



# FULLY MATED

A REJECTED MATES SHIFTER ACADEMY ROMANCE

DIANA O'DAIR

TAIKA-GALDUR ACADEMY BOOK 3

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# CREDITS

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# Fully Mated

BY: Diana O'Dair.

Thank you SO much, reader. I hope you are well!

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# STELLA

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Iced-up grass cracks under our feet as we slug forward with caution and our breath held. The air is dry with a frigid bite, like inhaling liquid ice. Everything is still. Was this... all my fault?

“Is... everyone dead?” I ask, my voice shaking. I cover my mouth with my hands, and tears burn my lower eyelids. Shit, shit, shit.

Jaxson tugs me into his body. “No. Stop.”

Wren comes around us and sniffs at the iced grass, and his eyes glow white. “Essence of hell.”

Milton makes a few quick hand signs, and a glowing circle appears. “Yeah, and it’s growing too!”

Xheros groans and scratches his head while analyzing the ground too. “Stella, crew, this is all my bad, actually.”

Wren grunts with a slight hint of a growl. “How the hell did you do that?!”

Xheros hunches over with a frown while pushing two index fingers together as if timid. “I kinda, sorta, kinda sorta \_\_\_”

Wren roars, “what, idiot?!”

Xheros covers his ears with a scowl. “Damn, a lil patience? A drop of pity? I recognize the errors of my ways...”

Milton adjusts his glasses. “My guy, you might wanna blurt it out before all bloody earth freezes over.”

Xheros throws his hands in the air and turns his back to us. “Alright, alright, I usurped the devil and took her throne.” He

bends over and rubs his forehead. The regret stitched in his voice is hard to ignore. “I was a shit-faced heart broken dipshit. I know, I know.” He shakes his head.

“Then fix it,” Jaxson says in a relaxed tone.

I speak up, “I’ll help you too.”

“Stella,” Jaxson begins.

“No, Jaxson, I have to. I’m a part of this mess too.”

Xheros turns around. “No, you’re not. I had no business sucking you into it either.”

He scans his gaze over Taika Galdur’s campus. “First, we need to undo this magic. Ms. Devil Queen is trying to turn earth into her new home.”

A loud howl erupts from the campus buildings.

\*Jaxson’s father!\* Lunai’s voice echoes through my soul.

‘Yeah, I recognize that hardy howl.’

Milton gasps. “Hey, the dean’s still alive!”

Jaxson shifts into his wolf form. “Dad, we’re coming!”

I allow Lunai to take over and shift into my lunar wolf’s massive form. I’m the same size as Jaxson.

Most female shifters are much smaller on average.

Alphas always tend to be the biggest.

\*Lunar wolves are always alpha)\*

‘No shit, really?!’

Wow.

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On our way there, we pass the bodies of a few students who must’ve gotten caught up in the initial wave of magic that began to turn Taika G into a warped-up ice age. Xheros and Wren (odd duo, I know) stay behind to thaw and free some of the frozen students and reverse as much damage as possible. This ice is more spell-based than regular ice, so hypothermia

shouldn't be too much of an issue. At least, that's what I vaguely remember about ice-based magic arts.

Meanwhile, Jaxson and Milton bust through a thick layer of ice into the Dean's main building. The hallway here no longer makes me feel uneasy. But jeez, I can sense the magic protection heavier now. Oh, the memories...

"Hey, look, I say, pointing a paw out down the hallway that leads to Dean Warclaw's office, "is that magic keeping the ice out?" Just up ahead, you can see the demarcation of the ice fizzling against golden sparks as it fights to get to the double doors.

Do your thing, hallway.

Milton switches his glasses in a snap. They're now glowing blue as he looks on. "Yep, I think that might even be Professor Ivory keeping the dean safe."

Jaxson lowers his body to the ground and looks at Milton. "Get on my back. The spells in the hallway won't allow more than two people to approach the door. If you're on my back, you'll get a pass."

"Coming!" Milton climbs onto Jaxson's back and holds on with a huge smile. Yeah, even during stressful times, magic can still put a smile on your face. Strange. But I'm thankful. Magic's saved me too.

We dart down the hall to the double doors, gliding down the ice like pro skiers. Hopping over the gold crackling magic, Jaxson hits the ground and springs back into the air, using his front paws to push into the doors.

Dean Warclaw is at one of the floor-to-ceiling windows and spins around. He gives us all a look down and rushes over to Jaxson. "Son! Come, let me look at you. I'm glad all of you have returned safely."

"Thanks, Dean Warclaw!" Milton pips as he hops off of Jaxson's back.

I sit down on my hind feet, swishing around my tails. It's fulfilling to see a family reuniting.



Jaxson and his father break into a complex discussion, but somehow my attention lingers on where Milton is going. Holy shit. Is that...

I shift back into my human form and catch up with Milton.

“Damn,” Milton says, frowning. “Professor Ivory’s really draining himself to keep the office safe.”

Professor Ivory never held many colors on his face. His lips aren’t pink, but a dull grayish maroon, and his hair isn’t as fluffy. It’s stringy and lifeless, as if he’d been working out in the sun for hours and sweat clumped it together. It’s like he’s made of fine porcelain and marble. But this kind of paleness signals weakness and decline. Not the youthful calm guy I saw last time.

Ah, and his scent is fading in and out. Shit. He’s really scrapping as much magic as he can.

“Considering that he’s keeping the devil’s magic back, this is amazing,” Milton says, placing a hand under his chin.

“We’ll help now, professor! Hold on. And thank you.”

A small smile slips onto his face, lighting both of us up. We’ll take all the hope we can get.

“Stella,” Dean Warclaw interrupts, “I hear the curse is gone.”

I blush. How much did... Jaxson tells him. “Yep.”

He smiles with a curt nod, full of pride. “Welcome to the family.”

My face turns hot. Family?! I mean, duh, I knew that... But...

Wow. Where’s all this family coming from?

“Thank you... pops!”

Blue flames shoot up in the middle of the room. It pushes chairs and tables out to the side. Guess who waltzes out of those flames, flexing his muscles?

Yep. Xheros.

And his attention goes right to Professor Ivory.

“Aw, come on. Cecil’s not even awake to see my intro? Damn.”

Growling, Alpha Warclaw, bucks up, his wolf pawing at the surface. “Not another move! Who are you, and how’d you —”

“Wait!” I butt in, jumping in front of Alpha Warclaw. “He’s my uncle, and he’s on our side.”

Xheros holds his hands up. “Oop, my apologies, Alpha W. I kinda have a thing for just busting up in places I kinda don’t belong.”

He flashes over to Professor Ivory and breaks his circle of rotating magic that keeps the ice out of the office.

And to be honest. He’s keeping the ice from expanding too far out from Taika Galdur academy too.

Taika City is just beyond the school gates. It’d be mayhem if the magic got out there.

Alpha Warclaw looks uneasy with Xheros fiddling with Professor Ivory, but I hold my hand up. “He knows what he’s doing.” Xheros damn well better know.

Xheros takes the professor’s limp body into his arms, and Cecil begins to glow with an electric blue color that breathes life into his aura.

His dark thick lashes flutter open.

Xheros, looking down, wiggles his eyebrows. “Hey, sexy. Long time no see.”

Woah, say what?!

All of our jaws hit the ground. And Professor Ivory’s hand slaps Xheros’ jaw to the ceiling and beyond.

With a furious flush, Professor Ivory fights against Xheros’ strong embrace.

“Unhand me, you perverted idiot! Are you behind this mess?!”

“Hey, settle down. You’re still dressed, and plus, I saved your ass. Again. Where’s my appreciation?”

Is it wrong that I’m already shipping these two? Now that I look at them, Xheros reminds me of a dark, more intense version of Professor Ivory.

“I don’t care about you saving me, Titan. Unhand me.”

“So dramatic,” he leans his face down to Professor Ivory’s. “Sexy.”

SMACK.

It is so wrong that I’m enjoying this.

“Put. Me. Down.” Uh oh. I never thought I’d see such a pissed-off Professor Ivory.

Alpha Warclaw clears his throat. “Excuse me. But what the hell is going on?”

When the glowing is done, Xheros lowers Cecil onto a nearby couch and sighs. The two exchange heated glares. One glare says, ‘you’re still sexy when you’re angry,’ and the other glare says, ‘fuck off, prick.’

“Oh, pardon my abruptness, your Wolflineness. I’m just helping with the cleanup. I’ll find Ms. Devil soon enough, return her to her throne, and everything will be Gucci.” He shoves two thumbs up in the air with a sleazy grin.

I stifle a chuckle while Jaxson shakes his head, and Alpha Warclaw gives an annoyed expression; his brows are furrowed, and his mouth is in an exaggerated frown.

Titans aren’t his thing. That’s totally obvious.

“Return Ms. Devil to her throne?” Warclaw echoes, crossing his arms across his puffed-out chest.

“It’s a long story,” I cut in. “But we don’t have time to explain. For now, let’s free as many as possible and locate where the devil is.”

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# STELLA

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The first place I run to is my dorm room shared with Gwen. Oh, Lunar Goddess, let her be okay. Too many people have been harmed just because I simply exist. Fuck.

Jaxson knocks down the door, and I find Gwen, to my relief and utter embarrassment.

And Rival.

And they're more than just fine.

“Stella! You guys!” Gwen gasps as she rides Rival in the reverse cowgirl position. Rival lands a smack on her ass, and her face melts with embarrassment... and pleasure as she reaches for some sheets to cover up.

Rival looks up. “What happened to knocking?” he asks Jaxson with a vein throbbing down his forehead.

My heart's pounding. I always thought those two were a good couple. Things went well for them while I was gone. Goodie. Can't wait to get the tea on what happened while I was away.

“Don't mind us!” I grab the doorknob. “We'll, uh, come back later!”

Gwen squeaks. “No, wait, I—”

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We all share an awkward three minutes of radio silence over at Milton's posh private dorm studio. I forgot how lush it is here. Domed ceiling, grate plush carpets, and a medium kitchen. Surprised he doesn't have a private chef.

To break the ice, I lean to the side towards Gwen with a goofy grin. “Congratulations, you two,” I sing. “Heh, after we solve this Devil and her ice issue, you must tell me everything, Gwen.” I nudge her elbow.

Gwen blushes and rubs her nose. “S-Stella,” she squeaks.

Milton sighs over a black leather-bound book and rests his chin on his hand. “Damn, this is complex... I’m both enthralled and perplexed.”

Rival leans onto the table with his forearms. Pretty muscular for a vampire. But now that I remember, he’s a warrior vampire. So it makes sense.

“Naturally,” Rival begins, “this is high-ranking magic from a devil. The question is, why is she in earth’s realm?”

“Uh, well, Rival? You know that Titan guy who unfroze Milton’s room and a few students we passed along the way?”

“Yes?”

“He’s my uncle... surprise...” I say, trying to put on a cheery front. But it fails miserably, and I lean onto Jaxson’s shoulder for comfort. “Fuck. I know this looks bad, but he’s a different person.”

“I hope so, Ms. Helios.”

\*Stella. Don’t forget how much of a flirt Xheros is... perhaps...\*

“HOLY SHIT!” I jump out of my chair.

Milton sits up straight. “What?! WHAT?!” A smile plasters itself onto his face. “Give us the deets!”

“Xheros is a total rizz. Maybe... Maybe this isn’t just the devil’s anger at being usurped; perhaps she felt burned by him?!” My joy at finding a possible answer quickly gets extinguished by grim reality. My uncle probably has a path of broken hearts...

Shit.

The way he was with Professor Ivory.

The way he was with the Dark Fae Queen.

Jeez, men and women fall for him.

And Professor Ivory seemed pissed with him. And called him a pervert. Then there was that bit about him being ‘dressed.’

Oh god. I gotta find him.

“Milton, can you find Xheros?”

Blue flames shoot into the room in another portal-like fashion. “You called?” Xheros asks, walking in with a smirk.

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“I’ve tried to summon her three times. She’s being stubborn as hell.” Xheros muffles a peal of small laughter. I see what he did there. He floats in the air with his legs crisscrossed. The back of his black clothing drapes behind him as his many buckles glint under the light.

“I can tell she’s heard my calls.” He taps the bottom of his lips. “Maybe if I’m naked in a room all by my lonesome, she’ll answer my summons...”

I scrunch my face. “Oh, ew, omit the details, please.”

Gwen blushes. “Oh my! So it’s true?”

“Hm?” Xheros tilts his head at her.

“That you had a relationship with the devil?”

“Ohh yeah. That was a thing...” Xheros looks off dreamily to the side. “I had some dumb goals on my mind and fucked things up. That’s me. A huge major fuck up.”

“And Professor Ivory?” I slide in on the side.

He frowns and shakes his head. “Was I that obvious?”

“You called him ‘sexy.’ More than once.”

Milton adjusts his glasses. “Woah. Are Titans bisexual by nature?”

“Very,” Xheros says with a devious grin and a glint in his eyes.

Jaxson stands up. “Look, we need to know where she is. Do you have an idea?”

Gwen gasps. “The devil is a female?! Wait, I assumed—”

“I know, right?” Hate to be that person, but finding out the devil is a woman too? Kinda cool.

Once I get this situation down pat, I have to worry about Helena, and then... I glance up at Jaxson.

We’re supposed to be fated, mates.

Does that mean we get a wedding? What happens?

Xheros lowers himself down. “Under the campus somewhere. She’s good at hiding.” Tapping his steel-toed pointy black latex boot, he points to the ground. “She’s bound to the campus by Cecil’s spell. But if we hadn’t arrived when we did...”

“Oh goodness,” Gwen hugs Rival’s arm.

“Maybe I can summon her?” I suggest. I mean, I am a dual goddess hybrid thing.

“NO!” Xheros barks and his face grows dark. “It’s too damn dangerous. This is my mess,” he slams his chest, “that I must clean up. Me. Solo. No partners.”

“You can’t stop me!” I huff.

“Bull shit, watch.” Xheros readies some magic in his hands. That scares me. In the back of my head, I know he wouldn’t hurt me. Not now.

“Alright,” Jaxson puts his arms out. “Time out, you two.”

‘Lunai, how can we deal with the she-devil?’

(Hmm, appeal to her as a woman scorned instead of a magical being.)

‘Can you find her?’

(Yes, I sense her powers.)



‘Alrighty. Let’s shift and get out of here quickly. I don’t want Jaxson or Xheros tailing me.’

(Oh? If that’s the concern, then hold on.)

My body glows like the moon and goes semi-transparent.

“Dammit, Stella!” Xheros hisses. He reaches out to me and Jaxson turns around but suddenly, I drop through the floor, and suddenly... I’m outside in front of the library.

The steps all the way up to the main entrance is frozen solid with ice that looks to be a few feet thick.

Strong feminine energy radiates from the ice. Slowly but surely it begins to glow red with thin veins of red magic flowing throughout.

“She’s here...”

(Good job. You’ve learned a skill called seer’s eyes. It’s like Milton’s glasses, but instead you don’t need to use external materials to see it.)

“Wow, it’s like I can feel exactly what to do.”

(Your instincts have grown, Stella.)

‘Thanks to you.’

(No, no, Stella. That’s all you.)

I approach the iced-off entrance but the ice around it is so thick... Wait.

I concentrate on my body, energy, and ground below me. Slowly, I lift off and levitate over the ice on the ground.

(Amazing, you’re wielding your powers very well.)

This feels amazing.

Gotta hurry though, before Xheros and—

“Stella!” My name pierces through the air. Shit. Speak of the Titan.

“Stella, get away from her!”

So he DOES know where she is. Why hide it? Damn it, I don’t want to second-guess Xheros. He’s... family. Blood

family.

(Or maybe he really didn't. He can easily trace you. Let's go!)

I turn to fly towards the ice. Not like there's a front door to waltz into but this is what my instincts say to do. Red energy leaps out and sucks me inside.

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My body sails into the library and hits the floor. I roll a few times before skidding to a halt. That's when I notice that the carpet is just that... carpet. And not iced up. It's cold as hell in here.

Oh shit.

I straighten my clothes out and stand up to see she-devil herself floating in the air on a black throne that reminds me of the dark fae queen.

She's got long blond hair, pouty red lips, and jet-black eyes with a huge, well-held bust. She's wearing a lace corset made with black and red glitter ribbon and has boots that remind me of Xheros. Super high, super dominatrix-esque with a stiletto heel.

I hold a finger up. "Wow. I just wanna say I'm impressed that the devil is a female. Like, males take all the cool positions in the magic world."

She shifts in her throne. "It is such a shame that us females are so underestimated."

"I know." I don't want to fly over to her, but I slowly walk down the steps into the main area she's floating over. "So, I gather my uncle broke your heart..."

"Hmph, the tricky bastard." She rubs her legs together and sighs. "He played me like a damn mortal. A damn fool. The things he did to me..."

"Yeah, I'd rather not know all that."

“He’s got a way of entrancing others.” She tightens her fist. “What do you want, child?”

“I want to save my school. And earth realm.”

“Heh. Tough luck, buttercup.” She turns her throne away from me. “You’re just a junior dual goddess. Don’t press your luck. You couldn’t win a fight against me.”

“I don’t want to fight you.” Appeal to her one on one. “I want to help you too.”

She whips around and jumps out of her throne, zooming right up to my face. Her aura is blazing with threatening magic. It’s like she could snap me out of existence just like that. “Help ME?! The devil?”

“Xheros is an ass. Yes. But I’m part of the blame. He usurped your throne to get back at my parents...”

“Power? Oh, how trivial. How old.” She turns away from me. But I grab her and turn her around.

“NO! He was heartbroken! He was originally in love with my mother. But his brother discovered that and slipped in... and well, during an eclipse I was made.”

At first, she’s giving me a ‘bitch are you stupid for touching me?’ look. But now her face is crestfallen. Even her jet-black eyes aren’t as menacing. Her entire aura shifts.

“A Titan in love with someone?”

“Yeah. And it didn’t work out that way. So he came after me. And he used a lot of people to do it.”

“Is this supposed to make me feel better? Tell me I was nothing but a tool?”

“No. Because when I asked him about you, there was this cheesy dreamy look on his face. Let’s just say he almost dropped some details of his own I didn’t want to hear.”

She bites her bottom lip. Progress.

“You’re good. Just like your uncle. But I’m not convinced.” She shakes my grip off and floats back to her throne. “I’m not here because I want to be. I’m here because

access to hell has been ripped from me when he usurped the throne.”

“He’ll give it back to you.”

She scowls and looks off to the side, reclining in her throne.

“I want much more than hell.”

Oh shit. She probably wants a new hell. Or probably two of them. Am I going to have to fight her?

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# XHEROS

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“Damn, am I shitty for saying that she’s growing way too fast?” I throw another few rounds of explosive magic spells at the library encased with my innocent fledgling of a Goddess niece. Fuck it, I’ll have to pull out the big guns. Haven’t done it in a while.

I don’t trust Ms. Devil with my niece for this fucking long. Urgh.

“Everyone, stand back. Or better yet go back to Milton’s pad and wait for me.”

“Hell no,” Jaxson growls. “My damn mate’s in there.”

Heh, her mate is as stubborn as I am. Since he’s my lil niece’s mate, I won’t get annoyed by it.

“Look, if you don’t wanna become toasted wolf meat, you might wanna,” I motion my head to the left. Come on, I’m a damn Titan. Serious blows with my magic can cause area damage.

I can risk it with all the ice but fuck it, not with Stella’s little friends around.

Jaxson put a few little scratches on the ice, I’ll give the pup that. But for me to get inside before it’s too late he’s gonna have to listen.

So.

I snap my fingers and open a portal that drops Stella’s lil goof troop back to where they’ll be safe.

The only one that dodges? Wren.

“Damn it, Titan. Don’t blow the damn academy up.”

I roll my damn eyes. “Get in the hole dog.”

Wren bushes up much like a cat, his eyes glowing. “Call me a fucking dog ag—”

I push his furry oversized ass into the portal and he growls on the way down. Snapping it closed I gather my most potent magic from the darkest recesses of my being.

Shit’s getting real.

Annd this is gonna hurt.

Chanting, I kneel down on one knee and draw a symbol on the ground, closing my eyes.

Olly olly oskin free, or whatever that shit is mortals say.

Thunderous cracks of lightning hail from the sky and shoot down over me, transporting me inside the library.

I’m coming, you brat.

I could never have kids.

Thank FUCK I can’t make ‘em.

My magic tears at Ms. Devil’s magic and I make it inside. I fall forward on my face, heaving. It’s like my insides are on fire and I’m being strangled from the inside out.

When I catch my breath I glance up to see the Devil with my niece in her grip, a Syboryllic knife to her throat.

Great.

Not that shit.

I drag myself up on my two feet, metal buckles clinking around me. “Put the kid down.”

“Well, well, well. I didn’t expect you to even give a damn.” Stella fights against the black matter constricting her body.

“Come on, this is between you and me... Sexy.”

The corner of her lip quips up in disgust. “You dare think I’m interested in you?”

“I mean who isn’t?” Honestly.

She laughs and the same black matter holding Stella down grips my ankles. Pfft. Please.

“Take me instead. You know I’d love for you to bind me up, baby.” Her magic is wearing me down. It’s crackling up to my shoulders and access to my power is fleeting. “Look!” I open the portal to her domain; hell. “Go! Take it! I am not interested. I relinquish the crown, almighty Satan.”

I crash down on my knees. “Just don’t hurt her. I’m the piece of shit that needs—agh—and ultimately is getting the pain. Not. Her.” Shit, gravity’s gaining a few thousand pounds here. These abs are just for show.

Ah, I need to hit the gym.

If my powers are going to be shit in a few minutes then I might as well hurry it up. I take my nails and dig into my flesh, summoning Cloraxic magic runes on each of my wrists. Black blood oozes down my skin and onto the ground as I hold them out to the sides for the devil herself to see.

Her eyes widen. “Hmph, Your powers were already—”

“I know your name,” I smirk while withholding a deep chuckle. “Remember when we first met? What I did to you? Oh, honey, you told me your real name and we had so much fun with it...”

Her face reddens and she bears her fangs. Sexy. So damn gorgeous. Knowing the Devil’s name means you can control them. Which is exactly how I took her crown and domain.

“But I’m not going to use it. Nor will I even have the power to.” I shake my wrists for her.

“All this for her?” She jabs a thumb at Stella wrapped in her black magic. Damn it, that knife pointing at her is pissing me off. Pissed off at myself that is.

“Well yes, and you too... And for all the bull shit I’ve caused. C’mon, babes. Spank me. Really. I’m an asshole who deserves it.” The weakness is getting to me and I can’t hold my arms out anymore, so my body begins to sink to the ground. I bet I look pathetic on this embarrassing path of redemption.

The Devil looks at my wrists, then at Stella, and last, the portal.

Stella's the only family that's worth anything to me. She holds no contempt, even though I shanked her wolf, and put her through the Necro-Realm and literal fucking hell.

Girl's got balls.

She deserves to survive.

Some of the black magic wrapped around Stella falls from her mouth. "See? I told you he's changing... Total work in progress, yeah."

Huh?

The ice that glosses over the windows and parts of the ceiling melts rapidly, allowing the sunset's rays to spill in and warm the library. My niece is lowered down and free from the Devil's grip.

"Ugh, fine," the Devil grunts, raking back some baby blond hair, "Your campus and earth are free from my control."

"Woah, wait. Someone wanna fill me in?"

I'm too wobbly to stand but since the spells are disappearing my energy isn't as encumbered and is slowly returning.

Won't be at one hundred due to these Cloraxic symbols, but that can be worked out with a lil help.

Stella saunters up to me with a warm glowing smile. Damn her adorableness.

"I made a deal with the Devil," she announces, showing me the palm of her hand glowing with a deal rune, "and I won! Thanks, Uncle Xheros. You came through. I knew you would."

I frown. "Hey, that was stupid risky of you."

"Where's my thank you at?" She pouts, crossing her arms.

I see so much of her mother and my brother in her... And, to be honest. There's some of me in her too.



I don't deserve this.

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# STELLA

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“Ready to reign supreme again?” I ask the Devil, winking an eye. Heh, I knew I’d win this deal. I’ve always heard the phrase; don’t make a deal with the devil.

Yet, I did.

She didn’t hesitate to indulge in the deal either. It was almost too easy. I wonder if that’s how Xheros... wait, he said he knows her name.

Ugh, and he said some other stuff too. Did NOT need to know that.

The Devil looks at me and Xheros then back at the portal again, but a cast of melancholy falls over her. Something else is wrong.

She clears her throat and straightens her back, holding her hand out she glares at Xheros half-heartedly. “I’m waiting for my crown, you idiot.”

“Ah, shit.” He glances at his wrists. “Mind helping me out of this, babe?” He shines another cheesy toothy grin.

She sucks her teeth because she knows she likes his goofy smile. I wonder what Professor Ivory would do if he found it he has a thing for the Devil too...

She runs her hands up and down his wrists, chanting. The symbols fade away and her hands linger on his skin longer than she’d like.

Pulling away she waits for her crown while keeping her focus on the portal blazing in front of us.

“Why didn’t you use my name, Titan?” She asks, her voice soft and unsteady.

“Because I wanna be more than just a power-hungry Titan. I’m an uncle now. Gotta be a stunning example.”

Her mouth forms a small ‘o’.

“Here’s your crown and your domain, my lady.” Xheros summons up a black key. Huh, that’s a crown?

She examines it and takes it with hesitation. “Are you staying on earth realm, Titan?”

“Yeah, for a lil while.”

She walks to the portal.

I pipe up. “Hey, I’m gonna actually miss you. Your fashion is to die for. I’d kill for a corset like yours.”

She stops, and glances back at Xheros and me.

“Jeez, Charon. Stop!” Xheros demands.

Shit, that’s her name?!

(My, we know the devil’s name now...)

A glow casts over her body and I swear I can hear a shiver leave her lips. Oh goodness, do these two need privacy?

“Tell me, babe, do you really want to return to hell?”

I cut in. “Hey, if she’s being controlled can she even tell the truth?”

“Yes, she can. Charon. Tell me what you want. Now.”

She turns around, fists balled with magic. “I want to slap you and,” throwing her magic into the ground, it shakes the library but doesn’t destroy or damage it, “I don’t want to rule hell. I want to be happy, fuck you some more, and experience something other than making others suffer. It’s tiring. Boring! It’s not me.”

I gasp. Holy shit.

(My, the poor thing. Usually, the crown is handed down to members of her family. Sounds like she didn’t want it...)

She turns back to the portal to hell and marches up to it. “Damn it, Dainn, come forth!”

Purple flames border the portal and Xheros steps in front of me.

“I wanna see.”

“Stay back you stubborn lil brat.”

I end up looking around his arm and witnessing another woman lean her bust and torso through the portal. She looks like Charon with blond hair but has purple eyes. Oh and the same sense of fashion, but more transparent clothing material. You can even see her huge nipples. I wonder if I can find an outfit like that for Jaxson...

“The throne is yours. Take care of hell. You were always the better candidate, sister.”

Her mouth drops. “Woah, what in the fuck is happening with you?”

“Just take it.”

Dainn sees me, Xheros and laughs. “You got fucked by a Titan. Now you have a daddy complex. How cute.”

Charon bristles with anger. “Take. This. Leave.”

“Fine, thanks!” She plucks the black key from Charon’s fingers. “Love you, visit me often, ‘kay?”

Charon grumbles.

The portal snaps closed and the double doors to the library burst open with Jaxson, his father, and Cecil in tow.

Uh oh. How are they going to take the news that both a Titan and an ex-Devil will be staying at T.G?

\*\*\*

It’s officially been two weeks since I returned and things have been pretty peachy. Gwen and Rival are a legit duo. Jaxson and I have resolved some sexual tension of our own.

Xheros and Charon have been a hit. I think they’re living somewhere under the campus. When the academy found out about their two new residents it became a huge story. Talk about having a fan base.

Everyone's raving about Charon and Xheros. Some are even writing fanfiction and drawing fan art. It's amazing. And he's my uncle.

I have a famous uncle. Heh.

There's a small sting of sadness, though. Because all this raving naturally got around to Professor Ivory. I wonder how he's holding up with all the news swirling around him. I saw that look in his eye when he saw Xheros.

Pure romance.

Sigh. I wonder if it's possible for someone to have two lovers. How scandalous. I can see Xheros doing just that.

Despite the new equilibrium, something still isn't right.

That's because Helena is still at large. She opened a portal that allowed Dark Fae in to capture me. She's good with magic. Swift even.

The campus might be padlocked with even more protection, but Helena is a crafty bitch. And she wants what's mine.

A part of me has kept silent just to keep the peace, but if Jaxson and I are to be mated officially soon, then I need to find her.

Milton could help but I'd have to keep that secret. That'd be hard to do since he and Jaxson are a bit more buddy-buddy now.

Hm...

Wait. Professor Ivory.

\*\*\*

I stop at the Professor's classroom door and peek in. His class isn't in session since we're on break, so he's alone in his high-back tufted chair, staring listlessly off into the air. Poor guy. I know what heartache looks like.

“Hey, Professor Ivory? I have an important question, can I bother you for a few minutes?”

He closes his eyes. Although he isn't crying, the pain he's giving off radiates all the way to the door and it makes me shudder. Fuck.

“Come in, Ms. Helios.”

I slip inside, close the door, and walk up to his desk that sits in the front but off the side.

“Oh, and I want to thank you again for the help back in Necro-Realm.”

“My pleasure.”

I place my hands on his desk and drop my head between my shoulders. “I need more help. I have to know the whereabouts of Helena.”

He sighs and leans onto the desk with his forearms. Swirls of colorful magic play on his desk, spiraling out from his arms. Saoirses are so whimsical with magic. Makes it even worse to think that he's depressed over Xheros' new babe.

“Alpha Warclaw—”

I hold my hand up. “I know, I know. It's supposed to be a secret from me. But we both know that won't last long. She's good with magic. While I'm a dual goddess with a bad temper. I have to know something.”

Professor Ivory swishes his hand around and a golden glitter disperses from the ceiling and coats the entire room. I can only guess this is to prevent eavesdroppers.

“Helena isn't too far at all. She's straddling the lines of the academy. Often trying to break in. She's either in downtown Taika or somewhere in Galdur county.”

“So if I go out there—”

“Not a chance. All the admin know not to let you out of those gates.”

I stumble back. “Shit, I'm a prisoner again?!”

“Stella, you’re powerful. Dual Goddesses are rare but they’re not quite immortal either.”

I bite my cheek.

This is as much as I’m going to get from him. But it’s enough. It’s a lot actually.

“Thanks, professor.”

“Promise me you won’t put yourself in danger.” He frowns and tilts his head to the side. His eyes sparkle like opals despite the sadness they hold inside.

I stick my tongue out. “No promises.” He needs a happy ending too. Or I should say a happy beginning.

“Ms. Helios,” he croaks, shaking his head with a grin.

I catch myself turning on my heel and pause.

“What about you and Xheros?”

His face grows red like cherries or crushed red rose petals.

“Excuse me, him and me, what?!”

Oh, look at him all frazzled. Cute. He does still like him.

“You know. I’ve read menages before. You could totally \_\_\_”

SNAP!

And just like that he transports me into the library, dumping me onto a leather couch. I bounce twice and a few students turn their heads out of mild curiosity that dies only seconds later.

Well, at least I planted the possibility in his mind.

Speaking of Xheros, time to make a second stop after defense class...

\*\*\*

Ding DONG!

The bell rings and students pour out of the classroom doors. Classes are done for the day but I’m not going straight back to my dorm. Jaxson’s probably gonna go a little crazy

looking for me, but he's going to have to wait a few more minutes.

I have one more stop to do today.

I duck into the library, looking over my shoulder in case Milton or Jaxson happen to see me. I need privacy for this visit. The coast remains clear and I pass many students on my way back to a private area that Xheros told me about in case I needed him.

Squeezing between tall tightly spaced bookcases, I come to a small opening and step inside the circle Xheros made for me to call him.

"Xheros," I whisper. This location has to stay secret or else the entire campus will try to knock on his door. The symbols around the circle etched in the stone ground begin to light up and dance around.

In a flash of blue light, I'm transported down into Xheros and Charon's cozy crib underneath Taika Galdur.

"Wow, you really dressed it up down here!" My mouth hangs wide open as I stare in amazement at the ceilings. It's composed of the pointy ends of terminated crystals, which sparkle like stars in a dark cool sky. The scent of orange vanilla fills the air and adds to the cozy vast aesthetic.

"Thanks," Xheros says while he sits on a black leather couch enjoying a hot drink. "I owe it to Charon, she's got one helluva eye."

"Your hell puns are getting way outta control." I walk down into their main living area. The shit's huge. It's the size of an entire apartment. Or two!

The furniture is all black with gold accents and the coffee tables are made with a smoky black crystal. Definitely Charon's aesthetic. But I can see Xheros having it too. No wonder those two go so well together.

"Yeah, yeah. Can't help it." He sniffs the air loudly like he's part shifter himself. "Huh..."

"What?"



He sets his cup down and cocks an eyebrow. “You’re up to no good aren’t you.”

“You can... smell that.”

“Titans can smell all kinds of things. Weird. I know. But out with it, kid. What’re you up to?”

“Fine. I need your help in finding this girl named Helena \_\_\_”

“Noooo, no, hell to the no!” Xheros sings with a confident smile.

“Come on! I’m supposed to get officially mated soon. It’s because of her I even got into Necro Realm. She opened the gates for the Dark Fae and I willingly let them take me!”

Xheros frowns. “Still a fat no.”

“Cecil Ivory told you not to help me, didn’t he?” Ah shit. How am I going to make any progress now? “Aren’t you supposed to be on my side?” I huff out.

“Okay so A.) Not when it’s going to get you hurt. B.) Cecil didn’t say anything to me. It’s your soon-to-be Alpha-Daddy-in-law.”

My cheeks warm up. That’s right. I’m part of his pack now. Of course, he’s going to be all fatherly over me. All this family stuff is too complicated.

“Wow, orphans have more freedom to move in life, don’t they?” I think aloud with a sigh.

Xheros’ expression drops. “Orphan?”

“You didn’t know? Mom and dad did NOT raise me. I was raised in an orphanage until I was eighteen. Then I was kicked out at like two something in the morning.”

His eyes widen, gray and blue orbs sparkling with surprise and a dash of rage.

He covers his mouth with one hand and rubs the corner of his mouth with his thumb, humming. It sends an odd chill up my spine.

“Hey, woah, woah, stop it right there. I’m fine! Don’t worry about it!”

“W-Were they nice to you?” He lowers his brows and narrows his eyes. Great, I hear that Titans have a thing for revenge. And after how we met, I can only imagine what’s brewing in his head right now.

“Uncle, you really gotta—”

“Did anyone hurt you?”

Oh my damn. Here we go... Come on, come on, think, Stella. Change the subject.

“Wait, where’s Charon?” Please have A.D.D. Please.

“That’s not gonna work.” Shit.

“But I was just thinking about how cool it’d be if she could have a little reverse harem of her own! You know, you, Cecil, her...”

He jumps up waving his arms. “Guh! Hey, no! Bad idea!”

Charon’s voice snakes around from behind me. “Cecil? Is that his name? The sexy little Saoirse with the balls enough to contain me within the academy’s grounds?” She purrs heavily in thought. I turn to see her in a black lace dress with two high slits on each side showcasing her thick pale thighs and fishnet stockings.

“Charon, babe, you look smokin’ as usual.” Xheros levitates over to her.

“Mmm, are you interested in that long-haired professor?” Charon asks him.

Xheros squeezes his eyes shut. Heh, should’ve given me some useful info on Helena. Now I gotta sidetrack him and hopefully watch them bring Cecil into the fold. He looks so lonely and wistful lately.

“Mmm, the thought of his magic all over me makes me feel dirty. If I can have both of you, that’d make me really happy...” her voice dies off with a heavy lusty sensual tone.

Xheros' eyes pop open and a devious smile slips onto his face. "Anything for you babe."

Happy dance.

"Mmm, you excite me, Titan."

Oh ew.

They look at me.

"Yeah, just transport me."

SNAP!

I'm thrown into the hallway of my dorm. Right in front of Jaxson who's undoubtedly been looking for me.

"Stella! Where've you been?"

"Out."

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# STELLA

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Night falls and the birds are still getting in their last chirps as Jaxson and I sit together on his balcony overlooking the campus and its rolling greenery. There are even a few lakes up ahead that I didn't know about.

It's serene and calm with a subtle fizzle of magic that makes you feel cozy. Kind of like the crackle of an open camping flame.

Jaxson disappears for a few seconds then reappears with two plates of food piled high. "Hungry?" he asks, his muscular definition glowing under the moonlight.

I clasp my hands together, my stomach rumbling. "Oh my god. Food. I didn't even—"

"Stella," Jaxson cuts in, putting the plates on a small lacquered table, "you have to stop."

"Huh?"

"My dad, Professor Ivory, and I are onto Helena. But I need you to stay safe and just..."

"Act like everything is fine? Like she can't pop up at any moment and cause havoc?"

Jaxson frowns with a slow barely noticeable nod.

"Oh, hell no. I think not. I'm literally the power combo of two gods and you want me to just sit on the sidelines?!"

"Stella, you might be a Goddess. But you're still new to your powers."

I drop my shoulders. "So I'm weak now."

"Far from it." He shakes his head and rakes his black locks back. Damn his muscles dancing under the light and making

me swoon. Ugh. I'm supposed to be pissed at him right now.  
"Just let me protect you."

I push the covers off of me and jump to my feet. I'm being coddled and I don't like it. I brush past him towards the door.

"Stella, wait!"

Just as I open his door, his powerful arm comes over my shoulder and pushes it closed.

"Please, don't end the night like this..."

"You already did." I pull at the door but it's not budging.

'Lunai a little help here.'

(Mate...)

Oh no. Not that again...

I make the dumbest mistake and glance up to see Jaxson's corded forearm keeping the door shut. Damn, even his arms get me excited. And he's really pushing his alpha scent right now. Go ahead, just lay it on a girl.

"Jaxson. Just let me go. I'm tired."

"Stella. I lost you once. As your mate, I failed you."

I turn around and meet him dead in the eyes. "I went with the Dark Fae willingly."

"It shouldn't have happened."

"I had to. Or else we wouldn't have come so far!" I rub my hands up against his abs, dipping my fingers between the seams of his muscles. "Plus, I like a little danger here and there. Let me live a little."

"You're going to give me a full head of gray hair early, aren't you?"

I tussle mine with a grin. "It'll be white like mine."

Jaxson dips his massive form and grabs me by the hips to hike me over his shoulder. Marching to his big bed off to the side, he dumps me down and I bounce. Suddenly every inch of my body craves to be naked.

My eyes happen to hook onto the delicious bulge growing between those massive muscular thighs clothed in black slacks. The wolf in me growls for complete nudity at once.

Butterflies flutter from the bottom of my rib cage to my core and then combust into an inferno.

These panties must come off. Why isn't he ripping them off yet?

I reach out to free that cock from its confines but he stops me and grunts.

“I'm going to have to punish you.”

I bite my lower lip. “Oh really? How are you going to punish a goddess?”

He smirks and flexes his pecs. Fuck me. “Easy.”

Jaxson rips out his cock and precum webs down from it like thick honey catching the moon's glow as it falls down in slow motion. My body shivers, bunching up my areolas and pruning my nipples. It's like they're being pinched in mid-air. I can only imagine how good Jaxson's rough hungry hot tongue will feel against them.

I work at my shirt until Jaxson's eyes command me to stop. Alpha power pours off of him and I fall under the control of his dominance. They glow gold with his wolf. “Don't undress. Keep everything on.”

Excuse me, what?

“How're you going to fuck me?” I ask with a hint of a growl.

A wild wolfish grin consumes his face, making cute dimples on his chiseled face.

“Who said we were fucking?”

I know he's lying. No, nope. He's going to jump into this wet-ass wolf. (WAW)

My legs part, beckoning him, a daring attempt to override his wolf. Reclining onto his bed, I arch my back enough that you can see the outline of my nipples.

“Hmph,” he lets out a solid one-puff chuckle. Confident little bastard, isn’t he?

He climbs onto the bed and dips between my legs, inhaling my pussy’s scent. That’s right.

See if you can control yourself now, alpha.

Jaxson backs up and stands on his knees, his cock ramrod forward with more precum leaking from his heavy dark shaft fitted with veins much like the rest of his body.

My panties are soaked and all I can think about is making him go so mad for me that he forgets about that so-called punishment.

The only punishment I want is a firm cock shoving inside my pussy. Wild and untamed.

I move my legs around to cradle his cock between my feet, but he pushes them to the side. Ugh.

“No, no, babe,” he grabs his cock and strokes it. My core clenches and flushes with heat I didn’t know could exist. So this is how a fated mate reacts when in heat. Irritatingly sensational. My body fidgets and spasms as he strokes his cock in front of me. The need to touch it and suck it off is eating at me.

“Not fair, I don’t deserve teasing.”

“Heh, this isn’t teasing. This is punishment.”

“Who punishes a goddess?”

“Her alpha does.” He rubs the head of his dick against my inner thigh, leaving a path of thick pre-cum behind. God, I wanna lick it. “You disappear all day today looking for trouble and danger, and you want a reward?”

“Nothing I can’t handle...”

He flips me around onto my stomach, throws my skirt up over my butt, and lands a firm meaty smack across my ass.

It jiggles, making it feel like I have more junk in the trunk than I actually do.

Next thing I know, his dick is planted between my cheeks. My skin burns against the hardness of his cock. I spread my legs for his amusement. The little growl he gives me tells me he can't say no...

"Fuck, your ass is so sexy." He grinds against my ass, precum leaving cool trickles against my fiery skin.

I reach back to swipe at it, but no, Mr. Alpha-hole here still has it in for my punishment. My pussy is on liquid fire, my nipples are digging into the bed through my shirt, and why the fuck are my panties still on. I don't care if they're pushed to the side. It's not the same as being bare in front of him.

Jaxson slaps my ass with his cock, sending newer sensations into my body that he won't let me react to.

"Damn it, Jaxson," I hiss out, clawing at his sheets. They're going to turn into ribbons if he keeps messing with me.

"Imagine how worried you made me."

SLAP! Oh yessss....

I sneak a hand down between my legs and into my soaked panties. My clit is drenched and ready for any type of stimulation it can get.

Unh, it still isn't enough. My little muffled moan gives me away and Jaxson lifts me up by the thighs to see what's going on.

Quickly I withdraw my fingers.

He inhales the air. "Were you finger fucking yourself without permission?"

"Since when did I need that?"

SLAP!

Ah, fuck yeah. I love the little sizzle left behind.

I maneuver my feet up to see if I can catch his cock and cradle it. But he pushes my feet to the side.

"No, no, babe. Remember, punishment."



I twist my body around to take another glimpse at that hard oozing cock of his and damn if it isn't ready to take me.

“Not fair, I don't deserve punishment.”

“You disappeared all day. Looking for trouble and danger.”

“Nothing I can't handle...”

He pushes my right shoulder down and I lose sight of that lovely manhood.

My skirt falls a little but he hikes it back up and lands another slap against my ass. It jiggles, making it feel fatter than it really is.

Next thing I know, his dick is planted firmly between my ass cheeks. My skin burns under the touch of his cock. I spread my legs for his amusement and the little growl he gives me tells me he can't deny me for too long...

“Fuck, your ass is so hot.” He grinds his cock against me and I pray it slips into my pussy. Precum smears all over my skin.

I reach back to swipe at it but no, Mr. Alpha-hole here still has it in for my punishment. My pussy is on liquid fire, my nipples are digging into the bed through my shirt, and why the fuck are my panties still on?

I don't care if they're pushed to the side, I'm starving for a hundred percent nudity. Fuck, let me be naked at least.

“Damn it, Jaxson,” I hiss, clawing at his sheets. They're going to turn into ribbons if he keeps messing with me.

With the way he's grinding, he's going to make himself cum before I can. If I can.

Hell, he's going to leave me aching.

“Imagine how worried you made me,” he grunts out.

SLAP!

Oh god yes. Very much yes.

I sneak my hand back down to my clit again and start messing around. If he cums, I cum. No negotiation.

I accidentally let a muffled moan escape and he catches it.

Shit, gave myself away.

“You think you can keep that a secret?” He chuckles deeply with a sinister undertone. “I can scent your hands down in your pussy, playing with your clit.”

My body shivers from the bass in his voice. My fingers pause and I swallow the stubborn lump of anticipation in my throat. I can feel my heavy heartbeat all the way down in my wetness.

“Jaxson...” I whine.

“That better be an apology coming.”

“For what? No regrets.”

I push my ass against his cock and wiggle it. His dick is so hard he’s ready to explode at any moment. And I want him to do that right inside me.

“Then you’ll regret not getting this...” Jaxson takes his cock and spansks my ass with it. Then prods the entrance of my pussy and I just about cum from the excitement and contact alone.

“I’m a goddess, I bend to no one’s will.”

The inner rebel in me is enjoying this; swimming in our struggle for dominance and power.

How long can he last?

“That cock’s pretty hard. Are you sure about not taking your dear mate?”

Jaxson growls, his desire for me overrides his desire to ‘punish’ me. Heh. Just one more crack.

My inner whore unleashes and a new kink of mine is born...

“I want you to choke me, Alpha.”

Oh shit. Have I snapped?

Jaxson stills, even though I can’t see him, I sense a tension in the air. Go for the gusto.

I chuckle into the pillows and sheets. “Choke me, fuck me so hard—”

His hard cock pierces my wet hot flesh in a flash and I gasp. The way his oversized ribbed manhood sinks into my flesh makes me arch upwards. Shit, I’m seeing stars. The whole damn universe. It’s like I threw gasoline into a raging three-alarm fire and flames are rising off my body.

And to be honest? Crackles of my powers are circling around my arms.

His hands creep around my neck, hungry yet gentle. Maybe even a touch nervous.

“Grip me hard.” And oh, I mean it.

His voice is throaty and deep with arousal, “Stella...”

“Safeword is sun. Go for it, big bad wolf.”

His meaty paws finally find the courage to grip me with delicious, careful tension. It has my pussy weeping with joy.

The pressure against my neck sends this euphoria, swirling around in my head, making the pleasure so concentrated that I feel like I’m losing my mind.

Jaxson’s powerful thrusts send us over the edge and my inner walls clamp down on him like the jaws of a lion. He shoots his cum inside me and fills me up to the point it’s leaking out of me. His grip loosens and I’m sad to see it go. But there will be plenty of other times.

I slam into my own orgasm and squirt like I’m trying to put out a massive fire. It’s mixed with cum and my own personal juices. It’s not pee, but it’s definitely something.

Our bodies fall wet and limp.

Jaxson rolls over so as to not squish me under his massive frame, and pulls me into his body. “Mine,” he whispers.

I yawn and stretch. “Maybe... next time... I’ll punish you too.” I smile and allow the slumber lurking around my eyes to overtake me.

“I mean it, Stella. Don’t worry me like that.”

“No promises.”

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# STELLA

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I turn the cold brass knob of my shared dorm with the caution of disabling a ticking time bomb. I feel stupid because why am I sneaking?

Oh, that's right.

I spent the night fucking my mate and I'm guilty of breaking the rules of NOT being in my dorm room. For shame.

Boo hoo.

But Gwen seems to be so by the book she's definitely gonna lecture me with her sugary voice. I peek inside and there's no sign of Gwen.

Or Rival. Heh.

Just the rays of warm sunshine of the early morning and my bed... still messy from when I left it last.

Slipping inside, I breathe a sigh of relief. Our dorm has a warmth that embraces and invites you in. Unlike the orphanage, there's safety here. To think I woke up in this room bound to the bed because Jaxson's rejection lit the inner wolf bitch in me.

"You really thought you could sneak around a witch?" Gwen says. But where is she?!

I look around and wave my hands around. "Gwen?! Are you like, invisible?"

She chuckles. "Up here, silly."

I follow her voice and see her floating on a glittery red broomstick upside down close to the ceiling. Stealthy.

"Figure I'd practice this new upside-down flying with my ruby broom on you!" She flips back down and lands on her two feet. "I just love flying."

“Sweet. Looks fun.” I fiddle with my uniform’s black silk tie.

“So, someone was busy last night?” She narrows her eyes with a slick smile.

“Like you and Rival while I was gone?” Bam. Right back at her.

She reddens like an apple. “S-Stella! That was—It’s just...” She scratches at her broomstick, diverting her gaze.

“Come on you two aren’t a couple yet?” I fold my arms.

A weird sucking motion catches our attention. A black hole swirls to life in the middle of our dorm room floor and we get into battle mode.

Gwen’s ruby broomstick turns into a blazing fire one.

And me? I’ve got lightning bolts at the ends of my hands. Good thing I’ve grown more accustomed to summoning them out now.

It’s not until Milton’s head pops out of the portal that our shoulders drop and our tension dissipates.

“Top of the day to ya!” He says with a small salute, his steel frames reflecting a band of sunshine.

“Damn it, Milton,” I say, stomping over to him while he crawls out of the portal, “you scared us shitless.”

Gwen whacks him in the back with a basic broom. “You could’ve gotten hurt! And we could’ve been naked!”

Milton adjusts his steel frames and grins. “Oh, sorry! You know my magic will alert me to any nudity or intimate activity. I won’t barge in on ya like that, you guys.” He claps and up pops a golden leather book studded with black crystals on the spine. “Plus, who wants to get mauled to death by Jaxson or bled dry by Rival?”

“Good point. But why are you here?”

“Heh heh!” Milton opens his book and a holographic image of... Taika City appears.

“Take a look! See those golden glowing spots?” He points at the three-dimensional model of Taika City.

“Yeah.”

“Oh no. That’s not good!” Gwen gasps.

“Woah, what’s not good?”

Milton closes the book and levitates, crossing his legs in a pretzel-like fashion. “There’s illegal rogue magic causing problems in Taika. Which is extremely rare due to its laws and magic neutralizing spells for particular neighborhoods.”

“And we need to know this... why?”

“Because I have a hunch that Helena is behind it. The girl’s crazy good at the dark arts and breaking the rules.”

“Where is she?! Can you find her?”

“Nope. She’s masking herself. It’s near impossible to tell her exact movements. But she’s definitely been trying to get into the academy. Unsuccessfully.”

My shoulders shiver. She’s after me.

“If she’s after me or Jaxson why attack the city?”

Gwen sits down on the corner of her bed.

“To lure us out,” Gwen answers.

Milton nods his head.

A loud siren pierces the air and my ears are about to explode.

“What the fuck?!”

“A D-level siren!” Milton freaks out. “Holy hell, what’s going on?!”

We run out onto the balcony to see what’s happening and see a flood of students running and flying to the assembly auditorium. The siren blares over the campus. Gwen told me about these drills and what the sirens mean but there weren’t any emails sent about any upcoming drills.

“Stella, come with me, we’ll fly to the auditorium. This isn’t a drill!”

Gwen grabs a broomstick that looks extra long; made for two. Or maybe even three.

But then a portal opens underneath our feet and swallows all three of us.

Falling through a black void, we drop onto a black couch and bounce to a stop. The room we’re in overlooks the assembly of students gathering on the auditorium floor.

“Stella,” Jaxson rushes to my side.

Rival slips in right behind him silent as a mouse and immediately looks for Gwen, spotting her on the couch.

“What’s happening?” I ask Jaxson.

Just as Jaxson opens his mouth to explain, a high-pitched mic sound pierces the air. Professor Ivory’s voice comes through.

We all gather at the balcony rail to hear what’s going on.

“Attention all students. We need all of you to be in defense mode. No one may leave the campus. There is illegal rogue magic attacking Taika City and we’ve had an attack on the outer rings of the school’s defense system.”

A hushed murmur grows with the crowd of excited students. Some think it’s a good time to show off, and some look legitimately worried.

Professor Ivory continues, “We’ll be crafting and sending a team of highly skilled students and staff to remedy this situation and end the conflict as swiftly as possible. We’ll limit, but also take volunteers.”

I throw my hand into the air. “I volunteer.”

Gwen, Jax, Milton, and Rival join in too.

Then Xheros appears behind us and floats over our heads. “Aw hell yeah, let me at ‘em.”

Cecil frowns at Xheros’ presence and nods his head.



“Classes are dismissed. Return to your dorms. The library will be closed but the dining hall will remain open.”

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Everyone gathers in Alpha Warclaw’s office.

There’s palpable tension in the air, and for the first time I’ll be able to stretch my powers for a new purpose; defending the academy and Taika City against Helena. And well, finally dealing with her to get her out of my hair. Then I’ll be able to go and live a real life without some stupid threat looming over my head.

“You cannot go.” Alpha Warclaw’s words tumble out of his mouth short, curt, and heavy. He says it like you can’t argue with him. Like it’s set in eternal stone that the gods can’t even chisel away from. Well, fuck that.

“What do you mean I can’t go?! Taika City and the academy are in trouble because of me and you expect me to sit on my ass and watch the damn world burn!? This is Helena, and I have to find her.”

Alpha Warclaw has his elbows on the desk, face semi-hidden behind laced fingers as he scans the room. Rival is standing next to Gwen floating on her broomstick. Milton is chilling in the corner of a couch with a distressed look knotting his eyebrows. Xheros is in the back staring at Cecil and Jaxson stands by his father’s side.

I narrow my eyes at Jaxson. “What say you? Mate?”

Jaxson exhales sharply. “Stella...”

“Ugh. Such a copy and paste of your father.”

“That’s not fair.”

I turn away, folding my arms.

Milton leans forward. “Alpha, who will be on the team to investigate the matter?”

Xheros pipes up too. “Yeah, I’m getting kinda bored myself. With my titan powers—”

Cecil cuts him off. “You won’t be doing a thing, Titan.”

Oop. Lover’s quarrel?

“Babe, really?”

“Call me that again and we’ll be having problems.”

Alpha Warclaw warns them to stop and they do. Hey, I needed that distraction because my own mate is pissing me off right now.

Protect this, protect that. God damn it, just throw me into hot water and let me swim!

“Milton, Gwen, Xheros, Stella. You will not be joining this investigation. Instead,” he directs his eyes to Rival. “Prince Petrov and my son Jaxson along with Cecil will investigate.”

“Woah, wait. You have a dual goddess on your hands and a damn Titan and that’s all you’re going to send?!”

“We cannot risk certain treaties. No one knows you’re a dual goddess. Keep it to yourself. And Xheros is classified as a C-Rank Titan.”

“The fuck I am!” Blue flames erupt behind his head.

“You will be if you want to keep your damn hole under the ground you call home!” Alpha Warclaw stands up, hands still on his desk. “Our academy would be disbanded if we demonstrated that we have too much power on our side. So work with me, you two. We’re trying to keep you two safe. And Taika Galdur Academy.”

Damn, the world of magic is more complicated than I thought.

Treaties.

Power balances.

“Does Helena know who I am?”

“I don't know. And that's what I'm afraid of.”

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# STELLA

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I huff and puff and pace our dorm for about thirty minutes until my feet start aching and Gwen persuades me to sit down.

I'm crackling with power because I'm pissed the fuck off.

"I don't understand. Disband TG? Get expelled? What the hell am I supposed to do with my powers if I can't help anyone?"

Gwen rests her hands on my shoulders. "You really have a lot of your uncle in you. Just look at how your power crackles blue lightning whereas his is blue flames."

I glance at the tall mirror in our dorm and harrumph.

"You're good at distractions, you know that, Gwen?"

"It helps sometimes."

"Yeah." I get up and walk to the balcony. Not one student is out walking around. "And the library is closed... I can't just sit here."

"And you won't have to!" Milton's voice pops up. He jumps out of a portal wearing a silver holographic leather cloak with multicolored cabochons that line his shoulders and red-rimmed glasses that don circular gray lenses. "Come with me. We'll be able to do something." He waves a mother-of-pearl wand around and it creates ribbons of light that form an oval portal. "After you, ladies."

Gwen investigates and then hops into the portal. I rush and jump in as well with Milton right behind me.

It's a small room with zero windows. There's a narrow golden table that's got a shit ton of runes carved into it with seven golden chairs. The source of light? A simple orb of power that floats over the table like a mini sun.

There's an odd taste of lemon on my tongue and I chuck that up to Milton's magic since I've learned certain spells can leave an aftertaste. The walls are velvet black with a few discreet runes of their own. And the air is so cold and dry and the room feels... unsteady. As if floating in an abyss of nothingness.

"Where is this?" I reach to pull out a chair.

Milton chuckles with pride in his magic. "Nowhere. That's the beauty of it. It's a simple old family spell us Pointdexters like to use when we need to do some discreet discussions."

"Does this mean we can dip into Taika City secretly?!"

"Nope. That's a bit more complicated. It's way more than Professor Ivory's magic we'd have to overcome."

Blue and hot pink flames blast in the back of the room and Milton goes on the defense. Gwen and I do too.

Xheros emerges with his hands up and a goofy grin on his face. "Hey, hey, hey! I'm insulted that I wasn't invited." He has Charon tethered to his side.

Milton's jaw drops. "How'd you find us?!"

"I'm a Titan. Not a mortal. Plus, I tagged your lil portal happy ass when I learned you were a Pointdexter."

Charon is next to Xheros, staring at her new lover with stars in her eyes.

"Charon. You're an ex-devil. That's some heavy magic knowledge. Do you know how we could sneak out of—"

Xheros butts in. "Woahhh, my lil niece is NOT going to break the rules." He points to himself. "That's my job."

"Please. I'm not a kid."

Charon moves in front of Xheros and opens her hands up, summoning three bracelets. More bracelets?

"Volcanic Hell Glass. These are number one in going under the radar. The magic to Taika's borders is that it won't let beings with magic cross certain territories. With this, you're essentially a magic-less mortal."

Each bracelet floats over to its new owner.

I take it and a shiver shakes me to the core.

(Careful. That will dampen our powers a hundred percent. She's not exaggerating. It will really make you mortal. Until you take it off at least.)

I ask Charon, "Will this hurt my wolf?"

"Not at all."

Gwen marvels at the diamond-cut cuff of the bracelet, holding it up to the light in awe. "Amazing. Such wonderful spellwork and artistry."

Charon juts out a hip with a triumphant smile. "Well of course."

Milton inspects his with his glasses, his jaw all over the floor. "Fucking impressed. But naturally, it'd be this good. This is the most amazing artifact of magic I've touched!"

Xheros grumbles. "Where's mine?"

"You cannot go. You're too hot-headed and if you blow our cover you'll lose your spot here with your dear niece. Do you want that, darling?"

He pouts. "No."

"Very well then. Off we go." She runs a finger under his sharp chin. "You promised me chains and whips this time."

He smiles. "Be careful, you guys. Call me if you need me, Stella."

"Sure thing. Now, ew, go."

\*\*\*

Eleven o'clock rolls around fast. I spent most of the day giving Jaxson head and cozying up with him. Would he consider that suspicious? Well, it depends.

On the one hand, yes. But the way I made him cum? Yeah, he's not in his mind right now. Still recovering.

I even gave him a huge spill about how I trust him to 'protect' me and all that jazz. I trust him to protect me but I

had to do the whole submissive girlfriend dance and it's still leaving me with a sour taste on my tongue.

Whatever. I'll deal with his alpha-ness later.

Gwen sees her beau off too. She gives him the starry-eyed 'be safe' speech too.

Two hours later? Milton pops up and we go down into his secret meeting room.

"Ready?" He asks, pulling out his special bracelet, and Gwen and I do the same.

"So, how are we circumventing this huge magical barrier by the school's elders?" I ask Milton with a hint of disbelief.

"Easy." He holds his hand up next to his mouth. "Charon, we're ready for you!"

She arrives in her hot pink and white flame splendor.

"Greetings, young ones." She's wearing a white and gold corset with a lace dress with a dramatic train that pools around her ankles. Oh, and those thick matte gold bangles are to die for.

"Hey, Charon. Uh, does Xheros know you're helping us?" I ask her.

"Of course not. Secrets make me feel sexier... I'll like his punishment later."

Gwen chuckles, her broom clenched to her side.

"Very well, children. This portal will let you off in a safe alleyway in Taika City. Don't take too long. And don't lose those bracelets."

She waves her hand and a portal opens on the black velvet wall with glowing runes circling around it.

"When you're done, return to this same spot," she instructs.

"Got it," we all say with a nod.

Putting on our bracelets, we hop through the portal.

And just like that.

We're here.

Taika City.

Somehow we're wearing hooded cowls, which is good because it's rainy here. The city's scent hits me with a million different magical species and a hint of food cooking on a charcoal stove. Onions, garlic, butter, meat, and salt. God, I'm hungry. Taika G's food isn't anything to sneeze at either.

But this. This is a different freedom that I've never known.

Our feet crunch against the dirty asphalt of the alley and the portal snaps shut behind us. A cold wind whips around us and we move to the end of the alley where the exit lets out to a street in gridlock and many supes shoulder to shoulder on the sidewalk.

You'd think back in my teenage orphan years that I'd get to know this city well, right? Nope-a-dopo. I was always doing chores, being the orphanage's maid and cook. Hell, the only places I went to on the south side of Taika were the Perry river and sometimes the county libraries.

Never downtown. Not like I had the money or time to get there.

"Wow, this is amazing."

"I miss going to MacKacksie's," Gwen reminisces.

"Ah, and Tipsies is fucking-A."

Gwen turns and taps me on the shoulder, bringing me out of my thoughts. "Stella. Do you have a favorite spot?"

I blush from embarrassment. I don't have a spot here in the city I'm familiar with.

"Ah, no. I was way south of Taika City. Too broke to visit."

Her face dims but then piques up with a glow. "When this is all over, I'll take you out on the town my treat."

"No, my treat!" Milton chimes in. "But let's go find some clues before time escapes us!"



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# STELLA

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We blend into the crowd on the sidewalk then dash across the wet street through blinding car lights and honking horns. Yeah, yeah, screw you too.

“Hey, what about this bar?” I point to a neon sign glowing, reading; Bar Claws. I wonder if this is a bear shifter joint or a wolf shifter place.

“Good idea, gossip is big in the bars these days,” Milton exclaims with puffs of cold breath turning to smoke.

We straddle up to the bar’s entrance. There’s a bouncer in the front perched on a stool. He jumps off and boy is he tall. Like, Jaxson’s father kind of tall.

“No I.D., no service,” he grunts, crossing his grizzly hairy arms across his broad chest. Wonder how many guys challenged this fellow?

We all look at each other. Yeah, we didn’t bring any with us.

The bouncer sniffs us down with one strong inhale. “Ah, hell no. Y’all aren’t even twenty-one. Get lost!” He points in the other direction, rain flicking off his arms from the force.

“Hey wait. We’re not here to drink!”

“That’s what they all say.”

Milton steps in. “We’re writing a paper for school and wanna know about the weird stuff happening in Taika recently! Figure the gossip here would be enough to save me from an overnigher.” He adjusts his black circular frames with a cheesy innocent smile.

That’s when I smell it.

Wolf.

Even though the bracelet brings me down to no magic human status, I can still smell the scent of woods and wolf on this man.

He cocks an eyebrow. “That’s a bit much for youngsters.”

“We’re not youngsters,” I bite back. Time to do something risky. I slip my bracelet off and the bouncer’s eyes grow wide.

Gwen gasps. “Stella!”

“Just for a second.” I turn back to the bouncer. “From one wolf to another. What’s going on and where can we find some... I don’t know—”

Milton finishes my sentence. “Some evidence. Like some rubble?”

The bouncer drops his shoulders and lets his guard down. “Perry Park. Heard some shit got wrecked the fuck up down there.”

“Thank you!” I give his arm a little shake then slip on my bracelet.

“Maybe I can fly us there on my broomstick?” Gwen suggests, looking at her own bracelet.

“Nah, don’t do it. Ever since rogue magic’s been banging up the city, there’s been a curfew on magic use. Ten o’clock and it’s already past eleven.”

Shit. Flying is definitely outta the question.

“Thanks,” I say, slipping the black glass bracelet back onto my wrist.

“Now get lost, better be careful out here.”

We scurry to the other side of the street, following Milton. When we return to the same spot we just jumped out of, I scratch my head. “Woah, we’re returning already?”

“Nope. We’re going to Perry Park! I had a chat with Charon about her portals and all you have to do is close your eyes, say the name in your head, and bam, we’ll be there. Alley portals are a total win and don’t require much magic usage when local. Ready?”

\*\*\*

Our newest portal lets us out at the park.

Through a tall ass thicket of bushes with leaves, budding roses, and fucking thorns. They scrape our skin as we shimmy out into Perry Park which sits in the heart of Taika City.

“Shit, I hope Jaxson doesn’t notice these scratches.”

Milton shakes off the leaves and petals from his hair bobbed hair cut. “Nah, not a chance. Once you take the bracelet off for a while your wolf will clean that up to tip-top shape.”

Gwen sniffs the roses and plucks one off with a dreamy look in her eyes. Heh, she must be thinking about Rival.

“Bloody hell, look at that!” Milton says in an excited whisper.

We turn our attention to where he’s pointing and our jaws drop. There are broken trees, benches, and a chopped-up jogger’s path.

Gwen spots something off to the side. “Hey, look at this, a piece of clothing. It’s glowing with essence.” I see it too.

She reaches to touch it. “AH!” The tip of her finger makes contact and her body is flung into a tree and drops onto the ground.

“Gwen!” We call out, running to her.

She struggles to prop herself up on her arms and coughs. “War-warlock magic.” She coughs some more and Milton helps pull her arm around his shoulder so he can carry her weight.

“Helena isn’t a warlock, is she?!”

“We need that evidence.”

“But wait, wouldn’t the magic police have taken this? It’s obvious. Look at that shit. It’s glowing like radioactive material.”

“Magic police aren’t the brightest in the bunch.” He sighs as he looks at the bracelet glittering on his wrist under the moonlight. “I’ll have to take it a special way. Stella, can you support Gwen?”

“Yeah, absolutely.” I take her arm and she’s already making a quick comeback.

“Thanks, Stella.”

“Girl, don’t even. I gotchu.” I take a stray rose petal off of her curly puff updo.

He slips the bracelet off and quickly motions with his hands, chanting something very quick. Five oversized golden glowing runes encapsulate the fabric as Milton repeats a fast chant. His glasses and eyes glow gold too. Soon the fabric disappears and the runes fade away.

Footsteps are getting louder. “Someone’s coming—”

“HEY! Over there! HALT! You’re violating Taika City’s orders!”

Shit. Caught.

Something large bursts out of the water, taking the police’s attention. Long black shards fly outwards and shishkabob the police like it’s nothing.

Oh fuck.

“RUN!”

Survival instincts kick in so strong that even Gwen hales asses to the bushes where we came out from.

Three large shards hit the bushes and they explode, knocking us back. We tumble but hurry back onto our feet in time to dodge two more shards.

Milton summons a shield and blocks three extra shards but they pierce through about halfway.

“Ah, fucking hell. It’s the warlock himself!”

All I can see through this darkness is a silhouette with a dark purple aura surrounding him.

Gwen takes her bracelet off and summons a broom. “Get on!”

It’s long enough to support us all and we jump on it like we’re riding a damn horse. We zip up in the air with Milton sitting opposite behind me to keep the shards from striking us. We weave through the air.

Then drop.

We drop like a heavy ass bomb.

Luckily for us, Gwen’s magic cushions our landing.

“Damn it, the city put out a fly-dampening spell!”

There’s a stranger whirring sound and it makes my stomach sick. It’s the warlock, he’s coming for us.

“Bastard child of the planets... Come to me, let me spill thy immortal blood,” he shouts out.

Oh helllll no.

Milton cloaks himself in the same kind of dark purple aura and makes a portal so fast it makes my head spin. It sucks us all in and we tumble into the alleyway, scraping our hands and knees as we roll to a stop.

“Hurry!” he cautions, “touch the walls, find the portal!”

We slam our hands against the cool concrete walls as the rain comes down harder as if to stop us.

“Shit, he’s getting closer!” Milton warns.

I can sense him too, the hair on the back of my neck stands up like needles.

“It’s not here!” Gwen calls. “This is where we came out, I know it!”

An alarm blares overhead.

“They sense us! The cops are coming too!” Gwen chirps out, banging on the alley walls.

The portal opens up and it’s Charon. She snatches us in and we tumble through the portal and slam into a vacant part

of the library. Our backs hit a bookcase and luckily nothing falls onto our heads.

(Stella! Are you okay?!)

‘Lunai. That was wild!’

(I smell dark magic.)

‘Yeah, apparently we have a new enemy. And he wants us.’

(Warlock?)

‘How’d you know?’

(I scent Warlock with Milton.)

‘You know, he did have that same purple aura. Is that a dark magic thing?’

(Yes. But it doesn’t mean the user is bad. It’s just that most users tend to be that way...)

Milton throws his glasses off and heaves, getting on his hands and knees. Black vomit hurls from his mouth onto the mahogany carpet.

Charon tsks. “My my, you’re not very good at handling dark magic, are you, small wizard?”

He wipes his mouth. “Ugh, not like that.”

“Gotta admit,” I pat him on the back to help get any extra ooze out of him, “that was pretty badass.”

I panicked. Shit, how will I be of help if I’m useless? Again?

(Don’t be so hard on yourself, Stella.)

“Quick, sit in the chairs and open those books!” Charon orders. She waves her hands and our bodies are seated into the chairs and hands placed on some books and a cup of steaming tea.

Professor Ivory barges in. “Charon,” he grunts, eyeing her up and down and then glaring at us.

“Mmm, you’re quite rough for a Saoirse. I might like that...” Charon purrs, tapping her collarbone with a long black shiny nail. “I wanted to lecture the kids about the Necro-Realm more. Is that a crime?”

“No, it isn’t...”

He looks us over once more and we begin to flip pages and sip tea. Which, this tea is delicious. And Milton thinks so too because he throws it back like it’s juice.

“Very well,” Professor Ivory says and turns around to walk away.

After a few minutes goes by and Charon pads the time with some fake talk about different realms in the Necro-Realm. She mentions the dark orcs and it reminds me of Matilda. I hope she’s enjoying her new mate.

After a few more minutes Charon cuts herself off. “Phew, that was entirely too close.” She rakes her hair back and fans her bust spilling out of the top of her tight white latex corset.

A blush skips across Milton’s cheeks. Yeah, Charon’s definitely a looker.

“What happened?” I ask her.

“Cecil was looking for you and your posse. To do a check-up. Make sure you weren’t getting into any trouble.”

She leans over onto the table. “I crave gossip. A small price to pay. Tell me what you found.”

Milton’s glasses fog up and he faints from the close proximity of Charon’s milky white boobs.

“Don’t mind him,” Gwen chirps.

“Boys. So fragile.”

I swallow the dryness in my throat. “We saw a warlock kill two magic police in the park today...”

“Warlock? Oh goodness. But what is his business here? They’re more the Galdur county type of species.”

“Huh?”



Gwen sets down the hot cup of tea she's nursing and leans back in her chair. "Galdur is a dark county full of ancient magic and lots of curses. No one with a regular beating heart lives out there. Many witches go out there for special hexes and spells."

Milton pulls himself up with crooked glasses. He straightens them up and clears his throat. "It's getting late guys, let's go catch some z's so we can analyze that cloth tomorrow." He looks at Gwen and wags a finger. "No touching, Gwen."

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The warm afternoon sun washes over my back as I sit in the dining hall, scrolling on my phone about the warlock's appearance last night at Perry Park.

Fuck, the way he just killed the magic police... it was as if he sucked their souls out without a drop of blood coming out from the impact. So clean that... There's no mention of it online. Anywhere.

Do they even know? Maybe it's unreleased information. Or do the news outlets even know? Oh my fuck, what if someone saw us? Sensed us?

Great. I'm good at getting involved in massive clusterfucks.

Gwen joins me and her vibe is shaken too. Murder. We saw a murder.

And even though it wasn't visibly gruesome... it was wrong. Who the hell is this warlock dude and why is he in Taika City?

Could it be connected to Helena?

"Afternoon, Stella," Gwen says, sitting with a small plate of salad and roast beef. "How... are you?"

She's trying. We all are.

"Peachy keen..."

She slumps into her chair, sighing. Picking up her fork she pushes her food around with zero intent on eating it. All that action and we almost got caught. I assume we're in the clear only because Dean Warclaw isn't screaming down our throats. But...

It was so close. There was one mishap after another.

And we almost got caught by Professor Ivory too. Gwen, Milton, and I owe Charon a big one.

Milton skips over with a weird glow on his face. Even a new pair of entirely transparent round glasses shining on his face.

"Gloomy, you two are. Chipper up! There are grand things on the horizon." He swishes his hand in the air.

I push food around my plate too. "I hope there's a good reason you're so cheery." Stuffing a fork full of roast beef into my mouth I chew and watch Milton's face for any hints.

A bat whips around us and with a puff of white smoke, Rival shifts into his human form. It still surprises me that there's a whole ass class of vampires that can be in the sunlight.

He stands by Gwen, eyeing her down. She doesn't look up at him and the tension is thick. I open my mouth to say something and break the ice, but I can't speak.

Rival folds his arms against his chest. "Gwen. Are you okay?"

She jumps and looks up at him with a guilty smile. Oh jeez, please keep a secret, Gwen. "Oh! Rival, of course."

Rival tilts his head slightly pulls out a chair and sits down, all while keeping his eyes on her.

He inhales the air around her and she blushes. "Rival!" She admonishes.

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# STELLA

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“You... have the scent of the city on you...”

FUCK. Double fuck.

Milton takes off his glasses and does a dramatic sigh. “Oh, a lover’s quarrel. Talk that out in private!” He summons his wand, and waves it around with a quick chant and POP.

They disappear in a blink of an eye.

“Woah. Smooth move, Milton.”

He grins and sips on his tea. “Magic is always smooth. Just like fine wine.”

Jaxson’s scent springs up around my shoulders and I shiver. Turning around, I see his massive form hulking over me.

“You’ve been hard to find.”

“I’m a busy girl, what’s up?” Act normal, act normal. I don’t need Milton doing that swishy disappearing act on me too. Unlike Gwen, I have one hell of an appetite, even when I’m stressed and distracted.

“Nothing, just obsessing over you.” He lowers and plants a kiss on my head.

“Oooh, hot. Did you and your special gang go into the city yet?”

“Yeah.” He sits down where Gwen just was and picks up a piece of roast beef, holding it to my mouth. “Here, eat.”

I push it away with my fork. “Keeping secrets isn’t nice, mate...” and I let the word ‘mate’ sting on my tongue.

Secrets only make things more complicated.

Hell, I’d know.

“Not even to protect you?” The flecks of gold in those eyes are trying really hard to distract me. It sorta isn’t working.

Kind of.

“Especially that. I’m not a regular human, after all. Binary Goddess, Dual Goddess, whatever they call me, it means I have powers and I can at least fight.”

A shimmer of red magic swirls next to Milton. Little mini pops of magic like firecrackers go off and catch our attention.

Milton glances to the side just in time to see Jennifer appear.

And... she’s not wearing much. Her shirt is unbuttoned, showing hints of her nipples poking through.

“Je-Jennifer?!” Milton squeaks, his face reddening.

“Milton Pointdexter. Fuck me, now.” Her hands travel up from her torso to her breasts. Then she massages them and flicks her nipples. WOAHH.

Jaxson gives Milton a curt nod. “Go for it, man. You deserve it.”

Men...

Milton’s head is on swivel one thousand. He keeps looking back between us and Jennifer who’s giving the dining hall one hell of a show. Uh, Milton better think quick and get his own portal thing going before staff sees this.

“Jen, you and I know that’s not going to happen.”

Jennifer pouts, her breathing ragged. “I need you, wizard.”

She takes off the entire shirt. Her nipples bold and erect. With one swing of the leg, she finds herself straddling Milton’s crotch.

“You guys aren’t going to do it right here, are you?” I ask with a dry laugh.

“Wh-wh-wah, Jen!” Milton stutters, his hands on her waist to

work her off of him. “No, no, we can’t do this. You know that!”

I can see her lower body grinding on Milton.

“Uh, there are phones out!” I warn them of the other students peeping and recording.

“Damn it, Milton, take me!” Jennifer demands, holding onto his shoulders. She leans back, breathing as if she’s out of breath and tussling her hair as she grinds onto Milton.

“Yikes! Jennifer, get a hold of yourself—ah!”

Jaxson bangs the table with his fist and smiles. “Man up and portal away!”

I hit his sturdy concrete metal ass bicep. “Jaxson!”

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## GWEN

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“Rival, please, you have to keep this a secret!” I beg, sitting at the edge of Rival’s bed.

Every time I visit his dorm suite, it never ceases to amaze me that he sleeps in a bed and not a coffin. Rival might be dead, but he’s just as normal as any other guy I’ve ever met (minus the lack of a pulse).

“And let you and our academy’s alpha’s mate get hurt?”

“Stella is also our friend. We have to help her.”

Rival paces the width of his suite, his focus on the ground and on me simultaneously.

I nervously fiddle with my fingers as I exhale, hoping for an encouraging response.

He pauses. “Gwen...” he trails off and shakes his head.

“Yes, Rival?” I stand up and walk to him, touching his hard bicep. It’s a curse for my body to tingle the way it does when we touch. Even a simple innocent touch lights me up like a candle. The glow travels through all of me, absorbs into my veins, and seeps into my heart, leaving me ignited and writhing with desire. No matter how hard I try to ignore my need, the warmth lingers and makes me want him even more.

He places his hand on mine and the shivers get worse. My eyes burn and I slip my hand back to my side, holding my head down.

“This is just about me, isn’t it?”

The side of his mouth twitches and a small giggle tickles my throat, but I hold it back.

“The warlock that’s loose in Taika City was summoned. He’s been locked up in magic prison for centuries. He’s not some heartbroken titan. There’s no redemption for him.”

My heart skips a beat. Centuries?! “If he’s been there for centuries, does that mean he...”

“Yes. He’s the only one to have perfected the spell for immortality. Another reason he’s been in the hole. Warlocks aren’t supposed to touch that spell.” He grabs my shoulders and lowers his body on one knee, his eyebrows knitted together. “Which is why I can’t sit back and relax knowing you’re out there with a warlock like that.”

“But Stella—”

“Is still learning her powers. She’s strong. Yes. But she needs some refining.”

I pull away from Rival and scratch my head. My gut tells me I have to stick with Stella. But if I do, Rival might just blow our cover.

That’ll jeopardize everything.

So...

“Okay...”



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## MILTON

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Well, I'll say I'm gobsmacked. Of all the things I've been through in the last few weeks, this has to be the strangest and the most titillating.

Jennifer.

In the palm of my hand.

Well, to be honest, her tits are in the palm of my hands because she yanks up my wrists and faces my hands against her hard perky nipples.

I can't lie. My cock stood to attention right away, straining against my black school slacks.

Gosh-damn it. Jennifer belongs to the Bloodstone family. And slipping my manhood into that deadly pussy will unequivocally cause me duress.

My whole bloodline would be under duress.

Jennifer bucks her breasts into my hands, piercing my palms with her aroused nipples. You're damn skippy that I knead them right back. Feeling her so raw against my hands makes me speechless.

"Oh, Pointdexter," she moans, her hands going down to her skirt and lifting it up to show her bare wet pussy riding my crotch area, wetting it up with her arousal.

We're lying on my bed and I'm pinned under her. Delightfully pinned. Her strong thighs have every intention of keeping me here until I plant her.

Ah. Getting out of this is going to require a lot of stamina on my part.

Jennifer's sweet juices are soaking through my pants. Oh hell, I got to get out of this position. Reluctantly of course.

I pull my hands from those beautifully erected nipples, draw a quick sign on my palm, and poof, I warp to the other side of my room. I'm now sitting in one of my black velvet Queen Anne chairs that sits in the corner next to a black volcanic glass coffee table with gold candles.

I'm breathing hard and my manhood is brittle from the cock blocking I've just forced it to endure.

Sorry.

This whole family saga thing is difficult.

"Milton," she purrs. "You think those cute little magic tricks will keep me from you?"

"Jennifer. I know what will happen. Why are you still trying? Do you really think I'm that weak?"

She knits her eyebrows, a flash of pain skipping her cheeks and darkening her eyes.

"Weak? I originally can't stand your family. But you... You're different and it makes me horny. You're mine and I'm yours. This is what's going to be."

She sheds her skirt and now she's bare-butt nude. Impressive birthday suit if I should say so myself. Half her body is covered in black tattoos of Japanese-style clouds and kanji.

But there's something else on her body that catches my eye other than her curves, dips, hips, and that ass.

I adjust my glasses and look closer.

"See? I know you see it, Milton," Jennifer holds her arms out and turns around slowly. "That's why I need you to fuck me."

"Did you do that spell?" Damn it, just when I thought my dick was calming down. Now there's a real possibility I can screw her brains out and not fuck up both of our families.

Still.

If I take a bite out of that forbidden apple. What if my desire for her overcomes common sense. What if that

protection spell isn't on her one day and I just give in to the emotions?

To the attraction?

I make a quick spell to warp her away. I've been getting better at them since I've bugged Professor Ivory to death on better portaling.

Though I did have to promise I wouldn't portal into certain areas on the campus.

A cloud of magic swirls around Jennifer, but her eyes light up with red and the clouds stop and fade away.

“Do you really think that'd work on me? I'm too hot for you. Nothing can keep me from riding that hard dick you're trying so hard to keep away from me. You want me.”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Bloody hell, Jen. Of course, I want you. You're just too dangerous.”

Jennifer stalks over to where I'm sitting. Either I run or I... stay.

We all know that I won't run. Not from her.

She lowers down on her knees, with those pouty reddish lips and piercing red eyes.

“If you don't enter my pussy, then enter my mouth. Let me make you cum.”

Damn it, Milton. Don't be weak... But what is weakness right now?

Would being weak mean running or staying?

Fuck if I care.

I open my legs and use magic to unzip my pants, allowing my manhood to spring upwards with a bit of precum dripping from the head.

She does have a high-level protection spell sprawled across her body. And my dick is aching.

Jennifer smiles, knowing what it means. On all fours now, she crawls up between my legs, whilst fingering herself with

one hand.

The other hand grabs my cock and I swear I bullet up straight and grunt, fighting a premature orgasm right then and there.

“Jen—fuck!” I rasp as she engulfs me with her mouth.

Each suction shoves me closer to the edge.

A few minutes later, I’m spewing cum all over her face.

She’s on the ground licking any and all of my cum up so there’s not one drop left.

I give her ass a playful smack.

“Are you going to punish me, daddy?”

Ah shit. She’s calling me daddy now. Good thing that protection spell is there, because I let my dick think for me, and now I’m on the floor on my knees, cock pointed at her pink pussy.

She pushes her ass out. “That’s right, daddy...”

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# STELLA

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Night falls again, and I'm back at Milton's place. Gwen arrives a tad later and there's an odd tension that shrouds her. I don't ask her about it because it's likely something with Rival. I don't wanna poke her and make something weigh heavier on her mind.

Milton hurries his portal and just like that, we're inside his secret room with the golden table and fancy chairs.

I still can't get over the no windows thing. Is it because we're not on earth?

Is there some sort of weird void outside of this room?

He take out the piece of fabric that we obtained back in Taika City's Percy Park. It's still glowing with that toxic green glow. It makes my stomach uneasy as if I'm having motion sickness.

Milton rubs his hands together with a mild grin on his face. "I've been waiting all day to do this!" Snapping his fingers, a scroll pops into existence. He unravels it and opens his mouth to explain.

But a white light fills the room and we can't see for shit!

This light isn't from Milton!

(Don't be alarmed. The magic is familiar.)

'Who is it?!'

"Milton, Gwen, Stella," Professor Ivory greets as the light dims around us with an eerie calmness. "Now, now, haven't you heard the alpha's warning?"

Oh shit.

Milton speaks up, "Professor!"

Professor Ivory holds a hand up and tsks, “No, no. Of course, the alpha won’t hear about this.”

I relax my shoulders and manage to bring my breathing under control. The last thing I need to do is get my friends expelled and separated.

Milton sits back down and drums his fingers against the table in anticipation of bad news.

“Wait. Really?” I ask in disbelief. “You’re like the alpha’s right-hand man. I can’t imagine you keeping secrets from him.”

He lifts his chin up at me with a devious sparkle in his eye. “Oh, everyone keeps secrets from those they either love or respect. Even from enemies.”

Yep, that stabs me pretty hard. I have hella secrets I keep from Jaxson. But nothing as dramatic as this.

“How’d you find out?” Gwen asks.

Professor Ivory stays silent to keep us guessing.

“Was it Jaxson?” I question.

Silence.

Gwen sighs. “Rival...”

Professor Ivory folds his arms and lowers his head. That’s as much of a ‘yes’ as we’re getting.

“Shit,” I breathe out, leaning my elbow onto the table and rubbing my forehead. Busted.

If Rival told Cecil Ivory, then did he tell Jaxson too? Guess I’ll have to find that out later.

I turn to Gwen. “How’d he find out? I really doubt that you told him...”

She keeps her eyes on Professor Ivory. “He said he could smell it on me. I begged him to stay quiet. And I thought he would...”

Milton stands up again and raises his hand. “Don’t punish them, professor. It’s all—”

The professor wags a finger. “Ah-ah. I know, I know. You really like starting trouble, don’t you, Milton? Though I am quite impressed you pulled that portal off to the city without triggering any of my spells.”

“Family secret.” He grins.

Lowering his hand back down, Milton squares his shoulders as if bracing for something.

“Do as you must,” Milton says, placing his glasses on the table. “I accept my punishment.”

“Hey!” I call out watching Prof. Ivory create a ball of swirling energy in the palm of his hand. “Wait!”

The ball of energy leaps from his hand into Milton’s chest.

BAM!

Blackout.

I can’t hear or see anything for about a few nano-seconds.

Then my eyes pop open and I see the domed ceiling of Milton’s posh suite. I blink a few times before I pull myself together and sit up.

I’m just a tad dizzy but Gwen and Milton seem okay. They recover soon after and look around.

“Where’s the professor?” Gwen asks.

We’re all sprawled out on Milton’s floor. Luckily, it’s thick with plush padding because I have a nagging feeling we were dumped or yeeted onto the floor.

Ugh. I do not want a mental image of how that looked.

Milton pushes the sleeve up of his right arm. “Heh. He blocked my magic channels for a week.”

“Holy shit!” I hold my head down and hit the carpet with my fist.

(It’s okay, Stella...)

‘No, it’s not okay. We know how much magic means to Milton. He’s had it his entire life.’

Gwen places a hand over her heart. “This is all my fault. I should’ve used a spell or something—”

“No,” Milton says, “You’re good, Gwen. Plus, I’ve seen Rival around you. He doesn’t want you harmed. If Cecil isn’t ratting us out to the alpha, he had to have worked out something with our local Saoirse.” He pats his arm with a grin. “Professor Ivory went easy on me. One week is nothing at all.”

“It’s a lot when you have an evil warlock killing people. And it’s because of Helena. I know it.”

I bite my cheek while my chest is burning. I hop to my feet and rake through my hair, nails grazing my scalp.

“I’m a dual goddess. A Binary Goddess. Yet all I can do is throw lightning bolts, shift, and fly.”

And occasionally I get lucky... I need more than just getting lucky.

Milton chuckles. “That’s nothing to sneeze at, Stellz.”

“You don’t understand. I should be... I don’t know, out saving kids from drowning, rescuing people in fires, saving the damn world. Finding Helena and yeeting that fucking warlock who’s ready to kill more people. Because of me!” The truth of my own words hits me hard upside the head a thousand times. I’m not even a regular human. Yet here I am, as useless as a mortal human without magic can be in a time of duress. There’s no telling how many unreported deaths this warlock has caused all just to get me to come out of the academy. I can’t become a mate to a powerful alpha without being strong enough to save myself.

And others.

I storm out of Milton’s room with a hurricane of emotions inside me.

I need to get out of my skin.

(Let’s run.)

Yes.

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With every push my legs launch me with more power than the last stride. It's as if I'm on wheels or skating on ice. It doesn't even make my heart rate tick up or anything.

The rush of the air entering my lungs and exiting back out thrills me and I hunger for more.

'Lunai, do you thing.'

I jump into the air and outstretch my entire body/ My bones crack and white fur explodes from my body. Thankfully there's zero pain. Because last time?

That shit was painful. No cap.

Now I'm in full wolf mode, three tails and all. I'm light on my paws and scent some fellow shifters up ahead.

There's the piney scent of bears, then the grassy smell of foxes, and the woody scent of wolves.

Interesting how each shifter contributes to the smell of nature.

I bound across the field to join them on a run. Some of them recognize me from when Lunai hopped out the locket and joined them on a run. Time flies by so fast. We run the borders and I soon lead the small group of shifters as we tear through the academy's woods and zip around a few lakes with glittering water.

We make about three laps around TG until we settle back at the lake where we all sit down and chill. Some of the bear shifters tussle around and dip into the lake.

The foxes gnaw on grass and the wolves all kinda crowd by me and chill on the grass.

I wonder... is this what it feels like to be an alpha?

A leader that people feel safe with and want to stay around?

Nope, do NOT let your lack of magic finesse get you down, Stella. Think positive. Hold your head up. Plus, I'm not that half bad now. I've improved.

At least for now.

I concentrate on the glow of the moon. It illuminates our backs and tingles my crescent as if I'm charging. That paired with the gentle chilly breath of mother nature cooling our backs brings me tranquility.

I settle down and nestle my head on my paws, swishing my three tails around.

Hmm.

Oddly enough, no one's asking about my crescent and three tails. Maybe they've seen so much that it doesn't surprise them?

It is a magic academy. And TG has seen some famous teachers and students here walk their halls.

"Stella, you carry the scent of an alpha. I didn't catch it at first. But it's very potent," a large black wolf says from behind me.

Glancing back, I see Wren.

"Hey! Long time no see."

He tilts his head to the side. "You must clash with your alpha quite often, no?"

More of a statement rather than an actual question...

I whine, my ears dropping down. "Not like that. He just treats me like a delicate flower that will break under the smallest ounce of stress. Ugh."

Speak of the devil.

Because a large golden wolf leaps out from the thicket of woods and onto our space by the lake. Jaxson's wolf hits the grass hard, shaking the ground.

Then the way he growls?

It sends all the other shifters packin'.

No questions asked.

Even Wren disappears.

“HEY! What’s the big deal?!” I growl. “I had a whole zen moment going on here!”

He grumbles. “There were too many guys around you!” He comes over and sniffs my snout with possessiveness.

I whack him with my tails, splattering gold dust all over him that disappears into the grass. “What?! Looking for some other doggo’s scent on me? Do you think I can’t take care of myself?”

“I know you can.”

“Do you really?” I back away from him. He drops his head in submission. To me.

“Stella. Don’t move away from me...” The hurt in his voice pangs my heart too. But damn. Where’s my identity in all of this?

I have an uncle, a mate, and friends. A soon to be father-in-law and... and...

My parents are still at large.

They haven’t even reached out.

Will I ever even meet them?!

“Jaxson. Are you afraid I’m still weak?”

He lifts his head and stands up onto his hind legs, shifting into his human form.

“It’s not about that, Stella.”

“You do think I’m weak!”

I shift into my human form too. Jaxson reaches out for me but I step back away again.

“No. I’ve seen you literally dive into hell. You’re not weak.” Jaxson steps closer to me but I step back. I don’t want to be coddled. I want respect. To be seen as even.

But can I be? Deep down I'm still some abandoned orphan...

Jaxson holds his breath and knits his eyebrows, letting out a pained exhale. "I just... I don't want to see you hurt anymore. I'm an alpha. Protection is my first nature. I can't change that."

Moments of silence pass through between us like slips of wind through trees. I look up at the moon and a small comfort settles in my chest.

"Stella... Come back with me? I really need to hold you."

(Mate...)

'Come on, Lunai. Not tonight...'

"I'm sorry, Jaxson. I just need a little room for a while."

His shoulders drop and he pulls his hand back. "How long is that?"

"I don't know."

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# STELLA

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There isn't any time to waste.

I can't sit and mope about Jaxson treating me like the world's most delicate flower. And even if I did want to throw myself into his arms and cuddle up with him, and well screw the night away, I have a warlock to defeat and a jealous Helena to find.

So that means one thing.

Get ahold of using my damn powers. I'm a Binary Goddess, so there's no excuse that I can't beat a Warlock. None at all.

Hell, a real goddess would've had this situation already taken care of with minimal effort.

That's why I'm here at the academy's library, combing through aisles of books looking for—

(I scent him. Three more aisles up. Take a right.)

'So that's his scent huh? Odd, it's kind of spicy... A bit off-putting.'

But Milton's a friend.

I know it.

My instincts haven't failed me yet. Maybe it's just Cecil's magic keeping his magic at bay. That must be the cause of the scent because I've never smelled it before.

Following Lunai's directions, I follow Milton's scent to a table in the middle of seven book aisles that end around it.

There are three books on the table and they're all black leather with rubies and silver-rimmed pages. His scent is strong here.

“Milton?” Looking around, I don’t see him anywhere. He wouldn’t go too far from these books. Right?

I decide to sit and wait, but curiosity strikes me and I reach to see what kind of books he’s reading. Guess that’s all he can do since Cecil locked his powers for a week.

Because of me.

Ugh.

As soon as my hand is about to touch the book, the entire pile slides away from me like I’m a living virus.

“What the hell?!” How come the books don’t want me to touch them? Well, maybe I can lean over and read it. So I scoot over some more to see if I can’t catch any of the words or script inside the open book.

And of course, it slams shut and zips to the other side of the table.

“For real?!” I huff, folding my arms together. “How can a book be picky?”

“Ha-HAH!”

I jump around to see Milton’s cheery face and large wooden spectacles. “Hey, you scared me!”

“You’re the one scaring the books.”

“How are they afraid of me?”

“You’re a Binary Goddess. Touch the wrong book and it’ll turn to dust!” He chuckles, pulling out another chair where the books settled down at.

“Wait... Really? I could... Kill books?”

Milton nods and pats the leather book with intricate designs on the front. Even the runes evade me. Just as I’ve learned to read them the past few weeks, a new set comes and destroys the progress. How many languages are there in magic?

(About 100.)

‘Fuck, really?!’

I lean over on the table with my hands and think about my question carefully. On one hand, Milton is suspended from magic, and my asking him for help might just be a disrespectful slap in the face.

But no one else can help me with confidentiality like he can. Gwen could help but there's a darkness in Milton that I gel with magic-wise.

Darkness...

Just like the darkness I see skipping in his eyes right now.

(Huh, those eyes...)

'What is it, Lunai?'

Milton holds my gaze with a sincere glower. It's as if he's trying to talk to me or tell me something.

Then it hits me.

Xheros and his wifey are literally underground. You'd think I'd ask him for help, right? But he's just as bad as Jaxson. He's way too worried about me hurting myself. It's like he's taking the place of my actual dad.

Heh, the thought gives me a small bubbly giggle that stays in my stomach. Heartbreak can make a person do some crazy things.

"Stellz, come with me, I have to let my glasses charge in the sunlight for a moment."

"Sure."

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Outside, we sit off to the side on the steps of the library. Milton's glasses glow under the sunlight. My next class happens in twenty minutes, I better get the asking.

"Milton, I need—"

"I already know, Stellz. And I'm up to help you. Meet me in the fields. You'll find me."

(Stella! Warn Milton to turn his Warlock side off.)

‘Warlock!?’ Shit I’m gonna have to ask about that later.

(Now! I sense Cecil close by! Grab his hand, and I’ll tell him so the words don’t travel through the air!)

I grab Milton’s hand and there’s a jolt that catches us both off guard.

(Milton, hide your Warlock powers! I can see them very plainly in your eyes!) Lunai warns him. The vibrations of her voice in his head buzzes my chest.

“Oh shit!” he yelps, taking out a small knife and pricking his palm.

(Better.)

-Thanks a lot, Lunai.-

(Anytime, wonderful wizard.)

Milton smiles, his eyes back to the friendly green I know them to be.

While I’m letting go of his hand, I happen to turn and see Jaxson at the top of the stairs, glaring at us.

“What?” I ask Jaxson. He’s rigid. Jaw clenched and chest heaving. Good goddess, his alpha is begging to bust through, but he sees Milton as a friend so he can’t bring himself to attack him. Yet...

“W-What the hell is this?” he asks, stomping down the stairs.

Milton opens his mouth but I stop him.

“You can’t be serious, Jaxson.”

His wolf is at the surface, growling with uncertainty.

“Stella. You know I don’t like seeing other guys touch you.”

“I touched him.”

Milton steps in with a creaky nervous voice, “that’s not helping the situation, Stellz.”



Jaxson glares at Milton and then drops his shoulders, his wolf retreating further into his soul. “I know you’re good, man. I’m just... lonely. Tell her to spend more time with me.”

Milton cracks a smile.

“I’ve got studying to do and a class to get to. Stop following me. I like my privacy too, you know.”

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The moon rises over the campus while I hurry down to where the woods and the fields to meet to find Milton. Hopefully, I can get a handle on how to utilize my powers better.

For some odd reason, my senses are stronger. I can smell fresh night dew beading on the grass and the pine of the trees is a bit mintier than usual. It’s as if I’m shoving my nose into everything. What’s going on?

I stop at a thicket of trees to look around but for some reason, I don’t catch Milton’s scent, not like before. Is it because his warlock powers aren’t active?

I call out, carefully. “Milton hey Milton are you here?”

It’s not like he can portal out of thin air with Cecil’s power-restricting cuffs on. I’m pretty sure the moment he tries he’ll either get zapped or get an even worse punishment.

I inhale the surrounding air harder wondering why I’m not catching a scent. Everything else is invading my senses.

A strange burning sensation pops up on my forehead and I notice the moon is brighter than usual. Floodlight bright. Everything seems a bit more vivid than usual. It’s like I’m having a wild hallucination. I hold my forehead and lean into a tree to keep myself from wobbling.

‘Lunai, am I tripping? Is it a full moon coming? What’s going on?’

(There’s a message coming from the Moon. It feels like a warning but I can’t catch what’s being said. So much...)

static?)

That's exactly what it feels like, static.

I try to shake off this odd irritating vibe that something's wrong and that something else needs my attention. Shit, on the one hand, I need to find a warlock, on the other hand, I have to find Helena and now I have to grab ahold of my powers. Which one am I going to do first and why the hell is the moon trying my attention so hard?

The trees bristle behind me and the presence of something fast and large rushes up behind me. It cuts into the static in my mind and I can hear myself think finally.

Just in time, I throw my body off to the side, using the tree trunk as leverage. The large shadow explodes into the ground while I crouch, ready to fight.

“Who are you?!” Is it an intruder?

Somehow I gain composure really quickly and I'm ready to shift until I see very familiar red glowing eyes.

I jump up, mouth open. “Wren? What are you doing out here?” I walk shakily towards him, calming my breathing down.

“No worries Stella. I invited Wren!” Milton's voice comes from behind a tree. He pops out with a smile and trots over, wearing his black velvet robe.

“You invited a teacher? What if Cecil asks him questions?” I glance at Wren and a pang of guilt hits me because it's shitty to have such little faith in Wren so quickly. But he is on staff now... Ugh.

Milton waves a hand. “Pish posh don't worry about that. When it comes to shifters and magic Wren knows the best. Especially your circumstance. Which is exactly why I was at the library reading.”

“You were doing research for me?”

“But of course. Magic research and rare items are the only reason for me living.”

“Oh, and not that Jennifer girl?” I poke fun at him.

His face glows red but he quickly shakes it off. “That’s a whole other can of worms I’m quite worried about. But save that for later. We need to get you on your way to bonding with your own magic.”

Wren shakes the dirt off his black fur and leaps over to my side. “Don’t worry I won’t rat you out to the Saoirse. They always get on my nerves anyway. Keeping secrets from them helps stroke my own ego. Plus, I owe you a solid for technically saving my life.” Power swirls around his right paw and points it at a tree trunk across from us. A red ribbon appears. “Before we start I do want to say you should be more aware of your surroundings. You might be a goddess but you are still a wolf, so look out for anything that sounds or smells out of place.”

I nod. “Thanks Wren. Where do we start?”

Milton clears his throat and folds his arms. “One skill all goddesses should master is teleportation; it can help you dodge attacks and get you to places very quickly. Since your magic channels allow for a lot of flow, this is a move you can do in large quantities. Though, I do caution on overuse until you’re used to it.”

“Teleportation?!” I gawk, my heart skipping a beat.

Had anyone told me while I was at the orphanage that I’d be able to teleport, I’d be happy but right now I’m sinking into my own skin. What if I accidentally warp myself into hell?

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# STELLA

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Of course, I don't say anything. I don't want to look that stupid this early on.

Milton brings me over to a different tree and points to the one with the red string wrapped around the trunk. He explains that I need to close my eyes and feel and concentrate on that red string.

“Um, Milton there's no way I'll end up, you know, elsewhere real far right?”

Milton gives me a blank look and blinks a couple of times. Then he laughs it off but that makes me feel even more worried. So it is a possibility goodness fucking gracious.

Wren grunts and butts in with his brute confidence. “Look Stella just do it and get it over with. If you keep stopping just because of fear you won't master any of your powers. Of course, it will be a few bumps and bruises along the way but that's what will help you master the power you've been born with.”

Yep, that is definitely the pep talk I was looking for. I square my shoulders, staring at the red string wrapped around the tree trunk about 10 ft away, and close my eyes to concentrate.

‘Come on Lunai, take me over there. Energy engulfs my body and it's as if my body falls through the ground and jolts. My ass plants right into the grass.

Next thing I know I open my eyes and I'm about 5 ft away from the tree with the red string. Hey, at least it's progress.

Wren shakes his head. “We've got a long way to go.”

I frown. “Thanks for the vote of confidence. Where are my congratulations? I'm not that far from the tree.”

“Hey kid, keep looking for cookies and you won't make too much progress.”

Milton pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose and examines the path I traveled or warped to, versus where I started.

“Ah, nevertheless, Stellz, congratulations. Now try to do it again. Right from where you are.”

Inside my chest. My heart beats as if I had just completed a hard workout. I wonder if that’s the magic channels doing their thing. Next time I’m bringing a bottle of water with me.

I pull myself up from the ground, brushing off the grass blades and twigs stuck to my skin, and stare at the tree. I ball my fists and concentrate even more connecting my body to the earth then to my wolf.

Closing my eyes, I imagine myself right against that tree. I see my hands touching it. My feet tap on it. Come on, do it, Stella. Make some damn progress.

My body zips into the ground again and the brush of cold air hits my body as I warp over to the tree. Must have done a good job because I end up face-planting into the tree trunk.

“Ow! Fuck!” The impact sends me right back down onto my ass.

Strike two.

Milton rushes over and helps me up and I glare at the tree with utter annoyance. That’s going to leave a scar.

(We’ll heal. Don’t worry.)

‘Thanks, Lunai. Sorry, I’m such a clutz.’

(Don’t apologize.)

Milton takes a twig out of my hair and chuckles. “Be more patient with your powers Don’t rush up against a location. Imagine you’re like a flower growing out of the ground. But you’re not just growing anywhere you are growing where there’s sunlight and no rocks or impedances of other surrounding objects.”

I rub my face and look at the red string again.

‘Lunai, any words of wisdom to add?’

Just as the wise wizard said don't rush, bloom.

Bloom, huh?

Magic really is poetic. Guess so if there are 100 different ways it can be spoken and written...

Ren pushes me with the tip of his nose. "Come on, we don't have all night, try again."

I ready myself for another failure, but hey maybe I'll make it this time. I wasn't that far off on the first attempt. The second attempt got me there, just with a face full of wood.

Alright then, same drill...

This time I focus on the moonlight shining down on me and it calms me down. For a moment, this light sends me a glimmer of hope that I might just make it over to that damn tree without eating it.

A smile crosses my face as I pass through time and space but something butts into my mind. For some reason, I see Xheros' face. He's yelling, eyes narrowed. Who's he arguing with?

And of course, when I think of Xheros the first place I think of is the library. The wind and temperature around me change and I can tell by the texture under my feet that I'm not in the forest anymore.

Opening my eyes I'm surrounded by sky but I'm not really floating I'm standing on something hard. I'm caught all the way off-guard and the first thing I do is take a step back. Lo and fucking behold I don't step on anything solid. Just thin air.

My body free falls backward.

It's not until I see the top of the library's expertly done roof that I realize I teleported to the library and now I'm headed to the pavement below. Not just any pavement but cobblestone. Hell, the steps are pretty damn sharp too.

Lunai responds quickly and my body halts mid-air, inches before my face and body meet the ground.

The adrenaline pumping through my veins allows my power to autopilot and save me at the last second but I need to stop doing that. I don't like last-second tricks. I need something reliable. Plus that was my wolf. Where's my ability to control magic?

Why did the moon do that? How come when I focused on the moon my mind went to Xheros and the library? Is there something wrong?

"Uh, that was unexpected, you okay, kiddo?" I turn my head to see Xheros chilling at the edge of the wall that juts out from the library, legs up, enjoying a hot cup of tea. Well, I hope it's a hot cup of tea and a hot cup of vodka... Yeah, Titans do like hot vodka. Ew.

He motions for me to come over with his hand and of course, I'm over here struggling in midair but then my body floats over and my two feet are finally placed on the ground. Courtesy of Xheros, naturally.

"Thanks." I scratch the back of my head. "Nice night we're having."

He lifts an eyebrow. "Yeah, yeah, cut the small talk. What the actual hell were you doing?"

"I don't know, just trying to study and master some basic power stuff, don't worry about me, I'm fine."

He swirls his steaming cup of tea (I hope tea, ew) and sits straight up. "Yeah you're fine but you almost face-planted into cobblestone." He takes another incredulous sip of his tea and furrows his eyebrows at me.

Okay, the jig is up. Is he going to help or hinder my progress, because right now he's taking the stance of an overprotective daddy and not the rebellious uncle that'll help me break out with my powers and kick some warlock butt.

"Look Xheros, let me study in peace, okay? It's not like I would have been hurt. I caught myself after all." I say that last bit with a hint of pride because hey, my wolf and I did stop my face from being splattered all over the cobblestone. Right?

Plus teleporting from the woods over to the library is no small feat. I succeeded yet failed all in one.

Somehow I focus in on Xheros' face and I notice it's a bit dinged up and his vibe is a bit off. It's almost as if I can sense another being with him like maybe he was in a tussle of some sort.

"Are you okay? You look a little banged up yourself..."

Please, let this topic change work.

(I sense solar energy)

'Really Lunai? How? It's nighttime...'

(Whoever gave him those marks had a great deal of solar power feeding their magic.)

Great enough to fight a Titan? That's a little worrisome. Hope he's not out here picking fights.

Xheros leans in from the hunk of cement he's perched on. "Don't worry about me. Changing the subject isn't going to work on a Titan that's about 30,000 years old, kiddo."

"Fine, then I'm going back to my dorm to practice. See ya."

"Go easy on the teleportation," he snorts.

...

Morning rolls around and I got only a few hours of sleep. If that. The toll on my magic channels has me feeling like I ran two marathons in one night. I'm surprised that I make it to the dining hall. The aroma of juicy full-fat bacon, eggs, and butter gives me the extra boost I need to grab a plate and find Gwen. She's sitting in a different spot than usual. It's by a window and she stares out of it wistfully. Until I arrive and dump my body into a chair across from her with my food.



Gwen gives me a very concerned glance. She taps her spoon against her untouched plate and frowns. “Stella what on earth have you been doing last night you look terrible. Did you get in a fight?”

My tired ass manages to shovel a fork full of food into my mouth, chew with record-breaking speed and swallow. Damn, the food here hits differently. “The only fighting I was doing was fighting with myself so I wouldn’t teleport myself off another rooftop.”

I fling my hands over my mouth and look real and make sure Cecil isn’t around eavesdropping. He’s incredibly stealthy.

Gwen lights up and clasps her hands together. “Teleportation is wonderful for those who have magic channels like you. I tried to do that once and I couldn’t use my powers for the next two weeks.” Then her wonder melts into a delayed shock. “My goodness, did you say rooftop?!”

“Eh, I’m fine. I bet you could definitely teleport halfway around the globe.” I scarf down some more food. Either there’s some sort of energy spell in this or the food here is just that good.

Gwen returns to moving food around on her plate. “I wish.”

“So where is Rival?”

Her face darkens. Maybe I shouldn’t poke that subject.

I slow down my eating. “Are you two good?”

She puts her fork down and sulks in her seat. “Yes and no it’s very complicated. Did you know Rival is vampire royalty?”

“Wow, he’s a prince?”

“Yeah, but he’s due to become the real king soon...”

“Oh snap Gwen, someone’s gonna be a vampire queen.”

She gets all flustered and flails her hands about.” No no no not me! It couldn’t be me or else there’d be an entire war.

We'd break so many treaties that even the Taika-Galudr Academy wouldn't be able to exist."

"Woah it's that deep?"

"Very deep, very complicated."

I don't like the way this is going...

"Top of the morning to you two!" Milton finds us over at a window booth. He flashes a bright smile as if he hadn't spent the last few days without his powers. He hands me a small pamphlet that is surprisingly made out of black leather and red paper with golden ink. Everything in the magic realm is super extra but I'm living for it. "This is what Wren wants you to read for lunch practice."

I go to open the small leather pamphlet but the lock on it won't budge.

"Ah! About that! Wren did mention that the book will open up when you have the best privacy. Try again when you're in your dorm alone."

"Okay, that's handy." Meaning no one else can peer into it either.

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# STELLA

---

It's odd how little magic they teach us in a magic academy. Literally, my last class was just about the history of 10 different types of rune-based languages. It was boring me to death.

When the bell rings I sweep my books into my book bag and bullet out the door. I head to my dorm since Gwen is in class right now. It'll be more than enough privacy to open the pamphlet.

I take a momentary pause in the hallway and dig it out.

A large warm hand lands on my right shoulder and my spine tingles.

Jaxson.

His voice dances from behind me. "You okay?" It's soft, suave, and powerful.

But there's also a lonely longing in his voice. Poor guy.

"Hey, Jaxson. I'm just studying really hard. sorry to be a ghost these days."

"Don't apologize but I want some of your free time too..."

My inner wolf bristles with need. He's still my mate. I can't ignore that.

Just a touch of his skin lights me up. Sending heat between my thighs. No, I gotta stay focused. I swallow hard and clutch my pamphlet close to my chest.

"I'll catch up with you tonight. Promise."

"You know how I'll hold you to it, Stella."

\*\*\*

Shoving my backpack full of useless, boring, heavy textbooks into the closet I plop myself down onto my bed and place my finger on top of the lock that seals the pamphlet. Without much energy, it flicks open.

I gasp and my eyes run greedily across the page to see what Wren could have written to help me.

(Wolf helping a wolf. Very suitable.)

‘Let’s just hope I can take this advice and not end up in the other part of the world or you know, severing my body to pieces or something freaky like that.’

There are only two pages written in a pamphlet that has six pages. What’s written is that maybe I should be in shifter form when I use my powers. It lists positions my paws should be in and advice for basking in the moonlight and perhaps training and meditating underwater.

Interesting.

\*\*\*

Back out near the fields, I resume practice with Milton and Wren. We’re not completely alone, but the other students lazing and running about don’t notice us. I shift into my wolf form and dive underwater. The coolness of the water feels amazing against my fur and skin.

Once I hit the bottom, I sit still and concentrate on different parts of the lake to warp to. At first, I take baby steps; a few feet here a few feet there, and next thing I know I’m warping around underwater in my wolf form.

Did I mention that I don’t really need to breathe down here must be the perks of being a goddess. Every so often I go above water so I don’t freak rand or Milton out.

Wren nods at my progress of teleporting to different spots underwater.

Using my powers and wolf form has been easier. I can't explain it but it just gels together perfectly, seamlessly. It's as if I'm right beside my magic channels, watching them work and learning how they feel.

It's almost as if I never experienced any kind of doubt about how to execute my powers.

Although I'm a dual goddess I feel like I tend to use my lunar powers more than solar which is interesting.

I wonder why the Moon calls to my powers so much versus the Sun.

(Stella, remember we're both one we're not separate. So when I use powers don't feel guilty and think that it's my expertise when it's actually just ours. Together.)

Lunai's words cause me to relax. She's right I usually think of her as a separate entity but we are both the same. One side was just locked away.

I return back to the surface of the water. The sunlight has a strange energy coming from it. At first, I just ignore it. But then my instincts tap me on the shoulder. Harder.

"You sense it too, don't you?" Wren stares at the sky.

I wonder how the sun doesn't burn his eyes.

Milton joins us.

Wren growls and goes into a defensive stance, black hair spiking up tall from his back. "I don't like this Stella, return to the campus immediately."

I shift into my human form. Uniform intact. Thanks for that handy spell, Gwen. "Wait what's going on?"

The sky splits; it literally cracks open with a black crack that showcases a forbidden part of the universe. The bright sun turns into a black hole and from that black hole a fiery figure descends like a god; hands open as if he were a savior. That energy is familiar. I've never met them. Who is that? wait!

Wren growls, looking back at me with piercing red eyes. "Stella, get back to the campus now!"

“No, that’s my father isn’t it?”

Blue flames crackle from a spot on the ground and Xheros explodes from out of it. He lands with a thud on the grass, kneeling down. He glances back at me. “Stella, go back to the campus. This fight is between my brother and me.”

I point at the flaming guy getting closer. “Wait so that is my father!?!”

I run ahead of the others much to their dismay.

Xheros lunges forward and catches my shoulder. “He is no parent, just an opportunist. Trust me, I’d know.”

Xheros summons another portal and is about to push me right through it until I remember I can teleport. So, I teleport away from all of them and I ball my fists ready to confront a very old question.

The fiery man makes its way to the ground and the flames extinguish to reveal a tall medium-built male with white short hair much like mine and eyes the color of lava. He smiles, but that smile holds nothing warm or nice. Maybe it’s an old rage that is making me see incorrectly.

Sun God Helios...

Stella Helios... oh I see. It’s literally in my last name. Duh.

“Dear daughter, are you ready to come and rule the kingdom of the Sun?”

“She’s not going anywhere. Leave, Helios,” Xheros shouts from behind me.

Helios chuckles with a hearty scoff, then throws out his hand, creating a barrier that keeps Xheros from getting close. “My brother, aren’t you the paternal one...”

I bite my cheek. “Kinda too late to say dear daughter isn’t it?”

“Your mother kept you a secret from me.” He opens his arms as if I’m going to run in for a hug. “But I’m here now. This earthly realm can’t accommodate your powers like the Sun Kingdom can.”

Xheros slams many attacks at the barrier but they prove to be useless. “You want control, you just want her powers. Stella, go now!”

“Look I’m not leaving, I’ve got questions to be answered.”

Helios levitates towards me with his hand out.

Xheros pierces the barrier and cuts in front of me with his powers on full blast. “She was never a secret, you know that.”

“Secret?” What are they talking about? “Excuse me, hey this conversation’s about me then it means it should really include me.”

Xheros shoves two huge power strikes into Helios’s chest. He stumbles back as if it was just a minor push and throws Xheros across the field.

Wait, is this why he had those bruises? Was Xheros visiting my father and fighting him about coming down here?

By the time I process what’s going on Helios is right in front of me and taps my forehead. Everything goes black.

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As I awake it feels like everything is spinning around. The first thing I see as I blink open is a large glass dome ceiling with a chandelier with floating flames and crystals hanging in the epicenter. Bands of rainbows spin against the glass and ornate walls of the room.

Uh, yeah, I definitely know I’m not on earth anymore.

It takes a few more seconds to register that I have possibly been kidnapped from the academy by my biological father.

I jackknife straight up and find myself in a large oval-shaped bed that’s floating over a white lava floor. Everything in the room is sun themed. Despite the rolling white magma under my bed, there’s no heat in the room. It’s comfortable but eerie because it’s even in the air that you’re not on earth.

‘Lunai, can you hear me?’

Oh no, My wolf isn’t responding. Lunai s a Lunar wolf so maybe it’s because I’m in the Sun Kingdom that I can’t contact her but she’s me which means a part of me is being muted?

Then I remember Xheros’ words; he’s after power. Mine.

Helios rises from the white magma flooring. It peels off of him like he’s got repellant on. He glows much like embers in a fire and the overwhelming presence of being in front of a God is smacking me in the face.

“Where am I? What are you trying to do? I don’t think you even like me.”

He smiles. “Of course I do. You’re my daughter, my kid.”

The word kid sounds terrible coming from his mouth. Just call me a fucking bastard of a child.

He floats closer. “Come we have a kingdom to rule. Your solar power needs some outlet.”

I move to the side a little bit. I can’t run too far on this bed. And I don’t see any doors in this room either. “You don’t even know me, what if I’m not interested?”

“Hmph. You’re a goddess. You have to be.”

“Question, why didn’t you find me sooner?” I grip the sheets, keeping my anger in check. Answers first, fists later.

“Your mother had a special spell over you to hide you from me and placed you amongst the...,” he pauses for a second, disgust pulling at his lips, “mortals.”

“So what’s different now, how did you find me now?”

There’s an awkward silence; he can’t even lie his way out of this one. Some God he is.

He lurches forward with his hands ablaze with white flames and eyes of rage and greed digging into my soul.

I imagine I’m underwater again and teleport to another corner of the room dodging his attack. That was useful. I’m



going to have to let Milton and Wren know about this.

Helios regains composure and turns around laughing.  
“This is my kingdom, my realm! You can’t run far. You can’t run faster than that little corner you’re stuffed in.”

“You had my connection the entire time. But guess what, I don’t need two powers, I only need one. Unlike you, I’m not on the quest for more. I just want a family.”

Listen to my instincts...

I take my hand and it turns into a blue translucent color. Shoving it inside my chest deep into my soul crystal, I grab hold of the fire deep inside me. I clutch the bitch and break it and it shatters deep inside me. Sparks of fire dance around inside my magic channels as my Solar side fades away.

Helios screams. “You dumb bitch, righteous like your mother. I’ll throw you back down to that trash can called earth. Be gone. Suffer the rejection of a true God!”

He says he’s going to send me back but judging that ball of energy in his hands he is going to try to yeet my soul into the underworld.

So I close my eyes and calm myself.

I can see the library, Jaxson, Xheros, and everyone and I call out to my lunar power to send me home. My body grows cold and fizzles.

Holy shit, am I doing it?

(Good job, Stella)

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# STELLA

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My body rolls on a hard floor and I slam against something hard. It isn't until a couple books hit my head that I realize.

I made it, I'm in the fucking library. YES!

Unlike the last time I was here, there were many students around me and they all give me a semi-surprised stare. Then return right back to what they were doing.

Okay. Do people usually teleport and slam themselves into the library on a daily basis? Guess there's a lot about the magic world that I still need to learn. Nothing seems to phase these students. Or the teachers.

I pull myself up from the ground and catch the librarian glaring at me.

Wow, how about an 'are you alright?'

I should feel accomplished by teleporting from the Sun Kingdom back to earth, not embarrassed. Sheesh.

I maneuver around students and occupied desks towards the back of the library.

Moving down a narrow aisle of books, Xheros appears in front of me from the floor and pulls me down into his lair.

Charon is lounging in mid-air as if she's lying on a love seat, her hair sprawling around her. "Well, well, that didn't take long. Told you women have a different agility than men, Xheros, my love."

Xheros has both hands on his temples and his shoulders shrugged, he breathes slowly with great control as if he's on the verge of losing his mind.

“Alright,” he swirls his hand in a small circle, “tell me what that asshole did.”

I cough a few times and make my way to the sofa and sink down on the soft cushions. A part of me is a tad nervous about calling on Lunai. What if she doesn't answer back?

I rest just a bit more.

Clearing my throat, I dwell on just how much I need to tell Xheros.

“Is it a good idea to tell you? I don't have to worry about you visiting and getting into another fight with him again, do I?”

He spins around, wide-eyed. “Again? He told you I was there?”

“Changing the subject.”

“Damn it, kiddo. You should've ran when I told you to!” Xheros scolds, shaking a finger.

“Do I look like your child? I follow no one's-” A heavy fit of coughing butts in and I bang on my chest.

“That's right...” Charon enters the living room in a ribbon of red and white flames. “Xheros, mind your manners. She's missing the other half of her Goddess powers.”

Great. Now he's gonna get worse.

His shoulders and eyes flare with blue flames. “I'm gonna kill him.”

I wave my hand to catch his attention. “I took my own powers away, Just the Solar.” And it's taking a toll on me. How long will it take to recover?

Xheros holds my gaze and drops into a brown leather tufted chair across from me, burying his head in his hands.

The energy in my body is fleeting and heavy sleepiness is tugging on my eyelids.

“Fuck,” Xheros cries. He summons a heavy golden book that plops onto his lap. “I gotta save you, kiddo.”

This heaviness in my body isn't normal... I can't move.

Charon claps her hand together. "She's not going to die, you idiot."

She appears at my side and places her hand on my forehead. "I'll patch her magic channels. She'll be fine. Women are built to heal from deadly blows."

Xheros jumps to his feet. "But I thought..." he goes silent and looks at his book.

"Darling, magic isn't only about brawling."

My energy billows back up and I can officially brain at full power.

"Woah, thanks, Charon." I rub my arms from a sudden chill that overtakes my body. "Was I really about to kick the bucket?"

"Yes and no." She rubs my back and warmth radiates from her hand. Who knew the devil, or well, ex-devil, could be so kind?

Xheros frowns and slams his book close, willing it away. "I'm gonna kill him."

"He's a god. You're a Titan. Calm yourself, sexy."

He grumbles and slinks off to the side out of view.

"As soon as I find Helena, I'll take care of Helios myself." He's going to be a problem in the future, isn't he? Problem after problem. That's my life.

Xheros pops back up to my right. "Uh, the hell you are."

"I'm a Goddess, you're a Titan, simmer down," I say, stealing Charon's words with a smirk.

He's NOT amused.

"You're a kid. A newbie god. What the hell can you do to a full-fledged god, huh? Without getting your soul ripped out of your body? Eh?"

Charon steps in between us and rubs her hands on his chest. "Love, you're so protective. Imagine the perfect little

demon babies we could have.” Her voice dips down to a seductive base.

Okay. That’s my cue.

With my newfound energy, I concentrate on where to go next. I have to find Jaxson and the others.

It hits me.

Milton’s room.

\*\*\*

“Sup!” I greet Jaxson, Milton, Gwen, and Rival as they’re talking at Milton’s dining table inside his suite. I fizzle into existence right on the top of the table in a sitting position. Progress to the max. I’m feeling it!

They all look at me like I’m a ghost, but Milton gleams a bright smile. Yup, that teleportation sure did come in handy. Didn’t know I’d be able to do it that far so soon though.

Jaxson jumps up and grabs me, smushing me into his chest where I indulge in his protective irish springs scent swirling around me like a barrier.

Mmm. He’s so warm.

(Mate <3)

‘Oh my god, Lunai?! You’re safe! Thank goodness.’

(I’m always with you.)

‘I know, I just... I destroyed half my identity, technically. Did I hurt you?’

(No, I’m completely Lunar based courtesy of your mother.)

Mom...

So many more questions.

Jaxson’s ragged panicky breathing brings me back out of my mind. I could only imagine how anxious and worried he

was when he found out my own God of a father kidnapped me.

My fingers smooth across his pecs while I admire his tense muscles built solely for me.

“I’m okay,” I sniffle into his chest. Shit, now it’s time for the wave of emotions to finally throw its gravity on me.

“Thank fuck. We were about to break a lot of heavy rules.”

I pull back just a little. “Oh, I can imagine. You don’t know how happy I am to have you guys.”

Rival folds his arms and lifts up his chin with a quaint smile. “Lady Helous, glad you’re back amongst us.”

“Thanks, Rival. Everyone.”

Gwen takes her turn to freak out and pushes Jaxson out of the way for a hug of her own. She looks me over and goes through her own wheel of emotions.

I catch a glimpse of Milton next to Rival with a smirk on his face. His eyes fade from black to green. Heh, he was about to go full Warlock mode, huh?

He was right. Teleportation is a goddess’s best friend.

Jaxson exhales through his nostrils heavily. “Why the fuck would your own father want to kidnap you?”

“Power. But I took my Solar side and uh, destroyed it. I’m just a regular goddess now.”

Everyone gasps.

Milton takes off his glasses. “Wow, usually... well uh...” He gives Jaxson a cautious glance. He doesn’t wanna stir up too much anger.

“Spit it out, Milt. What?” Jaxson barks.

“Well...”

I cut in. “Die. Yeah, usually that means death for one side to be gone. But Charon patched me up. I’m gonna be around for a while.”

Veins pop all over Jaxson’s neck and arms.

“Woah, bad wolf! Calm down!” I urge, grabbing one of his meaty wrists. “I did that. Not my father! He no longer has a connection to come down here. But I don’t know how long that’ll stop him.”

Milton laughs. “For a long damn time.”

“That’s good to hear,” Rival adds.

A loud boom quakes Milton’s room, rattling the chandelier above our heads and the window panes. We all rush out to his balcony, nearly tripping over each other’s feet.

I catch a glance of Milton’s eyes and they turn black, sending shivers down my spine.

“It’s him again...” Milton points at a spot in the fields before it turns hilly. A pothole is opening, growing wider by the second. It swallows grass, dirt, and rocks into a dark void bubbling with ominous power.

But something is tugging at my chest.

It’s off-kilter.

I’m relieved to know it’s not my so-called father trying to stomp back down here, but this magic... carries a hesitation.

A taste of disgust.

Gwen gasps, summoning her magic wand. “The warlock!”

“Yeah...” Milton pushes his glass up and swallows hard.

Damn. What a time to be attacked.

We rush back inside and before we make it to the door, the shelter-in-place alarm blares overhead.

I cover my ears and wince. “We can’t stay here!” I shout over the alarm.

Everyone nods. And thankfully Jaxson isn’t trying to stop me. Instead, he shifts into his golden wolf form, Gwen transforms into full witch mode with a gem hemmed cloak and all, Rival’s uniform turns into a black leather bodysuit and Milton takes an all-black knife and pricks at his hand where Cecil left a binding spell on his powers, breaking it off.

“You’re going to get in trouble, Milton,” Rival notes, seeing the fizzling of the binding spell fade off of Milton’s hand.

“Can’t fight with it on. That’d be suicide. Bad for the family name!”

I dart down the stairs to the main doors with everyone following me.

Just as I touch the double doors and push them open, a light blue sparkly barrier shoots down from overhead and shoves us right back inside. We topple over each other but quickly get back on our feet.

“Damn it! What the hell is that?!” I grumble, straightening out my uniform. Hell, I need a leather outfit too. This will tear to shreds in no time.

There’s a faint scent of roses. And the first person to pop up in my head is—

“Professor Ivory,” Milton says, glaring at the sparkling shield sealing us in at the entrance.

“Wait, why?”

Our academy’s local Saoirse hits the cobblestone with elegance, his pale blond hair kept up in a high ponytail. His stiletto black leather boots barely make a sound.

Damn. Of course, he made the barrier.

“Professor Ivory,” I hit the barrier with my fists. “Let us out! We have to fight too!”

How am I ever going to get better at being a goddess if I’m not given a chance to use it in a real battle? My nails dig into the barrier, causing sparks.

“You have to stay hidden. All of you. This is at the behest of the alpha and your uncle, Stella.” Cecil narrows his eyes at Milton. “And you better put that binding spell on before this barrier lifts, Mr. Pointdexter.”

Milton stays silent. It’s almost as if he’s not even here.



Jaxson nudges me with his nose. “Maybe it’s a good idea. There’s no telling what ancient or illegal magic that warlock has.” His protective alpha side is showing now...

“Jaxson. We can’t always hide.”

(He’s telling us not to argue with Cecil. It’s a waste of time. We’ll get out a different way.)

Rival walks up to the barrier and eyes it. “Impressive. Both a masking spell and a barrier. Expensive magic. However, I agree with Ms. Helios. Playing hide and seek is going to spell disaster.”

“There are more advanced administrators heading to the site. Stay put, King Petrov.”

With that, Cecil propels himself upwards, leaving a small wispy trail of gold magic behind. The barrier begins to darken to a shade of licorice. Damn, now we won’t be able to see for shit now.

Milton taps my shoulder. “Stella. Only you can leave. But you have to be careful.”

Jaxson shifts back into his human form, holding his head. “Fuck.” He grabs my shoulders and plants a big juicy kiss on my lips then draws back, staring into my eyes. “Go get ‘em, Goddess.”

\*\*\*

I imagine a field blasted to death with utter war going down. But when I arrive at the fields, it’s just the Warlock hidden in a gray cloak, floating over the hole he dug to get into the academy’s grounds.

Off to the left, there’s a box constructed out of bars of black energy. Everyone; Cecil, the alpha, and the bulk of our staff is inside, asleep, floating in mid-air.

So he’s not harming anyone.

But why?

Xheros is in the air with black energy restraining his body to the shape of an X. He glances over his shoulder and his eyes

grow wide when he sees me.

“Damn it, kid. Stop being so rebellious!” A black gag pops into existence in his mouth. Xheros struggles against it, veins popping in his neck.

“You’ve arrived. It took you long enough,” a deep ancient voice says. I take a few strides closer and slow down with the knife tightly gripped.

“You’re not hurting anyone. Why are you here?”

With a wave of his hand, he pushes Xheros toward the others in the cave. “I wish for freedom.”

Large veined hands reach up and pull down his hood to reveal a bald-headed hard faced male with red eyes and small black runes racing across his cheeks and nose. It’s like he’s wearing a muzzle full of runes.

“Weren’t you imprisoned?” The knife feels hot in my hand.

“Yes. But I’m asking for freedom. Real freedom.” He glances down at my hand and I jolt backward.

“You want me to kill you?”

His face is stony, it doesn’t move. But I know the answer.

The grass crunches from behind me, and I spin to see Charon. Her eyes are glowing red much like the warlock’s.

“I haven’t seen that knife in decades.”

It hits me... “Wait, this isn’t made with your blood, is it?”

The warlock groans and doubles over. “That wench Helena has a hold of me. I can’t keep my mind for long.” He breaks into wild gasping for breath.

“I... I can’t just kill you. Not when you don’t mean us harm—”

Charon’s pale, long-nailed hand lands on my shoulder. “You have to. Your idea of freedom and help isn’t always going to align with others.”

The warlock stands and bends his neck back.

“Holy shit, it’s on his neck too...” The dagger in my hand trembles, heating up. It’s like it has a mind of its own. It knows...

A single tear burns down my cheek.

Why are people so obsessed with death in the magic world?

Charon takes the hand with the dagger, and without touching it, lifts my hand up and points it at his neck.

“Go ahead. He’s in great pain.”

I bite my lower lip and walk forward.

The knife sparks against his skin and turns his veins a glowing angry orange like lava.

“Thank you. You will find your vengeance at the place you once knew as home...”

The orphanage?!

Is Helena at the orphanage? Why the hell would she be there?

(I think there might be sacred ground there.)

‘I’ll ask Milton, gear up, and slap the hell outta that bitch.’

The warlock’s body is taken over by the orange glow and withers away like embers. The hole he’s floating over disappears without a trace of ever existing, and the cage and spells vanish.

“You’re a brave goddess. Chin up, us women must remain strong. Cracks and all.” She glances over to the awakening staff.

Xheros helps some of them up. Especially Cecil. Who slaps him.

Damn. That echoed way over here.

Charon whispers in a hurried hush, “Go. Hurry. If they see that dagger...”

“Oh yeah. Thanks, Charon.” Milton was already in enough trouble.

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# STELLA

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Standing at the tall iron-wrought gates that once welcomed me into the academy almost a month ago, I take a deep breath and brace myself. This decision may cost me my place here and possibly even my future. But I cannot bear the thought of putting Milton and the others in harm's way. Helena is a skilled and dangerous opponent, and she only wants me.

Determined to finish this quickly, I step forward and reach for the gates, my hands trembling slightly. But before I can push them open, a sad growl behind me stops me in my tracks.

“Really? Without me?” Jaxson’s voice, husky with his wolf, sounds behind me.

Frustration wells up inside me. Jaxson always seems to know just when to intervene.

“It’s my fight, Jaxson. I have to do this on my own,” I explain firmly. “It’s between Helena and me.”

“Not without me,” Jaxson protests.

I bite my lip, torn between my need for independence and my concern for Jaxson’s safety. I shake my head.

“I can’t let you get involved. It’s too dangerous.”

Before I can say anything more, a blinding white light snaps in Jaxson’s eyes and he falls limp. I recognize the signature of Xheros’ magic.

“Hey, Lunar-cakes. Where do you think you’re skippin’ off to? Mmm?” Xheros purrs, sauntering up to us in a new leather outfit complete with steel studded stiletto boots. As always, he manages to make even the most feminine of styles look masculine and confident.

“The orphanage. I’ll be back later,” I reply, trying to keep my tone despite the knots in my stomach.

“Nuh, uh uh! Not without me,” Xheros says with a playful pout.

“But-” I protest.

“No buts. Or I’ll wake your alpha puppy up. Want that?” Xheros threatens, his tone turning serious.

I heave a sigh of defeat. “Fine.”

“Alrighty, heave ho!” Xheros disappears Jaxson’s body with a flick of his wrist, no doubt laying him out in his room. Turning back to the gates, he swishes his hands and they creak open, protesting against Xheros’ magic. Of course, the academy would have enchanted the gates to keep students from leaving without permission.

The cool, crisp air nips at my skin, and I pull my cloak tighter around me, trying to shake off the feeling of unease that has settled in my chest. This will be a long night, and I’m unsure what the future holds.

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Standing in front of the imposing metal gate, I am overwhelmed by a wave of nostalgia that leaves me feeling hollow and pained. The cold, spiny metal presses against my hand, reminding me of all the times I was forcibly pushed against it and all the times I had to scramble over it in a desperate bid to beat curfew.

The old English manor of the orphanage looms ominously above us, casting a dark shadow against the cloudy night sky and the flickering light of the full moon. Lunai howls mournfully, her haunting voice echoing through my soul, yet I feel her comforting presence within me, reminding me that I was never truly alone.

It's difficult to believe that just a month ago, I was simply a human being, living a mundane life. But now, everything has changed in the blink of an eye. I have an uncle who is a titan, a goddess for a mother, and a small family of friends and a mate who have become my new home. The thought of ever having lived here, in this place filled with trauma and abuse, makes me shiver with repulsion.

Xheros curses under his breath, clearly feeling the same discomfort. "Doesn't feel right. You stayed here? Looks like trauma and child abuse," he says, his voice filled with anger and disbelief.

"Yeah... There's a door we can enter through the back, but there's an alarm on the front," I reply, my voice barely above a whisper as I struggle to keep my emotions in check.

As we approach the gate, my heart races with a mixture of fear and anticipation. My wolf is on edge, sensing something amiss, and I can feel the adrenaline coursing through my veins as we make our way to the back of the building. If only I knew how to warp inside taking Xheros with me, but that might trigger something too.

The only way to fly under the radar was to do this the non-magic way. Back to grassroots.

I spot the kitchen door and a sense of familiarity washes over me, even though everything else seems to have changed. The door is old and weathered, but Xheros uses his magic to effortlessly open it, and we step inside, crouching low and on high alert.

The air is thick with tension as we make our way through the kitchen, our senses attuned to any signs of danger. I feel ready

to unleash lunar lightning at the first sign of trouble, my muscles coil tight, ready to strike.

As we reach the basement door, I feel a strange energy that makes my wolf stand at attention. Something is down there, and I can sense it in the very fibers of my being. I turn to Xheros and whisper, "You think we need it?"

He nods, his eyes are intense. "I don't know. But I do sense magic," he replies, his voice low and filled with caution.

Helena isn't here...

I know that.

But at the same time, I don't feel like this is a trap. "There's something we need from here."

We go up to the basement door, and I check for any signs of runes or spells using a technique called 'screening' which I learned from Mr. Halfington's class.

"All clear."

Lunai is a bit unsettled, rustling around inside me.

The house isn't empty.

I grab the cold brass knob and open the door, unafraid of any noise.

"Ey, kiddo, wanna tell the whole house we're here?" Xheros frowns following after me.

I step inside and look down the stone stairs to where there's a toxic green glow. "No, because they already know."

A voice calls out. "Come down, dear. We have what you're looking for."

Xheros grabs my shoulder but I pat it down gently. "Let's do this."

"Fine, me before you!" Xheros bullets down and I'm right behind him.



At the end of the stairs, I see my ex-headmistress standing with two other girls that used to bully me about being a 'regular human' all the time.

I let my Lunar Lightning crackle around my fingertips to give 'em a little warning.

The way they narrow their eyes and purse their lips sends a little thrill through me. On equal footing now.

“Well, well, well. Look at you. Who knew the prophecy would be about you. Poorly chosen indeed.”

Xheros' hair lights up with blueish fire. “Got a lotta talk for a poorly chosen outfit. Judging by the aura of this place she's the only person worthy of magic that walked through these shoddy ass halls.”

I crack a smile.

The last time I was here, no one was there to protect me. Thanks, uncle X.

I step in front of him and my wolf rises to the surface. “You have something I need. Hand it over or we'll take it. And we won't be nice about it.”

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# STELLA

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“I don’t think either will happen tonight.”

I fold my arms and chuckle. “Dare test a goddess?”

“Just because you’re one doesn’t mean you’re good at using magic.”

With a scowl that makes more creases on her face, the headmistress raises her brass and wood walking staff and hits the ground, releasing a shit ton of runes splaying onto the floors and sealing us in. It’s also trying to dull down our powers.

Nothing a goddess and a Titan can’t handle though.

Lunai growls and begs to shift but not yet. I know that’s what they want.

“You have what I want, Stella. Power. And it doesn’t belong to you.”

“Bullshit!” I shout.

\*Upstairs! It’s something upstairs in your old room. I see images of... of you reading in a bedroom!\*

Wait! My book! The magic book that I’d read in any spare time I could. That’s why I’m here.

“Xheros! Fend them off! I know where to find it!”

“Gotcha, Moon-cakes!” Xheros spreads his arms and laughs maniacally as blue flames explode from his hands and combats the headmistress’ powers.

I bound up the basement stairs, but the twins warp out of the floor and block me.

“How dare the gods choose you! They made a mistake,” twin number one growls with her blond hair snatched back in a tight pony.

Twin number two with the same hairstyle makes some signs with her hands. I don't need to be a pro in magic to know what that means. "The only mistake here is you assholes challenging a goddess." I concentrate and teleport around them and into the main hallway upstairs.

"Shit, that was easier than before."

\*You're getting better. Hurry! They're coming.\*

I swing the door to my old shared sleeping quarters and see my old bed.

The twins are in the hallway now, and race forward, their feet slamming on the old wooden floors, but I slam the door on them and use another technique from Mr. Ivory's defense class to lock and secure the door.

Hell yeah.

Running over to my old bed, I reach under it where I usually hid all my books and feel the hard leather under my fingers. Yep, that's it.

I pull it out and powerful magic exudes from it. It's like the books at the academy. The books choose who reads them.

And this one chose me a long time ago.

Someone pounds on the door. The spell is breaking from the twins throwing a mental tantrum at the spell. This is going to permanently yeet their egos into the trash bins.

So satisfying. I'm here for it.

The banging stops and my wolf paws at the surface.

That... aura... that vibe...

That's no longer the twins.

"We both know this door won't hold up to my magic."

It explodes open and I cover my head while holding my book.

The headmistress walks in with her faded black heels creaking under the wooden floorboards. She stops once inside, turns,

and levitates a few inches from the ground. A slimy green aura glows around her as her black eyes narrow in on me.

The room is filled with the scent of mildew and age, and the sound of the headmistress's faded black heels creaking on the ancient wooden floorboards echoes through the room. Her movements are graceful and measured as if she is perfectly in control of every muscle in her body. Suddenly, she stops and seems to levitate a few inches above the ground. The air around her is filled with a sickly green aura that glows and pulsates like a malevolent force.

I stand up and take a step forward. "What makes you think I won't shift and tear you to pieces?"

'Lunai, can you store this book for me safely so I don't drop it?'

\*Yes.\*

The book fizzles away, tucked away with Lunai. Now, I'm hands-free.

The headmistress tilts her head up, a sly smile playing on her lips. "You think you can actually lay a finger on me?" she mocks, her laughter echoing through the room like a haunting melody. "Honey, having a lot of magic and wielding it are two different things. Let me demonstrate."

"Touché..."

Her black eyes narrow and focus on me, as if she is assessing me, searching for some weakness to exploit. I can feel her cold stare boring into me like a drill, and for a moment, I am almost afraid to move.

The headmistress raises her cane and shoots a powerful burst of energy at me. "Even the gods are fools to have chosen you!" she spits out, her voice dripping with contempt and venom.

Quickly, I duck and teleport behind her, planning to catch her off guard with a swift kick to the back. "They didn't choose me, they made me," I retort, my voice steady and calm.

But the headmistress is too quick for me. She blasts me back with a surge of dark energy that sends me flying across the room. “Absolutely, darling. A very bad mistake they made indeed,” she sneers, her eyes glittering with malicious glee.

With a deep frustration, I teleport back into the basement to check on Xheros. “Eyy, Lunar-pie. You might wanna hurry back to the campus. Go!” he says, his voice weak and hoarse as he breaks into a wild frenzy of coughing.

“The hell I will. Not without you!” I reply, hurrying over to him. I spot the green cuffs keeping him tethered against a wall and feel a surge of anger and determination.

“What the hell did she—?” I begin, but Lunai and Xheros interrupt me urgently.

“Stella! The Twins, behind you!”

Without hesitating, I fly upwards and execute a back flip, unsheathing my razor-sharp claws as I go. As I soar over their heads, I slash at their faces with all my might. They grunt in pain, but their magic quickly heals their wounds, and they roll an orb of magic up to their sides, preparing to strike again.

Lunai puts a blue sparking shield around me. As the twins charge me, I wait...

They get close enough and I make it explode. The twins’ bodies fly back and hit the rough-edged chiseled walls and slump down on the ground. They’ll be back up again soon.

“Xheros, how did that old winch get you like this?”

“Stella. GO!”

“NO, Idiot.” Xheros coughs, his sentence being broken off.

What a worry wart.

I dig my claws into the magic binding his wrists against the wall. Pain shoots up and down my arms and grips my chest. But damn it, I’ve caused a lot of people to get hurt. Xheros is family, I can’t leave him behind.

And I’m not going to.

With one final push.

I.

Am.

The Moon.

A powerful explosion removes some of the walls and annihilates the cuffs on Xheros, freeing him without injury.

Uh, but me. I fall to my knees and clutch my chest. Through blurry eyes, I spot the twins recovering and off to the side I hear the Headmistress making her way down the stairs patiently.

Xheros crouches down and holds my shoulder.

Smoke sizzles from his hand and he whips it back. "Shit! Hotter than a lump of coal outta hell." He waves his hand to cool it off, his magic rushing to heal the burn.

"I got it... the book." My magic is trying to heal me too but this basement is loaded with more than just one rune-based spell. No wonder I never liked this basement.

The Headmistress walks forward at a slug's pace. "You were never the type to listen to those who knew better than you."

She knows I took a hit.

Damn it. Maybe that was her plan all along.

Xheros stands in front of me, fists balled. "Take another step, wrinkly bitch."

"Go ahead, Titan. Use your powers. I'd like to see you and that little mistake of the gods fry to pieces."

\*She's got the basement laid with offul spells.\*

'Awful? Oh shit, offul? You mean that spell that will nuke you if you use magic in certain parameters?!'

\*Unfortunately, yes.\*

No wonder I was fried up like a chicken tender. Ugh, still hot too. That must've been how Xheros was caught up and strapped to that wall too. Plus, the twins are recovering and starting to get onto their feet. Gotta beat 'em to it.

I force myself up, my arms burning and muscles crying for some rest. My throat's burning like I drank some lava from the 99th district in the Necro-Realm.

Wait.

'Lunai! When you executed magic I wasn't burned. Can you do it again to get Xheros and me out of here?'

\*Our magic channels are a bit on the fritz, but grab his wrist, and I can try.\*

I lunge for Xheros' wrist and Lunai does her thing. Light blue energy wraps us up and we're tossed onto the living room floor.

"Tell Ms. Lunar wolf I said thank you," Xheros says, jumping to his feet, his eyes blazing with his powers at full force.

"She says you're welcome."

Xheros quickly strikes the basement door with a locking spell. And just in time too.

The Headmistress and her goonies are attacking the door to death trying to escape. Sparks of magic shake off the door with their efforts but Xheros' power is holding strong.

I scramble to my feet and bolt for the door. But something above my head catches my attention.

"Gargoyles?!" Xheros spits out, yanking me off to the side as a statue swings its axe at me. Luckily it misses and hits the kitchen's back wall, bursting into black smoke. The stench makes my eyes water. Imagine dead squirrels with a hint of tar. Yeck.

"I never liked those things!" Didn't know they were guards, so to speak.

Three other statues to our left on the fireplace jump down and grow about three times their size. The one that threw the axe was situated on top of the front door.

"Xheros! Forgive me if this doesn't work!" Because if we stay here any longer, Headmistress will make SURE we don't

leave. Ever.

I grab onto his arm and close my eyes, remembering my lessons on warping. But this time, I imagine Xheros warping along with me too. I bring the sense of urgency of BOTH of us escaping.

And does it work?

I don't know because everything just went black.

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# XHEROS

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The moment Stella and I returned back to campus, Cecil was at the gate waiting. Seething. So was her mate, Jaxson.

Of course, Cecil stopped an eventual fight between me and the young worried pup. But now that he was off with Stella in his arms, it was time for Cecil and me to have our little ex-lovers brawl...

\*\*\*

When Cecil gets behind his black marble desk he slams his lithe white hands down with magic sparking out of his finger tips.

“Careful, you’re gonna break something.”

Cecil bears his teeth at me, his cheeks flushed. “Xheros! You imbecile! She could’ve died. The only thing I want to break is you.”

“You do remember I’m a toppy top, right?”

Cecil’s hair begins to take a life of its own and floats around his face with a menacing pale glow. Uh oh.

All the windows are closed and the spells that line the damn walls make sure not one word escapes. He’s fuming with pissed-off Saoirse magic and it only makes me wanna chuckle. Wonder how many buttons this titan can push?

I drop the flirting for now. And get serious.

“You know she was going to go alone right? You’re unreasonable Cecil.”

He jabs a finger at me, magic sparking off of it. “It’s Professor Ivory to you.”

I take a step back and levitate into a crossed-leg position and rub my chin. “What are you really pissed off about? Is it Charon?”

He lifts his chin. “Saoirse don’t know jealousy.”

“Is that true or are you bull-shitting me?”

He takes a hand through his long pale blond hair. Oh, the memories of grabbing a fistful.

“This has nothing to do with any distant affairs of ours.”

I click my teeth. “Too bad.”

Cecil momentarily loses steam and shakes his head with a hand over his face. “Stella is a once-in-a-lifetime being. For deity’s sake, she’s not immortal.”

“No shit. But you know I did the right thing.” I fold my arms. “Now, Stella aside, how are you? It’s been a decade or two.”

“This is not the time nor place.”

I float towards him then twist upside down with a smile. “You’re right. Offices are so stuffy and uptight. My place or yours?”

He lowers those heavily contrasted black eyebrows and leans back in his seat with his lips pursed. A heavy pause lingers between us.

Ah the thought of Charon and Cecil under me makes my power crackle.

Cecil notices it too because his eye flinches. Those pretty long lashes...

He exhales silently.

“You know, us Titans are famous for harems and Charon likes you too-”

Cecil pushes me back with his hand on my face. “Gross. Titans are greedy indeed.”

“Touche. See how I’m willing to spread the love?” I wiggle my eyebrows.

A vein pops on my little Saoirse's face.

“Next time she wants to do something dangerous you alert me and the alpha immediately. Get out.”

A portal opens underneath me.

“Oh come on. Not even a kiss?” I pucker up.

The portal yanks me down and I'm thrown into an empty table in the library, gathering some ire from the librarian.

She doesn't even need to shush me with that death glare, damn.

I mouth the words I'm sorry and later make a mental note to tell her that it was Cecil's fault.

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# STELLA

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My body's spiraling in a void of blackness. I'm here yet I'm not. It's as if my magic channels are gears spinning throughout my body.

\*Stella, wake up... it's time.\*

My eyes reluctantly pull themselves open. The glare of the afternoon sun is white and stings my eyes. Soon, the vaulted ceilings of my dorm room come into view.

I open my mouth and groan. The familiar scent of marshmallows makes me crave something sweet to eat. When was the last time I had chocolate?

"Omg, Stella, you're awake!"

"Hey, Gwen. How long was I out?"

"Like three days. It reminds me of how we first met. Oh oh, that's right. The book!"

I sit up straighter. "You have it?"

"Yes, Xheros asked me to keep it safe and away from staff. So Milton and I created a spell to keep it under the radar."

Gwen snaps her fingers and a wand appears. Swishing it around she chants a spell and poof the book appears in a fluff of white sparkly smoke. It drops onto my lap, its golden metal book clasps glinting under the light.

"Thanks, Gwen."

"No probs. And now that you're awake..."

Gwen taps the wooden floor three times in fast succession. A portal opens up with Milton and Rival hopping out. Milton wears a wide smile and pure blue spectacles. As soon as his feet touch the floor his portal closes up.

“Stellz, glad to see you up and running! Mighty fine book you have there.”

Rival nods. “Ms. Helios, glad to see you’re well.”

“Thanks, you two. And yeah, this book is my favorite. I read it all the time at the orphanage.”

“Oh wow. Really? This particular book is hard to open and find. More like it finds you.”

“What kind is it? Isn’t it just a regular magic being encyclopedia kinda book?”

He grins, lighting up the whole dorm room. “Woah. Bloodier than that. This is called the Gnolton Diary. It’s a book that’s all about serving the reader it chooses. It’s going to be pivotal in finding Helena. And maybe destroying her too.”

“Destroy? You don’t think I have to kill her too, do you?”

Gwen and Milton look at each other lost for words. Gwen smooths her skirt and Milton scratches his hair. The silence is more uncomfortable than being told a flat-out yes.

“Is that all people use magic for?”

“Sometimes,” Gwen whispers.

Rival exhales and doesn’t add to the conversation.

But Milton chimes in. “And sometimes not. Our generation will bring more hope into the magic world. I know it. Starting with us. You.”

He rubs his hands together like he’s waiting to dig into a delicious meal, eyes aimed at my book.

“Now go on, open her up! What does she have to say?”

Gwen sits next to me on the other side of my bed.

“It’s a beautiful book. My grandmother had a Gnolton Diary. Very rare indeed.”

“Well, let’s see if it matches up to the hype.”

Gwen looms like the others for a closer look. It was as if the Gnolton Diary would grow a face and say ‘wassup.’

Anticipation eats at me and I open it up.

“How come it’s empty?” Gwen asks, placing a finger on her chin.

Milton rubs under his chin, and hums in deep thought. “Maybe it’s something only Stella can see?”

I shake my head and squint my eyes to ensure I’m not missing anything. “Nope, I can’t see a thing. Just blank pages. Maybe I’m doing something wrong? Weird. It wasn’t blank before. It had all kinds of cool stuff in here about magic.”

Rival walks away towards the open balcony. The curtains blow in as the noon sun fills up the dorm. I half expect Rival to shift into a bat form and fly away. “It’s not the right moment. Yet.” And instead of him shifting into a bat he literally jumps onto the railing and off the balcony.

I close the book and rub my hand across the front. Who knew this book would end up being this important in my life. I exhale with frustration and lean back onto the headboard of my bed.

Small peaceful moments like these are really what make life count. No drama. No fighting. No injuries.

Just friends, Lunai, my mate, and magic.

Gwen squeezes my shoulder with a warm smile only a good witch like her can beam. “Don’t worry. The right moment will come soon. But you do need rest, Stella.”

Milton jumps and looks at the door. Hastily, he makes a portal on the floor and pushes his glasses up his nose. “Gwen, jump in after me. Company’s coming and I’m not supposed to be in here. Plus, your class starts soon.” Milton turns to me. “Rest up, Stellz.” With that, he jumps into his portal.

“Coming!” Gwen steps up to the portal and looks over her shoulder. “I’ll take notes in class for you!” Following Milton, the portal gurgles and zips shut.

No damage is left behind. Milton’s magic is clean.

\*Interesting to think that our humble wizard has some warlock in him.\*

‘Yeah. Really wild.’

Wait. Milton said something about company coming. Is that why everyone evacuated?

I turn my attention to the door and not a second after it swings open with Jaxson rushing towards me. An unnerved Professor Ivory following close behind.

“Mr. Warclaw, please—” Professor Ivory huffs, only to be ignored as Jaxson rushes towards me.

He looks so good with those muscles rippling under his uniform and black hair slicked back. There’s even a peek of his tattoos around his wrists under his shirt.

“Hey, Alpha,” I tease, holding my arms out for a hug.

He grumbles. “Damn it, Stella.” He bends down and dives into my arms, his nose going into the crook of my neck and inhaling my scent. A shiver shakes my spine.

If only we were alone...

And his scent is particularly strong right now. The refreshing scent of Ireland Springs sweeps around me and tickles my core. I could wrap myself in his scent like a warm sweater.

He loosens the hug to kneel on the ground next to my bed. Now his arms are looped around my waist. “Look, I like your uncle. Respect him even. But he’s going to catch these fists today.”

“Hey, don’t be hard on him. I was actually trying to go solo.”

Professor Ivory tsks and pinches his eyebrows together with his bony pale hands. “A very irresponsible move on your part. You’re a junior goddess. That doesn’t mean you’re immortal.” He throws his hands down and exasperates.

“Really? Well, honestly, I never gave immortality a thought though...”

“You should. Xheros told me where you used to live and the Headmistress who runs that place is very skilled in offul

spells and the dark arts. Bit of a thief and severely lacking morale. You and Xheros could've—" And oop, he catches himself.

Jaxson's eyes flash open even wider as he turns to stare the professor down.

Professor Ivory catches Jaxson's glare like a hurling football with great precision. Zero fear, but the tension is tangible.

"Could've what?" he growls, his wolf pawing at the surface.

"Hey, hey. Let's not get all dark and gloomy. Okay? I'm here, I'm fine." I wave my hands and tap Jaxson on the shoulder.

Jaxson places his shoulders down on the bed and exhales sharply. His hand is on top of mine. "Stella, I am an Alpha. Your mate. I'm built—no—born for this. You don't have to do everything by yourself."

"And place others in danger? They have families."

"You are family. To me and the others."

I pull away from his hand, my heart jumping. But he keeps it firm, not letting me get away.

Jaxson threads his fingers through mine and continues, "Life is always dangerous. Together we can make it safe. If we want to help you then it's fate letting you know you need it."

Shit, he's making too much sense.

Professor Ivory cracks a small, proud smile and folds his arms, nodding in agreement. "So, you've retrieved a Gnoilton Diary. Impressive. Has it said anything to you yet?"

"No. It's blank."

"Try again..."



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# STELLA

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The night is falling and shit's getting serious. I drop the Gnoilton Diary in the middle of Milton's fancy dining table in his dorm suite and look everyone in the eye.

Here goes nothing...

"We are going to be summing a God," I announce to everyone as confidently as possible.

Everyone's eyes widen with disbelief.

Milton hops up from his seat practically glowing.

"That's bloody amazing, but what the hell, that kind of spell is bonkers to pull off."

Rival adds, "Sometimes even forbidden..."

Gwen nibbles on her fingernail. "And it depends on the type of god you're summoning too."

"Well, we'll be summoning my mom, apparently."

Jaxson leans onto the table. "Yeah, that means there really shouldn't be a problem."

"Oh, I hope so." Because my father wasn't a cakewalk. He literally kidnapped me for my power. What if my mom is the same way? What will I say to her? Why did she even leave me as an orphan on earth and what does she have to do with Helena?

So many questions that it's making my stomach nauseous.

"So," Milton sits back down with his glowing smile, "When are we calling mom on down?"

I freeze up because... "I honestly don't know. I'm a bit uneasy. She did ditch me after all."

Gwen sighs. “Oh, Stella, maybe there’s some weird logic to it? Maybe she can’t wait to meet you.” She clasps her hands together hopefully.

Rival smiles at her from behind, so much love in his eyes for her.

My head sinks between my shoulders as I look at the Gnoilton Diary before me. Jaxson’s ripped and tatted arm snakes around my waist and pulls me into his body. I didn’t even notice that he moved. Guess that happens when you’re lost in a sea of old memories and ‘what ifs.’

“Let’s do it tonight,” Jaxson suggests barely above a whisper.

“Tonight? But..”

Milton chimes in, “He’s right. Better now than never. The fact that Helena could get that Warlock out of magic prison only means she might even do more damage if she hasn’t already.”

“You’re right. But how do we do that?”

The Diary snaps open and pages flip on their own. When they stop, golden ink sprawls on black paper.

“There’s our answer!” Milton sings. “And I have the perfect place in mind where to do it.”

Milton opens a portal from his dorm suite that leads us to... Oh my god. No freaking way. I can’t believe he’s taking us there.

I exchange a quick glance with my friends Jaxson and Rival, who look just as surprised as I am. We step through the portal and I feel a sudden rush of energy as we’re transported to another location.

As we step out of the portal, I look around and realize that we’re standing in front of an old, outdoor stone pit altar that Jaxson took me to and... rejected me at. I can feel a sense of nostalgia washing over me as I take in the familiar surroundings.

Damn, I remember the heartbreak that tore through me a thousand times and the power that burned through my veins when it happened. Now here I am, back at the same spot with my mate and a whole new family in tow.

Jaxson seems uneasy as he looks around, his muscles tensing up. I elbow him playfully, trying to lighten the mood. “Oh, what joyous memories this place holds...” I tease, a mischievous smile on my face.

“Stella. Shit, I—” Jaxson starts, but I cut him off.

“Woah there, calm down, I’m teasing. I know,” I say, patting his arm reassuringly.

Rival clears his throat and steps forward towards us, as Milton and Gwen start to ready the altar. “Do not feel guilty for the ills of another. Soon we’ll find out the core reason of Helena’s issue with Lady Helios and put all this chaos to rest,” he says, his voice steady and distant.

I take a deep breath, feeling a sense of anticipation building up inside me. We’re on the verge of uncovering a mystery that has plagued me, Jaxson, and my friends for over a month.

I give a small nod before landing a kiss on Jaxson’s jaw with a little jump. He’s so tall that I have to reach up to his jaw to plant a kiss, otherwise, I would have to ask him to bend down.

Milton gestures towards the Gnoilton Diary in my hand.

“Stells, come on over before—“

A voice comes from the side, and we turn to see both Cecil and the oracle. “Before we arrive? Oh, come on, Mr. Pointdexter,” he begins, “we’re not slow here at the academy.”

Mr. Pointdexter chuckles. “But of course not. Does this mean you’re going to stop us, though?”

Cecil shakes his head. “Not at all. Just here to make sure you guys stay safe.”

The oracle looks at me with kind eyes, as if she’s speaking to me in a silent language. Suddenly, I realize that someone is missing. “Someone’s missing...” I whisper aloud.

Jaxson notices my distress and asks, “Who?”

I feel a heavy weight in my heart as I answer, “My uncle. Xheros.”

Without hesitation, I tap the ground with my foot three times and call out his name louder. Soon enough, blue energy crackles before me, and Xheros hops out of his portal.

“You called?” His cheery expression drops as he surveys the area. “Ah, shit. You callin’ your mommy on down?”

I nod. “Yeah. And I think you’re the only one who can.”

Xheros turns to Cecil and the two share a very heavy moment that’s distilled in the air. He turns back to me and takes the book out of my hand. “Damn, Figured this would happen sooner or later.”

It’s a stark reminder that heartbreak can really damage a soul. Hell, I remember when Jaxson rejected me to protect his bloodline...

But then Xheros was rejected for a different reason. She chose my father Helios the Sun God.

Or did she?

Did Gods just shack up for the hell of it?

Xheros steps forward, his booted feet clacking against the stone floor. He lifts his hands and flexs his fingers, cracking them like whips as he strides towards the altar where I’d placed my diary. As he nears, I could feel warm, glowing energy radiating from him, and the light from my diary grew brighter. My chest burned with a pain that I recognized as belonging to Xheros.

He loved my mom.

And probably still does.

I know damn well the thought of seeing her again makes his heart sink in his chest. Every beat must feel like a hammer striking against an anvil. The pain too intense to bear.

Everyone is still, almost like no one’s even breathing.

Xheros chants the spell under his breath and his voice echoes like a lost wind blowing down an empty dark alley.

Broken and lonely.

Like I once was.

Moonbeams filter into the temple and dance on the floor, twinkling and glittering in a million rainbows of color.

A magic path sparkled amidst the dust, twinkling and weaving like a string of Christmas lights. The meandering trail aims straight for the altar carved from white marble-like stone. As my eyes follow the swirl of glittery moonbeams, I watch as her silhouette forms.

Her body soon appears, and the Moon Goddess is fully in our presence. Body, mind, and soul.

Her white silken gown floats around her like clouds. The soft, heavy fabric hangs in folds from her slim shoulders and trails to the ground behind her. Her hair is white, like mine, and cut in a bob that frames her pixie face, which has my eyes, nose, and mouth.

Her skin is like pearls with a holographic sheen.

But that's normal when you have a biological parent...

This feels so strange to me.

Her eyes fall on mine and widen with astonishment.

I open my mouth and it's hard to get my voice up and working. "You've never seen your daughter before?" I try to tease but it comes out sounding much more wounded than I would've liked.

"I... never get to see my children," she places a hand over her heart. Ribbons of lunar magic swim around her like they're floating in water. Even the stars are twinkling around her white silk and golden-robed body. "I'm so sorry. But I do recognize them when I see them."

Xheros is staying mighty silent.

Nevertheless, mom looks at him with a small smile. "You've been keeping her safe, haven't you Xheros?"

“Bah, as safe as the lunar kid will let me,” he chuckles with a hint of longing and pain. “You look good by the way.”

“So do you. Always changing, unlike the other titans and gods.”

“My worse quality at its best, I guess.” He bows with a mild humorous curtsy.

Milton makes a few hand motions and a glowing image of Helena’s face floats between his hands. “Goddess of the Moon,” he says, bowing before her.

Mom turns around and spots the image in his hand. “Oh, and your sister is here?”

All of our jaws hit the ground. “WhAt?”

Oh, fuck me.

This is just getting worse.

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# STELLA

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“Who’s the father?!” I ask, moving closer.

She taps her lips. “I... don’t know. Us gods can get pretty busy sometimes.”

I throw up my hands. “Woah, too much detail.”

“Sorry!”

Xheros shakes his head and covers his face with his hand. “Damn. I didn’t even catch it.”

“What do you mean?” Jaxson speaks up.

“Helena is good with dark magic. When she found out dark fae were after you because of me, she pulled a damn portal into the academy.” He turns to Professor Ivory. “With our sexy little Saoirse over here, that had to be not only stealthy but difficult to pull off. Something only high-level magic can do.”

Cecil frowns.

“Mom, where can we find her? Can you locate her?”

She stares at the sky and the stars twinkle back at her, signaling that they’re looking too. One shines brilliantly like a diamond.

“She’s somewhere called... Galdur Cemetary.”

Gwen gasps. “Oh no. Not good.”

A large shadow comes flying out from behind Professor Ivory and the Oracle. It only takes seconds to recognize Wren’s scent. His sudden flight over the staff has them shuddering, but they aren’t too nervous since they recognize his presence.



He lands with a heavy ground-shaking thud. His black fur catches a gentle sheen of moonlight coming from my mother's powers.

Xheros huffs. "Ey, scary wolf, what's the big hurry?"

Wren growls and looks at the sky. "You fool, you don't sense it? Do any of you?"

Small trails of smoke lift off Wren's fur.

"Wait," I cut in, walking over to Wren. I reach out to touch him but he backs up.

Professor Ivory and the Oracle look concerned and inch up to take a closer look as well. "Wren, why are you smoking?" I ask him.

"Someone's performing a forbidden spell. It's affecting me."

Thunder pulses through the sky, breaking the sound barrier. It pierces my eardrums and makes us all wince. Looking up to the sky, we notice ashen gray clouds swirling and growing seemingly out of nowhere. Roaring from the clouds were silhouettes of bodies grasping and reaching as if trying to escape from something. Gravity seems to be doing double duty, pressing down on my shoulders. Runes spike and shoot through the clouds like lightning and disappear as quickly as they came.

"Damn it," Wren growls. "It's that Helena girl isn't it? She's trying to break the magic prison open."

"Wait, she can do that?" Milton shoves his hands through his hair, his jaw still stuck to the ground. "Holy bloody hell."

"We got to stop her. Mom, help me."

She turns to me and opens her mouth to say something. In my gut, it's as if she's about to say 'no.' But I don't find out because an odd energy pricks at my skin and sucks my soul backward.

Things go black for a split second.

But by the time I blink again, I'm face to face with her.

Helena.

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# STELLA

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“Dear, sister. How lovely to see you again.” A sinister smile dresses her face while bending over a huge cauldron bubbling and wafting with ill magic. The demons in her eyes swim, and boy, she won’t be satisfied even if I were dead.

Helena cloaked in a black satin robe, drags a red blade from her sleeve and runs it against the cauldron’s rim, and slugs over towards me. It’s as if she’s mocking the time I have left to get out of these vines.

Her eyes are black and odd glows roll around in her irises. She’s only a few feet away from me, but her aura strangles me with haunting vibes.

Struggling against the wall, each little movement tightens the vines around me even more. Shit.

‘Lunai, a little help here...’

\*Oh goodness, I’m thinking. She’s got offul spells and cancellations spells of different levels stacked on top of each other.\*

The only way we’re getting out of this is a miracle without using magic.

Any little inch of magic would cause me to fry up like a sausage, and Helena would love to see that.

There’s got to be a way to get out of this without magic.

Wait.

A thought slips into my mind. And it’s crazy enough to work.

‘Lunai, jump out of me! Now!’

\*That will take a lot of natural energy out of you.\*

‘I figured, still, do it. Trust me, we’ll manage.’

There's a tingling sensation in my chest. Almost like it's bubbling like the cauldron over there. It turns my lungs ice cold and my nerves settle down just a tad. Oddly enough, that causes the grip on my body to relax as well.

Meanwhile, Helena leans onto the wall next to me and smiles, her eyes devoid of any compassion, any hint of familiarity. She allows one of the vines to drop from my mouth and I cough.

But I don't dare speak just yet because she's got that red translucent blade right by my cheek. It's so close it makes my cheek buzz.

This is supposed to be my sister? I can't see my mom in her, but I do see Helios. And that's even more concerning. I cringe.

"Helena," I say, willing the courage to speak first. "I'm—"

"Shut up!" You don't know me. You're not anything like me. All you are is a sacrifice." She raises the blade and plunges it.

Lunai jumps out, the burst of power knocking her back and keeping the blade from gutting me like a fish.

Helena tumbles backward and the blade dislodges from her hand.

Lunai jumps and slashes at the wall, breaking the spells that hold me down.

"Lunai! Thanks, girl!" I praise, rushing over to the cauldron.

The damn thing's billowing out into the sky like a bridge to earth from magic prison. I got to stop it.

Then maybe I can finally have a normal life with my new family.

I have a mate, an uncle, and a mom. Damn, would it be nice to have a sister too...

Lunai and I get to the cauldron, and the speed of the souls escaping magic prison is so fierce it's like trying to approach a

mega fan blowing you right back.

Lunai hops back into my body and I push through, grabbing the cauldron's rim. Its cold silver marbled stone buzzes my hand. Holy shit there's some big magic going on here. Did she do this by herself?

No, I'm sensing Solar power behind this.

Fuck it, I got to destroy this thing. I hold my hands out toward the cauldron and focus.

“Lunar—”

Something hot shoots my back and I'm thrown back from the cauldron.

“Don't think you've won. You're nothing but a payment. A thorn in my side.” Helena shouts, opening her hand towards the ground. The red-bladed dagger zips back into her grip as if it's magnetized to her.

My body lays limp a few feet away from the cauldron. Each second that passes is spelling chaos for Taika City and the academy. How are the others even holding up?

I can't... ugh. My body it's burning.

“Did you like the taste of my black lightning? Courtesy of our father.” Helena's feet are at my side.

Shit, I can smell the brimstone and ashes from her Solar power.

I can't even move.

“It's time to deliver you. The ultimate payment for the ultimate key...”

Helena drives the dagger into my right arm and a portal that opens under us sucks us down.

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# STELLA

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“Wake up, Stella.” A familiar male’s voice calls out, causing my skin to crawl.

I gasp and adrenaline pumps through me. I immediately look for Helena, only to see him; my father, standing on the other side of glowing electrified bars.

Oh shit, is this magic prison? Because it’s giving prison vibes with the bars and small ass enclosure. The only difference is that the walls aren’t cement but made with these bubbling gray, ash-like smoke that reminds me of Mammatus clouds.

“You know, it’s too bad you didn’t align with me.” Helios towers over me with a sinister scowl. “All the power you could’ve had. You’re more powerful than your sister. Did you know that?”

Fire crackles at the edges of his gown with the nerve of making him appear ‘holy’. And is he trying to pit me against Helena with some ‘power’ bull shit? Of course, toxic is written all over him. My beef with Helena will be between us and not because of anything this dipshit says.

I fist the smokey floor, my arms trembling. “Why are you doing this? You’re a fucking God, what else do you fucking want?” I ask, my voice raspy while I pound the floor with my fist. My heart wants to jump out of my throat and strangle him.

Helios bends down, fiery eyebrows furrowing. “A God. Not the God. With earth and eventually the moon under my control, I’d have the leverage to wipe the others out and become the only God.”

It’s hard to stand, so I drag my body back to the far wall and scowl at the man who’s supposed to be my father.

Then an idea pops up in my mind... Almost like a text message that pops up on your notifications.

If I call, will it answer?

Helios chuckles as if he thinks he won. Like his little fucking plan is going somewhere. Well, screw him because it won't.

“Gnolton Diary!” I shout, opening my hands. Come on, baby, work for me.

A ball of light blossoms between my hands and turns into the silhouette of a book.

“Damn it!” Helios thunders, grabbing the bars to my cell.

A lightning strike knocks Helios across the way, giving me extra time to get my shit together.

\*Good job.\*

‘Wait, that was me?!’

\*Yes.\*

The Gnolton diary drops into my hands and its energy flows into my body like a current, charging me up.

Words fill my mouth and I chant a spell that disintegrates the bars.

Helios bounces back and charges my cell, but then I get another line of spell...

I thrust my hand out. “Varatos in glecio.”

Power explodes out of the diary's pages and grips Helios with an iron grip and tosses him all the way inside the cell across the way from mine.

Then shit gets weirder.

His body erupts into flames, I bet it's because he's pissed.

But, the diary sends another band of magic out and stabs him in the chest, draining him of his powers and giving them... to me.

When the transfer is done, electric rods shoot up from the billowing ground to the ceiling and block him inside.

I float out of my cell and towards him, shaking my head. “It’s shitty that I must do this to my own blood. But apparently, you didn’t think twice about doing it to me...”

Helios is lying powerless on the floor groaning and grasping around. He’s a worm writhing in dirt, with nothing but a name left to him that holds no power.

The Gnolton Diary teleports itself before me, catching my attention again.

There’s a new page and the unknown runes glowing against black paper suddenly seem familiar... and readable to me, so I begin another chant.

Light glows from behind me and the silhouette of a wolf appears. When the light fades away—

“Wren!” I look down at the diary and raise an eyebrow. “I thought this would get me out of here, not drag someone else in.”

“That’s because there has to be a guardian. And it chose me.” Wren bows. “Sun Goddess, you may leave now, for Helena’s almost done unleashing long locked-up power. Make it quick though.”

“Wait, Sun goddess?!”

“Yes. You’ve taken your father’s powers. And the Sun kingdom will explode without its leader. So hurry.”

A portal opens between us, swirling like a whirlpool.

“Oh shit. I can’t wait to get this over with.”



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# STELLA

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Cycling through time and space with bands of blinding light thrashing around me, another opening comes into view: the cauldron.

Time is fleeting quickly. I have to get through to Helena before it's too late for both Earth and the Sun Kingdom.

My body propels through the cauldron's wide silver stone-lipped opening like a cannonball.

Then my back splats up against a tall ass wall of some sort. Slowly, I slide down, my powers keeping me from hitting the field as far as I got this wall.

I can't really tell because I'm still recovering my eyesight from the whirl of lights.

I land on the cold stone steps that lead up to the cauldron. Runes from the cauldron's mouth spill out onto the floor and shoot out beneath me.

"Stella!" A muffled voice comes from behind me.

I turn around and see Jaxon in his hulking wolf form with a large chunky metal collar burning with red warlock energy. That energy is pulsing from Milton who's feeding him that energy.

Xheros is here too, fists full of magic. Looks like they were trying to get the barrier down that I slapped into a few moments ago.

"Jaxson! You guys!"

Wren's voice penetrates my head like a sharp needle piercing through my skull, 'Stella, hurry, the Sun Kingdom is unstable every second that their God is gone...'

Shit.

I turn around and stare at the roaring cauldron and the first thing I can think of is blasting it to pieces. That should work right? If there's no cauldron, there's no bridge to earth for those in magic prison to escape.

I rush up the wide stone stairs, flame flickering around me brighter as I approach the cauldron, reacting to my presence.

As I get closer to the cauldron, I can feel the heat emanating from it growing more intense with each step. The runes etched into its surface pulse with dangerous energy, their magic thrumming through the air.

I take a deep breath and focus my power, drawing on my strength. Flames dance around my hands, burning brighter as I reach to touch the cauldron's surface.

My fingers brush against the runes, and the cauldron shudders beneath my touch. Sparks fly as my magic clashes with the powerful enchantments woven into the silvery marbled stone.

The Gnolton Diary snaps into existence next to me, glowing, beckoning me to open it. To think the book I've adored at the orphanage would end up helping me save the world.

Wow, major stuff.

I guess its a gift from my mom.

No, don't get melancholy now, Stella. Focus.

I grab the Gnolton Diary and open it to a random page, letting the chips fall where they may.

The pages are black and a glowing gold ink sprawls out a fancy cursive rune script. My skin tingles and flames spark.

I've never seen this script before but...

I can read it. It's like the spell itself is humming inside my soul like a song, a melody of long before.

Instead of an ancient fancy language, the spell comes forth in plain English.

“By the powers of the ancients, I invoke thee! By the heat of these flames, let this bridge be sealed.”

My voice bellows out like thunder and reverberates through me. A surge of power jolts through my body.

The runes on the cauldron shimmer then dim, darkening until they finally fade away. The cauldron begins to shake and tremble under my touch then explodes into a shower of sparks.

My powers shield me from being thrown back.

And just like that, the cauldron is broken and that bridge is gone. The only thing left is smoke.

I turn around and see Jaxon, Milton, and Xheros staring at me with awe and fear. I feel the heat in my hands dissipate as I close the Gnoton Diary and it fizzles away in a shimmer of gold dust.

“Good job, babe,” Jaxson praises, his voice deep with pride.

“Yeah, kiddo. With that nuisance gone, we can clean up the rest of the trash.” Xheros cracks his knuckles.

Milton releases the collar around Jaxson’s neck. “Indeed a spectacular show of prowess.”

Xheros leans in close and stares at me. “You got your daddy’s powers now, huh?” He frowns.

Suddenly, a loud rumbling shakes the ground beneath us, and I know that we need to leave. The magic seeping into the earth realm through the cauldron’s bridge had left a mark, and we needed to confirm that none of it did too much damage on earth.

Milton raises his hand and makes a few symbols that glow in the air. A portal whirls to life and shows the academy field full of everyone fighting.

“Ah shit,” Xheros hisses.

We run through ready to fight. But as soon as we do, the prisoners fighting the students begin turning into dust.

\*Wren’s calling them back using his magic. I believe it’s tenfold where he is.\*

‘Lunai! I’m glad to still hear you.’

\*Always.\*

Out of the corner of my eye, I see a flash of fiery lightning strike down from the sky. It lands in the center of the field and creates a ring of flames.

She knows that I have her father’s powers.

That he’s locked up.

And that the bridge is closed.

Her plans are gone.

Her figure is surrounded by an aura of darkness as if she had been painted with Draconic energy. She raises both hands in the air and all around us turns silent as if she were speaking a language we could not understand. Her hair sways and whips around her like angry snakes, ready to strike at any moment.

The power radiates off her like wildfire and I’m sure everyone can feel it.

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# STELLA

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Her eyes are glowing and she looks ready for a fight.

I rush forward

Xheros and the others yell from behind me. “Stella, no!”

I step into her ring of fire and grab her arms. “Helena! We can still be family! Don’t do this!”

Her power crackles at my grip, stinging me and shooting pain up my arms.

Helena glares at me with disdain, then breaks free of my grip. “Family?” she laughs. “No, thank you. I want power,” she sneers. “You should too. The blood of two gods is inside you and you’d rather be here with these humans. These mortals.” She glares around at the students readying themselves for a final fight.

Damn, Taika Galdur is a beast of an academy. They don’t even know about the specifics yet here they are, ready to defend their school, each other, and the town. No questions asked. It’s like they all have my back should things go south.

The air around us crackles with electricity as we lock gazes in a heated stare-down. My heart pounds against my chest as I try to think of what to say next, but it seems like our fate has already been sealed...

My wolf cries.

A quick snap of power throws me back. Then Helena sends a ring of energy out to push everyone further away from her.

“The cauldron might be gone, but there’s another handy little portal that hasn’t closed yet.”

“Oh shit!” Milton summons a magic rod, holding steady against Helena’s blast. “She’s talking about the portal to the Necro-Realm.”

‘Oh, shit’ is right.

A huge portal grows from under Helena’s feet.

The Gnoilton Diary appears next to me once again.

And the spell it shows me tells me how to kill her.

Kill.

My own sister.

But either that or she will kill everyone willing to protect me and this city.

She’s going to kill the family that wants to be with me.

Tears streak down my face and I can hardly breathe.

It’s... now or never.

I hesitate, my hand shaking as I reach up to hold the diary. Its power flows inside me and my lips tremble.

Closing my eyes, my soul sinks into my stomach.

“STELLA!” Xheros yells.

Opening my eyes, I see a fireball heading right at me.

No time to read the spell.

I’m going to let everyone—

Xheros jumps out of the ground before me, his powers blazing.

He looks back at me and winks. “You got this kiddo. Save the world, again.”

The blast of Helena’s attack hits him and a huge explosion of light pours out as if the sun were exploding. The rays stream down and blind me.

I yell out Xheros’ name, reaching out with my hand.

My uncle...

He... he can't be.

My heart sinks into a void that's just a touch above the pain I felt when I was rejected.

Warm taught arms catch me as I waver. It's Jaxson's scent.

"Stella, you can do this! I'm sorry it has to be this way."

Jaxson cradles me against his hard chest while he holds my diary up for me to read. I look away, my heart falling into my gut a thousand times. It's as if I'm being forced into an acid river.

But she's not going to stop. And trying to bring her over to the right side will cause delayed justice and more people hurt.

"Come on babe, we don't have much time."

"I know..." I swallow the lump in my throat and force my eyes to look up.

At least I get to let my attention trail along Jaxson's bulging veins in his arms as he keeps my diary before me to my eye level.

It glows to life with a satin purple page setting now and golden ink sprawling onto the page.

I exhale and recite the spell. "Bring the blade of justice to earth, and let it slay the darkest shadows." My voice echoes and the book sparks, forcing Jaxson's hands down.

The book turns and lays on its back in mid-air, with a golden sparkling handle rising out of the pages.

"Is that all it can muster? A pathetic sword?" Helena shouts, powering up her magic. It ebbs and flows around her in an angry whirlwind of rainbow flames.

She gathers up her powers in her hands above her head and aims at us for another blast. Damn, if it's like the one Xheros took, I need to act fast.

\*Remember Stella. You are a goddess. Act like one.\*

I can feel Jaxson about to jump in front of me to take the hit. But it's okay, I can take it from here on out.

“No one else is going to get hurt anymore!” I push Jaxson back with my energy and rip the sword out of the book. It has a diamond blade and must be about six feet long.

Charging the rainbow ball of fire hurdled my way, I point out the sword and let my magic create a counterattack.

Like a hot knife through butter, I slice through the attack and meet Helena head-on.

Her eyes widen with disbelief.

I am a goddess.

Hear me roar.

“I’m sorry,” I say as hot tears blaze down my cheeks. I want to stop. Hug her and shake some sense into her. But the more I keep delaying, the more people and this earth will be hurt.

The diamond blade slices right into her with zero pushback. Black translucent blood dribbles out of her.

I’m frozen. I just stabbed my sister. And it’s the only way out of this mess my existence has created.

Helena’s pupils go white and her body turns gray.

“You...”

A small part of me hopes she’s going to apologize. That she’s going to maybe say ‘I love you’. Or some sappy shit like that but—

“Should’ve been killed a long... time ago,” Helena says, passing out and exploding into white flaming dust.

White ribbons of light drift downwards, wispy and delicate, like snowflakes in winter. As they reach the ground, they dissipate and vanish into nothingness.

I drop to my knees, the sword disappearing in a flush of pearly smoke.

A loud howl rips from my throat.

Somehow Xheros enters my mind before my subconscious tumbles into a down spiral.



I bolt from my position and skid to a stop right by Xheros' side.

“Uncle! Wake up! I lost Helena, my father, and my mother's barely in the picture. I can't lose you too.”

“Ki-ddo, you'll be... fine,” he crackles.

Good god, there's a large burn blast to his body, burning his leather and torching many of his metal studs. Unlike Helena, he bleeds a dark blue.

A cold strike hits my chest and I remember—the Sun Kingdom. Shit.

Wait!

I place my hands on my chest.

Trust yourself, Stella.

You can do this.

My father's powers gather in my chest and then into my hands. With all the power and hope that I can muster, I shove it into Xheros and watch as his body lights up with new power.

His blue flames roar to life and he's healed. Outfit and all.

“Uncle!” I jump up and hug him.

“See, Lunar-pie. I knew you were a smart one.”

I kicked his ankle.

“Ow!”

“Did you know I could do that and not tell me?!”

“Hey, hey, it would've seemed a bit sus to suggest giving me your old man's powers. I don't have the best track record.”

“You could've died.” I throw out my hands in exasperation.

Milton rises out of the ground next to us. “Oh, the price he's willing to pay for redemption.” He straightens his glasses with a bright smile. “I do say, Xheros, you're emphatically in the clear, my guy.”

Jaxson, Gwen, and Rival joins us.

Gwen squeals and hugs me.

Charon appears in white and hot pink streams of smoke behind Xheros. “Xheros, my love...” She hugs him from behind. “I hate it when you play risky games.”

He wiggles his eyebrows. “Gonna punish me?”

“Oh, ew. Privacy, you two?” I cover my eyes playfully.

A warm light flashes in Xheros’ eyes much like a warning. He sighs and looks at the sky. “Yeah, about that privacy thing. Looks like we’re gonna be heading to the Sun Kingdom.”

“Oh, that’s right. Come back and visit, uncle X. Please.” My heart sinks for the thousandth time. But only a little. At least he’s still alive.

And the new Sun God.

A ring of fire circles at Xheros and Charon’s feet. “Gotta dip, kiddo. But I’ll always be in touch.”

Charon smiles and corrects him, “We’ll be in touch.”

He smiles at her and they kiss as they portal to the Sun Kingdom.

Well, that solves two things.

And now...

A new normal is on the horizon.

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# STELLA

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Three weeks later...

I'm flying to the very spot where Jaxson and I were announced fated mates by the oracle. But, to be honest, I knew the moment I saw him. That's how fated mates work.

I'm dressed in a white pearlescent robe with a loose white silk dress underneath with black knee-high boots and fishnets. Gwen is taking me there on her broomstick, and I can't help but feel butterflies.

It's like meeting Jaxson all over again.

"Oh Stella, there's no need to worry."

"Huh?!"

She giggles. "I can feel your anxiousness. I'm a witch, remember. And your friend."

"I know, I just. It's all so—"

"Surreal?" Rival interrupts, flying alongside us in his bat form. "Love is surreal. It opens the mind far beyond normal capabilities. Those capabilities will allow you to conquer blocks later in life."

Gwen blushes. And I wonder if that's more of a message to her than me.

Nevertheless, it's true.

We arrive at the ceremony pit and I see Jaxson standing with Milton who's donning a new pair of rimless yellow glasses and a gray robe.

Actually, a good amount of students are here as well to witness the official mating ceremony. And they're wearing the same robe as Milton.

Jaxson holds my gaze with a fiery intense one. One that leaves me breathless. And with some ideas for later on...

Alpha Warclaw approaches me and takes my hands. "You have my blessing, Stella. My son couldn't have found a better mate."

"Thank you."

The oracle appears in the firepit in the middle of the altar and walks forward with her hand out. "Come, dear one. It's time. The moon is looking forward to this one."

Mom...

Gwen rubs my back and Rival bows his head slightly. "Go get your guy," she whispers.

I glance at Rival. "You too." I elbow her slightly and waltz forward, leaving Gwen blushing like she's on fire.

Heh heh.

I move forward to stand beside Jaxson, and the oracle's hands weave us together with a ribbon of pure magic. Heat radiates from her hands, and I swear I see a glimmer of moonlight in them.

The oracle speaks "These two have been fated mates since the time they met. May their love and commitment to one another remain steadfast."

Jaxson takes my hands and looks into my eyes with an overwhelming amount of tenderness and love.

Jaxson inhales and exhales. "Stella, you're mine. Forever. I'll protect you and love you the way you deserve to be."

That 'you're mine' sent a shiver of heat between these thighs.

"Jaxson, you're an alpha-hole. But I love you and you're mine too." I wink.

His smile sends a bubbling warmth in my chest. If he keeps that up, we're going to have a very big family...

The oracle snuffles. "Do you, Jaxson Warclaw, take the moon's very own as your mate?"

“Yes.”

“Stella, daughter of the moon, do you accept Jaxson as your mate?”

“Ditto!”

At this declaration, fireworks explode overhead and numerous stars sparkle throughout the sky as if they were congratulating us on finally being officially mated. The air shifts around us as the moon pours blessings upon us, bringing us closer together than ever before.

Thanks, Mom.

A portal opens up and what do you know...

“EYY!” Xheros shouts, stepping through his fiery portal. The oracle does not look too pleased. “Lunar-pie, congratulations.”

Xheros slaps Jaxson on the back making him cough.

“Can’t stay long but Charon and I got a little present for ya!” Xheros rubs his hands together and shoots a ball of blue and white fire near the gardens. Out of the flames erupts a black glittering glass statue of Jaxson and me waltzing.

“Wow!” I gasp, giving my uncle a hug. “Thanks, Uncle X.”

“No probs. Heya, kids!” He waves to everyone. “Well, I’m off. Gotta keep the sun sunning, right?”

Xheros zips back into his portal and his signature flames disappear.

Family.

Friends.

Love.

And the power to protect them. I couldn’t ask for anymore.

‘Thanks, Lunai. I love you too.’

\*I know, I can feel it every day. Even before you met me.\*

Jaxson sweeps me up and raises me up in the air, then down into a kiss.

The students roar in applause.

Well, ladies and gents.

Looks like I'm officially and fully mated.

THE END!

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# AFTERWORD

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# Hey Everyone!

I'm planning a new series and I'm stuck between a PNR Hero Academy romance

Or an Alien Scifi Romance dealing with Billionaire aliens and how possessive and jealous they can get over there women <3

UGH the choices are so hard.

Watch my author profile on Amazon to stay in the know!

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