

Chapter 120

"Of course, I'll let you know." The lie felt wrong on my lips, but the fleeting sense of guilt had nothing on the feeling rolling through me right now. Like a landslide, boulders tumbled and collided in the pits of my stomach. I had never been exceptionally skilled at lying, so I added on a few details to make it more believable. "Breyona's parents are scholars. They're working with a few of..." I paused and the phrase 'vampire henchmen' came to mind, "...my men to search through my father's family tree."

"By your men I assume you mean the vampire's currently on your side." She shifted in the armchair, crossing one leg over another. Her sculpted lips tilted up in a knowing smile, "I don't fear vampires, Lola. Our ancestors had no reason to fear other species, not when their numbers rivaled the vampire's kingdom, and the werewolves' packs. It's a mindset I try to keep alive, even though things are drastically different now."

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●ow were things back then? I've only ever read about werewolves and vampires. I've never read anything about witches in our history."

"Trust me, they're in there. Names and details were changed, but I bet you there's a handful of witches in your history books." She said matter-of-factly, her whimsical voice taking on the tone of a schoolteacher. As she glanced down at her forgotten teacup, her mouth popped open. "Oh, how rude of me not to offer. Would you like any tea? I actually ran into your grandmother today, managed to take a bushel of lavender off her hands."

"Grandma gave you a bushel? She must really like you. She wouldn't even let me pull up the weeds from her garden." I chuckled, but politely declined. "Given, I wasn't the most gentle." ①

I'd always be grandma's number one fan with her lavender cookies and loaf cake, but hot tea just wasn't something I could get behind. I opted for a bottle of water and tried not to stare open mouthed at all the jars, plants, and questionable containers in the refrigerator, most of

Containers in the refrigerator, most of which couldn't possibly be food.

"I'd have never known you were related if she hadn't mentioned how much her granddaughter loved her lavender cookies, and that she had even gotten the Alpha himself hooked on them."

"She's earned her bragging rights with those cookies she mentioned." I snickered, but found myself stopping short, thinking back to what Rowena had told me. I sank into the armchair, taking another long drink of water to swallow the lie I had told. "How did you learn about our kind's history? When I needed to learn about vampire's, I started in the past. This time, I feel like I'm stumbling around blind."

"There's much history even I don't know. I'm sorry to say that everything I've learned has been passed through my family, or through witches I no longer have contact with. As a child, we lived next-door to another house of witches. Their daughter was my age, and we'd often teach one another what we learned." A hint of nostalgia mixed with the sympathy in her mossy eyes,

the sympathy in her mossy eyes, dimming the color into a light sea green.

"I made the mistake of teaching her about blood-magic. I knew no actual spells, but the topic is taboo in our world — especially back then. I never saw her again after that, but I still think about her from time to time."

"That's horrible, it wasn't your fault." I frowned.

"No, it wasn't. Still, her mother did what she thought right at the time." Rowena shrugged her narrow shoulders, then leaned forwards to top off her tea. A dash of cream and two sugar cubes later, the light scent of lavender filled the air. She grew quiet for a few seconds when a flash of determination crossed her eyes. "With your permission, I'd like to get a read on you again. That girl I told you about, she was three years older than me, and much more skilled than I. When I was seven, she used her magic to coax mine out."

I glanced down at her hands, feeling that flicker of excitement at the thought of using actual magic. The harsh gut feeling that had prompted me to keep my mouth shut was gone, drowned by the white

shut was gone, drowned by the white noise in my mind. Ⓢ

I couldn't help but think of Rowena and the girl next door, two young witches. They had both been born into this, trained as soon as they could walk and talk. There was a chance that the witch or witches involved in Carson's death had the same life-long training, and that alone solidified my decision.

"This time around you'll feel my magic. What I'm doing is no longer passive, not when I'm actively using my energy to get a rise out of yours." She said, eyes sparkling as she took a few slow breaths. Her slender face held an almost excited expression. "I'll be honest, I've never done this before. Perhaps it's the preschool teacher talking, but I've always wanted to train a young witch. I'm far too skilled to unintentionally harm you, so you needn't worry there."

I jumped when her hands met mine, though not because they were cold. This time around they were incredibly warm. They formed a vice grip around my own, not tight enough to harm, but enough to where I couldn't yank them away without a struggle. Even as she leaned over me

●ere I couldn't yank them away without a struggle. Even as she leaned over me, emerald flame flickering in those eyes of hers, I felt no warning or hesitation.

I watched with wide eyes because I could see her magic as it radiated from her hands, like thin vines that made my skin tingle as they grew. It felt playful and curious as it curled around my fingers and hands, inching its way up my wrists.

The vines that now reached my forearms slowed, becoming so still that I wondered if they had stopped altogether. I made no moves, still locked in place by Rowena's ironclad grasp on my hands.

Her eyebrows scrunched together, her calm and mature voice was laced with confusion. "Lola, are you doing this?"

"I'm not doing anything."

"I'm going to add a little more force, alright? It won't hurt you. If anything, it'll just evoke a bigger reaction." Her smile was reassuring; she was the trainer, the one with the experience.

Something clicked in my head as I registered the confidence in Rowena's voice. There had been something so

Registered the confidence in Rowena's voice. There had been something so comfortingly familiar about her, even though I was positive I'd never met her before. My mom had that same kind of can-do confidence, which I had found infuriating during my teenage years. No matter how big the problem was, she always had a solution.

"Do it."

I could tell she gave it some juice, because the flame that made her emerald eyes flicker and glow grew brighter. The vines that were wrapped around my fingers and wrists thickened and pulsed, shooting up my arms at an incredible speed.

Many things happened at once, all faster than I could process at the time. Looking back, I could feel the nanosecond where everything changed. Like a bottle of soda shaken past its breaking point, something exploded from beneath my skin.

Rowena cried out the same moment the vines encompassing my arms were blown to pieces. She snatched her hands away from my own, but I had barely noticed as

to pieces. She snatched her hands away

● on my own, but I had barely noticed as a loud explosion pierced my ears. The television across the room exploded, sending shards of glass scattering in all directions. Every lightbulb in the room—and possibly the house—erupted with a loud pop, sending Rowena and I into darkness.

“Well, the circuit board is completely fried.” Rowena said as she came up from the basement. She let out a shaky laugh and tucked in the strands that fell from her elaborate updo. “I say this with the full confidence of the electrician I just spoke with on the phone. Silver lining, though. Witches always have too many candles.”

“We’ll put you and Cordelia in another house, but I need to know what was that? I felt your magic, and what just came out of me wasn’t even remotely the same thing. It was like a—” I frowned, fumbling for the right words.

“A wild animal? Something a part of you, but out of your control?” Gone was the bedside manner of a preschool teacher, replaced with the confidence and authority of a witch.

authority of a witch.

● Knowledge simmered in her eyes, reminding me that there was much more to this woman than what was in her file. An entire life to accumulate knowledge and experience that I could only dream of.

“Yes...that’s what it felt like.”

‘It’s not another wolf spirit, I’ll tell you that. You only get one. No refunds or exchanges.’ Maya grunted, and I would’ve rolled my eyes if I weren’t already hanging on by a thread.

“Someone—I don’t know who, put a serious binding spell on your magic.” My stomach dropped as irritation replaced the excitement and hope I had been desperately trying to hold onto. I added another bullet point to my list, another problem to solve. “If I hadn’t have let go of you, it would have killed me.” ①

“A binding spell? What does that mean?”


“It means any magic you try to do—if it even works, will be catastrophic.” She frowned, standing from her seat to hurry towards a trunk set against the wall. I could make out small boxes and jars, little bottles with powders and liquids


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“It means any magic you try to do—if it even works, will be catastrophic.” She frowned, standing from her seat to hurry towards a trunk set against the wall. I could make out small boxes and jars, little bottles with powders and liquids inside. Rowena’s shoulders stiffened, “Call your mate—matter of fact, call the other witch too. We’re going to need all the help we can get. Binding spells leave a mark of sorts. That mark is the key to undoing it. With how long it's been on you, it wont be easy to find.”

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