

Alphas Bride 661

Chapter 661 Switching packs

Talia was curious about the faintly visible threads between her and members of the Midnight Guardians pack. She realized that they allowed her to sense the emotions of the pack.

Damon told her that he could feel when the Dark Howlers pack was happy or in distress in general, with the difference that he didn't mention any connections which could be seen with the naked eye.

Talia wondered if those threads were visible because of some ability she awakened or maybe because of the energies that were gathering there.

The positivity was tangible, and Talia knew that her pack members believed she could make their hopes and dreams come true. They believed in her, and that motivated her to keep pushing forward.

Was this the feeling of Alpha's strength amplified by the support of their people?

Will the threads be there regardless of the distance between the two?

Those threads would be handy to see in case one of her pack members was missing. She could be like a shepherd, searching for the lost lambs (aka werewolves). Can she use those to track her father? Assuming he was alive, of course.

She turned to look at Damon and noticed that there was nothing between them.

'If the white threads are manifestations of abilities to share emotions and communicate through the mind link, how come there is no connection between Damon and me?' Talia asked Liseli.

Liseli was not sure how to respond to that. 'I can feel the mate bond between you. Maybe you need to bite him again.'

Talia had no objections. Marking Damon again meant more sex, and every time they marked each other, the orgasm was mind-blowing.

Damon met Talia's gaze, and his eyebrows rose in slow motion questionably. He had no idea that Talia was thinking about jumping on him.

'Damon?' Talia called through their private mind-link. 'Do you see anything different?'

'Like what?' he asked.

'Never mind', Talia responded. If he could see the strings or anything else that normally wouldn't be there, he would definitely mention it.

Talia remembered how at the Council of Alphas, only she could see the runes that the Guardians summoned while blocking the Alpha aura. Was this one more thing that only people sensitive to energies could pick up?

Talia glanced at Yasmin and Cornelia, wondering if they could see the phenomenon, but both Yasmin and Cornelia were looking around and smiling, definitely not showing any signs of seeing silvery threads.

Talia decided to focus on the present. So many things were happening, and she looked like a distracted schoolgirl without reflecting the image of a confident Alpha she should be.

Tyler and Sandy were now at the altar, where the fire was sizzling. It was time for Sandy to change packs officially.

Normally, a person would leave a pack when they were unhappy with it. It was more than just leaving a pack; it was leaving home while cutting ties with family and accepting another one. People would also switch packs when they found mates in a different pack, but that was usually not done with both Alphas present, so Sandy was awkward about the situation. Why did it feel like she was doing something bad?

Sandy glanced at Damon apprehensively, and she was glad that he didn't frown at her. Actually, Damon was smiling a little. Was he glad that she was leaving the Dark Howlers pack?

Tyler gave Sandy's hand a squeeze, and she shook unnecessary thoughts away. All this was happening because she had found her mate, and she wanted to be with him. Damon's support was welcomed, but in the end, it didn't matter how he felt about it because it was her decision.

Sandy took a deep breath and said, "I, Sandy of the Dark Howlers pack, denounce my pack, the Dark Howlers pack."

Sandy felt a pang in her chest, and Damon grimaced as he felt the same. It was a long time since someone left his pack, so this caught him unprepared.

Talia actually saw the dark string between Damon and Sandy breaking, and then it disappeared completely.

Sandy cut her palm with a ceremonial knife, and Tyler frowned like he was the one being cut. Healer Calla collected a few drops of Sandy's blood in the previously prepared container that was white and curved, like a palm-sized bowl made out of a bone.

Calla asked Sandy, "Will you accept the Midnight Guardians pack as your own?"

"I am willing.", Sandy responded.

"I, Natalia Moonrider, accept you as the member of the Midnight Guardians pack.", Talia said proudly.

It was Talia's first time accepting someone in the pack, so this was a big deal.

Yasmin was there as Axel's Luna, but Yasmin didn't have the pack-joining ceremony, and now that she was pregnant, they didn't want to risk any disturbances until the children were born.

Calla murmured unintelligible chants while tipping the white container to pour Sandy's blood into the fire. The moment the flames licked the crimson liquid, Talia saw a thin thread darting from Sandy's chest to latch onto Talia's.

'Why is it gray?' Talia asked Liseli. All other threads were white, except for this one.

Liseli groaned in frustration. How was she supposed to know? But she had some theories. 'Maybe Sandy's loyalty is still with the Dark Howlers pack.'

Talia didn't think it made sense. Didn't Guardians say how different colors on the sphere represented members of other packs that were loyal to Talia because her hand was touching the object? But then... maybe these strings and strings on the sphere were different.

Talia wished to meet with the Guardians, especially with the one named Dex, who said that he was studying the sphere. She wanted to get answers to all these questions that were piling up. Would they be willing to discuss openly topics related to the sphere and magical powers?

There was also the point of her father. If the Guardians had so much influence, maybe they had clues about Valerian Moonrider.

'Kitten?'

Damon's voice sounded in Talia's mind, pulling her out of her thoughts.

Seeing her confused expression, Damon reminded her, 'Sandy is waiting for you to welcome her to your pack.'

Talia smiled awkwardly when she saw Tyler and Sandy looking at her expectantly. She had such a bad timing with spacing out!

Did they do all the steps for Sandy to join and be the Gamma? It looked like it.

"Welcome to the Midnight Guardians pack, Gamma Sandy.", Talia said, and the crowd cheered.

Tyler pulled Sandy into his arms and stared into her blue-green eyes that smiled at him.

"Welcome home, Sasa", Tyler said, and then he gave her a toe-curling kiss.

Tyler loved kissing Sandy. She was his zesty mate, and she was his to kiss and hug and feed and have sex with. Tyler had no intention of slacking off in any of those.

'What were you thinking about?', Damon asked Talia when the healers started the ceremony with healer Remi presiding over it.

Talia knew that Damon noticed she was distracted. She had no idea how to explain what she was seeing, but then she remembered that she didn't need to use words.

'Watch this', Talia said, and Damon's eyebrows shot up when she sent him mental images of what she was seeing. 'These are connections between the pack members and me.'

Damon wondered if that was possible because of Talia's unique identity. His mate was awesome

Chapter 662 The pack run (MG pack)

The ceremony ended on a high note, with everyone experiencing the rush as healers led by Calla and Remi worked together to channel the energy of the Moon for the whole pack to feel.

Werewolves were sensitive to the moonlight, and some stories said how that was the source of their powers which provided them with the ability to shift between human and wolf forms.

Talia was high as the emotions pouring into her were overwhelming, and she completely forgot that it was time for the pack run.

Damon was glad to see that no one in the visible range was naked, but he knew it was only a matter of time. But more than seeing other people naked, he didn't want anyone to lay their eyes on Talia's bare flesh. That was only for him to see.

Damon stuck close to Talia. His grip on her hip didn't allow her to budge.

"Kitten", his breath splashed on her ear. "Let's go inside to shift."

Talia thought how he was silly. Everyone gathered and was waiting for Talia to lead the pack run, yet he wanted her to leave?

"We can't leave."

"Just for the shift.", he insisted.

It took her a moment to realize the reason behind his request. She was touched that the possessive Alpha wanted to protect the sight of her body. Werewolves were used to nudity, and she should be the awkward one because she grew up differently, but here was Damon, shielding her from prying eyes.

She smiled at him and gave him a firm hug.

"There is no need to leave.", Talia said.

Damon was about to protest but then he saw that Talia started glowing. The silvery light intensified and enveloped both of them, making them disappear in the blinding brightness.

"Will this work?" she asked, and he could imagine the smug smirk on her face.

"This is perfect."

The crowd could see their Alpha hugging Damon, and then they started glowing to the point of their forms disappearing completely. By the time light subsided, two human forms were gone, and instead, there were two majestic wolves, one black and one light gray, nearly white in color. A faint silvery glow pulsed around Talia, giving her an otherworldly appearance.

Talia looked at the people who stared at her with eyes wide open.

'What are you waiting for?' Talia's voice sounded through the pack mind-link for everyone to hear. 'I thought you were excited about the pack run.'

The crowd stirred, and a few seconds later, humans were replaced by wolves of different shapes and sizes.

'We didn't see a white wolf in a long time.' Axel's voice, full of awe, sounded in Talia's mind. 'Actually, I never saw one in person.'

Just like everyone else, Axel couldn't stop staring at her. Talia's wolf was unusually big for females, and it stood out by evenly colored fur. Most of the wolves had patches of colors and shades, yet Talia was nearly white, with her fur shimmering in silvery tones under the moonlight.

Her flawlessness was emphasized with the completely black wolf by her side, both majestic in their own ways and equally deadly.

Talia realized that the voice in her head came from a light brown wolf that had a diamond-shaped tuft of darker shades on his chest. It was Axel. More than recognizing his appearance, it was Yasmin rubbing his ears that gave it away.

Talia craned her neck to look at herself. Damon told her that her fur was light gray. Her sight fell on her paws, and she wondered if her fur became whiter or if she was imagining it.

'Does white fur mean something?' Talia asked Axel.

'It symbolizes the connection to the Moon Goddess.', Axel responded.

'Well, we have that going for us. I know the female personally. We are tight', Liseli said proudly to Talia.

'Our records keep track of white wolves in the pack. Your father was the last one.' Axel continued talking, and Talia focused on his words over Liseli's snickering at her own jokes.

'I guess I will need to make another entry.', Axel said.

Talia was happy to hear that her father had a white wolf also, but she didn't feel that the color itself was important. Maybe Liseli and abilities were special in the outside world, but in the Midnight Guardians pack, abilities were common, and even Damon had a wolf that could talk, so Talia didn't think she was standing out.

Talia lifted her head to look up at the moon, and then...

"AWOOOOO!"

Talia initiated a howl that shook the whole forest when others joined as if they were competing who could do it louder.

That was it. The pack run began.

Talia led the way with Damon by her side. Axel was on Talia's right with Yasmin riding him, and Meg, Kai, Tyler, and Sandy were flanking them. Keith, Liam, and James were also there, with Cornelia on top of him.

Cornelia was gripping James' fur so she wouldn't fall off, and James would jolt on purpose so that Cornelia's thighs tighten around him. Cornelia was riding James, and it was a good feeling... for both of them.

As soon as the leading group entered the forest, the other pack members spilled after them.

This run was similar to the one the Dark Howlers had, with the difference that unmated wolves were not looking for temporary companions. Once the run was over, the mated ones were happy to frolic with their mates, but the ones without partners gathered in groups to drink and chat without physical intimacy.

At some point during the run, Talia gave control to Liseli, who was happy to spend time with Sapa.

Talia used that time to disconnect and not think about anything in particular. She needed a mental break from everything.

By the time Talia returned to her senses, Liseli was following after a big black wolf, and the surroundings were oddly familiar.

'Why are we here?' Talia asked Damon through the mind-link when she recognized the cave that represented the location of one of the hardest moments in her life.

It was the cave where Talia cared for Damon while he was under the effect of dark magic and unconscious. When he woke up, he didn't feel their mate bond, and he didn't remember Talia. He pushed her away, believing that she was the enemy, and Talia really wanted to forget about that, yet here they were.

'Trust me, kitten', Damon said. 'We need to do this. I need to do this.'

Talia was not happy, but she could hear his determination, so she followed.

Talia looked around the cave to see that things didn't change. The cot was still there, and the backpacks and mess they left there were missing, indicating that someone had visited this place after the unfortunate event.

Due to her wolf form and nerves which were acting out, Talia found the scents suffocating, and the sounds of water dripping echoed in her head, making her disoriented. She shifted into her human form to ease the stimulation of her senses.

Talia observed that the white threads connecting her to the pack members were not visible, even though she could still feel them in general. Were they not visible because the energies dwindled or because she was not in the mood to share, or was there another reason?

But none of those managed to distract her from the pressing question, why were they back here?

Chapter 663 Fixing bad memories (1)

"Come here, kitten", Damon's low voice echoed in the cave. He shifted into his human form and was sitting on the cot.

Damon's magnificent naked self was exposed for Talia to see completely, but the cave was filled with bitterness, and she couldn't make herself enjoy the visual.

Talia didn't move, even after Damon raised his left hand toward her, silently urging her to get closer.

"Why are we here?" Talia asked suspiciously.

"We are here to fix the wrongs", Damon said without lowering his hand that was hovering in the air and waiting for Talia's. "I promised you good memories, so many of them that they will bury all the bad ones. But it's hard to forget when negativity grips my heart and repeatedly reminds me that I hurt you. I am your mate, and it's my duty to cherish you, yet I ended up messing up over and over again. That's why I decided to give this a try. I want to fix bad memories."

"How?"

"Let's redo our moments in this place, kitten." He patted the cot with his right hand. "I will lay here, you will tend to me, and when I open my eyes, I will know how important you are, and things will be OK."

Talia's eyes blurred from tears. His sincerity really touched her, but what hit her harder was the grief and regret that poured into her through their mate bond.

Talia realized that Damon was struggling with the things from the past, maybe more than she did. He wished that he didn't forget about her (twice), and he wished that he didn't have so many women in his past, and he was blaming himself for those and much more because his past actions were casting a shade on their present and future.

Talia was the first one Damon cared for, she was his other half, and he hurt her. Repeatedly.

Damon was not proud of many things he did, and he kept messing up after they met. Some of those were not his fault, but they happened on his watch, and he was drowning in guilt.

Talia had an urge to assure him it was fine. Things were not perfect, but as long as they worked on their relationship and put each other first, things would work themselves out. They had to.

She walked to him and put her hand into his that was still waiting for her. Of course, he was still waiting for her. Since he found her in the attic of the Red Moon pack, Damon was waiting for Talia to get stronger, braver, to accept him and grow confident, to recognize him as her mate... the willful and impatient Alpha was always waiting for her and that showed how much he loved her.

"What should I do?" Talia asked.

Damon gave her fingers a squeeze, and then he laid on the cot; his head rested on the neatly folded blanket that was there, and he didn't let go of her hand.

"Do what you did while I was unconscious.", he instructed.

"Alright", she agreed to this experiment, but she already knew it will work because instead of thinking about how Damon pushed her away and left, she was completely focused on his attempts to make things right. Good memories were not replacing the bad ones; the good ones were squeezing in, making the bad memories appear smaller and less relevant.

Talia tore a piece of the blanket and disappeared among large rocks, knowing that there was a tunnel that led toward a stream of fresh water. She went there numerous times to soak the fabric so that she could wipe Damon's body.

At that time, Talia was desperate and lonely, and she had a belly full of anger for Cassandra and the two Alphas who harmed her mate, and now things were different. She was hopeful and excited to see how this would turn out.

Damon didn't move a muscle, and he watched her as she returned with a damp cloth.

"You should close your eyes.", Talia instructed, and he did so obediently.

Damon flinched when cold droplets fell on his firm abs.

"How long will you pretend to be unconscious?" She asked.

"Until you are done taking care of your mate, Alpha Talia.", he responded with all the seriousness in the world.

Talia paused. Was he joking? If this was for making good memories, there was no need for him to relax like that, yet it looked like he was about to take a nap. A long one!

Talia's attention was drawn to his erection that was standing there, making it impossible to ignore.

She got an idea.

"Let your mate take care of you. I will take a goood care of you."

Damon's lips lifted into a wicked smile he was unable to suppress. "Maybe I should take care of you."

"Nonsense", Talia said. "You are unconscious, under the effect of dark magic. You can't move. Remember?"

"Alright", he said obediently.

"No moving. You promised. If you move before I allow it, this game is over, and we are heading back", Talia said, and he wondered why she insisted on it, but he agreed.

Damon jolted violently when the cold sensation enveloped his cock as she put the damp fabric over it.

Damon growled. Didn't she know that cold water will make it shrink? He could feel himself go soft already!

"Kitten..."

"No talking either", Talia snapped. "You are unconscious, suffering. Let me take care of you."

Damon's eyebrows twitched when he heard her steps disappearing in the direction where the stream was. He was suffering, alright. He didn't think that they would get frisky, not right away at least, but what she was doing was pure torture.

"AH!" Damon exclaimed when another splash of cold water hit his groin area. He peeked to see that she had a bowl in her hands. Where did that come from?

Talia suppressed giggles at the sight of Damon, who was obviously regretting his idea of coming here.

She stared at his cock, which shrunk under cold water like it was hiding from her. She saw Damon naked plenty of times, and he was mostly hard and ready, or half-hard, and this shrunken form was something new.

"How small can it go?" Talia asked, and Damon opened his eyes to see her down on her knees, visually inspecting his little brother that was pathetically small.

Damon cleared his throat awkwardly. Out of all the situations he ever found himself in, this was the most embarrassing, ever!

"Cold makes it shrink", Damon said eventually.

"Will it go smaller if I cool it further?" She was genuinely curious.

Damon didn't know how to answer this, so he didn't. "Can we change the topic?"

"Do you really want to talk about something else?" She asked teasingly. "I am curious... we were under the waterfall, and the water was cold there, yet you were not like this."

"At that time, you kept me warm, kitten."

Talia's eyes flashed with understanding, and she put her palm on his thigh. "Will this make it hard?"

"It will help if you give it a squeeze. And you can rub a little", Damon said in a signing voice. The silent promise of carnal pleasures dispelled any shame he felt.

Chapter 664 Fixing bad memories (2)

Their current situation reminded Talia of the time at the Summer Solstice festival when the cheeky Alpha said his legs were numb and it was Talia's fault, so she ended up massaging him. At that time, she was suppressing her love for him, thinking that it was a one-sided thing that will end up with her being hurt, but now it was different. She was not an insecure girl from the attic anymore; she was Alpha Natalia Moonrider, and that naked bundle of handsome muscles was her mate, her other half. Hers.

Damon brought her here without consulting her first. It's not that she didn't agree with the idea of creating good memories, but she wanted it done on her terms.

"Ahh...", a barely audible sigh escaped Damon's lips when Talia took him into her mouth without any warning.

Talia's eyes widened when she felt him grow in her mouth. It was an unknown sensation, and it filled her with pride to know that her touch affected him in such a way.

"If this is how you took care of me the last time, I'm sorry I was unconscious", Damon said, his voice low from the lust that was swelling together with his cock.

Talia unlatched herself from him in order to respond, "At that time, I feared that you won't wake up, that you might become cripple, that I would lose you. But now there is no place for fear because we are here to make happy memories, right?"

"Right", Damon confirmed, and he was more than happy when she returned her precious lips to tend to his cock that was now hard and ready and aching for her touch.

He wanted to grab a fistful of her hair and thrust into her mouth, but she told him not to move, so he gripped the edges of the cot while staring at her with a heated gaze she could feel burning her skin.

There was something extremely humbling in the scene of Talia kneeling next to the cot with Damon's cock in her mouth. The most powerful Alpha was on her knees, lowering herself to serve him, and she was doing it willingly. It only made him love her more.

They were back in that wretched cave to make happy memories, and Damon was determined to make many of them. He will prove himself as the strongest Alpha, worthy of being her mate, by satisfying her repeatedly and making her cry his name in ecstasy. As soon as he fills her mouth with his seed, he will get to it.

...

Talia opened her eyes to find herself snuggled next to Damon on the cot.

It was morning.

They spent the night in the cave, indulging in carnal pleasures while creating happy memories, and it worked because she felt light, like there were no worries in the world. Damon had that effect on her, making her believe that things will be alright as long as they were together.

Talia felt the breeze on her bare flesh as the two of them laid naked without any cover, but she was not cold because Damon's body kept her warm.

"Sleep, kitten", Damon mumbled, his voice husky from drowsiness. "It's early."

She looked up at him to see that he didn't open his eyes.

"I'm awake, and we have a lot to do."

Damon frowned. "What's the point of time passing differently if you will be busy?" He thought they came here for a vacation!

"Time is passing differently, but that doesn't mean the world paused while we are relaxing here."

Damon opened one eye to look at her. "We should at least afford a lazy morning in bed. I mind-linked Keith and Liam earlier, so they won't expect us for breakfast."

"You thought of everything."

"I only thought of you and how to sink my cock into my sweet pussy without making it too obvious how much I'm lusting after you."

Talia's laughter echoed in the cave, and she moved to lay on top of him. "No need for schemes, my love, because I want to feel you."

Damon hissed when he felt the sparks of their bond all over, especially on his cock that was getting coated in Talia's juices as she was grinding on him. Damn! His mate was an Alpha with a libido to match it. And that was only for him.

"I will take back the lazy part, but we should stay in bed at least until lunchtime.", he said cheekily, making Talia laugh more.

Damon chuckled, and then he laughed with her, as her laughter was contagious, and it was the best sound he had ever heard. She was happy and that poured into him, and this was the vacation he was craving for, the two of them in a good mood, privacy, and clothes were optional.

...

~ The Dark Howlers pack ~

In the packhouse of the Dark Howlers pack, Dawn and Zina were chattering in the kitchen.

George went to train with warriors, so two girlfriends decided to spend those few hours together.

It's not that George needed training, but he knew that Dawn was craving some girl-time with Zina and when he was around, Dawn didn't leave his side while Zina was awkward, so he made himself scarce.

Maya and Caden were outside, dealing with pack matters, and the packhouse was unusually quiet after the last period of activity. It seemed like only Dawn and Zina were in that huge mansion.

Zina really missed Dawn, and she knew that Dawn will soon go to the Red Moon pack, and then Zina will miss her more, but Zina was also happy for her friend. Finding a mate was a monumental event for any werewolf, and Zina didn't want to be sappy and spoil this for Dawn.

Zina had only one concern. "Make sure those bastards at the Red Moon pack don't bully you."

Dawn wanted to assure Zina that things will be alright, but the truth was that she didn't know what to expect either.

George had a plan to take down Alpha Edward. It was a risky business, very risky. It could get them imprisoned or killed, definitely tortured, and Dawn did her best not to think about all the bad things that could happen. But even if George was successful, it will take weeks or months until it happens, and the idea of them living in fear until George makes his move was unsettling.

"You should come and visit", Dawn said. "George said there are several guestrooms in his villa, and you can definitely use one."

Zina made a face. "Who do you think you are talking to? I am now in charge of the kitchen so if any high-ranking pack member goes hungry it will be my fault. Do you think I can take a vacation anytime?"

Dawn realized that Zina was right. But... "James' birthday celebration will be soon."

Zina didn't understand why Dawn brought that up. It's not like Zina will be invited.

Seeing Zina's confused expression, Dawn explained, "Damon and Talia will definitely attend it, and maybe Maya and Caden also. Considering Alpha Edward's reputation, he will make it a few days long event so that he can use it to connect and scheme with other packs. You can come and stay with me during that time."

Zina bobbed her head excitedly. "If I can, I will be there." She wanted to see Dawn's new home and to make sure George treated her well.

Chapter 665 Malia strikes again! [Bonus chapter]

Zina's phone dinged with a notification and her eyes widened when she saw the message.

It was an official announcement from Meg about the new high-ranking member of the Midnight Guardians pack.

Normally, changes in the internal structure of a pack wouldn't be publicized to outsiders unless it's a change on the Alpha level, but considering the special relationship between the two packs, Talia approved for news about Sandy becoming a Gamma to be sent to Maya, Caden, and Zina (aka three people who were now in charge of the packhouse). If Talia was home, she would tell them.

"What is it?", Dawn asked while scooting closer to see what got Zina's attention.

"Sandy found her mate in the Midnight Guardians pack.", Zina said breathily. "It's Tyler, the Gamma of the Midnight Guardians pack, which makes Sandy a Gamma."

"I knew it!", Dawn exclaimed. "Malia strikes again!"

Zina looked at Dawn in disbelief. "You can't be serious."

"Oh, I am serious! I told you that you should go with them. Talia would find you a mate in no time. Keep on delaying this and you will miss the promotional period. Will you be able to afford it when Malia becomes world-famous?"

Zina shook her head helplessly. "There is no such thing as an ability to find mates, Dawn." If there was, Zina would find hers in Shifters the other night. Zina was there, and Talia was there, and plenty of unmated guys were there, but not a single one clicked for Zina.

Zina felt like crying. At this rate, she will be alone forever! Nights were the hardest. Even when she found a guy to keep her company, the joy was not complete because Zina knew it was just temporary. She wanted someone to feed her and to give her endless orgasms, damn it!

"Don't give up hopes, Zi.", Dawn said. "Just stick to Talia and she will find you a mate."

"You sound like Talia has a catalog and I just pick one."

"Picking is mutual, but yes, it's something like that.", Dawn responded with all seriousness in the world. "Didn't you see how many new mates found each other during the pack run? We never saw anything like it and I believe that it's because we finally got our Luna."

"I agree with that statement.", a familiar female voice from the door got Dawn's and Zina's attention and they whipped their heads that way to confirm that they heard it right.

"STEPH!", Dawn and Zina exclaimed in unison and then they rushed there to end up in a three-female hug.

Stephanie laughed. "It's good to see you, girls. How are you doing? Did you miss me?"

Dawn and Zina were both nodding earnestly.

Zina tilted her head toward Dawn. "This one has her mate to keep her company, but I'm missing you like crazy." Zina glanced behind Stephanie. "We heard you found your second chance mate. Did you already leave him at home?"

Stephanie couldn't stop grinning. "Richard was interested in the garden, so he went to take a look."

Stephanie looked around the kitchen. "I came here thinking that you will be busy cooking and baking, yet you are chatting like there is no work."

"There is no work. Not much work, anyway.", Zina responded.

Dawn explained, "Our Alpha and Luna went to the Midnight Guardians pack, and some of the guests went with them. Shaman Gideon and Mindy moved to their new home, so other than me and George, only Betas are still here. And for us, sandwiches are fine."

"Oh, they are not here", disappointment in Stephanie's voice was obvious. She was hoping to introduce Richard to Damon and Talia. Well, Richard knew Damon, but this would be an introduction as Stephanie's mate. "Do you know how long they will stay there?"

Zina shrugged. "A few days. Not long."

Dawn was curious about one thing. "Did you hear from Lisa? How is she doing with her mate?"

Stephanie's smile widened. "After Lisa told me she found her mate, I didn't hear from her, but isn't that expected? They are probably in solitude and if they are anything how Gil and I were, I won't hear from her for weeks."

All three women knew about Lisa causing trouble and how she couldn't accept when Tony found his mate, and they also hoped that Lisa finding her mate was a good thing.

Finding a mate helps one see things differently, and Stephanie wished for Lisa to grow up and stop clinging to things that were never hers. Now Lisa had her mate, and she should be busy starting her new life.

Stephanie didn't want to talk about bad things and spoil the mood.

"How are you girls doing?", Stephanie asked and turned to Dawn. "When will you go to the Red Moon pack with your mate? We should plan a sendoff party."

"A party?" Dawn really didn't think of that. "Don't make it sound like I'm going to a jungle never to return. It's not so far away. You can visit anytime. We were just planning for Zina to visit me."

Stephanie stifled a laugh. "You didn't leave yet, and you are already making plans for guests."

"Of course", Dawn said confidently. "With future Alpha James' birthday party coming, Damon and Talia will definitely attend it, and Zina can tag along and be my guest." She puffed her chest proudly. "As a Commander, George has his own villa there with guest bedrooms and everything."

"Oh, that's nice.", Stephanie said, her big smile creating crinkles around her eyes.

Dawn nodded earnestly and turned to Zina. "I will plan for some mixers. What if you find your mate there? You can be my neighbor."

Zina made a face. She loved the idea of being close to Dawn, but the Red Moon pack gave her heebie-jeebies. "If I need to go around and find a mate, I will stick to Talia and accompany her to the Blue River pack next week."

"What's there?", Stephanie asked.

Dawn responded, "Alpha Maddox will make his Luna Tatiana official. It will be a grand party with many high-ranking people attending. George also got an invitation. And there is also a birthday party upcoming, future Alpha of the Spring Leaf will be turning six years old and his parents were generous to invite us."

"I heard about those. Our Alpha and Luna will also be attending them.", Zina said and squinted at Dawn. "You got yourself a high-profile mate and now you can go to fancy parties."

Dawn didn't know if they will go because since they returned from the Shifters nightclub, George became sheepish whenever Dawn mentioned anything beyond the Dark Howlers pack; it made Dawn wonder what Damon said to George when they stayed in the VVIP booth on their own. It was suspicious.

"Did I come too soon?", a deep voice rumbled from the door and a burly man with a head full of red hair came into sight. The gentle gaze directed at Stephanie didn't match his rough appearance.

"Ladies...", Stephanie said in a singing voice while walking toward the man. "Allow me to introduce to you Richard, my mate."

She hugged him as soon as she got into the touching distance and his arms wrapped around her waist.

"Nice to meet you", Richard said to Dawn and Zina who observed the couple with sparkles in their eyes.

It was unusual to see Stephanie get so cozy with a guy. Dawn and Zina both worked in the packhouse for years, and Stephanie always kept her distance from men. This was different.

Chapter 666 Axel's ability (1)

~ The Midnight Guardians pack ~

Damon and Talia returned to the main house in time for lunch.

They all gathered in the dining room. Sandy and Tyler were also present.

Talia wanted to use this opportunity to casually discuss their future plans. Whenever they were in the study, it was all too official, and Talia craved a relaxed atmosphere.

"Now that the pack run is done, we should plan for our visit to the Silver Flame Coven.", Talia said. "Can any of you think of something else that must be done before we can go?"

They all looked around, and no one had anything to say.

"Alright", Talia said. "I thought that I should go with Damon, Keith, and Liam. Yasmin and Cornelia will probably want to visit their Coven, which means that Axel and James will come as well. Meg and Kai should stay here and watch over the pack. Tyler and Sandy can take time off."

Sandy was not happy about this. She came here as Talia's guard, and she didn't get to do any guarding business yet... "You are leaving me behind while Keith and Liam get to go?" She wanted to see the witches also!

"Don't compare yourself to Keith and Liam, Gamma Sandy.", Talia said in her official voice, reminding Sandy of her new position. "From the moment you accepted Tyler as your mate, you are not my guard anymore."

"I can be a Gamma AND your guard, Alpha Talia.", Sandy protested. "I am a warrior, and my skill set is to fight and not to deal with paperwork and electronics."

"Don't argue with your Alpha", Damon interjected sternly. He didn't want to risk Talia's mood being spoiled, and Sandy talking back was insubordination. Didn't Sandy realize that her action was making Talia either cave in under pressure or punish Sandy? And neither of those were good.

Sandy blinked at Damon. She had no intention to argue, but before she could explain herself, Damon was talking again.

"Your Alpha ordered you to take time off, bond with your mate, and learn to control your ability. It was not a request you could refuse. Where will you go protecting your Alpha when you are like a lightbulb whenever you get excited?" Damon gestured to Sandy, whose eyes were flickering in silvery light. "Are you planning to follow us while leaving your mate behind? As a Gamma, Tyler is aware of his responsibilities. In the absence of the Alpha, other high-ranking members will take the lead. Do your duty where it's needed, not when it's convenient."

Sandy lowered her head. She didn't like being scolded by Damon, but she knew he was right. She was out of line. "Yes, Alpha."

Talia felt sorry for Sandy. Sandy was always energetic, yet she ended up being reprimanded in front of her mate.

"Don't think of this as a punishment, Sandy", Talia said, making Sandy raise her gaze to meet Talia's. "It's more of a reward where you get time to learn about your mate and about your new pack. Depending on the nature of your ability, it could be dangerous until you master it. What if you harm someone accidentally? Luckily, you can't harm your mate, and healers have ways to protect themselves, so stick to them until you get the hang of it. Once your ability stabilizes, you can join warriors in training. No one said that a Gamma couldn't be a warrior also."

Talia smiled when she saw that Sandy's expression changed into a grateful one and she thought of warning Sandy, "You will need to practice patience because it might take a while until you master your ability. In the meantime, if you want to contribute, you can go to the archives and start reading and sorting stuff. Axel could use a hand there."

"Definitely!" Axel exclaimed. "After lunch, I can show you what I'm doing there." He looked around the table. "Tyler, Kai, Meg, you should join also. The archives are a mess. Many documents are without timestamps, while some are written like ancient riddles. If you think of it as a game of clues, it will be fun."

James felt neglected because he was also interested in those ancient riddles. But he also knew that he was an outsider, so he kept quiet and continued feeding Cornelia, his chocolate-colored Goddess. They didn't go all the way, but they did a lot of handholding, hugging, and kissing, and they were sleeping topless with him holding her breasts, and that was definitely progress.

Damon saw that Sandy's mood improved, and he turned to look at Talia. He wanted to praise her for being an amazing Luna, but she was not a Luna; Talia was an Alpha now and a very good one. And he was lucky to have her as his mate.

With that, it was decided that Damon, Talia, Axel, Yasmin, James, and Cornelia will head to the Silver Flame Coven. Since none of them had anything that would delay the trip, they decided to go on the next day, which was just enough time for Yasmin to prepare presents for Evanora and her sisters in the Coven.

...

Later that afternoon, Talia met with Axel in the study.

"You wanted to meet with me in private?" Talia asked, curious why he wanted secrecy. It took her a while to convince Damon that she was just meeting Axel to see what he wanted and that it was not dangerous and that she won't leave the study.

Luckily, Damon had some important emails to handle, so he didn't make a big fuss when Talia left their suite.

Seeing that Axel was mysteriously silent, Talia guessed, "Is this about Guardians wanting to meet me? Or Alpha Edward?"

"There is nothing new from the Red Moon pack, but Guardians sent another meeting request. You told me to ignore them for now, and I will do so until you tell me otherwise."

Talia was out of ideas, so she asked, "Why are we here, Axel?"

Axel gestured to Talia to sit on the sofa, and then he handed her a pen and a notepad with, "I want to show you my ability."

Talia was super-curious, but... "Shouldn't you keep it a secret?"

"I don't think that keeping this a secret will do us any good. As an Alpha, you should know the abilities of your pack members. Only like that, you will be able to protect us and to use us when needed."

Talia knew that his words made sense. She had no intention of using any of them, but his sincerity was touching.

"Alright", she said and glanced at the notepad and pen. "How do we do this?"

Axel chuckled. "I will ask you questions, and I want you to write answers without showing them to me."

Talia's mouth formed a big 'O'. "Are you able to force my hand to write what you want? Or can you see through the paper?" Talia turned to look behind her.

"What?" Axel asked.

"I'm checking if you placed there a mirror secretly."

"No mirrors and no tricks. Only my ability."

Talia pursed her lips. "No matter how you call it, if you want me to write something without showing you, and you will guess what it is, it's definitely a trick. Or will you make it burst in flames while smoke forms the shape of what I wrote on the paper?"

Axel rolled his eyes. She really had some crazy ideas. "Can we do this?"

Chapter 667 Axel's ability (2)

Seeing that Talia settled down, Axel extended his hand toward Talia, palm up. "First, I want to hold your hand."

Talia felt silly holding his hand like that, but it didn't last long.

"Now what?", she asked.

"Write down your favorite food.", Axel instructed. "Then write what you do first thing in the morning. What's your favorite song?..."

Talia finished writing down the fifth item and asked, "Should I show you this?"

"No. But I want you to follow it as I speak.", Axel explained. "Your favorite food is dark chocolate. The first thing you do in the morning is inhale the scent of the forest..."

Talia's eyebrows were rising questionably as Axel got it all right like he could read answers that were on the notepad she was hiding from his gaze.

Axel looked at her smugly. "Was I right?"

Talia turned the notepad for him to see her answers.

"Is your ability to see what I see?", Talia guessed. Sharing mental images and memories seemed like a good guess. She could do it with Damon, and Liseli said that they can force their way into other minds also.

"Not quite.", he said mysteriously.

"How did you do it, then?"

Axel extended his hand toward Talia again, silently asking for her hand, and she put it there.

"OK", Axel said while standing up. "Now, I want you to draw something."

"What should I draw?"

Axel shrugged. "Anything you feel like but keep it simple."

Talia watched as Axel walked to his desk and got a paper, and he started scribbling on it.

Unsure where this was going, Talia started drawing. It was an ugly bird that reminded her of the bird she drew on Damon's arm when the silly Alpha was obsessed with getting tattoos. Talia hoped that leading a pack doesn't require artistic skills because she had none.

Should she take some art lessons? She would love to, only if she had time. Lack of time seemed to be an unnecessary concern considering her identity and location, but the truth was that since she met Damon, Talia was always busy and since she became the Alpha (and Luna), things only got busier.

A minute later, Axel stood up with a folded paper in his hand.

Talia finished her bird and looked at Axel who looked at her with amusement.

Without a word, Axel opened the paper to show her an identical bird to the one she had on her notepad. Talia put both drawings on the table side-by-side to confirm that even an unsightly curve in the right wing was present on both copies... or was it on both originals?

Talia gaped at Axel. She thought that it was an ability to see from another angle or through her eyes, but he obviously drew that bird before she did.

"How did you know I will draw this?" Talia asked. "And how did you make it the same?" Even if he just said that it will be a bird, she would be impressed, but he actually got the details right.

"It's my ability", Axel said and made a dramatic pause. "I can see things that are about to happen. For the first round of questions, I saw the scene of you writing down your answers. And for these", he gestured toward two drawings on the coffee table. "I saw you drawing it. This wing wouldn't be so crooked if you didn't draw it first."

"Woah!", Talia said under her breath while thinking how handy that was. He can see what will happen and fix it if he doesn't like it. Or can he fix it? "What happens if you act differently from what's expected?" What if he saw her drawing that bird, but then he changed his instructions so that she draws something else?

Axel shook his head, indicating that he was not sure. "I can't see everything. It's almost like some things are certain that will happen. I tried impacting others to get a different outcome, but no matter what I did, what I saw, came true."

That was a bummer, Talia thought. Wasn't this like a curse? Axel could see bad things, and he was unable to prevent them from happening.

On the other side, a future that can't be changed can be taken advantage of.

"You can earn a lot of money by gambling. There is a city called Las Vegas, and you could be the money-king there."

Axel stifled a laugh. She had some good ideas, but... "It comes with limitations. I can see the future of the person I touch directly, and it goes only a few minutes in the future."

That explained the awkward hand-holding, Talia thought.

"Can you see your future?", she asked.

Axel nodded, and his expression told Talia it was not pleasant. "At first, I had so many déjà vu moments that I thought I was going crazy. It was like my world was stuttering, and I knew what will happen before it happened. It took me a while to realize what was going on and to figure out a way to turn it off."

Talia felt sorry for Axel. By knowing what was coming, he was robbed of enjoying the present. He was set on anticipating good things and dreading the bad ones, and the only thing he could do was wait for them to happen.

"Are you worried about me?" Axel asked, and Talia realized that her expression fell.

"Don't worry. It's not bad.", he assured her. "Yasmin said that with practice, my ability can evolve. Maybe I get to see the parts that can be changed, further into the future, and I don't need to touch people."

Axel seemed to be excited about this, and he looked at her like a puppy who was expecting praise.

"Don't worry about others. Think of it as a way that can help you prepare for the things that are coming.", Talia said. "It's a very useful ability to have. Congratulations, Axel. And thank you for sharing this with me."

Axel puffed his chest proudly. This was the first time for Talia to appreciate him openly. He felt like a big brother that his little sister admired.

"I will keep practicing, and I hope it will come in handy.", he said.

Axel really wanted to be useful to Talia. Since he found out that his parents were the ones who gave Talia away when she was a baby, the guilt was eating him alive, like he was the one who did it.

Axel spent many sleepless nights wondering how could Sophia and Isaac be such devoted parents after giving away Valerian's child. Maybe Isaac didn't feel much because Valerian was a stranger to him. However, to Sophia, Valerian was her older brother, Talia was her niece, Natalia Moonrider was an innocent baby, a member of the Midnight Guardians pack, with the blood of the Alpha in her veins, yet they abandoned her while justifying how the life of one was not important compared to the safety of the pack.

The twisted thing was that their pack was not in danger at all; it was all because of Cassandra's prophecy. Anyone with half a brain would know how prophecies were not reliable, and at most they spoke about things that MIGHT happen.

What other despicable acts did his parents do and brush off like they were nothing?

Axel was touched that even after knowing the truth, Talia still wanted him to be her proxy. The truth was that if she dismissed him, he wouldn't object.

As the only daughter of the Valerian Moonrider, Talia was the rightful Alpha of the Midnight Guardians pack, and she had no obligation to share that position with Axel nor to give him any benefits. She could put Sophia and Isaac in the dungeon (or execute them) and imprison Axel also because he might retaliate against Talia for punishing his parents. Instead of doing any of that, Talia was treating him as equal and allowing him to lead the pack and stay in the main house with Yasmin and... Axel finally saw what a graceful Alpha is, and he hoped that he won't disappoint her.

Unaware of Axel's turbulent emotions, Talia was imagining Axel standing by her side in meetings with other Alphas, and he would mind-link her about what others were scheming. She completely forgot her initial thoughts about not using the abilities of her pack members because Axel's power was too handy to have.

If Axel was with her at the Council of the Alphas, she would avoid several nasty situations, like the one when Alpha Edward kissed her hand. Even after all this time, it still felt slimy, and Talia had an urge to wash her hands.

Chapter 668 The Guardians (1) [Bonus chapter]

~ An unknown location ~

Three people were in a spacious room that belonged to a setting of an ancient castle with gray stone walls decorated with red and golden tapestries which hung between long and narrow windows.

A strip of simple red carpet extended from the heavy wooden door passing right in the middle of symmetrically arranged twenty empty chairs that stood empty, ten on each side. The red carpet was wide enough for three people to walk side-by-side without touching each other, yet it looked narrow

compared to the big floor it covered to end at the edge of the elevated podium, which hosted two elegant chairs, resembling thrones fit for a king and queen.

Other than twenty-two chairs, there was no other furniture in the room.

A middle-aged man with a head full of black curly hair was sitting on the right chair that was on the elevated podium. He was Gregory Mello, the leader of the Guardians.

Julian was below the podium, on his knee, with his head hung low in front of Gregory.

Declyn stood on the side, leaning on the wall, and observing the scene of Julian apologizing (again) for failing to get a positive response from the Midnight Guardians pack.

If Talia could peek into this room, she would recognize Julian and Declyn as two Guardians who attended the Council of the Alphas. At that time, Julian used his real name, and Declyn introduced himself as Dex, the one who said he was in charge of the Sphere of Power.

"I'm sorry, but Alpha Talia is not responding. With the current approach, this is as far as I can accomplish.", Julian said.

"Maybe we should give her more time.", Declyn said.

"More time?" Gregory asked, his deep voice full of irritation echoed in the massive room. "She had plenty of time to think about meeting with us. She wanted to know more, but now it seems she changed her mind." Gregory glared at Julian. "How much did you tell her?"

Julian raised his gaze to meet Gregory's.

"I left a message that we are willing to talk."

"It was obviously not good enough", Gregory said in a clipped tone. "Give her more information. Show her that we are willing to share."

"Are we going to tell her about us?" Julian asked.

"Of course not.", Declyn said from the side. "Outsiders shouldn't know what we are. We are not going to change our rules because of one female."

Julian felt that they were unreasonable. "How can I show her that we are willing to talk without telling her anything? If I make a promise and then back out of it, her already shaky trust in us will collapse completely."

"We don't share with outsiders, but she won't be one for long.", Gregory said.

"She didn't seem willing to join us.", Julian reminded him. Talia refused them after the Council of Alphas, and her not accepting their requests for meetings was not a good sign either.

"That's why your job is to give her enough so that she becomes curious, then interested, and then she will be ours.", Gregory said to Julian. "Do I need to teach you how to do it?"

Julian wanted to protest, but he knew that it would only make Gregory snap at him. He got a mission to get a meeting with Talia, and his duty was to make it happen. It's been a long time since Gregory got so excited about a person.

It's not that Julian didn't think that Talia should become one of them, but over the centuries, they had many women of different backgrounds join their clan, and it didn't work out, so Julian didn't want to get his hopes up. But at the same time, he didn't dare speak against Gregory, so he bowed his head.

"I understand.", Julian said and left the room with heavy steps.

"Do you think he will succeed?", Declyn asked.

"Does he have a choice?" Gregory responded with a question. "Julian knows how to make things happen."

Declyn was not so optimistic. "Julian thinks that Alpha Talia is a naive girl, and it seems you are underestimating as well."

Gregory wondered why Declyn spoke of Talia with respect. No matter how impressive her skills were, they confirmed that she couldn't be more than a few decades old, which meant she was a youngster.

"And what's your opinion on the female?"

"She is young, yet she had several Alphas standing behind her.", Declyn said.

Gregory's brows came together in obvious disapproval. "Were they trying to woo her?"

"No Alpha will lower himself just for wooing a female, and it's not in their nature to share. If more than one wanted her, there would be a fight, and if one of them claimed her as his, he wouldn't allow others to get so close. They seemed more submissive than seduced."

Gregory narrowed his eyes at Declyn. What they knew so far about Talia didn't justify that level of regard. Actually, ever since that meeting of Alphas, Declyn seemed a bit off, like he was not completely honest. Declyn and Gregory spent centuries together, and Gregory could notice the smallest changes in the behavior of his second in command.

"Are you hiding something?" Gregory asked.

"Are we back to you doubting me?", Declyn asked sourly. "I told you everything there is to say, and others confirmed my story. Why are you acting like a woman who found her husband cheating?"

Gregory waved impatiently. "Fine. What are you trying to say? Stop with the riddles. Why is it important how many Alphas supported her at that Council? And wasn't that meeting called by Alpha Edward in another attack on Alpha Damon?"

"That's exactly my point. It was between Alpha Edward and Alpha Damon, yet Alpha Talia took the spotlight. We should be careful when approaching her. Other than being powerful, Alpha Talia also has allies. Her appearance at the Council broke the equilibrium between generations. For the first time, I saw youngsters outsmarting the old wolves, and they did that by gathering around a female Alpha. Instead of claiming her, they respected her. I believe that we are about to witness significant changes in the upcoming years. If we act rashly, we might offend more than just one pack."

Gregory sneered in annoyance. There was a time when everyone trembled in front of them, yet now they needed to exercise caution around impulse-driven creatures like werewolves. The Guardians' powers were diminishing over time, and their reputation followed. Damn it!

"You talk about caution, yet I see opportunities. We can use the older Alphas to pressure Talia to come to us. You said that she offended Alpha Edward and Alpha Richard. Let's start with them."

"What's the rush?", Declyn asked.

"I would like her to join us before she meets her mate."

"Do you think that the Midnight Guardians pack allowed a new Alpha to take over without awakening her powers? For that, she needed her mate."

Gregory's temper flared. "Didn't you say that she is special? Mate is not a prerequisite for one to become the Alpha. Besides, I can't believe that she took over that pack with a mate, and we didn't get any news about it."

Chapter 669 The Guardians (2)

Based on the latest information the Guardians had, Alpha Talia was now in charge of the Midnight Guardians pack, and Axel was acting as her proxy. They also heard that Axel found his mate, a female of unknown background.

They reexamined Meg's background after she appeared at the Council of the Alphas as Talia's Beta. They knew that Meghan from the Lightclaw pack became a Beta once she was mated with Beta Kai, but she was new to the Midnight Guardians pack, and new to the role of Beta, yet she got to accompany her Alpha to such an important meeting. It all hinted at the possibility that Meg's ability was something amazing, but the Guardians couldn't find out what it was.

Alpha Talia's background was a mystery, and there was no news about Talia's mate. The Guardians knew that she didn't have a mate by her side at her Alpha ceremony, which made Gregory hopeful that Talia was unmated.

For them, getting information on the Midnight Guardians pack was tricky but not impossible.

"Let's send Vincent for another scouting mission."

Vincent was the Guardian who specialized in infiltration and disguises.

"Are you hoping to find out more about Alpha Talia?", Declyn asked even though he knew the answer.

"Aren't you curious?" Gregory asked. "I find it hard to believe that Alpha Sophia and Alpha Isaac stepped down willingly for a girl who came out of nowhere. I was hoping to talk with Alpha Talia in person, but since she is not responding to our meeting summons, we need to get information in another way. Tell Vincent to approach two ex-Alphas and inquire about Alpha Talia. I want to know about her family situation and see if there is something we can use."

"If she has a mate, she won't join us willingly.", Declyn said.

Gregory didn't think that was a big deal. "Even if she has her mate, that won't stop us. It will be just an inconvenience."

Gregory's main focus was on preserving their legacy and bloodline by getting powerful creatures to join their clan.

Even without forcing Talia into accepting one of them as her mate, it would happen eventually. Given enough time, she will be lonely, and maybe they were lucky that one of them was her mate. But this won't happen if she was mated already because once the bond was formed, the only way to break it is to either reject it willingly (which is not going to happen) or by one of the mates perishing.

Declyn disagreed with Gregory's approach of getting the powerful creatures on their side at any cost. Declyn was convinced that the decline of their clan was the punishment from the Moon Goddess for all atrocities they did.

There was a time when their kind was blessed with immense powers that allowed them to command the elements and rule over other creatures, and they did it to the point of thinking of themselves as Gods.

There were stories of their previous splendor, when there were thousands of them, males and females, each graced with impressive physical abilities and magical powers, and they said that reckless arrogance led to their decline.

Over time, females stopped bearing children, and their numbers thinned, and now there were barely a hundred of them... all males.

No one remembered at what point they started calling themselves 'the Guardians'.

The outsiders believe that 'the Guardians' is how they call themselves because they are guarding the harmony among creatures, but the Guardians themselves know that their goal is to prevent their legacy from disappearing completely.

Out of the one hundred Guardians in existence, most of them gave up on their identity as the Guardians and are living among humans, like humans, vowed to never use their powers, all with the hope that they would make amends and find peace.

That is why only about one dozen of Guardians were still present in this ancient castle that was full of silent history that spoke of their former glory.

Declyn didn't say anything, but Gregory knew that look. Declyn disagreed.

Gregory was frustrated. Sometimes, it felt like he was the only one who still cared about them as species. If it's up to others, the Guardians would disappear completely into the unwritten history, and no one would even know they existed.

If they had any better ideas, Gregory would listen, but since that was not the case, Gregory had to remind Declyn, "I am the leader. As my second in command, you are my right hand. You can advise me, but if you act against my orders, I will be forced to cut off the hand that is acting on its own. Keep that in mind, and you will keep your position."

Declyn didn't approve the direction where Gregory led them, but he couldn't abandon this place either. Where would he go? To be lost like the other members of his clan? A long time ago, he decided to stay here and try to salvage what was left behind. It was a futile struggle, but at least it gave him something to do.

"Yes, my liege.", Declyn said with his head lowered while placing his open palm on his chest. His submissive posture didn't match the sarcasm in his voice. "What are your orders?"

"Find out about upcoming high-profile events and secure me a way to get there."

Declyn raised his questioning gaze. Gregory never showed interest in socializing, so Declyn knew that his leader had an ulterior motive. It took him a moment to understand. "Should I also investigate if Alpha Talia will attend them?"

Gregory smirked. "That's why you are my right hand. You know me well."

Gregory watched Declyn leaving the room, and he cursed under his breath.

Gregory knew he was hasty, but after hearing about what happened at the Council of the Alphas, he was eager to see Talia in person. She was a new Alpha, an unknown player, a powerful female. A desirable female.

He regretted not going for that Council of Alphas.

Why didn't he go there?

Gregory never liked leaving the castle because they followed rules of acting as equals in order to conceal who the leader was, and Gregory's ego couldn't stomach it when the ones below him treated him as their equal. Other than that, Gregory was wrapped in investigating opening inactive portals. Since he read a document that confirmed how some of the Guardians left to other realms, Gregory's obsession became to reactivate portals. If they could reconnect with more people of their kind, he would prove that they were not cursed, and the ones who were hiding among humans would come out.

Gregory looked at the room that was used for meetings. He was sitting on the main chair with twenty others in the room, ten on each side, and there was one more chair by his side; that's where his partner in ruling should be sitting, but there was no one to fill that spot.

Gregory was a child when his father was a ruler many centuries ago. Gregory remembered when this room was bustling with noise, every chair was occupied, and many people were standing around them... this is where important discussions were held and major decisions were made, but now it was quiet and empty. Even if he summoned every active Guardian to come, that wouldn't be enough to fill up every chair.

He didn't allow himself to fall into depression. They found a powerful female, and that was a good thing. Talia was a ray of light in their darkness, and Gregory was determined to bring her to this room. With any luck, she will sit on the chair next to his and lead the Guardians to another renaissance.

Chapter 670 The Guardians (3)

"Vin!", Declyn called the male that was idling in the lounge with his legs up on the coffee table and a wine bottle in his hand.

Vincent was also one of the Guardians that attended the Council of Alphas, and he was introduced as Vin. Other than indulging in fine spirits, Vincent had a gift for disguise and concealing his presence, which made him an ideal candidate for covert operations and infiltrations.

"Greg has another task for you."

Vincent frowned. "Now what? I just got back."

"He wants you to get in touch with ex-Alphas of the Midnight Guardians pack and see what you can find about the current Alpha."

Vincent clicked his tongue impatiently. He was at the Council of Alpha, so he understood that they wanted more information on Alpha Talia.

"Did our mighty leader find his next target?" Vincent asked, even though he knew the answer. "Do you think this one will survive?"

Declyn's expression didn't change, but he could feel painful knots forming in his stomach as mental images of numerous females flashed in front of his eyes; some of them were dear to him.

One of the reasons the Guardians' population was dwindling was because they didn't reproduce. It's not that they didn't, but they couldn't.

Without females of their own kind, they were forced to look for others, and Gregory was set on finding powerful females to join them for a valid reason that went beyond not diluting their powerful bloodline.

Human females were out of the question because they would die during gestation. The offspring of a Guardian gathers energies from nature while growing in the mother's womb. Those energies carry the life force for the Guardians, yet weak creatures (like humans) will die of it. All human females carrying their offspring perished before the fetus developed enough to be able to sustain itself in the outside world.

Will Talia be able to carry an offspring of a Guardian? Declyn didn't have an answer to that question.

"Don't think about useless things.", Declyn said. "Your job is to gather information."

Vincent made a face. They were treating him as an errand boy, and he didn't like it. "You are asking me to infiltrate the Midnight Guardians pack. Again. Do you think it's easy like buying milk in the supermarket?"

The biggest weakness of the Midnight Guardians pack was that they believed they were safe as long as no one passed through that one portal they were guarding religiously.

"I know it's a lot, but you are the only one who can do it. Finish that bottle, sober up, and head out. If you delay longer than that, I won't cover your ass when Greg loses it."

Vincent's eyebrows shot up. "How come you are letting me rest?" The Guardians were aware of different passing of time between realms, so they knew that every hour of delay was much more for the Midnight Guardians pack.

Declyn didn't want to explain himself. "If you want to leave right away, that's also an option." He waved like it was not important and left the lounge.

Why did Declyn give extra time to Vincent when Gregory was eager for information? Declyn was not sure himself.

It was not like him to interfere in direct orders from Gregory.

On the grand scale, one female more or less wouldn't change anything because they needed many, and even if they found many, it wouldn't work unless they convinced other males to return. The biggest problem was that people lost hope. Other than being cursed with no ways to reproduce, they were also cursed by a life force that was impossible to extinguish. The Guardians were immortals who lived for more centuries than they cared to remember. They saw civilizations rising and crumbling, which turned their emotions dull as they witnessed cataclysmic events like something that didn't impact them in the slightest.

A small voice sounded in the back of Declyn's head, telling him that they shouldn't bother Talia. Was it because it would be another failure, or because she was different? It didn't make sense, but he couldn't ignore it. At the same time, he couldn't openly defy Gregory either.

Declyn had a good idea of what Gregory's plan was. Since Talia doesn't know what he looks like, Gregory will attend an event in order to approach Talia with a fake identity. He will use information collected from Sophia and Isaac to his advantage, and he won't reveal that he is a Guardian unless it's necessary.

Two Alphas had only one child, and that was Axel. Declyn couldn't imagine a scenario where two ex-Alphas approved of Talia becoming an Alpha instead of Axel, and that was with the assumption that they stepped down willingly. The only logical conclusion was that they were forced into giving their Alpha position to Talia. But Declyn doubted that she used tricks; if that was the case, the pack wouldn't accept her, and their intel confirmed that the pack supports her.

Declyn mentally replayed what happened at the Council of Alphas, and what stood out the most was Talia's impressive performance with the Sphere of Power. He never saw anything like it, and he wondered how far she would push the device if he didn't interfere.

Talia handled those Alphas with confidence, making them kneel and submit while extorting large amounts of money from them, and she did it with her chin held high even though Declyn could pick up her discomfort which told him that she didn't want to be there.

They attacked her first, yet she didn't enjoy teaching those Alphas a lesson. Was she so kindhearted or naive? Maybe a bit of both.

Declyn was unable to forget her curious gaze filled with the innocence that revealed how she didn't see the ugliness of this world. In a way, he wanted to protect her; he saw Talia as a pure creature that shouldn't be soiled with the gory truth, and he wondered if she needed protection or if she could take care of herself.

When Declyn confirmed that Talia saw the runes as they suppressed the power of Alphas, Declyn was carried away with excitement he thought he was incapable of sensing again. After all, the ability to see their ancient magic didn't belong to humans, werewolves, or witches, so... how could she see it?

And then she injected him with something that started hazing his mind. Luckily, it didn't take much effort for Declyn to suppress the effects, and he played along in order to reveal her motives. Declyn was surprised to see that the only thing she wanted was to be left alone. So, he did that.

Unfortunately, now Gregory was suspecting him. The old guy always had good instincts. It's not that Gregory could really harm Declyn, but it was creating some obstacles in moving freely. When Gregory's paranoia kicked in, everyone suffered.

Why didn't Declyn tell other guardians that Talia could see their magic and that she tried to mess with his mind? Declyn himself didn't have an answer to that question. Talia stirred his curiosity, and he wanted to see what her next move will be.

After centuries of boredom, he found someone who was... interesting.

Declyn had no intention of warning Talia about Gregory. Besides, if she fell into Gregory's net easily, she wouldn't be worthy of Declyn's attention.

Declyn wondered if he should attend those events also so that he sees how Gregory will approach Talia. Will she make him crash and burn how she handled those pesky Alphas? But if Talia could see the runes, maybe she could see through their disguise magic also. If she recognizes him as Dex, his cover will be blown.

Ah, what to do?