

The receptionist at the desk didn't seem like she would be leaving anytime soon as she scribbled away on a notepad while answering a phone call. Her white long-sleeved shirt seemed a bit too tight around her bust area, and her short brown hair was pulled up in a ponytail.

Bella had been watching from a corner for almost an hour, but the receptionist hadn't bulged one bit. She had tried asking to use the telephone to make a phone call, but the lady had only smiled and politely told her, *"Sorry. I can't help you,"* before ignoring her and getting back to her work. It wouldn't take a genius to understand that Bella's captor had already gotten to her.

So Bella had tried asking other occupants on the island for help. They weren't many people here, she had noticed and hardly saw anyone except for a few lounging outside under umbrellas or thatched-roof huts, some couples, some single. She had noticed the stares directed at her immediately she got close and had also been mystified at how they all were young and gorgeous.

When she approached a friendly-looking couple and asked for their phone to make a quick phone call, the man had only smiled and flashed a set of sharp fangs before shaking his head apologetically to tell her he couldn't be of help also. And as Bella stared around at everyone, she realized she wasn't just alone on this island, but that she was surrounded by Lycanthropes!

She rushed back inside then and since had been waiting for the receptionist to leave so she could use the landline, but no luck. She thought about knocking out the receptionist, but then there was the possibility she was also a Lycanthrope, and since Bella had no weapon with her, she would have zero to no chances of pulling it off.

Her captor, Logan Aldrich, as he had called himself, had introduced himself as the Crown Prince of the beast kingdom, which meant he was a Lycanthrope - a creature more powerful than a werewolf even though they were both from the exact origin. And today was the first time Bella had ever spoken to one. She recalled being in attendance at a meeting with the Royal Lycanthropes and their counsel alongside her father and brother, but she couldn't remember Logan being there. In fact, the memory of the meeting was so fuzzy, it was hard for her to distinguish what really went on in the hall, and thinking about it only made her head hurt.

Sighing, Bella leaned back on the wall, staring up in defeat. What would she even do if she got her hands on the phone? She wasn't even sure where she was, so her father or brother

Deep shit!

could try tracing her call, but if only she could get a damn phone. She wasn't with hers, and no one was going to help her.

What was she even here for?! Apart from the meeting, she couldn't recall ever coming in contact with a Lycan. Hunting werewolves was her thing! Lycans weren't easy to hunt, and they rarely interacted with humans or caused any trouble, or at least didn't leave anything behind that would trace the hunters back to them. So how come she was being held captive by one?!

Her captor, Logan, as he had called himself, had refused to answer any of her questions, and threatening him hadn't worked but only amused him further. She wasn't comfortable with the creepy way he even stared at her. She felt like one of Mary, her maid, snacks under his eyes. She had stomped away from him, but she doubted he had stopped following her around since the start.

Something in the corner caught Bella's eyes, and she suddenly paused before whipping her head to the spot. Behind the receptionist was another transparent door, and Bella could see a massive foyer through it. With her eyebrows furrowed, she took a step towards it, feeling a strange kind of pull. The receptionist arched an eyebrow as she watched Bella pass by her into the foyer, but she shrugged and continued on with her work. The girl was free to go anywhere she wanted anyway.

Bella's eyes immediately clashed with a pair of familiar azure ones, and just like that, the spell was broken. She shook her head, regaining her senses and glaring at the smirking man above her. Logan was on the second floor, looking down at her from behind the railings. His arms were crossed in front of him and his dark, messy hair falling over his eyes. He had two buttons of his white shirt unbuttoned, giving a peek of the smooth golden tanned skin underneath where a bead of sweat ran down.

Blinking away whatever dirty thoughts were already forming in her mind, Bella lifted her eyes back up to stare at his, and she could already see the twinkle of smugness in them. They were like that for a while, one glaring, the other smirking till another man came up behind Logan and whispered something in his ear. His smile slowly fell off, and she could see from her position a vein tick in his jaw as his face twisted in annoyance. His eyes never left her, though, and she despised the feeling they caused to her.

Balling her hands into fists, she turned to leave, walking out the glass door.

Logan only stopped staring at her when she was out of sight, even though someone

search for Bella. She was gone, but he could still smell her scent like she was in the foyer. She smelled sweeter than she usually did, and it affected him greatly, but he knew it was his beast's impatience exerting itself. He was tired of waiting and could break loose anytime.

Sighing, he turned and walked two more doors before stopping at the third and walking into the room.

The first thing his eyes caught was the lady sitting lazily in a wooden chair, looking somewhat bedraggled with her long grey hair all over the place and white lace nightgown slightly torn by the side. She was also sporting a black eye but what really caught Logan's attention was the metal choker around her neck with a glowing maroon-colored stone in the middle. His eyes moved back up to see the woman shooting him daggers through her snake-like eyes with her chest heaving up and down in anger. Two other men stood guard behind her, who both bared their necks in submission as their Crown Prince walked in.

"How did you find her?" Logan directed the question to Jade, who was leisurely leaning on the wall beside the door.

A small cut was visible on Jade's left cheek, her stare remaining on the woman in the chair in the middle of the room. "It wasn't much of a hassle, especially since she was stupid enough to carry something this...glamorous with her." Jade raised up a red pendant for everyone to see, and the woman looked away in regret, letting her hair cover part of her face.

Delilah had been in her hotel room, enjoying a good night's rest before she caught an early flight out of the country and far away from the Nightshades, but instead, she was brutally awoken and abducted. She'd been exhausted working on Bella earlier, and the fact that her eyes were still heavy with sleep had given her the disadvantage of easily being overpowered even with her dark magic. And before she could even gain her balance and fight back, a chocker was snapped around her neck to render her powerless. Whatever was in the glowing maroon stone on it was awfully leaving her drained. She felt humiliated and defeated. This had never happened to her, at least not with her powers.

Logan hummed and walked closer to Delilah before crouching in front of her and bringing her attention back to him.

"What's your name?" He c\*\*\*\*d his head sideways at her, keeping his expression neutral and reigning in his beast, who wanted out now looking at the witch that caused him and his mate pain.

Delilah scoffed in disbelief, "You kidnapped someone whose name you don't even know?"

Deep shit!

me." He smiled, but his eyes had darkness brewing in them.

It took a while, but Delilah soon began to slowly understand the situation here. Her eyes darted around the room at the two silent men behind her, the lady opposite them, before looking back to the man still crouched in front of her.

"s\*\*t!" She lowly cursed herself, wishing she had left town sooner and covered her tracks. Here she had thought they had kidnapped her because of the pendant she had stolen from Bella, which held a lot of power she wished to drain, but it seemed this was more than that, much more.

Brian Nightshade had told her a Lycanthrope had claimed Bella to be his mate right before she locked back her beast, but it seems her pissed-off mate was right in front of her, and she was in deep s\*\*t. She had suspected something like this might happen, but she thought she would be far away from here before he found out about his mate's predicament, so Brian would have to deal with him alone. But boy, oh boy, how wrong she miscalculated. Now, she could feel the power radiating from everyone in the room, but the man, no, Lycan, in front of her seemed to hold a great more deal of it.

"I...I only did what I was paid to do, I swear!" Delilah rushed out in fear. Werewolves, she could handle, but Lycans, they were creatures she had made sure to avoid at all cost. And now that they had somehow managed to render her powerless, she had never been so scared for her life. She needed to come up with as many excuses as possible. "I'm innocent. It was her father who asked me to do it. I didn't mean to do any harm; I swear it. And since she was a werewolf hunter, it could be bad for her and...."

Logan proceeded to shush her while brushing her hair aside and over her ear, making her face more visible. Her face was as pale as a ghost's, and she shrunk into the chair while gripping both arms of it tightly.

"I only asked for your name, and if you answer all my questions correctly and help, then you'll be free to go." He flashed his long white fangs at her, and she swallowed hard at sight before nodding.

"My name's Delilah." She answered.

Logan nodded, "Okay, Delilah. I am Logan. Now, I want you to tell me what exactly you did to Belladonna Nightshade."

Even though she had been told that telling the truth would get her out of this alive, she doubted answering his questions would guarantee that. She doubted Logan knowing what she had done to Bella would lessen his anger. Her eyes darted across to the room to Jade, who she knew was a witch also. Witches could sense one another's magic easily, so Delilah felt it the moment she met Jade, and that was why she had thought she had been abducted because of the pendant. Since the charm held power that could easily be detected and coveted, other witches would want it for themselves. But it wasn't the case now.

"Hey..." Logan's voice grabbed Delilah's attention back to him, and he arched his eyebrow in waiting.

"I just...put her beast to sleep." Something about the way Logan stared at her made her know he didn't believe that was all to it. He rotated his head to Jade behind him, who hadn't stopped staring at Delilah.

"It's more than that." Jade's eyes shifted to Logan briefly before moving back to settle on Delilah once more. "The dark magic I felt inside Bella was too powerful for only putting a werewolf to sleep."

Logan stared back at Delilah, and he didn't think it possible, but her face had become paler.

Sighing, he interlocked his fingers and rested his jaw on them, "Now, Delilah, I was hoping we won't have to do this by resorting to violence."

Her mouth closed and open like a fish's as she tried to get the words out. Clearing her throat, she tried again, "I also uh...made the beast's muscles palsied, making her immobile so she wouldn't be able to get out once more." There was silence in the room after that, and Delilah swore the temperature dropped unbelievably low. Staring down, she saw Logan's knuckles turning white even though his face still seemed unreadable.

"You paralyzed her?" He asked in a calm voice that sent shivers down her spine.

"Her beast." She quickly corrected but doubted that scored her any good points either.

"What else?" He pushed, his face still not betraying any emotions.

"Well, you already know this part which is I locked away anything that would give it desire to awaken, which are mostly memories of you. That's why she can't remember you." She wrung her fingers, not daring to look at him but keeping her eyes down. She heard him sigh but

"So how do we solve this issue and get my lovely mate back her wolf and memories?"

Logan posed the question, moving a bit forward and grabbing both arms of the chair. "How do we reverse the black magic?"

Delilah's eyes shot up then, and she stared between Jade and Logan in panic. They thought she could help remove the dark magic in Bella? Oh no.

With her eyes widened, she focused her stare on Logan, "You can't reverse dark magic..."

"Yes, yes, I know, dark magic is too powerful for pure magic. But that's why you're here to help us remove your spell since you practice dark magic." Logan smiled, once more flashing his fangs.

Shook her head, "No, you don't understand. Dark magic can't reverse dark magic, either. It's just as impossible as pure magic reversing dark magic."

Logan stared at Jade once more, who sighed, "I had hoped you would be able to do something since you made the spell."

Delilah shook her head and watched Logan's jaw begin to clench, and his grip on the chair tighten enough to start making it crack. Her heartbeat spike up as she imagined her neck would be next to squeezed so tight if she didn't do or say something worthwhile.

"But the mate bond can help. If she really is your mate by the moon, then..."

"The last time I tried that, *witch*, it took me six months for her wolf to start to show, and even then, it only had a minuscule effect on her, and I can't wait that long. My beast isn't as patient anymore!" He nearly roared, rising up with each word till he dwarfed her in her seat. Delilah swore she would pass out any moment then. Logan's eyes were ominously glowing a swirly golden color, and his canines were protruding from his gum and shining brightly at her. His face didn't seem human but more beast now and the muscles of his arms bulging.

She had never felt so powerless before, and her not being able to use her powers made it all worse. She was trapped with no escape and at the mercy of these people. She just had to make it out of this, and she would never have anything to do with Lycans or even the Nightshades ever again.

"Th...that's because you didn't try hard enough. If you mark and complete the mate bond, I guarantee you no dark magic will be able to suppress her beast." Delilah managed to rush out when Logan's canines came dangerously close to her neck. He paused for a while, becoming rigid after her words. He understood what she met; he had to mark and mate Bella, but how could that work when she had returned to loathing him? He would be damned to take her

bay much longer...

He finally moved back from Delilah, his canines going back into his gums and his eyes turning back to their natural color. She felt like she could breathe once more as she let out an exhale of relief while he stepped back. He reached out his hand for her to take, and she did and stood up.

He didn't let go of her right hand, staring down at her wrist and rubbing his thumb on a vein there even as she stood in front of him, "That's the only way we can help her, isn't it?" His tone was calm and not dangerous like it was before. Delilah nodded vigorously, finally relaxing when seeing the Lycan beast settle, but what she failed to see was the menace lurking behind those azure eyes. However, Jade could sense it from where she stood, and she shook her head sadly for the poor witch.

"So you're saying you caused my mate a lot of pain and are completely useless in helping us heal her." The smile on Delilah's face fell when she felt the hold on her wrist tighten and saw the glitter in Logan's eyes as he finally looked up. She tried taking her hand back and moving away, but his grip was firm. Her panic-stricken eyes dart around the room until they land on Jade, who mumbled something she couldn't hear before stepping out of the room and closing the door behind her leaving her alone with Logan and the two men behind her, who hadn't moved or say a word ever since.

Logan had heard Jade's words, though, with his beast's hearing before she left. *"I can't watch this."* She had mumbled.

It happened so fast, Delilah was in shock for a few seconds. Logan's claws had snapped out of his fingers, and with little effort, he had separated Delila's wrist from the rest of her arm. The sound of bone cracking was heard before blood spurted everywhere, and a shrill scream loud enough to deafen someone emitted from her lungs. She fell back to the chair, but it got knocked out from underneath her, and she ended on the floor.

Her white nightgown had red splashes of her blood decorating the lacy material, and some also splashed on Logan's white shirt and skin.

Red fluid dripped to the floor as she held her arm with her other hand while screaming and crying with tears flowing down her eyes. Her decapitated hand was thrown beside her, and horror Luke no other filled Delilah.

Immediately Logan took a step towards her, she began to crawl back, but she could barely move with the amount of pain she was in. Her eyes glared at him in pain and anger as she

any harm."

"Now, you see, Delilah, that's a lie." He tutted. "I felt what you were doing to my mate, and on my way to her, my beast howled in pain for the first time. He's never felt such pain before. I may have been bruised a couple of times or stabbed even in the last century, but I never felt my heartache like that, not even when I had a knife lodged in my chest so deep and near my heart. So I know whatever you did to Bella's beast caused her a tremendous amount of pain, and my beast only felt a fragment of it."

"So you are going to kill me?! Will that make you feel better? Just do it!" The hate in her eyes was visible as she looked up at him.

"Actually, " He crouched once more to her level, "I want to torture her father in the worst way possible and then tear through her ex-boyfriends slowly, watching him scream out loud till he dies from too much pain. But doing that will only draw my mate farther from me. So, I'll just have to have my fun with you, slowly." He grinned in a manner that made Delilah see only the devil. How had she thought she could make it out of this? Oh, she had been stupid to think so. She was more than on deep s\*\*t. She was toasted.

His claws raised up above, and Logan was ready to bring them down on Delilah when the door burst open. All their attention snapped to the intruder, but Logan already smelt her before she walked in.

"Bella?" He stared to the doorway, where his mate had her eyes bulging out of her skull from the gory sight in front of her. This was definitely not how he intended to woo her.



In the reception for a few seconds, Bella stood outside the glass door, contemplating about going back in and confronting Logan. Since every effort had proved in vain, she knew she could only get her answers from him since everyone here seemed to be underneath his thumb. She counted to three before turning back around and walking back into the foyer, but he wasn't behind the railings anymore.

She stared around, searching for any sign for him, and when she found none, decided to walk up the stairs to the second floor where she had seen him earlier. Seeing many room doors when she got there left her confused about the one he would have walked into. There was no one in sight to ask, so she went straight for the first door. Her hand hovered over the knob with her mind swirling with possibilities of what or who might be inside. What if she was intruding in someone else's privacy? Now that would end badly.

Her teeth sank into her bottom lip as she peeked around once more, and seeing no insight, she finally twisted the door now and glanced inside. It was...surprisingly empty.

Bella would be admiring how grand and elegant the bedroom and its design were, but her situation didn't give her much time. Logan wasn't here, but maybe a phone might be.

"Hello?" She called out, walking inside and waiting for a sound, and when there was none, she rushed over the drawers and began to search through them. Next was under the pillows, the wardrobe which had men's clothing, she even looked underneath the bed, but there was nothing. She'd search everywhere she could, but it seemed they'd already taken extra precautions and kept anything that could help her out of her reach.

With her back to the bed as she sat on the floor, Bella could almost feel the tears of frustration welling up in her eyes. *Why her?!*, she kept asking in herself. She didn't know how long she sat there, berating herself, when she heard a shrill scream echo from down the hallway. Her head whipped up, and in pure instinct, she was up and running out of the room towards the sound. *Someone was in trouble.*

She bumped into someone on her way out and stopped in her tracks. A tall red-haired stood in front of her, and before she could stop herself, Bella whispered, "Jade?"

Bella couldn't recall how she knew this lady's name, but she could remember seeing her in some sort of wooden house that she wasn't sure how she knew. It was as if gaps were in her memory, and it was hard to fill them up.

Jade's eyebrows shoot up when she saw the familiarity in Bella's eyes. Hadn't Logan told him she had a bit of memory loss? Or was it just him she didn't remember?

thoughts. Without wasting another second, she was back, running towards it. A door was slightly ajar, and voices could be heard coming from it. However, the horror she saw later left her jaw hanging, and her eyes widened in horror.

In front of Bella was Logan hovering over a woman who had exceptional grey hair. A pool of blood was already forming from the woman's wrist, which seemed to have been ripped from her arm, and the sight alone was enough to make Bella's stomach churn.

"Bella?" Logan's voice held surprise as he stood frozen in his position. This wasn't how he wanted Bella to portray him, especially since she wasn't his biggest fan at the moment. And explanations might not be that easy.

"Bella." He called once again when she didn't move or say anything, but what left him puzzled was when he noticed her eyes never strayed to him; instead, they were glued on Delilah.

Bella being a werewolf hunter had seen more gory scenes caused by werewolves, so she wasn't too bothered by sight in front of her. She'd seen far worse. And even though the woman's wrist had just been ripped from her arm, Bella wasn't seeing that but something else, an image or possibly a memory.

She could see the woman hovering over her with her grey hair whipping all over the place and her pale face covered in dark veins. Her snake-like eyes were dark like two soulless black pits staring down at her, and when she smiled, Bella's heart leapt with fear.

Her chest suddenly felt tight, and she was finding it hard to breathe as she staggered back from the doorway, her eyes never straying from the other woman. She could hear someone repeatedly calling her name, but it sounded so far away, and she could barely focus on the voice.

She was sprinting down the hallway before she could think of anything else. She just wanted to be far away from that frightening atmosphere and that...that woman. It didn't make sense, and Bella couldn't recall where she had met her, but never had she felt fear like this, clawing at her chest, restricting her airflow, and messing with her mind. Before she knew it, she was back outside and had everyone's eyes on her. One even stood up to lend her some help as she seemed disoriented and barely stood right on her feet, but she dashed once more towards the grove of trees this time.

When she finally stopped, she was panting for air and had to use a tree for support while steadying her breathing. Being outside calmed her down a bit, and the refreshing breeze

after all the emotions that ran through her a minute ago.

A twig snapped behind her, and her eyes immediately slid back open, with her body becoming rigid. When she turned, she met a hard chest instead and gasped in fright. However, before she could run, arms wrapped around her waist and stopped her from making another run for it.

"No!" She struggled, already knowing from the person's smell who it was without even looking up, which was weird considering she didn't usually recognize people through their scents.

"Belladonna, I thought you were a werewolf hunter. Ever heard, don't run from a predator?" Logan's voice resonated from his chest, and she felt it all over. But she felt something else, something dark in his tone, and that made her look up and stare at him warily. He seemed normal, but when he smiled, she saw sharp fangs.

"It only encourages us." He added with his eyes darkening dangerously.

Bella drew her elbow back on reflex before knocking him square in the jaw, making him loosen his hold on her. But instead of running, she stood still, overwhelmed by a particular feeling as something clicked in her head. It felt like she had been in this same position with him before, but just as quickly as it came, it left.

Logan cursed underneath his breath, holding his chin while recalling the last time someone had been able to get close enough and hit him like this. Bella, the day he went over to her place and told her she was his mate. Just like that day, he wondered now how her punch hurt than humans is supposed to. And maybe he wasn't the only one thinking about that day because he saw something flash in her eyes, and she stood frozen, looking for a few seconds, but it was gone as fast as it came.

He took a step towards her, but she took one back, and before he could help it, his beast let out a low growl deep from his chest. Her looking at him without a hint of familiarity in her eyes, the fright, no...terror, in her eyes earlier, not knowing if it was directed at him or Delilah, and the way she stared at him in disgust now, it was all screwing with his emotions and that of his beast especially. He was having a hard time controlling himself, and it was only a matter of time before he snapped.

"Stay away from me!" Bella warned in the firmest tone she could muster at that moment.

Logan took in a deep breath and stretched his hands towards her, "Come. Let's get you inside before it begins to rain." The clouds were already gathering above them.

"Who was that woman?" She first asked, but she recalled the image of the woman's wrist wrenched from her arm. "Did you do that to her? Is that what you're going to do to me? Is that why you abduct me? To torture me, a werewolf hunter, for your sick pleasure?!"

That was it, what it took to make Logan snap. The look in her eyes, disgust, fear, anger, hate...all directed at him from her. He recalled the six excruciating months he had to hide in the shadows, all in the name of protecting her, but the truth was that he was scared! An emotion he hadn't thought he would ever feel, but he'd been feeling it all along without even knowing it. He'd been scared she would reject him, scared she would run from him, scared he would put her life in danger, and maybe scared of losing the throne. Like it or not, he had been preparing for that role all his life, and giving it up wasn't easy. Maybe he was just like his father.

He forgot what he indeed was and let a silly emotion separate him from his mate! He was the Crown Prince of The whole beast kingdom, and he would be damned if he let one corrupted witch separate her from him. Never again.

"Come." He repeated with his hand still stretched. Warning bells went off in Bella's head, and she calmed down to stare at him once more. His face was void of emotions, and his rigid posture cautioned her not to disobey, or there would be consequences. There was silence between them for a while, his eyes never blinking but remaining still on him, and when she took too long to respond, he narrowed his eyes in warning.

On impulse, she took a slight step back and immediately regretted it when she saw him blink down at the feet that moved before staring back at her eyes. She didn't have to be told before she knew she had to run for her life as prey would from a predator. Being a hunter of beasts, she knew when to stay still, when to fight and when to run to save her life. Mostly she attacked, but she doubted she would defeat a Lycan, especially without any weapon.

However, before she could take two steps, an arm wrapped around her waist, smashing her back against rock hard body and gripping her tight against them. She couldn't move much except whip her head back and forth in protest. Another hand buried itself in her hair and pulled her head back, baring her neck open. A grunt of protest passed through her lips as she looked up and met eyes glowing just like the sun and leaving her mesmerized.

Canines flashed next, and she felt hot breath on her open neck. Before she could admire his face more, Logan's head dipped down to her neck, and she expected to feel pain and see her blood splashed everywhere as he rips her neck open with his fangs, but instead, she felt something wet on her neck, his tongue. Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion as he lapped away

longer, she tried wriggling away once more, but she gasped instead, throwing her head back and staying still for a heartbeat.

Canines were lodged in her neck, but they weren't ripping out her throat; no, they just were in there. Logan was holding her still with his hands as he sank his canines deeper, eliciting a loud groan from her. Something broke free within her, and she was supposed to be happy, joyous even, but the tears that fell down her eyes and mixed with the droplets of rain that had begun to fall weren't of joy.

When Logan retracted his canines back into his jaw, Bella's eyelids were closed, and she was passed out in his arms. He had done it, completed half of the bonding process, but why did he feel hollow in his chest. This was supposed to help her, right?!

He picked her in his arms and made his way back to the hotel, shielding her from the rain that had picked up. He placed Bella back in the bed she had woken up, brushing her hair away from her face.

"And they say I'm the impulsive one." He heard his brother's amused voice behind him.

"What do you want, Reagan!" Logan snapped without taking his eyes off of a sleeping Bella.

Reagan sighed behind him, "Dearest father has requested your return. Seems like he can't do two days without the Crown Prince."

### Please endeavor to read author's note

The deep blue sea got smaller and smaller as the plane steered up till all one could see below were clouds painting the earth and tiny birds below. But even the beautiful picture of it couldn't peel the dull look off Bella's face and replace it with one of serene.

After a week of being on an island filled with beasts while she slowly recollected bits and bits of her memory, it was hard for her to grasp and accept all that was happening mentally. It didn't all hit her at once, but day by day, it all began to make sense. She was a werewolf, a beast, a creature she had learned to hunt since she was a child; her father lied to her all this while and took life-altering decisions about her without her consent, not once but twice! She was a Lycanthrope's 'mate by the moon,' and not just any Lycan, but the Crown Prince of the whole beast kingdom, and he had also taken a life altering-decision about her without consent was marking her. It seemed she was some inanimate object everyone could manipulate to their satisfaction.

For the first time since watching her mum die, Bella felt utterly powerless. She couldn't do anything but stare as momentous events happen to her, and she had no one she could turn to for help, not her family, not her even so-called mate. She recalled the feeling of two long sharp, and thick incisors piercing her skin and branding her for life, not physically though, as her neck was smooth as a baby's with no bruise whatsoever. But she could feel it deep within her, like a string connecting her to the man she refused to look at who was beside her.

*"I had no choice,"* was all he'd said when she woke up. Not "sorry" for forcing the mate bond on her, not sorry, and that he regretted it, but a stupid statement to justify his action.

She hadn't read or researched much about the mate bond since it never really concerned her till now, but she wasn't naive about it either. She just wasn't sure if the technique that applied to werewolves was the same with Lycans. They were two similar creatures but with different traits. Logan hadn't told her much about it since she ignored him ever since he marked her. She was too upset and mentally drained to even deal with him. She just wished she could get away from everyone and everything for a while, to clear her head and find herself.

That's right, she was utterly lost, not just because her father had Delilah take some of her memory away, but because she didn't know who or what she was until now. She could feel it, another part of her, slowly awakening every day and wanting out. It scared her how torn her thoughts, desires, feelings were between herself and whatever was inside her. Or was it all her

within a mile away, her sight, even her emotions.

Sighing, she turned from the charming view, but her eyes landed on the man next to her. No, not a man but a beast. That was what he was, even though he looked just as human as she did. Logan could easily deceive and manipulate anyone with his looks, and with a smile, Bella doubted any woman would be able to resist. Hell, even men would join the line. He was sitting, slightly hunched with a bored look on his face with his jaw resting on the back of his hand as he stared the other way. From the side, Bella could see the muscles clench and unclench before he suddenly paused, and his eyes sharply caught hers, and just like that, shivers ran down her spine, and her heart stopped for a second.

After that day, when he sunk his teeth into her neck, she wouldn't lie; her attraction towards him had increased a considerable amount, but she still despised him, and now those two different emotions were battling for dominance. And even though she ignored him most of the time, he had already made it clear he wasn't letting go of her. His eyes were always following her every movement, watching her every step, and she had never felt more exposed.

When she kept staring at him, he arched an eyebrow while his lips slowly pulled up in a smirk, and that's when she stared away quickly. Her eyes met another, though, opposite her, Jade, who gave her a gentle smile.

Jade had been the only friendly and familiar face apart from Logan on the island, and she had already made it clear she wasn't in support of Logan's impulsive action of marking Bella. Even now, when Bella turned back to looking out the window, Jade narrowed her eyes in disapproval at him before looking away and giving him the cold shoulder. He sighed but didn't say anything since he was already used to it all week.

To Logan, he didn't do anything wrong. The good thing was Bella's memories were slowly returning, and she once more felt the bond. Even though she was mad at him right then, she would eventually get over it, and they would be fully mated soon, and everything will be alright. That was all the consolation he needed.

After three hours of driving through the sky, their plane finally landed in their private airport in Canada, and cars already lined up to take them back to the Lycaon Palace. Knowing the long argument he would have with his father once he returned to the Palace, Logan's fist clenched beside him as he grounded his molars.

Bella could sense the tension from him, her mate, which made her shift uncomfortably in

used to it.

The familiar building of the Lycaon Palace came into view, and Bella wasn't sure what she felt then.

*Was this going to be her new home from now on?*

A massive wave of nostalgia hit her then, and she wished she was back in her home in the woods with her father and brother waiting for her arrival. But recalling how her father had allowed a witch, a dark one at that, to hex her made her anger towards his return, and she threw that memory away. What she wasn't sure of was if Ethan had supported him. Ethan had always believed in doing what was right but never had he supported evil for good. It was one of his qualities that made her think he would be an excellent leader to the hunters someday, but if he had been hiding the truth from her all this time, then maybe she had been wrong about him.

Carlton was there to open her door immediately after their car stopped, and she nodded to him in appreciation while Logan got out behind her also.

"His Majesty is waiting in his office," Carlton informed Logan and received a stiff nod in response before he waved him off.

Suddenly, Bella felt arms snaking around her waist, dragging her back into a solid hard chest. She had to refrain from breathing in his fantastic scent, but he didn't bother as he dipped his head into her neck and took a big whiff. She felt something wet lap at her neck and immediately gasped, shivering in response to the electric spark that erupted at that spot and flowed through her whole body. She tried moving back, but his arms encasing her stopped her, and a deep chuckle emanated from his chest at her response. If it were possible, she would have turned to a puddle at his feet from all the sensations.

"I'll see you soon." He promised, pecking her on the forehead before moving back to stare at her, and the possessive look in his eyes as they slowly glide down her body made her protectively wrap her arms around herself.

She watched him follow Carlton inside while a maid walked up to her to lead her inside the Palace. She silently followed until they reached the familiar door leading to Logan's bedroom, and then she frowned in confusion. When they got in, and the maid was about to leave, Bella stopped her.

"Uh...I usually stay in the next room." Bella pointed at the door connecting Logan's room with the former guest room she stayed in the last time she was here. "Is it open?"



Bella all alone in a room where Logan's scent was all she could smell. Realization dawned on her then. Her father manipulated her life all through, and Logan was going to do the same if she let him. Even at the island, Logan had insisted on being in the same room as her even though she had been totally against it, and it seemed he was going to do the same here.

Her heart hardened in resolve as she recalled a decision she had already made back at the island. She went ahead to take a shower then, and when she was back into the room, a tray of food was already set for her, but Logan wasn't back, not until late at night. By then, she was already asleep on one side of the bed and only felt her hair being brushed aside and a kiss on her cheek. By the time she woke up, he was gone, but she didn't go back to sleep. She checked the time on the wall clock above and discovered it was one in the morning.

Bella stood up and walked towards the bedroom door in the dark. The light streamed in from the passage as she opened it and stepped out. Looking left and right, she was relieved to find it empty and thanked God Logan liked his side of the Palace silent, so it was easy for her to sneak out and get into the elevator leading downstairs without being seen.

She was even luckier not to see any guard when she got below and was able to hide behind a pillar before any could show up.

*"You smell a bit like Logan since he marked you, and also the guards would be able to recognize your smell and think it was because you came to the Palace earlier that that's why they can still smell you."* Jade had told Bella one day in her bedroom back at the island. *"So all you need to do is sneak past them without being seen."*

That was easy considering all her training as a hunter, so sneaking around beasts was her 'special skill.' The only problem was navigating around the massive Palace and not getting lost.

*"Get to the garden; I'll leave a sign on a trail for you to follow. There, you'll find me."*

Jade was right; the guards didn't pick up or focus on her scent, so she was able to sneak past them into the garden. She had to hide behind the fountain, away from the lights, as she searched for Jade's sign. Then she saw it, a tiny light circling a trail, a firefly! But its light was a bit scarlet, remembering Bella of Jade's hair color.

She waited patiently for the guards to look the other way before scrambling towards the trail and into the woods with the firefly following behind her.

It was pitch dark, but for Bella, she could see perfectly fine even though the moon wasn't out. A twig snapped to her right, and when she turned, she found a familiar red-haired already

Bella to follow her.

They silently walked for a few minutes before arriving at a deserted road where a car was parked. Jade went for the driver's seat and Bella for the passenger's.

"Thanks for doing this once more." Bella sighed once they got in.

"It's alright." Jade assured, "Besides, I think you need this." She nodded at Bella in encouragement. "Did you do what I asked you to?"

*"Logan can sense your emotions just as much as you can sense his now. So what you're going to do is try to create a wall between those emotions so that he can't sense anything wrong. The slightest slip up will give you away, so he will think you're asleep if he can't sense you."*

Bella nodded, and that was the signal Jade needed to rev up the engine and drive them away.

Bella's eyes unfolded to the orange glow of the morning sun materializing on the horizon and trees blurring past them as their vehicle moved on the tarred, deserted road. Logan, by now, would have already noticed she was gone and probably had a search party looking out for her, so they had to stay off the highway making their journey even longer.

Bella didn't stir from her position, though, even as she was awake. Her eyes kept staring into nothing as the car jerked once in a while and her with it. She had just had the most uncomfortable two-hour sleep, and now she's awake; she didn't feel any better and had been up ever since. Something just didn't sit right with her; everything felt wrong; the taste in her mouth, the smell in the air, the feel of her skin, the fabric of the car seat, the indescribable ache in her heart.

Sighing tiredly, her eyes diverted to the side view mirror, and she wasn't at all surprised to see the color of her eyes fluctuating every once in a while from a dull red to honey gold. She had noticed it first at the island, and it had totally freaked her out, shrieking till Logan came into the bathroom where she had been looking at herself in the mirror, and even though he was the last person she wanted around then, she hugged and cried into his shirt. Everything was changing, and as strong as she wanted to be, it wasn't easy adapting.

Alphas eyes usually glowed red and Lycans, gold. Which was she now anyway?! Closing her eyes, she inhaled and opened them to see them back to their original emerald color, making her breathe in relief.

Sudden sharp pain in her fingers made her raise her hand to inspect them, but nothing was out of the ordinary. No cut, just her short nails that she usually bit on when lost in thought. Soon, the pain reduced to a dull ache, and she balled her fist before resting them back in her lap.

Closing her eyes and taking a deep breath, she managed to whisper out, feeling a wave of nauseous hitting her, "Stop the car."

Jade, who'd been silent beside her, stared at her in question but did as asked, pulling the car to a stop. Bella reached for the door handle and lurched out, luckily making it a bit far before wrenching her guts out, or what little of it she still had, besides a tree. She heard footsteps, and soon, Jade was beside her, handing her a bottle of water. She muttered thanks before taking a sip and rested her back against a tree to calm her nerves.

"It's alright. You're going through some changes, so it's perfectly normal to feel this way." Jade tried to assure her, seeing how sickly pale Bella seemed. She could only imagine what

After a few minutes, they were back on the road once more, with Jade still driving. Bella had offered to take the wheel this time, but the witch didn't think she was in an excellent condition to do so.

Soon, they were off the tarred road and moving along a dirt road, passing a few houses once a while until they came to a stop in front of a particular one. Bella watched the familiar building from her seat for a few seconds as memories of visiting, when she was little, deliberately flooded her mind until Jade nudged her. Sighing, they both got out and made the walk up the driveway and steps leading to the house. A bit hesitant, Bella's fist hovered in the air before finally rapping against the wood in soft knocks.

She tried peeking through the small glass when she heard footsteps, and the door was pulled open.

"Mémé?" Bella smiled genuinely for the first time in a long time at the short old lady in a grey dress and white wool sweater in front of her. Her grey hair was cut short in a pixie cut, and one striking feature of hers was her bright green eyes, which sparkled with emotions when they landed on Bella.

"Belladonna!" The old lady raised both her hands up to cup Bella's face, and even in just that one name, Bella could already hear a hint of French accent. "Is it you, my darling?"

Bella nodded, still smiling as she engulfed the chubby woman in a hug and inhaling the sweet scent of vanilla and cookies.

"Oh, it's been so long since I heard from you, but your brother calls every weekend. Who's your friend?" Bella felt a pang of guilt at her grandma's words, although it wasn't her fault she rarely got in touch with all that was happening.

"This is Jade. Jade, my grandma." She introduced them both and watched them exchange a handshake before her mémé ushered them both in. Another flood of memories came washing in as they did, and when Bella paused for a second to take it all in, drowning out her mémé voice out, she swore she could hear her mum's laughter resonate in the room.

Since she could remember till she was eleven, this was where they always came for the Christmas holidays; her mum's parents' house. But after her mum's death, a lot of things changed.

Shaking her head to rid herself of the memories, she turned once more to her mémé, "Where's pépé?"

"Oh, he's taking care of some plants in the garden at the back. He'll be in soon; in the

ready." Mémé had her focus more on Jade leading her into the kitchen while Bella stood behind. A smile graced her lip, knowing how much her grandmother loved to spoil anyone who visited with food, and Jade was going to experience it first hand.

Sighing, Bella turned towards the stairs, slowly making her way up to them while brushing her fingers along the railing until reaching the hallway and stopping in front of the white bedroom door. She was surprised to find it unlock when attempting to turn the knob open, and once more, she hesitated before walking in. Considering the room's owner was no more, she had expected to find it dusty with cobwebs but instead saw clean flora curtains and bedsheets on the bed, neat furniture with a potted plant on the bedstand.

A small picture frame beside the potted plant caught her attention, and she went over to pick it while also taking a seat on the bed. It was a girl, who seemed to be in her teen years, but Bella recognized that black hair and green eyes that so resembled hers. Sometimes, Bella wondered how someone like her mum ended up with someone like Brian Nightshade. They were so different from each other; while her mum was the sweetest person she'd ever met, her dad was the scariest. Even though he was nice to her, she had seen him when working with the hunters, and he finally showed that side to her.

There were times the past week where she wondered if her father really did all he did, and maybe this was all a dream. How could a father do that to his daughter?! He claimed to be protecting her, but the truth was he was defending himself. He didn't want the other hunters to find out about their dark family secret, and that was all to it. It was supposed to be her decision to make if she wanted her wolf to stay dormant, not her father's, and also her decision to make if she wanted it awake, not Logan's.

"For a second there, I thought my daughter's ghost came visiting." Bella heard a hoarse voice from the doorway, and before looking up, she already knew who it was.

"Pépé!" Bella stood up while he walked in and engulfed her in a bear hug.

Moving back, he smiled down at her, "You look just like her." They both shared the same sad look in their eyes before he added, "Well, this is a surprise considering it's been long since anyone of you came to visit since..." He didn't need to mention the unpleasant memory.

"Yeah, sorry about that, pépé." Bella went to sit back down on the bed, taking one more glance at the picture frame still in her hand. "We've all been...busy." The truth was, being back here brought back too many memories.

He sighed, staring down at the picture of her mother that she held, "I understand, kiddo.

she looked up at her grandpa, "She was too good for this world anyway. "

Yeah, she was, Bella thought. Would things have been different if her mum, Victoria, was here? The woman never supported evil, no matter the good it brought. She once told Bella, "You might think a wrong will bring about the right thing, but never forget, it is still wrong." Maybe, just maybe, if she were alive, and she knew the truth, she would have let Bella make her own decision and stopped her father. She was the only one Bella knew who her father listened to.

"Your mémé's almost done making breakfast." He squeezed her shoulder before heading for the door.

"I'll be down in a minute. Just gotta use the bathroom." After he left, she placed the frame back on the nightstand and went into the bathroom. She could feel the dull ache in her finger once more as she came to stand in front of the bathroom sink, where a mirror was also hung on the wall. Her reflection stared back at her as she lifted her fingers to glare at them once more. She didn't recall hitting them against anything, so why did it hurt. Deep down, she knew the answer, but she didn't want to acknowledge it just yet.

Staring up, she wasn't all too surprised to see specks of gold swirling in her Jade-colored iris and waited for the red that usually accompanied it to show, but it didn't. Weird. She thought before shrugging and reaching for the mouthwash.

Soon, they were all at the dinner table; Jade, Bella, and her grandparents with fried eggs, toasts, sausages, and potatoes laid out before them with some orange juice. As tantalizing as the food seemed, Bella could barely swallow down a bite. If her mémé noticed, she didn't comment on it, but she did insist on both of them staying till the next day.

"If it's s clothes, we still have some old ones of Victoria's." The depressing look in her mémé's eyes as she mentioned her daughter's name was enough to persuade Bella into relenting.

Night came soon, and she and Jade agreed to share the same guest room, different from her mother's. She wouldn't be able to make the night alone in her mum's old room without breaking down into tears.

"How long do I have?" Bella asked out of the blue with her and Jade under the covers, facing up and staring at the boxed ceilings. The room was enshrouded in darkness, but they could see every detail in the room just fine, something that was still new to Bella.

Jade sighed, shifting a bit, "A few hours. Maybe in the morning." She shrugged, and Bella's

"I thought you cloaked our scent!"

"Even with our scent hidden, it won't take long for Logan to start scouting for any possible relatives of yours and go to them one by one. We're already wasting too much time by staying here till tomorrow; if anything, I'm surprised he hasn't found and come here yet, and this place isn't that secluded, so if we leave tomorrow, someone is bound to see us and report to him. I already warned you before that you won't have much time." She shrugged while Bella groaned and closed her eyes in fatigue.

Before attempting on this trip, Jade had already told her that running from Logan wouldn't be easy, and it wouldn't be long before he caught up to them. She had thought, at least, maybe some days before he got to her, but it seemed that was too much to ask.

"Found what you were looking for?" Jade asked after a moment of silence. "I just need some time away to know what I want..." Bella had told her when asking for her help, and she understood, which was why she granted her her support. The poor thing was going through a lot.

Bella furrowed her eyebrows as she answered, "Maybe." She then shifted and turned to face Jade fully. "I left because I wasn't sure if what I wanted was to go back to my family or stay and move on with Logan. What I suddenly realized is picking either of the two options meant I would just once more be letting myself get manipulated...and I'm so tired of that!" She emphasized the last words.

"So, what are you going to do?" Jade inquired, scrunching her eyebrows in curiosity.

Bella was silent for a while, her eyes sparkling with nothing but determination when she announced, "I'm going to take charge."