

## A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 106-110

### Chapter One Hundred & Six

Cai finally let me go at the revelation unfolding before us and took a step towards her. A turn of events that none of us had expected.

As the initial mate bond moment then finally ran its course, so many emotions flashed across his face. As if you could physically see the different thoughts running through his mind, put on display for everyone in the room.

Confusion, recognition, happiness... and then quickly followed by guilt, shame, and regret.

And, as he finally tore his eyes away to look at me, I immediately knew what he was thinking.

Because I was partly thinking it too.

Of all the people for Cai to be mated to, only Myra could have made us feel so genuinely terrible about what we did. Or, in Cai's case, significantly worse.

Because I'd slept with my best friend's mate... and Cai had also slept with the woman who killed her.

This was... messy.

"Myra... I'm so happy to see you," he said, unable to even meet her eyes.

But the look of hurt on Myra's face said it all. She didn't understand what was happening and Cai's reaction to their mate bond was probably only making it worse.

"Cai...? You're my... mate?" she asked quietly. "How... how can that be possible? I'm not ranked."

However, there wasn't any further discussion made on the topic. No, instead Cai quickly turned around, conflict still evident across his features.

"...I'm so sorry," was all he said.

And before Myra could say anything else, he instantly started to leave the room.

Or, at least, tried to.

I quickly ran after him, reaching out my hand just as he made it to the door, and caught him before he could get too far.

“Cai,” I hissed quietly to him. “Wait a second.”

“Aria... I can't... I'm not...,” he started, fumbling for the right words. But I knew what he was trying to say.

I'm not good enough.’

And I completely understood where he was coming from.

Truthfully, I felt sick at myself too. Somehow, I'd let Myra convince me that she wasn't interested in Cai all those years ago. I should have known better and trusted my instincts. It was so obvious that she had feelings for him. Thinking back now, I wondered if she was just projecting that through me instead, living vicariously from a false belief that she would never have a chance herself. If only she'd known.

Heaven made perfect sense for them to be together. They had the opportunity to meet in high school and would have balanced each other out perfectly; Cai and his old playboy antics would have been straightened out immediately from Myra's sweet nature, and Cal would have done wonders for Myra's confidence issues. Before her death, she had already been blossoming into a much stronger, more vocal person. Robbed too early of her full potential, she was someone I always said would fit a Luna position perfectly

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Chapter One Hundred & Six

But, more disturbingly, it also held a puzzle piece missing from the timelines.

...Because they were both originally destined to die.

Now things were complicated, a lot of history and errors being made in her absence... but it wasn't necessarily impossible to fix.

Especially since now, more than ever, they would need each other,

Cai's trust issues ran deep from where Thea had hurt him. I was sure that if it were anyone else standing before him, claiming to be his mate again, that he would be sceptical. Possibly even completely unwilling to accept it.

But this was Myra.

Someone we both knew extremely well. I knew he had his own form of close friendship with her, the two of them exchanging letters even after he returned home. For a period of time, Myra was probably closer to Cai than I was

So, if anyone was able to help him let go, move on, and be happy... it was Myra.

Myra, who had never held a grudge or ill wish against anyone, and the kindest person I had ever met.

Myra, who would be understanding and forgiving of the struggles he endured.

...Myra, who also just so happened to need someone supporting her through the beginning of her new life. A probably traumatic experience after more than two years absent. She would benefit greatly from Cai helping her adjust and warm up to all the changes.

No, they were still perfectly balanced.

In fact, I couldn't think of a better fit.

"I get it," I said to him, moving to grab his hands gently. "But I think if you walk out that door right now, you'll regret it for the rest of your life. The worst possible thing you could do is ruin this moment before you've even given her a chance to decide."

"Aria..." he said, teeth gritted.

"She needs you, Cai," I pressed. "Be the man she thinks you are and show her you're not defined by your past mistakes. I think you'll find she's more forgiving than you realise. This is Myra, after all, a girl who has been in love with you since we were fourteen."

He closed his eyes and frowned, still unsure, but after another few moments had passed, he finally nodded. Taking what I said to heart, he straightened back up, took a deep breath, and rubbed his face to refocus.

"Okay... okay," he said. "I'll just... I'll just go back there then... ahhh, how do I look?"

I laughed and took a step away to observe his appearance.

"You look like your only friend died three days ago and you haven't slept since," I joked, remarking on his more rugged condition. "Aww, how sweet of you. I'm flattered."

He just nodded his head, clearly too nervous to actually listen to what I was saying. A first for Cai, I was sure. I doubted any woman had ever made him so self-conscious before but I knew the pressure would be immense.

“Alright, stop stalling,” I smiled. “You’ve already kept her waiting.”

With a final thankful look towards myself, he slowly walked back over to her bed and sat in the chair, closing the curtain before he did so. A chance for them to talk in private and salvage what he had almost

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royally messed up.

“Hey... Myra...,” I could hear him say before he lowered his voice.

And I couldn’t help but feel a little overwhelmed by how perfect things had worked out.

“I hope those tears aren’t from being sad,” Aleric suddenly whispered by my ear, wrapping his arms around my waist from behind.

“I’m not crying...,” I started to say, but as I reached a hand up to my face, I realised he was right. “Oh. No... I think these are happy tears.”

I’d been so caught up by it all, I hadn’t even realised.

“Come on,” he said, gently tugging my arm to the door. “Give them some space.”

And I knew he was right.

I followed him out, feeling as though I’d aged another ten years with how intense everything became upon waking up. But it had been worth it. Every second of it.

Now just the two of us, in the silence of the hallway outside, the fatigue was finally catching up with me and I felt my eyes sting from exhaustion.

“Time for snacks and bed?” he asked, watching me fail to stifle a yawn.

I merely nodded, too sleepy to reply, and leaned into him for support.

“Alright, I got you,” he said.

And he picked me up in his arms, walking us back to the car.

I immediately nestled my head into his neck, greedily taking every chance I could get to be close to him. I didn’t want to waste any time, not even a second. Not after everything we’d endured to get here.

“So... What are we going to do tomorrow?” he asked quietly as we walked. I could feel the vibrations from his chest as he spoke, making me melt against him more.

But, despite my otherwise preoccupied thoughts, I did take a moment to consider his question. Just a small moment was all I needed before a smile spread across my face.

Because, now living a life of endless possibilities, without Thea or Selene breathing down my neck at every turn, there was only one answer to that.

One very simple answer.

“Tomorrow...?” I repeated. “Tomorrow... we do whatever the hell we want.”

\*\* SIX MONTHS LATER \*\*

“Aleric,” I moaned as his hands began roaming my body.

We’d been in bed all morning, procrastinating all of our duties on possibly the most important day of our hives. But somehow that knowledge had only made it feel all the more exciting.

“Seriously,” I said, though nothing about my tone implied anything remotely serious. “We need to get ready. We’re going to be late.”

I felt as he then started making his way over my body, planting little kisses everywhere, until he eventually landed by the mark on my neck

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Chapter One Hundred & Six

Or rather, his mark.

A shiver ran through me as he touched the sensitive flesh there, a gasp escaping my lips. A pleasure stemming from where he’d permanently claimed my body several months earlier. And whilst the contact he made now was small, it was enough to cause my wolf to stir inside, adding yet another force to argue with as we wasted precious time.

“Aleric, please,” I whined.

But my efforts of refusal were now beginning to sound like pleas for more.

“It’s fine, we can just be a little late,” he said, starting to gently nip my ear. Something that was making it increasingly more difficult to think properly.

However, before he could get much further, suddenly a loud knocking sounded from the bedroom door, preventing any further activities.

"...Alpha, apologies...", a voice said from the other side. "You asked me to remind you when it was time to get ready..."

Aleric let out a quiet growl next to me in irritation. "I hate your new attendant."

"No, you don't," I said, untangling myself from his arms to get out of bed. "My last two got me killed. You just hate that this one will interrupt us when we have more important commitments."

And he looked as though he was debating internally which was worse.

I shouted to the attendant that I appreciated them letting me know and that I would get ready, before turning back to Aleric laying in bed. He was watching me hungrily as I stood before him still completely naked.

"I'm having a shower," I said, dismissing his gaze. "You should get ready too."

But grabbing my clothes from the wardrobe, I could still feel his eyes on me the entire time, prompting me to finally turn around and see him smiling at me. A cause for suspicion.

"... What is it?"

"No, no, that sounds great," he said, getting out of bed. "I'll join you."

There it was.

"No," I said so quickly that he'd barely finished his sentence. "Somehow, I have a feeling that you'll manage to make us even more late if I let you, so go get ready in your old room. I'm already questioning whether or not I'm going to have time to do my make up thanks to you."

I looked at my reflection and sighed. Of all the days, today needed to be perfect. I really should have tried to be more organised and now only had myself to blame.

Aleric then came up behind me and kissed my temple, his hands gently touching my shoulders as he did s

o.

"You're so beautiful," he said, meeting my gaze in the mirror.

And it was almost enough to make me give in to his incessant badgering.

Almost.

“Nice try.” I said. “Now go get ready.”

He gave me a final smirk before leaving to do as I’d asked, and before the hour was done, the two of us were finally on our way to the meeting hall.

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Chapter One Hundred & Six

“Nervous?” he asked as we entered inside, walking to the main room.

“Of course,” I replied. “How could I not be? Aren’t you? Today, we’ll be making history.”

He gave a small shrug and smiled. “You organised it all so I luckily don’t have anything to worry about.”

I shook my head but had to laugh. Of course, he would think that.

But it was as we were about to enter through the double doors that someone then approached us, delaying us further.

“Alpha,” they called out. “Apologies, I just need a moment of your time.”

And both Aleric and I turned around, automatically responding to the title.

We looked at each other for a second, staring with blank expressions. But as realisation set in, we both found the situation amusing. This was probably going to be an ongoing issue, soon to be made even more complicated after today.

Finally, after another moment had passed, Aleric was the one to step forward. Much to my relief.

“I’ve got it,” he said. “You go get everyone settled.”

I quickly nodded and gave him my thanks. Judging by how the person was dressed, they were most likely a border warrior. Something better suited for Aleric’s expertise, having spent significant time amongst them during his training growing up.

Tentatively, I then pushed open the double doors of the meeting hall to see everyone else had already arrived, all chatting quietly to each other. A confirmation that, yes, we were the last people to get here, much to my embarrassment.

Everyone met my eyes as I walked past them, a small nod in greeting as I did. Just enough to acknowledge respect but not needing to take away from the conversations they were already engaged in. I was the late one, after all.

However, it was the two people in the corner that drew my attention the most. The only two to not immediately look in my direction when I entered.

Myra and Cai.

They were talking animatedly to each other, completely engrossed in their own little world. A sight that always made me happy to see.

Well, up until Cai wanted to push buttons. Something Myra was exceedingly great at keeping in check.

I watched as Cai leaned forward, tilting his head ever so slightly towards the crowd, and whisper something in a low voice. It was then promptly followed by him erupting into laughter.

Whatever he said immediately caused Myra's face to turn red in embarrassment, outraged by his remark. Something she quickly reacted to by dealing a light smack to his arm, looking up at him with a grumpy expression.

"You can't say that, Cai!" she scolded, making him laugh harder.

Their little banter went on for another minute before finally, all was forgiven with a smile from Cai and a quick kiss to her forehead. A show of just how close they'd become in such a short amount of time.

In fact, the two spent most of their time together. It made me happy to see their level of intimacy in light of all the issues that had threatened to keep them apart. A love that transcended even fate trying to kill them both off. Twice.

Suddenly, I felt as an electricity then washed over me, sending little shivers through my body, and I knew

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Chapter One Hundred & Su

that meant Aleric had finally returned. Ever since he'd marked me, I'd get tingles whenever he was close by. A great added bonus, though unexpected.

Sure enough, when I turned to look behind me, he instantly met my gaze with a small nod and smile. It was reassurance that everything was fine and that we were good to go ahead.



It was time.

“Everyone!” I announced loudly to the room, causing them to slowly hush. “Please take a seat and we can get started now. Apologies for keeping you all waiting... but we all know how terrible Aleric is with morning deadlines.”

This earned me a few laughs from the crowd before they went to take their seats at the table, looking up at me expectantly once they did so. A myriad of familiar faces, full of those I considered both friends and family.

My parents, Iris, Elder Luke, Brayden, and Alexander, to name just a few. And, of course, Cai and Myra. All of whom I knew this would have been impossible without.

Without these people, we couldn't have even dreamed to accomplish what we had planned. A place of equality and mutual respect, utilising our individual strengths to our collective benefit. A place of

greater than just their one leader or status, but rather required multiple facets to make them as strong as possible.

“Welcome, everyone,” I started, unable to stop myself from smiling. “It's been a crazy last few months finalising the merge and I really want to extend my thanks to everyone who made it as seamless as possible. But today, finally, we're able to have our very first meeting. A meeting that will mark us forever in the history books, forever changing traditions. A meeting of laying the foundation for our legacy.”

I took a small moment to pause, trailing my eyes around the table until they finally landed on Aleric, Cai, and Myra. Their expressions only mimicking my own as they shared in this monumental event.

“So, without further ado, I'd like to officially announce what we've all been waiting for,” I said, holding out my hands. “From today onwards, we are no longer just a pack, neither the Winter Mist nor the Silver Lake. But rather today marks the day that we will forever be known as one thing....”

“So, welcome, everyone,” I continued. “Welcome to the Council of the Silver Mist. Let the meeting begin.”

The End. (Epilogue in next chapter)

## **A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 107**

Bonus Chapter – Quick Home Recipes !! Important !! – You need to have read up to at least Chapter 96 to avoid spoilers. Continue reading at your own discretion.

This is just a short one-shot between Aria and Aleric during their time at the cabin.  
Explicit warning

Meat... herbs... garlic... butter... carrots....

I stared at the ingredients as if they were a dangerous foreign entity.

Not to say they were, but it wasn't exactly like I knew how to approach what I was going to attempt. Things had seemed so much easier when I was just reading about it... opposed to having to actually do it.

With a sigh, I picked up the kitchen knife and began peeling the carrots; preheating the pan on the stove whilst I did so.

Aleric had been doing the cooking for us both, having at least some experience with it. During times when he'd been on duty for the Winter Mist, there had been moments he'd had to cook whilst making camp somewhere random.

I

I, on the other hand, had experience that went only as far as boiling water for tea. After all, I'd lived my whole life surrounded by attendants and chefs.

But it couldn't be that hard, right?

I wanted to surprise him and give him a night off. Between the time spent with me and patrolling, I was sure he was getting exhausted. I thought this might be a good way to show my appreciation for his hard work.

I'd only read a few cooking books before, but I hadn't retained much. I knew the basic principles and theories, and knew what steps to do. The issue was in actually executing it though and making it taste good in the process.

The cabin had come stocked with bare essentials to last a while, the vegetables coming from a small, adjourned greenhouse and the meat was whatever Aleric picked up from hunting on patrol. Altogether, we were pretty fortunate considering we were in the middle of nowhere.

\_ \*Slick\*

I winced, looking down to see I'd cut myself.

I definitely needed to focus more. It wasn't like I could heal quickly, thanks to the silver ring.

After washing my hands and the knife, I threw out the spoiled carrot and tried again. He was going to be home any minute and I'd wanted to be finished before that. Though that was probably just me being overly optimistic considering my skill level.

Carefully, I proceeded to finish with the carrots, though taking far longer with it than I perhaps should have, and threw some butter, herbs and garlic into the pan. When that was sufficiently all nice and melted, I placed the meat on top, satisfied it at least smelt nice. That was surely a good sign if nothing else.

"What are you up to?" Aleric then said from the doorway.

I looked up sharply to see him there, a little surprised since I hadn't heard him approach over the sound of the pan.

"Oh, I'm ah... I'm cooking," I said, a little embarrassed. "I wanted to surprise you before you got home."

"I'm still surprised," he said walking behind me to wrap his arms around my waist. "Surprised you haven't burnt the house down."

"Hey!" I yelled offended, squirming in his grasp. "Come on, it smells good!"

But he held me against me, laughing as he refused to let me go.

"Aleric!"

"No, you're right, I'm sorry," he said, his head travelling to my neck and nibbling gently. "It does smell pretty good."

Though I wasn't sure whether he was still talking about the food.

"Ok, well I need to finish up here and I'll —."

I didn't get to finish my sentence though, instead losing my chain of thought. His hand had started tugging up the hem of my dress and immediately begun trailing across the bare skin of my stomach.

"... I um," was all I said.

What was I doing?

I tried to remember as I felt his attention then change, reaching up to grab at my breast and sending a shiver through me from the sensitivity there.

I could feel his warmth against my back, his breathing deepening near my ear, sending another wave of desire through me.

“What’s up?” he asked, his other hand now venturing past the hem of my underwear, causing me to gasp from the unexpected sensation. I leaned back against him, melting into the feeling of pleasure he gave, greedily taking every

second of it he had to offer.

“Aleric,” I moaned, turning my head to capture his lips against mine. His taste was intoxicating

My whole body then started burning up, my heart racing. But just before I was beginning to get too lost in the moment, I completely spun around and pushed him back against the kitchen bench, wasting no time in jumping onto his lap.

I could tell he was just as enthusiastic as me, his own lower-body betraying him, and I proceeded to move my hips against him, relishing in the way he reacted to me.

This was my doing. He wanted me just as much as I wanted him. Did my touch send him into delirium just as his did for me? Was it even better for him with the mate bond?

Before long had passed, it soon became clear that this wasn’t nearly enough for either of us.

Working as quickly as I could, I then undid his pants and positioned myself perfectly on top of him before....

“... Fuck,” Aleric slowly groaned, feeling as he pressed his length into me, and my own moan accompanied it.

How was it that he felt so perfect against me? As if he was naturally meant to always be there. Every sensation he had to offer me was enough to make me lose control instantly. As if proceeding with only pure desire.

I started to move again, his hands on my hips as he guided me against him, and every few seconds I would alternate between his lips, ear, and neck.

His own movement then slowly became more forceful as he quickened my pace, sending me into my own frenzy as that familiar buzz started to build inside me.

Faster and faster we moved, going until he was almost completely controlling me, arms now wrapped around me to hold my body to him. All I could do in turn was coil my own arms around his neck and hold on as I let him take over, almost at my limit.

In this position, his length was now pushing even further in as his speed increased, stealing moans from my lips with every thrust. I could feel myself tightening too, getting closer and closer until....

Finally, with a last cry escaping my lips, I felt myself come undone against him, shaking as the waves of pleasure swept through me. The overwhelming bliss fogging up my mind as the seconds ticked by.

Aleric wasn't far behind in his own end, a groan alerting me to his finish, and proceeded to rest his forehead against mine as we both fought to catch our breath.

How could things be this good? How was one person able to make me feel so euphoric from their touch? It seemed almost like a dream.

But, of course, with every dream, it had to come to an end eventually

The smell of burning quickly snapped me out of my trance, reminding me of exactly what I'd just been doing

The meat

"Shit!"

Without looking back, I jumped off Aleric's lap and ran to the stove... only to find it really was burning

"Oh.... no..," I whined, turning it over.

It was almost completely black on the opposite side, no longer looking appetising in any way.

The dish was ruined With a dejected exhale, I gave Aleric an apologetic look, only he didn't seem phased in the slightest.

In fact, by the time I'd served us our half-burnt dinner, the review I received from him was overwhelmingly positive.

Apparently, in Aleric's words, the meal had been delicious. It was 'one of the most satisfying dinners he'd ever had'.

...Though, \*somehow\*, I knew he wasn't talking about the food. Sigh.

Bonus Chapter – The Cycle of Change This chapter follows a young Elder Luke (Luke Hastings) 30/40 years prior to the main story. It was a very different time when things were not so accepting. This POV shows the beginning of how Elder Luke became the man he is today and why he holds the strong values he does – known by Aria as one of the deadliest men in the pack.

Fifty-two. There were fifty-two books I needed to reshelve today. Several more than the day before, even more than the day before that. It meant I would need to work late today in order to finish this in time. At least I had the entire day to get through it.

With a sigh of resignation, I grabbed my trolley and began the journey to the back of the library where I would start the process, giving small smiles to those I made eye contact with along the way. This was the life of a librarian. Day in... day out...

Not to say I didn't enjoy my work. On the contrary, I immensely loved what I did for a living. But I couldn't deny that it wasn't as interesting as say the ranked members of our pack. No, they led an eventful life of luxury and power. The kind of lives only unranked members such as myself could dream of.

"Excuse me," a deep voice then said behind me, making me turn around.

I was surprised to hear someone had followed me all the way to the very back, however, I quickly realised why.

"..What can I do for you, sir?" I asked politely, taking several steps towards the man.

"I was hoping you could help me for a moment. I'm trying to find something..."

He had the strong build of a warrior, with broad shoulders and a small air of authority about him to match that position.

I raised an eyebrow questioningly as I came to stand directly in front of him. "...Looking for a particular book, perhaps?"

"No, not quite..." he replied, looking down at me.

"Then how can I be of service today, sir? What exactly were you looking for?"

His hands then came up and grabbed either side of my face, sparks immediately erupting throughout my body from where our skin made contact.

"...My mate," he whispered, right before his mouth came down to meet mine.

Immediately, I was enveloped by him as we drew closer together, my senses overridden by his touch... his scent... his taste. It was only once I found myself pressed up against one of the shelves that I realised we were at my place of work... not our house. they felt lunge

A deep chuckle escaped me as I pulled away, smiling up at the man. At my mate.

"What are you doing here, Xavier?" I asked quietly. I was conscious of not being too loud so we weren't caught. "I didn't think I would see you until tonight."

“I need a reason to visit you now?” he questioned back, his lip pulling into a crooked smile.

I laughed once more before untangling myself from him, walking back towards my trolley.

“It’s not as though I don’t appreciate your presence, it’s just that I know you are meant to be at work right now. And it’s very unlike you to skip out on such a thing.”

He then sighed, his smile turning into more of a guilty one. “I came to tell you that I’ll be heading out over the border today. Official business in one of the neighbouring packs. My unit has been asked to supervise the proceedings.”

“... Then do they not expect you to be packing right now?” I asked, a small frown forming between my brows. “I would think that you’d... not want to risk coming to see me.”

His face then contorted from the unpleasant topic. “Luke... You know it’s not like that. I just... I’m so close to this promotion, I can feel it. Maybe today will be the day they recognise that.”

But I remained silent, my jaw clenching to stop myself from speaking my mind.

“Hey...,” Xavier then said softly, coming up to place his hands on either side of my waist tenderly. “Soon, I promise. Maybe in a few years, and after I get this promotion, we can make our relationship public. We can even finally buy a house in town... a nicer one at that too.”

His touch was making me want to melt into his arms but I managed to hold myself back.

“You say this every time, Xavier. We’ve been together for almost ten years now and it’s always the same promise.”

“Well... I mean, things might be different soon,” he said, finding an excuse. “Alpha Dominic is getting older and I’ve yet to hear the Alpha heir Tytus express any sort of... ‘grievance’ with our kind of relationship.”

I immediately tsked and pushed my way out of his arms. “That child? He barely knows what he’s doing. The only thing he knows is fighting.”

“That’s not true!” Xavier snapped back, a tone of irritation now in his voice. “Don’t say things like that about our future Alpha.”

Our eyes then locked for a few moments, his blue ones filled with frustration at my remark, and I sighed in response, rubbing my face with my hand.

“Apologies...,” I said, doing my best to sound as genuine as possible.

I should have expected him to have that reaction. He was a good warrior after all, and a patriotic one at that. Loyal to almost a fault, believing so wholeheartedly in the cause of making our pack great. It’s what made him the perfect soldier.

...But it was also what I loved about him too. His ability to have hope and see the good in people was one of the things that made me fall for him. Strong... attractive... and genuinely an amazing person. He complimented my more cynical nature perfectly.

Xavier then sighed, his shoulders relaxing. “It’s fine. Just... you know how important my work is to me, Luke. I’m sorry that I can’t... That we can’t... Well, some people just aren’t so accepting, you know?”

I nodded my head, unable to meet his eyes, but knew well what he was talking about.

Because whilst things definitely seemed to be getting better in terms of change, there was still a while to go before we reached the point we needed to. Movements were already starting across the country, bringing attention to the issue, and people were beginning to realise the truth of the matter. Because if the so-called Goddess could gift us with another being then, regardless of who they were, didn’t that mean there was a divine purpose behind the choice?

“The Goddess has a plan for us. I can feel it,” he continued, almost as if he’d read my thoughts. “Don’t lose faith in our future just yet.”

He then walked up and kissed my cheek, the sparks emitting through me once more. However, this time, I allowed myself to give in to the sensation, bringing my hand up to hold his head against mine, craving his presence for just a little longer.

We said our goodbyes shortly after that. I didn’t know how long it would be until I saw him again, his out of town pack business sometimes taking an uncertain amount of time. There was one thing I did know for sure though, and that was that it would certainly be a lot quieter around the house for a little while.

I went about my work diligently for the remainder of the day and, soon enough, closing time was just around the corner. I was relieved; thoughts of my cosy couch patiently waiting for me at home filling my head. Well, at least there was something waiting for me at home.

But it was as I was doing the final rounds for closing that I stumbled upon something. Two girls in the corner huddled closely together. I’d seen them here regularly so I knew they enjoyed this place just as much as I did, always treating the books with the respect they deserved. It was something that made me like them more than some of the more rowdy members we occasionally had.



“Apologies, ladies,” I said, politely approaching them. “We’re closing up now but we’ll be open again tomorrow morni...—.”

However, it was then that I noticed their demeanour properly, cutting my sentence short. Because they weren’t huddled together, so much as one was comforting the other.

“Is everything okay?” I asked, worried if someone had accidentally gotten hurt on the premises.

Burimit te pun

boleh dihanan

The girl who had her arm around the other one looked up at me, her expression wrought with concern.

“You haven’t heard?” she asked, her voice thick with emotion. “Oh, it’s so... it’s so horrible. I don’t know how they could have let it happen.”

They held my curiosity now and my mind began thinking of everything they could possibly be referring to

“What do you mean? Did something happen with the pack?” I pressed. Her friend then choked on another sob and the girl speaking patted her back, soothing her. “It was during a meeting today in a neighbouring pack,” she started, her eyes beginning to brim with tears of her own.

Immediately, my body froze, my blood turning cold.

“... There’s been an attack and some of our warriors died. Cindy’s mate being one of them. Someone from their unit came and found us not long ago to inform her. Apparently, there was a disagreement and a fight broke out. Several of the warriors fought to ensure the ranked members could escape. They were completely outnumbered”

Suddenly it was like the wind had been knocked out of me, the world starting to spin.

“...What... what um... ah, sorry...,” I said, flustered. I was struggling to keep composure even though the anxiety was starting to constrict around my chest, almost as if it were suffocating me.

I shook my head and tried again. “...Do we... Do you know who was hurt?”

The girl then sniffled, rubbing her eye as a tear escaped her. “Not really but they’re bringing the bodies back now. They should be at the hospital soon.”

I didn't hear anything else after that.

Instantly, my body moved on its own as I sprinted out of the library. I didn't care that I didn't close up, I didn't care that there were still people inside, all that mattered was getting to the hospital. Seeing him. Making sure he was okay.

...But he would be fine, right? He was strong. There was no way...

I couldn't even think about that. My wolf was already frantic enough, making it impossibly difficult to think clearly.

— Before too long, I finally arrived at the hospital, and I bee-lined for the administration desk

without even stopping to breathe.

“Are they here? The warriors that were hurt?” I panted, trying to get the words out through my heavy breathing. “The ones... that were killed?”

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The girl behind the desk looked up at me alarmed for a moment, my appearance overly dishevelled from having ran the few blocks here.

“Is there someone you were looking for in particular?” she asked.

“Xavier Burrows,” I quickly said. “I need to know if he was hurt. If he was....”

I couldn't finish my sentence.

The girl then looked me up and down, a frown forming on her face. “...And what was your relationship to them? Are you family?”

It took everything inside me not to growl out at her in frustration, wishing she would just answer the question instead of delaying further.

“What does that matter? Just tell me if —.”

“You're Luke, correct?” a voice then said next to me.

I looked up to see who had spoken and found the leader of Xavier's unit, Gavin, standing there, his face appearing as though he'd just been through hell.

“I think I've seen you around a few times, right?” he continued.

“Yes, 1... I know Xavier from your unit, sir,” I said, bowing my head slightly. “I heard the news and came to find out if he was okay.”

The girl at the desk then chimed in, much to my further irritation. “Apologies, sir, but right now only family—.”

“That’s alright, Emily,” Gavin said, raising a hand up to pause her. “It’s been both a traumatic and horrific day for everyone in our pack... Especially for those of us who have lost a friend.”

As he said those last words, his eyes met mine with a pointed sadness within them.

...And, instantly, it was as if someone had drowned me.

I couldn’t breathe properly. Couldn’t see properly.

Everything felt... black.

And it was as though a part of me was being ripped slowly to shreds inside, waves of pain beginning to pulse through me.

“I need to... I need to see him,” I choked out. “I need to say goodbye.”

But Gavin then frowned, his eyes narrowing ever so slightly. “That’s not really necessary. The bodies of the deceased will be prepared and a funeral held accordingly so you can pay your respects then. Right now only family are being allowed in.”

“He doesn’t have any family!” I yelled back angrily, gritting my teeth. “Bring me to him now.”

I was his family. His only family. The only one he had left. The only one I had left. We’d found each other in the most unexpected of ways, neither of us ever believing we would be truly happy. But we were. We were happy. In the end, we made our own happiness. Our own little pack of two

“...And what was your relationship to Xavier, again?” Gavin then asked, his tone suddenly sceptical,

And as I took in his demeanour, I understood the full gravity of the situation I was now in.

Because if I were to tell him the truth, then I would be revealing a secret that Xavier and I had both guarded our entire lives. A truth that many would still disagree with today, including our current Alpha, Dominic.

However, in this instance... it wasn't my secret to tell. It was Xavier's. It was \*his\* choice to reveal that sort of information, \*his\* reputation that was on the line... and he'd chosen not to do so. He'd chosen his job and the pack above all else. It wasn't my place to assume what he would want now that he was gone.

The only thing it would possibly accomplish now, in speaking the words aloud, would be to tarnish what he had worked so hard for. A selfish decision on my account for just the smallest chances they would even allow me in to see his body. After all, they had no way to even confirm my claim was true.

And so, out of sheer frustration, I then gritted my teeth and threw my hand out angrily, knocking over several items from the administration's desk. I'd never felt so much rage inside before, so much hatred and disgust.

They were pathetic. All of them. Cowards the lot of them, including the Alpha.

Without even answering the question, I then stormed out of the hospital, my grief and pain still tearing me apart inside, my wolf howling.

And it quickly dawned on me that I couldn't sit back and ignore the world anymore.

Just how many people were out there suffering under the same injustice?

There was a fight to be had that I'd purposely remained deaf to, becoming too consumed within my own world with Xavier to risk what we had built.

But he was gone now. And yet, somehow, the world kept going.

As if it didn't even notice that he wasn't here anymore.

As if no one really cared.

But I did.

...In the months that followed after his passing, I discovered a lot of different things.

Like, despite my unranked status, there was a lot a person could learn in a place like a library. Not just the wealth of knowledge acquired from the books either... but from the whispers between the shelves too. The gossip no one ever expects anyone to overhear.

But I heard it. I heard it all.

And not just that, but I learned a lot about myself also.

Things I wouldn't have ever thought possible, thought I was capable of... and, some, even unthinkable.

However, it was interesting how it all interlocked, how it all could come together for a bigger purpose.

And whilst I still couldn't find it within me to believe in a fictional woman who birthed our kind, I knew Xavier was one to have had that sort of faith. Believe in that sort of thing. And from that faith he had held, he had thought there was some sort of divine plan for us; for both of us.

...So just what exactly could one lowly librarian accomplish all by themselves?

What could they do against the prejudice that festered around them?

Well, I didn't have an answer for that yet.

But maybe I would think more on it after I'd had Alpha Dominic 'removed'.

...And I proceeded to do just that.

## **A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 108**

### **Bonus Chapter – The Chrysalis of a Killer**

This bonus chapter follows the moment Arla committed herself to Aleric in the old timeline. The first leap that led her down her dark past.

#### **AUTHOR NOTE:**

This chapter shows where it all started, a nice way to compare to where they ended up. This is the old timeline's version of Aleric (as we all know), and this is also a version of Aria never seen before either. All of this is way, wayyy in the past. Years before the book even began.

The importance of this chapter is that it shows the moment Aria fully committed herself to Aleric and began her road to becoming the person she eventually became. This is Aria before her guilt, her regret, before Aleric's truly harsh treatment and, most importantly, before she was brought back to life the first time. Just a child who didn't understand why her mate didn't love her; confused as to what she needs to do in order to fulfil the role everyone expects of her. Someone who still has hope that things will work out.

\*Thump, thump\*...

My heart. I could hear it pounding loudly in my chest, screaming at me to reconsider. To walk away and not enter through the doors in front of me.

\*Thump, thump... thump, thump... thump, thump\*...

I looked down at the tray in my hand, reviewing the amount of preparation I'd put into organising this. It was a small gesture and yet I was hopeful that he would acknowledge my effort.

Really, it had been Sophie's idea. She'd suggested that I find out what he enjoyed... what he liked to eat, drink... what he did for his hobbies. She told me to find ways that showed him I was at least trying to put effort into our relationship.

"\*“You need to be bolder, braver,” \*‘ she had said to me. “\*“He's never going to love you if you don't prove to him why he should.”\*”

\*“But we're mates...,” \*‘ I argued, confused by her suggestion. “\*“I thought... I thought that meant that he would feel the same way as me.”\*“

She then looked at me with her sad eyes, a sight that was slowly becoming more and more common over these last few months, and sighed. “\*“This man is an Alpha, Aria, and predicted t

o become the most powerful one at that. You were fated to help him achieve that goal. So... help him.”\*

...But it was so much easier said than done.

Aleric and I had been mates for over a year now but I still struggled with how to properly show him how I felt. He was cold, unreadable, imposing... impossible to understand. And yet I loved him. Loved his quiet, unquestionable aura, his strength... the way he made my body shiver when he was close. It's just that he didn't see me that way... yet.

...So what do you give a man who already has everything?

What do you do so that he'll maybe look at you with the affection you so badly crave?

A tray of treats and tea delivered to his office? Would he even want to be bothered right now?

He normally allocated time for me in his schedule for... mate things. Unfortunately, today wasn't one of those days. He would probably be spending the night with Thea again since she normally kept his bed warm during the week.

Soon, though. Soon she would be leaving. Everyone had told me so. 'A mistress can't compete with a mate,' they all said. 'He'll get bored of her eventually.'

But I hated waiting... and I wanted to see him even if it wasn't one of my designated days. Being around him made my wolf happier and made me feel better too. Would it be possible to help him see that I could do everything Thea could? ...That I could make him happy if he just gave me a chance?

'I shouldn't do this,' I thought, quickly talking myself out of it. 'I'm only going to annoy him.'

But my wolf whined inside, wanting to see her mate. She was too greedy sometimes, too demanding. Didn't she see the way he looked at us? How much he didn't want us around?

I sighed, caving to her pining.

'Fine.'

Taking a deep breath, I extended my hand... and hesitantly knocked on the office door.

A moment of silence instantly followed, something that dragged on for what felt like an eternity. Was he ignoring me? Was I wrong in thinking he was even here right now?

But no, I could smell he was in there. I'd followed his scent all the way from his quarters this morning until it led me to the general office downstairs. He was in there, I was sure.

"...Who is it?" his voice then called out from the other side.

'I should turn back. It's not too late. I can just apologise and leave quickly...'

"Umm... sorry! I didn't--"

"...Come in, Ariadne." to the

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Too late.

The only thing stopping my hands from violently shaking was knowing that if I dropped this tray outside his front office, that it would be even scarier than going in to face him. I needed to keep my composure or all of this was going to be so much worse.

As best I could with one hand, I maneuvered the door open, twisting the handle, and lightly pushed it ajar.

...And instantly regretted intruding.

Aleric sat at his desk, documents sprawled everywhere, and was accompanied by three Elders.

They were in a meeting... and I'd just interrupted.

One of the Elders I recognised immediately as Elder Luke. How could I not know who he was? Inside the pack vault, I'd avidly read all of his political strategies from the last five years and immensely enjoyed the way he tackled a lot of the major issues surrounding pack relations. He was a genius in his field and I held nothing but respect for him.

Though it was a little strange I hadn't realised Aleric was in a meeting. For whatever reason, I hadn't noticed the extra scents that lead through the door. Maybe I was just too focused on just the one very intoxicating one of my mate.

...A mate whose cold eyes were now glaring at me, piercing the small ounce of confidence I'd tried to muster up before coming in here.

The air was tense, serious, the sort of atmosphere you wouldn't normally want to intrude on. They were all huddled around where Aleric sat, their eyes now all on me expectantly to explain why I had interrupted.

"What do you want?" Aleric asked impatiently.

I quickly looked down at my hands to where I held the tray, my mind flustered. This had been a terrible idea.

"I-I just umm..." I stuttered.

'Pathetic.'

I couldn't even speak properly now. Was this really the best I could do?

I took another deep breath and looked back up towards him, willing myself to at least get through to the end of this interaction with a shred of my dignity left. I was a Luna. His Luna. I could come to see him if I wanted to... right?

"I know how hard you've been working lately... with the Silver Lake war and everything," I continued, finally meeting his cold eyes. "I just... I thought you might like something to help keep you going."

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He stared back at me, his face completely unreadable. Almost as if waiting for me to get to the point.

"I prepared it all myself... apologies, if it's not to your liking."

The three Elders then turned to look at Aleric, waiting to see what his reaction would be. It wasn't often Aleric and I interacted in public so their curiosity was probably piqued. Though I was sure they already knew of his distaste for me by now.



Aleric then sighed and let go of the papers from his hand.

“Fine. You can leave it on the table here,” he said, pointing to an empty space on the desk.

My heart leapt a little at his approval. He hadn't instantly rejected the idea... but that could have just been because there were others present.

Without wasting any more time, I quickly walked over to leave the tray where he instructed, doing my best not to cause any further trouble for him.

...But I couldn't stop my eyes as they naturally wandered over to the documents in front of him.

War correspondence, schematics, and field reports littered the area before him, filling the space so much I was surprised there had been room for the tray.

They'd been at this for months, I knew that much. After Aleric had killed Alpha Tobias, the world seemingly descended into madness, constantly in fear that we were going to be under attack at any moment.

But I had been hiding something from Aleric this entire time too. It was wrong, I knew, but I

couldn't help it.

The truth was that I was familiar with most of the documents here already, having snuck into the pack vault at midnight a few times out of curiosity, a place reserved for ranked members only. Not that I wasn't technically a ranked member... more so Aleric had expressly forbidden me from going in there. Apparently, there was no reason I needed to be involved with that side of pack management, but I couldn't seem to stop myself.

I'd always been taught growing up that a good Luna was a prepared one. And so I had studied.

the expectations of the Elders, beyond what any Luna should have to, but it was a responsibility placed on me nevertheless. Somewhere along the line, I even started learning about how intricate political strategies could be, how much of a fascinating puzzle they could

become.

Sometimes, if I focused enough, it was like I could see it all playing out in my head. See how moving people in certain ways would lead to correlated outcomes, anticipating what they may do in retaliation to those results. Almost as if it were a game.

And the war with the Silver Lake was proving to be one of the most interesting ones yet. I had

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a few theories for how it could play out but was waiting to see which side would move next. Would Aleric end up winning the next battle? Or would their new Alpha, Caius, prove victorious?

The problem was Aleric didn't like it when I left the packhouse for too long but there wasn't much else to do in terms of entertainment. Looking over the war documents had become a hobby of sorts. A passion. Even giving me a tiny bit of a thrill when I thought of new ways to go about certain issues.

...Suddenly, I was dragged out of my thoughts and thrown back into reality.

Without looking, Aleric had reached out to grab something on top of the desk and accidentally brushed my arm in the process.

...And a small gasp escaped my lips.

Sparks immediately erupted from where our skin made contact, igniting my body inside. And, just like every other time, a euphoric rush shivered through me. I wanted to reach out, to touch him again, to feel it for just a few seconds more...

"You can go now," Aleric said, verbally dismissing me when I stood standing there without moving

"Ah, a—apologies," I hurriedly replied, my brain still frazzled from the bond. But I quickly took a step backwards to leave, not wanting to tarnish the small positive experience I'd already accomplished so far. "I'll leave you to it. I hope—."

"Your name is Ariadne Chrysalis, right?" Elder Luke then chimed in, cutting off my final words.

I looked over at him confused, unsure why he was asking me something he already knew the answer to.

"We've never actually had the chance to speak before, Luna," he said, taking a step forward to extend his hand. "My name is Luke Hastings, the newest Elder on the council."

I instantly looked over at Aleric for his approval but he only stared back at me expressionlessly. Was he okay with this? With me talking with the Elders?

...But wouldn't it be rude if I declined his greeting?

I quickly looked back over at Elder Luke and accepted his hand, shaking it within mine.

“Yes, I’m familiar with your work,” I said quietly. “You have accomplished a great deal in such a short amount of time. It’s very commendable.”

He chuckled and pulled away, his eyes holding a glint of deep intelligence that made me wonder what vast knowledge he was hiding. I was sure there was so much more he could tell me than just what I’d read in the reports.

“You flatter me, Luna,” he said humbly. “Though I couldn’t help but notice your own

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curiosity with the work we’re doing here. And given that you’re familiar with my history, do I mean to take that as confirmation that you, too, are well studied in this field?”

I chewed on the inside of my cheek, sceptical as to whether I should confess. Aleric had always made it clear that I wasn’t meant to be involved with anything like this. My job was managing

small affairs and events within the pack... not politics.

“Oh... I don’t know. Not really,” I said softly, taking another step back towards the door. “I should probably be going now though. I’ve already taken up too much of your—.”

“Humour me,” he insisted, reaching down to hand me some of the documents from the desk.

I stared at the field report and map he’d given me; two documents I was already familiar with, yet were two documents I wasn’t meant to have seen before.

“I’ve heard rumours that our Luna is as intelligent and well versed as she is beautiful,” he said, complimenting me.

Was this his way of getting me to feel more comfortable and open up that I had been sneaking in the vault? Did Aleric set him up for this? To get my confession?

I scrutinised the pages in my hand, already having several ideas on the issues they were facing, but knew that my opinion wouldn’t matter anyway. My suggestions were just silly fantasies of a young Luna, not that of an experienced strategist.

“...What would a girl like me know about war?” I nervously replied, handing him back the documents. “I’m no Alpha.”

Elder Luke exhaled and took them from my hand. “Ah, that’s a shame. We’ve been stuck in a stalemate with the Silver Lake for so long now that I was looking forward to picking your brain on the matter. To get a fresh perspective.”

'Me too,' I sadly agreed inside.

I would have loved the opportunity to speak freely with Elder Luke, to revel in a proper academic conversation relating to the current affairs of the pack. But instead, I gave him a small smile, leaving towards the door once more.

"You think too highly of her," Aleric muttered quietly behind me. "All she knows is books. She wouldn't be useful for anything of this nature."

His words instantly stopped me in my tracks just as my hand rested on the door handle, stinging as if he had just physically wounded me.

Was that how he really saw me? Useless?

All Aleric ever seemed to care about was winning this war, to continue climbing in power. Why was it that it felt as though, between his work and Thea, there just wasn't any room for me?

...And then a thought came to me.

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...If I could make myself useful to him, help him get what he so desperately wanted... then would he finally have time for me? Finally want to make time for me?

But I was scared. Scared that, even if I did try, he would just laugh off my ideas. I had no real life experience with any of this. All of my theories were just based on books, old records and my own imagination.

"\*You need to be bolder, braver,\*" Sophie's words then echoed in my head. "He's never going to love you if you don't prove to him why he should."\*

...Was this what she had meant?

...Was this what would make him happy?

I closed the door once more and spun back around to face the group, doing my best to keep my composure.

"...Was there something else?" Aleric asked, his cold eyes slowly filling with disdain. I could tell that he wanted me to leave, and do so quickly, his patience finally dwindling.

But I pushed aside my fear. I needed to show him that I could help him, that I could add value. That I was worth his time.

No, I needed to cast aside my anxiety and fulfil my purpose.

Because if the Goddess could stand back and allow for his cold treatment of me, then perhaps this was all a part of her plan. That she would make it so I would have to earn his love to follow him down his path.

I needed to remember that I was fated to Aleric; his other half, his mate. My role was to help him achieve greatness and succeed. It was what the Elders had already prophesied me to do.

So all that was left for me to do was to just do it. Just as Sophie had said.

“Actually... yes,” I replied to him, raising my head slightly. “I just realised that there was something I noticed when looking at the files but I forgot to mention it.”

Without waiting for his invitation to proceed, I quickly walked towards the group and held my hand out to Elder Luke to retrieve the documents back. His eyes were filled with intrigue as he obliged my request; eyes that were the polar opposite to Aleric’s disapproving ones.

“In my opinion, your strategies so far have been fine, but too focused on brute force... no insult intended, of course,” I said before laying the pages out on the desk in front of them. “As your previous stalemate battles have shown, you’re never going to succeed against someone like Alpha Caius with just landscape strategies and strength alone. You need to think more outside the box. Aleric’s skill in battle is an asset, for sure, but so is the way Caius can manipulate his men so easily. And an army of men who are motivated will always prevail over one that isn’t. In fact, I’m sure if we didn’t have Aleric, we would have lost this war already.”

| “Ariadne!” Aleric growled in caution, angry at my blatant insult to the pack

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But what I had said was true. Aleric was trying too hard to catch them in tight spots but didn’t have the full strength of the people behind him to execute it correctly. It was like playing a game of chess by expecting to only use the king piece. The pawns were there... it’s just that they were all becoming more stagnant the longer the war drew on. They were now just going through the motions, becoming fodder to keep the war from completely ending.

And the result was stalemate after stalemate.

“Alpha, with all due respect, I’d like to hear her thoughts through to the end,” Elder Luke said, appealing to Aleric. “We’ve been out of new ideas for weeks now. I think we should at least give her a chance. The only thing we have to lose right now is a few minutes of our time.”

Aleric leaned back in his chair, his hand balled into a fist, but nodded his head anyway. I could tell that he didn't like me being involved. His irritation was radiating off him even if his face didn't outwardly express it.

My eyes quickly flicked back and forth between the two men, sizing up the situation, questioning whether this was still a good idea. Would I only accomplish angering Aleric beyond repair?

"Please... I'd like to hear the rest, Luna," Elder Luke said to me, gesturing that I proceed." Taking into consideration what you've said so far, what would you then propose we do?"

I paused for a few seconds in thought, still inwardly debating whether I should find a valid reason to escape. However, deep down, I knew it was probably too late to do so now even if I wanted to. It would cause more attention if I left now than it would if I continued.

"You need to separate Caius from the bulk of his men, narrowing them down to a smaller isolated group for Aleric to take on," I said slowly. "Once it's a more intimate battle, it would be easy enough to finish the job."

Aleric then suddenly scoffed, causing me to flinch from the abruptness, and a humourless smile formed on his lips. "You think it's that easy? Weren't you the one who just mentioned that landscape plans weren't going to work here? You haven't said anything we don't already know."

I quickly then turned to look at him directly, ignoring all the things in my head that were telling me to just apologise and leave. To not talk back to him like I was about to.

"Actually," I corrected, "what I said was that those strategies wouldn't work 'alone'. Caius isn't going to just abandon his men and he'll sense a trap if you try and lure him into a secluded area. No, what you need to do is make him think that his intel says it's safe to approach. You need to make him believe that closing in on us is his own idea."

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"And how would we do that, Luna?" Elder Luke asked politely, a small smile of encouragement on his face.

"You need to infiltrate their scouts," I explained. "Find their communication route, figure out

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their encryption system... and then it's just a simple matter of inserting our own misinformation into the mix to suit our bigger agenda. They'll think it's coming from their

own team and will follow wherever we lead them; especially if we mention Aleric isn't present."

The room then became deathly quiet as they all took in what I'd said, showing mixed expressions towards my suggestion. It was unnerving, to say the least.

"Here," I continued, pointing to a semi-closed off area on the map. I needed an excuse to look back down before I completely cracked under their pressure and lost my confidence. "You should eventually try and lead him here for the final stand. The maps shows some good tree and rock coverage here as well as a large flat area... it will work well with Aleric's fighting style but it'll still allow for a surprise attack once they show up."

The men all looked at each other, almost as if having a silent discussion with just their faces; one that I wasn't allowed to be privy to.

It was risky, I knew that. If we uncovered the communication route but burnt our one chance, it would be significantly harder to pull off the same thing a second time. They'd immediately rework the entire network and make it infinitely harder to infiltrate. In battle, it seemed the unexpected was most effective, but it was rare they would fall for the same trick twice.

If we were to do this, we would need to do it right the first time.

"Ariadne, I don—."

"— Don't think I could have thought of something better myself," Elder Luke said, finishing what was most certainly not Aleric's sentence. "Incredible suggestion... don't you think so, Alpha?"

Aleric's jaw tightened, his eyes narrowing at me, and I felt as though I was going to evaporate from just his gaze alone. Isn't this what he wanted? A new idea for how to win?

"... Yes," he finally agreed, albeit reluctantly. "Fine. We can try it. Who do we have available to take the lead on digging up the communication route?"

"Beta Jarrod is currently on the front line, keeping the warriors in line...", one of the other Elders chimed in. "But Brayden is probably available? Though I don't know if this kind of work would be suitable for him. He's also still grieving Gamma Oliver's recent passing from the last battle."

"What about Jonathan? Alexander? Anthony?" Aleric prompted. "Are any of them free?"

"Jonathan is working surveillance already on our side... but maybe Alexan—."

"—I can do it," I quickly cut in. "... I can uncover the communication trail."

...What did I just say? Did I actually just ask to take the lead on this? I shouldn't even be in this meeting right now, let alone making suggestions. They'd already indulged me enough by just listening to my idea.

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But a part of me had already decided that this was what I wanted to do, adamant on staying true to my earlier conviction to help Aleric. This was what the Goddess wanted, I was sure.

"...I've thought of a few trails that they could be using," I continued. "All you'd need to do is permit me access to a scouting team so I can send them out and confirm the correct one. Just one or two of the better trackers would be fine. They just need to know how to cover their own scents once they've discovered the route."

"You've put an awful lot of thought into this for someone who merely glanced at a few documents briefly," Aleric said, his statement implying that he realised I had probably been looking into this much earlier than I led on.

"I'm... very passionate about our pack," I replied, choosing my words carefully. "The state of affairs has been weighing down on me for some time and I found solace by thinking in-depth about our current situation. Excuse me for keeping my worries from you."

Not necessarily a lie... but definitely not the truth. Could he tell?

"Aleric... please," I then found myself continuing. "Please let me show you that I can do this. Put your trust in me just this once. I promise you won't regret it."

I held my breath, waiting for his permission. Waiting for him to acknowledge me even the tiniest bit... to allow me a foot in the door and show him I could be useful if he just let me. Not a scared young girl... but a partner.

Eventually, he sighed, waving a hand towards me. "Fine, whatever. Get it done. You have a week."

"Alpha-', Elder Luke started to protest, realising the time frame set was ridiculously short.

But I cut him off before he could speak for me.

"-I accept," I instantly agreed. "Thank you for the opportunity."



It didn't matter if the task seemed impossible. This was just another test of my commitment and I would prove to him that I could handle it.

Already I could feel the butterflies in my stomach making me feel breathless over his small acceptance... but I wanted more. I needed more. I would make him see me as the person I was meant to be, that the Goddess wanted me to be.

Tomorrow would mark the beginning of something new, I was sure. Something that would set us on the path we were destined for.

...And, deep down, I had a feeling that maybe... just maybe... things were only going to get better from here.

## **A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 109**

Book TWO – Ch#1

“Do you want to get out of here?” I whispered intimately into his ear.

The question was followed closely behind by my hand moving down his leg as he sat next to me,

leaving no room for doubt in his mind over my intentions. There was only one conclusion to be made

by my question

This was all it would take, I knew. A suggestion, a warm touch, a small smile from a pretty girl.

Enough to convince them to come with me.

And convince them I did as he eagerly stood up at my proposal.

“Where did you have in mind?” he asked as he helped me to my feet.

He moved in close, wrapping an arm around my waist, and tried to lean in for a kiss but I instantly

moved back to pause him.

“No, not here,” I said, my eyes darting around at the crowded bar. “But I think there is somewhere we

can go out back.”

He didn't hesitate for even a second and immediately grabbed my hand, allowing me to lead him

through the backdoor to the alleyway behind the establishment. An alleyway where many less than

honest activities took place. The kind of spot a girl would not want to find herself alone on a night out,

as was consistent with this side of town.

But it was due to that very reputation that I was here now today.

Some might say that I was accustomed to the danger.

"This is far enough," I said as I pulled him to the side, placing his hands on my waist.

"...Here?" he asked confused, looking at our dirty surroundings. "You don't want to... I don't know, find a

motel or something?"

GoodNovel

Book Two – Ch.# 1

But I simply pressed my body up against his and nibbled on his ear sensually, wrapping my arm

around his neck.

"I like the excitement of possibly being caught," I whispered.

And I felt as his lower region quickly responded to my words, pressing through the fabric of his pants.

Those were the last words exchanged before he moved in to hastily kiss me, his hand travelling up the side of my thigh, under my dress, and squeezing greedily at he found flesh there. He was completely focused on me, his desire evident as he continued to touch me wherever he could.

Something that I allowed him to do, giving him what he wanted.

But there were also other things to consider here. Ones that needed careful preparation.

I moaned a little for him and directed his lips to my neck, holding his head in place there as he kissed

my skin. And whilst his attention was entirely absorbed on the task I'd set for him, I took a moment to

bring my free hand up to my eye level over his shoulder... and check my watch.

...I only had a few more moments before it started. I needed to time it perfectly.

"Fuck, you're so hot," he grunted, still kissing and groping me.

"Oh, yeah?" I asked back breathily. "What else do you like?"

"... Everything," he said. "I like everything... I don't even know your name but I've never wanted

someone so much."

That was true. I hadn't told him my name but I think he'd told me his. What was it again? Daniel?

David? Dustin? No... Dale. His name was Dale.

"And what do you want to do to me?" I asked.

I could hear it now... the sound of voices approaching down the alleyway, coming in from the

direction of the main street.

Book Two – Ch#1

I became so focused on it that I didn't even hear what answer Dale responded with Something about

his junk or something,

"Oh, that's so sexy." I replied back automatically, feeling as he was clumsily trying to pull my dress up

more

I glanced back at my wristwatch, double-checking it for confirmation,

...And saw it was time,

It was at that exact moment that a group of men then rounded the corner of the building, heading

towards the back entrance of the bar. The same entrance that they always entered through at eleven

o'clock on Thursday nights, ready for their weekly poker game. A ritual I was familiar with

It was now or never.

...And I pushed against Dale in my arms, screaming for help.

"Get off me!" I yelled, trying to pull away. "Someone help! Please!"

But out of sheer confusion about the situation, Dale held on, unsure what was happening.

"What's wrong?" he asked in shock, taken off-guard by my sudden change in demeanour.

"Please! Please stop!"

I continued to try and escape, making a scene of the entire encounter. Screaming and carrying on as I

tried to do so.

"What's going on there?" a man's voice called out. One of the men in the group who had just arrived.

I quickly looked up towards him with tears in my eyes, pleading with just my gaze alone for him to

rescue me. That someone else intervene before it was too late.

"Help me! This man dragged me out here... please! I-I just want to go home."

"What? No, I didn't," Dale said adamantly, instantly taking his hands off me.

As his grip released from my waist, I fell backwards to the ground and scooted a few feet away. Trying to get as far away as possible. A response that made Dale take a step towards me, still not reading the

TO

situation correctly.

But the message was made clear when I promptly flinched away.

"I think the lady asked for you to back off," said the man, breaking away from his group to approach

1. us. "She clearly doesn't want you here."

"What do you mean?!" Dale exclaimed. "She was the one who asked me out here! She wanted it!"

—

th

And I cried into my hands, my shoulders shaking with every sob.

"Uhh, I don't know what to tell you, mate. I'm going to say that's probably not the case, but perhaps va:

just forget the whole situation and you head off home, yeah? Sleep off the drink?"

"What?! I'm not even, that's... I'm just... fuck. Whatever, stupid bitch."

With a last huff in frustration, Dale quickly left the scene sprouting curses and insults my way the entire time. Something that didn't do him any favours as I continued to cower on the ground sobbing.

"Are you okay, little lady?" asked the man, walking over to me.

He held out a hand for me to take, offering to assist me back up to my feet, but I simply took a moment

to look up at the face of my saviour, my rescuer, my knight in shining armour.. my target.

I looked up at the man known as Miles Kennedy

And I gave him a bittersweet smile.

"...I owe you my life," I cried, gently brushing away the tear on my cheek. "I don't know how I can ever

repay you."

Deck Two-chii

“Ah, don’t worry about it. Let me help you up.”

I took his hand gratefully and allowed him to lift me, shivering and holding my arms around my torso

once done

“Y you’re so kind,” I said, “I can’t thank you enough.”

“Seriously, don’t worry about it. Do you have someone you can call? A ride home?”

“N-no... I came here alone on a blind date... Oh, God, I’m so stupid. Why did I think this was a good

idea?”

He moved and touched my shoulder kindly. “Hey, now, don’t be so hard on yourself. There are some

pretty scummy people out there.”

‘Just like you, Mr Kennedy, I thought to myself inside. But I didn’t speak the words aloud.

“Why don’t you let us take you home? We can make a quick drop off before poker, right boys?”

And the group of men murmured in agreement amongst themselves.

“Oh, could you?” I gasped. “That would be amazing. I’m so lucky you found me. There really are some

good people left in the world.”

“We’re parked just around the corner. C’mom.”

He lightly held a hand to my elbow and directed me towards the main street, the group of four men

following behind us. To any onlookers, it might have looked strange, but that wasn’t something we needed to worry about in these parts. Because in a place like this, people would prefer to divert their

gaze away rather than look too closely.

But this was the kind of environment you found men like this. Men who had less than legal means of making money, scavenging in the dirt to do whatever was profitable. And, unfortunately for them,

today was not going to be their day.

Turns out that sometimes those dodgy business practices can come back to bite you. That, when the

little fish starts biting at the shark's food, trying to get a cut they aren't entitled to, sometimes there

are consequences to those decisions.

Today, Miles Kennedy was that little fish, and I would be acting as the shark.

Or... maybe 'shark' wasn't the right word... maybe....

What's your name, by the way?" Miles asked as he opened the passenger side door for me.

I sat down comfortably on the plush leather seat before turning to look up at him with an overly

sweet smile.

"You can call me Raven."

## **A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 110**

### **Book TWO – Ch# 2**

"Pretty name," Miles said, sliding into the driver's seat. "Where to?" "My apartment isn't far. If you could drop me off there, I would appreciate it." Miles promptly started the ignition of the car and began driving per the instructions I gave him. It wouldn't be a very long journey but I used every second to think over all the little details in my head. Making sure there was absolutely no room for error. Because errors could mean death. However, the entire time I could feel the gaze of some of the men in the back, making my skin crawl uncomfortably. I knew what they were thinking about me. I could tell without even looking. A pretty, vulnerable girl alone in their car? Yeah, it didn't take a genius. But interactions like this were just a part of the job. I was used to it.

We arrived at the location I requested before too long had passed and I turned to Miles with a now more timid smile.

“My place is just around the corner...,” I started, brushing some of my long black hair behind my ear nervously. “Um... if it’s not too much trouble, would it be okay if you walked me to my door? I think I’m still a little bit shaken from earlier....”

He looked as though he were about to decline, turning his head a few times to look between his men and me. As if you could see him internally debating whether he should ditch them for another errand.

But I couldn’t allow for that to happen. “Please,” I stressed, reaching a hand over to gently touch his knee. “I would... really appreciate it.” That seemed to do it.

“Alright guys, I’ll be back in a bit.”

Two of them instantly smiled in a way that made me feel gross, the others sighed in frustration and leaned into their seats instead. I didn’t care though. They weren’t important for what I needed to do. I just needed them to stay out of my way.

“If you’re longer than fifteen minutes we’re leaving your ass here,” one of them said. Though if that threat was enough to deter Miles in any way, he didn’t let it show. We exited the car and I started leading us towards one of the larger buildings in the vicinity. And with every step I took, I made sure to do little subtle movements to keep his attention. A sway of my hips, a flick of my hair. Anything to ensure he didn’t spend too long thinking about what was really happening. “The elevator is accessible via the underground garage,” I said, pushing open a door to let him go in first. “Hope you don’t mind walking me there, Miles.”

“That’s fine,”

But entering into what looked to be a rundown building under construction, I was sure he was going to notice at any moment.

Notice how there were no cars parked anywhere... nor was this even belonging to an apartment complex. “Where’s the elevator...?” he asked, slowly coming to a stop.— Wait did you call me ‘Miles’? How did you....”

And it was almost as though I could physically see the gears begin to turn in his head, the realisation that something wasn’t right now dawning on him. ...A moment I was waiting for. Before he could turn around to face me, I came up behind him and grabbed his hair, quickly throwing him against the wall. Using enough force to do serious damage but still light enough that he should have considered himself lucky. It was far better than the alternative. An alternative that held a more permanent outcome. No, my instruction had been clear; I was to hand him over alive. A hindrance more than a benefit and one that required more effort. Normally, I would have just been done with it in a matter of seconds. This way required more... restraint. “What the hell?!” he yelled out in pain as I threw him to the ground.



Dammit. It hadn't been enough. I'd held myself back too much. I moved towards him again with now more serious intent in my stride and reached down to grab him by the scruff of his shirt. Immediately, he began struggling against me, trying to get loose, but he wasn't anywhere near strong enough to get me to relinquish my hold. "Get off me!"

But I held on easily, lifting him up as I measured internally the right height to drop him once more. Or maybe it would just be easier to hit him direct 4- What are you doing?!" someone suddenly yelled behind me. I instantly spun my head around towards the voice, Miles still held firmly in my grasp, and saw one of his men had walked in on us.

Fuck

"Guys! Get in here! That bitch is attacking Miles!" Oh, c'mon. Seriously?

One or maybe two men would have been okay. But five heavily built men who knew how to fight?

That was concerning.

I dropped Miles to the ground again, hoping that the force was enough to keep him down for good this time, and turned my attention to the newcomers. The four new opponents I'd worked extra hard to avoid dealing with.

However, unlike Miles, I didn't have any orders for how to handle them.

I stood up straighter, rolled my shoulders back, and quickly equipped the dagger I'd stashed away behind my dress. A weapon of choice for its manoeuvrability and... silence.

Things were about to get interesting. The first man came rushing towards me then, swinging for my head which I dodged effortlessly. He mustn't have realised how agile I was since I instantly countered his attack by slicing my dagger along his side. It had been so quick that he wouldn't have seen me do it.

"Argh!" he cried out in pain, stumbling a few feet away. He clutched at the injury, his face contorted in rage. "Who the hell are you?!"

'Someone trained since a child to handle men like you,' I thought internally. 'Someone moulded to become a weapon.'

But none of these things were said aloud as I focused entirely on the task at hand.

Focused on my assignment.

I took another step towards him, intending to finish the job, but then the other men came rushing forward to his defence. I could tell by their faces that they were now scared of

me; so contrasted to the looks of perverted lust they held only minutes earlier. No, now I was a threat to them, an unknown, and far stronger than they would have expected given my small size. I wiped the dagger blade against my dress to clean it before slowly moving into a defensive position. I would need to play it safe. It was then that two of them ran towards me, probably hoping to utilise the fact I was outnumbered. They each tried to attack from either side of me but I still managed to dodge their punches despite that. I kept moving, kept eluding their advances, all the while keeping them guarded with swipes of my weapon. But it was as we'd been doing this dance for a few minutes that something then unexpected happened.

The tiniest sound of movement behind me.

Miles.

I went to turn around and confirm for myself... but I was too late.

Before I could move even an inch, suddenly the painful impact of something hitting me across the back of my head greeted me. ...And I fell to the ground.

Ringingly instantly sounded in my ears, my vision spinning. I'd been too slow and had forgotten to check on Miles sooner. What a stupid mistake.

I heard as something hit the floor near me and looked over to see a broken plank of wood. This would be the cause of the damage, Miles probably equipping it from the construction around us. But this situation was still manageable. With a quick swipe of the nearest man's legs, I could

probably regain the upper hand and try again. I just needed to stay focused. "Stay down!" one of them yelled, a foot promptly being pressed into my back.

...And then I felt it.

That pressure building up inside. One accompanied by my vision flickering to black. The nauseating feeling of something threatening to take over. I needed to get back up immediately before it was too late. Right now.

Moving as quickly as I could, I abandoned my earlier plan and attempted to just stand on my feet once more instead. Only the men were not so stupid as to allow me any advantage. They'd already seen firsthand how dangerous I really was. With a kick to my gut, they sent me straight back down before I could even kneel, and I wheezed at the air around me as a result.

No... no, no, no... this wasn't good. This wasn't good for any of us. Another flicker of my vision, another wave of nausea. I wasn't going to be able to hold off for much longer. "You... you need to stop," I choked out.

But this was only met with a round of laughter, their naivety to the actual situation evident.

“And why should we?” one of them asked. “So you can finish us off? Who even sent you?”

“Please!” I begged again as another kick was dealt to me. “Please, you need to stop or... or I won’t be able to stop myself.”

This earned me a second of confused silence. A second wasted as I felt myself approaching the tipping point of losing the battle inside.

“No, I don’t think I will,” said one of them, crouching down to look at me. “I think I’ll beat you some more and make you scream until you give me the answers I asked for. If you’re a good girl then maybe I’ll make those screams more... beneficial... for both of us.” More laughter, more taunts, another kick to my side as I continued to squirm and try to get up. Normally, this would have been relatively easy for me to overcome, but I was now fighting two separate battles; one internally and one externally.

...But then, finally, time was up.

I could feel it now, feel as it took over my body and pushed me aside despite resisting it with every ounce of energy I had.

“Oh, God...,” I whispered.

And I looked up at the faces of the men in front of me. I looked up and told them the only thing I could to ensure that maybe I could successfully fulfil this mission another day. To give Miles even the tiniest chance of surviving this.

“Start running,” was all I said. ...And everything turned black