

King Breeder 191

Chapter 191 The Moonlight Lily

"Today... is the sixth," Cerina said. "The sixth of Wheat Month by the ancient calendar."

My breath stuck in my throat, and I braced myself as tears rushed up my eyes.

"We have two days."

Hanging against the cliff, I kept telling myself not to look down, to focus on going up. We were not far from the top. I could do this.

"I don't understand." Soren's voice echoed from below me as he followed me up the cliff, finding holes for his hands and feet. "Why does the Moonshine Lotus have to make it impossible for people to get to it?" ..

"Moonlight Lily," Georgia corrected him. "I know you lost to Behar, but did you also lose your mind?"

"Hey, Georgia, I didn't lose to-" Soren pulled himself up, and when he finally stepped on a rock and could take a breather, he continued, "-Behar, okay? I wounded him severely. See, at least I am able to come on this trip. I bet Behar still can't get out of bed."

Georgia smirked, "You're able to move around because of Rosalie's blood."

As soon as she got to the top of the mountain, she offered me her hand. I took her help and finished my last few steps.

"Nice job, Rosalie," she said, embracing me.

"Thank you," I told her, but I was so tired that I struggled to catch my breath and really wanted a drink of water.

I couldn't imagine how the rest of the Drogomor people still had the energy to carry on a casual conversation during this kind of endeavor.

I heard Georgia continue to shout down to Soren. "You were pretty messed up to be honest. Speaking of, why did you come if all you want to do is to complain?"

"Because that jack*ss is also my brother!" Soren gritted his teeth, and with one final pull, he was up on the flat ground too.

In the past day and a half, we had gone through the putrid and disgusting swamp, the forest that was covered by sharp thorns that were almost impossible to get through, and the sheer cliff. Based on the map, we were getting close. Hopefully, this was the last crazy obstacle.

After finding out about the Moonlight Lily's next blooming time, I left the palace with a small group to pick the flower. Talon, Georgia, Soren, Jace, and another twenty elites from both Drogomor and Winter Forest pack joined me.

I turned down General Vandough's proposal of bringing a larger team, because while the trip would be treacherous, more manpower wouldn't be the solution to it.

In addition, while King Kal's side was recouping from the loss from the previous battle, it was still likely that they could attack, and we needed to have enough soldiers on the frontline.

Most importantly, Ethan's current status was still a secret to the enemies. We couldn't let them know what had happened. Therefore, we needed to avoid drawing any unnecessary attention to our operation.

Thankfully, the rest of the journey was relatively easy. Finally we reached an open field at the top of the mountain.

Most of the landscape was barren, save for large fields of moonlight stone, glowing white in the bright beams of the orb they were named for.

A few scraggly bushes grew amidst them, their brown trunks twisted, their green branches like crooked fingers stretching out into the open space around them, but there wasn't much color, and nothing stood out as remarkable or beautiful

Except for one dark green stem in the middle of the field.

It didn't look particularly special at the moment, but I recognized the plant immediately. It was the Moonlight Lily.

It was well past dark. A glance at the sky told me we had about half an hour before midnight of the eighth day of the Wheat Month, when the flower would bloom.

We settled in for a quick rest. We needed it because as soon as we got the flower, we'd need to rush back to the palace. The good thing was that it should be much easier on the way back now that we had cleared the hazards.

"Look!" All of sudden, Georgia pointed to the moon.

Everyone looked up, and the sky above us began to darken as the moon took on a tinge of red on one side.

It was a lunar eclipse!

Slowly, the tinge of red increased in size, and the moon seemed to turn to blood as the shadow of the earth came between the sun and the moon.

It was clear why it was called the blood moon as the giant orb hung there the same shade of crimson as the liquid I used to save so many.

I watched as the bright silver glow of the moon slowly replaced by the splendid scarlet. When the color change was completed on the entire moon, it was midnight.

I jarred my head to look toward the Moonlight Lily.

The flower was blooming under the blood moon!

As quickly as possible, I grabbed the knife from my pocket and slashed my arm. As my blood dripped into the center of the petals, I cut cleanly through the stem of the flower in its mesmerizing blue glow.

Immediately, the flower took on a purple hue, like the red from my blood had mingled with the blue of the flower, and it was clear to me that this was exactly what I'd needed to do.

"You did it!" Soren whistled.

"Yes, thank the Goddess!" I told him. "Now, let's get back!"

I grabbed my bag and opened it, getting out the case I had for the flower. I dripped some more blood into the flower before I packed it away.

Just as I turned around, I saw Talon's face turn from relieved to solemn. "Wolves are approaching, and they are not friends! Everyone, get ready to fight!"

"D*mnit!" Georgia murmured, "Who the f*ck could it be?!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" A menacing laugh pierced through the night. "Well, well, if it isn't the little queen who led us right to where we need to go. And it was so much easier for us, too, because they already cut through all the tough obstacles before us!"

Madalynn!

"Look at you, f*cking whore! Aren't you surprised to see me?" She continued to glare at me in the darkness.

I stared at her but didn't speak. How did they know we were here?

Madalynn smirked. "Don't look that f*cking stupid! Without Ethan, you're just a piece of sh*t! Now, hand over the flower,

and I may consider letting you go!”

My eyes widened. She knew about Ethan, and she knew about the purpose of our trip! Someone... someone betrayed

us Who could that have been?

However, the most urgent thing at this moment was to figure out a way to return to the palace with the flower.

I looked around and tried to figure out our best move. I realized that they had at least three times more men than our meager twenty member team, and we didn't know whether they had reinforcements on the way

We had less than one day to get the flower back to Ethan so that the nectar could be fed to him to help him to wake up.

That meant we would all have to kill three of Madalynn's men each just to get away.

The odds were not in our favor

But then I had some pretty good warriors with me, and I knew Talon and Georgia would do whatever it took to make sure that I was able to get the flower back to Ethan. So if we could figure out a way for Madalynn's forces to be kept occupied while the flower was smuggled back to Ethan maybe this would work after all.

I returned my attention to the confrontation in front of me just in time to hear Soren taunting our enemy.

Soren provoked “Hey, Maddy, how's Sehar? Oh, what's the matter, he's not here? Aww what a pity! If you want to save your mate why don't you kneel down and beg Rosale instead? You know, if she's in a good mood

“You son of a bitch Soren, I'm gonna kill you. Madalynn screamed.

Soren smiled carelessly “Go ahead and try?”

“You guys get him Madalynn ordered and three of her men shifted and darted toward Soren. At the same time, her other wolves also ran toward us while Madalynn herself was charging toward me. The fight was on!

The two sides collided, and even though it was tempting for me to get into the fight I stayed back. I put the backpack over my shoulder. No matter what happened I had to make sure it didn't fall into

Madalynn's grasp.

It was dear that she wanted to taste my blood, but she couldn't get to me at that moment. "Rosalie, you whore, now, hand me the fiowen!"

*Over my dead body!" I exclaimed and shifted.

'You asked for it! With that, Madalynn shifted and so did I Just as I was about to fight Talon leaped out in front of me, with Georgia on his back.

'Rosalie, leave this to us. Dont forget youve only got one day to get back!

Although we were outnumbered, I watched as Madalynn's wolves were torn apart. Unable to get up again, they were left for dead. Madalynn was furious, but even with her helpers, she wasn't able to break through the defense Talon and Georgia held together,

I shook my wolf head, trying to tell Georgia that I couldn't just leave my friends and people there, but Georgia shouted again, "We'll be fine! Trust us! Soren, you go with Rosalie too!"

Amournful howl went up from a few feet away, and I saw that Madalynn had her snout pointed to the moon, howling in anger and frustration. While it was true she still might've been able to stop me from taking the flower to Ethan if she had more troops with her, our side was stronger, and her forces were depleted.

Soren got rid of the ones he was dealing with and joined me at my side. He nuzzled me and started running back toward the palace.

They were right. I needed to trust my friends and bring the flower to Ethan in time. Otherwise, all of our efforts would be wasted. Also, as soon as I got back, I would need to figure out who the spy might be. We wouldn't be able to win the war if we were infiltrated

I took a deep breath, and looked back one more time at Talon, Georgia and the rest of the group, then turned around to follow Soren.

We sprinted the entire way back except for a few quick stops for water. There was minimal communication between me

and Soren since we couldn't connect through mindlink, I spent most of the time contemplating my action plan when! got back. It was a great distraction to take my mind off my sore legs from running,

Both of us were exhausted by the time the palace was visible from afar. As soon as the palace was back in sight and we entered the mindlink range. I slowed down my pace.

I wasn't planning to actually go back into the palace. Instead, I reached out to Cerina, "Cerina, I'm back!

But I need you to remain silent and listen to me carefully

Yes, Your Majesty, I'm listening, she responded in mindlink,

"Ask Seraphine and Vicky to bring Ethan to me. I'll wait for them in a cave not far away in the woods outside of the palace I'll let Seraphine know which cave to bring Ethan to But do not tell anyone else I'm back."

Understood

Chapter 192 Ethan's Finger Just Wiggled!

Soren and I arrived at the cave first. I stayed near the mouth of the cave, and a few minutes later, I saw two familiar wolf figures approaching the cave with a man on one of their backs.

I went about making sure Ethan was comfortable on his makeshift bed, but it wasn't time yet for me to use the flower to save him. We had to be patient and wait for the nectar.

"Why didn't we just go back to the palace?" Soren asked me I hadn't explained everything to him when we were running as wolves, and he'd come along with me out of faith.

Keeping my voice low, I looked around the cave and replied, "There are spies in the palace. There have to be, or else Madalynn wouldn't have known that we were going after the flower.

Seraphine and Vicky gasped, covering their hands with their mouths.

I summarized the situation for them. "We were attacked by Madalynn. That's why only Soren and I came back first. The rest of the group stayed to hold them off."

Soren didn't seem nearly as shocked; he must have already thought of that when Madalynn showed up. He asked, "So you tried to draw them out? What's your plan?"

"We'll make them reveal themselves to us."

For some reason, that made him chuckle. "It sounds like you've got some ideas."

My eyes scanned the cave and I nodded. "Seraphine, I want you to use the mindlink to contact Cerina. Tell her to prepare for putting on a show that makes everyone in the palace think I went missing while looking for the flower as soon as you are back. Also, please ask Commander Landon to send a detail tasked with looking for me. We'll need it to go help Talon and Georgia."

Seraphine nodded, following me so far.

"Also, people will think that the flower didn't get picked, so that Ethan will continue to grow weak and that we won't be able to save him. Give the trusted leaders a heads-up, so that they're not worried, and

make sure that frontline morale wouldn't be negatively impacted. It'll be better if the rumor only stays within the walls of the palace."

Hooked them in the eyes, and everyone seemed to be on the same page so far.

"The spies would want to send a message to the enemy or try to get within close range to use the mindlink. Vicky" || continued, "please work with Paul and Richard. Let them know to keep an eye out for anyone, soldiers or citizens, who are trying to leave the palace once the rumors are out. Those people need to be gathered together and held captive until I return. There's a good chance they could be the spies. Also, I'll need someone from your pack to join the rescue team so that hopefully we can mindlink Talon and Georgia when we are close."

"Very well," Vicky said. "I'll step over there so I can concentrate." She gestured at another area of the cave, planning to start her mindlink

I stopped her and looked at both Vicky and Seraphine. "You two should return to the palace. With everything going on, there's going to be chaos in the palace. People may need your help. Also, please look after Rowan for me."

After both of them hugged me goodbye, I turned to Soren. "We'll stay here until it's time for me to give the nectar to Ethan."

"I thought you would also assign me tasks and send me away too," Soren chuckled. "Rosalie, you've really changed a lot."

I smiled. "I'll take it as a compliment. Actually, I need your help on something else."

Soren laughed. "Of course it's a compliment! Tell me, what can I do for you?"

I looked down at Ethan. He laid there peacefully with his eyes closed, but I longed to see them open again.

I pushed my useless sentimental thoughts away, and turned my attention back to Soren. This war had been going on

for too long and it had to come to an end.

"Soren, what do you know about the relationship between King Kal and King James?"

Soren went into great detail telling me the history of the two warring sides but concluded with, "At the moment, they are cooperating because you and Ethan are bigger targets for both of them. They are willing to work together to get the two of you before they fight against each other again."

"Then what kind of role is Damian playing? I heard he went back to the islands?"

“Damian?” Soren repeated, rubbing his chin. “Well, he’s power-hungry,” he said with a shrug. “He wants to keep the islands that he took when Romero went to prison. Damian is not a stupid man though. He knew he wouldn’t be able to fight against either Kal or James; therefore, if it was up to him, this war would go on as long as possible.”

“Cause problems, find the right opportunity, and make a power grab. He’s already done that once,” I commented.

Soren nodded. “Exactly. For example, right now, while both of the kings are busy fighting one another, or against you, Damian would be happy that no one had the time to bother his islands.”

I understood what he was saying, “How’s his relationship with King James and his queen?”

Soren looked at me strangely before he began to respond “King James used to see him as an ally because he is the one who connected your blood to him and told him what the source was, but-“Soren chuckled, and his gaze turned cold. He turned to me and asked, “Do you know what makes people desperate?”

I shook my head, but I felt a cold shiver run down my spine. Soren answered his own question with a sneer. “It is losing hope after they thought they had it.”

The man standing in front of me seemed cruel and cold. The Soren I knew always had a smile on his face and was always polite and gentle. However, I should not forget that he was also one of the most powerful and scary Alpha in the world.

When he turned to me again, his expression softened, and he patiently explained, “See, that being said, I don’t think James treats Damian as his best friend anymore.”

I was quiet, pondering upon the information from him.

“Why did you ask all of this?” Soren seemed a bit amused at my questions.

“I have a plan that might help us buy some time,” I explained.

Soren chuckled slightly. “I had no idea you were so interested in war strategy. When did you start becoming so interested in schemes and politics?”

It was a good question. I’d led my own troops into battle against the enemy and done my best to fight to protect us, but maybe I’d always felt that there was someone I could rely on, until that person sacrificed himself...

“I became interested when I knew that I didn’t have Ethan to depend on.”

We both went into silence for a little bit.

I looked up in the sky, and based on the position of the moon, I commented, "It's almost time."

"Are you nervous?" Soren asked me, sitting next to me on the cave floor, the flower in its case nearby.

"Yeah, a little," I told him. I wasn't sure what I wanted to say to Ethan.

"Don't be," he said, patting my arm. "Everything will work out okay."

I managed a smile, but I wasn't sure I believed him. I was nervous that something would happen and it wouldn't work. Then, what would happen to Ethan?

At the appointed time, I got up, taking in a shaky breath and trying to make sure that my hands weren't trembling so much that I'd mess up.

"It's fine," Soren told me, standing next to me.

I nodded, but I was hesitant. "Please don't let me mess this up, Moon Goddess," I muttered.

Soren said, "You won't."

I wished I was as confident in myself as he was in me.

I pulled Ethan's mouth open and then held the flower above his lips. I squeezed the flower until the nectar began to drip out, the purple liquid glowing like the flower had in the light of the blood moon.

The drops slid down Ethan's throat, one at a time. By the time the twelfth drop of nectar dripped into Ethan's mouth, the Moonlight Lily completely dried out and turned to dust in my hands.

I said a prayer to the Moon Goddess, thanking her for the gift, and blew the dust of the flower into the air. Then I closed Ethan's mouth, and we waited.

I could hear that Ethan's heartbeat was more powerful, although his breathing was still very smooth. Nothing else seemed to be happening.

I didn't know what to expect, and I turned to look at Soren, seeking confirmation, although I knew he wasn't more knowledgeable than me on the matter.

Soren placed his hand on my shoulder. "You've done what you can. It'll work."

I nodded and stifled a yawn. It was as if my own power had been drawn upon to help him again. I was so tired. It had been over three days since I was able to take a rest for more than thirty minutes.

In my mind, I quickly combed through what else I needed to do. Yes, I'd need to wait for Commander Landon to send us the reinforcements to Georgia and Talon and wait for news from Vicky on the spy... but there wasn't much I could do at this point.

"Why don't you rest?" he asked me. "I can keep an eye out."

"I don't know...." I began, but this time the yawn escaped my lips.

He smiled at me. "Rosalie, you need to sleep. Go on."

He was right. I could barely keep my eyes open. The mat we had Ethan lying on was big enough for both of us, so I lay down next to him.

Within a few seconds, I was asleep.

I knew I was dreaming because I was back at the temple, the one I'd seen in my dreams right before Ethan woke me up.

This time, I was outside of the temple, standing a few feet away from the door, a field of green dotted with purple flowers behind me.

I decided to go inside of the temple to see if Ethan was there. Maybe I could speak to him while he was in his coma the same way he had spoken to me in mine.

Had he spoken to me?

I couldn't remember exactly, but the longer I thought about it, the more I thought... maybe he had.

I reached for the door handle to push the door open, but it didn't budge.

That was odd.

Shaking the handle, I realized that the door was locked.

Why would it be locked?

I knocked on the door with my fist. "Ethan, are you in there?" I called.

There was no answer.

"Ethan?" I banged harder.

Still, the door remained locked.

A desperate feeling began to bubble up inside of me. I remembered then that I'd been here before. I'd been on this side of the locked door with Ethan inside of there.

I'd asked him a question, and he'd responded as he pushed me out the door and locked it. I'd stood right there and banged on the door with both fists, shouting his name,

That had happened right before I awoke from my coma.

What was it that made me so upset? I searched my memory..

And then.. it all came back to me. I'd asked Ethan if he loved me.

And he'd told me, simply, "Never."

"Ethan?" I called, banging on the door, the same way I had before, when he'd first locked me out.

"Ethan!" He didn't answer me, and a stream of tears began to run down my cheeks.

"Ethan!" I said, pressing my forehead to the door. "You never loved me? Never?"

How could that be possible? Why would he say such a thing to me? I had thought there was a chance that he really did love me, that he wanted to be with me, to raise Rowan. Why else would he sacrifice himself for me?

Had he done it only for our son?

The salty tears from my eyes ran into my mouth as I cried out in agony.

"Rosalie? Rosalie!"

Someone was shaking my shoulder. I opened my eyes and found myself looking into a pair of familiar ones-Soren's.

"Ethan's finger just wiggled!" he exclaimed.

Chapter 193 Rosalie to the Rescue

"Are you okay?" Soren asked. "You seemed... upset."

"I'm okay." I said, though it wasn't quite true. I was disturbed by the dream. I looked over at Ethan. He was still asleep but I could see his eyes shifting now.

"I received word that they had pinpointed a few suspects as spies and are monitoring their actions right now. Also, the rescue team is here to meet you," Soren told me.

"Thank you," I said.

"I've been watching Ethan, and I think he's about to wake up." Soren continued.

He was right. Ethan's eyelashes were fluttering quite a bit too.

He was going to wake up.

Then what?

ren was a

"I... should go," I said. "What?" Soren was confused. "Why?" Ethan began to mumble a bit, but I wasn't ready to face him. What if... he really never loved me? "I gotta go," I told Soren. My tone was rushed.

"But Rosalie, I can go instead...." Soren grabbed my wrist.

I pulled my hand back and quickly gave him my reasoning. "First, you're still recovering from your injury from Behar. The fight yesterday didn't help. You need to rest. Second, my blood can help any of the wounded ones. Can yours?"

He couldn't argue with me and he let go, seemingly disappointed at himself.

I took one more look at Ethan. His dark and thick eyelashes were quivering a lot.

My throat was tight. I was anxious to see Ethan again, but I needed some time to think about how I should face him... "Just tell him I said I'm glad he's awake," I said and turned to leave the cave.

I didn't quite get to the exit before I heard Ethan's weak voice say, "Soren? Where am I...?"

I said a prayer to the Goddess, thanking her that the flower had worked... and then, I took a deep breath and fled the cave like a coward.

Yes... I was a coward. I didn't have the courage to face Ethan at the moment. I told myself that it was because I needed to bring his sister and his Beta safely back to him.

Letting out a breath of relief, I was somewhat grateful that I had a valid reason to run away from him for the time being.

Outside of the cave, the rescue team had been waiting for me already.

"Everyone follow me!" I shouted. "We have a day of running ahead of us. Our comrades are waiting for us, and there's not a moment to waste!"

Howls were the only responses I received. I shifted into my wolf again, ready to do whatever it took to

rescue Georgia and Talon,

Then... we ran

We got back to the open field where Moonlight Lily bloomed as fast as we could, but when I saw a few dozen lifeless wolves laid on the ground, my heart sank.

I forced myself to examine the bodies. Most of them seemed to be roques, thankfully, but I did recognize three warriors from my pack.

I left them here... and they died for me. I howled toward the moon to express my sorrow.

'Your Majesty,' Jace comforted me, 'there's nothing more honorable than fighting until the last breath on the battlefield against the enemies of their queen...'

I tried to return a smile, but I realized that he might not be able to tell with my wolf face. So I only nodded my head,

Thank the Goddess that I didn't see Georgia or Talon among the bodies.

We stopped, and I listened carefully. There were no growls or snarls anymore, so the battle must've been done already. I pushed my sadness aside and concentrated my hearing and smelling on searching for the rest of our warriors.

The footprints on the ground showed that the battle was spread into the woods in different directions.

I found an opportunity to shift back to my human form and put on a change of clothes. There were wolves that I couldn't mindlink with, and I needed to make sure everyone understood what needed to be done next.

I already knew the answer, but I asked Ethan's pack members anyway. "Any luck with mindlink?"

They shook their heads. That meant... either Talon and Georgia were not around, or they were not conscious. Either way, it was not good news.

I thought for a moment, then instructed, "Everyone, let's scatter out in pairs to search for them. If we find any clues, howl three times in a row as the signal if you can't mindlink, so that the rest of us will go there immediately. If we hear more than one such signal, then let's all get back here to regroup."

As I spoke, I handed out vials of my blood tied on thin ropes and hung them on their wolf heads. "Take these and use them as needed."

· They nodded and dashed into the nearby forest in different directions in groups of two. I was quite tired, so I didn't shift

back to wolf.

“Jace, you come with me.” I hopped on his back and we started running into the woods.

I could only pray that we weren’t too late. However, after more than half an hour, there was still no clue.

Where could they be?

All of a sudden, a hint of silver light caught my attention, and I picked up a knife from the ground. I recognized the knife. It was Georgia’s!

Hopefully, they were nearby!

Thopped down and checked for footprints nearby while Jace sniffed the air.

Georgia, Talon, please be okay....

Jace nuzzled me and started running through the woods. He didn’t go far before I caught up. I saw a familiar wolf laying under a tree-even though he was not moving, his body was wrapped around a female figure. Even in his unconsciousness, he was still protecting her as much as he could.

“Talon, Georgia!” I cried out.

Jace had shifted back to his human body and checked on Georgia, who was covered in blood.

I burst into tears when she murmured, “Jace... Rosalie.”

“Don’t move!” Jace helped her up. She was vulnerable now.

She looked at me and urged, “Rosalie, help Talon!”

Talon’s heartbeat was faint, I cut open my arm without hesitation. Thankfully, after getting some of my blood into him, his breathing smoothed and his wound started to heal.

I gave Georgia a nod and assured her, “Talon should be fine now. Don’t worry. How do you feel?”

Georgia finally let out the breath she was holding and collapsed back into Jace’s arms as he was supporting her. “Tm okay,” she said and gritted her teeth added, “that f*cking Madalynn! Don’t ever let me run into her again!”

“Georgia. I was so worried about you!” Jace gave her a gentle squeeze while I checked out her injuries with tears in his eyes,

Thankfully, most of the blood on her seemed to be someone else's.

Georgia first said to me, "Rosalie, there should be others nearby. We were all exhausted. Hopefully, most of them also made it through!" Then she turned to Jace and teased, "Hey, I'd never known you were capable of having tears!"

Jace's face turned a little red and he pretended to snarl at Georgia, who then softened her voice. "Give me a hug. It's so good to see you again, Jace..."

Georgia finally regained some strength and could sit up by herself. While the two of them gave each other a friendly embrace, I saw Talon open his wolf eyes.

I told Georgia and Talon, "Jace and I will go find others now. You two get some rest. We'll be back soon."

The rest of the rescue went smoothly. We were able to locate the rest of the group. Six were severely wounded, but at least they would be able to make it through.

We decided it would be best for everyone to get a good night of rest before we take our trip back to the palace.

The tents were set up. I walked back to where Georgia and Talon were resting, thinking she and I could share a tent so that we could catch up on Ethan and the situation in the palace.

"Georgia, the tent is ready..." However, my words caught in my throat halfway through.

"What the f*ck are you talking about? Why are you acting like this?" That was Georgia's voice; she was annoyed.

Toward Talon? Why? I always thought the two of them got along quite well, plus, no one could get frustrated with Talon. He was always such a patient and polite gentleman...

Talon must have shifted back to human. His voice was calm, but I could sense pain in it. "You don't need to stay in the same tent as me tonight. I can take care of myself. I protected you because you're Ethan's sister. It's my role. Jace was really worried about you, and he must have missed you a lot..."

I was beyond confused. Did Talon misunderstand Georgia and Jace's friendship? The two had been fighting hand in hand ever since Georgia came to Winter Forest pack, they were like best battle buddies.

I chuckled and was about to announce myself when I saw Georgia get up. Her expression was beyond furious and frustrated.

I ran out to stop Georgia from punching Talon in the face, and then...

I was shocked at what I was seeing.

Georgia kneeled next to Talon as he was in his sitting position. She grabbed his face and planted her lips on his. Her weight was on his body and he was slumped against a tree....

Talon was just as dumbfounded as me by the kiss.

My eyes bulged from my head, and I froze there a few steps from them.

“Now are you still worried about Jace?” Georgia tried to make herself sound angry, but she probably didn’t know that

As expected, Talon crushed against her lips again. She looped her arms around his neck, and he held her tightly against his body. The two of them kissed each other passionately.

I stood there and tried to figure out a way to sneak out without them noticing, but as I started to retreat into the woods, my feet crushed a few crispy dry leaves on the ground.

Oh well, so much for sneaking out then.

They heard the sound, separated and turned to look at me.

“Busted!” Georgia said, laughing, but her face was turning bright pink. “Sorry, Rosalie.”

“No, no! I’m sorry!” I covered my face, uselessly trying to pretend I hadn’t been there. “You guys... you guys continue

Talon’s face was burning red all the way to the tip of his ears, while Georgia burst out laughing.

“Rosalie, come back!” She waved at me and chuckled, “Why are you running away? Were you looking for me for something?”

“Oh, yeah.../ – wanted to...wanted to let you know that tents are ready.” I stuttered.

She looked at Talon. “So, what do you say? Are you sharing a tent with me? This’s the only chance you’ll have.”

Talon’s lips opened and closed a few times. Eventually he nodded, though he still didn’t make a sound.

Georgia smiled and answered for him. “I’m not sure what that nod meant, but I’ll take it as a yes.”

Go Georgia!

That was what I wanted to yell out. I was so happy for her, and so proud of her..

She hadn't gotten her wolf yet, so she probably wouldn't know exactly who would be her mate. However, it seemed that she knew what she wanted and would pursue her own happiness no matter what.

Luckily, based on Talon's reaction, he must have been in love with her for a while...

"Are you okay, Rosalie?"

"Ye...yes. I'm just so happy for you," I smiled.

Yes, I was unbelievably happy for them. I cared so much about both of them, and to know that they had found one another made my heart so happy.

However, seeing them made my mind go to Ethan.

Was he still lying back there on that makeshift bed in the cave, or was he up now? I hadn't even been able to tell him how much I cared about him. He'd risked his life for me, but he also said he never loved me...

In a day, I'd be back at the palace. How should I interact with him? Thatn't been exactly nice to him ever since we met again in the northern tier...I'd done many things and said many words to hurt him, just like he did to me...

Was there any possibility that we could start this all over again?

The more I understood my love for him, the more I was afraid to face him, because I knew I couldn't afford to lose him again...

I sighed.

I wished I could be as brave as Georgia.

Chapter 194 The Brothers Reconciled

**Ethan's POV

"Soren? Where am I...?"

"Hey, brother. You're awake!" Soren grinned down at me, and I blinked a few times, trying to figure out where the hell I was.

I thought I should be dead, but since I wasn't, I should at least be at the palace in one of the bedrooms.

But no, I was in some kind of a cave, it looked like. Something strange must've happened while I was

unconscious.

If I was awake, did it mean that... Rosalie wasn't saved after all?

"Rosalie!" I grabbed Soren's arm and shouted, "Where's Rosalie? What happened to her!"

"She's fine! She's alive, out and about!" Soren raised his voice and gave me a bottle of water. "Chill down, man."

I took a couple sips of water, and breathed in deep a few times.

Once I felt my heartbeat was back to its normal rhythm, I asked for confirmation, "You said... she is still alive?"

"Yes, still alive, powerful and beautiful as before. I wouldn't lie to you on this, I promise."

I finally felt I could breathe freely. Then I asked, "Then where am I? What happened?" I tried to sit up but failed and fell back on the mat I was lying on.

"You're in a cave," Soren gave the obvious answer and explained, "Long story short, we found out there were some spies in the palace, so we had to move you. But it's all being handled." He tried to smile reassuringly, but I could see through

"Where are Rosalie and Rowan?" I asked him.

"Rowan is with Seraphine and Vicky when Rosalie is working... being queen and all that," he said, still trying to be nonchalant. "And Rosalie went... to help Georgia and Talon." |

He had my attention now. My brain was trying to catch up. That last part sounded dangerous. "Help them how? What's wrong with them?"

Soren sighed. "It's kind of complicated, but essentially, we went on a journey to retrieve some sort of flower called the Nightmare Lotus, or... oh, Midnight Lily! It was supposed to save your life, which I guess it did. Anyway, we were attacked while we were there, and Georgia and Talon stayed behind with a few others to fight while Rosalie and I escaped back here to get you the flower."

"Midnight Lily?" I repeated, and he nodded. I vaguely remember some legendary flower called Moonlight Lily, but I'd never heard of Midnight Lily before.

But that wasn't important right now.

"Why the f*ck did you let Georgia go?! She can't even shift yet!" I scolded him.

"Yeah, like any of us could stop her. Be realistic, okay, brother?" He rolled his eyes. "I'm as worried as

you, but does it help? Now, the good thing is that it's quite hazardous to get there and it makes it impossible to bring in large troops. So hopefully, Talon and Georgia were able to fight Madalynn's group off. Rosalie should be there within a day."

I frowned. "I need to go too!" Once again, I tried to push up off of the bed, but my head was swimming, and I fell backward.

Soren chuckled, so I glared at him. "Always gotta be the hero, huh, brother?" he asked.

"I do what I think needs to be done." I glanced at him,

Soren complained, "C'mon, do you have to be this serious all the time? You're so boring."

"Or else what? Smile like a clown all day long?" I sneered.

I heard him growling under his breath, but then he rolled his eyes again. "Fine, fine. Do you, brother."

However, I realized that I just didn't have the strength to stand up, so I had to make peace with the fact that I really wasn't ready to leave the cave yet.

"Really, Ethan, you've gotta trust people around you. Georgia and Rosalie, they are capable of protecting themselves. If you have the time and energy to worry about them, why don't you focus on regaining your strength and make yourself useful again."

He had a point.

Obviously, Rosalie had gone to a great deal of trouble to make sure I didn't die, and I couldn't let her down by not recovering fast.

Thinking about what she'd done for me made my heart yearn to see her even more.

But then... I had lied and said awful words to her again. Whatever my intention was at that time, I was beginning to regret it. Those words would complicate matters between us. She might not want to see me anymore.

"How long ago did she leave?" I asked him.

Soren shrugged. "You just missed her."

Did she know I was waking up but left anyway? Did that mean she didn't want to see me? But could I blame her if she didn't?

I sighed. "Did she... did she have something to say to me?"

Soren sat on the ground, wagging left and right. He nodded with a smile. "Yes, she did."

I stared at him for a moment, waiting for him to tell me what she said, but Soren just had this mysterious smile on his face that made me want to punch him.

He seemed to find great amusement watching me knit my brow. "Brother, don't stare at me like that. You asked me a question, and I answered. If you want more information, you gotta ask me again."

How could he still be so childish?

I growled and gritted my teeth. "...What did she say?"

"Haha." He seemed to be greatly entertained. "She said she was glad that you were awake."

That was it?

I didn't know what to think, but I guessed it could be worse.

"Don't look at me like that. It's what she said. Why don't you just talk to her when she's back?" Soren shrugged.

If she ran away to avoid me just now, would she try to avoid me going forward?

Also, what should I say to her?

I sighed and ran a hand through my hair. There was no use in overthinking it. Soren was right; I needed to figure out a way to regain my strength.

I tried again to get up, and this time, with Soren's help, I was successful. The world was still a little topsy turvy, but I could feel myself recovering quickly enough.

"Where are you going?" Soren asked me.

"I just want to walk around a bit, try to get my bearings," I explained.

He stayed beside me as I wandered around the cave.

"You know," Soren began, breaking me out of my thoughts, "I thought your whole plan with Behar and Madalynn was really idiotic."

Narrowing my eyes at him, I retorted, "Have I asked for opinions?"

"No, but wait. Hey, don't just walk away like that, you're gonna fall!" Soren caught up to me and continued, "It was stupid on the surface. But then... when I realized why you did all that, well, it turns

out you were right. It worked.”

I lifted my gaze, but I really didn't get where he was going.

He scratched the back of his head and cleared his throat, “Well, um, anyway, I just wanna say... I'm beginning to realize !” ve been wrong about you all along, man. And I'm sorry I never saw the situation from your perspective before (sorry I never saw the situation from your perspective before).”

Soren finished the second half of the sentence so fast that it took me a few seconds to realize that he had just apologized to me.

“Excuse me?” I asked.

Soren's voice could barely be heard. “I said sorry I never saw. Then he got it and protested loudly, “Hey, not nice at all! You heard me the first time! You jack*ss!”

“And you're a right b*stard,” I pointed out.

He was speechless and rolled his eyes. I straightened my face and said to him, “Hey. Thanks.”

Soren froze. It was obvious that he didn't expect that.

I chuckled and finished what I wanted to say. “For keeping me alive from Behar and helping Rosalie.”

His tongue seemed to get stuck and the cave was 'quiet.

After a while, he looked away awkwardly and squeezed out his reply. “Don't mention it. I didn't do it for you.”

I smiled. It had been too long since he and I had a conversation like this.

But soon, my mind returned to Rosalie. For her to run out of here so quickly, she must've been upset at me.

My heart felt heavy in my chest, like a rock.

Thoped she was all right.

We continued to walk around a bit while I tried to reengage all of my extremities. Whatever had happened to me, it was clear I'd been near death, and it was going to take some time for me to get up to speed.

“Rosalie sure has changed,” Soren started another topic as we strolled through the cave. Whenever we

came to uneven ground, he reached out to steady me. "You should've seen how well she handled everything lately, like she's been doing this sort of thing forever."

I couldn't help but smile. "Yeah, she's something else," I agreed.

"And then there's the strategy she's developing to go against our enemies, King James and King Kal. She's acting like a real queen."

"She is a queen." I nodded, thinking of how amazing it was that she'd transformed so completely in just a few months. "What is the situation with our enemies now?"

"Well, after you killed off about half of their forces with your pil pit, they retreated, and I managed to hurt Behar pretty badly."

"Good."

"We are in a better spot now in terms of numbers, but the threat is still there," Soren continued his analysis, "It'll take some time to completely annihilate them. Kal's still going to want revenge against you-since you ate his arm."

"I didn't eat it."

"Okay, you didn't eat it. You just.., bit it off and spit it out. Mr. Boring! You see, we don't really have much to do right now, so have some fun, okay?"

Why was I wasting my time with him?

I walked toward the exit of the cave, and Soren stopped me, "Where are you going?"

"Back to the palace, of course."

"Look Ethan." Soren shook his head, as if what he was about to say would be a big fight for him. "Since you're weak and I'm also recovering, why don't we call it a night and go back to the palace tomorrow? From what I heard, Vicky, Paul, and Richard are working well with Seraphine and Cerina. Let them do their thing. If everything goes well, Rosalie should be back tomorrow too."

I thought for a moment, and agreed, "Okay."

He looked at me in awe, and he stuttered, "Did... did you just take my advice?! You, Ethan, listened to me?"

When did Soren become so easily flabbergasted? Wasn't he supposed to be manipulative and scheming?

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Weren’t you the one who told me to trust people around me?”

“Yes, I did, but are you sure you’re Ethan? Not some other soul who took over his body?!”

I felt the vein in my forehead was throbbing and I ordered him, “Shut up!”.

He let out a sigh of relief. “Phew, okay. Yep, that’s you all right.”

I was speechless and rolled my eyes.

Then, it was as if he found something super funny, and he started laughing.

And I couldn’t help but shake my head and smile, too.

It really had been too long since I had my brother by my side.

Chapter 195 Ethan And Rosalie Finally Met Again

“Alpha! They are back!” Vicky ran into my room to inform me as I was catching up with Paul and Richard.

I nodded to acknowledge the news. “Okay.” Then I turned to Paul and Richard. “You said Kal was forcing the citizens to fight for him?”

Vicky stood there, dumbfounded.

Then she winked at Paul. Paul then excused himself while Richard said that he wanted to take a break.

I pushed myself up from the desk and thought it would be helpful for me to take a walk to clear my mind.

However, before I knew it, I was in front of Rosalie’s room. I could smell her flowery sweet scent, and I couldn’t be more familiar with the pull that made me long for her. She was inside, behind a thin door, and yet, it felt like my arm weighed a thousand pounds and I couldn’t lift it up to knock.

As I was battling internally, the door opened,

And she was standing in front of me, holding our wonderful son.

It was as unreal and beautiful as a dream.

My heart hammered in my chest, and I debated what to do.

Her long white hair was tied up in a ponytail, and she looked like a sharp and experienced warrior, yet I could tell she was still a kind and gentle person inside.

It might not have been many days since I'd seen her last, but I felt I hadn't seen her in centuries.

After all, each of us had died once.

I knew she would have a lot to catch up on, but I selfishly wanted some time alone with her.

I wanted to tell her so much how much she meant to me. How I'd felt when I thought I wouldn't be able to see her ever again. How I hoped that we could be together forever to raise our child.

But then.. a lot of other memories flooded my mind.

When I was a rogue, I'd held her against her will. Before that, I'd lied to her from her son.

and I'd even planned to kill her and take her away

She was kind enough to keep me alive and bring me back to life, but how could I burden her more with my feelings after I'd treated her so poorly in the past?

No, now was not a time to confess my feelings and try to plan a peaceful future with my mate.

In fact, now wasn't even a good time for me to remind her that I'd marked her and that we were mates.

I needed to be patient. Maybe step one was to make her feel comfortable around me.

"Hi, Rosalie," I managed to say.

"Ah, hi, Ethan." She seemed a bit nervous as well. "I'm glad that you are up and about."

"Um... thank you for saving my life."

Rosalie shook her head. "No, thank you for making that sacrifice for me first," she said. As if it wasn't a big deal, she added, "I guess we're even now."

I replied softly, "You really didn't need to. It was too dangerous..."

She grimaced, as if a sharp pain hit her right in the heart at my words.

"...but I am grateful that you brought me back. Thank you again," I continued.

Chapter 195 Ethan And Rosalie Finally Met Again

I was grateful that I got to see her again, be able to hear her voice, and have a conversation like this. Her beautiful eyes were locked on me, and I wanted so badly for her to know that I loved her enough to die for her. But I wasn't sure how she could take it at the moment. I had to remind myself to take it slow.

“You’re welcome, Ethan.” Rosalie nodded her head and smiled, but her smile seemed bitter.

She lifted her head, and when her gaze met mine, a question slipped from my lips. “Why did you do that?”

Was it because she might have a spot for me in her heart?

She froze, and took a moment to respond flatly, “Because the boy needs his father back... Here, you want to hold him?”

Her words stung.

But what else did I expect? After so many things happening in our lives, how could I still expect that she had feelings for me and wanted me in her life?

When I took my son in my arms and held him tightly though, all I had left in my heart was gratitude. What more could I ask for?

I was here, alive, talking to the love of my life and kissing our baby, who laughed with glee before he reached up and patted my face.

Anything else in life was just icing on the cake. I should not have been greedy and should have just been content with what I already had.

Rowan was still wearing the special bracelet I had given him. I pinched his chubby cheek, holding him tightly. I glanced over and saw that Rosalie’s eyes seemed to be moist.

Then we seemed to have exhausted our topics.

I cleared my throat, trying to find something else to say. “Paul and Richard caught me up on the spy issue.”

“Yes, a man named Marcus. He was with a group of citizens who had met you before. A seer named Gayla and people from her village,” she said to give me more details.

I let out a breath inwardly. The conversation was much easier when it was about work.

Then she continued, “So of course, my trip to pick the Moonlight Lily wasn’t a secret, especially when Madalynn found out that she could use it to help Behar.”

“Moonlight Lily?” I repeated.

“Yes?” She was a bit puzzled at why I said that and then she chuckled, “If you heard from Soren, that

flower may have a few other nicknames.”

Idiot Soren, I cursed, but I focused back on the priorities.

“Gayla and the villagers are here?” I pondered. “Did James lose that territory to Kal?”

Rosalie nodded. “Yes, unfortunately.”

Again, I nodded. Now, I could see she wasn’t about to start our love affair over. She was all business.

“Your Majesty, welcome back.” Cerina’s voice echoed from down the hallway, causing both Rosalie and me to turn to her.

“You had asked us to hold the spy until you return. What would you like us to do with him?” Cerina said with a bow.

“Bring him over to the hall,” Rosalie instructed and turned to me, and Alpha Ethan, would you like to join us too?”

*My pleasure,” I replied. My eyes were narrowed. I had plenty to say to this Marcus.

“You can give the baby to...” Rosalie said.

I blew out a breath slowly and looked her in the eye. “No, I think it’s fine for he to join his parents.”

Rosalie seemed to be surprised by what I said, and she looked away. However, I swore I saw a hint of pink in her face.

We met the rest of the group in the meeting hall. Marcus’s wrists and ankles were shackled. He had a defiant look on his face as he scowled at Rosalie, who was sitting in her throne; she looked divine and graceful.

I decided to remain silent and let Rosalie handle the situation.

“Your name is Marcus?” Rosalie asked. Her voice was calm.

The man sneered, but he didn’t answer her question. Instead, he stated, “You’re going to waste your time on me. Why don’t you just kill me?”

“Because I have some questions for you,” Rosalie did not seem to be offended by Marcus’s attitude and she maintained her tone.

“Ha, go f*ck yourself! I’m not going to tell you a thing!”

“How dare you!” Jace was about to beat up Marcus when Rosalie ordered, Jace, stop.”

“But, he’s so disrespectful, Your Majesty!”

“Jace, it’s an order.” Rosalie nodded to Jace as he stepped back in line.

However, Marcus didn’t show gratitude for Rosalie’s kind act. He took the opportunity to turn to me and raise his voice, making sure that he could be heard. “I am loyal to my country and my king, unlike some f*cking banished traitors!”

I swallowed the bitterness and didn’t know what to think. The country I fought for and the people I tried to guard thought I was the one who had betrayed them. How ironic was that?

This time, Rosalie narrowed her eyes and she responded immediately, “Marcus, you’re wrong!”

Her clear voice echoed in the hall. It was not often that I saw Rosalie upset at others. She said, “Alpha Ethan’s loyalty lies with his country, not with one person. He was banished not because he did something wrong. Instead, it was because he protected your country so well!”

My eyes widened. A stream of warmth flowed through my heart.

Rosalie... she was defending me.

Then I felt something soft grabbing my finger. It was my little boy. He wrapped his hand around my finger, as if he was saying that he trusted me too.

I couldn’t help but smile. What a lucky man I was!

“Why waste time trying to explain it to him?” Soren stepped forward and cracked his knuckles. “If he seeks death, then let him have it!”

Marcus was a little surprised at Rosalie’s words, but after hearing what Soren said, he held his chin high and he exclaimed, “Go ahead! I’ll die as a hero!”

Soren burst out laughing. “Oh, man, you’re not only stubborn, but also stupid!” Then he stopped laughing and stared at Marcus. “You *sshole! A lot of people could’ve died because of you! Many have died because of your king, and you call yourself a hero?!”

Marcus shook his head. “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Rosalie got up from her throne, walked over and stood in front of Marcus. She said, “If my life alone could be exchanged for peace for all the people, I wouldn’t hesitate to do so.”

I frowned and was really not fond of what she said. However, I knew that as kind as she was, she would

do just that, just like she had done for her people earlier.

“However,” she paused and asked Marcus, “my question to you is, if King James were to get what he wants, to have my blood and Ethan dead, do you really think the war would end?”

“King James said he would end the war if Ethan was dead and you were captured!” Marcus said; it was as if he was convincing himself.

Rosalie shook her head. “Alpha Ethan had the war nearly won for King James before the king decided it was no longer about defeating the invader, but about making sure no one would ever be a risk for his heir’s throne.”

Marcus’ eyes widened. “That’s not true...”

Rosalie didn’t comment on his disagreement and continued, “Even if James got what he wanted, he’d just go right back to fighting against Kal, and you know that. It was proven that without Ethan, he is a weakling. He cannot win. But he would continue

to try because he wants to secure his reign. How many more families would be destroyed? How many more innocent children would be orphaned, or worse, killed? And that’s all because of your king’s selfish pursuit of his unborn child!”

“I don’t...” Marcus began, looking at the ground as he slowly shook his head. “I never thought about it that way... Your Majesty.”

Rosalie nodded. “Marcus, you look like an intelligent man. Is that who you want to serve?”

Marcus stood there silently this time. I could see the conflict in his expression.

“Now, you will still be taken down to the dungeon to serve a sentence for your crimes,” Rosalie said.

Marcus didn’t fight back and accepted his punishment, but asked, “Your Majesty... you said you wanted to ask me something. What was it?”

Rosalie smiled, and she walked back and sat on her throne. Everyone admired her. She was dignified and graceful. “My question for you is, if you are given the chance, will you fight for me?”

Marcus looked at the floor. Finally, he said, “...I don’t know.”

Rosalie didn’t pressure him more and gestured for him to be taken away before she looked at the rest of us.

We were all speechless. All I could do was stare at her in awe, wonder, and pride.

Like a butterfly that had broken free from her cocoon, this once timid girl had metamorphosed into a merciful and wise leader, a true queen.