

EMBRY FOX  
*goddess*  
WRATH



THE ZEITA CHRONICLES SERIES

# GODDESS WRATH

THE ZEITA CHRONICLES

BOOK FOUR

EMBRY FOX

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*Hard times are all around us, but it's up to us to find the light and continue fighting every day. So here is to those dark times that try to overshadow our light.*

*Keep fighting every day. I promise it will get better.*

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# BOOK SUMMARY

*We are the true rulers, and our wrath is unlike anything you've ever seen. The darkness should be scared.*

## **Summit**

I thought living without my daughter would be my hardest battle yet, boy was I wrong. Trying to control my hybrid side was more difficult than I believed possible but the final battle is among us, I can feel it in my blood. I might go down, but not without taking some of them down with me.

I'd do whatever I had to protect my family.

## **Sage**

I was finally one with my mates, all of them and I was stronger than I'd ever been. I was a natural now, but I knew what was coming would possibly still be more than I could handle. It's possible not everyone will survive, that's my fear at least. The only thing I can promise is that Velnias will be one of the fallen.

I'll make sure of it, even if it's the last thing I do.





# PROLOGUE

## HUNTER

With our twins moving on to study with Beckett, it's left all of us on edge. Each of us as fathers have been coping in our own ways. We've thrown ourselves into our own training, focused on gathering more allies, or just altogether avoided everyone and everything. The last one is the option I'm currently choosing. I left Paradox in charge of Atlantis while I decided to get away for a couple days. None of my brothers or my mate know I'm gone, and I plan to make it back before they find out.

Velnius is the villain we hoped to defeat before the twins would ever be old enough to have to deal with him. I guess it's true that you can't outrun prophecies or fate. We all hoped that wasn't true. Or maybe I was just the one hoping that we could. No one ever wants to watch their children have to live through the traumas that our daughters have so far.

Summit has become Queen of the Wolves and Hell. She has one biological daughter whom she can't even raise herself and became an adoptive mother to two phoenixes she saved from captivity. She is the strongest person I know after Eden, but I know she still has trials to face before she can have her happy ending.

How is that fair?

Sage has become Queen of the Fae and Dragons. She had her fiance lie to her before she was thrust into the supernatural world, learning that he was really Fae himself. She's had to learn to trust again and let her mates show her that love is

worth it. Furthermore, she had to learn to stop protecting her sister, which was one of the hardest things she learned to do, but still her battle isn't over. If she wants her happy ending, she's going to need to fight like hell for it.

Both my girls deserve better. Hell, even my son, Storm, deserves better. I can be sad for Summit needing to give up her daughter. I understand her pain. I never got to raise any of my triplets. Storm held himself in a sort of stasis to help with Calista. This family, our family, is a huge mess, and yet I still love them no matter what and will do everything possible to make sure we all survive.

Everything. Anything. Including sacrificing myself.

Summit and Sage will get their happily ever afters—I'll make sure of it.

I know my mate and brothers will have my head if they find out I'm planning on sacrificing myself for them, but it's the only thing I can think to do.



# CHAPTER 1

## SUMMIT

Everything feels like it's on fire. The pain is excruciating. All I remember is drinking the blood and then darkness and pain. Every nerve ending inside me is screaming at me like they are burning. My gums ache ten times worse than any toothache I have ever experienced. Whatever is happening to my body needs to stop.

I try reaching out to my mates through our bond. However, I don't get anything but dead silence. I can feel them still, but I can't talk to them. It's like I am left alone inside my mind and body to suffer in silence. I am positive I'm screaming, or at least I think I am, but I don't even know if anyone can hear me.

I have no idea how many days I have been like this. For all I know, it's just been hours. Time is irrelevant.

Slowly, the fire and pain begin to lessen. It has not completely alleviated, but it's dulled to a tolerable ache. I can start to wiggle my fingers and toes, which was more than before, and I can finally hear what is going on around me. All my family has been coming and going, taking their turns talking to me and holding my hand. Their voices hurt my ears. It is so loud and feels like nails scraping against a chalkboard. I cringe in my mind every time they speak. The only voices who don't hurt me are Zeke's and Daddy B's. They are like a soft melody, helping to calm and ground me. I can listen to them talk for ages, as long as they keep the others with their sharp voices away.

When the fire subsides, my eyes shoot open before closing immediately. The light above me burns my retinas, and I groan in pain.

“Summit! Shit! I’m sorry. I forgot how bad the lights would be for you,” Daddy B says in panic as I hear him rush to shut off the lights. “They’re off now; you can open your eyes again.”

I wait a second to make sure before doing as he says. Slowly, I open one eye and then the other, seeing the room in total darkness, except I can still see everything perfectly. *That’s weird as fuck.*

“What happened to me?” I whisper, my throat feeling dry and scratchy.

“You transitioned to being part vampire.” My father gives me a wary look.

My eyes widen in shock at his explanation. “Va... vampire?” *How in the hell is that possible?*

“I know that you’re scared, but we will be here to help you every step of the way. You’re strong, and I know you can handle this. I’m going to give you the option to choose who you want to help you. Everyone is in the hallway waiting. I would suggest choosing someone who is a vampire and can explain everything to you.” My father continues to look at me like he’s waiting for something to happen as he speaks. I assume he is waiting for me to panic and try to attack, but he should know me better than that.

“Ummm..,” I pause, thinking about who would be best. Zeke and I only started talking and working through the discovery of us being mates. I’m sure it would be a good bonding experience if I chose him to assist me, but I’m not ready for that closeness yet. Not when I feel vulnerable. I would ask my father to help me, but I’m sure he has enough on his plate that adding this would stretch him too thin. That leaves Lilith as the only person I could ask. She would be able to better understand what I’m dealing with since she is a vampire hybrid herself.

“Can you send Lilith in?” My voice is low as I look towards the door.

“I had a feeling that would be who you chose. Stay right there, and I’ll grab her. Don’t try to get up until we get back to help you.” My father gives me a stern look to stay put before opening the door just enough to sneak out.

It only takes thirty seconds before both of them enter the room once more to help me.

“Summit,” my friend smiles as she comes to my side. “I’m so glad to see you finally awake. Your mates and sister were going absolutely insane with worry, even when we told them you were fine. Here. Let me help you sit up.” She reaches for my hand while placing her other on my shoulder to slowly ease me up. “All your movements are going to be difficult for a little bit until you can adjust to how they feel.”

“Your voice sounds like a melody.” I look at her, confused.

“Ahh yes. Everything will sound different until you learn to block things out. You can turn the enhanced hearing off. First thing we need to do, though, is have you feed.” My eyes widen, and I back away from her, falling backwards off the medical table I had been laying on. I almost feel like a cat because I manage to right myself and land on my feet and hands instead of my head.

“Shit, Summit! Sorry I didn’t mean to make you panic. It’s just a blood bag; you don’t have to feed from anyone unless you want to. I would recommend trying to feed from your mates eventually because their blood will fill you more than any blood bag could, but it’s also an aphrodisiac.”

“No.” I shake my head quickly as my breathing becomes rapid. “I don’t want to feed from my mates. I don’t want to risk hurting them.” My voice shoots up an octave with my panic. I would never do anything to hurt my mates. It’s why I don’t even want them near me. I know that I’m in no position to be around anyone that I could risk hurting. Hell, I don’t even want Lilith in here, but she is the best person to help me. My breathing continues to increase in speed as I start to

hyperventilate thinking of every way I could be a danger to those around me.

“Alright, I see we’re going to be doing this the hard way,” Lilith sighs before rounding the table and coming to a stop in front of me. When she stops, her hand reaches out and slaps me across the cheek. “Snap the fuck out of this! You are a fucking badass, not this terrified creature. Fucking act like it!”

Standing there, frozen in shock, I continue to stare at her. She seriously just fucking slapped me. My anger boils to the surface as my body begins to shake. I can feel my powers coming to the front, and it’s taking everything in me to not lash out at my friend.

“Ah, there’s the Summit I know. Good!” She smiles and takes a step back. “Hold on to that anger if you have to. Now drink this blood bag.” She holds a bag of blood out to me, expecting me to take it.

“You’ll pay for that slap, but thank you. I was freaking out.” I nod and take the bag from her hand. “The thought of drinking this absolutely disgusts me, but it also has my throat burning just looking at it.” I sigh before bringing the end of the bag to my lips to drink it.

“It takes some time to get used to it,” Lilith says with a shrug. I watch her move to an armchair in the corner of the room and motion for me to join her. I don’t even make it four steps before I’m doubled over, holding my stomach as I violently puke up all the blood I just consumed.

“Fuck!” Lilith shouts, rushing to my side. She runs her hand down my back as she pulls my hair out of my face. “I was afraid this was going to happen. Let me call Zeke; we’re going to need his help.”

I don’t see what she does because I’m too focused on just breathing between each time I vomit. I feel bad for making a mess on the floor, but I’m in too much pain to do anything about it now. Hopefully, my father will forgive me.

“What happened?” I hear Zeke’s voice as he rushes into the room.

“You need to feed her. She can’t stomach the blood bags.” I can hear the worry in my friend’s voice as she continues to rub my back. The movement helps me settle my breathing.

“Summit?” Zeke squats down in front of me, careful to avoid all the vomit. “I’m going to pick you up and carry you to the couch, okay?”

I give him a small nod of agreement as I clutch my stomach. He has me on the couch and in his lap faster than should be logically possible as he holds his forearm in front of me. “Drink,” his cold voice demands.

I shake my head, scared to try to drink blood again, and lean away from his arm. His grasp around my stomach gets tighter as he holds me in place and pushes his arm against my lips. “Drink, Summit. You will feel better.”

I look up at Lilith across from us and wait for her to nod in agreement. When she does, I open my mouth and bite into his arm. With the first droplet, I can already feel my hunger being sated. It’s a sweet taste compared to the copper taste the other blood tasted like. When I realize it’s satisfying my hunger instead of making me sick, I readjust my bite deeper and take larger gulps.

“Slow down, Summit. His blood isn’t going anywhere. You don’t need much more,” Lilith calls out at the same time as I hear Zeke moan.

His dick hardens beneath me, causing me to start to squirm. The hunger for blood is gone, replaced with the hunger for sex. I release my bite and lick the puncture wounds, watching as they close in front of me. When they’ve sealed, I try to turn around in Zeke’s arms, but his grip is like steel holding me in place.

“Stop moving, baby,” he groans low in my ear, his breath against my skin causing goosebumps to form. I try to do as he says, but the need for sex is just overwhelming everything else. I need a release like I’ve needed nothing else before.

“I can’t. I need you.” I moan, my body enjoying the little bit of friction I’m able to get within his steel grip.

“I’ll leave you two alone for a moment,” my friend states as I watch her leave the room. I’m thankful she recognizes exactly what I need and is giving us some space until I’m taken care of.

When the door clicks shut, Zeke finally speaks once more. “I won’t fuck you. Not yet. But I will help you find a release.” He lets go of my waist, flipping us so that I’m now sitting on the couch and he’s kneeling in front of me. He undoes my jeans, sliding them and my panties down my legs in one slow, agonizing move. My ass squirms on the edge of the leather couch as I beg him to move faster.

“You have to be still, otherwise you won’t get to come, Dragă,” Zeke mumbles against my shin before placing a soft kiss where his lips hover. My nerves are thrumming with need as I inhale a deep breath of impatience but try to relax my body against the couch. Kiss by kiss, he slowly, agonizingly makes his way up the inside of my leg. When Zeke stops just at my soaked entrance, my nails dig deeper into the couch cushions around me as I wait for him to continue. “You smell divine.”

“Touch me. Please,” I whimper, pleading with him as my hips beg me to move. Everything is heightened, and every part of me is coming undone as his hot breath caresses my cunt. I feel the desperate need to cry in frustration as the anticipation grows without him touching me.

Zeke responds to my ceaseless neediness by plunging his fingers deep into my soaked core. He scissors them before adding his tongue to my tight clit, flicking it right over the bud as I cry out in pleasure. My hand moves, gripping his hair and forcing him against my core. He repeats the pattern with his tongue. A figure eight that drives me wild as the thrumming in my clit almost sends me to the edge. I see spots of blackness right as my orgasm hits me—hard. My mate doesn’t let up as my center spasms; he just keeps going, forcing me to ride through the climax. I squeeze my eyes shut as I try to hold off the second one that’s so close to the surface.

My hips move of their own volition as I chase a second ending that I won’t get as I cry in frustration when Zeke pulls



back and looks deep into my eyes. His tongue snakes out and gently—so gently—caresses my sore, tight bud with a teasing lick, just barely massaging the ache away. “That was just the introduction. I know you still have a few more in you.”

Further, he pushes me as, one after another, my orgasms crash through me like tidal waves. Exhaustion begins to seep into the edges of my eyesight as I scratch down his broad shoulders. My pussy clenching around his thick fingers and skillful tongue, I want more, so much more, but I know I won’t be getting that tonight. I feel his blood thrum in him as his own excitement calls to me. My mate wants me, and fuck if I don’t feel the same way. I feel another climax coming, this one all-encompassing as I prepare for it to knock me out. I throw my head back in passion and pleasure as my fingers dig deeper into Zeke’s scalp.

“Come for me Dragă. Let me see your cum dripping out of you.” Zeke’s gruff voice filled with lust overshadows everything else as I cry out in ecstasy. Every part of me tightens, and my eyes close with the force of my orgasm. Zeke gently rubs me through it, my knees weak and legs shaking from how much I’d found my end at my mate’s fingers and tongue.

“Go to sleep, my mate,” Zeke whispers against my ear as he picks me up and sets me on his lap. My head meets his chest, and I let the sound of his heartbeat lull me to sleep, feeling secure.



## CHAPTER 2

### SAGE

It has been way too long since I have had any update about my twin, and I'm going insane. Watching Summit collapse in front of me after we tried the blood is something I will never forget. This whole journey, we have faced one thing after another, watched our friends and family members get hurt or die, and given up way too much of ourselves and our happiness. All for what?

I keep pacing outside the room they placed Summit in for what they said was her transitioning, hoping that time will move faster. No one would tell us how long it would take for her to wake up. Daddy B said every transition is different, and only Summit can decide when she's ready. He let all of us have a turn visiting her, talking to her, holding her hand. I told her how much I love her and how strong she is. I reminded my twin that she is a legit badass, and I still need her in my life driving me insane. Her reckless energy better not disappear when she reawakens.

Everyone has told me that she will still be herself, just different, but it doesn't help the fear. Summit has been through more than any person I know, and she is still standing and fighting for her future and what she wants. I admire my sister for that, and I aspire to follow her in that thinking.

Glancing at the door as I walk past for what feels like the ten thousandth time, I pause, willing it to open. Two hours ago, my mates called it quits and left to go do some training. They tried to convince me to join them, but I refuse to leave

Summit until I know she's awake. She shouldn't be alone, not that she is with her mates being camped out in the hallway as well. Even Zeke and Lilith have joined our little party waiting for her to awaken. Lilith's mates brought Harlow by for a little bit, but we could all tell it was too hard on her to see Summit lying so still, so they took her to go have some fun. I'm sure she is terrified that she is going to lose another person she loves. My adopted niece has been through a lot for being six, almost seven, years old. We all love her and will do anything to protect her. I hope Lilith's mates are assuring her that Summit will be fine.

My thoughts continue to consume me the longer we wait. I can feel my mates reaching out and trying to reassure me through our bond, and it works, but only for so much. I'm still worried.

During my next lap, I catch the door to the room open, and Daddy B steps out. The movements make me stop in my tracks as I stare at him, waiting for whatever it is he is going to say. The door closes softly behind him as he steps fully into the hallway and looks closely at each of us.

"I didn't expect all of you to still be out here. At least I only need to say this once then. Summit is awake," he says, holding his hand before any of us can interrupt him. "She is not ready for everyone to visit. We need her to understand her power and to feed her before you can see her. She would be pissed if she hurt one of you. Lilith, my dear," Daddy B addresses her and turns to look at her. "Can you join me inside? Summit wants your assistance to understand what's going on, and I think you are the perfect person to explain, seeing as how you are a hybrid as well."

"Of course, Father." Lilith smiles heading towards the door.

"The rest of you go get some rest. We will tell you when you can visit." My father looks at the rest of us standing here before turning to open the door behind him.

I watch as both Daddy B and Lilith disappear into the room, shutting the door behind them once more, plunging the

hallway back into silence. Finally, I feel like I can start to breathe now that I know my twin is awake. That was the first hurdle for her, now we just need her to learn her new powers quickly.

“Sage, you should go update everyone else on Summit’s status. The rest of us will stay here until she’s ready,” Asher prompts, pulling me from my thoughts as he moves to step in front of me.

It makes me realize I’m still standing in the same spot, staring at where my father had just been. He makes a valid argument; the others should know that she is at least awake. Looking towards the door, I feel a pang of sadness at leaving her. There was once a time when I was the only person she ran to when things went wrong. Now, she has a whole family, we both do, that will help support and love us no matter what. It really does take a village.

“Okay,” I reply and nod with one last look at the closed door before looking up at Asher. The King of Hell is so much taller than me that it’d be almost creepy if I didn’t know he was a gentle soul until pushed. “If there’s any change, someone text me, please, and I’ll be here immediately.”

“Of course, Sage. No one would keep news like that from you.” Asher smiles down at me before moving out of the way.

Scurrying down the hall, I go in search of everyone else. I can feel my mates outside training, which is where I’m going to head first until I see Eden rushing down the hall towards me as I round the next corner. My mom’s so focused on where she’s going, she doesn’t even see me walking towards her until she is practically on top of me.

“Shit, Sage. I’m so sorry, sweetie, I didn’t see you there.” She grasps my shoulders, trying to steady both of us.

Looking into her eyes, I can tell something is wrong. She isn’t normally like this. I’ve never seen her running around like a chicken with its head cut off before. Eden is always in control of everything she does. Even when facing down Summit and me losing our shit, she still remains calm.

Whatever is going on now must be big for her to be so focused and wrapped up in her own mind.

“What’s going on, Eden?” I ask hesitantly, trying to search her face for some sort of explanation.

“Where’s your father?” She looks behind me down the hallway. Her eyes refuse to meet mine, even as I try to block her view. “I need to talk to him now.”

“Mom!” I raise my voice, trying to pull her attention back to me. “Talk to me. What is going on? And which father are you looking for?” My panic starts to rise the more she tries to avoid me. Something is wrong; I know it.

She checks all around us to make sure the hallway is clear before pulling me into a room on the other side of the hall. Her movement jerks my arm almost out of socket as she shuts the door behind us and checks the entirety of the room. I have no idea what she’s looking for since this appears to be just some sort of sitting or reading room, but she doesn’t leave any corner untouched in her search. Even the windows are double-checked to ensure each of them are locked securely.

“It’s clear.” She sighs, taking a deep breath before relaxing against the wooden wall between two large windows. “What I’m about to tell you needs to stay between us. You will tell no one except your mates, and even then, you will do it through your bond and not where anyone, and I mean *anyone*, can hear you. Do you understand?”

I nod, scared to answer aloud.

“I need to hear you say it, Daughter. It’s important.” Eden emphasizes, her glare in my direction making me shiver.

“I agree not to speak aloud any of what you are about to tell me. No one will know besides my mates, and they will only know through communication of our bond.” The words come out shaky, but I still manage to speak them. Whatever she is about to tell me must be extremely serious if I can’t speak about it aloud.

“Good.” She takes a deep breath in before dropping the biggest bomb possible on me. “Sarah is missing, more

precisely, she was taken.” My mouth drops open at her words, but she continues through my shock. “We believe the Shadowed Thorne somehow managed to kidnap her when she was traveling the realms for more allies. She was supposed to arrive at Sanguine Legato Academy two days ago to train Calista, but she missed their session. Damon, who was there training Calista’s wolf, advised me of it just yesterday.”

“Are you sure she was taken, though? I mean, I know you all said that you hadn’t heard from her, and Hades couldn’t feel her, but that doesn’t mean she’s missing.” I question, trying to wrap my head around her words. I know Sarah would never miss her duties unless something extreme came up. She loves Calista; we all do. I can understand the conclusion that Eden has come to, but I think we need more proof before assuming that she was kidnapped. “Mom,” I plead. “There has to be another explanation. I know Sarah wouldn’t miss training Calista, but maybe something else came up in one of the other realms.”

“Sage,” Eden shakes her head, her eyes begging me to understand. “If something were happening in one of the other realms, I would know. There’s no other explanation. She has been taken. I received a cryptic message in reference to your sister’s status just before I came to search for Beckett. I’m going to gather a team after I speak with your fathers to search for her.”

“Daddy B is with Summit. She just awoke from her transition. I was heading to tell my mates the news when we ran into one another.” I move to look out the window next to where my mother stands. The view looks out upon the city, giving view of all the life beyond the castle walls.

I don’t say anything further, letting my mother take the reins of our conversation once more as I get lost in my thoughts. Each of my other fathers have their kingdoms buried within other realms that exist peacefully with Earth. Daddy B, however, has the Midnight Coven right on Earth. They live in a historic castle in Japan. From what I have been able to learn so far, no one suspects anything of who lives here. If anything, they assume it’s a sort of school, but even that’s not the right

word, but more of a very private family maybe. Either way, the people around us don't bother anyone here and allow them to live their lives as they wish. It's something that I hope Summit and I will one day be able to bring to this world. We may need to hide our powers and the fact that supernaturals truly do exist from humans, but we should still be able to live alongside them. The only way to accomplish that, though, is for both of us to take our places as the Queens of the Supernatural world—which means we need to defeat Velnias, and bring him to his knees so he can never create an uproar again. To do that means we need everyone available to fight. We need Sarah back to fight alongside us. That leaves me one choice, and it's obvious I need to be on the team to find her.

"I'll go," I randomly call out. Turning from my position of looking out the window to face Eden. "My team and I will go find Sarah and get her back. Each of my mates will be with me to continue training me, and we can send a vampire or two with us as well to begin training me in Spirit magic."

"Sage, you're needed here to train. You can't go chasing after your sister. I have plenty of people to choose from who are capable of finding her." Eden shakes her head and begins to pace the room.

"Yes, there are people to choose from who could find her, but I can do it faster. We have a bond being family, even if we are only half-sisters. I can do this. You also know the second Hades finds out that Sarah is missing, he is going to go ballistic and tear apart the realms to find her. My mates and I will be able to rein him in so he doesn't cause too much destruction." I watch her stop in her tracks at the mention of my brother-in-law. She most certainly knows how much danger the realms would be in if Hades were to lose his shit, and I have a feeling that reasoning alone is what is going to help prove to her that I'm the right person to find Sarah.

"You make a good argument," her tone even, giving nothing away. "Hades will be problematic the second he realizes Sarah is missing. He is supposed to be in the God's realm taking care of some business, but the second he leaves

he will sense something wrong. Shit. I didn't even take Hades into consideration."

"Eden, stop," I demand. At my words, she comes to a stop and glares at me. "Trust me to do this because I *can* do this, Mom. Please."

"Sage," she rushes over and wraps me in her arms, "it's not that I don't think you can do this. I am more than confident in your abilities. It's just that I want you to focus on training. The battle against Velnias is getting ever closer. You and Summit need to be ready."

"And we will be. I promise. This mission is important as well, and we need Sarah for the battle. Let me go save her." I know my words come out sounding like I'm begging, and that is basically what I'm doing, but I need this. Searching for Sarah will help provide me a purpose further than just defeating Velnias.

"Alright, your team can go." Eden nods, her voice steady as she looks confidently at me.

I'm not sure what convinced her, but I'm not going to argue. She's giving me what I'm asking for—a chance to do something instead of just training. It's time everyone starts to see the type of Queen I will be. Summit is the fighter, and she always will be, but I'm not weak or helpless. I just have a different way to go about things. I won't try to bargain with the Shadowed Thorne for Sarah's release, but I won't slaughter everyone either. We will get her out safely somehow.

"It's not going to be easy, Sage. Heed the warnings your mates and Hades provide you. The team can leave in a week once Hades has returned. However," she sighs, shaking her head, "I'm not the only one you have to convince to allow you to go. When we meet with all your fathers in three days you will need to convince them as well."

"Shoot," I mumble, realizing the bigger issue. "They shouldn't fight me on it too much if you're backing me, though." I reason, hoping she will stand beside me when I make that declaration.



“If it comes down to it, yes, I will back you, though, it will be better for you to convince your fathers yourself. You and your sister are going to be queens over everyone within the next year or two. You need to learn how to convince others to back you and respect your decisions without the backing of your fathers and me. This will be a good starting point.”

Always the one teaching lessons, Eden is. She’s right, though. It’s time Summit and I start to think over how we will reign together. This is a good starting point, and it’s one I plan to win.

“Understood.” I give her a curt nod. “If that’s all, I’m going to find my mates, and I think Daddy B would appreciate hearing from you about what is going on as well.” I head towards the door, placing my hand on the doorknob when she answers.

“I’m proud of you, Sage. You will make an amazing Queen. Keep your backbone. Fight for what you want, but never be afraid to show that you care and love for others.” At her words, I turn to see her giving me one of the brightest smiles I’ve seen in awhile. My birth mother truly is proud of who I have become, and that praise makes me stand taller.

“Thank you, Mom,” I respond simply as I open the door to leave and start the search for my mates.

*Fuck me. The next couple days are going to be trying.*



## CHAPTER 3

### VELNIAS

“Are you ready to have that talk yet?” I growl, standing at the edge of my prison cell facing my daughter. She kneels before me with two guards holding her down. I can see the fire, the passion to fight, in her eyes. She’s pissed. Good. That gives me something I can work with.

For the past several days she has been brought to the front of my cell for us to have a talk. Each day has gone exactly like the first. I talk, she refuses to comply, and we torture her. The whole thing is just getting tedious at this point, but I know she will break soon. No one is capable of withstanding the amount of torture she will continue to go through. Each day we have increased our tactics, making the pain worse than the day before. The only thing she knows for sure is that I can’t kill her, at least not until my scientists find a way to mimic the effects of her blood. When that day happens, I will no longer need her.

“I won’t give you what you want,” Sarah spits out some blood.

If only her mother hadn’t taken her away. I could have raised her the proper way and taught her not to disrespect me. With a nod to Amaya, I watch her backhand Sarah across the face, her head snaps to the side from the blow.

“This fruitless game of you denying my request is getting tiring, Daughter. We all know you will eventually give in, so you might as well do it now. It’ll surely save you in the long run. Less torture of course as well.” I smile wickedly. *Oh how*

*I wish I could be out of this cell to torture her myself. One day soon.*

“I will never give you my blood willingly to unlock the final prison seal or tell you where it is located. And I will never give you my blood or power to take others’ powers. You are a bastard who deserves the death that will be coming for you.” Her words are full of venom as she tries to shake off the guards holding her.

“Is that your final answer today?” I sigh, disappointed in her once again.

“It will be my final answer every day. You are a waste of space and a despicable human being.” The hatred in her words makes me laugh.

“If you only knew, Daughter. Your path would be so much simpler if you would just join my cause and assist me. I could give you everything you ever wanted and them some. No one would question your authority as you stood by my side. I’m disappointed in you, Sarah. Your mother and her blasted mates have poisoned you. Very well. Torture it is until you learn.” I nod to another guard that is standing towards the back of the room. He knows how to make it hurt, specifically, how to torture her without killing her. She will be feeling the pain for days, especially because, I know for a fact, her magic is dulled within the cell Amaya placed her in. She can only be healed if we wish it so.

Gunner has been one of my followers from the very beginning. He’s a blood demon who has a thirst for, obviously, blood. He enjoys inflicting pain on anyone I direct him towards. His loyalty to the cause has made him a good ally and trustworthy to deal with my daughter.

The two guards holding Sarah down pull her to her feet, practically dragging her until she is tied to hang from the ceiling once more. Her body hangs as she glares between Amaya and myself. I watch on as Gunner comes around to face Sarah, and her eyes focus on him instead. She knows exactly what’s coming, but she keeps her face blank. Damn her stubbornness. In the blink of an eye, Gunner unleashes his

fury on her with several punches to the stomach. Her body swings backwards with each hit before she reaches the next when she swings forward once more. After six punches, Gunner pulls her still and pulls out a knife from his pocket to begin placing some strategic lacerations along her forearms and stomach. Sarah's face scrunches in pain, but she doesn't make a sound.

"You know how to make this stop. Just say the words," I tell her once more hoping she will finally give in.

Her eyes lock on me with hatred at my words, but she keeps her lips sealed and prepared for what's coming next. As predicted, Gunner starts to use his magic, making the blood pool out of her wounds at a much quicker pace than normal. Once a good amount is out and on the floor beneath her, he moves onto his next step. I can't see what he is doing exactly, but I do know he likes to play with his victims, moving their blood around within their bodies, attacking his subjects from the inside out. It's like the blood is ripping the inside of them apart. I heard it's extremely painful, and it looks like it is from the screams I have heard before when he's conducted the same process.

Sarah, however, still doesn't make a sound. Her eyes droop as her body hangs more limply from the cave ceiling. I'm sure it won't be much longer until she passes out. Gunner must notice the same thing because he stops using his magic and reverts back to using his fists once more. Three more hits to the abdomen, five punches to the face, and the sixth punch finally does it, knocking her out cold.

"Take her back to her cell," I command, wanting the disappointment of a daughter out of my sight. "Amaya stay behind."

I watch as all three guards remove the sleeping form of my daughter from the room and carry her back to her prison cell. Clearly, this method isn't working. We will need to start trying something else to get her to cave. I need her to tell us where the damn prison seal is. After that, I can get the answers of how to use her powers for my will. One step at a time.

“Velnias,” Amaya calls out sweetly, moving to the edge of my cell. I watch as her hands wrap around the bars, and she presses her delectable body against them. “We’re running out of time.”

“I know, Amaya. Thank you for the unnecessary reminder,” I grumble, pacing the length of my cell, trying my best to ignore her. I would love to use her body for my own pleasure right now, but it isn’t the time. We need a game plan to move forward with.

“You need to force her,” she growls. “Clearly torture isn’t working on her, so torture someone she cares about. Hell, kill someone she cares about. You need to make her feel at her lowest where her only option is you.”

“Now that’s a thought. Yes... once she is healed in a couple days, bring her back in here along with whatever innocent you can find. For every time she refuses, the other subject will get hurt.” I smile wickedly while walking towards Amaya. “You, my dear, have a fantastically sexy brain.”

“I should hope so after all these years.” Her smile turns sinful the closer I get. “Now, how about I help you relieve some of the stress.”

“On your knees,” I order. Watching her comply makes my dick harden. “You’re going to suck me off and swallow every drop like the good little whore you are.”

Immediately she drops to her knees as told and puts her face up against the bars. Thank god there’s enough distance between each bar that her face can fit between them snugly. When she’s in position, I undo my jeans, pushing them and my boxers down to my knees. My cock juts out, and I grab hold of it, rubbing the tip along her plush red lips and smack her cheek. “Open up.”

Amaya does as she’s told, hollowing her cheeks to allow her to take my cock more fully. I watch as she licks her lips right before I thrust fully inside her, not giving her a chance to get comfortable. My tip hits the back of her throat, and she gags before I pull back out and repeat the process two more times. When I feel enough moisture gather in her mouth, I

move my hand to the back of her head and let her have some semblance of control. Her head moves up and down on my cock, taking me completely before she pulls back off. Every once in a while, her teeth will scrape along my dick, making me groan and thrust forward. Her tongue slides along, and when she pulls back, she uses her tongue to lick the precum leaking from my tip before she swallows me once again.

Her hands grasp my thighs as she continues to bob up and down. When I feel myself getting close, I wrap my fingers tighter in her hair and take control once again until I hit the back of throat, making her gag and watching the tears run down her cheeks. When I think she's had enough, I pull back to let her breath before doing it again.

“Play with my balls,” I growl. Feeling myself getting close. Amaya does exactly what I say, her right hand leaving my thigh to massage and tug at my balls. It's the last little bit of friction I need before I feel my balls seize up and my orgasm begin. With one final thrust into her mouth, I hold her against me, my tip at the back of her throat, and come forcing her to swallow every drop of my seed. When I'm done, I pull back letting her breath once more.

“Such a good girl,” I praise, smiling down at the dirty whore at my feet, wiping the tears from her cheeks. “You did so good, swallowing all my cum.”

From her knees, Amaya smiles up at me while also moving her hips, chasing the friction I'm sure she needs after that. Taking a step back I pull my boxers and jeans back up in one smooth move and straighten myself once again. “You can leave now.”

I see the flash of anger in her eyes as she stands, knowing she is going to have some choice words before she finally takes her leave. Just as suspected, she starts once she's standing. “Leave?” Her voice rises in agitation. “You're not even going to get me off after that?”

“No. This was about relieving my stress, which you did. It had nothing to do with getting you off. Now, if you don't want to piss me off, leave. While you are at it, please have the upper

leaders come for a meeting in thirty minutes. Oh, and see to Sarah. Make sure she has no visitors and is kept far away from the other prisoners. We don't need anyone getting any ideas now." My voice is cold with my instructions.

Several emotions flash across Amaya's face before she finally takes her leave without further complaint. I watch as she exits the room, her hips swaying in a fashion that almost makes me want to call her back here, except it would just be to use her for sex, which isn't possible until we get me out of this blasted prison cell. I know soon I'm going to need to get a handle on Amaya and her thinking that she has any control in this dynamic between us. She doesn't and never will. I just learned quickly that the easiest way to get what I want sometimes, and to have others do my bidding, is through sex. Amaya is blinded by power and sex. With just the right suggestions, she has done my bidding very well since I began my crusade to take over the supernatural world. Once I'm free of this prison, I'll need to remind her thoroughly of her place in this world and that it is beneath me. She will never be my equal or be strong enough to stand at my side as my queen. No. She is only good for the whore that she is.

Knowing I only have about twenty minutes before upper leadership joins me, I need to get a plan formulated for our next step. I'll leave Amaya in charge of Sarah, which should keep her busy enough to leave me alone. The others, however, will need to divide their focus and attention between gathering more soldiers and throwing my slut of an ex-wife and her mates off our trail. I don't want anyone to get wind of us trying to find and destroy the last prison seal. I'm sure they already know it's my plan, but if we can surprise them as to when we are going after it, then that will be better. We can focus on attacking different areas to keep them busy fighting pointless battles that mean nothing.

Twenty minutes isn't a long time to put together a plan, but thankfully this is something I have been planning for a long time. The downfall and conquering of the supernatural world. I will make the Gods pay for their crimes, as well as all those who have followed blindly the rule of Eden and her mates. Fuck the Gods, fuck Eden, and fuck her mates. These next

couple months are going to be a fantastic game of cat and mouse.

While I continue to wait, I let my mind wander with all the possibilities for revenge. There's a lot of moving puzzle pieces, but I'm confident my upper leadership will be able to put them all into action successfully enough for something to work. We don't need every plan to work, only a couple.

Before long, I start to hear voices making their way down the hollowed out corridors towards my cell. Finally, it's meeting time.

The closer my subjects get, the louder their arguing becomes until I can clearly hear what they are fighting over. As per usual, it's over whose troops have done more for the cause and who will be getting praised during this meeting. If they knew the true purpose, they would be more afraid rather than rambunctious as they enter the area. To each their own.

Only a few more seconds pass until I'm watching three of the six upper leaders enter the cave area. As they round the final corner, their bickering settles and they quietly enter. Each of them gives their proper bows and hellos before settling against the wall opposite my cell to wait for the final three. It only takes a couple more minutes before we can hear the last leaders arriving.

Standing behind my bars, I faced them without saying a word, letting them stew over the purpose of the meeting. A person's body can give away much about them, whether they fidget uncomfortably or stand ramrod straight. Both are indicators they could be hiding something, depending on the subject's personality. Only two of my leaders are giving any of those characteristics, which is a possible cause for concern. If they have been flipped or are getting cold feet about our purpose... that will need to be dealt with immediately. I know to be careful about what orders I give today for that purpose, at least until an investigation can be done.

"Thank you, each of you, for joining me here on such short notice." I clasp my hands in front of me. "I have plans that I will need each of you to implement on my behalf. We need to



take our battles to the next level. No more of these childish behind the scenes plays. Our recruitment is also low, so that will need to be dealt with as well. I have a plan in mind, but first I would like to hear your thoughts on what you believe can be done. General Atticus you are up.”

“Thank you, Lord Velnias,” my most trusted General bows and steps forward to take the floor. General Atticus has been with me since the very beginning. He is a demi-god that has proven time and again that he has a penance for the dark side and enjoys making others do his bidding. During the first battle, he was essential to finding Eden and Sarah when they ran away to Earth. I’m sure he had a hand in tracking Sarah again this time as well.

I listen as each of my generals give their full reports and advise me of what they believe should be our next steps. The two generals I had my eyes on at the start went last. Each provided what sounded like a full report, but I’ll need to check with General Atticus after this if what they are saying is true. Their plans for our next steps, however, seemed lacking. They gave the answers expected of their station, but they didn’t have the heart behind them. I think it may be time to start looking to replace them depending how they handle my next orders.

“Each of you has presented some great ideas, and I will take them into consideration. For now, we will stick with the plan I have come up with. It does include some parts of the plans you all have given as well, and the first three names called will be in charge of going to the different realms and recruiting more members. The last three names will be picking battles in specific locations against our opponents. After you are given your orders, you are dismissed.”

It doesn’t take long for me to instruct each General on what they are to do. I split different tasks between the two Generals I don’t trust. One was placed to recruit and the other to battle. We will see if they come back successful or not. I could tell as each General left, not all were happy with their placements, but that’s not my problem to worry about. They are here to serve me and do as I say—nothing more. Finally,

with all of their dismissals, I can take a nap before working on the next part of my plan.



## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMIT

Since I first woke up a vampire, I've been struggling. We learned quickly that the only blood I can consume is that of my mates, or more specifically Zeke's; we haven't tried any of my other mates. Lilith and Daddy B decided that no one was allowed in the room besides the three of them. Thankfully, my bond with my mates still works well, and we are able to talk to one another if I give it my complete focus. It's still a struggle at times to focus on just one thing when I can sense so much going on around me. Every other second, my mood changes, depending what random thought I have. I know it's been making it hard for the others to train me and help get my vampiric side under control. I can't tell you how many pieces of furniture I've already managed to break in this room. It's starting to look pretty sparse.

"Summit you need to focus. I have never had someone be so bad at being a vampire before." My father sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose when I fail once again to focus on what he's asked of me.

I can't help it though. I am going insane being trapped in this room for four days now. I need a change of scenery or something. Essentially, I'm bored.

"King Beckett, I don't think getting frustrated with her is helping. She's trying. How about you men take a break and get her mates out in the hallway to leave as well." Lilith places her hand on my fathers bicep lightly before walking towards me.

“Once you are all cleared out, I’m going to take Summit elsewhere to train. Hopefully, it will help.”

I’ve never been more grateful to Lilith for her suggestion. She’s right, I need to get out of this room. I also will feel more comfortable talking with her about what’s going on in my mind than I would with the others. Ever since this change, I’ve been quiet, hiding within myself and keeping others at a distance. After I first woke up and had to feed from Zeke, that was the last time I allowed myself to feel something. When I awakened after that encounter with him, I sort of freaked out and hid on the other side of the room, begging him to leave. I didn’t mean to react that way, but, while I had been asleep, I dreamt of Declan, and it brought up a lot of bad memories, things I thought I had moved past. Now, everytime I close my eyes I see him. It doesn’t feel right to tell Beckett or Zeke about what’s going on, and I won’t burden my other mates either. It’s my past, my fears, and I need to learn to process them.

I hear the door to the room close, pulling me from my thoughts once again. “They’re gone.” Lilith sighs. “Are you ready to talk now about why you withdrew yourself, or do you want to wait until we go outside? I figure a nice walk in the fresh air will help.”

“Outside,” I mumble, turning my head to look out the window. It’s evening, which means night will be taking over soon, and the garden will be a perfect light with all the different fountains lit up. From this room, I’ve watched the lights turn on at seven on the dot every night and create a calming glow throughout the gardens and the hedge maze. I’ve wanted to see it for myself, but the closest I’ve gotten is them letting me open a window. Finally, I’ll get my chance to explore.

“Alright, give your dad a couple minutes to wrangle your other mates, and then we will head out.” Lilith nods and smiles at me.

“Thank you, Lilith.” I smile genuinely. “You have been an amazing friend to me through all of this. I’m sorry I’ve been struggling. I’m not entirely sure why.”

“Don’t sweat it. We will get you back to being a badass in no time. I’ll tell you a secret, though,” she drops her voice like she doesn’t want anyone to hear, which makes me laugh. “I did the same shit, and it took all 3 of my mates to help me figure things out because the only thing I could focus on was getting revenge on the friend who decided to kill me.”

“Wait, what?” I spin, turning to look at her in shock.

“Ah, I see Asher hasn’t told you my full story. Well then,” she links her arm with mine and leads me towards the door and continues, “let me regale you with the tale of how I went from being Queen of Hell to becoming a vampire and the fight over control of Hell. It’s a long story, so I’ll give you the basics and one day soon I’ll tell you all the gory details if you want.”

“Please do,” I implore as we exit the room. “I would love to hear the full story some day, though I still think you are a complete badass that I look up to.”

“I’m glad to hear it, and trust me, you are just as much of a badass as I am. We just need you to get your fire back. Now, let’s begin.” Lilith starts to tell her tale as we slowly make our way through the halls to go outside. Her grip on my arm is tight, helping to keep me walking at a normal pace instead of rushing the way my vampiric powers are begging me to do. I’m almost positive she is walking even slower than normal just to have enough time to tell me her story.

She begins with meeting Cazimir when my fathers came to visit, and leads into telling me about the trials they started to face when her best friend returned from the dead and decided he wanted to rule Hell himself. She told me how, during a giant battle of the two sides, he stabbed her, killing her and leaving her for dead. She told me that if it wasn’t for her mates, specifically Cazimir and Abigor, she would never have survived and managed to transition into a vampire.

As we make our way outside, she gets to the part of her transition. Her process was a lot more gruesome than mine. She told me how everyone was concerned about whether she would even survive the transition with how bad she had been

injured. When she finally awoke, her hunger was like mine, ravaging. Her mind could only focus on the revenge she wanted against the friend who killed her. She was so hyper focused that some days she would forget to feed, and it took her months to finally get a handle on her new powers. No longer was she just a demon, now she was a vampire with demonic powers. It made her even more powerful than before, which was dangerous to almost anyone who came near her.

“Did you get your revenge?” I ask when we make it to the entrance of the gardens.

“Ha, my revenge? Oh you can sure as shit bet I did. With the help of your mate no less.” Lilith gives me a big smile and laugh before continuing. “My friend was only able to rule in my stead for fifty years before I was able to take back the throne, rather your mate did. He was the one who dealt the final blow which made him the King of Hell.”

“I knew I loved Asher for a reason,” I chuckle.

“Oh, that we know. Now, we are at the gardens,” she waves her hand around us. “Go explore, and when you’re ready to talk, we can, but remember that we will be talking tonight before we go back.”

Lilith lets go of my arm and takes off down a path, leaving me to stand here alone. I’m thankful she understands that I need some time just to myself. Her story reminds me that there is more to life than just suffering through the trauma of your past. If she was able to conquer her vampiric side, then so can I. My problem is that I don’t have the fifty years she did to take back control. I’m lucky if I have a couple months before Velnias comes for us all. It’s bound to happen sooner rather than later, and I need to be as strong as possible, not just for myself, but for my family. Calista needs me to have myself together.

Taking her advice, I make my way wandering through the gardens. They are even more beautiful with the lights on. The fountains leave me intrigued, and I’ll admit to finding the largest one and stopping to watch the water and light show. I let the repeated movements clear my mind as I watch, trying to

focus on the here and now instead of the past that decided to come back and haunt me. Every part of this new journey has been a learning curve in one way or another. The easiest thing I've learned was what Asher taught me before we stumbled upon this massive secret life we're still trying to navigate... to fight. I'm thankful for those lessons because they taught me new ways to look at situations, especially when I needed to learn all these foreign powers.

When Daddy B gave Sage and me the blood to drink, he knew there was a possibility that one or both of us would make the transition, and I was the lucky winner. In a way, I'm thankful it was me. I know Sage would have handled the transition, but I always want to protect her. My sister's soul is too pure to go through the things that I have. I won't let her face these challenges if I can protect her from them.

I was scared when I first collapsed to the ground. When I woke up, the fear was still there, but it was even stronger. As the days progressed, my emotions were like a whirlwind. My father constantly wanted me to try something new, take control over another aspect of vampirism. He didn't give me any time to process this new change, which is exactly what Lilith is doing now.

I'm not sure how much time has passed as I sit and think, but night has completely taken over the sky. Lilith joined me at some point, taking a seat next to me on the wooden bench. She sat there quietly and let me take my time, finding the words that needed to be said.

"He hurt me. Worse than anything I thought someone was capable of. I thought I moved past the trauma." My voice is a whisper as I bring up the past. "Asher helped me learn to defend myself, to take back my mind and body for myself. After I met Xavier, I got thrust into this whole new world, and I continued to get better, to trust and love again. This transition, though, brought back memories. When I woke up in Zeke's arms, I had had nightmares of Declan and the things he did to me. Everytime I sleep, he's there; when I drink Zeke's blood he's there. I can't escape it."

“Aw, Summit,” Lilith wraps her arm around my shoulders. “Of course that’s going to come back. When you make your transition, your mind goes through everything, relooking at every situation. I wish I could tell you how to banish those memories, but only you can do that. I can be here to help you along the way, but the decision to move on is ultimately yours.”

“It helps talking about it. I can’t talk to my mates or my father. They’d just be angry. Sure, Asher knows the events, really only some of them, but I feel like it’s stupid to bring up the past.” Shaking my head, I sigh, trying to figure out what to say next.

“Nothing you feel is stupid, and your mates will say the same,” Lilith prompts.

“I guess; I just don’t want to hurt anyone,” I answer, letting us sit in silence once more. Lilith doesn’t interrupt, letting me take the reins for this whole conversation. “How did you start to take control of your life again?”

“I was wondering when you would ask me that,” she says before she pauses. “Everyone goes about it differently. I threw myself into fighting, which was the wrong thing to do because I almost killed several people. My first suggestion is to try to figure out what powers you have. Some of your other powers may have shifted with the transition. I know mine did.”

“When can we start then? I don’t want to hurt anyone.” My voice wavers as I turn to look at her. Lilith has never let me be anyone but myself around her. She provided advice when I became Queen of Hell, and she is an amazing Aunt to Harlow. I trust her completely.

“We can start tonight. I have the outdoor training area booked for us already. We can test each of your powers and make sure you can still control them all. If you can, we will move onto combat. As a vampire, you will be faster and stronger than you were before. You’ll need to learn new ways to fight.” Lilith stands and waits for me to do the same.

“Faster and stronger, huh? I kept up with you every time we’ve sparred before. What makes you think that I can’t



now?" I fake my bravery because I know she'd kick my ass in seconds.

"You're a newbie vamp. You may have the powers, but you don't have the skills. Now get your ass up, and let's get you back to being yourself." Lilith grabs my arm, hauling me up from the bench before she turns to leave the gardens. "You coming?"

I take one last look at the fountain that helped me sort out my thoughts before moving to follow Lilith. I think a good fight is exactly what's needed to conquer my thoughts and start getting back to who I am.

"Hey Lilith, before we get too far..." I stop waiting for her to turn and look at me. When she does, I continue. "Can you have Asuna check on Calista? Giving her up is something that still haunts me just like Declan. I know it was done to protect her, but now that she's at Sanguie Legato Academy I'm concerned people are going to go after her."

"Asuna already promised to look after her, but yes. I'll give her a call and remind her. Now, let's go kick your ass already." Lilith turns and leads us out of the gardens.

Her words help to calm some of my concern. Everyone always says that being a parent is hard, and they aren't wrong. My relationship with my daughter may be strained because of our circumstances, but I still love and worry about her. Having her back here on Earth and no longer safe in the God's realm is going to be an even bigger adjustment. I have to trust that, even though I didn't raise her, she still has my fire within her and can take care of herself.

Once we make it to the training arena, Lilith doesn't hold back any longer. She makes me use every power I have and use my vampiric skills. She wasn't kidding when she said this would be different. I feel like a brand new fighter with no experience all over again. Every movement I thought I knew didn't work the same. I either missed or did the movements wrong. It's like my muscles are having to relearn everything instead of me relying on muscle memory like I had become accustomed to. It wasn't going to be possible.

Lilith insists that, once I spend enough time using the skills, my body will get used to it and I'll relearn quickly, especially if I rely on my Goddess of war powers to help me. I really hope she is right because if I don't learn how to do something soon, I am going to be fucked when we faced Velnias. She promises we will come out and train every day as long as I promise to let Zeke in and allow him to help me learn my spirit magic. Four hours later, we finally finish our first fight training, and as I lay on the ground debating on finding the willpower to get up and move or not, Lilith decides to explain what spirit magic truly is. She says it is different for each person, but the essentials of the magic still works the same. Different vampires acquire different powers through its use, and, on some rare occasions, vampires can acquire new spirit powers over time with age. She says that is something both Cazimir and Zeke had happen, but also says it is up to them to explain it to me when they think it is the right time. After that, Lilith helps me up and brings me back to the dreaded room that had become my prison for Zeke to come feed me. She promises that, in a day or two, we will try to see how I react to my other mates being in the same room with me. Baby steps she says.

All I want to tell her is that those baby steps could kick my ass.



## CHAPTER 5

### SAGE

The day has finally come when I get to meet with all of my parents and convince them that I should be the one to go after Sarah. For days I have thought about what to say to convince them that I'm the right choice. Our meeting was supposed to happen four days ago, but Eden came to find me and let me know they were pushing it back until Hades could arrive. Most of my time waiting was spent in the vast library here at Midnight Coven, pouring over books and ancient scrolls, trying to find something, anything, that would help me find my sister. I didn't even have a starting point, and I still don't entirely, but I did learn a lot about the different realms, how they are structured, and even spent some time looking more into the first war with Velnias.

One interesting thing I learned is that there are rumors that Réimse Dorchadais, the Darkness Realm, is a portal to a whole different universe. I found the information on an ancient scroll I came across. It was written in a dead language, so it took awhile for me to translate, but I know enough from what I could figure out to know, if we don't find Sarah quickly, she may not even be in our own universe anymore. That is unacceptable.

Through all my research, I learned that most of the other realms in our world sided with my parents, but there were several shifter clans that swayed more towards Velnias side, even several vampires were on his side. My parents had made it clear that everyone was free to make their own choices in

regards to who they wanted to fight with. They wouldn't force anyone to pick a side; they were only concerned about putting all the information forward to let others choose. The texts said that part of what made Velnias so powerful was his public speaking ability. He was able to sway weaker-minded people to his side with the promise of power and the ability to get back at all those who had wronged them in the past.

I can see the allure that would have on others, but I wish people would realize they don't need someone like that to give them power to change their circumstances. With the proper motivation they can make their own circumstances change if that is truly what they want.

"Sage, come on or we're going to be late," Kelen says, bringing me out of my thoughts as he appears at the end of the dark wooden table in the library where I had taken up residence for the past week. From sunup to long after sundown, I sat here pouring over every text I could get my hands on, trying to find solutions and answers to our problems. Without knowing where my parents sent Sarah to start with, I couldn't focus on one specific area. We know the Shadowed Thorne took my sister; it's the only thing that makes sense. I have a suspicion that the Council is also involved, but I can't prove that. All I know is that all of us have pissed the Council off immensely, especially my older sister.

"Alright," I sigh, closing the book I was looking over about Council politics. "Is Hades here yet?" I haven't heard about anything drastic having happened yet, but I'm scared that he is going to completely lose it during the meeting. Without Sarah here to control him, the world may very well start ending.

"He is due to arrive in the next five minutes, which is why we need to hurry. We all know he isn't going to wait long before going after Sarah when he realizes what's happened." Kelen helps me up from my seat and pushes me towards the library exit.

"Wait," I spin, turning to watch his expression. "You mean that no one warned him ahead of time?" My voice screeches as several people turn to glare at me.

“No.” Kelen’s tone is unmovable as he pushes me forward again.

“Ah hell. This is about to be the worst meeting ever. We will be lucky if someone doesn’t die.” I pick up the pace, knowing we’re going to be cutting it close. At least Summit won’t be in the meeting to make things worse because I know for a fact, if we put Hades and Summit together for this, someone may very well die between the two of them. I can only hope Eden took some precautions to keep Hades under control.

*“You should have more faith in your sister’s mate, Kaida,”* Phoenix’s voice pops up in my mind. *“He is on the God’s Council, he knows how to control his temper.”*

*“That should be comforting to know, but it isn’t. All of us can do some crazy things when it comes to our mates, and those things would be completely out of character for us in some situations.”* Mentally I sigh from just having too much on my plate. *“Summit went to Hell while pregnant to chase after Xavier. If she can do that, imagine what the God of the Underworld can, and will, do.”*

*“I hear you, Kaida, I do. I just happen to think that Hades will keep it together better than Summit because we all know your twin can be psychotic when she wants to be. No offense.”* Phoenix chuckles.

His words about my twin should’ve pissed me off and have me defending her until I’m blue in the face, but I know how she is, and he isn’t wrong. Summit has a tendency to go to the extreme when it’s something she cares about. I’ve just always tried to be there to rein her in when she takes it too far. Sometimes, like her going to Hell, I learned it’s better to let her do what she wants rather than force her to stay in control. Plus her trip there paid off, she found her third mate and became Queen of Hell, so that incident really shouldn’t be used against her.

I don’t bother to reply to his remarks about Summit but instead focus on getting my ass to this meeting. I really want to get there before Hades shows up to try to talk sense into my

fathers before he blows the meeting up with his anger. Running through the halls, I almost knock a couple people over as I round the corners too quickly, but I manage to make it to the entrance of the meeting room at the same time Eden does.

“Sage,” she greets me warmly. “I’m glad you made it in time. Go on in. I’m waiting for Athena and Hades to get here, and then we can start. Why don’t you talk to your fathers for a couple minutes.” She nods towards the door.

I don’t wait for Kelen to join me before sliding the door open. Inside, I see all of my fathers, except Daddy Aquaman, gathered and talking in hushed tones. When they see me, they go silent, clearly wanting to keep whatever they were talking about secret. “Hi dads.” I smile, moving to a seat on the right side of the room. Right as I reach my chair, Kelen finally arrives.

“Sage, it’s good to see you. What are you doing here?” Papa M questions.

“Eden invited me.” I keep my voice and expression guarded. If she didn’t tell them I was coming, then I’m not going to give my plan away completely.

“Ah, your mother is always thinking ahead. Am I to assume that she told you what this is about?” Daddy B questions. I can see the concern in his eyes as I stare at him.

Reminding myself to keep my backbone, I answer, “Yes, I know that Sarah is missing and you all are going to be getting a team gathered to find her.”

“Let me guess, you want to be a part of that team?” Dad E assumes.

“Yes. She is my sister, and I know I’ll be able to find her. My team can do this. I know you’re concerned about me learning spirit magic, which I have a solution for. Send a vampire or two with us to continue my training while we’re gone.” Holding my breath, I wait for their answer. I know they are going to say no right off the bat, which is why I came

armed with all the information I gathered from the library to back me up.

“No, not happening,” Dad E insists. “You need to train here, in a safe environment where we can help you. It’s too dangerous out there for you to be gallivanting around.”

Before answering, I take a deep, calming breath, knowing that raising my voice and getting heated over this isn’t going to help me get what I want. “I hear you, Dad, but I know my team can do this. I have spent the last week in the library researching everything that I thought could help me, and what I don’t know, and I have all of my mates to assist me. It will be good for me to get out into the world, to show everyone that Summit and I care about our realm, and we aren’t going to let others fight our battles for us. This will be both a learning opportunity for me and a rescue mission for Sarah.”

“She has some sound reasoning, Ecko. The girls do need to take more of a hand with ruling this realm if the people are to trust them when we step down. This could be a good, real-world training session for her. Plus, as she already pointed out, she has been doing research and her mates are with her,” Old Man Mags argues on my behalf.

I keep my mouth shut, knowing this is between my fathers now. If I try to interrupt, I could very well lose my opportunity to get what I want. Kelen takes a seat beside me, and I catch my other mates entering the room as well while my fathers continue to argue back and forth on whether I’m capable of leading this rescue mission. I’m hoping the pro’s will outweigh the cons, but only time will tell. While they argue, Rhett takes a seat on my other side while Vox and Phoenix take up positions standing behind my chair.

My fathers completely ignore their presence, which causes Phoenix to clear his throat to get their attention. “Ahem.” He looks at them innocently. The sudden sound makes the arguing stop, and my fathers turn their attention back to me and, now, my mates. “Are you all done fighting now?”

I shove my chair back an inch into my mate’s gut causing him to grunt. *That was so not the right way to go about this.* I

can only hope his words don't ruin this chance for me.

"I understand you are all concerned about Sage, her training, and her safety if we were to embark on this rescue mission, but if she was out of the picture would you all send the rest of the team?" His tone is almost defensive.

I don't know what he is getting at, but I really hope that whatever point he is trying to make helps the cause. This mission is important to me. Sarah is my family, and I want to be able to prove, not only to everyone else but to myself, that I can handle the regular supernatural world, and not by being hidden within all my fathers' castles.

I watch as each of my fathers either nod or murmur their agreement with my mate's words. "Then why is it different if Sage is with us? She's powerful. You all have witnessed her powers. She can take care of herself, especially with each of us looking after her. Vox is now added to our team, and if you send two vampires to assist in training her in Spirit magic, then we will have plenty of people."

"Phoenix, son," Old Man Mags starts, "we hear you. It's not that Sage isn't capable of taking this quest on. I'm all for sending her. However, I think that her other fathers would prefer if she had more training before going off on something like this."

"WHERE THE FUCK IS SHE!" The door to the room bursts open as Hades comes into the room absolutely furious, pulling all our attention to him and off the conversation at hand. "I know you all know where she is! You all told me not to worry and that it wasn't a big deal that we couldn't reach her! Clearly you all lied to me!" Hades' breathing is heavy with his anger. When no one answers him, he shouts again. "SOMEONE TALK!"

"HADES!" Athena, my grandmother, comes in scolding him. "You need to calm your ass down if you want an answer. If you can't, I will drag your miserable hide back to the God realm and down to the Underworld, locking you up there until you can think straight. Is that clear?"



My grandmother's face is bright red as she screams at her grandson-in-law. I don't think I have ever seen her angry; she is usually so in control with everything that this is completely out of character for her. If the situation wasn't so serious, I would probably chuckle at the sight of Hades, the big bad god of the Underworld, getting scolded like a child. If Summit were here, she would definitely be laughing her ass off.

"We are here to come up with a plan, Hades, on who will be a part of the rescue team," Eden begins slowly as she enters the room last, sliding the door closed. "Sarah may be your mate, but she is my daughter first. I can promise you that we will not leave her in the hands of her father any longer than is necessary."

"HER FATHER!" Hades shouts. "You know exactly what that bastard is capable of and why he wants her. She's unique! Her power makes her sought after; it's why she refused to mate me for decades!"

"I know," Eden answers sadly. "I'm far more aware than you are of the dangers Velnias presents to Sarah. I would never leave my daughter in his hands for a long period of time, or at all for that matter, but this was out of my control. He is a wicked, despicable god who needs to meet his maker, but the only person capable of doing that needs further training. All we can do is continue to buy time until they're ready."

I know she isn't talking about Summit or me, but her words still prove how much we both have to learn. We have to keep Velnias distracted and incapacitate him to where he won't be able to fight back, which means that we need to be able to harness all our powers.

"If you were the one training her, she would be," Hades grumbles.

"I will be filling in as her teacher until Sarah is found," Eden counters. "Now, you need to trust your mate to keep herself alive and to keep her powers under wraps until we can get to her. Whatever team my mates decide to send could use your assistance, but like my mother said, if you can't keep your shit together, then you won't be welcome on this mission,

whether she's your mate or not. Trust me, the team would benefit greatly from your help because of your bond with her."

I watch as all the fight deflates out of him at her words. She has him by the balls there. He knows he can rescue Sarah, but he can't do that from the Underworld, so he either has to play nice or sit out. I can't imagine ever sitting out from a rescue mission like this if it was one of my mates. Hell, we barely managed to get Summit to sit out as long as she did before she had enough and went anyway, and she had less magic at the time than Hades ever has. Holding my breath, I wait to see what he's going to do. I truly hope he makes the right choice and will be a part of the rescue mission.

"Okay. I'll play your games for now, Eden, but remember we are equals in power and Sarah is my mate," Hades finally relents.

I let out a sigh of relief at his words. I really didn't want him to have to sit this out. We could use his help, especially if my fathers agree to send my team and me. I'd much rather have him with me, even if he is going to have a temper the whole time. If I have handled Summit for over twenty years, I can handle Hades. Hopefully.

"Now that's settled," Eden begins again, moving towards the open seat between my fathers. "Who are we sending to rescue my daughter?"

My mates and I keep our mouths shut as we wait on bated breaths for my fathers to answer. We pleaded our case, at least some of it, to them already. It's in their hands. I promised my mom I wouldn't put her in the middle, even if she did give me her blessing already.

"I think Sage and her team should go," Old Man Mags announces. I can already see my other fathers wanting to pick a fight.

"Magnus, we just went over this," Dad E starts.

"He's right," Eden cuts Ecko off. "Sage should be the one to go. It will be good training for her. Summit already went to

Hell on her own with even less backup than Sage will have. She can do this. She also has Lernea to support her.”

I give a small smile to my mom for her praise. I didn't expect her to speak up for me during this.

“Hades, are you good with joining Sage?” Athena looks towards him.

I can see the contemplation on his face as he thinks over the offer. He glances over my mates and me before giving his answer. “Yes, Sage will be capable of this mission. I'll assist her.”

“Great, now that's settled also.” Eden claps. “Let's discuss what two vampires will go with them and what to expect.”

For the next several hours, all of us discuss what to expect for the mission and which vamps should go with us. Even though I was scared to my core of what was going to happen, I wasn't going to let fear stop me. Instead, I am taking a page out of Summit's book and facing that fear head on.



## CHAPTER 6

SARAH

Groaning, I open my eyes and try to move before realizing it's impossible. Every part of my body hurts. It's like I'd been run over by a dump truck and somehow I survived. I know the torture Velnias is putting me through is nothing compared to what he has done to others. Knowing that doesn't change my circumstances, though. I am in no condition to put up a fight if anyone were to come in anytime soon.

Time has become a construct as I stare at the walls and bars surrounding me. I have no idea how many days I've been here. It's hard to keep count when you can't see the outside world. My body has been tortured so often now that I pass out after each session, just trying to sleep and heal. The healing is almost impossible, though, since I have no access to my magic. Without it, I'm stuck healing at the pace of a normal human, except for when they take pity on me and heal me just enough to go through the next round of torture.

Amaya did a good job of making sure I was placed far away from all the other prisoners. I'm sure they have others locked up here as well, but this way no one would be able to help me. I'm alone and at their mercy—exactly how I'm sure they prefer me. If my father thinks my mind is weak, then he would be sadly mistaken. I won't cave to what he wants. Not ever. They will have to kill me first.

Off in the distance, I hear footsteps coming my way. I'm sure they've figured out that I'm awake, even if I've barely moved or made a sound. Each time I awaken, it only takes

them a couple minutes to send someone in to check on me. I have no idea how they know when I wake up, but it's getting to be annoying. All I would like is a little bit of time to myself to come up with a plan instead of constantly being on my guard.

The sound of the door or prison cells opening puts me on my guard. When Amaya is entering, she tends to slam the door open, announcing her arrival. This time, the door was softly opened, which leads me to believe it's possibly the doctor that Velnias swayed to his side. I've seen him five times now in my cell taking blood from me. The first time, I actually woke up to him sticking a needle in my arm to gather the blood, I had enough energy in me to fight him off and injure him then. After that, the doctor usually brought with him at least one guard who stood outside the cell. He also learned to make noise outside my cell to ensure I was awake before coming in and risking injury again. Though, after the torture that Gunner has subjected me to, it makes it extremely difficult to fight back.

"Sarah, I know you're awake." The older doctor knocks on the metal bars near the door to my cell.

Still, I refuse to open my eyes, hoping he will just go away and ignore me. I don't feel like being poked and prodded as a science experiment for him anymore. I know he is determined to figure out how to harness my power to take others powers, but it's not within my blood. Apparently, that's not something Velnias and the doctor have figured out yet. Yes, the power *uses* my blood, but the power comes from my spirit, just like all my other powers.

"We don't need to do this the hard way, young one. It will only take a couple minutes to get the blood." He sighs when I still won't look his way or move. "Do I need to get one of the guards? I had hoped by now we could do this civilly. I don't like causing you to be in pain, you know."

At those words, I open my eyes and look at him. I would much prefer not having the guards pushing around my broken body and causing me more pain. Using the last little bit of strength I can muster at the moment, I push myself into a

sitting position, failing miserably at hiding how much effort it takes me. Gunner sure did cause a lot of trauma this time. I'm not even sure I have enough blood still in me for the doctor to take.

Cautiously, the older, gray-haired man opens the door to my cell and steps inside. He makes sure the door is closed behind him completely before making his way to my side. When he gets to my right, he kneels down and gathers the items he needs out of his pockets to take the couple vials of blood he usually takes. His hands are shaky as he tries to be as quick as possible, which puts me further on alert. He's always had steady hands from what I could tell. Never have I seen this man's hands shake when he goes to get my blood except for the first two times. So why now?

I don't ask my question aloud, but instead I just watch him waiting to see what happens. I doubt he would give me a straight answer anyway. He ties a rubber band around my bicep and starts hitting the inner part of my elbow as he tries to find a good vein to use for blood. At this point, I wish he would just use my wrist or the top of hand because my arm is starting to look like a junkie with all the puncture marks and bruising from being stabbed every day. It doesn't take him long to find the vein he wants to use, inserting the needle without warning. I'm already in so much pain, I don't feel the needle enter my skin. The only thing I feel is the lightheadedness that comes with losing so much blood. I watch on as the blood leaves my arm and fills up the five vials the doctor had this time. He worked silently to gather the blood but kept an eye on my face to make sure I wouldn't try anything. The whole time, his hands were still shaking as he worked. When the doctor finished, he quickly gathered his supplies and backed away towards the cell door.

"Guards will be here soon to escort you to your father." With those final words, the older man leaves my cell and makes his way to exit the prison area.

I don't bother to respond, knowing it wouldn't make a difference. He works for Velnias and would never betray him, if his actions so far are anything to go by. Not once has he

shown a shred of kindness or offered to try to heal me before he leaves. At that rate, the doctor doesn't deserve my words.

Without knowing how long it would be before the guards return and collect me, I decide to try to sleep a little longer. It shouldn't be hard since I'm already drowsy from the additional blood loss. Instead of trying to lay back down, I let my head rest against the bumpy stone wall behind me and close my eyes. In seconds, the blackness claims me, letting my mind and body rest once more.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

“Wakey, wakey,” Amaya’s annoyingly high pitched voice rings out as a banging against my cell doors begins. I try to keep my eyes closed in hopes she would go away, but I know it won't happen. Asleep or awake, they will pull me from this cell for more torture.

Opening my eyes slowly, I watch as Amaya opens the door and three guards step into the cell. Their faces aren't familiar, not that any of the previous ones have been either. They continue to change the guards assigned to collect me, probably in hopes that I won't be able to sway any to my side to assist me. Jokes on them since I really wouldn't try unless I could find a redeeming quality buried deep within them or they show me that they were there against their will, which we all know probably isn't possible.

“Ah, there's our favorite prisoner. Are you ready for your next chat?” Amaya questions from the otherside of the bars.

“Fuck off,” I grumble right as two of the guards grab me under the arms and drag me to my feet. I let my body go to dead weight on them as they drag me up. No way was I going to cooperate, not that my body would really let me anyway. Both men hold me up and drag me out of the cell. The second I'm outside of the cell, I feel my powers starting to come back. Nowhere near full power, but enough that my healing is starting to kick in.

“Don't worry, we'll get you patched back up before you see your father. Guards, bring her this way,” Amaya commands walking towards the exit.

Both men drag me along with the third walking behind us. Every step they drag me along causes pain all over. My healing isn't progressing fast enough to lessen it. I let my powers focus on healing all the internal injuries first, especially to my abdomen area. The whole time they have been dragging me along, Amaya has been talking. Most of it I've ignored as just background noise. The one thing I learned about her a long time ago is that she thinks she walks on the sun and everyone should bow down to her. It's why I always enjoyed antagonizing her every time we met.

"You know, rumor has it that Hades is coming back to Earth today. I wonder how he's going to react. My money is on him trying to rip the world apart." Her tone is playful, and I catch her looking back at me, waiting to see my reaction.

It takes everything in me to keep my mouth shut and my expression as straight as possible. I know if Hades comes back, he will tear this world apart trying to find me. I have a feeling that Amaya and Velnias want that. They want my mate to lose his shit so they can come in and save the day. I hope to all the Gods that Eden and Athena are able to talk him down. If not, I don't think I want to see what's going to happen.

"Oh, that doesn't bother you if he goes on a rampage? Wow. Are you two really mates then?" Amaya taunts, turning her back to me once again.

Closing my eyes, I take a deep breath and keep my mouth shut. There's nothing I can do for him. It's up to my mate, my mom, and my grandmother. I only hope they all make the right choice. I go back to tuning out Amaya's taunts. When we make a different turn than I'm used to, I open my eyes and see us heading somewhere I haven't seen before. Gone are the rock walls that had become my usual sign of impending hell. Instead, it looks like we are walking into an area that has been built up with actual walls. The lights go from being hammered into the rock to hanging from the ceiling. It almost reminds me of a hospital with how bright the lights are and how white the walls are.

Ah hell. I really hope they aren't dragging me to the clinic. I'll take the rough healings they give me before going in there.



“Dr. Burns,” Amaya’s voice comes out cheerful. “I brought our patient. Are you ready?”

“Ah yes, bring her in. I know she has an appointment with our leader, and we don’t want her to be late.” I watch as the same doctor from before opens a door and holds it open for the guards to drag me through.

*I guess it’s good to finally have a name for the asshole who keeps taking my blood.*

“Yes, make this quick,” Amaya answers as the guards manhandle me down onto a table.

Two guards hold my arms, and the third gets my legs. At the same time I’m being grappled by the guards, Dr. Burns places some device I’ve never seen before in the center of my chest and hits a button. Within seconds, I’m screaming out in pain. It feels like my soul is being sucked out of me. The pain is more excruciating than anything I have ever felt before. I have no idea what in the hell he’s doing to me. My mind wants to shut down, but one of the guards is pushing their healing powers into me to keep me awake. I’ve never felt anything like this before, and I can promise to whomever is listening that I will make this psychotic doctor pay for his crimes.

“I don’t think she can take much longer doctor,” I hear Amaya shout over my screams. Her voice seems so far away as I continue to scream. No longer can I feel my powers within me. All I feel is the pain.

“Just a few more seconds. I almost have it all,” I hear my new enemy insist.

*Almost have what?* I want to question him aloud, but I can’t find a way to form the words. Whatever he is taking, I don’t want him to have. With that motivation, I start to fight back. It isn’t much with how I’m being restrained, and the pain I’m in, but I manage to shake my body enough and dislodge whatever device is attached to me.

“NO!” I hear the doctor scream. “No, we were so close! Now, we have to start all over. What the hell is your issue?!”

You were supposed to be holding her still, you incompetent guards!”

“We don’t have any more time, doctor. Velnias is waiting.” Amaya disagrees, stopping him from reattaching the device. “You can try again in a couple days to harness her powers, but for now, she has a meeting.”

So that’s what the device is, something to collect my powers. Fuck. If Velnias is successful with that machine, who knows what my father could be capable of. I’ll have to make sure when I finally make it out of this hell hole that I destroy that damned device along the way. It would be madness if Velnias were able to have control of that.

With having one of the guards healing me through that whole ordeal, I can feel my energy returning and several parts of my body already feel stronger. I’m nowhere near one hundred percent, but it’s a starting point. I’m almost positive I can at least stand on my own two feet.

“We need to move. Now. Keep healing her on the way.” I hear Amaya turn and head towards the exit at the same time she speaks. None of the guards answer her as they unstrap me, roughly grab me, and drag me out the door to follow. The guard who was healing me is pushing even more of their magic into me, helping to boost my own healing powers. Once we’re about halfway down the hall, I’m able to walk again on my own. When the guards feel me straighten up, their grips get tighter and they go on alert. Still, no one says a word as we walk. We don’t even pass anyone down the now familiar hallways as we walk towards Velnias’ prison cell.

Amaya comes to a stop right before we enter the room. “You better give him what he wants this time,” she hisses, turning her back to me and leading us into the room.

If she thinks I would ever give him what he wants, she’s in for a rude awakening. I’d die before giving him answers.

“Daughter,” Velnias calls out happily as we enter the room. I glare at him, keeping my mouth shut. “Ah, I see we are still in a bad mood. Very well. Did you think about my offer?”

“I will never help you,” I reply with venom.

“Such a shame. I had such high hopes for you. Oh well,” he shrugs. “Gunner, she’s yours to do with as you please.”

Steeling myself, I wait for the blow to come. He can break my body over and over, but I will never talk. I keep my eyes open and watch Gunner as he brings his fist in my direction. I smile right before his fist connects with my face.

Game on.



## CHAPTER 7

### ZEKE

This past week has been one of the roughest in my one hundred years of being a vampire. Trying to help Summit with her transition has been a blessing and a curse. I'm thankful I got to spend some time helping her, getting her to learn how to feed. Not to mention that first day together when I got to eat her out was one of the best I've had in a long time. The fact that I get to do everything I can for my mate is the best feeling ever.

On the other hand, it's a horrible feeling that I feel like I failed her after that first day. Summit refused to feed from me without Lilith present. She withdrew within herself and wouldn't tell anyone why. Not even her other mates could get through to her using the bond. She shut everyone out, every single person. That hurt the worst after finally getting through to her. None of us knew how to help her, to fix her, for lack of a better term. She didn't need fixing, but she did need to talk. After Lilith took her to the gardens, things got better. Yesterday was the change we were all hoping to see. She took control of her transition, which is what we needed, what she needed.

"Zeke," Lilith pops her head out of the room Summit moved into after they returned from the training yard.

"Princess?" I answer knowing how much she hates the title. She went from being Queen of Hell to the Princess of the Midnight Coven. To most, the so-called demotion would be a low blow, but Lilith took it like the queen she is. She just hates

being called by it and would rather be known as Lilith. Titles never were her thing.

“You know how much I hate that, Prince Zeke,” she seethes jokingly.

“Which is exactly why I do it,” I smile. Since her transition and joining our family, we’ve been close. She’s like the annoying little sister I never wanted but don’t regret having. “What do you want Lilith? Does Summit need more blood?”

At my question, Asher, Lincoln, and Xavier all stand straighter from the walls they had taken up. Summit still hasn’t let the three of them visit, and I know it’s driving them absolutely insane. Not even Harlow has been allowed to go into the room. Summit’s visitor list is so small, I have a feeling she is still afraid to let others close, but Lilith insists she is almost there. I’ve tried to get her to explain more of what Summit is dealing with, but she won’t budge on the topic. Not even King Beckett knows, and lord knows I tried to beg him to tell me.

“You men need to get the hell out of this hallway. Better yet, get the hell out of Midnight Coven. You’re hovering, and it’s not only driving Summit insane, but it’s driving me insane, too, so get your asses out of here.” Lilith stands her ground glaring at each of us.

“You want us to leave?” Xavier growls. “To leave our mate here, alone, when she needs support and love?”

“Yes.” Lilith smiles like Xavier doesn’t scare her at all. Honestly, he probably doesn’t. She could kick his ass from here to Sunday and back.

“No.” Xavier stalks towards her.

“I suggest you back the hell up, Xavier. I respect you because you are my best friend’s mate, but I will still lay you on your ass. This is why you all need to leave. Just take like a two day trip and bond. It’ll be good for all of you.”

“Xavier, don’t.” Asher steps up next to him, placing his hand on his shoulder to calm the wolf. “Lilith is right. Clearly Summit needs some space, and when she’s ready she will talk

to us. Until then, let's do what Lilith suggests. Let's go take a dude trip."

"You clearly spent too much time around humans when you trained Summit," Lincoln chuckles. Asher ignores his comment and focuses on getting Xavier to calm down.

"What about feeding? Summit needs Zeke's blood," Xavier tries to reason.

"I have that covered. There is still leftover blood from the last time Zeke donated. Now go!" Lilith raises her voice and points down the hallway. "Don't make me treat you like children and count to three."

"I think it's a great idea. I would like to get to know each of you better since we will be brothers for a long time, if Summit lets us," I add hoping it will help convince the others.

"Come on, bBrother," Asher pushes Xavier forward. "Let's have a dude trip."

"If you stop calling it that, I'll go," Xavier answers grumpily and jerks his shoulder from Asher's grip.

I watch as they all start to head down the hallway, with one last look at Lilith and the door between me and Summit, I follow behind them. It'll be good to get to know each other and allow them to get to know me. I've always been considered the hidden prince of the Midnight Coven, very rarely being seen. I'd never met Xavier or Lincoln until they arrived here. Asher I had met before during the battle for Hell, but I couldn't even tell you if he remembers me or not. I much prefer to be forgotten in our world.

The further down the hall we all walk, the more I dread this trip, even if it is a good idea. The four of us together will have a target on our backs if anyone were to realize we were outside the castle walls, especially if the Shadowed Thorne were to find out. Hopefully, with it being only a two day adventure, we shouldn't have any issues.

"Any idea on where to go?" Lincoln questions, turning our attention to the plan.

“Zeke?” Asher turns back to look at me. “You’re the one who lives here. Where would be good?”

My steps falter at his question. I haven’t explored this area in a very long time. “Are you sure you want to stay here? We could go anywhere. Asher, don’t you have the power to create a portal?” I turn the attention back to him, not wanting to have to make a decision.

“I do,” he hums. “Alright, new plan. I know exactly where to take us. Everyone pack a bag and meet me at the front gate in fifteen minutes.”

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“Where the hell did you bring us, Asher?” Xavier grumbles for the fifth time since we walked through the portal.

I’m tempted to make a joke about the wolf not being able to handle the climate, but since these men don’t know me well, I don’t want to cause a problem. He is right, though. I don’t recognize where Asher brought us either, but it looks like the snow is going to be coming in soon.

“Romania,” the King of Hell shrugs as he leads us deeper into the woods.

“Why the hell did you bring us here?” the wolf pushes.

“Summit,” Lincoln answers for him.

His answer leaves me even more confused than our arrival did. Why would Summit be the reason we’re in Romania, unless we’re here to get something for her, but I don’t understand what we would be getting.

“Xavier, you know Summit. Just stop and think for a second,” Asher grumbles bringing our group to a stop. “Here, I’ll give you a hint,” he adds at Xavier and my confused faces. “We’re, more specifically, in Transylvania.”

“Oh come on,” Xavier groans, followed by laughing hysterically.

“I’m sorry,” I look between the three of them still confused. “What’s the importance of Transylvania?”

“Sorry, Zeke. Forgot you haven’t spent a lot of time with Summit.” Lincoln steps forward to explain. “When she was a human, she had, and still has, an obsession with all things supernatural. It’s why she was in New Orleans when Niklaus discovered her and actually led her into our world. Part of her obsession is with vampire mythology. If you get her started, she will tell you every difference between the different types of vampires and even give you a whole lecture, which I’m sure none of you actually want to hear. It’s also why we’re so shocked she has been struggling with the transition since she is so well read on the subject, but I digress.” Lincoln shakes his head before continuing. “Summit first fell in love with the myth of Dracula and, in turn, Elizabeth Bathory. She keeps saying she wants to come here and visit and explore. She’s even gone so far as trying to figure out how to book a night to stay in Dracula’s castle.”

Scoffing, I cut him off. “She does know that her father is who the Dracula myth is based on right?”

“Actually, no,” Xavier joins in. “We’ve helped keep that little secret from her, which, yes, in retrospect, we know she is going to murder us all for, but we figured that’s something that King Beckett should tell her himself. Why he hasn’t yet is a mystery to all of us, but we know better than to get involved.”

“Ahh, you are afraid to push the subject with the King, aren’t you?” I see each of them nod in agreement. “So, if that’s the case, why are we here?”

I know for a fact that when Beckett left this life behind him, he didn’t leave anything here of value. He brought everything with him to the Midnight Coven. I’m not sure what the men are hoping to recover, if that’s their plan. If they are wanting to get some memorabilia, we could have done that back home or had it shipped.

“I thought we could get a stone to bring back from the castle and give it to her as a present,” Asher responds.

“You want to bring a stone, from King Beckett’s past, that he left behind, mind you, back into his new home? Do you all



have a death wish?" There is no way I can back their plan. It's suicide if King Beckett ever finds out.

"Uh, yeah," Asher shrugs like it's obvious and shouldn't be a problem.

"You're funeral," I smirk, leaning back against a tree. I know Beckett won't be too thrilled that they are doing this. It's one thing for them to bring Summit here because it's something she's always wanted to see, but it's a whole other thing to bring something back that King Beckett could risk seeing. He wasn't proud of the things he had done back in those days. Putting people's heads on spikes like that would be severely frowned upon these days. War was ugly and brutal; it still is, but it's fought differently now in the human world.

With that debate finished, Asher leads us down the path through the woods once more. Xavier and Lincoln are all for this trip, especially now that they know where we are. I, however, am completely against it, but I won't let them go alone either. I was there for the things King Beckett did, I fought alongside him all those centuries ago. Being back in these woods, going back to the castle, may start bringing up memories that I thought had been long forgotten. They may know the truth about the King, but I won't tell them my story until I tell Summit first. She deserves to hear it from me, no matter how bloody and brutal it is. Thankfully, the area around us has changed so much I don't recognize it anymore. I can't see the burn marks, the fallen trees, or the burnt cabins.

For the next hour and half of hiking, I asked the others questions about themselves, about how they each met Summit, and even questions about Summit herself. Each of them told me their unique stories of meeting Summit, which left me more interested in our mate. She is truly a strong and incredible individual to take everything in stride that has been presented to her. While Asher explained how he first met her, he only said that she was in a bad place mentally, but it was her story to tell, though he had no issues explaining when they met for the second time while she was pregnant in Hell chasing Xavier. In return, I answered some of their questions to the best of my ability, without giving away too much about

the early days of my life. I did remind Asher that I was there during the battle over Hell. When I did, he started putting some pieces together in his mind. I could tell he wanted to ask for further details, but when he turned to look at me and caught the subtle shake of my head, he let it die for now. The only thing he mentioned was he remembered how brutal I was during that battle and the amount of demons I had killed.

When I told Summit before that I had a dark and bloody past, I wasn't kidding. I truly did do a lot of despicable things and kill many people. I won't ever be proud of that. Heck, before Summit became my mate, I had had every intention of sitting out of this battle against the Shadowed Thorne and Velnias. I didn't want to let that side of me come alive again. We can only hope that, at the end of it, someone will be able to bring me back from the blood haze.

Before long, I start to see the top of the castle through the breaks in the trees. It has been a very long time since I've seen the crumbling castle. I wonder if the others realize this is only one of three castles that belonged to King Beckett when he was once known as the infamous Dracula. At least they chose the one that is best known, so it shouldn't bother the King as much as one of the others would. This one was restored a while back and became a tourist attraction in the area. I remember hearing King Beckett talk about it when the local townspeople had reached out to his administration about turning it into an attraction instead of a dark and gloomy crumbling castle. He was hesitant at first, wanting to keep that private, but Lilith had convinced him otherwise.

"So where do you all think would be the best place to get a stone from?" Xavier questions when he sees the castle. I wonder if they realize that it won't be as easy as they suspect since the castle has been updated, and the stones aren't crumbling like they once had been.

"Zeke?" Lincoln asks my opinion.

"Does it need to be a stone from the castle wall? If so, we will need to get inside and go to the basement area. If it can just be from the stones the castle is built upon, the back will work. Either way, we should do this at nightfall." I may be

against their plan, but I'm also going to do everything I can to keep them out of trouble.

"Nightfall it is," Asher agrees. "We'll sneak in when it closes and sneak back out. Shouldn't be too difficult."

"Let's make camp in the woods here to keep hidden from passersby," Xavier suggests, moving into a small clearing on our left.

Since we knew it was going to be an overnight trip, we all brought some camping supplies and started to set up a little camp. None of us need much outside of some sleeping bags, food, and supplies for a fire. Lincoln had left to go in search of wood that we could use while the rest of us made sure the area was dry and built a small fire pit area in the center of all our sleeping bags. We were still far enough away from the castle that, if smoke was seen, no one would think twice about who was out here, but we were also close enough to make a quick entrance and exit in the dead of night.

*Gods, I hope the King will forgive us for this. I mean it is for his daughter, so maybe that will save each of us.*

It was early afternoon when we arrived, so we still had a few hours to sit and talk while we waited for nightfall. The one thing we had on our side was that it was winter, and night came sooner rather than later. We just had to hope no storm came in overnight since none of us brought tents.

"Shh," Xavier interrupts my conversation with Lincoln. He stands up, going on alert, his head swiveling as if he's trying to listen for something that only he can hear. "We need to hide. Now." His voice is quiet but firm.

Without hesitation, Asher puts the fire out as Lincoln and I try to gather our sleeping bags and backpacks to hide in the bushes around us. It won't do much good, but it's better than leaving an empty camp set up to make whoever, or whatever, is approaching us wary. After that's done, we each duck into the bushes and try to bury ourselves between thick trees. Lincoln took the approach of actually hiding up within the trees to help be our eyes.

*“There’s a group of people about a mile away. I think they may be supernaturals, but I don’t recognize any of them,”* Lincoln calls out through the bond. *“They are walking directly towards us, so be ready.”*

My body tenses at his words. I may keep up with my combat training, but it’s been a long time since I’ve had to fight. This is going to be interesting.

*“How many?”* Asher questions taking control.

*“Six, no seven. There’s four males and three females. They are definitely supernaturals because one just shifted into a fox.”* Lincoln’s info makes the hair on my arms stand. We can only hope they aren’t with the Shadowed Thorne and, maybe, this won’t turn into a fight.

*“Friendlies do you think?”* Xavier adds. I can sense him trying to decide if he is going to shift as well or not.

*“No way to tell until they get here,”* Lincoln answers.

With that answer, I see Xavier transition into his wolf a few bushes down from me. Taking his cue, I bring some of my powers forward. Not enough to create a full bloodlust but just enough to enhance my speed and vision. With my eyes adjusting, I can see the group Lincoln was talking about approaching us. They are moving fast and will be on us within two minutes.

*“Everyone be ready,”* I instruct, hunkering down further into the bushes.

The second the first male enters our clearing, the group attacks. Magic is flying every which way as Xavier’s wolf pounces towards the fox, pinning him to the ground. Leaving my hiding spot, I zip around the clearing, coming up to the rear of the enemy group and ripping into the neck of the red headed witch that had sent an energy ball in my direction. While I start to drain the witch’s blood, I watch as Lincoln jumps down from his spot above, landing on the back of the Atlantean who was shooting water balls at Xavier trying to force him off the fox. He held a knife to the male’s throat and began questioning him while trying to stop him from throwing

Lincoln off his back. Seeing that he had the situation in hand, I turned to help Asher fight one of the other females and the additional two males. You would think three against one would be fair, but Asher was giving as good as he was taking, if not better. He had the female in thrall, withering on the ground in need. The black haired male seemed to be struggling, trying to face Asher, but everytime he would try to summon what, I believe, was shadows, they would disappear the second they started to approach Asher. I wondered if it had to do with him being King, but I don't believe so because I remember when demons were able to face Lilith and attack her without issues. However, the second male was having an easier time using his magic against the King of Hell. He had partially transitioned into a dragon and was launching fireballs towards Asher. Right as I was joining the fight, he managed to get a lucky shot in, and one fireball clipped Asher's arm at the same time I heard Lincoln shout in pain behind us.

"Go help him; I got this," Asher groans, shooting a blast of black magic at the dragon, knocking him unconscious or killing him. I couldn't be sure, nor did I really care.

Leaving him to it, I turn to see Lincoln on the ground, a sword having been stabbed into his chest and reaching, barely, through to his back and the pool of blood on the ground around him getting larger by the second. I knew with the sword still inside him, he had no chance of healing himself. Rushing to his side, I kneel down, trying to hold my breath so I don't get agitated. Xavier finished off the wolf and had already ripped out the throat of the female who stabbed Lincoln. Now, he was focusing on keeping the other male off of us so I could save the angel.

"This is going to hurt," is the only warning I gave him before yanking the blade out as he screamed out in pain. I placed one hand on the center of the wound, calling forth my spirit magic to start the healing process. To speed it along, I brought my other wrist to my lips, biting it open and placing it over Lincoln's mouth. "Drink."

He tried to shake his head and avoid my wrist but was unsuccessful, I just pushed it harder against his lips until he

couldn't avoid the blood dripping into his mouth. Between my assistance in speeding up the healing process and the energy my blood was giving him, he was able to take over quickly and let his own body heal him the rest of the way. By the time I watched his wound finish closing, Xavier and Asher had killed all but one of the enemies. The last left alive was the female Asher had enthralled.

“What are we going to do with her?” I tilt my head toward where the female is still laying on the ground.

“We'll bring her back with us to the coven. I guess our little trip has come to an end. Maybe next time we will be able to get a prize for Summit,” Asher shrugs, walking over to the female to pick her up in his arms. “Ready to go?”

“No one tells Summit about this, got it?” Lincoln growls as he moves to stand.

Each of us agree, knowing she would slaughter all our asses, before Asher opens the portal for us to return home. We may be able to keep Summit from finding out about this, but there's no way to keep this hidden from King Beckett. He is going to murder us for being here.

*We are so screwed.*



## CHAPTER 8

### SUMMIT

“Are you ever going to tell me where my mates went?” I ask Lilith for what felt like the thousandth time today. One second, I could feel all four of them waiting outside my room to see me, and the next they were all gone. I knew Lilith was up to something, but she has yet to tell me what is going on. If they left to go fight someone, and I was stuck here waiting, then I’m definitely kicking someone’s ass later.

“Would you stop worrying about them?” Lilith grumbles. “If you keep asking, I’ll never tell you anything. Now, prove to me you have your powers under control because I know there’s a little girl running around this castle with my mates chasing her wanting to see her mom, and let me tell you. I love your daughter, my mates love your daughter, but damnit woman, we want sex and that’s not possible while watching Harlow.”

The passion in her words makes me start laughing. “You’re choosing sex over watching your niece?” I can barely ask the question as I keep laughing at her.

“No, you jerk.” Lilith laughs with me. “I just want your daughter to stop crying asking for you.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” I wipe the tears from my eyes from laughing and sober up. “I miss Harlow. I miss my mates.”

“Good. If you didn’t, I’d be really concerned and bring your mom in here.” Lilith smiles at me. “Now, show me you’re in control. Because being cooped up in these rooms

with you is exhausting, even if I've gotten to see how awesome of a fighter you are. Hell, I think you are one of the best combat fighters I have seen in my life, and that's saying a lot."

Her words give me the trust in myself that I need to do what she asks. I call fully on my vampire side to enhance every aspect of myself. My vision enhances to where I can see every speck of dust floating around the room, and every carve within the wood grain. My hearing enhances to where I can hear every sound around the whole castle. My body feels like it could take on a rhino and still continue fighting. Everything about me is better, faster, and stronger.

"Good, Summit. You're in control of it all. You're in control of your emotions, too." Lilith's voice is calm, commanding as she talks to me. "Now, tell me what you hear."

"I can hear a squad fighting out in the far training field, sounds like weapons. I can hear Eden and King Beckett talking, but it sounds like whispers; they must be behind a lot of closed doors and windows or deep underground." Closing my eyes, I continue to listen to all the sounds around us. "I can hear Harlow playing out in the garden with your mates. They are chasing her and teaching her how to quickly transition back and forth from her phoenix. Everytime she changes, she giggles."

"Good, Summit. That's really good." The pride in my friend's voice makes me stand taller. "Now, open your eyes and tell me what you see out the window."

I do as she says, opening my eyes and walking towards the large open windows. "Hmm, I can see the group training in the far field, and holy shit, they are pretty kick ass. I love watching supernaturals fight, everyone is different in their tactics. In the garden, awww," I smile so brightly watching my adopted daughter. "Harlow just transitioned to her phoenix while Lucifer is flying through the sky chasing her. Abigor and Cazimir are on the ground watching, and now Abigor is telling Harlow to shift. She did. She's right in the middle of the sky now, and she's shifting back to her human form. OH MY GOD!" I shout, covering my mouth in shock.



“What?” Lilith panics rushing to my side.

“Oh thank god,” I sigh as we watch Lucifer catch Harlow right out of the sky and fly her down into Cazimir’s waiting arms. For a second, I was terrified of what was going to happen. I trust Liliths mates with her, and I know they would never let anything hurt her, but it doesn’t help the terror I feel.

“Summit, breathe for me. Talk me through your panic attack,” Lilith rubs her hand up and down my back.

“I’m not sure it’s a panic attack, but I was terrified that Harlow would get hurt with that little stunt. I know we talked about how all my emotions would be heightened with everything, and it does feel that way, but I also don’t feel overwhelmed by it all.” Before Lilith worked with me, if I had seen the same scene, I would have completely lost it, but now I remember that Harlow is safe, and her Uncles won’t let anything hurt her.

“Good. That’s a lot of progress.” Lilith’s voice is filled with pride. “Do you think you’re ready to see her?”

“Yes, please. I would love to give my little girl a hug.” I turn from the window. “Can we go out with her? I’d rather not have to make her come in when she looks like she’s having a blast.”

“You have had the fastest transition out of any vampire I know and have taken it in stride. You still need to work on your spirit powers, which we will do later, but I don’t think you need to stay in this room. You can go back to living life now,” Lilith determines aloud as she heads towards the door. “You coming?”

Without hesitation, I follow her out the door and through the castle hallways all the way outside. I can’t help the anticipation I feel at finally getting to spend time with Harlow again. Having my mates here would make this moment even more perfect, but I know they are due back tomorrow, so I can wait one more day. Until then, I plan to enjoy an afternoon with Harlow. When we reach the gardens the others were playing in, I see Harlow once again flying around in her phoenix form, but when she spots me she starts beelining

directly towards me. She's flying so fast Lucifer is having trouble keeping up with her.

"Harlow! Stop!" Abigor shouts, trying to chase after her from the ground as he zigzags through the garden hedges.

"MOMMY!" Harlow shouts as she transitions almost fully back to human, she manages to keep a partial shift, so she can still fly right into my arms. I catch her as her arms wrap around my neck, and her little wings disappear again. "I missed you!"

"Aww, I missed you too, sSweetheart." Sniffling, I bury my face into her neck and hug her tighter to me. I did miss her. The time we've spent raising her, since saving her from imprisonment in the Watcher territory during my time in Hell, has led me to love her even more. I may not have birthed her, but Harlow is my daughter, just like Calista is. Fate can be cruel in many ways, like making it so I couldn't raise the daughter I birthed, but fate also gave me the opportunity to raise this little girl in my arms, and I will do everything possible to make sure that she is loved and given the best life possible. Just because we are in a war doesn't mean that I won't let her be a child. It's my job to shield and protect her to the best of my abilities, and I have every intention of doing just that.

"Are daddies here too?" Her little head looks over my shoulder as she tries to wiggle out of my hold.

"Nope, just me. They took a guys trip for the day." I hate that we can't spend the day together as a family, but I know we still have time to do things.

"Hey, Harlow," Lilith pulls her attention to her after her mates finally let her go. "Do you want to see some of your mom's new powers?"

"YES!" my daughter squeals in my ear.

"Alright, why don't you go stand with Aunt Lilith, and I'll give you a little show." I sit Harlow on the ground and take a couple steps back. "Do you want to see how fast I can run?"

The rest of the afternoon was spent with Harlow. After Lilith decided we were perfectly fine, she and her mates left us to our own devices. I took her around the castle on a piggyback ride, running full vampire speed. Then Harlow started to show me all the cool tricks her Uncles were teaching her. By the time night began to set, both of us were exhausted from using so much of our powers. King Beckett ended up finding both of us curled up in the movie room watching *The Lion King*. I was so excited when I saw that Daddy B had a huge selection of movies, and I knew Harlow needed to be introduced to all of them immediately. It was also great to just relive my childhood watching them all with her. When my father found the two of us, he covered us in blankets and took another couch to watch the rest of the movie with us.

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“Shh, whatever you do, don’t wake them up. The two of them had a trying day. Let’s talk outside.” My father’s whispered voice slowly wakes my consciousness. I can feel Harlow curled up on my chest using me as a pillow. I really want to know who my father is talking to and what about, but I won’t risk waking Harlow just yet. I know she is exhausted.

Several footsteps move away from me and out of the room, leaving Harlow and I alone. Whatever it is, I’ll find out later, but for now, I just close my eyes and go back to sleep for a little while longer.

*“I told you once, and I’ll tell you again. You belong to me Sarah, and you will do exactly what I tell you to do when I tell you to do it,” a male with dark hair and almost black eyes demands.*

*I watch as another male punches my sister in the gut. She hangs from the ceiling by her arms tied with rope. Her face is severely bruised, and she looks extremely pale. I can see a pile of blood beneath her coming from the deep lacerations down her arms. She looks like she has been to hell and back several times over. She doesn’t look like she can take much more before she’s going to pass out.*

*“I will never belong to you.” I watch my older sister spit blood at the man. “I may have your genes, but you mean absolutely nothing to me.”*

*“Such bad taste, daughter. I really hoped after all these sessions you would learn.” I realize now that the man in the cell is Velnias, Sarah’s father and the man we need to kill. “Bring the lad in,” he shouts.*

*Turning around I see two guards dragging in a young boy. Terror and horror fill me as I hazard a guess of what is about to happen next. The two guards drop the limp boy to the ground right at Sarah’s feet. The bald male torturing my sister takes his attention off of her and focuses on the boy. I take a quick look at my sister’s face and see just a blank expression. She’s giving nothing away. Whether that’s on purpose or she just doesn’t feel anything, I’m not sure. I don’t think she would ever stand for someone to be tortured in front of her, especially not a child, but I know she has seen a lot more of this world than I have.*

*“Remember you asked for this, daughter,” Velnias taunts right as the guard back hands the young boy across the face.*

*I cry out, covering my mouth with my hands as I watch. The young boy collapses to the ground from being malnourished and the force behind the hit. The guard leans down to pick the boy up once more. His hand swipes along the small laceration that formed from his hit. Whatever he does makes the cut bleed even more. I watch as it streams down his cheek pooling onto the front of his shirt. The guard then punches the boy in the stomach and I watch as it causes him to vomit blood. There’s no way the kid doesn’t have internal bleeding from that.*

*“You can make this stop, Sarah. You can save the boy. Just give me the location,” Velnias sneers from the otherside of his cell.*

*“Castle,” Sarah whispers, her eyes never moving from the young boy.*

*The guard lifts the boy up and places a knife to his throat hard enough that I can see blood from the cut he’s made so far.*

*“What Castle? Where?” Velnias demands. “If you don’t tell me, we will kill the boy.”*

*At his threat, the guard digs the knife in deeper, making the boy cry out in his arms. I try to rush forward to pull the boy away. My hands just move through their figures. I can’t do anything but continue to watch.*

*“Don’t,” Sarah shakes her head. I can see remorse in her eyes as she looks at the kid. “Romania.” My sister hangs her head at her answer.*

*I have no idea what location he is asking for, but wherever and whatever it is, it’s clear that Sarah wasn’t going to give the information to him until he threatened the boy. I can only hope whatever he is planning, we can stop it before he gets too far into his plans.*

The dream begins to fade as I feel someone shaking me awake. Slowly, I can feel myself waking up and hear my mates shouting my name as they shake my body.

“Summit! You need to wake up! Please, Warrior Princess, come back to us!” Asher’s voice is desperate as he pleads with me to wake up.

I don’t know why he sounds so desperate. I’ve had nightmares before. This dream did feel different, it felt real, but even then, I don’t think there is a reason to panic or anything like that.

“I’m up,” I mumble, opening my eyes to peer at all four of my mates surrounding me. Lincoln has Harlow buried in his arms as he stands behind Asher, Xavier, and Zeke. Each of them look absolutely terrified, and I can hear Harlow crying. “Is there a reason you are all freaked the fuck out?” I shiver involuntarily, thinking about my dream.

“Summit, you were shaking, screaming, and your eyes were pink staring at us. It’s like you were in some kind of trance. We couldn’t wake you,” Asher answers.

“Harlow’s screams are what alerted us to something being wrong,” Xavier adds as he helps me sit up.

Zeke grabs the blanket I had been using as a pillow and wraps it around my shoulders. He doesn't move from beside me, instead rubbing his hands up and down my arms, trying to help warm me up.

"Summit, do you know what happened?" Zeke is the calmest out of everyone.

"I had a bad dream," I shrug, not really knowing how to answer him.

"I don't think it was a dream," Zeke explains. "I'm almost positive your spirit magic is manifesting into visions. I've only seen a handful of vampires in my time with spirit magic that strong."

"Visions?" my voice wavers as I turn to look at him.

"Yes, it is one of the possibilities of spirit magic. Just like Asuna has a penance for tarot in a way no vampire has ever been drawn to. I'm able to help others heal faster, similar to Lincoln." My newest mate pauses to let me wrap my head around everything he's saying.

Everyone else around me holds their breath, waiting for me to answer. I'm thankful my other mates aren't pushing the subject and letting me take the lead. Now that Zeke has started to explain his suspicions, I can see Lincoln is much calmer and getting Harlow to stop crying. I watch him rock our daughter back and forth in his arms as he makes shushing noises. The sight makes my ovaries squeeze.

"Do you know anymore about visions?" I turn back to Zeke. "Like are they past, present, or future?"

"That I don't know. We would have to look in the library and talk to your father. I don't even think there is a vampire here in the coven that has the power." Zeke shakes his head and sighs.

"Okay, can someone go get my dad? I think we need to get started immediately based on what my vision was." I watch as my mates open their mouths to ask, but I hold my hand up to stop them. "I'll tell everyone what happened together."

Asher gives me a nod before standing up to leave the room and go in search of my parents. Xavier takes his place, sitting beside me, intertwining our fingers. I can feel just how close to the surface his wolf is. We haven't gotten adequate time together recently, and both our wolves need it.

"Think maybe our wolves can go for a run tonight?" I ask him as I lay my head on his shoulder. I let Zeke take my other hand as Lincoln takes a seat in front of me with, a now sleeping, Harlow curled up in his lap.

"I think our wolves would love that," X answers, placing a small kiss on my forehead.

Together we all wait for Asher to return with as many of my parents as he can find that are here. I hope they will be able to help us figure out exactly what I saw. Whatever it was made me extremely worried about my older sister and what Velnias' plan is. The only good thing is that, according to that vision, he is still in the cell. Maybe we can use that to our advantage.

"Summit," Daddy B calls out as he rushes into the room following Asher. Behind him, I see Eden and Old Man Mags. "What happened? Asher said we needed to come quickly. He said you had a vision?" His voice is a mix of panic and skepticism.

"I believe she did, Sir," Zeke answers for me. "I know it's an extremely rare power for vampires to have with their spirit magic, but it's not unheard of. I'm also not surprised Summit would be blessed by the fates to have the power."

"Are you positive? That's not something to take lightly," Daddy B focuses on my mate. He doesn't give Zeke a chance to answer before turning his attention back to me. "Tell me exactly what happened, Summit."

Doing as he says, I recap everything I recalled in my dream. Piece by piece, I tell him, feeling myself shake at the words. The things my sister has gone through or could go through and that little boy... we need to stop this from happening or save them now.

“Wait,” I stop mid story to look between all three of my parents. “Where’s Sarah? I know you hadn’t heard from her before we came here, but we should have heard something by now. Lilith refused to tell me anything.”

“I’m sorry, Summit. We just wanted you to focus on the changes you were going through before we gave you any information,” Eden answers softly. “Sarah is missing and believed to have been kidnapped by the Shadowed Thorne. Sage and her team left earlier today to go after them.”

“WHAT THE FUCK!” I shout, before sheepishly looking at Harlow when I hear her stirring. Lowering my voice back to normal, I hiss at my parents. “You never should have kept that information from me.”

“It was in your best interest. Now tell us the rest,” Eden answers coolly, unaffected by my outburst.

I continue telling the rest of the vision, giving as many details as I could, including about the guard I watched torture both Sarah and the child, as well as a description of the child. Hopefully, we can figure out who they are. No child should ever be placed in a war like this. When I get to the part about Romania, I watch all of my mates share a hidden look between them that I’ll make sure to ask them about later.

“Is there a way to know when this vision is going to happen or if it already has?” Neither is a good answer, but at least it could possibly give us a window of time.

“Your power is too new for us to figure that out yet. It’s something that will need to be trained. I’ll get someone here to train you. Be ready for them tomorrow or the next day,” Daddy B answers, standing and leaving the room abruptly.

The rest of us are stuck just staring after him. He didn’t give me any answers and left me with more questions. I’m starting to really get over all these new powers and I’m ready to start kicking ass and taking names instead.

“Summit, why don’t you all go head to your suite and try to get a little more sleep. I promise, in the morning, I will have some sort of answer for you. Right now, try to put it out of



your mind.” Eden bends down to pat my knee and then stands to leave.

“Your mom is right. You all need some sleep, especially your men after their ordeal today. Go get that little one into a real bed, too. Her neck will hurt tomorrow if she keeps sleeping in weird positions like that.” Old Man Mags’ smile is heartwarming as he looks at Harlow before turning to follow Eden.

“Let’s go get some sleep,” Zeke calls out, moving to stand and helping to pull me up. He lifts me into his arms and carries me as we all make our way out of the movie room and towards our suite. It will be good to sleep with my mates once again. I missed them more than they will ever know.



## CHAPTER 9

SAGE

“Do you have any idea where we are starting, or are you just going to make us teleport to different locations with no rhyme or reason?” Hades complains from the back of the group.

I had all of the team meet at the entrance of Midnight Coven ten minutes ago; the last person we are waiting on is the final vampire my parents decide to send with us. Eden divulged the few locations she sent Sarah to and also made sure to show me on a map exactly where each was so I could open portals to them. We don't know for sure which location she was taken from until we check them all, so I had planned to just go down the list, following the path she was supposed to take until we got something. We know for a fact she didn't make it into Sanguine Legato Academy, so I'm not planning on checking there unless we run out of options. Plus, Eden sort of threatened to kill me if I went anywhere near the academy. She reminded me that the school is run by the council, more specifically by Atticus. It's best to stay clear of there unless absolutely necessary. She also didn't want me to run into Calista and cause any problems. What kind of problems she thinks I'd cause, I'm not sure, but either way I'll take her guidance for now.

“Actually, Hades, yes I do have a starting point,” I turn to glare at him. “Not like I have to answer to you, but we will be going in the same order Sarah did.”

“I can make this easier for you...” my brother-in-law taunts.

“Oh can you,” I smirk. “Do tell.” I figure playing his games will help keep him in line. Hopefully. If not, then I’ll just threaten to call my Grandmother. Athena can come collect him and lock him in the Underworld. I think it’s a brilliant idea to keep him out of trouble if he starts any.

“Do you want me to tell you where I last sensed her?” He’s acting like he has more information than me. Too bad Eden already told me what she suspects, but she advised me to check every location to see if anyone had more information that could aid us in her rescue.

“Sure. Let’s see if your information is any different than mine,” I shrug. “Either way we are still checking each location for any sort of clues. Maybe we can find out if someone had been following her.”

I watch his eyes get wide with my statement. It’s clear he didn’t think about that. He was so focused on her last location that the idea of other factors, like someone following her, had not occurred to him. That look is exactly why he wasn’t allowed to go off on his own, and he was stuck with us. He would be too reckless on his own.

“That’s,” he stutters, “that’s a good idea.”

“Thought so,” I smile. “Now, does anyone know where our last member is? I’d like to get a start sooner rather than later.” I look around our group towards the front door of the castle, hoping someone would be walking our way. My parents didn’t give me any sort of clue as to who would be coming to join us, so I don’t know who exactly to look for, but it doesn’t stop me from trying.

“She should be here in a moment. Something happened that slowed her down,” Felix, the vampire S.P.E.E.R. team leader, explains. I was surprised that my father convinced him to come with us instead of staying with the other members of his team here that are training. I guess my father believes that he has something valuable to teach me.

Honestly, I'm glad my father decided to send another female with us. I think I'll feel more comfortable since this team has way too many men on it for my liking. It'll be nice to have someone to talk to about girl things. *Hopefully*. It would be better if Summit was with me, but I know she is going through a lot right now and has her own worries to deal with. Whoever this female is, though, I hope she will be relaxed. I have a feeling Felix is going to be a tough teacher.

"Ah, there she is now," Felix proclaims, looking behind me to the entrance. I watch him break into a large smile before quickly recovering and putting a straight face back on.

Turning around to see who this female is I gasp. *Holy fuck is she beautiful.*

*"I heard that Kaida," Phoenix chuckles.*

Ignoring him, I continue to stare at the female. She must be one of the prettiest people I have ever seen in my life. Her black hair hangs in beautiful waves framing her oval-shaped face. Her eyes are a bright red. Her makeup is perfectly done with a subtle black eyeliner, making an almost cat eye, her high cheekbones shadowed with red blush, and her lips painted in a dull red. Her body looks like that of a model as she walks up wearing black leather pants and a black and red lace top that comes up to her neck with the upper part of her chest cut out. On the collar of the neck is a large pendant that looks similar to a family crest. Her confidence as she walks towards us makes me want to bow down to her, even if that sounds weird, but I'm just in awe.

"I am so sorry I'm late," she explains, approaching us. I watch her eyes flash in surprise, looking at something behind us before she schools her face once more. "I wasn't expecting my errand to talk that long."

"About time you showed up. We can't keep wasting time that we don't have," Hades growls.

Without thinking about it, I reach out and back hand his arm without taking my eyes off the newcomer. "It's no worries. I'm Sage." I hold out my hand in greeting.

“Ahh, so you’re one of the future queens. It’s nice to meet you,” the woman replies and shakes my hand. “I’m Samara. Now, how about we get out of here, and we can continue introductions at our first location?”

“I think that sounds perfect,” I reply, wanting to get going. I think it will help if we can get a move on before Hades loses his shit.

Samara moves to stand beside me so I can open a portal. According to the list Eden gave me, Sarah first went deep into the Amazon Rainforest to visit one of the large shifter clans that had taken up residence there. That is our first stop. Eden advised it would be half a day’s hike from the Aztec temple before we found them. She tried to send a message to expect us but warned me to be on my guard as they may not have gotten it.

Waving my hand in an arch, I open the portal. I can tell it’s working when I see a large stone temple appear in front of us as the portal completely forms. I’m filled with pride in my abilities knowing I managed to pull this off without my parents’ assistance. My magic has definitely come a long way.

“We’re going to visit historical sights?” Vox asks skeptically.

“No.” I chuckle, heading through the portal. One by one, the members of my team follow through. Felix is the last to exit, and I close the portal behind him. “Eden said it’s about half a day’s hike to the shifter village from here. She also said to avoid using magic if possible; they are extremely wary of new people.”

“Let’s get a move on then,” Hades says, trying to push in front of me.

“Uh, Hades?” I try to hold in a laugh. When he turns to look at me with annoyance, I just smile and point in the opposite direction he’s trying to go. “It’s that way.”

Instead of waiting for Hades to try to take over again, I take the lead for our group and start towards the shifter village. The brush and trees are overgrown making it extremely

difficult to find paths through. I have a feeling it's going to be a long trek.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

"I'm so sorry, Miss," the leader of the shifter village grasps my hand.

When we had reached the edge of the village, a snake shifter, who I didn't even know existed, launched themselves out of the brush and bit my exposed ankle. I was so surprised that all I could do was jump backwards and fall on my butt, injuring my wrist in the process. Rhett and Vox pulled the snake off while Phoenix had partially shifted his wings out.

If it wasn't for the leader of the village rushing our way screaming, Phoenix would have killed the snake shifter. When the leader had reached us, she convinced my mates to release the snake and allow him to change back to human form. It was just a young child who didn't know any better.

"It really is okay," I insist. "He's young and is still learning. It's good that his first instinct is to protect his village. No harm done, I promise."

"Can you tell us anything about my mate? About Sarah Zeita?" Hades interrupts.

I roll my eyes but wait for the town leader to answer. I was hoping to go about this in a more polite way, but if it will get Hades to calm down some I'll let him take the lead this time around.

"She was here about a month ago. Eden had sent her to try to gather some fighters. We agreed to ask for volunteers, and if anyone wished to fight, we would contact Eden to send someone to collect them. She stayed with us for about four days before moving onto the next location." I can hear the concern in her voice as she looks at each of us. "Did something happen to the Goddess?"

"She was taken. We have our suspicions on the culprits, but we are trying to retrace her steps to make sure we don't miss anything. Did you notice anyone following her too

closely or just someone who didn't belong?" I don't want to push her, but anything she can give us is important.

"I'm sorry, mMy dDear. No one reported anyone out of place to me. As for if someone was following her, I don't believe so. She spent most of her time playing with the children here when she wasn't attending meetings with me." The leader pauses, her expression thoughtful.

"Thank you, Ma'am." I shake her hand in appreciation. "I do hope your fighters are still interested in joining our cause."

"I have already contacted Eden to send someone to gather the warriors in two days' time. I do hope you are able to find Goddess Sarah; she has such a kind heart." The leader finally lets go of my hand and takes a step back. "You all can follow me. I'll put you up in a couple extra huts for the night. Please join us for dinner. I know the villagers would appreciate seeing you all."

"We would love to join you." I don't let anyone say otherwise. Yes, the main focus of this mission is to find my sister, but I also know to look at the bigger picture. My goddess powers are telling me that we need to get to know the people along this journey, the people my sister and I will be ruling over in the near future.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

Last night was spent getting to know the villagers. Hades kept to himself in one of the huts we were given, which was probably the best thing he could do. I know the few people who saw him were scared and avoided him, especially with how angry he is. I don't blame them. The rest of our group socialized, and I even danced with some of the children around the fire in celebration. The town leader explained that a week of celebration had been going on to praise the warriors who would be going off to fight. It wasn't a time of fear for them, but it was a time of rejoicing. Long into the morning hours, the party carried on. By one in the morning, my mates were carrying memy back to our hut so I could rest. Vox and Kelen stayed with me while Phoenix and Rhett continued to socialize.

Looking at them this morning, you can tell they are going to be worse for wear for most of the day. Both Rhett and Phoenix look hungover, with Cody, the bear shifter on our team, not far behind them. Hopefully, the next location we're going to will have something to help the three of them.

"Are you sure I can't convince you to stay longer?" Our host asks as she walks us to the edge of the village.

"I wish we could, but we really need to find Sarah. I promise you, I will return when I can." I don't make promises lightly. I will come back to this village as soon as the war is over.

"I wish you luck. May the gods protect you all and Goddess Sarah."

"Thank you." I give her a quick hug before turning around. "Alright, let's move on to the next location."

Opening our next portal turns out to be a little more difficult for me. Eden had a general idea of the next location we're headed to, but she couldn't give me more than that. Our next stop is a small forgotten island in the pacific ocean near Hawaii. She said there was a group of sirens and Atlanteans living together in peace there. I can only hope I got the right island. I don't think any of us want to end up in the middle of the ocean.

"I'm going to go first, wait a few seconds, and if I don't come back through, then follow," I try to instill a confidence in my voice that I'm not feeling. Without waiting for my team to answer, I take the first step through, holding my breath.

The first thing I notice when I walk through is that I've come through on land. Hard part done, sort of. I managed to portal to an island, but I can only hope it's the right island. Looking around, I see the beautiful blue of the pacific ocean on my right. The waves create a sense of calm in me with every crash against the coast. I really want to go stand and put my feet in the water, but I know we don't have the time. Turning toward my left, I see the shore lined with palm trees creating a perfect place of shade. Looking behind them, I'm



almost positive I see what looks to be huts of some kind set up to almost blend in to their surroundings.

“Ah, Sage,” Kelen grumbles as he crashes into me. If he hadn’t grabbed my shoulder to right me, I would have fallen face first into the sand.

“Sorry,” I blush. “I caught sight of the water and sort of forgot you all would be coming through behind me.” The two of us quickly move out of the way so the rest of the team can come through without issue. “I’m almost positive we’re in the right place. What do you think, Vox?” I ask when everyone makes it through the portal.

“I can sense my people here,” he agrees with a nod and approaches the tree line.

Hades tries to walk past him, heading towards the huts I saw, but Vox puts his hand out to stop him. “Don’t.”

I can see Hades getting worked up but hope he holds off and lets Vox take the lead. I’m really starting to think that he should have been left behind like Athena suggested. I’ll give him this last opportunity, but as team lead it’s my decision to make on what we will do about him. Our group continues to stand at the edge of the trees, each of us holding our breath and watching to see what’s going to happen.

“I can feel you. There is no reason to hide; we aren’t here to hurt you. We come with questions in regard to Goddess Sarah,” Vox’s voice rings out clearly through the trees.

Looking more closely, I see a male’s head pop out from behind a tree quickly before ducking behind it once more. That was the only movement I caught for the next five minutes. I thought about pushing forward to see if it was Vox they were afraid of, but he would know these people’s customs better than I would, and I don’t want to offend anyone.

“Sage, if you could come up here please,” Vox asks in a whisper. “Hades, I need you to go to the back of the group.”

Moving slowly, I approach his side as Hades follows Vox’s request himself. When I get close enough, he finally speaks again in such a low whisper that I’m almost positive no one

else can hear. “Do you see the little girl hiding in the brush?” I nod afraid to spook her. “I need you to get on her level and convince her to come here to us. All of these people are freaking her out.”

I kneel down in the sand, taking a seat on the heels of my feet, and smile in the direction the little girl is hiding. Behind me, I can hear Vox moving everyone away from where I am and further down the beach. It takes a few minutes, but I see the little girl pop her head out a little further, smiling when I see her.

“I promise I’m here as a friend. I won’t hurt you.” My voice comes out sweetly, trying to coax the little girl towards me. “I have snacks I can give you.”

The mention of food helps to convince the little girl to reappear. Slowly, she makes her way towards me. I catch sight of a couple other kids doing the same behind the brave little girl. “I’m just going to reach into my bag to get the snacks for you,” I tell them so as not to spook them. The little red haired girl gives me a small nod and stops her steps as she waits for me to dig in the bag. The second she sees the food in my hand, she rushes forward and comes to a stop in front of me. “Here,” I prompt, holding a bag of dried fruit out to her.

The other kids join us now, and I give them the rest of the bags I have saved. Each of them start stuffing their faces like they haven’t eaten in days. It breaks my heart seeing kids so hungry like this and not a single adult around. It’s weird that there’s no adults around, and it leaves me wondering how long the adults have been gone. If Sarah had convinced them to fight, they would have left some adults here like Elders or something. Someone has to be watching the kids.

“Where are you parents?” I ask the little girl, hoping she understands English.

“All the adults went fishing two days ago. They left three Elders behind who are back in the village. They don’t really leave the main hall though.” A young boy, who looks no older than ten, answers.

“Can you take me to them?” I ask the boy. At the same time, the first young girl grabs my hand and starts to pull me along behind her.

“Guys,” I yell over to the group. “We’re going to talk to the Elders.” Turning my attention back to the kids, I let them know that my friends are going to come with me to help them as well. As the males in the group all approach, I notice the kids become more skittish and take off towards the village, leaving only the little girl holding my hand and the young boy who spoke to me walking behind us.

The walk through the trees and brush to the village is short. I notice the little kids all run inside a large hut in the center of the village, which I’m assuming is where the Elders are. I know my assumption is correct when I see an older gentleman with long white hair step out of the door and yell.

“Calian! Aiyana! Come here now!” the male shouts from the top of the steps in front of us. Both kids leave my side to run towards the male. His yelling makes my maternal instincts stand at attention, but I know he is most likely just trying to protect the children from outsiders, and I can’t fault him for that. “What are you doing here?” the male demands.

“We came to ask about my sister. We don’t mean any harm.” I put my hands up as I step closer.

“That’s close enough. I know exactly who you are, Sage Zeita. We already told your sister we will not be sending fighters. There was no need for your mother to send a group of you unless you are here to force us.” His tone is cold, his expression angry as he looks down on our group.

I don’t blame him for assuming that’s why we are here if they had already said no. I really wish my mother would have told me that ahead of time, though. This meeting could have started differently had I known.

“Sir,” I start.

“Dakota,” he cuts me off.

“Apologies. Dakota, we aren’t here to ask you to send fighters. The decision you all came to is one we understand

and respect. I would never try to force you to do something against your will. That is not the way my sister and I want to rule.” Taking a deep breath, I let my words settle for the Elder before continuing. “I’m here about my eldest sister, Goddess Sarah. She went missing, and we are trying to track her last steps to determine who took her. I’m not accusing any of you of anything either; I just came to ask if you all know anything or witnessed anyone following her.”

“We saw nothing, now leave,” Dakota answers, turning his back towards us as he tries to usher the kids inside.

“Elder Dakota, that’s not true.” The little girl I gave food to stops him. “There was some weird man following her.”

“Hush, Child,” Dakota pushes her in front of him towards the door.

“Elder Dakota, please,” I beg. “She’s my sister. I just want to protect her.”

“Fine,” he sighs. “Aiyana go ahead.”

“There was this weird man with red hair and a red beard. He was hiding, following her around while she was here. My daddy confronted him and chased him off, but when the Goddess left, I’m positive I saw him follow her,” Aiyana explains after pushing around the Elder.

“Thank you, Aiyana. That helps so much.” I smile sweetly at her before looking back to the Elder. “Thank you, Elder Dakota. We will leave you all in peace. If you ever need anything, please don’t hesitate to ask.”

I don’t give him a chance to reply before turning to the rest of the group. “Why don’t we head to the next location and leave these people in peace?” I wave my hand making our next portal and step through, knowing the others would follow. I didn’t want to disturb the people of the island any longer when they didn’t want us there to start with. I can respect that.



## CHAPTER 10

### BECKETT

“We need to go talk to him. He will have our answers,” I argue with my brothers for what feels like the thousandth time. For months now we have been going back and forth on whether it would be worth it to speak with Velnias’ second in command or not. I keep insisting he would be able to give us something to go off of, but my brothers don’t believe that’s true. Abraxus and his brothers spent months trying to get information out of him before he was transferred to Shadow Keep Penitentiary. Everyone knows that place houses the worst of the worst in the supernatural world. Once you get placed in there, you never will see the light of day again.

All of us contemplated sending Velnias there the first time around, but even we knew it would cause more issues if he was imprisoned there. It would just give him an army, which is exactly what we didn’t want to do, so we chose the option of prison seals. Too bad they didn’t work as long as we had hoped for, but we knew that these events, or some form of them, would come one day during our time. At least the twins were old enough to take everything in stride instead of being teenagers. They are handfuls as adults... I can’t even imagine trying to train fifteen or sixteen-year-old girls.

“Beckett, for the last damn time it’s not worth it,” Marcus groans, slamming his fist on the table. “It’s too risky to start with when everyone is supposed to believe him to be dead. If anyone got wind of the truth, we would be fucked.”

“Only a couple of us need to go, and we can take Summit,” I start to counter argue. “She needs to know about the prison eventually, and it’s better her than Sage. It will be her choice if she chooses to share it with her. Maybe he will talk to her. We all know Summit has a way of getting people to do things. Hell, both of our daughters do.”

“Beckett is right. Take Summit to the prison. We will get our answers.” Eden walks into the room making the final decision.

To this day, my mate is still the most beautiful woman to walk this Earth. Her light shines on all of us daily, reminding us the world is good, even with all the chaos in it. Each of my brothers and I would be lost if we didn’t have her in our lives. Spending the decades that we did separated was hard on all of us. Everytime she leaves my sight is hard because of that time apart. She makes every return worth it, though, when she walks into the room. I know my brothers all feel the same as well. One day we will all get to take a vacation far away from the hecticness of our everyday lives and leave the twins and their mates in charge, and that is a day none of us can wait for.

“Eden, my love, please see reason,” Hunter begs.

“The Seers already foresaw it. Take Summit. Leave today.” Eden turns back around to leave the room. “Oh, Beckett and Ecko, you both should be the ones to take her. I’ll be back.”

With those words, we all watch her turn and leave the room once more. Always on the go, that one. I’m thankful she sided with me, rather the Seers did. We all know they are never to be questioned. The second they say something is to happen, or has to happen, we know better than to try and fight it. That lesson was learned a long time ago during the fight in Hell. Never again will we do the opposite of what they say. We lost too many that day. The only reason we were able to save her is because of Cazimir, and I will forever be grateful he was able to get Lilith to all of us in time to perform the ceremony.

“Of course they had to get involved in this. Beckett, go get Summit, and tell her what to expect. The sooner we get this done, the better. You know I hate going to that place unless we

absolutely have to,” Ecko says, standing as he pushes his chair back and shaking his head.

I can see how shaken my brother is at the thought of going to the prison. Of all the people chosen to go to the prison, he is the first person who shouldn't go. The magic there to contain everyone is more than someone like him can handle, and once we step foot inside, he will lose all access to any magic he possesses; he will feel empty. Why the Seers believe he needs go better be worth it because this is almost guaranteed torture for my brother.

“I'll go inform her now. Can someone find Lilith to come get Harlow. Once again, the little girl is going to need to stay with them for a short time. Unless one of you would like to spend the day with your granddaughter?” I'm hoping they volunteer. It's not that Lilith and her mates aren't great with Harlow, but I know they could use a break and some training with the others. Us grandparents can step up more now and then.

“I'll take the munchkin,” Magnus offers. “I want to see how far she has come with her powers. I know Lucifer said they had been working with her a lot.”

“Oh, you're in for a treat, Brother.” I smile, waving as I exit the room. “I'll let Summit know.”

Now to convince my hot-headed daughter that she will need to control her temper for this visit. That will be the true test.

The walk towards her suite doesn't take long at all. Standing outside her door, I could hear Summit and Harlow running around and laughing. It makes me wish I didn't have to interrupt them for this. Reaching out, I knock on the door and wait for her to answer.

“Hi, Dad,” Summit smiles brightly as she opens the door. “I was wondering how long you were going to take before knocking.”

“Ahh, good to see you are working on your powers. Yes, I heard the two of you having fun, and I didn't want to interrupt

but this is important. May I come in?"

"Of course." Summit steps aside and allows me to enter.

"Harlow!" I call out excitedly as the little girl rushes to give me a hug. "How is our little phoenix doing today?"

"Grandpa!!" She hugs me tightly. "Are you here to play with us?"

"No, Sweetheart," I frown. "But Grandpa Magnus is going to come get you shortly. I need to borrow your mom for the day if that's alright with you."

"Are you bringing her home tonight? She promised we'd watch a movie." Harlow wiggles down out of my arms.

"Yes. I promise we will be home tonight, and we can have a family movie night." I pat the top of her head. "Now, why don't you go get dressed for the day." I watch as she takes off towards her room. When the door shuts, I turn back to my daughter to explain quickly. "I'm so sorry to interrupt your day. I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't important. We need to go visit somewhere to speak with someone that everyone believes to be dead. I'll explain more once Harlow is gone. Just know that the Seers foresaw this visit and said you needed to be there. I will warn you that you will need to control your temper though."

"What does that even mean?" Summit hisses trying to keep her voice down.

Before I can answer, Harlow's bedroom door opens once more at the same time we hear a knock on the door to the suite. Harlow runs towards the door, but Summit beats her to it, opening it to reveal Magnus.

"There's my favorite firebird!" My brother picks up our granddaughter and swings her through the air. "Ready to spend the day with me?"

"Can we fly?" her little voice is all excited.

"Of course we can! Now how about we head out to go get some food and then go have a fun-filled day!" My brother



waves to Summit and me before carrying Harlow out of the room.

“She completely forgot about me as soon as Magnus got here,” I chuckle.

“You know she loves you all equally.” Summit answers. “Now, how about you give me more answers about where we are going and who we are going to see.”

Sighing, I move to take a seat on the nearby chair before I begin. “Shadow Keep Penitentiary is the prison that holds the most wicked, lethal, and deadly supernaturals in the world. Once you’re placed there, you will never see the light of day again.”

“I was wondering if we had a place like that or if the dungeon Abraxus had was the only one,” Summit answers thoughtfully. “So, who are we going there to speak with?”

“Velnias’ second in command. I guess the old second in command, really. His name is Gael, and he is a hybrid, a mix of witch and fae. His magic could almost rival ours. We don’t know what exactly he did to gain so much power, but he sure had no issues using it. He slaughtered thousands in Velnias’ name. Whole villages of humans were wiped out on top of supernaturals.” Pausing, I let my words sink in, so she can understand the gravity of who we will be going to speak with. “When we captured him, we led everyone to believe he died during interrogation with Abraxus. It was too dangerous for anyone to know he was still alive, especially Velnais.”

“Why isn’t he dead?” Summit questions, finally taking a seat on the couch.

“Because we don’t know how to kill him.” I reveal the truth.

“What about the Holy Sword? Or the Sword of Hell?” I forget how little Summit knows about our history sometimes.

“The Holy Sword is coveted by the angels and can only be used by certain individuals in battle outside of the mating ceremony, which you performed with it. Anyone who tries to use it can die if the sword doesn’t accept them. I’m pretty sure

the Angels explained some of that to you already.” She nods in agreement. “As for the Sword of Hell, that hasn’t been seen in a long time. I think Lilith, and maybe Asher, know where it was hidden, but neither will reveal the location. It’s just as dangerous, if not more dangerous than, the Holy Sword. We can’t risk something happening and Gael getting his hands on it when we try to kill him.”

“So either way, it’s a fucked up situation that we are all left trying to figure out how to wade through. Got it.” Summit stands and heads toward her bedroom. “Give me ten minutes, and I’ll be ready to go. Let’s get this over with.”

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

“You could have warned me we were coming to the north pole. I would have dressed a little warmer,” Summit grumbles from beside me, burying herself further into her jacket.

“I figured you’d have gone to change when I told you to bring a winter coat,” I shrug. “We’re almost at the entrance. Once we get inside, it will be a lot warmer.”

In a single file line, we all continue down the icy mountain path. Ecko took the back of our group with me in the lead. I’m almost positive he is already feeling the drain on his magic, and we’re not even at the entrance yet. The rest of the walk is made in silence. I’m sure Summit has a lot of questions, but I’m glad she isn’t asking them here. While this may be one of the most hidden places in our world, it’s always good to be wary.

When we get close enough, the snow starts to settle from the magic placed to hide the prison. From the outside, it looks like nothing more than a large snowy mountain like the rest of the area, when in reality there is a prison buried within it. When the place was first built, we had a large shield created that would hide the prison, allowing it to blend in with the surroundings. You can’t look in, but the guards on the other side can look out. The shield also has an electric current to it that, unless turned off, will zap you and knock you out for hours. Every precaution we could have thought of was taken with the prison.

“Holy,” Summit whispers from behind me, cutting herself off as we step through the shield.

“Welcome, Kings and Queen,” the male guard calls out as we step through. “We have the prisoner ready for you all. If you step inside, my colleague will escort you all to him.”

We each follow his instructions and go through the security screening process to make sure none of us are hiding any weapons on us. I made sure to check Summit over before we left, and it’s good I did because our rebellious daughter had a knife hidden in her boot. I didn’t even know that was a thing until today.

The process to get through security only took ten minutes. A female guard was waiting for us on the other side to take us to speak with Gael. She also provided us a general update of how the prison has been doing and the items that they were in need of. Ecko and I would see to it they got the items as soon as possible when we got back. This visit was killing two birds with one stone, it would seem, instead of us waiting on the monthly report in two weeks.

“He’s in here for you all. As a reminder, do not touch the cell bars; they will hurt you.” She holds the door open for the three of us and closes it tightly behind once we are inside.

“Ah, you brought new meat for me, I see,” Gael calls out in a depraved tone.

“No, I’m here to get answers and nothing else. I suggest you watch how you speak about and to me,” Summit answers.

We had all agreed before leaving that Summit would take the lead on questioning. We knew Gael would be intrigued by who she is and why she would be with us. We’re hoping that alone will get him to talk since he won’t be able to feel how much power she truly has. Gael has a superiority complex that we’re hoping Summit will play into. As long as she can keep him occupied, he should give something up. Ecko and I settle in, leaning against the rock wall behind us. For the most part, our plan is to just close our eyes and relax so Gael knows this isn’t about us, and we are only here to escort Summit.

For the next hour and half Summit tried to get Gael to talk. He rambled on about everything and nothing, making sure not to give information away. When Summit changes her tactic, I stand a little straighter. No longer is she just making conversation. Now she is so close to the very bars she was told not to touch that I'm positive she can feel the current coming from them. She is trying to use her body to change his mind. I don't approve of this tactic, and looking over to Ecko, I see how much he hates it, too, but he gives me a small head shake telling me to let her do what she thinks will work.

“Ah yes, the good ‘ol days. Velnias really was one of the greatest villain masterminds, but he also had small thinking in the beginning. I was the reason he turned toward wanting to conquer the human world and not just the supernatural world.” Gael laughs, stepping closer to the cells. “You know, my dear, that you are a very pretty female. I'd keep you close to me if I was reigning. You would make the perfect little whore.”

“Ah, see now there's one problem with that thinking.” Summit's voice turns sinfully sweet. Gael has definitely fucked up now. It takes everything in me to keep a straight face. “I'd never be a whore for you. You are puny, weak, and easily squashed under the heel of my shoes only to be forgotten about in the long history of the supernaturals. For all intents and purposes, you're dead anyway.”

We watch as Summit turns her back to the cage at the same time Gael reaches through to attack her. The second his hand connects with her arm, she spins back around, grabs it, and yanks it to the side, breaking his arm at the elbow.

“YOU WILL NEVER TOUCH SOMEONE EVER AGAIN,” the power behind her voice lethal and commanding. Even though magic isn't supposed to work here, I can feel her power binding her words.

Gael reaches through the bars with his other hand, and when he connects with Summit again, he's thrown away, his back slamming into the rock wall behind him as he falls to the ground in a ball. “WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO ME!?”

“Aren’t you even curious as to who she is?” I step forward, joining the game.

“She’s a whore, that’s who she is!” he spits.

“That is one of my daughters. More specifically, one of the twins. She is one of the most powerful supernatural’s alive, and you just pissed her off.” I smirk from behind Summit. I can feel the rage still coming off of her, but I’m glad she is controlling herself.

“No one is more powerful than me!” Gael roars from his fetal position.

“Don’t let the other prisoners hear you say that. I’m sure they’d think otherwise,” Summit retorts. “Are we done here? Clearly that pathetic piece of shit has nothing to offer,” she asks, turning back around to Ecko and me.

“We’re done,” Ecko answers for us. “He gave us everything we needed.”

Summit walks towards us, and right as Ecko goes to open the door, Gael calls out in desperation.

“WAIT!” he groans, trying to push himself to sit up. “I know how to defeat Velnias. That bastard should pay for leaving me here.”

“Go ahead,” Summit prompts, turning to face him.

“His pride will be his downfall. He believes that he is stronger than everyone else. If you just try to appear weak and appease his pride, he will fall for you,” Gael offers after he gets himself up into a sitting position. “Now remove this curse!”

“We already knew that, so, no,” Summit taunts, turning her back to him again.

“Fine! I’ll tell you where they are hiding!” he tries once more.

“We know that too,” she answers, her back still to him. This time, her hand reaches towards the door handle.

“He was working with the Council and probably still is,” Gael’s voice drops deeper.

“Are you ever going to tell us something we don’t know, or are you just going to drag this out?” Summit asks, annoyed.

Eden said that Summit would be the one to get us some kind of answer. At this point, though, I’m not entirely sure what answer we are getting because she’s right; he isn’t giving us anything we don’t already know. It’s really starting to feel like this is a waste of a trip.

“How about this,” Gael smirks. “Did you know about his plan to break in here and release all the prisoners?”

That makes me stand a little straighter. We never got word of that. It would be a suicide mission... unless he has someone on the inside. Fuck!

“He could try,” Summit answers like it’s a challenge. She is actually doing a lot better at keeping her shock controlled than I am.

“Now, remove this curse,” he demands, crawling towards the bars dividing our areas.

“Nah, I think it can stay. Good luck,” Summit says as she turns, opens the door, and walks out. Ecko and I follow behind her, listening to the shouts of Gael as the door slams shut behind us. “I guess we got our answer.”

“Don’t say anymore,” Ecko hushes her. Together, we quickly make our way out of the prison. Once we are outside and walking far enough away from the entrance, he starts to open a portal. “We’ll talk when we get home.”



## CHAPTER 11

### SAGE

I knew we had to get off the island as soon as possible before Elder Dakota flipped out. I also know when Summit and I take the throne, we will be working on reaching out to all these smaller clans to bring them into the fold, or at least help them understand we aren't the enemy. The fact that Elder Dakota was going to withhold information about my sister absolutely infuriates me, but there must have been something that happened to his people that made him dislike our family so much, and at least now we have a description of the male that was following her, which is more than what we started with. Hopefully, this next location will have even more information to give us.

“Sage, where are we going now? We should have stayed there and questioned them more,” Hades mutters from behind me.

“It's a short walk to the next location Eden gave me. Hopefully, they will have more information and will let us stay the night before moving on. Now that we have a description to confirm my suspicions, it should be easier to track both the stalker's and Sarah's movements,” I answer, trying to contain my annoyance with him. I know it's not his fault, but he clearly missed the fact that the people of the island didn't trust us and we weren't welcome there.

“Where is this next village?” Cody questions from the back of the pack.

Since I didn't give them any warning, I'm not surprised they are wanting to know where we are. "We're in Massachusetts. More specifically, we are in the woods outside of Salem." It took everything in me to remain calm when Eden gave me this location, and again, just now telling everyone. It has always been a dream of Summit's and mine to come visit and explore here. I'm a little peeved we won't have time to go explore everything, but maybe if we are spending the night here, my mates will take me out for a tiny bit.

"I can hear your heart rate," Samora whispers from beside me. Her voice makes me jump because I didn't even know she was beside me. "You're excited, aren't you?"

"Just a tiny bit," I blush looking towards her, then quickly away. "I've always wanted to come here."

"If we spend the night, you and I can go out and explore. I know all the best and spookiest places to hit up," she bumps her shoulder against me and then takes a step back.

I appreciate her offer, and while I would prefer to go with my mates, I think getting to know the vampire may also be a good idea. I've spent so much time in a small circle of people, I really don't know anyone else. I let myself continue to mull over the offer as I lead our group through the woods, dodging branches, fallen trees, and snow piles along the hidden path. Before I know it, we are approaching the entrance to the village. I watch as the villagers scurry between their cabins, paying no attention to us newcomers.

"Excuse me," I stop a female walking past me. "Could you point us in the direction of your village leader?"

"Oh, um," she pauses looking around like she's trying to either help us or get far away from us. "I'm sorry, I can't help you." She puts her head down and rushes away.

*Well, okay then.*

I continue walking further into the village with everyone behind me until I come across a gentleman who stops to talk with us.



“Can I help you all?” the older gray-haired gentleman asks.

“Yes, I am looking to speak with your leader?” I answer nicely, hoping this gentleman will help us.

“You’re in luck. I’m Henry, the mayor of Lunaris. How can I assist you? We don’t get many newcomers out here.” He holds his hand out in greeting to me.

“Nice to meet you, Henry,” I shake his hand, “I’m Sage Zeita. My sister, Goddess Sarah, was here visiting you recently. We are trying to track her last whereabouts as she is now missing.”

“Oh, Sarah; yes she was here. Such a kind soul that one has. Why don’t we get you all settled into my cabin for the night, and we can talk in the morning. You all look absolutely exhausted, and no offense, but you could use some showers,” the older man chuckles and turns to lead us towards a large two-story log cabin nearby.

“Sir,” Hades starts, pushing me to the side.

“Ah, Hades. I should have known you would be too impatient to wait for answers.” Henry sighs but continues to walk. “The answers I have for you will not help you tonight. You will get all the answers you seek in the morning, but for now, the best thing you can do is shower, rest, and eat real food. Pushing me will not get you anywhere.”

I’m almost positive I hear the leader grumble something about how Sarah manages to put up with Hades, but I can’t be sure. Either way, I can’t help but laugh at how he put him in his place. This whole trip, Hades has tried to bully his way into answers. One would think, by now, he would realize that won’t get him his way. Hades continues to bitch as we all follow the mayor to his cabin. He assigns each of us a room with our respective partners and tells us to freshen up, dinner will be on the table in an hour.

My mates and I head into one of the two rooms he assigned us. Henry apologized that he wasn’t able to give us one room for the five of us, but he just didn’t have one big

enough. However, he did give us two rooms side by side. We all agreed it was fine and told him not to worry; we would figure out sleeping arrangements that worked for our group. With that, Henry left us to ourselves.

“Who do you want to sleep with tonight, Beautiful?” Vox asks, shutting the door behind us.

“Umm,” I hesitate, looking between them all. “Vox and Kelen, will you both sleep in here tonight?” my voice comes out unsure. I really don’t like having to choose, I much prefer when they choose for me.

“Anything you want, Babe,” Kelen answers, coming to kiss the top of my head. “Go jump in the shower, and us men will use the one next door so you can take your time.”

I watch as all but Vox leaves the room. He moves towards my bathroom which makes me hesitate. We still haven’t had a lot of time like I have with my other mates. I want to change that, but we have just been so busy, it never seems like the right time.

Following the sound of running water as he turns the shower water on, I hear him ask from the bathroom, “Are you coming?”

Curious, I head towards the bathroom to see exactly what he is up to. When I step inside, he has his hand in the water checking the water temperature. “What are you doing?” I ask shyly from the doorway.

“Just getting your shower started, and maybe hoping you’ll let me join you... if you’re comfortable with that,” he adds when I don’t answer right away.

“Uh,” I look between him and the shower. “I don’t see an issue with it I guess. It would speed up the process of showers a tad bit.” I shrug, moving further inside and shutting the door behind me. I move to stand in front of the sink, facing the mirror with my back to Vox. I can see his reflection behind me, but I focus on removing the couple pieces of jewelry I’m wearing, placing them on the counter in front of me.

I see Vox come up behind me, placing his hands on my hips, his lips move dangerously close to my ear, and I can feel his breath on my cheek. “Nervous?” He chuckles lightly, placing a kiss against my cheek as he pulls me back into him. “We will go at your pace.”

I can feel how hard he is as I lean back into him. His closeness is turning me on and makes me want him badly. I’m sure he can feel through the bond exactly what he is doing to me because I’m not trying to block him.

“Kiss me,” I answer, leaning my head back against his shoulder. With my permission, Vox spins me around quickly, lifting me up and sitting me on the counter. His lips crash against mine as he devours me. His hands grasp the hem of my shirt, lifting it up, breaking our kiss long enough to remove it completely.

Throwing the shirt off to the side, he wraps one hand around the back of my neck, the other on my hip, holding me tightly to him as he deepens the kiss making out with me. My hands move to the bottom of his own shirt, sliding up his chest as my fingers trail along his abs. Vox moves his right hand from my hip to reach back and pull the shirt off. He takes a step back from me, his eyes hooded with lust as he slowly undoes his belt and jeans. I watch as they drop to the floor at his feet, leaving him standing in front of me completely nude.

“No boxers?” I ask surprised, my voice filled with desire. I can’t take my eyes off him.

“I find them constricting,” Vox smiles a thousand watt smile at me. He knows exactly what he’s doing.

“By all means, never wear them.” I smile. Sliding off the counter, I undo my own jeans and slide them, along with my panties, to the floor. I keep my eyes on his as I do and watch his pupils dilate as he watches me.

“I can’t believe you’re mine,” Vox whispers as he moves to step in front of me. Both his hands grasp my face as he places a soft kiss against my lips. “Get your butt in the shower, or I’m going to take you here and now. I can’t wait much longer to have you.” His voice is rough with ardor.

Following his instructions, I pull out of his hands, walk around him, and step into the shower. Once I'm fully in, I test the water and realize he got it set to the perfect temperature for me. It feels amazing.

Vox joins me inside, pulling me back against his chest as he starts to kiss my neck. His right hand starts at the opposite side of my neck that he's kissing and slides down between the swell of my breasts, down my stomach, right between my legs. His fingers play with my clit before moving to my soaked cunt. "So wet for me already," he whispers in my ear.

His other hand moves to my breast as he teases and pinches my nipple. His fingers move inside my pussy expertly, causing me to cry out with my orgasm in seconds. Neither of us bother to muffle my cry as I come apart in his arms.

When I start to come down, Vox spins me around, picks me up, and pushes me back against the wall. The cold tile feels good with the heat between us. "This may hurt," is the only warning Vox gives me before he pushes his large dick inside my soaked core. He waits a second to let me adjust and then pounds in and out of me at a quick speed. It doesn't take much before he has me screaming my release once more, burying my face against his shoulder as I bite down. At the same time I come, I feel his hot seed spurt inside me as his dick twitches with his release, his roar echoes off the shower walls around us.

Both of our breathing is heavy as we slowly come back down. I feel Vox slip out from between my folds as he lowers me back to my feet. "Let's get you washed up quick, and we can go join the others for dinner." Vox reaches for the shampoo and starts to lather my hair up.

"Or we could just make this a fast shower and have more fun in bed." I wink, turning around to grab the body wash.

"I like the way you think, mate." Vox kisses me quickly.

Together we finished our shower in five minutes and spent the rest of the night curled up in bed together having some fun. I'm almost positive Kelen joined us in the middle of the night because I remember being wrapped in two sets of arms.

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“Sage, Kaida, it’s time for you to get up.” I feel a light kiss to my forehead. “Henry is ready to give us the answers we are seeking.”

Rolling over, I reach my arms up to stretch and then snuggle deeper into the body beside me.

“Sage, you have to stop doing that, or we are going to have a repeat of last night,” Vox mumbles into my neck as his arm wraps around me tighter.

“Sorry,” I blush, even though he can’t see it.

“Come on you two,” Phoenix pushes, sitting on the edge of the bed. “We left you both to sleep as long as we could.”

“Okay,” I groan, managing to extract myself from Vox’s hold. I climb over Phoenix’s lap and get out of bed, heading to the corner where my bag is still sitting for a change of clothes. “Damnit, I missed a trip to explore Salem with Samora.”

“We all knew how tired you were and decided sleep was more important. She promised to bring you and Summit out when things settle down,” my mate explains, trying to help my disappointment. “Now both of you get dressed and meet us downstairs in five minutes.”

I watch as my mate leaves the room. Behind me, I hear Vox getting out of bed as well while I pull today’s clothes out. The silence in the room would be deafening to most, but it isn’t for us. Quickly, I throw on my warm and fuzzy black leggings, a long, deep red sweatshirt that hangs to my mid-thigh, and a pair of black calf-high boots. It’s cozy and convenient for whatever hiking we will be doing today.

“Ready?” I turn to ask Vox.

“Just waiting on you, Beautiful.” He holds his hand out for me, and together we leave the room. When we reach the bottom of the stairs, I hear everyone talking in the other room and follow the sounds of their voices.

“Ah. Finally, you have both arrived. Here,” Henry holds out two breakfast burritos for us. “Eat up. You’ll need the

energy. It's a short walk outside of town where your sister was last seen. I had reports from two kids about a scuffle, but when I arrived, the area was clear, and your sister was gone."

"Did you check for any residual magic?" Rhett asks.

"I did," Henry answers. "But my magic is nothing compared to the levels you all have. Most of us just have basic witch magic. You will be able to see more than we could. All I was able to tell was that a large amount of magic was used in the area."

"Why didn't you..." Hades starts to shout, but Henry puts his hand up immediately to cut him off. He obviously has no intention of putting up with Hades' temperamental bullshit, and I'm glad because someone needs to be comfortable shutting him down.

"I didn't report it because there was no way I could tell the difference in magic between creating a portal and someone fighting. The only thing I could pick up was two different magical signatures."

"Can you take us to where you saw this? With Sage's help, I can cast a spell to replay the events in the area," Rhett explains as he puts on the black, puffy coat he brought with him. Honestly, it makes him look like a burnt marshmallow, but at least he's a cute burnt marshmallow.

"Sure. I will take you there now." Henry heads towards where I'm standing. "Sage, Vox. There are coats on the bench behind you for you both." Ironically, they were the same kind of puffy coat Rhett was now wearing, except one was a caramel brown, which is the one Vox took, and one was stark white, obviously the one I chose to make my red top pop.

*Aaaand now I look like a raw marshmallow, and Vox looks like a perfectly toasted marshmallow... We're a fucking family of marshmallows... Fantastic.*

Once Henry sees both of us ready, he leads our group out the door. The walk to the clearing he was talking about only takes ten minutes. Snow had fallen overnight, but someone had already come out to clear a pathway for us. It could have

been done with magic, but I sort of doubt it. The clearing was back behind the village away from prying eyes, and it was far from perfect like it would have been had magic been involved. With the clearing being so far out of sight of the village, I can see, now, why kids were the ones who had reported the scuffle.

“Here we are. Would you mind if I stayed to watch how you perform the spell?” our new friend questions as he steps off to the side.

“How about you help me instead? You will learn better from practice and experience than simply watching.” Rhett offers. Henry is quick to agree. I watch on as Rhett explains to him the steps they are taking as he creates a circle of salt around the center of the clearing. Then he has Henry place seven candles around the clearing. I knew that five of them were for the elements, but the last two I was unsure of their purposes.

“I can do my spell with just Sage, Henry, and myself, however, it would have a lot more power behind it if everyone helped.” Rhett proposes as he turns to look at where the rest of us are standing. Knowing it would be best for all involved, everyone is quick to offer assistance, and he places each person behind their respective candle. Vox goes to dark blue for water, Phoenix gets red for fire, Kelen has light blue for air, Cody moves to the green for earth, Samora takes the pink for spirit, Rhett has me go to the white for the gods, and he places Henry behind the purple for witches.

“I want each of you to pick up your candle and place it in your hands. I will go around and light each of them from here in the center.” Each of us do as we’re told and pick up our candles as instructed and watch as Rhett waves his hand, his rainbow magic encircling his hand causing each of our candles to light at the same time. Focusing closer on my mate, I see him close his eyes and enter a trance-like state as he mutters words I can’t understand. I’m almost positive it’s Latin, though. When he finishes, ghost-like figures appear in front of us and start to play out a scene. I see the male we were previously told about, and another female I don’t recognize having a harsh conversation. I can’t hear what’s being said, but

neither party looks happy. Sarah turns her back towards both parties and opens a portal when the female hits her in the back of the head with a rock and knocks her out. It looks like the male cast some sort of spell on her before they create their own portal to step through, and take my sister with them.

“Amaya!” Hades roars. “This is the proof we needed. The Council is dead.”

“Hades, STOP!” I shout when I see him try to teleport away. Immediately, he stops in his tracks and gives me a death glare. “Rhett, can I move?” I ask hurriedly, afraid Hades is going to take off.

With a quick wave of his hand, I feel the magic surrounding us from the spell disappear. I run across the clearing to my brother-in-law and stare him down. “You will not go after them. Not yet. We don’t even know where they went! If you don’t knock your shit off, I will send you back to Athena and Eden, and they can lock your ass up in the Underworld! Stop acting like an irrational child who has no goddamn plan as to how we should navigate this situation, and THINK before you get us all, and Sarah, killed!”

“Actually, I do,” Rhett answers from behind me.

I watch as Hades’ eyes light up with his information, but I don’t turn to look at my mate, not trusting Hades to not take off on his own. He is way too unpredictable right now, and I’m almost positive I should be calling Athena to come get him before we go after my sister, but the same thing that stopped me before is what’s stopping me now. I would go after my mates if I were in his situation, and I know they would do the same for me.

“Tell me!” Hades yells and pushes me to the side and approaches my mate.

“No.” Rhett stares him down. “You are too volatile to have that information. If Sage wants you to come with us, then okay, but if not, I’m not letting you have the information to follow us or go off on your own.”



“He can come, but do not give him the location,” I answer as I join the group. “Henry.” I turn to look at him. “Thank you for the hospitality and assistance. We will forever remember it and are in your debt.”

“It’s not a problem at all dear.” Henry shakes my hand. “No debt remains. I’m glad I could help you all find some answers. Go save your sister. And between us, I’ve never been a big fan of this council.”

We all watch as Henry leaves us alone in the clearing, returning to his village and people. When he is out of sight, I move towards my mate to find out where we are headed.

*“They took her to Headquarters but also said they would be moving her to the Darkness Realm,”* Rhett explains through the bond to me.

I had a sneaking suspicion that’s where they took her. I really didn’t want to go back there, but it looks like we no longer have another choice. At least, this time, we will be going as a whole team. I only wish we had the powers of invisibility to help us sneak in and past the Shadowed Thorne. Somehow, we will need to make a plan to get in and out without starting a war we aren’t ready for. This is about to be hell.



## CHAPTER 12

### VELNIAS

“Did we finally break you, Daughter?” I smile looking at the pathetic goddess crumpled in a pile at the foot of my cell. It took weeks, but it looks like my daughter finally lost her fight. That is exactly what I needed to happen so I can rebuild her in the image I need. She will be forever indebted to me and will be under my complete control instead of her mother’s. The Goddess of Knowledge and Chaos finally being on my side is the start of everything.

All I hear in response is a soft mumble from her crumpled form. She has been beaten everyday for three weeks, starved of food, and only healed enough so that she won’t die. I’m shocked she lasted this long. I expected her to break completely when we tortured the child in front of her, but it only broke her a little as she still fought my offer and the doctor everyday.

“Bring the doctor in!” I shout, watching as Sarah’s form twitches at the mention of my lead research doctor. He has been working on a device that will take her power from her and allow it to be transferred to me. So far, everytime we have used it on her, it hasn’t been successful, but the doctor said he was close. He thinks it’s something that Sarah has been doing to her powers to make it so we can’t harness it. With her as broken as she is, I think today will be the day that it works.

Gunner continues to stand over Sarah with the added threat to drain more of her blood if she found the will power to try to fight back again. Amaya left under my orders to go get the

doctor and should be back momentarily. Taking the moment alone with my daughter, I kneel down so only she can hear me. Even through a cell, I can taunt her and have a little fun.

“We could have done this the easy way, Daughter.” I run my hand along the back of her head, ignoring the sting of pain from the bars as I do. “You should have given in a long time ago to this future. One day, when I can trust you again to be by my side, you will be revered and loved by all.”

Only a soft incomprehensible mumble leaves her lips in response. I stand up quickly, hearing our guests approaching once more and watching the entrance for them to join us and get to work quickly. I have plans as soon as this is done. First, I plan to deal with the issue that is my daughter. This broken child in front of me just will not do. Second, I need to send a team to go break the final prison seal and get me the hell out of this cell.

“You called, Sir?” Dr. Burns makes a low bow when he enters.

“Yes. I do believe Sarah is ready to cooperate. Once you are finished with your collection, Amaya,” I turn to look at her next, “you will take Sarah out to the village, string her up in the middle of town for everyone to see and make an example of what happens when you defy me. Gunner, here, will assist you and continue to make sure she is too weak to do anything about it.”

Dr. Burns moves forward to do as instructed. With assistance from Gunner, he is able to get Sarah to turn onto her back so he can place the device in the center of her chest. She lets out a small groan when the doctor powers up the device. Two other guards step forward to help hold her down as she starts to scream out and convulse. Thirty minutes the process goes on as we all just continue to watch, holding our breath to see if it is going to work. At the end, the device makes a repeated dinging sound as it completes the process, and Sarah’s body falls limp to the floor once more. Her eyes are closed, and her breathing is shallow as I look down upon her.

“Heal her enough to be awake then take her outside to be a warning to others.” I instruct Amaya after Dr. Burns takes the device off her chest.

“Do you have what you need, Doctor?” I question as Gunner and Amaya pick up my daughter’s unconscious form from the ground.

“I believe I do, Sir. I will let you know in a couple hours if we were successful,” he answers before scurrying away.

“You,” I point towards a semi-familiar guard. Go get General Atticus for me. We need to have a chat,” I command. The guard looks scared for his life as he runs away from the room. Amaya finally has Sarah awake and is using the last two guards to drag her from the room.

“Amaya, make sure everyone lines up to see her,” my voice cold as I watch my lover take my daughter out of the room. She gives me a nod in agreement as they leave.

Finally. Finally, everything is coming together nicely. I will be able to harness all the power I need to restore my own and kill the twins that were destined to kill me. Fate has no control over me. I won’t let them win. Not ever.

Not even ten minutes am I alone before my old friend comes rushing into the area with three guards following, one of which is the same one I sent to find him. Their entrance broke my concentration on our next set of plans. I need him and his team to go release the last prison seal in Romania. Then we will be contacting our undercover guards at Shadow Keep Penitentiary. It’s time to get my second in command back.

“Velnias, you called?” General Atticus questions when he rounds the corner.

“Yes. Guards you can leave,” I command, not trusting them to keep this a secret. We both watch as they leave and wait until we can’t hear them anymore. “Why do you insist on having them follow you around? Every time, I have to send them away anyway, and it’s obnoxious.” Sighing, I look at my old friend.

“They have their uses. If you learned to trust some, then you wouldn’t have to send them away,” he smirks, thinking he has me.

“If I trusted everyone, we wouldn’t have this much power would we? Most of you all survived the wrath of my ex and her mates because they were only focused on me.” I see his face drop when he realizes how right I am.

“Okay, that’s fair. What did you need me for?” He gets us back on topic.

“First, it’s time you and your team break the final prison seal. Dr. Burns will have the blood you need for it. Second, alert our undercover agents we will be coming to the prison soon.” I can’t wait to get out of this damn cell. It has been way too long since I have seen the outside world. There’s so many people I haven’t gotten to kill, to pay back for the decades I’ve spent locked away. Revenge is coming—to each and every one of them.

“Yes, Sir.” He smiles, just as excited as I am. “About time we get you out of this prison cell so our people can see you once again.”

“Alright, get out of here. Make sure you go see Sarah in the village center and report back. I hope she is the example I need her to be for everyone.”

“You’re using your own daughter as an example?” General Atticus does a double take as he leaves. “Are you sure that’s wise?”

“It’s more for her to learn her place. I don’t want her getting any sort of ideas. We need her power on our side.” I shrug. No one ever said I was a good man or a good father. By blood, she is mine, but the only use Sarah has to me is her unique power; nothing more.

“Alright, I’ll stop by and take a look before leaving. Give me three days, and you will finally be free from this torture chamber. Don’t do anything stupid in the meantime. I’ll get a message to the guards at Shadow Keep.” My general gives a

small wave before he rounds the corner, leaving me alone once more.

Time to start working on my final plans. The world has no idea what is about to hit them.

### SAGE

“WE NEED TO GO NOW!” Hades pushes past me and takes off at a run down the path once we exit the portal. The rest of us start to chase after him, barely keeping up with the pace he chose. Finally, Phoenix gains enough traction on him and launches himself to knock him down to the ground.

We all come to a stop right behind them, watching as the two of them wrestle on the ground. I know we should try to break them up, but someone needs to get Hades under control because I’m done tolerating his shit, so I’m just holding my breath to see how it plays out.

“HADES,” Phoenix whisper-scolds, getting the God of the Underworld into a headlock. “You need to stop and think before Sarah gets hurt.”

“She is already hurt!” Hades groans, finally settling down within Phoenix’s hold. “I can feel her. She’s broken, battered, bruised. She has no hope left. We can’t just sit here. I need to get to her, help her. Please, Sage. She’s your sister.”

The despair in his voice and face nearly drops me to my knees. I knew whatever Sarah was going to be put through would be bad, but I have faith that she is strong enough to survive it. If everything Hades says is true about what he feels from her... I just hope Sarah won’t be too broken when we find her. It’s the only thing I can hold on to.

Moving to kneel in front of Hades, I reach for his hand. “We are going to save her. I promise you, but we can’t just rush into this. Lead us to where you feel her energy coming from, and we will do the rest, but no one can know that we are here. They will all pay for their crimes soon but not today. Today, we rescue my sister, your mate.” I let him hear the

conviction in my voice so he knows I'm not playing around. We won't be leaving without Sarah.

"Let me up," Hades says as he struggles against my mate's hold. I give Phoenix a small nod, and he releases him. Both men climb back to their feet, waiting for me to give them instructions.

"Show us where she is," I tell my brother-in-law. This is the reason I wanted him to stay on this mission with us. I knew I would be able to sense my sister, and while I can, too, he can do it on a deeper level as her mate, so we can find her even faster with him here and know some of what to expect when we find her.

Hades takes off at a quick pace down the path. This time, he goes at a pace we can keep up, and I'm grateful because I think I've tripped about eight times so far. None of us are calling on our powers to light the path so we have more cover. Thankfully, the path the portal put us on is one that isn't pre-lit like the one during my last visit. About ten minutes later, we reach the top of a large hill before Hades brings us to a stop behind a large boulder.

"I can sense her just over the hill," Hades whispers when we all gather behind him. "She feels like she is hanging from something."

"Hanging!? Like a pirate?" I squeak, quickly covering my mouth with my hand.

"No, no, not like that," Hades shakes his head. "It's like she's strung up on display. It's hard to explain."

I move around the group to the edge of the boulder and peek my head out from around the side to try to see what he is talking about. Below us is a large village with probably about a hundred people gathered in the center. I can't make out exactly what they are looking at, but I have a feeling it's what Hades was trying to describe. There is no way we are going to be able to get her out of there with that many people around. Not without a fight at least, and that's what we are trying to avoid.

I move back behind the boulder and look at the others. “Anyone have an idea to help us blend in? There are too many people for us to just charge down there and grab her. There are at least a hundred people looking at her. A lot have cloaks on, but they are all taking turns walking up to look at her and then leaving.”

“Here,” Hades waves his hand, and cloaks drop around each of our shoulders. “These should help each of us blend in.”

“You could have done that the whole time?” I look at him in shock. “I didn’t know that gods could do this.” I pick up the edge of the cloak wrapped around my shoulders.

“You pick up a thing or two when you get this old,” he winks. “Now, let’s wait for the crowd to die down; then we can go join in. Hopefully it won’t take too long.”

“When things settle down, you’re teaching me that trick,” I point at him to help make my point.

“Or you could just ask your niece,” he shrugs, closing his eyes as he leans back against the boulder. “Now everyone hush. I’m going to try to talk to my mate, so she knows to hold on a bit longer.”

“I’ll keep a lookout,” Felix adds, moving to the place I just was to look below.

For the next two hours, we all remain hidden behind the boulder, waiting for the crowd to get their fill of looking at my sister on display. The whole thing makes me sick the longer I think about it. No one deserves to be placed on display this way. It’s just another form of torture, which she has already seen plenty of. My heart breaks knowing how much my older sister has been through. Physically, her body has probably been pushed to the edge over and over again, not to mention the psychological trauma she’s been through. It’s going to take her awhile to heal from everything.

“Looks like most people are clearing out. Now’s our chance,” Felix whispers, turning to look at all of us. “Hoods up, and let’s move quickly.”



Each of us pull our hoods up and follow him down the hill into the village. We keep our heads down, making sure to avoid eye contact with anyone. The streets are still pretty busy as we make our way through them, dodging people left and right. Most are just milling about outside of store fronts talking with others. It's a weird feeling to see a whole village of Shadowed Thorne. I'm not sure what I was really expecting with this being where they made their home base, but I didn't expect a whole village.

Felix slows our approach down when we reach the center. Looking up, I see my sister displayed similarly to the position they did for witches in Salem when they were burning them at the stake. The sight infuriates me. I clench my fists at my side to prevent myself from doing anything that would cause trouble for us all. It's not easy, and I can feel the unrest of the others as well. We are all trying to contain our rage at the sight before us.

"Everyone gather round!" a female shouts. "Bear witness to what happens when you go against Velnias. Make sure to get your fill for the next ten minutes!"

"Amaya," Hades growls low with hatred. I'm not even sure everyone in the group heard him. Glad to know that the evil woman putting our sister on display is a council member. I definitely can't wait until we can make them all pay for their crimes. It may not be our issue, but the next council members will definitely do the right thing if Summit and I have any say.

All of us follow the last of the Shadowed Thorne, approaching where Sarah is up on display. Beside Amaya, there are two male guards watching everyone. Keeping my eyes down, I try to remember every detail I can about the two guards as we walk past. It's too risky to free her right now.

But when they move her in ten minutes, that will be our opening.

Right when I walk past Sarah, our eyes catch, her expression is grim, but I can see the light in her eyes. She's still in there, ready to fight. That alone gives me hope for what we are about to do next.

All of us move to hide between buildings nearby and keep an eye on the stage. At the ten minute mark, Amaya begins to loosen Sarah's bindings, and both guards grab her. The four of them walk directly to where we are standing. Felix couldn't have picked a better spot. All of us gather to the left side of the pathway so as not to appear like we are going to cause a scene. Amaya is leading the group, and we wait for all of them to walk past us before we attack. With no magic, I let the guys take the lead. Samora zips forward to yank Sarah from the guards grasp, moving her back to my side. While Hades and Phoenix attack one guard, Felix and Cody get the second, and Vox, Kelen, and Rhett get Amaya. After a small scrap, all three enemies lay in an unconscious heap.

It's risky, but I decide to open a portal back to Midnight Coven in the alley knowing we need a quick exit. Each of us follow through after Hades picks up Sarah, and we leave the Shadowed Thorne and Darkness Realm behind to be fought another day.



## CHAPTER 13

### SARAH

The past several weeks of torture were hell. I knew it would be bad when Amaya kidnapped me, but I also knew I would survive it. I just never imagined they would torture a little boy in front of me to make me submit. Knowing how wicked my father is, I shouldn't have been surprised they stooped to that level, but I was. He knew he couldn't break me by torturing me, so he chose an innocent instead. Of course, he couldn't stop at one. Three. He chose three by the end of it all. The last one that did me in completely, she looked so much like Calista, I couldn't let an inch of her get hurt.

In an attempt to push myself up out of bed, I fall backwards against the pillow behind me screaming out in pain. Three times I try with the same result before Hades comes rushing into the hospital room once more.

*Damnit. I just got rid of him.*

“Sarah! What the hell are you trying to do! You need to stay in bed!” he scolds, trying to push me back onto the bed while fixing the blankets over my legs. “You are in no condition to be up and around.”

“I have to. I can't be trapped in this bed, Hades.” I groan trying to push him away limply. “He has kids. Kids! That he is torturing. I can't leave them there!”

“Shh, it's okay. We will save them, I promise you.” Hades wipes the tears I didn't even know I was crying away from my cheeks. “We need to pick our battles. He used the kids because

he knew it would hurt you. Take this time to recoup and gain your strength back. The time for revenge is coming, and I promise to be by your side making your father pay.”

“You promise he will pay?” I say as I stare him down.

“I promise,” Hades leans forward to kiss my forehead. “Please rest. You need to sleep. I can see the circles under your eyes.”

Closing my eyes, I settle back in the hospital bed and pray for sleep to find me once again. All everyone has said is that I need to rest. All the doctors keep telling me it will help, but none of them understand. When I close my eyes, I relive everything I went through. It didn’t scare me, but it infuriates me, and I do want to make Velnias pay. He may be my biological father, but he is not a dad to me. He is a piece of shit that deserves a gruesome death after everything he has done.

I’m still waiting for Eden to come visit me. I tried to ask Hades where she was, but he said she was busy and would be here soon. That was twenty-four hours ago when I was first brought home. I haven’t told a soul yet about the device that Velnias’ doctor created to steal my powers from me. I know they managed to steal a small amount of my magic before I was taken to be strung up at the stake, on display for everyone to see. I’m hoping it wasn’t enough for them to steal another’s magic completely, but until I talk to Eden, and probably Athea, I don’t have a way to know for sure. Which is why I haven’t told anyone else.

I know for a fact that most of my family has been outside of the hospital wing wanting to talk to me. Each of them has taken a turn to come in and visit. Hades makes sure they only stay for a few minutes at a time, claiming I need to rest. It’s infuriating, but I also appreciate each of their support. Summit and Sage have spent the longest coming in and out of my room besides my mate. I’m almost positive he’s tried to stop them, but based on the arguing I’ve heard outside the door, he’s been unsuccessful each time. I would have thought by now he’d learn not to argue with them. Everyone knows Summit loves a good fight, but they tend to forget that, while focusing on

Summit's anger and trying to douse that, they should really be focused on Sage. She will use every logical reason to stop you in your tracks until you realize she was right all along.

Over and over, my mind continues to spin between my family and getting revenge. The fact that everyone has kept me confined to this bed just makes everything worse. I've never been one for thinking and plotting. None of us Zeita girls are built that way, except maybe Sage. The rest of us prefer action with a little planning mixed in.

"Sarah? Where is she?" I hear my mother's panicked voice from the otherside of the door.

*Thank god.* I sigh.

"Hades if you don't stop blocking my path to my daughter and move your ass out of that doorway this instant, I will personally drag your ass back to the Underworld, strap you to a chair in solitary confinement with nothing to do but watch Spongebob Squarepants on loop!!" My mother's tone is deadly as she threatens my mate with arguably the most obnoxious cartoon character ever created. I can't help but laugh when I hear her. You would think that Hades would know by now to not stand in her way. I love him wanting to protect me, but he doesn't need to protect me from her.

"Let her in!" I shout, or try to anyway. My throat is still sore, so my shout comes out at normal volume.

The door opens immediately after with my mother all but shoving Hades through it with her.

"I told you to let her rest, Eden. Plus, you can't lock me in the Underworld; you don't have the power." Hades sighs, trying to stop my mother from approaching my bedside.

"She doesn't, but we all know who does, and I have no issues picking her up from school," my mother glares at him. I see his eyes widen in shock, and he moves out of her path. "Glad you made the right choice, son." She pats his bicep then moves to my side. "How are you, Sweetie?"

"Hi, Mom," I smile tightly. "Hades, would you mind leaving us?"

I catch the flash of pain in his expression at my request, but he must sense something because he doesn't even open his mouth to argue. Instead, I get a small nod of agreement, and he turns to leave the room. I know full well I shouldn't keep secrets from him of all people, but sometimes a girl just needs her mom.

"Are you ready to tell me what's going on now?" Eden looks at me pointedly. "I know you. Being stuck in this bed, in this room, has probably driven you insane, but you aren't anywhere near ready to be released. Your injuries are severe, Sarah."

"I know they are, Mom, but you don't understand exactly what they did to me, what they were planning to do if Sage didn't rescue me." I shake my head, pleading with her to understand.

"Then tell me." She sits down on the edge of my bed. "Tell me everything you remember."

And for the next two hours, I do exactly that. I started from when Amaya and her minion confronted me all the way up until Sage and her team rescued me. I made sure to spend a lot of time detailing the paths they took me through between the different rooms. I explained in great detail everything I remember of the plans Velnias revealed and especially the device Doctor Burns created to steal my power. When I got to that part, Eden turned pale. She knows exactly what's at risk if Velnias gains my power to steal another supernatural's power. He would misuse it, possibly kill the other person, and become ten times more powerful. I told her how I did everything in my power to make sure that he got only a little bit of power, but I was also weak and in no position to completely fight back like I had been.

"Sarah, I know that you're strong. I will never argue that point with you, but you need to recoup. I understand your fear of what Doctor Burns was capable of pulling off, and it's something we will look further into." Eden pats my hand and sighs. "I'm just thankful we got you back in one piece. I will see to it that Velnias pays for hurting you."

“I want to make him pay myself,” I growl, trying to push myself to sit up further. “He will die by my hand.”

“Sarah,” Eden shakes her head. “You know you can’t kill him. Calista is the only one who can.”

“Fuck!” I throw my head back against the pillow. “Fine. But she better make it hurt. All of us better make it hurt. He should have been killed during the last fucking war.”

“You couldn’t and you know that.” Eden sighs before standing up. “Rest up. We will be back later to check on you.”

I watch my mom head towards the door to exit. I am so sick of being tied up in this bed, helpless to do anything for my family. There is too much at stake, and we don’t have time for me to be an invalid. It’s not fair.

“Oh, and stop pushing Hades away. You’re not okay, Sarah. Talk to him because you need someone to talk to.” With those last words my mom opens the door and leaves the room.

She’s right. I know she is.

Once she leaves, no one enters my room again, not even my own mate. At first, I thought I wanted to be alone, that it would be better to deal with my trauma by myself. For decades it’s just been me, technically me and my parents, but really they left me to my own devices knowing I was fully capable of taking care of myself. Something has changed now. I’ve realized just how many more people I have that care about me. My family has grown tenfold and still grows everyday. Now all I want is Hades. He’s my partner and the one person who can help me through the toughest times. Damn my mother for being right. I do need to stop pushing him away.

*Fuck.*

While I wait for someone, anyone, to return to visit, because I know someone will be, I continue to think about everything Eden said. Her plan may be to look into everything, but I know exactly who to talk to that will give us the answers we are seeking. However, getting in to see them is going to be the trickiest thing I may ever have to do. Eden will kill me if she finds out I went. No one visits them unless they request

you or you go through the Council of the Gods. Either way, me going without permission may very well mean my death. It will be worth it, though, to get answers.

The Seers know everything.





## CHAPTER 14

### Summit

“It’s been a week since we got Sarah back. We need to do more, to fight back more,” I bitch for the thousandth time to my mates as I pace the floor with pent up energy. Everyday, we have done nothing more than sit around waiting for something, anything, to happen. At the back of my mind, I know that’s not entirely true. We have been training our asses off from sunup to sun down, but that’s just not the same as a proper battle or a productive fight. There is only so much training I can handle. It’s to the point almost no one wants to spar with me anymore. Usually, it’s just Lilith and her mates going against me because everyone else gets their asses kicked.

“Will you just sit down and relax? Please, Warrior Princess,” Asher begs from the couch. “We’ve been over this a million times. There is a team waiting at the last seal for the Shadowed Thorne to arrive. When they do, we will be notified, and we will get our asses there ASAP.”

“Asher is right, Baby,” Xavier adds, coming up to stand behind me and massages my shoulders. “Training is the best thing we can all be doing, especially you and Sage. Both of you are the most powerful supernaturals any of us have seen in a long time, but with that power comes the responsibility of knowing how to use it. That is why we train.”

“Okay, Mr. Miagi,” I roll my eyes but relax back into his chest. My mates know the second they touch me, I turn to

putty in their hands. Xavier knows exactly what he is doing to get me to relax.

“Now, sit your ass down on this couch and watch a movie with us,” Lincoln demands, patting the spot between him and Asher. “Harlow is already in bed for the night so we can finally watch an adult movie and just relax. Didn’t you say something about some new marvel movie you wanted to see?”

“You remembered?” I smile, holding back the tears.

“We always remember everything about you,” Xavier answers, pushing me towards the couch.

“I love you. All of you,” I look at each of them with all the love I can muster, even Zeke. The little trip they took with each other over a week ago really brought them all together. I heard my father reaming them all out when they got back, though I have no idea what about, and no one will tell me, but whatever happened bonded them.

I pull out of Xavier’s hold and move to sit in Zeke’s lap. The expression on Asher’s and Lincoln’s faces is priceless when I get situated. Both of them expected me to take the spot between them. Neither thought I would choose Zeke’s lap. While I’m busy looking at both of them like I’m completely innocent, I feel Zeke starting to shake with laughter beneath me.

“You both look like injured puppies,” he chuckles. He doesn’t give me a warning before he picks me up and carries me over to the others. I half expect him to just drop me on the couch and deposit me between Lincoln and Asher, but instead he sits down himself, taking the spot between them with me on his lap.

Lincoln picks up my feet and starts to massage them as Asher takes my hair out of the bun and brushes the knots out with his fingers. Xavier settles in front of the couch, so I reach my hand down to settle into his hair and begin massaging his scalp. Once we are all comfortable, Zeke steals the gaming console controller from Lincoln and presses play. Now that I’m surrounded by my mates, my body starts to relax, so I can

enjoy the movie. Lincoln was right; I have been looking forward to finally seeing the new Thor movie.

For the next hour, we watch the movie in silence, each of my mates touching me in some way that keeps me relaxed even with all the laughter. Together we feel like a family, and it's something I didn't realize I was craving so badly—this feeling of happiness and relaxation. My mates were right that we need something like this.

Right when we get to the scene that I saw in the previews where Thor is tied up by Zeus and naked, all of our phones are blowing up with calls and texts. Zeke pauses the movie while I try to finagle my way out of all my mates' holds so I can get to my phone in my back pocket. Pulling it out, I see several texts saying 911. The last seal has been found. Long forgotten is the movie as we all jump up and rush around to gather what we need in order to leave. I run to the bedroom to grab my boots and a warm coat from the closet, also pulling out jackets for my mates. I hear the front door to our suite burst open and Lilith telling all of us to get our asses moving.

"Who's staying with Harlow?" I ask, coming back into the main area. I throw coats at each of my mates as they are putting their shoes on.

"I'm staying," Cazimir answers. "Lilith and the others are going with you. You'll need everyone if we are to stop them from opening the seal."

"Thank you," I say as I run to hug him quickly before heading towards the door. "Let's go kick some Shadowed Thorne ass."

"I guess you're getting your wish for some action after all," Lincoln relents, linking his hand with mine. "Don't do anything reckless."

I don't reply knowing very well that I can't make that promise to him. I will do whatever it takes to stop the Shadowed Thorne. They won't be unlocking the final seal. It will have to be over my dead body.

It only takes five minutes to get from our suite to the front doors where everyone is meeting. Daddy B is shouting orders to everyone as they arrive with Eden and Papa M having portals open for teams to walk through when they get their orders.

“Summit and Sage, take both your teams through Eden’s portal. You will be defending the portal. No one is to get past you. Both of you need to keep your wits about you. We have reports that the Shadowed Thorne are sending some of their toughest fighters this time. If a tall bald man shows up and answers by the name Gunner. Run. Do not interfere. Call Lilith and Abigor.” Our fathers tone leaves no room for argument. Whoever this Gunner person is must be pretty bad if they don’t want us to face them without Lilith and Abigor.

“Lilith,” I hear Daddy B call to her as my and my sister’s teams line up for the portal. “You are attached to the twins teams. Same with your mates. Protect them.”

The line for the portal moves quickly, and in no time, we are all stepping through, ready for battle. “Where are we?” I ask my mates when we step through. We were told the last seal was in Romania, but they didn’t specify where in Romania.

“I’m not answering that,” Asher chuckles.

“That’s not important right now, Babygirl,” Xavier adds.

“Is that really what you want to focus on?” Lincoln questions.

“Are you all really that afraid to tell her?” Zeke asks the others.

“Will someone please tell me already!” I bitch, annoyed that my mates are keeping secrets.

“We’re in Transylvania,” Lilith comes up to my side and answers.

“Wait, THE Transylvania! Like are we by Dracula’s castle?” I squeal, jumping up and down in excitement.

“Now, you’ve done it,” Asher groans. I’m positive he rolled his eyes when we said it, too.

“We are never going to hear the end of this,” Lincoln adds as he drags one of his palms down his face in exasperation. “Good job, Lilith.”

“She has a right to know. I don’t understand why you all are being little shits about keeping it from her.” Lilith shrugs as she looks at me and winks. Oh she is so purposely trying to cause trouble.

“Because of that,” I see Xavier point at me from the corner of my eye. I can’t help the fact that I’m super excited about where we are. It has been a lifelong dream to visit Dracula’s Castle. I know everything there is to know about the myth of Dracula and about Vlad the Impaler. This history nut inside me is going off the walls with excitement.

“I demand y’all take me there when we are done with this fight. No if’s and’s or but’s,” I turn around to glare at each of my mates.

“How about you ask King Beckett to take you,” Lucifer suggests from the back of our group. A chorus of groans rings out from everyone around us at his words, which only interests me more. Why does it sound like that’s a bad idea?

“Okay,” I hesitate with my answer.

“Can we just focus on the battle and not the trouble Summit is going to get into after?” Zeke interjects.

“No fun,” I grumble, crossing my arms and pouting. *Damn mates taking all my fun away.*

“You all have so much to learn,” my twin chuckles from behind us. “You just dangled the greatest news ever in front of her, and now you’re taking it away. You all must have a death wish.”

“We don’t have a death wish, but your sister does,” Lincoln remarks. His words make me want to turn around and punch him, but he’s too far behind me.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” I ask with as much attitude as I can muster.

“He means,” Lilith starts but gets cut off by Zeke.

“He didn’t mean it. Let’s focus please. This is about to be one hell of a fight.” Zeke’s plea effectively ends the conversation for now. After the fight, I’ll be pushing my mates for information, but I can drop the topic for now .

The rest of the hike is made in silence until we see some of the other groups gathered around the area. Lilith guides both our teams to a large rock wall that has all different kinds of symbols carved into it. We all spread out to make a wall two people deep. That’s a lot of supernaturals the Shadowed Thorne are going to need to go through to unlock this last seal. We can only hope it’s enough to hold them off. Even if we were to win this battle, we all know they would send more to keep trying.

I’m not sure how long we all stood at the ready before I started seeing magic flying to the area we were all gathered in. The first sign was a boulder that crashed against a large tree, causing it to splinter and come crashing down, nearly hitting several people. I flinched at the sounds of it all hitting the ground as I hauled ass out of the way the moment the boulder and tree collided with the earth.

“Here they come,” I call out, dropping into a fighting stance. I pull my trusty daggers from the holders on my thighs and hold them in front of myself. I have every intention of taking some of them down with me. *Velnias is not getting released. Over my dead body.*

I watch as the first three teams engage the Shadowed Thorne, but it’s quick to see they are going to be overwhelmed. We didn’t bring enough people. There has to be about a hundred of them compared to our, maybe, fifty. Magic is flying in every direction; I’ve already had to dodge several different magics coming our way. I thought about using my shield like Sage is, but I want to conserve my power. Watching the first wave of attacks makes me edge a couple steps forward, wanting to join in. My goddess powers are sitting on edge, ready to dive in watching all the chaos around me.

“Summit! Don’t move another fucking step!” Xavier shouts.

*How in the hell did he know I moved?*

I pause where I am. Waiting. It's driving me insane. They all know I do better with moving, with action. Waiting practically kills me. "We have to help them!" I push, watching a third person fall to their attack. "They need our help. All of us are strong as fuck. Stronger than some of them!" I beg the others.

"Just wait," Lilith answers calmly. Almost too calm if I had to guess. Turning to look at her I see her eyes filled with anger. She doesn't like this anymore than I do. So how in the hell is she able to just stand there?

"I see you looking at me, Summit. Watch the fight. You'll know when to join, trust me. Trust your instinct." Lilith calls out, her words forcing me to turn around and watch the fight. In the time it takes to look at her, a fourth person falls.

*This isn't right.*

The Shadowed Thorne are pushing us further back as they gain more ground. Our side is fighting hard as hell, but we are still struggling. I watch as Violet, a member of the Lumina Lunii Coven, takes a rough hit of water magic to the chest and falls to the ground. Her mate Leander makes it to her side to throw air magic at the female that hit her, causing her to fly fifty feet away and hit a tree hard and collapse to the ground. Watching Violet get attacked is my final straw.

Calling on my vampire side, I run past my mates faster than they can try to stop me and jump into the battle. Rushing to Leander and Violet, I shout at her to open a portal and head back while I keep everyone off them. Summoning a shield, I surround the two of them and focus on the three enemies approaching me. Engulfing one of my daggers with hellfire I launch it at the enemy on my right, hitting him directly in the chest. His body erupts in flames that disappear once he's dead. The second of the two pauses when he sees me lift the second dagger, while the third continues their approach. The second starts to shift into a bear, but he isn't fast enough with the transition and gives me time to jump on him. I wrap my arms around his neck, snapping it, letting his half transitioned body

fall to the ground. The last enemy uses that moment to launch a wave of air magic in my direction knocking me backwards.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Violet and Leander make it through the portal, so I stop my shield and pull forward my goddess magic more. Calling back my other dagger to me, I ready for the next attack from my third opponent. He looks familiar, tall, bald, and muscular. For the life of me, I can't figure out where I know him from.

"Ahh, the fighter twin," the man calls out stalking towards me. "You're prettier than I expected. Such a shame I'm going to have to injure you."

"SUMMIT! RUN!" Lilith shouts.

I see her and Lucifer running in my direction, but I'm trapped. I now recognize this man in front of me as Gunner, the one man my father explicitly told me not to engage, and he's standing in front of me with a tree at my back. I know better than to give an opponent like him my back. Fuck that. I'm going to stand my ground and fight. My hands tighten around my daggers, waiting to see what his next move is going to be. I just need to last long enough for them to reach me.

"You can try to hurt me, but I can promise I'll hurt you just as much," I taunt, taking up a defensive position.

"We shall see." Gunner raises his hand like he's going to choke me and starts to squeeze. At first, I have no idea what he is doing, but then I feel it, my air supply being cut off like he's choking me. Dropping my daggers to my sides, I reach up, wrapping my hands around my throat trying to get the spectral hands closing my windpipe to release. I can feel my eyes bulging, my oxygen lessening, and my body becoming weaker. Right when I feel like I'm about to pass out, he stops and my body collapses to the ground in a lump. I can barely keep my eyes open to see him approach me and lean down to whisper.

"The only reason you're being kept alive is because Velnias isn't ready for you to die yet, but your time is coming, Princess," he snarls, kicking me in the side as he walks away.



I watch him continue to walk away as I lay on the ground, unable to move and still gasping for air. Lilith and Lucifer finally reach him, beginning to engage him in battle. *I hope they kill him.*

“Summit!” Sage rushes to my side, kneeling beside me. She helps me get up into a sitting position so I can breathe easier. “Are you okay?! That was who everyone told us not to go against! What the hell were you thinking?!”

“By the time I realized who it was, I was trapped. I was thinking there was no way I was going to be able to run, so I needed to stand my ground and hope they got to me sooner. I didn’t expect him to do that,” I groan, trying to push myself to my feet. “I’m actually kind of impressed and mad I never thought to do that.”

“Only you would be impressed after some psycho tries to kill you,” Sage sighs, helping me the rest of the way to my feet.

Looking around, I see all of our mates engaged in battle right in front of the seal. For the most part, they are doing good holding everyone back, but I see the second they slip up. Asher and Lincoln are fighting back to back, Xavier and Zeke are tag teaming their opponents. Kelen and Rhett teamed up and took turns at defense and offense, while Phoenix and Vox teamed up together. Eight Shadowed Thorne members rush towards Rhett, Kelen, Zeke and Xavier. The four do their best to hold them back, but Xavier gets pushed into Kelen, who trips over Xavier’s wolf form, and then crashes into Rhett and Zeke. All four fall into a pile, creating an opening for two of the Shadowed Thorne to sneak through and get to the seal.

“NO!” Sage and I shout at the same time a female throws a vile against the stone, causing it to shatter and drip blood down the stone face. We watch, holding our breath, waiting for something to happen. It isn’t long before the stone begins to glow white. Soon the glow is so bright, we are all forced to cover our eyes. When it becomes too much to bear, a burst of powerful magic erupts, forcing all of us to the ground at the same time the light disappears.

“Man, it feels so good to be free,” a male calls out. Opening my eyes, I sit up again and see a tall skinny male with black hair and brown eyes standing in front of the broken seal. He’s wearing what looks like lightweight, flowy black pants and a white t-shirt. Immediately I know it’s Velnias standing in front of all of us.

“My followers, thank you for being thorough and breaking the final seals. As for everyone else, your time is coming, just you wait,” his voice turns deadly as he smiles at each of us. “We will be seeing you soon.”

With a clap of his hands, black magic pours from his fingertips and permeates the area. Slowly it spreads out all around us and continues to seep into the earth. I have no idea what he’s doing, but whatever it is, it’s bad. I watch as several of his followers breathe the magic in, their eyes flashing black as they do before returning to their normal eye colors.

“I’ll be seeing you soon, very soon, Sage and Summit.” With his final words, he disappears into a cloud of black smoke along with his followers.



## CHAPTER 15

### Vox

It's been one month since Velnias was released from his prison. The twins are going absolutely insane waiting on him to make some kind of move. No one has been able to find him; we only know the places that he has been after the fact by tracking police reports. Where there is an uptick of violence, we know Velnias has struck with his magic. By the time we get there, all traces of him are gone, and we're left dealing with cleaning up his messes and trying to cover up supernatural involvement. As every day passes, everyone is losing more and more hope. Sage and Summit have been training harder than anyone has ever seen. Many nights, I've been left begging and dragging Sage to bed just for her to wake up maybe five hours later and start all over again.

Each morning, we're briefed by the Kings on where Velnias has struck overnight and which teams will be responding to check it out. There has been a rotating list, so everyone gets an equal opportunity to investigate. We also have three strike teams that have been sent out regularly to areas we think Velnias may try to target next to get ahead of him, but so far we have been shit out of luck. Somehow he is always ahead of us.

This morning Eden informed us that Sarah has gone awol again, and this time Hades went with her. She told us all that we didn't need to worry, but that's what she said last time when she got kidnapped and tortured by Velnias. To say Sage and Summit are concerned would be an understatement. They

want to go after her, but Eden won't allow it. She said it's more important for them to remain here and at the ready. As a General of the Siren's army, I can see it from both perspectives. The twins have a right to be concerned, especially since, only a month ago, Sarah was being held and tortured for weeks on end by her father's minions. I also understand that Sarah has a lot of experience in this world and really doesn't have to answer to Eden anymore considering her mate is on the Council of the Gods, and she is extremely powerful in her own right. I also have a suspicion that Eden knows exactly where Sarah went and she is trying to give her the time she needs to figure things out. If only we could convince my mate and her twin of that, things would be better, but I don't see that happening; it's not how either of them are built, especially not Sage with her Goddess powers.

Every time we go to visit a new area that Velnias and the Shadowed Thorne have hit, I see how hard it is on Sage. She has such a big heart and loves so many people that when she sees them in pain, it causes her pain. I have a feeling it has to do with her no longer being able to shut off her Goddess powers. From all the magic she has been using, I can feel her Goddess powers leaking out of her when she doesn't realize it. There have been times when people around her in the training ring will just stop fighting because they feel at peace just from being in her presence. I know Eden has tried to work with her on harnessing her powers and directing it rather than letting her run wild like everyone tends to allow Summit to do. Their powers are such polar opposites, though, that it makes sense they need to harness their powers in different ways. It's one of the reasons I believe that they were meant to rule side by side, to level one another out and provide a balance of power.

"Vox!" Rhett calls out entering our suite. I escaped here to hide for a little bit from everyone before my training session with Sage. I'm almost positive we still have a little time before it starts. Each of us mates have been taking turns training with her.

"In here," I call out from the kitchen. I was in the middle of getting dinner going for everyone. It's my night to cook,

and I promised them a traditional dish from the island. I wanted to start marinating the chicken for a couple hours.

“Oh, thank god you’re here,” Rhett enters the kitchen. “Sage is freaking the fuck out thinking that you’re going to miss the training session. I promised her I would come find you.”

“We still have another hour, though.” I sigh, placing the last of the chicken into the bowl and covering it with a piece of plastic wrap. “It’s a good thing I just finished the chicken. I’ll go find her, and maybe we can start our session early. I thought she was still with Lilith?”

“She was, excuse me, is, but Lilith called a break in the session. Something about her needing to get her head in the game? I’m not entirely sure. I ducked out as soon as I could.” Rhett shrugs, coming around the corner to look at what I’m making. “What kind of chicken is that?”

“It’s my own take on an island glazed chicken recipe, and it will have coconut rice with it.” If I’m completely honest, I’m proud of being a good cook, especially after what Phoenix made last night. This will help us all forget that disaster. We all agreed he was to be taken off the cooking schedule for a couple nights.

“Well, it smells amazing already.”

“Thanks. I’m going to find our mate. Can you stick that in the fridge for me?” I ask, washing my hands in the sink quickly.

“I got you. Go rescue her,” he chuckles, shooing me out of the kitchen.

I don’t wait any longer before heading out in search of Sage. If Lilith kept her around, then she should still be in the training arena two floors down; at least that’s where Lilith said they would be training today. The path to the training arena is clear but as I get closer, I can hear the fighting from inside the room. Lilith is shouting orders and pretty much tearing her fighters apart when they make a mistake. There’s a reason she is known as one of the best fighters of the supernatural world.

Opening the doors to the arena, I see about twenty soldiers inside training. Lilith is continuing to shout orders at them, and each one does what she instructs. I stick to the edge of the room, walking around in an attempt to find Sage. When I make it to the far side, I finally find her facing off against another female. Neither is using their magic, only hand to hand combat.

I take up a position along the wall to watch her. She is a magnificent fighter even if she prefers not to fight at all. Her technique is different, and she focuses more on defense and trying to disarm her opponent instead of hurting them. That alone makes me love her even more. The two of them trade blow for blow, each holding their ground extremely well. Sage focuses on deflecting the punches and kicks. She is using the other female's momentum against her, causing her to become more off balance with every move. It is genius, actually, and something she can do while fighting with magic as well if done properly, and it's probably what I'm going to have her focus on if she isn't super tired after this.

The two of them continue to fight, with Lilith calling out different moves to incorporate, until there are only 4 teams still standing in the room. From where I stand, I can see the sweat rolling down Sage's back, soaking her tank top from all the exercise. She looks exhausted but also determined. Only a couple minutes later, her opponent makes her final mistake, costing her their match. Sage trips her, sending her sprawling onto her back. Not wasting the opportunity, my mate jumps on top of her, placing her into an arm lock and choking her until she finally taps out. The move is something I'm betting she learned from Summit, but it looked a lot less aggressive than Summit's style.

I start to clap, walking towards the edge of the mat but not taking my eyes off my mate. She is beautiful, even with her cheeks and chest reddened from exercise. As she walks my way, I conjure a bottle of water and hand it to her when she gets to me. "Drink up, Aqua."

Sage takes the bottle and chugs it. I can't help but stare at her as she does. Watching her throat bob with every swallow

makes me want to feel her lips wrapped around my cock again. If it wasn't for the need to practice her water magic, I would be stealing her away to our room to have some fun instead.

“I wasn't expecting you yet,” Sage states after finishing the whole bottle of water. I just shrug, not giving away that Rhett came to get me thinking she needed an early out. “Did something happen, or?”

“Nope, I just wanted to see you in action. Ready for me to steal you away to work on water magic, or do you need to rest a little?” The need to take care of her is strong. She needs rest and not to push herself too much, but I also know she will kick my ass if I try to tell her differently. I leave that argument to Phoenix and Kelen most days.

“I can rest while we walk.” She smiles and gives a small wave to Lilith after she links her other arm with mine. “So, do I get to know what you're making us for dinner? Please tell me it will be better than Phoenix's wreck last night.”

“Trust me, you'll like it.” I lean down and kiss the top of her head. “Let's head out to the pond. We're going to work on something a little different today.” I guide us outside to the small pond I saw buried deep within the garden grounds. I come out here to think when everything inside is overwhelming. I find watching the koi fish swim around extremely calming. They make me miss all the ocean fish I got to swim alongside back home.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~

“Where in the hell did you get this idea that I would be able to overpower your attacks!?” Sage growls after getting soaked for what seemed like the hundredth time. I've been taking it easy, only using water balls and sometimes a water whip. The purpose of this exercise was for her to intercept my magic and claim it as her own. She came close the last three times but hasn't been completely successful. When we first started the exercise, I had been holding back with using my full magic until she realized what I was doing and all but

yelled at me for doing so. Since then, every attack has left her soaked.

She may look rundown and water logged, but she is still sexy as sin. I wouldn't mind if she was wearing a white shirt right now so it was see through, but that's also my dick talking. I can't help that I find my mate sexy no matter what. It has been way too long since any of us have gotten any action.

Pulling my attention away from her body, I see the angry and defeated look in her eyes that breaks my heart. I didn't want to make her feel bad. "Baby, I didn't mean to make you feel bad. I got the idea from watching you fight earlier. I don't know if you realized what you had been doing, but you were deflecting your opponent's moves and using her momentum against her. With how powerful you are, I figured there was a good chance you would be able to grasp onto another's magic and turn it back around into your own."

Walking to her side, I place my hand on her back and guide her to a nearby bench in front of the pond. "Learning a new power doesn't always come easy. Kelen and Rhett told me you struggled with your water magic the first time you used it as well. We can keep trying another day."

"Do you really think I'm capable of this? Has anyone ever accomplished it before?" her voice is lacking the confidence and spirit I'm used to hearing from her.

"I think you are capable of more than you realize. As for if anyone has ever done this before, I have no idea. I think Queen Thelxinoe has before, but I can't be positive." I kiss the top of her head. "Now, how about we go get you out of those wet clothes, dried off, and I can get dinner finished for us all."

Sage is quick to agree, jumping up from the bench and practically dragging me back towards the castle. I can't help but chuckle as I follow behind her. I'll need to remember to bring towels next time we practice. Together, we make it through the twists and turns to our suite in record time. The second we step inside, she is already stripping her clothes off on the way to the bedroom. I follow behind her, picking up each piece as we go until we reach the bedroom door. When



we enter the room, she is completely naked, and I drop all the clothes in a pile at my feet. The little minx knows exactly what she's doing as she sashays to the bathroom. I hear a groan from the bed and realize Rhett is laying there watching the whole show our mate is putting on.

“Sage, if you don't want us to come in there and join you, then you better lock that bathroom door,” he calls out, moving to sit on the edge of the bed. I happen to completely agree with his words as I focus on picking up the clothes at my feet and placing them in the basket in the closet. When I step back out, I see Sage left the door to the bathroom wide open.

With one look to Rhett, we both nod and enter the bathroom. The shower is running, and we can make out the silhouette of Sage behind the steamed up glass doors. I know she knows exactly what she's doing as she leans back to wash her hair. The sight has my dick already rock hard, and I'm sure Rhett feels the same. Both of us strip out of our clothes, leaving them in piles on the floor, and go to join our mate in the shower. Sage makes a little shocked gasp when I open the door to join her, but I see the heat in her eyes. She wants this. She wants us.

Our little minx continues to rinse the shampoo out of her hair as her eyes lock on Rhett and me. “Let me help you with that.” My voice drops as I move to stand off to the side behind her and run my fingers through her hair, rinsing all the shampoo out. When I'm done, I see Rhett on his knees in front of her.

“I think you need a good washing.” He moans before moving his face into the apex of her legs. I can't see what he's doing from my position, but I'm sure he began to eat her out with the little moans she's making. I move to stand completely behind her and begin kissing her neck as my hands wrap around her body and play with her breasts. I know she's enjoying what Rhett and I are doing to her as her moans get louder and she arches her back into me.

“More, please more,” she begs, her hand moving to Rhett's head as she holds him in place.

Between the two of us, we play her body perfectly, and in no time, her shouts are echoing around the shower. Rhett stands up, grinning, as his face is covered in her release.

“You taste wonderful, Baby,” he leans forward to kiss her. I watch on as the two of them continue to make out. I release her body into his hold and move back until I reach the built-in bench behind me and sit down, watching their show. My hand grasps my dick as I run in up and down, squeezing slightly. Watching the two of them is the best show ever. Sage is so responsive to each of us; it’s intoxicating.

I watch as Rhett picks her up, carrying her over to the wall without breaking their kiss. Sage’s fingers wrap around his neck as she wraps her legs around him. Her moans make my dick that much harder as she chases the second release she desperately wants.

“Give it to her, Rhett,” I instruct my brother. He breaks their kiss, turning to look at me to make sure I’m serious. With a nod of encouragement, I watch as he leans back to line up with our mate’s tight hole and slams inside her. She screams with the sudden force and then relaxes into his hold. From here, I can hear her pants and moans over the shower. Her face is filled with pleasure as Rhett continues to move in and out of her at a quick pace. My hand matches their speed, and in a short time, I feel my balls tighten with my own climax coming faster than I can stop it. Shortly after, I watch as Sage slams her head back against the wall screaming with her second release. Rhett follows right behind her, biting her neck as he finds his own orgasm.

When Rhett slides out of our mate, I steal her for a quick kiss before leaving her in his capable hands to finish up so I can get dinner done for us all. I can hear the sadness in her voice at my leaving, but I have a feeling Rhett is going to make her come at least one more time before they leave the bathroom.



## CHAPTER 16

### NIKLAUS

Months. I have been hunting down Charlotte for months with little to no leads. I promised Xavier I would return in a week's time if I still have had no luck finding her. Every location I go to check, she either hasn't been there in a while, or I just missed her. That was always the problem back then. We tried to follow her, find her, but she was like a ghost, never staying anywhere for long. She took to the vampire way of life a lot faster than most newly turned vampires do. It left me wondering if Albert had been training her before she went missing. Not like any of us could prove that was the case.

Seeing her again after all these years was a shock to the system. It's not that we gave up hunting her down, but more like she was placed on the back burner because all our leads were cold. We left her case open, always documenting if someone came across her, but she did well keeping herself off the radar. Her showing up at the prison seal battle was not a fluke. She wanted to be there, to taunt us. We should have known that she would have fallen in with Velnias.

Like draws to like after all.

After we saw her at the battle, Xavier knew I couldn't just let her go again. This was our chance to finally make her pay for her crimes. We have hundreds of reports detailing the massacres she became capable of as she grew in power. We may not be able to give her father the answers he sought all those years ago, but we can imprison her for the murders she committed over the years. I can also seek the answers we all

wanted about how she managed to escape after we killed Albert. In the weeks after his death, we all assumed we were looking for a dead body until the reports of her sighting started coming in. She was a savage and left devastation in her wake. Small villages and towns were slaughtered in her pursuit of blood. Over time, she either learned to control herself, or she found someone who could teach her what she needed. Either way, that was when we lost track of her.

Just last week, I was so sure I had gotten a leg up and was hot on her tracks, but when I got to the city she was supposed to be in, there was no sign of her. Whatever game she decided to play was one that I was starting to get sick of.

Today I found myself wandering around the streets of Paris in hopes to find her. Over the years, this has been one of her favorite places to revisit. The city offers such a diverse city life that she can find everything she's ever wanted. Citizens dine later into the evening at some restaurants, while stumbling through the city streets late at night when they come home from clubs. The city sleeps, but the way it's always lit up makes it appear that it doesn't. With how populated it is, Paris gives her the opportunity to hunt without someone asking too many questions.

Last night, I spent the time combing through police reports for any that would hint at a vampire's involvement, using those as my starting point for today's hunt. There weren't many, thankfully, so I was able to get a later start. All but one of the locations was a miss. The very last place I checked rang of a bloody murder. Police have been at the crime scene all day. Using my credentials from S.P.E.E.R., I was able to get in and have a look around, promising not to touch anything. There was blood splatter covering the walls with the bodies of a whole family laying amongst them. Two parents, a teenager, and a small child all laid within the blood. It was gruesome and most likely would make the front page news by the end of day. I heard what the police were saying, that they had no leads, and the family didn't have any known enemies. They were blind and had no idea where to start. The only thing they knew was there was still one child missing. They were trying

to reach neighbors, family, and known friends to see if anyone knew where the missing child could be. So far, nothing.

The police won't find the child. Not if Charlotte truly is involved. She is playing with me, acting out a similar story to what happened to her. She took the child as her calling card, knowing I would recognize the sign for what it is. She wants me to find her. I can only hope I'll find the child alive as well.

The only question now is, do I call Xavier in yet, or wait until I know exactly where she is? Either way, Summit will probably try to tag along, and I just can't see my best friend right now. It's too hard. Looking at her reminds me of her daughter, Calista, and just the smell of her drives my wolf wild. I don't know why, but he wants Calista, he's protective of her. All I know is that I have to fight everyday to not hunt her down and find her.

As I walk out of the family's apartment building and head down the street, I flip my phone over and over again in my hand, debating the right thing to do. In the end, I decide sending a text to Xavier is the right decision. He could make the choice for himself if he wanted to come all this way or wait until I had further evidence. It doesn't take long to type out the text. Since it is late afternoon here, I know he won't see it yet with their time difference being behind us. I just had to kill some time until he answered.

I wander down the streets, looking for somewhere to eat, while I think about everything I know. The child Charlotte took is too young for her to bring into a nightclub or bar, so it limits the places she could hide out without looking too obvious. She would want somewhere that was crowded but also private enough that she could slip away without causing a scene, which limits her options even more.

Finding a restaurant buried down a small side street, I take a seat at one of the outdoor tables for a late lunch and look over the pictures I took on my phone, hoping they will reveal something, anything that will tell me where Charlotte went. During that time, the server came and went, dropping off a glass of water and taking my order. It was then that Xavier texted me back.

**Xavier:** So you found her?

**Me:** Yeah, I think so. It's too similar to what happened to her. The only difference is this child is a teenager.

**Xavier:** Charlotte was only eighteen when she was taken and turned, remember? Do you need me there?

**Me:** Yeah, but that was a different time. People grew up faster back then. This girl is only fifteen. That's too young. I wanted to let you know, keep you posted. You can make the decision if you want to come or not.

**Xavier:** I'll come. We can't take any chances. Not with a human teenager's life hanging in the balance.

**Me:** Understood. Please don't tell Summit. She will want to come, and I can't be around her yet. Also she will want to take this child in, and I'm almost certain you all do not need anymore child responsibilities.

**Xavier:** Ha! You're not wrong. Don't worry, Eden agreed to open a portal for me. Tell me where you are and I'll be there in a few.

I LET him know where I am, and, not even a minute later, my food arrives. Thank goodness for eating during the off hours. Right as I'm finishing up, I see my Alpha walking down the street towards my table.

"Long time no see, Nik. You look well," Xavier greets me, taking a seat across the table.

"Here," I hand him my phone, still having the pictures I took on the screen. "Take a look and let me know what you think."

We sit there quietly as he quickly scrolls through the pictures, stopping on the same ones that have drawn my interest over and over again. I watch as he zooms in on a few to get a better look at some details, humming and nodding at different times.

“So?” I prompt when he returns the phone.

“I think she’s hiding in a church,” my alpha answers. “It’s clear the family was religious, and in Charlottes opinion, it would be a big fuck you. Also, in two of those pictures, there are brochures for the Notre Dame placed where they would be found for someone with a trained eye.”

“Isn’t it still closed for renovations?” I pause. “I expected her to pick a more crowded place, but also somewhere that she could slip away if needed.”

With a quick search on his phone, Xavier agrees. “It is closed, but I really do think it’s where she is. We can check it out, and if she isn’t, then we look elsewhere.”

“Alright. Let’s go then.” I flag the waiter down to pay, and then we head for the subway to get to the church.

In thirty minutes, Xavier and I come to a stop in front of the cathedral. Even after the fire, you can still see the glory the cathedral once held and still does. When they finish restoring it, I have no doubt it will look just as amazing. It makes me wonder if my future mate would ever take a liking to history and want to visit one day.

“Ready?” Xavier asks after we slip past security and stand at a side entrance.

“Let’s go.” I nod, pulling open the door. Together we walk in slowly, making sure to check our surroundings. I let my wolf just under the surface, enhancing all my senses, ready to shift if need be, but not totally on edge. I can smell people here, humans, recently too, but I also smell something else. Something supernatural.

“You smell it too?” he whispers.

“This way,” I point in the direction I can hear a heartbeat and smell supernatural. Silently, we make our way towards the front of the church. When we reach the main area, we see them—Charlotte and the poor human girl. She has the human laying at her feet in the fetal position. From where we stand, I can see and smell the blood coming from several wounds. Our first priority is to rescue her and get her medical attention.

“Ah, finally you arrived. Oh, and you brought a friend. How nice.” Charlotte’s sing-song voice calls out.

Tentatively, I continue my walk towards her, not wanting to set her off in any way. “You did lead me on quite the chase.”

“I miss you, Niklaus.” She smiles. “Life wasn’t the same when you stopped trying to find me. Oh, how I wish you wouldn’t have given up the hunt.”

“I’m not sure what you’re talking about.” I keep my voice even to avoid giving anything away. “I’ve always had my ear to the ground for news of your whereabouts. However, they were few and far between.”

“I always left a crumb for you, my dear wolf.” Charlotte moves closer, forgetting about the human at her feet. “I was sad when you left me. I had to find a new teacher. Someone who could help me because you refused to.”

Her words confuse me. It’s like she was, no is, obsessed with me. I never got that sense from her all those years ago. This is different. I wasn’t chasing her because I wanted her. I was chasing her because she was a monster who needed guidance.

“Who is your new teacher?” I already know the answer, but I want to keep her talking. Xavier already slipped away from me and began sneaking around the outside of the pews to loop around and check on the human girl. I just needed to keep Charlotte talking long enough.

“I think you know that answer,” she purrs when she reaches me. Her hand runs up my chest and cups the side of my neck. “It’s too bad. I really wanted it to be you.”

It takes all my self control not to react repulsively to her touching me, even though every part of me is disgusted by it. Behind her, I see Xavier giving me a keep going motion as he almost reaches the girl. “I’m not sure if I would have been a good teacher for you all those years ago. Even now, I’m more of a follower, Charlotte.”



“Yes, I’m starting to see that. It took you longer than I expected to find me this time. I think you’re starting to lose your touch at tracking me.” She presses her body further into me. “If only you found me sooner. We could have had some fun before needing to get serious.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t. Though, I’m not so sure your new teacher would have approved if we did.” I play along, keeping her distracted. I see Xavier pick up the female and move her off to the side, hidden by some pews.

“He would understand. I mean it isn’t every day your first love comes back for you, now is it?” She kisses my cheek and moves towards my earlobe. Her teeth graze my neck, causing me to grab her waist and pull her away from me some, not wanting to risk her biting me.

“I’m not so sure, Velnias would. He has a habit of not letting go of his play things.” I see a flash of anger in her eyes, but it’s gone almost instantly. “Or did he let you go and move on? Is that why you decided to play this game with me again?”

My words do exactly what I expect. Now she’s angry. Pulling out of my hold, Charlotte takes a couple steps back and moves into a more defensive position.

“What do you know of that?” she growls.

“I know more than you think,” I answer carefully. “Velnias always has something to gain from someone before he tosses them to the side. He craves power and control and nothing more.”

“He loves me!” Charlotte shouts, enraged.

“No, he never did, Charlotte,” Xavier joins in from behind her. “He used you and then threw you away for being the whore you are.”

“I’m not a whore!” She turns toward Xavier and runs to get up in his face. “He told me things!”

“What things? What did he tell you?” Xavier pushes, not even flinching from her quick approach.

“He told me about the prison. The one all the bad people are sent to. Shadow Keep.” Charlotte taunts. “I know his plan. You don’t stand a chance. He knows his second in command is still alive, and he wants him. He wants everyone in the prison. With their powers, he will be able to kill the princesses and start to control the human world.”

“It’s cute you think that.” Xavier shrugs. “We already know he wants to attack the prison. That’s old news.”

It may be old news to him, but this is the first I’ve heard about it. Xavier hasn’t told me much outside of the occasional update that I needed to know, like them finding and rescuing Sarah. He didn’t tell me about Shadow Keep Penitentiary. It must have been something that they already dealt with if he didn’t see the need. That, or he didn’t want me to worry and return, cutting off my search for the female vampire standing in front of us.

“I’m glad you thought you were special Charlotte, but you weren’t. Not even all those years ago when we were following you. Niklaus never wanted you, not for a second. He was chasing you so that you would stop killing incessantly. Someone needed to teach you. We couldn’t leave a newly turned vampire out in the world. You just happened to be good at slipping through the cracks.” Xavier’s words do what he wants and enrages her enough to attack.

With a hiss, she jumps on him and tries to go for his neck. Easily, he shoves her backwards off of him, right into my waiting arms. I wrap one arm around her neck and the other around her waist to hold her in place. Xavier walks purposefully towards us to continue his line of questioning. Since she was close with Velnias, she may have more information for us to use.

“How did Velnias know Gael was still alive? Does he have someone on the inside?” I can tell he’s directing his alpha voice towards her, commanding her to answer.

“Yes,” she groans, finally answering under the assault of his power.

“Who?” I demand.

“Guu..ard.” her body shakes in my hold.

“What’s their name?” Xavier asks.

Charlotte doesn’t answer, just shakes her head no. I squeeze her neck tighter, cutting off more of her air supply. “Answer him!” I growl in her ear.

“Don...t Kn..ow,” she mumbles. If it wasn’t for our wolf hearing, neither of us would have heard her.

“Not good enough.” I tighten my hold on her.

At the same time, Xavier’s phone starts to ring with the tone I know means it’s Summit calling. I expected him to answer it, but he shocked me when he silenced it and turned back to Charlotte. He will definitely be hearing about that later.

“What else do you know?” Xavier steps right up into her face.

Before Charlotte can answer, I see a portal opening up right behind Xavier. Shit. I guess he should have answered that phone call. He also probably should have blocked Summit from finding his location, unless she asked Eden, which could very well have been the case. Either way, Summit shouldn’t be here right now.

“Did you seriously send me to voicemail?!” Summit shouts as she exits the portal. “What the hell is going on here?”

“Go home, Summit. I’ll explain later,” Xavier answers, not turning away from Charlotte. We both know how slippery she can be if we divide our attention.

The longer Summit stays in the area, the more my chest starts to burn with a need to go find Calista. It doesn’t make any sense, but it’s causing me literal pain. I do my best to hide it and keep my hold on Charlotte, but the closer Summit gets to where we stand, the harder it becomes, and eventually, my hold loosens just enough for Charlotte to take the opening, throwing her head back to smash my nose and then pulling herself to twist out of my hold.

“No!” Xavier roars, transitioning to his wolf to chase after her.

“Summit, watch the human girl!” I shout, pointing to where Xavier hid her. When I see her heading that direction I shift into my wolf as well and follow the pursuit. Running through the pews, I catch up to Xavier and Charlotte. He has her cornered near the front entrance to the church. Slowly, I stalk forward, growling and baring my teeth. When I get into position, Xavier transitions back to human, leaving me to be the muscle.

“You won’t get away this time, Charlotte. You can either come with us peacefully, or we will use force. Which will it be?” Xavier questions, holding his ground. I give another growl to help push her to make a choice.

“I won’t go with you. I’m sorry,” Charlotte responds. I see her try to run the second she makes her decision. She darts to the side and tries to get past us. Too bad I’m faster and manage to pounce and land on top of her, knocking her to the ground. She tries to push up and shove me off, but I put all my weight onto her and force her back to the ground. I move to bite her neck and hold her in place until Xavier is able to grasp her arms and place her in a set of magic canceling handcuffs. Once she’s secure, I leap off of her and make the transition back to human.

“You have a lot to answer for, Charlotte. Let’s go!” Xavier pushes her forward towards the portal that Summit left open. “Summit, let’s go. We’ll talk about this when we get home.” I can hear the bite in his tone. He’s pissed Summit came here.

“You can’t tell me what to do,” she retorts, getting in his face as he gets closer. “What about the human girl? We can’t just leave her here.”

“I have her,” I call out, taking tentative steps towards where they stand. The last thing I want to do is get closer to Summit right now, but I’m starting to think I just may not have a choice in avoiding her anymore.

“Oh, so you’re speaking to me again?” she retorts, placing her hands on her hips and glaring at me. I’m almost positive

she isn't mad but sometimes I can't tell with her. She doesn't even give me a chance to respond. "No, I'll take care of the human, and you can go with Xavier. When I get back, I'll deal with both of you."

"Summit," I start, but she cuts me off once again.

"No, Niklaus. We are, or were, best friends until you disappeared. I'm pissed at you right now, so get the fuck out of here and leave the human girl to me. I'll take her to a hospital. I know what to do. I did grow up in the human realm." Summit moves towards the female, lifting her arms and creating a second portal. "As soon as you are both through, that portal will close behind you." With those last words, she's gone.

I don't blame her for being pissed. She has every right to be with how I have been treating her. She's right. Summit is my best friend, and that's exactly why I've been avoiding her. How do I tell her the way I feel about her very own daughter?

"Don't think about it right now, Nik." Xavier calls out, pulling my attention back to him and our prisoner. "We can deal with it tonight. Let's get Charlotte in a cell."

Following my alpha, we walk through the portal and head directly to the dungeons. After following Charlotte's activities for decades, it feels good to finally have her under our control and in a prison cell. She will be tried and convicted for her crimes in due time. Let's just hope she has more information to give us on Velnias and his plans outside of just this prison plot. We need to start looking through all the guards at the prison. The last thing we need is a prison break at the top security prison that almost no one is supposed to know exists. If those prisoners being held there got out, it would spell trouble for all of us.



## CHAPTER 17

### SUMMIT

I can feel my body vibrating with anger at both Xavier and Niklaus as I carry this human teenager to the hospital down the street. How dare neither of them tell me what is going on! Children were involved, and they still didn't say anything to me about it. It pisses me off. I have been worried sick about Niklaus for months since he disappeared to chase Charlotte. He refused to answer his phone, so I stopped trying and just relied on updates from my mate instead. Now, my own mate has gone behind my back to help Nik and didn't bother to tell me.

Yeah, to say I'm upset would be an understatement.

I had to find out from Eden that she opened a portal for Xavier. Thank god she told me where they were without any hassle. I half expected her to tell me to just sit and wait, but when she saw Xavier send me straight to voicemail when I called, she figured they could use another set of hands. Clearly, they did because how else were they going to get this small human teenager in my arms to the hospital, just the two of them?

If they left her in the cathedral, I'm not sure how long it would have been before someone found her; probably the next day, and she could have been dead by then. If they called the police to the cathedral, that would raise more questions and suspicions. They really didn't think this through. I know it's going to look suspicious for me to turn up in an emergency room with the young girl, but I already formulated a story. I

didn't portal straight here from the cathedral. Instead, I stopped in an alleyway that was close to her home address just far enough away that it would be somewhere the police wouldn't have thought to look. I made sure the young female's blood was in the alley and some of her torn clothes. I had to make it believable that she ran away and escaped to the alley, but when I tried to rouse her to call an ambulance, she said no and mumbled a story about her family and then passed out, so I just brought her here instead. It might be a little out there, but I made sure there was enough evidence to back up the story if the police ever came looking.

"Help, please!" I shout, pushing through the emergency entrance doors. It's a whirlwind of people in the waiting room and security trying to help people through the metal detectors. When they see me walking in with a bleeding girl in my arms, everyone stops. Security shouts for a nurse and a gurney. Within seconds, they have the girl out of my arms and laying on the bed. They are shouting at me in French, but I can't understand a single word to say.

"English!" I plead. "I don't speak French."

With a huff, one of the nurses rushes away from me, shouting something towards someone else. Security helps me through their metal detector, and when I reach the other side, there's another nurse waiting for me at the same double doors they pushed the young girl through.

"We need to ask you some questions while my team evaluates her," the older female states. I nod and follow her through the doors as she leads me down a busy hallway full of nurses, techs, computers, and patients. My memories of spending time in emergency rooms flash back to me as I continue to follow her. I have a feeling she is leading me to a quiet room to get answers, ones I can't give her, to any questions she may have.

When we get to the room, she points toward a chair for me to sit in and takes the seat across from me. Most people would try to explain, offer any sort of answers they can, and ask more questions, but I can't do that. I need her to ask the questions, so I don't say the wrong thing.

“Do you know the young girl?” she starts.

“No, I found her.” I look down at my hands, trying to appear solemn. It’s not hard to do. No young girl should go through the things that she has. I would want someone to care for my daughters and protect them if something ever happened to me as well.

For the next two hours, the lead nurse asked me questions followed by the police. I answered each of them to the best of my ability without giving away the truth of us supernaturals. When the police finished taking my statement and were informed of my association with S.P.E.E.R., they let me go and knew who to contact if they had any further questions. I told them I would be leaving town again, but I would come back if they needed me to, though I knew they wouldn’t.

When the lead nurse came back in to tell me the female would survive, I knew it was time to take my leave and deal with the mess back home. I left my name and number with the nurse, making her promise to keep me posted on the female, and if she should ever need anything then she was to get in touch with me.

Leaving that girl behind was one of the hardest things I’ve had to do. She’s going to wake up to no one there and no family left. If I could, I would stay and push to help her, but my world isn’t one that she should ever experience again. My world tore her world apart. She needs to be protected from it.

Getting home took a longer time than I originally planned. My time at the hospital didn’t help abate my anger any. If anything, it angered me more. Niklaus and Xavier are going to have hell to pay when I get back home. They better not be hiding either.

Following the streets to the outer edges of the city, I finally open a portal at the end of an alley to return home. My anger isn’t going to go away until I face them; that much I know.

“Summit!” Daddy B calls out when I step through. “Where the hell have you been?”



“Uh,” I stop in my tracks, staring at him, thoroughly confused. I thought someone would have said something to him by now. “Haven’t you talked to Mom, Xavier, or Niklaus?”

“Your mate and beta brought back that vampire, Charlotte, hours ago. They said you would be behind them shortly. It’s been hours!” My father is now shouting in my face.

“I understand that you were worried, but I was doing exactly what I said I would—taking care of the human teenager and answering the police’s questions, so please stop shouting at me. I did nothing wrong. Anyway, it’s all taken care of, and they don’t suspect a thing, so where are my mate and beta?” I turn the questions back on him.

“Busy questioning Charlotte. You can see them after. Come with me. I have a surprise for you.” He flashes me a suspicious smile and turns, expecting me to follow him.

Knowing full well I got the “I-do-what-I-want-and-expect-others-to-follow” attitude from him, I do as he says and follow him into the castle. Down the different hallways he leads me until we reach his office. “Now, what I’m about to show you, no one can ever know about. I did it so that you wouldn’t try to murder someone when you got back here. And don’t try to tell me that you wouldn’t. I know that look in your eye, Daughter.”

“You’re right. Xavier and Niklaus deserve my anger. You can stall me, try to protect them, but in the end, they will both still get my wrath, Dad.” I give him a pointed look and then step past him into the office.

“Go sit at the desk, and look at the computer. When a video call comes in, answer it. I’ll see you soon.” Beckett gives me a wink and then shuts his office door behind him.

I have no idea what he has planned, but I also know that he wouldn’t do something without thinking it through. I head to the computer and sit down at the desk, clicking on the screen. I’m not having to sit there long before a video call pops up on the screen. There’s no name, but I answer it like instructed.

“Mom!” Calista smiles when her face pops up on the screen.

“Calista!” I smile, my anger abating for the time being. “How is everything at school? Is it going well?”

“It’s going really well,” she smiles, but it’s tight. I can see the tension in her eyes that she’s lying, but I don’t want to push it. I don’t have the right to push it. Not when I just want to have a good relationship with her.

“I’m glad, baby girl. You know that your fathers and I are here if you need us for anything, but I know just how strong and capable you are. Is your Uncle Storm there with you? Helping you?”

“Yeah, he’s here now,” she starts before I see my brother’s face pop up on the screen.

“I’m right here, Summit!” He waves and smiles. “Calista isn’t telling you the truth, though.”

“Is that so?” I give her a pointed look, the same one I use on everyone else to get what I want. I see her give the same death glare I give to others to Storm. *Yup. She’s definitely mine.*

“Fine, everyone is bullying me here.” She rolls her eyes. “There is a stupid ass hierarchy and school council that thinks they can control everyone and everything. Don’t worry, though. I’m showing them I take no shit.”

“Is Asuna showing you around? She promised that she would.” Concern fills my voice as I look at my daughter. “Do you need me to come there?”

“Mom!” she groans, dropping her head into her hands. “No, I don’t need my parents fighting my battles.”

“Okay. If you’re sure.” I smile. “Now, what about Asuna?”

“She’s...,” Calista trails off. “It’s complicated, but she did what she told her mom she would do.”

I know that answer is bullshit, I can see it in her eyes. “Storm,” I start.

“She’s fine, Summit. Stop. Let Calista handle this herself. I’m here to help her when, and if, she needs it.” I can see the look in my brother’s eyes. He knows she needs to do this herself, so I’ll listen to him. For now.

“Alright, you can handle this yourself, Calista.” I give her what she wants. She is my daughter after all.

“Thanks, Mom. Also, thank you for sending Grandpa Damon, Aunt Sarah, and Grandpa Michael to come train me. It’s been helping a lot, I have a lot better control of all my magic. I can finally transform into a wolf!” Her voice is so excited with the news.

“That’s fantastic, Sweetheart.”

For the next thirty minutes, Calista catches me up on her school life, and I fill her in on some of the things we have been doing here, mostly just all the training. Beckett was right. I needed this time with Calista, just us, and technically Storm. It may be wrong that I get it without my mates, but sometimes a mother and daughter just need each other, and that’s exactly what today is. Just getting to see her, talk with her, helped keep my anger down from everything that happened. She is the reason I won’t be tearing Xavier and Niklaus a new one. Our daughter bought my mate and my best friend time from my war path. I won’t ever tell her that. I know her teenage self will use it against me later.

“Sorry, Mom. That’s the bell, we need to go. Talk soon?” my daughter asks, looking behind her in a hurry.

“Go have fun. Storm, take care of her! Love you, Calista.” I manage to squeeze out before they end the call. For a few minutes, I just stay and look at the blank computer screen where they just were. It was the greatest thing I could have asked for today.

With a deep breath, I go in search of my mate and best friend. It’s time we all have a chat. One that is long overdue. Going with my gut instinct, I go to the dungeon, hoping they are still there. With luck, I caught them just as they were leaving.

“All done?” I ask as they both walk out the door.

“For now,” Xavier answers. “Are you still angry?” my mate asks, though I think he knows the answer to his own question.

“Is that what you think?” I shoot back, wanting to see what he would do. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Nik trying to sneak off.

“Nik, don’t,” Xavier demands. “Summit, I’ll talk to you later. Be nice to him.”

I watch as my mate walks off leaving me and our best friend behind. Xavier trusts me to keep my anger under control, the anger that I’m no longer feeling. Niklaus and I spend the next couple minutes just standing in the hallway looking at one another, both of us afraid to say anything.

He’s my best friend, and I feel betrayed by everything that he has done these last couple months. He disappeared and left us, left me. How am I supposed to be okay with that? I know there is more going on with him. It clearly has something to do with me, and we aren’t going to leave this hallway until he tells me why.

“What did I do to make you hate me?” My voice is soft, giving away how terrified I am of his answer.

“I don’t hate you, Summit. I never have.” Nik’s voice is just as weary. It’s like we both just forgot how to hold a conversation with one another.

“It seems that way. You disappeared. You left. No explanation. My best friend left me.” I choke, trying to hold back tears.

“You had Sage and your mates. I didn’t leave you alone.” He argues, starting to take a step closer then stops. “It’s just really hard to be around you.”

“Why? Why is it hard to do?” I push, needing an answer.

“Because of Calista,” Nik answers after a deep breath. “I see you, it makes me think of her. I end up in physical pain

being close to you because my wolf wants her. I don't know why. Nothing makes sense to me, but the distance helps."

"I'm sorry being around me is so hard for you. I've just missed my best friend, Nik" My heart breaks at his words. I would have done anything to help him and he never gave me that chance. My best friend is in pain because of me and my daughter, and he kept that from me. I don't understand why his wolf would cause him pain. Our wolves should be a part of us, should help us and we help them. It's like there is some kind of divide between them for some reason. His wolf should be helping him, not hurting him. Unless....

"Mate," I whisper, soft enough that I don't think he even heard me.

"What did you say?" Nik pushes.

"Nothing," I cover not wanting to fuck anything up. "Listen, I get it. Not being able to be around me, and I won't push the subject again, however, I need to ask a favor of you this one time."

Already I have a plan formulating in my mind. A way to help him and his wolf under the guise of needing their help. This is either going to be the best or worst idea I've ever had, but one way or another we will get some kind of answers with my plan.

"Listen. Damon isn't going to be able to make it to Calista's lessons at the academy tomorrow. Do you think you can go in his place? You're the next person I would trust her to learn from." It takes everything in me to hide my excitement from my plan.

"Summit," Niklaus exasperates. "I can't."

"You can, Nik. I trust you with her." I plead. "You're the one person I know that can teach her, help her, besides her grandfather. Plus, I think it will help your wolf with whatever is wrong. Two birds, one stone."

"You should listen to her, Son." Beckett rounds the corner, weighing in. "Go to Sanguine Legato Academy and teach Calsita."

“King Beckett,” Nik drops into a low bow.

“If you won’t listen to Summit, then listen to me. Don’t make me order you.”

Knowing to stay out of this, I keep my mouth shut and watch my father work. Niklaus going to help Calista is the best idea, for both of them. It will be even better if I’m right in my theory, and they are mates. It may take Niklaus time to find it acceptable considering he will probably think it’s wrong and crazy since she’s my daughter, but in my opinion it would be the greatest thing in the world. Nik would be amazing for Calista, and I know he would love and care for her in the best way possible. What better mate could I ask for my daughter than my best friend?

“Fine,” he relents. “I’ll go, but only for tomorrow.”

“Thank you,” I jump forward to hug him then back away. “Good luck with my stubborn spawn.” I smile, wave, and then walk away, knowing I got exactly what I wanted, or at least the start of it. Now to go deal with my mate.



## CHAPTER 18

### VELNIAS

“Progress update, Doctor Burns.” I command walking down the hall through the medical wing. I watch as nurses and doctors jump out of my way while I head towards the man I need to speak with. His research into harnessing my daughter’s power for me is the last part of my plan that I need to work. Then, finally, I can go kill Eden and her stupid mates. I can take care of the pesky twins who are supposed to stop me. No one can bring me down.

“Sir, I..” he stutters when I finally reach him.

“You what?” I question, towering over him. He was the most capable doctor the Council said they could find for this research project. Amaya brought me all his paperwork, and I signed off on them recruiting him to our cause. He was easily bought and persuaded, but that also means he doesn’t have a backbone to stand on, which leaves me dealing with someone who can be a blubbering mess at times. Case in point, this conversation with him. He’s gotten harder to deal with since I was released from my prison.

“I may have managed to get the process working. It hasn’t been tested yet,” he explains, holding a door open to his research clinic.

Walking in past him, I see a row of hospital beds filled with other supernaturals, each of them placed into a coma. His test subjects laid so still, just waiting for the next hypothesis he wanted to work on. They were perfect, just ready and waiting for me to test if his device worked. Moving to his

work station, I see the exact device he placed on Sarah's chest to harness just a drop of her power.

"Have you managed to recreate her power? Do we have more of it?" I place my hand on the device, staring at the one thing that will finally let me finish my plans.

I need this to work. It's the only chance I have to defeat all of them. Once we get this working, I can move on to breaking Gael out of the prison. With him and some others from there, we will be unstoppable. My second in command took one for the team all those years ago. Eden and her men think they won by capturing him, but what they never realized was—that was the plan the whole time. We needed someone on the inside of the prison, someone who could persuade the guards and other prisoners to join our cause. Gael volunteered for the position because he knew he would be able to withstand the torture he would be placed through. We couldn't send someone who would break.

"I haven't tested it yet. I think I may have figured it out, but if we had more of her power to work with it would be better. Because we didn't get her full power, it may be possible that whatever power you take with it is only temporary." Doctor Burns moves to my side and takes the device from me before he begins to play with some of the buttons. "Put your hand out," he instructs, holding the device in the air.

"I understand. I'll use the power when needed only." I do what he requests, holding my palm out. Dr. Burns places the device in the center of my palm, latching it to my hand. He presses the button at the top, and I watch as a dark gray light emits from the device and surrounds my hand right before it feels like my hand is being stabbed through. The magic disappeared into the center of my palm where it felt like I was being stabbed. When all the light is gone, the device beeps three times and disconnects from my hand. I can feel the extra power running through me. It feels different from my normal magic and feels like my own magic is trying to attack it almost.

"Move," I command, pushing the doctor out of the way as I approach one of the test subjects lying in a hospital bed



behind him. “What’s this one do?” I ask standing over a younger male.

“He is a vampire,” Doctor Burns explains as he comes to the other side of the hospital bed.

“Hmmm, enhanced speed and strength could be useful.” I would use him as the first test subject, but until we know for sure that the doctor is able to replicate the process correctly after this, I don’t want to waste my one shot to gain extra power for something as simple as that. I need a more unique power. “What about that female over there with purple hair?” I look across from me. I can sense that she has power within her.

“That is a witch. Let me check her file to see if we have her power listed.” Together we move to her bed while Doctor Burns checks the chart. Whatever power this witch has, it’s a lot. I can feel it under her skin just from standing this close to her. I’m not even sure how they managed to subdue and capture her, but all the same, I’m thankful for it. She is going to be the perfect person to test this one.

“It looks like she has the power of aura stripping and immunity.” Doctor Burns’ face is shocked. “Immunity hasn’t been seen in... I don’t even know how long.”

“She will be the perfect test subject for that power alone.” A wicked smile forms as I look down at the female’s unconscious form. If this works, I will need to keep her around to continue to steal this power from her, maybe even convince her to join our cause. Together we could be unstoppable.

I place my hand in the center of her chest and reach inside me for my daughter’s power. At first, the power is unresponsive, basically trying to get away everytime I reach for it. With a little bit of struggle, I finally manage to wrangle the power and pull it forward, pushing it into my victim. I use the power to just focus on her power of immunity as I let it search her body to give me what I want. Finally, I feel it attach itself to her and suck the power out of the female as it slowly trickles into my palm. The power still feels foreign, like my daughter’s, but it’s already much more responsive and isn’t

fighting my own magic. The process doesn't take too much longer before I finally feel Sarah's power disappear, leaving only the witch's magic behind inside me.

"How do you feel, Sir?" The doctor's voice is tight as he looks at me, waiting for my answer.

"I can feel her power coursing through alongside my own. It's not fighting me, which is good." I continue to caress the power, trying to get used to the way it feels and how I will need to summon it. The power is like its own entity running alongside my own. It doesn't intertwine the way my own powers do, but I can feel how it tests me, tests my power. It doesn't outright reject me, which is a start.

"Do you want to test it? I can get one of the interns to summon their power for you." Without waiting for an answer, he gets the attention of a male in blue scrubs nearby.

"No, I'll save the power until it's needed. I know it will work for me; it just needs to get used to my own." I stop him in his tracks and head to the exit. "Keep up the good work, Doc. I'll see what I can do about getting more of my daughter's power for us to use."

I don't bother to stick around long enough to hear his reply. The door to the lab swing shuts behind me while I focus on getting to my next location. I'm not going to waste this little bit of power on something so trivial as testing it. A power like this should be used in combat. I know the perfect target to use it on first.

The hallways are empty as I walk through the mountain, heading towards the large cavern I had my followers carve out decades ago to use as a meeting area. It's pretty much an amphitheater, and this is the first time I will be getting to test the acoustics of the place. I had my generals call a meeting with all of the Shadowed Thorne, pulling them in from even the outskirts. Only those undercover were to remain where they are. It's time we finally start moving forward with our plans. No longer will we remain in the shadows biding our time. The world is ours for the taking.

The closer I get to the theater, the more talking I can hear. The sound of chit chat echoes off the walls around me as I travel down the halls. I can tell the place is packed, exactly how I wanted. It appears everyone followed their orders for once.

“My love,” Amaya’s annoying voice calls out when I round the next corner. “Everyone is here as requested.”

“Go sit with the others,” I demand with a cold tone, making sure to keep my face neutral. She was fun to pass the time with, and was a good pawn to use as I needed, but she will never get to rule at my side. She’s too weak and too easily controlled for the role. I need someone with a backbone that can’t be controlled to rule at my side. That will never be her, no matter how much she wishes it so.

Her eyes flash with anger before she quickly catches herself. “Understood, Sir,” she answers in the same cold tone. I watch as she walks away, her lackey following close behind.

*I’m definitely going to need to deal with that mess sooner or later.*

One would think Amaya knew the drill after seeing the different women come and go over the decades. The only one who lasted the longest was the vampire, Charlotte, until I realized just how unhinged and obsessive she was. She couldn’t think for herself. It was good riddance when I ditched her. Just yesterday, I heard a rumor she had been captured. I’ll need to look into that and make sure someone kills her before she can talk. She knows more information than I’m willing to risk falling into the wrong hands. I don’t need anyone to find out about the plot with Gael. That plan has been too many decades in the making to fuck it up now.

With a deep breath, I move down the small walkway to get behind the stage. The pathway is clear as everyone is already seated, waiting for me to begin. Stepping out from behind the wall, I see the place is jam packed with several people standing in the back. The second they all see me, a hushed silence takes over, everyone waiting to hear what I’m going to say.

“Good afternoon!” I shout, realizing just how loud the echo is and that I don’t need to actually shout but just speak a little louder than normal. “Thank you all for joining me here today. I am ecstatic to finally be able to join you all in person once again! It is so good to see support for the cause. I promise you all that you won’t regret this decision. We will conquer the world and take our rightful places at the top. All those who oppose us will wish that they hadn’t. Eden and her family shall pay for the crimes they have all committed against us. Those who have fallen for the cause will see their retribution.”

A chorus of cheers rings out through the room at my words. Smiling, I wave my arms to get everyone to quiet down once again. I’m glad to see the spirit of the Shadowed Thorne is still alive and thriving. With this type of enthusiasm, I believe we will be successful no matter what the Seers said in their stupid prophecy.

“Quiet down,” I shout a little louder to get the last of the crowd to be silent. “These next few weeks and months are going to be all hands on deck. We are taking the fight to our enemies. No longer will we cower in the shadows waiting for our opportunities. No! We will be gaining back our ground. Be sure to keep an eye out for word from your generals as to your assignments. Several new teams are being created for special missions. Remember, each and everyone of you is important no matter your task. Without you, we won’t be able to conquer the world!”

“One of the most important goals is to capture all three of Eden’s daughters. If you come across Goddess Sarah, she is not to be killed. As for Princess Sage or Princess Summit, I would much prefer them to be brought to me alive, but if death happens, I won’t be angry.” I stare around the room, making sure they all understand how important this task is. I’ll be creating a special team just to capture Sarah, but I need everyone to be keeping an eye out for openings. “Thank you again for being here and supporting our cause! Go! Continue our fight and make the Shadowed Thorne proud!”

With those final parting words, I watch as everyone stands to clap and exit the room. Several people come down to the front to thank me and profess their desire to fulfill the needs of the cause. Doing my duty as their leader, I keep a smile on my face and thank them for their devotion and passion. The whole business is tiring, but I know sometimes you need to put on a front to get the outcome you wish to have accomplished. This is just one of those instances.

Over an hour later, the crowd has finally dispersed, leaving my trusted council behind to speak with. Now, the real planning can begin. Everyone knows the score this time around. We aren't leaving anything to chance. Our first stop will be the prison, but I know we will also need a distraction so no one suspects anything. That is where our Council is going to come in. They will need to keep the Kings occupied until it's too late for them to do anything.

Let the games begin.



## CHAPTER 19

### SAGE

All morning, I've been feeling rundown, exhausted, and nauseous. The second I smelled the food Vox had been making for breakfast, I bolted out of bed for the bathroom. Kelen tried to come in, but thankfully I had enough thought to lock the door behind me so he couldn't get in. No way was I letting my mates see me while I held my head over the toilet puking my empty stomach contents up. I may love them, but I will never let them see me like this. A woman should still have some sort of privacy. It's like using the restroom in front of them— never going to happen.

The second I could finally move without puking, I brushed my teeth then jumped in the shower quickly. The past several mornings, my mates had been joining me for a shower, which was a nice change of pace, but my body was sore from all the sex we had been having. I know my mates were wanting to help me relax and get my mind off all the what-ifs and training, but a girl can only handle so much sex with four mates. I knew locking the door would end with me getting shit about it when I came out, but it was worth it none-the-less. Summit and I were to have a training session with our mother in the late morning, so I didn't want to take too long. I already slept longer than I meant to this morning.

After I got out of the shower, breakfast with my mates didn't take long. I had been especially grateful that Vox had just a plate of toast ready for me instead of what he had been making. I wasn't sure I would have been able to stomach

anything else at the time. Like I had predicted, when I finished both slices of toast, Kelen was on me about locking the door. It's cute my mates want to help, but it's still a hard no. I simply reminded him that I am capable of taking a shower and brushing my teeth by myself and that I am allowed some privacy. If he wants to be mad about it, that's his own problem, but I will not change my attitude on the matter.

An hour passed before my mates finally left me to my own devices, going to their own training sessions. Phoenix tried to stay behind, but I promised him that I would be okay and that he didn't need to be so overbearing. None of them liked that I wasn't feeling well, but since I was able to keep food and drink down, they left with my promise to take it easy. That was almost an hour ago.

The second they were out the door, I collapsed on the couch to take a short nap, and it was glorious. Thank god I had remembered to set an alarm on my phone, or I would now be running late to the training session. Leaving my suite, I head towards my sister's suite a hallway over to pick her up. We promised to walk together and present a united front to our mom. Both of us were hoping for a trip to visit the Seers and find out more about Sarah's whereabouts once again. Reaching her room, I see her already waiting outside the door, holding the door handle to her room closed.

"What are you doing?" I ask as I get closer to my sister.

"My mates are being overbearing, so I'm teaching them a lesson." She grunts as the door slips open a little bit.

"Eh, forget about them. We have to go meet Eden." I would love to see how this continues to play out, but the one thing our mother hates is tardiness, even if she expects it from Summit at this point.

Pouting, my twin takes one last look at the door before shrugging and letting the handle go as she dodges out of the way and heads in my direction. At the same time, I watch Asher come tumbling through the doorway, crashing into the opposite wall. I can't stop the laugh that escapes me from the thud of his body hitting the wall. Asher has a deadly look on

his face as he stares down his mate. Knowing this is the kind of thing my twin thrives on, I quickly grab her hand, pulling her behind me as I turn to leave.

“I’ll get you for that, Warrior Princess!” Asher shouts at our retreating forms.

Once we get far enough away, Summit pulls us to a stop, doubling over to clutch her stomach with laughter. “That was literally the greatest thing I’ve experienced in days.”

“It was pretty funny watching him hit the wall. I’m glad you’re finding ways to relax and play. Your mates really do you justice.” I hug her when she stands back up. It took a long time to see my sister heal after everything her ex, Declan, had done to her. I’m glad her mates have helped her return to the girl I watched grow up.

“They really do,” she said, smiling brightly. “Are you okay?” She places her hand on my shoulder. “You kind of look pale.”

“I wasn’t feeling good this morning, but I’m better than I was,” I reassure her. “Let’s go get to this training session with Mom. We don’t want to be late.” Pulling out of her hold, I head back towards the main area of the house. The last thing I need is anyone looking too closely at why I don’t feel good. People get sick. It happens. We don’t need to assume the worst or anything.

For the rest of the walk, Summit and I made small talk, just catching up on our different trainings. I’ve been curious about her new vampire powers because I’ve been struggling just to use my spirit powers. With all the days of training, I haven’t had any luck summoning them, no matter who I trained with. It made me upset and like I was a failure, but I channeled those feelings into all the other magic I did have control over and have been far exceeding the goals others have been setting for me. Almost no one wants to train against me one on one unless it’s one of my mates or someone within our inner circle. So far, we are up to me being able to fight three people at once, four is just a tiny bit too far.



“About time you both got here,” we both hear Eden grumble when we start to open the door. It always surprises me that she knows who is about to enter before she sees us.

“You can blame Summit for that one. She decided to play a game with her mates.” I laugh, rolling my eyes.

*“I’ll get you back for throwing me under the bus, Sis. Remember that.”* Her dark chuckle comes through our bond.

“No excuses. We have a long day ahead of us,” she pauses. “Sage, because you are struggling with your spirit magic, your father, Lilith, and Cazimir will be joining our training session shortly to work with you. I will be here to assist as well so we can determine what exactly the block on your magic is.”

With that, she starts us on a short series of warmup drills including summoning shields, creating energy balls, and teleporting across the room. She had Summit fighting a hologram and me trying to break up a fight without using physical powers. Thirty minutes went by before I doubled over vomiting once again. I tried to hold back and push through, but there was no stopping it. I’m just grateful I didn’t manage to get any of it on me.

“Shit! Sage!” my twin shouts running over to me, her fight completely forgotten. “I told you that you didn’t look good.”

“Sage,” Eden approaches both of us calmly.

“I told Summit before that I’m fine. Just feel a little under the weather today, but I can push through it. There’s nothing to worry about. I probably ate something that doesn’t agree with my stomach.” I hold my hands against my stomach trying to stop the next round of vomit that’s threatening to come up.

“Summit can check for you if you want. She does have a small amount of healing power from her bond with Lincoln,” Eden suggests kneeling by my side. “I can help her as well.”

“No, it’ll pass,” I wave, not wanting them near me.

“Sage,” Summit sighs, crouching down on the other side of me. “Stop being so damn stubborn. Let me fucking heal you so you can stop being so gross and puking.”

“Sage,” Eden joins in.

“Fine, you can heal me.” I relent, giving them what they want. I really don’t want to keep puking if I can avoid it anyway. With their assistance, we move away from where my vomit is, and they help me lay down on the ground. Both of them place their hands over my stomach. My mom’s white magic mixes with Summit’s pale yellow and encases my belly, and I can feel the nausea easing slightly.

“Uh, Sage,” Summit hesitates, pulling her hands away from my stomach.

“Summit,” Eden hisses at her and shakes her head.

“What?! What is it!?” I start to panic, my breathing becoming labored, worried that something is really wrong.

“Sweetheart,” Eden removes her hand and places it on my shoulder to help me sit back up. “Is there a possibility you could be pregnant?” Her voice is soft and compassionate as she asks.

“Uh,” my mind blanks as I stare at her. Is there a chance? Possibly. My mates and I have been having a lot of sex. It’s their way to distract me, but I don’t think I’ve missed any of my pills. Maybe when we had traveled to find Sarah I did, but I can’t be positive.

Summit snaps her fingers in front of my face, pulling my attention back to them. “Sage! Mom is saying that you’re pregnant.”

“Summit!” Eden scolds, shaking her head. “I was trying to break the news lightly to her.

“What?!” my twin pushes back laughing. “There is no breaking the news that you’re pregnant lightly. It is what it is. She’s in shock.”

“That... I... What?!” my brain continues to short circuit trying to understand what they are saying. “This can not be happening. I can’t be pregnant! We’re about to be fighting Velnias!”

“Well, it is and you are. So suck it up buttercup. I went to hell while pregnant. You can fight Velnias while pregnant. Looks like we are starting a trend.” Summit laughs.

“Sage!” I hear one of my mates call out right before the door to the training room bursts open.

“Please tell me you’re okay, Sunshine,” Kelen rushes to my side.

“Of course she’s not! She’s sitting on the ground and there’s puke over there!” Phoenix grumbles, pointing at where I got sick.

“Could the three of you just relax?” Vox adds from behind my other mates’ forms who have surrounded me and effectively pushed Summit and Eden out of the way.

“Uh, hi,” I squeak. “What are you all doing here?” Not that I don’t appreciate them being here for me, but it’s really unnecessary.

“We felt you get sick again,” Rhett explains as they all continue to fuss over me.

“Ah, yeah, well, about that,” I fumble trying to figure out how to tell my mates while making sure they understand this won’t stop me from fighting.

“She’s pregnant,” Summit answers, helping to just rip the bandaid off.

“YOU’RE WHAT!” Kelen shouts.

“Yeah, what she said,” I reply dryly, not wanting to have to say the words out loud yet. We hadn’t talked about having kids, if we wanted them, when we wanted them. I feel like I’ve now taken the chance to make those decisions away from them. I’ve always wanted kids. It’s been one of the greatest wants in my life to be a mom; I just didn’t think it would happen unplanned and before a big fight.

“Aren’t you excited?” Vox asks. “This is fantastic news! We’re going to be parents and bring a new life into this world. It’s magical.” I can hear the excitement in his voice. Each of

my mates look extremely excited at the news. It appears I'm the only one panicking about it.

"You all want this baby?" I ask hesitantly. I still can't believe they are excited.

"Babies," Eden adds from somewhere behind me with a smile.

"WHAT!?" my head whips around. TWO! I can't handle twins right now!

"How many?" Kelen asks. This time, I can hear the hesitation in his voice.

"Twins, I believe. We shouldn't be surprised since Sage is a triplet. Be happy it's only two. Carrying the three of you was hell." My mom laughs like that will help the situation right now.

All around me, everyone is talking about what to expect and the excitement of more kids joining the family, but all I can feel is dread. The excitement I always expected to feel at being pregnant isn't quite there just yet. I was already contemplating the risks of being pregnant with one child while fighting Velnias and the Shadowed Thorne, but being pregnant with twins? That's just something I'm not sure I can risk at all. My mind travels down all the what-ifs, leaving me spinning, trying to find the right answers to the questions that I'm not even sure are the right ones to be asking myself. Over and over, I repeat the process until someone breaks the cycle in my mind for me.

"*Sage?*" Summit's voice breaks through the chaos going on in my mind. "*You don't need to be scared. All of us will support you. This is an exciting moment. Leave the what-ifs and scary thoughts behind. Take things one day at a time. That's all you can do.*"

I don't answer her, only give a slight nod of my head that I heard her before doing exactly what she says. I leave the thoughts, the fears, behind and start to focus on what a blessing this will be for all of us. Bringing new life into this world is a wonder, and I am truly blessed I can do it.

“What is all the yammering and excitement about in here?” Lilith shouts, entering the room. “And why is Sage on the ground? Help her up already!”

“We’re having babies!” Kelen turns around explaining.

“Oh fuck yeah! Congrats to all of you!” Lilith pushes my mates to the side and comes to give me a hug and whisper in my ear. “Don’t let them tell you that you can’t fight while pregnant. All the women in this room can tell you that you can.”

“Thank you,” I whisper, hugging her back. That was the advice that I needed to hear.

“Alright, it’s time to start training in spirit magic. Everyone who doesn’t have it, get out!” Lilith commands, her gray and white hair flipping around behind her as she stands and glares at my mates.

I watch on as each of them try to argue with her to let the training wait so we can celebrate, but it’s a hard no from her. Summit helps me to stand as I watch my mates finally relent and realize they are getting absolutely nowhere with the demon vampire hybrid. If anything, they were working towards her kicking their asses if they didn’t listen. That thought made me laugh since they are just super protective over me. It only took another minute or two for my mates to each give me a hug and kiss in congratulations before promising to see me later to celebrate our babies.

“I have an idea that may help Sage connect with her Spirit powers,” Cazimir states after everyone has left the room. “Since her powers are focused on love and justice, she brings peace to those around her. Let’s turn that power inwards towards herself.”

“How am I supposed to do that?” I’m curious to see where he is going with this.

“Look inside yourself. Focus on the babies as you try to look for powers that you don’t recognize.”

In theory, his words would make sense, but I’m still somewhat confused. Instead of questioning it, I do what he

says, closing my eyes to focus on my babies. Now that I know about them, I can feel them inside me. They are still tiny, maybe four weeks along if I'm lucky. I can tell they are healthy and growing the way they should be.

"Good, Sage. That's good. Keep focusing on that," Cazimir's voice sounds distant.

After checking to make sure the babies are okay, I turn towards looking at the different powers within me. Deep inside, I can feel a power, one I don't recognize. It has a pink hue to it, buried behind my other powers.

"Perfect, Sage. That's so good. Your hands are glowing pink. You found your power." My father's proud voice breaks through my concentration.

Opening my eyes, I see what he is talking about. The Spirit magic is now encircling my hands. Finally, I was able to summon it. Only took me months to pull it off. "I actually did it," I whisper, surprised.

"Now, tell me what the magic is telling you to do. Let it guide you," Beckett explains.

"It feels calm," I place my hand on my stomach, not entirely sure why but letting the magic lead me. The glow in my hands encompasses my stomach, the same way Summit and Eden's did when they were helping my nausea pass.

"What are you doing?" Lilith's concerned voice breaks my concentration.

"Healing. My magic wants to heal the last of the nausea I'm feeling." I pull my hand away, feeling completely better. The power doesn't disappear, though; it's still surrounding my hands.

"Sage, you can put your power away now," Cazimir states. "You have the power of healing. I'm not surprised since your soul is full of light and good, like your goddess powers. They complement one another."

"Wait. There's another power. It wants something else," I explain, hoping they can help me figure it out.

“Okay, what does it want you to do?” Lilith asks, moving closer.

“Command,” I answer confidently. “My power wants to command, control.”

“Okay,” Beckett hesitates. “Tell me to go do something. Something that I wouldn’t normally do.”

“Uh,” I pause, trying to think. At first I wanted to tell him to do something like hurt himself in some way, but I could feel my power revolting at that. *So it won’t let me command to injure.* “Cazimir,” I turn to look at him. “Give Summit a hug.”

I watch as his eyes open in shock, and he tries to fight the command, but he can’t. His feet drag as he tries to stop walking towards my twin. Right when he reaches her, I call him off. “You can stop, Cazimir.”

I knew commanding that would be risky, but I’m hoping they all understand. I needed something nice, something that wouldn’t hurt. My power approved of it as well.

“If it wasn’t for the fact I know you were just testing your power, I would kick your ass right now,” Lilith grumbles, pouting as Cazimir wraps his arms around her from behind and kisses the top of her head.

“I’m sorry. My power wouldn’t let me injure, so I had to find something else. I knew Daddy B wouldn’t be opposed to hugging all of us, so commanding him to do it was out. My power approved of it, though.” I shrug. “I think you’re right, Cazimir. My power is similar to my goddess powers.”

“She gets to command people, and I get visions! Ugh, that is so unfair,” my twin pouts.

I can’t help the laugh that escapes me at that. Only she would be jealous of something like this. “Dude, even if we switched powers, you couldn’t command someone to hurt themselves or another person, so it wouldn’t even be fun for you.”

“Uh,” her brain short circuits in front of us. “Fine, you’re right. Keep your stupid commands.” She crosses her arms across her chest.

We're twenty five with kids, well mine aren't here yet, but still, she still pouts like a child. It's hilarious. "Never change, Sis. Never change." I smile at her.

"Alright, that's enough, you two." Beckett breaks us apart. "Let's start training."

For the next three hours, all of us worked on not only my spirit powers but Summit's as well. It was hard and exhausting, but it also taught me so much. I was terrified when Cazimir and Lilith started cutting themselves just for me to practice healing them, but after they showed me how their skin would heal on its own, the fear disappeared, and I was able to focus on what they asked of me. By the end of our training session, I was so sick of seeing lacerations strictly for the sake of me healing them, but Summit was able to trigger one vision. All in all, it was somewhat successful. Beckett promised to arrange another training session in two days time for us after we took some time to rest. He also made us promise not to test our new powers unless one of the three of them were with us.

Now, it was time to go face my mates. Fingers crossed they were still excited and would hear me out on wanting to fight.





## CHAPTER 20

### EDEN

“Are you sure you want to take the twins to see the Seers? You know how they can be,” Marcus asks for what feels like the thousandth time since I told them a week ago of my plans.

“Yes. They will be fine. Both girls need to see everything in our world. The Seers are protected by the Gods, and they will need to be speaking with them when they begin their rule.” My mates have been thinking that I made this decision without weighing the risk. I know how dangerous the Seers can be. Hell, for the longest time, they scared me as well until I started to respect them and the role they play in our world. They may not be able to change our fates but them showing us their visions can be just as deadly.

All Gods are taught from a young age that you do not approach the Seers without an invitation or permission. Knowing the things they know can dramatically alter the fate of the world, which, in turn, pisses off the fates. That is something no one wants to experience. We aren't meant to know what the future possibilities are, but sometimes it's a necessary evil. Just like this visit. I trust both my daughters to understand the risks involved and not to use the information they learn for anything other than what it is. I trust them to not alter the paths we are all meant to take.

“Be careful, Mate. We all remember our last interactions with the Seers. I wouldn't wish that on anyone,” Beckett states, giving me a quick kiss before leaving the room.

I remember the first time my mates were all introduced to the Seers. It was also one of the first times I had met them. My mother, Athena, was escorting them to speak with the Seers after they had been summoned. I was still a teenager and had just started seeing Velnias. I thought the kings were a little scary back then, but it was nothing compared to the looks on their faces when they had returned with my mom from their visit.

Yeah, seeing the Seers tends to be shocking the first time.

“Are you sure you don’t want one of us to go with you?” Hunter starts. “We all know what a handful Summit can be.”

“She handled herself perfectly at Shadow Keep. Trust her to handle this,” Magnus adds, taking my side. At least one of my mates has faith the girls can handle this.

“Fine,” Ecko joins. “Take the girls. Be safe and please try to find Sarah. We need to have a chat with our oldest. This whole disappearing act is getting out of hand.”

“I will, Dear.” I kiss his cheek before heading towards the door. “Since I have the girls, how about you all try to go visit Storm if possible. Just check on him and Calista, and make sure they don’t need anything. Maybe try to prepare them for what is to come?”

Leaving them behind, I go to find the twins. I told them to meet me at the castle entrance by ten since Summit groaned when I tried to tell her eight. Little does she know, I had planned to show them around the God’s realm some more while we were there, but I guess that’s going to have to wait depending on how long the Seer’s take us. I know Summit is somewhat familiar with a small part of where I’m from, but Sage isn’t. I do know Athena has a plan to instate them fully within our community after we speak to the Seers. This should be interesting to see how Summit reacts. I know Sage will handle it calmly.

“Glad to see you both here on time,” I call out pleasantly surprised as I approach them.

“Caffeine. Only reason I’m standing here. That and this one,” Summit points to her twin as she rolls her eyes. Clearly, she woke up on the wrong side of the bed today.

“How are you feeling, Sage?” Yesterday was a big shock to her. I’m sure that her mates kept her up most of the night to talk about the twins. Whatever they decide, I will try to support her decision, but I also know none of us have much say in how this fight with Velnias is going to happen. We can keep her out of most of the fighting, but she is still going to see some, we all are. Knowing my daughters, Sage will want to stay on track since she isn’t far along right now anyway.

“Better. No morning sickness,” she pauses. “I guess there was a little, but I used my powers to heal the little bit I had.”

“Good. Did you stop by to see the doctors yesterday to see how far along you are for sure?” Hopefully, she doesn’t think I’m trying to be an overbearing mother. I missed getting to raise both my daughters. I missed most of Summit’s pregnancy since she snuck away to Hell. Who knows how Sage’s will progress since we won’t know what powers children have until they are born. At this point, everything is going to be a toss up, and all any of us can do is ride the wave until we get answers along the way.

“I did. My mates forced me to go as soon as we finished training with everyone. The nurse took a look and confirmed that I am five weeks along. She said I can continue to go about life as normal, and just be on the lookout for anything that feels wrong.” The smile on my daughter’s face is everything. I am so thankful she isn’t scared anymore about this new path of hers and is embracing her pregnancy fully.

“That’s good to hear. Let me know immediately if anything changes. I am so happy for you. I promise when things settle down, we will throw you a baby shower when you’re further along.” I pat her arm as I step between both my girls. “Ready to go?”

“She gets a baby shower, but I didn’t?” Summit grumbles from my right.

“Oh hush it, not everything is about you twenty four seven, Sis.” Sage jokes from the left. Summit laughs, and I’m betting she rolls her eyes.

“Besides. I don’t anticipate Sage sneaking off to Hell and having her pregnancy progress nine months in three,” Eden shot back with a look that made Summit pout even more but shut up all the same.

I’m focused on opening the portal in front of us when I address the girls. “Both of you,” I turn to look between them both before we leave, “are to be on your best behavior starting now. I will be bringing us as close to the Seers as we can get, but it will still be a bit of a hike. You will need to be respectful, and don’t mess around with one another.”

Both of them give me a nod of agreement before we step through the portal. The closest I could get us was the base of the mountain where the Seer’s Keep is hidden. It’s at least an hour hike to their door unless they are feeling generous and open one of the closer ones for us. I have a feeling they won’t be, though, since I know for a fact Sarah and Hades are here when they shouldn’t be, and the Seers are already pissed off.

That was the second reason I wanted to bring the twins to visit. Sarah needs help, and she is refusing to accept it. What she went through at her father’s hands was hard, and she thinks it didn’t affect her at all when we can all clearly see that it did. My mates don’t believe me that she’s here, but I know my daughter. She came here searching for answers to questions she’s always wondered—answers as to why she has the power to take others powers, why she is the daughter of someone so evil, and, lastly, how her own flesh and blood could torture her the way he did. She never thought her father was good, but I know the little girl within her always had hope that maybe there was just something wrong with Velnias and that he just needed help. Now, she can see the full truth of who, and what, he is after he had her tortured relentlessly.

I can only hope that the Seer’s see how much she has been through recently, and they decide not to hurt her for her arriving without an invitation. If not, we will have a lot bigger issues on our hands today. That is something I don’t want to

deal with. My mother did promise she had been keeping an eye on both of them while here, so hopefully she got the Seers to play nice.

The hike doesn't take long with all of us lost in our thoughts. Thankfully, the twins had stopped their arguing and were both silent while we walked. Let's hope they continue to put their bickering aside right now and focus on the bigger picture. As we round the last corner of the mountain range, I finally see the black and gold door standing in front of us. The door marks the gate to the Seers compound. Once we enter, no longer will it look like we are in the middle of a mountain range but more like a city in the clouds. It's stunning, beautiful, and the most unique place in all the realms, or at least it is in my opinion. Growing up, I had wanted to spend more time here with the Seers, but Athena would never allow it. I'm glad she didn't, though, or I never would have met my mates and had all four of my kids.

"Goddess Eden, please enter through the gates with your daughters," a generic voice calls out as we step closer. The door in front of us opens, granting us entry inside their safe haven.

"Wow," Sage whispers from behind me.

"Remember what I said. Behave," I turn to glare at both my girls before entering through the door. It's like going through another portal. Everything goes bright white before the lights go down a little and our eyes adjust. I know both the twins have visited heaven, and this place is similar to that. Everything is brighter and whiter than our normal world.

"Goddesses, it is so good to see you here today. I know you all have questions and want answers. We have a couple things to show the twins. While we do that, Eden, you need to speak with our leader, Anastasia. She has two people here I believe you are looking for," the female waiting for us explains.

I turn to look at the twins behind me before I follow the male that is standing by to take me to speak with Anastasia. "We know, Mom. Go. We will be on our best behavior,"

Summit answers. With a nod, I turn around and move towards the male, following him towards their leader. Hopefully, cleaning up Sarah's mess won't take long, and I can get back to the twins to see what they are shown. I trust the girls to behave during our visit.

"Eden," Anastasia states the second I'm brought into her study. "It's good to see you again, though I wish it was under better circumstances."

Looking at the leader of the Seers, most people would be terrified. I was at first, but after that I realized she is a kind soul who is just protective of her people, their culture, and their powers. They are even more powerful than any of the gods combined. The only people that rival them are probably the fates. Anastasia's eyes are all white and the same with her hair. They stand in stark contrast to her deeply tanned skin. The most powerful Seers all have the same white eyes that she does. The next most powerful ones behind her have all bright blue eyes, similar to ice. I once asked Athena what the difference was, but she couldn't tell me anymore than that. She said it wasn't my business, and it was up to the Seers to explain it if they ever wanted to.

"I'm sorry to be here under these circumstances. Please tell me they didn't cause too many problems for you? Sarah has... gone through a hard time, and she still isn't totally back to herself yet." Defending my daughter comes naturally, even if she needs to accept whatever punishment the Seers deem fit for her.

"We know and understand that she has gone through a lot. It doesn't excuse her actions, but we also feel it doesn't benefit punishment either. Just take her home and get her some help." I can hear the worry in her tone. She knows Sarah needs help. I just don't know how to convince my daughter that she does.

"Did you?" I start, unable to finish my sentence. I'm not sure if I truly want the answer of whether or not they told Sarah anything.

"Get her help, and she will accept it," Anastasia explains. "We both know I can't tell you more than that. She is waiting

in the other room for you. Don't be mad at her. She felt like she didn't have a choice. Sarah understands now. She knows what needs to be done."

"Thank you, Anastasia. I...", I stutter trying to find the words. "I am so thankful for you helping her. I know all of my daughters are a handful. The twins most certainly remain one, even after all of this, especially Summit. I think Handful should have been her middle name."

"Summit will figure it out. Don't worry about her. The fire and passion that she has will do her well when she becomes Queen. Sage will help to level her out when she gets to be too much. Just like Summit will help Sage learn to be more outspoken and take bigger risks when needed." Anastasia stands from behind her desk. "I have one last question before I let you take Sarah home."

"What's the question?" I'm curious as to what she would want to know from me. I know they don't rely on their powers for everything, but they still have amazing intuition without their magic.

"Do you want to know what the twins are being shown or leave it up to them? They won't be allowed to tell you, or anyone for that matter, what they are being shown currently. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't even offer to disclose the information, but the world we live in... nothing about it is normal." She clasps her hands behind her back and turns to look out the window behind her. "This world will forever be changed after this battle no matter the outcome. I'm not sure if knowing the options and choices or not is the right decision, but we need all hands and minds available to fight."

"Will knowing help anything?" I hope she doesn't get me wrong. I want to know badly. However, I already know way too much as it is. If my knowledge will help, then yes, I want to know, but if it won't, then I have enough on my plate. I trust my daughters to make the right decision, and I have to trust them to do this.

"It may or it may not. I really can't give you that answer. Do you trust your daughters to do what needs to happen? No

matter what, will you let them do their jobs and not stop them, even if you want to protect them?”

Fuck, I really don't like the sound of that. A mother wants to protect her kids from everything. This whole thing with Velnias has left me unable to protect them. All four of them have had to face things no one should ever have to. How does a parent accept that they can't take care of their kids and fight their battles for them? It's hard, and the decision I'm about to make is even harder. I just hope that not only my mates will forgive me, but that I can forgive myself as well.

Closing my eyes, I take a deep breath and give the answer that I know is right, even if it's the one that is going to hurt me the most. “Don't tell me. The twins can handle this themselves. They need to learn how to make decisions on their own without a parent being there to help them. They are adults, with mates, and children. They can do this without me butting in trying to protect them.”

“I respect that decision. You are a fantastic mom for it. Go get your daughters and take them home. Oh, but leave Hades behind. I'll have him catch up to you all.” Anastasia keeps her back to me, signifying my dismissal.

“Thank you, Anastasia. I won't forget the kindness you have shown my family today.” I will forever be grateful for the things she has done. Leaving the room, I go in search of my oldest daughter. She and I need to have a nice long talk about this behavior of hers. I only bought her so much time, but she is going to need to face the wrath of her fathers after this.

As Anastasia promised, Sarah and Hades are waiting in the other room for me. “Mom,” Sarah almost shouts, jumping to her feet and running to hug me. “Thank god you're here. Am I in trouble?”

“No. This time you aren't, but you could have been. What the hell were you thinking by coming here?” I scold, pulling back from her to see her expression.

“I wasn't, Mom. I was lost, confused, and scared. I wasn't in my right mind.” She's terrified at what she's done. I can see



it in her eyes and hear it in her voice. Good. That means she's finally ready to listen.

"When we get back, you will be staying with Athena for a couple weeks until she decides you are strong enough mentally to fight. You will listen to her rules and follow them. Understood?" My voice is cold. She needs to know that I mean business right now.

"Yes. I'll stay with Grandmother. I know that I need to get myself straight." She steps back and moves into her mate's side, seeking his comfort. I'm glad she has him to support her. She needs someone in her corner at all times.

"Hades, you need to stay here. Anastasia wants to talk to you alone." I walk towards the exit of the room where there is someone waiting to escort us out. "Sarah will be with Athena waiting for your return. Don't piss Anastasia off even more, please," I remind my son-in-law.

"No, I'm not leaving without him." Sarah begs, clinging to him. It breaks my heart to see her so out of character. I'm glad she's ready to accept help to begin healing. She's always been so independent.

"Sarah, stop," Hades starts before I can. "I will be fine here. Anastasia and I are good friends and overdue for a chat. Go be with your grandmother."

I can see the tears in my daughter's eyes from where I stand at the door. Hades has been the crutch she's been leaning on for weeks. I hope he realizes that and takes a step back so Sarah can remember how strong she is on her own.

"I love you, Sarah. I promise you will be okay, and we will be okay." Hades hugs and kisses her before pushing her towards me. I can see the look in his eyes. We both know she won't leave him behind unless I physically take her away.

"Sarah, now. I won't ask you again." My tone is hard, leaving no room for argument. Sarah can see I mean business and moves to my side. I grab her wrist, pulling her ahead of me to go find her sisters. I hope they found the answers they

needed from this visit. Overall, this visit should have helped each of my girls in their own ways.



## CHAPTER 21

### SUMMIT

For the past week the visions the Seers showed Sage and me haven't left my mind. So many different options and possibilities exist. Everything could go right or wrong. Each little decision we make could change the visions. The Seers never told us what decisions we should or shouldn't make; they only showed us the different outcomes. Since those visions, I have been terrified to do the wrong thing. Every waking moment has been spent practicing every form of fighting: magic, non-magic, and as my wolf.

"Summit, for the last time, you need to take a deep breath and relax. All this training isn't helping you, or anyone for that matter." Asher has been in here begging me to stop for the past two hours.

He doesn't understand; none of them do. I can't tell them what I saw, which just makes this harder. I need to know that I'm ready, that I can take on every possibility and react without thinking. All of my magic needs to come naturally to me without hesitation. I'm almost there. I can feel it. Once in a while, I still struggle with a few of my vampiric powers combining with my demonic powers. Lilith said I was just overthinking it, but I'm not entirely sure if that's true.

"I can't, Asher. You don't understand," I plead for him to drop it.

"Then tell me so that I can!" he shouts, his hands twisting into his hair.

I hate seeing my mates angry or frustrated with me. “I CAN’T!” I almost fall to my knees. “I am so sick of having the same damn argument with you, with all of you. Please just trust me to know what I’m doing.”

“Summit,” Asher’s voice softens as he gets closer to me. “I trust you. We all trust you. We’re just worried. You have shut all of us out for a week, you barely sleep, and I’m almost positive you aren’t eating unless I come in here and physically make you.”

Shit. They have been watching me more closely than I thought. I’ve barely been eating one meal a day with everything going on. It’s one of my stress reactions. I don’t mean to skip meals. I just forget to eat and just keep on going, pushing myself to get things done. I’m horrible at taking care of myself when I get wrapped up in my head with things, which is exactly what has happened now. I need to get a better handle on myself so my mates can stop worrying.

Right when I’m about to answer Asher, we’re interrupted by Lilith rushing into the training room. “We need to go now! It’s all hands on deck!” she shouts before turning around to rush back out of the room.

“What’s happening!?” I shout at her retreating form. With a quick look to Asher, we both make the decision to chase after her. Too bad she is already gone having used her vampire speed. With myself being in the lead, I decide to go find my fathers instead. We all knew this moment would be coming eventually and agreed to meet in the war room to decide on our first moves.

With every step I take, my panic rises more and more. This is what I was preparing for—this fight to begin—but it doesn’t make me any calmer at this moment. I’ve been on edge for days, and now I feel like I am about to break. When Asher and I reach the entrance to the war room, he grabs me and pulls me back against the wall.

“Summit, you need to take a deep breath before you walk in that room. You’re panicking. I can feel it and see it.” Asher

kisses me hard, completely distracting me and getting my brain to shut off for a minute.

I kiss him back harder, pulling him against me as I moan into his mouth. If I could keep kissing him, I would, especially if I could fuck him here and now. After all, sex is a good stress reliever.

“We don’t have time for your shit, let’s go,” Sage growls, walking past us into the room.

Asher and I break apart laughing before we follow her. I’m sure I am going to hear a lot of shit about this soon. I won’t ever apologize for kissing my mates. Who knows how many kisses we will get in the coming days? We should all take the moments that we can. Asher just reminded me of that.

“Alright, we are missing a couple people, but they can be filled in upon arrival. The Shadowed Thorne is attacking Shadow Keep Penitentiary right now,” Beckett explains from his spot at the head of the table.

“I thought we took care of the guards that had infiltrated.” My brows scrunch as I look at my father. This was something we had dealt with weeks ago, so how did this happen now?

“It appears there was one or two we missed. That will be dealt with now. We need to get there and stop them. No one, and I mean not one of those prisoners, can get out. We will have a much bigger fight on our hands if they do.” Beckett slams his hand on the table. “Move out, people!”

His words get all of us moving out the door immediately. “Those who can open portals, do it at the main entrance,” my father shouts behind us. Shit, I won’t get to jump right into battle because I’m one of the few who knows where to open the portal to.

“Damn it, Dad,” I grumble under my breath, heading towards the main entrance. I guess the secret prison isn’t so secret anymore.

When we reach the main doors, I see two portals already opened by two of my fathers with teams streaming through them heading to the fight. I guess the one thing all the prison

seal battles gave us is the ability to be organized in our portal travel. There's no confusion and everyone is already waiting with their teams. Those who are still waiting on some members are the ones we passed before exiting the front door.

"I'll catch up with you all. I need to open another portal to help," I tell Asher before giving him a quick kiss on the cheek and heading towards my fathers.

Making my way around the waiting teams was a little difficult. We have a lot of people to move in a short amount of time, and this is only a fraction of the army my parents have gathered to fight. This is nothing like what it will be for the final battle. When I reach the front, next to Old Man Mags, I call on my goddess powers, the red magic pouring from my hands and forming into a portal. Beside me, I see Violet creating an additional portal with her magic.

"My portal's ready!" I shout. "Next team come forward!"

Team after team steps through each of our portals. With four of us working, it doesn't take long to get everyone. I see Asher still hanging around waiting on me, but my other mates have already gone ahead with my father's insistence that they were needed ahead of us.

"Summit, Violet, close both your portals and come through mine. The fight has already started, and they need you," Old Man Mags instructs both of us from his spot beside me. "Give 'em hell, and make sure no one escapes, no matter what."

I can hear the fear in my father's voice even with him trying to hide it. He's worried about what will happen during this battle, and I don't blame him either. I remember what walking into that prison was like—scary, and even with none of the prisoners having access to their magic, I could still tell they were extremely powerful and psychotic. My father is right that none of them can escape, and if they do, they can't be left alive. It's too much of a risk for this world.

I give him a tight nod, pulling my magic back inside me to close the portal. When it's done, Asher steps up beside me and grasps my hand tightly before guiding us through my father's portal.

“We got this, Sir. No one will be escaping. I have a few enemies within those walls that I would much prefer to not see again if we can avoid it.” With his final words, Asher pulls me through the portal beside him.

The second we’re through, I realize that I forgot a coat and start to freeze my ass off. My father managed to open a portal even closer than the one we had originally taken, unlike the portals Violet and I opened at our original location. I assume he decided to risk it due to the circumstances. I look out off the edge of the cliff and can see the fighting already taking place near the protective shield of the prison. This isn’t good at all.

“Asher,” I turn to look at him, my eyes filled with worry.

“Don’t, Summit. Bury it now. Be the badass you are. Summon your wings, and let’s get in the middle of this. Your other mates could use our help.”

Now that he mentions it I can see Xavier and Niklaus fighting as their wolves side-by-side. One jumps on an opponent as the other bites their head off. It’s gruesome but effective, and that’s all that matters right now. Lincoln and Zeke are tag teaming their enemies as well, each of them take a turn to attack while the other defends. Together they are making quick work cutting through the Shadowed Thorne that are trying to reach the invisibility shield.

Bodies litter the ground already, and there’s still more coming from the ridge on the far side of the battlefield. We have to find a way to cut them off, to stop them before they can get more of their people here. A loud roar can be heard right behind where Asher and I stand, causing me to turn around just in time to see Sage riding on Lerne’s back overhead into the battle. Situated behind her is Kelen who has created some sort of magical arrow that he is shooting down into the fight. It’s brilliant really.

Wasting no more time, I straighten my back and let my wings form and expand. With a couple quick flaps to adjust to their weight, I prepare to take off into the air shouting at Asher, “Catch me if you can!” With that, I leap off the cliff

edge and fly straight into battle behind my sister. In my right hand, I create red energy balls, and in my left, I summon fireballs. Originally, I had thought of using the water in the air to create ice balls, but since I was freezing my ass off, I decided fire would be better, so I could try to warm myself at the same time.

From my vantage point flying above the fight, I was able to see everything going on. When it looked like some of our people were in trouble, I joined in by firing my magic in their direction to give them a chance to recoup and finish their enemy off. It didn't take long for others to realize we were attacking from the sky as well as the ground. Several people tried to launch arrows and magic in the sky towards my sister, but they bounced right off. I guess she had the brilliant idea to protect herself with a shield underneath her. Too bad I realized it too late. I was so focused on what my sister was doing that I missed the arrow flying in my direction. It hit me in the stomach, piercing my side. Immediately, I began to fall, unable to keep myself in the sky. The pain is unbearable as I feel whatever magic it was laced with spreading through my veins quickly. My body is already seizing up, preventing me from stopping my fall. I try to focus on finding my healing magic, placing both hands where the arrow hit me, but the poison is spreading faster than I can heal myself.

“SUMMIT!” I hear Asher screaming right before I land in his arms as he swoops underneath to catch me. “I got you, just keep breathing. Please don't close your eyes.”

“I'm trying. It hurts. Don't touch the arrow,” I moan, as pain shoots through me, causing me to arch my back and almost fall out of his arms. His grip on me tightens so I don't fall. “It's laced with something. Get me to Lilith.”

“You don't need, Lilith. Zeke and I can heal you. The arrow was laced with a demonic poison. I know what to do, but I need to get you somewhere safe,” his voice rough as he focuses on getting us away from the fight.

He lands us right in front of the invisibility shield to the prison. It's not the safest spot in my opinion, but I'm not exactly in a position to argue right now. I'm more focused on



trying to keep my eyes open and slow the poison as best as I can. “I really hope you can work fast. The small amount of healing powers I have aren’t exactly doing anything to slow this.”

“They wouldn’t. This demonic poison is meant to attack angelic blood,” Asher explains as he gently places me on the ground. “Move your hands. I need to get the arrow out of you.”

I give a small shake of my head, not wanting him to touch it, but I’m too weak to fight him. He easily pushes my hand to the sides, yanking the arrow out of me as I scream out in agony. Placing his hands against the wound, I can feel the site it pierced starting to heat up before I see black magic being pulled out of the wound. Him being the King of Hell is definitely useful at the moment. If he had told me to use my demonic powers to heal myself, though, I would have.

“Zeke!” Asher shouts as he continues to work.

Turning my head, I see my vampire mate rushing towards us. I am almost certain he was a lot further away, but he must have had his hearing attuned to us in case anyone called for him. In no time, he’s kneeling on my other side as Asher continues to work on me.

“Linc,” I mumble, feeling better but still extremely weak. I’m worried about him fighting without everyone having his back.

“He’s fine. You come first. Now, drink!” He shoves his wrist in front of my mouth, pushing against my lips when I don’t bite immediately. “You need the blood to heal and get energy. The longer you take, the more at risk we all are. DRINK!” He commands, pushing his wrist past my lips.

Grabbing his arm, I open wide and bite deep, nicking his vein. Immediately, his warm blood flows past my lips and down my throat. I take several deep gulps before I feel my body starting to regain its strength. At the same time, Asher finally pulls his hands away and watches as my side stitches itself back together thanks to the blood Zeke is feeding me. I

can feel that he is infusing his healing powers into it, trying to make sure Asher got all of the poison out of me.

“That’s enough,” Zeke states, pulling his arm away as I moan trying to keep him closer. “Summit, enough, Baby. We are in the middle of battle. I can’t fuck you, and neither can Asher.” He chuckles when I finally release his arm and glare.

*Fucker.*

“Oh, don’t give me that look right now.” Zeke stands, helping to pull me to my feet. “I need to get back to Lincoln. Summit, get behind the shield. Asher, go with her. I overheard Beckett and Marcus say there was an issue with some of the security guards and prisoners”

“Shit!” I burst forward running to the shield and leaving my mates behind. If that fucker, Gael, managed to persuade a guard to free him, I’m going to kill him myself. He will forever rot in the prison like the piece of despicable shit he is. I won’t let Velnias take any of these prisoners to his side. Not even over my dead body.

The shield doesn’t repel me as I push my way through its magic. If anything, it feels easier to walk through than the first time, which isn’t good. I hope the magic isn’t lacking. When I reach the other side, I see an ugly scene before me. There is blood and bodies sprinkled around the entrance to the prison and not a soul in sight. The front door is wide open, and I can hear the shouts from within.

Using my enhanced speed, I make it through the front doors in no time and see Beckett and Marcus fighting a handful of guards each. Marcus is facing them as his wolf and tearing each guard to shreds when he gets his jaws around them. Beckett is dodging magic attacks and snapping guards’ necks while helping to keep them off of Marcus’s back. I’m shocked, stuck standing still as I watch them fight. I know I’ve seen them fight before but never at this level. I never knew someone could move as fast as they both are. Neither is using their magic, just their pure strength. I’m almost left wondering why Zeke sent us in here to help because it really looks like they have it handled until I see it, or more specifically him.

Gael.

The slimy fucker is behind the guards, banging against the final gate as he tells them to hurry up and unlock it. That is exactly what we came here to prevent. Behind him, I can see several other prisoners just biding their time, waiting to be released. Everything is about to go to hell the second they get that door unlocked. It leaves me with two options. We either figure out a way to keep that door locked immediately, or we figure out a way to kill all the prisoners, neither of which we have the time to truly work through right now.

“Summit! Asher! Go stop that guard from opening that gate no matter what you have to do!” Beckett shouts as he zooms right past us.

I look to Asher and give him a small nod before we rush forward past all the fighting and go directly to the two guards trying to open the gate. “Are you sure you want to be doing that?” I call out when we reach them.

Their surprise at our entrance causes the one to drop the keys as he spins to look at us. His face is filled with terror as he gives me a small shake of his head no. That alone lets me know someone else is pulling the strings here. The question is, who?

I let Asher focus on grabbing the keys as I look around to see who could be forcing them. Everyone seems so focused on the different fights, I don't notice who it is until it's too late.

“Well look who it is. The famed Princess has returned to play. Did you miss me?” Gael calls out, making me turn back in his direction. His words distract me as a guard hits the back of my head from behind. Too bad she didn't put enough force behind it because it only caused me to fall forward and have to catch myself on the bars. The very same bars that Gael had his hands wrapped around. If only I had landed my hand one bar to the left we would have touched and I could have sent him flying backwards. The asshole realized the precarious situation he was in and pulled his hands away from the bar immediately. The female guard shoved my face into the bars as her knee jammed into my back holding me in place.

“Unlock the bars now, and let him out!” she demands, putting pressure in the center of my back, causing it to bend in an unsafe way. Weighing my options, I realize the only thing I can do right now is what she asks. I can sense Asher still fighting the other prison guard, leaving me to deal with this myself. It’s a risk to even let just Gael out, when we have no way to kill him yet, but it’s one I’m going to have to make if we’re to get through this.

Since I know Asher didn’t have time to grab the keys, I let my fingers fumble beneath me as I try to feel for the keys the other guard dropped. Eventually, my pinky brushes against a key ring, and I manage to grasp onto it, lifting it into the lock. “Only Gael goes free,” I groan as she presses my face harder against the bars while I place the key in the hole.

I see the asshole give a small nod to the female holding me. “Deal.”

Turning the key, I hear the lock snap free at the same time the female pulls me away from the gate. Gael rushes past just as I slam the gate closed with my foot. The second he’s free, the female guard forgets about me, giving me time to get the door locked once again. In that moment, the worst thing imaginable happens.

I turn to join the fight after pocketing the key, only to see Gael engaged in a fight with both Marcus and Beckett. Asher already has his hand wrapped around the female guard’s neck who forced me to open the door. Knowing I can’t leave my fathers to fight alone, I focus on the guards surrounding them, using every power I can to either knock them unconscious or kill them. I let my powers of war consume me, blind me, guide me, until no one is left standing. Bodies and blood surround me as I look at the chaos I caused in my wrath to protect my fathers. Only it was too late. Gael has his teeth dug into Marcus’s wolf’s throat as he holds his body in the air against him.

“NO!” I scream, pure terror rising within me as I see the life drain out of my father’s eyes. Marcus was the first father I met. He took me under his wing and taught me how to be the

wolf I am today. His death is destroying me, and there's nothing I can do to save him.

Rushing forward, I slam into an invisible shield. Over and over, I beat my fist against it, trying to break the magic preventing me from getting in. I get nowhere as I watch Gael fling my father's dead wolf against the shield right where I stand.

With a roar, I watch as Daddy B pushes himself to his feet and charges forward, hitting Gael in the gut and pinning him against the other side of the shield. My eyes drop from their fight as I fall to my knees staring at Marcus. Tears blur my vision as I sob. I can feel Asher come up behind me and wrap me in his arms. I can't make out what he's saying between the sobs. All I can focus on is my father, the first parent we met who helped to introduce us to this world, protect us, and teach us to thrive, dead in front of me. He won't get to watch Sage and me be crowned Queen. He won't be there to watch all the grandkids grow up. So many memories he is going to miss out on.

"Summit! You need to get it together," Asher pleads, shaking me. "I need you to bury the grief just a little longer. We need to save Beckett before Gael kills him, too. Together, I think we can break this shield, but it's going to take a ton of magic."

"No, no, Daddy," I plead, hitting the shield again. "You can't leave us! It's not fair!"

"SUMMIT!" Asher screams, turning me in his arms and slapping me.

"What the fuck, Asher!" I scream, lunging to push him away from me.

"I'm sorry, but I need to snap you out of it. I know you're distraught, but the fight isn't over yet. We need to save your other father unless you want to lose two of them today." His voice is a mix of apologetic and cold as he looks between me and the fight within the shield.

I lift my eyes to see Beckett struggling in his fight against Gael. Both are bleeding from several places and already have several bruises and black eyes. The spell I placed upon Gael is the only thing that appears to be letting my father have the upper hand. Every hit that Gael lands sends him flying backwards, giving my father a chance to recoup before his next attack.

“Okay,” I turn towards Asher. “What do we need to do?”

“I want you to place your hand against the shield and summon every bit of magic within you. We need to overload the shield.”

His instructions are simple. Thankfully I have a shit ton of different magics within me to help with that, and since he is the King of Hell, he has a lot of power himself. Standing, I follow his lead, placing my hand upon the shield and pushing my magic forward.

“What are we going to do when this breaks? My fathers said they didn’t know how to kill Gael. It’s why he was imprisoned. They said the Holy Sword or the Sword of Hell would work, but they don’t have access to either of them.” Our first priority is breaking this shield, but we still don’t have a way to stop him, and without it, I have no idea what our next move would be.

“The Holy Sword has already answered to you once. It may again if you focus on your angelic powers and ask for it.” Asher shrugs before sighing.

“Why did you sigh?” I turn to look at him, confused.

“The Sword of Hellfire is a different story. It won’t answer to just anyone. The last person to wield it in its true form was Lilith. I’ve tried to summon it, and I can’t.”

“And,” I push when it’s clear he isn’t going to finish his thought.

“And there is a possibility you would be able to summon it, but I can’t teach you how; it’s something you have to figure out for yourself. It’s extremely risky, though. Both swords are powerful, and if Gael were to get his hands on them in any

way, it could mean a lot more death and destruction.” Asher’s terrified. I can hear it in his voice as he explains both options.

What the hell is Gael if he has so many people terrified of him including my fathers and the King of Hell? My thought process gets shut down immediately when I feel the shield finally give way to our overload of magic, and it disappears.

“Summit! No!” Beckett shouts, turning around to run towards Asher and me when he feels the magic break. “Run!”

Fuck! I think my father was the one who had created the shield, not Gael, and if that’s the case...“Oh fuck!” Asher get the fuck out of here! It wasn’t Gael who created the shield!” I push him to get behind me and run as Beckett makes his way to me.

My fuck up gives Gael the opening he was waiting for. I see the moment he creates a sword out of nothing and runs after my father, stabbing him right through the heart. I watch as he pulls the sword from my father’s chest and lets his body drop to the ground.

“Velnias wants you alive, Summit, otherwise you would be next,” he spits at my dying father’s body before turning his back on me to walk towards the exit.

Oh fuck no. This asshole doesn’t get to kill two of my fathers in front of me and just walk away. I let my rage take over once again, focusing on all the pain and suffering Gael has brought to my family. I let it guide me as I summon all of my magic to my right hand to create a sword, one I hope is powerful enough to kill him. Running after him, I catch up right before he makes it to the door. With my left hand, I create a shield in front of him to block him from exiting.

“Face me you, Asshole,” I roar, bringing the sword in front of me and holding it with both hands.

The second he turns around, I see a terrified expression upon his face, but I don’t give it a second thought before I swing the sword clean through his neck, his body and head falling to the ground. I watch as his head rolls across the floor, coming to a stop nearby. When it does, I finally release the

breath I was holding and let the sword hang from my hand at my side.

“Summit!” Asher shouts. “Get over here now! Beckett doesn’t have long.”

Rushing to his side, I drop to my knees and pull my father’s head into my lap. “It’s okay, Daddy B. I killed him for you. Gael is gone.”

“Thank,” he sputters, coughing up blood. “You. You need to put that sword away now.” He commands in a whisper. “I don’t know how you did it, but being able to both wield and summon not only the Holy Sword but the Sword of Hellfire is something no supernatural has been able to do before. Don’t let anyone find out.” He coughs again as more blood pours from his mouth and the wound from his chest.

“I won’t, Dad. I promise,” I swear, running my hand through his dark hair to push it out of his face. “Just try to breathe, someone will be here soon to fix you.” I cry, watching one of my tears drop onto his face.

“They won’t make it.” He coughs again. “I have one last thing to tell you. Only because I made everyone swear to keep it a secret from you, but it’s time you know.”

“No! Save your breath. You can tell me when you’re better,” I plead through the sobs.

“That Dracula myth you are so obsessed with,” he chuckles, causing himself to cough up more blood. “It’s based on me. The castle is yours. I made sure Lilith put it in your name the day your mates came back from their little camping trip.”

“YOUR DRACULA!” I shout, laughing through the tears. Almost forgetting that he is dying in my arms. Of course my own father would be the reason for one of my favorite myths. Damn, my family is amazing.

“I am,” Beckett laughs with me on his dying breaths. “I love you Summit. Tell,” he coughs once more. “Tell your mom and sisters that I love them, too. You all were and forever will be my reason for existing. You and Sage will make amazing



Queens. Don't let our deaths..." he pauses to look at Marcus's dead body nearby. "Don't let both our deaths go to waste."

With his last words, I watch my father close his eyes and take his last breath before his body goes still, death finally claiming him.



## CHAPTER 22

### XAVIER

A month has passed since the loss of Beckett and Marcus. Summit took it hard, crying in our room for days on end. The only people she let near her were Harlow, Asher, Eden, Sage, Magnus, Hunter, and Ecko. I tried to enter her room, but she sent a blast of air at me, pushing me out the door and shutting it in my face. Lincoln and Zeke both got the same treatment as well. Asher could only give us a pity look as he went in and out with her food. He kept telling us to give her time, but it was something I couldn't keep giving her. After two weeks I had finally had enough. I changed into my wolf when she was sleeping and snuck into bed with her. It was the only way she would let me near her. In her sleep, she would curl herself into my wolf, taking my heat.

Those nights were how my wolf helped me to remain calm throughout the day, throughout the chaos that had taken over all our lives. We knew Velnias would make a move, but no one expected it to be what it was. Thanks to everyone's quick thinking, the only prisoner that escaped is also dead. Summit and Asher refuse to tell anyone how he died. They insisted it wasn't important, which means it is, but they are protecting someone. Ecko tried to push them to get answers but was practically thrown out of our whole suite the second he did. After that, he made sure not to ask anything again.

“Xavier, we need to find a way to get Summit out of that room. I can feel the fight coming. She needs to be in the right

headspace,” my father-in-law, Hunter, pushes for what feels like the thousandth time.

I know how important it is to get her out of the room and out of bed, but how do you convince your mate, who witnessed two of her fathers die in front of her, to get it together. She needs to grieve, all of us need to grieve. All of us thought we were doing the right thing by letting her take her time to sort through everything. Asher said it was a good thing that she was choosing to cry and sort out her emotions. It was better than the anger that he had expected. There was plenty of that, too, but she stopped threatening to kill each of us after the first twenty-four hours.

“I’ll work on it, Sir. It’s not the easiest thing to do, but we will figure it out.” *Somehow*, I add silently. I have a feeling the only way to get her out of bed is to piss her off, and I’m not sure I want to face her anger right now. Maybe I’ll leave that up to Asher or Lincoln.

“You have until this afternoon. If not, we will come drag her out of bed,” Hunter gives me a good glare before leaving our suite.

Whelp, this is going to be fun.

With Hunter gone, I head toward the master bedroom. Hesitantly, I slowly open the door, waiting to see if Summit is going to yell about it or not. When she doesn’t, I open it the rest of the way and step inside. It’s still early in her sense of the morning, so I’m not surprised to see her curled up on her right side and sound asleep with Asher wrapped around her. Looks like Harlow snuck in here last night, too, and is curled into Summit. The three of them look so peaceful, I almost don’t want to try to wake them, but I know time is of the essence now.

“Give her a few more minutes,” Asher whispers as he opens his eyes. I watch as he places a light kiss on Summit’s head then disentangles himself from her and gets out of bed, walking towards me. “Let’s talk outside.”

With one last look at my mate and daughter, I follow him back to the main living area. “Hunter just left.”

“I heard. When she wakes up, I’ll deal with her if you all could take Harlow. It’s going to get messy. He’s right though. She’s had time. It will never be enough time, but we have a war to fight. When everything’s said and done, more people will be dead. There’s no avoiding that, and she will have her time to grieve then.” Asher sighs, shaking his head as he moves to the kitchen. “I know the bond Summit had with both of them was strong. Though, I think it helped that, in Beckett’s final moments, he told her his secret. The times I’ve gotten her to talk about him, that’s the one thing that always makes her smile.”

“He told her?” Zeke chimes in as he rounds the corner from down the hall.

“Yeah, it was his final present to her.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised, but I am. I’m guessing he didn’t tell her anything else? Just the name he once went by?” Our vampire brother grabs a bag of blood from the small mini fridge on the counter. That was a new addition to our suite when he started staying here.

“And that she inherited his castle there,” Asher explains like it’s the most obvious thing in the world. We watch as he makes a steamy cup of hot cocoa and walks back towards the bedroom. “There’s a second cup on the counter. I’m going to wake Harlow and send her out if you could give it to her? Give me an hour, and I’ll have Summit ready to go.”

I give my brother a nod and go to grab the cup he left on the counter. “I just wish there was a way to help her.” I sigh, feeling my wolf whine. Neither of us like the idea of our mate suffering the way she is.

“Time. That’s the only thing we can do, and that will have to wait a little longer. Have faith, though, Brother,” Zeke pats me on the back. “Summit is stronger than we all give her credit for. A little pep talk, and she will be ready to take this world by storm.”

“I have faith. I just also know Summit has a way bigger heart than she lets on. I can handle it when she’s angry, but this sadness drives my wolf and me insane because we can’t do

anything about it.” Before I can say anything further, I hear the little pitter-patters of our daughter heading our way. Turning around, I see her standing in the living room, her hair a mess of tangles as her face is still filled with sleep. Wrapped in her little arms is the stuffed dragon Old Man Mags got her when we first arrived in Blazing Clan. Grabbing the mug of hot cocoa from the counter where Asher left it, I head towards where my daughter stands waiting.

“Mine?” her soft voice questions when I kneel down in front of her.

“Yup, all yours, Sweetpea. Let’s get you dressed for the day while Daddy Zeke makes you food.” I pick her up and carry her down the hall to her room while she drinks the cocoa.

It doesn’t take long to get her ready for the day, and by the time she is almost done, I can hear Summit and Asher shouting. I’m almost positive they moved to the living since we could hear them down the hall. The second I hear Summit shout about putting her down, I start laughing, a full, deep belly laugh. Harlow still being young just gives me a weird look and a confused head tilt before she joins in as well.

“Let’s go rescue Daddy Asher before Mommy bites his head off.” I pick Harlow up once more and place her on my back for a piggy back ride. With every step I take, she keeps laughing all the way down the hallway. The closer we get, the less arguing I hear. Thank god they both decided fighting in front of Harlow was a horrible idea.

“Look who’s awake and dressed all pretty,” Summit coos when Harlow and I enter the living room. Placing Harlow down, I watch her run right past Summit and straight to the table where Zeke has what looks like chocolate chip pancakes waiting for her.

“Oh, I see how it is,” my mate rolls her eyes jokingly as she watches our daughter. I can still see the sadness in her eyes, but she’s trying to keep it together now that she was forced out of the little nest she had made in bed.

“Glad to see you’re out of bed,” I pull her in for a hug and hold her tightly. I press my nose to her throat and take a deep breath. The moment calms my wolf and me.

“I don’t want to be, but Asher didn’t give me a choice. He said Hunter came and told you the weather was changing, and it’s time for war.” She tries to turn in my hold to look at me, but I just lock my arms down around her, forcing her to submit and burrow deeper into my hold. “The thought of revenge is what is going to keep me together. Velnias will pay for taking two of my fathers from me. After, and only after, am I going to fall apart, and all of you will let me.”

There’s a bit of growl with her final sentence, one that she has every right to make. I’m just thankful to see her out of bed and some of the fight back in her. I will do anything and everything to keep the fight in her alive.

“Whatever you say, Babe.” I kiss her neck.

“X,” Summit whispers. “We need to send Harlow somewhere to be safe. I don’t want her anywhere near this fight. I already don’t like Calista being involved.”

“I know. We all have been thinking the same thing, trying to decide where she will be safest.” I lift my eyes to look at our adopted daughter. She’s only seven, almost eight, and has already been through more than any child should have been. Harlow is one tough little girl, and she definitely takes after Summit, but she also needs to be protected. She needs to be as far away from the war as possible.

“The Seers,” Summit whispers again. “They will keep her safe. It’s the safest place I can think of.”

“Are you sure?” I loosen my arms and turn her to face me. “The Seers don’t let just anyone in. Everyone knows to fear them for a reason.”

“I’m sure. They will do it.” She nods, leaning up to kiss me softly. “Let me go talk to Eden. I’ll be back in a couple minutes.” Before I have a chance to stop her, or tell her that I’m coming with her, she zips off out of the room.

“Let her go, Xavier,” Zeke calls out from his seat beside Harlow. “She’s making the right choice. I’m actually pissed none of us thought of it.”

I take one last look at the door before moving to join them at the table. Who knows how long Summit is going to be? At this point, we should just celebrate the fact that she left our suite as a win.



“WE NEED TO LEAVE NOW,” Summit practically yells as she comes bursting into the suite. She’s been gone for about thirty minutes now, and I know all of us were starting to get worried. Knowing our mate, it would be a toss up of what new mess she landed herself in this time, but it’s always interesting to find out and try to swoop in and save her, even though she’s proven over and over again that she is perfectly capable of saving herself.

“Do we have time to pack anything?” I stand, approaching her slowly.

“No. Athena will make sure Harlow gets everything she needs, and what my grandmother doesn’t bring for her Anastasia promised to already have. All the arrangements are made, but we need to leave immediately. There’s only a small window,” Summit explains while rushing around the suite. She was in and out of our bedroom and Harlow’s with all our jackets and shoes gathered. We watch as she drops them all in a pile in front of the table we’re all still near and commands, “put these on.”

With a quick glance between all of us, we do as she says. Summit helps Harlow into her shoes and jacket while the rest of us get our own. Even with my wolf hearing, I’m unable to hear what Summit is whispering to our little one. It’s all hushed tones and some head nods. When they’re done, she lifts Harlow into her arms and heads towards the door knowing full well each of us are ready and following.

We’d all follow her to the ends of the world and back.

None of us say a word as we follow her through the twists and turns of the hall leading us towards the exit. Each of us are on edge with everything that is about to come. At least our youngest daughter is going to be tucked away safely where no one can get to her while we wage war to bring peace to our world once more. All we can hope is that it will go in our favor to give both our daughters the lives they deserve.

Abruptly, my mate takes a right turn, moving towards the back gardens instead of the entrance to the castle, which caused Lincoln to crash right into me before we both caught ourselves and kept going. I gave him a confused look, trying to figure out just where she was taking us. Usually, when we portal places, we leave from the front, never the back.

“Uh, Summit,” Zeke hesitates, looking the same way we thought we were going.

You know it’s bad when even the vampire who has lived here for who knows how long is just as confused as the rest of us as to where we are going. Summit doesn’t even answer him but continues heading out the double sliding doors to the gardens in the back. She doesn’t pause, even as several people try to offer her condolences. The only thing that gives away exactly what their words are doing to her is how her back straightens even higher and she starts to stand taller as she walks, almost as if she’s putting up a wall around her to let the words bounce off.

That’s the funny thing about condolences. Everyone offers them, but usually that’s the last thing you want to hear, especially Summit. I haven’t had to see her deal with a lot of grief until now, but I can tell she has her own way of processing it. She either buries it deep within her and focuses on a million other things around her or she lets herself drown in it until there are no more tears to cry, and then she tries to hide from it with sleep. This time, it was the latter, and I’m not entirely sure if it was better. At least when she is trying to feel physical pain rather than emotional pain, we all know what to expect and can handle her. Not this time around.

“Perfect. You all made it on time, ” Eden calls out when she sees us round the last corner into the center of the garden



maze.

“Are they there to meet us?” Summit questions, leaving us in the dark as to who they are.

“Yes, but it won’t be like last time. You all have special circumstances, just remember—” Eden starts before she’s cut off.

“I know, no going past the gate.” Summit turns to look at us, her expression guarded. I can’t tell what about, but it’s not normal. She’s hiding something, and I have a feeling we should be worried about whatever it is.

“Good luck, kids.” Eden waves her hand, opening a shimmering white portal before us that’s almost blinding and so unlike any of the others we have gone through before.

One by one, we each step through with our mate and daughter in the lead, not knowing what exactly to expect. The only thing we do know is that it has to do with the Seers because Summit had mentioned Anastasia.

“Thank god you all made it in time. Now, we only have a small opening, so say your goodbyes. Your daughter will be safe here while you do what you need. Don’t any of you worry,” a tall female with all white hair and eyes calls out smiling.

I’ve heard rumors, we all have, about the leader of the Seers, but seeing her in person makes the hair on the back of my neck stand up. Very few people have had dealings with the Seers, and all of them have come back changed after it, and not always for the better. Just looking at this woman makes my wolf side come forward, not liking the idea of leaving our daughter in her care. Only with the reminder that Harlow would be safe here does my wolf back down enough to not take over.

Summit places Harlow down and scoots her towards us, instructing her to say her goodbyes to each of us. One at a time, our daughter approaches us men and gives us a big hug and kiss on the cheek before promising to see us soon and telling us to kick the bad guys’ butts for her. It’s cute as she

does it, each time remembering to not swear like she's heard her mother do a million times. Thank god our daughter learned when it was and wasn't appropriate to say those bad words. I still remember the day we caught her saying fuck. Summit thought it was the greatest thing ever, while Lincoln just about blew a gasket and had to sit her down and have a firm talk with her. After that, she learned to only swear around Mommy.

Asher was the last one to tell Harlow goodbye before she walked to Summit's side and turned to face the woman she would now be staying with for who knew how long.

"Mommy said you're a good friend and will take care of me. Does that mean you will help me practice my powers so I can learn cool new tricks to show my Mommy and Daddies when they get back?" Harlow's sweet little voice helps break the tension all of us are feeling.

Anastasia squats down to get on our daughter's level before answering. "You, my little one, will have a lot more control over your powers before you leave. You may even acquire some new ones while you are here. We will see. The future is never set in stone."

The leader of the Seers holds out her hand for Harlow to take, and without hesitation, we watch as she does. Then, she stands and looks at each of us before speaking once more. "May the fates be in your favor, for each of you. Good luck and godspeed." With a flash of bright light, both her and our daughter disappear from sight.

"Now, let's go kick a god's ass so we can put our family back together sooner rather than later," Summit calls out in a deadly calm voice and fire in her eyes once more.



## CHAPTER 23

SAGE

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Kelen asks once more as he follows me through the halls towards the war room. Everyone was told to gather there in the late morning for one final discussion of our plan. Things have been in place for weeks for our battle plans, but there are always the small details to go over to make sure a move like this will go off perfectly. We have too many moving pieces, too many bodies to keep track of. Just yesterday, we had an hour-long conversation to ensure that we had enough tents to house everyone because Vox thought that we were short about twenty. Turns out it was only five, but either way, it counts.

“Yes, someone needs to. I can’t stand by and do nothing. Velnias has taken so much from everyone, including two of my fathers. Summit is a mess right now after having to witness it. It’s my turn to step up and be the Queen our community needs.” I pause feeling the weight of those words. “There’s a reason we were destined to rule side by side. Together, we are stronger, but when one falls, the other is still there to do what needs done.”

“You’ve barely grieved, though.” Kelen grasps my arm, pulling me to a stop in one of the small alcoves. “I’m not trying to dissuade you because I don’t believe you are ready.”

“I know that, Kelen, and I am grateful that you are trying to look out for me.” I lean up on my tiptoes to give him a soft kiss. “I can handle this, I promise you.”

“Do you want us to at least get one of Summit’s mates to be in the meeting with us?” Kelen sighs, knowing that he isn’t going to stop me from attending this meeting. It’s the very last one before we leave this afternoon to go set up camp where the visions that Summit and I received showed us.

“They aren’t here,” I answer, trying to get around him before we’re late while also avoiding telling him where they are, not that I know exactly. Eden and Summit just told me they would be gone for a little bit to hide Harlow away and said the less anyone knows the better.

“Then where the hell are they?” He growls, blocking my path. I should have known my mate wouldn’t let this go. Not after everything we’ve all been through.

“Harlow couldn’t be left here. They are taking her somewhere that she will be safe. Ah,” I hold up my hand stopping him before he tries to cut me off. “I don’t know where, and that is exactly the point. The less people that know, the better to keep her safe so she can’t be used against any of us in the battle. We all know that we would give our lives to protect that little girl.”

“Not you. You’re not allowed to give your life for anyone or anything while you are growing our little twins inside of you.” He places his hand on my barely there stomach and leans forward to kiss me. “Promise me, Sage.”

“I can’t make that promise, Kelen. You should know that.” I sigh, tired of the same fight. This is exactly what I had been worried about when we found out I was carrying. “I will do my best to stay safe and keep our babies safe. They are my priority, but I will also do what needs done to stop Velnias and the Shadowed Thorne. Nothing you or anyone else says will change that.”

“Sage,” he starts before I pull out of his arms.

“Enough,” I shout. “We have been going in circles over this, and you will not win. Now, we have somewhere to be, so either come with me or don’t, but my decision will not change.” I turn away and enter the hallway once more. Ignoring the stares from several people passing by, I take the

last couple hallways, coming to a stop in front of the war room door. With a deep breath, I push the door open, feeling Kelen behind me. He's pissed, but he knows to leave our problems at the door before we enter.

“Thank god you both made it in time,” Sarah calls out from her seat. “Hurry, we need to get the show on the road.”

Kelen and I move to the two open seats that Vox had saved for us and take them quickly. The second we sit down, my father, Hunter, goes over the plan. Most of it is already stuff that we had discussed and had broken down. We wanted to move there today and get things set up so we would be ready when the war begins. Our best guess is it will only be a day, maybe two before the fighting starts. Most don't believe that Velnias will show up at first. The intelligence we have said that he is going to be sending just the Shadowed Thorne with some assistance from the Council to start with before coming at a later point when we are more exhausted and beaten down. His plan has merit, but we are also preparing for that. The teams have already been broken down and set up in waves so no one gets too exhausted or wears their magic out more than necessary.

“Sage,” my father pulls my attention to him. “We need to ask you something, and I know you aren't going to like it.”

“No,” I groan. “If you are about to ask me to stay here, it's not going to happen. I already told my mates, I will not sit back and hide behind everyone else. That is not going to be my place in this world. I already agreed to stay with Summit, and our mates will team up around us. It is the only promise I will make.”

“We understand,” Old Man Mags sighs. “You must understand that we had to ask. We just want to keep you and the twins safe. How about you stay towards the back during the first day of fighting? Once Velnias arrives, then you can join the main fight. Is that enough?”

Before answering I take a moment to truly think about what they are asking of me. It isn't too much to give them this. They aren't keeping me out of the fight; they are just asking

that I wait to join until our main opponent arrives. That is something I can agree to.

“Sure. I will stay in the healers tent for the first day, trying to assist them as best as I can with these new found powers. Once Velnias arrives, then I will go fight.”

I can feel the tension around the room lessen with my agreement. I guess everyone was truly worried about me. I guess I can't blame them considering we just lost Beckett and Marcus during the prison fight. No one wants to take any risks that something will happen to me or the kids.

“Thank you for that, daughter,” Magnus smiles warmly. “Now that concludes our meeting. The others should be back shortly, and then we will leave. Make sure you have everything packed and ready to go in two hours tops.”

Agreements are heard around the room as everyone gets up and takes their leave. I wait until everyone exits the room before standing. I know my mates are going to want to talk while we pack the last of the items we need. Most of us have been ready for the last couple days.

“Thank you for agreeing to that, Kaida.” Phoenix pulls me into his arms, kissing the top of my head. “We all will feel better having you only involved when needed. You will do well assisting the others in the healers tent.”

“Don't get your hopes up. If I'm needed sooner, I'm going, and none of you will stand in my way.” I turn to glare at each of them. “Now, let's finish getting ready. If I'm to stay with the healers, I need to pack a couple more items.”

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

“This looks nothing like I had expected,” I state in awe, looking at our surroundings. Summit gives an impressed whistle from beside me as we watch our mates help put up tents. Both of us tried to help when we first arrived but were shut down immediately. I agreed just for the sake of keeping the peace with my mates. They have been overly protective since the pregnancy announcement, so the least I could do was

let them put the tents up. My twin, though, was a different story.

Summit lost her shit when she was told to sit and look pretty. No joke. Asher actually said that to her. I thought she was going to kill him. She almost did. If Lincoln hadn't stepped in to calm her down, I think we'd be planning another funeral. I think Asher just did it to help her relax, but it probably wasn't his best idea. My twin has been through a lot, we all have, but I know watching two of our fathers die really hurt her. I've never seen my sister lay in bed crying for a week. Usually, it's a day at most before she is back to channeling all her energy into anything that will make her physically hurt, so for her to have spent a whole week in bed, and it took Asher pissing her off to get her back to her somewhat normal self... yeah him saying that to her wasn't the brightest thing he could have done. She needs to keep moving and stay busy to help the tension I know she is feeling.

"Have you talked to Niklaus, Michael, or Sarah about Calista and Storm?" I ask, trying to distract her from her anger. Every so often, she's been huffing in frustration as she pouts.

"Niklaus is effectively avoiding me—again. I can sense something different in the pack bonds, but he is trying to keep it locked down tight. Lincoln talked to Michael last night, and he said everything was going well and that Calista is one of the strongest hybrid angels he has seen. I'm sure Sarah gave an update on Calista at the last meeting," Summit shrugs. I know she is trying to hide how hurt she actually is at not being able to see her own daughter's progress for herself.

"Actually, she didn't. It never came up while we were talking." Turning to look at my sister, I see her straighten her shoulders before looking at me. "Sarah said that Calista doesn't need much work with her powers. She has practically learned everything that she needs to, understanding and using magic high above the level that she should be."

"That's a good thing," I bump her shoulder with mine. "Calista is smart and talented just like her mom. You couldn't have asked for a better daughter. Let's just hope she didn't get your stubbornness and vengefulness."

“Oh, she did,” I laugh, remembering the day we gave her the dagger from hell. “She is my daughter in every shape and form, trust me. She also has Xavier’s hardheadedness and Lincoln’s penance for keeping people at arm’s length.”

“Oh great,” I say with a facepalm for emphasis, “the trifecta between you all.” I laugh at the same time Summit groans.

“We’re screwed aren’t we?” she asks, joining in with my laughing.

“Yes you definitely are.” I agree with a bright smile and tears in my eyes from laughing.

“What the hell are you two laughing so hard about?” Vox questions as he holds the side of a large tent up for Lincoln to put a pole through a couple loops.

“Nothing,” we answer at the same time, continuing to laugh.

“That spells trouble for all of us,” Xavier groans, looking between us.

“Oh quit your bellyaching and get to building our damn tents. The pregnant lady needs her rest damnit,” Summit shouts back, trying to keep a straight face.

I elbow her in the side for her comment, trying to turn this around on me. Kelen gives me a quick once over from where he is holding another side of the tent before some sort of decision is made for him. He lets go of the tent with one hand and snaps his fingers, letting his magic pour out and surround the whole tent structure. Within seconds, it’s built, and it even looks like there are lights inside.

Rhett comes over to my side now that they are all free and scoops me up from the log I had taken up residence on. “Your tent awaits, Babe.”

“What? You... She...” Summit sputters from behind me.

I turn my head to look over my mate’s shoulder and wink at her. “You made the comment.”

“Bitch!” she shouts laughing.



“No, Sweetie, that’s all you.” I manage to answer before Rhett carries me inside the tent and out of view. “You can put me down now.” I pat my mate’s shoulder hoping he’ll listen. It takes a couple seconds, but he finally relents and lets me go.

“You should get some rest though while we help with the rest of the tents,” Rhett kisses the top of my head. I close my eyes and sigh at the affection. I’d totally blame it on the babies, but I know that’s a lie. I’ll never tire of them loving me.

“Will do,” I answer, leaning into his arms.

He lets me go and I watch as he leaves our tent. I think I could get used to this kind of treatment from my mates. Now that I’m alone I finally get to look around and see what all Kelen did in the tent. It’s separated into at least two different areas from what I can see. The main area where I’m standing is open and full of cushions and blankets laying around a small table. Behind it is a veiled area, like it’s sectioning the tent off. My guess is it’s going to be the sleeping area. Originally, I had every intention of going to go look, but the cushions in the main area were already calling my name for a nice nap.



## CHAPTER 24

### SUMMIT

Alarms around the camp begin to blare. The horns blasting me awake from the restless slumber I had fallen into after camp was finished being set up. Through the lining of the tent, I can see flashing lights outside; night had fallen, and I didn't even realize it. Jumping up, I pat the sides of my legs, making sure the daggers I placed there remain and none of my mates didn't remove them. Feeling them there, I rush out of the tent and head in the direction we had set up as our main area.

The whole area is crowded, but as others realize who is pushing their way through the crowd, they part for me. It also helps that I purposely hit a few people with my wings to get them to move. The alarms and lights continue to go off the entirety of my walk to the main area. By the time most people had gathered, the alarms stopped sounding. I didn't even know my parents had set up alarms for the area, but it was a smart thing to do.

When I reach the front, Magnus and Ecko are shouting orders for the teams to start heading to their places. People are moving in every direction readying for battle. Some are in such a hurry they are running into others and knocking them down. It's absolute chaos.

"Where do you need me?" I ask Dad E, looking around to find my mates. I know they have to be around here somewhere.

"Stay with Sage in the healers tent," my father answers half-heartedly as he turns to give instructions to another team

behind him.

“Hell no!” I growl. “I do not need to be kept on the sidelines. I will be fighting whether you give me instructions or not.”

“Fine,” Dad E sighs, turning back towards me. “Fight as your wolf alongside Xavier. Don’t let your other mates surround you, or it will give your position away. We don’t want them knowing who you are, so keep your power levels locked down.”

“Copy!” I smile before heading towards what looks like the front lines since everyone is going that direction.

“X, *where are you?*” I question through the bond. I can feel him nearby but can’t get an exact read.

“*Front lines. You should stay hidden for now,*” he answers, tension filling his voice.

“*Not gonna happen, Wolfman,*” I growl, pissed that he is trying to sideline me. “*I’m fighting as my wolf. Dad E gave me permission. Said to stay with you but keep the others away.*” This time, I send the message to each of my mates so they know the plan. I can feel their anger and annoyance through the bond, but they also know not to argue. My other mates all distance themselves from Xavier, spreading themselves out amongst the other teams nearby. They are far enough away that it wouldn’t give away who I am, but close enough to reach us if needed.

When I get closer to the edge where everyone is gathered, I duck behind a tent to transition into Nyx. It doesn’t take long before I feel the magic taking over and my wolf coming forward. She doesn’t fight me. If anything, she is excited to sink her claws and teeth into some enemies. I’m right there with her. It’s about time they all start to pay for their sins against my family and the supernatural race.

Nyx shakes herself out, letting the last tingles from our change disappear, and then bolts forward in search of our mate. Standing at the very front lines is Xavier’s large black wolf. When he feels my approach, his wolf turns to look at me,

his blue eyes locking with mine as he tracks my every step. Nyx stands taller and holds her head higher as she approaches him. When we reach our mate, Xavier and his wolf try to give us a soft nudge, but Nyx brushes him off and continues to stare straight forward as we wait for our enemy to arrive.

To me it feels wrong to stand so close to where our camp is set up, but I trust my fathers to have some sort of plan. I'm sure there's a reason they have us here instead of moving closer to where the main battle grounds will probably be.

*"Stay close,"* Xavier commands through the bond as he lowers his body closer to the ground like he is getting ready to take off.

Nyx huffs at his words, and I don't respond through the bond. We don't need him telling us what to do. With Marcus gone, I have completely taken my place as Queen of Wolves, even if we haven't had the whole ceremony yet. Everyone around us knows. Neither Nyx or I will submit to his wolf in this. I may need to keep myself hidden for the time being, but that doesn't mean I'm going to lay down and roll over. I will fight to the death to protect those around me. Revenge is coming to all.

The hair on the back of my neck stands at attention as Nyx drops into a lower position readying for something. Whatever she can sense, she hasn't shared it with me yet. I trust my wolf to do what is needed today. When she needs me, she will let me know.

*"Hush, Little One. Let me focus. Call Nightmare to join the fight when I tell you. We will need his help today. Don't worry about a thing. We will come out of this victorious,"* Nyx assures me.

Her words help settle me and allow me to focus on the battle ahead. I'm slightly concerned about having Nightmare join the fight only because he would give me away. Nyx knows what she is doing, though, and wouldn't have me call on him unless absolutely necessary. Testing my bond quickly with my familiar, I can feel him nearby waiting at the ready. I can also feel his disappointment at not getting to be involved

just yet, but he will be soon enough. By the end of this war, we will all have seen our fair share.

*“Ready yourself, Summit,”* Nyx instructs. *“Things are about to get bloody.”*

That was the only warning I got before she burst forward, running full speed ahead. The ground around us is a blur with the speed we are moving. Out of the corner of my eyes, I can see Xavier and the others all around us. Several vampires have already sped ahead and are cresting the large hill in front of us. It doesn't take long for us to make it up the hill behind them. Nyx pauses before heading down the other side, giving me a chance to see the battle before us. Hundreds of Shadowed Thorne are gathered below with their magic at the ready. With the moon being almost full tonight and the assistance of the Shadowed Thorne's magic, it's easier to see just how many await us. This is going to be a long-fought battle.

Nyx pauses and lets several others move ahead of us. That's when I realize there are witches and demi-gods scattered among us. Together, the other teams and I watch as they create a shield around us all to protect us from the onslaught of magic that's coming our way. Slowly, we all make our way down the hill, staying behind the protective shield. In a couple spots, I see it start to waver with the assault of magic. I don't think it's going to hold much longer unless we get some other magic users to add their power or those using their powers to create the shield to siphon more magic from others around them. Right when I'm about to add my magic to assist with strengthening, Nyx interjects.

*“Do not help, Little One. Save your magic. We don't need the shield much longer anyway. Watch,”* her soft voice instructs me.

Doing as she suggests, I keep an eye on the magic around me. The shield is holding, even with it wavering. What little magic appears to get through dissolves before it touches anyone beneath it. By now, we are three-fourths of the way down the hill and almost at the approaching army. Suddenly, their attacks stop when most of our group reaches the bottom.

It's as if they are waiting for something, but I can't quite figure out what.

All of us slow our approach, weary of what will happen next. I know Nyx can sense that something is amiss, and she brings us to a complete stop, making several people behind us crash into us and trip. Several grunts are heard as they help themselves up. Someone places their hand on the back of my wolf to do so, but when Nyx starts a low menacing growl, they let go immediately. I had expected her to stop when he did, but she didn't. I've never heard my wolf make this kind of noise, and while it has me concerned, I know better than to ask a question right now. Right when I think my curiosity is going to break me to ask, I feel i—the ground shaking around us.

Nyx holds her ground, dropping her body lower to keep a center of gravity as the ground shakes. Ahead of us, I see a large chasm opening. Several people jump back to avoid falling into the hole, and those with wings take to the air. I can sense both Lincoln and Asher off to my left above me. They're ready for the fight. Next to me, Xavier's wolf hunkered down as well and was giving off a low growl the same as Nyx. Off to the left as well, I can feel Zeke; he is oddly calm compared to everyone else. It's almost sort of scary how calm he is. It makes me wonder what else about him I don't know yet. It's clear he is an amazing fighter with his decades, or maybe centuries, of experience.

*“Pay attention, Little One. You aren't going to want to miss this.”* My wolf's soft voice pulls me from my thoughts and back to the battle.

At the same time the shield around us drops, Nyx and Xavier's wolf both lower themselves to the ground completely, and that's when I feel the earth magic within me rise up to the surface. In front of us, small bridges are being created by the fallen earth as everyone rushes forward to cross the chasm. Those with wings fly across as the Shadowed Thorne take to the sky as well. Those still on the ground remain in place for our forces to come to them. Magic flies in every direction. A fireball lands a little too close for comfort beside me. Once a good majority of our forces have found a way to cross, Nyx

stands and joins the fight, lurching forward and sprinting across the bridge. She crashes into a male in front of us. I have no time to figure out what type of supernatural he is before she has him pinned to the ground, sinking her teeth into his neck deeply. The taste of his blood makes my vampire side rush forward wanting more, but somehow, between both Nyx and myself, we're able to contain my urges as she lets go of the bite. She doesn't give him a second thought before moving onto our next target.

One after another, she attacks ruthlessly. Sometimes, it's like the first time where she can catch them by surprise, but other times, she has to go for the ankles and dodge their attacks in return. I lost count how many opponents we had taken down before I began to feel tired. As Nyx and I look for our next target around us, we hear a deep growl and then a wolf whine from nearby. Immediately, we turn to see Xavier's wolf being pinned down by two large bear shifters.

*"Call Nightmare,"* Nyx growls as she takes off to help our mate. It's obvious Xavier is about to lose without extra help.

*"Nightmare, we need you,"* I call out to my familiar. The second I say the words, I can feel him making his way to our location.

On our way to help our mate, Nyx ruthlessly takes down two females that attempt to block our path. She even tore the head off one of them, not stopping before jumping onto the second. Nothing was going to stand in our way. At our approach, one of the bears holding Xavier down turns their attention towards us and charges us. Nyx lowers herself to the ground, waiting for the perfect moment. When the shifter was practically on top of us, she rolled to the right, narrowly avoiding him before jumping to her feet and climbing up onto his back, digging her claws in deep. The shifter beneath us shakes himself hard trying to dislodge us and succeeds, but not before we cause severe damage to his back. He flings us off, and our body hits a boulder nearby. Nyx is slow to get up from the impact, but when she does she shakes herself off and stalks forward towards our prey once again.

Out of the corner of my eye, I can see X back up on his feet and in the fight, facing the other bear shifter. It's clear our mate is badly injured, but he's doing well holding his own at the same time. Nyx runs towards our shifter opponent, and, this time, when he rears back up onto his hind legs, Nyx takes the opportunity to swipe her paws at both his shins before dodging out of the way of his fall, and when he's down, she goes for the throat with her claws as she digs her teeth into the underbelly and bites him. I can feel something break in his neck in the movement, but I know we weren't able to bite all the way around to do too much damage.

Letting go, Nyx backs up at the same time Nightmare joins the fight. I can feel my familiar's flames rise up around him as he enters the small area the four of us are fighting in. Without instructions, he jumps in to help Xavier, leaving us to our fight. With his help, I can hear the bear they are fighting struggle greatly as he lets out a deep roar before I feel his body hit the ground, sending a vibration around the area. That just leaves one more opponent.

The bear Nyx and I are facing finds his strength once again, now that his friend has fallen. With one last push, he charges in our direction. Nyx is ready, though, and dodges him, jumping onto his back for the final attack. While we have him distracted, Nightmare and Xavier charge him and are able to attack his throat, ripping out his windpipe. He collapses onto the ground in a heap, and takes us all down with him. Nightmare is able to wiggle his way out from underneath, but Xavier is too weak to move. Right when I am about to shift to pull him out, Lincoln and Phoenix land next to us. Phoenix uses his dragon strength to push the bear off while Lincoln pulls him out and gets to work. I watch on as his pale yellow magic begins to cover X in an attempt to start healing his injuries. All I want to do is lie down beside him to shield his body and provide comfort while Lincoln is working, but Nyx refuses to budge and continues to stand watch.

"We need to get him back to camp immediately," Lincoln sighs, pulling his hands back. "I did what I could to stabilize him for now. The healers can do more without me using all my magic. Summit, Nyx, I'm going to have him shift and climb



up on your back. You two need to carry him back. Nightmare will stay to guard you. Don't stop to fight—just run. Understand?"

We give a nod and lower to the ground to make it easier for Xavier to climb on our back. "Shift," Lincoln prompts X. When he doesn't at first, Nyx and I give a small whine, and he finally does. The change comes over him slowly, a lot slower than what is normal. I can see just how much energy the change is costing him. When he is finally human, Lincoln helps him up onto our back and instructs him to hold on tight.

"Get him back safely, mate. I love you." Lincoln kisses our nose and then steps back. With a quick bark, Nyx takes over, heading back towards the safety of our camp. Nightmare moves to take the lead and clears a path for us with his flames. If I didn't already know it, I would say I have the coolest and bestest familiar around.



## CHAPTER 25

### SAGE

When the alarms first sounded, it was chaos. Bodies rushed around every direction as orders were being shouted. With the assistance of my mates, I was able to find the healers tent before they left me with kisses, promises to stay safe, and my promise to stay within the tent. It still felt wrong to be left behind here, but I knew I could do more good as a healer for now, and it would leave everyone more relaxed if I stayed behind.

Within five minutes of them leaving, I am already growing restless, shuffling from foot to foot, just wanting something to do other than waiting for something to happen. Usually, I'm okay with down time and waiting, but not in this situation. This time it is just too much for me. The others around me soon realize I am about to go out of mind, so they put me to work helping to ensure each bedside area is stocked with the essentials. When I finish that, the nurses have me begin cutting up strips to use as bandages. That is when our first patient comes in. Soon after, another and then another. Quickly, the beds begin to fill up, the more urgent cases being placed in the back for the doctors to work more closely on because it was faster to get them to the different machines if needed for treatment. The beds towards the front are for those with lesser injuries that can be patched up more quickly without the use of much magic. In the area off to the right, about half way down, is where we set up what would become the morgue. About an hour into the battle, we already had to move two people there.

I knew before this started that we would lose people, but knowing it and seeing it are two very different things. My heart hurts knowing we could have saved those people. My magic and I want to save everyone. No one should die because one evil bastard got it in his head to try to conquer the world. I wish I could understand why villains were okay with others dying for their cause.

“Sage, we need you over here,” the nurse who had me cutting up the bandages earlier calls. She was such a sweetheart when she got stuck telling me what to do earlier. I learned that she is a witch and lives in a small village buried deep within the Rocky mountains. She had just turned eighteen and was about to be heading to college, but as the strongest witch in her family she was asked to come assist here before leaving. When she told me that, I wanted to send her home immediately, but I know she is an adult and can make her own decisions. That doesn’t mean I haven’t been keeping an eye on her, and I told her I would help her whenever she needed me.

Rushing to her side, I see her trying to heal another witch who was screaming out in pain due to a broken arm, and it looks like he took a fireball to the leg as well.

*Ouch.*

“What can I do to help?” I ask, looking down to see where to start.

“Hold him still, and see if any of your magic can help calm him. I need to reset his arm and then clean his leg before bandaging it up.”

Getting to work quickly, I grab the man’s shoulders and push him into the bed, calling on Nasha to lend me some of her wolf strength to keep him in place. His cries get even louder when Nurse Megan snaps his arm to reset the break before her yellow magic covers the arm, and I watch it start to heal. Once it’s far enough along, she pulls her magic back and turns to grab a sling off the shelf beside her that we had recently stocked.

Before our first patient had come in, it was agreed that everyone would only use as much magic as needed to help people get by. No injury was to be healed completely to save energy for the next patient. Only under extreme circumstances was a large portion of magic to be used.

Once she had the male's arm set, she gave me a grim look before moving down to his leg. "This is going to hurt," she tries to explain. I don't think the male completely comprehended what she said before she began working. The second she started to peel away the dead, burned flesh, he let out a blood curdling scream and almost knocked me backwards off of him. It was only because of Nasha helping me, and then pulling on my dragon magic as well, that I was able to hold the male down and right myself quickly so she could keep working.

I was contemplating asking if it would be easier to just knock the male out when I realized his screaming had finally stopped. Looking down, I saw he had already passed out from the pain. I felt bad, but it also made it easier for us to work faster on him. When I was sure he was still out, I moved down to help Megan clear the wound faster. Together, we were able to get all the dead and burned flesh cleared in ten minutes and apply some burn salve and a few cloth bandages around the wound. When we were finished, his friend who had been standing near the front of the medical tent came over.

"Is he done?" the male asked, looking down at his friend.

"Yes," Megan answered as she handed him some of the burn cream. "Make sure he applies this to his leg, or someone does for him, for the next couple days. He will need to rest and stay off the leg as well."

"Understood, thank you," he nods, pocketing the salve and leaning down to pick up his friend. "I'll return him to his tent now so you can have the bed."

We watched as they left the tent. Already there are three people waiting to take his place. I learned quickly why we are only to use limited amounts of magic to help the others for now. There are too many injuries and not enough magic.

Another hour or two goes by, both of us working side by side before I hear a familiar wolf howl.

Nyx!

Instantly, I drop what I am doing and run toward the front of the tent. Megan is shouting behind me, but I can't focus on what she is saying. I am too focused on getting to the large black wolf that is running straight in our direction. When Nyx gets closer, I realize there is someone on her back.

*Oh no. Please god no. Please tell me one of Summit's mates didn't die. There is no way she would be able to come back from that. No way.*

My heart rate rises as I continue to watch them get closer, my mind focusing on every horrible thing that could have happened leading to this moment. "CLEAR A PATH!" I shout, making everyone jump to get out of the way. It helped because I knew Nyx wasn't going to stop. She had every intention of plowing through anyone who stood in the way of her reaching the hospital tent. When she gets close enough, Nyx hits the brakes and comes to a sliding stop right in front of me. Her large wolf head nudges my chest as she gives a worried whine.

"Don't worry, we'll take care of him. I promise." I rub her snout before looking to see who is on her back. My eyes widen when I realize it's Xavier. Oh, this really isn't going to be good.

"Let's get him to the back." I turn, knowing she will follow me. "Doctor Smith! Healer Tien!" I shout heading to the back of the tent. Their eyes widen in shock when they see Nyx standing tall and menacing behind me. Their shock is quick to clear when they see Xavier clinging to her back. Promptly, they guide us to a bed off the main area in the back that has more space to work, but wouldn't let Nyx stay if Summit didn't shift back.

"Get him on the table now," Doctor Smith commands when he sees just how grave Xavier is. It takes both me and Healer Tien to finagle him off Nyx's back. The second we

have him off her and onto the bed, I can feel Summit take back control and transition back to human.

“You have to help him. Please,” she begs, grasping his hand. “I can’t lose him.”

“Who patched him up some already?” Healer Tien questions as she cuts his t-shirt down the center of his chest.

“Lincoln,” Summit answers, her eyes never moving from her mate’s face. From the other side of the bed, I can see the fear in eyes, but she is doing a good job holding herself together for now.

“Ah Kratos. He did a good job.” Healer Tien smiles. “We can save your mate, but I want you to send him all the healing energy that you can. The magic doesn’t need to do anything specific, that’s for me to influence. Sage,” she turns to look at me. “I want you to do the same. The more people we have just providing magic, the easier this will be.”

“Healer Tien,” Doctor Smith interrupts. “I’ll guide the magic, and you focus your magic on keeping him calm. This is going to hurt like hell. He has several broken bones, a collapsed lung, and a lot of internal bleeding.”

“Who are both of you?” Summit finally pulls herself together to ask.

I was wondering how long it was going to take her to question who was working on her mate. Not like it should entirely matter given the circumstances, but I know my twin is weird like that.

“I’m Healer Tien, a dominion angel,” the black-haired female answers. When she was introduced to me upon my arrival, she said she was one of the top healers in the angel community. From what I’ve seen her do so far, I would have to agree with her.

“And I am Doctor Smith, a fae and healer within your fathers castle,” the gray-haired man answers. “Now, how about we save your mate?”

Summit gives a small nod before I see her hands turn a pale yellow, letting me know she’s pulling on her healer

magic. Following her lead, I pull on my spirit powers, letting the pink magic spread from my hands and move into Xavier's body. It feels weird to pull on the power but lend it to another to guide. I can feel Doctor Smith grabbing onto it as a way to enhance his own magic and guide it along to work on each injury, one at a time. The healing process was slow, even with all the magic we were using combined. I have a feeling that if Lincoln hadn't done some initial healing, and if Nyx had taken much longer to get here, we may have been even closer to losing Xavier or lost him entirely. That would be something Summit would never forgive herself for.

"Good. You girls are doing a fantastic job and are extremely powerful. With more magic, I'm sure the two of you could heal injuries like this on your own extremely quickly." I can hear the pride in Doctor Smith's voice with his words. It helps give me the confidence I need to push more magic forward.

"Would it help if Summit gave him her blood? She is part vampire now," I ask, curious to know if it would help. I remember Zeke mentioning it once in passing, but I didn't want to press him considering it wasn't something I would be able to do.

"You're a vampire?" Doctor Smith's gray eyes widen as he looks up at my twin.

"Yes," she answers, slightly shocked. I'm sure it's from not even thinking that her blood could heal her mate.

"Give him your blood. Now," he directs.

Summit bites her wrist and places it on Xavier's mouth, letting the blood trickle down his throat. Only a few drops make it in before her wrist heals itself, but it does the trick. Already, we can see an improvement in his skin coloring. Even his eyes have opened as he begins to move around. Only Summit's voice is able to calm him and get him to hold himself still for us to finish our work. Now that her blood is in his system helping to speed up the process, it only takes five more minutes for us to heal him almost completely. I have a feeling that on a normal patient, Doctor Smith and Healer Tien

would have stopped the healing process a lot sooner, letting his wolf take over to finish the job, but since he is Prince of the Wolves and mate to the Queen of the Wolves, they wanted to get him back to fighting order.

“He is good as new. There’s just some small bruising left that his wolf will take care of for him with a couple shifts,” Healer Tien explains as she steps back from beside me. “You should get him back to his tent to rest. Sage, go with them as well. You need to rest and get off your feet for a bit. It’s almost morning, and you have been working for five hours now.”

Holy shit, I didn’t realize five hours of battle had already gone by. I’m afraid to know just how many are lying dead in our makeshift morgue or lying deceased on the battlefield. Now that she mentioned it, I could feel how much my body had drained just from the small amounts of magic I have been using over time.

“Okay, I’ll help them.” I give her an exhausted smile. “Thank you.”

“Ready, Babe?” Summit asks her mate as she helps him sit up.

“You’re never going to let me live this down are you?” He groans, getting to his feet.

I already know her answer to his question. “Nope,” she says, popping the p.

“Save the bickering for later,” I say through a chuckle. “Let’s get you back to your tent, and hopefully my mates will be back as well.”

With Xavier’s arm wrapped over both mine and Summit’s shoulders, we help him off the table and make our way out of the tent. I’m almost positive he’s making sure to place more weight on Summit than me. It kind of pisses me off because I’m not breakable, but I also know that all men are stupid overprotective of pregnant females.

It doesn’t take us long before we make it from the hospital tent to their tent. When we do, the sun is cresting over the



horizon, and a loud horn blares. The sound causes both Summit and me to jump, but Xavier just laughs at us.

“Calm down, you two. It’s just the signal for the first battle to be over.” He shakes his head as we help him settle down against the pillows in their main area. “Both sides will have time to go and collect their dead before we meet for battle once more in a day or two.”

“Uh. Why was none of that explained to us?” I ask, dumbfounded. Not once did our parents mention this in the meetings leading up to today. One would think that would be something important to explain to us.

“Sometimes we forget that you girls haven’t been in our world for as long and don’t know all the traditions. Sorry.” he shrugs and groans from the movement.

“I’ll let your mate deal with you for that one. I’m glad you’re okay, Xavier.” I give a soft smile. “Would have sucked to lose you as my brother-in-law. I’m going to wait in my tent for my mates. Have a good night, technically a good day, I guess.”

“Thank you, Sage,” Xavier calls out. “It sure would have sucked dying.”

I give a nod in response and turn to leave the room. I know they need their time together and definitely don’t need me getting in the way of that. I’m sure Summit is going to yell at him for a bit, and then they will have sex because that is just how the two of them work. Already, I can hear them starting to raise their voices as I walk across the pathway to my tent. I’m grateful we got our mates to set them up near one another. It feels better to have my twin and best friend nearby, especially now that I’m left alone to deal with my thoughts until my mates return.

Reaching through my bonds, I can feel each of my mates are alive. For the most part, they blocked the battle from me so they could focus on their missions. A part of me is grateful for it because I don’t think I could have handled staying behind if I saw and felt everything they were doing and experiencing. Moving through the tent, I head towards where the bathing

area was set up for all of us. I want to get the blood and other gorey bits off of me before I settle into bed. Not knowing how much time I'm truly going to have, I elect to just take a quick shower, because magic is cool enough to make a shower in a tent, not bothering to get a hot bath set up, which is what I would much prefer to do if given the opportunity.

It doesn't take long to go through the motions and change into some comfy clothes to settle into bed. The second my head hits the pillows, my exhaustion truly takes over, and I'm out cold before I even feel my mates enter the tent.



## CHAPTER 26

### SUMMIT

One day. That was all the time we were given after collecting our dead from the battlefield in the morning. My mates tried to get me to stay behind and not witness the gruesome scene, but I refused. If I was to be able to lead our world, I needed to be there to see the sacrifices that were being made by everyone for us. Our fallen deserved to have their leaders there collecting their bodies to be buried. Even Sage came along after a large fight with her mates. She stayed out of the fighting yesterday, but she knew we needed to present a united front today. Our mates tried to have our fathers force us to stay behind, but they were shut down in their arguments immediately. Our fathers and mother all agreed that we needed to be there, to show that we care.

When the men realized they all lost, it turned into how they could surround us and protect us while also collecting our dead. It was stupid and annoying that they thought it was needed, but Sage and I both agreed to just let them do what they wanted so it would make them feel better.

Xavier had tried to tag along as well, but I put my foot down immediately. After almost losing him, I just needed him to rest and recuperate. He had already shifted multiple times throughout the night to finish healing, and there were only some small bruises along his ribs left. Even Lincoln had cleared him to come help as long as he promised to take it easy, but I still couldn't handle it. My brain was trying to come to grips with the fact that it could have been him. He could

have been one of the bodies that we were cleaning up, and it just wasn't something that I could handle. After a lot of arguing, and maybe some tears and threats of maiming him, he finally relented and realized it would just be better all around if he stayed behind. I know he wasn't happy about it, but I'm thankful he did it for me, so that I could feel better about things.

When we had finally reached the battle field about three hours after the first clash ended, it was covered in blood, scorched earth, and many upended trees, boulders, and dirt. No longer did the area look like an open field. If a human were ever to stumble upon this area, they would be asking a lot of questions. I took a mental note to talk with my parents about what we could do when the battle was done to return the area to its former glory, or at least do the best we could so questions wouldn't be asked, questions that we couldn't answer without outing ourselves to the humans, and that's something none of us want. It's the whole reason we are fighting this battle in the first place.

"Summit," Sage whispers from beside me as she grasps my hand tightly.

"I know," I answer, seeing the same thing she is. Before us lie hundreds of dead. I almost want to gag from the smell of rotting flesh, but I manage to hold it down, just barely. "Let's just do everything we can and get back to shower." Straightening my spine, I walk forward, pulling my twin beside me. When we reach the bottom of the hill, I walk to the first body closest to us. It's a female with, I think, blonde hair. It's hard to tell with the amount of blood covering her. Kneeling down beside her, I close her eyes and say a small prayer for the gods to ferry her body to the afterlife in peace. Behind us, our mates are waiting with a cart to collect her body. Eden had given us a token from Hades to place upon all the deceased's eyes. Taking them out of my pocket, I place one on each closed eye before I nod to my mates to pick her up. Not far from me, I look up to see Sage doing the same.

One by one, we make our way through the dead. When the cart fills up, several people take it back as we continue

forward. It's hard and heavy work. I can feel the drain on my soul, but I know their souls will be at peace. Their sacrifice will be worth it, or so I hope. An hour turns into two, and then three, before we finally reach the end. The only bodies remaining are those belonging to the Shadowed Thorne. Sage has asked Eden if they would do the same for their dead. I didn't hear the answer, but I could see the indecision on our mothers face when she answered. All the souls lost from this unnecessary battle were sad, but the weight of it should be on Velnias' shoulders, not ours, even if it doesn't feel that way.

By the time we reach the end, both Sage and I are ready to fall over and sleep for a good while. It's only late morning, almost afternoon, and no one knew when the second battle would commence. As we make our way back through the camp, my parents advise us all to get some rest while we can and get some food. I wanted to just fall into bed for a couple hours and then start a plan for the next battle, but my mates insisted on feeding me first.

I let them lead me to the chow hall, and Xavier surprised us by meeting us there. "Hey, Babe." He gives me a quick kiss. "How are you holding up?"

"Exhausted. Completely, utterly exhausted. I'd much rather shower and fall into bed than be here eating," I grumble, pouting, as we make our way inside. The loud noise inside is enough to send me running for the hills. I was way too exhausted to deal with any of this, and I am starting to get a killer migraine. I know I need to eat. I always do, but when it's a choice between sleep and food, I'm always going to choose to sleep, so the fact that my mates managed to get me here should make them ecstatic.

"We'll make it quick," Zeke answers from behind me. "Lincoln and Asher are going to grab us all food while the three of us find a table." With his hand placed on the center of my back, Zeke guides me towards an open table near the entrance. Thank god he realized I would want to make a quick getaway after stuffing my face. Though, I'm not positive how much food I'll actually be able to eat.

“Are you all worried about this next phase?” I ask as the three of us take seats. Looking around, I see everyone looks a little haggard, which is to be expected. Zeke has a couple specks of blood in his hair and in the collar of his shirt, but I’m not going to bother to let him know when I’m sure I look just as bad.

“Every battle is a worry, Dragă,” Zeke answers with a sigh. “If we weren’t worried then something very wrong could happen and probably would. Worrying is just a part of life. The only thing we can do is focus on ourselves and know that we will do everything in our power to save as many lives as we can and make it through at the end of the day.”

“We’ve lost so many already, and I know we are going to lose more. How is Velnias okay with just sacrificing people’s lives like this? It’s despicable,” I state with as much disdain as I can muster.

“Because he doesn’t care how many people he needs to sacrifice to get what he wants. That’s what villains do,” Xavier answers from my right, wrapping his arm around my shoulders.

Before I can say anymore, Lincoln and Asher make it to the table carrying four trays of food. Each tray is loaded down with all different kinds of food, a mix between breakfast and lunch items. I even caught a glimpse of a brownie mixed into the pile. Once they place the trays down, Lincoln also removes two bags of blood from his pocket and hands them to Zeke. Looking between all the food, I pick out a slice of avocado toast that I am impressed we even have and grab the brownie as well. It’s a good enough breakfast. If I can manage to keep it down, maybe I’ll choose something else as well.



“WILDFIRE,” Lincoln calls out as he shakes me, trying to wake me from the dead of sleep I had finally found. I’m not sure how long I managed to sleep, but I am positive I don’t want it

to end just yet. Ever so slowly, I open one eye and then next, squinting at my mate to see what he wants.

“This better be life or death,” I grumble.

“The second battle is about to begin. You’ve slept over twelve hours,” he answers, thankfully ignoring my attitude.

“What time is it? The horns never sounded.” I sit up confused, trying to get my bearings. I must have been extremely worn out to have slept that long.

“Relax. The horns haven’t sounded yet, but they are about to,” he reaches out to help me stand. “I wanted to wake you before they did so you weren’t scared awake.”

“Awww, you do have a heart in there,” I laugh, accepting his offered hand.

“Only for you,” he smiles, lifting me to my feet. “Now, let’s get your ass in gear. Take your crankiness out on the enemy. They are the reason I had to wake you, not me.”

Rolling my eyes, I brush past him to get to where I had left my battle gear when we returned from eating. Someone had taken the time to clean it all up, which I am extremely thankful for. With a little help from Lincoln, we get me into the gear, leaving me just needing to check my weapons, which doesn’t take long at all. Both daggers are attached to my legs and I have a long sword that Asher gifted me from Hell attached to my back. Lincoln also managed to get Michael to bring me a sword from heaven, which is strapped to my back as well. It’s weird but also feels even, knowing I had both a sword from hell and heaven at the ready, waiting to be used should I need them. Not everyone can say they have the powers of heaven and hell.

Seconds after getting my weapons in place, the alarms sound around the camp. Lincoln takes the lead, guiding us out of the tent and into the pathway towards the center of camp once more. I hadn’t even realized night had passed, and the sun was shining once again. Along the way, we catch up to Sage and Phoenix who had gone out for a flight to scout ahead. According to their report, we are about to have one hell

of a fight on our hands, but I'm ready for it. Hopefully, this time Velnias will show up, so we can end this war instead of dragging it out even further.

Together, the four of us make it to the center area where everyone is gathered. We had to push through a good portion of the crowd to make it to the front, but it doesn't take long. As we get close, I can hear Old Man Mags shouting out orders for everyone.

"This is it everyone!" His voice rings out clearly through the crowd. "The final battle should be upon us. I know we lost many of our friends and loved ones yesterday. Let their losses not be in vain."

A chorus of shouts and cheers cover the area before a quiet settles once again. "You all know your positions. If you have to kill to save yourselves, then do so. This is war." Eden takes over giving the speech. "You may have friends or even family members on the other side, but they made their choice on who to side with. Unless they willingly submit and agree to turn, don't hesitate to save yourself by killing them."

"We will not be waiting for you to get in position. Do what you must and fight to live. If you come across a council member or Velnias, please remember to call for one of us or the twins," Dad E joins in. "Go, and let fate be with us all!"

At his words, everyone cheers and then starts to march to the battlefield once more. The four of us stay behind with the others to join my parents for our final instructions. We all know the drill. Sage and I are to face Velnias and hold him off for as long as we can. For all intents and purposes, he thinks we are the ones that will deal the final, killing blow, and we need him to believe that until the very end.

All around us, everyone is clearing out, making it easier for the last of our mates to make it to us. Sarah and Hades join as well as Lilith and her mates. I thought there would be more staying behind for final orders, but it makes sense to keep our group as small as possible.

"Girls," Eden looks at us, her expression grim. "I can't guarantee how this day will go. The one thing I can tell you is,



no matter what, do not stop fighting until Velnias is dead. He can not leave alive. Save as much of your magic as you can to face him. Call on your familiars to help you, and enhance your powers when you do. If one of us should fall, don't stop to grieve. Grieving comes after fighting. Let the grief, the pain, guide you, push you to keep fighting until the end.”

“What about Calista?” I ask, concerned about when she will arrive. We all had previously agreed to keep her hidden and away from the fighting for as long as possible.

“Niklaus and Michael will bring her when the time is right. Nik knows to wait for your call, so time it perfectly,” Hunter answers. “Let's head out. We are going to have a long day ahead of us.”

Not a single one of us bothers with giving a goodbye; we all know it would only bring us down. Together, as a family, we head towards battle knowing that by the end of the day only one side will still be standing victorious.

## SAGE

THE WALK to the battlefield is silent. Each of us lost in our thoughts, preparing for what is to come. Our mates are to stick close to us for as long as possible and keep a majority of the Shadowed Thorne off of us. We all know it will be a long shot for it to happen properly but it is the best we have to work with. There is no way we can sit out waiting for our main enemy to arrive. While we are waiting for the alarms to sound, my mates and I had previously agreed on how we would battle today. I am going to remain as my wolf for as long as possible with Phoenix in the sky above us with Lernea. Vox, Rhett, and Kelen are to remain around me.

I'm not sure what deal Summit worked out with her mates, but I'm sure it is something similar to mine. I watch as she transitions to her wolf, as does Xavier. I take that as my cue to make the change as well, finally letting Nasha out to play. Cresting the hill we went over to reach the battle field yesterday morning, I can hear the clash of swords, the magic flying around, and the roar of the different shifters fighting.

It's chaos all around. Nasha and I look over to Nyx and Summit, giving them our best wolf smile before charging head first into battle. Rhett creates a shield around us to keep the magic back as we join in. Phoenix and Lernea are blowing streams of fire to clear a path in front of us before focusing on the other dragons in the sky. There are so many that they are blocking a lot of the sunlight in the area. Thankfully, the dragons in the sky were more concerned with using their powers on one another rather than wreaking havoc on those of us on the ground. As we join the battle, Rhett drops the shield as he and Kelen focus on using their powers to knock the enemies around us out. Vox is using his water magic to drown his victims alive. The ones he doesn't do that with, he sings to, making them do his bidding and attack their friends for us. Using my mates as distractions, I come in for the final attack, biting or clawing at our enemies legs. Nasha and I refuse to aim for their necks unless it is absolutely necessary. I'm still positive most of these people can be saved one way or another.

"HELP!" a female off to our right shouts as we get deeper into the battle. Glancing her way, I see her battling against Councilman Kalmin. We knew it would only be a matter of time before some, if not all of them, would show their faces. The one thing our parents told us is that we cannot kill any council member, we can only detain them.

Nasha and I head her way to help intercept, but Lilith and her mates get there first. "Nasha, we got this!" she shouts, making sure not to give away who I am. "Just get Asher over here to help."

I'm not even going to try to fight her on it. I know between the three of them and Asher, they can manage the demon council member. I look towards where I last saw Summit and her mates, reaching out through our bond to see if I can find her. Before I can call out through our bond to have her get Asher, I see him flying past to go join the battle with Lilith. Good, I hope they kick his ass.

With a growl, my wolf and I jump back into battle, helping a nearby fae who is struggling against a fox shifter. The shifter keeps jumping back and forth, dodging every blast of air

magic the male is using against them. I can tell the shifter is just playing with him, hoping he will exhaust himself. Too bad the shifter doesn't see Nasha and I join the battle until it is too late. We clamp our jaws around his body, picking him up off the ground and throwing him into a rock nearby. Knowing I shouldn't use much magic, I can't help but try to sway the shifter before we kill him. Nasha and I approach slowly but steadily. The shifter struggles to get up, falling back down into a heap. As we get close enough, I let out a small bit of my goddess powers, trying to bring peace to the fox. At first, he fights the magic as it flows into him, but soon he gives up all fight and lets out a small whine before lowering his head into submission. I can feel his decision to switch sides before he lowers onto his stomach before us and makes the change back to human.

"I submit to you, Alpha," he calls out, kneeling on the ground.

With a small yip in his direction of acceptance of his answer, Nasha and I turn to leave, knowing he won't attempt to switch sides again. I had never tried to use my powers like that before, but it is good to know that we can.

"SAGE!" Sarah shouts off in the distance. Spinning in circles, I try to see where she is shouting from, and then I see it. Velnias has arrived and is in the center of the battlefield on a raised platform. He's facing off against all our parents. Eden, Hunter, Magnus, and Ecko are all doing their best to keep him contained to just them. His arrival means it's time to bring the fight to an end.

One way or another.



## CHAPTER 27

### CALISTA

“Niklaus, are you sure this is the right thing to do?” I ask for the tenth time as we stand at the gates to Sangué Legato Academy. Uncle Storm and Grandpa Michael are standing nearby, giving us the semblance of privacy while we talk. Nik said that Summit would call him to tell him when it was time for us to join the battle.

For days now, I have begged to be there fighting alongside everyone. I’m powerful enough and can handle my own. I know I have proven that time and time again dealing with the stupid school council and all their rules and bullying. No one can stop me or hold me down. I will always rise above the bullshit and give everyone the truth whether they want to hear it, or see it, or not. The past six months at Sangué Legato Academy have taught me who I am and the type of person I want to become. The student council will pay for their crimes, right after I make Velnias pay for his.

“Calista, you can’t be there right now. Your parents want to keep you safe,” Nik explains again. It’s been one variant of the same argument ever since he came here. Over and over again, around and around, we have fought over my participation in the battle. He doesn’t even want me to go. The first two days of him being here to help train my wolf were spent fighting over me going to kill Velnias.

Niklaus has been extremely overprotective since he set eyes on me. I could feel him always watching me even as I went between classes. I’m almost positive he faced down a

couple students who had been bullying me at the orders of the student council, but I can't prove it, and Storm won't tell me the truth about it. I don't want him fighting my battles, and I'm not even sure why he is. All I do know is that he has been an overbearing wolf who needs to learn his place, and that place is not trying to tell me what to do. I am Summit Zeita's daughter, and no one will ever control me or try to hold me down.

"Calista, stop trying to antagonize the poor wolf," Storm shouts. I flip him the bird without looking as I continue to stare Niklaus down.

"One thing you need to learn, Niklaus," I take a menacing step forward, forcing him to step backwards to maintain some sort of distance, "is I make my own decisions. I always have, and I always will. My parents do not," I snarl, "make my decisions for me."

"Careful what you say next, Niklaus," Michael warns the wolf in front of me.

"Calista, Amant, please. I didn't mean that you couldn't make your own decisions." Nik pleads. "I was just trying to get you to understand why we have to wait."

"Nik, I suggest you stop while you're behind," Storm interjects on his behalf trying to save him.

I continue to stand there glaring at him, keeping my mouth shut as everyone else does the work for me. Niklaus dug his hole, and it is one deeper than anything he is going to easily get out of. I'm interested to see him try before I tell him once again to go shove it where the sun don't shine. It's slightly entertaining to know that I can terrify a wolf who is so much older than I am.

"No, Storm," Niklaus argues. "She needs to understand what everyone is facing." His voice is cold, but his eyes never leave mine. "When you were first born, the Shadowed Thorne attacked Atlantis and tried to take you for their own. Velnius wanted your power, and not just to train you in his image but to eventually steal your powers using your Aunt Sarah's power against you."

I keep my face straight at his words and let him continue. I want to hear everything he says before I speak my mind. I know how to listen to others instead of just always assuming that I'm right. *I know. How big of me, right?*

“That fight was the moment your parents knew they had to give you to your great grandmother to raise you, hide you, and keep you safe. All your parents wanted was to let you have the best and safest life possible, which is exactly why we are standing here waiting on my Alpha to tell me they are ready for you.” His voice gets bolder the further he gets into this speech. “You don't need to see how gruesome this battle is, all the people who are dying to try to save this world we all live in. You're only sixteen years old, Amant, and you have so much life ahead of you that you shouldn't have to see more of this war than is necessary. Hell, your parents never wanted you involved at all, but fate, destiny, whatever you want to call it, decided that you have to be, so we will stand here and wait for as long as is needed until they are ready for you to deal the killing blow.”

“Understood,” I answer, turning my back to him. I don't like his answer, but I understand why he feels the way he does on the subject. I won't fight any longer trying to get there sooner. Niklaus is right. I have a role to play, and my parents are trying to minimize the trauma I would have to deal with if I saw more than I am already going to.

“Why do you call me Amant?” I question, curious because I've never heard the word before. I can't even figure out what language it is or what it means.

“Calista,” Michael prompts, cutting off Niklaus' response. “I don't think you should be worrying about that right now. You need to clear your mind and focus on what is coming. Remember what I told you?” He waits for me to nod before continuing. “Good. I need you to try to do that now. We don't want your powers to fail you at the most inopportune time.”

“We have been making me do that for two weeks now. For the past week, I have had no issues. I won't fail,” I growl, feeling my wolf rise up at the challenge. Besides just working on my angel powers and flying skills with me, my grandfather

Michael has spent the last two weeks teaching me how to summon the Holy Sword. No one besides him knows that I am capable of it, not even Storm. Though I suspect he knows and just won't say anything. The sword, and my ability to summon it, is the one thing that will end this war. For days when I first found out, I questioned why my mother couldn't be the one to wield it and kill Velnias, leaving me out of this fight completely like everyone wanted. I read the stories, learned the history. I know that my mother was able to use the Holy Sword during her bonding ceremony with my father, Lincoln. No one, though, can tell me why she can't use it now.

"How about we all just take a moment and cool off," Storm tries to mediate. "Brawler," he heads in my direction. "Don't overthink things. You got this. Trust in yourself. How about we focus on what you want to do when we get back? I'm positive you have something cooking to get back at Lexon for his stunt two days ago." I can see the wicked excitement in his eyes. He may have tried to stay out of the pettiness between the student council and myself, but he also has been there every step of the way to help me when I need it.

"Now that you mention it," I drawl, letting my wicked plans start to form.

"Sorry to interrupt." Niklaus comes up behind me.

It takes everything in me not to lean backwards into his heat. That thought alone terrifies me because after him being an ass, I don't understand why I am craving his touch when he's close to me, and I can't ask him either because I know it's weird.

"Summit just called for us. It's time," his voice is rough with emotion. "Michael, if you could?" Niklaus's hand brushes my shoulder before he steps away.

"Be ready. We have no idea what we are stepping into," is the only warning he gives us as the portal opens. With Storm beside me, we step up to be the first ones to walk through. A low, deep growl from behind us makes me stop. In that short amount of time, Niklaus transitioned to his wolf, and he clearly wanted to take point.

*“You will stay behind me, and when we get there, I want you to climb onto my back and hold tight. I’ll get you to where you need to be,”* Niklaus’ voice pops up in my mind.

My steps falter when I hear his voice. I’m pretty sure the only time someone can speak mind to mind is if they are within the same pack or mates... I really hope it’s not mates because there is no way in hell I want him to be my mate. Nope, never going to happen. I also don’t believe we are in the same pack, even though that’s the most reasonable explanation, but then again, I still don’t know that much about my wolf side.

As I stand there in shock, Niklaus takes the opportunity to step forward through the portal. With a push from Storm, I follow behind him trying to get my thoughts back together and focus on what I can control at the moment. The whole mind linking thing will have to wait.

When we make it to the otherside, as I stand in the treeline to take it all in, I see why my parents waited until the last minute to call me in.. It is chaos, pure and simple. Magic is being thrown around as everyone attacks one another. There’s dragons, angels, and demons in the air fighting, some with swords, most without. All different kinds of shifters are clashing, their roars echoing around the field area. Mixed within all the fighting, I can see the bodies. Some dead, some dying. There is blood everywhere, and it’s something I will never forget.

“Calista,” Michael places his hand on my shoulder. “Try to block out as much as you can. I’m sorry, Young One, that you are witnessing this.”

“It’s okay, Grandpa. I can’t be hidden from all the gruesomeness in the world.” I give him a tight smile trying to stay positive. In all actuality, I am extremely terrified of what is going on and what we are about to do, but the only thing I can focus on is my task at hand. Later, once this is all done I can go back to process what is going on.

“Climb up on the back of Niklaus. He will get you to the center where Velnias is.” Michael points towards where the



wolf is waiting for me. Niklaus lowers himself to the ground to make it easier for me to get on his back. Taking a deep breath, I start his direction and lift my leg to climb over. At the same time, Michael reaches out and grasps my bicep, “create a shield around the both of you while he runs. Neither of you stop for anything.”

With his final warning, Michael releases me and helps me climb up onto Niklaus’s back. Once I’m settled, I twist my hands in a circle creating a small ball of pink magic to create a more advanced shield that I learned from one of the books Storm had snuck me when we were kids. When the spell feels complete, I pull my hands apart and let the ball of energy surround both of us. As our forms are fully engulfed, the pink magic becomes translucent, basically invisible to the naked eye. Feeling the shield in place, I wrap my hands around Niklaus’s neck. “Go,” I whisper, knowing his wolf hearing will hear me.

Niklaus and his wolf burst forward, trying to take the path of least resistance. With the assistance of my shield, the small amount of magic that is attacking us just brushes off like nothing happens. It’s drawn some attention our way, but thankfully, several of our allies step up and block them before they can cause issues for us. Ahead of us, I focus on the direction we’re heading, and I can see my entire family fighting against Velnias. There is so much magic being thrown around the area, I’m surprised it isn’t attacking the others nearby. It isn’t until I see an energy ball that Sage throws hit a shield around the platform they are on that I realize someone put up a shield to contain everything.

Shit! That may make things a lot harder for me to do my job when we get there.

Where they are is still far away from where Nik and I are at. There’s a lot of area to cover, and it doesn’t help that we’ve stopped twice now to sort of hide until another opening is created. This time we just stopped behind a gathering of bushes, using them to hide both of us. There are just enough gaps between the branches for me to continue watching the battle against Velnias. It’s one against six, but they look like

they are struggling. Sage has her back turned, trying to do something. I can't tell what, but Velnias notices and takes the opening. He launches a bolt of magic straight in her direction. I gasp, my hands moving up to cover my mouth as I watch, knowing she isn't going to notice it in time. Right before it hits her, my grandfather Ecko jumps in front of her, taking the bolt directly to the chest.

"NO!" I scream, watching as his body drops to the ground. It looks like there's smoke coming from his chest where he was hit, but I'm uncertain. Tears stream down my face as I collapse against Niklaus trying to hide from what I just witnessed. My body shakes with my sobs. There's no way my grandfather survived that hit. Not unless someone got to him immediately to save him.

*"I'm sorry, Amant,"* Niklaus's soft voice enters my mind. I can hear the sorrow in his words. *"I wish I could hold you and give you the time you need to cry, but we need to move again when you're ready. Your family can only hold him off for so long with the amount of magic it looks like he managed to steal."*

His words snap me from my sorrow and bring forward my anger instead. I deserve to have the chance to cry for my family, even if I never got to know him. I still recognize him from the pictures and stories I've learned. He was a great king and an even better father, and now he'll never get the chance to be my grandfather.

Pulling myself together, I wipe my eyes and squeeze my legs around Niklaus's sides, letting him know he can move forward again. As he does, I make sure our shield is still working around us as he pushes forward through the fighting. This time, he puts a new kind of speed behind him as he rushes to get us into fighting. He ducks and weaves, avoiding others in a skilled manner that I have yet to learn how to move in as a wolf. Everyone fighting is a blur as he moves. I continue to focus on the battle my family is engulfed in, knowing that it looks like we're losing. Niklaus is right. They need me there to help if they are to stand any sort of chance.

When we get closer, Niklaus slows down, skidding to a stop just shortly before we reach the small hill that will lead up to the platform. Now is the moment we have all been waiting for. Here's hoping I can summon the magic I'm supposed to be able to wield. Niklaus lowers his body for me to climb off. With a soft yip and a nuzzle into my side, he turns around to face everyone fighting behind us. I know he is going to stay here and help keep everyone back.

Steeling my nerves I pull back the magic I used to create a shield and clear my mind. Creating a picture of the Holy Sword, I hold my hand out in front of me and envision holding it. Even though it's risky, I close my eyes and focus only on the sword, how it feels, the weight in my hand, the magic pulsing off the sword. When I open my eyes again, the brilliant white light of the sword glows around it. The power it holds pulls my own goddess powers forward, wanting to combine itself with the sword. Holding back my magic, I make my way up the small hill and reach where I think the shield is. Tentatively holding out my hand, I feel the magic in front of me, letting my own caresses it. The magical signature is that of my grandmothers. I'm sure keeping this in place is draining a large percentage of her magic. Instead of using my own magic to push my way through like I had planned, I decided to use my magic to ask her for permission instead. Immediately, I get my answer, and the shield opens just enough to let me through.

Eden, knowing I'm here to help, puts a new pep in her step, giving her further motivation. I watch as she sends bolt after bolt of white magic at Velnias in an attempt to keep him distracted from my entrance. I try to stay hidden behind my family members as I make my way closer towards our enemy. I know the only way to kill him is up close and personal. My mom lets out a small gasp when she catches me out of the corner of her eye before she shakes herself and moves to step in front of me to provide cover. She combines her angel and hell magic to send bursts of both right towards Velnias, pushing him back towards the shield. Both my grandfathers realize what is happening and join in on the attack as well. The only person who holds back is my aunt Sage. She stays closer

beside me, sending calming magic my way. She won't know now how much I appreciate it, but I really do.

With a blast of power, Velnias manages to send all of us flying backwards, slamming into the shield behind us. When his eyes lock on me and the sword in my hands, they widen, but I can't tell if it's in fear or not. He summons a large ball of black energy that I know is about to be for me. Struggling, I try to get to my feet fast enough before he sends the magic my way, but it's too late. The magic comes barreling straight towards me. This time, Eden pushes me out of the way and absorbs the magic herself, saving me. Black veins form along her skin as it runs rampant through her body. I have no idea what kind of magic Velnias is using, but I've had enough.

Letting out a roar, I push through the pain and onto my feet. I pull all my magic forward, funneling a good bit of it into the sword but keep enough to myself to teleport directly in front of Velnias. I hold the sword out in front of me ready to stab. In the blink of an eye, I appear in front of him, thrusting the sword forward directly into his cold heart. With it inside of him, I can feel my magic being strengthened by the sword as it spreads through his body, absorbing every inch of magic he is controlling, including the powers he stole from others.

Velnias gasps, blood running out of the corner of his mouth as he looks at me. His lips move like he's trying to find the words to say. He definitely didn't expect me to beat him. "Goddess of Power," he whispers, his hands reaching up shakily to grasp my biceps. "You, Child, will either be the savior or the ruin of the gods. Choose wisely." He gives me a wicked smile before pulling away from me and the sword.

With the sword removed, he drops to his knees, his hands grasping his abdomen as if it would do any good to staunch the flow of blood. Finally, his tyranny of evil is over. I take a step back in case he tries to reach back out to me. "I hope you rot in Hell," I sneer as he takes his last breath.

I wait several more seconds to make sure he is well and truly dead before turning to look at my family. All of them are gathered around my grandmother. Her head is being cradled in Grandpa Hunter's lap as Grandpa Magnus kneels on her right,

holding her hand. My mom and both aunts are on her other side, all of them crying.

Rushing forward, I drop to my knees at her feet, the only open space left. “Why aren’t you doing anything! Why aren’t you healing her?!” I shout with tears streaming down my face. I drop the sword beside me and pull upon the last bit of magic I can feel within me, placing both my hands on her ankles as I try to push the magic forward to combat what’s inside her.

“Stop, Calista,” Aunt Sarah pleads, her hand wrapping around one of my wrists. “It’s too late. The magic has taken hold of her.”

“No!” I shout, “there has to be something we can do!” My words fall on deaf ears as my family just holds her. My hands drop away as I let go of my magic knowing there’s nothing I can do.

This war took too much from me, from all of us.

Letting my anger take hold, I reach for the Holy Sword once again and slowly rise to my feet. My tears stop, and my expression turns deadly. Velnias may be dead but there is still vengeance to be had. Everyone who sided with him needs to die. The well of power within me fills itself up once more. I’m sure I’m glowing pink with the power that is swirling around me. I can feel the wind picking up as it makes my silver hair flow around me.

“CALISTA!” my mom shouts, but it sounds far away.

Steeling my shoulders, I move away from my family, searching the crowd for the next person to pay. All the fighting stopped when Velnias was killed, but his followers are all still standing around, waiting to see what was to happen next. I catch a couple different forms moving through the crowd away from us. Those are my targets, the Council members who sided with Velnias. They will be the first to pay.

Letting my powers guide me, I keep a laser focus on the first person I’m going to face, ignoring the shouts around me as I step off the platform. Before I make it too much father, I feel someone grab me from behind, pulling me backwards.

Their screaming in my ear is what finally helps break through the haze of power I surrounded myself with. When I finally let the power go, I see my mom holding onto me, her skin covered by my pink magic as she tries to control the influx of power running through her. After a few moments, I watch as my magic releases its hold on her, and she drops to the ground at my feet.

“MOM!” I shout falling beside her. “No! I’m so sorry!” I cry holding her body to me. I feel someone try to pull her from me, but I just hold on even tighter.

“Calista, babygirl,” Daddy Lincoln’s voice calls out in my ear. “Let us take her, she will be okay.”

“Niklaus!” Dad Asher calls when I focus on everything around me and realize each of my fathers are with us now.

“Sir?” Nik asks as he joins us.

“Get Calista out of here and back home. Stay with her!” Asher demands him. I don’t get a chance to say goodbye or do anything further before Niklaus is pulling me to my feet and away from my family.

“Make sure she puts the sword away, too!” Zeke shouts as we reach where Michael is standing at the bottom of the hill.

Looking down, I see the sword still in my hand. I grasp just a tiny bit of my power and will the sword away before shutting all my magic down. The last thing I want to do is use any of it right now. Clearly, I have more magic than I had ever realized, and I feel terrible for hurting my own mother. We lost too many people today; if I had killed my own mother as well, I would never be able to forgive myself.

“It’ll be okay, Amant,” Niklaus whispers as he lifts me into his arms and carries me through the portal Grandpa Michael opened in front of us. “Close your eyes and sleep. You’ll see when you awaken, all will be right.”

With his words, I let sleep claim me. It seems like a better option than dealing with the fact I may have killed my mom.



## CHAPTER 28

### LINCOLN

It's been two days since Calista killed Velnias. Two days since we lost Eden and Ecko. Two days since Summit was on the verge of death from saving our daughter from her own power. Too much has happened and changed in such a short amount of time. Casualties happen during war; we all know that, but it's one thing knowing it and another losing people you're close to. Not only did we lose some of our family members, but several of us lost many of our friends.

None of us have gotten any sleep. If we aren't with Summit, then we are trying to help with all the funeral arrangements. I know Xavier has had his hands full from losing four members of his S.P.E.E.R. team, and he has been taking the loss hard. The moments we try to persuade him to get some rest are few and far between. He has barely spent any time by Summit's side. Even now, he's off speaking to the family members of those he lost. Rhett went and joined him for a couple due to them being members of the Lumina Lunii Coven.

Upon our return to Japan yesterday, Zeke stepped up, and with Lilith's assistance, the two of them have been running all the daily activities needed around the castle. They also arranged transportation for families to come collect their loved ones for burial. Asher and I are the only ones who have truly spent a decent amount of time by Summit's side. Apart from him making some arrangements in Hell for the deceased

demons, he has been on the opposite side of the bed from me holding our mate's hand.

It's not to say Xavier and Zeke haven't stopped by or asked if I wanted to take a break; they have. I just decline every time because I don't have the responsibilities that they do. Claire checked in with me when we returned from battle. When we both saw that the other was unharmed, she went on her way to give me time. My sister stops by every couple hours to check on Summit and make sure she is still stable and healing, but then she leaves again. I like it that way more than anyone understands. I don't mind being the person to stay beside Summit while the others focus on their responsibilities. I even have Nightmare here keeping me company. The hellhound has been curled up at the foot of my mate's bed since we brought her in.

"How's she doing?" Sage questions as she opens the door to the room.

Looking up, I see that she's been crying again. Her eyes are stained red from her tears. Both sisters lost so much these last couple weeks. It wasn't fair to them. Nothing about this war was.

"No change," I sigh, moving my eyes back to my mate. Since we placed her in this bed, she has been lying still. If it wasn't for the soft rise and fall of her chest, I would have thought she was dead. Very rarely do I even catch a glimpse of movement behind her closed eyelids.

"I'm sorry, Lincoln," she whispers, taking the seat Asher vacated only a few minutes ago while I had been lost in my thoughts. "I was wondering if you all would like it if I brought Harlow home?" The hesitation in her voice worries me.

"Why do you sound worried while asking that?" I turn to look at her once again. "Is everything okay?"

"Yes, yes, sorry," she backpedals, smiling sheepishly. "I didn't mean to worry you, Linc. I just wasn't sure if you would want Harlow around everything going on. Anastasia reached out to me this morning. She said she didn't mind keeping Harlow for as long as was needed, but it was up to you all."



“Ah,” I sigh, realizing what she was more concerned with. “We should bring her home. She may be young and not understand everything but she should also say goodbye to her grandparents at the funeral tomorrow.”

“Okay. I will let Anastasia know and bring her home this evening. Hopefully, by then, Summit will wake up.” Sage grasps her sister’s hand before letting go and standing.

“Sage,” I call out, stopping her before she gets out the door. “How are the twins?”

Turning to look at me, she gives me an extremely bright smile, the first I have seen from her since our return. “The twins are fantastic! They are growing at an extremely fast rate. I’m four months along now.”

“I’m glad,” I smile. “You’ll make an amazing mom when they’re here.”

“Thank you, Lincoln.” She gives me a sad smile. “Give Summit my love. I’ll be home soon with Harlow.” She walks away after that, leaving me alone with my mate once again.

“Summit. Wildfire, I need you to open your eyes for me. Please,” I beg, leaning forward to kiss her forehead. “I can’t do this without you. None of us can do this without you.”

If Summit dies from this, all of us will be lost. She is the good in each of her mates. None of us will survive without her. I’ll go back to being my closed off self, shut away from the whole world. It was better that way, safer that way for everyone. Summit came into my life like a wildfire, burning non-stop and so brightly. She was the light for my dark soul to follow. The only thing that would stop me from following her into the next life is our daughters. I know that Calista and Harlow need their fathers, all four of us.

“Lincoln,” Hunter calls out as he enters the room.

“Sir?” I jump to my feet. Neither he nor Magnus have come back since our return. I didn’t expect them to. I went and gave them both my condolences yesterday after we had gotten Summit settled in and made sure she was stable.

“No, no, sit Lincoln. I didn’t mean to disturb you. I just wanted to check on how she was doing.” He takes the seat Sage vacated.

“The same; stable,” I explain.

“Good. I have faith she will awaken soon. Magnus and I agreed to hold off on the funeral until she does.” He grasps her hand. “It doesn’t feel right not to have her there to say goodbye. Has anyone checked on Calista?”

“Asher did yesterday. He snuck into the school grounds with Michael and Niklaus’s help. She was still passed out, but Niklaus could see into her mind. She is just exhausted and trying to escape the memories. When she wakes up, she is going to hate herself and everyone around her. Nik is going to stay with her and try to help her. If she gets to be too much, then we will step in,” I explain hoping it’s the right answer.

“I think they are linked,” Hunter ignores what I explained.

“Linked?” I ask, not following his thinking.

“Summit and Calista. When one awakens, so will the other.” Hunter places a soft kiss on my mate’s forehead before sitting back in the chair. “Mind if I stick around for a bit? I’ll switch you.”

“Go right ahead. Maybe your presence will help her.” I stand, moving towards the door. “I’m going to go check and see if anyone else needs anything.”

“Thank you, Lincoln,” Hunter whispers, not turning to look away from the love of my life. Opening the door, I leave him be, letting him have the time he needs with his daughter. I only hope it will help bring him some kind of peace.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

“Lincoln!” Kelen shouts as he comes running into the throne room where Magnus and I have been checking the funeral arrangements. “It’s Summit! She coughed and twitched her fingers when Sage brought Harlow into her room.”

I drop the clipboard I’m holding and rush out of the room, heading to where Summit is laying. This is the sort of good

news we need. Summit needs to come back to us. It doesn't take me long to make it to the private hospital room we have her in. When I get there, I see that I'm literally the last person to arrive outside of Kelen and Magnus who followed me. All of us needed this good news. Getting closer, I see Harlow sitting at the foot of the bed with Nightmare. She's curled up, using him as a pillow, her little foot touching Summit's hand. It's not much, but it seems like it's just enough.

All of us watch as Summit continues to twitch and move, looking like she is going to come to any moment. Each of us holds our breaths, waiting for a miracle to happen. It doesn't take long before her eyes flutter open once, twice, and on the third time, she manages to keep them open and stare at all of us.

"Care to tell me why all of you are standing around watching me sleep?" she grumbles, half the words difficult to understand, but we all get the gist of it.

Laughter fills the room with her question. Shortly after, Xavier's phone rings. "It's Nik," he announces as he answers. Several mmhmm's and uhuh's later, he hangs up once more. "Calista is awake, too and doing well."

Well, I'll be damned. Hunter was actually right. Calista and Summit were linked together somehow from all the transference of power between them. That is something we are going to need to look into and determine what exactly happened when Calista's power took control of Summit. We all have our theories, but there's no way to test which one is right without putting her into different situations and seeing how she reacts. I'm sure Summit will have enough ideas of her own to help us all. If Eden was still here, she probably would have worked out what happened already. Sarah and Hades were both dumbfounded by it and had no answers for us. Sarah had reached out to Athena to see if she knew, but last we all heard, there was no answer yet.

"Where's Calista? What happened to her?" my mate questions in a worried tone.

*Oh yeah. We all have a lot of explaining to do regarding the last two days. This ought to go over well.*

“She’s back at the academy with Niklaus and Storm watching over her. When her magic took control and you tried to stop her, it ended up knocking both of you out,” I explain, moving towards the foot of her bed. Resting my hand on Nightmare’s head, I give him some pets and scratches as he basically purrs at the movement.

“Yeah, that probably wasn’t my best idea, was it?” She asks with a soft chuckle. “If someone could just check on her to make sure she’s doing okay over the next couple of days?”

“Already taken care of, mate,” Xavier answers from beside her. I’m not sure why she thinks we wouldn’t be checking on our own daughter. I can only chalk it up to her still trying to adjust to everything going on.

“How about the...” she trails off, choking up. I can see her trying to hold back tears as she finishes her sentence. “The funeral arrangements?”

“They will take place tomorrow after you and Calista have rested. We got permission from the school to bring several students home, so that will be starting tonight. Calista and Hayden will arrive tomorrow in the second group. We wanted to give her some more time before moving through portals again.” Magnus does an excellent job explaining what he and I had spent the past two hours working on. It was a struggle to convince the Council to let us pull so many students out of school and all but cancel classes. I’m almost positive the only reason they agreed was because we called them out for their backing of Velnias during the war, and they had no way to defend themselves when we had all the proof we needed. They all know their time is coming soon.

“Then I think I’m going to rest just a little bit longer.” Summit settles deeper into the pillows and blankets around her. Those were all Sage’s ideas when we brought her back here. She insisted Summit needed them all to heal.

“Mommy?” Harlow questions, shifting around on the bed. “Can I stay with you?”

I think every heart around the room broke at that. We all missed our little phoenix causing chaos around us the past few days. The fact that she wants to curl up with Summit instead of chasing after some of us tells us all how scared she was when she saw Summit lying in the bed.

Summit pulls some of the blankets away from her and scooches over on the bed. “Come get your little heat-ball of a body up here.” We all watch as they both get settled in. Then a majority of the visitors all exit the room, leaving only our immediate family behind. With Harlow settled in with Summit, each of us men take up a spot around the bed. Xavier and Zeke are holding her hands, while Asher joins me at the foot of the bed. We may not be much at times, but we definitely all love our mate equally. She is, and always will be, our whole world, and I’m thankful that both her and our oldest daughter finally awoke.



## CHAPTER 29

### SUMMIT

Attending my parents funerals was literal hell. I've never been one to handle death and mourning easily. I avoid it at all costs actually, so the fact that I had to sit through hours worth of a funeral almost killed me last month. One good thing I did take from it was that I saw just how many people loved and cared for my parents. Each of my fathers were amazing kings to their people, and my mom an amazing queen. The stories others shared about their accomplishments and the way they gave back to their people broke my heart. Truly, they were the greatest rulers the supernatural world had seen. I have no idea how Sage and I are to rule in their stead.

A week after the funeral, Magnus and Hunter sat both Sage and me down to talk about what the future was now to hold. They both agreed they wanted to step back from ruling and allow us to take over completely as co-rulers. According to them, Eden had already been putting everything in place to set up for our ceremony to become the new Queens of the Supernatural world. They had all been working closely with the advisors before the war to make sure things would be in place if anything had happened to them. With Daddy B, Papa M, Dad E, and Mom all passed, their advisors had been trying to run things in their place with the assistance of Old Man Mags and Daddy Aquaman. Each of them promised to still be around to assist us while we make the change and get used to ruling.

To say I was panicked when they dropped this news on us is an understatement. I knew it would happen, it had to, but that doesn't mean I was ready for it at all. Sage, at least, had taken the news a lot better than I had. She was ready to jump in and start to learn more of what would be expected of us. Both Hunter and Magnus promised that most day to day business was dealt with by a team of advisors in each of the realms. That was a relief to me because I knew I would probably lose it eventually if I had to handle everything. I had already taken over a lot of the responsibilities for ruling the wolves because Papa M wanted me to start learning what would be expected of each of us. Even though I am the Queen of Hell, most of the ruling there is still done by Asher. He had asked me shortly after we mated if I wanted to take a more forward role and help, but I knew I had too much on plate at the time.

“Summit?” Sage speaks up as she exits the bathroom from the suite we took over to get ready for our coronation. We agreed to get ready here at the Midnight Coven and then portal to Tennessee to the Council Headquarters for our official ceremony.

I'm still not sure how I'm not going to kill them for everything they've done, but everyone made me promise I wouldn't.

“What's up, Sis?” I question as I turn to look at her. “Holy fucking shit monkeys! Dude! You are absolutely stunning!” Her dress is a pale blue with so many sparkles she looks like she is shining. The top is a sweetheart style that hugs her body to her waist and then opens into an airy flowy skirt around her. Her black and red hair is curled, perfectly framing her face and falling into soft waves down her shoulders and back. She did her make-up to look simple with only some black eyeliner to help her eyes open and some light blue eyeshadow.

“You really think so?” her voice is hesitant. “I was afraid it would be too much for today.”

“Trust me, it most certainly is not too much at all. You are gorgeous.” I step forward to give her a quick hug before pulling back to take in her dress again. “Yup, most certainly

beautiful. Let me guess,” I pause when I see her expression, “me wearing a pair of black jeans and a nice shirt isn’t going to be enough. You’re going to make sure I’m wearing a damn dress.”

“Yeah. I think our parents, especially Mom, would appreciate you wearing one. I promise you’ll be able to take it off as soon as the ceremony is done.” She knows she has me by bringing our parents into this. I want to make sure we honor them the best way that we can, so if that means putting on a fucking dress, then I guess that’s what I’m going to do.

“Fine,” I sigh, shaking my head. “Where’s the dress you want me to wear?” I know she had to have already had it brought in before I got here. “And please, for the love of god, tell me it isn’t something too over the top.”

“I think you’re going to like it,” she calls out walking back into the bathroom. I wait and watch as she comes back out carrying a garment bag. It doesn’t seem to be too big, so I’m hoping whatever dress she found me isn’t puffy and flowy like hers. When she opens the bag, I see a long black evening gown. It has the same sweetheart top that hers does, but instead of the silver sparkles on hers, mine are gold and more spread out. The bottom opens a little at the hips to allow me to walk, but it isn’t over the top. She actually found me the most perfect dress.

“I told you that you’d like it,” she taunts me when I can’t take my eyes off it.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Hush it, woman,” I laugh. “Now help me get into that thing.” I demand as I start to pull my shirt over my head. It doesn’t take long to strip out of my clothes as she gets the dress fully out of the bag for me. Between both of us, we are able to get it pulled up, and she zips up the back for me.

“Are you two ready yet?” Sarah opens the door to the room and walks in.

“I could have been naked here!” I shout, trying not to laugh.



“And you care why?” She smirks, knowing full well it doesn’t bother me one bit. “Yeah, exactly my point.”

“Fine,” I sigh, rolling my eyes. “Is it time?”

“Yes, but first,” she points to my hair. “Are you curling that mess or leaving it straight? And did you really have to dye your whole head purple with just a few streaks of black left in?”

“Mess?!” My eyes widen in panic at her words. I spent an hour straightening my hair to be perfect today before I did my normal makeup of black eyeliner. “Yes, I did have to dye my hair. You all know when I am going through a crisis and dealing with loss, I have a habit of redoing my hair. It’s therapeutic, and no I am not changing it for this.”

Sarah sighs, shaking her head. “I’m kidding on the mess part, but are you leaving it straight? As for the purple, even though I think you should change it back to natural, I’ll let you have this one rebellious act.”

“I was planning on it,” I answer hesitantly. Really, starting to question why she is pushing me about my hairstyle. No one said anything about it needing to be done any special way. I am glad she is letting me keep my purple hair, though.

“That’s fine. I think it’s good for both of you to be contrasting as you take the crowns. It shows that you both are united but also separate, just like a sort of checks and balances thing,” Sarah explains, moving to take a seat on one of the chairs. “One last thing. Have you decided who wants to be queen of what or are you both just going to take the overall titles? It’s up to you.”

“I think we decided to separate them out,” Sage answers for both of us.

“What she said,” I add. “It will just be easier to separate them between us, but we agreed all large decisions will be talked about between both of us. It’s only fair.”

“Perfect. Then I guess we are ready to go.” Our oldest sister gives us an extremely bright smile as she stands. I can see how proud of us she is for what we are about to do. Sarah

opens a portal in the middle of our room and prompts us to step through. “Don’t worry. Hades is waiting on the other side for both of you. Our fathers and your mates are inside the chambers. Hades and I offered to be the ones to get you into place.

“Thank you, Sis.” Sage gives her a quick hug before stepping through the portal ahead of me.

“She’s right. Thank you,” I grasp her bicep. “I know how hard all of this has been on you. Are you sure that you don’t want to be standing up there with us? You know Sage and I would love it if you ruled by our sides.”

“I’m positive. It isn’t, and never was, my place. I don’t need that on my plate. I am the Queen of the Underworld now. Hades is sure to keep me busy there,” she laughs a full laugh. “Now, get through the damn portal.” Sarah gives me a shove through the portal.

*Bitch.*

“Ahh, about time the final queen makes it,” Hades states as I tumble out of the portal. “Was starting to wonder if you were going to run away or not.”

“Bite me,” I retort, pushing my hair out of my face. It really wasn’t necessary for her to push me.

“I think your mates would frown upon that one. Better save it for them,” he counters. *Touche.*

“Now, when you girls walk in, all eyes will be on you. Do not speak unless spoken to. Sarah and I will escort you in. When you reach the center, we will leave to take our seats while you continue forward. Do as instructed and nothing more,” Hades explains, moving to Sage’s right but a step or two in front of her. Sarah does the same on my left. Together as a group, we head towards the large wooden double doors.

When we get close enough, the doors open wide, greeting us inside. On either side of us, the walls are high and made of dark chocolate wood, the floor is a light brown sandstone, creating a beautiful contrast. When the doors first open, I can hear hundreds of voices, but as we walk down the hall,

everything goes silent. The only sound is those of our steps as we continue forward. In front of us, I can see two large throne chairs sitting atop a platform facing the seating area we are walking underneath. Standing beside each chair is Magnus and Hunter. Both of them are in their formal attire, suits matching their race colors, and they have their crowns on.

Reaching the end of the hall, Sarah and Hades move off to the right and into the stands to sit, leaving Sage and me to walk forward together. I give her a quick look and head nod before taking a deep breath and beginning the last of the walk forward, side by side. I can feel all eyes on us as we make our approach forward. The walk feels as if it takes forever until we reach the bottom of the platform, coming to a stop in front of the thrones and our fathers.

Together, we both do a low curtsy before standing straight and turning around to face the council. All six of them are standing together in a straight line. I can feel the magic coming off each of them as they stand there, portraying themselves as the leaders. Sage reaches over to give my hand a quick squeeze to remind me to hold my tongue. She knows I want to lose it on them so badly.

Behind the council, we finally get to see just how many people arrived to see us be crowned. I thought it was hundreds before, but it looks like it is actually thousands. There are three levels of seating filled to the brim with people, some even standing in the walkways. In the front row, I can see all of our mates, both my daughters, and Sarah with Hades. Each of them have large smiles on their faces as they look at us. I can also see the heat in my mates eyes. Each of them want to strip me out of my dress and have their way with me. Before we even came here, I made sure to have our bond locked down tight so they couldn't distract me. I knew exactly what they would be thinking seeing me in this dress.

“Sage! Summit! Please kneel,” Councilor Kalmin demands, stepping forward from the group.

Doing as he instructs. Sage and I both carefully move to kneel on the ground. Right as we do, small pillows form beneath our knees, which I am extremely grateful for. When

we are on the ground, Kalmin and Melle walk slowly towards us. Each one pulls a sword from the sheaths at their hips and holds them out towards us. I accept the black one Kalmin offers me, holding it with both hands in front of me. One hand holds the handle and the other has the blade resting in it.

“Do you both swear by the best of your abilities to uphold the supernatural laws in place? To protect, serve, and sacrifice for those you are sworn to watch over?” Melle questions, her voice rings out loud and clear around the ceremony hall.

“We do,” we answer jointly.

“Please use the blade to make a small slice along your palms,” Kalmin directs us. Turning the sword so the sharp edge is against my palm, I close my hand around the blade and drag it down, cutting my palm open. I hiss at the sting of the blade as it cuts my flesh. When I think I’ve made a large enough cut, I open my hand and look at what I expected would be a pool of blood. Instead, the blade is absorbing the blood from the cut. I guess absorbing isn’t the right word. It’s more like my blood is flowing along the sword, coating it. I’ve never seen or heard of anything like it before. Looking over to my right, I see Sage’s sword is doing the same.

“Good,” Melle smiles. “The swords have accepted you both as royals to the realm. Sage, please stand.”

I watch as my sister stands besides me. She still holds the sword between both hands as Melle and Kalmin step in front of her. Melle holds her palm out, and a silverish blue crown appears in her hands. The crown has intricate swirls on the bottom and a large fleur de lis in the front with two more below it and two above it, tilted to the side. The crown is extremely fitting for her.

“Sage, the new Queen of the Fae, Queen of the Dragons, and Queen of the Atlanteans. Do you accept these titles and vow to honor your role as our leader until the end of days?” Kalmin questions.

“I do,” my twin’s voice rings out clear and strong as she holds her head high. The silver sword in her hand glows a

brilliant white before dimming as Melle reaches forward to place the crown upon her head.

“You can take your seat,” Melle prompts her as Kalmin steps in front of me.

“Summit, please stand,” Kalmin commands. As I do, a black crown appears in his hands. It’s different from my twins. This one has large purple jewels embedded around it that are an oval shape and stand long ways into the air. Each gem is surrounded by the black metal with tiny diamond points above them. It’s beautiful and totally fitting for me.

“Summit, the new Queen of the Wolves, Queen of the Vampires, and Queen of Hell. Do you accept these titles and vow to honor your role as our leader until the end of days?” Kalmin queries.

“I do,” my voice rings out as clear and strong as Sage’s around the room. Inside I am terrified and shaking, but outside I appear calm. There’s no running away now. I’m in this for the long haul. As I give my answer, the black sword in my hand glows red. I’m about to panic thinking the magic is rejecting me, but as soon as Kalmin steps forward to place the crown on my head, I relax. I guess the Council, or possibly our fathers, made sure everything was tailored to us individually.

“You can take your seat,” Kalmin prompts. Melle has already walked away, back towards the council. Turning around, I step up onto the platform and take the second open seat beside Magnus. A large breath of relief leaves me when I settle into the chair.

We did it. We actually just became Queens. The world better watch out now.

“As the Council of the Supernatural community, we present to you, your new Queens!” Melle shouts towards the spectators. At her words, cheers and shouts of congratulations echo around the room. The only ones I truly care about are the ones our fathers are giving us as they place their palms on our shoulders in support.



## CHAPTER 30

### SAGE

These past six months have been crazy. Even though Hunter and Magnus have tried to help Summit and me settle into our roles as Queens, it has been difficult. We were left dealing with the aftermath of the war with Velnias and the Shadowed Thorne. Summit kept insisting that we needed to make the Council pay for their decision to side with Velnias, and she did not want to listen to reason. The only thing that continued to stop her from going after them was the reminder from our fathers that they have what is coming to them. Hunter and Magnus told us who the next council members will be, and knowing that, the Council definitely has their hands full when it comes to them. They won't leave any stone unturned when it comes to righting the wrongs of this council. When they are finally ready to take their places, the war against Velnias will seem like nothing in comparison.

One of our first orders of business when we took over was to clean up the Shadowed Thorne and make sure they were all dismembered. There's no way to make sure they are completely eradicated, but we have been trying our best. Many turned themselves into the different realms and swore to atone for their crimes. The higher ups that we either captured or turned themselves in were sent to different prisons. Two went to Shadow Keep Penitentiary, and most of the others were sent to Abraxus's prison in Hell.

We let most of the lower members of the Shadowed Thorne return to their homes with the promise that they would

be checked on constantly, and their villages or leaders were to punish them as they saw fit. We all know Velnias could be persuasive when he wanted to be, and several were forced to join them under the threat of death. It was hard to decide the proper punishment for everyone. There were just too many people, and the majority deserved a chance to prove themselves. That was what we wanted the most from everything.

Just last month we also started to break ground on a new castle that we would jointly rule out of. We are keeping all of our fathers' places, but we won't rule out of them or live there full time. They will be more like vacation homes for us. This castle will be where we take all our main visitors. It took a month for us to agree upon a location. Summit wanted it somewhere warm and tropical while I wanted it back in the states. We ended up agreeing upon a small island off the coast of Italy after our mates said we should make it someplace more central for all the races to get to without making it seem like we favor one place more than another. It's still going to be a few months until the building is complete, but it should be pretty epic. There's a huge three story library that both Summit and I insisted was needed. Both of us have our own wings to the castle that are near one another but also separate enough that we can have our own areas without being on top of one another. There are three separate wings full of guest suites, a large war room, a gigantic ballroom that Sarah insisted was needed, and a large kitchen where I can bake and cook to my heart's desire. We have sort of gone all out, but it is our hope that, one day, this castle will be passed down to our children, and they will fill the halls with their own families.

It would be nice if the castle was done sooner rather than later, though. Two months ago I gave birth to my beautiful twin boys. Already, they have been a handful, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. Everything we have done has been to provide a better future to our kids and all the other supernatural children. My mates made sure that I took the first month after their birth off. I was only to be interrupted if it was an emergency, which my mates took seriously. It got to the point that Summit and I just spoke telepathically through

our bond so we could avoid my mates trying to stop us from talking business. I love my babies, don't get me wrong, but sometimes I needed to talk about something other than children in those first couple days.

"How are our beautiful babies doing today?" Rhett asks as he walks in and wraps me in his arms. Sighing, I sink deeper into his hold, cherishing his touch. I will never get tired of this.

"Both Elijah and Wren are doing well. They just finished eating, and I put them both down for a nap," I whisper, staring down where our two boys are sleeping in their cribs. They've been in this world for two months, and I am still obsessed with watching them sleep. Sometimes I find it so weird that we were able to make two of the most amazing children in the world, even if I am a tad biased about that.

Two weeks after they were born, Sarah and Athena helped us test them for their powers. Turns out, Elijah is part god, witch, and siren. While Wren is part god, dragon, and fae. Both of them are powerful and are going to be a handful once they finally start accessing their powers. Athena offered to place a block on them, similar to the one that Summit and I had when we were born, but all of us refused. I would never put my kids through something like that. We will take everyday in stride, and when they start to exhibit their powers, we will teach them how to use them. It's not like they won't have some of the best teachers in the world to help them.

"Good, I'm glad they settled right away for an afternoon nap." Rhett kisses behind my ear. It takes everything in me not to turn around and beg him to take me to bed. Since I had the twins, my sex drive has been unreal. I never thought I would be the girl who wanted sex like this, but I certainly do. I talked to Skye about it last week during my check up, and she believes it's my body craving something I can't have yet. She told me next month I would be able to have sex again, but until then to just suck it up and suffer through.

"Did they arrive?" I inquire, pulling out of his arms so I don't try to make a bad decision.



“Yeah, that’s why I came to get you. Asuna and Calista are here along with the others. We need to be quick so no one notices they are missing,” Rhett moves to the door and waits for me to follow. With one last look at the sleeping twins, we head out to go search for the next set of council members. This meeting will be the first and only meeting we all have. It’s up to the next generation to make their decision. We can only hope they make the right one and create a new path.

“For the last time, will you shut your mouth, Mouse!” we hear a male shout as we reach the doors to the war room in Fae Reich. It was decided this was the best place to hold the meeting because it was close to Sanguie Legato so we could get them all back quickly without any issues.

“Shut my mouth?!” Calsita snarls. “I don’t answer to you, Asshole.”

“Should we even go in?” Rhett chuckles, his hand on the doors as he hesitates.

“Oh, you do answer to us, Mouse. We are the student council. You are not,” the first male’s voice drops to a dangerous tone.

“I never have and never will, Lexon,” Calista’s voice sounds just as dangerous. “You are all just bullies, and I won’t stand for it.”

“Just because your mom is queen doesn’t mean you have any power, Princess,” a second male retorts.

“You’re right. I am the princess to our world. I don’t need that title to have power over you, though. I know the difference between right and wrong, and you are all wrong. You wield your power just like the current council does. It’s wrong. I will always put you in your place and without using my power to do it, unlike you,” Calsita answers calmly, almost too calmly. She got that from her mother.

“Now, I think it’s time we break up whatever is going on in there.” I nod to Rhett to open the doors. As he does, I see Storm holding a pissed off Calista back from two males standing in front of her. The first has blonde hair that is sort of

a medium length and styled in a messy way that slightly covers his agate blue eyes. He has to be over six feet tall as he stands with his black, red-tipped wings behind him, towering over Calista. The second male beside him is about the same height, but he has short black hair and striking purple eyes.

“What is all the yelling about in here?” I ask calmly, stepping into the room. It’s not my place to tell any of them how to behave. Calista may be my niece, but we haven’t spent a lot of time together, and she is basically an adult, so I will treat her as such until I am needed to step in. I also see my nephew Hayden in the mix but I didn’t hear his voice, so I only give him a discreet smile to not show any favor.

“Nothing, Queen Sage,” Asuna answers as the two males in front of my niece give her one last glare and step back.

I will definitely be keeping an eye on that situation. There is more than meets the eye there. Unless Calista asks for it, though, I will let her do this for now. Doesn’t mean I won’t be telling my twin about it.

“Are Queen Summit and my mom coming as well?” Asuna asks sweetly. Oh, they are definitely hiding something. She asked too nicely in my opinion.

“They will be. How about we all take a seat, and when they get here we can get introductions out of the way.” I don’t wait for their answer before heading towards an open seat with Rhett behind me. My other mates wanted to attend, but I asked them to stay out for now and we will fill them in. Not that I don’t trust them, it’s just better they keep everyone clear of this area.

“Sorry we’re late,” Summit rushes into the room with Lilith, Lucifer and Zeke hot on her tail. Lilith goes to give Asuna a hug before taking a seat on our side of the table. We all agreed that the parents would sit on one side and leave the kids on the other. At first, we weren’t even going to invite Storm to come, but Calista said she wasn’t coming if he didn’t.

“Do you all mind if I ask why you asked us all here?” Asuna questions once everyone is seated.

“We will explain that shortly, Una,” Lilith answers. “How about you tell us who each of you are for Summit and Sage.”

“I am Asuna, as you both know already. I’m a vampire demon hybrid. The daughter of Lilith, Cazimir, Abigor, and Lucifer,” Asuna explains as she flips her shoulder length pink hair out of her face.

“If you all don’t know me, are we really even family?” Hayden jokes. “I’m Hayden, phoenix shifter, and Summit is my adopted mom. Next?” He turns to look at his friend.

“My name is Zev,” the male on the other side of Asuna answers softly. The most striking thing about him is his long dark blue hair. He has it pulled back in a low ponytail, but I can tell it’s extremely long still. “I am a fae and grew up here in Fae Reich. My father is a local shoe maker, and my mother works in the library here in the castle.”

“Hmmm, I’ll have to go meet your mom,” Summit smiles. I know she didn’t mean that in a bad way, but with the look of panic in his eyes I think he took it in that way. Oh well.

“Who are you?” I ask the blonde haired male who was staring my niece down. It was clear neither of them were wanting to speak up. Probably because I walked in on something between them all.

“My name is Lucian. I am an Archangel, or will be, when I graduate.” He pauses, his eyes shifting between Rhett and me. “My father is Gabriel, the Archangel.”

His name is one that I will be remembering.

“I’m Lexon,” his friend answers next. “I’m the next horseman of war. My mother is the current war horseman, and my father is a shadow demon.”

“It’s nice to meet you all,” I answer, giving them a bright smile. “Now that we know who you are, let’s get started. Each of you know why you are here today, or should at least have an idea of why.” I pause waiting to see if they understand. Asuna and Zev are the only two who give a look of understanding. “The council needs to be dealt with. They are corrupt beyond repair.”

“Then why don’t you take care of them?” Lucian inquires, placing his hands on the table in front of him.

“Because we can’t,” my twins answers. “A rule was set in place centuries ago. The only people who can deal with, or evict the current council, are the members who are supposed to take their seats.”

Hayden and Lucian now give knowing looks, finally catching on to what is happening here. Only Calista and Lexon are left looking confused. I doubt Calista was filled in on who she is. It was already a lot telling her she would be the one that had to kill Velnias, now adding in that she is also a future council member just adds a lot of confusion and worry to things. She deserves a chance to be a kid, or she did. That opportunity is gone now. Sometimes, our futures are bigger than us, bigger than what we hope for. I just hope that Calista will understand that one day.

“Asuna has been aware since she was younger just what the birthmark on the back of her neck means,” Lilith begins. “We thought it would be important that she understands her role in our society and why it was so important to her to keep the mark hidden. I can see that you are all starting to catch on, or at least understand that you each share something with the other people beside me. Each of you are marked to take over the council. None of us know what your roles will be or whose seat you will take. It is up to you to discover your destiny, just like it is up to each of you to decide what type of council you all want to be. The only thing I will suggest is doing better than the previous council.”

“Are you for real?” Calista gasps, her eyes widen when she learns the truth. “You mean to tell me this stupid mark on my hip is what is marking my destiny? I thought I already completed my destiny! What the fuck?!”

“Language, Calista,” Zeke scolds. It takes everything in me not to laugh because she doesn’t know him that well yet to respect him like she does her other fathers. I know they have all been video chatting when they can, but it’s not the same, and I think he knows that. However, I understand why he scolded her just now. He isn’t trying to be her parent at the

moment but is trying to treat her as an equal without sacrificing authority.

“Oh whatever,” she rolls her eyes and looks towards her mom. “Are you serious?”

“Yes, this is all of your destinies. Don’t screw it up.” Summit stands and starts to leave. “One last thing. Make this council fucking pay for their crimes.” She opens the door to the war room we set our meeting up in and leaves. Zeke follows behind her leaving us all behind.

We all agreed that she needed to leave once the situation began. It would be too hard on her not to convince them to do what she wants, and we’re not allowed to do that. Everything must be their choice. We can only support them. For the next hour, we all discussed how they wished to proceed and if they even wished to. I got to witness more of the relationship between all of them, and it made something extremely clear. Calista was the odd one out of the group. Whether by choice or circumstances, I’m not sure, but until they learn to work together, we aren’t going to stand a chance. I can only hope when the time comes, they will be ready somehow for what they need to do. Whatever issues they all have between them are small in comparison to the mission they are about to take on.

Godspeed.



# EPILOGUE

## SUMMIT ~ THREE YEARS LATER

**Dear Diary,**

**T**hese last couple years as queen have been some of the best of my life. Almost everything from Velnias and the Shadowed Thorne have been cleaned up. There are still petty squabbles between the races, but we don't step in unless needed. Most issues are resolved amongst themselves. When we have been needed to step in, the issues were dealt with quickly. Several laws were passed to improve each of the realms, and we opened permanent portals so the species can co-mingle and co-habitate. That was one of the biggest hurdles we had to get past. Many didn't want us to open the realms and wanted to stay segregated except for those in small communities. We disagreed and fought tooth and nail to convince them they were wrong. Since the law was put into place a year and half ago, we have been having issues with some of the more influential families, but for the most part, they are falling in line.

We helped that matter by opening more academies similar to Sanguie Legato. Five more were opened around the world. Some were designed for just high school level, while others were designed for all years from elementary and up. We wanted everyone to have access to the same level of education if they wished. As soon as the schools opened, enrollment was filled up before a month's time. Everyone wanted to send their kids. One of the major decisions for the schools that we impressed upon their admissions staff was that they would

accept a variety of kids and not favor one race or economic level above another. We ensured there was enough money for scholarships for those who couldn't afford the tuition. The call for more academies and schools has continued to rise, and we just spent the last month working on the plan for more. I know how happy Sage was to see the academies being so accepted around our world. It was one of the most important topics to her that she pushed for.

I completely agree with her decision. She wanted somewhere that, when the time came, she could send her twin boys. Elijah and Wren started showing their powers when they turned a year old. I still remember the day that Wren transformed into a dragon in the middle of dinner. It was the funniest thing to see. Almost everyone was panicking. The only people who weren't were Old Man Mags, Phoenix, Lilith, and myself. The four of us were laughing so hard we were crying. It took thirty minutes and an alpha command from Sage for them to convince Wren to change back into his adorable baby self. The very next morning, Elijah decided that he had felt left out from his brother's antics and decided to put on a very beautiful, yet terrifying magic display. He created fireworks all throughout the main living areas of the castle and made sure that everyone was there to witness it. If you weren't, he sent his magic out to come find you to follow the light until you saw the fireworks. They were only one, but the power they had was unreal. Athena, once again, had offered to bind their powers until they were a little older, but Sage still refused, and I don't blame her for it one bit. Before she had left from that visit, I asked her if she had bound Calista's powers. She said she didn't and that when my little girl would throw a tantrum, magic went everywhere. I wasn't surprised in the slightest when she said that.

Now that the twins are three, they have gotten a little better, but some days are a lot worse than others, especially the days they throw a tantrum, which sometimes feels like it's every other day. When you throw in my youngest daughter, however, things tend to go a little haywire.

Two years ago, I gave birth to a beautiful black-haired, rainbow-eyed baby. Her name is Raven, and her fathers are

Asher and Zeke. She already has my attitude, Asher's determination, and Zeke's skill for lurking. It's a dangerous mixture, and I have a feeling she is going to be a handful once she's older. Same as when Calsita was born, Athena and Circe came to visit, telling us that she would be powerful, but not like her sister. She had her own future and destiny to conquer. They hinted that she would be rebellious and to let her fuel her fires how she can. They also provided a sort of ominous warning to Asher about the sins of the past coming back once more, but they wouldn't explain further. To say that warning has set Asher on a path of destruction trying to find answers would be an understatement. I'm almost positive that he spends more time in Hell searching for answers than he does Earth side anymore. I can't fault him for that. He's gotten mad that I'm not searching for the same answers he is. All I could do is explain that Raven is going to have her own future, and we can't do anything about it. What we can do is love her and provide her all the resources she needs for when it comes time to face her destiny.

Harlow is now ten, and man did those pre-teen years come early. I had really hoped we wouldn't get them until next year but our daughter decided to prove me wrong. She still loves to use her powers for everything and show off her skills. She is at the top of her class in school at the local middle school. For the past six months, she has been begging to attend one of the academies, but was not ready to miss these years with her like we did Calista. Our compromise with her was that she needed to keep her grades up and stay out of trouble, and when she turns fifteen, we will let her attend an academy of our choosing. Thankfully, she agreed and has done just what we asked of her. Now, we just need to survive the next five years, and she can get what she wants. Our biggest issue with her was that she wanted to skip being a kid. I get it. Her brother and sister are a lot older than her, and now she has a younger sister and two younger nephews. It's hard when the only people her age are her school mates. Even though she hasn't said anything to anyone, I also think she is struggling in school with making friends. She's only had two friends come back to the castle for visits and sleep overs. I'm just not ready to send



her away to an academy. It's too soon in my opinion. I want my little girl to stay little just a bit longer.

As for Calista, that girl has accomplished amazing feats the past year alone. It took her, her friends, and her mates two years to destroy the previous council and take their place. Just six months ago, we had the ceremony to anoint them as the new council. Already, their rule has been different and our community has continued to thrive greatly in their hands. They understand change and what all of our futures need. I know the TWO years leading up to them facing the last council weren't easy, especially for Calista. I will never tell her this, but I know for a fact the other council members bullied her while she was at school. Several times, I threatened to step in and all four of my mates reminded me that she is my daughter and can fight her own battles. Six months before they took down the last two council members, all of them finally made peace. I won't give you the details since that's her story to tell, but it was pretty epic from what Calista told me. I am so proud of my daughter, and I couldn't have asked for anyone better. She's the Goddess of Power, but not once has she let that go to her head.

Who knows what the future is going to hold for all of us, but I can promise if it's anything like the last couple years have been, every day will be worth it.



## EPILOGUE

### SAGE ~ TWO YEARS LATER

**D**ear Diary,

It's hard to believe that it's been just over five years since my sister and I took the throne after Velnias defeat. Every day, I still wonder if Eden, Beckett, Ecko, and Marcus would be proud of everything we have accomplished. It's been hard without having them here with us. We all feel their loss, especially at holidays and birthdays. None of the little kids got to know their grandparents. Calsita and Harlow are the only ones who have some memories with them. Magnus and Hunter have done amazing trying to keep their memories alive. I know how difficult it is for them to not have their brothers or their mate here any longer. I'm waiting for the day that they tell Summit and me they want to move on so their souls can be at peace with Eden once more. We both know it's coming, but we can't figure out what is holding them here. Our only guess is they wanted to see the kids, and if that's the reasoning, they better be ready to stick around a little bit longer.

Three weeks ago, we found out that I'm expecting once again. Thankfully, this time, it's just one. I don't think my mates and I could handle a second set of twins. The boys are such a handful as it is. To say that we were excited about bringing another child into our lives would be an understatement. I always wanted a big family, and I'm glad we're on our way to that. This little bundle of joy is already bringing so much excitement to our family. Tonight, we're planning on announcing to everyone that we are expecting

again. I have a feeling Summit already knows because I caught her giving me knowing looks the past two weeks. I'm going to blame that one on her visions. She has spent a lot of time working on the visions she gets from her spirit powers, and now she knows how to control them for the most part. Thank god.

Wren and Elijah are now five and love to stir up trouble, especially with their little cousin, Raven, running around after them. The three of them wreak havoc throughout the castle every day. We all love them, but we all hate their chaos at times. Several times, the men have suggested getting nannies to come in and help with the kids, but everytime Summit and I refuse. We don't want to miss any time watching them grow up and discover who they will be. I'm a mess just thinking about the fact that the twins will start kindergarten in the fall. I'm not quite ready for them to leave the nest. Even with this other baby on the way. The boys are my pride and joy and help remind me everyday why I enjoy being queen. It's for them, and it always will be.

Now that the new council has been in place for three years, a lot has changed. With their help, so many changes continue to be brought to our world. We have been able to build seven more academies around the world for kids to attend. We have also set up four more areas hidden deep with the mountains and rainforest for supernaturals to cohabitate without any issues. Every month, we and the council set up open meetings so anyone with grievances can bring them to our attention to be dealt with. Some are petty things that are easily taken care of, but at times, others are a much larger issue that needs to be handled carefully.

All of this has allowed Summit and me to take a step back more often and enjoy our families. Even Calista and her mates come over for weekly dinners, though I'm relatively certain it's because Summit forced them. Either way, it's good to have them join us. We are actually using this week's family dinner to tell everyone the good news.

My mates are already being extremely overprotective once again. For some reason, fate has decided that, every time I get

pregnant, we have some new battle we need to fight. This time it's bringing us right back to Réimse Dorchadais, the Darkness Realm. We heard a rumor that the realm can lead to a whole new world. If that's true, then it's our job as queens to have a look and see what we can do about it. We're hoping that, if it is true, the rulers of that new realm will be easy to work with, but who knows for sure. The one thing we do know is if they want a war, then we will gladly give them one. Nothing and no one is going to stand in the way of all our happily ever afters.

Get ready for the future, because we sure are. Just remember, the darkness doesn't have to win if you don't let it. That's the greatest lesson these queens have learned.

# AFTERWORD

Thank you to all you new and loyal readers for reading The Zeita Chronicles. I hope you all have enjoyed this world just as much as I have. Summit and Sage will always hold a spot in my heart as my first series ever written. They taught me so many lessons, not just in writing, but in the real world too.

If you are wanting to get more of the characters, then be on the lookout! Starting next year, we will get to continue in this amazing world and explore a whole new adventure or two. We'll see what the muse decides. Whatever fate decides, I can promise you it is going to be an exciting journey that you won't want to miss.

Don't forget, if you loved the book, and the series, to make sure to leave a rating or review. It is always much appreciated!

Make sure to check out my other books if you're looking for more adventures to read. In 2023, another series will be completed, along with several new standalones being brought to you. I can't wait to share them with you and hear your thoughts!

Happy reading!

# ABOUT EMBRY FOX

Embry Fox currently lives in Largo, FL, but has spent the last 10+ years living in Pittsburgh. When she's not writing she can be found at the beach reading a good book or video chatting with her best friends. If it wasn't for her bestie Luna Weathers being her keeper, life would not be easy. She has always had an obsession with all things supernatural and has enjoyed getting to learn all about it during her travels around the world.

Embry would love to have others join her on Facebook in [Embry's Supernatural Realm](#). Feel free to come talk about the book and keep up with all her future works, including several co-writes coming in the near future with Luna Weathers, R. Spain, and other authors.

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# BOOKS BY EMBRY FOX

**The Zeita Chronicles**

[Moon Blessed](#)

[Charged Elemental](#)

**The Cursed Fae co-write with Luna Weathers**

[The Lost Land](#)

The Long Road (Coming Late Spring 2022)

**The Damaged Daughters Series**

[Consumed By Fire](#)(Full story releasing Winter 2022)

**Vita In Morte co-write with R. Spain**

Conuinx Trials (Coming Early 2022)

**Immortal Hearts: A Vampire Romance Anthology**

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