



# Oral Hex (Cauldrons and Kisses)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Who knew a kiss could change your whole life?

In Manhattan, Nash—a vibrant omega witch—thrives at night, performing magic tricks for the rich and famous and defying the covens strict rules. His carefree spirit makes him both a cause for concern and easily beloved.

Ara, a brooding Alpha vampire haunted by death and two decades of solitude. He's instantly drawn to Nash. Spellbound by his freedom to cast spells. A single encounter ignites a passion neither can resist.

When potent magic mixed with forbidden desires, their steamy nights and enchanting days reveal a bond deeper than any hex. Together, they must navigate ancient prophecies and the climate on mixed species dating.

Can their love withstand the forces determined to keep them apart? Or will it push them together?

**Total Pages (Source):** 16

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

There was something magical about midnight. Maybe it was the darkness, or the fact that I felt like anything was possible in the city never slept. Either way, I knew I'd found my people when I came out at night. There was a cool breeze in the air, washing over my intoxicated face. I'd sang so many songs on the karaoke, my voice was hoarse. I'd attempted to cast a spell, a simple giggling spell into a drink, and wound up turning their vodka into water. It was not my finest moment, but thankfully they were too drunk to notice.

Most nights I would find myself in a different penthouse of a different celebrity. The higher I was, the happier I felt. I did whatever I wanted in the few hours of the night when I felt like I was an immortal being, someone destined for something great.

But it was all play pretend.

I was an omega witch, a twin at that. Twins were said to be powerful in my community, and I got most of that power. My brother, who is ten minutes younger than me has power, but only on large celestial events, and we rarely spoke anymore. Rhone was a bit a hermit, and quite troubled. I suppose I was also troubled too, pretending I was someone I wasn't, someone worth these swanky penthouses.

The host tonight was Raynard Hoppin, a former A-list celebrity. In his late sixties now. Human, so less inclined to acknowledge my low social standing as an omega—or acknowledge it at all. Unless you were an Alpha or a fellow omega, you wouldn't really know about me. I fucking loved humans for that. And they were the only sexual experience I'd ever had. I didn't want to get caught in a mate bond.

“Sing!” Raynard's voice was heard over the speaker system. “La-la-di, la-di-da!”

On the terrace of the penthouse, I continued to embrace the air and breeze. It was delicate on my skin. It made me wish I had an affinity for air magic, to fly, or levitate, to create a breeze like this on me all the time was the dream.

There were several people on the terrace, all chatting, all drinking. I'd exhausted my spell casting for the night. And far too drunk to commit any magic out in the world. I was an aether witch, my magic was the connective tissues of the universe itself.

"Enjoying yourself?" a woman asked, approaching me from the side. "I saw you at the Dr. Egheart's party last week. He gave my face a full lift, and he did my nose. I bet you could never tell though. That man has magic fingers." She laughed and hiccoughed.

Humans knew about shifters, vampires, and witches, but they were told we kept to ourselves, and that we walked among them, we were harmless. It made some of the popular fiction from the era before we came out of the shadows a little less fictional now, like Dracula, and Frankenstein. So, I found it funny when someone approached me with talks of magic.

"You have a gorgeous face," I said, taking her hand. "And may I ask your name?" From a single touch alone, I saw her name, age, and the strings that pulled her life in all directions. A blessing and a curse of having my gifts and being drunk; my control was all over the place.

"You're not hitting on me, are you?" she giggled. "I could be your grandmother."

Flirting was a coping mechanism at this point. I didn't bat for the straight team. I could appreciate a gorgeous woman, at any age, their beauty through my eyes at least was always on show. Tendrils of magical threads reached out to her. I immediately pulled them back and stopped touching her. "Sorry," I said. "The wine. It makes me say things I know I shouldn't."

“Please,” she laughed. “Raynard hasn’t complimented me in years.”

“Oh, Mrs. Hoppin.”

She nodded and raised her nearly empty wine glass up. “The one and only. And if he thinks he’s ever going to trade me in for a younger model, I’m taking all of this.” She gestured. “This view alone is worth millions.”

She was right about that. I’d seen many places around the city from all different angles. This one was in the top five. I didn’t tell her that, because it was possibly the fifth spot on that list. “Mr. Hoppin loves you,” I said. I felt it from him. I’d also felt how he’d lost his passions, and how his wife was suffering some of those consequences. “Let me ask you a question. What other parties have you and I both attended?”

“Well, there’s parties nearly every night dear,” she said. “I couldn’t possibly know that. Although I will tell you, there is a party tomorrow night. I shouldn’t be telling you, it’s really invite only, the elite of the elite, darling. I supposed since it is a once in a lifetime thing, I wouldn’t want you to miss it. Our mysterious host never throws these things, but I’ve heard they’re lavish. Wine is overflowing, the food is divine, I mean, I’ve never tasted anything so delicious in my entire life.”

“Oh. Could I be so rude as to ask you who, when, and where?”

“Well, I’ve already given you the when, dear,” she said, a light chortle in the back of her throat as she brushed a hand through the tips of her hair. “The who, well, nobody knows. Over the years we’ve called him all sorts of names, it’s really a lot of fun trying to figure him out.”

It sounded fun. I’d never heard of someone like it, but overflowing wine was like most of these rich people, but this time there a mystery begging to be solved. I needed

to get the where so I could plan accordingly.

“And where?” I asked.

“I’ll write it on a slip of paper,” she said. “But you can’t tell anyone it was me who told you.” She winked at me, a sudden sparkle in her eye from the twinkle of the night.

“I promise,” I said, extending a pinky finger. She’d already turned by that point, and thankfully too, I didn’t know what type of magic my body was producing in my state of intoxication. I followed her back inside the large multistory penthouse apartment complex. It was loud with the screech of voices over the karaoke machine.

Most everyone here were famous in some aspect, they were either on reality TV or in movies, not big names, but a name nonetheless. I didn’t care too much about famous people, I only cared about the lavish parties where I could find myself at the attention of humans with my so-called party tricks.

“It’s only a couple blocks away, still in Manhattan, obviously,” she said and snorted back laughter. “We’d never travel too far for a party. Oh, and there is a passcode. I’ll write it down for you too, just in case of prying ears. And one more thing, the bubbles from the champagne earlier have really gotten to my head, it’s also a masked party.” But nobody was listening to her, everyone was focused on her husband’s screechy voice as he sang a cover of a song I’d never heard before.

On the slip of paper, she’d written the apartment building name and also the passcode, *nox amori*, I knew a little Latin from some of the older magic texts. *Nox* meaning night and *amori* something to do with love. I supposed it was one of those kinds of parties.

It was getting late and the party was winding down fast. I made my getaway through

a quick portal jump back to my bedroom at the compound. It exhausted me to use magic like that, and being drunk too, I was lucky to have not sent two halves of my body in differing directions. At the foot of my bed, I fell back and looked at the ceiling of old glow in the dark stars I'd had up there since childhood.

Witching families were close, we usually lived in large compounds with many rooms and sprawling floors. The richer your family were, the nicer the place you lived. My family weren't too rich, we lived in two brownstone houses, neither owned by my parents, but the two elders of the community.

A passing knock at my door roused me from sleep. "Breakfast is ready."

I'd only been sleeping for a couple hours. I needed more than that to feel fully rested. I forced myself out of bed and looked across at the wall. Rhone, my twin, he'd had posters up there for the longest time. Since there was a time when this room was shared. Now it was just me, but at least I got a double bed now.

I had a younger sister too, Melize, she was probably going to follow in the footsteps of Rhone and leave soon. And I would leave, but I felt like I owed it to my parents to stay and show the community that I was a team player.

There were five families. We were a coven. Each member family assigned and aligning with an element. Air, earth, fire, water, and aether. If both Melize and I left, my parents would be the only aether witches behind, and that could spell disaster for the coven.

I barely had enough time to take a shower before I was shouted to breakfast again.

There was a large dining table on the second floor. It ran across both of the brownstone buildings. In fresh clothes and smelling like a mixture of coconut and mango, I sat at the table across from Melize. We were the last to be seated it seemed.

She had large sunglasses over her eyes and her thick brown ringlets half covering her face too.

“Mom’s gonna tell you to take those off,” I said.

She sank a little further into the seat. “Well, I don’t want to.”

“Late night?” I asked.

“Fun night,” she said, smirking.

“You haven’t even showered,” I whispered across the table to her, noticing the smudged stain of red lipstick on her mouth. “Mom’s gonna be mad. Weren’t you supposed to be meeting her friend’s son today?”

As we spoke about our mother, she came out with a dish of breakfast potato hash. She placed it in the middle of the table, right between us. She leaned in to kiss Melize on the cheek and whispered to her, and then walked around to me. “I heard you stumbling around this morning,” she said. “Late, this morning. Please be quieter in future.”

At least I wasn’t being married off. There had been attempts at it, but in the end, I didn’t click with any of the people she put in front of me. I couldn’t be picky, I knew I would have to marry an Alpha witch, and there were all these strings attached to that. He must be from a line of aether practicing witches, and we had to marry up, marrying down was apparently, and ironically, beneath us.

There were eleven other children of witches at the compound, only half of them were old enough to marry, but they were like siblings. The idea of marrying within the compound triggered a flight response, and probably why Rhone left this place, but I was content with free accommodation and food in exchange for sticking around an

alternate aether witch for their weekly blessing circles.

Melize kicked me under the table. “What are you doing tonight?”

Picking at the eggs on my plate with a fork. I couldn’t tell her, and she knew what was about to come out of my mouth was going to be an absolute lie.

“Fine, don’t tell me,” she said. “But if it’s fun, and you don’t invite me, I’ll be annoyed. You always get to hang out with fun people.”

“People just like me,” I said.

“People like me too, Nash,” she said, tugging the sunglasses down the bridge of her nose to look me in the eye. “Don’t they?”

“I’m sure they do,” I joked with her. “But I don’t have any plans tonight. I’m studying the old ways of the aether.” Since there weren’t omega schools to teach magic, only Alpha academies and universities, I was stuck learning from old dusty texts. Although I was lying to her as my plans for the evening involved visiting a mysterious masked party.

“Boring,” she said, knuckle pushing her sunglasses up. “I heard about this dive bar in Brooklyn. Apparently, it’s a hot spot for shifters. I fucking love shifters,” she laughed, drawing eyes in her direction.

“Mel,” I laughed with her. “You’re gonna get yourself in trouble with the elders.”

The elders were the most powerful in the coven, they set the rules and the laws of the compound. We were bound by them, and bound by a loose term because we weren’t exactly locked in, but they could exile us if we broke them. Cyrus and Fayle were our elders. Cyrus the leader of water, and Fayle, the leader of earth. They were



also the owners of the buildings we lived in.

Once breakfast was done, our parents cornered us. Firstly to chastise Melize, a freshly minted twenty-one year old enjoying her ability to drink legally in the city, and me, at twenty-six. I was in no mood to be lectured about my actions. I wasn't bringing shame on the family, if anything, I was bringing love, light, and laughter—all the things they had in bold print signs across the walls.

"I'll be studying all day," I told them. "And then I might take an early night. I really want to mentally connect with Rhone. He's been ignoring me." Mentioning our brother was always a soft and occasional sore spot for them, so I got away with a lot.

"I'm gonna be studying too," Melize said.

"Nope, you're coming with me to the market," our father said. "There's a witch I want to purchase supplies from, and you need to start learning more hands on experience from the world."

My mom patted my back. "Let us know how Rhone us when you find out."

"I will," I said.

"Thanks, sweetheart. Well, I'll see you both for lunch."

"Actually, I'm probably also going to grab a coffee and a pastry at lunch. It's a nice day, the park is great for reading," I said.

Any moment I could get out of this place was a huge bonus. When I was younger, having all these people around meant I was never bored. There was always someone and something to entertain me with, even if that was just my twin.

Now, I couldn't get a moment of peace because of all the noise. And they were overbearing. If it wasn't my folks, it were the other parents, asking me to look after or tutor their kids for a little while. I didn't want to do any of that. I didn't even want kids, at least not yet. So, the idea of being forced to teach them while they weren't listening was a hellscape for me.

Meliza pulled a face at me as I'd gotten away with what I wanted to do, and she was forced to go to the supernatural market with our father. Although now, I had to pretend to be busy until I could slink off into the night. I could keep myself busy trying to find a mask for the party. I was excited for this once in a life event, a new party destination, and maybe new guests I could entertain with my so-called party tricks.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I didn't wish to announce myself to society in any way, shape, or form. I didn't want to find out how much the world had moved on in the last fifteen years. Each time I slumbered for this long I would see news of horrible world events, and medical documents of plagues that wiped out small villages.

If I'd been an omega vampire, I wouldn't have been forced to survive this long. But here I was, sitting at a breakfast table with all the blinds drawn as a bowl of heated blood. A woman with sleek red hair and a black gown approached me. "Uncle," she said. "They told me you were awake. I got the train in Vermont. That's where he took me. I'm not sure if you remember."

"Estefania," I said, as she came closer, she was a beauty. A reminder of my sister, Elya, who died, and one of the catalysts for me hauling up inside my penthouse. "How have you been darling?"

She sat at the table beside me. "Uncle. I've missed you. The world has been—wow. A lot has happened."

"And your father?"

"We live in a small plot of land," she said. "He was going to come with me, but I didn't think it was a good idea to leave the thrall without a leader."

"Well, I wouldn't want your father to make the trip all this way," I said.

"But you're having a party tonight," she said, screeching forward on her chair. "Unless the invite we got wasn't meant to come to us."

I reached out across to her. My palm out for her to touch me. “Sweet, niece. I’ve been in a slumber for twenty years. The guest list for my awakening was planned by the omegas who work for me. Although, I suppose some of the invites might be a little outdated because the list I gave them was full of celebrities, debutantes, and other famed people.”

“Well, I’m here to help you adjust to life again,” she said. “First thing you’re gonna have to learn is technology. A lot has changed since you went to sleep. Although, you still look like your paintings.”

I had slumbered in an effort to protect my looks. As a vampire, I aged at a much slower pace. It was different to humans who were afflicted with vampirism, that, in my opinion was a curse. They were forced into a forever hunger of blood and their bodies might not have aged, but internally, they were deteriorating. Most humans turned into vampires took their own life around the one-hundred-year mark. And I was just over six-hundred.

With a weighty spoon, I ate my warm blood from the bowl. My thumb and forefinger caressing the design and pattern in the stem of the spoon. These were over a hundred years old, they had belonged to my parents once upon a time. “How is life treating you?” I asked her as she stared deep into my eyes at every possible turn of my head.

“Incredible,” she said. “I’m really finding my feet. And there is another reason I came to see you, uncle.”

“Yes,” I said. “You may move in with me. The city has that affect on people.”

She squealed, immediately reaching for a block with an interactive screen that moved as she tapped her fingers at it. “I’m going to call my dad and let him know,” she said.

“What is that?”

“Right. Technology. This is a phone,” she said. “And a camera, and a music player. I’ll send a courier out to get you one. You’re gonna need it if you’re going to integrate yourself into the world again. Oh, and there’s this thing called social media now. This apartment would go wild on some of the apps. Can I make a video tour?”

I’d only known Estafania for a few years as a babe, but here she was, the spirit of her mother. “Of course,” I said. “And tonight is a masked party. You are my niece, but the rules are the rules.”

“Got it,” she said, screeching out of the chair and placing the odd device to her ear.

I sipped the blood from the spoon. It was burned, I didn’t cause a fuss. I preferred it from the source, but I needed to ease myself back into the world around me. The last time I took such a large slumber, there was an entire revolution that occurred. I feared the same had happened. I had yet to view the city outside.

Estefania seemed to have accounted on me accepting her into my home. I would never refuse her. She’d brought several cases of luggage, and she was quick to find herself a room. Strangely, the same room that had once been her mother’s. My heart still ached for the tragedy. I almost wondered if twenty years was enough, maybe I should’ve gone down for thirty. But I knew I’d wake with the same feeling on my chest. In my mind, she’d died only months ago, but in reality, it was years.

It was common for an Alpha vampire to present themselves to society once they woke. If it had been up to me, I wouldn’t have wanted a masked ball of sorts to occur the minute I was rocked awake. I wouldn’t have wanted one at all.

The omegas who worked for me all came from omega vampire families that had spent their lives in servitude to my family. They worked for me because it was a blessing. I came from a bloodline of vampire that could stretch back a thousand years. And I loved all the omegas that pledged their life to me.

“Uncle,” Estefania called out to me. I’d regained most of functionality from the nutrient rich blood in my bowl, but I continued to sit at the table in the dinner hall, a small stack of papers with choice cuttings torn from them as I reacquainted myself with the world. “I’m obsessed with this place.”

“You didn’t visit while I was sleeping?” I asked.

She shook her head, her large curly hair covering her face for a moment. “Dad wouldn’t let me. He was worried I’d wake you. I think he was just still mourning. And he said this is where it happened.” She touched the wood paneling. “This place is so clean.”

“You didn’t expect me to be living in filth did you?”

“No, well, I wasn’t sure,” she said, still rubbing her hands across the carvings in the wood panels. “But I didn’t think this place was going to be so well-maintained.”

“I do have a staff,” I said. “The ones who welcomed you into this place.”

“I know, I know, but they’re not really out. They sink into the background of this place,” she said. “I didn’t even notice one girl at the bedroom door until I was walking towards her and she said something. I nearly screamed.”

“That explains the sounds,” I chuckled. “Tell me more about that device.” I folded the paper clipping binder onto itself.

She bounded across the hall to me, sitting on the edge of the table. “There’s also the internet. I’m not sure if that was a thing before you went to sleep. Anyway, you can ask anything and you’ll get an answer.”

“Oh, really?” I liked the sound of that. Instead of combing through books or going

from person to person for information there was an archive of sorts. That seemed like real progress. “Tell me more.”

“Anyone you know, or knew, are probably online,” she said. “You’re not, but that’s because nobody has ever made an online profile for you.”

“Good. I don’t want people knowing me.”

“Uncle, you’ve got to get with the times,” she said, chuckling. “I have an idea! You should go take a bath, pamper yourself, get all dressed up, and then we’ll take photos. You’ll be online before this evening, and before the party, then all your famous friends can follow you. You’ll have thousands of followers, trust me.”

I tickled at the facial hair on my chin. “Followers, you say.”

“Online followers, not like, a commune or something.”

“I don’t follow people,” I told her. “I’ve never followed.”

“You don’t have to follow anyone. Except for me.”

My smile faded. “Darling, I don’t want to set a precedent for others.”

“But I’m family.”

It took her a little while to explain and show me some of her profiles. The last time I’d been profiled was for a crime I was being falsely accused of by some vampire counsel. That was the one and only time, I got a full written apology for it too.

Estefania was right about the bath. I needed to soak my skin. Being in a deep slumber for as long as I had been was not good on the skin. I had small sore spots and a

couple of hard patches of skin. My omegas had just what I needed for it, a nice, milk and rose petal bath. It took me back in time to somewhere simpler, when I wasn't in charge.

After an hour, a heavy pounding of knocks came to the door. "Uncle, I have a phone for you," Estefania called out. "I'll wait until you're finished to unbox it. You're gonna love the ASMR of an unboxing. Is it ok if I record it for my followers?"

"Of course," I said. "Give me a moment while I dry myself and get dressed." An woman was waiting in the wings of the bathroom with a large bath towel and robe for me to get into. I held onto her as I got out of the tub. "This thing has gotten deeper since the last time I was in it."

She smiled. "We've kept everything as it was, sir," she said. "My parents said you were very particular about keeping everything untouched."

"Your parents," I said, taking the bath towel and giving myself a pat down. "So, we haven't met?"

"I served your food earlier," she said. "I'm Dana, my parents are Ronan and Sara."

"And they're passed?"

"Oh no, sir," she said. "They're still here. I believe they went to the market for supplies. Tonight is going to be quite the event."

"Of course." I slipped a hand into one side of the comfy fluffy robe, and she helped me put my other arm into the other. "I'm going to require a lot of small, dark, and empty spaces where I can hide and escape from it all."

She chuckle. "I believe there are such places," she said. "And I'll be honored to show



them to you.”

I’d forgotten how doting my omegas were, these were the real followers that Estefania had been talking about. The ones who anticipated me, and knew what I would require before I actually needed it.

All throughout the two-story penthouse, there were heavy curtains batting out any daylight. Streams of it came in, gently dancing across my skin.

There was a nice, suit set out for me in the bedroom. It wasn’t the one I’d taken my slumber in, for that, I’d been inside of a coffin. It wasn’t a popular form of sleeping anymore, but it was the perfect thing for a stint of hibernation.

“The colors are from your chart,” Dana informed me. “They’re new in. We all put it to a vote, and decided that you should have new clothes to wake to.”

“How very kind of you all,” I said. “Once I’m dressed and Estefania has shown me her little gadget, I would like to speak to all the omegas. If you could bring them to the grand staircase, that would be very helpful.”

She nodded. “Of course, sir. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“That’s all. I appreciate you,” I said. “Actually, one last thing. All the curtains can be opened now. I’m ready for my new era to begin.”

I watched as she blushed and walked off with my damp bath towel over her arm.

I took my time getting dressed, feeling the fabrics and smelling them. They were factory fresh it seemed, the smell of hands, a mixture of sweat and iron around the hemmed portions. I got dressed in the suit. No tie, this wasn’t a job interview. In the mirror, I really admired myself. My hair hadn’t grown a wild amount, but it rarely did

in what I considered a statis of the body.

The bedroom was just how I'd left it. It really did feel like nothing had changed.

Drawing back the curtain in the room revealed the real change.

The city. In all of my wildest dreams, I never imagined so many apartment towers built up around the park. The park itself from my view didn't have much change, it seemed greener, but all colors seemed more saturated after twenty years with my eyes closed.

Estefania was still waiting on me. I could hear her heart beat and breathing as she paced around. She was eager to knock again. My abilities were slowly becoming restored. It was a delight on the senses to feel power once again.

"Come in," I called out to her.

The door swung open. "I am in love with this place," she said. "I'm going to be able to post online for months and months. I only have like five thousand followers from like mukbang content, but it's going to skyrocket." She tugged at a small plastic bag on her wrist.

"Muk-what?"

"Oh, wow. I so need to give you an education," she laughed. "Your new phone. I think you're going to become a social media addict."

"I'm not social at the best of times," I said. "And I'd rather not spend all my time consuming media."

She snort-laughed. "Ok, well, it's a top of a line phone for one terabyte of data, which

basically means it'll take forever for you to fill up.”

“Tera-who?”

I was quickly informed that a mukbang was a video shared to the internet of a person eating, and other people seemed to get joy from it. And a terabyte was one trillion bytes of data, wrapping my head around that was strange.

Estefania recorded the process of me unwrapping the box, feeling like I was a child at Christmas, being given a gift through clear plastic. She only got my fingers in the little box she was recording with though. I sat on the bed as I held the device and tapped a finger to it. “Why doesn’t it do what yours does?”

“It needs to be set up,” she said. “Don’t worry, uncle, I’ll set it up for you. Do you have an email?”

“No,” I said. “Maybe. I have no idea. It was a something I hadn’t gotten around to doing, but you can do that for me, right?”

“Of course.” She took it from me.

It was strange being told all the things it could do, but I’d seen it in action, so I knew it was true. “You don’t think all my guests are going to be into that social media thing, do you?”

She snort laughed again, this time harder. “Whoa. Yes. Everyone is going to be on their phones, taking pictures, videos, and exchanging numbers.”

There was an easy fix to it. I wasn’t against change. In fact, I was an early adopter of most things. “For my sanity tonight then, I’m making it a no phone policy.”

“What?” she gasped.

“I like my anonymity,” I told her. “And with the masks. I’d rather get to look at my guests directly in their eyes rather than through that little device.”

“I can still have my phone, right?” She asked, pouting.

Just like her mother, my sister, I couldn’t refuse. “Of course, but only in secret.”

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

My mask of choice was sleek and elegant. It was actually just an old mask I'd once made at the compound for some event the coven held. It had a single pink feather on it and was covered in dry pasta shapes. It was my attempt at a venetian mask. I'd since spray painted it gold, and the pasta shapes or pink feather didn't stick out as much. All gold. There was no other way of telling people you were one of them by adorning yourself in the color of wealth.

I'd spent the day preparing my outfit, and also trying to figure out where this party was. I had also tried getting in contact with my twin brother too, but he was always busy doing something. If he wanted to contact me, he would, so I left him and could easily tell my folks he was fine. It wasn't like he ever get himself into trouble.

As soon as darkness descended on the city, I was preparing my escape. My sister was at my bedroom door, ready to start having a go at me for not telling her about my party, or where I was going.

"Mel," I whispered to her through the door jamb. "I promise next time, I'll take you. But this time. It's a private event."

We argued in whispers, back and forth with each other. "I wanna go."

"You can't. It's invite only, and only I was invited."

Last night at the party, I hadn't exactly been told it was invite only, but I assumed as much. A party that only happened once every so often, not even yearly. I wasn't going to waste that opportunity on giving my sister an invite. I loved her, but I loved my independence more. And it wasn't like she would tell on me.

Dressed in a nice black suit, white shirt, freshly starched, and a bow tie. I looked the part of someone who could attend a masked ball. It obviously wasn't a finished look until I put my hat on. It completed the look.

The party was on the upper east side. Manhattan. I teleported myself into an alley, sure enough I was away from prying eyes. I'd held onto the note paper and my mask. I knew I'd have to flex some of my ability to get through with just this note paper and a code word.

Photographers, flashing and popping at celebrities as they left cars caught me off-guard. Bodyguards in suits patrolled the area, making sure nobody was getting in. There was a small slip of unsecured space in their perimeter.

"I have an invite," I said, waving around the slip of paper. "Let me in."

At the door of the apartment building, there was a woman with a checklist against a clipboard. As people queued to see her, many of them were turned away. Celebrities I'd seen on the covers of magazines, papped as they were refused entry.

My hands were sweaty, making the paper in my hands become moist.

I was next up. "Hi."

"Name," she said.

I tried to reach out, flexing some ability in her direction. "I'm—"

She inched away. "Name, please. Either you live here, or you're attending something here. I have all the names of approved guests on this list."

"Nash," I told her.

“No,” she said without looking at it.

I tried one more to touch her, force a thought in her head, a memory of my name on that list.

Just as I tried, a familiar voice called out from behind. “You’re here,” she said. “Are you going in?”

“He’s not on the list,” the woman said, removing the silver mask pinned to her face with elastics. It was Mrs. Hoppin from last night. “And your name?”

“Mrs. Hoppin,” I said. “It’s nice to see you again.”

“Catrina and Bernard Hoppin,” she said. “My husband is that man.” She gestured to the man basking in the flash photography like it was sunlight. “And this here is our guest. We’re allowed one of those. Aren’t we?”

The woman stuttered a little. “I—uh—well—”

“Our son,” she continued. “He’s our son.”

And that worked a treat. We were let through into the arches of the building. There was someone standing by the lift with a silver tray and flutes of champagne.

“Should we wait for your husband?” I asked her.

Catrina had a rich laugh, throwing a hand to her chest. “Oh no, he’s out there taking in all the media attention. I’ll let him do that for as long as he likes,” she said, taking a glass of champagne from the tray.

I took one and the elevator door dinged open.

There was a man standing in it, dressed in a red suit with a matching red cap. “Are you here for Mr. DeMauriel’s event?”

I put my mask up to my face. “Of course,” I said.

“I don’t wear a mask every day, sweetheart,” she said. “Take us to the party.”

It was the first time I’d heard his last name being spoken aloud. DeMauriel. It didn’t have anything familiar to it. It had a strange sound on it as the letters rolled around on my tongue.

As the elevator doors closed, we were shown our reflections in the gold mirrored doors.

“I hope you’ve brought some of that sparkle with you tonight,” Catrina said.

“Sparkle?”

“The magic,” she said with a giggle. “I find it so much fun to see the way you captivate people with your party tricks. And I’m sure our host will love it too.”

I was nervous about meeting the host. He hadn’t invited me. He was bound to know that I wasn’t on the list. Catrina had told the woman at the door I was her son, but Bernard might not play along. I downed the entire flute of champagne before the doors opened back up.

We were inside the apartment.

It felt like stepping back in time. The wood paneled walls, the muted green fabrics of the curtains draped across walls and windows. People in three-piece suits and fancy gowns walked by with masks covering part or their full face.



Stepping inside the apartment together. Catrina had the same expressions as me. We were both taken aback. Above us, a chandelier that scattered delicate rainbow colors in the lighting.

Another wait staff came by with a silver tray. I swiped a glass and downed it. Now, with two empty champagne flutes, I was looking to arm myself with a third.

“I hope you’re not collecting,” Catrina laughed. “Well, I’ll leave you to go and mingle. You don’t want to be saddled with me all evening.”

As much as that was true, I didn’t want her to feel like I’d used her for this party alone. “I’ll see you again soon, I’m going to see if I can find somewhere to place these glasses. I definitely don’t want it to look like I’m stealing.”

She laughed harder, pawing my hand. “And remember to keep that mask up. These places have strict rules. You don’t want to be caught without it covering your eyes at least.”

It was going to be a great deal of effort to keep the mask up, especially since it was a venetian mask style with the stick. I should’ve opted for an elastic or string.

Although people had their masks, I could tell who a couple people were from previous parties I’d attended. Most of them were older, in fact, all of them were older. Celebrities who hadn’t been in the limelight for years. I was fascinated by the invitation system.

There was a staircase that was cordoned off to an upper floor. I desperately wanted to see inside. It was my nature to be curious. It got me into a lot of trouble, but what was life if there wasn’t any risk.

The moment I appeared to touch the red rope, a girl came over to me, my age. She

wore an emerald dress and matching mask with feathers. “You can’t go up there,” she said, touching my arm. It was a fleeting moment of contact, but informed me of so much.

A vampire. This was a vampire’s residence. It wasn’t hers, but someone else’s.

“Are you ok?” she asked as I was seemingly stunned to a silence. “It’s my uncle’s place. I think we’re the youngest here.”

“Your uncle, he’s the Mr. DeMauriel?”

She nodded. “The one and only. Don’t worry though, I don’t think he’s going to actually visit. He wrote each of the invites himself, and I doubt he invited you. No offence or anything, but the crowd is obviously—”

“A lot older than I am.”

“Exactly,” she said. “My uncle is only just now figuring out how to work a phone.” She cocked her head and looked at me with a furtive crease in her brows. “You’re a witch.”

“And you’re a—”

She placed a finger to my mouth. “Let’s not spook the guests. I’m guessing that’s how you managed to score an invited then,” she said. “So, what’s someone like you doing at a place like this?”

“Playing with humans is my favorite game,” I admitted. “I like the way they look at me when I perfect little magic tricks for them. It’s a nice feeling.”

“I bet,” she said. “I don’t get the same feeling. Usually, whenever I show what I can

do, people are scared.”

“Nash,” I said, introducing myself.

“Estefania,” she said. “And whatever you’re thinking, you’re right. My uncle is just like me.”

A lot of things quickly slotted in space and made sense. Her uncle being a vampire and hosting an event every ten or so years was wild, but as a vampire, mostly immortal, there was a clear reason as to why that happened.

“Can I meet him?”

“You heard me, right?” she asked. “My uncle probably won’t come down to this thing. He’s upstairs. Scrolling TikTok I think. He’s trying to learn all the things he missed.”

I knew she wasn’t telling me exact information, but the more she said, the more I was getting from her. Mr. DeMauriel had been in a hibernation it seemed, so much so that he’d missed most of the world’s technological advances pass.

“Well, since I’m usually the only supernatural at these things, it’s like someone else is getting a peek behind the curtain,” I said. “Wanna see what a real party looks like?”

“As long as you don’t remove your mask,” she said. “That rule is strict.”

With a thread from the aether, I strung the mask up behind my head, securing it in place. I hadn’t wanted to exercise my abilities like this, but I used both hands a lot of the times. I had a flair for the dramatics.

Estefania gave me a short applause. “I’m impressed.”

“If I show you something cooler, will you let me meet your uncle?” The idea of meeting someone who could score invites to even hotter parties was enticing. I lived for the thrill of entertaining.

“My uncle does as he pleases,” she said. “But I can promise you that if you impress me, I might let you hit on me.”

A record scratch cut through me. I almost lost the invisible string threading the mask up behind my head. “I don’t swing that way.”

She scoffed. “All the fun ones are gay,” she said, combining her fingers through the tips of her hair. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t want to see any of those tricks up your sleeve.”

“Then let’s go to the bar.”

I did what I knew best, illusions. People saw small fireworks in their glasses of champagne and sparkles appears as the fizz. The guests at the event all wanted a show, it was nice to feel all the eyes on me like this, every single one of them acting like I was the one who’d thrown this extravagant party. Estefania had since vanished into the crowd of people.

It took a lot out of me to put on a show for so many people. And even when I stopped, I was being approached with questions about how it all worked.

And as one more person approached, a voice cut them off. “I was just about to talk to you.”

I turned to see a masked man with deep brown hair in waves. A white porcelain mask with gold edges over his eyes with extravagant white feathers in both corners. “I can’t give away all my secrets,” I said. “But I can do another little firework in your drink if

you like.”

He smirked. “I won’t stop you.” He held out the full flute of champagne. “I only saw it from far away.”

“I’m Nash,” I said, sucking in a deep breath. I pulled everything I had out. My well of magic desperate to be replenished. The color of the champagne turned red and then pink. “I’m sorry, that’s not—”

The man drank it. “Mhmm.”

“You should’ve waited for it to go back,” I said.

His eyes turned deep red as he looked at me. He grabbed hold of my hand by the wrist. “You,” he whispered. “Oh.”

“Me?” I couldn’t sense anything about him, other than his cold grip.

“Kiss me,” he said. I watched his lips move and his teeth gently bite down on his bottom lip. “You remind me of someone.”

That was as good a reason as any. I leaned in and kissed him. My mind seemed to explode with small zapping pops. His cold tongue entered my mouth, and for a moment, I thought we were two abstract balls of light merging as one.

The second he pulled away, the intense light energy from him faded out of my mind. “My first kiss in over twenty years,” he said.

And just as I was about to put the two together, him being the owner of this apartment, and the vampire uncle, I was sucked through a portal back into my bedroom.

Melize stood there, gasping for breath. “Ugh,” she said. “Mom and dad are coming. Someone saw a picture of you. Get changed. And I hate you for not inviting me to that party.”

The invisible thread snapped, dropping the mask. I was still reeling from the kiss. But I couldn’t blame Melize for saving my ass on this one. And the last thing I wanted was to bring shame on the family name, or worse, the coven.

Footsteps came toward the door as I was already stripped to my boxers and a tank top. Melize was practicing some improv, throwing me in at the deep end of a conversation she was having with herself.

“And so I told her that I wasn’t going to have enough time to crochet anymore amigurumi,” she said. “Please, the yarn is expensive and then there’s—”

“Oh,” my mom said walking in on us.

“Thank god you’re here,” I said. “She’s been talking my ear off.”

My parents were easily fooled, either that, or they wanted me to believe they were easily fooled. I liked to think it was a former of the two.

And when they all left the room, I was stuck thinking about Mr. DeMauriel, and without the strength to summon a portal back to the party, thinking about him was all I could do.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I couldn't understand the way he'd made me want more of him. He'd vanished in the blink of an eye, and all I'd wanted was another kiss from those sweet lips. I couldn't even smell him in the air. Wherever he was, it wasn't here.

Estefania approached me, a flute of champagne in hand. "Where did—"

"Vanished," I grumbled.

"I'm surprised you're down here," she said.

"I had a question about this phone," I grumbled, pulling the thing out of my pocket. I didn't like sleeping for too long, the world would happily go on by while I slept. "What does this mean? And why does it keep saying not available?" I took the glass of champagne from her. The stuff was adored by humans. I placed my nose at the tip as my niece was busy looking at the phone. There was a strange notion of Nash in it, delicately balanced and sweet, just like him. He had secrets. I was desperate to figure them out.

"Ok, well, this is your WiFi, and you need it. It's for the internet. You have it installed, but there might be some dead zones in your apartment," she said. "Like areas of intense magical energy."

"Like your friend," I said, dipping a finger into the champagne and sucking it.

"We're not friends. He's just the only person here close to my age," she said. "But I saw the two of you kiss. What was that all about?"

“Witches are a distraction,” I said, savoring the strange lingering taste of him in the champagne. “I can smell his magic, it’s all around.”

She giggled. “He was doing tricks for the guest. Making fireworks in champagne.”

That made sense why the liquid tasted burned, but it was the magic I was mostly intrigued by. I finished the glass and found a counter to place it on. “Ugh,” I grumbled as Estefania followed me around. “Why did I insist on a masquerade?”

“I don’t know, uncle,” she said. “But I think it was pretty fun.”

“Of course, you do, sweetheart,” I said, itching to take the mask off, but I didn’t want to break the rules I’d set. It was a bad showing as the host to remove your mask. “I’m going to head back to my quarters. Make sure the guests have fun, and don’t let any of them beyond the barrier.”

She nodded and handed me the phone back. “And you’ve got to make sure you find those places with good internet connection,” she said. “You’ve got to get through the last twenty years of world information.”

The world had changed on all fronts. And I wasn’t going to get to know all of it through information on a contraption. I needed to hear certain information, straight from the horses mouth. Like, the current supernatural world’s standing amongst the humans.

I’d slept for twenty years. I wasn’t going to bed anytime soon.

Fashions were the one area of change that always held me in great confusion. We’d gone through times of people wearing the tightest jeans and tank tops to the most loose fitting clothes like amorphas blobs. But the one trend that never went out was a sharp suit.



A midnight blue suit with stark white shirt and polished black boots allowed me to fit in. I'd combed my hair back and with a little pomade, held it in place.

The reality of my trip was to find the witches. I had to know more about Nash. He was so different to what I remembered of witches. The vampires and witches had a tumultuous past, so it was a surprise to find myself kissing one.

Passing the illuminated signs for dollar pizza slices and naughty video stores flashing pink and purple neon X's in their windows was hypnotic. I found myself staring at the signs and watching people walk in and out beyond the doors and the curtains.

New York was the city that never slept, because everyone was so busy fornicating. I headed into the store, beyond the velvet curtain to see rows of cases. People were moaning out, masturbating right there into their palms.

There was a scent, and it wasn't cum.

I locked eyes with a woman at another velvet door. A red one. Her blond hair, slicked back into a ponytail with two delicate strands curled up on her cheeks. She was a vampire. And from the scared look on her face, she knew I was one too.

Stepping quickly toward her, she didn't have enough time to form a sentence. Stuttering out an incoherent and incomplete thought.

"What's behind there?" I asked. "Your master?" I cooed, pursing my lips. "No. Your maker?"

"Mr. De—De—De—DeMauriel," she said, forcing a hand to her jaw to quell the chattering. "It's really you."

"Of course, darling, who else would I be?"

He bowed her head and rescinded the red velvet curtain with a pulley, opening it for me. “Hellenia is in charge. She is my maker and master.”

“Hellenia,” I repeated. “Is she back there?” The space behind the curtain was complete darkness.

She nodded. “She’s been waiting for you.”

As soon as I stepped beyond the curtain threshold, it fell back in place behind me. I headed forward in the comfort of complete darkness. There was another velvet curtain fifteen paces in front of me. It led to another, larger room, cold blue lights overhead had me raising an arm to recoil. “It’s bright,” I exclaimed.

The clip clop of heels on a hard surface came. First, from two angles were men in suits. And as they all formed a line across as if I was forced to pick from a line up.

They parted and Hellenia revealed herself. Six foot in heels. Electric purple hair tied up on top of her head. She wore a midnight blue power suit, the female version of mine. No shirt, just her breasts held up and pushed against the interior lapel of the jacket.

She tapped her foot on the stone and stared at me, lips pursed and brows knitted. “Well,” she said.

“Hellenia, my oldest friend, I—”

“Old,” she cackled. “Come here, it’s been far too fucking long, Ara.”

We met in the middle and embraced in a hug.

“And my best friend,” I said. “I thought you would’ve moved on to bigger and better

things.”

“Next time you fall into a depression, please don’t force yourself into a coffin for twenty years,” she said, grabbing me by my cheek. “I missed you. I missed being havoc and mayhem with you.”

“Me too.”

“How did you find me?”

“Truthfully, I was staring at the neon outside, smelled something familiar, thought it might’ve been a trace of a witch I seem to find myself falling for,” I said, feeling the biggest relief shake itself off me.

“You fall hard and fast, Ara,” she said. “And for a witch.”

I knew the warnings, I knew what people said. “So, who is this small army of men behind you?”

“Those are my mates,” she said, gesturing a hand at all eight of them. “I really took control over my destiny once you were gone. I own businesses up and down Manhattan. These men don’t get jealous, and they do exactly as they’re told. At all times.” She snapped her fingers and they all stood straight.

“If anyone was going to have find themselves at the center of a mating nest, it would be you,” I said.

“And I use them to keep order,” she said. “By the way, has anyone told you that you’re considered a vampire elder now?”

A groan came out from the depths of my throat. “Please, don’t.”

“The vampires are going to want to see you,” she said with a smirk. “There’s only two of them left now. Some of the others fled to Europe, and others down to South America.”

The vampire elders oversaw areas with vampire covens in them. I was never in their good books. I did as I pleased but I never had a coven or thrall. I preferred to live a solitary life, with my staff of helpers.

“I’m not ready for that type of responsibility,” I told her.

“It’s in the bylaws of the land,” she said. “I won’t report you being back among the living, but I can’t say the same for all the other vampires in the city.”

I shrugged. “Help me find a witch.”

“The witch you’re falling in love with?” she shook her head. “I don’t get involved with the witches. Nobody gets involved with them.”

“I’m not asking you to go rifling through their garbage, I’m just asking if you know of a witch name Nash,” I said. “An aether witch, I believe.” I pressed a finger to my lips. “Yes.”

Hellenia turned to her thrall of mates behind her. “No promises,” she said. “But I can ask around. I don’t want you getting in over your head, Ara. The witches protect their own, and they’ve grown in strength since you went to sleep.”

“Good.” I took her hand and admired the ruby ring on her marriage finger. “Congratulations.”

“No,” she said. “I’m not married. This has the blood of my first mate.”

“Rodrick?” I asked.

“Oh no, he wasn’t my first. This is Julian’s blood. He was a human. I had to let him go. And I refused to turn him. You see what happens when you turn a human into a vampire.” She gestured her ringed hand to the men. “They’re no longer themselves.”

A smirk formed on my lips. “That’s why you’re not telling the elders about me. They’d never approve of you turning—one, two—eight men.”

She giggled. “Remember those that are loyal to you, Ara.” She patted a hand at her chest. “I’m loyal to you, and anything you need. My friend.”

“I could do with a map,” I told her. “I’ve forgotten all the regular haunts of the city.”

Hellenia explained to me how a year after my slumber began, there was a shift, and all the major elders of the supernatural communities came together to move around the supermarkets, bars, and other establishments catered only to our kind. She had one of her thrall bring out a worn map from somewhere deep in her system. There were also new lines drawn out on the map of Manhattan, all segmented and color coded to show whose territory you were entering. I had a singular block where my apartment was. It had been zoned in black, which meant out of bounds for all.

“You can keep this,” she said, rolling the map up. “The moment vampires without Alphas sniff that you’re out of your coffin, they’re going to come, seeking you to take them in.”

My niece had left a lot out. Although I had to give her credit, she wasn’t from here. “I can understand why a lot of vampires fled to Europe and South America now,” I said. “It all seems to be a little controlling.”

Hellenia had a smile that nothing could wipe clean. “Don’t leave without saying

goodbye,” she said. “But I hope you’ll stick around and try changing things. For far too long Raquel and Sven have been running things. They’re together now too.” Even snarling, she smiled.

Raquel and Sven, their names brought a hazy image to mind. There had been several elders. I’d know their names if I saw them written down, but they weren’t coming to the front of my mind in the moment.

Armed with a map of the city, I knew exactly where I wanted to go.

Buried beneath an apartment building, only accessible by pressing the one, two, and three on an elevator button at the same time.

A sprawling underground market. A city under the city. It was incredibly busy, with market stalls, and food vendors. Heads turned in my direction, not all at once, but slowly, and surely, everyone eyed me, up and down. It had been a while since I’d been in the land of the living, not to say I was dead beforehand.

“You’re the DeMauriel Alpha,” a man said at candied fruit stall. “Please, take this.” He offered me a sugar topped red apple in a bag.

“No,” I said.

Accepting gifts was sometimes accepting ownership of some of these people. I didn’t want to be indebted to any of them. I also didn’t care that I was making myself known to the city again. I wasn’t leaving the city, but I also wasn’t going to kiss the ring of two so-called elders who were younger than me.

I didn’t know exactly where I was going, but as I walked around, slowly becoming sucked into the underground world, I knew I was going to have a hard time coming out of it. I stopped by the doors of a bar, Fang-a-lot, it was themed in old British

coats of arms, tapestries, and really tried to teleport me back in time until a woman at a podium, smacking gum in her mouth pulled me back to reality. “Hi, welcome to Fang-a-lot , what section of the bar do you want to be seated in tonight?”

“Segregated seating?” I pondered.

She looked me up and down. “Vampire.”

I leaned in, the mint on her breath tried its best to hide the stench of rotting meat between her teeth. “Shifter,” I mused.

“We’re inclusive, but some people like to sit amongst their peers,” she said.

“Do you have a witch section?”

She snorted. “Yeah, but witches don’t come in here. So, we just use it as our mingle zone.”

“Then I’ll mingle.”

The place was busy, people of all shifter creeds and vampire thralls were standing and seated, some together, others in their corners. This was the real education my niece should’ve been showing me. The way the world had stayed the same but also changed. Although she was busy entertaining my guests.

At the bar, I ordered myself a small drink of B-pos blood. I just enjoyed telling people to ‘be positive’. Blood had all types of notes to it, but most of it depended on who it came from. It was like wine in a way, different grapes gave different tastes, and all the ways it was crushed, pressed, and barreled up.

The blood I was given was awful. Like a mix of three people had poured themselves

out in my mouth. I nearly threw it across the bar.

“Ara DeMauriel,” a man’s voice came at me from behind. “As I live and breath, I’d heard stories you’d killed yourself.”

“Zo Boloric.”

A tall, thin man, gaunt cheeks like he was constantly sucking the insides into his mouth. He was dressed in an ill-fit suit and as he walked, he held steady to a cane. He approached me with two youngsters behind him, almost waiting to see if he was about to topple over at either side.

“You’re not dead,” I remarked.

“Almost,” he laughed, reaching me at the bar. He held himself up. “It’s not a good time to be seeing me.”

Zo was a weasel shifter, which seemed fitting considering he was considered the biggest snitch alive the last time I was awake.

“What happened to you?” I asked him.

“Witches,” he said, coughing. He pulled out a handkerchief and spat blood into it. “I broke one of their things. An altar, whatever it’s called. Cursed me. I no longer heal. And they told me they since the witch whose altar it was is dead, the spell has to run its course.”

I glanced at the two boys behind him. “And those?”

“My protectors,” he said, laughing and coughing more blood into the handkerchief. “It’s funny, isn’t it. But I cursed my bloodline too. Well, only if I die before my



ninetieth birthday. In ten years, and then the curse will fall through to my offspring, and then their offspring.”

“And you say witches did it?”

“No on purpose, I already asked the elders to convene, but I only have myself to blame,” he said. “The witches are not the same as they were before you went under, Ara.”

I felt like I was in a dream, almost. Everyone wanted to tell me about their experience with the witches. Perhaps world was around that I was set to take a seat at the vampire elder’s counsel. It was unfortunate what had happened to Zo, but he knew the consequences of going through other’s garbage.

“You should probably head home then,” I told him. “Because I’m here looking for witches. Specifically, any of them that know of a young aether witch named Nash.”

He shook his head. “Not that I know,” he said, bowing his head at me again. “And I must refuse any offer to find out.”

I pat his shoulder, feeling the bony exterior under his body. I could smell the death inside him, something foul was growing. I felt bad for the affliction, although it wasn’t me who’d done it to him. “Good luck, Zo,” I said. “I hope to see you around for the next ten years.”

“And—and good luck to you, Ara, but please stay away from the witches.”

The more I was told to stay away from them, the more I wanted to find them. I needed another kiss from Nash’s lips, and I needed it before the feeling of them faded from my lips.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I'd exhausted myself to a point of not being able to sleep.

Ara's lips were on my mind. Ara's touch had infested every corner of my mind.

Legs folded over each other, back straight, focused on breathing, I was focused on that kiss and the way it held me. The moment we touched, I was hit with fragments of him. I saw through slips of time. There was pain and prophecy, he was an echo chamber of thoughts, hollowed out by actions he had no control.

Blacking out from exertion, I woke to my sister rummaging through my closet.

"Melize," I grumbled, lifting my head from the pillow and unable to control the yawn stretching out from the back of my throat like I was going deep on a fist. "What are you doing?"

"I lost a ring last night," she said. "It's the pretty silver band with the inscription on it."

A crackle of thought snapped in me. It was mom's ring. She's going to kill me.

"Stop it!" she shouted, throwing clothes from the ground at me. "I know what you're doing, Nash."

"You stole mom's ring." And I knew the exact one she was talking about. It was funny she'd stolen that one in particular considering it had adverse affects on magic from the inscription. A spell on it to dampen a witch's power, usually inscribed and worn when a family doesn't want to draw attention to themselves.

“Not theft, she was eventually going to pass it down to me, I just tried it on,” she said.

“Have you tried casting for it?” I grabbed my pillow and held it tight against my chest, letting out all my energy into a big squeeze.

“It’s not my ring, I can’t cast for it,” she said.

“Get mom to cast for it.”

Melize snapped her fingers. “Good idea. Then she’ll find it in here, and you’ll have to explain it. I won’t be in trouble.”

I threw my pillow at her. “Mom knows I haven’t taken it. Plus, the way you’re walking around blasting thoughts, I wouldn’t be surprised if she doesn’t already know.”

She often got like this, frantic and panicked, unable to keep up her boundaries and control her abilities. Compared to my twin, Rhone, who lacked a lot of magic. Part of me wondered if I’d absorbed him magic in the womb.

“Found it!” she shouted, jumping around. “Ugh. You need to clean your room.”

“Why did you take it off anyway?”

“Um, I don’t know, maybe because I had to portal you home and mom’s silver ring does freaky shit sometimes,” she said.

“No duh. Have you read the inscription?”

“It’s in those strange symbols. So, no.”

“Get out,” I told her.

The last thing I wanted to wake up to was my sister. I thanked her for saving my ass last night, but I was pissed that I didn’t get a proper chance to talk to the vampire. He wasn’t the first vampire I’d met, but he was definitely the first one I’d kissed.

Different witches tapped into their source of magic in different ways. As an omega, though, I couldn’t access magic through the world. I could only access it through myself, which meant it drew on an energy store I only knew to fill up through sleep.

The daily routine begin. Breakfast, small talk about my plan for the day, which was always to study or research. And followed up with an escape route out into the so-called big and scary world. I had to find Ara. My soul craved a second glance into his eyes, and my palms itches to reach out and read his skin.

“Nash, today, you’re going to come to the market with me,” my father said. “We’re in need of ingredients for the coven summoning circle this weekend.”

It took me completely by surprise. “What about Melize?”

My mom chuckled. “She’s staying to help clean and polish some of my jewelry.”

Melize scowled at me across the table. “You told her.”

“No, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Mel, sweetie, you’re awful at hiding your thoughts,” our father said, also hiding a chuckle. “The kitchen staff heard, and they were concerned too.”

She lulled her head to the dining table as other members from other families in the compound glanced across at us.

“Do you really need me to come with you?” I asked.

“You are part of this family,” he said. “Yes. And don’t think we don’t know that you prefer the company of humans to those of your kind. We need to put on a united front. And that starts by showing the other families that we’re not losing control over you two.”

I know my parents had been in a constant state of worry ever since my brother left. The other families must’ve assumed that we would follow suit and left our parents, who would in turn probably be forced to leave.

“Fine,” I told my father. “But I find the underground market tiring.”

“You won’t be saying that when we work together on some portal magic,” he said.

Portal magic was my favorite. My brother and I would create them constantly together, it was the only time he ever felt a sense of ability at his finger tips. I knew that because he thought it often, and I buried it deep. I didn’t want to be burdened by it.

I dressed in my signature all-black suit attire with matching rimmed hat. It made me feel like I was going on an adventure every time I pressed it to the back of my head, almost like I was in an Indiana Jones movie.

My father carried tote bags inside tote bags for all the supplies he needed. I rolled my eyes the moment I saw them with him, and the rucksack on his bag. “Well, come on then,” he said, waving me down the hall. “We’re going to summon in here.”

He preferred summoning directly against a wall just in case someone was to walk in the opposite direction and they’d get sucked through it as well. Personally, I found the idea funny. I wondered if they’d go to the same place, but it was magic, so I’d

never tried it out. It could been a blackhole that slurped you up and spat you out into spaghetti on the other side.

The underground market was in a permanent twilight. It looked like a sky above, pitch black with the odd twinkle, like stars, but it was the road or ground of whatever buildings were above this place.

My father had a list of things he required on several scraps of paper that went together would form the longest list known to all kinds. Seeing him go around all the stalls and be peculiar about everything got old quick, but nobody else seemed to mind.

“I’m gonna go buy something,” I told him.

“Stay close,” he called after me.

I preferred spending my time with humans because I was special around them. Around my people, I was a witch, and an omega at that. Which then meant I had to contend with being glared at by hungry horned up Alphas as they were desperate to get their claws into me and tear my tight little witchy ass up. I couldn’t blame them on that, I did my squats, I kept it tight, and I was nearly suctioned into my black jeans.

Bars were also boring here. I just walked right by them.

Nothing entertained me here.

I went all around the underground city, admiring trinkets on display and gems for sale.

“Well,” a voice caught me by surprise.

“I’m not buying,” I said, looking up. The stall owner was dealing with someone else. But through the glass, I saw his reflection. “Oh.” I turned, nearly falling back on my foot.

Ara stood without his mask, looking sharp in his fancy suit. “I’ve been looking for you,” he said, taking my hand. He pulled it to his lips and kiss it. “You smell so—” He smacked his lips.

An intense rush of adrenaline coursed through me, screaming in my veins. His touch showed me images that wrote entire novels about him. He was old, but young in the face. The longer I stared at him, the more blurry my vision became. Right until...

A soft coo washed over me. “Nash,” Ara whispered to me. “Wake up.” He pressed a cold bottle of water to my forehead.

I was laid in his arms, looking up at him.

A small crowd had formed around us.

“What are you doing down here?” I asked, taking the bottle but my hands were too tired to open it.

“For you,” he said, smiling up at me. “I figured you were going to show up eventually.” He took the bottle of water and opened it. “I didn’t like the way you just disappeared last night.”

Sipping the water, the gnawing consciousness of all the eyes on us were making me conscious. It was different when humans were watching me, but for people like me, it wasn’t a nice feeling at all. Slowly, I pulled myself away from Ara. “Thank you for catching me,” I said. “I’m fine. Really.”

Ara glared up at the crowd. “You heard him. He’s fine. Leave.”

As the crowd dispersed, that’s when my father’s face appeared. He was standing there, all of his tote bags filled with items. He just stared.

“Dad.”

“Nash,” he said. “What are you doing on the floor?” He approached me with a hand to help lift me to my feet. “And with a vampire.”

“Ara DeMauriel,” he introduced him, standing from his squat beside me. “Your son fainted. I was close by when it happened and offered help to the situation.”

The solid state of my stomach knotted harder. “Thank you,” I said, looking into his eyes. “I appreciate all of your help. And the water.”

My father hummed. “DeMauriel. Didn’t that vampire clan move west? After an awful tragedy, or something.”

“If you’re referring to my sister, Elya’s death, yes, it was an awful tragedy,” he said. “But I didn’t move. I’ve been here this entire time.”

“How old are you?” I blurted.

My father grabbed my arm. “Come now,” he said. “We both thank you for helping, but we really don’t want any trouble with the vampires. Thank you.”

“There’s no trouble,” he said. “I’m fresh out of slumber.” He laughed. “Nash caught my eye. He’s special.”

“I know,” my father said, still tugging my arm. “And we don’t want any trouble. Like



I said.”

It was a fleeting moment of time spent with Ara again. Every contact of his skin on mine was electric. It made me giddy. But whatever alchemy was going on between us wouldn't last if my family had anything to say. While inter-supernatural dating wasn't forbidden, a lot of families prided themselves on being pure. Most witches belonged to that, calling anything else a dilution to the bloodline.

My father lectured me as he forced us to get as far from Ara as possible and summoning a portal out of the market. He was reiterating statements I'd heard be told time and time again. I didn't want to hear any of it though. There was something about Ara I couldn't put my finger on. It got my heart skipping a beat, or several.

“We're not going to say a word of this to your mother,” he said. “I don't need her worrying about you. She's already got it up to here thinking about your brother.” He gestured with a hand to his forehead.

Once we were crossed the portal, my father exhaled and the several tote bags on his arms all came down and settled in an organized line on the floor.

“It was nothing,” I told him.

“What was nothing?” my mother asked, entering the room.

“The gourds,” I lied, seeing one pressed against the fabric of the bag. “Someone was handing them out because they were going to go rotten otherwise.”

She grumbled. “Well, hope they don't spoil before the circle. You know the earth witches are going to have a field day if they found out we haven't been able to get everything on the list.”

“I think they’ll save,” he said. “So, how’s punishing Melize been?”

“Yes,” I said. “I bet you’ve had fun.”

“Not really,” she said. “She was actually enjoying herself too much polishing jewelry.”

“Well, I’m going to head to my room and—”

“Your knees are dirty,” she noted.

I dusted a hand over them. “I was kneeling to look at something,” I said. “Anyway, I’m gonna go change. I still want to get some studying in and meditation before lunch, although I might be too tranced for that. So, perhaps don’t come get me until dinner.”

It was all a lie. I needed to get back to the underground market. I needed to see Ara again.

Once I was in my room, I secured the door with a knot of magic and then portal hopped my way back to the market. I hadn’t been gone longer than ten minutes. Ara had to be around here somewhere.

As the portal disappeared behind me.

I caught him watching from across a path next to me.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I knew he'd be back. His scent lingered in the air. I'd followed to where it ended, and shortly after, it's where it began.

Nash appeared through an aberration of light that quickly stopped shimmering the moment he stepped out of it. He noticed me immediately.

"I hope you didn't think I was going to just leave," he said, adjusting the hat on his head, his fingers swiping around the brim. "But I don't usually frequent these places, so you got lucky."

"Me either," I told him, taking his hand the moment he was within grabbing distance. I squeezed his warmth between both hands, holding him still. "I had to get a map of all the new factions and parcels of land since it was divided."

He shrugged. "Yeah," he laughed. "I never pay attention to that. So, you wanna get out of here?"

"That's supposed to be my line," I said. "Do you have anywhere in mind?"

"Somewhere we can get a drink," he said, turning his wrist slightly to look at his watch. My hands still holding both of his hands together. "It's brunch. So, mimosas works. I know a brunch spot. It's usually busy though."

I pulled his hand to my lips. "Don't worry about busy. I get in wherever I want."

His palms were immediately slick with sweat. "Oh. Yeah. You can—you can get in."

We headed out of the underground market, using the elevator. I didn't want to stop holding his hands, even as they produced their own dew point. I just needed to be in constant contact with him. We eventually shifted to holding on hand side-by-side with each other.

"How was the rest of your party?" he asked.

"I left the moment you did. I've not been back. I just been—standing around, browsing, and getting reacquainted. You know, witches are rarely seen mingling with anyone other than their kind these days," I mused with him as we walked through the lobby of some building that the elevator had brought us up through.

"I do know that, but what's life without breaking the rules people force on you," he said. "It's why I prefer humans so much. They're clueless, and they don't care about whether you're an omega, or a witch."

"I care," I said. "Not in a—sorry, my words."

"Go on," he said, giggling. "What do you care about?"

"I meant it as, I care that you're an omega and a witch. Mostly because that means you're not a vampire trying to indebt themselves to me."

He shrugged. "You're gonna have to explain more about that to me. I really don't get supernatural politics. Explain it to me like I'm a human."

"Once we're at your brunch place," I said. "And I want to know more about that kiss last night. You've intoxicated me with thoughts. You are all I can muster at all times."

Nash didn't have an answer for me. I didn't want to suggest he didn't have control of

his abilities as a witch, but something about the magic he was performing last night could've hinted to the idea that he wasn't in complete control.

We got to the brunch spot. It was a quaint place with a queue of people. Nash's hand in mine was getting even wetter, causing him to break free to wipe it down himself a couple times. I took him to the ma?tre d' at the front of the queue.

"A table for two," I said.

The ma?tre d' was a young man. He didn't speak. Only nod. It was nice to wield power again. And to know the elders were running on fumes meant repercussions seemed off the table.

A table was vacated for us by the window, a prime spot to see the light shine on Nash's gorgeous face.

"I can't believe you came to find me," he said as we accepted our first round of mimosas, light on the orange juice. "What did your niece have to say about it?"

"I told her I was not to be disturbed," I said. "She's probably assuming I'm catching up on world affairs still. And the party is probably still going. I have blackout curtains and fresh air pumped in through ventilation. That's the way they do it in Vegas casinos."

"Can I—can I ask why that list of people?"

"Sure. They were the famous people when I made that list," I admitted. Although, I was also using them as blood banks. Nash wasn't going to know that though, and also a good reason for him to have left when he did. "And while it was nice to have seen some of their faces, I think the only face that mattered, and stole the show was yours."

He radiated heat, his face turning a deeper shade of red. He grabbed the glass and nearly drank the entire thing in one. “Thank you,” he said, inhaling a large breath afterwards. “That’s nice of you to say.”

“I wonder if this was meant to be,” I mused. “Meeting you. Considering you’re not the fraternizing type. I’m just drawn so completely to something in you, that you have to offer.”

“Is it my blood?” he joked, flipping his hand over on the table to show his wrist. “Because if you give me warning, and if you promise to be gentle, I’ll let you tap a vein.”

I bit into my bottom lip, nicking my own skin just to sate the taste of blood. The temptation to drink from him was far too high. “You’re gonna have to not offer that up,” I said, hampering the moan in my mouth. “Please.”

“Well, it’s not like I offer it up to every vamp I meet,” he said.

There was a distinct pump to the blue vein below his wrist, embedded in flesh and bone. His heart raced, his skin continued to flush. I slipped a leg between his leg under the table. “I’m not feeling hungry anymore,” I said. “If you’d rather come back to my place with me, I can arrange for that.”

“You—you wanna finish what we started last night?” he asked.

“I imagined it wasn’t just a kiss you wanted,” I said, pressing the bottom of my mimosa toward him. “Finish this. I’ll get someone to pick us up.”

He took my drink and downed it in one gulp it seemed. I was enamored.

Estefania had taught me the basics of this newfangled thing. I called her, trying to

excuse myself from the table, but Nash was adamant I didn't leave him. I'd been taught it was rude to take a call around someone, but the times had changed.

From the call, I arranged one of my employees to pick me up.

I left a large bill on the table and with Nash on my arm, we waited on the sidewalk for my car. It wasn't until a window was rolled down and I saw, Toril, one of my staff in the driver seat. It was a town car, not one I recognized, but flashy.

"Wow," Nash said, clinging to my arm. "How much money do you have?"

"It's family money," I grumbled. And I was the last member of my family, with the exception of Estefania, who would no doubt inherit it all, unless Nash was destined to be my mate, and from the heat radiating off him and his cling to me, he was definitely trying to mate with me.

In the back of the town car, Toril pushed a divider up.

"Kiss me," Nash said once we were alone .

I looked into his dilated eyes and at the gloss of his freshly licked lips. "I want to do more than kiss you," I whispered, stroking a hand up his neck and chin. "I want to consume you." Nash strained his neck back slightly, giving me access to porcelain skin. I kissed his neck with a peck, my lips feeling the sweet throb of his artery pulse against it. Like I was operating a metal detector. I kept kissing and Nash moaned into it.

Finally, my lips met his again. And fireworks, like the ones from his creation in the champagne yesterday. I was fixed on shoving as much of my tongue in his mouth as possible. It wasn't even like we were wrestling. My tongue beat out his tongue every single time.

Our bodies were becoming one as my mouth was unable to detach itself from his, and my hands couldn't help but begin undressing him. My fingers plucking his shirt buttons free to open up and touch his soft, delicate torso.

"Oh my god," he exclaimed the moment my mouth travelled south to his chest.

I sucked on his nipples and gave the skin around them sweet, gentle bites, looking to him to see the open mouthed pleasure being expelled from his body in heavenly moans.

We didn't get any further than that, being edged into oblivion. I couldn't have my first time after such a deep slumber to be in such a cramped space. But before the kissing and skin sucking got too out of hand, we'd arrived at the apartment building.

"I could portal," he said.

"No, no, I'm going to need you to save that energy," I told him, giving him another kiss and plucking his bottom lip out with a bite.

There was underground parking at the apartment building. I carried Nash out of the car and into the elevator where I stood, staring at the reflection of me with him in my arms and his suit jacket draped over my shoulder. It was just the two of us.

"I've never done anything with a vampire before," he said.

After everything I'd heard over the last twenty hours, I'd have been more surprised to learn if he had been intimate with a vampire before. "I've been with witches, and shifters, and sometimes, witches and shifters and vampires, all at the same time."

"Oh."



“Don’t worry. That was in the twenties. Or, my twenties. I don’t recall it well enough,” I told him.

Nash reached out to my face and pulled my bottom lip down. “How old are you?” he asked, running his warm thumb across the teeth ridges in my lip.

I licked his finger, forcing him to giggle and pull it away. “Old enough to be considered a vampire elder,” I said. “That doesn’t put you off me, does it?”

“I’ve always had a thing for older men,” he said.

The elevator dinged and we were at my apartment.

Estefania was waiting for me, in a different set of clothing than yesterday. “Oh, you brought company.”

“Hi,” Nash said. “I would’ve said bye yesterday, but I was—”

“It’s fine,” she said. “Witches where I’m from are unpredictable too. Anyway, uncle. I can’t believe you left and didn’t tell me. I mean, I kinda knew because I didn’t feel your presence anymore.”

“We’ll talk later,” I said. “Nash was going to show me what I’ve been missing out on for the last twenty years.”

“Be my guest,” she laughed. “I’m going out to explore. I’ve been told dinner will be served in the late evening. Should I inform the staff to set a place for one more?”

Nash was too busy staring at me to notice she’d been talking about him. “I’m not sure,” I said. “I think he’ll be needed back home, but I’m not sure I’ll be finished with you before then.”

He nodded. "I don't wanna go home."

"You don't have to."

There was a particular scent to Nash now, sweet, almost floral. I carried him right to the bedroom as a fury enraged inside me. A mix between a panic attack and a drug-induced psychosis. Nash was in heat, and I was about to become the worst behaved Alpha this side of Manhattan had seen in years.

I threw Nash on my large, made bed. "You're mine," I told him, unable to contain the excitement in my fangs. They were hungry to pierce flesh and consider claiming it.

He popped the rest of his shirt buttons as he laid on his bed. "Come get me." He threw his hat across the room, landing perfectly on my dresser. "I'm all yours."

I tore the clothes from my skin, shredding them with sheer strength. Naked, I jumped onto the bed, landing perfectly over Nash's body. The wooden foundations of it broke, sending the bed down to the ground and the four small posts at the corners to collapse and hit the floor with it.

"I won't have control once I start," I told him, slipping a finger into the waist of his slacks. "It might hurt, are you ready?"

Nash's hands fumbled to meet mine at his waist. He nodded. "Please."

"Our fate's were sealed the second our lips touched," I whispered, planting my teeth with kisses across his smooth chest. His blood on my tongue matured with the taste of his sweet heat sweat. I didn't lick too much of the blood, just prodding it with my tongue.

He moaned as the blue bloom of bruises revealed how deep our bodily connection

had blossomed. “Yes,” he said softly in my ear. “Yes,” he moaned, hands ruffling through my hair in an attempt to pin my face to his chest.

There was no stopping my hunger now that I’d gotten a singular taste of what made him so special, the magic in him, his blood, it was—I lifted my head, blood dripping down my chin. I looked him in the eyes, his heart beat faster, I knew I could look a little gnarly when I was feeding, and maybe I shouldn’t have jumped right into bed after waking from a long sleep.

“How do I taste?” he asked, presenting me with his wrist.

“A cabernet with a deep fruity profile,” I said, taking his hand and kissing the wrist. “And I feel your thoughts.”

On his body, between his legs, I didn’t need to read energy to know his was rocking an erection and producing enough slick to find himself ready to be bodied by a full football team. I continued to go down his torso, leaving kisses and tearing whatever fabric of clothing he had on him, getting to his naked body and embracing him.

“We’ve made a mess,” he whispered, looking at the smeared drying blood wiped across the bedding. On his elbows, he glanced at my cock, eyes wide and blinking fast. “Oh. I—”

“I’m going to make a bigger mess,” I warned him, tracing a hand down from his belly button to the base of his cock. It was throbbing against his thigh, leaving a precious precum trail of all the places I’d yet to kiss and make bloody. “Let me guess. You usually fuck humans.”

He nodded. “It’s safer,” he said, sitting upright to meet me. “But you’re different.” He reached out to my cock, and grabbed it with two hands. Neither of them connected finger to palm. I was thick in that department.

“You’re never going with another human again,” I told him. “Or anyone else for that matter. You’ve done something to me, Nash. And I need you to know that I’m a little possessive, you could say it’s my nature.”

I let him tug on my cock for a couple more moments before pushing him back on the bed. I flipped him over and raised his ass in the air. He’d made a little mess on the bedding, producing sticky slick. I parted his cheeks, the warm, inviting pinkness of his hairless hole stared back at me. I met it with my lips, devouring him inside and out.

As Nash laid there, slowly dipping his hips to the bed in an effort to rub his cock down against the fabric of the bedding, I was keeping it from happening. My mouth devoured his ass until my ravenous thirst took over.

Without any warning, other than my mouth coming away from his ass with his slick dripping down my chin, I jammed my cock deep in his ass. There was no resistance. It went deep on the first thrust.

He yelped and slowly turned to a cooing moan, begging me to do it again.

Laid on his back, I was a little more gentle now. Giving him kisses at the nape of his neck and inhaling the sweetly scented hair products on his scalp. There wasn’t a single part of him I didn’t want to leave untouched and unfucked.

For the first time in twenty years, I was rock solid, and life had a renewed sense of meaning to it.

I pulled out and turned him over on the bed. “I need to look you deep in your eyes,” I told him, hiking his legs up over my shoulders and pushing them back against his body. Naturally, they slipped to the side of me as he didn’t possess an acrobats level of flexibility. My cock buried itself inside him again, instinctively.

“You’ve ruined me,” he whimpered with a smile.

“I’ve only just started,” I told him. “Can I—” My jaw clenched as I gulped hard in my throat. “Can I take a drink from your neck?”

He tilted his head slightly, showing off the gorgeous structure to his neck. “Yes.”

I latched onto him. There was no removing me once I had my hold. I was akin to a leech, lapping up life source.

Nash lasted seconds before orgasm, his body semi-convulsing on my cock while he was shooting ribbons of cum between our torsos, mixing with the blood residue still on his skin. I didn’t blame him, it was euphoric to drink and be drank from.

My cock knotted nice and hard inside him. I was a key to his lock, and there was no removing this key with any amount of force.

As I pulled out of him, his blood dripping from my lips into his mouth, I felt his pleasure run through me right before I came, filling him up with cum, and forcing his belly to bulge slightly against mine.

“Fuck,” I let out, dipping my head to kiss him and lick the blood from his face. My ass continued to jolt slightly as I wasn’t done unloading.

Nash had the biggest smile on his face. “I never wanna go back home,” he said.

Sliding my hands under his body, I held him and kissed his torso. “I hope you never do.” I knew it was wishful thinking, but I wasn’t going to start a war and kidnap this sweet omega witch. Although wars had started for less, and he was worth it.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I'd never felt so much post-nut body bliss before.

Ara held me in a hug, his entire body leeching heat from me, but I didn't even care that it was making me a little cold. I was enjoying being held by him.

As we cuddled, I began admitting things to him.

"I've never been with any other supernatural before." I stared at the ceiling. "I've never felt like this. I feel whole." I giggle came out. "I bet you feel hole too."

"I do feel whole," he said.

I giggled harder before explaining the joke I'd made.

"You're silly," he said, holding me tighter and kissing my torso. "These should go away soon."

The sensation of his bites had vanished too. There was no residual pain left behind where there should've been after being bitten by him. "How did—I don't usually heal that fast."

"Saliva," he told me. "It has healing properties. Just need to lick your wound and it should look like I was never there, well, it'll look like new skin, so a lighter shade, but not completely noticeable." His fingers seemed to trace the markings, dotted around my chest.

The crushing thought of remembering I had to leave soon hit. "I don't wanna leave."

“You don’t have to.”

“I do.”

“You have free will, you can do whatever you want.” He turned my head to look into his eyes. “I won’t tell you what you have to do, but I will encourage it, especially if it coincides with something I could benefit from as well.” He leaned in and kissed me, his cold lips warmed against me.

A patter of knocks came at the bedroom door.

“Sir,” a soft voice called out. “Sir. We have guests. They’ve requested I summon you immediately.”

Ara sighed. “This is happening sooner than I thought. I have to meet the elders.”

“I thought you said we have free will,” I said, giggling in his face.

“No, I said you have free will.” He took my hand, tucked at my side and kissed it. “I have to fulfill a line of succession type of thing.”

“Can’t you tell them to wait?”

“Then they’ll storm my bedroom. And until I’m actually an elder on their counsel, they practically have ultimate power,” he said, kissing up my arm until he came back around to my lips. “I don’t want you to leave.”

“But I have to.”

“Promise me you’ll come back.”

His pupils grew wider, almost ready to open up into mouths and swallow me whole. “You don’t have to make me promise that,” I told him. “I’m definitely coming back. And I’m definitely going to need you to have a new bed. I don’t like being this low down.”

“Done and done,” he said.

The knock came again as did the soft voice. “Sir. They are really impatient.”

“Relax,” he called out. “I’m getting dressed. I’ll be there in a minute.” He jumped out of bed with vampiric speed. “I’ll also get you something to wear,” he said to me. “I can’t have you going home naked.”

“It’s fine,” I told him. “I can portal my way into my bedroom.”

There was a fine hum of magic thrumming through me. I was able to portal myself home with little effort. In fact, too little. I’d only thought of doing it and I was at home, in my bedroom, laid on my bed, completely naked.

“See you later,” I whispered up to the ceiling, as if I’d fallen through it from his bed to mine. And in my chest, I felt him repeat it back. I’d never felt so much power run through me before, well, I had, actually, during times when the lunar cycle peaked at a full or new moon.

For the minute I laid in my bed, staring at the ceiling and painting pictures like a fresco of what my body looked like entwined with Ara’s, I was in a state of bliss. And then a knock came at the door. The handle rattled.

“Nash,” Meliza being unsubtle. “Where have you been? And you know we’re not allowed to lock our doors.”



“I’m getting dressed.” I scrambled out of bed, looking around for clothes. I slipped on a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt, and then my hand went to my head. “Fuck.” My hat, the one that kept my hair in place in all weathers had been left behind.

“Ok, whatever, I came by like ten minutes ago,” she grumbled. “Mom had me doing something I actually enjoyed, which was organizing her jewelry box.”

Meliza was sat at my bedroom door when I opened it. “You know, if you want to do anything, you’ve got be quiet about it,” I said.

She plugged a finger to her nose. “Oh my god, Nash.” She gagged. “Nobody can come near you.”

“Why?” I stuck my head into my armpit. “I don’t smell—well, that bad.”

“You’re in heat,” she snapped, pushing me into the room as she stayed behind the threshold. “Where’s your necklace?”

Suddenly conscious of the metal enchanted necklace that usually hung around my neck with the small opalescent gemstone in the center. “No.”

“Where is it?”

“I—” Stepping backwards, I stumbled onto my bed. “Maybe at the market. When I was there with dad earlier. I fell, it must’ve come off then.”

With her hand still covering her mouth, Melize’s voice sounded distant. “They’re gonna kill you when they find out you’ve lost it,” she said. “And they’re not going to let you out of their sights.”

My hands wrapped around my stomach. Ara had fucked the heat right into me.

Our bodies had bonded. Our souls mated. It's why I'd felt so intensely. I just assumed it was because he was an Alpha. It went much deeper.

"Don't tell them," I said.

"Don't worry," she said, pushing up against the wall in the hallway. "I won't have to tell them. They'll be able to smell you the second they come into contact with you."

Most omega witches had pendants or enchanted tools that kept their heat cycles at bay, in order for them not to look weak, which is often what it felt like to be an omega in heat, like the world's most submissive species.

I waved a hand and closed my door in Melize's face. I needed to be alone to think. And thankfully, to use my ensuite bathroom to unload Ara's seed. I might've been in heat, but that didn't mean I was going to become a teen parent—I was in my twenties, but he was—hundreds of years old, so in the grand scheme, I would've been a teen parent.

For a moment, I'd already settled into my fate, and then I remembered it was my father who'd forced me into communing with the people in the underground market. So, he was to blame for the necklace slipping away from my neck.

After getting cleaned up, I had only one thing on my mind. Ara. He was front and center behind my eyes with every single blink. His smile, his lips coated in blood, and his teeth as they were fanged rescinded back into his gums.

A knock came at my door. I stood quickly, back straightened like I was stuck to a wooden board. Both of my parents were there, a mix of emotions plastered across both their faces.

"Your sister told us," my mom said, stomping in my room. "And now the entire

compound knows. I cannot believe you've done this to us, Nash."

"Mom, calm down. Did she also tell you this is your fault?"

"She did mention something about your trip to the market," my father said, closing the door behind himself. "It's going to be impossible to find it there, and you're already in heat now. You know how risky it is to be in heat as a witch."

I sat on the bed, throwing my body and head back. "I'll just stay in my room until it's run its course. I can't remember the last time I was in heat." I fanned my face. "Unless you have any other ideas."

"Yes," my mom said. "You can start by cleaning up this place. And then you can get some reading done."

"I don't wanna read." I groaned. There wasn't anything else going through my mind other than Ara, and I couldn't let on to either of them about him.

My father cleared his throat. "Does this have anything to do with that man?" he asked. "When you fainted, earlier. You were helped by a vampire."

Mom whacked his arm. "You should've told me. Damn it, well, that's the whole reason you shouldn't be allowed out without it on. Unbound Alphas who aren't house broken only want one thing from an omega in heat. And a witch, like they'll think they've hit the jackpot with you."

"As much as I love the ego stroking," I said, a hand over my mouth to stifle laughter. "I'm fine. I'm not going to leave. In fact, I'll lock the door."

They shared a glance.

“It’s not like that’s ever stopped you,” my father said. “But we’re not going to forbid you. We’re not the most strict parents. But we have to show the other families here that we have some type of communication with you, and Melize. The other families would think that we let the two of you run wild.”

“You don’t?” I asked.

My mom swatted a hand at my leg. “Every since your brother left, we’ve felt undermined. I just wish he’d reached out.”

“I’ll tell him the next time I see him,” I said. “And you’re lucky. At least I’m not out there in the world with my back turned in all things us.”

It was unfortunate that my brother’s ability was impeded, like a lot of omegas, he simply possessed very little magic. And with it, he’d done the unthinkable, spelling himself to be unable to get pregnant. There were adverse affects to that though, and my parents didn’t know. They didn’t know where he lived, and they couldn’t reach out with magic. What Rhone lacked in ability he made up for with knowledge of trinkets and amplifiers. He knew how to not be found.

“I’ll stay in my room, I’ll brush up on the books, I’ll think of how I can best serve the family,” I said, stringing together phrases that perked my parents ears.

“Good, good,” my mom said. “And clean. It stinks in here. But that could just be—” she sighed. “Do something. Open a window. But maybe not too much. Light a stick of incense or something.”

My father stood, nodding. “I’m just disappointed,” he said. “I should’ve taken your sister. She wanted to come with me.”

“That’s only because she didn’t want to polish mom’s silver,” I said. “So, it’s

Melize's fault, if you really think about it."

Her muffled cough was heard from behind the closed door.

"I knew she was there," I said, sitting upright on the bed. "So, how long will this last?"

They both shrugged.

"It's not entirely possible to tell," mom said, looking to my father. "But if you stay in here, you'll go through it. Just make sure to clean up with whatever it is you have to do."

I never considered my mom a prude, but here she was, almost disgusted by the idea of sexual maturity. I was already sexually mature, but the necklace had our heat cycles dialed down to a never gonna happen, but that didn't mean I didn't get horny.

They quickly left after that, forcing Mel to leave the hallway with them.

Laid back in bed, I stared at the ceiling again. I couldn't believe I'd been so stupid to have lost my necklace, or even left my hat at Ara's place. It was one sure fire way of forcing me to go back there, but now, I was probably not in the best state of being. Heat had always been that one phase of being where an omega was at their most vulnerable.

Hugged a pillow tight and pulling my legs up around it, I squeezed as much energy and force from my being into it. I so desperately wanted to be weaved and wrapped around Ara's body again. His sweaty cold body with two decades worth of dormant energy awakened in him.

My cock got hard at the idea and gyrated in my sweatpants, thrusting my hips into the

pillow. I screwed my eyes shut. I was desperate for him to be thrusting in me again. I needed it immediately.

And without even meaning to, I was back in his bedroom, back on his bed, the damp blood soaked into the sheets. My head across the room on the dresser. His melodic voice humming, as it got closer.

The bedroom door opened, and there he stood. Dressed smart, in a suit, holding my necklace in a hand and playing with the opalescent gem between his fingers.

“I didn’t think I’d see you again so soon.”

“And now I know why I’m in heat.” It explained a lot actually.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

The two remaining elders on the small counsel had asked me far too many questions. Like my intentions to being back in Manhattan. I had to inform the both of them that I never left, and that I was older than the both of them. Sure, only by a couple years, but it counted. Raquel and Sven then gave in and offered up the rightful seat to me. I could've refused them, but nobody refused a seat as an elder, it was better than being put out to pasture, which I'd heard some other covens and clans do to their elders.

It was only fifteen minutes after they'd left when I smelled Nash's sweetness return. At first, I assumed it was his blood staining my bedsheets, but there was life to it.

He laid on the bed, dressed now. A furtive look to him, with eyebrows and lips pursed in question.

"This was on the floor when you fainted," I said. "I had the clasp fixed for you."

"That's why—" he said, gulping hard. "That's why I'm in heat."

"Oh no."

I'd smelled it on him, and tasted it from him. I suppose he didn't want to be in heat. I didn't see the big deal about it, an omega in heat was a delicious thing indeed.

He smiled slightly, and looked at me, up and down. "Does that mean you're going to give me it back?"

I tossed it across to him. "Of course."

He caught it in one hand. “My parents noticed, well, the entire compound probably noticed.”

I joined Nash on the bed, down on my knees in front of him. “This is dangerous,” I said, tucking a hair behind his ear. “I actually needed to talk to you. So, my new position as an elder, means I’ve been given information that I didn’t have before this.”

“What is it?” he clasped the necklace hard. “Is this your way of breaking up with me? Because we’re not even together. But, we—have—I fear bonded, and I’m not sure—” his bottom lip trembled.

“No, no, no,” I said, stroking his cheek and cupping a hand at his chin. “I’m just now stuck.”

“You’re stuck?” he said, smiling. “Because I’m the one in heat right now. I’m the one who is really stuck.”

“Yeah, because as an elder, I can’t be with you, but the only way I can’t be an elder, is if I leave the city,” I said.

I’d never looked into the supernatural bylaws that the elders and leaders created. There were some hard and fast rules, specifically those about the age required and the force of which that would create an elder. There was no escaping my fate. I couldn’t be with Nash and be an elder, but I didn’t have a choice to be an elder, I was forced into that.

“So, are you moving?” he asked.

“It would solve all the problems,” I said, unable to stop touching him. “They also smelled you on me. So, your witch coven leaders are probably going to be searching



for you. I've heard witches keep to their kind."

He scoffed. "Witches will do anything but be independent," he said. "Everyone is always following someone else's rules. And I—I'm now just a pawn because all my feelings and thoughts are tainted by you. This bond." He reached for my hand and stroked it. "I can't even think. But wherever you go, I'll come with you."

"I'm not going to let you make a decision based on your current feelings," I told him. "If I'd known we would've bonded and more-so in your heat, I might've held back a little, but I also haven't had sex in a long time. I got a little carried away."

"So, what are you saying?" He grabbed my hand at his chin. "Because I need you to use straight forward language and expressions. Please."

"I'm saying, we can't make any decisions without thinking them through. I've been alive a long time. I've made decisions on the fly and the ones I think about first, always end up being better," I told him. "The one thing I know to be true, is that I need you. In here." I took his hand, still clinging to my wrist and placed it on my chest. "But I need to warn you that you could lose your entire family."

Nash's heart raced, the sound of it like a steel drum in my ears. "What's going to happen to them?"

"Not to them," I said. "But you. You've bonded with me. Your witches aren't going to like that."

"You know, my twin brother—"

"You have a twin."

"Yeah. Rhone. He's no longer in the family pictures now. He left because of issues,

so it's just me and my younger sister. I don't think my parents could survive with me leaving as well," he said. "And not just because it would only leave Melize as the only family member left, but because it'll look bad. On the outside, it'll look like they're the reason we both left."

"If your family choose, I can give them a comfortable life," I said. I had an intrinsic need to care for Nash and all his wants and needs. "Assuming, they're ok with the two of us being together."

I knew he wasn't thinking properly, his heart continued to beat, and his chest swelled as he tried to take in as much air as possible probably to calm his nerves. I wanted to squeeze him in a large hug, but I resisted, I could've made things worse with a bite on his neck to devour him. He brought out a hunger in me, a dangerous hunger.

"I understand now," he whispered. "Why my parents kept me from going into heat. They knew I would fall for someone who wasn't a witch."

"That's not the worst thing, is it?" I asked.

"I never saw myself with anyone," he said.

"I don't want you to change," I told him. "I don't want you to stop being the fun and carefree guy I saw performing magic tricks for humans."

"You make me feel more powerful," he said.

I grabbed his leg, my fingers digging in his inner thigh, feeling up, closer to the groin. "I'm not going anywhere," I said. "So, tell me what you want to happen, and I'll make it."

He looked at me, his eyes snapping wide. The colors of his irises shifted through the

entire rainbow spectrum. And like a heat beat, they throbbed with a halo of yellow.

“Yours eyes.” I removed my hand from his thigh to stroke his face. “Gorgeous. You—”

“I told you,” he whispered. “I feel—I feel so powerful around you. I can’t explain it, but it feels illegal almost.”

“You’re an aether witch, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

I kissed him, maintaining eye contact as they settled on purple and transformed to blue. With a hand on the back of his head, I lead him down against the pillow where I continued to kiss him, forcing my tongue in his throat and his tongue submitting to mine. His sweetness had me in a chokehold, and there was no way I’d ever give this up, not by force or will. Nash woke me from a two decade depression with a bang.

Nash shot up, banging heads with me. “I have to go,” he said. “My sister is trying to get in my room.”

“Don’t be long,” I said. “I want to take you somewhere special. Somewhere without interference from elders or witches.”

Once Nash vanished into the aether, I stormed out of my bedroom into the hallway.

Estefania was there, pretending like she hadn’t been listening. “Well,” she mumbled.

“We’re leaving,” I told her.

“No, uncle. Please, I’ve only just got here. I can stay. Hold the fort.”

“Didn’t you come here to learn from me?” I asked.

“Partly,” she said. “And also to teach you things you needed to learn. You know, technology and all that stuff.”

Estefania groaned and stormed off. “Ugh.”

“Just like your mother,” I laughed, calling out after her.

I round up the staff and informed them about the change.

The DeMauriel family had properties all over the world, and since the family numbers had dwindled, they were all almost unoccupied, with the exception of squatters, I assumed. In fact, there was the home in Vermont, that’s where Estefania’s father was currently living.

In the dining hall, there were six members of staff, and Estefania, all of them seated and stared at me at the head of their table.

“The elders have given me no choice but to relocate,” I said. “As you all know, I’ve found myself in a sticky situation, which I’m absolutely enamored by. I’ve taken a mate, but unfortunately, the elders of Manhattan have come together, forbidding it. It must be a new rule, because the last time I was awake, people were frolicking through the city without a care for who they mingled with.” I smacked my lips. “That was one of my most fond memories.”

Estefania raised her hand. “But haven’t they introduced the laws to make sure people keep their lines of succession clean.” Slowly, she stood. “A witch and a vampire. What would the offspring become? You’re also going to outlive a witch, and are much older than him.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” I grumbled, waving a hand at all the things I’d heard before. “But we’re bonded.. It’s more than just a bond. It’s a—” My teeth tapped together, clinking in search of the right word. “It’s in my soul. I feel like I’ve waited so long for him, my soul, it tells me that I’ve waited.”

“Uncle,” she said, interrupting me. “I love the idea of love, but with someone your equal. Nash is great, he was so much fun at the party, he has little tricks, but he’s from a no name family.”

I’d lived a long life, and at one point in that life, I had thought similarly to her. But none of those thoughts ever brought happiness to me. The idea of love was far fetched. I always assumed it would never happen for me, but now that it had, I wasn’t going to let anyone get in the way of it. And I’d rather go with the path of least resistance, and just leave this city than fight stupid supernatural bylaws.

“You have a lot to learn about love,” I said.

“But you barely know him,” she said.

That was the beauty of drinking from him. I didn’t have to spend hours in conversation, talking to him to feel like I knew him. I had him in me, the aura of his thoughts splashed with passion were enough.

I gave a single clap, silencing the dining room, although it was only my niece making sound. My staff leaned back against the stiff backed chairs.

“Maine is nice this time of year,” I said. “Ready my things. We’re going to take a little autumnal vacation while I figure this out.”

“Now it’s just a vacation?” she grumbled.

I loved my apartment. It was a jewel in the city. It always had been and it always would be, especially with the emerald green glass and the architecture. This would always be my home, and would stand long after I was gone, but right now, my thoughts were focused on Nash, and spending time alone with him, unimpeded by anyone else.

The staff sprung into action nearly immediately once I disbanded them to talk with my niece alone.

My niece wasn't happy about the plan, and I had told her she could stay here, but there wasn't going to be a staff to service the place, or her needs, and I'd be taking my blood stock with me, even if Nash was a fresh bag for me to drink from whenever I pleased.

"I could just go back to Vermont," she grumbled at me. "But then my dad would ask questions, and I'd rather not. He's still trying to get me married."

"You don't have to stay," I said. "Go out there and explore. Find a love connection."

"But it's not that easy."

"It isn't. But it doesn't mean you shouldn't try."

She sighed. "I think if you really wanted to, you'd stay here, fight the elders on the rule and really make a life with Nash."

"Trust me, I will," I told her.

It wasn't being completely honest with anyone.

The two remaining vampire elders in the city hadn't just told me about not being able

to romance Nash, but they'd informed me of a prophecy that all elders were sworn secret to protect. A prophecy that foretold the death of a bloodline through unpure blood in this year. The prophet, Dahlia had died over three hundred years ago. And she hadn't been wrong once.

From slip of paper with the transcribed prophecy, I'd seen the year and the location being the eastern coast of the Americas. Prophets like Dahlia were uncommon nowadays, but those who claimed to see the future were witches, not prophets.

I'd have to tell Nash, but right now, we had four more months until the year was over, and the old prophecy would be through.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

Melize had been banging on my door, furious with questions. She knew it was too late for me now. I'd found feelings in the arm of someone I was told to be scared of. Vampires weren't completely scary, but they were blood thirsty, and everyone else was seen as a natural resource to them.

"I'm pissed," she said once I let her in my room.

"I don't get why you're the one in your feelings," I grumbled.

"Did you—"

"What?"

"Your hat and necklace," she said. "You've been back there. After they told you to stay here."

"And so what if I did?"

She closed the door behind herself. "Mom and dad are going out of their minds. The other families in the compound are also not letting up on it. They want to know what happened. Everyone can smell you out there. One of the families has even offered their sons to bond with you, but they can't say that you've already been out there, fornicating with a vamp."

I just laughed, removing my hat and placing it over my chest as I laid my head on the pillow. "I can't stay here," I said. "The rules, the gossiping. It's all—" I grabbed a pillow from the stack and shoved it over my face to muffle a scream. I only gave it



about fifty per cent, but it was feral and loud.

Mel sat on the edge of my bed. “You’ve got to tell them,” she said. “They’re going to be kicked out.”

I glanced at her, her eyes filling with tears. “Is that the worst thing that could happen?” I asked.

“No—yes—who knows!”

“No, it’s not the worst,” I said. “Ever since we moved into this place, they’ve controlled everything. When we eat, when we practice magic, when we’re allowed to leave. If we couldn’t portal around, we might’ve done what Rhone did. In fact, I’m pretty sure that’s why he left.”

Melize grabbed my hand and squeezed it. “I don’t want you to leave, because I wanted to leave, and—and—” she broke out into a gentle sob. “And we both can’t leave.”

Now should’ve been the moment I told her about Ara and his proposition. But everyone was so obsessed with keeping everyone distanced that it wasn’t likely news that would sway their opinions.

“Mom and dad are used here,” I said. “They’ll have no trouble finding a new coven that doesn’t rely on them procreating to keep each generation coming up through the families.” I sighed harder. “And I was always going to leave, one day, I was never going to stay.”

“But you’re leaving for a vampire,” she said in a hushed tone. “You have somewhere to go. I have—well, I can go to Rhone, but he’s been keeping his distance, and he’s been quiet.”

“Maybe you can go to Brooklyn and find a nice boyfriend from the house of Lumen.”

Melize punched me. “That family is cursed,” she said. “I’d never.”

Each of the five witching elements were said to come from each of the five families. There was Ember, Cascade, Gale, Terra, and Lumen. Each one coincidentally located in New York City because of old Nephilim prophecies and promises.

“Besides, isn’t that like inbreeding?” she continued.

“Not technically, we’re aether witches like them, but they got the most concentrated dose of it,” I said. “You really need to read up on it. The five families have the most magic. Some sources say they were blessed by angels and demons themselves, and other sources say it was from a contaminated water well back in the middle ages when witches were hunted for sport, and five witches who lives near each other and practiced together, drank from this well and found untapped and unmatched magic. We don’t descend from them, because then we’d all be inbreeding.”

As I explained the theories, I watched her eyes glaze over.

“So, we’re not related to the Lumen family?”

“If we were, we might not have had to settle for living in a compound where we could be kicked out at a moments notice,” I grumbled.

“Why do they all live here?”

I got up out of bed and started to pack a bag. I needed to prepare to leave. It was inevitable. “Well, a couple hundred years ago, one of the Nephilim prophets, Rickard, basically told the five witches something about magic needing roots to grow, which they interpreted to mean they couldn’t move. So they divided the city. It’s in a book

somewhere the actual wording, but some people now think how something a prophet says is so open to interpretation that anything can happen, and some people believe that when a prophet dies, so do their prophecies.”

Melize threw herself across the bed and groaned. “So boring,” she said.

“And this is why our teachers growing up always said you lacked focus.” I stuffed folded shirts into a rucksack. “But prophecies are just words we’re supposed to trust. And I guess the witches trust them most, because they stuck around, and look at them, all five families are living life full of power and money.”

“Do you think they’ve killed for it?” she asked.

“Absolutely. There was an interpretation of the prophecy that actually said they were required to spill blood and bury their dead beneath their homes for the roots of their magic to feed from.”

“I should read more, but—nothing keeps my attention,” she said. “I finished watching *Desperate Housewives* for the sixth time. I just need what you said in the format of that.”

As I continued to pack, I reworded my explanation to her, putting it in terms of Gabrielle, Bree, Lynette, Susan, and Edie as the house of Lumen, the so-called cursed house.

“See, I prefer that. Edie shouldn’t have died the way she did either.”

“I know, what they did to her character was the worst,” I grumbled. “I think it went downhill after her death.”

“Hard agree. And Susan, ugh. Least favorite character. I mean, was there an episode

where she wasn't a victim or crying?"

"We're getting off track," I said. "So, all the families while living here are connected. They can't leave. Well, the head of the family can't, if they believe what they've been told. And if they do, they lose it all."

Mel finally realized what I was doing and grabbed the bag from me. "You're not leaving yet. Stop packing."

"I have to," I told her. "I'm in love."

"No," she snapped. "You might know more about the history of us, but you don't know love. And all you're feeling right now is a mix of the heat hormones and—a mate bond."

"So?"

She grabbed my arm and gestured to slap me. "I will," she said. "You can't make a life decision on a one-night stand."

"But my heart and soul don't think of it like that," I told her. "It knows. I think we were meant to be together. I really do."

"But I don't want you to leave just yet." She let go of the bag. "Nash. Please think about the family for once. You need to warn them."

"Are you going to warn them?"

Melize gave a reluctant nod. "Obviously. I can't imagine what they must think or feel, for all of their kids to leave. We should give them the opportunity to leave with us."

Now that was the right time I should've told her about Ara's offer, and still, I couldn't bring myself to do it.

"Oh god. He's marked you," she whispered, touching my neck. "Have they seen this?"

"No."

"Jeez, Nash. Well, for what it's worth, they should see it, and they should know what's going on. If it was me, I'd tell them."

I knew my sister well, and her lies were obvious. This lie in particular stung. I knew she'd never tell our parents if she was in my shoes.

As much as she tried to stop me, I wasn't going to let her. There was a lot of new feelings happening within me right now, and this was all new to me. The only thing I could think about was Ara. I had to be with him, no matter the cost.

Melize didn't leave my room once, trying to quietly convince me to stay. The same arguments again and again. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew I couldn't stay here.

I took a portal back to Ara's apartment while my sister was at the furthest point of my room. I ended up in the bedroom as a man was on his knees, pulling the wooden posts out from beneath the broken bed. I dropped my heavy bag on the ground with a thud, startling him.

"Ah, you must be Nash, Mr. DeMauriel's mate," he said, standing upright.

"Hi, yes, I'm Nash Cavanaugh. Where's Ara?"

“Mr. DeMau—”

The bedroom door opened with a breeze of cool air and with it, Ara strutted in with the air swishing through his shoulder-length golden hair. It delivered a sweet scent with it

“You’re back,” he said, racing to me. “I mean, I knew you’d be back.” He glanced to the man on his knees. “Horatio, could you please leave us alone. There are things that need to be packed in the other room.”

Once we were alone, I could’ve dropped to my knees in front of him from the emotional explosion running through me. “I just left, I didn’t even tell anyone.”

“I’ve sent two of my staff up ahead to Maine,” he said, bridging the gap between us. He took my hand to caress his soft shaved cheeks with it. “I don’t want your family sending people to us. You should’ve told them.”

The tangled touch of my fingers tingled against his skin. “You don’t have to worry about it.” His worry was bittersweet against my magical tendrils. “I just want to be with you.”

“I want to be with you as well,” he said. “But I’ve lived a long life, and I don’t want to have people with pitchforks prodding our relationship. I feel like there’s going to be so much of that already.”

And at the juicy core of my touch to his skin, I could feel a secret hidden deep inside. “You’re holding something back,” I said, looking up into his eyes.

“I’m still getting my bearings,” he said.

“That’s not it. You’re not telling me something.”

He sighed, taking my hand and pulling it away. “You felt that through magic or through our bond?”

“Both?”

“There is something, and I want to start this on the right foot together,” he said. “The vampire elders went into more detail about why we couldn’t be together. And maybe why everyone keeps to themselves. There’s a prophecy.”

I burst into laughter. “Everyone is so scared of a prophecy lately. I’m not one of the five families. It shouldn’t matter.”

“This is about ending a bloodline,” he said. “And they were specific about the location, which makes sense why Manhattan’s supernatural scene runs scared. Everyone is out to make a family and put down roots.”

“Roots,” I repeated quieter. “That’s also part of the other prophecy with the witches, b like I said, that doesn’t even involve me. I’m not from a fancy bloodline.”

Ara’s eyes flickered from side to side, making sure to look at me in each one. “If we leave, continue finding out what this is, and come back, that prophecy won’t have legs to stand on.”

“For a vampire, I didn’t think you’d be superstitious. Nephilim words, they could’ve said anything, and people run around eating it up.” I touched his face again, reconnecting ourselves. “That was your secret.”

“I didn’t want to scare you,” he said. “This bond has me in a way I’ve never felt before. It’s infectious.”

“Love is infectious. And you’ve poisoned me with it.” I gave him a kiss. His

sweetness on my lips. I licked them and went in for a second kiss.

“Maybe I should suck it out of you.” He extended his tongue, opening his mouth slightly to reveal his pointed incisors. “Again.”

I nodded. “Uh-huh.”

“Once more before we hit the road,” he said, sweeping me off my feet. My hat falling to the ground. In lightning speed, he carried me across the bed and laid me down. “I wanna rip them off you again. But—I guess we’ve got to conserve some clothes.” His fingers unbuttoned my shirt with expert precision.

I tried to unbutton his for him, but he didn’t have the same approach, tearing his shirt off and throwing it. “Taste me again,” I said, turning my head to reveal the unmarked side of my neck. “Please.”

Each time he bite even the slightest amount, I felt power surge through me, it was quick and electric. The gentle zaps tensed me. I wrapped my arms around his head, encouraging him to latch onto me.

“I can’t do it all the time,” he said, licking the side of my neck. “You need that sweet, precious crimson resource to keep you darling body going.” He kissed me and nuzzled his nose into me. “But I need another taste, especially with all those hormones.”

“All yours.”

His lips were anesthetic, numbing my skin from the initial pain to his bite. A moan came out of my mouth, unable to control myself, as if he was pressing on a nerve that forced me into action. Magic continued to surge through me. I didn’t know if this was heat, or the bite, but either way, it was the most power I’d felt fill up my body in a



long time.

After a single bite, he wrapped his arms around me, pulling me on top. “I want your kisses now. All of them.”

Slowly, I made my way down his body with my mouth. I summoned threads of magic and wrapped them around his wrists and arms, keeping his body confined to the bed.

“Oh, I see what you’re doing,” he said, struggling against my magic. “As long as I get to eat that ass and taste your slick, I don’t care if you tie me down. It’s always nice to see a little omega flex themselves.”

I gave his chest a little smack and pulled on his nipple. “A little omega,” I scoffed. “I—I’d usually be mad about that.”

“You can’t be mad,” he said, his hand attempting to pull at the thread. “You’re bonded to me. If anything, you’re getting a kick out of it.”

It was a slow bubble in my belly. He was right. I was getting a kick out of it. He was my first Alpha, and my last. And nobody was going to get in my way. I went back down on him, giving his body some returning bites, not breaking through the flesh, but enough for him to give me the satisfaction of him writhing around and pretending it hurt.

Reaching his waist, I yanked his trousers and underwear down by his ankles. His thick cock flopped back up against his belly button. Precum leaking out, making his skin all glossy. I lapped it up, tracing the length of his cock with my tongue and watching as it throbbed, letting more sweet sugary precum out of his tip.

“Good omega,” he said with a little chuckle. He knew exactly what he was doing, forcing me to act a little more aggressive with the oral. I went down on his cock as

deep as possible, knowing it was going to bruise my soft palette on the roof of my mouth. “You better not do any of that witch stuff on me. I’m not gonna cum so quick this time.”

As I continued to suck his cock, I pulled my trousers and underwear off. It was only a couple of hours ago that I was dumping his lying on his chest and then dumping his load out. In a matter of hours, everything had changed, and I had zero regrets.

Once we were both naked, I turned around on his body and sat on his face. His one request was to eat my ass and he did it so well. I almost didn’t let him breath as I leaned back on his face and jerked my cock. He’d broke free of my weak magical threads, his hands at my ass cheeks, prying them apart so he could get a better angle.

He bucked his legs and knees, forcing me down to suck his cock and giving him some breathing room. Quickly, he took control, picking me up, my face in his crotch. He stood with me and flipped me around like I weighed absolutely nothing.

“We’ve already ruined the bed,” he said.

I wrapped my legs around his waist. “Where do you wanna ruin now?”

“My dresser. The door. I would say the wall, but I don’t want to compromise the integrity of this place.”

I stuck my tongue out, closer to his face and licked his nose. “I wanna break everything with you.”

“Except you, I’m scared of breaking you,” he whispered before licking me back. His cock jumping up and hitting my ass, searching for my hole.

“Don’t be scared of that. I don’t think you’re all that strong.”

I might not have mated with an Alpha before, but I certainly knew how to play on the emotions of one. Especially one threatening to break things in a sexually frustrated rut.

“Fuck me,” I whispered. “If you think you can do it better this time.”

“Better.” He raced across the room with me, sitting me on his dresser. He threw the mirror and all the products on the dresser off, most of them smashing. He had a big grin on his face. “That’s a good sound.” He lifted my legs up, pressing them as far back as they’d go.

“Now you’re just teasing me.”

“You’re mine to tease, and mine to please,” he said as I held my legs up and he whacked my cock and balls with his cock. “But if you want something, tell me, and I’ll do it.”

As he slowly inserted his cock inside, opening me and going deep, he stared deep into my eyes. The red blood stained lips with saliva dripped down his chin. It was feral. I wanted to be sat on his face again, but my lips would do.

He pulled me away from the dresser and pushed me against the wall to the side, my legs unable to keep bending that way as they fell by his side and I got a hold of him once more, wrapping them tight around him, not wanting his cock to slip out of me.

“I love you,” I let out.

“I love you harder.” He slammed his hips deep into me, causing a rumble against the wall.

We didn’t stay in one position too long, but I was always in his arms, as close to his

body as possible. His cock knotted deep in me, he wasn't letting go of me, and I might've been fucked to the point of almost gaping, but I wasn't letting him go.

Stumbling and dropping back to the bed, he moaned in my ear.

The moment he came and filled me up, I shot cum between our bodies, more liquid and clear than the first time, but that was usually the case with a second orgasm in close succession to the other.

Ara cock kept throbbing in me as my stomach swelled, pressing against him. I laid on his body and listened to the faint rhythmic pound of his heart.

"You meant what you said?" he whispered. "Saying you love me."

"I don't know what it is, but we're bonded."

"I've never bonded before," he said. "And that's not to say I hadn't been with—"

I pressed a finger to his mouth, hushing him. "I don't want to know about your exes." And slowly, I eased myself off his cock. "And you won't know about mine." Although, just the connection of our skin, I could feel images of the omegas he'd been with in the past. His history was vast, I could never immerse myself in it all fully.

But I loved him. Or maybe it was lust. Either way, it ran deep.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I didn't think we'd ever make it to Maine, but it was a pressing issue. I didn't believe what those elders thought about words of people who were long dead, but I knew that there were a lot of people who would be out to get me if I stuck around. And I'd lived long enough going under the shadows without people gunning for my life.

My staff worked quick.

Nash was excited by the entire thing. He'd never been outside of the city before. All of his family had been stuck in a cult-like witch commune. I'd tasted parts of his memory. I'd felt the way he'd thought about them. It was an incredible feeling, it gave me a renewal on life.

And then Estefania came in and tried to bring all of that back down on me. Accosting me in the foyer of the apartment while Nash was pressed against the reinforced window, staring out over the city in awe. Probably unaware of Estefania's ranting.

"Uncle, I'm staying here," she said. "There always needs to be a DeMauriel here. At all times. And—"

"Darling, your last name isn't DeMauriel," I offered with a chuckle.

"By blood," she said. "And you're going to need that here. So, I'm staying, even if thee isn't a staff. I'm trying to help the family. Come on. We've lost a lot of reputation. And the vampires are already talking."

"They are?" I laughed. "What? Telepathically. I doubt that."

“No,” she said, shining the bright screen of her phone in my face. “On the internet. There are so many places now online where we can talk about things. Well, the elders in the city know you’re turning the post down. And they know you’re doing it for a witch.”

I grabbed her phone. This wasn’t a good idea at all. Having access to the internet at the touch of her fingertips. I knew there was witchcraft, but this was a different type of witchery. “Are you telling them any of this?”

“I haven’t said a word,” she said.

“Good. So, don’t say a word. Just say we’ve left town. We won’t be coming back until I—until we’ve really bonded, I’m going to marry him.” I glanced across the room at him. He was unaware of the plans I was hoping to make with him. “I’ve never felt this way about anyone. And I think there’s a reason why I found myself waking from my hibernation now. Other than it being something I requested. It was so that I could meet him.”

She scoffed. “Even if he was the one that gatecrashed your party.”

“Even more sense. We were supposed to meet. We were supposed to be together. Don’t you see it?”

I’d been accused of seeing signs that weren’t there before, but this was real. My feelings were real about this. And I was going to see it through until I saw a sign that said otherwise, but even those signs would be ignored because I was bonded with Nash, and there were very few ways to break a mate bond.

I didn’t mind Estefania staying behind. I knew the only reason she was here was because she was looking to live in this large, luxurious apartment. But she would have to staff it herself if she wanted to take full advantage of all the amenities it could

create.

“When are we going?” Nash asked. “I have a—” He was cut off by the penthouse elevator dinging. The door opened up and inside it stood a girl with curly hair.

“Hi, how did you get up?” I asked.

As she came out of the elevator, Nash called out her name. “Melize, how did you?”

She pressed a hand to her chest and gasped. “You’ve not gone yet.”

“No, but we’re about to,” I told her. “But who are you?”

“I’m his sister,” she said. “Nash. You just left.”

He approached her and cuddled up to me in the process, taking my hand. “If I told them, they would’ve tried to keep me back,” he said. “And that would’ve killed me.” His palms were sweaty in mine. “Don’t tell them You can’t tell them.”

“Didn’t you invite your family to stay?” I asked him. “Because I offered it. I know the situation your family must be in. I have this—” I glanced at Estefania. “This apartment is free, with the exception of my niece. If your family is kicked out of the compound, I extend an invite to you.”

“I didn’t tell her,” he whispered to me. “I didn’t want you to think he was trying to buy your respect with it.”

She let out a sobbing laugh. “Fuck. Nash. I guess there’s no convincing you otherwise. So, that only leaves me with telling mom and dad. Obviously, it’ll just mean I can never leave, which is selfish, but it also means I’m going to be pressured into marrying someone and having a child. Uh. I don’t want kids.”

“Move in here then,” I told her. “You shouldn’t have to feel pressured into doing any of that. Obviously, you’ll have no staff, so you’ll have to feed yourself. But freedom and free will is something I value most. It’s why I’m taking Nash, we need free will away from the words of old prophets.”

I didn’t know his sister, but I could see the cogs turning behind her eyes. She was clearly thinking through her options, and it didn’t matter what she said, I was taking Nash to Maine, and nobody else was invited.

“It’s a good idea,” he said. “We’ll be back once we figure out things.”

“What’s the witch prophecy got to do with any of this?” she asked.

“Not that one,” he said. “This is different. It’s a vampire prophecy.”

“An elder vampire would end a powerful witch’s bloodline,” I said. “And I am officially an elder vampire.”

“But he’s not a—” she furrowed her brow as she glared at her brother. “Nash, you’re not that powerful of a witch.”

“I never said I was, but I’m stronger than a lot of witches,” he said. “And I’d rather be safe than whatever ending a bloodline means. But for all we even know, those things are bullshit anyway.”

There was a moment of quiet that was interrupted by a member of my staff carrying a cooler box into the foyer. It was marked with a blood symbol.

“You’ve gotta be safe,” she said. “I know I can’t tell you what to do, Nash, just like I couldn’t tell Rhone, but fuck, mom and dad are going to be pissed.”



I kept a holding Nash's hand, feeling small surges of energy pulse through my palm. I knew he respected his parents. And from everything I'd heard about them, they were just trying to give their kids a good life, and I knew I could give Nash the best life.

"Can we talk?" she asked. "In private."

Nash took a corner of the foyer to talk with his sister. I directed the cooler of blood to the van I'd had them prepared with things to take to the house with us.

"No blood," Estefania mumbled, approaching me. "You have a supplier in the city?"

"I told you, if you stay, you're fending for yourself. But we're not taking all the blood. I don't really need as much anymore."

"Because of him." She nodded to Nash. "Has he agreed to be your personal blood bag?"

"No, because I'm older, I don't require as much." I rolled my eyes. "Honestly, if I were you, I'd stop complaining. I'm allowing you to stay here, and you don't have to go home, even though you probably should."

She fussed a little, tugging at the cuffs of her sweater. "In Vermont, we're very accepting, but I was brought up knowing that a vampire's true mate was another vampire." She then snickered. "Trust the old one to have a more progressive idea of relationships."

"Darling, I was alive when everyone loved everyone, and anything went. It was only—" A sharp jagged emotion struck me at the throat. "Around the time your mom was murdered, people changed. People were clinging to their groups before that. Shifters, vampires, witches, whatever you are, or were, you started to stick with that group. But I've always been open, and I think showing our communities that we can

be together is a show of force.” It wasn’t a prepared statement, but more of what I was feeling in the moment, even if I was going out of my way to accommodate for the bullshit of my own community.

The moment Nash finished talking to his sister, he came to me and hooked an arm around mine. “Ok, let’s go before my sister tries to pull me back home.”

“Don’t worry,” she called out. “I know there’s no convincing you. I’m just stressed out because I’d love to live here, with that view, and—”

“Do it,” Estefania said. “Besides, I need a friend in the city. Unless you’re afraid to live with a vampire.”

I smacked my hands. “Great,” I said. “You can both do whatever you want to do, and we’ll leave you to it.”

We were soon in the elevator and down at the garage. There was a small van and my town car, two of my staff ready for us to depart, waiting on us. So much had happened today, I was impressed they’d done so much today, and so much I’d done with Nash today.

“You want me to drive us, or I can have someone drive us,” I offered him.

“I think I’d like you to drive us, if you remember how,” he giggled. “I just want to spend more time with you alone without any of your staff listening to us. It kinda feels weird to have a people who listen to your every whim.”

I tugged him into my arms and kissed his forehead, hitting his hat almost off his head. “When we’re in Maine, I’ll let you look through my family archives, and you can see just how much power and influence my family has.”

He kissed me back. “I wish I could give you the same access, but my family have always lived in poverty and shit like that. Well, I say that, but we’ve never had anything, or property like that. And you have houses everywhere.”

“Well, vampires live longer,” I told him. “We mass wealth. Collect it. And since our need for blood satisfies almost everything, the cost of food is way down. But obviously, that doesn’t always apply. Some vampires don’t live long and most of them don’t make much.” Growing up in whatever year it was before people had easy access to healthcare and education, vampires were feared into giving over property and wealth, but nowadays, that wasn’t the case. The world was awake to us, and that meant we didn’t operate in the shadows anymore.

I sent the two members of staff off in the van and got the keys to the town car. I’d been driving longer than Nash had been alive, and it was like riding a bike, although I had been out of practice for a while physically, but mentally, it was like I’d been driving just last week.

In the car, Nash adjusted his seat a bunch and played around with the settings on the console of the car. Technology I wasn’t too familiar with, the glowing screen was a little jarring, like a small television unit in a car. It was fascinating to see him play with it like a form of witchcraft everyone had access to.

“So, tell me about this place in Maine,” he said. “Like the address and I can put it into the GPS.”

“We don’t need that,” I said. “I know the route well. I was brought up there. And every other weekend or so, I would come down to New York, a bit of a hunting ground,” I said.

“I thought the apartment was where you grew up,” he said.

“No, it’s a large house surrounded by forest,” I said, smacking my lips and recalling the sweet fresh pine air. “It’s been a long time since I’ve been there. I’ll drive through the night. You should get some sleep. Unless you don’t need it.”

Nash relaxed into the seat, collecting his hat against his chest. “I definitely need it. Today has been crazy.”

That was one word for it I hadn’t planned any of it, but I was grateful. Throughout my life, I’d been vocal about the universe sending me signs and places where I needed to be. The only time it failed me was my sister’s death. I couldn’t have saved her, the poison had already infected her entire body, she’d done it to herself. Thinking she would wipe out the entire group of elder vampires by having them drink from her. That’s how much she didn’t want to become an elder, she killed herself because of it.

For the entire nine-hour drive to the estate in Maine, I was going back and forth with a headache of stormy thoughts. It was the first time since I’d woke up where I was alone to think. Nash’s sound asleep body, snoring slightly reminded me I wasn’t actually alone.

My sister’s voice still fresh in my head, telling me that I was doing the right thing. I knew I was, I felt it as much in my soul. I just wished she was here to give me advice, maybe if she was still alive and an elder, she would’ve attempted to sway their minds about the prophecy, telling them it had already come to pass already.

We arrived at the house as the sun was breaking over the trees. It was a gorgeous glowing orange view. The house was nestled inside a large overgrowth of trees and bushes. The van had arrived a little earlier and they were unloading it.

“We’re here,” I whispered to Nash, getting close to his cheek. I gave him a gentle kiss.

He gasped awake. “I—”

“You ok?”

His bright bloodshot eyes, stared into mine. “My parents were trying to call me in my sleep.”

“I didn’t hear your phone.”

“Mentally,” he said. “They were doing their best. But I’ve got wards up.”

I took his hand. “You want to see the house?”

He turned to look out of the window. Slack jawed expression on his face said everything. He was excited and impressed. It was going to be nice starting out our mate bond here.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

My family were known to communicate through thought, so it was no surprise that they tried to contact me by bombarding stressors to me mentally. They came to me as nightmares, screaming in my head. I was mostly lucid, feeling their voices beg me to come back home. And all of that stress disappeared the moment Ara woke me, telling me we'd arrived.

I held his hand as we walked a gravel path to a large three story house of deep grey and chipped blue paint panels. The house itself was surrounded by tall grass and trees. The leaves were turning burnt orange and red as autumn was almost here.

"How long has this place been in your family?" I asked him.

"My grand father built it," he said. "I don't recall the date. It's been built on since then, but it was originally built by my grandfather."

"How many members of your family are still alive?"

"Just me and my niece," he said. "But it used to be a lot more."

"If you don't want to talk about it, we don't have to," I said, clinging to his hand a little harder. "If it makes you uncomfortable that is."

We stood in front of the steps to the porch and he embraced me. "Ask me anything you want," he said, kissing me on the forehead. "Don't forget your hat. I put it on the back seat so you didn't squash it." He ruffled a hand through my hair.

"I'll get it later. I wanna see what this place looks like. And the land too." I briefly

closed my eyes. The sounds of nature were strange. Not that I found nature strange, but because I was so used to the noises of the city. “Do you have a herb garden?”

“A herb garden?” he asked, laughing slightly. “I can’t say I’d know that. Are you thinking of cooking?”

“For spells,” I said. “I’m not an earth witch, but I’ve read up on so much about earth magic, I’d love to try out a couple things.”

“We can do that later, but for right now, I want to pick you up and carry you over the threshold,” he said, reaching down and squeezing my ass.

I leaned my head into his shoulder and inhaled him. “Take me then.”

As Ara carried me into the house, I noticed how his staff were like ghosts. I saw glimpses of them around, but I never once heard them. They were there, but they were never registered in my peripherals at all. I feared that was Ara’s bond rubbing off on me, I didn’t grow up with a staff of people—let alone vampires around me.

Ara carried me up a set of creaky stairs, down a hall, and into a bedroom full of bright light. A bed with posts and white sheets wafting in the breeze. He laid me on the bed, and laid his body half on top of me, and half on the bed. “This is the biggest room in the house,” he said. “I made them give it a repaint before we got here, so it might still smell of paint.”

As soon as he mentioned it, the sharp smell of it hit me. “I love it.”

He kissed my neck and cheek. “You want to freshen up before breakfast?”

“Are my clothes up here?”

“I meant taking a bath,” he said. “But yes, I can get them up here. So, you want to take a bath with me?”

I stroked his face and traced his lip with my finger. “Yes, please.”

He pretended to bite my finger. “Good. Because I’ve been driving for so long, I stink. And the only thing I want to smell of is you.”

Ara climbed off the bed, leaving me there to look at the wooden frame of the bed post above. I hadn’t seen beds like this before, only in movies dramatizing older historic places. After sleeping in the car and my entire body aching, the bed was a relief.

I turned over to follow Ara as he went around the bed into an adjoining room.

“Since the house is so old, is the plumbing and electrics good?” I asked.

He peered out to me. “Last updated thirty years ago,” he said. “But yeah, it’s fine. And we don’t need electricity. We’ve got each other, and that’s the only spark I’m interested in.”

I giggled and kicked my legs. “That was smooth.”

“Just stay there, I’m going to make sure we have hot water,” he said, going back into the bathroom. “And we’re going to need someone to bring up the towels because these ones in here look like they’d rip a layer of your skin off.”

“Show me.”

As water echoed from the bathroom, he threw one of the stiff and rough textured towels at me.



“Ew. It’s like cardboard.”

“There’s another,” he said.

“Don’t you have fabric softener here?”

“I don’t think they’ve been washed in thirty years.”

I could believe that. I whacked the stiff towel and dust flew off it.

Ara came back into the bedroom. “The water is hot. Come on.” He grabbed my arm and tugged me toward the side of the bed. “Get undressed, I’m going to have things brought up.”

“Can you get them to bring my bag up too?” I asked. “I have a body cream in there. It’s my favorite. It’s scented like peaches.”

He smacked his lips. “Is that why eating your ass is like trying to pit a peach with my teeth?” he said, sticking his tongue out. “I’m looking forward to that later.” Before Ara headed out of the room, he told me to watch the bath. He wouldn’t be long.

The floorboards in this place creaked under every single step I took. I went to the window, looking out to see the van and car parked up across a large clearing of dead grassland. The white paint on the walls was still glossy from the fresh coat of paint. I almost wished they hadn’t painted them. I wanted to see them, and the tapestry of paper that might’ve laid there. There were memories inside everything, and I wished I could’ve unlocked them with a touch.

Ara was back in the bedroom before I’d even managed to finish mentally feeling out my surroundings. The tendrils of magic reached out and pulled back in, trying to

uncover anything about Ara that he hadn't told me yet.

"In the zone," he said, planting my bag on the bed and two thick towels from over his arm. "You ready to take a bath with me? Or you want more time out here?" He somehow knew what I was doing, which shouldn't have been a surprise since we were connected.

"It's a new surrounding," I told him. "Sorry, I didn't check on the—"

"It's fine," he said. "Although you should've taken a look inside. It's not a modern bathroom. Be warned."

On his arm, we went into the bathroom together. It was covered in a dull green tile. The bath tub itself looked rusted around the edges and the taps. The sink was covered in scratches and chips, and the toilet flusher was attached to a string and tank on the wall.

"You're right," I said. "It's different."

"How different?"

"Well, it's better than a bucket, I suppose."

He squeezed me in his arms. "I'll have it updated for you. Depending on how long we're staying here." He gave my forehead another kiss. "And that might be a while."

"I don't have anything to go back for," I said, and I truly meant it.

It surprised me how well I'd connected and attached myself to Ara after barely knowing him. But he'd asked for that first kiss, and I'd felt the spark with it. A kiss that transformed my entire life. A kiss that almost sent me into heat, and part of me

thought he'd taken the necklace of me on purpose to trigger it. I knew I'd done crazy things in lust as well, but not quite as crazy with the humans I'd been with.

"It doesn't look like they've unpacked the soaps yet, but I just want to get in here and relax," he said, unbuttoning his shirt.

The bath was scalding. "You can't get in it yet."

"Oh, I can. I need it."

I watched Ara undress, not even putting on a show, just whipping everything off until he was naked. It was the first time seeing his cock all soft, yet still thick with his tip showing through the foreskin. His small bush of hair above it, begging me to grab him by it and play in the curls.

"I'll get in now and let it cool around me," he said. "You can't handle this heat. Your sweet little body would get third degree burns."

With fascination, I stared at him as he climbed into the bath. His pale skin immediately turning bright red where the water touched. He had no reaction to it, other than a slight hum as he sat and relaxed against back of the tub.

"It feels like I've just renewed a layer of my skin," he said.

"You want me to grab those hard towels for you in there?" I asked. "You can scrape it off."

"You want to check under there, there might be some old soaps, and I don't think they go out of date, do they?"

I shrugged, dipping to the cabinet under the sink. There were a couple of soaps in

plastic wrappers each one coated in a layer of century-old dust. “I can’t see the fragrances,” I told him, rubbing a thumb across the packaging. “I—”

“Probably nothing fancy,” he said.

I tore the packet open. Inside, there was a dried piece of soap. I threw it into the tub. “Hopefully it will rehydrate.” I stuck my nose in to smell faint vanilla notes. “I think it’ll still be good to use.”

Ara grabbed the soap and lathered it between his palms. “I think so.”

Still on my knees, I approached the tub. It was hot to the touch. I turned the faucet off, knowing I still had to get inside it once it cooled. “I didn’t really have the time to think about this place or the offer,” I told him, putting my fingers dangerously close to the water and feeling the heat. “I know it’s all happening so quickly, but—”

He touched my hand a little, a strange mixture of heat and cool from his skin was oddly inviting. “But it feels like we’ve been together for so long.”

“It’s the bond,” I said, dipping my hand into the water and immediately yanking it out. “Because I feel the same, and I’ve read up on bonds for so many years. It’s why I refused to date, and only had sex with—” I quickly mushed my lips together. “No talk of exes. It feels wrong.”

“Humans just aren’t satisfying,” he said. “In bed, that is. Their blood is ok, but honestly, I don’t think I ever want another drop of blood that isn’t yours.” He sucked on his teeth. “I should get that craving under control. I know we’re different in that respect.”

“You mean, because I don’t drink blood and you do.”

“That’s exactly what I mean.” He took my hand by the wrist and pulled it in close to his lips. “How does it feel to be drank from?”

I was practically pushing my wrist into Ara’s face. “It feels good,” I said. “Makes me feel strong.”

“Not weak?”

“No, I think it’s the adrenaline.”

He kissed my wrist a couple times. “Well, don’t worry, I’m not a ravenous vampire. I wanna feel your power too on me. I need to feel it, if you are the powerful witch from the prophecy.”

“I know I’m not, but in heat, I have a little more of a magical punch,” I told him. “Plus, my affinity is aether magic, it’s sometimes telepathic, but it’s always unpredictable.” I cupped his chin with my hand, trying to feel out for him. I clung to him with magic, the threads on him were coated in static. Brushing over a single thread had his thoughts in my mind.

I love you with my entire being. I would turn entire cities over to find you if you were taken from me. His words were soft, almost on the tip of his mental tongue.

“I heard that,” I said.

“I was hoping you would. It’s the absolute truth.”

“I’m going to try something.” I took my hand back, losing the almost feeling of being one with him.

With both hand hovering above the bath water, I closed my eyes and listened to all

the elements. I focused in on the water and with a couple deep breaths, inhaling deep and blowing out soft, the heat of the bath raised up around my face.

Ara cooed. "Making a jacuzzi?"

The water bubbled and as I dipped a hand to test the temperature, I could feel it dip from the scalding heat to a cooler warmth. "It worked."

"You're sweating," he said, swiping a thumb against my forehead. I placed it on his tongue and sucked it. "Don't exert yourself on my account."

I wasn't just sweating, I was horny. My heart raced as I stood and started to pull my clothes away. The desperation to be naked and one with Ara was strong. Too strong. The strongest I'd ever felt anything before. A deep throaty moan came out as I was down to my underwear and my hand rubbed against my bulging cock.

"What are you waiting for?" he asked, splashing a handful of water at me. "Take 'em off and come in."

With my back to him, I tried my best to tease him with the action. I pulled them down slowly until they were around my ankles. "Like this?" I asked, reaching behind and grabbing my ass cheeks. I spread them and bent over, giving him a nice, long look at my hole. "You want this?"

"Now," he said. "I need it."

I shook my ass in his face, backing up. "You wanna get it?"

His warm wet body came around me and pulled me back into the tub with him. Between his legs, he embraced me, covering my body with water in small splashes from his cupped hands. "You're all mine," he said. "I've got you for good." Then his

hand grabbed my cock. He squeezed it and nibbled at the top of my earlobe. “Are you always hard?”

“Just for you,” I said, reaching around and grabbing his chubbed cock going up my back. “You’re always hard too.”

He continued to bite at my earlobe. “That’s my natural state. I can’t help it being so thick and heavy.” His other hand sipped under me and touched my hole, circling it with a finger. “Don’t pucker it, you’re not fooling me.”

“That’s it’s natural state,” I giggled. “It’s always tight. Until your tongue touches it.”

His tongue came at the back of my neck, he wrapped it around the necklace. “You always wear this then?”

“It stops me going into heat, I already told you that,” I said. “Not useful right now, but I feel useless like this. I just want to cum and have my ass played with.” Normally, I just wanted that as well, but in heat, that need was multiplied by a thousand.

A finger penetrated me, and swiftly followed by a second finger. “I’m not going to deny you that.”

Lifting myself slightly on the edge of the tub, I’d never fucked in a bath before. Everything was a moving part. I couldn’t use my hand to direct his cock in me, and I couldn’t attempt to mount him with how my feet were slipping around.

“Let me,” he said, taking control. He wrapped his arms around my stomach and squeezed, just as he positioned my ass on his cock in the water. The pressure of his cock was intense, and quickly deep inside me as my feet slipped and his cock was implanted inside me.

Throwing my head back against his shoulder, he turned to kiss me, his tongue making my mouth his new host. His centuries of knowledge on pleasure had me in a hold, physically and mentally, he satisfied me with small bursts of adrenaline-filled bliss. I was just a thing for him to put himself inside, and I had no problem with being a thing.

Caressed with warm water and that was being manually heated and cooled by our bodies. My hands were glued to the tub, holding me in place. Moaning into Ara's mouth, he ate each one of them with his tongue, deeper in the back of my mouth. One hand around my waist to keep me seated on his cock, his other hand jerked my cock.

I'd already surrendered to him, the only thing I had control over was my grip on the tub.

"Can I have a bite?" he asked, thrusting deep in me as he held me deep. "I need it."

"Yes." I turned my head to the other side and let him go for my neck.

I knew there was no getting off since he was inside me, throbbing and stretching me at the base. His bites felt like rough kisses. He latched onto my neck and at the moment he drank from me, I came. My eyes rolling back in elation from the squeeze on all my senses.

Post-nut sensations trickled through me, turning me limp as I rested on him until he came to completion. He lasted a couple more minutes, right up until he stopped drinking from me. He filled me up inside, caressing my belly.

I could've lived in that moment forever.

Part of me wondered if we were going to.



We'd mate bonded for life.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

The more time I spent with my cock inside Nash, the more I was happy with my decision to hibernate for so long. Mentally, I was back twenty years ago, but physically, I was in the moment with him.

We were interrupted in the bath with someone bringing a collection of shampoo, conditioner, and body wash for us to use. If I thought of my staff as unloyal or looking at Nash in any type of way, I'd have broken their neck and made an example of them. Of course, they averted their gaze and apologized for it.

The water in the tub itself was cloudy from soap, and lightly pink from the Nash's blood. It almost looked like a milk bath, which took me back in time to when the epitome of a beauty routine was a milk bath and special petals.

"I think I could get used to it here," he said.

"You haven't seen anything yet," I told him. "And I think breakfast is almost ready."

Being in this house wasn't anything I'd ever thought would happen again. I'd left it for a reason. It was remote and it reminded me of the closed off approach the older members of my family had taken when they were still living and in this house. There were a total of ten rooms and five bathrooms. That included the staff quarters at the back of the house.

Wrapped in thick towels, we went back into the bedroom.

My staff prepared clothes for both of us on the bed. Nash was clearly taken aback by it, almost scared by it since they'd gone through his things.

“I didn’t even hear them in here,” he said, picking at the stacked pile of his clothes. “Have these been dry cleaned?”

“Well, you saw her come through to give us the shampoo,” I said, sniffing his head. “Mhmm, coconut. And I don’t know. Have they?”

He pulled the pair of underwear to his nose and inhaled. “They smell like home, so I guess not. Maybe they just folded them really well.”

I tugged the towel around his waist, forcing it to drop to his feet. “You better get dressed, or I’m going to bend you over and this time, I won’t cum so quick.” I gave him a gentle open palm spank.

“I need to—get rid of you seed first,” he said, dipping his head shyly. “So, if you could change somewhere else. I don’t want you to hear me.”

“Well, come down once you’re ready.”

Respecting his wishes, I dropped my towel and took my pile of clothes. “Love you.” I kissed him before leaving the bedroom naked to another room down the hallway. I’d never been the Alpha of this house, and now that I was, full advantage was being taken, my cock slapping at my left and right thigh as I walked.

The smell of meats being cooked filtered up through the house. And once I was dressed in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, I went down to explore more of the changes that had happened to the house.

The kitchen was the heart of the house, a huge room with a door leading out to the garden on the back.

“Kristoff,” I said, getting the attention of the cook. He’d been with the family for

years. “Are those sausages?”

“Master DeMauriel,” he said, turning and bowing his head to me. “Yes. From the list of food you said your mate eats.”

“Ah.” A thought entered my mind. “He might not be hungry. He’s in heat. Notoriously not a great time for an omega. We’ll see how he’s feeling once he’s finished getting dressed.”

“Of course,” he said.

“Another question. Does this place have a herb garden?”

He nodded. “I believe so. And a vegetable patch. A little overgrown, but with some tending and mending, I’m sure we can grow crops again.”

“Nash will be happy about that.” It would also give him something to do whilst I went through family archives in an attempt to find out what prophecies were written that I didn’t know about. Nephilim were children of angels and omegas. Barely any of them existed now, most of them were killed before birth, nobody wanted Nephilim around. They never predicted anything good. Everything they said was awful, negative, and sent people to doing crazy things, much like the vampire elders of New York City, and all the other factions to follow.

Waiting for Nash to arrive, I watched the flames of the hob devour the sides of the frying pan and the fat from the same spit out against the back tile and counters. It was hypnotic watching fire. It allowed me to think without punishing myself with regrets.

The last born Nephilim I recalled was fifty years ago. Once a child was born, they were under angelic protection, which is why so many of them were killed off beforehand. Fifty years ago was actually seventy as I incorporated my lapse in time to

it. But in that time, I couldn't recall any new prophecies.

Nash snapped his fingers in my face. "I'm not that hungry," he said, gesturing to the large plate of cooked sausage. "I can probably stomach one, but it might come back up."

I apologized for it. "It's been a while since I recalled what an omega in heat needed."

"What I need is lots of kisses, lots of cuddles, and maybe a tour."

Kristoff stood in the shadows of the kitchen, waiting on orders. "Whatever he doesn't eat, make them into something else for lunch or dinner. If his appetite picks up by then. I hope it picks up by then."

"I can't decide when I'm out of heat, it's a fucking curse," he said.

"Come on," I said. "Let's start the tour with that herb garden you were asking about."

Before heading out of the back door, Nash grabbed a sausage from the plate. There was one person in the garden when we walked into it. The overgrown grass up to our knees. She was whacking at them with a large stick. "Oh, Sir, I didn't think you'd be out here," she said, bowing her head.

"Dana, right?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Parents are Ronan and Sara," I recalled. "I'm still adjusting. This is Nash, my mate. I think we already spoke about how the world is all different now. How are you adjusting to the house? And the ground." It was all a different staff to those who were around before I slept, but I could see the resemblance of her grandparents, and

parents in her.

“Hi,” Nash said. “This is a garden?”

“It’s supposed to be,” Dana said, swiping a stick through the grass. “I tried to find something metal to cut the grass, but there’s barely any supplies in the house.”

Nash snapped his fingers. “Then we’ll get something. I’ve never had a proper garden. I want to try growing something,” he said.

“Make a list, I’ll send someone out for something,” I said, resting a hand on his shoulder. I hadn’t known his desire to grow something from the earth. It made sense, considering he’d asked about the garden.

“There are some planters,” she said. “But I don’t know anything about soil. I’m mostly just whacking these to form a path out into the woods. My dad and Kristoff want to go hunting for local game. You know, something to serve you.”

“I do love a hunt,” I said.

“What? No.” Nash shrugged his hand off me. “I’m fine with like eating meat, but hunting animals in their homes isn’t what I think we should be doing here.” He kicked off his shoes. “This area of land is all healed with grass, but I can—I can—” He closed his eyes and raised his nose up. “I can feel there used to be a path and veggies growing in rows, and—and flowers, all in bloom with their sweet scents.”

“How about the two of you stay out here with the garden, and I’ll have a look around the house for any gardening tools?” I suggested.

“Ok, but then I want a tour.”

I went back inside the house as people brought in more items. There was only one room I wanted to be in. The basement. From a rusted locked door, easily torn from the fixture, I headed under the house. A dull orange spark struck the bulb in the center of the room, barely illuminating the rows of bookshelves line the edges of the room and dust sheet covering a table and chairs in the middle. Glancing across it, in the far corner, buried in complete darkness, the bars of an empty cage.

Memories flooded. Vampires unable to control their blood lust kept inside. As I approached, the orange light above became brighter, illuminating more of the room and into the closed cage. Three corpses, decayed down to the bone. “Auntie Tabby, her husband Jules, and illegally sired human, Von.” It wasn’t my decision to have them die like that, it had been my grandfather’s, I was only half-sure on that. “Rest in peace, or pieces.”

Killing a vampire was no easy task, we could put our bodies into a stasis for long periods of time. But these deaths in here were cruel, they weren’t just imprisoned, they were awaiting their execution. It was always on the edge of my mind, the horrendous horrors the DeMauriel family had built their names on. Myself included.

“You’re gonna need a burial,” I said to the pit of bones and dust. “The world has changed since then. I’m sorry you couldn’t see it. Wherever you are, I hope you’re looking after Elya, or she’s looking after you.” My sister was older than them, I wondered often about life after death, if there was anything there, or if we just ceased.

After paying a short respect through memory lane, I pulled back the dust cloth from the table and chairs. I was going to be down here a lot, trying to figure out if there was anything I could come back at the elders with to support my relationship with Nash.

These family archives documented all the births and the ever-spanning family tree. It was a rolled up sheet set inside a pipe scone. Opening it, I spread it across the table

and placed small paper weights on it at each of the corners. It was weathered and worn paper, stained and burned.

Sitting in front of it, our family name went back nearly two thousand years. The first two were just known as Si and Pa. No gender, nothing else, either that was their title, or their names. The family had sometimes playfully debated about it over drinks.

Scrolling a fingers across the paper, I went down to the bottom.

It even included Estefania's birth and Elya's death. I wondered who'd updated it, but I knew the staff had orders.

Everyone was dead except for me and my niece. This proved that much. I knew stories about some of them, choosing to die after living for so long. I should've left some staff for her at the apartment, but those numbers had also dwindled a lot too. The staff were families that had committed themselves to us or been forced to commit themselves for any number of reasons. Most of it theft. And most of those were let go, or killed. We didn't have a family tree or log book of staff members.

A footstep creaked on the stairwell.

I turned to see Nash attempting to sneak.

"Bored of the outdoors already?" I asked.

"There's just a lot of overgrowth out there. And I felt you were thinking," he said, joining me at the table. He glanced around from the seat at all the shelves. "What's all this? The archives?"

"And family tree," I said. "It's old."



“You should get all this stuff digitalized,” he said. “That way if it’s damaged, you still have copies, and don’t need to come here to read any of it.”

His fancy words went over my head. “Sure,” I chuckled. “A lot of these books are very old. I think there’s a couple Shakespeare scripts in here too.”

“No shit.” He jumped from his seat. “Are you being serious? That’s like gold.”

“Some Oscar Wilde, I believe too,” I said. I stood beside him and followed him around the room with a hand on his lower back. “Don’t touch any of them. I fear the warmth on your skin might speed up deterioration.”

“Everything is dusty,” he said with a snuffle and a sneeze. I immediately placed a hand to his mouth before the spital could spray out. “I’m sorry.”

“I anticipated it,” I said, wiping my hand on my shorts. “Let’s back it up a little though. You don’t happen to have an ability that brightens the space, do you?”

“I might know of something,” he said. He closed his eyes and all around the room bright white orbs appeared like fireflies. They sat around at different heights in the room, putting the light bulb to shame.

I reached out to one, careful to keep my distance from it. They didn’t radiate any amount of heat. It was strange.

“It’s just light,” he said, “you can touch it. It won’t hurt.” He demonstrated, wafting a hand at one and pulling it down to him.

It was a sensation, strange at first, and then oddly comfortable. “And you can do this any time?”

“It’s a very basic skill,” he said. “But now you can—” he looked right past me. “What’s that? A prison cell.”

I hadn’t wanted him to come down and see it. “Yeah. It’s not in use.”

He walked right to it, immediately seeing the bones inside. It was much brighter now. There were rags on show too, eaten away at by bugs and mites. “Who were they?”

I took him back to the family tree and showed him my aunt and her husband as they were listed as dead. The third wasn’t on their because he was illegally turned, and while it was still shamed to turn others into vampires, it was more common. “Everyone on this is a natural vampire,” I informed him. “It’s why I’m here, because rules always change, and I’m going to change the rule that the elders are using to keep us apart.”

“How?”

That was the real question. There were a lot of books here. It was going to take a lot of time to get through them all and find a prophetic statement that went in direct opposite to the one being used against us.

I had faith. And a bond that I relied on.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

I was in complete awe of the records his family had managed to keep over all the years. I almost wished I had something like it, but I knew my history would've been a history of struggle and witches being persecuted by shifters, vampires, and our former biggest enemy, humans.

"If I could absorb all the information, I'd probably be able to find something," I told him.

"I think if you absorbed all this, you'd be on the floor unable to speak for a week," he said. "I don't know where anything is, or what anything say. All I know is my family have lived very long, and not all of these are original accounts and records, most were copied and translated from dead languages into English."

I knew I couldn't touch any of them, but I desperately wanted to. The idea of sticking my nose close and fanning my face with the pages. It would've set off more sneezes, but that was the beauty of a book. And with my abilities, I could almost literally inhale the information on it.

"You should be outside, enjoying this place," Ara said. "It should be down to me to figure out what's hidden in these pages."

"Absolutely not. I want to see. I need to. Your entire family history is in here. I think it'll help me know you better."

He pulled me into his arms, squeezing me at the waist. "Darling, you already know me better than anyone else," he said, kissing my neck. "Nobody else has been so mentally close to me. But I'm not going to tell you no."

“What else are you not going to say no to me about?” I giggled.

“Oh, I’ll say it when I mean it.” He gave my neck a bunch of tiny pecks. “But if you’re determined to help, I’ll get you a book. I don’t want you to touch it, only with your magic. And only one book.” He let go of me and rushed around the shelves. “Ah. This is it.” He paused at a small book with a hard blue spine on show. “It’s been rewritten twice in the last five hundred years.”

“How do you know?”

“Two lines,” he said, gesturing to the shiny golden lines at the bottom of the spine. “And this area here is from the 1500s. Specifically, this book is what I’ve written.”

“You’re five hundred years old,” I choked. “I’m—”

“Six-hundred and some years,” he said. “Five-hundred is technically elder territory for a vampire, and since I was older than the two elders in New York, I had to become one.”

I took a seat at the table, glancing over the family tree. “Wait. So, you were the oldest vampire in the city when we were there?”

“I’m probably the oldest in the entire state of Maine too,” he chuckled, gently tugging the book off the shelf. “I want you to start with my history because if I were to recall every single memory I had since birth, I’d probably go mad. I can recall easily back forty—well, sixty years.”

There were so many questions on the tip of my tongue. I couldn’t comprehend living for so long. He’d outlived several generations of my family. And when he went into slumber twenty years ago, I was a toddler. It was such a strange set of thoughts.

Ara rolled the family tree up and set the book in front of me. “Remember, no touching,” he said. “I’m going to go upstairs and see about getting a burial plot made up for those bones in there.”

“Ok. And I won’t touch. I promise.”

As a witch my power waned when I didn’t get to recoup it, however, there was no sign of it waning when Ara was constantly pumping me full of his vampiric seed. It was above and beyond the power I usually felt. There was no tugging at it, it felt like opening floodgates and embracing the power barring down on me.

I’d perfected my technique on absorbing information. It’s probably why my sister hated books, because she couldn’t work her magic like me. We joked that I had double the power since Rhone had so little. And sometimes I thought that was true myself.

Sitting in front of the deep blue book with dust covering the edges, I placed my palms on the table at either side of it. A cold breath stilled in my throat, my eyes rolled back, and my head tilted up to the ceiling, watching the mindless orbs drift across the room.

Threads zapped me from left to right, bouncing between my hands, ping-ponging off each other and encompassing the book in the center. I didn’t need to see to feel. Screwing my eyelids to empty my mind, I was a conduit for information, awaiting to be filled.

The first words came through.

‘Still the deep and drive the storm, into chaos the people mourn.’

Then nothing.

I was out.

Unconscious.

The cool floor caressing my cheek.

Behind my eyes, a crunch and scream.

My parents were attacking my defenses, and they were winning.

Deep scars were carved into my mind, clawing at my guards and safety. I couldn't find my voice or make a sound. There was a pain I could only feel on a mental plane. There was no pulling myself back from it, they were trying to send me into a catatonic state.

Fighting their pressing powers and the threads of magic entering my mind from the book, I was helpless. Right up until the moment Ara found me, his words brought me back, calling my name and allowing me to resurface from his touch.

Gulping back air, I threw my head forward, almost bashing it against Ara's forehead.

"What happened?" he asked. "Relax. It's ok."

"They're—" I choked on the words as they formed in my throat. "They're looking for me."

He smiled down at me, combing a hand through my hair.. "They won't find you," he said. "This place is warded. What did it feel like?"

My lips burned from how dry they suddenly were. "My sister must've told them. That was—that was—that was a full coven attack."

“What can I do to help?”

“I probably shouldn’t use magic,” I said. “That’s how they’re trying to get me. Fuck.”

Ara continued to comb his hand through my hair. “Did you learn anything from the book?”

I tried to lick my lips but my tongue was dried too. “I need water.”

“Ok, let’s get you back upstairs. There’s centuries worth of dust and dirt down here on this floor.”

I faintly chuckled, but it hurt my lips. “I know there’s ways I can protect myself from their mental attacks,” I said. “But they’re—they’re going to be relentless trying to get me back.”

“Don’t worry. They’re not going to get you back. Not while you’re with me.” He leaned in and kissed me. “You want to be married up, or can you walk?”

“I can walk. I think.”

My mind spun as I stood. The dizzy fog took over my mobility.

Ara helped me up the stairs back into the daylight of the hallway, and faint whiff of paint in the air. I clung to the only words I’d heard came through my mind when I tried reading the text.

I repeated it back to him. “Still the deep and drive the storm—”

“Into chaos the people mourn,” he finished. “My great-grandfather would say that before going into a village and slaughtering everyone.”

Whatever smile I had on my lips faded fast. “Really?”

He hummed, leading me into the kitchen where more of the staff were gathered, unpacking boxes and bags of food. “It was his way of saying that you needed to achieve inner peace before you could achieve anything, and in that instance, it referred to the death of many. There were war games and all sorts of things happening around that same time.”

I’d heard horror stories about vampires, most of them I assumed were to frighten me away from them, but instead it instilled a type of fascination.

I was handed a glass of water, which I drank to completion almost immediately.

“What else did you hear or see?” he asked.

“Nothing.”

“It makes sense that book contained that. A lot of people went to war in those times.”

I sighed. Almost defeated. Part of me felt like I’d uncovered something important, like a prophecy. I’d hoped it was, because I probably couldn’t go back and read the texts with magic. Even now, those scratch marks pained the edges of my mind as I went deep into thought.

Dana came into the kitchen, a big smile on her face as she approached us. “My dad found a scythe to cut the grass with,” she said.

“Some fresh air will do you good,” Ara said.

“He found some seeds too,” she said.



Licking my dry lips wet, I nodded. “Going outside is probably going to be good,” I said. “I want to find a patch of land I can sit and do some meditating. I need to restore my mental guards.”

Ara gave me a kiss and a pat on the back. “I’m going back down to the archives. I’ll miss your orbs, but the light there is fine.”

I kissed him back. “You could take a lantern or whatever you used to use,” I said, holding back laughter. “Maybe a candle.”

“I will not be taking an open flame down there,” he said.

I followed Dana out into the garden with Ara calling out reminding me to drink water and call for him if anything happens.

“It’s so nice to be out of the city,” Dana said. “I made more progress since you were gone.”

As we walked further out into the tall grass, there was a sudden end to it and ahead of us was an open forest. It was vast and the ground was covered in roots and dead leaves. “I didn’t ask you before,” I started, staring ahead until I found a spot of darkness between all the trees. “What would happen if you decided you didn’t want to serve Ara and his family?”

She laughed. “Impossible,” she said. “There is no choice. My entire family line is bound to it. We don’t do it our entire lives. We do it for seventy years, but only if we have a child. And then when we turn seventy, we receive a house and some money, and we get to live out the rest of our lives. You know, since I live until I’m killed.”

“But why are you in service to him?”

She whacked at the grass behind her with the scythe, cleaning slicing it. “My parents probably know the history better, but the DeMauriel’s saved our families in one way or another. And they repay us once we’ve done our service. It’s an honor more than anything.”

“I’m glad you think that. When I asked him, he mentioned sometimes people worked for the family because they stole, and were forced into it,” I said, still staring straight ahead at the void between the trees.

“Oh no, years ago, like a lot of years, maybe that happened, but nobody here,” she said. “My uncle, Kristoff is the cook here too. I don’t think he wants to leave ever. And why would he? The expensive food he can cook with, the places we can see, and the famous people we meet who tried to see Mr. DeMauriel while he was in hibernation. It’s better than the life I would’ve had.”

It paralleled some of my life. My parents were taken in by a coven, but I wasn’t happen with how they used us, because we were being used. Aether witches weren’t all that common, and my parents loved the compound because they saved us from homelessness, but that was over eighteen years ago. I could never go back.

“I’ve never met a witch though,” she said. “I mean, I might have, but you’re the first. People have always said you were scary.”

“Me, scary?” I laughed, breaking concentration on the spot of darkness. “I’m probably the least scary person you’ll ever meet.”

“I know that now,” she said. “I was never allowed to go to the markets either. So, I never knew any different. I guess my parents think I’ll disgrace them and leave.”

“I left my parents,” I said. “Maybe I disgraced them.” I told her my life story almost, about being a twin, and living as the only decently strong witch they’d given birth to.

And worst of all, I was an omega, so all that supposed power meant absolutely nothing because I didn't have a say in my life.

"I think you did what was best for you," she said. "But now you don't have a coven."

"Covens are overrated," I grumbled, readying a foot to step out into the forest.

"Don't—" she grabbed my arm. "The ward ends there. I think Ara wants you stay in the boundary."

I didn't mind sacrificing this bit of freedom if it meant keeping prying eyes out of my skull. "Thanks. Could you go over there and grab me a large stick? I need something to draw in the dirt with."

She handed me the scythe and ran out into the wood. I was desperate to cast magic, and I knew I could do that with symbols. Especially in this fertile earth.

## Page 14

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

The more I witness of Nash's power, the more I believed him to be part of the prophecy. He was a powerful witch, I don't think he knew his true strength at all. I'd tasted it, an addiction on the lips. I craved just another drop of his blood at all times, but I was old enough to have a single shred of self-control.

All of my staff knew to watch out for him and inform him of areas of the house if he asked. I'd stood in the doorway and watched him and Dana get close to the edge of the grass. Dana swiftly informed him about the boundary, it was a relief, I didn't want to rush out and baby him by telling him he had to stay here. He could go wherever he wanted, as long as he could protect himself.

"Master," Toril, the driver approached me. "Is there anything else you need picked up from town? I brought the groceries you requested."

"No, that's all, wait. Actually, a light source, preferably a lamp of sorts," I said. "Portable. I don't think there are any outlets downstairs."

He nodded. "I'll get on that."

"Thank you." I continued to watch Nash and Dana for another couple of minutes from the doorway. She went off into the forest and brought him back a large stick. He fascinated me. I wanted to be inside his brain to get a taste of what he was thinking.

Once Toril came back to me with a lantern, he demonstrated the functionality of the flickable switch on the underside. "These are from the emergency power kit. In case the lights go out."

It never ceased to surprise me with the lengths my staff went to in an effort to be prepared for any eventuality.

The archive room was a lot brighter with the lantern. I went through several books before Nash came down for me. I didn't discover anything, only self-loathing through my own words, and the floral way I used to write, it made me want to throw up. It reminded me I was far too self-involved and only caring about pleasures of the skin to concern myself with the world at large around me.

"The grass is all gone!" he said, raising his hands in a gesture. His fingers were covered in mud and he carried a musky smell. "We found a mower and it was hella rusted, but we managed to use it and now we're making a path and—"

"I see you're settling in well."

"As an aether witch, I was never allowed to play in the dirt," he said. "Next, I wanna play with fire or water, maybe even try some air magic." There was a giddy nervous laugh in the back of his throat. "It's fun not having negative people around you telling you not to do something."

"But is it safe?"

He shrugged. "It's just magic. It's all about intention and will. And I have it by the bucket." He tried to touch me and I grabbed him by the wrist.

"Not with those hands," I said.

"I tried to clean them," he said, turning them over to see his palms. "Oh. I've got a cut."

"Let's head back up. I want to see all this work you've done."

It was the middle of the afternoon. I didn't recall how long I'd been pouring myself over the books or speed reading through them, careful not to tear the thin pages. He had everyone out in the garden, hoeing up dirt and placing slabs of stone to create pathways.

"Everyone wanted to help," he said.

"Of course, they did. I told them to do what you asked," I said, turning back to see his smile turn to puzzled concern.

"That makes."

In the light, I could see the cut on his palm a little better. "Nash," I snapped. "You've got to be safe." Taking him by the wrist, I pulled him to the kitchen sink. "You're surrounded by vampires. You're lucky the smell of this dirt covered the smell of you." I washed his hands for him. "I know they're not blood lust thirsty, but you've got to be safe."

He looked at me with a pout. "I'm sorry."

"It's fine. I'm just—I have you," I said, still keeping both his hands under the water as I added soap. "You're mine. We're bonded. If anything happened to you, I don't know what I'd do with myself. I'm probably level this house with everyone in it."

He smiled again. "Have you drank today?" he asked. "Water. You've down downstairs all day. I don't want you going all stir crazy because you're breathing in old paper and dust particles."

I finished washing his hand and finally saw the extent of the cut. It wasn't as deep as I'd thought. It ran across his palm in one clean scratch. "I can take care of my needs," I told him. "The better question is, have you been drinking water?" Placing his palm

to my lips, I gently kissed along the cut and once more, applying the tip of my tongue to it, like I was suturing it. All that remained when I pulled it away was a shiny silver line.

“Of course,” he whispered. “Did you find anything interesting while you were downstairs?”

“Nothing, except how I could stretch a moment of my time into a thousand word essay,” I grumbled. “It’s really nothing interesting. Anyway, have you had any more issues? Nobody came down and said you fainted, so I assume you were ok.”

Nash was a ball of sunshine and smiles. “Practicing what little I know of different elements had helped, almost like they’re trying to find me through aether magic, but I’m not even there anymore.”

I caressed his chin and cheek. “You should get your hat from the car. You’re catching the sun.”

“It’s not even hot out.”

“That doesn’t mean the sun isn’t there.” I gave him a kiss. “So, what do you plan on growing out in this magical herb garden of yours?”

“Potion stuff,” he said. “Which reminds me, I’m going to need a whole thing of glassware.”

“And what do you intend on brewing?”

“Potions, duh.” He laughed.

In my mind, I had an image of Nash around a comically large cauldron and getting

his steps for the day by walking around it and stirring up whatever he was concocting. “I’ll send someone out for it,” I told him. “But I’d love to know what exactly you’re going to make.”

“Does it make you nervous?”

“No, I’m curious.” And a slight bit nervous. Magic wasn’t new to me. I’d known witches. The nerves came from the unknown about magic and witchcraft, anything was possible with it. I didn’t like anything.

Nash went back out into the garden and told me all his plans. In a way, it felt like I’d rescued him. He thought twice about coming with me, but he didn’t need to think more than that before deciding on coming with me.

“We’re going to grow in rows,” he said. “All the way across here, following the path.”

“Exciting stuff!”

“And I’ve been drawing symbols in the dirt for fertility and growth,” he said. “And they’re staying in the dirt. Don’t get any ideas.”

“No ideas here,” I called back to him. “And I told you to put your hat on.”

The staff helping him didn’t stop clearing to even appear like they were listening, but I saw them slightly smile as we exchanged words.

I went back through the house to the car parked out front. Not only did Nash look adorable in his black hat, but it also covered him up from getting burned. I placed it on my head, testing it out. I needed to cut my hair a little. I’d never really had longer hair before, it was a bit of a pain to manage, getting all curly and clumping together.



“Don’t stretch my hat,” he shouted at me from outside.

The complete peace of being with Nash was unmatched. I watched for a while as he tended the garden. It was quickly finished into a state he called an absolute dream. Dana was his chosen helper, probably because they were a similar age.

Kristoff was back in the kitchen, making toad in the hole with the sausages from that day. I still didn’t have much hunger, I’d been getting my fill from the source. I could’ve eaten, but it would’ve been a choice of glutton rather than necessity.

If I’d had to file the day under any specific feeling, I’d say it was perfect. Except for the blip where Nash fainted, but we’d learned why that was. I suppose perfect was too high, since tomorrow was bound to be better.

Nash stayed outside for as long as possible. He was absolutely pitted in dirt. I nearly took a hose to him. It was in his hair, on all of his clothes, and yet he was smiling so big.

“Bath,” I told him.

“I got a bit carried away.”

“You’re right about that. I will carry you away,” I said. “Upstairs.”

He held his arms up and I swooped in and grabbed him. I got dirty in the process, but it beat having him walk mud through the house, even if it would’ve been quickly taken care of. Once we were upstairs in the bathroom, I sat him in the empty tub.

“Need help undressing?”

“Earth magic is so renewing,” he said, rubbing the dry dirt between his fingers.

“I think we might need the shower attachment,” I said, knowing the water would become filth if he was made to sit in a bath. “I trust you to undress, put your clothes over the side of the tub, and I’ll have someone clean them.”

He laughed, laying back in the tub. “You should’ve joined me.”

“There’s no way I was getting in that mess,” I told him. “Stay here.”

The house was so old there wasn’t any showers, but I could recall a certain plastic attachment that went over the faucet. It didn’t take me long to uncover it inside a box in one of the other bathrooms. And when I return, Nash was sat in the tub, completely naked. The contrast of the dirt on his skin and where the clothes had been were funny. I stared, cocking my head to the side.

“Are you getting undressed too?”

“I don’t want you to get distracted.” I plugged the tube of the shower over the faucet and turned it on. It was a mixed tap where both hot and cold came out at the same time. The worst invention. “Besides, if I got in with you, I’d only get you dirtier.”

He pawed the side of the tub, knocking his dirty clothes over it. “Mhm, I might like the sound of that, actually.”

Water spat out of the showerhead, putting a quick end to that train of thought. It took a moment to get the temperature right, blasting him with both hot and cold water. But when it was just right, he embraced it, he rolled around like a pig on a stick, rotating for me to get all the dirt. My favorite function was the pressure nozzle. I targeted his ass and cock, both places he tried to hide from me.

“I didn’t get any dirt there,” he laughed. “Oh my god. I’m gonna get you back.”

It took half-an-hour until he was fully cleaned. His temperament had changed too. More relaxed. As he got dried, I bagged his dirty clothes up to be cleaned. The ground had been slightly damp from rain, it must've been for it to cling to him like that.

"Feeling hungry?" I called out to him as I prepared the bed with extra pillows I'd taken from the unused bedrooms. If there was one thing I knew about sleep, it was the importance of pillows.

"I am, actually." He walked into the bedroom, a towel around his waist and another across his shoulders that he was drying his hair with. "I think I'm coming out of heat. Thank god." His hand dipped to the silver chain around his neck. "It shouldn't have happened at all."

I patted the bed for him to sit. "I didn't know what would happen when I took it off you," I said, helping him get dried and just searching for another reason to have my hands all over his body. "I've never bonded with anyone, so I also didn't know it would happen like that."

He grabbed my hand, stopping me. "It's different for everyone. Some omegas and Alphas can bond without being in heat or—rutting, but most of us need to."

My hand dipped to his chin, my finger at his bottom lip, pulling on it slightly. "You wanted me to take it," I said. "I knew you wanted another reason to see me as much as I wanted a reason to see you."

"You think fate pushed us together to tear us apart?"

"I think fate pushed us together and people are trying to deny it," I said. "Once, I heard someone tell me that we're given chances and opportunities that our souls crave. It's why—" I gulped hard as my mouth turned dry.

He gently bit the finger I pulled his lip down with. “Go on,” he said. “What were you going to say?”

“It’s why I needed you to kiss me when we met,” I said. “I—I don’t really think I had any other thought but a desire to kiss you. It was after the champagne, but—” The acidic bubble taste of champagne emerged in my throat as I recalled it. “You performed a little trick in my glass.”

“Fireworks,” he said. “People love them.”

“I think—”

“Oh my god. Come on, finish a sentence, please.”

“I think your magic told me to kiss you,” I said, carefully recombining the moment. Before the drink, I had desires on him, but it wasn’t until after drinking it that I was compelled almost. And I was not someone who was easily compelled to do anything. “Are you sure your power doesn’t come from one of the five families?”

He shook his head. “Why would you even say that?”

I sat on the bed and looked him in directly in his eyes. “Because you’re stronger than I thought.”

“Well, I’m not,” he said. “I’m not the powerful witch from the prophecy. We’re just a vampire and a witch, who are bound to love each other. It happens all the time, nobody cares. Well, people care about it because of who you are, but if I was to find a vampire out there on the street—not saying, I will, but nobody would care.”

My teeth ground together. “Let’s not suggest that again.”

“But I’m not all powerful. I’m just connected to the magic of the world,” he said.

I took his hand and placed it on my face, his wrist by my lips. “I need one bite, just to be certain. That’s it. That’s all. I’d like to be sure.”

“You’ve bitten me a bunch, why is now different?”

“Because I’d be doing it with the purpose of searching you for markers and lineage,” I said, kissing the spot on his wrist I intended to open up. “And then you can eat. I need to know. I fear I’ve been looking in all the wrong places.”

He nodded. “You have full control,” he said. “Take what you need, as long as I can take from you.”

“And how do you intend on doing that?”

Palming a hand between my legs, he grabbed my cock. “Come to think about it, I’m not that hungry for food. I’ll take this instead.”

I bit into his wrist as he squeezed my cock. A direct correlation to the time I spent with my lips and tongue prodding at the wound I made and the strength of his grip on my cock, still inside my shorts.

Intentions were key to the process. Finding fragmented images of his family. His birth. The first breath. His scared tender beating heart, so strong, and already full of magic.

Of course, it all made sense. He’d said it already. He had twice the power. A twin who stole the others power in utero.

Coming out of the hazy vision, I saw Nash going to town on my cock with his hand.

Whether he'd got it out with a single hand, or magic, I was impressed by his tenacity. I licked his wrist clean to heal itself and fell back on the bed, giving him free range to me.

I was still processing the new information.

Nash wasted no time in putting his mouth to my cock, and with the pleasures of his tongue, I received more semi-visual images in the peripherals of my eyes. Nash was a powerful witch, the very one from the prophecy. And one of our bloodlines was going to end because of it.

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

The moment I had control over my hands and body again, I used it to work magic, not literal magic though, on Ara's cock. On my knees at the side of the bed, I pulled his shorts off and spread his legs to get full access to my reward. His cock bounced with a rhythm of its own, producing precum from the tip that threatened to dribble down his shaft.

Ara had laid on the bed, craning his head up slightly to watch me give him head.

Who needed food when I had all the nutrients I could possible ever require coming out of his cock?

I sucked until my ass repeated back the throbs of his cock, almost as if they were communicating with each other in morse code, and the translation to it would've been, fuck me .

"Baby," he said, reaching out to stick a finger under my chin. "I don't want to wear you out. Are you sure?"

This was mostly new to me, and the most I'd ever had sex with any one person ever before. "Lay back," I told him. "I'm going to show you my skills."

Skills I'd practiced with suctioned dildos on the back of hardcover books. It was a surprisingly good way at learning to ride cock without the mess of another person being all up in your guts. Even if that's the entire reason I needed Ara right now, was so he could make a mess inside me.

Fresh from my bath, I climbed my naked body on top of his. I sat on his abdomen and

pushed his t-shirt up over his head and arms.

“Where do my hands go?” he asked, placing them on my knees. “If you’re taking control, I want you to tell me what to do.”

“Firstly, can you scooch yourself on the bed properly, head at the pillows,” I said. “And then, I want your arms above your head. I don’t want you to do anything.”

Ara moved us with ease, dragging up half the sheet and comforter with him as we repositioned. “I don’t get to touch you or anything?”

“You can, but only when I say,” I told him. “Because you said I was in charge, right?”

“Well, you do possess enough power to control me,” he whispered.

I chuckled. “You’re funny.” I tried to emulate the first time we fucked in his bed. I knew we weren’t going to break this bed as I lacked the sheer strength that came from a vampire bearing down on you. I started at his neck, kissing and teasing his skin with my teeth. Pulling away occasionally as I worked my way down his torso, I view my handiwork of light blue love bite bruises already healing. “You like it?”

He nodded. “Any time you’re touching me, I like it,” he said, touching my face.

“Ah, your hands are supposed to be up there.”

His hands went back above his head. “I’m sorry.” A big smile on his face. “I won’t do it again.”

When I reached his cock, it was coated in precum. He had such little self-control in that department. It made me feel even more lucky. I got to lick it clean and watch his



teeth sink into his lips as I touched the sensitive uncovered tip of his cock. From his tip, down his shaft, all the way to his balls, I sucked each one individually and listened to his moans.

The complete mind-altering urge to ride his dick from dusk 'til dawn had vanished. I was here to take my time and experience all the pleasures his body had to offer. Each individual pleasure on each of my senses.

I mounted him, his cock bounced around the moment I was straddling his hips. I reached around to grab it and with all my slick, his cock slipped inside, thrust base deep as he hitched his knees up. It threw me on his chest.

“I couldn’t help it,” he said, wrapping his arms around me and fucking me with the motion of his hips. “You teased me too much.”

Biting him turned him on more, coaxing moans and begging me to bite harder. I did, right up until I drew blood from his chest. His blood, cold to my lips sent an adrenaline fueled spark through me. I pulled out of his arms and leaned back, forcing his knees to go down.

“I’m on top,” I told him.

“Ok.” He wiped the blood from my chin. “I don’t like being teased.”

Slowly, back and forth, I was riding his cock, feeling it move with me. It was as deep as it was ever going to get, but the knotting had started, stretching me out, pushing my stomach to bulge, at least it felt like I was bulging on the inside. “I like teasing you,” I said, collecting my breath.

“I’m still the Alpha.” He planted both hands on my thighs. “Don’t forget that.”

I placed my hands over his, squeezing as hard as I could. “Or else what?”

“I like this feisty side,” he said. “Or else I’ll—I’ll—” He bit his lip and closed his eyes. “I can’t think of anything. Or else I’d pin you down, or, or else I’d fill your body up with bite marks.”

The burst of strength his blood gave me was enough for me to peel his hands away and then pin them to the headboard. In that position, I continued to buck my hips back and forth, pushing my cock harder against his torso and through his soft body hair. It tingled in all the good places.

My eyes rolled back as I let go of his hands, my body seized slightly, cuddling to his chest as I came. The bulb above smashed with a pop and crackle. Opening my eyes, I noticed we were hovering above the bed, and quickly came crashing down with a thud.

Ara wrapped his arms around me. “I told you, you’re powerful.” He groaned in my ears as his cock throbbed, hurting my hole with the way his knot pried me open and lodged him inside.

Words were formed but unsaid.

“The bed didn’t break,” he whispered.

It was what I’d planned on saying.

I continued to lay on his chest, taking his load.

Whatever energy had been present when that had happened was gone now. I couldn’t believe it was me, or even real, but I’d seen our bodies fall. I’d felt the bounce. And the bulb. sure, there were explanations for that, except I didn’t want to think of those.

I'd done that too.

"I think I've been missing out on this," I whispered to him, playing with his chest hair.

"Me?" he asked, stroking a hand down my back and tracing the length of my spine.

"No, well, maybe." I was struggling to form sentences. "Drinking my feelings. I never wanted to let my family down, but I left now. I feel light and free."

Ara cock slowly fell out of my ass. "Still feel light?" he asked.

I whacked his arm. "Mentally, spiritually, yes, I feel light."

"I know what you mean. There was a time when I was under my parents thumb too. When I did everything to impress them, and the minute they were out of the picture, I think I had a mental breakdown. Not for the reasons you might think either."

"I'm thinking it's because you were relieved."

"Ok," he chuckled, his laugh vibrating against my face. "So, maybe you do know the reason."

"I just wish we didn't have to come all the way out here to be together."

"Well, we could be together wherever we are," he said. "But here is the safest place, and that's all I care about right now. Your safety." He hugged me tight and tried his best to kiss my forehead.

"Not too tight," I said. "You know what you did to my insides."

“I’ll kiss it better for you,” he said, his hand going as far down as possible to reach my ass. “Does it need a kiss?”

I pawed his chest, pulling his hair into a fist. “Maybe later. I’m not taking any chances. So, if you’d head out or something, I don’t want you listening.”

We readjusted. “I have supernatural hearing. No matter where you are in the house, I’ll hear.”

Heat rushed my body. I’d known that about him, but hearing it from his mouth, it made me feel some type of way, and it wasn’t good. “Oh my god. Just go, and clean this glass on the floor.”

“Of course.” He kissed my hand. “I don’t want my baby getting hurt.”

There wasn’t much glass on the ground, only two large curved shards from the bulb, and a couple of other smaller bits that were visible from the light in the bathroom. As I sat on the toilet with the door shut and a towel as a sound dampener at the bottom, I wondered what my family were doing right now.

Melize had probably moved into the apartment. Rhone was still dodging as many calls as possible. My parents were begging to stay at the compound. I should’ve told them to go with Melize. But I wasn’t going to be reaching out to any of them from here. And I definitely couldn’t portal jump such large distances either.

I should’ve been full of joy that I’d escaped the fate my parents had attempted to force on me. Instead, I still had a small sense of dread. I didn’t know what the future held, and I couldn’t help Ara read any of the books either. But at least I had the garden, and that would be the only place anything would be growing.

For as long as I could remember, I’d always hoped to practice little bits of other

magic. Witches were so stuck in their ways to only practice one. They seemed forced to it, and base their entire personalities on it.

I was going to use earth magic to make the soil full of nutrients, water magic to bring rain, air to create breeze, and fire would be a no-go. I always thought of fire as destructive, and every fire witch I'd met or lived with was up their own assholes.

Ara knocked on the door, pulling me from thought planning. "I don't want to spend our first night sleeping alone," he said.

That was wild. Our first night. It genuinely felt like we'd been together for half a year, but maybe that was the gay aspect to all of this. Public opinion stated that gays moved faster when it came to relationships. We were just proving them right.

I had one of the best nights of sleep that night, laid on his chest with my limbs wrapped around him as if I were a vine growing to keep him close.

When I woke the following morning, still holding Ara close, I almost thought I was dreaming. Nobody had attempted to comb through my mind in the middle of the night. Whatever I'd done yesterday had helped me reinforce my defenses. Playing in the dirt had a bonus to it.

"You're finally awake," he whispered to me as I moved.

"Yeah." I yawned. "How long have you been awake?"

"Like an hour, maybe ninety minutes. I wasn't keeping count."

"You should've—"

"I was enjoying your warmth," he said before I could finish. "I had time to think."

I nuzzled my face into his body like he was my pillow. “Hopefully, it was all good thoughts.”

“Oh, they were the best thoughts. I thought about all the time we get to spend together,” he said. “Forever.”

“You need to propose before you can say stuff like that.”

He pulled my hand from over his body. “I will, when the time is right,” he said. “And I will give you the best wedding you’ve ever seen.”

“You’re in luck, I haven’t been to a wedding before,” I said. “So, of course it’ll be the best.”

I went back to nuzzling him just as a loud ringing chirped from outside the room.

“Ahh, that will be the phone,” he said. “It’s all still landlines here.”

“Do you need to get it?”

He raised his brows and chuckled. “No. Someone else will. I’m here with you. So, where were we?”

“You were telling me about this wedding.”

“Mhm, yes. We’d have it here, at the house, in the back. Hopefully it wouldn’t disturb your garden.”

“It’s a lot of land out there, I’m sure we’ll fit all five guest seats,” I said with a little snort of laughter. “Or maybe my sister and brother will come, I can’t ever be sure if my parents will be happy about it. Fingers crossed. One day.”

He sat upright, pulling my body slightly with him. “If you want them there, we’ll make it happen,” he said. “I hope we can break or change this stupid prophecy, and then we’re free. I hate the idea of not having free will.”

“Of course, we have it,” I said.

“Not if you’re involved in a prophecy you don’t,” he said.

A knock came at the bedroom door. “Sir. Hellenia is on the phone. She says it’s urgent.”

“Hellenia?” I asked.

“An old friend. She wouldn’t call unless—”

I grabbed his chest hair again, but all it did was thrill him. “What?”

“Unless she’s got news. And I’m hoping it’s the good variety.”

“Go get the phone then,” I said, rolling off the side of him. “And put a robe on. I don’t want anyone seeing you like that. It’s for my eyes only.”

Ara climbed off the bed and shook his hips, almost creating a windmill with his cock. “Your eyes only.” He went into the bathroom for a bathrobe as I pressed my head in his spot on the bed, inhaling the scent impression he’d left.

If I hadn’t been mate bonded to him, I feared I still would’ve fallen head over heels in love with him.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:55 pm*

There was a phone in the hallway of the upstairs. I picked the receiver up to hear Hellenia yelling at someone in the background.

“Hello? Helle? What’s happened?” I asked.

“You ran off with a witch,” she said. “People are talking about you. More than they would if you’d just accepted your position as elder. Like, you could’ve done so much for us. Instead, you—”

“Hellenia, hush,” I snapped. “I’m bonded with him. The same witch I was looking for the other night. There was something about him. I found him, well, we found each other. And that connection was real.”

“Well the witches are pissed,” she said. “And I’m not going to be informing anyone. If that’s your worry. Also, I had to go to your apartment, where you’ve got two squatters arguing just to get this number from one of them. Although I guess you know about that. One of them is also a witch. I’m guessing a relative of the witch you’ve taken.”

I imagined Estefania arguing like my sister, her mother, and it brought a smile to my face. “I didn’t take anyone. He wanted to come with me. And I hope this number stays between us.”

“Of course. I was only calling to warn you. And because I’m worried,” she sighed.

“Don’t worry about anything. I’ve got it figured.”



“I don’t want you to die. Most of us are old enough to recall that prophecy, Ara. A bloodline will die. We all know what that means. It’s the whole reason the witches appear to be an impenetrable barricade of bitches—I mean, witches.”

At the bedroom door, right in my eyeline. Nash appeared in a bathroom, all snuggled with his untamed bed head begging me to go and comb my fingers through it.

“Some of us don’t want to live in fear,” I told her. “But thank you for telling me. I need someone to keep me informed. I also need someone to tell me if they remember anything else they remember. A contradictory prophet, perhaps.”

After a long pause, she clicked her tongue. “I’ve heard about a guy, well, just a kid. He’s eighteen—seventeen, whatever. Apparently he’s of Nephilim blood, perhaps a prophet in the making. Even if he isn’t, you get him to foresee a blessed relationship, and nobody can say otherwise.”

That was the best news I’d heard for a while. “You have a name?”

“No. It’s just something I heard. I’ll find out for you. But you owe me one, Ara.”

“How about I owe you one now,” I said, still looking at Nash as he exposed his leg and ran his hand up his thigh, showing off more skin I’d yet to bite. “Stay at my apartment. Make sure my niece, Estefania, and Melize, my witch boyfriend’s sister don’t kill each other. Plus, the best view in the entire city.”

“Ara DeMauriel, are you offering me your penthouse apartment?” I could hear the glee in her voice.

“Until I’m back.” If I ever went back.

I hung up and Nash let out a squeal. “Boyfriend.”

“That’s right!” I chased him back into the bedroom. “My boyfriend.” On the bed, he tried hiding by wrapping himself up in the sheet. “I feel a little too old to say it, but it’s the truth.”

All wrapped like a log, he pushed his head out of the top, now like the head of a cock through foreskin. “I like it,” he said. “What else did you say? What did they say? I want to know everyone.”

Leaning in, I hovered my lips over his. “Use some of that magic and find out for yourself.” I knew he could if he wanted. He had so much magic he wasn’t touching yet. I needed him to claim it with both hands.

We kissed.

It lasted a while as he spent the moment absorbing information from me. I felt his cool hands collecting it like he was spooning it out of me and slurping it down.

“I saw her,” he said, trying to wiggle out of the position he’d put himself in. “Your friend. Hellenia. I don’t think Melize is going to like her.”

I pecked him again once more. “Well, I’m assuming you know what she said. She’s been arguing. They both have. Hellenia won’t do anything but be a presence of power.” I helped Nash out of the tangled sheet. “And she might know of a way we can have our relationship blessed by a prophet.”

He beamed a smile up at me. “I also felt your thought. You might want to stay here, even afterwards.”

“You’re happy here, right?”

“Very.”

“I am too. I feel like Manhattan is all too much now. But if you decide, we can move back once we’ve been blessed and married,” I said. The word married it was something I never thought I’d associate with an action I’d do, and yet, I was finding joy at the idea of it with Nash.

“Can I call my sister?” he asked.

“You don’t have to ask. I mean, you can, but don’t tell her where we are. The last thing I want is for my staff to become defensive and go on the attack about any witches that weren’t invited,” I said. “They take my protection very seriously.”

He reached out and pressed a hand to my chest. “And yet, they still let me in.”

“They won’t be happy if you tried to destroy me,” he said. “So don’t.”

“I’m not that powerful,” he giggled.

I clung to his hand on my body. “When you realize your power, you’ll embrace it,” I told him. “But go, call your sister. Ask someone for the number to the apartment. They should have it written somewhere.”

He escaped and I dropped to the bed, this time pressing my face to inhale his smell. It took everything in me not to devour every lick of blood inside. I wanted so much to consume him that we would become one. He had me in his heart, and I had him in mine, both of those were true now that he’d gotten a taste of me. The idea of our bloods mixed within each other was nice.

While Nash was in the hallway, I got dressed and tried my best not to pry on his conversation with his sister. It was an ordinary conversation, as ordinary went, checking in on her and making sure my niece was playing nice.

He came back into the room after I was fully dressed in a pair of chinos and a shirt.

He flashed me with a brief open of his robe. “Oh my god. I’m starved.”

“Clothes first,” I said. “There’s some in the dresser. Your size. And then you should come down to eat. I’ll make sure there’s food on the table for you when you’re there.”

“Mhm, food on the table,” he said.

“Well, breakfast food. What do you want?”

“What’s my choice?”

I grabbed my cock over my chinos. “Not this.”

“Tease.”

“Come down and the rest of the choice is yours.”

I honestly didn’t know what food there was. Apparently the kitchen was stocked with his favorites, but I’d forgotten what they were. I knew, if I questioned myself that he loved sausage and scrambled egg, but I really had to focus in to recall it. My memory needed to be spilled out on pages as a form of purging to refresh itself.

The house was alive with all the staff in operation, applying coats of paint to the worn wooden doorways. I barely ever focused in on any of them. The exception was Dana. Nash had taken a liking to her.

In the kitchen, I took her aside as we looked over the garden in the shape it was currently in. Much nicer than yesterday, but a pit of dirt waiting to happen. Kristoff was busy frying up meats and eggs, almost like he’d started the moment he heard me coming down the stairs.

“Is everything ok?” she asked.

“It’s all good,” I said. “I was hoping you’d be able to keep Nash occupied again today. He had fun yesterday, and I’ve relocated him, so I don’t want to have him alone where he could lull on his thoughts.”

She nodded. “Sir. You don’t have to tell me your reasons. I will keep Master Nash occupied today.”

“You’re right. I don’t, but I want to. He’s special to me, and my future.”

“Ok. Thank you for trusting me with it,” she said. “Is there anything in particular you want me doing?”

“He enjoys the garden. Oh, also, I will require a small burial plot digging up. It can be anywhere without the boundary line,” I said. I’d forgotten to take care of that last night. Nash’s playful nature came out with the dirt, and I was far too influenced by my carnal needs to remember my familial duties. “And I’ll also require candles for a brief service. But I’ll have someone else get that.”

She nodded enthusiastically. “You know, he’s great at using earth stuff,” she offered in a whisper. “He pulled out a large plot of land like it was nothing just by hovering a hand over it.”

“Oh?”

“We were turning the soil,” she said, still using a hushed tone. “He was drawing symbols in it and then saying something before he just swirled it all around. I’ve never seen anything like it before.”

“He’s incredible,” I said, just in time for him to walk into the kitchen. Dressed in a white linen shirt that was misbuttoned, and a pair of cargo shorts. “I don’t know

where my hat is.” He came right for me, and then turned at the smell of food. “Ooh. I bet you could hear my stomach.”

“Your hat is being cleaned,” I said. “And please, fill up. I feel like you’re going to have another busy day outside in the garden.”

Kristoff plated him a portion of the scrambled eggs and the sausages and rashers of bacon. “Anything else?” he asked.

“A glass of milk, please,” he said.

Dana tapped me on the shoulder. “I can get his hat for him,” she said. “It’s drying out on a rack upstairs.”

“You don’t have to,” I said. “If the sun is out, then yes, but let it dry a little more before then. I don’t want him catching a cold from something damp.”

I sat with Nash as he devoured the food on his plate. He fed me part of his sausage, but I really didn’t have the stomach for food. He’d been giving me all the food I required.

“I’m going to the archives,” I told him. “I’ll be boxing the remains of my aunt for a funeral later. And I’d still like to have a look at my old journals just in case Hellenia’s idea doesn’t pan out.”

He nodded. “Also, I thought about what you said.” He glanced at Kristoff. This wasn’t something he wanted anyone listening to.

I ordered everyone, Kristoff and Dana out of the kitchen so that Nash could finish his thought without them in distance, although if they wanted, they could easily listen in. Kristoff removed food from the hob, and Dana put the broom she’d been sweeping with in the corner.

“I think you were right,” he said. “The fireworks in the drinks.”

“Oh, you believe me now.”

“I didn’t want to believe it,” he whispered across the table. “But it makes sense. You’re not the only person that it has happened to. Not the kissing part, but the compelling. It’s how I got an invite to your party.”

I stroked the side of his face, my thumb wiping away a small speck of scrambled egg on his chin. “I also heard that you were magically turning soil yesterday as well,” I said. “Now, do you think we’re the people from the prophecy?”

“I think it’s going to come true,” he said, lulling his head as I pushed a handle to cradle it.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I’m not going to have children,” he whispered. “I don’t—I don’t want kids. Ever. And that means my bloodline will end.”

Children had never been part of my plan either. It wasn’t a dealbreaker, not that we had any room to make a deal since we were bound and bonded. “My bloodline too.”

“But you’ll probably outlive me,” he said, avoiding eye contact. “You’re gonna be able to have someone long after I’m gone. And your line will continue. So I think it probably just refers to me. My line has ended, or will end.”

I tipped his chin up. “I’m not thinking that far into the future,” I told him. “Because as it stands, I don’t see a future that doesn’t involve you. I’d go as far to throw myself on a pyre the day you ceased existing in my world.”

“But it feels like such a depressing end,” he said.

“Then stop thinking about the end, and start thinking about the now,” I told him. “We’re going to live a long time. And you are going to grow into your power. If there’s one thing I can promise you, it’s that I’ll never leave your side.” I collected a tear that had formed.

“Sorry. I’m just emotional and hormones are driving me up the wall,” he said, sniffing back. “I read about this, and I didn’t like what I read. But yeah. These are the hormones talking, and not the type of hormones I enjoy talking about.”

“Which ones do you—”

“Whore moans,” he said, laughing at his joke. “You gotta admit that was funny.”

“You’re adorable.” My mind went back to its earlier notion of eating him alive. “Dry those eyes. And go show me what those magical fingers can do outside. I expect big things when I come out to see you later.”

He pulled the underside of his shirt up to wipe his eyes, flashing his belly button and where he’d skipped a button getting dressed. I didn’t even mention it. It was cute.

As soon as the Kristoff and Dana came back into the kitchen, I handed Nash over. It was surprising to hear him come to the conclusion about his power. His compulsions were hexes, and he’d been doing it a while it seemed. He didn’t seem entirely comfortably that he’d been unaware of it, but that was the mark of his true power and strength.

It relieved me a little to feel the conviction in his words, knowing himself so well to the point he was ending his own bloodline. In my eyes, that prophecy had spelled certain death, but this was a different viewpoint.

I was still going to need that name of the Nephilim boy Hellenia knew about though. A positive word from him would set a whole world straight—no hetero.