

Traded To The Lycan King by MG Wattsons

Chapter 21-25

Chapter 21

Merikh stands next to me, the entire pack of lycan's watching anxiously from the center of the new **town** square. I wish I would have been able to have a moment alone with him before we started all of this, but this is the life I have to get used to. There are far more important things than me. **Especially** with traitors among us here in **the** pack and the red-eyed wolves who seem to have it out for **him**.

My light blue dress ruffles in the wind, my hair **tickling** my cheek **as** tensions grow. I reach out, touching his hand, hoping he picks up

my nerves and

maybe wraps it up in his. He doesn't, instead he slides his hands into his pocket and looks **in** the opposite direction, making my heart lurch in fear.

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"As you all know, there has been a new member in our pack these past few weeks." Merikh says, looking out at the crowd. "Many of you have seen her in training down at the lake or roaming around the hiking trails. Today I would like to introduce

her to you.

He slides his icy gaze to me, my heart skipping a beat at the lack of warmth in his eyes. If I didn't trust the words, he **has** told me many times, I would think he hates me,

He places his hand out before me, waiting for me to place mine in his palm. I hesitate for **a** moment before accepting it **and** he pulls me forward with him. The pack members watch me, waiting for something to happen.

"This is Colette. Your Luna, and my new mate." Merikh announces, his voice booms through the air, authoritative and firm. The **pack** members collectively drop their **gaze**, bowing their heads before looking back up and watching me, then Penny and Percy, who stand at the front of the crowd, step toward us..

“We accept you as our Luna, and we pledge our lives to you in service. They kneel, dropping their heads. A tingling starts in my chest, a warmth spreading and my eyes go wide in surprise. Hayes steps up to my side, sliding me a warm and encouraging smile.

“Accept them,” he whispers, and I realize I am supposed to be doing my part,

I glance at Merikh, frustration tickling my mind that he is not helping to guide me through this, but maybe it’s a test to see how I handle the stress of all of this. Which is fantastic because I have proven frequently how poorly I do with that.

“I accept your promise, and I promise to do my best as your Luna. To lead you only where you can follow and follow only when I know it is right to do so. I only wish to serve you all and prove myself worthy of your loyalty.”

Merikh **chortles** quietly next to me, shaking my confidence, but I don’t let it show. **The** pack members all lift their heads and Jet out a howl that resonates through the air, vibrating the ground as my **chest** seems to burst with white energy that spills into pale blue. It whips around me like a storm, stealing my breath away.

Each passing breeze calls **to** me, voices of encouragement and love before the air stills and the world seems to pause for a moment. A whooshing screams past my ear, the light zipping away before spinning and heading straight for me. I close my eyes, tilting my head back as it hammers into my chest, the whispers echoing through my body until they rest in my chest and I **gasp**.

The mind link. The world around me is silent, but internally I can hear the excitement, the whoops and hollers for their **new** Luna, and tears flood my eyes. They accept me. They want me.

A warm hand takes hold of mine and I squeeze it, looking at Merikh who wordlessly holds it up in celebration, though he doesn’t look at me. I ache to feel his gaze on me, but I relish the touch of his skin instead, looking down at Penny and Percy, whose eyes flash blue and then their usual shade. They grin from ear to ear and I hear them in the mind link.

-Welcome to the **pack** Luna Letty, we are honored to serve you-

“Now!” Hayes announces, filled with giddy excitement. “Who the heck is ready to **party**?”

We watch as everyone disperses, and I turn to face Merikh. His eyes find mine **looking** hollow and again my heart races. Something is wrong. I can feel it in my very being

“Merikh...” I whisper and he seems to focus on me.

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“Yes?” he asks, then **he** snaps his hand from mine.

“Are you okay?” I **ask** him, and he frowns.

“Of course. Why wouldn’t I be? I just announced my new Lana to my pack.” I can feel my old self wanting to cower and hide, begging to just drop this and let it fester but the new me. The stronger one with a wolf who is nearly at her full strength for the first time in our lives stands firm. I am a Luna now. Not the maid who is being reprimanded for some misdeed.

“Did I do something wrong?” Lask.

Merikh watches me for a moment, a hurricane forming in his emerald eyes.

“Did you do something wrong?” He asks, arching a brow. “That is a good question. Is there something you wanted to speak with me about, Colette?”

I can feel the blood drain from my face, my mouth dry as I blink at him. He knows. He has to know otherwise why else would he be asking me. It was idiotic to **think he** wouldn’t have **known** that someone like Grady was on his pack lands. But **that** means that he let him enter and that Grady would only leave if Merikh allowed him to leave.

“Yes,” I swallow roughly, licking my lips. “I need to speak with you.”

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“Good.” he smirks. “But it will have to wait. We have a party, and then I have a gift for you.”

Merikh walks away, leaving me stunned and teary-eyed as every terrible possibility swirls in my head. Did Penny tell him? Or **maybe** he was watching me the whole time? Heavens, I have been so stupid. Merikh wasn't just out in the woods sitting in the rock to clear his mind. He was waiting for me.

"You coming. Luna?" He calls out, stopping and looking over his shoulder. "Our **pack** members are eager to meet you person."

"Of course." I mutter, shaking my head, ridding myself of the negative thoughts. Merikh seems to enjoy my discombobulation. "Let's go." I smile.

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I follow Merikh, rounding the outside of the building and turning the corner to see a beautiful garden decorated with **string** lights and floating jasmine flower balls. The tables are covered in delicate lace covers with a gold satin beneath, each one decorated with a stunning display of white lilies, ivy and eucalyptus cascading from the center.

Music starts up, ringing through bluetooth speakers hung in the trees where **white and** lace streamers sway in the breeze." The attention to detail down to the tiny fountain with water lilies and white fish swimming in the rippling pool. There is **a** bow on the fountain, the twinkling water sounds, making me shiver with a calm. It's so beautiful.

Penny rushes up to me with a huge smile on her face.

"Luna, Percy **and** I would like to give you our gift now, if that's okay?" She asks, looking up at Merikh and back at me.

"Take her," Merikh bites out as Penny pulls me to the fountain where Percy stands.

"Okay." Penny says in a squeal. "Percy and I were trying to come up with the best gift, and we couldn't help but remember **that** the sound of water **is calming**

"But you can't **have** your window open anymore." Percy interjects.

"So we convinced Alpha to let us install this in your room." Penny is glowing, and her happiness is contagious as I look at the fountain and back at them.

No one has ever given me such a thoughtful gift. Heck, no one has really ever given me a gift **at** all unless we are **counting** the few little things Merikh has given me. I bite my lip, fighting back tears as I step forward and touch the water, playing my fingers over the top **and** then a sob **breaks** free. I throw my arms around the two of them.

"It's stunning," I blubber as Penny hugs me back and Percy pats me. When I pull away, I see Percy's red cheeks and Penny elbowing him with a "we did so **good**" grin. And they did. They did so well.

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it Percy says.

"We are pleased you like it," Percy says.

"No one has ever.." I pause, calming myself. "This is the **most** personal gift I have ever received."

"You are going to do great things for our pack, and the whole community of **our** kinds, Luna." Percy says reassuringly.

"Do you really think **so**?" I ask that old insecurity creeping in as I catch Merikh watching me with a scowl from the forest line.

"We know it." He whispers, giving me a sweet smile. Someone taps on my shoulder and I spin to find a pretty woman holding a little boy about three years old.

"Luna," she says, bowing **her** head in respect before looking up at me with a soft smile. "My son was hoping to meet you in person, and he is a persistent little guy"

I grin

at him and give him a wink. "Persistence pays off sometimes, doesn't it, little **man**?"

He smiles and then buries his face into his mother's shoulder before popping back out shyly.

"**I am** Luna-

" I stop **and** look at Penny and realize Colette **might** be too long for a little kid to say, so I decide to **rename** myself right here. "Letty. Call me Luna Letty. Can you say **that**?"

"Luna Letty," he says a lisp, making the l's sound like w's. His cute little baby voice makes my chest **ache** with how sweet he is.

"And who **are** you?" I ask him. He looks up at his mom, who encourages him.

"**Josiah. And** I'm three." he says.

"Oh! A whole three years old?" I ask, sounding shocked, and he grins.

"Yep. Then he looks **at** his mom. "I'm hungry.."

She gives

me a soft smile and a nod before she totes him away and I feel a hand on my back. I jump, looking up over my shoulder to see Merikh standing there with a satisfied grin on his face.

"Seeing how happy you were with your gift from Penny and Percy has made me jealous."

"It did?" **I ask**, confused by his whiplash. He takes my hand in **his** and **tugs** me away.

"I have told Hayes to keep the party going until we come back!

"Where are we going?" I ask **him** and he chuckles.

"To **show** you your present."

My heart clenches as he takes me through the forest, and the sound of people and music dulls. The memory of the story Penny told me about Lauren resurfaces **and** I swallow. He wouldn't kill me, would he? Just after announcing me to the pack as the official Luna? **I** know he must know about Grady by now, but would **that** lead to him being violent? He is obviously

angry.

"Merikh..I need to tell you-

“**Shhh**,” he says, finally stopping and spinning me to face him, his hands landing on my hips as he tugs me close. I missed this closeness, craved it since **last** night, but it feels...forced and angry. “Are you ready?”

He spins me around, his chest to my **back** as he leans down, pressing his lips to my ear..

“Yes,” I say with a shiver of both fear and delight.

“Bring him out,” He calls out, and a warrior drags out a

a man covered in blood. My heart stutters, my hands shaking when the

man lifts his **eyes and** I recognize him. His **face** is swollen, his lip fat and busted, but I would know those eyes anywhere.

Grady

My worlds collide, my past **and** my future. The stark **reality** of the monster I am mated to and the kind, gentle lost rejected me. I spin in Merikh’s arms, looking up to him, ready to beg. He leans down as he grabs my chin, anger on **his face**.

“You are my Luna, and you will not leave me.” He growls.

“I wasn’t going to!” I rush out, hoping he can hear the honesty in my quivering voice. All I can see is the murderous rage of his lycan barely restrained in his mind. If he makes me watch him kill Grady, there is no world in which I could ever forgive him, ever love him.

“I warned you, Colette. Did I not?” Merikh asks. A sob rips from my lips **as I cover** my mouth and nod in acknowledgement.

“Please, I whisper. He grips my arms.

“I WARNED YOU!” He roars. Then he steps away from me, pure anger and hurt on his face. “I warned you, and now **you have** forced my hand.”

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“Merikh POV

My lycan lurks just beneath the surface, fighting me with every sharp inhale **as** my chest aches with anger. He wants out; he wants blood, and he is fixated on the fucker who is trying to take what is ours.

The only thing keeping me from throwing my head back and letting him take over and rain down his punishment is the beautiful, wide eyed, sobbing woman between us. I hate that I am the reason for her crying. At first I thought I would relish **making** her acknowledge the lies, but this. it's torture.

"Merikh.. her voice is a soft whisper as she clutches her chest **and** looks up at me with puffy eyes, "I am begging you, please.

"It's okay, Cole." Grady says and I grit my teeth, biting back the monster that is begging for release. "Let the Alpha of Death show you

his true colors."

"Say your goodbye," I say, staring right at the asshole who thinks he is acting so damn tough. He **didn't** seem all that tough when the **first** strike fell last night.

"I wish I **could** take it all back, accept you, choose you like you deserved. My greatest regret is losing **you**, and I will die knowing at least I tried to rectify it."

Colette looks at me, agony in her eyes as she takes a step closer to me. I move back, away from her and her intoxicating presence. Being close to her, when I know I am hurting her, is painful.

she sees thi

"Turn and watch." I whisper, making sure she sees this. She needs to witness it.

I nod to my warrior, **who** stands behind Grady, and he acknowledges my command. He walks Grady to the border line no more than thirty feet from us **and**, with a hard push, he sends him over the line. I can feel her eyes on me, **and** I know she is confused.

"This is your gift, my little luna." I take another step back, away from her.

Grady lifts his head, waiting for someone to kill **him**. Instead, I point into the woods.

“I banish **you.**” I utter, the words booming through the forest with **force** as the trees rumble. “You are not to return to any of the werewolf or lycan communities. You are no longer one of us. If you come back, you will be killed on sight.”

“What?” his mouth falls open before he holds his stomach in pain, the tie to our kind breaking, making him a true rogue. His eyes slide to Colette, who remains silent and unmoving. Then Grady drops his head, and she looks away at the ground, unable **to** watch **as** he turns and rushes off

“We need to head back,” I say, breaking the silence and Colette’s eyes scan me, looking at me closely as I turn and walk away from her. “The sooner the better,” I **say**, feeling dead inside.

The rustling behind me is a **good** indicator that she is following along as my warrior goes back to his dungeon duty, heading in the opposite direction. Other than the **birds** in the trees and rustling of the forest floor beneath us, there is no sound. No attempt from either of us to understand or explain **what just** happened.

I could **have** killed Grady. And honestly, I really wanted to, but I have more important things to worry about than an ex mate trying to reclaim what he can never **have**.

As the music comes back into ear range, I feel her hand grab my arm and I go rigid, confused. I look down at her thin fingers that wrap over my shirt and then look **at** her **as** she stares forward, walking at my side. She must be doing this to **put** on a **show** in case any of the **pack** members see us coming back out of the woods.

It’s smart. The last thing I need is my pack thinking I **picked** someone **randomly that** I don’t even care for. No matter how angry I **am**, I will never be able to lie and tell myself I don’t care for her. Hell I just fought the part of me I have always let win to keep from losing her forever.

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As we get closer, the sounds of laughter and clinking echo through the trees, and I feel at ease. My pack is finally happy. Since Lauren, things have been..rough. A luna strengthens a **pack**, helps guide me in my mission

to protect an entire **pack** and the whole of our kind and the werewolves. The role is vital to being a successful Lycan King. A king must have his **queen**.

“Luna!” Penny squeals, coming up and bouncing around us eagerly. “Did you do it? Do you have a mark now?”

The girl is drunk. How she has successfully managed it this quickly is beyond me, but drunk is definitely what she is. Which **means** Percy must be close by on duty.

“No,” Colette says sweetly, “He just took me for a **walk**.”

“OH!” her eyes grow wide. “For your present? Not going to lie, kind of thought your present was going to be eggplant shaped and a fresh bite,” she winks.

Colette furrows her brows, confused. Then she looks up at me for the first time since leaving Grady in the woods. I expected to find anger and apprehension in her beautiful light brown eyes yet; **I find** something entirely different. Instead, she just watches me. Her chin tilted up and mouth parted ever so slightly.

“He gave me something so much better.” **She** murmurs.

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“Not sure what could be better than what I suggested,” Penny hiccups, and I shoot her a scowl.

“Penny, no more drinking and get some food in **you**.” I order and she nods, waltzing off happily.

“So what did he give you?” Hayes says, walking up and I close my **eyes**, squeezing them tight, wishing to disappear. Why does he always show up at the most inopportune moments?

“That’s between us,” Colette says, with a soft chuckle.

“Well, that is not fun,” Hayes teases before slapping me on the shoulder. I watch as Pack members come up and drag their **Luna** off to meet other all the while chatting and smiling. Hayes sighs heavily at my side.

“She seems to have liked her **gift**, then?” He asks as I glare at him.

“Yes, I suppose not murdering him in front of her **was a** good choice.” I mutter, reaching over and stealing the cup of liquid from my brother. I sniff it, a little disappointed to realize he is drinking ice water, but I take a swig anyway.

“Are you going to kill him now that she thinks he is safe?” **Hayes** asks, and I sigh

There is no point in lying. I had thought about that option. Several times on the walk back over here, but truth be told, it’s a waste of my resources and dangerous to venture out into the exiled territory just for a meaningless kill.

“No.” I bite out, my eyes glued to my Luna **as** she be spells everyone with her melodic laughter and genuine smile.

“Are you **planning** to forgive her?” He asks, lowering **his voice** as he turns to **face me**. I slide **him an** annoyed glance **and roll**

my eyes.

“Forgive her?” I scoff. “Forgiveness **is usually** something someone asks for. She hasn’t asked for it, hell she **hasn’t** told me **shit**. All that has happened is I announced that I **know** she’s full of shit and she thinks I was somehow being nice.”

-Well, I mean you didn’t murder her first love, so that kind of seems nice.”

“Yeah, shut the fuck up.” I growl.

“The council meeting is coming up,” he **says**, choosing to change the subject.

“I am aware.” I grit out.

“And she is going to find out you are second chance mates in a week.” He continues. I groan in annoyance, looking at of water in my hands, really wishing it were **that** special brew **that** can get a lycan drunk.

the

cup

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“We **will** see,” I grumble and I can feel his curious gaze.

“You wouldn’t..” he **says** skeptically.

“Well, I’m sure as shit not marking her yet,” I shoot back at him and he furrows his **brow**.

“It would be easier if you did.”

“Marking requires sex, Hayes, I remind him.

“Yeah, I know that.”

“I’m not really feeling all that gentle or loving. Do you suppose I should screw her while I am angry at her? I am sure that would make **for** a super comfortable first time.”

“With the rate you are going, you are fixing to be mad at her forever.” He **says** with a frown. “Why don’t you try **talking** to her about **things**?”

“I gave her the chance, to be honest. She lied right to my damn face.” I hiss at him and he rubs the back of his neck.

“Merikh.” He starts but I give him a dagger filled glare and he stops, looking frustrated. After a moment, he sighs and walks off, leaving me alone.

An hour passes, one filled with congratulations and giddy excitement as the kids leave the party and the parents remain drinking to their heart’s content. Colette makes her way back over to me, Percy at her side.

He gives me **a** nod before backing up to give us space and Colette **reaches** out to take hold of my arm. My lycan wants her touch, craving it, while my anger fights him for total control. I can’t slip up, I won’t

“Are you ready to go back?” **She** asks, a look in her eyes I can’t place. Perhaps it’s a mixture of worry and desire. Or maybe she is drunk **and** just wants to lie down. Either way, I frown but nod.

“Sure.”

The walk is fast and silent as I nearly drag her back to the room, shutting the door behind us. Her smell seems to suffocate me in this room. The bond between us is stronger now that she is officially Luna, and my lycan wants his Luna in the most desperate of ways.

“Merikh” Colette whispers. I press my head against the closed door, trying to gather my wits when her hand touches my **back**. I flinch away, moving from her and the door.

“Dont” I rush out, my wild eyes meeting hers, a sadness there but understanding and fuck if it doesn’t make it harder to stay away from her.

“I need to tell you what happened with Grady.”

“You really don’t,” I mutter, letting my anger take over to keep me from giving in to the pull that seems to hum through my veins. It’s unheard of, announcing your Luna before the mating ceremony, **but** I wasn’t expecting this draw to her. This need to make her mine in every damn way possible.

“Merikh, please, I am begging you, just let me explain...”

“I DON’T TRUST YOU!” I roar at her. “No amount of words or talking will change the fact that I can not trust you.”

“Then why did you make me your Luna?” she asks, shocked.

*Because I NEED you.” I hiss and her brows **knit** in confusion.

“I don’t understand...”

“And you won’t. Because you don’t need to **know**, not yet.”

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Chapter 23

*Colette POV”

Merikh paces back and forth, his **hands** sliding through his hair one minute and a scowl shooting my way the next. His **lycan** barely restrained and with every second I fear we are getting closer to it breaking free. My hand reaches out,

but I stop myself, drawing it back to my stomach as I bite my lip and watch him fall apart.

Every part of my body screams to touch him, to be near him, but the hatred in his eyes chills my blood. If only he would let me explain. Let me tell him I **chose** him and slapped Grady when he kissed me. But I know it won't make a difference, **not** now. Not when he has already made his mind up that I am a liar, and someone he can't trust.

"Alpha," I swallow, not sure how **to** address him when he is this mad at **me**.

"**Alpha?**" he scoffs, **a** sardonic chuckle breaking free. "You make out with your ex-mate, lie about it and suddenly I am back to **Alpha?** You call me Merikh. Understood?"

I nod in agreement.

"I'm sorry." I whisper, **wanting** to counter his accusation with the truth. But Merikh isn't looking for the truth right now. He is looking for sanity and it feels like I am the reason for the lack of it.

"I won't be marking **you**." Merikh **finally** states, stopping and **looking** at me.

His chest heaves violently, his breathing labored. Tears dot my eyes for yet another time tonight. It hurts, though I can't say I am surprised. I've done nothing but wear a fake smile, but I knew the moment Grady stepped out that there was no way Merikh would want me anymore.

"Perhaps you should choose a different Luna," I murmur, my heart breaking at the thought, my wolf whining as she paces, unsure of how to react with me.

He is in my face in an instant, tearing me from the edge of the bed where I sit and dragging me to standing, Merikh's eyes are jet black and his voice melding with his lyrics.

green

"Mine!" he snarls and I wince, looking away out of fear. His grip disappears **just** as fast as it had landed on me, and Merikh stumbles back into the dresser behind him. He shakes **his head**, then scrubs **his** hands down his face.

“I—

I don't know what to **say**...” I admit and he glances at me. “Merikh I don't know how to fix this.”

Time will fix it. I won't trust you, but I will mark you, eventually. But not like this. Not when I can't decide whether to fuck you or to kill you.”

I can feel the blood leach from my face at his words. From the very first moment I met him, he was calm, collected, and put together. Even in his **anger**, it was as never really pointed at me, being on this end of it, watching him come undone because of me..because of what I did it's tearing my heart to shreds.

Merikh releases a heavy sigh and **groans** in frustration. Then he takes three measured steps close to me, but not **too** close. I can see the war waging in his green eyes. The way his lycan rails against him, fighting for control. And I can feel the tug to him, the growing urge to reach out and just make him mine.

Every second I stand near him my wolf seems to drool, going more hungry for a mark than she ever has been. Granted, she **has** almost been dormant for so long, so she hasn't been hungry for much. Which only makes it harder to control her.

“My wolf” I gasp, as she lunges at the barrier in my mind, begging to be released, wanting to force him to mark us.

“Shit,” He mutters, grabbing my hand. He turns my wrist up and rubs his nose along the inside and he nearly moans at the scent. Then he sinks his fangs into my wrist and I yelp in pain. He clings to my arm tightly as panic travels through me.

Holy shit, he is going to literally consume me. I whimper in pain, then he finally releases me. My blood stains his lips and his eyes dance between black and green. I clutch my wrist to my chest, cradling it, then he nods at me.

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“What?” I ask, trying to wrap my head around the burning in my arm that travels up and makes my hair stand on edge. Merikh shoves his wrist into my mouth and my eyes bulge, trying to force him away.

“**Bite**. Down.” he demands, and I hesitate before complying.

His warm skin breaks with my teeth and a thrill shivers through my body. The moment his tangy blood touches my tongue, he takes his arm away and grips the back of my neck, dragging my forehead to his as he stares into my soul.

“Repeat after me, understood?” he asks, sounding pained.

“Yes,” I swallow roughly, intoxicated by his closeness.

“I pledge my life to this pack,”

“I pledge my life to this pack.

“And to the whole of the lycan and wolf shifter community” He **says**. I close my eyes, fighting my wolf off.

“And—uh—
to the whole lycan **and** wolf shifter community..” I say, trying like hell to keep up.

“I pledge to remain at the side of my Alpha, to never leave it unless I am forced and to follow where he goes.”

My eyes pop open, and for a half second I hesitate, trying to understand what is happening. He growls, and I repeat the words in a rush.

“I pledge to stay by your side and never leave it. I promise to follow where you go, Merikh.”

Merikh leans in, stopping to look me in the eye, before he presses his lips to mine. The room spins, my heart racing as I reach out to touch his cheek, but he yanks away. There is a twang in my chest, like the feeling of a taut rubber band and being snapped and his eyes flash gold, and my wolf **submits**. Then he takes a step back, sighing like he can finally breathe.

“W—what was that?” I ask. A strange gentle tingle through my body.

“A desperate measure,” he sighs as he walks toward the bathroom.

My eyes follow **him**, and I can feel our **dynamic** shifting. That desperate need to crawl up his body and make him make me **his** isn't suffocating anymore. That thread that always seems to grow tighter is suddenly slack and I feel like my emotions are mine **again**, my urges controllable.

He returns to me with a white towel **in his** hand and grabs my arm, wrapping the rag around my wrist. It's painfully obvious that he is avoiding eye contact as he looks anywhere but at me. Panic rises in my stomach, bubbling up into my mind, reminding me of what it was like back home.

Back in the pack, where I was treated like an object **and** not a person. I've never had control, ever. But at least here it felt like I had some semblance of control over myself. Until right now, until what he just did.

"What did you do to me?" **I ask**, struggling to keep my emotions out of my quivering voice.

"We have made a blood **oath**," he says so nonchalantly, like it isn't a life altering thing.

"You tricked me into never leaving your side?" I ask, tilting my head to the side. "Yet you won't mark me?"

A blood oath? Merikh has just stripped me of the ability of ever feeling a full force mate bond. Even when he marks me, if he marks me, the oath will remain intact until I find my mate or second chance mate, but there is no finding those.

Not for me. Not when one is exiled and the other I will never find because this oath, it blocks my ability to find them. And for **what** reason? I would have stayed. I **would** have done what he asked **and** would have always remained loyal to him, to my

new station

Chapter 23

His eyes meet

mine and I see it. The guilt burns in him and he turns away. Good. I hope he chokes on it.

"You never planned to leave my side anyway, so what does it change?" He shrugs.

"But you didn't...I **don't**... I stutter over the words and he frowns.

"This is for the best." He whispers, though I'm **not** sure he believes his own words..

"I wanted to feel the bond. Merikh, I wanted to have all of **that** with you." I say, **raising** my voice. "I thought that.."

"You thought what?" He asks, releasing my wrist and crossing his arms over his chest. "**You thought** that because I let Grady live, I would be lenient with you too? This IS lenient."

"I wasn't expecting anything." I whisper.

"Good. Having no expectations is easier. Leaves you with nothing to get upset about," he grumbles before he storms out of the room, slamming the door shut behind **me**, making me **jump**.

I want to hate him, to be angry and curse his name, but the truth is. I would have agreed to the oath if he would have asked. I am more upset because I know why he did it this way. One betrayal for another. Merikh's punishment of exiling Grady

wasn't enough and because he doesn't trust me, he needs to know he can force that trust. This isn't the Merikh I knew

This isn't the one who watched my heart breaking in the woods and changed his mind about an execution.

Merikh gave me the most beautiful gift, and he is convinced I saw it as a weakness. He showed me he had a heart tonight, so he **broke** mine to hide his. But that says far more about him than it does about me. Broken hearts are still capable of love. And even in my anger and sorrow, I still feel it, beating just as loudly as the rage in his actions. As much as I want to deny it and push it away, it's begun to beat for **him**.

H

Chapter 24

"Merikh POV

I lounge back in the chair on the deck, taking in the clear sky above me, showcasing the stars and the waning moon. My whole body feels like it's vibrating

with every emotion. Rage, guilt, betrayal. **All** of them meld together, ripping through my **mental** state like nothing I've felt before.

"So you did it, huh?" Hayes says, approaching me from behind. I roll my eyes, knowing I should have expected him and his usual confrontations. It's what makes him such a great beta. That and I can't kill him off for his honesty,

"Hello to you too, brother." I grumble.

I **ignore** him as he takes a seat next to me, sighing heavily, keeping my eyes trained on the sky.

"So how did she take it?" he asks, and I scoff.

How did she take it? Not fucking well. That's for sure. Hell, the more I think about it, the more I try to convince myself I didn't see how hurt she was. How betrayed she was. **But** I need to get used to that look, and the feeling it carves into my s

"I think.. I exhale, looking over at him finally, "I think I broke her heart."

"Of course you did, Merikh. You took her options away." He says like she ever actually had any.

"What option? Could you explain what exactly I took from her?"

"Well, her choice, for starters.

"We both know that the blood oath is entirely reversible." I grumble. "I took nothing from her, I just delayed it."

"We know that, but she doesn't. How can she when you refuse to tell her you guys are second chance mates?"

"Colette agreed to this. Okay? She agreed to being Luna and take my mark one day." I say, sitting up and swinging to face him.

soul.

"Yes, but she meant being marked. Not the blood **oath** that you use on a top warrior or someone you have to keep close."

“Damn it, Hayes” I **growl**. “Without this oath blocking the pull **to** her, I will lose control! It’s intoxicating, SHE is intoxicating. I want to claim her. Shit, more than I wanted to claim Lauren. It’s like **a** festering inside my chest, like a fucking infection that keeps growing. There is no antidote or cutting it out. But this oath, it’s a bandaid. It buys me time, it’s to keep me sane,”

“Buys you

time for what?” He scoffs.

“To figure out what the hell to do next!” I stand abruptly.

You should have just told her you are second chance mates, so that she knows the oath can be broken when you mark her.”

“I want a mate I can trust!” I roar, my chest pinching at the memory of Colette kissing Grady. The moment my **trust** for her shattered. “How does telling her prove this I can trust her?”

“Forcing that trust isn’t real trust.” Hayes says softly and I chuckle dryly

“Beggars can’t be choosers,” I mutter, annoyed, looking **away**.

“You are the alpha. You don’t have to beg”

“No, I shouldn’t have to beg”

“Are you done having a pity party yet?” Hayes says, his voice firm, like he is fed up with me.

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Chapter 24

“Pity party?” I scoff, striding away before turning and grabbing him by the collar. “Hayes, it is my job to take care of this **pack** My **job** to finish what father tried to fix before MY MATE fucking killed him with her vampire lover.” I release him, but I stay in his face, making sure he understands the shit on my shoulders.

It wasn’t Hayes who found them. Dad’s dead body laying **at** the feet of the traitorous bitch who had told me the night before she wanted to carry my pups. It

wasn't Hayes who had to step up and keep his shit together to lead a pack that was broken and distrusting of me.

He forgets the whispers; the rumors doubting me and my role in all of this. Lauren had planted seeds, and they bloomed into black blossoms of doubt overnight after being watered with our father's blood.

"Merikh, dad's death is not on you." He breathes

"It was my mate who fucked our pack over. It was me trusting her, and the wrong people on the committee that have the Lycans weaker than we have ever been, and the werewolves exposed to the fucking other supernatural asstards that can use them how they please. This isn't a pity party. This is me trying to plan out what is best for EVERYONE else."

"And you think tricking her into an oath where she can't backstab you, while **you** use her to get your way with the committee, is going to fix all that?"

"Look, I did it for her, and for me." I grit out. "I need to trust that she won't try to leave me when shit is revealed."

"Ahh, so that is the real reason." He whispers, looking disappointed in me. "You wanted her to be forced to stay by your side

"And marking her wouldn't have the same effect?" I **scowl**.

He scoffs, dragging **his** hand over his stubbled chin.

"You are so wise, big brother, truly. **And** you have done so much for our pack and you are sacrificing so much to do what **you** think is best..But you are on the path to messing this up beyond repair"

I sigh, looking up at the moon for some clarity.

"Too late." I mutter and he sighs.

"You need to smooth this over before your committee meeting" He says, looking at me. "I mean it, Alpha."

"How do you suppose I do that **now**?"

“Go tell Colette you are second **chance mates**. Go tell her why she is so important. Tell the poor woman **who** she is. She is strong enough to handle it now.”

“I can’t risk her knowing her past.” I bite out. “We need the element of surprise”

“What you need is a unified front, not one **that** is fake. You don’t want to tell her all of that yet? Fine. But the oath **is** already in place and she deserves to know **that** when you **two are** ready, that mate bond will be there for her, too.”

I stare at **him**, seeing more and more of dad **in** him every day. Hayes has the heart of our mother and the **wise** words of our father. The combination always brings me comfort after pissing me off first. So instead of taking his advice into consideration, I nod, agreeing.

“Okay.” I whisper, shoving my hands in my pocket. “Okay, I will tell her what she is to me.”

His eye grows wide and then he smirks victoriously.

“I’ll be here waiting for a chat when you are done. I have to know how she responds. Do you think she will slap you?” He teases and I frown. From a wise father like figure to idiot brother in ten seconds flat. Might **be a** record. I chuckle, giving him a gentle shove as I turn and walk back into the pack house.

The trip back to the room is anxiety ridden, my lycan pouting in my mind, still angry with me for doing what I did. Maybe if he were a more controlled beast, we wouldn’t have had to take drastic measures, but he doesn’t like that opinion.

Chapter 24

As I get closer to her door, I **can** feel the emotions brewing. The anger I feel for her and the ache in my chest to hold her. Such conflicting emotions are becoming a constant in my life and it’s going to cause permanent damage to my brain. I am

I knock, waiting a moment before gently pushing the door open. Colette looks up at me from her spot on the ground, sitting with her **back** against the bed and her eyes red and raw. There are no tears anymore, only the residue from th

e ones **that have** fallen and my heart breaks. I did that. I put those tears on her cheeks and redness in her eyes.

“I need to speak with **you**.” I swallow, “If you allow it.”

“Do I have a choice?” **She** clips out.

des,” I nod, giving her the ability to push me the way I have done to her. Instead, she snuffles and scoffs.

“What do you need?” she asks, her voice small and shaky.

“The oath will break when I mark you. If you want me to mark you.” I say, fumbling over my words, choosing the most direct **path**.

“Merikh, I know what a blood oath is. I may have been raised as a maid, but I know things. I will never get to experience a full bond with you.”

“Then you know there are loopholes,” I remind her **and** she nods.

“Of course. But that would entail me finding my second chance mate, and I can’t do that with the oath in place.”

“But he can find you.” I swallow, my mouth going dry.

“I suppose. She furrows her brow

“You felt **the** pull, didn’t you? How strong it was?”

Colette pulls her knees to her chest and sighs heavily.

“Yeah, it was mind numbing” She admits and I find myself relaxing just a little knowing it wasn’t just a one sided attraction.

“I was going to lose control of my lycan.”

“I wanted you to mark me. I care about **you**, Merikh. What would losing control do?”

“It would force me into marking you when I am not ready,” I say, moving closer to her. Her eyes are glued to me, **watching my** every move as I stop just before her. “I can’t **risk** a full mate bond when **there is no** trust.”

"If you would **have** asked, or explained this...I probably would have agreed. All you had to do was **ask**." She **says**, glaring at me. I sigh and shake my head.

"I wasn't in the right frame of mind. My pull to you..it is stronger than yours to me. It's different."

Her brows furrow in confusion. "Because you are the **lycan** king?"

"No. Because I know who my second chance mate is."

-What does that have to do with

"You are my second chance mate." I interrupt her. She blinks at me, her mouth falling open.

Irving to humiliate me? Because of Grady?"

"I don't **that** doesn't make any sense." She frowns. "Is this some joke? Are you trying

I flinch when **she** says **his name**, **hating** the sound of it in her voice.

"When we mark each other, the oath will fully disappear and you will recognize **me** as your second chance **mate**."

SEND GIFT

Chapter 25

Colette says nothing, only frowns as she tries to process what I am telling her.

"I don't believe you, she whispers. "How can I believe you?"

"You are just going to have to trust me," I whisper, hoping for a little leeway, even though I know I don't deserve it.

"Do you trust me?" She tilts her head, waiting knowingly for the answer. I draw in a shaky breath and exhale sharply.

"I—can't." I admit hesitantly,

"**Yeah**, I didn't think so." She chuckles dryly, standing from the floor and stepping into me. "Then I **will** keep my trust until you prove to me you are my second

d **chance** mate. And when you are ready, I have proof that what you think **yo u** saw was only a snippet of what actually happened. I have asked Penny to stay with me tonight.”

Then she moves past me, opening the door and holding it for me to exit

Chapter 25

“Colette POV”

I want to hate him. The stupidly handsome **man** sitting next to me as we ride to this council meeting he has been **panicking** about since I arrived in our pack. His **eyes** keep wandering over to me, lingering for only a moment before they **snap** away every time I look at him

I have **had** one week to process **what** he did. One week of giving him the silent treatment on anything related to me and how I am feeling. I still can't believe he thought I wouldn't be angry after forcing me to take a blood oath under the guise of us being second chance **mates**.

He isn't the only one with broken trust. If anything. I have more of a right to be upset with him than he does with me. I have tried to communicate and **explain** everything to him, but he won't listen..

But he **has** no reason for why the hell wouldn't he tell me we are second chance mates. What kind of jerk sets up his second chance mate to see how they will act when their first mate wants to run away with them? Not that he knows I am aware of that part.

He should be. I'm not dumb and I know he is smart enough and our **pack** is trained enough to have known Grady was there. Merikh set me up. And instead of being upfront with me, he led me into a trap and then refused to listen to the entire story. My cheeks heat in anger just thinking about it again, and I look out the SUV window as trees fly past.

“You have been quiet,” He says, the air thick and heavy between us.

This **is** how it's been all week. Him trying like hell for a conversation and me only doing the bare minimum. If he thinks I will easily forget this or that the temptation of him marking me to see if we actually are a second chance mate will soften me to him, he is severely wrong. I am livid, even all these days later.

“Would you like me to entertain you?” I ask, **turning** to look at him. He furrows his brow, turning his massive frame to face me on the leather seat.

“No.” He sighs. “I just was worried you might have some unresolved emotions about long car rides after the last incident.”

He’s not wrong and I hate that he is bringing it up. It takes an immense amount of **mental** strength to keep myself from freaking out every time I see a truck at a stop or someone passes us. Each squealing tire feels like a dagger to my lungs, **and** my hands are **a clammy** mess.

“I **am** fine.” I force out, but I can tell he doesn’t buy it.

“You are anxious,” He says and I exhale, shaking my head.

“A lide”

“Then perhaps we should **discuss** what will happen when we arrive.” He offers. “To distract **you.**”

I press my lips together, not entirely pleased. I’m busy trying to hate him. Even with the bond between us suppressed, I am still drawn to him. I’d **love** to **blame** the **Luna**—

alpha bond, but the truth is angry or not, feelings don’t just go away. And I have genuine feelings for Merikh, untrusting or not, and that makes me angrier than anything else.

“Sure,” I **agree**, placing my hands on **my** lap.

“We won’t be warmly welcomed. Our kind is not entirely well received by the **others.**” He pauses as I listen. “Once we are dropped at the front door, the council laws will protect us and we will be safe, but that doesn’t mean we can trust anyone.

“No, of course not. Why would we ever think we can trust someone?” I grumble.

“This is not **a joking** matter,” he says sternly, and I glare at him.

“Of course not. Got it. Trust no one. That I can handle. I’ve been living like **that** long enough **that** it’s habit now.”

Chapter 23

He lets **my** attitude slide as he continues growing a little nervous.

“We will share a room.

My heart sinks, and I meet his eyes. The only way I **have** been able to maintain my anger is because Penny has stayed in thy room with me for the week he **has** been absent. I fell for him in three weeks because I spent so much time with him. How long will it take me to forgive him because of those emotions? Especially when I don't want to forgive him!

“Will there be a couch?” I ask

“We will sleep in the same bed.” He says, and I bite my lip. “They will know by our scent if we do not stay in the same bed,

Colette

“Is that a bad thing?”

“The types of beings at this meeting will **have** different rules, thoughts on mating and how to treat one's chosen one. If you do not smell like me, to them you would be fair game.”

“Fair game how?” I ask, a little shocked. This is the most he has really told me anything about the others.

“They will try to get to you. To use you, like **a** toy.” he frowns. “Something to spice up their bedroom life, a challenge to win from me or worse, a reason to eject you from the meeting and let you loose in the land outside the council rules.”

My heart races and my mouth falls open. A toy? His hands land on mine **and** I let it stay there. Where the hell is he taking me that his word is **not** one to be taken seriously? He is the Lycan king, known for his lack of mercy in battle. Yet here, if the one he says is his **luna** doesn't smell like him, they will try to...steal me?

“Why didn't you just mark me?” I ask, my fear melding with my hurt anger.

If he would **have** just marked me, spoke with me..this could be avoided. Instead, he is placing me in danger. For what reason? Why the hell does he even need me here at his side? Should I not have stayed and helped Hayes take care of the pack!

"You know why," he murmurs, and I scoff.

"Right. I'm not trustworthy," I grind out. "What else do I need to know?"

"We will need to act like a fully mated couple." he watches me close, gauging my reactions.

"Won't they know we aren't because I don't have your mark?" I scoff.

"Lycans generally mark on the neck, yes. But we can technically mark wherever we want. If anyone asks, just say your mark is only for me to see, **and** I will say likewise."

"Okay."

"This **will** mean we have to do things **that** may make you feel uncomfortable. Things that make them believe we are mated,"

"Like what?" I **ask him**, narrowing my eyes.

"Holding hands, me nuzzling your neck, kissing you, **and**, at times, potentially sitting on my lap."

My checks turn red, embarrassment rising.

"Those are pretty descriptive things," I force out, my mouth dry. Not because I **am** worried, but because like a totally love struck idiot, I crave those moments with him. And I know I shouldn't..

"Vampires and Fae are very intimacy driven creatures. And vampires can be persuasive"

My **eyes** go wide, shocked.

I

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Chapter 25

“F–far” I ask and he nods.

“You will meet many supernatural beings. Ones **you** may not have heard of

“How long will we be here?” I ask him and he looks **away**, then looks back.

“We are hoping to be asked to stay for the duration of the meeting. Which is a bout a month.”

“What? A month long meeting?” I gasp and he nods.

“It is not like one formal long event. It’s similar **to a** vacation with friends.”

“Only everyone will want to steal me from you if I don’t smell like you, and the fate of the werewolves **and** lycans depends on this going well.”

“Yeah, there is that...” he says, chuckling nervously. I tilt my head, looking at him closely, noticing the dark shadow under his eyes for the first time.

“**Merikh**,” I say softly, “Why do we need to be a member of the council?”

“That is a loaded question,” he exhales.

“I think we have some time.” I offer and he watches me close, his eyes scanning my face looking for something. Then he sits forward and rests his hands on his knees.

“We were banned from the council for two hundred **and** fifty years.” He **says**, “Before that there was peace, rogues nearly never happened and everyone lived happily. Until my great great–great–grandfather killed a council member.”

“Why would he do that?” I ask **him**, shocked, **and** he shrugs.

“How my father explained it was that my ancestor found his fated mate, but was denied her because one of the other species did not agree with breeding **outside their kind**. Hybrids would be too powerful, **and** hard to control with **no** knowing what they would be like once they come into their powers” He explains.

I feel like my mind is about to explode as I revel in all the possibilities and process the information at hand. Hybrids. First, there are other supernaturals. No w there are rules against hybrids?

“Do they not realize a wolf or lycan needs their mate? That is not a choice we make, but a completion of our souls.” I say.

“Like I said, different species with different kinds of mates and purposes for th em.” He **explains**.

“So if our kind **was** banned for two hundred **and** fifty **years**, how much longer do we have to wait?”

“Our time has been up for years.” He says with a frown. “My father tried many times to bring us back in but we are refused **what** is ours. And it is because th ey do not want us to have our time as the head of the council”

I shake my **head**, confused. “Wait, wait. Head of the council?”

“The head of the council changes. Every twenty– five years, it cycles through from species to species to keep things hair. Our term should have started the year Lauren betrayed me.” He says simply.

“Why would they do that?” I ask, completely shocked. “Why would they not give us what is ours? Especially after we served

our time?”

“Because the current head of the council **is** a power hungry asshole who took not only his species term, but another **booted** species **and** now ours.”

“You aren’t doing a lot to help me want to be nice to people” I mumble. He smiles at me **and** I grin before realizing I am mad at him. I look away with a scowl . “So, who is the current head?”

“King Caspian.” He tells me. “The King of the sirens and complete **asshole**.”

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Chapter 25

I look back at him and then frown. Crossing my arms over my chest as I lean into the chair.

“Who do you think **has** been the one attacking me?” I ask him and he **blows** out a puff of **air**, settling deep into the chair, leaning back into the **leather** headrest,

“That’s tough to tell. **Many** of them have magical powers. There are the witches, vampires, Fae. Any of them could **easily** manipulate a werewolf or other species to do their bidding.”

“Is **that** the reason you brought me?” I ask, tilting my head. “To keep me safe, here where I am protected from all of them?”

I watch as his muscles tense and he looks out the window, refusing to look at me.

“Something like **that**.” He mutters. But I get the feeling he is yet again not being truthful.

H