



The Lycan Pack's Luna

Author: *Izzy*

Category: Fantasy

Description: Cassandra Primrose had spent her life training for war, never for a mate bond. But when fate ties her to Alexander Knight, the ruthless Lycan King, she refuses to submit.

Alec is powerful, feared, and completely unwilling to let her go. She is his mate, his Luna, and no matter how hard she fights, he knows one thing-she belongs beside him.

But Cassandra is no queen in a golden cage. She's a warrior first. And when the kingdom is threatened, when traitors rise and betrayal cuts deeper than any blade, she proves one thing:

She is not just Alexander's mate.

She is his equal.

And she will fight for him, just as fiercely as he fights for her.

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"Cassie?" A familiar voice yanked me out of the darkness.

"Cass? Come on, wake up!" The voice sounded panicked now, rough with worry.

I groaned, turning away from the disturbance, hoping whoever it was would get the hint and leave me alone. But peace was never on my side, was it?

Cold.

A gasp ripped from my throat as icy water crashed over me, shocking my entire system. I shot upright, blinking rapidly as droplets dripped from my soaked hair and ran down my face.

"What the hell?!" I sputtered, whipping around to glare at the culprit.

Damon.

Of course, it was him.

He stood there, arms crossed, his blue eyes sharp and unreadable. He was the only person I knew who could somehow pull off looking both worried and annoyed at the same time.

Before I could start yelling at him, last night's memories came rushing back. My nightmare. The panic attack. Calling him.

I swallowed hard.

Damon noticed the shift in my expression and sighed, rubbing his temples. "Cassandra, why—I... I don't understand. You said—" His jaw clenched. "God."

He ran a hand through his hair and began pacing. I lowered my gaze, guilt pressing down on me. I knew he was angry. I knew he was worried. And I knew I had no excuse.

"Damon, I—" I tried, but the words stuck in my throat. What could I say? That I lied? That I said I was fine when I wasn't? That I didn't want to be a burden?

He exhaled sharply, shaking his head. "You said you were fine. You said they stopped. Cassandra, you passed out after a panic attack last night. Your breathing was faint when I got here. You said—"

A bitter laugh slipped past my lips, cutting him off.

"Let's face it, Damon. How many times do people say things they don't mean? How many times do we say we're fine when we're really not? It's a facade." My voice was quiet, but firm.

"A way to stop people from seeing how vulnerable we are. A way to stop being a burden. That's all I was doing. That's all I've ever done."

I turned away from him, unwilling to see the pained expression on his face. I didn't want his pity. I had seen enough of that over the years.

"Cassie..." His voice softened, but I cut him off before he could say anything else.

"Thank you, Damon. Really. I don't know what I'd do without you. But please... I don't want to talk about it anymore."

Silence stretched between us before he sighed. "Fine. But just so you know, you never have to thank me. It's my job as your brother."

I smiled faintly, appreciating the way he let the conversation drop.

That was Damon for you—overprotective, stubborn as hell, but always knowing when to push and when to let things go.

"Now," I exhaled, forcing the heaviness away. "What time is it?"

Damon hesitated. "Uh... half past nine."

My eyes narrowed. "Half past—" My head snapped to the clock. It was already morning.

"Damon! You were supposed to be at the pack grounds. You're the Alpha! You have responsibilities. You can't just ditch them because of me."

Damon raised an eyebrow. "Cassie, do you honestly think I'd leave you after what happened last night?"

I opened my mouth, then shut it, realizing he had a point. But still...

"You're not skipping your duties because of me," I muttered.

"You're going, and I'm coming with you. I need a distraction, and what better way to forget than training my ass off?"

Damon groaned, already knowing he wouldn't win this argument. "Cass—"

"Nope," I cut him off, already walking to the bathroom. "Decision made. Get ready."

I stepped inside and caught my reflection in the mirror.

I looked like a mess.

And no, not a hot mess. A dire-need-of-help mess.

I took a shaky breath, gripping the edge of the sink. My head throbbed with everything racing through my mind.

The nightmare, the past, the burden of everything I tried so hard to suppress. I squeezed my eyes shut, willing myself to push it all away.

I had to be strong. For Damon. For the pack. For myself.

I would be strong.

Splashing cold water on my face, I took another deep breath before heading out, my mind set on one thing.

I had to fight.

I wouldn't give up.

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Seeing Cassie take down one warrior after another, I couldn't help but feel a surge of pride. She was relentless, a force to be reckoned with.

It was no wonder I made her my Commander. Strength wasn't just about muscle—it was about resilience, and Cassie had more of that than anyone I'd ever met.

But I knew the truth.

She wasn't just fighting them.

She was fighting herself. Her demons. Her past.

I sighed, crossing my arms as I watched her from the training grounds.

The way she threw herself into every punch, every dodge, every strike—it wasn't just training for her.

It was survival.

"Was she okay last night, son?" My father's voice cut through my thoughts.

I turned to see Lucian Norman, my father, and the former Alpha of the Shadow Pack, standing beside me.

I clenched my jaw. "Had a panic attack after another nightmare."

My father frowned. "But she said they stopped. She convinced the doctors, she—"

"She lied." My voice was hard. "She didn't want to put us through more stress, so she said she was fine.

But the moment something reminds her of her past, she breaks all over again."

A long silence stretched between us as we both watched Cassie spar with another warrior.

She moved with precision, but there was an anger in her strikes, an edge that most didn't notice.

"I just want our Cassie back," my father murmured. "Happy. Carefree. Like before her mother's death."

I exhaled, my gaze never leaving my sister. "I know, Dad. But for that, we need a miracle. And we need it fast."

A sudden commotion near the pack gates pulled my attention. Nathaniel, my Beta, mind-linked me.

Alpha, the royal guards have arrived. They demand to take our children to the palace.

I stiffened.

I'm coming. Do not let them take anyone.

Without another word, I stormed toward the pack gates, arriving just in time to see a scene that sent rage surging through me.

A royal guard had slapped a young child for clinging to his mother.

A second later, the guard was on the ground, a knife pressed against his throat.

Cassie.

She was breathing heavily, her eyes burning with fury. The warriors around us stilled, waiting for my command.

"Commander," I said sharply. "Let me handle this."

Cassie hesitated before growling lowly and stepping back, her grip on her blade tightening.

The head guard pushed himself up, rage twisting his features. "Stupid, worthless bitch! Do you have any idea of the price you'll pay for attacking the King's messenger?"

A deadly silence fell over the pack.

I took a slow step forward, letting my Alpha aura roll off me. "We know the price. But you seem to forget whose land you stand on." My voice was dangerously calm.

"You will not disrespect my Commander. You will not lay a hand on my pack's children. And unless you want a full revolt, I suggest you start speaking with the respect my pack deserves."

The guard spat blood onto the dirt. "The King demands all children ages fourteen to eighteen be taken to the Royal Kingdom for training, as per tradition."

His glare darkened. "Or have you forgotten?"

My hands curled into fists. "And yet you treat our children like animals?"

"I do what needs to be done," the guard sneered. "Frankly, I've always hated the Shadow Pack and its pathetic Alpha."

The moment the words left his mouth, blood splattered across the ground.

Cassie stepped back, wiping her knife clean, her face blank.

The head guard's body hit the dirt with a thud, his throat slit.

The pack fell silent.

"What is the price of attacking a royal messenger, Mommy?" A small voice broke the quiet. A child clung to his mother, eyes wide with curiosity.

I exhaled sharply. "A hearing before the King."

Cassie met my gaze, her expression unreadable.

Her eyes showed no fear.

No hesitation.

Just emptiness.

My father stepped beside me, his voice low. "Son, if there is to be a miracle, I hope it happens soon."

I didn't take my eyes off Cassie.

"I know, Dad."

And I meant it.

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Damon dragged me back to the pack house, his grip firm but not punishing.

His silence was worse than his anger, stretching between us like a taut rope. When we finally stepped inside, he released me and leaned against his desk, arms crossed over his chest.

I braced myself for an explosion.

Instead, he exhaled sharply, shaking his head. "You really don't know how to make my life easy, do you?"

I lifted my chin. "He disrespected me, Damon. He raised his hand against a child. What was I supposed to do? Stand there and let it happen?"

His golden eyes studied me, something unreadable flickering behind them. "I'm not saying he didn't deserve it. But killing a royal messenger... that puts us in dangerous territory."

I didn't flinch. "So be it."

His jaw tensed. "Do you have any idea what you've done? The King will expect an explanation. And by explanation, I mean he'll want your head."

I met his gaze, unwavering. "Then I'll give him one."

Damon let out a quiet laugh, but there was no humor in it. "You have an answer for everything, don't you?" He shook his head. "Nathaniel just mind-linked me. The

royal guards are waiting. You need to go."

My stomach twisted, but I forced myself to remain composed. "Fine."

He hesitated for a fraction of a second before reaching out, his fingers brushing my wrist. "Be careful, Cassie."

I nodded once. Then I turned and walked out, not daring to look back.

The journey to the palace was silent, the carriage rattling softly as the road stretched before us. Two guards flanked me—one of whom, Ian, was practically seething.

"You're disgustingly calm for someone on their way to meet their executioner," he muttered.

I turned to him, unfazed. "And you're disgustingly tense for someone who enjoys seeing people dragged before the King. Relax, Ian. Stress causes wrinkles."

His hands twitched, but the other guard smothered a chuckle. Ian shot him a glare before gritting his teeth and turning back toward the window.

I let my head rest against the cool glass, my mind wandering to what awaited me.

The King.

A man wrapped in rumors and half-truths. Some called him a beast—merciless, unyielding. Others whispered that he had never once smiled, never once entertained the notion of softness. He ruled with absolute control, his presence enough to silence an entire room.

Damon had met him once. He had spoken very little about the encounter, only telling me one thing: "He doesn't tolerate defiance."

Well, that made two of us.

The carriage slowed to a stop, and before I could fully prepare myself, the door swung open. A hand yanked me forward, metal cuffs snapping around my wrists. My feet barely touched the ground before I was forced to move, my captors steering me through the grand halls of the palace.

The weight of the place pressed down on me—ornate walls stretching high above, torches casting flickering shadows that danced across marble floors.

My breathing remained steady, but my heart pounded a quiet rhythm against my ribs.

Finally, we stopped before two massive doors. The guards didn't speak, but the air shifted, thick with unspoken warnings.

Then—

"Enter."

The voice was deep, commanding. It sent a shiver down my spine.

The doors swung open. I stepped forward.

And met the eyes of the King.

I'd love to hear your thoughts! What do you think of the King so far? And Cassie—reckless or brilliant?

Drop a comment and let me know! Also, a huge thank you to everyone who has been reading and supporting this story. Especially @AvaLangley40 for being the first voter on my story.

You guys make writing so much more fun!

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"Enter." A voice boomed. The doors opened and Nasty pushed me inside, my head bowed.

"King Knight, Head of Warriors, Beta Female." Nasty went down on one knee making me go down with him as well.

"Rise." A husky voice, echoed throughout the hall. Damn, at least now I know our King has a powerful voice.

"Obligations on Commander of Shadow Pack?" A different voice which I guess belongs to the Head of Warriors, Jackson, asks.

"She killed Head leader of guards, meaning not only she broke law #143 but #144 as well. Hence she is brought to the palace, for her required punishment, Head of Warriors." Nasty replied with a smug voice. What is the matter with this guy? Someone needs serious therapy.

'Well someone is trying to get you killed.' my wolf decides to make an entrance.

'Not now, Accalia.' I say and push her at the back of my mind.

"Commander of Shadow pack, state your reason." The King says, making hair on my arms and neck rise. His voice was softer in tone, I wonder why. Though is something soothing about his voice, it makes me want to listen to him forever. What is happening? One part of me begs to lift my head and look at him. Just one peek. But the rational part says I'm already in deep shit, no need to make a damn coffin for myself. Shaking my head to get rid of the thoughts I clear my throat, then start

confidently.

"King Knight, the royal messenger sent to our pack disrespected not only the pack's children but me as a Commander. Not only that but he disrespected my Alpha, which according to the manuscript is punishable by death. He broke law #123 , #133 and #136. According to the manuscript if a person breaks 3 or more laws, that to mentioned in the special section, the punishment is death. I was only doing my duty as a commander, because the things he said to my Alpha, me and the way he abused a child, I'm sure anyone in my place would have done the same thing." I finish, my hands clenched at my side.

Just one peek- Stop.

"Your reason is justified Commander, but that still does not allow you to kill him. It was a royal punishment and you interfered in royal matters though you have made valid points and your reasons were valid, hence your punishment would not be as severe as many would have gotten. five whips in-front of the pack and one day and night of hanging in the punishment ground. DISMISSED." The sound of him getting up ready to leave, confused me. Hanging in the punishment ground? The hell?

"Five whips are justified, but according to which law are you punishing me to hang in the ground?" perplexed by his decision, even though my head is still bowed I dared to ask him. That made nasty bring his fist up to hit me but even before he could come near me, I get ahold of his fist twisting it and punched his nose, sound of his bone snapping echoed through the hall. He fell backwards, bleeding from his nose. An eerie silence fell in the hall, not before Nasty got up and lunged towards me.

"YOU BITCH." Nasty yelled, coming forward to hit me again, when he was stopped by the King.

"Enough!" He sounded angry. My back was to the King, turning around still not

meeting his eyes, my head bowed I waited for his next words. Shit, shit, shit. Why do I do this to myself?

"You are people with respectable positions. Act like it. Even pups have better control than both of you. Commander of Shadow Pack-" I stiffen as he turns his attention towards me.

"- You killed a Pack messenger, then you questioned your King, then you went ahead and hit a royal guard in-front of my eyes. What does that say about you? I respect you, really I do. But picking a dog fight in-front of everyone leaves me no choice-" He sounded so done, honestly but before he can continue Nasty broke him off.

"Yes, my King. And I want her punished for hitting me-" An angry growl from the King shut him up real quick.

"Did I ask for your opinion? Learn to speak when your spoken to. As to her hitting you, I believe you started the fight. Your punishment will also be decided. For the Commander, the rules are clear. Your previous punishments and one day in the torture cell. You're dismissed. Jackson, you know what to do."

I guess he motioned something because the next thing I know, I'm being pulled out of the hall by another guard. He pulled me a little roughly, which earned a growl from the King.

"You do not manhandle a woman, guard." He practically seethes out and I furrow my eyes in confusion. The guard stilled as if he would pass out right now. Stuttering out a small sorry he gestured for me to walk ahead. Walking out the only thing I could hear was nasty stuttering out his reasons, and only thing I could think was should've taken a peek.

'Real proud of you Cassandra, real proud. You just managed to book yourself ticket

to hell.' Accalia says sarcastically.

'Not now, Accalia.' I say, and let the guard guide me to what I believe is the punishment ground.

Five whips in-front of the pack. Five whips coated with silver. One day and night out in the training grounds to say I was exhausted, would be an understatement. But I still did not complain, not whimper, not wanting to give anyone the satisfaction of calling me weak. Tomorrow, I will be taken to the torture cell . I heard a guard saying that the Pack Alpha would also be present. The rules state Alpha King himself would have to torture me. In a sense, setting an example that no-one is above law. Man, woman or child would receive equal punishment. The day passed in a blur and I was being pushed towards the torture cell.

My body was weak from the whips and Accalia was still healing me, but she needed time and hanging did not help at all. My wrists badly bruised and my ankles had blisters because of silver chains used to hang me. I hate the rules, honestly. I mean, okay fine, I messed up. But seriously, who give such severe punishments? It's not fair.

I was pushed into a cell with no light and they unchained me for a while, until the King decides to come to complete my punishment. I knew fighting would make things worse so I didn't even think about complaining. It was cold and me being starved was cherry on top. My body was dehydrated because of hanging in the sun and the small amount of water didn't help.

I shiver and wrap my arms around my self. I wanted to get over with it soon, so I could go back to my pack and forget this whole ordeal. I sat in the corner and laid my head on my knees closing my eyes. There was this window sort of the thing, I know that whoever was behind could see me but I couldn't see them. My shirt was all torn from my back because of the whips and the scars were displayed. I sighed and waited

for my upcoming doom.

The sound of door opening and a powerful aura, made me stiffen. The King was here. Finally, let's get this over with. Accalia yelps getting excited. Is she even real? he's here to torture us and she's getting excited, someone kill me now.

"I'm sorry, Commander. I-" His voiced sounded pained. Why?

"King Knight, please just- just get this over with." my eyes remain closed and I stand up.

"Very well." His voice quiet. Why does it feel like something's wrong? Aside from my punishment, of course. Like there's an elephant in the room, and we're not addressing it.

He takes a knife and run it along my right arm, just barely. I bit my lip to stop the whimper threatening to come out. He stiffens, gulping loudly.

"I- fuck." He growls. The sound of knocking on the window, makes him aware that he has no choice. He steps forward again. Please not the left side , please not the left side. I chant in my head. I already have a ugly scar on my left side of the stomach and it's my weakness.

"I'm so sorry-" He slides the knife light across to my left side, not pressing it down just sliding it across enough to hurt but enough to be healed quickly. Not being able to take even the slight pain ,I left out a painful scream.

"Please...." I whisper, almost swaying.

"What was that Commander?" His voice breaks, he says as if he was in pain. Why was he in pain?

"Not- Not th- the Left side please ... I- I beg you." I stutter out and he steps back as if seeing me in pain was breaking him but why? I don't know what came over me. I slowly lifted my head and my eyes made contact with his grey ones. I hear the knife hitting the floor my eyes flooding with tears and his eyes wide as if lightening struck him. Accalia lets out a painful howl and I whisper ' Mate' before everything goes black.

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I knew something was going to happen from the moment, The commander entered the hall. My instincts were telling me something, yet I ignored them. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before, so why will it now? With this thought I continued. I gave her punishment, even though everything in me was begging me not to. But who was she? I had no idea. If the feeling was due to her being a female, I was helpless in that case as well. No one is above law. If I didn't give out her punishment, that would raise questions about me being a just King. And I can't afford that. Being just, and fair that's what I was always taught about. No one is above law. Then why did it seem she should be?

When I got the answer to that question, I couldn't even comprehend what was happening. No, no. I can't be. It's not right. It's not fair.

Why? Why was our meeting written like this? Why couldn't we meet in normal circumstances, where I wasn't the source of her pain? My heart shattered at her weak voice. My thoughts all over the place, I shook my head and looked at her, she was so fragile yet so strong.

'Mate' her weak, hoarse voice hit my ears, before she could hit the ground I scooped her up in my arms, carrying her bridal style and yelled for all the pack doctors to meet me in my chambers.

"I'm sorry, I am so sorry, love. Fuck! I should have never let this happen to us. I'm sorry, please I'm sorry. I would never let myself or anyone hurt you, anymore. I promise just come back to me, please." I whispered in her ear, my voice breaking. I laid her on my bed. Her blood all over my arms and shirt. I never wanted to cry this bad before. Caressing her face, I gave her a feather like kiss on her forehead.

"Alexander? the pack doctors are here." Jackson came in my chamber and informed me, he looked at me with sad eyes. I knew my eyes were all moist from the tears that were threatening to fall.

"Let all the female doctors enter, send the males away," brushing her hair away from her face, I told Jack without turning my attention away from my mate.

I don't even know your name. Please, come back to me. Please.

Alicia, the main pack doctor, entered with her nurses and they all bowed to me and then proceeded to check my mate. God, I'm an awful mate. I back away from her, leaving the doctor to do her work.

'Will mate hate us? ' My wolf Aztec said to me

'I won't be surprised if she does. We deserve it. ' I replied to him. He is painfully howled the moment I entered the torture cell . I thought that was because of him not wanting to hurt any woman but I was wrong. The moment she lifted her head and I made contact with her emerald green eyes I realized my mistake.

Too late, you're too late. She'll never accept you.

"Alpha? I tended to her injuries and gave her the healing potion, she would wake up in a few hours. She is suffering from mental stress and something that happened in the torture cell triggered some past memory that made her faint." Alicia informed me. I couldn't stop myself from flinching. That felt like a slap on the face. You triggered all the bad memories. You made your mate hate you even before she called you one.

"Thank you doctor. You can take your leave now. "I said to her, she bowed and then left.

"I am so sorry love. It's all my fault. I should have done something, anything. But I was being stupid and that resulted in you being hurt. Please forgive me. I've waited so long for you, don't leave me just yet." I whispered in her ear, a lone tear left my right eye and landed on her cheek. Wiping the tear, I bent once again and kissed her head. Backing away I went out of the room. My shirt was drenched in my mate's blood. My mate's blood that I caused.

I can't- I have got to get it off.

"Alexander, we need you for some pack matters." Jackson mind-linked me and I sighed. Replying him that I'll be there in ten minutes, I made my way to the bathroom to clean myself up.

Entering the conference room, I sat down on my chair. The Alpha of Blood Moon pack was talking about waging war against vampires, but my attention was stuck on my mate. When will she wake up?

Suddenly, the door flew open. Turning my attention towards the intruder, I looked up to see Damon, Alpha of Shadow Pack looking livid angry at me. Okay, I deserve all the anger right now. Even though Aztec was growling at the disrespect, I shut him off. I caused their Pack's Commander harm, him being angry at me was justified.

"How could you-" Alicia entering the room, broke him off. I looked at her and she nodded her head at me. I knew what that meant.

"She's awake."

Alpha Damon looked at me narrowing his eyes, I got up ignoring him completely and rushed to my mate. He was following me close behind. I entered my room to see my mate, looking around frantically, clearly confused as to where she was. Then she looked at me, our eyes met.

I swear time stopped, every thing faded away leaving only me and her. Looking at me with her big emerald eyes and it took me everything in me to not fall down on my knees, seeing she was fine. My mate, the one I am meant to protect, love and respect. It was inculcated in my mind by my mother to love her unconditionally.

She got out of bed, walked towards me, my heart raced. I waited for her to come to me. I can't pressure her into doing anything, not after what I did to her. I did not deserve her. She stood just inches away from me, titling her head she looked at me and a beautiful smile made its way to her face. Her eyes held amazement, as if she found the answer to her question.

Hesitantly I stretched my arm forward, giving her time to pull back if she wanted. When she didn't, I almost wanted to cry again. Circling my arm around her waist, I pulled her to me, her head on my chest. I pulled her even closer to me, removing any distance between us. She fit perfectly in my arms. My bent down, inhaling her scent and almost purred.

I put a kiss on her cheek and she shivered. I smiled and laid my head on the crook of her neck. We stayed in that position, until she put her hands on my chest, pushing me back lightly. I let her go. She was looking behind me, leaving me she went running in Alpha Damon's arms.

Ouch. I deserved that.

Aztec pushed through my barrier, forcing me to give him control. I held my ground and I pushed him back.

'Back off, Aztec.' I closed my eyes trying to calm him down.

'Go to mate! Another male has his hands around her. She's ours.' He was growling, my head started to hurt. I tried my best to fight him. She may already not like me, I

don't want her to hate me as well.

'Aztec! She will fucking hate you for forcing her. She's not an object, give her space you moron.' An unwanted growl escaped my lips, my eyes were tightly shut. I should stay away from her, but before I can leave both of them alone, I felt delicate hands cup my face and I opened my eyes. My mate was looking at me, with worry.

Fuck, I don't deserve her. She's too perfect.

"Hey, I'm sorry. He's my brother." She says softly before wrapping her arms around me. In an instant, I relax. The pain stops and Aztec stops growling, instead he starts purring. What the heck?

I pull back and look at her again. So beautiful. My eyes furrow as I realize I don't even know her name.

"I-umm-" I freaking stutter. I never stutter. Clearing my throat I try again. My beautiful mate's eyes shine with amusement.

"What- what's your name?" I finally breathe out.

Thank God, that was so difficult.

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I told you guys! There was an elephant in the room. I knew I should've taken a peek from the start. Imagine just imagine the difference between us meeting in the start and us meeting like we did. But I guess some things are beyond your control.

The moment I looked into his eyes, my question about his eyes was answered. Damn straight, his eyes have a magnetic pull to them. You really to get lost in them, but I believe that's because we're mates. What the hell were the other people playing at?

Seriously, Cassandra? It's the most climatic scene ever and you're stuck on his eyes? God woman, get a grip.

"What- what's your name?" My mate asked and I wanted to coo at him so bad. This is just straight up comical. I mean The Big Bad Alpha King is stuttering talking to his mate.

"It's Cassandra, mate." I tucked a piece of my hair behind my ear, looking away from him. Then I drop my hand down. I did not think of myself as the shy one, really. What is wrong with me?

Well accept for Lia going crazy in my mind. She was beyond ecstatic.

"Your full name, love. I'm Alexander, by the way." He gave me his full smile, dimples popping up and I gulp. He has dimples! Oh okay, do not go crazy Cassandra. Relax, deep breaths.

"Cassandra Primrose Blaze. And, yeah I kinda knew that. I mean who doesn't know The Kings name." I say fidgeting. He makes me nervous. I hate being nervous. He

wanted to reply but was cut off, his eyes held a glazed look.

Mind-link.

I took the opportunity to give him a once over. Okay, let's see if fate has him prepped up for me. Tall height? check. Killer jaw? check. Grey eyes? Oh god, check. Long eyelashes? check. Muscles? check. Strong arms? check. Prominent veins? check.

Yep, he's perfect.

I look back at him to see his eyes full of amusement. My cheeks color and I turn red. He noticed me staring at him. Smiling at me he said,

"Your name is beautiful just like you are. Rose, just as much I would like to stay with you, I'm sorry I have to attend to some matters and after that, we need to talk. I know I didn't make good first impressions so let me make it up to you, please." I nodded my head. He bent down, placed a kiss on my forehead and left me in his room. I relaxed, turning my attention to the room. I noticed Damon was standing there, looking fully tortured. I feel sorry for the guy.

"Okay first of all, that was just plain awkward for me. I mean fine, you both get all lovey dovey and what does Damon do? Look at the freaking wall and think 'oh this wall is nice'. Please, please I beg you, never do that to me again. I'm horrified." He shivered as if even remembering the events was torturing him. I laughed, shaking my head at him.

"Secondly, are you okay? How are you feeling?" He turned worried again. God this man.

"I'm fine. Actually I'm good this time. I guess the healing potion did wonders for me." Shrugging I look at him again. I knew what was coming next.

"Okay, very good. So now for the main part. How on earth can you forgive him? He TORTURED you for God's sake Cassie. How can you accept him? I can't let you do that to yourself. You fainted because of him you suffered so much and you will just forgive him?" Damon asks baffled. I sigh.

"Yes, Damon I will forgive him. Yes, I will accept him. And yes, he did torture me. I suffered but I am tired, Damon. Tired of not having anyone I could count on except you. He is the King Damon a freaking werewolf King if he would have let me go without punishment than people will think he is not a fair leader. Mate or not I went against the rules and I paid. If he would have let me go without punishment then honestly I would have thought of him as a bias King. For the first time in years, I felt complete Damon. I felt alive again. He made me feel emotions that I never thought I could feel. Attraction, Passion, Loyalty, Possessiveness all those simply touching me. Call it mate bond or anything but I believe he is a miracle. My savior, who would save me from my nightmares. So what do you want me to do? Let go of him?"

"I understand, Cassie. But-fine it's your decision. Just take care of yourself. I am so proud you, and you were, are and forever will be my family, my best friend and my little sister no matter what happens. Also, King or not I'll beat him up if he hurts you one more time." Damon hugged me tightly and I laughed. Now, that's a fight I would love to see.

"Thank you, Damon. And it's a done deal," I hugged him back.

"Well since you will be staying, I have to take my leave. If you need me you know I'm only one call away." Pulling back he straightened himself up.

"You're leaving already? I mean right now? " furrowing my eyebrows I looked at him. I didn't want him to go just yet.

"Yes, I'm sorry. I have to go back to the pack. Duty calls." Kissing my forehead, we

both walked out of the room.

"Oh okay. You have to find yourself a Commander also. I'll miss you. Tell Mom and Dad I love them."

"Ugh. So much work, anyways, I have to see King before leaving though." Damon said I decided to go with him. A guard came and escorted us to Alexander's office as we were near his office I heard growls and Alexander's angry voice.

Damon opened the door and Alexander was choking Ian aka Nasty. His eyes were bloodshot red meaning his wolf was taking control of him, I took a step forward but Damon held my hand stopping me. I looked at him and he shook his head . I got my hand out of his grip and slowly went towards Alexander. His back was faced to me. Ian was pressed against the wall choking . I laid my hand on his shoulder and his muscles relaxed a bit I moved forward and held his hand that was choking Ian and slowly brought it towards my face. Taking his hand off Ian was hard but he allowed me to do it. His features relaxed and he moved forward and hugged me tightly, taking in my scent and calming down. He then let me go and turned towards Ian and said,

"You have disrespected your Luna, Your Queen and by disrespecting her you have disrespected your King. I'll make sure you don't live to see another day." His voice was deadly. The kind that would make people shaking and cowering back. I held his hand and he tightened his grip.

"I am sorry My king if I disrespected you but you cannot punish me." Ian said bowing down.

"And why the fuck not?" Alexander's voice was low, it was calm before the storm. And that is what scared me. His aura is beyond dominating. He doesn't need to yell to deliver his message. His normal voice gives you shiver, and not the good ones, well except for me.

"Because I would like to duel with Commander of Shadow Pack during the Luna Games." He said still looking down. I felt Alexander shaking with anger and before he could lunge at Ian, I stepped in front of him and took his head in my hands. I looked in his eyes which were flickering between red and his grey ones. I smiled at him, he frowned confused by my actions. I turned towards Ian, raising my eyebrow and gave him my best death glare.

"I accept you challenge. You may take your leave." He stepped back clearly shocked, but left nevertheless.

"Cassandra, you let him go, love?" Alexander looked at me, shaking his head.

"No, I accepted his challenge."

"Why would you do that? You should've just let me kill him mercilessly." Shrugging he held my hands.

"Now, where is the fun in that?" I smirked then turned around, Damon was standing near the door with his one eyebrow raised. He moved towards me and returned my smirk.

"You gonna make him regret being born, princess?" He said and nodded at me.

"You bet."

"You know that you're gonna be dueling him during Luna games that would be scheduled for next week?" Alexander said from behind me.

"Yes I know I will duel him durin- Wait! What games?" I looked at him sheepishly.

Okay, I really need to stop acting on impulse.

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"The Luna Games." A deep voice answered from behind me. I turned around to see Sophie and Jackson standing next to Damon.

"King, Luna, Alpha Damon." they both greeted us in unison.

"Beta female, Head of Warriors." Damon greeted back and shook their hands but stilled when he touched Sophie's hand. Both of them looked up and whispered "Mate" before Sophie ran out of the room. Damon shook out of his trance and looked at me for permission to go after her.

"Go Damon. You guys need to sort things out."

"Thanks Cass." He said, bowed and went after her.

"Well that was unexpected," Jackson coughed awkwardly.

"Tell me about it. Moving on, Rose, you will be filled with the details about Luna games but my mother ordered that she would be the one to help you with all this stuff. You will be meeting her and Dad tomorrow at lunch." Alexander looked at me and said. I nodded my head not sure as what to answer to that.

"Luna, I don't think we have been properly introduced. I'm Jackson and it would be an honor to serve you."

"Please call me Cass. I'm still adjusting to this Luna title."

"Of course. in that case call me Jack and anytime you need to hear all the

embarrassing details about our I'm-so-dangerous-fear-me King I'm free to fill you in." He smiled and I laughed.

" Well Jack we're off to a good start." I said and Alexander huffed.

"Already setting up a team against me, I see. Well I hate to break up your moment but Cassandra is MINE and I won't appreciate if you got too close to her jack. Friend or not, you touch her and you're dead" He said in a threatening tone. Jack raised his hands in surrender.

"All yours, Friend. For now" He said the last part in low voice but of course Alexander heard and he growled.

"I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'll go now you two need to be alone. I can feel Alexander's lusty gaze from a mile away. Bye." He left before I could ask him what he meant by that. I frowned lusty gaze? I looked at Alexander to find him too close to me. His breath fanning my face and his eyes turning into a darker shade.

Accalia whistled 'Damn you Nixon' I pushed her back before she can come up with something else. He started to walk towards me and I walked backwards my back was against the wall. He placed his both hands on either side of my face and said

"I have waited exactly 6 years 3 months 16 days 7 hours and 17 minutes to meet my mate. Every sec of every minute was harder then the previous. I vowed to protect and love my mate for as long as I shall live. I vowed to love her unconditionally with everything in me. I vowed to never let anyone harm her. I vowed to stand by her side in her lowest. I vowed to make every second she spent with me memorable. I vowed to never let anyone cause her tears. But, in a matter of days I broke those vows. I hurt you. I caused you pain. I made our time memorable but the kind that would haunt you. I broke every vow and I have never felt more ashamed , guilt, and pained in my life. I am extremely sorry. I proved to be the worst mate even before you called me

one. I failed you and I am sorry."

He removed his hands and stepped back. He was going to leave when I held his hands turned him towards me and let my lips meet his. He stilled for a moment, shocked before wrapping his arm around my waist and pushing me back against the wall. All my life I never wanted to submit to anyone. I wanted to prove that I am stronger than anyone who challenges me. We both were fighting for dominance before I let him take control. I let him take control of me body and soul . His words, His actions, His gestures took away all my thoughts of every mate being like my biological father.

I was going to give him a tough time by not accepting him as my mate but I know that life is too short to let important people in your life go. We werewolves are told about soulmates even before we learn to speak. My biological father shattered by dreams about having a mate. He ruined mine and my mother's life but now I won't allow his deeds to stop me from having a loving mate. I won't allow my past to overcome my future. I won't surrender to my fears. I will prove that to everyone that I am not weak, insecure or broken. I pulled back and opened my eyes. We both were breathing heavily and our foreheads were touching.

"I, Cassandra Primrose Blaze, accept you, Alexander Nixon Knight, as my soulmate, My Alpha and my King making our bond unbreakable for as long as I shall live" I breathed out. He took a step back looking at me with wide eyes and then smiled his full 1000 watt smile that would make anyone fall on their knees.

"I, Alexander Nixon Knight, accept you, Cassandra Primrose Blaze, as my soulmate, My Luna and my Queen making our bond unbreakable for as long as I shall live" He said and I felt my eyes go black and his red he then claimed my lips once again. I felt our wolves connect and Accalia howled in joy. She felt strong, powerful, happy to learn that his wolf's name is Aztec. And what did I feel?

Complete.

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I wake up to kisses on my face. I groan and shove Xander away. If you think meeting your mate starts a connection wait till you accept them. After accepting your mate you feel so inclined towards them that it's difficult to leave them alone until you've marked them. Now, that is the story for a normal wolf. Xander being an Alpha King is a whole new story. His emotions, His possessiveness, His dominance and His actions are stronger than any other wolf. Hence, the kissing.

Accepting your mate is like an engagement in human words. Your wolf and your mate's wolf bond on a higher scale. Our wolves being a dominant part of us results in both mates having an understanding. Trust between mates is developed and their feelings towards each other become serious.

"Go away, I want to sleep." I groan.

"You know for a girl you're very unromantic." He huffs.

"No I'm not. I love my sleep. I'm just very committed to my sleep." I grumble still eyes closed. Moments later I'm being picked up and thrown over Xander's shoulder. I shriek eyes wide open.

"YOU! How DARE you come in between me and my sleep" I pound my fist on his back and he sighs. He then starts moving towards the bathroom.

"Ooh, BOLD! I like it." I smirk and he laughs and puts me down in front of the bathroom door.

"Tempting, love. But that's for another time." He smiles and kisses my forehead.

"Yeah, dream on mister." I say and pat his shoulder. He shakes his head then says

"You're meeting my parents in 30 min. I'll go change in another room. Get ready."

Before I could say anything he was out the door. I stomp my feet and step in the bathroom. I sigh and walk towards my wardrobe. I pick out casual attire not in the mood of dolling up. Red and black strips shirt and black jeans, perfect. I run a bath and finished my business. I step out in the room, wrapped in a towel and start to dress. I tucked in the shirt, left my hair naturally as they are. I'm not really good at this make-up stuff and I didn't want anyone to come do my hair. I mean I have maids that could help me dress and all but nah. Just as I was wearing my shoes the bedroom door opened.

"Rose are you-" I look up to see Xander staring at me his eyes darkened. In a flash I was against the wall, his minty breath fanning my face.

"Why do you have to be so fucking Hot." He dips his head and inhales my scent.

"God you smell heavenly." he says lowly and I laugh.

"It's called a shower. Soap, Shampoo, Hot water." I smile sweetly at him.

"Naked I know the drill." he replied smugly and I shriek.

"You read the book?? Hush hush??" I stare wide eyes at him and he laughs.

"No, I didn't but I have been living with Jackson long enough for that quote to be stuck in my head. "

" Wow. I'm impressed." I say lowly and Xander nods busy inhaling my scent.

"By jack or me?" He places a kiss on my cheek and I laugh.

"Jack?" I answer more like question, the smile never leaving my face. He growls at that.

He caresses my face, turning my head to him. His eyes on my lips, then they flicker to mine as if silently asking for permission. I nod and he wastes no time in placing his lips on mine. The sparks come alive wherever his skin meets mine. The kiss was soft yet harsh, loving yet possessive. God, the kiss was perfect. He took control, and I gladly gave it to him. I pull away to allow oxygen in my system and calm my rapid heartbeat. Last night when I accepted him as my mate our wolves connected making our bond stronger. By marking our human halves will also connect.

"Umm we- we are get- getting late, no? so umm yeah let's go." I stutter and Xander raises his eyebrows and stepped closer to me.

"You like it when I get possessive don't you? MAJOR turn on for you, love?" He smirks.

"Shut up! that's not true. I- I was just saying that your parents are waiting so we should go. Come on, caveman. We're getting late". I stepped away from him and walk out of the room with Xander following me.

"Sure, whatever helps you sleep at night." he says while smirking and I glare at him. He wraps his arm around my waist and I raise my eyebrow at him.

"What? we're wayy past the boundaries stage." He says shrugging and I shake my head. We walk towards the Dining hall. I admit I was nervous and it's weird, I mean never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be nervous meeting my mate's parents. Weird isn't it? How life makes you experience the unimaginable adventures, and you have no choice but to experience it.

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"Relax, love." Xander says in my ear.

"Easy for you to say. You're not meeting my parents." I clench my teeth.

"Funny experience that would be wouldn't it?" he says and laughs. I shot him a glare, realizing what he said I became quiet. If mom would have been alive she would surely threaten him and give him warm hugs, doing the job of what a father would do also.

Father, I hate that word. Probably because mine left the moment he found out my mom was pregnant. You would think that werewolves are protective especially the pups but not that guy he ran and never spared us a glance again. My mom used to cry at nights alone holding his picture. I loathe him. He is like that chapter in your life you just want to forget.

"Earth to Rose." Xander says and I shrug. We were standing in front of a giant door and as the door opened I see a large table with probably 20 seats. The former king and queen seated and eating quietly. Just as the door opened their eyes snapped towards us. I feel like passing out from the seriousness.

"Oh My God!! Are you his mate? You're so beautiful, darling." The former queen says just as we bow to them. She stands up and comes towards us pulling me in a tight hug. To say I was shocked is an understatement. She was so elegant. To me she looks like in her mid 30's. Also, her calm and motherly aura I was beyond than happy.

"Thankyou, mam." I say and slightly bow

"Oh relax, my dear. Call me Amara." she says smiling at me. I could see the resemblance Xander was exact copy of her mother just not the eyes. I suppose he inherited them from his fath-

"Son. Good to see you, as you the infamous Cassandra Primrose." Xander father said while walking over to us. I gulped that man screamed power. Though, less than Xander but still.

"Father." " Sire". Xander and I say while he was standing stiffly and i wonder if they have that strict father and son relationship. But, after a sec i heard laughter and i am confused right now. Both Father and son were laughing while pulling each other for a hug. I looked at Amara to see her smiling and shaking her head at them as if seeing my confusion she said.

"They like to have fun. Giving others the impression of having a strict relationship" I too was shaking my head at them after hearing that.

"I'm sorry dear. I was just joking I'm absolutely thrilled to meet you. Finally I have a daughter I always wanted." Sire said while giving me a hug. I stilled hearing those words.

" Thankyou, sire" i said softly.

" Please dear, call me Edgar or Dad. I'll be very pleased." He smiled softly at me and I was on brink of crying. Not thinking I hugged him again taking everyone by surprise.

"Thankyou, Edgar." I said and he patted me on the back.

"Let's eat, shall we?" Amara clapped her hands and we all nodded. Sitting on our respective chairs we started to eat.

" So, Cassandra dear. You ready for Luna Games?" Amara asked me and I nodded eagerly.

"Perfect. So let me explain everything to you. Our forefathers when found a mate many people had objections regarding the mate. Plus many of the mates were selfish and after the throne. To resolve this issue a group of leading leaders sat down to decide and the result was The Luna Games. Every Luna game is different from previous accept one challenge. Whosoever feels that the King's mate is not fit for her Luna position challenges her in a battle. Further this proves the Luna's fighting abilities as well. The rest challenges are on the previous Queen she may choose whatever she wants for the next Queen to compete in. There have to be total 4 challenges. 1 being permanent the previous Queen has to choose the rest 3." She explains.

"Right" I drag. " So what are the 3 challenges I'm facing other then the battles?" I ask and both Amara and Edgar laughed lightly.

"Impatient are we now, love?" Xander whispers in my ear and I swat him away giving Amara my full attention. Earning a huff from Xander.

" My dear, Both Ed and I have decided that this time the games should be different than tradition. The 3 challenges I chose are:

1. Leadership test

2. Danger Hunt

And....."

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" And.....?" I ask Amara.

" You both in the battle ring." She says smiling.

" Waitwhat?" Xander looks at his mother as if she's grown two heads.

" Okay, so mind explaining the challenges a bit?" I asked her.

"Wait, can we first address the fighting together thing? I won't fight with Rose, no matter what you say." Xander said sternly.

" Oh please, loverboy. You're just scared you'll be defeated by me in front of your whole kingdom." I smirked at him.

"Fine bring it on. Wanna bet?" he raised his eyebrow at me and i mouthed him 'later' to which he smiled.

" Okay, that being settled. I'll explain you a few things. In the leadership Test you'll have be given a group of people and you'll have to go through some obstacles or a maze. Bringing all of them out with strategy and intelligence will be your test. If you pass you'll go to the next phase, which is Danger hunt. Seeing from your aura I gathered you have accepted each other as mates the first round will get you familiar with your pack and develop a Luna sense which you'll use to save your pack people from different dangers. You'll have to save all of them before the time runs out. If you succeed then you'll be taken to the Battle field where you will duel with your opponents who will be those you want to challenge your authority as Luna as they do not think you're fit to be Luna. Lastly, if you pass all these you'll battle with your

beloved mate. But that will be just for fun after these heated challenges. Clear?" Amara explained and i nodded.

" Well then let's eat as we both have places to be." Edgar said.

After the breakfast Edgar and Amara had some affairs to run so after they left I was walking through the halls with Xander deep in thought about Damon finding his mate, The Luna Games, My relationship with Xander, and me becoming a Queen. My head feels like it going to burst with all the thinking. I turn to look at Xander to see him looking at me with concern as if sensing my stress.

" What are you thinking about, love?" He asks me stopping me and hugging me.

" Nothing special." I shrug

" Well then let's talk about our deal." He said smirking and I laugh.

"Okay, caveman. Shoot." I said and he gave me a disapproving look.

"First tell me what's your deal about giving me horrible names. I mean I would love it if you would give me names but i was thinking along the lines of sweetheart, my life, my king, no?" Xander says.

" Umm... No. The only names you're getting are the ones you deserve." I say and he rolls his eyes.

"Anyway, my deal is if I win I get to mark you." He says smiling.

" Fine and if I win you'll be doing whatever I say for one whole day. Deal?" I say and put out my hand in front of him.

" Deal." He says and grabs me by my waist and kisses me.

" That's not how it's supposed to go, you know. You had to shake my hand." I say after stepping away from him. This man and his ways.

" Eh. I like this way more. Plus, we can say now we sealed it by lips." He gives me a toothy smile and I laugh.

" You waited to say that for a long time, didn't you?"

"You have no idea."he says before looking at me and he was going to say something but stops and stills meaning someone is mind-linking him. He runs his hand through his hair and kisses me on the forehead.

" Sorry, love. I have to go jack just mind-linked me, but we will continue this talk." he says softly and I only nod and he leaves. As I was going to our room i saw Damon coming towards me.

" Hey! Everything okay?" I asked him and he signed.

"Not even close to it. She wants to reject me, she doesn't want to be a Luna she wants to remain as the Beta Female. Cass, as much as i would love to stay i have to go back to the pack. I mind linked Head of Warriors about my departure and he agreed. Just wanted to meet you before leaving." He said and hugged me.

"Damon everything will work out. You both need time and I'm sure it'll turn out perfect in the end." I smiled at him.

" I hope so, Cass. Anyways will see you at the Luna Games. Bye, Cassie." He says and smiles as the escort guard comes to take him outside the castle.

"Bye, Damon." I return the smile and head back to my room.

'Well, technically it's Alexander's room but yeah go mark your territory.' Accalia says.

'Look who decided to show up. And plus it was a mistake i mean Xander's room.' I reply.

'First time it's a mistake, second time it's a choice.' she smugly replies, and i roll my eyes blocking her. Damn, this wolf is annoying.

As i entered m- i mean Xander's room i felt a sharp pain on my left side of body. I almost collapsed on the floor but i held the nearest thing for support. I hunched over and slowly made my way in front of the mirror. I took my shirt off leaving me in only my sports bra and looked at my hurting side. The left part of my rib cage was all purple and the scar clearly visible. I contacted Lia to heal me.

'I am trying, Cassandra. The pain will stop but the scar it will remain. It will take me time to heal you completely also the pain goes back 14 years.' She replies and i nod in understanding.

I turn around to make my way to the bed but stop dead in my tracks. Alexander stood at the door rigid and his eyes on my scar.

"Alex-

"I can't do this." he says slowing raising his eyes to look at my face.

"Alexander it's okay. I forgive you ple-

"You forgive me? What about me forgiving myself? I'm sorry i ... i thought .. no i

can't. I'm sorry Cassandra." He says slowly retreating and my eyes widened.

" What is that supposed to mean, Alexander? No please just lis-" i stop in mid-sentence to scream. I knew it will be painful, one disadvantage of Lia healing me is that i go through immense pain to get healed quickly. I was going to collapse on the floor when Alexander lifted me up and laid me on the bed. The tears start forming in my eyes and i hold Alexander's hand tightly.

" Do... Don't please... It's all too much. I am done fighting for myself.... I need a reason to live." I manage to say before darkness consumes me.

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" Rose? Sweetheart, love please open your eyes. I'm begging you please just wake up." i felt someone caressing my face and whispering in my ear, and from the sparks i knew it was Xander. His voice felt so strained. I try to open my eyes but my body betrays me, no matter how much i try to get up. I give up in the end and let my self slip back into darkness.

.....

I'm running.

As fast as i can. I hear them after me.

They're getting close. Tears run down my face as i push myself to run faster.

They're gaining on me. They will hurt me like they hurt my mom.

I feel my legs giving up and i fall face down on the ground.

"Got you." They say and i scream.

.....

I hear her screaming and i run to our room. I see her on the floor, looking straight ahead and screaming go away. Getting hold of my self i go to her and kneel in front of her she looks at me and stops screaming. Her eyes wide, Bloodshot and full with tears. She looks at me and then at the side of my head and then back at me. Suddenly she pushes me. I stumble back almost falling.

" Go away. Get out. Go, go, go. They'll hurt you. They... they wi... will come again. They'll take you.. away. They can't. No, no, no, no." She keeps saying and i hug her but she pushes me away.

" I SAID GO. WHY DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND GO." She yells at me and starts hitting me i hug her closer to myself and get both of us to stand. She thrashes against me , hitting me again and again and telling me to go.

" Cass-" I start but she stops me.

"GO AWAY"

"Lo-"I start again but she hits me again and pushes me.

"NO..... GO AWAY" she screams and manages to pull away from me and stumbles back but i pull her back against my chest before she could fall. I hold her firmly and she stops thrashing and lays her head on my shoulder.

" The- they killed her. She's ... gone. N-ever com- coming back. I lost her. I lost my... Mum." She says while hiccuping and i feel her go limp in my arms. Lifting her up i take to towards the bed and lay her down. I give her a kiss on the forehead and sit down beside her. She looks so pale, so lifeless, so tired. I sign and hold her hand, just looking at her for sometime. She lost her mum? but Damon's parents are alive. How can her mum be dead, unless..... realization hits me and i leave our room. Going in my study i try to mindlink Damon but he has his guard up. I look around for my phone and call him.

" Hello. Alpha Damon speaking." He says.

"Damon, it's Alexander. Cassandra has been unconscious for 2 days. She woke up a little time back and started screaming at me to go as 'THEY' will hurt me. And she

was crying about losing her mum. But that means....." I trail off and hear Damon take a sharp intake of breath.

" Yes... we are not blood related but it's not my story to tell. She's been through alot King Knight and now she needs happiness in her life otherwise i'm afraid she will lose the will to live. Only you can save her, help her please." He says.

" I'll do anything in the world to help her. She's mine to protect now." I say and end the call.

I sit down on my chair and put my head in my hands.

'Alex. I can't contact Lia, also. Mate is going to be okay right? ' I hear my wolf ask me.

' Yes, she's going to be okay. I'll make sure of it.' I say determined to help my mate, my queen get the spark in her eyes back.

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Numbness. That's all i felt. I stared at ceiling, without blinking. He saw how messed up i am. He saw right through me and all my fears were displayed in front of his two eyes. My nightmares all came true. He saw my worst and now he'll leave me. Like everyone else. I'm going to be alone, like always.

" Cassandra?" I felt someone shaking me gently and i blink. Slowly, i turn my head towards the owner of voice and i gasp. I get up and throw myself at Alexander without thinking twice.

" Don't leave me, please. I can't do this. Please I'm tried of fighting." I hug him hard and whisper to him.

" I won't, I won't leave you, Cassandra. I promise." I hear him say in my ear as I remained glued to him. Then, slowly i let him go and stand on the ground.

" I want to help you, love. But you have to tell me what's wrong. Just tell me when you're ready but i will be there for you no matter what. I'll be your support. I'll always protect you and I promise you that you'll never find yourself alone again." He says lowly and kissed my forehead.

" I- I nee... I need some time. I'll tell you but please." I look at him with pleading eyes not to force me.

" Take your time, love. I'll wait for you for a thousand years if i have to. Now I'll let the doctor know you're up and she'll give you a routine check up. Until then I'll bring something for you to eat. Alright?" He says and i nod. He makes me sit on the bed and leaves as the doctor, Alicia, enters.

"Good morning, Luna. It'll take only five minutes." She says and i smile at her softly and nod. Alicia then checks me and leaves.

After a while Alexander returns with oatmeal and glass of juice with some medicines and places the tray in front of me.

" Alicia gave some medicines to ease your headache and some other pills for caution. In case you feel any chest pain or you start feeling dizzy or lack of sleep. For now I'll feed you this then you take medicine to ease your headache and take some rest." He says to me and starts feeding me. I stare at him. He was a mess with eye bags under his eyes and ruffled hair. He looked like he didn't sleep at all and i felt bad because it was all my fault. He continued feeding me as I argued with myself whether i should tell him or not, and if i want to tell him what should i say.

' Lia, I'm scared. What if... what if he leaves me like..... him?' I ask her and Alexander realizing i was talking with my wolf sat patiently waiting for me.

' He won't. If he wanted to he could have just left when he saw you break down. Just trust him for once. Not everyone is like your father.' She replies and i cringe at the word Father. I sign and block her out. Alexander sat in front of me looking at me with sadness. He hands me the medicine and i swallowed it. He slowly got up and started to leave when i spoke. He placed the tray on the stand and sat down on the bed with me and held my hand.

" My mother, her name was Clarissa. My biological father, Jason, was her mate. My mother belonged to a wealthy family and when she met him she realized that him belonging to a lower status would cause problems and her family would never accept him. He promised her love, protection and support through thick and thin.

She fell in love with him and to be with him she left her family. My....I mean Jason when realized that she left her family and all her wealth changed completely. He

started abusing her and told her he wanted her only for her money and now that she has none, he wants nothing to do with her. When he found out about my mother being pregnant with me he abandoned her. She was left alone with no family to go to. She had no money, nothing.

At that time Damon's father helped her. He was her only support and they bonded as siblings. He gave her shelter and after my birth he took care of both of us. Damon's family accepted us with love and compassion. I grew up with Damon and everything was finally better. But....." Tears sprang to my eyes as i recalled what happened next and Alexander came close to me and hugged me.

" Hey, it's okay. You don't have to continue if you don't want to." He says and kisses my hand then my head.

" No. I have to it's been with me for so long that I have to get it out." I say and straightening my self I start again.

" But It all went downhill from there. One day when i was eight years old my mother and I....."

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.....*Flashback*.....

"Mom! Catch me!" I say while running away from my mother while laughing. I look at her to find her laughing with me and running after me.

"I'm gonna get you, Primrose." She says and I run faster towards the woods. I push myself harder and run as fast as I could.

"Cassandra! Not too far in woods. Come back! You're going close to the pack boundary." I hear my mother yell from behind me but I ignore her and keep running.

"You're just saying that so you can catch me and win." I yell back still running.

"Cassandra, please. Look I've stopped running. Please, come back. You're going to far." I hear her worry filled voice and I stop running. I turn to look at her and she sighs.

"Good girl. You win, Primrose. Now let's go back home." She says softly and I nod. I run back to her and in her arms.

"Yay. I won, mommy. Now you'll have to bake me a chocolate cake!" I grin at her and she smiles.

" Anything for My Primrose." She says and kisses my forehead. I lay my head on her shoulder as she carries me back to our home. Suddenly, she goes rigid and stops. She puts me down and look at me with fear.

"Primrose, I want you to run as fast as you can and mommy will follow you. You keep running no matter what happens. We'll have a race as to who will reach home first, Alright?" She whispers to me. I get confused but nod nevertheless.

"Okay, mommy." I say and she pushes me in the direction of house.

"Run. Go now, run." She says and I start running. I hear sounds behind me but I keep on running just like Mother said. After a while I hear her scream and I stop. I look behind to see my mother laying on the ground with blood oozing out of her head. I run back to her and lay her head on my lap.

" Mommy? Mom. I- please wake up." I shake her as tears run down my face.

" Get up, mommy. Primrose needs you. Mommy, please. I promise will be a good girl. I will never run away from you." I whisper to her while crying. I hug her tightly to me and lay next to her with my head on her chest. I continue crying until I hear a sound and I get up. Alpha Lucian with other Pack wolf's come towards us and I run to him.

"Alpha! Alpha! Look. Mommy is hurt. She is not waking up." I pull at his trousers and point at mother. He looks at her and picks me up. He starts walking towards the pack house and I look at him to see tears in his eyes. I hit him on the chest and start screaming.

"No! No! You have to help mommy. Help her. No!" I keeping hitting him and he hugs me tightly. I thrash against him and he using his werewolf speed takes me down to the pack house. He puts me down and Luna Audrey comes to us. He shakes his head at her and she stills. Tears come in her eyes and I run to her.

"Luna ! Luna! Help mommy, please." I say to her and hugs me.

"Mommy is gone, princess." She whispers as tears run down her face and I shake my head.

"No... NO!"

.....*End of Flashback*.....

Tears run down my face as I tell Alexander how I lost my mother. Alexander picks me up and puts me in his lap and kisses my forehead. I put my head on his shoulder and continue to cry. His grip on me tighten as I start hiccuping.

"I'm so sorry, love. I'm sorry." He keeps whispering in my ear and hold him tighter. He lets me cry, and I needed that. I needed to let all my tears out. After a while the tears stop and I calm down. I pull back from him to see his eyes red and filled with moisture. I get of his lap but he shakes his head at me. I look at his shirt which was wet with my tears.

"I'm sorry." I say to him while looking down.

"For what?" He asks his voice strained.

"I ruined your shirt." I whisper as my voice quivers.

" Look at me, love." He says softly and I look up.

" Never say sorry to me again. I don't care about the shirt being wet the only thing that breaks me is knowing your tears made it wet. I can't see you in pain, Cassandra. I'm so sorry. You were only eight and you saw your mother dead. You're father left you and you waited for the moment to met you mate. But I- I hurt you. I tortured you and I'm sorry. I'll change myself, I'll redeem myself for you just please I can't see you like this. I'll do anything for you." He says and kisses slightly on the lips and pulls

away.

Hugging me closer to him gently. He places both of us on the bed with me laying my head on his chest and him holding me in his arms. I wanted to tell him I'm okay, but I didn't have the strength in me to tell him that so I snuggled closer to him. I know he'll ask me about my scar and I will tell him but that's a story for later. I felt him place a kiss on my head. My eyes closed from exhaustion and I fell asleep.

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I felt someone playing with my hair. It was cute until they started pulling my hair making me go bald. I push Xander away and open my eyes to glare at him. He smiles sheepishly at me.

"Do you want a bald mate?" I ask him with clenched teeth and he laughs making me more irritated.

"Jeez, sorry love. Not my fault your hair is tangled as vines" He says and I hit him with a pillow.

"I hate you." I say and he laughs.

" Aww, so it's turning out to be Hate to Love relationship now?" He grins at me and I groan.

"Why are you in such a good mood. It's- " I stop to look at the time. "-5:30 in the MORNING." I give him an exasperated look.

" Because I woke up holding you in my arms. And yes, it's 5:30 in the morning meaning we're going to the training grounds to train you for the Luna games. We have only 12 days left. So up! Hurry! Hurry!" He says while getting up and going towards the bathroom.

" Awwwww, to your first statement, and Nooooo to the rest." I say and lay back closing my eyes.

" I'm going to count till 5. If you're not up and ready... Well let's hope we both enjoy

the same things." He smirks and me and I scoff.

" You're bluffing." I say not moving.

" 1....." He starts and I open my eyes.

"2....." I look at him with wide eyes.

"3....." I start to panic.

"4....." I get up throwing the covers off me and before he could say 5 , I run into the bathroom but before shutting the door I come out and say:

"I only got up because It was nature calling me. I still call your bluff."

"5....." He says and I shriek shutting the door in his face. He starts laughing and I couldn't help but smile. Shaking my head I wash my face and do my daily routine. I change into my sports bra and legging pants. I tie my hair into ponytail and step out. I look around to see Xander typing at his phone furiously. I go to our walk in closet and wear my sneakers. I step out and give Xander a look over before his attention turns to me.

He was wearing half sleeve grey shirt with black sweatpants and his black sneakers. I almost drooled at the sight. Half sleeves made his biceps and veins more prominent which made him look 100 times more hotter to me. Still in trance I didn't realize him coming towards me.

"Ready?" He says huskily. I look up and take a step back on instinct seeing our close proximity. His breath was fanning my face, but before I could move away he pulls me to him. His hand makes contact with my bare waist and sparks erupted throughout my body. He pulls me to him our chests pressed together. I look directly in his eyes to

find them darker shade of grey.

"MINE." He growls and inhales my scent laying his head on my shoulder. He kisses my neck and I shudder from the contact. He trails kisses up my neck on my jawline. Then he pulls back and smiles at me, his dimples showing and I melt right there.

" You okay?" He asks with a smirk and I nod.

" Feeling a little weak in the knees but I'm fine." I say slowly and he laughs. Then, he picks me up bridal style and I shriek. I look at him with wide eyes.

"Problem solved." He winks at me and feel blood rushing to my cheeks. I bury my face in his neck to hide my blush and kisses my head smiling. He starts moving out the room, towards the training grounds. I saw his mother on the way and I died of embarrassment while she gave me a huge smile and wink. God, this family. As we reach the training ground, Jackson comes running towards us.

" Hi Cassie!" He says and I look at Xander to put me down. He reluctantly sets me down and I look at Jack.

" Hi Jack! How are you?" I say with a smile and shrugs. He nods and Xander and they do their handshake. Then he turns to me and says:

" Same old, same old. But I'm prefect now seeing y-" Before he could complete his sentence Xander give him a deathly glare and he gulps.

"Um.. nevermind. I'm going now." He walks away going to the warriors. I look around to about a thousand wolves training. They were divided into groups according to age. Each group under a commander and Jack supervising them all. I look at my right to see Jackson training the fighters. They were all shirtless and doing push-ups.

"Don't look at them." Xander growls and I laugh.

" Why ? You getting jealous?" I smirk at him and he narrows his eyes at me.

" No, love. I don't get jealous." He says.

" Liar." I tease him and raises his eyebrow. Then he comes near my ear and whispers.

"Nah, I'd like to call this possessiveness mate. Plus, I have better body than anyone of them." I look at him with boredom and pat his chest.

" Whatever helps you sleep at night, caveman." I turn around to see Sophie training female warriors and I turn back to Xander to let him know I'm going to her but before I could say anything he takes his shirt off putting his Greek god body on display. My eyes go wide and I open and close my mouth like a fish. Then I hiss at him.

" I see your point now put it back on, right this minute. Bitches are staring at you."

" Why? You getting jealous?" We switch roles but I don't give him the satisfaction to tease me.

" Nah, I'd like to call this possessiveness mate. Plus I can always make them blind for eyeing my mate." I smile sweetly at him and he looks at me for a second before putting his shirt back on.

"Good boy. Now, I'm going to Sophie in hopes to fight the bitch who has been eye raping you from the moment we came. Feel free to watch the fight." I say and run towards Sophie's group before Xander could reply me. All of them were busy in fighting except that bitch who was busy chewing her lips looking at Xander. I go to Sophie and she greets me.

"Luna! Wonderful to see you here. You going to train or just passing?" She asks and I smile at her.

" Call me Cassie please, Sophie. Of course I'm going to train. But first let's kick off with a fight. Mind telling me the name of that woman?" I ask her while pointing at that brunette.

" Oh, that's Victoria. She's always finding ways to talk to Alexander. She's annoying as hell." Sophie says with disgust.

" Well shit's about to go down." I whisper to her and step forward to give a loud whistle. Everyone stops what they were doing and looks at me.

" Hi everyone! I'm Cassandra. Your Alpha King's mate." I say and everyone gasps. Some girls look at me with envy, some with respect but my attention was on Victoria. She eyes me up and down then looks at me with disgust. Then she does what I wanted her to do.

"I'm Victoria Blaze and I challenge you for a duel." She says and I smirk at her.

"She's so dead." I hear Sophie say and advance towards her. Looking her dead in the eye I say:

" Challenge accepted."

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"I'm Victoria Blaze and I challenge you for a duel." She says and I smirk at her.

"She's so dead." I hear Sophie say and advance towards her. Looking her dead in the eye I say:

" Challenge accepted." I say and turn to look around. Almost everyone who was in the training ground was present forming a ring around us. I find Xander arms crossed giving me a deadly look and I smile sweetly at him and he frowns then he walks towards me and I gulp. I didn't notice a grey top in his hands until he handed it to me. I eyed him confused.

"If you're going to fight, and everyone is going to watch then you HAVE to wear this or no fight." He says trying to keep his anger at bay.

' Someone's getting over protective.' Lia whistles at me and try not to laugh. I put the sleeveless top on and look at him.

"Happy?" I ask and he nods then steps closer to me until our bodies were touching and bent down to whisper in my ear,

"Show that pup who's boss around here and make her regret being born." I smirk and step back from him.

"Your wish is my command, mate." I say and wink at him. I walk towards Victoria and see her rolling her eyes at me. My eyes go black and I try keeping Lia in control.

" Before the fight begins there are some rules you have to follow. No shifting into

your wolves until I say, and you fight till one surrenders or becomes unconscious. LET THE FIGHT BEGIN." Jack announces and Victoria growls. This is going to be FUN!

As the fight began I grew concerned for Rose. The only thing keeping me from ending this fight was my trust in her. I knew she can handle herself and she wasn't Commander for nothing. She must have been excellent fighter to get that position. Plus, I knew that this fight would not only satisfy my over protective mate, it would also show the people her fighting skills making them afraid of challenging her in The Luna Games. I shake my head and pay attention to the fight.

"She is so damn cool!" I hear wolves whispering behind me and I growl lightly making them shut up in an instant. I see Rose holding Victoria by her throat and lifting her up in the air. My eyes widen, wow she's strong. Victoria kicks her in the stomach making Rose stumble back and her hold on Victoria loosen. Victoria breaks free from Rose's grasp and plunges her canines into her shoulder. Rose knees her in the stomach and Victoria grunts. Rose punches Victoria's face and she falls face down on the ground, and coughing out blood.

"Surrender!" Rose snarls at her and Victoria gulps but shakes her head. Rose smirks at her and shrugs,

"Your choice." She replies and kicks Victoria in the stomach making her double over in pain. Rose then tilts her head to one side looking her Victoria groaning in pain. She offers her hand to her and Victoria looks at her startled and hesitantly let Rose pull her up. But before she could stand properly Rose punches her again in the stomach making Victoria fall down on her knees. Jackson comes towards me and whispers to me,

"I don't think they need to transform in their wolf form to fight." I look at him and nod.

Rose steps closer to Victoria and pulling her chin up to look at her.

" Now, I'm going to ask you some questions. Give the right answers and I'll spare you otherwise ... well you'll see." she says and Victoria whimpers.

"Number one, Do you accept me as Your King's Mate?" She asks and Victoria's face goes pale but she spits at Rose saying,

"NEVER." Rose's eyes goes black and she wipes her face and in an instant Victoria was on the ground coughing blood.

"Wrong answer." Rose picks Victoria up again and asks her another question.

"Let's try this again, Do you accept me as Your King's Mate?" Victoria nods and Rose smiles.

" Good. Do you accept me as Your Luna?" She asks softly and Victoria snaps her eyes at her and looks at her with disgust replying,

" You're nothing but a MONSTER. You don't deserve to be a LUNA. You don't deserve RESPECT, and you certainly don't deserve ALEXANDER." Victoria was breathing heavily and Rose just smiles at her then bends down to her level looking at her dead in the eye.

" Prove that to the Gods, because you failed to prove it to the pack." She says whispering and stabs her with a dagger enough to draw out blood making her unconscious. Rose then turns towards Jack raising her eyebrow at him saying,

" Next what happens if the opponent is unconscious?" Jack gulps and stammers,

" Um... I.. I. Oh god." He clears his throat and starts again. I try to suppress a laugh at

his behavior.

" Nothing. Unconscious means she failed to protect herself meaning she loses the fight and WE HAVE A WINNER." He loudly announces the last part and everyone stares at Rose not moving. I sign and start to clap slowly then one by one everyone claps. Some whistling, and chanting ' LUNA'. Rose smiles and bows her head. Everyone drops to one knee and bow their head showing submission and their acceptance of Rose as their Luna.

I step forward and Rose runs towards me hugging me tightly. I wrap my arms around her and before I could put my head in her neck she pulls back shaking her head.

" Nope. I smell like a fight." She says shuddering in disgust and I laugh. I snake my arm around her waist and pull her towards me her body coming in contact with mine.

" Not gonna lie, love. THAT. WAS.HOT" I growl in approval and she looks at me weirdly then shrugs.

" I don't wanna even know why you found that 'HOT', but I fight to impress honey." She winks and turn towards the crowd. Clearing her throat she says loudly,

" I may not deserve all this as my opponent said but I can without doubt say that I Cassandra Primrose Blaze with fight for My Mate, My Pack and My Kingdom with my life without hesitating. Putting My responsibilities as a Mate , Luna and Queen before anything even my Life." As she finishes everyone howls and looks at their Luna with pride in their eyes, trust in their bones and love in their hearts.

' Guess who got a new job as The Lycan Pack's Luna.' Aztec says with pride and I look at Rose her skin glowing and eyes shining with happiness at the new bond she managed to establish with her pack.

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As I entered Xander's room I go straight in the bathroom to take a shower. I strip and let the cold water wash away the blood. I look at my shoulder to see red bite marks on my shoulder blade but it was almost healed meaning the bite marks will disappear as they were never there. As the water droplets ran down my face my eyes take me back to the fight scene. I place my head in my hands.

What have I done?

I think and look at my hands starting to shake. I just fought someone to an extent of stabbing her, why? only because I was... jealous. Is this who I am? Was Victoria right? Am I Am I a Monster? I gasp and tears form in my eyes. My body starts shaking and slowly after washing my hair and doing the essentials I get out of the shower and wrap a towel around me. I stare at myself in the mirror.

What have you done, Cassandra?

My hands form a fist and I dug my nails in my palms enough to draw out blood. I look at myself in the mirror with disgust. She was right to look at me that way. I don't deserve anything. Me, Cassandra Primrose, a broken girl with daddy issues and panic attacks and a dead mother with nightmares and scars that run down my body. I a mess. My head starts to throb and I clench my teeth to avoid breaking the mirror.

"Rose? Love? Everything okay?" Xander's voice and the sound of knocking on the door breaks me out of my thoughts and I unclench my fists immediately. The nail marks start to heal and I wash my hands to get rid of the blood. I tighten the towel around me and open the bathroom door. Xander was pacing near the bed and I go straight in the closet to dress my self up.(A/N The outfit above.)

I step out dressed and Xander comes towards me holding my face in his hands making me look at him.

"What's wrong?" He asks with worry and I stare at him. His face laced with worry. His eyebrows knitted in confusion and lips forming a frown. I realize how much I have gotten attached to him in a matter of days. I have accepted him as my Mate and more than that I have accepted him as a part of me hence when Victoria showed interest in him I was insecure of losing him, losing a part of me. I push Xander away with tears in my eyes.

"This is all your fault!" I say and when he comes closer I pull back. He gives me a confused look and says,

"What happened? You were happy a while ago and What is my fault?" He again tries to hug me but I back away.

"Exactly! Why? Why was I happy? I hurt someone and I took pride in it. I hurt someone over a stupid emotion of jealousy and insecurity! Victoria was right. I AM A MONSTER. And It is because I have unconsciously accepted you a part of me and now ... now I can't let anyone even look at you without feeling hurt. But.... You're supposed to be Mine. You're supposed to be My Happiness, My love, My miracle, My mate and My savior. Then why do I have to fight, hurt or forcibly make others admit that you can't be theirs? Why is it that I have to hear doubts about not deserving you even by myself? Why is it so hard for me and people to see that I am not a piece of trash? Am I broken beyond repair?" I laugh dryly and run my fingers through my hair.

"Oh Rose, What- " A knock interrupts Xander and we both look at a smiling Sophie standing at the door. Her smile drops at soon as she realizes what she walked into.

"Oh- Sorry.. Um.. I didn't know. I'll just go." Sophie turns back but Xander stops

her.

"Wait. Did you need anything, soph?" Xander asks softly and she stops in her tracks then turns around facing him and smiles sadly.

" No. I mean Yes. I was just ... I was hoping to spend some time with Cassie. But I am so sorry. I'll leave you guys." She says and I quickly straighten myself and smile at her.

" Hey, It's Okay. Can you wait for me outside? I'll be there in a minute." I reply and before she could say It's fine Xander mind links her stopping her from saying anything and she leaves us. Xander hugs me and this time I let him. I hug him tightly as if he was breath and I was choking.

"I will always be there for you. No matter what and you deserve the world, Cassandra. I can without doubt say that if you don't deserve happiness or love or this pack or every other thing Victoria said then no one and I mean NO ONE deserves to even live." He whispers in my ear placing a kiss on neck and I tighten my hold on him.

"I-" I stop in my sentence not knowing what to even reply and he pulls back. Places a kiss on my forehead and smiles at me.

"Go. We'll discuss this later. You'll feel better I'm sure." He says and I nod.

" Thank you, Alexander." I say and he frowns at me.

" Never again say thank you to me. It's my duty. Now go, love." He says and I nod going after Sophie. I stop before exiting the room and look back at Xander and he does something I wanted my mate to do for a long time.

He blows me a kiss.

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It had been 2 days since my talk with Sophie, but I was couldn't forget about it. The questions she asked they hit me like an arrow. Xander was busy and with the Luna Games approaching I barely had any time to talk to him. We get up, he goes to his office and I train with Sophie in the training grounds. But despite all this I still couldn't shake the feeling that maybe our relation is all mate bond and we have given in because we are bound to each other.

..... Flashback.....

" Hey Sophie, everything okay?" I say as I walk towards her. She smiles sadly at me and nods.

"Let's walk, Luna. I wanted to talk to you about something." She says and I nodded. We walked in the garden just outside the palace.

"I was thinking about Damon. We met only once and I felt like I had known him since forever. His touch, his voice everything about him had put me in a trance. Umm... I know you're thinking why I am telling you this or What this has to do with you, but let's just say you're the only one I can trust and tell this to. Luna, I'm scared that my relationship with Damon will be all mate bond. How can meeting one person for the first time compel you to say in first two days that you love them? How do you know what you have is special and not all mate bond? How can you trust someone with your life without knowing anything about them? How can you sleep next to them everyday just because of the fact they are 'meant' to be your soulmate? I know Damon came to you and told you about me wanting to reject him. I don't want to reject him just.... I just want to give our relationship some time. So we can know each other and then move to the next level. Also, I want that the next time Damon asks you

about me you tell him what I told you. Please Luna, I would be very grateful." She says and stops walking.

To say her words hit me like a bus would be an understatement. I understood her, I always thought that my relation with my mate would be because of us understanding each other and not because of the mate bond. And now? I am starting to question my every single moment with Xander. I wonder if it was all because we are destined to be together or.... I don't even know if what we have is real, anymore.

I look at Sophie, her eyes filled with unshed tears and I hug her.

"I understand Sophie, everything is going to be alright. You're right everything has it's time and If we all are meant to be then we shall get what we deserve." I say and she nods. Then she pulls back and smiles at me.

" Thank you, Luna. You're honestly the best thing that ever happened to this pack. I have to go now, some matters have to be dealt with. See you tomorrow at training." She turns to leave.

"It's an honor. And Sophie?" I stop her midway and she turns to look at me.

"It's Cassie for you." I say and she laughs before leaving.

..... End of Flashback.....

" Cassie? Earth to Luna!" I hear someone snapping their fingers in front of my face bringing me back to the present. I look in front of me and Sophie stands there with her hands on her hips, frowning. During my reverie I forgot that I was standing in the training grounds with Sophie who was showing me some fighting stances.

" Huh? Sorry what were you saying?" I say smiling sheepishly at her.

" What were you thinking about? I called you about a hundred times." She asks narrowing her eyes at me. Before I could answer she snaps her finger as if she figured what I was thinking.

" I KNOW! You were thinking about Alexander, weren't you? Missing him already? Oh I am so telling him this that you were thinking about him when you should be training!" She nudges me slightly while wiggling her eyebrows and I laugh.

" No, Sophie. I wasn't thinking about him." I shake my head at her and she looks at me with I-don't-believe-you-for-a-second- look.

" SURE, Luna, SURE." I hit her slightly on her arm.

" Can we go back to the training, please." I say while getting in a fighting stance. She shrugs and gets ready also. I slowly step forward and swing a punch at her face while she ducks and kicks me in the stomach but I block her by grabbing her foot and twisting it making her fall down. I then land some punches on her face which she blocks and hits me in the stomach making me fall back. She took that time to stand back up.

" So was it his eyes that made you zone out?" She says while trying to land a punch on my face. I grab her hand twisting it , making her turn.

"Oh please. Pretty sure he's the one thinking about me, right now." I say and knee her in the back and she stumbles forward. She then looks at me with her eyebrow raised and starts running towards me and I get ready to block her signature move.

"You think?" She says before jumping and shifts in mid air opening her jaw to bite me and I smirk knowing her next move. Before she could bite me I stand straight and tilt my head at her making her confused and she closes her mouth and lands right in front of me but I swing my leg from below making her land face down.

" You lose." I say while throwing her a shirt turning around I walk away from her before stopping and looking back at her.

" Sweetie, I know." I say and start running towards the castle.

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Looking at myself in the mirror I start to get more nervous. Today's the day I was-

"Cassie! You ready,yet? Can I come in?" The sound of Sophie's voice and her knocking on my room's door interrupted my thought process. I straightened myself and cleared my throat.

"Yeah, come on in. It's open." I replied back. I heard the sound of door opening and closing from behind me but I didn't turn around to see Sophie entering. After a matter of seconds I saw her standing behind me in the mirror.

" Wow.. you look..." she trailed off and I sighed before turning around.

"I know! I don't know what's wrong never in my life have I ever gotten nervous and now I can't control my nerves."

"It's okay! Totally normal. Not everyday you get to-" before she could complete her sentence the sound of knocking stopped her.

"Luna! It's time. The arrangements have been made. Everyone has settled on their seats. Your arrival is awaited." Sam, the palace guard said from outside my room.

"Okay, I'm coming." I replied back and Sophie smiled softly at me. Then she hugged me tightly muttering words of encouragement in my ears. I pulled back and followed her out of the room. We walked outside to the training grounds where she departed and went to sit on her seat which was along on the left of Xander's.

I looked around to see the grounds had been set up with thousands of chairs. In the

middle was made a Ring for the fight. All four sides of the ring was covered with bars making it more of a large cage. Everyone was seated on their seats and waiting anxiously for the games to begin.

The Luna Games, would officially start from today and my first task of fighting whose who challenge me will start in about 10 minutes after Alexanders opening speech as the King. Sam had already left and I looked down to adjust my Armour and checking my knives. While I was double checking my weapons I sensed my mate behind me. I turned around and hugged him which was a bad idea as I was wearing Armour so the hug was more of a failed attempt made my me. Disappointed I stepped away from Xander and huffed. Xander laughed and I narrowed my eyes at him.

" Shouldn't you be more... I don't know, WORRIED?" I asked to which adding to my frustration he laughed again.

' So much for a possessive mate' Lia snorted. And for once in my lifetime I agreed with her. I mean what if I lost? What if someone else becomes Queen? What if someone else becomes the LUNA? Then she'll be considered as Xanders mate. I gasped loudly at my thoughts.

"Stop!" I heard Xander say firmly.

"Huh?" I replied dumbly.

" I know what you're thinking. Stop It. I know you're going to win because .. well you should 'cause I ain't tolerating anyone except you as my mate." He said the last part while snapping his fingers making me laugh.

" You okay? I mean ..." I continued laughing. He rolled his eyes at me.

" Okay, I was trying to make you laugh, now that's enough of laughing." He said and

I controlled my laughter.

"So.... Any advice Mr sassy pants?" I asked and sewed my lips together to stop me from laughing. He roughly grabbed me from my throat making me gasp and smashed his lips on mine. It was needy, rough and full of passion. I realized he portrayed all that he felt in the kiss. I pulled back and looked me dead in the eye while I was gasping for breath.

" Just one. Show 'em who's the Queen." He said then winked at me before walking towards the Ring to give his speech.

Okay, THAT was not FAIR! I try to hug him and I fail yet he gets to give me a demanding kiss plus a kick-ass advice and to top it off a HOT freaking wink while being all smooth.

Man, I suck.

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"Good morning everyone! You all know why we have gathered here today. The Luna Games have been a tradition since the dawn of time. These games pave the path for the Luna to prove herself in front of her pack and create a special bond with them. The pack deserves to know that their leaders will not hesitate before putting their lives on the line to protect them and vice versa. Today, my mate, my chosen, Cassandra Primrose Blaze will show herself worthy of been your Luna though I believe she will be the best Luna our pack has ever seen and I say this not as her mate but as your king. Now, all those who see her unfit of been your queen and Luna will enter the fighting ring one by one and fight with her until one of you forfeits or becomes unconscious. May my mat- i mean may the best fighter win. Without any further ado, LET THE GAMES BEGIN!"

Alright, you got this Cassandra. Just like Xander said show'em whose queen. No pressure. Cool,cool,cool,cool,cool.

'This is not the time or the place to quote Brooklyn nine nine, Cassie.' Accalia rolls her eyes at me and I almost want to strangle her. How come one's wolf have so much sass? I'll surely go crazy with all this bickering with my own wolf.

'Alright, wolfie. What's the battle plan then?' I say to her and she howls.

'Aztec says dagger through the heart of everyone but I say kick their butts out of the pack.' She says and I smile. Dagger through the heart? No wonder Xander comes of as dangerous it's the wolf in him.

"All participants get ready because the first fight will between Victoria Blaze and Cassandra Primrose Blaze."

'You know what Cassie? Let's stick to the dagger plan.' Accalia says and this time I couldn't agree more.

As the drum roll start I make my way towards the ring. Glaring at Victoria the entire time. Freaking Hell she submitted to me in the last fight but i guess some people just never learn. As we both stand in front of each other in the ring I notice something different about her and I frown. Her aura's more powerful than last time.

"Scared luna?" She mocks and snarls her teeth at me. My eyes widen they're more sharp and her eyes have a hint of red in them. Analyzing her, realization dawns upon me.

'Witch help. You should mindlink Xander about this.' Accalia voices my thoughts.

'Mindlink's blocked and there wasn't anything mentioned about witch help in the rules. We have to prove to our pack we can take on anything and well let's see if are powerful enough to defeat a werewolf and witch combo.' I say and Accalia takes control.

Victoria doesn't wait a second before attacking me. I block her moves as I'm forced to play the defensive. Punch left, right leg kick.. I watch her movements studying her tactics. She's fighting with emotions and that gives me leverage. I just need her to tire out delivering punches and kicks before I play the offensive and she will have no choice to play defensive.

'She doesn't protect her left side.' Accalia says.

I focus all my attention on Victoria as she keeps delivering punches at me and I keep blocking them. She tries to hit my head but I lean backwards and she misses. As she recovers I take out my dagger from my back and slash her waist on the left side. She howls painfully but in a matter of seconds her wound heals up.

Shit.

Victoria's nails get longer, her canines extend and she gives me this crazed look before lunging for my throat. In super speed she rips my front Armour leaving me vulnerable and her nails digging in my shoulder.

The audience gasps, some even getting up from their seats.

I wince not making any sound of pain and knee her in the side, knocking her towards the right where she hits the cage. She gets up and advances towards me a dagger in her hand she swings her legs below me but i jump up. She says something inaudible and I feel my breath getting knocked out of me as if someone was choking me. I fall on my knees and Victoria grabs me from my throat lifting me upwards. She smiles menacingly at me and whispers,

"Now, we're even." before stabbing me in my stomach with the dagger twice. I fall face down coughing up blood. Everything hurts so much. My ears are ringing, blood coming out of me making a puddle around me. No...

Instead of chants of 'Victoria' I hear people shouting at me to 'get up'. I turn on my back looking up to see Victoria saying something about being Xander her mate, her king.

I can't lose. Not like this. Flashback of my mother laying on the ground her blood surrounding her just like mine I feel a sudden surge of power in me. My breathing slowed to become normal once again. My eyes go pitch black and in seconds I take the dagger out of my stomach getting up on my feet.

Victoria's eyes widen and she continues whispering this can't be happening to herself. I tune everything out, the people, the chants of people chanting Luna, and my mate being held back by Jack. I close my eyes feeling the power around me. A sudden

burst of energy knocks Victoria down and I open my eyes cocking my head to the right smirking at her.

"Die bitch." I say and lunge at her.

Knee to her face knocking her backwards. I grab her by the hair and with all the strength swing her around before releasing her she hits the cage and falls again. I snarl my teeth at her and repeat what she did to me. I rip her armour off and hold her by the throat lifting her upwards. Her eyes were red and wide. She was gasping for breath and trying to get free of me.

"No, THIS is us getting even." I say before she goes limp in my hand.

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Just as the sound of victory bell was heard I was engulfed in pair of arms. Knowing from the sparks where he touched I knew it was Xander. His arms were tightly on my waist, my face buried in his chest and him placing small kisses on my head every now and then. I wrapped my arms around his waist. He smelled like petrichor and coffee surprisingly.

"You smell nice." I mumble due my face hidden in his chest and he freezes. He pulls back and holds my face in his hands. I look up to see moisture in his eyes and my eyes widen.

"Wha-" before I could finish his lips descended on mine for a gentle kiss. I move my lips against his my hands finding way towards his hair but he pulls away and again hugs me, his face in my hair.

"I was.. I was so scared for a moment. You.. you.." His body starts to shake and I put my arms around his head pulling him closer to me.

"Heyy, listen to me. I'm fine, honey. I'm okay. I'm here." Our moment was interrupted by Jackson.

"Alpha? Luna? You might wanna hear his." He says and we pull away to look at him. Xanders hand still tightly wrapped on my waist, he nodded at Jackson. I was in that moment that I looked around my self, taking in my surroundings. People were on their feet. Some having tears in their eyes. Some clutching their mates tightly to them. But they all looked at me, and instead of hate or resentment, there was worry, awe and respect in their eyes.

"Everyone! You all saw what happened here today. Our Queen, Luna, King's chosen mate, she fought a werewolf who in order to win the fight took help from a witch. Never in a hundred years had anyone done this. We all know how important a luna is to the pack. No one could ever think of harming a luna to extent of taking a witches help, hence there was nothing in rules about this. But, still your luna WON. I believe this changed many of your opinion about Luna Cassandra. It is with pleasure that I would like to announce all the participants have withdrawn from challenging Cassandra. Be it fear or respect but everyone accepts Cassandra Primrose Blaze as The Lycan Pack's Luna."

Around me everyone erupts into cheers and chants of 'Luna' after a while everyone goes down to one knee and bow their heads at me. I feel a sudden surge of emotions from everyone. Loyalty, love and respect. I bow down my head as well and they all stand.

"Love, speech?" Xander whispers in my ear and I look at him grinning.

"Lycan Pack is my Pack. It means it's mine to protect. I will never let my pack down and will to utmost of my ability uphold my position." I say and everyone howls.

"Let's go, love." Xander takes my hand and I step forward to feel sharp pain in my stomach. I wince and look at Xander. His hold tightens and he frowns. In seconds he lifts me bridal style and we move towards the infirmary. All the way people coming up and saying 'Congratulations Luna' and I smiled at them. As we enter the infirmary, the nurses told Xander to take me to emergency room where he set me down on the bed. Alicia entered and smiled at me before looking my wounds.

"Well Luna, luckily your wolf was able to heal you quickly. I have bandaged all the wounds and here are some painkillers, take them when the pain gets too much to bear. I would recommend loads of rest and avoiding engaging in strenuous activities for at least 2 weeks. Change your bandage every day and drink loads of water."

"Thank you Alicia. Can I take her back to the castle then?" Xander asks and Alicia nods.

"Come on beautiful." Xander says making my heart speed up though I am sure I was looking anything but beautiful. He lifts me in his arms again.

"You realize I can walk, honey?" I say laying my head on his shoulder. Damn I'm so exhausted. I snuggle closer to Xander putting my arms around his neck.

"You want me to put you down,love?" He says smiling at me and I nod while closing my eyes and tightening my arms around him. His chest rumbles with laughter and before I realized I dozed off in my mates arms.

I wake up to sound of water running. I look around to see I was in Xander's room on the bed while he was preparing bath. I rub my eyes to see more clearly.

"Oh you're awake. I prepared bath for you love. The water is warm. It will relax your muscles after then you can go to sleep again." He comes closer while lifting me up for the hundredth time today. We step into the bathroom and he set me down on my feet.

"You want me to help you?" He says meekly and I narrow my eyes at him.

"You want you to help me." I say and he grins. I shake my head at him and he pouts.

"Just help me with the bandage." I say taking off the black shirt I didn't realize I even had on. Xander steps closer to me looking only at my wound while taking my bandage off. His hands were shaking while doing so. Before I could say something he threw the bandage in the dustbin and left the bathroom closing the door on his way out. I sigh and take rest of my clothing off. My leftover armour Xander must've taken off. I step into the tub and lay down instantly feeling my muscles relax.

After taking the bath I washed my face and quickly threw on my nightwear. I stepped out of the bathroom, towel drying my hair, to see Xander sitting on the bed gripping the sides tightly. I step forward and again wince from the pain in my stomach. Xander looks up and helps me towards the bed.

"Here let me bandage it again." He says lifting my shirt and applying some gel on the wound before bandaging it. I looked at him. He was tired and stressed. As he was done I took his hands and made up look at me.

" I'm fine." I say and he nods caressing my face gently, then placed a kiss on my forehead.

"Sleep, love. I'll lay with you once I clean up." He says moving towards the bathroom.

I lay my head my head on the stop pillows and snuggle into the covers. I dozed off until I felt arms around my waist tightly pulling me towards a chest. I turned around tangling my legs between Xanders and snuggling close to his chest.

"I love you, mi amore."

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"Exile or death?" Alexander's voice boomed all around. I looked at the people gathered to decide Victoria's fate. Slight murmur of people was heard then a raspy voice said,

"Exile." All heads turned towards the sound of the voice. Victoria stood between the palace guards, her head bowed.

"All those in favor?" Xander turned his head towards the people, series of 'aye' were heard from the crowd.

"She tried to kill our luna! Immediate termination is in order!" A voice came from the crowd and chants of 'death' were heard all around. My heart warmed at my pack's loyalty to me yet I was still not in favor of their decision.

"Silence!" Xander said and everyone hushed, the power radiating from his voice made everyone bow their heads. He looked at me, well more likely at the little cuts I had here and there and sighed trying to calm his wolf.

"According to the laws, If Victoria is to accept Cassandra as her luna, there will be no punishment. But if she chooses exile, we have to grant her that. Need I remind you, Victoria choosing exile means you will be a rogue. No Alpha allows any rouge near his pack. Keep in mind the treatment towards rouge before affirming your answer."

Victoria visibly stiffened, clenched her fists, still looking down. In a heartbeat she went down on one knee and said:

"I, Victoria Blaze, pledge my allegiance to The Alpha King, The Alpha of Lycan

Pack and his mate, Cassandra Primrose Blaze, the Queen of were-wolfs and Lycan Pack's Luna. I pledge to put their lives before mine and protect them to the best of my abilities from any harm that is to come their way."

I felt it before I registered it. The wave of another pack member accepting me. Following her again all the members went on one knee and bowed their heads to me repeating the words. In an instant mind links from the entire pack were opened to me. Now, the whole pack can mind link me and vice versa.

I looked at Xander, he was looking at his pack with adoration and respect.

'Our pack ' Xander turned towards me , leaning in to kiss my forehead. I looked at him and he smiled.

"You didn't put your barrier up. I can hear your thoughts." I nodded immediately putting my mind barrier. Then Xander spoke,

" Everyone rise! Although Victoria has accepted Cassandra, yet still she has to serve her punishment for using unfair methods to win a fight. One week in the dungeons, one week on patrol duty and two whips on the back. These punishments are already set by the manuscript of the rules. Her offense breaking rules #122 and #125. Anyone has any objections?-" when no one objected, "- Head of warriors, Jackson will ensure the punishments are executed. Dismissed."

In matter of seconds everyone dispersed. Sophie and Jackson made their way towards us.

"Hey, luna! How are you feeling? I'm so sorry I didn't meet you yesterday, everything happened so quickly. Congratulations and welcome to pack!" Sophie rambled while coming to hug me.

"Slow down Sophie," I say laughing lightly and hugging her back. " I'm perfectly fine, thank you."

"Well duh, Cassie is so badass! I mean the fight luna, that's it I'm a fan." Jackson said and I smiled looking at Xander, he was rolling his eyes at him.

"Alright fanny boy, go do your job or else I'll have to find someone more serious as my Head of warriors."

"Uh... I think not! You hit a jackpot son, finding the bestest warrior, coolest and most handsome of them all." Jackson said grinning while Xander glared at him.

"Alright boys, calm down! Jackson go, get the job done. I have to take Cassie to our dearest Alpha's mother. Let's go!" Sophie took my hand pulling me with her.

"Not so fast-" Xander pulled me back placed a kiss on my cheek and forehead,"- take care love, please. If you feel tired immediately go and rest. I'll come back to you after a while, need to get things done." I nodded at him feeling a blush creeping on my neck and cheeks. God! This man has the power to make me flustered even by the simplest of things.

I started laughing seeing Jackson and Sophie making gagging faces. I pulled Sophie with me, momentarily looking back to see Xander looking at me, I gave him a flying kiss which he caught before placing his hand on his heart, not breaking eye contact with me. My heart skipped a beat at his actions.

I turned my focus on Sophie yet my heart was still with a certain Alpha king.

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"We have a problem-" Jackson says while entering my office with a frown on his face. It must be something big if he's actually serious.

"-The Alpha of Moon stone pack just called in for help. Apparently they received notes from the rogues about attacking their pack. Not only this there is a huge group of rogues settled in the western side, and many other packs are calling in for help as they are not strong enough to fight them all."

" Call the cabinet meeting in 5 minutes." I say standing up and Jackson nods then leaves my office.

Rogues. Fucking rogues every single time.

To those who don't understand why rogues are hated so much it's the fact that rogue means a wolf who doesn't belong to any pack. A pack is a family, it keeps the humane part of us werewolves alive and superior then our wild part. You get kicked out of the pack for two reasons alone according to the manuscript. If you have committed murder of an innocent person or if the pack feels the wolf is a threat due to its other actions, then with unanimous agreement a wolf is disowned from its pack.

The thought that rogues are getting bold enough to attack my packs, my people and under my rule boils my blood. Getting frustrated I pick the nearest thing to me, which happens to be an unlucky cup, and smash it on wall. The cup breaks into hundreds of tiny pieces , in my rage I ignore the dull ache in my hand due to some pieces that cut my hand.

'Mate.' Aztec says and I get more angry. Cassie, my mate, my queen. Oh my god

she'll be so scared if she finds out about this. She is one of those people who had to face death of a loved one because of some bastard rogue.

'Not this time. Even if hell freezes over, we will protect mate and our people.' Aztec growls and for once in my life I couldn't agree more with him.

"Fuck it." I say and punch the wall. Then gathering myself I leave my office going towards the conference room.

"..... and so I was thinking-" Sophie standing up caused Amara to stop mid sentence. I looked up at her, her eyes having a glazed look.

'Mind link.' Lia says and I roll my eyes.

'I gathered that much. I'm not stupid.' I say and Lia shrugs.

'Just making sure.'

I turn my attention towards Sophie again, she was frowning. After she was done mind linking she looked at both of us and smiled forcefully.

"I'm sorry your highness's but there is an urgent matter I must attend to. Luna, your presence is also requested. We must take our leave, Amara." Sophie says standing up and I follow her as well. Hugging Amara good bye we make our way towards the conference room.

Anger. Rage. The emotions I felt at the pit of my stomach , knowing very well these aren't mine I wonder why Alexander's so angry that through the mate bond I can feel his emotions.

"Sophie is everything alright? What happened?" I ask and Sophie sighs shaking her head.

"You'll find out soon enough, Cassie." We fasten our steps and enter the conference room. Around six- eight people looked up at us as we enter. The conference room was huge. With a round table in the center and chairs around it. White boards and maps lining on the walls. Two head chairs positioned on the far left of the room, providing the perfect view to all the people present and the boards. On one of the head seats Alec was sitting, his posture stiff, power radiating off him in waves, his grey eyes holding a stern and darkened look. He visibly relaxed as I moved towards him sitting in the chair next to him. He looked at me and I smiled softly at him to which he just nodded. I frowned and looked ahead to people sitting before us.

" Alright everyone. Before we discuss the matter at hand, I would like you all to go ahead and introduce your selves to our Luna Cassie, to whom only I have the privilege to call Cassie its Cassandra to you all. Sucks to be you!" Jackson jokes trying to ease the tension in the room, earning a few chuckles, a few shaking of heads and one stern look, obviously from Alec, one by one the cabinet members rose to introduce themselves.

"Greetings Luna, my name is Aspen. I'm the general in charge of war and tactics." A very tall, buff looking man with tattoos stood up and bowed. He had black hair with a solider cut. I nodded at him and he sat down.

" Greetings Luna, my name is Hugo. I'm the general in charge for defense." The next person was tall and lean with thick glasses. A boyish look on his face though I knew he was far from that if he was in Alec's cabinet. I smiled softly and he sat returned it while sitting back down.

"Hey luna! I'm Chloe. I'm in charge of Finance and administration." A girl with all black clothes and a smile on her face stood up and bowed. I returned the smile. She

had short blonde hair, sharp features and a lean body.

As the next person stood up, even though it was wrong of me, I couldn't help but turn my attention towards Alec who sat there with jaw locked and tightened fist.

'What's wrong, honey?' I mind link him and he sat up straighter, his eyes shifting towards mine momentarily before looking back ahead.

'Stay with me.' He mind linked back and I was taken off guard.

'Always.' I reply and from the corner of my eyes I saw his face lift to a smile. I looked at his hands frowning when one of them was bruised badly. Knowing it can't be treated right now I extended my hand, gently taking his and placing it on my lap. Then I carefully slipped my fingers in his intertwining them avoiding the little cuts. Even though I was smiling back at everyone who got up and introduced themselves and looking at them, my attention was nowhere near towards them. I felt sparks when I held his hand gently, my heartbeat speeding up just from the simplest of touch. As everyone was done Jack stood up,

"Alright so that's everyone. Moving on the topic of discussion, I received a help call from the western side packs. A large group of rogues -" The word rogue stilled me. I stiffened and my grip on Alec's hand tightened. He moved closer to me placing his right hand on my hand intertwining our fingers and moved his left arm to hold me by the waist bringing me closer to him. I relaxed a bit.

"-have settled there and are sending threats of attacking them. Small packs being weak in terms of fighting against them have requested our help. This is a very important matter, lives of our people are in danger. If the rogue group succeeds in taking over packs they will expand and rebel against the king. Now, the floor is open to suggestions."

" Head of Warriors, there are no suggestions except one and we all know what it is."
Aspen said.

"Prepare the army, Jackson. We are going to fight those rogues and end them once and for all." Alec's thick voice came from beside me.

Well shit.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

You know the moment where dread fills you and you feel the walls closing in on you? Yeah, that is what it feels like when I think of Xander going to fight the rogues. I always thought if I don't let my fears show they'll eventually go away but I was so wrong. Running away from your problems doesn't make them go away, instead they creep up behind you and suck all the happiness left in you.

But I guess we are the ones who give our fear more power over than our faith. Be it in ourselves, or others. Why does everything have to be so damn complicated? Is living a happy life too much to ask? I know I can't even think of a life without Xander, my wolf would drive me insane knowing our mate is not with us but the dread I feel isn't only from my wolf. The hollowness I feel is mine alone and not Lia's. Xander is my miracle, even though he doesn't act like one.

'Wow you're a comedic genius.' Lia snickers breaking my thought process.

'I'd like to go mad with over thinking in private, thank you very much.' I reply and block her before she can come up with yet another remark.

After Xander announced about preparing the army, I excused myself and left the conference room. None of them should see their Luna being a crybaby. I made my way to the private gym room and without bandaging my hands, I prepared to hit the punching bag.

I have to be strong for the people. I chanted in my mind landing hits after hits on the punching bag. My arms started to ache yet I couldn't stop myself. Not knowing when in all the hitting tears started cascading down my face but I didn't pay heed to them and continued. I didn't stop when my hands started to hurt, I didn't stop when my

headache grew, I didn't stop when my knuckles went all red and bruises formed but I did stop when two arms wrapped around my waist from the back, one hand coming forward to stop me from punching while the other secured on my waist. I leaned back and closed my eyes my head on Xander's chest, his chin on my head. For sometime only the sound of my heavy breathing could be heard until I turned myself in his arms burring my face in his chest and let all my barriers down. Then the sound of my sobs and his soothing voice promising me everything will be alright resonated in the room.

My knees buckled and Xander quickly carried me bridal style to our room. Exhausted I laid my head on his shoulder trying to find peace in my mate's arms. As we entered he put me down and I made my way towards the bathroom. Taking Xanders black hoodie and my trousers from the closet I quickly took a warm water bath.

As I came out Xander took my hand, made me sit on the bed with him beside and applied gel on my knuckles then bandaged them. I looked at him the entire time. His hair all messed up, his back straight with tension and his eyes looked tired. I gently combed his hair with my fingers, then placed my hand on his face. His eyes closed and his hand came up to hold mine after placing a soft kiss on my palm. We stayed like this for a minute then he opened his eyes and looked at me with love and worry. The grey in his eyes a darker shade than before.

"Hurting yourself doesn't make the pain any less, Cassandra." He says softly then gets up and lays on the bed turning away from me.

Cassandra? Not love or Rose? I wanted to cry. I got up as well and went to lay beside him, hugging him from the back and throwing my leg on top of his.

"I'm sorry, Alec." I say placing a kiss on his cheek and he turned his head towards me capturing my lips in a passionate kiss. Pulling away I laid my forehead against his.

"Alec? Not love of my life or Xander? Should I cry?" He says and I laugh lightly.

"Stop reading my thoughts, caveman."

"Your block was down." He says turning completely towards me. I didn't reply and a comfortable silence fell in the room.

"Do you really have to go?" I ask Alec fiddling with his hands as we lay. My head on his chest, his one arm around my waist while the other in my hands.

"Sweetheart I know you're worried, but I'll be fine. I promise," He nuzzles his head in my hair, planting a soft kiss on my cheek.

"Besides I'll be back before you know it." I scoff at his comment and he tightens his hold on me. I just don't want him to go. What if something happens? What if he gets injured? What if lost him? What if he never comes back?

"You're overthinking again, mon amour." Alec says firmly turning me on my side so I was facing him. His hand cups my face, gently caressing it before holding my hand once again. He pulls himself on his elbow hovering over me and plants his lips on mine. My eyes close on their own account.

I gently move my lips against his, my hands finding their way into his hair pulling him closer. Our lips move in sync, and damn the sparks. He pulls away, then kisses my forehead before planting a series of kisses all over my face. I giggle pushing his face away and this only encourages him.

"Stop it." I say laughing, squirming in his hold.

"Never." He says grinning attacking me with his kisses once again. I grab his face gently in my hands and smile at him. His eyes light up at my smile and he gives me a peck on the lips. His arms wrap around me, tangling our legs together, resting his head on my chest. My fingers move towards his hair, I push back some of the hair

that fell on his face and plant a kiss on his forehead.

"You're my lifeline, Rose. I cannot imagine a life without you. You're everything I've ever wanted and so much more. This, laying with you in our room, is home." He closes his eyes pulling me closer to him, not leaving the space even for air to come between us. My heart warms at his words.

"Promise me you'll come back." Tears sting my eyes as I rest my chin on his head. He moves a little, placing a kiss on my neck just below my ear where his mark will be and I close my eyes.

"No matter what my love, I will always find my way back to you."

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

I wake up to an empty bed, sadly. It wasn't the chirping of the birds nor the sunshine falling on my face and a beautiful weather outside that woke me up. No, I woke up to sound of a horribly loud alarm. I laid in bed for some time contemplating between getting up or going back to sleep, I mean even though as a Luna I should go and see where the sound is coming from but I had a very good dream to finish.

Groaning, I threw the covers off me and got up from the bed. I hate mornings. There is nothing good about sunshine or birds or mother nature blah blah blah.

'Why so grumpy today, huh?' Lia asks and I sigh. Rubbing my eyes and slapping myself lightly on the cheek so I can get back in my senses I made my way towards the bathroom.

'I don't know something just feels off and It's irritating me.' I reply and continued with my morning routine. I took the bandage off seeing my knuckles were already healed. I could go to the training grounds but knowing my mate, he'll drag me back to the castle so I shrugged that thought away and made my way towards the kitchen.

"Hello Luna! What would you like to eat?" William, the head chef, asked as I entered the kitchen. I shrugged and went to open the fridge.

"How about pancakes?" I replied taking the water bottle out of the fridge.

"Coming right up!" William said and started to make the pancakes. Taking a big gulp of water I sat on the stool behind the kitchen aisle. A sharp pain in my abdomen shook me. I doubled over trying to take a deep breath. I couldn't understand my surrounding, my ears were ringing, my eyesight blurred and black spots started to

appear yet I couldn't utter a single word of pain. Only my heavy breathing and wide eyes were signs something was wrong. In an instant the pain went away, and I sat up straight. I rubbed my eyes and looked at William, he didn't notice my state as he was facing away from me. I abruptly stood up knocking the stool down in my hurry and ran towards the bedroom, ignoring William's calls.

Panting as I reached the room, I closed the door behind me and lifted my shirt up. I frowned looking at my abdomen. The pain wasn't because of the scar, no. Before I could think of something else I felt someone trying to reach me through mindlink. I let my barrier down and the worried voice of Alec came through,

'Love? Are you okay rose?'

'Umm.. I'm not exactly sure.' I replied biting my lip. I waited for Alec to reply but when no answer came Lia started talking,

'Cassie listen to me. The pain wasn't because of your scars. You're-' The sound of door being thrown open distracted me and I turned my attention towards the intruder. The guards stood there with their eyes completely changed to one color. Their wolves had taken over them. In that moment I felt my body burning, it felt like I was thrown in fire. My eyes rolled back and I swayed sideways. The pain too much to handle, they all made their way towards me as if they were in trance. One tried to touch my hand, I screamed like my insides were on fire. The last thing I heard was a loud roar. Then there was only darkness.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Coming back to the real world from the land of dreams was not easy. Just as I woke up the extent of pain hit with full force. It was like getting hit by truck when you least expect it, more than the injury it's the shock of it that leaves you breathless. Okay, maybe not the best of comparisons. My body felt like it was thrown in the fire. I tried opening my eyes, they too were burning, hot tears ran down my face as I tried to get a hold of myself. A whimper escaped my mouth and in an instant something cool pressed on to me, relaxing me immediately. I relaxed, it was like ointment on my burning skin. My eyes remained close, as if they were refusing to open and I gave up trying.

"Shh... I'm here. I got you." As the words rang through my ears, I entered the world of dreams again.

The next time I regained consciousness only one thought ran through my brain. Hot. It's too hot. My insides were burning, my whole body screamed out in pain, as did I.

"Temperature is spiking,—

"Then, do something you idiot—

"Nothing—

My brain processed only fragments of the conversation going around me. I screamed as another wave hit me. I felt myself being pressed into a chest, knowing it was my mate, I pressed myself further clinging unto him for dear life. My breaths became labored and I tried fighting my tears off though failing miserably. Alec's lips felt cool against my skin. I shuddered at the contact.

"Alexander," I whimpered, my voice raspy and dry.

"I'm here, baby. I'm here." The sound of his voice hit me with different force all together. My blurry vision made it difficult to make out his appearance. We were sprawled on the bed, my hair wet as if they were recently washed. Alec was on top of me, his face buried in my neck, he placed kisses to any area he came into contact with. He raised his head, caressing my face gently and placed a soft kiss on my forehead, then my cheek, moving down to the corner of my mouth before claiming my lips.

My hands found their way towards his hair and I pulled him down to eradicate any space between us. I needed him like he was my oxygen. The kiss was gentle but it put out the fire that coursed through me. Pulling away Alec wiped my cheeks with his hands before sighing softly and pulling me down to bury my face in his chest. Only then did I realize he was shirtless. Even though my cheeks were already flushed bright due to the heat, the skin contact did nothing but further redden my face.

"Rest, my love. I'm so sorry you have to go through this. I'm so damn sorry." His voice was hoarse and weak. With the small energy left in me I kissed his neck softly, which raked a shiver through his body. Smiling at the effect I had on him, I closed my eyes and drifted once again to the calm realm of dreams.

Ignoring the pain in my body I got up and looked at my beautiful mate who was fast asleep. I pressed a kiss to her forehead and went towards the bathroom. Turing the shower to full cold I stepped in. Damn, the heat shit hurt. I wanted to mark her, really I did, but not without asking her first. My love was unconscious mostly through the heat and I was thankful for that. I could not a bear a single more scream of agony that escaped her without turning the world upside down. She was in pain, and even though I could do something to help her, at the same time I couldn't.

The water droplets ran down my body, effectively cooling me down. Now that the heat was over, the full moon gone and the sun shining it's brightness, I was beyond relieved. Standing in the shower for 10 more minutes, doing my routine I turned it off and grabbed the towel from the stand.

' You could've asked her when she woke in the middle,' Aztec paced around in my mind before laying down with his head on his paws.

' She would've said yes and you would've been uncontrollable then.' I replied as I stepped out of my shower.

' If you're so sure she would've agreed then why didn't you ask?' He huffed turning his head away from me. Clearly wanting to mark his mate.

' Because it would've been the heat talking, not my Rose.' I quickly changed into something comfortable and stepped out of the bathroom. My eyes directly landing on my mate which slept peacefully on the bed. I made my way towards her sitting on bed beside her, caressing her face.

"Baby?" I gently tried to wake her up. She needed to eat something, she must be starving. My mate stirred a little before drifting off again.

"Rose? Sweetheart, please wake up. You need to eat something, my love." I bent down and placed a kiss on her cheek then on her nose. At the contact she fluttered her beautiful forest green eyes open. I smiled lovingly at her, bringing my arm behind her back to help her sit up. She winced slightly but got up nonetheless.

My brave, beautiful, amazing Rose. My mate.

"Alec?" her voice sounded hoarse. I quickly handed her a glass of water. After greedily gulping the water, she looked at me and smiled. My heart raced and I inhaled

sharply. God, I feel a heart attack coming just because of her smile.

"Yes, my queen?" I grazed my fingers on her lips before looking into her eyes. She launched herself at me taking me by surprise, tightly hugging me.

"Thank you." She breathed out, tightening her arms around my neck. I pulled her closer to me, my arms around her waist.

"Anything for you, mate. Come on, let's get you ready for breakfast." I say pulling her out of the bed.

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Okay, let's put it out there, the heat shit hurt. Will I go through it again? Probably not. Would I use inspiration from it as future torture technique? Definitely yes, but that's not the point. I wanted Alec to mark, I did. But not while I was in heat and due to its influence on both of us, rather when we both were ready for it. When we went downstairs for breakfast, (even though Alec said we should eat in the room and sleep in) I was stunned to say the least.

Sophie and Damon were sitting in the living room, with Sophie on Damon's lap. Her head on his shoulder, his arms around her both watching some show playing on the Tv in-front of them. A surprised gasp escaped me and when they both turned around to see me, with her eyes wide open and jaw probably on the ground, quickly standing them they faced me with smiles on their faces. Well, Damon was grinning and Sophie had a shy smile but same thing.

"Well, looks like your advice worked Cass. All it took was the heat process to make Sophie accept me. Even though it hurt like a bitch, it was worth it in the end," Damon intertwined his hands with Sophie and placed a kiss on the side of her head while she blushed. I almost cooed at the sight before me.

This ship has sailed.

"You guys! I'm so happy for you-" I ran forward engulfing both of them in a big bear hug. "I'll be very happy to be the godmother of your child," I whispered, which earned a groan from Damon and light laugh from Sophie. Pulling away I looked back at my mate to see him shaking his head at me with a smile on his face.

"My heartiest congratulations to you both. Commander, we'll have to go through the

transfer papers-" I groaned which stopped Alec mid sentence and he looked at me with his eye-brow raised in question. I gave him a pointed look and turned to the couple.

"Seeing all my mate can think about right now is work, I'll have to take away Sophie for details. You boys can continue with the legal stuff. Bye!" Pulling Sophie away before she can react, I moved towards the kitchen with her trailing behind me. Once we settle on the kitchen chairs and I had requested for my daily dose of pancakes, I turned towards Sophie unable to keep my excitement at bay.

"Well? What happened? When did Damon arrive at the palace? Spill the tea, sister." I joined my hands in anticipation turning my full attention towards her. Wait, this is their personal matter. What if she isn't comfortable sharing it with me?

" I'm sorry, IF you're comfortable in sharing it with me of course. I didn't stop to think about your feelings, I'm so sorry. I'm not forcing you or anything, it's perfectly fine if you don't want to spill the tea, I—" Sophie's arms coming around me stopped my rambling. Patting my back she pulled away and smiled at me.

"Relax. We're friends, right?" I nodded at her question before she continued, " When you screamed I was in my office, your scream got me up running towards you when the heat hit me. I fell on my knees because of the sudden impact to my abdomen. I was already away from my mate and not having him with me increased the extent of the pain. Alexander was running towards your office when he saw me on the ground barely holding myself together, he mind-linked Damon to come and in matter of seconds called mated female guards to help me. They took me to my room, locking the door. They moved towards the bathroom placed me in the tub, filled with ice cold water to cool down my temperature. It took Damon almost an hour to reach here. Just when he entered my room his scent hit with full force and on instinct I got up and pulled him to me. I felt complete you know? like—"

"You were meant to stay in his arms forever. Like you found your missing puzzle piece." I completed her sentence, remembering the same feeling I felt when I was in Alec's arms.

"—Yeah, exactly. It was then that I realized how foolish I've been. Torturing both of us just because of my insecurities. We found each other and we're meant for each other. Going fast be damned. Also, when I realized he was experiencing the heat himself I knew he was perfect for me. Then he asked me if he can mark me and I said yes. So, yeah. The tea, as you so graciously put it, has been spilled." She finished with a large smile on her face. I put my fork down, after swallowing the last piece of my pancake that I was eating while she told me her story, and congratulated her again. We talked for some time after that but then she said we should go to Alec's office and sort things out. Quickly grabbing the breakfast tray I had asked William to make for Alec, we went onward to my mate's office.

As we entered the office, Alec was sitting in his chair while Jack and Damon sat in front of him, seeing us they turned towards us. Alec's face visibly lit up seeing me and I felt all giddy inside. Sophie went to stand beside Damon's chair but he got up and made her sit on the chair while he stood near her. I walked towards my mate, placing the tray on the desk, in an instant he pulled me towards him making me sit on his lap. I squealed at his actions, my face instantly heating up.

"Damn, that's how you do it Damon." Jack says shaking his head, Sophie nodded in agreement and Damon rolled his eyes.

"Well, excuse me for trying to maintain a serious work environment," huffing he pulled Sophie to him then sat down while placing her on his lap. Instead of reciprocating my act of blushing, she made herself comfortable and smirked sending a grateful look towards Jack.

"You guys do realize there's plenty of space for all of us to sit in our own chairs

right?" I rose my eyebrow which resulted in three people hushing me. Rolling my eyes, I grabbed the tray motioning Alec to start eating.

"Cassie! How could you?" Jack gasped and looked at me with pure sadness in his eyes. I frowned and looked at him clearly confused.

"You.. you didn't bring me any food tray. Am I not important to you? Do you not love me anymore? Does our relationship mean nothing to you?" Jack placed his hand on his heart and turned his head away from me. Behind me I hear Alec grumbling, annoyed at him and I almost laugh.

"I'm so sorry, my best friend in the whole wide world. I'll order one for you right away." I say trying to stop my smile while he continues to shake his head at me.

"Nope, nope. The damage is done. We're over-" before Jack can continue a flying stapler hit him in the stomach earning a groan out of him. Damon and Sophie both tried stifling their laughter covering their faces with their hands.

"Shut up. Get your own mate, leave mine alone." Alec glared at him, turning to look at him I elbowed his stomach to which he gave me a hurt expression.

"Okay, okay, guys. As much as I'm loving this we need to discuss about Sophie's transfer or how things will move forward. Also, I believe our King has to announce something as well." Damon adjusted Sophie on his lap and said in a serious tone. In an instant the playful environment took a whole 360 degree turn.

"Damon's right. As much as I would love for Sophie to go back with you right now Damon, I'm sorry she won't. With the rouge attacks and me leaving almost immediately after this meeting with the warriors to the pack's that need help, we don't have time to appoint a new beta. All this will have to be discussed when I come back," Tightening his arms around me to stop me from shaking Alec looked ahead to

gauge the reaction of the remaining people in the room.

He's leaving now? Well of course it's not like we have time. Somehow we never have enough time. My hands grip Alec's arms that were around me. It's okay, he'll be fine. He's here. He'll come back. I keep chanting the words again and again.

He's going to be okay.

Sophie and Damon were saying something, but I couldn't focus. They were probably agreeing to Alec's decision. Then Jackson said something that me still,

"I'm going with you," With finality in his voice he looked at Alec, leaving no room for argument. Alec sighed and drew small circles on my stomach to calm me down.

"Seeing you have made up your mind, yes Jackie, you're coming with me." With this he placed a kiss on the side of my face and got up from the chair with me.

I'm so pathetic.

Even now he has to console me rather than being the other way around. The others took their leave, which left only me and Alec alone in the office. In an instant I turned around and hugged him as if my life was depending on it. He wrapped his arms around me whispering, he'll be okay in my ear. I nodded and stepped back.

"I've asked the army to assemble outside the castle, we'll transform and go towards the west. After fighting the rogue group settled in there, I have to make sure there aren't any other groups settled elsewhere. So, we'll travel to south then east. Take care of yourself while I'm gone, my love. And remember I'll come back to you, I'll always come back." Placing a kiss on my lips, then on my forehead Alec pulled away. Alec said he met with his parents before already. Explained everything to him. His father was going with the army.

I stood outside the castle with Damon, Sophie and Alec's mother beside me. The army of warriors gathered here, most of them were in wolf form. Those who were not, they were wearing backpacks with all the necessary equipment. After Jack's encouraging speech to raise the morale, he looked at me. Sending me a confident smile, he shifted as well. I turned my attention towards my mate. He was looking at me, his eyes relaying me the same message he said earlier. I knew I had to be strong, not for myself but for my mate and my people.

'Go get 'em tiger.' I mind-linked him, to which he smirked. Turning into his majestic black wolf, he let out a loud growl which shook the ground. The power radiating off him in waves making everyone bow down, bearing their necks to him. With confident strides he lead the army towards the battlefield.

Please, be safe.

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I wish I could say the days passed in a blur. But really, they did not. They dragged on and I'm pretty sure I'll go crazy by the time Alec and the others return. Alec and I had been mind-linking each other, but I knew at a larger distance we won't be able to, we're not mated, yet. Sophie has been in contact with them. Her being part of the pack, has advantages which I still have yet to gain.

The nights were especially harder. I didn't have Alec's arms around me, cocooning me in his hold. And damn, was it difficult to sleep without that. I should've gone with them, but that would leave the throne alone, not exactly the best strategy. The first day though did pass rather quickly, I went to my mates office and a stack of papers, which needed verification greeted me. Sighing, I went through them quickly, which in reality took me 4-5 hours. So, by the time I got free it was late. Sophie and Damon came to help me, though I sent them away after sometime. They were newly mated couple, they deserved time alone.

I needed time alone with my mate.

Someone pushing my mental barrier broke my train of thoughts. Shaking my head I let my barrier down,

'Cassie? Amara wants to meet, you down?' Sophie's voice echoed through my mind. Furrowing my eyes in confusion I replied her,

'I swear I didn't do anything! but sure I'll go to her.'

'Relax , she just wants to talk I suppose. She's on the west wing's second floor.' With that our mind-link broke and I got up from my chair. Stretching my back a little I

closed all the files, quickly arranging everything in order and left my mate's office. Alec had shown me around his office telling me all the important details as well. Obviously, the news about me being in charge while Alec was gone, was told to all important alphas.

As I made my way towards Amara, I realized I've never been to the second floor of the west wing. Curiosity peeked in me and I walked faster, nodding or smiling at the helpers as they passed me. Going up the staircase I looked at the walls, which were decorated with pictures of the royal family. There was one portrait of Edgar, Amara and Alec but with them was one more person, before I look at it more closely Amara's voice reached me which made me fasten my steps to meet her on top of the staircase.

"Amara, everything okay?" upon reaching her I asked to which she shrugged and smiled warmly at me.

"Why? Can I not just meet my daughter without any reason?—" my heart warmed at her words and a small smile made its way to my face.

"—besides I wanted to show you this part of the castle. I myself haven't been here since so long." Her eyes roaming around before she sighed. Then she grabbed my arm and started to walk ahead towards a huge door. I furrowed my eyebrows, it did look secluded from rest of the castle, but why?

The walls were decorated with white gold design which I could barely see, classical drawings on roof and spider webs, golden candle stands barely lighting the place. A golden mirror was placed on the way at the end of hallway which was full of dust. Huge brown with golden designing doors, piqued my interest to reveal what they held inside them. Amara took us towards the middle one, then she looked at me excitedly and said,

"Ready?" I nodded my head, she pulled open the double doors and my eyes widened. A ballroom with old window drapes, motes of dust dancing in shafts of lights, marble floors which needed cleaning and a white cloth covering something to the far left side greeted me.

"Umm.. this is nice." I cringed at my own remark. Amara's laugh echoed through the ballroom.

"No sweetie, this place needs a clean up. This part of castle was closed long ago, and now we'll be opening it back again. With help from the staff it will look like the ballroom's you read in stories." She smiled at me and I made an 'o' face.

" But Amara, why was this closed off? And why open it again now?" I ran my fingers through my hair and made my way towards the white cloth covering something. The sound of my shoes hitting the floors echoed throughout the ballroom.

"That is a story for another time but as to why open it again, I figured we needed a place for your Luna ceremony and such special occasion required special place. You look around, I'll call the helpers." Amara's voice reached me and I nodded. Grabbing the edge of cloth I pulled it down swiftly which revealed a black grand piano underneath. Blowing away the dust settled on top of it, I let my fingers waver on the keys. Soft sounds emitted from it and I smiled.

The next few days of mine were spent more in the office than in the ballroom. I wanted to go through the other door which was at the end of hallway but Amara stopped me by saying it would be better if Alec showed it to me. Amara did say they thoroughly cleaned the ballroom and the upper west wing to make it look presentable enough. Even though my hands itched to play the piano again, I just couldn't find the time.

I missed Alec and not having any mind-link contact with him just added to my worry

for him. Every second of every minute of mine was spent in praying for their safety. My heart ached for my mate. Lia became quieter after not having contact with Aztec for longer than 1 week. Amara, Damon and Sophie made it their mission to cheer me up everyday. I called them 'The Powerpuff girls' even though Damon did not agree to the name. So I started calling him buttercup, surprisingly he did not find it funny.

After a week since Alec left I got used to the routine. Waking up missing his hold, yet dressing up to not let my worry show. Then doing office work, getting daily reports about packs and any problems they faced, having cabinet meetings to discuss the matters at hand, then hoping to hug Alec when my headache starts. Having dinner with 'Powerpuff girls', teasing buttercup and then retiring to bed all exhausted.

Day by day the time passed. Sometimes slow, sometimes fast. It was almost a month since Alec had left with the army. Sophie, bless her heart, everyday informed me about the army's whereabouts. Up till now they were successful in every battle against the rogues. Obviously they were the royal pack warriors, they were stronger than any normal wolves. Thankfully, there was minimal damage to our army, no pack members were lost.

Alec did say it would be easy win, but I still worried like crazy. Rogues are weaker than average wolves, because when a wolf is exiled from their pack it becomes weaker than before. They become lone wolves even if all the rouges make a pack. The danger mostly is they become vicious creatures, they're human side being thrown back and the wolf side taking over. They become deranged. Sophie informed me Alec and the army would be returning soon after patrolling the east side. To say I was overjoyed to hear the news would be an understatement. Even Lia yipped on hearing the news.

Shaking my head to clear my thoughts I left the office and made my way towards the west wing. Amara had called to see the new look and I was ecstatic. Humming to myself I ascended the stairs, the once dirty and dusty hallway was now shining bright.

The hallway lighted up by the candles. I moved towards the ballroom opening the double doors. A gasp escaped my mouth, ballroom with vaulted ceilings embellished with painted artwork, marbled floor and thick velvet drapes over large french windows. To the left end of the ballroom sat the grand piano in all its glory, to the far end of room a spiral staircase lead by balustrade to the second level with double doors, greeted me.

"Damn.." I felt like dancing on the marble floors. Moving towards the piano I sat down and closed my eyes. I learnt to play it long ago as a therapy to take my mind off things. I found myself getting lost in the music, my worries lessen whenever I played. Though few years back I stopped playing. Taking a deep breath I played the tune I've found myself humming to these days. Not realizing when I started to sing along,

(A/N You can play the song above now.)

~Woke up in the middle of a dream

Speak? your name like a prophecy

Well,? the moon?is?holding me tight

Dance?with your ghost

Underneath the streetlights

I? will?wait for you

Can? you feel me too?

When the sun goes down

When? the stars come out

I can lost the starrng to be found

Every night I pray

Take me away

Like? an angel

Free me from the ground

I will wait for you

I will wait for you

Reality doesn't feel the same

I live in the day when I had it my way

Sleeping Beauty waiting for your kiss

'Till the day you come

Gonna stay like this

I will wait for you~

The sound of clapping stopped me. Quickly standing up, I turned around to see the intruder. Well, more like intruders. None other than 'The powerpuff girls' stood there clapping. Damon with a proud smile on his face, Sophie and Amara with utter shock

mixed with awe faces.

"Was this meant for Alexander the great?" raising his eyebrow in question Damon stepped towards me. Running my fingers through my hair, a nervous laugh escaped me.

"I didn't hear you guys come in—" before I could continue Damon interrupted,

"Oh! but we heard you. Singing to your oh so beloved!" Smirking he crossed his arms over his chest. Sophie lightly slapped his arm and came to hug me.

"That was beautiful, dear. You sing like an angel!" Amara gushed at me, heat rushed to my cheeks. I wasn't exactly the person who was confident in singing in-front of people.

"Thank you, Amara. Well, I just came to look around. It's almost time for dinner, let's go now." I ushered everyone out before they could protest. I hated being the center of attention.

"I'm so telling this to Alexander!" Damon teased and I rolled my eyes at him.

Great, just great.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Later that night we all sat in the living room, with mugs of hot chocolate in our hands. It was getting chilly now, winter season coming around. We sat on the carpet in a circle. Sophie urged we should play truth or dare. The first few rounds we all had a good laugh. It felt peaceful. Then the bottle landed on me while Amara had to ask. I chose truth,

"What do find yourself thinking more often these days?" She asked taking a sip from her mug.

"Well, I think—" Damon broke me off saying,

"Oh no! That usually ends up bad for other people." He grinned and I stuck my tongue out to him.

"— it's so different this time," I trace my fingers along the cup. Getting lost in the never ending thought process of mine.

"What is different, dear?" Amara looked at me urging me to continue. I shrugged then sighed.

"Just- well, everything. I mean all this queen deal. My meeting with Alexander, then the Luna Games, then this war with rouges, it feels like everything's going so fast."

"You feel things are going differently than you expected or wanted?" Sophie wrapped her arms around her knees, placing her head on top of her knees.

"I.." trailing off I looked at Damon and just like every time he understood me. He

knows I find it difficult to share my thoughts mainly because I feel I'm putting burden on others. That becomes the main reason for me bottling things up and pushing myself away from the people around me. But I'm trying to change that, I know I've got people around me whom I can trust.

"Why does it feel different this time, Cassie?" Damon gave an encouraging look. Taking a deep breath I start,

"I mean, I met Alec in unusual circumstances rather than meeting in the royal ball. Then all of a sudden the Luna Games come up and there are people challenging me for duel. Then the whole issue with Victoria and the pack accepts me as their luna even before I can complete all rounds. Then the heat comes up yet no marking, then the rouge war and I have to act as the official yet unofficial queen without any mark or Luna ceremony. It feels like I've been thrown in obstacles one after another without getting the time to actually slow down. Alec and I went direct to the advanced level without starting from basic level. It's just... all too much." I run my fingers through my hair and a nervous laugh escapes me. I look up to see all of them looking at me with worry and I close my eyes.

This is why I don't share.

They all become worried and I feel at fault. I rest my head on top of my knees, placing my now cold mug on the floor beside me. After a while I feel arms wrapping around me. Sophie hugging me from my right while Amara hugs me from left. I lift my head and return their hugs. Looking at Damon I smile and he smiles back. My family, minus two people.

Alexander and Edgar.

Pulling back Amara starts off, "I know everything feels rushed right now but just a little time and it will come together. You and Alex are soulmates. You can start from

basics or advance level but you both will bond the same way. Once he comes back, you guys can start all over again if you want to. As for the other things they don't matter more than you do. These things are from you not the other way around. We're all here for you my dear. Never forget that."

My heart warmed at her concern for me. "Thank you, Mom." I smiled, her eyes widened for a fraction of second before a huge smile stretched on her face. Damon broke the silence by saying we should continue the game.

That's how my night passed. With people who reminded me that blood does not determine who your family is. I had no blood relation with anyone of them, but they're the faces that come to mind when I think about the word family. So, I guess you're never always alone. Maybe for a short time but someone will come around and show you that you're not alone. For me it was my mate after Damon.

"Oh god!" Sophie stood up all of a sudden, her eyes wide and look of utter shock displayed on her face. My heart picked up speed as well.

" Sophie? What's wrong dear?" Amara got up as well and moved towards her. Damon pulled her closer and rubbed her arms in soothing manner.

"Alex and the army—" A loud sound of sad howl coming from outside stopped her in mid sentence and we all stilled. Dread filled my whole body and I clench my eyes shut.

No, no, no.

"Alexander and the army, they're...."

Peace.

I smile as I made my way towards the ballroom. My hands were itching to play the piano since morning. It's weird isn't it? How even though you hope things go your way yet still it's a surprise when they do. Walking up the staircase I let my thoughts wander back to last night's events.

-----Flashback-----

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"Alex and the army—" A loud sound of sad howl coming from outside stopped her in mid sentence and we all stilled. Dread filled my whole body and I clench my eyes shut.

No, no, no.

"Alexander and the army, they're... coming back."

My eyebrows furrowed, slowly opening my eyes I looked at Sophie. She was smiling, all signs of stress gone from her face.

"Seriously? You just HAD to give me a heart attack?" Placing my right hand on top

of chest I breathed deeply. Damon and Amara both had straight faces before shaking their heads at Sophie.

"Come on guys! It was a good joke."

-----End of Flashback-----

It was not a good joke.

Sophie said they'll arrive sometime in the evening. I smiled as my eyes made contact with one of the helpers, nodding my head at her greeting. Pulling my hair in a bun as move ascend the stairs, I felt Lia getting uneasy. I really needed to go on a run.

The amount of stress all this queen work gave me is tiring in so many ways. Stretching the sleeves of my black turtle neck, I put my hands in my black jeans pocket. Winter was almost upon us.

Opening the ballroom doors, I stepped in awe of the place. No matter how many times I come here, it manages to stun me every time. The sound of my footsteps echoed throughout the ballroom. Sitting down on the piano seat, I slowly let my fingers wander over the keys. Soft sounds filled the whole room. Closing my eyes, I started to play. Though this time I don't sing.(A/N Play the video now.)

Slowly, my fingers play the tune which was inside my head for a long time. I find myself getting lost in the music. Memories of my mate flash through my closed eyes, and I feel my eyes getting watery. I sway to the music lightly.

I don't stop.

"And I've heard of a love that comes once in a lifetime,

And I'm pretty sure that you are that love of mine."

I don't stop when an aura surrounds me.

"And I see forever in your eyes,

I feel okay when I see you smile, smile."

I don't stop when the familiar scent engulfs me.

"Cause it gets so hard to breathe

When you're looking at me, I've never felt so alive and free

When you're looking at me, I've never felt so happy."

I don't stop at the sound of footsteps.

"Dandelion, into the wind you go

Won't you let my darling know?"

And I definitely don't stop when a strong pair of arms come around me, the sparks coming to life after so long.

"Praying to God that one day you'll be mine

Wishing on dandelions all of the time, all of the time."

As the last note ended, I inhaled deeply, still not opening my eyes. I was afraid the feeling would go away. Tears cascading down my face, I felt a soft kiss on my neck

and my eyes flew open. Alexander was hugging me from the back, his face in the crook of my neck. I tightly grab his arms in my hands as the sound of my soft sobs filled the same room which was echoing with the sound of music just a few moments before.

We stayed like that I don't know for how long before I composed myself. Alexander stood straight now behind me, wiping my tears, I slowly stood up and turned around. There he was, my mate, standing right in front of me with a look of awe, longing and love.

He loved me.

I loved him.

A smile made it's way to my face, and his eyes visibly lit up. Opening his arms, I launched my self at him. My legs wrapped around his waist, arms around his neck, my face the crook of his neck. I held onto him as my life depended on it. And his hold was no way any less tight.

"Hey, beautiful." He whispered in my ear and my hold on him tightened.

"Hey, caveman." The sound of his soft laughter filled the room. Pulling my head up, I looked him. My hands found their way towards his face. My eyes dropped to his lips, then back to his eyes. His arms around my waist tightened as he leaned in. It felt like I was breathed to life again as his lips met mine. All the longing, suffering and days of missing each other, all portrayed by the one kiss. Soft yet passionate. Our lips moved in perfect sync with each other. I never wanted to let him go. It's strange how distance between people makes you realize how much they mean to you, and all your feelings simply sort themselves, to make one powerful emotion.

Love.

Pulling away breathing heavily, our foreheads touching I realized I can never live a life without Alexander. He brings me to life with every touch, every smile, every look, every comment of his.

"So, does this mean you missed me love?" I laugh at this and pull away. Standing few steps away from him I smile at him.

"Missed you? Nope. I was just too busy to even notice you were gone. Was it for a long time? -" I looked at my nails then at him.

"-Oh wait, the army. Is everyone okay? We didn't lose anyone did we? I wanted to welcome you all, but Sophie-" . Shaking his head at me smiling, he stepped forward. His hand cupped my face while he placed a soft lingering kiss on my forehead. My eyes closed on their own account. Then he kissed my cheek, then my other cheek, before whispering in my ear,

"We're an army of lycans, my queen. Everyone is fine. Rouges are no match for us. We all ran to the person we missed the most just as we entered the pack boundary. We'll gather everyone tomorrow, for now let them be with their loved ones. And as for the missing part, But I my love? I missed you like an idiot misses a point. I longed for you like a lover longs for his love. From your smile to your anger. Your playful hitting to your hugs. I missed you like crazy." My cheeks burned bright red from the heat of his words. Unable to stop my smile I pushed him away lightly before placing my hands on both sides of my cheek.

"Okay, okay. I get it. I- umm... I still didn't miss you though," I shrieked as he tried to pull me to him again. Running away from him, out of the ballroom with him chasing me, I laughed. Running down the stairs, towards the living room I looked back to see my mate had stopped running after me, shaking his head. I blew him a kiss and went inside the living room.

Narrowing my eyes at Sophie, who told me they would all arrive later this evening. I smiled at Edgar and Jack. Damon, Amara, Sophie, Jack and Edgar were all in the living room. Amara hugging Edgar. Damon talking to Jackson. And Sophie giving me a sheepish smile. I moved towards Jack and hugged him.

"Hey Jackie, you okay?" I asked him as he pulled away from me. A mischievous smile made its way to his face. Looking behind me for a second, he turned his attention back to me.

"Perfect, now that you're-" Alec's voice stopped him mid sentence.

"Say it. I dare you." I turned around to see Alec, with his arms crossed on his chest, glaring at Jack. Jackson raised his arms in surrender before winking at me.

"Jackson. Behave." Alec warned coming towards us. Rolling my eyes at both of them, I turned towards Edgar and smiled.

"Hey dad, you good?" Pulling him for a hug, he smiled at me.

"I'll never get used to you calling me dad. Warms my heart every time. We're all okay, my dear."

As I stepped away from Edgar, a pair of arms pulled me towards a strong chest. I looked up to see Alec talking with Damon, with a smile on his face.

My eyes wandered to the people in front of me. All of them talking over each other. Soon, the living room was filled with sounds of laughter.

Finally, my family was once again complete.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Mom's eyes always twinkled when she looked at my dad. Her eyes would visibly lit up when she saw him, and vice versa. When things got tough he used to lay his head on mom's shoulder while she caressed his face, soothing him. I was four years old when for the first time I asked my mom about my dad.

"Why do you smile when you look at him, mommy?" My head was on her lap, playing with her fingers, I looked up at her. Her fingers were combing my hair softly. At my question she smiled warmly at me. I loved it when she smiled.

"Because he's my mate and he makes me happy." She pecked my forehead, pushing back my hair.

"Mate? Yuck!" my nose scrunched at the word, and mommy laughed.

"No, my little wolf. Having a mate is a beautiful thing. You will have one too when you grow up. And you must love her with all your heart, okay?"

"But mommy! I love you the most. How will I love her with all my heart?" I sat up, my eyes widening in fear as I looked at mommy.

"You will, my love. Your heart-" she takes my hand and places it on chest where mommy says my heart is,

"-will make new space for her. You see little wolf, you must protect her heart too. Never hurt her okay?"

"Okay mommy. I will take her heart and put in my safe box then it will be safe!" I

jump up throwing my hands in the air.

The sound of my mother's laughter fades as I blink my eyes to the present. My darling mate stands in front of me, with her arms crossed as she looks at me with a raised eyebrow. She looks breathtakingly-beautiful. Her hair, now open, cascading down her back. Her eyes narrowing at me, the green in them a little brighter than before.

Emerald.

My now new favorite color. Her lips forming a slight pout, and I wanted to take her in my arms never letting go. She was telling me something relating to Damon and Soph, and now asking if I'm even listening to her. My sweet mate. As if I need her words to listen, her eyes talk enough to me. Shaking my head to clear my thoughts I smiled at her,

"Yes, darling. I'm every much listening to you ramble about your new favorite ship. And no, my love, you cannot call them dophie from now on." I chuckle at her attempt to make a ship name for them. God, she's cute.

Rolling her eyes and huffing at me, she swats my arm.

"You're so rude. Meanie." She sticks her tongue out and I laugh. Pressing my lips to her forehead I caress her face.

"The things you do to me, sweetheart." Inhaling her scent in, which never fails to calm me. I move towards my mother. My precious memory awakening love for mother strongly. She looks up from where she was sitting with my father and smiles. I love her smile. Returning her smile I sit next to her, hugging her close to me, which takes her by surprise.

"I love you mom." I close my eyes as my mother tightly hugs me to her.

"I love you more, my little wolf." She replies and I pull away groaning.

"Mom! Seriously? I'm a man now." I puff out my chest and she laughs. My heart filling with warmth at the sound. I look towards my mate to find her shaking her head smiling.

"Alright everyone! This was fun but my social battery is dead and I just returned from war so please excuse me and my mate for we shall take our leave." Standing up I say moving towards Cassie, taking her hand and pulling her away.

"Yeah! Go get some!" Jackson's shouts from behind us laughing and I fix him with my most disapproving look. Beside me Cassandra's reaction resembled mine. We both glared hard at him.

"I meant sleep. Go get some sleep. Jeez, guys, stop looking at me with all this love. My heart can't take it." Sighing dramatically Jack places his hand on his heart. Damon slaps the back of his head, to which Jack's jaw dropped open. Running my palm over my face I pull Cassie with me before they could start a fight. She trails quietly behind me.

As we reach our room, I step aside motioning her to enter first. She looks at me gulping before moving. Stepping inside I shut the door, locking it. Cassandra's eyes widened at my act.

"Why-" clearing her throat she starts again, "- why did you lock it?" looking anywhere but she fidgets.

"Because that's what we always do?" I look at her in confusion, tilting my head sideways.

"Oh! Oh, right. Yes, we lock the doors. Of course." She laughs awkwardly before closing her eyes as if regretting her words. I pursue my lips to stop myself from smiling.

"Why? What were thinking I was doing?" I ask as if in serious confusion. Her eyes opened at she stutters,

"Me? I- I.. nothing. We- umm weren't you tired? You should sleep." She turns away from me and I grab her wrist pulling her towards me. Her body clashes with mine, eyes widened, her pulse getting faster. I bent down, our noses almost touching, her breathing picked up. Smirking I trailed my nose from her cheek, down to her neck, moving up again till her ear. She shivered against me. Placing a kiss behind her ear, I whispered,

"Considering Jack's suggestion, are we?" She just stood there not moving, eyes closed. Placing a trail of kisses from her ear down towards her neck and her collarbone, I asked again,

"Are we love?" I looked back at her to find her lost.

"Hmm.." She replies softly and a surprised laugh escapes me. Her eyes flew open and she stepped back.

"What? No! I mean No! Wait what was the question again?" She looks mortified and I laugh shaking my head.

"My mate." I hug her close to me tightly. Placing my head in the crook of her neck, I place a soft kiss where my mark will be. Her arms wrapped around my shoulders, pressing me to her.

Later that night when we lay in bed together, me on my back her head on my chest, my

fingers playing with her hair. Her arm draped across my waist, her legs thrown on top of mine. More accurately she was laying on top of me, and I did not mind it one bit.

"Can I ask you something?" placing my palm on her forehead I look down at Cassie.

"No." She joked and I smiled.

"Don't take this the wrong way, and I'm not pressuring you or anything. It's okay fine if you don't want it. It's totally fine, I don't mind or anything-" Cassandra places her lips on my mine silencing me. Pulling back she smiled sheepishly at me.

"You were rambling! Get to the point, sir." She raises her eyebrows and I gulp. Calming my heartbeat I hesitate before asking,

"Umm... when- I mean can I- I mark you?" I ask and instantly shut my eyes.

Silence.

I wait and wait and wait. When she didn't reply after waiting for whole five minutes I slowly peek my one eye open then the other. She looks amused at me. Sitting up cross legged she takes my hands in hers.

"What about our deal?" She stuns me for a moment. I thought she had forgotten about it.

"I didn't forget, caveman. We had a deal about our fight in the arena. If you win you get to mark me. If I win you do whatever I say for a whole day," she suddenly stands up on the bed, her arms in a protective stance. I raise my eyebrow at her and she smirks,

"Let's fight now!" She exclaims and I drop back on the bed with a groan.

"No!" I say turning towards my side and closing my eyes. She drops on the bed with a thud.

"But why?" whining she shaking me and I keep my eyes closed.

"We'll do this tomorrow the proper way in front of the pack." I reply not turning towards her.

"Alexander!" She pokes my back. I remain still she hovers over me for a moment, then sighs.

"Fine! Go to sleep. Who care about Cassandra? She'll just entertain herself." She grumbles laying on the bed away from me. When I feel her settled down, I turn towards her, wrapping my arm around her waist and pull her towards my chest. Placing a kiss on her cheek, I lay my head on her shoulder, allowing her scent to wrap itself around me. A wave of exhaustion passes through me, and I give in. I allow sleep to overcome me not before finding a certain someone holding my arm tightly in her hands.

"I love you, my miracle." The sound of her voice is the last thing I hear before falling into deep darkness.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

"Alexander! Wake up!" A distant voice which kept getting louder as I come back to the land of living wakes me up. Opening my eyes, I rub them to get rid of any traces of sleep. My eyes adjust to a certain red head leaning over me.

"Well, hello, beautiful." I grin up to her and her scowl deepens. Placing her hands on her hips, she stood next to the edge of the bed, shaking her head at me.

"Come on, get up! Meet me in the arena in 10 minutes." She says, leaving me to stare at her retreating back. So lost in my mate's beauty it took me some while to register her words. Getting up in a hurry, smiling to myself, I started to get ready.

Smiling to myself, shaking my head at Alec, I made my way to the arena. Wearing my fight clothes, my hair closed in a ponytail, I couldn't help the excitement bubbling inside me. As much I love these fighting, training my whole life so I could become Commander, I knew Alec was a King for a reason. He must be exceptional in battles to never have lost one. Even the thought of fighting against him, gave me butterflies for no reason. Sure, I love light-hearted romance, but nothing beats mates in a battle ring. Being at each other's throat yet knowing the other person would never harm you.

I'm weird, I get it.

"Hello, there Luna! Must I say you look exceptionally pretty today." Jack's voice broke my reverie, and I grinned up to him.

"Why, thank you kind sir. It's the pre-fight glow, you know." I said bowing down and Jackson laughed. I looked around me, the pack gathered around the ring, the whole

area buzzing with excited energy. I had woken up early and with the help of Jack, managed to get the pack present as audience. It helped that they all were already in the training area as usual.

I felt Alec's presence before I saw him. He nodded at people's greeting as he passed him and came to stand beside. Looking around for few moments, he turned to me,

"So, what's happening?" At his question both Jack and I looked at him with our jaws on the ground.

"Seriously, man? Your fight with Cassie. That's what's happening." Jack gave him his best disapproving look and turned to walk away from us. I pursed my lips to stop myself from smiling.

"Sometimes I wonder why I haven't killed him yet," Alec sighed.

"Don't you dare, he's amazing." I laugh. I can't wait until Jack to meet his mate. The way he lights up even the worst of places, I know he'll keep her beyond happy.

Before Alec could respond Jack went ahead to stand in the ring gathering people around to make the opening announcement.

"Alright guys, listen up! What you all are going to witness today is a historical moment. So, get ready to watch an intense, serious, awe-worthy fight. Introducing our first contestant, She's brave, she's fierce, she'll stab you in the throat, CASSANDRA PRIMROSE!-"

Barely containing my laughter, I waved at the people cheering and made my way to the ring. Entering it, I stood to Jack's right side. He cheered for me before continuing,

"And opposing our amazing Luna is..... Alexander Knight." He rolled is eyes as he

said it and the crowd laughed. Alec entered the ring, muttered 'asshole' to Jack, then proceeded to stand on his left side.

"Well you all know the rules! Let the games begin!" Shouting the last sentence he made a dash out of the ring.

"We're not in the hunger games, you doofus." Alec grunted and I stood my protective stance.

Alright, let's see. I could never win if I take the offensive, so defensive it is. Circulating slowly around each other, Alec winked at me. He was trying to draw me in, so I would initiate the fight.

'Well, we know he wouldn't hurt us. But to win I'm not, not going to hurt him.' Lia shaking her fur, gets ready to take control.

'Alright, Lia. Remember the advice?'

'Show 'em who's boss? Heck yeah.'

I look at Alec, giving him my most innocent look...

'Attack!!' Lia's words are the last thing I hear before pouncing on my mate.

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Cassandra's POV

The crowd buzzed with excitement as Alec and I circled each other. His eyes, sharp and unreadable, stayed locked onto mine, tracking my every movement.

He smirked. "Are you sure you're ready for this, sweetheart?"

Cocky bastard.

I tilted my head, feigning innocence. "Oh, absolutely."

Alec took a slow step forward, testing my reaction. I mirrored him, shifting my weight lightly on my feet. I knew his game—he wanted me to strike first, to give him an opening. But I wasn't stupid.

Wait him out, study his movements.

Lia huffed inside my head. Or... we could just show him who's boss.

I barely had time to process her words before she took control.

Attack!!

With a burst of speed, I lunged.

Alec sidestepped effortlessly, but I was already twisting mid-air, landing lightly on my feet behind him. I launched a kick aimed at his ribs—only for his hand to catch

my ankle mid-strike.

"Nice try," he mused.

Before he could yank me off balance, I used his hold to my advantage. Shifting my weight, I kicked off the ground with my free foot, twisting into a spin. He had to let go or risk taking a knee to the face. He let go.

I landed in a crouch, grinning. "What's the matter, your highness? Losing your touch?"

Alec rolled his shoulders, his own grin forming. "Oh, darling, I was just warming up."

In a flash, he was moving.

I barely had time to react before his arm was sweeping toward me—fast.

I ducked, dodged, and—

Shit.

His hand caught my wrist, yanking me forward. I stumbled, but before I could recover, he spun me around and pinned my back against his chest, one arm locked around my waist.

The crowd erupted in cheers and laughter. Jack was howling.

"You done playing, Cassie?" Alec murmured in my ear, his breath warm against my skin.

Oh, hell no.

Lia growled, and I smirked.

"Not even close."

With all my strength, I threw my head back—right into his nose.

The satisfying crack of my head meeting Alec's nose sent a shockwave through the crowd. Gasps and cheers echoed around the arena as he loosened his grip just enough for me to slip free.

I spun around, ready to follow up with another strike—only to find Alec standing there, barely phased, wiping a streak of blood from his nose with his thumb.

"Oh, you are ruthless," he muttered, lips quirking into a smirk. "I like it."

The cocky bastard was enjoying this.

I shifted my weight lightly, shaking off the slight dizziness from our scuffle. "You talk too much, your highness."

His eyes darkened with something between amusement and challenge. "Fine. No more talking."

And then he moved.

Fast.

I barely had time to register it before he was on me. A left hook—I ducked. A sharp jab—I dodged. A low sweep—too late. His leg caught mine, and suddenly, the

ground was rushing up to meet me.

Damn it.

I hit the dirt hard, rolling just in time to avoid his next move. Springing back to my feet, I retaliated with a swift kick aimed at his ribs. Alec caught my ankle again, but this time, instead of pulling me off balance, he twisted—sending me spinning mid-air.

Shit.

I landed with a solid thud, air whooshing out of my lungs. Stars danced in my vision, and before I could fully recover, Alec was on me, pinning my wrists above my head.

The crowd erupted. Cheers, whistles, some dramatic gasps—it was chaos.

Alec's face hovered inches from mine, his breath warm against my cheek. His grip wasn't painful, but it was firm, unshakable.

"Yield," he murmured.

My heart pounded in my chest. Part from the fight. Part from the way his voice dropped an octave when he said it.

"Not a chance," I breathed.

He chuckled. "Stubborn."

I smirked. "You knew that when you met me."

Then, using his own weight against him, I twisted my hips and slammed my knee into

his ribs. Alec grunted, momentarily losing his balance, and that was all I needed.

With a sharp twist, I flipped us over, reversing our positions so I was straddling him, my hands pressed against his chest.

The crowd lost it.

Jack was practically howling from the sidelines. "That's right, Luna! Show him who's boss!"

Alec looked up at me, surprise flickering in his eyes before it morphed into something else. Something dark and dangerous.

"That was impressive," he admitted. "But tell me something, sweetheart—"

I never saw his next move.

One second, I was on top. The next, Alec had shifted his weight, grabbed my waist, and flipped us again. This time, his hold was unshakable, his body pressing against mine, arms caging me in.

His voice dropped, low and teasing. "What now, Luna?"

I hated how good he was at this.

But I hated losing more.

I lifted my chin. "Now? I make you regret underestimating me."

His grin widened. "I look forward to it."

I twisted sharply, aiming a knee at his ribs again, but this time, he was ready. He blocked with ease, shifting his grip to press my wrists further into the dirt.

I clenched my jaw. "You're enjoying this too much."

"Maybe." His voice was casual, but his eyes gleamed with something else. Something undeniably amused.

Jack's loud voice cut through the tension.

"Alright, lovebirds, as much as we're all enjoying this weird foreplay, some of us would like to know who actually wins the fight."

The crowd roared with laughter.

I groaned. Alec just smirked.

Jack stood on the edge of the ring, arms crossed, tapping his foot. "You two gonna keep rolling around on the ground, or should we call it a draw?"

Alec leaned in slightly, his lips brushing against my ear. "What do you say, Cassie? Call it a draw?"

I narrowed my eyes. "Only because I let you win."

He laughed, finally releasing me and standing up. "Whatever helps you sleep at night, love."

I took his offered hand and let him pull me up, brushing dust off my clothes.

Jack clapped his hands. "Alright, folks! No clear winner today, but damn if that

wasn't the best fight I've seen all year. Give it up for our Luna and King!"

The arena erupted in cheers. I barely had time to catch my breath before a swarm of people surrounded us, clapping me on the back, exchanging bets, and excitedly rehashing the fight.

Jack threw an arm around my shoulder. "Cassie, I swear, I have never been prouder. That was art."

I grinned, stretching out my sore muscles. "You act like I don't fight every day."

"Yeah, but you usually don't almost castrate the King."

Alec, who had been greeting some of the pack warriors, turned his head at that. "Excuse me?"

Jack gave him a deadpan look. "You heard me, your highness."

Alec groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Remind me why I haven't had you exiled yet?"

Jack grinned. "Because I'm the best thing that's ever happened to this pack."

I snorted. "Debatable."

The banter continued as we left the ring, but my mind was still buzzing from the fight.

Because for all Alec's teasing, I knew something for certain—he hadn't been fighting me at full strength.

And if that was him holding back...

I couldn't wait to see what he was capable of when he didn't.

Hey everyone! First of all, I want to say a huge thank you for your patience. I know this chapter took longer than expected, and I truly appreciate you sticking around. Writer's block has been hitting hard, but I'm finally back, and I can't wait to share more with you all!

Let me know your thoughts on this chapter—I'd love to hear from you. Your feedback and support mean the world to me!

Happy reading! ??

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Cassandra's POV

I found Alec in his office, casually leaning back in his chair like he didn't have a care in the world. The moment he saw me step inside, his smirk deepened.

"I was wondering when you'd bring this up," he said, tapping a pen against the desk.

I crossed my arms. "The fight ended in a draw."

He nodded. "It did."

I narrowed my eyes. "Which means neither of us technically won."

"True."

"So," I said slowly, stepping closer. "How do we settle the bet?"

Alec's lips curled into something smug, something entirely too pleased with itself. "Simple. We both get what we wanted."

I raised a brow. "Meaning?"

His voice dropped slightly. "You tell me what to do for a day, and I get to mark you when the time comes."

I stared at him, my stomach flipping at the way he said it.

“When the time comes?” I echoed.

Alec stood, moving around the desk, his movements slow and deliberate. “I won’t rush you, Cassandra,” he murmured, stopping just inches from me. “But the mark will happen. You are mine, and I am yours. The fight may have ended in a draw, but this—” his fingers brushed my wrist, sending sparks up my arm, “—isn’t a negotiation.”

I swallowed. “So, you’re saying I get to boss you around and you still win?”

His lips twitched. “That’s one way to look at it.”

I huffed. “You’re insufferable.”

Alec chuckled. “So, what’s my first order, Commander?”

I grinned. “Oh, I have plans for you, Your Highness.”

His smirk didn’t waver. “I’m sure you do.”

Little did he know, I was not going to make this easy for him.

Surprise, surprise!

I know, I know—I’ve been gone for what feels like forever. But I couldn’t just drop one chapter and disappear again, could I?

So, stay tuned because there’s another exciting chapter coming your way! I hope you enjoy this one, and as always, let me know what you think.

Happy reading!

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The sun had barely risen, but I was already wide awake. Today was my day.

Alec might think he won our little negotiation, but if he thought I was going to go easy on him, he was in for a very rude awakening.

Stretching lazily, I made my way downstairs to find him waiting in the dining hall, sipping his morning coffee like he didn't have a single worry in the world.

"Good morning, Your Highness," I greeted sweetly, taking a seat across from him.

He smirked over his mug. "Good morning, Commander."

I grinned. "Ready for your orders?"

He set his coffee down, leaning forward with a lazy confidence that made me want to wipe that smirk right off his face. "Hit me with your worst."

Oh, I planned to.

I clasped my hands together. "First order of the day: you are going to personally train the youngest group of pups."

Alec blinked. "You mean the six-year-olds?"

I nodded innocently. "Yes. The ones who still trip over their own feet and cry when

they scrape their knees.”

He stared at me for a long moment, then exhaled slowly. “You’re evil.”

I grinned. “And yet, you’re still legally required to listen to me for the next twenty-four hours.”

Alec pinched the bridge of his nose, muttering something under his breath. Then, to my delight, he stood. “Fine. Let’s go.”

One Hour Later – Training Grounds

I leaned against the fence, watching with pure amusement as Alec tried—and failed—to get a dozen hyperactive pups to listen.

“Alright,” he said, tone strained but patient. “Everyone line up—no, don’t tackle each other—Lucas, stop biting your brother—”

I stifled a laugh as one of the smallest pups tugged on Alec’s pants. “Alpha, I gotta pee.”

Alec sighed, rubbing his temples. “Then go. You don’t need my permission to pee.”

The pup blinked up at him. “But my mom says I gotta tell an adult first.”

I lost it.

Alec shot me a glare over his shoulder, and I flashed him my brightest smile.

“Having fun?” I called.

He growled something unintelligible before turning back to the chaos that was his tiny training class.

Best. Morning. Ever.

Midday – Task #2

Alec finally escaped his torment at the hands of the pups, but I wasn’t done with him yet.

His next task? Taking Jack shopping.

For furniture.

Jack was thrilled.

“This is already the best day of my life,” Jack declared as we strolled through the market. “I have so many opinions on couches, and you—oh mighty Alpha King—are going to listen to all of them.”

Alec shot me a glare that promised revenge. I just batted my lashes at him.

For the next hour, I watched in absolute glee as Jack dragged Alec from store to store, debating over throw pillows, of all things.

“Okay, but does this couch scream power, or does it say ‘I take my afternoon tea with scones’?” Jack mused, stroking his chin.

Alec, dead inside, just stared at him. “It’s a couch, Jack.”

Jack gasped. “Just a couch? Oh, no. No, no, no. This is where guests will sit. This is where Cassie will sit. Do you want her to be uncomfortable? Do you?!”

Alec turned to me, eyes pleading. “End this.”

I grinned. “Nope.”

Jack patted his shoulder. “I hope you live a long life, my friend, but today? Today, you suffer.”

This was turning out even better than I expected.

Evening – The Final Task

By the time night rolled around, Alec had been through hell.

And yet, I still had one last order for him.

We stood in his room, and I watched as realization dawned on his face. “No.”

I crossed my arms. “Yes.”

“I draw the line here, Cassandra.”

“Oh, come on. It’s just a simple braid.”

Alec glared at me like I had personally betrayed him. “You want me to sit still while

you mess with my hair?”

I twirled a strand of my own red locks between my fingers. “Fair is fair, Your Highness. If I had lost, you would’ve gotten to mark me.”

Alec exhaled sharply, like he was questioning every life choice that had led him here. Then, finally, he dropped onto the edge of the bed with a groan. “Fine. Just do it quickly.”

I beamed, hopping onto the mattress behind him. “See? That wasn’t so hard.”

Alec grumbled something under his breath but stayed still as I ran my fingers through his hair, gathering the dark strands into a simple braid.

To my surprise, he actually relaxed under my touch.

By the time I was done, I let out a satisfied hum. “You know, you’d look great with a warrior’s braid.”

Alec scoffed. “Absolutely not.”

I smirked. “You just let me do it.”

“Because I had no choice.”

I moved to sit beside him, poking his chest. “You always have a choice.”

His gaze met mine, his expression softening. “Not when it comes to you.”

My breath hitched.

The teasing atmosphere shifted—just slightly—but enough to make my heart race.

He reached out, his fingers brushing my jaw, his voice lower now. “Your twenty-four hours are almost up, Cassandra.”

I swallowed. “And?”

His lips curled into something dangerous. “And then it’s my turn.”

My stomach flipped.

Oh, hell. What had I just set myself up for?

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The moment the clock struck midnight, I knew I was in trouble.

Alec leaned casually against the doorframe, arms crossed, a knowing smirk playing on his lips.

“Our bet is over,” I announced before he could speak. “Time for bed.”

He didn't move. “Not yet.”

I exhaled. “Alec, I—”

“Cassandra.” His voice was soft but commanding. Dangerous. “You know what I want.”

The mark.

His claim on me. The final, irreversible step in binding us together.

My heart pounded.

I had been fighting it for so long—this pull, this undeniable gravity that made it impossible to resist him. I had convinced myself I wasn't ready.

But the truth was, I wasn't afraid of the bond.

I was afraid of how much I wanted it.

Alec took a slow step forward, his smirk fading into something darker, something more real. “I told you I’d wait.” His fingers ghosted over my jaw, tilting my chin up. “But I think we both know you don’t want me to.”

I swallowed hard.

He was right.

Every instinct in me screamed to claim him. Not because of duty, not because it was expected—but because he was mine.

And I was done pretending otherwise.

Alec’s breath hitched as I reached for him, curling my fingers into the collar of his shirt. His usual cocky arrogance vanished, replaced by something raw and unguarded.

I tilted my head, baring his neck.

His pulse thundered beneath my lips as I murmured against his skin, “You said you’d wait for me.”

He exhaled sharply. “Always.”

“Then wait for this.”

And bit down.

Alec shuddered, his grip tightening on my waist as my fangs sank into his skin. Power surged through me, hot and electrifying, as the mate bond flared to life. His

scent—smoke and cedar—wrapped around me, burning itself into my soul.

Then—something shifted.

A sharp, tingling sensation bloomed on my own neck, and my breath caught as heat spread across my skin like wildfire.

Alec's body went rigid beneath my touch.

I pulled back, dazed, licking the last traces of blood away. My mark—my claim—stood stark against his skin.

But then his eyes darkened, and his fingers brushed my throat, tilting my chin.

“Cassandra,” he whispered, voice rough.

Confused, I reached up—

And felt another mark.

My pulse skipped.

It wasn't just him that had been marked.

I had been marked, too.

I met Alec's gaze, wide-eyed, realization crashing down on me. “That's not supposed to happen.”

His smirk returned—slow, dangerous, possessive.

“It does,” he murmured, his thumb brushing over the fresh mark on my skin. “When the bond is perfectly matched.”

I swallowed. “That means—”

His lips curled as he leaned in.

“We belong to each other. Completely.”

My heart thundered.

Because this wasn’t just any mark.

This was permanent.

Alec was mine. And I was his.

Forever.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The training grounds had transformed overnight. Banners of different packs lined the perimeter, warriors gathered in tight groups, whispering about today's trials.

But none of them whispered as much as they did when I walked onto the field.

Because they saw it.

The mark on my neck.

Alec's claim. My claim.

And whether they liked it or not, it was undeniable proof that I was their Luna.

Jack whistled low beside me. "Well, well, well. Look at them stare. If I didn't know any better, I'd say they're shocked our Luna actually belongs here."

I rolled my shoulders, exhaling slowly. "Let them watch."

Jack grinned. "Oh, I plan to. This is gonna be fun."

But just as I was about to turn my attention to the first trial, a slow, mocking clap echoed across the field.

I tensed.

The crowd parted, revealing a figure I was already learning to despise.

Elias.

The Alpha of Blackwood Pack strolled toward me with that same arrogant smirk, his green eyes flicking over my form before settling on the mark at my throat.

He laughed.

“Well, isn’t this something?” Elias drawled. “The little Luna already claimed her pet King.”

Jack bristled beside me. “Watch your mouth, Elias.”

Elias didn’t even look at Jack. His gaze remained on me, sharp and amused. “Tell me, Luna,” he continued, tilting his head. “Did you mark him first because you were scared he’d change his mind?”

A slow, dangerous heat burned in my chest.

I smiled. Sharp. Cold. Lethal.

“No,” I said sweetly. “I did it because I wanted to. Just like I’ll want to put you on the ground during the trials.”

The warriors surrounding us murmured, some snickering under their breath.

Elias’s smirk twitched, but he covered it quickly. “Big words for someone who hasn’t proven anything yet.”

I took a step forward, meeting him head-on. “I don’t need to prove anything to you,

Elias. But if you want to fight me so badly, step into the ring.”

His eyes gleamed. “Oh, I plan to.”

A deep voice cut through the tension.

“Not yet.”

I turned to find Alec standing nearby, his silver gaze unreadable. But there was something simmering beneath the surface—something dangerous.

He walked toward us, completely calm, but every warrior around us straightened instinctively.

He stopped beside me, his presence a wall of heat against my back.

His fingers brushed my waist. Casual. Possessive. Unshakable.

“If you want to challenge her, Elias,” Alec said smoothly, “you’ll have to earn that fight.”

Elias raised a brow. “Is that so?”

Alec smirked. “You’ll be facing her in the combat round. Try not to embarrass yourself before then.”

Elias chuckled, shaking his head. “You two are so fun. Really. Can’t wait for this.”

And with that, he turned and strolled off.

I exhaled sharply. “I hate him.”

Jack nodded. “We all hate him.”

Alec hummed, his hand still at my waist. “Then crush him when the time comes.”

I looked up at him, meeting his gaze. “You sure you’re okay with me fighting him?”

Alec’s lips curled. “Oh, I want you to fight him.” His silver eyes flickered with heat. “I want you to win.”

I smirked. “Then watch closely, Your Highness. Because I don’t lose.”

The announcer stepped forward. “Luna Cassandra, are you ready for the first trial?”

I rolled my shoulders, letting the adrenaline settle into my veins.

Time to show them who I am.

I glanced once more at Alec, then turned to the arena.

“Let’s begin.”

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

The arena was buzzing with anticipation as I stepped onto the field, the weight of a hundred stares pressing down on me. Warriors from various packs stood in clusters, murmuring, waiting to see if their Luna was worthy.

Elias leaned casually against a post, watching with that same arrogant smirk.

Alec stood off to the side, arms crossed, unreadable. But I could feel him watching.

Let them stare.

I wasn't here to prove them right.

I was here to prove them wrong.

The announcer's voice rang out. "The first trial: The Leadership Challenge."

A low murmur rippled through the crowd.

I kept my expression neutral. Leadership. That meant strategy, endurance, and commanding a team. Easy enough.

The announcer continued, "The Luna will be assigned a team of warriors. Their objective? To navigate a dangerous obstacle course—together. Every member must cross the finish line, or the trial is considered failed."

Simple in theory. A nightmare in practice.

Alec had trained me for combat, but this wasn't just about individual skill. This was about leading people who didn't want to follow me.

I turned as five warriors stepped forward—my team.

Instantly, I recognized the problem.

Three were from my own pack. Loyal. Respectful.

The other two? Blackwood warriors. Elias's men.

I clenched my jaw.

He was already trying to sabotage me.

Elias grinned from the sidelines.

I ignored him and stepped in front of my team. "Alright, listen up—"

One of the Blackwood warriors, a tall brute named Soren, crossed his arms. "Look, Luna, no offense, but we can handle ourselves. Just tell us the course, and we'll figure it out."

I raised a brow. "Is that so?"

The other Blackwood warrior, a wiry man with sharp eyes, scoffed. "Yeah. You don't need to lead us like we're pups."

The nerve.

Jack, who was watching from the crowd, muttered, "Oh, they're so dead."

I took a slow breath. Calm. In control. Unshaken.

Then I smiled.

“Alright. Since you don’t need a leader, let’s make a bet.”

Soren frowned. “What?”

I gestured toward the start of the obstacle course. “I’ll race you to the first checkpoint. If you beat me, I’ll let you ‘handle yourselves’ and stay out of your way.”

The two Blackwood warriors exchanged looks. This was their chance to humiliate me in front of everyone.

Soren smirked. “Deal.”

Alec sighed from the sidelines. He knew what was coming.

I walked to the starting line beside Soren, stretching lazily. The course stretched ahead—a wall climb, rope swings, mud pits, and a final sprint uphill.

Soren cracked his knuckles. “Try to keep up, Luna.”

I smiled sweetly.

The announcer raised a hand.

“Go!”

Soren shot forward, running at full speed.

I let him.

I paced myself, keeping steady as he threw himself at the first obstacle—a high wooden wall. He jumped, gripping the top, hauling himself over with a grunt.

I reached the wall seconds later, leapt, and pulled myself up effortlessly.

Soren glanced back, surprised to see me right behind him.

Good.

The next section—rope swings over a water pit. Soren grabbed a rope and launched himself across, barely making it.

I grabbed a rope and flew.

Landed lightly. Kept running.

Soren was panting now. Already?

The mud pits slowed him down. He trudged through while I glided, using my speed and balance to avoid sinking.

And then came the final sprint.

Soren pushed himself forward, arms pumping, feet digging into the dirt—desperate to win.

I didn't even break a sweat.

I shot past him at the last second.

And crossed the checkpoint first.

Soren collapsed to his knees, gasping for breath. The crowd cheered.

I turned to him, smiling. “Looks like I’ll be leading after all.”

Soren scowled but nodded. The challenge was over. He would listen now.

I turned to the rest of my team, my voice sharp. “We move together. No one gets left behind. Understood?”

This time, they all nodded.

The real trial had just begun.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The real trial had begun.

The checkpoint was behind us, but the hardest part of the Leadership Challenge was still ahead.

Mud-covered trenches, rolling logs over deep pits, a balance beam dangling over open water, and the worst part? A timed climb up a collapsing rope bridge.

I turned to my team. They were still catching their breath from the sprint, but there was something different now.

Soren wasn't arguing anymore.

The Blackwood warriors had stopped looking at me like I was an outsider.

I had their attention. Now, I had to keep it.

I squared my shoulders. "Listen up. We're not here to just finish this course—we're here to win. And the only way we do that is together. No one moves ahead alone, no one gets left behind. Got it?"

They nodded. Good.

I glanced at the other teams.

Two groups had already hit the mud trenches, struggling to crawl under the barbed wire while avoiding the swinging clubs that hung above them. A few warriors had already taken hits to the face.

Jack, watching from the crowd, cupped his hands and called out, “Cassie, if you get knocked out, can I have your room?”

I shot him a glare. “Not happening.”

Elias laughed from the sidelines, arms crossed. “Try not to get too dirty, Luna.”

I ignored him and turned back to my team. “We go in fast and low. Keep your heads down. Move together.”

And then I dove forward.

The second I hit the mud, the stench hit me—wet earth, sweat, and something that definitely wasn’t just dirt.

Soren grunted beside me, crawling fast. “This is disgusting.”

I smirked. “You giving up?”

He scowled. “Not a chance.”

Good.

A wooden club swung down, nearly taking out one of my packmates. I grabbed their arm, pulling them back just in time.

“Eyes up! Watch the swings!” I called.

We weaved through, bodies low to the ground, moving like a single unit.

Behind us, another team was struggling. One of their warriors got hit in the chest and was dragged back to the start.

I turned to my team. “Move faster.”

We pushed through, making it out in under a minute.

Two teams were still behind us. Only one was ahead.

A thin wooden beam stretched over a ten-foot drop into ice-cold water. It swayed slightly, unstable.

One misstep, and you were done.

I turned to my team. “One at a time. No rushing. If you fall, grab the side ropes and pull yourself back up.”

One by one, we moved across.

Two made it.

Soren was next. Halfway across—

CRACK.

The beam shifted violently.

Soren lost his balance.

I lunged, grabbing his arm before he could fall. “I got you!”

He gritted his teeth, gripping my wrist. “Don’t—”

“Shut up and hold on,” I snapped.

Using every ounce of strength, I hauled him back onto the beam.

Soren stared at me, breathing hard. Then, after a beat—

He nodded. “Thanks.”

That was the moment he truly accepted me as his leader.

We finished crossing together.

Only one challenge left.

A massive rope bridge, frayed and unstable, stretched toward the finish line.

Every thirty seconds, the ropes would loosen—making the climb harder. If we didn’t move fast enough, we’d fall.

The team ahead of us?

They were already struggling.

One of their warriors slipped, grabbing onto the net just in time. But it slowed them down.

I turned to my team. “We don’t stop. No hesitation. If someone falls—help them. But

no matter what, we finish this.”

They nodded.

We climbed.

Hands gripped rope. Feet found footing. Every movement mattered.

Halfway up, the ropes shifted.

One of my warriors lost her balance—

I reached down, gripping her wrist. “I’ve got you!”

She held on, breathing hard.

Soren climbed down to help me. Together, we pulled her back up.

Below us, another team wasn’t so lucky—two warriors tumbled off, disqualified.

But we?

We kept moving.

The finish line was right there.

I pushed myself harder, ignoring the burning in my arms, the ache in my muscles.

And then—

I reached the top.

I turned, grabbing Soren's hand.

Then the others.

One by one, we all made it.

Together.

The announcer's voice boomed over the arena.

“Team Luna completes the course!”

The crowd roared.

I exhaled, heart pounding.

We won.

I turned to my team, breathless but grinning. “Nice work.”

Soren, still catching his breath, smirked. “You too... Luna.”

That was it.

That was the moment I knew—I had earned their respect.

I turned toward the crowd, locking eyes with Alec.

His silver gaze was burning.

With absolute pride.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

Winning the first trial should have felt like a victory.

But as I stood at the edge of the training grounds, staring at the dense forest ahead, I knew the real challenge was just beginning.

The Danger Hunt.

"The second trial," the announcer's voice boomed across the arena, "is a test of a Luna's ability to protect her pack."

The crowd murmured with anticipation. This wasn't just about skill or leadership anymore. This was about instinct.

I clenched my fists. I won't fail this.

"The rules are simple," the announcer continued. "Each participant will enter the forest, where a group of unarmed 'civilians'—played by younger warriors—have been scattered. The goal? Find them. Protect them. And bring them back safely."

I scanned the competitors beside me.

Some were seasoned warriors, standing tall and confident. Others, like Elias, looked bored.

I smirked. He wasn't taking this seriously. Big mistake.

But then, the announcer's voice dropped lower. "One last thing—"

The crowd hushed.

"This trial comes with a twist. Some of the threats inside the forest are not staged."

Silence.

Alec tensed beside the announcer. That was not part of the original plan.

I frowned. "What does that mean?"

The announcer hesitated. "Our scouts have reported rogue activity near the borders. While we have guards stationed, it is possible that not all of the 'threats' inside the forest will be actors."

My stomach dropped.

This wasn't just a trial anymore.

It was real.

Alec's gaze snapped to me. Don't go.

"Luna Cassandra," the announcer called. "Are you ready to begin?"

I exhaled slowly, the weight of my mark burned against my skin, a reminder of what I was fighting for.

I turned toward the trees.

“Let’s begin.”

The forest was silent.

I moved quickly, my senses sharp. The ‘civilians’ were hiding somewhere—and so were the threats.

A twig snapped behind me.

I whirled, claws half-shifting—

Just a warrior in disguise, playing the role of a rogue.

I relaxed. Not yet.

Ten minutes passed.

I found the first ‘civilian’—a younger warrior named Leah, crouched beneath the roots of an old oak tree.

“Stay close,” I murmured, leading her toward the clearing.

Another five minutes—found two more.

So far, so good.

But then—

The scent changed.

The air turned sharp, thick with something feral.

Not staged.

Real.

My pulse quickened. I turned to my group. “Run. Get to the clearing. Now.”

They hesitated.

“GO!” I ordered.

They ran.

I turned, claws extending, as the real threat emerged.

I saw them before they attacked—three figures, their movements too calculated, too efficient for actors.

Rogues.

Shit.

They didn’t hesitate. They lunged.

I dodged the first, spinning low, kicking his legs out from under him.

The second swiped at my throat—I ducked, slashing upward. My claws tore through his shoulder, sending him staggering back.

The third?

He was fast.

Too fast.

I moved to block, but—pain.

His claws raked across my side, sharp and brutal.

I bit back a curse. Not now.

A blur of movement—another attack.

I grabbed his wrist, twisted—snapped it.

He howled, stumbling back.

The first rogue was back on his feet now, eyes blazing.

I wasn't going to let this drag out.

Within seconds, the rogues were on the ground, unconscious or too broken to fight.

Blood dripped from my claws. My side burned where the rogue had landed his hit, but I stayed on my feet. I had fought worse.

The rogues lay motionless on the forest floor—some unconscious, others groaning in pain.

The younger warriors were safe. I had done my job.

But I wasn't alone.

I felt his gaze before I even turned.

Elias.

Standing at the edge of the clearing, arms crossed, leaning casually against a tree like he had all the time in the world.

He hadn't helped.

He hadn't interfered.

He had just... watched.

A slow, mocking clap broke the silence.

"Impressive," Elias drawled, pushing off the tree and strolling forward. "Didn't think you had it in you."

I tensed, my claws still extended. My body was ready to fight again if I had to.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I demanded.

Elias smirked. "Same as you, sweetheart. The trial."

I narrowed my eyes. "Then why didn't you help?"

He tilted his head. "You seemed to have it under control."

Liar.

I knew what this was.

He had been testing me. Watching. Waiting to see if I would fail.

Too bad for him—I didn't fail.

I took a slow step forward. "Next time, if you see a rogue attacking your Luna, you do more than just stand there."

Elias chuckled. "Oh, I don't take orders from you, sweetheart." His green eyes gleamed with amusement. "And besides... you did fine without me."

I clenched my jaw. I hated him.

Every instinct in me screamed to put him in his place, to make him kneel and acknowledge who I was.

But I didn't.

Because another presence had just entered the clearing.

A dangerous one.

Alec.

I had felt it.

The pain.

Cassandra's wound wasn't deep, but the mark that connected us had burned the second she was hit.

The moment I sensed it, I moved.

Now, standing at the edge of the clearing, I took in the scene.

Blood.

Rogues—real ones, unconscious on the ground.

Cassandra standing in the center, wounded but still standing.

And Elias.

A slow, burning rage settled in my chest.

I took a step forward, my power rolling through the clearing like a storm.

Elias barely reacted. He didn't flinch, didn't back down. He just smirked, like this was all some kind of joke.

I didn't like him.

I didn't trust him.

And if he had let Cassandra fight alone when he could have helped, then he had just made the biggest mistake of his life.

Cassandra turned to me, eyes sharp, but relieved.

A silent message passed between us.

I'm fine.

I exhaled slowly, nodding.

Then I turned my attention back to Elias.

“You were here the whole time?” My voice was calm. Too calm.

Elias shrugged. “She didn’t need me.”

I clenched my jaw.

One second.

That’s all it would take.

One second and I could have him on the ground, teeth bared, reminding him exactly who the hell he was dealing with.

But Cassandra placed a hand on my chest.

A silent message.

Not now.

I forced myself to breathe.

Instead, I turned to the younger warriors who had been hiding. “Get back to the clearing. Now.”

They nodded, hurrying off.

Elias chuckled, shaking his head. “Relax, Your Highness. She won.”

I took a slow step forward. “Let’s get one thing straight, Elias.”

The amusement in his eyes flickered—just for a second.

I lowered my voice, sharp as a blade.

“The next time you stand by and watch instead of protecting what’s mine, you won’t like what happens next.”

For the first time, Elias’s smirk vanished.

He met my gaze, tension thick between us, before finally nodding once.

Then, without another word, he turned and disappeared into the forest.

Good.

Because if he had stayed a second longer, I wouldn’t have let him walk away.

I exhaled sharply, finally turning back to Cassandra.

Her wound wasn’t bad, but seeing her blood—even just a little—sent a deep, primal fury through me.

I hated it.

“You’re hurt,” I murmured.

She scoffed. “It’s nothing.”

I didn’t care.

Gently, I took her arm, tilting her so I could see the injury better. My fingers brushed against her skin, and she shivered.

I smirked. “Something wrong?”

She glared. “I’m fine.”

I leaned in, voice low. “I know. But that doesn’t mean I won’t make sure of it.”

She swallowed.

The bond between us hummed, thick with heat and unspoken promises.

But before either of us could say another word, the announcer’s voice rang out.

“Luna Cassandra has completed the second trial!”

The crowd in the distance cheered.

I smiled.

She had won. Again.

And something told me that this was just the beginning.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

I rolled my shoulders, letting the soreness settle into my muscles. The last trial had been brutal, but I wasn't done yet.

Because now?

Now it was time to fight.

I stepped into the training grounds, where a massive circular ring had been drawn into the dirt. The crowd was louder than before, warriors shouting bets, waiting to see who would fall first.

The announcer's voice boomed across the field.

“For the third trial, each competitor will face an opponent chosen at random. The challenge is simple—win the fight.”

I barely heard the rest.

Because I already knew who I'd be fighting.

I felt him before I saw him.

Elias.

He stepped into the ring, stretching his arms, completely relaxed.

He smirked. “I was hoping it'd be you.”

I clenched my fists. Good.

Because I had been waiting for this too.

The announcer raised his hand.

“Begin!”

Elias moved first.

Fast.

He swung for my ribs, but I dodged, twisting out of reach. He barely missed me before shifting into a second attack, a quick knee aimed for my stomach.

I blocked, sliding backward to gain distance.

He smirked. “You’re fast.”

I smirked back. “You’re predictable.”

His eyes flashed.

Good. Let him get mad.

I circled him, light on my feet, waiting for my opening.

He lunged again—but this time, I was ready.

I twisted around his attack, hooked my leg behind his, and swept his feet out from under him.

He hit the ground, hard.

The crowd erupted.

Elias blinked up at me, momentarily stunned.

I smirked. “You good down there?”

His jaw tightened.

Then he kicked off the ground and launched himself forward.

This time, Elias didn’t hold back.

He came at me in a blur of movement, throwing punches, kicks, anything to break my guard.

I blocked. Deflected. Dodged.

His foot came up—aiming for my head.

I ducked, spinning low, and landed a sharp kick to his ribs.

He stumbled.

Not much, but enough.

He growled. “You think you can actually win?”

I smiled. “I don’t think. I know.”

He lunged again, but I was already moving.

I shifted my weight—redirected his own force against him—

And threw him to the ground.

Hard.

The breath whooshed out of him.

I dropped onto him in a blink, pinning him.

My arm pressed against his throat, just enough to keep him down.

“Yield,” I ordered.

Elias gritted his teeth.

The crowd was chanting my name now.

I leaned in slightly. “You lost. Say it.”

His green eyes burned.

Then—

He exhaled sharply.

“...Fine.” His voice was low. Frustrated. “I yield.”

The announcer’s voice boomed over the field.

“Luna Cassandra wins the match!”

I pushed off Elias, standing tall as the crowd roared.

Jack cheered the loudest. “That’s our Luna! Elias, buddy, you okay? That fall looked painful.”

Elias glared at him before pushing himself up, dusting off his shirt.

Then, to my surprise—he laughed.

I narrowed my eyes. “What’s so funny?”

He shook his head, running a hand through his hair. “Nothing. Just didn’t think you’d actually win.”

Jack snorted. “Clearly, you don’t think much at all.”

Elias ignored him and looked back at me. “Guess I was wrong about you.”

I crossed my arms. “You’re wrong about a lot of things.”

His smirk returned. “We’ll see.”

Then he walked off, not looking back.

Jack muttered beside me. “I don’t trust him.”

I sighed. “Neither do I.”

Because I knew Elias wasn’t done with me yet.

And something told me the next time we fought... it wouldn't be for sport.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The last challenge.

I stood at the edge of the training grounds, my muscles sore, my heart still pounding from the previous fights.

But this?

This was the final test.

The announcer's voice boomed across the arena.

"For the final trial, the competitors will enter the Labyrinth."

A murmur spread through the crowd.

I stiffened. Labyrinth?

"The objective is simple," the announcer continued. "Find your way out. But beware—there will be obstacles."

Obstacles.

That was code for this is a trap, and you're all screwed.

I exhaled sharply, rolling my shoulders. Alright, fine. Let's play.

Alec stood nearby, arms crossed, watching me like a hawk. His silver eyes burned with pride and something darker.

I smirked at him. “Worried?”

His lips curled. “Not for you.”

I laughed. Cocky bastard.

Across the field, Elias stretched his arms, looking entirely too relaxed. “What’s the matter, Luna? You tired yet?”

I grinned. “Why? You planning to keep up this time?”

His smirk twitched. “Guess we’ll find out.”

The announcer raised his hand. “Begin!”

The gates of the Labyrinth swung open.

And we ran inside.

The second I entered, the walls shifted.

Stone columns moved, paths closed, and suddenly, I was alone.

I exhaled, adjusting my stance. Alright. Game on.

The first part was navigation.

Easy enough.

Except...

I wasn't alone.

A low growl echoed behind me.

I turned just in time to see the first "obstacle."

A damn hellhound.

Of course.

The beast lunged, and I dodged, rolling across the stone floor. It snapped its teeth inches from my arm.

Alright. No time for thinking.

I moved.

I flipped onto the beast's back, wrapped my arm around its throat, and twisted.

A sharp crack.

The hellhound collapsed.

One down.

No idea how many to go.

I ran deeper into the maze, dodging traps, climbing walls, cutting down anything that moved.

Then—a voice.

“Cassandra?”

I froze.

Damon.

I turned sharply, my chest tightening. Why was he here?

Then I saw him.

Standing at the end of the hallway. Looking hurt. Bloody. Weak.

I swallowed. “Damon?”

His eyes flickered. “Cass, I need you. Please.”

I took a step forward.

And then I stopped.

Because something was wrong.

Damon never called me Cass.

I narrowed my eyes. “Nice try.”

His lips twitched.

Then, before my eyes, he shifted.

Damon's figure morphed, twisting into something else.

An illusion.

I clenched my fists.

Alright. Mind tricks, then.

The creature lunged, shifting into Alec.

I didn't even blink.

I punched it in the face.

It collapsed, shrieking before vanishing into dust.

I sighed. "Nice try, idiot."

Then I kept moving.

I was close.

I could see the final exit, the light streaming in.

I picked up my pace—

And slammed into Elias.

I cursed, steadying myself. "Damn it, Elias!"

He smirked. "You again."

I sighed. “Are we really doing this?”

Elias shrugged. “Only one person can win, Luna.”

I exhaled. Fine.

I lunged—

And so did he.

We collided in a blur of claws and speed, our strikes faster, harder than before.

But Elias was wounded from our last fight.

And I?

I was not losing.

I caught his arm, twisted—flipped him onto his back.

Elias gasped, winded.

I pressed my knee to his chest. “Yield.”

He groaned. “You really like pinning me, don’t you?”

I smirked. “I enjoy winning.”

The announcer’s voice boomed.

“Luna Cassandra is the first to exit! The challenge is complete!”

The crowd exploded.

I exhaled, rolling off Elias. Finally.

I turned—just in time to see Alec waiting for me outside the Labyrinth.

His eyes were burning.

I grinned at him.

Then, without thinking, I ran straight into his arms.

His grip tightened, his lips brushing against my ear.

“That’s my girl.”

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

I stood in the center of the arena, my chest rising and falling as the announcer's voice boomed across the field.

"Luna Cassandra has won the final trial!"

The crowd erupted.

Jack was the loudest. "That's our girl! Someone paint this moment—I want it framed!"

I huffed out a breath, turning just in time to see Elias staggering to his feet.

He wiped blood from his lip, eyeing me carefully.

Then, to my surprise, he smirked. "Well, damn."

I raised a brow. "No snarky remark?"

Elias rolled his shoulders, grimacing slightly. "Would it kill you to let me have a moment?"

Jack, from the sidelines: "Yes."

I snorted.

But then, Elias's smirk faded. His green eyes flickered—just for a second—with something serious.

Then he nodded.

Just once.

And walked off.

I blinked.

That... wasn't what I expected.

I didn't have time to dwell on it because the crowd was still going insane.

The announcer lifted his hand again. "With that, the official games have come to an end!"

The cheering grew louder.

Then I felt him.

Alec.

Before I could even turn, he was already behind me.

I barely had a second to react before his arms wrapped around my waist—strong, warm, possessive.

His breath brushed my ear. "You looked good out there, sweetheart."

I smirked. “I always do.”

His grip tightened. “Mmm.”

Then he leaned down, lips ghosting over my throat. “But don’t think I didn’t notice you tackling Elias again.”

I froze.

Oh.

Alec felt that.

The crowd was too loud to hear our conversation, but I could feel the heat rolling off him.

He was jealous.

I grinned. “Alec.”

“Mmm?”

I turned, facing him fully. “Are you pouting?”

He narrowed his eyes. “I don’t pout.”

I reached up, tracing my fingers along his jaw. “No?”

He caught my wrist, holding me firmly. “Sweetheart,” he murmured, voice low and dangerous, “if I were pouting, you’d know.”

A shiver ran down my spine.

I opened my mouth to respond—

“Luna Cassandra! King Alexander!”

I turned sharply as the announcer called us forward.

The official crowning moment.

Alec’s grip on my waist didn’t loosen. If anything, he held me closer.

Then, slowly, he smirked.

“Enjoy your moment, love,” he murmured. “Because when this is over?”

His lips brushed my ear.

“You’re mine.”

Oh, hell.

I stood next to Alec, the entire pack watching as the final ceremony took place.

A crown—lighter than Alec’s but no less significant—was placed atop my head.

The official mark of my title.

“Your Luna!” the announcer declared.

The crowd roared.

And Alec?

Alec just watched me, silver eyes burning.

I had won.

The games were over.

But something told me...

The real battle was just beginning.

The sun had barely started to set when the feast began.

After days of trials, fighting, pain, and Alec's endless smugness, the pack had decided that the only appropriate response to the end of the games was to throw a massive celebration.

Bonfires lined the courtyard, tables were piled high with food, and warriors were already laughing, drinking, and telling exaggerated stories of their own victories.

I sat at the head table, next to Alec, still getting used to the weight of my new crown.

Jack plopped into the seat across from me, grinning. "So, how does it feel, Your Majesty?"

I groaned. "Don't start."

Jack smirked. "Oh, no, no. This is what you signed up for, Cass. You're officially

royalty now, and I, for one, will be extremely annoying about it.”

Alec sighed beside me. “That’s nothing new.”

Jack raised a glass. “To our Luna!”

The crowd cheered, raising their drinks in response.

I rolled my eyes but couldn’t stop the smile tugging at my lips.

Then Sophie appeared, grabbing my arm. “Dance with me.”

I blinked. “What?”

She huffed. “I sat through every second of these games watching sweaty men try to kill each other. Now I want to dance, eat, and ignore Damon for a few hours.”

Damon, standing behind her, raised a brow. “I can hear you.”

Sophie smirked. “Good.”

Jack howled. “Damon, you are so whipped.”

Sophie grabbed my hand, yanking me out of my chair. “Come on, Cass. Before your overprotective husband decides to keep you all to himself.”

I smirked. “He’s not my husband.”

Sophie winked. “Yet.”

Alec sipped his drink, watching me over the rim of his glass. His silver eyes held

something dark, something knowing.

I swallowed.

Because Sophie wasn't wrong.

Sophie dragged me into the center of the courtyard, where warriors had started to dance. The music was fast, loud, chaotic.

Exactly how I liked it.

We spun, laughed, and nearly knocked Jack over when he tried to join us.

I was mid-spin when suddenly—

A strong, familiar grip caught my waist.

I gasped, twisting right into Alec's arms.

He grinned down at me. "Having fun?"

I narrowed my eyes. "You planned this."

He hummed. "Maybe."

I opened my mouth to respond—

But he spun me.

Hard.

The world blurred before I landed right back against his chest.

I gasped, my fingers gripping his arms for balance.

Alec smirked. “Careful, sweetheart.”

I scowled. “You’re impossible.”

He leaned in, lips brushing my ear. “And yet, here you are.”

My pulse skipped.

Damn him.

He held me close, leading us across the courtyard effortlessly. I had seen Alec fight, but I had never seen him dance.

It was unfair.

I tilted my head. “Where did you learn this?”

His smirk widened. “Surprised?”

I scoffed. “A little.”

His fingers brushed my waist. “What else surprises you about me?”

I swallowed.

Because a lot of things did.

The way he was gentle when he wanted to be.

The way he watched me like I was the only thing that mattered.

The way he was completely and utterly obsessed with me, and didn't even try to hide it.

I licked my lips. "I haven't decided yet."

Alec's silver eyes darkened. "Let me know when you do."

I shivered.

He pulled me closer, his breath warm against my skin.

The music slowed.

I could feel the weight of the entire pack watching us.

Because this?

This wasn't just a dance.

It was a claim.

Alec had waited. He had let me fight my own battles, let me win. But now?

He was making it clear that I was his.

And the worst part?

I didn't want to fight it.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

The moment Amara and Edgar stepped into the courtyard, the energy shifted.

Not with tension—but with presence.

They were royalty, and every single warrior in the pack felt it.

But I?

I only saw the way their eyes softened when they looked at me.

Amara, had sharp, intelligent eyes that missed nothing. But the moment her gaze met mine, her expression melted into something warm.

And as Amara gently took my hands, her next words nearly undid me.

“Welcome home, Cassandra.”

The grand ceremonial hall was filled with leaders from every allied pack. They had gathered for one reason only.

To recognize me as their Luna.

No more trials.

No more proving myself.

This was it.

I stood at the center of the hall, wearing an elegant black gown trimmed with silver. My crown—lighter than Alec’s but no less significant—rested atop my head.

Alec stood beside me, steadfast and unwavering.

Amara and Edgar sat at the royal table, watching with pride.

Then, the royal advisor stepped forward, lifting a golden blade.

I knelt.

His voice echoed through the chamber. “Cassandra Primrose, do you swear to rule with strength, wisdom, and unwavering loyalty?”

I met Alec’s gaze. Steady. Sure.

Then I turned back.

And said the words that would change everything.

“I swear it.”

The blade touched each of my shoulders.

Then the advisor lifted his hands.

“Rise, Luna Cassandra.”

The hall erupted.

Alec pulled me into his arms, his voice low against my skin.

“You are breathtaking.”

I exhaled. “I thought you didn’t like sharing the throne.”

His fingers traced my waist. “I don’t.”

Then he smirked.

“But I’ll make an exception for you.”

The night was a blur of music, laughter, and teasing.

I danced with Sophie and Jack, nearly tripping over my dress. Damon was grumbling about the whole thing, while Alec—predictably—spent the entire night watching me like a hawk.

Finally, after hours of celebration, Alec leaned down, voice low and dark.

“Come with me.”

I blinked. “Why?”

He didn’t answer.

Just took my hand—and led me away.

The hallways blurred as Alec guided me through the palace.

I exhaled. “Where are we going?”

He glanced at me, silver eyes gleaming. “You’ll see.”

Finally, we stopped in front of a massive set of doors.

Alec turned to me, studying my expression.

Then—without another word—he pushed them open.

My breath caught.

Because inside?

Was a room full of weapons.

Swords. Daggers. Crossbows.

Racks of silver and steel, gleaming in the candlelight.

It was beautiful.

I turned to Alec, stunned. “This...”

His voice was low. Certain.

“This is yours.”

I blinked. “What?”

He smirked. “You didn’t think I was going to make you sit in a throne room all day, did you?”

I turned, running my fingers over the hilts of perfectly crafted blades.

Everything in this room was built for me.

Not a symbolic gift.

Not a gesture.

This was my future.

Alec leaned against the doorframe, watching me. “Say something.”

I exhaled shakily. “This is the best thing anyone has ever given me.”

His silver eyes softened.

Then, so quietly I almost missed it—

"You deserve it."

I swallowed.

Because Alec might have been cocky, arrogant, and impossible—

But this?

This was his heart.

And it was mine.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

I barely slept.

Not because of stress. Not because of nerves.

But because I couldn't stop thinking about what Alec had done.

The weapon room.

The way he had watched me, waiting for my reaction.

The way he had given me something that was truly mine.

And—most dangerous of all—the way my heart had betrayed me.

I had known, for a while now, that Alec was dangerous.

Not just because he was a king. Not just because he was stronger, faster, and utterly impossible.

But because he was patient.

Because every day, he broke down my walls.

Every day, he made it harder to fight the truth.

Every day, he made it clear that he wasn't going anywhere.

And I?

I was starting to want him to stay.

I sighed, sitting up in bed. The sun was barely rising, the castle halls quiet.

I needed air.

I slipped out of my chambers, padding through the halls. The scent of waxed floors and old stone filled my lungs as I moved toward the courtyard.

But then—

I stopped.

Because at the far end of the hall, standing in front of a massive portrait of Alexander's family—

Was someone I had never seen before.

A man.

Tall, broad-shouldered, dressed in black.

His back was turned, but something about him made my skin prickle.

A quiet wrongness.

Like he didn't belong here.

Slowly, I stepped forward.

“Who are you?”

The man stilled.

Then—he turned.

And I sucked in a breath.

Because his face?

I had seen it before.

In the portrait.

Alec’s family portrait.

But there were only three people in that painting.

Alexander.

Amara.

Edgar.

This man?

He wasn’t supposed to exist.

And yet—here he was.

Smiling.

Like he had been waiting for me.

The man smiled.

Not the kind of smile that put you at ease.

Not the kind that welcomed you.

No.

This was the kind of smile that sent a cold shiver down your spine.

I clenched my fists. Stay calm.

I was Luna now. A Queen.

I wouldn't be intimidated by a ghost from a portrait.

Slowly, he tilted his head. "I was wondering when we'd finally meet."

His voice was smooth. Deep. Like he had all the time in the world.

I swallowed. "Who are you?"

His smirk widened. "You don't know?"

I narrowed my eyes. "I know you shouldn't be here."

He hummed, turning back toward the massive painting of Alec's family. His gaze

lingered on it, tracing the details with something almost... amused.

Then—he finally spoke.

“My name,” he said, “is Adrian.”

The name meant nothing to me.

But the way he said it—like it should.

Like I was supposed to know.

Like it was a test.

I held his gaze. “And?”

Adrian chuckled. “And, sweetheart... I’m Alexander’s older brother.”

My heart stopped.

No.

That was impossible.

I forced myself to breathe. “Alec doesn’t have a brother.”

Adrian raised a brow. “That’s what he told you?”

I clenched my fists. He’s lying. He has to be.

Alec would have told me.

Wouldn't he?

Adrian sighed dramatically, turning away from the painting to face me fully. "You know, I have to admit—I was curious about you."

I didn't move. Stay sharp. Stay ready.

He took a slow step forward.

"Alexander doesn't let people in," he murmured. "Doesn't let himself get attached."

His dark eyes flickered with something mocking.

"But you? You're different."

I exhaled sharply. "And why do you care?"

Adrian's smirk returned. Sharp. Amused. Unreadable.

Then—

His voice dropped to something almost too soft.

"Because I've been watching, Cassandra."

My blood ran cold.

I knew something was wrong before I even saw her.

I had been heading towards our chambers, ready to sleep after the longest night of our lives.

But the moment I entered the hall, I felt it.

The shift.

The wrongness.

Then I saw her.

Cassandra.

Standing in front of him.

My body locked.

For a second, I couldn't move.

Couldn't breathe.

Because Adrian—my brother—was standing in my home.

Speaking to my mate.

His eyes flicked toward me. Slow. Calculated.

“Ah,” he said lightly. “There you are, little brother.”

And Cassandra?

She turned—meeting my gaze.

And in that moment, I knew.

She had questions.

Questions I wasn't sure I was ready to answer.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

I had spent years pretending Adrian didn't exist, forcing myself to erase every memory of him, convincing myself that he was nothing more than a ghost of the past, a shadow that no longer had the power to haunt me. And yet, in a cruel twist of fate, he was here, standing in my home as if he had every right to be, as if the years of silence and betrayal had never existed.

Worse, he was smiling at my mate.

The sight of it sent a visceral, gut-wrenching rage through me, sharp and uncontrollable, but I held it back, forcing my body to stay still, my breathing measured, my expression carefully blank. Not here. Not now. Not in front of Cassandra.

Adrian, ever the showman, tilted his head, a lazy smirk stretching across his lips as he regarded me like some puzzle he was eager to solve. "Come on, little brother. No welcome home?"

I clenched my jaw so tightly it ached. "You aren't welcome."

He let out a dramatic sigh, as if my response was exactly what he had expected, yet still somehow disappointed him. "Still bitter, I see."

Slowly, deliberately, I stepped forward, my movements controlled, placing myself between him and Cassandra. The weight of her gaze burned into my back, but I didn't turn. I knew what she wanted—answers. And she deserved them. But first? I had to deal with him.

"You need to leave," I said, my voice low, even, but carrying the unmistakable promise of violence.

Adrian's smirk widened as if he found my hostility amusing. "And miss all the fun? No, no, I think I'll stay awhile."

I felt Cassandra tense behind me, but before I could react, she did something unexpected—she stepped forward, moving to stand beside me instead of behind. A show of strength, of defiance, of unwavering courage.

Her chin lifted, and when she spoke, her voice was steady, unwavering. "Why are you here? After all this time? Why should we believe anything you say?"

Adrian's gaze flickered with something akin to amusement before he let out a low hum of appreciation. "Oh, I like you."

I snarled, my claws itching to extend. "Don't talk to her."

He chuckled, shaking his head. "Protective, aren't we?" Then, as if tiring of the game, his expression shifted ever so slightly, the teasing glint in his eyes dulling, the smirk fading just enough to make my stomach tighten.

"I came to warn you," he said slowly, deliberately. "Because war is coming."

The words sent a chill through me, an icy dread coiling in my chest. Cassandra inhaled sharply beside me, and I could feel the way her body stiffened, mirroring my reaction.

Adrian ran a hand over his jaw, exhaling. "And if you don't start preparing now, Alexander... you're going to lose everything."

For the first time in my life, my brother wasn't smirking, wasn't taunting, wasn't playing games. He was serious. And that? That terrified me more than anything else.

He must have seen the way I hesitated, the way I warred with myself because his expression softened just slightly. "I know you don't trust me. I don't blame you. But I'm not here to cause trouble. I made mistakes, Alec. I chose wrong. But this? This is my chance to set things right."

I didn't answer, but my silence was enough for him to press on.

"You don't have to forgive me. Hell, you don't even have to believe me. But I had to come back. I had to warn you." He took a breath, steel in his gaze. "Because I can't let them destroy what's left of our family."

My fists clenched, the war raging inside me growing louder. Every instinct screamed at me to tear him apart, to throw him out and never look back. And yet—

I let him go.

Because if, by some cruel twist of fate, he was telling the truth?

Then we needed to be ready.

The second Adrian was gone, the air in the room shifted, heavy with unspoken words and unrelenting tension.

I turned to Alec, my heart still hammering. "What the hell was that?"

His jaw tensed, silver eyes dark with frustration. "Not now, Cassandra."

I narrowed my eyes. "Yes, now."

He let out a sharp breath, running a hand through his hair, looking like he was waging a war inside himself. I could see it, the hesitation, the conflict, the ghosts that haunted his gaze.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he turned to me, his expression unreadable. "He shouldn't be here."

I crossed my arms, refusing to back down. "And yet, he is."

Silence. Heavy. Unyielding.

I stepped closer, searching his face. "You told me you didn't have a brother."

His fists clenched at his sides. "Because he's not my brother."

I froze. "What?"

Alec exhaled, his voice quieter this time. "Not anymore."

Something about the weight of those words sent a chill down my spine.

I swallowed, my voice softer now. "Then tell me, Alec. Who is he?"

For a moment, I thought he wouldn't answer. Then, his gaze flickered, his jaw tightening before he finally spoke.

"Adrian was supposed to be king."

My breath caught in my throat.

Alec looked away, the memories thick in his voice. "He was the heir. The perfect son. Strong. Smart. Unstoppable. The kind of leader people would follow without question."

A pause. A tightening of his fists.

"And then, one day... he betrayed us."

I felt my stomach twist. "What did he do?"

Alec's silver eyes darkened, something dangerous flickering beneath the surface. "He sided with the enemy."

I stilled, the weight of those words sinking in.

Alec exhaled sharply. "My parents stripped him of his title. Banished him. I was forced to take his place. I had no choice." His voice was edged with something raw, something painful. "From that day on, Adrian ceased to exist. I made sure of it."

I hesitated, my mind spinning. "And now he's back."

Alec nodded, the muscle in his jaw ticking.

I took a slow breath. "Do you believe him? About the war?"

His gaze met mine, hard, unreadable.

Then, finally, he spoke.

"I don't trust anything he says."

"But," I pressed, my voice barely above a whisper, "if he's telling the truth?"

Alec's eyes held mine, and in them, I saw the weight of a decision that could alter everything.

Then, at last, he answered.

"Then we're all in danger."

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

The war room was silent.

For the first time since I became Luna, I sat at the royal table, surrounded by Alec's council—alphas, warriors, and strategists—all waiting for him to speak.

Alec sat at the head of the table, his expression cold, unreadable.

Adrian's warning still lingered in the air.

Finally, Edgar leaned forward. "Tell us everything."

Alec exhaled sharply. "Adrian claims a war is coming."

Murmurs spread around the table. Some doubtful. Others concerned.

Edgar's expression darkened. "And you believe him?"

Alec's jaw clenched. "I don't know."

Silence.

Then—Damon spoke.

"What if he's right?"

I turned toward my brother, heart tightening.

The former king studied Damon. “If war was coming, we would have heard something by now.”

“Would we?” Damon challenged. “Or are we ignoring it because of who the message came from?”

Alec’s fingers tapped against the table. “We prepare anyway.”

Murmurs of agreement.

Sophie, sitting beside Damon, sighed. “So what’s the plan?”

Alec exhaled. “We increase border patrols. Train warriors. Get every pack ready for a fight.”

“And Adrian?” I asked quietly.

Alec’s silver eyes hardened.

“He’s not our problem.”

I wasn’t so sure.

Because something told me Adrian wasn’t done.

Not yet.

The first attack came faster than expected.

I was in the training yard, sparring with Jack when—

BOOM.

The entire castle shook.

Shouts erupted from the guards on the walls.

I whipped around. “What was that?”

Jack’s face dropped. “That sounded like—”

Another explosion.

I grabbed my weapons instantly, sprinting toward the gates. The scent of fire, ash, and blood filled the air.

The second I reached the outer wall, I froze.

Because outside the gates?

Rogues.

Dozens. Maybe more.

And at the front—

Not leading them.

Fighting them.

Adrian.

My blood ran cold, but for a different reason now.

Alec appeared at my side, his silver eyes flashing with confusion, then hesitation.

Adrian stood in the chaos, his clothes torn, his face bruised, battling the rogues like his life depended on it. Because it did.

One rogue lunged at him, claws outstretched, but Adrian moved faster, dodging and striking with lethal precision. Then, as if sensing our presence, he turned—eyes locking with Alec's.

Adrian lifted his hands, breathless, voice steady but edged with urgency. "I told you they were coming."

Alec's snarl softened into something more complicated—conflicted. "Why should I believe you?"

Adrian wiped blood from his mouth, stepping closer. "Because I didn't bring them. I've been tracking them. I tried to stop them before they reached you."

Alec hesitated, his gaze flickering to me, then back to his brother. "You expect me to just trust you?"

Adrian's lips quirked, but there was no humor in it. "No. But I expect you to fight beside me. Unless you'd rather die proving a point."

Alec's jaw tightened, but the decision was made in an instant.

He turned to the warriors behind him. "Defend the pack."

Then, looking at Adrian—

“Don’t make me regret this.”

Adrian’s smirk returned, faint but genuine. “I wouldn’t dream of it.”

And just like that—the battle began.

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

The first wave hit fast.

Rogues poured through the broken outer gates, claws flashing, fangs bared. The scent of smoke and blood thickened the air.

I didn't hesitate.

I dove into the fight.

My daggers found their mark, slicing through an enemy's side before I spun, kicking another rogue square in the chest.

Behind me, Jack shouted, "Cass! Left!"

I twisted just in time to block a strike, my blade clashing against a rogue's claws.

Across the battlefield, I saw Alec.

He was a storm of fury, cutting down enemies without breaking stride, his silver eyes locked on one target.

Adrian.

He was fighting too—ripping through rogues with a lethal grace, standing alongside Alec's warriors. His strikes were calculated, efficient. And yet, suspicion lingered in the air.

Was he truly helping us?

Or just playing a part?

I cut down another rogue and tried to move toward him—but suddenly, someone slammed into me.

I hit the ground hard, the impact knocking the air from my lungs.

Before I could move, a boot pressed against my chest.

I looked up—and froze.

Because it wasn't a rogue standing over me.

It was one of our own.

A guard.

One of Alec's men.

And his eyes?

They were filled with betrayal.

I felt it.

The moment Cassandra hit the ground, my instincts roared.

I whirled around, searching—and then I saw it.

One of my own men standing over her, blade raised.

My vision went red.

I moved without thinking.

One second, I was across the battlefield.

The next?

I was tearing him away from her, my claws ripping through his side.

He barely had time to gasp before I threw him to the ground.

I turned to Cassandra. “Are you hurt?”

She exhaled, shaking her head. “I’m fine.”

I looked back at the traitor, my chest tight with fury. “Who sent you?”

The guard smirked.

And then—before I could stop him—

He bit down on something.

Poison.

His body went limp.

My jaw clenched.

The betrayal wasn't just coming from outside the walls.

It was inside, too.

And someone had just tried to kill my mate.

The battlefield was still smoking when I finally caught up to Alec.

He stood near the edge of the courtyard, his back to me, his hands clenched into fists.

I knew that stance.

It meant he was furious.

I exhaled, stepping closer. "Alec."

He didn't turn.

I tried again. "We need to talk."

His voice was low. Dangerous. "Not now."

I frowned. "Yes, now."

Finally, he turned. His silver eyes were stormy, wild.

"You almost died."

I stiffened.

Alec took a step toward me, his presence thick with barely contained rage.

“One of our own turned against us,” he growled. “And I don’t know who else I can trust.”

I met his gaze. “You can trust me.”

Silence.

For a moment, neither of us spoke.

Then—his mask cracked.

Just slightly.

Alec exhaled, running a hand through his hair. “I need to figure out who betrayed us.”

I swallowed. “And Adrian?”

His jaw ticked. “He fought beside us. He saved my men.”

I hesitated. “Then maybe he isn’t the enemy.”

Alec’s expression was unreadable. “Maybe.”

But I wasn’t sure if he truly believed that.

If there were traitors among us, I had to find them.

We set the trap that night.

Cassie and I spread rumors—made it seem like we were moving supplies to the eastern border. If there were more spies inside our ranks, they'd take the bait.

Now?

We waited.

Cassie stood beside me, hidden in the shadows of the training grounds. Her fingers were wrapped around the hilt of a dagger, her body tense.

She was ready.

I watched her carefully.

She had been too close to death today. And something deep, something feral, hated that I couldn't stop it.

Hated that I couldn't keep her safe.

Cassie glanced at me, raising a brow. "You okay?"

I exhaled. "No."

She smirked. "Good. Means you're focused."

I shook my head. "You're insane."

She leaned in, her voice low. “And yet, you’re still in love with me.”

My breath hitched.

But before she could finish, movement caught my eye.

The trap had been sprung.

A shadow moved along the rooftops—too fast, too careful.

A spy.

Cassie saw them too. Her expression hardened.

I met her gaze.

She nodded.

Then we moved.

Once all chapters are published, I'm gonna go back and make some MAJOR changes to the starting chapters.

Starting with Cassie's punishment, and I'll probably dial back on the insta love trope??

Anyways, so we trusting Adrian or not?

Thoughts?

Happy reading! ??

With love,

Izzy.

We moved fast.

Alec veered left, I darted right—closing in on the shadow that didn't belong. The traitor barely had time to react before Alec was on him, slamming him against the stone wall with enough force to make the air shudder.

Alec's grip was brutal, his silver eyes glowing with fury. "Who sent you?"

The spy—a pack warrior, one of our own—struggled against his hold, but Alec didn't budge. The raw power radiating off him was enough to make even the most hardened warrior cower.

I stepped forward, flipping my dagger in my hand, my voice sharp as steel. "If you lie, I'll know."

The spy's breathing hitched. His gaze flickered—not with fear, but hesitation.

And that's when I knew.

He was more afraid of someone else than he was of us.

Alec must have realized it too. His grip tightened like a vice. "Who are you working for?"

The spy exhaled shakily, his muscles going rigid. "I can't."

Alec's snarl was deadly. "You can't, or you won't?"

The spy's jaw clenched. Then, so quietly I almost missed it—

“They’re already inside.”

A sharp chill ran down my spine.

Inside?

I turned to Alec. His expression was unreadable, but I could feel his rage boiling beneath the surface, barely restrained.

The spy struggled again, voice low, desperate. “You don’t understand. You think this is about rogues?” His gaze snapped to me. “It’s bigger than that.”

My chest tightened. “Then tell us.”

His lips parted—

But before he could speak—

A silver blade shot through the air, piercing his throat.

I gasped, stepping back as warm blood splattered onto my boots.

Alec cursed, jerking backward as the spy collapsed to the ground.

Dead.

Executed before he could reveal the truth.

I whirled around, scanning the rooftops, the shadows, anywhere the attacker could be

hiding.

But whoever had thrown the blade?

They were already gone.

The castle was too quiet.

Too still.

I paced in my war room, the tension in my muscles coiling tighter with every second.

The spy was dead.

Silenced before he could talk.

And the worst part?

He was right.

This wasn't just about rogues. This was something deeper. Something inside these walls.

A traitor.

Cassie stood across from me, arms crossed, her expression thunderous. "We need to find them."

I exhaled sharply. "And we will."

She shook her head. “No, Alec. We need to do it fast.”

She was right.

The problem?

We had no idea who to trust.

And whoever was behind this?

They were already watching.

The war room was silent.

Every council member, every high-ranking warrior, every trusted ally stood in a tight circle around the long wooden table.

And yet?

One of them was a traitor.

Alec stood beside me, arms crossed, his silver eyes cold. Calculating.

The list of suspects was short.

Damon. Sophie. Jack. Edgar. Amara. Elias. The generals.

Every one of them had access to information. Every one of them was close enough to strike if they wanted to.

I clenched my fists. “We need to figure this out before they attack again.”

Alec nodded. “We start with who had access to the spy before he was killed.”

Silence.

Damon frowned. “We all did.”

Jack raised a brow. “So... we’re just gonna start pointing fingers?”

Alec’s voice was razor-sharp. “If we have to.”

Elias leaned against the wall, arms crossed. “You sure about that, Your Highness?”

Alec’s jaw ticked. “Something to say, Elias?”

Elias’s eyes flickered. “Just that if you start hunting your own people, it won’t take long for the real traitor to slip away.”

I exhaled. Damn it.

He was right.

We needed proof.

Because if we weren’t careful?

We’d start turning on each other—and that’s exactly what the traitor wanted.

Silence stretched thick between us, heavy with tension.

Then Jack dramatically exhaled. “Alright. Fine. It was me.”

The entire room turned to him.

He placed a hand over his heart, face solemn. “I was the traitor all along.”

Silence.

Then—

Jack grinned. “But in my defense, they paid really well.”

Sophie groaned. “Jack.”

Amara smacked the back of his head. “Not the time.”

Edgar just pinched the bridge of his nose, muttering something about killing him himself.

Alec didn’t even blink. “Do you want to die?”

Jack grinned wider. “Not particularly.”

“Then shut up.”

Jack raised his hands in surrender. “Just trying to lighten the mood.”

I sighed, resisting the urge to smack him myself. “Jack, you have the absolute worst timing.”

He winked. “And yet, you’d all miss me if I was gone.”

Alec exhaled sharply, turning back to the map. “Let’s focus.”

Jack leaned in, whispering to me, “I’m just saying, if I was the traitor, I’d be a damn good one.”

I rolled my eyes. “And we’d be the first to kill you.”

His grin didn’t falter. “Fair point.”

The attack came that night.

Fast. Silent. Precise.

I woke to the scent of blood.

Cassandra was still asleep beside me, her breathing steady, her body curled into mine.

Then—

BANG.

The doors to the royal wing burst open.

I was on my feet instantly, claws extending.

Cassie bolted awake, grabbing her daggers in a single fluid motion.

Jack was already in the hall, sword in hand. “We’ve got a problem.”

I didn't need to ask.

I could smell it.

Blood.

I grabbed Cassie's wrist, pulling her behind me as we moved toward the entrance—just in time to see the bodies.

Guards.

Four of them.

Dead.

Their throats slit.

Cassie stilled, her jaw tightening. "They were our men."

My vision darkened.

The traitor wasn't just inside the castle.

They were getting bold.

Jack exhaled. "What's the plan?"

I clenched my jaw, my voice dropping into something lethal. "We shut this castle down. No one leaves. No one enters."

Cassie's voice was quiet but firm. "And then?"

I turned to her.

My voice was low. Dangerous.

“Then we hunt them down.”

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Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

Cassandra's POV

No one left the castle. No one entered.

Alec had locked everything down. Every exit, every entrance, sealed tight. We were trapped in a cage of stone, and every minute felt like an eternity.

Now, we wait.

Jack, Damon, and Elias were stationed at different points of the castle, alert and on edge, watching every shadow that moved. Sophie remained near Amara and Edgar, guarding them like the protective warrior she was.

And Alec and I?

We were the bait.

The air was thick with tension, the weight of it pressing against my chest. I could feel the pulse of danger, the shadows closing in on us even though I couldn't see them. Alec and I walked through the winding, dimly lit corridors of the castle, our senses sharp, every step calculated.

Then—

A shadow moved.

Alec's posture stiffened, and his voice was low. "There."

We turned the corner just in time to see a figure slipping into a side passage. My heart pounded in my chest.

Without thinking, I ran.

I sprinted after them, Alec right behind me, the scent of blood and steel filling the air. The figure was fast—too fast.

I threw a dagger, and it missed by an inch.

"STOP!" Alec's command was a snarl, but the figure didn't stop.

Instead, they slowed just long enough for me to see it—a glint of silver, the same kind of blade that had killed the spy.

Then they were gone.

I skidded to a stop, my breath heavy, my mind racing. "Did you see—"

Alec's jaw was tight, and his silver eyes were stormy. "I saw."

I turned to face him, heart hammering. "We're close."

His gaze burned with intensity, but there was an edge of frustration. "Not close enough."

The next morning, the silence was broken by the first real clue. Not a shadow, not a whisper.

A name.

Sophie burst into the war room, her face pale, her steps hurried. "It's the council," she said, voice tight with urgency.

I stiffened. "What?"

She swallowed hard, her voice shaking as she continued. "Three council members were caught trying to flee the castle."

The room fell silent. The weight of her words hit like a blow. I could feel the cold certainty creeping into my bones.

I exhaled slowly, trying to keep my composure. "Where are they now?"

"Locked up," she replied. "Damon and Elias are handling them."

My mind raced. Three council members. This wasn't just an outside threat. This was an inside job. And if it was inside, it could be anyone.

I turned to Cassie, her expression unreadable, but I could feel it—the shift.

"This is bigger than we thought," she said softly.

I nodded, my jaw clenched. "We make them talk."

The dungeons were cold. Silent. The air was thick with the scent of damp stone and old blood. Three council members sat in chains, their faces expressionless, though their eyes betrayed the fear they tried so hard to hide.

Alec stood in front of them, his silver eyes dark with fury. I had seen him angry before. But this? This was different. This was lethal.

I stepped forward, crossing my arms, keeping my gaze fixed on the men before us. "You were caught trying to flee."

Silence. No one moved, no one spoke.

Alec's voice was ice, cutting through the tension. "Tell me why."

One of them, a man named Gregor, lifted his chin defiantly. "We were afraid."

My brow arched. "Afraid of what?"

His jaw clenched. "You know what."

Alec's patience snapped. He grabbed Gregor by the collar and slammed him against the cold stone wall. "Do not play games with me."

Gregor flinched, but the man next to him, Calden, sighed. His eyes flickered to Alec, and then—softly—he spoke.

"We were following orders."

My blood ran cold.

I forced my voice to stay steady. "Whose orders?"

Calden's eyes darted to the ground for a split second before he lifted them to Alec again, a smirk curling on his lips.

And then he spoke, the words cutting through the air like a blade.

"Elias."

My heart skipped a beat. The air seemed to freeze in the room.

I whipped my gaze toward Alec, who had gone rigid. His grip on Gregor tightened, the claws on his hands itching to extend.

"What did Elias promise you?" Alec's voice was low, dangerous.

Calden's smirk didn't falter. "A future. Power. A kingdom."

The room seemed to spin.

My pulse raced in my ears, and for a moment, I couldn't breathe. "You're lying," I hissed.

But Calden's expression never wavered.

Then, as if on cue, the sound of footsteps echoed from the dungeon's entrance. Jack, Damon, and Elias appeared in the doorway, their expressions unreadable.

I felt the sudden shift in the atmosphere—the weight of suspicion, the seeds of doubt already being planted. I couldn't think straight.

"Elias?" I looked at him, my voice barely a whisper. He didn't meet my gaze. His eyes flickered, but only for a second.

Alec, still gripping Gregor by the collar, turned slowly to face him. "Elias, what do you know about this?"

The question was like a spark, igniting everything in its path.

Elias's eyes widened in shock. "What? No—" He stepped forward, trying to reach Alec, but the tension was suffocating. "I don't know what they're talking about! I didn't—"

"Give me one reason why I should believe you," Alec cut him off, his voice cold as steel.

Jack stepped forward, his eyes narrowing. "If Elias really is behind this, we need proof. We can't act on accusations."

But the damage was already done. Doubt had been sown, and suspicion was now in the air. Elias tried to defend himself, but his words were lost in the rising chaos.

I stood frozen, my heart torn between disbelief and the fear that everything might fall apart. "What happens now?"

Alec's gaze flickered between Elias and the traitors in front of him. His voice was steady, but there was a storm behind his eyes. "We hold them. We wait. We make them confess."

I had seen this before—how chaos could spread like wildfire when trust was shattered. And right now, trust was the most fragile thing we had.

Elias stood there, his eyes wide with confusion and fear. He hadn't expected this. None of us had.

But as I watched him try to defend himself, I couldn't shake the feeling that

something was off. This was too neat, too perfect.

And this all started with the arrival of one person.

I should have known.

The quiet was a lie.

I had spent enough time on battlefields to understand that silence was never safety-it was a warning. And yet, I had let my guard down. I had allowed myself to believe, for just a moment, that the worst had passed.

But now, as I stood in the dim corridor of the castle's western wing, staring at the figure emerging from the shadows, I knew the truth.

This had all been a game. And Adrian had been playing us from the very beginning.

A slow, amused chuckle filled the space between us.

"I was wondering when you'd figure it out," Adrian murmured. His voice was smooth, almost bored, as if none of this-his presence, the betrayal, the war-was anything more than an inconvenience.

My pulse thundered in my ears.

I took a step back, reaching for my daggers. Too late.

Hands closed around my arms, gripping hard enough to bruise. A second too slow. A mistake that cost me everything.

The world blurred as something heavy struck the back of my skull, and the last thing

I heard before darkness swallowed me whole was Adrian's voice-low, satisfied.

"Checkmate."

Pain drags me back into consciousness. It comes in waves-sharp, relentless, throbbing at the base of my skull like a war drum. My limbs feel heavy, the weight of exhaustion pressing down on me, but it's the burning sensation around my wrists that jolts me fully awake.

I try to move.

Rope bites into my skin. My arms are pulled above my head, bound so tightly that my fingers tingle from the lack of circulation. The air is damp, thick with the scent of mildew and rusted iron, and as my vision clears, I realize where I am.

A dungeon.

The stone walls are rough, uneven, and the flickering torchlight does little to chase away the shadows lurking in the corners. Chains hang from the ceiling, some still stained with old blood, and the realization sends a sickening twist through my stomach.

Then I hear it.

Footsteps.

Slow. Deliberate. Unrushed.

A cold shiver crawls down my spine. Even before the heavy iron door groans open, I

already know who it is.

Adrian.

He steps inside, his dark armor gleaming in the dim light, his face unreadable except for the faint amusement curling at the edges of his lips. His presence fills the room like a gathering storm, pressing against my skin, suffocating in its inevitability.

"Awake at last," he murmurs, his voice smooth, controlled. "I was beginning to wonder if I'd hit you too hard."

I swallow down the nausea rising in my throat and force my expression into something sharp, something that doesn't betray the pounding in my chest. "You should have made sure I didn't wake up at all."

Adrian chuckles, crouching before me, his gaze sweeping over me in quiet assessment. "Where's the fun in that?" He tilts his head slightly, his dark eyes gleaming. "No, I'd much rather you be awake for what comes next."

A cold dread pools in my stomach, but I don't let it show. I meet his gaze head-on, refusing to flinch, refusing to let him see even a crack in my armor.

"You're a coward," I spit, my voice steady despite the rapid beat of my heart. "Hiding behind tricks and chains. You couldn't face me in a real fight, so you resort to this?"

His lips twitch, as if I've amused him. "You wound me, Cassandra," he muses, resting his forearm on his knee. "I've waited far too long for this moment to waste it on brute force. You of all people should know-power isn't about who's strongest."

I glare at him, my breathing shallow. "You think this is power?" I tug at the restraints, feeling the burn as the ropes scrape against my skin. "You think trapping me in a

dungeon makes you stronger?"

Adrian exhales, almost disappointed. "I think knowing when to strike makes me stronger." He leans in slightly, lowering his voice to something quieter, more dangerous. "And I think Alexander would agree-when he sees you like this."

The breath leaves my lungs.

Adrian sees it, that split second of hesitation, and he smiles.

"Oh, did you think he wouldn't come for you?" he continues, his tone almost pitying. "Did you think he wouldn't tear this entire place apart to get to you?"

I bite down on the fear rising in my chest. Because he's right. Alexander will come.

And that's exactly what Adrian wants.

My blood turns to ice.

He wants Alexander to walk into this trap.

I shake my head, pulling at my restraints harder, my breath coming faster. "You-"

But Adrian is already standing, already stepping away, already moving toward the door as if this conversation has run its course. I refuse to let him leave without knowing.

"Why?" I demand, my voice raw with fury. "Why are you doing this?"

For the first time, something flickers in his gaze. A crack in that cold, controlled mask.

And then he laughs.

"Why?" he repeats, stepping closer. His voice drops to something sharp, something edged with bitterness so deep it sears through the air between us. "Because I was supposed to be king."

The words slam into me.

His jaw tightens, his fingers curling into fists at his sides. "Alexander took everything from me. The throne, the pack, my birthright. And now, it's my turn to take something from him."

I meet his gaze, and this time, there is no fear. No hesitation. Just pure, undiluted hatred burning in my veins.

"You'll never be king," I whisper, my voice steady, cold. "Not because of Alexander. Not because of fate. But because you are nothing more than a bitter, power-hungry coward who will never be anything more than a footnote in his story."

The amusement vanishes from his expression, replaced by something dark, something dangerous.

And then he slaps me.

Pain explodes across my face, my head snapping to the side. My vision blurs for a moment, but I refuse to make a sound. I refuse to give him the satisfaction.

Adrian exhales, shaking his head. "You always did have a sharp tongue, Cassandra. I suppose I'll have to cut it out eventually."

I spit blood onto the floor, lifting my chin defiantly. "Try it."

His smirk returns, but there's nothing amused about it now.

"I think it's time for a reunion."

Then the door slams shut.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

The night was cold, the kind of chill that sank into your bones and refused to let go. The moon hung low in the sky, its silver light barely piercing through the thick canopy of trees. My heart pounded in my chest, each beat echoing in my ears as I struggled against the ropes digging into my wrists.

Adrian had planned this. Every move, every deception, every betrayal—it had all led to this moment. And I had walked right into his trap.

“You always were predictable,” Adrian mused, circling me like a predator savoring its meal. His voice was smooth, almost amused, as if he wasn’t holding me captive, as if he hadn’t orchestrated everything. “So easy to manipulate.”

I gritted my teeth, my wrists burning as I fought against my restraints. “You’re a coward,” I spat, my voice hoarse. “You could never face Alec fairly, so you played your games in the shadows.”

His smirk widened. “And look where that’s gotten me.” He knelt beside me, his dark eyes gleaming. “And look where it’s gotten you.”

He reached into his pocket, pulling out a small device. With a lazy flick of his thumb, he activated it. Static crackled before a familiar voice rang through the air.

“Adrian,” Alec’s voice was low, lethal. “Where is she?”

Adrian chuckled. “Patience, Alexander. You’ll see her soon enough.” He let the words hang in the air before continuing, “Meet me at the clearing by the river at midnight. Bring your army. Let’s end this.”

A pause. Then Alec's voice, sharp as a blade. "You'll regret this."

Adrian ended the call, his smirk deepening as he pocketed the device. "Now, we wait."

Midnight came too soon.

The battlefield was a vast, open stretch of land, the river glinting under the moonlight. The air was thick with tension, both sides standing poised for war. Shadows moved restlessly, claws gleamed, and the scent of impending bloodshed tainted the wind.

Then, they arrived.

Alec led the charge, his silver eyes burning with fury, his presence commanding. Jack, Damon, and Sophie flanked him, their expressions hardened, their bodies coiled for battle. The moment Adrian's men moved, the war began.

Claws clashed, blades met steel, and growls filled the air as both armies collided. Chaos erupted around me, the fight a blur of movement and violence. I struggled against my restraints, my breath coming in sharp bursts as I tried to break free.

Sophie found me first, her dagger quick against my bindings. "Come on!" she urged, shoving a blade into my hand.

I didn't hesitate.

Alec and Adrian were locked in combat. It was a vicious dance, one that had been years in the making. Adrian was strong, but Alec was stronger. He wasn't just fighting for revenge—he was fighting for me.

Adrian faltered, just for a second. Alec seized the opening, slamming him into the ground with a force that sent cracks through the earth. Blood dripped from Adrian's lips, yet his smirk remained.

"You think you've won?" he rasped.

Alec bared his teeth. "You're finished."

Then—

Adrian's hand moved too fast. A glint of silver, a wicked grin, and before I could react—

The dagger plunged into Alec's side.

The world shattered.

"ALEC!" My scream ripped through the night as he staggered, his breath catching, his eyes going wide. He looked down at the blade buried in his flesh, at the black poison slicking its edges.

I moved without thinking, my hands catching him just as his legs gave out. He collapsed against me, his weight heavy, too heavy. His breathing was shallow, uneven.

"No, no, no, no," I whispered, pressing my hands to the wound, trying to stop the bleeding, trying to do anything to keep him here. "Stay with me. Please, stay with me."

His silver eyes found mine, softer now, unfocused. "Cass..."

Adrian stood above us, wiping blood from his lips. “A fitting end, don’t you think?” he mused, tilting his head. “I could kill him now, but where’s the satisfaction in that? No, I’d rather let you watch him wither away.”

Something inside me snapped.

I wasn’t thinking. I wasn’t breathing. I was moving.

In one swift motion, I ripped the dagger from Alec’s side and turned, my grip steady, my heart pounding. Adrian’s smirk barely had time to falter before I drove the blade straight into his chest.

He choked, his eyes widening in shock, in rage. “You—”

I twisted the dagger deeper, watching as the life drained from his face, as the power he had clung to for so long slipped through his fingers.

“You lose,” I whispered.

And then—I shoved him back.

Adrian’s body crumpled to the forest floor, unmoving, unbreathing. The silence that followed was deafening.

I turned back to Alec, my hands shaking as I cupped his face. “You’re going to be okay,” I murmured, my voice breaking. “You have to be okay.”

His lips barely moved. “Cass...”

Tears blurred my vision. “Don’t talk. Just—just stay with me.”

Alec gave me a weak smile, the kind that barely reached his eyes. His hand, trembling, reached up to brush my cheek, his touch featherlight, as if he was already slipping away. “Don’t cry, love...” His voice was nothing but a whisper, fragile like the last ember of a dying flame.

Then, his body went limp.

For a moment, my mind refused to understand what had happened. It wasn’t real. It couldn’t be real.

But then the warmth started to fade from his skin.

“No,” I gasped, shaking my head wildly as I grabbed his face between my hands. “No, no, no, Alexander, please! Please, I beg you. Wake up! Look at me! Please!” My voice cracked, shattering like glass, but he didn’t move.

His silver eyes—those storm-filled, beautiful, impossible eyes—stared up at me, but they no longer saw me.

A sob ripped through me, violent and raw. “You promised,” I choked, my forehead pressing against his. “You promised you’d always come back to me.”

Jack and Damon were suddenly there, their hands on my shoulders, their voices distant echoes against the crushing silence. Someone was trying to pry me away, but I fought against them with everything I had.

“No!” I screamed. “I can fix this—I can—I just need more time! He can’t be gone! He can’t—” My breath hitched, and then there was nothing but agony, spreading through my chest like fire, like ice, like something that would never heal.

I buried my face in his neck, clutching onto him as if I could will him back to me, as

if I could force his heart to beat again. But his scent, once warm and steady, was already fading, slipping through my fingers like sand.

A sob wracked through me so hard I thought I might break apart.

Alec had to live.

Because if he didn't—

I wasn't sure I would, either.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

The silence that followed the battle was deafening. The cries of the wounded, the rustle of the trees, and the eerie stillness of the forest combined to create a haunting atmosphere. I barely noticed the blood staining my hands as I held Alec against me, his head lolling on my shoulder. His body, once filled with life, was now a heavy weight in my arms.

Adrian was gone. His body lay in a crumpled heap a few feet away, his twisted expression frozen in his final moment of shock and fury. I should have felt relief, but it was overshadowed by the gaping void his death had left behind. It was over... but at what cost?

My breath hitched as I looked down at Alec, his silver eyes barely open, flickering in and out of focus. His lips parted, but no words came. His breath was shallow, ragged.

"Alec," I whispered, my voice breaking. "Please, don't leave me."

He gave a weak smile, one that didn't reach his eyes. "Cass... I... I can't stay... much longer..." His voice was barely a breath, but I heard the pain in it, felt it deep in my chest.

"No," I whispered urgently, tears blurring my vision. "No, don't say that. You're going to be okay. Just hang on. Please."

I looked around frantically, but there was no one. Jack, Damon, and Sophie had gone to deal with the rest of Adrian's army, ensuring that no one else would rise against us. My heart pounded in my chest as I searched for anything, anyone, that could help Alec.

The battle had taken its toll. The ground was littered with bodies—some of Adrian's men, some of ours. The stench of blood and death clung to the air, thick and suffocating.

"Stay with me, Alec," I whispered again, pressing my trembling hands to his wound, but the blood kept flowing, too fast, too much. "I won't let you go. I won't."

He closed his eyes briefly, and for a moment, I thought he had fallen unconscious, but when his eyes fluttered open again, they were filled with such sorrow, such acceptance, that my heart shattered.

"I'm sorry," he murmured, barely audible. "I couldn't protect you... couldn't save you... from all this."

Tears streamed down my face. "You did," I said, choking on my words. "You saved me. You're the reason I'm still here. Please, don't give up on me now."

He smiled again, faintly, as if trying to reassure me. "You're strong, Cass. You'll... you'll be okay. Without me."

I shook my head violently, not caring about the pain that rushed through my chest. "Don't you dare say that. You're not leaving me, Alec. We're in this together. Always."

But even as I spoke, his breaths became more labored, more strained. His pulse was weakening, and with every passing second, I could feel him slipping further away.

A scream of frustration tore from my throat, and I looked around, desperate, helpless.

"Help! Somebody help!" My voice echoed through the night, but there was no answer. No one could hear me. No one could save him but me.

I pressed harder on the wound, as though I could will it to stop bleeding. My hands shook, my heart racing in my chest. But nothing worked. Nothing could stop this.

"I love you, Alec," I whispered, my voice barely audible, but I needed him to hear it. "I love you. Please don't leave me."

His silver eyes flickered one last time, locking onto mine. There was no strength left in them, but in that brief moment, there was everything—his love, his pain, his acceptance.

"I love you too, Cass," he whispered, his voice so soft, so faint, that I could barely make it out. "Always..."

And then, just like that, his body went limp in my arms.

No breath. No heartbeat.

The world around me seemed to collapse. My body went numb, and for a moment, I was frozen in place, unable to comprehend what had just happened. I stared at him, as though hoping that if I looked long enough, he would wake up, that he would open his eyes and smile at me, just like he always did.

But he didn't.

The tears came then, like a dam breaking open, and I let them fall. I didn't care about the blood that stained my hands, or the battle that still raged in the distance. I didn't care about anything except the man I had lost.

I held him close, my arms wrapped tightly around him, as if I could somehow pull him back from the brink, as if I could force life back into his body.

But there was nothing. No warmth. No heartbeat. Just the cold weight of his body in my arms.

"Please, Alec," I whispered through my tears, my voice desperate. "Please don't leave me."

Jack and Damon appeared then, running over, their faces grim as they took in the scene before them. "Cassie..." Jack said, his voice full of concern and horror. "We need to get him to the medical tent. Now."

Damon crouched beside me, his face pale, his hands quick as he assessed Alec's injury. "He's losing too much blood," Damon muttered, his voice tight. "Cass, we need to move fast. He's not going to make it if we don't get him treated."

"No," I whispered, shaking my head as I clung to Alec. "I'm not leaving him. Not like this."

Jack knelt beside me, his expression softening as he placed a hand on my shoulder. "Cassie, listen to us. If you stay here, you'll lose him. We can't do anything here. But if we get him to the medic, there's still a chance."

The urgency in his voice finally broke through my panic. I nodded, my hands trembling as I gently pulled away from Alec, giving them room to lift him.

I couldn't look away as they carefully lifted him, each movement slow, deliberate, but every step was agony for me. The weight of the loss I was already feeling threatened to crush me, but I couldn't let him go. Not like this. Not ever.

Alec's body was limp in their arms, but his face—his beautiful, familiar face—remained a source of solace for me. I reached out, brushing my fingertips against his cheek.

“I love you,” I whispered, more to myself than anyone else, as they started to carry him away.

Jack and Damon exchanged a glance before Jack spoke again, his voice soft. “We’re going to save him, Cass. We’ll do everything we can.”

I nodded, but the emptiness inside me only deepened as they took him away.

Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am

A Year Later

The house was quieter than it used to be. A full year had passed since the war, but the shadow of that time still lingered in every corner, every creak of the floorboards.

The days blurred together, filled with routines that were comforting yet hollow. I hadn't exactly moved on, not in the way I should've.

I wandered through the halls, my mind miles away. Every now and then, I would pause by the window, looking out into the distance, as though hoping the view would offer me something I could cling to.

But all it ever gave me was more silence, more empty air.

I was alone.

Truly and utterly alone.

Sighing, I tried to remember the happy moments. But then.....

As I was caught up in one of these little melancholic moments, staring out the window, I heard the faintest sound behind me.

A familiar, too-familiar sound that made my heart race and my breath catch. I already knew who it was.

~~~~~Flashback~~~~~

The room had smelled like antiseptic and fresh linens, the sharp scent of medicine lingering in the air. The beeping of the monitors was the only sound in the too-still space, a quiet yet constant reminder that Alec was still here, still breathing.

I sat beside his bed, my fingers curled around his hand. His skin had been cold that first night, his body weak from the battle he had barely survived.

I had never been more terrified.

“Come on, Alec,” I had whispered, my voice barely audible in the sterile silence. “You don’t get to do this. You don’t get to leave me behind.”

He didn’t stir. Didn’t even twitch. But I had kept talking anyway, as if my words alone could anchor him back to me.

Jack had popped his head in more times than I could count, sometimes with food, sometimes just to check that I hadn’t lost my mind.

“You know,” he had said one evening, leaning against the doorframe, “if you keep staring at him like that, he might wake up out of sheer discomfort.”

I had shot him a glare, but the truth was, I had been staring. Watching the slow rise and fall of Alec’s chest, counting each breath like they were the only thing holding me together.

Days passed. Then weeks.

And then, one night, I had been dozing off, my head resting on my folded arms beside him, when I felt it—his fingers twitching against mine.

My head had snapped up so fast it hurt, my heart slamming against my ribs.

“Alec?”

A quiet groan. A flicker of movement. Then, finally, after weeks of silence, his eyes had opened.

The relief had been so overwhelming, so all-consuming, that I hadn't even realized I was crying until Alec's hoarse voice broke through the haze.

“Cassie?”

I had laughed then—an odd, choked sound, somewhere between hysteria and disbelief. “Yeah, it's me, you idiot.”

He had blinked slowly, taking me in as if trying to confirm I was real. Then, despite everything—despite the pain, despite the exhaustion—his lips had curled into the faintest smirk.

“You look terrible.”

I had laughed again, punching his arm lightly. “You almost died, and that's the first thing you say to me?”

Alec had hummed, his smirk growing just a little. “Almost.”

I had hesitated then, pressing a trembling hand to his cheek, just to be sure he was real, that he was warm, that he was back. The weight of weeks of worry crashed down on me all at once, and I had barely managed to choke out, “You scared me.”

His eyes softened, his fingers weakly curling around mine. “Sorry, Cass. Didn't mean to.”

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:24 am*

I blinked back to the present, my fingers unconsciously grazing the windowsill as I exhaled. That moment still clung to me, as vivid as the day it happened.

"Alec," I muttered, not turning around, knowing exactly what I was doing.

He chuckled softly from behind me, his voice smooth and full of that unmistakable teasing warmth. "Are you still doing this?"

I turned to face him, trying to mask the small, guilty smile tugging at my lips. "Doing what?"

"Pretending," he said with a grin, arms crossed, leaning against the doorway. "Pretending you're some heartbroken widow. What is this, your... thirtieth time this week?"

I sighed dramatically, letting my shoulders slump. "It's an art form, Alec. I have to perfect the performance."

He stepped into the room, his eyes glinting with mischief. "I'm pretty sure your 'performance' is just you looking out windows and sighing every few minutes, hoping I'll catch you and ask if you're okay. It's not fooling anyone, you know."

I gave him my best pout. "Maybe I like the attention."

He snorted. "Yeah, because nothing says 'I'm grieving the love of my life' like dramatically staring out of a window hoping to be interrupted." He raised an eyebrow. "And here I thought you'd at least be a little more subtle about it."

"Subtlety is overrated," I quipped. "Plus, it's hard to be subtle when you're pretending someone's dead for a year."

He stared at me for a long beat, then raised both hands in surrender.

"Okay, okay, I get it. You're the tragic widow who mourns her lost love every day, a tortured soul. But for the last time, I'm right here. You don't need to act like I'm gone."

Jack, of course, chose that exact moment to barge in. "Did I hear someone's heart breaking?" he asked with a wink. "Because it sounds like Cassie's still running that widow routine. Alec, you let her pretend you're dead again?"

I rolled my eyes. "Oh, so now everyone's in on it? Thanks for ruining my dramatic moment, Jack."

The banter spiraled from there, Sophie and Damon joining in with their own quips. The room filled with laughter, light teasing, and warmth.

The sound of everyone's voices—the teasing, the playful jabs—was like a balm, soothing the ache that had lingered in me for so long.

Alec watched the chaos around us with a quiet smile, before pulling me into his arms. His hands found their familiar place at my back, and as he leaned down, his lips brushed my ear.

"I love you, my mate," he whispered softly, his voice low and filled with all the emotions he'd never quite put into words before.

I melted into him, feeling the tension in my chest finally release. For the first time in a long time, I wasn't looking for something beyond the window, something out of reach.

Everything I needed, everything I had been searching for, was right here, in his arms.

As I looked around at the friends who had become family, at the life I had built with Alec at my side, I realized just how much I had healed.

The journey wasn't over, but for the first time in a long time, I didn't have to carry the weight alone.

“Well good for you, cause you're stuck with me for a long time.” I whispered back, my voice thick with the emotions I couldn't quite express.

Alec's smile was everything. It was soft, it was genuine, and it was home.