



Jabba's Journey (Iron Howlers MC #2)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Jabba

As the Enforcer for the club, my job is to protect my brothers against any and all threats. When Harmony's vision indicates that I have a mate out there who is in danger, as well as the missing club girls, I hit the road, not knowing that my life's about to irrevocably change. As we hunt, a scent settles in my nostrils, and I know that I need to follow it because whomever it belongs to, is the other half of my fated, destined soul.

Electra

I'm a water witch, alone in the world when I'm abducted by the Red Caps and taken to an undisclosed location away from my power source. As my body is battered and my energy depletes, I worry that I'll never be rescued. So, when I wake up to find a handsome biker is the one who rescued me, I'm not sure how to feel. Especially when he tells me I'm his mate.

Redwich has more threats coming their way and something Electra tells Jabba lets all of them know that there's a reason for the matings that have already occurred. The big question is, will they be able to use that information to ensure everyone stays whole and hearty?

Suitable for ages 18+ due to adult language, situations, and content

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Jabba

It's been two months since the sweet butts came up missing, and every day, we go out and search, but come up empty. However, this morning during church, Corbin reached out to Cyrus with a viable lead, so as the club's Enforcer, we decided I would go check it out.

Finished packing, I'm now washing my laundry since I changed my bedding so when I get home, I'll have clean sheets. It's one of my idiosyncrasies; I hate coming back from a run, taking a shower, then getting into a bed that's been unused for sometimes up to a week.

Now, I'm sitting with several of the other brothers eating lunch and chit-chatting with everyone. I wish I could wait to go until Jazzy got home from school, but I want to get several hours of wind therapy under my belt before I stop for the night.

When Harmony's eyes glaze over, all conversation ceases as we wait for her to reveal what she's seeing through her premonition. I worry it has something to do with my upcoming mission and decide to pack even more ammo, so I'm prepared for any eventuality.

As her eyes clear, she pins me with her gaze, and says one word, "Hurry. Your mate and the club girls are depending on you."

Well, fuck. Good thing I'm nearly ready to go. Nodding, I stand and take my empty plate to the kitchen, and after I rinse it off, I put it in the dishwasher. I know the prospects will take care of cleaning up since Harmony's now doing all the cooking,

but my time in the military prevents me from just leaving it be for someone else to handle. After I get my dried clothes, I quickly remake my bed, then grab a few more things and shove them in my saddle bags. Hoisting them over my shoulders, I leave my room then set them down so I can lock the door, confident that nobody will mess with my stuff. That's not how we roll in our brotherhood, but old habits die hard.

"Shiny side up, Brother," Cyrus says as I make my way to my bike. "You call if you need backup of any kind whatsoever. If what Harmony saw is true, you'll need us to bring a cage at least."

"Will do, Pres," I reply, attaching my saddle bags to my bike.

I crank up my girl, reveling in her rumbling purr, and after putting my helmet on and tying a bandana around the lower part of my face, raise my arm to Cyrus, who bumps my fist with one of his own.

"Be careful, Brother," he whispers. Thankfully, because of my shifter abilities, I can hear him over my engine.

"Always," I promise, raising the stand before I begin pulling through our parking lot to the road.

My sense of urgency grows with every passing mile. Right now, I'm glad I won't need a lot of rest, because I feel as though I'm running out of time.

And that simply won't do.

Electra

"What was I thinking?" I murmured as I looked around at the men surrounding me. I knew about the Red Caps; they were legendary throughout Appalachia and quite

frankly, despite my own abilities, they scared me half to death.

Still, like an undisciplined witch instead of one with a few years under her belt, I went out on my own to collect several plants and herbs I needed to finish up a customer's order. Now, I'm trapped. Not only that, but having heard some of the things they'd said, my life is definitely in danger.

I wince as I'm shoved into the back of a nondescript van, and while highly inappropriate, my thoughts drift to the fact that they may be older than time, but they've kept up with modern conveniences. Probably so they could blend in better and continue their reign of terror.

"Stop that!" I hiss as one of them gets too handsy, which earns me a fist to my temple. "Lights out, Electra," I mumble to myself as the darkness pulls me under.

"Shh, you're okay, you'll be fine," a voice whispers over someone moaning. It takes me far too long to realize that I'm the one moaning. "Don't let them hear you, they'll come back," that same voice warns, a hint of fear embedded in her tone.

I manage to pry my eyes open, although one is so swollen it's mostly shut as I stare into a face I don't recognize. "Who... who are you?" I ask as my gaze notices three other women nearby.

All of them are bruised and battered, although their bruises are varying shades of purple, yellow, and black, which tells me the men who've taken us are frequently free with their fists.

"We're club girls for the Iron Howlers MC," the one holding me replies. "I'm Candy, and that's Sushi, Ellie, and Queenie," she adds, pointing to each woman in turn.

I have no clue what a club girl is at all, but that's the least of my concerns right now.

Being stuck inside what appears to be a cave of some sorts is definitely more important in the grand scheme of things.

“Why are we here?” I query.

I guess that’s the biggest question. I’ve known of the Red Caps but didn’t think a water witch would be on their radar at all. Neither would these women if memory serves about what the bastards get into.

“We don’t know,” Queenie softly says. “Hopefully, Cyrus and the brothers know we’re gone by now and they’re looking for us.”

“Before we wind up dead in a ditch,” Sushi continues. “I think my arm’s broken.”

“My shoulder’s dislocated,” Ellie states.

Each woman’s face is tearstained, and their clothing, while minimal at best, is worse for the wear, with tears and missing buttons.

“I won’t have anyone looking for me,” I murmur as I continue to catalog my injuries. What’s worse, I won’t be able to heal if I can’t get near a water source. “Where are we?”

“Somewhere inside the mountain,” Candy says. “We think it’s their hideout or something, not that they say much when they’re around. It’s just we’ve seen a lot of them milling about when they bring us up to their main room to ‘interrogate’ us.”

“Why would they want to do that?” I sputter out the question. I’m aghast that these women would be beaten or threatened for answers they most likely don’t know the answers to.

My head's pounding, not only in pain, but also with all the information the women are throwing at me.

"Because they think we know things that'll help them." With my head hanging, I don't catch who said it, but it feels like an omen.

"If that's the case, what do they think I know? I'm not a part of the Iron Howlers. I don't have any association with them. Taking me won't help them in the least." My admittance has another thought entering my mind, they need me for something else, something that may end up being the end of me. I can't let that happen. A sense of dismal foreboding swallows me whole, my body feels as if it's drifting into a dark abyss. What is it about my powers that they think will enhance their cause?

I'm a water witch, and I can't use my power without a sediment source, which this area is swamped with. I mean, I know there is water somewhere nearby, but being physically injured is keeping me from drawing from it to help heal me. Considering I've just come into my gifts, and I haven't had a chance to test them out to their full capabilities, I'm nervous that I'm not mighty enough for the Red Caps, and once they figure that out for themselves, I'm doomed. Will they keep me hostage until I come into my full awakening? That's a concept I can't fathom. No. I refuse to believe it. They'll end me because they aren't known for having patience.

If anything, they'll push me until I either break or I fulfill whatever role they want me to carry out. I won't use my witchery for evil intent. I'm a good witch, I'm not bound by my thirst for blood. Dark magic isn't something I strive for, if anything, I made an oath to the goddesses the day they shined their light on me and granted me with the gift of water that I'd use it for good.

No matter how much they torture me, I'll never be their willing victim.

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Chapter One

Jabba

With Prowler by my side, we take to the roads in an effort to catch the lingering scent of the stolen club girls. If the Red Caps have them, and we're almost positive they do, it won't end well for the girls. Not that I utilize them all that often, but regardless, they're part of our dysfunctional club family, so we take their disappearance seriously. We've been diligently searching for over a week now and have gotten quite a distance from Redwich at this point.

Prowler motions with a twist of his wrist for me to pull over and as soon as I do, he shuts down his bike. "Brother, I'm thinking we need to shift and search," he says. "I think we're going to need our oronasal senses to find them."

I just know that the urgency that drove me from the clubhouse after Harmony's predictive vision has steadily increased. I feel as though my bones wanna jump out of my skin at this point. "We got Xavier on standby for when we find them?" I ask.

Because I refuse to say 'if' ; I won't give up.

"Yeah, Cyrus reached out to Corbin for us. He said if we found them to use our collective link and give him the coordinates so he could send out the cavalry."

I chuckle a bit because Cyrus has calmed quite a lot since his mate came into his life. In the past, the whole club would be out looking, but because of what Harmony said, he told me and Prowler to go hunting while they wait back at the clubhouse for word

from us.

Waiting isn't one of my fortes at all.

Hell, I'm not exactly a patient man either, although having to learn how to do Jazzy's hair has tempered that part of my personality quite a bit. That little girl has every one of us bastards wrapped around her finger but for some reason, she insists that I do her damn hair! Even with Harmony now in the picture, more often than not, it's me twisting, braiding, and twining to give the little imp the perfect hairstyle. A snicker escapes when I think about how many ads and shit now cross my social media timelines concerning hair styles and products.

For fuck's sake, I'm a badass biker!

"We may want to let them know now, Prowler, since we're so far from home," I state, quickly stripping down and putting my clothes into my saddlebags which I lock. My keys are hidden in a special hidey hole that all of us have on our bikes for just this very reason.

"I'll let them know now," he replies. I vaguely listen in to the collective link as I wait for him to finish. Once he's done and Cyrus assures us they'll be on their way soon, I watch Prowler undress and put his clothes into his saddlebags.

Soon, we've both shifted into our animal counterparts and we're running, opening up our sentient senses and following a trail that smells distinctively of Candy and the rest of the girls.

There's another teasing scent, one that has my animal perking up in both anticipation and dread.

It's slightly floral like a fresh, clean breeze, as if sheets are being hung out on a

drying line after they've been washed. It feels like... home.

Speeding up, I veer to the left with Prowler behind me until we near the entrance to a cave where the bitter odor of fear is overwhelming.

They're here, Prowler projects into my mind.

Nodding in agreement, we tactfully approach the cavern's opening with cat-like caution, our paws barely hitting the ground because we know the Red Caps are involved and they're known for their malicious tendencies.

Crouching low to increase our chances of striking undetected, we prowl toward the mouth of the cave, as soon as their scent invades our nasal cavities, we both release a low growl. One I feel in the depth of my belly. My natural instinct to attack and decimate my adversary pours through me. I'm bred to safeguard the innocents and our girls, as well as this person holding the scent that's enraptured me, are just that—innocent.

My snout instinctually rises into the air as I encounter a scent that all but possesses me. A mating call rings through the air, and it astounds me when I realize that sound came from me. But that can't be right, I haven't encountered anyone who could be my other half.

Shaking my head, I bury the need to rush inside to solve that puzzle, because if I don't do this the right way, we could all suffer the consequences in ways I don't want to chance.

They're hurt, I convey as we stealthily begin our foray into the cave.

There are five of them , Prowler adds.

Five? We only have four club girls.

Mate , my wolf whispers to me. Save her.

We've managed to maneuver around several pockets of Red Caps, which I've alerted Cyrus about since I fully anticipate them to arrive at any time and are so deep in the cave at this point that the only way we're able to see is due to our shifter abilities.

They're close, Prowler murmurs, glancing over at me. I nod, my senses practically on overload at this point as I follow next to him to a smaller cave that juts out from the side of the cavern we're currently pawing our way through.

I can smell the revulsion and dread that emanates around us as I touch my paws to the ground and listen to what the earth has to tell me. The five bodies who don't have the stink of blood magic running through their veins are huddled together and a sigh of relief that sounds more like a huff passes through my muzzle as I make my way to where the first body lays.

While our club girls are humans, they obviously know about shifters so it's not a surprise when I hear Candy's voice, hoarse with dehydration, call out, "I hope like fuck it's one of the Iron Howlers next to me."

Prowler yips as he moves closer while I let my eyes roam over the women, checking each one individually for damage. Each is almost skin and bones at this point, their clothes little more than shreds of fabric. The four club girls, as well as the unknown fifth woman, are all battered and bruised and rage courses through me at the fact that those fuckers dared to touch a hair on any of their heads.

Prowler shifts into his human form and crouches next to Candy. "It's us, Candy. Jabba and me," he says. "We've been looking for y'all for a long time."

Sushi's eyes open and she states, "Electra won't wake up, Prowler."

Electra? The name sends a profound sense of longing through me as I move closer to where the women are hunkered together and shift so I can put my hands on them to see how bad all of them are hurt. Hopefully, their injuries are all superficial.

Mate, my wolf whispers as I quickly and methodically run my hands over each of the women, eliciting a grunt of pain from each of them.

"Sorry, sorry," I languidly murmur as I gather the unconscious fifth woman into my arms and nestling her into my rumbling chest, needing to touch her. I see her eyes, while closed, are sunken into her face, and her lips are dry and cracked, with speckles of dried blood on them where they've split open. I'm no medic like Xavier is, but even I can see that whatever's going on with her is more than what's typical of someone being dehydrated.

Prowler skeptically glances over at me when the rumbling turns into a chuff. My wolf is all but purring at the aspect of clutching his mate. I narrow my eyes at him in warning. A male who's found his mate but has been unable to claim her is possessive to say the least.

Mine, I mouth the words to him, making sure my protruded canines are distinguishable.

He shakes his head and like with any of my brothers, I can read his thoughts on his face. Yeah, brother, I know. The timing is bad, but fate had a reason for bringing her into my life when she did.

Shooting him a back off look, I continue to caress my mate, thankful that I found her no matter what the circumstances are.

“How are we getting out of here, Jabba?” Sushi asks, causing me to lift my head from my mate and look into her eyes. “We’re all hurt, but I think we can follow y’all out of here.”

“Cyrus and Corbin have brothers already on the way,” I reply in an attempt to sooth her trepidation. “How often do the Red Caps come down here?”

Sushi looks at Candy, who shrugs. “It’s hard to keep up with time down here, Jabba, but it’s been a few days at least since we’ve seen anyone. I think... I think they left us here without any food or water to die.” Her last few words are barely stated above a whisper as my spine straightens in agitation.

It sounds like something those bastards would do, but right now, we need to get these women out of this drafty cave and back to the safety of the clubhouse. And the only reason I agree with what Candy’s saying is we bypassed several groups of Red Caps when we were looking for the women. If they hadn’t washed their hands of them, surely there would’ve been a guard or two down here watching over them. Instead, there are none. They threw away these women, and my mate, like they were little more than yesterday’s garbage.

We’re here, brothers. Gonna take care of the threats before we start heading toward y’all. Cyrus’s voice in my head is welcome right now. Prowler nods so I know he heard them as well.

“Okay, ladies, what do you say we start heading up and out?” Prowler asks.

He helps our four club girls stand while I lift myself up with Electra still tucked into my arms. Prowler leads from the front, the women holding one another up in the middle, and me protecting us from the rear, we start slowly heading toward the cave opening. I can hear my brothers fighting the Red Caps and a somewhat maniacal grin crosses my face. They made a grave mistake when they crossed two of the worst MCs

to battle with because we don't take prisoners, we bury bodies.

Soon, we're surrounded by several of our brothers, who each take one of the injured women into their arms so we can move faster. At this point, whatever it takes so I can get help for my mate, I'll willingly accept. I'm not one who normally feels fear, but seeing her still, gaunt face, has that emotion clawing at my guts.

We finally burst through to the outside, all of us taking in huge gulps of fresh air as I frantically search for Xavier. Finally spotting him, I run toward him and yell out, "She needs help! My mate needs help!"

And just like that, silence reigns as every brother present stops and stares in shock at me.

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Chapter Two

Electra

As my eyes flutter with alertness, I become anxious when my unknown surroundings become visible. I don't know where I am or how I'm even still alive. Because of my affinity, I finally had to tell the women I was in captivity with that I was a witch, especially when I grew weaker and weaker the longer I was away from a heavy flowing water source.

If I hadn't been physically injured, I probably could've pulled some from the cave itself and healed myself, but unfortunately, it didn't pan out quite like that at all. I take inventory of how I'm feeling and realize that surprisingly, aside from some residual soreness, I don't feel terrible. My lips aren't chapped like they were and there's a thrumming inside as my body continues to mend.

I don't heal like a shifter does, but if whoever rescued us bathed me, it would've started the process. I still need to get grounded by going to the lake for a day or so, but since I have no clue where I'm at or even who I'm with, I'll have to put that on the back burner for the time being.

"Hello?" I manage to croak out, my throat parched.

"Oh! You're awake!" A little girl peers over the side of the bed, her smile radiant. "I'm Jazzy. Uncle Jabba went to get some food and I told him I'd watch you."

"Thirsty," I say, sounding nothing like myself.

“I can help!” She emphatically bobs her head. “Momma showed me how in case you woke up when nobody was here but me,” Jazzy says.

Her confidence is infectious and despite the strange set of circumstances I find myself in, I can’t help but smile at her as she holds a cup with a straw up to my lips.

“Now, Momma says to only take a few small sips at a time,” she cautions, “otherwise, you’ll make yourself sick.”

Even though I want to guzzle the water, I do as she says then tell her, “Thank you, Jazzy.”

What I really want to know is who her uncle is and whether or not he had anything to do with rescuing me. Because I might have been out of it, but I distinctly remember being held as though I was precious. Tears come unbidden to my eyes as I recall that the last time I was treated that way was when my mother was alive. Being alone in the world sucks sometimes.

“You’re welcome. I helped Momma give you a bath, too. You’re very pretty and I like the tattoos on your skin.” Her compliment has me preening. I can feel a fellow lover of art whenever my runes are appreciated.

My water elements that came out when I gained my powers flit across my mind. I briefly wonder if she or her mother understand what the symbols embedded into my flesh are for, then brush it off in favor of finding out where I’m at. Right now, having that knowledge feels more prudent than explaining why my flesh is covered in gothic symbols.

“Where am I?” I ask.

“Oh! We’re at the clubhouse. Uncle Corbin and everybody are here. I don’t know a

lot, but me and Sage try to listen when we can. I guess there are enemies of the club or something, but Papa and Big Daddy and all our uncles will keep us safe. You too,” she replies. I’m amused that this little girl and her friend are eavesdropping, and she feels no guilt at mentioning that fact to a complete stranger.

The door flashes open and a behemoth of a man steps through, a tray balanced in his hand. “Uncle Jabba! The pretty lady is awake,” Jazzy exclaims, moving her hands excitedly. “I gave her some water already.”

“Good job, Jazzy,” he praises, moving closer, his gaze never leaving mine. He sets the tray on the table next to the bed then sits down in the chair, his hand reaching out to touch my forehead. “You seem to be healing nicely. No signs of infection or fever.” He shifts in his chair, moving further away from me which has me fumbling.

There are times when I’m speechless, and now seems to be one of them. My mouth opens but no words come out. The spark that traversed through me when he touched me has me stumped. Why do I feel as if my world won’t spin on its axis if he were to leave me? Anxiety grips me, choking me in its clutches, and I reach out to grab him, keep him in the same room as I’m in.

“Don’t go,” I whisper, the words coming out choppy.

“Not planning to go anywhere, Sprite,” he replies, a handsome smile splitting his face. “Just need to get you comfortable so you can eat.”

Elation flows through me and I find myself smiling back at him. “Thank you,” I murmur.

“Jazzy, your mom is looking for you,” he says to the eager little girl still bouncing on the other side of me.

“Oh! I think we’re making potions today!” she screeches out in excitement. “I gotta go, pretty lady, but I’ll come back, okay?”

I nod at the little whirling dervish, a giggle escaping me as she runs over to Jabba, throws her arms around him as best as she can due to his muscular frame before she kisses his cheek and then practically skips to the door.

“She’s something,” I whisper. I haven’t been around many children, but find that if they’re like Jazzy, I may have been cheating myself out of a lot of enjoyment.

“That she is,” he replies, setting the tray over my lap. “Harmony put together some broth for you since you were so dehydrated. She said it was better for your stomach to start ingesting food slowly. The jello was my idea, and the saltines were Xavier’s. Jazzy wanted to give you some mashed potatoes, but Harmony told her you couldn’t have those yet, maybe tomorrow or the next day.”

I giggle again thinking about the team of people who put together something for me to eat. They’re complete strangers to me, yet they were all focused on my comfort and healing. “I like red jello,” I admit, watching it jiggle in the small bowl it was put in. Memories flit across my mind of being a child and my mom making me ‘special desserts’ with the sweet gelatin.

“First the broth, then you can have your dessert,” he advises, smirking at me. “At least, that’s what we tell the girls all the time. But you’re an adult so if you want to eat your jello first, I’m not gonna stop you.”

I erupt in full blown laughter at his spunky words while shaking my head. “I think starting with the broth, which smells delicious by the way, is the way to go.”

Picking up the spoon, I carefully ladle some into my mouth then moan when the distinct flavors burst across my tastebuds. None of the herbs and spices used are

overwhelming, but I can feel the power behind them and recognize that Harmony, whoever she is, has powers like I do. I don't think she's a water witch, but I sense no malice in anything I touch, so she must have either earth or air abilities. Guess I'll find out at some point. Right now, I welcome the fact that a sister of sorts is using her skills to help me heal.

I'll thank her for her kindness as soon as I meet her, I think to myself. Although from the sounds of it, she's already been caring for me. Still, that was while I was unconscious. Instinctively, I know my mom would've liked these people.

While I continue to eat, Jabba clears his throat. "How did you manage to find yourself a guest of the Red Caps?" he asks.

Sputtering, I put down the spoon and grab the glass of water then take a deep sip. Once I'm sure I won't choke any longer, I look at him and reply, "Trust me, it wasn't in my plans at all. I was out gathering some items I needed and completely missed detecting them."

I'm trying not to tell him I'm a witch because there are those who fear us, regardless of our lineage. If I was a blood witch, I could see it because they're evil, malevolent bitches who practice in bloodletting magic. But still, I should've sensed that there were Red Caps in the area, and I didn't, which is definitely not normal.

"They likely disguised themselves, Harmony says they can do that," he says. "She's an earth witch and says you're one as well. Not an earth one, of course," he stammers out, his cheeks going slightly ruddy.

"I'm a water witch," I manage to reply, shocked to the core that I'm having this kind of conversation with a man who looks like he does. "I had forgotten they can conjure up exterior shells to disguise their natural appearance and mask their scent. Normally, I'm more cautious than that, but a customer needed a healing potion, so I wasn't

thinking clearly. She's been sick for so long and I wanted to help. It was a stupid mistake, that's for sure."

He reaches over and gently touches my forearm, causing another zing of awareness to course through me and replies, "Don't go beating yourself up over something you weren't aware of, Sprite. Those bastards, they are wily and conniving, and for whatever reason, they had their sights set on you."

"Electra," I murmur. "My name's Electra," I clarify, wanting to hear my name on his lips.

"Well, you're tiny like a sprite to me, so that's what I'm calling you," he casually says, smirking at me.

Shrugging, since I kinda like that nickname, I go back to eating. It's not like I can help being petite in stature. Most of my family was, including my mother and father. I'm kind of surprised they found anything small enough for me to wear, to be honest, since I can shop in the junior section of most stores. Meanwhile, he's big enough that I bet he has to shop at the big and tall stores, he can honestly do whatever he wants, plus there's a slight thrill at the fact he gave me a nickname that's somewhat sweet. Because I don't think he does 'sweet' per se means I'm somewhat special. Once I've finished the broth, slurping the last little bit into my mouth without any shame, I grab the second spoon off the tray and start in on my jello.

There's a knock on the door then it quickly opens, and Jazzy comes in along with another little girl about the same age. I'm guessing, of course, since they're roughly the same size, but one could easily be older than the other for all I know. If I've learned anything through life, it's that you can't judge a book by its cover.

"Hey, pretty lady! This is my cousin, Sage, and our mommas," Jazzy exclaims, rushing to the side of my bed with a giddy grin on her face, Sage now in tow.

I gaze into two little faces, seeing the beauty that resides deep within both of them. Not only that, but they have an essence, one I can't quite put my fingers on, that causes the very air surrounding them to thrum with an electric current.

"Hi again, Jazzy. It's nice to meet you, Sage," I reply.

They're both so close I can see the light smattering of freckles across Jazzy's nose and upper cheeks, and the tiny scar on the outside of Sage's eyebrow. Somehow, I just know these two keep their mothers on their toes and I experience a sense of longing so deep from my uterus it nearly has me gasping.

I don't often regret my life of solitude, but right now, I am, because I can tell there's a closeness with these people that's lacking in me. With my mother now gone and no other living relatives, it's only me and my faithful cat, Sprinkles.

"Sprinkles," I whisper, forgetting for a few seconds that I'm not alone. "I... I have to go, she's been alone all this time."

"Who's Sprinkles?" Jazzy asks. "And why did you name her that?"

"My cat. I named her that because her fur is solid gray with a sprinkling of white on her tail. I mean, she has a gravity feeder and a water fountain, but I've never been gone this long," I reply as I try to get out of bed, only to feel a masculine hand gently push me back.

"I'll go get her," Jabba gruffly states. His offer has me slouching back into the bed. It's a relief he's willing to grab her for me since I'm not as steady on my feet as I'd like to be. My strength is returning, but exhaustion has set in. Recovering takes a lot out of me apparently. "Give me your address, I'll take the girls and a truck and pick her up. Anything else you want?"

“Why don’t you give her a few minutes to make a list, Jabba?” one of the women asks. Turning to me, she says, “I’m Harmony, Cyrus’s mate, and this is Karsyn, my sister-in-law and Corbin’s mate.”

Mate? Wait, does that mean they’re mated to shifters? I didn’t know that was possible, but now I’m intrigued and would love to pick her brain about it. I don’t want to outright ask because that would be considered rude, so I just nod and reply, “I’m Electra. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me. How are the other women I was found with doing?”

My thoughts are all over the place right now. Part of it is likely due to the fact I was so dehydrated from lack of water and being able to replenish myself, the other is because I’m worried about my baby. While there are some people who look down their noses at animals being thought of like that, she came into my life as a kitten right after my mom died. I was able to pour all my sorrow into her and she follows me around as though she’s a small child. She was my saving grace during a depressive time in my life. She saved me and gave me joy where I thought doom would reside for the rest of my living years.

“I’ll go get some paper,” Jazzy proposes. She proceeds to fly out of the room like she sprouted wings out of her back, Sage on her heels as the two women look on fondly.

“They’re very exuberant, aren’t they?” I ask, searching for something to say. I don’t mind silence as long as it’s not the awkward type.

“You have no idea,” Harmony replies, snickering. “They keep all of us on our toes, that’s for sure.”

Both women start laughing and I presume it’s over memories of things the girls have gotten into. But when Jabba adds his deep, rumbling chuckle to the mix, I find my stomach clenching with need, something I don’t know how to handle at all.

What is it about him that has me longing for things I'd tucked into the back of my mind a long time ago?

I don't know who he is to me or why fate decided we needed to meet by happenstance, but my instincts scream that I need to be open-minded to our paths interconnecting the way they have.

"Thank you for rescuing me," I say, turning to look at Jabba. "I'm sure I was a surprise."

"Wouldn't have left anyone there, even if it was a surprise," he advises. "Those bastards are pure evil."

Harmony and Karsyn are nodding in agreement. I haven't had a lot of exposure to the Red Caps; my mother warned me about them when I was very young, but their reputation precedes them. Before any of us can say anything else, Jazzy and Sage come back in, braids flying, and Jazzy places a pad of paper and a pen next to me on the bed.

"Thank you, girls," I say, picking the pad and pen up so I can start a list. "Um, how long before I can go home?"

I must be hearing things because I hear Jabba mumble something that sounds like 'never', but that's not possible, is it? Shrugging, I don't wait for an answer but instead, start writing.

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Chapter Three

Jabba

While Electra writes her list, I try to reconcile the things I'm feeling inside with what I always believed about myself. Growing up, I was always told there wasn't anyone out there for me; I was too big, ungainly, odd. Since finding my place in the Iron Howlers, I've adjusted my thinking slightly, but where women and mates are concerned, not so much.

So, to see this tiny pixie with runes etched in her skin denoting she's a magical being and feel the current running through my body with the knowledge that she's mine has me off my game somewhat. It's taken everything in my power not to spend every second in her presence, even when she was unconscious. My wolf was upset that we weren't allowed to care for her when we first got her back to the clubhouse, but I wasn't ready to reveal what she was to me, so instead, I allowed Harmony to do her thing.

Now, however, I want to be the one to tend to her and take care of all her needs. Ever since she woke up and I caught her crystalline blue eyes in my gaze, I've had to keep my headstrong wolf in check. That bastard is impatient on most days, but right now, he wants me to throw her over my shoulder and head to our den and not come up for air until she's mated, claimed, and carrying our pup.

"You're sure this isn't too much trouble?" she asks, interrupting my thoughts. The fact that she sounds insecure believing that someone would do something to help her out just because it's the right thing to do has my beast snarling. He wants me to track

down anyone who put that doubt in her tone and shred him into minuscule pieces. Nobody has the right to make my female feel less than her worth.

Needing to clear the murderous thoughts from my head, I decide to put all of my attention on her and ask, “Not at all. Are you noting where things are located?”

Eventually, I’ll know everything about her and vice versa, but until we have that discussion, she deserves her privacy. Which means no snooping, even though a piece of me wants to solve the mystery that is my mate.

“Yes. My door is coded, but I’ve written that down.” At my narrow-eyed look she continues, “I often have to go out searching for the things I need and carrying keys doesn’t allow me to move silently so I don’t disturb the wildlife, so I had my door coded for convenience.”

“That makes sense,” Karsyn states, interrupting us. She looks over at Harmony and says, “Maybe Cyrus and Corbin will consider that, because I know Corbin at least has lost a ton of keys over the years.” I smirk at her commentary because men claim women’s purses are black holes, but when you stop and think about it, so are men’s pockets.

I bet he has lost items when he shifts, because while he’s an Alpha, if he transforms while dressed, his clothes are still shredded just like ours are, and keys go flying. Hell, I’ve lost a few wallets over the years and don’t even get me started on how many fucking debit cards I’ve had to replace. My bank ladies don’t even raise a brow any longer when I have to walk into the local branch. It’s something to think about; I mean, if we’re not driving anywhere, maybe we shouldn’t bother putting our wallets in our pockets. Then I nix that idea, because it’s like the swipe of deodorant; it’s an automatic habit and I don’t think any of us will be able to break it easily. Perhaps we need to have a prospect stay nearby who can collect all of our shit when we have to shift unexpectedly. Something else to ponder.

“I’ll bring it up to Cyrus the next time we have church,” I say, addressing their suggestion since I think from a security standpoint it’s something to consider. I know our tech guys will ensure the security at both clubhouses remains intact, but it’ll definitely keep our keys from getting into the wrong hands.

Especially since we have Jazzy and Sage to protect, plus the future babies that I’m sure are coming from Harmony and Karsyn. Both clubs are gonna be growing, and it’s one of my jobs to ensure all of us remain safe from harm. The second the thought of growth in the clubhouse flashes through my head, I shake it off because my imagination went directly to Electra’s belly rounded with my pup. We’re not there yet. But one day, when she’s accepted the significance of me in her life, I’m sure that topic will come up in conversation. And color me surprised, I’m ready for it. Probably because I’ve yearned for a family I could call my own since the one I was raised in felt so toxic.

She breaks into my thoughts once again when she says to Jazzy, “Sprinkles isn’t shy at all, and she’ll go into her carrier without a problem. That’s in my mudroom, which is where my washer and dryer are, so you should be able to find it.”

“I can’t wait to pet her,” Sage says, looking at Jazzy. “Is she fuzzy?”

I chuckle as her question has Electra talking about her pet, her face so animated that it sends me down the path of wondering how she’ll look when she’s sated.

Dammit, there I go again! Shaking my head at my musings which are causing inappropriate bodily reactions, I look at Harmony and ask, “Your mate busy?”

“When isn’t he?” she retorts, grinning at me. “Probably, but I’ve already let him know what’s going on.” When Electra looks at her in shock because she hasn’t physically grabbed her phone and sent a text or made a phone call, Harmony simply taps her forehead with her finger and smiles. When Electra’s mouth opens in a wide

O, I duck my head for a second, so she doesn't see my grin.

I nod, knowing she reached out through their link and told him of the current plan in place. "Good."

Seeing that Electra is tearing off a page from the notebook, I reach out and take it from her, our fingers lightly brushing. The look on her face tells me she feels the same spark I do, a current of electricity.

"You just rest, we'll be back before you know it." I make the excuse, not ready to answer any of her questions about the feelings that flowed between us. When I get the courage to tell her what she is to me and likewise me with her, we'll broach that subject.

"Oh! I have a clean litter box in the mudroom as well," she says, smiling at me. "And an unopened bag of her litter." I grab a pen off my desk and add those items then tilt my head, waiting to see if she thinks of something she might have forgotten. When a few seconds go by and she doesn't come up with anything else, I know I'm good to go.

"We've got it, I promise. Come on, girls, let's blow this popsicle stand," I say to Jazzy and Sage who are practically bouncing out of their skin.

Since I only own a motorcycle and have two little girls coming along with me to help me gather Electra's things, I took the club's communal truck.

"Do you think Sprinkles will be scared of us?" Jazzy asks, her knees bouncing in excitement as we trek down the dirt path that'll lead to Electra's home.

"I'm not sure," I admit, glancing over at her. "Some felines don't have trouble with our wolves, but some can't handle the dominance we radiate."

“I don’t want the kitty to be scared of us,” Sage whispers.

“Neither do I,” Jazzy concurs, her tone soft.

“Let’s take it one step at a time, huh? Let’s not worry about it until it happens. We could walk in there and Sprinkles could choose to claim us as one of her people.”

“Okay,” they both say in agreement.

The rest of the drive is done so in silence. The girls are both lost in their thoughts of how they’ll win Sprinkles over while I’m contemplating how to help Electra heal both emotionally and physically so I can explain to her that fate has deemed us each other’s soul mate.

When we pull into her driveway and park, her natural scent envelops me. And even though this is not my abode, I get wrapped in the feeling of coming home. I feel welcome here even though this is my first time stepping onto the property.

“Look!” Jazzy hollers excitedly. “She has a koi pond in her front yard and there are fish inside of it.”

“Being that she’s a water witch, it doesn’t surprise me that she’d have a water source or two surrounding her house,” I utter aloud, peering into the pond. I’m impressed at the size of the fish inside, then realize that she didn’t mention them, and I have no clue how they eat.

“It helps her stay powerful, huh?” Sage questions.

“That about sums it up,” I remark, smiling at the inquisitive duo. We do everything we can to keep the girls educated about all aspects of the paranormal and supernatural world. After all, their potential mates could come from any of the facets.

I nod my head and encourage them to follow me to the door. Once I gain entrance, my jaw drops. Natural light shines through coming from every wall of the house. She has picture and stained-glass windows which causes a spectrum of colors to shine throughout and bounce off the surfaces.

“It’s like a rainbow,” Jazzy says, her tone in awe.

“It’s so pretty,” Sage says with admiration.

After a small investigation, I walk into each room, gathering the items off her list, while the girls focus on grabbing the items for Sprinkles, who is following both girls meowing her head off. She’s got a smooshed face and as Electra said, there are sprinkles of color in her fur. They’re both enthralled and I imagine they’ll be pleading with their respective parents to get a pet of their own. That thought makes me chuckle since both Cyrus and Corbin are hardasses. Of course, when it comes to their girls, there’s nothing they won’t do for them.

Pulling out my phone, I call Harmony because I need to make sure we take care of the koi in the pond before we leave. When she answers, I ask, “Can you check with Electra about something?”

“Sure, what do you need to know? I’ll put the phone on speaker,” Harmony replies.

“Jabba?” Electra’s voice coming through the line sends shards of longing through me and I have to take a deep breath in order to respond.

“Electra, do you have anything special you give the koi?” I question.

“Oh! The pond is its own ecosystem, so they find food within it, but the big rock that has the gnome on it is actually a specially made feeder. I usually toss in two scoops to supplement what they get from the pond itself.”

“How often?” I ask, already making plans to make daily trips if necessary.

“Just once a week. They’re past due though,” she replies.

“We’ll take care of it before we leave. Is there anything else you can think of?” I want to get back but talking to her is a delicious torture as well.

Harmony’s voice breaks in and she says, “Maybe anything that would spoil that’s in her refrigerator, Jabba.”

“We’ll get that as well and be back shortly.”

Chapter Four

Electra

I wake up slowly to purring in my ear. Opening my eyes, I see that Sprinkles is next to me, kneading me. “Making biscuits so early?” I murmur as I reach out to rub my girl between her ears.

She meows, making me giggle. The day I walked out of the pet store with food for my fish and found the little abandoned kitten, I knew I had to bring her home. Granted, I didn’t know the tiny thing was a girl at the time, but as soon as I could, I took her to the vet and got her fixed up. She was sick for a bit too, likely from being a stray, but she’s grown into a beautiful cat.

“I’m sorry you were left alone,” I say as I maneuver myself so I can sit up. I see a bottle of water on the nightstand, so I open it and take a long, satisfying drink. The look Sprinkles gives me has me giggling again; it’s as if she’s admonishing me for abandoning her. “I’d never leave you alone unless something happened to me.”

Which it did when the Red Caps abducted me. Wincing, I stretch as much as possible, my body still bearing the aftermath of their abysmal treatment. Granted, I think the club girls were treated far worse than I was because they were there longer, but even still, they were not gentle with any of us whatsoever.

I decide a shower will help so I leave Sprinkles to her biscuit making and get out of bed. Walking over to where a duffle bag sits, I push aside the thought that Jabba was the one to get my clothing and choose a clean outfit to wear. He even put my hygiene

items in the bag I have for them, which has me smiling as I walk into the ensuite, gasping when I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror.

“You look awful, E,” I mutter to myself as I set my clothes and the bag down to peer at my reflection. “Holy goddesses, there’s no way a man like him would ever give you a second glance.” I mean, Jabba is perfection. He’s large and burly, his muscles have muscles, and he’s the epitome of a man’s man. He is fit as a fiddle, and I have a muffin top if I bend over.

For some reason, that thought makes my heart hurt a little bit. I’ve been alone for so long now, not by choice, but since being rescued, the longing I thought was long gone has made its presence known. It came barreling at me like an unexpected slap to the face. Shaking my head at my fanciful thoughts, I turn the shower on and while the water heats, I strip down, ignoring the mottled bruises that cover nearly every square inch of my being. Grabbing my shampoo and conditioner, as well as the soap I make from all of the herbs I hunt for in the fields, I step into the shower stall and sigh as the water hits my knotted body.

“Goddess, that feels good,” I murmur as I set about getting my hair wet so I can shower.

Harmony and Karsyn did what they could to clean me up, of course, but I need to thoroughly wash away the Red Caps’ touch from my body and start the ritual that’ll help cleanse my soul from their foulness while I’m at it. It’s going to take longer for my soul pain to go away, but just being around Harmony, Karsyn, their girls, as well as Jabba, is already helping tremendously where the mutilating memories are concerned.

As the water sluices over my body, I find myself humming, the connection to my affinity helping to further heal me and strengthen my power, which was waning due to where I was being kept. It’ll probably take a few more days, but it appears I’m not

going anywhere just yet, so I have the time.

I take the time to wash and rinse myself twice, but resist scrubbing my skin completely raw, not wanting anyone to question whether or not the witch they have in their midst is crazy or not. Grinning, I finish up then step out to grab one of the fluffiest towels I've ever felt and fold it around me, sighing in contentment when the plushy material hits my flesh. With one wrapped around my head turban style, I methodically dry myself, occasionally wincing when I touch a tender area. Once I'm done, I grab my homemade lotion, which has more herbs and plants infused into the silky base I made and thoroughly rub it all over my body until it absorbs in my skin making it feel satiny smooth.

Since I don't have a hairdryer, I opt to brush out my long hair and allow it to dry naturally. After dressing, I slip on a pair of fuzzy socks that I don't remember asking for, but appreciate all the same, then re-enter the bedroom where I come to a complete stop.

Jabba is sitting in the chair in the corner, and I see a tray sitting on the nightstand. When he feels my essence near him, a handsome smile crosses his face even though he hasn't glanced in my direction. "Hey," he says when he finally lifts his head and he sees me standing there, looking unsure of myself.

"Hi," I shyly reply as I wonder how long he's been here. Did he hear my slight moans whenever I hit a tender area? I know I'm surrounded by shifters and their hearing, as well as their sense of smell is superbly heightened.

"Figured you'd like something to eat," he replies, motioning to the tray. I'm not sure how to react here, I'm not good at flirting even though every instinct I have is screaming that I should let him know I'm interested in more than friendship. But I'm too shy to put myself out there in that brazen manner. I'm not sure if I can mentally take rejection if he doesn't feel the same tug toward me as I do with him.

“Oh! You shouldn’t have gone through all the trouble,” I mutter.

“It wasn’t any trouble at all,” he says. “Just for the record, I don’t really cook. Harmony oversees the club girls who have gotten remarkably better with what they prepare for us to eat. No one has gotten food poisoning yet.”

I snicker as I make my way over to the bed, get myself settled then put the tray on my lap. “Well, that’s always a good thing to hear before I start eating.”

His rich, deep chuckle fills the room, sending frissons of desire coiling through my body to settle in my midsection. I’ve never had the reaction I’m having around anyone else and had begun to wonder if I was possibly asexual. Feeling the way my core clenches whenever he’s nearby, I realize I was simply waiting for the right one to come along and wake up that yearning that’s been dormant. Luckily for me, he did because he’s one fine specimen of a man. Um, wolf.

My face reddens when I see his nostrils flare, knowing he has likely scented my arousal. As my gaze shies away from his, I decide to focus on my food instead. It’s a better alternative than thinking about something, or should I say someone, that may or may not be mine.

I’ve always read storylines where mates saw each other and insta love followed. However, the cookie never crumbles that way for me. I’ve always had to work for what I had, and considering men weren’t a determining factor when it came to building my holistic career, I’m in a whole new realm here.

“How are the other women doing?” I ask. I know I’ve checked on them before and while I don’t totally understand how they can willingly be with whatever club member wants them, it’s not my place to judge. Besides, they were kind to me and tried to help as much as possible while we were enslaved.

“They’re healing, same as you.”

“They were with the Red Caps for a long time, weren’t they?” I question.

“Yeah, unfortunately. Honestly, if it hadn’t been for you, we probably wouldn’t have found them,” he admits. His words have me rearing back in confusion. I can’t fathom for the life of me how I helped them be tracked down seeing as they’d been missing for as long as they had been. And I know from our earlier conversation, the club never stopped searching for them.

Deciding I’ll never understand what he means unless I ask, I gather the courage and do just that. “Me? How did I help?”

I mean, it’s not like I’d ever seen any of them before I woke up, so I don’t understand what he’s saying.

He seems a bit uncomfortable right now as his body shifts from one side to the other in his seat, so I push the half-eaten tray of food aside and wait, dread now filling me with what he might say.

“When Prowler and I were searching, we shifted, of course, and picked up the faint scent of the club girls. Except, the closer we got to where they were being held, another scent overrode theirs.” My eyes widen. Surely, he doesn’t mean me, right? But he must by the way he’s laser focused on me and my reaction.

“What?” I’m not prepared for what he says next and nearly fall off the bed in shock.

“You, Electra. Your delectable, enticing scent drew me to you like a flower draws in the honeybee.”

His ears are slightly red around the edges, so I know he’s not used to expressing

himself in such a way, which I find absolutely adorable on so many levels. Because I'm almost positive, given what minimal interactions I've seen between him and Jazzy, he's got that gooey marshmallow inside that all women secretly crave.

"What are you saying, Jabba?" I'm equal parts terrified and exhilarated. No matter what he says next, I need to pull my big girl panties up and accept it. It may take a minute for me to digest whatever it is, but this won't be the first time I've taken a hit and swayed with the punch.

"You're my mate."

My upper body rocks backward and skepticism sets in. These things, these miraculous things don't happen to me. I need him to be absolutely sure before I allow myself to accept this information as truth. "How can you be sure?"

Great, Electra. Such a smooth conversationalist. He's a dang shifter and from all the lore I'm aware of, their mates emanate a particular scent just for them when they're nearby. I briefly wonder what I smell like to him. I mean, if water is part of what he smells, that has no odor as a rule. So, does that mean I have no discernible essence I emit?

"Because to me, you smell like a warm, clean breeze, like freshly washed sheets hanging out, with a light, floral undertone. You smell like home to me, Electra. My home."

"But how would that work, Jabba? You're a shifter and I'm a witch. I don't have that mate instinct inside of me like you do," I reply.

Hope fills my heart as I wait for his response.

"I know you feel the connection between us," he states.

“I do,” I admit. “But it’s not like one where I’m grateful that you rescued me. Oh, goddesses, I’m messing this up. What I mean is, I am attracted to you, even though witches don’t have that intuition inside of them for their partner.”

“Harmony and Karsyn are both witches mated to wolves,” he replies to my earlier question. “So, the mate bond, once we complete it, that is, will grow within you, just like it has with them.”

“The mating draw. I’ve heard of that in my family’s grimoire,” I whisper. “There are legends that say the strongest coupling stems from a witch and shifter relationship. According to the lore that was passed down to my grandmother from her mother, you will find a large quantity of those relationships in great times of danger.”

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Chapter Five

Jabba

Her words have me wondering what else is in store for our respective clubs. We've already faced Death and beat him, now we've gone up against the Red Caps. Is there something coming that has the goddess Luna preparing us for? I need to let Cyrus know so we can begin planning and forming a defensive strategy. The best defense is a good offense and I trust my brothers, as well as Corbin's club, to ensure that the women and children are safe.

My mind is in turmoil as I wonder if there is greater danger out there than any of us are aware of. It's like once we discover one thing and solve it, another mystery pops up. Some days, it feels as if we're fighting an enigma. We can't protect ourselves against unknown forces if we don't have any clues about what we're battling against. There's a bigger picture, one we aren't privy to and that has me ready to dig an underground bunker and store the women and children inside of it until we make sure all threats to them have been neutralized.

One thing I know we'll always take a stance against, and that's our family being the object of another's malicious intentions. They are to be sheltered and kept safe at all cost, even if that means sacrificing ourselves.

"So, what you're telling me is your lore is saying we're a power couple?" I tease, deciding to lighten my thoughts as she now looks worried.

When she giggles, I find myself joining in, the freeing sound drawing me closer to

her.

“It sounds funny when you put it like that,” she finally says. “I honestly thought I’d live my life alone, except for Sprinkles, of course.”

“Babe, you may be a cat lady, but you’re nowhere near the place in your life where you should even think you’d spend the rest of your life alone.”

“So, what are we going to do about this mate thing?” she probes, the insecurity in her eyes has me wanting to lift her into my arms and soothe her fears.

“We’re going to take our time and get to know one another first. I’m going to prove to you that you’re mine and I’m yours. By the time I’m done, you’ll never doubt what you mean to me,” I decree.

“You sure your wolf will be patient enough to give me time to wrap my head around this, Jabba?”

“He’s not going to have a choice. We’re both on the same page when it comes to you, Electra. Your happiness and comfort are our top priority.”

Her arousal flares and it takes everything in me not to cross the room, take her into my arms and make her mine. She’s still injured, and I have no desire to add to her pain since the mating dance isn’t gentle by any means.

“Can I leave the room?” she asks.

“Absolutely, let’s go down to the common room for a change of scenery,” I say, standing up and moving toward the bed to grab the tray.

She grins at me as I help her stand, needing to at least touch her. We talk about

inconsequential things as I take her downstairs to the common room, then through to the kitchen so I can take care of her tray.

“Electra!” Jazzy exclaims, running through the back door into the kitchen. “Uncle Jabba!”

I swing her up into my arms and nuzzle her neck as she giggles. “What are you doing, pretty girl?” I ask, finally setting her back on her feet.

“Big Daddy brought me and Sage over for dinner!”

My brow raises knowing that Corbin and Karsyn are coming too. I briefly wonder if any of the other brothers from the Spiked Raiders will be here as well and decide to find Cyrus and ask him. As the enforcer, I need to be aware of any threats to my club, especially since I now have a mate.

Cyrus, why is Corbin coming? I ask through our link. If there’s something I need to know to ensure the safety of the club, tell me.

Listen, fucker, we’re going to meet after dinner. Satisfied? Cyrus’s response is snarky, so I suspect I’ve interrupted my brother.

Snickering, I nod, then decide to tell him I have something to share of my own. Electra mentioned something that I think is worth all of us knowing, Pres.

What is it? His response is quick, and his tone has gone serious.

I’ll tell both of you when we meet. No sense repeating myself.

I can command you to tell me, he threatens.

Yeah, you can, but it doesn't change anything. I hate telling stuff more than once and you know it. Now leave me be, I'm entertaining your daughter right now. Don't you have a mate to bother?

I can't help the chuff of laughter that bursts out of me at his growl through our line. Looking at Jazzy, I ask, "How about some ice cream? Dinner's a long way off."

"Oh, yes," Jazzy gushes. "Do you like ice cream, Electra? Me and Sage like the three flavor one with chocolate syrup and sprinkles."

Electra looks confused so I lean in and whisper, "Neapolitan. Chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry infused."

"Ah, gotcha. Yeah, Jazzy, I love ice cream," she says. "Now, how about you girls show me where the spoons are while your Uncle Jabba gets the bowls, scooper, and topping stuff. We'll have an ice cream party!"

"Harmony, you outdid yourself tonight," I say, patting my flat belly. If my metabolism wasn't so fast acting, I'd worry about being sucked into a food coma.

As shifters, we have high metabolisms, so we need a lot of protein to keep us fit. Harmony put on several crockpots full of roasts that she then shredded, so we had pulled pork and pulled beef sandwiches, along with all the trimmings. Corn on the cob, coleslaw, baked beans, and thick steak fries. As I scan the room, I notice all of my brothers are lounged back in their seats, satisfied smiles spread across their faces. We're spoiled sons of bitches, and not a single one of us will deny that fact. It's why Harmony is treated like a queen around here.

"We'll clean up, I know you guys need to go talk in your bat cave," Harmony teases as she and the rest of the women rise from their seats and begin collecting plates and utensils. Electra shifts her eyes in my direction and a shy smile is displayed on her

face as she gets out of her chair and joins the rest of the women. I'm glad to see she's pitching in; it'll go a long way with the women in the club and accepting her as one of them.

"Den, woman. We're fucking wolves, not some stupid superhero," Cyrus rumbles, giving her a narrow-eyed look. He may sound like he's angry, but I see the twinkle in his eyes and know this is something they must frequently talk about between themselves.

Longing hits; I can't wait to have those inside jokes with Electra and be able to know what she's thinking and feeling once our mate bond solidifies and clicks into place. I stand and follow Cyrus, Corbin, Big Daddy, Bandit, Justice, and Abel into our meeting room. Once the door's closed and we're all seated, Cyrus looks at me and demands, "Talk, fucker."

I barely resist the urge to roll my eyes, not wanting to disrespect my president in front of another club. They may be allies, but I won't do that to Cyrus especially since their reconciliation is so new. Respect and trust are still being earned on both sides and Cyrus would have my ass if they thought for even a second that he doesn't have command over his men. It'd make him look weak and inferior. Considering he's not only my pres but a man I look up to, I'd never put him in a position where he'd have to defend his right to hold the mantle.

"I told Electra that she's my mate," I say, which elicits a few gasps. "She told me that her grimoire has written legends that say the strongest coupling stems from a witch and shifter relationship. According to her grandmother, the lore that was passed down through several generations, you will find a large quantity of those relationships in great times of danger. Cyrus, this will make the third such mating between the two clubs once she and I complete the mating bond."

"Fuck," Cyrus hisses, while Corbin glares. At least we all know his ire isn't aimed at

us, it's directed toward whatever entity is testing us. We're practically being forced to go to war to defend our people as well as the innocent humans that have no clue shifters and witches walk amongst them.

“What the fuck else could possibly be coming?” Big Daddy asks, banging his meaty fists on the top of the table. “We’ve dealt with Death, and while the Red Caps are obviously still out there, we got the club girls back plus Jabba found a mate.”

I notice Cyrus and Corbin exchange a quick look but neither says a word. “Pres?” I ask. “Is there something we need to know?” I point to the Spiked Raider’s SAA. “We can’t keep everyone safe if we don’t know what’s coming.”

“Not gonna lie since you can smell it anyhow,” Cyrus says, “but there is something we know. Unfortunately, we cannot share it with anyone just yet. But we will in due time, when we don’t have any other choice. I need you all to understand but not push us on this. There are lives at stake and we all know that there are times where that has to be a priority. Suffice it to say, we are going to need to fortify the wards around our properties and clubhouses. Plus, none of the women or the two girls are to go anywhere by themselves. At minimum, they need to have two brothers with them at all times.”

My body stiffens at his words. I trust him implicitly so while I want to know what’s coming, I know when the time comes, they’ll tell us what we need to know. The thought of my mate, of Harmony, hell, even Jazzy being in danger? Yeah, I’ll fight to the last breath to ensure they’re unharmed. I know that Abel will do the same for Corbin’s club.

“Does she have any other information in that book of hers?” Big Daddy asks. Then he looks at Cyrus and Corbin and continues. “Thinking that with three witches, they’ll possibly have some of the answers you’re seeking, don’t you?”

“Yeah, Harmony and Karsyn both have been scouring their books,” Cyrus admits.

Sighing, I confess, “Whatever is heading our way, the women are going to be a key component. They’re crucial to keeping our people safe and our secret from being exposed to the masses. This is just me thinking out loud, but it’s what my gut is telling me.”

“With everything we’ve been through, we need to listen to our intuitions and not ignore anything. I’m not saying you’re right or wrong, but I’ve had a few instincts rise to the surface as well. I’ll get with Harmony and share what you’ve said and tell her what I’ve been thinking. As intuitive as she is, it may lead her in a direction none of us have contemplated. I hope for all of our sakes that we’re going down the wrong path,” Cyrus explains.

“Electra may be new to the club and the way our brotherhood works, but I’ll speak with her too and see if she has anything to add. It may take someone on the outside to see what’s happening within,” I offer.

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Chapter Six

Electra

Despite not being home, I find myself growing comfortable staying at the Iron Howler's clubhouse. It might have more to do with what Jabba told me than anything, but after being on my own for so long, there's something soothing about being around others. As I meander to the kitchen, Sprinkles following alongside meowing as though we're having an intellectual conversation, I hear his deep rumbling voice and smile.

While witches may not have the draw of the mating pull like shifters experience upon finding their mates, ever since I was alert enough to see him, I've felt the underlying attraction deep in my soul. Once we breach the kitchen, I find him standing behind Jazzy, his hands in her hair twisting it into complex braids with his tongue out wetting his lips while Harmony looks on and laughs.

"What are you doing?" I ask as I fill a bowl full of food for Sprinkles and set it down on the placemat Jazzy brought from my house. There's already some fresh water, which tickles at my senses and makes me realize I need to connect with a larger source to finish healing the last of my wounds I suffered at the hands of the Red Caps.

"Uncle Jabba is trying out a new hairstyle on me," Jazzy replies. "I don't know why Momma is laughing though."

"Because the braids are so tiny and his fingers aren't," Harmony says. "It's funny to

me that a man of his size is capable of doing something so intricate.”

“Hey now, we’re not all Neanderthals,” Jabba admonishes before winking at me. “Some of us are more... cultured.”

Harmony’s scoff has me giggling behind my hand as I watch how comfortable they all are with each other. “Keep telling yourself that, Jabba,” Harmony teases.

I decide to fix a cup of coffee, the heady brew calling to the part of me that’s under-caffeinated. It’s not my preferred beverage, but I’m not in the mood to boil water for some tea, so it’ll do for now. Once I’m happy with the amount of creamer and sugar I added, I take my mug and sit down next to Harmony, before I ask, “Is there a large water source nearby?”

“We’ve got several that aren’t too far,” Jabba replies. “Depends on what you’re wanting because there’s a hot spring about five miles or so from here, but we also have a few lakes, including a man-made one that’s just outside of the wards for our territory.”

“You have wards?” I ask, my heart rate increasing for some inexplicable reason.

“Karsyn and I put them in place,” Harmony says, her hand reaching out to touch mine. “It’s more so that the humans who live in the area don’t stumble upon us, although we do have a few that serve as an early warning system of sorts.”

“Didn’t help much when the Red Caps snatched the club girls,” Jabba grumbles.

“They were in town, remember? Shopping or something like that,” Harmony states. “Speaking of, maybe I need to talk to Cyrus to see if he’d like us to put some new ones in place, especially now.”

She doesn't elaborate, but looking closer, I can see something's different about her, but I can't put my finger on it. Deciding to push it to the back of my thoughts, I ask, "Can you take me to the hot spring, Jabba? Once you're done, that is."

"Absolutely. If you want, I'll let you ride my wolf." The shiver that courses through me at his words has me clenching my thighs and I watch as his nostrils flare.

Great, being around shifters means I'm going to have to watch my erotogenic reactions, although desire and arousal aren't easy to hide. I feel my face redden as I avert my eyes from his knowing ones. Thankfully, Jazzy is too young to miss the innuendos that are flying around, because I wouldn't want to face Cyrus's wrath if his daughter decided to ask him about what something meant.

"That sounds interesting," I finally manage to say.

"It could be," he replies, shooting me a wink that has my cheeks pinkening.

"Anyway. Do you have a wolfie saddle or something we could tie onto you, or do I simply clutch your wolf between my thighs?" Do not ask me where this brazen part of me came from, but his wink did something to encourage it. My core clenches at the thought and I watch him take a deep breath in before his eyes widen, and I see the carnal want blazing in his eyes.

"Yeah, I think this conversation needs to hold off until little ears aren't around," Harmony says, laughing.

"I want a wolfie saddle," Jazzy pouts. "I'd like to ride Daddy's wolf. That'd be fun." I swear that behind the cup of her hand, Harmony says it is. Even without superb hearing, I can make the words out with crystal clarity. It takes every bit of my self-control to not bowl over in laughter.

“Do not say that to your father,” Jabba barks, mirth shining in his eyes. “Never mind, just make sure I’m there when you do.”

“You’re bad, Jabba,” I jokingly criticize, but secretly hoping I’m there too if she asks Cyrus that particular question.

“Uncle Jabba is good,” Jazzy says, trying to refute what I said. Defending her uncle is an honorable trait. One I can get behind. “He protects us, especially me!”

“And how are you getting out of that one?” Harmony whispers to me. “You’ll learn with little ears around that you have to think before you say anything. Trust me, I’ve learned the hard way.”

“Jazzy, I was teasing.” Okay, that is definitely lame as far as excuses go, but hopefully, she’ll understand what it means.

“But it wasn’t funny, Electra,” Jazzy replies, giving me a little girl’s version of a scolding look. “Teasing should be funny, not hurtful.”

Now I feel truly reprimanded and put in my place. Ouch.

Out of the mouths of babes. Shrugging, I look at Harmony for a little bit of help. Goddess knows I don’t have much experience with young children and the right way to speak with them that’s considered socially appropriate.

“Jazzy, you’ll understand better when you’re older, but Electra was teasing your uncle,” Harmony says. “She doesn’t really mean that he’s a bad person.”

“I’m so bad I’m good,” Jabba teases, winking at me.

Again with the dang winking! At this point, I suspect I need to go back to the room

I'm using and change my panties, because there's no darned way I will ride his wolf like this! "Um, I'll go up and change," I say, to try and diffuse the tension that's now coating the room.

"Nah, you're fine," Jabba retorts. "Besides, I'm finished with styling your hair, Princess. What do you think, Jazzy?" he asks, handing her a small mirror that was sitting on the table.

She takes the mirror and I grin when I see her turning her head this way and then twisting her neck to look at the other side, smiling so widely that all of her teeth are showing. "I love it! I'm going to go show Daddy," she exclaims, hopping off the chair and running out of the room.

"Oh, to have that much energy," Harmony murmurs.

"Right? If we could bottle that shit, we'd make millions," Jabba replies. "Let's go see how Cyrus likes it because maybe, she'll ask him about a wolfie saddle." His snicker has Harmony and I joining in as we quickly follow Jazzy's path to see her standing in front of her father, preening as he inspects her new hairdo.

"Daddy?" Jazzy asks as we come within earshot.

"Yeah, baby," he replies, somewhat distracted as Harmony comes into view.

Swishing her hips from side to side, she holds her hands up in a prayer-like motion and asks what we were all hoping she would. "Do you have a wolfie saddle?"

Cyrus's brows shoot up toward his hairline as he glances toward the three of us. "A what?"

"A wolfie saddle. Uncle Jabba is going to let Electra ride his wolf to the spring, and I

wanna go for a ride too!"

"Harmony," Cyrus hisses.

"Yes, love?" she replies, smiling sweetly up at her mate.

"What in the fuck is my daughter talking about?"

"Don't you mean our daughter?" she retorts, irritation now in her tone.

"Of course, that's what I meant. Don't change the subject," he commands. "A wolfie saddle? Really? Is nothing sacred around this fucking place?"

"Daddy, do you have one or not?" Jazzy questions, hands now placed on her hips as she stares at him. Goddess love her, she's got a one-track mind right now and it's rather hysterical to see Cyrus slowly losing his mind while Jabba appears to be highly pained trying to hold his laughter back.

"No, I do not," Cyrus growls out. "And you're getting too old to ride on my wolf, especially since you can shift now."

"If I'm too old, then so is Electra," Jazzy advises, her lower lip now poking out in a perfect, little girl pout.

At that, Jabba loses his control and doubles up, laughing so hard the sound booms around the room. I know his position means he's probably serious all the time since the club's protection is his primary thought, so seeing him being so free right now adds to the growing feelings I'm having where he's concerned.

"Harmony, you've got some explaining to do," Cyrus scolds, but the heat in his eyes says that conversation needs to be of the private sort.

Jabba manages to get himself under control and move to my side, where he whispers, “You’ll never be too old to ride me, babe.”

Cue the swoon because the sexual tension is now so high, I feel like we should all be choking on the thickness of it at this point.

“Um, yeah. Ride. A ride sounds good,” I stammer, then slap my hands onto my face to hide behind.

Dear Goddess, could I get any more embarrassing?

When Jabba’s endless laughter picks back up, I quickly turn on my feet and head toward the backdoor to make a swift exit.

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Chapter Seven

Jabba

I'm still chuckling as I follow behind Electra, leaving Cyrus to deal with his precocious daughter and naughty mate. Once we're outside, I move so I'm standing in front of her, looking down into her expressive face. I can still scent her arousal and it's taking every last bit of my control to keep my hardon from showing up.

"She's something else," Electra murmurs, her gaze skittering away from mine.

"She wasn't lying, though," I reply, shrugging. "Jazzy doesn't know about the subtleties of humor yet, plus she's always been allowed to speak her mind. That's not necessarily a bad thing, because she's been raised to be strong and fierce, but there are times when what she says, while appropriate, is too advanced for her."

"I was homeschooled," she whispers. "So, I wasn't around a lot of other kids. It was mostly my mom and me."

I look at her and say, "Doesn't bother me one fucking bit, Electra. Especially if you're trying to say you're a bit awkward about certain topics. I'll protect you, I'll always protect you."

Her face brightens as she leans into me, and I'd swear she had some cat shifter in her because to my ears, it sounds as if she's purring.

"Thank you, Jabba. That means a lot to me," she expresses, laying her head on my

upper arm seeing as she can't reach my shoulder.

There aren't a lot of times I detest my height, but right now, I do... I truly do because I'd love to reciprocate by laying my head on top of hers, imprinting my scent into her.

"So, when you mount me," I say cheekily, "I want you to do it as if you were riding a horse bareback. Use the pelt at the nape of my neck to hold onto me with. Use it like you would a horse's reins. It'll help you keep your balance."

Right now, the thought of her luscious thighs cradling my flanks, her arousal soaking into my fur has me biting back a growl. Her scent is heady, of course, but with the addition of her desire that's been steadily building, I'm in a delicious state of agony.

"Let's get you to your water source, Electra. A dip in the hot spring sounds good to me also," I say, guiding her away from the back door and into the field so I can shift.

"I need the power boost," she tells me. "I'm stronger than I was, but I still have some healing left to do. Whenever you're ready." When she holds out her hands for me to get on with it, I take it as my cue that we need to move on from this conversation.

Without any fanfare, I strip down and shift, standing proudly before her as a wolf. I see her eyes expand but I don't smell any fear emanating from her. When she reaches out to touch me, I sit on my haunches, my tongue lolling out as I wait for her to touch me.

I may be an animal right now, but I've been longing for her to willingly touch me so when her hand touches the top of my head between my ears, I may or may not whine just a little bit before I lick her arm, causing her to giggle.

"Okay," she says, mumbling to herself. "How in the heck am I supposed to do this?"

Her predicament dawns on me so I make it easier for her to climb aboard and I flatten my body to the ground while my tail wags as she climbs onto my back, sighing deep inside when I feel her settle and then gently grab the fur around my neck. Once I'm sure she's as secure as she's gonna get, I stand up and hear her gasp followed by a giggle.

Woofing lightly, I turn toward where the spring is located and set off in a gentle lope, being mindful of the woman who's astride my back.

If wolves could grin, I'd be sporting one as I prance through the high grass. Once we hit flat ground, I begin to sprint, yet not too fast so that she doesn't lose her stability.

"Wow," she whispers. "This is amazing, Jabba. I can't believe you get to experience this every time you change forms."

I can't wait until we unite the way our people do so I can telepathically speak to her through our mate bond. This is an intimate act for a wolf, he only allows those that are important and trustworthy to ride on their backs.

It doesn't take but a few minutes for us to make it to our destination. When we arrive, I crouch down so that she can dismount. As soon as she's on her feet, I shift back into my human form. I shoot her a dazzling smile and bend down to peck her on the cheek.

"How did you like your first ride, Electra?"

"Are you looking for compliments, Jabba?" she teases. "I already told you I thought it was magnificent."

"I know, but I couldn't respond, and I really wanted to," I answer.

“Oh, yeah? And what would you have said?”

“I’d have told you that my wolf considers you special, it’s the reason he let you jump on his back and carried you here, to a spot he considers part of his territory,” I murmur.

I’m not great at this flirting thing like the rest of my brothers are, but for her, I’m going to try so she understands how extraordinary she and this connection I have to her is.

She takes a deep breath and I wait to see how she’s going to respond. But what comes out of her mouth nearly has me dropping to my knees, especially given the fact that for most of my life, until I found the Iron Howlers, I was a freak.

Ungainly, too big, awkward.

“I think you’re special, Jabba,” she softly says. “From the first time I set eyes on you, I’ve felt a connection, and it’s only getting stronger the more time I spend with you.”

My wolf chuffs in delight inside of me while I grin down at her.

But instead of carrying on in a romantic vein like I should be doing, I change the subject. “I did mention what you said your grimoire had written in it,” I tell her. “Cyrus and Corbin are going to ask their mates to go through theirs to see if there’s anything that can be added to the lore your grandmother gave you. Because we all can feel something’s coming.”

“Well, whatever I can do to help keep everyone protected, Jabba. Now, will you turn your back so I can undress and slip into the hot spring? I can feel it pulling at my soul.”

I turn around, mentally kicking myself for not following my heart.

I've spent so much of my life on the outside looking in, I feel broken sometimes. Of course, I sense that in Electra as well, so maybe the gods decided to take two halves and make them whole. Regardless, she's mine and I'll take her any way I can.

"Jabba?"

"Yeah," I answer, not wanting to turn around and see the disappointment on her face when she realizes her mate isn't suave or debonair.

"Are you going to join me or just stand there with your back turned to me? I mean, the view is phenomenal, don't get me wrong," she teases, "but I was under the impression you wanted to enjoy the water as well."

I see my witch has a bit of mischief in her, which has my heart swelling. Perhaps there's hope for us after all. Turning, I walk to the water and step inside, groaning at the way the warmth seeps into my body.

"Damn, this feels good. I always forget, y'know?"

"I don't see how you could, this is like being given an IV for me. Already I feel a lot better, and we haven't been in very long at all."

I watch as she leans back and closes her eyes, peace crossing her expression as she relaxes into the water. Once I assess the surrounding area for any threats, I do the same, content for the time being to be near my mate.

My heart.

My everything.

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Chapter Eight

Electra

“Child, are you listening?” A soothing, motherly voice I don’t recognize asks.

“I’m here,” I reply, allowing myself to be drawn into the comfort of her words.

It’s not lost on me that wherever I’m at isn’t in the hot spring with Jabba any longer, but I’ve never been here before, so I have no reference.

“I know you have questions about your mate. Let me show you how life can be,” the melodic voice states.

Flashes and images fly through my head in rapid succession. I see Jabba next to me, two small children laughing and running at our feet. Both have my hair color, but the little boy is already tall like his daddy, while the little girl is petite like me. My belly is rounded, and Jabba’s hand is protectively covering it while he talks to the kids.

More scenes erupt in my brain; I see Jazzy and Sage, a few years older, with smaller children nearby, while Jabba’s other brothers laugh and joke around a huge bonfire.

“I don’t understand,” I murmur.

“This is what can be, should you accept his mate claim,” the voice says. “Now, let me show you what will happen if you don’t.”

Fear grips me as I see myself in a small hovel, my body and face aged as bitterness wafts around me. I look like I'm muttering out loud as I walk outside and follow a long and winding path that's apparently not far from the clubhouse. I can see the people I've met milling around and my heart clenches when I spot the man who is quickly stealing my heart. Jabba.

Only he's different. There are no easy smiles; in fact, he's off to the side, his arms crossed over his chest with what appears to be a permanent scowl if the wrinkles on his forehead are any indication. Jazzy and Sage walk by, steering clear of him, which breaks my heart having seen how loving he is with the two little girls.

"Why? Before I came along, he didn't even know he had a mate," I whisper. I truly don't understand.

"It's two sides of the coin, Electra. The moment you two touched, you set Fate in motion. Because of your histories, you'll either have joy and happiness, which will not be without its trials, of course, or pain and sorrow. Rejecting one's mate has drastic consequences for both parties involved."

"I choose joy," I murmur. "I choose Jabba."

I wake up to Jabba holding me close to his chest, his voice ragged as though he's been screaming. "Jabba?"

"Dear Goddess, I thought I lost you somehow," he mumbles, his lips caressing my forehead. "I woke to find you in a trance of some sort. Nothing I said or did let you come back to me."

"I... I had a visit from the goddess. I'm not sure which one, but she showed me what would happen to the both of us if we denied our mating. It's not good, Jabba. I couldn't stand it if neither of us found happiness. Growing bitter and distancing

ourselves from those we love.”

“Rejection is hard on a shifter and his intended half’s soul. It can make you hateful, or in some cases, if the people aren’t strong enough it causes death,” he explains. “It’s a hard road to travel if you choose to go against Fate’s designation.”

“I choose life and joy, Jabba. I choose you,” I reply. “Please.”

He lowers his head, and his lips gently caress mine, teasing a moan out of me. For such a big, somewhat fearsome man, his touch is soft. “I’d rather be home in my den... our den,” he murmurs.

“I’d rather be with you, and it doesn’t matter where,” I admit. “I draw my strength from water elements, you’re a wolf who’s in tune with nature. What better place to complete our mating?”

“If this is where you’re the most comfortable, then this is where we’ll bond, baby. And you’re right, my wolf is in his element when he’s surrounded by nature. And who knows, this may make us stronger in the long run.”

“That’s what I was thinking too,” I admit. “I’m ready, Jabba. Mate me. Claim me. Make me your family.”

“No words you’ve spoken have sounded sweeter on your lips,” he declares as he bends his head and captures my lips with his. I never understood what possession felt like until his tongue swiped itself against mine. Sparks explode behind my eyelids, and I whimper into his mouth.

Because we’re both already naked, I can feel his hard length pressed against my side since he has me cradled in his arms almost bridal style. My nipples tighten in response to the onslaught from his kisses and when he lowers his head, I moan.

The sensations coursing through me are unlike anything I've ever felt before as my hands roam his body, touching wherever I can. He's hard all over; muscular and built, with a six pack that flows into a very impressive package. My core clenches as desire hits and I watch his nostrils flare before he leans down and lightly nips at one of my nipples before flicking his tongue over it to soothe the slight sting.

"Jabba," I groan, pressing my chest closer to his, needing the friction of his skin against my erect nipples. "Please. More."

"I want to take my time, explore every inch of you. We'll only have one mating, Electra. I want to make it special, not rush through it."

"We have forever for that," I reply, a slight foreboding overshadowing the pleasure currently coursing through me. I don't know why there's this sense of urgency, but I learned a long time ago never to question my goddess given instincts. With the fear of the tides turning on us and the warning I was given, I decide to share what I was told and shown. "Jabba," I whisper, "I don't think we can afford to take our time. Something's not right."

"I feel it too, but rest assured, we will be going nice and slow later," he replies, lowering me to the ground then covering my body with his.

He reaches between us, and I feel his fingers swipe through the apex of my thighs. An almost feral expression crosses his face as he murmurs, "So wet for me, Electra. You ready, baby?"

I can only nod as he notches the head of his dick at my entrance and slowly enters me. The fuller I get, the more my joy increases. As I wrap my legs around his waist, he starts to move, his hips gyrate and my pleasure ramps up exponentially. I'm a bit nervous about the pending mate mark, but I've heard it enhances pleasure. I know it'll happen right as we both climax and I can feel mine fast approaching.

“Jabba,” I warn as my back arches.

“I’ve got you, baby,” he promises, his voice a bit garbled as his canines elongate, preparing to penetrate my skin and insert his regenerative saliva into my DNA that’ll help me not only live longer, but connect us in ways that can never be undone.

As my orgasm hits, he strikes, his teeth sinking into the fleshy part of my neck at my shoulder. I scream out my release as whatever is in the bite courses through me, ramping up the feelings until I get to the point I don’t think I can handle much more.

He collapses on top of me before quickly rolling so he doesn’t crush me, his hands cradling my body as he places a kiss on my already swollen lips. “Fuck.”

“Well, that was a bit...,” I start, only to have him begin laughing beneath me. “Jabba? What’s so funny?”

“Babe, there are no words to describe how I’m feeling right now. I had no clue this is how it would feel marking my mate.”

Even though I didn’t feel what he did, a sense of pride washes through me that my mate is satisfied. Cupping his face, I kiss the underside of his jaw, not missing his shiver as he gazes up at me.

As we hold onto one another, a black cloud forms over the two of us, and as our bond settles and strengthens, the cloudy structure screams as if our union has pained it.

“Blood magic,” I whisper, ducking my head and settling it between Jabba’s neck and shoulder.

The witches who dabble in blood magic are evil and malevolent and I shudder when I think that they were attempting to keep Jabba and I apart so we couldn’t mate. It’s

more important now than ever that Harmony, Karsyn, and I go through our grimoires. We may be witches with different affinities, but there's a reason we were all drawn to these two clubs.

The question is, how can we figure it out so no one we know and love is harmed?

"Don't ask me how I know this, but the Red Caps were responsible for that," Jabba says, wrapping me up tighter in his embrace. Protecting me from our enemies' grasp. "We need to get back and inform Cyrus. Something else is coming."

"I need to be around as many light witches as I can. We can protect each other as well as the rest of our family. We have strength in numbers as my grandmother used to preach," I acknowledge.

"Wolves believe that too, it's why we believe in the sanctity of packs," he says, sitting up and reaching out for my clothes. "We're gonna ride like the wind, baby. Don't be scared, I won't let anything happen to you."

"I feel like you say that a lot to me, Jabba."

"I do. But it's only because it's the truth, Electra. You're my entire world, without you, there's no reason for me to exist."

In no time at all, we're back at the clubhouse and Jabba's rushing off, naked as the day he was born, to have Cyrus call church while I look for Harmony. When I find her, I see her face is pale and fear is in her eyes.

"What's going on?" I ask.

"I felt it. Blood witches are nearby. The question is why? But that question will have to be answered later. Karsyn's on her way with her grimoire. Go get yours and meet

me in the kitchen.” Harmony is on a roll, buried deep in thought so I decide to let her do her thing without any interruptions from me.

I rush off to my room, scooping up Sprinkles as I pass her, so she isn’t in our way and once inside, I settle her on the bed before I pick up my grimoire that Jabba and the girls got when they went to the house to grab my possessions and clutch it to my chest. Right now, the energy held within is almost palpable, which is slightly frightening. Yet, I know my sister witches will help me figure it out so we can protect everyone.

“Behave,” I tell Sprinkles who just meows at me before curling up and closing her eyes. As I head back down to the kitchen, my mind is working feverishly as I think about the events of this afternoon.

Chapter Nine

Jabba

“Tell me you didn’t just run through the common room with your junk hanging out,” Cyrus bellows.

“What the hell are you talking about?” I shout back. My focus is on what happened, what it means for the two clubs, and of course, the fact that I now have a mate.

A mate. As those two words resonate in my mind, I stop in my tracks. I don’t know if we’ll be able to communicate telepathically or not but decide to try it later on.

“Brother, you’re naked, and as far as I know, we didn’t plan for a club run. I know Jazzy’s a shifter as well, but we’ve always tried to shield her from us when we shift back to our human form,” Cyrus replies.

Okay, he’s still yelling, but nowhere near as loudly as he did when I first stopped in front of him, which is good. His words penetrate my foggy mind and glancing down, I realize he’s right and I’m standing before them butt ass naked. I shoulda thought ahead before rushing to relay our newest development to him. My mind was centered on the safety of my brothers, women, and children, and not my state of dress. I was so consumed with finding him so we could try and figure out what happened while I was off with Electra that I didn’t even think to grab a pair of sweats to slip on in my haste. He tosses me a pair of pants which I slip on, grateful that we have them stacked practically anywhere.

“Thank the goddess you covered up,” Prowler says, snickering.

“Don’t be jealous,” I snark as I slip on the proffered sweats. “We can’t all be goddess blessed.”

He reaches down and grabs his junk before thrusting his hips in my direction. “Maybe I don’t show it off because I don’t want to offend you and your mini me.”

“Guys!” Cyrus hollers. “Focus. It’s like I’m surrounded by pups and not grown ass wolves. What was so important that you came in here swinging your junk around like it’s the blade of a helicopter?”

“Is Corbin on his way by any chance?” I question, not wanting to repeat myself multiple times if at all possible. I feel like I’m always having to do that; repeat myself like a broken record and it takes away precious time we need to formulate a plan.

“How would you know that? I called before you came running into the room,” Cyrus replies.

I shrug my shoulders because I didn’t know, but I was hoping that they could feel the urgency beneath our bond and felt what I was projecting.

“Can I wait to tell all of y’all at the same time?” I question. I don’t want to be disrespectful of my president, but something deep inside my gut is telling me that time is of the essence.

“Why is it that you ask me that exact question every time I ask you to tell me something?” Cyrus throws his hands in the air but there’s a hint of humor in his tone, so I don’t take offense.

I sigh then say, “Because it usually ends up that I repeat the same situation more than

once. It gets exhausting, Brother.”

The room explodes in laughter because some of these fuckers I call brother do it to me as well. They know I prefer solitude to being the center of attention. I may be the club’s enforcer, but it’s mostly because I have the ability to stay somewhat apart from everyone else so I can keep an eye on everyone and everything.

“He’s got a point, Pres,” Prowler says once he stops snickering. “And he’s a surly fucker on the best of days.”

“He’s supposed to be surly, he’s our enforcer,” Bandit retorts.

Gee thanks, VP, my mind snarks. I don’t say it out loud of course; I do value my life after all.

“Well, surly or not, we all do that to him any time something comes up and with everything that’s happened since Harmony first came, it’s probably wearing on him,” Prowler advises.

I appreciate him doing that; he was with me on those long trips when we sought to find the missing club girls and saw it happening several times as I was inundated with phone calls from several of the brothers, as well as a couple from Corbin’s club.

Big Daddy was probably the worst, though, because he wanted hourly updates. He often got frustrated with me when I had nothing new to share. I mean, the man wasn’t the president of the mother club any longer, but I wasn’t going to be the one to inform him of that particular fact. Nope. I like my face right where it’s at, on top of my shoulders.

“Fine, go grab some real clothes while we wait for them to get here. I’ll get one of the prospects to bring drinks.”

Nodding, I rush from the room, so intent on quickly changing into my typical uniform of jeans, t-shirt, boots, and my cut, that I fail to see Queenie in front of me and end up with an armful of her as I try to keep from falling and crushing her.

“Shit, sorry,” I mutter, so focused on my task that I don’t realize anyone is nearby, let alone another of the club girls.

That little misstep on my part is going to come back and bite me on the ass.

“Oh, it’s okay, Jabba,” Queenie purrs as she runs one of her long, perfectly manicured talons across my bare chest. “You look a little stressed out, would you like me to help you with that?”

“No, no, I need to get to a meeting,” I mutter, finally setting her aside to haul ass to my room.

As I slip into clean clothes, my mind wanders to the fact that my brothers had to have scented the mating pheromones on me, but they didn’t give me any shit about it clogging the room. Since it’s a brand-new bond, the scent is strong... nearly overpowering. Once I’ve redressed, I hurry back down to the room we hold church in and take my seat. Bandit hands me an ice-cold beer which I quickly pop the top off of and take a long, satisfying drink.

“Damn, that hit the spot,” I murmur, sitting it on the table only to find all my brothers’ eyes concentrated on me. “What?” I bark out, my wolf still close to the surface.

He knows danger surrounds us, he just doesn’t know if it’s only from the Red Caps, or from something far more nefarious.

“Care to share why you smell as though you mated?” Bandit’s silky tone has me

glaring at him.

He has a smarmy look on his face, and I want nothing more than to smash it off of him, but Cyrus frowns on us beating the shit out of each other unless we're actively training.

"Maybe because I did?" I retort. "Not up for discussion right now. We've got bigger issues and as soon as Corbin and whoever he's bringing arrive, I'll enlighten you. All of you," I say in a snarly tone, giving Cyrus a slight nod.

Turtle, who's been steadily moving his hands over his keyboard, looks up and says, "I can't find anything, Cyrus."

"What are you looking for?" I ask, my curiosity now roused.

"Before you came here waving your twig and berries, we all felt a disturbance shift in the atmosphere," Turtle advises. "Harmony told Cyrus it felt as though it was infused with magic, but she couldn't identify where it was coming from, so we haven't been able to pinpoint the threat to neutralize it. That's when Corbin and his guys were called."

Something about what he says is niggling in my brain. "Wait, twig and berries? Twig and berries? Really, Turtle? More like a tree trunk and two bushes!"

Once again, the room reverberates with laughter, with Lucky slapping his hand on the table while tears flow down his face as he keeps repeating what I've said, only to break down again. Fuckers. All of them are juveniles. Adolescent, prepubescent fuckers. I relish the next time they're in the ring with me because I'll make them eat their words, that's for damn sure.

There's a knock at the door and at Cyrus's bellow to enter, I watch as Corbin, Big

Daddy, Dane, Justice, Abel, and Tucker walk in with Evan and Howie behind them carrying trays of beers. After they hand them out, they leave, closing the door behind them.

“I left Coby with Harmony, Karsyn, and Electra,” Corbin says as he finds a seat and settles in. When he sees Turtle plucking away at his laptop, he asks, “Unless we need him in here too?”

“If I need him, I’ll go get him,” Turtle says, never looking up from the monitor’s screen. Then, he must realize he’s just replied to a club president, and he glances up and says, “As long as that’s okay with y’all.”

Both Cyrus and Corbin smirk and I can see why they weren’t able to stay under the same clubhouse. They’re both Alpha to the core but are inherently different when it comes to how they deal with threats. Corbin is more apt to eradicate the threat and while Cyrus can and has done the same, he usually sets about handling things a bit more on the legal side of life. Corbin simply doesn’t care if he’s being diplomatic or not.

Cyrus looks at me and says, “Jabba, you’re up.”

Fuck, I hate it when I’m made the center of attention and all eyes are trained on me, but I mentally pull up my boxer briefs and start. “I’ve known since we rescued the club girls and found Electra with them that she was my mate. When I informed her of the fact she was my mate, she mentioned something about lore that had been passed down from her grandmother.”

At Tucker’s blank look, it dawns on me that he doesn’t know about that little gem, so I continue. “She said that the strongest coupling stems from a witch and shifter relationship. According to her grandmother, the lore that was passed down through several generations, there will be a large quantity of those relationships in great times

of danger. We know we've faced Death already." At that, Corbin growls since it was his mate who was horrifically abused by Death and his minions, but aside from giving him a commiserating look, I try to keep things on track.

"I took her out to the hot spring, and she met my wolf..."

I'm interrupted by Bandit who's cackling like a hyena and makes sure the entire room hears when he says, "He means she rode his wolf."

Rolling my eyes, and not letting him wind me up, I pick up the conversation from right before he so rudely butted in. "And while we were out there, the urge to complete the mating came over us both, as if not to do so would be a death sentence for all of us." More chuckles are heard from the peanut gallery, which I manage to ignore. "As our bond kicked in, black clouds came from out of nowhere and settled over the two of us, and as our bond cemented, we both heard an unearthly scream as if our union pained it."

"Fuck," Cyrus murmurs. I can feel his stress levels ramp up and wonder what has him stressing so much. This isn't the first time we've had to deal with an unseen enemy and I'm sure it won't be the last.

"I think it came from the Red Caps myself, or at the very least, they were involved, but Electra felt as if it was enchanted with magic."

"So let me get this straight," Bandit says, all business now. "We know that Fate decides who our mates will be, but the fact that the presidents from both clubs are mated to earth witches and now you're mated to a water witch, there's a purpose behind that as well? What the fuck do we need to be so strong for?"

"All three of the women are currently going through their grimoires to see if there's any lore that will further explain what Electra's grandmother told her," Cyrus says.

“Since the Red Caps are known to deal with the dark arts, it’s possible they’ve partnered with a blood witch for this latest assault.”

A round of ‘fuck’ goes through the room and I see Big Daddy clenching his fists as anger rolls through him. “All we want is to live peaceful lives.”

“What if this isn’t about us but about the humans?” Turtle asks, popping his head up from his laptop. “What if the Red Caps and the blood witches want to enslave them?”

“Well, if that’s not the sixty-four-million-dollar question, I don’t know what is,” Corbin states.

Fuck. Me.

Chapter Ten

Electra

Someone named Coby came in with Karsyn, but he's been off to the side to allow the three of us to search through our grimoires with a fine-tooth comb. Fear still courses through me, but it's now laced with the fact that I smelled Jabba on one of the club girls. Queenie, I think her name is, but I can't be one-hundred percent sure.

Harmony must feel my distress because her head lifts from the pages of the binding and glances up at me. When she notices where my attention is focused at, she narrows her eyes and emits a sigh that comes from deep within her lungs.

"Sticks and stones, Electra," she murmurs, placing a comforting hand on my forearm.

"This is more than words, Harmony," I snap, not trying to take my irritation out on her. "She physically rubbed up against my man, can't you smell him all over her?"

"I do, but before you make any assumptions, ask Jabba about it. For all you know, it could be innocent on his part. These girls don't always understand boundaries or matings. They aren't shifters or witches so they can't possibly grasp the significance of the bond."

"She'll understand it just fine when I snatch all of her hair out of her head and she's forced to wear a wig," I snarkily suggest.

Karsyn barks out a giggle, letting me know she's overheard us. "I'd like to see that."

“She keeps looking at me like she’s got one over me and you just might get your wish,” I grit out.

“Wait! I think I found something,” Harmony says with excitement dancing behind her eyes as she bookmarks a page with her fingertip.

“What’d you find?” I ask, abandoning my book and the visual smack down I was having with the club girl who was kind to me in the beginning and scoot my way over to Harmony so I can read what she’s found, while Karsyn moves to her other side.

Within the line of three, comes a power mating with shifters.

Together, the three reigning couples will free our kind from the bindings of bloodletting alchemy.

Protection of the humans must remain high, as Death walks among them.

Enslavement cannot happen, the golden six will prevail.

“Are... are we the golden six?” I ask, my voice barely above a whisper.

“You could only wish to be something like that,” Queenie retorts, having come closer without any of us noticing.

“Queenie, you’re not welcome here,” Harmony states. “Now, get gone, or you’ll find out just how much power we do yield.”

A look of fear crosses Queenie’s face as she turns and practically runs from the room. I can’t help the snicker that bursts from my lips, despite the seriousness of what’s currently happening.

“Don’t think you’re gonna need to worry about her, but I still think you need to talk to Jabba,” Harmony says. “Communication is key with your mate, as both Karsyn and I have found out.”

“I’ve always been a loner since my mom passed,” I reply.

“Well, you’re not alone anymore,” Harmony says as she places her hand on top of mine, with Karsyn quickly doing the same.

For the first time in a very long time, I feel as though I belong. I’m part of a family again. Granted, it’s unlike anything I ever thought about growing up, but that’s the joy of having one. They’re all different and they blend according to the individuals involved.

“That’s good. Now, how do we best protect everyone?” I ask. “Especially the girls.”

Because there’s no way I’ll let anyone harm a hair on either Jazzy or Sage’s head. From the looks that Harmony and Karsyn give me, I realize I’m in the right company. As witches of the light, we are born to protect and educate those who aren’t as strong as we are. And in my opinion, those two precious girls fall underneath that umbrella of protection. I’ve sensed there’s something extraordinary about them, but it hasn’t been revealed to me yet, so I’ll keep my thoughts and observations to myself for the time being.

“I think we need to let the guys know what we’ve found,” Harmony says. I watch her zone out and realize she’s speaking telepathically with Cyrus. When she nods, I grin, because she stands, grabs her grimoire and motions for Karsyn and me to follow her.

When we breach the doorway of their meeting room, Jabba motions for me to come to him, while the other two mated men do the same. As I settle on his lap, I put my grimoire in front of me and see Harmony and Karsyn do the same. Since this is

Cyrus's clubhouse, Harmony takes the lead as she looks around at all the brothers from both clubs who are present.

"Okay, so while you guys were in here slamming down beers, my sister witches and I were pouring over our grimoires," she says, looking pointedly at the empty beer bottles lined up on the table while the guys all laugh.

"What did you find?" Cyrus asks, his arms casually draped around her waist, cupping her stomach. I find myself platonically drawn to the love and devotion that radiates from the couple whenever they touch. It's magnetic, nearly electrical. I also wonder if Jabba and I will eventually reflect that as our mate bond grows stronger. It's something to think about and it makes me smile inside.

I hide my smile because I suspect they have news they're not ready to share. Still, I'll patiently wait. Goddess knows I've had to learn how to do that in my long life.

"This is the interesting part. I've read through this grimoire so many times I feel like I could quote it, but today, this particular notation stood out," she says.

A memory teases at me and I look at her and ask, "Can I say something before you continue?"

"Absolutely. As my mama has said, knowledge is power."

"I remember my great-grandmother telling my grandmother that the grimoire doesn't always reveal everything all at once. There may be spells, familial history, and even lore that will show up and it's always when it's needed, never before. You saying what you just did makes me wonder if this is the time for what you found to be revealed."

Her eyes widen just as Karsyn says, "I've heard that as well. It was so long ago, I

buried it deep in my subconscious, obviously, but it definitely makes sense now that you've said it out loud."

"So, what did it say?" Cyrus asks, his impatience showing. Harmony pats his hand and I watch as he calms down. Slightly. There's still a frisson of power that electrifies the room, and I don't know if it's because there are in essence three alphas as well as three witches, or it's something more. Otherworldly .

Harmony recites:

"Within the line of three, comes a power mating with shifters.

Together, the three reigning couples will free our kind from the bindings of bloodletting alchemy.

Protection of the humans must remain high, as Death walks among them.

Enslavement cannot happen, the golden six will prevail."

"Fuck," Big Daddy growls out. "Fucking riddles, all the fucking time." He pulls at his beard while I hide my grin, because the frustration emanating from him is almost palpable.

Deciding to jump in as Harmony and Cyrus appear to be having a conversation between themselves, I say, "We think that the three of us, me, Karsyn, and Harmony, are the three witches mentioned in the script, while Cyrus, Corbin, and Jabba are the shifters."

"Me? I'm not an alpha or anything like that," Jabba states, confusion marring his brow.

“Brother, while we don’t do what a lot of packs do because of our makeup, you’d be what they call an Omega,” Cyrus advises.

“What the fuck is that?” Jabba asks.

“Someone who is sensitive to the emotions and feelings of their pack, or in this case, our brotherhood,” Cyrus says.

What they have yet to understand is that it’s so much more than that. An Omega doesn’t only feel a sensitivity to those around them, they are also able to sooth the emotions through their bonds. They can anticipate what someone within their pack needs before the person themselves knows they need it. They are also some of the biggest badasses within the ranks outside of the Alpha himself. That’s why nine-tenths of them end up soldiers or SAA and in Jabba’s case, the enforcer.

“Sensitive? Jabba sensitive?” Bandit manages to ask while snickering.

“Hey now, he makes a helluva hairdresser, aren’t they supposed to be in touch with their feelings?” Prowler asks, smirking at my mate.

I can feel his confusion and hurt through our bond and want nothing more than to douse all of these assholes in a roaring flood of rock-filled water.

“You can’t do that,” Jabba says inside my head.

Wait, what? He’s talking to me in my head?

“Yeah, my water nymph, I can talk to you thanks to our mate bond. You can’t drown my brothers, though. It’s really bad form, I’m afraid.”

Great, now he’s quoting the movie Hook to me? I shake my head as he squeezes me.

“For your information, Jazzy loves her Uncle Jabba and the fact that he was willing to learn how to style her hair has no bearing on whether or not he’s a badass biker. How many times have one of y’all gone off half-cocked about something only to have him calm your asses down?” Cyrus asks.

The room quietens at Cyrus’s remark. All of them looking ashamed of how they downgraded such an important position within their club.

“So, how does this tie in to what Jabba said happened with the dark clouds and shit?” Turtle asks.

“That’s something we’re going to have to figure out for ourselves as we go. As you can tell, none of these prophecies or lores we’ve crossed fill in any details,” Cyrus explains.

“That’s because it can change the outcome, and not always for the better,” I insert.

Chapter Eleven

Jabba

We toss a few more ideas around and the consensus is that the three women will work at enhancing the wards currently around both clubhouses, as well as our businesses. We'll increase patrols and ensure that the humans who work for us stay safe. It's not outside of the realm of possibility for the unknown enemy to use our employees in such a way that it would force us to react.

First and foremost, they'll be creating talismans that anyone patrolling can wear without fear of losing it if shifting, as well as the two little girls. I may not be fully in the know where the two of them are concerned, but there's something unique about both of them and even if I can't put my finger on the reason why, they must be protected at all costs.

Finally, Cyrus bangs his gavel and says, "Let's grab something to eat."

"Who's cooking?" Prowler asks while rubbing his belly.

"The prospects have burgers and dogs on the grill, and they also picked up some premade salads," Cyrus advises. "If it were both full clubs, we'd have steaks and ribs, of course, but this'll do."

We all laugh, which I suspect was his intention as we head out of our meeting room. Electra's fingers are laced with mine and I find that despite the disparity in our size, she fits just right.

“Come with me for a few minutes,” I whisper to Electra. When she nods, I take her to my room. No, it’s now going to be our room and I’m fucking grateful that I never brought one of the club girls inside and tainted it with their perfume. Some wolves don’t have a problem with other women in their dens, but it always bothered me, so if I had to scratch an itch, I used one of the social rooms downstairs and kept my individual space untouched.

“What’s going on, Jabba?” she asks once we’re inside and the door is closed.

“I know you smelled Queenie on me earlier. I could sense your distress, but I want to explain what happened.”

“Okay,” she drawls out. “And just to say, yes, I did smell her on you, and it rankled me because it wasn’t too long after you mate claimed me.”

I shake my head, and run my hand across the back of my neck as I come up with the words to explain the run in I had in the hallway with Queenie. “Nymph, I was running to get changed before everyone got here for our meeting and literally crashed into her. It was nothing more than that, I promise.”

“She tried to make it seem like it was more than that,” Electra says once I’ve finished explaining what happened.

“When?”

“When we were in the kitchen going over our books, she said something that was a bit... bitchy. Harmony calmed me down and told me I needed to talk to you about it instead of flying off the handle. Since we have bigger issues that are apparently coming, I shelved it, but I’m glad you brought it up so we could clear the air. I know she was just trying to stir up trouble. I’m... I’m not the most experienced person out there, Jabba, and for a few minutes, I bought the lies she was trying to sell.” Pride

swamps me when I realize she's comfortable enough with me to find her voice and give me the truth, instead of what she thinks I want to hear.

"Thank you for that, Electra. I'll always want you to tell me how you're feeling. I mean, I know I'll be able to feel it through our bond, but any encounters you have with any of them where they try to rattle you, I want to know as soon as you're able to tell me."

"I will, I promise," she replies. "So, we can talk to each other in our heads, huh? That was a bit unexpected, but I can see where it will come in handy."

I chuckle at how she's changing the subject. She's clever, my little water witch, that's for sure, and I look forward to learning everything there is to know about her. "Come on, Nymph, let's go eat. You're going to need your strength for later."

"Oh, really?" she teases. I love how happy and free she sounds right now. It's much different to the confused, scared woman who woke up in my bed when she was first brought to the clubhouse for protection.

"Definitely. Earlier was to make sure everyone stayed safe. Later is for us, and I plan to take my time with you."

"I'm looking forward to that," she admits, smiling shyly at me as I take her hand in mine once again.

"Uncle Jabba! Will you swing me and Sage?" Jazzy asks, having come over to where I'm sitting with Electra. "You're the only one who can do both of us at the same time!"

I chuckle because with my height, my arm span is greater than most of the brothers and the two girls love swinging on the playset that the brothers built for them years

ago. It's been expanded and added on to as they've grown, of course, but they always return to the swings. Makes me wonder if they both have some kind of spiritual connection to the sky.

"Come on, girls," I say, standing and then grabbing each of them, one under each of my arms before I stalk over to the playground. I laugh when I see them pick their favorite swing. It's never deviated and even when it's just Jazzy playing by herself, she doesn't use Sage's swing.

Once they're settled and holding on, I start pushing. "Higher, Uncle Jabba!" Sage demands, giggling.

There's something that loosens inside of me at their sheer joy. Suddenly, I can see myself with several pups, Electra by my side and the thought has me grinning like a lunatic. I've always had paternal instincts, but I never thought I'd have the possibility of having a pup of my own... in my head, I'd always be the fun, Uncle Jabba.

"What's on your mind?" Electra asks as the girls shriek and giggle over our heads as they pump their feet.

"Just thinking about us, our future, and the pups we'll have some day," I admit. I watch a light blush cross her face and raise my brow.

"The Goddess showed me what my life would be like with you as well as without you. I hope you want more than one," she teases. "Because I think we're going to end up with a house full." Her face pinkens and it makes me wonder just what, exactly, the Goddess showed her to have her blushing so hard.

"That'd be a blessing, don't you think?"

"I felt just like that when it was shown to me," she confesses, sending me a blinding

smile.

“Do you think they’ll have your smile, Electra?”

“Maybe? I hope any boys will be tall and brawny like you,” she says.

“I hope any girls we have are as beautiful as their mother,” I rebut, liking the sound of it.

“Yeah. Well, I pray to the goddess that any boys we have get your dimples.” When she says this, I feel my cheeks heat from the compliment.

Right now, we’ve got a mutual admiration society going on and it almost feels as though we’re the only two around. Instead, as the giggles and shrieks of the girls intrude on my thoughts, I tune in and can also hear everyone else talking and laughing.

This is what it’s all about, I think. Family.

As we make our way to the room we’re now sharing, the prospects’ having moved Electra’s things there while we were outside, I marvel at how Harmony’s vision has changed my life. My mate is perfect for me in every way, and I can say that confidently even not knowing her all that well. Once we’re inside, I close and lock the door then give Electra a heated stare.

“Come here, Nymph,” I instruct, wagging my finger between us.

She sashays over to stand in front of me, a smile playing on her lips as she looks up at me. “Yes?” she all but purrs. “Did you need something?”

“You.”

Reaching down, I pull her into my arms so she's forced to wrap her delectable legs around my waist then crash my lips onto hers. Long, extremely pleasurable minutes pass as I take my time exploring every nook and cranny in her mouth until we're both left panting and breathless.

Somehow, I manage to carry us to the bed without tripping or falling, and gently set her on top before I settle in next to her. Right now, I'm grateful that I'm a shifter; we don't tend to get wrapped up in bullshit things like humans do when it pertains to sexual encounters. Thankfully, our immune systems don't allow us to be contaminated by any transmitted diseases, however, pregnancy is a possibility, but we usually leave that to fate on if it's the right time for conception or not.

"Jabba," she whispers, her hand reaching out to cup my cheek. "I think you promised me something earlier." I did promise her something, but now that we're here, I want to change things up a little, map out her body, and become intimately aware of every square inch of her.

I chuckle at her exuberance as I lean in and nip her bottom lip, which is just one of many things about her that entice me almost to the point of madness. "You are the star of my everyday fantasy, Electra. I can't think of anything but you and this since you came into my life."

"Fuck, Jabba. You've got a golden tongue," she compliments, reaching out for me.

"Never had that before meeting you," I proclaim.

"Don't change, Jabba. I like that there is special stuff meant for only us."

"Pretty set in my ways, Electra," I reply. "Now, enough talking, Nymph, and just feel."

It doesn't take me long to strip both of us down and seeing her sprawled out on my bed the way she is has my cock as hard as a steel pipe. Her whimpers and pleas for me to hurry have me grinning as I take both her hands in one of mine and raise them above her head.

"Just." Kiss. "Feel." Kiss. "Understand me?"

I watch as a shiver has her body undulating on the bed and can smell her arousal as it permeates the room. The heady essence has me almost salivating, especially when I remember it's all for me.

The unwanted one.

The gawky one.

The bullied one.

Shaking those thoughts from my head since they have no place in bed with me and my mate, I ask, "Now, what should I do next?"

Chapter Twelve

Electra

My eyes widen at his question. I don't know if it's rhetorical or if he's expecting an answer but right now, I'm so full of lust and carnal need, I can't think straight, much less verbally respond. I wasn't lying to him when I told him I had limited experience, but so far, there's nothing he's done to me that I haven't thoroughly enjoyed. If anything, he makes me feel adventurous, ready to try any and everything.

He leans in and takes one of my taut nipples between his lips, sucking it deep into the cavern of his mouth, the electrical pulse flaring throughout my body as I moan in unadulterated pleasure.

"Ah, my little water witch likes that, I see," he says. The vibration of his mouth moving against my heated flesh has me feeling as though I'm going to detonate, and he hasn't even touched me there yet. My pleasure button is begging for him to notice it. My entire body feels as if it's on fire, a flame that only he can put out.

Time seems almost suspended as he spends countless minutes moving back and forth between my breasts until both nipples are pouty and red, while my flesh itself feels beyond full. As unintelligible moans pass my lips, he continues his sensual assault, and I quickly realize that there are quite a few erogenous zones on my body. I mean, I truly had no idea that the back of my upper arm would have my pussy pulsing in wanton need.

"Jabba," I moan through clenched teeth. I'm trying to keep from screaming since we

haven't gotten to the main event, but I feel as though the minute he touches me between my legs, I'm going to burst into a million tiny little fragmented pieces.

"Patience, baby," he replies, sounding proud of himself, now licking and nipping across my abdomen as he slips lower on the bed until his body is cradled between my splayed thighs. I glance down my quivering body in time to see him breathe in deeply, an almost feral expression on his face.

Strangely, there's no embarrassment, especially since I felt how hard he was as he was moving down my body. I know his reaction is a direct result of how he's responding to me. My arousal, my responses, my need.

I know he'll take care of me, even as new as our bond is I can feel his intent when it comes to providing for me. It's almost an instinctual knowledge and I briefly wonder if it's like this with all mated couples, then push that thought aside to do as he told me to earlier.

Just feel.

As his mouth moves closer to the apex of my thighs, I spread my legs even wider, marveling at the fact that I'm able to do even that simple task since they're shaking so much with unbridled passion it's not even funny. My eyes cross when he blows out a heated breath toward my mid-section, lighting my libido further until I feel as if I'm going to blow my top. The sensation has my head thrashing on the pillow.

"Jabba," I whimper. "Please."

"I've got you, Electra," he says, leaning in and swiping his tongue through my saturated folds. I know they are because I can feel how slick it is between my thighs as it drips down toward the mattress. Instead of being grossed out by my overly abundant excitement, he appears to revel in my body's response as he thoroughly

licks me then quickly fills me with two of his fingers until I feel stuffed.

Not as full as when he's inside me, of course, but still, the sweet invasion has me writhing on the bed as he coordinates the movements of his tongue and fingers in such a way my back is now arched as I reach for a release that's just out of touch. When he hits something combustible inside that has me crossing my eyes yet again, I explode, screaming out his name as pleasure ignites through every nerve ending residing within me as it courses through me over and over again.

As I slowly come down from the orgasmic stratosphere, he raises his head, winks at me, then moves so the head of his cock is notched at my entrance, before he thrusts home, causing another scream of pleasure to cross my lips and echo throughout the room. His hips begin pistoning in and out of me, the snap of his thrusts causing me to climb that mountain once again.

My hands reach out and grip his shoulders, my nails lightly scoring his skin as my pleasure mounts. When I bite my lip to prevent myself from screaming, he leans in and kisses me then says, "Don't deny me the privilege of your screams, Nymph. I want everyone to know who you belong to, just as I want them to know I'm yours."

"Your wish is my command," I whisper before wave after wave of bliss hits my body and I scream out his name, just as I feel him slam into me one more time then still as his own release flows into my tight, wet sheath.

His forehead hits mine, both of us sweaty and out of breath, and he chuckles. "Fuck, I feel like I just went a few rounds in the cage with Cyrus."

I look at him straight in his face, one I'm already growing so fond of and one that has become so dear to me, and reply, "Are you comparing me to one of your brothers, Jabba?"

A startled laugh bursts free, causing me to join in while he shakes his head. “No fucking way I’d ever be in this position with one of my brothers, Electra. Not that there’s anything wrong with those who love in that way, but I’m hooked on pussy.” At my acidic glare, he adds, “On your pussy, mate. Only yours.” I nod my head because that explanation was better than his initial response. It appeases that jealous streak inside of me that I’ve never had to deal with before. But as long as he’s aware I have one, it may keep him walking on a straight path.

“I think we’re gonna need a shower before we sleep.”

Now that our heart rates are slowing down back to a normal beat, the sweat is cooling on our bodies, and I feel icky.

One long, thoroughly delightful shower later, I find myself tucked securely into his side. As we drift off to sleep, I send up a prayer of thanks to the goddess for all she’s given me.

Namely, a mate by the name of Jabba. While it’s far too soon for professions of love, I can feel the change inside and know it won’t be long before he owns me, body, heart, and soul.

I’m walking through the misty woods, dazed and disoriented, my heart desperately crying out for my mate. “Jabba? Where are you? Why can’t I find you anywhere?” Fear grips me, strangling me as I stumble along the forest’s broken path, because nothing looks familiar to me. None of the landmarks are the same as I recall, and there’s an almost ominous sensation that has me looking around, afraid of what I might see... frightened of what might be lurking in the shadows.

“Where is everyone? What’s happened?” I cry out, rubbing my temples in hopes that it’ll send out a forewarning beacon to my mate. “Why can’t I feel you, Jabba?” I ask, my hand pounding my chest above my heart. “You said you’d protect me and always

be there, but you lied. You lied!”

“Electra! Electra, baby, wake up!”

Jabba’s voice breaks into the nightmare I was having, the details already fading into oblivion as I open my eyes and look at his face, his brows furrowed with fear and worry. “I’m awake, Jabba,” I say, my voice scratchy for some reason.

“You just took at least a dozen years off my life, sweetheart,” he declares, leaning in to place a soft, doting kiss on my lips. “You were thrashing on the bed, yelling for me, for anyone. What was it about?”

“I... I don’t remember,” I tell him as the last wisp of the nightmare disappears. “All I know is I couldn’t find you, but I don’t know why I was looking for you, for anyone to begin with.”

“Something else must be coming,” he murmurs, his words hitting me as if they’re prophesized as he gathers me into his strong arms and holds me close. “Hopefully, we’ll be able to figure out what it is.” The words ‘before something tragic happens’ kept out of his wistfulness, although I can feel it through our bond.

Yeah, I hope so too because while the details are gone? The abject fear isn’t and that’s far more terrifying to me than anything else. I can fight against things I know about, but those nameless, faceless entities? Not so much. Sighing, I allow him to soothe me back to sleep, praying I don’t fall back into the apparent hell I was in a short time ago.

I wake up alone the next morning but find a short note from Jabba letting me know he’s meeting with the brothers. Gathering some clean clothes, I head into the bathroom and take a somewhat boring but thorough shower.

It's only boring because you're doing it by yourself , I think. Because if Jabba were here, it would be anything but a normal shower.

Snickering, I take the time to deep condition my hair while shaving my legs. There are some things I'll probably never do around him and this is one of them, as is trimming up my privates.

“What about when you're so round with our pup that you can't safely see what you're doing?”

I screech and almost slice a huge line down my leg when Jabba starts talking to me through our bond. I guess my last thought was loud enough that he heard me as if I were speaking directly to him. Shaking my head, I quickly finish my task, then rinse out my hair before I step out of the shower. I need to check with Harmony to see how I can shield some of my more private thoughts from my mate, because there might be times I don't want him to know what's going on until I've made sense of it.

Once I'm dressed and have pulled my hair into a ponytail, I decide to change the sheets since my nightmare left me sweaty, then gather the hamper to go do some laundry. If we're going to be living here, I need to find my own place amongst the members, and taking care of my mate and our den, as he calls it, is one of those ways I can do that very thing. With the clothes quickly sorted and washing, I head into the kitchen for some much-needed caffeine and something to eat.

I also want to speak with Harmony and find out if there are other ways I can contribute around the clubhouse. I've noticed they all have their own set chores, and I wouldn't mind pitching in on kitchen duty or watching the girls. Mostly Jazzy even though Sage is here more often than not.

“Are you okay?” Harmony asks as I walk into the kitchen, my feet dragging as I force one foot in front of the other. “You look tired.”

“It’s the weirdest thing. I had a nightmare last night, but I don’t remember any of the details. Jabba says I was yelling out for him or anyone else as though I was lost or something. He seems to think there’s something else coming our way,” I reply.

“Cyrus said I woke up the same way,” she murmurs, grabbing her phone. I watch her fingers fly over the keyboard and figure she’s texting Karsyn, so I grab a bottle of diet soda then fill a cup with ice. The drink may already be cold, but that first icy sip has me sighing in pleasure.

“What did she say, or has she answered yet?” I question as I sit down across from her at the table.

I watch her face pale while her eyes widen before she stares at me and says, “It happened to her too. What the fu-freaking hell-o is going on?” I wish I had the answers for her, but I’m just as discombobulated as she is. Then I giggle when I realize that she switched up her wording even though Jazzy isn’t in the room to hear her cursing.

I suspect she changed the words because of Jazzy, but to me, that’s a bit of a lost cause since her own mate sprinkles F bombs around like they’re confetti. Wisely, I don’t say a word, because sometimes, living in denial isn’t unpleasant at all.

She does that thing where her eyes haze over that lets me know she’s communicating with Cyrus through their bonded link, and I sit back to wait for what he tells her because I’m positive the men will be approaching at any time now.

Less than a minute passes before Cyrus and Jabba both come skidding into the kitchen, with Bandit and several of the other brothers directly behind them. “We’ve got to figure this shit out!” Cyrus booms out. “None of us are safe right now, but not knowing exactly where the threat’s coming from makes it impossible to prepare. How can we keep our family safe if we don’t know what the hell it is we’re up against?”

A thought crosses my mind and I ask, “Could these nightmares be messages, omens or something foretelling from the goddess of impending scenarios? Like, if we don’t do something specific, it’ll happen?”

“But what are we supposed to be doing, Nymph?” Jabba questions, crouching next to me so he can wrap his arm around my shoulder. The problem is that I don’t know... I feel as if I’m living in an hourglass, a kernel of sand dropping through the funnel one granule at a time.

“Should we consider a lockdown?” Bandit asks Cyrus. “The thing is, we’re technically two different clubs, but with all three of the mated pairs’ women having these nightmares or visions, whatever the fuck they were, should we be separate or together?”

“Fuck my life,” Cyrus snarls, palpable anger emanating from him that’s so strong, I see each of the brothers fighting against the urge to submit to his Alpha power. “Part of me says we should stay separate, but I’m going to reach out to Corbin to figure it out. Maybe there’s something Big Daddy knows that will help.”

“Then let’s go get your brother on the phone,” Bandit says. “Because the sooner we can figure that out, the faster we’ll know where we stand as far as lockdown goes for the clubs.”

“I almost liked it better when we weren’t speaking,” Cyrus retorts as they walk out of the kitchen. Jabba stands, kisses me quickly then follows behind.

“Alrighty then, if there’s a possible lockdown, we’re going to need supplies. Let’s do an inventory and make a list so we can send the prospects out to get whatever we have to have,” Harmony declares.

Chapter Thirteen

Jabba

The irony isn't lost on me that we've had more meetings lately than ever before. Especially since Electra and I completed our mate bond. It seems as though whatever's coming for us, for both clubs, has all three women receiving messages from a higher power or some shit. The only problem is, we have no clue how to decipher any of the messages being shown to them. It's beyond frustrating at this point.

We sit around our table, which isn't as well-worn as the Spiked Raiders, of course and watch as Cyrus dials Corbin's number.

"Fuck, Cyrus, seems we're talking almost every day," Corbin growls out through the line, sounding none too happy about the myriad of calls and get-togethers passing through the clubs.

"Yeah, fucker, I said the same fucking thing. Tell me again why we're getting along?" Cyrus retorts.

"Because our mates and daughters like each other and there's no fucking way I'll disappoint Sage and keep her away from Jazzy," Corbin says. "So, why are you calling? Shit hit the fan last night."

"Same here. Both Harmony and Jabba's mate, Electra, woke up from suffocating nightmares that they can't remember," Cyrus advises his brother. "Something's

coming, and it's big."

"Yeah, no shit, Sherlock. The question is what?" Corbin snorts.

Bandit interjects and says, "We're considering going on a soft lockdown, Corbin, so at least the women and Jazzy are kept safe."

"We're tossing that idea around here as well," Corbin replies.

"What does Big Daddy have to say?" I ask. "Has anything like this happened in the past? Before y'all can remember maybe?"

Big Daddy's voice booms through the line as he says, "Not a fucking thing. We've had issues over the years, of course, but ever since Karsyn and Harmony came into the family, we've dealt with Death and then the Red Caps. Now that Jabba's mated to Electra, it seems to have triggered something that has yet to be revealed."

"Fuck," Cyrus hisses out, his teeth clenched. "What could we have done that'd put a target on our backs?"

"We've found our mates," I insert. "It's the only thing that's changed."

"And it can't be coincidence that they've in a way reunited the Raiders and the Howlers," Big Daddy rumbles.

"I don't believe in coincidences," Cyrus grumbles, slamming his fists against the table. "Especially since attacks only started when Corbin and I mated Karsyn and Harmony."

"So, who are the real targets then? You guys or the girls?" Bandit poses the question, causing the room to go silent.

“There has to be more to the lore than what we’ve found,” Prowler states, then reiterates, “There has to be more to it.”

“But we have no leads to follow to figure out what that could be,” I add.

“Are we missing a key piece to the puzzle? A person or persons, maybe?” Bandit asks. “Because from where I’m standing, there’s a big blank in the warning.”

“What can we do? Sit back and wait for more dreams or try and find more mates?” Prowler inquires.

“I don’t like the way Electra screams out when she’s stuck in a nightmare,” I snarl. “Not one bit.”

I don’t care if it makes me sound like a pussy either; seeing her writhing in terror last night, the sheets tangled around her sweaty body nearly gave me a fucking heart attack.

“Yeah, me either,” Cyrus says. “Rather her be screaming my name in pleasure instead.”

“TMI, brother dear,” Corbin drawls, causing all of us to burst into laughter.

Yet, just that little bit of levity seems to settle us, and I presume the group that’s at Corbin’s clubhouse as well. Maybe now we can put our thinking caps on and figure out what the fuck’s going on before something we can’t come back from happens to one of us and we end up hurt or worse.

Dead. I mean, it takes a lot to kill a shifter, contrary to what fiction tries to say when it comes to taking us out. Literally, there are only two ways; remove our head from our body or our heart from our chest. Since we have extraordinary speed, agility, and

strength, it's next to impossible for a mere human to get close enough to even try.

"What the fuck ever, brother dear, " Cyrus sneers, his constricted eyes aimed toward the phone's receiver. "We're going on a soft lockdown until we manage to dig something consequential up. And while I don't want my mate enduring another nightmare like she had last night, if she has one, I'll see about asking her questions that may help jog her memory. Maybe she'll answer, maybe she won't, but it's better than feeling totally useless."

"I'll do the same," I advise. "I do know she yelled that I had lied to her, which I've never done."

For one, it's not how I'm built personality-wise. The other thing is, shifters can scent a lie and while my little water nymph isn't a shifter, I'm almost positive that witches have that same uncanny instinct. It's something to ask her later.

"Big Daddy, I'll call the school and let them know that there's a family emergency and that Jazzy won't be there for the foreseeable future. Been thinking about homeschooling her with all this shit going down around here anyhow," Cyrus states.

I start laughing as I imagine Cyrus teaching his daughter about the three R's, at least the ones he knows. Rest. Recess, and Recreation. How he thinks he can do that without liberally sprinkling 'fuck' throughout the lesson plans is beyond me, but whatever he wants to tell himself. Ain't no skin off my nose, it's going to be Harmony he has to answer to for his expletives. My only request is that I get to be in the room with a tub of popcorn when she chastises him for his teaching style.

"What the fuck has you laughing like a mangy hyena, Jabba?" Cyrus asks.

"Just thinking about the subjects you plan to teach Jazzy is all," I manage to reply while snickering. "Not to mention, I don't think your mate will be thrilled with the

language I've no doubt you'll be using as you try to teach her about common core math and proper grammar."

"What the fuck is common core math?" Cyrus questions. "Whatever happened to simple addition and subtraction? She's not old enough to have to learn anything fancier."

"Don't forget about grammar," Prowler helpfully adds. "You manage to use the word fuck as nearly every possible part of speech, pres."

"Hell, he uses the 'F' bomb as a replacement for every action and reaction." Bandit snickers as Cyrus flips him off.

"Fine. Harmony will teach her," Cyrus retorts. "Now, if there's nothing else, we need to prepare for this latest shitshow."

He hangs up the phone and glares at all of us since we're still laughing, no doubt thinking about poor Jazzy trying to figure out what her father means during her lessons.

"Anything else? Let's get the prospects busy, brothers," he finally says once we quiet down.

As we file out of our meeting room, I open up my senses and search out my mate. I need to touch her to assure myself she's okay. Not surprisingly, I find her and Harmony in the kitchen, along with Jazzy who's chatting away while she writes stuff down.

"What are you three doing?" I ask, leaning in to give Electra a kiss.

"Making a list of stuff we need so the prospects can go get it," Harmony replies.

We're in the common room and I have Electra right where I want her, on my lap, when Queenie approaches. She's sashaying her hips, trying to look as seductive as possible.

I can't help the growl that slips through my lips at her audacity, but Electra pats my arm and says through our bond, "Let's hear what she has to say, Jabba."

"Fine, but if I don't like what passes through her lips, I'm going to kick her ass to the curb." Queenie has no right to me whatsoever. She may think she's the queen bee around here, but I have no issues proving to her how wrong she is.

"You'd do that when there's a looming threat?" Electra asks.

"Possibly. It depends on what she says." My job is to protect the inner sanctity of the club and she falls under my authority, the decision on who's worn out their welcome and who hasn't is primarily left up to me. It doesn't even have to be taken to the table for consideration by the rest of the patched brothers.

"Electra, I want to apologize to you," Queenie says, nervously twisting her hands as she shoots glances at me. My head tilts to the side as my wolf listens for the sincerity of her words. "Nothing happened between me and Jabba and hasn't in a very long time. He's... well, he's not like that and maybe that's why I was so jealous. I don't really know, but I don't have an excuse for my behavior."

"I know he's not like that," Electra advises. "And I appreciate your apology, Queenie. But for the record, don't forget I have my own powers and I'm not afraid to use them against anyone I deem to be a threat to myself or my mate."

I watch as Queenie's face blanches at my mate's words and have to bite my lip so as not to smirk. While I'll always protect her, she's just shown that she's more than capable of handling anything on her own. The good news is, I didn't detect any

deception in what Queenie said so as long as she doesn't decide to stir up any shit with anyone else, she can stay. We have bigger fish to fry, even though we don't know exactly what they are at this time.

"But I want to make something clear to you, Queenie," Electra states, her tone serious and unforgiving. "I'm not temporary. I am Jabba's mate, so I'm here to stay. I'm not a passing fancy for him, I'm a permanent fixture."

Her words have my wolf howling with joy inside of my head. I'm feeling emotions I've never encountered before. In thanks, I pull my woman tighter to me and snuggle into her. She gently squeezes my arm since my feelings are pouring through our mating link; I don't have to say anything out loud for her to understand the appreciation I have for the loyalty and declaration she's shown.

And I definitely plan to show her when we're behind closed doors, since it's almost impossible for me to keep my hands to myself whenever she's around.

Chapter Fourteen

Electra

Sometimes, the endless, overzealous activity and cohabitating dynamics in this clubhouse are too much for me to bear. Maybe it's because I've mostly been alone without a lot of interaction with others before being accepted into this ragtag family, but since Cyrus decided we were on a lockdown of sorts, most of the men spend their days milling around. Everywhere I turn I'm bumping into one of them since they're bored and looking for something to occupy their time. I'm still not quite used to the random, sporadic fights that break out, but Harmony lowered the boom a few days ago and said they needed to keep it confined to the cage they use for their sparring matches.

Right now, I'm sitting with Jazzy as she works through some worksheets her teacher kindly sent back with Big Daddy so she wouldn't get behind her class, who went to the school to pick up the packets for both girls. Harmony is researching her grimoire once again, hoping to find something else significant we can use to unravel this current mystery. The prospects are fixing the holes in the wall, which is what precipitated Harmony's halt decree, while one of the patched members puts new furniture together that was ordered to replace the ones they destroyed during one of their 'whose dick is bigger' fights.

"Electra, what does this mean?" Jazzy asks, pointing to a question on her sheet that she's been staring at for the last several minutes. The faces she's made at the mathematical equation are priceless. If she could make the paper burst into flames it'd already be a pile of ash. "I don't understand."

Pulling the paper to me, I quickly read the instructions then glance at the problem Jazzy's stuck on. "I have no idea, I haven't seen a problem laid out like that before, but I'll look and see if we can't figure out how to solve it," I reply, pulling my laptop close.

Within minutes, I have a video tutorial pulled up from a link I found online that shows step by step instructions on solving common core math problems. As I watch it and take notes in order to explain it to Jazzy in a way she'd understand, she chatters on about her parents, Big Daddy, Sage, and of course, her Uncle Jabba.

"I hope he can do my hair," she murmurs, pulling me from my 'online' learning.

"When, sweetie? Maybe me or your mom can do it for you if he's busy," I reply.

"I wanted to have it done like the characters in the Grinch movie," she says. "Do they have that on the computer?"

Shrugging, I open up the search bar and type it in, then turn the laptop screen toward her. "Looks like they do, Jazzy."

"Yay! Now, what about my math?" This time, she's a little more subdued and I have to hide my giggle that wants to slip out. She doesn't really like math all that much, not that many kids her age do, as well as a few adults, but she excels in reading and creative writing.

"Let's see if this makes sense," I tell her, using a scrap piece of paper, I follow the directions I jotted down, following each step accordingly.

"Gah, that was rough," I say to Jabba as we walk around the property after dinner. This has become one of my favorite ways to unwind after a laborious day of scouring text and lores. "Why are they changing how basic math problems are solved? I mean,

I get that there are often many ways to arrive at the answer, but that common core shit is just that, shit.”

He bursts out laughing then replies, “I was thinking that when Cyrus said she was going to be homeschooled for the foreseeable future. His patience level on a good day is negligible, and having helped her a few times with her math, I knew that common core would toss him into the deep end.”

“So, it’s probably a good thing she’s being homeschooled then,” I muse.

He pulls me closer and leans down to kiss me. “Yeah, Nymph, it’s a very good thing. The club’s doing well, but I suspect he’d wipe out our reserves after burning the school down in a rage.”

My eyes widen at the thought. “Would he really do that?” I whisper. After the strenuous activity of helping Jazzy with that bullshit they call math, I wouldn’t mind burning a few textbooks myself in rebellion. They’re making these kids work harder instead of smarter.

“No clue, to be honest, but like I said, he’s not always the most patient of men. When you toss in that it’s his daughter involved? It drops even further.”

“Goodness.” I know Cyrus is a hothead and sometimes reacts based on his emotions, but that’s a little extreme, even for him.

I don’t really know what else to say, to be honest. I don’t want to insinuate something about his president that I don’t mean. Words can be taken out of context and cause division in families if not comprehended in ways they’re meant. And considering the fact that this unit is around each other twenty-four hours a day for the foreseeable future, we have to be cautious about the way we approach things.

“Has Harmony found anything else?” he asks, breaking the companionable silence.

“No, unfortunately. But she, Karsyn and I are all hopeful that something else will be revealed so we know what we’re up against.” But if our conclusions are right, and things won’t reveal themselves until the magic of our grimoires feels it’s essential and necessary to the timeframe and situation we’re facing, we could all be in more trouble than we thought we’d be.

“I just hope it’s not too late,” he replies. In all honesty, it’s one of my biggest fears. Our ancestors left it up to mystical books to decide when things should be revealed. How is it supposed to know if the future once seen has changed course or not? If the once crystal-clear water has become murky, we’ll all be wading through shit thick mud as we navigate to the other side of the ravine.

Feeling choked up, I answer in a low, monotone voice, “Me too, Jabba. Me too.”

Because for the first time in my life, I’m a part of something extraordinary. I’m part of a we, a team; a couple, not a loner, and I’m loath to give that up for anyone. I still think it’s wild that the three of us are part of a prophecy that was foretold long ago.

I’m so lost in my musings that I don’t realize that we’ve already made a circuit around the perimeter and am astounded when the clubhouse comes into my sights.

“You ready to head to our room?” he questions.

Glancing at him, I see the heat in his eyes and nod, my own desire flaring to match his. He quickly tosses me over his shoulder, causing me to giggle, as he jogs to the clubhouse then over to the stairs toward the rooms. I can feel my face flushing, but I don’t know if it’s because I’m upside down and being jostled or because his brothers are calling out suggestions and a few cat calls and wolf whistles permeate the air as we pass on by.

Once we're in what's now our room, he makes quick work of stripping both of us down before he gently tosses me onto the bed, where I bounce several times while giggling the whole time. When he lands next to me, he pulls me into his arms and kisses me thoroughly and all thoughts of what may be headed our way, common core math, and the teasing we just went through fly out of my head, and I give myself over to the feelings coursing through my body.

Glancing around, I get a distinct feeling as though I should know where I am, but I don't recognize the barren, damp walls. They're similar in structure to the drabby cave that the Red Caps held me captive in, but not fully. There are distinct familiarities that have the hair rising on my skin and vomit roiling in my stomach. Still, even with the knowledge that this isn't the same cavern, my heart is beating erratically as fear clogs my throat and stress sweat pours from my body. I'm nearing a full-blown breakdown which has me damn near hyperventilating as I work hard to drag each forced breath into my lungs.

"Jabba? Where are you?" I call out, unable to keep my voice from trembling as I search for the one person in this world that gives me a sense of safety and security. "Why is this happening?" I ask, even though there's no one around to answer me. "I don't understand." That seems to be the motto of my life these days. That phrase seems to be spoken a lot by me here recently and I'm not sure how that makes me feel.

An ominous voice says, "If one falls, they all do."

"Excuse me? Could you repeat that?" What does that mean? And why can't I feel Jabba through our bond? It's like he's being blocked, his essence hidden from me by somebody pretty damn powerful... or some sort of ethereal phenomenon that's close to that on the power scale. I don't understand it at all. Screaming, I continue to look around at where I'm being held, searching for any way out of this present nightmare.

“Electra!” Jabba’s voice penetrates my nightmare and I latch onto his voice in an effort to come back to myself. When I finally open my eyes, I find I have tears falling down my face and he has wrapped his arms around me while running his hands up and down my back in a soothing manner. I need to find out who it is that keeps locking me into that dream state and why they’ve chosen to trap me there. I know that the message this entity has to say is paramount to what we’re up against but considering it’s all said in random parts and broken riddles, isn’t helping us figure out what path we need to take or what threats we’re facing.

“I had another nightmare,” I murmur. “This one was different though, because even though I don’t remember all of it, this time, there was a voice that said, ‘If one falls, they all do’ only I don’t know what that means, Jabba.” And the fact that I’ve been chosen as their voice and can’t remember their words verbatim after opening my eyes, doesn’t bode well for us.

“Me either, Nymph. Let’s take a shower and put some clean sheets on the bed then try and get some more sleep. Tomorrow’s soon enough to see if Harmony and Karsyn had dreams again as well.” I hope that if they were dragged into that gloomy lair like me, and hear the same supernatural being as I did, that they got more direction than I did from the divine trickster.

“You’re right,” I reply, not wanting to let on that this merits a wakeup call in my opinion. Especially since it’s still lingering in my mind and I’m afraid that if we don’t start figuring this out right away, somebody will pay the price for our delayed reaction.

However, I have been known to jump the gun and let my anxiety overrule my common sense. The more I think about it, the more I recognize the fact that there aren’t enough clues to do anything about this newest puzzle tonight. Now that I’ve acknowledged that fact, I can let it rest until the morning. “Let’s change the sheets first so after our shower we can just collapse back into bed.”

“A nymph after my own heart,” he teases.

“Absolutely.”

Chapter Fifteen

Jabba

It's been a few weeks since the first nightmare hit, but all three women are now having them somewhat regularly. Each morning, they share with us and each other what they were either shown or told. Sometimes, they remember what they dreamt in vivid detail, while others, they don't recall more than being drawn into this 'dream state' as they refer to it as being. Still, any time there's a message of sorts, I've been jotting it down so we can compare and look for a commonality. Anything that'll help us get one step further than where we're at currently.

Cyrus has been quite surly, as is to be expected, especially since he announced that he and Harmony are expecting. I know if Electra was carrying my pup, I'd be an utter and complete asshole considering the dangers surrounding us. As it is, Harmony is constantly having to tell him she's more than capable of protecting herself, because he'd be content to wrap her in bubble wrap until she delivers.

Yeah, I don't see that happening at all.

I've seen more eye rolls and have heard more growls since the announcement was made. Cyrus isn't the only one of the brothers feeling protective of her. None of us let her lift anything heavier than a milk jug and even that's questionable. We've been kicked out of the kitchen on more than one occasion when she's lifted a pot of water to strain in the sink. Corbin made the mistake of suggesting to Cyrus that he find the book about expecting mothers and what they should avoid to keep both them and the pup growing in her belly safe.

The things it says she can't do are astronomical. And the fact that the doctor who wrote the book recommended that she avoid certain foods, has us all checking over the grocery lists she makes and comparing it to the reference page. When we mark through things it says to avoid, she uses words that make me want to cup the pups' ears. If Jazzy shouldn't be hearing those swear words, neither should the one in her belly.

Unlike the other men in the club, I'm not willing to take any chances by voicing my concerns out loud. She's taken dessert and some of our favorite foods off the menu, and so far, I'm the only one who hasn't gotten on her bad side, and I intend to keep it that way. I whisper things in Cyrus's ear and let him do my dirty work for me. I may not be the smartest wolf on the block, but I'm not the dumbest either.

I'm sitting back with Electra on my lap as Cyrus dodges from the latest thing she's thrown in the kitchen. Since all I hear is metal clattering on the floor and there's no growl, I sense she missed him once again. Even that pisses her off to the extreme. I'm not sure any of us will remain unscathed by the time she delivers their child.

"Get out! Getoutgetoutgetout!" Harmony yells. "I can't take this anymore, Cyrus. If I want to make myself a tuna fish sandwich, I'm gonna. Electra!"

"Yeah," my woman answers from the perch on my lap.

"Find that damn book! We're gonna burn it in the pits," Harmony directs.

"You're not burning that book!" Cyrus roars. "And you're not eating tuna fish, dammit! The book says it could contain mercury and it's bad for you... both of you."

"A limited amount is perfectly fine, Cyrus. I sent a message to my doctor through the portal to ask her some of these asinine questions that have y'all driving me positively insane! If you keep this up, I'm calling my mother."

I snicker when I hear Cyrus growl. Harmony's mom is actually pretty awesome and has settled in Redwich to be closer to Harmony and of course, Jazzy, but no man wants his mother-in-law all up in his face.

"Harmony?" Electra calls out.

"Hmm?" Her tone is deceptively sweet, and I watch in absolute horror as my mate throws all of us under the bus.

"You realize that Cyrus got every single one of the brothers a copy of that book, right? He wanted to make sure they knew what to look out for," Electra says, a smirk on her face.

"Nymph, you're gonna pay for that," I growl through our bond.

"Looking forward to it," she teases.

"Electra, we're on a mission to find all the copies," Harmony states, stalking through to the common room from the kitchen. "Then, we'll start a roaring bonfire."

"Mama, can we have s'mores?" Jazzy asks, forcing me to choke back laughter.

"Absofreakinglutely," Harmony decrees glaring at Cyrus.

The fucker doesn't even look remotely chastised. Doesn't he realize that there's another saying about happy mate, happy fate?

Deciding to humor Harmony and replace her scowl with a smile, I pull out my phone and say out loud, "Adding marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers to the master grocery list now, Harmony."

“And this is why you’re one of my favorites,” Harmony sweetly replies, causing Electra to jab her elbow into my stomach. Looking at her, I shoot her an innocent smile since I did steal her thunder. She was trying to incite a riot amongst the members and Harmony with that mass book handout she ensured her club sister knew about. She’s scandalous sometimes and I love that about her. We’re two peas in a pod, both of us enjoying the fact that we can get under our leader’s skin and cause chaotic reactions from the members.

Cyrus glares at me and flips me off behind Jazzy’s back, which has me throwing my head back in gut-busting laughter. He’s got a somewhat unhinged look on his face right now and I don’t see him surviving the pregnancy at the rate he’s going, because Harmony will eventually have enough and smother him in his sleep with her pillow.

“Let’s have a cookout!” Prowler says. “Seems to me we’ve got a lot to celebrate even with all the shit swirling around us.”

Harmony euphorically claps her hands and states, “Electra, come and help me plan what we’re going to have on our menu.”

“A pig, of course,” Cyrus states. At her look, he adds, “Burgers, steaks, chicken, too. Fuck, woman, whatever you want, we’ll have.”

I see resignation wash over his face when he realizes that Harmony’s going to march to the beat of her own drum where this baby is concerned. Deciding to allay his fears somewhat, I call out, “Cyrus, she’s not gonna do anything to harm y’all’s pup. Besides, she has an entire band of brothers at her disposal. We’ll do all the heavy lifting.” Knowing my last sentence is going to irritate Harmony, I send her a conspiratorial wink. She gets the meaning behind my silent message and beams back at me, clapping her hands.

Harmony’s eyes widen as she continues the game I started and she whirls to face

Cyrus, her hands now pressed against his chest. “Cyrus, I would never do anything that would hurt our baby! I’m following my doctor’s orders, honey, I promise. And I understand why all of you are like a bunch of nattering hens, I really do, but trust me enough to know that I won’t put myself or the baby in harm’s way.”

He leans in and kisses her while nodding. He still looks rather fierce, but I suspect that Harmony’s won this little battle. “I know you will, Harm. But that doesn’t alleviate my fears with all of the dangers that seem to be directed at you and the rest of the women. Hell, it feels like a black cloud is swirling around all of us as a whole. It has me on edge and it’s my job to see to the safety of every member,” he reminds her, leaning over and cupping her belly. “Every damn one of y’all, including the ones not born yet.” She nods, her face saddened before she steels her resolve and squares her shoulders, being the badass president’s mate that she is and comes to some sort of resolution. And considering she isn’t voicing whatever that is out loud, I trust that whatever that is, it’ll be in the best interest of her loved ones.

Electra leans in and kisses me before standing and walking toward Harmony who asks, “Cyrus? Remember that store in town that Karsyn and I have been ordering things from? Can I invite Sloane, the owner, to the cookout? Syn and I both want to actually meet her, and I don’t think she has a lot of friends.”

“Invite whoever you want, sweetheart,” he replies. “If it’ll keep you and Karsyn happy, why not?”

I chuckle because ever since he and his brother, Corbin, have found their mates, they’ve softened. Okay, maybe not a lot, but it’s noticeable enough, at least to me, and I’m glad not only for my president, but his brother. “Get me her information so we can check into her,” I demand.

While I won’t actually run the background check since that’s not my forte, as the club’s enforcer, it’s my job to make sure the club is protected at all times. I know the

likelihood of a woman attempting to infiltrate us and cause issues is slim, but it could happen, and since we're still figuring out what all the dream messages mean, and how to be prepared as a club against an unknown enemy, I take that role entrusted to me by my brothers seriously.

Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 7:25 am

Electra

For the last two hours, Jabba and I have been setting out tables and chairs, making sure there's enough firewood for the pits to get us through the night, and filling coolers with beer, water, and drinks for the kids. Even though I should be exhausted from all of the strenuous activity, I'm not. I'm feeling energized since there's several water sources nearby, restoring my reserves.

We're nearly done with the setup when I see an unfamiliar vehicle pull through the gates and park where the other cars are lined up, since the bikes take center stage in front of the clubhouse itself.

Looking at Jabba I murmur, "I wonder who that is?"

"Maybe it's that woman Harmony wanted to invite," he replies, unfolding the last stacked chair. The prospects have been helping as well, but they're doing some of the really heavy stuff, like carrying the bags of ice for the coolers, getting the wood for the bonfire set up, and they did haul the tables and chairs out from the shed.

The pig is currently in the humongous roaster the club uses, and all the other meats have been prepped and are ready to be thrown on the grill. I giggle a little bit because there are multiple grills lined up, and from what Jabba has said, and what I've personally witnessed, several of the brothers will be handling the tongs and spatulas.

They're all determined to earn bragging rights as the best griller or something to that effect. I swear to the goddess, they'll turn anything into a competition. Personally, I think it's their male egos wanting to preen, although I'm not sure who they're doing

that for seeing as the women who are here are already mated, and the club girls aren't allowed to attend because it's a family day.

"Clarify for me, Jabba. What exactly is it we're celebrating today? There have been several different things mentioned and I want to make sure I congratulate everyone." I mean, there's Harmony's pregnancy, of course, plus both Jazzy and Sage are doing well with homeschooling, so it could be anything at this point. Both girls are exceeding expectations, jumping to the head of their class in all subjects, and honestly, it's a lot of fun helping Harmony teach Jazzy.

"I don't know what everyone else is celebrating, but I'm celebrating you, Electra," Jabba replies.

"No, Jabba. We're celebrating us and you've given me one of the best adventures I've ever been given," I murmur, leaning up and pecking him on his chin since that's as far as my body will stretch.

"To us, Electra," he says, lowering his face and capturing my lips with his.

"To us, Jabba," I repeat once our lips unlock.

"Love you, my mate," he tells me.

Tears gather in my eyes, because this is the first time he's said the words instead of proving them with actions. "I love you too, my growly wolf."

Bandit

Never in the history of ever did I expect to find my fated mate. And I sure as fuck didn't think if I was so fortunate that she'd be a damn human. When I went to help Sloane with the stuff she was getting out of her car, the most enticing scent I've ever smelled curled into my psyche as my wolf whispered, "Mate".

The end... for now!