

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood

Chapter 116 - 121

Book 2 Ch#8

"Alright a little game sounds fun," I finally replied "But you'll be disappointed to learn the reason for my ulterior motive in talking to you. You've just piqued my curiosity, is all

I tried to laugh it off but Kieran didn't seem to notice as he immediately set his drink down. His expression turning serious as he looked me over. Almost as if I could feel him scrutinizing every little detail about me

But that confident look of his. It took all I had to just calm my heart down, the nervous thumping inside becoming so loud that I was worried he'd hear it.

For a man who could seemingly read me so well could he really pull this off?

"Your eyes give you away a lot," he started, leaning forward enough that I could still hear him as he spoke in a low voice. "Don't get me wrong, they're very pretty, but they also betray you."

At this proximity, his scent was beginning to overwhelm me. His compliment wasn't helping either. I'd never been affected by small things like that before, but with him, it felt almost

involuntary.

"I think you're probably reading too much into it," I replied quietly, smiling, "Besides, I thought you were meant to be guessing my thoughts, not theorising my tells."

*That's true....

He moved in a little bit closer again, and I felt as though I became trapped by his gaze alone, unable to move away even if I wanted to. Which, of course, I didn't.

No, at this distance, I was helpless to stop myself from thinking about how flawless his features were. How his defined jawline was such a perfect shape that I could easily picture how my head could fit under it, nestled against his neck comfortably,

"Mine," that word repeated inside my head, but I bit it back.

"You're thinking... 'why am I so attracted to him?'" he said, sending a jolt of surprise through me

But after quickly scrambling to find a logical explanation, I realised it was clearly just a magician's trick. He was influencing my thoughts with his behaviour so I'd be pressured to think what he wanted me to.

I laughed his guess off and simply called him out on it.

"How incredibly vague yet conceited of you to think so," I said, amused. "I thought this was a game of guessing my exact thoughts, not giving yourself a backwards compliment."

However, this didn't seem to deter him in the slightest and a smirk spread across his lips

"You're thinking.. why does he make me feel this way?*"

I laughed again

"I just told you that you can't use ambiguous statements to win. It's like bogus fortune telling.

pot going to wor=—*

And then his hand reached out and touched mine, tinging lightly against my skin. Spreading those sparks through my body that made my breath catch in my throat

I stared at his hand as he gently enveloped my own, the warmth starting to make me focus concentration.

*Mine.' That same unrelenting thought kept trying to force itself aloud,

He closed the final bit of distance between us, coming in until he was speaking almost directly into my ear. His scent making it impossible to breathe without his influence. And with one hand holding my own, his other moved to my waist to hold me in place.

"You're thinking.. 'why does it feel like sparks against my skin?'"

In surprise, I sharply looked back up towards him, only I found myself now merely inches away from him. So close, I could feel the warmth of his breath against me.

My gaze trailed down from his eyes until I became fixated on his lips, those thoughts from earlier starting to invade my mind once more.

Wondering just what it would be like to feel them moving against mine. To taste what they looked to promise me.

“Mine.”

His hand then moved, coming up until it found my cheek and his thumb started tracing along my jaw. Sending more sparks through me. But the entire time he did that, I was still transfixed on his lips, watching them closely as he continued to speak.

“You’re thinking... that you want to kiss me.”

I closed my eyes a little as the pleasure of his presence started to sweep me away. Letting myself relax into the touch that made me feel so many emotions all at once.

I was giving myself over to him and there was nothing I could do. Nothing I wanted to do. Like a spell, he had me now completely at his mercy.

‘Mine... mine....’

When he moved in closer, so close our lips were almost touching, I felt as a shiver went through my body. Tempting me to make the first move, as if promising me water after years of thirst.

I wanted it... I wanted him... and I finally felt that last piece of restraint melt away.

I started to give in, my own hand moving forward to touch him....

..But just as I was about to make contact, his words stopped me.

“...Mine....,” he whispered.

...And it was enough for reality to kick back in

I quickly took a step out of his grasp, hugging my arms to my chest in horror

“..How did you know that?” I demanded. “How could you possibly know that?! Out of every single word you could possibly say, you somehow manage to say that exact one?”

Kieran held up his hands to calm me, but it did little to soothe my fear

**Relax," he said "It's not a big deal I can explain".

But it didn't feel like a light matter it felt lay (roin it.

You didn't answer me," I said, gutting my teeth *I asked how you knew that
How you knna say

It was then that I started to think over everything that had just happened, taking
a *momento* tealise just how crazy the whole encounter was Something that was so
batshit insane that could only come to one conclusion,

* Did you drug me?" I asked in a hushed voice.

He had to have. My feeling of illness and lack of control, my inability to make rational
decisios All of it could only be explained by one thing.

I quickly looked over to where my drink was and eyed it warily. It didn't explain *my* initial
reaction, but perhaps he'd also done something to me back when he disarmed
my dagger.

What did you do to me?" I asked again

His eyes went wide, clearly not expecting me to say it.. or maybe not expecting me to
realise the truth. Either way, I didn't trust him.

Wait, what? No!" he said, offended "Just calm down for a second."

He tried to move closer but I instantly matched his step backwards.

"No! Don't touch me!" I wamed.

This caught the attention of a few people around us, briefly turning their heads to what
the commotion was. Their faces filled with confusion and intrigue as they fed off the
drama unfolding. Acting as if they were social vultures.

" Raven," Kieran hissed, grabbing back my attention "Give me a moment to explain *

But the last time I let him freely talk to me, he almost made me succumb to a state of
unknown A state where I had no control. And, in my life, control was everything. He
should be lucky that his attempt of drugging me didn't accidentally result in his death,
because that was the true worst case scenario here. Unleashing that creature could
have ended in a massacre,

* Raven"

*No...," I whispered. "No... I'm not doing this. Fuck it."

No amount of punishment would be worth that risk. Not to mention that this man was clearly *mentally* ill if he could so easily drug a woman and then have the audacity tell her to calm down.

My father be damned, I was done. The way I saw it, this was going to end in disappointing hum *regardless*.

I snatched my purse away *from* the counter and immediately started walking to the exit as fast as possible. Slow enough to not draw attention by onlookers, but still quick enough that I felt assured

he wouldn't be able to chase me without looking suspicious.

"Raven," a deep familiar voice called out sounding from somewhere behind *me*.

But I kept walking, refusing to meet the eyes of my father *wholknew* was watching *me* leave

Internally, I was constantly checking myself as I made my way home via a taxi. Checking to *make* sure I didn't randomly pass out or show other side effects of the drug. Telling myself over and over again that all I needed to do was get home and sleep it off

And yet, the biggest side effect I was feeling wasn't fatigue or drowsiness, as I would have expected. No, it felt almost like.. loneliness. As if something was hollowing out my chest the further I travelled away from the event. A string tying me to what was waiting for me there,

Or 'who' was waiting for me.

I shook off the thoughts instantly and gritted my teeth.

Whatever he gave me, I'd never seen anything like it. A drug with such a specific yet fast chemical reaction that it didn't seem possible. A scientific breakthrough, for sure.

I did my best to distract my mind as I arrived back to my bedroom. Doing everything I could think of to stop myself from feeling the effects. But, ultimately, there seemed to be no escape.

And even as I slowly drifted off into sleep, there was still only one thing on my mind as I slept that night.

Kieran.

I awoke the next day feeling slightly better than when I'd gone to bed. And though the thoughts of him still lingered, I felt as though the whole thing wasn't as fresh.

Perhaps it would take another day or so before the effects wore off completely?

I could only hope. This feeling of infatuation was dangerous.

"Raven," a voice said suddenly from my door, breaking my thoughts.

I recognised it immediately.

Gavin

"Please... I'm not feeling well enough for training today," I yelled back. I was far too tired from the whole ordeal and just wanted a day to fully recover.

But as the door swung open anyway, revealing that it wasn't only Gavin alone... I knew instantly what it meant.

"Morning Raven," my father said. "Did you sleep well?"

Oh... no. No. No. No....

"Please... please don't do this, sir," I said, panic starting to rise in my chest.

As I stepped out, presenting myself with the familiar leather cuffs I would be required to wear.

"I beg you, please," I begged again. "I was nicked last night. I'll make it right to you, I swear."

"Please, don't make this more difficult than it needs to be," he said. "You know the rules. I've already given you another chance and you seemed to throw that back in my face. We don't accept that sort of behaviour here."

Gavin started walking towards me and I quickly scooted backwards until I was up against the headboard.

"No, no, no, don't," I pleaded.

"Hold your hands out," he instructed, ignoring my cries.

But when I still refused to budge, Gavin reached forward and grabbed my hands, placing the cuffs on them accordingly. I tried to squirm away but there was nowhere I could escape.

"Time to go," he simply said.

And I realised then that they were really going to go through with this.

It had been years since I'd last undergone punishment. Years since I'd made such careless mistakes. Yet, even knowing what was ahead of me, I still made choices that would lead me here.

I made that choice last night, knowing the repercussions.

Did I regret that now?

"Please... I'm sorry," I said over and over, a tear falling down my cheek.

When was the last time I'd cried? Truthfully, I couldn't entirely remember, but I quickly tried to brush it away, knowing that my father didn't like it when I acted like a child,

"Raven, we're going now," Gavin repeated.

He reached out and grabbed my arms, attempting to pull me forwards, but I kept trying to evade.

*Stop resisting!" he hissed.

It was several more moments before he finally lost patience. When I still showed no signs of complying, he moved to my waist instead and hoisted me up over his shoulder.

"NO! No, please don't!" I cried. "Please...."

I didn't deserve this. I hadn't done anything wrong. It was him. He drugged me.

It was all his fault,

With nothing else I could do, I looked up and over to the one voice that could put a stop to this. To

the one person who could make this end right now.

...And I met his cold eyes.

"Please papa, I'm sorry, I can be better, I swear."

I could fix this. I could make it right. I just needed some time and some fresh air. Figure out a new

strategy and I could get him what he wanted. Whatever he wanted.

I was still his raven, after all. I was still useful.

I could still help

But I was met with only silence and a stony stare.

When it was clear that no reply would be given, Gavin took this as his cue to leave, and began walking us out of my bedroom and down the hallway. And with every step he took, 1 squinet ad screamed out to my father. Hoping that deep down he would take pity and help me

“PLEASE! PAPA! Please..,” I cried.

I just needed to be better.

“PAPA!”

I would do better.

“I’M SORRY!”

But, soon, only my screams remained as they echoed through the house

Echoing until they were finally only heard within the soundproof basement walls. The basement where my punishment would begin.

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 117

Book 2 – Ch.#9 “Are you ready to follow the rules now?”

...Rule number one... obedience. Always follow the orders from the boss. No questions asked.

I’d broken that rule. I knew I was breaking it the moment I’d chosen to run that night. I knew it would land me here. And yet I still did it.

I pulled my body upright from the old bed, more sluggish than I would have liked, and hated how I still felt so sore from the injuries inflicted several days earlier.

‘Days’. That was the key word.

That was how long I’d been trapped in here, alone with my thoughts as it forced me to reflect on every decision I’d made leading to this point.

Because, at its core, that was the true punishment.

It wasn’t the pain. No, that was always over quickly. Gavin did a great job of making sure the damage inflicted was swift yet efficient. Always enough to get the point across and never seeming to even flinch as he did what he did. But it was the psychological punishment that truly made it horrific. ... ‘Days’.

I’d been in here... for days.

Alone.

In pain. Wondering how I'd managed to convince myself that running had been worth it. Wondering how much longer it would take before punishment was finally over.

And now this was the first thing spoken to me after all that time. This voice of my father on the other side of the door, asking if I was 'ready to follow the rules'. Yes, I was ready. Of course, I was ready.

I was about ready to do anything, to say anything, if it meant finally getting out of here. I'd learnt my lesson the minute Gavin had ripped me from my bed. There was only one authority in my life and that was my father. It had always been my father. ...Someone I just wanted to be free of.

I forced that thought away as quickly as it sprung to mind. It was thoughts exactly like that which led me to this moment. Testing the patience of a man who had none. I wasn't exempt from the rules because of our relationship. If anything, this punishment had been necessary. I'd clearly become too complacent in its absence and needed the reminder.

Really, it was my fault.

All my fault.

"Raven?" prompted my father. Slowly, I swung my legs out of the bed and stood up, taking a deep breath. The first one I'd done in so long, my chest having felt too sore earlier. ...And I committed to this decision to obey.

To obey *him*. "...I'm ready," I replied. It didn't take long before I heard it. The sound of a key clinking for a few seconds before the satisfying click of the lock. Within moments, I found myself face-to-face with my father after all this time.

"Good," he said, entering the room towards me. "Because there is work to be done." ...Already? So soon?

But, no, that was another incorrect thought. I should be thinking 'thank you', praising how lucky I was to be given another chance. This was a good thing for me. A moment to redeem myself. A moment to show that I was still loyal:

My father held out a manilla folder towards me and I took it, giving a small nod to show how

grateful I was. Forcing myself to believe that very thing.

"It's a clean-up job," he simply said. "You know what to do."

...And, of course, I knew only too well.

Within the hour, I had packed my things and gotten dressed. A black attire that made it impossible for anyone to recognise me; this being accomplished via a moveable cloth mask that could be pulled up to cover both my neck and lower face.

That was one of the most important things when completing a mission like this. Making sure that no one saw me. Or, at least, if they did, then ensuring that they wouldn't remember my face.

After all, no one wanted to be recognised at a murder scene.

I left my house and swiftly started heading to the location, choosing to stick to the shadows of the night and alleys along the way. Thankfully, my speed and strength made the journey easier, but I'd be lying if I said my injuries weren't interfering at all.

Truthfully, even back in the fresh air and with slightly faster healing, I knew I would still need another day or so before I fully recovered.

But I persevered regardless. Running with only the intent in mind of proving myself to

my father. Telling myself that nothing else mattered. I made it to the location perfectly on time, intending to enter the run-down looking apartment complex, but as I did so, I felt something that wasn't just the ache of my injuries. It was a burning in my mind, the start of a headache. Similar to what I'd experienced on the night of the charity event. One I wished would never return. And yet here it was again, now of all times.

I gritted my teeth against the pain and pushed through it. This wasn't the time and I could deal with it later once the job was done. For now, I just needed to focus on my mission.

And so I slipped through the front door silently, making no noise. That had been the easy part; entering the public area without being noticed. It was late at night but not late enough that people wouldn't still be around, coming home from the local pubs and bars. Yet I knew this wasn't that big of a deal when this side of town was as neglected as this apartment's security was lacking.

A straightforward job, all things considered.

I hadn't been given much information. Just a first name, a brief description, a time and a location. I hadn't wanted to press for more details since it wasn't something I needed to know. Not to mention that I didn't want to push my luck, having broken rule number one this week already. Rule number one; obedience. Always follow the orders from the boss. No questions asked.'

There was no need to undergo another reminder so soon.

I silently made my way up the stairs, choosing to avoid the elevator, until I finally came upon the room I was looking for; apartment thirty-six. Located conveniently around the corner and somewhat away from the eyes of anyone arriving via the elevator. But the burning in my head hadn't subsided, something I was doing my best to ignore. In fact, it made lockpicking the front door harder as concentrating became increasingly more difficult.

Just a little bit longer though. I had to hold out for just a little bit longer....

Inside, I could hear sounds coming from a T.V. and smelt the scent of someone located in the same direction. This almost guaranteeing the target's exact position. All I needed to do was sneak up and end this quickly. A job that should be simple enough to complete with the new dagger I'd acquired from the armoury.

I took a few cautious steps, testing the floor for any weakness that may create sound, and proceeded to move. Moving closer until –

-You don't have to....!

Out of nowhere, a faint voice suddenly spoke behind me, and I instantly crouched to the ground defensively...

...Only no one was there. Where the hell had that come from? It was almost like a whisper and yet I'd heard it so clearly. As if it were right next to me. As if they were close enough to touch.

But it wasn't just a voice. Like a needle in my brain, a new pain pierced me and caused me to wince. Making it more difficult to focus as I looked around, frantically trying to spot the source. Searching for whoever had spoken.

...And yet there was definitely nothing there. Only the muffled sounds of people speaking on the T.V could now be heard, along with some light snores coming from the armchair in front of it. A confirmation that whoever had spoken. it wasn't stemming from

the man I was here to see. A man by the name of Noah. I persisted through the pain and stood back up, walking to behind the armchair. Moving quietly until I stood right behind the man who fit the description given.

It was now or never.

I lifted my arm and aimed my dagger, going for a spot that would make this quick. There was no need to cause unnecessary pain, I just needed to

You don't have to do this... You don't need to be....!

There it was again.

I instantly spun around and lashed my dagger out towards the voice, hoping to silence whoever it was once and for all. To stop the intense, sharp pain it seemed to bring me.

To make it stop haunting me.

...And yet only empty air filled the space around me.

No, there was no one there... but I thought I knew what was wrong now. The same thing that had been messing with my head only days earlier.

... It was that drug

The drug that Kieran Lycroft had given me.

The effects of whatever he'd done to me must have still been in my system. Now, it was interfering with my work. Scaring me out of doing what I needed to do.

Just what kind of drug could do this though? Or was I wrong and I simply was just losing my mind finally? Had this last punishment been the straw that finally made me break?

But I didn't get a chance to think on it further as I was dragged back into reality, the sound of another mistake waiting to happen then snapping me from my thoughts. "W-what the fuck?" someone yelled. "Who the hell are you?!" ...Ah, shit. I turned around once more and, sure enough, there was Noah. Awake. Watching me in his living room. Able to scream for help and cause other loud commotions to alert people nearby that something was wrong.

Would I really be facing punishment twice in one week?

But I quickly tried to not think of the consequences and focused instead on what I could do now. Letting the thoughts of failure fill me were only going to make this worse.

Because I would be successful this time. I had to be. Moving faster than he probably expected, I lunged towards him and immediately tackled him to the ground. The thud was thankfully softened somewhat by a carpet he had, but it didn't do anything to stop him from flailing around. I just needed to finish this quickly before-

-You don't have to do this... You don't need

!

"Shut the fuck up!" I screamed at the voice.

My grip tightened on my dagger as I held it against the man's throat. The whites in his eyes were now so clear as he froze under the touch of my blade. "Please... please don't do this..." he whimpered pathetically from under me.

But it was too late to plead for his life. Whatever he'd done to piss off my father, I knew this was now a result of his own making. If only the situation happening to me internally was as simple as that logic though. ...It doesn't have to be like thi—,' it continued, but I instantly cut it off, yelling whatever I could just to drown it out.

"Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

I shook my head and gritted my teeth, trying to just get this over with and ignore the conflicting emotions that both the voice and man were creating inside me. Never before

had I ever questioned my father on who deserved to die. So why was this suddenly so difficult now? "Please, just take whatever you want," Noah cried. "I don't have much but please... please don't kill me."

What was wrong with me? Why couldn't I do it?

It was like my hand was frozen, unable to make the final strike. He was right there. Helpless to move even an inch for fear of my knife biting him. This should have been so simple.

And yet it was as though there was something inside, blocking me from finishing this.

"Ma'am... please. Please—."

– You don't have to...'

The voices continued to speak at once, making it difficult to think....

But it didn't take long before I couldn't take it anymore.

A growl ripped from my chest in response, instantly making Noah flinch and whimper some more. An animalistic, guttural noise that held a threat within its tone alone.

However, it wasn't sounded because I was following through with my orders finally... rather, it was done in defeat.

With a quick flick of my wrist, I spun the dagger around and proceeded to use the hilt to strike the man's head. A move intended to make him pass out... not kill him.

...Because I couldn't do it.

I was once again unable to complete a mission. And it wasn't anyone's fault except my own.

Somehow, I'd had the perfect opportunity to fix things between my father and I, but I wasn't strong enough. Or maybe I really was just going crazy. With the last bit of my frustration, I embedded the dagger into the armchair, my breathing heavy as I came to terms with what this meant for me.

I was broken... sick... or maybe just too weak for this job. Perhaps all of the above. But either

way, tonight, I was a failure.

I sat on the floor for several minutes, contemplating what to do next and had ideas swim through my mind. A few times I even tried holding the dagger to his throat again, urging myself to just do it... but failed every time to go through with it. The more time that passed, the more I became angrier, frustrated, and it wasn't long before new thoughts began to fill my head.

Ones... I wasn't meant to think of because it wasn't part of my assignment tonight.

However, given the circumstances, there was only one way to fix what was wrong with me so I could fulfil my mission. To find a cure for the problems I'd experienced since that night of the charity event.

...I would just need to go back and eliminate this from the source.

And, this time, I wouldn't run away.

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 118

Book 2 – Ch.#10

The plan was simple; Track down Kieran and demand he fix whatever he did to me.

With Noah tied up and locked inside a cupboard, I would head towards the hotel which had been listed in Victor Lycroft's information folder.

With any luck, his son had the same taste in accommodation.

Once I found him and got my answers, I'd then just have him undo the effects before going back to Noah to finish the job. I'd complete my mission tonight and get back home without any issues.

As a result, Father would begin to trust me again and Gavin wouldn't need to drag me back into the basement.

Everyone will be happy.

Well...except probably Noah. He'd be dead.

But that was unfortunately just the way it had to be.

'C'est la vie' some would say. Now to just pray that nothing went wrong. I hailed a taxi and gave the driver directions to the hotel, doing my best to make my clothes seem more casual on the way over.

There wasn't much I could do but I worked with what I had.

By the time I arrived, there was nothing on me that would stand out too much in a public setting.

Upon stepping out of the car though, I found the hotel was surprisingly large.

The kind of place only the very wealthy could afford which, given he was the son of a literal mayor, I guess that made sense.

Though for a small town I'd never heard of before, they sure seemed to have the cash to spare.

Whilst this was an interesting thing to note, it unfortunately meant that sneaking in was going to be difficult.

The place would have security cameras and staff walking around everywhere.

So how was I meant to...And then I smelt it.

That intoxicating scent that I could recall so vividly now.

The one belonging to Kieran.

He was here or, at least, he'd been here sometime recently. I would just need to follow it and hopefully scope out the area before entering his room.

But the scent didn't lead me towards the elevator as I expected.

No, it led me to the hotel's bar area.

A place where far too many people would be around to witness.

Certainly not an ideal development in this plan.

"Apologies, madam," a man at the entrance said, holding a hand out to pause me.

"I just need to quickly confirm your name and room number, or the room number of the person you're here to see." I stared at him blankly, confused.

This hotel was apparently far more exclusive than I'd realised.

However, I'd had to deal with far worse obstacles than this before.

"Oh! Is that so?" I asked innocently.

"That's a little awkward... You see, I was sent here to surprise Mr Lycroft but no one told me his room number. I guess it was just a mix-up. Isn't there any way I could still go inside? Just this once?"

He looked uncertain and taken a little off guard.

This wasn't the kind of job where you'd want to accidentally insult the wrong influential person.

"Oh ... Well I suppose I could quickly go in and find him to confirm. Mr Lycroft you said?"

He took a step away as if to enter, but I knew if he did that and Kieran told them to not let me in, then this whole plan would become messy.

"That won't do," I said a little too quickly.

I then walked over to gently touch his arm.

"As mentioned, it's meant to be a surprise. We haven't seen each other in the longest time and his father, Victor, told me Kieran was in town."

"Madam... we have precautions in place to ensure the safety and privacy of our gu—."

“The whole family will be so disappointed if it’s ruined. We’ve been planning this for a while now. I know Victor likes to come here regularly when he’s here for business. It would be a shame if this one unpleasant experience tarnished that... Especially if I have to call the family so late for something so petty ”

Immediately, he became flustered, but I didn’t give him any more time to process the situation.

After all, bad decisions were always made under pressure.

“Please...,” I repeated, giving him my best smile.

And it only took a few more seconds before, finally, he cracked.

“Okay...very well. I’ll just need your name for the record and you can head on inside.”

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A feeling of smug giddiness rose inside me as I won the small victory, and I instantly started walking towards the door.

“You can call me Raven,” I called back.

And I entered the bar before he could ask any further questions.

Inside, it was far quieter than I’d expected. It was mostly a lot of people sitting close together having intimate conversations in low voices.

The sort of atmosphere one would expect from a fancy establishment.

Definitely not the kind of place I personally liked to have a drink, but I was familiar with the vibe nevertheless.

However, I wasn’t here today for that. I was here to find *him* .

And, right now, I could still catch his scent as it slowly became stronger the further inside I traveled.

I followed it carefully, screening the faces of every person I walked past, but none were of the man I met days earlier.

In fact, by the time I’d done a lap of the entire floor, I was beginning to worry I’d walked past him entirely.

Just where the hell was he? I kept walking, heading towards another small group seated...

and that's when I finally found it.

His scent, not within the room itself, but veering off through a door to somewhere else.

A door that held a sign saying 'Staff Only'.

Well, obviously that wasn't going to stop me.

Waiting until I was certain all the servers and staff weren't looking, I slipped through the door and continued to follow his scent until it led me into a back storage area.

The space seemed pretty untouched for the most part, clearly not used very often.

The only question I had though was why was he here of all places...? It was almost as if he knew I was tracking him...but that was impossible.

For that, he would have to know I could trace his scent, which was already unnatural in itself.

So many questions were swimming in my head but, as I rounded the corner, everything seemed to just...slip away.

And once again I found myself falling into that trance as [met his expectant hazel eyes.

It was hard to explain, but seeing him again made me start to feel almost calm.

Like something inside that had been scratching away was finally ceasing.

All because he was here.

Because I was in front of him, within feet of being able to touch him.

Just like the night we first met, he wore a perfectly fitted suit, his dark brown hair styled to match.

Gorgeous in every possible way.

Almost impossibly so. It took everything I had inside me to not just immediately rush into his arms...though I couldn't say the same for him.

As soon as he caught my eye, he instantly moved forward as if to embrace me, but it was that very same movement that made me remember why I was here.

A reason that was to fix this exact issue, one which was causing me to feel this way about a complete stranger.

He quickly stopped himself as I took a step back warily.

“Raven,” he said, sounding almost relieved, and it caused a shiver to spread through me at the sound of his voice.

“I’ve been looking for you for days. Do you have any idea how worried I was?”

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Mayor Lewis. It would have to be him since I didn’t end up slaying at the event long enough to meet anyone else.

“Why the hell were you looking for me?” I asked.

“Is this your grand scheme? Drug a girl then stalk her? Why are you even doing this?”

“I didn’t do anything. What you’re experiencing is completely natural. It’s—”

“Bullshit!” I said, cutting him off.

“People don’t just meet someone and instantly become infatuated. It doesn’t stop them from being able to function...or work...or do anything. I tracked you down for the sole purpose of making you reverse this. I want my life back.”

No, I needed it. I needed it more than anything if I wanted to stay in my father’s good book.

“Raven, it doesn’t work like that. I can’t just undo it. It has to be—.”

“Enough!” I yelled, and I pulled out my dagger.

“Fix what you did to me. Right now.”

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If it was between drawing blood or going back to my father empty-handed, the choice was easy.

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“Just take it easy for a second.”

But I didn't let him lull me into another trance, choosing to act instead.

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I forgot that he was also just as skilled, proving that back when we'd met the first time.

Before I could get my dagger anywhere near him, suddenly he was wielding one of his own as he deflected off my attack easily.

A weapon that looked awfully familiar.

..In fact, upon closer inspection, it was definitely mine. He must have kept it this whole time.

“Calm down!” he yelled.

“I can explain everything but you need to just chill for a minute.”

But I was angry.

Angrier than I'd ever felt before in my entire life.

So many feelings bubbling inside that I wasn't used to, all jumbling around confused with whatever he'd done to me.

I was angry at him, at my own new inability to function.

Angry at my failures, at my situation... and I was scared.

Scared of going home, knowing I would be losing both my father's respect and my usefulness to him.

..And so I swiped my dagger again, angry tears beginning to form at my eyes as my desperation increased.

“I don’t have to hurt you,” I answered.

“Just fix me and we can go our separate ways.”

He deflected the dagger again and proceeded to be on the defensive as I advanced.

Moving fluidly as if he’d been doing this sort of thing his entire life.

For me, it was the first time facing someone who was anywhere near as skilled, if not more so, than I was.

Something that was both impressive and concerning at the same time.

It meant that this might not be as easy as I’d anticipated.

I kept on attacking, aiming for areas that I thought he left open, and yet he somehow managed to defend perfectly every time.

Faster and faster I moved, but nothing seemed to work.

Soon, he was moving as quickly as I was at full speed.

...A speed that I knew wasn’t normal.

“Who are you! ?” I yelled in frustration.

“Why won’t you just help me?”

Another swipe. I could feel as my angry tears started to overflow and began falling down my face in defeat.

..And, slowly, I came to a stop.

“I don’t understand why you’re doing this...What do you want from me?”

That seemed to make him falter for a moment and I saw as he relaxed in his stance.

Only, of course, I didn’t let that chance go to waste. I moved in quickly again, catching him off guard, and pushed him against the wall to hold the knife to his throat.

“Go on,” he said, his face so close to mine that I could feel his heavy breathing almost mixing with my own.

“Go on and do it then. Just try.”

“Are you crazy?” I asked incredulously.

“Why are you so ready to die for this?”

“I’m not.”

“Then why...?”

And then I felt it. His hand coming up and touching mine. Those same intense sparks erupting through me, instantly making my head become clouded.

“Stop that,” I hissed, trying to press past it.

Trying to go through with the threat I’d issued.

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However, the more I tried to resist, the more I struggled to remain firm in my resolve.

“Just stop telling me excuses already! You think I won’t do it?” But, truthfully, he’d called a bluff I didn’t even know was an issue.

Because he was right.

..I couldn’t do it.

Just like with Noah.

Just like every time I’d met Kieran.

He had a hold over me...and I was apparently helpless to it.

“I can’t tell you without giving you context first,” he said, trying to slowly move my hand away.

“There are things you don’t understand about yourself and, honestly, I probably should have been more upfront about it. I guess I got carried away and found it a little amusing that you didn’t know. That was my mistake and I’m sorry, Raven. I shouldn’t have teased you and, instead, I should have just immediately told you the truth.”

“You don’t know anything about me. Stop acting like you do.”

“Don’t I?” he asked.

“Didn’t I guess every single thought in your head as if I were reading you like a book? It wasn’t a drug, Raven. It’s biology.

“Your* biology.”

“Stop lying.”

“What about that unnatural speed and strength you seem to have? Senses that don’t even come close to being comparable to others? How else could I know that you would be able to follow me back here without seeing me?”

I felt as my hand loosened a little from surprise and Kieran instantly took advantage of that lapse to grab the dagger from my grip.

He knew far more about me than I realised, things that would be difficult to find out even after investigating me thoroughly.

Somehow, he knew it all. He knew it all...and, to my surprise, he knew my secret too.

The one I kept hidden, buried so deep from everyone for my own safety.

The one that only my father and I knew about.

The creature I kept locked up inside.

“And I know about the wolf,” he said simply.

A statement that made my blood run cold.

“I bet it was a bit surprising on your eighteenth birthday, right?” he said gently, as if that was going to make any of this better.

“Having no idea what you were and then suddenly you have four paws and a tail? I can’t imagine going through that alone, completely in the dark about what was happening. Having no one around to explain it to you.”

I took a few steps back in fear, terrified over how he could possibly know that.

Even if he had witnessed me change on accident, there was no way he could have found out that it had started on my eighteenth birthday.

“I saw how overwhelmed you were over just meeting me so I didn’t want to rush you into this world,” he continued.

“...But I also didn’t expect you to accuse me of drugging you or to attack me.”

"I -I don't understand how you know this," I fumbled, taking another shaky step backwards.

But he didn't even hesitate to match my step, moving towards me.

"You're not human, Raven. You've never been human," he said.

"I know...because I'm the same. We're exactly the same."

"What...?"

He took a deep breath, as if prepping himself for whatever he was going to say next, and looked me dead in the eye as he answered.

"You're a werewolf, Raven."

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 118: Book 2 – Chapter 10

The plan was simple; Track down Kieran and demand he fix whatever he did to me.

With Noah tied up and locked inside a cupboard, I would head towards the hotel which had been listed in Victor Lycroft's information folder.

With any luck, his son had the same taste in accommodation.

Once I found him and got my answers, I'd then just have him undo the effects before going back to Noah to finish the job. I'd complete my mission tonight and get back home without any issues.

As a result, Father would begin to trust me again and Gavin wouldn't need to drag me back into the basement.

Everyone will be happy.

Well...except probably Noah. He'd be dead.

But that was unfortunately just the way it had to be.

'C'est la vie' some would say. Now to just pray that nothing went wrong. I hailed a taxi and gave the driver directions to the hotel, doing my best to make my clothes seem more casual on the way over.

There wasn't much I could do but I worked with what I had.

By the time I arrived, there was nothing on me that would stand out too much in a public setting.

Upon stepping out of the car though, I found the hotel was surprisingly large.

The kind of place only the very wealthy could afford which, given he was the son of a literal mayor, I guess that made sense.

Though for a small town I'd never heard of before, they sure seemed to have the cash to spare.

Whilst this was an interesting thing to note, it unfortunately meant that sneaking in was going to be difficult.

The place would have security cameras and staff walking around everywhere.

So how was I meant to...And then I smelt it.

That intoxicating scent that I could recall so vividly now.

The one belonging to Kieran.

He was here or, at least, he'd been here sometime recently. I would just need to follow it and hopefully scope out the area before entering his room.

But the scent didn't lead me towards the elevator as I expected.

No, it led me to the hotel's bar area.

A place where far too many people would be around to witness.

Certainly not an ideal development in this plan.

"Apologies, madam," a man at the entrance said, holding a hand out to pause me.

"I just need to quickly confirm your name and room number, or the room number of the person you're here to see." I stared at him blankly, confused.

This hotel was apparently far more exclusive than I'd realised.

However, I'd had to deal with far worse obstacles than this before.

"Oh! Is that so?" I asked innocently.

"That's a little awkward...You see, I was sent here to surprise Mr Lycroft but no one told me his room number. I guess it was just a mix-up. Isn't there any way I could still go inside? Just this once?"

He looked uncertain and taken a little off guard.

This wasn't the kind of job where you'd want to accidentally insult the wrong influential person.

"Oh ...Well I suppose I could quickly go in and find him to confirm.Mr Lycroft you said?"

He took a step away as if to enter, but I knew if he did that and Kieran told them to not let me in, then this whole plan would become messy.

"That won't do," I said a little too quickly.

I then walked over to gently touch his arm.

"As mentioned, it's meant to be a surprise.We haven't seen each other in the longest time and his father, Victor, told m e Kieran was in town."

"Madam...we have precautions in place to ensure the safety and privacy of our gu—."

"The whole family will be so disappointed if it's ruined.We've been planning this for a while now.I know Victor likes to come here regularly when he's here for business.It would be a shame if this one unpleasant experience tarnished that...Especially if I have to call the family so late for something so petty "

Immediately, he became flustered, but I didn't give him any more time to process the situation.

After all, bad decisions were always made under pressure.

"Please...", I repeated, giving him my best smile.

And it only took a few more seconds before, finally, h e cracked.

"Okay...very well.I'll just need your name for the record and you can head on inside."

A feeling of smug giddiness rose inside me as I won the small victory, and I instantly started walking towards the door.

"You can call me Raven," I called back.

And I entered the bar before he could ask any further questions.

Inside, it was far quieter than I'd expected.It was mostly a lot of people sitting close together having intimate conversations in low voices.

The sort of atmosphere one would expect from a fancy establishment.

Definitely not the kind of place I personally liked to have a drink, but I was familiar with the vibe nevertheless.

However, I wasn't here today for that. I was here to find *him*.

And, right now, I could still catch his scent as it slowly became stronger the further inside I traveled.

I followed it carefully, screening the faces of every person I walked past, but none were of the man I met days earlier.

In fact, by the time I'd done a lap of the entire floor, I was beginning to worry I'd walked past him entirely.

Just where the hell was he? I kept walking, heading towards another small group seated...

and that's when I finally found it.

His scent, not within the room itself, but veering off through a door to somewhere else.

A door that held a sign saying 'Staff Only'.

Well, obviously that wasn't going to stop me.

Waiting until I was certain all the servers and staff weren't looking, I slipped through the door and continued to follow his scent until it led me into a back storage area.

The space seemed pretty untouched for the most part, clearly not used very often.

The only question I had though was why was he here of all places...? It was almost as if he knew I was tracking him...but that was impossible.

For that, he would have to know I could trace his scent, which was already unnatural in itself.

So many questions were swimming in my head but, as I rounded the corner, everything seemed to just...slip away.

And once again I found myself falling into that trance as [met his expectant hazel eyes.

It was hard to explain, but seeing him again made me start to feel almost calm.

Like something inside that had been scratching away was finally ceasing.

All because he was here.

Because I was in front of him, within feet of being able to touch him.

Just like the night we first met, he wore a perfectly fitted suit, his dark brown hair styled to match.

Gorgeous in every possible way.

Almost impossibly so. It took everything I had inside me to not just immediately rush into his arms...though I couldn't say the same for him.

As soon as he caught my eye, he instantly moved forward as if to embrace me, but it was that very same movement that made me remember why I was here.

A reason that was to fix this exact issue, one which was causing me to feel this way about a complete stranger.

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“You're a werewolf, Raven.”

Un regalo de la diosa Capítulo 120: Libro dos – Capítulo 12

“Rae... creo que este tipo está vivo”, dijo Zac.

Los dos estábamos mirando dentro del armario, mirando a un Noah muy atado y muy aterrorizado.

“Sí”, respondí.

“Bien... bien... Y, solo para asegurarnos de que estamos en la misma página aquí, sabes que normalmente no veo esta parte, ¿verdad? ¿Que entro después?”

“Soy consciente.”

Al escuchar la conversación, Noah inmediatamente comenzó a retorcerse y suplicarle a Zac con los ojos, con la esperanza de que lo ayudara a liberarlo.

No es que le fuera a hacer ningún bien.

“Entonces, ¿cuál es el retraso?” Zac preguntó, todavía confundido.

“¿No es esto solo otro jueves para ti? Te he visto hacerlo peor”.

Tenía razón. Esto realmente no era un trabajo tan anormal para mí.

Pero apreté los dientes ante su pregunta de todos modos, odiando cómo había terminado en esta situación.

“Yo... no puedo,” dije, desinflándome en la derrota.

“No puedo hacerlo”.

“No puedes... hacerlo...”, repitió Zac lentamente.

“¿Y por qué es—?”

“Mira, simplemente no puedo, ¿de acuerdo?” Dije, interrumpiéndolo, irritada por todas las preguntas.

“Lo intenté. Incluso lo intenté de nuevo antes de que llegaras aquí. No puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo. Fin de la discusión”.

“... Entonces, ¿por qué estoy aquí? Solo dile a tu padre que -“.

“No.”

Por supuesto, Zac sugeriría eso. No conocía todos los oscuros secretos que ocultaba mi padre, solo veía lo que necesitaba.

“No, no puedo decirle”, le dije.

“...Y tampoco puedes decirle.”

“Rae, el jefe espera que este tipo muera”, dijo, dando un paso atrás para mirarme.

“No estoy muy seguro de lo que está pasando, pero te das cuenta de que lo descubrirá tarde o temprano, ¿verdad? No puedes mantenerlo encerrado en un armario para siempre”.

“¡Está bien, bien! Bien...”, suspiré con frustración, antes de cerrar lentamente la mirada para mirarlo a los ojos.

“... Entonces lo haces tú”.

Inmediatamente, su rostro palideció.

“¿Qué?! ¡Rae, no! ¡No!” soltó.

“Yo no hago eso”.

“Vamos, Zac”, me quejé.

“No es tan diferente de limpiar. Ambos tienen mucha sangre. Puedo hablarte sobre eso. Toma... solo toma esta daga así... y luego sosténla en tu mano mirando hacia—”.

“¡Cuervo, detente!”

Estuve tratando de hacer que empuñara el arma, pero inmediatamente levantó las manos y se alejó.

“Solo... relájate”, dijo.

“No voy a matar a nadie”.

“¡Argh! Me di la vuelta y comencé a caminar con enojo por la habitación, comenzando a preocuparme más a medida que pasaba cada segundo. No entendía por qué esto tenía que ser tan difícil. No debería ser tan difícil. Cualquier otro día, podría haber hecho este trabajo con los ojos cerrados. ¿Por qué estaba luchando para matar a un hombre al azar? ¿Quién era este tipo? Una pequeña billetera marrón me llamó la atención mientras estaba sobre una mesa, y me acerqué para inspeccionarla.

Melania ha estado llevando una vida algo separada de su esposo

Khloe Kardashian no tiene miedo de darle a alguien una dosis de realismo

“Oye, ¿no te resulta familiar este tipo?” Escuché a Zac decir detrás de mí.

Sin embargo, lo ignoré mientras buscaba entre sus diferentes cartas.

Tenía una tienda de abarrotes recompensa uno... una tienda de alquiler... ¿una membresía para una lavandería? Ni siquiera sabía que tenían membresías.

Pero entonces, finalmente, encontré su licencia de conducir.

“Rae... se parece un poco a ese tipo”

Zac continuó.

“El de hace unos días. Ya sabes...”

“...Kennedy,” dije, leyendo el nombre en la tarjeta.

“Claro. Miles Kennedy. ¿No era él el tipo de la limpieza hace unos días?” Lentamente me di la vuelta para mirar a Zac, mi mente ahora corría con nueva información.

“No, Zac... Kennedy es el apellido de este tipo”, dije.

“Noah Kennedy”.

Y, simultáneamente, ambos nos giramos para mirar al hombre atado en el armario.

¿Cuál era su conexión con él? Pensé que Miles era un hombre de negocios clandestino o algún tipo de líder de una pandilla.

Alguien que había intentado engañar a mi padre.

¿Por qué otra razón habría adquirido documentos problemáticos relacionados con él? Pero... ‘limpiar’. Así es como se había descrito este trabajo.

¿Estaba Noah involucrado en lo que Miles había estado haciendo? ... ¿O me enviaron aquí porque estaba investigando su desaparición? ... Si eso fuera cierto... ¿entonces eso no significaba que la sentencia de muerte de Noah hoy fue por mi culpa? ¿Por mi lapso accidental en el control? “Ah, mierda”.

Me acerqué a Noah y saqué el paño que le había metido en la boca.

Normally, I would have agreed that talking to the future murder victim was possibly the dumbest thing I could ever do...but I felt we were already past the point of no return.

“Please, let me go, please,” he immediately started begging.

“I’ll do anything. Just... don’t kill me. Please.”

“You’re related to Miles?” I asked, disregarding the crying.

His face blanked for a moment before becoming confused.

“What about Miles?”

But I really wasn’t in the mood for people not answering my questions plainly. I’d already had my fill of that from Kieran today.

Instantly, I crouched down to his eye level and sunk my dagger into the wall directly next to his head, causing him to jump in fear.

“I’m asking the questions,” I hissed, pulling the knife back out to point it at him.

“Now.Let me repeat myself for the last time.Are.You.Related.To.Miles?”

He squirmed in fear but managed to huff out a ‘yes’, his head quickly bobbing up and down.

“Howe”

“M-my...he’s m-my brother,” he stuttered.

I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose, already knowing I was going to hate where this was going.

“And when was the last time you heard from Miles?”

“He never showed up at the bar on Saturday.I think he’s missing,” he hurriedly answered.

“I-I don’t know where he is, I swear! I’ve been looking for him but it’s like he’s just disappeared....Is that why you’re here? Does this have something to do with him? ...Or the business?”

That caught my attention.

‘Business’.

It was something that held my curiosity and yet I knew I shouldn’t ask.

Asking the questions I had already asked was already way too far.

My job wasn’t to investigate my father’s dealings, it was just to carry out his orders.

But...but a part of me wanted to know.

To find out whether or not his death sentence today was actually because of me.

..And so I asked the question I knew I shouldn’t have.

“..What business was Miles involved with?” I asked.

“Rae—.”

“What.Business?” I repeated, interrupting Zac before he could stop me.

He would know how bad of an idea this was, just as I did.

After all, he was also under the same orders to not pry too hard.

“Smuggling,” Noah answered.

“He’s a smuggler for that wealthy businessman in town. Gets in supplies and rare goods from all over. The best at what he does, in my opinion. Even better than me.”

I should have stopped there. I knew I should have stopped. No, I *definitely* shouldn’t have wanted to keep going.... But I couldn’t seem to stop myself.

“..Which businessman?” I asked carefully.

And he looked at me as if I were stupid for not knowing.

“Eric Reid, of course. Who else in this city would be shady enough to need a smuggler?”

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

An employee.

Miles had been a goddamn employee.

He wasn’t some random criminal or a rivaling businessman. He was on the freaking payroll.

...I killed an employee*.

But why had I been given instructions to bring him in at all? Was he trying to run away or snitch on my father? ...Did he find out something he shouldn’t have? And those documents allegedly pertaining to the business...

just what was in them? If they were harmful, then what could make someone want to betray a man as powerful as my father? Someone who would know better than most in this city what going against him entailed? There were too many questions already asked and far too many answers left unknown that I shouldn’t go looking for.

I needed to pause for a moment and stop tunnelling down a thought process that had no end in sight.

Because, regardless of the why, I was now left with a very important ‘what’; As in, what the hell was I going to do about Noah? And I quickly stood back up and stepped away, my brain swimming with a million different thoughts as for what I should do.

This wasn’t like the jobs I’d had before.

I wasn't killing him purely for the sake of business this time...it was more personal than that.

His blood really would be on my hands this time.

Both physically and morally.He was, for lack of a better word, a loose end.

Someone who would go looking for Miles.

My intervention here today was meant to be cutting off that loose end.

'Cleaning up'

"Rae, I kinda think that this has gone far enough," Zac said, watching as I began to pace again.

"Just kill him and we can pretend that none of this ever happened.Here, I'll just turn around and you can quickly do your thing."

"I can't," I groaned in annoyance.

If I couldn't do it before, I *definitely* couldn't do it now.

"Miles was an employee," I said to Zac, pausing to face him.

"Don't you have someone you care about outside of work? What if Noah was them? Just trying to find out what happened to you?"

"Since when do you care?" he argued back.

"No offense, girl, but seriously.We've been in this business for...how long? You being employed even longer than me.I can't say that I've ever seen you even bat an eyelid at having to do something like this in the past."

He was right.I knew he was right.I didn't know why I cared so much.

This newfound reluctance, conscience even, was so incredibly unlike me.

But that nagging voice inside was still telling me to not do it.

That I shouldn't.

...That I didn't need to.

"We need to come up with a plan," I finally said, taking a step towards Zac.

“We!? Rae, no. There is no ‘we’ here,” Zac said, moving away.

“You finish the job or someone else has to come in and do it.

That’s how this works.”

“I-I can’t fail again,” I said desperately.

“Do you have any idea what my father will do to me if I come home empty handed?”

“That’s not my problem. I’m not getting involved in your family issue—.”

But his voice abruptly came to a stop as I lifted up my shirt, revealing the many different shades of bruises still riddling my skin.

“I can’t fail again,” I repeated.

And Zac visible gulped in disgust. I pulled my shirt down but it was another few moments before Zac finally found his voice.

He coughed, clearing his throat, and did his best to compose himself.

“So...what plan did you have in mind?” he asked.

And, suddenly, I had the perfect idea.

Something that just came to me out of nowhere.

It was so simple.

Why hadn’t I thought of it earlier?

“Zac Greene...”

I started, a smile beginning to twitch on my lips.

“El tipo de hombre que puede esconder un cuerpo sin dejar ni una sola gota de evidencia”.

..Y el reconocimiento se extendió lentamente por su rostro cuando entendió exactamente lo que estaba insinuando.

“Espera, Rae, no”, comenzó a protestar, casi tropezando cuando trató de alejarse de mí.

“Eso no es lo mismo. Yo no—”.

... Entonces, de todos modos, así fue como Zac terminó escondiendo a Noah para mí. Tal vez todo esto de la amistad no fue tan malo después de todo.

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 119

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 118: Book 2 – Chapter 10

The plan was simple; Track down Kieran and demand he fix whatever he did to me.

With Noah tied up and locked inside a cupboard, I would head towards the hotel which had been listed in Victor Lycroft's information folder.

With any luck, his son had the same taste in accommodation.

Once I found him and got my answers, I'd then just have him undo the effects before going back to Noah to finish the job. I'd complete my mission tonight and get back home without any issues.

As a result, Father would begin to trust me again and Gavin wouldn't need to drag me back into the basement.

Everyone will be happy.

Well...except probably Noah. He'd be dead.

But that was unfortunately just the way it had to be.

'C'est la vie' some would say. Now to just pray that nothing went wrong. I hailed a taxi and gave the driver directions to the hotel, doing my best to make my clothes seem more casual on the way over.

There wasn't much I could do but I worked with what I had.

By the time I arrived, there was nothing on me that would stand out too much in a public setting.

Upon stepping out of the car though, I found the hotel was surprisingly large.

The kind of place only the very wealthy could afford which, given he was the son of a literal mayor, I guess that made sense.

Though for a small town I'd never heard of before, they sure seemed to have the cash to spare.

Whilst this was an interesting thing to note, it unfortunately meant that sneaking in was going to be difficult.

The place would have security cameras and staff walking around everywhere.

So how was I meant to...And then I smelt it.

That intoxicating scent that I could recall so vividly now.

The one belonging to Kieran.

He was here or, at least, he'd been here sometime recently. I would just need to follow it and hopefully scope out the area before entering his room.

But the scent didn't lead me towards the elevator as I expected.

No, it led me to the hotel's bar area.

A place where far too many people would be around to witness.

Certainly not an ideal development in this plan.

"Apologies, madam," a man at the entrance said, holding a hand out to pause me.

"I just need to quickly confirm your name and room number, or the room number of the person you're here to see." I stared at him blankly, confused.

This hotel was apparently far more exclusive than I'd realised.

However, I'd had to deal with far worse obstacles than this before.

"Oh! Is that so?" I asked innocently.

"That's a little awkward...You see, I was sent here to surprise Mr Lycroft but no one told me his room number. I guess it was just a mix-up. Isn't there any way I could still go inside? Just this once?"

He looked uncertain and taken a little off guard.

This wasn't the kind of job where you'd want to accidentally insult the wrong influential person.

"Oh ...Well I suppose I could quickly go in and find him to confirm. Mr Lycroft you said?"

He took a step away as if to enter, but I knew if he did that and Kieran told them to not let me in, then this whole plan would become messy.

"That won't do," I said a little too quickly.

I then walked over to gently touch his arm.

“As mentioned, it’s meant to be a surprise. We haven’t seen each other in the longest time and his father, Victor, told me Kieran was in town.”

“Madam...we have precautions in place to ensure the safety and privacy of our gu—.”

“The whole family will be so disappointed if it’s ruined. We’ve been planning this for a while now. I know Victor likes to come here regularly when he’s here for business. It would be a shame if this one unpleasant experience tarnished that...Especially if I have to call the family so late for something so petty ”

Immediately, he became flustered, but I didn’t give him any more time to process the situation.

After all, bad decisions were always made under pressure.

“Please...,” I repeated, giving him my best smile.

And it only took a few more seconds before, finally, he cracked.

“Okay...very well. I’ll just need your name for the record and you can head on inside.”

A feeling of smug giddiness rose inside me as I won the small victory, and I instantly started walking towards the door.

“You can call me Raven,” I called back.

And I entered the bar before he could ask any further questions.

Inside, it was far quieter than I’d expected. It was mostly a lot of people sitting close together having intimate conversations in low voices.

The sort of atmosphere one would expect from a fancy establishment.

Definitely not the kind of place I personally liked to have a drink, but I was familiar with the vibe nevertheless.

However, I wasn’t here today for that. I was here to find *him* .

And, right now, I could still catch his scent as it slowly became stronger the further inside I traveled.

I followed it carefully, screening the faces of every person I walked past, but none were of the man I met days earlier.

In fact, by the time I'd done a lap of the entire floor, I was beginning to worry I'd walked past him entirely.

Just where the hell was he? I kept walking, heading towards another small group seated...

and that's when I finally found it.

His scent, not within the room itself, but veering off through a door to somewhere else.

A door that held a sign saying 'Staff Only'.

Well, obviously that wasn't going to stop me.

Waiting until I was certain all the servers and staff weren't looking, I slipped through the door and continued to follow his scent until it led me into a back storage area.

The space seemed pretty untouched for the most part, clearly not used very often.

The only question I had though was why was he here of all places...? It was almost as if he knew I was tracking him...but that was impossible.

For that, he would have to know I could trace his scent, which was already unnatural in itself.

So many questions were swimming in my head but, as I rounded the corner, everything seemed to just...slip away.

And once again I found myself falling into that trance as [met his expectant hazel eyes.

It was hard to explain, but seeing him again made me start to feel almost calm.

Like something inside that had been scratching away was finally ceasing.

All because he was here.

Because I was in front of him, within feet of being able to touch him.

Just like the night we first met, he wore a perfectly fitted suit, his dark brown hair styled to match.

Gorgeous in every possible way.

Almost impossibly so. It took everything I had inside me to not just immediately rush into his arms...though I couldn't say the same for him.

As soon as he caught my eye, he instantly moved forward as if to embrace me, but it was that very same movement that made me remember why I was here.

A reason that was to fix this exact issue, one which was causing me to feel this way about a complete stranger.

He quickly stopped himself as I took a step back warily.

“Raven,” he said, sounding almost relieved, and it caused a shiver to spread through me at the sound of his voice.

“I’ve been looking for you for days. Do you have any idea how worried I was?”

Here I was thinking that I was the one losing my mind, and yet this guy was almost certifiable, acting as though we were close friends.

Was I missing something?

“What...?” was all I managed to say, so extremely confused by this turn of events.

“I wanted to give you some time to cool down before I explained a few things to you, but it’s almost as if you don’t exist,” he said.

“I asked several different people about you, trying to find out how I could contact you, but out of everyone I spoke to, only one person seemed to know of you. Something that they even admitted to not knowing prior to the charity event.”

Mayor Lewis. It would have to be him since I didn’t end up staying at the event long enough to meet anyone else.

“Why the hell were you looking for me?” I asked.

“Is this your grand scheme? Drug a girl then stalk her? Why are you even doing this?”

“I didn’t do anything. What you’re experiencing is completely natural. It’s—”

“Bullshit!” I said, cutting him off.

“People don’t just meet someone and instantly become infatuated. It doesn’t stop them from being able to function...or work...or do anything. I tracked you down for the sole purpose of making you reverse this. I want my life back.”

No, I needed it. I needed it more than anything if I wanted to stay in my father’s good book.

“Raven, it doesn’t work like that. I can’t just undo it. It has to be—.”

“Enough!” I yelled, and I pulled out my dagger.

“Fix what you did to me. Right now.”

I was hoping this would be a civil conversation but he was proving to be stubborn, giving me excuses rather than solutions.

If it was between drawing blood or going back to my father empty-handed, the choice was easy.

“Woah...slow down,” he said.

“Just take it easy for a second.”

But I didn't let him lull me into another trance, choosing to act instead.

I charged towards him with the intent of holding him up at knifepoint; just enough to scare him into taking me seriously. I was quick and had training, so it should have been a piece of cake...

I forgot that he was also just as skilled, proving that back when we'd met the first time.

Before I could get my dagger anywhere near him, suddenly he was wielding one of his own as he deflected off my attack easily.

A weapon that looked awfully familiar.

..In fact, upon closer inspection, it was definitely mine. He must have kept it this whole time.

“Calm down!” he yelled.

“I can explain everything but you need to just chill for a minute.”

But I was angry.

Angrier than I'd ever felt before in my entire life.

So many feelings bubbling inside that I wasn't used to, all jumbling around confused with whatever he'd done to me.

I was angry at him, at my own new inability to function.

Angry at my failures, at my situation... and I was scared.

Scared of going home, knowing I would be losing both my father's respect and my usefulness to him.

..And so I swiped my dagger again, angry tears beginning to form at my eyes as my desperation increased.

"I don't have to hurt you," I answered.

"Just fix me and we can go our separate ways."

He deflected the dagger again and proceeded to be on the defensive as I advanced.

Moving fluidly as if he'd been doing this sort of thing his entire life.

For me, it was the first time facing someone who was anywhere near as skilled, if not more so, than I was.

Something that was both impressive and concerning at the same time.

It meant that this might not be as easy as I'd anticipated.

I kept on attacking, aiming for areas that I thought he left open, and yet he somehow managed to defend perfectly every time.

Faster and faster I moved, but nothing seemed to work.

Soon, he was moving as quickly as I was at full speed.

...A speed that I knew wasn't normal.

"Who are you! ?" I yelled in frustration.

"Why won't you just help me?"

Another swipe. I could feel as my angry tears started to overflow and began falling down my face in defeat.

..And, slowly, I came to a stop.

"I don't understand why you're doing this...What do you want from me?"

That seemed to make him falter for a moment and I saw as he relaxed in his stance.

Only, of course, I didn't let that chance go to waste. I moved in quickly again, catching him off guard, and pushed him against the wall to hold the knife to his throat.

“Go on,” he said, his face so close to mine that I could feel his heavy breathing almost mixing with my own.

“Go on and do it then. Just try.”

“Are you crazy?” I asked incredulously.

“Why are you so ready to die for this?”

“I’m not.”

“Then why...?”

And then I felt it. His hand coming up and touching mine. Those same intense sparks erupting through me, instantly making my head become clouded.

“Stop that,” I hissed, trying to press past it.

Trying to go through with the threat I’d issued.

...

However, the more I tried to resist, the more I struggled to remain firm in my resolve.

“Just stop telling me excuses already! You think I won’t do it?” But, truthfully, he’d called a bluff I didn’t even know was an issue.

Because he was right.

..I couldn’t do it.

Just like with Noah.

Just like every time I’d met Kieran.

He had a hold over me...and I was apparently helpless to it.

“I can’t tell you without giving you context first,” he said, trying to slowly move my hand away.

“There are things you don’t understand about yourself and, honestly, I probably should have been more upfront about it. I guess I got carried away and found it a little amusing that you didn’t know. That was my mistake and I’m sorry, Raven. I shouldn’t have teased you and, instead, I should have just immediately told you the truth.”

“You don’t know anything about me. Stop acting like you do.”

“Don’t I?” he asked.

“Didn’t I guess every single thought in your head as if I were reading you like a book? It wasn’t a drug, Raven. It’s biology.

“Your* biology.”

“Stop lying.”

“What about that unnatural speed and strength you seem to have? Senses that don’t even come close to being comparable to others? How else could I know that you would be able to follow me back here without seeing me?”

I felt as my hand loosened a little from surprise and Kieran instantly took advantage of that lapse to grab the dagger from my grip.

He knew far more about me than I realised, things that would be difficult to find out even after investigating me thoroughly.

Somehow, he knew it all. He knew it all...and, to my surprise, he knew my secret too.

The one I kept hidden, buried so deep from everyone for my own safety.

The one that only my father and I knew about.

The creature I kept locked up inside.

“And I know about the wolf,” he said simply.

A statement that made my blood run cold.

“I bet it was a bit surprising on your eighteenth birthday, right?” he said gently, as if that was going to make any of this better.

“Having no idea what you were and then suddenly you have four paws and a tail? I can’t imagine going through that alone, completely in the dark about what was happening. Having no one around to explain it to you.”

I took a few steps back in fear, terrified over how he could possibly know that.

Even if he had witnessed me change on accident, there was no way he could have found out that it had started on my eighteenth birthday.

“I saw how overwhelmed you were over just meeting me so I didn’t want to rush you into this world,” he continued.

“...But I also didn't expect you to accuse me of drugging you or to attack me.”

“I -I don't understand how you know this,” I fumbled, taking another shaky step backwards.

But he didn't even hesitate to match my step, moving towards me.

“You're not human, Raven. You've never been human,” he said.

“I know...because I'm the same. We're exactly the same.”

“What...?”

He took a deep breath, as if prepping himself for whatever he was going to say next, and looked me dead in the eye as he answered.

“You're a werewolf, Raven.”

Un regalo de la diosa Capítulo 120: Libro dos – Capítulo 12

“Rae... creo que este tipo está vivo”, dijo Zac.

Los dos estábamos mirando dentro del armario, mirando a un Noah muy atado y muy aterrorizado.

“Sí”, respondí.

“Bien... bien... Y, solo para asegurarnos de que estamos en la misma página aquí, sabes que normalmente no veo esta parte, ¿verdad? ¿Que entro después?”

“Soy consciente.”

Al escuchar la conversación, Noah inmediatamente comenzó a retorcerse y suplicarle a Zac con los ojos, con la esperanza de que lo ayudara a liberarlo.

No es que le fuera a hacer ningún bien.

“Entonces, ¿cuál es el retraso?” Zac preguntó, todavía confundido.

“¿No es esto solo otro jueves para ti? Te he visto hacerlo peor”.

Tenía razón. Esto realmente no era un trabajo tan anormal para mí.

Pero apreté los dientes ante su pregunta de todos modos, odiando cómo había terminado en esta situación.

“Yo... no puedo,” dije, desinflándome en la derrota.

“No puedo hacerlo”.

“No puedes... hacerlo...”, repitió Zac lentamente.

“¿Y por qué es—?”

“Mira, simplemente no puedo, ¿de acuerdo?” Dije, interrumpiéndolo, irritada por todas las preguntas.

“Lo intenté. Incluso lo intenté de nuevo antes de que llegaras aquí. No puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo. Fin de la discusión”.

“... Entonces, ¿por qué estoy aquí? Solo dile a tu padre que -“.

“No.”

Por supuesto, Zac sugeriría eso. No conocía todos los oscuros secretos que ocultaba mi padre, solo veía lo que necesitaba.

“No, no puedo decirle”, le dije.

“...Y tampoco puedes decirle.”

“Rae, el jefe espera que este tipo muera”, dijo, dando un paso atrás para mirarme.

“No estoy muy seguro de lo que está pasando, pero te das cuenta de que lo descubrirá tarde o temprano, ¿verdad? No puedes mantenerlo encerrado en un armario para siempre”.

“¡Está bien, bien! Bien...”, suspiré con frustración, antes de cerrar lentamente la mirada para mirarlo a los ojos.

“... Entonces lo haces tú”.

Inmediatamente, su rostro palideció.

“¡¿Qué?! ¡Rae, no! ¡No!” soltó.

“Yo no hago eso”.

“Vamos, Zac”, me quejé.

“No es tan diferente de limpiar. Ambos tienen mucha sangre. Puedo hablarte sobre eso. Toma... solo toma esta daga así... y luego sosténla en tu mano mirando hacia—”.

“¡Cuervo, detente!”

Estuve tratando de hacer que empuñara el arma, pero inmediatamente levantó las manos y se alejó.

“Solo... relájate”, dijo.

“No voy a matar a nadie”.

“¡Argh! Me di la vuelta y comencé a caminar con enojo por la habitación, comenzando a preocuparme más a medida que pasaba cada segundo. No entendía por qué esto tenía que ser tan difícil. No debería ser tan difícil. Cualquiera otro día, podría haber hecho este trabajo con los ojos cerrados. ¿Por qué estaba luchando para matar a un hombre al azar? ¿Quién era este tipo? Una pequeña billetera marrón me llamó la atención mientras estaba sobre una mesa, y me acerqué para inspeccionarla.

Melania ha estado llevando una vida algo separada de su esposo

Khloe Kardashian no tiene miedo de darle a alguien una dosis de realismo

“Oye, ¿no te resulta familiar este tipo?” Escuché a Zac decir detrás de mí.

Sin embargo, lo ignoré mientras buscaba entre sus diferentes cartas.

Tenía una tienda de abarrotes recompensa uno... una tienda de alquiler... ¿una membresía para una lavandería? Ni siquiera sabía que tenían membresías.

Pero entonces, finalmente, encontré su licencia de conducir.

“Rae... se parece un poco a ese tipo”

Zac continuó.

“El de hace unos días. Ya sabes...”

“...Kennedy,” dije, leyendo el nombre en la tarjeta.

“Claro. Miles Kennedy. ¿No era él el tipo de la limpieza hace unos días?” Lentamente me di la vuelta para mirar a Zac, mi mente ahora corría con nueva información.

“No, Zac... Kennedy es el apellido de este tipo”, dije.

“Noah Kennedy”.

Y, simultáneamente, ambos nos giramos para mirar al hombre atado en el armario.

¿Cuál era su conexión con él? Pensé que Miles era un hombre de negocios clandestino o algún tipo de líder de una pandilla.

Alguien que había intentado engañar a mi padre.

¿Por qué otra razón habría adquirido documentos problemáticos relacionados con él? Pero... 'limpiar'. Así es como se había descrito este trabajo.

¿Estaba Noah involucrado en lo que Miles había estado haciendo? ... ¿O me enviaron aquí porque estaba investigando su desaparición? ... Si eso fuera cierto... ¿entonces eso no significaba que la sentencia de muerte de Noah hoy fue por mi culpa? ¿Por mi lapso accidental en el control? "Ah, mierda".

Me acerqué a Noah y saqué el paño que le había metido en la boca.

Normally, I would have agreed that talking to the future murder victim was possibly the dumbest thing I could ever do...but I felt we were already past the point of no return.

"Please, let me go, please," he immediately started begging.

"I'll do anything. Just...don't kill me. Please."

"You're related to Miles?" I asked, disregarding the crying.

His face blanked for a moment before becoming confused.

"What about Miles?"

But I really wasn't in the mood for people not answering my questions plainly. I'd already had my fill of that from Kieran today.

Instantly, I crouched down to his eye level and sunk my dagger into the wall directly next to his head, causing him to jump in fear.

"I'm asking the questions," I hissed, pulling the knife back out to point it at him.

"Now. Let me repeat myself for the last time. Are. You. Related. To. Miles?"

He squirmed in fear but managed to huff out a 'yes', his head quickly bobbing up and down.

"Howe"

"M-my...he's m-my brother," he stuttered.

I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose, already knowing I was going to hate where this was going.

“And when was the last time you heard from Miles?”

“He never showed up at the bar on Saturday. I think he’s missing,” he hurriedly answered.

“I-I don’t know where he is, I swear! I’ve been looking for him but it’s like he’s just disappeared....Is that why you’re here? Does this have something to do with him? ...Or the business?”

That caught my attention.

‘Business’.

It was something that held my curiosity and yet I knew I shouldn’t ask.

Asking the questions I had already asked was already way too far.

My job wasn’t to investigate my father’s dealings, it was just to carry out his orders.

But...but a part of me wanted to know.

To find out whether or not his death sentence today was actually because of me.

..And so I asked the question I knew I shouldn’t have.

“..What business was Miles involved with?” I asked.

“Rae—.”

“What.Business?” I repeated, interrupting Zac before he could stop me.

He would know how bad of an idea this was, just as I did.

After all, he was also under the same orders to not pry too hard.

“Smuggling,” Noah answered.

“He’s a smuggler for that wealthy businessman in town. Gets in supplies and rare goods from all over. The best at what he does, in my opinion. Even better than me.”

I should have stopped there. I knew I should have stopped. No, I **definitely** shouldn’t have wanted to keep going....But I couldn’t seem to stop myself.

"..Which businessman?" I asked carefully.

And he looked at me as if I were stupid for not knowing.

"Eric Reid, of course. Who else in this city would be shady enough to need a smuggler?"

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

An employee.

Miles had been a goddamn employee.

He wasn't some random criminal or a rivaling businessman. He was on the freaking payroll.

...I killed an employee*.

But why had I been given instructions to bring him in at all? Was he trying to run away or snitch on my father? ...Did he find out something he shouldn't have? And those documents allegedly pertaining to the business...

just what was in them? If they were harmful, then what could make someone want to betray a man as powerful as my father? Someone who would know better than most in this city what going against him entailed? There were too many questions already asked and far too many answers left unknown that I shouldn't go looking for.

I needed to pause for a moment and stop tunnelling down a thought process that had no end in sight.

Because, regardless of the why, I was now left with a very important 'what'; As in, what the hell was I going to do about Noah? And I quickly stood back up and stepped away, my brain swimming with a million different thoughts as for what I should do.

This wasn't like the jobs I'd had before.

I wasn't killing him purely for the sake of business this time...it was more personal than that.

His blood really would be on my hands this time.

Both physically and morally. He was, for lack of a better word, a loose end.

Someone who would go looking for Miles.

My intervention here today was meant to be cutting off that loose end.

'Cleaning up'

"Rae, I kinda think that this has gone far enough," Zac said, watching as I began to pace again.

"Just kill him and we can pretend that none of this ever happened. Here, I'll just turn around and you can quickly do your thing."

"I can't," I groaned in annoyance.

If I couldn't do it before, I **definitely** couldn't do it now.

"Miles was an employee," I said to Zac, pausing to face him.

"Don't you have someone you care about outside of work? What if Noah was them? Just trying to find out what happened to you?"

"Since when do you care?" he argued back.

"No offense, girl, but seriously. We've been in this business for...how long? You being employed even longer than me. I can't say that I've ever seen you even bat an eyelid at having to do something like this in the past."

He was right. I knew he was right. I didn't know why I cared so much.

This newfound reluctance, conscience even, was so incredibly unlike me.

But that nagging voice inside was still telling me to not do it.

That I shouldn't.

...That I didn't need to.

"We need to come up with a plan," I finally said, taking a step towards Zac.

"We!? Rae, no. There is no 'we' here," Zac said, moving away.

"You finish the job or someone else has to come in and do it.

That's how this works."

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“I can’t fail again,” I repeated.

And Zac visible gulped in disgust. I pulled my shirt down but it was another few moments before Zac finally found his voice.

He coughed, clearing his throat, and did his best to compose himself.

“So...what plan did you have in mind?” he asked.

And, suddenly, I had the perfect idea.

Something that just came to me out of nowhere.

It was so simple.

Why hadn’t I thought of it earlier?

“Zac Greene...”

I started, a smile beginning to twitch on my lips.

“El tipo de hombre que puede esconder un cuerpo sin dejar ni una sola gota de evidencia”.

..Y el reconocimiento se extendió lentamente por su rostro cuando entendió exactamente lo que estaba insinuando.

“Espera, Rae, no”, comenzó a protestar, casi tropezando cuando trató de alejarse de mí.

“Eso no es lo mismo. Yo no—”.

... Entonces, de todos modos, así fue como Zac terminó escondiendo a Noah para mí. Tal vez todo esto de la amistad no fue tan malo después de todo.

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 120

Un regalo de la diosa Capítulo 120: Libro dos – Capítulo 12

“Rae... creo que este tipo está vivo”, dijo Zac.

Los dos estábamos mirando dentro del armario, mirando a un Noah muy atado y muy aterrorizado.

“Sí”, respondí.

“Bien... bien... Y, solo para asegurarnos de que estamos en la misma página aquí, sabes que normalmente no veo esta parte, ¿verdad? ¿Que entro después?”

“Soy consciente.”

Al escuchar la conversación, Noah inmediatamente comenzó a retorcerse y suplicarle a Zac con los ojos, con la esperanza de que lo ayudara a liberarlo.

No es que le fuera a hacer ningún bien.

“Entonces, ¿cuál es el retraso?” Zac preguntó, todavía confundido.

“¿No es esto solo otro jueves para ti? Te he visto hacerlo peor”.

Tenía razón. Esto realmente no era un trabajo tan anormal para mí.

Pero apreté los dientes ante su pregunta de todos modos, odiando cómo había terminado en esta situación.

“Yo... no puedo,” dije, desinflándome en la derrota.

“No puedo hacerlo”.

“No puedes... hacerlo...”, repitió Zac lentamente.

“¿Y por qué es—?”

“Mira, simplemente no puedo, ¿de acuerdo?” Dije, interrumpiéndolo, irritada por todas las preguntas.

“Lo intenté. Incluso lo intenté de nuevo antes de que llegaras aquí. No puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo, no puedo hacerlo. Fin de la discusión”.

“... Entonces, ¿por qué estoy aquí? Solo dile a tu padre que -”.

“No.”

Por supuesto, Zac sugeriría eso. No conocía todos los oscuros secretos que ocultaba mi padre, solo veía lo que necesitaba.

“No, no puedo decirle”, le dije.

“...Y tampoco puedes decirle.”

“Rae, el jefe espera que este tipo muera”, dijo, dando un paso atrás para mirarme.

“No estoy muy seguro de lo que está pasando, pero te das cuenta de que lo descubrirá tarde o temprano, ¿verdad? No puedes mantenerlo encerrado en un armario para siempre”.

“¡Está bien, bien! Bien...”, suspiré con frustración, antes de cerrar lentamente la mirada para mirarlo a los ojos.

“... Entonces lo haces tú”.

Inmediatamente, su rostro palideció.

“¡¿Qué?! ¡Rae, no! ¡No!” soltó.

“Yo no hago eso”.

“Vamos, Zac”, me quejé.

“No es tan diferente de limpiar. Ambos tienen mucha sangre. Puedo hablarte sobre eso. Toma... solo toma esta daga así... y luego sosténla en tu mano mirando hacia—”.

“¡Cuervo, detente!”

Estuve tratando de hacer que empuñara el arma, pero inmediatamente levantó las manos y se alejó.

“Solo... relájate”, dijo.

“No voy a matar a nadie”.

“¡Argh! Me di la vuelta y comencé a caminar con enojo por la habitación, comenzando a preocuparme más a medida que pasaba cada segundo. No entendía por qué esto tenía que ser tan difícil. No debería ser tan difícil. Cualquiera otro día, podría haber hecho este trabajo con los ojos cerrados. ¿Por qué estaba luchando para matar a un hombre al azar? ¿Quién era este tipo? Una pequeña billetera marrón me llamó la atención mientras estaba sobre una mesa, y me acerqué para inspeccionarla.

Melania ha estado llevando una vida algo separada de su esposo

Khloe Kardashian no tiene miedo de darle a alguien una dosis de realismo

“Oye, ¿no te resulta familiar este tipo?” Escuché a Zac decir detrás de mí.

Sin embargo, lo ignoré mientras buscaba entre sus diferentes cartas.

Tenía una tienda de abarrotes recompensa uno... una tienda de alquiler... ¿una membresía para una lavandería? Ni siquiera sabía que tenían membresías.

Pero entonces, finalmente, encontré su licencia de conducir.

“Rae... se parece un poco a ese tipo”

Zac continuó.

“El de hace unos días. Ya sabes...”

“...Kennedy,” dije, leyendo el nombre en la tarjeta.

“Claro. Miles Kennedy. ¿No era él el tipo de la limpieza hace unos días?” Lentamente me di la vuelta para mirar a Zac, mi mente ahora corría con nueva información.

“No, Zac... Kennedy es el apellido de este tipo”, dije.

“Noah Kennedy”.

Y, simultáneamente, ambos nos giramos para mirar al hombre atado en el armario.

¿Cuál era su conexión con él? Pensé que Miles era un hombre de negocios clandestino o algún tipo de líder de una pandilla.

Alguien que había intentado engañar a mi padre.

¿Por qué otra razón habría adquirido documentos problemáticos relacionados con él? Pero... ‘limpiar’. Así es como se había descrito este trabajo.

¿Estaba Noah involucrado en lo que Miles había estado haciendo? ... ¿O me enviaron aquí porque estaba investigando su desaparición? ... Si eso fuera cierto... ¿entonces eso no significaba que la sentencia de muerte de Noah hoy fue por mi culpa? ¿Por mi lapso accidental en el control? “Ah, mierda”.

Me acerqué a Noah y saqué el paño que le había metido en la boca.

Normally, I would have agreed that talking to the future murder victim was possibly the dumbest thing I could ever do...but I felt we were already past the point of no return.

“Please, let me go, please,” he immediately started begging.

“I’ll do anything. Just...don’t kill me. Please.”

"You're related to Miles?" I asked, disregarding the crying.

His face blanked for a moment before becoming confused.

"What about Miles?"

But I really wasn't in the mood for people not answering my questions plainly. I'd already had my fill of that from Kieran today.

Instantly, I crouched down to his eye level and sunk my dagger into the wall directly next to his head, causing him to jump in fear.

"I'm asking the questions," I hissed, pulling the knife back out to point it at him.

"Now. Let me repeat myself for the last time. Are. You. Related. To. Miles?"

He squirmed in fear but managed to huff out a 'yes', his head quickly bobbing up and down.

"Howe"

"M-my...he's m-my brother," he stuttered.

I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose, already knowing I was going to hate where this was going.

"And when was the last time you heard from Miles?"

"He never showed up at the bar on Saturday. I think he's missing," he hurriedly answered.

"I-I don't know where he is, I swear! I've been looking for him but it's like he's just disappeared....Is that why you're here? Does this have something to do with him? ...Or the business?"

That caught my attention.

'Business'.

It was something that held my curiosity and yet I knew I shouldn't ask.

Asking the questions I had already asked was already way too far.

My job wasn't to investigate my father's dealings, it was just to carry out his orders.

But...but a part of me wanted to know.

To find out whether or not his death sentence today was actually because of me.

..And so I asked the question I knew I shouldn't have.

"..What business was Miles involved with?" I asked.

"Rae—."

"What.Business?" I repeated, interrupting Zac before he could stop me.

He would know how bad of an idea this was, just as I did.

After all, he was also under the same orders to not pry too hard.

"Smuggling," Noah answered.

"He's a smuggler for that wealthy businessman in town.Gets in supplies and rare goods from all over.The best at what he does, in my opinion.Even better than me."

I should have stopped there.I knew I should have stopped.No, I *definitely* shouldn't have wanted to keep going....But I couldn't seem to stop myself.

"..Which businessman?" I asked carefully.

And he looked at me as if I were stupid for not knowing.

"Eric Reid, of course.Who else in this city would be shady enough to need a smuggler?"

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

An employee.

Miles had been a goddamn employee.

He wasn't some random criminal or a rivaling businessman.He was on the freaking payroll.

...I killed an employee*.

But why had I been given instructions to bring him in at all? Was he trying to run away or snitch on my father? ...Did he find out something he shouldn't have? And those documents allegedly pertaining to the business...

just what was in them? If they were harmful, then what could make someone want to betray aman as powerful as my father? Someone who would know better than most in this city what going against him entailed? There were too many questions already asked and far too many answers left unknown that I shouldn't go looking for.

I needed to pause for a moment and stop tunnelling down a thought process that had no end in sight.

Because, regardless of the why, I was now left with a very important 'what'; As in, what the hell was I going to do about Noah? And I quickly stood back up and stepped away, my brain swimming with a million different thoughts as for what I should do.

This wasn't like the jobs I'd had before.

I wasn't killing him purely for the sake of business this time...it was more personal than that.

His blood really would be on my hands this time.

Both physically and morally.He was, for lack of a better word, a loose end.

Someone who would go looking for Miles.

My intervention here today was meant to be cutting off that loose end.

'Cleaning up"

"Rae, I kinda think that this has gone far enough," Zac said, watching as I began to pace again.

"Just kill him and we can pretend that none of this ever happened.Here, I'll just turn around and you can quickly do your thing."

"I can't," I groaned in annoyance.

If I couldn't do it before, I **definitely** couldn't do it now.

"Miles was an employee," I said to Zac, pausing to face him.

"Don't you have someone you care about outside of work? What if Noah was them? Just trying t o find out what happened to you?"

"Since when do you care?" he argued back.

“No offense, girl, but seriously. We’ve been in this business for...how long? You being employed even longer than me. I can’t say that I’ve ever seen you even bat an eyelid at having to do something like this in the past.”

He was right. I knew he was right. I didn’t know why I cared so much.

This newfound reluctance, conscience even, was so incredibly unlike me.

But that nagging voice inside was still telling me to not do it.

That I shouldn’t.

...That I didn’t need to.

“We need to come up with a plan,” I finally said, taking a step towards Zac.

“We!? Rae, no. There is no ‘we’ here,” Zac said, moving away.

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A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 121

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 120: Book Two – Chapter 13

I left Noah in Zac's capable hands and got his word that he'd call my father to say the job was completed per normal. He was risking a lot for my sake, I knew that.

A lot of risk for what seemed like absolutely no reason.

The level of danger associated with this insane plan wasn't lost on me.

After all, the last thing I wanted was for Zac's name to end up in my next manilla folder. I headed home as soon as I could, leaving enough time to arrive well before daylight, and walked towards my front door.

But it was as I was entering through the front gate to our property that something caught my eye.

It was an old lady, huddled up in a shawl, standing just on the street outside.

She had grey hair and eyes to match, clearly at an age that would suggest a retirement home or carer was required.

And yet she stood randomly outside my house at three o'clock in the morning, staring directly at me.

I paused for a moment and looked around, trying to see if she was with someone.

But when the empty street was completely silent and devoid of all other life, I started to wonder if maybe she'd gotten lost.

...Did I really have the energy to deal with this right now though? I was already so exhausted and just wanted to go inside to sleep in my own bed, something that would be a first after many days.

I could already perfectly visualise how soft my pillow would be...

just begging to be laid on and—.

"I can save her," the old lady suddenly said.

"I can save the girl." ...

What? I took my hand off the gate handle and turned back around to fully face her, part of me still wondering if she was even talking to me.

"..Pardon?" I called back.

Wasn't it common for older people to lose their minds at a certain age? What if she was a dementia patient who wandered off? I should probably just look up where the closest hospital or retirement home was and tell them where to find—.

"The girl. Clarissa," she said.

As if that was of any real help.

I blankly stared back at her.

"I'm not Clarissa," I clarified.

"I think you've—."

"I know that," she snapped sharply, making me flinch a bit in surprise.

"Oh...kay. Well, is that...your daughter?" I asked, still trying to be polite.

"Or your carer? Do you want me to call someone for you—?"

But then she started to walk towards me, her stride more steady than I would have expected given her appearance.

There was something oddly strange about her too.

A weird atmosphere around her.

Or maybe I was just slightly unnerved by the whole creepiness of the situation.

“Do you not know who I am?” she asked once she stood within a few feet of me.

“Ma’am, truthfully, I’m not even sure if you know who you are.No offence,” I said, starting to get more uncomfortable the longer this drew out.

“If you just wait here a moment though, I’ll head inside and wake up one of the maids.They can maybe help you out or something.”

I really didn’t care about courtesy anymore and just wanted to leave as soon as possible.

There was something about this entire encounter that just rubbed me the wrong way.

Almost as if I could feel the hair at the back of my neck standing up.I turned around and tried to open the gate, but she quickly moved forward to stop me.

“Wait,” she said, and I had to bite back my instincts telling me to go.

Rational logic would suggest that there was nothing to be worried about.She was just an old lady.

Frail enough looking to be pushed over by the wind alone.

“Wait, amoment,” she repeated.

..And I reluctantly turned back around to meet her eyes.

Eyes that seemed to hold an intelligence there that I wasn’t expecting.

And she spoke in a tone so low that I almost didn’t hear her.

“...Do you know the true story of the Winter Mist?” she asked.

Her expression was completely serious as I shuffled uncomfortably under her gaze.

It was as though I could feel her scrutinising me, analyzing my face for any sort of recognition that I knew what she was talking about.

Which, of course, I didn’t.

“Is that like a fairy tale?” I asked.

“Was it a book you used to read to your grandkids or something?”

But to my immense discomfort, she only continued to stare at me silently.

“..Ma’am...?” I really wanted to leave.

I was so close to home, merely a foot away from being back on the property.

Just a step forward and I could close the gate between us.

But she was so close to me that I wasn’t sure what she would do if I tried.

Clearly, she wasn’t right in the head.

However, at the sound of bird wings loudly flying into the air somewhere, she finally turned away, pulling the hood of her shawl up.

“I can save her,” she simply repeated.

“Don’t forget that.” And she started walking back down the street towards town.

...What the hell had that just been? I didn’t waste any more time in stepping through the gate and locking it behind me, my chest still pounding slightly from the whole ordeal.

So much fear caused by just one crazy old lady.

But if I had to say one thing that was far more terrifying than the old crone, I would have to answer that it was the man waiting for me once I finally entered inside.

As I walked through my front door, I saw a light had been left on in the living room.

A surprise given most people in the house should have been asleep by now.

Naturally, after everything that had just happened, I had every intention of just ignoring it and heading upstairs to my room instead.

...

However, I couldn’t help but catch the familiar scent of someone I knew only too well.

My father. My foot had been on the first step of the staircase as I came to this realisation, so close to finally being able to go to bed, but I knew that the light had been left on for a reason.

He was expecting me.

With a small sigh, I stepped back...and headed towards the living room instead.

“My Raven,” he greeted me, sitting in a leather armchair.

From where I was standing, I could only see his arms as he held a drink in his hand, the chair facing away from me.

“Father,” I replied.

“I just received the call from Zac not long ago,” he said, taking a sip from the glass.

“You’re later than expected.”

“Oh...Well, there was this old lady outside,” I started.

“I think she was lost. Kept trying to talk to me and wouldn’t let me leave—.”

“I meant the job, Raven. You’re several hours late from the job. The agreed upon time should have seen you home a long time ago.”

“Ah...”

“Did everything go...smoothly?”

No. No, it had not.

In fact, I couldn’t think of many ways in which it could have gone worse.

I’d dug into things I definitely shouldn’t have, opening a door to a liability of my own creation.

Firstly, by accidentally killing an employee for a kidnapping job...then by failing to take care of the consequences of that mistake.

Now, I was continuing to hide that consequence because I didn’t want the death on my hands.

Though, I couldn’t mention any of this to him.

By this point, I was already in far too deep to come clean.

Besides...and I knew I shouldn’t be...but I couldn’t help but feel a little...curious.

Just what had that smuggler managed to find out? Was it related to the documents?

“Yep...it ah, it all went smoothly,” I lied.

"I just had some issues getting into the building, is all. A crowd of people were drinking outside and, well, intoxicated or not, they'd still be witnesses. I decided to play it safe."

"Is that so...?" he mused.

A nervous feeling was bubbling in my chest. He couldn't know I was lying...could he? But then again...there was no such thing as a secret from Eric Reid.

I knew that better than anyone.

The silence seemed to stretch on for what felt like an eternity, quiet enough that I was painfully aware of how loud even my breathing seemed inside the room.

Could he sense how nervous I was? Hear the loud thumping of my heart? But, no, that was impossible.

Because love him or fear him, at the end of the day, my father was still just a man.

A man.

Not a... 'werewolf'.

And, as a normal man, he didn't have the heightened senses I possessed.

That was always going to be something that kept us apart.

Thinking on that now, it was a stark reminder of where I'd accidentally found myself now.

Facing a crossroads of two paths.

On the one hand, I could continue to live blindly in fear, hoping that the eggshells around me would not crack under my mistakes, revealing to the world just how different I really was.

A path where I would follow the rules, taking each day one at a time.

Forgetting about everything I'd found out, everything I'd seen...everyone I'd met.

All so I could continue to loyally serve my father.

The man who raised me, doing what he thought was best for both me and the business.

And, in doing so, trying to save me from myself...and others...Or I could reach into my pocket to where that hotel keycard now laid.

A promise attached to it that maybe things didn't need to be like that.

A warm hand extended towards me through the darkness, offering sparks and a light that I'd never experienced before.

That I never thought even possible.

A way to take back control over the things that constantly scared me, learning to use them for myself instead.

To become a version of myself that had no limits.

If Kieran was telling me the truth and I really was what he said I was, and he was the same, then didn't I have no choice but to at least try and explore that option? To at least take a chance that maybe one day I wouldn't need to be so afraid? My father could try a million different things to help me hide my secret.

To contain the creature and keep me protected under his umbrella of power, hidden from the world, but at the end of the day...he didn't really know anything.

Just like how I currently didn't either.

He was...just a man.

Just a human man.

Someone who could never truly understand me.

The only real question now was...

Am I actually doing this for him? Doing this out of love for him and for the business I was raised in? ..Or am I actually doing this for myself? I heard as my father then inhaled sharply, standing up from the chair he'd been seated on, and turned to walk towards me.

That fearsome gaze of his still pierced through me, as if he could see everything I was hiding from him inside.

But I held my resolve, keeping my expression steady, committed to this decision I'd made.

He walked until he stood right in front of me, staring into my eyes as he watched me carefully, bringing a hand up as he slowly reached for my face, and....

..And he gently touched my cheek.

“Good work,” he said simply.

“You’ve done well.” And, with that, he walked past me, leaving towards his own room to rest.

My shoulders relaxed the minute I heard his footsteps fade upstairs, but despite that minor relief, I was still helpless to the thoughts swimming around in my head.

Because for the very first time in my life, I had knowingly and willingly disobeyed my father, going even as far as to lie to him.

And yet, somehow, in spite of all of that...by some goddamn miracle.....I had gotten away with it.

Or, at least, that was the case for now.