

Chapter 125

It took another hour to fall back asleep. Standing out in the early morning chill, talking about a dead man whose presence still made me shudder, it had chased away the remnants of sleep that weighed my eyelids down. I stayed curled in Asher's embrace, enjoying the warmth and his woody scent as sleep slowly reclaimed me.

That morning I was out of bed bright and early, driving to a coffee shop just outside of town but still within the pack's borders. We had stopped there on our way in, and Breyona fell in love with their caramel macchiatos and bear claws. It had been a last-minute decision to drive the extra fifteen minutes and grab us one since we'd both be spending the morning with Cordelia.

Asher and I had been working on my driving for the last few months, and I've improved drastically despite his hesitation on letting me go off alone. Coasting down the winding highway, seeing nothing but dense forest and a few cabins, was much less exhilarating than

bins, was much less exhilarating than running on four legs. Driving the vehicle myself made it a little more bearable.

The coffee shop outside of town was a little building along a strip of boutiques and shops. Vines with baby-pink flowers wrapped around the doorway and hung over the large display window out front. A milk and cream bar wrapped around half of the counter and was dotted with various syrups and flavorings. Breyona and I had tried to make our own coffee the first time, but both of us lacked the magic touch the baristas here had. A giant chalk board took up the wall behind the counter, and had the menu written in near-perfect handwriting. Little doodles of coffee beans and cappuccinos with fancy art, took up the free spaces.

I nodded and waved politely when people walked by their eyes lighting up with recognition as they spotted my face. It was impossible to avoid people once I stepped into the quaint coffee shop. The golden bell at the top of the door was almost deafening to my ears as eyes lifted from their phones and conversations to look my way. I steered my gaze towards the only things that mattered; the

● The only things that mattered; the pastries in the display case and the source of the rich coffee scent permeating the shop.

"Luna Lola, good to see you again!"

I didn't even recognize the sound of Lars's voice until I turned and spotted his dimpled grin and shaggy hair. He looked different than he had at the party, donning a leather jacket and faded jeans. Feeling even more stares on my face from how ungodly loud he was, I hushed him and frowned.

"Were you trying to keep your appearance here secret, because everyone was already staring at you before I said anything." His whisper was still loud enough for everyone in the shop to hear since most of the customers were werewolves.

"That was the goal." I replied and gave him a forced smile, remembering the mirth in Cassidy's voice as she talked about the asshole's girlfriend. "Great to see you, have a good one."

"Hey, what did I do? I might not have the best track record, but I think I'd

● t track record, but I think I'd remember pissing off the Luna." His smooth grin might've worked on me if I weren't already bonded to my other half, so I couldn't help but find it a bit lackluster. Like a half-dressed male model on a magazine, it was two-dimensional and bland.

"I haven't been in town long, but I already have friends here. One of those friends is Cassidy. You know, the girl you went out with the night of the party." I lifted an eyebrow at him, letting him see exactly how unimpressed I was. "Now, it's not my business but sleeping with another girl while you're dating someone, it's a bit pathetic."

"Damn, if I knew Cassidy would rat me out to the Luna I would've chased after her." Lars shook his head, and if he hadn't of continued without pause, I probably would have decked him right here in line. "It's ex-girlfriend, actually. Cassidy never gave me the chance to explain before she broke my nose and stormed off. Talk about an overreaction."

"She broke your nose?" I held back my laughter with a snort.

Lars's shoulders fell, "And keyed my motorcycle."

"Wait. Why was your ex-girlfriend calling you anyway?" I couldn't help but ask. ☹️

He smirked through the pain, "thought it wasn't your business? Kidding, kidding. My ex was calling me because she's incredibly annoying and needy. Oh, and she's mated to my younger brother."

"Mm, hopefully he's nicer to her than you are." Either Lars was too dense to hear the disdain in my voice, or he just didn't care. With the last shreds of my patience floating in the wind, I was about to turn on my heel and promptly end our conversation when a thought came to mind. "Cassidy actually mentioned something really interesting you said that night. What was it? Something about 'hot vampire bitches,' I believe."

He flinched and gave me a sheepish grin that did nothing to lessen the severe look on my face.

"Yeah...that sounds like something drunk me would say."

he would say.

"Next!" The teenaged cashier shouted, his eyes widening when he spotted me.

I walked up to the register but turned back to glance at Lars who stood a few feet behind me, his hands in his pockets and a look of curiosity in his eyes.

"Perhaps you should keep drunk you in check. He certainly doesn't have what it takes to handle a hot vampire bitch..." I replied and added on, "oh and get back to the end of the line, you're not using me to skip to the front." ①

I drove the rest of the way to the new house Asher had put Cordelia and Rowena in, which was only ten minutes away from the first one. This house was larger but had a quaint cottage feel to it, like grandma's only this house wasn't nestled in the middle of the forest. When I arrived only Cordelia and Breyona were here, both sitting on the front porch swing and talking amicably.

Tossing the pastry bag with the bear claw over the railing and onto Breyona's lap, I chuckled when her delighted squeal pierced my ears.

plugged my ears.

"I don't think either of you would appreciate if I threw this over." I chuckled, handing her the iced caramel macchiato she claimed to have dreamt of three times this week. "Where's Rowena?"

"Caffeine and sugar, that's my magic." She licked her lips and made a beeline straight for the front door. Knowing her she was ready to nestle into the coziest sitting space and dive in.

"She's at your sisters." Cordelia called out from over her shoulder and vanished down the hall for a few moments, dragging a golden plated trunk as she returned.

She let it fall to the floor with a thud, and I noticed there weren't any latches on it or a seam for that matter. Before I could ask how to open the thing, she knelt and placed her palm flat against the leather top. Where there had been nothing, not even the smallest of scuffs, a circular sigil glowed beneath her hand. It was etched into the leather of the trunk but was completely invisible until she placed a hand against it.

nd against it.

"This is a type of protection sigil. It acts as a lock. Whoever's blood is used to make it, that's the person it will unlock for." She answered helpfully, propping the lid up against the foot of the couch.

At first, I wasn't sure what I could accomplish without having access to my magic. When Cordelia placed a leather-bound book two times the size of my head onto my lap, I knew I was going to eat my words.

"It's my largest book of sigils to date. Flip through it, take notes and memorize all that you can. Take heed if you ever plan to use these. One small mistake can change the purpose of a sigil. Draw a slash when you should've drawn a line, that's the difference between a protection sigil and one that sets fire to the unlucky soul that touches it." I could taste the warning in her words, and felt it mix with the rush of excitement I felt as I thumbed through the thick pages.

An hour passed with the speed of a few minutes, and even though I could hear Breyona and Cordelia chatting in the background, my mind was utterly silent.

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● kground, my mind was utterly silent.

A tornado of symbols and words, dots and slashes that had no meaning unless they were combined in just the right order. Many of the descriptions were vague enough to leave me confused and just a bit apprehensive.

Start a fire, create a large wave, vanish from sight, curse an enemy with blindness.

Some were more complex than others, and even required potions or spells to be performed on certain days of the month. Ingredients I had no knowledge of, along with some more common plants I had seen a time or two in grandma's garden.

When my stomach began snarling for something more than a couple of pastries and caffeine, I decided to take a break. Cordelia sang under her breath as she walked into the kitchen and rummaged through the newly stocked fridge. Breyona had brought a trunk full of groceries since the refrigerator at the previous house was stockpiled with random herbs and bottles of suspicious liquids.

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liquids.

Breyona and I wandered in a few minutes later and got to work with helping Cordelia cook. Like grandma, the kitchen was Cordelia's element, just in a different way. Still, she graciously let us help even though we made our fair share of messes. ③

Through the jokes and giggles, somewhere along the way we had gotten to talking about my mom and this mess with the magical block.

"Maybe there's a memory sigil that'll zap those bad boys back to the surface." I found it refreshing how Breyona always remained optimistic, even though she had her own battles she was fighting.

Unfortunately, it was Cordelia's soft-spoken words that had to dash my hopes.

"I'm afraid there's no such thing. There's sigils for just about everything, but not for that." She shook her head, making her long braid swish. "If you don't remember getting that block put on you, chances are those memories were erased. Erasing a memory is doable but incredibly risky...even a skilled with is going to be hesitant. There's too much potential to erase something important o

erased. Erasing a memory is doable but incredibly risky...even a skilled with is going to be hesitant. There's too much potential to erase something important or worse, create a domino effect that damages the brain and leaves the person a shell of their former selves. If your mom took this route, then there's a reason she didn't want you to remember."