

## Enslaved By The Alpha Chapter 51 -100

Chapter 51 ~MAYA~ "Not like that!" Giselle screams at me. "Can't you do anything right?" I'm tired of her asking that question; even if I did everything right, she would find something to complain about. I tied the bow at the back of the dress; she made it clear that she wanted it as tight as the dress could pull. If only I could squeeze the attitude straight out of her. Then life would be better for a lot of people. I had no idea how Giselle's own father could stand her. The answer was simple; he was forced to love her. "I'll let everyone know that I'm late to my event since my stupid maid can't seem to do anything right." She continues to insult me. I bite my lip to keep from responding to her. I wish I had more of that potion; it was better when she was in a deep sleep. I didn't have to hear her annoying voice all the time. "Why aren't you getting my shoes ready?" She demands as she points at her barefoot. I don't know; maybe it's because I was tending to your other wishes this entire time? I bite my lip harder to keep from telling her this. I grab her shoes a few feet away from us and shove them near her feet. Can't she do anything on her own? I breathe a sigh of relief when she shoves me out of the room. It wasn't like I would get a break; I had to help welcome some of her guests and inform them that she would be with them in a few minutes. I don't get far when she calls me back to her room. I inwardly groaned; I was so close to getting far away from her, even though it would have only been for a few minutes. "I'll welcome my friends," she tells me. "Instead, I want you to find Kane and bring him to meet everyone. He was supposed to meet me here fifteen minutes ago. I don't know what's taking him so long. Find him and bring him to me." My heart skips a beat at the thought of getting to be near Kane again. I don't complain and quickly start searching for him. The first place that I check is his room, but he's nowhere to be found. I continue my search throughout the house, but there is no luck. It's then that I remember where he could be. I make my way out into the garden, remembering that one spot I found him in before. I don't stop until I get there, and to my surprise, he really is there. He acknowledges my presence and turns to face me. His hands are in his pocket, and I feel naked under his intense gaze. "What are you doing here?" he asks me. "Shouldn't you be inside with Giselle? I find it hard to believe that she let you out of her sight." "Where did you go?" I ask him. "I can't get it out of my head. I tried to cover for you, and it worked, but I was terrified of what would happen if Giselle found out you'd left without a good excuse." He leans his back against the tree and sighs, "why were you worried over it? You wouldn't have been the one to get in trouble." "Are you purposely ignoring my question?" I ask him suspiciously. He looks away from me and gazes up at the sky. I don't know if to feel relieved or sad that he's no longer looking at me. I know he doesn't have to tell me the truth, but I'm hoping that he considers me

enough to try to explain what happened while he was gone. I've wanted to ask him this since he returned but couldn't because Giselle was always there. I was surprised she even sent me to look for him and didn't come searching for him on her own. She was probably too caught up with showing off to her friends to be concerned about me being alone with Kane. He finally turns back to me, and I'm hit by his piercing gaze that leaves me speechless. Why does it feel like I should know those eyes? Why does it feel like those eyes have haunted me in the past? Even if they weren't a part of my past life, I know for a fact that they haunt me now. I know that I won't be able to stop thinking about him or his gorgeous eyes, no matter how hard I try to. "And what question is that?" He asks innocently. "As far as I know, you haven't asked me anything that needs to be answered." I narrow my eyes, "it's not my place to ask, but I still want to know. Why did you leave? What has your attention other than the woman you're marrying?" His jaw clenches, and I know I've crossed a line, "you're right. It's not your place to ask me any questions. Why are you even out here? Shouldn't you be tending to Giselle? Shouldn't you be doing your job?" I cross my arms, "and shouldn't you also be in there with her? She invited friends over so that she could introduce you to them. How can she introduce them if you're out here by yourself?" A muscle ticks in his jaw as he glares at me; I don't think he's ever been this angry before with me. But I barely spent any time with him; that's probably why this is only the first time he's mad about something I've said. Thinking about it now, it isn't the first time he's been pissed at me; he hates it when I call him by his name. "Kane," I say, and his eyes narrow to a dangerous level. I was right. He does hate it when I call him by his name. "Am I somehow not good enough to even say your name?" I demand. "Just because I'm some low maid that works for the woman you're planning on marrying, it's a problem if I say your name?" I ask with disgust. He remains quiet; once more, he turns away from me. It's almost like he's dismissed me without saying anything at all. It upsets me so much. I'm usually hanging onto every moment with Kane, measuring every second I get to be alone with him. This time is no different, except for the fact that he's driving me up a wall. "Answer me!" I shout. I know I'm being ridiculous right now, but it feels natural arguing with him, almost like I'm used to it. I don't think I've ever felt this alive before, at least not since I've woken up with zero memories of my past. I walk up to him with the attention of demanding answers. I'm not prepared for when he grabs me by my waist and pulls my body tight against his; the darkness in his eyes calls out to me, and even though I want to touch him. I don't. "I hate when you say my name because you sound just like her." He whispers so softly that I'm not sure if I even heard him correctly. Just like her? Who's he referring to?

Chapter 52 My mind was racing as I tried to make sense of his words. Was he referring to the woman he was with before he decided to marry Giselle? Is she the reason why he's always looking like this? How much did he care about her? Did he love her? There were so many questions on my mind. I needed the answers, and I had to get them now. I felt like I would go insane if he didn't tell me who she was. "Who is she?" I whisper. I can't even recognize my voice. I'm scared, actually scared, to find out that this was the woman he loved. I'm not sure how I would react to this, knowing that there was a woman out there that Kane loved this much. A woman that left him in a state of depression. He doesn't have to tell me. I can see the answer in his eyes alone. But I still want to hear it. I won't believe it until he opened his mouth and told me. I wait for his answer, but it never comes. "Who is she?" I ask again. "How can you say something like that without explaining yourself? I want to know who she is. I want to know who this woman is that you can't seem to forget." Even though you're marrying someone else, I want to finish with those words but stop myself. I don't want to upset him further. If I do, I may lose the chance to find out more about his past, and finding out his past is something I've been dying to do. I want to know everything about Kane, everything that he doesn't even wish to tell anyone else. I want to be the woman he trusts enough to open up to. I don't know why this is so important to me; I don't understand why I'm so willing to let him confide in me even though I know it will break my heart to hear him talk about another woman. But this isn't about me. This is about Kane and the things he's had to go through in his past. I couldn't remember mine, and I'm not sure if that's a good thing. Maybe my past was terrible; maybe there were things I'd want to forget; perhaps not remembering was good for me. I can see that Kane's past was still haunting him today. It was the reason why he didn't want to go through with this wedding, why he was so depressed over it. And now I knew that a woman was the reason behind it. There was a woman in Kane's heart, a woman that he cared about and still does. "Who she is isn't any of your damn business." He snaps suddenly. Our faces are inches apart, and neither of us is shouting; we're somehow arguing but not in a loud tone. "It is my business!" I disagree. "If I sound just like her, don't you think I will want to know more about her? Do I also look like her? Are there any other similarities between us? You know that I've lost my memory; maybe there is some connection between the two of us. Maybe that can explain why I feel so safe around you. I trust you more than anything else, even though my mind tells me I shouldn't." I'm not even sure of the point I'm trying to make; I'm just trying hard to make him tell me everything that bothered him. Kane and I were two worlds apart, and maybe that's why I want to hear the stories of his past; it would help me seem closer to him. Closer than where we are now. I know that it wasn't any of my business like he just said,

but that doesn't mean he couldn't talk to me about it. Talking made things better, as long as you spoke to someone that genuinely wanted to help you. Kane runs his hand through his hair and mumbles a few curse words. I know that I'm pressing his buttons; it's something I'm becoming good at doing. I'm not proud of it, but I wasn't going to give up either. One way or another, I'll get Kane talking about the woman from his past. The woman that prevented him from moving on. The woman that made him look like his entire life was over. "The girl in my heart and mind is not someone I will ever speak about with anyone that doesn't deserve to hear her story. She's too special for that. Her name alone is more important to me than anything else. You wanted to know why I hate it when you say my name and I've answered your question. I can't answer anything more than that." He tells me. "Listening to you say my name is torture for me, so please, just stop it. I don't want to hear my name on your lips." His words are sharp and brutal, and they cut through me like a sharp blade. He did try to tell me to back off nicely; I was the one that pushed him to say something this awful to me. But I don't regret pushing him at all. I was still determined to find out more about this woman. She meant something to him, and because of this, she meant something to me as well. Anyone that was important to this man was important to me. I didn't plan on ever telling him this, but I meant it. The fact that he wouldn't tell me the truth shows me that he thinks I don't deserve to listen to her story. He believes that I'm not worthy of knowing this woman's name. How would it feel to be loved this much by someone? To have someone treasure my name alone? I wouldn't know. I didn't even know my own name. I thought that my memories would slowly return to me, but that wasn't happening. I don't think they ever will return to me. I'll spend the rest of my life not remembering who I was. "If you don't want to talk about her," I whisper. "Can you answer me one thing? Why are you marrying Giselle if there is a woman that holds the key to your heart? Don't you think it's unfair to the three of you to continue with this wedding?" "Do you think I want this marriage to happen?" He demands. "There are many things that you do not know. Many things that you don't know about me or my past or the people that I love. And it should stay that way; I need you to stay the hell out of my business, do you understand me? We aren't friends. We share no relationship whatsoever, I helped you once, and I'm not going to do it again. I felt guilty because I let someone down already, I thought that helping you would help with the pain of letting her down, but it only made me feel worse. You wanted to know why I helped a stranger; this is your answer to that question. You can stop thinking that I owe you any answers. We aren't that close, and we never will be." I didn't think that words could pierce a heart that quickly, but I was learning that there were many ways to hurt someone. And this was hurting me a lot. 'We aren't that close and never will be.' Those words may haunt me forever. I was only trying to help him; I hoped that if he told me what was bothering

him, I would be able to help him. Trying to help him only made things worse for both of us. He seems to hate me more than ever, and my heart is more than broken from his behavior towards me.

Chapter 53 "I'll return to the party," I tell him as I step away from him. It's hard for me to do it, but he's leaving me no choice. He doesn't want me here. "It's clear that you don't want me here. I won't stay where I'm not wanted. All I wanted to do was to help you as you helped me. I wanted to hear your story; you remember everything from your past while I remember nothing. I don't know who my children's father is, and I don't know my name. I don't know my family. I don't know anything. I don't know if people are looking for me, and I don't know if someone did this to me or if losing my memory was an accident. I don't know why I'm telling you this; you don't want to hear it. I'm just trying to say that while I don't remember anything about my life, you remember everything about yours. And whatever it is that you remember, I can tell that it's hurting you. I'm sorry if I overstepped my boundaries; as I said, I only wanted to help." Kane doesn't say anything; he isn't looking at me, so I can't tell if my words have affected him. I'm not the woman that he wants to speak to. And I may never be that woman. I was stupid for thinking that I could be that woman for him. I was only a maid. And I kept forgetting that he was getting married to the woman I worked for. "You should get inside soon," I tell him. "I know you don't like me looking after you, but Giselle is already looking for you. She won't be happy to find you here when she wants to show you off to all her friends. While I realize that it is hard for you, and since I know you're being forced into this marriage, you can't run from it. I know that this means she has something on you. Whatever it is, she will use it if you disappoint her tonight. So please, for your own sake, get inside." I don't wait for him to say anything; I don't expect him to. The moment I walk into the dining room, now filled with strangers, Giselle walks over to me with a frustrated look. "Where is he?" She whispers, trying her best to act unbothered around her friends. They're all looking our way, and I'm not sure she's doing an excellent job at hiding how frustrated she is by me. I'm sure that she's about to get even angrier when I tell her that Kane didn't return with me. Giselle didn't like when things didn't go exactly how she wanted them to go. "I couldn't find him." I lie. I don't want to tell her where he is; he doesn't look like he wants to be disturbed. Even though Kane wasn't exactly nice to me, I know that he wasn't deliberately trying to hurt me; I also know that I don't want to hurt him either. I want to protect him. I want to defend his already bruised heart. I don't care what happens to me in the process; I will continue to protect him because I think that Kane has a good heart. Something also tells me that he isn't used to people taking care of him. I know he doesn't

want me to, but I don't think I'll ever stop trying to care for him. Her eyes narrow, "you continue to make my life f\*\*\*\*\*g miserable." She snaps at me. "How can you not find him? Is he invisible? There are only a number of places he can be. Where did you search, girl? I find it hard to believe that you're not only stupid but blind also!" I open my mouth to say something when I feel his presence behind me. I'm not sure if I'm imagining it; he didn't look like he would listen to me. "I'm right here, Giselle." His voice confirms it for me. I don't turn around to look at him. There were too many people in the room, and I didn't want them to realize how much I adored Kane. I didn't want to give Giselle any more reasons to hate my guts. I walk over to a corner of the room and ignore the stares sent my way. I'm not sure if these people pity me or if they hate me just as much as Giselle does. Maybe she's told her friends horrible stories about me; it's something that I totally expect from her. She loved to say awful things about me. I watch as Kane takes a seat next to Giselle. There are surprised looks all around the room as she introduces Kane as her to be husband. I think that no one expected Giselle to get married to someone as handsome as Kane. The women are all lost in him, and I don't blame any of them. He had that aura about him; I would think that there was something wrong with the women in here if they didn't react the way that they're doing now. Giselle is happy with their reactions; I know that this is the reaction she was hoping for from them. They are asking hundreds of questions; they want to find out why Kane agreed to marry Giselle, though they don't dare to ask a direct question like that. Instead, they ask what made him fall in love with her. I can see how uncomfortable Kane is; it's hard for me to watch this exchange. Not just because I want Kane for myself, it's because I know he loves someone else. I don't want him to be unhappy. I hate seeing him like this. How hard must this be for him? He's in love with one woman, and he's being forced to marry another. I still don't know what Giselle has on him. What was she using against him to make him agree to marry her when he didn't love her? What did she do to him? If she really loved him, she wouldn't force him to marry her. She would let him choose on her own. She would let him be with the woman that he actually loved. I wish that Giselle could see what she was doing to him. I wish she could see that she was making him hate her instead of love her. "What are you staring at?" Someone asks me. I jump at the interruption; I'm terrified that whoever it was saw me looking at Kane. I tried not to get caught, but I still ended up messing up. It's hard to ignore Kane when he's the center of attention wherever he goes. The man standing in front of me blocks my view of Kane; he was the one that asked the question. He has dark green eyes and reddish-brown hair. I've never seen him around before. I don't know why he's speaking to me when I'm Giselle's maid. I don't think he realizes that his actions will most definitely anger Giselle. The last thing she will want tonight is for me to get any sort of attention from her friends. "Giselle," I lie. "Doesn't she

look beautiful tonight? Kane is lucky to be marrying a woman like her." The guy looks at me in disbelief; even he doesn't believe that Kane is the lucky one for marrying someone like Giselle. "I can think of someone more beautiful than Giselle." He says. "She's sitting in front of me." I take a look around me, and there is no one else here that he can be talking about. "I don't think that you should be seen speaking to me," I tell him. "Giselle doesn't like it when her maids speak to anyone other than her." "I'm sure that she can make an exception tonight." He tells me as he takes a seat next to me. "Besides, it seems to me like she's too busy to realize that her maid is talking to one of her guests. Don't you think?" I follow his gaze and almost choke from what I see. Kane is looking directly at us, and there is a look on his face that I've never seen before. His hands are gripping tightly on the glass in front of him, and it looks like he's about to break the poor thing. I don't think I've ever seen him like this before; he looks like he's about to explode with anger. What could have possibly made him this angry? Did Giselle say something to him that pissed him off? I can see that happening, and I would have believed it if he wasn't glaring at the man next to me. Did he not like him? "I'm sorry," I whisper. "I really can't be seen talking to you." I don't wait for him to say anything as I storm out of the room. I can't get Kane's reaction out of my head. What caused him to behave that way? I let out a sigh of frustration as I rush back into the garden. I had to get out of there; too much was happening all at once; it was driving me insane. "I knew you wanted me." I freeze. It's the voice of the man from earlier. Did he follow me out here? I spin around to face him with a perplexed look. "Why are you following me?" I demand. "I want to be alone." "You're a low maid." He says, "you can't decide when to be alone. That's for people like me to decide." "Excuse me?" I snap. "What the hell is your problem? Do you not understand words? I said I would like to be alone, and I don't care what are your thoughts on what a maid should or should not be allowed to do." "Finally," he says. "We are finally alone. I've been staring at you since you stepped into the room." He walks closer to me and grabs my arm. "What are you doing?" I demand. "How dare you touch me?" "I saw the way you were looking at me from across the room." He says. "You don't need to act hard to get. I prefer a woman who tells me what she wants." "I already told you," I shout. "I want to be alone. I don't know what you think you saw, but it definitely wasn't what you think it was. I was not staring at you. I have no reason to stare at you." "Come on," he says as he leans closer to me. "You want me. Say it." I'm about to knee him in the crotch when someone pulls him off me. I covered my mouth in horror as Kane's sharp claws dug into the man's neck. "She said to leave her alone." Kane roars. The man's screams echoed throughout the quiet night. How did he even find me? Was he searching for me this entire time? He must have seen him follow me out into the garden and came to make sure that I was safe. He told me that he wouldn't help me again but yet here he is once more, acting

like my knight in shining armor. Why does he always do this? Why does he make my heart flutter? I try my best to hate him, to not think about him, to see him as a horrible person. Then he does things like this that remind me that he's good. He's a good person who's had a shitty past. He's someone who's been through a lot and doesn't have anyone to talk to. Or maybe he doesn't like talking to anyone about his problems. I'm not sure which it is, but either way, I know he's been through a lot. Kane doesn't realize that every action of his, every act of kindness, makes my heartbeat for him. He needs to stop protecting me; he needs to stop being like this towards me if he wants me to stay away from him. I won't be able to grant his wishes if he continues like this. I watch as he rips the man's body apart like it was nothing to him. I should be terrified, but I'm not. I'm happy that he's doing this. This man was planning to hurt me, to hurt my babies. He deserves this; he deserves to die. Why does even this feel familiar to me? Seeing Kane kill someone, it doesn't feel like the first time that I've seen this. Which is crazy; I would remember seeing him kill someone. How does everything he does seem so effortless? I've always known that Kane was strong, but I'm getting a front-row seat this time; I can see it all. He's stronger than I initially thought he was. This guy was nothing compared to him. His strength was out of this world, making me fall for him ever more. Why do I let myself go through this? Why do I let myself fall? Within minutes, the man's body falls to the ground, completely lifeless. Kane hurries to clean up the mess before anyone can see, and I try to help him as much as I can. He finally turns to stare at me after he's done. There is blood everywhere, on his face, hair, and clothes. He's soaked in blood, and I hate it. I don't want anything on his body that shouldn't be there. Again, he's only like this because he was trying to protect me. He told me that I was nothing to him, that he felt bad, and it's the only reason why he helped me before. What was his reason for helping me today? I reach for my dress and rip a piece of it off my body. Kane doesn't say anything as I walk over to him. He's completely still when I raise my hand and wipe the blood off his face with the cloth. His body shudders from my touch, but he doesn't stop me. It shocks me that he's letting me touch him like this. I expected him to push me away from him. Maybe he's just in so much shock from what just happened. I don't care what the reason is. I'll continue to take advantage of this opportunity. He isn't someone that would easily let another woman touch him unless it was the woman that was close to his heart. I don't think she knows how lucky she is to have his love. Wherever she is, I wonder if she knows that he loves her this much, that she's all he can think about. Does she know how many women will die for this kind of love? It feels wonderful touching him. It's exactly what I thought it would feel like, magical and beautiful. "We can't return to the party like this," I tell him. "We need to find somewhere to wash the blood off before Giselle realizes we're gone. Getting to a bathroom is too risky. We need to find a

river close by, somewhere that no one will find us. But wouldn't Giselle realize that we're both missing from the party?" "I doubt she will even notice that we're missing." He tells me. "Why do you say that?" Did he not know Giselle at all? The girl practically stalked him. She always wanted to know his whereabouts and what he was up to. I can't say that I'm any different than her when it comes to wondering about where he's been, but she tries to stop him, unlike me. "She's drunk." He tells me. "She had too many drinks. She's not going to remember anything from tonight. You don't have to worry about that happening." I sigh with relief, "but we still can't leave you looking like this. We need to fix it." "Get back inside," he tells me. "I can get rid of this myself." Again, he wants to push me away after helping me. Does he not realize how much I want to help him? How is he the only one allowed to do good deeds? Why can't I help him as he helps me? Why can't he accept that there is someone that wants what's best for him?

Chapter 54 ~MAYA~ "I don't care what you say," I tell him. "I'm going to stay and help you today. I'm not taking no for an answer." I meant every single word I just spoke. I was tired of him pushing me away when all I wanted to do was help. He runs a hand through his hair and sighs. Before I have a chance to react, he grabs me by my waist and pulls me against him. "Hold on to me," he whispers. I wrap my arms around his neck, and before I know it, we're moving at an incredible pace. I can never get over how good it feels to be like this in his arms, especially with the wind blowing against my hair. I wish I could stay like this, I don't want to have to let go, but soon enough, I do. We stop by a river, and Kane slowly lets go of me. It's not like I can beg him to keep holding onto me. If I did, he would put more distance between us. I had to act like this did nothing to my weak heart, even though my red cheeks may be enough to tell him that I wasn't unaffected by being so close to him. I rip another part of my dress and move towards him. "I can do this myself." He tells me. I shake my head in disagreement, "I came with you with intentions of helping, not watching while you do it yourself. I told you that I'm not taking no for an answer." He looks on edge when I get closer to him, but he doesn't try and stop me again. I don't know why my presence bothers him so much, but I wish he could learn to relax when I'm near him. Maybe it's because of my voice; maybe it bothers him that I sound like the girl from his past. There is still blood on his face, and it's the first place that I start to rub the cloth on. Just like before, Kane remains perfectly still while I remove the blood from his face. My hand accidentally touches his lips, and we pause from the contact. I should move my fingers, but it's hard when I desperately want this. I take a deep breath while Kane stays still like a statue so that I can gently wipe the blood from his lips. I notice that his body shudders for a second, but he quickly tries to hide his reaction from

me. He wasn't fast enough; I was sure of what I saw and felt. Why did he have such a reaction? What was he thinking right now? I was desperate to find out, but I'm sure that he would never tell me. He will never want me to know what he thinks of me. Maybe that's for the best because I doubt that he likes me. Though, it is strange that he always comes to my rescue. But the way I see it, he's such a good person who will rescue anyone he realizes is in danger. That's just the type of person that he was. I don't think that even Kane realizes that he's such a good person. He tries to pretend that he's terrible, but I can see straight through his pretense. He cares for people even though he doesn't want to. I think that he's easily mistaken by others as well. I've never actually seen him interact with many people other than Giselle, but I can see it in him. I'm glad that I can see straight through him, it made me feel closer to him, and that's all I want. I want to know him better than anyone else ever did, maybe even more than the woman from his past knew him. That can only happen if he allows me to get closer to him. I dip the cloth into the water and move closer to him as I continue to wipe the blood off his face. I'm surprised that he's letting me do this for him. He always tries his best to keep a great distance between us. Maybe he's trying to be nice since I almost had a terrible experience earlier. I'm not sure what his reason is, but I'm happy that he's at least letting me do this for him. I don't want to overstep, however. I'm not sure where I should stop. There was blood all over his body, and so far, things were already tense between us. Kane didn't look like someone who was used to having someone take care of him like this. He doesn't seem like he knows how to react. That makes me feel sad. What kind of life did he have? Why did no one care for him? Did he have a difficult life? Who were his parents? And what happened to the woman that he couldn't forget? What happened to her that caused him to agree to marry Giselle? He had already confessed that he didn't want to marry her, I had my doubts before, but it was finally confirmed. He didn't want to marry her. Just like I had suspected since the beginning. I let my hands travel down his neck and gently rub the cloth there. I move closer to him to get a better look; I want to make sure that I get everything off his body. "You don't have to do this." He says in a hoarse whisper. My body shivers at the tone of his voice; it's unfair that just a few words from this man make my body react this much. He doesn't realize how much I want to do this for him. He thinks that he's burdening me, but he isn't. I want this. "Stop saying that." I scold him. "You are hurt because of me. You keep putting your life at risk to save mine. You don't know anything about me, yet you continue to protect me. Then why don't you let me do the same for you, Kane? It's unfair that you keep trying to help me, but anytime I try to do the same, you push me away. Do you know what it means to have a friend? Do you have any? What is so wrong if I try and help you? I'm only returning the favor. I don't see anything wrong with that. So please, stay back and let me do what I must. You are hurt,

and I want to at least get all this blood off your body. I hate seeing you like this. I hate seeing you hurt."

Chapter 55 ~KANE~ I can't let her continue to touch me like this. My crazy heart likes it too much when it shouldn't. She's making me feel things that I promised myself that I never would until I found Maya. I don't know what's happening to me. Why do I act like this girl is my mate? I didn't only kill that man from earlier because of what he did; I also killed him because I wanted to from the moment I saw him trying to flirt with her. My reaction to her was driving me f\*\*\*\*\*g crazy. When would I stop this? What did I have to do to stop feeling this way for her? Every time I tried to push her away, something like this happened, pushing me closer to her than ever. I didn't want to snap at her, not after what almost happened to her tonight. I imagine Maya in front of me, and I see the look of disappointment on her face. She's disappointed in me for being so weak and once again letting her down. I couldn't even control my urges around another woman. I never knew that I was this soft. How could I do this to my mate? I grab the girl's hand before she can go any further, "stop." "But I'm not finished." She complains. "There is still so much blood and—" "I don't need you to do this for me," I tell her. "I can simply wash myself in the river. Give me a few minutes, and then we will return home." She doesn't hide her disappointment from me as she slowly steps away. Why does it bother me so much that my words have hurt her? Ah, f\*\*k. I will completely lose it if I spend any more time alone with this woman. . . . . ~MAYA~ There are two things I'm very aware of after the events of last night. One; Kane was one of the most caring men I've ever known; even though I can't remember anything from the past, I already know it's true. And two, my heart feels like it somehow belongs to him. Like it has always belonged to him. I don't know why I feel this way. All I know is that I do. I like Kane. It may even be more than that. I know it's too soon to say things like this, but I can't control myself. Not while being around him. There is something about him. I can't wrap my finger around it, but there is something that draws me in. How pathetic could my life be? Why must I fall for a man that I couldn't have? He was getting married soon, for crying out loud. Did my heart not understand that the man was off-limits? What else needed to happen for my body to understand that I couldn't like someone like him? Even if he wasn't marrying Giselle, he was already completely out of my league. Not to mention that he wouldn't even look my way. The funny thing about this entire situation was that Kane wasn't interested in either of us. His heart seemed to be set on the woman he wouldn't even speak about. Because according to him, she's too special to talk about with me or, as he said, with people who aren't worthy of knowing about her. I try to snap out of thinking about him and the

woman he loves. I was standing in front of Giselle's room; she had called for me. "Get in here, girl!" She shouts. What was her problem? She seemed extra cranky today, and I had no idea why. There was also something strange going on in the palace. There were a lot of decorations being brought in, was there about to be another party soon? Giselle hadn't told me anything, and I don't think Kane knows about it either, judging by the frown on his face. This must be a surprise. Was it his birthday or something? I would assume that Giselle knew his birthday since she seemed obsessed over anything concerning him. "Is your father hosting an event tonight?" Kane asks. I can tell that even he has been curious about the decorations and her actions since this morning. She claps her hand in excitement, "what do you mean?" She asks. "How can you not know what's happening right now? I spoke to you about this yesterday, Kane. You even agreed to it. How can you forget your engagement party?" What? Engagement party? Kane's head snaps up at her words. "What the f\*\*k are you talking about?" I wince at his tone; I can tell that she's managed to surprise him. I know that he wouldn't have spoken that way to her otherwise. He was trying too hard to please her to make a mistake like that. She had managed to push him past his breaking point today. But who wouldn't react this way after what she just told him? No one knew about this, not even the man she was getting engaged to. "Is that any way to speak to your wife, Kane?" She demands. "You aren't my wife," he growls. His words are not helping the situation; they're both making each other angrier. "Yet." She snaps. "Why are you so angry? You knew that the engagement party had to happen eventually. I've never kept this from you." "I thought we spoke about this before?" He asks her. "Didn't we agree to get to know more about each other before anything happens? Wasn't that what we both decided on? Why are you changing your mind like this and without telling me?" "I did tell you." She shouts before lowering her voice to say, "I did not change my mind. This is the engagement party; it isn't the actual wedding. If you keep making a fuss about this, I can easily change this from an engagement party into a wedding ceremony. So tell me, Kane, do you want to change this into a wedding instead of an engagement?" A muscle ticks in his jaw at her question. I didn't have to wait for him to answer that question to know his response. He knew that he had messed up big time by challenging her. Giselle wasn't someone that took lightly anyone disrespecting her. Kane sighs and pulls her against him; my heart drops when he does this. I know that he's forcing himself to calm her down, but it's still not easy for me to see. I try to fight the pain in my chest. I can't let myself do this. "I'm sorry," he apologizes. "Let's prepare for the engagement."

Chapter 56 ~MAYA~ I'm standing next to Giselle; I watch the people she hired dress her up from head to toe. She's wearing an aqua blue dress with little gems attached to the already glittery cloth. She looked beautiful, but who wouldn't with the number of people tending to her? She's shouting at them, just like she continuously shouts at me. She wants everything to be perfect for tonight. If she's like this for the engagement, I don't want to be there for the wedding. She's going to make everyone's life miserable on that day. The only reason anyone agrees to work for her is that her father pays them; I'm positive he has to pay extra to get them even to agree to work for her. She didn't have any respect while speaking to anyone; it was embarrassing and foolish of her to talk to others that way. At least having others tend to her meant that she didn't bother to harass me. It also meant that I had enough time to think about everything today. Kane was getting engaged to her. Nothing was going to change that. After today, they will officially be engaged to each other. My body is not reacting well to this news. I felt sick to my stomach, and I don't think it has anything to do with my pregnancy. Though, the pregnancy was not helping my situation. I kept having to run off to the washroom. Eventually, Giselle will notice and scold me about it, I'm sure. I just had to hope that the party kept her busy enough so that she didn't see what I was up to. While she was busy arguing over her makeup, I chose that time to slip away slowly. I couldn't be in there with her any longer; I had to take a moment to catch my breath. I needed to understand what was wrong with my silly heart. Why was I reacting this way to Kane getting engaged to her? Why did it hurt so much? Why do I feel this way for him but no one else? Was I falling for him because he was always kind to me? Could that be the reason why? Or was it more than that? Those questions snap out of my head when I see the man living in my mind since the first day I saw him walking toward me. He's dressed in an all-black suit, and he looks as dashing as ever. I can't stop looking at him. This man was made to be admired by onlookers, including me. I wasn't the only one staring; anyone that spotted him couldn't look away. I don't blame them, but if Giselle saw this, she might throw us all out of the party in fear that we would try to steal Kane from her. He had a lot on his mind, but it wasn't new to me; Kane always looked like he was in another world, like someone had his full attention. It had to be the woman he spoke about; she seemed like all he ever thought about. I don't know where she is, but I know that Kane can't wait to get back to her. I still want to find out more, but I think he will never tell me more about this woman. He turns and catches me staring at him. I feel my cheeks turn red at being caught red-handed like this. I don't look away, however, and he doesn't look away either. It's the first time that Giselle hasn't given me a hideous dress to wear. It's a pretty long royal blue dress with a slit to the side. I'm not sure if Kane likes it, but he doesn't hide that he's looking at me. I feel my body tremble as his eyes travel down the dress. I want to ask him what he thinks

of it but keep that question to myself. I couldn't do it. He made it clear that we weren't that close, and he was getting engaged today. Not to mention he was crazy about an unnamed woman. Kane's life was messed up the more I learnt about it. Maybe that's why he keeps it to himself. He straightens his tie and walks down the stairs without saying anything to me. He acts like he didn't save my life a few days ago; Kane should win an award for acting like he didn't care. He was very good at that. No one would ever think that we spoke unless someone tried to harm me in front of him; it's the only time anyone would think that Kane and I had any communication between us. I follow him down the stairs, but I don't try to speak to him. Instead, I sit in the back row and wait for Giselle to show up. She might rip out my head for attending this party as though I belonged here, but I'm hoping that she doesn't realize that I was here. A few minutes later, she's making a grand entrance, and there is a loud round of applause in her honor. I'm willing to bet that her father paid for such an entrance; I don't think anyone here actually likes her. They all make their positions on the stage, and I hate seeing them stand next to each other. Kane didn't belong there; he didn't. Seeing Kane engaged to Giselle was a difficult sight to see. It wasn't only that I didn't want to see him with another woman; it was seeing how much this engagement destroyed him. This was the most unhappy I've seen him since the first time I've met him. To say Kane was unhappy would even be an understatement. They exchange rings, and there is another round of applause. They're holding hands now, and I feel like I need to throw up again. People are congratulating them together, but Kane isn't paying attention to anything happening around him. I want to comfort him. Like I always want to do. But all I can do is sit and stare with a broken heart. I wanted to see him happy; I wanted to know what it was like to see Kane smile. He deserved so much happiness. It's unfair that he's being forced to marry her. I wish he would talk to me. I wanted him to tell me what she had on him. Maybe if I knew, we could help each other again. I can help free him from her, and he can help free me from her also. But it would never be that easy. We were trapped here for a long time unless someone with power tried to help us.

Chapter 57 It's been hours since they've exchanged rings, and I feel like I'm losing everything with each second that I stand back and watch everything unfold before my eyes. Everything is loud. The party. The people in it. The music. The cries within me. Everything. I'm hurting because I saw a man I barely knew get engaged to the woman I worked for. Why? Why did I let it bother me so much? I should be okay. I should be happy for Kane. But how can I be happy when I knew that he was anything but happy? And even if he was happy, would I be happy for him then? I feel a tear roll down my

cheek, and I wipe my cheek with shaking hands. Why am I crying over this? I wish I had the answers to my own questions. Giselle is on the dance floor; she's the happiest out of everyone in the room. She's managed to get engaged to the man she's always wanted. He is even closer to being hers than he ever was before. Even if Kane were to marry Giselle, would he ever really be hers? How can a man belong to a woman if his heart is already held onto another? Giselle may think that she's winning now, but when she realizes that he couldn't give his heart to her, she will feel lonely. I wouldn't want to be her. While it would be nice to have someone like Kane as your husband, it would mean nothing if he didn't love you back. I don't think she cares about that; however, thinking about it, whether Kane loved her or not would not matter to her. All she wants is to know that he's her husband. She wants to brag about it to the world. She wants to show off to her friends. She wants everyone to know that she gets everything that she wants. I search the crowds for Kane. He isn't by her side. They're now engaged, but he is nowhere near her. Another indication that they didn't love each other. When I finally spot him, he's by the bar sipping on some drinks. I think that he's trying to drown his sorrow in alcohol. He wants to forget that he's engaged to Giselle. Again, I'm hit with this intense need to make it better for him. Even though I want to, I stop myself from moving forward. The last thing he will want is me next to him right now. He made it clear to me that we weren't that close. We needed to keep a clear distance from each other. Giselle runs to his side and pulls him towards the dance floor with her. I knew she would have eventually done something like that. Everyone was noticing that Kane didn't want to be near her, and she had to prove to them all that he did, in fact, want to marry her. Image was everything to someone like Giselle; she wouldn't let Kane out of her sight until she proved that he was in love with her even though everyone thought that he wasn't. My heart aches, actually ache when his hand touches her waist, and they begin to sway to a love song. Giselle may not be able to see it, but I can see the pain on his face. It hurts him to be close to her; he doesn't like it; I think he even hates it. I feel sorry for him. I feel sad that he's being forced into this marriage. Kane doesn't deserve this; he deserves to be happy. I wish that there was a way that I could be that happiness for him. I take a deep breath. I need to stop thinking of ways to fix him. I need to start thinking about my babies. I had to find a way to get away from Giselle. Or maybe, I needed to find a way to get her to fire me without harming me. I had to do something quickly. I couldn't stand the sight of seeing the two of them together. And it's something I won't ever be able to get away from as long as I stay in this palace. I turn away from both of them. Maybe if I didn't have to look at them dancing, I would be able to think about anything else. I push my way out of the crowd. I was heading to the gardens; maybe I'm heading there because I know deep down that there is a chance that Kane would soon come here as well. It's the one place he goes to

clear his head. The one place that Giselle doesn't look for him. Maybe she doesn't think he will ever spend his time here. It's crazy since gardens are Giselle's favorite places, yet she never looks there for him. "Shouldn't you be inside?" My body goes stiff at the voice. I spun around on my heels to see that it was indeed Kane in front of me. He was drunk; I could tell by how his body swayed slightly as he walked toward me. "Shouldn't I be asking you the same thing?" I answer his question with one of my own. "You look beautiful tonight." He compliments me. "You always do." I'm taken aback by his words. He's never complimented me before. And to call me beautiful? To say that I always look beautiful. It must be the alcohol speaking. "T-thank you." I stutter. My cheeks are flushed, and I can barely think of anything after hearing him call me beautiful. How does he always manage to do that? To leave me speechless. He takes another step toward me, and I lift my head so that I can stare into his eyes. "I love your voice." He whispers as his finger lightly traces my lips. "It's the most beautiful sound in the world. I can listen to you speak for hours, days, years. I will never get tired of it." My heart flutters in my chest; I know he's saying this because I sound like the woman he can't forget, but I don't care. Just for one moment, I want to pretend that he means this, that these words are meant for me and not for anyone else. He doesn't know how hard it was for me to watch him get engaged to Giselle. He knows that it was hard on him, but he has no idea just how much it hurt me. Even now, I keep picturing them together. I'm breaking my own heart, I know this, but I have no control over my emotions. "I hate seeing you with her," I confess. "I know it's not my place to tell you this. I know that you love another woman, and I know that I can never take her place. I don't want to take her place because I know I can't; I can tell you love her more than anyone else. I'm sorry you have to break your heart like this because of Giselle. I wish that I could make it better; I wish there were a way for me to help you. You're too good of a person to be treated this way; you deserve better; you deserve to be happy." "I don't know why you think I'm such a good person," he whispers, "I'm far from being a good person. I've hurt the people closest to me; I've destroyed more lives than I can count. I'm not the man you think I am. You should stop looking at me in that way because you make me want to be that man, to be the person you think I am." I gently cup his cheek in my hand, "you're wrong. You're a good person without trying to be. You may not be able to see it, but I can. You've given me hope; I'm a woman without a family, and if I have one, I don't know where to find them. I'm pregnant with twins, and I don't know who the father of my babies are, but just being in your presence gives me so much hope. Seeing you every day brightens up my day. You bring me happiness." His hand gently touches my hand that's still on his cheek, "I wish you'll stop doing this. I want you to stop making me feel things I'm not allowed to feel. It's wrong." "I don't want to stop," I whisper as I move closer to him, "I want to make you feel." He chuckles, and I

think my heart stops moving for a few seconds. It's the first time he's laughed around me, and it was beautiful. My breath gets stuck in my throat when he brings his face closer to mine. Our lips are closer than ever now, and if I make even the slightest movements, I will be able to feel them. "I want to make you feel too," he says in a hoarse whisper. My breath gets stuck in my throat, and before I have a chance to react, his lips are on mine. I clutch his tie and pull him tighter against me. I want to take all his pain away; I want him to forget about everything else and focus on me. I want to make him smile, just like he did a few minutes ago. Kane growls against my mouth, and I feel it all the way in my belly. I wrap my arms around his neck as his hands travel down my body before gripping my ass and pressing me even tighter against him. I still can't believe that Kane is kissing me. I know that he's drunk, but this kiss means everything to me. He may never know how much I want this, how much I will treasure this till my last breath. He's the man of my dreams without even knowing it. "Kane," I whisper as he breaks the kiss so that he can kiss my cheek, then chin, and finally my neck. I gasp and grip his hair tightly. "Maya," he cries. I froze as that one word pierced through my heart. Maya? Who's Maya? Was that the woman he was in love with?

Chapter 58 Maya. Why does that name stir up so many emotions in my heart? Hearing Kane say her name while kissing me was the worse thing that could have ever happened to me. How could I continue kissing a man who called me by another woman's name? It means that he was thinking about her while kissing me. The realization hits me so hard that I feel the air get knocked straight out of my body. He didn't know he was kissing me this entire time; he thought he was kissing her. This fact breaks my heart into two. All along, I was hoping that Kane knew he was with me, that he knew how close we were, that he was enjoying it, that it was making him happy. Now I know that he was thinking about her, the woman he was deeply in love with. He loved and missed her so much that he mistook me for her; for Maya. I didn't know her. I knew nothing about her but yet I didn't think I'd ever been more envious of a woman in my entire life before. How stupid was I? How could I envy a woman I'd never met? She did nothing to me except capturing the heart of a man I wanted to protect and keep happy for the rest of his life. Since I met Kane, that's all I've ever wanted to do. To make him happy. His sadness was something I hated to see. But having to stand here while he thought that I was another woman was ripping me apart. It's my fault for letting him kiss me while he was drunk. I should have kept some distance between us. I was just so happy that he was finally touching me that I didn't think of the consequences of my actions. I knew that Kane was in love with this woman; he was in love with Maya. I now knew her name. I shouldn't have let him kiss

me while he was in that state. When he sobered up, he would be angry with himself, and it will be my fault. He was already going through so much, and I added to his problems by letting him touch and kiss me like this. I knew Kane enough to know that he would never forgive himself for being so weak in my presence, even though it wasn't his fault. The entire time he was thinking of her, this was my fault, and I would make it my duty to ensure that he knew this. We only kissed because I let it happen; he would have never done it if he had been sober. I couldn't allow myself to enjoy this anymore. His hands are still on my waist, and his lips have traveled to my chest. I close my eyes and try to find the strength to push him away. As much as I want this, as much as my body craves this kind of attention from him, I can't let it go any further. "Kane!" I force myself to say between gasps, "stop. You need to stop this before you regret it. I'm not Maya. I'm not the woman that you love. You can't let this continue. I can't let it continue." I try to shove against his shoulders, but his hands only tighten around me. He's pulling me even closer than before, ignoring my attempts to put distance between the two of us. When he does this, it makes it even harder for me to resist him. His scent was all over my body, and I didn't think it was possible to want a man this much. My body felt alive in his arms, like we were made to be this close. I shook my head; if my hands weren't preoccupied, I would have slapped myself to snap out of his spell. He must be extremely drunk to let things get this far. I can't imagine how much pain he must have been in to let this situation reach where it was now. He was trying to drown his sorrows but only caused more trouble for himself. I gasp when he grabs my cheeks and gently turns my face to the side, exposing more of my neck to him. I whimper when I feel his nose edge closer to me, almost touching my skin. "You smell so f\*\*\*\*\*g good," he growls. I gasp when he rubs his nose at the base of my neck before going all the way up to below my ear. I swallow when he inhales deeply, and a possessive growl leaves him one more time. "Mine." My knees go weak at hearing him say that I was his. Why couldn't he be speaking about me? Why did it have to be Maya? Why was she so lucky to have this man's heart? I try to snap myself out of it once more. You can't do this. You can't let yourself fall for him. He doesn't know what he's saying; he's thinking of another woman; he isn't thinking about you. I need to keep reminding myself that Kane was drunk, and because of this, he wasn't aware of what he was doing. I can't help but wish that this was true, that this wasn't him imagining another woman while speaking to me. I try to push him away again, but he grabs my hand and shoves it above my head. I cry out when he shoves me up against a tree with one of his legs between both of mine. He's spreading them apart and bringing our bodies closer together. "I want my tongue in you," he says hoarsely, "I want to taste you. I want to get lost inside you." I break free from his hold and cover my mouth with my hand to keep myself from moaning aloud. His hand slowly

runs up my leg, and I've never known pleasure as this existed. He's making me weak for his touch. How can I ever allow another man to touch me again when he lives in this world? I would always compare them to him. "Kane!" I cry in both pleasure and pain when his hand continues to rise. Pain because I know I have to stop this. "Please, you need to snap out of this. You need to stop yourself." He grabs my hair and pulls it down so I'm staring straight into his hooded eyes, "say it. Say my name. I want to hear you say it over and over again." I'm fighting back to need to give him what he wants. You can't let this happen. You can't.

Chapter 59 ~MAYA~ I fight with everything inside of me, with all of the strength that I could muster. I'm doing everything that I can possibly do to stop Kane before it becomes too late. Before, he regretted everything and blamed himself once more. I lightly touch his face and turn him to look at me properly, and while staring into his pretty eyes, I say, "I'm not Maya." Kane gets lost in my eyes, and I'm both happy and sad that I'm finally getting through to him. I don't think he fully understands what's happening, but he does seem to see me more clearly now. His eyes are sad before they slowly begin to close. I think I've finally managed to get him to stop, and it breaks my heart even though I'm the one that made this happen. Why couldn't I be selfish? Why did I have to care about his feelings for that woman? His body falls on mine suddenly, and it takes me a moment to realize that he's unconscious. He's too heavy for me to drag him back inside. And so, I helped guide him to a bench and sat down next to him. His face fell on my neck, and I gently held him close to me. Why does it feel so familiar to me? Why did my heart seem to recognize him when he didn't remember me? . . . . . ~AUSTIN~ Kane's words have not left me since the planned funeral for Maya became a complete fail. I canceled the entire thing after he left. Knowing how much my sister trusted and adored me was enough to make me highly disappointed in myself. He was right. I shouldn't have accepted her death so readily. I should have been out searching for her. I should find the people who took her from me instead of hosting a funeral. She would have expected more from me. I've let my sister down on multiple occasions, and I didn't want to let her down anymore. She was always our innocent princess, our sweet Maya. It was time that I did the right thing for her. I wouldn't be a fool anymore. I won't let my pride make me follow through with foolish plans. It was time that I acted like the alpha prince that I've proven time and time again to be. My pack didn't get its title for no reason. We worked to reach the top, and nothing would bring us down now. No matter what happened to me, I would make sure to find out what the f\*\*k happened to my sister. And if she's still alive, I will do everything in my f\*\*\*\*\*g power to bring her home. I already spoke to my brothers,

and they felt the same way. We've protected her for her entire life, kept her sheltered, and given her everything she has ever wanted. She was the best sister any of us could ever ask for. She made us happy; her presence was our joy. Now, it felt incomplete without her. I had to keep holding onto the memories of her, I didn't trust Kane, but his actions at the funeral were enough to tell me that he did love my sister. No one could act so good; his emotions were real. He didn't kill her. Which meant that I had to search for her killer like he was doing. Or the person that took her and possibly still has her since, according to Kane, he knows that she is alive. Since he was her mate, he may know more than we did. He would sense her presence a lot stronger than us. Baby Roman stirs in my arm, reminding me that I am still holding him. I lean over and gently kiss his forehead. I was still upset with the things I'd said to Maya. It was never my place to ask her to abort her child or give him up for adoption. I thought I was suggesting the right thing for her, but I was wrong. The decision was always hers. She was the one that had to give the final say on what she wanted to do. I love my sister, all I wanted was to make her life better. Somehow, I managed to make it worse. I've always had this problem even before I met Lucy. I still need to learn how to deal with situations like this better; I tend to mess up everything. My decisions have been poor lately, and I have had little time to work on them. I had to fight to do the right things from now on, to be careful of the words that left my mouth. Not just for the people around me but also for my sleeping baby in my arms. My baby. I would always protect him with my life. I was terrified of any harm ever coming to him. I can't imagine how Maya must have felt when I suggested getting rid of hers. I mutter a few silent curses, careful not to wake my son. "I believe him," Lucas says to me as he enters the room. Lucy walks in behind him and takes our son from me. "I'll put him in the crib and be right back." "I believe that Maya is still alive." He continues. "I would know if she was dead, Austin. We've been inseparable since birth. You know how close the both of us are. Kane is telling the truth. Maya is alive. I know she is, but she's definitely in danger, and we need to get to her before we lose her for good." "Are you even allowed to be here right now, Lucas?" I ask him. Gideon hated our guts; there is no way that he let him out of that dreadful place knowing that he would come here to see his family. "I'm on honeymoon with my wife," Lucas says to me, and I can hear the edge to his voice. "She was nice enough to let me come here after hearing rumors about Maya. I wasn't sure if it were true until I got here and saw the funeral." "How are you, brother?" I ask him. No one knew how much Lucas was hurting as his family did. We knew that this was one of the f\*\*\*\*\*g hardest things that anyone could possibly have to go through. It was almost as painful as losing your mate. He had married the sister of his mate. I don't know how my brother could be so strong to do something like that. Even I wasn't that strong. "This isn't about me, Austin," he says, avoiding my question. He doesn't need to

answer me; I can already tell how sad and miserable he is. "This is about Maya. I want to find my sister. I need to find her and bring her home. We need to find her. She needs us more than ever now. We've been there for her during her entire life. We will be there for her now, too; I don't care what either of us is going through. We must put it all aside and bring her back to us. Where she will be safe and happy once more." I nod. I couldn't agree more. It was time for another battle. One where we would bring our sister home! And this time for f\*\*\*\*\*g good. No one will ever be able to take her from us after this.

Chapter 60 ~KANE~ I groan and hold my head as the sunlight touches my face. Where the f\*\*k was I right now? I slowly open my eyes and wince as the light hits me directly in my eyes. I look at my surroundings, and it's only then that it dawns on me that I'm in the garden. How did I end up here? It's not like anyone would drag me to the garden; I must have come here of my own will. I close my eyes and try to remember the events of last night. Everything felt hazy to me; I knew I got drunk after getting engaged to Giselle. It broke me inside to see that I was truly being forced to be with her. I couldn't stop thinking about Maya during the entire ceremony. I was terrified of what would happen when word started to spread. Wherever she was, what if she found out what was happening here? What if she found out that I had gotten engaged to someone else? How would it feel to know that her mate was marrying someone else while she was pregnant with his child and in danger? I didn't want to know how she would feel to know that I kept failing her. I hoped that if she did find out that she would know I wouldn't do it to her on purpose. I could only hope that she realizes that I'm being blackmailed into marrying that woman. It still bothered me that I couldn't remember how I reached here. I remember Giselle pulling me to dance with her. I remember just wanting to get away from her; I didn't like touching that woman; it always made me sick. At least I should be happy that I didn't wake up in bed with Giselle. That would have left a sour taste in my mouth. I wouldn't have been able to recover from something like that. I couldn't stand her; I couldn't wait for the day that I would be able to free my people and get the hell away from this place. I was running out of time, but I wouldn't give up; as long as I knew Maya was waiting for me, I won't give up until I got to her and held her safely in my arms. I pick myself off the bench and pause as a distant memory catches me off guard. 'I'm not Maya.' I held onto those words as I tried to place them together. My memories felt like a puzzle to me right now. I had to try and put them all together. What the hell was I up to last night? Why did someone tell me that they weren't Maya? Who would willingly say her name to me? I was sure of one thing; I wasn't in this garden alone. Someone was out here with me. That would explain the blanket that was on top of me earlier. Who took care of me last night? I

took a step forward but stopped when yet another memory blasted me. 'Say my name.' Who did I say that to? This was driving me insane. I should have never drunk so much last night, but I couldn't help myself. I was so distraught by the events of last night that I let myself get carried away. Getting engaged to a woman that you absolutely loathe was something that would leave anyone in the state that I was in. Giselle wanted me to show her friends how happy we were; how was I supposed to pretend to be satisfied when I was anything but that? I tried to fight off my feelings as I got back inside. It wouldn't help me if I kept being frustrated over the events of my life. I had to keep a clear head if I wanted to get out of here and save my mate, even though it was proving very difficult for me to do when I had to spend every second of every day next to Giselle and her horrible personality. I'm heading back to my room when I spot a familiar figure walking with folded sheets in her arms. And that's when it hits me so hard that I almost trip on my own feet. The memories are bombarding me one after the next, and I wish it were all just a terrible dream. I didn't. I wouldn't have kissed Giselle's maid when I had my mate waiting for me. I wouldn't be so stupid to do something as foolish as that. But the look on her face tells me that I must have done it. I must have kissed her. And I must have called her Maya. What the f\*\*k was wrong with me? I take long strides toward her and pull her into my room. "What are you doing?" She demands from me. "Giselle is already looking for you. Imagine if she comes in here and sees us in here together. I wish you would think before you do things like this." "I don't want to talk about Giselle right now," I snap as I squeeze my temples in frustration. "I want to know what happened last night. I can barely remember anything, and the things that I remember seem impossible to have happened. You're the only one that can tell me exactly what I did." She folds her arms over her chest, "why do you think anything happened last night? You were drunk. That was all." "You were there in the garden with me?" I ask her. "Weren't you?" Her eyes search my face, "what exactly are you trying to ask me, Kane? I'm not sure that you want me to answer these questions." "It doesn't matter what I want," I growl, growing impatient. "Tell me word for word what happened out there between us." "Us?" She asks. "Nothing happened. You have nothing to worry about. You were drunk; I didn't want to see you like that. I felt sorry for you and guided you to the bench. I later left some blankets for you and went back to my room to sleep. There is nothing else for me to explain." Was she telling the truth? Why did I remember things that made me want her more than ever? Her body felt like it came alive under my touch. It felt too real for it just to be a dream. And when I kissed her. She tasted just like Maya. It's why I said her name. Everything about her kept reminding me of the woman I loved. And now she wants me to believe that it was just a dream? Was it just a dream? Was my mind and body playing tricks with me?

Chapter 61 ~MAYA~ It's hard to keep a straight face while Kane is trying his best to get me to tell him the truth about yesterday. I promised myself that I would do everything I could to keep that truth from him. I can see how much it's already hurting him. How much it's bothering him after remembering that he kissed me last night. It's why I'm trying my best to convince him that nothing happened. I didn't want Kane to feel bad for a mistake that I made. I'm the one that allowed the kiss to happen even after knowing he was drunk. It's not like he would have kissed me otherwise. I was nothing but a burden to Kane. I kept asking him for help and getting both of us into trouble. I didn't want to be the reason why he also hated himself. We were both causing trouble for each other the closer we got. But according to Kane, we weren't even close. He only pitied me; it was the only reason he had helped me in the past. While he said something along those lines, I didn't fully believe him. I didn't think anyone would put themselves in danger so many times to help someone only because they pitied them or felt sorry for them. "Are you sure that's all that happened?" He asks me. I held my breath; why did I not like lying to him? I shouldn't feel bad when I was only doing this to help him. I felt tiny underneath his piercing gaze; those eyes felt like they were staring into my soul. As always, they felt so familiar to me and like I could stare at them for days without getting bored. "I'm sure." I lie. "Can I leave now? I can't stay here much longer, and I've already answered your questions. We can go on with our lives acting like we don't care about each other now." I say those words because that's what he's always wanted from the beginning. For us to not be close, he didn't want to be close to anyone except Maya. It felt weird now that I knew her name. Something about that name made me feel uneasy. Every time I thought about it or heard that name, something felt strange inside me. Maybe I'm reading too much into it; perhaps that name bothers me because I know how much she means to Kane. How did anyone love the way that he did? She wasn't even near him, and still, he kept trying his best to keep her in his heart. He was trying his best to keep everyone else away from him. I knew he was failing, but it was only because Giselle had something against him. I turn to leave but pause when I hear his footsteps. I gasp when he grips my waist and buries his face against my neck. It took my body a while to figure out what was happening. It was always hard for me to remember anything when his hands were on my body. What on earth was he doing? His grip on my waist tightens as his nose touches the base of my throat. My body went completely numb when I felt him inhale my scent. Why did he do that? My body shudders at his small actions. I was about to push him away when I noticed his body was shaking from rage. What made him so angry? I don't think I've ever seen him this pissed before. I wanted to ask him what was wrong but convinced myself

not to. Maybe I don't want to know his answer. "You f\*\*\*\*\*g lied to me." He growls. My lips part at his words. He isn't asking me a question; he sounds sure that I lied to him. How did he know this? I've done nothing to give away that I was lying to him. Did he suddenly regain all of his memories from last night? I had to pretend like I didn't know anything; I had to stick to my lie if I wanted him to believe me. "I don't know what you're talking about." I try to deny the truth. But Kane isn't having any of it. His grip tightens on my waist once more, and my breath gets stuck in my throat, "I can f\*\*\*\*\*g smell me on you. Do you expect me to believe that we didn't kiss last night? I remember; the memory is too strong for me to believe that it didn't happen. That it was all just in my head. Why are you lying to me? Why are you refusing to tell me what happened?" I tried to push him away, but he wasn't moving, just like last night. He's sticking to me, not giving me a chance to escape. "Can you move?" "I'm asking you a question." He roars. "Why are you lying to me?" I've had enough of this. All I'm trying to do is protect him, but if he insists on finding out the truth, there is nothing I can do to stop him from getting what he wants. I tilt my head upwards to stare straight into his cold eyes. "Why am I lying to you?" I repeat his question. "Why do you think I'm lying to you, Kane?" "That's why I asked the f\*\*\*\*\*g question because I don't know the answer." He snaps at me. "When are you going to tell me the bloody truth?" "You don't think I see how much you're hurting from the memory of kissing me?" I ask him. "Do you think I like the idea of you being hurt because you kissed me? Do you think I want that? You're asking me why I lied to you. I hate seeing you in pain, and I hate knowing that I'm the one that caused that pain. You're the only person that protects me when you barely even know me. The last thing I want to do is bring more trouble for you. I can see how much you're already going through, Kane. I rather you think that we didn't kiss if it means that you would be able to sleep at night." He gets exceptionally silent at my confession. "You don't have to blame yourself for anything. We both know that you were drunk and didn't know what you were doing. You said her name while kissing me. The name of the woman that you love. The woman that's too special for me to know about. You don't have to feel guilty when you were thinking about her the entire time. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? You're not at fault." "How am I not at fault?" He demands from me with a pained look. "I'm the one that kissed you. And I tried to do much more than that. If you didn't stop me, what would have happened? It's because of my foolishness. I don't know why you always try to see the good in me when it's clear that I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g bad. I keep messing everything up, and I destroy every damn thing that I touch. I'm sorry for what I did to you last night. It was wrong of me, and you deserve better."

Chapter 62 I didn't want an apology from him. The last thing I wanted was to hear him apologize for kissing me. He may never know just how much I wanted that kiss. And I was never going to admit it to him, knowing that he was in love with someone and getting married to Giselle. I still couldn't believe that the engagement took place just yesterday. It didn't feel like Kane was now engaged to her. It felt like quite the opposite. Somehow I keep getting tangled with him in crazy situations. I'm not sure how to stop it from happening. Something tells me that I can't easily split from this man. The more I tried to get away from him, the more I would be tied to him. The problem was that I didn't even want to try to get away. It felt like I was holding onto any chance to spend alone with him. I'm not sure what it is about him that makes me feel this way, but it's almost like I have no control. "You can let go of me now," I say, reminding him that his hands were still on my waist. "Giselle is looking for you. You need to see her before she does something crazy like plan the wedding tomorrow. I know the wedding isn't something that you want. If I were you, I would try my best to keep her happy; that way, she would listen to you more." I knew that it was easier said than done. For Kane to keep Giselle happy, it would require him to actually have some feelings for her. From what I've seen so far, he doesn't feel even the slightest bit of emotion when it comes to her. I notice that his hands tighten on my waist when I mention for him to let me go, but it only lasts for a few seconds before he releases me and turns to look out the window. "I'll be there in a few minutes." I want to say something to make him feel better, but I know that there is nothing that I can say to help him. He seems trapped, and he doesn't wish to open up to me or anyone about what's happening to him. I can't help but wish there was some way I could help him free himself from her. If only he would learn to trust me. I'm not sure that he will ever trust me after today. He thinks I'm a liar now, even though my lie was to help him. I sigh and open the door, leaving him in the room. When I walk out and turn the corner, I spot Giselle walking toward me. I hold my breath; if she'd been here just a few minutes earlier, she would have seen Kane and me in the same room together. I don't want to even think about what would have happened if she'd caught us like that—another reminder for me to be more careful around him. We were too careless, and our emotions kept getting in the way of everything. It was more my emotions than his messing everything up, however. His feelings for Maya were the only thing that made him kiss me last night. It's because he thought that I was her. I, on the other hand, knew that it was him that I was kissing. And it's something that I've wanted for a long time. "Did you find him?" she asks me. I nod, "he's in his room." "That's strange," she notes. "I was sure that he wasn't." "That's where I found him," I state, trying to stay calm even though my heart was racing against my chest. She nods and is about to say something else when I hear his room door close. A few seconds later, he's making his way toward us. His body stiffens

when he sees Giselle, but he still greets her with a forced smile. "Good morning," he tells her. She beams up at him, "I'm sorry that we didn't get a chance to spend last night together in my room. I think I knocked out because I partied too much." He nods, "it's okay. I think the same thing happened to me. I couldn't remember much of last night. I still can't." My cheeks burn when he looks my way as if to remind me of the kiss we shared. I knew his words were a lie. He could remember everything from last night; he said it to me just a few minutes ago. He remembers our kiss. A kiss that would forever be etched on my memory. "I have some exciting news." Giselle continues, not even realizing how Kane is looking at me. "While my friend Jenny was here last night, she mentioned that she had a gift for us. A wedding gift." "A gift?" Kane asks her; the mention of their wedding was enough to catch his attention. If she wanted him to pay attention to her, she had definitely won. She had his undivided attention now. "What kind of gift?" I knew why he was concerned. Whenever Giselle was this happy, she wanted him to do something that he wouldn't be ecstatic about. What did she have planned for him this time? Or shall I say for us? Because whenever she had anything planned, she always made sure to drag me into it. "There is this football game; it's a big one." She explains. "Jenny's boyfriend is playing for one of the teams, and she got us tickets to the game. I told her that it was a wonderful gift, and I can't wait for us to attend." Kane folds his arms, "a football game?" He asks in disbelief. She nods, "we leave for it tonight." She didn't even wait for him to decide if he wanted to go. I wouldn't expect anything less from her. She didn't care about what Kane wanted. She only cared about herself. I could only hope that she wouldn't be dragging me along with them. But from the look she gives me, I'm sure I'm included in this little trip. But it definitely wasn't to enjoy the game with them; it was to watch me suffer. Just wonderful!

Chapter 63 I still can't believe that Giselle is dragging me along to this school game with her and Kane. Even he looks annoyed that she's carrying us all the way there to see her friend's boyfriend play a match. I still didn't understand her; if she hated me so much and saw me as a threat when it concerned Kane, why did she want me there every time they had a chance to spend alone time together. Maybe I was right all along, and she truly enjoyed torturing me. Perhaps she knew it would hurt me to see them together. I tried my best to hide what I felt for Kane, but I don't think that I've ever done an excellent job at it. It was hard to pretend like you didn't care about someone when everything they do affects you. "What school are we going to?" Kane asks her. "Angelites Academy For the Supernaturals," she answers him. His head snaps up at the mention of this school's name, "only the richest and most powerful students attend that school." She smiles, "I know.

Jenny's boyfriend is from the school nearby; they're playing against the Angelites Academy. I'm going to support it, and I think it will also give us a chance to bond. After we marry, it will be normal to attend events like those. Plus, I want to have a good relationship with the school to get our children to attend that school in the future. It's challenging to get your kids into that school; many people talk about it. Money was the most important thing for the Angelites Academy. If a child is attending that school, you know that the child comes from a wealthy family. Even the tickets for the game we're attending are costly." Both Kane and I freeze at the mention of their kids. Neither of us wanted him to have any children with her. I would feel sorry for any child that had a mother like her. She wasn't someone that would ever deserve to have a child. She's too selfish to know how to care for a baby. She would never put the child's needs above her own. And I think that Kane knew this as well as I do. He knew that Giselle could never be a good mother. I've noticed on multiple occasions that Kane got extremely frustrated whenever children were mentioned. It makes me wonder if he had any children with Maya. Why else would he react like that whenever anyone mentioned having kids? I know that it's useless trying to ask him about that. He was very private when it came to the woman he loved. And I didn't blame him. He doesn't trust easily, and I can tell that people must have betrayed him in the past to react like that. Or maybe he's had a difficult childhood. "We're here!" Giselle exclaims. I don't think I've ever seen her this excited over anything; it frightened me. Anything that made this woman happy could never be any good for everyone else around her. I get out of the car and try to ignore the tingling in my hands when I accidentally touch Kane. He doesn't seem to notice, and if he did, he was very good at hiding his emotions. "I spot Jenny!" She shouts as she walks over to where she was standing. They greet each other with hugs. I try to ignore the dirty look Jenny throws my way. "My boyfriend Jacob got us seats on the third row!" Jenny tells us. She seems like the type who likes to boast, just like Giselle does. "Well, isn't that just wonderful?" Giselle asks Kane, who fakes his excitement to get her off his back. I follow behind them when Giselle stops me, "where do you think you're going?" She asks me. I knew that something like this was coming. There was no way that she would have brought me to the game with them just for me to sit down and watch. "Am I not going to sit beside you?" I ask her, already knowing the answer to that question. I knew that she brought me to not only rub it into my face that she was here with Kane but also so that I would do every and anything she wanted to get done. "Ha!" She laughs. "There isn't any space for you; as you can see, the stadium is packed, and we weren't going to waste time paying for a ticket for you. You can find something else to do in the meantime." I maintain my calm; it's not like I wasn't expecting this response. It wouldn't help me if I showed her how annoyed I was. "Where shall I go then?" I ask her. "You can stand

somewhere in the back, where you won't bother anyone. Just make sure to be here when I call your name. And you better listen closely above all the noise because there will be severe consequences if you don't come as soon as I say your name." I clench my jaw and move to the back of the stadium when I see three girls talking or having a mini argument. I wasn't sure what was happening between them, but one of them didn't seem happy at all. "Please, Scarlett." One of the girls begs. "You need to just sit down for a few minutes, and you'll see you will enjoy the game just like you enjoy reading your books." "I already agreed to try and make Carter fall in love with me because he broke your heart, just so that I can break his. You're my sister, and he was your boyfriend; I keep trying to make you see that this plan may backfire on all of us, but you won't listen to me. I'm already doing so much; why must I attend this game also?" The girl named Scarlett asked her sister. I felt like I was invading their personal conversation, but I had nowhere else to go. However, I wasn't sure if I had just heard them correctly. Did Scarlett's sister want her to flirt with her ex-boyfriend to get revenge on him for hurting her? Even I saw how wrong that was. "Carter deserves everything that's coming for him. I'm incredibly grateful that you even considered doing this for me because I asked you to. You're more than my sister Scarlett. I promise you need to continue with this for a little while longer. Carter is already falling for you." I clear my throat, making my presence known. I didn't want them to feel like I was intentionally eavesdropping. "I'm sorry," I apologize. "I don't have a ticket, so I need to stand in the back here." "Do you go to our school?" Scarlett asks me. "I'm Scarlett, by the way." "I'm Clara, her sister." "And I'm Jenna, the best friend." The third girl introduces herself. I'm not sure how to introduce myself when I don't know my name. "I'm not from here," I answer. "I came with a woman that I work for. Her name is Giselle. As for my name, I'm not sure how to explain it, but I've lost my memories of my past and have no idea what it is or who I am. I'm sorry that I can't give a proper introduction." Their faces turn to pity at my words. I didn't want anyone to feel sorry for me. "If you want, you can come to sit with us," Scarlett suggests. "We have an extra seat, and I would prefer giving it to you than any of the other girls around here. They tend to scream a lot, and I don't want to go deaf tonight." I laugh at her words. "Is that a yes?" Clara asks me. I nod. "I'd love to; I only hope that Giselle does not get angry with me." Scarlett rolls her eyes, "I see Giselle is one of those." "Where are your seats?" I ask. Scarlett smiles, "there is one benefit of having a popular older sister. We get front-row seats! Even though I hate these games, I know it's impressive to get the opportunity to sit up front." "I'm sure you just overheard our little conversation," Clara says, embarrassed. "You don't have to worry about me telling anyone," I assure her. I didn't want them to feel uncomfortable around me. Especially not after they're being so nice to me. "I wasn't going to say anything along those lines," Clara clarifies. "I can already see you're not like

that. I wanted to explain properly so that you don't think we're crazy. Also, this could help so that you would understand any future conversations that we may have." "You don't have to tell me," I tell her. "I know it's private." "It's okay," Clara tells me. "A few days ago, I found out that my boyfriend has been cheating on me for the entire relationship. I loved him and was heartbroken, but he felt no remorse. I wanted him to hurt like me, but I didn't know how when he didn't love anyone, Carter Prince doesn't love. He's one of the few werewolves out there that doesn't have to worry about mates. His family is cursed, it's a long story, and I don't want to get into that. But it's just natural for him to date and not fall in love. My sister Scarlett here despises Carter. I felt like she was the only one I could trust to make him fall in love with her and then dump him so that he could feel the way I feel now. I know it's petty, but I have to do it. It's the only way I can move on. So if you hear us talking about this the entire night or see Carter heading our way, you know what's happening." Even though this doesn't sound like the best plan out there, that Carter Prince guy sure sounds like an ass. Clara was right; he would deserve to get payback for hurting them. "I hope you get your revenge, and he regrets everything he did to you," I tell her. She smiles, "the game is about to start. How about we grab our seats?" I nod and follow them to the front row; I'm hoping that Giselle is too preoccupied with her friend and Kane to notice that I'm now sitting in front of her. Clara and Scarlett continue to talk more about the game, but my mind is far; I'm worried about Kane. He's being stuck here with Giselle, just like I am. I don't try to turn around to look at them in fear that she would spot me and make a scene. I didn't want to spoil tonight for the kind girls next to me. They seemed to have enough problems on their backs. I didn't want to add to those problems. Besides, Kane wasn't a weak person; he would be able to survive a game next to her. The crowd goes up in an uproar as the players run out into the field. My eyes go from one player to the next, but it's not hard to tell who Carter Prince is; he's the one that got the most cheers from the audience. I can confirm it's him from the name on the back of his uniform. "Ugh," Clara says beside me. "I forgot how good Carter looked at these games. He always outshone everyone around him. I used to feel so proud knowing that I was his girlfriend. I felt lucky knowing that I was the one he was coming home to at night while all the other girls wished they had him. Now I know that they had him all along. I was the fool." I couldn't argue with her; he did look outstanding in the middle of the field, and judging by the screaming girls all around us, I wasn't the only one to think like this. Of course, he didn't compete with Kane, but they were both appealing to the eyes in their own ways. I'm about to respond when I spot a figure leaving the game. It's Kane, I know, without turning fully to look at him. "Is it okay if I leave for a few minutes?" I ask the girls. Their eyes are glued to the field, but they still manage to nod at me. I rushed to catch up with him; I didn't want to lose him in this crowd. I keep walking, just like he is.

I'm not sure where he is heading, but he appears to know where he is going. "Ermanno!" I hear him call out to someone suddenly. The man turns to look at him, and immediately the two of them shake hands. It's not the first time that they've met. I'm sure of it. Is this another one of Kane's good friends? How well did they know each other, and how did Kane know that he could find him at this game? "I've heard some stories about you that I'm hoping are not true," Ermanno tells him. Stories that he's hoping aren't true? What stories could that be? This was the first time that I was getting a glimpse into his life, and I didn't want to leave until I'd heard everything. Kane clutches the back of his neck and looks a bit guilty, "it's probably true. Most of it, at least. If it makes you feel any better, my life feels like s\*\*t now. Maya is missing; I don't know where she is. Everyone believes that she's dead, but I'm not giving up on her. I can feel it in my heart that she's still breathing and waiting for me." I cover my hand to stop myself from making noise after hearing him say that Maya was missing and possibly dead. That would explain so much. Kane was always so worried whenever he mentioned her, which was always an infrequent occasion since he didn't like bringing her up to anyone that he didn't think deserved to know about her. Ermanno folds his arms and sighs, "I want to be pissed at you. The foolish decisions you made, affected my sister Lucy and her entire family, but I can see that you're also suffering. I won't hold this against you since I owe you my life. But I expect you to make things right old friend. You made a mistake; I understand that. You were blinded by rage; it's an emotion that I'm pretty familiar with. I know that it makes anyone act without thinking." From everything I've heard so far, Kane wasn't sure if Maya was still alive, but he hoped that she was. It also seems like he has done some horrible things in the past. According to this man, it's because he was blinded by rage. What was he angry about to make him act foolishly? "I need your help to find her," Kane tells him. There is no mistaking the desperation in his voice. I could see clearly how hard it was for him to ask for help. He was only doing it because he had no other choice. He couldn't find Maya on his own, and he was willing to get on his knees to ask anyone to help him find her. My heart aches at how much he loves this woman. "What can I do?" Kane runs a hand through his hair, "I have a list of people I believe could be responsible for her disappearance. I was hoping you could help me find their locations. I know that the council will have information on things like this, especially those with a close relationship with them or even their enemies. I don't have many people that I can turn to for help. I will forever be indebted to you if you help me." Ermanno nods, "I'll come to find you when I have the information you want. I told you before that I would do anything to help you after what you've done for me. I'm just returning the favor." "There's just one more thing," Kane says, "you know how obsessed Giselle has always been with me. She's finally trapped me. She's forcing me to marry her. For now, I can't escape. If

you come looking for me, be careful. I don't want her to suspect anything." The man nods, "you're truly having a shitty time, aren't you?" Kane's jaw clenches, but we all notice a figure trying to sneak past us. Ermanno growls and jumps forward, grabbing the girl by her waist and pinning her to the wall. "Where the f\*\*k do you think you're going, princess?" "Is that any way to speak to your princess?" She demands. "You're my bodyguard. Nothing more, nothing less." I'm surprised by their actions and make a sound before I could stop myself. Kane turns and spots me; I swallow; the girl who happened to be a princess wasn't the only one in trouble. His eyes narrow, and I feel my heartbeat increase. "Were you eavesdropping?"

Chapter 64 "It was not intentional," I say as I step backward. He quirks a brow and moves forward, "how much did you hear?" "Nothing much." I lie. "I would have believed you if I didn't know how good you are at lying." He growls. I narrow my eyes, "that's unfair. You know the reasons why I lied to you the first time. Why would you use that against me right now?" "Because somehow or the other, everything you do always affects me!" He exclaims. He looks frustrated over this, but how was any of it my fault? Maybe it was my fault a little; I shouldn't have followed him out here. I was simply concerned about him. No matter how hard I tried to keep my distance, my heart and body pulled me towards him. It kept caring for this man, and I have no idea why. Without my memories, I couldn't figure anything out at all. I was being held in the dark from my mind. "I'm not doing it on purpose. I can't control your emotions or actions when it concerns me," I point out. I can barely control my own emotions. "But I can thank you for always taking care of me when you don't have to. It's why I always try to help you in return because I know that you're the only person that has ever been there for me. I understand that you may not want to do it, but the fact remains that you have helped me on multiple occasions. I want to help you too, Kane. You can keep pushing me away, but I will keep trying to do whatever I can to make your life easier." He runs a hand through his hair as though he's frustrated with my words. That was never my intention. I made it clear that I wanted to make things easier for him, not more difficult. "I don't need your help!" He exclaims. "Why don't you get that? There are things that I have to do, and I need to do them alone. I can't allow anyone else to get hurt because of me, do you understand that?" My lips part. Did he just let it slip that he didn't want me to help him because he was afraid I would get hurt? The surprised look in his eyes tells me that even he wasn't aware of his feelings. He also didn't realize that he was only trying to protect me by keeping me out of his problems. "As long as you are here, I can assure you that I will be safe," I promise him. "That's the problem; I won't always be here." He tells me. "There is someone else that I

need to protect, and she will always come first. When I find her, this will all be over. I will not see you again. If Giselle realizes that you helped me in any way, what will happen to you when I'm not there?" I didn't once think about this. I didn't want to think of a time when Kane would no longer be in my life. I already knew that I would be heartbroken when he finally found Maya. Everything will spin out of control in my life. But I also learned before that I couldn't always work for Giselle. I would have to find a way to leave eventually. "I won't always be here either, Kane. You know that I can't stay with her as long as I'm pregnant. I will be leaving. I need to find the right opportunity. You do not need to worry about me. I can take care of myself." I assure him, but he doesn't look convinced. "Who were those girls that were with you earlier?" He asks me, bringing our conversation to a different topic. "Did you see that?" "Of course, I saw it, you were in front of me, and I'm not aware that you have any friends since you've lost your memory." He answers me. "Did Giselle also see me?" I ask him. "No." He answers sharply. "So who are they? How do they know you?" "Would you believe me if I told you that I only met them today? And that they were kind enough to let me sit in front with them since I didn't have a seat." I ask. "Why would I not believe you?" He answers my question with one of his own. "Because you told me that I'm a good liar." I remind him. "Do you not remember saying that to me a few minutes ago?" His eyes search my face, and I'm unsure what he's looking for, but my heart skips a beat. It's always hard for me when he stops talking to look at me. Kane doesn't look at you like an average person does; he takes his time examining everything about you. At least that's the way he looks at me. Almost as though he's trying to figure out something that's been bothering him. "You should go back." He tells me suddenly. I step toward him, "you don't even have to question whether you can trust me or not." I promised him even though he never once asked me to. "I'll always protect you because I know you would do the same for anyone that needed your help." I meant those words. He can trust me. I'll never repeat what I heard him say to that Ermanno person earlier. His secret will be safe with me. And as much as it pained me to even think of it, I hope he can find Maya. I hope that she can make him whole again. I want nothing more than to see Kane happy again. I don't think he realizes just how honest I am about whatever I say to him. I also don't know if he trusts me after lying to him about him kissing me. However, I don't need him to trust me. I want him to know that I'll always be by his side even when he doesn't want me to be there.

Chapter 65 "Please return to your seat." He repeats, ignoring everything I just said to him. I'm not happy that he's just ignored my words. I didn't exactly expect him to say thank

you, but I also didn't expect him to totally ignore it. "And shouldn't you also return?" I ask him. "Giselle expects me to be here instead of the front row seat, but she expects you to be next to her. Doesn't she?" He sighs, heavily, "can you just do what I say for once?" I cross my arms over my chest and press my lips tightly together. I was showing him that I wasn't backing down. He would not get me to move just because he orders me to do it. I may care for Kane but it doesn't mean that he could tell me what to do. In this case, I didn't want to leave because I wanted to be near him. He just explained to me that he wouldn't always be here. That this would all be over the moment that Maya was back in his life. Knowing this only made me want to stay as close to him as this world would let me. I don't think there would ever be a day where I could tell Kane my true feelings. I would be a selfish person if I let him know how I truly felt about him, even after learning that he could never feel the same. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying here with you." I snap. "If you want to return, you can. If not, we will both remain here until someone finds us." He knew that I was referring to Giselle when I said 'someone.' The moment she realized that Kane was taking forever to return to his seat she would come looking for him. He knew this just as much as I did. "What is your problem?" He asks. "My problem?" I ask him. "Why don't you try to figure it out on your own?" Kane rubs a hand down his face, he seems to be frustrated with me. Good. I don't want to be the only one frustrated. He should also join me. After all he's the one that's causing all of these emotions to stir up within me. "Did I say something to upset you?" He asks me, he seems to be concerned all of a sudden. I want to laugh at his question. He's said so many things to me that have made me upset. And yet he has the audacity to ask me that? I turn away from his penetrating gaze and pretend to be looking at the game. There are constant cheers and it's clear that Carter's team is winning. I can only imagine what the kind girls from earlier are feeling right now to see him perform so well after everything he's done. Just like me, they must be agitated right now. "Does someone else have your attention now?" Kane asks behind of me, he sounds annoyed and it's weird to hear that tone of voice from him. It can't be that he is jealous. I've never seen him as the jealous type of guy. I'm sure that I'm reading too much into it. There is no way that he will be jealous because I'm looking at a guy in the field. He doesn't know why I'm looking however. It's not because I like him, it's because my new friends hate him. I spun around to face him angrily, "how could anyone else have my attention when a man like you exists?" I demand from him. He looks taken aback by my question. "A man like me?" He asks, startled. "What on earth does that even mean?" "What that means isn't necessary; all I'm saying is that I'm not exactly happy with everything you've told me. I know that you don't owe me anything. I know that I'm not the center of your attention. I know that you love Maya, and I now know that you're trying to find her. I understand now that your life is

anything but simple. I know that getting mixed up in it isn't the smartest thing for me to do, and I think that's why you keep pushing me away. I'm here to tell you that it isn't your decision to make. It's my life. This is my decision to stand by your side no matter what. I want to help you find Maya. I want to help bring back your happiness. I want to help you escape from Giselle, and whatever it is she's holding against you to force you to marry her." I tell him. "I want to help, and I want you to let me." Kane exhales loudly, and he doesn't take his eyes off me. I squirm beneath his gaze, but I don't look away. He takes a step toward me and then another; he doesn't stop until he's inches away from my body. "Do you understand what it means to get mixed up in my life?" he asks me. "Do you know what it is like to help someone that doesn't deserve your kindness? To help someone that deserves every bit of torture that he gets? You don't know my story. If you knew it, you would run as far away from me as possible. Maya is in danger because of me. I've done unforgivable things to her, and she didn't deserve it. If she were here, she would tell you exactly what I did, and she would make sure that you understood the monster that I truly was." I shake my head at him, "I don't believe you. You love her. How can you hurt someone that you love so much?" "What the hell are the two of you doing back here alone?" I jump at the interruption. I slowly turn around to see Giselle standing in front of me with a murderous expression on her face. Crap. This is the last thing either of us wanted right now. But we weren't exactly careful about it, were we?

Chapter 66 "Are you honestly that pathetic to find any opportunity to be around my fiancé?" Giselle demands from me. Kane was still standing close to me. There is no way for us to explain this to her. It's not like I can tell her we were talking about Maya either. I step back from him, not wanting to make her angrier. We were at fault. We were supposed to be more careful than this. Maybe I should have listened to him when he told me to get back to my seat. But then Giselle may have made another scene if she recognized me at the front row. She didn't like anyone doing better than her, and she would hate for her maid to have the front row seat. "I'm the one that came to her," Kane steps in. "Don't blame her when you were the one to ask her to stay up here because you were too spiteful to buy a ticket for her." "How do you expect a maid to sit next to her master?" Giselle demands from Kane. "And stop trying to take the blame for her. I'm done giving this girl chances. She will finally get the punishment that she deserves." I'm surprised that Kane is stepping up to protect me. He knows how important it is to stay on Giselle's good side, but still, he was protecting me, just like he always does. He claims not to want anything to do with me, but the goodness inside of him makes him take care of me even when he shouldn't do it. "If you try to stop me this time, I will marry you

tomorrow, and if you refuse, all of your friends will be murdered tomorrow morning; you won't have a say in that matter. Do you hear me, Kane?" She threatens him. Her words spark so much rage inside of me. It also cleared up so many things for me. Now I knew why Kane was marrying Giselle. She held his friends captive, forcing him to marry her even though he was in love with Maya. Giselle was worse than I initially thought she was. She wasn't just a spoiled brat. She was someone that would kill the people close to Kane to have him to herself. I realize now that my life was in more danger than I'd initially thought. Now that she saw us alone next to each other, she was ready to get rid of me. She wasn't taking any chances with Kane. She used every force possible to get him, and no one could take him away from her, not if she had a say in the matter. Kane looks helpless as he looks between Giselle and me. He's conflicted on what to do. He doesn't want to marry her, and I'm not going to be the reason why he has to choose between marrying her and protecting me. It was time that I stood up for myself without him interfering. "I'm okay with whatever punishment you have for me," I tell Giselle. I would not show fear to someone like her. Giselle smiles, "that's exactly what I wanted to hear from you." "You don't have to do this," Kane tells her. "Why are you trying to hurt an innocent girl?" "Innocent girl?" Giselle demands from him. "This innocent girl that you love to call her has been staring at you since the first time she saw you. If you haven't realized, Kane, this girl is obsessed with you. She's always running to be by your side and for any chance to be alone with you, like right now. This may be the first time she's succeeded, but I'm not going to allow any more of this nonsense. I don't want a maid who also wants my fiancé. Today is the last day that she will work for me. She will regret everything she has done after seeing the punishment I have waiting for her." My cheeks are red from her words. What would Kane think of them? Would he think I'm crazy for showing so much interest in him? That wasn't important right now. She said other things that were even more alarming. What punishment could she possibly be referring to? I was happy not to be working for her anymore, but what did that mean for my life? Was she going to try and kill me? If that were the case, I knew that she wouldn't make it easy for me. Giselle would want me to suffer before I die. Telling her that I was pregnant would not give her a heart either; I wouldn't waste my time trying to get her to let me go without harming me. I warn Kane with my eyes not to interfere. This was my problem, not his. He has enough problems. He couldn't keep helping me; he had to support himself first. I notice that his fists tighten at his sides, and it looks like he's using every last bit of self-control he has left not to interfere right now. "Follow me." She tells me. I walk behind her and feel Kane following after me. This may be the last time that I will ever see him again. There are so many things that I want to say to him, but I don't want to make things worse for either one of us. The moment we enter the car, Giselle gives directions to

her driver, and I'm unsure where she is taking me. The tension between all of us is unmistakable. It takes us an hour to reach what looks like an old, abandoned building. "What are we doing here?" Kane asks her with an edge to his voice. I'm praying that he keeps his calm; I don't want him to do anything that he will regret by tomorrow. I want to remind him that he must stay focused on the woman he loves, but I know I can't say that in front of Giselle. "This is where my father lived a long time ago," she answers him with mischief in her gaze, "there is a dungeon here. One of the very best. After all, my father looked after the entire construction of it. No one is in there now, but I think that my maid will be the first to stay here since this place was abandoned. She's going to love those dungeons. A place like this is perfect for a woman like her. This is where she belongs—locked in a dungeon with no food and water. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. No one to come to her rescue."

Chapter 67 I could hear Kane's sharp intake of breath as her words hit the both of us. She was planning on trapping me in a dungeon until I died. She made it clear that there would be no food or water. I knew that Giselle wanted me dead, and this was my confirmation. I notice that Kane's fingers are digging into the seat, and if I don't get out of this vehicle right away, he might do something stupid. I was trying hard to keep him out of this mess. It wasn't his fight. "Let's go then," I tell Giselle as I get out of the vehicle. I was sticking to my plan of not showing how terrified I was of this. Kane attempts to leave the vehicle, but she insists that he stays outside while she carries me to the dungeon. It's not like I didn't know that this would eventually happen to me. I knew that something like this would happen whenever Giselle found Kane and me in a compromising position. And she hadn't even seen anything serious between the both of us; what would she have done if she'd seen him kiss me? There was no point in asking that question anymore. I may not be alive to know the answer after today. If no one came to rescue me, there was no way for me to escape from this place. There were hundreds of cells; all built uniquely. I couldn't believe that Giselle and her father had something this horrible made. Was this how the dungeons in their castle back home looked like also? The same dungeons where Kane's friends were being held in. I've never met them before, but if they were anything like Kane, they didn't deserve to be locked up somewhere this awful. No kind person deserved anything like this. These types of dungeons were more for people like Giselle and her father. How wonderful would it be to see them trapped in something they built themselves? I still couldn't believe that she would do something this horrible to get Kane to marry her. The woman needed a reality check. She needed someone to show her that it wasn't possible to get everything she wanted. Her father was the reason she was like this.

He was the one that gave her everything that she wanted. He never taught her that there were certain things you couldn't have, no matter how much you wanted them. "We're almost there." She tells me. I roll my eyes at her. There was no use pretending that I liked her now. She grabs me by my hair, and it pisses me off. It's not like I can get her angrier than she already was at me. What's the worst that could happen if I finally give her a good piece of my mind? "This is what I get for being nice and giving a girl a home who had no memory of her past. She tries to take my fiancé from me." She spat. She pulls me backward, and before she has a chance to do anything else, I slap her hard across the face. Before she has a chance to do anything, I elbow her hard in her stomach. Her eyes widen, and she shouts for her guard to come forward. "I don't want her to get a single opportunity to escape!" She shouts. "I change my mind on where I want her to die. Lock her in the cold cell and drop the temperature so that she freezes to her death!" A cold cell? Did that mean what it sounded like? I wouldn't care about her threat if I didn't know I had my babies to protect. "You deserve everything that's coming to you b\*\*\*h!" She snares. "You don't think I didn't see the way you always looked at Kane? Did you think you could outsmart me and get him all to yourself? In a few days, I will marry that man, and you'll probably be dead by then. While we are starting a life together, you'll be long gone. Sadly, you're going to die without even knowing your name. That's how pathetic your life is." "Do you think you'll be happy with a man that doesn't love you?" I ask her. "It's clear that he doesn't want you. He's being forced into this marriage. He's in love with another woman. That woman is not me, but it isn't you either. Her name is Maya. But I'm sure you already know that. Maybe you're responsible for her disappearance; you're that sneaky. Whatever the case, that man will never love you. Do you think that I'm the one that's going to suffer? No, Giselle, you are the one that will live a depressing life. You'll eventually be lost in your greed and devious ways; no one wants to be around you, and those choosing to stay by your side only want one thing from you. To use you. Continue living your ridiculous life trying to make others believe that you're happy!" She rolls her eyes at me, but I can see that my words have affected her. I'm happy that I can finally speak my mind around her. I've been waiting to tell her exactly what I think of her. Her guard grabs me by my hand, and I jam my fist into his stomach. I attempt to run when I see that there are three others in front of me. Where did they come out from? Does she have guards here even though this place is now abandoned? Or were they following us all along without me knowing? Either way, there is no way that I can escape without them harming me. It wasn't a risk I was willing to take with my condition. I let the guard roughly pull me along with him. I feel my body shake the moment he shoves me into the freezing cell. I wouldn't be able to survive long in here. What the hell was I supposed to do?

Chapter 68 ~KANE~ I couldn't stop pacing in my f\*\*\*\*\*g room. I didn't know what the hell to do. My mind and heart were racing. I could stay here and pretend that I didn't care for Giselle's maid, but I would cause more damage if I continued to lie to myself. I had already lost Maya because of my foolish choices, choices that I still regret to this day. I had no idea where she was, but I knew where Giselle's maid was being held captive. She was someone that I could save. I had to find a way to get her out of there without Giselle suspecting anything. But now that this entire thing had happened, she wouldn't let me out of her sight. She wouldn't allow me to try and help the girl. She knew well enough that I wouldn't want to sit back and let her die. I had no idea what kind of dungeon she was being kept inside, but I didn't want her in any jail. She was pregnant, and it was dangerous for her to be kept under poor conditions. It wasn't just the innocent girl I had to protect; I had also to protect her unborn babies. I had to think of something fast that would help me distract Giselle. Anything that would buy me enough time to save her. My mind is racing with ideas. My head felt like it would explode any minute now. How could I help her without Giselle finding out? She walks in just then, and I try to pretend that I'm doing fine even though my body is going haywire on the inside. I'm terrified of not being able to protect another woman that I cared about. And it bothered me how much faith the girl had in me. She believed that I was so good that I found myself trying to live up to her expectations. I felt like I would go insane if I didn't get to her soon. There was only one other woman I ever felt like this over. Like I would go crazy if I didn't protect her. I'm confused by my feelings, but I don't have time to sit and think about it. I need to get to her before any harm can be done to her. "You look like something is troubling you," Giselle notes. "I hope it has nothing to do with my maid. I know you have a good heart, but she isn't a good person. What good woman looks at a man who's about to get married? I did us both a favor by getting rid of her." I stiffen at her words, and I can't hide my reaction from her this time, "what do you mean by getting rid of her? Is she not alive right now?" She shrugs her shoulders, "I can't say. I had her stuffed into a freezing cell without any clothes. If she's still alive, she doesn't have much longer to live." My blood boils at her words, and I'm panicking on the inside. It's much worse than I initially thought. "I want to marry you tomorrow." I lie to Giselle. "I don't think that I can wait much longer. Let's have the wedding tomorrow. It doesn't have to be big. Invite only the important people; it will be short notice either way." "Tomorrow?" She asks in shock. "That's right there. You're not giving me enough time to plan my dream wedding to my dream man." "I don't care about a perfect wedding. I want us to be married. Is that not what you wanted all along? For the wedding to happen quickly? Are you changing your mind now?" I ask her. "Do you not want to marry me? Should we end this relationship

then?" Her eyes widen, "are you insane? Why would I want to end something I've wanted for so long? If you want the wedding to happen tomorrow, that's okay with me. I'll be extra busy trying to get everything together. I'll have to hire extra staff and get the word out to my friends. The decorations need to be done as well. I'm not sure how to pull this off, but we will have the wedding in the evening; it should give me enough time to place everything together." I nod; this is exactly what I wanted, for Giselle to be so swarmed with responsibilities that she doesn't even stop and think for a second of my whereabouts. It would give me enough time to get to her maid and bring her out of the cell before she could freeze to death. That is, if she hadn't already. I didn't want to think of that. I didn't want to think of the possibility that I'd lost her too. "There is someone that I'll like to invite," I tell her. "You're having all your friends over, and I don't have any of mine." "That's because they're all locked up in my dungeon. Don't worry; I'll release them as soon as we're married." She promises me. "I have other friends," I tell her. "Friends from the council." "Oh?" She asks. "I've never known this detail about you. Well, if you want to invite your friend, go right ahead. I'll allow it since it's our wedding day." This is exactly what I was hoping she would say. I would have to ask Ermanno and his brothers for another favor, not just for him to find out where the people from that list were staying. I would need them to help me free my people. When they were free, I would burn that damn castle to the ground. "If you cannot find me," I tell her. "I'm just giving the invitation out to the council. They won't come if I don't meet them in person and tell them about the wedding myself." She doesn't look suspicious, and I'm glad that my plan is working so far. I was brilliant for using the wedding as a way to get her off my back. The wedding was Giselle's one weakness. I was finally getting to use it to my advantage.

Chapter 69 ~AUSTIN~ "We've gone through half of the list already," I tell James. "None of them were responsible for Maya's disappearance." It was killing me inside not knowing who the hell was responsible for taking her away from us. "I know," James says to me. "But that means that we're closer than ever to finding our sister. We all agree now that there is still a chance that she is alive. We are not going to accept her death until we find the people that took her from us. If it's one good thing that Kane did for our family, it was to remind us of the love we share for our sister. We've fought for her our entire lives; we will not let anything stop us from finding her now." My brother is right. Nothing will stop us from finding the ones responsible for hurting her and taking her away from us. First, it was Kane; now, someone else had taken her away. Kane would have been dead by now if Maya hadn't stopped us. But everything happens for a reason; because of him, we were reminded of who we were and what we did for Maya. We didn't give up on our

family; we kept fighting to keep each other safe. I stare at a picture of my loving sister and feel a sharp pain in my chest. She's been one of the best things to ever happen to our family. Without her, everything felt so damn incomplete. I wish that I knew if she was still alive, and if she were, I wish I knew if she was okay. Not knowing anything was driving me close to insanity. The only thing that kept me sane was my mate and my child. Without them, I would be out of my mind with worry for my sister. "I miss her too," James says as though reading my mind. "Every day, I see her face everywhere that I turn. There are memories throughout the palace of her; she has touched almost every corner of every room. I want to bring her home too Austin. I want her back. I want our sister safe in our arms again." Every word that he just spoke, I agreed with it all. I haven't been able to sleep with worry and fear of what's happening to her. Knowing how much she trusted us doesn't help with the guilt either. I knew that I had let her down more than once. I wanted no more of that. I nod, "we will get her back, brother. We will get our sister back. Whoever took her will suffer the worst faith than any of our enemies from the past. I will make sure of it." . . . . . ~KANE~ I've left everything in place to ensure that Giselle doesn't bother looking for me at all. I also confirmed that her father would not ask any questions about my whereabouts. I couldn't trust either one of them. The moment they had an idea of what I was up to, they would do everything in their power to make sure that my plan failed. I was done trying to kiss up to Giselle to protect my people. I didn't want to ask anyone for help, but now I knew that I couldn't escape them without some help. I'm sure that Ermanno would help me once I explained what was happening; he owed me one for something I helped him with in the past. But even he and his brothers would not be enough to free me from Giselle. I remember the woman that tried to protect me in the past from Austin. She was willing to help me in the past, and I'm not even sure why. But hopefully, she was still ready to help me. I would need all of the help I could get to escape Giselle and get my men out of her grasp. I couldn't wait for the chance to be free of her. For the opportunity to free everyone that she was holding captive. Maybe that's exactly what I needed. If I can let everyone out of the dungeons, they can help me fight her. It will give me enough time to escape while simultaneously burning her castle to the ground. I can feel my heart pound against my chest as I near the abandoned castle. The girl can either be dead or alive. I wasn't sure if I was ready to face reality. I muster up all of the strength I could find as I race into the building. I had to find her. And I had to find her alive and healthy. She needed to be okay. If she wasn't, I had a good feeling that I would never be able to recover from this. I didn't understand how I could feel so much for a woman that wasn't my mate. These feelings weren't right. Something had to be terribly wrong. I couldn't be feeling this way for a woman who I barely knew. I push through door after door, trying to find where she was. I was desperate to find her. I wasn't sure

which cell she was in. There were hundreds of these things here. What the hell were they even doing with this amount of cells in one castle? How many innocent people did they trap and kill inside of here? I tried not to think of that as I barreled into another cell. It couldn't be any of these. I knew it because they weren't cold cells. They were average room temperature. I knew this because I heard Giselle say that the cell she'd kept her maid inside was a cold one, where she could freeze to death. I held my head in frustration. "WHERE ARE YOU?" I roar as my voice echoes. I hear a small cry, and it's enough to have me racing as fast as I've ever moved in my entire f\*\*\*\*\*g life to get to her. I pound the door open with my fist, not caring that I'm bleeding from the force. I spot the girl in a corner, curled up in a ball. My heart almost jumps out of my chest from the sight in front of me. For a moment, I can't move, I'm relieved to have found her but I'm also pissed by the condition that she's in. I finally rush to her and pull her into my arms. "I'm here," I whisper as I walk us out of the freezing cell. "You're safe now. I promise."

Chapter 70 I couldn't believe that Kane was here. A part of me felt like I was dreaming. And maybe I am dreaming. My body is so cold that I'm not even sure I'm alive. I try to move, but I can't. My body feels as immovable as stone. I can't even move my fingers. My lips are stuck together, and I'm scared even to try and speak. Kane leans against the wall and pulls my freezing body against his. "It's okay," he whispers. "I'm only doing this to keep you warm." "T-thank you." I stammer from the cold. I'm surprised that anything was able to come out of my mouth. Giselle tried to kill me. And she would have succeeded if Kane didn't reach in time. I can't believe that the evil woman trapped me inside an ice-cold dungeon. She wanted me to freeze to my death. I didn't even know that those kinds existed until now. And how was it even still operational when they no longer lived there? We have no idea how long that place has been abandoned for. I bury my face against his neck and grip his shirt. "I-It's so cold." I cry. I've never felt this cold in my entire life, and I want it to stop. I don't want to feel like this anymore. I hate it so much. Kane's body is warm, but it doesn't feel like enough. I need more than this to help with the coldness of my body. His arms tighten around me, "I know it is, sweetheart," he whispers. He's trying to soothe me, and while it does help, it's still not enough. I need more than this. "Kane," I cry as I try to move my body closer to his. "C-cold." "f\*\*k," he growls as he tries to pull me closer. When he realizes that even that isn't helping, he mumbles a few curse words and pulls his shirt off his body. He doesn't stop there as he pulls his pants off; he doesn't stop until he is naked beneath me. There isn't a single piece of cloth left on him, and I can tell. I can feel every part of him pressed tightly against me as he tries to give me the heat from his body. My body still trembles, but his actions make it a lot better than it was. But I'm still freezing. And I know that Kane can sense it also.

He can feel how my body still trembles in his arms even though he tries his best to keep me pressed tightly against him. We are both naked. Giselle made sure to leave me without any clothes inside that death trap. She walked into the cell after her guards had pushed me into it and stripped me until I was left with nothing. The woman was just that cruel. Kane's hands begin to rub up and down my shoulders as he tries to create some friction between us. Once again, it helps but only a little. It's not enough. "I'm sorry," he whispers. "I'm sorry I took this long to get to you. I hate that you're suffering like this because of me. This is all my fault. I should have been more careful around Giselle. I shouldn't have done anything to piss her off. I hate that no matter what I do, I can't seem to be able to give you the warmth that you need." I can barely speak to tell him how I feel right now, but I don't want him to feel like this is his fault. It's not his fault. He didn't do anything wrong. He's not obligated to take care of me. We have never had that kind of relationship. I'm more indebted to him than he is to me. As far as Giselle is concerned, no matter what he did, she would have found a way to get rid of me. She never liked me from the start. "N-not your f-fault," I whisper and try to get closer to him. I don't know what my body needs right now; he's already giving me plenty. How can I keep asking for more? I can't help my situation; I'm freezing my ass off. "You're still so cold," he says softly, "I'm sorry for what I'm about to do. It may scar both of us, but I don't have another choice right now. I have to make it better for you." My eyes widen when his lips touch mine; I gasp, and my heart pounds against my chest as he kisses me in a slow and controlled manner. Kane's lips feel just as good as I remembered them from the last time he kissed me while he was drunk, I couldn't get that kiss out of my head, and I was sure that I would never be able to get this kiss out of my head either. This time Kane seems to be in control of his actions. He knows that he's only doing this to help my body recover from the cold. He's trying his best to make my body warm again. I will forever be grateful to him. I know how hard this must be for him to do; it would feel like he's betraying Maya. I don't want to think about that right now. And I don't think he will want that either. He's just trying to help me, just like he always does. I didn't think a kiss could have this much of an effect on me. His warm lips are enough to warm mine. His kisses, along with his hands now rubbing up and down the sides of my waist, are helping to warm me both on the outside and inside. My body is getting more than it needs to return to its average body temperature. But it wants more. It's becoming greedy, and it's only because he's the one that's kissing me. If it were anyone else, I wouldn't have cared at all. I gasp when Kane breaks away from my lips to kiss my neck, he slowly moves from one side of my neck to the other. He's trying to kiss every inch of my body in hopes of making it warm again. I couldn't believe Kane would do something like that for me. His heart belonged to another woman, it would kill him to do this, yet he was still doing it because he knew he could

die from the cold. Maybe that was an exaggeration, but he wasn't taking that chance. I try not to cry out when his lips reach my chest, right above my left breast. My breaths are uneven as he moves across my chest, just like he did with my neck; he isn't leaving out any parts of my body. He's making sure that every inch of me knows his kiss. "Forgive me," he whispers, and I'm not sure if he's asking forgiveness from the woman he loves or from me. I cry out when his mouth closes over my n\*\*\*\*e, and he begins to suck gently on it. He does the same to the other, and I can feel the wetness between my legs. Kane freezes for a second, and it almost feels like he can smell my arousal. His face looks in pain as he travels down my tummy, continuing with his kisses. His grip on my waist tightens as his lips near my aching wetness. He hovers over me for a few seconds, and I find the strength to say, "y-you don't have to do this. I don't want you to do something you will regret. You've done enough already." He closes his eyes and inhales a great deal of air. When he opens his eyes next, I can barely make them out. They're black with a need that is hard to mistake. It's like a beast has taken control of him, and there is nothing on this earth that can stop him. Kane growls and spreads my legs open without warning. Before I can react, his face is between my legs. "KANE!" I scream when his tongue licks at my opening. I whimper when he spreads my p\*\*\*y with his fingers so that his tongue can get proper access to me. I feel him inhale more of me like he's craving my scent and taste. I'm not sure what else to do but hold onto his hair, pulling on it the more he stuck his tongue inside my p\*\*\*y. He's moving in and out of me with his tongue alone, making me ache with just those small movements. I don't think I've ever known pleasure like this before. I'm dying for more of this. I need more of him. Now that I've gotten a taste of this. I know that nothing and no one could ever be as good as this. I'll never feel this way again for another man. I knew that much. And because of this, I'm more greedy than before. I want to think about my own needs; I don't want to care about anyone else. I want this. I want him. I may not have him in the long run for at least tonight; I want him for myself. I want to imagine that he's mine, that he doesn't belong to anyone else but me. Kane pushes a finger into my opening along with his tongue, and it sends my ass flying off the ground. "I f\*\*\*\*\*g know this taste," he growls. "I know this pussy." Does he mean what I think he does? I don't want to think about that right now. If he wants to imagine me as Maya, I'll let him as long as I get a chance to have him with me like this. I push him onto his back, and before he has a chance to stop me, I place my mouth over his d\*\*k. I want to taste him too. I want to have his d\*\*k on every inch of my body; I want to take every inch of him into my mouth even though it's not possible. He's big and hard in my hands as I continue to suck, and for a second, I'm weak with a need to have him inside of me. Kane shouts as I continue to taste him, taking as much of him as my mouth would let me, "MOTHERFUCKER!" he roars. He grabs me by my waist and pulls me on

top of him suddenly. Both of us are breathing hard. His hands on my waist are trembling, and I can tell that Kane's holding onto the last bit of control that he can find. "How do you feel?" He whispers as he rubs his hand down my hair. There is so much concern in his eyes that I want to cry in frustration. He was a good man. I couldn't take advantage of his kindness. I had to stop this for the both of us. If I let things go further, I would be scarred for life. No one would ever be able to live up to him. And if Kane knew that he went all the way with me, he would never be able to forgive himself. This is the worst thing he can ever do. If he did find Maya, how would he tell her about what he did with me here today? I touch his cheek lightly, "thank you. Thank you so much for everything that you've done for me since the first day that I met you. I'll never forget you, Kane. Even if one day we go separate ways, please know that I will never forget you and that I'm always thinking of you. As for how I'm feeling, I'm much better. I don't need you to go any further for me." He closes his eyes, and I can see that he's having an inner battle within himself. I can see that he's also returning to his normal self, which means that he would be pissed about his lack of control earlier. Neither of us moves for a few minutes. Kane eventually sighs and guides my head to his chest, "you can stay here until you recover for good. Then we will leave before Giselle realizes I've been gone for too long. There are a few places I need to go. I have to find Ermanno. I may have to pay the council a visit to get to him. Then I'm heading back to Giselle. There is going to be a fight. I'm going to free my people from her, and she's going to pay for trying to kill you." I can hear the determination in his voice. How could I not fall for someone who fought so hard to protect me? He's been nothing but gentle towards me. Even now, his hands are extremely careful with me while holding me against his chest. "What happened between you and Maya?" I whisper. I want to know the entire story about them. There were so many missing pieces, and while Kane doesn't have to tell me, I wish that he would. I could feel his sharp intake of breath when I mentioned her. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want to," I assure him. "But I still really want to know. I want to know why she's no longer by your side. What caused the two of you to separate?" I can feel how much my question about her is affecting him. Should I have remained silent and just held onto him? This may be the only chance I'll ever get to be this close to him, and yet I chose to mess it up by asking about the one person that made Kane put up a wall around everyone. What was I thinking? I don't think I was thinking at all. "Maya's family was responsible for the death of my father and sister. I don't know the entire story behind it, but I was devastated after losing them. They were the only family that I had. I was blinded by rage and wanted to hurt her family like they'd hurt me. In order to do so, I kidnapped Maya, and I mistreated her in the worst ways possible. She fought back against me. I don't know how she got the strength to do it, but she continued to stand up

for herself. Each time I hurt her, I would feel it in my heart. She was my mate. Hurting her meant hurting me. When I was no longer blinded by my rage, it was already too late for us. I had fallen in love with her, but she was broken because of me. When her brothers finally found us, they almost killed me, and I was happy to let them. I knew that I deserved everything that was happening to me. But Maya stopped them from killing me; despite everything I'd done to her, she still chose to protect me from her brothers. I didn't understand her. I still don't understand her. How can she show me mercy after the many times I hurt her? And then they took her from me. Her family took her. But I also let her go. I knew that I couldn't be selfish. I couldn't have her because I was the one that broke her in half." He says. I look up at him, and I can see that he's lost in those memories of her. I hold back the tears that threaten to fall from hearing the hurt in his voice. "I was planning on getting her back. On begging her to come back to me. To give me another chance. I was desperate to have her near me again. But before I could do that, her brothers came for me again. They tried to kill me again. And I didn't know what was happening until I realized that something must have happened to her. They told me that I had killed their sister. A woman by the name of Gabriella saved me that day. I don't know why she did it. I don't know who she was to Maya, but she saved me. I was devastated by the news. But I didn't want to believe it. I can still feel the bond between us; it's still strong. How can it be this strong if she's gone? I don't think that my mate is dead. I think that someone is holding her captive, and they want us to believe that she's gone. Maya's family has many enemies; I was one of them. I'm sure they pissed off someone else. When I met Ermanno, I gave him the list of all the people that could be responsible for her disappearance. I'm hoping that I can find her again. To hold her in my arms. To tell her how sorry I am. To tell her how much I love her and how much I love our unborn child." I gasp at the mention of his unborn child. Maya was pregnant? Now I understood why he reacted the way he did when he found out that I was pregnant. So many things were finally making sense to me. I can't hold back the tears this time. I hate that he had to go through so many things all at once. And then he also got trapped by Giselle. "Now you can see that I deserve everything that's happening to me. I had no right to hurt Maya. I should have never let her suffer the way that she did. I f\*\*\*\*\*g deserve to pay for all the wrong I've done to her. And I'll gladly accept it all, but first I want Maya to be safe and happy. She doesn't deserve any of the things that have been happening to her. She's always been this bright ray of sunshine. All I wish is to see her that way again." The tears roll down my cheeks and touch his chest. This catches his attention. I know this because there is a sudden hitch in his voice. He lightly touches my chin and gently tilts my face upwards so that he can see me. "Why are you crying?" I bite my lips, "I'm sad. You don't deserve all the things that's happened to you Kane. You've already paid enough for

hurting Maya. If she knew how much you love her, she would want nothing more than to be in your arms again. You made a mistake. Everyone makes mistakes. You can't blame yourself for the rest of your life." He shakes his head, "no, I have not paid enough. You don't know the things I did to her. That's why you can say something like that. Because you don't know." I touch his cheek, "I know that you're trying to be a good person now. I know that you love Maya so much that getting engaged to Giselle almost killed you inside. I know that being this close to me is torture for you because you can't be this close to anyone else but her. I know that you're only doing this because you have a good heart. I know that you deserve happiness even though you think that you don't. I also know that Maya would be happy to see you when you finally find her." Kane doesn't say anything, he just continues to look at me. "I know that I have no right to ask you this after hearing how much you love her," I whisper. "But there is one thing that I desperately want to know." He tries to sit up against the wall with me still in his arms, "what do you want to know?" "Do you have any feelings at all for me?" I finally found the strength to ask. I know that this isn't the right time to ask, but I feel like I'm not going to have another opportunity after this. Kane is quiet, and his silence says plenty to me. I hold my breath as I wait for his answer. His eyes are cold and distant when he opens his mouth and says, "there is only one woman in my heart, and you already know her name."

Chapter 71 Things are awkward between Giselle's maid and me. I don't blame her for keeping her distance from me after I told her that Maya was the only woman that I'll ever have any feelings for. Even if I had feelings for her, I would never admit them. Not when I had a mate. Not when my mate was Maya, the most wonderful woman I've ever known in my entire life. No one could take her place in my life. I knew that something kept pulling me towards the girl, but I also knew that the moment Maya was in my arms again, absolutely no one would be able to grab my attention ever again. After everything I've put my mate through, I cannot do anything to hurt her again. I've already done things that I shouldn't have done. I've gotten physical with the maid twice already, and I'm not sure how to ask Maya to forgive me for what I've done. Every time I thought about it, I felt like drowning myself in the bloody ocean. How could Maya be so unlucky to find a mate like me? I couldn't seem to do anything right. But it's not like I'm purposefully betraying her either. My emotions are messing with me. The only reason why I get so lost around Giselle's maid is that she reminds me so much of my mate. I can't explain what happened whenever we were together, and I can't answer why my heart sped up whenever she was around. I also can't deny having feelings for her. There was also one other thing that worried me; my wolf seemed to think that she belonged to us. That she was something more than what she was meant to be in my life. I don't f\*\*\*\*\*g understand anything that's

happening in my life recently. I can't explain why my heart felt like it would explode with fear when I realized that Giselle had left her to die. I also can't explain why I risked everything to protect her on multiple occasions. The only explanation I could think of was that I was a hypocritical fool. My words and actions were not aligning with each other. They both felt like they were going in opposite directions as long as it concerned this woman. A woman that I still had no name for. I knew nothing about her or her background. Maybe I felt sorry for her; perhaps that's why I was desperate to protect her. It was the only reason I could think of. I felt like I had to stick with this explanation if I wanted to move on from whatever I felt for her. I hate how much it bothers me that I've hurt her from what I said to her earlier. But I don't regret it. I can't regret it. I told her I had no feelings for her because I knew that I was getting closer to finding out what had happened to Maya. I knew that I couldn't keep this up as I was in love with my mate. It was eating me up inside that my control slipped around the maid; things were never supposed to reach that far between us. The first time I was drunk and used that as an excuse to kiss her. I'm still not sure what happened that night. The second time, I almost ended up inside her. I shiver at the thought. Lord knows I still f\*\*\*\*\*g wanted that to happen even though I knew how wrong it was to even think about it. But in my defense, I was only trying to keep her warm in whatever way I could think of at the time. The only problem was that my body began losing control when I finally started touching her. I don't know what I was thinking to even consider touching her like that. I knew that whenever she was that close for me to hold and smell her, my control always slipped. So then why was I so stupid to let it happen? I could have taken her out of the dungeon and started a fire. There were other options for me to help warm her body. But it was also true that I wasn't thinking clearly after seeing her like that; all I wanted to do was to save her. I knew that I would have to deal with the consequences of my actions after. And that's exactly what I'm doing now. So many things about her reminded me of Maya. And maybe that's the only reason I'm so confused and conflicted whenever I'm around her. She reminds me of the woman I so desperately want to find. Maybe I find comfort in her, a reminder of what I wanted and needed. But nothing could explain why the taste of her was exactly like the taste of my mate. The moment I had spread her legs and gotten the scent of her, I knew; I just knew that I was f\*\*\*\*\*g screwed. I wanted more and more, and it was because it felt like I was tasting Maya again. A taste that has always left me needing more. At this point, I wasn't sure what was truly happening to me. All I knew was that it had to f\*\*\*\*\*g stop before I found my mate. I'd put her through too much to let her down now. Now was the time for me to act like the mate I should have been in the beginning. There were no excuses anymore. I had finally put everything that happened in the past with my father and sister behind me. I knew that it was stupid of me to blame

Maya for any of that. And it was stupid of me to hurt her because I was hurting. I let her take the fall for me. It should have never been that way. Every time I think about the past, I lose my mind. I had to make a promise to myself. A promise that I would never do anything to hurt her again. The moment that I found her and brought her back into my arms, I would do everything in my power to protect her and our unborn child. No one else will ever come above them. Not even me. Maya would be all I would ever worry about. She would be the only woman that I would put everything aside for. She was my woman. My only one. And I was one step closer to finding her. I could feel it. She was near. I would have her in my arms again. And when I did, I would have no choice but to say goodbye to Giselle's maid. She's by my side right now. She's quiet, deep in thought as we make our way to the council. I didn't want to drag her along with me, but I had no other choice. I didn't want to leave her stranded. There was danger lurking everywhere. I didn't save her to leave her for someone else to hurt her. "We don't have to go any further," I tell her as I spot Ermanno and his brothers a short distance from us. This was it. It was time to plot my revenge on Giselle and her father. They were going down.

Chapter 72 ~MAYA~ My heart is broken. I don't know why. It's not like I didn't realize that Kane's heart belonged to Maya. He's never tried to hide his feelings from me. He's made it clear since the start that she was everything to him. I don't know why I hoped that he would say something different. I caused my own heart to break. I knew that I had no right to ask him that. He'd just poured his heart out to me, telling me everything about Maya and their relationship. But I was so selfish with my own needs that I wanted to hear him say to me that she wasn't the only one he cared about. I wanted to hear him say that he also cared for me. I can feel him looking at me; we're here to meet Ermanno and his family. And while he's speaking to them, he hardly ever takes his eyes away from me. I don't know what he's thinking. I don't know if he's still worried that I might be sick after what Giselle tried to do to me or just afraid that he was too harsh on me earlier. I'm ashamed to look his way. I don't know what else to say to him. How can I face him after he'd made it clear that no one else mattered but Maya? I didn't want to push my way into his life any more than I'd already done. All that was left for me was to help him get his revenge on Giselle. After that, I would be free to leave. We would go our separate ways, and I would be left with the little memories I had of him. I wish that there was more for me to cherish. They would be all I would have left of him after we parted ways. "This is the location of everyone you wanted me to look into," Ermanno tells Kane as he hands him a list. "Though I've spoken to Lucy, you should know that the first half is not

responsible for Maya's disappearance. Austin has already confronted all of them. Searched their homes. It made more enemies, basically. But none of them have Maya. There are only a few left to search under, and Austin has probably already looked into them. It may be faster to discuss this with him before you try looking for her." Kane looks uneasy, "I'm not Austin's favorite person. If I ask him, I doubt he will be willing to disclose that information." Ermanno glances at me, and I can tell that he's curious to know who I am. This is the second time that he's seen me around Kane. He must understand that there is a story behind the two of us. I didn't want his friends to think that something was going on between us. That would not look good for his already tarnished reputation. Kane catches him looking at me, and he tries to refocus his attention on him instead, "I wanted to ask for your help. Again." "What do you need help with?" He asks him. "I already told you that I'll help with whatever you need." Ermanno's brothers are quiet as they watch the exchange between them. They don't try to ask any questions, and it seems to me that Ermanno might be the eldest. They seem to respect him a lot. "I want help to take Giselle and her father down," Kane tells him. "I know it's plenty to ask for. They aren't the weakest targets out there. But it's the only way for me to escape Giselle and get the chance to look for Maya. I tried other ways, but Giselle was unwilling to let me go. I need to free my men and the women that have worked with me for years. I don't want to see them suffer because of me. I wouldn't ask for your help if I didn't desperately need it. If we can reach the dungeons and free everyone they've wrongfully held captive, I'm sure that they would help us fight against them." "I'm in as long as the pretty lady next to you joins us on the trip back!" One of Ermanno's brothers exclaims. "Marcus," Ermanno growls his name in a warning. "There you go frightening the poor girl." Another one says. I believe I heard Ermanno call him Thane earlier. "How are you so terrible when it comes to flirting with anyone other than yourself?" Nolan asks him. At least, I think that was his name. Kane didn't give a proper introduction between us. But how could he introduce me when I didn't have a name? I look up at him and am surprised to see him glaring at Marcus. He looks like he wants to send him flying into the air. I've seen Kane angry before, but I don't think I've ever seen this side of him before. If I didn't know better, I would think that he was possibly even jealous. But I knew it was impossible since his heart only belonged to Maya. He wouldn't need to be jealous concerning me. Not that he had anything to worry about, I explained to him once before that I couldn't look at any other man as long as he existed. I don't think Kane understood exactly what I meant back then, but at least I knew the extent of my words. "It's nice to meet you." The last brother greets me, he looks like the youngest out of them all, but I could be wrong. "I'm Luthais. What is your name?" I offer him a shy smile and shake his outstretched hand. "She doesn't know her name." Kane cuts in before I can answer him.

"We don't have time for any introductions right now. I'll introduce you later. For now, I need to know if I have your help or not. Giselle thinks that we are getting married tomorrow. She's preparing for the wedding. I can't be away for too long, or she will suspect that I'm trying to set her up. If that happens, the entire plan will be a complete failure. I can't let that happen. I'm too desperate to find Maya. The more I stay trapped in the castle with Giselle, the more danger Maya's life is put into. Please, I don't know who else to turn to." Ermanno places his hand on Kane's shoulder, "I think I speak for all of us when I say that we will stand by your side and help free your people. What Giselle is doing is wrong. She cannot continue to destroy your life for her selfish intentions." "You can count me in also." A new voice says. We all turn toward the sound, and I'm surprised to see a woman in front of us. The first thing that I notice is how beautiful she is. She's one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. The second and more important thing that catches my attention is the resemblance between her and Kane. I've studied Kane enough to realize that there were similarities between them. However, Kane doesn't act as if he knows her all too well. Did I imagine things? Who was she to him?

Chapter 73 ~KANE~ I'm surprised to see Gabriella here. I was planning on asking for her help, but I didn't get the chance to ask. Then how did she know that I needed help or would be here? "I told her that you might be here," Ermanno explained before I could ask any questions. "How do you two know each other?" I ask him. "It's a long story," She says. "Let's not get into that right now." Arthur walks toward us and wraps his arms around her protectively. It's almost like he's telling Ermanno and his brothers to back off and that she was his. I didn't think he needed to do that since it was clear that she was pregnant. Everyone here understood that she was off-limits. "I heard that you needed my help," Gabriella says. "I'm here to help you." "Why are you so kind to me?" I ask her. "Your friends still believe that I should be punished for everything I've done in the past, and I fully agree with them. I've done so many things to Maya that even I can't find it in myself to forgive my wrongdoings. So then why are you always so willing to stand by me and even protect me?" I knew I had asked this before, but I wanted to hear her answer. A real answer. One where she wasn't hiding anything from me. Because I knew there was something she was keeping from me. I don't know how I know this, but I do. There is plenty that Gabriella is holding back, and for some reason, it feels like she's holding back for my sake. But that doesn't make any sense to me. Why would she be concerned about her answer affecting me in any way? We had no connections with each other. Anything that she said would not affect me in the wrong way. Unless it had something to do with Maya, but again, somehow, I just knew that it didn't have anything to do with her. "I don't

think that any of that is important right now." She tells me. "I can see that there is plenty to be done. We need to free your friends, and then we need to find Maya. I'm here to stand by your side through it all. All you need to know is that I'm not your enemy. I'm going to help you wholeheartedly without expecting anything in return from you. I want you to trust me and rely on me; as long as you do that, I will be happy." Again, her words are so strange to me. She speaks to me like I'm family. For some reason, that word sends off alarm bells in my head. It feels like I'm missing something essential, and only she would be able to tell me about it. But just like she said, there were more important things that needed to be done. When this was all over, I would finally corner her and get the answers from her that I needed. I had a feeling that she would willingly come to me and tell me the truth then. Maybe she's waiting for me to find Maya before she breaks any news to me. She probably understands that I'm already going through hell. "I hope it's okay, but I've also asked Austin and his family to join the fight with us." She adds suddenly. The mention of Maya's family catches my full attention. Anything else that was on my mind was wiped out immediately. Why would Maya's brothers ever be willing to help me after everything I've done? They made it clear how much they hated me. It's hard for me to believe that this was true. Maybe she misunderstood them. Perhaps she thinks that they will show up, but they never will. "I don't think Austin will ever agree to help me willingly." I point out. I would do the same if I were him and someone had treated my sister the way I treated Maya. In my defense, he also mistreated my sister poorly when Lucy came into the picture. I didn't want to think about that now. It was in the past, as I've already said to myself multiple times. "If I'm being honest. He isn't helping you willingly," she says with a chuckle. "Lucy is kind of forcing him to help." "That's my sister," Marcus says with a chuckle. "Austin doesn't stand a chance. Anything that she wants, he has to give her." "He must," Thane growls. "He promised to keep our sister happy, and he better keep that promise." "So, where exactly is Austin?" Ermanno asks as he joins in the conversation once more. As soon as he asks the question, multiple vehicles pull up beside us. I watch as, one by one, they all begin to exit. The first person I see is Austin, followed by Lucy. Then James, followed by Eden. And lastly, Hunter is followed by Isabella. I realized then that I was surrounded by some of the most powerful werewolves in the supernatural world. "Look who's finally decided to join the party!" Marcus says as he hugs his three sisters. "Couldn't you have come sooner? It's been boring without you." Lucy walks over to the rest of her brothers and hugs them tightly. "I never get tired of seeing your handsome faces." "Handsome?" Austin asks her in a sarcastic tone. "We can still bust your ass," Thane warns him. "Lucy isn't always going to be able to protect you from us." "Stop it, you two." Lucy scolds them. Amongst their bickering, something catches my attention—Giselle's maid. I couldn't keep my eyes off

her. When everything else mattered more, she was still the center of my attention. I notice that she doesn't look too well. I know that this isn't the best environment for her after everything she's been through. I wish there were a safer place for me to get her to. One where she wouldn't have to listen to all of this. It must be too much for her, and she barely knew anyone here. My eyes widen when she begins to sway on her feet. I push through Ermanno and Marcus as I rush to pull her into my arms before she can hit the ground. "What's wrong with her?" Gabriella asks as she joins me. "Giselle trapped her in a freezing cell," I explain. "She almost died. She would have if I didn't get to her in time." "Oh no!" Isabella exclaims. "How horrible! That woman needs to pay for her wicked ways. I'll be happy to put her in her place!" Hunter squeezes her shoulders and kisses her hair, "you're not going to be in this fight, remember, sweetheart? You're pregnant. You have to remain with Eden and Gabriella." "I never said that I wasn't participating in this fight." Gabriella disagrees. "But we've discussed this already," Arthur cuts in. "Didn't we conclude that you girls would only join in if we needed your help?" "Remember when all of you left me out because I was pregnant?" Lucy teases. "I'm happy that you can finally get a taste of it." "I'll rather you stay behind with them also," Austin growls. She rolls her eyes at him, "you're not stopping me this time. I miss this. I don't want to be left out again." Austin doesn't look pleased, but he doesn't try and stop her again. I'm happy that they're too busy arguing over who would be joining the battle to realize how worried I was over the girl still in my arms. If they took a second to study me, they would realize how much she meant to me. "Can I put her in your jeep?" I ask Hunter. He nods, and I quickly open the door before placing her on the seat. I know that this is the worst possible time to do what I'm about to do, but I can't seem to stop myself. Seeing her like this was causing my emotions to overreact again. I take another look around me; everyone is still bickering. I take a deep breath, lean forward, and press my lips to her forehead. I don't know what the f\*\*k I'm doing right now, but I'll be damned if I stop. She stirs a little and quietly opens her eyes. I'm not sure if she realizes what I've just done, but she doesn't comment on it. "Are you okay?" I ask her, concerned. I didn't like seeing her like this. This was all because of that blasted Giselle. I couldn't wait to get my hands on her. She's gotten away with too much already. She crossed the line when she shoved this innocent girl into a freezing cell without any clothes. I was too easy on Giselle. She felt like she could do whatever she wanted to the people I cared about to get her way. That would be all over tomorrow. "Are you okay?" I repeat. She didn't answer the first time. She nods slightly, "w-what happened?"

Chapter 74 ~MAYA~ I don't know what just happened to me. One minute I was watching Kane speaking to everyone that had come to help him, and the next, I was falling to the ground. All I know is that something happened to me when I saw the vehicles pull up and the people that exited them. I felt this intense emotion that I had no idea how to describe. Everything about them seemed familiar to me. But none of them even looked my way, not once. I don't know why I keep feeling a connection with people who don't seem to know me. It happened with Kane, and now it was happening with these strangers that I knew nothing about. My heart felt heavy, and tears threatened to fall. Why was I hurting on the inside? "I think you're still weak from earlier," Kane tells me. "You should rest here for a little. You don't need to listen to everything that's happening around you." I immediately shake my head, "I want to listen to everything. Giselle is finally going to get what she deserves. I'm not about to miss even a second of this." Kane doesn't look convinced, "are you sure that is what you want?" I nod, "I'm positive. I just had a moment of weakness. I will be fine now. I promise." Kane nods and helps me to get down from the vehicle. The moment that we step out together, all eyes are on us. I feel nervous under all their stares. They don't look unfriendly at all; they may even be concerned about me. That would be understandable since I'd just blacked out in front of all of them. "How is she doing?" The girl from earlier asks. The one that looks like Kane. "She says that she's fine." "Do you need anything at all?" Lucy asks me. I believe that she was the mate of Austin. And also the sister of Ermanno and the rest of his brothers. At least that's what I've picked up from everything they have said so far. "No, but thank you for asking." Austin watches me, and again, I feel an unmistakable pull toward him. Not like the pull, I felt for Kane, but it was still a strong one. "Who are you? Why did Giselle try to kill you?" Kane walks in front of me in a protective stance, "I don't think now is the time to ask her any questions. She's been through enough already. She can't give an introduction because she doesn't remember her name. She was forced to be a maid for Giselle. She had nowhere to go because she'd lost all her memories. She still can't remember them. I think we can all agree that now is not the time to ask her any questions." "Now may not be the time for that, but I think that we can still at least introduce ourselves to the kind girl," Lucy says. "How uncomfortable would it be for her if she didn't know our names or who we were? We have time for at least that much." Kane didn't refuse this time and instead moved from in front of me so that they could all introduce themselves. One by one, they did just as they said they would; they gave me their names and explained who they were to Kane or Maya and even each other. Maya wasn't just lucky to have Kane; she was also fortunate to have people who loved her. I could see how much she meant to almost everyone here. She was loved. I, on the other hand, had no idea if anyone loved me at all. So far, there is no one that has shown up asking for me. No one recognized my face, and

if they did, they didn't bother trying to get into contact with me. After all the introductions, I stood at the back and watched as everyone continued their discussions. It was clear to me that everyone here was familiar with battles. The way they spoke and their properly laid out plans were something that only professionals could do. This definitely wasn't the first time for either one of them. I had faith that they knew what they were doing. This meant that Giselle would surely get the punishment that she deserved. It was almost time for the invasion to take place. After watching Kane suffer day after day, it was finally happening. I knew that Giselle would not be expecting this before her wedding day. I believe that Kane did the right thing by making her think that he was really going to marry her. It definitely kept her busy enough not to realize that she was being played. Soon enough, she would learn the mistake that she'd made. I couldn't wait to see the look on her face. Not only would she realize that her plan to kill me had failed, but she would also see that Kane would never marry her. She would never get to have the one man she was desperate to trap. Giselle tried every way possible to force him to marry her even though she already knew about his mate and the love he had for her. She was an incredibly selfish woman. Even though I also felt strong feelings for Kane and hated the idea of him loving another woman, it wouldn't make me act as crazy as Giselle did. I would not force him to be with me if he didn't want that. I knew that my heart would break if he ever found Maya, but I was willing to accept it because I knew that she was the only person that could make him happy again. And I've wanted that since the beginning. For Kane to be happy again. I wanted to repay him for all of the times he's saved me. I watched him as he walked from one person to the next, discussing everything about their plan. He was trying his best to ensure that everything went smoothly without any bumps. He was what I would imagine any good leader would be like. "I can't believe you're forcing me to help," Austin says to his wife, Lucy. "You know that this is what Maya would have wanted you to do as well." She tells him. "She wouldn't want to see her mate marry someone other than her. If you don't want to do this for Kane, at least you know that you're doing this for your sister. Believe me; she will love you even more for doing this for her." I'm surprised that she would say something like that. I think I know now why Austin was head over heels in love with her. She was an intelligent and warm-hearted young lady. Austin sighs and pulls her close to him, "I don't know what I'll ever do without you, Lucy. Somehow you always make me do what's right." She smiles and kisses him, "it goes both ways. You need me just as much as I need you." All of the couples present today are just like those two. They were all deeply in love. It was a beautiful sight to see. So this is what true love looked like. I was happy for all of them. The plan was originally to attack Giselle tomorrow on the wedding day, but they all decided that it was best to catch her off guard tonight instead. After listening to all their

points, I also thought it was best to attack her when she least expected it. If they waited for tomorrow, Kane would have to go back there and be with her, pretending to truly want to marry her. From what I've seen so far, he wasn't the best at showing affection towards Giselle. I wasn't sure how he got her to believe that he was willing to marry her. "It's set then," Austin says. "We have the layout of the castle. And we know which side each of us will be attacking from. The main goal is to get to the dungeons and free everyone. We don't want to have any of us injured during this fight. After we free those people, we can leave. And that's when we will start our search for Maya." My heartbeat stopped for a second after they mentioned searching for Maya. This meant that Kane was closer than ever to find out what had happened to her. I'm not sure how I feel about this. When she was back in his life, he would completely forget about me. I sighed; it didn't matter if he forgot about me. His happiness was all that I had to be concerned about. Kane walks over to Maya's brothers, and I can see how eager he is to learn more of what Austin knows, "Ermanno told me that you've been looking into the list. And that you've gone through half of it already. How much more people do we need to question?" This is what he's wanted all along. This is what Giselle has prevented him from doing. She's stopped him from searching for Maya. "There is only one person left on the list," Austin answers him. "She has to be the one responsible for Maya's disappearance. She also happens to be a damn witch." "I'm sure it's her," James adds. "We are so f\*\*\*\*\*g close to finding Maya. I can feel it. I hope she knows how much we love her and that we are coming for her. I hope she knows that we will never give up on finding out what happened to her." Eden hugs her mate as he shows signs of emotional trauma. This must have been hard on everyone, not only Kane. They've all been grieving for Maya. She was so loved that when she left, everyone felt it. It tells me the kind of person that she was. Kane wasn't lying when he said she was a ray of sunshine. She had to be for so many people to love her. I can see the look of hope that crosses Kane's face at their words. For the first time in forever, there is happiness on his face. He's looking forward to seeing her again, just like he told me earlier. This is what he was so desperate to achieve. Kane's eyes fall on me, and I feel my body come alive under his gaze. I don't know how to hide the pain I feel, knowing that we are about to go our separate ways as soon as this battle is over. That was it for us. I would be free from Giselle. Which meant I would have to learn to survive on my own. I didn't have any family or friends. I turn away from his penetrating gaze and walk over to the jeep. I didn't want to look at him. I was scared that I would begin to cry. I didn't realize how attached I was to Kane until now. I always knew it would hurt like hell when we had to separate, but I didn't think that it would feel like I was drowning in my sorrow. "Hey!" A feminine voice calls out to me. I turn and find myself face to face with Gabriella. "Hi." I smile. "How are you feeling?" she asks me. She genuinely looks

like she wants to know. "A lot better." She smiles, "I'm happy to hear that. Kane looks as though he cares for you plenty." I'm surprised that she brought that up; I didn't think anyone would notice the relationship between us. It was also very random. Was she implying something? "Um," I try to search for the right words to say. "I'm not sure that I agree with that. I think that he has a good heart. He knows how much Giselle put me through, and I know how much she also tortured him. We share common enemies. Or shall I say, one common enemy?" She nods, "He has a good heart, doesn't he? I'm surprised that you noticed that. Not many people see that in him." I study her closely, and like before, I notice how much she resembles Kane. She also looks like she cares for him. Austin and his family are tied to Kane because of Maya but Gabriella has no reason to help him. But still, here she is, putting everything behind her to help him. She even asked Maya's brothers to join in and somehow found a way for them to agree. "Are you related to him?" I find myself asking. Her eyes look startled by my question. Her reaction seems weird to me. It wasn't a difficult question, and I don't think that I've overstepped any boundaries. So then, why does she seem so surprised by my question? "I. . ." she pauses and looks at Kane before looking back at me. "I think I should get back. I'm sure there is plenty for us to discuss still. But it was a pleasure speaking to you. I hope that one day you'll regain your memories, and I'll be able to get a proper introduction." If I was unsure before, I'm positive now that she is hiding something. "Is everyone ready?" Ermanno asks. "I think it's time we get ready for battle." They all agree and return to their vehicles. I'm not sure where that leaves me. But I know that I'm not saying goodbye to Kane this soon. I had to see him win. I had to see Giselle pay. And I wanted to see the look on her face when she realized that she'd lost. Kane approaches me, and he seems to be concerned about something. I'm not sure what he's worried about, but I want to assure him that everything will be okay. "I need you to stay back," he says, surprising me. "You can't be in the middle of that battlefield. Do you understand me?" This wasn't what I expected him to say. Why would I stay back? I shake my head at him, "I want to be there by your side. You saved me from dying, Kane. Do you understand how much I owe you? I owe you my life. That may mean nothing to you, but I don't take things like that lightly. I want to be able to fight for you." A muscle ticks in his jaw, and it looks like he's trying hard to control what he wants to say or do to me, "the problem is that you don't know how to fight. If you can't fight, how do you expect to be on the battlefield? Do you remember that you're not only fighting to protect your life but that of your unborn children as well? If you don't want to listen to my plea, at least think about them. No one else should matter but them. I know you think that you owe me something for saving your life but believe me, you don't. I did something that I thought Maya would be proud of. It was the only reason why I did it." "I don't care why you did it," I whisper as I step

toward him. "What matters to me is that you saved me multiple times. You saved me, and you saved my unborn babies. I'm just trying to do the same for you. I know how important this battle is for you. I know that you can't afford to lose. I know all of these things, and I know how much Giselle has made you suffer. When you should have been out there searching for your mate, you were forced to stay back with her because of her selfish reasons. I want to help you get the justice that you deserve." "Did you forget everything that I told you?" He asks in a broken tone. "I'm not a saint. I'm not a good person. I'm far from it. I've done wrong to the people closest to me, especially my mate Maya. Everything that has been happening to me is what I deserve. I've done this to myself. This is my punishment for hurting the one person I should have held close to my heart, protecting her, loving her. Giving her everything that this world has to offer. Don't ever think that I never deserved any of this." "I know what you told me," I answer him. "It still does not affect my decision. Just because you made some mistakes in your past, it doesn't make you a bad person, Kane. You had your reasons for whatever you did, I'm sure of it. It doesn't excuse your behavior but what matters is that you realize that you were wrong, and you're willing to correct it. If you were a bad person, you would not have recognized the bad you did, and you definitely wouldn't have tried to change it. You wouldn't waste your time trying to convince me that you were evil either. You're far from a bad person. It's time that you saw that yourself as well." Someone clears their throat, and I see the man Kane had introduced as Hunter earlier. His tongue seemed pressed against his cheek as he took in how close we were standing. He doesn't give much of his feelings away, but I can tell that he isn't pleased with how close we are. I can understand his reaction since these people were all Maya's friends and families. No one would want to see Kane this close to a woman that wasn't her. Especially not when she was missing. "Please, for my sake, stay here where it is safe. If you want to do something for me, this will make me happy." He tells me before walking toward Hunter. The man looks at me one more time before the two of them walk away. I'm not sure what they are discussing, and at this point, I don't think that I care. I'm too lost in Kane's words to think of anything else. How can he convince me that he has no feelings for me when he says something like that? He acts like he's desperate to keep me away from any harm, and that's not something that you would do for someone you didn't care about. I can understand why he would want me to believe that he didn't have feelings for me, however. He knew that the moment he confessed to it, that would change everything between us. Things were already awkward after we almost made love. What had started as him trying to keep me warm and prevent my body from freezing to death had turned into something different—my body shivered at the reminder of that day. Part of me wishes that he didn't stop it from happening, but I'm still happy that I at least got to feel more than a kiss from

him. These were memories that I never wanted to forget for the rest of my life. I wasn't sure if I should listen to him or do the opposite of what he was asking of me. Even if I were to stay back, where exactly would I seek shelter? I knew no one. "What are you still doing standing here?" Lucy asks me. "Come join us. You can stay with the girls while the men start the battle. We will only interfere if they need our help." Gabriella rolls her eyes, "that's quite unfair. I don't know why they're always so damn overprotective." Isabella rubs her belly, "I don't know how we handle them. Hunter doesn't leave my side for even a second." Hunter walks towards us and places his hand on her stomach, "are you okay? I saw you rubbing your belly? Is our baby fine?" Isabella gives us a look as if to prove her point. Lucy covers her mouth to keep from laughing, and so does Eden. I can't help but smile either. Their relationships were so pure and beautiful. How wonderful would it be to be a part of this family? I don't think I will ever have the chance to know.

Chapter 75 ~MAYA~ I was freaking out. The battle had just started. All the men had attacked from all sides of the castle; there wasn't a single corner left open. It was official. Giselle and her father were now under attack. "How will we know if they need our help?" I ask Gabriella. "Their wolf's cries." She answers me. "We will know if it's a victory cry or a cry for help." Oh, well, that would explain plenty. "You look a bit uneasy," Lucy notes as she studies me. "Aren't any of you? Your men are out there in battle." I answer her question with one of my own. Isabella smiles, "there are times when I panic, but by now, I know how powerful my man is. I think he has this covered." "I also feel a lot more confident when they are all in battle together," Lucy adds. "That's true," Eden says. "They look out for each other. We're lucky to have them." "And they're lucky to have us," Gabriella says as the girls laugh. "I still think it's unfair that they love leaving us behind during these battles," Isabella says. "When we're no longer pregnant. We need to call dibs on the next battle. The guys will have to sit back and watch us win." Gabriella adds. Lucy laughs, "They will have a panic attack if they learn of your plan Gabby." "I won't be surprised if they try to lock us inside a room to prevent that from happening," Eden notes. "They are sly when they want to be." Isabella laughs. I could tell how much these ladies adored their husbands just by how they spoke about them. Even though they weren't happy about how overprotective they were towards them, they still understood why they did it. For a second, I let myself imagine what it would be like if I were married to Kane. Would he also be as overprotective as their mates were to them? I think I already knew the answer to that question. Kane was already a bit overprotective, and he wasn't even in love with me. If he acted like this now, how would he act if he were in love with me? He probably would never let me out of his sight. And I wouldn't have the slightest problem with that. I would happily let him keep me by his side every day. "Can you believe they

left men behind to guard us?" Isabella snorts. "It's like they have no faith in us." Lucy laughs, "I think these men are here to keep us from entering the battlefield. Not to protect us." Gabriella laughs, "I think you're right, Lucy. Arthur, for one, knows that it's challenging to keep me out of a battlefield. These men are here to make sure that we don't try to pull a fast one on them." If they were so confident in their mates, I shouldn't have any reason to worry about Kane. He should be safe as long as they all stuck together and watched each other's backs. My only fear was that Maya's brothers didn't like him too much. But if they were going to betray him, they wouldn't have bothered trying to help him escape from Giselle. I had to try and remain calm before I went insane with worry before they could return to us. . . . . ~KANE~ It was almost over. We were winning the battle. The guards were no match for all of us combined. It's not like I had any doubts. I knew the power we had when all of us were joined together. "This is too easy," Marcus says with a fake yawn. "I can fight these men with my eyes closed." I grab one of the guards and shove him against the wall. Ermanno finishes him off for me without me asking. That's how the battle has been going since the start, one attacks and the other slaughters. They didn't stand a chance against us. "I don't think you needed us for this fight," Hunter notes as he quickly rips a guard's head off his body. I couldn't agree more with him. It seems that Ermanno and his family would have been more than enough to win this fight. "We've reached the dungeon," Austin informs us. This is where most of Giselle's security was kept. We had to keep on high alert now. There would be more of a challenge inside of here. There is a sudden scream, and it's only then that I realize Austin has one of the guards by his neck. "Fuck." I mumble. "We've made them aware of our location. Get ready to attack." "Here they come in their numbers!" James shouts. "Let's see who can get the most guards!" Marcus cheers. He was good at making a joke at the worse timing. It wasn't something that I wasn't used to by now. At least it was able to lighten the mood a bit. "Free the prisoners!" Austin shouts to me. "Take Hunter with you." I nodded, and we made our way further into the dungeons while they distracted the rest of the guards. "You take the left," Hunter tells me. "I'll take the other side." I don't wait for him to repeat himself; we're rushing to let every prisoner out of the hundreds of cells. They are confused when they realize that they've been set free, but it doesn't take long for them to spring into action. This is exactly what we wanted. For all of the prisoners to fight back for their freedom. The guards won't stand a chance against this many. I was happy that the plan was working. I breathed a sigh of relief when I finally reached the cage that held my people inside. "Alpha!" I hear them shout when they spot me. "It's time to get you guys out!" I shout as I break them free. "We thought she'd done something to you," Dane says as he hugs me. "You know I'm stronger than that." He laughs, "I knew that as long as you were alive, you would find a way to get us out of this

hell hole." "Let's get the hell out of here before there is a blood bath. These prisoners are about to declare war on their captors." I inform them. Hunter joins me as soon as we're nearing the exit. Austin and the rest of the guys are already waiting for us. We pause when we spot Giselle and her father at the entrance—blocking our escape. "I've been waiting a long f\*\*\*\*\*g time for this," I shout. "You've forced me to stand by your side for days. Did you think that your plan would work and I would marry you? This whole time I've just been thinking of ways to find Maya and get my people out of your cells. Now that I've gotten them out, it's time to make you and your father pay for everything you've done to me at my weakest point." Giselle narrows her eyes at me, "how dare you to betray me like that? I've done nothing but love you this entire time! Every single thing I've done, has been for you. I have never hidden my feelings for you. You knew from the start what my intentions were." "Love?" I ask with disgust. "Do you even know what love is? What you feel for me is not love. If it were love, you wouldn't force me to do something I would never want. You wouldn't hurt the people closest to me to get your way. Your mind is too twisted to see how insane you truly are. Maya is the only woman I will ever love. There is no place in my heart for anyone else but her. I'm going to find her. But first, I must make you pay." Her lips tremble before they lift into a smirk, "I don't think you realize it yet, but there may be someone else in your heart. Keep lying to yourself, Kane. It's not going to work." I stiffen at her words, knowing she isn't speaking about herself. There is only one other person that she could possibly be talking about. f\*\*k. I've already shown too much of my emotions. I was never good at hiding it, and it came back to bite me in the ass. "What is she talking about?" Austin asks. Just what I needed right now. Another reason for Maya's brothers to doubt my love for her. Giselle knew what she was doing by saying something like this when they were around. She was hoping to put us against each other. I had to shut her up before she made a mess out of things. "I wouldn't listen to anything that woman has to say." Ermanno cuts in. "She's twisted in her head." Before she can say anything else, I lunge for her throat. I'm surprised when she doesn't try to stop me as I grab her and shove her against the wall. I squeeze her neck tightly. Remembering what she did to her maid. The men prevent Giselle's father from stopping me from hurting her. They would deal with him while I dealt with her. "You thought that you could get away with your evil plan. Didn't you?" I demand. "You tried to kill your maid as well. How sick are you in the head?" Her eyes widen, "what do you mean by try?" She asks. "Is she not dead? She should have frozen to her death by now!" I smile, "she's very much alive. I think it's time you get a the taste of your own medicine." She gasps when I open the door to a cold call, "good luck trying to escape from something your father built to keep prisoners. I'm sure you know what happens to anyone stuck in one of these cells." "Kane!" she screams. "Please. You can't

do this to me! I love you! You can't hurt me!" I don't wait to hear the rest of her pleas. It was over. Giselle could no longer hurt the people I cared about. There was only one thing left for me now. To find Maya. I'm coming for you, sweetheart. I'm coming.

Chapter 76 ~MAYA~ "They're coming!" Isabella shouts as she spots her mate along with everyone else. I watch them all run to their mates to hug them and hold them close. My eyes are on Kane, and I desperately want to run to him. However, I know that it isn't my place. Especially not when Maya's entire family is around. They would freak out if they saw me holding onto Kane as though he was my lover. Even Kane would freak out if I did something like that in front of them. He already freaked out if I was close to him in private. "Did you finish them off?" Gabriella asks Kane. "We killed her father. I locked her in a cold cell. She wouldn't last long. And the prisoners will finish off the guards for us. They can't hurt anyone else after today." He answers her. "It's not over," Austin says. "I don't want to waste another second. We need to bring Maya home today. I don't care how long I have to stay away from home. I'm not going home until I find her." Kane nods, "let's get going. We have no idea what they are doing to her. We need to free her. She's suffered enough already." I'm not sure if it's okay for me to tag along on this trip with them. This was a rescue mission for Maya. The woman Kane was hopelessly in love with. I'm not sure that I will be able to stand back and watch something like that happen in front of me. I've said before that I wanted him to be happy, and I understood that he would only be satisfied if he was back with Maya. That didn't mean that I wanted to see their reunion. I don't think my weak heart would be able to see something like that. I could barely handle hearing him talk about how much he loved her. How horrible would it be to see him showering her with love? Kane doesn't seem to notice me anymore. He's only concerned about bringing her home to him. I always knew this day would come when I would no longer have his attention. A day where she would be all he thinks about. That day was finally here, and I was even more devastated than I thought I would have been. Once more, Lucy invited me to join them, and I didn't turn her down. Kane didn't even ask for me to join them. I'm not even sure that he realizes that I would also be there while they searched for Maya. I had to get a grip on myself. I knew this day would come. It was time for me to be happy for him. He was finally close to getting Maya back. . . . .  
. . . . . ~KANE~ My heart is pounding against my chest. I'm not sure what I'm going to find. I walk towards the door, with everyone behind me waiting for a signal. This was the last known location of the witch. We'd already searched other sites where we'd hoped to find her. We didn't find anything. This was our last hope. If we didn't see her here, I didn't know what else to do. Austin and his pack are to the left, while James and his pack are

right. Hunter's men, along with Arthur, are at the back of the building, while Ermanno and his brothers are right behind me. We are all here to bring Maya home. I'm still praying that we find her alive and healthy. Though, I can't feel her presence here at all. That couldn't be a good sign. However, the witch may have put a spell on her to prevent me from finding Maya sooner. A spell that could stop me from sensing her. She was strong enough to pull something as crazy as that off. I had to wonder what other spells she used to get her way. We had no idea what she was doing to her all this time. Just the thought of it sends my blood boiling. I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g pissed that it took me this long to reach here. If Giselle hadn't trapped me, I could have gotten to her sooner than this. But I had to put that behind me now. At least Giselle had finally gotten what she deserved. Both her and her father. They'd lost everything in the end. I'm sure that they weren't expecting so many people to come to my rescue. Even though I didn't expect to get so much help, I was grateful for all the support I'd gotten. It's only because of them that I'm finally here. I wish it hadn't taken me this long to figure out where my Maya was. There is no telling what she had to go through in the hands of these f\*\*\*\*\*g monsters. When I got my hands on them, I would rip them into a million pieces. We didn't need this many men to attack the witch, but everyone here came for Maya. This was how much she was loved. She had all of these people along with me, ready to bring her home with us. "Ready?" Ermanno asks me. I nod my head and slam the door open with force, breaking it down. I didn't want anything to be in my way. One after the next, we searched every single room in the abandoned castle. I moved as fast as my body would let me. "Did you see anything?" I ask Austin across the room. "No!" He shouts in frustration. "Did you?" "Nothing here!" I answer him. Those were all of the responses we kept getting, over and over. "Nothing here either!" Arthur shouts a little distance away. "Where is that f\*\*\*\*\*g witch?" Hunter asks as he comes out of a different room. "Where could she be hiding?" I wish I knew the answer to that. There were still many other rooms to search; I couldn't give up hope yet. I reached too far to give up now. "Come on," I tell them. "We need to move faster. We can't give her a chance to try and escape before she tells us what she did with my mate." Ermanno pats my back as support, and we all move up the stairs together. "We will find her, and even if we don't, we will not give up searching." "Thanks." I thank him as we continue to search rooms one after the next. We don't stop until there is just one more floor left. The highest floor and the only one left for us to find the bloody witch that destroyed my life. My heart is pounding against my chest, and it feels like it's about to jump out of my damn chest. This was it. I held my breath as we barrelled into the last room—my last hope. I searched my surroundings and felt the air rush out of my body at what I saw next. Leaned up against the wall, with her knees pressed against her chest and tears streaming down her face, was none other than my mate. Maya. I'd finally found her.

Chapter 77 ~KANE~ It takes my body a while to catch up with everything happening all at once. I couldn't believe that she was finally in front of me. After weeks of wishing and hoping that she was alive, doubting myself, and fighting others that thought she was dead, I'd finally found her. I finally had my mate in my life again. I couldn't begin to explain the relief I felt at seeing her. I wasn't expecting to find her, not when I couldn't sense her. I can't seem to snap out of the shock, and because of this, Austin is the first one to get to her. He kneels and helps pick her up from the ground, wiping her tears away. "We've got you," he whispers as he hugs her close to him. "You're safe now, Maya. We are never letting anyone take you from us again. I promise." Maya's tears flow more as she hugs her brother. Happy to have him in front of her. I don't think she was even expecting us to find her today. Did she lose hope in us? When we first saw her, she looked startled but relieved to know that it was us and no one that could bring harm to her instead. How much torture did my mate have to go through? James hugs her next, and I can't wait any longer. I have to take her in my arms. And I do just that. The moment I wrap my arms around her, her body relaxes against mine. I'm not sure what to say to her. I've known all along what I wanted to tell her, but now that she was in my arms, I can't seem to find the words. "I've finally found you," I whisper. "I can't believe you're here. I'm so sorry for everything. For hurting you. For not protecting you when you needed me to. For not being there for our unborn child." She burst into more tears at the mention of our child, and my body turns to stone at her reaction. "What's wrong?" I demand, already on high alert. "Our baby didn't survive," she cries. "The witch threw me down the stairs. I begged her not to hurt my baby, but she wouldn't listen to me. I couldn't save our baby, Kane. I couldn't!" Her words are like sharp knives piercing through my heart. Our baby was killed? By that f\*\*\*\*\*g witch? "Where the f\*\*k is she?" I roar. "Where is that bloody witch?" Austin tries to comfort her, but nothing is helping, "we need to find her. We need to make her pay." He shouts. I pick Maya up into my arms and walk with her out of the room with everyone following behind me. "I don't know where she is, Kane," she cries. "Someone must have told her that you were coming to find her. She left earlier today, and she didn't tell me where she was going. I tried escaping many times; that's how I lost our baby. While trying to escape from her. It's my fault. Everything is my fault. I'm to blame. My baby is gone because of me." "Shh," I try to soothe her. "It's going to be okay. I promise. I will make the pain go away. I'll do everything I can to make it better. And we will find her eventually. I'm not going to stop until I suck the life out of her body for hurting you and taking our baby away." I didn't think it was possible to hate myself more than I already did. I didn't get to her in time. Because of me, neither of us would

ever be able to see our baby's face. I was happy to have Maya in my arms again, but it f\*\*\*\*\*g hurt to know that we'd lost our child. I was a horrible father. I couldn't protect my baby. I was a failure. I hurt Maya, and I wasn't there for either of them when they needed me the most. How could I ever forgive myself after today? . . . . .

~MAYA~ "Do you think they've found her?" Lucy asks as she looks around nervously. "Maya has been a sweetheart to me since the first day I met her. She always made me feel at home. I'd hate for anything to happen to her. Austin tries to stay strong in front of me, but I know her disappearance kills him inside. He hasn't been the same since we lost her." Isabella hugs her sister, "she will be fine. They will find her. I have faith that they will." "It's rather quiet, don't you think?" Gabriella asks as she looks around us. "If they'd found the witch, wouldn't there be more noise by now? They aren't exactly quiet during any battle. No one is quiet during battle." Eden nods, "it is tranquil. It sounds like they're returning, however. I'm hearing something like footsteps." I held my breath and waited to see if they'd found anyone. Gabriella was right. I doubt they found the witch. If they did, there should be shouting amongst other noises. But there was none of that. "I see someone!" Lucy says. "It looks like Kane. He has someone in his arms!" I follow her gaze, and she's right. He is holding a woman with short hair, but I can hardly see her face. "MAYA!" Lucy shouts. "It's Maya!" "They've found her," Gabriella whispers in disbelief. "Kane was right. She was alive." Lucy rushes to their side and gently pats Maya's head while tears flow down her cheeks. I couldn't believe how much everyone loved this woman. I don't think there was a single person that disliked her except Giselle and the witch who kidnapped her, of course. I watch as all the women take their turns to greet Maya and tell her how much they missed and loved her. All I could do was stand at the back and watch the exchange. The love in Kane's eyes was killing me inside. He loved her. Just like he said, I could see it so clearly now. But something seemed to be wrong. He was holding onto her tightly, but there was a strained look on his face. Something must have happened for him to look unhappy at a time like this. I studied him enough to know when he was sad or upset. I could safely say that he was both right now. So what was wrong? He's wanted this day for so long. The day when he could have her back again. And he'd gotten it with the help of all these people that also loved her. So why was he like this on such a special occasion? And he wasn't the only one. It was clear to me that there was an edge to everyone that went inside to save her. What had they seen or heard? I'm not the only one to notice it. Gabriella also seems to realize that something is off about the guys. Arthur joins her next to me. "What's wrong with Kane?" She asks him. "Why is he so unhappy?" He sighs, and it looks like whatever it was has affected everyone, "I don't think you want to know, Gabriella." "Of course I do; I need to know why he's sad." She disagrees with him. "Maya just told us that she lost the baby. The

witch pushed her down the stairs. And we have no idea where to find her. We searched the entire castle. She wasn't in any of the rooms. Which means that she's escaped before we could get a chance to get to her." Gabriella covers her mouth in horror, and so do I. Maya had lost the baby? Both Gabriella and I protectively held our stomachs at his words. We were both pregnant and knew what it meant for someone to lose their unborn child. I couldn't imagine the pain either one of them was going through. Losing a baby would be painful for anyone that had to go through something so awful. How could anyone do that? How could anyone try to harm a pregnant woman to the point that she loses her baby? My heart aches for both Maya and Kane. She may have the heart of the man of my dreams, but I still wouldn't wish anything so horrible on her. Kane's eyes somehow fall on me, and I feel my knees grow weak as our gazes lock. My lips part, and I try to remain calm. I couldn't be seen looking at him with longing when everyone was around. And he shouldn't be looking at me either. Not when the love of his life was in his arms. I can see the hurt in his eyes, and it's killing me inside, knowing that I can't run to him. I want to hold him, to hug him. To assure him that everything would be okay. To tell him that they would both heal from this. But I don't. It's not my place to do that. It never was. He belonged to the grieving woman in his arms. And I won't ever come in the way of that.

Chapter 78 I hold Maya tightly in my arms, but my eyes are glued to Giselle's maid. Her eyes are surprisingly both sad and happy. I couldn't look away. I knew that I should but I couldn't find the strength. I know that she's happy that I've found Maya; she's never tried to turn my mind against my mate, not that she would have been able to even if she'd wanted to do it. However, she cannot hide the hurt in her eyes from seeing me with another woman. She has never really come forward and asked for anything from me, but her actions did show that she had feelings for me. She didn't have to tell me this for me to know the answer. I can tell that she knows I'm in pain. I've seen that look on her face many times before. She always tried to comfort me whenever I was missing Maya. Even when she didn't know anything about me or my past, she always thought of me as a good person and she kept that opinion even after I told her everything I'd done in the past. Maya wraps her arms around my neck, and I force myself to look away from the girl. I promised myself that no one else would have my attention after finding Maya. I intended to keep that promise. There were just a few things that bothered me. Something felt off about this entire thing. I didn't feel the instant connection that I always felt around Maya. It was almost completely gone, and it worried me. This was not how I remembered feeling around her. But she was still my mate, and I had a duty to love and protect her no

matter what was happening to my messed-up heart. Maybe the witch who had her did something to affect my feelings around her. Her scent that I was so addicted to was barely visible. Giselle's maid had more of Maya's unique scent than Maya did. I wasn't sure if I imagined this or not. I always thought that the girl smelled like Maya because I was making it all up in my head. Now that Maya was in my arms, it didn't feel that way. It made me wonder if the witch used a spell on her to make it impossible for me to find her by blocking her scent. Whatever it is that she did, it was incredibly good. She wasn't an amateur. And that worried me. What else did they do to my mate while I was gone? I was terrified to ask her. I don't think I'll ever be ready for it. It will only remind me of how much of a failure I was. I'm not sure what any of this means for both of us. I know that I want to stay in her life. I don't want to let her go again. But I'm not sure she will want me back after everything I've done. I am prepared to fight for her, however. No matter what, I will not give up. The way she held onto me gave me hope. She didn't act like my presence made her sick. At least that was a good sign. However, she can be in shock from everything, and that's probably why her anger for me hasn't resurfaced as yet. Only time will tell. For now, I will enjoy these moments I have with her. Or at least try to enjoy it. The news about my baby has left a scar in my heart. I never got a chance even to say hi, not once. My baby never knew me. And maybe that was for the best. I would be ashamed to show myself after what I did to Maya. I tighten my hold around her. "Are you okay?" "I am now that you are here." She tells me. I'm surprised to hear her say that, but I'm also happy. Another sign that she may have possibly forgiven me or at least considered forgiving me for hurting her. "I think you should give me a chance to hug my sister," Austin tells me. He doesn't look pissed at me anymore, but I can't say that we are friends now either. "Do you want that?" I ask her. She looks between Austin and me before nodding. I slowly let her go, and before she could get to her brother, her eyes fell on the maid. Maya pauses and stares at her for a good few seconds. Her reaction to her surprises me. I know they've never met before, but why does Maya look so shocked to see her? Austin pulls her in for a hug, but she doesn't look relaxed. What could have possibly made her react like that after seeing the girl? It's not like she'll know that something happened between us? Would she? And was I planning on telling her? Maya was traumatized; I didn't think telling her about the details of my relationship with Giselle's maid would make the situation better. The last thing I wanted to do was make Maya wish to leave me again. But it's not like I could keep this from her forever either. She deserved to know the truth. I just had to wait until she fully recovered before explaining everything that happened between the two of us. I wouldn't even know where to begin. Did I tell her that the girl reminded me of her, and that's why I kissed her the first time? Being drunk wasn't an excuse, even though the girl wanted me to believe it was. She was kind-hearted,

and that's why she thought that way, but I knew better. I was wrong. Just like I've always been. "I don't think I know who this woman is," Maya says suddenly as she points at the maid. "Who is she? Why is she here?" My body goes still as she waits for someone to explain. "It's a very long story," Gabriella tells her. I don't think anyone wants to mention to her about Giselle. "I think I have plenty of time to listen to a story now that my family is with me." She says. "I don't think that's a good idea." I intervene. "You're tired, and you've been through a lot. We can tell you more about it after you've rested. Let's at least get you home." I don't know if Maya can sense my hesitation, but she doesn't look happy. I didn't want her to know that I almost got married to another woman while she was locked up and held captive by a witch. I didn't want her to think that I was weak. She needed an explanation for why we took so long to rescue her, and she will hear the entire story. But I don't want to tell her now. I don't think the rest of her family wanted her to know that they held a funeral for her either. Austin looks at me, and I can see that he's thinking the same thing I am. I was the reason they decided to get up and search for her again instead of accepting what the witch had said. "I want to know." She repeats, drawing our attention back to her. "What are you not telling me?"

Chapter 79 ~MAYA~ I don't think I mistook the look that Maya gave me earlier. I don't think she likes me at all. This is strange since everything I've heard about Maya told me that she was a kind, loving person. But the woman that just looked at me with so much hate and surprise did not seem like a caring person at all. I'm sure that Kane didn't have enough time to tell her what happened between the two of us. I'm also positive that he wouldn't tell her as soon as he rescued her; he would give her time to recover from being kidnapped first. So then why doesn't she like me? It's not like she knew me from the past either. I heard her ask the others who I was. That meant that I didn't do something to her in the past that could make her dislike me. This seemed rather strange. And now she appeared demanding, insisting that everyone tell her who I was even though they were all trying to protect her. I knew that they didn't want to explain who I was because it would mean that they would have to tell her about Giselle. The entire story with her would only make Maya feel worse than she already did. Everyone here was trying to prevent that from happening. But she wasn't listening. She wanted the explanation now. It felt weird since she was crying just a few seconds ago, and now the crying had stopped, and she seemed annoyed. How did she switch emotions so quickly? Was I reading too much into this? I don't think anyone else saw what I was seeing right now. They were probably too worried about telling her everything that happened while she was gone. "How about we get you home first?" Austin asks her gently. "I promise as soon as we get home, we will

explain everything to you." Maya looks at her brother before looking around her. I think she realizes that she's acting unfairly when everyone here only wants what is best for her. She slowly nods her head, and the sad expression is back on her face. I don't know what I was expecting from Kane's mate, but I don't think this was it. Maybe losing her baby had caused her to become like this. Maybe in time, she will act like her old self. For Kane's sake, I hoped that she did. I saw what he went through with Giselle. I didn't want to see him suffer again. Everyone walked towards the vehicle, and I spotted Kane walking behind Maya, protecting her. I don't want to feel jealous, but I can't help it. I had to stop looking their way. What did any of this mean for me now? Maya was found, and Giselle was no longer a threat to us. It told me that I was free to go. But where would I go now that I was free? I didn't know anyone. And I couldn't ask these kind people to let me stay with them either. I also don't think I can stand seeing Kane with another woman. That would be too much for me. I didn't want to torture myself any more than I'd already done. "I think this is goodbye," I say to Gabriella and the rest of the girls. I wanted to say goodbye to Kane and thank him one more time for everything he's done for me. But I don't think it's appropriate for me to do that when Maya is next to him. She already seemed to dislike me. Maybe she can sense how much I like Kane. If she did, I couldn't blame her for hating me. "What?" Gabriella asks. "We barely got to spend any time at all together. How can you leave?" "Isn't it also true that you don't know anyone?" Lucy asks me. "Where do you plan on staying? We've learned of your pregnancy as well. It's not safe for a pregnant woman to be out with nowhere to turn to. And you still have no memory of your past. We don't know if someone tried harming you; maybe that's why you can't remember anything. I think you should stay with us until you at least regain your memory. When you finally remember, we can take you to your family, where they will be able to help you get back on your feet." "Our family has never been the type to let anyone in your condition suffer without offering our help," Eden tells me. "You can't go on your own. Let us help you until you get back on your feet." "You're such a darling," Isabella adds. "We will hate to see you go so soon. We promise to give you somewhere to stay. And we won't ask for anything in return." "And you can stay with either one of us." Gabriella points out. "It will be your decision. We don't all live together. Whoever you're most comfortable staying with is totally up to you." "And you don't have to worry about offending us with your decision," Lucy says. How are they so kind? They barely knew me. They weren't even sure if they could trust me; yet here they were, inviting me to their homes so I wouldn't be homeless and out on the streets with no one to turn to. They were nothing like Giselle or the people I'd met while being stuck as her maid. "What's wrong?" Austin asks as he joins us. Everyone else was already starting the vehicles, waiting for the women to join. "We are trying to convince her to stay with us," Lucy explains. "We

can't just leave her stranded when she doesn't even know her name. She won't be safe out here on her own." "I don't want to be a burden on you." I try to reason with them. "You aren't a burden on anyone." I feel my body become numb from the sudden interruption. It was Kane. He had spoken. I didn't think that he would care what happened to me now that Maya was back in his life. But I was wrong. He still showed his caring nature even though she was his priority now. I try to calm my racing heart. It's happy now that he's spoken to me again. It felt like forever since he'd said a single word to me. I don't know what to say in return. There is no use fighting them when it's clear that I have nowhere to go. For now, I'll have to stay with Maya's family. It may be torture, but I had no other option. I couldn't be stupid. I just had to be careful around Kane. As long as I could do that, there shouldn't be any problems between us. And it wasn't like I had to stay with them for the rest of my life. It was only until I could regain my memories or at least find a place where I could stay. I would also have to find a new job, hopefully, a good one that was nothing like the one I had with Giselle. "Alright," I finally respond. "I'm happy to stay with you. Thank you for showing me nothing but kindness."

Chapter 80 ~MAYA~ Gabriella and the rest of the girls had kept talking for the entire ride back home. They were all pleased to have Maya back. And I was happy for them in return. Every single one of them deserved happiness. I've never met kinder people than these beautiful women next to me and I can safely say that even though I had no memory of the people that has been in my life in the past. And I was glad that they were all blessed with mates who loved and adored them. They deserved to have people in their lives that would keep them happy and safe. After a long drive, we finally pull up to the palace. From what they've told me, this kingdom belonged to Maya's family. Maya wasn't just any regular girl; she was also a princess. Just when I thought she couldn't get any more perfect than she already was. I was still in shock from her actions earlier. I didn't hear any of them mention that she was acting weirdly. I apparently had been the only one to notice it. But I've never been around Maya before; I wouldn't know how she used to behave. All I knew about her was what Kane had told me. Was it possible that I was trying to find a fault in her? I'm not sure what it is about her that makes me feel so uneasy. And I don't know why I'm the only one that feels that way. "We should have a celebration!" Lucy says as we exit the vehicle. "Today is a happy day for all of us. We thought we would never see Maya again, but we were all wrong. We have her back." "I think that's a great idea," Isabella responds. "But I think we should ask Maya first. She's still in shock, and she also just lost her baby. I'm not sure that she will be willing to celebrate at a time like this." Lucy covers her mouth in horror, "you're right. I didn't even

consider that she wouldn't want this." Maya and Kane walk in front of us just then. I try not to be affected by their presence, but it's hard for me. Kane has his arm around her waist, supporting her. She has her head on his chest. "I know that Austin doesn't really like Kane, but I can't deny how cute they look together," Lucy whispers. "It's clear that Kane loves her even though he was an ass initially." Gabriella nods, "I've tried to tell the men that since the beginning. He loves her. He always did. He got caught up in the death of his father and sister. I think any of us would be blinded by rage if someone we loved was killed. We also know his family deserved it after what they tried to do, but they were still his family. Of course, he could have handled it differently, but I'm glad that all of that is behind us now." Eden nods, "I think the guys need some time to warm up to him. It may take a while, but with our persistence, I'm sure we can get them to like each other." "What are you ladies chatting so much about?" James asks as he joins us. "I'm sure they are up to no good," Austin adds. "They're never up to any good when they're together like this. I'm sure they're planning something that will drive us miserable." Lucy rolls her eyes, "when do we ever do that?" "How about we continue this discussion inside?" Arthur asks as he pulls Gabriella along with him. I follow behind them, not sure where we're heading. As soon as I step into the palace, my body feels like it had just been hit with something powerful. I gasp and clutch my heart. It felt like it was bleeding. What was this reaction? What was causing me to feel like this? Everything hurts inside of me. It's like my body is trying to tell me something, but I can't figure out what it is. "Hey," Gabriella says as she looks at me with concern. "Are you okay?" Lucy and Isabella rush to my side, "are you having belly pains?" Lucy asks. "Do you want us to call the doctor to give you a check-up?" I shook my head as the pain slowly started to leave my body. "I don't know what happened." This is not the first time this happened to me. It also happened when I saw all of them for the first time. What connection did I have with this place? It was killing me inside, not knowing anything from my past. "Let's get you inside," Gabriella says as she helps me. They stay by my side until we reach the living room area. "Have a seat," Lucy tells me, and I do as she says. Kane walked in then and noticed that everyone was making a fuss over me. His body immediately goes into a protective stance as he walks over to us with concern written all over his face, "what happened?" "We're not sure," Gabriella tells him. "It looked like she was in pain, so we helped her get inside." I didn't want to do this. I didn't want to do anything that would force Kane to show affection for me. As much as I loved his attention, I wouldn't fake any pain to get it. "We need to call a doctor." He insists. "No!" I exclaim. "I don't need a doctor, Kane. I can assure you that I am fine." He doesn't look convinced, and I don't think he realizes what he's doing now. He wasn't making things look good for himself. He'd just found Maya, and yet he insisted that a doctor come to see about me. He didn't

react like this to anyone else except Maya. Wouldn't anyone find his reaction to me a bit weird? I was glad that Maya wasn't here to see this. I'm not sure if he dropped her in her room or if she was spending time with her parents. After all, they were also in terrible pain after thinking that she was possibly dead. "You don't look fine." He says to me. "You're pregnant with twins. Don't you think it's better to be safe than sorry?" "Twins?" Lucy gasps. "She has two babies inside of her?" Gabriella asks in shock. "This is fantastic news!" Isabella says. "The first twins amongst us!" "I think Kane is right about this," Gabriella tells me. "We should have a doctor check on you. To make sure that everything is okay." "I don't need one," I assure them. "If anything happens to me again, I'll tell you. We can call the doctor to see me then." Kane doesn't look happy, but he doesn't try to change my mind. Especially not when Maya finally walks into the room. He immediately masks his concern for me and walks over to her. I heard him ask her if she needed him to get anything for her. Austin and the rest of the men walked in just then. "I think I'm ready to know the truth," Maya says. "Everyone told me they would tell me what I needed to know after we got home. We're home now. I don't want any more excuses. Who is this woman? What happened while I was gone? And why are you so scared to tell me?" Kane guides her to the couch, "I think you need to sit to hear this." "Are you sure you're ready to learn everything?" Austin asks her. "You've been through plenty, Maya. I don't want you to be sad anymore. I need to know you're strong enough." She nods, "when have I ever been weak, brother? I can take it. Tell me." Kane sighs, realizing that he can't change her mind, "the same day you went missing. We all thought that there was a possibility that you were dead. The witch sent your family a letter and strands of your hair. She was claiming that they had killed you. Your brothers thought that I was responsible for it. They came for me, but Gabriella protected me." I look at Gabriella as he gives her a look of appreciation. She smiles, and she even looks like she melts a little. There is no doubt that Gabriella cares a lot more for Kane than she's admitting. She still was keeping something from the rest of us, and I'm not sure when she would be willing to tell us. And it indeed had something to do with Kane. Even Maya looks at Gabriella with pure curiosity. She doesn't know why she would fight to protect him. I expected her to be grateful for her; it's only because of Gabriella that he was still here with us today. But there is no appreciation in her eyes for her at all. "What happened next?" She asks. "After they left, I was devastated, but I wasn't willing to accept that you were gone. I felt your connection even though they wanted me to believe that you were dead. I was going to find you, but something happened to me, preventing me from coming for you." He says without looking at her. I hated seeing him like this. He felt like a failure in front of her, and he shouldn't feel that way. I was by his side; I saw how much he was in pain because of Giselle. He was in despair because he couldn't get to Maya. Giselle was preventing

him from doing that. "There is a woman that has been obsessed with me for years. Her name is Giselle. Her father attacked me when you went missing; he blackmailed me into accepting her. He captured my people and held them in his dungeons. They threatened to kill them if I didn't agree to marry her." Maya doesn't look as surprised by this story as I thought she would be. When she catches everyone looking at her, her expression quickly changes to one of shock. "Are you telling me that while I was fighting to protect my life and our baby's life, you were about to get married to another woman?" She asks in disbelief. I tried to remain calm in the tone of her voice. Does she not realize how much he's already hurting? She doesn't have to try and make him feel worse than he already did. Kane bows his head in shame, "I'm sorry, Maya. I'm so sorry. I tried to get away from her. But I couldn't do anything when all of my people were already locked up. I couldn't ask your brothers for help because they hated my guts and still thought I was responsible for your disappearance. And to be clear, I don't blame anyone for thinking I was responsible. I brought that upon myself after hurting you the first time." "How did you escape then?" She asks him. "And I still don't know who that woman is. What is her name?" Kane looks at me, and I can see the guilt in his eyes, "she doesn't remember her name. She has lost her memories. Giselle forced her to be her maid, knowing that she had nowhere to go. She even tried to kill her." "Then how is she still alive?" Maya asks; she seems to be more interested in my story than Kane's. "Giselle locked her in a cold cell; she tried to freeze her to death. I knew that she was pregnant and that I had to save her and her unborn children. I got to her just in time." "At least you were able to save someone's baby since you weren't capable of saving your own." She tells him in a sarcastic tone. I couldn't stand this anymore. How could she sit there and say those things to him? It was clear that he was already in so much pain from hearing that she'd lost their baby. Did she think that he wanted those things to happen? It was clear that he loved her with all his heart. Why couldn't she see that? "How can you say those things to him?" I demand from her, shocking everyone in the room. "I was there. I saw everything. Every chance he got, Kane would sacrifice his life to find out what happened to you. He was heartbroken every single day that he had to spend without you. You were always in his heart and mind. He didn't care what happened to him; all that mattered to Kane was getting back to you. Can't you see how much your words are hurting him? I understand that you've been through a lot, but he has to. Not a day went by that he didn't think of you. Every second he spent with Giselle was torture for him, but he still stayed strong because he knew he had to be strong for you. I've never seen a man love a woman as he loves you. You should be happy to have someone like him, and you should be happy to have a family like this one. They all love you more than anything else in this world. If you love them, you will try to see that your disappearance didn't only affect you but

everyone here as well!" Maya's eyes narrow at my interruption. The shocked look on everyone's faces tells me that I may have just crossed the line. Why did I do that? Why did I let her words get to me so much? Kane stands up and faces me, "don't you dare ever speak to my mate like that again." My lips part in horror. His words have pierced my heart. I was only trying to protect him. I didn't mean to offend anyone. I couldn't believe that he would stand there and speak to me like that after everything we've been through together. How could he?

Chapter 81 ~MAYA~ "I think we should all calm down," Isabella says as she tries to lighten the mood. "Obviously, everyone is still stressed from everything that has happened to this family recently. Let's not say things in the heat of the moment that can hurt each other. Don't let the events of today ruin what we have." While she had a point, it was still hard for me to accept everything. I couldn't stand here and look at Kane anymore after what he just said to me. I tried to stand up for him, and he attacked me verbally for it. "Will you please excuse me," I say to everyone before I storm out of the room. I don't bother looking his way when I leave. I didn't want to look at him. Kane had finally done what he always said he would; he had hurt me. I was already sad that he was back with Maya, and I knew that from now on, she would always be put above me or anyone else. I was willing to make my peace with that for Kane's happiness until I saw how she spoke with him today. But apparently, I was wrong in Kane's eyes for standing up for him. How could I stay here after the way he just spoke to me? And that wasn't all that had me upset. Why did they let Maya talk to him like that? It was evident that her words were hurting him, and no one seemed to care. And Kane, instead of standing up for himself and telling her what it was like for him without her, lets her say whatever she wants to. I understood that she was having a hard time, but why would she attack the people that cared for her? If they didn't come for her, she would still be locked up in that abandoned castle with nowhere to turn. "Hey!" Gabriella called out to me before I could leave the palace. I wasn't sure where I was heading, I just knew I wanted to escape. I turned to look at her, waiting to hear what she had to say. "I know that you probably don't want to be here right now. I think that it's best if you come home with Arthur and me. You can stay there for as long as you like. We can return when things between you and Maya improve." She tells me. I was glad for her suggestion. I didn't want to see Kane, and I definitely didn't want to see Maya. "Thank you; I'll be happy if we can leave now." I plead with her. She nods, "Arthur is already by the vehicle, and I've said bye to everyone else. They know that you'll be coming with me, so you don't have to worry about telling them." I thank her for another time as we both walk towards the vehicle where Arthur is already waiting for us,

just as she said earlier. Gabriella opened the door for me, and I got into the back seat. The ride to their home was an awkward one. I don't think any of us knew what to say to lighten the mood. I wanted to ask Gabriella if I was wrong standing up for Kane, but I remained quiet. I don't think she will take my side. I don't think anyone would when they love Maya so much. It doesn't take us long to get by Gabriella's home. As soon as we walk in, a little girl runs into her arms and hugs her. "I'll like you to meet our sweet girl, Emma," Gabriella tells me. The girl smiles at me, and I return her smile. She's beautiful, and her smile definitely lights up the room. Arthur picks her up in his arms and tells her that he brought snacks as he walks with her into the kitchen. I wasn't aware that they had any children together. I knew she was pregnant, but I thought it was her first child. Gabriella looked very young; the child couldn't be hers. At least, I didn't know that to be possible. How old would she have had to be to have her? "I didn't know you had a daughter," I tell her, saying what was on my mind. "We adopted her." She explains. "She was just like me before I found out who my parents were. Arthur and I decided to take her in. I already loved her like my own daughter. And Arthur was the one who suggested it when he realized how much I cared for her." Before she found out who her parents were? What did Gabriella mean by that? Did she not know who her parents were at a point in her life? That wasn't important after what she'd just said. I couldn't believe they were so wonderful to adopt the sweet girl. My heart melts at her words, "just when I think your family couldn't get any kinder. She's lucky to have you as her mother." Gabriella smiles, "thank you. Would you like something to eat or drink?" I shook my head; I was still angry and hurt over what had happened earlier. I've done nothing but stick by Kane's side since I first met him. And he's always stuck by my side as well. He never let Giselle mistreat me in any way. He always protected me. This was the first time he's ever spoken so harshly to me before, and the pain I felt was excruciating. I knew that he loved Maya, but how could he speak to me like that when all I was trying to do was make her see that her words were hurting him. "Don't take what he said to you personally," Gabriella tries to comfort me. "I don't think he meant to speak so roughly to you. He was only concerned about Maya." She somehow knows exactly what's bothering me. It's not like I tried to hide it either. I knew that she was right. I knew that he would always support Maya no matter what since she was the love of his life. I just got so angry by the way she was speaking to him. I never liked seeing Kane hurt; whenever he was in pain, somehow, it affected me more. His pain felt like mine. "Between you and me, I don't blame you for what you said to Maya." She continues. I'm surprised that she was taking my side or at least understanding why I acted the way that I did. I was sure that she would pick up for Maya just like Kane had done. "You don't?" I asked to confirm that I had heard her correctly. She shook her head and poured herself some water, "not at all. Maya had it

coming. I understand that she's going through plenty but taking it out on Kane was uncalled for. Maybe she's still hurt about the past. I'm not sure what's going on with her. I know that she was wrong for making it look like Kane was wrong for protecting you and your babies. She made it sound like he intentionally let their baby die. He wasn't the one to push her down the stairs, and from what you've told us, it was clear that he had gone through hell without her. I knew he kept blaming himself for everything that happened. Her telling him that he was to blame for the loss of their baby was only making him feel more guilty than he already did." I couldn't hide my surprise from hearing her say everything I was thinking. "Exactly!" I snap. "How could she do that to him? I've heard Kane talk about Maya, and he called her a ray of sunshine. The way he spoke about her, I expected her to be a lot more loving. He said that she protected him from her brothers at one point when they almost killed him for hurting her. The woman that I saw today didn't look like someone who would ever protect him. Today was the first day that I met her, and I can't judge her, but it's hard not to. She's nothing like the person Kane described to me." "I haven't known her that long either," Gabriella tells me. "But I can also sense that something is not right. She doesn't seem like the same Maya to me at all. Something is off about her. Maybe the witch did something to her. I'm not sure what's going on, but someone needs to find out what happened to her in that abandoned castle." Arthur whistles behind us, "I can see that you two are getting along well." Gabriella rolls her eyes, "yes, we are, and if you haven't realized, you're disturbing us." He laughs and kisses her on her cheek, "you don't need to tell me twice." I watch as he leaves us to continue with our discussion. "I thought that I was the only one that realized something was off with Maya," I tell her. "I'm surprised that no one else saw it." "I think it's because we're not directly related to her somehow," Gabriella answers me. "Everyone else has close ties with her and is happy that she's home. They're too blinded by love to realize that something is wrong with her. Or maybe they saw it too but are trying to be understanding since she's been through plenty recently. But we're different; we can see straight through her." I had to agree with Gabriella on that. They were blinded, especially Kane. If he opened his eyes a little, maybe he would be able to tell that something was off about his mate. "Hopefully, she returns to her normal self soon before she breaks Kane's heart more. I hate to see him in pain. Giselle made him suffer greatly, especially when Maya wasn't by his side. Now that Maya had returned, I hoped she would treat him well. So far, that isn't happening. She's making things harder for him. I'm afraid of what will happen to him if she continues to push him like that." I'm surprised when Gabriella doesn't respond. I turn to look at her and am startled to find her staring at me as though she's seeing me in a new light. "What's wrong?" I ask her. "You care about Kane plenty," she points out. "Don't you?" Oh damn. What was I thinking speaking so freely to her? Gabriella made it

easy to talk to her, so easy that I forgot to hide how much I cared about Kane. "Come to think of it. Kane also seems to care a great deal about you." She added before I could answer. "I've only seen him that concerned about one other person, Maya. You're a lovely person, but I don't think that's enough to make Kane worry about you the way that he does. He doesn't seem like the type of person to fuss over someone he doesn't care for." My cheeks are red, and I don't think it's helping my situation. "You care about him also. A lot." I bring up something I've pointed out before. I'm trying to change the topic, but I'm also curious to know what's between the two of them. Why did she care for him so much? She already had a mate she was head over heels in love with. So what is it about Kane that makes her want to protect him? Gabriella sighs and takes another sip of her water, "I wasn't supposed to bring this up with anyone, but I think it's safe to say that I can trust you. I need you to promise me that you will not tell Kane. I'm waiting for the right time to tell him." I nod, "I promise. As you said, you can trust me. Whatever it is, I won't tell anyone, not even Kane." Her hand tightens around the glass, and I can tell this isn't an easy topic for her, "before I tell you. I'll have to give you a little glimpse into my life. When I was a child, I was kidnapped from my home. But I wasn't the only one; my twin brother was also kidnapped. I was left to die in the woods. I don't think it's any use telling you what happened to me next. That's not important to this story. When I met Arthur, my life completely changed. We had many struggles before we could finally be together. Again, I'm not going to tell you the details of those struggles. But I eventually found my birth parents, and they told me about my brother. It turns out that they never found him. I honestly didn't think that there was a chance that we would ever find him. But now, I think I may have found him." My lips part, "you think that Kane is your long-lost brother?" I ask her before she can finish. She smiles, "I don't know how to explain it, but I feel this strong sisterly connection whenever I'm around him. I constantly want to protect him from any harm. I'm always worried about him. And I can't deny that he also shares some resemblance to me. But I don't have enough proof. I only found my parents because of an amulet they'd left on me. Maya's family was able to help me find my parents because of that amulet. They recognized it immediately. I was hoping that Kane would also have the same amulet as I did, but when I asked him, he told me he didn't. I don't want to mention it to him until I have more proof, but so far, I'm not getting anywhere." "If I'm being honest, when I first saw you, I immediately saw a resemblance between the two of you. I also think that he is your brother. He has to be." I tell her. "But what does that mean about his father? He mentioned that his father and sister were killed by Maya's family. Does this mean that they weren't his real family? Were they responsible for his kidnapping as well as yours?" Gabriella shrugs her shoulders, "I know he is my brother. It definitely means that they were not his real family. From what I've heard about

his father and sister, I can tell you that they weren't good people. It's why Maya's family got rid of them. They were causing too many problems for everyone else. If Austin and everyone else didn't fight back, they would probably be the ones dead right now.

Knowing everything I knew about his father and sister, I can say that there is a good chance that his father was responsible. I'm not sure what his intention was or if someone he knew performed the disgusting act; I hope that I can prove this to Kane." What would happen if Kane found out that his whole life was a complete lie? His father had most likely lied to him. He wasn't his real dad. Kane already had so much going on in his life; this would only destroy him more. But it could also help give him the support he needed. He wasn't alone. He had a sister, and he had a family. I just wasn't sure that he would be willing to accept them. "This will explain why you protected him from Maya's family." I point out. She nods, "I couldn't watch them hurt him. They were going to kill him. I couldn't stand back and watch it happen. I knew I had to stop them before it was too late. I almost cried that day; I knew that he was hurting, but no one else could see it. Their rage blinded them so that none of them saw that he was dying inside of the news of what had happened to Maya. He was her mate; they were bonded; of course, he would feel it more than anyone else." I bite my lip to keep from crying. Hearing what Kane had to go through in the past always made me tear up inside. And now I was getting more details on the events in his life before I met him. "Have you ever considered going to his home?" I ask her. "Not Kane's, but his father's. Maybe there will be something there that can prove that he is your brother. I doubt that Kane would easily accept your words. He doesn't seem like the type who would give in easily. He would want proof to accept that his father and sister weren't even blood-related to him. If he went through so much to avenge their deaths, he clearly loves them a lot. This only means that the last thing he will want to hear is that they weren't his family, to begin with. That they'd lied to him since the beginning." Gabriella looks surprised by my suggestion, "I have never thought of that actually. But you are right. Why didn't I think of it before? It is possible that there would be clues in that house. As far as I know, I don't think Kane visited that home since they died. I could be wrong, however." "If you want, I'll be happy to help you look. I'm willing to do anything to help you prove that he is your brother." Gabriella touches my hand, "thank you so much. You don't know how much that will mean to me." I smile. I know that she still wanted to ask me why I was so willing to help when it concerned Kane, but she didn't. And I'm grateful for that. She was so honest with me that I didn't want to lie to her. If she asked again, I would have no choice but to tell her the truth. I will have to tell her that I liked Kane a lot, and my feelings might have been stronger than just liking him. But hopefully, for now, I didn't have to give her the answer that she wanted. I could keep that secret with me for as long as possible.

Chapter 82 ~KANE~ f\*\*k me. I couldn't get the damn girl out of my head. I kept replaying the look of shock and hurt on her face when I told her to never speak to Maya like that again. I knew that she was fighting for my benefit, saying things that no one else was willing to say to Maya. But still, it wasn't something I could sit back and let her do. Maya had just lost our baby. I know that Maya's words weren't the kindest, but she was hurting. The hurt was causing bitterness in her words towards me. I know that it may have been hard for the girl to listen to after being by my side this entire time. She knew exactly what I had to go through without Maya. And she's been nothing but loving and kind towards me. I hate to admit it, but she's probably the reason why I was able to break free from Giselle. Her support had helped me plenty during that difficult period of my life. She may not realize it, and it's probably because I've never told her, and I don't think I'll ever be able to now that Maya is back in my life. But even after knowing all of this and being grateful for her, I couldn't sit back and let her make Maya feel bad. I didn't want her to feel uncomfortable and unhappy after everything she's already been through. But speaking that way to the girl had left me feeling extremely angry and guilty about myself. She has been nothing but gentle towards me. She didn't deserve the way I spoke to her. I didn't know if I'd done the right thing. At that time, I was only trying to protect Maya's feelings; I didn't think that I would be hurting her in the process. Now I felt like a complete ass. The one person that has stood by my side since the first day she met me, I'd managed to hurt her. I knew that would have happened eventually. I always knew that I would hurt her. Anyone that was in my life that cared for me, I always ended up hurting them. She wasn't an exception, even though I wanted it to be that way. I let the water fall over my body in the shower. I was trying to cool the fire within my veins that hadn't left since the moment I hurt her. I finally had Maya back, but that apparently couldn't stop me from thinking about the girl. From caring for her, from hurting because I hurt her. The sadness in her pretty eyes would haunt me for the rest of my f\*\*\*\*\*g life. How did I make this better? How did I let this woman go? I had no choice but to make it happen. I had to find a way to forget about her. And I had an opportunity to make that happen yesterday. I could have told her that she was a burden to us, that it was better if she left. But I knew damn well that I could never get those words out of my mouth. Not when it was directed at her. I slam my fist against the wall. This is all because of her. My feelings are in f\*\*\*\*\*g tangles because of her. And I have no f\*\*\*\*\*g clue why. Who was she to me? Why does she affect me so much? I protected Maya today, just like I knew I should. But instead of feeling happy about my actions, I felt like a damn fool. I felt like I'd done the worse thing possible. And the girl was no longer here. She'd left with Gabriella. I couldn't see her face, making things harder for me. I thought that not seeing her would be the best thing for me, but I was wrong. It's anything but easy not having her in front of

me. I knew that Gabriella would keep her safe, but for some reason, that wasn't enough for me. I wanted to make sure that she was safe on my own; I didn't want anyone else to have to do that but me. I was the only person I could trust when it came to her. She was so delicate that anyone would want to protect her at all costs. But I did the opposite of that yesterday. f\*\*\*\*\*g HELL! What was wrong with me? I've been praying for the day that I will find my mate again. Ever since she went missing, she was all I had on my mind. It was always her. I was desperate to have her back in my life. But I can't deny that the maid had my attention too. It had times that I put her above finding Maya, and I still felt guilty for it. Especially now that I knew Maya lost our baby while trying to escape from the witch. A damn bloody witch that we still hadn't found up to now. Maya gave us all the information she could think of to help us find her, but it was barely anything. It wasn't enough to track the witch down. This is what I should be thinking about. Ways that I could catch that witch and make her pay for everything she's done to my mate and our baby. She had to f\*\*\*\*\*g pay. But even though I knew this, my mind kept going back to the girl, replaying the look on her face, over and over again. Why did I let her get under my skin? Why did I let things get so far between the two of us that I craved her presence when she was no longer around me? "Kane?" Maya calls. It's a reminder that I needed to get my s\*\*t together, at least for her. No one else matters to me but her. I had to stop getting distracted at a time like this. "You've been in there for a while!" She shouts. "Is something wrong?" I stop the shower and wrap myself with a towel. "No," I tell her as I exit it. "Everything's fine." I had to stay here until my people had rebuilt our home from scratch. There wasn't much left of it. This would give Maya time to spend with her family as well. I knew that both sides missed each other. I wouldn't want to separate them at a time like this. Her family already didn't like me too much. I didn't want to give them a reason to dislike me even more. "I wanted to thank you for standing up for me yesterday." She says as she looks at me. Her eyes traveled down my body, and they did nothing for me. Usually, when she does something like that, I'm dying to touch her. To get closer to her. To eat her f\*\*\*\*\*g alive. But I felt none of those intense emotions right now. I blame it on the girl. She entered my life, and now everything felt upside down. "You don't have to thank me, Maya," I respond. "From now on, you're the only person that matters to me. I'll always put you above everyone else. I won't let anyone mistreat you, not even me." She smiles and hugs me, "thank you." I wrap my arms around her despite the voice screaming in my head not to do it. "I know that this may be too early for me to ask this question, but it's been on my mind for a while," I say. "Do you think you can forgive me for all the times I've hurt you in the past? Can you forgive me for not being there for you when you needed me the most?" She goes still in my arms, and I can tell that she isn't sure yet. "You don't need to answer me right away," I assure her. "Take

your time. I'm not going to rush you." "Thank you," she whispers. "I need some time to rethink everything. I'll give you my answer eventually. For now, continue to hold me. I need this." Why does holding my mate feel so wrong to me? This used to be the best feeling in the damn world. And now it felt like the worst. What had changed? I should be holding onto her as tightly as our bodies would let me. I shouldn't be this hesitant for something so simple. There is a knock on the door, and I'm grateful for the interruption. I didn't think I'd ever be this happy to not hug my mate. I throw a shirt over my head and rush to open the door. "What were you two love birds up to?" Lucy teases us. Maya laughs, "nothing different from what you and Austin are often doing." Lucy blushes, "I came to ask you something. I want your opinion before I go ahead with something." "And what is that?" Maya asks her. "Well, I know that you and Giselle's maid aren't exactly on the best terms after yesterday, but we wanted to invite her to the party tomorrow. She's staying with Gabriella; it will look bad if we send an invitation for Gabriella and Arthur but not for her. I just wanted to make sure that it wouldn't be uncomfortable for either one of you." Before Maya could respond, I answered for her, "she isn't a threat to us. Yesterday was just a big misunderstanding. I'm sure she won't do anything like that again. You can invite her." I wanted to see her. I was almost desperate to see her again. I know that it was wrong, but my desperation got the best of me. Lucy smiles, "that's wonderful. And Maya, I know that you haven't exactly gotten a chance to know her properly. I think you might like her. Just give her a chance and get to know her better." Maya doesn't respond, but I can tell from her expression that she doesn't believe Lucy. She doesn't like her at all. I don't think I've ever seen Maya dislike someone this much before. Things are awkward between us; she isn't happy that I answered Lucy before she could. I wasn't thinking straight. When will I ever learn?

Chapter 83 ~MAYA~ "I have a surprise for you!" Gabriella tells me as she walks into the room. "And that is?" I ask, curious. "A dress!" She says with excitement as she drops the short, blue dress on the bed for me. I've never gotten anything this beautiful to wear before. At least not since I became Giselle's maid and had no memory of the past. "Is there a special occasion?" I ask her. "Are you and Arthur planning something to celebrate your relationship?" "Actually," she says, looking guilty all of a sudden. "It's kind of a bribe. I know that you probably don't want to be around Maya right now. But they are hosting a small party for her return. It's nothing big, at least that's what they told me. I believe the bigger celebration is in a week. This one is only for close family and friends. Lucy said that she asked Maya and Kane if it was okay for you to be there, and they agreed that it's best to put everything that happened behind them." I find that hard to

believe. Maya always glared at me as though she hated me. I didn't think this was a simple dislike; she seemed like she couldn't stand my face. And did Kane also agree to this? Even he looked like he didn't want to be around me after the way he'd spoken to me the last time I saw him. "Are you sure they agreed to this?" I ask her. "Maybe Lucy just said they did to get me to come in hopes that I wouldn't feel horrible over what had happened. I know how kind-hearted Lucy is; I'm sure she's worried over what had happened between us." "Lucy is indeed kind hearted, but I can assure you that she isn't a liar. If she said they agreed to have you at the party, I believe her, and you should also." She answers me. "It will give us a chance to examine Maya some more properly. We need to find out if her attitude has improved or if she's still acting out of her character." That was a good idea. Kane may have spoken rough to me and hurt me, but that didn't mean that I would automatically stop caring for him. I couldn't switch my feelings off like a light bulb. This was something I had to live with for the rest of my life. And I didn't blame him for the way he reacted either. At first, I was mad, but I finally understood that he couldn't control his emotions. It was his first instinct to protect his mate. "What are you wearing to the party?" I ask Gabriella. She smiles, "I thought that we could match. I got a blue dress as well. It's just a long one with a slit on the left side." I loved the idea of the both of us matching to the party. Gabriella felt like a sister to me, and we barely even knew each other. "I think that is a great idea!" She grins, "get ready quickly. I'll help with your hair and makeup." "Why does it look like you've been waiting months to do someone's hair and makeup?" I tease her. She laughs, "well, aren't I lucky to have you here with me now!" Arthur walks in just then and looks at us, "we need to leave in an hour, and you girls aren't ready. We are going to be late." "You sound like our dad!" Gabriella mumbles. "I don't think your dad will do this," Arthur says as he pulls her in for a deep kiss. Gabriella melts in his arms, and I pretend to cover my eyes, "I think you need to get a room!" She laughs and hurries him out of the room. "Let's get ready before he starts complaining that we made him reach late to the party." I laugh and do as she says. It takes us exactly an hour to get the dress on and get our hair and makeup done. "You look stunning!" Gabriella tells me after I give a little swirl for her. "I love how the dress fits. It's like it was made just for you." "Can we take a moment to appreciate how good you look?" I ask her. She looked beautiful, and from the way Arthur stared at her with longing, I wasn't the only one to think that. I wish that Kane would look at me like that at least once in my life. Ugh. Why was I thinking about him again? I promised myself that I would try to keep my distance from him and Maya tonight for my own mental health. However, how could I do that when my heart did a little jump at just the thought of getting to see him again tonight. I hate to admit it, but I was looking forward to seeing him. I missed not having him close to me. It felt like we were too far from each other. It

was bothering me more than I wanted it to. As much as I tried to fight it, I wasn't winning the battle. It doesn't take us long to reach the palace, and my heart is pounding against my chest as we step out of the vehicle. "Don't be nervous," Gabriella tells me. "I'll be by your side during the entire night. And don't let Maya's attitude get to you either. If it doesn't bother Kane, why should we let it bother us?" But it did bother Kane. He wasn't willing to admit it because he felt like he deserved it. I knew this much about him. He loved to blame himself for everything. The first thing I notice when we step inside is that the hall is filled with a lot more people than I was expecting. Wasn't this just supposed to be for family and friends? How many friends did they have? I would assume they probably had as many friends as they did enemies. And I learned that this group had a lot of enemies. "There they are," Gabriella whispers to me. It was a warning to prepare myself. The moment my eyes fell on Kane, everything else in the room disappeared. All I could see was him. I could hear the loud pounding of my heart, threatening to burst free. Of course, it would react this way to seeing him after missing him constantly since I left here. This wasn't good. I thought I could try and avoid him, but I was clearly wrong. How could I avoid someone that was in the spotlight? This was about to be a long night.

Chapter 84 ~MAYA~ Right next to Kane is the woman that he's told me multiple times before that he's crazy in love with. The woman that is his joy. The same woman that he once told me was too important to him for him to mention her name to someone like me. I still remember how much those words had bothered me. She looks absolutely stunning tonight. She's wearing a short white dress, matching heels, and earrings that shone all the way from where she was standing. Everything about her screams beauty: even if they weren't mates, I'm sure she would have caught Kane's attention or any man that wasn't already taken. I'm sure thinking about her beauty will not help the jealousy in my heart. I don't want to be jealous, but I am. It wasn't just because it was her; I would be jealous of any woman that had this man's heart. Because since the first day I met him, I've wished that his heart would belong to me. Maya spots me, and the look she gives me tells me that she isn't happy that I'm here. She stops talking to Kane and focuses on me. I'm not happy that she is here either. It's clear to see that neither of us likes the other. Kane follows her gaze, and his body turns to stone the moment that his eyes fall on me. I try not to shiver when his gaze takes in my dress; I don't think he's ever seen me this dressed up before. And it's all thanks to Gabriella. I'm not sure what he thinks of it, but I don't want to let it bother me too much. His eye is back on Maya, realizing that she's still looking at me. He knows that we aren't on good terms, not after the last day we saw each other. "I don't think Maya was truthful when she told Lucy she would be fine with me coming here," I

tell Gabriella, who follows my gaze. She takes my hand and pulls me towards everyone else, "let's not give her the attention she is seeking for now." I let Gabriella pull me along until we stopped by Lucy and Isabella. Both women look fabulous, but they always do. "I love your dresses!" Lucy compliments us. "And we love both of yours!" I respond.

"There will be a dance in a few minutes," Isabella informs us. "We are allowed to switch partners during each change of song." "I bet our mates are not happy about that," Eden says as she joins us. Lucy grins, "a little jealousy won't hurt them. Besides, everyone here is family and friends. Nothing for them to get upset about. Everyone here knows that most of us are already taken." "Don't forget someone next to me," Gabriella says with a wink. "Maybe she can find a partner tonight." Finding a partner was the last thing on my mind. I already knew that no one could take Kane's place. No matter how hard I may try to accept another man in my life, no one will live up to my high expectations. He was the only one for me, and it just so happened that he was already taken. "You're right," Lucy agrees with Gabriella. "If there is anyone you're interested in here tonight, don't hesitate to tell us. We can help introduce you to them." She says to me. I shook my head, "I'm not looking for anyone. I don't think it's wise to find a partner while pregnant." The only person I would trust is Kane, no one else. He has repeatedly proven that I can trust him, excluding the one time he hurt me. And if I would want a father for my children, again, I would only want it to be him. I knew with all my heart that Kane would be a fantastic father. He had that protective instinct in him. He would protect my children as no other man could. I'm sure of it. But why was I even thinking so far? He could never be the father of my children. I didn't even know who the father was. "Be sure to let us know if you change your mind," Isabella says. I'm about to respond when Maya joins us. I look around for Kane, but he is with the men. And he isn't looking in my direction. I was hoping he would have been looking forward to seeing me, but I was wrong. It looks like he was happy that I had left with Gabriella. "How are you feeling?" Lucy asks Maya. "A lot better. Kane doesn't give me a chance to be sad; he's constantly finding things for us to do to keep my mind away from the bad stuff that happened to me. I'm lucky I have him." She tells us. I know I'm stupid for thinking that she's only saying this to get to me, but I can't help but feel that way. It feels like it's directed at me. It's almost like she wants me to know that Kane only cares for her. She doesn't need to remind me; he's said it enough times for me to know this. It's funny how much her words have changed since the last time I saw her. She seemed to have a problem with Kane back then. Now she claimed that she was happy because of him and even said that she was lucky to have him. "I do not doubt in my mind after what I saw between the two of you today," Lucy teases her. "I'm sure I interrupted something special." My heart stopped for a quick second after hearing Lucy's words. Did they already sleep together? Was that what she was implying?

It was bad enough that I knew she had him, but to hear that they were moving so fast was hard for me to accept. I knew it was something I would have to get used to eventually, but I didn't want to be a part of a conversation surrounding the details of their relationship.

"The dance is about to start!" Lucy exclaims. "And everyone must take part." I'm not sure that this is something that I want to do, but Lucy doesn't look like she's going to take no for an answer. The girls are already forcing all the men to join as well. They weren't kidding when they said they wanted every person here to participate. I'm partnered with someone I've never met before. He introduces himself to me as Miles. And, of course, he's shocked to know that I don't have a name to introduce myself. He probably thinks that I don't want to tell him, and I'm okay with that if it ensures that he doesn't try to pursue me. The song switches, and the next person I'm partnered with is Arthur. I'm okay with that since Arthur is already like a brother to me. We've spoken a few times since they'd offered their home for me to stay in. "Are you annoyed that Gabriella is dancing with someone other than you?" I tease as Gabriella grins at us. He growls, "she sure is enjoying herself. I'll see how she likes it when I get to her tonight." Before I know it, we're switching again. My eyes widen when I'm practically thrown into Kane's arms. I didn't once think that I would get the chance to dance with him tonight. Kane's hand tightens on my waist as he pulls me closer to his body; out of all my dance partners, he's the first to hold me this close. It makes my heart do a little flip-flop, and I want to slap myself for letting him affect me so much. The playing song happens to be a slow one, and I want to curse at my fate. We are forced to move in a slow-motion along with each other. His hands are warm on my waist, and I can feel the skin tingle where he's touching me. What's wrong with me? Why couldn't I feel this tingle for a man that wasn't taken? I'm not sure if anyone notices the tension between us, but I can't seem to bring myself to care. "You're very quiet." Kane finally breaks the silence between us. "Am I?" I ask, feigning ignorance. "I haven't noticed." His jaw clenches, and he brings my body closer to his, "is there something you want to say to me?" I take a deep breath, "am I allowed to say anything? It seems like my opinion on anything important is a problem for you. I'll rather not say anything to avoid your wrath. I don't want a replay of what happened the last time I saw you. Speaking up in your favor is apparently frowned upon." Kane's hand travels up my back and pushes me so close that my chest is pressed against his; he leans down so that his lips are close to my ear, "it's not frowned upon. I understood why you spoke up, but I don't think you realize how much your words could have hurt Maya. After everything she's been through, don't you think that was a bit too rough on her?" I pull back to look at him, "And what about you? Are your feelings not important? You're so concerned about hurting her that you don't care that her words were hurting you. I'm sorry if my words offended her or you, but unlike everyone else in the room, I couldn't

stand back and let her continue to hurt you. If she's your mate, shouldn't she not want to hurt you?" He sighs, "my relationship with Maya is complicated. Our past continues to push us apart. And that's my fault. It's why I don't blame Maya for anything. It's because I know I'm the reason why things are how they are right now." "When are you going to stop blaming yourself for everything bad that happens in your life?" I ask him. Since I've met him, that's all he's ever done. He always believes that he's at fault. He's about to say something when the song changes. It's time for us to change partners, but I know in my heart that I don't want to. I've missed being this close to him, and it may be the only form of physical contact that I can get since Maya was back in his life. "I don't want to switch," I whisper, hating myself more for admitting this to him. "I barely know anyone. You're the only one I'm this comfortable with." A muscle ticks in his jaw as he stares at me; I'm unsure what he's thinking. Is he upset that I've told him how I really felt about it? The next guy in line to dance with me taps on his shoulder, and Kane gives him one of the deadliest glares I've ever seen in my entire life. The man quirks a brow, "if you didn't want to switch, you could have just said so." He says as he leaves us alone. I look up at him in awe, surprised that he just did that for me, "thank you." He nods, but I can sense that he's having a battle within himself, "how has it been living with Gabriella? Are they treating you good?" I'm surprised that he's concerned about how they're treating me. "Gabriella is one of the nicest women I've met in my life. Of course, she's nothing like Giselle. Both her and Arthur always make sure that I'm happy and comfortable." I answer him. I wish I had the proof to show him that Gabriella was his sister. I knew how much she would want for him to see the truth. Kane's hand travels back down to my waist, and I gasp with the rush of emotions that soon follow. It feels so good having his hands on my body again. And I desperately want more. I know that this would never be enough. I'll always want more of him even though I know he's off-limits. "You know more than anyone else that I've always wanted you to be happy," I whisper. "Seeing you with Giselle always made me sad because I knew that she was the last person you wanted to be with. I know how much you've wanted Maya back in your life, and you finally got your wish. But I've noticed that you haven't been as happy as you should be now that you have her. What's wrong? Why aren't you happy?" I don't know if it's my place to ask him this question, but it's been bothering me. I can tell when he isn't happy, and he is far from happy now. "Hey," Gabriella interrupts us. "Can I speak to you in private?" Kane's hand tightens around me like he doesn't want to let me go. "Now!" Gabriella pressed. I look between Kane and her before nodding and following after her. She doesn't stop until she's found a quiet place for us to talk. After checking that no one was around, she turned to me. "What the hell are you thinking?" I frown, "did I do something wrong?" She holds her head in frustration, "did you not see what you and Kane were doing in the middle of

the dance floor? I could swear that the two of you wanted to be on top of each other with how close you were dancing. Nothing could possibly pass between you two. I don't know if you've realized, but he has a mate. Honestly, what is truly going on between you and my brother? And I don't want any excuses. I want to know the truth. What I saw out there didn't look like two friends talking. I also saw him practically glare at some guy who wanted to dance with you. That's not how the game goes; you're supposed to switch partners between songs. But you already know that since you were switching before he came around. What's baffling me the most about this entire thing is that he's already a bonded man. He has a mate who he can't live without. He's not supposed to be looking at another woman as though he wants to eat her alive. And believe me, that's precisely how he was looking at you. I consider you like a sister; I would appreciate it if you could tell me the truth and not lie to me. Something is not right at all. I don't know if either of you even realized what you were doing. You're lucky I was the first to see and no one else. If Maya's brothers had seen what I just did, there would be an uproar inside there right now, and I don't think I would have been able to stop them from hurting him this time." I was not sure how to respond to Gabriella when I barely knew what was happening between us, but I knew that I couldn't lie to her; if I wanted our relationship to continue to be as good as it was, I had to be honest with her like she was honest with me. "I promise to tell you everything," I assure her. "But not here. They are too many people here, and it's a long story. When we return home, I'll tell you every detail without leaving anything out." She sighs, "okay. You both nearly gave me a heart attack after what I just saw. It's like you aren't careful around each other." I swallow; how bad must it have looked to her for her to react this way? It was true that I did get lost and forgot about everything else whenever I was next to Kane. It happened so often that I was surprised that it took Giselle so long to catch us. And still, she never saw us while we were being physical. She only caught us alone together, and it was enough for her to try and kill me. Somehow or the other, I always got so caught up in Kane that I forgot that there were people around us. "I'm sorry," I apologize. "Thank you for stopping us before something serious happened tonight." She nods, "I care about you both. Of course, I wouldn't just stand back and watch you two do something that could hurt you both. Now let's get back to the party before someone hears this conversation." When Gabriella and I return to the party, I'm both devastated and shocked to see Kane now dancing with Maya. She's laughing and kissing his cheek, breaking my heart into two. Just a few minutes ago, I was the one next to him. I was the one he had his hands on. Now I had no choice but to watch him with the woman he wanted. I don't know why I always did this to myself. "We just spoke about this," Gabriella whispers. "You're not exactly hiding your emotions well. I can see straight through you, and if I can, everyone here can as well." I bite my lip to keep from

screaming in frustration. This is so hard. How can I hide my feelings? I couldn't do that! It just wasn't possible. I know that Gabriella is trying to protect me, but I don't know how to keep my emotions in check. "I think we should leave now," I tell her. "I don't want to see any more of this. And it will give me the chance to explain everything to you." Gabriella looks at me for a few seconds, and she finally seems to realize that I was telling the truth. And I was. The more I had to stand here and see Kane with Maya, the more my heart would break, and I might do something stupid that would cause problems for all of us. She walks over to Arthur and tells him that it was time for us to leave. He looks surprised, but he doesn't try and stop her. "You're leaving so soon?" Lucy pouts. "There are so many other activities I had lined up for us." "I'm sorry, Lucy, but I don't feel well. You know how it is when you're pregnant. It's not something you can control." Gabriella apologizes. Lucy gives her a sympathetic smile, "I understand. Been there and don't want to have to go through it again. At least not anytime soon. We can plan a different day and have the activities done on that day instead. Go home and rest." Gabriella thanks her, and we both say goodbye once more to everyone. I can feel Kane's eyes on me as I leave the room. Even though Maya's in his arms right now, he doesn't take his gaze off me, and for some reason, it makes my body overjoyed. I'm happy that he's noticed me tonight. I'm happy that, for once, I'm the center of his attention. At least for a few seconds before it goes back to her. As soon as we're near the vehicle, Gabriella doesn't even bother going to the front with Arthur; she jumps into the back seat with me as well. "You have some explaining to do." She says. I thought we were waiting until we got home? "We have time now," Gabriella says as though reading my mind. I guess it was time for her to know the truth.

Chapter 85 "I don't know where to start," I say. "Do I want to know what this conversation will be about?" Arthur asks in the front seat. "You do," Gabriella tells him. "I'm sure this will affect all of us in the days to come. From what I've seen so far, those two cannot control themselves around each other." "Those two?" Arthur asks, not aware of what was happening. He didn't listen to our conversation before, he wasn't around, which would explain why he was so lost right now. It didn't seem like Gabriella would waste any time explaining it to him either. She appeared impatient to hear the story from me. She points at me, "she and Kane." He quirks a brow, "you're not making any sense, Gabriella. How can't they control themselves?" "Maybe if you let her tell the story, you'll understand." He shrugs his shoulders, "go ahead. I'm listening." "Kane and I first met when Giselle introduced him as her fiance," I explain. "From the moment I first saw him, there was this instant connection. My heart and body both felt like they belonged to him.

I know it's crazy to say that, considering he loves Maya, but the feelings was definitely there." Arthur looks puzzled in the front seat, and I don't blame him. "Keep going." Gabriella encourages me. "I could see how sad and miserable that he was. I didn't know that he was in love with Maya or that she was presumed dead. All I knew was that he always looked depressed, and I wanted to be the one to make him happy. Kane knew that I had no memory of my past, and he knew that Giselle never really liked me by how she treated me. There were many times where he protected me from her." "I'm not sure I like where this story is heading," Arthur says. "It seems like there may be trouble ahead from where it's going. Trouble loves following us." "Shhh!" Gabriella shushed him. "I want to hear the rest of this." She waits for me to continue, and I take a deep breath before speaking again. "Soon enough, I realized that I might be pregnant. With no memory of my past, I wasn't sure if it was possible. I asked Kane to help me since I didn't trust anyone else. I knew Giselle would probably get rid of me if she knew I was pregnant, and Kane was the only one who's always been kind towards me. I knew that he was my best and maybe only option at the time." "And did he agree to help you?" she asks me. "Look who's interrupting now," Arthur says dryly. She waves her hand at him and waits for me to continue with the story. "I knew that Giselle couldn't find out what we were up to, and so we slipped something in her drink so that she would fall asleep long enough to do what we had to. It worked, and Kane was able to carry me by a doctor who happens to be a close friend. The doctor confirmed that I was pregnant with twins. That day, something happened with Kane. He didn't seem happy with the news; it bothered him. Now I know he reacted that way because Maya was pregnant when she disappeared. It's sad now that I know her baby didn't make it. There were times when Kane would say weird things; he didn't want me calling his name because he said it reminded him of someone. I later found out that he was referring to Maya. My voice reminds him of hers. Despite everything that was happening in his life, Kane always protected me. He saved me from one of Giselle's friends who tried to take advantage of me, and he also saved me when I almost drowned another time." "I never thought of Kane to be that kind of man. He seems like someone to only care about family. People close to him. Not someone he barely knows." Arthur notes. "Did he protect anyone else as strongly as he did you?" Gabriella asks me. I shook my head, "not that I know of." She nods and tells me to continue. "This is where things got a bit more serious," I warn them. "Giselle announced their engagement suddenly. Kane was devastated while she was overjoyed. It was hard for me to watch. It broke my heart to see him so helpless. I knew that he didn't want to marry her; I knew that he loved another woman. That day Kane got extremely drunk, and he did something that I can safely say scarred the both of us." My body shivers at the memory of our kiss. It still affects me today. And I wish that I could kiss him freely without caring

about the consequences. "I'm afraid to find out what you mean by that, but I'm in too deep already," Gabriella confessed. "I need you to remember that Kane was drunk and didn't know what he was up to. He was devastated that he had just gotten engaged to a woman he didn't like. I tried to comfort him because, as I said, it was breaking my heart to see him like that. Kane has always been to me, a knight in shining armor. He's always made everything better for me. I wanted to do the same for him. He kissed me that night, thinking that I was Maya. He called me by her name, and it was then that I was able to find out the name of the woman he was so deeply in love with. I knew that I had to stop the kiss before it was too late. I knew Kane well enough to know that he would blame himself for kissing me while he was drunk. And I didn't want him to do that to himself. He always blames himself for everything that goes wrong. I was eventually able to stop him, but the next day, he remembered everything and questioned me about it." "Anyone wants a snack?" Arthur asks. "I was carrying this back for Emma, but I think we can take a few for storytime." Gabriella grabs the snack from his hand, "will you stop interrupting? It's just getting good." "Says the one nibbling on the snack right now," Arthur says as he shakes his head at her. "Ignore him," Gabriella says to me. "I tried to lie to him. I wanted him to believe that he hadn't kissed me. I was only trying to protect him, but somehow, he knew the truth. He didn't believe me, and he was angry that I had lied to him even though it was apparent that I only did it to protect him. That same day Giselle planned for him to attend a football game with her. I believe she said that it was the Angelites Academy. One of the wealthiest schools around, but I assume you probably already know that since it's a famous school for all the rich kids from what I heard Giselle say. She dragged me along to the game with her, and that's where I met three lovely girls. They were very nice to me, just like you are. But that's not a part of this story. Giselle found Kane and me standing very close, deep in a conversation. She couldn't handle seeing us like that, but I knew she wanted to get rid of me from the beginning; she just used this as an excuse. She locked me in a cold cell. One that her father had helped build at their abandoned castle. She wanted me to freeze to my death. I don't know how Kane managed to get away from her long enough to save me. When he finally got to me, I was freezing my ass off. I was so cold that I was sure I would have died if he didn't get me warm. Kane realized how cold I was and tried to warm me with his body. It wasn't enough; he eventually removed his clothes; mine was already gone since Giselle had stripped me while I was in the cell. She just wanted me dead." "I don't think the next half of this story is appropriate for kids." Arthur cuts in. I know he is trying to lighten the mood. "There aren't any kids here." Gabriella points out. "Yes, our baby in your belly and the twins in hers." Gabriella rolls her eyes, "what exactly happened next?" My cheeks are flaming as I continue, "things got heated between us. Kane was only trying to save me; he

had no hidden intention. We did something we shouldn't have; it didn't get as far as sleeping together, but it was intense and more than a kiss. We eventually stopped because we both knew that if we went any further, there was no going back. I was also warm enough to survive; there was no need for him to go further. Everything that happened next, I believe you already know since you entered the picture." Both Gabriella and Arthur looked shocked by this new information. Arthur, who was making all these playful comments before, was unusually quiet. "I hope that you don't think poorly of Kane after this. None of that was his fault. The first time he was drunk, and the second time, he was only trying to save me. He's done nothing but love Maya with his whole heart. The things he did for me must still haunt him because I'm sure he thinks that he has betrayed her. If there is anyone to be blamed, it is me; I knew from the start who he loved. But whenever I'm around him, I can't seem to control myself. I'm not happy that I'm so weak around him, but I also won't change anything between us. Every moment that I spent with him, I plan on treasuring it till the day I die." Gabriella rocks back against the seat, "this entire thing is insane. I know you said Kane isn't to blame, but I don't think anyone could say that he is innocent either. What doesn't make sense to me is his reaction towards you." "What reaction?" I ask. "He hasn't been anything else but kind to me. Everything that he has done is because he has a good heart." "I can assure you that it's not just because he has a good heart." Arthur clarifies. "It sounds like Kane is just as attracted to you as you are to him. And nothing good can come from trying to ignore those feelings or pretend like they aren't there. Just ask Gabriella. We know what it's like to try and ignore strong feelings like the ones you just described. Eventually, it blows up in your face, and neither of you will be able to control your emotions." "But we are mates, Arthur." Gabriella points out to him. "It's expected for us to behave that way around each other, but they aren't mates. There is nothing that has tied both of them together. And what makes this even weirder is that Kane already has a mate. Maya. She's his mate. Let's assume that he thought she was dead and got close to you because you somehow reminded him of Maya. What can explain his reaction to you now that Maya is back?" "I don't know what you are talking about," I say. "From what I've seen so far, he's still crazy about her. If he weren't, he wouldn't have attacked me for what I said to her. She is still the most important person in his life." "I'm not referring to that," Gabriella tells me. "I'm talking about tonight. I saw the way he was looking at you. He didn't even look at Maya that way tonight, and she was there! He even glared at another guy to stop him from dancing with you. He was jealous!" I shook my head, "I'm the one that told him I didn't want to dance with anyone else. He only did that because he respected my wishes. I said to you before that he always protects me." "I'm pretty sure that he was also jealous. Even if you didn't ask him to do this for you, believe me, from what I saw, he would have done

it either way." Gabriella assures me. I'm not sure if I agree with that. To me, Maya was always his priority. He wouldn't have danced with me today if he didn't have to. It was all a part of the game. "I think you're wrong about this one Gabriella." I try to tell her.

"Whether I'm right or wrong, you have to be more careful around my brother. He has a mate, and she has dangerous brothers. I don't want to have to defend him again. Like I said before if they catch the two of you, I'm not sure that I will be able to protect Kane from them. There is only so much I can do. They have more power than Arthur and me at this time. Austin and his family are wonderful people, but they don't mess around when it involves their family. And since Maya has already been through so much, they will be extra sensitive when it comes to her." Gabriella explains. I did understand what Gabriella was saying to me. And the last thing I ever wanted to do was cause more problems for Kane. I kept telling myself that I would keep my distance from him, But whenever I was around him, everything changed. I lose all control over my body and its emotions. And when that control is lost, there is nothing I can do to bring it back. The only thing I can think about is avoiding Kane, but even that would be hard to do because when I don't see him, I tend to miss him to the point that I feel I can't breathe. I don't know what I did to have these strong feelings for a man that could never be mine. And I don't understand why our fate seems to be intertwined for some reason. We're always finding a way to be near each other, whether intentional or not. I keep finding myself back to Kane. And my body always wants to stay by his side even when it knows it's just not possible. "I don't think you're getting through to her, Gabriella," Arthur tells her as we pull up to the house. "I think you know just as much as I do that it isn't exactly easy to ignore feelings as strong as hers." She sighs, "I know, but I also know the trouble such strong emotions bring. We need to find out what's causing it because something has to be wrong. Why does Kane have feelings for more than one woman? He's only supposed to have eyes for Maya. Why is he straying? Something just isn't right." . . . . . ~KANE~ How could I let myself become so weak around another woman while Maya was there? I purposely joined the dance to get a chance to dance with the girl. I didn't participate for a chance to dance with Maya. I wanted to dance with her. She was the one my eyes were on for the entire night. I couldn't look away from her. She was the center of my attention. I always thought that when I found Maya, my attention would be back on her, but I was proving myself wrong. Giselle's maid was on my mind more than Maya was. At this point, I was thinking about seeing a damn psychiatrist because clearly, something was wrong to me. I had no one to go to, no one to tell my feelings. Who would understand what I was going through? They would think that something was wrong with me, just like I felt about myself. There I was missing and wanting Maya by my side for days, and when I finally have her, I want to be around another woman that's not her. "You look like you need a

beer," Hunter says as he throws one at me. I grab it and don't think twice as I take a big gulp. This wasn't the best time to be drinking, but at least I didn't have to worry about me doing something stupid since the girl had already left with Gabriella. Even Gabriella had acted strangely today. Did she happen to see what the girl did to me? I was practically begging to touch her on the dance floor, using the dance as an excuse to get closer to her. My hands felt like they were in control; my entire body kept disobeying me when it came to her. I don't know what Gabriella said to her, but I hope it was for her to stay away from me because damn it if she didn't, there was no f\*\*\*\*\*g hope for me. Hearing her say that she didn't want to dance with anyone else but me had fed something inside me. I felt pride and joy and a will to claim and take what was mine. A part of me wanted to tell everyone in the room that she belonged to me. I wanted all of them to know that I would kill anyone that tried to even touch her. And I almost did just that when I saw her dance with the first guy. Seeing her with another man was like losing a damn finger. It f\*\*\*\*\*g hurt. "Take it easy," Hunter says. "I know you're having a hard time. Losing a baby is something I won't wish on anyone. I'm sorry what you and Maya have to go through." The guilt was intense after hearing his words. Maya. Maya. Maya. She's the one I'm supposed to be daydreaming about. She's the one that needs me more than anyone else right now. After everything I've done to get her back in my life, how can I let her down over someone I barely knew? The answer was simple. I couldn't. I was done with this. I was done being a weak, pathetic mate. Maya has always had to go through a lot of emotional trauma because of me. I had to be f\*\*\*\*\*g strong for once and do what the right thing for the both of us was. And the right thing was to forget about the girl. I'm not going to do this to her a second time. Maya will always come first. I don't care what I have to do to make that happen.

Chapter 86 ~MAYA~ I couldn't stop thinking about everything Gabriella spoke to me about yesterday. She said that Kane was jealous that I was dancing with other men, and he'd purposefully glared at that one guy who tried to dance with me while I was still in his arms. A part of me wanted to believe it was true. But I knew he'd only done that for my sake. He knew that I was uncomfortable and was only trying to make it better for me. She had also asked me if Kane had ever protected anyone else as desperately as he'd done for me. And I had answered her honestly. I've never seen him get worked up over anyone else but Maya. So then why did he also get worried over me? I've denied it all along, thinking he was doing it only because of everything he'd gone through with his mate. But not that she was back, I had to double-check everything that I've thought I knew about the way he reacted around me. Gabriella has definitely given me something to think about. It's been on my mind since yesterday. I could barely sleep because of it. "Lucy has

organized a picnic for us," she informs me suddenly, bringing my attention back to her. We were in her room; I was helping her sort out her closet. She also wanted to share some of her clothes with me since I didn't own a single thing. Everything that I've worn so far was because she was kind enough to give it to me. I'm super grateful for everything she's done for me since the first time we met. Gabriella indeed was one of a kind. "I'm not sure it's a good idea to attend," I tell her. "After everything you pointed out to me yesterday. I think that it's best Kane and I kept our distance from each other to avoid any problems for the people around us." Gabriella sighs and pulls a dress out of her closet and hands it to me, "I know that you not going may be the most logical thing to do, but I want you there. I don't want you to miss out on some fun because of this thing with Kane. Hopefully, it will pass. Plus the picnic is right next to a lake. It will give us a chance to swim and relax our minds. I think all of us need some fun." Emma walks in then and gives me a sweet smile. I can't get over how adorable she is. "Do you want to come with us?" Gabriella asks her. "She hates going to any events." She explains to me. "I think it will be fun!" I try to encourage her. "We can swim together! Or shall I say instead, we can learn to swim together since I don't know how to. And I also almost drowned once." "What do you say, Emma?" Gabriella asks her. "You can learn to swim with her." Emma smiles and agrees, totally shocking Gabriella. When she leaves the room, she hugs me, "thank you for that. I've been trying to get her to go places with me for some time now. It's the first time she's agreed." "I didn't do anything except admit that I can't swim." I laugh. "Put this on under your dress," Gabriella tells me as she throws a white bikini onto the bed. My cheeks turn red, "I'm expected to wear that in front of everyone?" She nods, "I know we're both pregnant, but our tummies aren't that big. We can pull it off." "I don't mean that. Wouldn't it be awkward in front of everyone?" I ask her. "I don't think so. You'll only have to wear it in the lake. You can change right after." She points out. I finally give in and do as she says. I'll have to unzip the dress when it's time to get into the lake. Hopefully, everyone else in their swimwear will make it less awkward for me. It didn't take long for us to pack everything we needed for the picnic and get into the vehicle. I'm incredibly nervous about seeing Kane again. Now that both Gabriella and Arthur knew how I felt about him, I had to be extra careful of showing my emotions around them. Yesterday was proof that Gabriella would interrupt us if we did anything stupid. And I think that was exactly what we needed. We always did things that could land us both in trouble. But like I've said before, it was never intentional. We got lost in each other. To be fair, I couldn't speak for the both of us; I knew that I got lost in him; I'm not sure what went on in his head whenever we were near each other. All I knew was that, at times, it did seem like he wanted it as much as I did. I always thought it was because I reminded him of Maya. But Maya was back now, and like Gabriella pointed out, he does seem to have some interest

in me still. "Now, girls, I hope we can all behave ourselves today," Arthur says in a fatherly tone to all of us in the back seat. "Sometimes I think he forgets I'm his mate and not his child." Gabriella snorts. "I'll be on my best behavior, dad!" Emma says, and I'm sure I heard Gabriella gasp. Even Arthur looks shocked in the front seat. He looks at Gabriella through the mirror, and I can see the warm smile he gives her. "It's the first time she's called him dad." She whispers to me. Oh, that was wonderful. I was happy to be a part of this special moment for them both. Emma was such a sweet little girl. She seemed so friendly and kind. I can see why they decided to adopt her, and from what I could see, she was happy to be a part of their little family. She loved them just as much as they loved her. They were all lucky to have each other. I held my breath as we pulled up to the lake. Thankfully, it was just us here. Kane and the rest of them hadn't reached as yet. "For once, we're early to something," Arthur says as he grabs the basket from the front seat and exits the vehicle. Gabriella takes the cloth and spreads it so that we can have a seat while enjoying the beauty of the lake. It didn't even last a few minutes before we heard a sound. "They're here!" Gabriella informs us. I look on as two vehicles pull up next to Arthur's. My breath gets stuck in my throat when Kane jumps out of the jeep with nothing but shorts on. He's completely shirtless, and I can't help but stare. How am I supposed to look away from a tempting view like that? "You're practically drooling," Gabriella warns me. I'm grateful for her reminder that I'm supposed to behave myself today. But it shouldn't be so wrong to stare when no one was even paying attention to me. Kane isn't the only one, the rest of the guys are also bareback, and they all looked good. Still, none compared to Kane. I would think it was a crime to cover a body like that with clothes. Maya walks out in one of the tiniest bikinis I've ever seen; it barely covers anything. She clearly doesn't feel awkward like I did. The rest of the girls are in dresses like Gabriella and me. I assume they will also change when it's time to go into the water. "Emma!" Lucy says as she hugs her. "I'm happy you decided to join us today." "Hi, Auntie Lucy." She greets her. "Austin!" she calls to her mate. "Do we have some snacks for her? Bring whatever we have." "You don't have to do that," Gabriella tells her. "Arthur already drowns her with snacks any chance that he can get." "How are you feeling?" Lucy asks Gabriella as Austin walks over with a basket full of snacks alone. He hands it to her, and she gives it to Emma, ignoring what Gabriella told her a minute ago. Emma doesn't refuse as she happily takes it from her. Gabriella looks at me; we both know she lied so that we could get home earlier last night, "I'm much better today, Lucy. Thanks for asking." Everyone is suddenly distracted when Isabella walks in with baby Roman in her arms. He's the cutest baby I've ever seen. I won't expect anything less since his parents were Lucy and Austin. "Ugh," Isabella whispers. "I never want him to grow up. He should stay this little forever. I love these baby toes and fingers." "Do you want to

hold him?" Lucy asks Maya. "He hasn't gotten a chance to be held by his auntie Maya. I'm sure he will love it." Maya looks skeptical, but she eventually gives in when Austin persists. He obviously wanted his sister to hold his child. Isabella gives her the baby, and something unusual happens. Baby Roman begins to squeal at the top of his lungs as though someone is harming him. Maya tries to calm him down, but he doesn't want to stop crying. Lucy walks over to them and takes him into her arms, "that's weird. He usually loves when anyone holds him. Maybe he's hungry." She tries to feed him a bottle, but he doesn't want it. The crying has definitely eased up, however. Lucy sees me looking at him, and she smiles, "do you want to hold him for a second?" I can't hide my excitement as I reach for him; something about this baby makes my heart melt. I felt so much love for him without spending any time with him at all. I'm worried that he will start to cry as he did with Maya, but I'm pleasantly surprised when he nestles against my chest. He looks happy as he stares into my eyes. "Hi, sweet baby," I whisper. "You're so handsome. I love your little dimple." He has a dimple on the left side of his cheek, and it shows more when he gives the cutest smile I've ever seen. I gasp when he grabs onto my baby finger, gripping it tightly. "He's so strong for a baby," I whisper to Lucy. I don't want to be loud; I'm afraid I'll startle him. "He likes you," Austin says as he joins me in staring at him. Having Austin next to me while we stared at his baby did something to me. I felt happier than I've ever felt in a long while. It felt like I was doing something I should have done since a long time now. I don't know what causes me to feel like this, but I wanted to hold onto this feeling for as long as I could. Austin looks very happy, and his happiness made me feel a sense of satisfaction. Austin catches me looking at him, and he frowns suddenly; he looks at Maya and then back at me. It was an awkward situation for a few seconds before he dismissed whatever he was thinking. I lean over and kiss Roman on his forehead as he falls asleep before handing him back to Lucy. She places him into his stroller and joins us on the ground. I try my best not to look at Kane, who's looking at the lake with Hunter. Even from the back, he's a sight to see. I spot Gabriella looking at me, and I quickly look away. I can't get away from her; she watches me like a hawk. I don't blame her; she knows how much drama will occur if anyone sees how I stare at Kane. Maya already didn't like me; I didn't need a reason for everyone else to dislike me. "Do you guys want to go for a swim now?" Lucy asks us. "I think I should go in before Roman wakes up." "I'm up for it," Isabella says. "I'm starting to feel sweaty in all these clothes." "I'm joining you," Hunter says. "I'm not risking you going into a lake while you're pregnant alone." She smiles, "we both know whether I was pregnant or not, you would be coming with me." She teases him. "Is Emma not joining us?" I ask Arthur. He shakes his head, "she already fell asleep. I just placed her in the vehicle. Hopefully, she wakes up soon to join in on the fun." Gabriella helps me unzip my dress, and I do that for

her as well. The men are already waiting for their mates to join them. I don't think any of them trusted their mates enough to leave them in the water by themselves. And I've already learned that all of these men were very overprotective when it came to the women they were in love with. My body shivers as the wind picks up. I felt naked in this bikini. At least I wasn't the only one. I take a step forward with Gabriella by my side, and it's only then that I notice Kane leaned up against a tree, looking straight at me. His eyes are heated, and there is so much longing there that I felt almost pressured to walk toward him. I swallowed the feeling, afraid that I would do just that. Whenever I felt like running to him, my feet compelled me to do it. Not this time. Too many people were watching us. My body felt like it had just awakened from a long nap, happy that it was getting the attention of the one man it wanted more than anything else. Gabriella takes my hand in hers, "do I need to remind you of what we spoke about yesterday?" she asks me. I quickly force my eyes away from Kane with a blush on my cheeks. If I'd known that wearing something like this would have gotten him to look at me with such an intense hunger, I would have worn it sooner than this. I hate that I just admitted that to myself, but it was the truth. We're about to get into the water when Kane approaches us. My body immediately shivered from his closeness. "She shouldn't be in there alone without an aid." He says, surprising me. "She doesn't know how to swim." By now, all eyes are on us. Maya walks toward him upon hearing his words, "how do you know that, Kane?"

Chapter 87 There is an uncomfortable silence as everyone waits for Kane to answer Maya. I don't see how that is important. What's so wrong if he knows that I can't swim? And it is evident that we spent time together while he was trapped with Giselle. Couldn't she see for herself that it's possible that he found out during the time we spent together? Maya seemed like she was looking for any excuse to cause trouble between us. "Giselle tried to drown her once." Kane finally answers. Maya crosses her arm over her chest and tilts her head upwards, "and let me guess; you were the one that saved her because you're such a knight in shining armor." Again, she's saying things that aren't necessary. Gabriella tightens her hold on my hands as if to tell me to stay out of it. But how am I supposed to when this conversation basically involves me. "Well, aren't you going to answer me?" She asks him. "I'm sorry to interrupt," I say, and Gabriella holds her head, clearly worried about what I'm about to do. "But what did you want him to do. Did you expect him to watch someone drowning and leave them there?" Maya turns to me, and I can see the hatred in her eyes as she glares at me, "does it look like I'm speaking to you?" I fold my arms over my chest, "you're not speaking to me, but speaking about me. If you're going to discuss anything to do with me, I think I can participate in that discussion. I can't believe you're angry with Kane for saving someone's life. Do you even hear yourself right now?"

Her eyes narrow, "what makes you think I'm angry with him? I was only asking a question. You're the one that assumed I was angry." "You're not angry?" I ask in a sarcastic tone. "If this isn't anger, I don't want to be near you when you're actually angry." "If I was angry, would I do this?" She asks. What the hell did she mean by that? Do what? I watch as she throws her arms around Kane, and before anyone has a chance to process what she is doing, she presses her lips to his. My jaw drops, and I don't think I've ever felt pain like this before. My heart felt like it was being squeezed by chains and threatened to burst. I know that I shouldn't be watching her kiss the man I was crazy about, but I can't seem to look away. It's like my body wants to feel this pain. What the hell was wrong with me? Why can't I look away from them? Gabriella takes my hand and pulls me towards Hunter's jeep so I don't have to see Maya kissing him anymore. She knew by now how much it would hurt me to see something like that. "I didn't want to say this, but Maya is a bitch." Gabriella tells me when we are away from everyone else. "I don't understand how she could possibly be the same Maya that everyone loves so much." I tried to calm myself down; I was still in emotional pain from seeing them kiss. I thought that I would be strong enough. I thought that I would be able to see him with the woman he loved. I thought I could do it because, from the start, all I've ever wanted was for him to be happy. I just never thought that Maya would turn out to be this type of woman. The fact that she's such a pain in the ass doesn't make this any easier on me. I wanted to like her; after everything Kane had said about her, I thought there was a good chance that I would. Now I knew there wasn't a single thing in this world that could possibly make me like that woman. "Well, it is her," I respond to Gabriella. "She has the same face. Everyone knows she's Maya. But it seems like her attitude has changed since the last time everyone saw her." Gabriella sighs, "I was hoping we could have a great day today. She just had to spoil all the damn fun." I take a deep breath and lean against the vehicle. "Are you okay?" Gabriella asks; there is no mistaking the concern in her voice. "You don't look the best." "I don't feel the best," I answer. "I don't want to admit it, but seeing her kiss him was extremely painful for me to watch. I didn't expect her to do it." I knew it's something I had to get used to. They were the official couple. It's normal for them to be seen kissing. I didn't think she would intentionally do it in front of me. "Are you two okay?" Arthur asks as he joins us. I'm sure everyone was concerned after what just happened. I've managed to cause yet another scene when it's the last thing I wanted to do around the people that were so kind to me. "I'm sorry that I keep causing problems for you. I know everyone just wanted to have a good time today. I didn't mean to spoil it for you." I apologize. "You weren't at fault," Gabriella assures me. "She was the one that started the argument. She is to blame. Though Kane wasn't exactly helping the situation from how he was looking at you. Maybe Maya saw him, which caused her to react that

way. I know I will be upset if I see my mate looking at another woman like he was staring at you." "I think we both know that will never happen," Arthur assures her. She grabs his shoulders and pulls him towards her, "of course, that will never happen. If you want to live to see another day, you won't do something that stupid." "Is that a threat?" he asks her. "Take it as you want to take it." She smiles as she hugs him. As I look around me, I realize that I'm the only one here without a mate. Everyone had their partner and was having a great time. I was the only one that didn't have someone by my side. And the only man I wanted by my side already had someone in his heart. A horrible woman. "Is it okay if I take a walk by myself?" I ask them. I was tired of having to see Kane and Maya together. And after what I just saw, I knew I needed some time alone. "Do you want me to come with you?" Gabriella asks me. "No," I answer her. "Please go enjoy yourself with Arthur. Don't let me stop you from having a great time. I think everyone would be at ease if I weren't here." Gabriella goes to disagree, but I stop her, "please. I will only be gone for about half an hour, and then I will be back to have fun with the rest of you." Or at least try and have fun. I finally got her to agree, but only after I promised her that I would be careful and back in half an hour. . . . . ~KANE~ I watch as Gabriella returns with Arthur, but the girl is no longer with them. Where did she go? The last thing I was expecting was for Maya to kiss me in front of her. I couldn't close my eyes during that kiss. All I could see was the hurt on her face while she stared at us kissing. I felt nothing during that kiss. If anything, I've never wanted to get as far away from Maya as I did during that kiss. The look on Giselle's maid's face will haunt me for the rest of my life. It was clear that I didn't like to hurt her. She has always wanted nothing more than for me to be happy; how could I wish to see pain in someone who always wants what's best for me? I don't know what's been happening with Maya lately, but she is nothing like the woman I had fallen deeply in love with. I know that I'm the one to blame for her behavior. If I hadn't bruised her heart over and over again, and if I hadn't failed to protect our baby, she wouldn't have changed so much and become this bitter woman. "Where did she go?" Isabella asks Gabriella. I'm happy that she asked the question because even I was desperate to know. And I couldn't be the one to ask that question when Maya was right next to me in the water. If I asked, I would only fuel the fire within her. I can see that she's still partly pissed from earlier. I can barely look at her. I'm reminded of what I did to her that caused the horrible change. "She said that she wanted to go for a walk to clear her head. And that she will be back in half an hour." She informs everyone. Maya rolls her eyes, and I don't miss it. Another reminder of how much she has changed. Where was the woman I would do anything for? I wanted her back. I didn't want her to be this way. It wasn't how I remembered her to be at all. I'm restless now that I know the girl had walked off in the forest independently with no one by her side. "Isn't that a bit too risky since she

isn't familiar with this forest?" Lucy asks. "Someone should have gone with her." I'm glad that Lucy had said exactly what I was thinking. Why didn't Gabriella and Arthur stop her before doing something so stupid? Everyone knew how damn dangerous these forests were, especially for someone unfamiliar with it. There were always creepy people around, and besides that, she could easily get lost. And she already wasn't in the right state of mind. Why the f\*\*\*k hadn't I seen her going? If I did, I would have stopped everything to get to her and asked her not to go. "We said the same thing to her, but she wouldn't listen to us," Gabriella explained as she joined us in the lake. "I figured that she wouldn't go far. And I've realized that she might need this." "I'm sure she will be okay," Maya adds. "She's a big girl; she can handle herself. She doesn't need everyone making a fuss over her. I'm sure she is having a great time while leaving everyone worried about her." "While leaving everyone to worry about her?" Gabriella asks Maya. "She didn't ask for anyone to worry about her. She left to let everyone have a great time. I wish I could say the same for other people." The last sentence was directed at Maya, but she doesn't care. She seems happy that the girl has left. "Let's just wait a few minutes," Hunter says. "If she doesn't return by then, I think we should go look for her. To make sure that she doesn't hurt herself in these dangerous woods. We need to remember that she is pregnant." The reminder sends chills down my back. Just when I thought things couldn't get any f\*\*\*\*\*g worse. She was pregnant. She could easily slip and fall and hurt both her and her babies. I'm trying hard to mask my frustration over this entire incident, but it's becoming rather difficult to do when I want nothing more than to leave this lake and rush after her. I was angry that no one suggested that we get to her now. They were all back to having fun in the lake. Maya tries to engage me in a hug, but I don't return it. I'm too worried about the girl to focus on her right now. A few minutes passed, and time had never been this slow for me. Each second was torture. When will they decide to pack up their s\*\*t and search for her? My eyes turn to the skies when I feel a drop of water touch my head. Ah, f\*\*\*k. I push my hair back with my hand. It was beginning to f\*\*\*\*\*g rain. Things continued to go from bad to worst. "She should be back by now," Gabriella says; I can see the worry on her face. "And it doesn't look good that it's beginning to rain." Her words make everyone look up to the sky like I'd done a minute ago. Lucy and Austin rush out of the water to place Roman in the vehicle, and I don't waste any time; I use that opportunity to get out of the water as well. I was waiting for the chance to do that. I couldn't stand being in there with Maya. "I think we should start looking for her now," Arthur says to Gabriella, and she readily agrees with him. "Should we split up?" Hunter asks. "It doesn't make any sense that we all go in the same direction. This forest is big, and she can be anywhere. We need to follow her scent." Her f\*\*\*\*\*g scent. I couldn't get that f\*\*\*\*\*g thing out of my head. If anyone were to find her quickly, it would be me

since I was most familiar with her heavenly scent. What was I going to do if I couldn't find her? And it's not like I could tell anyone here that her scent was branded on my body. No one would be able to understand me. "I think everyone pregnant should stay behind," James says as he looks at the women. "We will constantly have to worry about you as well. For this search to go by faster, the best thing is for all of you to stay here in case she returns." "No!" Gabriella exclaims. "She's like a sister to me. And she's missing because I didn't stop her when I should have. I want to join the search. I want to look for her as well." Arthur kisses her cheek, "if you want to go that badly, you can. Just stick by my side so that I can make sure you don't slip and hurt yourself." "I will not slip," she assures him. "I can look for her and move fast enough." Arthur pulls me to the side suddenly. He ensures no one can hear us when he says, "I think we both know that you're the most familiar with her scent. You will have to be the one to find her. No one will be able to get to her as fast as you would. Somehow or the other, you'll have to let Maya agree to join the search." How did he know? Who would have told him? "She told us everything. You don't have to worry. Your secret is safe with us." He assures me. She told them? She must have trusted them entirely for her to confide in them. I'm not about to be angry with her for telling them what happened between us. I believed Arthur when he said he would keep our secret. As far as convincing Maya went, I wasn't worried about that. This was one thing that I wouldn't let Maya stop me from doing. A pregnant woman's life was in danger. I don't care what she has to say. I will be joining that search because, as Arthur had pointed out, I have the best chance of finding her. "I'll stay back with Roman and Emma," Isabella says. "Someone needs to look after the children." Hunter looks pleased with that. I'm sure he didn't want her to be in that search with how pregnant she was. "I'll stay back to keep you company, just in case anything crazy happens. You know how many enemies we have. They're always waiting for the right opportunity to attack us at our weakest points." Eden tells her. She was right. There were always people waiting to attack. It wasn't good to leave Isabella alone with the children, no matter how good she was at fighting. "Kane and I can stay back to help watch as well." Maya offers. My jaw clenches, "I don't think so, Maya. I have to join the search with everyone else." "He's right, Maya," Austin tells her. "We need as many of us out there searching for her. I think you can understand that more than anyone else here. She's pregnant. She needs all of our help right now." Maya doesn't look happy that her brother and mate both went against her wishes, but she doesn't try and stop us again. Good. The last thing I wanted was to deal with her attitude at a time like this. Every second would count. The rain was pouring heavily now, and we could barely see or hear each other. It would also make it harder for me to track her scent. What made it worse was that none of us even knew her name. How did we call out to her? We didn't have a name to shout. f\*\*k. This wasn't good. It wasn't

about to be an easy search; I was damn sure about that. We hoped that she would somehow find her way back, but chances were slim since half an hour had already passed since we last saw her. "CAN YOU HEAR ME?" I shout; it's not loud enough in this rain. I can barely see or hear anyone. I'm not sure what directions the rest of the men had gone off into. I was trying my best to pick up on her scent. It wasn't solid because of the rain, but I could still sense it. That at least was a good sign. If I couldn't smell her at all, I would have been a bit more worried than I already was. I shout once more, and still, there isn't a response. My heart is pounding against my chest, and it feels louder than the damn rain. I'm terrified, actually terrified, that something has happened to her. I pull at my hair and let out a frustrated roar. How long again before I can see her? How long before I can find her and pull her safely into my arms? I can hear howls throughout the woods, and I know that some of the men had switched to their wolves. They must have realized that we had to hurry if we wanted to get to her before any harm could come to her. That is, if she hadn't already been harmed. Another howl rocks the forest. I'm not sure who it belongs to, but they were trying their best to find her. I couldn't let her down. She's been nothing but loving towards me. I can't let anything happen to her. I would never be able to forgive myself. Wherever you are, I swear to you that I will find you. I will protect you. I won't let anything hurt you. I know that she can't hear me, but I meant every single one of those promises. No matter what happened today, I would make sure to bring her to safety. I would have her in my arms again if it's the last thing I do.

Chapter 88 ~AUSTIN~ I'm not sure what is happening to my heart right now. Why am I so scared that something could have happened to the girl? She was nothing to me. She wasn't my mate; she wasn't my sister; she wasn't related to me in any way at all. She wasn't a friend, and it seemed like Maya didn't like her at all. I usually made it a habit to dislike anyone my siblings didn't like, but I couldn't bring myself to dislike her. She didn't give me any reason to. There was just something about her that made me want to protect her. I felt just as protective over her as I did over Maya. It was an unusual emotion for me, especially since I barely knew her. We've only spoken a few words to each other, yet I'm ready to risk everything to bring her back to us safely. My wolf is searching ferociously, trying to pick up on her scent, but it's hard to find anything in this rain. It's messing with our tracking. And so far, we haven't found anything: no torn clothes, no strand of hair, absolutely zero sign of the girl. And I was beginning to lose my f\*\*\*\*\*g mind. Why the hell did we take so long to start the search? Not once did I think things would have gotten to this point. I knew she had no experience in the forest, and even if she did, she wouldn't have remembered since she'd lost her memory, according to Kane. I

rock my head back and howl in pain. Why does it hurt so much? Who is she to me? Another howl rocks the sky, and it sounds like Hunter. I know this wouldn't sound good to the girls back at the lake, but it's not something I can control right now. I need to find her. I need to find her before she gets hurt. I had to. . . . . ~MAYA~ How could I have been so freaking stupid? I put not only my life in danger but the life of my babies. The rain had caused me to slip and fall, and my ankle was sprained. Everything felt like it was in pain, and I was terrified that I had done something stupid that could threaten the life of my children. I try to get up, but I can't move, not with my ankle like this. I soon realize that it's pointless trying to move. I was only causing more harm to myself by doing this. But what else am I supposed to do? Should I wait here for someone to find me? Would anyone even come looking for me? That was a stupid question. I had people that cared about me now. Of course, they will come looking. I was sure that Gabriella and Arthur would have already started their search. She told me to return in half an hour, and I'm sure that it's already past that time. I didn't want to spoil the picnic for everyone, that's why I decided to leave to clear my mind. Somehow I still managed to ruin everything for them because I'm sure that they're all worried over me by now. Kane always came to my rescue in the past, but I had a feeling that this time would be a bit different. He had Maya now, and he tried his best not to upset her. I'm sure the last thing she wants to see is him coming to my rescue. She won't let him do something to help me, and he won't want to do anything that would disappoint her. Thinking about the two of them was not making this any easier for me. They are why I'm in this mess, to begin with. Because seeing them together was becoming too much of a torture for me. I've always thought that seeing Kane with Giselle was horrible but seeing him with Maya was a hundred times more devastating. I guess it's because I knew that this time he actually loved the woman by his side. I knew that he would do anything for her. But why did it have to be Maya? Why her out of everyone on this damn planet? I didn't think I despised anyone as much as I disliked Maya. She isn't the person I want Kane to end up with, and it's not just because I want him for myself. It's because I can see straight through her, and she's not as good as everyone wants me to believe she is. There is something terribly wrong with that woman. She was not the same Maya she used to be. I didn't have to know her from the past to see that she wasn't the same. And I'm not sure why it's taking everyone else so long to figure out what I saw. They should have seen what I saw by now. I barely knew her and could tell that she wasn't right in the head. This woman seemed like someone who enjoyed making others unhappy. That alone could say that she was nothing like the woman Kane had fallen in love with. I squeeze my temple as I try to remain calm. The rain was falling heavier than before, pounding against my body. There was lightning and thunder that rocked the skies. If I were terrified of the rain, it would

have made things a lot scarier than it was now. It didn't help that I was in nothing but a damn bikini. At least I didn't have to worry about clothes sticking to my skin with the amount of water all over me. There was mud all around me, and I tried to move again, only to be reminded that it was best I stay in this position at least until the rain had eased up. But from what I could see so far, this rain was not even close to stopping. "WHY?" I ask myself. "Why couldn't you have just stayed in the jeep? You didn't have to do this to yourself!" My body jumps when I hear a powerful howl ripple through the sounds of the heavy rainfall. My heart skips a beat, and I don't know why that howl sounds so familiar to me. Like I've been listening to it all my life. Who was that? Somehow I know it's a frustrated cry, one to let others know that I was in danger. They were out looking for me. I'm not sure how to get them to come to me. "HELP!" I scream. "I'm here!" I don't think they will be able to hear me even though I'm screaming at the top of my lungs. Another howl echoed throughout the forest, and I felt so helpless. They were looking for me, and I still had no clue how to alert them of my location. "WHERE ARE YOU?" I hear someone roar above the pouring rain. My heart jumps, and I know that it's Kane. He's here. I couldn't believe that he'd come looking for me. Part of me thinks that I may be hallucinating. Why would he come looking for me when he knows it would piss Maya off and put his relationship under strain? But when I hear his roar for the second time, I know that I'm not hallucinating. He's here. Kane is here. And he's here for me. My heart swells with joy. "KANE!" I cry as loud as my body would let me. He was coming. He was coming for me.

Chapter 89 ~MAYA~ "I'm almost there!" Kane shouts loud enough for me to hear him despite all of the rain still pouring down on us. I'm both nervous and excited to see him. Part of me still couldn't believe that he'd come for me. After witnessing everything between him and Maya, I was sure that he wouldn't have come for me. But how did she react, knowing that Kane had still come to protect me? Was she okay with it, or did he come despite her protests? I knew that wasn't important right now, but I still wished to know. I held my breath when I finally spotted him. His hair is wet and hanging over his forehead, his body covered with raindrops. His eyes are drowned in what seems to be fear. Was he that worried over me? He hasn't spotted me yet, and his eyes are searching his surroundings ferociously in hopes of seeing me. When his gaze finally finds what it's looking for, he doesn't move for a few seconds. He takes in my soaked body lying on the ground, and I think he's checking for injuries. I can practically see the movements of his chest as he finally begins to move. He takes long strides toward me like he can't believe that I'm really in front of him. He falls to the ground beside me and continues to search

my body for bruises. "What happened?" he asks as his hand lightly touches my waist like he's scared that he would hurt me. I try to ignore the intense feelings that immediately follow from his slight touch. "I fell," I whisper as I try to fight the tears. "I don't know how much damage I've done. I don't know if my babies are okay. Everything hurts. And I sprained my ankle. I can't walk. I tried to move, but it was too painful." His hand travels to my bruised ankle, and he's careful not to hurt me as he examines the damage the fall had done to me. "We'll have to get you back to the vehicle quickly. You'll have to see a doctor as soon as we get you home." He tells me. I nod, and I can't stop staring at his face as he continues to examine my body. Why couldn't he be mine? Why did he have to belong to Maya? No one has ever looked after me the way that he does. His actions always warm my heart and make it difficult for me to move forward. He finally stops looking at my body and drags his gaze to my face. Our gazes lock, and I swear I see a hint of intense heat mixed with a desire to protect in their depths. He still wants to protect me, even when he has Maya by his side. My bottom lip trembles as I remember the kiss she gave him earlier. It's what had started this in the first place. I shouldn't have let it get to me; somehow, I think that I'd fallen straight into her trap. She wanted me to do something stupid that could hurt myself, precisely what I had done. I'd been so caught up in the pain that I didn't stop to think of the consequences of my actions. "I'm sorry," I whisper. "I'm sorry for making you worry; for making everyone worry. I wasn't thinking. I just got caught up in my feelings, and I didn't know how to control them. I thought I was doing the right thing by leaving. I didn't know that I would end up causing more trouble for the people around me when it's the last thing that I ever wanted to do." Kane gently cups my cheek in his hand, "you don't need to apologize. We shouldn't have let you go off on your own. If I had known, I would have found a way to stop you. You're not familiar with this forest. It's expected that something like this could happen." I peer up at him, "would you have truly stopped me?" I ask him. I knew that he was with Maya when I left. Possibly still kissing. Would he have done as he said and stopped me despite having her near him? "Is that even a question?" he asks me. "Of course, I wouldn't let you walk off in danger. The last thing I want is for anything to happen to you." I bite my lip, trying to find the strength to not fall any stronger for the man in front of me. "Please don't do that." He looks startled, "don't do what? Am I hurting you somewhere?" I shook my head, "stop being so caring towards me. Stop protecting me every time I'm in danger. Stop running to my side when I call for you." He seems shocked by my words, "what are you saying? Why shouldn't I protect you when you need me? Why would you ask for something so preposterous?" I look away from his penetrating gaze. I don't want to tell him how I feel. I know that there won't be any return for us if I do something like that. Kane would be forced to keep his distance if he knew how much I wanted him. How

much I didn't want him to be with Maya. I knew that her feelings would always come first for him and that telling him how I felt wouldn't make any sense. "Hey," he says as he lightly touches my chin and turns me to look at him. "What's wrong? Why aren't you answering me?" "Because I'm scared," I finally confess. He immediately looks concerned at my confession, "scared?" he asks. "What has you scared?" "I'm terrified of what would happen to my heart if you keep being so nice to me. Each time that I think I can't fall for you more, you do something like this that makes my heart beat only for you. I know that it's wrong, but I can't control it. And every time that you run to my rescue, it makes these feelings multiply. And I don't know how much of it I can take anymore, Kane. I don't. All of this that I feel. It's all because of you. Only you. No one else. And at times, I feel like it's driving me crazy because you belong to someone else. And I know that you could never belong to me." I don't think I've ever seen him this stunned before. I've managed to shock him into a speechless state. The rain is still pouring heavily, and the water is leaking down his face and onto his bare chest. I don't want to stare; I don't want to be distracted from what I have to tell him. Because since I've opened the lock that trapped my feelings for him, everything came pouring out. He opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. He's still trying to process my confession. I know that it's selfish of me to tell him these things when he'd just found Maya. I know that I have no right, and while I've tried to ignore these feelings, to pretend that they didn't exist, I don't think I can do it anymore. It's too much for me to handle on my own. I don't want to do this to him, but I've already started; how could I stop now? "I don't know how much more I can take of seeing you with her," I cry, and this time, there is no stopping the tears flowing down my cheeks. "Seeing her kiss you was one of the hardest things I've ever witnessed. I know that she's the one you love, and I'm sorry I'm telling you these things, but I feel like I can't keep it inside anymore, Kane. It hurts. It hurts so—" I don't get to finish the rest of my sentence because Kane does the last thing that I'm expecting him to do. He does the one thing I thought he would never let happen between us again. He closes the distance between us and covers my lips with his. At first, I was too stunned to do anything about it. I let him kiss me, and he did so slowly and controlled. His hands on my waist is still gentle, and he's still careful not to hurt me. I know that this doesn't seem right. I know that we shouldn't be doing this while everyone searches for me. But I don't know how to stop it from happening when I want it more than anything else in this world. My body feels like it's finally at peace now that he's touching and kissing me. I wrapped my arms around Kane, and I held on for my life, kissing him back with everything inside me. With all the feelings I had bottled up. Since the beginning, I'd had to keep it trapped inside me from the first day my eyes fell on him. It felt good to have some of it out finally. Kane's tongue requested entrance into my mouth, and I happily opened up to him. I felt like I

would die when he deepened the kiss. They weren't controlled anymore; his kisses were rough and hungry, like he wanted to swallow all of me. And I knew by now that I would let this man do anything to my body that he wanted to do. I trusted him with everything in me. I knew that he could take me to places I'd only dreamed about. And I was happy to let him. Kane's breathing was loud, and it matched mine perfectly. Something about the rain still pouring down on us made everything more intense. And I can sense that he can feel it too. He can feel how much my body wants him, how much it craves to be this close to him. And still, this isn't enough. I want more of him. I want to give more of myself to him. I want to provide him with all of me. I gasped when Kane bit down on my lip, and I tasted blood. He growls as the taste of my blood mixed with our kiss hits him. His grip on my waist tightens as he picks me up so that I'm now straddling him. There is no mistaking his arousal. Kane is hard and ready for me. And my body is waiting, eager for the chance to have him inside of me finally. I gasp as he begins to rock me back and forth, making me crave for more. "This is wrong," Kane growls between kisses, "it's so f\*\*\*\*\*g wrong, but you're like an addictive drug. I can't get enough of you. The more of you I have, the more I want." My stomach drops at his confession. It's the last thing that I ever expected Kane to admit. He wants me. He wants me just as much as I want him. He may not realize just how much those words mean to me. I've always wanted to hear him say those words to me. "This feels too much like a dream," I whisper. "I'm scared to wake up. I live for every touch and kiss of yours. They're all I can think about. You. Your touch. Your kiss. Everything that has to do with you. Your smile. The power in every stride. The way you look at me." "STOP!" He growls. "Stop before I can't stop myself from taking this any further. Please don't make me do this. I don't want to lose control. Not around you." But I want that. For him to lose control. A howl quakes the raining forest, reminding me that we weren't alone. Kane breaks away from me. He's heard them too. They are close to us, and it's not very smart for us to keep kissing. Not when Maya's brothers are about to find us. Kane knows what we've just done. He knows that there is no going back now. This time there were no excuses. He wasn't drunk, and my life wasn't in so much danger that he had to kiss me to keep me warm like the last time. This was us kissing with our own will. I could see his chest heaving. He knows just as much as I do that we've messed up big time. This was never supposed to happen between us. What are we supposed to do now? How can he look Maya in the face after today? Not that I cared about her feelings after the way she acted around me, but I did care about Kane's. And I knew since the beginning that his heart belonged to her. I knew that this would be an enormous betrayal in his eyes. "FUCK." Kane growls out of nowhere as he untangles my body from his. He runs his hand through his wet hair and paces in front of me. I'd done this to him. I'd somehow managed to make his life more complicated than it already was.

I'd promised myself not to do it, but finally, I'd broken that promise. What had I done? I'd let my emotions get the better of me yet again. I'd let it control me, and now I had to watch Kane suffer because of it. I can see the guilt on his face. He doesn't try to hide it. I don't even think that he can hide it. Kane falls to the ground beside me, and I don't have a chance to react as he picks me up into his arms and begins to walk with me. He doesn't say anything, and neither do I. There is nothing left for us to say. We know what we did. And neither of us was proud about it. It doesn't take long for the wolves to catch up with us. Gabriella spots me when I spot her, and she rushes to my side. From the look on her face, I could tell that she was on the verge of tears. "Thank the Lord; you're okay!" She exclaims. "Where did you hurt yourself?" "She sprained her ankle," Kane answers for me. "I was so worried. I'm sorry for letting you go on your own." She apologizes. "I should have known better than that. I have plenty of experience in these forests; I should have realized it wasn't the same for you. This is all my fault." I shook my head and hugged her even though Kane was still holding onto me, "this isn't your fault. It's mine. I should have known not to walk too far. I knew it was dangerous but still kept going. I would have been fine if the rain didn't come down and made me slip and fall." Gabriella covers her mouth, "we need to get a doctor to you right away." She was right. I didn't think I'd done any severe damage, but I wanted to make sure that my babies were not in any danger because of my foolishness. It's the last time I will ever do something like that without thinking. Everyone hurries to get me back to the vehicle, and I held onto Kane knowing that it may be the last time he would ever let me this close to him again after what we'd just done. We both knew that it couldn't happen again. He didn't say it, but the strained look on his face told me all I needed to know. As soon as we reached the lake, everyone surrounded me, asking questions. They were all concerned, and I was grateful that no one was upset that I had ruined a good day. They didn't seem to care about that. All they were concerned about was my wellbeing. The only person that didn't manage to ask me anything was Maya, and I didn't expect anything different from her. And at this point, I can't blame her because I know that I'd just done something unforgivable. At least no one found it weird that Kane was still holding me. I guess it's because they knew that he was the one that had found me. Whoever saw me first would have been responsible for picking me up since I couldn't walk. He helps me into Arthur's vehicle, and he looks like he doesn't want to let me go. Arthur clears his throat, and it snaps Kane out of his trance. He finally lets go of me and walks back to where Maya's standing. I try to remain calm as Gabriella joins me in the back seat. "Are you okay, auntie?" Emma asks me as she peeks at me. I nod, "it's just a little bruise. Nothing for you to worry about, sweetie." With how fast everyone was driving, it didn't take us long to reach the palace. There was already a doctor on standby when we exited the vehicle. This time Arthur was the one to help me

inside, and I hated to admit that I still wished it was Kane. I can feel his eyes on us as Arthur carries me into the bedroom. I have to wonder if Kane wishes that he was the one holding me. I can't see his expression; but I know he's watching me. I'm not sure whose bedroom I'm in, but it's beautiful. The doctor asked for some privacy as he examined my bruised ankle and checked the condition of my babies. When the report is ready, everyone rushes back into the room. I think we all breathe a sigh of relief when he tells us that my babies are fine and healthy. I touch my stomach and find Kane looking at my hands across the room. He doesn't need to tell me for me to know that he's also relieved that they're okay. Kane was good at many things but hiding how he felt right now was not one of them. I didn't think he would care for my babies as much as he cared for me, but I was wrong. It's possible that he cared just as much for them as he did for me. I told him to stop doing this. To stop caring. My heart would burst with emotion where he was concerned if he didn't stop his actions. "I'm so happy that both you and your babies are okay," Gabriella says as she grabs my hand in hers. "I'm sorry again." "Please stop apologizing," I beg her. "I feel bad every time that you do because I know that I was the one that made a mistake." "You can cheer up now," Arthur tells us both. "She's safe. Everyone is well. We can learn from our mistakes and put it all behind us now." I think that Arthur was right. We didn't have to live in the past. Everyone was safe now; no one was in danger. There was no need for us to be apologizing to each other constantly. Lucy and Isabella join Gabriella and stand on either side of me. "We're so happy to learn that you and your babies are safe. Never scare us like that again." My gaze returns to Kane, and he hasn't looked away from me since. What did this mean for him and me? The secret was out. He knew how I felt about him and Maya. He knew that being with her would break me in two. What would he do about it? Would he finally let me go? I didn't think that there was a chance that Kane would ever choose me over Maya. And I think that alone is the answer that I'm seeking. This was it for us. I'd managed to destroy everything. I'd let my emotions control my actions, and now I had to pay for it. And pay for it, I will.

Chapter 90 ~KANE~ Guilt was eating me alive as I looked from Maya to Giselle's maid. One was my mate; the other was a woman I barely knew. The girl's scent was still all over my body. And it was making things so much more f\*\*\*\*\*g harder for me. I'd kissed her. I'd risked everything and kissed her in the woods under the pouring rain. After everything that I've promised myself, after saying time and time again that I won't hurt Maya again, I'd betrayed her. I'd finally snapped and done the one thing I was terrified of doing. I knew the girl tempted me; I knew that she wasn't someone I could easily ignore. But damn it, I didn't think I would have done what I did today. I didn't know I was that foolish to do something so risky that could ruin everything. Maya had just returned to my

life, and while she wasn't the woman I remembered her to be, I still had a duty to love and protect her no matter what. A duty to be faithful. I'd failed at that time and time again. I'd failed to love her, protect her, and even be faithful. I couldn't do a single thing right when it came to Maya. And that was having an awful effect on me. Knowing that I wasn't strong enough to do the things a mate should be able to do. It wasn't that hard for everyone else; why was I incapable of doing what was right? I don't know what came over me in the forest. First, I was terrified that something had happened to the girl. And then I couldn't control myself when I saw her. I was relieved that nothing serious had happened to her while she was out there alone. All I wanted to do was make sure that she was okay. That her babies were okay. I wasn't expecting her to say the things that she had said to me. I could still taste her. I was convinced that my mind was playing games on me. Even the taste of her blood was familiar to me. What was it about her? She looked nothing like Maya, but yet she reminded me more of Maya than Maya did. It made absolutely zero sense to me. I really was about to lose my mind over this. And f\*\*k me, but the taste of her blood along with her lips had undone me. I could have f\*\*\*\*d her right there if Austin and the rest of men hadn't alerted us that they were close. I was so close to being inside of her. So f\*\*\*\*\*g close. And damn it but not being able to take her right there and then seemed to bother me more than the consequences of my foolish actions. I'd awakened the beast inside of me, and he wanted her. All now, he wanted her. He wanted her with a passion, a passion that threatened to break free any second now. It's all because of you. Her words kept replaying in my head. I always knew that she had feelings for me, but I never knew the extent of those feelings. Now that I knew them, I didn't know what to do with them. That wasn't exactly true. It wasn't that I didn't know what to do with them; it was that I couldn't do anything about them. Not when Maya was still in my life. I was ashamed of my actions. How can I claim to love Maya when I betray her every chance I get? This was never supposed to happen. I was never supposed to kiss the girl. It wasn't supposed to happen when I was drunk, and it most definitely wasn't supposed to happen when I was sober! Even now, while everyone is showering her with love, I can't stop looking her way. And I know she sees me looking. I don't know what's going on in that pretty mind of hers, but I'm completely lost on what was the right thing to do now. She didn't want to see me with Maya, but I belonged to Maya as much as she belonged to me. We'd marked each other. Leaving Maya would break me in two. But something also told me that leaving her would do even more damage. I felt conflicted about what to do. I had a duty to my mate; I didn't have a responsibility to the girl. We weren't bonded mates; it would literally kill Maya if she found out what I did. Giselle's maid, on the other hand, is supposed to be able to handle it better than Maya since we weren't bonded together. But the broken look on her face and the tears in her eyes had

said otherwise. Being with Maya was truly hurting her, and the last thing I wanted was to see her hurt. But what the f\*\*k was I supposed to do about it? I'm tied to Maya. And I owe her so much after everything she's been through. Every time I think about the ways that I've wronged her, I'm reminded that I need to love and cherish her. I'm reminded that I'm not supposed to love anyone but her. I'm reminded that she deserves me to be good to her for once. Sometimes I felt like it was possible, that I could do it. I could be there for Maya the way that she needs me to. But then this girl walks into my life and rocks my f\*\*\*\*\*g world. It's like a storm that won't go away. Everything is turned upside down when she's around. I forget about the important things and run after her like she's my reason to f\*\*\*\*\*g breathe. I already knew what the right thing to do was, and that was never to touch her again. The next thing would be to beg for Maya's forgiveness. I still couldn't build up the courage to tell her what I'd done. It didn't help that she didn't like Giselle's maid either. Even now, she looked annoyed that everyone was caring for her. Again her actions are reminding me of how much she has changed. I have to wonder if this is why I'm finding it so hard to connect with her. She isn't herself. If she's not the woman I fell in love with, how can I feel any emotion towards her? Even today, when she had kissed me to make a point to the girl, I'd felt nothing. And that was unusual for me; kissing Maya had never felt like nothing. Kissing Maya always felt like the kiss I had in the forest under the pouring rain. That's how I remember what it's like to kiss Maya. How can a kiss with a girl I barely knew left more of an impact on me than a kiss with my mate? That is something I've never heard about before. I was beginning to wonder if we should bring someone in to check on Maya. Another witch. Someone who can figure out if that blasted woman had done something to her. Something that prevented me from feeling the connection that had always been there. I wasn't sure if anyone else would agree with me. If they didn't, it would almost be impossible for me to make that happen. And if I did something like that, Maya would realize that I was having doubts about our relationship. I didn't want her to feel threatened in any way. I didn't want her to know that I was failing her yet again. I was running out of ideas. I had to figure out what was the f\*\*\*\*\*g right thing to do, and I felt like time was running out on me. I kept saying that I knew what was the right thing to do, but I kept doing the opposite of that. Any chances that I got alone with the girl, I went the other direction. I forgot about values and morals. She was capable of doing that to me. She had that aura about her that drew me in like a f\*\*\*\*\*g spell. My head is spinning with the events from today. My emotions have been on a damn roller coaster ride. One minute I'm sure that I can treat Maya good and pretend like the girl didn't exist. Then she walks into the picnic in a pretty dress, and she has my full attention. And then she takes that dress off and is left in nothing but a white two-piece that has my pulse quickening. At that moment, I couldn't decide if I wanted to

take her in my arms and hide her beautiful body from everyone else around us or shove her into the jeep and have my f\*\*\*\*\*g way with her. Of course, none of that happened or was about to happen with everyone around us. Then Maya kisses me out of nowhere, and the girl ends up getting lost in the forest. I spent minutes searching for her, which happened to be some of the most excruciating minutes of my entire existence. It bothered me that my actions had caused everything to happen. If I hadn't let Maya kiss me in front of her, she wouldn't have been so hurt to the point that she got lost in the forest. But how could I not let Maya kiss me? She was my mate. I couldn't stop her from kissing me because it would hurt a girl I barely knew. I kept saying I barely knew her, but my body said otherwise. It felt like we knew her more than I was letting myself believe. And then when I saw her there on the ground, soaked from head to toe and staring at me with wide gorgeous eyes. I lost my mind. I forgot about everything else. I barely knew my damn f\*\*\*\*\*g name because of the look she gave me. She always looked at me like I was her knight in shining armor, and damn it; I don't know why it always made me weak. So many f\*\*\*\*\*g things happened today that I can't seem to be able to find a break. And lord knows I needed one right now. Because no matter how much I thought about what I would have to do, I still couldn't make up my mind. The girls are still talking, and I may have drowned out their conversation because of the many things on my mind. But I'm soon on high alert. "There is a bruise on your lip." Lucy points out as she tries to inspect it. "How did you get that?" Both the girl and I freeze. I know where that bruise came from. From f\*\*\*\*\*g me. When I'd bitten down on it and tasted her sweetness. And I wanted to do it again. I was dying to have another taste. Ah, f\*\*k.

Chapter 91 ~MAYA~ I want to shout that Kane was the one that left it there, but I know better than to do that. I can see the tension in his body. The last thing I want to do is cause a scene for him. Admitting that he was the one that left the bruise on my lip while kissing me would cause an uproar. And I was sure that I wouldn't be able to stop Maya's family from attacking him. That's something I would never intentionally do to Kane. I never wanted to see him in any danger because of me. He's done too much for me to let anyone hurt him because of something I've said. We're both looking at each other, and Gabriella squeezes my hand to remind me we have company. I'm grateful that she is here to point me in the right direction because apparently, I was too stupid to know when to stop. I look around me and realize that everyone is still waiting for an answer. What did I tell them? I think it is evident that something had bitten down on my lip from how the wound looked and felt. I had to go with a story that went along with that. "I bit down on it when I fell; the pain was too much for me." I lie. I don't know if they believe me, but

when no one says anything, I assume that they do. Gabriella and Arthur are the only ones that look a bit skeptical. That was expected since I'd already told them of everything that had happened between Kane and me in the past. And I didn't regret telling them. It felt good having someone to talk to. People that didn't judge me and who wanted what was best for me. It helped that Gabriella also cared a great deal for Kane. I knew that I could trust her because of it. Why did Kane's kisses always make me forget that this world existed? Whenever he kissed me, I forgot about everything else. I stopped caring about doing what was right; all I wanted was for him to keep kissing me. It's something I could never get tired of. If I had a chance, I'd let him kiss me every second of every day. Kane is still looking at me, and the hunger in his eyes makes my knees feel weak. Is he possibly thinking about the kiss like I am? I couldn't get it out of my mind. I wanted everyone but him to leave the room so that we could continue where we had left things between us. His eyes narrow a little, and he shifts restlessly against the wall. It's a good thing that I was already on a bed, or I would have fallen straight on my ass with the intensity of his gaze. Why wasn't he looking away from me? Wasn't he worried that someone would see the way he stared? And that's exactly what he's been doing, openly staring at me, like he wanted to devour me whole. I had to clench my thighs together as I tried not to squirm beneath his gaze. Why does he do this? Why does he always look at me that way? He wasn't helping the situation any more than I was. I was beginning to think that we were both screwed. It didn't seem like we had any control when it came to each other. I always thought that it was just me that felt this way, but after the way, Kane acted in the forest, it was confirmed that I wasn't the only one that felt these strong emotions between us. He also felt them, and they controlled him just like they did me. What was this thing between us that made us want to risk everything whenever we were alone together? But it wasn't just when we were alone; even now, when we're surrounded, I want to risk everything to be near him. I heard a soft cry from the center of the room that caught all of our attention. I realized who the sound had come from, and immediately I tensed. Maya. What was she up to? She looks like she'd just seen a ghost, or at least she's pretending to have seen one. She suddenly sways on her feet, and Kane snaps his gaze away from me towards her. It's the first time he's looked away from me, and of course, it would be because of her. When he realizes what is happening, he rushes to her side, preventing her from falling. When he picks her up in his arms, I'm shocked to see the victory smile on her face. I'm not sure if anyone else saw it, but I'm stunned and speechless. Did she pretend to faint so that Kane would catch her? Was she so upset that the attention was on me right now? I knew that she was pathetic at times, but this was borderline crazy. She was beginning to make me think that she had lost her damn mind. I had to have mistaken her smile, right? There is no way that she pretended so that the

attention would be taken away from me. But I kept seeing her smile in the back of my mind, and I just knew that this was intentional. I couldn't believe the nerve of this girl. Everyone were now rushing to her side to make sure that she was okay. And that's what she wanted to happen all along. She was upset that everyone was concerned about me. Since she returned, most of the attention was on her, and she clearly hated that, for once, people were tending to me. Everyone except Gabriella and Arthur. They were both looking at me. I guess they were the only ones that saw what I had just seen. But that was expected. We could see straight through her act. At least I wasn't the only one. I had those two by my side, and they were the best. They stuck by me through it all. And they knew everything about me. Everything except that kiss that happened in the woods. I'm not sure if they would be happy to learn about it, but I didn't want to keep any secrets from Gabriella. She was too kind to me for me to lie to her about anything. Whenever we were alone, I would get the chance to tell her what happened between Kane and me. "I can't believe her," Gabriella whispers to me as she looks at Maya. "Did she fake it to get attention? That's just unbelievable of her. I didn't think she was that crazy for attention." Arthur looks at them, ensuring that no one can hear our conversation. "Something is off about her," he says to us. "I can feel it. We need to get someone to keep an eye on her. I think it will be in the best interest of everyone if we keep this to ourselves until we figure out what's wrong with her. I don't think anyone else here might agree with our observations. Because from what I can see, we are the only ones who knew that she just faked that faint." "He's right," Gabriella says. "I didn't know her before, not like the rest of them, but I know this isn't right. She's not herself. That can't possibly be the Maya I've heard them talk about multiple times before. It's not normal for someone like her to pretend to faint just to get some attention." I agreed with them both. I did believe that something was off. I don't think that Kane would ever fall in love with someone like her. She had changed for the worse. And I don't believe that someone could change that much. The witch must have done something horrible to Maya. I don't know what she did, but we had to find out soon before she caused more trouble for everyone. So far, she hadn't done anything to attack any of us directly, but I wouldn't put it past her. Every time I looked her way, I got these unusual chills. It's like my body is trying to tell me something about the girl. I don't know what it is, but it wasn't anything good. It was weird that the witch had left her in the abandoned castle for us to find. Why hadn't she taken her with her? She'd hidden Maya from everyone for so long just for her to be found alive? It just didn't add up at all. We were missing something. I don't think Kane or anyone realized that finding Maya was just too easy. A witch would never make it that easy for her to be found. I don't know why I didn't think about it before. It's only because of Maya's weird behavior that this thought is now crossing my mind. Something was wrong

with her. And if there was something off about her, if the witch had done something to make her act differently, it only meant that Kane was in line to get hurt again. And I would not stand back and let her hurt him. We had to find a way to figure out what went wrong, and we had to do it without anyone suspecting anything. That wouldn't be easy. We would have to find a witch that we could trust. I would think that only a witch would be able to tell if a spell is on her or not. Kane and everyone else is still around Maya, ensuring that she is okay. I can see the worry on their faces, and it annoys me. It annoys me because I know that she'd just pretended. How could she make all these kind people so worked up over nothing? They think that something is wrong with her and she's totally fine. "It's not time for you to worry about anything right now," Gabriella warns me. "You need to rest. And we aren't going to be able to move forward until you have completely healed and can walk." It was true. I wouldn't be able to help anyone like this. I had to take the time to heal. While I wanted to get to the bottom of everything and help Kane, as well as everyone else that loved Maya, I wouldn't be able to do it in this condition. "We should get her to another room," Austin says as he checks her temperature with the back of his hand. James is also next to her, moving the hair from her face and asking her how she is feeling. All the while, Kane is still holding her close to his chest. It hurts because just a few hours ago, I was the one he was holding onto. I was the one he was worried over. I'd felt like the luckiest girl alive to know that he cared so much for me. Now I had to watch him react the same way to another woman. Why did I do this to myself? Whenever I saw them together, I was never able to look away. Even now, I'm staring at how he takes care of her. Kane had this gentle nature about him. But that delicate nature only came out for certain people in his life. If he didn't care for you, he treated you differently. He was only gentle towards a select few, and once you were a part of that list, it made you feel on top of the world. Kane walks out of the room with Maya still in his arms; he doesn't look at me as he leaves. She knew what she was doing, and she seemed good at it. She knew that Kane wouldn't be able to focus on anything else as long as she wasn't well. And that's why she had pretended to faint. What else would she do to get him to commit to her fully? If they were as connected as she wants everyone to think, why does she have to try so hard to get Kane to pay attention to her? "Don't pay any attention to them," Gabriella whispers. "I think you've been through enough already. Take this time to rest." I sigh, "I will." Even though I spoke those words, I knew it wasn't true. I will never be able to stop thinking about them. At least not Kane. He will always be on my mind. Even if I try to push him out, somehow, he will find a way to remind me that he was there, locked in my memories and my heart.

Chapter 92 ~MAYA~ Lucy and everyone else had insisted that I at least stay two days with them; it was how long the doctor recommended that I rested for. Given that I could heal quickly, I insisted on leaving with Gabriella and Arthur. But none of them were listening to me. I eventually gave in even though I knew that living in the same house as Maya and Kane were about to be torture. Seeing them together even for a second was painful. How could I survive being around them for two days? And I now knew that Maya enjoyed provoking me. She would do anything to make me feel uncomfortable during my stay here; I was sure of it. I hadn't seen Kane since he'd walked out of the room with Maya in his arms earlier. I heard Lucy telling Isabella earlier that things were not looking good and something seemed to be bothering Maya. They had stayed in the room with her along with Kane for hours. The doctor that had looked after me was the same one that they called to check up on her. From what I've heard, Maya didn't want the doctor to see her. She kept screaming and making a fuss. Why wouldn't she want a doctor to see her? Isabella had asked Lucy the same question. Lucy had told her that Maya was still traumatized from losing her baby and didn't want to see a doctor because it reminded her of what had happened to her. The more I heard about Maya, the more I was convinced that the witch had done something to her. I don't believe that losing her baby was causing her to lash out the way she was. It has to be more than that. This Maya seemed vicious and ready to cause trouble. She also looked like she could be a great liar. If she could have lied about fainting or pretended to faint, she is capable of far worse things. If we weren't careful around her, things could get terrible. I'm not sure if Maya's family has started to catch on to her weird behavior, but from the way Isabella spoke to Lucy earlier, she was also beginning to suspect her. I wanted to bring up what I'd talked to Gabriella about but convinced myself that it was best to keep it to ourselves until we had more proof. I didn't want them to think that we were against Maya. I enjoyed spending time with this family; I knew that offending Maya would mean that I was also disrespecting her family. That's the last thing I wanted to do. They were all so kind to me. I wish that Maya didn't have to be someone I disliked being around. I'm suddenly distracted by the painting of wolves on the walls. As I'd said earlier, this room was beautiful. I was in the guest room all along. I didn't have to leave or switch rooms because of this. This room would be mine until I was ready to go. I didn't have a problem staying here. I could spend the entire two days locked in this room as long as it meant I didn't have to see Kane and Maya together. It's not like anyone here would understand my pain. I couldn't tell them what I had told Kane. It was something I had to keep to myself. He was the only one other than Gabriella and Arthur that understood what I went through when I saw them together. Gabriella and Arthur had left to go home, and I already felt lonely without them. They didn't want to leave me either, but eventually, they also gave in

when Lucy mentioned that they would have their doctor do regular checkups on me to ensure that my babies indeed were out of any danger. And I wasn't about to protest to that either; I wanted them to be safe after I'd openly done something so stupid that could have taken them from me. I was lucky things weren't worse than a sprained ankle. Arthur and Gabriella had taken Emma with them, and I missed the little angel. There was one good thing about being here; I would get to see baby Roman as much as I wanted. His little smile always melted my heart, and the fact that he liked me made it even better. I sigh as I look out the window to stare at the dark sky. It was already night, and the wind was cold, but I didn't want to move from the bed to close the opened window. Instead, I let myself enjoy the view of the glittering stars. From here, life looked simple. But I knew that it was anything but that. There were always challenges at every corner that you turned. All of my challenges felt like they were connected to Kane. I knew that my life would be more simple without him in it, but if that were the case, I didn't want a simple life. I wanted one where he was happy and by my side. I'm not sure that I could get both things at once. Since the day I opened my eyes and realized that I couldn't remember anything from my past, there have been only two things that have given me the strength to fight. One was my babies, and the other was my feelings for Kane. I knew that I didn't want to remember my past if he was not a part of it. And I knew that he was not a part of it since he never once recognized me. No matter how many times my heart felt like it recognized him, he never once said that he knew me. Another sigh leaves my lips as I try to get off the bed. My ankle already felt better, not completely healed but good enough for me to stand on. I wanted something to drink, and I had already drank everything they'd left in the room for me. I was hoping that I didn't run into Maya. I assumed that everyone was probably asleep by now. I didn't hear any talking or any noises at all. It was quiet, and I liked it that way. After a long day, I was glad to have some peacefulness surrounding me. But what would I do if I was unfortunate enough to see her? I'm sure that she would do something to irritate me. It was no use worrying over this when I wasn't even sure I would see anyone when I got out of here. I take another look at the painting. I don't know why I kept looking back at it. There were so many things in this palace that called out to me. I still found it hard to believe that I hadn't been here in the past. There was something so familiar about everything in here. Even the people that lived here seemed close to me, which was crazy to me. It was clear they didn't know me. Again, I was reading too much into things that weren't there. I don't know if my heart wanted me to believe that I belonged to a loving home like this, and maybe that's why it wanted to trick me into believing that everything here was familiar. I slowly made my way out of the room and tried not to knock anything down in the process; I didn't want to do anything that would wake anyone. I knew they would be upset to see me on my feet

when they told me not to walk on them. Everyone was extremely caring and made sure to look after me. While I knew they were only looking out for me, I could tell that it was okay if I walked around now. When I open the door, it takes me a moment to realize that I'm not alone. There is someone here. My eyes slowly take in the figure, and I'm unprepared for what I see next. I'm shocked to see Kane standing right there in front of me. But the man in front of me looks nothing like the man I'm so used to seeing. His eyes are red, and his hands are shaking. Not just his hands, his entire body looks like it's losing control. My gaze travels down his body, and it's apparent that something has happened to him. I'm not sure what, but something did happen. His shirt is so badly torn that I can see his chest through the tear. What had he been up to? Did he get in a fight? That couldn't be. If there were a fight, I would have heard something. And as I'd mentioned earlier, everything was quiet and peaceful. There was no one else around us either, I'd looked down the corridor, and we were the only two people standing here. If there had been a fight, I'm sure that Austin and the rest of them would have been by his side. Unless they were the ones fighting him, I studied his face and body for wounds; there wasn't a single one, and I'd made sure to examine him thoroughly. If he was in a fight with someone, I was sure that there would at least be one bruise on him. "What are you doing here?" I whisper; I can't hide the concern from my voice. He's scaring me and not because I feel threatened by him; I'm scared because I'm worried that something horrible has happened to him. Did Maya do something? Or did something happen to her? "Lock the door." He growls. His words surprise me. Why should I lock my door? Was I in danger? "Kane?" I ask. "What's happening? Is something going on? Do you need my help? Are we in danger?" He doesn't seem to hear my questions. There are so many emotions flashing in his eyes that it's hard to pick up on them. It didn't help that he wasn't giving me an explanation of what was going on. "Did something happen to—" "GET INSIDE AND LOCK THE f\*\*\*\*\*g DOOR NOW!" He roars, cutting me off from saying anything else. I jump at his tone, but I'm not scared of him. I've been around him long enough to know that he won't hurt me. But I also know him well enough to know that something is definitely wrong. I was sure of it now. Kane has never once looked this lost and not in control as he did right now in front of me. Something caused him to become this way. I step toward him even though I know I'm doing the opposite of what he's asking me to do. And Kane wasn't someone that liked when you disobeyed him. But I was used to doing the opposite of what he asked me to do. This wasn't something new. "Something is wrong with you. I know it." I whisper. "What can I do to help? What do you need from me? I'll do anything. Anything that you want as long as it's going to help you with whatever has you this way. Please talk to me; I'm here to listen." "ARE YOU NOT HEARING ME?" he demands. He's beginning to look frantic now. "I'm asking you to get inside and lock

your door." This was getting on my nerves. How hard was it for him to tell me what had him this way? He should know that I wasn't the type of person to back down when I wanted answers. I wasn't going anywhere until he explained what had him this way. Did he not realize that I cared about him? In what world would I ever leave him looking like this? "No!" I snap. "I'm not going anywhere until you tell me what is wrong with you. I've never seen you behave this strangely before. Something has to be wrong, and I'm not just going to leave you when I know that you need me." He doesn't say anything, and I take that chance to take another step toward him. I don't stop until our bodies are inches apart, his hand is tightened into fists at his sides, and his jaw is clenched. It's another sign that he's in some sort of pain. My closeness seems to affect him more than it usually does. I can see it clearly from the strained look on his face. He was fighting something, and it seemed to be a battle within himself. I hesitantly reach up and cup his cheek in my hand, "tell me, please. What is troubling you? How can I help?" I know that I'm repeating the same questions, but he hasn't once answered me. The look on his face tells me that I've finally done it. I've crossed the line he didn't want me to cross. "This is your last f\*\*\*\*\*g warning." He growls, and his eyes have turned to complete darkness. "If you want me to move, you'll have to do it on your own because I'm not doing it otherwise," I informed him calmly. A loud growl tore from his throat, and it echoed throughout the quiet corridor. I still don't back down, even though that growl was a warning for me. His hands shake even more than before, and it's hard not to miss it. I'm about to ask him if he needs my help once more, but before I can do that, his hands grab my waist in a tight hold. He moved so quickly with me in his arms that it took me a while to realize we were now on the bed. Before I can understand what's happening, Kane's mouth is on my neck. "KANE!" I gasp when I feel his teeth pierce into my skin. "KANE!" I shout once more, but he isn't hearing me. I don't think he even knows what he's doing anymore. Or maybe he knows but has lost all control. I feel my eyes roll back in my head as pleasure rushes through my vein as he continues to suck and feed off me. His desperation is somehow flowing into me. I can feel myself begin to want this more than he does. I grab the back of his head and guide him closer to my neck until there is no room for anything to pass between us. I'm not sure what is happening, but I'm not going to stop him. I can't. Not when I feel this way.

Chapter 93 ~KANE~ Sweet. Divine. Heavenly. f\*\*\*\*\*g mine. I've lost all f\*\*\*\*\*g control. All. My body has all of the power over me at this time, and I can do nothing about it. It's taking the lead and giving us what we've wanted for a long time now. I'm not

sure what had taken over me. One minute I was in the room, and the next, I was in front of her door. I wasn't even aware of how I'd gotten there. I remember just standing there, listening to her heartbeat, slow breaths, and light shuffle on the bed. I don't know how long I was standing there before she finally came out. I remember fighting for control, telling myself that I had finally f\*\*\*\*\*g lost it. Telling myself that it was time to leave before she found me there waiting for her like a bloody stalker. But the desire was too strong for me to ignore; I couldn't fight it any longer. I had kept away for far too long, and it was finally tearing me apart for denying it what it wanted all along. After the taste I had of her in the forest, my body was desperate for more. I wanted her blood. Lord knows I wanted more than just her f\*\*\*\*\*g blood, but right now, it was what I wanted most. Just that one taste in the woods was enough to fuel the desire. It was too late to turn back now. Too damn late. I couldn't stop even if I wanted to. I tried to warn her. I wanted to frighten her to get her inside and lock her doors. I was using every last bit of self-control I had left to get her to do that for me, but she hadn't listened. I'd practically begged her to get her pretty little ass inside. But did she listen? Of course, she didn't. When does she ever? She never f\*\*\*\*\*g listens to me. It's why we are in this position right now. She's beneath me. Her soft, luscious body is beneath mine. My hands are intertwined with hers as I trapped them above us on the pillows. My mouth is pressed against her neck as my teeth pierce her skin; I'm sucking on her, taking her blood, feeding my body what it needs. Our bodies are pressed tightly together, and I could feel every part of her curves against my body. And f\*\*k me. That and the taste of her blood had me harder than I'd ever been in my f\*\*\*\*\*g life. I wouldn't be able to hide my arousal from her. I was hard as stone; I was sure she could feel me against her. I wanted to suck on her neck as I f\*\*\*\*\*d her hard against this bed. I wanted to f\*\*k her on the ground, against the wall; on top the desk. I wanted her on every inch of this blasted room. The fact that I hadn't done that already told me that I still had some control left. I didn't think I had any. Not with the way I was acting. But it was the only explanation I had for why I wasn't stripping her bare and burying my d\*\*k in her p\*\*\*y when it was what I was dying to do. The hopelessness was real; it was very much alive. The last bit of control that I was trying to hold onto, the one that prevented me from getting inside of her, it was barely visible. This happens when you don't feed the hunger inside of you. You eventually snap and lose control. I promised myself that I would never drink another woman's blood after losing Maya. I didn't want anyone else's taste in my mouth but hers. I felt like she also deserved that from me. I wanted to punish myself for losing her, and I was getting good at that punishment. I was getting good at making myself suffer for failing her. And it was working. My plan was working. I hadn't drank blood from anyone else after she went missing. . . Until now. After getting a taste of the girl's blood earlier, it was over for me. I thought that I was

stronger than this. I knew that I wanted more of her, but I didn't think that I would snap the way that I did. I was able to ignore the need to take more of her earlier today; I had managed to put it behind me and focus on other things than tasting her again. But tonight, something snapped within me. All control had left me. And when she didn't lock herself inside like I'd asked her to do for me. When she'd purposefully taken a step toward me and when she'd willingly offered to do anything I wanted, I was happy to take her up on that offer. I knew that her words would have shattered the last bit of self-control I had. How could I ignore her when she offered to give me anything I wanted from her? What f\*\*\*\*\*g man in his right mind would say no to an offer like that from her? Not this selfish man. Selfish was all I was from the beginning. I was greedy when it came to her. I would drop every damn thing just to keep coming back to her, to get more of her, to taste her. To get everything my body was dying for. My body begins to tremble with the need for more of her. Like I said, greedy, it was f\*\*\*\*\*g greedy for her. And it was going to take all that she was offering and more. I was past the point of stopping, I just couldn't stop myself anymore. And I wasn't planning on stopping either. Not after her taste filled my mouth. Eventually, sucking on her neck wasn't enough for me. I was craving more of her sweet blood, and I wanted to take it from more than one part of her body. "MORE!" I growl as I suck the last bit of blood from her neck. I watch as some of the blood trails down to her chest. I tightened my whole on her hands above her head as I licked the blood off her soft skin, not stopping until it was all gone. I grab her hair and pull her head back so that I can easily access her mouth. She doesn't have time to prepare as I crush our lips together. Biting down on her lips just like I'd done earlier today. Taking more of her. Taking what I f\*\*\*\*\*g craved. Tasting her. Kissing her. Touching her. And even that wasn't enough for me. I was dying for every part of her beautiful body. All because of you. Her words. But they felt like mine. I was losing control. And it was all because of her—no one else. She was the one that made me do things that I had no excuses for. She made me feel things I knew that I shouldn't. She made me want things that were forbidden. She did this to me. She made me want to have all of her. She made me want to do things with her that could possibly make me lose everything that I had, yet she somehow made it feel all worth it. She made me believe that it would be okay as long as I had her. Nothing else would matter. She made me think all of these crazy thoughts. And whenever I was like this with her, those thoughts became more believable. I became blind. I dreamed of the chance for those thoughts to be a reality. That's the power this woman has on me. So much damn power. More power than I wanted ever to admit. "You." I whisper as I suck on her lip, "you make me do this. You. No one else but f\*\*\*\*\*g you." She doesn't say anything. She lets me have my way with her without protesting, not even once. Why did she always f\*\*\*\*\*g do this? Why didn't she put up a

fight? Why did she make it so easy for me to get caught up in her? She just had to say no to me once, just f\*\*\*\*\*g once. Why couldn't she do that for me? She gasps when I spread her legs and push her dress upwards so that I can get access to her thighs. I drag my body down hers, kissing every inch of her, nibbling on her skin, teasing her, making her think that I'm about to suck but never actually doing it. I keep it up until my lips are above where I wanted them to be. With one hand on her breast, and another squeezing her waist, I sink my teeth into her inner thigh. I am taking more of her. I wanted to sink my teeth into every inch of her beautiful body. I wanted to leave my mark on every part of her. I wanted everyone to know that this woman was f\*\*\*\*\*g mine. She should have never offered herself as she did to me. Now I wouldn't stop taking. I was too greedy, too selfish, not to take what she was offering. And now that I knew that she meant every word, it awoke the desire more than ever. She would give me everything I wanted. And she had it all. She had everything that I desired right now. No one else but her could give me what I wanted. And I don't think she knows that. If she did, she would have power over me. She would know how weak she could make me with just one simple word from her pretty mouth. "KANE!" she cries out as I deepen my sucking motion. It still doesn't feel like enough. I know what my body wants, and I have to find the control to stop it. A whimper leaves her mouth, and she surprises me yet again by burying her hands in my hair and pulling me tighter against her. A low growl escapes my mouth, and I tighten my hold on her body as the blood continues to fill my mouth. Her blood is the purest, sweetest. . . I pause as a distant memory invades my mind. Maya. I remember doing this to her. I remember her blood tasting precisely like this. And I did the same to her. Taking too much of her, slamming her against the wall. Sucking more of her than I deserved. And here I was doing the same thing to the girl within my grasp. If I kept this up, I might do to her exactly what I did to Maya at one point. And it's the last thing I wanted to do. I had to learn from my mistakes; I couldn't repeat them repeatedly. I didn't want to take so much blood from her that she would become weak in front of me. And I had to remember that she'd been through plenty today already. I was not helping the situation. I was making it worse. I was hurting her. It's enough for me to rip my body away from her and scramble right out of there. I got as far away from her as I possibly could. I couldn't stay in that house for the night again. If I did, she would tempt me too much; I would end up straight back in her bedroom, ready to finish what I started. And f\*\*k, I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it to her, and I couldn't do it to Maya. I'd seen how weak Maya was today. She'd fainted in front of me. And at that time, I promised myself to stay away from the girl for her sake. A promise that I'd broken multiple times already. I couldn't even last a few hours. I had already broken it once more. I run a hand down my face in frustration. What

had I done? What the f\*\*k was wrong with me? Why couldn't I have any sort of control? When would I stop being so f\*\*\*\*\*g weak?

Chapter 94 ~MAYA~ What just happened? Did Kane really just come into my room, spin my entire world out of control, and leave in a split second? How was that even possible? I touch my neck; I'm still stunned at everything that just occurred. It's taking my body some time to recover. The last person I expected to see when I opened my door was Kane. I thought something had happened to him, but I didn't know he needed blood. It's not like I would have stopped him if he'd asked first. I knew he tried to warn me; now I understood why he insisted I lock my door. He was trying to protect me from himself. It's the first time I've ever seen him lose control like that. And it's also the first time I've seen him so terrified of himself. I don't think Kane even trusted his own actions at that point. I may have had more trust in him during that period than he did in himself. I don't think I'll ever forget the look on his face when he realized that nothing was going to stop his body from going after what it wanted. I didn't know what it was at first, but I knew now. My hand travels to my inner thigh. His lips were here just a few minutes ago. I didn't think someone taking my blood would ever feel so pleasurable. My body felt the most relaxed and excited it's ever been during those extraordinarily limited minutes of my life. It was almost like it was happy to give him what he wanted. I shouldn't be surprised by that. I was always happy to provide Kane with anything that he desired. And it wasn't often that he asked anything from me. He didn't even ask for it even though his body was clearly crying out for blood. He ignored his own needs and probably would have been able to stop himself if I had just listened to him and locked the door behind me. We were lucky that no one had heard him. Kane's possessive growls of warning weren't exactly quiet. It had definitely been loud enough for someone to hear. I knew I would have heard it even if I was locked inside the room. And when he'd thrown us both onto the bed, the door was wide open. He hadn't bothered to close it. I don't think at that time Kane was even thinking about shutting the door. He was only concerned about feeding the desire within himself. I'm not sure what came over him. I can't explain why that had happened to him. But I was happy I could help him overcome whatever it was that had caused him to behave that way. I wish that it had lasted longer. Kane was very aroused. I could still feel him between my legs from how much of him I'd felt earlier. I cover my face in frustration. Why did he always do this to me? I would get all hot and needy because of his actions, and then he would rip himself away from me. I already knew the answer to that question. Kane didn't want these things to happen between us. He was conflicted about what he wanted. He had a duty to Maya, and I was getting in the way of that. I

sighed; I knew staying here would only lead to more trouble. I didn't think it would have happened like this, but we definitely could have gotten caught if anyone had just passed in front of my room. I couldn't let something like that happen again. At least not for everyone to see us. I didn't want a repeat of what had happened with Giselle also to occur here. Instead of my life being in danger, I was sure that Kane was the one who would be in the most trouble. I hug the pillow as I try to calm myself enough to fall asleep. I needed to rest. My body felt weak now that he was gone. I could only hope that Kane was not blaming himself for what had just happened, just like he always does. Kane loved to blame himself, and it was one thing about him that I didn't like. For once, I'll like it if he gives his burden to me as well. . . . . It was the next day, and I hadn't slept at all. I couldn't after the events of last night. I kept looking at the door, hoping that Kane would show up again. But he never did. I'm not sure what happened to him after he left the room. But I was worried about him. I force myself to get out of bed and walk toward the bathroom. There was something I needed to check. I knew what Kane did to me last night was bound to leave evidence on my body. I look at myself in the mirror, and there are indeed bite marks all over me. Marks Kane had left on my body. The most noticeable was on my neck and thigh. I needed to find a way to hide them before Lucy, or anyone else came to check up on me. How could I explain bite marks? I could barely explain the bruise on my lip, one that he had left. There was no way for me to lie about this one. It was too noticeable to be lied on. They would know that a vampire would be responsible for marks such as these. And as far as I knew, Kane was the only hybrid in this palace. It wouldn't take a genius to figure out that he'd fed from me last night. And they would question why he hadn't taken blood from Maya instead. Or even found some other way to quench his thirst. But why hadn't he taken from Maya? She would have been his first option since she was his mate. She should be the one he craved more than anyone else. Why did he come to find me last night? And why was he so scared of himself? Did he think that he wouldn't be able to stop? I knew Kane well enough to know that he could stop himself if needed, just like he did last night. He stopped before he could hurt me. I'm not sure that he would see things the way that I did. In his eyes, he had failed. He was too weak. I know that's what he would be thinking. I wish I could see him and tell him that he is wrong. I rushed back to the bed when I heard a knock on the door. I pull the covers over my body and try to hide my neck with my hair. I couldn't risk anyone seeing the marks Kane left on me. I had to continue to protect him. I don't even think what happened last night was intentional. He didn't want to do what he did. He tried his best to stop it from happening. But I was happy he had lost control. I got to experience another side of him that I absolutely loved. Another knock reminds me that I had company, "come in!" I invite whoever it is at the door to enter. Lucy walks into the room with clothes and food

in both hands, "I wanted to bring these for you myself." She tells me with a smile. "Thank you, Lucy," I tell her as I try to reach for it without letting my neck become exposed. I hope my actions aren't making her feel like something was wrong with me. It was hard to hide something so big. And the marks were indeed big. Kane did not play last night at all. When he snapped, there was no stopping him. He took what he wanted without caring about the consequences of his actions. "How are you feeling today?" she asks me. "You look like you haven't slept at all. Was the bed not comfortable enough for you? Or should we get you more pillows?" I immediately pale at her question. I hadn't slept because I couldn't stop thinking about Kane. I was also in need of something only he could give to me. He had left before anything more could have happened between us. I'd spent the night feeling restless and needy. Maybe I should have gone after him last night. But I doubt I would have been able to catch him. He moved so quickly that he was out of the room in the blink of an eye. And let's say I did go looking for him and had found him, Kane wouldn't have let me come close to him. I was sure of it. He would have told me that it was unsafe, and he probably would have pushed me away like he'd tried to do last night. "Everything was very comfortable," I assure her. "You don't need to change anything in here. I had a lot on my mind. That's all. I'm sorry for causing so much trouble." Lucy's eyes widen, "what trouble? You've been a lovely guest. And we were the ones that asked for you to stay. The doctor will be here in a few hours to do the check-up. I'm sure everything is fine, but from my pregnancy experience, it's always good to do these things regularly. Just to make sure that the baby is okay. And since you're having two babies, the risks will be greater. We're just playing it safe." "Thank you for everything, Lucy. Your family is always so caring. It warms my heart. I can't remember my family, but if I had a wish, I would wish that they were like yours." I confess. Lucy places her hands over her chest and smiles, "your words are so beautiful. You don't know who your family was in the past, but I can tell you that you have a family now. We are your present family, and we will help look after you like you're one of our own. There was a point in my life when I felt like I had nothing and no one. I was like you, feeling alone and like I didn't have any family to turn to for help. Then I met Austin's family, and they completely changed my life. It was hard at first, but eventually, I'd had a family I couldn't live without and who couldn't live without me." Her words made me incredibly happy. Being a part of this family would mean so much to me. I already felt a strong connection to almost everyone here. Now that I knew they considered me like family, it made everything so much better. I also had no idea that Lucy lived a lonely life at first. She didn't act like someone who had a rough start in life. She was always so warm and cheerful. "Good morning!" Someone shouts from the doorway, bringing my attention to them. I was happy to see it was Gabriella, though I should have been able to tell from her

voice alone. She smiles brightly as she enters the room and sits on the opposite side of Lucy. She leans over and hugs me, "how are you feeling today?" "Much better," I tell her. "Especially since you're here now." She laughs and hugs me again. "You two can catch up; I'm going to check on Maya. Austin is in the room with her now. I'm hoping that she is doing better today." Lucy informs us. Gabriella and I tried to act concerned even though we both knew she was faking her sickness yesterday. I still couldn't believe she'd stuck with her lies for so long. If Austin was in there with her now, it meant that she was continuing with that stupid, selfish act of hers. "I hope she's doing better today," I tell her. "Keep us updated." Lucy nods and exits the room. "Nice one pretending to care." Gabriella laughs. "I can't believe she's still trying so hard to keep the attention on her." Now that Gabriella was here, I knew I would need her help to cover these marks on my body. I was glad that Lucy didn't happen to see them. I knew that I wouldn't be so lucky if more than one person were around me at the same time, like how they were surrounding me yesterday. "You look a bit distracted," Gabriella notes. Of course, she notices; she never misses anything. "Can you shut the door?" I ask her. I couldn't hide the anxiousness from my voice, and I didn't want anyone to hear our conversation. She looks confused but goes to shut it for me before she can ask any questions. "Are you planning on changing into the dress Lucy brought for you?" she asks me. "Do you need my help getting into it?" "I do need your help," I confess. "But not to change into the dress," I inform her. I'm unsure how to tell her about yesterday without making Kane look bad. I knew how the marks on my body would look to her. They would be a bit alarming for anyone to look at. "What is it that you need my help with?" she asks as she studies me. "Do you need help standing?" I shook my head, "I have something to show you, but promise me that you're not going to freak out on me." Gabriella still looks completely lost, and she seems hesitant to agree when she doesn't know what I'm talking about. "I can't promise to freak out when I don't know what you have to show me, but I can promise to try my best not to." I sigh and slowly remove the covers from my body. She didn't notice right away, and I had to wait for her to see what I was trying to show her. I push my hair to the back, exposing the bruise on my neck. Her mouth opens in shock, "How did that happen to you? It looks like someone sucked the s\*\*t out of you!" I touched my neck once more; someone did suck the s\*\*t out of me, and that someone was her brother. How did I put it into nice words for her? "Someone was in my room last night and did this to me." I finally say as I wait for her to catch up. Her mouth opens into a wide 'o', and she jumps up from the chair and walks up and down the room before she finally gets the strength to say, "please don't tell me this was done by a certain someone whose name starts with a k." "You said you will at least try not to freak out." I point out to her. "I'm not freaking out," she says in a high-pitched voice. "Why would I be freaking out? You have marks all over

your body, and they were caused by my brother, who doesn't know he is my brother. Who also has a mate literally down the hall, possibly under the influence of a witch for all we know. Of course, I'm not freaking out. Why would I be?" She'd summed up our challenges pretty decently. I give her some time to calm down, and it takes at least a few minutes before she composes herself and returns to the chair next to me. "How exactly did this happen? Did he force you, or did you willingly offer yourself to him?" "He didn't force me, and I didn't technically offer myself to him." I try to explain. "What's that supposed to mean?" she asks me as she tries to make sense of my words. "Last night, I decided to leave my room to get some water from the kitchen, but when I got to my door and opened it. Kane was standing there. I noticed that something was clearly off about him. He didn't look as collected as he usually does. His shirt was torn, and his eyes were red until they became dark. I asked him if I could help. I wanted to know what was wrong. He wouldn't tell me. He just kept insisting for me to get inside and lock the door. Of course, I wasn't about to leave him in that condition. The longer I stayed by his side trying to find out what was wrong, the more he became frantic. He was scaring me, not because I felt threatened but worried for him. When I refused to go back inside, and offered to help him in whatever way I could, he seemed to snap. He grabbed me and carried me to the bed, and bit down on my neck. I think you know what happened next." It's the nicest way that I could explain to her what happened between us. I didn't think I needed to go into details about the event. It may be too much for her. "I don't," Gabriella says. "Because there isn't just one mark on your body. Did anything else happen? Are you sure he didn't do more than just drink your blood?" I shook my head as my face turned red, "no, we didn't. It never got to that point. Something seemed to give him his control back. He left before anything else could happen. He was in the middle of taking more blood from me when he pulled away from me with incredible speed. I never saw him again after that." Gabriella sighs, "I don't know what's going on with him. But it seems like he's been depriving himself of blood if he snapped out of control like that. It wouldn't have happened if he had been drinking it regularly. I'm assuming that his reason for starving himself was probably because of Maya. What I don't understand is why Kane came for your blood. He could have easily asked Maya, and her blood is the one that would be the most irresistible for him. Kane is beginning to worry me. I think we need to look into your connection with him as well. I don't think this is a typical infatuation. I think it's more than that. There is something that is drawing the two of you together. And from the looks of it, neither of you know how to control whatever it is that's happening between you." She was right; why didn't he go for Maya's blood? It was a question I still didn't have an answer to. "We must help cover up those marks before anyone else sees them." She says as she walks into the bathroom and comes back out with makeup in her

hands. "We are lucky that they left this in here, or we would have been in some serious trouble. I could have lied and said that I was the one that had done that to you, but I'm sure that everyone would be freaked out about that." I want to laugh at the thought of anyone thinking she had done this. I sit still as she begins to cover my bruises one by one. She doesn't stop until everything is properly concealed. "Did you see him?" I ask her when she is finished and packing the makeup away. I was still concerned about him. I knew more than anyone else what last night would do to him. "Kane?" she asks. "No, I haven't seen him, but I wasn't exactly looking for him either." "Do you think he will be okay?" I ask her. She studies me for a few seconds before saying, "I'm sure he will be. You just gave him what he needed. If he was craving blood, and he gave his body what it desired, he should be back to his regular self by now. You don't have to worry about him." I know that her words should have calmed me, but they didn't. I wouldn't be able to relax until I saw Kane and confirmed for myself that he was okay. "You should eat something," Gabriella says as she looks at my full plate. "You're not only eating for yourself." I didn't feel hungry, but I did as she said. She was right; I wasn't only eating to feed myself. I had to take better care of my body. When I'm finished, I ask us to leave the room and spend some time with everyone downstairs. According to her, they were in the garden. I wanted to see Kane. It was my main reason for leaving the room. I had to see him. I was becoming desperate. "Look who's joined us!" Eden says as she gives me a big hug. While she's hugging me, my eyes begin to scan my surroundings. There is only one person I'm looking for. My breath hitches as I finally see him, and he looks just as troubled as I felt. He knows that I'm here; I can see the tension in his body; it's how I can tell. It doesn't look like he wants to look at me. I think that he was ashamed of his actions last night, or maybe he feels that he might snap again if he sees me. "Are you okay?" Isabella asks me. "You look like you haven't slept for days." That catches Kane's attention, and he finally looks my way. He seems concerned by her words. His eyes scan my body from head to toe, and he doesn't look happy. It almost looks like he's searching for something, and when his eye zeroes in on my neck, I know what he's looking for. His marks on my body.

Chapter 95 I don't know what I was expecting from Kane, but I definitely didn't expect him to be disappointed to see that the marks he left on me are covered. I don't think he expected me to model with them on my body either; as much as I would love to do that, we both knew it would only cause trouble. I'm not sure what I was getting myself involved in. I kept putting myself in the position to get hurt. And I couldn't stop it even though I knew it was dangerous for my heart. I'm not sure what's happening between

Kane and me. And I'm not sure what will happen to us in the future. I just know that I want to fight for this. But I didn't want to be someone that tried to take him away from his mate. But Maya wasn't the same as she was before. I wasn't even sure if she was the real Maya from how she acted. But what if she was the real Maya? What would that mean for us? Kane didn't seem to think that she was a fake. He didn't even think that she was under a spell-like Gabriella and me suspected. What if we were wrong? It would mean that I was doing to her what I wouldn't want to be done to me. But it's not something that I'm doing intentionally. Whenever I'm next to Kane, I have no control. He makes me want things that I know are wrong. And at times, it feels like I would die if I didn't get a chance to be near him. My feelings for him were too intense for me to ignore. I could never get enough of Kane. Never. I want him every second of every day. And I don't just want Kane. I knew now that I no doubt loved him with every part of my heart. I loved Kane. I loved him so much. And I didn't want anyone else to have him but me. I wish I were stronger than this when it came to him. I wish I knew how to control myself. And from the way Maya acted around him, she didn't love him the way I did. She didn't want what was best for him. So then why shouldn't I fight for him? Why must I just sit back and let her have him? I can tell by just looking at her that she would make his life miserable. I didn't want that for him. If he didn't choose to be with me, I wouldn't want him to be with her either. Because being with her would only make him unhappy. And that's the last thing I wanted for him. Part of me wondered if the right thing to do was walk away. I quickly got rid of that thought. I wasn't going anywhere. Not now and certainly not anytime soon. I had to find out who this Maya was before I did anything drastic. I also had to prove that Kane was Gabriella's sister. He had to know the truth. I wanted him to know the truth. I wanted him to see that he had a family that loved him. I wanted him to know that he wasn't alone. We were all here for him, all he had to do was ask for help, and we would be there in a second. I don't think he even realizes that Gabriella has so much love in her heart for him. He doesn't know why she protected him in the past, but I knew the whole truth, and I couldn't wait for him to find out. I think that Kane realizing he wasn't alone anymore would help fill the void in his heart. He doesn't show it, but I know he wishes he had a family. And he thinks he will never have that again since his impostor dad and sister are now dead. While I couldn't wait for the truth to be out, I was still terrified of his reaction to finding out he had been lied to his whole life. "I was thinking that we should take her home with us today," Gabriella says to Lucy, bringing my attention back to the people in front of me. "Her ankle is much better, and as you can see, she can now walk. There isn't any need for her to stay longer." As much as I wanted to stay close to Kane, I knew Gabriella was doing the right thing. For now, it would be better if we stayed away from each other just long enough for me to get the answers that I

was seeking. If I were around him, I would never be able to get anything done. I would be too caught up in everything that includes him. And it seems that I was also tempting Kane in multiple ways. If we kept this up, we were bound to be caught by someone in this palace. "Are you sure this is what you want?" Lucy asks me. "You can stay here as long as you want. I've told you that you are now part of our family. We will always have a place for you here." I can't help but smile at her, "I'm happy to be a part of your family. But I really would like to go home and rest with Gabriella." She nods, "I understand. The doctor is still coming to see you today. So you can all stay here until he reaches. We can have a little fun in the meantime." "Some fun?" Gabriella asks. "What did you have in mind?" The way that Lucy says the word fun has gripped all of our attention. We're all waiting for her to elaborate on her words. "It's something that Isabella suggested," She tells her. "It's supposed to be a straightforward game for the guys to win." "So it's a challenge more for the guys?" Gabriella asks her. "I think I like the idea of that. Arthur could do with a good challenge." The men don't look as excited as the girls, and I wonder what kind of game Lucy was referring to. "Isabella was telling me that she saw people do this already. You blindfold the male, and then he has to find his mate just by their scent. No touching, hugging, nothing. Of course, when he thinks he's found her, he can hug her and take off the blindfold." She teaches us how the game goes. "I can easily find you in a room full of people with my eyes closed," Austin says in a dry tone. "I don't need this game to prove that." Lucy grins, "let's see if we can put your words to the test then! Unless you're scared that you're going to lose." "I agree with Austin on this one," Hunter says. "We can all easily find our mates with our eyes closed. Their scent will be the strongest out of everyone else's. This game doesn't prove as a challenge to us." Isabella sighs, "can we just play the game? I think it will be fun. We have nothing else to do." Arthur pulls Gabriella by his side and takes a big whiff of her scent. She hits his hand and pushes him away, "that's cheating!" He laughs, "do you think I truly needed to do that to win? After all the things we did last—" Gabriella's cheeks turn red, "Shut up, Arthur!" James chuckles as he tries to do the same with Eden, but she pushes him away in time. "Girls, get the blindfolds ready. And let's have some fun! Let's see which of our mates needs to spend the night out of their rooms!" Lucy teases. "I'm guessing I don't have to participate since I don't have a mate." I point out as I make an attempt to leave them to the game. "Oh no, you don't," Isabella says as she brings me right back. "Even though you don't have a mate. You can help us confuse the guys." I guess it means that I'm staying for this even though I know I'm not going to serve a purpose. Maya is unusually quiet during the entire conversation. I couldn't read her mind, but it didn't look like she wanted to play the game. She doesn't try to back out as I did, however. Instead, she joins Isabella as they try to find the blindfolds. A few minutes later, they return with them in

their hands. Each woman calls their mates and places the blindfolds over their eyes, getting ready to start the game. "Can any of you see anything?" Lucy asks. "And answer honestly, we don't want any cheaters. And as you've pointed out already, there is no point in trying to cheat since it's a straightforward game ." Arthur grins, "nothing here. But I can already smell my woman. We told you this game would be a breeze for us." Hunter nods, "this game only makes me want her more." Isabella laughs, "okay, since all of you can't see, I guess it's safe to start the game now." Lucy nods, "remember, girls. We can't make a sound when the game starts. We can't make this any easier for them." "Who should start the game first?" Eden asks as she looks at the guys. "Let's have them go in order," Lucy says. "Austin first since he claims he can find me in a room filled with people with his eyes closed very easily. Then James, Hunter, Arthur, and lastly Kane." "Just let us know when it's time to start," Austin says. "START!" EDEN shouts. The girls try to move around a bit to distract and confuse Austin. I hold in a laugh as he practically follows Lucy everywhere that she goes. She's trying to make it hard for him, but he is right; he can find her quickly even with his eyes closed. "I know you're moving around," Austin growls. Lucy laughs when he jumps forward and grabs her waist, pulling him towards her. He doesn't even remove the blindfold as he leans down and kisses her. "Shouldn't you have taken off your blindfold first before you kissed me?" she teases him. He pulls it off finally and quirks a brow, "why would I? I was sure that it was you." She rolls her eyes, "I won't make it this easy for you the next time we play this game." He groans, "why does there have to be a next time?" James goes next, and just like Austin, he finds Eden very quickly amongst the rest of us. She doesn't try to move around as Lucy did, making it much easier for him. "Hunter, your turn!" Lucy informs him. Isabella tries to hide behind Lucy, trying to make it harder for him. It's hard for all of us to keep our laughter in. He smirks; I think he knows what Isabella is trying to do. He makes it look like he's about to grab Lucy, but in a quick second, he pulls Isabella out from behind her and removes his blindfold. Isabella pouts, "that's unfair. You should have had it harder." Hunter shakes his head, "I thought you would be happy that I won? Should I have pretended to lose to make you happier?" Isabella tries to act annoyed, but she can't hide her happiness that he'd found her without any problems. It was Arthur's turn now. He and Kane are the only ones left in blindfolds now. The other men can now sit back and watch as everything unfolds. They seemed relieved that their time was over. That was understandable since they didn't want to play, to begin with. The only reason they chose to do it was to make their mates happy. From what I've learned from these men, they lived to make their mates happy. And I don't blame them; they have some of the most precious women I've ever met before in my life. Arthur moves around, pretending to be lost, but we can see the smile on his face. He's purposefully annoying Gabriella, and it's

working. She stands still, waiting for him to come to her, but also signals Lucy to go next to her. When Arthur finally attempts to grab her, she jumps to the side, and he mistakenly holds Lucy instead. "You lose!" Gabriella teases him. He removes the blindfold and growls as he lets Lucy go, "you cheated. You were right there." She laughs, "I'll like to see you try and prove it, Arthur. You're the only one who missed his mate." She teases. She's laughing, but Arthur clearly looks annoyed. "Kane!" Lucy shouts. "You're the last one. Girls, let's assemble; we can't make it easy for him since he's the last one here. Let's make it difficult so he can join Arthur on the loser's side." I want to laugh at Arthur's expression when she practically calls him a loser. Even though they cheated, it was fun to see at least one of them had lost. We needed a win on our team. After all, the girls wanted to play the game to begin with. I didn't want to see Kane choose Maya. Just like everyone else, he would be able to easily find her amongst the rest of us. For some reason, he looks hesitant. Like he isn't sure, and he's the first to look that worried. It bothers me. He doesn't look like he's enjoying the game; he seems to dislike it more than everyone here did. He walks toward Maya, but I'm surprised when he passes her straight. I think all of us are stunned. The girls, the men, and every one of us is in complete shock when he keeps walking. At one point, I thought he was going for Gabriella since she was standing right next to me, but he also passed her straight. I'm shocked to my core when his hands reach out and grip my waist in a tight hold. I gasp when he pulls me towards him and removes his blindfold. There is an awkward silence when he opens his eyes and sees me standing in front of him instead of Maya. I don't think either one of us knows what to say at this point. I love being this close to him, but not like this, not with everyone looking at us. And not when Kane has to feel uncomfortable because, unlike everyone else, he couldn't sense his mate. I don't know how much this would affect him. Everyone knows that a male can feel his mate easily; it shouldn't have been hard for him. Kane slowly lets go of me, and he looks like he doesn't believe what he'd just done. I don't think anyone here believes that he just grabbed me instead of Maya, his actual mate. And he didn't hesitate; he passed her without a second thought. "It's okay!" Lucy tries to lighten the mood. "The dress I lent her belongs to Maya. I think that's why Kane got confused." Gabriella fake laughs, trying to lighten the mood. "Lucy, did you intentionally try to make Kane lose by giving her something that had Maya's scent on it?" "That's good." Isabella adds, "it gives our team an extra point." Kane goes to stand beside Maya, and things look extra awkward between them. "So, is this considered a tie?" Lucy asks the men with a smile. "A tie?" Austin asks. "It's three against two. That is not a tie in my book." "Let's not forget that they cheated me as well," Arthur grumbles. "Stop being such a sore loser!" Gabriella exclaims though she's grinning from ear to ear, knowing exactly that they did cheat to get that point. I'm still in shock from Kane choosing me when he

had his blindfold on. I need a moment to catch myself. I can't stay here while everyone is still having fun. What made him think that I was Maya? His mate? I needed some time to recover, and so I excused myself, lying that I wasn't feeling the best. They looked concerned and even offered to go with me, but I told them I would be fine. Thankfully, they didn't try to persuade me anymore and let me go. As soon as I got to the room, I didn't even get to the bed when I heard footsteps coming closer. I'm surprised when someone shuts the door behind me. I spun around to find Kane locking it. What was he doing? Why would he lock the door with just the two of us inside? Did he not realize that he couldn't do this? Not after last night, not after what just happened in the garden. And definitely not after the way my heart beat with excitement of having the two of us alone in a room together. "What are you doing?" I ask him after finding my breath. It's the last thing that I'm expecting him to do after everything that happened last night. I thought Kane would be trying to put as much distance between us as possible. He doesn't answer me. He takes long strides toward me, and I can barely breathe when he grabs my neck and pulls me close to him. I gasp when he buries his nose against the base of my throat and inhales my scent, "I can't stop thinking about you. I think I'm going insane. Why do you smell more like Maya than Maya does? Who are you really? Why can't my heart stop beating for you?" My lips part in surprise; how does he expect me to answer those questions? How should I know why I smell like his mate? And how does he expect me to breathe when he says things like that to me? How does he expect me not to fall for him when he tells me that his heart can't stop beating for me? How?

Chapter 96 "Is this about what happened in the garden?" I ask him, my hands are trembling, and my heart pounding in my chest makes it hard to hear myself. "Lucy already explained that she lent me Maya's dress. It would explain why you got mixed up with both of us. I can't think of a better explanation than this. It's nothing for you to be this worked up over." Again, I'm trying to make it better for him. I want to make things easier, not harder. I want Kane to be okay. I want him to stop hating himself, and I am trying my hardest to make that happen. He doesn't look convinced by my words. Instead, he seems a bit more frustrated by it. I'm not surprised. Kane never listened. If he was already convinced that he was at fault for what happened, he was sticking with it. Nothing I can do or say would ever be able to change his mind. He exhales, "it's not just the dress. Her scent should have been stronger than a damn dress. I've breathed her in before; I know what she smells like. I've dreamt of it, tasted it. Maya's scent is locked in my memories. No one can ever take it from me. Lucy said that for my benefit, but everyone knows that I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g weak. I can't even find my mate in a simple game. I

was the only one. I was the only man who couldn't pick his mate out of a few women. It was not supposed to be a challenge, but it was for me, and I failed miserably. It doesn't just stop with the game. You always confuse me. Everything about you reminds me of Maya, the Maya I knew and fell in love with. How is that even possible? I thought that when I finally found Maya, everything would change. But look at me now. I'm worse now that she's here. It makes no f\*\*\*\*\*g sense to me. You make no f\*\*\*\*\*g sense to me. Everything about you it's like a puzzle that I can't seem to figure out. For once, I want to understand you. I want to understand why I'm so conflicted whenever it involves you—a woman with no name." I bite my lip and try to control my racing heart. I'm not sure what he's trying to say to me. What was his purpose behind telling me these things? How should I react to them? "I don't know what to tell you, Kane," I whisper. "We know I'm not Maya, so it makes no sense why I remind you so much of her. Something must be wrong. I'm just as confused as you are. I wish things weren't this way. All I wanted was for you to be happy, and just like you, I thought that you would be happy when Maya was back in your life. It seems that we were both wrong about this. You look the most miserable now that Maya is back in your life. I don't think anyone else, but you can answer the questions in your heart. Only you will be able to explain why you're feeling this way. No one else." I want to tell him that I believe that Maya is under a spell or possibly an imposter, but I know that he isn't likely to believe me without proof. And I already agreed to keep this between Gabriella and me. The only other person that knew was Arthur. And we had to keep it that way until we had what we needed to prove our allegations. I watched as he paced in front of me. Left to right. Something I was getting used to seeing. I can see the battle he's having within himself, the feelings he's trying hard to keep hidden. He's fighting to find the truth to these same feelings that he wants to hide, but I don't think that he's winning the fight. My breath gets stuck in my throat when he finally turns and pins me with his intense gaze. I can't move. Not when he's looking at me like that. How does he do it? How does he make me freeze on the spot? Why does my heart flutter so much in his presence? I have just as many unanswered questions as he does. We're both screwed; it would seem. Messed up in our own bitter ways. We're both far from perfect. My knees feel weak when his eyes scan the areas he left marks on my body. This isn't the first time today that he's done this. It's like he's memorized them all. I can almost tell what he's thinking, but I'm not prepared for when he opens his mouth to speak. "Please tell me. Why the f\*\*k am I so angry that you covered the marks I left on your body?" he demands in a pained whisper. "Why do I want to see them? Why is it that I want to show them to everyone around us? I shouldn't be proud of them, but damn it, I f\*\*\*\*\*g am. I'm proud that I put them there, and I want to see them. It's killing me that I can't right now." My body felt weak at his confession. I don't think Kane has ever been

this honest with me, and I don't believe my heart can take it anymore. I had fallen hard for him without him saying things like this to me; how much more would I fall when he said words like this that made my heart feel like butter? I don't move as he takes slow steps in my direction. I slightly tilt my chin when he stops a few inches away. "Why did you cover it up?" He asks as his hand lightly traces the makeup over the mark. "I was looking forward to seeing them. I wanted to." I place my hand over his still on my neck, "because we both know I couldn't just leave them there. Why are you here, Kane? What do you want to say to me? You know that you shouldn't be here. Not when everyone knows where to find me. I don't want to get you in any trouble. I want to keep you safe, even if that means keeping you safe from yourself." It was true. As much as I loved having him here by my side, I knew that it was dangerous, especially for him. If he didn't want to keep himself safe, I would have to do it for him. He groans, "I came to apologize to you. I'm sorry for what I did last night. I tried to stop myself, but I've been unable to control myself recently, especially around you. What happened last night should have never happened. You didn't deserve what I did to you. I even left you there still bleeding without a single apology or explanation for why I did that. I know that an apology isn't enough for what I did, but it's all I can do for now. Even I don't have an explanation for my unforgivable actions recently. But I hope that you will accept my apology." Why doesn't he realize by now that he doesn't have to apologize for things like this? I'm always willing to do anything that could help make him happy or at least make his life easier than it was. Besides, the events of last night weren't exactly painful for me. It brought me so much pleasure that it was hard to control my own emotions. But I'm used to not being able to control my emotions around him. That wasn't new. He made my feelings turn upside down. Even now, he's doing the same to me without trying. "Don't apologize. I'm always happy to give you whatever you want. I will always do anything that makes you happy. I've told you that countless times already." I explain once more. "And last night was not painful for me, Kane. It was anything but that." I want to tell him how good it felt. I want to say to him that I wanted more than he gave. I want to tell him that I almost left my bed to come to find him so he could finish what he started. I wanted him to know that I was restless and craving him for the rest of my pathetic night in that room. He looked stunned by my response even though I'd left out half of the things I wanted to say. The thing that seemed to shock him the most however, was when I explained to him that it was anything but painful for me. What could he possibly be thinking? I suddenly wished that I could read his mind. He rubs a hand through his hair, "fuck." He hissed. He's clearly not happy. I don't know what I said to upset him, but he's definitely displeased. "Stop f\*\*\*\*\*g doing that," he growls. "Every time you offer yourself like that to me, it sends me closer to insanity. Because each time I want to take you up on that

offer and when I know I can't, when I prevent my body from getting what it wants, all hell breaks loose inside of me—all control snaps. Do you even understand the kind of effect you have on me?" Once again, he's managed to shock me with his honesty. Apparently, the honest side of Kane is more deadly than his usual restricted side. His words continue to pierce right through me. I attempt to walk toward him, but I'm hurt when he turns away. "This can't happen." I'm not sure if he's speaking to himself or me, but I don't want to end this conversation like this. I want to help him because I know that he is in pain. I walk toward him, but he pulls away once more from me when I try to touch him. I watch him pull at his hair in frustration. I hate seeing him like this. I hate knowing that I'm the one that's doing this to him. Because of me, he's conflicted and doesn't know what to do. I wish I knew how to make this easier for both of us. But the truth remained that there were many things that neither of us understood. It felt like there were things that we didn't know. Things that were causing this reaction between us. It may haunt us for the rest of our lives if we can't figure out how to deal with it before time runs out on both of us. Before our feelings take control and swallow us whole. If that happened, I was sure things would be heated around us. He slams his fist against the wall in anger; Kane's no doubt angry with no one but himself, "what's wrong with me? Why can't I stay the f\*\*k away from you?" Before I can say anything, he's already out of the room, slamming the door behind him. I try to find my breath. I didn't realize that I was even holding it in. I don't see Kane again after that. I'm not sure if he left the palace or if he was locked up in his room. Either way, the doctor saw me and confirmed that everything was okay. Lucy and everyone else was pleased with his report and allowed me to leave without kicking a fuss again. I was glad for the escape. Things were too crazy in just one day. I don't think either Kane or me would be able to survive another day around each other. It was better for the both of us that I was leaving. I sigh as I watch the palace become tiny the further we drove away from it. I was on my way back home with Gabriella and Arthur. I don't think I'm the only relieved one amongst us. They weren't saying a word, and I could tell that they were caught up in their thoughts. I can't tell if it's about me or Kane or us both. Gabriella was the first to break the silence, "I can't believe Kane skipped Maya and went straight to you." I was surprised it had taken her this long to bring up this conversation. I knew she was probably just as bothered about it as I was. Kane was right. He should have been able to sense Maya even though I was wearing her dress. How much of her scent could have even been on that dress? There was no way that's the only reason he was able to choose me over her. "He said something troubling to me," I confess. "After I went to my room, he followed me. He said that I smelled more like Maya than Maya did." "That doesn't make any sense," Arthur says. "No, it doesn't." Gabriella agrees. "So there is definitely something wrong." "There is one thing I can

think of that could explain what's happening to him," Arthur says suddenly. "It's possible that you are also his mate." There was an awkward pause as I tried to make sense of his words. A possibility that I was also Kane's mate? I wasn't sure that something like that could be possible. "What?" Gabriella demands. "How is that logical? He bonded with Maya in the past. They marked each other. I've never heard of anything like that before. The only possible way I can see something like that taking place is if Maya is dead, and we can all see that she is still alive. She isn't acting like herself, but she's alive nevertheless." Arthur looks at us through the rearview mirror, "we don't know for sure if she's alive." "What are you trying to say?" I ask him. He shrugs his shoulders, "from what I've seen so far, Kane has more of a connection with you than he has with the Maya back at the palace. There is no way that she is his mate, at least that's the way I see it. And if she isn't his mate, how can she be the real Maya? I have a theory that she may be an imposter, and the real Maya could be dead. If that is the case, it will make sense that he's gotten a second mate. Which will be you." Gabriella sighs, "while that theory does make sense. It's hard to believe that she isn't the real Maya. It's easier to believe that she's under a spell and behaving weirdly because of it. However, your theory does seem to explain everything that's happening so far. It will make sense as to why Kane is so attracted to her. His full attention seems to be focused on her. It will also explain why he went for her blood and not Maya's." "Went for her blood?" Arthur asks, confused. "What are you talking about? Did I miss something?" Gabriella bites her lip, "did we forget to tell you? Kane barged into her room last night and had a bit too much fun, as in he couldn't seem to get enough of her blood. I was confused as to why he didn't go for Maya's blood since that would make the most sense. She would have willingly given her blood to him, and it would have solved the problem. Instead, he went into her room and took way more than he should have, judging by all the marks I saw on her body earlier." "Marks?" Arthur asks. "Yes, Arthur, marks, like the one I give you every time I feed on you." She explains. "I didn't see any marks on her." He points out. "That's because I helped cover it with makeup." She explains. "As I was saying before, he took too much from her. But that only means he lost control, and I think we both know that shows that he couldn't get enough of her. And that kind of reaction only happens between mates." Was it possible that I was indeed his second chance mate? Was there a chance that the real Maya was dead and the woman in the palace was pretending to be her?" "How do you feel around Kane?" Arthur asks me. "Do you ever feel like you don't want anyone else to have him?" I blush at his question, "I think I do feel that way. At times I wish that Maya didn't exist even though I know it's wrong of me to wish for something like that after everything she's gone through." Gabriella nods, "it does sound like she's his mate, doesn't it?" Arthur nods, "I'm afraid that it does. If that's the case, none of this will be easy. We have a rough

ride ahead for us. The attraction between them is only going to grow the more time they spend away from each other; they're going to crave each other the more they try to ignore their feelings." It did sound exactly like what was happening to Kane and me. We kept trying to ignore or at least control our feelings, but the opposite of that always happens in return. We both snap and do things that could land us in serious trouble. "Let's say that it's possible that Maya could be dead, and the woman in the palace is not her but an imposter," I say. "Then who could she be?" "I would go with a safe guess and say she could be the same witch we were all looking for. She would have had plenty belongings of Maya that would easily allow her to be able to shapeshift into her. I've seen witches do that already as long as they were powerful enough and had what they needed to get the spell done." Arthur answers me. "And if that is true, Austin and his family are in danger. She could be plotting something against them, and since she's now living there, she has easy access to each of them." "Shouldn't we warn them?" I ask. "Without any proof?" he asks me. "I don't think you realize how stubborn Austin is. He will never believe that Maya is an imposter without some solid proof. If we try to tell him this and we have nothing to prove it, it will push him further away, giving us less of an opportunity to catch her before she can hurt anyone." Arthur was right. I didn't realize my suggestion was wrong until he pointed out the obvious. Austin would never accept that Maya could be dead and that the woman living with them could be the witch they were searching for. I'm about to mention something else when I realize something I should have earlier. "Where are we going?" I ask Gabriella. We aren't heading toward the house. I knew that something was up; what I didn't understand was why no one had told me anything as yet. "I think it's time we finally get the answers we needed about Kane being my brother." She tells me. "We're going to Alpha Eric's old home. As you said, I'm hoping we find what we need there to prove that Kane is my long-lost brother." "Are you frightened of what his reaction will be like if you can prove that he is your brother to him?" I ask her. She sighs, "I know that Kane is a bit stubborn, and he isn't likely about to be happy that he'd been lied to by the people closest to him. It would mean he was also wrong for defending them when Austin's family killed his supposed father and sister. But I do believe that he would realize soon enough that having me as a sister was a blessing in disguise. He will have no choice but to love me." "You're pretty hard not to love. No one would know that better than I do." Arthur says to her from the front. Gabriella blushes, "of course, you fell in love with me at first sight." She turns towards me and adds, "You should know that he was planning on marrying someone else when we first met. And he tried to push me away the entire time. So I know how it feels for you with Kane. I keep trying to pull you away; I'm trying to protect your heart. I'm unsure if I'm helping you or making it harder for you. Let's assume it's true that he is your mate. I think that I may be causing more

damage than good. No one knows how hard it is to stay away from your mate as I do. I've suffered a lot trying to put distance between Arthur and me. When all of this is over, I'll take the time to sit down and tell you about Arthur and me. Our life before we were finally able to settle down and start a family together. It wasn't always like this. We had a rough time also." I squeeze her hand, "I'll be happy to listen to the entire story." "We're here," Arthur says to us suddenly. Already? I bit my lip; we were so close to finding the truth. Gabriella looks at me, and I can see the uncertainty and hope in her eyes. It was time. Time to prove that Kane was indeed Gabriella's brother.

Chapter 97 "Are you ready?" Arthur asks us. I don't think either of us was ready for this. We weren't even sure that we would be able to find anything that would be useful to us. Kane's fake father would have wanted to hide all the evidence that proved Kane wasn't his son. It's crazy that Kane had a family that was alive, and he didn't even know. And now we would fight until we found the evidence we needed to show him the truth. I exit the vehicle with Gabriella, and Arthur checks around to ensure we are the only ones here. We weren't sure if this place was truly abandoned. And we were trying to make this trip as successful as possible without anyone ruining it for us. He returns a few minutes later, "everything looks clear. It doesn't look like there is anyone around. It's safe for us to go in." The first thing I noticed when stepping into the house was that it was definitely not a little one. Apparently, Kane's father had enough money to build a nice home. "Kane's father was rich?" I ask. "I didn't mean to say his father. I meant to say his imposter father," I added after the look Gabriella gave me. "Rich because of the number of people he'd stolen from. We already know he wasn't the best person in the world. And neither was his daughter, putting Austin under a spell, making him think he was in love with her, plotting to kill Lucy, and trying to wipe out Austin and James's packs; those two caused too many problems. It's why they are dead now. They made too many people suffer." Hearing these things from Arthur and knowing the story from Kane, I can see why there is so much tension between him and Maya. They were never meant to be together, with so many things tearing them apart. It would be too much for anyone to handle. If I weren't in love with Kane, I would have been amazed by their passion. Despite what went on with their families, they still found a way to love each other. I wish I didn't have to stand in the way of that. I wish I didn't have to love him as I did. I wish the connection weren't there since the first day I met him. I take another look at the house. I could tell that we would be in here searching for a long while. "I'll take the upstairs," Arthur tells us. "You two can search here." "What exactly are we looking for?" I ask Gabriella. She shows me the locket on her neck, "something like this. According to my parents, Kane

also had one when he was taken on that dreadful day. I'm not sure what Eric did to it. It would make sense to get rid of it; he didn't want anyone to know that Kane was not his son. And I'm sure he wanted to make sure that Kane was the last one to find everything out. I don't know the full story of my parents. There are things they've still kept from me. They seem to have many enemies they've kept from me for my benefit. From the little I know after speaking to my other siblings, I don't think Eric was one of them, which would mean he was helping out a friend to do their dirty work." "Something that small may take forever to find," I point out. "And it's just the three of us." "In that case," Arthur says. "We should all stop talking and start searching before we get company. I'm still not so sure that this place is entirely abandoned. There could be enemies lurking around. I'll be happy if we can finish up here and get out before we can be spotted." He was right. We needed to find the proof to show that Kane was Gabriella's brother, and after that, we had to get away from here. Something about this place gave me the creeps. And after learning how horrible Kane's father was, I didn't want to be here for long. There is no telling how many of his followers were still alive and looking for a chance to cause trouble. Arthur makes his way upstairs like he said he would, leaving Gabriella and me here. We started looking through drawers on any desk that we could spot. There weren't that many to search through. There was nothing in those things that could help prove that Kane wasn't Eric's son. There were a few pictures with the three of them together; none were baby pictures or when they were children. They were all when they were already grown up. It wasn't hard to see that the girl in the photo was Eric's daughter. And she looked nothing like Kane. They could argue that Kane looked like his mother, who, surprisingly, there isn't a single picture of. However, how would they explain the resemblance between Kane and Gabriella? And I'm sure Gabriella looks like her parents, which would mean that Kane did also. If we couldn't find proof today, we would have to use their resemblance to get others to believe us. I'm not sure if it will work, but it's worth trying. I think it will be easier to get the others to accept us than it will be to get Kane to agree. The only ample proof we had was that they were both hybrids: half-vampire, half-werewolf. Gabriella pulls at her hair in frustration, "none of these pictures. None of these papers. Nothing here is helping my situation. I want nothing more than to tell Kane the truth. I want to embrace him and show him that he isn't alone. But I can't do that without proof. I've been trying to find it, and just like today, there is nothing that is helping my situation!" I rush to comfort her, "this is far from over. Arthur is still searching upstairs. We know that if there is any proof, Eric would not have left it out in the open for all of us to find it. We just need to keep searching. I'm sure that it is here somewhere. From what you've told me about this man, I believe that there is a chance that he wouldn't have gotten rid of everything that could prove that Kane was your brother. I believe that he would have kept it to use

against your family one day. If he was still alive, I'm sure that he would have done it." Gabriella sighs, and I can see that my words have helped, "you're right. I can't give up now. We're close to finding what we need." "How about we join Arthur?" I ask her. "Let's see if he has more luck than us." She nods, "I hope that's true." "I can save you the trouble of walking up those stairs to meet me." He tells us as he walks towards us. "There is nothing upstairs as well. Eric hid the evidence well, just like we knew he would." "We know it can't be out in the open," I say. "Then there is something that we must be missing. There has to be a hidden door or something. Somewhere that he kept all his important stuff." "She's right," Arthur says as he begins checking the wall for any sign of a hidden door. We do the same as him, but again, we find nothing that can help us. I hate seeing Gabriella this upset. I'm used to her calm and cheerful nature. I sigh and try to look around some more. I didn't want to leave this place until we found what we were searching for. I refused to let this go without spotting the one thing we needed. I had to do this for Kane and also Gabriella. I wanted to help them both; after all, they would have done the same for me. "Do you notice that?" I ask Gabriella. "That rug seems out of place. Like it doesn't belong there." She follows my gaze. "Like it's hiding something." She says to me. Arthur removes it, and we all pause at what we see next. The secret door we were hoping to find. "A basement," Gabriella whispers. Arthur pounds on the lock until it's broken and opens the door wide for us to climb down. I'm hoping there isn't anything like a pile of dead bodies down there. It wouldn't be surprising from the man's awful past and the things he's done to people. "No dead bodies so far," I say thankfully as I get my first look at my surroundings. "It looks like where he planned all his attacks," Arthur says as he watches the board in front of us. "The last thing here is the plan he plotted to get rid of Austin's family. The plan that failed big time." "That plan is why we're here." Gabriella mumbles. "He messed up all of our lives in some way. Kane wouldn't have had to suffer like this if he wasn't in the plan." "Should we start searching?" I ask her. "We need to get out of here soon. We've already stayed for too long." She nods, "let's search as quickly as we can. We can grab some stuff and take it with us if it becomes too much." I watch as Arthur and Gabriella search through some more drawers; they're desperate to find that one thing that can give us what we need. My eyes are suddenly drawn to a painting in front of me. I slowly walk towards it and run my hands over it. I don't know why it caught my attention but I can't seem to look away. I removed it from the wall and continued to stare at the little boy in the painting. Somehow I believe this is what Kane would have looked like at the age of nine. "What are you doing?" Gabriella says right behind me. Her closeness surprises me, and the painting drops from my hand and smashes to the ground. I gasp as the glass shatters and makes a mess around us. "At least we don't have to clean that up," Arthur says. My eyes narrow as

something stands out to me. I bend over and pick the cloth up in my hand. It must have been inside the painting. It looks like a baby's blanket. "Look at the symbol," Arthur says to us. I did, and I know where I saw it before; on Gabriella's locket. This can only mean one thing. This was the blanket they had wrapped Kane in as a baby. They must have taken it when they'd kidnapped him. Gabriella takes it from my hand and opens it; we are both shocked when we see the locket wrapped neatly inside. This was it. The proof we needed. Kane was indeed Gabriella's brother. We didn't need anything else to make others believe us. I sigh with relief and turn to Gabriella with a huge grin. She's smiling too, and Arthur looks happy to see his mate like this. "I can't believe it," she whispers as she hugs the blanket to her chest. "We finally have it. There is no way that Kane can doubt me now. He must know I'm telling the truth when I say that he is my brother and that I love him with all my heart. We can finally start our sibling bond after losing out on it for our entire lives." . . . . . ~KANE~ Maya slams the door loudly as she exits the bathroom. She wasn't speaking to me after what happened today. I'd tried to talk to her multiple times already, but nothing was working. She was pissed with me, and even that was putting it nicely. I couldn't blame her. What I did earlier was unforgivable. Not to mention what I did last night. If I thought I had to tell Maya about what happened with the girl before, I wasn't sure that was a good idea anymore. Not with the way she was reacting now. "Please," I beg as I walk towards her. "Just talk to me." She laughs, "talk to you? Talk to a man that's so weak that he can't find his mate amongst five other women. You weren't even in a crowded place, Kane. It shouldn't have been that hard for you. Your actions embarrassed me in front of everyone. It made me feel like we had the weakest connections out of all the couples present for the game. How do you think that would make me feel?" She demands. "And all of this is no one else's fault but yours. Everything is your fault. You caused this to happen. You made us look bad in front of everyone else. Not me. You're an embarrassment. I can't believe out of everyone else; I'm stuck with you. Lucy's mate found her quite easily. The same with Eden and Isabella. And even though they cheated Arthur, it's quite clear that he also won the challenge. You're the only one that couldn't do it. What happened? Why couldn't you find me? And even if you couldn't find me, why did you choose an entirely different woman? A woman that I don't even like!" Maya's words were excruciating. I knew that she was angry and had every right to be, but I didn't think that there was ever a chance that she would try to make me feel this bad on purpose. I knew that I was the only one that had failed; I didn't need her to remind me. It was on my mind every second of the f\*\*\*\*\*g day since it had happened. I didn't help the situation when I ran after Giselle's maid the moment that it happened. I should have stayed and comforted Maya, yet she was the one I had gone after. Why? I had no f\*\*\*\*\*g clue. Well, I did have a clue. One. She smelled like Maya. More like her

than the woman who looked like Maya in front of me. And because of that, I wanted answers. Answers that I was hoping she would be able to give to me. Of course, she didn't have the answer I was seeking. But she made me feel like I was about to combust into flames. I was never supposed to confess the things I said to her today. They just slipped out, and it felt like I had zero control over my mouth. I was spilling things that I promised to keep inside of me—forbidden feelings and desires that were supposed to be buried and never brought back to life. I went against all of that today. I guess I figured that I couldn't mess up more than I already had. Choosing another woman while my mate watched? I was a f\*\*\*\*\*g disaster. And it seemed like every day; I found a new way to make life difficult for myself. I couldn't wait to see what my body had planned for tomorrow. I take a step toward her, and she says, "please don't come near me. I can't stand being close to you after what you did. I want my space, and I think that's best for the both of us right now." I close my eyes and try to calm myself before opening them back to look at her. At this point, I was forcing myself to feel something for the woman in front of me. It should never be like this. It's never been this way before. "I'm sorry," I finally whisper. She didn't deserve the things I was doing in front of her and behind her back. "You have every right to be angry with me. What I did earlier is unforgivable. I know this. I'm sorry for being so weak when you need a strong mate, someone who doesn't keep messing up. If you give me a chance, I promise to make it up to you. I promise to work harder to fix what we have. I know there has been a strain in our relationship because of me, and I'm willing to work hard to make things right. The way it should have been since the beginning." Maya crosses her arms over her chest and narrows her eyes, "I don't think you mean those words. I lost our baby, OUR BABY Kane, and you have done nothing to help me recover. You're continuously worried over another woman. Didn't you think I would realize that she's the one you've been running after since I returned home? Don't you think that I see you staring at her? And you don't think I see how she looks at you? At first, I thought I was crazy for thinking my mate would be so stupid to do things like that in front of me, but after what happened today, I know I'm not mistaken. Something is going on between the two of you, and after everything I've gone through because of you, I'm saddened and disappointed that you would still treat me like shit." My jaw clenches, and I can't find the words to say to her. Every word that she said was the truth. My attention has been on another woman when it should have never been, not when I found her back. My attention was always supposed to be only on her. "Maya—" She stops me from saying anything else, "you can't try and deny it. I'll never believe you. I saw everything with my own eyes. It's time for me to speak. You've done enough; you've said everything you needed to. How would you like it if I did the same thing to you? Would you enjoy seeing me with another man? If they had blindfolded the women,

would you have been happy if I had chosen Arthur instead of you? Do you think that's something you would have enjoyed seeing? I've had enough of this. I don't want a mate that treats me like you do. If you don't start acting right, I'm leaving, and you'll never see my face again. Whatever we have will be over. If you still want me in your life, I suggest that you start treating me like your mate and not some random woman you picked up from the street." The thought of never having Maya in my life again sends my body into instant panic. I don't want to lose her. I don't want to lose my mate before I get the chance to love her the way I should have since the beginning. I crossed the room and closed the distance between us. She doesn't stop me as I pull her into my arms, "I'll never look another woman's way again. This is my promise to you. I'm sorry for the way I acted. I wish I had an explanation for why I did it, but I'm grateful you're willing to give me one more chance. I'm not going to let you down again. No matter what, I will be the mate that you have needed from the beginning. I promise you, Maya, I will love you the right way. No one will come in the way of that. Not anymore."

Chapter 98 ~MAYA~ We are on our way to Gabriella's home. She didn't want Austin and his family to suspect what was happening. The three of us were the only ones that knew Kane was definitely her missing twin. And she wanted to keep it that way until we had Kane next to her parents. She would break the news to everyone during dinner. I couldn't stop my heart from racing against my will. I know that this was a big day for Gabriella and Kane. It was also a big day for me since I cared deeply for both of them. I knew this would be a blessing for Kane, but he wouldn't see it that way at first. It would take him some time before he finally saw it the way that everyone who cared about him saw it. "Where are you heading?" Gabriella asks Arthur all of a sudden. "This is not the direction to my home. We will be late, and I don't want Kane to arrive before we do. For all we know, they could already be there. I left the invitation and already spoke to Lucy. The last I heard, they were getting ready to leave home." Arthur keeps one hand on the steering while using the other to scratch his chin. "I asked some old friends to meet up with us." He explains. "They might be able to give us an idea of what was happening between Kane and her." He tells Gabriella as he looks at me through the mirror. How could anyone possibly explain what was happening between Kane and me? If we couldn't explain it, how could some random people that didn't even know us be of any help to us? "Who are these friends, and why didn't you mention it to me earlier?" Gabriella asks suspiciously. It did seem a bit skeptical since Arthur usually never kept anything from her. They discussed everything before going forward with something. Who exactly were these people that he wanted us to meet? Gabriella narrows her eyes as she waits for him to give

a proper explanation. She doesn't look happy that we may be late for the dinner either. "I wasn't sure that they would show up." He confessed. "I didn't want to get your hopes up. I'm not even sure that they can help. I heard some things about them. If it's true, maybe they will be able to explain certain things that have been happening." It didn't take long to reach our destination, which was on the side of the road, in some area that I couldn't recognize. We've never taken this route before. I watch as a jet-black jeep pulls up in front of us. It's bigger than the ones I'm used to seeing. Three men that shared a resemblance exited the vehicle. They all had a dominant look about them. I know it's crazy, but even how they walked was powerful; one would think these men controlled the wind as they moved. "They're billionaires," Arthur explains to us. "And they attend the Angelites Academy." It's not the first time that I've heard about that school. Giselle had mentioned it when we were heading for the game that day; the day that she found Kane and me close to each other. I shiver at the memory of being locked in the cold cell. It was one of my worse memories ever. And I wish that I could forget it. The only thing that made it okay was the memory I had of Kane saving me. That was the day I earned the friendship of three beautiful girls. I never got to say goodbye to them because of Giselle and her psycho behavior. I never got to find out if they had succeeded in their plan to get back at Carter Prince for everything he'd done. I don't remember seeing these three men at the game. I would remember faces like these. It was those kinds that were hard to forget. "What's up?" The one dressed in navy blue asks as he shakes hands with Arthur. "This is Atticus Fawn." Arthur introduces him to us. "And his brothers Damon and Dante." He continues as he points to the other two. "Nice to meet you, ladies," Damon says as he shakes our hands. "It's a pleasure." Atticus nods his head slightly. "What did you call us here for?" Dante asks. "I think I have an idea, but I want a proper explanation." "At first, we thought it was your father hoping to do another business deal. There are a few things at home we wanted him to install." Damon notes. "But that's not why we're here. The last I heard, you and your father are no longer allies." Arthur sighs, "I've heard something that I wasn't sure was true. But if it is, I hope you can help shed some light on a similar situation." A similar situation? He was referring to mine. But what could these men be going through that would be similar to my predicament? The three men gave each other a silent look that made me think they understood themselves without speaking. "What did you hear?" Atticus asks. His eyes are severe and a bit cold. I don't think he's trying to be tough; this is his regular expression. "I've heard the three of you have the same mate," Arthur explains. His words helped everything he'd said to us in the vehicle make sense. This is what he was referring to. He wants to confirm that it's possible to have more than one mate. Atticus wipes a finger over his bottom lip and quirks a brow, "it's true. But how can that information help you?" The mention of them

having the same mate has definitely hit a nerve. The tension in the air was hot enough to start a fire. The men now seemed to be uneasy. What did it even mean for three brothers to have the same mate? How would that work? I found it hard to see Kane with anyone else but me; how did they handle it knowing it was their brother? I felt sorry for them even though I barely knew them. It couldn't possibly be easy having to love the same woman. "Are these two women your mates?" Damon asks, searching for an answer. His question immediately makes me uncomfortable. My eyes widen, "of course not." I snap. "Only Gabriella is his mate. No one else." "And it will stay that way for the rest of our lives," Gabriella adds; there is no mistaking the threat in her voice. I bite my lips to keep from laughing at the look she gave Arthur. It's almost like she wants to ask him why he didn't give a proper introduction so that these men wouldn't have made such a stupid comment. He gives her a nervous smile before returning his attention to the men in front of us. I'm sure he was about to get a lecture tonight about this. I would be happy to be near them when this happens. Arthur knew how to get out of trouble when it came to Gabriella; I'm sure he was already thinking of ways to make it up to her. "It's concerning her." Arthur nods in my direction. "I'm sure you've heard of Kane, Alpha Eric's son. I believe that she could be his mate, but the problem is that he's already bonded with another woman. I wanted to know if this could happen." Once more, Gabriella looks annoyed when Arthur refers to Kane as Eric's son. I don't think it was intentional; I believe Arthur knows it will take longer if he has to explain to these men that Eric was not Kane's father. Atticus looks at me, and his forest green eyes are a vision to see, "while we all have the same mate. None of us have marked her. We're not sure what will happen if one out of the three of us marks her. It's why we haven't done it. I'm not sure if this means that after marking your mate, it's possible to find another. All I can confirm is that you can have more than one mate. It's possible. It's not f\*\*\*\*\*g easy; sharing never is. But it's possible." I can see the pain in each of their eyes as he tries to answer Arthur's question. They must all really love this girl. "Atticus," Dante says his name in an alarmed whisper. He's staring at something on his phone, and I can tell that whatever it is, it's something worth stopping this conversation for. "I think you should look at this." He hands the phone to Atticus, and since I'm standing close, I can see what they're looking at. It seems to be an article; the headline is written in bold letters, 'Atticus Fawn To Wed Autumn Rivera.' Since the man in front of me was Atticus Fawn and a billionaire, I'm guessing this article was about him. "What is this f\*\*\*\*\*g article about?" Atticus demands from Dante. "Mother and father did not mention anything to me about marrying a woman. And Autumn Rivera? Have they lost their minds?" Who was Autumn Rivera? From the way he said her name, it would seem like he already knew this woman. It's possible that he wasn't very fond of her either by the tone of his voice. But this reaction

could simply be shock after finding out about his marriage from an article. I can't imagine something like that happening to me. It doesn't help that he was already in love with another woman. Does his family not know he already had a love interest? Why would they still plan a wedding without telling him about it? "Didn't mother tell you that there would be an important business deal with the Riveras tonight? She asked that you come home early for the announcement. I'm guessing this is what she was referring to." Damon explains as he takes another look at the article. He looks like he's reading the entire thing trying to figure out what was happening. "This can't be f\*\*\*\*\*g true." Atticus snaps as his hand tightens on the phone. "I need to get home now and stop this. I won't marry another woman other than my mate. Mother should know this! How could she do this without informing me first?" "Let's just stay calm," Damon says. "Maybe this article is false. They're always posting false information about our lives. Let's all take a deep breath and get home to hear what our parents say about this." "I'm sorry we have to cut this meeting short," Damon says. Atticus is already back in the jeep. I think he's too shocked to talk to us right now. Arthur says goodbye to his friends and watches them leave. We didn't get time to ask any other questions, but at least now we knew it was indeed possible that I could also be Kane's mate. "What was that all about?" Gabriella asks as soon as we're back in the vehicle. "What was so shocking about his marriage?" Arthur turns back onto the road and says, "Autumn is not his mate. As you've heard, the three of them have the same mate. Unfortunately, Autumn Rivera is a billionaire, just like they are. They both have rich families. I assume their families are using their marriage as a way to expand their business. To join forces and become closer than before. It gets worse since Autumn is his mate's best friend. It's not about to end pretty if they get married." "Why do so many parents try to control their child's life?" Gabriella demands. "If he's in love with another woman, why ruin their lives by forcing them to marry each other?" "While I do agree," Arthur says. "Sometimes, it works in our favor. I would not have been here with you if my father didn't kidnap you. I would have married someone else. I'm not saying it will be the same outcome for Atticus, but I'm glad I ended up having you in the end. I wouldn't want to be with anyone else but you." Gabriella blushes, and I love to see her this happy. Arthur was a good man. He knew how to make her happy. And maybe this was his way of making up after what had happened earlier. "Hopefully, the article was a lie," I say. "Maybe it's a mistake. I don't see why his parents established his marriage without informing him first." "We have our own troubles," Gabriella says as we pull up to her home. "I'm nervous about telling Kane. But I know that it has to be done. I can't continue to keep this from him. He deserves to know. So do my parents. At first, I wanted to tell them, but I refrained from doing it; I knew that they would want to run to his side. I couldn't let that happen. It needed to be done at the right

time." "It looks like they're already here," I say as we spot their vehicles in the parking lot. "Let's get inside and hope my parents haven't already noticed how much he looks like them and like me. I know they will feel an instant connection when they see him."

Gabriella says. "Just like I did. I didn't need anyone to tell me that he was my brother. I knew it from the first day I met him. I wish it were the same for him. Maybe it would have been if he knew he had a long-lost twin. It was easier for me because I was already searching for him." "You are in luck," Arthur says. "I can still see them. They must have just arrived. See, sweetheart, I didn't make you reach late. We're just in time." As soon as his words hit me, I spot Kane. My feet feel shaky as we walk toward him and Maya, Austin and Lucy, as well as everyone else, are near. I can't stop staring at Kane. I love this man with all my heart. I would do anything for him. Now that I knew he might be my mate, I loved him even more. It all made sense, why I always felt like I knew him, why he made my heart beat the way it did whenever I was around him. He's dressed in a suit, and as always, it takes my breath away. I know that he senses my presence, but he doesn't look at me. I'm accustomed to seeing him looking my way, staring with longing, but he isn't doing that today. It feels like he's trying to avoid me. And I'm scared. Actually scared that he was finally ready to let me go. I knew it had to happen eventually, but if he did it abruptly, my weak heart wouldn't be able to handle it. It doesn't help that I know we are about to break his heart. Like Gabriella, I'm scared to tell him that his father was not Alpha Eric. That he was stolen from his real family as a baby. "Thank you all for showing up," Gabriella thanks them. "I'm sorry for being late. Let's get inside and start the dinner. I'm sure my family is waiting impatiently for us. This is their way to thank you for always being by my side and Arthur's. We are grateful for all of you." Lucy hugs Gabriella; while this dinner was mainly about Kane, I knew she meant those words. She did appreciate each of them. Gabriella's parents are waiting for us in the dining room. They greet us there. I wait patiently for the moment that they spot Kane. And when they do, I see the moment as recognition hits his mother's eyes. She walks up to him and gently places her hand on his cheek. Everyone gets quiet as they watch the exchange. "It can't be," she whispers. "This isn't happening again. Gabriella? Did you find him? Did you find our son? Did you find your brother?" I can see the confused look on everyone's faces as they wait for Gabriella to answer. No one knew what we did. But they were about to find out. In a few minutes, the secret would be out. Everyone would know Kane's true identity. "You are him." His father says. "You are our son." Kane removes his mother's hand from his face and steps back, "what are you talking about?" He asks his parents. "My father was Alpha Eric. I'm not your son." Gabriella has tears as she walks toward him, "you wanted to know why I was always so protective of you. Why I was so nice to you when everyone else wanted to harm you, it's because you are my brother. Eric was never your

real father, Kane. It's the truth. My parents are yours. I knew it from the moment I saw you. I felt the connection instantly. We share a close resemblance; my twin brother was kidnapped along with me, and that twin is none other than you. They separated us when we were children, when we wouldn't know what was happening around us. Before we even knew our names. They took us from our parents, from our siblings. You are my brother. You can't run from this truth."

Chapter 99 I see the moment every word that Gabriella just spoke hit Kane head-on. I watch and wait for him to say something. Anything. I knew that he wasn't about to take this quietly. There would be plenty of questions, and there would also be a lot of denials. I could see that he didn't want to believe a word that she'd just said, just as we had suspected would happen. Kane would fight this until he had nowhere to run and hide. We already had the proof; when it was revealed, he would have no choice but to believe what was being said. I think both Gabriella and me held our breaths when it looked like he was finally going to respond to her words. "You're lying!" Kane roars. His voice rocks the quiet room. I flinch at his tone. He wasn't just shocked anymore; he was also angry. "You're not my sister. Ariana was my only sister, and she's dead." He thinks Gabriella is trying to take him for a fool; I don't think he realizes yet that she has no reason to hurt him. They weren't enemies, and she's proven that she will go through hell to protect him, even when it means saving him from people she cares about. I notice that Lucy immediately draws backward towards Austin at the mention of Ariana. Even Austin looks pissed that Kane just brought her up. It was safe to say that they still didn't like her even though she was dead. After everything I've heard, they had good reason to act this way. I would do the same. Kane's fake sister was an awful person and deserved everything that happened to her. It was time that Kane realized this as well. He had to see that they were using him; he had to see that their deaths were the best thing to happen to him. If they were still alive, they would have done something to make his life miserable. The fact that Eric had Kane's belongings as a child was enough proof that he planned on using them one day, just as Gabriella and Arthur had suspected. He would have used Kane's love for him to get Gabriella and her family under his command. "You're a hybrid," Gabriella says, trying to remain calm. "So am I. As far as I know, Ariana wasn't one. How could she be your sister? You need to think about it, don't just listen to the lies Eric told you all these years; dig deep into your heart and see for yourself what it tells you. I know mine tells me that you are my brother and that I must protect you." Kane's jaw clenched as his hands tightened into fists at his sides. He was trying his best to stay calm, but he was failing miserably. How long again before he completely snaps in front

of us? "We didn't have the same mother!" He hissed. Gabriella pushes her hair back in frustration. Her forehead creases, and I know she's also becoming impatient with him. If they keep this up, they may clash physically and emotionally. "Eric lied to you, Kane," Gabriella tells him as she throws her hands up in the air to show her frustration. "He lied to you. He was never your father. You may not believe me now, but when you see what I have with me, you'll understand that I'm speaking nothing but the truth. I have nothing to gain from claiming you are my brother. No money. No fame. All I can gain from this is my brother back, the same brother I've been searching for since I learned about him." Kane takes a step towards her, and I notice the way Arthur tenses. The way he's standing tells me that he's ready to pounce on Kane if he tries anything crazy. "Tell me, what can you possibly have to show me today that will change my mind? It's true that you have nothing to gain from claiming that I'm your brother, but this isn't something that I can trust so easily. Anyone can claim that they are my sister. I need solid proof. Something that isn't made up." Gabriella looks happy that he brought it up. I knew she was more than happy to show him what we had all found. She was waiting for the right opportunity to show it to everyone present here. I'm surprised that no one else has said anything up to now. I think this news has brought shock to everyone. They didn't know how to respond, and maybe they were just as skeptical as Kane was. But all of their doubts would disappear when they saw what Arthur was holding in his hand. No one had paid any attention to it yet. They didn't seem to find it weird that he was holding onto a blanket. Maybe they thought it belonged to Emma. Gabriella nods suddenly, "I will tell you what you wish to know. We paid a visit to Eric's abandoned home. We searched and searched; I felt like giving up at one point and was lucky to have these two with me." She says as she points at Arthur and me. Kane again doesn't look my way, just like earlier. His actions are worrying me more than ever now. I was sure he was avoiding me. After being so open and honest with me, why would he completely shut me out right after? I don't have a chance to ponder that thought as I continue to listen to Gabriella, "because of them, I was able to find the evidence even when I thought Eric had possibly gotten rid of everything; we needed to prove that you are my brother and I knew that you wouldn't believe me unless I had evidence to support my claims. Remember I asked you if you ever had a locket like mine? Your answer was no, but that was because he kept it from you. I was disappointed with your response but soon realized that Eric wouldn't have kept it out in the open for anyone to see it and figure out who you were. He wasn't that stupid; he was crazy but definitely not stupid. He kept the truth, and he hid the evidence so that you wouldn't be able to find out who you were, not until he was ready to use it against you. He never got the chance to do it because he died. And I'm sorry that his death scarred you, but I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g happy that he's gone. He deserves it for what he put our family

through. He deserves it for what he did to Austin and his family. He deserves it for what he did to you. I'm sure that he didn't treat you as his son; I'm sure that he made you suffer and sad at times. Suppose you've ever wondered why now you know. He never loved you because you were never his son. You were just another weapon that he didn't get a chance to use. You would have gone the rest of your life thinking this man was your father if I hadn't found you. Do you understand now how evil he was? Do you believe me now?" Kane's eyes are wide, and he looks like he's about to go insane. I look at Maya, waiting for her to go toward him. I'm waiting for her to try and help him remain calm. She doesn't do any of that; if anything, she looks happy that this is happening. It's almost like she's glad to see him in pain. This is another sign that this woman was not the old Maya. This was also another sign that I was his mate. I was the one that felt every shock and pain this news brought to him. His pain was mine. I felt like I was the one who'd just found out their whole life was a lie. And I'm the one that's dying to rush to him and remind him that everything will soon be okay. "Stop lying!" Kane eventually roars as he glares at her. "How dare you say such nonsense about my father? He's dead! Dead! My sister is dead. They're both dead. Gone. They are no longer a part of this world. They're no longer here to prove that everything you say is bullshit. How can you try to make them out to be such villains? Why can't you just let them rest peacefully?" Gabriella doesn't look surprised by his outburst. I'm not either. This may look bad, but we both knew he was beginning to see that she was telling the truth; it's why he's acting out more now. He's starting to realize that everything was indeed a lie, and it's taking a toll on him. She looks at me, and I nod at her. It was time to show him the proof. There was no use keeping it from him now. He was ready. Without even realizing it, he was prepared to learn the truth. Gabriella takes the blanket from Arthur; the locket is still wrapped inside. She's careful not to let it slip out. She hands it to Kane, and even though he doesn't want to take it, he eventually does. His hands are shaking as he slowly unwraps it to reveal the locket inside. His parents gasp as they recognize the blanket instantly. "Oh," his mother whispers as she stares at it lovingly. "I remember it like it were yesterday; I wrapped you in it. I remember. It was made just for you, my baby boy." Kane swallows as his eyes scan the symbol in the blanket. He drops it onto the floor as he holds the locket in the air. I watch as the little thing swings in front of him. Kane is in denial. He's also in shock. He's now learning the truth, that his entire life was a lie. Everything he did for the people he thought was his family, all they did was betray him in the end. He gave them his heart, and they crushed it. And it may be even more challenging for him now that he knows they aren't here to fix the mess they caused. They aren't here for him to shout and curse at them. They're not here for him to get his closure for everything they've put him through. They died and got the easy way out, while he had to remain with all the nasty scars they left behind. I want

to hug him. I want to kiss the pain away. I wish it were never like this. I wish he were never taken away from his birth parents. I wish he didn't have to hurt so much. I wish things were different. And I wish there was a way for me to make this possible. His eyes travel to the locket on Gabriella's neck. He stares at it for a couple of seconds before looking at the one in his hand. It looks tiny next to him, like he could crush it with the snap of a finger. He can see that the two of them are identical. I know that he knows she's telling the truth. I can see it in the broken way that he's standing. He knows. But he doesn't want to accept it. Not yet. He doesn't want to believe that the man he loved all his life was actually the villain in his story. He protected and fought for the honor of people that never loved him. I bite my lips as I try to fight the tears that threaten to fall. "This could all be a setup." Kane snaps suddenly. "How do I know you got this from his abandoned home? How do I know that you are telling the truth? Am I supposed to take your words for it? I'm not that stupid." Gabriella's lips are trembling as she walks closer to him until she's standing close enough to hug him. "Look at me, Kane. What do I have to benefit from lying about something this big? The evidence is right here in front of you. If you don't want to believe the locket or the blanket or even the words coming out of my mouth. Take a second and dig deep within. Look inside. You can't tell me that you don't feel the connection. That you can't see that I'm your sister. Since the first time I saw you, I knew, I instantly knew that you were my brother. I didn't need this blanket or locket to tell me. If you don't accept this, I don't care, it will hurt, but you need to know the truth. I couldn't keep you in the dark. I needed you to know the truth about Eric and his daughter. I needed you to know because you deserved to know. You had to know how awful they truly were. They never deserved you. You must have known this. They never really loved you. You may try to believe otherwise, but I know deep down you can tell that everything I'm saying to you today is the truth." Kane is quiet, and his silence is deafening. The entire room is quiet, not just him. It's a lot for everyone to take in. I know it took us a while to get used to all of this. I can't imagine how it was for everyone else around us. "Again, you don't have to accept me as your sister. I want you to know that I will always protect you. I will always protect you because you are my brother. You are my twin, and I love you. Without knowing you for most of my life, I still love you with a fierceness that's hard to describe." Gabriella says as the tears continue to fall down her cheeks. My heart breaks for the two of them. I want them both to be happy. How beautiful would it be if Kane finally accepted the truth? He would have this family that was waiting to accept him with open arms. A family that would actually love him and wants what's best for him. He wouldn't need to fight for their love or attention. They would happily give it to him without a second thought. All he had to do was let himself love them. He loved the

wrong people in the past. This was his chance for a better life. He just had to allow himself to be happy. For once, I wish that he did what was right for him, no one else.

Chapter 100 ~KANE~ My mind and heart are spinning out of control. I don't want to believe a word coming out of Gabriella's mouth. At first, I thought this was just a cruel game being played on me. But when I realized that no one around me was laughing and that everyone seemed to be just as shocked as I was, I knew that this was real. This was happening. She was claiming that my whole f\*\*\*\*\*g existence was all a damn lie. She was claiming that my father was a bloody liar. That he wasn't my father, to begin with. I've loved that man with everything in me. I did everything for him. I looked up at him. I saw him as my bloody hero. Despite everything he put me through, despite locking me in basements without any food, despite all of that, I saw him as my father. I thought that he was hurting me to make me stronger. I felt that he was doing it to make me a man. Those were the words he'd said to me. When I was young, he hid me from everyone. Was this the reason? Because I had been stolen from my real family, and he didn't want anyone to find out what he had done? That would make plenty of things he'd done in the past make so much sense. It would give explanations to questions I've had all my life. Questions that he never willingly answered, even when I asked. The evidence was difficult to ignore. I could deny all I wanted, but I couldn't forget the words Gabriella had just spoken to me. She was right. She had nothing to gain from claiming I was her brother. None of them had anything to gain. I had nothing to offer anyone here, at least not anymore. Almost everything of mine had been destroyed. She was also right about the connection. I never paid attention to it before because of everything happening in my crazy love life. But now that it was out in the open, I felt the connection she was talking about. I also had a strong urge to protect her and keep her safe. I knew I wouldn't stand back and watch anyone try to hurt her. And this connection that I felt was nothing like I thought for Maya. It was different; it was a brotherly affection. f\*\*k. She was telling the truth, wasn't she? I was her long-lost twin. We were both hybrids. We were the same age, no doubt. My supposedly birth parents recognized me the moment they saw me for the first time. My heart was telling me that I knew them even though I hadn't met them before today. All of the signs are there. I didn't need the blanket and the locket to prove anything; I would know the truth in my heart without having those things as proof. I hate that this is happening to me, but there are no more chances for me to run from this. Even though I knew now that this was my real family, I had no idea how to accept them. How did I forget about my past? The closest people in my heart were my enemies without me even knowing it. They destroyed my life while they were alive, and they managed to do it

when they left this earth also. They never gave me a chance. It's like they lived to see me suffer. How could I have believed them all this time? Why hadn't I realized before that it was all a lie? All I had to do was dig deeper, all I had to do was search inside of me, and I would have gotten the answer I needed to stop myself from making so many damn stupid mistakes. They made me do things that I now thoroughly regret. I hurt the one woman that I was supposed to love. I hurt her, and I hurt her for the man I thought was my father and the girl I thought was my sister. I thought that I was avenging their deaths, and I felt that I was doing the right thing. I don't think I've ever met a person dumber than I am. To do the things I did for people who hated me. They were good at masking the truth. They fooled me till the very end. There is one person that I need to beg forgiveness. For my foolish and heartless actions. One person that never deserved all the wrong I've done to her. I never deserved her. I never deserved Maya. And after knowing who I was, knowing that the man I fought for, the man I hurt my mate for, was never actually my father, it was enough to shatter everything inside of me. All along, I thought that I was fighting for a good cause, that I had to do this for my father, that it was what he would have wanted me to do. This entire time, he was a liar, someone that caused my real parents pain. Before finding this out, I already felt guilty for everything I did to Maya. Now, I felt a thousand times worse. I hurt her for a man that never loved me. I hurt her for a sister that was never even my sister to begin with. The signs were always there, and I ignored them. I ignored them like a pathetic fool. I should have known that Ariana was the only one that he truly cared about, and that was because she was actually his daughter. And I was never his son. My mind is racing with everything wrong that I've done in the past. All this time, causing pain to others because I thought it would make my father proud. I did so many things that I regretted, and all of them were because of him. I was always trying to make him happy, to make him proud of me. No matter what I did, he never seemed to love me more. I was punished by him, tortured. And after it all, I loved him still. I loved him because I thought that he was my father; I thought that he was doing everything for my own good. I thought that he was teaching me to be stronger. Now I knew that it was all a lie. All this time, he enjoyed hurting me, he enjoyed torturing me, enjoyed seeing me fight for his affection. How stupid could I be? How could I have not known? He's never loved me. He's never loved me the way a father loves his son. And Ariana never treated me as her brother. She treated me like another one of her pawns. And still, I loved her more than anyone; still, I loved father more than anyone. Why am I still referring to him as father? He never was one to me. MOTHERFUCKER! What had I done? I destroyed everything with Maya and hurt her over and over again, all because of people that never loved me to begin with. She was probably the first woman to love me, and I let her down. I let her down. I hurt her. I made her cry. I was never there for her when she needed me the most. What was wrong

with me? How could I have done so many things to hurt her? There were no excuses anymore. The only reason I had turned out to be bullshit. I fought for people that didn't care about me. I was a f\*\*\*\*\*g lunatic. I know that Gabriella is saying something to me. I know that my birth parents are trying to get my attention. But none of them have my attention. Maya is the only one that does. I'm looking straight at her. I don't even deserve to see her pretty face. I don't deserve to look her way. All I can think about now is begging for her forgiveness. The guilt was eating me alive. After everything, knowing what I did now, I knew I couldn't let her down again. I was done messing things up for her. I was done hurting her. I don't care if I had to break my heart to treat her right, but I would. For her, I would do anything once it meant that she would be happy again. Anything. . . . . ~MAYA~ I can see how much this new information is killing Kane. I can feel his pain from all the way over here. I could feel it so strongly. And I was sure more than ever now that we were mates. Kane was my mate. This man, he was mine. But he was also Maya's. And he felt like he owed her his life more than anyone else in this room. I could tell this by the way he was looking at her. I should have known that he would feel more guilt towards her after learning that the people he fought for were never his family, to begin with. "Kane?" Gabriella calls his name. "Please say something. We want to help you. Telling you this was never my intention to hurt you. I wanted to be honest with you. I wanted you to understand that you have a real family. A family that will be there for you the moment that you need help. We will always be by your side. We will never let anyone take you away from us again. Never." Kane doesn't look like he's hearing a word she's saying to him. And it goes the same for anyone else that tries to grab his attention. I'm worried that he was so shocked that he wasn't aware of what was happening around him. I don't think that he doubted Gabriella anymore. I think he knows that she was telling the truth. He knows that he is her brother. He knows that these people are his parents. He knows the truth. After all these years of thinking that Eric was his birth father, he finally learns the truth. The secret was finally out. And it was destroying him. My lips part when he begins to move. At first, I thought that he was about to leave. However, I'm shocked when I realize who he's walking towards. Maya. The air seems to knock right out of me as Kane drops to the ground beside her. Everyone is confused by his actions. But none as much as I am. He'd just found out that Gabriella was his sister, that he had parents, brothers, a family, one that was ready to welcome him home. Yet the first thing he does is bow his head in shame in front of her. Why would he do it? Why didn't he try to hug his parents instead? They were waiting for a chance to hug him and hold him close. They weren't the only ones; I can see how much Gabriella wants him just once to admit that he is her brother. He's still kneeling in front of Maya with his head bowed. He hasn't moved for a good few seconds. I'm beginning to think that he isn't even

aware of his actions. My body shakes with an unknown emotion as he whispers her name. Why does it feel like he's calling out to me instead? Why do I think his actions were meant for me, not her? Am I crazy for thinking this way? This was not the time for my body to react this way. This was not the time for my heart to confuse my mind. I felt like someone was purposefully squeezing my heart as he lifted his arms and hugged her to him. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Maya. For everything. I never deserved you. You were always too good for me, even from the start. I beg you; please forgive me, sweetheart. Please forgive me. I will never do anything to hurt you again. Never."