

# A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 128 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 20

## A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 128

Book Two – Ch.# 20

We exited the vehicle and I began walking to the front door, thinking that Kieran was next to me. Only, as he called out to me, I realised he was still at the car.

“Come here for a second,” he said, crooking his finger for me to return.

I did as he asked and he stood in front of me, a smirk on his lips.

“I hope you don’t find this too weird,” he said, and I merely raised a brow in question.

He then gently grabbed my hand and placed it across my chest. “It won’t be a very formal setting but you’re still going to meet my father. It means I need to teach you this. It’s the same thing that Daniel did. You place your hand here and bow your head a little. It’s a sign of respect for those ranked above you, as well as those amongst allied packs.”

Oh, I did remember the gesture. Though I hadn’t known what to do at the time and just stood there. Was I meant to have done it back? Was I considered “allied” despite not being from a pack?

“Like this?” I asked.

And I mimicked what I’d seen.

But it instantly made Kieran’s lip twitch, looking as though he were trying not to laugh. “Was that... wrong?”

I thought back on what I’d done but couldn’t work out which part I’d messed up.

He quickly cleared his throat though and smiled. “No, no, it wasn’t wrong. It was perfect. It’s just amusing to see you do it towards me. I never thought I’d be in this situation.”

“What situ.”

“Let’s go in,” he said, guiding me with a hand to my shoulder. “Everyone will be waiting.”

I didn't pry for more answers.

From the minute we walked inside, I became painfully aware of just how much I stood out.

There were a few people around, all of whom were staring at me or... whispering. Every time they accidentally caught my eye, they would instantly look away. A little unnerving, but I did my best to shrug it off. I had a feeling this was going to become the norm everywhere we went.

"Alpha heir," a lady said, approaching from another room. She then did the bow that Kieran had shown me moments earlier. "...Miss Reid." Another bow.

She knew my name. I took that to mean Daniel had already made it here and the people were gathered to meet us.

I placed a hand over my chest, thinking that bowing back was the respectful thing to do amongst 'allies', but Kieran's hand shot out so quickly to stop me that I almost didn't see it. "If you can please have the luggage from the car put away, it would be greatly appreciated," Kieran said, giving the girl a polite smile. "Please also have the room arranged to ensure Raven has a comfortable stay."

...An employee. Maybe a maid? I guess it would have been strange to do it as a guest. The lady looked at me, breaking her guise of formality to momentarily crease her brow, but she soon recovered. With another quick bow, she left to do what she was asked.

...Just to my father," Kieran whispered, reiterating what he had said earlier. And I nodded my head.

I'd gone from being able to navigate high society etiquette with my eyes closed to... feeling like a clumsy child. A much steeper learning curve than I anticipated."

We walked through some hallways, the place being even bigger than I initially thought, until we eventually arrived at a set of double doors. It was here that Kieran stopped for a moment and gave me one final look.

I wasn't sure what to expect on the other side, but I had been imagining like an antique-style living area with a bunch of people in formal attire. Or maybe something like those old fashioned cigar rooms.

But, as the door opened before me, I found it to be... normal.

Sure, it was furnished really nicely, but everything seemed somewhat modern. Closer to the sort of living areas I had back at my house than anything else.

Several people stood inside the room, it being large enough to accommodate it. Three adult men around my father's age, Daniel, and a few other older gentlemen who seemed more elderly. All dressed nicely but not the blazered suits with ties I'd pictured.

...However, as we entered inside, their eyes all instantly fell on me.

Kieran was the first to move, walking up to the man who stood at the centre. I already vaguely knew what his father, Victor, looked like, having read it in my folder weeks ago, but seeing him in person was another thing entirely. Based on looks alone, it was easy to see the resemblance. They had the same dark hair and build, the only real difference being their eyes Victor's were brown as opposed to Kieran's hazel.

And there was something else too. He had a sort of... air about him. Almost as if you could feel the importance coming off of him. Even if I came in here blind, I was sure I could have pointed to who was in charge. Or was... 'Alpha', as Kieran had told me.

"Father," Kieran said, giving a small bow. "Apologies for the short notice. I hope you weren't busy."

But with the short formality out of the way, I was taken aback by how Victor just immediately stepped forward and brought his son into a hug.

...Something that induced a pang of longing inside me, one that I'd thought to have buried long ago.

"It's good to have you back," he said, pulling away after a pat on the shoulder. "And please don't worry about any of that. I just appreciate you going in my absence to the event. Besides, how could I possibly be annoyed? What with you bringing home your..."

There was a pause as everyone looked to Kieran... and then to me.

"...Guest," he finished.

I took this as my cue and stepped forward, doing the bow in respect. "Allow me to introduce you to Raven Reid," Kieran said, gesturing a hand back towards me.

I felt an itch of discomfort over hearing the name, but smiled nonetheless.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," I said to Victor. "I can't tell you how much it means to me just being here, and I sincerely appreciate the generosity of accommodating my abrupt visitation, This is all new to me so I hope you'll forgive any faux pas I may make. I'll do my best to learn

quickly."

It wasn't quite the same thing, but making a good impression was still something that felt more natural for me to do. Being able to quickly put on the face I needed to show was

important to ensure my assignments were completed.

"Well, aren't you just so charming," his father said, walking up to me. "And so beautiful too. Those eyes and smile of yours are stunning. I'm sure you hear that all the time though."

He then held a hand out for me to shake, which I quickly did.

"The pleasure is all ours though, I assure you, so please make yourself at home," he continued. "I'm very much looking forward to getting to know you and hope you'll excuse all my questions. I just find your situation a little fascinating. It's not often that children of our kind are raised by humans."

However, just like his son, I found him a little difficult to read. He either genuinely wanted to know... or he was trying to suss out if I was actually telling the truth. Maybe both. Either way, I held my smile in place and remained composed. "These are my second and third in charge," Victor then said, pointing to the men of similar age. "Reece, our Beta, and Neil, our Gamma. As well as three members of what we call Elders. Elder Atticus, Douglas and Roy."

I gave them each nods of acknowledgement and smiles as they were introduced one by one.

"...And I believe you've already met Reece's son, Daniel?"

"Yes," I said, meeting Daniel's guilty eyes. "I've already had the pleasure." No one else apart from Kieran seemed to notice the small tension there. Probably for the best. "Perfect. Then there is also Neil's eldest son, Camren, but he's currently patrolling. You'll probably meet him at some point."

This was entirely too many names to remember at once, but I did my best to retain what I could. Already, I knew I would have to ask Kieran to remind me later.

I looked around the room one more time, internally memorising their faces, however it was then that I noticed something else.

...They were all men.

Didn't they have any female leadership?

It was an uncomfortable thought that made me start to wonder just how archaic the values here might be.

But in the end, I wasn't able to think on it for long... as then the door burst open.

"Kieran!" a female voice squealed behind me.

. And a wave of nausea instantly hit me, the voice piercing through.

Slowly, I turned around to see who had entered... and saw a young girl with blonde hair and hazel eyes.

But it was difficult to pay attention to anything other than what was happening in my head, Because every part of me was now screaming, urging me to reach for my dagger. To not waste any time in just ending it.

...And I took a step back. Shocked by my own thoughts.

"You're home!" she said, immediately running to hug Kieran. "I was starting to think you weren't coming back."

...Al... Alli...

It was at the tip of my tongue. As if I should have known it.

"Don't be ridiculous," Kieran sighed, pulling away to pat her head affectionately. "Of course I was coming back."

I stared at the two of them, doing everything I could to keep myself away. Whatever this weird sensation was, I clearly wasn't in a right state of mind.

...But then she turned to look at me.

Her eyes meeting mine.

And it suddenly came to me.

It was her name.

"Raven, meet my little sister..." Kieran said.

... – Allison

"—Allison," he finished.

The girl didn't seem to notice anything off though. No, she seemed completely normal. Just a young girl, maybe barely older than eighteen, who appeared nothing but sweet. What the hell was wrong with me?

I needed to say something. Anything. Everyone was staring at me. But I was internally having a battle inside myself as I tried to restrain those thoughts screaming at me.

Allison just smiled brightly though, clearly unaware, and, before I could get any words out, she did the one thing I wished she hadn't.

...She walked up and threw her arms around me. "I'm so excited to meet you!" she gushed. "As soon as I heard you were here, I ran the entire way! I almost couldn't believe it."

'Move, Raven,' the sane part of my mind yelled inside. 'Move or say something.' And, very robotically, I managed to bring a hand up to pat her shoulder. Making sure to control the movement as much as I could.

"Give her some space, Allie," Kieran said, pulling her off me. "She's already got a lot going on."

"Oh, Goddess, I'm sorry!" she said, her eyes wide as she looked up at me. "I must have gotten carried away. You're just so beautiful though! Ahh! I can't believe I finally have a sis -."

"Alright, come on," Kieran said, pushing her out the door. "There'll be plenty of time to talk to Raven later. Let her settle in first."

"Oh... W-wait, Kieran-!"

She kept struggling, protesting her forced departure, but did finally manage to get a glance at me from around his arm, giving me one last smile.

"It was nice to meet you, Raven!" she called out.

And, finally, the door was closed.

...What was that?

I momentarily stood in a daze, still trying to collect my thoughts. I'd never had such an adverse reaction to someone before. It seemed almost insane. And did I know Kieran had a sister? He must have mentioned her at some point for me to know her name.

...Hopefully I had that doctor's appointment soon. The faster the drugs were out of my system, the better.

"You've had a long journey," Victor said, pulling me from my thoughts. "We should let you get some rest. Tomorrow night I'd like to have a proper dinner to introduce you to Ashwood... if that would be okay with you." "Move."

...I forced my lips back into a smile.

“Of course,” I said automatically. “I’d love that.”

“Come on, I’ll show you to your room,” Kieran said, gently touching my shoulder.

He managed to walk me a step before I quickly turned back around to face everyone in the room, remembering my manners. “It was lovely to meet you all. Thank you again for the warm welcome.” They each gave me kind smiles and a wave, and we proceeded to leave. Heading to the place I would be sleeping for the foreseeable future. I allowed Kieran to lead me through the house, walking through the large building that felt more like a maze, but I couldn’t seem to focus on anything around me. Because, inside, I was still struggling to comprehend what had just happened. Wondering why I’d had such a violent urge to hurt his sister... and whether, deep down, I was an unknowing threat to the people here.

...If perhaps maybe, just maybe, I was already too far gone in the darkness of my past. That I really couldn’t be changed.

## **A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 129 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 21**

### **A Gift from the Goddess**

Chapter 129

**Book Two – Ch.# 21 “Here you go,”**

Kieran said, showing me to a door. “You’ll be staying in here. All your luggage should be inside already.” I snapped myself out of my thoughts to give a smile. “Thank you. I really do appreciate it.” “And if you need anything, I’m just across the hall in the room over there.” There was a door where he pointed, and I promptly nodded.

...And then... silence. Not quite awkward but not entirely natural either, but it spread between us nevertheless.

“Um... well, I guess I’ll get some rest—.” “I’m really sorry,” he said quickly. Almost as though he’d been holding onto it. “Today could have gone a lot smoother and I think I may have overwhelmed you a little.”

I stared at him, a little shocked that he was the one apologising to me rather than the reverse.

"What? No, no, I'm fine," I said. "You have nothing to be sorry for. I honestly am thankful just to be here."

"Well, just with the whole thing with Daniel being a bit aggressive... and then Allison maybe coming off a little strong. I wish that you'd had a better start here." "Oh... no, they're fine. Really, it's my fault for showing up last minute."

I was trying to brush off the topic, but the Allison situation was apparently bothering him. A crease formed between his brows as he seemed almost conflicted.

When he did finally start to speak again, his tone was far more serious.

"I could tell that she made you uncomfortable, but I hope that you'll give her a chance. She is a really nice girl when you get to know her. I'm not sure if you noticed but there aren't many other girls around here. I think she just got a little excited and forgot about personal space." I was starting to feel even worse about my reaction to her, a pang of guilt slowly chewing me up inside. "Of course," I said. "She was lovely. I'm looking forward to spending time with her." But then he searched my face and my heart quickly sank, knowing that he was probably able to read me. Just like he always could. I'd never hated that ability of his more than I did right then. And the worst part was that I didn't even know why I felt that way about her. There shouldn't even be a need to have this conversation right now.

"...She means a lot to me," he finally said quietly. "After my mother died, she took it the worst of all of us. Wouldn't eat, wouldn't sleep... just a little kid, walking around everywhere in a daze. For a while, we were worried we'd lose her as well." He paused for a moment before taking a deep breath, looking away. "It was years before she finally came back and it wasn't without a lot of work. She found solace by connecting with her faith, which I was happy about, but she still relies on me heavily."

I felt so guilty that I could have thrown up. Hearing all of this was so incredibly heartbreaking.

But the way he was venting... I could tell this was something that had been weighing on him for a while. I wasn't entirely sure if he was telling me about her for my sake, or if he just felt the need to finally talk to someone about it.

Perhaps I was the first person he felt could truly understand, given my personal history with grief.

"I guess what I'm trying to say is... I hope that you'll warm up to her," he said. "Which is probably not my place to ask, especially considering everything you're probably going through right now. Hell, it's actually pretty selfish-." "Hey," I said, grabbing his head gently in my hands. It was enough for him to stop and meet my eyes. "You don't have anything to worry about. Your sister was nothing but sweet. I'm just ... tired from a long day."

It was probably a once-off anyway. Just a bad reaction or flare from the drugs. The next time we met, I was sure things would be better.

...And if they weren't, then I'd just make it work. Somehow. I was determined.

Kieran was giving me so much by allowing me to come here. To help me get better and learn more about myself. The least I could do was be nice to his sister. Not that this should have

even been an issue. The girl hadn't done anything wrong. She just... hugged me.

But it apparently meant a lot to Kieran hearing me say it. And, truthfully, that was all that mattered. He seemed to quickly relax under my touch and I took a second to study his features, momentarily absorbed by all the different emotions that always filled me when we made

contact.

He wasn't like anyone I'd ever met before. He was caring, understanding...gentle. He was everything that I felt I wasn't... and it made me gravitate to him like a moth to a flame.

I felt myself then slowly lean in closer, arcing upwards as my body moved on its own. My craving for him now turning into a hunger, needing his warmth around me.

His face was still within my grasp but I found that I didn't need to coerce him. Already, his gaze was changing focus, flickering up and down between my eyes and mouth. Inching ever closer as his hand then found my waist, pulling me towards him.

And then, finally... his lips met mine.

Turning those sparks into flames, a sensation I'd found myself withdrawing from the last few days, missing it after experiencing it just the once. His touch, his taste... it was an addiction

I deepened the kiss, my mouth starting to move against his hungrily. Needing more... Needing to feel everything

And as I trailed a hand down his chest, feeling every muscle hidden behind his shirt, I wanted nothing more than to find the hem and trace a hand back up under it.

But he moved before I could

with a small push, I felt as my back then found the door behind me, his grip on my body tightening, his fingers pressing into my skin As every second ticked by, I found that I was losing myself a little bit more

“Kieran,” I splied as his mouth moved to my neck

His hand then moved down my waist, wandering lower until he held a firm grasp of my leg from behind my thigh. Squeezing it once before lifting it up against him. But I needed to be higher than this to wrap myself around him properly, something that we both must have realised. Only, as he went to lift me, it was then that we heard it.

Footsteps.

And we instantly broke apart.

Simultaneously, we both looked down the hallway and caught the startled eyes of an embarrassed-looking girl. The one I recognised as the maid from earlier today. “Alpha heir,” she fumbled out, quickly averting her gaze. “Apologies.” And Kieran immediately let me go, taking a step back. She definitely wasn’t the only one embarrassed though. Whatever she was feeling, I was probably ten times more mortified. This wasn’t exactly the kind of impression I wanted people to gossip about after one day. “What is it?” he asked her.

If he was annoyed or upset in any way, it wasn’t noticeable. He somehow sounded completely neutral as he spoke to her. However, unlike Kieran’s demeanour, she shuffled uncomfortably where she stood.

“I um... I came to ask if you or Miss Reid required any food brought to your rooms.”

Kieran looked towards me and raised a brow, silently asking me the question, but I quickly shook my head. Up until a minute ago, I’d only been hungry for one thing... and it wasn’t food.

“We’re fine,” he called back. “Thank you.”

The girl quickly gave a bow and left without another word. Truthfully, I don’t think I’d ever seen someone so eager to leave before.

But with it now just the two of us again, Kieran looked back over to me and a silence fell once more.

Though I was still a little embarrassed over being caught, a part of me still wanted to continue from where we’d left off. To invite him into the room with me and ask to spend the night together. I had the feeling that, whatever this thing between us was, I’d only just scratched the surface of how good it could really be.

But as he inhaled deeply with a sense of finality, I realised he wasn’t of the same mind.

“You said that you were tired... I should really let you get some rest.”

..But I wasn't so tired anymore.

"Right," I agreed, contradicting my thoughts. "I did say that."

"And you'll probably have another long day tomorrow too."

only, I was still eager for today not to end yet.

That's true"

I stared into his eyes and proceeded to silently plead for him to lean back over and resume our

moment... but I wasn't so lucky.

"Goodnight, Raven," he said.

...And, with that, my first day at the Ashwood 'pack came to an end.

The next morning, I awoke to a light knock on the door, finding a lady there to 'assist with getting ready. Though confused, I allowed her into the room; a space larger and grander than any guest residing I'd ever seen. But it was through her that I was able to learn a little bit more, like how her job was referred to as a personal attendant'. Something that apparently was a bit different to a normal maid.

I declined the offer of letting her help me get changed, finding that a little too weird, but was grateful for her showing me to the dining area afterwards. This being the place where I was to meet Kieran for breakfast.

Kieran and I made small talk as we ate but didn't mention the night before at all. Though I wasn't sure if that was a good or bad thing. A part of me was wondering if he'd treat me differently today; greet me with a kiss or touch my hand as we spoke. But he seemed to act normally.

To be fair, I still wasn't entirely sure what we were. For all I knew, public displays of affection were off limits or frowned upon here. Or maybe he just didn't think we were serious enough to announce it to anyone. All of which I could totally understand and respect.

For now, I would just follow his lead.

"Time to go," Kieran then said, looking down at his watch. "I said we'd be there by ten." I drank the last sip of my coffee and placed the mug down. "Where are we going?" I asked, having not heard about any plans yet. Kieran scanned the area, looking at the people in the dining room with us. There were a few scattered around, either eating breakfast or working, but none of whom looked to be paying us any mind. Or, at least,

there were none who \*looked\* like they were actively listening in. Though I knew all too well how looks could be deceiving.

“Come on,” was all he said, avoiding the question... and I followed behind him.

It wasn't until we were back in his car that he finally gave me the answer I was looking for.

...And it was one I was both grateful for yet nervous about.

“Kieran... where are we going?” I repeated, getting a little worried by his aversion. “Sorry...,” he said, turning the car on. “I just wasn't sure if it was a good idea to make it public knowledge. I've set the appointment up to protect your privacy as much as possible.” And though I had an inkling of where we were going based on just that response, he very quickly confirmed it before I could ask “We're going to the hospital,” he said. “They're going to do a full evaluation of your condition.”

And off we went.

## **A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 130 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 22**

### **A Gift from the Goddess**

Chapter 130

**Book Two – Ch.# 22**

“Please sit down on the bed over there,” said the doctor, pointing in the direction.

She was an older lady and quite pretty for her age, her most notable feature being her gentle eyes. She had introduced herself as Doctor Melissa Chambers. “Kieran, did you want to sit in the chair?” she asked without looking. A question met with a second of awkward silence between the two of us.

We hadn't discussed him being in the room whilst I was examined. I'd just assumed that, like human doctors, they normally were more of a private thing unless the person was a spouse or relative.

But before any of us could talk, the doctor quickly shook her head. “Oh, right, I forgot... I suppose just wait outside then.”

“No... hang on,” I said, hesitating. “Kieran should probably be here. You know... in case I don’t understand parts of what you tell me. I may need him to help explain later...” I then turned to look at him. “If that’s okay with you?”

He nodded.

“Of course,” he said. “Whatever is most comfortable for you.”

And without any further delay, I went and sat on the bed as the doctor began examining me.

There was a small privacy screen, so I didn’t need to worry about Kieran seeing anything, but I was just grateful to have him there. Truthfully, I was more nervous than I cared to admit and having him close by helped soothe my anxiety a little.

“I didn’t hear the whole story from Kieran, but I was told there was something about potential suppressor usage... and silver,” she said. “If that really is true then we should do an internal investigation as soon as possible.”

She poked and prodded at my skin as she conducted different tests, but her words caused a stir in me.

An investigation could lead back to my father... which could lead back to me. All of which I didn’t want uncovered. My past was still something I hadn’t divulged to Kieran yet.

I didn’t argue with her though, choosing to remain silent. My head was now already thinking of ways I could avoid the situation. But I was promptly pulled from my thoughts after she finished taking my blood pressure,

Because upon lifting my shirt up, a small gasp left her, Just how bad did it need to be for a doctor to be surprised?

“However...,” she continued, her eyes not leaving the old scarring on my skin. “Kieran told me a little about your situation Told me about the potential abuse. As a personal favour, he’s asked me to give you some time to adjust here before we let officials go digging into your personal life I can see merit in that Mental wounds are just as important to heal.” It felt strange to have someone talking about me like this. My last doctor never seemed to show more interest than was absolutely necessary,

“...Were these scars originally caused by a silver object?” she then asked.

It was a difficult question that brought up some less than pleasant memories, but I bit back any discomfort I had.

“No,” I answered, keeping it simple.

The truth was that most of these were from my victim's pocketknives, training daggers or... whatever instrument Gavin felt like using during punishment. All normal metal from what I could recall.

"Adult scarring like this is rare for our kind. You should have completely healed from these. It's true the suppressors would limit ability but I'm more inclined to think this might be from the... silver consumption." She seemed to struggle to say the last part, almost as though the idea of it made her sick "I'm going to take a blood sample now. You can pull your shirt down." I did as instructed and allowed her to do what she needed. She spoke a little as she worked.

"Kieran already told you about blessed silver, I hope?" she asked, taking the sample to a workbench of different testing machines.

"Yes."

"Good. So, then I don't need to tell you how lucky you are to be alive then."

"Melissa-," Kieran started to protest, but I cut him off. "-Yes, I've been told." She turned around to look at me, the vial behind her having turned black. And though her eyes were now sharper, I could tell her blunt response had good reason behind it. "There isn't any point in sugar coating it. She needs to understand just how bad this really is," she defended. "...And I don't say that lightly. This is the worst case I've ever seen in all my years as a doctor. Worse than even the things I saw during the war. We stopped production of the suppressors exactly for this reason. To ensure that it wasn't adapted or developed into something far more terrifying. And now look..." She held a hand up towards me, her voice becoming emotional. "Look at what it's caused. This pack's future Luna-,"

"Enough, Melissa," Kieran said, a warning in his tone.

"Luna'?" What was that? I wasn't sure what she was referring to, but it was a term I wasn't familiar with Internally, I made a note to ask Kieran about it later.

The two of them stared at each other and I could have sworn that, for a moment, I saw tears in the doctor's eyes. But with a long inhale of recovery, she then turned back around and began mixing some small vials or liquid on her workbench. Working until she was able to produce a syringe full of whatever she'd made "This is the best I can give you," she finally said, walking back over to me. "The external damage already done will most likely never heal and, for that, I am truly sorry. But what I give you will help to eliminate the chemicals in your system, hopefully allowing your full strength to return It should also mean that non silver injuries will heal laster without further

permanent scarring."

"How quickly?" I asked, unable to hide my curiosity.

I already thought my ability to heal within a few days was quite quick, but she made it sound as though I were only harnessing a fraction of my potential. "For bruising and wounds... usually within a day. Of course, this also depends on the severity, the person, and the body's condition. Broken bones though are usually fairly quick thanks to our natural shifting affinity."

She then leaned over and stabbed me with the needle.

"I can't say we have much research on this exact scenario, but I believe this should help with the silver in your body. I'm hoping that it will bind it like a metal, allowing for it to leave your system without issue. And, as for the suppressors..." To my dread, a bottle of pills were then handed to me. A sight I now loathed after discovering the truth regarding my medical care all these years. "This will help to absorb and flush it out. Once a day for two weeks. I would also like to see you again soon to check your progress. In the meantime though, I'll do some further testing here to screen for long-term internal damage. With any luck, we'll get you up and running at full strength in no time."

I couldn't help but notice that she didn't seem to realise I already held significant ability despite the suppressors and silver. Did Kieran not tell her...? But I proceeded to take the pills from her anyway, deciding not to mention it. "I appreciate your help," I said, trying to give her a smile. Only her eyes seemed to tear up a little again.

"...I truly am sorry this happened to you," she said, reaching for my hands. "I'll do everything I can to make this right."

And though the statement appeared like a standard thing to say, I couldn't help but hear a tone of genuine sincerity. Almost as if the apology were more personal. I frowned a little but thanked her nonetheless, doing my best to stay neutral. Another several minutes then passed before Kieran and I were finally leaving the hospital. The entire time we walked, I kept thinking back to the doctor's words, questioning the intention behind it. Wondering if there was more to it.

Was she perhaps involved? But that didn't make any sense. She was the one who brought up needing to do an investigation. Then.... "Are you okay?" Kieran asked. I hadn't said anything since we left her office so it probably did seem odd. His voice quickly snapped me out of my thoughts. "I'm fine," I said. "I'm just a little confused,"

"About"

"I don't know, I'm probably just overthinking," I said, biting my lip. "But... did the doctor seem like she was apologising a little too personally?"

To my surprise though, Kieran went quiet. Something that made me think he knew something I didn't.

Immediately, I stopped walking so he would turn to look at me,

“Kieran?”

“I took you to see her because she’s an old family friend. She was close with my mother before her passing. But... there was another reason too.” He then paused, a crease forming between his brows. “She was one of the lead developers who originally designed the suppressors. I figured she would be the best person to help you.”

That explained a lot.

“I know she’s not proud of it and harbours a lot of guilt,” he continued, “but it’s not like she can undo her past. Back then, she didn’t really have a choice either. Mating you now and being able to see how the effects are still present even after all these years... I think she feels somewhat responsible for what happened to you.”

It created a conflicting chain of thoughts in my head. Did I resent her? I wasn’t sure. She knowingly helped create something that had the sole purpose of hurting others. Even in her old age and whether it was voluntary or not, surely she had to be culpable for her actions even a little bit. She might not have made the exact pills I took but it was her original contribution that led to the event.

I tried to push it out of my mind though, knowing it wouldn’t do much good to mull on it. There wasn’t much I could do about what had already happened. All that mattered now was making sure that my future was better.

A thought that made me recall her words regarding the need for an investigation.

I completely understood the importance of finding out where the drugs came from, especially if there could be others out there just like me, unknowingly affected. But... letting them follow my trail back to my father was the worst possible outcome.

...There had to be a way to find out where they came from before it got to that point.

“Alpha heir,” someone said nearby.

We both looked up sharply to see a man. They reminded me of the person we’d met at the border yesterday; a similar sort of athletic authority about them. A ‘warrior’ perhaps? I remembered Kieran mentioning that term before.

“Give me a few minutes,” Kieran said to me. “I’ll meet you outside.”

And he walked over to talk to the man.

I assumed that, whatever it was, it was work related since I wasn’t meant to be privy.

However, it did get me thinking about my own work... and my assignments... and... Zac.

...Which gave me an idea. No, it gave me more than an idea,

It gave me a connection. One I'd failed to see up until now,

How had I not realised it sooner?

Once outside, I found somewhere private and quickly pulled out my cell phone. If I were to do this then I couldn't let Kieran hear the conversation. An unfortunate added time pressure but I

would make it work

Only, as I pulled out my phone, I discovered that there was barely even a single bar of service. How could that be though? Didn't they ever have to make calls?

I kept walking, trying to get a stronger signal, but eventually gave up and decided to just try it anyway. ...And I dialled the number I knew only too well.

"H-lo?"

I cringed at the quality, trying to walk another few steps in the fleeting hope it might help. "Zac, it's me," I said. "Can you hear me? I need a favour."

"Rae? It sounds like you're in a t-nnel. Where are y—?"

"Don't worry, I'm fine. Just out of town working a job," I said. It wasn't a complete lie. In a way, it was partially true. "I don't have much time. I need your help." "What? What did y, say?" "Help. I need your help," I said loudly, getting frustrated.

"What-ith?"

"Noah. Tell Noah I need information. He mentioned he was a smuggler like his brother. Ask him to find out if Miles was transporting any strange drugs." "D- you say drugs?"

"Yes. Drugs. They won't be like anything you can find on the market. They will contain weird ingredients that might not even seem to have a noticeable effect. I need to know who Miles was getting them from. Tell Noah he owes me this."

If they were specific to werewolves, there was a chance they might be completely harmless to humans. That was a good thing though. Hopefully, they would stand out on an inventory list. "Rae, I don't kn- if this is a g-d idea."

"I don't have a choice, Zac. This is extremely important," I argued. "...Please."

After a few seconds, I thought I heard a sigh on the other end. I took this to mean that he agreed

“Thank you, Zac,” I said, feeling relieved. “This really is important. Just call me as soon as you know anything, I’ll try and get better reception next time.” “Where you?” he asked again, but it was still a question I avoided.

“I can’t say But I really an okay. Don’t worry. I’ll be even better when I can find that info

“Okay, I’ll let y know.”

And then I heard it someone moving I quickly turned and saw Kieran rounding the corner, his gaze searching the area for me. will soon found \* Raven?” he asked, confused, “Who are you talking..”

But his voice trailed off as we made eye contact.

“I have to go,” I said quietly into the phone. “Bye, Zac.”

And it was as I hung up that understanding crossed Kieran’s features, realising that I’d just been on a phone call. Looking between my face and the device still in my hand.

...Something that, if I didn’t know any better, I would have thought he just caught me doing something illegal. ...And it just so happened that I \*didn’t\* know any better.