

The Beast And The Blessed by Ashley Breanne

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Thirty-One: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

My chest was burning as I made my way around the ballroom. The need to hide away was getting stronger with each passing moment that Kil*ian remained absent. Every time I walked past a woman who would send me a side-eye, I had to wonder if she had been sleeping with my mate too. How many women here hated me not because I was human, but because they had hoped they would be the one selected as the king's chosen? Charlie kept catching my eye as she interacted with her companions. Her group was loud and boisterous, having a grand time and enjoying the free drinks and food that were both spread out and being carried around by servers. I steered clear of them, not wanting to bring them down with my sour mood. Instead, I kept my eyes peeled for K*lian. I wanted to turn and ask Tobias how long I needed to be present before I could turn in for the night. Instead, I bit my tongue and pushed back what little pride I had left as I watched happy couples dancing and enjoying the ball while I stood alone to the side, feeling the weight of the tiny tiara on my head. When the crowd began to thin as the night went on, I looked to Tobias, hoping he would catch my silent request, and he did. With a curt nod of

confirmation, I turned on my heels and made my way from the ballroom and back to my room.

It was a familiar feeling of foreboding, the same one that had settled deep into my gut before I had walked in on Jake *my sister.

Tobias cocked an eyebrow at me in curiosity as I turned to him, and he took his place against the wall across from my door.

“He’s not alone, is he?” Something about the question triggered my body to react, and

it felt like my organs were being pulled from my chest. The shaking of his head

crushed me, and I put my face into my hands as I took several deep breaths to calm

myself. It was one thing not to be alone in his office, but to have someone else in our

bedroom, our personal space... The broken whisper that left me tumbled free as the

last of my walls fell down. “I can’t keep doing this.”

I dropped my hands, feeling exposed and used as my anger began to bubble up and

over my pain. Tobias looked confused and opened his *as if he finally wanted to say

something, but I had already reached my breaking point.

I spun away from him and threw the door open to the bedroom.

My eyes landed on

Kil*ian sitting with Joselin next to him on the arm of the couch.

She had one hand

rubbing his shoulder as he stared into the distance. They both froze when I walked in,

and as innocent as their position was, I was deeply hurt that he hadn’t even bothered

to take her to a guest room.

He brought her to the room that we shared, and where we slept.

Joselin began to speak, but I cut her off as I walked past them. "Get out, Joselin," I ordered, not caring that I had no real authority over her.

"I was just..." She started as she stood, I saw her in the reflection of the mirror, and I narrowed my eyes at her as I reached up and took the tiara from my head, placing it down carefully onto the wooden surface.

"I don't really give a *what you were doing. I want you out of my bedroom!" What I really wanted to yell at her, was that I wanted her out of my relationship. I wanted her away from the man who claimed I was his and who would be mine. All my thoughts of Joselin being innocent were lost to me the second I saw her hand on him.

"Natalie," Killi*n scolded, but I turned to glare at him.

"No! Don't, Natalie, me! Do you have any idea how humiliating tonight was for me?" I

felt the water lining my eyes as I met his. "The party is over. All of the guests are gone!

You left me there alone, all night, to be judged and publically humiliated by your pack

as the *human who, according to them, is just warming your bed for the time being.

Then I come back to find that you brought 'her' to our room. It's the only place that I

have in this *castle, and you brought 'her' here! You couldn't even show me the

decency to go to another room?"

The tears fell as I thrust my finger in Joselin's direction. I was well aware that she

could ki* me in the blink of an eye, but I didn't care.

*held steady as I took a step toward him, but the anguish on his face had me coming

to a stop, not wanting to be near him right now. It was all lies. I had no idea what to believe anymore.

“Natalie, that’s not...” Joselin chimed in, her voice sounding softer than before but

hearing her right now. made me want to punch her in the face.

“I really wanted to believe you when you swore you were faithful, *. I was even

planning on apologizing to Joselin! But after just dealing with your jealous *buddies

downstairs and coming back. to the two of you... I just,” I pinched the bridge of my

nose as I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. “I can’t keep doing this.”

The room was silent as they both stared at me, seeming to understand that I was past

the point of hearing anything they said. I was hurt, angry, and emotionally beaten

down.

My voice dropped to a whisper as I wiped the tears from my cheeks. “I figured that

even if you didn’t want me, we could be friends. I thought that if we were going to

breed and have kids together, that we could at least respect each other and give our

children a positive environment to grow up in...forget it.”

I turned back to the dresser, grabbing my clothes before making my way past them

and out into the hallway.

“Natalie, please. I didn’t lie to you. Nothing is going on with me and Josie.” *said with

pain laced in his voice. His endearing nickname for her didn’t fit her personality. Josie

almost sounded like a young, innocent girl. Not a witch determined to destroy my

relationship and *with my head. But I let the door close behind me as I looked up at my guard.

“Tobias, please take me to a different room to sleep for the night.”

No matter how

many times I wiped my hand over my cheeks, the tears wouldn't stop. He looked over

my shoulder as the door opened to my room, and I jumped as

Killian let out a loud

roar of anger.

Thirty-Two: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

Even when I had watched him murder one of my pack members, I had never heard

him sound so angry. It put the fear of the Goddess right into me.

“No,” Killian growled out, and I turned to glare at him and his glowing red eyes. He

had no right to tell me what to do or where I would sleep. I needed a break. I needed

time to myself to get my thoughts together before I went back to being pushed around.

“Things were better. I've been trying to make things better.”

The short animalistic way he spoke shocked me, and I stared at him blankly. It was as

if his beast was speaking for him.

He looked more hurt than ever before, and I felt a pain in my chest as I realized that I

was the one hurting him this time.

A push against my back forced me to take a step toward Killian, and I turned to smack

Tobias's giant hand away from me. Tobias dropped his arm back to his side quickly,

but held his gaze on the wall in front of him, refusing to make eye contact with me as I

glared at him.

The traitor.

“I really don’t want to fight anymore, Killian,” I said softly, my shoulders falling as I held my bundle of clothes closer to my chest.

“Then we will talk, but at least give me the chance to explain before you start accusing me.” I narrowed my eyes as I saw Joselin move behind him, and he caught me

glancing over his shoulder at her. Why was he allowing her to still be in our room after

I told her to leave?

He let out a growl of frustration before looping his arm around the small of my back and dragging me back into the room.

“Seal it.” He demanded as he looked past me to Joselin. I hated having my back to her, especially when she was casting magic. I didn’t trust her. At this point, I didn’t trust either of them.

I didn’t see or hear anything, but I knew she had done what he asked when he relaxed a small amount.

“You’re going to hold me prisoner here?” I scoffed as my cheeks finished drying, and my anger came back tenfold. Did his father lock Killian’s mother in a room like this or was she locked in the dungeons?

“No, we are going to talk like adults about this, and then if you choose to still leave, I will allow you to sleep in another room.” He said, holding me tightly to his chest as if he were scared I was going to try to get away again.

“Let me go!” I squirmed, hating the fact that I couldn’t see Joselin behind me. Killian

took in a deep breath before releasing me, and I instantly moved a few steps back until she was in my line of sight. The loss of his touch and his warmth helped me to think clearly again, and I turned to glare at Joselin as she sat back on the arm of the couch with confidence. Her ghostly complexion made me want to cut her skin to see if she even could bleed or if she was as evil as I assumed. “Look at me,” Killian commanded, and I felt myself instinctively turn to him, like a wolf responding to its alpha’s order. I had no choice. My body and mind responded before I had time to even consider resisting. “What will it take for me to convince you that there is and has never been anything between Joselin and me, Natalie?” I scoffed at the full use of our names. I was sure that if the three of us were in here under different circumstances, it would be Josie and Little One. “How am I supposed to believe that when not only are you always together, but you abandon me to go be with her?” My hands were shaking as I tightened my hold on my clothes, refusing to release them as I needed something to hold onto. “You’re not even giving me a chance to be your mate!” “I didn’t abandon you to be with her!” He argued back before taking a calming breath and lowering his voice. “She is my advisor and my friend, but nothing more.” “This wouldn’t be happening if you had marked her,” Joselin muttered with disdain and what I could only assume was jealousy. “At least then, she would feel it if you had

been unfaithful.”

I wasn't even sure if I wanted the mark anymore. What were the chances of me being able to shift because of it? Slim to none, if I had to guess. Would it do to me what it

had done to his parents? Would it destroy me when he chose to *Joselin or any of the other women at court who opened their legs for him?

The idea had been tossed around my head for the past couple of days, wondering if the mark would trigger my shift and whether it was worth it. The more I considered it, the more I thought it was.

“So, mark me.” I insisted as I turned my glare from Joselin to stare at a flabbergasted

Killian. His beast seemed to have receded, and his jaw was open as he stared at me.

“I'm not going to mark you just so you can know that I am being honest with you.”

Killian walked to the couch, falling back into the cushion as he rubbed his forehead.

The space between him and Joselin made me happy, but I refused to let it show.

“Well, you don't seem to want to mark me at all.” I placed one hand on my hip, holding my clothes firmly against my stomach with my other. The fabric of my dress suddenly felt scratchy and far too tight to breathe normally.

“Goddess! You just have a whole list of things you're mad about, don't you?” Killian

groaned as he let his head drop back against the couch.

I stared at him closely, noticing the way that his shoulders were sloped downward and

how his eyelids were drooping. This was not the king I knew or the man I knew. He

looked exhausted and drained.

“We will talk tomorrow,” Joselin said as she stared directly at me. I tried not to groan in response, but I knew she saw the displeasure on my face. “You’re not royalty yet. You owe me an apology.”

I rolled my eyes as she vanished from the room, knowing that without her here, the

spell would remain intact, and I would be stuck here all night.

I probably did owe her an apology, but at the same time, my stubborn pride had taken

a hit with her always being with the man that I had grown to care for. Having him

publically choose her over me tonight was a huge *. One I wasn’t sure when I would come back from.

“I don’t have a lot of experience with this,” Killian said, leaning forward and placing his elbows on his knees. “We need to talk.”

Thirty-Three: Natalie

Natalie’s P.O.V.

I felt a pain in my chest as I realized that he was only seconds away from admitting

that he had made a mistake by choosing me and sending me back home. If he did, I

could live with it, but I was also frozen. with a deep panic that I wouldn’t ever feel his

arms around me again or get to enjoy the way the room. smelled like him after he showered.

He may not have let me in, but that didn’t mean he hadn’t already wormed his way

into my heart. Even if it was only a small amount. I was hooked on him. I was jealous

of Joselin, and I was angry when I didn't get to spend time with him.

The sudden realization that I wanted him to stay in my life... that I wanted to learn

more about him, not just because I wanted a civil relationship but because I wanted

him to be mine, was terrifying. I had never felt like this before, even for Jake. With

him, we were just comfortable.

We dated because it felt right, and we enjoyed each other's presence and touch. If I

was being honest with myself, I enjoyed having someone who protected me and he

enjoyed being seen as someone's hero. With Killian, I couldn't even say if we were

officially a couple. But the more time I spent around him, the more I discovered this

insatiable need to talk to him, touch him, and be near him. He was a like a magnet,

constantly drawing me in and then flipping over when the sun rose and pushing me

away.

But he had been right. It had only been one day, but after last night he was putting

forward an honest effort to make things better between us. I was woman enough to

admit that he was right.

I wasn't ready to give up on whatever we had or could have in the future.

He seemed to pick up on my turmoil. Perhaps he could hear my heart, or maybe he

could smell that I was stressing, but his eyebrows pulled together.

"I don't want to yell, and I don't want to fight. We have already covered that I have

never had anything to do with Joselin. For you to believe me, is

up to you, and I know that it will take time for me to earn your trust.” He let out a deep breath but this time I was the one confused. This wasn’t how a break-up conversation went. “For the rest of it, well...”

He leaned back against the couch with a sigh as the weight of the world seemed to

grow heavier on his shoulders, pulling them down further.

“During dinner yesterday,” Killian said as he rubbed his hand over his face before

staring at me, his deep hazel eyes filled with torment. “There was a sighting just

outside of the city. I sent out patrols and came right back to you.”

Vampires.

If they were that close then, the people would be in danger. I

hadn’t been mad at him

for the dinner itself, but I had the feeling if he was bringing it up, there was more to the

story.

“During the ball, another one of my men were killed. It was inside the city this time. He

was found in an alley. I had to go talk to his family and tell them what happened. I was

going to have you come with me, but I didn’t want to take you away from your first

ball. I thought with Charlie there, you would still be able to enjoy yourself.” His hazel

eyes found mine, and I felt the bundle of clothes lower in my hold until I dropped them

to the ground.

His eyes were empty. He was pushing back his emotions, but I could see in the

clenched fist on his thigh. and the ticking of his jaw muscle that he was hurting.

“Oh, Killian,” I whispered, moving forward one step before stopping and waiting to see if he was okay with me approaching him. The swirling of emotions in his eyes told me that he was, and I closed the space between us, dropping to my knees before him and grabbing his fist in my small hands. I had been acting like such a jealous brat while he had been dealing with real issues, bigger problems. He had lost two men and had to tell their families that they had been murdered, and I was over here pouting because I wasn’t getting enough attention from him and didn’t like that he was spending time with his advisor before the inevitable war. He didn’t need my insecure *.

“I’m so sorry, Killian.”

His hand opened, and he turned it over to grab mine. “I’m trying to make things better.” The repeated statement only confirmed how broken he was by the new development, and I gripped his hand tightly. “Things are getting better. I was just being insecure and jealous. I... I like having you around. I like being around you when you are you.” I whispered, scared to look at him as I spoke, not wanting to have to face his rejection.

“I am also a king.” He bit out bitterly, and I held his hand tighter, afraid he would pull away. “You will need to learn to tolerate being around both because that is who I am. I will be the king until my last breath. I will have to step away from you from time to time

to deal with my work, my kingdom, and my people.”

“I understand that better now,” I said as he leaned down and grabbed my waist, pulling me up until I sat next to him on the couch instead of kneeling before him.

“Things are and will be better. What can I do to help? What do you need from me?”

He let out a slow exhale as I leaned into his side, enjoying the physical contact after such a stressful day.” Be patient with me, mate.”

It wasn't Natalie or Little One. It was mate. His mate.

He was being open and honest with me, and I respected that he was able to push his

pride aside and ask me to give him a little more time and understanding. I could do

that. If he could hear me when I asked for civility, I could hear him when he asked for patience.

“And let me hold you at night.”

My head fell onto his shoulder as I smiled with relief. I did owe Joselin an apology, and

eventually, I would have to deal with Killian's jealous, blonde ex. But right now, it was

just the two of us, and I was happy for the moment.

I would need to grow and adapt to this new role, and support him the way a mate

should instead of acting like the clingy and easily offended woman I had been for the

past few weeks. If he wanted to hold me after a hard day of work, I think that is only fair.

“I can do that,” I whispered as he leaned his cheek against the top of my head as we sat in comfortable silence

Thirty-Five: Natalie Natalie's P.O.V.

I had woken up alone before. I had woken up with him holding me. But this morning, I woke up to a gentle kiss on my lips as he whispered goodbye. My sleepy heart began to race instantly, hammering away in my chest at the sweet moment.

When he wanted to be, the man could be smooth. I would give him that.

I cracked my eyes open and watched him walk out of the room. Only this time, his shoulders looked lighter as he left to complete his royal duties. It made me happy to see that our conversation over the past two nights had been beneficial.

There were things that I needed to change and things that he needed to change. But overall, the changes were happening, and they were positive. It made me smile as I considered stopping by his office later to see him. Perhaps I

would bring him food, or maybe I would be the food.

I pictured him laying me down on his desk, falling between my legs, and taking me to new heights as I moaned out his name. Yes, visiting him at work sounded like a great idea.

The loud banging on my bedroom door was familiar, and I knew I was safe, but the feeling of dread washed over me when I realized I still needed to swallow my pride

and apologize to Joselin. I still didn't like that she had tried to invade my mind, but at least she wasn't sleeping with Killian.

"Come in!" I shouted as I crawled out of bed, instantly missing its

warmth. The door opened silently, as the witch walked in. I was cautious as I turned to the side to grab my clothes from my dresser, not quite trusting her enough to turn my back to her by going into the closet.

When I looked up, she was leaning against the door frame that led from the sitting room to the bedroom with her arms crossed, and her hip cocked out.

“You owe me an apology. I know you didn’t like me from the moment you met me, but

I don’t appreciate the way you’ve been treating me.” The sudden and aggressive way

she greeted me this morning was warranted, but still took me by surprise. I had

grown used to people walking on eggshells around me and treating me with respect,

at least they did to my face. It was something I needed to make sure I did for them as

well. They deserved to be treated with respect

“You’re right,” I said, turning to face her fully. “I am sorry. I assumed the worst, and I

had no right to do that. I was jealous of how much time you spend with Killian and how

close you two are. You didn’t deserve me taking out my insecurities on you.”

Her eyebrows raised as I spoke, “I was expecting this to be a lot more difficult. I had

plans to make your shower water turn to blood and for your food to turn to dust every

time it touched your tongue until you finally apologized.”

I choked on a laugh as I stared at her with bewilderment. “You have an interesting

way of interacting with people.”

She shrugged as she flicked her long white hair over her shoulder. While her back was straight and she looked as fierce and terrifying as always, I could see in the way her head tipped forward as she fidgeted with her hair that she was embarrassed. "I've never had a lot of experience with it. Men love to sleep with me because of my looks and power. They think of me as some trophy, but we don't talk. When I saw you in that vision, I was excited that..."

"And then I acted like a jealous bitch and ruined it." I finished for her as she trailed off, noticing as the lines on her skin seemed to slow and still. They were fascinating. She followed my gaze down to her arms before letting out a dark laugh that had the hairs on the back of my neck standing at attention.

"You know, people have never liked me. They fear me. She said as she looked up at me with a blank expression. "When I was born with white eyes to human parents, they lost their minds. They spent years keeping me tied up and calling in every exorcist and doctor they could to heal me. It wasn't until I was eleven that I got my abilities."

My mouth dropped open, surprised that she was telling me her story. "It's ironic, really. They hated me for being different. They didn't want me to be supernatural but they were willing to push aside their hatred for my kind long enough to hire other witches to try and turn me into a human. They seemed to agree that they would need to bleed me out during a ritual under the full moon to do it. I remember as

they chained me down, carved these runes into my skin, and chanted to the Goddess to rid me of my powers. Really they were trying to absorb my powers for themselves. Those fucking idiots.”

Joselin shook her head. “They had no idea how powerful I was, even that young.

Once they had tethered my magic to theirs, I was able to drain them of everything they had, killing them in the process. Their magic now belongs to me. My parents were horrified when I got myself free. I killed them too. Killian’s father found me while he was on a hunt with his guard and took me in.”

The lack of emotions in her voice was alarming, and I watched her closely.

“I don’t tell a lot of people my story.” She said as she stared deadly daggers at me.

“I’m telling you now so you understand. I can either be friend or foe.”

I swallowed hard. It would take time to get used to her. But as she was Killian’s best friend and advisor, she wasn’t going anywhere anytime soon. Then again, neither was I.

“As long as you don’t try to invade my mind again, I would love to be friends,” I said as

I grabbed my workout clothes. I wanted to improve myself, so I would be ready to defend myself and save Killian when the time came. After last night and this morning, I was more determined than ever.

“Good. Agreed.” She said curtly, but the corner of her lips twitched as she bit back a

smile.

“You enjoy intimidating people, don’t you?” I called out as I narrowed my eyes at her on my way to the bathroom.

“Yes.”

I nodded to myself as I closed the door to get ready for the day. As I was pulling my shirt on, the silver lines on my sides caught my attention, and I turned my body to look over my shoulder at my back. I had healed more than any human would, leaving only faint lines across my skin. Killian hadn’t seemed to mind or notice, even during my heat, but I hated them with a passion. I was grateful that Killian had killed my Alpha. He had unknowingly fought my demons before he even knew I had them.

Thirty-Six: Natalie

Natalie’s P.O.V.

The butterflies in my stomach swarmed the closer I walked toward Killian’s office. I had trained. I had showered. Now, I wanted a minute of my man’s time.

The large stained glass mural that depicted the origin story of the Lycans took my breath away each time I saw it. But as I walked past this time, I didn’t bother sparing it a glance. I had one thing, and one thing only on my mind. Killian.

He had gone from being someone who brought me incredible frustration to even think about, to a complete obsession. The entire time I was training, I was picturing Killian’s eyes, his smile, his body, his hands... his touch, and his lips. I worked as hard as possible, driven by the need to go see him.

He would be working.
He would be the king that he wanted me to get used to and accept. This was the perfect chance for me to prove to him that I could accept him as the man and the king.
My shadow was trailing behind me, per usual, but even Tobias seemed happier as he walked with me to my mate's office. He stopped several paces back, with his back against the wall as he scanned up and down the hallway.
I wanted to dismiss him so I could have some time alone with Killian, but I knew that he wouldn't go anywhere during his shift unless someone replaced him. I also knew that he wouldn't be able to hear anything from inside the room with the doors closed.
Killian would be working, and I could sit silently and spend time with him. Maybe I would bring a book next time and read while he worked so I wouldn't annoy him with my questions, or perhaps he could start teaching me about what he does, so I could help him and take some of the weight from him.
That didn't mean that I wasn't hoping for more to happen. After our kiss last night, I was wound tight.
My knuckles rasped against the hardwood of the door, and I was relieved that I had beaten Joselin here. I just had to hope that she wouldn't pop in during anything scandalous.
The door was pulled open, and Killian's arm wrapped around the small of my back as he pulled me against his body with a smile that made my heart stutter. I beamed right

back at him as he leaned down and stole my lips in a kiss that had my breath catching in my lungs as the door slammed shut behind us. My hands slid up his shoulders as his tongue met mine, and the loud moan I let out caused me to blush in embarrassment as I pulled back. I sounded as needy and desperate as I felt. Then again, I was ready to do anything to feel his touch. My first thought had been a bit too bold for my sober mind. But as I looked past him to his desk, I couldn't help but wonder what his reaction would be to me sitting in one of the visitor's chairs free of clothing. Would he mind as I placed my toes up on his desk, spreading my legs for him as I slid my hands between my legs? Would he enjoy watching me touch myself in front of him? The low growl that came from his throat had me clearing mine as I looked down. Did I dare to be as bold as I was during my heat? We had just started over, so perhaps we needed more time to get to know one another before jumping into sex. "I can smell your desire, Little One. Was that why you came here?" His question took me by surprise, but it was the rapidly hardening member in his suit pants that had my attention. "No, I just wanted to see you. I know you are working. I thought maybe I could just quietly sit with you while you worked, or help if you need me." The fingers of my right hand lifted. And I ran them over his jawline gently, my gaze following the path over the

light layer of stubble there, before I looked up to meet his hazel eyes.

He looked warmly down at me, and the small fear in the back of my mind that

everything would go back to the way it was before disappeared.

This wasn't the cold

and cruel king who wanted nothing to do with me. This was the man who wanted me

around.

"I am working," He said as he pulled away, turning his back to me and walking back to

his chair. I let out a stabilizing breath as I followed after him slowly, placing my hand

on the back of one of the visitor's chairs as I moved around it.

"But that does not mean

that I cannot make time for us."

Us.

I felt myself internally swoon at the word and bit my lower lip to hide the ridiculous

smile that was threatening to break free. His hand patted his thigh as his heated stare

roamed over my body.

The confidence that flooded my body as I moved around his desk obediently

encouraged me to be bold as I approached him. While he seemed to expect me to sit

sideways on his lap, his eyes lit up when I placed one knee on either side of him on

his large chair.

It was a tight squeeze, and his hands grabbed my hips to steady me. My short pants

of excitement matched the low growl of pleasure he let out as I leaned in and bit his

lower lip, pulling on it slightly before speaking softly against his mouth. "How much

time do you have for us right now?"

My hips were still bruised from our time together a few nights ago, but as his hold on me tightened, I fucking loved it.

"As long as you would like." He responded before kissing me deeply, letting go of my hips with one hand and lacing his fingers through my hair to pull me in closer.

The summer dress I had put on was confirmed as the right choice as he moved his other hand down to my thigh, sliding it under the fabric and massaging my leg. His fingertips danced along the edge of my panties, moving closer to my center each time.

I knew if I were to grind against him now, even with the thin fabric between us, my wetness would get on his pants, and everyone would be able to see it. There was already no way to hide my smell from the wolves, but I didn't need the added embarrassment of them seeing that I had been grinding against him like a bitch in heat.

My hands slid down his chest as he began to trail kisses over my neck. I panted with need as I found the button and zipper of his pants and set him free. He lifted me slightly as his hips rose, and he clumsily wiggled his pants down beneath me as I cupped his large cock, stroking it gently and encouragingly.

"Killian," I moaned out as he sat back, and I removed my hand, sliding my panties to the side and adjusting him so he lay between the wet lips of my pussy. His eyes glowed red as I ground against him, sliding back and forth as my

head dropped back
in pleasure.

I knew he needed it as much as I did as I pulled back, reaching between us to line his tip up with my entrance. As soon as he was there, he gripped my hips, slamming me down on top of him, and I gasped loudly. "Fuck! Yes!" He wanted control, but he was in no position for it. My nails dug into his back as I held myself down on him, clenching my walls around his large cock as I began to grind against him once more.

My clit rubbed deliciously on his pelvis, and I felt myself building quickly. If

I hadn't been there myself a couple nights ago, I would have thought that it had been years since we had last had sex with how quickly he was getting me there.

I leaned forward, stealing a kiss before resting my forehead against his as I felt him lift his hips, matching the pace I had set.

There was something about this man that made me lose my mind. It could have been any number of things really, but the more I had of him, the more I wanted.

It was an odd thing, to know that the man that currently had me on the brink of a mindblowing orgasm had been nothing but a stranger a few weeks ago.

Yet as he growled louder and thrust harder, I couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

"Natalie," he growled out as the glowing red of his eyes scanned over my

Yes.

before looking down at my neck.

Mark me.

He continued to move with me as I felt myself building higher toward my orgasm. The friction against my clit pushed me over the edge as I tightened around him, moaning his name as I came on his cock. My head fell onto his shoulder as I quivered, my body trembling from the intense high. Killian looked away from me, pulling my hips from his just in time to come on my pussy before letting me sit back down with his shaft between my lips. His canines were elongated, making his jaw look larger and more defined as his wolf remained present. But his teeth never came near me, and my neck remained bare.

“Is everything okay?” I asked, feeling nervous but calm at the same time as I came down from my high. A high that only he could bring me to.

“If you didn’t like this, we can always take advantage of your desk next time.” My statement caused his shoulders to relax as he let out a chuckle, but there was still tension in his eyebrows as they were pulled together. I lifted my head with a lazy smile as I placed my thumb between his eyebrows and began to gently rub away his worry line.

“What is on your mind?” I whispered before leaning down and stealing one last kiss.

Killian turned to me, his face hardening with authority and power as he lifted me from his lap.

“Mate, there is something that I need to tell you. I received word this morning, but I didn’t know if you would want to hear this.” The seriousness of his

voice made me sit up, and I suddenly felt weird that we were still exposed to the elements.

“This sounds serious. Let me grab a tissue and clean up first before we talk. “I looked over my shoulder at his desk, but there weren’t any. Killian’s hands rubbed my hips and the small of my back soothingly. “We can use the bathroom.”

I looked at him with my eyebrows raised. There was no way I wanted to walk out of this office with his cum on me. It would mortify me to know that Tobias and anyone else I passed would smell what we had just done. It was natural to his kind to mate and fuck. But to me, it was private. Killian pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and I glanced at the bookshelf to his right as he helped me stand. The loss of his warmth was felt instantly, and I let out a soft whine of protest. He left his pants open but picked them up over his butt as he walked toward the wall and pushed it open.

The secret room made me laugh in bewilderment, but I walked with him inside as he grabbed a washcloth from a small wooden cabinet and wet it before handing it to me. I quickly cleaned up before rinsing it off and handing it back to him. Killian shook his head as he smirked at me. His still semi-hard erection showing proudly. “I quite like smelling like you.”

“Don’t you dare!” I scolded with my eyes wide as he began to laugh before taking the cloth and cleaning himself off.

“Now, what is it that you wanted to tell me?” I asked as I adjusted

my dress and made my way back to his office to sit across from him at the desk. "You're old pack was attacked this morning. I have sent men to investigate, but it seems it was more of a scare tactic. The vampires ransacked the pack, killing only two members before vanishing into the forest again. Their scents were untraceable, blocked by magic." He seemed so collected and calm at the news of an attack, but I knew from his reaction to the last two attacks, that he felt the guilt of his people being attacked. Even if they were regular wolves this time. My parents flashed through my mind, and I prayed to the Goddess that it wasn't them who had been killed. They may have treated me poorly for the last few years of my life with them, but until I failed to shift, they had been wonderful. I never wanted to live with them again, but that didn't mean that I wanted them to die. My sister, Haylee, I could really care less about. She was just a power-hungry, lying, bitch.

"Can I go too, to check in on my parents?" I knew I could just call them, but I was also excited that I would have the option to show them that I was something they could be proud of now. I may not have shifted, but I was still going to be their queen one day. Surely, that had to make up for letting them down years ago when I came home from the full moon in my skin. Killian eyed me contemplatively, and I held his gaze, trying to show him that I was serious and determined to

go.

He let out a sigh of defeat as he nodded. "Yes, we will leave in the morning.

Thirty-Seven: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

I was grateful that Killian let us take the cars. I didn't want to be carried again, whether it was like a sack of flour or cradled to his chest. It made me feel weak, and I didn't want to return to my family and be seen as anything other than a queen.

My eyes were locked on the passing trees and ruins as we drove through them. It was fascinating to watch the men who chose to run in their Lycan form, sprinting alongside the vehicles as they jumped and dodged debris.

The world had changed a lot over the last century. I remember seeing pictures in my school books of tall and shiny cities packed full of humans, practically crawling on top of each other just to move around. But after The Great War, their cities fell, and they had to rebuild. Most of their technology made it through, but the other species refused to let humans gain that much power and control over the world again.

Now the humans kept their towns small, trying to hide them in any natural structures they could find. Some even went underground and built their cities in the Earth.

But the evidence of the destruction was fascinating to see first-hand. It was a reminder that things would always be changing. It was not wise to be comfortable in

life as we know it.

Going back to my family, was terrifying and exciting. I wanted to prove to them that I

was more than just the human who failed to shift. I was going to be their Queen,

someone they could be proud of.

I had given up hope of our relationship mending when I chose to run away.

I had left them behind when I was taken by the king.

While the little voice in the back of my mind was quietly whispering that I didn't need

them, it was largely overshadowed by the insecurities screaming that I wanted to see

my dad smile at me again like he had when I would learn something new. I wanted my

mom to pull me into a hug and tell me everything was alright like she did when I had a

bad dream.

Only now, the monsters she had been chasing away from those nightmares ... I was

living with them, making love to one of them, and would be ruling over them.

Killian's warm hand settled on mine over my thigh as we approached the border, and I

felt myself still, not realizing I had begun to shake with anxiety. I looked over at the

large beast crammed in the back of the SUV with me.

I knew he hated it. He wanted to run free with the rest of his warriors. Instead, he sat

with me, silently holding my hand and being a supportive mate.

It wasn't just my parents that I was anxious to see. I was also nervous to see Jake.

Did Killian know that we had been together? If he found out, would he kill him?

A part of me wanted him to be punished for cheating on me and

treating me like shit at the end. But I knew being stuck with my sister would be punishment enough.

My eyes widened as we drove through the pack land. My old pack mates lined the road in their fur, their heads bowing in respect. At least Jake had learned from his father's mistake. All of the familiar faces made my chest tighten as the memories of their bullying, abuse, and torment washed through my mind. I looked over my shoulder, watching through the window as the pack sank back into the woods once we had moved past them.

I knew they would be in a hurry to beat the vehicle back to the pack house. But when we pulled up, I was stunned as the pack silently gathered back in their skins with their eyes cast down.

Whether it was Killian's last visit here that put the fear of the Goddess into them, or Jake straightening them out once he took control, I had never seen them so organized and respectful. The warriors that had come with us surrounded the vehicles, and I remained seated as Killian's hand stayed in mine.

"What are they doing?" I asked as quietly as I could, hoping no one outside of our car could hear me.

"Ensuring the area is secure," Killian muttered, his eyes scanning his surroundings.

"They didn't do this the last time you were here," I wondered aloud, figuring it was because of the added threat of the vampires.

"Last time you were not with me. You are precious to our people,

and I will not risk any harm coming your way.” His voice remained low and hard but the way they briefly flickered back to me had my cheeks burning.

I knew he really meant that it was because I was human that I needed the extra protection. But his use of the word precious had my stomach filling with butterflies.

“Stay here,” Killian insisted as his eyes turned black, signaling that someone was mind-linking him. My eyes stayed locked on him as he strode around the front of the car with the confidence of a king, stopping when he reached my door.

I sat up straight, lifting my chin just before he pulled open the metal barrier between us. His large hand was out and waiting as he winked at me before loudly and

indirectly asking for my hand, “My Queen.”

I felt my chest stop moving as I stared into his eyes. He was like a different person, one that seemed to adore me and who I could see myself falling for quite easily. I

could see the acceptance of us in his eyes as I placed my hand in his, and he helped me from the car.

His Queen.

“My King,” I whispered back as I smiled up at him, temporarily forgetting about the people waiting around us.

I didn’t want to humor the thought that he had only said it to throw my status in my old pack’s face. It was a possibility, but I refused to believe that it was anything less than him accepting me in his life.

Movement out of the corner of my eye made me turn, and I watched as Jake approached cautiously. "Your majesty," He bowed before us with Haylee hot on his heels. He dipped his head before Killian, waiting for an acknowledgment to stand back up.

"Alpha Jacob," Killian nodded, forcing his eyes away from me and glaring down at my ex-boyfriend. "My condolences for the loss of your pack members."

I tore my eyes away from Jake, briefly meeting Haylee's sneer of disgust before looking over the crowd. Each face brought back different memories, but the two that I had been looking for were nowhere to be found.

"If there is anything you need, please let me know," Jake said as he dipped his head once again before looking up at me. "It's good to see you are doing well, Tilly."

I refrained from flinching at the nickname, but the growl that left Killian made everyone jump. I was half-expecting him to reach into Jake's chest and rip his heart out right there.

"That is not her name. Show your future queen some respect!" Killian snarled as he took a step forward.

Jake quickly submitted, muttering an apology.

The stubble on his chin looked patchy and unkempt, and the redness that covered the whites of his eyes made him look terrible. But as bad as he looked, Haylee looked worse. Her clothes were wrinkled, and her makeup appeared to be on her second or

third day. I could see that she had been crying, and I felt my stomach drop.

There was only one reason someone as selfish as her would be upset. She didn't

care about the rest of the pack. She never had. But the faces missing among the pack now seemed more alarming than ever.

"Our men have their orders," I said mindlessly as I continued to look over the pack to ensure I didn't miss them. "We wish to visit with my parents before we return."

"Our apologies, your highness," Haylee spit out. Grinding the title between her teeth

as a low growl in the back of her throat followed. Tobias took a step forward from

where he stood several paces back and Killian's eyes flashed red.

"But they have not invited you, nor are you wanted in their home at the moment."

My tongue felt heavy as my eyes began to burn, but I kept my composure.

"You have forgotten your place. You may be a Luna for now, but she will always be your Queen. Now move aside before I rip out your tongue for your insolence!" Killian

threatened with a low and deep growl, stepping forward and releasing my hand as his claw extended.

I knew he wanted to spill her blood. I could practically taste the desire for it radiating

from him. From my time watching him interact with others, I learned that Killian

despised disrespect more than anything. If I had to guess, the only thing holding him

back was that she was my sister.

Haylee dipped her head, stepping back to be out of the way. I

could see her clenching her jaw, but it was the death grip Jake had on her wrist as we passed them that caught my attention. She jerked her arm away from him, and I smirked as she subtly swatted his hand. It seemed Jake was having a hard time controlling his Luna and teaching her how to act properly for her role. With my father being the Beta, I had expected my parents to be present during our welcoming. Yet, as I approached my childhood home, I felt in my gut that my fears were justified. Something was wrong. Something was very, very wrong.

Thirty-Eight: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

The door had been ripped clean from the frame and was now leaning up against it as a barricade against the elements. The front window had a large hole in the left side that had webbed through the rest of the glass.

I wrapped my arms around my torso as I approached, terrified that the slight disturbance of air caused by my walking would send the shards tumbling down.

"Why are you here?" My mother asked. Her hoarse voice made me flinch, but I remained calm as Killian moved forward and lifted the door before placing it off to the side.

As the interior of the house was revealed, I felt my lungs collapse in my chest.

Blood was splattered on the walls, and the rancid smell of vomit washed over me,

making me grimace. All of my childhood memories were scattered over the flood, destroyed in the battle that had occurred here. I stepped in carefully, hearing the glass beneath my foot crunch as I moved into the living room. Killian was close behind me. I could feel his chest gently brushing against my back as he stood alert, scanning the surroundings when I came to a stop. My mother was only a few feet away, curled up in a ball against the living room wall with a puddle of dried blood the size of a bear. I knew from looking at her that it wasn't hers, but someone had suffered from a fatal blow in that very spot. She looked gauntly and pale. Her veins were purple beneath her skin as they struggled to pump blood through her body. "Mom?" I asked as I rushed to her, crouching down until my knees hit the floor. "What happened? Are you okay?" Her head snapped up, and her eyes melted to black as she growled at me. Her hand grabbed my legs, ripping my knees off the floor and sending me tumbling backward, only to be caught by Killian. The terror of the situation was replaced by confusion when she began to run her fingers over the dried blood where my knees had just been. "You tainted it." She whispered as her wolf receded back into her mind, and my body continued to shake as my mother's nails dug into the blood, pulling it up from the hardwood. She took in a deep breath, closing her eyes. "There." "Natalie," Killian said as I righted myself and tried to move back

toward my mother.

“Mom? I don’t understand.” My hand reached forward as if to touch her, but her body was coiled up like a snake ready to spring at anyone who dared to come too close to her.

She blinked up at me, and I watched as recognition covered her face. She turned her head to turn to Killian, and I gasped as I was able to see the infected bite mark on her neck. If I had to guess, it wasn’t the only one she had. But the raised edges of the wound were dark like they had been burnt over a fire. The center was red and purple, seeming to visibly throb as she stretched her neck to be able to meet Killian’s eyes behind me.

‘You! Show me mercy!’ The coarse plea was followed by a rough round of coughing that speckled my forearm with her warm and tainted blood.

“We have doctors that can help you, mom,” I said louder than before, but she didn’t hear me. She was in a trance, staring at my mate like he was the moon.

“Send me to him,” She cried as she continued to trail her finger over the flooring.

Him? Not the Goddess.

It was then that I understood. I had assumed it from the moment we arrived, and I had seen how upset Haylee was. But I couldn’t believe it until now.

“Mom, where is dad?” I asked, tearing my horrified gaze from her and the blood

beneath her, glancing around the room.

I jumped when her cold hand latched around my arm, pulling me in closer to her.

Killian growled but allowed it as I looked back into my mother's eyes. They were lifeless and dull.

'He begged for the pack to take you in after we found you. He didn't know you would be human. We would have left you out there if we had known.'

Her hold on me tightened as I tried to pull my arm back.

'What do you mean 'found me'? I'm your daughter. I was born into the pack.' I

insisted. Hearing the words from her mouth made everything clear. I didn't look like them. I didn't act like them. I couldn't shift like them.

"No, you're not." She was speaking to me, but I watched as she turned and made eye contact with Killian in a direct challenge. "You're just a human that we found in the woods as a baby. Abandoned. Alone."

As her fingers loosened, I pulled my arm free, cradling it to my chest." Mom, it's the venom from the bite talking. This isn't you."

I shook my head as I got to my feet to stand next to Killian. "We have to get her to the infirmary. Someone has to be able to help her!"

"No!" My mother screamed as her claws extended, puncturing through the hardwood floor to prevent us from moving her as she laid her cheek back down on the dried blood. "Send me to him."

"It is too late for her,' He said, void of emotion as he stared down at her. He placed his arm around me, trying to push my lower back to move me toward the door.

"I'm not leaving without her! We can... we can help her. She can be healed, Killian.

"Please!" I begged as I lifted my hands to cup his cheeks. I wanted him to look at me, so I would know that he heard me, but he grabbed my hands in his and held them to his chest.

"Natalie, it's too late. Even if we could get the poison out from the bites, without her mate, she won't be strong enough to recover." Killian stared at me with pity as I fell into his chest, my mother crying softly behind me from her position on the floor.

My mouth opened to protest, but my mother spoke first.

"Please, show me mercy!" She begged. I turned, stepping back as she pushed herself

up and began to crawl forward. Her hands grabbed the edge of the couch, pulling

herself up as she stumbled forward. "Kill me!" She screamed as she fell against

Killian, grabbing the front of his suit. ' Send me to him!"

My head shook back and forth as my shaking hands moved up to cover my mouth.

Killian's eyes shot up to me as he grabbed my mother's elbows. Her knees gave out

as she sobbed, gasping and begging for him to kill her.

"No, please!" I whispered as the tears flooded over and streamed down my cheeks.

My legs began to pull me back, toward the open exit of the house and away from the

horrors that we had seen today. "Please, no!"

"Kill me!!" She screamed again. I flinched as I watched the woman who raised me beg

my mate for a fast end to her life.

"Killian, that's my mom! You can't do this! Please, don't do this!" I begged as I heard

someone else enter the home. I knew they weren't a threat as

Killian nodded to them once. Arms wrapped around my waist as I kicked against the newcomer. “No, no! That’s my mom!” ‘Kill me! Kill me!” She begged as she pulled at his suit jacket. My hands reached out to grab the door frame as I was pulled from the house, stopping my movement long enough to meet Killian’s gaze as he placed his hands gently on my mother’s shoulders, silencing her. ‘I promise to make it quick, my mate.” He said to me before looking away and glancing back down at my mother. I gasped as I felt my lungs give out. It was as if my heart had been ripped from my chest. His words allowed a calm to settle over me, and while I was violently opposed to what he was about to do, one last look at my mother told me it was exactly what needed to be done.

Thirty-Nine: Killian

Killian’s P.O.V.

Her heartbeat was slow, slower than I had expected as I approached the car with my suit jacket over my arm. The bloody handprints left by her mother as she begged for death were sure to stain, but I would burn the fabric later. I had learned long ago not to let anyone get a hold of my personal belongings. That was like giving a kid a piece of candy. Witches ate that shit up like they were addicted. If you ever wanted to get on their good side, a guaranteed way was to give them something that belonged to one of their enemies. The curses and

spells they could cast from that were endless.

Natalie was staring blankly ahead at the headrest of the front passenger seat. The driver was in the car, ready to go, but her guards were standing outside of the vehicle.

“King Killian, we didn’t get a chance to talk.’ The alpha called out as he jogged behind me.

“Not now,” I said, dismissing the young alpha as I kept my gaze locked on the SUV

where my mourning queen was sitting.

“But what about the vampires? What do I do?” He called out, sounding lost and overwhelmed.

I stopped, scoffing at how weak he was. He was not prepared to lead, and that was

my fault for killing his disrespectful father. But he needed to step up. “Lead your

people!’ I snapped, spinning around to face him. “Review border patrols, care for the injured, train harder, and step up!”

His eyes were glossy and bloodshot. He stopped walking when I reached the back of

the car and popped open the back hatch, placing my suit jacket inside so Natalie

wouldn’t have to see it when I got in to sit next to her. Her body was stiff and

unmoving as I glanced at the back of her head before pulling down the hatch to shut

it.

‘We are not prepared for vampires.’ The young alpha whispered. I pinched the bridge of my nose as I let out a breath of frustration.

“Then you know

what your goal is. Do your research and become prepared.”

No one spoke as my men returned to the vehicles. Those in their skins waited until I was seated next to my mate before climbing into the other cars. The rest shifted their weight in their Lycan form with excitement to run again. I wanted to be out there with them, stretching my legs and getting away from the offensively loud cage of metal around me. But I needed to be here.

A single tear fell down Natalie's cheek as I watched her from the corner of my eye.

Her hands were clasped together on her lap, but the tremble was still visible.

As the car began to move forward, she didn't bother to look out the window at her previous home.

"Natalie," I called out gently, not wanting to startle her from her trance. Her skin was pale as she turned to me slowly. Her eyes filled with water. As a king, I had only ever apologized once, and it was to her. I would only ever apologize to her. Last time, she didn't believe me, and I prayed to the Goddess that she would this time. "I'm so sorry."

The vehicle picked up speed as we flew down the dirt road, and her walls seemed to crumble at my words. I watched as her chin quivered before she turned to me, leaning into my side. I couldn't take that she was hurting, and I knew most of it was my fault.

She moved with me willingly as I reached around and grabbed her hip, taking her from her seat in the car and turning her until I could pull her into my lap. Her side was against my torso, with her feet on the seat she had previously

been sitting in.

It broke my heart as her shaking hand reached up and grabbed the front of my shirt while she cried into my neck. She shouldn't want to touch me, let alone seek comfort from me when I had just killed the only remaining parent she had left.

It was the mate bond pulling her to me.

Although it was now made clear that they may have never been her parents. It was something I would have to talk to Joselin about. She had mentioned a confusing vision about Natalie's birth. At the time, I had refused to listen, wanting nothing to do with the beautiful siren in my lap.

Now, I wanted to know everything.

It took the majority of the car ride home for her to calm down. As she did, I held her tighter to me, scared that she might decide against touching the man who had just murdered the woman who raised her.

Instead, she rubbed her cheek on my shoulder once as she adjusted and whispered a soft, "Thank you."

I had never been thanked for killing someone before. I had single-handedly killed hundreds, if not thousands in my life. But a show of gratitude was never given. Not until now.

Perhaps she was thanking me for comforting her, or perhaps she had accepted her mother's fate and was grateful that I had shown mercy. I had given her a quick and assumed pain-free death instead of letting her suffer from the poison until her organs

inevitably gave out.

“I’m not one of them.” She whispered. My mother... my mother said that I was not born into the pack. How could they even know if I was born with the wolf gene?”

“They could smell it, just as I can. It is in your blood to be a wolf.” I responded, unable

to resist the urge to take a deep inhale through my nose to confirm what I already

knew as fact. Natalie held herself closer to me as her shaking stopped, but I continued

to gently rub her back with my thumb.

“But I am not one, Killian. I am not a wolf.” She pulled back, staring into my eyes, and

I released one hand to wipe the trail of tears from her cheeks. ’

You could have

chosen anyone you wanted. A warrior, a witch, a fae... why me?

Why did you pick

me?’

The innocence in her eyes and her question made me stall. How many times would I

need to tell her before she finally believed me? Were her insecurities really so deep

that she could not accept that she had been chosen for me, not by me?

“I have told you before, but I will tell you again... as many times as you need me to.

We will breed, one day. But I did not choose you to be my breeder. You are my mate. I

did not choose you, the Goddess chose you for me.”

Forty: Killian

Killian’s P.O.V.

Her eyes were wide with wonder as she looked up at me, a smile pulling at the corner

of her lips. Something about the way she was looking at me had heat rising in my cheeks and the tips of my ears, and I cleared my throat as I looked away.

It was that siren look she had, with her big green eyes and her long brown hair. Her red lips were parted just enough to show a small sliver of teeth, and her chest rose and fell faster and deeper than normal.

She was pulling me in, calling me to her.

‘Boss!’ My driver called out as he slammed on the brakes. My arms tightened around

Natalie as she sat in my lap to prevent her from going flying at the sudden stop. My

eyes burned as they flashed red, and my beast made himself known as I let out a loud growl.

My pack was surrounding the car quickly. All but the drivers were stepping out of the

vehicles and shifting into their Lycan form as they roared, announcing they were

prepared for battle. We were just outside the city, a mile, if not less. But the chance of

us getting back into the city without an issue had gone.

I didn’t need to ask what caused the chaos. Up ahead, I could see him very clearly.

The smirk on his face, the black eyes, and the pale skin. He stood in the middle of the

road, not bothering to hide. He was just a decoy, there to taunt us.

“It’s an ambush,” I whispered as I looked out the windows to the tree line on either

side. No vampire would be so stupid as to stand against me and my guard on their own.

I gently moved Natalie off my lap and into the middle seat before

pressing a kiss to her head and opening my car door. "Code Green!" My voice carried through the trees, and several birds scattered from the treetops as my men took formation. Natalie reached for my arm, just barely brushing my skin with the tips of her fingers as I stepped out of the vehicle. "Killian..." She called out with fear in her voice. "It's going to be okay. I'll be home soon." As the words left my mouth, Tobias brushed by me in his Lycan form and shoved himself into the car. Natalie gasped as he shifted back into his skin. I watched her for only a moment longer as my men continued to surround the vehicle. Tobias used one forearm and pushed it against Natalie's chest to keep her from fighting him as he reached over and clicked her seatbelt in place with his other hand. Another guard jumped into the other side of the car, and Natalie jumped, turning to look at him. I took advantage of her turning to look away from me to shift into my Lycan form. The impenetrable wall around me began to sprint forward toward the vampire as the car containing my mate sped away. They knew their orders. They had to protect the Queen at all costs. She was their priority right now. The other half of my men stayed with me as I ran into the tree line, not wanting to stay out in the open. I looked back just in time to see one of Natalie's guards launch himself out of the tree line and through the apparition of the vampire, landing on the

other side of the road
just as the SUV sped past him. Black smoke filled the area where
the vampire had
just been standing but dissipated in the air quickly.
Black Magic.
'Update,' I demanded as we sprinted toward the downed guard.
His screaming
sounded as if he had been doused with acid.
'It's Heath, Your Majesty.' Nolan called out as he tried to hold
down the struggling and
tortured guard to get a better look. 'I can't see any injury.'
As I approached, I could feel the thickness in the air, something
no other wolf had
ever mentioned being able to do. It was as strong as Joselin's
magic, if not more so,
and I felt myself slow as I moved through the wall of darkness.
Whoever the vampires were working with was strong.
Heath continued to scream as he shifted back into his skin, his
limbs flailing while he
tried to pat his body down as if putting out a fire that only he could
see.
'Grab him. We need to keep moving. Any sign of others?' I knew
asking was pointless.
The wall of magic ensured that we wouldn't be able to follow or
find them, but my
team of trackers was still scouring the forest thoroughly.
'No, Your Majesty.' They reported back, and I felt my anger build.
I wanted to find one
of those bloodsuckers and rip them to pieces so small even their
creator wouldn't be
able to recognize them.
Nolan tossed Heath over his shoulder, and the pack formed a
protective barrier
around the two men.
I ran with my pack, feeling the freedom that came with the fresh

air and movement
boggled down by the heavy unease of the possibility that I could
lose another man
today. I glanced to my left, seeing Heath's body give out as he
fell unconscious. A
string of blood fell from his mouth and down onto Nolan's arm.
My gaze went past them as we continued to run, and to the tree
line on their other
side. There was nothing out of the ordinary. My trackers were still
spread out, combing
the grounds quickly as we approached the gates of the city walls.
Rows of warriors stood ready for battle as we raced past them. I
wanted to turn back
and stand with my people, but I knew the vampires would not
attack today. Whatever
they had planned, they had accomplished.
The color had drained from Heath's skin, and I spared him one
last look before
separating from the group that was taking him to the infirmary.
My first stop would be to ensure the safety of Natalie, then I would
lead Joselin with a
small army back out to the road where Heath had been injured
and see if there was
anything she could tell me.
Guards stood alert by every doorway and corner as I barreled
through the corridors,
following my mate's scent.
'Natalie,' I called out as I rounded the corner. My beastly form
forced me to have to
duck to fit through the doorway. She jumped to her feet as I
entered. My eyes
scanned her over as I tried to calm my beast so I could shift back,
assuring myself
that she was okay.
I knew she wouldn't want to come near me in this form. The last

time she had seen me this way, she was horrified. The chance of her even recognizing me seemed low. But as our eyes met, she ran toward me, crashing against my chest with her arms wrapped as far around my waist as they could go, and she held me tightly to her.