

## Chapter 101 It's Been A While, My Dear Brother

**\*\*Soren's POV**

It had been a long time since I'd had a knife held to my throat, but this wasn't the first time.

I didn't move, but chuckled, "It's been a while, my dear brother."

He didn't speak. I glanced around my surroundings. In the darkness, it looked to be an underground tunnel.

"I was wondering when you will show up. I have to say, I'm impressed with how patient you are." I tried to wiggle and make myself comfortable. "Dear brother, have you missed me?"

I almost laughed. My sight had adjusted to the darkness.

**I** stared up into my half-brother's narrowed gaze as he grimaced at me, the emotion in his eyes mirroring the way I felt about him deep into my bones. "You haven't changed a bit."

"Do you know what the f\*ck you've been doing?" He growled as he inserted the blade of the knife into the soft tissue of my neck, the dagger sinking just far enough that a ripple of pain passed through me, and I felt a trickle of blood slide down my throat.

I didn't move a muscle, holding my breath, not because I thought he would kill me, but because I didn't want to make the wrong move and have him accidentally jab the knife in too far.

This was a bluff—and we both knew it.

I smirked, "Of course I do, big brother!"

"Then get the hell out of this war. It has nothing to do with you."

I stared at him for a second. "What do you mean it has nothing to do with me? Can't you see? They need me."

"They? Kal? Soren, you and I both know he's just using you."

I sneered, "So what? I've gotten what I wanted. At least he values me." I clearly irritated him. "You are committing atrocities against your own people. Do you f\*cking understand that?" he roared.

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This was exactly what I couldn't stand. He killed my parents, he ruined everything I had, he caused me so **many** years of pain and suffering, and now, he thought he could stand there and just scold me?

Who the f\*ck did he think he was?!

“Surprise! I bet you didn't anticipate this day when you abandoned me.”

He didn't move, and he didn't speak.

Of course he didn't. What would he have to say?

Why didn't you just kill me in my sleep, you cowardly b\*stard?” I asked him, doing my best to provoke him.

“Shut up, Soren!” His tone was a bit rushed.

“Why do I have to listen to you?” I hated how he **treated me**. After, this **many years**, he still thought of me as his eleven-year-old tag-along?

He seemed calm, but I could hear his breathing getting a little faster. Just a little.

**I smirked. “What are you waiting for, Ethan? Just kill me then! All of your troubles will go away.”**

I moved myself towards his knife slightly.

**As expected, Ethan** withdrew the blade and stood across from me, glaring at me.

I finally could **move around and reassess where I was**.

I was sitting on the damp concrete floor of a tunnel that had to be under the house I'd just purchased—apparently from him. I'd done enough intel to assume that was the case, but now I knew for sure.

“I don't want to kill you down here in this pit, Soren,” Ethan told me.

“Why not?” I asked him. “You dragged me, sleeping, off of your sweetheart's nice, warm couch to this miserable place. Why not just end this?”

I laughed, “Ethan, because you know killing me won't really solve your problem, right? My men would still do what I had arranged, and you'll realize that killing me won't really help you much in the war, right?”

He didn't deny it, and only said, “Shut up and fight me.”

The knife he'd just poked me with was covered in sticky scarlet at the tip—my blood.

I chuckled. "I have no interest in doing that, brother. If you want to kill me, then go ahead."

He paused for a moment and said in an even tone, "Soren, go back with me to Drogomor."

My eyes widened. What the h\*ll was he talking about?!

"Who the f\*ck do you think you are? Go back to Drogomor so that you can lock me up for the rest of my life?" | burst out laughing.

"Ethan, after this many years, you still think everyone should just do whatever you want?!" I was furious. I thought I could control my emotion, but he clearly had the ability to rile me up beyond my imagination.

"You did that to my parents, you did that to Georgia and me, you did that to your Rosalie. How f\*cking arrogant you

**are?!"**

The growl that emitted from the back of his throat was just as deep and thunderous as it would've been if he was in his wolf form.

For everything I'd said tonight, **Rosalie was the one** thing that made him lose his temper. Interesting. —

"Just what is it that makes you so angry, Ethan? Are you upset that I've stolen your pregnant breeder away? That is all she ever was to you, isn't it? Just a woman you knocked up?"

"Shut up!" he roared, "You have no idea what you're talking about."

"Don't l?" | asked, sliding up the wall until I was on my feet. He kept the knife pointed at me, but I was still confident he wouldn't use it against me, not down here.

"You didn't think of her as anything more **than a tool to get what you wanted, something** you could use and then discard."

"Soren!" he shouted.

"If she's so important, then why is she here? Why **has she been** living with me for the past couple of months? Eating

dinner with me, playing piano with me, singing to me?"

I didn't need to see his face to tell i'd successfully made him mad. So I continued, "And **who has been the one** kissing her goodnight?"

Well, he didn't need to know it was her cheek I'd been kissing..

He took a couple of deep inhales and said, "Lying won't get you out of here."

**I was surprised at** how quickly he regained control of his temper. Then I realized **he had been trying to keep himself** calm the entire time... ah, for Rosalie, of course! ,

We were right under the house, and of course, he wouldn't want to wake her. My eyes widened in disbelief. **Was he** serious?

I couldn't stop laughing to myself.

"Ethan, you know, you would never win this battle, right?"

Silence again. Now that I knew what he was concerned about, of course, he would remain silent. My plan would go incredibly well then.

Finally, he offered, "Soren, I'll give you a chance to fight me."

"A duel?" I smirked.

"Yes, a duel," he said, "but if I win, you need to pull your men both from the islands and from the northern tier."

Sh\*t, did he also find out about my deals with the rogues?

But a smile spread across my face as I accepted. "All right then, my dear brother."

Ethan nodded and tossed the knife aside since I was unarmed.

"But not down here. Let's go out there where our wolves can see the sky above us and the victor can howl at the moon."

He shifted into his wolf and turned around to lead the way. He didn't even bother to check if I could **sneak attack him** from behind.

Not that I would ambush him either way. I didn't need to out-fight him. My plan was way more interesting.

I followed him down the tunnel to an open field.

Though I liked the dramatic effect of leaping into the air and transforming into my wolf mid-air, I knew I'd be needing my clothing later. I wasn't dying tonight.

SO— I took my clothes off more carefully.

**Ethan was in** his wolf form. He growled at me, not wanting to wait.

“Good things take time, brother,” I told him, and the moment I had my pants off, he was yipping at me. I leaped **over** the top of him and shifted above him, landing on the ground behind him and spinning around as he came flying at **me**.

Ethan’s wolf was larger than mine by a few inches, and I decided to use that as leverage. When he came at me, **stayed low. For a few passes, it** caught him off guard, and he aimed too high.

It didn’t last long.

Eventually, he was able to get in some **blows on my legs and** haunches. I started fighting back, aiming for his ne and shoulders, **but he had more experience** fighting than I did, and he **knew how to guard against those areas**.

I was a skilled fighter, and in most cases, I would have no trouble winning—but not against him.

In a matter of a few moments, he had me backed up, my neck bleeding even more now than it was from the knife

His teeth were gleaming in the moonlight as his eyes centered on my face. He nipped at me again, and I dodged to the left, swinging my head around and catching his left front leg in my mouth. The taste of dirty fur filled my mouth as muscle ripped and blood flowed freely from the wound.

I spit out a mouthful of blood as Ethan winced. It was probably the deepest wound I would get on him as he brought his right front leg around and sent me flying.

My head slammed into the trunk of a tree, and everything went sideways. The tree branches above me were blurry,

and there seemed to be two of everything.

I looked up to see Ethan standing over me and there appeared to be two of him.

I just needed a few more moments.

My half-brother bit down on my left back leg, and pain radiated through my body. His sharp teeth pierced my skin and sliced all the way down to my bone as he dragged me from the tree.

I tried to regain my footing, but my head was still swimming.

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I yelped loudly, not because it hurt, but because I needed to let her know where **we were**.

Ethan's chest was heaving as he looked down at me, his face hovering over mine, spit dripping from his open mouth. His eyes were narrow, and using the mind-link he asked me, "You lost, Soren. Pull your men, or I'll have to—"

I pulled my wolf face into a smile, and asked him, "You think you've won, don't you, Ethan?"

That low rumble I'd heard earlier echoed from his throat again as he contemplated all of the wrongs he'd done to **me**.

But what he didn't realize was... I'd known all along...

"Ethan! Soren!" Rosalie's cries filled the night sky as she ran toward us, and it no longer mattered what he intended to do.

He could do nothing to harm me.

Not now.

Not in front of Rosalie.

I took the opportunity to pull myself away from him and laid on the ground.

I looked up at him, and my smile widened as his eyes took on the shape of the full moon. "You b\*stard, do not hurt her!" he cursed as he realized what my true plan was.

"Congratulations, brother. You finally figured it out!"

But by then, it was too late, and Rosalie was rushing toward us—rushing toward me.

## **Chapter 102 I love you, Rosalie**

**\*\*Rosalie's POV**

A phone was ringing.

It had been ringing for several minutes, and it woke me from my sleep.

I heard it from my bedroom, even though I was fast asleep, and even though it sounded like it was coming from far **away**.

Thinking it was Soren's phone, and he would eventually wake up and answer it, I tried to ignore it, but eventually, when he didn't, I sat up and rubbed my eyes, deciding I'd go investigate.

Pushing my feet into my slippers, I put my robe on and headed into the other room.

Soren wasn't on the couch. The kitchen clock showed it was already past midnight.

That was weird.

"Soren?" I called, not loud enough for the guards outside to hear and know that there was a problem, but loud enough that he should've been able to hear me if he was in the house.

**There was no answer.**

"Soren?" I called, a bit louder.

I went and looked in the bathroom, but he wasn't there either.

He didn't seem to be anywhere.

I decided to follow the sound of the ringing phone, and as I followed it to the study, I noticed that the floor looked odd here.

Strange marks marred the clean floor. They looked like... drag marks.

"What happened?" I whispered.

I got an awful feeling that something bad had occurred, and it was unsettling at the very least.

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Soren's phone was on the top shelf of the closet. I remembered he had been hanging up some clothes for me earlier. He must have accidentally set it up there. I picked it up and looked at the caller ID. 4

It was Thomas calling, and he'd phoned eight times.

Taking a deep breath, I thought about whether or not I should answer.

If I didn't, they'd come in looking for Soren and realize he wasn't here.

*My eyes went to the trap door. It was partially open. I knew where Soren had to be. I just didn't know why.*

Drag marks..

"Hello?" I said, trying to keep my voice from shaking.

"Miss Ro?" Thomas **asked**, sounding surprised. "Is Soren available?"

“Uh... he’s uh... not right now. Because he’s in the bathroom. But I can tell him to call you as soon as he’s not

**in the bathroom.”**

**Thomas paused a** moment before he said, “Yeah, okay. Thanks.”

“Sure.” I hung up the phone and considered what I **needed to do.**

I really only had one choice.

I had to go after Soren.

Either Soren had somehow figured out that I was using that tunnel to visit Ethan, and Ethan was in trouble or...

I didn’t want to think about the alternative.

I had told Ethan the night before that I would have guests over tonight, and it wouldn’t be safe for him to visit. So what happened?

In a hurry, I threw up the door and headed down the ladder, hoping I could get to the end of the tunnel in time **to stop** whatever was happening.

I ran as fast as I could down the tunnel, but it was difficult with me being pregnant and unable to shift. By the time reached the end, I was spent. My lungs were burning, and my legs were tired.

Yet, the sounds that greeted me when I emerged spurred me on to the clearing.

Yips and growls filled the otherwise peaceful forest.

Wolves.

Fighting wolves

I continued to push myself on until I got to the clearing.

Confusion washed over me as I tried to decipher what I was looking at.

I recognized Ethan’s wolf immediately, and I had to assume that the other wolf, the one lying on the ground, injured far worse, was Soren.

“Ethan! Soren!”

I ran over to them, hoping to make them stop. I didn’t want to see either one of them get hurt.



“Stop!” I shouted as I approached, and both of them turned their heads to look at me.

Soren, who was covered in blood, shifted into his human form. Lying naked on the ground with his back to me, he raised a hand. “Stay back, Ro!” he said, his hand covered with blood. “This wolf is dangerous! He’ll hurt you!”

So he didn’t know that I had been seeing Ethan.

My attention turned to Ethan then, and I stared at him as he looked at me, his wolf breathing heavily. “It’s all right, Soren,” I told him, coming to stand between Ethan and Soren. “He won’t hurt me.”

Not as long as I was pregnant anyway.

\*Ro, please, get back. Call my guards!” Soren pleaded with me.

“It’s okay,” I told Soren. “I know him.”

“Wh–what?” Soren said, but my **attention was on Ethan now.**

“Ethan, what’s going on?!” | **demanded an answer.**

His wolf stood **there, seemingly** surprised.

“You told me you didn’t know him,” I said, trying to piece all of this together.

His wolf took a step backward, his head tipping to the side, as if he wanted to say something, but he couldn’t mind link with me because I was not a member of his pack.

“I asked you, Ethan, if you knew Soren, and you said no, but then, here you are, trying to kill him! And... you brought me here, to this house.... Why?” My eyes widened in recognition as everything began to fall into place.

I didn’t want to believe any of it could possibly be true, but nothing else could explain what was happening.

all along, it had to do with the war? And I stupidly thought that

“You set all of this up just to get to Soren? All of this I actually meant something to you!”

I fought the tears that threatened to fall down my cheeks. How could I have been so naive and stupid!

This was the same man who was willing to kill me moments after I gave birth to his child. Of course, he didn’t love me. I was the biggest fool of them all.

He shook his wolf head vigorously at me, as if to say I had it wrong, but it was the only explanation that made any **sense to me**.

He had suggested this house to me because he knew Soren would come here with me, and he knew that the tunnel would allow him to get to Soren. He had come here on a mission for the war.

After all, he was here for Soren, not me...

Did he really even know I was here to begin with, or was it all a happy coincidence that made it easier for him to get his target?

“Ro, he was here for me. Stay back!” Soren’s voice was filled with worry. Over my shoulder, I saw that he had crawled to the side to retrieve his clothes so that I wouldn’t feel uncomfortable seeing his naked body. Even when he was hurt, he was being considerate. But Ethan...

I couldn’t breathe.

I turned to face Ethan.

“Well, if you want him, you’re going to have to rip me and your baby apart! And while I’m sure you won’t **hesitate to** do that, you should know that his guards will get you before you leave the island.” I lifted Soren’s phone for him to see, but I didn’t dial.

I still couldn’t bring myself to do that.: no matter how much he hurt me.

Ethan shifted back into his human form, and even though he was completely naked, I kept my eyes focused on his face. I was no longer interested in his body, no matter how tempting he was.

“Rosalie!” he said, a pleading look on his face. “All of this is a trick. Soren has been lying to you from the very beginning! I didn’t come here just to kill him. I came here to find you.”

“You can stop the lying right now, Ethan!” I shouted, shaking my head. “There’s no point in it! I don’t believe a word you’re telling me!”

Behind me, I heard Soren struggling and glanced over my shoulder to see him pulling his pants on. He was bleeding badly from his side and shoulder. His neck was cut as well. He needed medical attention.

I needed to make this argument short. I needed Ethan to leave—and never come back.

“Rosalie, please! I came to you because I love you. The baby pulled me to you, so I knew you couldn’t be dead. Every moment since you’ve been gone has been like an eternity in h\*ll—”

“Save it. Ethan!” | **raised my** voice to interrupt him. “I don’t want to hear it! You’ve **lied to me for the last time**. **The** first time when I learned of your plan, it wasn’t that surprising because I

didn't expect anything different from the powerful Alpha. But this time..." i felt hot tears stinging my eyes as they splashed down my cheeks. "This time... you looked me in the eyes and lied to me."

"No, it isn't what you think, Rosalie," Ethan said. "He's my half-brother! **These problems we've been having go back** for many years."

"All the more reason for you to use me to get to him!" | **screamed.**

I shook my head, looking down at the ground. I picked up a sheet that was lying there and threw it at **Ethan. If we were** going to argue, he may as well cover up.

He wrapped it around his waist, but he didn't quit trying to persuade me. "Please, Rosalie, come with me. I'll shift to **take you away** from here. I don't have much time. Soren's men are closing in."

"Good!" I shouted, even though I honestly didn't know how I would react to seeing Ethan hurt. Even though I was furious with him at the moment, I didn't think I could stand to see him severely injured or killed.

Still, I couldn't help but say, "Maybe they will kill you the way that you intended to kill me. Perhaps they will slaughter you the way that you were just about to slaughter your brother before I stepped between the two of you!" . .

Ethan's eyes were glistening as he took a step closer to me. "Rosalie, don't you remember how I opened my heart to you? Don't you remember all of the things I said to you?"

"You mean the lies you spouted?" I shouted, "Yes! I remember them! You're a liar, Ethan!"

I could barely breathe while my tears flooded out. "You used me! You were going to kill me! I should've listened to my heart in the first place when I felt that you didn't deserve a second chance. Well I can tell you right now—there will be no third chance!"

"Miss Ro, Mr. Soren! Where are you!" a guard shouted in the distance.

Time was up. I could tell by the look on Ethan's face that he knew it, too. He was going to have to escape or face off against all of Soren's guards. And chances were, unless there was an extensive series of more tunnels underground that Ethan was familiar with and the guards weren't, he was going to be caught.

"Come with me, Rosalie!" Ethan extended his hand, as if he hadn't been listening to a single word that I'd just said.

"No! Never!"

I backed up, careful not to step on Soren, who was still lying on the grass, trying to recover from his injuries. He **needed medical attention**, and he needed it soon.

**“You’re making a mistake**, Rosalie. He’s the one tricking you! All of this is a setup. You don’t know what you’re dealing with!”

“I know that I had to run *away* to get free of you, and it was Soren who **saved me and** took me in. You wanted to kill me, and he let me live!”

I heard footsteps approaching, “They’re over here!”

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“Rosalie!” Ethan shouted, his jaw tight, and his eyes desperate,

“I don’t ever want to see you again!” I cried.

Just then, the guards came running through the **trees**. **I wanted to yell at Ethan to run, but I said nothing**. They **could** catch him for all I cared.

**Before Ethan shifted back into his wolf, I heard him say, “I love you, Rosalie. And I’ll never give up on you.**

### **Chapter 103 All of This Is A Setup**

I watched Ethan turn around and leap into the air, his fur and paws appearing as he shifted from his human form into his massive wolf form before hitting the ground.

The guards also shifted as they were chasing after him, but Ethan was fast and powerful. I had a feeling they wouldn’t catch him. Not unless they got lucky.

Once he was gone, I turned around and dropped on my knees next to Soren. Seraphine arrived, too, bringing her black bag.

“I’m so sorry you’re hurt,” I said, cradling his head in my lap.

Seraphine arrived soon after the guards. Even in this chaos, Soren didn’t forget to have someone look after *mê* and the baby

After briefly checking me, Seraphine went about patching Soren up.

Soren didn’t say anything at first. He only reached up and touched my face, a smile on his lips. I felt a tear slide from **my eye**.

This one wasn’t over Ethan, though. It was because I felt so guilty from all of the awful decisions I had made over the last few days. That a caring friend here who had been supporting me all

along, yet I was willing to turn my back on him so quickly and run back to the man who had said he would kill me.

As Soren was holding me, I realized he was slumping a bit. “Soren!” | exclaimed. “Your injuries are worse than you were letting on!”

I looked down to see that he was bleeding through his bandages.

“I’m fine,” he said, trying to reassure me, but a thin veil of sweat covered him, and it was beading up on his lip.

He definitely wasn’t fine.

“Let’s get you to the house first.” I turned to Soren’s men, “Help please!”

The guards, who had been giving us some space to speak to one another in private, but still lingered nearby, moved upon my orders, and two of them slung Soren’s arms around their necks. They moved briskly, but carefully, back to the house, taking him inside as Seraphine waited at the door and shouted, “The doctor is here to help him.”

“Take him to my room,” I insisted, intending to follow him inside, but Seraphine stopped me.

“Let’s give the doctor some room, dear,” she said. “I did my best to bandage him up, and I believe he’ll be just fine, but the doctor is the one who can help him the most. If we are in the room, though, it will only serve as a distraction.”

“I understand.” | sank down onto the back porch, weariness overtaking my body. It was almost dawn, and I wished I could crawl into bed to go to sleep.

Not too long ago, I was planning my first night in my new home, going to sleep with a smile on my face. Now, I was

sitting here, thinking about how Soren was injured and how I had been betrayed again.

Then, I thought of what Ethan had said they were half-brothers.

The realization finally sank in.

I should’ve known this. Ever since the first time I saw Soren, he reminded me of Ethan because of how similar they looked. I just persuaded myself that they weren’t related,

Now, with everything that had happened, I finally figured out why I kept feeling I overlooked something— When Talon **told me** about Ethan’s past, he said Ethan’s stepfather was abusive to his children.

At that time. I was so shocked to find out that Ethan killed Georgia's father that I totally let **the other piece of** information slip my mind. Ethan's stepfather indeed had two children— Georgia and Soren.

How could they be so different? One was heartless and cruel, while the other had **been nothing but pleasant and** considerate?

I wrapped my arms around myself.

What should I do? Should I stay here?

Soren had been so kind as to take care of me. He said he would do everything to help me and the baby like he'd always been doing. But.. he didn't know that I intentionally picked this house so that I could secretly spend time with Ethan. And I had to assume it was that very same tunnel that **allowed Ethan to sneak in and take Soren out to** fight him.

When Soren discovered that, would he still consider me a friend?

Wouldn't he be angry to know that I'd been meeting with his enemy in his own home, in his garden, behind his back?

All that time that Soren had been mentioning that smell—he had been sniffing Ethan's scent!

Seraphine sat down next to me, but she may as well have been on the other side of the planet, I felt so alone. I dropped my head into my hands and Seraphine rubbed my back, yet I said nothing to her.

I felt like such an idiot—such a fool.

I pictured myself, walking around the nursery, putting the items in their place, thinking about what Ethan would think of each one. I had imagined his belongings in there, thought about our lives together, how we would raise our child here. I thought that this would be our home together.

When, all along, Ethan never really planned to stay with me. Everything sweet that he did was for one purpose—to **use me**—again!

Tears filled my eyes yet again as I considered my foolishness. When would I learn? I meant nothing to him.

I had actually thought that he loved me! I had believed his words when he'd told me all of those intimate revelations about his feelings, about how he felt so lonely and lost without me, how when I allegedly died, he felt pain for the first time in so very long, and how he didn't think he was even capable of feeling pain again until I was gone from his

life.

I wondered how long he had rehearsed those lies before he got here so that they would sound like he meant them.

I could see him sitting around with a team of negotiation experts, going over all of the things he should say in order to fool me so that he could get me to trust him.

So that he could get to Soren. That was, after all, what he needed me for this time.

While it might've been my body standing between Ethan, and Soren, it was my baby that had prevented the Alpha from tearing Soren apart. He would've dispatched me in a heartbeat without even batting an eye if I wasn't pregnant with his own flesh and blood.

Soren shouldn't be thanking me—he should be thanking my baby.

My mind wandered to the stories Seraphine had told me. When I had asked her about couples that had been able to make it through something as terrible as what Ethan and I had gone through, she'd had plenty of stories about

couples that could not get past it.

Some of them even got worse after their reunion.

But I hadn't listened. I had insisted that she tell me a story about a woman and a man who **had managed to make up after something awful, and even when it was** quite clear she'd made that story up, I had **wanted to believe it.**

**Ethan and I had a** story that was doomed to disaster to begin with because our story wasn't built on a foundation of **love.**

**I was his breeder; he was my master.**

I was his tool; he was my inseminator.

**That was it.** Because I'd grown to love him, that only meant that he was able to manipulate my feelings and **use me more.**

I was dispensable to him once he'd used me. He had great power. And what did I have?

Only his baby in my belly, and once that wasn't the case anymore... I would be in a situation where he could kill me easily again.

Then, he'd take my baby from my dead, with his cold grasp, and go back to Madalynn

and go back to Madalynn so that the two of them could

raise the baby together.

Without me.

The thought made my tears run even more.

“I’m so sorry, dear,” Seraphine said, holding me tighter. “I know you feel betrayed. I can’t blame you. But... Soren will **take** care of you. He cares deeply for you.”

“I just. I feel so awful for what has happened to him.”

“You shouldn’t. You saved him.” Seraphine continued to pat my back.

A noise behind us had us looking over our shoulders. We saw Thomas, Soren’s assistant, standing at the door. “He’s asking for you, Miss Ro.”

With Seraphine’s help, I got up off of the back porch steps and went into the house, making my way to the bedroom where Soren was resting.

The doctor was standing in the doorway. “He’s going to be just fine,” the doctor said.

**A wave** of relief washed over me.

“Some of the wounds were rather deep, and I needed to go in and stitch them up, but there’s no internal damage. He’s also lost quite a bit of blood, but as long as he rests over the next few days and drinks lots of fluids, I think he will . recover on his own. I’ve left some medication for the pain and to help him sleep.”

“We all know how impossible it will be to get him to stay in bed,” Seraphine said, slowly shaking her head.

The doctor chuckled. “That’s why I left the medicine. You may have to sneak it into his food.” He patted me on the shoulder. “I heard about your bravery, Miss Ro. It’s commendable.”

“Thank you,” I said, but I didn’t feel like a hero.

“I’ll walk you to the door, Doctor,” Seraphine said, and the two of them left.

I walked into the **room to make sure that Soren was okay.**

I could tell he was feeling sleepy and wasn’t in as much pain. He reached for my hand, and I gave it to him. “Ro,” he said, with a small smile. “Sit down. Please.”

**I sat down next** to him on the bed. I didn’t know what he wanted to talk to me about, but when I **looked into his eyes**, I was reminded of Ethan.

Ethan... all of a sudden, the rest of what Ethan said flooded back to my mind:



‘He’s the one tricking you! All of this is a setup.’

I looked into Soren’s clear **eyes**.

How could that be possible?

**There was** no way Soren would do that to me...right?

All of a sudden, I wasn’t so sure. I just had a feeling... the trouble had just begun.

## **Chapter 104 Can I Trust You, Soren?**

\*\*Soren’s POV

I knew Ethan wouldn’t kill me with Rosalie standing next to me, and I was considering taking her hostage if needed.

It had all worked as I had planned it. Actually, much better than I had planned.

Although, I could’ve done without the awful pain radiating throughout my body.

Just as I knew that she would never standby and let him kill me, I also knew that my half-brother, no matter how much he hated me, would never kill me because **he was just a coward**.

He didn’t have any problems ripping me to shreds though.

However, I had not expected Rosalie to run out of the tunnel and position herself between me and Ethan. ”

She had fallen for the act I was presenting her with. Except for... looking up into her tear-brimmed eyes right now as she sat next to me on the bed, I suddenly wasn’t sure whether I was acting at all.

I remembered her tear rolled down her nose and splashed against my cheek earlier. Like the rain refreshes the thirsty ground, I felt renewed, restored. That tear was for me.

However, it bothered me.

I didn’t want to see her cry, not over me, not over my dastardly half-brother Ethan, not over anyone.

Tonight was a good night. I just didn’t know what brought me more joy. The pain I caused Ethan or the care Rosalie **showed me?**

Either way, it didn’t change my good mood.

‘Confirmed that it was Ethan. Have all of the supplies been moved out?? I connected the mindlink with Thomas.

“Yes, they have. King Kal’s men should have it by the end of tomorrow,‘ Thomas replied.

The moment I suspected Ethan was here on the island, I figured his target would be both me and the military suppliers, therefore, I had arranged the supplies to be split up and sent out.

‘Let Edgar know that Ethan is not at the frontline right now. This is their best opportunity to attack and push forward.‘

‘Got it. Aren’t you going with King Kal?’ Thomas asked.

‘Nope. I have something important to take care of.‘

‘Like what?’

Why does he have to be such a busybody? I disconnected from mindlink and switched my focus back to Rosalie.

The only thing left for me to do right now **was to take care** of the crying beauty.

There was no reason for Rosalie to know that all of her trouble’s from earlier on the island were because of me.

Of course, I had taken care of those robbers. They hurt Rosalie, and they shall never be seen again..

Nor did she need to know that **I was aware** that Ethan would act exactly how he just had, that I had lured him to fight so that she could make her choice.

But all of that was in the past now. She didn’t need to know about any of that.

“Ro,” I said, still using the name i’d been calling her since the day we met. “You put yourself at risk to save me.” || brushed her long hair over her shoulder. “Why would you do such a thing? You could’ve been killed.”

Her palm smoothed against my face, the scruffiness of my five o’clock shadow not deterring her.

She shook her head, “I couldn’t just stand there and watch Ethan kill you.”

“But.. he’s the one you were running away from, isn’t he?” I asked, as if this was a new revelation to me.

“He is the one that I was running from,” she admitted. “Never mind that right now. You’re injured. We **need to** concentrate on making sure that you get everything that you need.”

“It’s okay,” I said. “I’m better now.”

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“No!” Rosalie protested. “You’re not well enough for that.” She looked to Seraphine for confirmation, who had just returned from seeing the doctor out.

“He should be all right now that all of his wounds are bandaged. While there was a lot of blood, it’s true, the wounds were not that serious.” Seraphine paused to think for a moment before looking at Rosalie. “Of course, if you hadn’t intervened when you did, this would all be a different story. You’re very brave.”

Rosalie took a deep breath and let out a gentle sigh. “I just did what I felt I had to do.”

“But what about the baby?” Seraphine asked. “You were risking the baby, too.”

Rosalie shook her head. “I knew Ethan wouldn’t hurt his own child. If it was just me standing between him and Soren, unfortunately, I don’t think he would’ve had a problem at all plowing right through me on his way to murder his half-brother. But with his child in the mix... that’s why he decided to stand down.”

With those words, Rosalie began to cry again, and I couldn’t help but sit up then and comfort her. It hurt, but I managed to push up off of the bed and wrap my arms around her.

She froze, and I could tell she wasn’t as comfortable with me as she used to be.

I pulled her to my shoulder and stroked her hair. “It’s all right, Ro,” I told her. “I know he hurt you again, but you’re okay now. You’re safe. You’re with your friends.”

Holding her there for a moment, I wasn’t sure whether I fully understood her. How could she take the leap to sacrifice herself in order to save me?

Did I mean more to her than I thought?

Regardless of what she thought of me right now, I didn’t want to let her go.

*I wanted to keep my arms around her, not in the same manner as my dream the other night, but I just wanted to hold her, to comfort her.*

The gestures I’d shown her, the gifts I’d given her, the time I’d spent with her.. all of that had been a ruse. I’d been intending to use her as a pawn, luring my half-brother out or otherwise using his woman and her child to hurt him.

But”, breathing in her floral scent, feeling her silky skin against my cheek, smoothing her satiny hair, I realized...

I wanted to comfort her simply because I didn't want her to feel sad.

*My* grip around her strengthened.

A pretty *woman* like her shouldn't be hurt by my b\*stard brother. How dare he use her the way that he had? How dare he use her as a tool to gain a child and then plan to dispose of her?

All of a sudden, I was furious. Ethan truly was a monster, and I wished I would've had my guards cut him down

**where he stood.**

Lused the mindlink to send out a stronger directive. 'Find Ethan. Look everywhere. **He doesn't leave this island, and** he cannot hide from us. He must pay for what he's done to Rosalie.'

'Yes, sir,' **the responses came back.**

I was angry for all of the pain my half-brother had caused me over the years, too, of course. But **this was new. This was fresh**, and hearing her cry because of him made me want to shift back into my wolf and hunt him down myself.

The only thing that brought me pleasure was knowing that wherever Ethan was at the moment, **he had to be miserable** knowing that Rosalie had just chosen me over him.

**I was pleased** that Ethan was suffering, and I wanted him to live so he could suffer more.

"You both should get some rest," Seraphine suggested. "It's been a long night. It won't be good for Mr. Soren's injuries or for Ro's baby to stay up longer."

"Rosalie," she whispered, lifting her head from my shoulder. "You heard Ethan use my real name. You may as well use it, too, unless you don't want to."

Seraphine smiled at her and reached over to pat her. "You'll always be Ro to us, dear." The midwife helped Rosalie up. Before she left, I could tell Rosalie's tears had dried up some, but she was still very **emotional**.

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Using my thumbs I **wiped away her tears and looked** into her eyes. I knew at that moment that I wanted to kiss her. Not on her cheeks like usual, but on those soft lips.

But I didn't tell her.

I didn't want to overwhelm her. She'd been through enough emotional turmoil for one night. I needed to be patient. Good thing was, I had all the time in the world now that she no longer trusted Ethan.

What I needed to know next was, did Rosalie have feelings for me?

Seraphine could help me determine whether or not she did. And if she didn't. I would make her.

Because I wasn't planning on letting Ethan have a third chance.

"Ro," I whispered, cupping her hand and tipping her chin up to look at me. The moonlight illuminated her face through the window, and I could see the sadness reflected in her eyes. "I want you to know, no **matter what happens**, you will always have a place with me. Always."

She stared at me for a moment, and the urge to lean in and press my lips to hers was overwhelming.

But I didn't do it. Restraint was so important. I couldn't cause her further damage by rushing the situation.

"Thank you, Soren," she sighed,

"What's wrong?" I asked her.

She looked me in the eye. "Can I trust you, Soren?"

## **Chapter 105 Shall I Thank Alpha Romero?**

### **\*\*Rosalie's POV**

Soren's eyes seemed a bit haunted as he looked at me, and I knew I probably asked the question too bluntly.

However, I considered Soren a friend, and I thought it would be best if I was honest with him and asked the question directly

"You know my half-brother," he didn't answer my question, instead, he commented, "it appears, quite well."

His eyes went to my protruding baby bump, and I felt a bit uneasy, but I nodded.

In the past, I hid my past from Soren because I wanted to start over. I didn't mean to cause any trouble. I just thought it wasn't necessary to tell anyone.

Honestly, Soren and the others around him also did their best to avoid asking questions about my past.

Soren smiled at me and patted my arm. "It's okay, Ro. You don't have to be upset about anything. I'm trying to understand your past."

“I wasn’t completely honest with you about what I was running from,” I decided to be the one to confess first. “And .. please accept my apology for that. I didn’t know that Ethan had a half-brother. Never once, in all the time that I knew him, did he, or anyone else that I knew in his pack, ever mention you.”

Soren’s head rocked up and down slightly. It was quite clear to me that the pain medication the doctor had just given him had kicked in, and he was not only numb from pain, but he was also a little loopy.

He said, “I have no doubt that it’s true that Ethan never mentioned me. But surely... when you saw me... you had to know the two of us were related?”

He smiled at me and raised his eyebrows, as if he couldn’t believe anyone would miss the similarities between them.

I nodded honestly. “I definitely noticed that the two of you look a lot alike, Soren. When I first saw you, it scared me to death. I thought that Ethan had followed me. I was terrified.”

I looked at him and sighed. “But... they say everyone has a doppelganger, someone who looks exactly like them, or nearly exactly like them. And the two of you do look a lot alike, but over time, I began to notice the differences between you and focused on those.”

Soren tipped his head slightly to the side and studied my face for a moment. “Differences... like what? Our hair color? The shade of our eyes?”

I couldn’t help but giggle. As if the differences were that simple. “No,” I told him. “Like.. the fact that you are almost always smiling, and Ethan always looks so serious—or even has a scowl.”

Soren smiled and nodded, encouraging me to continue.

“You actually pay attention to people, whereas Etan purposefully dismisses their presence.” Although when his *eyes were* locked on me; I fell for his lies willingly,

“You tip your head toward people when they talk because you are listening. He doesn’t even acknowledge people Jong enough to give them a chance to speak., Soren, that made me think that the two of you couldn’t be related, even though you do look a lot alike.”

The more I spoke about the differences between the two men, the more foolish I felt for ever having trusted Einar *lor*

the second time to begin with.

Soren didn’t seem to mind that I was with Ethan before, and whatever I’d said didn’t make him upset either, at least *from* what I could tell.

Now that I'd told him my secrets, I patiently waited for him to answer my question. Would he be honest with me?

"RO." Soren said, his hand grazing my chin as he turned my face gently to look at him, "Ethan killed my father when I was eleven. You might've already known that. Later on, my mother died. That's why I never mention them to you."

I nodded. I remembered I mentioned his mother once, and he switched the topic right away.

I also lost my mother when I was young, and I couldn't imagine how heartbroken it would be to lose both parents one after the other, let alone since it was his own brother who did it.

Just for that, Soren had all the reason in the world to hate Ethan.

"I'm sorry to hear that Soren..."

"Not your fault." He patted my hand, and the usual smile on his face slowly faded. "My father... he wasn't the nicest guy in the world."

Abusive. Talon mentioned that before.

He continued, "But he, Ethan, had no right to do what he did!"

His face tensed, and he had to control his voice from trembling. "And even after he did it, he didn't even bother to say

anything to me and just abandoned me!! For a few years... I thought it was a miracle that I even survived!!"

I'd never seen Soren like this. He was furious

and he was hurt.

I couldn't help but gently squeeze his hand back.

He seemed to realize that he was losing control of his temper, and he took a few deep breaths to level his tone.

"I can't tell you everything, but I can tell you that what I said before about me being in charge of this island is true. Alpha Romero gave me this island to oversee."

Listened and I started to feel the panic bubbling up inside of me. If Soren had been working with Alpha Romero, then did that mean Damian, Madalynn, and Romero all knew I was still alive?

Was that why Ethan came here?

Was I too naive to think that no one else knew I was alive...

He noticed my nervousness and asked, in a concerned tone, "Ro?"

"Soren, shall I thank Alpha Romero for letting me stay in his territory then?" I tried to test his reaction.

Soren seemed surprised about what I'd asked, but his answer made me feel much better. "Unless you insist. This is my island, and I do not need to report my guests to him." He looked at me sincerely, "I'll never mention you to

anyone without getting your permission."

I nodded to acknowledge what he said.

"I'm sorry, Ro, I didn't mean to hide anything from you, I just didn't think you needed to know all of that." He

apologized.

asons he gave to me were the same reasons why I hid my identity from him in the first place.

I looked at him, and told him, "I didn't tell you who I was either. We are even now."

However, deep down, I knew the situation may be far more complicated than I thought. Another question raised in my head. Was all of this a coincidence?

Turning to Soren, I saw that his eyes were heavy. He was tired. I should let him rest. But I needed to ask now.

I would ask again when he was awake, especially if I got an answer I wasn't satisfied with.

"Soren," I said, my tone not accusing him of anything, but full of wonder. "What are the chances that you and I would meet? And that you would have no idea who I was? And yet, I was carrying your half-brother's baby?"

"You know, Ro, I was just thinking that exact same thing," he said, a little chuckle escaping his lips. His voice was gravely, heavy with sleep. "It's a strange world, isn't it? But that's what happened. I think the Moon Goddess knows what she's doing. She knows that my half-brother wronged me in the past, and now, she is giving me a chance to help another soul that he has wronged by taking care of you and his-your-child."

"Yeah, I think you're right," I said.

And I wanted to believe him. I wanted to believe that he could get back at his half-brother and still treat me—and my child—with kindness.



“I should let you sleep,” I said, seeing that his eyes were already closed, and his breathing was becoming more even as he started to doze off. “Do you need anything else before I go, Soren?”

“No,” Soren said, his eyes only slitted. “But Ro, listen to me.” His fingers grasped my wrist, but not in a threatening way, not even tight enough that I couldn’t pull away if I’d wanted to.

But I didn’t try. I would hear him out.

“What is it, Soren?” I asked, sitting still and leaning toward him so that I could hear what he had to say.

“Ethan is dangerous,” he said, opening his eyes for a second to gaze into mine. “Stay *away* from him. He’ll try to get you back because it will help him get what he wants. You’ve got to be careful.”

I nodded in understanding. “Okay, Soren. I will.”

“Promise?” he asked me.

“Yes, I promise.”

“Good.” He reached up and brushed a lock of hair away from my face, his fingers grazing my cheek and lingering on my shoulder as he pushed my long hair out of the way.

“You’re so beautiful, Rosalie. Anyone who couldn’t see your value, not just because of your pretty face, but because of your pure heart, your music, and your willingness to do anything for anyone... doesn’t deserve you. Ethan... doesn’t deserve you.”

With that, Soren let go of *me*, and promptly fell asleep.

I sat there *for* a long moment thinking over his words.

That was the first time he’d called me Rosalie.

My skin was still *warm* from the touch of his fingertips.

Soren had a good point, one I wish I would’ve thought about before I had planned to let Ethan back into my life.

Ethan led me to believe that there *was* a possibility that the three of us—Ethan, the baby, and me—could live in this house together, knowing that the house was just a tool for him to get to Soren.

Was there a single thing that man had told me in all of the time that I’d known him that was true?

“Yes,” I thought, as I got up *and* walked out of the bedroom I’d planned to share with him. “He’s been telling the truth

when he said he planned to kill me.”

Why in the world would I walk right back into a situation where I would have my baby and then die?

I wouldn’t

Then how about Soren?

I looked back at Soren’s sleeping face. Would I still trust him like I did in the past?

He had said that it was a coincidence that he had been the one to find me when I was injured.

Perhaps that was the truth.

But whether it was or whether it wasn’t here I was—in his care.

And so was my child—Ethan’s child.

The child of the man Soren hated most in this world.

As much as Soren seemed to like me, how would he see my baby?

If—if somehow everything wasn’t a coincidence...

Just a slight peek into that possibility sent terrifying shivers down my spine.

If Soren wasn’t exactly harmless as he appeared to be, then what did it mean for me—for us?

Would he try to use my baby as a pawn? As some sort of chess piece he could use to maneuver between Alphas or manipulate the other powerful men in the world?

I realized that my ignorance about the war and the details of the situation between Soren and Ethan led me to where I was now, but all I could do was to get my head out of the past and move on, or else I was going to keep making mistakes.

And the next one just might cost me my life.

My hands moved to my abdomen.

I comforted the little one in my belly silently, “Don’t worry, I’ll protect you. At all costs.

## **Chapter 106 Ethan, Make Love To Me**

**\*\*Ethan’s POV**

“You need to take it easy, Alpha,” Richard told me as I gazed out at the ocean, looking back at the island we were sailing away from.

“I’m fine,” I grunted at him. The injuries I’d sustained during the fight with Soren were nothing compared to how I felt on the inside.

That b\*stard. He had come up with this plan. He had somehow known what I would do and used it to his advantage. I slowly shook my head, wondering how he got to be so... conniving.

“How are the rest of the operations tonight?” I asked Richard.

“We were able to hack into their communications, which has essentially cut the islands off from the mainland,” Richard said with a nod of satisfaction.

“That’s encouraging,” I told him. “Maybe we can use that to our advantage if they transmit any important information?”

“Perhaps, but I believe they may be aware of it,” he said. “We will continue to monitor the situation.”

“And the supplies?” | asked.

He shook his head. “They were moved off from the island before we had a chance to take them, but we were able to observe the supply route and send that information back to the capital.”

I arched an eyebrow. “Talon has gotten the report?”

“Yes. Beta has sent Samuel along the transportation route. We’ve got enough men to organize an ambush on the supply vessels when they get close to the mainland. That will greatly reduce the supplies the enemy is able to utilize along the coast.”

The confident smile on Richard’s face was well earned.

“Good,” was all I could manage to say, but I was pleased with their work.

At least we had managed to accomplish something while we were on the island.

Soren may have lured me in, but at the same time, that gave my men an opportunity to complete their tasks.

“Alpha, you’ve got wounds in your shoulder and your side. We’ve bandaged you up, but none of us are doctors. You should rest.”

Richard didn’t know how to back off. I turned and looked at him, my eyebrows furrowed and my eyes narrowed. He put both hands up, palms out, as if to say he understood.

I nodded, but I didn't want to talk about it.

"I'm fine." I sighed. It wasn't his fault. I'd gotten only myself to blame.

Soren lured Rosalie out to see us fighting.

It hadn't been that difficult for him to convince her that I was the bad guy in all of this, because I wasn't completely

honest with her.

And I knew the reason I was able to get away. That was simply because Soren allowed me to.

It was almost like a game of cat and mouse where the cat enjoyed standing back and watching the mouse run but was content in letting it get away—for now. He wanted to see me live to suffer.

He wanted to see me suffer without Rosalie.

I grimaced. Just thinking of her made my stomach twist into a ball so tight, I thought I might be sick.

"You need to sit down, Alpha," Richard said, thinking that I was making that face because I was in physical pain from my wounds, not because my heart was being wrenched from inside of me.

I'd never been a dreamer, but in the days I'd spent leading up to my fight with Soren, I had envisioned a life with Rosalie and our baby.

I had dreamed of a time when the war was over, and the three of us could return to my home. She would be my Luna, and my heir, perhaps a son, would fill our lives with love and light.

We would be happy together.

And I could give Rosalie the life she deserved.

Now, that future had slipped from my grasp—because I didn't tell her everything.

But how could I? Rosalie didn't need to know all of the details of the war. She certainly didn't need to know that I was there to assassinate Soren. She would've thought I was there to see her only to kill him from the very beginning.

"Alpha, shall we plan the next assassination attempt?" another one of the men asked, coming over and leaning against the railing next to Richard.

"No." My head snapped back to the war effort. I needed to concentrate. "They.. he would have already found out about the tunnels by now."

. Yes, Soren was not stupid. Right now, all the secret tunnels would no longer be secret.

The warrior immediately was on alert. “Okay, Alpha, then shall I get ready to return to the capital then?”

I thought for a moment and shook my head.

“No, right now, I am the bait. Let’s play hide and seek with our enemy. Plan to leave in two days.”

“Alpha! You’re already wounded. It’s too dangerous for you to show yourself again!” Richard finally got my plan and was concerned.

“Richard, send another message to Talon for reinforcement. Do whatever you need to do so that reinforcements can find us in two days. No more, no less. After that, we’ll head straight to the coast’s frontline.”

I willed my mind to slip back into military mode, but it simply wouldn’t happen. Not completely. I kept thinking of Rosalie. How could I leave her and my baby behind? I felt that tug in my gut and knew my child wanted me nearby, yet I was floating further away.

“What should we do in the meantime, sir?” Richard asked, jarring me back to the men.

“Continue to be on high alert,” I told them. “We need to keep our eyes open for enemy vessels.”

“Alpha, we also received inquiries from the king...”

“Tell him I am severely wounded and can’t talk right now.”

Everyone looked at each other, and then said in unison, “Yes, Alpha,” and then went back to their duties.

I returned to staring at the island in the distance, which was so far out of reach. My wounds began to heal but were still aching

Not as much as my heart was aching, though.

Eventually, I fell into a restless sleep, but my dreams were unpleasant and filled with images of Rosalie.

When I’d found her again, the nightmares of her falling to her death had stopped. Those few weeks of sleep when I’d been visiting Rosalie at night had been the best I’d gotten in years.

Now, images of her dying were replaced with haunting visuals of her face as it had been etched into my mind the night that Soren and I had fought.

I knew it was a dream again as soon as I saw that we were in the forest. "Ethan," Rosalie said in a haunting, siren sweet voice. "Make love to me."

I leaned in and kissed her, tasting strawberries on her warm mouth as I carefully undressed her. Every sensual touch felt real, every moan and passionate sigh that came from her luscious red lips echoed through my ears as if it were really happening

But just as I was about to bring her to her peak, Rosalie leaped away from me.

She was dressed in her robe now, her eyes wide, her face streaked with tears. "How could you do this to me, Ethan!" she shrieked. "You a\*shole! You liar!"

"No, Rosalie!" I tried to tell her. "Please, let me explain!" But I couldn't speak because I suddenly shifted and I was in my wolf form. With all of my might, I tried to push myself back into my human form, but even though I focused with my full concentration, I couldn't shift back.

That had never happened before.

In the meantime, Rosalie continued to shout profanities at me, words I'd never heard come out of her sweet mouth before. "You b\*stard! I hate you! I hope you die! You worthless a\*shole!"

"No!" I tried to tell her. "You've got it all wrong! I love you!"

She still didn't understand, and as she covered her face with both of her hands and broke into sobs that racked her whole body and made her shoulders shake, I saw him.

Over her left shoulder, he was there, standing in the background, casually leaning against the trunk of a tree.

Soren, grinning at me like the devil himself.

He had orchestrated all of this, caused all of this pain to come into my life, and now, he was just watching and maniacally laughing as my world fell apart.

Sucking in enough air to fill my lungs, I sat straight up in bed, feeling like I'd been underwater for so long that I had nearly drowned

I gasped for breath for several seconds and looked around, wiping sweat from my brow as I realized that it had all been a dream

But it made my heart stop thundering against my rib cage.

But that didn't mean the nightmare was over.

I swung my legs over the side of the bed, the pain in my side aggravating me slightly from the movement.

Needing some fresh air, I made my way back out to the deck. In the darkness, my men had positioned us to the other

side of the island.

“Where are we?” I asked one of my men at the helm. “What’s going on?”

“We had to move, Alpha,” he said. “Soren’s ships spotted us again, so we changed positions and drew them further out to sea.”

I nodded. It was exactly what I wanted. The longer I could occupy Soren’s vessels and keep them busy trying to trap me, the easier it would be for Talon’s men to sneak in and attack the supply ships.

Soren had to think I was simply reluctant to leave Rosalie and my baby, which was true, but while I was out here suffering, I may as well use this to my advantage.

“If they find us again, keep moving,” I told him.

“Yes, Alpha,” he said, and I headed over to check on other military information.

My work as Alpha never stopped, no matter how broken my heart was.

## **Chapter 107 Ethan Owed Me Big Time**

### **\*\*Talon POV**

Ten days—it had been ten long days since Ethan had left.

Eight of those days were spent with no contact.

Not that I was worried about him. I knew he was more than capable of taking care of himself. Other than the assassination, I also wondered if he found out anything about the necklace.

With Ethan gone, the meetings had become painfully long. While Ethan was here, everyone did what he asked, but right now, too many people had opinions.

Glancing quickly at the clock, I noted the time.

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In just an hour, I would once again be sitting with the other leaders going over the latest update of what was happening on the frontline.

“Beta Talon,” a voice called from the doorway drawing my attention from my thoughts.

“Come in.” My eyes gazed up to see one of Richard’s men who had appeared by my door.

“News from the head office. The men you requested to cut off supplies were dispatched effectively, and a letter came for you as well.”

“Good,” I commented. What he reported was nice to confirm, but this wasn’t news to me. However, he didn’t leave. Then, I realized his eyes lit up with excitement.

Timmediately stood up from my desk and closed the door behind us.

“Beta, Alpha has a message for you. He also requested reinforcement for his retreat in two days,” he reported in a cheerful, but low voice.

I nodded, and after a couple seconds, I added, “Make sure no other people know about this.”

Other people did not need to know where Ethan was. We didn’t know who we could trust behind the capitol walls other than our own men.

Taking the private letter and the report with the latest intel from him, I watched as he quickly left my office, closing \* the door behind him.

I quickly went through both documents and frowned.

Things were more complicated than we anticipated because of Soren. However, this confirmation would allow us to plan our next actions accordingly.

After that, I checked both reports carefully again. There was no mention of Rosalie.

I sighed in both disappointment and relief. It was just a faint hope anyway. Even if Ethan had found something, it might not necessarily be good news.

I shook my head. “At least he’s on his way back.”

He had been gone too long, and I definitely was looking forward to having my Alpha here again. I much preferred executing orders than making them.

Also, there was trouble I couldn’t handle any more. Like Madalynn.

“Talon!” Madalynn’s shrill voice echoed from outside the office door.

Oh god. Here we go again. I tossed the report into my drawer and locked it right away.

The door was thrust open as Madalynn barged in with a scowl on her face. “Have you heard anything from Ethan yet?” she snapped, demanding information once again.



“No Miss Madalynn,” I replied, taking a deep breath and forcing a smile to my face, “but please allow me to remind you that this is my private room.”

“Don’t use that tone with me,” she snapped, crossing her arms over her chest. “I am your future Luna.”

Luna or not, it wasn’t up to me to decide. All I knew was that she was nothing but a pain in my a\*s.

My Alpha liked me to run defense, but he owed me big time, leaving me with her.

“Of course,” I forced a smile, clasping my hands in front of me on the desk, “my apologies, Miss Madalynn. You’re more than welcome to barge into my personal space.”

The fact was that I didn’t have it in me to argue with this woman. It made more sense to fill her ego and pretend that she was right.

Knocking at the office door drew both of our attention as Vicky’s face peered in. “Oh, there you are Madalynn... the florist was here and said something about petunias.”

Madalynn jumped to her feet quickly, her eyes widening in horror. “Oh no no no, that’s not what I wanted!”

Raising a brow, I stared at my sister, who hid her smirk as Madalynn rambled on about wedding preparations and exited the office.

“I take it you were lying?” I asked with a grin as Vicky closed the office door and glided towards my desk.

“Me.. lie... of course not,” she replied in a fanning shock. “Misunderstandings happen though.. Hmm maybe the florist didn’t mention petunias.”

Laughing, I shook my head, “You need me for anything, Vicky?”

“Georgia wrote,” she replied softly, pulling a letter from her pocket and sliding it over towards me. “I haven’t read it. I saw the guard carrying it and told him I would take it.”

I felt my heart skip a beat, then my breathing increased slightly.

Georgia had been gone for almost seven days now, and my wolf was going crazy. She told everyone she was going back to the pack, but she didn’t.

We had no idea where she’d been if it wasn’t for Vicky finding out from Lily that Blake left with Georgia. That was the only clue, and we guessed that she went to the northern villages.

My rebellious mate had been on a mission, and was able to get past me without my wolf sensing she was on to something.

Now knowing where she might be, it took everything in me to reign my wolf back in and keep him from chasing after her.

“Let me see.” I replied, as I loosened my tie to allow more fresh air to get into me.

Vicky didn’t hesitate in handing over the parchment. My finger broke the wax seal as I anxiously untold the letter.

“Talon and Vicky,

Sorry to have worried you both, but as you have probably guessed by now I am in the north.

I just wanted to let you know that I’m safe. We ran into a little rogue trouble, but it all turned out fine, no biggie. The only problem is that my phone broke.

I didn’t find who I was initially looking for, but I found something else that I thought was very cool.

I’ll be away for a little bit. Catch up with you when I’m back.

Georgia”

I crumbled the letter slightly in my right hand.

Georgia – MY Georgia.. She ran into rogues. How did she manage to escape?

A drowning sensation surfaced within my gut as my wolf howled in outrage that we hadn’t been there to defend her. I wanted to leave, but I couldn’t.

How could she be so bold and reckless?!

“What’s wrong?” Vicky urged softly as her eyes skimmed over me. I tossed the letter at her. She gasped upon reading Georgia’s message.

“I should be there with her,” I growled in annoyance. “I should have taken better care of her!”

My fist came down on the solid oak top of my desk as I stood to my feet. The chair slammed into the cabinet behind me.

Vicky walked over and grabbed my arm, “Talon, you have to calm down.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down!” I snapped, but immediately, I regretted taking things out on Vicky. She had done nothing wrong.

My wolf was out of control. The fact our mate had been hurt caused him to fly into a fit of madness, and it took everything in me to block his escape.

“Why are you acting like this?” Vicky retorted.

I couldn’t tell Vicky I was mated to Georgia. I had made a decision to keep it a secret until Georgia came of age. If somehow, I wasn’t her mate... at least I could continue to be around her to protect her and support her, like a friend.

“She’s Ethan’s sister. What do you think his reaction would be when he’s back?” I realized that my voice raised uncontrollably. Luckily, I was talking to Vicky, one of the few people I trusted with all my heart.

Vicky reasoned with me, “Alpha already has a lot in his hands, but your reaction like this wouldn’t help him at all. Georgia is safe right now, and I know her. She may be young, but she knows what she’s doing.”

I took a few seconds to calm myself. Georgia was safe, and that was all that mattered.

“Honestly, I think you both should have more faith in Georgia. She’s more than capable of protecting herself,” Vicky concluded.

She was right. My Georgia wasn’t a little girl anymore who needed someone to defend her. She was a woman who didn’t take sh\*t from anyone and had a mind of her own.

The only thing I could do was be supportive of my mate, and hope that in time, things would work out for the best.

Yes, she was a daredevil, but she’d proven she was one of the best warriors in the pack already,

I didn’t want her to be in danger, but I also couldn’t hold her back,

Watching Vicky step back from me shaking her head, I expected a lecture to follow, but I was pleased when she

*made her way towards the door and opened it without scolding me.*

“You know,” she said softly as she paused at the open door, “I don’t know what’s going on with you, but you need *to figure it out*. You’re not yourself and you can’t go back into the war room like this.”

A *bitter smile* crossed my lips as she disappeared, closing the door behind her.

## **Chapter 108: A Friend Or A Foe?**

**\*\*Rosalie’s POV**

There were a million things on my mind. The last thing that I needed was for my child to be trapped between two warring brothers.

When I finally lied down, I found myself restless. I saw myself being pulled and tugged in two different directions until I was ripped apart.

Who was the winner in this instance?

I don't know—but it certainly wasn't me.

I was so exhausted and eventually was able to sink into darkness.

Not sure how long it had been, finally, I woke up.

At first, I was confused about where I was.

I wasn't in the cottage that I had been in for the last several months. Sunshine streamed in through unfamiliar curtains, and I remembered.

I remembered the new house. I remembered the new betrayal.

However, after getting some rest, my head was clear—regardless of the situation, I could not continue to stay with Soren long term.

Ethan knew I was here, and he may come back for me, so I couldn't bring more trouble for Soren.

Moreso, as much as I wanted to trust Soren and still treat him as a friend, as much as I hoped it wasn't the case, but what if he was a foe?

I needed to do what was best for my child.

I took a deep breath and pulled myself out from the bed.

First thing first, I had to get some energy into my body.

“Oh, good morning, Miss Ro,” Lola greeted from the kitchen. “Can I get you something to eat?”

\*Thank you,” I told her. I didn't have a huge appetite, but I still picked up some fruit and bread. “How's Soren doing?”

“Mr. Soren has been awake and I've brought him food. He had asked us not to wake you up, so that you could get as much rest as possible after a long night,” Lola stated. “However, I'm sure he'd be very happy to see you now that you're awake.”

“Thank you Lola,” I said to my friend, “I'll be there as soon as I'm done.”

On the short walk to Soren's room, I thought about how I should act around him going forward.

I would like to believe that Soren was a wonderful person and a very kind man, and I would need to treat him the same way as I used to.

He had just finished eating and was putting his empty bowl of oatmeal aside.

"Soren," I said, gently smiling at him. "You look so much better."

"Better than what, a corpse?"

His sense of humor didn't seem to change a bit. I smiled, "Well, yes. But I meant better than you did last night."

He patted the side of the bed where I'd been sitting the night before. I went over and placed a comfortable distance between us, focusing my face towards him.

"How are you?" he asked.

"I'm okay," I stated plainly, rubbing my belly like I did most of the time. "Tired. But that's the usual."

He nodded. "You know, I was just thinking, you can't come back to the cottage because of the pollen, but I'm worried you won't be safe here. I'll have to leave some guards here to protect you. I have to make sure that Ethan can't ever hurt you again."

He rubbed my arm reassuringly and asked, "Also, may I stay here until I recover?"

"Of course!" I nodded, and I understood why he made this request, "It's better that you don't have to split the guards into two groups."

He smiled, "How could someone be as beautiful and smart as you? It's just not fair."

I shook my head. "Soren, thank you for protecting me, I appreciate it."

He seemed to be relaxed and happy with my gratitude. I looked at him and couldn't help but ask, "I know that you'd never ever let anything bad happen to me or the baby, right?"

"Of course, Ro!" He smiled at me cheerfully.

I felt guilty. Soren seemed to be his usual self, and yet, I was suspecting him. Was I too sensitive?

Later that day, Soren was feeling strong enough to get out of bed. His men helped him walk to the living room. As soon as he sat down in a chair, he sort of sank into it, like it had taken all of

the energy he'd gathered in the last several hours to take those few steps from one room to the next.

Perhaps he was more severely wounded than I realized.

But then, the night before, he'd stood up and hugged me.

Was he putting on an act?

Soren looked older than I'd ever seen him, more tired and weary.

"Can I get you anything?" I asked him.

I moved to a chair closer to him and sat on the edge so that I could reach his hand, and the apprehension I'd been feeling all day about having to pretend that I wasn't suspicious of him faded away.

Even if I wasn't sure what his motives were at the moment, this man had always shown me kindness. Now he was hurting, so how could I not show him the same attention he had always shown to me when I was in a similar state?

His hand was warm as he squeezed mine back. He shook his head and adjusted the blanket he had draped over his lap. "No, thank you," he spoke gratefully. "I feel so pathetic."

"Don't feel that way." I told him. "I know you are used to being the strong one who takes care of everyone around you, and that's who you still are inside. You'll be back on your feet again in no time at all. But if you don't take it easy now, you'll end up making your condition worse, and then you'll have to start all over, and you don't want that, do you?"

"No, I definitely don't want that," he shook his head and smiled at me, "Ro, you are really good at persuading

people."

I returned the smile. "I'll go get you some water and some crackers in case you get hungry. That should settle your stomach." I gave his hand another gentle squeeze and then went into the kitchen.

Lola was in the middle of cleaning and she smirked at me in a way that made me think she was trying to imply something

It wasn't the first time she had given me that look over the last few months. She and Seraphine were always teasing me about having romantic feelings for Soren.

Ordinarily, I would brush it off and tell them they were just being silly and there was nothing going on between us. However, today, I was too tired to explain. Lola giggled at my silence.

When I brought the water and crackers back to Soren, he was so thankful, it was as if no one had ever brought him anything before. “You’re so kind, Ro, I appreciate it so much.”

“Really, it’s no trouble,” I told him, “I’ll be around, so just let me know if you need anything.”

As much as I wanted to act the same as in the past, I realized that it wasn’t as easy as I thought it would be. After offering my service, I almost felt like I was fleeing away from the room.

“Actually, I would love it if you could play me a song,” he coaxed before I could leave, his eyes trailing to the piano across the room.

The piano. It had come with us. The day before, I had been imagining myself playing the songs I used to play for Ethan, visualizing his face if he heard me play them again.

Now, I would be playing for Soren, and Ethan was...only the Moon Goddess knew where.

“Of course, I’ll play you a song,” I told Soren, pulling my thoughts out of the past again. It didn’t matter what I had dreamed. This was my reality.

I crossed the room and sat down at the piano, noticing just how many of Soren’s soldiers were standing around outside. It was as if we were at war right that moment, and the entire army was stationed here. But then, this house wasn’t as easy to protect as Soren’s mansion. It didn’t have the same kind of barriers.

My fingers sat over the keys for a few moments as I decided what to play. I settled on a nice slow, quiet song that I thought would be soothing to Soren and let my fingers run over the keys for a few moments before I decided to start singing along.

Drawing my eyes back inside, I looked at Soren. He had a satisfied expression on his face, his head tipped back, his eyelids closed, and a smile on his face. He seemed like he was at peace and had everything he wanted in life.

I wondered if that was the case. Was this all he wanted—his island, all of these properties, enough money to enjoy a good life, and that was it?

However, if that was the case, why would he become Ethan’s target? What role did he play in the war?

Thadn’t been singing long when Thomas came in the front door. He took one look at Soren and stopped in his tracks. I continued to sing and play, but my eyes didn’t leave Soren’s assistant.

Thomas didn’t wake Soren. Instead, he turned around to walk back outside, thinking better of disturbing his boss when he was sleeping.,,

One of the guards came in the door as Thomas was going out. They were about twenty paces away from me, and at first couldn’t hear what they were saying.

However, as they continued to speak to each other about whether or not what was going on was important enough to wake Soren over, I caught enough words to ascertain what the situation was.

They hadn't been able to find Ethan.

"Checked the tunnels?" Thomas was asking.

"Yes," the other man said, slightly irritated. "Several times." I heard him say, "Blood, but no sight of him."

My heart skipped a beat as I thought about Ethan being injured, but then I remembered that I shouldn't care if Ethan was injured severely enough to be leaving a trail of blood.

That should make me happy—to know he was getting a taste of his own medicine.

"Keep searching," Thomas ordered. "When the boss wakes up, we'll see what else he wants us to do."

For the next hour or so, I played the piano and sang for Soren, trying to change the vision I'd had in my mind of what my life would be like. It was a drastic change from what I'd been imagining the day before with Ethan in the scene.

I'd also decided, at the moment, it was in my best interest for Soren to still treat me as his friend like in the old days.

It was the best way for me to protect my baby.

## **Chapter 109**

### **How To Make More Money**

A few days passed and Soren had regained his strength. While I was pleased with his healing process, more and more. I found I couldn't be as carefree around him as before.

More and more, I had to remind myself to plaster a smile across my lips.

Things were different now, I felt different.

I felt as if the emotions I was going through were almost robotic, and even though I wanted to believe Soren with all my heart, I just couldn't.

Ethan lied to me... but so did Soren.

I questioned myself over and over. Had everything up until that point just been part of Soren's game?

Seraphine stopped by and slid the cup of tea towards me. "You seemed a bit preoccupied. Drink this, it will help to calm your nerves."

I thanked her and took a sip. The hot liquid washed down my throat, slightly easing the tension in my mind.

"Do you know if Soren will be back for dinner tonight?" I asked.

My question brought a grin to Seraphine's face.

"I find it sweet that you are so concerned about him. He doesn't know how to quit working," she



replied with a grin, “but I believe he will be back this afternoon.”

“In that case, I should have enough time to clean up the house,” i nodded. I felt it would be best to keep myself busy.

“Miss Ro, you can just leave the house to me.” I turned around and saw Lola, who now spent most of the time on Papeno helping out her master. There wasn’t much she needed to do back in Soren’s place in Avondale.

EO

Seraphine agreed with her, “Why don’t you find something fun to do?”

I thought for a moment and decided to do something to cheer myself up. It felt like it had been a while since I last went into the nursery. Yes, just thinking about spending time in my baby’s space brought a smile to my face.

In addition, it might not be a bad idea to start planning what I would take with me if and when I decided to part ways with Soren.

“Seraphine, I’ll check a few things in the baby’s room,” I replied. “I’ll call if I need any help.”

Seraphine and Lola looked at each other, and they could tell that I wanted to be alone at the moment.

“Of course, dear,” Seraphine replied.

As soon as I entered the nursery, I was in a better mood.

Seraphine’s tea might have helped a little to soothe my tense nerves, but being in the nursery helped a lot more.

However, something on the ground drew my attention.

It was a letter addressed to me.

Confusion laced my mind. There were only very few who knew about my whereabouts... who would have written to me, and how did it get in here?

I went to pick it up, and as I was about to break the wax seal, Lola appeared at the door. I was so distracted that I didn’t notice until she called out my name.

“Miss Ro, anything in particular you want for dinner?”

Then she noticed the letter in my hand and frowned. “I didn’t remember getting any mail lately?”

That was my thought exactly.

In the past, I would have shared my concerns about the mysterious letter with her, because I didn’t feel I had anything to hide. However, now..

Especially, since I planned to leave Soren sooner or later, I needed to be able to handle things on my own.

“Soren left me a sweet note,” I quickly made up a reasonable explanation.

I didn’t know how convincing it was, but my response made her smile.

I then answered her dinner question, “For dinner, something light, maybe some fish with a salad?”

“Absolutely!” she answered cheerfully and left the room with a grin on her face.

However, I knew that it wasn’t from Soren. He was the kind of man who would rather tell me in person than to send me a letter.

My stomach tightened with apprehension.

This time, I gently closed the door.

I broke the wax seal and unfolded the letter.

It wasn’t long.

“Rosalie,

Have you missed me? It has been far too long.

What a surprise! The whore I once knew has men eating out of the palm of her hand now. Sorry that I didn't say hello earlier in Avondale, thanks to those b\*stard guards. You made me lose a hand, and you destroyed my life, b\*tch! I can't wait for you to beg for my forgiveness, but it will cost you. Give me the money, and you won't hear from me again. Do not tell anyone, otherwise, there will be no peace for you or your child for as long as I live." I stood there frozen. My hands trembling in fear, and my heart was pounding due to terror. Derek!

He found me! As much as I wished that it wasn't true, he was here on Papeno! My eyes scanned over the letter multiple times, trying to make sense of it all. My thoughts drifted back to the day in the market when I thought I saw him. I knew it was him. I was just hoping that he didn't see me. After I moved to Papeno, I thought I was safe. I thought I escaped from him! But he was out there, right now, probably watching me, seeing me tremble in fear. I could almost see his sinister smirk, the face that I saw in my nightmares from the past.

What should I do...?

then

IT Derek could get a letter to me here, if he was able to sneak the letter in my baby's room with all the guards around what choice did I really have?

I used the wall to steady myself and finally managed to sit down in my chair.

I needed to stay calm. I needed to think through lile SIVULUP".

Seeking help from Soren wasn't an option. The guards couldn't prevent Derek from approaching the nursery, and I couldn't burden Soren more, especially since he was injured.

What's more, if Derek knew he was being hunted down by Soren's men, would he do something in desperation to hurt me... or worse, my child?

No matter how unlikely it was for Derek to break through Soren's security team, I just couldn't take the risk.

I tried to reason with myself... if all he needed was money...

Perhaps, there was enough saved up that I could give him.

I blinked away the tears that threatened to fall. It wasn't the time to get emotional. t

First things first, I needed everyone to believe that it was me and Soren exchanging notes.

I carefully shedded the letter into the smallest pieces I could manage and put them back in my pocket.

Then, I wrote a note and dropped it on Soren's bedside table in his room. Since he was able to move around, he insisted that I take my bedroom back while he moved to the guest room.

Afterwards, I walked over to the living room and started pulling out a stack of paper.

Seraphine and Lola looked at me curiously, but they didn't pry.

"I wanted to make something fun for the baby," I announced.

Seraphine arched an eyebrow. "Like what?"

"Origami!"

She smiled and seemed happy to see me energetic enough to do something.

I cleared up some space on the dining room table and started my small project.

My hands were busy, but my mind drifted away back to Derek's threat.

He lost his hand. What happened to him after my escape that turned him into a street beggar?

Was Isis also with him...?

But those details were not important. All i knew was that he was threatening not just my life, but

my unborn child's life.

The thought of him approaching the nursery in the dark...

I shook my head hard to wave away my fear. However, no matter how hard I tried, I could feel panic settling in as the unpleasant memories of Derek returned to my mind.

I stopped and looked at the origami papers. Not happy with what I had done, I shredded them to pieces-so that I could mix in Derek's shredded letter. I pulled out a few more new pieces of paper, and started from scratch, with my mind continuing to wonder...

... Hopefully, if I gave him the money, he would disappear just like he promised. At least that was the hope. If not,

I was planning to leave the islands sooner or later anyway. I would run as far away as I could from Ethan, from Soren, from everyone.

I'd done it once; I could do it again.

"Miss Ro, you okay?" Lola walked by and saw the mess I had made on the table.

"Yes, I just couldn't remember how I made them in the past!" I complained.

She commented, "When was the last time you did it? Any skill takes practice."

"I guess so! It's been a while for sure."

I shredded more paper and let it take over the better half of a six-person dining table.

Lola shook her head and smiled, "Well, at least you seemed to have lots of fun."

I nodded, agreeing with her. "I don't know why, but I was just in the mood. Sorry for the mess!"

She giggled. "Don't worry about it at all. Whatever that makes you happy, Miss Ro."

As she walked away, I let out a sigh.

I really didn't know whether I was making the right decision to keep Derek's blackmail as a secret.

Once again, I pulled out more paper. This time, I managed to make a couple samurai hats, a few cranes, and a howling wolf, which earned me compliments from Seraphine.

Finally seeming to be satisfied with my project, I cleaned up the table, and dumped all the shredded paper from my failed origami trials and from Derek's letter into the garbage can.

Neither Lola nor Seraphine noticed that I sneaked in more shredded pieces than what was from my failed origamis.

Afterwards, I slid the paper wolf into the note for Soren, and then returned to my room.

I pulled out all of my cash.

That some savings, but I just didn't know how much would satisfy Derek.

"Ro?" Seraphine's voice made me jump, and it was too late for me to put away the cash. "Sorry that I scared you." She walked in with a laundry basket in her arms. "I brought the laundry in.

Let me put it away for you."

—

—

—

"No, no Seraphine. I can do it myself!" I was a bit anxious, trying to hide the money.

"Oh, dear, don't worry about it, and the basket is heavy. You shouldn't be carrying weight."

Then she glanced over and saw the cash.

"Oh... I'm so sorry," Seraphine apologized, and put down the basket. "I didn't mean to pry."

I sighed again. At this point, the more I tried to cover it, the more it would make it seem suspicious.

Therefore, I let out a sigh to draw Seraphine's attention.

She sat down next to me. "Dear, are you okay? You've been acting... a little out of sorts."

Seraphine was observant. I knew I hadn't been acting quite normal the whole day. I needed to provide some logical explanation.

"Alright... you caught me."

"Oh, dear. Do you mind sharing what's bothering you?"

"Seraphine," I looked at her and tried to make myself look embarrassed. "I was wondering how I could make more money."

She obviously didn't expect that.

"I'm getting closer to my due date, and I've just started to get anxious."

Guilt filled me knowing I had to make up the lies. "I just wanted to be able to provide for my child..."

"Oh, dear, you are going to be alright." Seraphine comforted me softly. "You have a good job, you have a place to stay.. you have us,"

"That sounds great, but I don't know why. I was just a bit unsettled."

"That's not uncommon," she smiled. "You know, with the whole pregnancy thing."

"You sure?" I asked,

"Of course, Ro. Don't think too much about it."

"I guess you're right," I said as a yawn came over me. "I can't believe how easily I get tired."

"Get some rest, dear, and I bet you will feel all better when you wake up. It's hard, both physically and emotionally."

I thought about her advice and decided a nap would be a good idea.

After all, I needed to get some energy and get myself mentally prepared to face Derek. Alone.

## Chapter 110

### Was She Planning To Leave Me

\*\*Soren's POV

Striding up to Rosalie's home, I knocked twice and smiled. When I saw it was Seraphine who opened the door, I was quite disappointed.

I had been expecting Rosalie, but knowing her, she was probably busy preparing dinner as she usually did this time of day.

"Afternoon, Seraphine. Where's Rosalie?" | inquired, stepping into the house and peering around for Rosalie's beautiful face.

"She is resting in her bedroom," Seraphine replied as she took the flowers from my hand and put them in a vase.

My eyes swept over to her in confusion. It wasn't like Rosalie to be lying down at this time of the day.

"Is she not feeling well?" I inquired with apprehension.

The last few days, she had not seemed like herself, understandably, but it didn't mean that I shouldn't worry.

Seraphine didn't seem to be too concerned. "She will get more tired as we are approaching her due date. It's emotionally draining, and women tend to get anxious or upset over little things."

"Like what?" I followed Seraphine towards the kitchen.

I was looking forward to the dinner conversation with Rosalie, so the more I knew about her day, the easier it would be for me to keep her engaged. "You said she was upset?"

If Rosalie was upset by something, that something would only possibly be Ethan or me.

I frowned. While I did understand it would take me time to have her accept me into her life in the

way I wanted, I didn't like that she would be upset because of something I had done, whatever that reason might be.

Seraphine's eyes looked towards the hallway that led to Rosalie's room, and then turned back to me. "It has something to do with money," she replied casually, "but I don't know all the details." That wasn't quite expected. Seraphine shrugged, "Don't look at me. I was surprised too, but I wouldn't overthink it. You can't reason with hormones."

Seraphine walked away, and I returned to my room to get changed.

However, I just didn't feel right about the situation. I'd rather overthink it than miss any details. I wanted to tell Rosalie she didn't need to worry about money when I had enough for the both of us. However, I knew she wanted to be independent, and I'd love to let her live the way she wanted.

As long as she was with me.

She wanted money. she wanted to be independent...

Was she planning to leave me? Otherwise, why would she need more money?

I narrowed my eyes.

Then I saw a note lying on my bedside table.

I unfolded it and pulled out a howling wolf made from paper.

The short note said, "Wish you and your wolf a speedy recovery!"

My fingers gently brushed over her writing, and I felt my internal battle of uncertainty calm like a passing storm.

She was here, with me, still treating me like a friend, and trying to make me happy. Plus, she was heavily pregnant, and

before long, she would have the baby. A baby that I would father myself.

I felt confident that there was no way that Rosalie would leave me for Ethan.

The desire to see her grew strong. I rushed over to her room and knocked on the door.

However, I regretted it immediately.

If she was resting, I should let her rest.

I heard slow movement behind the door, and as it opened, her sleepy face glanced up at me in surprise.

"Soren?" Her eyes turned back towards the clock on her wall before she looked back at me wide-eyed. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I slept longer than I thought."

"Don't worry, pretty. You need your beauty sleep." I tried to make it lighthearted, and gave her a hug. "I just wanted to check on you."

She was pretty, and no matter when I looked at her, I would never grow bored of her gorgeousness.

She replied with a small smile, "I should probably get up so that I don't ruin my night sleep."

Stepping aside, I let Rosalie pass me, my eyes quickly skimming her room, noting the money sitting on her dresser before! closed the door.

"Miss Ro, why don't you let me make dinner tonight?" Lola suggested from the kitchen.

"Um. I can..."

"Ro, let's try Lola's new recipe," I pulled her close to me and suggested. She was a little disoriented.

"Ok...I think you're right." Rosalie sighed, and turned to Lola, "Do you mind?"

Even though I requested her to let Lola cook, her reply still caught me off guard.

No matter how busy Rosalie was, she always enjoyed making dinner for me.

She wanted no one else to do it in the past.

Either she was just exhausted, or something was definitely wrong with her.

“Of course, I would love to do it, and Seraphine would help too,” Lola replied with a smile as she started going through cabinets.

Rosalie moved towards the living room, taking her place upon the sofa. She looked tired, but she still had a soft smile on her face.

“Half day for you?” she teased me.

“Yes, I decided I needed to focus on getting better.” I waved the paper wolf at her.

She smiled. I watched her soft gaze settle upon me. “Hey, Ro, why don’t you rest your feet and close your eyes? I have some papers to look over, and you can sleep while the dinner is being cooked.”

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Biting her bottom lip, she looked away from me, shaking her head, “No, it’s okay. That would be rude. I would rather hear about your day.”

My heart beat in response to her interest.

“My day was okay,” I responded. “I took care of a few things, but my thoughts were of you all day long. I couldn’t wait to come back and see you.”

Her eyes cast down as she smiled. She didn’t comment on my compliments and only said, “I’m glad you took it easy.”

Her voice was soft like usual, and she was smiling, but she just seemed distant to me.

What Seraphine said kept playing over in my mind.

Something had upset her, and I needed to know what was bothering her.

“The problem is, this little guy just boosted up my energy level!” I waved the paper wolf at her again. “By the way, thank you for making it for me.”

She blushed, I loved that she blushed easily. “You’re welcome. I know it’s silly...”

“Not silly at all, I love it! Thank you for thinking about me.” I meant it. “Now, I wonder, are you up for a walk outside?”

She tipped her head. “That would be lovely.”

Entranced by her beauty, I felt a new determination set within me. I would allow nothing to come between us.

If something was upsetting her, I needed to get that taken care of.

The sunset was beautiful. I breathed in the salt air and let it clear my head as I walked alongside Rosalie. We took it slow; her baby bump was getting so big walking was becoming more and more difficult for her each day.

The waves rolled in along the beach, crashing with a soothing repercussion before they rolled out, only to come in again. Their rhythm was a bit mesmerizing, and I focused on it as we walked along, letting it keep me calm.

“Is something bothering you, Rosalie?” I asked directly.

Immediately, I saw her forehead furrow. I didn’t think she’d tell me exactly what it was that was bothering her. She wouldn’t want to trouble me with that. “I’m fine,” she said, trying to play it off. “But thank you for your concern.”

“Rosalie, seriously,” I said, pressing the issue, “I can tell something is troubling you. I’m here to help. If something is bothering you... I’d like to know about it.”

She could tell I really wanted to help, so she finally said, “Actually, there is one thing you could help me with.”

“Certainly,” I said, eager to please her. “Anything. Anything at all.” I hoped she’d tell me the truth.

“Well,” she began, “do you think it would be possible for me to start going to the market? You know, to set up a booth and start selling my crafts?”

I stared at her for a moment before my mouth fell open and I asked, “Uhm, why would you want to do that?” I wasn’t expecting that.

“I like making crafts, and I’d like the opportunity to sell them.” It was clear she was keeping the truth from me.

“You don’t need to sell them, though,” I argued. “You have everything you need.”

“Soren,” she said seriously, “I want to be independent. I want to make my own money.”

“Fine.” I decided to go along with her wishes, “If that’s what you want, that’s what we’ll do.”

She was clearly surprised that it was that easy. “Thanks,” she said. “I really appreciate it, Soren.”

She reached over and patted my arm, and tingles of electricity pulsed through it. “No problem,” I said.

“Just one more thing,” she said, and I held her gaze for a moment, expectantly. “Can you make sure there are no guards around?”

I could only stare for a moment. “Why is that?”

“Because if there are a lot of scary warriors around, my customers will be scared away,” she explained.

I took a deep breath and slowly let it out. “Fine,” I told her. “Whatever you’d like, Ro.”

I smiled at her, and we headed back to the house because I knew she was getting tired.

As soon as we were back to the house, she went inside to rest for a few minutes, and I called

Thomas. “Put an extra detail on Rosalie,” I told him. “She wants to go to the market, and that’s fine, but she doesn’t go anywhere without you knowing exactly where she is and who’s around her, got it?”

“Of course,” Thomas said. “I understand.”

“And she doesn’t know you guys are there either.” I made sure he understood the importance of being discreet as well.

“You’re really obsessed with her.” Thomas commented. I could almost see his smirk.

“Shut up and do your job.”

I hung up and put my phone away, ready to go inside and spend more time with my angel. I needed to find out what it was that had her so desperate to make money, but if she wasn’t ready to tell me, I would have to find out on my own.