

The Rejected Luna's Prince Chapter 56 -

6–8 minutes

The Rejected Luna's Prince Chapter 56

56 – Walk Through The Woods

(Willa)

The next day was thankfully our last. I was excited to get back home and see Emmett.

We checked in with my parents to make sure they were ready to go. I took one last look around this house, my home, and my emotions swelled. It felt like I was losing a part of me somehow, even though I knew the memories would remain and what was to come would be so much better.

The thought of putting this behind me was something I had never imagined.

Caspien gave me some space to look back through my childhood room. I reminisced on all the memories and focused on the good ones.

I relived the happy memories of growing up here, feeling their warmth, and cataloged them.

Caspien and I walked through the pack grounds one last time after saying our temporary goodbyes to my parents.

“Can we take a walk through the woods?” I asked him.

“It would be my pleasure to escort you,” He squeezed my hand.

I led him to one of my favorite paths; we walked silently until the trees enveloped us.

“This used to be my favorite place,” I admitted.

This walk was one I took when I needed to think through things, if I was feeling down, or if I just needed time to myself.

I looked around and smelled the scent of warm earth and the last few blossoms of honeysuckle. I tilted my face towards the sun and let it envelop me. Warmth settled over me and radiated off my bare skin.

I savored it.

Being in the city was nice, but I missed this. I missed being this close and connected to the earth.

When I opened my eyes, I reached for Caspien but didn't see him next to me.

Turning around, I almost bumped into him on the ground.

"Uh, hi," He said.

I looked down at him, placing my arms on his shoulders, "What are you doing?"

"Trying to propose," He frowned, looking away and fidgeting.

"Oh. I'm sorry, go on," I bit down on my lip, trying not to laugh.

"Willa," He looked at me seriously before a wide smile parted his lips, "Well. F.uck Willa, you know how I feel about you. Will you be mine in every way possible?"

"Yes," I almost shouted; I was so surprised, but happiness flooded through me in waves; it was a tangible thing and lit me up from the inside.

I knelt down to him and wrapped my arms around his neck, touching my forehead to his.

"Okay," He breathed, "Good." He gave me a smile and took my hand in his.

He slipped something on it, and I looked down. It almost took my breath away. On my ring finger was a large oval diamond. I twisted it to see it was set on a thin gold band with some etchings and swirls.

"Family band," He muttered. He didn't seem like his usual confident self, "The engravings are hard to see now, its been passed down for centuries. If you don't like it, I can update it." He frowned.

"I love it," I looked at him, "You didn't have to."

"I wanted to." His icy blue eyes fixed on mine.

"Did you plan this?" I asked, not able to look away from him.

Not that this wasn't a great spot, but it seemed random.

"I had the ring made ages ago," He lowered his hands to the small of my back, "Okay, well, weeks ago. I was just waiting for the right time. I didn't want it to feel staged." He frowned, "I really didn't plan on it to happen here. I'm sorry if that muddled things."

I leaned up to kiss both edges of his frown.

“This place still means so much to me. I’m glad that I get to share it with you.” I replied, making his anxious stare meet mine again.

“I asked your dad and Emmett, by the way,” He looked at me, “They both said yes.”

I laughed at that, “Of course they did,” I brought a hand to his cheek and ran it through his short beard.

“Willa, I want this. I want you in every way. You are mine.”

I felt more confident than ever walking out of the Blue Ridge packhouse, finally on our way home.

No part of me wanted the life that I was promised here. I knew that already, but it was different actually to come back and see it. See how much I changed and how this place and people didn’t.

Nolan and Camilla were standing at the front to send off their guests. When they saw us, Camilla was shifted on her feet but glared at me as if I did something to offend her personally. Nolan was wearing a tight frown.

“Alpha Nolan, Luna Camilla,” I started plastering a bright smile on my face, “Thank you for your hospitality. This weekend has been refreshing.” I couldn’t think of a better word, but it fit. Camilla looked down, but I saw her gaze snag on my ring.

Nolan’s parents appeared out of nowhere. They must have been waiting for us.

“Let us know,” Hugo reached out a hand, and Caspien shook it, then he smiled down at me.

“I will, but it’s up to him. I can’t promise anything, and it might not be for a while.” I explain honestly. I wanted to get Emmett settled before I even mentioned the convoluted history with his sperm donor and his parents.

Camilla’s face contorted in shock as she stared at Hugo, realizing what he was implying. Nolan looked angry but had the good sense not to say anything. Natalie was silent for once in her life, not able to meet her son’s eyes, and I relished it.

“Thank you for hosting us,” Caspien said, regaining the attention of everyone, “And don’t worry about the incident with the dress,” He went on talking to Camilla, “I already ordered her a new wardrobe full of his originals.” Camilla’s lips met in a tight line and she took a shaky breath through her nose.

He turned to me, frowning slightly, “Don’t be mad, darling, but you’ll have to go to a fitting again. I know you hate these royal duties, but he insisted that you come to his private office so he can design pieces specifically around you.” He sighed, “If it makes you feel better, go shopping afterward. Take the jet, of course.”

I looked at him and tried to suppress the smile, “Might pass on that monotony,” I raised an eyebrow.

You think you’re funny, huh? – I linked him

I was met with a swift kiss and a smile.

“We will be back to discuss the other matters at hand,” Caspiens voice dropped lower as he turned back to our hosts.

“What matters?” Camilla’s voice was high-pitched and shaky.

Caspien raised a brow at them as if they were stupid and led me out.

We had no intention of claiming Emmett’s birthright, but they didn’t need to know that, not yet, at least.

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 57 -

14–18 minutes

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 57

Chapter 57 Two Rings

(Willa)

We rode back to Crescent Moon in another one of those ridiculous limos. I laid my head on his chest with his arm wrapped around me in comfortable silence. That weekend was a lot, and I don’t know if I needed to process it all or just not think at all. Either way, the drive back helped me decompress.

Caspien ran his finger over my knuckles before stopping to trace the outline of my ring, “I like this here,” He whispered, “Now all the humans know that you’re mine as well,”

“How antiquated,” I whispered back.

“I like to call it primal.” He growled for emphasis.

I settled into him, letting his scent wash over me as we pulled up to the packhouse.

“Let’s go get our boy,” Caspien brushed his lips over my forehead before helping me out of the car.

It felt so nice being back, putting that weekend behind me, and returning home.

Emmett rushed into my arms, and I settled my face into his soft hair, grabbing him close to me. Relief and love pulsed through me; knowing that Emmett got away from there before he was even born was a blessing I had never thought of before. It made it all worth it having Emmett safe from growing up in that environment.

Caspien’s strong arms wrapped around us both in a warm embrace.

“We made the perfect airplane out of blue paper,” He pulled back excitedly and wiggled in my arms to get me to put him down before tugging on both of our hands and leading us into Rendell and Grace’s apartment.

“We heard we’re getting new neighbors,” Caspien’s dad said as we were dragged past him.

“We can’t wait. We’re going to stay the next few nights here to help them unpack and settle in.” Grace added.

Emmett stopped at the dining room table that was covered in paper.

“We’ve had a busy weekend,” Rendell said, stopping behind us as Emmett rummaged through the paper planes.

“This one!” He shouted, holding an airplane over his head triumphantly.

“That is a good one,” Caspien knelt next to him; Emmett handed him the airplane, and Caspien examined it, lifting part of the paper wing up.

“I have to say it might be one of the best, son,” Rendell knelt down and placed his hand on Caspien’s shoulder, “We made the weight a bit heavier.”

“But with the thrust? It seems too small,” Caspien replied.

“Try it for yourself,”

Caspien stood up and aimed the paper airplane back down the hallway. It glided with ease and fell to a soft landing.

“Wow,” Caspien whistled.

“I told you!” Emmett said, tugging him back down the hallway to retrieve it.

Grace looked at me and sighed, “It’s even worse with his grandson, I thought Caspien and him were bad, but I guess the whole apple and the tree thing or whatever people say,” She waved a hand, but her eyes were bright.

She turned to study me, “Can I get you anything? Some tea, maybe? I knew it was a long weekend.”

“It was,” I agreed, “Maybe later, thank you, I just want to unpack and change sweatpants and stare at a wall for a while,” I responded honestly, and Grace laughed louder than I’d ever heard her.

“I completely understand that,”

“We’ll see you tonight?” I asked, “My parents will be here after dinner if you’re still awake.”

“Willa, we’re honestly not old,” She scolded, and I covered my smile.

Her eyes widened, and she grabbed my hand.

I had already forgotten, the ring was part of me now, and nothing changed between Cas and me. It was just another outward show of our commitment.

“That is gorgeous; he has outdone himself,” She breathed, turning my hand over, “It looks even better than I imagined.” She said in awe, her eyes welling up.

She dropped my hand and pulled me into a tight hug.

“What is happening here?” Caspien said, eyeing us.

“We’re engaged,” I said as Grace let me go; she wiped her eyes.

“Are you crying, Mom?” Caspien looked taken aback.

“Yes,” Grace eyed her son, “There’s nothing wrong with that.”

“Congratulations,” Rendell boomed, clapping Caspien on the shoulder, “Let me see what you did with the family band,” I held my hand out to his, and mine was swallowed in his, “Very good, son.” He smiled proudly, “Fit for a princess.”

Rendell sounded serious, and I felt my cheeks flush a bit.

“What is it?” Emmett peered behind Caspien.

“I proposed to your Mama,” Caspien ruffled his hair, “Remember when I asked you if it was okay if I asked your mom to marry me?” Emmett nodded and walked up to me, looking at the ring.

“That’s nice, but wait until I show you this other airplane.” Emmett walked past me.

Caspien shook his head, smiling, “Grab the airplane, and let’s go home. We can order pizza if you want.”

“Yes!” Emmett cheered.

“More reaction for pizza than that diamond,” Caspien sighed.

“He doesn’t have your taste for the finer things,” I raised an eyebrow.

“He will come around,” Caspien wrapped an arm around me and grabbed Emmett’s hand in his.

It took all of five minutes before Cali and Holden barrel through the door with Loreli in tow. Loreli barreled over to Emmett and almost knocked him down.

“She has my grace,” Holden smiled at us.

“I have news,” Cali brushed past him and held out her hand. A massive diamond with a halo of smaller ones that made it look like the sun sat on a diamond-studded gold band.

“It’s beautiful,” I breathed.

“A sunbeam for my ray of sunshine,” Holden came up and pulled Cali against his chest. Cali rolled her eyes but her smile didn’t waver.

“Well, congratulations,” Caspien said, nodding at them.

“That’s it? I just bared my soul to this woman and poured out more money than I thought a rock could cost,” Holden said, and Cali rolled her eyes, “And I get a terse congratulations?”

“Terse,” Caspien repeated.

“Congratulations,” I beamed at them, feeling a rush of happiness from my friend.

I knew this meant the world to Cali, she was just turned, and this meant more in her mind than a mark. I knew it went deeper than just the ring she wanted. This was a human version of a mark.

“Let me see it again,” I took her hand in mine as Cali’s smile widened, “He got Loreli a necklace that looks exactly like it, smaller of course, and she’s too small now, but,” She shrugged.

“We need to celebrate,” Holden said.

“With my wine, I’m assuming,” Caspien said coolly, and Holden looked away guiltily, “That’s fine,” Caspien said and sighed, “Because we also have something to celebrate.”

“Oh, the weekend,” Cali raised an eyebrow, and her genuine smile was replaced with a wicked one, “I want all the details.”

“And you’ll get them, but I also asked Willa to marry me,” Caspien cut in; Holden and Cali looked at him, their eyes wide as if this was some sort of shock, “And she said yes,” Their eyes widened.

“What?” I asked them, “We’re already marked.”

“But marriage, Cas, it just seems so, I don’t know, sentimental.” Holden said, “Were werewolves,”

“I think it’s great,” Cali said, reaching for my hand now examining my ring, whistling lowly.

“Double wedding? We can both have babies after,” Holden suggested.

“No!” Cali and I shouted at the same time.

“Jeez, calm down,” Holden held his hands up, “I’ll keep my little swimmers to myself.”

“I swear,” Caspien shook his head.

“Let me get the kids some snacks, and I want to hear all about it,” I diverted the conversation.

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“So, first we went on a helicopter ride over the city, and then he rented out this theater, I forget the name, not the big one,” Cali chewed her lip, looking away, “It doesn’t matter, but when we got there there wasn’t anyone, I thought we were going to see a show.” Holden placed his hand on hers.

“It was dark besides roses and hundreds of candles,”

“Thousands,” Holden corrected.

“Thousands of candles, and a band and orchestra band, string quartet? Whatever,” Cali waved her hand, “He brought me to the top of the stairs and proposed there in front of this huge window that overlooked a moonlight garden,” She sighed and looked up as if she could see it now, “Normally I would say it would be over the top and cheesy,” Cali gave me her wry smile, “But I deserve it.” She flipped her curls.

“That you do,” I smiled at her.

Her happiness was infectious. I saw a different side of her recently, one where her first instinct wasn't to protect or defend.

“How did Caspien do it?” She turned her hazel eyes to me. They seemed almost gold under the dim kitchen light.

“Well, it was the last day, this morning, actually.” Goddess, was that only this morning? “And we were taking a walk through the woods, and then he proposed,” I said.

“Oh,” Cali said, expecting more.

“The princeling got dirt on his pressed pants?” Holden's eyes widened in mock horror, “That is romantic,” He stared at Caspien, “For you at least.”

“I was going to do something else, but it felt right,” Caspien shrugged, ignoring his friend, “I can still do something more dramatic,” Caspien turned to me, but he wasn't joking.

“No, no, please, once is enough,” I said, and Caspien's eyes furrowed slightly, “No, I meant like it's over; we don't need to redo it.”

I was definitely not getting this out right.

“Sorry, wait. It was perfect; nothing could top it.” I looked at Caspien; I meant it. I didn't want anything else.

Holden sucked in air through his teeth, and Cali looked away.

“Great save,” Caspien chuckled dryly but put an arm around me, smiling.

I mean it, it was perfect. Unexpected, everything I linked him

He kissed my forehead.

“Your parents are here,” He said, “Let's show them the new place.”

I heard Caspien call Emmett to show his grandparents their new apartment. We did the same engagement story over again for them. More tears, more congratulations.

Neither of us even thought to tell anyone. Not out of disrespect for our friends or family, just because it felt so natural. This was the next step for us, not one that either of us had to think about.

It felt so normal, so natural; we didn't think about it.

Once they were all settled, at least for the night, we left both of our sets of parents in their apartment to relax over a glass of wine.

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Cali and I were leaning over the kitchen table, Emmett and Loreli were fast asleep, tiring themselves out from chasing each other around all afternoon.

Cali was twisting her ring, watching the reflection of the overhead lights.

“I never thought I would get this, you know,” Cali murmured, her voice soft.

“A ring or a wedding?” I asked.

“Either,” She shrugged no hint of playfulness in her voice, “I honestly never thought about it. It was something I saw too many people do just because they felt like they had to, that they were stuck, and it was a way out,” She laughed once, “It never was.”

“I didn’t think my life would take this turn, not the werewolf thing,” She looked up, throwing her ruby curls across her back, “That one wasn’t even in the cards, but to even carve out time in my life to date it seemed,” She shrugged.

I smiled at her. I got it, in a sense. I never thought of the possibility of a second chance. It wasn’t even on my radar as something that might happen. I was too engrossed in the steps I had to take to ensure Emmett had a good life. I didn’t think about a future for myself as well, outside of him.

“It’s funny how it happens, isn’t it?”

“People always say that when you meet the one you know,” Cali smiled, “I didn’t believe them, but the whole werewolf mate beacon electric buzz thing is something else.”

I shook my head, “It’s not because of the mate bond that you want your mate. It’s because of who they are. The mate bond just alerts us to our person we can cut the c.rap.”

“Never go on a bad date again,” Cali gave me a wry smile, “Seems like you guys have evolved past humans in that department.”

“Maybe,” I shrugged.

“But it is Holden, even without the electric shock to my c.oochie every time he touches me,” I closed my eyes and shook my head, suppressing a smile, “He balances me, and I think I don’t know if I deserve this. It doesn’t feel real. I felt like I got a get-out-of-jail-free card for no reason. Life isn’t supposed to be this easy.” She looked up at me, her eyes hard.

“But was it always this easy? I don’t think either of us had it very easy, at least not at times,” I shrugged, she still didn’t dive into her past with me, but I hoped she did with Holden.

Cali took a deep breath and placed her hands on the kitchen island, “You’re right.”

“I think this happy ending is d.amn well deserved,” I smiled at her channeling a bit of her energy.

“You’re right again,” She gave me a bit of a smile, “I just feel too young to get this. I thought I would be slaving away for decades before I got this sense of peace, of ease.” She shook her head.

“If you want, we can start at the diner again. Maybe I’ll get Caspien to charge us extortionate rent just so we have some of the crippling anxiety back,”

She gave me a genuine rare smile this time, “Crippling anxiety is a feeling I’m far more comfortable with than peace. Every day my body is confused; it feels like it’s missing something, that sense of dread, fear like something is off.”

“You’ll get used to it, I hope.” I shrugged, “Also, you kinda did that whole assassin thing, so I’m sure we can find something to keep that adrenaline up if you ever find yourself getting bored.”

“I did, didn’t I?” She crossed her arms and leaned back, “Maybe I do deserve this after all,” She stood up and brushed off her jeans, “I’m going to find my mate.”

“Everything good that comes is something you already deserve,” I turned as she passed me.

“What? Next you’re going to tell me to trust the universe or something,” She laughed once.

“I mean..” She rolled her eyes, flipped her hair over her shoulder, and went to the living room where Holden and Caspien were.

I followed her out, letting Caspien pull me into his lap and wrap his arms around me.

“What did we miss?” I nuzzled into his neck.

“We were talking about logistics of the challenge,” Caspien said.

“When are you going to challenge him?” My stomach dropped, and ice went through my veins as I asked. I didn’t want to think about that, not yet.

“Tomorrow,” Caspien said, and I froze, pulling back to look at him, “We don’t know what else he has in the works; I want to cut it off before things go any further.” Caspien’s eyes were like chips of ice.

“He might not even know The Silent Assassin is dead,” I looked down, playing with the edge of the blanket.

“Griffen said that there has been talk, rumors at most, but I’m not taking any chances.” His jaw hardened.

“What about the baseball game? With my dad?” I was grasping at straws.

His eyes softened as they settled on me, “I’ll be back before then,” Caspien’s voice was gentle, and he took my hand, rubbing his thumb across my knuckles.

“I trust you,” I said.

I knew I couldn’t stop him, and I didn’t want to. I wanted to stop this challenge completely, wish it into existence, but we all knew this was the way we had to go forward. This was the exact moment that we had been working towards.

“Let’s put on a show then,” I sighed and tried to smile, but my shoulders sagged.

“Now, that I can do,” He tilted my chin up to face him, a broad smile spread across his face, but it didn’t reach his eyes, “I’m ready for this, Willa. I need to show him, show them all what will happen when someone tries to touch my family,” His eyes flashed black, and I placed my hand against his cheek. He leaned into it, shutting his eyes and visibly calming.

“Tomorrow, it will all be over tomorrow,” Caspien promised, his eyes locked on mine back to their icy blue.

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 58 -

14–18 minutes

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 58

Chapter 58 – The Challenge

(Willa)

I slept in Caspien’s embrace. He held me to him tightly, not loosening his grip throughout the night. Dull morning light filtered through a crack in the curtains, and I shut my eyes against it, wishing to go back to sleep to have a few more hours of peace.

I nuzzled my head into his chest, but even his warmth and scent did nothing to calm me down.

Caspien’s grip loosened on me, his hand coming to my back, lazily rubbing circles until he came to my bra strap and undid it, his hand moved up to lower the straps off my shoulders. I scooted back only a bit so that my bra could come down for him.

His thumb grazed over my n****e, and it pebbled against his touch. I pressed myself against him feeling his hardness against my stomach.

Caspian let out a low growl that rumbled through his chest, I reached out to touch him, but he flipped me fast, so my stomach was on the bed.

He removed my bra discarding it before he hooked his thumbs in my underwear and pulled it down and off. Everywhere he touched lit me up, goosebumps and sparks trailed behind his strong hands.

He sat up and pressed his body on top of mine, lowering some of his weight on me so that I was held in place beneath him.

One of his hands entangled in mine and splayed it over my head. He brushed my hair to the side away from my back and ran his hand up and down my side.

“You’re mine,” His voice was raw, sending a delightful shiver through me, tightening my core.

One of his knees pushed open my right thigh, spreading it wide for him. His other settled over my left leg, pinning it down.

“Goddess, Willa, your scent,” He settled over me, “Is this okay?” His voice was low, gravelly, and pleading.

“Yes,” My body was thrumming with anticipation, and he didn’t make me wait long.

I felt his velvety tip press slightly into me. I grabbed his hand and the sheets, clenching around him, waiting for the rest of him.

“Is this what you want?”

Fucking obviously

Shut up – I almost laughed at Iris, but I couldn’t focus.

“Tell me, Willa. I need to make sure I’m not hurting you,” His warm breath fanned my neck, sending goosebumps in its wake.

“Please, more.” I tugged at the sheets.

I felt him smile against my neck before he pushed slowly, painstakingly slowly, into me. I gasped as I expanded for his length.

He pulled out while taking the mark he gave me in his mouth. He sucked and slid his tongue over it, sending sparks rolling through me. I tried to move in response to the sensation, but I was locked under Caspian’s heavy weight, entirely at his mercy.

“I like this.” He grumbled into my ear, “You here, under me, completely n.aked,” He kissed my mark again, “Waiting and ready.”

“Cas,” I pleaded.

His growl reverberated through his chest as he p.lunged back inside me. I cried out in p.leasure and he nipped at my ear.

“Better?” His nose slid along my neck.

I nodded, whimpering.

“Good,” He pulled out of me almost completely before t.hrusting himself back in, bottoming out inside of me.

I groaned as he filled me, my breathing sped up, catching in my throat as delicious p.leasure shot through me in waves from where he entered me.

He held me down. I laid there under him as he did what he wanted for his benefit and mine.

It was primal, claiming, beyond s.exy.

His hands tightened around mine in between my splayed fingers.

“F.uck Willa,” He started to speed up.

His weight on me, using me for his p.leasure. It undid me in ways I never knew. I knew one-sided p.leasure before; I was used to it before I met him.

But this, this was for both of us.

I wanted him to use me, to take me how he needed in a primal way. Some deep-rooted instinct in me overcame me. I craved him finding his r.release from my body alone.

I gave myself over to him completely.

His legs pressed against mine, holding me open for him, his body rolled and tensed against my back. I cried out, and his breath became shorter, matching mine.

With each of his deep movements, my body wound up.

The need and want inside me was met with his carnal desire.

“Willa,” He groaned, and it started to send me over the edge.

My name on his lips, the promise of his undoing because of me. Because of my body, what being inside of me did to him.

Something coiled tighter inside me to a point where it was almost painful.

“You’re mine,” He growled, “Only mine,” His royal aura burst through the room. His cool steady power met my hot satisfaction and caressed it.

His primal claiming was my release.

I unraveled under his steady rhythm, his weight warm and strong and safe.

His hips thrust into me as I bared myself for him, to him.

My pleasure sparked and flared up, rushing through me. Waves of heat and sparks coursed through, wrapping around me until I couldn’t think anymore, couldn’t form a word besides a string of moans and cries.

I was consumed by Caspien.

I took everything he gave me and wanted more, craved it.

He moaned deeply, the sound of his undoing reverberated through me.

He thrust deeper and quicker.

“Willa,” he groaned. Butterflies erupted at the sound of my name on his lips, the sound of his undoing because of me.

“Willa,” My name was strained as he stilled inside of me.

He put more weight on me. I loved how his body fell limp against mine as he was still inside me.

Our heavy pants intermingled. His hands uncurled and grasped mine.

I wanted this, needed this. I never wanted this moment to end. But it had to

His parents were downstairs waiting for us. Grace had got Emmett ready this morning and dropped him off to my parents for breakfast. Despite the looming dread I felt a flicker of happiness swell in my chest.

It was so indescribably nice to have both of our parents so close. To have Griffen and Nora and Holden and Cali here, as well. Even though I wanted to give Emmett everything I could by myself, I realized that he was getting so much more being around this newly expanded family.

This is how it should be, the benefits of being part of a pack, something that I thought was lost to Emmett when we left Blue Ridge was only intensified now.

“All set?” Rendell asked Caspien as if we were going away for a day trip instead of challenging another Alpha to the death for his pack.

“Good to go. Griffen and Holden know an outline of what will happen after, subject to change, of course,” Caspien gave his father a tight smile.

“Obviously,” Rendell returned it, “Do you want me to come?”

Caspien nodded once, “As a backup, I’ll have Griffen fill you in now. We might need you to stay with the pack today after we explain the options for their future. I don’t want to rush them into any decisions, and know that we are there to help, not hurt them.”

Rendell nodded at his son and rubbed his chin, but his eyes seemed to light up. I wasn’t sure if it was because he was back in Alpha action or because Caspien admitted to wanting his help, but it was nice to see.

“Mom, you’ll be okay here?” Caspien asked.

“I am not fragile,” Grace gave her mate and son a look that made them instantly avert their eyes, “Need I remind you who was running this pack while you were in diapers?” She raised a perfect eyebrow at her son.

“And need I remind you who was closing the deals you botched and cleaning blood off your nice shirts when you decided to let your emotions take over instead of thinking rationally?” She turned her penetrating gaze on Rendell.

I couldn’t help my smile.

“Men,” She closed her eyes and shook her head once, “So damn irrational. And these Alphas, Goddess help their mates. They can be so overprotective even though we’re the ones that end up protecting them,” Grace turned her eyes to me, “My advice – just let them pretend they are in charge. They know they’re not, but it’s like when you let a kid pretend to drive while you’re pushing their stroller,” She said, not lowering her voice at all, and gave me a knowing smile that bordered on amused.

I bit down on my lip, trying to hide my laugh.

She was one powerhouse of a woman and could back it up. She was exactly the Luna I would like to be; I could be if I chose.

“I can’t exactly argue with that,” Rendell came up and pulled his wife to his chest, a motion that seemed so young, nothing like the King and Queen they usually presented themselves as.

“Neither can I,” Caspien gave me a look that seemed to bore right through me, “Let’s get going. The sooner we get this over with the better.” Caspein reached for my hand.

We stopped to drop Grace off at my parent’s apartment, and Caspien pulled Emmett aside for a conversation that seemed serious.

My mom rubbed her arm and averted her eyes from mine before pulling me into a tight hug.

“You’ll be okay,” She whispered more to herself than me.

My dad pulled us both close for a brief embrace.

“I know,” I sounded more confident than I was.

It wasn’t that I didn’t believe in Caspien. I did completely, with very fiber of my being.

He showed me time and time again that his reputation wasn’t just a myth. He showed me what an Alpha should lead like, and I knew how strong he was.

I just didn’t do well with the uncertainty, but I guess that was normal. I would put on a strong front, he didn’t need to worry about me today.

Griffen came up to drop off Nora with my parents and Grace. Nora looked annoyed but didn’t argue, “Nora said she could help with Emmett,” Griffen announced, getting her settled on the couch and making introductions.

Nora closed her eyes and took a deep breath looking at me, “Thank your parents for babysitting me, will you?” She said when Griffen was out of arms reach, “He packed me snacks,” She laughed once.

Something clawed at me, wishing that I had that when I was pregnant with Emmett, I shook my head trying to push away that longing.

“At least he’s practicing for parenthood.” I tried to laugh, taking her hand. She rolled her eyes, but they held nothing but affection.

I wanted to tell her that he would back off once the baby was born, but there would be no guarantee he wouldn’t be even more protective.

“Ready?” Caspien came up and extended his arm. I swallowed but nodded and put on a smile that I knew only he would see through.

I said my goodbyes to everyone and gave Emmett a massive hug, blinking back tears I wasn’t anticipating.

Holden and Cali came to drop Loreli off, and we all headed downstairs together.

No one spoke, but the air was charging with anticipation in the elevator, but it wasn't coming from me. All I felt was fluttering nerves, and even though Cali was standing firm next to me, I could sense the slight agitation from her. But she kept her gaze forward and her hand locked with Holdens.

I grasped Caspiens's hand in both of mine. I could feel his tension but not a note of fear. That settled me a bit.

One last thing to get past – I felt like I have been saying that for ages now.

If I can just get past my final, past The Silent Assassin, past the conference, past Emmett's fevers.

I wondered if there would be a time when I could just focus on the moment we were in without something looming over us threatening to rip away my happiness.

Still think we have it easy? I linked Cali

The corner of her lip twitched up, and she shook her head once.

—

The drive was too short, far too short.

We were pulling up to their pack in no time at all. Thankfully, I didn't have time to process fully what was about to happen. Iris and I trusted our mate, even if we hadn't seen a challenge before.

Caspian explained it, however simply.

We show up, challenge him; the more witnesses the better, someone dies – Alpha Jasper, and then we address the pack and deal with the backlash which I hoped there wouldn't be too much of.

Apparently, Griffen and Holden already had a thorough plan for pack takeover, assimilation, whatever.

Warriors followed us in cars behind, even though they were forbidden to intervene. Others followed in wolf form close behind. We didn't want to look like we were coming to attack them, but I didn't know how they could see this otherwise.

They didn't even have warriors at the gates. Caspian told me their pack numbers were dwindling, but that just seemed ignorant.

We pulled up to a packhouse that looked like something I was more familiar with. It was made of wood and fit in with the area around it, even if it wasn't even as big as the one at Blue Ridge.

A group of people was waiting out front. Now that I wasn't expecting.

With no one at the gates, I didn't think they would be warned, but maybe they had patrols that I missed.

Caspian tensed next to me. He looked at Holden and Griffen, and they seemed to have a silent conversation without mindlink.

Cali looked at me, a concern flickered over her face, but she gave me an encouraging partial smile before her face settled into hard indifference.

The car rolled to a stop, and the warrior driving gave an almost imperceptible nod in the mirror to us. Caspian got out first and held his hand up for me to wait. I did as he asked. For the first time, I feared for my safety and not only his. Something seemed off.

Holden gave Cali a swift kiss and followed Caspian out with Griffen. They left the door open, but I didn't dare look at Cali, I was focused on Caspiens back, trying to read him.

"Ah, Alpha Caspian," A tall man with dark hair sauntered towards him. I assumed it was Alpha Jasper.

"Dracos," Caspian corrected, "I know you don't come from a line of Alphas, so your education is lacking, but for royals, you address them by their last name as a sign of respect."

"And what if I don't respect you?" Alpha Jasper crossed his arms. There was something slimy about him; I immediately didn't like. It went past my hatred for him about what he tried to do to Emmet; this guy was off.

"That's fine," Caspian shrugged, "I don't need respect from others, especially from an Alpha like you,"

"Well," Alpha Jasper smiled after a long moment, "Get on with it," He opened his arms to his pack members behind him, "We've been waiting for you,"

Caspian seemed to tense, but it was hard to tell.

Even though the vote was only two days ago, there were so many people who knew of our intentions across our territory. It wouldn't be surprising if word got around or if he had any friends or family in any of the other packs.

"I, Prince Caspian Dracos of The Crescent Moon Pack, challenge you, Jasper Finn of The Black Stone pack,"

A wide smile crossed Alpha Jaspers's lips. It was unnerving. This Alpha that I could barely see past Caspiens broad shoulders should be on his knees, begging, pleading, at least pissing himself.

"Winner takes all?" Alpha Jasper asked.

“This is for your pack, not mine,” Caspien growled.

“That hardly seems fair,” Alpha Jasper went on, tilting his head.

Caspien shook his head, “You know how this works. This is personal. You came after my son, my heir, a child,” Some of his pack members looked at each other and shifted on their feet. I was glad it was news to them; we could use that later on.

Alpha Jasper had the good sense to look taken aback; his smile faltered for a second before it widened again. It was a wicked thing, cruel and unhinged.

Cali seemed even to tense next to me, I glanced at her, and she was paler than she usually was.

“I accept your challenge,”

I knew that would happen, that he didn’t have a choice, but with those words, my heart dropped to my stomach.

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 59 -

15–19 minutes

The Rejected Luna’s Prince Chapter 59

Chapter 59 – Black Blood

(Caspien)

The crowd waiting outside the packhouse was strange. I saw it in Holden’s and Griffen’s eyes too. It wasn’t just me being over-protective.

They knew we were coming past being alerted by patrols.

They were ready and gathered a group.

I didn’t know what he told these witnesses, and I honestly didn’t care. They would know the truth soon enough. I had the papers to prove it.

I asked Willa to stay in the car, and that pained me. I wanted her, needed her by my side, but I had to assess the situation first.

Alpha Jasper seemed more confident than I would have thought. I wanted to take him by surprise, but even if that element was lost, the complete faith I had in beating him didn't waver.

I fought to keep my voice even, letting some of my auras out so I could focus on keeping the anger at bay. I knew too well letting my anger lead clouded my judgment. I needed to keep it as fuel for later.

My dad came out of the car with Cali and Willa once it seemed there was no immediate danger.

Willa came to my side and grabbed my hand; it helped keep some of the anger at bay.

"You know the rules," My dad said, his voice booming.

"Of course I do," Alpha Jasper smiled, "I've done this before."

I was expecting Alpha Jasper to fight against this, protest that we couldn't fight outside our jurisdiction. I brought the proof, the document the other Alphas signed, but he didn't even ask for it.

A sense of unfamiliar unease flickered.

My dad nodded once, "Do you all agree to bear witness?" He asked the pack members and our warriors who came behind us.

They agreed; his pack members seemed nervous now. I scanned the group for his Beta and Gamma. They were standing in front of the other members but still didn't come to their Alpha.

"To the death or forfeit," My dad continued.

Willa tensed next to me, and I squeezed her hand. Alpha Jasper's eyes grazed over my mate, and I fought a growl. I didn't want him to know that anything he did got to me.

"Alpha Jasper," Willa said coolly, taking a small step forward, "I don't think we've met," She tilted her head, but I felt the rage through our bond.

"No, we haven't had the pleasure," He said, looking her over.

"I guess it won't matter anymore. Your pack and I will forget your name after today. You came after my son. You are not and will never be relevant," She went on, and I swelled with pride, "Let's end this. I'm bored already." Willa turned her brilliant green eyes to me and smiled sweetly.

Goddess, I loved this woman.

"You heard the lady," Holden said from behind me; Griffen was surveying the crowd.

Alpha Jasper's smile didn't falter; it unnerved me only slightly. I didn't think he could do anything illegal, but I wouldn't put it past him either.

I knew better than to tell my Beta and Gamma to be on the lookout. I knew they already were.

You sure you want to do this? My dad linked me. I nodded slightly.

This is what we came for. His being prepared meant nothing; it just might make it a more interesting fight, for me at least.

I reached out my hand for Alpha Jasper to shake, and he just looked at it, turning away.

"We can do it here," He said, motioning outside the packhouse.

It hardly seemed like the right place, but it didn't matter. I could take him no matter where it was. I gave Willa a quick kiss.

It will be okay, I reminded her.

She nodded once, her green eyes met mine with fierce determination.

I removed my shirt and took a step forward. The crowd backed up, giving us enough room.

"A fair fight," My dad reminded, "No one else shifts or intervenes. This is between Alpha Jasper and Alpha Dracos."

Alpha Jasper stepped forward. I couldn't wait to wipe the smile off his face. I nodded to him once, indicating I would start with or without his consent. His smile only widened.

He shifted into a brown wolf before I could think. Why would he shift already?

S.hit, this changed things, I wanted to wear him out in human form, but the size of his wolf was laughable. I could crush him without any thought.

Let me at him

Fine, if this is how he wanted to play it.

I charged at him and shifted into Atlas, letting him take over and lead by instincts.

His wolf rolled out of the way faster than I anticipated, but we got a bite to his leg. His howl pierced the air before he wiggled free from our grip.

I let some of the anger flare inside me, only enough to make it fuel this fight.

I wanted him to suffer, feel a fraction of the pain he put me through.

I would have fun with this, and I knew Atlas was craving this too. This was the moment we were building to, and I needed to put on a d.amn good show.

He righted himself, and I charged again. At the last second, I ducked aiming at his side.

It threw him off, he ducked out of the way and I got what I wanted.

His tail.

I clamped down hard, biting through fur and flesh. The thin bone snapped as I shook my head biting harder.

We didn't bite it off. Fully. But it was limp and twisted when we finally let go. I knew that would be painful and affect his balance, an added bonus.

Alpha Jaspers's whimpers and howls of pain helped satiate the mad rage coursing me.

This was what we needed.

We snarled at him, letting the royal aura unleash completely. I had other things to focus on besides containing my aura.

Alpha Jasper cowered under us.

We took advantage of that and lunged again, he lifted a paw over his head, leaving himself prone.

It confused me, but we got a bite to his back leg. A deep one.

He slashed me against my side, the sting of the shallow wound surprised me.

Atlas let out a howl.

Alpha Jasper's wolf was panting hard, and he raised his claws to attack again, but he was too slow. He had a few major injuries and probably wouldn't be standing for much longer. It was a dumb move to try the same thing twice, especially when it worked the first time.

We dodged him easily and nipped at his paw as it passed us, biting down but not gaining enough purchase to break it.

Frustrated, I pulled back.

My side was starting to burn, making it almost hard to ignore. I hadn't ever felt something like this; my adrenaline and sped-up healing would make any minor injury go to the back of my mind. I rarely felt an injury during a fight, never a minor one.

I took a deep breath and focused on the enemy at hand, getting out of my own head.

He was snarling at us; his teeth pulled back in something that looked like a smile.

He lunged and bit us. I jerked him off with little effort. He wasn't very strong. I had to admit that this was unlike any one-to-one combat I had been a part of. There was usually more circling, more fluidity. This stop-and-start was unfamiliar to me, I didn't like it.

I knew that I needed to make him suffer more. I felt like I was losing my advantage, but I didn't know why.

We swayed as we stepped forward, reaching out to s***h him, but he easily missed.

My sight was starting to go fuzzy around the edges.

Cas, what's going on? Holden came into my mind, and I shook it away.

No distractions.

Okay, maybe we wouldn't make him suffer, couldn't.

We had to end him.

Now.

We tried to stand, no, wait, we were already standing.

The wolfs in front of us were blurry.

Why were there so many of them?

They all came at once and bit down.

Hard.

But I didn't feel it.

All I felt was the raging pain in my side, it was burning, worse than anything I had ever felt. It was spreading. It wasn't just on my side anymore, the fire was clawing its way up my side.

I looked to make sure I wasn't on fire, I couldn't see anything past out midnight-black fur.

Something was wrong.

We had to finish this, though.

For Emmett, for our son.

For our pup – Atlas agreed, but he sounded far away.

We let out a loud growl that shook the ground, almost making me fall.

I let the anger out. All of it.

It sparked and lapped up, charging my blood.

He came after mine. He came after my son, my heir.

He came after Emmett.

He came after my family.

Alpha Jasper lunged again, but the anger pushed back some of the dizziness, if only slightly.

We took a step, and he barely missed us, stumbling on his injured paws.

I turned to face him. Blood was covering his dull brown fur. His eyes seemed to barely focus, or maybe that was me. There was only one of him again. That was a slight relief.

He stumbled but then charged and went for our front paws, a common blunder, leaving his neck wide open.

As he went to bite me, I clamped down on his neck, not missing this rare perfect opportunity.

His blood filled Atlas' mouth, but we didn't loosen our grip.

He was fighting against it, kicking, clawing. But our grip held fast, tearing deeper into him with every movement from his wolf. All of our lingering strength was poured into our grip on him.

None of his kicks or scratches was painful. I couldn't think of anything past the fire in my side that was radiating through me, pulsing with my heart.

Red spots blotched my already blurry vision.

We bit harder with the last of our strength.

Alpha Jasper's wolf went limp under us.

His breathing stopped along with his heartbeat as I slipped into the darkness I couldn't hold off any longer.

(Willa)

Once I saw Alpha Jasper shift, I felt immensely better. He wasn't the size of a true Alpha, I wondered if he had any Alpha blood in him at all.

Caspian shifted into a massive black wolf and pounced.

The sight sent a shiver to my core despite the situation.

Rendell placed a steadying hand on my shoulder, and Cali stood closer to me, leaning against my side. The c.ontact helped me stay calm. As calm as I could in this situation.

He made immediate c.ontact and the sound of Alpha Jasper's howls of pain fueled me. I wanted him to suffer. I wanted every d.amn person out there to see what would happen if they tried to come after my son, come after any one of us.

My fear turned to a hardened resolve.

This had to happen, and I would relish in every second of pain he went through.

I didn't care if that made me a d.amn monster, I didn't care if I was reduced to the same scum that he was; I needed this.

Caspian kept attacking, he was fluid yet calculated in his movements.

Alpha Jasper finally got in a swipe, and I held my breath. I didn't want him to get hurt – at all. But I wasn't dumb enough to think he would walk away completely unscathed.

But that swipe hurt me. I felt all the air inside me leave at once as if I had been punched.

Rendell tightened his grip on my shoulder. I wasn't sure if it was for my benefit or because of his own fear. I hoped it wasn't the latter.

Caspian seemed to sway on his feet; he tried to attack and then again, but he didn't get a good enough grip.

My stomach tightened. Something was wrong.

I f.orced myself to look away for a brief moment. Holden was linking Griffen, and Cali shifted on her feet.

Something wasn't right. I knew that before I had confirmation.

Atlas seemed to sway, but he was barely scratched. I wanted to link him, but I didn't want to distract him.

Iris was pacing around my mind, and it unsettled me further.

How much longer could this go on?

End him, end him, end him – I pleaded silently.

Caspian's wolf lunged, clamped down, biting down on the howl that Alpha Jasper emitted until there was just a low guttural sound that faded away to a slight wheeze and then nothing.

Was that it?

I looked at Rendell, and his face was hard, but his eyes seemed to be full of worry.

“Is it over?” Cali asked under her breath.

I looked up at Holden and Griffen. Their gazes were focused on Caspien.

“I- I don't know,” Holden admitted.

“I think so,” Griffen said.

Caspian didn't get up. Didn't move.

“We wait for Cas,” Holden said.

“No,” I responded, taking a step forward.

“That could be seen as you interfering,” Griffen said, his dark eyes meeting mine.

“Something isn't right.” As soon as I said that, I got confirmation from everyone else's faces.

Griffen looked nervous for the first time outside of being with Nora. His calm facade seemed to crack.

I broke away from everyone and ran towards him. I clutched at his silky fur that was matted with blood. His mouth fell away from his grasp, but he was limp.

No, no, no.

I swallowed the bile that started to rise in my throat.

I opened one of his eyes, and all I could see was white.

I buried my head into his chest; his heartbeat was too slow, far too slow.

But there was a heartbeat.

I might have called out to Rendell. I wasn't sure. I could barely hear what was left of Caspien's heartbeat over my erratic one.

His dad knelt next to me; the color drained from his face.

This was bad. Could it get worse?

No, he was my mate, a royal. He would survive.

He had to.

Atlas shifted under my hands, his fur retracted, and Caspien lay in front of me.

His breathing was shallow, his eyes closed, and a layer of sweat sheened his face.

"S,hit," Someone said, maybe me.

Down his side were three long gashes.

An unearthly red shade and black blood dripped out of it.

It wasn't natural.

My breath caught in my throat, my entire body seemed to seize, and I couldn't breathe.

"What did he do? How did he poison my son?" Rendell shouted. His aura was angry, dark, and unrelenting.

"Griffen," Rendell said, and a blur of activity fluttered around us.

Some grunts and protests met with what sounded like blows, skin against skin.

"What do you want us to do?" Holden knelt next to me. I couldn't look away from Caspien, and I was worried if I did, his shallow breathing would cease.

"Get him back, now, with the warriors." I choked out, surprised I could string a sentence together. Adrenaline pumped through me, and I grasped onto that slight bit of clarity.

We had to save him.

I had to save him.

"Rendell and Griffen will deal with it here. I want answers and no one leaving until we figure out who was part of this, who knew."

I saw Holden nod once from the corner of my eye, "Now," I said, my voice hard.

That was the last rational thought I had until I slipped back into sheer panic. Caspien was loaded into the back of a car, and I sat next to him with a young warrior trying to bandage him.

The wounds were seeping through the bandages so fast I knew it was no use, but I wouldn't stop him, and I didn't want to lose any hope I had to save him.

Cali crawled in next to me, "What can I do?" She asked, her voice breathless and panicked.

"Text Grace, have her meet us with the doctor, and get a room ready." I realized I didn't even know where the pack clinic was. The doctor always came to Emmett. It had to be in the packhouse, though; there was still so much of it that I hadn't seen.

Cali fumbled with her phone, and my full attention returned to Caspien. I took his hand in mine, it felt cold, clammy, and I bit down on my lip to fight back the sobs that were trying to get out.

This couldn't be how it ended.

The minutes crawled by; there was no way this was the same way we had come only an hour ago. Time meant nothing anymore, I couldn't trust myself.

Cali's warm fingers entangled my other hand. It was such a contrast to Caspien's.

"We're almost there," She said, stroking the back of her thumb on my hand.

We rolled to a stop, and people started moving before I realized that we were home.

People in white coats came up, and Caspien was lifted from me. His hand fell out of mine and hung limp as he was moved to a stretcher.

Grace was standing at the front, her face tight and pale. She barely noticed me as we followed Caspien into a large elevator. She grasped my hand tight, and I held onto hers for dear life.

Neither of us had words.

"You'll have to wait here," Someone said as two doors were flung open, and Caspien was wheeled through them.

I couldn't help but think that this was the last time I might see him alive.

Iris was howling in our head; she didn't have anything slightly encouraging to say either. Her pain mirrored my own.

I had felt pain, but this was a new depth to it—a new layer.

I felt that the well of pain that I knew and the bottom of that well was cleaved open. I was thrust down into a deeper hole where I couldn't see even see a flickering light of hope.

I don't know when I fell. I don't know if it hurt when my knees hit the hard floor. I didn't know if those sobs were mine or Grace's.

I was ripped apart so completely nothing could put me back together.

The Rejected Luna's Prince Chapter 60 -

14–17 minutes

The Rejected Luna's Prince Chapter 60

Chapter 60 The Clinic

(Willa)

Days turned into weeks, into months, into years.

I felt like a shell of a person, burying myself in work, but I never felt fully here.

“How is he?” Cali tugged at a curl, not bothering to knock on the office door, his office door.

“The same,” I said, nothing new.

Stable, unchanging, but at least he wasn't worse. Not yet.

It was painful to be away from him, but I had to step up; it was what he would have wanted.

“What can I do to help?” She came up to my desk, Caspien's desk.

I was trying to sort through everything that was important, but I didn't know what was. I should have accepted Luna duties before, and then I would know what I needed to do here. I was so wrapped up in my own s.hit I didn't think about what was best for the pack, for Caspien.

Thankfully, I had support. Rendell was a huge help, and Griffen handled the new pack while Holden held things down at The Dracos Group.

“I don't even know.” I slumped into myself.

“Go get some rest. You need it,” Her voice was softer than usual.

“I can’t sleep,” Those same images just flashed through my mind. Him laying in pain, him slipping away, how he looked almost corpse-like now.

Besides, any second sleeping was a second that something could turn for the worse for Caspien.

“You didn’t sleep last night,” Cali said, “Go down to the hospital and sleep next to him, but you’re useless without sleep.”

I was useless with sleep too.

“He’s been stable for hours now,” Cali tried, “I’m sure he will be okay.” But she didn’t sound sincere.

The doctors didn’t know; no one did.

“It’s been almost twenty-four hours since we got back. He’s been stable most of the time,” She grabbed my hand and pulled me up, “I got this; link me if you need anything. Get some rest. I’ll let you know what Griffen finds out,” I nodded once.

Has it only been a day? I swore years had passed.

I didn’t know what true fear was until everything that I knew was held on a precipice that I didn’t control.

I was terrified of being pregnant alone, scared out of my mind during labor. Moving to the city by myself was a new flavor of fear. Emmett’s fevers were the worst, but there was still a bit of hope there, even if I felt mostly hopeless.

This was something else. This was too real. It ripped open parts of me and filled them with waves that felt white hot.

I dragged myself up, “I’ve got it. Go,” Cali urged as I paused at the door. I nodded and left.

Emmett was with my parents. I couldn’t bear to tell him what had happened yet. I didn’t know how.

The elevator door opened, and Emmett came barreling out, followed by my parents, who looked both frantic and stoic.

“He needed to see you,” My mom explained, “I tried to link you.”

S.hit. I didn’t mean to have a block up. I couldn’t afford to miss any information. I worked to lower it, it was the first time I accidentally had a block up, I didn’t even realize that was possible.

“Dad is hurt,” Emmett’s green eyes were wide and filled with tears.

I looked at my parents, who shook their heads, “We didn’t tell him, I swear.” My dad said.

“Baby,” My voice shook, “He will be okay.”

“I want to see him,” Emmett said, and I swallowed; Caspien didn’t look like himself. I couldn’t put Emmett through that; he was already starting to look like a corpse.

“I don’t know if that is a good idea,” I said, trying to put on a smile, “Let’s see him when he’s better.”

“No,” Emmett’s tears spilled over, “I need to,”

I looked up at my parents for help, but they didn’t say anything.

“Okay,” I took his hand and led him to the main elevator that went down to the other floors leaving my parents behind.

The clinic was bright, with large windows letting in the sunlight and plants everywhere. It did little to improve my mood, actually, it worsened it.

This place was far too cheery.

“Luna,” The nurse nodded. I didn’t care about her using a title I didn’t have, it meant nothing without him anyways “There isn’t any change,” She looked away, and I nodded not trusting my words.

“Are you sure?” I asked Emmett.

He was solemn next to me, clutching onto my hand. He nodded once.

I walked down the already familiar corridor. The others in the hallway stepped aside and looked down. When the professionals looked worried, I knew better than to hope for a good outcome.

“It’s okay, Mama.” He said, and it shattered me.

He didn’t have to protect me. I didn’t want him to think he had. I was supposed to be the one reassuring him, and I tried but I couldn’t.

I felt like such a failure.

I took a shaky breath as I paused at the closed door at the end of the hallway. The largest room, I was assured, as if that mattered. He was so far gone the extra square inches meant nothing.

A doctor that looked familiar was standing by his bedside, looking over papers on a clipboard.

It felt too normal, jarring; it grated against me.

How could anyone go on doing anything normal while my mate was lying there dying?

I hated them. I hated them for not knowing what this felt like. I hated them for not understanding.

I hated that they could go on back to their normal lives, that this was just a part of it – a job.

I envied them, anyone, that could find joy still. Anyone that could do anything with any sense of normality.

I didn't realize how lucky I was before, how much I took for granted, and that even sounded cheap, didn't encompass how much I lost, could lose.

I promised The Goddess I wouldn't take anything for granted if he came back, but I knew that it was a promise I couldn't make. I craved nothing more than normality, and I would willingly slip back into it if I was ever allowed the opportunity.

I hated the hope; it felt cheap. I didn't want to cling to it even though I had to. I had to.

The doctors had nothing, the specialists had nothing, there wasn't enough time to come up with some other saving grace, magic, or anything. Time was almost up.

We were scrambling, and we were behind.

We had been behind since the challenge.

He lay there, pale, his lips cracked and unmoving. His chest barely rose and fell, too slow, too damn slowly.

But it was a sign of life.

“Dad?” Emmett asked, letting go of my hand.

I was shot back to reality, the beeping in the room felt overwhelming, the dim light was far too bright, and I reached out for anything to keep me from spinning.

“Mama,” Emmett's voice sounded far away, and I nodded once closing my eyes, trying to pull myself from the overwhelm.

I blinked back tears for him. I still had a reason, even if it wasn't for myself.

“Mama, we have to fix Dad,” Emmett said, his voice small but strong.

“Yes, baby, yes we do.” I grabbed his hand and nodded ferociously for him.

I walked towards the bed, but I didn't want to. I wanted to be with him, but being here showed me just how far he had gone.

It broke me, cleaved me in half seeing him like this.

This room was cold, dark, and nothing like Caspien.

I didn't want this to be my last memory of him. I didn't care if it made me weak. I didn't want this to taint the few memories we had.

Emmett dropped my hand again, and I breathed quickly, not wanting to slip away from the cold, cruel reality for my son's sake.

Emmett climbed up on the bed, and I reached for him, not sure why. Maybe I didn't want him to touch Caspien's tubes. Maybe I didn't want Emmett to see his only father figure like this for the last time.

The doctor opened his mouth and then shut it after he saw my face. I didn't know what he saw on it, though. I didn't know what I must have looked like. I didn't care.

I grasped onto the back of Emmett's shirt.

"Careful," I croaked.

"He needs help," Emmett's small hand came to Caspien's pale cheek.

I almost lost the rest of myself right there.

"Your pocket,"

I studied Caspien's handsome face, memorizing the planes of his face that I already knew better than my own.

His face was set in a pained look.

My hand reached towards him, brushing his cheek. It was cold, clammy, and sent a shiver through my spine.

There was no response from him, no way to get to him, tell him how much I needed him, how much he changed me, completed me.

"Your phone," Someone said from far away.

"Hm?"

"Mama," Emmett smiled, almost laughing, "Your phone."

“Oh,”

I took my phone out of my pocket and slid it open.

“It affects the blood, stays in it. A pure form of wolfsbane mixed with some poison. It suppresses the wolf completely. They said they usually die in minutes; I’m not sure how long he can hold on, I’m not sure how he did.” A voice so familiar came through the phone,

I scrambled to replay his words in my mind.

Who was it? What was he trying to say?

“I’ve notified anyone that might be able to help,” Griffen said.

Griffen.

“The remedy?” I asked, that seemed logical.

“They don’t know. The last one died in a few minutes.”

Thankfully, I didn’t even have time to spark that hope that there was a way out of this.

“Okay,” I managed.

“His blood, it stays in it.” Griffen said, “Willa? Give me to the doctor, anyone, please. Hand me to someone.”

I held out my hand, I don’t know who but someone took the phone.

“Draining, but how much?”

“New blood.”

“Which blood?”

“Witchcraft.”

“No, science.”

I focused on Emmett and Caspien.

I would be here, in this moment, while he was still here.

“You need to move, please.” Someone came up and brushed my arm, making me jolt.

“No,” Emmett buried his head in Caspien’s cold chest, the sound of his protests wrenched through me, “I can help.”

“Emmett, baby,” My voice caught.

D.amnit, I took a breath.

“We need to drain him, replace his blood,” Someone held my arm and helped me stand.

“With what blood?” My browns tugged together. I wouldn’t let myself grasp onto hope even though I so desperately wanted to.

“Blood bank, Luna, you just need to relax-”

“Don’t chastise me,” My voice was harder than I remembered, “Give him my blood.”

“We had to process it and test-”

“Give him my blood.” I said again, turning to them. My voice left no room for question. I grasped onto the slight bit of clarity.

“Mine, I am his mate.”

“Okay,” Someone led me to a chair.

There was a prick.

Where was Emmett?

He was here next to me. He looked up and patted my hand but looked worried. His wide green eyes were bright but with fear, something that might have been clarity. I wasn’t sure.

“Does it hurt?” He asked.

I looked at him. Was he talking to me?

He was.

I shook my head and tried a smile, “No baby,” I curled my lips up; it didn’t feel right.

“I can help,” Emmett frowned.

“I know,” I grabbed his hand, “I know.”

Movement blurred around us, encapsulating us in our own world.

Voices, murmurs, machines, beeping, frantic questions.

“It’s a theory.”

“The only one we have.”

“How much do we drain? He’s already at the end.”

“This could kill him.”

“He’s dying. He has hours if that.”

“The Luna agreed.”

I grabbed Emmett, my tether. A part of me felt guilty for using him for comfort when I should be comforting him.

“It will be okay,” I told him, repeating those hollow words that had no meaning to either of us.

Warmth flickered through my hand, and I glanced down at Emmett.

They started draining him. It was too soon, and this would kill him.

“No,” The word escaped my lips as I saw Caspien’s almost lifeless form, somehow even paler than before.

This would be the last moment that I saw him on this side of the world. I clutched my heart hoping to physically keep the pain that was ripping through me together. If I moved my hand, I knew that I would rip open.

I stood up, and stumbled towards him.

No.

“Luna,” A hand came out to stop me.

I stopped when I hit their hand, but Iris wanted us to go to our mate, she was begging me to go to him.

“Space,” Someone said, “While we finish the transfusion.”

Emmett tugged at my hand. I forced my eyes away from my mate being drained. I was still a mother. I had to be.

“Mama,” His eyes were wide.

I pulled him to me stroking his hair and facing him away. I didn't want him to see Cas like this. Why was he still here? This isn't appropriate for him to see this. He would be traumatized.

"Emmett, go wait outside." I was about to link someone to get him.

"He needs me," Emmett tried to pull back from my grip.

"Baby,-" My voice broke, I choked on my words and clutched tightly to him.

He broke away from me and didn't stop him, hoping someone would follow my wishes and take him out. I couldn't focus on anything besides my mate.

His heart sped up, the monitor beeping out of control. My skin crawled and felt too hot and too cold. That couldn't be good.

One long beep that didn't stop and everyone rushed around, I got pushed out of the way.

I've seen enough in movies to know this was the end.

"Get him away," Someone said.

"No!" Emmett shouted, and I tried to follow his voice. Where was he?

Emmett was clutching onto Caspien, and it broke the last piece of me.

It was over.

Emmett was holding onto his dead father. His eyes were shut, and his hands splayed on Caspien's bare chest.

The beeping started again.

The doctors froze. Time froze for a second before activity picked up back in the room.

(Caspien)

I fought with everything I had, what was left of me at least, but I couldn't remember what I was fighting for.

Darkness was all that I knew. The only thing that made me think that there might be something else was a sharp pain that radiated through me with each breath.

I didn't know where I was or why I was there.

I just wanted it to end.

Everything slowed and stopped.

The pain was there but not as sharp, but maybe it was because it was the end of whatever this was.

I was slipping.

Something new rushed through me, it wasn't enough to take away the pain, but it lessened it.

The pain. My side. The challenge.

I held onto that, a moment of clarity in the darkness. A rational thought.

I was Prince Caspien Dracos, and I had a mate and a son.

Willa. Emmett.

I had them.

I had something to fight for, but I didn't know how long I could hold on.

With each passing moment I knew I was fading away.

I knew Atlas was spent, and I was about to be as well.

I wished I could tell them how much they meant to me, how they shifted and changed my world completely. How nothing was worth it before them, I thought I had a life. I thought I knew peace and happiness, but what I had before them was just a shell of what real contentment was.

A warm light washed over me.

No, through me.

It pushed back the darkness and held it at bay.

I followed the light and tried to grasp it.

The dark red pain was replaced with warmth.

The sound of beeping, my heartbeat, and the smell of blood and bleach clawed at my senses.

"Cas?" The most beautiful voice lilted through the darkness.