

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 131 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 23

A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 131

Book Two – Ch.# 23 "...Is that a phone?" he asked, still appearing shocked.

"...Yes?"

And he immediately walked over to me, starting to scan the area around us. Almost as if he were checking to see if anyone else had seen me. "Quickly put it away," he said.

"What's wrong, Kieran?"

I asked the question but still did what he requested, stuffing it back into my pocket.

"Communication and recording devices like that aren't allowed here," he said. "It's the only way we keep ourselves safe. They potentially jeopardise our entire kind's secrecy. You'd be best to just leave it switched off in your suitcase and don't let anyone know you have it."

...I guess that made sense. I'd been wondering myself how they'd managed to keep their existence so unknown all this time. If someone started taking videos of people turning into wolves, I could see how that would quickly uncover the truth. "I'm sorry... I didn't know," I said. "My friend was worried about where I disappeared to. I just called to let them know I was safe."

"You don't need to apologise. It's my fault. I should have told you before we got here." He then exhaled and relaxed himself, the danger now gone. "It's slowly becoming a little better ever since we started business with humans. We even have a landline phone for that reason now. I guess if you wanted to call someone, I could ask permission for you to access it. Its use is monitored by the Elders."

I thought about it for a moment but realised that if I used a public phone, I would have limited freedom in what I could and could not discuss openly. Especially if mentioning things related to my father or the drugs, it could make all of this effort to keep it hidden pointless.

"Thank you... I'll be sure to let you know."

I didn't enjoy lying to Kieran but, for now, this was the only way. So much was riding on that call from Zac that it didn't leave me with many options. No, I would need to keep my phone nearby and hope for the best

"Come on," he said, touching my shoulder. "I'll show you around some more places. We'll need to be back at the house by about five o'clock though. We've got that dinner tonight." In amongst everything happening, I'd almost forgotten about the dinner planned for tonight. It sounded as though everyone who was even remotely important would be attending, which was a little nerve-wracking.

"Sure," I said

And we left soon after, It was a fun day in the end, all things considered. After a stressful morning with the doctor's appointment and the cell phone incident, it managed to recover back into an enjoyable time spent with Kieran.

And though it was slow, I was starting to learn more things by being around him. Like his sense of humour... his smile... the way he laughed. And I noticed how easy it was for me to open up because of that.

Every now and then I would find myself stopping after realising how comfortable I seemed to be, so contrasted to my normal guarded nature... and I would sneak a look over at him. But every time I would do so, I would find him already watching me, his hazel eyes instantly sending little butterflies through me.

...And I would wonder what he saw when he looked at me.

By the time five o'clock came around, I was almost sad to see the private part of our day come to an end. Now, with the expectation of meeting important figures tonight, I knew that I would need to be on my best behaviour, careful about how I presented myself.

'Best behaviour' ... no, that was how I used to describe working assignments for my father. But I wasn't going to the dinner tonight for him. I was going... for me.

This was something that *I* wanted to do. "...You look beautiful," Kieran said as I approached a little while later.

My cheeks burned in response, his words catching me off-guard.

I'd spent the last hour quickly getting ready for the dinner, so I was relieved to hear he thought so. But he, himself, looked exceptionally handsome too, something that made it hard for me not to stare. It was as if every time I saw him, I was struck a little bit more by his features.

"Thank you," I said quietly.

“Everyone will be waiting already.”

And so we began walking to where I remembered the dining area was. Only, as we entered back into the large space, I was amazed by how different it appeared.

It had been completely rearranged and now resembled a fancy restaurant more than the casual eating area I recalled. Everywhere I looked, I saw pristine white-clothed tables with candles and flowers. Many nicely dressed people were also already seated and chatting amongst themselves.

“Kieran!” a voice said, and I turned to see a young man speaking. “It’s good to finally see you. *Sorry* I couldn’t come by earlier.”

“Camren,” Kieran greeted. “It’s no trouble. I’ve been busy showing Raven around anyway.”

“Oh, right,” said the man, his eyes turning to me. “The talk of the pack. It’s lovely to meet you, Raven. I’m Camren, the Gamma heir.”

He did a bow and I gave him a smile. “It’s nice to meet you.”

The conversation then reverted to the topic of things Kieran had missed whilst in Lockdale City, all of which I didn’t really understand, but perhaps it was caused by my lack of concentration. Because in the corner of my eye, I couldn’t help but notice the stares I was receiving from a group of girls seated nearby.

Or maybe ‘glares’ was a better word for it.

Immediately, the hair on the back of my neck stood up as I watched them. Almost as if I had a weird urge to glare back at them. I wasn’t sure why though. It wasn’t the same as the feeling I’d had with Allison. This felt less dangerous and more... protective?

“Ignore them,” Kieran whispered to me. I jumped a little in surprise, him addressing the encounter I was having with the girls; much to my embarrassment. I’d been so absorbed by the whole thing that I hadn’t even realised Camren had left. It was now just the two of us once more. “...Did I do something to offend them?” I asked, confused. But upon Kieran looking over at them, they instantly turned their heads, acting as if they were merely talking to each other. “They’re just jealous,” he said. “It’s not worth your energy.” “Jealous? Jealous of who?” “Of you. Seriously, don’t give it any thought. Now come on, we’re expected up the front.” I didn’t ask anything further but it stuck with me regardless, wondering just how anyone could feel jealous of me. I would happily trade places with any person in this town if it meant avoiding the upbringing I’d had. Hell, if it meant avoiding the issues with my father both past and still pending.

Though... ..Though what if they were jealous for a different reason? Like... how I was here with Kieran? Were some of them perhaps ex-girlfriends? Lovers? I could see how

he'd be incredibly popular. He was bound to have a history here. It would be silly to think otherwise.

But then another thought came to me. One creeping into the back of my mind.

...If I somehow managed to stay here, to find a way to move my life to Ashwood without fear of my father, would I, too, find myself at that table one day? Scornfully looking over at whatever woman Kieran came to dinner with? ...Was I just the latest obsession? A pet project to help fix? Was that maybe why he didn't feel comfortable telling anyone that we were romantically involved? My chest hurt a little as that thought invaded me, but I pushed it back as much as I could. He'd been nothing but sweet to me so there was no reason to assume the worst. Not yet anyway.

As we made our way up to the front of the room, I recognised a group of familiar faces already seated. It consisted of the people I'd met the other day, plus a few more that I was sure were equally as important.

We did standard greetings to everyone, plus formalities to Victor, before taking our seats. But to my immense discomfort and dismay, I discovered that Allison sat near me. Upon eye contact, I once again was overcome with the impulse to attack. A sensation that had no founding or explanation. Just... pure instinct telling me to end her. ...But I held myself back. I'd promised Kieran that I would spend time with her. I needed to stay true to my word. And so I gave her a smile, a wave, and took my seat to chat to her, all the while biting back the

compulsion radiating inside me. From now on, Allison was going to be my new best friend. Whether I liked it or not. It was not negotiable.

What was it I had told myself yesterday? That I was committed to being someone new and more positive? Well, talking to his sister nicely was surely a step in the right direction.

In fact, over time, I may even become close to many of the people around me now. I would need to tread extra carefully in these early days to not step on any feet due to my new social ignorance.

...But... first I needed to navigate how their strange government worked. A struggle to say the least, as I continually discovered.

"Sterling," said a man, holding a hand out to me. "Pleasure to meet you."

He sat himself down in Kieran's chair and looked at me expectantly. And though I was confused, I still shook it, discreetly trying to look around the room.

Kieran had gotten up from the table only a minute prior and I now felt a little out of place without his presence. Especially with the ever-constant threat of making a mistake in this new environment.

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“...Raven,” I replied politely. He had familiar looking features and my mind quickly began trying to work out who he might be. Only, before I could come to any conclusion, he answered the question weighing on me. “I’m Victor’s brother. Kieran’s uncle,” he said, pointing towards where Victor was seated further down.

Upon turning to look, I saw there was an active conversation happening amongst the ‘ranked’ members who I’d already been introduced to. Allison included. None of them paid us any mind.

However, this did now leave me in an awkward predicament.

I was required to show formal respect to Victor and I knew their hierarchy here was based around family lines. Did that then mean Sterling was under that same umbrella? Should I be bowing?

I attempted to look around the room once more for Kieran but he was still nowhere to be seen.

Shit.

“Oh wow, the resemblance is uncanny,” I said in an attempt for conversation, choosing to risk

1. it.

He laughed and took a sip of his drink. Though not before shooting me a wink. “I got the looks, thankfully.”

It was a comment I wasn’t really sure how to reply to, one that made me uncomfortable.

‘Smile, Raven,’ I scolded myself inside,

And I managed to force a smile in lieu of words. There was something about him that was giving me a bad vibe. Though that was apparently becoming the norm with many people I met lately. Perhaps all my discomfort was just due to my insecurity; what with me being in an entirely new world. Internally, I reminded myself to stop being so guarded and judgemental.

“Human city, right?” he asked bluntly. “What was that like? Terrible, I imagine.” Was he drunk? The longer the conversation went on, the more I felt like he was saying whatever

popped into his head. "It was... very different from here," I replied carefully. He snorted at that and took another sip of his drink. "Yes, obviously." What was he expecting me to say? But as I went to open my mouth to reply, it was then that Allison came back over, her eyes shifting between Sterling and myself. "Ah, my favourite niece," Sterling cheerily greeted. "It's always so wonderful to catch up. Please, take a seat."

Though confused, Allison took her seat once more. The one she had already been sitting at basically the entire evening. "Sterling..." she said, frowning. Could she tell that he was a bit off too? It was the first time I'd seen Allison so serious. Up until now, she had been very peppy all night. "How has the packhouse been? Did you go to the temple today?" "Our Great Mother, Selene, blessed us with a bountiful feast today," she replied. "I chose to stay here and help with the preparations for that." "Of course, of course..." Sterling said. "Then I guess I can't let the Moon Goddess' blessing go to waste, right?" And he proceeded to down the rest of his drink in one go. I assumed that this was the religion Kieran had briefly mentioned to me, the one his sister had become involved in due to her grief. But it was a topic I didn't end up getting a chance to ask about.

Because it was then that Sterling chose to place his empty glass in front of me, sparing me only the quickest of glances. "Get me another one, will you, sweetheart?" he said, turning to resume talking with Allison.

...And I stared at the glass in shock.

Weren't there attendants working for that reason? Was this a normal thing to ask?

But as I mulled on it for a second, I couldn't help but wonder if it was due to the ranking system. *Maybe* he really was important and I'd shown disrespect by not bowing earlier.

...And it was a thought that ultimately made me reach out to grab the empty glass, forcing another smile on my lips.

"Sure," I said, standing up. "Raven, no," Allison blurted out. But I interrupted her by waving off her words.

"It's fine. I don't mind,"

Good impressions. I was trying to make good impressions. Looking at Allison, she was only a

reminder of that very thing. Showing courtesy to people couldn't be a bad thing, surely.

"See? She doesn't mind," Sterling repeated pointedly. Only, the way he said that made me start to wonder if maybe there was something I was missing

Nevertheless, I left the table and went looking for the kitchen. A quest where I could feel the eyes of many people as I walked, but I attributed it to being an outsider in their town.

It wasn't until I finally found the relevant hallway to the kitchen that I began to question that motive.

Because as I rounded the corner, I finally bumped into Kieran... and the look on his face held the same confusion I was used to seeing now. The one that told me I was doing something strange.

And immediately I sighed. ...Here we go again.

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A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 132

Book Two – Ch.#24 “What are you doing back here?” Kieran asked. “Did you get lost?” I took a small breath and tried to think on my words, but there wasn't really any way around this. It was pretty obvious what I was doing.

“Your uh... Your uncle asked for a drink,” I said, holding it up a little to show him. “I was looking for the kitchen.” “And he asked you to get it for him?” “...Yes.”

Silence.

I tapped my nails against the glass in my hand as I awkwardly stood there, unsure if I was about to get another lecture about something I was never told about. A reoccurring situation that was becoming more frustrating.

“Raven... that's not your job. Especially not as my... guest. We have attendants to help with that which he should already know.”

“Ok... but *I* didn't know that and you weren't there,” I snapped back. “I was trying to be polite. In a human city, it's not that uncommon for someone to ask this. Especially for people who are important.”

Countless times in my life had I fetched influential men drinks in order to gain favour. Some people just expected it. How was I meant to know it would be met with this much pushback here? It was just a freaking drink.

“I'm sorry. I'll try and stay by your side more,” he said. “And don't worry about the drink or about Sterling. I'll speak to him about pulling that sort of thing again.” He went to walk past me to the hallway door, but it was then that my frustration finally came to a boil.

...I'd had enough.

"That's not the issue here, Kieran," I said, stopping him. "You can't be with me twenty-four seven. That's just... unrealistic. The problem is that I don't understand."

He turned back to look at me and his eyes quickly softened.

"...You're right. That's my bad. I should explain the culture here to you more," he said. "The last thing I want is for you to feel uncomfortable. We can do lessons or—."

"No,"

I placed the glass down on a side-table and took a step towards him.

"No, what I don't understand is... me. Where I fit into all of this. Where I fit into your life and this town. You say that I'm here as a guest and yet that seems to have unspoken social rules I've never heard of."

"It's... complicated," was all he said,

"Complicated in the same way this thing between us is?" I asked, thinking back to what he'd

once told me. "Because you never explained that to me either. Just left it as 'a complicated question'. But these sparks... these abrupt feelings... the connection... It's all so intense. I need to know if this is just a part of my sickness or... if this is real."

At that, he instantly moved back over to my side, his hands grabbing mine. I could feel the warmth and sparks spread through the contact, trying to calm me, but my uncertainty inside prevailed.

"It's real," he said quietly. "Of course it's real."

"Then why won't you tell me what this is? Or tell anyone else for that matter? Are you hiding it from people because you think this is temporary? Or casual? I'm confused about what you want from me."

"You've got it wrong," he said quickly, seemingly shocked by what I was saying: "I'm not hiding anything. I don't need to tell people anything... because everyone already knows, Raven. Everyone knows because you're my..." "...Guest?" I offered when his words trailed off, raising a brow at him. But he then took a deep breath, rubbing a hand against his eyes. Almost as if he was having an argument with himself inside. One he seemed to leave feeling defeated. "Because you're my... mate," he said reluctantly. I stared at him blankly, not understanding what that meant. Clearly, this was something he'd been hesitant to tell me and yet his answer provided no new insight into my concerns.

“..Mate? I don’t... I don’t know what that is,” I said, a crease forming between my brows.

“It’s-.” But before Kieran could elaborate further, an attendant then walked through the hallway with a tray full of glasses in hand. He spared us a quick curious glance as he passed by but didn’t pause, promptly continuing through to the dining area. “Come on,” Kieran said, tugging on my hand to follow. “We should talk in private.”

I allowed him to lead me for a minute until we came upon a room. It looked to be a small, contained suite; complete with both a bedroom and lounge area.

He took several feet inside but I quickly crossed my arms, growing impatient. “Tell me,” I said.

And he looked at me with conflicted eyes, as though he really didn’t want to have the conversation. But it was now past the point of hiding this. I needed to know. I needed answers.

Only, I could have never anticipated the way the conversation started.

“Do you believe in Gods?” he asked randomly. The question took me by surprise but I answered it honestly. “No more than the average guy on the street, I guess. It’s not like someone can prove their existence.” It was difficult to believe in a divine power after experiencing the things I had, after seeing the things I’d seen

“What if I was to tell you that there lived a Goddess who created and oversaw our kind? A Great *Mother* who we refer to as the *Moon Goddess*, Selene?”

“...Am I being indoctrinated into a cult right now?”

Whilst I’d been warned of his sister’s strong faith, I hadn’t expected Kieran to bring it up like this now of all times. Especially since faith was something personal, not something to be shoved upon another by force.

But he laughed at my response and shook his head. “No, I’m not. I’m just explaining our kind’s history. Unlike humans, we actually have reasonable evidence to support our deity’s existence. One of those things being... destined mates.” “Destined mates?”

“A destined mate is... someone chosen by the Goddess to be your other half. A soul mate,” he explained. “The Moon Goddess saw to it that our kind never had to suffer alone. So she created two halves of our souls. Upon finding the other half, we are instantly connected to them. It’s why you feel and experience all the things you do around me. I feel them too.” I’d already thought werewolves were something out of a fantasy book, but now there were soul mates? Someone who was apparently irrefutably connected to you? But if his deity had decreed this... thing... between us, why pretend like it didn’t exist?

“Why would you want to hide this from me?” I asked, my head still whirling with information.

“...Because I wanted you to have a choice,” he said.

And it was then that I started to understand his actions.

Kieran slowly walked over to me then and brushed a stray strand of hair away from my face. His eyes studied my features before finally meeting my gaze. “Without any added pressure, I wanted you to have the freedom to decide if you didn’t want this,” he said. “If... you didn’t want me.” My chest ached in pain over hearing him say that. Even in the short time we’d spent together, it was clear just how attached to him I already was. I was lying to myself in thinking that I could ever return to my normal life the same now. That I could return to my father happily without any regrets. Kieran had a hold over me that was intoxicating, a light I’d craved for as long as I could remember. Being near him made it feel like I was able to breathe for the first time.

So if what he was saying was true, if he really was my ‘mate’, then did that mean he really would stay by me?... Could I dare to hope that this was maybe permanent? I reached my hands up and gently touched his face, his eyes immediately relaxing under my touch

“Kieran... you saved me from a world of pain and abuse, one where I was blind to just how bad it really was,” I said, trying to keep my voice steady despite the overwhelming emotions churning inside. “How could you possibly think I wouldn’t want you?”

He averted his gaze then, looking across the room. “Because it’s not that simple. There are... responsibilities with being involved with me. My role within this pack basically dictates the future of whoever I become mated with.” “What do you mean?” “An Alpha’s mate is referred to as a Luna and they’re seen as a mother figure. A symbol of kindness to everyone who resides here. Where an Alpha typically rules with strength, his Luna is meant to balance that.”

There was that term again. ‘Luna’. Doctor Chambers had expressed guilt when referring to it. So she had been referring to... me. To what she had inadvertently done to me.

“So it’s like a... queen?” I asked, trying to understand.

“Similar, yeah.”

That was... a lot to take in.

I wasn’t by any means a good person. I wasn’t a symbol of kindness nor a leader. In fact, I was so incredibly far from those things. I’d done... terrible things in my life, controlled by a father I still couldn’t help but feel love for despite everything he’d done.

Just what part of that said I was capable of being a 'Luna'? Of having any sort of responsibility for other people?

It had to be some sort of mistake. This... Goddess, or whatever she was, had to have made an error. If she was even real.

After all, who would want a criminal as a queen? "Hey... don't stress," he said, pulling me from my thoughts. "If you don't want it then... I don't know, maybe we can think of another option. Right now, all I care about is making sure you get better... and, though it may be wishful thinking, I'd like to not jeopardise what we have over something stupid like future titles."

He was always so aware of me, so adept at reading me. I guess it made sense now why he was the only person I'd met who could do that.

He was my... other half. No, my **better** half.

It seemed almost too good to be true. But that didn't mean I could be what he wanted me to be one day. All I could offer was myself. Myself and nothing more. So was it okay for me to exploit this mistake, to want to be with him even though I didn't want the additional responsibilities? Because I knew for a fact that I wasn't fit for the role expected. I could never be....

And as I continued to think on it, my eyes then trailed from his, slowly moving down until I was staring at his lips; a small shudder coursing through me as I began to crave his touch once more. Like an addict needing their fix. Well... I mean... surely it would be okay to reap the benefits a little? We could come to another solution, just as he had said.

And it was with that thought that I then made up my mind.

I wanted to stay here. I didn't want to go home yet.

And as I looked back up to him, my next words held only conviction.

I want to be with *you* too," I said, finishing the thought in my head.

It was with those last words of acceptance that he then moved in closer, leaning down towards

1. A new drive igniting within his actions as he reached out, almost as if he were now unable to stop himself, and the colour of his eyes quickly darkened.

And though I wasn't an expert by any means, I was beginning to think that maybe I'd worked out just what that darkening meant. ...And a shiver of anticipation swept through me.

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A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 133

Book Two – Ch.# 25 Everything moved quickly.

It was as if all the things keeping us apart were now gone, and all that was left was the unsatiated desire that had been left to grow unchecked every day.

And it... was a lot.

A lot of pent-up emotions and yearnings. A lot of needs that were ignored. But, finally, it was time. Kieran had one hand pressed into my waist, his other holding my face as our lips moved in sync hungrily against each other. And all the while this was happening, I ran a hand down his chest, clutching at his shirt to bring his body closer. Pulling at him to envelop my entire body.

There was nothing gentle in the way we grabbed at one another. No, it was urgent. Desperate. Almost as if we'd both been starving and there was now only one thing able to satisfy it.

Just... pure instinctual lust. Nothing else.

“Mine.”

The word left my lips involuntarily. It was met with a growl of approval from him; the deep sound doing all sorts of inexplicable things to me inside. Already, I could feel that I needed more than just this.

And he must have been of the same mind.

He pushed me against the wall, the movement prying a small gasp of excitement from my lips, and his hand started to travel along my thigh. It moved upwards, sending tingles along my skin, up until the fabric of my dress prevented him from going any further. But he didn't let that deter him. With one, sharp movement I heard the sound of fabric tearing, allowing him new access to explore my lower body; now a hot trail of flames burning wherever he touched. “I hope that wasn't expensive,” he said, his warm breath tickling my neck. But, truthfully, he didn't sound very apologetic over ruining my designer dress. He seemed more amused than anything. Which was fine by me. Because instead of words, I decided to reply in other ways.

...I hooked a finger at the top of his shirt and proceeded to slide my hand quickly down his front, forcefully ripping away all the buttons to unveil his chest underneath.

It was important to even the score, of course.

"I hope that wasn't expensive," was all I cheekily replied.

But he swiftly stole the devilish smile from my lips as he spun me around, my body pinned to face the wall. I could feel the heat radiating from his bare chest as he encircled me from behind ... though that wasn't the only thing pressing against me. No, with a shiver of delight, I was now able to feel his own excitement through his pants as he held me this close.

I'd be lying if I said this was my first time. I, of course, had been intimate before. But never in

my life had I ever experienced anything close to what I was feeling now. This was... beyond anything I could have possibly imagined. And all he'd done so far was touch me.

So, if it was already this good now... then....

with one hand, he started to rub and squeeze at the skin of my sensitive inner thigh, his teeth grazing against my shoulder. The movement alone was enough for a small moan to escape my lips, hungry for more.

"Please," I whimpered, almost begging.

And I squirmed backwards against him impatiently, trying to incite him with the small amount of friction. Hoping that it would be enough for him to relieve me of this waiting.

... But then I felt it.

His hand moving up, finding its way to the hem of my underwear, teasing me with the mere possibilities. And, before I could completely lose my patience, he then slid under the fabric, granting me my wish.

...A motion that stole another moan from my lips as I felt his fingers move, relishing in the small reprieve granted by his touch.

"Kieran..." I sighed in pleasure.

His free arm had wrapped around my torso, holding me in place. Though, more accurately, it was supporting my weight, now not entirely sure if I could even remember how to stand.

But it was as I spoke that he instantly became encouraged. His actions sped up, his fingers somehow knowing exactly what I needed without having to tell him. An ability that made me start to think that perhaps it *was* possible for a God to exist, because how else could he be so good at doing this to me? Hell, I could see myself subscribing to that religion if these were the perks associated. Sign me up for the cult.

I could feel myself trembling within his grasp as his movements started to quicken. He now held me inches away from that final moment I knew was within reach. Getting closer... and closer... becoming more and more lost within the euphoria... just needing a little bit more...

... Just... the tiniest... bit... more....

“Ah, fuck!” I cried out.

...And the waves of electricity immediately wrecked through my body, clouding my mind in a haze of bliss.

I held a hand up against the wall, futilely trying to stay upright as the tremors swept me, but thankfully he held me tight against him through my shaking.

It was several seconds before I could coherently think again, but I knew things had only just started. In fact, this was just the tip of the iceberg

Because as I turned back around to look at him, the expression of pure desire on his face told me that he was now starving... and I had made him wait long enough.

His dark eyes watched me lustfully, no longer resembling the hazel colour I'd come to know so well. No, he was seemingly almost animal-like now as he studied me, waiting for his cue to strike... but I pulled him towards me before he could do so.

I quickly recaptured his lips once more, drinking in his taste, relishing the flames of his touch

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against my body. And as his fingers pressed into my flesh with renewed urgency, I took this as my chance.

Without wasting too much time, I trailed my hands down the front of his bare chest, only stopping once I came upon his belt... and with one swift movement, I removed the obstacle between us. It fell to the ground with a satisfying 'thud'. Another growl sounded from deep within him at this, the vibration tangible as I stood so close. It was a noise that I would listen to on repeat if I could. But I didn't let it distract me for long. And as my fingers made quick work of unzipping... I soon released his length from his pants, taking a few seconds once done to appreciate his body. Because he was perfect... his entire

physique somehow sculpted. So much so that a part of me was a little in disbelief that he wanted me.

But his actions spoke for themselves.

At my touch, he immediately stilled, looking as if he was becoming lost in the sensation I provided him. A response that told me I was capable of creating the same effect on him; that he felt everything so extremely just as I had.

That he wanted me just the same.

His forehead came to a rest against mine as I slowly moved my hand on him, his body starting to softly rock forwards... and, to my utter delight, a groan soon left him. Hopefully, it was a sign that this felt even half as good as what he'd given me.

Only, I knew this wasn't going to be sufficient for long.

...And it didn't take long for that moment to arise.

After what couldn't have been more than a minute or two, his eyes then snapped back to awareness, meeting my gaze once more. A look contained within that immediately told me he needed more than this

That he needed much, much more. And before I could do anything else, he picked me up with ease and held me with my back against the wall.

There was a moment after that. A moment in which we paused to look at each other, silently speaking without words. A connection between us as we realised what was about to happen. He looked as if he was giving me one final chance to back out, asking the question that I knew there was no returning from. But of course that was insanity. As if there was any chance I'd want to stop now. Not when I was this close.

And so, with a nod of confirmation from myself, he quickly obliged that very need.

...He pressed his length in... and a moan of pleasure sounded from me.

Clinging onto his shoulders was the only thing I could do as my mind went blank with ecstasy. I understood it now; this 'mate' system he'd spoken about. How it was shared with only someone chosen for you. Because now that we were finally together in this way, it was impossible to think that there could ever be someone else able to make me feel like this again.

Even those sparks... tingles... sensations from being around him these last few weeks, they all paled in comparison to this very moment. To this feeling of moulding around him so completely in every way, both mind and body.

It was slow at first between us as I adjusted to his size, but that didn't make it any less intense. He held my gaze as he moved, pushing in... and back out... inciting quick pants from my mouth as he moved... continuing to fill me with a burning heat at the place our bodies joined.

...And it wasn't long before he began to speed that rhythm up, steadily increasing in force.

That urgency from early hadn't dissipated. It had merely been on hold as the rational side of our minds had surfaced. But there was no need for that anymore.

And things swiftly sped back up. With a grunt, his thrusts then became more hasty, pushing in further with every stroke. Forcing my moans to soon turn into cries as I wrapped my arms around his neck, needing to hold him closer.

Beside me, I could see the picture frames on the wall begin to shake, his roughness threatening to make them fall. But at this rate, I was sure that I would probably shatter sooner than they would. Not that I was complaining.

"Kieran..." I whimpered, already losing control.

But he didn't show any sign of slowing.

His mouth moved to my shoulder, his teeth gently grazing my flesh there, and it sent a surprising surge of exaltation from the movement. A shiver sweeping through me.

"...Yes..." I moaned, wanting more of that.

I immediately weaved my fingers through his hair, holding his head closer. Hoping that he would understand. And he indulged my need perfectly.

He continued to nip and lick at my skin there, slowly working his way closer to my neck. His pace never slowing as he did this, continuing to thrust into me mercilessly.

"... Yesss..." I cried again.

I hadn't known I was so sensitive to this spot, but it was pushing me closer to my limit the more he did it. As if the nearer he got, the more excitement inside me it built.

I could feel my release so close now... so within reach.

It was just around the corner.

"... Yesss, Kieran, please..."

...And he came to a spot on my neck that instantly felt right. That with just a little more pressure, I could get there.

And I wasn't the only one feeling this way either.

I could tell he was close to his limit too, my voice probably only making things more frenzied. His grip on my thighs had tensed, his heavy breathing turning into groans... And I knew, any second now...

But I needed this last thing. This last piece to make me get there.

And I gripped his head tighter, ordering it accordingly.

"Bite me," I cried out. And as a guttural growl ripped through his chest in reply, his mouth responded to my words. I felt as his teeth instantly pressed in, clearly just as eager. Only, before he could truly bite in the way I had craved, he eased off from going through with it

But it was still enough.

With one final thrust, I experienced my entire body convulse in pleasure. Rippling tremors erupting unlike anything I had thought possible, sending me into a state of euphoria. "Fuck," Kieran grunted.

And his own release was only moments behind mine, sharing in the bliss that was still overwhelming me. Our bodies experiencing the highest level of gratification together.

...And it was at that moment I knew. I knew there was no returning from here.

That the way he had been so instantly familiar, so recognisable from the minute we'd met. It made sense now.

He was... my mate. We were always meant to find each other. This was exactly where I was supposed to be.

He continued to hold me close for some time as we caught our breath, but it was as he next spoke that I knew my fate was truly sealed.

"Mine," he said with finality, affectionately touching his nose to my cheek.

Yes... yours, Kieran.

I was yours.

I always would be. 1

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 134 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 26

A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 134

Book Two – Ch.# 26

I awoke to the feeling of Kieran's finger lightly tracing a pattern on my back.

It was delicate, and yet I could feel the sparks follow wherever he touched, leaving a trail of warmth behind as he moved. It felt so nice that I could have easily fallen back to sleep again right then and there.

"Good morning," he said quietly behind me. My change in breathing must have given me away.

But it was certainly a good morning, indeed. A very, very good morning. My body ached in all the right ways, the night's exercise being a workout that scratched every itch imaginable. I was exhausted... yet so energised at the same time.

"...'Morning," I mumbled. I took a deep breath in and stretched my body out, feeling the full extent of my aches. However, unbeknownst to me, this was apparently an unspoken cue... because Kieran immediately moved in closer to encircle my body, holding me as we laid on our sides. And I turned my head to look up at him, meeting those hazel eyes. At some point last night, we had made it into the bed... though most of our clothes had unfortunately not survived the battle. A noble sacrifice, if I ever saw one. But it meant we were now completely bare as our skin touched, the heat of his body fully surrounding me.

...Knowledge that was enough to elicit a small stir of excitement inside me. "Don't tempt me," he said jokingly, leaning down to kiss my cheek. He must have realised what I was thinking without me having to say it.

But... maybe I wanted to tempt him. Maybe that was exactly what I wanted to do.

...And I captured his lips before he had the chance to pull away, kissing him slowly... enjoying the feeling of his mouth against mine.. sparks fluttering through me..

Last night's urgency had been a necessity, a desperation that was inevitable, but it had also meant I couldn't really take my time. Like a fine wine being consumed as a shot, rather than appreciated in sips. And he was the finest of wines I'd ever met.

His arm then moved around me more, a hand sliding up to my breast and, ever so gently, he started to tease the skin there. Sending my mind into a haze and forcing a small gasp from my lips.

He'd told me not to tempt him and yet he'd conceded so easily. Giving in without any fight whatsoever. Already, I could sense his own obvious excitement, feeling as it began to press against my thighs, begging for entrance. Which was a request I was powerless to deny him.

...And I promptly allowed for him to slide his length through, grinding along my sensitive lower flesh from the outside.

His thrusts were gentle, creating just enough friction between my thighs that hit the perfect spot. But there was no need to rush, no desire to move quickly. Just the two of us enjoying the proximity of the other. Lost in the moment of being together as we slowly kissed.

Only, soon enough, the rhythm building between us demanded more.

I pulled away from him a bit, just enough to plant a peck on his cheek, and silently told him with my eyes that it was time. ...And with his hand working its way down my body, I felt as he then readjusted... and proceeded to push his length inside me.

I was still sore from the night before, but his movement was tender, slowly moving in to give me ample time to adjust. Yet the sensation still made me softly pant regardless, needing a few seconds before the pleasure could replace the pain.

He watched me carefully as he entered, his eyes sensing for any discomfort. But he didn't need to worry for long. No, it only took a moment before a quiet moan left me, my mind relishing the feeling of his body joining with mine. A state that felt right, as if this was how we belonged

"Kieran..." I sighed.

His pace started to increase at the sound of my enjoyment, building that pressure as I felt every thrust. It was forceful, yet still gentle, a clear contrast to the events of last night, though this didn't detract from the experience in the slightest. No, as I vividly felt his body move within me, I felt just as lost in his embrace.

... Just as consumed by everything he offered me.

His teeth nibbled at my ear as he held me firmly against his chest, and I knew then that I was reaching that point soon. The point of bliss. But... there was something that would make this perfect, recalling the earlier discovery I'd made.

And, with a quick movement, I brushed my hair away from my neck... and presented myself to him. Hoping he would get the hint. However... this didn't go as planned.

Rather than do what I expected, he immediately paused instead. The opposite of what I'd wished for... and I looked up curiously to meet his eyes. Eyes that were now dark orbs staring back, the animal-like gaze returning.

"Kieran?" I asked quietly.

It was weird for him to stop so abruptly that I wondered if I'd done something wrong. But at the sound of my voice, it was as if he came back to his senses.

His lips twitched into a half-smile and he chuckled lightly to himself, planting a kiss on the very spot I'd craved his teeth. "I swear..." he said under his breath, shaking his head. "You have no idea what you're actually asking for." It sounded almost as if he were trying to tell himself that very thing too.

And though I wanted to ask what he meant, he quickly stole the words from my mouth with another thrust... and I decided the question could probably wait.

His pace and force increased significantly from before as we resumed, a new energy sparking that I hadn't expected. It seemed he had other ideas for how we would proceed, ones that held new urgency.

With one, quick motion, he then pushed me onto my front, his thrusts barely stopping in the adjustment. I could feel the weight of his body on top of me now, his chest against my back...

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his legs enclosing mine.... It stirred a whole new type of excitement within me as I laid helpless under him, gripping onto the sheets firmly as I moaned out in pleasure.

I was close. I was so damn close. And he was too.

His breath turned into grunts in unison with my moans, his pace becoming more aggressive, and, just when I thought things couldn't possibly feel any better... his hand then found its way between my thighs... his fingers rubbing at the perfect place....

...And I instantly came undone around him.

A strangled cry of bliss left me, my body shaking violently. I could feel the waves of electricity shooting through my entire body, sending me into a haze of gratification; an unparalleled experience.

And he hit his own moment of release just seconds after mine. I could hear as his groan filled my ears, his hands grabbing onto me roughly wherever he could.

...And it was perfect.

We ended up lying in each other's arms for a long time after that, silently enjoying the proximity of the other. I had never been allowed to be so close to someone like this before and so I didn't want to waste a minute of it. Not even a second.

It was almost strange to picture what my father would think right now, seeing me this way. He would probably call me weak or become possessive over my attention. Either option would lead down a path of pain for me. A path I would rather avoid.

As I laid with my thoughts, Kieran had resumed his tracing of patterns on my back. So intently fixated on it. Almost as if it were an important task to draw the little imaginary lines with his finger, leaving the sparks where he touched.

But the focus held some discomfort for me too. And though I couldn't exactly place the feeling, I assumed it was to do with what I knew he could see.

"I like your tattoo," he finally said.

And I squirmed a little in response.

It was of a small raven I'd had done when I was younger. A reminder to myself of who I was... and who I would always be. A way to never forget my place.

...My place as my father's raven. I was slowly beginning to loath the name now. It was something I'd felt since arriving; the uneasiness whenever someone addressed me. A reminder of my invisible cage.

"...Raven?"

I flinched.

Almost as if on cue, Kieran had called to me. I realised my silence had probably been odd, however the timing couldn't have been worse.

Hearing him call me that now felt... wrong.

That name was for my assignments, for when I was working... it was a branding on my soul from my father. All of which were things I didn't want to connect with Kieran. No, I refused to associate those things with him anymore.

...Besides, he made it feel as though I didn't need to be Raven here. That... I had a choice.

“Are you okay?”

He leaned over my shoulder to meet my eyes and I bit my lip, conflicted.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

How was I meant to say this?

“I, ah...,” I started, hesitating. “I don’t... I don’t want you to call me Raven anymore.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean... I can tolerate others saying it... but not you. I don’t want to hear the reminder from

you.”

He understandably seemed confused by the request, but he could tell it was important to me. Enough to thankfully not ask the painful questions I was hoping to avoid. But he paused nonetheless, appearing unsure. “Okay... well... what would you like me to call you then?”

Oh. Right ...I hadn’t thought that far ahead. It was the only name I’d known for so long that it was hard to think of something else, something that would feel like... me.

I suppose there was always “How about... Rae?” he offered, interrupting my chain of thought. “I overheard your work colleague call you that on the phone.”

And at the sound of the nickname from his lips, a flutter of butterflies filled me.

It was a surprising reaction to even myself, thinking that I had despised being called that from Zac. Yet somehow when he said it, it felt right.

“...Say it again,” I said, turning over to look at him better.

He stared down at me affectionately before planting a kiss on my cheek. “...Rae,” he repeated quietly. It sent a shiver through me, his warm breath tickling my ear.

“...I like the sound of that,” I said, a smile slowly spreading across my lips.

And he proceeded to repeat it to me several times, forcing an outburst of giggling from myself until I had to beg him to stop. Which he, of course, ignored. It took a pillow being thrown at him before he finally conceded.

But I wasn't upset in the slightest. No, in fact, I couldn't be happier. ...Which was why I was disappointed when he then got out of bed. "As much as I would love to lay around with you all day," he said, reaching for his pants. The

only garment of his that survived. "I, unfortunately, am expected at training. Not that I would need the additional workout after all of this. But alas, I have responsibilities."

At the mention of... strenuous activity, I felt an urge to start up a different sort of workout between us again. But he quickly shut the idea down with a stern look and a 'no', all before I could even open my mouth. Well... couldn't blame a girl for trying.

Though... I really wouldn't mind doing some real exercise. It had been a while since I'd done training with Gavin and, whilst I didn't care for the man himself, I did enjoy the feeling of pushing my body.

"Could I come with you?" I asked. "It would be good to maintain something from my routine whilst I'm here. A little normality in my life."

But the question was met with far more hesitation than I expected. He looked... uncomfortable. "Ahhh... I don't know if that's a good idea," he said. "Besides, you're still recovering from the suppressors."

"That didn't stop me from almost beating you in a fight last week," I pointed out.

Apparently, that fact didn't seem to help much with easing his worries. "I'll be free again in a few hours," he said. "We can do some private training then instead. Just the two of us."

And though I was a little reluctant to agree, I nodded my head anyway. It was most likely another one of those social 'pack' things I didn't understand yet.

"Hey... don't look at me like that," he said, walking back over to hold my face. "I'll make it up to you, I promise."

A deal which was then sealed with a slow kiss, making me melt under his touch. It was an unfair move to pull, but I allowed it.

"This afternoon," I said, repeating it to him.

And he nodded in confirmation.

"What did you want to do until then?" he asked. "I could... have someone bring you breakfast and... some clothes." We both then turned to look at the pile of torn remains that was once my dress. One of only two nice dresses I'd brought with me, my suitcase having limited space. "Ah... I'll have someone come by to help you buy a new one," he said.

...I quickly agreed.

Within the half-hour after Kieran had left, I'd had a shower and changed into some clothes that an attendant had brought me from my room. I had initially thought that she would be the one to take me to the shops so I could buy a new dress.

But... I had been wrong.

I had been so very wrong.

Because the person who then appeared at the door, a smile and peppy attitude in tow...

...Was Allison.

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"Ready to go shopping?" she asked. Goddammit.

A Gift from the Goddess Chapter 135 By Dawn Rosewood Book 2- CH 27

A Gift from the Goddess

Chapter 135

Book Two – Ch.#27 "What about this one?" Allison asked, holding up a floor-length red gown.

It was a little more elaborate than I normally wore. Typically, I leaned more towards subtle coloured dresses, ones that showed off my body without needing to be the brightest in the room. But this... this one was definitely a statement.

...Not that it really mattered here, I guess. Maybe the new me could like brighter colours.

"That's fine. Just add it to the pile," I said, nodding to where I'd thrown a few others. They were all laying on the cash register's bench, ready for when I quickly checked out. I didn't want to drag this out for any longer than I had to.

But she gave me a strange look at that and hesitated instead. "...You're not going to try it on first? I'd hate for you to buy something so expensive only for it to not fit. Or... we also have a few other stores that you might like. There's no need to rush."

Oh, but I did.

I was learning to suppress that feeling inside, the discomfort I felt from being around her. But it didn't mean I wanted to test my fortitude on the matter. Besides... I could always return them later. "Don't worry about the price," I told her. "My father can just write it off as a b—."

And I almost choked on my words as I bit my sentence short, stopping myself from saying 'business expense'. As in, implying I was working right now. Which I wasn't.

...Was I?

I internally shook my head. No, I definitely wasn't working. I didn't know what to do about my father's missing documents but I had no plans of leaving Kieran anytime soon. Not now after I'd had a taste of how good things could be. I was completely hooked and had every intention of staying here for as long as possible. ...And so I cleared my throat as a cough, attempting to disguise my slip. "...Birthday present," I slowly finished.

"Oh, that sounds nice," she smiled.

I wasn't sure if she picked up on the lapse or if she was just being polite. Either way, I returned her smile with a forced one of my own and quickly turned my attention back to the row of garments.

And a silence filled the air.

What did girls normally talk about in situations like this?

Even putting aside my own issues, I didn't know how to initiate a normal conversation with her. What do we

s discuss? Her... Goddess? Pack?

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...Shifting?

I shuddered at that last one, the nausea filling me. Truthfully, I could do without ever experiencing that one again. Not after everything I'd been through. It was probably the topic I least related to her on. Probably right next to how it feels to kill a man, assuming she had no personal knowledge of that one herself.

I sighed.

We were... very different. And though that wasn't enough to justify the strange way I felt around her, it certainly didn't help.

"It's been nice having you around," she then said, breaking the silence. I looked up in surprise. "In the pack, I mean. Everything has been feeling very... lively. You're the talk of the whole town."

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Right... that wasn't the first time I'd been told that. But I guess I could somewhat piece together why now. "Because... I'm Kieran's mate?" I asked, a little unsure over using the term for the first time.

This seemed to take her off guard though.

"Wait... you know?" she asked, a tone of excitement in her voice. "Did he finally tell you?"

"...Yes?"

And she made a squealing noise that was so piercing it made me wince. "Oh, sorry!" she quickly said. "I'm just so happy to be able to talk to you about it now. After you arrived, I was given strict instructions to not say anything. In fact, we all were." She then laughed a little. "Kieran even went as far as to give us all a list of things we could and could not discuss around you."

"...He did?"

She nodded. "Mhmm. It was the sweetest thing I ever saw, if you ask me. A mate trying to ensure you aren't overwhelmed, making an entire pack conform just so you're comfortable." She sighed whimsically. "I hope my mate is like that one day." "Oh... yeah, I hope so too... for you, I mean."

I was a little shocked to discover the lengths Kieran had gone for me, all so I could have the smoothest of transitions and not feel pressured. Hopefully, people didn't resent me for having to give special treatment. "It's been a good thing for everyone though, don't worry," she continued, almost reading me as her brother did. "And it's been a really positive change for Kieran. He's... showing a side to him now that he hadn't previously shown publicly."

"..What do you mean?" *Well... I mean he..." And she giggled at my question before pausing. "Mmm, actually, I *probably* shouldn't gossip. He wouldn't want me to embarrass him." But my *curiosity* was piqued now.

"Allison?" I pressed, wanting her to continue.

Her site was sly as she looked at me, a devilish intent showing as she debated with herself... and Ujen promptly seemed to cave,

“Oh, okay, fine,” she conceded, walking over to me. “The truth is... before you came along, Kieran’s public image was a bit... standoffish. Sort of arrogant and cocky at times; just usual immature boy attitude. But your presence has made him show a caring side publicly that only I had ever seen before. And it’s... nice. It’s nice to not be the only one he’s worried about now.” “Oh...,” was all I said.

I guess I could see how that was the case. He’d been a bit cocky to me too when we’d first met, treating my lack of understanding as a game to have fun with. It was only once he realised the true damage of my life that he switched up his approach.

... Though, he still had that sense of humour. Not that I really minded. It usually meshed perfectly with my own... just so long as I was in on the joke, of course.

I became lost in thought at her words that I almost missed when Allison’s face then turned a little sad, her fingers starting to fidget with a clothes hanger. “He does care a lot. Sometimes a little too much... especially when he treats me like glass. But I’ve got a life to live too, ya know?” she said. “I’ve got a mate out there somewhere waiting for me and it gets a bit lonely here. I’m not a kid anymore... I’m nineteen. I have a wolf and everything!”

And my lip twitched, finding her enthusiasm at the end a little amusing. Because despite being only three years younger than me, I felt like I was a generation older; both physically and mentally. At her age, I was off on assignments almost every day, doing... unpleasant things. Whilst she’d had the luxury of a much more sheltered upbringing, even despite her mother’s passing. “Ah... I went on a rant,” she said hastily, shaking her head. “Sorry about that. You don’t need to hear that stuff. You’ve already got enough on your plate.”

“No, no it’s fine. I... enjoy hearing stories of Kieran; even the bad.”

Because that was what had been lacking; a conversation point. And suddenly, we had just that. A commonality in the person we both cared deeply about. Perhaps this would be enough to focus on from now, something to help push down the other... negative feelings.

And so, for the very first time, I smiled at her. Genuinely.

“On second thought, I don’t like any of these dresses,” I said, putting down the one in my hand. “Did you want to show me the other stores? Maybe get some breakfast on the way?”

Well, I can confidently say that I’d never seen someone’s face light up in excitement so quickly.

“Come on, it’s this way,” she said eagerly. ...And she abruptly grabbed at my hand.

A reaction I hadn't prepared for.

Because as a low warning growl sounded from my lips involuntarily, I had to swiftly pull myself back away... leaving us to both stand a little in shock at my response.

...And I did the only thing I could think of in that very moment; I tried to mask it as another cough

"Sorry, I think I'm coming down with something," I lied, patting my chest. "Probably just the change in environment. Don't worry though. Let's just go."

She gave me another odd look, her confusion clearly evident, but I lightly touched her shoulder for her to lead the way, hoping to leave before she could dwell on it.

This was all I could do for now.

Once outside, we resumed our friendly chatter, talking about the town some more and about her family. I enjoyed learning new things and hearing stories of the two siblings growing up. Plus, the historical information she gave me was interesting too; giving insights about the town as we walked.

However, it was once we came upon a more populated area that something triggered my instincts. Like the feeling of being... watched. "...And this is the town square," she said. "I'm sure Kieran already showed you it, but it's the place people usually come to eat lunch during the day... or to come to look at the fountains. That one in the middle there, the one with the statue... that's meant to be a depiction of Selene, the Moon Goddess. It's my favourite."

I turned to look at where she was pointing but, before I could do so, I then felt as the presence approached.

...And my eyes snapped to the perpetrator.

It was a man, his face somewhat covered by a hoodie, but I could still see his eyes. Eyes that held a tinge of malice, the kind I was no stranger to. It was the look of a man who was both angry... and had given up. As if they'd already lost the fight and were taking as many people down with them.

He charged towards me with purpose in his stride... and I instinctively reached for my dagger. ...A dagger I wasn't equipped with, having thought I wouldn't need it here.

Shit.

I was out of time.. I was out of time and knew Allison was too close to me, in range of being hurt during close combat. And all I could think about was how Kieran would never forgive me should something happen to her.

And so I did what I could.

“Get back,” I quickly yelled, and pushed her out the way. A movement that happened barely a second *before* I was then attacked by the man.

By getting *Allison* to safety, I’d left myself open to the assault, his knife grazing my arm as I *brought* it up defensively. But I’d rarely let a scratch stop me before. No, before he had time to even blink, I then disarmed the knife from him easily... and, in one quick movement, held it up to his throat.

But he didn’t look scared. Not even a lite bit. Even now, he just stared back at me with so much animosity. He was defenceless, the threat to his jugular obvious, and yet his hatred still *prevailed* above that

„No, he didn’t seem to care... and he promptly spat in my face. “Filthy outsider,” he hissed. “I will never bow to a rogue Luna.”

...And he *forcefully* shoved himself out of my grip, running out of the square immediately before I could think

Because, truthfully, I’d been too stunned to stop him. I’d just... let him get away. I didn’t know what a rogue was, but I could get the gist of what he was saying. I’d learnt enough for that, at least.

“Raven, are you okay?!” Allison screamed next to me.

I turned to look at her, still a little dazed, but nodded my head. “I’m fine.”

“But... but you’re bleeding,” she said, pointing to my arm.

I looked down at the scratch along my skin, the place still trickling a little with blood. Though, in my opinion, it wasn’t that bad. I knew it would heal soon enough and maybe even faster than normal, that being if Doctor Chamber’s medicine had kicked in yet.

“...I’ve had worse,” I shrugged.

And the look of horror on Allison’s face was a reminder that I needed to be more careful with my words.

“Uh... I mean, don’t worry about it,” I corrected, reassuring her. “I feel perfectly fine. It looks worse than it feels.”

She looked as if she didn’t believe me but thankfully didn’t push the issue.

“We need to go report it at the packhouse immediately,” Allison said. “They’ll want to find the guy who did it.”

“Do you know them?” I asked.

But she shook her head. “Not personally, no. But I think he worked as a low-tier patrol guard.”

And that was the last thing said before we made our way back to the house, finding Kieran already returned from training upon our arrival.

Understandably, he was outraged. After explaining the situation, he immediately started a witch hunt for the guy, demanding he be brought in for crimes against a ranked member. At first, I’d originally thought that he was referring to Allison, but it turns out he’d actually meant me. Because of who I was apparently supposed to be one day. A... Luna.

Which was a thought that churned an uneasiness inside me, remembering the words of the man.

So by the time I was finally alone once more with Kieran, there was only one question on my mind. A term that had stuck with me, unable to shake since the attack

“...What’s a... ‘rogue’?” I asked him quietly, nestled against his chest. We sat on the couch, his arms holding me as we enjoyed the small silence. A break from the day that had become so chaotic. ...Only, his hand seemed to instantly freeze at my question, stopping from where he’d just been gently patting my back. “...Where did you hear that?” he asked instead.

“The *man* who attacked *me*. He referred to me as a... ‘rogue’ Luna. I wasn’t sure what that *meant*.”

“Nothing,” he said *defensively*. “It doesn’t mean anything. He’s clearly just out of his mind,

Don’t worry about it.”

But this wasn’t good enough. He still hadn’t told me.

“Kieran... what does it mean?”

And I felt him softly sigh. “A rogue is... someone who doesn’t belong to a pack. They’re usually people who wander alone, unable to join anywhere due to their past. A past that is unforgivable and where they’ve committed atrocious, inexcusable acts. They’re all... criminals.”

Instantly, I felt as my breathing caught in my throat, hearing the definition. “But that’s not you,” he continued, resuming his movement on my back, however the soothing effect of his patting no longer seemed to hold. “Unlike rogues, you were born into a world of

humans which was why you were packless. You're not like them. I guess some people just can't understand the difference."

"...Right," I said, forcing the reply from my lips. "You've got nothing to worry about. Seriously." But, inside, my heart was racing. It was racing so loudly I was worried he could hear it.

Because that's exactly what I was.

I was a criminal. I had done terrible, terrible things in my life.

By all accounts of his definition, I was... a rogue.

So what would happen if they discovered that very truth? My past history and everything I'd done?

...And suddenly the stakes of me staying here felt all the more grim.