apologized to me the next day. We were outside of the castle and ready to leave when Ren decided to burst out and scolded both his father and brother for locking us up in a room.

It turns out no one knew about it until now. The queen and Nate were shocked while Ace seemed expressionless as always.

The queen seemed furious at her husband and son that she asked them to apologize to us – she even pinched their ears when they refused.

“What about me?” Asked Ren when he realized that the king and Dan were only apologizing to me. The king and Dan only looked at Ren with a blank face.

“Oh, you’re still there, boy?” Asked the king while Dan said, “Get out of here.” I swear, the king and Dan are more like twins than Ren and Dan.

“Hey!”

“It’s alright. I forgive the king.” I said. The king turned to me with a great full look and nodded his thanks.

“What about me?” Asked Dan, giving me his puppy dog eyes.

I gave Dan an unpleasant look. “Don’t talk to me,” I said, making Ren laugh and stuck his tongue out at his brother.

“Ha! Take that for punishment,” Ren said with a victorious look on his face and earned a sharp backhand to the head from Dan.

“Ow! Dan,” Ren growled at his brother. If Dan noticed the murderous look that his brother is giving him, he ignored it as he started to whistle as nothing happened.

“Princess, we’re leaving.” Nate stepped beside me and placed a hand at my back as he faced the king and queen of Sanver.

“Thank you for your hospitality, your majesty.” He told them.

The king and queen smiled and nodded at Nate in acknowledgment. “It’s our pleasure.” Said the queen. Her eyes suddenly found mine. “You all are welcome to visit here anytime.”

“Even for a lifetime!” Said the king as he grinned at me.

I smiled awkwardly as I looked at Nate before returning my gaze to the king and queen. “Thanks. I’ll...think about it.” I said and let Nate lead me away from them.

I leaned onto Nate as I whispered into his ear. "I swear Ren and Dan's parents want to adopt me." Nate looked down on me with an amused look in his eyes. "Do they?" He asked and chuckled when I nodded eagerly.

Nate assisted me onto riding Cloud before he headed back to get on his ride. From where I sat, I watched Ren and Dan bidding their parents farewell before making their way to Garius and Wyren, who let out pleased noises when they saw them.

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A few meters from us I saw Ace with Midnight by the palace gate and decided to head towards him. I pulled on Cloud's reign to a stop beside Ace. He hasn't noticed me yet as he gazed out into the woods looking distracted. I thought he was only daydreaming or something when I noticed that his face had grown pale and he started to wobble.

"Ace?" He started to lean towards my side and would have fallen if I hadn't pushed him back. "PRINCE Ace!" I raised my voice a little louder and finally, he seemed to have regained his consciousness. He sat up and looked at me. I noticed the tired look on his eyes behind the hairs that obstructed them.

"Are you okay?" I asked worriedly. He looks tired. Did he not get enough sleep?

Ace closed his eyes for a bit and let out a long breath before opening them again. "Fine." He said and his midnight blue eyes suddenly trained on me. "I should be asking you that question."

"What?"

"The ride to Hazel is short. We'll be able to reach it before sundown. Are you sure you're ready to face him?"

I swallowed and looked down at my hands as I started to play with the reins. I haven't thought about what I would do when I get to see Fred again. Sure, I would be happy to see him and his carefree attitude and his calming aura, but I don't know what I would say when I see him. Would I greet, smile, joke, or slap him? Well, I guess I could go without the slapping part since I don't think I have the guts to do that to him.

I could also demand why the nymphs want me to see him.

"I...I don't know." I admitted. "Maybe I would know once we get there."

Ace seemed to study me more before he finally nodded and looked back to where the others are. "Pack up! We're leaving." He called out to them.

Am\*\*\* the five of us, Ace seems to carry more authority, because in just a matter of seconds Nate and the twins were already positioned behind Ace and me – that or the others are afraid of him.

We said our goodbyes to the king and queen one last time before we headed out. Going to the back for our exit so we would not be chased off again by the people of Sanver.

\*\*\*

As usual, our trip consisted of Nate and the twins going all Vampire vs. Werewolf again. Arguing about little things that we see in the woods like how many nuts did that squirrel have, how long that snake was, how fat can a bear get, etc. Even now it makes me wonder if their dislike against each other is due to their race.

I was getting annoyed by the nonstop quarrel that I chastised them which resulted in pointing fingers at who started who, making it even livelier. Because of that, Ace burst out and threatened to shoot an arrow at our throats and cut our tongues if we won't shut up.

And that, my friends, is the way of the Ace. Better take note of that one when you want to shut people up.

We had a short lunch break after a few more minutes before he headed out again. This time, our trip was a little peaceful.

True to his words, we were able to reach Hazel before sundown. The sun had barely set when he reached the outskirts of the city.

“Well finally.” Breathed Dan and stretched his arms up making me hear bones pop.

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“Dan, manners.” Scolded Ren.

Dan snorted. “You eat like an animal back home.”

“Well, you fart randomly back home.”

“You burp loudly back home.”

“You get out of the showers naked-”

“Woah there!” Nate cut them off. “Please keep in mind that there is a girl here?”

“Yeah. And that girl here has a name and she would like to be acknowledged properly?”

Nate grinned sheepishly at me. "Sorry."

"Hey, Leech. Stop flirting with my brother's girl!" Dan shook his fist in the air as he yelled at Nate.

"She's not me-" Ren only shook his head at his brother. "You and your weird words again, brother."

"Shut up all of you!" Ace scolded us making us zip imaginary zippers on our lips. "Get down from your horses." Commanded PRINCE Ace and we obeyed. Nate assisted me down from Cloud and I let out a sigh of relief as I stretched my muscles.

Ace suddenly appeared beside me and handed me a brown cloak. "Wear this. We don't wanna be seen or recognized in this place." He said and I couldn't help but notice that his voice had gone low.

Tentatively I took it while looking at him. "What for?"

"Just wear it and no questions." He snapped and told the others to do the same.

Geez, what's on his b\*\*\*? I don't know the purpose of why we are wearing this cloak but if his HIGHNESS wants us to wear it then who am I to refuse?

We started to walk on foot this time. Nate led Cloud and Ryde on each hand as we went deeper into the city.

The Kingdom of Hazel was unlike Vertez, Sanver, nor Thalia. It looked like something straight out of a Harry Potter world. The city buzzed with busy people wearing something that resembles robes. Stoned floors are lined with shops that sell different colors of bottles with strange liquid in them. A bunch of herbs and weeds hanging from the stall. Carriages with wooden wheels drawn by horses passed by. Shouts echoed from left to right as sellers bargained with their customers.

As we passed by one of the shops I saw a sign saying: NEWTS EYE. FRESHLY PLUCKED.

I cringed at it and quickly averted my gaze. "Don't look at them in the eye or else they will offer you their goods." Ace said beside me. I could barely see his face from the cloak but I was certain that he was looking up ahead.

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I felt Nate bumping my side and whispered to me, "The way he said it sounds nasty. Offer you their goods. Pfft!!"

I looked at Nate with a confused look. "I don't understand."

“Uhm....never mind.” Dismissed Nate. “I forgot you have the mind of a child.”

“What do you mean, Nate? Nate? Hey!” I hissed when I saw him scurrying to get away from me while whistling. That’s weird.

Nonetheless, I followed Ace’s advice and forced myself to look straight ahead until I saw something familiar from my line of vision. A man wearing a white coat had his back to his. The unmistakable blonde hair and lean posture made my heart swell in recognition. I stopped walking.

“Rose? What is it?” Ren asked and I felt him place a hand on my shoulder.

“It’s him,” I mumbled and before I knew it, my legs carried me towards where I saw him stood. “Fred!” I called out.

“Wait, Rose!!”

Too late. I was already running. I kept my eyes on the crown of his head so I would not lose him. Again. I kept running and running, but the crowd was too thick and it was hard for me to get a clear path. The man turned his head to the side and I could just make out his face.

It is Fred!!

But he was walking away. He didn’t see me!

Through the thick crowd, I started jumping and waving. “Fred, you got for nothing blonde prince...over here!! Fre-” I suddenly bumped into someone so hard that we both fell on the ground.

“Ow!!” Both of us said at the same time and at that moment I turned to look at the person who I ran into. She was a teenage girl like me with long dark hair styled into a side braid. She was slim and pale. Her skin was very smooth and her cheeks were tinted with a rosy glow. She’s pretty especially with those gray eyes looking at me with alertness before she scrambled to her feet.

“Sorry. I am so sorry.” She apologized and offered me her hand.

“No. It’s alright. I should be the one to apologize. I wasn’t looking.” I said and took her hand. Her grip was strong and I let her help me to my feet when she gasped. Her eyes closed for a few seconds. I noticed that she had a few freckles on her nose when she wrinkled it in concentration.

Finally, she opened them again and looked at me. Her eyes were wild and terrified. “You....” She paused and looked from side to side and I started to worry that she may

be crazy or something. Suddenly, her eyes were back to mine. A sense of urgency in them. "Come with me." She said.

"What?" I drew my hand back and started to step away from her. My eyes darted back to where I last saw Fred and found nothing. My heart sank when I realized that I lost him. Again.

Then I started to remember Ace and the others and I suddenly felt chills run down my spine as if Death himself was there.

Was I separated from them? Oh no. This is not good. Not good at all.

### Chapter 55 Almost Finding out When I'll Die

I am not that worried about what would happen with me getting lost in his town, but more of what Ace would do to me when they find me. That demon. Surely he notices my sudden disappearance by now and is planning on tying me to his horse and dragging me away.

"Crap crap crap!" I muttered while biting my nails nervously.

I was so engrossed in my future demise that I almost forgot the girl in front of me if she did not grab my wrist with an urgent look on her face. "Miss, you really must come with me."

I looked at her as if she had grown another head. "Sorry." I gave her a small smile as I tried to pull my hand back but her grip was too strong. "No offense but I don't know who you are and what you're gonna do to me after I go with you. My mother told me specifically not to talk to strangers."

"Sophie."

"What?"

"My name is Sophie and I am a seer that is why you need to come with me." She said and before I could protest, she was already pulling me through the crowd.

I don't know who this chick is but I seriously don't wanna go with her.

I tried pulling my wrist again but to no avail. I even tried slowing her down as I dug my heels to the ground but it was no use. She's like a freaking amazon girl.

She led me to a sus\*\*\*ious-looking tent in the middle of two stalls. She pushed me in before she closed the door – err.... – fabric behind her.

My eyes scanned the tent's interior. The flooring was made of weaved straw mat that spread around the circumference of the tent. A small coffee table was placed in the center with two purple cushions that I am guessing will serve as a seat. decorating the outer part of the circle is a bunch of jewelry and gems of different colors and varieties. I could also see a few clay pots and treasure chests.

Sophie cleared her throat as she looked at me and smiled. "Please do not be afraid, Princess Rose." She said and gestured towards one of the cushions. "Please have a seat."

"Thank you but-" I paused as I suddenly realized something. I whirled at her with my mouth hanging open. "Wait, did you – How do you know my name?" I asked suspiciously.

She chuckled. "I have a special gift. See, unlike the other witches, I cannot do magic, but I have the power to connect to the spirits letting me see the future." She explained. "They show me the future or the past of one person once I make contact with them. The spirits told me your name. I apologize for bringing you here all of a sudden, but they told me to give you a reading so I can warn you about your future." She said.

"MmHm." She's still suspicious.

I raised an eyebrow at her. If I was the old me and she keeps blabbering about spirits, then I might think of her as crazy. But let's face it. While I am here I don't think anything could be crazier than living in a castle with 5 Princes. I mean duh! I don't think anyone could survive that especially if the said princes are drop-dead supernaturally gorgeous! I'm surprised I even made it this far.

"Okay," I said as I cleared my throat my eyes darted towards the exit before I trained them back to her. "What is it about my future that you badly need to warn me about?"

Sophie made her way to the opposite side of the table and sat Indian-style on the cushion. I did the same as I sat on the other one opposite hers. "Give me your hand." I placed my hand on top of hers. She smiled and started to close her eyes as if in concentration.

Nothing. Nothing happened at first and we were just sitting there while I awkwardly looked at our hands.

"Um...okay? I don't know what I am supposed to do here but-"

Sophie suddenly opened her eyes as she gave me a blank look. "A spirit is following you, am I right?"

“Huh?” I gave her a confused look until I suddenly remembered the little wolf that has been following us. “Maybe? Sort of, but I haven’t seen it since we entered Hazel. It must have stayed back in Sanver.” I said.

Sophie slowly smiled at me and nodded at me once. “I see.” She said as her eyes darted to the side. Her smile became broader.

“It’s still here though.”

“What?”

She pointed a finger to the spot where she was looking a while ago. I followed her gaze and saw brown fur poking just behind the wooden chest decoration. The little wolf’s head poking just at the side and when it caught me looking at it, it hid.

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My eyes widened when I realized that it was the same wolf spirit that we saw back in Gija. “What the?” I whispered in disbelief as I looked at the wolf trying to hide behind the chest before looking back at Sophie. “What is it doing here?!”

Sophie laughed. “It feels a connection towards you.” She said and looked back at the wolf spirit.

“A connection? Hang on.” I withdrew my hand back from her as I pointed at the wolf. “That thing – creature – feels a connection towards me? I don’t get it. Ren said that it only appears to these.....people-”

“Tamers.”

“-Tamer race thingy people who are dead. Why on earth would that wolf feel a connection to a nonamer like me? How can you chop the connection off?”

“You can’t chop it off.”

“Then why, in poodle’s name, is it following me?”

Sophie looked away and sighed. “That was why the spirits wanted me to bring you here in the first place.” She muttered and looked back at me once again. She gestured for my hand and I placed it over hers once again. She closed her hands over mine firmly as she began to concentrate.

I jumped in surprise when Sophie began to speak in a very cloudy voice. Her eyes were still close as she said, “You are a princess by name. Asked by the fairy queen to choose an heir to the kingdom.” She spoke.

Yeah, I already know it. I wanted to say it out loud but chose not to since it might ruin her concentration.

“Princess by name, shall soon be recognized and become a true royal by blood. Little spirit of the forest shall come and revive what once had been lost. By blood, you shall be recognized and loved. Thy blood shall be hunted by the one who is killed.” Sophie then stopped speaking and her body seemed to slouch afterward.

When she opened her eyes I was pretty sure that I was gaping at her like a fish.

She raised an eyebrow at me. “What?”

“Did-” I swallowed and tried again. “Is it me or...were you just possessed by a spirit and gave me prophecy like Rachel Dare from Percy Jackson?”

She c\*\*\*ed her head to the side in confusion at my reference. “I don’t understand who Rachel Dare is or the meaning of Parsley Backsoap, but yes. It was a prophecy foreseen by the spirits.”

She released my hand and I drew them back as I thought of her words. “Hunted by someone who was killed,” I mumbled. “I don’t understand. What does it mean?” I looked at Sophie for clarification, but she did not answer me. She looked uncomfortable in her seat and kept fidgeting making me wonder if what the spirits prophesied about me is as bad as I think.

“I’m sorry, but whatever the spirits told you, that is all I am supposed to reveal. Things that I might say afterward might change your future.”

“Great.” I sighed. “Thanks for that. Now I don’t even think I’ll be able to sleep peacefully tonight.

There was an awkward silence in the air before Sophie broke it when she let out a nervous laugh. “Who cares about that prophecy? The thing about it is that it is unpredictable and time will only tell when it will happen.” She said.

“But-”

“You know, instead of talking about that awful thing, why don’t we talk about something more interesting?” She suggested as she gave me a teasing smile and winked. “While the spirits showed me your future I also saw something very intriguing and this very short info won’t affect the outcome of your future.” She giggled and motioned for me to lean in as she whispered in my ear. “I saw a man.”

As soon as the words left her lips I immediately sat back to look at her. “A man? Is that the killer?” I asked her and she hit me on the head. “Ow!” I glared at her.

“I was talking about your lover!” She burst out.

I stared at her. Wondering if I heard what she had just said. Then I laughed. “Sorry, but that’s not how it’s going to be. My lover is somewhere far in the fictional world where one could not reach except in dreams.”

“You have a very weird mind.” Sophie shrugged and let out a disappointed sigh. “Well, I guess that you still won’t care even if I tell you that your lover is one fine man. He’s very handsome, strong, smart, and kind. You two get along very well.” She winked.

“Make him rich and we have a deal. Also, make him either a son of a Greek god, a dragon, fairy, or an Egyptian god from the underworld that starts with letter A.”

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She stared at me as if I was the weirdest person on earth. “I can’t tell you what he is, but he will be a suitable partner for you. Time will tell when you’ll be with him.”

“Can you at least give me a hint on whether he’s one of them?”

She grinned. “Nope.”

“Have I met him?”

“I don’t know.”

“Is he human?”

“Do you want him to be human?”

I paused. At this point and in this world, humans are... “I-I don’t know. It doesn’t matter – I guess.”

“Then let’s leave it at that, alright? I am not allowed to reveal any more of your future partner because the spirits might get mad and separate you both. I am only allowed to give you hints on what he is like and advises – in which you don’t need.”

I pouted. “Well you were the one who said to talk about this lover and now you are the one who’s holding back. Talk about being left in the air.” I mumbled.

“Sorry.” She giggled. “I was just caught up in the moment.”

“Well doesn’t matter,” I said even though I was still thinking of what she had just said that this lover is handsome, strong, blah blah, but what is he like? Will he and I get along? When will I meet this person? What if he is the killer? Or the son of the killer? Or

the grandson of the killer? Or the killer's brother? Or the killer's brother's grandson's grandson? Or – Oh you get the point!

Millions of questions followed, but all were cut off when Sophie brought my attention back to her when she spoke again.

“Princess Rosalie,” She called as she looked up. “I think it is time for you to leave. The others are looking for you and they are very worried.”

With that, I suddenly remembered the princes and let out a curse. “How long was I here?” I asked her.

She looked at me and shrugged. “I don't know. I don't keep track.” She said. “But maybe about 30 minutes. The sun has already set.”

“I am so dead.” I got up and started fixing my dress

“You're not. According to the spirits the date set for you to die-”

I paused and turned to Sophie with a bewildered look. “Wait, the spirits can tell when I'm about to die?”

She grinned teasingly. “Yeah, and it's-”

“I don't even want to know when I'll die.” I snapped to quickly stop her. “By the way, thanks for the um....prophecy thing, but I have to go. Bye.” With that, I left Sophie's tent and into the cold night.

The streets weren't as dark as I expected them to be. Unlike earlier, the streets were now almost deserted. Canded lamps hanging from houses gave off a very dim glow, but it was enough for me to see if only I knew which way to go.

“Let's see....” Placing a hand to my chin, I scanned my surroundings and tried to find a familiar path. I tried to look for something that we must have pa\*\*ed by when Sophie dragged me into her tent.

Finally, I saw a stall that was selling crystal jewelry. I remember seeing it on the way since I was attracted to one of the yellow gems that shone brightly when it was hit by the rays of the sun.

I took that as my starting point and made my way to the stall. I saw the shopkeeper was closing his stall and gathering the crystals in a sack.

Maybe I could ask him for directions.

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As I was making my way to the stall, I called out for him. "Excuse me."

The shopkeeper looked up to the sound of my voice. I grinned and waved at him and tried to look friendly. When the shopkeeper saw me, I couldn't help but notice the look of fear on his face as he hurriedly tidied up his things and darted away from me.

Um....ok? That was very rude and offensive. I know that I am not the prettiest girl in the land, but my face isn't that bad, right?

I stopped in front of the stall as I thought of my next approach on how to find the others.

Maybe I should just wait here and wait for them to find me. I mean, they are looking for me, right? Surely they would be searching the town as of now trying to look for me.

But what if they already pa\*\*ed by this side of the street and are searching for another? Oh boy. Maybe I should look for them on my own.

But what if they decide to go back here while I'm gone?

So many thoughts and occurrences swirled in my mind that I did not notice the little wolf hiding behind the stall. It was looking up at me with those wolfish eyes. It might have been cute if I hadn't known that it was a spirit and not an actual wolf.

Its eyes suddenly darted behind me and let out a menacing growl. Its hackles raised and it bared its sharp canine teeth. It was the look of a wild beast.

I backed away nervous while keeping an eye on my spirit stalker. Suddenly, I bumped into someone and I looked back to see a middle-aged man dressed in black and reeks of alcohol.

"S-Sorry." I immediately backed away. I don't know why but somehow I get a bad feeling about this man.

The man smiles, showing a set of rotten teeth. He suddenly grabbed my wrist and started to pull me away. "Hey! Let me go, you creep!!" I dug my heels on the ground in an attempt to pull us both to a stop, but the man was too strong for me that I stumbled on the ground.

The man stopped – well at least that stopped him – as he turned to glare at me. "Get up!" He yelled, sending spits in the air. He sounded furious.

As much as I wanted to bold and run I can't. Not with his strong grip on my wrist and not with frozen legs from fear.

My lack of response infuriated the man and he forcefully pulled me forward dragging me to the ground and scratching my free arm in the process.

“I said get up!!” He yelled again and yanked my arm once more.

“Stop it.” I winced as I feared that my arm would dislocate at the force.

The man’s gaze darkened. His grip on my wrist tightened, making me whimper in pain and close my eyes to keep the tears in.

As much as I hate to admit it, I am powerless in this world and I couldn’t help but remember the rouges I encountered when I attempted to leave Thalia once. The fear and frustration at being useless were still etched somewhere in my mind. If it wasn’t for Ren and Dan saving me back then I would have died. That last incident should have been a lesson for me not to go out on my own but no. I have to be stupid and act rationally when I know full well that I am a danger magnet in this world.

Call me a coward for saying this but I wish that the princes would hurry up and find me.

The man pulled my wrist again. Harder this time. Like seriously. Any prince will do. As long as they are willing to help.

As the man started to drag me again, a handclasp on the man’s hand and stop his advances. It was soft and gentle with a calming touch. For some reason, I have this sudden urge to look up and know who the owner of this hand was.

And so I did.

The moment I looked up, I froze.

“Let her go.” There was a dangerous look in Fred’s eyes. One that I haven’t seen before. A look that I would never imagine Fred to wear until now.